

PRESS RELEASE  
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+HALLER

viewer **DISCRETION...**

children of **BATAILLE**

A Group Show

Curated by **Kathleen Cullen**



**Hans Bellmer**, *La Poupée* ["The Doll"], 1935  
Hand-colored vintage gelatin silver print, 5 3/8 x 5 1/4 inches  
Ubu Gallery, New York & Galerie Berinson, Berlin

**June 10 – July 17, 2015**

**Opening Reception: Wednesday, June 10, 5:30 – 8 PM**

**"To others, the universe seems decent because decent people have gelded eyes.  
That is why they fear lewdness."** *Georges Bataille, "Story of the Eye," 1928*

*Thordis Adalsteinsdottir*  
*Hans Bellmer*  
*Louise Bourgeois*  
*Jeff Burton*  
*Chivas Clem*  
*William Copley*  
*Dennis Dawson*

*Wei Dong*  
*Anne Doran*  
*Tracey Emin*  
*Heide Hatry*  
*Akikazu Iwamoto*  
*Aaron Johnson*  
*David Kramer*

*Cary Leibowitz*  
*Philip-Lorca diCorcia*  
*Bjarne Melgaard*  
*Sean Mellyn*  
*Sarah Meyohas*  
*Pierre Molinier*  
*Tyler Moore*

*Picasso*  
*Chloe Piene*  
*Walter Robinson*  
*Michael St. John*  
*Peter Saul*  
*Max Snow*  
*Betty Tompkins*  
*Hannah Wilke*

**Viewer Discretion...** is an exhibition of erotica that moves us to examine the depths and permutations of our own desires. Where do our edges of comfort lie? At what limit do we draw the stark line of discretion? What stirs us, what shocks us, what does both simultaneously?

Nearly all human beings experience the need to know others intimately, to penetrate mind and body, to observe one another in moments of vulnerability and domination. But what happens when we bear witness to others in their pursuit of that pleasure of intimacy?

It is the gaze that trips the boundary between sensual and erotic, between nude and naked. Watched bodies are erotic in a way that bodies in private cannot be. When nakedness or fornication becomes public, the activity of intimacy becomes provocative fodder for our erotic consumption.

**Viewer Discretion...** begs us to surrender our self-imposed limits of modesty. Many of the artists in this show are in pursuit of the same provocative ends as **Georges Bataille** in his 1928 novella "The Story of the Eye." Bataille explores eroticism, reaching into the furthest realms of obscenity, but in doing so he reveals the raw, gaping, grasping nature of human sexuality.

Bataille's young narrator defines his need for his lover: "We did not lack modesty – on the contrary – but something urgently drove us to defy modesty together as immodestly as possible." That "something urgent" is the drive to know each other carnally, to find certainty in the knowledge of a whole person, down to their every desire.

**Picasso** is featured in this exhibition, with a print depicting a Minotaur eroticizing the female nude figure, an implication of the prelude to an act of sex. **Hans Bellmer**, who was inspired in his art by "Story of the Eye," photographs a sexualized "doll" and, in contrast, naked women pleasuring themselves as Georges Bataille's character Simone often does.

**Pierre Molinier** photographs his own body dressed in lingerie, exposing his fetishes while entering into congress with the viewer. Many works in this show, by artists such as **Aaron Johnson, Chivas Clem, Betty Tompkins, Jeff Burton, William Copley, Walter Robinson, Wei Dong**, and **Thordis Adalsteinsdottir**, portray the act of sex (in the moments before, during, and after) to expose the details and layers of intercourse.

**Bjarne Melgaard, Sarah Meyohas, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Michael St. John, Dennis Dawson, Tracey Emin, Cary Leibowitz, Tyler Moore, Sean Mellyn, Max Snow, Heide Hatry**, and **David Kramer** take a more cerebral approach to facets of sexuality, employing elements such as the disembodied anatomy of humans, plants, and animals, short-form snippets of text, spoken word audio, and images appropriated from popular culture to imply the universality of eroticism. **Louise Bourgeois, Anne Doran, Akikazu Iwamoto, Chloe Piene, Hannah Wilke**, and **Peter Saul** photograph, paint, and sculpt bodies, highlighting the sensuality, ambiguity, and inherently sexual nature of the human form.

Through every artist featured in this exhibition, **Viewer Discretion...children of Bataille** ultimately provides the viewer with the freedom to embrace desire and be stirred by intimacy. As Bataille wrote in a 1957 essay on eroticism and sensuality:

*"The stirrings within us have their own fearful excesses; the excesses show which way these stirrings would take us. They are simply a sign to remind us constantly that death, the rupture of the discontinuous individualities to which we cleave in terror, stands there before us more real than life itself."*

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