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Is It Possible to Reject Conformity?

Different perspectives on common shapes.

A preview of Fitting In (2025), a show by

Jonny Briggs



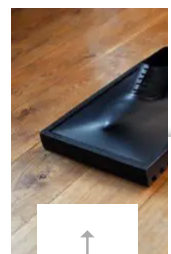
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Briggs weirding use of common items transforms them. But rather than pop symbolism, the symbolic aspect of the shoes echo around the idea of societal reproduction – ‘shoes to fill’ – and ‘fitting in’ as per conforming to a normalising shape. As Bourdieu observed social roles are less about the acceptance of a person rather they are governed by a person’s acceptance of a form. A judge is expected to be ‘judge-like’ often above their abilities in the role. As much as things change, things stay the same. Bourdieu was writing about society in the 70s and yet conformity exists now as tightly as ever. Briggs reflections on his foundational experiences extend forward to considerations of the present day,



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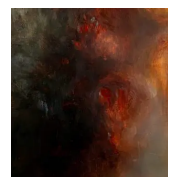
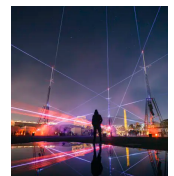
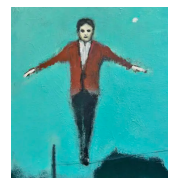


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These glum and perhaps cynical reflections are ameliorated by Briggs' fresh use of geometry and colour. The works show the artist's talent for élan where his twist on the visual aspects of artistic formalism moves between sculpture, photography, installation and painting through his use of direct symbols and objects. A promise of fun regardless of where you step in.



Jonny Briggs, Fitting In (Installation view), 2025



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Jonny Briggs transforms the mundane masculine uniform

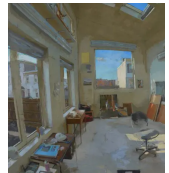
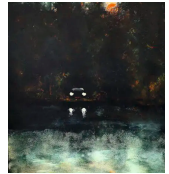
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into a playground of subversion in his latest [solo exhibition](#)

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at [Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery](#). *Fitting In* centres on that most conformist of objects—the men’s formal leather dress shoe—and weaponises it against the very structures it represents.

The gallery space becomes a theatre of the absurd, populated with sculptural shoes that have been stretched, twisted and contorted into impossible forms. These aren’t merely altered objects but performative tools that dictate the artist’s movements when worn, forcing his body into uncomfortable configurations that mirror the [psychological](#) constraints of prescribed masculinity. In *Shoes to form a parallelogram*, Briggs assumes a hunched, almost foetal position, his limbs bent at unnatural angles to accommodate the sculpture’s jutting tips—a physical manifestation of how social expectations can literally reshape us.



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Jonny Briggs, Fitting In (installation view) 2025

The monochrome photography throughout the exhibition creates a visual ecosystem where frames, clothing, and sculptural elements blur boundaries between subject and structure. Yet it's the strategic deployment of hot pink that provides the exhibition's most potent gesture. Applied to shoe soles and the artist's bare toes, this unapologetically feminine colour becomes both celebration and confrontation—a reclamation of what was once forbidden territory during Briggs' childhood, freely available to his sisters but denied to him.

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a joyful transgression, while the colour itself functions as what Briggs calls “queer camouflage”—hiding in plain sight through performative visibility. The triangular-framed photographs *Looking Out* and *Looking In* further fragment identity, presenting multiple versions of the self in conversation, framed by warning-yellow borders that suggest both caution and celebration.

There’s genuine pathos beneath the exhibition’s playful surface. While Briggs’ father remains physically absent from these works, his presence haunts every sculptural intervention—these are reimaginations of his shoes, symbols of a restrictive masculine inheritance that the artist literally cannot walk in. The violence of forced conformity lingers in every strained pose, yet the work’s circus-like absurdity refuses to grant patriarchal authority its dignity.



Jonny Briggs, Installation View, 2025



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conformity. Strange and tender, Briggs doesn't simply reject inherited constraints—he makes them ridiculous, mutable, and ultimately powerless. The exhibition's title captures this perfectly: the impossible bind between the pressure to conform and the necessity to misfit.

This is work that operates through the body, using physical discomfort and visual disruption to excavate the psychological mechanisms of gendered expectation. In doing so, Briggs claims authorship over his own narrative, transforming tools of constraint into instruments of liberation—one pink footprint at a time.

Read more: [Briggs was featured in Trebuchet 13: photography](#)



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Jonny Briggs: Fitting In
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Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery

533 Old York Road

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The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance. – Aristotle

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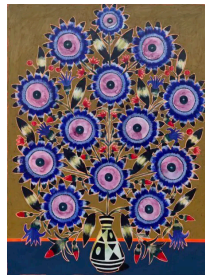
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