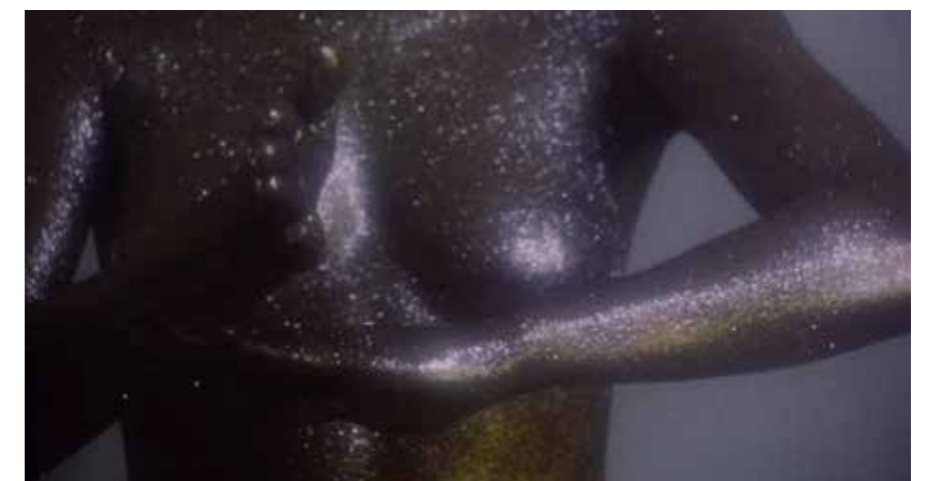
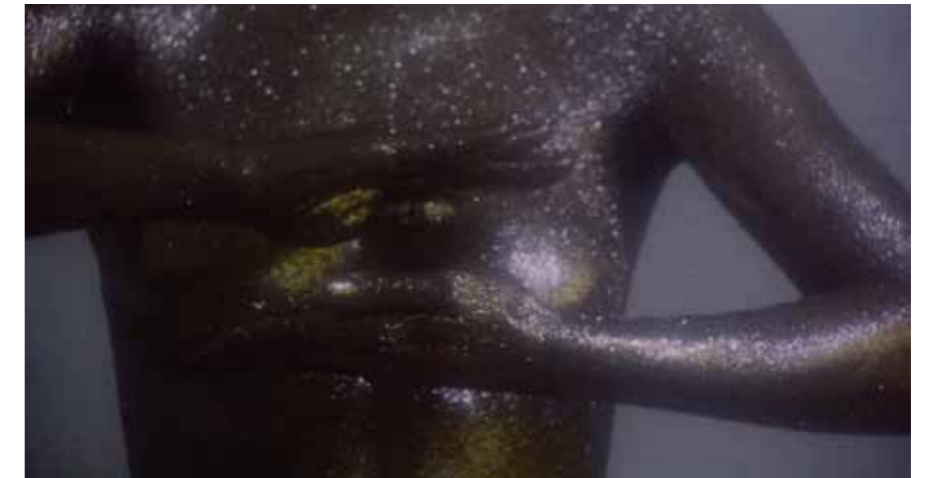


WHEN NOW?  
*I COME IN PEACE*

IMAGES BY **CARA STRICKER & RYAN MARIE HELFANT**  
FEATURING **CARA STRICKER** MAKEUP **HECTOR LUNA**  
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PRODUCTION DESIGNER **EMMA ROSE MEAD**



*When now? I come in peace*

From a galaxy far, far away where there is talk of life on  
 Earth in all its splendour  
 Is this true?  
 I am curious,  
 Can it sustain my people?  
 My mission is to assess the promise  
 of this land  
 You see, my birthplace has never felt like home  
 I am hoping that here, I may unearth some answers, some...  
 meaning  
 These are my findings:  
 The air is so thick with smog that  
 breathing is laborious  
 And my skin, it bubbles under the  
 sun's warmth  
 But the plants, they are not petri dish plants,  
 They are tall, lush, green and dotted with little blue flowers  
 I have yet to determine their edibility  
 I explore further under the cover of darkness and come  
 across what I believe to be a  
 body of water  
 There are no adverse effects upon contact  
 I dive in head first  
 For the cause, of course  
 As I emerge, I catch a glimpse of my reflection:  
 My entire body is sparkling  
 As I bask in the glow of the moonlight, I embrace the vessel  
 that brought me here  
 I unintentionally attract a gaggle of Earthlings  
 Overcome by my effervescence, they flock to me and begin  
 fawning over my unique 'look'  
 I do not speak for fear of outing  
 my otherness further  
 Suddenly, I am blinded by these little flashes and  
 bombarded with clicking sounds  
 I hear one girl say, 'This is going on the 'gram'  
 Lucky for me, she accidentally leaves behind the odd  
 personal device that emanated  
 the annoyances  
 I begin inspecting the intel  
 From it, I gather what the 'gram' is:  
 A tool that places value on something  
 called 'pictures'  
 Namely, pictures of oneself not at all unlike a snapshot of  
 your reflection  
 It is more than that though,  
 It has a strange distortion to it  
 Cartoonish proportions compete with each other while  
 others watch and vote  
 Some repeat mantras that only fuel their mental list of  
 shortcomings:  
 'May the booty get fatter and the  
 tummy get flatter'  
 I have seen enough  
 I feel deceived,  
 I feel sick,  
 I feel empty  
 I shudder at the thought that this  
 is my purpose  
 It would take any life form to realize that this erodes the soul  
 My final report:  
 Conditions are not entirely suitable  
 It is possible to adapt but it is not worth it  
 Life is better on Venus

SHORT STORY BY HANNAH ROSE PRENDERGAST

