A large, vibrant pink watercolor splash serves as the background for the text. The splash is irregular and textured, with darker pink areas and lighter, more washed-out areas. It is surrounded by smaller, scattered pink splatters and droplets, particularly concentrated in the lower-left and lower-right corners. The overall effect is dynamic and artistic.

NOTES ON SEX & SOLITUDE

A WALKTHROUGH IN
TRACEY EMIN'S VOCABULARY

FROM US TO YOU

Dear you,

Welcome to *Tracey Emin. Sex and Solitude* exhibition. We are nine young international women, with diverse cultural backgrounds, who study art in Florence. In recent months, we have had the opportunity to confront Tracey Emin's artistic practice.

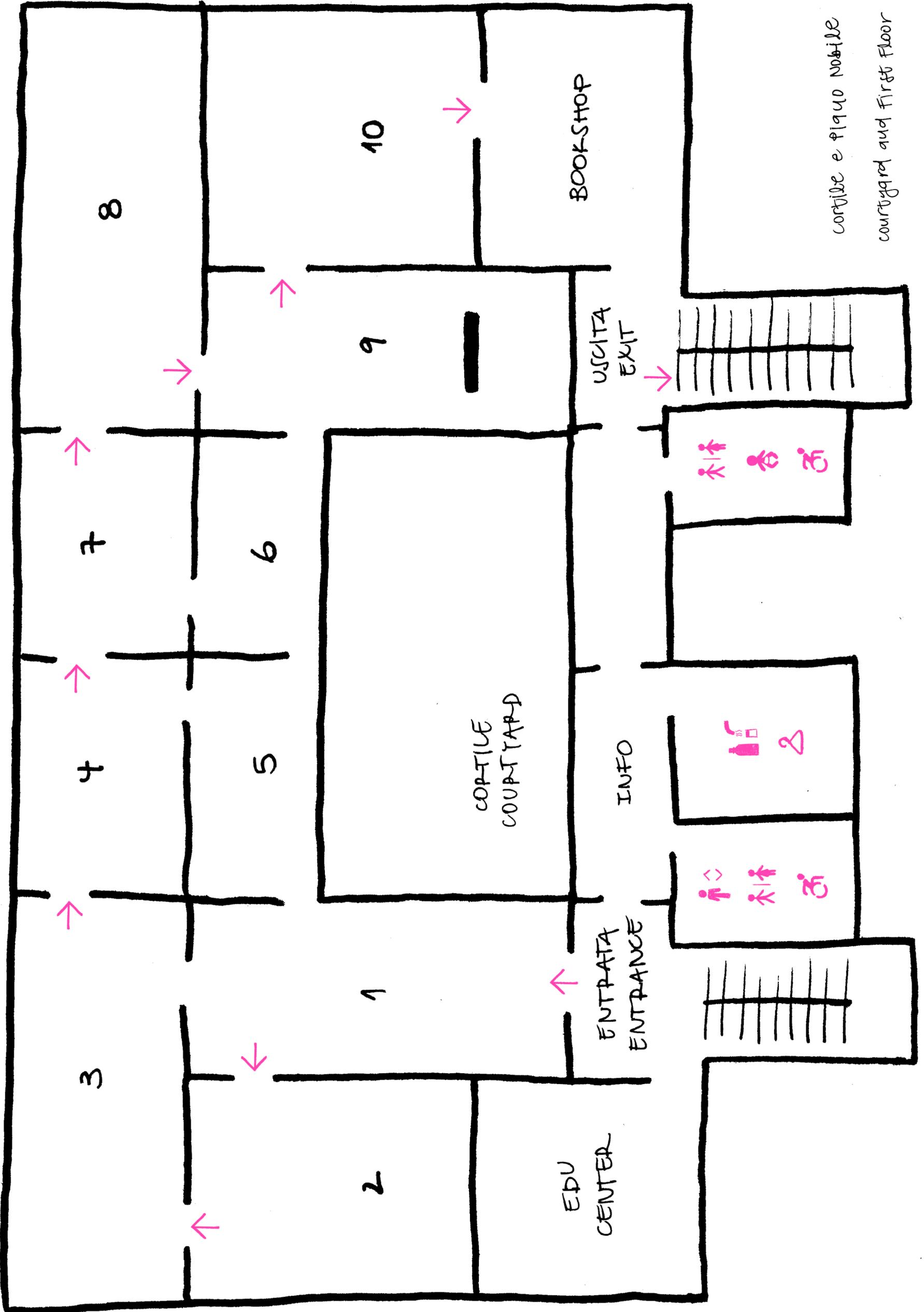
Through paintings, neon lights, sculptures and embroidery, Emin narrates her biography with no filter: sexuality, depression, love, maternity, and death are some of the recurrent words and themes in her research.

We were inspired by Emin's confessions, hidden and sometimes explicitly, stated in her artworks, prompting us to consider emotions that we wouldn't have ever shared. No matter how uncomfortable they may have initially been.

This booklet was designed to enhance and aid your experience throughout the show and her vocabulary, composed of words that are sometimes difficult to address, uneasy or hard to handle.

We recognize the power of Emin's work, which is why we have created a tool to explore these difficult themes: a safe space for all of us. We invite you to take this opportunity to delve deeper into Tracey Emin's artworks and the profound subjects they explore.

WITH CARE
FROM US



cortile e p1940 Nobile
 courtyard and First Floor

SEX

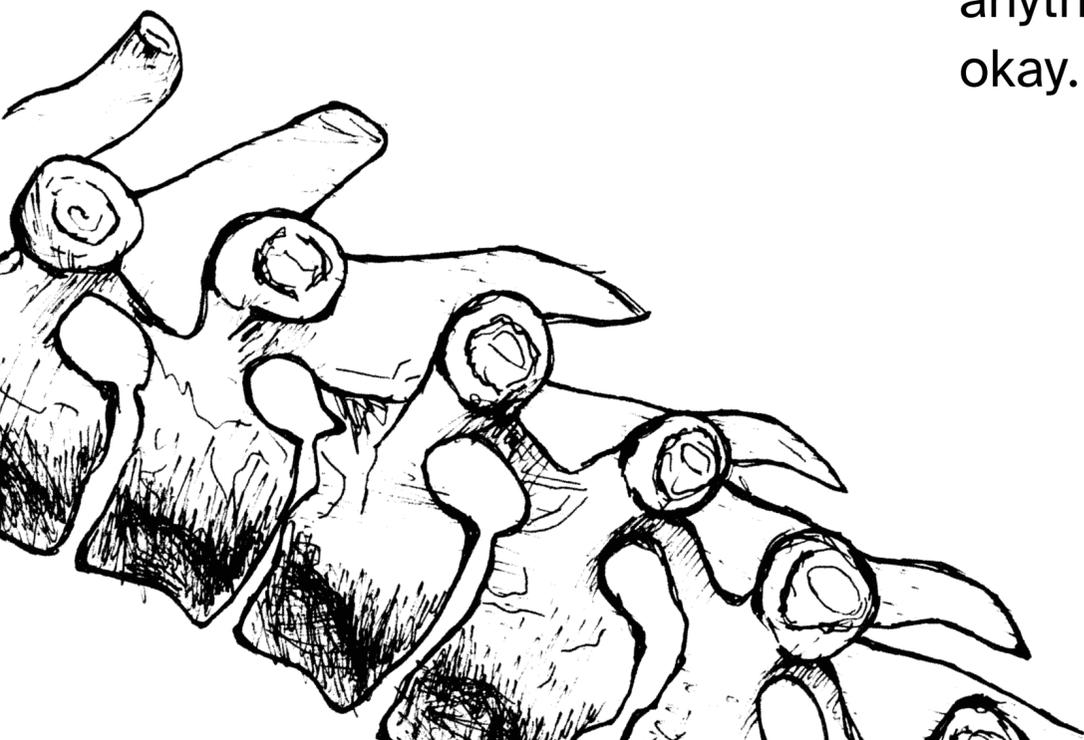


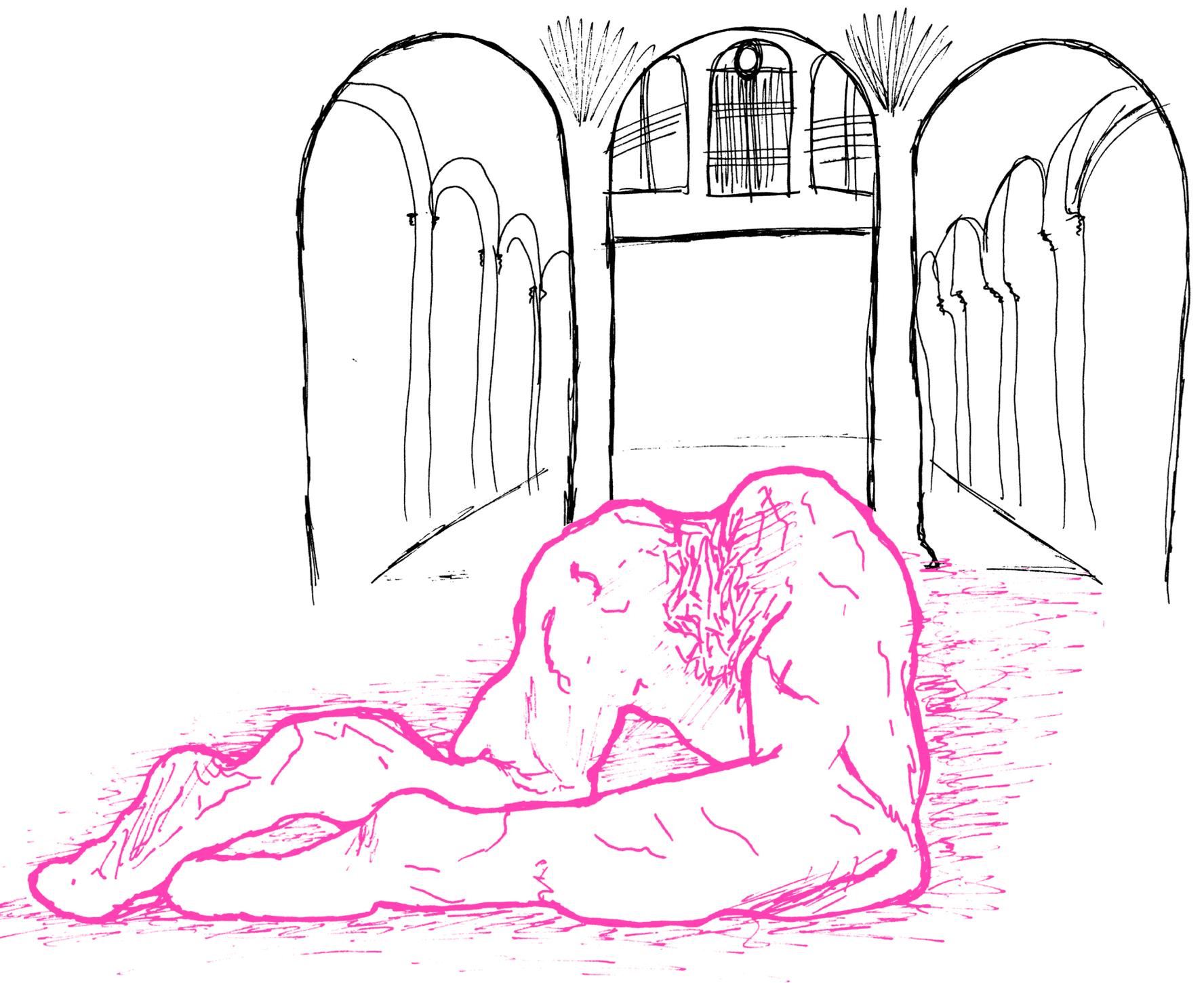
SOLITUDE

When you think of sex, do you ever think of solitude? Why are these two words combined in the title of an exhibition? At first glance, they might seem like opposites, evoking contrasting emotions, yet this pairing invites us to challenge this assumption. Could Tracey Emin be suggesting something we have yet to understand? Reality is neither black nor white but a spectrum, where two opposing poles merge in the middle, where we exist. Thus, reality seems to be a realm of doubles and multiplicities, filled with overlapping meanings.

Tracey Emin. Sex and Solitude show alludes to this duality. These words refer to driving forces that have always moved her work, in which she reflects the complexity of her (ours, yours) emotional spectrum—ranging from intimacy to profound solitude, from pleasure to obsession, from grief to acceptance.

Due to this emotional complexity, we came to design a guide where many opposing forces can coexist, a protected place to explore and to confront certain challenging topics that might emerge from the visit. You might feel overwhelmed, or you even might not feel anything. And it'll completely be okay. This is how we felt.





Pleasure

&

Repulsion

Harsh brushstrokes and romantic words in the guise of neon lights welcome you into this room. These ‘confessions’—both painted and written—invite you to witness the beauty of feeling deeply, even when those feelings ache. At first, there is warmth: the tender curve of a line, the intimacy of a handwritten note, a heartfelt letter to a past lover. But linger a little longer, and something sharper emerges. The edges of her work sting, confronting us with truths we might avoid in ourselves. Tracey Emin’s works offer no neat resolutions. Instead, her creations pulse with contrasting forces; the ache of desire, the

honesty of self-exposure, the bliss of solitude.

Standing between her pieces, we have found ourselves caught between two energies: pleasure and repulsion now entwine, blurring boundaries with raw, human vulnerability.

The push and pull of her art reflect life itself: raw, messy, and undeniably human.

This tension that blends amusement and aversion makes Tracey Emin’s voice resonating most powerfully, urging us to feel, to confront, to exist.

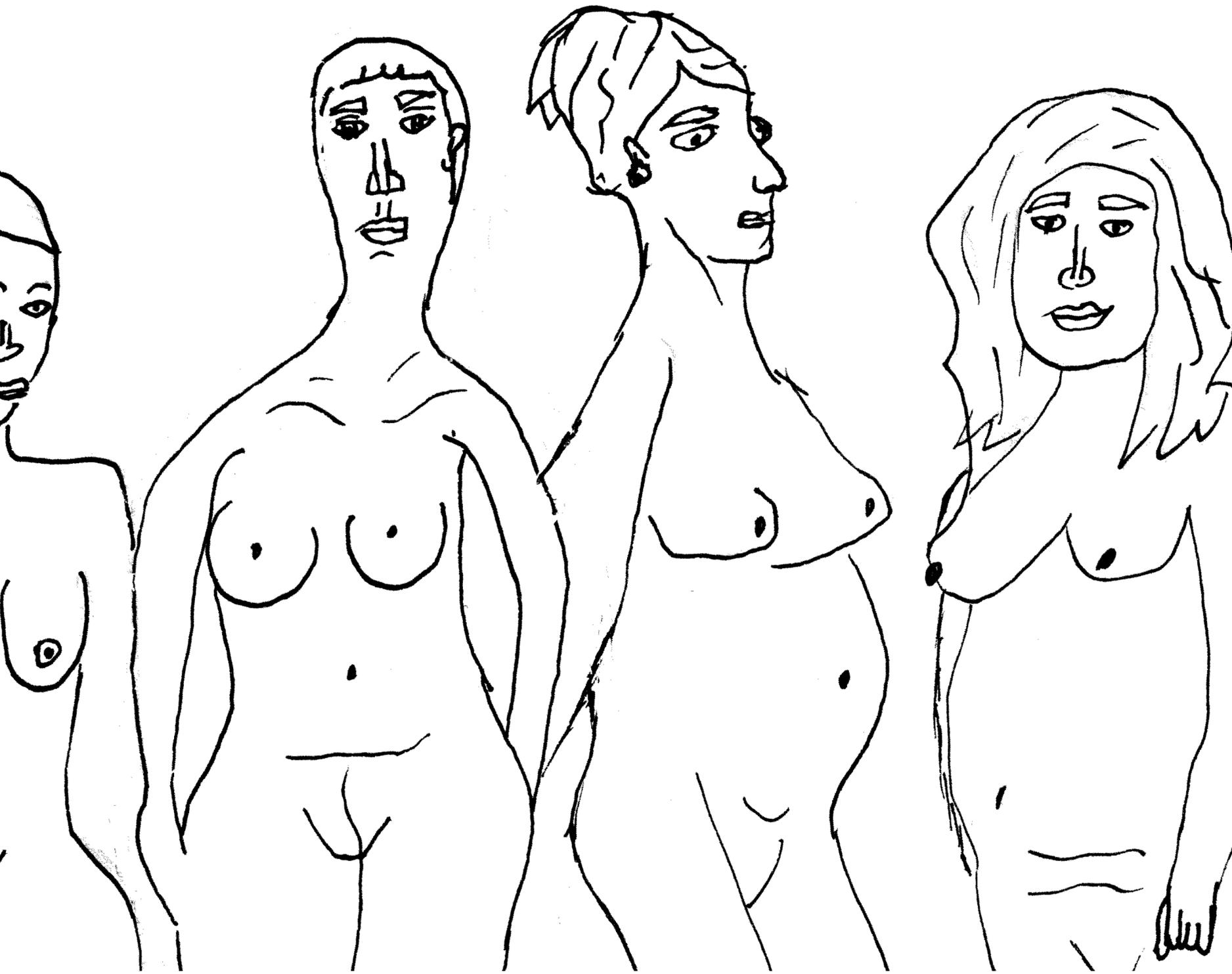
Have you ever felt pleasure in your repulsion, or repulsion in your pleasure?



Belonging

Smashed

Screaming



Abortion & Rebirth

Have you ever experienced something that changed your life? This room invites us to immerse ourselves in Tracey Emin's personal experience, documenting a moment of transformation and rebirth as an artist.

After an experience of abortion, the artist stopped painting for years, living a self-described "emotional suicide." In 1996, she made a performance where

she locked herself in a room for three weeks. Naked, surrounded only by canvases, brushes, and paint, she exposed herself as an artist as well as a model to an invisible audience. This is how she reconciled to painting: finding in such demanding experience the strength to restore her relationship with the medium. Nevertheless she waited many more years before starting to paint again.

A traumatic event may seem like a street with no end. The feeling of being locked inside a room with no way out. A situation that makes you question yourself and your identity. Instead, this is how Tracey Emin processed her emotions, locking herself in a room, completely vulnerable, fully exposed with no excuses to avoid painting.

Have you ever experienced something so painful that you stopped doing what you love the most? Have you tried to overcome such loss with any means necessary?



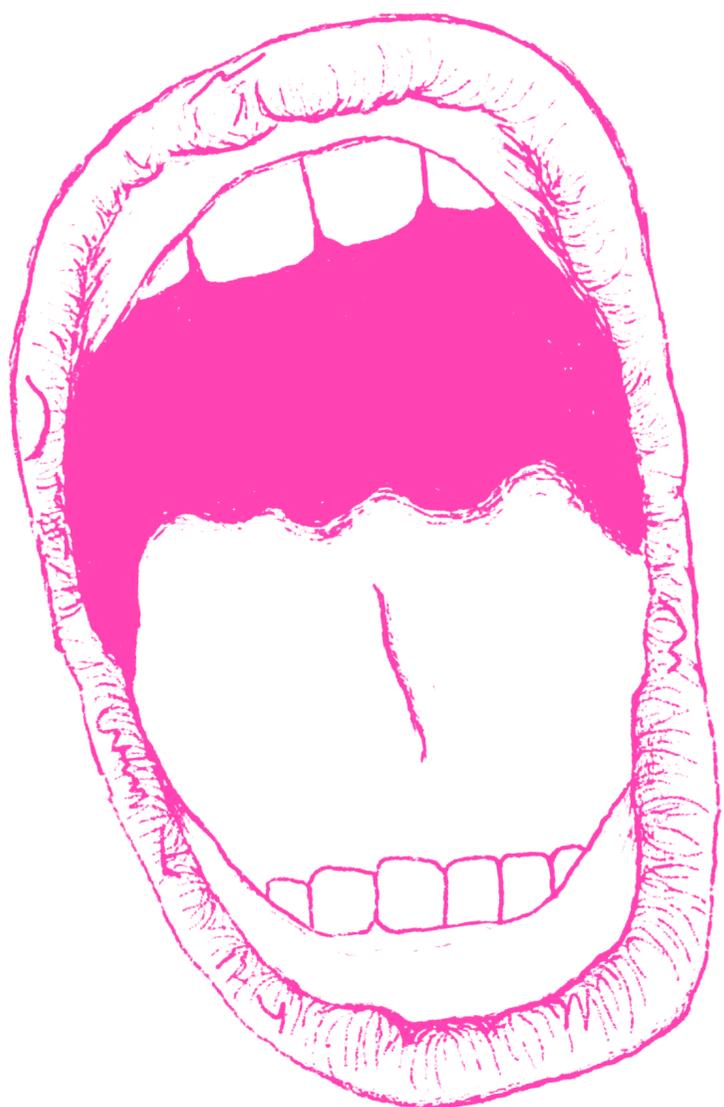


" I came out of it as
a different person "



Passion & obsession

Tracey Emin creates a universe of bodies—fragile, imperfect, eternal—, a reminder of our desires and lust. Bodies painted with vivid and impulsive brushstrokes, that chase each other like waves of thrill crashing against the shores of the soul. Flaming colours that illuminate and consume, making each image a field of tension and



cravings. Other bodies are sculpted with immediate impressions, capturing in bronze raw instincts and feelings.

She always represents a throbbing intertwining of passion and obsession, an intimate dialogue between heart and flesh, exposing an unfiltered intimacy.

A raw, cutting phrase emerge from the silence of a painting, suspending the viewer on the verge of emotion: "I WANTED YOU TO FUCK ME SO MUCH I COULDN'T PAINT ANYMORE." These works do not provide answers, they pose questions about the fine line between passion and obsession, about the act of loving and the need to be loved. A cascade of emotions that covertly becomes an overwhelming ocean.

When does something harmless become dangerous? When does passion become obsession?



SOLITUDE

Room 6



RECONNECTION

At times, we look around and see no one, not a single soul. Yet, we don't feel lonely; we are simply alone. In solitude, we can experience a unique freedom, allowing us to be the truest and rawest version of ourselves. In this room, Tracey Emin is "thriving on solitude," as the title of one of her paintings made during the 2020 lockdown states.



Here she embraces solitude in her apartment, translating intimate details of her confined life into small paintings. Ghostly atmospheres defined by blue and azure shades.

In solitude we might find reconnection, like in a quiet walk or a slow morning. Moments in which we can enjoy our own company. Times to reflect and understand what we need, and what we don't. Where we can have space for our thoughts, and we all can get to know ourselves better.

Reconnecting with our needs can also allow us to reconnect with the world. Because of times of solitude, we appreciate better the moments in which we are not alone. After a while, an empty room gets too quiet, and the warmth of others is wanted. During these times, we seek to reach out to those who we have loved and that have loved us back.

So, how about you, what do you find in solitude?



Grief & acceptance

We have a confession to make, one that weighs heavily like stone. There has been pain, but with time it became our warmest quilt. In the beginning, it felt like the grief would never lift, a suffocating and dense mantle. But as time stretched on, we began to see it for what it was, a soft embrace. Grief will transform. It will shift from being a burden, towards something that becomes part of you.

Tracey Emin taught us that there is more than one way to create, nurture, and shape our history. With embroidery she connects thoughts and fragments of an inner life into a soft quilt, giving a new shape to her memories as “I do not expect to be mother, but I do

expect to die alone.” With every piece in this room, she continues to remind us of what it means to be vulnerable and human—showing us that even in our breaking and aging, we find new forms, new possibilities, and new connections. We are shaped by carving and crushing. The world may change, the body may change, but nothing can erase the fact that we live and shape each other through rusty weather. Somehow, you will learn that by allowing yourself to break, you’ll uncover soft treasures within. Numbness may seem like a refuge, but it is sadness that creates space; when you confront it, you open room for something more. This ‘more’ is the meaning.

I DO NOT EXPECT TO BE

M O T H E R

BUT I DO EXPECT TO

DIE

A L O N E

IT DOESNT HAVE TO BE LIKE THIS

SHE WENT OUT LIKE

C A L L M M

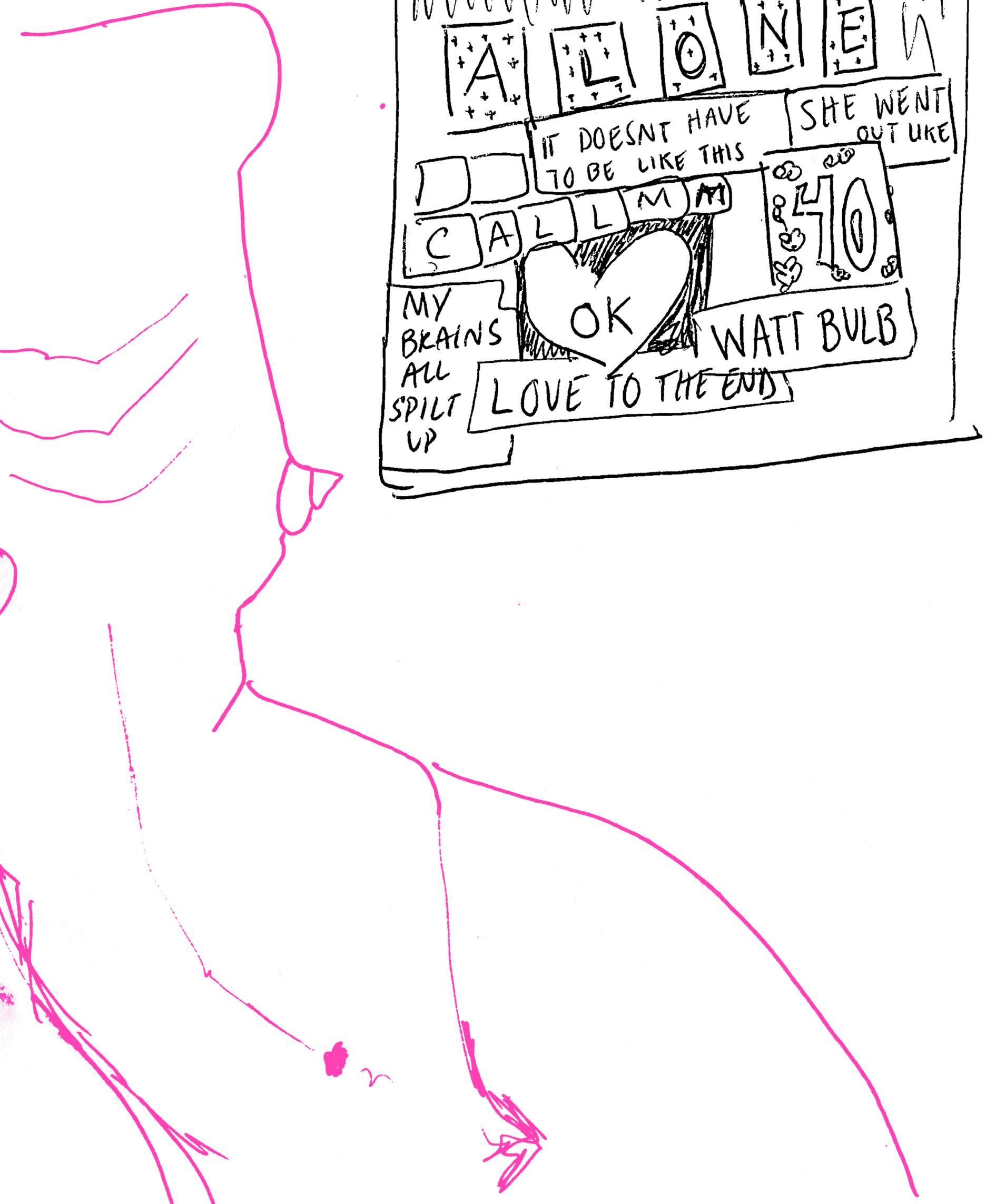
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MY BRAINS ALL SPILT UP

OK

WATT BULB

LOVE TO THE END



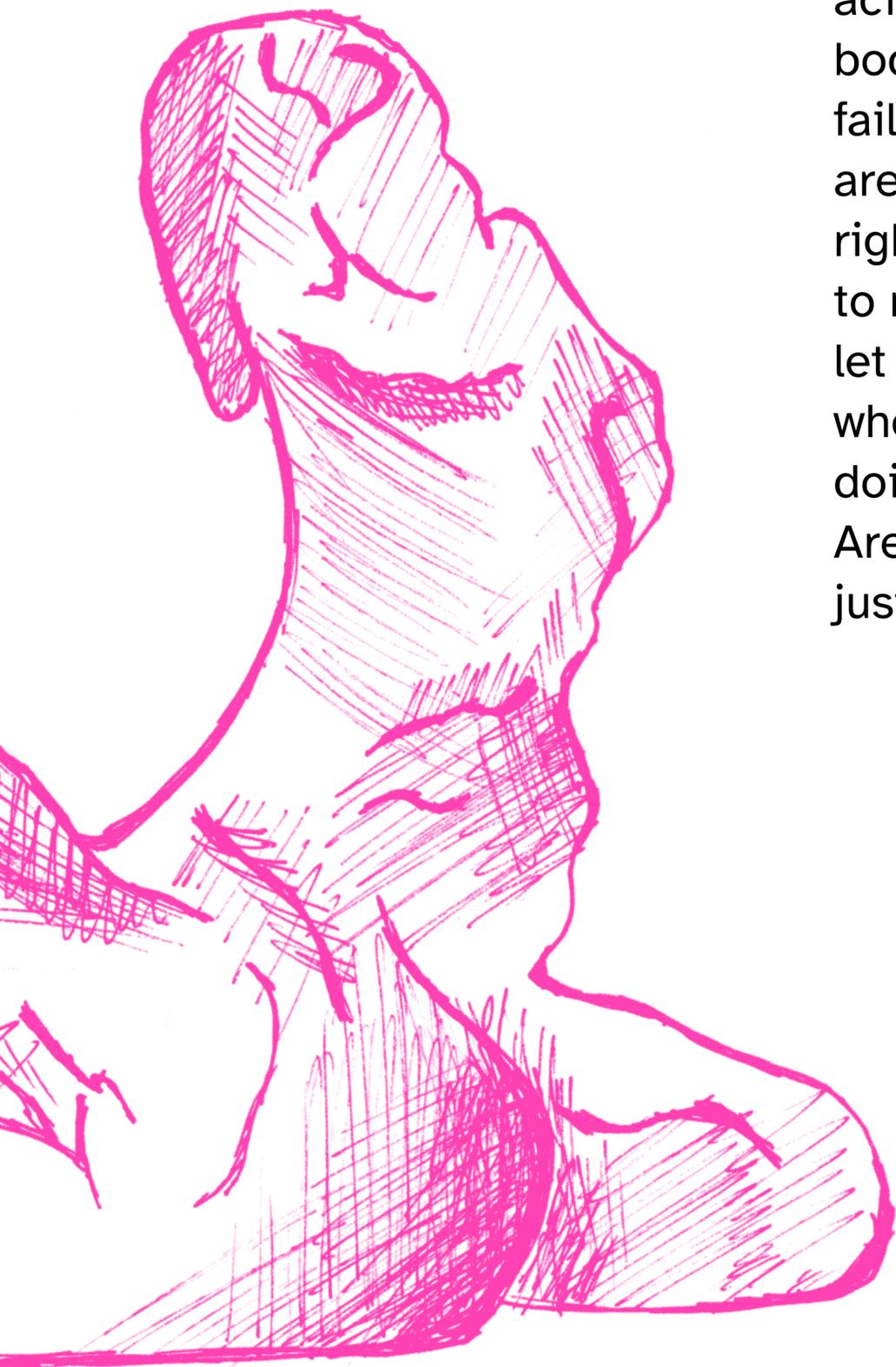
L O N G I N G I N G

“I longed for you,” Tracey Emin welcomes us in the room with these words in the form of a neon sculpture. Every language has its way to describe this emotion:

struggimento, Sehnsucht, anheló, 渴望, verlangen, envie. You might call it whatever you want, but you know if you have felt it.

Longing is to wait. But we never master how to calm down that acid fluid coursing all over our body during sleepless nights and failed attempts in focusing. You are probably longing for someone right now. But have you ever tried to make peace with the ache, and let it teach you how to love even when you think you’re already doing it?

Are you really loving, or are you just waiting?



to return, but every time you finally walked back, you suddenly, slowly disappeared. And even when you were here while you were so far from me, I couldn't wait for you to return, but every time you finally walked back, you suddenly, slowly disappeared. And even when you were here, right next to me, I could touch your cold thigh with my hand, but still longed for the warmth of you. I wish you were here, just as you once desired.



For that old me that comforted her soul in your chest, his in her childhood favourite pillow. I now sleep on that pillow and I dream of you. There has never been either positive or negative feelings that make me live together next to me together, but I know that I have a rage that kept me alive for the next time - a time which however I could never ever have again. That's why I feel for you.

While you were so far from me, I couldn't wait for you to return, but every time you finally walked back, you suddenly, slowly disappeared. And even when you were here while you were so far from me, I couldn't wait for you to return, but every time you finally walked back, you suddenly,

FLOURISH

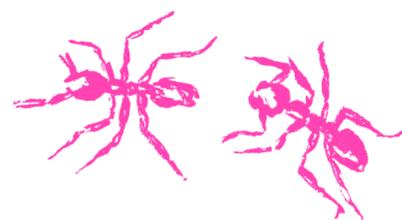
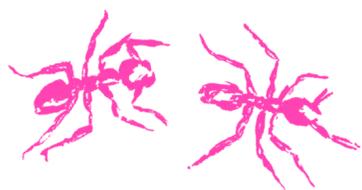
&

DECAY

Don't let the bronze statue in the middle of the room intimidate you. Laying on a white base, a sculpture portrays an unfamiliar shape, a fragment of a body. The title *This is exactly how I feel right now* tells us something more about Tracey Emin's story. A story made also of illness, body transformation, and close encounters with death. But, do you know the bronze doesn't decay as our flesh and bones do? Instead, it flourishes in oxidation. When we become older, or ill, our body might feel like disappearing and not like home anymore. Maybe, our body has learned to shed what hurts it, while we wait until it is fully regrown.

We can continue to thrive, no matter what, even if some parts of us are left behind.

Surrounded by black and white images of bodies in grey fields, we arrive at the end of this story. Tracey Emin's personal story, yet something that belongs to us all. We often think of flourishing and decay as opposites, yet they both unfold within the same cycle, each requiring time. One offers us the chance to grow, while the other reveals the tangled knots we leave behind. Both demand attention to what shapes us—the relationships, the habits, the choices. What is worth nurturing into bloom, and what is worth letting time erode?





I knew they were no longer my words but something

and now my soul was crying

and I knew

they were no longer my words but something

had been carved into my heart

and now my soul was crying

and I knew they were no longer my words but something had been carved into my heart and now my soul was crying

SOMEONE TO TALK TO

1522

1522

Anti-violence and anti-stalking hotline.

TELEFONO AMICO ITALIA

02 23272327

Emotional support helpline for loneliness, distress, and crisis.

DE LEO FUND

800 168 678

Psychological support for traumatic loss.

I.C.A.R.E

<https://icare.sanita.toscana.it/en/>

Counseling centers that offer free medical, obstetrical, psychological consultations from Local Health Agency (Azienda USL Toscana).

This is a list of numbers to call and resources in case of need, to talk, to ask for support, guidance or medical advice.



Tracey Emin. Sex and Solitude

March 16 - July 20, 2025

Palazzo Strozzi, Florence

The booklet *Notes on Sex and Solitude* is a tool to explore *Tracey Emin. Sex and Solitude* exhibition through the gaze of the undergraduate students of the Arts Curating and Multimedia Arts courses of Istituto Marangoni Firenze working alongside Fondazione Palazzo Strozzi team.

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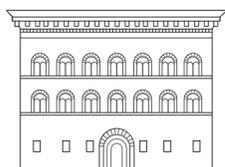
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