

Exhibition and Publication.

Testosterone: Warsaw, Photography Festival, Poland.

Solo Exhibition: Ripped, Chiselled and Rock Hard.

<http://warsawphotodays.com/?project=1059>

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My exhibition Ripped Chiselled and Rock Hard which had been previously been exhibited at the Belfast International Photography festival in 2014, was selected for the Warsaw Photography Festival 2015, in Poland.

The third edition of the festival was held in November 2015. The theme was TESTOSTERONE. The Main Programme in Warsaw galleries featured thirteen individual projects selected through a competition addressed to visual artists. The photographic projects and multimedia forms visually analysed and problematised the idea of masculinity.

My Artist Statement:

Title: RIPPED CHISELED AND ROCK HARD! The presentation of the male body is paramount within extreme male bodybuilding: bodies are not judged on what they are capable of but solely on how they look.

Via the act of re-photographing, re-printing, enlarging, cutting, mounting and balancing, this work presents a number of photographs used in advertisements from Muscle and Fitness (1980 to 89) outside of their original context. The cut-out images in have not been manipulated and remain as they were found in their magazine, with no alterations made other than enlarging the image after tracing its outline and removing its background.

In 1980, Joe Weider* addressed what he describes as “a cultural shift” and rebranded his most successful bodybuilding publication Muscle Builder as Muscle and Fitness. With this rebranding came a subtle yet noticeable change in the advertising that it featured. The extreme muscularity of the male bodies started to be presented as objects and mechanical objects were presented as bodies. The classic visual signifiers of objectification were made more apparent; (isolation of specific body parts, decapitation and removal of an identity) visual tropes that had been more commonly associated with the sexualisation of the female form.

With their subjects in a state of activity, ‘flex’ or ‘pump’, these representations seek to encourage the male viewer to admire the apparent physical strength, yet never lust after the sculpted body. This ideology is reinforced via another commonly used visual construction of hetero-masculinity, in which these bodies attain not only an identity but also become the possession of a female admirer.

The homoerotic overtones associated with an identified heterosexual male viewer gazing upon a hyper- muscular male body provide some insight into the way in which these advertisements are constructed. A specific area of investigation within this exhibition is

validity of this type of material as 'art objects' and how they activate a specific set of engrained responses –and actions- from the exhibition visitors. These interactions have, in the past cancelled any normative hierarchy between the art object(often untouchable) and the viewing, which includes movement, touch, and acting up.

*Joe” Weider was a Canadian bodybuilder and entrepreneur who co-founded the International Federation of BodyBuilders (IFBB) alongside his brother Ben Weider. He was also the creator of the Mr. Olympia, the Ms. Olympia and the Masters Olympia bodybuilding contests. He was the publisher of several bodybuilding and fitness-related magazines, most notably Muscle & Fitness, Flex, Men’s Fitness and Shape, and the manufacturer of a line of fitness equipment and fitness supplements. Installation information. The installation comprises of one floor-based inkjet photographic print and six ctype photographic cut outs mounted on 6mm MDF cut to shape using a (CNC) milling machine/ router. The cut outs are supported by 25.4mm pine rods counterbalanced by cinderblocks. Each work is at an angle of 90 degrees from the floor and has been individually spot lit from above. Each piece has been scaled upwards, to five times the size of the original