

**Masculinities: Liberation through
photography**



Multi-component output involving curatorial
work and contribution to exhibition catalogue

Researcher's Name:

Research Programme:

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Project Details

- Exhibition at Barbican Art Gallery, Barbican Centre London 14th July -23rd August 2020 (Initial schedule February 20th - May 17th 2020)
- Exhibition also travelling to LUMA Foundation, Les Rencontres d'Arles and Gropius-Bau, Berlin
- Role: Curatorial Advisor to Barbican curator Alona Pardo, with Ekow Eshun and Jonathan D. Katz

300-Word Supporting Statement

Through the medium of film and photography, this major exhibition considers how masculinity has been coded, performed, and socially constructed from the 1960s to the present day. The exhibition brings together the work of over 50 international artists, photographers and filmmakers including Laurie Anderson, Sunil Gupta, Rotimi Fani-Kayode, Isaac Julien and Catherine Opie.

In the wake of #MeToo the image of masculinity has come into sharper focus, with ideas of toxic and fragile masculinity permeating today's society. This exhibition charts the often complex and sometimes contradictory representations of masculinities, and how they have developed and evolved over time. Touching on themes including power, patriarchy, queer identity, female perceptions of men, hypermasculine stereotypes, tenderness and the family, the exhibition shows how central photography and film have been to the way masculinities are imagined and understood in contemporary culture.

Tim Clark's role as curatorial advisor on this exhibition involved scoping out the content, selecting the artists, devising a structure for the show and thematising the six sections for the show (eg, 'disrupting the archetype' or 'family and fatherhood')

His key research questions for the project were:

1. To what extent has photography and film contributed to the understanding and undermining of masculinity in contemporary culture?
2. In what ways have photographers and filmmakers from the 1960s to the present examined the image of masculinity as socially constructed, performative, unfixed and coded in nature, as opposed to biologically determined?
3. How have artists sought to disrupt and destabilise gender conventions and binary positions to offer a more nuanced and complicated vision?
4. As curators, how can we encourage audiences to think more exceptionally about identity, gender and sexuality through different artistic strategies, spaces and times?
5. Can an exhibition about masculinities faithfully align itself as a feminist gesture?

These questions are further addressed in his essay in the exhibition catalogue.

Research Output

Tim Clark (2020) “Too Close to Home: Memorialising Masculinity”

In Masculinities: Liberation through Photography (Barbican Exhibition Catalogue)

The official exhibition catalogue is published by Prestel, and organised by six themed chapters with essays by writers and academics 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. Designed by The Bon Ton.

(see folder for copy of article)



Research Output

Masculinities: Liberation through Photography exhibition

Installation views from the exhibition at
the Barbican, highlighting the six thematic
sections developed by the curators.

(All images © Tristan Fewings, Getty
Images.)



Research Output

Disrupting the Archetype



Research Output

Male Order: Power, Patriarchy & Space



Research Output

Too Close to Home: Family & Fatherhood



Research Output

Queering Masculinity



Research Output

The Black Male Experience: Reclaiming the Black Body



Research Output

Women on Men: Reversing the Male Gaze



Dissemination

Masculinities: Liberation through Photography

Exhibition

- [Barbican 13th July-23rd August 2020](#)
- [Gropius Bau, Berlin 16.10.2020 till 10.01.2021](#)

Exhibition catalogue

- [Masculinities: Liberation through Photography](#)

Contextual Evidence

[Curator Tour – Masculinities: Liberation through Photography](#) (40 minutes)

A walk through the six sections of the exhibition, with Barbican curator, Alona Pardo

[00:15](#) Introduction - Barbican Curator Alona Pardo introduces the idea behind Masculinities and the striking work by John Coplans that welcomes you into the gallery.

[03:50](#) Disrupting the Archetype - Exploring how artists overturn the usual representations of masculinity, we look at the work of photographers Adi Nes, Collier Schorr, Catherine Opie, Rineke Dijkstra and Robert Mapplethorpe.

[11:47](#) Male Order: Power, Patriarchy and Space - Reflecting on the construction of male power, gender and class, here we look closer at the work of Richard Avedon and Karen Knorr.

[16:38](#) Too Close to Home: Family and Fatherhood - Looking at the complexities of family life and fatherhood, we explore three photo series by Hans Eijkelboom, Aneta Bartos and Kalen Na'il Roach.

[22:30](#) Queering Masculinity - Working in defiance of the expected gender norms of the time, we explore the queer culture captured in the work of Peter Hujar, David Wojnarowicz, Hal Fischer, Sunil Gupta, Rotimi Fani-Kayode and Elle Pérez.

[32:21](#) Reclaiming the Black Body - Giving form to the black male experience, we learn more about Samuel Fosso and Hank Willis Thomas' work.

[37:02](#) Women on Men: Reversing the Male Gaze - In the final section, we look at how the second-wave feminist movement and feminist art tried to expose idea of masculinity, notably in the work of Laurie Anderson, Marianne Wex and Ana Mendieta.

Contextual Evidence

Mark Windsor “Masculinities: Liberation through Photography”, *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Volume 60, Issue 3, July 2020, Pages 359-362
<https://doi.org/10.1093/aesthj/ayaa017>



This review considers how successful the exhibition has been in realising its goal of liberation through photography, and whether representations of masculinity can be untethered from societal expectation and gender norms

Selected quotes from article:

“The plural ‘masculinities’ is central to the exhibition’s optimistic narrative. Masculinity as it has traditionally and singularly been represented may not be a good thing, the exhibition argues, but the power of art to critically reflect and expand upon these representations is.”

“The worry is that replacing a singular idealized image of masculinity with a plurality of masculinities only pushes injustice a step back.”

“Perhaps the most successful works in the exhibition are those that intentionally resist typifying masculinity or which prompt the viewer to question their own assumptions and normative judgements.”

“It may be that ultimately the liberation the exhibition calls for can only be achieved by doing away with masculinities altogether. ... But even if this is possible and desirable, we are obviously a long way off yet, and to get there will require using gendered concepts to address social injustices on the one hand and promote individual expression on the other. To the exhibition’s credit, many if not most of the works in *Masculinities* achieve this aim admirably and in artistically compelling ways.”

Contextual Evidence

Additional reviews

Aperture, July 14, 2020

[Lou Stoppard, “In London, an Exhibition Provokes Questions about Masculinity”.](#)

Artnetnews (March 11, 2020)

[Javier Pes, “A Photography Show that Redefines Masculinity in the Age of #MeToo is a Hit in London”](#)

