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Symptom is an exhibition of new and site-specific work by Andrew Long, presented in a long, narrow room in the Epworth Building located in the Adelaide CBD that has served as his studio for the last six months. A 'symptom' is also an indication of the existence of *something*, especially of an undesirable situation—an allusion to an illness. But what might this 'something' be that Andrew is pointing us towards?

A key text in developing this new body of work has been *Pornography in the Urban World* by Jean Gagnon (published in French by Art Metropole in 1984, with an English translation following in 1988). Utilising semiotics, psychoanalysis and film theory, Gagnon works to decode the optical constructions that uphold the ideology of mainstream pornography in a pre-internet world in order to reveal the manner in which men and women are positioned within this visual regime; a regime that has increasingly embedded itself in daily experiences via its infiltration into popular culture (film, tv, advertising, fashion and magazines). Gagnon describes pornography as a closed system that limits and regulates the social and sexual relationships between the sexes. Moreover,

pornography is understood as a political problem that enacts a disagreeable conformity against both genders.¹

Writing in the foreword of *Pornography in the Urban World*, Art Metropole's Head of Publishing AA Bronson describes how this book has been 'written for men', with the view to help them find a position in relation to pornography that is not destructive or paralysing.² I give this referential context because *Symptom*, as a body of work that explores industrialised notions of sexuality, beauty and desire, is authored through a CIS male perspective and subjectivity. Applying Gagnon and Bronson's intent to address a gendered readership who are fundamentally affected by, but routinely absent in, critical discussions concerning the social impacts of pornography, I wonder what we learn when we each think seriously about prefabricated visual systems encountered in our own formative experiences.

Andrew was born in 1987 and much of the source material that is appropriated or footnoted in the exhibition is drawn from texts concerning masculinity that were either published or in high circulation across the 1980's and 1990's. As per above, the phrase

'THE PRODUCTION OF SEX / REGULATED THROUGH THE VISUAL', taken from *Pornography in the Urban World*, is delicately handwritten in two parts across opposing walls. The other keystones are a 1995 book titled *Masculinity in Crisis* and a 1986 *New York Times* article that details the findings of a psychological study aiming to quantify the physical parameters of female beauty by asking one hundred and fifty white male subjects to rate the attractiveness of fifty women from pictures of their faces.³ In the case of *Masculinity in Crisis*, Andrew has enlarged and traced the book's complete index in graphite across a length of wall, with all page numbers omitted. What results is a collection of words which allude to various predicaments of traditional masculinity, full of both obviousness and obscurity. Translating these words by hand requires a significant investment in time and labour and, by removing the standard print quality of the text, also creates an instability to the idea of an index as a fixed knowledge set. The findings of the psychological study referenced by the *New York Times* resulted in a 'blueprint for beauty' that mapped the dimensions of what was determined to be the perfect

female face. For *Gaze* (2020), Andrew has turned this map into a three-dimensional skeletal form that only barely resembles a face. What the sculpture makes visible is not the beauty of a single woman but the collective desire of a group of men in the abstract; a schematic portrait of a gaze at a moment in time.⁴

Whilst one impulse is to locate this body of work in relation to its historical referents, another important aspect of interpretation is to consider the broader cultural context under which the work was made and through which I am writing. On one side, I feel witness to a liberating shift where gender and sexuality is more and more understood as a fluid concept. Concurrently, the visibility and participation of women, people of color and members of the LGBTQI+ community in formerly all-male spheres of public life is expanding. On the other side, 'toxic masculinity' has become a short-hand catch-all explanation for male violence and sexism. At the spikiest end, the downward mobility of young men is represented by the misogynist backlash of incels and Proud Boys.

This changing landscape of sexual politics is perhaps best touched on in the exhibition by *Lindsey's physicality* (2020).

Made with graphite on fine, translucent fabric, the work reads 'Lindsey's physicality isn't an act'—a statement taken from a profile on American actress Lindsey Morgan in the January/February 2016 issue of *Playboy* which, at the time, was purported to be the last to feature naked women. Founded in Chicago in 1953 by Hugh Hefner, *Playboy* launched by pushing at the boundaries of free expression, and revolting against heterosexual monogamy and the stranglehold of domesticity.⁵ There is an underlying implication in the quotation in *Lindsey's physicality* that one's physicality *could* be an act. Alongside the use of the unisex name 'Lindsey' (when reproduced out of context), the use of this phrase queries where and how we may assert authentic expressions of the self and body.⁶

The material and conceptual qualities of print-media and image-reproduction is an area of ongoing interest in Andrew's practice. Ironically, there are no images present in *Symptom*. Instead we are met only with typographic text and architectural form that act as deconstructed time capsules of image culture as it relates to men and masculinity—possibly even productive memorials.

When we identify a symptom, it's because we observe a difference in ourself. We may be able to find a cure or learn to manage our symptoms. However, without perceiving any symptoms, we don't go looking for answers.

- 1 Jean Gagnon, *Pornography in the Urban World*, translated by James Boake and Jeanluc Svoboda, Art Metropole, Toronto, 1988.
- 2 AA Bronson, 'Foreword', in Jean Gagnon, *Pornography in the Urban World*, translated by James Boake and Jeanluc Svoboda, Art Metropole, Toronto, 1988, p. 9.
- 3 Daniel Goleman, 'Equation for Beauty Emerges in Studies: Researchers Devise an Equation for Beauty', *New York Times*, 25 August 1986.
- 4 Email from the artist to the author, 25 January 2021.
- 5 Jeet Heer, 'Hugh Hefner's Incomplete Sexual Revolution', *The New Republic*, 30 September 2017: <https://newrepublic.com/article/145097/hugh-hefners-incomplete-sexual-revolution> (accessed 8 February 2021).
- 6 Email from the artist to the author, 25 January 2021.

Andrew Long, *Symptom*, works (clockwise from left):

Lindsey's physicality, 2020, graphite on fabric, 201 × 116 cm

Gaze, 2020, laser sintered nylon, epoxy resin, 26 × 24 × 13 cm

Production, 2021, graphite wall-drawing in 2 parts, each part: 38 × 230 cm

Index to Masculinity In Crisis 1995, 2020, graphite wall-drawing, 230 × 300 cm

Symptom, 2020, graphite on fabric, 201 × 116 cm

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