

University of Cape Town

Clubs of Night:

An artistic response into spaces of
collective association and coping in a patriarchal time

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1. Vaginal Davis performing with *Cholita!*
1995

*“If there’s something that’s lacking,
if you’re seeking a scene, you have to first envision it”*

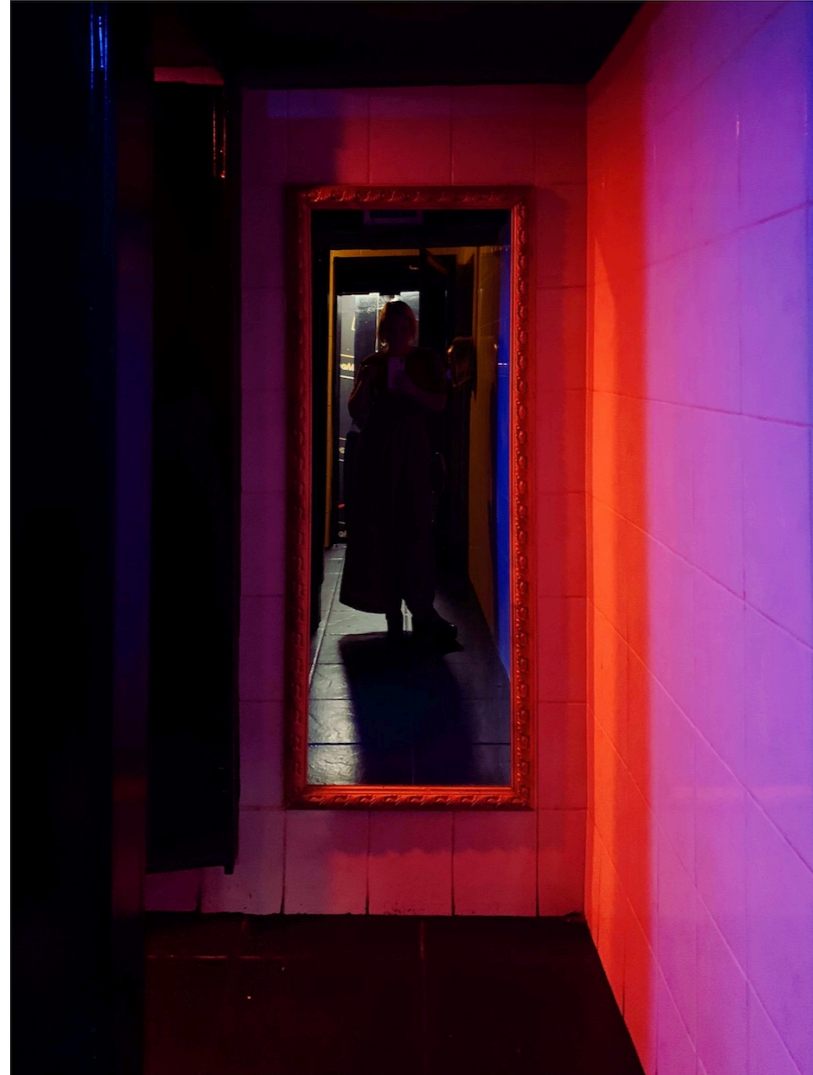
- Vaginal Davis, 2017



2. Light installation test, 2019

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3. Mirror selfie in club toilet
2019

Preface:

Safety in the Night

In the search for safety from the often passive-aggressive emotional dangers of the day, I've caught myself rediscovering a setting that I've been fascinated by, and actively part of, since the days of my development into womanhood and sexual awakening at the age of 16 years old: the night and its nightclubs. The night, with its all-encompassing darkness, is often implied to be more dangerous than the daytime, and yet, at the same time, it invokes a romanticised space of otherworldliness that one can escape into. Perhaps, with more room for violence in the dark hours of the night and with less disciplinary modes of observation and surveillance, it is also a time for positive self-expression away from the witnessing eyes of the light of day. As a womxn,¹ I've been brought up to live in fear and to be specifically careful at night. While the night-time insinuates this fear, it has also been – in my experience – a time for liberation. Still to this day, I find comfort at night as it allows a space for quiet reflection, but above all, it incessantly invites me to venture into experiences that are usually unacceptable during the day. Having lived in a handful of cities, it is in nightclubs that I've found like-minded people who've become new friends for life – in the sweaty clubs of *Pigalle* in Paris, dingy dive bars in alternative east-London, and the after parties of LA.

In this research, I focus on examining the *clubs of night* as a time and space that provides environments for collective associations, for re-imagination, re-actualisation and reclamation of self, specifically the parts of oneself that a heteropatriarchal society condemns.

¹The definition for Womxn is `a woman (used, especially in intersectional feminism, as an alternative spelling to avoid the suggestion of sexism perceived in the sequence m-a-n and m-e-n, and to be inclusive of trans and nonbinary women), from the online source Dictionary.com, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/womxn>.

Throughout this research, womxn are discussed in the most inclusive sense. While the majority of referenced literature mainly speaks of gender-based issues from either a female, girl, or LGBTQI+ perspective, I endeavour to speak of both perspectives under the umbrella of people who, as a demographic, challenge patriarchal norms and culture. As heteronormativity and patriarchal culture goes hand in hand (Ward, J., 2009:433), I therefore mainly speak of *heteropatriarchal* culture (instead merely referring to patriarchal culture) as harmful and violent. Additionally, I aim to approach this research project from an intersectional approach. In this regard, I am aware that my privilege – in terms of cisgender, whiteness and economic privilege, may represent significant limitations and blind spots. Nevertheless, I aim to recognise the crucial interconnections between racism, sexism, heterosexism and class.

A significant limitation with my practice while engaging within the complex social dimensions of contemporary South Africa, is the fact that my research places a particular emphasis on urban nightclubs in the CBD area and its surroundings. This approach necessarily omits spaces outside of the urban club experience, such as shabeens and taverns which are usually located in the surrounding suburbs and townships.² This, however, does not mean that I have not explored other environments beyond the urban femme and queer scenes, but I am limiting my focus on the intersectional spaces that I am already involved in and fully acknowledge my subjectivity. This is this an affirmation of my direct personal knowledge of these spaces that makes the understanding of them deeper and this a resource for my art practice.

This visual research is focused on nightclubs and field work in the cities of Cape Town, South Africa and my hometown Helsinki in Finland, two seemingly opposite extremes of gender inequality, although both still unequal and patriarchal. Stated differently, the differences between the two spaces in terms of gender issues are marked, but still reveal a shared link in certain forms of subjugation and hegemonic assumptions. In this regard, I also reference US politics and mainstream media, as it has global reach and influence on mainstream ideas around the world.

² I have purposefully not included these particular spaces within this research project in order not to inflict violence with my whiteness in spaces that I have not been invited to.

Notes on the document:

All images are produced by the author unless stated otherwise. Hypertext links exist and are embedded in this document and should be used to tracks artworks and archives. Crucially this text must be seen in conjunction with the body of artworks that comprise nine photographs, four sculptural wall pieces, one floor installation, a light installation, an interactive animation and a video art film. Special attention has been paid to be concise and remain within the authorized word limit.

List of abbreviations

GBV Gender based violence
SAPS South African Police Service
LBGTQ+ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Other Sexualities
BIPOC Black, Indigenous and People of Colour
UN United Nations
SAHRC South African Human Rights Commission

Introduction

This academic and artistic research investigates ideas about safety in relation to gender³ and femininity in the heterotopian⁴ time-space of urban nightclub culture in the context of current patriarchal time.⁵ My aim is to examine the experiences of safety and unsafety within these particular spaces from an individual and socio-political perspective and discuss how contemporary artists have engaged with similar issues in their own practices. And most importantly, I will investigate the need for safety: where, when, how and for whom it “exists” – but, at the same time, it will also be crucial to consider if safety is not merely, as Gay (2014:194) put it in her book *Bad Feminist*, a much-needed illusion that is “as frustrating as it is powerful”. It is against this background of seeking to identify shared experiences of (un)safety that I will explore the night as a form of metaphor; highlighting it as a romanticised site which can potentially open up the space for imagining alternative possible futures against the oppressive elements in one’s day-to-day life (De-Guzman, 2012). At the same time, it is vital to consider the time-space of the night from the rational perspective of caution; as it is often a heightened time of day for emotional and physical violence, specifically with regard to young girls and womxn who are warned of epistemic gendered violence through society and the mainstream media since childhood (Massey, A., 2017).

It is from this perspective that my body of work aims to shed light on the theoretical and symbolic meaning of the intentionally created physical “*safe(r) space*” (Austin, B., 2018) of specific nightclubs and events that challenge patriarchal norms.⁶ In other words, I am interested in how these often-overlooked spaces can create new configurations of belonging between like-minded people and able to induce new forms of shared subjectivity in the time-space of the night. I draw on art-historical examples of how nightclub culture has historically provided the time-space for expression and re-imagination of the ‘Self’ and society, and how this has served as a catalyst for change into mainstream culture, as well as national and global politics.

³ Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviours and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time. Definition by World Health Organization, https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender#tab=tab_1

⁴ Heterotopia; according to philosopher Michel Foucault, is a geographical space with non-hegemonic conditions. It is described as a space in society with its own rules, unspoken or generally known, that only function as such in this specific space. Examples include Turkish baths washrooms, saunas, swimming pools or as my personal example, public or semi-public toilets.

⁵ Patriarchal time: Definition of society as patriarchal or privileging masculinity over femininity, specifically describing a historical and/or current time period. The opposite of matriarchal time, when society favours women. Definition of matriarchy by Merriam-Webster Dictionary, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/matriarchy>

⁶ The term patriarchal norms, is based on the idea of gender roles, meaning norms towards either gender. By stating that the norms are patriarchal, it means that the norms privileges males before females. These norms include expectations towards either gender, behavioural or cognitive patterns. Definition of patriarchy and norms by Oxford Dictionary: <https://www.lexico.com/definition/patriarchy> and <https://www.lexico.com/definition/norm>

Here I refer specifically to the work of the French artist Toulouse-Lautrec (pg 27) and the contemporary female artist Sadie Barnette (pg 41). While the discourse is mainly produced around the concept of patriarchal violence, there is, nevertheless, a constant search for signs of unity between the marginalised by patriarchal society in the midst of violence (and the night) as will be evident in the work of the artist Gabrielle Goliath, see pg 19. This move, to ensure I use the past (Histories of Art) to participate in finding paths of flight for the present (and future) in my own visual research is an explicit acknowledgment of both the recurring social gender/class/racial challenges faced in society across time and space, and at the same time the role of contemporary artistic production to give form to these challenges so as to enable the production of critique.

Furthermore, my theoretical and visual research will also extend to conceptualising toilets as a potential safe space within the nightclubs, bars and restaurants. Here, I consider the toilet designated to women (otherwise known as a bathroom, restroom, powder room, or ‘the ladies’) as a possible safe heterotopia to retreat to in non-safe public or semi-public environments – in a similar way to safe space nightclubs which can be an escape from the hegemonic norms of the day. I also examine possible codes of care/conduct and the importance of a sense of belonging in these collectively created safe spaces.

Another crucial aspect of my visual research is the strong nuance of bright pink, which acts, in my use of the colour, as a metaphor for the ‘safe’ agenda that is both empowering and challenges heteropatriarchal norms. Moreover, I consider the colour pink’s history as a political tool to administer and challenge issues of patriarchy. It is for this reason that there is a specific colour pink (which I have titled *Club Pink*), which weaves throughout my body of work as a symbolic motif for expressions of freedom and feminine agency. This *Club Pink* functions as a kind of visual, metaphorical lens which allows me to further examine how this sense of belonging and collective agenda in “safe space” nightclubs have extended to

exist in isolation during the Covid-19 pandemic.

My focus throughout this art practice-based research predominantly lies on drawing attention to the pervasive patriarchal power structures that affects all genders. Most importantly, my aim is to initiate the space for reflection regarding one’s own positionality within the scope of challenging patriarchal norms – all under the light of bright pink. Through the mediums of interactive animation, audience-activated installation, sculpture, photography, performance, light and sound, my work seeks to investigate various artistic strategies, in which, a representational and/or hypothetical ‘space’ that emphasises the importance of collective associations⁷ and codes of care within the scope of a nightclub or its restrooms, may be brought to the fore (McCallum and McLaren, 2011).

⁷ With collective associations I refer to groups of people who collectively share a common interest or pursuit. In this research, this is the non-conformity to patriarchal society.

A Pandemic of Violence:

Unsafety in a ‘Patriarchal Time’

All over the world, it seems as if the proportion of womxn suffering violence has notably increased. In the past two years,⁸ in countries such as Mexico, Brazil, France, Spain, Poland and South Africa, womxn from all spheres of society have mobilised to protest against everyday realities which, for many, defines our current ‘patriarchal time’. And with the onset of a global pandemic, this state of violence has only worsened. It is therefore crucial, from my perspective, to portray the conditions of fear and the threat of violence that certain demographics are constantly submitted to in order to understand the urgency for safety, collective associations and a sense of belonging, far away from the ubiquitous violence.

It is through the framework of a short statistical analysis that I aim to highlight the devastating effects of gender-based violence in both day and night-time, in isolation and ‘out and about’. I focus on the many acts and crimes (emotional and physical abuse) that normative society does not approve of or agree with, often happening during night-time hours as there is less surveillance and greater chances of harmful events to go unseen.

Looking at recent domestic violence helpline statistics, the Executive Director from the UN Women, Mlambo-Ngcuka foresees a likely increase in the number of reported incidences of gender-based violence for 2020 compared to pre-pandemic statistics.⁹ In addition, Mlambo-Ngcuka states that there are devastating impacts on womxn’s mental, physical, sexual and reproductive health as well as their ability to participate in the recovery of respective societies and economies (UN Women, 2020)¹⁰.

Furthermore, a report by *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime* states that the domestic space, the supposed safe space of ‘a home’, already pre-pandemic was the most dangerous space for womxn and young girls.¹¹

⁸ 2018 – 2020

⁹ In a statement titled *Violence against women and girls: the shadow pandemic (2020)*, Mlambo-Ngcuka shares statistics on the increased number of reports to domestic violence helplines across all continents during the global Covid-19 pandemic. In the 12 months before the pandemic, 243 million womxn and girls across the world were reported to have been subjugated to gender-based violence by an intimate partner.

¹⁰ The report fails to specifically mention the growing number of gender-based violence from an intimate partner as an effect of the pandemic’s lockdown and curfew regulations. This is most likely due to lacking information on whether the intimate partner pre-pandemic had violent records or history of inflicting gender-based violence outside of the domestic space, or, if it is a consequence of lockdown and curfew regulations

¹¹ Where 137 womxn were killed per day across the globe (UNODC, 2019).

South Africa, according to the *SAPS 2019/2020 Crime Report*, stated 53 293 reported cases of Sexual Offences, leading to 138 per 100 000 women, standing as one of the highest figures in the world (Crime Stats SA, 2018). There is, however, a lack of South Africa’s crime statistics on the time of day that these sexual offences take place. Nonetheless, the SAPS report does state that both the home and the night-time¹² stand as the most dangerous for women and girls (SAPS).

In Finland, the number of reported rape cases in 2018 stood at 1393 and the reported sexual offence cases at 512, making rape a risk of one in approximately 4000 people (a 0,025% chance). An estimated 96% of the reported cases were against women (Stats Finland, 2018)¹³. While the numbers are miniscule in comparison to South Africa, the point here is not to make a comparative statistical analysis of two very different and complex societies. Rather, I would like to indicate that although Finland typically serves as an example of a “progressive” country in terms of gender equality (it is ranked 3rd most gender equal country in the world), it is still a country recognisably steeped in heteropatriarchal and racist tendencies like any other Western society.

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, Mlambo-Ngcuka (UN Women, 2020) identified an increase in the reported cases of fear, threat and acts of gender-based violence towards womxn. Furthermore, a rising number of LGBTQI+ persons have been reported to feel unsafe and unsupported at home (both emotionally and physically), mainly because family members do not (or struggle) to accept their identity and sexuality. This hardship was especially felt during recent periods of lockdowns and stay at home orders where family members were forced to remain at home (Neighmond, P., 2020). The rise of direct physical violence, death and thoughts of suicide, are indeed the effects of enacted heteronormative patriarchal norms, which have become more entrenched and conspicuous due to the pandemic (UN Women, 2020).

What should be clear from the statistics laid out above, is that violence directed towards womxn should not be considered in terms of isolated cases – this violence is rather systemic, infiltrated into all spheres of society, transnational in its reach, and deeply rooted in patriarchal gendered power structures.



4. Broken glass and spilt drink on mirror
installation test, 2020

Artistic Responses to Patriarchal Violence:

Urgency, Awareness and Resistance

From a place of urgency, artists (feminist art-activists or artists within feminist movements) have been working on bringing the experiences of gendered violence into a field of greater visibility, with the hopes of raising awareness and creating new forms of relationality at both the individual and societal level through their artistic practices.

Hereafter, is a selected group of artists¹⁴ who have illustrated different approaches and responses to patriarchal violence. Ultimately, the aim of their artwork was to ensure that the events of patriarchal violence were not left unheard-- some in a more meditative, and some artworks function in a more direct manner. Each has informed and energised my work and have shaped my interest in social and experiential engagement as a critical part of my own practice.

¹⁴ The artists include Regina José Galinda, Gabrielle Goliath, Suzanne Lazy, The Guerilla Girls, and an anti-femicide coalition Ni Una Más (Not One More).

Ni Una Mas

A striking approach to visualising the effects of patriarchal violence lies in the works by members of the anti-femicide coalition *Ni Una Más* (Not One More). Throughout the city of Ciudad de Juárez (Mexico) and its surrounding desert, pink crosses were displayed by the group as visible proclamations of resilience and resistance against the systemic violence and injustices perpetuated against women. This grassroots mobilisation effectively stood as a “visual declaration of agency against the region’s gendered power hierarchy”, in which the pink crosses represented a visible affirmation in a silent social landscape, a united call for justice for all the women who disappeared. (Patterson, 2015:119).

In order to continue this effort against the hetero-normative pillars that fails to value the lives of womxn, the Washington State Poet Laureate Claudia Castro Luna wrote a book of poems titled *Killing Marias* (2017), which honours the brutalized and murdered women of Ciudad Juárez. In the foreword to her book, Gabriella Gutiérrez y Muhs describes Luna’s poetic dedication to these women of Juárez as a “live cartographic image of the struggle and survival vis à vis the erased history of femicide/femicido” (2017). This memorialisation of victims of femicide, through both the spoken word and activist-art, articulates the different orientations of visual, poetic and spatial engagements that could raise social consciousness and engender political action.

María Santos Sweetest Apple

*They say we live
On either side of a border*

*I say that’s fodder
For a sexist imagination*

*Coyote’s tooth does not alone bite
And falcon’s feather takes not alone to the sky*

Silo living is not for living things

*Like a braid on my abuela’s back
And the beads on a Rosary strand*

Interlinked we are rain, dust starts

- Claudia Castro Luna, *Killing Marias* (2017)



5. Crosses erected to memorialise the femicide in Ciudad Juarez.

La Verdad (2013)

In Regina José Galindo's 70-minute video piece *La Verdad* (The Truth, 2013), we follow Galindo sitting by a desk reading testimony out loud, of women who were killed, raped and violated by military men in the war 36-year-long civil war in Guatemala from 1960 to 1996. Approximately every 10 minutes, she is interrupted by a dentist who injects novocaine into her mouth, making it more and more difficult to speak, and to understand what she is saying-- slowly silencing her and the women's stories. Through this video she is making sure that the testimonies live on and are being heard, in opposition to the government's (systematically violent) attempt of destroying the testimonies and erasing the tragic events from history.

While I cannot relate with the experiences that she re-tells, I find her use of the novocaine injections as a poignant contemporary interpretation of silencing and numbing the pain. The viewer can both see and hear the visible and audible change in her storytelling, leading one to vicariously feel and imagine the details of the described events in a minimal manner, while still managing to portray the horrors and violence.



6. Regina José Galindo, *La Verdad*, 2013
Still images from video piece / performance

De tu Puno y Letra (2015)

Suzanne Lacy's performance piece, *De tu puno y letra* (Of your fist and letter, 2015), set in a bullring addresses gender-based domestic violence with 300 men reading aloud letters written by womxn in Ecuador who are victims of violence, specifically from intimate partners. When Lacy first arrived in Quito, Ecuador in 2014, she was introduced to the Cartas de Mujeres project, which brought together 10,000 Ecuadorian womxn who wrote letters of their experiences of violence. In the piece, the audience sits around the bullring, listening to men, amongst them policemen, reading out the letters of violence. The piece successfully involves men in the conversation, in an attempt to engage men directly with the topic, while making audible the stories of thousands of womxn. In the last act, the 300 men walk into the audience with a candle and letter in hand, to further and more privately continue the conversation after the end of the main part of the performance. This last act illustrates the importance of continuing the conversations within one's own personal life, relationships and interpersonal networks. More importantly, the audience is reminded that hearing about domestic violence is not something to experience and then leave behind, rather this final action of closeness and proximity portrays a tool of how to continue the discussions after an event, that it is not something that should be easily forgotten.

Lacy's piece in four acts is an important example of art reaching out to include men in the conversation and push for action to fight gender-based violence. Historically speaking, the feminist approach in art has normally focused on the issues being expressed, but seldom specifically targeted to include men, the usual perpetrator of gender-based violence and crime in general (SAPS, Stats Fin, FBI). I am similarly interested in the direct inclusion of men as an approach to tackle patriarchal violence, which I have expanded on in my piece *Clubs of Night* (see pp 59).



7. Suzanne Lacy, *De tu puno y letra*, 2015

Documentation from performance

Elegy (2015)

The devastating effects of domestic violence in a visually minimalist setting, but audibly and conceptually powerful is Gabrielle Goliath's performance project *Elegy* (2015). It is an hour-long theatre performance about mourning the victims of rape, sexual and gender-based violence in South Africa. In the piece, a group of female vocal performers each represent a specific woman or LGBTQI+ individual, and one at the time, steps up onto a plinth to open up to a kind of singing cry, only for a short moment while standing on the plinth before stepping down and giving space to the next person to vocalise their mourning. The piece creates a platform, literally and artistically, for voicing loss and trauma and communicates the heaviness of violence, while simultaneously depicts strength and community. *Elegy* communicates the mourning experiences and personal and collective stories of people by abstracted vocals without including any defining or directly descriptive words. Set in a dark room, with only the current vocalist lit up one at the time, the piece places a respectful focus on each survivor. The darkness could be interpreted as nighttime that portrays a general feeling of danger within patriarchal norms that are placed on the everyday lives of womxn and LGBTQI+ persons in South Africa (and elsewhere).

While addressing the patriarchal system and its symptoms, the above-mentioned artists' works further initiates a learning space where the experiences of violence can be heard and validated. The art and performance pieces function as a platform that can convey a sense of a 'safe space' as they allow and encourage discussions surrounding complex issues of gender violence. In the next section, I will expand on this notion of 'safe spaces' as an alternative model for inclusiveness, agency and dialogue.



8. Gabrielle Goliath, *Elegy*, 2015

'Safe(r) spaces':

Situating fear, illusion and empowerment

within the concept of 'safe spaces'

Living in a world riddled with scorn and violence against the female body casts a long shadow of fear. Manufactured through threat, shame, stigma or bias, it is through this fear that dominant (hetero) sexualities, patriarchies and oppressions are perpetuated and entrenched. Where violence and oppression are interlocked, womxn and LGBTQI+ persons need to not only battle with staying safe, but must also find ways to cope, work on one's self-image, find empowerment and locate new emancipatory practices. Amongst the ongoing emotional and physical violence that permeates the lives of many womxn, acts of profound solidarity and care can function as a disruptive force that leads towards transformation and a reordering of power. And it is precisely within the material and symbolic boundaries of a 'safe space' that such solidarities can be forged. According to the feminist theorist Nancy Fraser, the notion of 'safe spaces' should not be considered as a closed concept. That is to say, they are not just physical localities but relational spaces which operate as "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser in Clark-Parsons, 2018:4). In this regard, safe spaces can be conceived as a site for transformative engagement – a locus of possibility and agency, where marginalised and oppressed groups can operate with freedom and integrity.

In the research paper titled *Kuchu activism, queer sex work and lavender marriages* (2018), Austin Bryan discusses the concept of "safe(r) space" in relation to creating safe spaces away from heteropatriarchal culture in Uganda. It is my contention that the added (r) in 'safe space' serves a poignant reminder of the various experiences of the privileged and less privileged. Firstly, within the context of locality, and secondly, within the relational dynamics of safe spaces where various degrees of safety are experienced amongst different groups or individuals. Acknowledging this gap in terms of interpersonal experiences, facilitates an openness with regard to each person's own identity, namely one's gender, sexuality, race and class¹⁵.

Furthermore, I believe that the added (r) within 'safe(r) spaces', illustrates the urgency for an emphasis on the safety aspect within the word 'unsafety', building on Roxanne Gay's (2019:192) argument that the idea of safety is in many regards "an illusion designed to reassure us, to make us feel like we control the influences we allow into our lives". To put it another way, can absolute safety exist or be promised as long as harmful cultural biases exist so dominantly? Throughout this research, I have come to agree with Gay's conclusion that the concept of safety is, indeed, an illusion. However, it seems to me that by admitting this position to be nominally true, it should then become clear that even more transparency is necessary and new emancipatory practices needed in order for spaces to become as safe as possible, or *safe(r)* in the most inclusive sense.

¹⁵ It is for this reason that I speak of 'safe(r) space' night-clubs and restrooms throughout my research paper (instead of merely referring to them as 'safe spaces') as I would like to acknowledge the various degrees of safety that different groups or individuals experience.



9. Performance test pre Covid-19

2020



10. Broken tiles for *Unswept club floor* installation

Reconfigurations of Space:

Conceptualising ‘safe(r) space’ nightclubs and restrooms as ‘heterotopias of resistance’

In this body of work, in order to counter the hegemonic voices that have consigned womxn and LGTQI+ individuals to silence, invisibility and perpetual fear; I have chosen to focus on specific nightclubs and its restrooms as physical, virtual and metaphorical ‘safe(r) spaces’ that specifically foster empowerment and a sense of belonging with like-minded people. While ‘safe(r) spaces’ may be limited in terms of the extent and degree to which they are actually safe, this does not mean that such spaces are not open to social, symbolic and experiential reconfigurations of dominant norms or actual power relations. Indeed, I regard the nightclub spaces as small microcosms – where rules and social codes of conduct are constantly negotiated outside of dominant symbolic systems – and can be referred to what Michel Foucault terms as ‘heterotopia’.

In his 1967 lecture titled *Des Espaces Autres*, (Other Spaces) Foucault (1967:3) designates heterotopias as functioning as a space of reflection, or even opposition; “something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted”. In this sense, heterotopias are to be understood as ‘counter-sites’ in which the hegemonic order of things is challenged. Or, as theorist Michael Helton puts in more precise terms:

They represent separations from ordinary spaces and existing formations of power and knowledge that establish collective places of alternative social ordering, contrasting fundamentally with their surrounding environment through different forms of built environment, social practices and events happening there (Helton, 2015:167).

In my own research, by observing and examining the terms in which femininity exists and comes alive in ‘safe(r) space’ nightclubs and their restrooms within the context of heteropatriarchal society, I find it poignant to observe these spaces from the perspective of heterotopia. More pertinently, Foucault (1967:5) speaks specifically of heterotopias in terms of deviation: “those in which individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed”. In other words, it is a site for people who do not conform with the conventional norms of society; where the misfits,

marginalised and subordinated may come together, exist and even feel a sense of belonging.

In his article *Queering Space: Heterotopic Life in Derek Jarman’s Garden*, Chris Steyaert (2010:48) argues that Derek Jarman’s garden can be viewed as a “site of resistance”, a heterotopic space “where the personal, the artistic and the political are simultaneously played out in practices of care of the self and self-formation”. Here, the garden is highlighted as a site for leisure, pleasure and relaxation, while referencing the biblical reference of the Garden of Eden. In this case, leisure exists within the complex associations to disobedience, power, sexuality, and acting against the forbidden. Furthermore, Steyaert (2010:45) suggests that this heterotopic garden provides a space to re-inhabit the body as well as an opportunity to recognise a vision of other kinds of subjectivities and sexualities: “in the context of sexual minorities, new forms of sexual identity that contest the dominant forms are generated and practiced in specific, ‘other’, spaces and timings, so-called ‘heterotopias’”.

It is within this heterotopic horizon that I consider ‘safe(r) space’ nightclubs and restrooms as sites of resistance which can inspire a sense of belonging and a collective agenda through what may be considered as ‘trivial’ fun night-time activities, such as connecting with like-minded people through music and dance. And, just as Jarman’s garden underlines an existential, aesthetic and political sphere for personal self-transformation, I believe that these spaces have the potential to operate in precisely the same way – as a kind of ‘heterotopia of resistance’ which are grounded in the possibility of “creating new contexts of meaning” in order to “transcend traditional power relations and function as laboratories of new ways of social organisation” (Helton, 2015:167).

Opportunities in the Night:

An art-historical and contemporary overview of heterotopic ‘clubs of night’

Conceptualising the nightclub as a heterotopian space that fosters critique and new ways of thinking about social configurations is by no means a new idea, especially within the heterogeneous fields of art production and visual culture. Since the proliferation of cabarets and bistros in France during *La Belle Époque*¹⁶ to the burgeoning culture of Sophiatown in the 1950s up to the present-day alternative LGBTQI+ friendly nightclubs in Cape Town, the nightlife was always characterised by a sense of community, freedom, liveliness and resistance. It is no wonder that artists, musicians and writers would look to these spaces as a source of inspiration for their creative expression – where new subjectivities could develop and provide the impetus for radical aesthetic horizons to emerge.

In the section that follows, I draw attention to a set of art-historical moments relating to nightclubs that, in heterotopic terms, have provided the space for collective associations to shift away from hegemonic society and serve as a catalyst for artistic and social transformations. In order to better understand how ‘safe-space’ nightlife culture has influenced progressive social values within society, I refer to the practices of the Post-Impressionist Toulouse-Lautrec, theorist María DeGuzman and underground photographer Billy Monk. I’ve chosen to focus on them as their documentation of the social, symbolic and experiential dimensions of nightlife practices exemplifies the manner in which such activities can interrogate and subvert dominant cultural norms and hierarchies. It is worth noting that the artists are both men but are not detained by the pervasive attitudes of their day. They are very different people working at very different times and spaces, yet their pairing is productive because they both point to aspect of “night” that embrace difference and work against normative orders as may be seen in their artwork.

Nightlife¹⁷ as we know it¹⁸ emerged in Paris in the late 1800s. It is during this period, in the red-light district of Pigalle, that the painter Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec would immortalise the people of the night. Toulouse-Lautrec became famous for his sketches, paintings and lithograph prints of dancers and sex workers of the Moulin Rouge, depicting intimate paintings of love and lust as well as the explosion of nightclub culture in Paris. He was a frequent guest of the brothels and bars, and authentically lived the bohemian life that he painted.

¹⁶ *La Belle Époque*: French for “Beautiful Epoch”, a term to describe a specific period in French history, usually dated between 1880 and the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

¹⁷ Nightlife: “the activity of or entertainment provided for pleasure-seekers at night (as in nightclubs)”. Definition by Merriam-Webster Dictionary <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/nightlife>

¹⁸ With as we know it I reference mainstream nightclub culture as influenced by the Global West: club culture that was born and developed in cities such as New York City, Paris and London. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199329175.013.178>

Toulouse-Lautrec

Toulouse-Lautrec truly turned his passion into painting and was possibly the first artist to portray the people of the night as joyous and carefree (Cate, P.D., 1985:83), and most importantly, unashamed of public perception. The night and its clubs, specifically Moulin Rouge, was geared towards a certain crowd and mostly stigmatised within conservative circles of society. The people of the night were, and often still to this day, frowned upon and described as lost or unruly by many (conservatives) (Castelman, R., 1985:14). That very shame is sometimes implied in some of his paintings and would be astutely dealt with through intelligence and humour. What is also evident in Toulouse-Lautrec's work is his clear "sympathetic fascination with the marginal in society" (Michael, 2010). He likely felt most comfortable surrounding himself with the marginalised due to his own physical handicap (Frey, J., 1985:35) and his feeling of not fitting into society as it was and still is found today with the presence of ableism¹⁹ and the continued discrimination against non-conformists.

Within Toulouse-Lautrec's paintings, one feels the mood of the restaurants and clubs with his dazzling depictions of swinging skirts, flirtatious looks and outrageous outfits, captured by the use of colour, light and pockets of darkness. The postures and movements of the people, in combination with their facial expressions, allow the viewer to get a glimpse, an invitation even, to join in for the night. His paintings are filled with exuberance, generosity and sympathy as he portrays groups of happy people, non-judgemental, alternative and accepting. Not a sign of violence can be seen in his paintings in my analysis, only glimpses of momentary melancholy, which allows me to think that he also perceived the night and the clubs as a space where a community of its own could gather and be themselves, escaping the trauma of day. E.g., in the painting *At the Moulin Rouge: the Clowness Chau-U-Keo* (1895), a woman is depicted posing proudly towards the viewer, while she is paired with a desolate looking male figure directly behind her, as in to remind the viewer of how the opposites co-existing within the night.

¹⁹ The definition of ableism is the discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities, Merriam Webster Dictionary, [www.https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ableism](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ableism).



11. *Marcelle Lender dancing the Bolero in Chilperic*, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, 1896



12. *At the Moulin Rouge: the Clowness Chau-U-Keo*, Henri Toulouse-Lautrec, 1895

In her book *Buenas Noches American Culture; Latina/o Aesthetics of the Night* (DeGuzmán, 2012), DeGuzmán describes the night as “both visible and invisible, feared and romanticised” and explores representations of the night in relation to Latina/o art and literature as it exists unappreciated and inferior in the United States and Western culture. She continues describing “the invocation of night as figure and discourse for the inversion and re-orientation of cultural norms and expectations” (DeGuzmán, 2012:3), illustrating the night as a space for those non-conforming with Western culture and the “unaccepted” to come alive and exist in ways they can’t during daylight hours.

Such a movement of nonconformity that strengthened a collective agenda while mainly taking place during the night was the Harlem Renaissance. This explosion of social and artistic upswing in the African-American community in the early 1900’s Harlem in New York would influence the development of the Civil Rights movement (Hutchinson, 2019). The movement was empowered and energised by African American artists musicians, poets and writers who chose joy in the night as a site of resistance and embraced nightlife, especially jazz clubs, as spaces for collective association and momentary feeling of freedom and acceptance away from white supremacist norms.

Billy Monk

A few decades later in South Africa, the apartheid regime placed curfews and passed laws curtailing the lives of its citizens. And in a similar way to the Harlem Renaissance, a proliferation of urban culture and resistance would emerge in Sophiatown, Johannesburg in the 1940s and 1950s. Amongst the vivacity and energy of the shebeen parties, the night provided the opportunity for progressive minds to meet, drink and dance to jazz, creating a new sense of identity amongst a multi-racial disenfranchised group in the face of apartheid. Local artists and writers, renowned for criticising society and conservative ideas, were and still are famous for pushing radical progressive ideas into the public sphere, and as the cliché illustrates; debated over art, politics, human rights, sex and love over glasses of illegally brewed beer and wine into the heat of the night, while the conservatives were sleeping.

At a later time, the photographs by Billy Monk, a bouncer at The Catacombs nightclub in 1960s apartheid Cape Town, captured the beautiful possibilities of not living in accordance with oppressive laws. In Monk’s intimate snapshots, we encounter the patrons of this underground club finding a ‘safe space’ to socialise and freely come together in defiance of the strict racial laws – providing an elementary example of the heterotopic nature of the nightclub. The photographs serve as a documentation of how the liberals at the time, found each other and celebrated being humans together, but behind closed doors. The photographs can be interpreted to capture a moment in time, when illegal relationships included the interracial and cross-cultural friendships or intimate affiliations. They captured the queer, the drag and the nudity, bouncing breasts of laughing womxn and drunken people passing out. In the photographs, everyone seems comfortable being in the space. Most of all, the fact that the night and specifically the nightclub as such, were documented as a space for liberation, for self-expression and where wild laughter can run free and be encouraged, I speculate that perhaps it is the ones living at night who are the most honest people in society, unlike what may conservatives seem to argue.



13. Billy Monk, photographs from *The Nightclub* collection, 1960s

In the 1970s in New York, the birth of disco music and clubs are often described as the hallmark of the American liberation for races, sexes and sexual orientations and as “a place where black, Hispanic, gay and any combination thereof could come together and dance, love and just be without fear” (Mattera, A., 2012). In the photographs of dancing people in the famous New York City nightclubs, Bill Bernstein captures “a vibrant microcosm of social change” (Busha, N., 2015). Even if the “free feeling” only was temporary and momentarily possible in the semi-public spaces of nightclubs, it illustrates an example of the overlooked importance of the clubs as a space for collective ideas and development of progressive culture.



14. *Paradise Garage Dance Floor*, Bill Bernstein, 1979

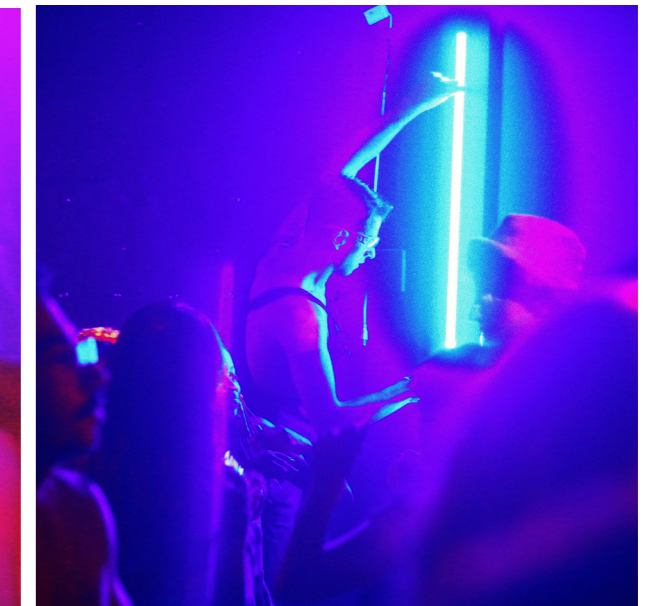
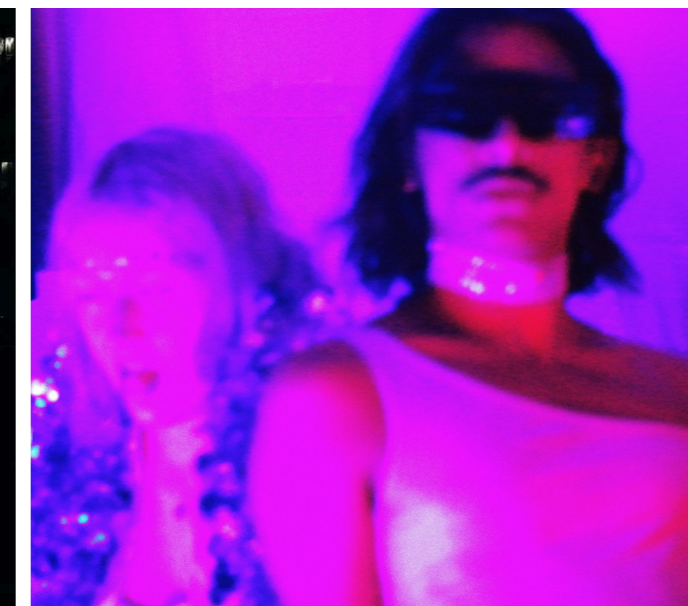
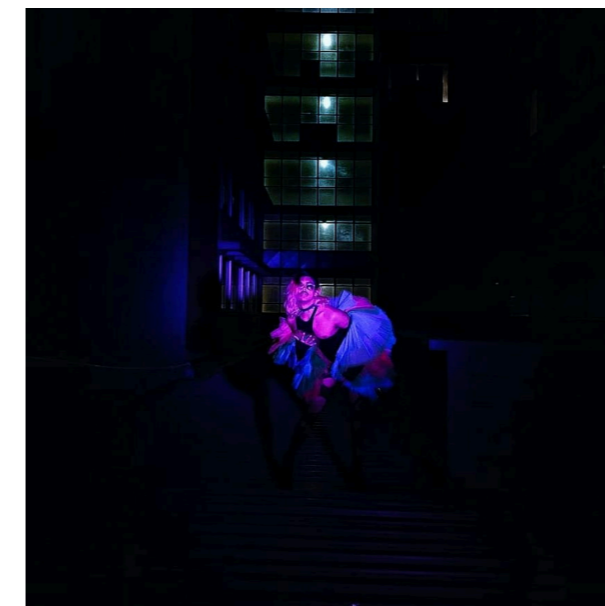
Contemporary Cape Town

In current contemporary Cape Town, that claims itself a “rainbow nation”, referencing to liberation of races and sexualities while still being extremely oppressive towards both (Mncube, 2019), an example of the oppressed groups of people and culture that comes alive at night is the series of parties organised by an interdisciplinary underground art collective *Death of Glitter*. A community created to subvert and promote “collective consciousness and aims to be a utopia free of the constructs of patriarchy.”²⁰ It is directed to the gay and femme community and aims to be non-judgemental and inclusive to all, specifically the BIPOC LBTQIA+ community. Although having a small following of under 1000 people, its existence stands as crucial in the visibly predominant white heteronormative patriarchal culture of inner urban Cape Town.

Another local nightclub community is the *Not Sorry Club*,²¹ a femme-centric dance and music community that pushes for representation and inclusivity in the electronic music industry and nightlife scene. Their parties, similarly, to Death of Glitter aim to be intersectionality inclusive, but with the extended focus on a specific music style at their parties which are promoted with posters in various pink tones.

²⁰ Death of Glitter (DOG), 69 Hope Street at EVOL club, Cape Town, <https://www.instagram.com/thedeathofglitter/?hl=en>, https://www.facebook.com/pg/deathofglitter/community/?ref=page_internal

²¹ Not Sorry Club aimed at building a more inclusive rave community bringing underrepresented talent to the forefront, <https://www.notsorryclub.co.za/>



15. *Death of Glitter* by Elliot Rose, 2019

16. *Death of Glitter* by Ryno Stols, 2019

17. *Death of Glitter*, Ryno Stols, 2019

Pink Problems:

A Brief History of the Colour Pink

I proceed here to discuss the colour pink which is a fundamental component of my artistic practice and this research project. Pink gained importance in the project as I became aware, through observation of the colour in both mainstream nightclubs and “safe(r) space” nightclubs. In these different spaces, it became clearly visible as to how the colour communicates or gestures towards femininity within various settings: in mainstream nightclubs, pink is normally used in gender-segregated restrooms designated for womxn, while in ‘safe(r) space’ nightclubs, I’ve observed that it was being used throughout all areas of the club. Furthermore, I started seeing the colour used outside of nightclubs, which led me to consider how pink is used often within feminist political movements.

The colour pink has a complex and highly critiqued history as it was utilised within the framework of heteronormative patriarchal structures in order to portray a certain kind of womxn that fitted the patriarchal gender norms of femininity. Later, the colour would be reclaimed by womxn as the essence of pink would become a universal visual symbol to challenge the gender norms dictated by patriarchal systems. It is important to look at the brief history of the colour pink in relation to femininity and its development from gender neutral, to representing the vulnerable and weak within patriarchal constructs, in order to create a more comprehensive understanding of the development of the colour within feminist movements, and how they are intertwined. I will also examine the manner in which a new stronger neon pink – a more vibrant and striking version – has been embraced by intersectional heterotopic spaces, especially in the night.

1. The Complexities of Pink

Since the colour pink lacked any specific connotation to femininity until the impact of western influence, I will mainly discuss the colour pink’s history from a Western perspective. Drawing on examples from mainstream media and advertising within the US, I will explore the manner in which these dominant mediums have influenced the

the general perception of the colour pink in current patriarchal times (Lyons, J. K., 2005).

Today, the colour pink commonly exists as a colour highly associated with comfort, care and safety because of its feminine ‘nature’ (Jonaskaite, D., Dael, N., Chèvre, L. et al. 2018). The development of pink being seen as ‘feminine’ cannot be affiliated to a certain moment or event in time but is recognised to have started in the mid-1900s. Before then, it was a colour seen as extravagant, “flashy and flamboyant”(Adams, A., 2011:591),²² as it was developed from the most expensive colour pigment – red (Pastoureau, M., 1947). In fashion catalogues from 1918, girls were recommended to wear blue as it was seen as a “much more delicate and daintier colour”²³ (Stamberg, S., 2014).

A recognisable turning point for the colour pink in fashion and domestically in the US, was after WWII, led by the famous advocate for the colour pink (popularly called Mamie pink) was First Lady Mamie Eisenhower (Wright, J., 2015). For her husband’s 1953 US presidential inauguration, she famously wore a pale pink rhinestone-covered ball gown, which shocked and bedazzled everyone especially after WWII when women were wearing practical shades of blue at their factory jobs while men were at war (Wright, J., 2015). In the article *How Pink Became a Color for Girls*, Wright suggests that the dress and Mamie’s attitude indicated that “the men are home now, and you can return to your traditional roles” (Wright, J., 2015). With such statements, Mamie served as a supporter and a conformer of traditional gender roles and the connection between the colour pink and women’s domestic role of being a homemaker and a housewife with famous quotes such as “Ike runs the country. I turn the pork chops!” and “I have a career. His name is Ike” (Wright, J., 2015).

²² In the film, *The Great Gatsby*, set in the 1920s, Gatsby’s enemy Tom Buchanan is heard dismissing Gatsby by saying “an Oxford man! Like hell he is. He wears a pink suit!” This comment by Tom may be misinterpreted in thinking that Gatsby is less of a man because of his pink suit, while he is actually stating Gatsby’s “new money” status and poor taste.

²³ In November 1927, 10 department stores in the US participated in a survey by *Time Magazine* that asked each store of their association to the colours pink and blue in relation to boys and girls clothing. The response was mixed, showing that either colour was not specifically connected to either girls or boys.



18. Mamie Eisenhower dressed for her husband’s 1953 US presidential inauguration



19. Actress Jayne Mansfield

Mamie’s public agenda influenced many other women. For example, the actress Jayne Mansfield (1933-1967) embraced the colour pink and famously stated “men want a girl to be pink, helpless, and do a lot of deep breathing” (Wright, J., 2015). We see how public figures and female celebrities embraced the colour pink with this traditional attitude, contributing to the idea of femininity in terms of “woman wearing pink and a woman being of delicate nature” (Wright, J., 2015). This trend of the colour pink in the Western world slowly became ingrained to mean a “girly” and feminine colour (Wright, J., 2015) and would become associated weakness, cuteness and helplessness (Jonaskaite, D., Dael, N., Chèvre, L. et al. 2018). Furthermore, this led to a trend of colouring the domestic space, household and feminine products, which still lives on today in women’s sanitary products and pink razors.

A poignant example worth mentioning with regard to ‘Mamie pink’ and her use of pink in bathrooms that became the vogue in its time. At the Hidding campus of University of Cape Town (UCT), toilets assigned for “Ladies” (see images below) are all painted with a light dusty pink colour, while the toilets assigned for men are painted baby blue. This phenomenon occurs all over campus, which highlights the intentionality in the use of the colour pink to conform to gender norms.

The idea of pink being a feminine colour was further explored, used and strengthened through mainstream media, cinema, TV and advertising (Wright, J., 2015). In TV shows or films women who were identified as strong, independent or focused on intellectual matters, were dressed in dark colours and portrayed as threats (Wright, J., 2015).²⁴

In her article, Jennifer Wright points out how in the Hollywood movie *Mean Girls* (2004), the popular, beautiful girls are dressed in nuances of pink throughout the film. In a similar way to *Funny Face*, the film *Legally Blonde* (2001) serves as a popular cinematic example of how a young woman who loves pink and conforms to the ideals of the Barbie doll is beauty-oriented, non-serious and cute according to Western mainstream beauty standards, while the young woman portrayed as more serious and smarter is dressed in shades of brown throughout the film. The main character, Elle Woods, is heard saying “whoever thought orange is the new pink, was delusional” (*Legally Blonde*, 2001). However, even if it is because of a male crush, she becomes ambitious and proves that cuteness and drive does go hand in hand, even while wearing pink. This film *Legally Blonde* came out in 2001, which is simultaneous to the third wave of feminism, and therefore, slightly builds on the idea of breaking traditional gender roles and how femininity can be used as a tool of

strength, instead of women having to conform to masculinity in order to be perceived as strong figures in positions of authority.

As the colour pink’s journey has progressed from gender-neutral to feminine-specific as dictated by patriarchal norms, pink is slowly starting to find its own meaning. A growing number of activist feminists and feminist artists are reclaiming the colour as a symbol of empowerment: the colour in its various shades is now often used to communicate issues related to femininity, both in terms of political and health-related advocacy. Within both the political and health/body related sphere, the use of pink has also been criticised to be exclusionary in terms of being associated with white feminism, as feminist movements have mainly focused on the social conditions of white womxn, instead of approaching the fight of gender equality through an intersectional approach. Also related to the body, a light shade of pink was titled “nude” for a very long time, communicating that the “normal” tone of skin colour is light pink, therefore conforming to the ideals of white-only beauty.

As a round-faced, blue-eyed, blonde white womxn, I have personally avoided and come to despise the colour pink across a large span of my life due to its association with femininity. I feared that I would not to be taken seriously and I disdained the way it was often regarded as a colour of “the weaker gender” (Jonaskaite, D., Dael, N., Chèvre, L. et al. 2018). Interestingly, I’ve also rejected or “looked down” on femininity within myself out of concern that I would not appear strong and independent. Recognising my own self-censorship led to my realisation that I was in fact conforming to accepted patriarchal norms of what constitutes as strong, appealing, confident, believable, etc (Barker, G., 2016: 328). It is specifically through this research project that I have come to face these ingrained thoughts and started the journey of unlearning these harmful ideas. This has allowed me to embrace the colour pink and its many nuances and allow femininity within myself to become more empowering and stronger.

²⁴ In the film, *Funny Face* (1957), two strong female characters are slowly turned towards the more accepted idea of femininity. At the beginning, Audrey Hepburn’s character Jo Stocktown, a bookshop keeper and academic is dressed in dark colours and unfitting clothing, which through a fashion take over, are changed into bright colours, including pink, while her character’s interest shifts from intellectual matters to finding love and a man. Similarly, Kay Thompson’s character Maggie Prescott’s, the fashion editor based on Diana Vreeland, a famously strong, independent career woman, embraces pink for the new fashion season, while when asked if she herself will be wearing pink, she replied “Me? I wouldn’t be caught dead wearing it!” (Wright, J., 2015).



University of Cape Town’s Hidding campus, the Ladies toilet in the Ritchie building

20. Toilet entrance door

21. Selfie in one of the toilet mirrors

22. Sink and mirrors

2. The Contemporary Use of Pink: Club Pink

Today, one comes across various tones and shades of pink on a daily basis. However, there is a ‘new’ kind of neon-type pink that is more visibly striking and is often found in intersectional spaces that has become poignant to my research and approach towards feminism. I argue that the proliferation of this more dynamic pink echoes the developments in feminism, which is shifting towards a point of convergence with greater inclusivity and considerations for intersectional complexities.

During my field work for this research project (which started in January 2019) in ‘safe-space’ nightclubs and its restrooms, I was re-introduced to the role of light and darkness, the placement of light and how specific moods are created by the use of lights in different colours. A characteristic that I’ve often encountered in these nightclub scenes was the use of a specific neon pink, which I have titled *Club Pink*.

This colour pink plays a crucial role in my artistic practice as I’ve noticed its prominence in several femme and queer nightclubs. By incorporating it into my artworks, my aim is to reconceptualise the colour pink as one that challenges the general associations of weakness and promotes empowerment and belonging. Through my visual and academic research, I have come to recognise the colour pink – and specifically the contemporary use of *Club Pink* – as a symbol for spaces that aims to attract a certain crowd, specifically those who strive to challenge patriarchal norms or identifies with, and/or honours feminine qualities (Jonaskaite, D., Dael, N., Chèvre, L. et al. 2018). Therefore, I recognise the colour of *Club Pink* as an experiential, relational and visual metaphor for the heterotopic “safe(r) space” nightclubs and their agenda to challenge systemic heteropatriarchal norms and violence. In this section, I will look at examples of how the colour exists in contemporary settings, specifically in how it relates to the night, patriarchal violence and those who oppose it, femme and queer nightclubs, and how these issues and concepts are communicated in contemporary mainstream media and art.

Outside of Fine Art and activism, mainstream media and cinematography are simultaneously starting to express and spread information about the circumstances of gender-based violence and unsafety in terms of femininity, specifically set in the night-time economy. A significant example is the critically acclaimed HBO series *I may destroy you* (2020) directed by Michaela Cole who also stars in the series, which uses the colour pink in relation to

experiences of patriarchal violence specifically taking place in nightclubs. In a similar way to fine art, mainstream media plays a crucial role in the public sphere as it serves as a popular platform to further communicate such pressing social and cultural issues to a broader audience. Indeed, the series *I may destroy you* pertinently depicts gender-based violence set in the night, the threat of violence and fear, as well as illustrating ingrained systems of patriarchal violence in the urban nightscape of contemporary London. Similarly, to my research project, it serves as an example of accumulations of past and present events and art expressed around the matter, and provides continued dialogue and awareness, while paired with the compelling development of the colour pink in terms of awareness of patriarchal violence.

While Cole’s storyline is not set in a ‘safe-space’ nightclub, it serves as an example of the violence that often occurs in ‘mainstream’ nightclubs. As such, the nightclub is neither portrayed as a site of resistance nor as a heterotopia of alternative social practices. Rather, it lays bare the gendered violence that permeates our society, forcing the viewer to confront the fact of sexist oppression in heteronormative patriarchy. Throughout the different episodes of the series, the protagonist approaches such challenges from various perspectives, highlighting the importance of intersectionality and the layers of privilege within the hierarchies of power-dynamics in terms of gender, race and sexuality. All the while, different nuances of the colour pink are represented throughout the series, functioning as a kind of visual and symbolic reflection of the underlying critique of patriarchy that is implied in the narrative. Additionally, in the series, the washed-out pink wig is tied to the events of sexual assault and the process of accepting the main character Arabella’s (Cole) traumatic experiences. Once she feels more empowered and self-assured, she removes the light pink wig and replaces it with one that has a stronger nuance of purple, until finally she shaves her head – a gesture that indicates she is ready to leave the violent events that occurred behind her and strive to reach further self-empowerment (Allure, 2020).



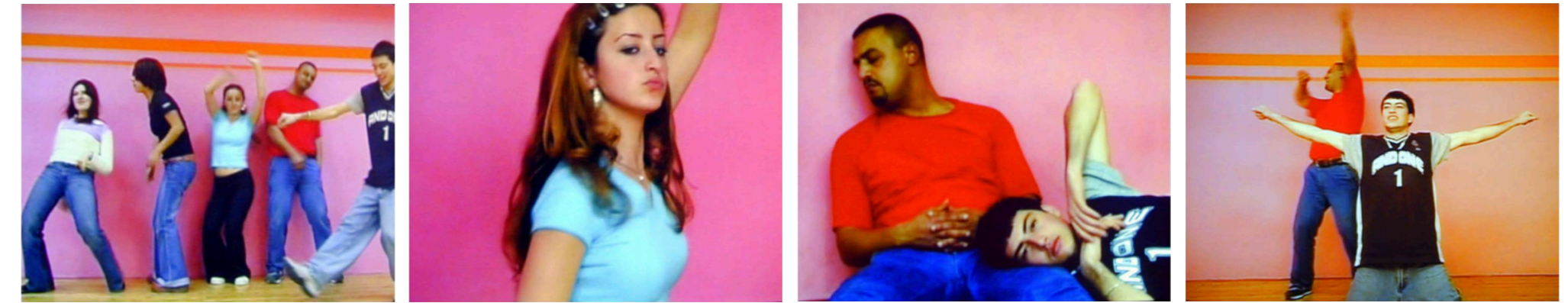
23. Promotional image of the series *I May Destroy You*, directed and starred by Michaela Cole, HBO

Within the context contemporary art, an installation that similarly challenges heteropatriarchal norms is the audience-activated installation *The New Eagle Creek Saloon* (2019) by Sadie Barnette. With this project, Barnette pays homage to the recent historical milestone of her father's bar, the first black-owned gay bar in San Francisco. She reimagines and recontextualises the histories and practices surrounding her father's bar in such a way so as to render visible a creative and intimate search for social change. Barnette describes it as "my restaging of the *New Eagle Creek Saloon* offers space for connection and new energies, to dance and dream, to call the names of those lost and to see one another as we are in the glow of our own small moments of freedom" (Barnette, 2019). Here, she speaks of the bar and its connection to racially and patriarchally discriminated individuals and their need for this specific space. This sense of belonging to a community is enhanced by her use of the same colour palette of different lights of pink. The installation is further activated through audience participation and interaction through human connection.



24. *New Eagle Creek Saloon* by Sadie Barnette (2019)

In the artwork *they shoot horses* (2004) by Phil Collins, the concept of the dancer and dancing functions as an act of resistance. The two-channel colour video allows for a nuanced engagement with social activism through one of the key elements found in nightclubs – dancing (against a backdrop of pink). Here, Collins challenges prejudices towards Palestinian youth in an eight-hour dance performance by a group of young Palestinians dancing to Western pop music. The piece makes clear how certain aspects of the nightclub can serve as a platform and medium for self-expression, resilience and liberation (Kolz, L., 2007). Additionally, the piece experiments with the audience's relation to the performers, as one of his aims was to create a humane connection across cultures through the non-verbal act of dancing (Bidouin, 2004). In the exhibition catalogue of the Dallas Museum of Art, Kolz describes her experience with the performers as: "We have never met these young people, but after a while we feel as if we know them intimately" (Kolz, L., 2007). Indeed, Collins' use of the colour pink as a backdrop emphasises this sense of triumphal defiance and joy, and effectively communicates how the collective site of the nightclub can embrace and foster progressive struggles for acceptance and inclusiveness.

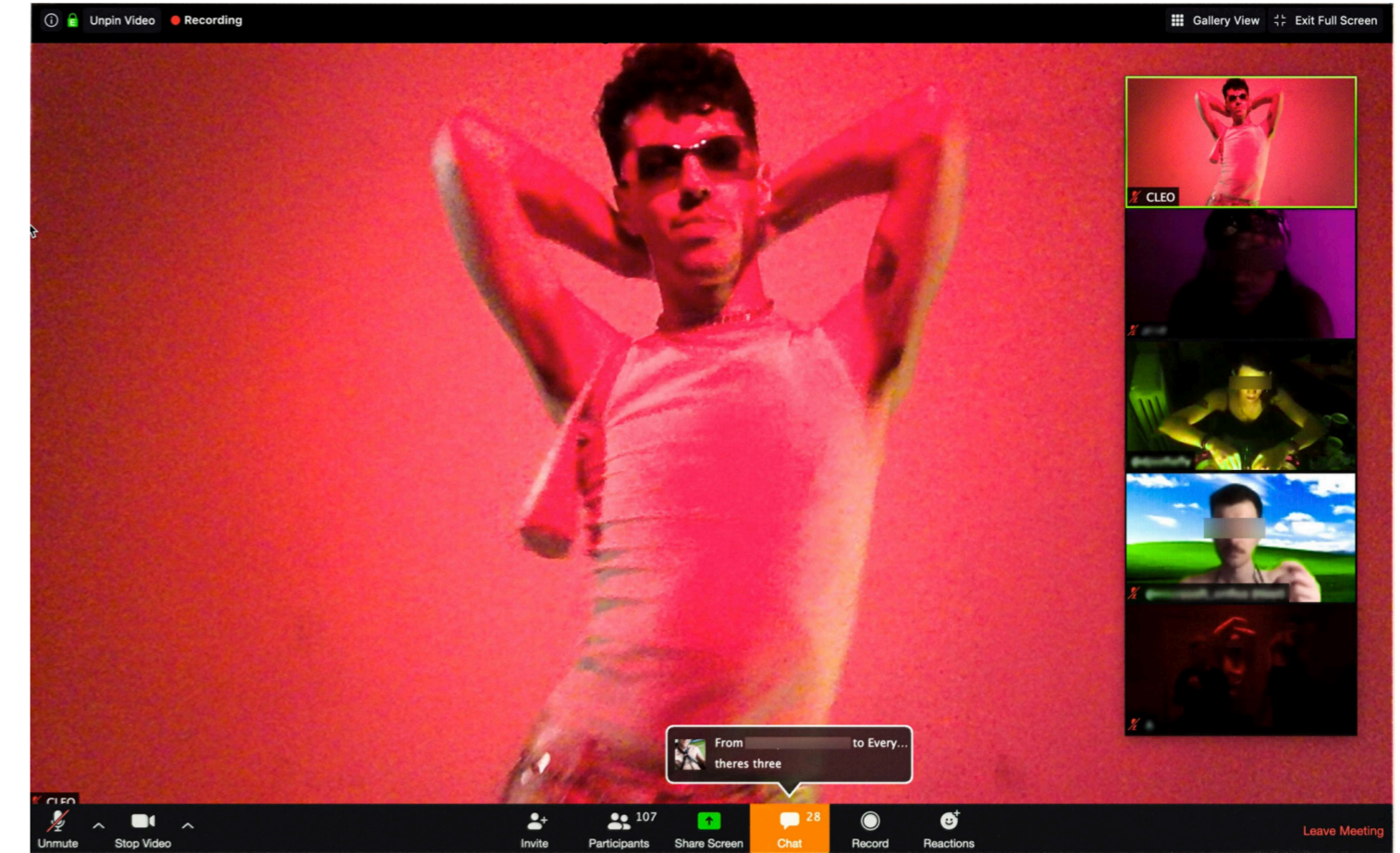


25. Still images from video piece *they shoot horses* (2004), by Phil Collins

The colour pink can be found in many multidisciplinary works which references femininity, the night, dancing, partying and nightclubs. In early 2020, when the world took an eventful turn, and all forms of social interaction would be placed on hold – including nightclubs and other ‘safe-spaces’ – I became interested in how the colour and its metaphorical use could be extended beyond physical spaces and communicate its symbolic value of empowerment in isolation.

During the first Covid-19 lockdown, photographer James Emmerman – a member of a queer community in New York City – organised virtual ‘safe-space’ parties called *Club Quarantine*. In order to create a welcoming, communal and inclusive mood for the virtual party, Emmerman describes his setup of the virtual queer space as, “first step was to turn my studio into my own mini-club, primarily through lighting” (Document Journal, 2020). In the article, he does not elaborate on the reasons for his choice of the colour pink, rather his description implies that it was an obvious choice based on his previous experiences at physical events during pre-pandemic times.

The idea that the empowering metaphor of the colour pink continues to figure in womxn and queer-driven artistic projects, even in the context of isolation, has strongly influenced my own approach to my body of work during this turbulent year.



26. *Self-portrait at Club Quarantine* by James Emmerman, 2020



The Werk:*

To Everyone who escaped the day onto the dancefloor

27. *Toilets in Venice*, 2019

* Werk; a term derived from the words “work” and “twerk”, originally used when a womxn, femme or LGBTQ identifying person dances in a proud manner, owning their body, sexuality and sexual liberation. Also used as congratulatory approval and accomplishment. Popular examples in gay and femme culture. Example “Yesss girl, werk!”



'Liminal Locations': Observation and documentation

In my body of work for this research project, the consideration of the nightclub as a collective meeting place which can underscore a clear political articulation is established through a multidisciplinary and interactive approach. An important aspect of my practice is documentation as it allows me to unpack the intricacies and complexities inherent in the thinking, making, collaborating, questioning, and experimenting that is crucial to any project that I pursue. It is perhaps for this reason that throughout the years, I've been observing and documenting various nightclub scenes that I move and interact in. In the various cities that I have lived in, my main medium for documenting myself along with other "creatures of the night", as O'Brien (1973) puts it, has always been smartphone photography due to its convenience and unobtrusiveness.

At the beginning of my MFA program in 2019, I found myself once again photographing my nightly excursions. While these images would previously only act as a memento of a night out, it is through this research project that I've started to integrate the details and events captured in these photographs into the theoretical field of my practice. The act of revisiting them allowed me to notice visual and representational patterns between people and the spaces; and helped me to discern the metaphors that shape the rhythms of the night. Besides the frequent use of the vibrant pink, attitudes such as positive verbal encouragement and the complimenting of strangers were often observed in moments of safety. Other direct acts of care included a wide range of interests in collectivity, such as the assistance towards one another with small but significant gestures (such as lending lipstick or tampons). I've also noticed that bigger gestures such as intervening in situations that may seem unsafe in terms of patriarchal violence would become more common.

In the photographic series *Liminal Locations*, my aim is to archive, revisit and revive these practices rooted in dialogue, solidarity and respect. In other words, this series seeks to communicate personal observations of the heterotopic space of nightclubs (and their restrooms), and how such social spaces can accommodate and reflect lived experiences of togetherness and empowerment. The series is documented with an iPhone XR, portrayed as mirror selfies, #toiletselfies²⁵ and also depict the architectural space of restrooms and their related areas.

²⁵ #toiletselfie a concept derived from women taking images of themselves on the toilet or in the toilet mirror, visualising the "vulgar" and often taboo act of women "also having needs"

In my exhibition, I present a selection of eight photographs from this series. They portray the nightclub and its restrooms as heterotopic, romanticised and liminal spaces in which they capture a visual landscape through light, architecture and glimpses of people. While seven of the photographs capture the liminality in terms of architecture and light, two of the images in this series portrays social interactions under a *Club Pink* light in the 'ladies' restroom'.

The one image titled *Hot as fuck* is specifically poignant to the conversation of aiming to empower womxn, however, it can be argued that it simultaneously implies objectifying subtexts. Here, the toilet designated for womxn in a non-safe mainstream nightclub aims to be empowering through its neon sign text which compliments the visitor as "hot", and yet, such messages adhere to (and perhaps even reinforce) patriarchal norms – or, to put it another way, it underpins the patriarchal notion that desirableness and self-esteem arises from beauty rather than intelligence.

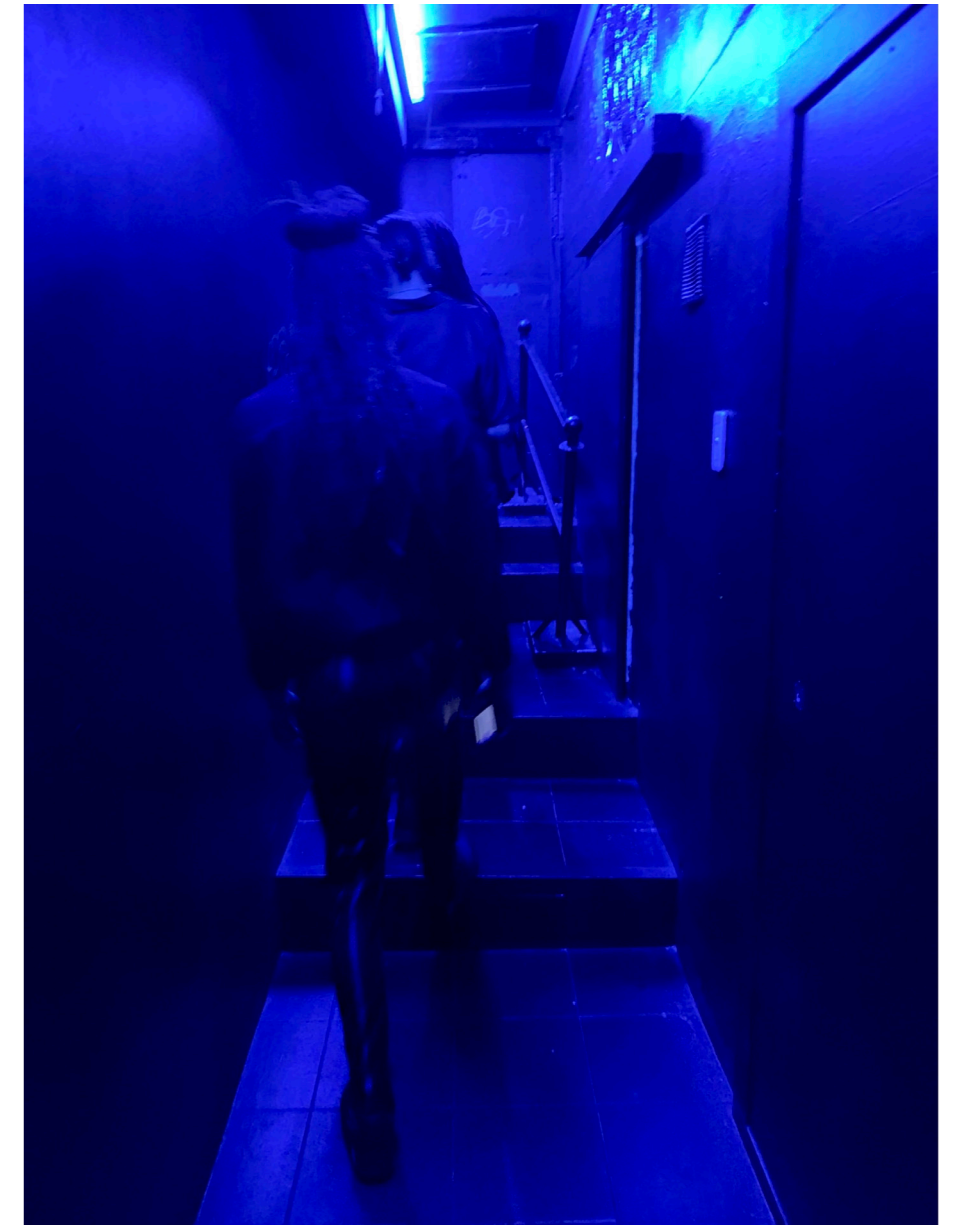
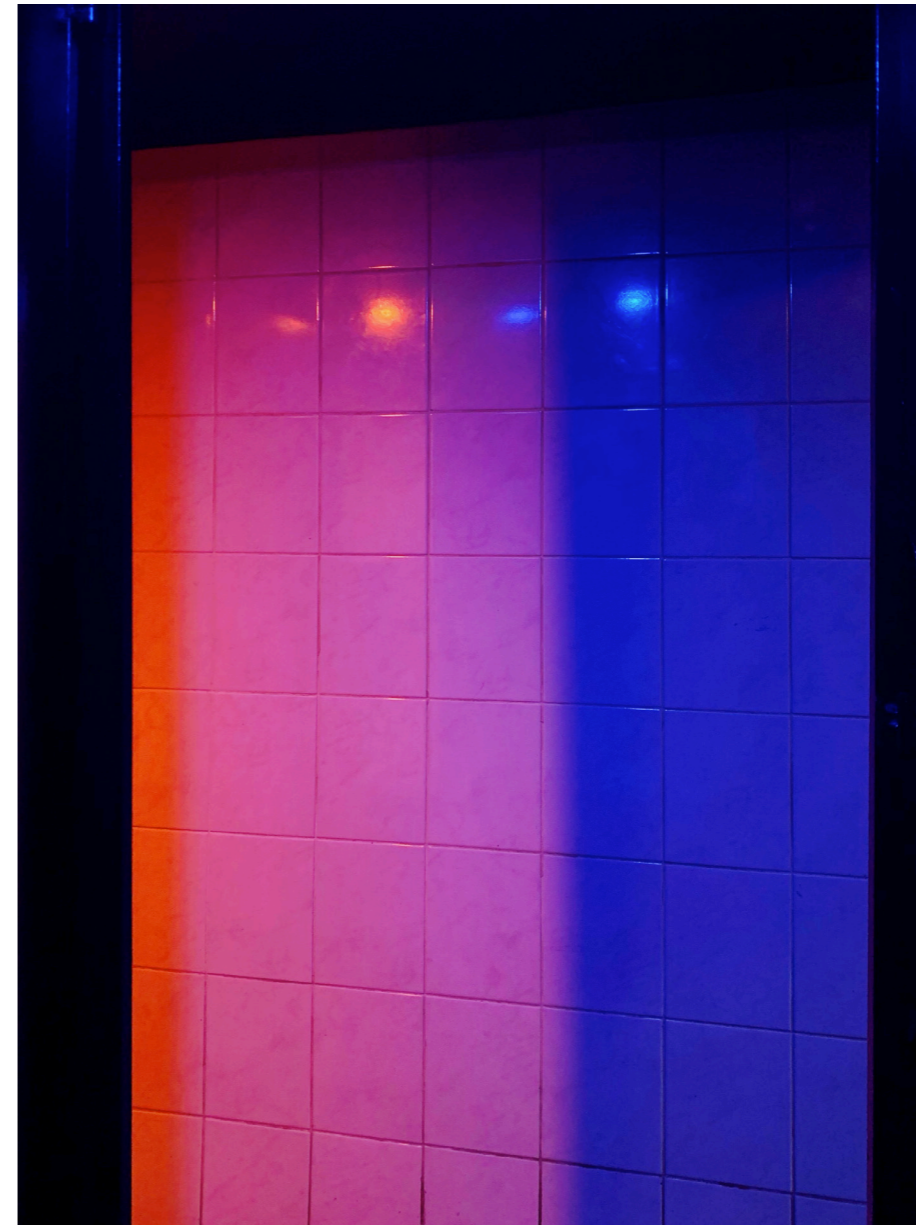


29. *Hot as fuck*, photograph from the photography series *Liminal Location*

2019

30. *Lit up toilet tiles*, photograph from the series *Liminal Locations*, 2019

31. *Club corridor*, photograph from the series *Liminal Locations*, 2019





32. *Fine lines*, photograph from the series *Liminal Locations*, 2019



33. *Amsterdam in Joburg*, photograph from the series *Liminal Locations*, 2019

Interactivity and Embodiment: 'Clubs of night'

A central concept that is present throughout my body of work, both in terms of research, field work and in the creative process and final pieces, is interactivity.²⁶ In terms of research, I've examined the time-space of the nightclub social landscape, which is in itself is a relational environment that exists due to the interactions between various groups and individuals. A key interest of mine is the exploration of aesthetic strategies which can transpose these interactive social exchanges grounded in particular spaces into participatory and relational artworks. In her book *A Capsule Aesthetic: Feminist Materialism in New Media Art*, Kate Mondlock argues that interactive new media installations can produce a

critical framing function in order to stage spectators' physical and emotional interactions with science, technology, and other objects (including human bodies), transforming these encounters into part of the work of art itself... Through creatively enacting a variety of human-nonhuman relations, these artworks reveal how human experience is always contextual and interactive, and they instantiate how subjects and objects emerge through their encounters with each other. (Mondlock, 2018:6)

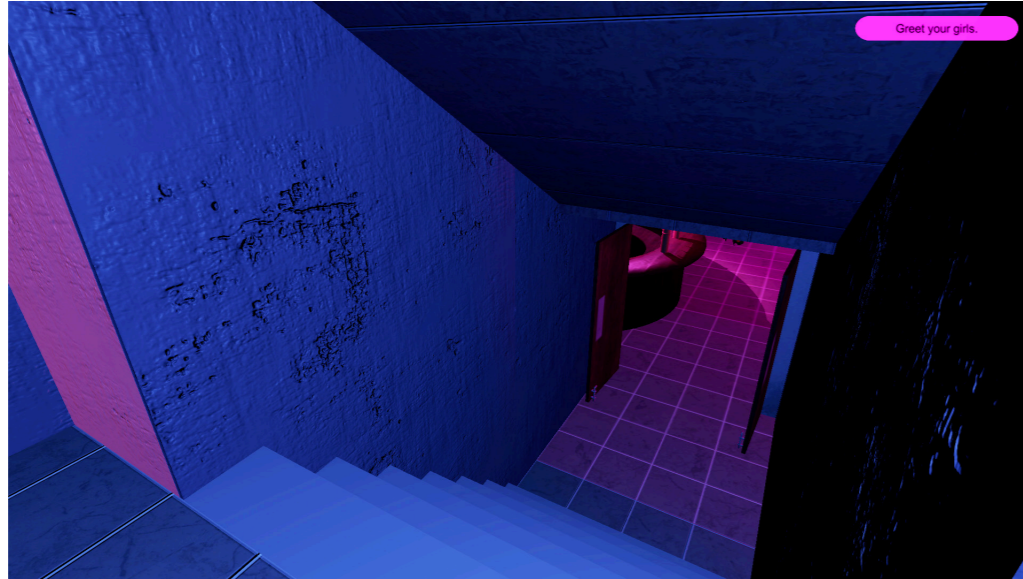
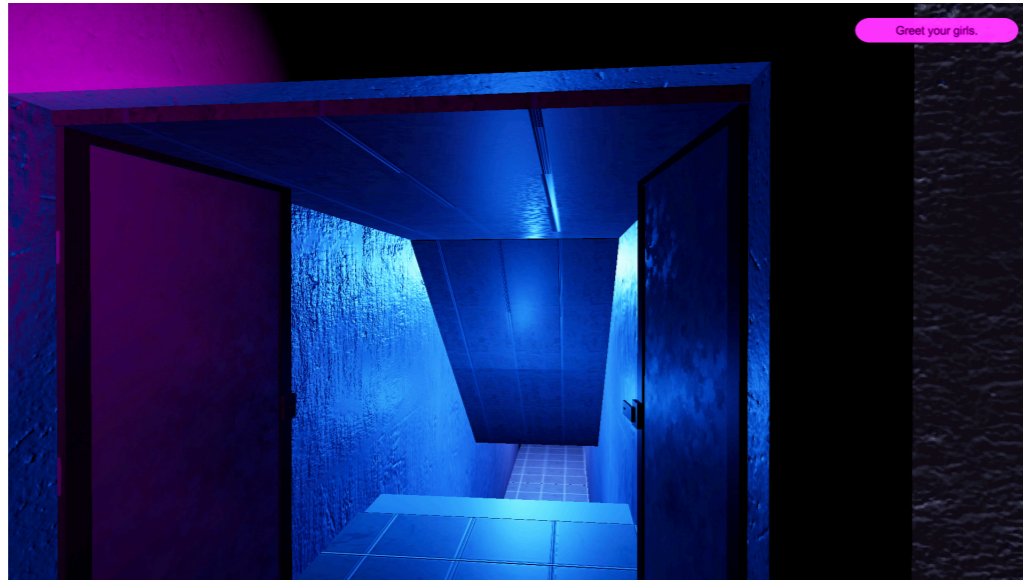
It is from this perspective that I've utilised my own body as an instrument in reference to feminist theories and practices of embodiment and relationality: either my artworks are directly interactive or audience-activated and/or relate to previous modes of interactivity with regard to expressions of embodied femininity (pieces made with ripped clothes, and *Unswep clubfloor*). A piece that is directly interactive through audience participation, or interactive in real-time, is the new media artwork titled *Clubs of Night*. It is an interactive animation which I've created (conceptualised, produced, designed and directed) together with a video game developer.

In *Clubs of Night*, the audience participates in the piece by playing four different characters in a video game demo, one character at the time. The aim of each character is to get home safe from an evening out at a nightclub. Through the different characters, the audience experiences and intervenes in different situations that portray various elements of emotional or physical unsafety in a patriarchal context. The situations and experiences are based on each character's gender and identity. The piece aims to create an immersive, relational, embodied and embedded audience experience that fosters empathy



36. *Clubs of Night*, still image from interactive animation, 2021

²⁶ Interactivity or interaction with the viewer. In *Clubs of Night* the viewer may directly interact with the topics of the research as introduced through the interactive animation.



37. *Clubs of Night*, still image from interactive animation, 2021

and awareness with regard to the symptoms of systemic patriarchal violence through each character that one plays in. In the different scenarios, the audience experiences a range of patriarchal emotional and/or physical abuse such as silencing, bullying, harassment, groping, catcalling, name calling, stereotyping, misgendering and more. As a result, each character directs our attention to the various ramifications of patriarchy and aims to demystify this opaque system which affects the lives of so many on a daily basis.

Although the artwork focuses on subjective experiences, knowledge and self-awareness, the overall experiences within the game are interlinked and therefore illustrate Butler's idea of interdependency – or as Johnson puts it, “the something larger that we all participate in is patriarchy, which is more than a collection of individuals. It is a social system, which means it cannot be reduced to the people who participate in it” (Johnson, A., 2014:50). It is from this standpoint that *Clubs of Night* aims to combat institutionalised sexism and patriarchy through its various role-plays. By visualising and embodying individual symptoms of patriarchal culture from different points of views, the game slowly draws the players' attention to the urgent issues surrounding patriarchal violence which permeates the particularities of many people's everyday life.

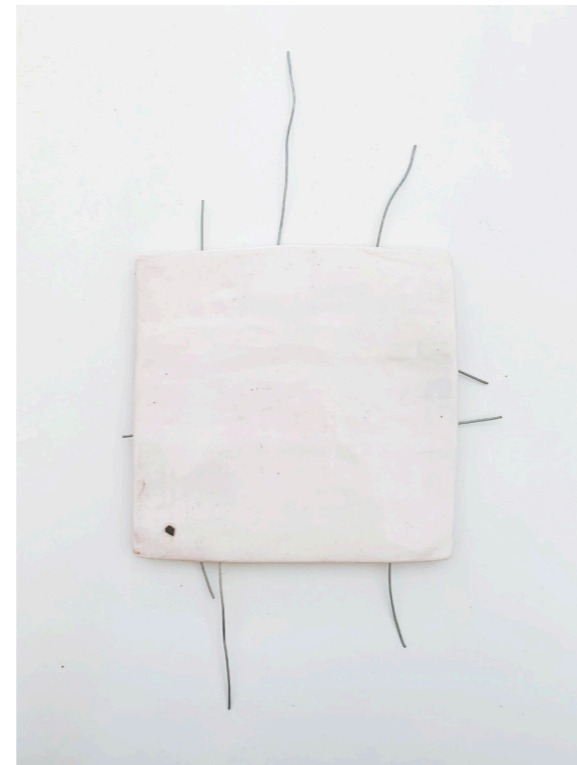
A crucial feature of the artwork's gameplay is the participant's interaction in various types of tactical interventions. The experiences of intervening in situations of patriarchal violence – such as bullying feminine traits, or the femininity within all genders – is critical to fully proceed in the progress of tackling the issues on an individual and systemic level. It is for this reason that participants are presented with situations where they may choose to respond defensively, or alternatively, with compassion and listen, and change their opinion and behaviour based on the newly learnt information. As such, the player will have the opportunity to acknowledge their own situations by displaying empathy or calling oneself out for problematic behaviour and self-correct, which I consider to be positive experiences and foster emotional and political growth. It is my hope that such important interventions will enable players to recognise their own ingrained patriarchal patterns or thoughts. Furthermore, I wish that the piece will have a future life after this exhibition and continue to exist and promote change through educational channels and platforms.

Clubs of Night is developed by Morne Gouws from The Academy of Digital Arts and Loud Rabbits Productions. The playthrough and dialogues are based on collected and personal experiences, as well as with external consultation from Sibusiso Fanti, Kim Windvogel, Tebogo Malebogo and Joshua Pearse. The piece is funded by The Arts Promotion Centre Finland.

Unnoticed: 'Remnants of violence'

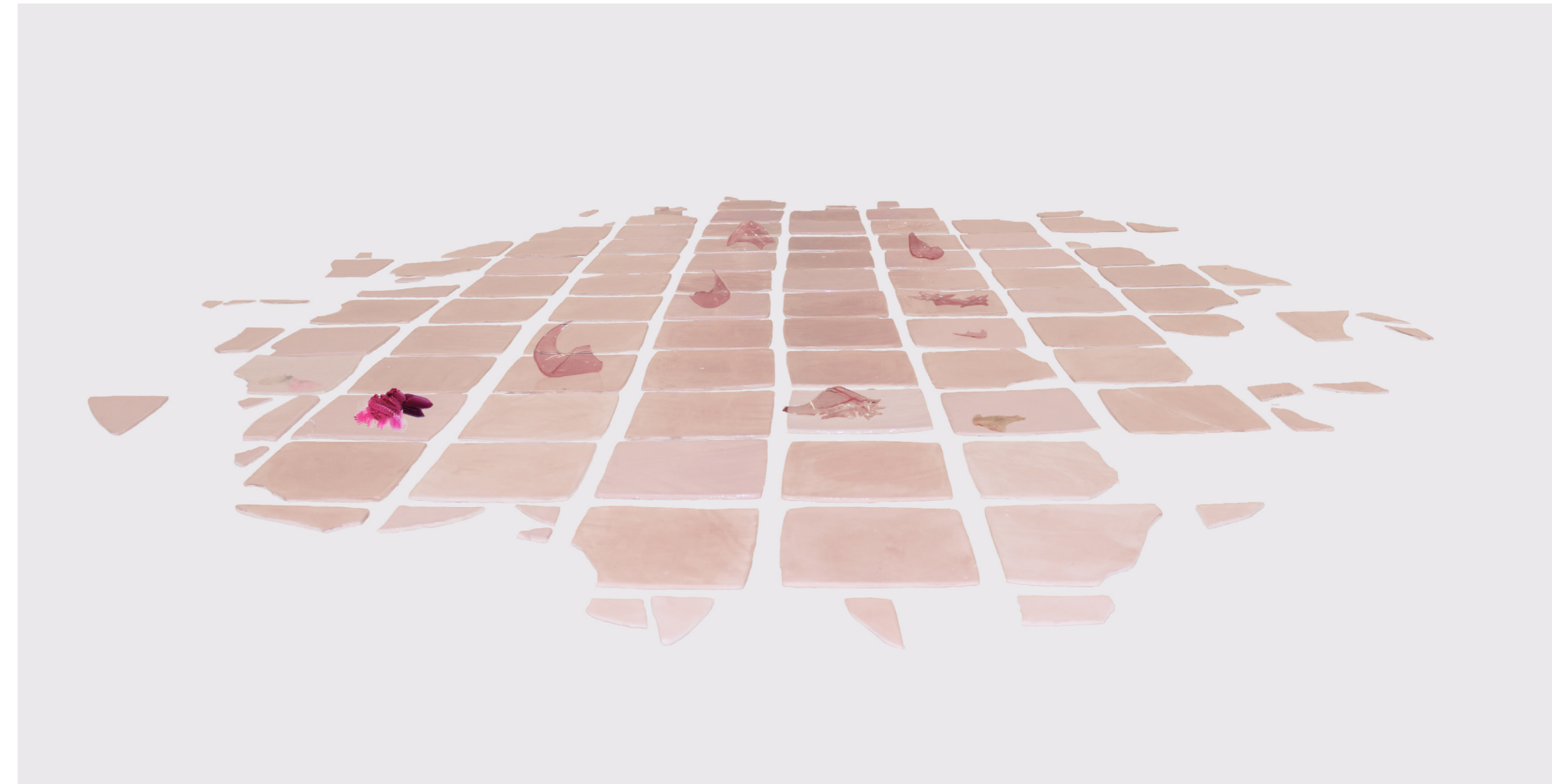
While the work previously discussed illuminates ongoing patriarchal violence, the work titled *The unswept club floor* similarly speaks to the harm (and acts of care) that often goes unnoticed. This sculptural installation piece consists of hand-made tiles that are positioned in a rectangular area on the floor. The tiles are coloured different nuances of dusty pink, once again suggestive of a common element found in many female restrooms (and bodies). Instead of engaging with the bright neon pink or club pink, the tiles are lighter in colour in order for them to be less noticeable. Some of the tiles (very few, approx. 7-10 out of 120) have objects on top of them such as condoms, crushed lipstick, broken glass, tampon wrapping and liquid from a drink. The objects represent remnants of events in a space after a night in the club, displaying the aftermath of events that could have been either violent or caring.

I have chosen to make tiles as they are a common feature in any restroom and nightclub. The title and thinking behind the work originate from Roman floor tiles in the 2nd century, which showcases the remnants of an evening during a dinner party (Fathy, E., 2019). The materiality of the hand-made tiles and the installation reflects a theoretical, visual and aesthetic representation of the vulnerabilities that may be experienced in the physical space of nightclubs and their restrooms. The placement of repeated tiles on the floor represents the actual floors found in these spaces, while the choice to make the unique and imperfect hand-made tiles speaks to the importance of seeking connections between a multitude of experiences, identities and social realities. In this sense, at a metaphorical level, the tiles point to the potentialities inherent to such social spaces – the potential for social connections, empowerment and resistance but also vulnerability and violence. By referring to the *remnants* of the space, the installation also looks to uncover that which has been hidden in silence, aiming to give visibility and create a 'post-reflection' of the events which may have occurred at the end of the night.



38. and 39. *Unswept club floor*,
Hand-made ceramic tiles installation tests

2021



40. *Unswept club floor*,
Hand-made ceramic tiles, broken glass, crushed lipstick, dried condom

2021



41. Hand-made ceramic tiles in kiln, 2021



42. Hand-made ceramic tiles, 2021



After-effects and coping: Ripping and reconstructing

While *Clubs of Night* and *The unswept club floor* portray elements of incidents in nightclubs, the following pieces focus on the possible after-effects of patriarchal violence, and how these experiences may stay with us. The following work titled *Cut, rip, open, Shields* and *Never-ending* draws attention to women's clothes and the common defence used by sexual harassers and abusers: "she was asking for it (by wearing that)". The pieces draw attention to the manner in which womxn are often viewed, filtered and framed through the clothes that they wear. It is common in the setup of a nightclub, and even other occasions, where 'going out' entails that people often dress up to feel and look attractive. This, however, is not an invitation to proceed to physical contact without consent.

'Cut, rip, open' started through an intuitive process of ripping clothes as a means of visualising the inflicted violence on/towards the harassed and the emotionally or physically harmed. I then continued by hanging the strips next to each other, which abstracted the clothes to the point of being almost unrecognisable. However, when looked at up closely, the original function of the hanging fabric becomes clear as the seams or buttonholes become visible and clear. Towards the bottom of the piece, I've purposefully kept some clothes in a less ripped condition in order to depict the sheer weight that follows these harmful events. In a similar way to *The unswept club floor*, the pieces made with ripped clothes visualise remnants of violence that often stays with the person. However, unlike the clothes, this symbolic and direct violence cannot be taken off, washed and fixed.

43. *Cut, rip, open*
250 x 120 cm, ripped clothes, 2021



44. In studio, 2020



44. In studio, 2021

As I worked on these hanging strips, I would feel an urgent need to tie the strips together into a kind of shield or barrier. This process would develop into the works titled *Shields*, which consists of three pieces of ripped clothes knotted together in an irregular fashion so as to resemble shields or tapestries. Interestingly, tapestry is a traditional craft that womxn have historically been making worldwide.²⁷ There are many different techniques for making tapestries, often made with small repeated patterns of knotting. My own hand-knotted tapestries are made from ripped clothes which were tied together, foregrounding the complexities and intricacies of the knots.²⁸ Additionally, the idea of knotting speaks to a way of 'fixing' or 'mending' something that has been violated. Like ships in a harbour which depend on sturdy knots in order to not drift away, the symbolic act of knotting is also a way to ensure that loose parts are kept together, of *securing* different objects or materials to each other.

Furthermore, the irregularity of the knots in *Shields* breaks the traditional regularity of creating tapestries which may be interpreted as a break from the controlled positions that womxn have conformed to and accepted within patriarchal norms. These knots – made out of ripped (violated) clothes which are interwoven in order to create a stronger surface or material (outcome) – metaphorically infers the dichotomy between the violations which occur on the one hand, and on the other hand, the vital forces, agencies and capacities for learning how to navigate the violence embedded in patriarchal cultures.

²⁷ My grandmother used to make them and taught me how to use a traditional tapestry loom when I was young.

²⁸ The approach to knotting was further improved by the traditional decorative wall rug weaving called *ryijy* or *rya*. *Ryijy*, back home in Finland, is a long-tufted tapestry or knotted-pile carpet hanging, which is a unique art form that is rooted in folk art.



46. *Shields*

Ripped and knotted clothes
approx. 3x 180 x 80 cm

47. Detail shot of *Shields*



Never-ending

An additional work where I use ripped clothes is the video piece *Never-ending* which encapsulates a performance where I engage with the act of folding clothes that have been ripped. Here, I highlight the theoretical concern of safety in relation to femininity through the use of the colour of pink which contrasts with the ripped (violated) clothes used within this work. Although signs of violence may be witnessed in the ripped clothes, the video piece does not specifically focus on this violence. Instead, the video invites the audience to follow me in folding the ripped clothes into neat piles with love and care. And since the clothes are ripped, they are not as easily foldable into perfect shapes and piles. The attempt of folding the clothes is symbolic to trying to piece together something that has, too many times, been violated. It represents an act of tenderness by symbolically trying to manage and cope with common events of emotional and/or physical abuse due to patriarchal violence. In a similar way to Yoko Ono's *Cut Piece*, *Never-ending* discusses feminine submission in relation to masculine domination (Bryan-Wilson, J., 2003). While Ono's *Cut Piece* illustrates the act of violation and fails to create "a gesture or reparation, or ritual of remembrance" (Bryan-Wilson, J., 2003), *Never-ending* stands as an act following the violation – attending to the need for recovery and reparation and functions as a ritual of remembrance. This work welcomes the audience to witness an intimate interaction that portrays an act of care towards the those who have been violated.



48. Yoko Ono, *Cut Piece*, 1965



49. *Never-ending*
Still images from performance / video piece
7:49 min

Managing Expectations

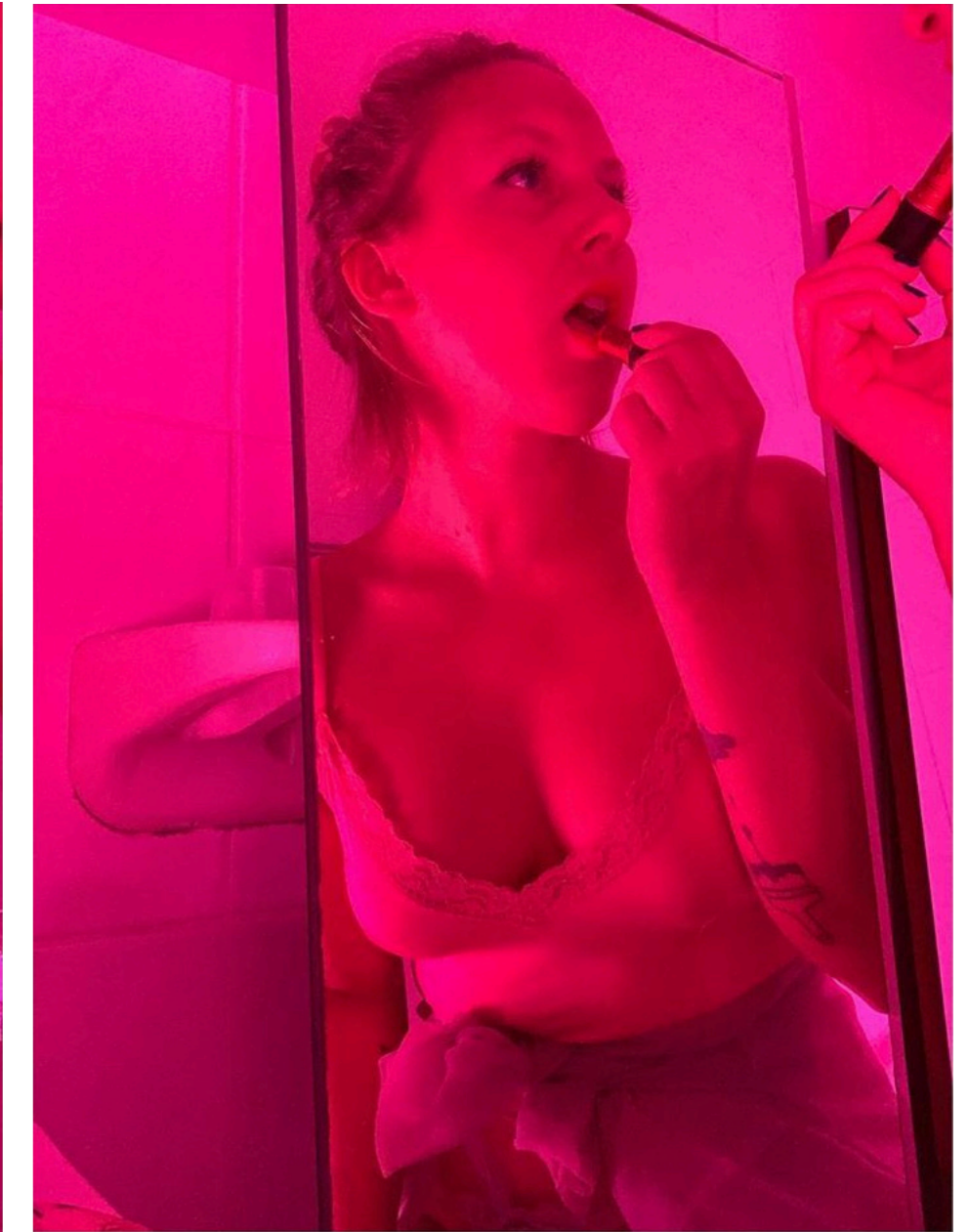
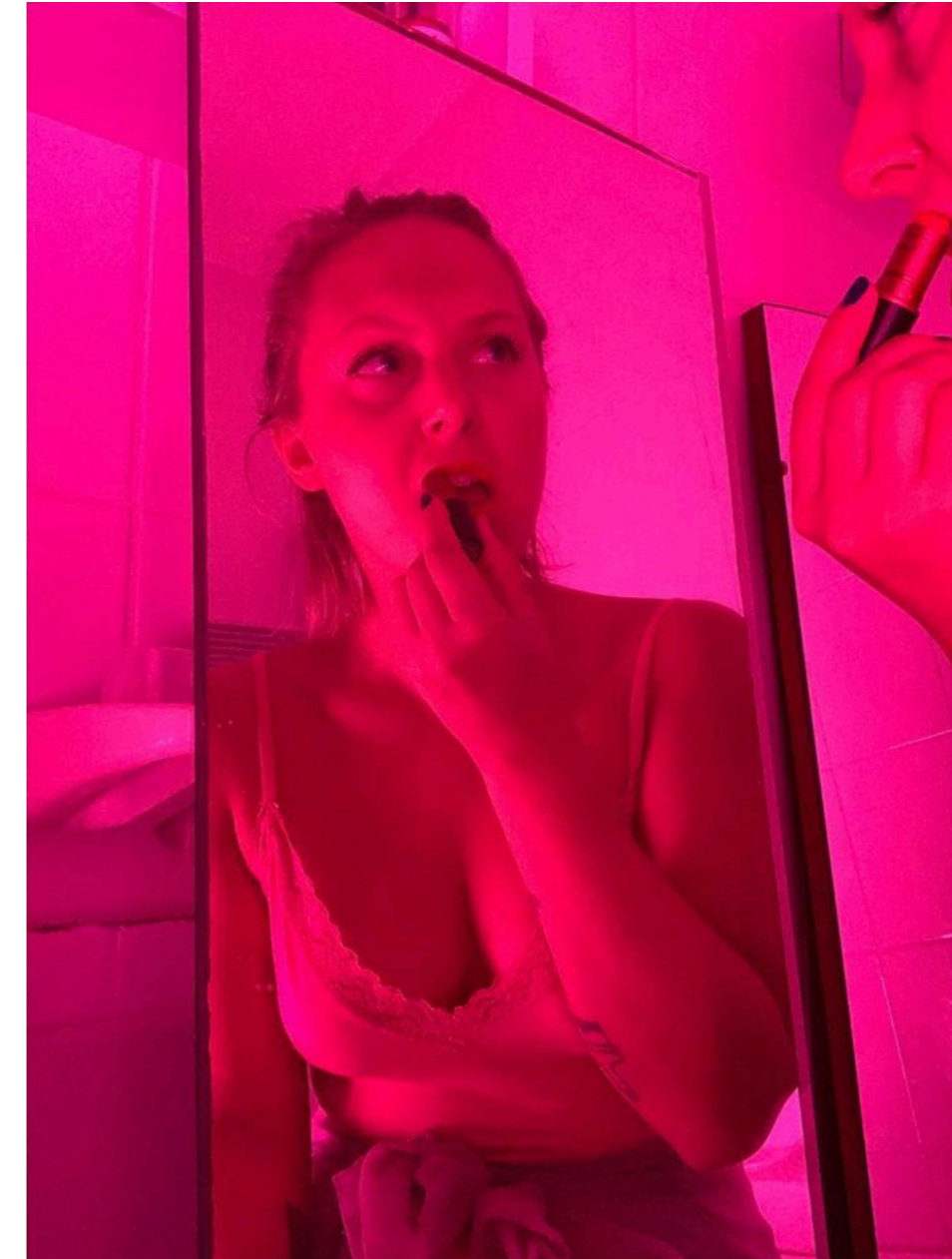
In the previous pieces, I have mentioned the dichotomy of existing, coping and even trying to thrive within the conditions set by a patriarchal social and cultural forces. As I speak of ‘safe(r) space’ nightclubs and their restrooms as spaces that provide momentary relief from hegemonic norms, I also want to examine the restrooms outside of its utilitarian functions. Instead, I would like to observe the “ladies” restroom as a breathing space – to fix make-up, check messages and discuss private concerns away from other guests and get ready to face the norms outside of these insulated spaces.

A performance piece where I tackled the idea of self-preparation (within restrooms) with regard to the ritual of heading out into the night – and into patriarchal spaces away from the safe confines of my own home – is the performance piece titled *Managing Expectations* (15:47min). This artwork was made for the Art Pod Instagram Live Art Festival and took place in April 2020 during the Covid-19 lockdown and exists virtually. The Live Art Festival provided space to try out ideas with an experimental approach, and engage with a community during lockdown.

The performance was set in my own bathroom which was lit up with the colour *Club Pink*. I pretended to get ready for a night out by putting on make-up in front of the bathroom mirror. In the background, a recording of collected voice notes is audible. They vocalise safety precautions that womxn take when leaving the house during the pandemic (or in pre-pandemic circumstances), at different times of the day, although nighttime advice was especially prominent. These voice notes were played in the background as I was pretending to get ready for a night out.

Examples of safety precautions include checking the back of the car before getting in, holding house keys between the knuckles when walking, carrying pepper spray, never leaving a drink unattended, going clubbing with male friends who can deter harassers, making sure a cab driver or fellow bus passenger hears you making plans to see someone at home soon, amongst others.

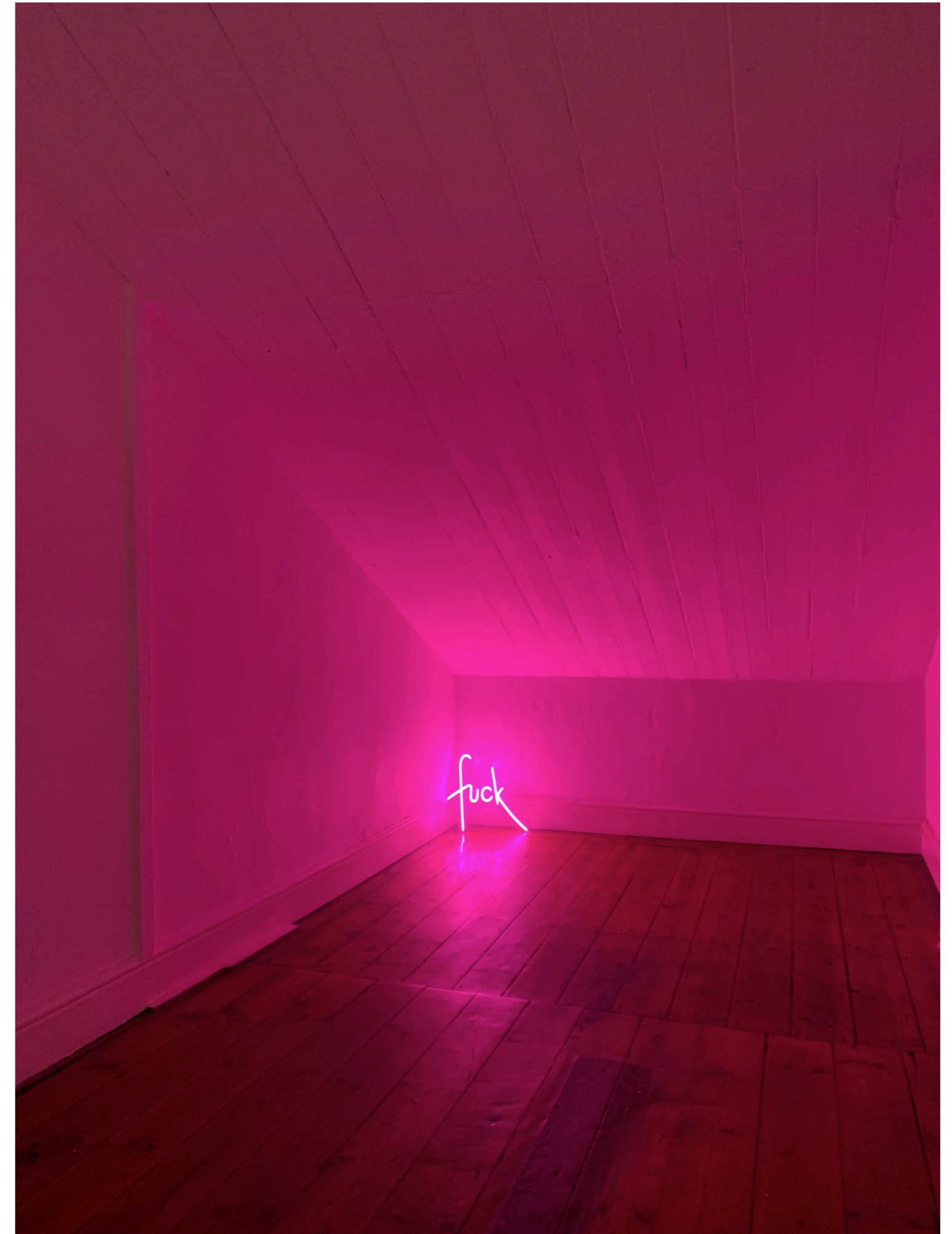
The piece portrays the contradictions many womxn, femme and LGBTQ+ persons are faced with on a daily basis: to be aware of the dangers of leaving the safety of one’s home, while simultaneously acknowledging that we cannot be locked inside and the need to find ways to become comfortable in circumstances that are inherently uncomfortable. Furthermore, the piece is similar to the previously discussed works and was a critical experimentation to the development of the previously discussed piece *Never-ending*. It speaks to the dichotomy of getting dressed and making an effort to look and feel appealing and confident in a society that objectifies womxn, as well as learning how to thrive in a society that tries to oppress us.



50. *Managing expectations*
Still images from recorded performance

2020

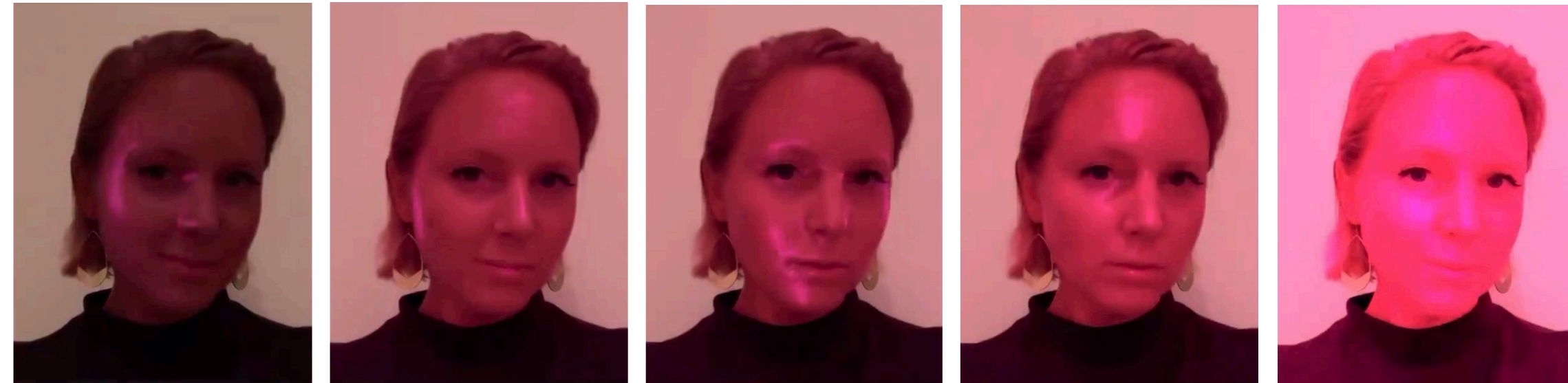
51. Neon light sign test in studio
39 x 40 cm



Virtual party

Virtual Party is a piece inspired by James Emmerman's self-portraits during the virtual event Club Quarantine in combination with the ideas surrounding alternative modes of social engagement under *Club Pink* in *A Shrine // To Everyone who ever escaped the day onto the dancefloor*. The piece *Virtual party* is an Instagram filter that I made using Spark AR augmented reality software and released on Instagram for public use. The filter projects a *Club Pink* light over the whole screen and shines a moving pink light onto the user's face, which rotates as the face moves. The filter is made to fit all skin colours and brings out everyone's individual expressions. I've invited people to use it in their stories, add their favourite club tune, and tag my handle in the story, which allows me to then repost the story and add it into a highlight in my profile page where the entire 'party' can be viewed. The on-going piece takes place only on the Instagram platform and aims to serve as a reminder of togetherness which can occur under pink lights – functioning as a symbol of resistance against patriarchal norms while in Covid-19 isolation. Here, the colour pink again functions as a kind of visual metaphor for communicating the joyfulness in dancing and music in 'safe space' nightclubs and as a universal message to counter patriarchal violence.

Link: <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17878858948779194/>



52. *Virtual party* filter, example of "club" lights on face, 2020



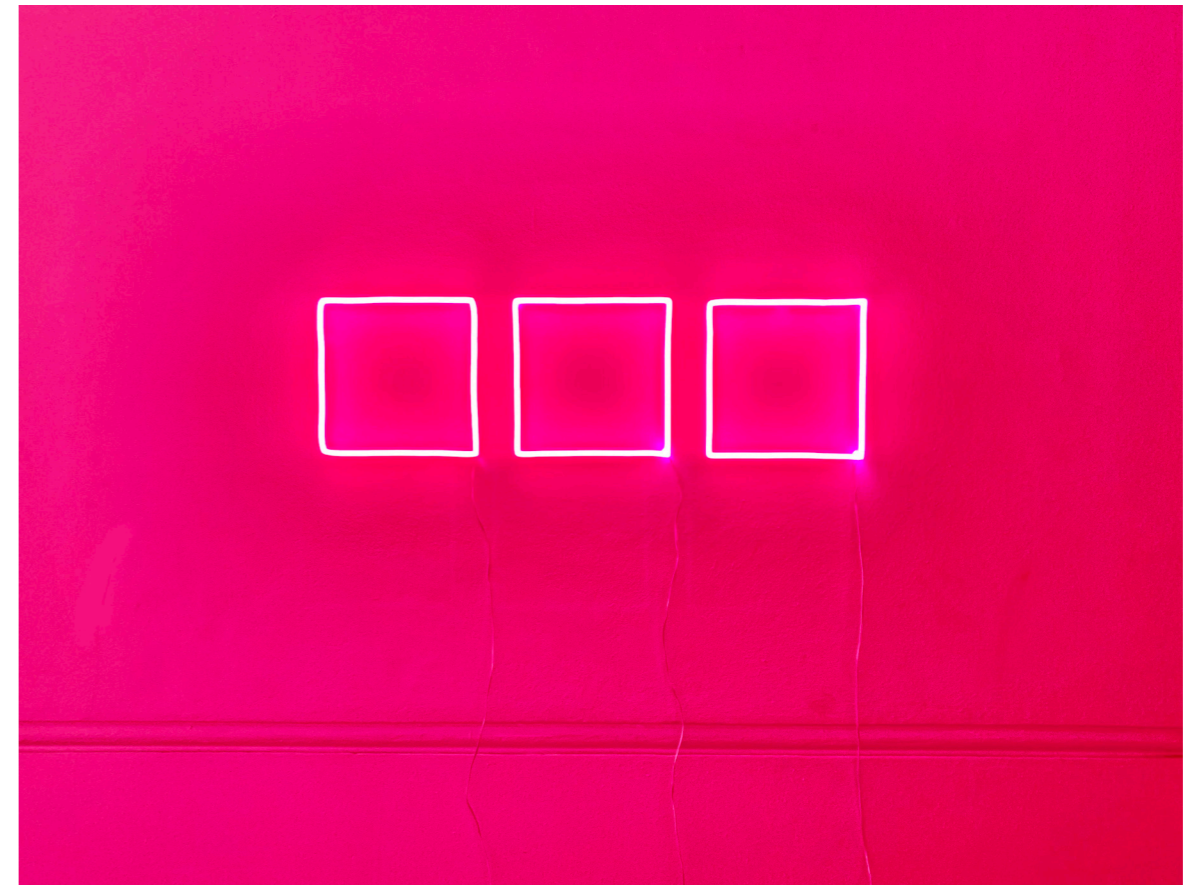
*'Safe(r) space' as joy and a place of resistance:
A Shrine // To Everyone who ever escaped
the day onto the dancefloor*

At the end of 2019, I was invited to make an installation for the New Year's festival called *Search* in Swellendam, South Africa. Inspired by my research as well as the festival's agenda to foster an environment that is inclusive and safe towards womxn and the LGBTQI+ community, I created the light installation *A Shrine // To Everyone who ever escaped the day onto the dancefloor* (2019). My aim was to design a spot away from the dancefloors and stages where people could pause, reflect and connect. The installation was set in a calmer forest area and consisted of minimal structures made of transparent Perspex and a *Club Pink* light. The piece functioned as a social experiment in similar terms to what the art theorist Nicolas Bourriaud (2002:44) calls *Relational Aesthetics* in which artistic practices embedded in interactive social engagements can give rise to "places where alternative forms of sociability, critical models and moments of constructed conviviality are worked out". It is in this sense that I've observed how the *Club Pink* light would attract people to take a break from festival activities, and serve as a meeting point, a location for connecting with friends but also strangers. The piece will not be part of my final exhibition, but rather functioned as an experiment in the process of working with this pink light in spaces that aim to be intersectionally inclusive and safe.

53. *A Shrine // To Everyone who ever escaped the day onto the dance floor*

2019

54. Neon light squares in studio
20 x 20 cm each



Hide and seek

Another work where I use of the *Club Pink* together with light is an experiential installation piece titled *Hide and seek*. The installation consists of a dimly lit room (with *Club Pink*) filled with fog which prevents the audience from seeing no more than 1 metre around them. The size of the room depends on the exhibition space, but ideally a minimum of 40m² in order for the viewer to be able to feel momentarily lost in the fog. Whilst walking in the dark room, the audience may run into two lit up wall-less and cube-like structures of approximately 4m². These pink-lit cubes represent the heterotopian time-space of 'safe' nightclubs as they suggest a safe space that the audience may or may not find in the otherwise dark room. These light squares and their location in the fog are symbolic of the representation and importance of the overlooked platforms of 'alternative' progressive 'safe space' nightclubs where individuals oppressed by conservative norms may feel a momentary sense of relief or belonging. To whoever is familiar with the bright pink colour in these nightclubs, may be reminded by individual memories in other spaces with the same such light. Alternatively, it may be an intense experience of empowering pink, which allows each viewer to have a personal connection with it. The number of individuals that are allowed in the dark-lit room varies between 5-7 persons.

The floor tiles within the cubes are weight-censored and turn pink when stepped onto. These weight-censored lights also serve as a reference to the disco culture, as the birth of disco music and clubs are often described as the hallmark of the American liberation for races, sexes and sexual orientations and as "a vibrant microcosm of social change" (Busha, N., 2015). Similarly, as in the piece *A Shrine // To Everyone who ever escaped the day onto the dance floor* (2019), the pink light escapes the constructs of the square and shines light onto its surroundings, metaphorical to the aim of growing and expanding 'safe(r) spaces'.

55. *Hide and seek*

Immersive light installation

2021





56. Condom balloons and pink light, video piece test,
2020

Conclusion:

At the end of the night, arriving home in the early hours of dawn

In this research project and body of artwork, I have aimed to draw attention to some of the symptoms of heteropatriarchal systemic violence as well as the counter-hegemonic acts of togetherness and care that takes place in the night. I've brought forward the idea of 'safe(r) spaces' (in terms of femme and queer) nightclubs as a heterotopic space where heteropatriarchal norms may be challenged and disrupted through a concerted effort towards a radical reimagination of self and society.

This project began as a reaction to past and current national and global events, and through research and engagement in nightclubs (pre-pandemic) and online (during pandemic) which developed into the pieces in the final body of work. My research and artworks by no means aim to offer concrete solutions to such urgent social issues, but rather focuses on drawing attention to critical perspectives and radical new subjectivities through artmaking both past and present, those of others and my own.

The interdisciplinary nature of my practice has allowed each piece in the final exhibition to tackle specific elements of the discussed issues through various mediums, such as clay, textiles (ripped clothes), light, fog, found objects, photography, videography and interactive animation, choosing each medium in relation to what each piece in question hopes to communicate. The materials are selected to gesture, amplify or draw attention to the aesthetic and conceptual concerns behind each piece, as discussed in the chapter that presents the final pieces.

The exhibition aims to serve as an extension of the discussed notions of heterotopia and its complexities, highlighting both the violence and victories that may occur within such alternative social-cultural imaginaries. Additionally, the works aim to serve as an adjunct platform for these counter-acts to continue to take place outside of the night-time economy, to foster and encourage a sense of belonging, excitement and intrigue, and therefore offering to extend the time-space and energy of the discussed clubs into the day. It is my hope that my artworks offer a space for reflection of one's own positionality, activity and awareness of the discussed issues and its encompassing elements.

The academic and artistic process has given me the opportunity to immerse myself in radical theories, practices and possibilities as well as enabled me to observe and listen to experiences around me. Similarly, I invite the viewer to do the same and to ultimately lend this body of work to the historical chain of creative ideation focused on challenging social subjugation that I have consistently grasped during the course of my production.

I would like to extend a special thanks to

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Elu Eboka Studio

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Last but not least, my family;

My father for raising me to survive in a world run by men, my sister Nina for always standing beside me through thick and thin, and grandmothers for keeping my feet on the ground, teaching a mindful approach to life while encouraging my dreams.



57. In studio, 2021

Image Reference List

1. *Vaginal Davies performing with Cholita!*, 1995 <https://www.theblackscholar.org/a-scene-of-her-own-the-inimitable-vaginal-davis/>
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5. Crosses erected to memorialise the femicide in Ciudad Juarez
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53. *A Shrine // To Everyone who ever escaped the day onto the dance floor*, Search Festival, Swellendam, South Africa, 2019
54. *Hide and seek*, immersive light installation, 2021
55. Neon light squares, 20 x 20 cm each, 2021
56. Condom balloons and pink light, video piece test, 2020
57. In studio, 2021
58. Ripped clothes on hooks and hand-made tiles, 2021

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