

Oli Rodriguez

The Papi Project Project Statement

One Paragraph Statement:

The Papi Project is an interdisciplinary project including 3D photographic sculptures, video, photography and performance. The project vacillates between exploring the effect of technology on gay/queer hook up culture as well as a simultaneous conceptualization of generational loss. The landscape photography investigates locations of previous cruising spaces. With the internet made accessible to the public in 1993 and the concurrent generational loss of queer/gay men to the AIDS epidemic, these locations of cruising were symptomatically reduced then lost. Thus, this project spans the years from 1978-93, roughly the era of the AIDS epidemic in America. The video component initiates collaboration with men that have survived the epidemic. I seek out men who had sexual relations with my Papi (dad) and ask them to have any mediated contact with their consent. These men have full documentative power (videoing us), as well as full power of dictating our interaction. While the portrait photography functions as archival art, which depict the queer nuclear family. The 3D sculptures appropriate from the archive of portrait photographs, reviving these documented historical moments into a fragmented physical contemporary space.

Full project proposal.

My work parallels time frames pivotal in existence, roughly pushing ideas of consent through incorporating the public as a collaborator. The Papi Project incorporates public collaborative performances, videos, photography, archival photography and sculpture. This project investigates a simultaneous absence of my dad and I. As a participant in the gay hook up culture of the late 70s, 80s and 90s. The performance video component will be my (non)sexual encounters with men that had sex with my gay father, who died in the early 90s during the height of the AIDS epidemic. This inherently becomes a dialogue with the rise of technology, which in conjunction with the epidemic abolished many of these green spaces and public sites of sexual interaction. In these videos, however, they initially began with my dad but ultimately move into the dialogue of the mass devastation of queer men during the AIDS epidemic.

The photographic component involves capturing the contemporary remains of 70s, 80s,

and 90s public hook up spots in Chicago and other cities. This component was documented with 16mm film, to utilize a popular 80s medium in the reconstruction of this era. In addition to reshooting these landscapes, there is an archival component where his photographs will be used as a slideshow with a soundtrack, similar to Nan Goldin's screenings of her work from queer culture in 1980s NYC. The archival photographs will also be printed as diptychs and triptychs. Resurrected from this imagery selected objects will be made into 3D sculptures: cat water bowls, party remnants, a bust and a collection of cigarettes and alcohol. These objects will exist as signifiers of a memorial, remains that are extracted from the two dimensional to become apart of the three dimensional living world.

The performative video component of the project involves posting on gay/queer oriented online hook up websites for men. On these sites, I submit the following paragraph with an image of my father:

I am looking for men who had sex with my dad. He was known as Troy, Peter, Pedro and other aliases in the late 70's/80's/early 90s, before his death from complications of AIDS in '93. I'm his son and I want to hook up with you. I'm open to dinner, roleplay and other interactions, ideas? Below is his picture. If you had relations with him, please contact me

I am seeking to make a sexual and nonsexual connection with these men who believe that they at one or more times had intimate relations with him. I am interested in the present loaded contemporary landscape of these photographic sites and exploring the remnants, the changes, the barrenness and the historically lost subtext. These are often green spaces no longer identifiable nor connected to their historical cruising roots.

I have shot at least 25 different Chicago sites. I have launched Internet ads nationally and am encouraging participation in New York, Chicago, Miami and Key West, Florida; however this is primarily a Chicago based project. Given that my role is negotiated by the respondent, and they decide the actions to do with our encounter/my body, as well as they have complete control of the video documentation.