

MAGAZINE

Far Flung: The Amazingly Far-Reaching, Far-Out Mind of Cosimo Cavallaro

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Throughout history, a select class of artists have been marked by both fierce opinion and a sheer unrelenting strength of vision. Cosimo Cavallaro could arguably be included among men like Jacques David, Caravaggio, and Francisco Goya in that his willingness to speak out in the name of

personal freedoms is equal to his desire to stand firmly at the center of his own aesthetic.

Cavallaro is not an artist for whom the world is without burden, as there are no obviously correct philosophies. However, it is the desire to explore internally and outside at the world around him that informs his art-making. This is made particularly clear in his choice of subject matter not meant to be glamorized or even viewed for long periods at a time. Rather, Cavallaro wants the viewer to not only see the work, but to also experience the pieces viscerally through sight, smell and sound. To see famous model Twiggy wearing a jacket made entirely out of cheese would be striking enough; but, one can imagine that the cheese coat had an equally moving olfactory presence. Working with a variety of ephemeral materials including jam, candy, chocolate, sprayed cheese, ham, and the occasional inflatable latex sculpture for good measure, Cavallaro's primary artistic concerns derive, not from the impulse to commemorate or to fetishize, but to ask vital human questions that consistently address our political and social precepts: societal structures largely built upon archaic notions of hierarchy. Cavallaro professes in no way to have the right answers, if there are indeed any answers at all. Instead, he provides viewers with increasingly more interesting and complicated questions.

Cavallaro is quite in tune with the Happenings trend of the 1960s, first coined by performance art pioneer Allan Kaprow in 1957 referencing a performance, event or situation meant to be considered an art form. Happenings took place anywhere from basements to studio lofts and even street alleyways, and were often multidisciplinary with a nonlinear narrative and depended on the active participation of the audience. These works were often built around strategies of imagination rather than commercial value, a theme present in Cavallaro's work.

Particularly refreshing is how Cavallaro speaks directly to the cultural trend of art as strictly a commercial venture. In much the same way that Michael Asher pumps a gallery full of stale air and invites viewers into the space to experience the transformation, Cavallaro slices pieces of ham and throws them over his shoulder onto a giant ornate bed. The work is smart yet discriminating, touching on a variety of issues including the American meat-driven appetite; voyeurism and fetishism; and postmodernism and surrealism. Cavallaro might even ascribe to the dream that the artist can and must live a Renaissance lifestyle, giving himself wholeheartedly to his work without concern for money if the work is to remain honest. Of course, this rarely happens today because we live in a consumerist economy and art, like gold or fossil fuels, or anything else a person can sell, is a valuable and viable commodity, and this must be taken into account.

Cavallaro does not simply dream for his pieces to be admired and purchased for a hefty sum, but he moreso strives to simply to sit unseen and untouched in some collector's climate controlled storeroom awaiting rotation, and given the art world's predisposition to support artists who seem to make work either as masturbatory exploration, or as a part-time "trust-fund baby" exercise when they're not busy travelling the world trying to appear glamorous, Cavallaro's uniquely express downright grotesque visual pronouncements that are developments in the discourse regarding contemporary culture in the world of modern art.



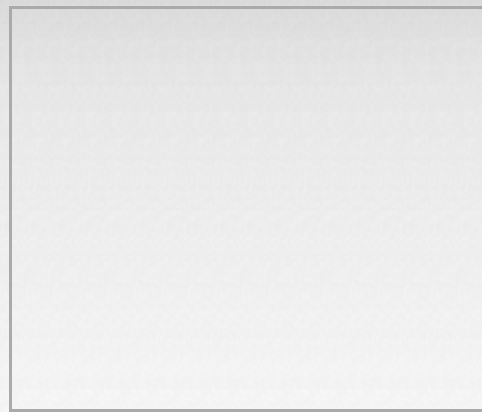
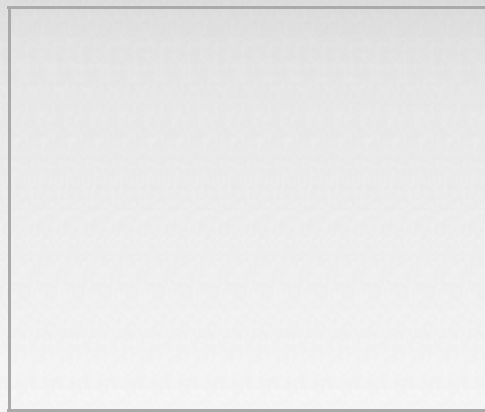
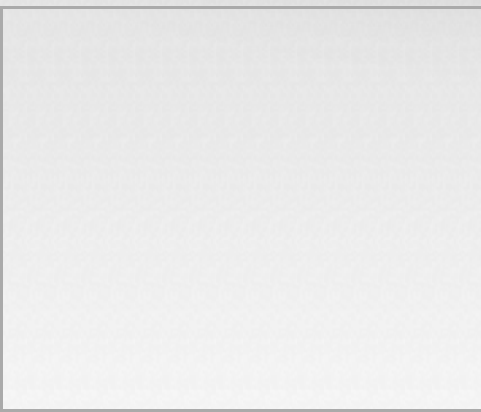


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