



Photo Series: Making Men and Man-Kind

Damien Schumann

Masculinity is socially constructed. It is learned and passed down from one generation to the next. Masculinity in South Africa is troubled with historic and economic challenges, as well as changing gender norms having greatly affected the way we perceive men in our society, and also how masculinity is achieved. The inability to achieve a sense of manliness through socially acceptable means leads to hyper masculine behaviour that includes violence, dangerous acts, and acts of domination (like rape or domestic abuse), played out in order to counter the stress caused by the inability to feel purposeful within society.

The response to hyper masculine behavior until recently has been to empower women, in a sense putting up arms against a threat. Few have considered how to resolve this threat from its root. What are the concerns of men, and how can these be resolved to better society?



Making Men

Making Men looks at the relationship between fathers and sons and inquires what kind of influence this masculine role model has had on a boy's life, and how they choose to embrace manhood. Based on what they experience in their intimate environment, what do boys consider to be manly? Through observation of physical similarities including mannerisms, postures, dress code and genetic snaps, a greater discourse is opened on how much psychological behaviour can be adopted from a role model as well. The influence of the (physically or emotionally) absent father is also analyzed.

Having lost his father at a young age, the artist commences this project within the demographic he grew up in, witnessing how his peers grew up and turned out having had a male influence. His search to conclude what a good masculine role model is traverses a gendered line and the relationship between men and boys.























Man-Kind

For *Man-Kind* the artist was curious on how men strive to attain and sustain their sense of masculinity. In a constant battle for dominance how does an alpha-male come to power and maintain his position? To find out Schumann undertook to seek alpha-males from a diverse cross section of backgrounds and observe behavioral trends, both of the alpha-male and his counterparts. Attention was placed on noting the performance men take on to exert their masculinity, and also the vulnerability of what lies beneath this mask. It aims to question how certain men are of their actions that feed the social construct of masculinity in which they find themselves; the scope of opportunity their environment provides for them to achieve this sense of masculinity; and what the repercussions of success and failure of these actions mean for the rest of society.





















