

Musée, *The Real Thing* at Flowers Gallery, Text/ Ashley Comer, January 30 2016



MUSÉE

VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE

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The Real Thing at Flowers Gallery

ART OUT (/CULTURE/?CATEGORY=ART+OUT)

Image above: © Pixy Liao, some words are just between you and me, 2010 / Courtesy of Flowers Gallery

Flowers Gallery presents exhibition of the work of four female photographers, who experiment with gender roles, sexuality, and constructed identity, often putting themselves and their relationships with others in the frame. Pixy Liao's *Experimental Relationship* navigates the dynamics of power within partnerships between men and women. As a woman brought up in China, Liao describes the perception of an ideal male partner as being older and more mature, playing an authoritative role of protector and mentor. Since meeting her current partner, Moro, who is five years younger, Liao has begun to experiment with alternative possibilities, interweaving a fictional narrative in a series of constructed self-portraits. Photographed within domestic or pastoral scenes, the couple are often locked in embrace with the male body unclothed. The artist uses her body to grip, shield, or brace the male figure, accentuating the shifting balance of their relationship.



Image above: © Natasha Caruana, Bar Italia, 2008-09 / Courtesy of Flowers Gallery

Working in a documentary mode, Natasha Caruana's series *Married Man* captures the exchanges between the artist and men who she met through online sites devoted to matchmaking for married people. Posing as a potential partner, Caruana secretly filmed their encounters, focusing on the peripheral details of the setting, as though presenting clues for the viewer

to decipher. Caruana questions their motivations of the men beyond the temptations of sexual desire, suggesting unfulfilled expectations and underlying states of loneliness and alienation.



LEO XU PROJECTS



Image above: Y. Jiao's *Unseen Things*, 2012, Courtesy of Thomas Gallery

Jane Calypso has created a series of self-portraits in which she stages herself as a fictional character named Joyce. Since her recent *bedrooms and bedrooms* series, Calypso performs solitary rituals of seduction, applying mysterious looking cosmetics, substances and electronic anti-aging devices. Through Calypso's lens the artificial setting of the hotel bathroom becomes joyless and oppressive. Directing Joyce's gaze towards her own distorted image, which is often duplicated and reflected by the use of multiple mirrors, Calypso's character appears weighed down by the skewed construction of her own femininity.

Image above: Y. Jiao's *Unseen Things*, 2012, Courtesy of Thomas Gallery

Melanie Willhite takes the idea of intimate vernacular portraits, rooted as tokens between lovers, as the inspiration for her series *Shaping Beauty (The Skin Under the Skin)*. Willhite fabricates gloriously antique photographs complete with personalized messages and markings on the reverse, carefully simulating the glue stains, fingerprints, watermarks, scratches, time and use. Through her digital overlaying of the front and reverse sides, the portrait and text are reimagined, becoming partially obscured. In creating artificial artifacts, Willhite meditates on the memory and loss of early moments of romance, while presenting the photographs themselves as an almost proxy for the real thing.

About The Artists

Peng Yilin Lian was born and raised in Shanghai, China, and currently resides in Brooklyn, NY. Lian holds a MFA in photography from University of Maryland, and she is a recipient of the 2008 Fellowship, the Tracy's New Works Fellowship, and the LotusCultures Equinox Awards. Lian's photographs have been exhibited in the USA, China, Taiwan, Korea, Lebanon, UK and The Netherlands.

Image above: Y. Jiao's *Unseen Things*, 2012, Courtesy of Thomas Gallery

Natalie Carstairs lives and works in London, UK. She has an MA in photography from the Royal College of Art, London and is a Senior Lecturer in Photography at the University for the Creative Arts, Farnham, UK. Her work has been exhibited widely internationally. In 2010 Carstairs was named as the winner of the B&N Artist in Residence Award 2010 at Studio Mulphree, Farnham. She has been named as the one to watch in the Royal Photographic Society Journal and selected by the Humble Info Foundation as one of 40 leading female art photographers currently working in the UK.

Image above: Y. Jiao's *Unseen Things*, 2012, Courtesy of Thomas Gallery



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Sven Calypso lives and works in London, UK. She graduated with a BA (Hons) in photography from London College of Communication, University of the Arts, London in 2015. She was a winner of the LCC (London Portfolio Award 2015), the Michael Wilson Award 2015, and was the Venice 2015 Winner of the Carlos Art Prize 2015. She has recently been named a winner of the British Journal of Photography's International Photography Awards 2016. Her work has been exhibited in the



UK, USA, South Korea, Mexico and Switzerland.



<http://www.magazine.com/culture/culture/en-out-the-real-thing-at-tower-gallery>

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Image above is really from the same place.

Valerie Williams lives and works in Los Angeles, California; she holds an MFA from Yale University School of Art; she has exhibited throughout the United States for nearly two decades. Her work has been reviewed and featured in the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Wired* *Spin*, *Art in America* and *Modernism* *Patterns*.

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DOI 10.1002/pola.23951

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