

Press Release

Seriously.

Curated by Nana Bahlmann

November 21, 2025–January 31, 2026

Public Reception: November 20, 6–8pm

Sprüth Magers, London

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Conceptual photography is often regarded as self-serious and academic. Yet, since the very inception of conceptual art in the 1960s, many such artists have strategically employed humour to provoke and meaningfully engage the viewer, as well as challenge visual norms. Despite being humorous, this work remains intellectually rigorous and profound.

Monika Sprüth and Philomene Magers are pleased to present *Seriously.*, a group exhibition curated by Nana Bahlmann, featuring over a hundred conceptual photographs, print media, and select films ranging from the 1960s to the present, which expose the absurdities of our world and its representations. Through visual wit, subversiveness, and even outright slapstick, these photographic experiments offer humorous conceptual investigations of how images are constructed and interpreted. Employing a range of strategies, from masquerade and role-play to the construction of inexplicable scenarios, unexpected juxtapositions, and idiosyncratic sculptural compositions, these works reveal the farcical and fantastical within the visual realm. In reframing our visual world through satire and playful mimicry, they create space for both reflection and amusement.

The exhibition unfolds across a range of thematic clusters, from explorations of self-portraiture, the built and natural environment, and everyday objects (and sometimes combinations thereof). As visitors move through each room, they encounter groupings of artworks that invite questioning and reimagining of societal norms, gender identity, and the role of the artist. However, a prominent recurring motif that thematically bridges such groupings together is artists citing or parodying the work of their fellow artists. Peter Fischli and David Weiss' eccentric *Equilibres* (1984–86), which are included in the show, are rephotographed in Thomas Ruff's *Zeitungsfotos* (*Newspaper Photographs*, 1990–91), also on view here. Jonathan Monk jovially makes reference to Louise Lawler and the artist duo Bernd and Hilla Becher, whose unexpectedly humorous work is presented. Satirising Cindy Sherman, Thomas Demand, and Andreas Gursky, as well as their contemporaries, John Waters' *Art Market Research* (2006) merrily documents hysterical reviews of the work of artistic peers that are exhibited alongside Waters' comical critique.

While many of the artists included in this exhibition are traditionally associated with humour, such as John Baldessari and William Wegman, others are not. Humour is subjective; what one person finds funny may not resonate with another, depending on the context in which the object of hilarity is presented. Not all of the works included in this extensive exhibition were necessarily intended to be humorous by the artists who made them, nor will every viewer perceive them as such. Yet, in the context of an exhibition focused on humour, the underlying wit and clever punning within these works becomes apparent.

Humour is more than entertainment; it's a powerful socio-political tool that acts as a lens through which to understand the strange or illogical aspects of our times. *Seriously.* celebrates this complexity and invites its audience to engage, think, and laugh.

Seriously. features the work of Bas Jan Ader, Keith Arnatt, John Baldessari, Massimo Bartolini, Bernd and Hilla Becher, Lynda Benglis, Helen Chadwick, Robert Cumming, Thomas Demand, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Braco Dimitrijević, Cao Fei, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Peter Fischli and David Weiss, Ceal Floyer, Tom Friedman, Dan Graham, Rodney Graham, Scott Grieger, Aneta Grzeszykowska, Sigurður Guðmundsson, Andreas Gursky, Barbara Hammer, Nancy Holt and Robert Smithson, Rebecca Horn, Douglas Huebler, Birgit Jürgenssen, Astrid Klein, David Lamelas, Louise Lawler, Natalia LL, Sarah Lucas, Urs Lüthi, Tom Marioni, Anthony McCall, Jonathan Monk, Peter Moore, Bruce Nauman, Joshua Neustein, Dennis Oppenheim, Géza Perneczky, Sigmar Polke, Charles Ray, Andrea Robbins and Max Becher, Ulrike Rosenbach, Thomas Ruff, Ed Ruscha, Cindy Sherman, Stephen Shore, Santiago Sierra and Franz Erhard Walther, Roman Signer, Laurie Simmons, John Smith, Martine Syms, Robert Therrien, Rosemarie Trockel, Keiji Uematsu, Ger van Elk, Mark Wallinger, John Waters, Gillian Wearing, Carrie Mae Weems, William Wegman, Hannah Wilke, Stephen Willats, and Christopher Williams.

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