

Freedomination Soapbox Protest Performance and Installation

Davin Watne and Dawn Woolley (Performed by Dawn Woolley and volunteers)

Performance: Tuesday 6th March 2018.

Fighting Talk Exhibition: Thursday 1st - Thursday 15th March 2018.

35 Chapel Walk, Sheffield

Freedom and domination appear to be mutually exclusive concepts. This performance draws attention to this binary, through the concepts of objectification and empowerment, by exposing and exploring a grey area in between.

Women in contemporary societies often experience a simultaneous mix of overt and subtle messaging in adverts that suggest a women's power is confined to her attractiveness and desirability. There exists a plethora of consumer products promising to liberate women if they choose to objectify themselves. Some of these messages are overt and highly sexualized as in Victoria Secret ad campaigns, others such as Dove ad campaigns offer a more subtle narrative that beauty is a path to better health. The adverts use sexual subjectification to promote commodities that Wolfgang Haug called 'goddess-packaging' that 'serves as a glittering straitjacket, a glossy recompense for subjection and degradation to a second-rate existence. Furthermore, maintaining the packaging is not only expensive but it keeps one occupied.'¹ The freedom to consume has become a pervasive form of oppression.

Freedomination recognises this paradox and seeks to expose it through dialogue. Building on the success of our first collaboration in Hull, where we presented a 'Freedomination' billboard and accompanying performance about freedom of speech, we will mark the suffragette centenary by applying the concept to women's false promise of liberation through consumption.

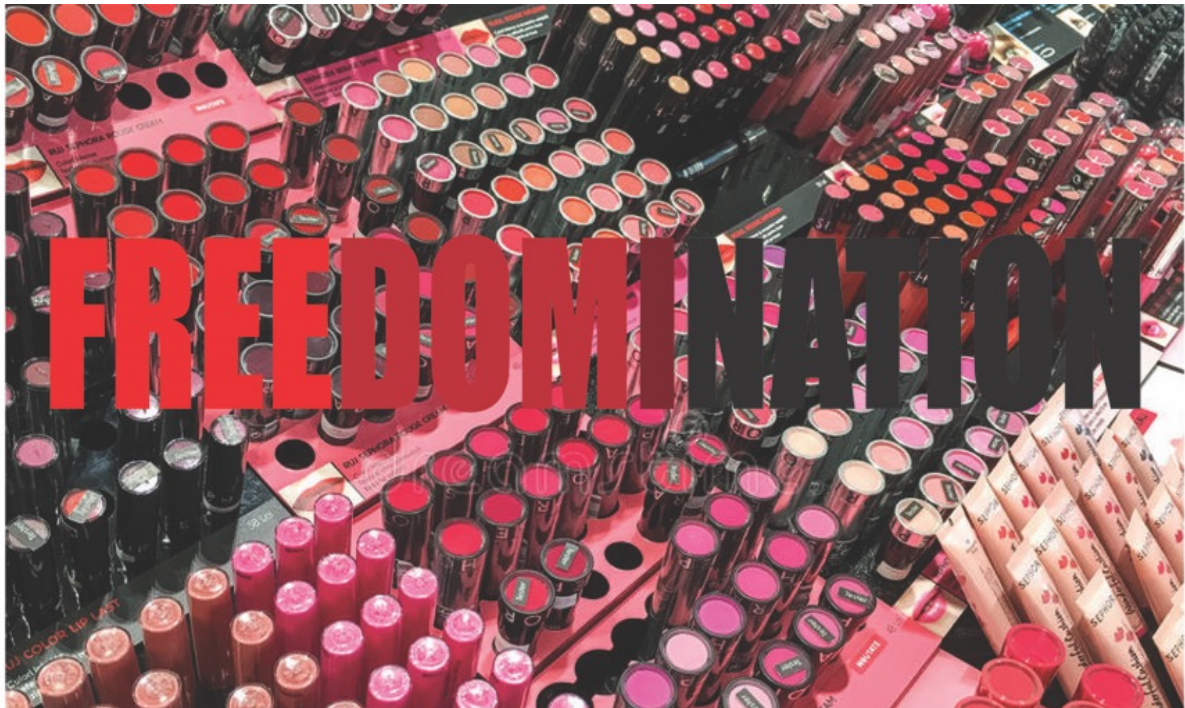
Set up like an unruly debate, the Soapbox performance will ask: has feminism become a pursuit of freedom that is little more than a freedom to consume, and sexual empowerment that is confined to a highly commodified form of self-objectification?

During the performance Woolley will read a Freedomination manifesto that expresses the blurred boundary between empowerment and objectification and also the conflicts within feminist discourse in relation to consumer culture. Watne and Woolley will recruit performers to read extracts of differing feminist discourses simultaneously. To expose the complexities of this debate performers will be asked to pick a side and present their own argument for or against the freedom of objectification and the power to consume. As individuals express their freedom of speech it will become increasingly difficult to hear what is said, demonstrating the concept 'Freedomination'.

https://www.instagram.com/hard_stop/

¹ Haug, Critique of Commodity Aesthetics: Appearance, Sexuality and Advertising in Capitalist Society, Social and Political Theory, trans. by Robert Bock, Cambridge: Polity, 1986, p. 76.

<https://www.a-n.co.uk/blogs/hard-stop/>



Performance and Installation Images





SheFest, Sheffield's Fringe Festival for International Women's Day, is a programme of events celebrating women and girls. The festival, running from 5th-11th March, features a wide range of inclusive and celebratory events which aim to engage women from all over the city.

2018 marks 100 years since (some) women won the right to vote. This exhibition responds to this centenary with a 21st century perspective. By focusing on contemporary protest the exhibition will draw attention to inequalities that we need to overcome worldwide. Fighting Talk features artists that reference this united backlash against patriarchal society whether this be in small acts of everyday resilience or collectively in public-facing resistance movements.

Although we are celebrating the momentous achievement of our past sisters it is important to recognise that the fight is not over. Women are still facing inequality worldwide, in 2018 the war is not yet won. We ask you, this year, what are we fighting for?