

# THE UPCOMING

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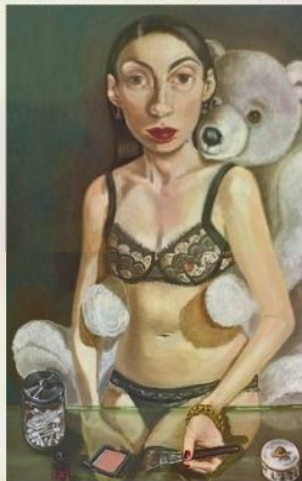
## Anh Duong: Can You See Me at Robilant + Voena | Exhibition review

Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Anh Duong's latest exhibition, held at the Robilant + Voena Gallery, showcases a series of oil paintings and bronze sculptures that portray the artist and her surroundings from an explicitly feminine point of view. Shoes, bags, make-up, fashionable clothes and the glamour of celebrity are all themes that are touched upon in the artworks on display.

As always, Anh paints herself facing forward, often seemingly addressing the viewer, stretched out naked in vabathub – odalisque-like, recalling Goya's *La Maya Desnuda*, or else staring blankly forward, in the act of removing her makeup, as if unaware of the viewer's voyeuristic contemplation. Anh's preoccupation with the continual exploration of the depiction of her "true self", to use her own words, reminds one of the work of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, although Anh's work is less obviously surrealistic.

Her art seems to want to examine the various roles that women are often assigned in contemporary culture; roles that are usually artificially constructed. For example, a series of still-lives that portray her various fashionable shoes on a shoe rack, or her trendy handbags – one seen in the painting *Exercise of Prostitution*, the other modelled in bronze – "icons" of femininity immortalised.



*The Art of Marital Bliss* depicts her standing in a kitchen, wearing nothing but a Dolce and Gabbana bra and crinoline, a saucepan in hand and carrying a teddy bear like an infant in her arm. The teddy bear is an element that reappears often in her work. In another painting, it embraces her as she holds a powder brush in one hand, dressed in sexy black underwear. The images of her with the bear, together with the depiction of herself as a sort of sexy housewife, do seem to want ironically evoke the notion of a *Beauty and the Beast* relationship. In fact, the artist describes the inspiration for these paintings as born of her coming to terms with a painful divorce.

In *The Edge of Existence* she is seen standing together with a man, in front of the flashing cameras of the press – Anh, as always, bearing her trademark blank expression. Although at times reverting to clichés in order to make a point, Anh Duong's art, in the portrayal of a woman and her world – her loves and her anxieties – is fascinating for its perennial investigation of the woman in popular culture, seen from a personal point of view.

★★★★★

Mark Sempill

Anh Duong: *Can You See Me* is showing at the Robilant + Voena Gallery from 3<sup>rd</sup> February to 21<sup>st</sup> March 2014, for further information visit [here](#).