



Andrew Francis

Adam: If you could inhabit any product of binary technology, say a cell phone tower or Google Glass, which would you choose? You can also make one up.

ANDREW: I'd like to say a satellite or some life support system on a spaceship, because it seems like computers belong in outer space in a way that we do not. I wonder, though, if orbiting the earth and taking in data would feel any different from inhabiting a bread maker with a computer chip inside.

Jake: Will you exposition on precision?

ANDREW: I think you just did! In the word precision, you added an extra "s" post-pre, pre-cision. Some curve slipping squarely between prefix and suffix. Misspelling the word "precision" says a lot about the function of precision in art. It seems like artists try hard to make works that are precisely imprecise—that is, works that are just off of a proposed expectation, vibrating between it and the result. And when artists are not doing that, they are working hard to make art that is imprecisely precise—that is, works that throw all sorts of dust in your face, each cloud its own imprecision, but when viewed as a whole some clear message emerges.

Jake: What's the role of exhibitionism in your work?

ANDREW: I'd like to think not much, because I generally hear that term negatively. People who are exhibitionists get more pleasure out of others watching them do something taboo, than the experience itself. I only consider something exhibitionist if I don't get anything out of it or think, "Oh, they're just doing that to get a rise out of me." It's like, "Hey, look at me! I am crossing over the edge! I am on this side. See ME?!" It's kind of reprehensible in that the whole point of going over the edge is that you're acting on independent desire, not because you need someone else's approval or disapproval. Yet, when I watch videos of Paul McCarthy dragging himself through paint or covering himself in ketchup, I'm so affected by the action that the question of exhibitionism becomes irrelevant. Some people really liked watching me dance in my baby clothes, but that action was also me pointing a finger at myself. Shoving my head into the peaches might have been about that too. Even my golden tears could be read as a loud, self-aware love ballad. But I still feel the total necessity of those tears, the presenting of them to Sarah, and the opening of that presentation to others.

To answer your question more succinctly: if exhibitionism stands out as a central part of what I do, then something

needs to shift, but only a little, because exhibitionism isn't that far from actually leading people across lines that need to be crossed.

Noa: Can you say a few words about the importance of spending time with one's art after a day in the studio, OR when do you think you are most intimate with your work?

ANDREW: I don't know if there is a "most" kind of intimacy. It's like with a lover; even in those stretches of time where you feel totally disconnected, that disconnection generates its own particular intimacy, which when reflected upon is just as intense.

I experience different kinds of intimacy with my work, coinciding with different stages in the arc of making it—like when I'm only aware of the pleasure in working the materials at hand. Or when I'm able to see all the components of a work-in-progress but have no idea what they're moving towards. Or when a finished piece shows me something I didn't expect to see. There's an intimacy too, partway through, when I still have the power to destroy it or leave it unfinished; and another once it's finished and nothing I can do can keep it from being in the world.

Moments of intimacy only happen when I'm able to let go of my attachment to my initial impulse to make it. It's paradoxical, because those sparks of excitement form the basis of how I justify pursuing one project over another, or anything at all. But all the attention I pour into nurturing that spark—wondering if it's really interesting, if my materials choices fit, etc.—pulls me away from actual intimacy. When faced with pestering doubts, I return to my inspiration-in-amber as a crutch to keep me going. I suppose when you're limping around, you develop an armpit-intimacy with that crutch, too. Still, leaning on the past pulls me away from the moment I want most to be in.

Omri: How do you feel about the misalignments of intentions and results in your process?

ANDREW: Great! I work with certain intentions in mind, but the processes I develop are often weird, which means that along the way pieces skew and change. In the upside-down man, I would have never imagined the power of all those twists and folds, but there they are energizing the whole figure.

Lately, I've been more open to drafting, like a writer. Some part of me still believes that art is instantaneous, that we're all action painters, but over the last year I've found more value in trying something out and then making a second, third, and fourth attempt. The misalignments allow me to move from draft to draft.

Writing this, I wonder if deviations I'm thinking of are actually built-into my intention, and that's why I'm so comfortable with them. If you expect mistakes, can you really call them that? Maybe I should work more towards misalignments that make me uneasy.

Morgan: In your art, are you a top or a bottom?

ANDREW: Whichever, I just want to have sex!

I like rolling around. I like sex when I lose orientation, or maybe what orients me is the sensation of the other person's edge. The point of sexual contact becomes a new gravity, independent from the feeling of pushing your weight onto someone else, or being stuck between the ground and their body. My fantasy is to be able to do that while making art and for my work to do that to other people. For different works to touch people in different ways, so by the end you say "Wow, Art!" just like you say "Wow, Sex!"

But maybe you were just asking about shirts and pants.

Sb: Taking into account the inherent sappiness of plaster casting, do you imagine your occupation as a body-nostalgic mold maker of sorts will, in some way, soil any sense of true intimacy that I'd like to think you're more interested in?

ANDREW: Yes. Sappiness. While I don't think there's anything sappy about plaster casting in general, there is something sappy about replicating the body, as a cheap attempt to fix it in time, away from death. Watch out when plaster turns into bronze! What I think has saved me so far, as you've said yourself, is that in casting I violate the body and treat it as a material that can be stretched, torqued, and forced to do things that would maim a living person. By approaching a body as just another material, I put some distance between the work and the nostalgic body you refer to. Hopefully, the inherent sappiness becomes a part of a more complex whole that tolerates and is, to some extent, energized by it.

There are many ways to approach the kind of body I imagine, and it would flatten that fantastic body if I only approached it from my current method of distorted plaster casting. All those misshapen forms would normalize each other, allowing the romantic aspect to soak cloyingly through. You're right to unite sappiness and occupation in the same sentence.

Shawn: How much of your work has to do with reversal and polarization of bodily functions?

ANDREW: If my work is about that, it's because there is some desire inside my body to be different than it is. And it's desperate. Sure, it would be nice to have wings, but if my kidneys can become ears and visa versa, then I'll take it! The imagined body squirms inside my actual body, and it can be lonely.

There's such a striking difference between the formal inflexibility of my body in this lifetime, and the flexibility suggested by Darwin's theory of evolution. The possible permutations of the same fundamental forms are endless, and as much as my mind can make sense of that fluid variety, my body remains stuck and becomes frustrated. Reversal and polarization are one expression of that frustration. I asked my friend Leora about this, and she wrote back:

I actually don't think your work has as much to do with "reversal and polarization" as it does with a kind of... double



function, a holding things together (squeezing them between thumb and forefinger until they fuse), and the sensory/cognitive dissonance and/or virility that results.

We've talked about multi-stable perception before, right? It seems to me that your work often feels motivated by a greedy hungry impulse:

"Can't I be both?!!!" it seems to say, "Can't I be a leg and an arm? Can't I be tempting and repulsive? Can't I be sex and death? Can't my work be your food? And can't you hold these contradictions with me? Can't I ask you too much?"

Becky: If negatives and positives were people, what would they be like? Do you identify with one more?

ANDREW: I think every object we perceive has a negative counterpart, and every negative space can be imagined as full. Real form lies in suspension between the positive and its negative and the negative and its positive. But I appreciate the playfulness of the question, so let's go for it!

You can't see the interior of a positive, and interior is all a negative is. There is no outside, except the positive shape that defines the boundaries of the negative space. You can't ever really see a negative. As soon as I crack an egg, all that's left is the shell. I can put the shell back together and imagine the negative existing inside it, but no sooner do I open it again to get a closer look than the negative spills into the negative of the airspace in the room.

I imagine positives to be opaque, superficial, and solid. Negatives are more exposed, unable to hide their motives, desires, fears, and emotions. Negatives are effusive. They spill out. Negatives are people who, when you crack them open, give off an immediate strong whiff of their essence, which dissipates and can only recover itself once they've closed themselves off in the structures that define them. A solid no matter how you crack it remains impenetrably itself. I want to be penetrated and therefore seen, but am too often a positive. It seems like it takes infinite energy or none at all to oscillate between the two.

Roxanne: Andrew, is there a relationship between the meditative, masking state generated by casting and the dancing/altered/transcendent persona in your performance work?

ANDREW: I like being in my body, whether I'm slathering plaster on something or dancing in front of people, so the relationship is pretty direct. My dance performance isn't so different from how I dance socially. I rarely find someone who I can really dance with in a back-and-forth way, so I generally just show-off whatever moves pop out of my body and get excited about potentially catching someone's attention.

Tal: Andrew, what are your doubts, if any, about the power of a single object? I mean this in two ways: the power of sculpture, as opposed

ANDREW: While your question is being posed generally, I feel like it's also a response to how my upside-down man was presented in the center of the exhibition space, without any other work of mine to contextualize it. The piece might have

to other mediums, and the power of one autonomous object in a space, as opposed to multiple.

grown more powerful around other artworks, but at the same time, it wasn't alone. It shared the space with Noa's sculptures and Adam's video, and I was excited by how they affected each other. There's still a place for curation, and I don't think we always need to control our own contexts. As much as I want to introduce people to the way I see my work by presenting it all together, I'm equally interested in group exhibitions where it can bleed and shift into other artists' work and vice versa.

An object is never singular. There's always some context, even if it's just the memory of what you ate for breakfast. There are objects that pretend to be singular, that aspire to be separate and alone, but I have doubts about things that exude this odor. My upside-down man was the last to leave the space when we deinstalled the show, and it did look absurdly majestic, like a king in a room-sized kingdom with no subjects. I didn't like it. I also question the aspirations of installation art, where an artist creates a whole world of objects and other elements so strictly interrelated that the introduction of another artist's work shatters it. An over-determined installation can be as fragile as an object aspiring towards singularity. So I think my doubts lie more with the proposal of singular identity itself, regardless of whether it rests in a single object or an installation.

