

Arcadia Missa ::

Prologue:
Juliette Blightman &
Dorothy Iannone
PRESS

Dorothy Iannone and Juliette Blightman's Daily Pleasures

A joint presentation at Arcadia Missa, London, centres female desire, from Iannone's erotic *(Ta)Rot Pack* to Blightman's sensual Instagram stories

R BY [RÓISÍN TAPPONI](#) IN [REVIEWS](#) | 21 OCT 20



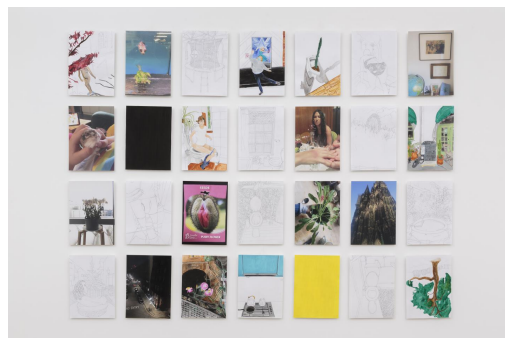
It is 1969 and Dorothy Iannone is having sex – quite a lot of it, if her illustrations are anything to go by. A purveyor of female pleasure in a male-dominated market, the Berlin-based American visual artist has been fighting censorship of women's sexuality for more than five decades. Skip to 2020 and women artists are still pushing against restrictions to body representation. In fact – as the title of the artists' joint show, 'Prologue', indicates – there's still a long way to go.



Dorothy Iannone, *The Story of Bern*, 1970, film still. Courtesy: the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

In Iannone's *(Ta)Rot Pack* (1968–69), 27 tarot cards based on the major arcana depict the artist's relationship with her lover and muse, Dieter Roth. Iannone worked on the cards during the early stages of their liaison in Düsseldorf, where Roth was professor at the city's Kunstakademie. The cards centre the couple's sex life, exploring the aphrodisiacal moments of the everyday. Sitting on the toilet, masturbating, reading in bed: the figures are as self-absorbed as they are a part of each other when in playful sex positions, her breasts and his hairy chest protruding.

This blending of the spiritual with the sexual caused shockwaves when the works were first shown: Iannone's tarot are as blasphemous as they are divine, contradictory and carnal. Sex is not presented as something quotidian but not mundane: a daily pleasure. Deep spiritual connection with the body isn't merely something to aspire to: it can be found in the here and now.

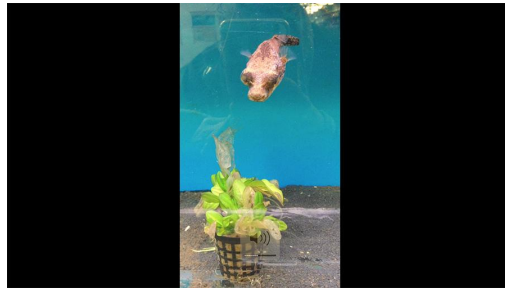


Juliette Blightman, *Stages of Seed Development*, 2020, 27 tarot cards; pencil drawings and gouache on paper, coloured photographs, each: 29.4 x 20.8 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

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pencil, digital printing, watercolour – Blightman uses form to evoke pleasure, hinting at the sexual potency of the depicted objects both subtly (the phallic outline of a watercolour houseplant) and overtly (a photograph of a packet of ‘Pussy Flower’ seeds).

The installation culminates in Blightman’s short video, *Diseaseeds and Pollutionation* (2020), which comprises clips from Instagram stories. Drawing attention to the fleetingness of existence and the need to document it through archiving, the artist creates ‘moments’ out of mundanity, foregrounding the transitory marginalia of a 21st-century woman’s experience of the world. Blightman finds pleasure in pausing, visualising the sensual world that makes up her daily life.



Juliette Blightman, *Diseaseeds and Pollutionation*, 2020, film still
Courtesy: the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

Following *Diseaseeds and Pollutionation* is Iannone’s 24-minute video *The Story of Bern (or) Showing Colours* (1970). A diaporama of an artists’ book published by Iannone and Roth, this politically charged work explores the consequences of representing women’s sexuality in an institutional environment. In May 1969, Harald Szeemann curated a show at Kunsthalle Bern titled ‘Friends and their Friends’, for which he asked four artist friends – Roth, Karl Gerstner, Daniel Spoerri and André Thomkins – to each approach artist friends to exhibit work alongside theirs. Roth invited Iannone to participate, but her *(Ta)Rot Pack* incited a significant backlash, ultimately prompting the other artists to censor her drawings with brown sticky tape. When Iannone’s work was finally removed from the show, just ahead of the opening, Roth withdrew his work in protest. (Szeemann himself resigned as director of the museum shortly after.) Yet, the attendant public and media debate only served to create a myth around Iannone’s unseen exhibit, ironically enhancing its desirability. As Blightman’s work here continues to underscore, the uncensored experience of female pleasure, when documented by a woman, continues to upset the male order.

‘Prologue’ is on view at Arcadia Missa, London, until 22 October. The exhibition will travel to Költnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, on 30 October.

Main image: Dorothy Iannone, *(Ta)Rot Pack*, 1968/69, 2016, 27 laser copies on card, front and back, from 54 original drawings from 1968/69, each: 26.5 x 20 cm. Courtesy: the artist and Arcadia Missa, London

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Róisín Tapponi is an Iraqi-Irish curator, film programmer, researcher and writer. She is founder of Habibi Collective, a platform for women’s filmmaking from South-West Asia and North Africa, and lectures extensively on cinema from the region. She is currently developing its first independent streaming service, Shasha and is also founder of *ART WORK Magazine*, a critical art publication for cultural workers operating on the margins.

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