

Maja Malou
Lyse

MM



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O-OVERGADEN
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INTRODUCTION

It is a great pleasure to introduce this publication, as a companion to Maja Malou Lyse's solo exhibition *MM* at O—Overgaden. Since 2021, O—Overgaden has, with the generous support of the Augustinus Foundation, published a monographic series in conjunction with our large-scale solo exhibitions, aiming at expanding the conversations around each show and producing new, offspring material.

For this edition, the acknowledged Canadian writer and editor Whitney Mallett has contributed the new text "Nasty Tales and Their Orchestra" alongside writer and curator Alissa Bennett who has generously edited an excerpt of her text "Looking for Something Warm" from 2019 and finally, O—Overgaden's in-house post-doc researcher Anne Kølbaek Iversen has written the essay "MM" about Lyse's exhibition. A warm thank you to all contributors. In addition, I wish to thank our publications editor Nanna Friis and the whole team at O—Overgaden for their efforts in realizing the exhibition, as well as the graphic design team at fanfare consistently dedicated work. Of course, not least, my gratitude goes to the artist, Maja Malou Lyse, for generously sharing conceptualizations and co-thinking with all of us, through both the exhibition and this publication.

Maja Malou Lyse's artistic practice interlaces sex education, feminist theory, and pornographic material with 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, and ready-mades, notably Hefner's 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 documents Lyse's pursuit as she journeys to an auction in Hollywood to acquire the Monroe nude; the other shows the artist getting her *Playboy* bunny butt tattoo erased. Lyse 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 and the 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?

Rhea Dall,
Director and Chief Curator, O—Overgaden,
September 2024

Maja Malou Lyse (b. 1995, 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).

NASTY TALES AND THEIR ORCHESTRA

Whitney Mallett

Season 1, episode 1 of the reality TV show *The Girls Next Door* opens with an aerial view of the 22,000-square-foot Playboy Mansion. The 1950s pop-jazz smash hit “Come On-a My House” plays but it is a Y2K cover of the original Rosemary Clooney song credited to Nasty Tales and Their Orchestra (a musical artist with no other song credits). In the initial overhead, you can count at least a dozen peaks of gabled roofs and five vehicles parked out front in a driveway circling a fountain. The Gothic-Tudor-style mansion, designed in 1927 as the residence for the son of a British American department store tycoon, resembles a castle. When Hugh Hefner purchased the property in 1971, the \$1.05-million sale price was one of the highest ever recorded for a private residence in Los Angeles at the time. He paid 2,100 times more for the mansion than he had paid for the rights to use the nude photos featuring Marilyn Monroe that he had featured, without her prior knowledge or consent, in the debut issue of his magazine. He paid 21,000 times more for the mansion than Marilyn Monroe had been paid for the session from which these nude photos originated, when she modeled as an unknown actress for a calendar company in 1949.

Following the aerial shot of the mansion, a montage of sped-up footage guides us through a wrought iron gate and up a driveway flanked by dense green hedges conveying a sense of elegance and exclusivity. A medieval-style wooden door opens and the first person we see is a member of the household staff. No makeup, brown hair pulled back in a ponytail, and dressed like a catering waiter—black pants, black vest, white collared shirt—she greets the camera: “Welcome to the Playboy Mansion.” Throughout the opening sequence, the Nasty Tales cover continues to play in choppy interludes, interspersed with clips of natural sound spoken by “the help.” Blonde women rub in tanning oil as they lounge on deck chairs, jump in bikinis on a trampoline, smile on a pool floatie—and cut to a phone operator in a security office: “Good morning Playboy Mansion, can I help you?” Flamingos, coy pond, puppy dogs, bunny rabbits, chef stirring soup, and a Pop Art-style portrait of a young Hugh Hefner hanging on a wall. This is the first piece of art we see. I cannot find a record of this portrait being included in the catalog for the 2024 auction *Icons: Hugh Hefner, Playboy, and Marilyn Monroe*. Hugh Hefner and Marilyn Monroe never met in life, but in death their curated miscellany, including Keith Harings and lipsticks, made a combined \$4 million.

Holly Madison was one of Hugh Hefner’s three live-in girlfriends and a principal cast member of *The Girls Next Door*, which ran from 2005 to 2010. Years later, but somewhat precociously, in 2016, before the groundswell of #MeToo, Madison published a tell-all about her time living in the mansion, titled *Down the Rabbit Hole: Curious Adventures and Cautionary Tales of a Former Playboy Bunny*. Chapter four chronicles a period a couple of years before the TV show started production. It is 2001 and, as part of Hugh Hefner’s harem of seven girlfriends, she attends his Comedy Central roast. She navigates the pettiness and jealousies of living in the mansion, finally discovering she can use a tab at a salon to have her hair dyed professionally. She experiences her first mansion Halloween party, noting her Alice in Wonderland costume from Trashy Lingerie is not as revealing as the other girlfriends’ outfits. She gets a nose job. When Tina Jordan moves out, Madison is promoted to number-one girlfriend. Her new status does not make her immune to insecurities, which Hugh Hefner sews intentionally to create division amongst the girls and maintain his power, she explains. Madison feels like her waist-length natural hair is her only unique feature. However, when a new girl named Mary Jo arrives, with ass-length hair, Madison spirals and decides to undergo a Marilyn Monroe-inspired makeover. Cue the scene when Hugh Hefner sees her new look. “Don’t ever wear red lipstick again. You look old, hard, and cheap,” he berates her. Madison cries, “I felt like an idiot for even trying to be beautiful.”

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING WARM

Alissa Bennett

In November 2012, Hollywood auction house Julien’s sold a partially used jar of Active Phelityl Cream in their *Icons and Idols* sale. The exterior of the container was stained with foundation and there was a layer of grime visible around its lip; its seal had been broken and its contents dipped into, but these imperfections only served to make the object more desirable. It belonged to Marilyn Monroe; its hammer price was \$4,687.50.

Though the invention of Marilyn Monroe was the culmination of factors far too complex to itemize here, Allan “Whitey” Snyder can be credited with conjuring her bombshell countenance from its relatively humble Norma Jeane Baker beginnings. The two met in 1946 at Monroe’s first Twentieth Century Fox screen test, and Snyder is recognized not only for collaborating with the actress on her heavy lidded, glossy lipped look, but as the makeup artist on nearly every major film she appeared in from the early 1950s until her death.

We can only imagine the pleasure both must have felt in those early days when Marilyn was first coaxed into the flesh, when the person was transformed into persona via sorceries that were alternately cosmetic and emotional in nature. Whitey’s makeup chair was the site of *sous rature* activation, a place where the chaotic trauma of Norma Jeane’s life gained currency under the power of Marilyn’s mask. But the monkey’s paw of fame is rarely free from complication, and it requires only a rudimentary knowledge of Monroe’s addictions and emotional volatility to surmise that the task of summoning her to the surface became increasingly difficult. The end of Monroe’s career is always of particular interest to those of us who feel compelled to excavate her grave.

Although the actress is at her luminous best in Billy Wilder’s 1959 comedy *Some Like it Hot*, her physical appearance belies a series of troubling personal crises that would eventually wend their way to her surface. Morbidly preoccupied with the possibility of losing the child she was pregnant with and distracted by the drama of a failing marriage to playwright Arthur Miller, Monroe’s anxiety and depression manifested not only in an exacerbation of her legendary tardiness, but in on-set habits that aroused the contempt of both her co-stars and her director. Unable to memorize her lines—it famously took her in excess of 50 takes to deliver the phrase “Where’s that bourbon?”—Monroe depended on cue cards for the duration of her performance,

an issue that was further problematized by her increasing dependence on barbiturates and amphetamines.

John Huston’s 1961 classic *The Misfits* represents Monroe’s final complete performance. Co-starring Clark Gable, Montgomery Clift, and Eli Wallach, the production was a maelstrom of alcoholism, addiction, infidelity, and gambling. Within five years of the film’s lackluster initial reception, three of its four stars would be dead. This film is of special interest to anyone with a ghoulish investment in Hollywood history; I have watched it closely many times, mostly because it is the only film where Monroe begins to wear her tumult on her face. The plot revolves around three increasingly disenfranchised cowboys who meet a woman named Roslyn and all come to expect her to cure them of their pain, each of them absolutely oblivious to her own disappointment and suffering. The subtext of the narrative is clear: we had come to expect things from Monroe that she was in no position to provide us with; life had emptied her out, and it did not matter that everyone still expected more.

Whitey Snyder served as Monroe’s personal makeup artist on the set of *The Misfits*, a particularly harrowing task due to the actress’s insomnia and drug-bloated features. Hollywood myth suggests that the movie star was so decimated by champagne and prescription pills that Snyder would often have to begin transforming her into Marilyn while she slept off her pharmaceutical hangover. Each morning, her eyes would be checked to see if she was fit for film; if approved, her face would be iced and moisturized, and Whitey would begin the increasingly grim task of calling her back to life. Though the inquisitive eye will detect a gentle slackening of her jaw line, the first suggestions of middle age settling themselves in on her face, it is a strange turn in the film’s cinematography that offers us the greatest evidence of Marilyn’s physical state. Most of the actress’s close ups were shot in soft focus, a decision that was primarily made to disguise the flaws that Snyder could not.

Midway through the filming of *The Misfits*, Monroe overdosed. Production was halted and the actress was forced to admit herself into a hospital for two weeks to detox from drugs and alcohol. She returned chastened, if not happy, and completed production without any further catastrophes. It was during their shared cosmetic ritual one morning that Monroe asked Snyder to make her a promise: as her co-inventor and her friend, she asked if he would do the makeup at her funeral if she died before him. “Sure,” he answered. “Bring the body back while it’s still warm and I’ll do it.”

Many writers have covered the bleak details of Monroe’s final days—some because they love a mystery, some because she has been made emblematic for the generic suffering of all women, and others because her story proves to the rest of us that beauty and fame are flimsy scrimms that cannot rescue even the most spectacular among us from pain.

It is through these accounts that we know that Snyder kept his promise; fortified with a flask of gin, he resurrected Marilyn's face one last time. He also served as a pallbearer at her funeral.

My interest in Whitey Snyder is difficult for me to explain, and though his name has come up many times in my own research into Monroe's death, there has never been quite enough information to sate me. Some years ago, I stumbled across the website for Julien's, the auction house in Hollywood that sold Marilyn's moisturizer and specializes in (often ghoulish) celebrity memorabilia. In 2012, they had a sale of items from Snyder's estate, the most publicized of which being a large volume of original on-set photographs that he had taken of Marilyn during the course of their friendship. Buried as Lot 521 was a gold-plated money clip that the actress had gifted to him; it was inscribed with a dedication that read "Whitey Dear, While I'm Still Warm, Marilyn." It sold for \$21,250.

In 1962, Monroe's personal assistant, a woman named Betty Robin, consented to a filmed interview and answered questions about her impressions of the actress's life. "I thought she was a friendless, wandering person," Mrs. Robin said, "and that the only people that surrounded her were the people that she paid." The money clip is somehow able to contain all of the desperate sadness of this sentiment while still maintaining a measure of saucy nihilistic portent. It is a perfect object, a profound metaphor for a life that was by turns glitzy and shabby, and I wish that I knew where it was.

The problem with obsession is that we always want more. Recent news has revealed that there is a new Monroe documentary claiming that there were nude photographs taken of her body in the morgue. What is it inside of us that would feel psychologically stimulated by the idea of further humiliating a woman who has been dead for nearly 60 years? The truth is that wanting to see more is not so far removed from examining her bedside table or reading her letters. It is not so different from wanting to hold a meaningless jar of her face cream in our hands; we are looking for something that feels intimate, we are looking for something warm.

MM

Anne Kolbæk Iversen

*The Young-Girl is resentment that smiles. There are beings that give you the desire to die slowly before their eyes, but the Young-Girl only excites the desire to vanquish her, to take advantage of her.*¹

How do we look at the picture of Marilyn Monroe today? And where is it placed in relation to the picture we imagine when thinking about her? Marilyn. Monroe. Norma. Mona. It is difficult to write about Monroe without resorting to the clichés that her career was built upon: the blonde hair, diamonds, the beautiful smile, seductive voice and figure. She was a woman desired by the most powerful men and became the 20th century's greatest sex symbol. She was also a woman never allowed to grow old.

With the exhibition *MM* at O—Overgaden, Maja Malou Lyse focuses on elements from the history and myths surrounding the American actress, known for her tragic childhood and an equally tragic death, as well as a career that dazzled through the 1950s as brightly as the diamonds she sang about. Lyse also questions what stories Monroe inspires today.

In 1962, when Marilyn Monroe was found dead in her home at the age of 36, a full stop was put to her career, but neither her image nor her idolization disappeared with her living body—in fact, quite the opposite. Her belongings continue to be sold at auctions for staggering prices (the jewel-encrusted dress she wore when she sang "Happy Birthday" to President John F. Kennedy in May 1962, only months before her death, was sold for \$4.8 million). Her life story is told from new angles in documentaries and feature films; in books and films alike, speculation persists over what lay behind her unmistakable charisma and the circumstances leading to her death.

This continued idolization and fetishization is what Lyse deals with and deconstructs. The exhibition is based on Lyse's acquisition of a photograph of the young Marilyn Monroe, shot in 1949 (Julien's Auctions dates it to 1948) by photographer Tom Kelley for a pin-up calendar.² Four years later—without the actress's knowledge or consent—the photograph ended up as the centerfold in the very first issue of *Playboy* magazine, published in December 1953. Thus, the use of the image of Monroe in *Playboy*—launched with cover text reading: "First time in any magazine, FULL COLOR, the famous MARILYN MONROE NUDE"—becomes an early example of the type of exploitation where sexualized images are distributed without consent.³ *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner had purchased the rights to the image (whether it was directly from Tom Kelley or from the company holding the rights varies among sources) and chose not only to reprint it in *Playboy*,

but later also to put it in a gold frame, sign it, and hang it in his home, the Playboy Mansion.⁴

In the exhibition, Lyse presents the Hefner-signed image as a ready-made alongside, among other things, footage from the auction where she purchased the image and memorabilia from her journey to Los Angeles and New York. The exhibition addresses the fetishization that took place around Monroe in both her life and afterlife, but also showcases the randomness in how certain objects are attributed fetishistic value while others remain mere things. Displayed in the vitrines are, among other items, a Marilyn Monroe edition of a vibrator, a pepper spray in a Marilyn Monroe keychain, a bottle of Chanel no. 5 perfume, the auction paddle number 232, a pair of pink rhinestone-studded panties, some cookies, and a page from Monroe's autobiography *My Story*, published posthumously in 1974, in which she writes about how, as a young teenager, she was cast in the role of a "siren" and object of desire, without yet understanding or feeling desire herself.

"Why I was a siren, I hadn't the faintest idea. There were no thoughts of sex in my head. I didn't want to be kissed, and I didn't dream of being seduced by a duke or a movie star. The truth was that with all my lipstick and mascara and precocious curves, I was as unsensual as a fossil. But I seemed to affect people quite otherwise."⁵

The publication of Monroe's autobiography and, later, her remaining diaries, notes, and poetic fragments, can be seen as attempts to gain insight into the woman behind the icon and discover who Norma Jeane was before she became, or when she was not, Marilyn Monroe. But even in this attempt to capture the authentic person and separate her from the idolization, the fascination with the tragedy prevails and perpetuates the split between a suppressed, authentic self and the public persona.⁶ Where previously Monroe's body was used for selling copies of *Playboy*, now her intimate scribbles are meant to move and shock. In the vitrine, the autobiographical records work as examples of how stories are spun around Monroe's life and image. Lyse's presentation feeds and challenges the desire to read these objects as traces of connections to Monroe's life or Lyse's journey in search of her ghost. The display of seemingly everyday items brings to the fore discussions about their use and exchange value and the practical function of objects versus their symbolic value. Lyse highlights and shifts the exaggerated, auratic, and fetishized value attributed to anything that has been in contact with Monroe—including the previously mentioned Chanel no. 5, which was re-launched with Monroe as face of the campaign 50 years after her death—by placing her own personal objects alongside the collection of Monroe memorabilia. Maja Malou and Marilyn Monroe mirror each other.

This mirroring is also at play in a series of narrative and reflective texts spread across the exhibition space walls,

where Lyse writes about random as well as arranged encounters she has had with various people in LA and New York while following Monroe's trail. The texts revolve around sexuality, desire, and identity as they are shaped and negotiated through cultural codes, reflecting on the exchanges that take place in various intimate relationships: gifts, money, images, status, desire. Monroe is a central figure in these stories. Lyse visits a collector to view an original silkscreen of Warhol's *Marilyn Monroe* and is gifted a bottle of Chanel no. 5; she practices hot yoga every day at a yoga studio called Some Like It Hot, and must therefore repeat the tedious daily routine of applying self-tanner and acrylic nails because all of it melts in the studio's heat—tiring maintenance labor. She binges reality shows, one from the Playboy Mansion and another featuring a couple of Hefner's former girlfriends talking about being haunted by a middle-aged woman's ghost and the ideal of the blonde, busty "playmate"—one lying very close to Marilyn Monroe's appearance, which Hefner required all his girlfriends to live up to. The symbolism is heavy: Monroe's ideal has haunted Playboy, just as Hefner's obsession with her haunted Monroe herself, culminating in his purchase of the gravesite next to hers. "I'm a believer in things symbolic," Hefner, who died at 91 in 2017, previously told the *Los Angeles Times*. "Spending eternity next to Marilyn is too sweet to pass up."⁷

At the online auction, one can follow the price of the photograph rising from \$8,000 to \$9,000 to \$10,000 before finally being sold for \$12,500. This is quite a bit more than the \$50 paid to the depicted "Mona Monroe" for posing for the pin-up calendar, and more than the \$500 Hefner later purchased it for. What this image has earned the Playboy corporation over time is unknown, but it is clear that it paved the way for Playboy's success—and also for Monroe, who at one point stated: "I never even received a thank you from all those who made millions off a nude Marilyn photograph. I even had to buy a copy of the magazine to see myself in it... The fans, my public, cheered when I admitted it was me, and that calendar and that *Playboy* first-issue publicity helped my career."⁸

But although Monroe seized the moment when the nude photos first began circulating in 1952 and turned the potential disaster to her advantage by publicly admitting that she was the one posing in the picture,⁹ the heavy sharing of the photograph stands as an example of how Monroe was also haunted by her own image during her lifetime. In any case, there is a significant distance between the image of the 23-year-old "Mona," on which Hefner chose to profile *Playboy*, and another series of photos taken for *Life Magazine* in May 1955. Here, Monroe is seen in her Los Angeles home, wearing a dark sweater and white slacks, reading a book in front of her impressive bookshelf; two images published the same year that show vastly different versions of Monroe. The two images create tension between the popular sensual seductress and the introverted, poetic woman—even though both may be equally staged.

Returning to the 1949 photograph of Monroe, the question becomes: what is at stake when the picture is shown so many years later and in an exhibition context? On the one hand, there is a risk that displaying the discussed and controversial image of Monroe in the exhibition repeats the violation it marks, and the sensation surrounding Monroe as a figure. On the other hand, Lyse's staging of the image as a quotation, highlighting its appropriation and circulation as Hefner's "work," opens up an important discussion about sexual violations and consent—even today. The legacy of Playboy is further explored in two video works juxtaposed in the exhibition: one shows the auctioning of Playboy artifacts, including Hefner's portrait of Monroe, while the other is a short and pixelated sequence of the artist herself having a tattoo of the iconic Playboy bunny removed from her butt cheek. It is a raw recording in low resolution and without additional narrative layers; we see Lyse arrive, take a seat on the bench, and watch the tattoo being removed. The Playboy trademark, the bunny with a bow tie, is a much-debated icon that, historically, has symbolized sexual empowerment and economic liberation, but also sexual exploitation and abuse.¹⁰

Lyse has previously posed in selfies featuring the tattooed bunny saying, in a speech bubble, things like: "Sexuality is like Jell-o"—it can be molded, but once it sets, it cannot be reshaped. The appropriation of the icon as part of her artistic practice is linked to explorations and experiments with the ways we desire and are desired, and how bodily and sexual tropes can be developed and challenged. Thus, the exhibition also becomes a reflection on Lyse's own practice in the intersection between activism, sex critique, and body art. While Monroe's nude photo marks the beginning of Playboy's empire and the sexual revolution to which it contributed, Lyse's performative video indicates a break with the Playboy brand. Is it an exorcism of the young girl's haunting of the adult woman? Of an empire profiting from the sex appeal of hopeful and ambitious women? With *MM*, familiar motifs and icons are recirculated in a negotiation of existing visual economies and politics as a reminder of the porous connection between an image and its meaning and the centrality of consent. Just because the image seduces us, we should not be seduced by the idea of wanting to own and define the desired object. Instead, we are invited to look into the mirror the artist holds up for us, reflecting the ideals, imaginations, and entrenched economies of desire that shape how we read Monroe's image—and all the images that have followed hers—and to ask: "Exposed known and seen—so what?"¹¹

1. Tiqqun, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*, translated by Ariana Reines, (Los Angeles: Semiotext(c), 2012), p.42.
2. The following articles refer to 1949: Amanda Luz Henning Santiago, "The strange story of how Marilyn Monroe appeared nude in the first issue of Playboy", *Business Insider*, 28 September 2017, [businessinsider.com/how-marilyn-monroe-appeared-nude-in-first-issue-of-playboy-2017-9](https://www.businessinsider.com/how-marilyn-monroe-appeared-nude-in-first-issue-of-playboy-2017-9); Elahe Izadi, "Marilyn Monroe helped launch Hugh Hefner's career. But they never even met", *Washington Post*, 28 September 2017, [washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2017/09/28/marilyn-monroe-helped-launch-hugh-hefners-career-but-they-never-even-met](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2017/09/28/marilyn-monroe-helped-launch-hugh-hefners-career-but-they-never-even-met), while the Julien's Auctions online sale information says 1948.
3. The phenomenon of "revenge porn", or sexual assault in the form of image sharing, has gained increased attention in recent years; see Signe Uldbjerg Mortensen, "Defying Shame: Shame-relations in digital sexual assaults", *MedieKultur*, vol.36, no.67 (2020), doi.org/10.7146/mediekultur.v36i67.113960.
4. Brad Witter, "Marilyn Monroe Didn't Actually Pose for the First Issue of *Playboy*", *Biography*, 8 September 2020, [biography.com/actors/marilyn-monroe-playboy-first-issue-didnt-pose](https://www.biography.com/actors/marilyn-monroe-playboy-first-issue-didnt-pose).
5. Marilyn Monroe with Ben Hecht, *My Story*, (New York: Stein & Day Publishers, 1974), p.26.
6. One example is *Vanity Fair* editor Sam Kashner's mention of the published fragments: "It is clear that the experience of writing was cathartic for her, providing a momentary grasp on the whirlwind of emotions that accompanied her life." Sam Kashner quoted in Jaime Lalinde, "The Writing on the Wall", *Vanity Fair*, November 2010, [vanityfair.com/culture/2010/11/marilyn-monroe-handwriting-analysis-201011](https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2010/11/marilyn-monroe-handwriting-analysis-201011).
7. Izadi 2017.
8. Ibid.
9. Aline Mosby, "Marilyn Monroe Admits She Is Girl on Calendar", *Kingsport Times*, 15 March 1952, [newspapers.com/article/kingsport-times/158494553](https://www.newspapers.com/article/kingsport-times/158494553).
10. Former "Playboy bunnies" speak about this duality in the documentary *Secrets of Playboy*, A&E Networks (2022).
11. Quote from Marilyn Monroe's private notebooks, c.1954, quoted in Sam Kashner, "Marilyn and her Monsters," *Vanity Fair*, 5 October 2010, [vanityfair.com/culture/2010/11/marilyn-monroe-201011](https://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2010/11/marilyn-monroe-201011).

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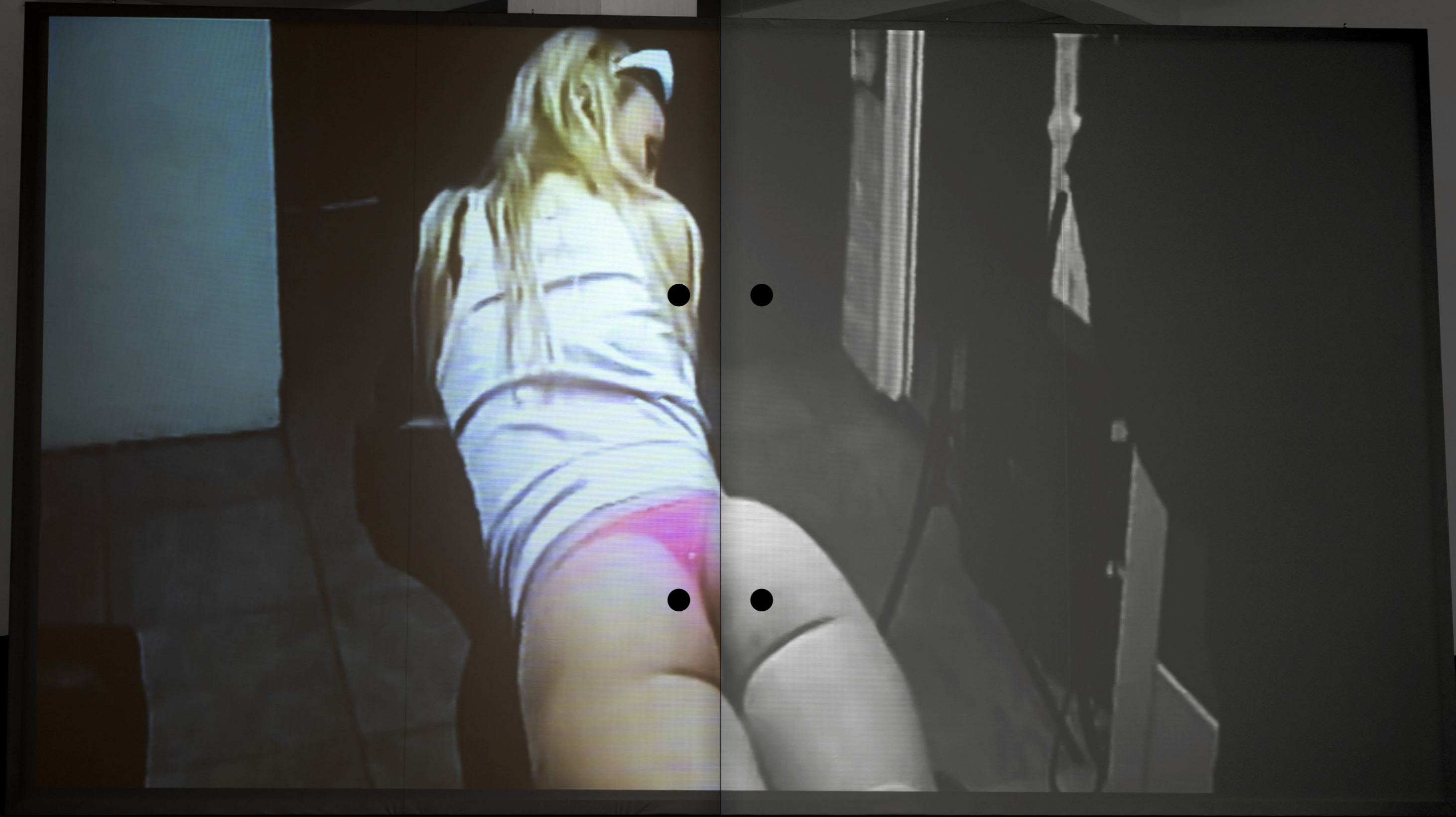
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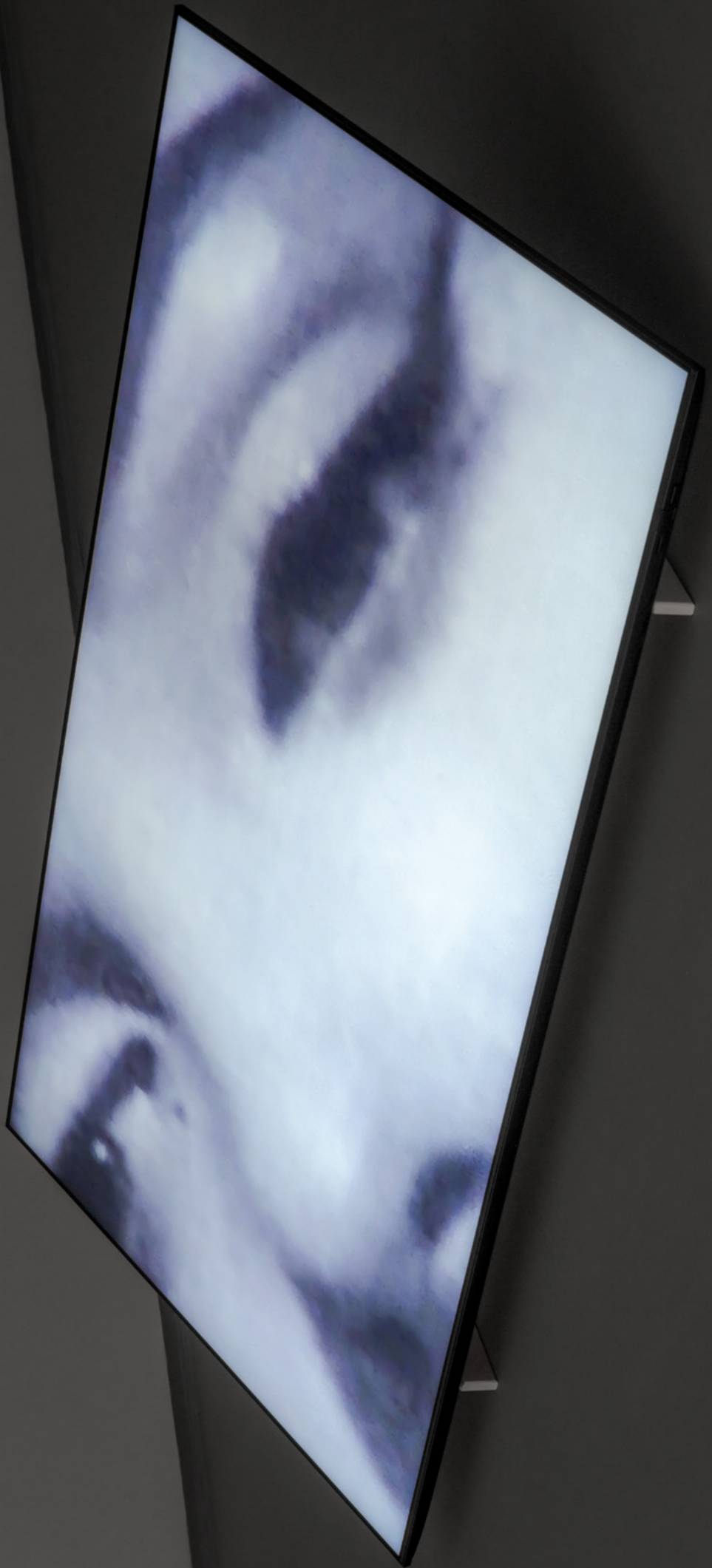


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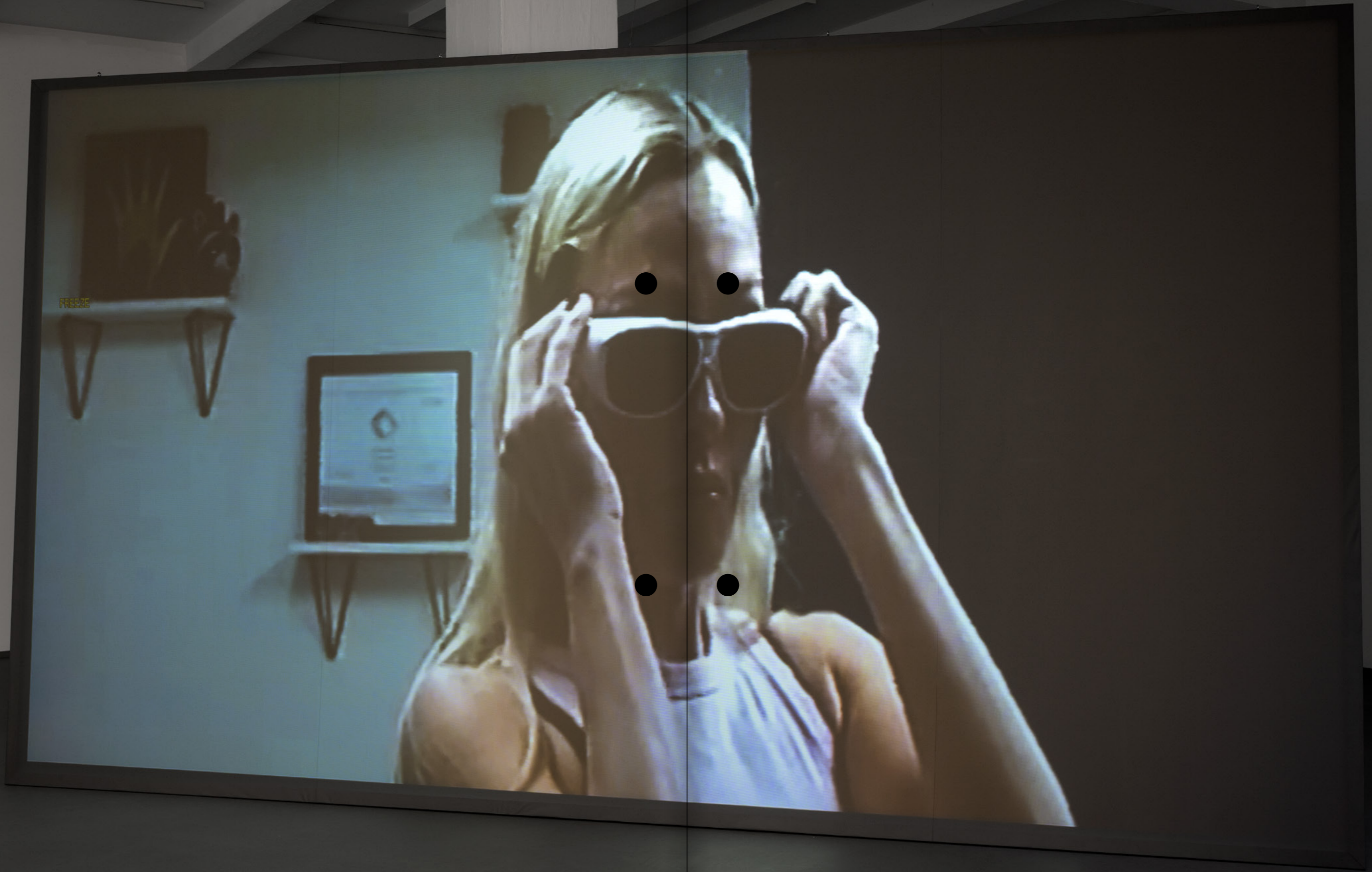
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ICONS: PLAYBOY
HUGH HEFNER, AND MARILYN MONROE
MARCH 28 - 30, 2024 ^{IN} LOS ANGELES







MEMO 3
The Legend (1977)

JULIEN'S

Julien's
ACCESS

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ICONS: PLAYBOY, HUGH HEFNER, AND MARILYN MONROE

Follow Upcoming Past

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LOT 505
Marilyn Monroe | Richard Avedon Shoot "Lillian Russell" Costume, with Magazine
Estimate \$20,000 - \$30,000

LOT 506
Marilyn Monroe | "The Misfits" Press-Worn Jean-Louis Dress, with Book
Estimate \$40,000 - \$60,000

LOT 507
Marilyn Monroe | "The Seven Year Itch" Film-Worn Black Evening Gown with Photo and Magazine
Estimate \$100,000 - \$200,000

LOT 508
Marilyn Monroe | Framed Brassiere
Estimate \$2,000 - \$3,000

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MARILYN MONROE | TOM KELLEY RED VELVET SESSION PRINT

A artist proof print featuring an image of Marilyn Monroe from Tom Kelley's famous 1948 Red Velvet photo session initialed lower right in by Hefner "HMH," with "A/P" in lower left, matted and framed.

Framed: 47.25 x 40.5 inches; Sight: 35 x 27.75 inches

PROVENANCE Property From the Playboy Archives



BID HISTORY

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working (doing my tasks that I
have set for myself)
On the stage—I will
not be punished for it
or be whipped
or be threatened
or not be loved or sent to hell to burn with bad people
feeling that I am also bad.
or be afraid of my [genitals] being
exposed known and seen—
so what
or ashamed of my
sensitive feelings—¹⁵

To billeder offentliggjort samme år, der viser to
skaber en spænding mellem den populære, sensuelle
fortørriske og den introverte, poetiske kvinde – selvom
begge måske er lige iscenesatte.

Tilbage foran fotografiet af Monroe fra 1949 bliver
spørgsmålet, hvad der er på spil, når det vises med så
mange års forsinkelser og i en udstillingsammenhæng.
På den ene side er der en risiko for, at visningen af
det omtalte og omdiskuterede billede af Monroe på
udstillingen gentager den krænkelse, der markerer,
eller den sensation, der omgærdter Monroe som figur.
Men Lysses iscenesættelse af billedet som et citat,
hvormed hun udpeger appropriationen og cirkulationen
af det som Hefners "værk", åbner samtidig for en
vigtig diskussion af billedmæssige sexkrænkelser og
samtykke – også i dag – og af kommercialisering af
vores seksualitet og begær.¹⁰

Arven efter *Playboy* undersøges videre i to
videoværker, som er modsatlet i udstillingen:
Den ene er videoen, der viser auktionen med salg
af *Playboy*-artefakter, inklusiv Hefners portræt af
Monroe, den anden en kort og pixeleret sekvens
af kunstneren selv, der får fjernet en tætoering af
den ikoniske *Playboy*-kanin, eller 'bunny', fra sin ene
balle. Det er en helt skrabt optagelse i lav opløsning
og uden yderligere fortællende lag. Man ser Lyse
ankomme, man ser hende tage plads på briksen, man
ser tætoeringen blive fjernet. *Playboys* væremærke,
kaninen med buttertly, er et omdiskuteret ikon, som
historisk har symboliseret seksuel empowerment og
økonomisk frigørelse, men også instrumentalisering
og overgreb.¹¹ Lyse har tidligere poseret på selvs,
hvor den tætoerede bunny i en taleboble bl.a. udtaler,
at "Seksualitet er som Jell-o" – det kan formes, men
når først det er størket, kan man ikke få det ud
af sin form igen. Appropriationen af ikonet som del
af den kunstneriske praksis er knyttet sammen med
undersøgelser af og eksperimenteren med de måder,
vi begæret og bliver begæret på, og hvordan kropslige
og seksuelle troper produceres og forhandles.
Udstillingen bliver dermed også en refleksion over
Lysses egen praksis i spændingsfeltet mellem aktivisme,
sexkritik og kropskunst. Hvor Monroes nøgenbillede
markerer starten på *Playboys* impetium og den
seksuelle revolution, der var med til at gennemføre,
indikerer Lysses performative video et opgør med
Playboys brand: En uddrivelse af den unge piges
hjemmesøgelser af den voksne kvinde? Af et impetiums
profit på håbedule og ambitiøse kvinders sexappeal?
Med *MM* bliver velkendte motiver og ikoner sendt
i cirkulation på ny i en forhandling af eksisterende
billedøkonomier og -politikker som en påmindelse
om den porøse forbindelse mellem et billede og dets
betydnings og om samtykkes centralitet. Blot fordi
billedet fortørrer os, skal vi ikke lade os fortørrer af
ideen om at ville eje og definere det afbildede objekt.
I stedet inviteres vi til at se ind i det spejl, kunstneren
holder op for os, og til at spørge, hvordan vi kan folde
billedet ud på ny ved at folde det ind i nye historier:
"Exposed known and seen – so what."¹²

1. Tiquan, *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl*,

overs. Ariana Reines (Los Angeles: semiocontext), 2012), 42.
2. Følgende artikler refererer til året 1949: Amanda Luz
Henning Santiago, "The strange story of how Marilyn Monroe
appeared nude in the first issue of *Playboy*", *Business Insider*, 28.
sept. 2017, businessinsider.com/how-marilyn-monroe-appeared-nude-in-first-issue-of-playboy-2017-9; Elahé Izadi, "Marilyn Monroe
helped launch Hugh Hefner's career. But they never even met", *The
Washington Post*, 28. sept. 2017, [washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2017/09/28/marilyn-monroe-helped-launch-hugh-hefners-career-but-they-never-even-met](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2017/09/28/marilyn-monroe-helped-launch-hugh-hefners-career-but-they-never-even-met).

3. Fænomenet "hævnporno" eller sexkrænkelser i form af
billeddeling har fået stadig mere opmærksomhed gennem de
seneste år, herhjemme bl.a. med Emma Hollens vidnesbyrd og
DR-dokumentaren "Klædt af på nettet". Signe Ulbjerg Mortensen
har skrevet en vigtig artikel om, hvad hun dehnerer som "digitale
sexkrænkelser", som spænder over billeder taget og/eller delt og
videre delt uden samtykke. Signe Ulbjerg Mortensen, "Deryng
Shame. Shame-relations in digital sexual assault", *Mediekultur*,
vol. 36, no. 67, doi.org/10.7146/mediekultur.v36i67.113960.

4. biography.com/actors/marilyn-monroe-playboy-first-issue-sexsymbol-sitene-577745.
E:2 "Sirenen", DRTV: drdk/drtv/sc/marilyn-monroe-mere-end-dokumentarserien-Marilyn-Monroe-Mere-end-et-sexsymbol" S:1
karterer, der er ved at tage fart. Hændelsen diskuteres også i CNN-
ansigt, navn og billede sammen og lægger sig i slupstrømmen af en
forrett eller skammede sig – men *Playboy* knytter direkte hendes
billederne – og at hun i øvrigt ikke mente, hun havde gjort noget
hvortil Monroe måtte bekræfte, at det var hende, der poserede på
Nøgenbillederne af Monroe havde også cirkuleret året tidligere,
vol. 36, no. 67, doi.org/10.7146/mediekultur.v36i67.113960.

5. Marilyn Monroe sammen med Ben Hecht, *My Story*
(New York: Stein & Day Publishers, 1974), 26.
6. Et eksempel er *Vanity Fair*-redaktør Sam Kashners omtale
af de udgivne fragmenter: "It is clear that the experience of writing
was cathartic for her, providing a momentary grasp on the whirlwind
of emotions that accompanied her life." Sam Kashner citerer i Jaime
Lalinde, "The Writing on the Wall", *Vanity Fair*, november 2010.
vanityfair.com/culture/2010/11/marilyn-monroe-handwriting-analysis-2010.

7. Jf. Elahé Izadi, "Marilyn Monroe helped launch Hugh Hefner's
career. But they never even met",
8. Sammeseds.
9. Jf. Aline Mosby, "Marilyn Monroe Admits She Is Girl
on Calendar", *Kingsport Times*, 15. marts 1952.
10. For yderligere analyse af Lysses kunstneriske praksis i lyset
af eksisterende billedkultur, se fx Anne Kolbæk Iversen "Det
genærlige blik. Fotografiske selvscenearbejder som kunstnerisk
strategi til forhandling af køn, identitet og seksualitet", *Pertskop
Fotografi Nu*, nr. 31 (2024), doi.org/10.7146/pertskop.v2024i31.146556.

11. Tidligere *Playboy*-bunnever taler om denne dobbelthed
i dokumentaren *Secrets of Playboy*, A&E Networks (2022).
12. Marilyn Monroe ca. 1954, *Fragments*, citeret i Sam Kashner,
"Marilyn and her Monsters",
13. Sammeseds.

O – OVERGADEN
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overgaden.org

Maja Malou Lyse
MM

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Takket være forfatterens beretninger ved vi, at Whitney holdt sit løfte; med en flaske gin til at styrke sig på genoprettede han Marilyn's ansigt en sidste gang. Han var også med til at bære kisten ved hendes begravelse.

Min egen interesse for Whitney er svær at forklare, og selvom hans navn er dukket op mange gange i min research af Monroes død, er det aldrig lykkedes mig at finde helt nok oplysninger om ham til at blive tilfreds. For nogle år siden faldt jeg over Julien's hjemmeside – auktionshuset i Hollywood, der solgte Marylins fugtighedscreme, og som har specialiseret sig i (ofte makaber) kendis-memorabilia. I 2012 forestod de salget af genstande fra Whitneys bo, hvoraf den mest omalige var en stor mappe med originale fotografier, som han havde taget af Marilyn på filmsetene. Anført som objekt nr. 521 var desuden en guldbelag pengeskåps, som skuespillerinden havde givet ham, med en indgraveret dedikation: "Whitey Dear, While I'm Still Warm, Marilyn." Den blev solgt for 21.250 dollars.

Problemet med besættelser er, at vi altid vil have mere. For nylig er det kommet frem, hvordan en ny Monroe-dokumentar påstår, at der blev taget nøgenbilleder af hendes lig i lighuset. Hvad er det i os, der bliver stimuleret ved tanken om endnu en gang at ydmyge en kvinde, der har været død i næsten 60 år? Sandheden er, at ønsket om at se mere ikke adskiller sig så meget fra lysen til at rode i hendes nabord eller læse hendes breve. Det adskiller sig ikke meget fra ønsket om at føles intimt, vi leder efter noget, der stadig er varmt.

MM

Anne Kolbæk Iversen

The Young-Girl is resentment that smiles.

There are beings that give you the desire to die slowly before their eyes, but the Young-Girl only excites the desire to vanquish her, to take advantage of her!

Hvordan kan vi se på billedet af Marilyn Monroe i dag?

Og hvordan placerer det sig i forhold til det billede, vi ser for os, når vi tænker på hende? Marilyn. Monroe. uden at forfalde til de klichéer, hendes karriere blev bygget op omkring: det blonder hår, diamantene og det smukke smil, den forførende stemme og figur. Hun var en kvinde, der blev begæret af de mest magtfulde mænd, og som blev det 20. århundredes største sexsymbol. Hun var også en kvinde, der aldrig fik lov at blive gammel.

Med udstillingen *MM* på O - Overgaden slår

Maja Malou Lyse ned på clementer fra historien og mytiedannelserne omkring den amerikanske skuespillerinde, kendt både for sin tragiske barndom og en ligeså tragisk død samt en karriere, der gennem 1950'erne blændede så klart som de diamanter, hun inspirerer til i dag.

Da Marilyn Monroe i 1962 blev fundet død i sit

hjem, 36 år gammel, blev der sat et punktum for hendes virke, men hverken billedet eller ikonogørelsen forsvandt med hende, snarere tværtimod. Hendes gjendele bliver stadig solgt på auktioner til svimlende priser: 4,8 mio. dollars blev den stenbesatte kjole solgt for, som Monroe havde på, da hun sang fodselsdagsang for præsident Jack F. Kennedy i maj 1962, kun få måneder før sin død. Hendes liv fortællers fra stadig nye vinkler i dokumentarer og spillefilm, og i begge bøger og film bliver der spekuleret over, hvad der gemte sig bag den umiskendelige udsralling, og over de omstændigheder, der førte til hendes død.

Det er denne fortsatte ikon dyrkelse og fetichering, Lyse i udstillingen beskæftiger sig med og piller fra hinanden. Udstillingen tager udgangspunkt i Lyse's erhvervelse af et fotografi af den unge Marilyn, taget i 1949 (auktionshuset Julien's har angivet 1948) af fotografen Tom Kelley til en pinup-kalender, der 4 år senere – uden skuespillerens vidende eller samtykke – endte som midtertopslaget i det allerførste nummer af *Playboy*, udgivet i december 1953.² Brugten af billedet af Monroe i *Playboy*, der blev lanceret med følgende forsidekrst: "First time in any magazine, FULL COLOR, the famous MARILYN MONROE NUDE", er dermed et tidligt eksempel på en billedmæssig seksualisering, hvor et, typisk seksualiseret, billede distribueres uden samtykke.³ *Playboys* grundlægger Hugh Hefner havde købt rettighederne til billedet (om det var direkte af Tom Kelley eller fra firmaet,

der havde rettighederne til det, vartæler i de forskellige kilder) og valgte ikke bare at genoptrykke det i *Playboy*, men senere desuden at putte det i en guldramme og signere det for at hænge det op i sit hjem,

Playboy Mansion.⁴

I udstillingen præsenterer Lyse nu det signerede billede som en ready-made ved siden af bl.a. opargelser fra den auktion, hvor hun købte billedet, og andre memorabilia fra sin rejse til Los Angeles og New York. Udstillingen tematiserer den fetichering – på en gang objektvisering og idealisering – der har fundet sted i Monroes liv og efterliv, men udstiller også det tilfældige i, at visse genstande tillægges fetichistisk værdi, mens andre blot er ting. I monterne er udstillet bl.a. en Marilyn Monroe-edition af en vibrator, en peberspray i en Marilyn-nøglering, en flaske Chanel no. 5, auktionsnummeret 232, et par lysrøde trusser besat med simlister, nogle småkager og et opslag fra Monroes selvbiografi *My Story*, udgivet posthumt i 1974, hvori Monroe bl.a. skriver om den rolle, hun som ung teenager blev sat i som "stirne" og begærsobjekt, uden selv at forstå eller føle et begær.

"Why I was a siren, I hadn't the faintest idea. There were no thoughts of sex in my head. I didn't want to be kissed, and I didn't dream of being seduced by a duke or a movie star. The truth was that with all my lipstick and mascara and precocious curves, I was as unsensual as a fossil. But I seemed to affect people quite otherwise."⁵

Med udgivelsen af Monroes selvbiografi og senere

også hendes efterladte dagbøger, noter og postiske fragmenter har det været et forsøg på at få et indblik i kinden bag ikonet og finde ud af, hvem Norma Jean var, før hun blev, eller nær hun ikke var, Marilyn Monroe. Men selv i dette forsøg på at indfange den autentiske person og skille hende fra ikon dyrkelsen indfinder dyrkelsen af det tragiske sig, som fortsat fastholder splittelsen mellem et undertrykt, autentisk selv og den offentlige persona.⁶ Hvor det før var Monroes krop, der skulle sælge numre af *Playboy*, er det nu hendes intime skrivelser, der skal bevæge og forarge. I monterne fungerer de selvbiografiske optegnelser sidordnet med de øvrige eksempler på, hvordan det spinnes historier på Monroes liv og forbindelse til Monroes liv eller Lyse's rejse efter hendes spøgelse. Fremvisningen af umiddelbart hverdagslige ting aktualiserer diskussionen om deres brugs- og bytteværdi, tingenes praktiske funktion og symbolske værdi, og Lyse fremhæver og forskylder den overdevenne auratiske og feticherede værdi, der er tillagt alt, som har været i berøring med Monroe – herunder den omalige Chanel no. 5, der i en reklamekampagne brugte Monroe som model 50 år efter hendes død, bar andet end et par dråber af parfumen, når hun sov ved at indsatte personlige genstande i samlingen af Monroe-memorabilia. Maja Malou og Marilyn Monroe spejles i hinanden.

På onlineauktionen kan man følge, hvordan prisen på fotografier stiger fra 8.000 til 9.000 til 10.000 dollars for til sidst at blive solgt for 12.500 dollars. Det er en del mere end de 50 dollars, den afbildede "Mona Monroe" blev betalt for at posere til pinupkalenderen, og de 500 dollars, Hefner senere købte det for. Hvad billedet har indbragt *Playboy*-koncernen gennem tiden, er uvis, men det står klart, at det slog hul igennem til succesen for *Playboy* – men også for Monroe, som på et tidspunkt har udtalt: "I never even received a thank-you from all those who made millions off a nude Marilyn photograph. I even had to buy a copy of the magazine to see myself in it ... The fans, my public, cheered when I admitted it was me, and that calendar and that *Playboy* first-issue publicity helped my career."⁸

Men selvom Monroe greb situationen, da nøgenbillederne først begyndte at cirkulere i 1952, og vendte den potentielle katastrofe til sin fordel ved offentlig at stå ved, at det var hende, der poserede på billedet,⁹ står delingen af billedet i *Playboy* som et eksempel på, hvordan Monroe også i sin levetid blev hjemsøgt af sit eget billede. I hvert fald er der langt fra billedet af den 25-årige "Mona", som Hefner valgte at profilere *Playboy* på, og en anden serie af billeder taget til *LIFE Magazine* i maj 1953. Her ser man Monroe i sit hjem i L.A. i mørk sweater og hvide slacks, mens hun læser i en bog foran sin imponerende bogreol.

Denne spejling er også på spil i en serie fortællende og reflekterende tekster spredt på væggene rundt i udstillingsrummet, hvor Lyse skriver om både tilfældige og aftalte møder, hun har haft med forskellige personer i L.A. og N.Y., mens hun har været på sport af Monroe. Teksterne kredser om seksualitet, begær og identitet, som de formes og forhandles gennem kulturelle koder, og reflekterer over de udvækslinger, der finder sted i forskellige (intime) relationer: gaver, penge, billeder, status, begær. Monroe er et centralt omdrejningspunkt i historierne. Lyse besøger en samler for at bese et originalt silketryk af Warhols Marilyn Monroe og får foræret en flaske Chanel no. 5; hun dyrker hot yoga hver dag i yogastudiet "Some like it hot!" og må derfor dagligt gentage den majsommelige rutine med at påføre selvbruner og akrylmalet, som smelter i yogastudets varme – og hårdt vedligeholdelses- og reproduktivt arbejde – og hun bingewatcher realityprogrammer, bl.a. *The Girls Next Door*, optaget i The Playboy Mansion, og *Kendra Sells Hollywood* med en af Hefners tidlige karrester som deltagere, hvori kvinderne taler om at være hjemsøgt af en midaldrende kvindes spøgelse og idealer om den blonde, barntagte *playmate* – et ideal, der ligger tæt på Marilyn Monroes fremtæden, og som Hefner krævede, at alle hans karrester skulle leve op til. Symboликken er tyk: Monroes ideal har hjemsøgt *Playboy*, ligesom Hefner har hjemsøgt Monroe med sin besættelse af hende, der er kulmineret i erhvervelsen af gravpladsen ved siden af hendes. "I'm a believer in things symbolic; Hefner, who died at 91 in 2017, previously told the *Los Angeles Times*. 'Spending eternity next to Marilyn is too sweet to pass up.'"⁷

NASTY TALES AND THEIR ORCHESTRA

Whitney Mallett

Første afsnit i første sæson af reality-showet *The Girls Next Door* åbner med en droneoptagelse af det 2.000 kvadratmeter store Playboy Mansion. 1950'er-hitet "Come On-a My House" spiller i baggrunden, men nummer fra starten af nulterne med Nasty Tales and Their Orchestra (der aldrig har lavet andre numre end det her). I åbningsskuddet kan man rælle mindst et par håndfulde tagspir og fem biler, der holder parkeret i en rund indkørsel med en fontæne i midten. Det gotiske, tudorliggende hus, som blev bygget i 1927 til Hugh Hefner skaber for at så spild blandt pigerne og har et hendes eneste unikke træk. Men da en ny pige ved navn Mary Jo flytter ind med sit hofrelange hår, går Holly ned med flaget og beslutter sig for at gennemgå en Marilyn Monroe-inspireret makeover. Hefner betalte 2.100 gange mere for huset, end han havde betalt for retfældighederne til de nøgenbilleder af Marilyn Monroe, som han havde bragt i første nummer af sit magasin – uden hendes vidende eller samtykke. Han betalte 21.000 gange mere for huset, end Marilyn Monroe var blevet betalt for den fotosektion i 1949, som nøgenbillederne stammer fra, og hvor hun poserede som endnu ukendt skuespillerinde til en pinup-kalender.

Efter oversigtsbillederne bliver vi fastforwardet gennem en smedjernsport og ned ad en indkørsel flankeret af rætte grønne hække, der oser af elegant og eksklusivitet. En middeldalderliggende trædør lukkes op, og den første, vi ser, er en af de ansatte i huset. Ingen makeup, brunt hår sat op i en stram hestehale, klædt på som tjener – sorte bukser, sort vest, hvid skjorte – hun siger nej til kameraet: "Welcome to the Playboy Mansion." Under hele den indledende sekvens spiller Nasty Tales-coveret i hakkende intervaller, afbrudt af klip med personaltets samtaler. Blonde kvinder i figgestole smører sig ind i sololie, hopper på trampolin iført bikini, smiler fra en badering: "Good morning, Playboy Mansion, can I help you?" Flamingoer, havedamme, hundehvalpe, kaniner, en køk, der rører i suppen, et Pop Art-agtigt portræt af en ung Hugh Hefner på væggen. Dette er det første kunstværk, vi ser. Jeg kan ikke finde portrættet i auktionshusets katalog til *Icons: Hugh Hefner, Playboy, and Marilyn Monroe*, der løber af stablen i 2024. Hugh Hefner og Marilyn Monroe mødtes aldrig i virkeligheden, men i døden indkasserede den kuraterede blanding af ting og sager, inklusive Keith Haring-værker og læbesifter, 4 millioner dollars.



Holly Madison var en af Hugh Hefners tre samlevende, og hun havde en af hovedrollerne i *The Girls Next Door*, som kørte fra 2005 til 2010. Flere år senere, i 2016, som et forvarsel af #MeToo, udgav hun bogen *Down The Rabbit Hole: Curious Adventures and Cautionary Tales of a Former Playboy Bunny*, hvor hun afslørede diverse detaljer om sin tid i Playboy Mansion. Fjerde kapitel handler for eksempel om en periode, et par år før tv-produktionen gik i gang. Det er 2001, og som en af Hugh Hefners harem af syv kærestes deltagere Madison i et Comedy Central-arrangement. Hun prøver at finde vej i den jalوسي, der opstår mellem kvinderne i huset, hun finder ud af, at der er en salon, hvor hun på Hefners regning kan få sit hår farvet professionelt. Hun er med til sin første Playboy Mansion Halloween og bemærker, at hendes Alice i Eventyrland-kostume fra Trashy Lingerie ikke er nær så alsøgende som de andre kæresters outfits. Hun får en næseoperation. Da Tina Jordan flytter ud, bliver Holly forfremmet til nummer et-kæreste. Men hendes nye status gør hende ikke immun over for den usikkerhed, som Hugh Hefner skaber for at så spild blandt pigerne og opertholde sin magt. Holly følger, at hendes tøjelange hår er hendes eneste unikke træk. Men da en ny pige ved navn Mary Jo flytter ind med sit hofrelange hår, går Holly ned med flaget og beslutter sig for at gennemgå en Marilyn Monroe-inspireret makeover. Klip til scenen, hvor Hugh Hefner ser hendes nye look. "Don't ever wear red lipstick again. You look old. hard, and cheap," skælder han ud. Holly græder. "I felt like an idiot for even trying to be beautiful."

NOGET, DER STADIG ER VARMT

Alissa Bennett

I november 2012 solgte auktionshuset Julien's i Hollywood en halvbrugt Active Pheilyl Cream på auktionen *Icons and Idols*. Krukken er picteret af foundation, og der sidder en synlig skidkant rundt om læge; forseglingen er brudt, og der er brugt af cremen – men disse ufuldkomnheder gør kun gæstanstanden endnu mere eftertragtet. Cremen har nemlig tilhørt Marilyn Monroe; den blev solgt for 4.687,50 dollars. Opfindelsen af Marilyn Monroe skyldes så mange faktorer, at det bliver alt for kompliceret at ridsse op her, men sikkert er det i hvert fald, at Allan "Whitey" Snyder kan krediteres for at have forvandleret den relativt beskedne Norma Jean Baker til en sexbombe, i samarbejde med Monroe selv. Monroe og Snyder mødtes i 1946 til Monroes første skærmtest hos Twentieth Century Fox, og Snyder står ikke alene bag skuespillerindens tunge øjenlåg og glossy læber, han var også makeupartist på næsten alle de store film, Monroe medvirkede i fra begyndelsen af 1950'erne og frem til sin død.

Vi kan kun forestille os, hvilken nydelse det må have været for dem begge, da Marilyn første gang kom til syne – da person blev forvandleret til persona i kraft af en magt, der både var kosmetisk og følelsesmæssig. Whiteys makeupstol var en slags *sous rature*, det sted, hvor Norma Jeans kaotiske, traumefyldte tilværelse kunne tillægges en form for værdi i kraft af Marilyn-maskens magt. Men berømmelsen har også et grimt ansigt, og man behøver ikke vide ret meget om Monroes afhængighed og følelsesmæssige ustabilitet for at forestille sig, at opgaven med at kalde hende frem til overfladen blev stadig vanskeliggere. Slutningen af Monroes karriere er altid af særlig interesse for de af os, der følger os tvungent til at grave i hendes eftermæle. Selvom skuespillerinden stråler allertydligst i Billy Wilders komedie *Some Like It Hot* fra 1959, dækker hendes fysiske fremtoning over en række store personlige kriser, der med tiden kom op til overfladen. Hun var besat af frygt for, at der skulle ske noget med det ufødte barn i hendes mave, og det mislykkede ægteskab med dramatikeren Arthur Miller var også en distraktion. Monroes angst og depression manifesterede sig ikke kun som en intensivering af hendes legendariske evne til at komme for sent, men også i vaner på filmset, der forargede både hendes medspillere og hendes instruktør. Hun var ude af stand til at huske sine replikker – det tog hende for eksempel mere end 50 takes at levere replikken "Where's that bourbon?" –

og var afhængig af cue cards, når hun spillede – et problem, der kun blev forværret af hendes stigende stofafhængighed. Rollen som Roslyn Taber i John Hustons klassiker *The Mistis* fra 1961 endte med at blive Monroes sidste. Med Clark Gable, Montgomery Clift og Eli Wallach i hovedrollerne var produktionen et inferno af alkoholisme, afhængighed, utroskab og gambling. Fem år efter filmens lunke modtagelse var tre ud af fire hovedrolleindhavere døde. Denne film er særligt interessant for enhver, der har en makaber fascination af Hollywoods historie – jeg har nærstuderet den mange gange, mest fordi det er den eneste film, hvor Monroes ansigt begynder at bære præg af hendes indre kamp. Filmen handler om tre mere og mere fremmedgjorte cowboys, der møder en kvinde ved navn Roslyn, som de alle forventer kan hindre deres respektive smertor – uden at nogen af dem er opmærksomme på hendes egne lidelser. Fortællingens budskab var klart: Verden var begyndt at forvente ting af Monroe, som hun ikke kunne levere; livet havde tømt hende for kraft, og det hjalp ikke, at alle stadig forventede mere og mere.

Whitey Snyder var Monroes personlige makeupartist på setet til *The Mistis*, en særligt udfordrende opgave på grund af skuespillerindens søvnløse og medicinopstuede ansigt. Hollywood-myten siger, at filmstjernen var så smadret af champagne og piller, at Snyder ofte måtte forvandle hende til Marilyn, mens hun sov sin medicinbandert ud. Hver morgen blev hendes øjne tjekket for at se, om hun var i stand til at filme; hvis hun blev godkendt, blev hendes ansigt kølet og fugtet, og Whitey påbegyndte den stadig mere dystre opgave med at kalde hende tilbage til livet. Selvom det opmærksomme blik vil bemærke en diskret blødgøring af kæbelinjen, de første tegn på aldring i hendes ansigt, er det et besynderligt filmmæssigt greb, der giver os det tydeligste bevis på, hvordan Marilyn's fysiske tilstand var: De fleste nærbilleder af skuespillerinden blev optaget i blødt fokus, en beslutning, der primært blev truffet for at skjule de fejl, som Whitey ikke kunne dække. Midtvejs i optagelserne af *The Mistis* tog Monroe en overdosis; produktionen blev stoppet, og skuespillerinden blev indlagt til aftrusning i to uger. Hun vendte tilbage i en mere aldæmpet tilstand, om hun ikke glad, og afsluttede filmproduktionen uden yderligere katastrofer. En morgen under det kosmetiske ritual bad Marilyn Whitey om at love hende noget: Om han som hendes ven ville lægge makeup på hende til hendes begravelse, hvis hun skulle dø for ham. "Selvfølgelig," svarede han. "Giv mig liget, mens det stadig er varmt, så gør jeg det."

Mange fortællere har beskæftiget sig med de dystre detaljer om Monroes sidste dage, nogle fordi de elsker et godt mysterium, andre fordi hun er blevet symbol på kvindens lidelser, og atter andre, fordi hendes historie beviser, at skønhed og berømmelse ikke er andet end flimrende skærm, der ikke kan beskytte selv de mest spektakulære af os fra smerte.



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O – OVERGADEN

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Det er en stor fornøjelse at introducere denne publikation, der udkommer i forbindelse med Maja Malou Lyse's soloudstilling *MM* på O – Overgaden. Siden 2021 har O – Overgaden med generøs støtte fra Augustinus Fonden produceret en publikationsrække, der udgives i forbindelse med kunsthallenssoloudstillinger. Målsætningen med denne serie er at mangfoldiggøre samtalene under og efter udstillingerne og åbne op for, at nyt materiale kan udspringe heraf.

I dette tilfælde har den anerkendte canadiske forfatter og redaktør Whitney Mallert bidraget med den nyskrevne tekst *Nasty Tales and Their Orchestra*, mens den amerikanske kurator og kunstsribent Allissa Bennett generøst har redigeret et uddrag af sin tekst *Noger, der stadig er varm* fra 2019, og endelig har O – Overgadens tilknyttede forsker, postdoc. Anne Kølbæk Iversen, bidraget med essayet *MM* om Lyse's udstilling. En varm tak til alle bidragsydere. Derudover vil jeg gerne takke publikationsredaktør Nanna Frits og hele O – Overgadens team for den store indsats i forbindelse med udstillingen, og naturligvis også fanfare, vores grafiske designere, for deres dedikerede arbejde på denne publikation. Sids, men ikke mindst, en særlig tak til Maja Malou for at dele sit materiale – fra koncept til udvalgte samtaler – med os alle sammen, både gennem udstillingen og denne publikation.

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

Til Lyse's soloudstilling på O – Overgaden har hun forfulgt et af medicinhistoriens mest ikoniske kvindebilleder og dets økonomier: nemlig Marilyn Monroes berømte afkædte billede i *Playboy*, der kronede magasinets midttopslag i den allerførste udgave i 1953. Lyse's undersøgelser tager udgangspunkt i,

hvordan Playboykoncernens grundlægger Hugh Hefner brugte fotografier 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 medieflder.

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

To videoer følger kunstneren selv. Den ene dokumenterer Lyse's jagt, da hun rejser til en auktion i Hollywood for at erhverve det betygtede Monroe-relikvie. Den anden dokumenterer kunstneren, der får fjernet sin tarovering af en Playboy-bunny på den ene ball. Lyse undersøger således, hvordan Monroe og Hefner stadig stempler vores kroppe, liv og tanker som betydningfulde hjørnesen i den kollektive vestlige seksuelle bevidsthed. Med udgangspunkt i Monroes betygtede nøgenbillede og soundtrækker fra dets auktion – som et komplekst nutidigt symbol på, hvordan identiteter konstant bliver konstrueret, cirkuleret og seksualiseret – stiller *MM* spørgsmål ved forholdet mellem seksuel kapital og serkapitalism, repræsentation og dommans, branding og spektakel, eller sagt ganske enkelt: hvem ejer et billede?

Rhea Dall
Leder og chefkurator på O – Overgaden,
september 2024

Maja Malou Lyse (f. 1993, DK) er billedkunstner med en MFA fra Det Kongelige Danske Kunstakademi (2022), bosat i København. Ud over at have været vært for tv-showet "Sex med Maja" på DR i 2018-19 har Lyse udstillet på blandt andet Kunstnuseum Brandts, Odense (2020), ARoS, Aarhus (2019) og Kunsthal Charlottenborg, København (2019).

INTRODUKTION

