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LOVE Speaks to Parma Ham About the X-Rated Exhibition That Seeks to Give Artists a Safe Space for

their Censored Work
one day ago
February 20th 2019



Latex Lucifer: 'Blojob'

You may have seen Parma Ham partying at Electrowerkz donning a signature mohawk, but to coincide with the first edition of Frieze Los Angeles, the die-hard goth, DJ and art curatorial producer has seemingly taken a break from partying to curate *Community Guidelines*. Parma Ham's latest exhibition targets the aggressive censorship that takes place on social media, asking 16 artists to select images and/or films to exhibit that have been, or would be, removed from their social media due it being deemed

unsuitable as per 'Community Guidelines'.

Inevitably, the purpose of censoring is to control, and as a result of it, history can be rewritten; authorities have the power to filter what we consume, which goes against the entire concept of social media and freedom of expression. George Orwell's *1984* was a novel which, although published in 1949, spoke of the harrowing tribulations that would come in the future. A particular part of the dystopian fiction reads, 'And if all others accepted the lie which the Party imposed - if all records told the same tale - then the lie passed into history and became truth. "Who controls the past" read the Party slogan, "controls the future: who controls the present controls the past."'

LOVE spoke to Parma Ham about the X-Rated exhibition below (Community Guidelines is available to see now until March 7th 2019 at Lethal Amounts Gallery, 1226 W. 7th Street, Los Angeles, CA 90017)

In the past, art has been used as a method of snobbery – Monet vs. Pollock, Botticelli vs. Picasso, realism vs. abstract. Do you feel as though social media and new-age technology targets the elitist culture surrounding art?

The artists in the show routinely display their work for free, with their primary source of displaying work via a smart phone app. There is no intermediary taste creator between you (the audience) and the artist when online, whereas galleries and museums will make a choice based on an artworld hierarchy which is often heavily influenced by money. Artists who are popular on social media have received their following democratically in that the audience has chosen to follow them. These artists are also largely self taught, and have sidestepped artschool and degree shows. Not to mention it's generally quite difficult to commodify and exclusify work that's always been consumed for free.

This exhibition rejects the notion of censorship, but do you think a line should ever be drawn? If so, what would said line be, and how have you determined it?

The show identifies a problem where many of these artists cannot display their work online, which is particular issue for artists where this is the main source of interaction with their audience. I recognise that the exhibition might not be suitable for minors, but for that we have parental guidance like there is with film, television and institutional exhibitions. For social media we need a viewing filter that separates adult content and hides it from children. Deleting content and blocking minority artists is not the best solution. This would also take care of the double standards we have; where stars such as @kendalljenner show skin, but when it comes to individuals or artists one would get blocked.





Lewis G. Burton: 'Mound', 2019

The press release reads ‘It is important that we question the authorities who are able to implement control over artists and over our lives.’ Do you think the authorities’ oppression comes from fear of the unknown/unfamiliarity?

One of the great things about social media is that it integrates art into your every day experience. You can be at a café waiting for your friend to arrive, and by scrolling, you will be exposed to cutting edge creativity in art, fashion, make up, design, and music, and it’s all mixed in with images of your cousin's baby and what your colleague had for dinner. It’s incredible that it’s all in one place. But it’s also for this reason where tech companies need to be socially responsible, as their power and control bleeds more and more into every day experience.

I think social media has drawn this arbitrary line in the sand over what they think will be the most agreeable to the most amount of people. The problem with this utilitarian model is it doesn’t support minority groups and blocks anything transgressive. This creates a filter bubble in that the internet user then only encounters information and opinions that conform to and reinforce their own beliefs.

On your Instagram post with Salvia (@salvjia) you recall an encounter where you were walking on a road that has numerous embassies on them, and you were approached by a security guard who asked you to walk somewhere else because you were “strange looking”. Is this a frequent occurrence – people targeting you because of your aesthetic?

Being profiled and treated differently happens all the time. Just before the opening of the exhibition we were visiting the graves of some musicians at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery and were asked to leave on account of the way we looked, meanwhile other visitors were left alone. This profiling also takes place

at airports, and it's a horrible anxiety inducing moment for any trans or gender non-conformer as various aspects of your identity are questioned, judged and even laughed at.

How did the 16 artists that are exhibited react when you asked them to be a part of this exhibition, and explained the concept?

Everyone immediately understood the gripe with censorship, having all suffered because of it, so the necessity of the show was really felt, and for me, it was great to work with that kind of enthusiasm. The other half of the concept is migrating artists who typically show their work digitally into a physical space, and for some of the artists, it was the first time that their work had been printed and installed. I wanted to show that "Instagram Artists" also belong in galleries and museums, and are worthy recipients of artworld opportunities.



Mimi Virus: 'Sacrificial Lamb at the Stake of God'

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