

Moments that last forever

Yonatan Ullman, 2016

During 2014 I presented 'Empire' - my solo exhibition at Z I Z gallery.
In hindsight, in that exhibition, love in regards to time was my primary concern.

If you, like me, believe that existence is inherently sad,
then you, like me, love Felix Gonzales Torres's work 'Perfect Lovers'.



Felix Gonzalez Torres, Perfect Lovers

I first encountered this iconic work during a 2006 visit to the MOMA.
The image of two separate analogue clocks perfectly synchronized with one another
mesmerized me.

I remember thinking to myself - "This indeed is an image of ideal love".

I was young then, only beginning my career as an artist.



Yonatan Ullman, Matter of Time, 2014

Call me slow, but this thought only clicked for me many years later:

"Due to the subtle differences between the specific mechanics of each individual clock, inevitably these clocks will fall out of sync."

One clock will begin to tick slower than the other.

Later, that same clock's battery will die and it will completely cease to tick.

At that point, the other clock, that which battery has yet to run out, will continue to run all by itself.

Eventually, that clock's battery will also fail.

From that moment on, each clock will forever show only the exact moment when it stopped running.

Likely, these will be different moments for each clock.

Regardless, in the grand scheme of things these clocks will only have been synchronized for a fragmentary moment.

For the rest of eternity 'perfect lovers', rather than representing two individuals who became identical to one another, represents two individuals who stay together regardless.

Is that what perfect love is?



Yonatan Ullman, detail from Empire, 2015

A crystallized sugary substance covers the entire surface of the gallery's floor.

The sugar smashes underneath your feet as you walk through the exhibition.

Over the course of the exhibition this sugary coat, like sandpaper, scraped off dirt which visitors to the exhibition brought with them from 'the normal world'.

These markings, or imprints, gradually piled, thus forming trails through the exhibition.

Like photo paper turning dark, these tiles eventually served as testament to the exhibition's viewing patterns.



Yonatan Ullman, detail from Empire, 2015

A frosted floor:

A bizarre temple.

A strange shrine.

A triumphant memory of persistence and perseverance.

A decaying attrition of downfall and defeat.

In this sugary substance objects become images.

We remember images and not the objects which they represent.

As Damien Hirst might say - "Beautiful inside my head forever".



Yonatan Ullman, Restored Glory, 2014

Some thirty thousand years ago man went hunting.
When he returned exhausted and leaned his bloody palms against the walls of his cave
history's first man made image was formed.

A self-portrait or an image of self'.

Bloody. Gory. Savage. Beast.

Me.

Arguably, man loved and despised his image all at once.
In that respect, throughout history, honestly not much has changed.

I revisited this image by placing my own palm on a mellon.

Using a retractable knife I carefully cut the mellon's skin in the shape of my hand's
silhouette. Like a womb, when this second skin was encased inside a sugary substance
which preserves the wound.



Yonatan Ullman, Perfect Lover, 2014

You and a loved one are on vacation.

You both sit in a pool.

The weather is perfect.

You both are there.

Engaged in the moment.

You look deep into each other's eyes.

Maybe you think 'I love you'.

Maybe you even dare to say it.

Maybe you both sink into this divine moment and passionately kiss...

It is at that very moment that an uninvited thought hits you:

"How long will all this last"?