

17/04/23

From A Pole Dancing Club To The Injustices Of Greek Mythology – It's All In Lindsey Mendick's World

Grace Banks Contributor

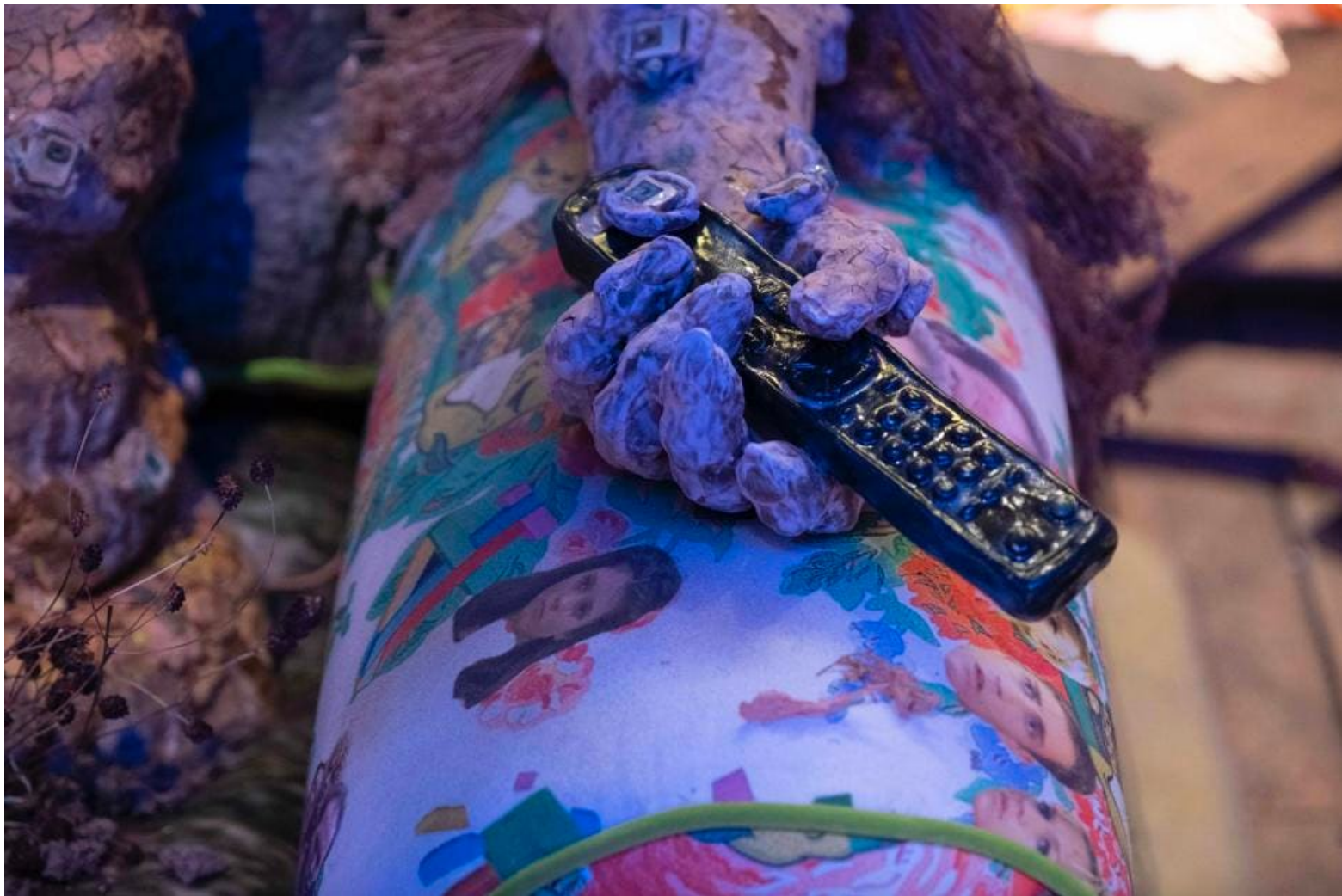


The Margate-based artist Lindsey Mendick ELISSA CRAY

“We all know the person who holds the remote has all the power” says [Lindsey Mendick](#) of her ceramic piece *I'm Even Tired in my Sleep* (2023) – “I made this work really intuitively, let the clay slump and bulge like my own fat folds. Simultaneously admiring the curvature of the ceramic whilst damning the roundness of my own.” At creating an intuitive, bulging, glamorous world – Lindsey Mendick is at the top of her game. Her new exhibition [Lindsey Mendick: Where the Bodies are Buried](#) at Yorkshire Sculpture Park is her biggest to date, spotlighting the exhilarating twists and turns her practice takes.

From stained glass to television, the show is a living embodiment of Mendick's energizing art, which has been exhibited at [Carl Freedman Gallery](#) in Margate and [Jupiter Artland](#) in Scotland. Mendick is perfect at conveying the queasy moments of brief humiliation that populate our days. Of her work *It's too hard to contain* (2023), about domesticity, she says: “Everyone fears a split bin bag... It's so humiliating when a fox tears your household bag apart and everyone can see the debris of all your sad eating habits and used kitchen towels. Or that you don't recycle as much as you should.”

Such everyday, ordinary subjects in contemporary art often attract criticism, but Mendick isn't squeamish about comments or opinions of her work. After receiving a scathing review by a male broadsheet journalist, she posted a screengrab of the article and posted it on her Instagram account with the caption "C'est moi" – it's hard to think of a more elegant riposte. Here, she talks us through five of her favorite works, from dinner tables to tissue boxes.



Lindsey Mendick, I'm even tired in my sleep, 2023 (detail) COURTESY THE ARTIST. PHOTO © JONTY WILDE, COURTESY YSP.

I'm even tired in my sleep, 2023

This man was one of the first sculptures that I designed and created for the show. I wanted there to be a ghostly body above the ground, a fragment of a man dozing off as he clutches the remote. We all know the person who holds the remote has all the power. I made this work really intuitively, let the clay slump and bulge like my own fat folds. Simultaneously admiring the curvature of the ceramic whilst damning the roundness of my own.

I've started making glazes from scratch. Weighing out all the ingredients, sieving and mixing the oxides and raw materials meticulously. I feel very proud – it's alchemy, it's proper ceramics. This glaze went hideously wrong but I fell in love with it, and it was even better than the glaze that I wanted. He looks ancient and mottled and raw, he looks poorly.

He has decal square eyes all over his body, they're a sort of fake tattoo for clay. "If you watch too much TV, you'll get square eyes" – remember when your parenSubscribe to journalism that illuminates, informs and inspires. ts said that? **Subscribe No**I was far too old when I realized that was an old wives tale. In this installation, the tale came true.



Lindsey Mendick, *It's too hard to contain*, 2023 YORKSHIRE SCULPTURE PARK

It's too hard to contain, 2023

We built these bin bags from slabs on top of actual bin bags. They were so pleasurable to make, creating folds and puncture points... sliding intestines and fingers out the tears. Making oversize flies with stained glass wings that were growing plumper on the juicy flesh.

I feel like in every detective programme there's a moment where they find a body dismembered in a ditch – organs and limbs split haphazardly and hurriedly between bags. Hoping to go undetected, lurking beneath the plastic. Everyone fears a split bin bag anyway. It's so humiliating when a fox tears your household bag apart and everyone can see the debris of all your sad eating habits and used kitchen towels. Or that you don't recycle as much as you should. It felt joyous to recreate the lowly bin bag, as they say: one man's trash is another man's treasure.



Lindsey Mendick, *My Softer Side*, 2021. Copyright of Lindsey Mendick. COPYRIGHT OF LINDSEY MENDICK. COURTESY OF THE CARL FREEDMAN GALLERY, MARGATE

***My Softer Side*, 2021**

I made these slippery octopus vases over 2022 in between various exhibitions. They kept me sane and grounded me when I was overwhelmed by my shows. It was lovely to spend such a long time on a body of work, making slowly and allowing each piece to influence the direction of the next. I could tangibly see my skill set in the material improving, I started pushing each vase further and further. They helped my confidence to grow, I suppose the vase became my canvas to experiment on.

Previously scared of the octopus, during this process - I seemed to morph into her. I made the vases when I was feeling sexy, shameful, abandoned, frightened and everything in

between. She cowers, she erupts, she squeezes into clothing and smothers her partner's member.

This particular vase was my most empowering. Midway through making it, I had a horrendous argument with my boyfriend and unfortunately he left me. He had left me before, but this time it somehow felt very serious. Usually, I'd chase after him, cry at his feet, and beg him not to leave me. But as clay has drying times that cannot be rushed, I had to choose between running after him and finishing that work on time. For the first time, as a woman, I chose myself. I sat there for three days in a lovelorn state and kept working and working. This vase really signifies a change in me, as a person and an artist. I finally believed in myself and it felt so great.



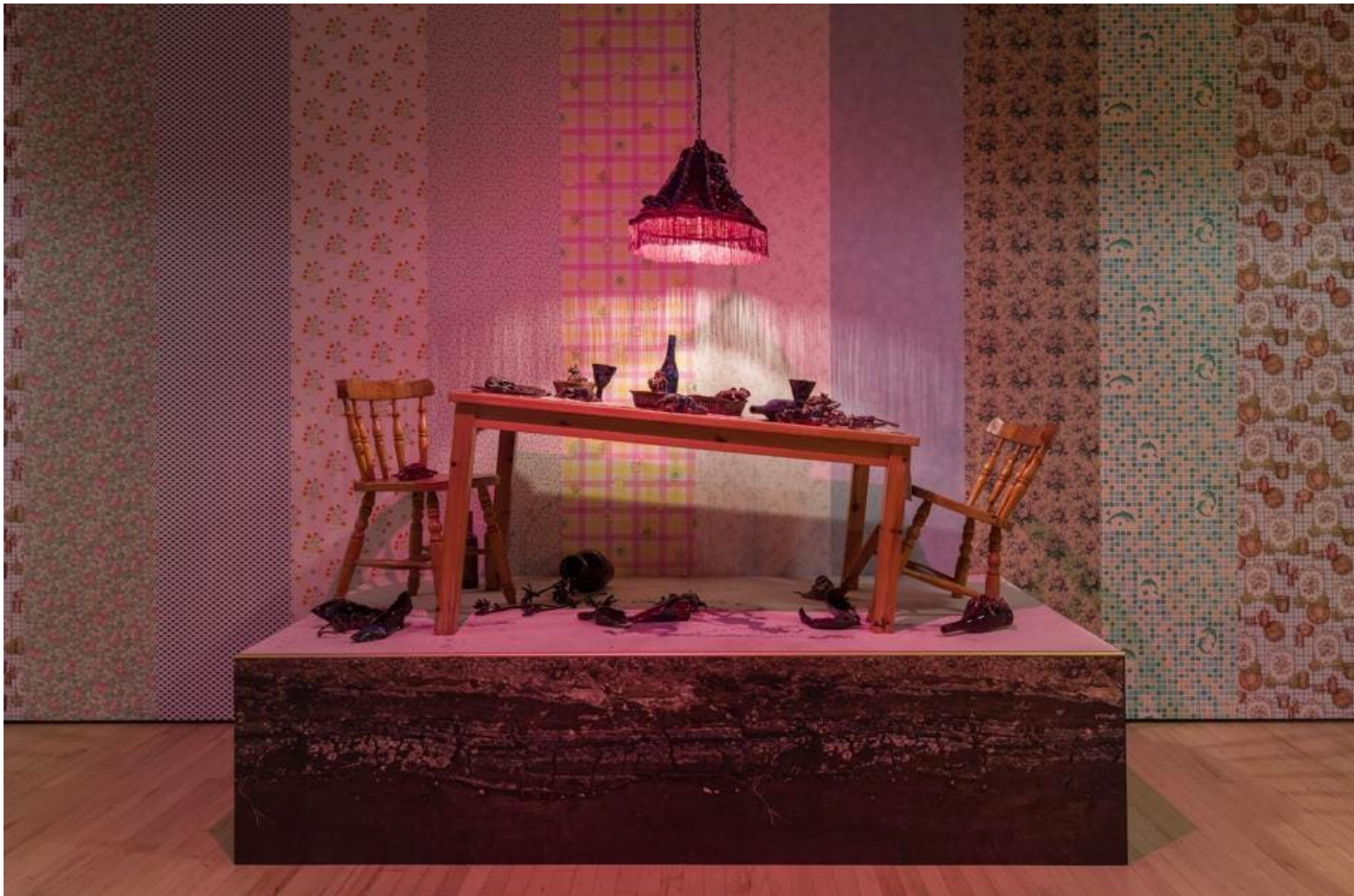
Lindsey Mendick, *I Drink To You Pandora (Cockroach Invasion)*, 2022. COPYRIGHT OF LINDSEY MENDICK. COURTESY OF CARL FREEDMAN GALLERY, MARGATE. PHOTO © OLLIE HARROP

I Drink To You Pandora (Slug Invasion), 2022

This was the first work that I conceived for *Off With Her Head*, my solo show at Carl Freedman gallery. It was a three roomed show consisting of confessional gallows, leading into a debauched pub (with headless women tables), leading into a flame curtained pole dancing club. It was my London dungeons, it's a lot to explain.

Sometimes the threads of ideas suddenly collide together. I feel like the ceramic piece is the fruit of this research. I had been reading "Pandora's Jar" by Natalie Haynes and I was getting angrier and angrier. There seemed to be such an intense injustice in the stories of the women from the Greek myths, how the world's wrongs always rested on the harmless actions of women. I realized how true this still was in the present day and I wanted to make effigies to these women.

When I began to think of the club idea, I thought: “what better way to celebrate Pandora's downfall than with a vaginal ceramic tissue box?” The ceramic obviously fits a box of man-size tissues, which some would suggest the perfect accompaniment to our pole dancing performance.



Lindsey Mendick, *Till Death Do Us Part*, Installation view, 2022. COPYRIGHT OF LINDSEY MENDICK. COURTESY OF HAYWARD GALLERY, LONDON. PHOTO © MARK BLOWER

***Till Death Do Us Part*, 2022**

This is a whole installation rather than a ceramic, but quite often I don't think of the works as individual pieces, I think of them as protagonists of a larger installation. I made *Till Death Do Us Part* as a response to living in a couple during lockdown. The work presents the home as a battleground. Our secret castles that we rule and create unsaid laws for, featuring a multitude of ceramic elements, the installation reflects on the micro conflicts and dramas that can haunt our home life.

In my imagined household, the humans are nowhere to be seen. The rooms have been invaded by the ceramic vermin who are all at war with each other; navy slugs are at war with Napoleonic mice in the kitchen, an octopus erupts from the toilet, wasps and moths infest the hallway, spiders trawl the dark web in the water pipes, cockroaches box in the living room whilst rats collapse after a poisoned feast at the dining table.

The work is meant to be a tragi-comic look at the difficulties of navigating cohabiting with a partner. I felt so much shame that my boyfriend and I fought so ferociously in lockdown. Unfortunately, this shame made it difficult to talk to others about what we were going through, so I internalized it. It got to a point when I realized that other people must feel the same way as I did and I had this intense need to make a work about it. I think in my practice I'm always looking to explore those places we often suppress – not to provoke, but out of necessity. As a form of communal catharsis.

Lindsey Mendick: Where the Bodies are Buried runs until 3 September at Yorkshire Sculpture Park.