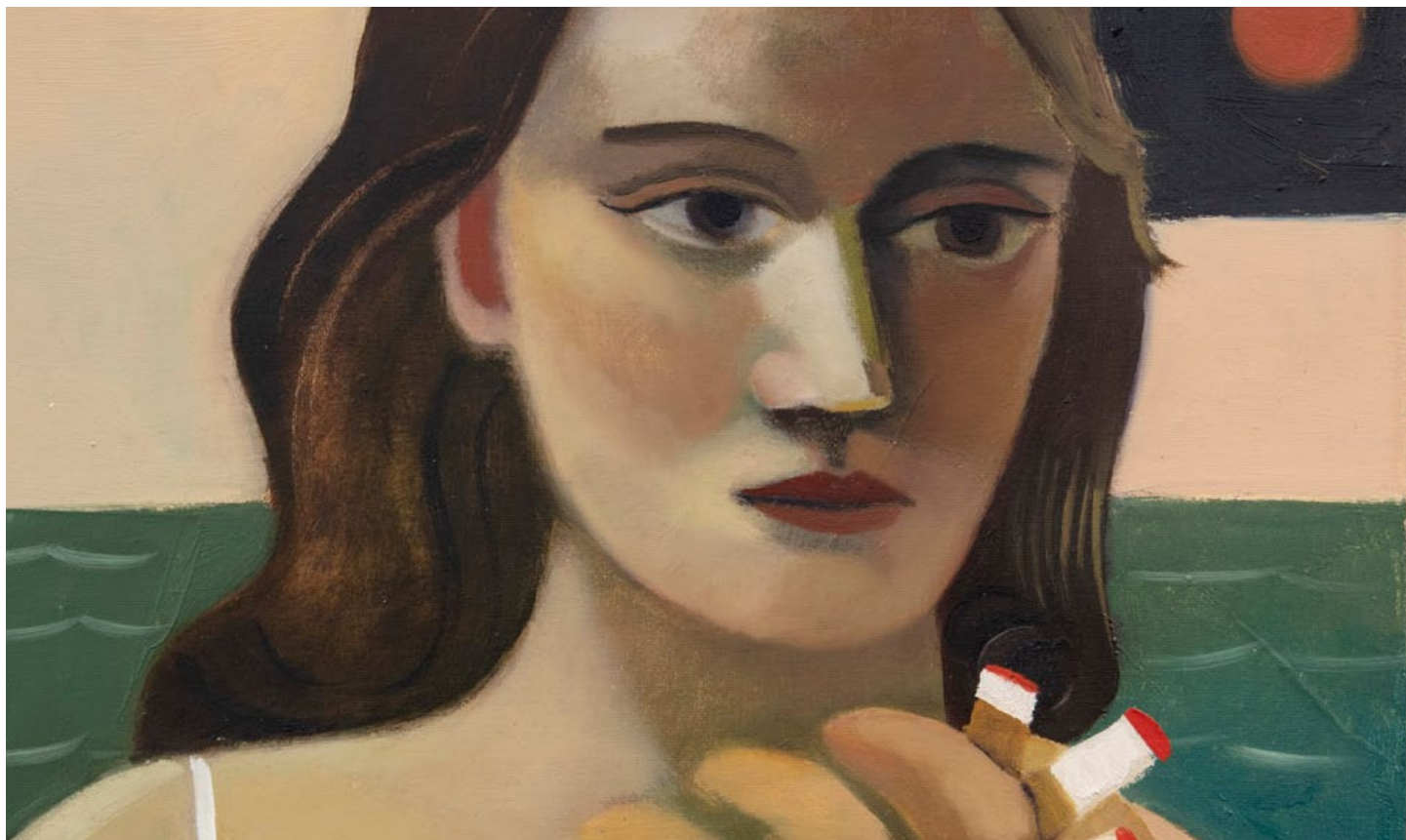


Pleasure Principle

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

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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.

Curated by artist Genesis Belanger, and comprising works from Belanger, Tony Matelli, 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.