

Rob Pruitt
Lizzi Bougatsos
w/ Baptiste Pinteaux
Silent Baroque II



Rob and Lizzi met over twenty years ago. Since then, thanks to the friendship, the tenderness and the curiosity they have for one another, they never lost sight of each other. They both still live in New York, where I met with them last winter. In his studio in Prospect Park, Rob is followed everywhere by his dog Gilda; a melancholic giant and a tiny genius, the two of them make for a charming odd couple, and their image alone attests to Rob's sense of irony and his candour as an artist. Lizzi has recently moved to a studio on the other side of the river, on the seventh floor of a Financial District high-rise. She welcomed us amidst an array of found objects, each of which carries a memory or a story. Though she knows some of them better than others – a dress once worn by Yoko Ono, Ivan Julian's piano – it seems as if they were all made for her. Her studio is nowhere near high up enough to see the sky, but she knows when the sun hits the building next door and reflect its light back at her. Similarly, this exhibition is about two people who have found the best angle and the perfect distance to look at each other, and who, whether through skill or divine attention, have found ways to shine light back and forth at one another and be illuminated in return.

Baptiste Pinteaux

BP: I'm going to start recording. I'll start from the beginning, and I'll probably ask you some questions I know the answers to already, but it'll be easier to edit the interview that way. I'll pretend I'm hearing your stories for the first time. So, first of all, could you tell me how you two met?

RP: Is this a question you know the answer to?

BP: Actually, no!

RP: Well, I don't either. [Laughs]

LB: I know my answer :)

RP: Then you should start. I have my own memory, but most of the time, when I'm answering a question in an interview, someone will say to me, "That's not true at all!" So I always end up feeling terrible and worrying that people will think I'm a liar.

LB: Well, I get mixed up between dreams and reality all the time, and I make up these crazy scenarios... But anyway: I met you through Benjamin Sturgill. He was obsessed with your practice. Amy Gartrell was also around.

RP: She turns 50 this weekend.

LB: I know! You were still living with Jonathan [Horowitz] in this pink loft on

Grand Street and Hester, and you had objects and furniture that were quite extraordinary. You had this bed that was a car.

RP: That was Jonathan's, actually, but I had a storybook bed. It looked like a little toy that had been blown up into a life-size version. Like a bed in a dollhouse, but 500 times the size!

LB: Like Margiela's doll's clothing. You also had an enormous Evian bottle, like a sevenfoot-tall Evian bottle.

RB: That was made for a beverage center or a party or something. I still have this habit today, whenever I see something good on the street, I just can't resist dragging it home. I'm such a scavenger that way...

LB: I used to do the same when I lived in Fort Greene. I furnished my whole house with objects from the stoops and everything was so beautiful. But I really have to fight that urge now.

RP: Because you're a real adult!

LB: I just moved in a smaller place and I can't afford to bring anything else up.
[Laughs]

BP: So, you two met more than twenty years ago, but this exhibition is actually the first time you're working together?RP: When Jonathan and I moved to the Catskills right after the 9/11, we bought a big old falling-down house that we painted all-black, inside and out. Then we invited all of our friends to come do projects there, and Lizzy came.

LB: I did an Angelblood performance with Rita [Ackerman].

RP: You played music up a tree. It was so incredible. Hauntingly beautiful.

LB: I think we also made a flag and some merch. And I did many of your flea markets.

RP: Right.

LB: I think the first one was at the Gavin Brown booth at the Frieze Art Fair in London.

RP: That was the most glamorous one, probably. [Laughs]

LB: That was amazing! I got my hair cut by that artist from Herald Street. But was I also involved in your Yoko Ono Grapefruit project? Or was I just obsessed with that? You know, I am a big fan of her, and I vaguely remember being invited to execute one of the ideas, but it's probably just another dream I had...

RP: It was kind of a week-long party setting up the show. I had a lot of people help me install, so I don't remember all that clearly, but I'm going to choose to believe that you were there.

LB: I was definitely involved... [Laughs]

RP: So when Florence asked me to do this show, I thought it would be a great occasion to bring Lizzi with me.

BP: Why now, then?

RP: Well, I just loved Lizzi's last show at Tramps, but it wasn't just that. I mean, there's something about her that's hard to put it into words... I don't want to sound weird or creepy... Sometimes I'm too self-censoring because I just don't want people to get the wrong idea. [Laughs]

LB: Don't worry. [Laughs]

RP: Thank you. Well, when I was little, my sister had all of these dolls and she didn't like to play with them, so I would bring them all to my room, and I just loved playing with them. And there's something about Lizzy... Let's say that some days, if I'm not having a good day, I'll think: "Oh, I hate being myself. I wish I could be somebody else, like Lizzy. She and her life just seem so fun!" She is a great performer on stage, and her show was so good at Tramps, and we have a lot of the same ideas, but the way she executes the ideas is so much better and more romantic than the way I execute the same ideas. And so and so. Part of why I asked her to join me was just out of envy: I just wanted to be close to her, because I'm so inspired by her personally and, you know, artistically, which is like... professionally. That's basically it. You're always looking for ways to keep yourself excited, and I just had a feeling that it would be fun and beneficial for the project and for me.

BP: I was thinking the same thing...

RP: Sorry to interrupt you, but I also had this feeling that Lizzi would get along with Florence [Bonnefous] who is very punk, you know, and that it would make it fun for all of us. Like opening a window and letting some fresh air in.

BP: Right. I like how clear and straightforward you are. Lizzi, your work was initially meant to be shown in a project room inside of Rob's exhibition, but we tore down the walls and took things in another direction. You didn't produce any work together, but I liked how you worked thinking of each other, so in the end, some pieces are difficult to assign to one or the other of you.

LB: I still don't have a complete grasp of it. I think that I'll need to see the finished show to really understand it, but it definitely feels like, even if we didn't roll up our sleeves and make things together, actually we somehow did.

RP: Another feeling that I have is that I sometimes think about how lucky musicians are when they're making music in a studio and they get to work with a producer. They're still making their own work, but it's under the guidance of this other entity. And it's been fun for me to work with you. I don't usually work that way, but it has been fun this time to have a producer, which would be you.

BP: I had fun too. Really. And I like your idea of a producer. To me, too often curating just means smoothing the edges to produce an even, consistent aesthetic. I liked how we tried to find meeting points between three different sensibilities – meeting points, but not compromises. I like the elegance of the show, but also its unbalanced character. It's like your tires or your hotdogs, Rob. Some things don't always fit together.

LB: Right. It just doesn't have to.

BP: Some of your marbles, I just installed right on the floor of the gallery. I was also thinking of Lizzi's monochromes, and suddenly they appeared to me as a kind of twisted answer to modernist works. I know it's really not the starting point of any of your work, but you know, they somehow seemed to me to be a kind of pastiche, parody, sentimental remake... Do you ever think of your work as sarcastic sometimes, as ironic?

LB: That's interesting. I really don't, but I think of Rob's pieces as sarcastic sometimes, or ironic, yes. You know, like the Americana references and all the homages, the Marilyn paintings... I also see a sarcasm in painting the cats and then putting them in the bag.

BP: You did that too.

LB: It's like a put-on. But I feel his sarcasm is moving: it has this lightness of, you know, death and rebirth. RP: You know, I've been lucky enough to be asked to be in shows for a while now, and that interpretation always comes up. But I have to confess that's never the way I think about it. Like honestly, with the cats, I happen to have a dog right now, and I was thinking about the way cats just sit and lick their own fur for hours. It makes me think of painters applying strokes of paint to a canvas. I just love cats.

LB: So do you ever get frustrated that people don't get you?

RP: It used to upset me, but I think I've left that behind. Sometimes I worry that maybe I left it behind in a bad way though! [Laughs] Like I just don't take as many chances as I used to when I was younger. I feel sometimes I just do things that are safer and more boring. Anyway, I always thought I wanted to make my work more boring with each year of my life so that by the time I'm 80, I'll just be like Agnes Martin or Robert Ryman, or something.

LB: I love that. [Laughs]

RP: I know that their work isn't really boring, but they are so focused that it is kind of disturbing... But Lizzi, you also have a brain working in a way that's like out of this world. You know that, right? I don't know anybody like you.

LB: My friends always say that about me.

BP: You're not 80 yet, and Agnes Martin is still a long way off from both of you, but there will be a grid in the show.

RP: Yeah, a red and white tablecloth like the ones that we all know from picnics and Italian restaurants. But this one will be real handmade and crappy – but beautiful! Hopefully. And I think that's a good example of the kind of philosophy we share, that even if something is like found, or mass produced, it can be deeply personal, and you can do things to make it even more personal.

LB: Absolutely. To me everything is personal in the way that I think that objects sort of carry a certain type of energy that represents a feeling or an emotion or a memory that is gone. Like those perfumes I find in my friend's refrigerator. And this feeling-in-object is hard to get at. I've always had this desire, maybe it comes with the fleetingness of performances and of, you know, moments that you can't hold on to anymore.

RP: Sorry, but do people do that? I know people used to keep film in the refrigerator back when they used film cameras.

LB: Well, my friend does. And I remember opening the refrigerator when I lived in Williamsburg and having the satisfaction of seeing nail polish next to film canisters, and I was just thinking, you know, like... I'm a real artist... [Laughs]

RP: That's funny.

LB: Yeah: the essentials. But that's sort of me and you, the pop and the...

RP: The...

LB: The feminine, I guess.

RP: To go back to your first question, well, this isn't how we met, but this is an early memory of Lizzi. I think it happened in Soho. I was walking down the street and she was walking down the street. We collided and she was so excited to tell me that she just had a breakthrough in the studio and that she was making "negative sandwiches."

LB: I had just had this show at American Fine Arts, Co. and Colin [de Land] didn't like it. So he said to me, "Lizzi, what have you done!? You have to do another one."

BP: Right after?

LB: Yes, he was very strange. And I was making those photographs in the dark room at night when I ran into Rob on the street and he said to me, "Oh, you're making negative sandwiches."

RP: Oh, was it me who said that?

LB: You told me that that's what Man Ray called his work, yeah. And I've carried that memory around with me for like 20 years!

BP: That's so funny. You two have candid minds, and I feel sometimes there's something almost childlike about you, but in the best sense of the term: I mean a playfulness and a hypersensitivity.

LP: You're right. Sometimes people just want to ask for your help. I like our title by the way.

RP: I like it too. And I'm happy that it wasn't my idea, because I was able to let it just sort of wash over me: it was very easy just to say "yes." I love it, it just appealed to other things that I just generally like. Like those kinds of unexpected truisms. You know, how nowadays normal people love to hang those plaques on the wall that say...

LB: "Raise me up."

RP: "Every day is a new beautiful thing." You know, like all these positive aphorisms. The title related to all that in a way that wasn't horrible. Do you know what I mean?

LB: Yeah. It wasn't like that British one.

RP: Oh, "mind the gap?"

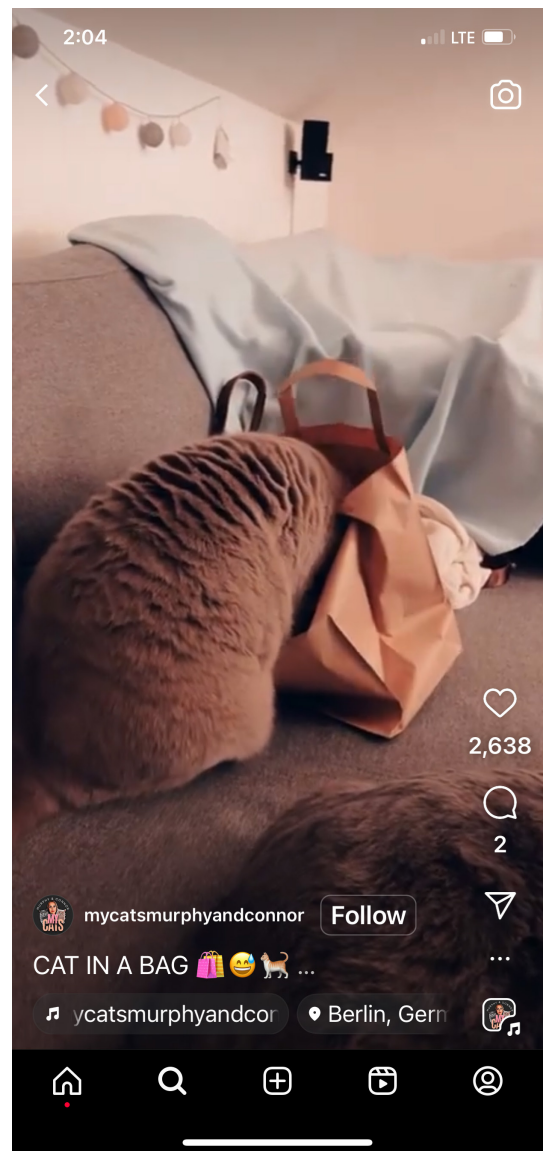
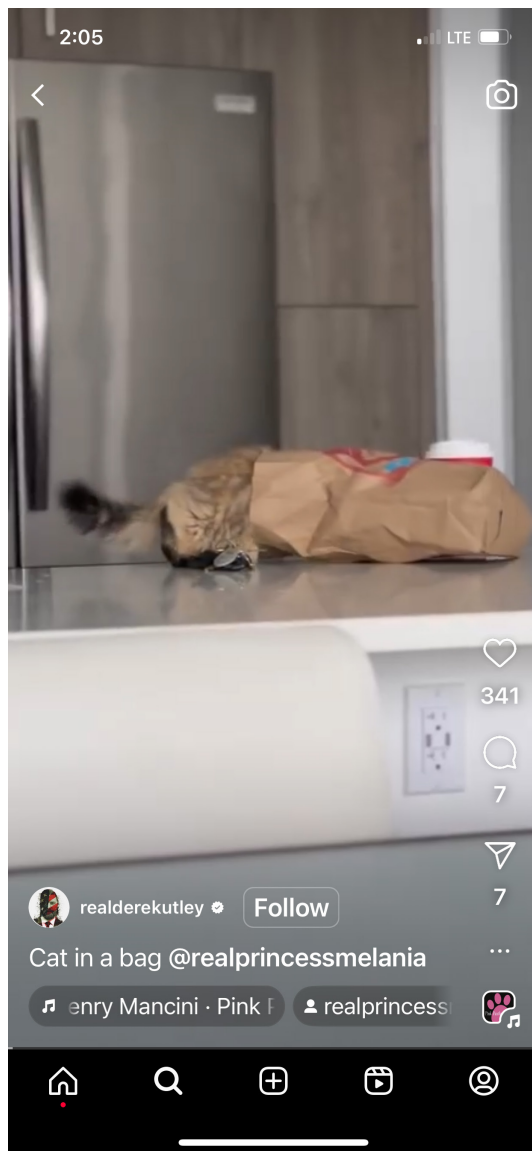
LB: No, no, like...

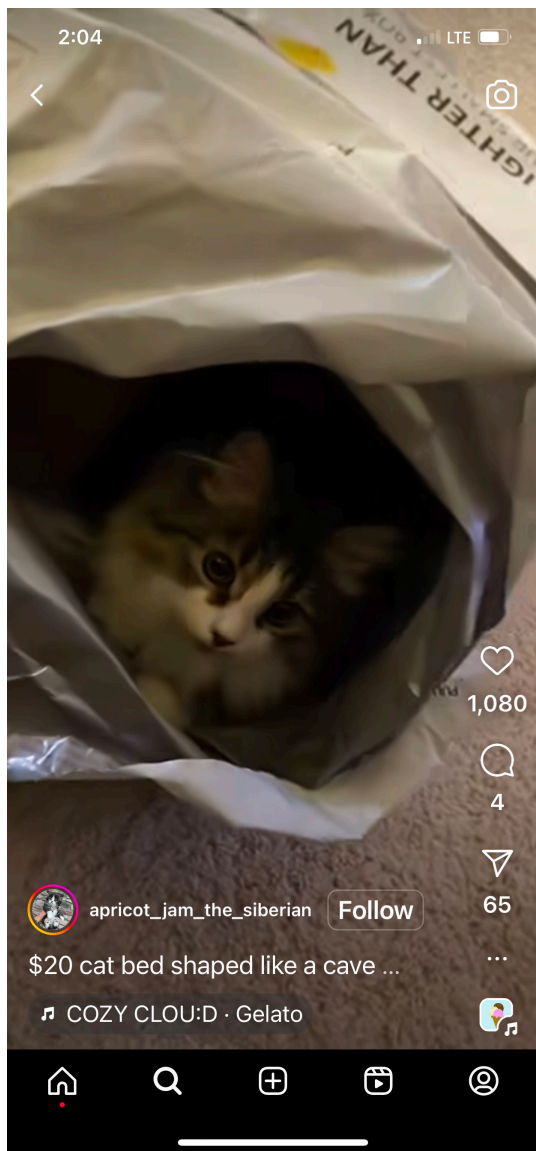
RP: Oh, "stay calm and carry on" or something...LB: "Keep calm and carry on with the crown?"

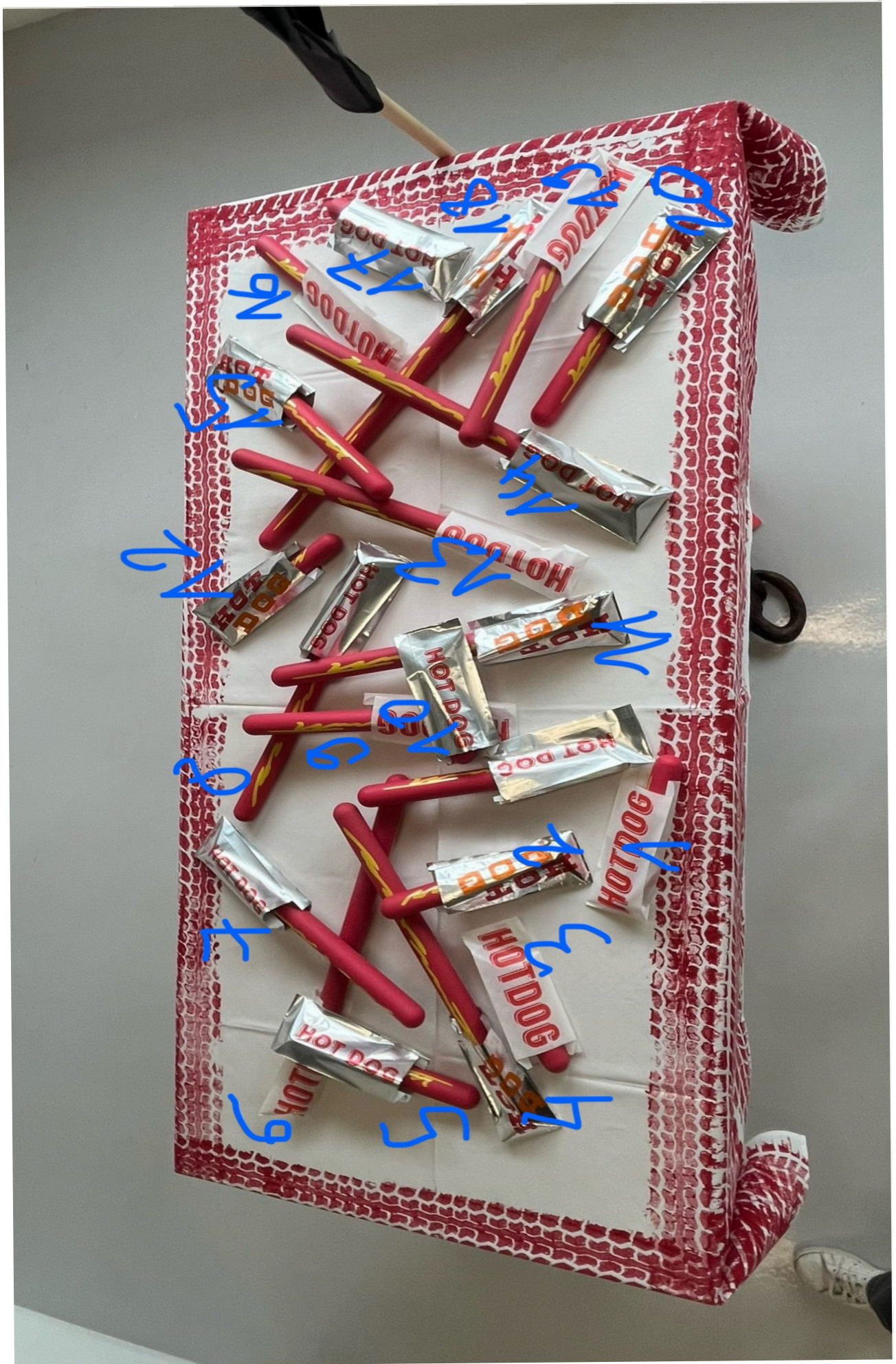
RP: People go so crazy over these kinds of things, and it's always just so baffling to me. But yours had that kind of a similar equation, but it was actually much more poetic and... and not annoying! I just thought, I can sign off on that because it feels real to me. I can believe it, like, I can get behind it.

LB: Right. I would like to say it to a friend, or have someone say it to me.

BP: Well... [Laughs]







PERVERTSITY? a Question Posed by Robert Nickas

WHAT MAKES FOR PERVERSITY?

Perversity does exist by reason of Jesus Christ. To forsake a false system esteemed as true is our duty, as it was His obligation, when He perverted the bestial laws of Judaism to the spiritual lessons of Brotherly Love. Jesus Christ teaches not tribal propagation but selective discipleship. Our progeny must be the infants of Divine Conception, rather than the offspring of vanity.

Imagine a very popular fellow, naked but for a towel wrapped around his loins, who kneels before twelve of his youthful followers, and proceeds to wash their feet respectively with that self-same towel wherewith he is girded. Such a tableau would be considered perverse to-day, yet it is merely the example of Jesus before the Last Supper, which he decreed be repeated amongst themselves. Here too the concept of equality of men is reiterated, as this ceremony of physical expression humbles the Master before his servant, and exalts the servant to his Lord.

Therefore, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say unto you, A new commandment I give unto you. That ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Authored by Jeffrey Casperini
McDermott & McCough

WHAT MAKES FOR PERVERSITY?

Perversity is basically at odds with what's not.
Matt Mullican

WHAT MAKES FOR PERVERSITY?

Stopping too soon or not soon enough.
Herbert Muschamp

WHAT MAKES FOR PERVERSITY?

Vanity,
Peter Schuyff

WHAT MAKES FOR PERVERSITY?

Flavor Station.
Haim Steinbach

WHAT MAKES FOR PERVERSITY?

"Perverse", in *Hebrew's Dictionary*, is defined, among other things, as:

1. deviating from what is considered right or acceptable.
2. wicked.
3. persisting in error or fault; stubbornly contrary.
4. obstinately disobedient or difficult; intractable.

The idea of perversity is a social idea. The definition of the concept of perverse is a social definition. In order to define perverse, there must be a definition (agreed upon within society) of what is not perverse. Since, as an artist, I am both an outsider to and an observer of society, it is impossible for me to know what is truly perverse.

Pat Steir

WHAT MAKES FOR PERVERSITY?

The failure of necessity.
Gary Stephan

WHAT MAKES FOR PERVERSITY?

Will.
Meyer Vaisman

3:55

LTE

Done



6:33

LTE

Add a comment...

50 minutes ago

**cattosbeingcattos**
Suggested for you

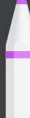
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*New York Collector & Spouse*

We like to buy 'Radical art,
 For it makes us feel smart.
 We know the work's intelligent—
 Yes, the artists say so, they're so eloquent.
 Speaking profoundly to us they adjure,
 Citing words like an ad-man might use in brochures.
 Oh our art's hot, cost twenty grand making us cream.
 But its cool too, for it couldn't ever make a bad scene:
 At fundraisers for 'Republicans,
 Or brunch with the Chair of Young & Rubicam,
 Our Rad art's piss elegance can receive no retorts,
 We love the way it beautifully mimicks annual reports!

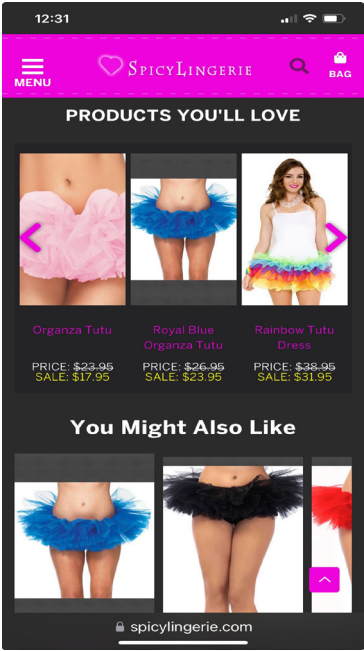


...you go farther back, it gets harder to make a list at all. None of these women is perfect, but that's what makes them, or makes parts of them, work so well. They are equivocal. Their ambiguity – which after all is part of human nature – makes them believable and helps counter

Jane Fonda in *Julia*, 1977

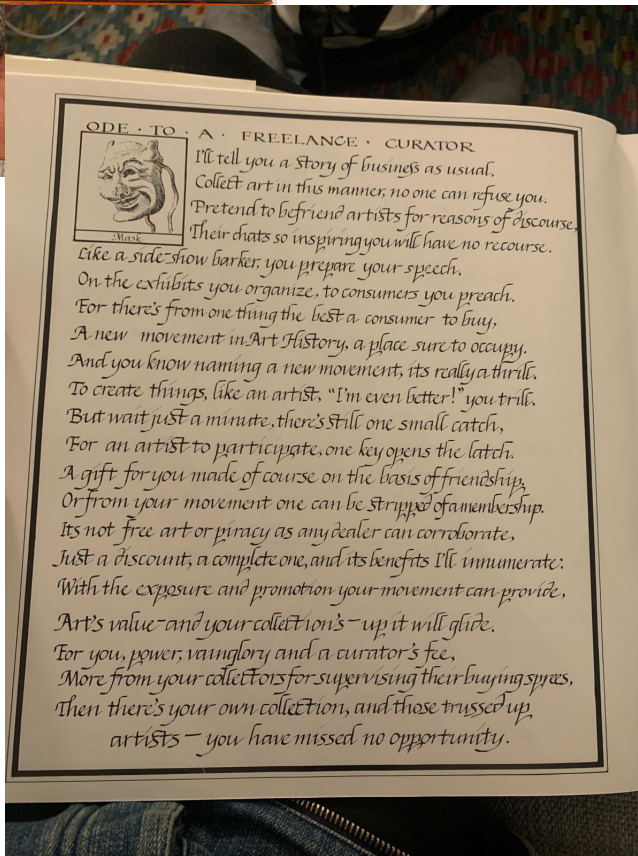
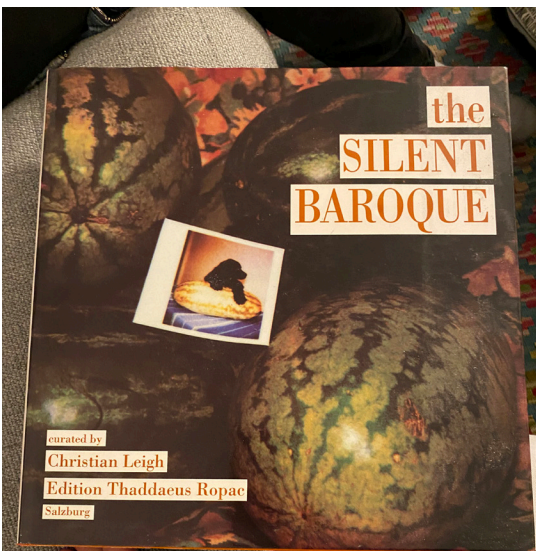


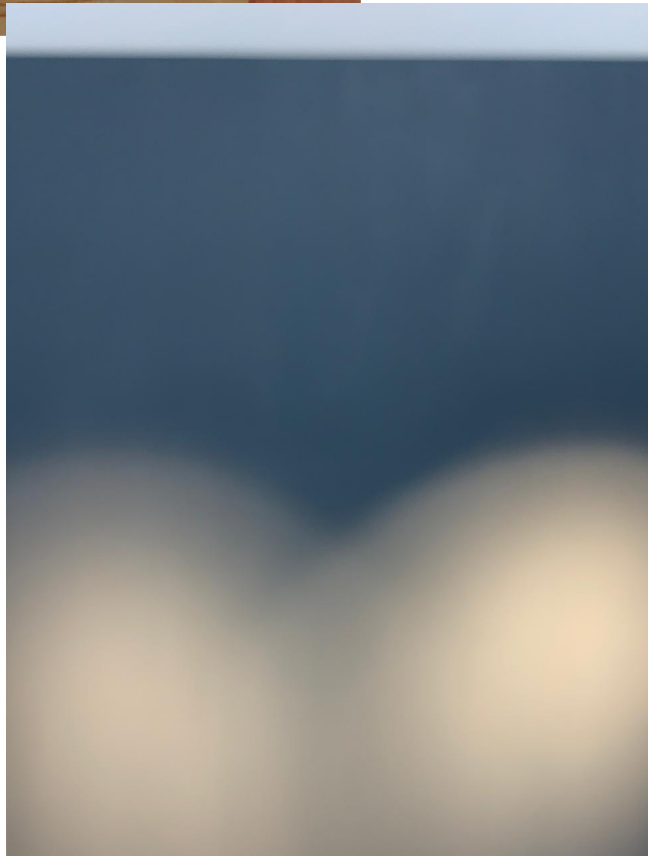


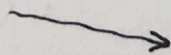
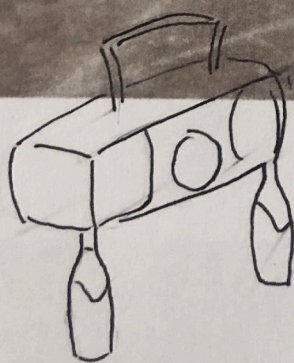










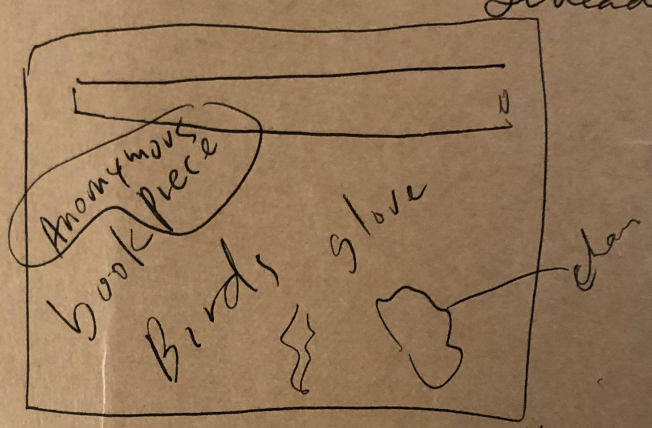


garden
cat ✓
knife?

painting
posters
mylar?

glove
chain
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mylar piece?
- chain for
Sinead

her refrigerator?
book in mylar
mylar for knife



~~look~~

Baptiste bring:
her ref.
cont.

~~Gift bring:~~

DHL
Fed ex

December 9th? Look for recordings
~~Feb may~~
secretary of unknown soldier

candor

"unexpected trivisms"

A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS FROM
WHOLE FOODS WRAPPED IN MYLAR
IS PLACED BEFORE THE SCULPTURE.

[MASSIMODECARLO]

(IN ADDITION TO THIS / AS AN ALTERNATIVE?
A SET OF 365 BRANDED SMALL PLASTIC
BAGS WRAPPED IN MYLAR)

PRU-034-A

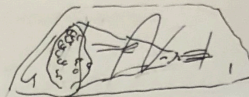
Rob Pruitt

Roberto Duarte / Jose Luis Duran, 2012

Marmo e sacchetto di carta / Marble and paper bag

48.5 x 29.7 x 17 cm / 19 3/32 x 11 11/16 x 6 11/16 inches

Unique



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muslem sa
n/cosmetics
- 1 day
one
Simhan



Bows.

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Rob Pruitt & Lizzi Bougatsos
Help Me Lift You Up
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