

PUPPIES PUPPIES

Interviewed by SAM LIPP and LUIS MIGUEL BENDAÑA from Queer Thoughts, Chicago.

On a brisk July day in Chicago, Queer Thoughts sat down with Puppies Puppies for tea and conversation. Puppies Puppies arrived with croissants and a bouquet of calla lilies.

What does it feel like to be a dog?

Woof.

Will you always be Puppies Puppies or will you someday be Dogs Dogs?

I think eventually one day Puppies Puppies will evolve into Dogs Dogs, but I think for now I like the ephemeral nature of it as a stage in a life cycle. I like that it's a temporal thing.

In your recent show at Oliver Francis Gallery, the surveillance mirrors and sanitizing hand foam brought the immersive environment to a new level of anxiety. Does your work come from a critical perspective or is criticality no longer possible?

I think it comes from the perspective of a ready-made, and you can project upon it if you want, especially because it's just an object that we already see out in the world. I think I try to create situations in which the objects are critical, but I do it in a way that leaves it open for the viewer to make those connections—like the absurdity of how we've come to these preventative measures—like how Purell is creating resistance to antibiotics, so it's actually causing the problem that it's supposed to prevent.

In the installation you presented in the show Queer Thoughts, curated at New Capital, you displayed a scrolling LED sign with the Puppies Puppies rendition of the "I Have A Dream" speech, where you declared your aspiration to feed all of the dogs in the world. Do you still believe in this dream? Does Puppies Puppies believe in egalitarianism and democracy?

I think Puppies Puppies does believe in those things, but just on the surface. I think I was more interested in the ideas behind that artwork rather than actually fulfilling them. I think it's more of a politician's standpoint on those things, someone that would just go out in public and say *I believe in those things*, but not actually do anything.

It's sort of like the Facebook level of democracy, like we are all engaged but we have no power.

Yeah, you show people what you want them to think you believe in, even if you don't actively support those ideas.

How do you feel about Puppy Play?

Puppy play! Wait, what is that? Is Puppy Play like leather?

Like where you dress up as dogs and pant and sniff each other.

The first thing that came up at the show in Dallas was that it was like a "furry" costume, especially with the two beds in the installation. It was kind of creepy, especially with the mirror facing the beds. I think it's definitely an aspect of the artwork.

When did you know that Puppies Puppies was your destiny?

I think it was over a year ago. I got the idea from this guy I knew who went crazy and disappeared into the middle of nowhere. On his Facebook all he left were pictures of kittens, every single image was kittens, and he put "Kittens" as his name. When I heard about that I was like, *that's brilliant!* So I just adopted it and switched it to dogs instead of cats. I loved the idea of someone disappearing and only leaving pictures of animals in their place.

Which contemporary artist, if any, would you take to the puppy park?

Hmm... Who have I been kind of obsessed with recently? It would probably be Darren Bader... or Kitty Kraus.

You were recently overseas, do you think the attitude in Europe is more open to a dog in search of it all?

Yes, definitely, it is more prone to wandering which I think is good. I actually just read this article about dogs in Moscow that have figured out how to navigate the metro system. They know the smell of the stops they have to get off at, so they get on the train and get off wherever they have to go...



"Untitled", Rawhide bone with Thai herbal estrogen supplements, (2013). Image courtesy of the artist, and Queer Thoughts, Chicago.



[All images this page] "Blue" installation view at Oliver Francis Gallery, Dallas (2013). Image courtesy the artist, and Oliver Francis Gallery, Dallas.