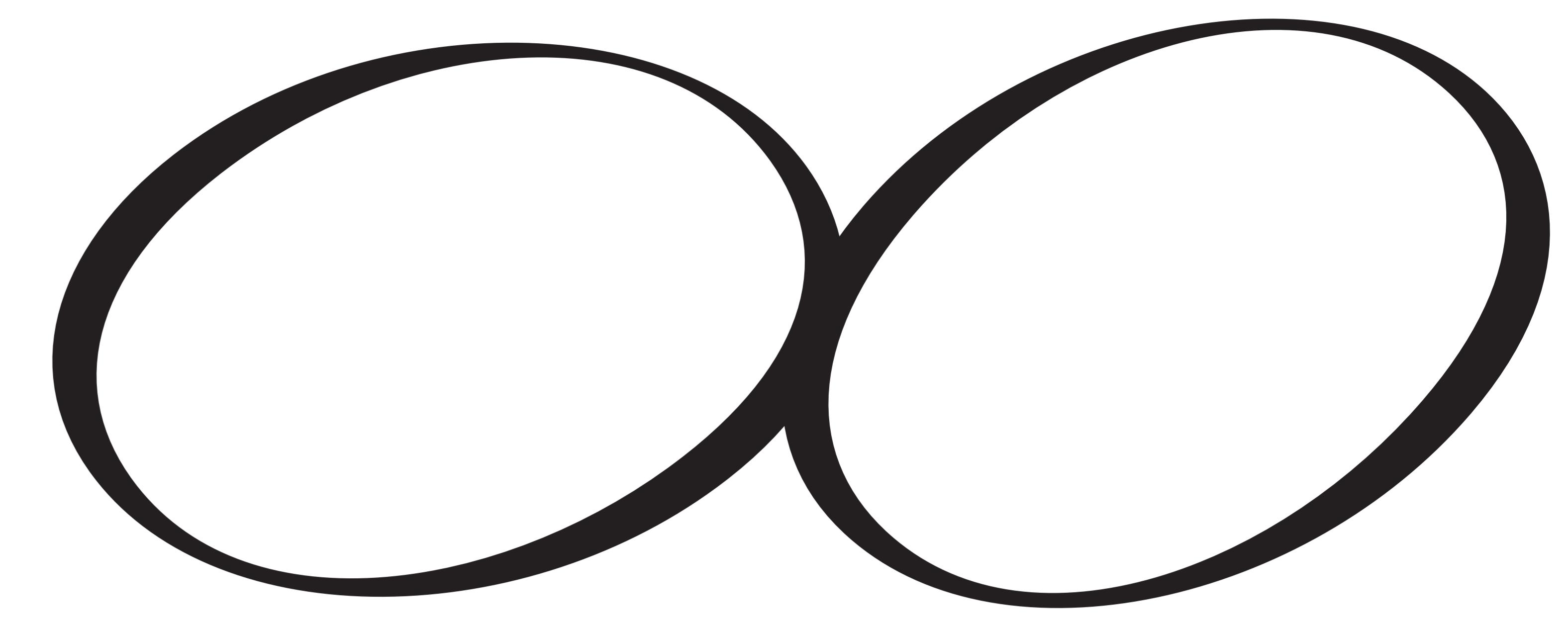


# Reba Maybury

## Private Life



I sit kunstneriske virke trækker Reba Maybury på sin position som dominatrix under aliaset Mistress Rebecca, idet hun lader sine underkastede mænd – også kaldet submissives – udføre instruktionsværker på hendes befaling.

På O – Overgaden præsenterer Maybury en serie malerier fra 2025, som alle er baseret på mal-efter-tal-sæt. Værkerne gengiver den franske impressionist Edgar Degas' serie af pasteltegninger på papir, som afbilder kvinder fra arbejderklassen, ofte læst som sexarbejdere, der vasker sig. De nøgne kvindelige kroppe, hvis "klodsede positurer" fylder hele billedfladen, er optagede af det ofte usynlige arbejde, som er forbundet med intimitet og sexarbejde: at holde kroppen ren. Degas' komposition er grundlæggende voyeuristisk – kvinderne observeres bagfra eller med ansigtet vendt væk, som upersonlige, objektiviserede kroppe, der ikke ser tilbage. Hvor Degas' berømte værkserie synes at skjule sin iboende mandlige dominans gennem brugen af blødt lys og douche farver, afslører de upolerede, grove gengivelser, skabt af forskellige submissives, en brutal virkelighed bag disse kvindelige motiver.

I udstillingens andet rum udsender duftspredere en forfalsket version af Diors mandeparfume *Sauvage*, det franske ord for rå, overgribende, vild. Gennem de sidste ti år har duftens reklameansigt været Johnny Depp – skuespilleren, der samtidig har været anklaget for vold i hjemmet af sin eks-partner, Amber Heard, i to højt profilerede retssager. I retten benyttede Depps forsvarsteam den velkendte strategi "deny, attack, and reverse victim and offender" (DARVO), hvor kritik afværges ved at forbytte rollerne mellem krænker og offer. I 2023 fornyede Johnny Depp sin kontrakt med Dior for 20 millioner \$, den største sum nogensinde for at promovere en herreparfume.

I den bagerste sal introduceres et element af overvågning: publikum ser sig selv, mens de ser på de badende kvinder, der observeres og seksualiseres selv midt i et af livets mest banale eller hverdagslige gøremål. Ved at udlicitere det trivielle arbejde, der ligger i selve produktionen af kunstværket, peger Maybury på magtforholdet mellem dominans og underkastelse. Her vender hun rollerne mellem observatør og observeret, eller sågar mellem krænker og offer, som er indlejret i både vores kænnede, private liv og vores offentlige, kulturelle institutioner, på hovedet. Hvis dominatrixen som sexarbejder typisk bliver set som en underholdende og undertrykt fantasi – lidt som kunstneren ofte gøres til samfundets underholdende 'underdog' – så er det her Mayburys submissives, og i sidste ende også hendes publikum, der sættes i arbejde og observeres, hvilket undergraver og perverterer den stereotype forståelse af, hvem der egentlig tjener hvem.

Reba Maybury (f. 1990) er britisk billedkunstner, forfatter og politisk dominatrix bosat i Funder udenfor Silkeborg. Hun er uddannet fra Central Saint Martins i London (2013) og har udstillet på blandt andet LC Quiesser, Tbilisi (2025); Company Gallery, New York (2024); Museum of Contemporary Art, Rom (2021); HFKD, Holstebro (2021); Kunsthall Charlottenborg, København (2020) og LUMA Westbau, Zürich (2019).

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Reba Maybury's artistic practice harnesses her role as a dominatrix with the alias Mistress Rebecca: most of her artworks are instruction pieces carried out by her submissive men under her orders.

At O—Overgaden, Maybury shows a 2025 painting series based on paint-by-numbers kits. The series reproduces a suite of pastels on paper by the French impressionist painter Edgar Degas depicting working-class women—widely thought to be sex workers—washing. Shown in “ungainly positions,” the frame-filling female nudes are carrying out the unseen labor of intimacy or sex work: keeping the body clean. In this series, Degas's framing is inherently voyeuristic, watching the women from behind or with their faces turned away, as depersonalized, consumable bodies that do not look back. While Degas's heralded series seems to hide its inherent male dominance in subtle light and soft colors, the crude grittiness of the submissives' reproductions reveals a brutal reality to the motifs.

In O—Overgaden's second space, scent diffusers distribute a counterfeit version of Dior's cologne *Sauvage*, the French word meaning rough, offensive, or savage. The face of the cologne for the last ten years has been Johnny Depp, the actor simultaneously accused of domestic abuse by his ex-partner, Amber Heard, in two highly publicized court cases. During trial, Depp's defense team employed the recurrent strategy “deny, attack, and reverse victim and offender” (DARVO) in which critique is deflected by inverting the roles of aggressor and victim. In 2023 Johnny Depp renewed his contract with Dior for \$20 million, the largest ever men's fragrance deal.

The back space introduces an element of surveillance: watching the audience watching the watched and washing women being sexualized even while completing this most banal of tasks. By outsourcing the menial labor of production, Maybury's practice plays out dynamics of domination and subjugation, inverting the roles of observing and observed, even aggressor and victim, layered into both our gendered, private lives and our public, cultural institutions. If the dominatrix as a sex worker is typically seen as a “dehumanized” fantasy—not unlike how the artist is often understood as society's entertaining underdog—here it is the submissives, and indeed also the visitors, that are put to work and watched, subverting and perverting the stereotypical image of who serves who.

Reba Maybury (b. 1990) is a British visual artist, writer, and political dominatrix based in Funder near Silkeborg. She graduated from Central Saint Martins in London (2013) and has exhibited at venues including LC Quiesser, Tbilisi (2025); Company Gallery, New York (2024); Museum of Contemporary Art, Rome (2021); HFKD, Holstebro (2021); Kunsthall Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2020); and LUMA Westbau, Zurich (2019).