

A close-up photograph of a vibrant pink, draped fabric, likely silk or satin, featuring ornate, jeweled trim along the edges. The trim is composed of numerous clear and yellowish-gold crystals. The word "PINK" is centered in a large, white, bold, sans-serif font.

PINK



PINK

04 FEB - 08 MAR 2021

A hue where feminine and feminism collide.

Featuring artwork by Anastasia Klose, Tracey Lamb, Lola-Mae Pink, Maja Malou Lyse & Arvida Byström, Honey Long & Prue Stent, Jessie Adams and curated by Caroline Esbenshade.

Presented in the lead-up to International Women's Day this exhibition explores the use of pink and other feminine motifs in creative practice by womxn. Once maligned for being girly and diminutive, pink is reclaimed and presented in hues ranging from hot pink to millennial with works exploring the social, biological and performative intersections of the colour in practice.

Intended as a platform for dialogue, PINK explores where the combination of second wave feminism and neo-liberal feminism has brought womxn artists today. Covering a range of mediums and approaches the pieces in this show present a variety of creative practices and approaches to feminist narratives, each using pink as an element to strengthen their work, not minimise it.

Wyndham Art Gallery
Great Art. Deep West.

Image (Left) : Honey Long & Prue Stent - *Venus Milk* - 2015 - image courtesy of the artists and Arc One Gallery
Image (Cover) : Anastasia Klose - *Miss Spring 1883* (detail of dress worn during performance) - 2016



PINK

Curator's Note by Caroline Esbenshade

Last year, in 2020, I was working at an International Women's Day event and saw first-hand the impact COVID-19 was already having. People weren't coming out to celebrate women, they had limited time for collective celebration and essential tasks, like securing toilet paper, took precedent.

A few weeks later, as the announcement came that we'd be working from home for the foreseeable future I came across an article published by The Atlantic, 'The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism.' In the article writer Helen Lewis reflected on how pandemics affect men and women differently. It was not only a push back against the rhetoric emerging

Image (Left): Anastasia Klose - *Miss Spring 1883 (performance documentation)* - 2016
Image courtesy of the artist

at the time that lockdown would be everyone's chance to finish writing that novel they never started, but also an honest look at how a pandemic increases the gaps and inequalities including social and economic. Looking to past health crises she reflected on how coronavirus would roll back the clock on feminism, not just placing women back in the kitchen and increasing the phenomenon of the "second shift" but also trigger an increase in domestic violence.¹

It made me consider not only where we were heading – straight into a pandemic, but what ground recently gained could be lost. Unfortunately, Helen Lewis' predictions were accurate. For example, in the U.S. alone women have lost 5.4 million jobs since the pandemic began. Not just a case of jobs disappearing as retail and hospitality sectors take a hit, it's also women having to quit because of increased domestic responsibilities due to schools and childcare services being unavailable.²

Thus PINK, a presentation of a range of narratives around feminism presented in the lead up to International Women's Day 2021. An exhibition for a time when we are both reflecting on the past and looking forward on how to rebuild.

Image (Right): Anastasia Klose - *Miss Spring 1883 - 2016* - (exhibition view)
Photography: EP Group Australia





In the main gallery the colours are bold, and the works feature the themes of power, marginalisation and erasure. Lola-Mae Plnk's *Good Girl* feels like a direct response to the 'nasty woman,' raising the question of what is considered a good girl according to the patriarchy - powerless on their hands and knees? In *We Share Our Mother's Health* this is taken a step further, the legacy of disenfranchisement through generations and the impact on lived experience as prolonged behaviours and outdated attitudes towards women are continually deemed acceptable.

Anastasia Klose's *Miss Spring 1883* and Tracey Lamb's two sculptural works both highlight how women are (un)represented in the industries of art, architecture, and design. Klose draws attention to issues of inequity in gallery representation while Lamb queries who is being left out of the history books. The hot pink hues of both artist's work demand attention and recognition. Lamb's large sculptural work, so large it was installed on its side, is like a hot pink elephant in the room jockeying for attention.

Heading into the glassed-in mezzanine, a small nod to the glass-ceiling; hues shift to candy, pastel, and millennial pink. Touted as the new gender-neutral colour, it represents new millennial outlooks towards pink and femininity. A time when the male gaze is challenged, self-representation and presentation become forms of agency and femininity is embraced.

There are two photos from long-time collaborators Honey Long & Prue Stent. These works shift the power structures of imagery from the canon of art history by re-presenting them. *Venus Milk* is an evocation and fresh take on Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* and *Scallop* could be any number of alluring, draped female forms – though I suspect Chauncey Bradley's *Undine Rising from the Waters*.

Shifting the agency and the gaze is one form of empowerment, in Jessie Adam's series it is the act of wearing pink. In Adam's *SOFT POWER: THE PINK PROJECT*, sitters curated their appearance heavily around the inclusion of pink as a form of self-expression. I was especially excited to include the

Image (Left): Lola-Mae Plnk - *Good Girl* (exhibition view) - Photography: EP Group Australia

Lauren Stardust portrait because it features the feminine motif of Sailor Moon along-side the riot of pinks. An anime that became a global phenomenon, Sailor Moon not only featured a lot of pink and girl power narratives it also was embraced by the LGBTIQ+ community and became a symbol of feminine empowerment.³

Also featuring feminine motifs in conjunction with its baby-pink everything is Maja and Arvida's *High Energy Selfie-Admiration* or '*Selfie Stick Aerobics*.' Dressed in matching, baby pink track suits against a backdrop of pink, sparkles, and beauty products the duo parodies an aerobics video. Rather than guiding the viewer through a physical exercise regime, they instead lead participants in an exercise of self-admiration and agency through the technology of selfies. Post-COVID lockdown, where we've all been less active and enjoying snacks in lieu of activities, it's good to be reminded that "I am beautiful and everyone around me is."⁴

Emerging in our new 'COVID normal' it's important to not only pick up the pieces but remember what pieces were missing before we had to take a pause. As we step outside, maybe wearing pink, we can get back to those conversations that were put on hold while searching for loo roll.

¹ Helen Lewis, "The Coronavirus Is a Disaster for Feminism," The Atlantic, 19 March, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2020/03/feminism-womens-rights-coronavirus-covid19/608302/>

² Gretty Garcia, Sarah Hagi, Sarah Jones, Caitlin Moscatello, Amelia Schonbek, and Nick Tabor, "The Breaking Point," The Cut, 1 February, 2021, <https://www.thecut.com/2021/02/women-out-of-the-workforce.html>

³ "How Sailor Moon Transformed Queer 90s Kids' Lives," VICE, March 28, 2016, video, 11:18, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yM3SWeQz4v4>

⁴ Maja Malou Lyse & Arvida Byström, *High Energy Selfie-Admiration* or '*Selfie Stick Aerobics*,' 2016, Digital video, 04:370, Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/141297245>





FEMININITY AND THINKING PINK

Catalogue Essay by Dr. Hannah McCann

Dr. Hannah McCann is a Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies at the University of Melbourne. Her work focuses on femininity, queer identity, and feminism and rethinking the intersections and tensions between them. She is currently working on a project examining emotional labour in hair and beauty salons.

Tracing the history of pink reveals a tangled web of political and symbolic issues, where feminist sentiment has played a key role in defining how we ought to think about pink's significance. Each of the artists in the PINK exhibition invokes this history while remaining removed from definite conclusions. The collective result is a meditation on femininity and gender through the lens of pink, where the audience is exposed to the contradictory notions of agency, objectification, empowerment and disempowered bound up with the colour.

Image (Right) : Maja Malou Lyse & Arvida Byström - *Selfie Stick Aerobics* (video still) - 2016 - Image courtesy of the artists
Image (Following page) : Tracey Lamb - *The eyes that saw her were closed* - 2018 - (exhibition view) - Photography: EP Group Australia





While pink may be the colour of strawberry milk and cotton candy, it has not always been connected with femininity. In the nineteenth century babies in the West were most frequently dressed in white, symbolic of purity. Though pastel pink, blue and yellow were also infant colours these were not specifically associated with gender, though sometimes pink was seen as a boy's washed-down version of masculine "fighting" red. Similarly, blue was sometimes associated with femininity given the Virgin Mary donned in shades of blue.

It was not until the 1950s in the US that demand for women's pale pink fashion emerged, a result of a menswear manufacturer creating a preppy pink blouse for women. After subsequent promotion in Vogue magazine, pale pink became a trend in fashion and homewares. There was a growing sense of pink becoming aligned with traditional "ladylike" femininity during the period. According to historian Regina Lee

Image (Left) : Lola Mae Pink - *We Share Our Mother's Health* - 2019
Image courtesy of the artist

Blaszczyk, when US First Lady Mamie Eisenhower debuted her inaugural gown in 1953 the shade was dubbed "First Lady Pink". It was at this point retailers began to "think pink".

When the women's liberation movement emerged in the 1960s and 1970s pink was vehemently rejected as a marker of earlier traditional gender roles. Paradoxically, this target solidified the tie between pink and femininity. As historian Jo Paoletti suggests, "By so openly and consistently associating pink with traditional femininity, [the women's movement] fixed it in public discourse as the most visible symbol of everything female".

This association continues to be used in productive ways by artists like Tracey Lamb to draw attention to the erasure of women's labour and talents. Lamb's work demands consideration of the way women's designs and skills have been eclipsed by a cultural focus on men. In Lamb's sculptures subtle traces of pink are used to remind the viewer that women's ideas have been systematically occluded in history.

Anastasia Klose's piece *Miss Spring 1883* uses pink to a similar effect, also referencing a key moment

Image (Right) : Jessie Adams - *SOFT POWER: The Pink Project* - 2019 - (exhibition view)
Photography: EP Group Australia



in the women's liberation movement. While activists protested the Miss America Pageant in 1968, Klose's 2016 performance involved becoming the pink-clad beauty queen in order to interrupt the art fair. The piece also calls to mind the protests of the anonymous New York group the Guerrilla Girls in the 1980s who sought to draw attention to the sexism and racism of the art world through culture jamming. Klose does not take a position on whether feminists ought to reject femininity in the work, but instead shows how women are relegated to the world of beauty and appearances while excluded from the more "serious" business of commercial art.

While women's liberation argued for rejecting femininity, and pink as its signifier, unfortunately rejecting femininity writ-large can sometimes align with broader patriarchal patterns that favour the masculine over the feminine. As feminist sociologist Dr. Ashley Rhea Hoskin has argued, girls are often applauded for partaking in activities seen as masculine, while for both boys' and girls' feminine activities are seen as a demotion. Hoskin calls this systemic denigration of femininity "femmephobia". Feminists continue to grapple with how to challenge patriarchal stereotypes of femininity while avoiding femmephobic positions. The ebbs and flows of backlash and resurgent feminism across the decades since women's liberation, have seen the rejection versus recuperation of pink as a signifier of femininity shift like a tug-of-war.

For example, in the early 2000s, popular culture was awash with what has been dubbed "postfeminist" sentiment, which cast feminist activism as a thing of the past. During this period many feminist commentators were

Image (Right) : Maja Malou Lyse & Arvida Byström - *Selfie Stick Aerobics* (video still) - 2016 - Image courtesy of the artists





concerned with what they saw as the “pinkification” of girlhood, with pink used as a strong gender marker to not only sell products to girls but to contribute to solidifying the very coherence of the gendered subject of “girl” in the first place. However, some approaches at this time, like the UK “Pinkstinks” campaign, inadvertently repeated femmephobic patterns marking out pink as the problem rather than focusing on broader patriarchal frameworks informing expectations of girlhood.

More recently pink has been revalued anew by the resurgent women’s movement, with the infamous bright pink “pussy hat” becoming a key symbol of the women’s marches of 2017. The use of pink was not without controversy, with some criticism that the colour combined with the “pussy” reference was predominately relevant to white cisgender women and was therefore alienating for broader coalition building. Around the same time “rose quartz” was chosen as Pantone’s 2016 colour of the year and “millennial pink” became the go-to colour for the Tumblr generation.

These lighter shades supposedly invoked “calm” and in contrast to the pussy hat debate have been actively understood as aligning with the queer gender-neutral sensibilities of a new generation.

The queer association with pink is in part due to the pink triangle used by the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) which formed in the late 1980s and whose slogan was SILENCE = DEATH. The group’s iconography featured a pink triangle, a reference to the symbol that gay men were forced to wear in Nazi concentration camps. The pink triangle has since been used more broadly as a signifier within the LGBTIQ+ community. This queer history echoes through Jessie Adams’ work, which draws on the intersections between feminist negotiations of pink and queer symbolism to suggest that pink can be a powerful source of gender agency. Here pink is represented as an instrument that can be used to challenge patriarchy, homophobia and cisnormativity, where the master’s tools can in fact dismantle the master’s house.

Though each artist included in PINK draws on the multifaceted history of feminist relations to femininity sketched above, they also bring a fresh vision for refiguring the meaning of pink anew as they draw attention to issues around gender identity, sexuality, domesticity, representation, history, bodies, and objectification. Rather than suggesting didactically that pink – or femininity – ought to be negated or embraced, these works draw from the complex threads of pink’s associations to offer feminist pathways for the future.

Go Deeper:

A series of experiences
that offer further insight into
the exhibition



PINK Photobooth

***Book in for our fun, pink photo booth at
International Women's Day on 8 MAR 2021***

Presented as part of PINK, local artist Ceardai Demelza has created an underwater world where Denise (they/them) a pygmy seahorse, male and pregnant, lives. Pygmy seahorses mimic the colour of the coral they live on; like all of us, Denise has adapted to fit into their environment. Explore Denise's pink-hued coral home and have your photograph taken by our professional photographer.

The photo-booth is an opportunity to reflect on gender expression and stereotypes. Marvel in the magnificence of Denise – we invite you to dress up for this photographic moment (perhaps, a snorkel or goggles?). Everyone takes home a printed postcard image.

Book now at:
wyndhamarts.eventbrite.com

Image (Left) : Ceardai Demelza - Denise, PINK Photo Booth - 2021

Artist in Conversation

PINK

Artist in Conversation with Prue Stent, Honey Long, Anastasia Klose, and moderated by Dr Hannah McCann.

Available online to listen to from 5pm on Thursday 18 FEB 2021

Collaboration, performance, and femininity - Honey Long, Prue Stent and Anastasia Klose talk all things pink and feminism with Dr. Hannah McCann in a dialogue that searches for an understanding between art practice, academic research and lived experience to find out – where is feminism now?

From 5pm on Thursday, February 18 2021 you can access an abridged recording of this panel discussion through Wyndham Art Gallery's podcast channel *Go Deeper* at:

<https://wyndhamartgallery.podbean.com/>

Image (Right) : PINK exhibition view - Photography: EP Group Australia
Image (Back Cover) : Anastasia Klose - *Miss Spring 1883 (detail of dress)* - 2016

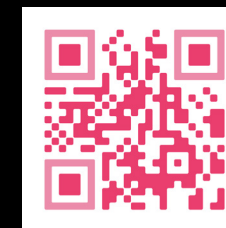


Online Video Tour

Visit Wyndham Art Gallery remotely with this video tour of PINK. Featuring an opening speech by Mayor Adele Hegedich and narration from curator Caroline Esbenshade this is a great way to experience our most recent exhibition remotely.

www.wyndham.vic.gov.au/pink

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