



Essex Flowers Marries Art with Virtual Reality

Rob Goyanes
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Though the name Essex Flowers might lead you to believe they deal in orchids and hydrangeas, it's actually an artist-run gallery in Chinatown. Named after the flower shop that occupied their original space, the collective has put on Kunsthalle-style exhibitions since 2013. Their current show, titled *The Sands*, references the classic Vegas casino, but in an indirect way: rather than the casino itself, the 15 artists will be displayed in a virtual, unreal world.

To do so, Essex Flowers will host a virtual reality exhibition within the space. Visitors will see the artists' work via VR headset as they walk through the gallery, interacting with art and other aesthetic experiences in unexpected ways. Curated by the Blended Reality Crew (which includes several of the artists in the show), *The Sands* will consist of a nine-day, rotating virtual art show. Not just mere sculptures and paintings, the exhibition promises closer encounters.



Photo courtesy of @theworldofadam via Instagram.

The show will include an international roster of emerging artists, a solid number of whom are graduate students at Yale, including the multimedia practitioner Valentina Zamfirescu, born in Craiova, Romania, as well as Young Joo Lee, originally from Seoul and also working across a wide range of media. Zamfirescu engages a panoply of art historical methods, from modernist painting to video work, while Lee treads the lines between performance, digital animation, and strange sculpture.

Antonia Kuo engages the history of Chinese calligraphy and the omnipresent fluidity of natural systems, while the Bologna-born, Brooklyn-based Federico Solmi uses bright color and satire to create his works. *The Sands* isn't hung like other normal art shows: as you move through the VR space over the nine-day period, the works will evolve and interact with each other (and the audience) differently. Essex Flowers doesn't divulge a lot of information, but this is perhaps part of the thrust.

Delivering these artworks through a virtual world—but in a real gallery space—is sure to be an uncommon gallery visit. Much like the hyperreal experience of casinos, *The Sands* will likely be stimulating, a little disorienting, and leaving you wanting more.

The Sands

Through August 20th, 2017

Essex Flowers

19 Monroe St, New York, NY 10002

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