

ANH DUONG – Can You See Me

3 Feb – 21 March 2014

Reception for the Artist: Thursday, 6 February 6-9pm



ROBILANT+VOENA are pleased to announce the first UK exhibition of paintings and sculptures by French-American artist **Anh Duong (b. 1960)**, open from February 3 through to 21 March 2014.

Featuring twelve paintings and two sculptures, the exhibition interrogates the artist's sense of identity via her characteristic language of self-portraiture.

Set largely against dark plain backgrounds, Duong's self-portraits are psychologically intense and personally revealing, intimate yet never narcissistic. The compositional centre of many is Duong's eyes which unnervingly meet the gaze of the viewer with a dead-pan expression, blank and yet perplexing. This intense stare is seemingly directed at the viewer – engaging them in what appears to be a somewhat voyeuristic game. However, we are also reminded of the fact that the self-portrait is by definition executed with the help of a mirror, implicit in the paintings featuring the typical glass shelf usually found under bathroom mirrors and on which rest an assortment of cosmetics. The artist is therefore focused squarely on herself, challenging her self-image, absorbed in self-reflection, both literal and metaphorical, leaving the viewer simply to witness her enigmatic internal dialogue. Indeed, Duong describes her self-portraits as biographical and intensely personal: *'they're a record, a narrative of a particular moment in my life, but the details of that narrative always remain hidden from the people who look at it'*. That mystery, that enigma, is what makes them particularly alluring – the eyes pose a myriad of questions to which we can only guess the answer.

If Duong's self-portraits speak to us directly about her relationship with herself, and by implication the relationship of women in general with their own self-image, her still-lives, which incidentally she also views as self-portraits, allude to our consumerist nature, and particularly to the essential accoutrements to the female self-image – the cosmetics, the perfume, the array of designer bags, the multi-coloured high heels stacked up waiting to be selected. By placing them in the traditional genre of still-life Duong at once admires and questions these 'essentials' – their attraction is undeniable, yet they beg the question – how essential should these accessories be to women's perception of themselves? How much of our self-image is wrapped up in possessing these accoutrements and enhancing ourselves and our vanity with their aid?

Duong's work has variously been described as 'timeless' (Glen O'Brien), 'raw and oddly private' (Mark Van de Walle), and 'extremely fascinating' (W. Van den Bussche). It has been shown internationally at galleries such as Sonnabend, Sperone Westwater, Tony Shafrazi, Cheim and Reid, and Jérôme de Noirmont. This will be Anh Duong's first solo exhibition in the UK and her first with **ROBILANT+VOENA**, and will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with an essay written by Phoebe Hoban.

For further information and images please contact Mira Dimitrova via mira@robilantvoena.com