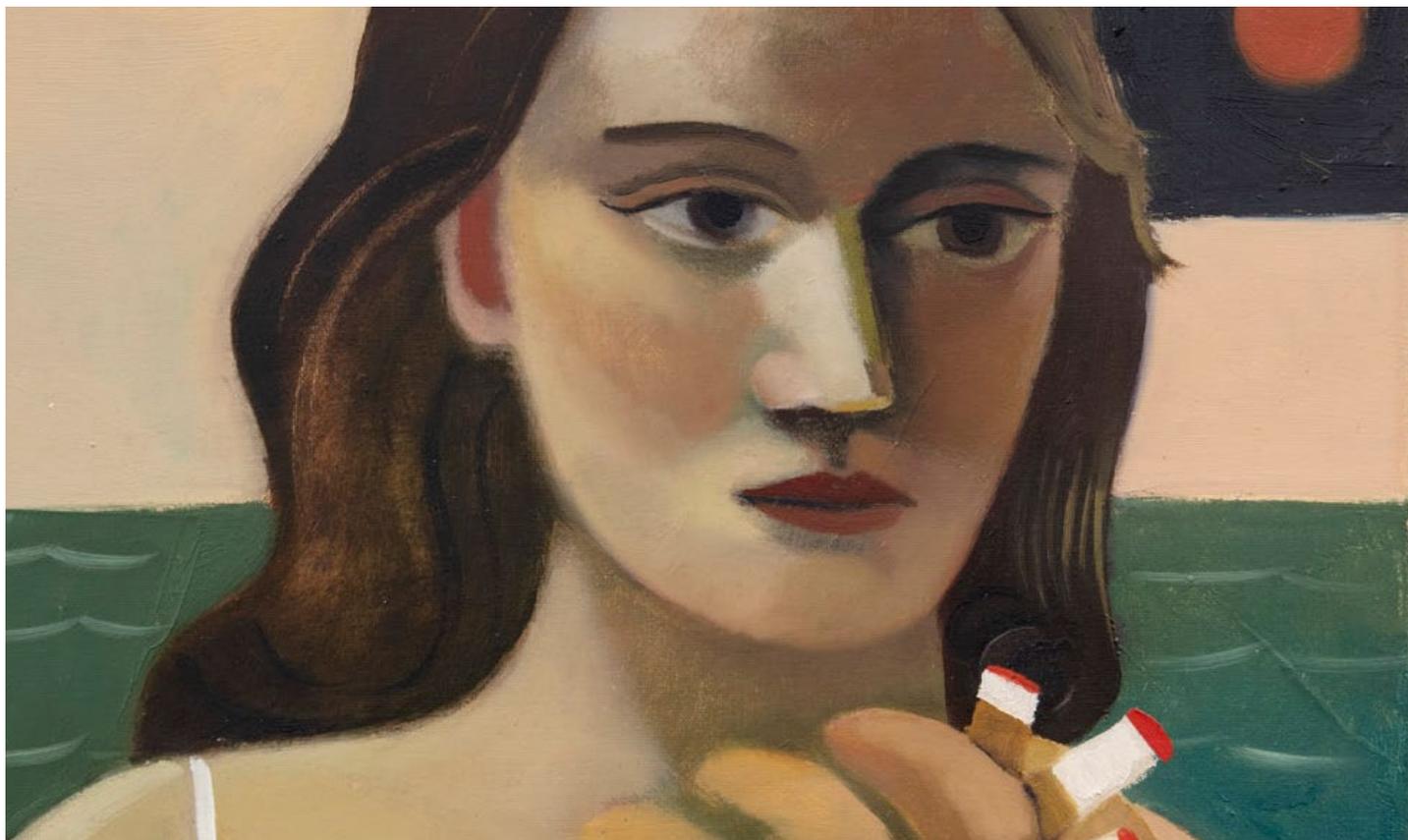


Pleasure Principle

Genesis Belanger, Dike Blair, Nikki Maloof, Tony Matelli, Danielle Orchard

March 9 - April 15, 2023



“The ideal which I strive to realize in my life is the serene sensuousness of the Greeks—pleasure without pain. I do not believe in the kind of love which is preached by Christianity, by the moderns, by the knights of the spirit. Yes, look at me, I am worse than a heretic, I am a pagan.”

“Love knows no virtue, no merit; it loves and forgives and tolerates everything because it must.”

Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Venus in Furs, 1870

Pleasure Principle

Genesis Belanger, Dike Blair, Nikki Maloof, Tony Matelli, Danielle Orchard

February 18 - March 25, 2023

Until the final decades of his life, Sigmund Freud's seminal *Lustprinzip* ("pleasure principle," earlier "pleasure-unpleasure principle") remained largely unrevised. Freud states that at the core of our psychic self-preservation apparatus (and, by extension, much of our behavioral range) is the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. For the modern reader, the principle's basic argument is straightforward: we act according to our desire for gratification and pleasure, and against that which compromises gratification, or brings us displeasure. 1920's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* would upend this. Rewriting earlier counterexamples to the pleasure principle, Freud introduces the highly controversial "death drive" ("*thanatos*," as contrasted against "*eros*"). Figured as a further, more concealed pressure upon the unconscious, the death drive describes the basal human desire toward aggression, punishment, and elimination--self included.

Comprising works from sculptors Genesis Belanger and Tony Matelli, and from painters Dike Blair, Nikki Maloof, and Danielle Orchard, *Pleasure Principle* is poised at the nexus of these competing forces on the psyche. Forms are dreamlike and distended, at times even grotesque, while recurring leitmotifs throughout the exhibition--vice, objectification, fetish and false illusion, hubris, Icarian myth--elicit the contradictory double-edges of compulsion. Together, the artists offer from their respective formal and symbolic vantages glimpses of this precarious condition: on the one hand, the supremacy of desire; on the other, the far, sometimes astounding reaches of our capacity for self-destruction.