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Lindsey Mendick: 'I want to blow up everything I do'

The artist talks to Ashley Davies about her exhibition at Jupiter Artland — and first solo show in Scotland — *Sh*tfaced*, and how the shame that follows inebriation inspires her work



Lindsey Mendick: "I'm looking at the duality of self"

ELISSA CRAY

Most of us have had the morning-after fear: that creeping, mortifying sense that we drank too much and embarrassed ourselves, that we were needy, socially clumsy or offensive. You wake up and shame is right there, wanting to hang out.

Our relationship with alcohol is complex, and we have hundreds of colourful euphemisms for being drunk. This is why Lindsey Mendick's exhibition at Jupiter Artland — her first solo show in Scotland — is called *Sh*tfaced*.

"Getting drunk is such a massive part of our society, but it's also massively frowned upon both by those who drink and those who don't," says Mendick, whose practice revels in taboos and uncomfortable truths. "The idea of this show comes from me having OCD and being very controlling about most aspects of my life, but also having a burning desire to put a bomb in everything I do and get absolutely rat-arsed."



Mendick's exhibition at Jupiter Artland, Sh*tfaced, features ornate sculptures that have a funny, hedonistic and regretful twist

COURTESY OF CARL FREEDMAN GALLERY, MARGATE AND JUPITER, EDINBURGH; COPYWRITE: LINDSEY MENDICK

These ideas largely take the form of a series of sculptures in the ballroom at Jupiter Artland. Mendick has made 12 ornate vases. At first they seem like beautifully traditional Victoriana, but the closer you get the more you realise they are erupting out of themselves. Spiders and poison are seeping out; they're rotten to the core.

Another exhibition space is based on a miniature nightclub inspired by Dante's *Inferno*. One side of the room represents the start of the night, and as you move through you see people metamorphosing into the worst versions of themselves. A hen party turns into wolves attacking a stripper, bankers become pigs doing disgusting things, a couple playing pool transform into cockroaches. Everyone is drunk and fighting.

For this element, Mendick was inspired by *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, and the idea that you can be shunned by everyone you love if you put a foot wrong.

"Quite often, we think Dr Jekyll turned into something else, but I think actually what he wanted to do was split himself completely so he could behave in that way and not lose himself. I'm looking at the duality of self."



An installation at Lindsey Mendick's Sh*tfaced exhibition, Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh
COURTESY OF CARL FREEDMAN GALLERY, MARGATE AND JUPITER, EDINBURGH; COPYWRITE: LINDSEY MENDICK

The exhibition also features a film in which Mendick's partner, Guy Oliver, describes her relationship with alcohol, and the pattern of shame and anxiety it causes. There's also footage of Mendick doing karaoke, which is where she feels free, she says.

"When you're talking about hard-hitting subjects it doesn't have to be someone pointing at your face and shouting at you," she says. "Shame can be such a debilitating and lonely feeling. I'm trying to make shows that talk about sticky and sore subjects because I think we can be cruel and hang people out to dry. I don't want to do that. I want it to be a space where people talk about things, and I want them to laugh. The work is incredibly earnest, but I'm also poking fun at myself being earnest."

A spin-off of this exhibition is a one-off party called Jupiter Rising (Aug 19), curated by Mendick and the Bonjour collective, a Glasgow-based queer community space. The night is all about championing under-represented communities and features a hedonistic blend of music, drag, karaoke and more.

Mendick is even planning a happening at which she will make sausages while dressed as a pig; it's a way of playing with the idea of adoring somebody so much you want to absorb and consume them completely.

“The ability to laugh at yourself can be one of the greatest things,” she grins, then giggles. No shame in that.