Happy cake meltdown

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HAPPY CAKE MELTDOWN

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
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Master of Fine Arts

in

The School of Art

By
Joshua Spahr
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ABSTRACT

This group of work addresses the complexities that come as a result of stimulation overload. The breakdown of singular focus triggers the demand that everything in your reality be considered simultaneously. The result is a Happy Cake Meltdown, a visual and auditory coping mechanism with no beginning, no middle and no end. It’s about fragmentation and choosing flexibility over specialization. It’s about everything.
HAPPY CAKE MELTDOWN

Happy Cake Meltdown is a reality in multiple channels. As thought should always be progressive, any of the following will be null and void the minute I change my mind. In which case I will disavow any knowledge of Happy Cake Meltdown or its authorship. With that said, here is how it looks inside my head, right this minute.

It’s 3am and your insomnia has resurfaced once again. Amidst a slight haze it appears that you are watching television, or maybe you have indeed managed to go to sleep, either way there is a commercial on. It is that sad and broken Bunny Rabbit. Back in the day he could get work in the children’s cartoons but now he works peddling hardcore pharmaceuticals to the masses. Those who fear the signs of eminent doom as he does will need all the pharmaceuticals they can gather. From now on vomiting will be the accepted cleansing ritual. The once cute bunny dances awkwardly with a forced smile as fine print at the bottom of the screen lists the side effects. Headache, nausea, anal bleeding, impotency, retardation and possible stroke are just a few things you will risk if you wish to consume their fine product.

The commercial has ended and the dancing bunny fades, giving way to the current program. One of those Jesus shows, this one stars Jesus himself. This isn’t your parents’ Jesus. The new Jesus raps, skateboards, and if you crucify him, he will bleed all of your favorite candy. This of course is absolutely necessary if he wishes to snag the large, money spending, youth based target audience. This programming is absurd but not entertaining enough so you change the channel.
Now we are on a cable news channel, a politics gig. The Garden Gnomes have taken over government. Let me clarify this for those who are not familiar with the Garden Gnomes. A gnome is a gnome is a gnome is a gnome is a gnome—same shirt, same hat, same beard, and same shoes. They have no identity to speak of. This has led them to mass hysteria and they will attack in fits of violence, anyone who displays difference. Red is their favorite color. The cowardice of authority has sustained their endeavors, and exploits hysteria for its own ends, but gnomes eventually bite the hand that feeds them. The gnomes can be pacified temporarily with the use of over the counter commodified personas, which they will consume eagerly, thanks to the use of modern market research and manipulation methods. This, however, can last only so long before the gnomes realize that they have been burned and resume their destruction.

Once again our damaged attention span has led us to another channel. It’s a self-help channel for the sad and pathetic. A heavily delusional figure, known only as JOSH, promises you salvation in just a few simple steps. The greatly confused and self proclaimed artist/philosopher/god rants for a minute stating the following. “As always, the gnomes will eventually fail, but they have managed to fracture God Head in the process. The ailing God Head cannot be repaired. You can however, build a new one of your very own, using my very own 5 step program.” A chart quickly flashes to the screen. Step 1- Realize that theory, religion, archetypes, etc, are nonsense and should be disregarded immediately. These are only ideas created by other human beings and are therefore flawed. You can come up with your own thoughts, personal icons and theories.
They will likely be just as flawed, but at least they will be yours. Step 2- Realizing that “Why?” isn’t a hard question. Why- “Because I said so, and I do not need any justification or reasoning to do so.” Step 3- Say to yourself “Every generation gets the creation (art) that it needs and this is the creation I need”. Step 4- Labeling the creation is inefficient and futile. Pop surrealism, pop expressionism, pop pluralism, none are quite right. The human need to identify, categorize and label is a weakness best left to the weak. Step 5- Practice repetition of the medium mantra. Digital is analog is plastic is earth is sound is color is television is all of your favorite candy is truth is the beautiful lie.

You are now finally exhausted, it’s about 5am and you hear JOSH rant incoherently about the virtues of the blue environment versus the red environment. What is he talking about? What is a blue environment? Should you buy his $99.99 self-improvement packet, to find out? Is any of this real? Are JOSH’s promises of a world void of mediocrity and homogenized personality a glimmer of hope, or just another elaborate scheme? maybe a little of both? You now drift off to sleep, taking comfort in the fact that celebrity divorce and fall fashion tips will keep your mind off those pesky limbless war orphans.
plate 1. Happy Cake Meltdown

plate 2. Installation View
plate 3. Cluster Installation

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plate 16. Installation detail
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plate 18. Video detail
plate 19. Blue Berry

plate 20. Bite
VITA

Joshua I. Spahr was born March 27, 1975, in Los Angeles, California. He is the son of his mother, Kathy Spahr and his father, Clayton Spahr. Joshua graduated from Huntington Beach High School in 1994 and then went on to Orange Coast College. He then attended California State University Long Beach where he obtained a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 2000. In 2002 he was accepted to the graduate program at Louisiana State University and is expected to graduate with the Master of Fine Arts degree in May of 2005.