



L. Geoffrey Aldridge, *Rush*, 2009; electrical wire, light bulbs, dimensions variable

R. Still from *Hanky Panky*, 2009; video; 14-minute loop; edition of 5; images courtesy the artist and Transformer, Washington, DC

WASHINGTON, DC

Geoffrey Aldridge Transformer

Congress appears unlikely to challenge a law passed in Washington, DC that will make the city the sixth jurisdiction in the United States to legally recognize same-sex marriages. Congress could roll back this right after the thirty-day waiting period. Barring that, the District is bound to host thousands of same-sex weddings in 2010. This historic yet tentative step forward for legal equality serves as a significant—and crucial—backdrop for *Hole in the Wall*, a solo show by Geoffrey Aldridge that commemorates the fortieth anniversary of the Stonewall riots.

The association between Aldridge's work and the riots is putative at best. Aldridge was far from born when violent demonstrations followed a police raid of the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village and the homophile community emerged as the modern-day gay rights movement. The show feels as though it has been commissioned for the occasion. Works like *Pendulum*, a path of handcrafted yellow bricks that winds from the floor up the gallery wall to nowhere, play on a popular myth spread by the straight press that Stonewall activists were agitated by the death of Judy Garland.

The brick—or weight—is the symbolic key to the show, appearing again in *Cinder Ball*, a suspended, rotating object shaped like a cinder block but modeled after a mirror ball. Acknowledging the systemic repression of the gay community during the riots, *Cinder Ball* also symbolizes gay nightlife and a shining icon for liberation. Other works reveal Aldridge to be more interested in the history since Stonewall than in the event itself. In a video titled *Drag*, he dons a stole made of three fur-covered cinder blocks and attempts to stand up. (He fails.) At times, Aldridge appears to labor under an identity that really isn't his own, perhaps due to an obligation he feels toward history. For instance, the blue handkerchiefs he tries to

stuff into his mouth in the video *Hanky Panky* once indicated the practice of flagging—displaying color handkerchiefs to signal sexual preference. Today, handkerchiefs are hardly necessary for hooking up. So what exactly is Aldridge gagging on?

He nearly gives the game away in *Rush*, a pair of naked blue light bulbs strung in a sculptural homage to Félix González-Torres. *Rush* is perhaps the boldest work in the show for humorously deploying materials so totally associated with González-Torres and the heavy subject matter of AIDS. A crude metaphor—suspended blue balls—the piece conveys a casual attitude that betrays how far the struggle has come in forty years. Through this lens, much of the show snaps into focus: a lethal disco ball hanging ominously overhead and a yoke made of fur and chains—the threat of overindulgence and overstimulation.

It is easy to read liberal guilt in Aldridge's meditation on this deadly serious historical moment. He acts as a custodian, struggling with a legacy that he would like to honor but did not suffer through. This challenge hasn't stunned him into false earnestness. Instead, Aldridge has chosen to emphasize the problems that carry over to today as if to say that, even minus the police beatings and riots, it remains a difficult thing to be a sexual being in the world.

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