

## **CLOAK**

Jodie Marks

Installation in the Ladies Edwardian Cloakroom

Park Row, Bristol

20 - 23 March 2015

*They say that Greta Garbo's father was a latrine cleaner.*

The Ladies Edwardian Cloakroom (opened in 1904) on Park Row is set back from the street, behind tall green bushes, along a winding path. One enters through a porch doorway, down a dark-wood panelled corridor, past the attendant's room, into a toilet cubicle. This labial entrance sits in contrast to the Gentleman's equivalent next door: a stark protuberance fully exposed on the corner of the street.

As a place where private acts are played out in public (and not always the ones expected), the public toilet is both a site of revelation and concealment; a liminal space where public and private blur.

*CLOAK* is an installation that draws upon the context of the female public toilet as a site of hidden activities. A series of pixelated images are propped up and drawn into soft focus by frosted Perspex sheets. Pools of wire and bare bulbs throw light onto the subjects. Suggesting intimacy through distance and exploring the act of looking, the installation questions the viewer's relationship with the screen. However, we are not alone: the attendant's room is inhabited again - is there

someone to bear witness to the various acts concealed and revealed within this space?

The show draws inspiration from *Ladies Mile* (Abson: 1977), memoirs by Victoria Hughes (now out of print). It shares stories of her experience as a toilet attendant in Bristol from 1929 - 1962, with anecdotes that revolve mainly around the many female sex workers who frequented the Downs during the interwar years, and who sought shelter and respite in the female public toilet she attended to. By modestly refurnishing the attendant's room in the Ladies Edwardian Cloakroom - drawing up on personal effects that Hughes mentions but crossing over with the artist's own position taking on the role of attendant to this space - it presents another iteration of the exploration of public and private thresholds within this site.

A longer text is also available. *Fragments: Searching for Garbo* explores wider themes and interests discovered while devising this show.

Jodie Marks graduated from the University of the West of England in 2014 with a degree in Art & Visual Culture, and is currently based at BV Studios, Bristol.

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