

Maja Malou Lyse

MM

Maja Malou Lyses kunstneriske praksis sammenfatter seksualundervisning, feministisk teori og pornografisk materiale med brugen af massemedier og iscenesættelser af kunstnerens egen krop.

Til Lyses soloudstilling på O – Overgaden har hun forfulgt et af mediehistoriens mest ikoniske kvindebilleder og dets økonomier: nemlig Marilyn Monroes berømte afklædte billede i *Playboy*, der kronede magasinets midteropslag i den allerførste udgave i 1953. Lyses undersøgelse tager udgangspunkt i, hvordan Playboykoncernens grundlægger Hugh Hefner brugte fotografiet af Monroe uden hendes samtykke og således byggede et ekstremt indflydelsesrigt seximperium på at fratage det kvindelige subjekt sin autonomi – en handling som potentielt er det første eksempel på hævnporno set på populærkulturens medieflader.

Som en performativ gestus blander udstillingen *MM* – som er forkortelsen af både Marilyn Monroe og Maja Malou – videoværker, souvenirs, dagbogslignende tekster og ready-mades, særligt Hefners tidligere privatejede original af Monroes nøgenbillede: et guldindrammet fotografi som mediemogulen signerede på dets front og havde hængende i sit hjem, the Playboy Mansion, frem til sin død i 2017.

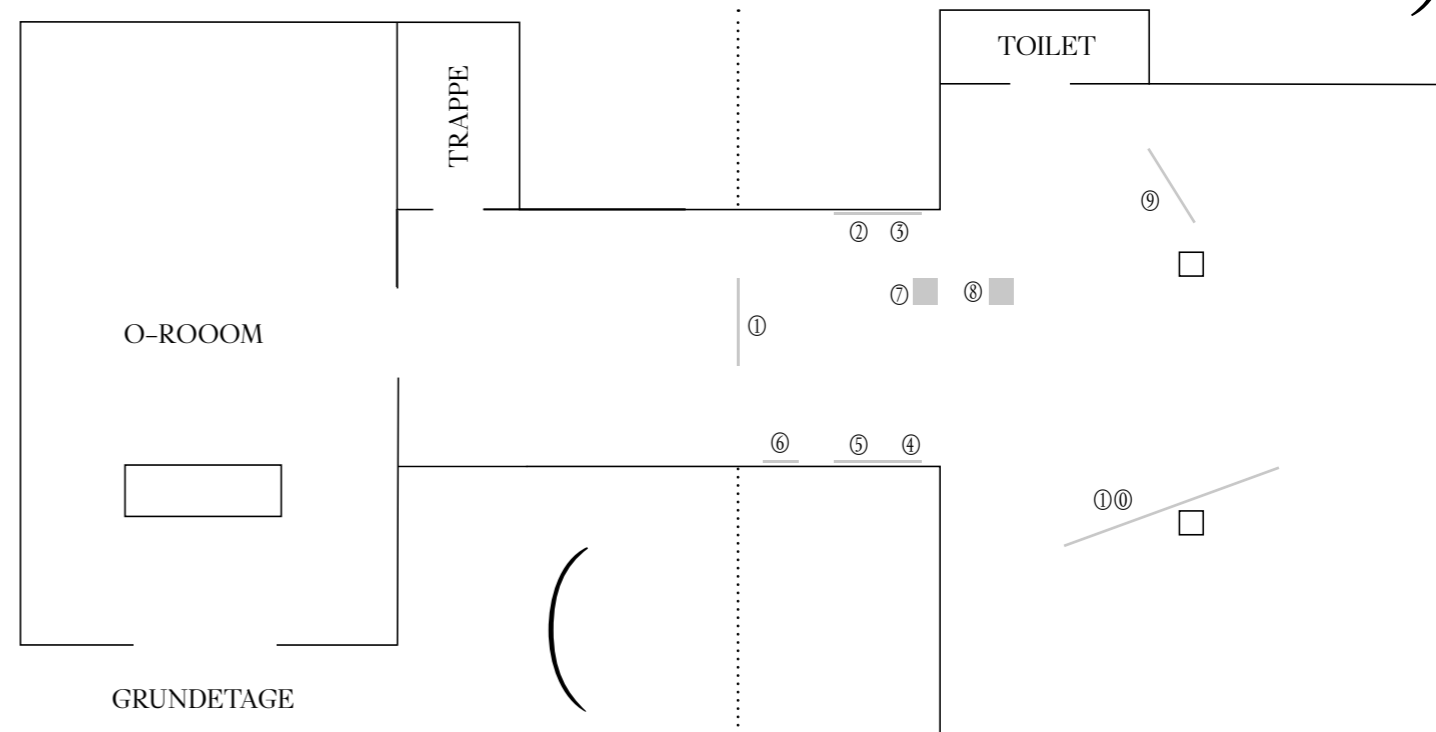
To videoer følger kunstneren selv. Den ene viser Lyses selvscenesatte jagt, idet hun rejser til en auktion i Hollywood for at erhverve det berygtede Monroe-relikvie. I filmen ses Lyse byde på det spektakulære fotografi, hvis gradvist stigende pris når næsten 100.000 danske kroner – en pris, der hverken spejler de 50 dollars Norma Jeane oprindeligt modtog under pseudonymet Mona Monroe fra den kommercielle fotograf Tom Kelley, eller den ekstreme profit Playboys eksponering af fotografiet gav Hefner. Før dette klimaks følges budene på en gravsten tæt på Monroes. Alt imens krydsklippes til bl.a. Monroe-imitatorer, auktionarius og en OnlyFans (porno)model i forskellige poseringer. Salget af gravstenen skaber en parallel til, hvordan Hefner selv rekvirerede en gravsten ved siden af Monroe for, ligeledes mod hendes vilje, at kunne forfølge hende selv efter sin død, som han udtalte det: “spending eternity next to Marilyn...”.

Den anden video – der er skudt op på stort lærred, så den bliver næsten skulpturel i grovkornede close-ups af Lyses krop – dokumenterer en kort seance, hvor kunstneren får fjernet sin tatovering af en Playboy bunny på den ene balle. Fjernelsen er dog ikke varig. Helt som i filmens gentagne loop, skal laserbehandlingen gentages (mange gange). Hvis Lyses køb af Hefners fotografi kan ses som dét, hun selv – i en af udstillingens personlige, notatliggende essays – kalder et slags ‘revenge ownership’, bliver den visuelle repetition af forsøget på at ændre kroppens imprægnering en metafor for en utopisk kamp for at slette eller omgøre fortiden.

Både i Lyses essays af gonzojournalistisk karakter, der titulerer Monroe “MM” og Hefner “HH” og bl.a. beskriver Lyses NYC-hot yoga studie *Some Like It Hot*, og i kunstnerens samling af merch og memorabilia, fx en serie cookies i forrådnelse, som kunstneren har fået af en sugarmama, forfølger hun, hvordan Monroe og Hefners forbundne historier fortsat spejles i dag og kan ses som en slags startskud på samtidens begærs-, sex- og kropskultur.

MM undersøger således, hvordan Monroe og Hefner stadig stempler vores kroppe, liv og tanker som betydningsfulde hjørnesten i den kollektive vestlige seksuelle bevidsthed. Med udgangspunkt i Monroes berygtede nøgenbillede – et komplekst nutidigt symbol på, hvordan identiteter konstant bliver konstrueret, cirkuleret og seksualiseret – og den allestedsnærværende lyd fra dets auktion stiller *MM* spørgsmål ved forholdet mellem seksuel kapital og senkapitalisme, repræsentation og dominans, branding og spektakel, eller sagt ganske enkelt: hvem ejer et billede?

31. august – 27. oktober 2024



① *MM #01*

Artist proof af Marilyn Monroe fotografi; fotograferet af Tom Kelley i 1948, signeret af Hugh Hefner på forsiden, guldramme

② *MM #02 Julien's Auction DIARIES (A hollywood shopping spree).docx*
Papir

③ *MM #03 Malik (MM_My Dick).docx*
Papir, fotografi

④ *MM #05 Richard (MM_5th Avenue).docx*
Papir, fotografi, kaloriefri sukkererstatning

⑤ *MM #06 HAUNTED HOUSES. spookyASS&TITS&BRICKS!!!.docx*
Papir, fotografi

⑥ *MM #04 SOME LIKE IT HOT (rotting_sugar).docx*
Papir, fotografier

⑦ *MM #07 Memorabilia*

Vitrine med *My Story* af Marilyn Monroe, Womanizer – Marilyn Monroe Special Edition, Agent Provocateur ønskeliste

⑧ *MM #08 Memorabilia*
Vitrine med cookies, t-shirt, Chanel No. 5, jeans, auktionsskilt, nøglering med peberspray, Agent Provocateur æske, g-streng

⑨ *MM #09 Auction*
3:26 min, loop

Video
Filmet, klippet og produceret af Maja Malou Lyse & Lasse Lund

⑩ *MM #10 Tattoo*

2:40 min, loop

Video
Filmet, klippet og produceret af Maja Malou Lyse & Lasse Lund

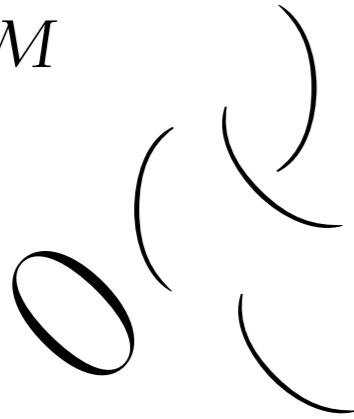
Alle værker er fra 2024 og lavet specifikt til udstillingen på O – Overgaden.

Biografi:

Maja Malou Lyse (f. 1995, DK) er billedkunstner med en MFA fra Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi (2022) bosat i København. Udover at have været vært for tv-showet “Sex med Maja” på DR i 2018-19 har Lyse udstillet på blandt andet Kunstmuseum Brandts, Odense (2020); ARoS, Aarhus (2019); og Kunsthal Charlottenborg, København (2019).

Maja Malou Lyse

MM



Maja Malou Lyse's artistic practice interlaces sex education, feminist theory, and pornographic material with the use of mass media and her own bodily posture.

For her exhibition at O—Overgaden, Lyse chases the story of one of the most iconic female images in media history and its economic trajectories: Marilyn Monroe's undressed *Playboy* centerfold, crowning the magazine's first ever issue in 1953. Lyse's investigation sets off from the fact that the Playboy Incorporation's founding father, Hugh Hefner, used Monroe's image without her consent, thus building a hugely influential sex empire on stripping the female subject of autonomy—potentially the first ever example of revenge porn flooding mainstream media.

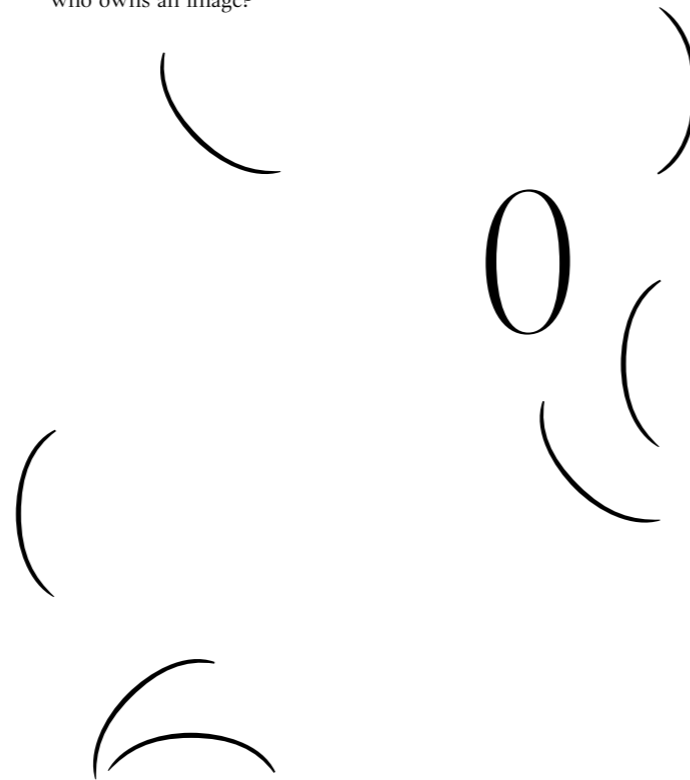
Performative in nature, the exhibition *MM*—the acronym of both Marilyn Monroe and Maja Malou—mixes video, memorabilia, diary-like texts, and ready-mades, notably Hefner's formerly privately owned original of the Monroe nude: a gold-framed photograph that the magazine magnate signed on its front and kept in his home, the Playboy Mansion, up until his death in 2017.

Two videos follow the artist herself. One shows Lyse's self-staged pursuit as she journeys to an auction in Hollywood to acquire the Monroe nude. In the film, Lyse is seen bidding on the spectacular photograph, the gradually rising price reaching \$12,500—a price that neither reflects the \$50 Norma Jeane originally received, under the pseudonym Mona Monroe, from the commercial photographer Tom Kelley, nor the extreme profit *Playboy's* exposure of the photograph presumably gave Hefner. Before this climax, the film closely follows bids on a gravestone near Monroe's, while crosscutting to, among other things, Marilyn impersonators, the auctioneer, and an OnlyFans (porn) model posing. The gravestone lot creates a parallel to how Hefner himself, likewise against Monroe's will, acquired a gravestone next to her, enabling him to haunt her even in the afterlife or, as he has stated, to be “spending eternity next to Marilyn.”

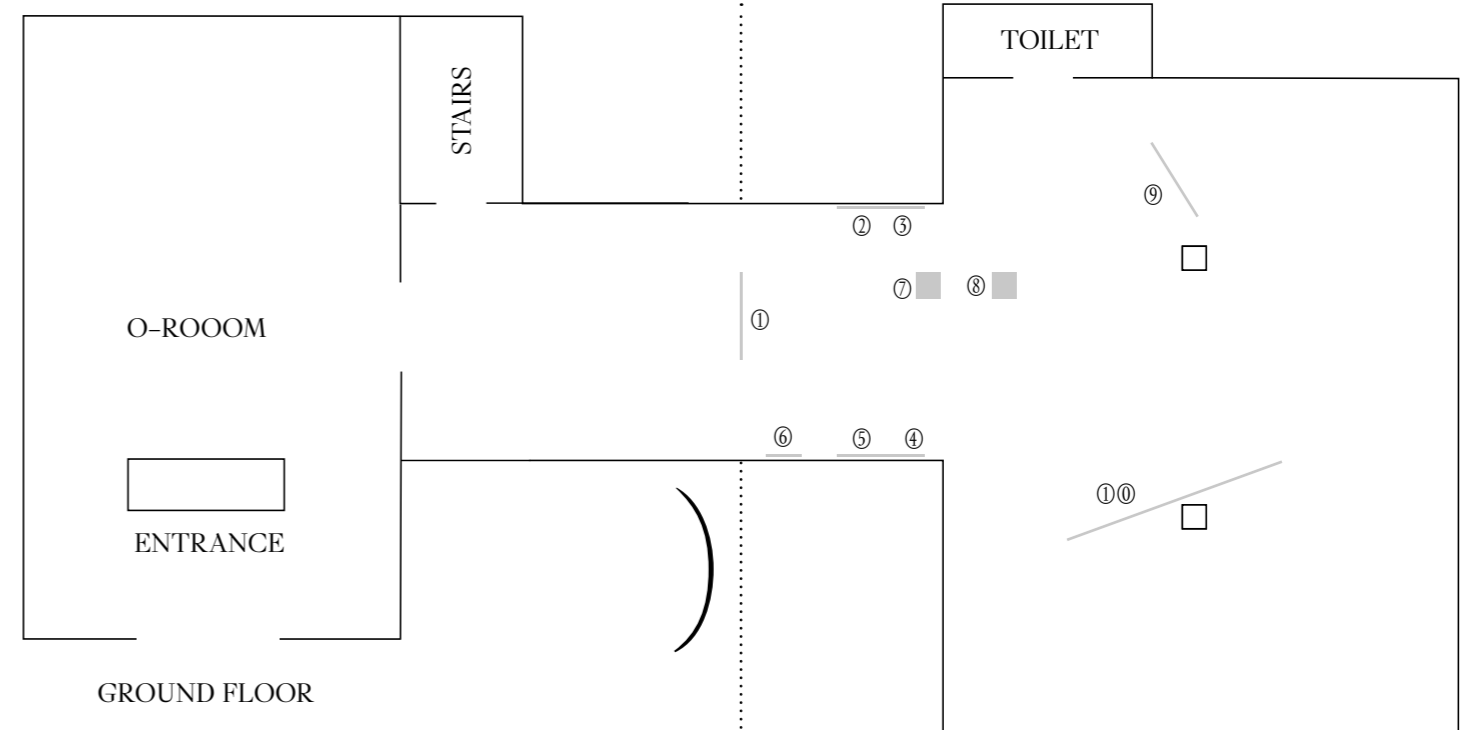
The other video—projected on a large screen, making it almost sculptural with its grainy close-ups of Lyse's body—documents a brief séance in which the artist gets her Playboy bunny butt tattoo erased. However, such a removal is not permanent. Just as in the film's repeated loop, the laser treatment must be repeated many times. If Lyse's purchase of Hefner's photograph can be seen as what the artist herself—in one of the exhibition's personal essays—calls a kind of “revenge ownership,” the visual repetition of the attempt to alter the body's imprint becomes a metaphor for a utopian struggle to erase or undo the past.

In Lyse's essays of a gonzo-journalistic nature—which name Monroe “MM” and Hefner “HH”, and, among other things, describe Lyse's NYC hot yoga studio *Some Like It Hot*—and in the artist's collection of merch and memorabilia, including rotting cookies from a sugar mama, she explores how Monroe and Hefner's intertwined stories continue to resonate today and can be seen as a kind of starting point for contemporary desire-, sex-, and body culture.

MM thus traces how Monroe and Hefner are still stamping our bodies, lives, and minds as significant cornerstones of collective Western sexual consciousness. Employing Monroe's infamous nude surrounded by the omnipresent soundtrack from its auction—as a complex contemporary symbol of how identities are continuously constructed, circulated, and sexualized—*MM* poses questions of living currency and late capitalism, representation and domination, branding and spectacle, and simply: who owns an image?



31 August – 27 October 2024



- ① *MM #01*
Artist proof of Marilyn Monroe photograph; shot by Tom Kelley in 1948, signed by Hugh Hefner on front, golden frame
 - ② *MM #02 Julien's Auction DIARIES (A hollywood shopping spree).docx*
Paper
 - ③ *MM #03 Malik (MM_My Dick).docx*
Paper, photograph
 - ④ *MM #05 Richard (MM_5th Avenue).docx*
Paper, photograph, zero-calorie sweetener
 - ⑤ *MM #06 HAUNTED HOUSES. spookyASS&TITS&BRICKS!!!.docx*
Paper, photograph
 - ⑥ *MM #04 SOME LIKE IT HOT (rotting_sugar).docx*
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 - ⑦ *MM #07 Memorabilia*
Vitrine with *My Story* by Marilyn Monroe, Womanizer – Marilyn Monroe Special Edition, Agent Provocateur wish list
 - ⑧ *MM #08 Memorabilia*
Vitrine with cookies, t-shirt, Chanel No. 5, jeans, auction paddle, keyring with pepper spray, Agent Provocateur box, thong
 - ⑨ *MM #09 Auction*
3:26 min., loop
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Filmed, edited, and produced by Maja Malou Lyse and Lasse Lund
 - ⑩ *MM #10 Tattoo*
2:40 min., loop
Video
Filmed, edited, and produced by Maja Malou Lyse and Lasse Lund
- All works are from 2024 and created specifically for the exhibition at O—Overgaden.

Biography:
Maja Malou Lyse (b. 1993, DK) is a Copenhagen-based visual artist, holding an MFA from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts (2022). Beyond hosting the TV show “Sex med Maja” (Sex with Maja) on DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation) in 2018–19, Lyse has exhibited at, among other venues, Kunstmuseum Brandts, Odense (2020), ARoS, Aarhus (2019), and Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2019).