



GHWIV, Team Gallery, NYC, 2011

Dominic: Ok, let's start with *GHWIV*, Glory Hole Wall Four at Team, fourth in what became a series of sort of walls. The first one functioned as a wall, it divided a space. It functioned as a wall to create a separate room within the grander room. And then it became a thing onto itself. It became an object in the room that still could function as a wall. Then it became a wall that was a sculpture that leaned against the architecture, so it lost all function as a wall. It acted like a sculpture of a wall, a picture of a wall. And so then this is the latest one. This is the first one that had a second wall that dissects it.

Birgit: There are so many levels of abstraction already in here that it's a rabbit hole to think about what each level of abstraction does to the thing and what it ultimately becomes. But it's still called Glory Hole which butts up the abstraction against the reality of a bathroom.

Dominic: I became interested in glory holes as a way to set the stage for other work, because of what it does to the body. It's a thing and a place that abstracts the human body and turns it into just a physical item to be used.

Birgit: Like a tool?

Dominic: Like a tool, exactly. Or a material. And it just becomes matter. It's about how the body gets abstracted at a physical location, and with a physical device, and how this architecture mediates this interaction between two abstract bodies.

Birgit: You never felt compelled to make the walls anything other than the walls that hold the hole. They're not discursive in any way, other than they kind of look like gallery walls. They don't look like the kinds of walls that would have glory holes.

Dominic: They look like gallery walls, because gallery walls look like a basic wall. Also, I use the same paint as the gallery and it becomes incorporated as an extra wall in their space. It sort of becomes their wall. In this instance it's Team's wall. It's possible to move them, but it's ridiculous to move them.

Birgit: What happens when the show is over?

Dominic: It gets destroyed. I have a section in my studio that's 8 ft by 7ft square, with three walls, and I move it around the studio to frame stuff or put stuff in it. I carpeted the floor inside. It makes a little cubby, an 8 ft x 7ft cubby.

Birgit: I've never seen an actual glory hole because I don't spend that much time in men's public bathrooms.

Dominic: And there aren't that many in public locations. The only ones I know of in the city are at the Blue Store on 41st and Seventh Ave. The lower level has video booths and there are holes that connect them. And then Chelsea has a few. There were some in Times Square, but i think they've been closed for five years now.

Birgit: For some reason, I think of the second Bush presidency as the time of the glory hole in the public consciousness. There were the political scandals, including the Senator Larry Craig being arrested at the airport in St. Paul, MN.

Dominic: Yeah, one person asked me recently about glory holes as a subject matter being dated because it's not where the contem-

porary gay man goes to meet people, but I think it's not true. I go, for my research, and the community that's there isn't the contemporary gay man necessarily.

The people who I have mostly seen there are from other already invisible communities like migrant workers, guys who work in restaurants, construction. It's a population that people don't necessarily think about as being the gay population in the city.

As much as it's about the gay thing, it's more about mining interesting specificities of gay life, and then finding out other ways in which it can be interesting (aside from this is where people have sex, you know?)



GHWIV, Team Gallery, NYC, 2011, Detail

Birgit: So, what are the grey things in the holes?

Dominic: Those are solid aluminum rods that range from being 8 inches to 10 inches long, 2 inches in diameter and it's solid matter. It reflects back on the idea of the body being abstracted into matter. They become a compositional element. You have these holes and you fill them.

There is an element that is hidden in this, and it's my labor. I work very hard to hide the labor, because I like it when a labored object becomes a found object. It's something you make in your studio and when it leaves, it can exist entirely outside of the studio, and entirely outside of the artist. I am doing this type of physical wall building labor, connecting my population with the population of that type of worker.

Birgit: If you've built a wall before you know intrinsically how much work that was, but if you haven't, you don't know what a pain that is.

Dominic: In fact, every time I say I will never do that again, but I do and I like it once I'm in it.

Birgit: Would it be an attractive proposition for someone else to make it for you?

Dominic: It is, but I wouldn't want the gallery staff to do it, I'd want to hire workers from Home Depot or something like that so that how it is constructed stays part of the content.

The other work comes out of the glory hole walls. They function in the same way as glory holes, but where the glory hole



*Black Cowboy (reciprocity pile),
Team Gallery, NYC, 2011*

is an idea that does exist in reality, these things don't. They're just art works. It's a sheet of leather or plexi-glass, there are two parties on either side of the sheet, one uses one set of handles to hold it up and lines their mouth up with one hole while the other person is on the other side, probably kneeling, using the other set of handles,

and their mouth lines up with the lower hole which also lines up with the cock.

So, it's like a portable glory hole, although the body isn't entirely covered. And so, the plexi one could function easily, and where it's clear, you don't have the anonymity that you have in a glory hole, but you are still choosing to have something mediate between you and the other person. And it's with fairly thick plexi-glass (3/4 inch), which is quite heavy but manageable for two people to hold, so you have this shared acceptance of distance between the two people, while having closeness.

Birgit: So, in the wall, there is a level of risk involved, because you don't know who is on the other side, and what they are going to do.

Dominic: Yes, this is much more about the choice of working with this person to keep distance or have mediation.

Birgit: Would you ever try these out?

Dominic: Yeah. I mean, it's not important for me or the viewer to know how these function in reality, but absolutely, it could be interesting to find out. In a way it would extract from it being an art object, there is a risk that you could lose it into the S + M world. And then it just becomes me appropriating leather and chains.

Birgit: Well, I was actually wondering about the implied performative aspect of both these pieces. Is it tempting to try and throw an orgy? How can you resist? If this was the late 60's, there'd definitely be one.

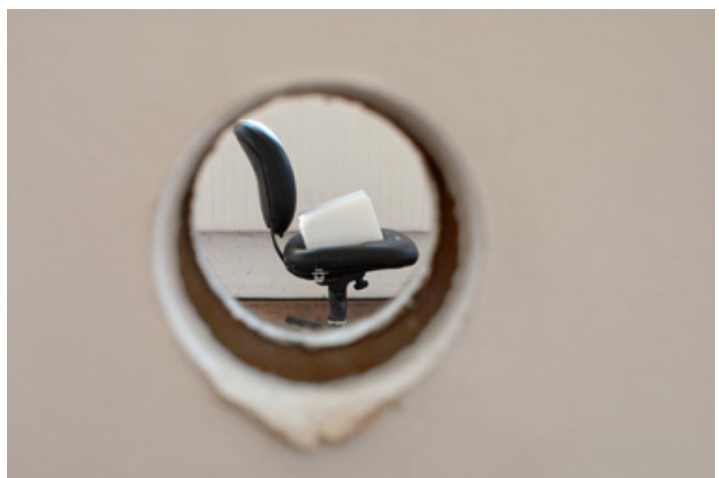
Dominic: Oh, yeah, that would be the opening! What's funny is that very few people ask if they have ever been used. But they do ask if I have ever visited a glory hole. But a lot of this work is about the choice of keeping distance, and putting a barrier in between me and the viewer. It's about having distance and choosing to have it.

Birgit: Not having an orgy defines the work just as much as having one does.

Dominic: Yes. I might personally be interested in seeing them used, but not as an action in the gallery, not as an art thing. But just to satisfy a level of curiosity. They are based on my proportions. Seeing how it would work for someone shorter or bigger would be interesting.

I really appreciate the juxtaposition between the wall which is kind of aggressive and then you have these which are total atrocity, material that falls victim to gravity. One is dyed black handbag leather and other is raw leather that's for saddle making and other more Western crafty style objects. City. Country. Sex. I like that it's a physical location that abstracts the body.

Dominic: Let's go skipping back, to PS 1. This view shows the bulk of the installation, behind the glory hole wall which is held up by these pipes that are about head height. In order to maneuver in the space, you have to duck underneath them. You have a set of office chairs, one leather, one fabric, their arms have been cut off. Salt licks are embedded into the seats, and water dumped on it gives you a crusty build up of salt spreading on the leather and fabric.



ObjectionRoom, P.S.1, New York, 2010

The most noticeable and obnoxious part of the room is the speak-



ObjectionRoom, P.S.1, New York, 2010

er blasting recordings of hyena calls which hunters use in Zimbabwe. They hunt hyena by attracting them to the hunter rather than the hunter to the animal.

In other hunts, they are tracking for days, but the hyena is very easy because they don't seem to differentiate between a recorded call and

a real call, and they will come to you.

Birgit: The speaker is a giant bullhorn?

Dominic: The speaker is a an older style bullhorn type speaker, and I chose it for its aesthetic aggressiveness, and the institutional connotations. You get a very tinny sound.

Birgit: And the hyena still respond to that?

Dominic: Yes, they do. This isn't the one we used. When I was in Zimbabwe, they just used the built-in speakers of the truck, and the quality of the recordings is terrible, which is what I used here. It's pretty incredible that these hyenas, who aren't dumb animals, fall for that. The sound piece is pretty assertive, and I didn't want to aim it directly at the viewer. They gave me this really great room with windows at PS 1, and I got to have the windows open the whole show. I pointed the sound out and you could hear it on the street.

Birgit: Did any hyenas come?

Dominic: No, none.

Birgit + Dominic: Bummer.

Birgit: So, what's the story with the salt licks? These are much bigger than any I think I have ever seen.

Dominic: These are used for cattle. It's salt with different minerals in it. Cattle ranchers use them to make sure their product is getting enough nutrients. I remember hunters in

Minnesota using them to attract deer to a specific spot in the woods. Also, I learned that a few patient hunters will feed the deer over number of years so their trophy is bigger. For these hunters, it works in the same way that the hyena calls do.

Birgit: So in combination with the glory holes, you are playing with the risk factor?

Dominic: Yes, there is the risk. It also creates a community without allowing it to form, which is something I have come to find interesting about the glory hole because you have people come to the same place to fulfill a common need, which is one way that communities are formed. Except, in the way that glory holes are set up it's basically impossible to create a community outside of that space. The reason you go to the glory hole, is to not participate in the community. Also, there is the coming together of the conservative community of hunting and the not necessarily conservative community of gay sex. The pipes function to hold up the wall which is free-standing and would fall over easily but they also force people to change their physicality as they enter, duck and change their perspective for that one brief minute.

Birgit: Or bang your head. Which is relatively aggressive. The pipes are not asking the viewer nicely to change perspective, but give a choice: change perspective or get hurt.

Dominic: Yes, this was a fairly aggressive room with the pipes and the walls right in the middle of the room, having only 2 feet to get around it. We shut the A/C off for the six months of the show and it was a really hot summer, and it was really windy. So the exterior atmosphere penetrated the room, which made for great pressure on the human body.

Birgit: Let's talk about the installation at Asia Song Society. Tell me about the snake.

Dominic: I had to look up "snake eating it's own tail", that's the sculpture I wanted to make, and I knew it existed in



Reciprocity Room, A.S.S., New York, 2010

myth or somewhere. It's the Ouroboros and it appears in multiple cultures. And almost every time it's a symbol for the circle of life and a self-perpetuating living being.

Birgit: You made it, right?

Dominic: Right. It's a taxidermy snake. I found pictures online documenting this event, but it's very rare, and usually for this to happen, the snake hasn't eaten in a long time, and its feeding drive takes over. The prey is in sight, it strikes, but misses the prey. The next thing it sees move is its tail and so it goes for that. Yeah.

To me, a self-eating snake symbolizing perpetual life is so absurd. You can't eat yourself, you'll die or damage yourself. There is a homo-eroticism involved in eating your own tail, and I like that. I'm going out west in a few weeks to look for rattlesnakes, because that's what it has to be for it to be a good American art work. And this is probably the most American show I have ever made. The show was made specifically for A.S.S. run by Terence Koh. I had the work with its history and cultural niche in mind. Like past room installations, it functions as one



room-sized work, the works are interconnected and related, and should be experienced together though they can be separated out and be autonomous works. Along with the snake, which for me was the center piece, were the most attention-grabbing works, these two exercise machines, igallops, which simulate the gallop of the horse.

Birgit: What part of you do they exercise?

Dominic: They exercise your core. From what I can tell, it was mostly advertised to women to work abdominal muscles. And you sit in front of the TV and gyrate.

Reciprocity Room, A.S.S., New York, 2010

I designed these harnesses that strap on champagne bottles. You take off the wrapper and metal cage that holds the cork in, it can take somewhere between 2 and 40 minutes or 6 hours, but eventually the champagne pops. The show is called **Reciprocity Room**. The two machines are called Equaas Quaaga (zebra) and Bos Americanus (buffalo). The two machines were differentiated by the buffalo rug and the zebra skin rug. The zebra also gets a nylon and stainless steel cock ring harness contraption with plastic parts whereas the American version is all leather, and there is no sewing involved, it's all done with tension and metal rings. They identify as very different things even though they are the same functioning machine. For me the buffalo hide and leather took on an American or an interior identity versus the exotic, man made materials, fluorescent webbing, plastic and the zebra, which is a very non-American animal, as foreign or an exterior kind of identity.

And then this is the first of the leather, portable glory holes, called **Mediation Sheet** made out of extra leather from the harnesses. Also, there were two spare harnesses in the space that satisfied a want for baroque decoration on the walls.

Birgit: They functioned as wall hangings, kind of like very eccentric wall hanging.

Dominic: Yeah. And then there was this decal of an image I found online in a biological journal to describe the slight sexual dimorphism that happens in hyenas. When they were first discovered by Western civilizations in Northern Africa, hyenas were believed to be hermaphroditic because there is such little dimorphism and the females have an extremely enlarged clitoris, and so it was thought that either they were all hermaphrodites or an all male species, a gay animal.

It's a fascinating cultural history that goes along with hyenas.



*Reciprocity Room, A.S.S.,
New York, 2010*

Dominic: I liked what happened to the machines when the bottles were empty and the machine was off or when the machines were running and the bottles were full. I like that the objects weren't performing all the time, necessarily. I was interested in dealing with performance in art and the way a contemporary viewer seems to desire the instant of the making of the work. And then to create an object that performed that. But also, then have it to be able to shut off.

Birgit: The sound was very memorable

Dominic: The leather harness was really great sound-wise. They're extremely sexual machines. I loved that these machines just celebrate themselves and they go and go until the champagne pops: "Congratulations!" "Put another bottle on". This continuous action that leads to constant celebration. The congratulatory, masturbatory behavior that the sculptures have. I liked the work a lot, but the reception was that it was comedic. It's the easiest read, that it's a simple sexual comedy.

Birgit: You made a performing object, and within the context of the space where you showed it, it performed exactly in the way that people wanted it to, and maybe it made it difficult to see anything else.

Dominic: I used to be more hesitant to show the same idea in the same form more than once, but I've started to realize that it's ok to show slightly different forms, keep it interesting for me and less challenging to the viewer. They get to have a continuity which I have come to understand is extremely important for their ability to move past the first level of meaning, past the surface of the object into the interior and develop a meaning for why someone is making this work.

Birgit: Maybe this piece goes more into a metaphorical language and that's why the multiple levels of meaning are important to you? Some other pieces address being a sculpture differently, right? Some sculpture makes you aware of your physicality by not appealing to your brain that much and then there is the sculpture that's super specific in it's cultural conditioning and isn't legible to everyone.

Dominic: Yeah, I think so, too. And I think the snake is the piece that functions in both ways the most even though it's such an image. It's an image of a snake eating itself, but it's an actual snake.

But I was thinking about the snake earlier today. In the 20th century, leading into abstraction, you have this idea of making the image explicit or everything explicit, bringing the hidden meaning to the forefront. Emphasizing that, whether it be misogyny or homophobia or racism but also pictorially, you have this idea of bringing the background forward, as in the all over painting and abstraction but with sculpture you have this long history of the image in culture and the 3D body and the iconography that goes with the church for example or the government who is commissioning these things. So, abstraction in sculpture went a different route.

But it is a battle that happens in my studio between the physicality of the object and the semiotic meaning.

Birgit: I like that they exist at the same time.

Dominic: Me too.



*Future Work (The Joys of Isolationist Doctrine),
taxidermy north american rattlesnake, 2012*