

# MIMICKING LIFE

In **Annika Koops**’ latest series, the artist’s body is intertwined with ribbons of automation.

WORDS | **DIEGO RAMÍREZ**



LEFT: Annika Koops, *Strokes*, 2022. HD Digital Video production still, 5 min 15 sec.

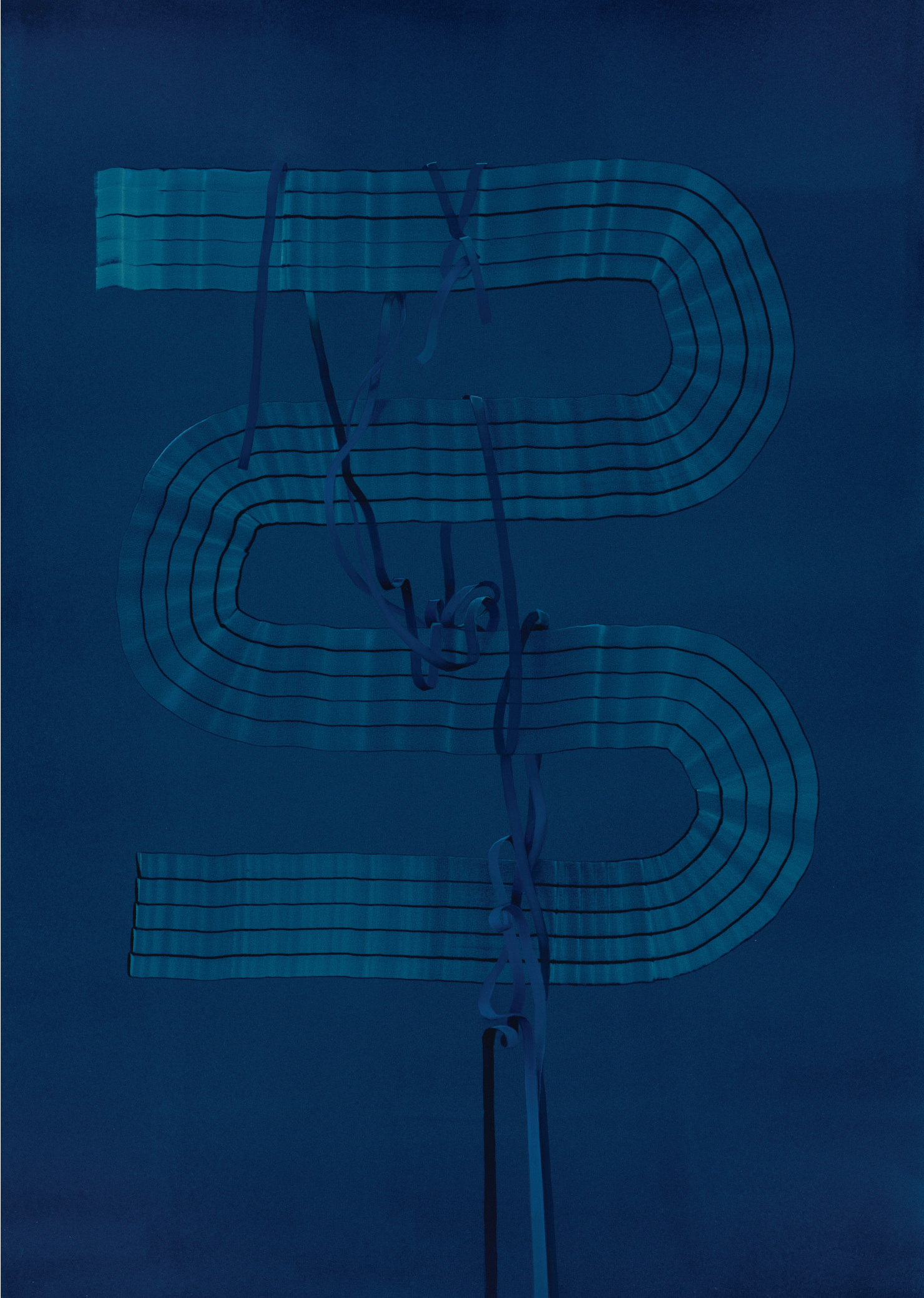
OPPOSITE: Annika Koops, *Double Binds #5 (blue s4)*, 2022. Oil on primed paper, 70 x 50cm. PHOTO: MATTHEW STANTON

COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND BETT GALLERY, HOBART.

*Shadow Moves* by **Annika Koops** at Bett Gallery, Hobart is an exhibition about motion as seen through a painterly lens. It considers the emotional register of movement in the context of automation with a series of paintings called *Double Binds*. These works show inert forms that resemble squiggles made of steel, conveying a sense of immovable weight. Koops often adds delicate ribbons – restaged versions of these shapes developed in 3D software – which hang from their dead curves and create a stark contrast of fluidity

and movement. These gestures look at how animation creates the illusion of life by giving motion to the inanimate while considering how physical expression can convey complex emotional states through subtle movements. The artist links this idea to the phenomenon of automation, which now threatens areas of labour that once relied on human movement. As she explains, “Motion-capture technologies generate data that is used to mimic the appearance of life. What is pertinent to my work is the augmented capacity these

technologies have when linked with processes of automation used to make predictions about individuals and their interior worlds.” Koops deploys the stroke as a symbol with great intelligence in *Double Binds*, as it immediately speaks to our ability to exteriorise inner life by marking a surface. Otherwise known as the touch of the artist, this emotional coding is central to automation debates. For art is often associated with an emotional depth that only human life can offer, making its automation undesirable.







Of course, Koops who is known for immaculate renderings that mimic the perfection of digital technology, complicates this idea by making these paintings look mechanical – creating a double bind. Her images resemble corpses in the sense that they are bodies left behind by the liveliness of movement, to evoke how we abandon physical traces of ourselves when we perish.

“Expressive painterly gesture registers materially on a surface, pointing explicitly to the moving lively body of the artist,” she says. “Illusionistic painting tends to correlate to a more inert body, one that acts upon an expressive mark with many more careful, smaller, slower ones. My impetus here is not to play

out modernist dialectics but to enter these painterly conundrums from a different angle – one that more explicitly unfolds how social, physical and emotional effects of automation might be picked apart.”

The title of the show *Shadow Moves* ultimately frames these works as shadows cast by movement, contoured by the emotions felt when they were left behind.

“These works contain the energy and spontaneity of the painted mark as well as its densely mediated version, and I wanted to bring them together, make them touch,” says Koops, “In doing so, these works plumb my own ambivalence to making an expressive mark.”

OPPOSITE: Annika Koops, *Double Binds #2 (red s3)*, 2021. Oil on primed paper, 40 x 30cm.

ABOVE LEFT: Annika Koops, *Double Binds #1 (Green s)*, 2021. Oil on primed paper, 70 x 50cm.

ABOVE RIGHT: Annika Koops, *Double Binds #8 (green wave)*, 2022. Oil on primed paper, 70 x 50cm.

PHOTOS: MATTHEW STANTON. COURTESY: THE ARTIST AND BETT GALLERY, HOBART.

Annika Koops' solo show *Shadow Moves* shows at Bett Gallery, Hobart from 25 November to 17 December 2022.