

Masculinities: Liberation through Photography

Barbican Art Gallery, London, UK

20 February – 17 May 2020

Media View: Wednesday 19 February 2020, 10am – 1pm

#Masculinities @barbicancentre

Lead Sponsor: Calvin Klein

This exhibition was made possible with a Jonathan Ruffer Curatorial Research Grant from Art Fund.



Masculinities: Liberation through Photography is a major group exhibition that explores how masculinity is experienced, performed, coded and socially constructed as expressed and documented through photography and film from the 1960s to the present day.

The exhibition brings together over 300 works by over 50 pioneering international artists, photographers and filmmakers such as **Richard Avedon, Peter Hujar, Isaac Julien, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Robert Mapplethorpe, Annette Messager** and **Catherine Opie** to show how photography and film have been central to the way masculinities are imagined and understood in contemporary culture. The show also highlights lesser-known and younger artists - some of whom have never exhibited in the UK - including **Cassils, Sam Contis, George Dureau, Elle Pérez, Paul Mpagi Sepuya, Hank Willis Thomas, Karlheinz Weinberger** and **Marianne Wex** amongst many others. *Masculinities: Liberation through Photography* is part of the Barbican's 2020 season, *Inside Out*, which explores the relationship between our inner lives and creativity.

Jane Alison, Head of Visual Arts, Barbican, said: '*Masculinities: Liberation through Photography continues our commitment to presenting leading twentieth century figures in the field of photography while also supporting younger contemporary artists working in the medium today. In the wake of the #MeToo movement and the resurgence of feminist and men's rights activism, traditional notions of masculinity has become a subject of fierce debate. This exhibition could not be more relevant and will certainly spark conversations surrounding our understanding of masculinity.*'

With ideas around masculinity undergoing a global crisis and terms such as 'toxic' and 'fragile' masculinity filling endless column inches, the exhibition surveys the representation of masculinity in all its myriad forms, rife with contradiction and complexity. Presented across six sections by over 50 international artists to explore the expansive nature of the subject, the exhibition touches on themes of queer identity, the black body, power and patriarchy, female perceptions of men, heteronormative

hypermasculine stereotypes, fatherhood and family. The works in the show present masculinity as an unfixed performative identity shaped by cultural and social forces.

Seeking to disrupt and destabilise the myths surrounding modern masculinity, highlights include the work of artists who have consistently challenged stereotypical representations of hegemonic masculinity, including **Collier Schorr**, **Adi Nes**, **Akram Zaatari** and **Sam Contis**, whose series *Deep Springs*, 2018 draws on the mythology of the American West and the rugged cowboy. Contis spent four years immersed in an all-male liberal arts college north of Death Valley meditating on the intimacy and violence that coexists in male-only spaces. Complicating the conventional image of the fighter, **Thomas Dworzak**'s acclaimed series *Taliban* consists of portraits found in photographic studios in Kandahar following the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, these vibrant portraits depict Taliban fighters posing hand in hand in front of painted backdrops, using guns and flowers as props with kohl carefully applied to their eyes. Trans masculine artist **Cassils**' series *Time Lapse*, 2011, documents the radical transformation of their body through the use of steroids and a rigorous training programme reflecting on ideas of masculinity without men. Elsewhere, artists **Jeremy Deller**, **Robert Mapplethorpe** and **Rineke Dijkstra** dismantle preconceptions of subjects such as the wrestler, the bodybuilder and the athlete and offer an alternative view of these hyper-masculinised stereotypes.

The exhibition examines patriarchy and the unequal power relations between gender, class and race. **Karen Knorr**'s series *Gentlemen*, 1981-83, comprised of 26 black and white photographs taken inside men-only private members' clubs in central London and accompanied by texts drawn from snatched conversations, parliamentary records and contemporary news reports, invites viewers to reflect on notions of class, race and the exclusion of women from spaces of power during Margaret Thatcher's premiership. Toxic masculinity is further explored in **Andrew Moisey**'s 2018 photobook *The American Fraternity: An Illustrated Ritual Manual* which weaves together archival photographs of former US Presidents and Supreme Court Justices who all belonged to the fraternity system, alongside images depicting the initiation ceremonies and parties that characterise these male-only organisations.

With the rise of the Gay Liberation Movement through the 1960s followed by the AIDS epidemic in the early 1980s, the exhibition showcases artists such as **Peter Hujar** and **David Wojnarowiz**, who increasingly began to disrupt traditional representations of gender and sexuality. **Hal Fischer**'s critical photo-text series *Gay Semiotics*, 1977, classified styles and types of gay men in San Francisco and **Sunil Gupta**'s street photographs captured the performance of gay public life as played out on New York's Christopher Street, the site of the 1969 Stonewall Uprising. Other artists exploring the performative aspects of queer identity include **Catherine Opie**'s seminal series *Being and Having*, 1993, showing her close friends in the West Coast's LGBTQ+ community sporting false moustaches, tattoos and other stereotypical masculine accessories. **Elle Pérez**'s luminous and tender photographs explore the representation of gender non-conformity and vulnerability, whilst **Paul Mpagi Sepuya**'s fragmented portraits explore the studio as a site of homoerotic desire.

During the 1970s women artists from the second wave feminist movement objectified male sexuality in a bid to subvert and expose the invasive and uncomfortable nature of the male gaze. In the exhibition, **Laurie Anderson**'s seminal work *Fully Automated Nikon (Object/Objection/Objectivity)*, 1973, documents the men who cat-called her as she walked through New York's Lower East Side while **Annette Messager**'s series *The Approaches*, 1972, covertly captures men's trousered crotches with a long-lens camera. German artist **Marianne Wex**'s encyclopaedic project *Let's Take Back Our Space: 'Female' and 'Male' Body*

Language as a Result of Patriarchal Structures, 1977, presents a detailed analysis of male and female body language and Australian indigenous artist **Tracey Moffatt**'s awkwardly humorous film *Heaven*, 1997, portrays male surfers changing in and out of their wet suits.

Further highlights include New York based artist **Hank Willis Thomas**, whose photographic practice examines the complexities of the black male experience; celebrated Japanese photographer **Masahisa Fukase**'s *The Family*, 1971-1989, chronicles the life and death of his family with a particular emphasis on his father; and **Kenneth Anger**'s technicolour experimental underground film *Kustom Kar Kommandos*, 1965, explores the fetishist role of hot rod cars amongst young American men.

Participating artists

Laurie Anderson, Kenneth Anger, Liz Johnson Artur, Knut Åsdam, Richard Avedon, Aneta Bartos, Richard Billingham, Cassils, Sam Contis, John Coplans, Jeremy Deller, Rineke Dijkstra, George Dureau, Thomas Dworzak, Hans Eijkelboom, Fouad Elkoury, Hal Fischer, Samuel Fosso, Anna Fox, Masahisa Fukase, Sunil Gupta, Peter Hugar, Isaac Julien, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Karen Knorr, Hilary Lloyd, Robert Mapplethorpe, Peter Marlow, Ana Mendieta, Annette Messenger, Duane Michals, Tracey Moffatt, Andrew Moisey, Richard Mosse, Adi Nes, Catherine Opie, Elle Pérez, Herb Ritts, Kalen Na'il Roach, Paul Mpagi Sepuya, Collier Schorr, Clare Strand, Mikhael Subotzky, Larry Sultan, Hank Willis Thomas, Andy Warhol, Karlheinz Weinberger, Marianne Wex, David Wojnarowicz and more to be confirmed.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Press Information

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Press images available online from the Barbican Newsroom

A link to the image sheets can be found in the 'Downloads' box on the top right-hand side of the page from www.barbican.org.uk/masculinitiesnews

Masculinities: Liberation through Photography

Opening Hours:

Sunday - Wednesday 10am – 6pm

Thursday - Saturday 10am – 9pm

Bank Holiday Mondays: 10am – 6pm

Bank Holiday Fridays: 10am – 9pm

Ticket Prices:

Standard: Monday – Friday, £15

Standard: Saturday & Sunday, £17 (including Bank Holidays)

Members Free; Members Plus Free + guest;

Young Barbican £5; Concessions £11–15
Under 14s Free

Important Notes

Young children need to be supervised at all times
Large bags, rucksacks and luggage are not permitted in the gallery. All bags are subject to search. Food and drink are not permitted.

Exhibition

Masculinities: Liberation through Photography is curated and organised by Barbican Centre, London.

It is supported by Lead Sponsor [Calvin Klein](#) and is made possible through support from a Jonathan Ruffer Curatorial Research Grant from the Art Fund. It opens at Barbican Art Gallery on 20 February until 17 May 2020. The exhibition will then tour to Les Rencontres de la Photographie, Arles from 29 June - 20 September 2020 and Gropius-Bau, Berlin from 16 October 2020 until 10 January 2021. The exhibition is designed by vPPR Architects with graphic design by The Bon Ton.

Catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a generously illustrated catalogue and published by Prestel, organised by six themed chapters with essays by key thinkers including Chris Haywood, Edwin Coomasaru, Tim Clark, Jonathan D. Katz, Alona Pardo and Ekow Eshun in the fields of art, history, culture, and queer studies. Design by The Bon Ton.

Price: £39.99 ISBN: 978-3-7913-5951-9

Events

A rich programme of talks and events accompanies the exhibition. Please check the webpage nearer the time for more information

www.barbican.org.uk/masculinities

Her Lens, His Story: Female Directors and Masculinities

Barbican Cinemas

Wed 26 Feb - Tue 10 Mar 2020

This explores complex, revealing and often provocative takes on men and masculinity, as seen through the lens of female filmmakers around the world.

As the Barbican Art Gallery explores how masculinity has been depicted by artists and photographers over the decades, the Barbican Cinemas present a series of feature films by female directors, including **Edith Carlmar, Kinuyo Tanaka, Larisa Shepitko** and **Shahrbanoo Sadat**, many of which are very rarely screened in the UK, that offer interesting and insightful depictions of its male characters.

Featuring films from the UK, Norway, the Soviet Union, Argentina, Australia, Afghanistan and Japan, *Her Lens, His Story* shows how great female directors have reversed the traditional male-female gaze to give us exciting and challenging male characters across multiple genres, including film noirs, melodramas, comedies and war movies.

Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning Schools Offer

A downloadable teacher's resource, highlighting key themes and questions raised by the exhibition, is available to support school visits. A special school group rate alongside free exhibition tours, suitable for secondary school groups

is £3 per student (Secondary and sixth form, up to age 19) and applies to all school groups of 10 or more. Children under 14 are free. To ensure a free exhibition tour as part of the visit, bookings must be made at least two weeks in advance.

Please contact the school groups booking line: Tel: 020 7382 7211 (Mon–Fri 10am–5pm) Email: groups@barbican.org.uk

Young Barbican

In addition to our regular discounted access for Young Barbican members, Barbican will host special views for Young Barbican members, offering young people the opportunity to visit the exhibition and see the works interpreted by their peers. The Young Barbican Guides programme invites young people aged 16-25 to respond creatively to our exhibitions and give creative tours to other young people and the wider public. The Young Barbican membership is free and gives young people aged 14-25 discounted access to unmissable art and entertainment as well as exclusive events and creative opportunities.

www.barbican.org.uk/join-support/young-barbican

Barbican Art Gallery Shop

In addition to the official exhibition catalogue the Gallery Shop will also feature a wide selection of books and other related titles plus prints, stationery, postcards, gifts and more. The best of the Barbican Shop ranges can be found online at www.barbican.org.uk/shop

Barbican Art Gallery and The Curve

Our visual arts programme embraces art, architecture, design, fashion, photography and film. Many of our exhibitions explore the interconnections between disciplines, periods and cultures, and aim to imagine the world in new ways. Designers, artists and architects are our collaborators in this process.

We invest in the artists of today and tomorrow; The Curve is one of the few galleries in London devoted to the commissioning of new work. Through our activities we aim to inspire more people to discover and love the arts. Entrance to The Curve is free. Through Young Barbican we offer £5 tickets to 14-25 year olds for our paid exhibitions and free admittance for under 14s.

Our exhibitions are complemented by comprehensively researched catalogues and a full range of public events. We develop engaging online content for audiences and offer special tours for schools. In partnership with renowned museums and art galleries, many of our exhibitions travel to reach both national and international audiences.

2020 at the Barbican

Inside Out is the Barbican's year-long programme exploring the relationship between our inner lives and creativity.

Throughout 2020, Inside Out will showcase the work of artists who have found pioneering ways to articulate their innermost thoughts, feelings and desires, and how this can help us to better understand ourselves and empathise with each other's experience of the world. The programme will interrogate themes such as identity, self-expression and how we shape our private selves in a world in which we are more socially connected than ever. It will highlight courageous artists and individuals who have challenged society's definition of them, including those that have found ways to express themselves during times of censorship. www.barbican.org.uk/inside-out

About the Barbican

A world-class arts and learning organisation, the [Barbican](#) pushes the boundaries of all major art forms including dance, film, music, theatre and visual arts. Its creative learning programme further underpins everything it does. Over a million people attend events annually, hundreds of artists and performers are featured, and more than 300 [staff](#) work onsite. The architecturally renowned centre opened in 1982 and comprises the Barbican Hall, the Barbican Theatre, The Pit, Cinemas 1, 2 and 3, Barbican Art Gallery, a second gallery The Curve, public spaces, a library, the Lakeside Terrace, [a glasshouse conservatory](#), conference facilities and three restaurants. The City of London Corporation is the founder and principal funder of the Barbican Centre.

The Barbican is home to Resident Orchestra, [London Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Orchestra, [BBC Symphony Orchestra](#); Associate Ensembles the [Academy of Ancient Music](#) and [Britten Sinfonia](#), Associate Producer [Serious](#), and Artistic Partner [Create](#). Our Artistic Associates include [Boy Blue](#), [Cheek by Jowl](#), Deborah Warner, [Drum Works](#) and [Michael Clark Company](#). The [Los Angeles Philharmonic](#) are the Barbican's International Orchestral Partner, the [Australian Chamber Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble at Milton Court, and [Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra](#) are International Associate Ensemble.

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