

Meaning slip and slides in Petrina Hicks' photographic works

By Dylan Rainforth

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In the immaculately crafted images of her new exhibition, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, Petrina Hicks employs Milan Kundera's memorable title to stand for the fleeting nature of human life.

The photographer contrasts this with symbols of eternity such as pure metals or the skin-shedding serpent, symbol of transformation and immortality. While clearly borrowing from ancient Greek legends – Medusa, Persephone and Minerva are either named or represented by their visual attributes – Hicks prefers to work with archetypes in a way that doesn't lead directly to any particular interpretation.

"I aim to make works that are slippery of meaning ... I'd rather they hover in a state of ambiguity," she says.

Instead, Hicks aims to create what she calls "sculptural photographs", where stark backgrounds and meticulous compositions eliminate all extraneous information, a process of reduction the artist likens to alchemy. The exhibition, on now at *This Is No Fantasy*, follows recent residencies in Mexico and California for Hicks.