

## GALLERY

*Photograph by***TARRAH KRAJNAK**

'Portrait as Protestor (Arm Raised), 1979 Lima, Peru 2019 Los Angeles, CA'

**1979 was a tumultuous year in Peru.** Strikes and political protests paralysed Lima, leaving many dead, while in the countryside the Maoist revolutionary organisation the Shining Path was preparing a violent "people's war". It was also the year the artist Tarrah Krajnak was born.

Her early life mirrored the turmoil of her native country. Born as a result of sexual violence, orphaned when still a baby, then adopted by a North American couple, she would only return to Peru some 30 years later. Much of her practice has been an attempt to reinsert herself into her country's history.

Krajnak's 1979: *Contact Negatives* is the first body of work to be acquired by The Parasol Foundation Women in Photography Project and one of the inaugural exhibitions at the V&A's newly expanded Photography Centre in London. The artist projects news images from her birth year - protests, street scenes, underage prostitutes, the Miss Universe contest - on to studio backdrops, then poses in front of them, as if to make herself part of the picture.

The 19th-century cyanotype process she uses involves placing a contact print or negative on chemically coated paper, then exposing it to light. The characteristic blue colour comes from the chemicals involved. "I love that one-to-one idea of making 'contact' or connecting with the dead, all that it conjures," Krajnak told an interviewer.

By reinserting herself into the dramatic events into which she was born, Krajnak examines how her identity has been shaped by her national history. Overlaid with newsprint, she also seems to question how far we can trust the narratives we use to make up our life stories. **FT**

Words by Josh Lustig. *The Parasol Foundation Gallery is in Room 97 of the V&A's Photography Centre* [vam.ac.uk/photography](http://vam.ac.uk/photography)