

# Things to Do

Edited by

Jillian Anthony

jillian.anthony@timeout.com

@jillathrilla

Untitled #6 (From the Women of Canterbury series) by Marianna Rothen



A group portrait of the artists by Aneta Bartos



Things to Do

## It's a woman's world

Or at least that's the way five female photographers, who created the powerful images of "Pheromone Hotbox," see it. By **Jillian Anthony**

In Marianna Rothen's photograph *Untitled #6*, five nude women with hair distinctly from another decade sit at a picnic table in the middle of the woods, at ease and smiling at one another, awash in a yellowish tint reminiscent of a '70s-era TV screen. It's an inviting scene of a female utopia, one where the women are both in power and at play, with no hint of voyeurs of the opposite sex or even their existence. Enter the postfeminist realm created within the work of the five female photographers in "Pheromone Hotbox" at Steven Kasher Gallery.

### What does "Pheromone Hotbox" mean?

The exhibit's title originates from a philosophical concept of featured photographer Amanda Charchian: "Pheromones are something that exist to attract people to one another, and the hotbox is the psychic space the psyche is in when it is creating under those terms," she says. "If I was with a man, it would be sexual or to procreate, but I have a theory [that when a woman photographs another woman] you push extremes that only you and that woman can create together."

### What will you see?

Women with mermaid-red hair exploring lake waters with childish abandon, stretched out for a deep sleep on the sands of an infinite desert and gripping each other's naked bodies in a circle, everyone's hair connected by one shared braid. "The line between dream and reality is super thin, and art is a way to get to that point," says Charchian.

### Who are the artists?

The five women all use friends to enact an invented narrative while naked, "the most natural state for

a human being to be in," says Rothen. Gallery owner and director Steven Kasher sees the images on a mood spectrum: Olivia Locher's work, full of humor and brightness, is the lightest; Aneta Bartos's threatening, angst-riddled subjects are the darkest; while Shae DeTar's, Charchian's and Rothen's pieces lie somewhere in between.

### What makes this work unique?

Kasher finds the way these artists break from the tradition of self-portraiture and today's conceit of selfie culture fascinating. "I [also] felt that these photographers are very free and open and gentle and fun and sexy, as if the battles of modern feminism were won or never took place," he says. "The previous generation of young women photographers' work is challenging and contentious."

### And what about modern feminism?

"The older paradigm is definitely changing and women have more of a role [in the art of photography] than they've ever had," says Charchian. Then why the lack of noted and successful female photographers and artists in relation to men, as Rothen bemoans? "To be honest, I haven't given it a lot of thought," says Kasher. "Outside of the obvious reasons; that it's a man's world."

**"Pheromone Hotbox" is at Steven Kasher Gallery through Feb 28.**