

alun rhys jones artist statement

“The Last Days of Dionysus” II will continue my investigation into the use of the body, celebrity, form, language and colour in contemporary consumer culture.

We live in an age of image proliferation. Visual media constantly bombards us across multiple platforms, from print and television to computers and mobile phones. Images are consumed and discarded within seconds. Products are consumed and discarded almost as quickly, as soon as the newer model arrives. Advertising, marketing and branding surround us creating a colour coded, kaleidoscopic, design experience from birth to death encouraging us to consume more and more.

iThink, iPhone, iView, therefore iAm has become the mantra of the day and the way we live our lives.

Young beautiful models and celebrity endorsements of products and services encourage us to consume with an aspirational fervour to belong. If we look/ act/ feel a certain way then we have succeeded, and with the right product we can! This relentless drive creating a conveyor belt culture of consumers hell bent on “Living the Dream”.

The upcoming show explores these ideas with four separate but connected series of works.

The male fashion and grooming industry has now outstripped the female in terms of revenue and profit. This burgeoning market is attracting major attention from the world of big business attracted to the high disposable income and aspirational nature of the image conscious, product prone “metrosexual” and “spornosexual” man.

The “Dysmorphia Playground” series comprises photorealistic charcoal drawings of crumpled paper and plastic bags for major fashion brands with a male audience. The brands commonly use young, male models both in store, in print and on packaging to promote their marketing brand.

However in the drawings the disposable bags are crumpled and distorted, the image printed on their surface twisted and transformed reflecting the aspirational and often unobtainable nature of the body beautiful promoted by the advertising industry.

In a similar vein celebrity endorsements attach a glamorous cache to a brand. The consumer perceives an association between a brand and a celebrity that they admire and relate to, resulting in purchasing products from that brand. David Beckham is the ultimate male, celebrity brand. A working class footballer and all round good bloke he is a walking advertisement to the aspirations of the male audience.

In the A4 series, pages have been torn out of fashion magazines featuring celebrity endorsements from iD, Interview to Vanity Fair and Vogue. These pages have then been torn, scrunched, folded and then drawn in their new form to highlight the divide between the perfect, vacuum packaged world they inhabit and the reality of today where that world quickly turns to the next best thing then to landfill and decay.

The Symbols series explores the language and use of symbols in advertising and the internet. The series examines the traditional symbols of ownership and branding with the Copyright, Trademark and Registration symbols and the newer internet based symbols of the Hashtag, @ and Like symbols. On the internet advertising collates the number of Likes, Shares and Hashtags the consumer clicks and uses this information to target audiences, discover what is popular and ultimately co-opt the consumer into advertising their products for them. In the series the Symbols are presented in 24 Carat Gold leaf framed in glossy frames acknowledging the reverence and monetary value that they import.

Finally the CMYK Skull Redux and CMYK Dan Series of prints are comprised of four separate colours (Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black). These four colours are used in the printing process; different percentages of each can be combined to create any other colour. As such they are the four building blocks of colour from which all other colours can be created. They are the four fundamentals of the visual, print world. These two works explore how we, as individuals, are affected by a media based society.

Dionysus, the Ancient Greek God of excess, seems a fitting analogy for Western consumer culture where sheer excess and lust for more threatens to destroy and

consume the civilisation it was built from. The title of the exhibition “The Last Days of Dionysus II alludes to the end of days nature of our global, unsustainable, consumer driven society.