

When moving house, everyone is challenged with what to keep and what to throw away. Moving in with a partner for the first time and establishing their together home as a site of lesbian love and life, Ana Daniels approaches this dilemma with thorough consideration in her first solo exhibition *Stripping the Bed*. She asks the question: which elements of the cisheteronormative, conservative models of a home or domestic space need to be held onto for survival, safety or comfort? And what can be created through navigating the domestic space with a distinctly queer self-determination?

In her book *Queer Phenomenology*, scholar Sara Ahmed poses that if we know orientation to be finding one's bearings in the world, then 'queer' is not merely a sexual orientation, but a political, social and spatial orientation too. In *Stripping the Bed*, a queer (or more specifically lesbian/dyke) orientation becomes the artist's navigatory compass through domestic spaces. The home and bedroom, as the domain of the cisheteronormative dream woman (a wife to a husband, a mother to children), becomes the site for Daniels' dyke orienteering. Daniels navigates this foreign space of what domesticity can be when free of cisheteronormativity by queering domestic objects and spaces. She reconciles this gap by integrating the soft and feminine crafts of quilting and embroidery with dyke utilitarian aesthetics. D-rings, rivets, buckles and bolts meet plush pink fabrics and vintage florals in a playful butchfemme embodiment.

Despite tackling this broader phenomenological dilemma, these works are not without humour. Unapologetically camp motifs haul the most private elements of lesbian domesticity and sexuality into a public space. Daniels celebrates playful sensuality with an irreverence for the conservative forces that have historically enforced shame and sequestering of the queer community. A bush embroidered into plush garden print and a strap harness pulled from quilt blocks sit alongside cross-stitch crotches and drapes with vulvic tucks and folds. This irreverence of conservative convention extends beyond motifs to the formal foundations of the works themselves. The traditionally flat plane of the quilt is disrupted in unconventional ways through slits, scrunches and warps. Simultaneously, Daniels acknowledges the quilt as an active and interactive domestic object and, in

alignment with much of queering aesthetics, works to disrupt the conservative stillness of a gridded plane.

The playful tension between public and private is challenged even in the quietest works. The stark white of the quilt-less doona and slip-less pillow contrast against Daniels' usual camp and vibrant palette. A highly personal vulnerability is laid bare by pulling bare bed linens into the public eye. By stripping linens of their covers to reveal their white innards, the artist reconciles the private and public, the interior and exterior, the personal and shared. In *Stripping the Bed*, Daniels invites us into a wholly new space of entirely her own construction, handing us the manual for how a lesbian might make her bed.