

AKTÏONSHÄUS



Clemente Ciarrocca

The Joys

24 June — 25 July 2025

AKTIONSHAUS is pleased to present *The Joys*, a new solo exhibition by Berlin-based artist Clemente Ciarrocca. *The Joys* comprises a new series of photo transfers, theoretical diagrams, prints, chemical and multimedia assemblages exposing the porosity between institutional discourse and intimacy.

For the epigraph of his 1974 *Libidinal Economy*, the French philosopher Jean François Lyotard adopted a slightly reworked version of a sentence originally appearing in Stendhal's 1822 *De l'Amour*, specifically in a chapter entitled 'Des Courts'. Inscribing his "livre méchant" in the conviction that "[w]ho knows not how to hide knows not how to love," Lyotard acknowledged the concealment natural to intimacy as a crucial and generative force underlying the non-plus-ultra of relations. Somewhat similarly yet with drastically divergent consequences, Stendhal looked at the Provençal tradition of courtly love poetry and conception of "amor de lonh" (distant love) for an exemplary form for his own theory of crystallization: the process by which lovers work in absence by idealizing their beloved through imagination and psychosomatic projection, eventually establishing perfect objects of desire (and sustainment). *The Joys* emerges from this complex libidinal genealogy as an attempt to expose intimacy's double role: generation and reification. It does so by offering a both semantic and material, markedly experiential and multi-sensorial field where trembling and institutioning converge. Drawing on theories of libidinal economy, diaristic work, excerpts from canonical texts and the language and tools of the military-corporate complex, Ciarrocca lays out space for personal and official vocabularies to collapse into singular, intimately logical expressions of control-desire dynamics.

The exhibition unfolds as a layering system that rewards a durational engagement. Center stage is taken by a double series of prints, intriguingly entitled *A History of Reason*, installed across the corner joining the two main walls of the exhibition space. One set of prints are still frames from footage of a couple's deep kissing punctuated by moments of lip biting and pulling. After filming and selecting the stills, Ciarrocca inverted them and had them printed through a black-and-white-only HP LaserJet located in the Berlin corporate headquarters of a major German bank, which he was able to access through a personal connection. He then proceeded to transfer the grayscale prints onto industrial sanding paper, the bank's toner forming the blurred contours of the lovers' faces and mouths over the grey abrasive surface. The installed sequence opens on the left with a first bite, followed by a surrender into a deep kiss that unfolds through multiple frames, before concluding with a second bite where the roles reverse. As the kiss deepens toward the moment when the two profiles would become virtually indistinguishable, the negative space of the room's interior corner suddenly occupies and replaces this central frame. Here's a gesture of removal subtly hinting at the way deep intimacy is, at once, the place of dissolution and structural foundation of discursive realities such as identity, property, power.

Both intercepting and narrativizing the kissing stills is a second set of prints, composed of short sentences crossing over what looks like a sunset sky which darkens as the series progresses across the corner. The horizontal sentences are transcripts from some of Ciarrocca's own diary pages, originally noted with personal thoughts and altered excerpts from Hélène Cixous's *Tomb(e)*. The transcripts are crossed with vertical, categorizing statements printed on vellum sheets and composed by the artist by repurposing CATIA, the design software that is the global industry standard in aerospace and defense, as a text editor. The darkening sky is revealed to be nothing else than the software's background wireframe.

The rest of the space is pinpointed by material interventions that variously frame the environment of this structural kissing sequence, expanding on how the personal and the institutional overlap in the intimate. Incorporated as both sound and text throughout the exhibition are fragments from St. Augustine's *Confessions* and BAE Systems's corporate rhetorics, both transposed from collective to singular voice, exposing the uncanny resemblance between declarations of love and assertions of power. The space is scored by a seemingly endless (and yet, repetitive) overlay of field recordings, sex tapes, youtube and social media autoplays, music tracks abruptly cut short. Prints of still frames from a rose bush filmed by the artist in his hometown show the coexistence at a single moment of the three stages of flowering: budding, blooming, and fading. A translucent liquid poured all over the gallery floor pools and crystallizes over the course of days, slowly flowing underneath acrylic screens that function as framing devices for the liquid's coagulations as well as for the traces left by the already evaporated water. Including electrolytes, amino acids, lactic acid, urea and other chemicals dissolved in running water, the liquid solution mirrors the chemical composition of human sweat, functioning as a phantom of corporeal balance dynamics, signaling fatigue, pleasure, or simply exercise; the stress of repression, or the joy of release.

Working more as an alchemical invocation than a title, *The Joys* maintains a fugitive relationship to the pieces and interventions that compose it. Like the sweat refusing complete crystallization, or a kiss edged by bites, the works on show variously and jointly manifest a grammar of intimacy that remains mysterious and resists full disclosure, suggesting that institutional and personal realities share not just a vocabulary, but a fundamental investment in what remains strategically unsaid.

AKTIONSHAUS

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Saturday, 5th July 2025

The Joys

from 6:00pm

performances by

Olga Hohmann & André Mulzer

Yanne Horas

Ugne Uma

Vida Vojić

ML

Giorgio Gallo

Telva



Sunday, 6th July 2025

The Joys

from 6:00pm

Tabloid Press readings by

Cru Encarnação

Hayes Hoey

Dalia Maini

Beatrice Martini

Liola Mattheis

Filippo Vogliazzo

Vida Vojić

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