

STANDOUT | Eldar Krainer

Goldsmiths MFA Degree Show 2023, London, UK (July 2023)

It begins with Columbia Road Flower Market- the heart of East London. More than it is associated with flowers, it is closely tied to the quest for love. A Sunday morning at the market unavoidably exposes you to the sight of beautiful couples strolling down the road. Wearing their finest designer garments, holding hands, sometimes accompanied by an adorable and undoubtedly expensive dog, and most notably, cradling recently purchased flowers or plants—the ideal image of love.

From the flower market to the dating market, Hinge, a popular dating app, collects data on the type of people you will most likely be attracted to and curates a dedicated list for each user, called "standouts". The only way to unlock this list and get access to your potential lovers is by paying extra money for digital roses.

The fact that an app could quickly determine your type while simultaneously imposing constraining prerequisites for that long-anticipated encounter to happen can make you feel more frustrated and desperate than ever. In their early days, these apps promised a new and groundbreaking form of communication with endless opportunities for matchmaking. Today, however, it is evident that they've transformed into addictive gambling platforms rather than serving as tools for fostering real connections.

Curious by the exploitative nature of modern technologies and the hope and despair inherent to dating apps, Krainer's installation introduces a space akin to a cruising site where personal data and emotions are constantly mobilised through transactional platforms in search of love and external validation. Much like flowers in the market, individuals get picked up and cast aside all the time.

Reflective aluminium surfaces, vinyl stickers and castings of imageries taken from a smoothed-out world of the internet merge with the city's landscape and become contemporary monuments that cannot be escaped from. Scaffolding poles, crumpled billboards, graffiti signs, pierced fences, leftover waste, and torn posters from parties and concerts may appear for one moment as symbols of resistance and a moment later only as a capitalist representation of it where neglected streets are depicted as romantic commemorative structures to all the possible interactions between couples, singles looking to meet up, or those who have just gone on a first date.

Just like online images that undergo constant editing and often drift far from reality, for instance, someone who presents themselves as a tough and macho guy on Grindr may turn out to be a shy and sensitive person in real life, so as the materials, from which the objects in the show are made of, deceiving the viewers by pretending to be something that they are not; A personal story printed as a billboard, soft-to-the-touch castings of poly-foam look hard as stones, graffiti from the street been inflated like a balloon, a roadblock that looks massive and heavy is hollow and can be moved easily on wheels.

The exhibition is accompanied by a text printed as a greeting card which the visitors are invited to take. The text is a sort of love letter to all Krainer's potential lovers that if he had enough money to spend on a digital rose on Hinge, he would have probably given them a whole bouquet.