

## *Pink Thing*

This is not your mother's pink. Nor is it your hunk's junk. Brett Reichman's masterful oil and egg tempera painting, his *Pink Thing*, is a perversion of the historic cod undergarment, fantasized to hyperbolic scale. The cloth cock coils snakelike; pinched, pulled, and jerked on itself. It is sadistically choked by rope at the perceived foreskin, which exacerbates the object's anthropomorphic qualities. Indeed the face seems to grimace and pucker in anguish, its testicles scooping under its body as feet would; a modification of the fetal position.

At once glamorous in its sensual rendering, warm and cool lights swimming throughout the body, it is simultaneously grotesque; more visceral, or cerebral than the hot-blooded flesh it impersonates.

The hyper-saturated pink is a sickening concoction of flesh and bubblegum, taffy and skin and velvet and Barbie all over: a queen's palette on steroids! A highly fetishistic image, Reichman's thing is lavishly presented atop pretentious white linen, theatrical curtains sweeping aside as if a grand *dénouement* were at play.

This painting is nothing short of a post-modern masterpiece, should such a thing be possible. The work is a shrewd amalgamation of post-modern ideologies that are as tightly wound together as the enmeshed satin folds of the *trompe'loeil* phallus. Indeed, *Dénouement* seems to be explicitly what the artist intended. At this desperate outpost of art's meta-narrative timeline, what image could be more prescient than a giant dick, crawling on its underside, cuffed and gagged to satirize a couple decades worth of philosophizing Baudrillard's simulacrum? Second, Reichman seems ambivalent on the legacy of camp. While generously celebrating the thrill of artifice in all its holy queerness, the gesture here begs the question of what thresholds remain unchallenged on the horizon for Sontag's vision of the knowing tacky and too, too much? Lastly, the subject-object dichotomy is also subject to outright ridicule. There is sneakiness with the in-your-face use of the fabric as cock object as subject. Here that binary dynamic of form and content, forever a polarizing stalemate - wrestles itself in a frustrated knot.

Despite the relentless aggression of the work- its rigid technical execution coupled with its high academic aim, there is an implicit emotional provocation tied to the work's subject. The work is a staunch investigation of the politics of gay male sexuality. For all its reputed post 2000's visibility, gay sexuality remains an enigmatic locus. With Reichman's painting, we are invited as viewers to cruise an extroverted façade, not to love it wholly and deeply. The sexuality contorting before you here is a beautiful, strong thing - truly, but it is experiencing a painful self-induced incarceration. It is a forceful critique of mythical sublime gay sex, while still employing the language of queer aesthetics: acknowledging the potential for that ephemeral sublimity.

The work is bound together neatly by its seemingly understated title. However, it seems appropriate to ponder Lacan's formulation of "the thing", that interstitial life force - that unfathomable integrity of humanness so susceptible to exploitation, which was carefully articulated by the artist in this exceptional studio effort.

Painting is dead? Go screw off!

- Daniel Samaniego  
2010

