

# STUART PERKINS

## *If Ancestors Anchor*

April 1 – May 30, 2020

### THE WORK

New York-based artist Stuart Perkins photographs himself in scenes of reductive tropes of black culture, using racially charged props and tableaux. Perkins images attempt to reason with racism, appropriation and assimilation, inviting viewers to examine their own assumptions.

In our second episode of [TOGETHER, APART](#) (our twice-weekly IGTV program), Perkins offers a detailed discussion of the cultural-historical references and concept behind one the work shown at right. The poems he references in that discussion are included on following pages.

### THE ARTIST

Born in Oklahoma and raised in Germany, artist Richard Stuart Perkins creates photographs that question public and private personas. Perkins' creative process uses interviews, fragmentation, and histories of portraiture, cinema and art, to ask questions about what it means to be an individual in societies that seek to define our lives externally.







*If Ancestors Anchor #2*, 2019  
archival pigment print  
8 x 8 inches, edition of 8  
30 x 30 inches, edition of 4

XII

If Ancestors anchor  
and History instructs  
the hold of  
those who died  
and the stories  
told of the dead  
by the living  
are meant to  
settle the question  
of who,  
and why  
and where

but

all history is compost  
and we are atop it  
like a fungus  
like a mold  
like a plant  
bacterium

of Edens  
and lawns  
the pastoral imagined place where peaceable kingdoms  
exist,

Then we like to see the world as a garden either lost or in the process of being made.

All gardens are manufactured things,  
In them what the soil brings is a fight between the pruned  
and the free  
tended and fenced,  
We love only the things  
we want to grow  
and kill all that we do not wish to see.



*If Ancestors Anchor #24, 2019*  
archival pigment print  
8 x 8 inches, edition of 8  
30 x 30 inches, edition of 4



*If Ancestors Anchor #11, 2019*  
archival pigment print  
8 x 8 inches, edition of 8  
30 x 30 inches, edition of 4



*If Ancestors Anchor #25, 2019*  
archival pigment print  
8 x 8 inches, edition of 8  
30 x 30 inches, edition of 4





*To dance and sing and whirl and  
play #25, 2019*  
archival pigment print  
8 x 8 inches, edition of 8  
30 x 30 inches, edition of 4

XIX

Surely, I am able.  
The reach of arms  
Guarantee my balance.  
And what I am to Myself,  
I am to you 'cause  
There's no way  
Less of me is better.

Sorely, I am able.  
My poverty begat  
Your sermons of  
The piety in thrift  
So well I have utilized  
The dust, and the bone.

Simply, I am able.  
Mind and body  
Bending  
Ears listening  
Eyes seeing  
I can crouch  
Ready to  
And lean  
When the tilt  
Is right for resting.





*So Here We Are #31*, 2019  
archival pigment print  
8 x 8 inches, edition of 8  
30 x 30 inches, edition of 4



*So Here We Are #37*, 2019  
archival pigment print  
8 x 8 inches, edition of 8  
30 x 30 inches, edition of 4





*So Here We Are #36*, 2019  
archival pigment print  
8 x 8 inches, edition of 8  
30 x 30 inches, edition of 4

XXI

So, here we are.  
You there. Me here.  
The space between us  
Yours by default,  
mine by time's reckoning,  
and you know  
that with each  
exhale your  
insistence upon  
this stasis  
weakens  
both of  
our  
bodies.

So, why is it we don't move?  
We define and then defend,  
We make a stand, and stay,  
Fat accumulates about our bones  
Our vessels and veins squeezed.

The spirit of punishment  
Animates us, and we  
Pretend the Furies are  
Not sent to punish men  
But are in fact the best  
Of our manhood. Stuck  
As we are in this place  
Where men and war  
And women and rage  
Are defining characterizes  
of a well made house.

So, here we are.  
Looking backwards  
Looking at shadows  
Standing in spaces  
Too small for the futures  
We wish to deliver.





*If Ancestors Anchor #3, 2019*  
archival pigment print  
8 x 8 inches, edition of 8  
30 x 30 inches, edition of 4



*If Ancestors Anchor #19, 2019*  
archival pigment print  
8 x 8 inches, edition of 8  
30 x 30 inches, edition of 4



*If Ancestors Anchor #4, 2019*  
archival pigment print  
8 x 8 inches, edition of 8  
30 x 30 inches, edition of 4





*If Ancestors Anchor - Laure's  
Child #3, 2019*  
archival pigment print  
8 x 8 inches, edition of 8  
30 x 30 inches, edition of 4

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