

Wrong Times

TARZAN JANE

TIMES

top: Dorothy Iannone, *I Begin to Feel Free*, 1970. Acrylic on canvas, collage on canvas, 190 x 150 cm. Courtesy the artist.
bottom: Larry Sultan, *Backward: West Valley Studio*, 2003. From "The Valley".

2. What is painful and what is pleasant?

DI: Something, but I don't know what, pleases me intensely by what I see and sense and intuit. Then our verbal communication elates and carries me further. It has happened that once I fell in love prior to lovemaking and I left everything—a lot really—to be with a man I had not even slept with yet. But still, though I trust my feelings completely, I cannot say what it is exactly that makes me fall in love.

LS: Pain. She sees me. She's smiling at me. But when I smile back, to my embarrassment, I realize that she is looking past me to someone else and I'm left with an expression that looks like the beginning of a seizure. My shaky attempt to demonstrate my desire is met with complete indifference. Just as I suspected I'm becoming invisible and whatever bait I had, or was, is now gone. What's left is this incredible ache. I knew it. I should just settle on a life of errands and chores and whatever exorcisms are possible through making pictures.

Pleasure: I take great pleasure in mentally reconstructing past sexual episodes. There are several that produce really good images and have held up over time. The best ones keep intact some of the intensity of desires and observations as well as the more formal properties of the situation: the smoothness of surfaces, the mood of the light, the heat of bodies and the coolness of sheets and floors. But what's best are all the countless revisions and corrections that are now opened up. With each new version I get closer and closer to an incandescent center of pleasure, the creamy nougat. This scene is slowed way down – repeated twice with variations – panned from different angles – cropped and refocused. The awkward acting and rushed scenes are cut and restaged. Bodies are arranged into this position that then submit to a variety of procedures. Freed of my usual hesitation and self-consciousness all kinds of visions and desires are coaxed out of their hiding spots and made to perform again and again.

3. What makes you fall in love?

DI: Loss of the beloved is the most painful experience. I very much like the Tibetan Buddhist story about Marpa the Translator who was an eleventh century farmer,

per back was something else – not exactly an image of a female but with my vision clouded by agitation and desire it was close enough to be of use. I'm not using masturbation to conflate sex and art (even though they both are born from urgency and produce temporary relief). But like my younger self, I keep trying to make photographs that seduce me into believing in the image – it's promise of new knowledge and pleasure, of mysteries made visual - all the time knowing better but believing anyway.

5. Which is better, love or sex?

DI: The unsurpassable is Eros, when love and sex come together. But I wouldn't ever want to have to make a choice between enjoying only the one or only the other.

LS: What an odd and difficult question - it's like asking, "which is better a mouth or a tongue?" They seem to work best when together, at least in the long term. But if separated and placed side by side, well, the only way for me to make sense of it is to convert love from a condition to an act or event – as in "falling in love."

Weighing the feeling of having fallen in love as opposed to just getting laid I'd give love the edge. Plus sex without love or intimacy can get pretty dreary. Those erotic "Halloween balls where genitals get dressed up as people, come to mind.

But I'm torn – since love over time can become difficult to notice and easy to take for granted except when it's over and gone. Sex coming to conclusion is fine and natural but when love ends, it's like death. Actually now that I think about it, for me with my family and friends I'm flush in the love account. So for the moment sex is better – sex with different partners in strange places—sex that spills out all over the place – surprisingly nasty sex.

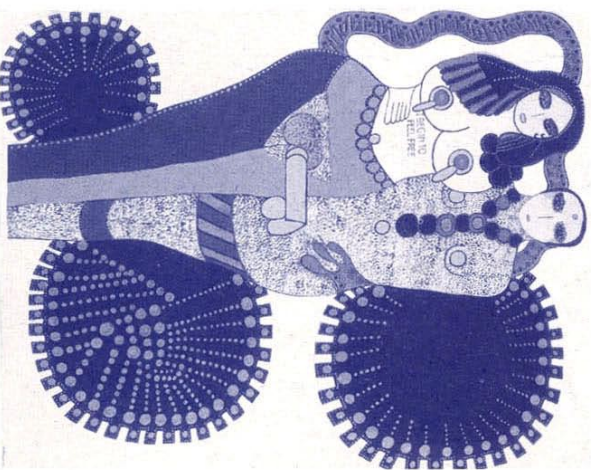
DOROTHY IANNONE & LARRY SULTAN:
SEX

1. What makes you blush?

DI: It doesn't happen very often and I'm not even sure it ever happens, but I can give you an example of the last time it might have happened. For some reason, which I cannot begin to imagine, my Turkish greengrocer, a man of about sixty, shows by small signs that he appears to consider me somewhat special. A few months ago, as I was making my purchases from one of his assistants, he came from the back on his way out the door and greeting me, took my hand and kissed it, going further than he had ever gone before—and greatly impressing his assistant who immediately remarked that the boss is a gentlemen—but completely disconcerting me. The feeling of discomfort, which I felt expressed itself, I think, in a blush. But maybe not.

LS: I stare at people. I put on my sunglasses and believe the dark lenses render me invisible and immune from reciprocal scrutiny. But when I feel the heat of someone's eyes on me it's another story. The more they look the more I want to hide. I try to adjust myself by sucking in my stomach, straightening my jaw and flexing those facial muscles near the cheekbone. I perform

these movements slowly in order to escape detection. I feel like I'm being tried on like an old coat—examined and assessed. I can't look. What would happen if I met those eyes and had to respond? Then what? Instead of flushing I go fleshy white, the blood drains from my face and my body shrinks in size. I feel like I lose any trace of body hair. As if the attempt to disappear actually begins to work but then catches and sticks. I'm left with a skinny adolescent body trying to hide a boner without anyone noticing my cupped hands. "They saw me, they saw me, they saw me."



scholar, teacher and one of Tibet's most renowned saints. When his beloved son died in his prime, Marpa showed signs of grief. And his students said, "But you told us that everything is an illusion." "Yes," Marpa answered, "but this was the greatest illusion of them all." And the most pleasant, the supra-pleasant is, of course, finding the beloved.

LS: I seem to fall in love primarily while on the phone. I'll be making plane reservations or dealing with the bank and the mouth sounds of the customer service agent works a kind of magic on me—puts me in a spell. It doesn't happen haphazardly and takes a very particular kind of voice but when I'm lucky enough to hit it, within seconds I begin to slip and swoon. If I can get her to look something up and she makes that "looming something up sound" by expelling small bursts of air through their lips I'm really gone—a lost soul. I devise elaborate questions to keep her on the phone. I imagine her mouth close to those small holes and hear her breath in my ear. Maybe it's the innocence I love—she is without guile or adjustment—no presentation of image or intentional seduction. With such a sweet a voice suffused with empathy and endless patience there is a promising future ahead.

4. Where do sex and art meet?

DI: Since sex and love were so important for me, it was natural and a pleasure to make them the subjects of my work. And somehow, making art then extended the condition of ecstasy into another dimension when, for example, that ecstasy was not present. But also, when Eros didn't work out, the resulting pain could, in the same manner be transformed into the high satisfaction, which can come from creating.

LS: My very first picture was made before the energies that fuel sex and art were differentiated and if I'm careful I can still detect the faint signal that inspired it. The occasion came at the end of a frenzied and fruitless search for the two Playboy magazines that my older brother kept in his bedroom. I was in a state of urgency—so desperate to make my imagination into a thing that I grabbed the Polaroid camera from my father's closet and stood in front of the large mirror in their bedroom with my pants down and my penis tucked between my legs. While the resulting picture was a sharp and somewhat pathetic image of my 13-year-old body without a penis the faint negative image that hovered on the pa-