Interview – Ransom Ashley

R**ansom Ashley** has shown work internationally and been included in shows at the **New Britain Museum of American Art**, **Fort Wayne Museum of Art**, and **Masur Museum of Art**, among others. He has also been featured in select publications such as **Teen Vogue**, **Parallel Magazine**, **Ignant Magazine**, **Metal Magazine**, and **Dazed and Confused Magazine**. Ashley is currently working on a collaboration with Italian artist and fashion designer **Nicola Romagnoli** and is set to appear alongside Oscar Winning **Actress Holly Hunter** in the upcoming southern drama ***Strange Weather.***

Mirror (Andra)□□ – Ransom Ashley

When did you start taking pictures and what did you use?

I started taking pictures at about the age of 14 or 15 when I got a camera for Christmas one year. It was a Nikon D60- I had never owned a DSLR before or had any photography experience so I taught myself how to take pictures by doing photoshoots with my best friends.

How did you develop your style? Who inspired you?

I think my background in theater and acting helped me develop my style a lot, as well as my environment in Louisiana. It gave me my aesthetic and my tumultuous coming of age experience gave me what I wanted to say through my photographs. I was very inspired by cinema and the power of it to transport me and make me feel so much during the darkest times of my life. As far as photographers that inspired me a lot: Cindy Sherman, Guy Bourdin, and others that had a very narrative approach the medium.

You present yourself as a queer photographer. How do you approach people? Do you call models, friends or stop people on the Street that inspire you?

It’s not the primary aspect of my presentation but certainly is a part of my identity that shapes my experience and especially had an impact on me while coming of age. I generally shoot those closest to me and rarely approach people to shoot that I don’t have some connection with already. So much of my work has an autobiographical element to it and I have always found that my friends have a better understanding of what I want to say through my photographs because they know me personally.



Big eyes – Ransom Ashley

Have you always presented yourself as queer? If not, how did people react to your coming out and how has your photographs been valued afterwards?

I haven’t. I have only recently found a term that I can relate to, that term being queer, and it kind of encompassed my idea of feeling different but not feeling so rigidly defined. I like that the term represents something more fluid which is how I have always found myself to be.

Living in the USA with everything that is happening, how is it? Is it tough?

Honestly, not much has changed in my environment but I know that people in certain areas are being affected by policy changes, etc. I am not ignorant of the fact that even though I am part of a minority group, I am also white and from an upper middle class family that is insulated from a lot of situations that plague other people. The toughest thing for me is feeling represented by an administration that doesn’t value diversity, having experienced the beauty and richness of diversity in this country.



Downtown – Ransom Ashley

Despite being a photographer in 2017, your photos seem to come

from the 50’s, 60’s and 70’s. What do you like of those years? Why did you choose to get inspiration from older days? What are your future plans?

So much of the nostalgia in my photographs is inspired by the same nostalgia that is characteristic of so many places in Louisiana. My hometown in Louisiana always felt very behind to me culturally speaking, so as I gave life to many of the emotions I experienced while coming of age, it just felt like setting my photographs in a time that was reflective of the past made them feel even more isolating and authentic to the way Louisiana always felt to me. Aesthetically speaking, I love the emotional value that color can add to a narrative and that is something I always appreciated about the decades you mentioned.

Right now, I am getting ready to host my first solo exhibition in my hometown and it is opening on the 10th of November so I’m very excited about that. I’m also working on a new photography series that focuses on some of Louisiana’s subcultures while finishing my psychology degree. I graduate in December and then plan on moving to Los Angeles to pursue some photography and film projects.

Windshield – Ransom Ashley

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