

Casper Sejersen, *Belongs to Joe: Book of Comfort for a Nymphomaniac*
(MACK, 2015)

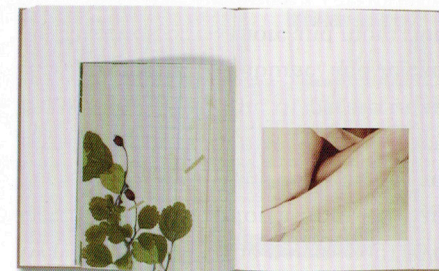
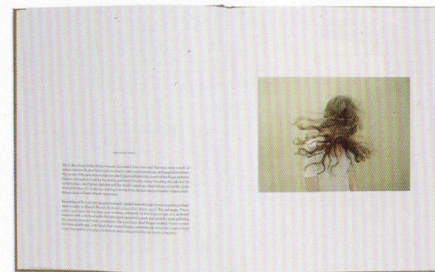
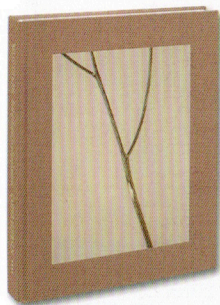
By Pippa Milne

Belongs to Joe is a catalogue of the life of Lars von Trier's wayward protagonist from the film *Nymphomaniac*. Through mutedly graded images by Casper Sejersen (the film's official photographer) and texts carefully selected or constructed by Cecile Høgsbro (curator and writer from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts) the book unpeels layers of the film's script with deft sensitivity.

Alongside Sejersen's images – and interspersed with von Trier's dialogue – are extracts from historical texts on topics as eclectic and beguiling as cartomancy, fly fishing, Edgar Allan Poe's cause of death and Bach's principles of composition. Biblical references flow into botanical descriptions, before nonchalantly settling on Freudian analysis of the female orgasm. Segersen's photographs willingly illustrate these disparate and often darkly sexual aspects, and such esoterica seems to construct an impression of a life abundant in brutality, extremism and searching.

Joe, whose life we peruse, is a self-diagnosed nymphomaniac unburdening her tale of sexual woe to a bizarrely un-

flappable and an (almost) infinitely sympathetic gentleman. As a film, *Nymphomaniac* is theatrical, scripted and replete with flashbacks, info-graphics and didactically titled chapters. It is the sort of film that is perhaps better realised as a scrapbook. In *Belongs to Joe*, objects such as a fishing fly, a game of solitaire, a gun, an image of the Virgin Mary, a cat-o'-nine tails and a herbarium, provide a syntax to von Trier's troubling narrative. They



anchor the plot's constituents while providing rich opportunity for extrapolation.

On the page, this use of symbolism remains entrancing and seductive; the objects are lures that drag you into a new web of existence, woven from references to literature, religion, musical theory and sadomasochism. Somehow, Sejersen and Høgsbro have resisted the urge to overuse such devices, which can often feel so heavy on screen.

Willow
(*Salix alba*)

The White Willow can grow to a height of 70–80 feet, although identifying willows is very difficult due to the way the tree forms. Willows are fairly large trees that are found beside water; they are some of the earliest to flower in the spring. Willow bark is so rich in salicin that it is used as a natural pain reliever.

Willow – The Observer
15 April to 12 May

People born in the Willow sign are ruled by the moon, and so their personality holds hands with many of the mystical aspects of the lunar realm. This means they are highly creative, intuitive (highly psychic people are born under the sign of the Willow) and intelligent. They have a keen understanding of cycles, and they inherently know that every situation has a season. This gives them a realistic perspective of things, and also causes them to be more patient than most tree signs. With their intelligence comes a natural ability to retain knowledge and they often impress their company with the ability to expound on subjects from memory. In Celtic tree astrology, Willow signs are bursting with potential, but have a tendency to hold themselves back for fear of appearing flamboyant or overindulgent. It is their powers of perception that ultimately allow their true nature to shine, and what leads them to success in life. Willow signs join well with the Birch and the Ivy.

11 April to 20 April – Willow with Maple Tree
(Independence of Mind) (*Genus: Acer*)

No ordinary person, full of imagination and originality, shy and reserved, ambitious, proud, full of self-respect, hungers for new experiences, sometimes nervous, many complexes, good memory, learns easily, complicated love life, wants to impress.

21 April to 30 April – Willow with Walnut Tree
(Passion) (*Genus: Juglans*)

Unrelenting, strange and full of contrasts, often egoistic, aggressive, noble, broad horizon, unexpected reactions, spontaneous, unlimited ambition, no flexibility, difficult and uncommon partner, not always liked but often admired, ingenious strategist, very jealous and passionate, no compromises.

