

Lust for Life

14 February - 2 May 2026

Tim Van Laere Gallery Rome is pleased to present *Lust for Life*, a group exhibition with works by Carroll Dunham, Gelitin, George Grosz, Sarah Lucas, Ben Sledsens, Rinus Van de Velde, Franz West, and Rose Wylie. Borrowing its title from the iconic Iggy Pop anthem, *Lust for Life* stands as a rejoinder to the tension and uncertainty of the present. Rather than retreat, the show places emphasis on energy, desire, humor, defiance, and the irrepressible drive to create. Across generations and sensibilities, these artists share an insistence on the charged, combustible experience of being alive and on art as a space where that vitality can be confronted, celebrated, and felt.

The works *The Invasion* and *Waiting for Better Times* by George Grosz stand at the heart of this exhibition. These works of 1947 and 1933 resonate strongly with our current times. They present lust for life turned inside out: what happens when that vital force is blocked, corrupted, or conscripted by ideology and power. Grosz shows a world where bodies are still moving, still acting, but aliveness has been drained of pleasure, tenderness, and choice. Desire hasn't disappeared; it's been weaponized. Life continues, but in a state of moral and spiritual malnutrition. The figures in *The Invasion* feel driven rather than alive. They march, brandish, prod, and follow, as if caught in a collective trance. In *Waiting for better Times*, Grosz depicts two people in an almost frozen state. Numbness is not the absence of activity, but the absence of presence. Grosz exposes a society where intensity exists, as violence, frenzy, spectacle, but is severed from care, humor, or sensuality. It's intensity without intimacy. It shows the cost of a world that suppresses desire instead of allowing it to be messy, mutual, and human. Where others insist on staying sensate, Grosz shows what happens when sensation is flattened into obedience and cruelty. Yet, these drawings are ferociously alive. The nervous lines, the acid color, the manic detail, all of it pulses with urgency. Grosz refuses passivity as an artist even as he depicts it as a social condition. That tension is crucial: the works do not numb the viewer; they agitate them. It keeps perception awake. These pieces anchor the exhibition's darker register. They remind us that lust for life is not guaranteed. It must be defended. When vitality is denied room to be awkward, erotic, humorous, or tender, it doesn't disappear; it mutates. Grosz shows us that mutation with brutal clarity, making his works not an outlier, but the shadow that gives the rest of the exhibition its stakes. They reflect the human need to always have hope that better times will come.

Moving between painting, sculpture, and works on paper, the exhibition further unfolds as a series of encounters (sometimes tender, sometimes abrasive, often mischievous) where bodies, fantasies, memories, and cultural icons collide. Figuration slips into caricature, intimacy veers toward the grotesque, and high art rubs shoulders with popular imagery. The result is a visual language that is unapologetically human: messy, humorous, erotic, melancholic, and fiercely alive. Throughout the gallery, gestures oscillate between vulnerability and bravado. Delicate lines and saturated colors coexist with blunt physicality and material excess. There is a persistent sense of play, but also of resistance: against propriety, against despair, against the dulling of sensation. Whether through exaggerated bodies, warped perspectives, or subversive reworkings of familiar images, the works insist on feeling; on pleasure, awkwardness, longing, and laughter, as vital forces.

In our current moment, when life is increasingly filtered through screens, metrics, and crisis language, a lust for life becomes a form of insistence. Not optimism, not denial, but a refusal to go numb. It is the decision to stay sensate, to feel desire, discomfort, humor, pleasure, and contradiction, even as the world encourages detachment or exhaustion. This lust for life shows up as excess, awkwardness, and embodiment. It lives in unruly bodies, in sexual charge that is funny rather than glamorous, in forms that bulge, slouch, or sprawl instead of behaving. Against a culture obsessed with control, efficiency, and polished identities, these gestures insist on the body as something messy, libidinal, and alive. Desire here is not refined; it's proof of pulse. At the same time, lust for life can be quiet and attentive. It appears in slowness, in devotion to interiors, gardens, daily rituals, and acts of care. In a world driven by urgency and spectacle, choosing softness and beauty without irony becomes radical. To linger, to look closely, to paint or build as an act of attention is to protect inner life from being eroded by constant alarm. There is also humor; crude, ridiculous, collective humor that refuses seriousness as the only valid response to crisis. Laughter, participation, and physical togetherness become tools for survival. In their chaos and absurdity,

these gestures push back against isolation and the privatization of experience. They remind us that life is not meant to be managed alone or experienced at a distance.

Lust for Life does not propose optimism as a solution to the present moment. Instead, it asserts stamina. It insists that pleasure, desire, humor, care, and excess are not distractions from reality, but ways of staying inside it. In a world that benefits from exhaustion and detachment, this exhibition argues that choosing intensity, choosing to remain sensate, awkward, and awake, is a quietly radical act. To lust for life today is to refuse the idea that despair is the most “intelligent” response. It’s choosing presence over paralysis. It’s noticing the way sunlight hits a kitchen table, or how a song can still knock the breath out of your chest, and letting that matter. Not because it solves anything, but because it reminds you that you are still here, and that being here is not neutral.