

VW (VeneKlasen/Werner) is pleased to present The Joy of Pleasure, a group exhibition curated by Dieter Roelstraete and Monika Szewczyk. The exhibition includes works by Pierre Bismuth, Shannon Bool, Jennifer Bornstein, Marco Bruzzone, Agnieszka Brzezanska, James Lee Byars, Cheryl Donegan, Piotr Nathan, Oksana Pasaiko, Martha Rosler, Steven Shearer and Mina Totino.

Inspired by the delightfully didactic tradition of The Joy of Cooking, The Joy of Sex and The Joy of Photography, The Joy of Pleasure offers twelve distinct artistic positions as so many lessons in pleasure. Lesson one regards the culinary and conversation and lesson two tackles flower appreciation. Lesson three is most basic. Lessons four and five summon butts and bikinis and lesson six continues the pursuit of naked flesh and the flesh of painting. Lesson seven is mystical, as is lesson eight, which is also morbid – and it should be said that both these lessons find pleasure in resurrecting what was once popular. Lesson nine plays with polarity, crafting incommensurable combinations of high and low, east and west, vertical and horizontal. Lesson ten reminds us to take the time to look up, day in and day out, and is about the transition of this perspective into poetry and paint. The eleventh lesson looks down the gorgeous gutter and with the twelfth lesson we return to the origin.

If an investment in pleasure is avoided in contemporary art, where it is often seen to oppose criticality, might this taboo breed ignorance about the very dimension of experience that ensures enlightenment? Against this grumpy grain, The Joy of Pleasure proceeds with a firm conviction that true critique follows from the assertion of desires, the study of passions and the active pursuit of enjoyments at once sensual and spiritual.

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