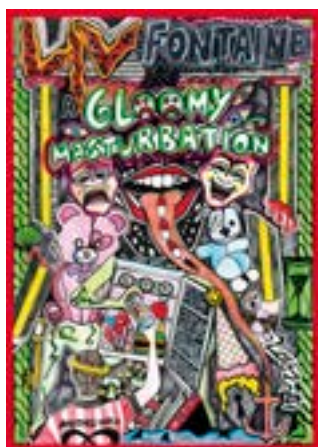


Press release

A Gloomy Masturbation by Liv Fontaine

Featuring a selection of drawings from Fontaine's ongoing project ,A Gloomy Masturbation' this book takes the reader on a trip through the artist's mind. The work functions as part diary, part fantasy, and part information, chronicling her own chronic sickness, fixating on her many failed romantic relationships, and exploring therapeutic theories of the mind and the precarious political situations of our time. Expect tragic comedy, slippery statements, radical honesty, and total teenage angst.



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'A Gloomy Masturbation' is taken from a line in the popular tv show *Mad Men* and refers to the fine line between pleasure and pain. I am often at my most productive when I am at my most miserable, and I have always been an active participant in the seething cauldron of modern society. Through my work I have tried to challenge the outrageous notions and accusations relating to 'female histrionics', while also marketing myself as a fully-ledged on-the-edge HYSTERICAL WOMAN. When using art to consider sex, status and sickness I have sometimes felt as if I am knocking down a wall that – with my help – keeps rebuilding itself.

This book was birthed when my body became sick with an urgent force. At first my mind tried to ignore the signs – putting the pain and exhaustion down to years of behaving like an absolute animal. As my condition worsened I was diagnosed with psoriatic arthritis – the illness made famous by Dennis Potter's *The Singing Detective* in the 1980s. Unable to do live shows and unwilling to rest, I started to draw.

I became depressed and obsessed with the drawing. My approach was compulsive; I had a desire for ending and completion but felt stuck inside the work – reflecting my feelings of being stuck inside my own sickness. My method of making became a performance: a demonstration of endurance pedestalling my most personal mis-adventures, precarious politics and endless bad romance.

Consistency of characters, stories and spirits quickly became apparent – a green figure representing a woman who becomes victim to her own toxic behaviour; the reframing of Greek mythologies focusing on the complex character of Medusa who is viewed as the ultimate wronged woman; the unhappy clown who is the fool in all of us, tempting fate by dancing on the cliff of criticality from which they may soon fall in the most unfashionable fashion; the slippery snake seducing us to betray ... I spent many months visiting the reptiles in the Queen's Park

Hothouse in Glasgow, close to the hospital at which I was being treated. I developed an affinity with skin-shedding creatures and viewed them through my own crises of personality. They were as alone as I felt, leaving bits of themselves in their own habitat and being forced constantly to confront their former selves.

Using visual interpretations of counselling skills and therapy theories, I considered my own performance-persona vs personal-self relationship which – with the absence of live shows – had become incongruent and lacking in tension. As a performer I might present myself as an object, then desperately try to wrestle with myself back to the status of subject. With the drawings, however, I am actively trying to make objects not too dissimilar to the decorated ornaments many of them depict. They do not live inside me, and commodity in this context becomes a means of entertainment: sentiment as signs of personality that live in one's secret self.

To me the drawings have many functions: they are personal diaries, lists of lovers, mission statements, memorials and manifestos. They are in the spirit of self-destruction, as fickle as the materials used to make them, but hopefully they are productive in their deconstruction: a process in which control has been relinquished ... and it's time to move on with life.

Liv Fontaine, 2021

Liv FONTAINE (b.1989 Southampton) is a multi disciplinary artist working across mediums that include drawing, performance, writing and video. In 2021 she was included in the group exhibition *Don't Let the Bastards Grind You Down* curated by Cabbage Arts and showed a new video work produced by Civic Room as part of Glasgow International Art Festival. A solo show of her drawings curated by Roisin Mcqueirns was presented on the Richard Saltoun website as part of their *woman 2.1* Online programme and she was the recipient of a Resilience Grant from Cabbage Arts. She has exhibited and performed in numerous group shows and solo presentations over the last 10 years in venues such as galleries, artist led spaces and bars. This has included at Elephant West, London; David Dale Gallery, Glasgow; Celine, Glasgow; SuperNormal Festival, Oxfordshire; Raven Row, London; CCA, Glasgow; Matthew Gallery, New York; BLOC Projects Sheffield; ICA, London; Caustic Coastal,

Salford; HAHA Gallery, Southampton; Austrian Cultural Forum, London; Serf, Leeds and Academy of Art, Vienna.