

ANISSA MACK: How did you feel about the feedback you got from your show at Andrew Kreps? Did people see it the way you saw it?

DANIEL BOZHKO: It's hard though. It's almost like there are a few general ways in which people related to it. One of the ways was to relate to the media and that reading took over for some people. That part of the content was so overpowering for some that sometimes they didn't pay attention to the rest. For me, especially the way it was framed in the gallery, I was hoping that the main focus would be the periphery. In other words, if you take the center, the crop sign of Larry King, actually the gallery provided me with a periphery of the content.

A: You mean with all the other objects?

D: I mean the fact that there is a naturalist who is self-taught and who helps to identify the plants. She really looks like someone from 300 years ago. And she provides a reading as if the crop sign is some kind of natural phenomenon. She talks about the plants and relates to the milk-weed more than talking about that there is an image of a television talk show host. For me, I am most interested in how these two almost opposite ends of the American paradigm meet and in a way confuse each other.

A: You are referring to the landscape and the media?

D: Well, the response of Larry King and Matthew Perry, compared to her saying in every eco-system like this, everybody becomes part of a community. All these plants live together and they know what is happening, and when there is an intruder in a system like this, they do struggle. Everyone knows that there is someone in the system that does not belong there. If you come there with a good intention, the fact that you didn't kill anything, but just pressed the plants down. She spoke about it as if yesterday she spoke with the milk-weed.

A: Right!

D: For me, that mindset overlaps. Basically, in the installation, when you sit on the sofa, you hear her say that on one monitor and on the other monitor, you hear Larry King say "and he calls this learn how to fly over a very large Larry." So, for me it is very interesting how these two things are cross-pollinating.

A: Do you feel that what you did yourself was cross-pollinating? Neither one of these people were talking about it as art.

D: Oh absolutely. The artwork doesn't exist. Larry King doesn't relate to it. When a New York Times critic was talking about the show, his take was that it was a Warholian critique on Smithsonian. Which is such a smart-ass, art-referential and ultimately very limited view of the piece.

A: Yeah, but if you can get a naturalist, Larry King, and Matthew Perry to all get a read, at least you know the piece is open, which I think is really important. Even though the piece itself, the crop sign, was only accessible from the air, somehow it became immediately accessible to a lot of people. That is pretty interesting. It was like an invisible piece. I would imagine from driving by, you wouldn't know that anything changed in the field.

D: Yes. It's way off in the field, way off the road. But, people do fly over the area, so at some point there was an increased amount of flying over that area.

A: What you're saying about word of mouth, that's similar to how my pie piece worked. Word of mouth traveled quickly in Park Slope, which helped with the dis-

semination of the information. This was different than how I imagined it would happen.

D: But a piece like yours, "Pies for a Passerby," it's related to things that might happen, but at the same time it's like nothing else.

A: Right. It's a familiar image. The action is familiar from lore, or potentially from history. Maybe someone two blocks away was baking a pie, but no one was stealing it or even thinking of it. To see something that you think you know, or you think you heard about and to really see it, is very jarring. It didn't have a whiff of art around it, I hope. It was clearly for everyone.

D: Yeah. Since there is no other precedent, there are many genres of communication, which you can relate it to, but the nearest thing that I can relate it to is an oral tradition of fairy tales. The method of dissemination is similar. The coverage by the media is very interesting to me, just as a genre. My coverage and your coverage in a way do something very similar in different ways and in some ways they do something completely opposite. My piece originates in the media, because it takes a media personality, which is oversized, worldwide, and tries to make sense of that scale and gain perspective. Then ultimately after that whole circulation it ends in the media again naturally- it self-perpetuates. But your piece, it's almost as if the initial impulse has nothing to do with the media.

A: Right. Lately I have been thinking about two camps in my work. One side is interested in things that everyone can recognize, like the apple pies, flags, and bandannas. Everyone knows what they are and my pieces just shift them a little bit. But, then there are these other pieces I make that are totally weird and have to do with images from my childhood or some time in my life, which are very personal and iconic to me, but they're not iconic to you. Somehow I still want to make a piece out of them. I want to understand how that image became iconic to me. In the bigger picture I want to figure out how this works. I think of the objects as self-portraits to give them some agency. Both ways of working are rooted in images. They just have to manifest themselves differently.

I can't be hyper-conceptual about a Christmas ornament that I remember as a kid, because that treatment doesn't help anybody.

D: The interesting thing about that, especially hearing you speak about it, because the iconic image- the pie is recognizable by everybody. It is so entrenched that you have to get it in the open to be able to see it, which is what I was trying to do with Larry King in some ways.

A: Well, he's everywhere and you had to put him in one place and pin it down.

D: Yes. To get him to stop moving, so I could see him. Anyway, what I am trying to understand is between those iconic images that are everyone's and put you and me in a particular time and particular culture, slightly less for me because I am not American, but still. The amazing thing is that the very recognizable icons, and the other, the personal things that are completely yours in your being, or whatever makes you a system. They exist simultaneously or next to each other.

A: I hope so.

D: The fact that they coexist just because you are in the world is already very clear. That coexistence between this very recognizable icon and your personal glimpse of a Christmas ornament when you were two years old; these two would not have existed next to each other if you weren't here. But, it's not about identity searching here, it's much more about some kind of territory.

A: I was told that either the Larry King or your yogurt DNA project came about from the front page of a newspaper. Since you mentioned territory, I'm thinking about this juxtaposition. I always imagine that your ideas have some sort of literary or historic genesis. I am also thinking specifically about that show that I saw of yours in Philadelphia.

D: The show about Ben Franklin.

A: Yeah. It seemed like a portal to immense areas of arcane knowledge. I wondered who could possibly know this amount of information. Not that the information was secret or hard to find, but it definitely felt like you went to the library and found the most interesting and crazy facts. Especially Ben Franklin, who's one of those people

who has done everything. He is like a newspaper in a way.

D: The story with the newspaper is kind of complicated, because, you see, part of it is pre-existing. The past is also changing just like the future may change. I did a fresco in Wal-Mart in Skowhegan. They covered it on the first page of Skowhegan's MORNING SENTINEL. That front page had five other articles. There was the one about the fresco painting in Wal-Mart and above it there was an article about people restoring a church, and it was called "Stairway to Heaven." The next article was about genetic engineering, specifically the next stage of genetic science that will deal with Alzheimer's. There were five or six articles there. So, I took that front page as a five-year plan. I am doing one piece on each article. The article suggests the subject. The DNA yogurt piece came out of the genetics article.

A: So, it pushed the direction of your thinking. So, did the Larry King piece also come out of that?

D: No, but there is a connection. The Larry King piece was published on the front page of the same newspaper two years after. And I am considering as a third piece to try to do something that will make the cover next summer.

A: It is a small town.

D: Well, making the front page isn't as easy as it sounds. I'm thinking about doing something where there used to be an old Woolworth. There is a small old Woolworth sign about the second or third floor height at the side of the building. I am thinking of building scaffolding at that level and bringing a bed there and spending one night sleeping under the sign. With a night-light and everything. I would arrange to have two guards. That's the piece. Hopefully it will make it to the front page.

A: How did you connect the idea of sleeping with Woolworth's?

D: It's the way that Woolworth's disappeared, and having nostalgia for it. It's an all-purpose store, like Seven Eleven. It has the promise of the familiar. It has things you always need. But, Woolworth again is closer to your apple pie.

A: It's definitely the same time in my mind.

D: It's a similar sense of security. It's extremely democrat-

ic in some way. It aims to address the needs of some almost mythical anybody. The one that Larry King always speaks to by asking anybody's questions.

A: That makes me think of something related to both of our work. Who is the audience? A lot of our media coverage was very human-interesty, not art-related, even though we were both acknowledged as artists. I think that for a person on the street, it's hard enough to know what public art is, because they don't see enough of it. That's just the thing. How much is there visible for the average New Yorker to see? Not enough. I would always say to viewers, "If only I could challenge your expectations, that's really all I want." Hopefully the next time they see something in the paper about public art or they go to the Met, or wherever, there will be a memory of my piece and then they'll see a painting or a sculpture and think about how they can allow these two things to exist in the same universe. That is my hope. At first I thought, oh, I just want to do public art now.

But it was enormously draining and stressful. I came back to the studio and I just wanted to make a little Santa in a basket. And there's no way I'm gonna sell the same lady that I managed to get interested in the pie thing into this different world, or get that same person to look at objects in a gallery, but that's what I'm working towards.

D: Do you think that those several levels or possible aims of the work in terms of audience can be merged in any way or should be?

A: I think it can. Maybe that's my question. I just think that work should be accessible and populist. But I still need to go and make something that is totally hermetic sometimes.

D: I personally would like to be able to have things to say to a number of people that could tap into a very generic and general set of themes. I would like to be able to do this. I also have subjects that are extremely obscure.

A: As long as you offer some accessibility you can add additional components that are far more complex, I think.

D: Broad access. The portals in my early work that allow you and will hopefully keep you there long enough to focus on the idiosyncratic elements that ultimately may be more interesting. **Sk**