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## 6 Edmond Gallery

### 九口走召 9mouth SEXUALLY EXPLICIT

23.06 – 02.09.2017

Edmond Gallery is pleased to present for the first time in Europe, a solo exhibition by 9mouth, a Chinese photographer born in Jingzhou in 1988, now living and working in Beijing.

This exhibition brings together works from different series – “Menstrual”, “Night Tour”, “Instax Love” – that 9mouth has been working on since 2011, and in which he tirelessly and exclusively photographs young Chinese women nude. Any young woman who wishes to be. Over two hundred, friends and strangers, contacted him online or came to him by word of mouth. Photographed in the location of their choice – at home, at a hotel or sometimes at night in a park – directly and in the moment, without any test shots or artificial light, sometimes even with a borrowed camera.

In these photos at once gentle and raw, but never vulgar, the young women showcase themselves without shame, exhibiting their private parts and thus cast the viewer, maliciously or perversely, in the disturbing role of the voyeur.

Due to their sexually explicit character, these photos also bring up of course the question of boundaries that, in China as elsewhere, continually fluctuate between the public and private spheres, between decency and indecency. But they also ask the fundamental question in contemporary art of what constitutes the criteria for a work of art.

What allows these photos to move beyond the ghetto of pornographic sites?

Their documentary value, for one. Even if 9mouth claims to contribute to the sexual evolution of the girls of his generation, he is far from the radical approaches of others such as Jean Rault, Tobias Zielony or Boris Mikhailov, who sought to emphasize on naked bodies the cruel inscription of passing time, sexual exploitation or the disintegration of a society.



*Night tour#1*, 2014, Archival Pigment print on Hahnemuehle PhotoRag, Alu Dibond, 80 x 53.3 cm

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Their aesthetic quality, certainly. The expressionist theatricality of Hosoe are not to be found in 9mouth's work, nor the stylized provocations of Araki or Hirakawa, the Mc Ginley's meticulously staged situations or the brilliantly slick choreographies of Ren Hang. He loves each one of his models, at least in the moment of taking the photo. His love of feminine bodies is expressed by a discreet lyricism, between shadow and light, a freshness a paradoxical candour that are more reminiscent of Saul Leiter or Lee Friedlander.

But his obsession is very different and probably more desperate. For if 9mouth loves nudity it is because it appears every time new to him, in a sort of primitive and irreducible strangeness. Breasts, vulvas, anuses are laid bare like enigmas that haunt him and for which he wants to be a mirror, infinitely held up to them.

His photos are disquieting not because of the complete nudity which has ceased to be shocking, but because of the scopic drive evident in them, the frantic fetishistic quest which seems to reveal a fantasy of regression, like the impossible desire of returning to the mother's womb.

It's not surprising that menstrual blood was the starting point of his work. A red trickle that – even more so than women's private orifices – must be kept hidden and clandestine. The formless blood of origins, fascinating and terrifying because it contains in itself all fears and taboos: the violence of sexuality, incest, death. In 9mouth's work, this image of a bleeding vagina like a wounded animal seems even more inappropriate because a man has taken up the red flag held high by Judy Chicago 40 years before in her feminist battle.

This is an exhibition of a fantasy, a transgression of genres and roles, and there lie undoubtedly the true obscenity and originality of these photos.

**Eric Vinassac**