

Thomas Erben Gallery



Installation view, south/east walls (photo credit: Fernando Sandoval/MW).

Self-Pleasure

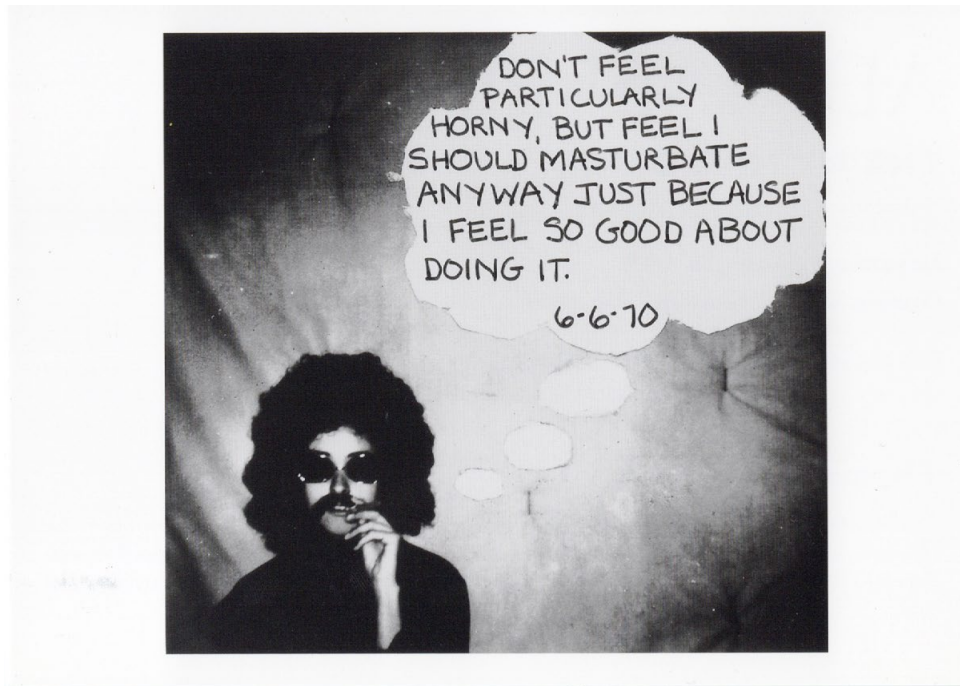
Tofo Bardi - Nicole Eisenman - Chitra Ganesh - Andrea Éva Győri - Justine Kurland - Kinke Kooi - Jacky Marshall - Shala Miller - Anne Minich - Senga Nengudi - Janice Nowinski - Adrian Piper - Carla Williams - Jin Young Lee with Colin Sakamoto and Thomas Raggio

Curated by Sabrina Slavin

June 27 - July 26, 2024

Opens June 27, 6 - 8:30 p.m.

Thomas Erben is thrilled to present *Self-Pleasure*, a thematic exploration that delves into the realm of female self-gratification, offering a multilayered journey through the complexities of pleasure, desire and autonomy.



Adrian Piper

The Mythic Being, 1972-1975

Gallery invitation, Fall 1999

This exhibition showcases work by fourteen female identifying as well as non-binary artists and is curated by Sabrina Slavin, the gallery's archivist, who is herself an artist working in photographic self-portraiture. Across painting, sculpture, mixed media, lens-based art and performance, these works brim with female agency and self-determination, while discussing the self in its relation or reaction to a wider social context.

The artists exhibited use self-portraiture or the sharing of moments of intimacy as sites of ambiguity and critical examination. **Adrian Piper's** *Mythic Being*, for example, uses a diary entry about her masturbating in an unpublished 1974 Village Voice ad, publicizing an act, which – at the time – was more associated with male pleasure.



Installation view, west wall (photo credit: Fernando Sandoval/MW).



Chitra Ganesh
Hidden, 2007
Digital C-print
24 x 25 in. each
Edition of 5 (+ 1 AP)

Grotesquely guised, **Chitra Ganesh** places her crone in both the tradition of the sadhu and the witch, performing a mysterious ritual in one part of her triptych, and an act of defying self-pleasure in another.



Senga Nengudi

R.S.V.P., Reverie - Stale Mate, 2014

Nylon tights, sand

60 x 7 x 3.5 in.

“Male energies”, humorously referenced in **Senga Nengudi**’s nylon mesh sculpture, are present in her sand-filled bulbous forms, which simultaneously suggest pendulous breasts and testicles.



Andrea Éva Györi

Traumatizing an Apple (1-7), 2019

Watercolor and pencil on paper

54 x 70 cm. each

The ability to heal through pleasure is the subject of the vitally expressive drawings by **Andrea Éva Györi**, who instrumentalizes this act of self-love to heal psychic wounds left in the wake of sexual trauma.



Installation view, north/west walls (photo credit: Fernando Sandoval/MW).



Carla Williams

Untitled (black wall)

1987-1988

Gelatin silver prints

Image dimensions: 9 1/4 x 7 1/4 inches

Paper dimensions: 10 x 8 inches

In her photographic triptych, **Carla Williams**, We see her dancing with herself coyly posing in the first two frames, with her motion blurred in the second, and finally, her belly exposed, with an expression of triumph, arms raised, eyes closed, and mouth agape in the last.

Williams created a canon for Black female self-representation because she could find none. It is this act of creating something in a space of one's own which Slavin propels us to join as we celebrate the power of self-discovery and self-love in an unapologetic ode to empowerment and liberation.



Justine Kurland

Masturbating on Marc's Couch 23 Days After Breaking Up, 2015

Gelatin silver print

40 x 30 inches

Edition 1/6 (+ 2AP)

In a self-portrait from 2015, we see **Justine Kurland**, orgasming in a state between pleasure and pain, pointing simultaneously – as the title references a recent break up – to the potential for psychological release. Masturbation is used here as an act of healing as well as of rebellion.



Installation view, north/west walls (photo credit: Fernando Sandoval/MW).



Janice Nowinski

Bather, 2022

Oil on canvas

6 x 4 inches

Subtly, and emerging as a result of a painterly process starting from 19th century erotica, we see a female figure suggestively touching herself in **Janice Nowinski's** intimate painting.



Jacky Marshall
Mars I and II, 2022
Collage on paper
24 x 18 in.

Gender fluidity as well as entwinement are the subject of **Jacky Marshall's** collages, in which her and her partner's (in male drag) nude portraits are printed on transparent film, intermingling materially as well as visually.



Installation view, south/east walls (photo credit: Fernando Sandoval/MW).



Kinke Kooi
Be Precise, 2024
Archival pigment print
40 x 30 inches

Like in Janice Nowinski's piece, the same gesture is pointed to in **Kinke Kooi's** pastel *Precise*, a signal of sexual agency.



Installation view, east wall (photo credit: Fernando Sandoval/MW).



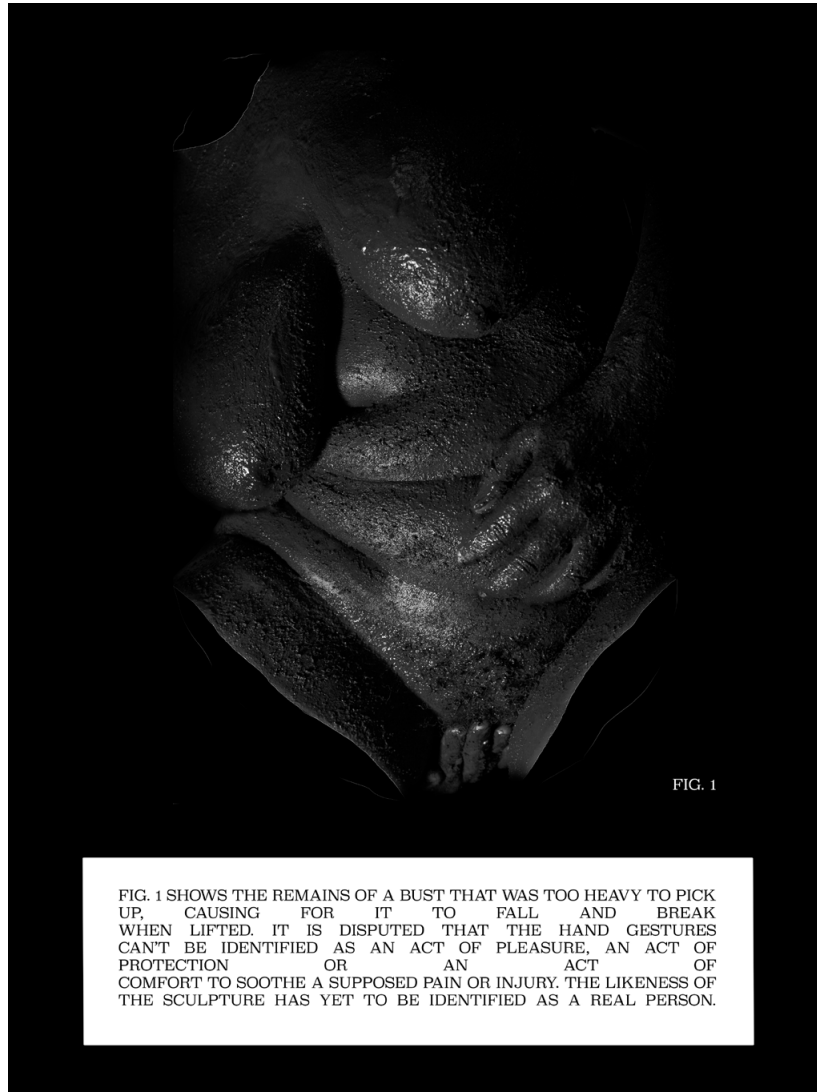
Tofo Bardi

How to Hold an Omen, 2024

Oil on canvas

48 x 48 inches

In **Tofo Bardi's** paintings, by contrast, genderless beings float ethereally in a space defined solely by color.



Shala Miller
Likeness Unidentified, 2022
Archival pigment print
22 x 20 inches

The repetition of gesture repeats itself once more and becomes an unidentifiable “act of pleasure, an act of protection or an act of comfort to soothe a supposed pain or injury” in **Shala Miller’s** *Likeness Unidentified*.



Anne Minich

Span, 2021

Oil on wood, found objects

50 x 28 inches

Ruminating over the effect being female has had on her life, **Anne Minich's** *Span* charts the points between birth and death, mimicking the span of Duchamp's mannequin in his peep-hole-only accessible installation of *Étant donnés: 1° la chute d'eau* in Philadelphia, Minich's place of work and life.



Installation view, south wall (photo credit: Fernando Sandoval/MW).



Jin Young Lee with Colin Sakamoto and Thomas Raggio
Let Me Show You How Terrible I Can Be, I Can Be Real Terrible (detail), 2021
Found and original imagery and text, printed on transparency film and
archival inkjet paper
Modular dimensions

As a counterpoint, **Jin Young Lee's** sprawling installation of self-portraits, screenshots and texts – the result of an exquisite corpse-kind of conversation with her male collaborators – presents aspects of internet culture, where women and the concept of sex become so detached from reality that they occupy an entirely fictitious space.



Nicole Eisenman

Don't Go A Changin', 1995

Ink on paper

15 x 11 inches

Further poking at misogynistic gender expectations, **Nicole Eisenman's** watercolor adds a darkly-comical coming-of-age story.

Slavin observes, "It is depleting to think about sex only as something to be consumed, rather than the beginning of us all. By making love, we create life. Through self-love, we create ourselves; like clay spinning on a wheel, being molded with soft force. As women, erotic imagery is not created with our psychic needs in mind, so we create our own imagery. There is joy and healing in singularity, in allowing yourself the space for self-discovery. This is the essence of **self-pleasure**."