

New York Exhibition

GROUP SHOW

REAL FAKE DOOR

Curated by Oli Epp and Mollie E Barnes

November 3 – December 16, 2023



Liam Fallon, *One Man's Trash Is Another Man's Treasure*, 2023,
Pigmented jesmonite, MDF, paint, 59 x 101 x 3.5 in

Arsenal Contemporary New York is pleased to present *Real Fake Door*, a group exhibition organized by artist Oli Epp and curator Mollie E Barnes.

“In this matter of the visible, everything is a trap.” - Jacques Lacan

Real Fake Door invites you to a realm where illusion blends with reality, and portals transport you to uncharted territories. From a diverse group of international artists, the works challenge conventional norms of perception and understanding.

Real Fake Door encapsulates both paradox and concealed truths. It serves as a lens to examine themes of portals, deception, subversion and world-building. It asks you to question preconceived notions and to embark on an intellectual and aesthetic journey that traverses multiple dimensions of contemporary art. The notion of ‘real fake’ takes center stage. Here the mundane becomes sublime, and the subliminal becomes profound, all interwoven with threads of Americana.

It soon becomes clear that nothing in our perception is experienced in a vacuum. Everything we ‘know’ is by its reference to other things. How are **Willie Cole’s** sculptures equal parts heels and face? Our trap as humans is our prison to our perceptual limits, and the delight in illusion. **Cole** subverts the traditional symbolism of women’s heels, disguising them as masks that challenge mass consumerism and conventional notions of femininity. His assemblages are a captivating fusion of elements from mass consumer culture and fashion, unveiling simplistic notions of identity. Watch the eyes follow you round the room.

The way we actively engage with each piece, the intentions we bring, and the context in which we view them, plays a significant role in shaping our perception - a reminder that art is a dialogue between the artist’s creation and the

viewer's consciousness. **Nokukhanya Langa's** paintings feature never-ending, multi-colored, hypnotic spirals and infinite gradients, signifying her fascination with the loss of the image and, by extension, the erosion of reality itself. **Paa Joe's** paragon, the miniature coffin, serves as a portal bridging the realms of life and death, connecting the living to the departed while plunging us into an abyss of Americana

Works draw on philosophical ideas from the necessity of skepticism to question our perceived realities, to ideas of cognitive bias and the ways our perceptions are distorted. **Christopher Page's** illusionist depictions of framed paintings act as conceptual portals, challenging viewers to reflect on the very act of viewing. These second-order simulations employ techniques such as 'trompe l'oeil' contemplating spaces within spaces, blurring the lines between representations and reality, prompting viewers to question the nature of perception itself. **Al Freeman's** larger-than-life iPhone, complete with cracked and worn screen, is part of her collection of everyday object pieces that deceive, stripping away branding and structure to reveal their true, sagging essence. In doing so, she satirises consumer culture, underscoring the hollowness of our post-literature society.

Through sculptural wall pieces, **Nick Doyle** uses a broad pop culture database to question what these collective moments say about us as individuals and as a culture. Keenly aware of the visual vocabulary of American mythology, seemingly mundane household items of a socket and level, are meticulously collaged in denim. **Oli Epp** paintings construct a world that mirrors the complexities of 21st century society, marked by consumerism, digital age anxieties, and conflict. His work underscores the intricate relationship between humanity and technology, mirroring the flatness and luminosity of a screen. *Right Before My Eyes* engages a faceless figure applying makeup face-to-face with a Mondrian, brought out of focus by her gaze as she applies liner to eyes that aren't there.

Liam Fallon's sculptural works challenge the deceptive façades of everyday spaces, revealing unexpected movements and transformations. He offers commentary on queer culture, challenging boundaries and presenting a theatrical perspective on love, desire and loss. Momentary pleasures of cigarettes blend into a walled tunnel. A passage. **Rafa Silvares's** vibrant industrial landscapes create playful worlds within the starkness of urban life, inviting views to explore spatial qualities. **Rosie McGinn's** inflatable installation mirrors her fixation on our collective pursuit of heightened moments, adrenaline and discovery, this time in space and sponsored by 'Rod Bell'.

In a world brimming with paradox and deception, the influence of the digital realm and the internet loom large. Today we are inundated with meticulously curated and AI-generated imagery and videos. Why are we so susceptible to deception? What drives our seemingly insatiable hunger for the unknown? **Emma Stern** explores the deceptive nature of 3D representations, challenging prevailing notions of reality and fantasy. The avatar figure shyly revealed behind door number 7. She seamlessly merges traditional oil paintings with technology, offering a compelling intersection of art and digital realms. **Maja Djordjevic**, known for her digitally-native aesthetic sensibility and mastery of computer-generated visual syntax, brings the contemporary reflection to the exhibition, pixel by pixel. Her works bridge the gap between traditional and digital art forms, inviting viewers to contemplate the evolving landscape of artistic expression. Together, in our technology-driven image culture, we are trying to decide if we can believe that anything is true. With the seeming impossibility of fact checking, with the overload of visual culture, apps open on our phone and windows on our computer, are we resigned to not knowing what is 'real'?

Real Fake Door explores the intricate interplay between perception and reality, offering an opportunity to challenge the foundations of visual understanding. It is where the real and the fake coalesce. Follow the tunnels through the works, in and out of portals, screensavers and revolving doors. Look into the mirror, through holes in a mask and deep into space. Is the door we are about to open a portal to truth, or merely another layer of illusion? A trap?

Mollie E Barnes & Oli Epp

About the Curators:

Oli Epp (b.1994) is a London-based artist and curator. Graduating from City & Guilds in 2017, Epp has exhibited internationally, most recently in a solo exhibition, Shampoo, at Carl Kostyál, London (2023). Further notable exhibitions include solo exhibitions at Perrotin New York (2024) and Semiose Paris (2022), as well as group exhibitions with Half Gallery (2021), König Galerie, Berlin (2021) and Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig (2019). Epp has organized exhibitions for Carl Kostyál Gallery, London (2019) and the Schlossmuseum in Linz, Austria (2020).

Mollie Barnes (b.1996) is a UK-based curator and producer. She has curated exhibitions internationally, including for Yusto/Giner Gallery, Madrid (2023), Barbara Thumm Gallery, Berlin (2022), the Taurisano Collection, Rome (2021), Roman Road, London (2023), Brocket Gallery, London (2021), Daniel Raphael Gallery, London (2021), WILDER Gallery, London (2020-2023). Barnes is the Festival Manager for Tom of Finland Foundation London and Berlin.

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