

FRIEZE

Yves Scherer

Galerie Guido W. Baudach Berlin

BY MELISSA CANBAZ IN REVIEWS | 20 FEB 15



Most people probably heard via social media about English actress Emma Watson's address at the United Nations where she launched the #HeForShe gender equality campaign to win over men to feminism. Soon after, an unknown agency began issuing threats to publish nude photographs of Watson online. These claims of 'Emma you're next' turned out to be a bluff. A Google search still comes up with many nude pictures of the actress, but they are all fakes, more or less crudely put together using Photoshop.

Yves Scherer's large-scale exhibition *Closer*, filling the main gallery space and titled after the British celebrity magazine, presented four different Emma Watsons, all naked and life-size. (Just as many of the Photoshop fakes were already circulating before the scandal, Scherer's sculptures also predate it.) The 3D model on which the sculptures are based was constructed by Scherer using an average of the online material she found of Watson, resulting in a version of the actress the ideal of nerdy Photoshop boys. Some of the sculptures, such as *Whenever I get gloomy with the state of the world, I think about the arrivals gate at Heathrow Airport (Copper)* (2014), have a copper coating that gives them a certain 'classical' patina. With a slight shy grin, the figure holds her hands in front of her bare breasts and crosses her legs. Like a statue from classical antiquity, she was presented on a plinth standing in a pond suggested by a border of rugs, complete with plastic water lilies (*Wet Look*, 2014). The historical tradition of nude sculpture lent this work a certain femininity, but on closer inspection the sculpture lacked the crucial sexual charge. Instead, it appeared as an androgynous being, a visibly artificial

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creature that only carried a different weight when one remembers it is a supposed digital 'creation of a woman'. Other Emma sculptures like *Emmy* (2014) and *Emma (Pink)* (2014) did have a stronger sexual charge, with their nylon knee stockings or outsized anime eyes, but they, too, remained within the uncanny realm of the artificial.

The show's second striking motif was tatami: traditional rice straw mats from Japan. They lay on the floor or hung on the wall behind Perspex vitrines, strewn with burn marks or illegible tags (*Sirens*, 2014). These works were supplemented by prints working with the characteristic surface quality of the mats. Like the series of silk curtains printed with sketch-like drawings (*Celebrity Curtain I*, 2014), the mats acted as partitions, structuring an exhibition space filled with numerous sculptures and creating an illusion of inside and out, real and virtual, and evoking a strangely disconcerting domestic atmosphere. For *Closer*, this interlinking extended to the gallery's website, where in lieu of a gallery homepage Scherer provided an archive of high-resolution paparazzi pictures of Watson's private life available for download.

These distinct levels – real, virtual, private and public – were particularly pronounced in the juxtaposition of two works. The copper Emma in the back area of the gallery was in a wooden crate – both protected and cramped. In sight of it was a work titled *Rain* (2014) made out of a PC casing, a similarly 'box-like' form. It contained a small male anime figure – a geek living inside his computer. The exhibition succeeded in addressing issues of feminism and the internet without recourse to the expected tech aesthetic, as well as cleverly linking on and offline worlds.