

Why 'dick jokes' make the world a safer place

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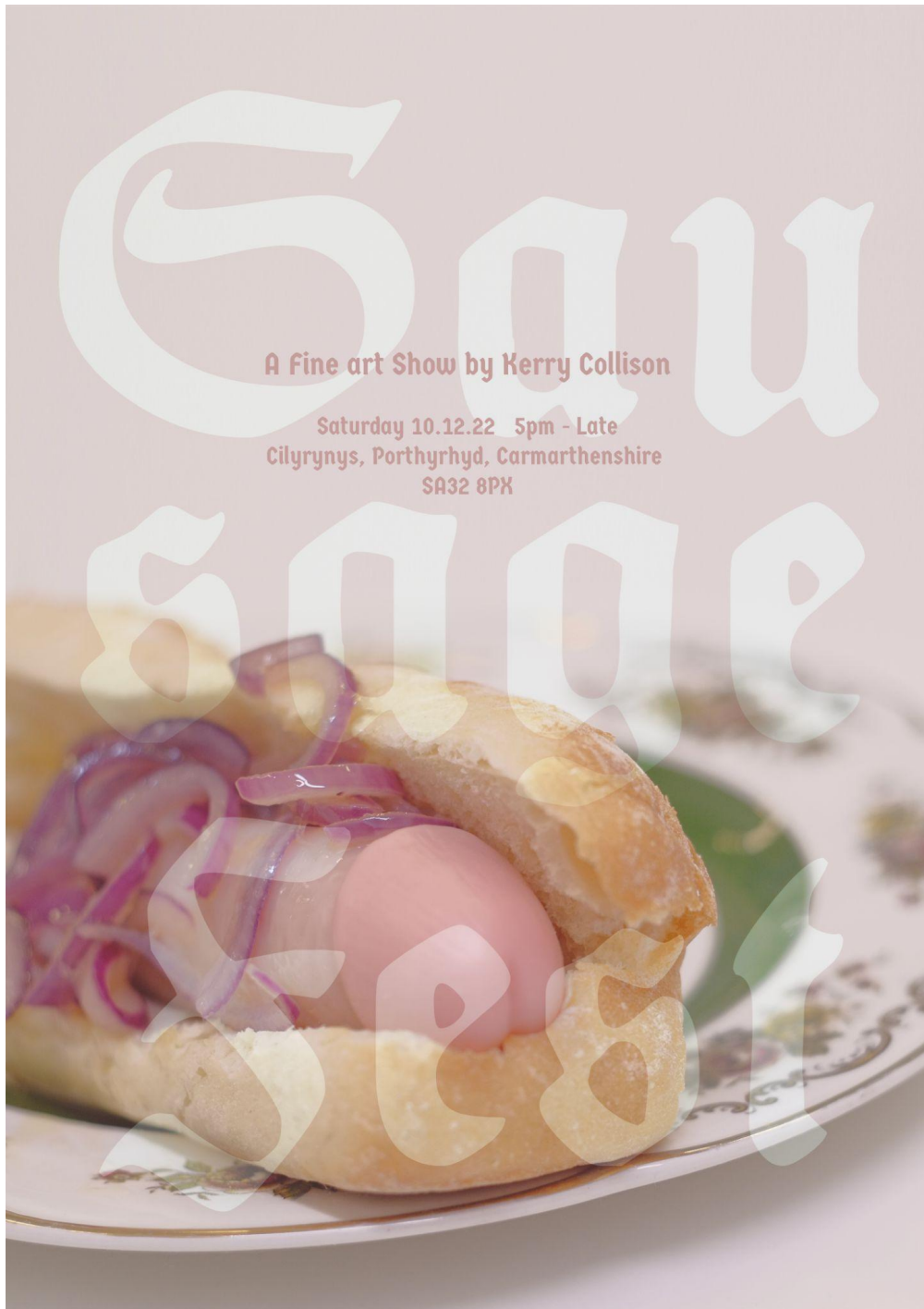


Fig 1. Kerry Collison, 2022. SausageFest Poster, [Digital Image].

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Disclaimer

This writing stems from feelings of vulnerability resulting from my own experiences with domestic violence. It discusses the regression to a childlike state using humour as a coping mechanism. I felt it wasn't appropriate to censor the scatological language. The informalities in this essay reinforce this childish humour therefore belong and contribute to it as a safe space.

In. and out again

My practice is about control. I isolate power symbols that make me feel vulnerable and subvert them with humorous, skewed imagery. I create a safe space for myself. The power symbol that appears throughout the following works is the phallus. In this context, the phallus conceptually signifies male power, control and violence. Contrary to this, the penis embodies a humanised reference to the male gender and genitalia.

This writing will dissect some works from the exhibition 'SausageFest'. The work and show is an autoethnographic narrative, taking a multidisciplinary approach. It focuses heavily on craft based making with the overarching theme of scatological humour. Throughout this essay I will identify and critically analyse methods of using humour as a coping mechanism and as a tool to dismantle the power behind phallic symbols and systems. Biological and social theories on humour will also be discussed, alongside contextually relevant, historical and contemporary artworks. Works will be considered under Henri Bergson's three categories of humour: contrast, exaggeration and degradation.

I hold a firm personal philosophy that if something doesn't make me giggle, there's no point in making it. But not everyone feels so similarly in the eyes of scatological humour. Shit, piss and dick jokes are funny because they're naughty and relatable. They're childish and often regarded as the lowest form of humour. Apparently 'A true comedian only makes a joke regarding male genitalia if they have nothing left to say' (Lodwick, 2013). But these jokes are safe because they remind us of that childhood comfort. Discovering naughty words and their meanings cement some of my most enjoyable memories of being on the school yard. My humour doesn't seem to have changed since then, but I've been told by my friends that I make too many dirty jokes for a girl. There is often a shame associated with making these jokes as adults, especially in front of women or as a woman. 'Women, initially young women but later all respectable women, even if they were grandmothers, were expected to display the utmost confusion and embarrassment at any sign of coarseness. Weeping, blushing or swooning were in order: this demonstrated the extreme purity and innocence of their own characters.' (Johns, 1982, 17).

The 19th century saw the rise of civilised power hand in hand with the suppression of antiquity's rich erotic history. Artworks, artefacts and texts were hidden or destroyed. 'Considered improper by the very severe standards of the time [they] were relegated to the category 'obscene'. [...] locked away in special collections which were made as difficult of

access as possible' (Johns, 1982, 9). This prudish dominance, enforced by Freudian misdiagnoses of sexual perversion being the route to mental illness, condemned all sex as bad sex. If we remove pleasure from the equation we are left with either practicality or violence. This has contributed to the integrity of the patriarchy. A phallic governed societal structure that regards women as baby makers and promotes rape culture. Dick jokes lay directly in conflict with this autocracy.

Is that an iceberg in your pocket?

Philosopher Thomas Hobbes talks about laughter as an assertion of power in an uncomfortable situation. He uses the term 'superiority tool' suggesting that 'laughter expresses a joyful and contemptuous sense of our own superiority.' (Skinner, 2004). By making a joke of a serious situation intensity is diffused and control is regained. A more objective response can be rationalised. This is an evolutionary stress response belonging to the sympathetic nervous system; the network responsible for fight or flight. It can be seen in the neurological studies of patients with Pseudobulbar affect. This condition causes 'Dimorphous expressions' (Aragón et al., 2015); unconscious and socially inappropriate reactions such as laughing when distressed, often as a result of brain injury or neurological trauma. The brain struggles to find the distinction between laughing, screaming and crying because they act as identical unconscious methods for regulating strong emotions.

This gives us a biological explanation for humour often being used as a coping mechanism, rationalising the root of dark and morbid humour that generally surrounds topics of death, violence and trauma. Laughter releases endorphins and decreases stress hormones. This is normally an involuntary stress reaction but can be consciously exploited specifically through the use of telling jokes in stressful situations.

Henri Bergson discusses jokes in relation to their use of 'contrast, exaggeration, and degradation'. (Bergson, 2009). He is fixed upon the context of a joke only being possible because of the presence of a controlled nature, recognising that an 'absence of feeling' accompanies laughter. This cold intention contrasts the use of humour, relevant in the context of using jokes as a coping mechanism. 'It seems as though the comic could not produce its disturbing effect unless it fell [...] on the surface of a soul that is thoroughly calm and unruffled.' If this is true there is a contriwise expectation that control breeds humour and humour therefore breeds control. This suggests the use of humour to be a method of disguise, to laugh about dark circumstances covers the true severity of the joke's origin. When Bergson discusses the unexpected as a strong comic tool, he states that 'A man in disguise is comic. A man we regard as disguised is also comic. So, by analogy, any disguise is seen to become comic' Something hiding its true intention, yet is so blindingly obvious has humorous merit despite its morbidity 'a social masquerade, so to speak, will be laughable.'

The long sword fight (Contrast/ Desexualisation)

Toilet humour returns me to childhood, a safe and ignorant position. Where the image of the penis and phallus are indifferent; nothing but funny and embarrassing. Here, we see two women taking out their anger through symbolically slapping each other with dildos. A subverted 'Cock Fight' where the phallus loses its power. This brash and immature depiction doesn't take things seriously. Sex can be serious and intimidating under the context of abuse and violence. Promoting sex through scatological humour makes it harmless again. The window becomes an immature narrative of innuendo that subverts the power behind the phallus; 'a systematic attempt to overthrow [it]' (Merriam-Webster, 2023).

The secretive nature of subversion is something I've tried to emphasise, apparent here from the use of traditional craft and period accurate imagery that disguises nearly 100 penises into the stained glass scheme. This coupled with excessive decorative heraldry camouflages the obscenities even further. On first glance, this is a pretty yet incredibly boring 18th century replica of a Flemish roundall. With period accurate costume, text, glass choice, and frame. But once the artwork is studied for long enough the delayed sensory reaction occurs. This use of a double take enhances a shock value and forces the viewer to have an unexpected response. It often leaves people speechless or confused as their original sensory perception has been challenged. When people can't rely on their senses it tends to put them on edge.

Their original perception of the phallus has also been challenged. Here taking the phallic symbol of the sword and replacing it with a dildo. An often regarded as tacky, replica of the penis that intends to revolve solely around pleasure. I have taken away all of the violent and dangerous connotations of the phallus and displayed it as a harmless and safe 'toy like' object. A double (ended) entendre in itself.

Due to instability in my life, the glass department has become a place sanctuary. Consequently, glass as a material has taken on this role of a safety blanket. I am drawn to making work in this medium because, ironically, it's sharpness and danger now reflects comfort and control.



Fig 2. Kerry Collison, 2022. (Roundall from) The Long Sword Fight, [Stained Glass].

When I talk about this work, I describe it as the willy window. The use of the word 'willy' feels suitable. Urban dictionary states "'Willy" [] is also a term used by kids. The word, Willy, implies the penis in a flaccid state unless it is explicitly stated otherwise. By using the term "willy" it desexualises the male member and allows one to talk about cocks while your mother, wife, or grandmother is listening.' (2007).

This desexualisation is paramount. Each of the willies depicted in the window are either bendy or pointing downwards. Again emphasising this implied flaccidity. The passiveness sits in direct contrast to the repetitive motif of the sword. The use of the rubber dildos in the central imagery reinforces a floppy quality in the 'weaponry'. Practically, this would result in a bouncy and non damaging blow. Suggesting that The Long Sword Fight is just an action of play fighting. Again this points to childish fun. This archetypal depiction of a phallus as strong erect and sharp, a dangerous weapon to fight and stab with, is disarmed. Not much can be done with a bendy sword, it is useless, defective, laughable and embarrassing. A suggestion of male impotence. A direct contrast to reproduction or violence.



Fig 3. Kerry Collison, 2022. (Details) The Long Sword Fight, [Stained Glass].

I consider stained glass windows as medieval comic books. They're a method of delivering an illustrative narrative, in one or multiple panels. Originally intended as the 'graphic novel' equivalent of the bible for church goers who were unable to read. Traditional stained glass very rarely has photorealistic portrait depictions, it relies almost entirely on illustrative caricatures of people and events. I like to view *The Long Sword Fight* as a ludicrous caricature of stained glass. It belongs in a slightly perverse alternate reality of a time before prudish societal norms with the anachronistic inclusion of dildo weaponry.

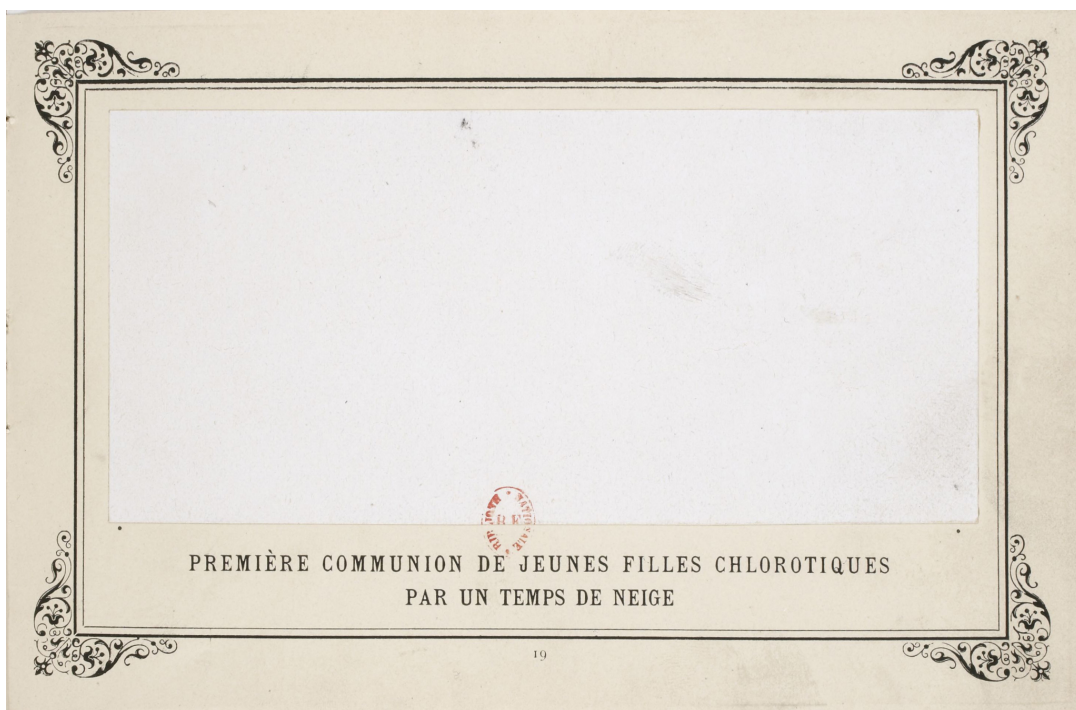
We expect this to be out of place in our own and ancient history. We forget about the huge amount of erotic illustration in illuminated medieval manuscripts, presumably for no other reason than the scribe's boredom. And, that the oldest found dildo is 28,000 years old, its use determined due to how 'highly polished' it was (Haines, 2021). The scene depicted in the stained glass window is temporally ambiguous. The concept of erotic freedom is not as revolutionary as we might think. Esmé James, academic and digital creator of 'kinky history' emphasises the need to 'tell a story where we write sex back into the pages. [...] By refusing to let sex remain clouded in secrecy, we take the power back. We let those who feel underrepresented see themselves in our stories.' (TEDxTalks, 2022).

The window shares imagery with the Russo brothers' 2022 surrealist martial arts film 'Everything, Everywhere, All at Once'. The film exists in a state where multiple universes can be travelled at the act of something unexpected. Midway through the film, an expertly choreographed fight scene sees the antagonist use a pair of long, rubber dildos in replacement for nunchucks. The martial art is so proficiently undertaken that they truly stand out as the anomaly in the environment. The scene that follows introduces another parallel universe where the inhabitants have hotdogs instead of fingers. This ludicrous appendage edit quickly ensures a slapping fight between two character's faces and their long, sausage hands. My nod to these scenes isn't just the hilarity of the unexpected, these phallic objects are a catalyst of realisation for the main character Evelyn to understand that she is in the wrong place, a dangerous place. The taboo of phallic symbols strays so far from the norms of everyday life that they are used as an indication of wrongness, unease and danger. The phallus in the hands of the antagonist holds power, yet the sausage fingers of the protagonist yield a floppy and ineffective defence.



Fig 4. Kwan & Scheinert, 2022. (Screenshot) Everything Everywhere All at Once, [Film].

Fig 5. Alphonse Allais, 1897. April Fools Album, [Print].



A double ended entendre

The use of text in this work enforces the poetic equivalent of a pun. I've always found the use of humorous titles to be engaging on a secondary level.

Alphonse Allais' April Fools album (1897) is a series of ambiguous visual artworks that are only comprehensible through their text titles or descriptions. The text and imagery are meaningless as separate entities. Together, the two parts make intelligent jokes, successful due to their simplicity and sardonicism. My personal favourite; 'Première communion de jeunes filles chlorotiques par un temps de neige' details a decorative frame with a painting of just the colour white within it. The translation of this french title reads as follows. 'First holy communion of young anaemic girls in the snow.' The title describes all elements that are in the painting as being white, excusing the monochromatic blandness and suggesting there is no distinction between the elements. Whilst this is a clever visual joke, the real genius for me is where I first saw the painting displayed. It hung, unassumingly, in a room of the Tate modern that was wholly devoted to blank canvases. 'Room 6: Painting with White' is home to famous avant-garde abstracts including the work of Piet Mondrian. All of these 'Monochromes' are to be taken seriously, with connotations of the 'philosophical, poetic and spiritual'. (Tate 2022). Freud, in his book 'jokes and their relation to the unconscious' describes a joke as an 'arbitrary connecting or linking, usually by means of a verbal association, of two ideas which in some way contrast with each other'(1917). So in Allais' work here we see the link between the colour white, and the descriptive scene elements through the verbal association of the title. The title implies that this is an obvious connection, as if it spells it out, making the viewer seem childlike and unintelligent. However it isn't an obvious connection, it is completely fabricated. Allais, the humourist, uses the context of purity and religion but removes the necessity for the artwork's interpretation. By telling us the unwavering meaning, he overrides the ambiguity of the rest of the artworks in the room.

The work is sober. It speaks to a wider audience; those engaged in contemporary art and those who aren't; who often regard this ambiguity as elitist and inaccessible. The removal of the interpretation barrier manipulates every single viewer into seeing the same thing (nothing at all) and therefore having the same response. Contradicting the very thing abstract artworks stand for.

This provides a commentary on the surrounding Monochromes and implies that they too are completely fabricated. This undermines and devalues their position in the contemporary art

scene and by default the position of the gallery as a representation of wealth and upper class pretentiousness. Funded by colonialism and patriarchal values.

I tend to be drawn to artworks by artists or makers with a sense of humour. Unfortunately they are few and far between. The fine art world is littered with artists tackling heavy subject through producing equally heavy artworks. Despite there being poignancy in many of these works, their weight makes them hard to digest. To approach dark topics with a contrasting, amusing approach is often more accessible and engaging. Being able to see the lighter side is a precursor to the light at the end of the tunnel. If there was no light at the end of the tunnel, the world would remain an incredibly dark place.

The text on The Long Sword Fight is in both english and german. It is fitting with the european context of the roundall, blackscript is also close to my heart because of my german heritage. In addition to including the english and german translations of works title, I chose to include a german idiom. 'Sie beligte er leberwurst gespielt' is a german saying literally translating as 'she is playing the insulted liver sausage'. Its colloquial translation means 'she is upset about something' or 'has the hump about something'. A suggestion of the phrase's origin stems from traditional methods of cooking sausages. 'The butcher removes the sausages that have finished cooking, leaving behind only the liver sausage, which is still slightly raw. Now all alone, and greatly offended by this exclusion, the liver sausage bursts its skin in rage.' (Henry 2022). The yellow liver is also linked to anger in the context of the medieval four humours.

The idiom's conformity to the stereotypical german obsession with sausages works on another level because of the visual connection between sausages and penises. This image of an angry penis is evocative of the phallus. It feels insulted because its sexual power has been devalued.



Fig 6. Kerry Collison, 2022. The Long Sword Fight, [Painted, Stained and Leaded Glass].

A grower and a shower off

Commissioned for the Venice Biennale 2017, Rachel Maclean's film 'Spite Your Face' is a parodic reinterpretation of Pinocchio. It follows a boy 'Pic' through his journey from rags to riches whilst raising 'issues including the abuse of patriarchal power, capitalist deception, exploitation and the destructive trappings of wealth and fame' (Rachel Maclean: Artist Talk 2018). Pic manages to win a bet which transcends him into an above land of splendor, but the new world he lives in is seductive and dangerous. The greed quickly corrupts him.

Pic's nose, the traditional Pinocchio's lie, becomes symbolic of the patriarchy. This phallic and eventually abusive power sees his nose transform into a metaphorical phallus and used to rape the only female character in the narrative. The fact the phallus is attached to his face however exaggerates comical undertone, shining a light on the trivial attitude behind abuses of power. This is emphasised further as the darker subtext of the film is in such high contrast the gold and sparkly aesthetic. The gaudy nature of the costume and superimposed scenery is used to undermine the patriarchal structure of power, leading to Pic's predetermined nose castration. To remove the phallus entirely is demeaning in the strongest form. Maclean discusses her decision to loop the film so it can be watched from any point all the way through. She suggests that watching Pic make the same futile mistakes over and over again is more powerful than having a resolved plot ending. Without absolving his actions this makes it clear that Pic is too a victim and a pawn of the system.



Fig 7. Rachel Maclean, 2017. Spite Your Face, [Digital Film].

This video creates an obscene reality for itself to reside in. 'I like to be able to draw in an audience with my work with something that makes them feel secure, that makes them feel at home, makes them feel like they know and understand what's happening. And then puncture that comfort with something disturbing or strange or disgusting' (Arts News 2, 2018, 09:55). I empathise greatly with this technique as it is something I implement in my own work with intention.



Fig 8. Kerry Collison, 2022. Self Portrait with Penis, [Photograph].

She's compensating (Exaggeration/ Reclamation)

Symbols of violent power cause vulnerability. For me being female immediately has the implication of vulnerability, attracting abuse and violence. As a result, I have found myself presenting in masculine clothing and demeanour as a method of counteraction. The following self portraits have become work that separates the penis and the phallus. By using the penis as an opposing power symbol to the phallus, it can reclaim power in a non violent manner. The over exaggeration of a male characteristic implies an over compensation.

I realised that confronting my femininity was much more poignant than confronting my masculinity. I decided dressing up in a feminine way would be challenging. This photoshoot grew through many iterations of costume and settled on the silk dress in question. The white silk and my pale skin hold those stereotypical virginal qualities with connotations of purity and innocence. This dress also has a comforting quality. It is a reference to a safe place as my childhood 'blankie' was a pair of my mums silky pyjama bottoms. This definitely helped me overcome the conflict of putting on the dress. Donning the dress became a performance, immediately engaging with feelings of exposure and vulnerability.



Fig 9. Édouard Manet, 1862-1863. Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe, [Painting].

A close friend of mine took the photographs, in the presence of two ex-lecturers. We sat, discussing the work in a freezing cold workshop. They all fully dressed, myself scantily clad in this dress, barefoot and clutching a fluffy blanket for warmth. There was a real contrast between clothed and unclothed, comfortable and vulnerable, dominant and exposed. This surreal combination of people reminded me of Manet's 'Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe'; the unexpected composition of powerful, clothed men surrounding a solitary nude woman. This power dynamic is so opposing and is emphasised harshly through the contrast of dark clothes and pale skin. Manet's non classical nude, was a cause for controversy due to a scandalous implication of vulgar public indecency. I'd like to unpick the positions of the bodies in the painting. The men in the image look complacent in their comfort, reclining into their lavish suits. Manet's depiction of the woman at first appears relaxed. On closer inspection, she covers her lower half with a blanket and her upper half with her bent leg close to her chest, a closed body language in comparison to traditional nudes. Her face too is turned away from her male company and holds an ambiguous expression. We can't tell whether she is uncomfortable or out of touch with the situation. Many formal analyses of this painting suggest an expression of 'human freedom' (Takac 2019). But in my opinion, she doesn't look free at all. She looks out of place and uncomfortable.

The introduction and exaggeration of the penis in my self portraits was an effort to regain control over the vulnerability caused by presenting as feminine. Using polar opposites to counteract each other. The penis is representative of this masculine safety net I seem to cling to. If I am covered or associated with the masculine then I don't have this sense of vulnerability. The fake penis is an exaggeration of this compensation. It acts protectively as an aversion to the sexualisation of the feminine that is taken advantage of by the construct of the phallus, therefore allowing me to regain control. It allows me to steal the power behind the phallus and use it in a defensive and apotropaic manner. It was important to me that within the images, at no point was the penis erect. It represents calm, defensive and non aggressive authority. I spent a long time selecting images and monitoring the extent the penis was subtly seen. I settled on it just 'peeking out', implying an anthropomorphic quality.

Any depiction of a phallic symbol losing its power is considered humorous because of the juxtaposition with reality. It plays with the tension in society. Anthropologist Mary Douglas discusses this formula. "[A]ny recognisable joke falls into this joke pattern which needs two elements, the juxtaposition of a control against that which is controlled, this juxtaposition being such that the latter triumphs." (Douglas, 1968, p.365). Jokes leaning on penis size and functionality are an example of this, using the images of weakness and ineffectivity to

undermine purpose. But the presentation of a fundamentally female form juxtaposed with a penis between her legs sees an ultimate power shift.



Fig 10. Kerry Collison, 2022. Reclining Portrait with Penis, [Photograph].

Fig 11. Unknown Artist and Gian Lorenzo Bernini, The Sleeping Hermaphroditus, [Marble].



The reclining images are a direct reference to 'The Sleeping Hermaphroditus'. The sacred hermaphrodite reflects my unknowing position between binaries. Instead of a gender ambiguous presentation, my appearance is hermaphroditic, an ancient symbol of power, unity and enlightenment. Despite the classically sexual recumbent poses, the nature of the penis in the image becomes jarring and unexpected in a heterosexual context. It contradicts the pornographic connotations.

Despite the imagery appearing crude and shocking to some audiences at first glance. This work is meant to gently push boundaries. The aim was for a soft outcome that would encourage discussion about gender insecurity caused by domestic abuse. It isn't meant to be revolutionary, it aims to provide a safe space to start conversation. I've had a few comments surrounding transgender pornography and the potential for these images to be derogatory. I discredit this, for me it is very clear this work belongs in the queer sphere and champions gender non conforming presentation as powerful.

The experience of composing these images was anxiety inducing. By placing myself in a vulnerable position the penis stands in as the humorous relief. Relying on this as a coping mechanism I conform to a biological demonstration of Hobbes's argument. The photoshoot became funny, uncomfortable, laughable and improbable. The serious undertones of the artwork were countered by throwing rubber dildos at each other across the room, or arranging them in funny positions around the workshops to point and laugh at. A firm demonstration of Hobbes' theorem of unconscious biological response.

For 'SausageFest' one image was selected and intentionally displayed on its side. A transitory composition where the body floats between two gender binaries and the penis points downwards. I also decided to position the photograph above a doorway, this symbolically loaded curation references an archetype of female genitalia. However, the choice to keep the door closed further reinforces the themes of autonomy and control.

I later collated a larger selection of images into the format of a 1970's style porno mag. This curation aims to remove the stereotypical sexualisation and entertainment from the purpose of the magazine, but without taking itself too seriously. A soft example of reclamation and reform through this excessive exaggeration.

SausageFest

'SausageFest' was conceived as a solo show because the work became too controversial to place within a group environment. It became apparent that the work needed enough space to be viewed sensitively and the comical imagery took too much attention away from surrounding, non related works. I found a location that I could manipulate into an ostensible domestic space, a small threshing barn attached to a cottage in the rural welsh countryside. It felt necessary to create an enclosed atmosphere of safety and warmth, subverted by the cold and semi industrial barn space. The curation of the show was reasonably bare to reinforce this illusion where comfort is baited but not delivered, key phallic artworks were dotted around the space with an eerie quality of fraudulent safety.



Fig 12. Kerry Collison, 2022. SausageFest Setting, [Exhibition].

Soft Cock

I previously touched on the imagery of a penis acting as apotropaic; a symbol imbued with superstitious intention to ward off evil or bad luck. I keep talismans resembling penises hanging from the rear view mirror of my car, where another might hang a dream catcher or Nazar (Turkish eye amulet).

These are similar to Tintinnabulums from the Roman period, great bronze hanging penises attached to bells, hung in dwellings to ward off chaos, danger and evil spirits. They often incorporated animalistic features of large beasts such as wolves, lions or eagles. Catherine Johns, archeologist and museum curator, speculates 'whether this expresses a fear of sexuality as an uncontrollable animal urge, or whether it is simply intended to be startling or amusing.' The merging of beasts with phalluses reflected 'The feeling of anxiety about the power of sexuality certainly existed in antiquity.' (1982, 68). The Tintinnabulums challenge and deflect this notion of power.

Soft cock is the product of my matriarchal need to look after people coupled with the vulnerable and childlike projection of myself. I made this toy for myself as an emblem of apotropy. Made from baby pink wool, and stuffed with soft offcuts of fabric, the soft cock is haptically comforting. It takes on the function of a children's toy. 'The warmth of a cuddly toy offers comfort and security that children desire when tired or facing a new change or situation' (Beehive Toys, 2021). There is an absurdity in a child's toy resembling something as unfriendly as genitalia. But this recontextualizes the phallus as something soft and comforting, like a childhood friend.



Fig 13. Kerry Collison, 2022. Soft Cock, [Crochet Woolen Toy].

Quite the mouthful (Degredation)

The 1951 hit by Hank Williams inspired the following video work and performance which share the name 'Hey Good Lookin', What You Got Cooking'. The jaunty country tune is composed as if someone is moving about a kitchen at a moderate and confident manner. Upbeat and used to their environment. I immediately had the image of a matriarchal figure, matter of factly making dinner for her family of boys. I must admit the lyrics of the song helped. But this woman, cooking what innocently looks like hotdogs, turns out to be cooking penises and plating them up for her family to eat.

The concept was initially for a film, using a barbeque, with a table of large bearded men to consume the phallic feast. An image of me assuming a more masculine stereotype by becoming the 'BBQ chef' and wearing a comedy apron that read something obscene like 'smoking hot grill daddy'. However, it felt wrong for me to be lovingly cooking something that turns out to be horrible, then feeding it unknowingly to my male guests. It surfaced images of a discontented wife that poisons her husband, or a Fatal Attraction 'bunny boiler' moment. This female anger, that might be applauded in the feminist gaze, is something that I try to avoid at the best of times. It became important that there wasn't an intended eater, as there is no intended 'victim' of the artwork.

Then I decided that there didn't have to be a penis at all. The implication of a phallically representative object was good enough. A dick joke is never missed when a group of my friends tuck into a hotdog at a BBQ, or a bratwurst in the German christmas market. The sausage already holds that connotation, there was no necessity to be so literal. This opened the opportunity back up for the sausages to be eaten. In a live, performatic, audience participation extravaganza; hotdogs with steaming hot onions, ketchup and mustard were served to the viewers of my show. The intention being, they experience this heartwarming, matriarchal cooking ritual. Then they are let loose to walk around the exhibition, whilst eating their hotdog they take a bite and simultaneously realise they are looking at work that resembles a penis. The intimacy they weren't expecting forces the work further down their throats and enhances their engagement with it. Perhaps they already have a suggestive innuendo on their mind, leaving them more susceptible to recognising subtle imagery they might have previously missed. This attempt to elevate hilarity seemed to prove successful when the performance yielded several jokey comments including 'ughhh' and 'I feel a bit sick now'. This response is a classic example of male insecurity and fear surrounding the power of the phallus. There is a fabricated resistance to do anything remotely regarded as homosexual because it suggests weakness and femininity. Our society is based on the fear

of humiliation and emasculation. This insecurity is best demonstrated in the sitcom 'Peep Show' where David Mitchell's character discusses his intimidation by a nine inch Dildo. 'It's a dildo [...] nine inches, it's a nine incher. Thought it might spice things up. Trouble is, I find it quite intimidating as a man. [...] So I've decided to call it Kenneth, to take the curse off.' (Armstrong & Bain, 2010).



Fig 14. Kerry Collison, 2022. Hey Good Lookin' What You Got Cooking. [Performance].

Although I had previously discounted it and settled on a live performance, the original concept of a film held such a strong vision that I felt compelled to make it anyway. With no budget and no tripod, a dodgy camera and the setting of my student accommodation flat, I set to work making a trailer for 'SausageFest' to an edited version of the song. The 30 second clip shows me nonchalantly chopping onions and frying sausages only to reveal in the last five seconds, that the hotdog was actually a penis. Again, this riffs on a double take reaction which invites an air of disgust. But the hotdog isn't aggressive or asking for someone to eat it. It simply exists as an object to be laughed at. Certainly with a higher production value or better skill with a camera, a full length music video would have been more successful. But the short, posted on instagram heralded a fine response of shock, laughter and controversy leading up to the show.



Fig 15. Kerry Collison, 2022. Hey Good Lookin' What You Got Cooking. [Photograph].
Fig 16. Kerry Collison, 2022. (Still from) Hey Good Lookin' What You Got Cooking. [Video].



A bone(r) to (un)pick

Even social media such as instagram, censor images of nipples and penises. Influencers ratings drop if they swear or use the word 'sex' in their captions or subtitles, replacing them with tamer versions and colloquialisms such as 's*x' or 'seggs'. The platforms the youth have control over are still monitored and prudish. If we aren't exposed to or educated properly about sex, that is where the problems begin to occur. Media such as 'Kinky History' understand that if sex is treated dangerously it becomes dangerous. We live our lives, fearing the patriarchal system and the symbol of the phallus. Fear and anger makes hostile territories even more tense. But I do feel a well placed and slightly patronising joke does a much better and subtler job than shouting. I long for the day we can vouch for a 'monsters inc' style twist where instead of screams, we use laughter to power our society.

If sex here is the feared element, using sexually suggestive imagery with a contrasting element to decontextualise its nature subverts that fear into innocent laughter. To penetrate the discussion of decency with sharp wit and light heartedness is essential. We shouldn't shy away from yearning for a more childlike existence. And if humour, through Bergson's three categories, is a suitable way to confront trauma or maintain a balance of control we should take advantage of it. Laughter subverts the image of the phallus into something less intimidating whilst simultaneously being used as an educational tool. This challenges the systemic prudish defences, slowly dismantling the patriarchal structure of our western society. 'SausageFest' has been a crude fragment of this aspiration displayed through the medium of conceptual fine art. And I feel proud to have broken some taboos and bought some laughter back into the world, one dick joke at a time.

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