



Lutz Bacher, *Jackie & Me*, 1989 (detail), Astrup Fearnley Collection, Oslo

LUZ BACHER: Burning the Days

Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo

26 Sep 2025 – 4 Jan 2026

WIELS Centre for Contemporary Art, Brussels

28 Mar – 9 Aug 2026

Astrup Fearnley Museet and WIELS Brussels announce the first posthumous retrospective of American conceptual artist Lutz Bacher (1943–2019). This landmark exhibition offers an expansive view of Bacher's provocative, genre-defying oeuvre, spanning over four decades of uncompromising artistic production.

Early in her career the artist adopted her fictional, masculine-sounding pseudonym, insisting on an open-ended understanding of authorship and identity in a practice that resisted categorization. Throughout her career Lutz Bacher remained an enigmatic figure whose influential yet elusive practice occupied a singular position in contemporary art.

Burning the Days is the first posthumous exhibition to cover the full breadth of her artistic life. The exhibition presents an artistic practice that challenged power dynamics through an unsettling mix of affect and sentiment, humor, pop-cultural touchstones, and unflinching examinations of sexuality, violence, political paranoia, and cosmic metaphysics.

Astrup Fearnley Museet

Bacher began working with photography in the mid-1970s, but early on introduced the use of the media image as a readymade itself. Her method involved sifting through newspapers, advertisements, self-help manuals, trade catalogues, pornography and abandoned photographs. Deliberately migrating between styles and attitudes, her practice developed to incorporate installation, video, sound, and found objects, without developing a signature style that could be easily recognized and commodified.

The exhibition foregrounds the political dimensions of Bacher's work, an aspect of her practice that has often been overshadowed by discussions of her formal or conceptual strategies. Her engagement with American cultural and political violence is pivotal to her work, particularly her examination of institutional power and its expression and manipulation through media. Bacher's examinations of American power structures as the Cold War ended—of paranoia and cultural psychosis, which she opposed with unapologetically affective and empathic images—are more relevant than ever at this time, as the United States grapples with profound political polarization, institutional mistrust, and resurgent authoritarianism.

Bacher's oeuvre operates through a radical deployment of found objects and detritus, reinvigorating the 'readymade' paradigm: found images, texts, archival fragments, and disused objects, assembled in installations, videos, prints and sculptures that refuse to dissolve into singular narratives.

Lutz Bacher lived and worked between Berkeley and New York. Her archive, organized from the 1980s onward in what she titled "The Betty Center"—home to nearly 300 black binders of sketches, correspondence, clippings, photos, and project notes—became not only a private studio resource but an artwork unto itself: mobile, recursive, and forever incomplete.



Lutz Bacher, *Horse / Shadow*, 2010, Astrup Fearnley Collection, Oslo



Lutz Bacher, *Yamaha*, 2010 (detail), Astrup Fearnley Collection, Oslo

EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

Rather than following a chronological order, *Burning the Days* unfolds through a series of thematic and associative encounters—reflecting the logic of Bacher's own methodology. Highlights include:

Early works from the 1970s, including *Men at War* and *The Lee Harvey Oswald Interview*, highlight her interventions into the instability of images and the political mythologies they create.

A rare reunion of a substantial number of the iconic *Jokes* series (1985–88) and *Playboys* paintings (1991–93), in which appropriated image/text combinations expose the psychological undercurrents of mainstream cultural codes.

Assemblage installations, such as *In Memory of My Feelings*, *Yamaha*, and *Horse/Shadow*, as well as other sound and sculptural works, map the terrain of embodiment with an emotional depth but a mechanized fragility.

Firearms (2019), the artist's final work, created shortly before her death, offers a stark meditation on the culture of violence, national anxiety, and personal reckoning.

Through its associative layout, the exhibition evokes Bacher's archival impulse—where stories are partial, archives overflow, and meaning remains in motion.

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PUBLICATION

A comprehensive monograph will be published in 2026, featuring newly commissioned essays by art historian Kate Nesin, writer Emily LaBarge, and philosopher Juliane Rebentisch, alongside a curatorial foreword.

CREDITS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LUTZ BACHER: Burning the Days is organized in collaboration with WIELS Centre for Contemporary Art, Brussels, where a new iteration of the exhibition will be on view from March 28–August 9, 2026.

Curated by Solveig Øvstebø with co-curators Dirk Snauwaert and Helena Kritis at WIELS Centre for Contemporary Art.

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