

**PUBLIC**



John Miller and Richard Hoeck, *Mannequin Death*, 2016 (video still)

## *Camera Obscura*

Lyndon Barrois Jr., John Miller and Richard Hoeck, Russell Perkins,  
Cece Philips, Taylor Simmons, Tiffany Wellington

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89 – 91 Middlesex St, London E1 7DA, UK

Public Gallery is pleased to present *Camera Obscura*, a group exhibition of painting, sculpture, installation and video. Engaging themes of theatricality, illusion, doubling and decoys, the exhibition probes the mechanics of image-making – its title referencing an optical device that functions by projecting an image both upside-down and reversed into a darkened chamber. Used historically as a drawing aid, the camera obscura helped artists trace projected images with greater perspective and accuracy, and served as an important precursor to the photographic camera. In attempting to render the real, it produces an inversion, evidencing the inherent mediation of all images. With these ideas in mind, the artists in this exhibition employ strategies that challenge the authenticity of an image, often referencing the art historical canon, and privileging trickery, manipulation, deception and artifice in their works.

Lyndon Barrois Jr.'s *A Witnessing (After Pieter Bruegel the Elder)* (2025) occupies the gallery vitrine and reinterprets works by its titular reference to interrogate the historical gaze and its entanglement with race, ethnography and systems of classification. Barrois Jr.'s oil stick paintings on Belgian linen excerpt and reframe fragments of *The Blind Leading the Blind* (1568), while sculptural elements resurface motifs from *Netherlandish Proverbs* (1559), *The Beggars* (1568) and *Peasant Wedding* (1568). Alongside Barrois Jr.'s 'cabinet of curiosities', replicas of color and scale charts — tools from museum registries, archaeological study, and forensic science — suggest a taxonomy of visual knowledge and power.

In *Mannequin Death* (2016), a short video by John Miller and Richard Hoeck, couture-clad mannequins — human surrogates which function as "empty subject positions" — are hurled from an Alpine mountainside to the sound of various thumps and smacks appropriated from martial arts movies. The spectacle vacillates between slapstick and grotesque, recalling Immanuel Kant's theories of the Sublime as much as Mario Perniola's writings on "the sex appeal of the inorganic". Bringing together high and low references from the paintings of Caspar David Friedrich to the MTV show "Jackass", Miller and Hoeck's three-minute black comedy critiques the commodification of human desire with the absurdity and horror of a false double.

Tiffany Wellington's *Witching Hour* (2024) further complicates the relationship between subject and object, narrative and prop. A pair of worn boots assumes a ghostly role within their filmic mise-en-scène, illuminated by car headlights and echoing Antonin Artaud's *The Theatre and Its Double* (1938) — privileging lighting, sound, and visual intensity to stage an embodiment in space. Wellington's total installation is accompanied by a single channel sound work, a reference to *Fly Me to the Moon* by Frank Sinatra, assuming a bizarrely disjointed atmosphere that recalls 1960s 'showbiz' with an air of possibility and romanticized nationalisms.

Taylor Simmons' *Free before 12* (2025) depicts a crowd of figures huddled together outside a nightclub beside a red car. With heads lowered, their downward gaze gives the work a feeling of routine drudgery, of processions and rituals, or collective performance. The darkened charcoal palette stands in contrast to his work *Writing on the Wall* (2025), dominated by sharp diagonal and horizontal interruptions and brightly colored figures. Here, the central subject occupies a stage-like space and suggests an awareness of the viewer's presence, as if posing atop a ladder beside a cast member reading lines below.

In the quiet paintings of Cece Philips, the intensity of spectacle gives way to moments of intimacy and interiority. The theatre, the stage, the window and doorway all become frames through which the artist explores ideas of spectatorship and voyeurism. Her subjects embrace both a desire for solitude as well as the ache of loneliness, lending the work a psychological and narrative depth, and call to mind Laura Mulvey's essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* as well as W.E.B. Du Bois' concept of double consciousness.

Russell Perkins's two-channel silent video *Card Players* (2018) presents a group of professional online poker players competing in a tournament. Based on a 19th-century painting by Theodoor Rombouts of the same title, the work stages a social context in which we see the workings of a financial market, examining how it enables and intersects with heteromascularity and its performative nature. Perkins playfully displays one channel upside down, mirroring the format of a face card and reinforcing the notion of mutually opposing points of view, playing on sleight of hand tricks and the theatricality of a good bluff.

*Camera Obscura* plays on the slippages and subtle frictions between the real and replica, subject and surrogate. Across a range of media, the artists in the exhibition destabilize fixed ways of seeing, using theatricality, inversion, and artifice to question the mechanics and politics of image-making. From haunting mise-en-scènes to reimagining histories both art-historical and social, the works in this presentation expose the constructed nature of representation and the systems that underlie it, intertwining the invested voyeur with the object of his gaze.

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## Artist Biographies

**Lyndon Barrois Jr.** (b. 1983, New Orleans, LA, USA) lives and works in Pittsburgh, USA. Recent solo and two person exhibitions include *Hand of Glory*, Royal Academy of Arts, London (2025); *Rue Daguerre*, Gallery Closed, Pittsburgh (2024); *Forum 86: ROSETTE*, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2023); *mercantile* (with Addoley Dzegede), Sharp Projects, Copenhagen (2022); *Mirage Collar*, Artists Space, New York (2022); *Dreamsickle* (with Kahlil Robert Irving), 47 Canal, New York (2021); and *Others Who Struggle with Nature*, Rubber Factory, New York (2020). He has participated in group exhibitions at Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, Dublin; White Columns, New York; Public Gallery, London; Stove Works, Chattanooga; and Storage Gallery, New York. Recent residencies include Cité Des Arts, Paris (2024); LATITUDE, Chicago (2022); LAB:D, Knoxville (2021); Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2019); and Jan Van Eyck Academie, Maastricht (2018). He is currently the Starr Fellow at the Royal Academy Schools, London.

**Richard Hoeck** (b. 1965, Hall in Tirol, Austria) currently lives and works in Vienna, Austria and Breslau, Poland. Recent solo and two person exhibitions include *Last Words* (with John Miller), Magazin 4, Bregenz (2023); *Toxic* (with John Miller), Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck (2023); *HOUSTON, SIE HABEN EIN PROBLEM!* (with Paul Renner), Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston (2022); *The ecstasy of becoming trash* (with Rudolf Polanszky), Gabriele Senn Galerie, Vienna (2020); *Richard Hoeck & Rudolf Polanszky*, Galerie Johann Widauer, Innsbruck (2019); and *Mannequin Death* (with John Miller), Meliksetian I Briggs, Los Angeles (2016). He has participated in group exhibitions at Neuer Kunstverein, Vienna; Stadtgalerie Schwaz, Tirol; 21er Haus Museum für zeitgenössische Kunst, Vienna; Wiener Art Foundation, Vienna; Lynden Sculpture Garden, Milwaukee; and Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna. Permanent collections include The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA; MUMOK, Vienna, Austria; and the Abteiberg Museum, Mönchengladbach, Germany.

**John Miller** (b. 1954, Cleveland, OH, USA) lives and works between New York, USA and Berlin, Germany. Recent solo and two person exhibitions include *The Ruin of Exchange*, Kunsthaus Glarus (2024); *New Horizon*, Meliksetian I Briggs, Dallas (2023); *Last Words* (with Richard Hoeck), Magazin 4, Bregenz (2023); *Toxic* (with Richard Hoeck), Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Innsbruck (2023); *Imaginary Intervention*, Various Small Fires, Seoul (2023); *Public / Counterpublic*, Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany (2021); *An Elixir of Immortality*, Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin (2020); and *The Collapse of Neo-Liberalism*, Metro Pictures, New York (2020). He has participated in group exhibitions at the Rubell Museum, Washington D.C.; Kestner Gesellschaft, Hannover; The Metropolitan Museum of Art at The Met Breuer, New York; The Hessel Museum at Bard College, New York; Museum Brandhorst, Germany; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; MoMA PS1, New York; New Museum, New York; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin; and Palais de Tokyo, Paris. Permanent collections include The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA; Art Institute of Chicago, USA; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Germany; MOCA, Los Angeles, USA; Sammlung Ringier, Zurich, Switzerland; Sammlung Falkenberg, Hamburg, Germany; and Rubell Museum, Washington D.C. and Miami, USA. His work is on permanent exhibition at the MAMCO / Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Genève, Switzerland.

**Russell Perkins** (b. Chicago, IL, USA) lives and works in London, UK. Recent solo and two person exhibitions include *Ecstatic*, Shmorévaz, Paris (2024); *Safe Harbor*, Artists Unlimited, Kunstverein Bielefeld, Germany (2023); *Conduit*, Barbe à Papa, CAPC Museum of Contemporary Art, Bordeaux (2022-2023); *The Future Tense*, Frac Ile-de-France Les Reserves, Romainville (2021); and *Card Players*, *Ordinary Time* (with Luke O'Halloran), OCDChinatown, New York (2019). He has participated in group exhibitions at the Art Museum at the University of Toronto; Le Beffroi, Montrouge; Abendspaziergang, Bielefeld; Kunstverein Bielefeld; Kunsthalle Basel; the Abrons Art Center, New York; and Leslie-Lohman Museum, New York. Recent residencies include Artistes en résidence, Clermont-Ferrand (2025) and Fondation Fiminco, Romainville (2021).

**Cece Philips** (b. 1996, London, UK) lives and works in London, UK. Recent solo and two person exhibitions include *The Wall*, Almine Rech, Brussels (2025); *Conversations Between Two*, Peres Projects, Milan (2024); *Opening of Digestif* (with Hettie Inniss), Palazzo Monti, Brescia (2024); *Walking the in Between*, Peres Projects, Seoul (2023); *The Night Has A Thousand Eyes*, Peres Projects, Berlin (2022); *Between the Dog and the Wolf*, ADA Contemporary, Accra (2022); and *I See in Colour*, HOME by Ronan McKenzie, London (2021). She has participated in group exhibitions at GRIMM, Amsterdam; Harper's, East Hampton; Cob Gallery, London; and Soho Revue, London. Recent residencies include TaC, Torre al Cerro (2025) and Palazzo Monti, Brescia (2024). Forthcoming projects include *Interior Motives*, a three person exhibition at Hauser & Wirth, London (2025).

**Taylor Simmons** (b. 1990, Atlanta, GA, USA) lives and works in New York, USA. Recent solo exhibitions include *HangTime*, Public Gallery, London (2025); *LIMBO = Living Is My Best Option*, Helena Anrather, New York (2024); *Where's My Hug At?*, Sixi Museum, Nanjing (2023); and *Everything All At Once*, Public Gallery, London (2022). He has participated in group exhibitions at CC Projects, New York; Deli Gallery, Mexico City; Kravets Wehby Gallery, New York; Martha's Contemporary, Austin; Particle Foundation, Miami; Public Gallery, London; Marlborough Gallery, London; Carlye Packer, Palm Springs; and Half Gallery, New York. Permanent collections include X Museum, Beijing, China; The Friedrich Christian Flick Collection, Berlin, Germany; Igal Ahouvi Collection, London, UK; and Sixi Museum, Nanjing, China. Taylor Simmons was selected for The Artsy Vanguard in 2025.

**Tiffany Wellington** (b.1996, Kingston, Jamaica) lives and works in London, UK. Recent solo and two person exhibitions include *A Public Safety Concern* (with Raheel Khan), The Bomb Factory x Lisson Gallery, London (2024); *Grey Area*, Studio Chapple, London (2023); *Love is a state of mind* (with Maria Joranko), San Mei, London (2023); *Duppy Water*, Public Gallery, London (2023); and *Made In Heaven* (with Katarina Caserman), Des Bain Gallery, London. They have participated in group exhibitions at 198 CAL, London; Coleman Project Space, London; Public Gallery, London; Austrian Cultural Forum, London; Xxijra Hii Gallery, London; KASK Conservatorium, Belgium; Royal Academy, London; and Cubitt Gallery, London. Wellington was awarded the Lisson Gallery Scholarship in 2022.