

DRIFTING
OLIVIER VALSECCHI



© Olivier Valsecchi, Drifting, 2014

From February 5th till March 14th, 2015, OPIOM Gallery is pleased to present *Drifting* by French photographer Olivier Valsecchi. The series, which will be exhibited for the first time, will feature 10 exclusive photographs and will span his previous series, from *Klecksography* to *Time of War*.

Olivier Valsecchi's new *Drifting* series is a journey through art history where each picture merges the tradition of the reclining nude with the still life painting genre from Flanders.

Faithfully devoted to his *chiaroscuro* approach of light, straightforward sense of composition and muted colour schemes, Valsecchi replaces baroque floral arrangements and the overlapping motif of *Memento Mori* by pale bodies, in order to create what he calls a *Flesh Vanitas*. His taste for eerie atmospheres draws the viewer into paradoxical tableaux where flowing movement and dumb stillness mysteriously interact.

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Every instant devours a piece of the pleasure

Granted to every man for his entire season.

Charles Baudelaire, excerpt from *The Clock* in *The Flowers of Evil*

While looking at Valsecchi's *Drifting* series, obvious images come to mind : sand pouring through the hourglass, Bouguereau's nudes, or even echoes of Dali's soft watches as bodies seem to turn into liquid and drip off the table. Their chalky-white, expressionless faces remain silent while sparks of life sift out with the tremor of a leg or the twitch of an arm.

Straying the audience from their grounds of certainty, Valsecchi induces an unsettling doubt on whether his subjects are falling apart or withstanding paralysis. He investigates this tenuous and brooding space between inertia and the urge to go somewhere. His bodies appear to have been submitted to an exorcism, an epileptic trance, or a mutilation akin to a reptile being cut in two pieces - and yet still crawling. Ultimately, *Drifting* is to be perceived as a conversation between Rembrandt's *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* and Géricault's *Raft of the Medusa*. The table is alternately a canoe adrift on the open sea or a cold buffet offering souls in transit. Tainted with a surreal aura, it depicts the unutterable moment of confusion when a specific sequence is intriguingly and subconsciously connected to the next.

Valsecchi's comment is that *Drifting* is a mediation between his previous painterly *I am Dust* project, and sculptural *Klecksography* series. « Still-life was the perfect fit for a post-war atmosphere. Beyond symbolizing the ephemeral nature of life, it relates to the notion of transitioning. I wanted to set bodies into an unfamiliar environment and infuse them with a feeling of disorientation, as if recovering from trauma or stuck in a vertigo. »

Drifting is an invitation to meditate at a mystical onirism, a haunting and cryptic gateway between near-death-like experience and the very next minute.



© Olivier Valsecchi, *Requiem*, 2014
by courtesy of OPIOM Gallery



© Olivier Valsecchi, *Home*, 2014
by courtesy of OPIOM Gallery



© Olivier Valsecchi, *Blooming*, 2014
by courtesy of OPIOM Gallery

Olivier Valsecchi was born in Paris in 1979. He currently lives and works in Toulouse.

Olivier Valsecchi initially studied music as a teenager. As he began creating cover art for his record sleeves, he became passionate and engrossed by photography. He then spent the next ten years taking self portraits for his own enjoyment and mastering his skills upon entering the ETPA photography school, to perfect his technical skills. His work is dark and mysterious, oozing the magic of nature, and uniquely represents the peculiar cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. As a way to translate his emotions, he uses others' bodies to convey his trance and compose pictures that he qualifies as self-portraits, although he doesn't necessarily physically appear on the photos. He finds his whole working system, from visualizing a certain image to capturing the moment, to be based on his personal instinct. With his striking black and white images and almost statuesque models, Valsecchi's work truly brings beauty and character to aspects of life that are rarely thought of as alluring.

From Korea to New York, his work never ceases to arouse the interest of the international press (Réponses Photo, FR; Le Figaro Beaux-Arts, FR; Le Monde, FR; Orlando Weekly, US; Santa Fe Art Magazine, BR; Eyemazing, ND; Zoom, IT; Rooms, UK; Blink, KR; Arte Fotografico, ES; Image in Progress, IT; Profifoto, DE; etc.) as much as that of curators (Promenades Photographiques de Vendôme, Festival Européen de la Photographie de Nu en Arles, Fotofever Paris and Brussels, Centre Atlantique de la Photographie in Brest).



© Olivier Valsecchi, self-portrait, 2014

Olivier Valsecchi Né / Born: Paris, France, 1979
Vit et travaille / Live and works: Toulouse, France

PRINCIPALES EXPOSITIONS / SELECTED EXHIBITIONS
2015

Art Wynwood, with Opiom Gallery, Miami (US)

2014

Context-Art Miami, with Opiom Gallery, Florida (US)

Squarte au Carré, galerie Le Carré d'Art curated by Square Magazine, Rennes (France)

AAF Hong Kong, with Opiom Gallery (Hong Kong)

OFF Bruxelles, with Galerie Cédric Bacqueville (Belgium)

2013

Fotofever Brussel, solo show with Galerie Céline Moine (Belgium)

Opiom Gallery, group show opening, Cannes (France)

Le Château d'Eau, Mois de l'image, Toulouse (France)

Ulsan International Photography Festival, Stillness in movement (Korea)

Cutlog New-York with Galerie Céline Moine, New York (US)

SNAP! Orlando, Motion to Light, Florida (US)

Kyotographie, with Hasselblad Masters (Japan)

Lille Art Fair, group exhibition with Galerie Cédric Bacqueville (France)

2012

Hasselblad Masters Tour group exhibition (London, Los Angeles, New York City, Berlin, Seoul)

Fotofever Brussel, group exhibition with Galerie Céline Moine (Belgium)

Photokina, Hasselblad Masters Book exhibition, Cologne (Germany)

Le sacre du printemps, group exhibition, Galerie Maubert, Paris (France)

Centre Atlantique de la Photographie, Galerie du Quartz, solo exhibition, Brest (France)

Lille Art Fair, with Rize Art Gallery, Lille (France)

Raw Art Fair, with Rize Art Gallery, Rotterdam (The Netherlands)

2011

Fotofever Paris, group exhibition with Galerie Céline Moine, Paris (France)

Affordable Art Fair, with Doinel Gallery, North London (England)

Lineart, with Doinel Gallery, Flanders (Belgium)

Resonance, Biennale de Lyon, Espace Ricard, Photographie Onirique, with Céline Moine (France)

Photography and sculpture, Art Gallery 826, with Doinel Gallery, Knokke (Belgium)

Festival Regard Photographie, Villeneuve de la Rivière (France)

Fotofestival Naarden, Festival Off, with Rize Art Gallery (The Netherlands)

Le Voyage Initiatique, Fotografia Europea Festival, Offset Revolt, Officina delle Arti, curated by Alice Mazzini, Reggio Emilia (Italy)

Festival Européen de la Photographie de Nu, Chapelle Sainte-Anne, Arles, with Galerie Céline Moine (France)

2010

solo exhibition, Galerie Fokus, Graz (Austria)

Festival Manifesto, Galerie Photon & Port Viguerie, Toulouse (France)

Promenades Photographiques de Vendôme - Parc du Château, Vendôme (France)

BOURSES ET DISTINCTIONS

2013 Grand Jury Member, Hasselblad Masters 2014

2012 Winner of Hasselblad Masters Awards (Fine Art category)

2011 Finaliste des Hasselblad Masters Awards (Fine Art)

2009 Grand Prix de ETPA

TIME OF WAR, 2013



© Olivier Valsecchi, Time of War VIII, 2013



© Olivier Valsecchi, Time of War IV, 2013

Incarnation remains the main theme in Valsecchi's oeuvre. Thus he decided to dive into his *Dust* series once again, whilst adding a parameter to it: a soul of their own. Deliberately choosing to set the second part of his *I Am Dust* saga in a former arms factory, this autobiographic project is on the theme of incarnation and Samsara. Whereas the first part illustrated the photographer's cosmology, *Time of War* liberates those chaos-spawned creatures. The title, inspired by the Prado Museum's 2008 Exhibition: *GOYA in Times of War*, which commemorated the War of Independence, equally portrays this crying-out for emancipation.

From then on, Characters have a history, and are out to conquer. Their bodies tense, each mote of muscle tissue contracts itself, shoulders heave. The primeval ash, this very element which has transiently crossed through the cycles of life and death, seems to burst out in an explosion of effort, unless this be the final agonizing breath of these Ovidian heroes. This is about survival.

KLECKSOGRAPHY, 2012



© Olivier Valsecchi, Minotaur, 2012



© Olivier Valsecchi, Alien, 2012

Revealed to the public eye in 2010 by *Dust*, this series earned him the prestigious Hasselblad Masters Award two years later. He was then asked to conceive a new series on the theme *Evoke*. Hence the birth of *Klecksography*, organic sculptures created by symmetrically articulated bodies. Valsecchi's inspiration for this series is drawn from the works of Swiss Psychiatrist Rorschach, whose method implied using imagery created by inkstains on a piece of paper then folded into two. Where the latter used their interpretation by patients to diagnose schizophrenia or dementia, Valsecchi's approach is the opposite.

The one he calls his interior foe - this dark side in each one of us which we try to constantly restrain - is given full freedom of expression, and the ability to overcome bodily constraints. During two months, in a derelict hangar beating to the tribal rhythms of Kate Bush's album *The Dreaming*, he pushes himself and his models over the brink of exhaustion, reaching out for total burnout. At that climactic point, the mind disincarnates itself from the body, leaving behind a mechanical flesh and bone entity, bereaved of any willpower: except that of the photographer's dictates, or, rather, those of his subconsciousness.

DUST, 2010



© Olivier Valsecchi, Dust VI, 2010



© Olivier Valsecchi, Dust VII, 2010

The *Dust* series tells about incarnation, the very moment between nothingness and existence. It was inspired in the definition introduced by Ovid about Chaos described as confused masses (light and dark, order and disorder, liquid and fog, fall and flight, torment and frenzy) giving life to items that contain it.

These hanging bodies bursting out (of themselves ?) could be both humans or ghosts floating in an oniric atmosphere - a dark, emotional atmosphere that reminds of the Renaissance painting-, playing fictitious encounters between the beginning and the end, explosion and silence, rage and soothing, running and retreat.

PRESE PAPIER

2015
BEAUTIFUL BIZARRE #9 (Australia)
PSIKEART Mercy issue (Turkey)
FOTOGRAFE MELHOR #222 (Brazil)

2014
ARTE FOTOGRAFICO #638 (Spain)
NORMAL MAGAZINE (France)
YACONIC #10 (Mexico)
EXIT #53 (Spain)
VISUAL ARCHIVE #2 (US)
QUO #224 (Spain)
CLUTCHMAG #16 (France)

2013
GENTE DI FOTOGRAFIA #57 (Italy)
FOTOGRAFE MELHOR #207 (Brazil)
ELLE DECORATION #223 (France)
PHILOSOPHIE MAGAZINE #74 (France)
ARTE FOTOGRAFICO #634 (Spain)
PARCOURS DES ARTS #36 (France)
LE BRASIER DES SOUVENIRS Carina Rozenfeld, Robert Laffont coll. R
MUSEE MAGAZINE #6
DIGITAL SLR PHOTOGRAPHY august issue (UK)
CATALOGUE UIPF (Korea)

ORLANDO WEEKLY (US)
SANTA ART MAGAZINE #10 (Brazil)
PROFIFOTO 03/13 (Germany)

2012
PHOTO+ #32 (Korea)
AZART #59 interview by Sophie Garmand (France)
HASSELBLAD MASTERS BOOK #3 published by teNeues (Germany)
LES CENDRES DE L'OUBLI Carina Rozenfeld, Robert Laffont coll. R
THE OPERA #1 published by Kerber (Germany)
L'OFFICIEL DE LA MODE #967 (France)
ARTE FOTOGRAFICO #631 (Spain)
IMAGE IN PROGRESS #3 (Italy)
PHOTOGRAPHIE #3 (Germany)

2011
PHOTOGRAPHE #1 interview by Laëtitia Guillemain (France)
ZOOM #103 text by Elisabetta Piatti (Italy)
CATALOGUE ANGERS NANTES OPERA saison 2011-2012 (France)
ROOMS #5 (UK)

PHOTO #484 (France)
CATALOGUE FEPN (France)
BLINK #3 interview by Kim Aram (Korea)
EMPTY #20 (Australia)
LE FIGARO BEAUX-ARTS hors-série guide du marché de l'art 2011 (France)
REPNSES PHOTO #230 (France)
PHILOSOPHIE MAGAZINE #48 (France)

2010
AZARTPHOTO #8 (France)
LE MONDE 22/10/2010 supplément Le Monde des Livres (France)
KULT MAG (Italy)
EYEMAZING SPRING ISSUE text by Sarah Baxter (The Netherlands)
PHOTO #470 (France)
LE MONDE 26/02/2010 supplément Le Monde des Livres (France)
LADOS #14 interview (Spain)
CATALOGUE MANIFESTO (France)
AZARTPHOTO #7 text by Sophie Garmand (France)
PREF #35 (France)

PRESE DIGITALE (liens cliquables)

2015
STERN.DE (Germany)
THE PHOTOBLOGGHER interview
STITCH interview (Belgium)
PHOTOGRAPHY.COM interview
THE CULTURE TRIP
APAR.TV
GRAINE DE PHOTOGRAPHE interview (France)
PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS MAGAZINE
DODHO (Spain)
ART SHEEP
CULTURA COLECTIVA (Mexico)
PIXFAN (France)
WUKALI (France)
BEAUTIFUL DECAY
VANGARDIST
LOVES BEAUTIFUL (Russia)
ARTS AND FACTS (France)
CREATIVE BOOM (US)
WIDEWALLS (US)

2014
GRAINE DE PHOTOGRAPHE (France)
ARTWORT interview
SILVERSHOTZ (Australia)
DIY PHOTOGRAPHY
GRAINE DE PHOTOGRAPHE (France)

2013
LA REPUBBLICA.IT (Italy)
THE DAILY MAIL (UK)
KONBINI (France)
SLATE (France)
FUBIZ (France)
JUXTAPOZ
THE VERGE
IGNANT (Germany)
JOURNAL DU DESIGN (France)
MUSEE MAGAZINE interview (US)
RESOURCE MAG (US)
AS DE PIXEL (France)
LA DEPECHE.FR (France)
ART TRIBUNE (Italy)
PARIS ART (France)
EMPTY KINGDOM

2012
GUSMEN
FRANCE GAZETTE

2011
FNAC.COM (France)
PIXFAN (France)
ARTBOOKGUY interview (US)

2010
MY MODERN MET (US)
LOST AT E MINOR (US)
ART MAGAZIN interview (Germany)
IDEAFIXA #17 (Brazil)
SQUARE MAGAZINE #1.4 (France)
500 PHOTOGRAPHERS Photographer #033
DOZE issue #2 (Spain)
PDN Photo of the day (US)
ART NOUVEAU artist of the week (US)