

*the Seam, the Fault, the Flaw* draws on Roland Barthes' 1973 work *The Pleasure of the Text*, in which he argues for text that is as powerful, unpredictable, and textured as the human body, which should be consumed to the point of orgasmic bliss. The radically subjective reader is anyone, from "whatever class, whatever group he may belong, without respect to cultures or languages..." Barthes notes that the "consequences" from such a union "would be huge, perhaps even harrowing," an acknowledgement that binds the sensual to the political. In this state of bliss, what he refers to as *jouissance*, reader and text are cut loose from the social and political ideologies structured by and enacted through language.

*The Pleasure of the Text* still echoes nearly fifty years after its publication. The possibilities for language, as not only a way to grab but also remove power, have only become more prevalent and urgent. Images have also come to define a new kind of literacy, with an equally complex potential for both agency and control. *the Seam, the Fault, the Flaw* brings together painting, collage, works on paper, and photography made between the early 20th century and the present day, whose style, imagery, or content enters into playful, strange, extreme and even uncomfortable terrain. Eliza Douglas suggests the body by way of its negation, while also playing with identity through gendered satirical codes; Louis M. Eilshemius and Pierre Klossowski both adapted faux-naive, illustrative styles to depict sexually charged scenes that oscillate between suggestive and explicit, harmless and sinister. Emily Sundblad visually translates Klossowski's seminal text *Living Currency* through her own auto-erotica; Jimmy Wright and Loretta Fahrenholz picture spaces not often seen—bygone gay nightclubs and contemporary mental health facilities; and E'wao Kagoshima's signature collages queer mundane advertising and bland formalism with seamlessly integrated shards of homosexual pornography.

All of these works are a kind of fantasy. They depict neither reality nor fiction, but something in-between that meditates on the unspeakable, invisible, or taboo. For Barthes, *jouissance* meant occupying the furthest edges of accepted codes and behaviors as a means to break them apart, writing that, "neither culture nor its destruction is erotic; it is the seam between them, the fault, the flaw, which becomes so."

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