

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Siri Kaur
SHE TELLS ALL



Siri Kaur, *Camille, Lucumí Aborisha Initiate and Reiki Master Teacher*, 2019

Opening Reception October 30, 2019, 6-8pm

Eric Buterbaugh Gallery

8271 Beverly Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90048

Exhibition on view October 31-Dec 7, 2019

Monday through Friday, 11AM-5PM

Los Angeles, CA, October 10, 2019 – *SHE TELLS ALL*, an exhibition of new work by LA-based artist and photographer Siri Kaur continues the artist's investigations into issues of personal representation and identity as she turns her camera's lens to the world of esoteric and occult spiritual practices by photographing witches in Southern California.

Opening October 31, 2019, the exhibition will position recreations by the artist of neon signs from the windows of LA psychics' storefronts alongside color portraits of occult practitioners and photographs of magical objects. The title *SHE TELLS ALL* references one of these signs discovered by Kaur on her journey through LA's occult community. The sign calls to mind both the skeptic, who doubts the power of the clairvoyant, and the power of divine feminine energy that Kaur claims as her own. The consequence is a timely and revealing look at contemporary mystics, material culture, and the nature of identity itself.

Kaur's impetus to document and explore physical manifestations of the performative nature of identity originated as she was growing up in an American Sikh ashram in Boston during the 1970's New Age movement. Through her group's all-white turban-clad dress code, she experienced firsthand the physical performance of identity. As a transplant to LA, Kaur immediately felt the connection between her unusual Northeastern New Age upbringing and LA's unique and magnetic counterculture. From legendary figures such as artist, performer, poet, and occult practitioner Cameron to the freedom of 1960's hippies, Los Angeles has long been a mecca for those seeking freedom in both the spiritual and art realms.

As an artist, Kaur is interested in the unique power of portraiture to elicit this performative nature of identity. In this new body of work, *SHE TELLS ALL*, Kaur engages questions of identity performance by exploring an ever-present and wildly diverse American identity: the modern American witch. Witches are contemporary practitioners of the ancient tradition of paganism, which includes multiple and diverse religious and spiritual beliefs centered on nature worship and humans' innate connection to magic. However, the aesthetic experience of the American witch is not neutral; it's camp. The theatrical personae of many of the witches Kaur encounters denotes their status as citizens of this surreal city, where even mysticism is influenced by Hollywood. Kaur photographs these individuals in the context of their material world, where she finds commonplace identity markers such as crystal balls, burning incense and yes, neon signs denoting the mystic. There's a playfulness there and a real performance of the hyper-stylized self. Yet Kaur's photographs use these identity markers as a starting point to create a visual record of something more intriguing and ephemeral.

The women in Kaur's imagery identify with a variety of practices, traditions, and beliefs; her subjects self-identify as witches, but also as psychics, clairvoyants, light workers, mediums, spirit guides, healers, as Mexican witches known as *brujas*, as initiates in the Afro-Cuban practice of *Santería*, and as Druids, among others. Most of the people depicted in Kaur's images claim several of these labels simultaneously, creating fluid and individual identities, for example in Kaur's photograph *Camille, Lucumí Aborisha Initiate and Reiki Master Teacher* we see a beautiful young woman lying in the brilliant LA sunlight surrounded by tokens of the fortune-teller: cards, crystals, and astrological symbols. Camille, who lives in LA but is originally from Detroit, follows the *Lucumí* tradition, a variation of the Afro-Cuban practice of *Santería*, both of which originated in Western Africa. Camille is simultaneously aware of the physical performance of her identity, achieved by dressing herself in stunning white robes alongside props, and yet she is also deeply spiritual and sincere in her spiritual beliefs. The identities of all

of the witches Kaur depicts are innately performative and fraught with contradiction, and this is what compels Kaur. Her portraits reveal more than just performance and costumery, as the presence of real human identities emerge rich with complication and wild with an intangible otherness that engages a range of viewer, the enchanted and the skeptical alike.

The concept of witchcraft, a wide-ranging system of beliefs that engage and explore our connections with nature, with the unseen, and with magic, is a tool we can use to find meaning in dark times such as in America today, when many of us have given up hope. There are questions in this world without answers, and answers without questions, yet we still yearn to know all. In *SHE TELLS ALL* the power of the divine feminine shines from Kaur's images, where diverse and resplendent women stake their claim to be seen and to hold forth their light to illuminate a path for our future.

On the occasion of the opening night preview on October 30, several of Kaur's subjects will be present to tell all through live sessions and psychic readings.

Siri Kaur (b. Boston, MA, 1976) is an artist and photographer who examines identities that occupy dualities, diversity, and contradiction, with a rigorous eye for the photographic quality of magic. She received her MFA from The California Institute of the Arts, and an MA and a BA from Smith College. Kaur's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Blythe Projects, Cohen Gallery, and Kopeikin Gallery, Los Angeles; at 99¢ Plus, New York; at the Vermont Center for Photography, and at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Group shows include those at Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, the San Antonio Museum of Art, the Aperture Foundation, the Portland Museum of Art, the Camera Club of New York, the Torrance Museum of Art, and the Museum of Photographic Arts, among others. Kaur's work has been reviewed in *ARTFORUM*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New Yorker*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *The Washington Post*. She was a Professor of Fine Arts at Otis College of Art and Design from 2007-2018. In 2014 Leroy Press published Kaur's first monograph, *This Kind of Face*, that documented the world of celebrity impersonators. She lives and works in Los Angeles.

The opening reception and preview on October 30, 2019 will be hosted by luxury fashion site 11 Honoré.

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