

GET DRUNK

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Curated by René-Julien Praz

Ever since antiquity, inebriation has been presented as a way of opening the doors to creativity, a means that is deeply connected to poetry, both by its origin, inspirational value and its subversive and exhilarating aspects. After all, is it not fêted for giving rise to sharing and festivity by worshipers of the Greek god Dionysus and his Roman counterpart Bacchus, the god of wine who is the living embodiment of this tribute to the values of drunkenness that paves the way to other excesses, madness, theatricality and tragedy. Poets lay claim to inebriation, asserting it as their way of accessing the inspirational divine voice and describing the latter's light, euphoric and ephemeral condition.

In *Petits poèmes en prose*, which was published in 1869 two years after his death, Baudelaire assembled men and wine to show the necessity of drunkenness as an escape towards an ideal. Here he is speaking of a poetic and spiritual inebriation that is an antidote to metaphysical disarray and the passage of time. "Get Drunk", he proclaims. "One must always be drunk. That is the heart of the matter. So as not to feel the horrible burden of Time crushing your shoulders and bending you toward the earth, you must get drunk without rest. But on what? On wine, on poetry, or on virtue; you choose. But get drunk."

Baudelaire's brilliance provides without a doubt relief from the burden of life at a given moment in time and, to quote Véronique Nahoum Grappe, "no matter what the future holds in store, drunkenness is an investment in the present moment". Charles Baudelaire is trying to draw out the main idea, the implicit philosophy at the core of a work and its creator's vision of the world, the harmonious rapport between

sensibility, perspective and an essential choice that defines a mind. And this is precisely what characterises the get-together of artists in which this exhibition invites you to participate, an encounter between Baudelaire's modernity and the creative pugnacity of 24 contemporary artists in whom the forces of the imagination meet and intertwine with the poet's ideal. What once excited him and now excites these artists is not describing the material nature of art, but rather setting off in search of its hidden source, by evoking the dreams and considerations to which works of art give rise. Each artist present takes firmly hold of their pictorial truth and the genesis of their art in order to analyse their chosen means of expression and approach to colour, the flat canvas surface, material questions and the mastery of space, light and composition. *"We have within us the sparks of knowledge, like a flint: philosophers extract them through reason, but poets force them out through the sharp blows of the imagination [...]"*.¹ *Damn yourself through your use of colour, eccentricity, madness and libertinism. Dare to drink to excess for "[...] what does an eternity of damnation matter to one who has found in a single instant an infinity of joy?"*.²

1. Descartes
2. Baudelaire

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