

This show is a marker of transition, in my life as well as my artistic practice. It feels silly to even make the distinction.

Recently (August 2015) I found out that the brain tumor I have been running from since 2009 (surgically removed in 2010) is finally confirmed to be

gone

(for the time being)

which is really amazing news! But it hasn't sunk in completely. I still feel as if I'm on an existential run. Well, maybe the run has already turned into a jog. 7 years of feeling like "THE END IS NEAR" is insanely hard to shake off. It makes me uncomfortable to even write about it..... I usually appropriate everything.....but it feels right to use this format to explain that this exhibition doesn't feel normal to me. It doesn't feel normal in the sense that over the years I've gotten in the groove of this intensity, even wallowing in it. Now I'm here (free of a tumor that has haunted me since I was 19 years old) and ...Where do I go? Who am I? What's going to happen in my work? I feel uneasy writing this press release.

I've only really dealt with the art world for the past year or so (although it feels like an eternity). As any world, it's intertwined with money in a way that makes it hard to form real emotional connections with people. That being said, I have found some people that I will cherish for as long as I live (I hope). The two people that first introduced me to this art world are Alivia Zivich and Daniel Sperry who run a gallery in Detroit called What Pipeline. They really understood my work right away, and asked me to participate in their booth at Sunday Fair here in London exactly a year ago. By now, I email Alivia constantly and I consider her to be one of my main confidantes.

We stayed in an Airbnb together in Mexico City. I was doing a performance called *Love, Bob Esponja (Love, Spongebob)*. Wearing a large bootleg rental Spongebob costume, I danced around an art fair and on the street with a protest sign that had an appropriated digital drawing of Spongebob making love to Squidward. I, Spongebob, was on the "bottom" as we call it in the homosexual sphere lol. (this performance was organized by Queer Thoughts run by two very good friends of mine Sam Lipp and Luis Miguel Bendaña) One day in the apartment Miguel and Alivia tried on the costume and really had a ball dancing around the living room. Later on, Alivia and I had a conversation that really got to the root of dancing in disguise. She talked about how liberating it felt to perform without being physically seen. Taking on the persona of the costume allows for a comfort

that just isn't there as a normal human being throwing one's appendages around in space. She was right. I thought back to the root of these mascot costume dancing performances; there have been a few by now.

In high school I really had a rough time being gay as well as mixed race in the heart of Texas. It was mandatory to do some sort of sport and so I chose the one thing that I knew I could do and still hide from the world at the same time... being a lion mascot for the school's basketball and football seasons. The thing about being the school's mascot was that the identity of the performer had to remain a secret...which was perfect. In high school I longed to blend in at all costs.

After Mexico, Alivia and I discussed collaborating on a mascot dancing performance. Alivia wanted to perform as Olaf the snowman from *Frozen*. I hadn't seen the movie, so I decided to watch it as research. The part that stood out to me the most is a song in which Olaf the snowman endlessly sings about longing for summer and all things hot. Olaf's fantasy is that his snow body will exist in warm weather without melting, but he comes close to realizing that his dream would kill him throughout the song. Part of him knows... Part of him wants to die.

The performance started out thinking about Alivia and being hidden in public, but now I identify with Olaf too. I feel like I made it to summer but I didn't melt. I made several other works about Olaf recently which are included in the exhibition. Alivia wasn't able to be here to perform, so I'm dancing in her place.

Apart from *Frozen*, the other works in the show deal with corn, specifically high fructose corn syrup, which is relatively uncommon in the United Kingdom yet ubiquitous in the United States of America. I grew up on high fructose corn syrup as a kid because my parent's generation really didn't know any better. The exhibition includes commercials (propaganda) sponsored by the Corn Refiners Association, which exists to turn fresh vegetables into poison. All three of the commercials use a similar format: a friendly conversation between two people discussing how high fructose corn syrup is "just corn" and similar to sugar in that it's fine in moderation. The problem is HFCS is used in addictive products (such as Coca Cola) and is omnipresent in food deserts (food deserts are urban areas where it's difficult to purchase fresh food), which I've lived in. These foods have to be incredibly sweet to mask all of the preservatives and chemicals they contain. A part of me can't help but wonder if growing up consuming these products resulted in my brain tumor, or even if my parents consuming these products before they had me contributed to it.

I've always loved sugary drinks and sodas. Until this past month, I've never had to worry about the

ill effects of drinking them, or eating too much pizza, or not exercising, because I sincerely expected to die young. Early in our relationship I asked my fiancé to live in the moment with me when I thought the moment was all we had. Now that melting is far off in the distance, we have time.

-Puppies Puppies, edited by Forrest

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