

# 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, intimately logical expressions of control-desire dynamics.

For the epigraph of his 1974 *Libidinal Economy*, Jean François Lyotard adopted a slightly reworked version of a sentence originally appearing in Stendhal's 1822 *De l'Amour (On Love)*, specifically in a chapter titled 'Des Cours' ('About Courts'). Inscribing his "livre méchant" in the conviction that "Who knows not how to hide knows not how to love," Lyotard acknowledges concealment as an active, generative force underlying the non-plus-ultra of relations. In the parallel of *De l'Amour*, looking at the Provençal tradition of courtly love poetry and 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, as an attempt to evidence the logic of the fold where personal interaction and institutioning, desire and survival-driven exchange coalesce in a sequence of semantic undercuts.

The exhibition centers on a series of still frames extracted from footage of a couple's deep kissing punctuated by lip biting. After filming and selecting the still frames, Ciarrocca had them 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 onto industrial sanding paper, the bank's ink composing the blurred contours of the lovers' faces and mouths on the grey abrasives. At once intercepting and narrativizing these intimate shots are transcripts from the artist's own diary pages, originally noted with personal thoughts and altered excerpts from Hélène Cixous's *Tomb(e)*. The diary pages are crossed over with conclusionary, categorizing wording, drawn by repurposing CATIA (the industry standard design software for aerospace and defense) as a text editor and printed on transparent vellum sheets, shaping each page into a layered assemblage where personal narrative, system design and institutioning converge. Incorporated as both sound and text around the exhibition are fragments from Augustine's writings 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 the course of days, slowly flowing underneath screens functioning as framing devices for the liquid as well as for the chemical traces left by the already evaporated water. Including electrolytes, amino acids, lactic acid, 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, the joy of release.

Working more as an alchemical evocation and incantation than a title, *The Joys* maintains a fugitive relationship to the pieces and interventions that compose it. 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.

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