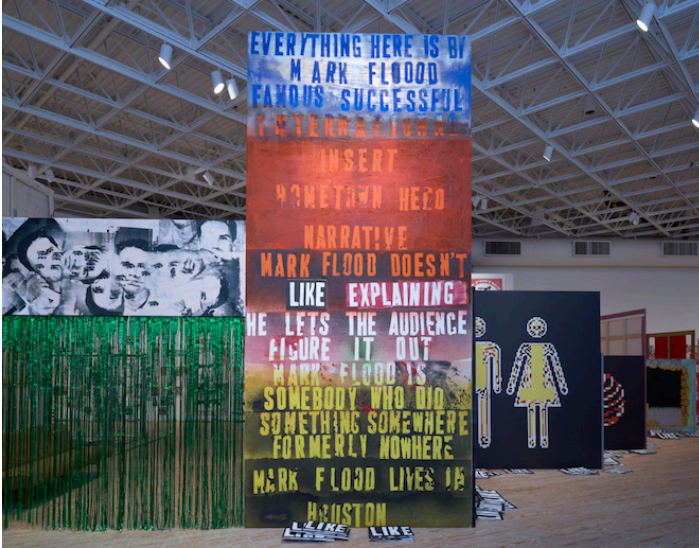


THE DIARY OF MARK FLOOD, PART TWO: HOME ALONE

by Mark Flood



Mark Flood. (Courtesy of the artist)

Sunday, April 17

1.

I've thought about hiring a fake crowd for my CAMH opening. I hear they get hired for political rallies, to make political candidates look more popular than they really are.

Maybe they should protest something. I've made protest signs before, and I like doing it. It's easier to have a reason to make a protest sign than it is to have a reason to make a painting.

I made protest signs to ridicule the KKK, and the media, back in the '80s, when the Klan used to march in Houston. And I made them to ridicule the candidates, and the media, in 1996, when the Republican National Convention was held in Houston.

I remember in 1996 the protest leader frowned at my protest sign, DESTROY THE ENVIRONMENT, CREATE NEW JOBS.

I swear he complained: I don't like this, it makes people think.

For CAMH, I have no clear vision of what the protest signs might say. One idea I had was that they should copy some of the negative comments people made online about my Supreme skateboard decks.

My decks were text paintings that said MOM DIED or DAD DIED. They got a lot of hate, really great, stupid teenage hate. Some cleverly commented that Mark Flood should die.

MARK FLOOD SHOULD DIE. That might make a good protest sign outside my exhibition.

But I'm already trying out so many things at CAMH, I'm not sure this is the time. Also, one of my assistants thinks some other artist has already done it. Ugh.

2.

I went over to my Wakefield studio. Two of my assistants, Barry and Edgar, are finishing up 5,000 LIKE paintings there.

The LIKE paintings are handmade. They spray black spray paint through stencils onto 12 x 16 white cotton canvases. By this time, the much-used stencils are encrusted by dark growths of accumulated paint.

This all got started when I made a painting about Facebook's tie to the CIA. I made the first eight LIKE paintings to go with it, and leaned them on the floor under the CIA painting.

At that opening, people picked up the LIKEs, and moved them. Daily Facebook activity had erased their reservations about touching art! I thought that was something special.

I tried it again in Miami, during the Basel frenzy, leaving hundreds of LIKEs stacked at various fairs. And again, the LIKEs walked and I got dozens of pics of them in new locations.

So at CAMH we're going to have 5,000 LIKE paintings, and I assume the public will just pick them up, and put them wherever.

Some people will try to steal them. I told the guards to say No to the LIKE thieves, but not to actually shoot them.

3.

I give a LIKE painting to each person who visits my studio, and I always name the LIKE painting after them, Mona's LIKE or Truman's LIKE.

People may interpret this to mean I like them. But the work is actually about

how much I'm disgusted by Facebook, and its creepy corporate colonization of all human reality.

When a LIKE painting comes up at auction, I'll know who's selling it...

4.

I dug through boxes of old paperwork from the ANR warehouse. I need to make a selection of '80s and '90s memorabilia, to install on CAMH's walls.

Visitors, if they wish, will be able to go down the rabbit-hole of my complicated past by browsing my memorabilia. Flyers, receipts, photographs, reviews...

I get lost in the rabbit-hole myself. Even an old utility bill can make me start staring into space.

Get it together, Flood! Just make sure nothing is too embarrassing to yourself, or anybody else, and throw it in the box!

My favorites are the pages of my old press kits, where I've crossed out my old name and written my new name in the margin.

I like to say I've had seven names but the truth is, I've lost count of how many names I've had.

Digging in these boxes, I've several times come up with puzzling clippings of articles by strangers. Then I slowly realize....that's me...I wrote this!

5.

My personal assistant's assistant called about the cage that I want for my opening, where I could put the two surrogates I've hired to pose as me and my brother. The assistant said that they looked for a cage for me to use, like a go-go dancer or some BDSM dungeon, but they couldn't find one in Houston. They had to go to L.A. or New York. They weren't sure they could get here in time.

I told them to look for animal cages... maybe shark cages?

Monday, April 18

1.

I tried to ignore the heavy rain, since this is the week we're moving all the work to CAMH, and we had lots of prep work to do.

The assistants have to go to ANR storage, to stage paintings for ANR to

move. Then we have to wrap art at Party Tyme studio for Crateworks to move.

But it turned out we were in the middle of a huge flood, no relation, and the roads are impassable.

2.

My PA has found the celebrity shark cage I want for the opening. It's actually something called Lucky Dog Modular Welded Wire Kennel Kit, but it's perfect for my purposes.

If only we can get it here on time, and I bet we can!

I've written the surrogates to make sure they're willing, and I haven't heard back, but I'm getting the cage anyway, because I'm sure I can talk them into it.

At the least, they only have to get in the cage for 20 or 30 minutes...

The rest of the time, customers can get in the cage, and take selfies...

I've seen it all on my visits to Alcatraz, where tourists pose in the prison cells...It'll be a nice photo-op for this camera-crazed world.

Tuesday, April 19, 2016

1.

Because of the flood, everything's pushed back a day. No big deal. I drove four assistants out to the north side airport area to ANR, where I store tons of my art.

The north side is where the flooding was worst. My buddies at ANR showed me photos of giant rivers that used to be creeks, and told me about their friends who lost everything.

2.

We had to pull great big paintings from the ANR stacks. One of the things "Gratest Hits" means to me is great big paintings. They're the only thing that looks good in the great big CAMH space.

One of these paintings is The Warrior, made with lace and acrylic. It's 14-feet-tall. It took six of us to pull it off its shelf and lay it on its side, so it can get in the truck. I remembered how, ten years ago, I painted it from a scaffold in one day.

It doesn't matter how big they are, or how small, a lace painting takes one day

to paint. You can prep for weeks but when you paint it, the process takes one day. You have to follow a recipe, like you're baking a cake.

3.

The next challenge at ANR storage was finding the EAT HUMAN FLESH folder. We found it.

I've told the EAT HUMAN FLESH story so many times that I'm sick of it, but in brief:

I made a painting, on paper, with that caption, plus a picture of a teen Idol. It was the late '80s, when I was using slogans like MASTURBATE OFTEN, DRINK BLOOD, KILL YOUR PARENTS, etc. The paintings were pseudo-advertisements, that captured the advertising form without being comfortable or familiar.

I gave it to a bass player, who was living with a nest of punk rock drug dealers. As you may or may not know, drug dealers often have advanced taste in art. They hung EAT HUMAN FLESH over their sofa, looking out from their picture window, onto the mean streets of their dicey hood.

The police were monitoring their activities. And it so happened that members of a very advanced branch of Santeria had recently cooked and eaten a spring breaker college student, in Matamoros, just down the road...

So the clever cops put two and two together and got five, and they busted the place, bringing in all the local news crews. Soon EAT HUMAN FLESH was famous, and I was doing interviews as the Satanic Artist on the nightly news.

No charges were filed.

The police took the painting and I never saw it again, but I made ten copies for a show, to try to cash in on the publicity.

Thousands came, but no one bought. Welcome to Houston!

Wednesday, April 20

1.

The CAMH guys had strips of cardboard on the floor, that mapped out where the wall of giant paintings was going to go. This made it very easy to see what we were doing.

So my biggest worry, that the wall wouldn't fit, went away.

ANR and Crateworks had already delivered most of the art by the time I got to

the CAMH. We spent the day unwrapping paintings and leaning them around the room.

2.

Here's some of the art, with bland professional commentary...

Deutsche Bank 37

A few years ago, I got inspired by seeing the Deutsche Bank logo, tattooed here and there on the white flesh of the tent-womb of Frieze New York.

When I strapped that involuntary subject onto my lab table, and started experimenting, the results were fabulous.

My process, which is low-tech and stupid, but patiently developed, mutates corporate logos in a thousand directions, ranging from insect exoskeleton to alternate universe modernism.

You could argue that I am being all too cooperative with corporate fascism, or that I am subtly subverting it. By the time such conversations are possible, I feel my work is done.

Inscribed [Anderson Cooper]

I understand why viewers assume I hate the celebrities whose faces I mutilate, but it's not really about hate. It's about how one finds one's own feelings reflected, in certain photos of celebrities, and how with a little stretch here, and a tuck there, self-expression blossoms forth.

Celebrity faces are how every person in this culture experiences their emotions. So I allow myself, and everybody else, to soak our tense realities away, in the warm hot-springs of Anderson's sad eyes.

In this particular photo, there was a vertical tension line in his forehead, exactly the kind of wrinkle that Botox is designed to remove from the foreheads of celebrities.

I decided to develop that tension line until it was a nasty Otto Dix WWI scar. The scar leads to an abscess, where modern viewers can locate the anxiety we experience in the trenches of today...

Pink Glow

I haven't had much hate about my digital Rothko Derivatives from the art world, at least not that I've heard. But the voices in my head won't shut up about how wrong it is to make them, and what a bad person, and a rotten artist I am.

So I sneak around in my Mac after midnight when I'm too tired to care what the voices say, and develop these works.

I'm obsessed. The Rothko formats and the Rothko projects are too interesting to pass by. Isn't it strange that staring at certain shapes and color combinations can make you have intense feelings?

I hop over the cemetery fence, because I need to play on that playground.

2.

The first thing that actually got installed at CAMH was my mural, Drone War.

It was challenging to install, because not all of the seven 14-foot-tall canvases were perfectly square. The preparators said that some of them were shaped more like strips of bacon.

We also started work on The Edge of Fame, a.k.a. the Lindsay Lohan wall. I have 6,500 clippings of Lohan covering every phase of her career, which I bought from an obsessed fan.

Published photographs are the basic unit of fame. I think displaying quantities of a star's published photographs is a way to look at fame, and think about it.

We have to pin up enough to go 30 feet long, 6 feet high. The walls of CAMH have so many coats of white paint that the assistants can't get the pushpins in. I told them to tape pennies to their thumbs, and think about the pioneers. But they decided to use rubber hammers.

When I showed The Edge of Fame in NYC it was wildly popular. Everyone stood around talking about Lindsay. I wish they had been talking about me, but I'll take what I can get.

Thursday, April 21

1. We started assembling pieces of the wall. We joined together pairs of paintings, at right angles, with big brackets.

We also studied the vertical diptychs. They need to be fastened together very securely. I'm worried an upper panel might fall down and kill a customer.

2.

Hours later, the wall started to take shape. It looks like it may be cool. You walk into CAMH and face this big facade of art, then you go backstage through a passageway. You end up in this backstage art zone, with a lot of

sofas and memorabilia, and probably some dim light.

As I mentioned, my operating theory is that nobody wants to be in the audience anymore. Everybody wants to be backstage, licking glitter off Miley's tits, or rubbing Nick Jonas's cock through his greasy leather pants.

Mysterious, glamorous, exclusive art world backstage! That's what everybody wants, so I'm giving it to them.

3.

I hadn't thought about what it would be like to have the backs of all the paintings exposed. They're a lot more interesting than one might expect. There are signatures and labels and paint bleed-through and dirt, plus the brackets joining them and anchoring them to the floor.

The oddly connected paintings jutting up in the space remind me of Serra's looming slabs of steel.

4.

The CAMH preparators kept assembling the wall all day. My guys work on the Lindsay Lohan wall, and move paintings around.

I'm taking lots of pictures and lots of glitch panoramas with my iPhone. I'm trying to improve my entourage's Instagram account, which is called mikeloodsarmyofthedamned.

I also need a lot of pictures for the catalogue. The catalogue comes out later, in July, so it can have pics of the install.

I like shots of paintings with people in the shot, working, sleeping, dancing, whatever. I like shots of people unwrapping the painting, carrying it, installing it.

I'm so bored with straight shots of paintings on white walls. I hate it when they trim a photo of a painting, right up to the painting's edge, and throw the last scrap of context away.

It seems art professionals, in their never ending quest to turn art into something that makes sense, want to pretend that they're scientists, and that they're studying something. So they need a lot of white space, and no contamination from reality. They need to study this art thing, to really pin it down, like a butterfly on a nice white board, or a swab of blood on a nice sterile slide, or a naked political prisoner in a nice clean cage.

Art professionals need to remove all the dirt, all the context, all the people, and all the fun from the art. They need to starve it for money, and torture it

with stupid reviews, and inject a bunch of pureed Marxist theories up its ass.

Then they may finally get some valuable intel out of that art, right before it shudders and dies.

5.

I kept looking for the boundaries at the CAMH and I never found any. I had suggested that we do a photo session where we get a bunch of erotic performers and fog machines, and CAMH's director, Bill Arning, said, Sure. That's when I knew I'd met my match.

The fog machine was sitting there. My CAMH liaison, Patricia, casually mentioned to me that she had gotten a bunch of names and contact information, regarding erotic performers. Bill said he had some too.

No boundaries... It's like my parents are gone for the summer, and I'm throwing a scary party in their house!

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