

YVES SCHERER:

WHAT IS REAL?



Yves Scherer is fascinated by the boundaries that separate and merge the public and private spheres of human interactions. Along with concepts such as reality, virtuality, *fan fiction*, alterity, and appropriation, the public and the personal are reiterative themes in Yves's *oeuvre*. For example, in some of his newest sculptures, made of painted aluminum, the artist transforms private moments, presenting them as a public sculpted reality. Meanwhile, as part of his ongoing lenticular series, Yves creates alternative realities for celebrity personalities who belong to the public sphere of Hollywood's star system, which he integrates into his personal narrative. By playing with these themes and shifting from one to the other, Yves evidences the porosities between both spheres, which ultimately *influence each other*: "I like to play with that in a way: I mix images that I took on a family vacation with a picture that Mario Sorrenti took of Kate Moss when they were a romantic couple many years ago."

Currently, Yves is less interested in commercial shoots or advertisement campaigns to dialogue or base his narratives on. However, when he first started using the lenticular printing technology to create two-dimensional moving frames, he appropriated the work of well-known fashion photographers such as Josh Olins and Vincent Peters, whose technique was impeccable and whose objective was to carefully frame and compose a controlled reality. Similarly, his earlier sculptures featured celebrities such as Johnny Depp, Kate Moss, and Emma Watson in their public roles. The sculptures served as a base to *create a fictitious narrative around his relationships with those personalities, who were objectified*.

This shift is noticeable. If back in 2014, Yves's sculptures represented a Greek-inspired nude woman's body with the face of Emma Watson, seven years later, in 2021, his sculptures have begun to represent everyday-life moments, such as a boy leaning over to pick a bunch of flowers, a mother carrying her baby girl, or a hand caressing a cat. The sculpted people in these new representations are anonymous models: they no longer reproduce a famous person's face. "My most recent sculpture incorporates the relationship between two figures in one work. They often don't feature celebrities anymore but certain archetypes like 'the boy,' 'the mother,' 'the girl,' and 'the cat' ... the sculpture is less just a figure but is more about the relationship between two figures within one sculpture."

In his latest lenticular works, Yves continues to use the images of celebrities but differently. He now merges their portraits with natural and urban landscapes, colorful flowers, *cute* panda bears, and modern architecture. So the work is not merely about these people's lives as celebrities but as human beings who can live in an alternate reality where the world is beautiful, loving, and tranquil. When asked about his interests in the lives of people from the star system, Yves mentioned: "Even though I have never been interested in glamour, I have

always had a specific interest in celebrity culture and the personalities of Hollywood... America has had such a hold on the cultural landscape of the past decades, that in Europe, one always feels on the periphery. So I always thought I had to look to the United States to understand what is actually 'happening' that is interesting." For his lenticular pieces, Yves has worked with the image of a limited list of people: from Monica Bellucci to Laetitia Casta, Vincent Cassel, Scarlett Johansson, Kate Moss, Kirsten Stewart, and Emma Watson. We asked him if he uses a particular methodology for choosing the personalities for each work, and he told us there is none but that "there is an explanation for choosing each character." They "are stars in diverse fields that serve as role models within the entertainment industry, which provides us with the tales, stories, and characters that we can use as guides for [carrying out] our private life."

Yves moved to the US eight years ago, and his interest in celebrity culture has been reshaped since then. In his works, celebrity culture "has become less of a personal interest than a tool or a trope... People always say celebrities are like ordinary people, and everyone thinks, 'yes, but..!' And then, when you move into the same sort of daily environments and places [as celebrities do], you realize that they, in fact, are ordinary people. So Hollywood becomes just a sign." However, by constructing specific *personas* and later creating tales and stories of their lives, such a star system becomes part of the social imaginary. And it is precisely because of this, of the social and media reach of the entertainment industry, that Yves appropriates the image of such celebrities. So, while Hollywood, according to the artist, is just a sign of a common place – *Gemeinplatz*, says Yves – it is also a symbolic location where character construction is fabricated for mass consumption.

We mentioned above that Yves is interested in concepts such as reality and fiction. What is real, and what is not? Is there a simple way to define a particular narrative as real? Or part of the definition of "narrative" is the possibility of creating a fictitious reality? For him, *his works, particularly the lenticular works, condense the larger narratives that often run through his exhibitions*. "For example, most of my past exhibitions are a little love story or romantic relationship between two or more characters in the show. Often these are figurative sculptures that are part of an installation that might include landscape paintings or other works as backdrops. From where I look, lenticular works do the same but within the work itself. There is the beautiful backdrop that sometimes is the architecture of Luis Barragán or, more recently, the Swiss mountain flowers I photographed myself. And then, sometimes there are two figures within the work or just one figure, and the other is implied." The lenticular technology permits Yves to construct a specific narrative by merging the image of real, tangible people, places and nature, into a fictitious world he has produced.

Yves decided to start using the lenticular technology back in 2015. The first work was a piece that consisted of two images of Emma Watson, which was made for an exhibition in Alabama. He chose the *persona* of Emma Watson because, for him, "she was a contemporary icon in the religious sense. Like how they painted saints back in the day, and you have them now in the windows of churches. So I created a version of that for our times." After that first approach to the lenticular printing technology, Yves began to include himself in the images, creating personal narratives larger than his life and work because they were connected to the lives of celebrities. So what is it that attracted Yves to lenticular printing? "...in the end, the magic is what counts for me... It still feels like magic to me." After working with this medium for many years now, Yves has mastered it; he perfectly understands how it works, its capacities and limits, and he knows what to expect as the final result: "it was a very, very, very, very long road to get to what you see in my most recent work. From the digital manipulation of the individual images to interlacing them, to finding the best printing methods and techniques; from which lenses to choose and the alignment, to which glue to use, and learning which mounting techniques work best." Notwithstanding the familiarity with the medium, the artist keeps feeling that "the actual experience of a finished and framed work is so much bigger than the sum of its parts," and becomes "positively surprised on almost every occasion."

The latest narratives created by Yves are about beautiful, quiet, fictitious worlds. Yves was born in 1987 in Switzerland, but now he lives in New York City. We asked him whether he had missed anything from his life in Switzerland, and he answered: "Yes, I miss the mountains in the summer, and I miss swimming in the lakes or the river after lunch or in the mornings. It makes such a difference in the quality of life to be in a natural landscape that does not feel poisoned." Yves began introducing natural landscapes to his lenticular works a few years ago. Why so? He mentioned to us – and has said this in past interviews – *that when he puts a flower into the work, it feels like offering it to the portrayed or sculpted people as an extension of himself and a gesture of love*. By using images of mixed flowers, animals, and natural landscapes and introducing them into his lenticular pieces, Yves is trying to create an alternate reality not only for the portrayed people and the spectators of the work but also for himself. It might not be an over-interpretation to state that Yves needs to find an alternative world that feels natural and safe – like the Swiss mountains and lakes – against the urban city that is polluted, overcrowded, and most often, turns its back on nature. Through the creation of his latest works, this is possible for him.

We ended our conversation by asking Yves what he thinks of virtuality. "It's hard for me to get a grasp of this concept. What state is currently opposite to 'virtual: physical?' Like many of us, Yves carries his phone everywhere; in his case, he carries it around his neck. *He jokes by*

saying he has already become a cyborg because virtuality has become part of his physical body – an action he regards as the natural next step in our evolution. "Reality is now a blend of our virtual and physical realities. In most everyday situations, virtual reality carries more importance than physical reality, and it would be easy to argue that it also makes up much more of our distinct identity."

We agree with Yves that virtuality is indeed an extension of us, part of who we are, and thus, part of our identity. We can now establish virtual relations, which are not merely fictitious but real. So, in this sense, "virtuality" is not the contradiction of "reality" but another option for perceiving and living our lives. Virtuality, as an alternative dimension, can also be inhabited. If we were to create an alternate reality – not necessarily virtual, or at least not entirely – we would support Yves's ideal to produce a beautiful, safe world where everyone can become part of it and construct diverse forms of interactions within the universe of entities that shares common space and time.

Right page before

YVES SCHERER
A Faithful Man, 2021
 Inkjet print, lenticular lens, acrylic glass
 and KT-board in wooden frame with glass
 Unique
 Frame 201.5 x 152 x 6.5 cm /
 79 1/4 x 59 3/4 x 2 1/2 in
 Image 196 x 146.5 cm / 77 1/4 x 57 3/4 in
 Courtesy the artist and Galerie
 Eva Presenhuber



Current page

YVES SCHERER
Casa Pedregal, 2023
KT-Board, light jet print, lenticular lens,
acrylic glass, artist's frame
163 x 123 x 6 cm / 64 1/4 x 48 1/2 x 2 1/3 in
Courtesy the artist

Right page

YVES SCHERER
Stuyvesant Square, 2023
KT-Board, light jet print, lenticular lens,
acrylic glass, artist's frame
163 x 123 x 6 cm / 64 1/4 x 48 1/2 x 2 1/3 in
Courtesy the artist and Galleri Golsa







Double page before

YVES SCHERER
Installation view "Candida", Kunsthaus
Grenchen 2020.

Left page

YVES SCHERER
What if Yves made applejuice, 2021
Paint and lacquer on aluminium
145 x 85 x 70 cm / 57 x 33 1/2 x 27 1/2 in
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Guido
W. Baudach Berlin

Right page

YVES SCHERER
Laetitia, 2021
Painted aluminum
Unique
160 x 65 x 58.5 cm / 63 x 25 5/8 x 23 in
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Eva
Presenhuber

