

## Flash Art

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Evelyn Taocheng Wang, "Heatweave Wrinkle," installation view at Château Shatto, Los Angeles (2016). Courtesy the Artist and Château Shatto, Los Angeles. Photography by Elon Schoenholz.

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## Evelyn Taocheng Wang Château Shatto / Los Angeles

The ubiquity of massage parlors in Western cities has not completely divested the practice of its associations with exoticism. In the 19th century, they suggested hidden thrills for Orientalist painters, like Gerôme, whose imaginary baths teem with scantily clad maidens.

They provided fertile grounds, too, for Leopold Bloom's masturbatory fantasy in *Ulysses*: "Time to get a bath round the corner. Hammam. Turkish. Massage. Dirt gets rolled up in your navel. Nicer if a nice girl did it. Also I think I. Yes I. Do i in the bath. Curious longing I. Water to water. Combine business with pleasure."

"Heatwave Wrinkle", Evelyn Taocheng Wang's current exhibition at Château Shatto, promises a different kind of business and pleasure, with an unorthodox trio of elements: painting, drawing and—you guessed it — massage. The exhibition, which takes up a single room, is dominated by five blue-curtained screens that partially obscure the view of a cushioned table. Human touch is its own currency here, with a ten minute massage setting you back \$10. If you bring along a photograph of a landscape, you get a discount and a personalized narrative from your masseuse.

The glimpses afforded by this coy arrangement might heighten a sense of erotic tension, if in fact a rubdown were taking place. However, the table was unoccupied on my visit, and the artist, who has herself dispensed the massages in previous exhibitions (as well as professionally, during her studies), was absent. Consequently, the space felt somewhat denuded, which was exacerbated by the sparse hang of three paintings on the surrounding walls. Depicting various kinds of vessels, executed in thick, bold strokes, these large acrylic on canvas works look a little hastily made. While *Untitled No. 5* (2016), a faint sketch of a vase with a Greek key pattern on its neck, has a spare elegance, it feels rather surplus to requirements.

Through two simple gestures – using screens to disrupt the gaze and endowing the masseuse with a narrator's role – Wang transforms the parlor from a site of voyeurism into one actively authored by the participants. This is underscored by two delightful works on paper installed by the entrance, in which long-haired figures relax amidst fine-leafed foliage and the eddying flows of a river. In these delicate rice paper drawings, Wang takes care to represent people taking their own pleasure rather than performing for the pleasure of others.

by Ciara Moloney