

AKTIONSHAUS

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 examining the porosity between institutional discourse and intimacy. Drawing on excerpts from St. Augustine's *Confessions*, theories of libidinal economy and the language and tools of the military-corporate complex, Ciarrocca sheds light on how personal and official vocabularies collapse into singular, logical expressions of control-desire dynamics.

The Joys departs from Jean François Lyotard's reworking of the Stendhal maxim "Qui ne sait celer ne sait aimer" ("Who knows not how to hide knows not how to love"), originally appearing in a chapter titled "Des Cours" (About Courts) from Stendhal's 1822 *De l'amour* (On Love). Lyotard epigraphs his "nasty" *Libidinal Economy* with this line, hinting at concealment as an active, generative force underlying the non-plus-ultra of relations. Similarly, in *De l'amour*, looking at the Provençal tradition of courtly love poetry and the Provençal conception of "*amor de lonh*" (distant love) Stendhal finds an exemplary form for his own theory of 'crystallization,' the process by which lovers work in absence to idealize their beloved through imagination and psychosomatic projection, creating perfect objects of desire (and sustainment). *The Joys* emerges from this libidinal genealogy to articulate the logic of the fold where personal interaction and institutioning, desire and survival-driven exchange collapse into each other in a sequence of semantic undercuts.

The exhibition centers on a series of still frames extracted from footage of a couple's deep kissing, intervalled by intense lip biting. Ciarrocca had the still frames scanned and printed through an HP LaserJet office printer located in the Berlin corporate quarters of a major German banking institution; he then proceeded to manually transfer the prints on industrial sanding paper, the bank's ink drawing the blurred lines of the lovers' faces and mouths on the grey abrasive surface. Intercepting and narrativizing these intimate shots are transcripts from the artist's own diary pages, originally noted down with personal thoughts woven into altered excerpts from Hélène Cixous's *Tomb(e)*. The diary pages are overlayed with conclusionary, categorizing wording created by repurposing CATIA (the industry standard design software for aerospace and defense) as a text editor and printed on transparent vellum sheets, creating an assemblage where personal narrative, system design and institutioning converge.

Incorporated in the space are fragments from Augustine's text and BAE Systems' corporate communications transposed from collective to singular voice, exposing the uncanny resemblance between declarations of love and assertions of power. Synthetic human sweat spread across the gallery floor pools and crystallizes over time, slowly flowing underneath screens functioning as frames for the liquid and the chemical traces left by the evaporated water. Including sodium and potassium chlorides, lactic acid, amino acids, urea and other chemicals dissolved in running water, the substance is a phantom of corporeal balancing dynamics, a material signaling at once absence and presence, fatigue and exercise, the stress of repression or the joy of release.

Working as a sort of alchemical incantation and evocation rather than title, *The Joys* maintains a fugitive relationship to the works themselves. Like the sweat refusing complete crystallization or a kiss edged by bites, the works variously and jointly manifest a grammar of intimacy that resists full disclosure, suggesting that institutional and personal languages share not just vocabulary but a fundamental investment in what remains strategically unsaid.

Aktionshaus

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