

Wall- flowers

Wallflowers is an installation of drawings made for the Artslav space, a previously abandoned male public toilet in Kennington, London. The installation consists of 83 drawings on wallpaper scattered in piles throughout the space as though discarded, with the intention of allowing the viewer to interact by being able to sort through them and re position them, personally selecting and discarding. The work aims to explore ideas of masculinity and specifically gay masculinity, through the appropriation of images of erect penises found on the gay 'dating' websites used as a means to connect, in the same way that public toilets were previously by gay men before the digital age.

The work aims to question the way in which masculinity and therefore possibly identity, is often reduced to the phallus by both heterosexual and homosexual men. In some ways the work references a mimicking of the adolescent's repetitive phallic drawings that are perhaps an attempt to reaffirm the power society attributes to the construct of masculinity, but also the taboo of the actual image. Indeed, more often than not, profiles on gay dating sites are headless bodies displaying cocks. This can be interpreted as an attempt to channel an unobtainable 'conventional' masculinity, but arguably also succeeds in re-affirming a presumed one-dimensional identity in the gay male, that is used both as a potentially controlling yet liberating categorisation.

The images are presented on wallpaper in an attempt to trivialize, perhaps even 'feminise' these phalluses in the same way that a hetero-normative society often attempts to devalue gay 'masculinity'. The collection of torn sheets of wallpaper also suggest a collection of sample pieces, which along with the method of display within the space and viewer interaction, implies a process of selection or shopping and discarded, devalued objects.

The number of drawings at 83 makes tenuous reference to the average 830 men arrested in the UK for sexual activity with men every year between 1967 and 2003, two significant dates in the amendment of the sexual offences act.

Private view | Friday 1st November 2013 6 – 9pm | Public opening | Saturday 2nd November 2013 12 – 4pm | Sunday 3rd November 2013 by appointment | ArtsLav, Kennington Cross SE11 | e: darren@darrennairn.co.uk | w: darrennairn.co.uk