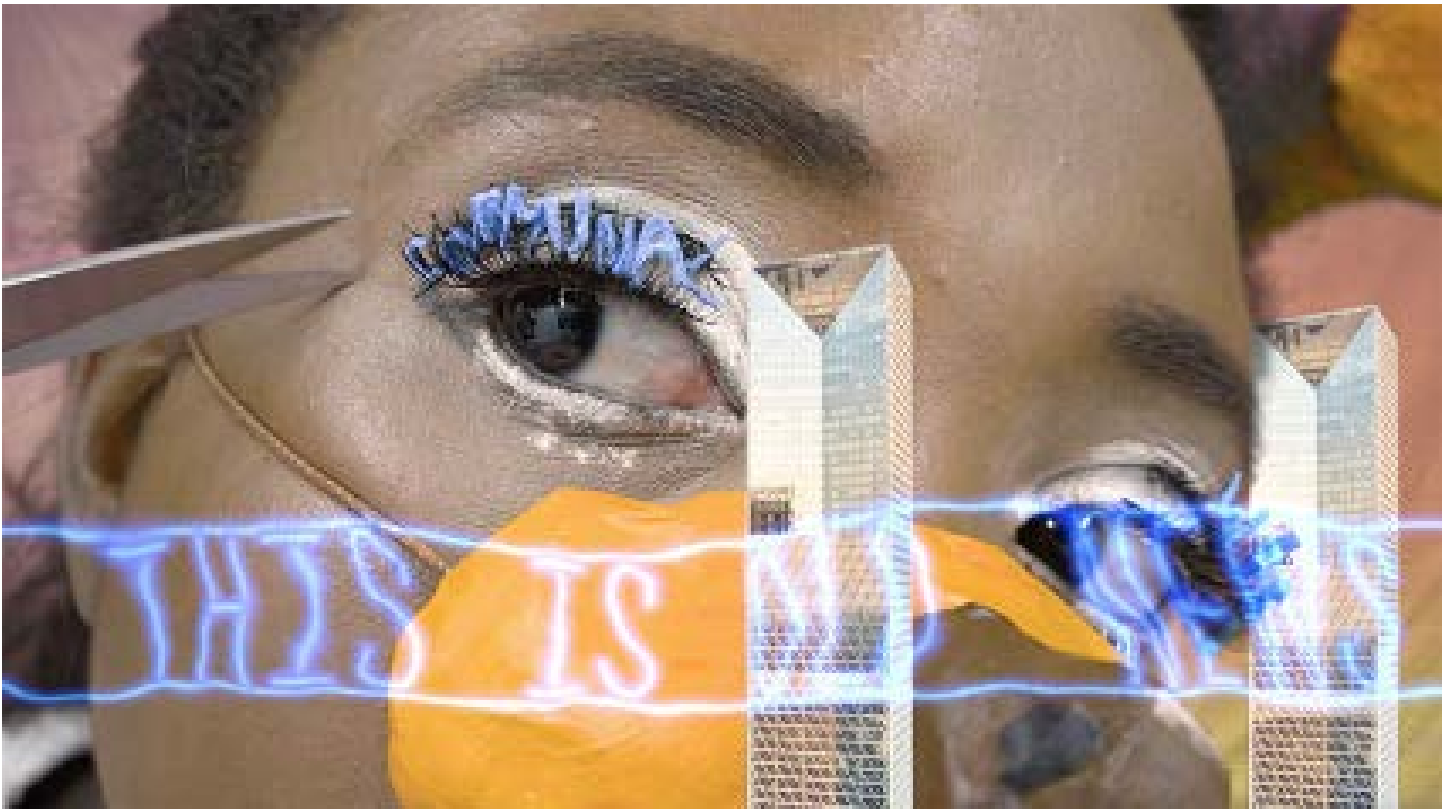


Soul Recordings at Luis De Jesus

By MATTHEW LAX March 15, 2018



Lex Brown, Lip Gloss Alurt (2017). HD video, 05:12 minutes.

Image courtesy of the artist and Luis De Jesus Los Angeles.

Photo: Austin Radcliffe.

News media, despite respective biases, seem to agree in the description of contemporary politics as “complicated” and “divided.” While accurate, this semantic admission fails to demonstrate the accountability of the status quo. Soul Recordings, a group exhibition currently on view at Luis De Jesus Los Angeles, examines ideas around representation and meaning amid the persisting trauma of colonial histories.

While news coverage may be simplified, hashtags are user-generated, providing the illusion of autonomous control through generalized shorthand. Peter Williams’ #137 (2017) depicts a car with words including #black-couple, #policechase and #homeless painted on the hood, referring to the 2012 murder of Timothy Russell and Malissa Williams by East Cleveland police. Red lines and bullet holes rendered in pencil cover the collapsed windshield, the impermanence of graphite emphasizing cultural erasure. Williams’ reference to Black Twitter archives #137 within a timeline of police shootings, revealing the limits of language to sufficiently index horror.

As language becomes inadequate, the perils of visual representation perhaps complicate further. Lip Gloss Alurt (2017) by Lex Brown is a green screen video of the artist in costumed whiteface, simultaneously performing as

a humming, DIY-Snapchat dog filter, a Siri-esque character reading a voicemail, and a television salesperson named Mananda. Punctuated by descriptive text reading *This is Old News* and *Animal Looks at Self*, “Mananda” models a lopsided pink camo KKK ensemble, saying “the historical element, you can’t get better than that.” Brown uses re-appropriation to reclaim the other-ed body, a notion catalyzed in Caitlin Cherry’s garish Harvard, MIT and Yale portraits (all 2017), cheekily undermining ethnographic projections on the black female body and institutional racism.

If the contemporary is complicated, moments like the stark removal of text in Edra Soto’s *24 Hours* (2017) – an installation and risograph series of alcohol bottles stripped of their labels, and consequently, the stigmas associated with their branding – and Brown’s title spelling, might indicate celebration as an apt tool for meaningful social change. Curator Jill Moniz’s essay lauds “making space” in an art world mired by systemic problems. Yet *Soul Recordings* might go further—demanding space, challenging institutional “cultural initiatives” and neoliberal “tolerance.”

Soul Recordings runs from February 17–March 24, 2018 at Luis De Jesus (2685 S. La Cienega Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90034).

NEW MUSEUM

PERFORMANCES EXHIBITION-RELATED · EXHIBITION-RELATED

Lex Brown and Aaron Fowler: C.E.

Saturday, June 9, 2018, 4pm



Cover image: Aaron Fowler and Lex Brown, C.E., 2018.

Performance: New Museum, New York. Courtesy New Museum. Photo: Scott Rudd

In conjunction with “Aaron Fowler: Bigger Than Me,” on view in the Storefront Window of the New Museum’s 231 Bowery building, Fowler has paired with Lex Brown for a new collaborative performance, C.E. (2018). Written by Brown and devised with Fowler, C.E. brings together the sci-fi worlds of Brown’s interdisciplinary practice and Fowler’s storytelling approach to personal narrative. Each playing an A.I. named Alexa, Brown and Fowler navigate systems of social and economic control in search of the people who have gone missing in a privatized world. Premiered during the opening reception for “Bigger Than Me,” it is the artists’ first collaboration.

Aaron Fowler (b. 1988, St. Louis, MO) is an artist based in New York and Los Angeles. “Bigger Than Me” is the artist’s first solo museum presentation. Fowler creates elaborate assemblage paintings through intuitive layering of found objects and unconventional materials that illustrate imagined and concrete narratives from his personal experience. Recent solo exhibitions include Diggs Gallery, Winston-Salem State University (2016); Beeler Gallery, Columbus College of Art & Design, Columbus, OH (2016); and Diane Rosenstein Gallery, Los Angeles (2016). He will be in “Made in L.A. 2018” at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2018), opening in June, and has been in group exhibitions at Savannah College of Art and Design Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2017); Saatchi Gallery, London (2017); Rubell Family Collection, Miami (2016); and the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2015). Fowler was a recipient of the Rema Hort Mann Foundation Emerging Artist Grant in 2015 and an artist-in-residence at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2014.

ARTFORUM

NEW YORK

Lex Brown

DELI GALLERY

110 Waterbury Street

June 9–July 9

Don't let those foam cinder blocks on the floor fool you. Lex Brown's first solo exhibition ain't soft—it's a razor-edged debut with a droll twist. "Immortal Duck" departs from Looney Tunes' iconic 1951 "Hunting Trilogy," where Daffy Duck is shot multiple times by Elmer Fudd but never dies, like some eternal god in an Attic comedy—though the cartoon is, of course, deeply American and quite current, with vainglorious characters center stage, avaricious and always craving attention. But Brown mines Daffy Duck's enduring potential as positive and perhaps even as an avatar. (From the poem on the press release: "She's like that duck, quack / here forever / and always fine, / So I don't worry about that shit getting taken by Fudd, Bugs, / Bud, Chuck, / Chad, Brad, or any other brat wabbit.")

Wave Sandwich (all works 2017), a fleshy, Oldenburghesque burger patty and grimy bun made from steel, chicken wire, fiberglass resin, burlap, casters, and paint, crushes one of the squishy cinder blocks. The work features the word rage in negative—or maybe it's race? This searing ambiguity runs across a few more works in the show, yet the strongest pieces here are clear in their direct address. "Wabbit Season" is a series of laminated ink-on-paper drawings of Daffy Duck's face. Dotted around the gallery, the works recall some of Joyce Pensato's paintings, but Brown's take is looser. A slew of hasty lines transform the character's visage across multiple pictures—we get anger, satisfaction, curiosity, confusion—but most of all we see Brown having fun with these incisive works, which might just be the best survival strategy.

— Lauren O'Neill-Butler



View of "Immortal Duck," 2017.



Lex Brown on the Elastic Reality of Cartoons, Clowning + Subverting the Economy of Emotion

Selby Nimrod, 8 August 2017

Focus



'Wave Sandwich,' (2017)



'Then parting, smiling, and exiting,' (2017)

“There’s an economy to emotional expression,” says Lex Brown, when speaking by phone of her desire to “de-internalize racism and sexism.” The New York-based artist’s fluency in expressive economies is evidenced in her artworks, which deftly balance a sense of comedy that is dark and vaudevillian with the strength of her subjectivity – a counterpoint on which the other elements turn. Materially, her works encompass performance, sculpture, writing (her erotic novel *My Wet Hot Drone Summer* is available through *Badlands Unlimited*), video, and, most recently, drawing.

Brown’s first solo exhibition *Immortal Duck*, which ran at New York’s *Deli Gallery* from June 9 to July 9, presented an unruly group of fluid ink-on-paper renderings of the classic Looney Tunes character Daffy Duck. Alongside a number of sculptural works that pull their power through the vernacular of the support structure, a pair of densely geometric colored pencil on paper drawings conceal the artist’s diaristic texts on a romantic encounter in Central Park, as well as women in Hollywood movies. While *Immortal Duck* owes its pacing to the energetic and linguistic elements present in her drawings, much of Brown’s previous work has accomplished this through in situ performance. Having studied clowning techniques, the artist’s searing performances similarly draw upon pop cultural and autobiographical references, while they employ musico-theatrical forms that run from operetta

to RnB.

Between the close of Immortal Duck and the upcoming presentation of her new video 'Lip Gloss Alurt' on the Highline Channel opening on September 28, Brown spoke with AQNB about her work, and her relationship with cartoons which resonate in their portrayal of an elastic reality.

** What interested you in Daffy Duck?

Lex Brown: My work is rooted in an appraisal of what energy I need to grow at any given time. I'm feeling a sense of beginning again, so I was mining things from childhood and watching a lot of Daffy Duck videos. I realized that he, as a character, is such a clown, specifically a clown in the way that I have been studying clowning as a performance technique and tradition.

More than any of the other Looney Tunes characters, Daffy embodies so many different personas and roles. He's kind of manic and his emotions are always fluctuating wildly. Those fast-paced fluctuations between highs and lows are a strategy that I use in my performances a lot – to go on a real up-and-down with the audience.

The title of the show, Immortal Duck, references a series called 'The Hunting Trilogy' where Elmer Fudd shoots Daffy Duck 18 times within three episodes, but Daffy never dies. He can't die because he's needed – Fudd would have nothing more to shoot at. That Daffy Duck is the one with real power had a personal resonance for me. There is something so truthful to me about cartoons in the way that they portray an elasticity to reality. I wanted the whole show to have a relationship to the rhythm and look of cartoons.

** Could you speak to the relationship between your object-making and your performances?

LB: Before I started performing I was making installations based around characters. I also made sculptures that had a performative relationship to language. As I got into performing, I focused less on the objects and more on language, sound, and sequence.

I've always had a fascination in the body as an object that is embodied by a spirit, and also how others objectify a given body. I have an acute sense of double-consciousness and often perceive myself as if from looking from the outside. I got to a point where I was ready to build more of that complexity into the work. The objects that I'm using now my are made as sculptures and serve as characters, objects, and places. They can be read and experienced independently of performance, or interdependently between works.

After the experience of a performance has passed, you can sometimes feel like you're left with nothing. So it's also nice to have this process of making something physically tangible. And, no one ever wants to talk about this, but I have to support my performance work.

** There was no performance associated with your recent solo show Immortal Duck. Why?

LB: I thought I was going to do one, but I realized I needed to take a break and give myself a chance to show drawings and sculptures. I've never shown any drawings before. As scary as it would be for some people to stand up in front of 130 people and perform, it was that scary for me to show those colored pencil drawings.

** Tell us about your interest in food, especially in rage burgers.

LB: Food is a very efficient way of representing larger systems like economy and nationality, but there's also a level of humor to it. I think because we all eat food and most of us love food. Whenever I hear food is anywhere, I'm there. The relationship I have with food is a privilege.

One review in Art Forum talked about how the image in relief on the bun looked like the word “race.” I was aware that would be an interpretation, but it does say “rage” in relief. The word emerged as I thought about an emotional counterpoint to the text drawing which is very much a text about romance and intimacy, amongst other things (visibility, architecture, race, The Matrix 3). Visually, I find the word “RAGE” very strong. I wanted the word on the burger to have some thematic relationship to ‘Focacciatown,’ my first major performance. More generally, I wanted the word to make a relationship with the iconic American food, the burger, that it’s emerging from. As I worked on it, my own associations with that word came up, and some of those have to do with being black and being a woman.

I took a clowning class this year, where a part of our weekly warmup was a circle in which we could express anger in its most physical, undiminished form — full out stomping, yelling, and screaming. It was incredibly cathartic to me. In our society there’s no healthy outlet for anger, especially as a woman, and as a black woman you can just forget about it. A few older artists have advised me to be more cautious about how I portray myself, in my black female body, so as not to reinforce stereotypes. I fully appreciate where they’re coming from, but I’m here to be a different type of artist. I’m here to call on my full body, intellect, and spirit. I want to de-internalize racism and sexism. If my education and accomplishments give me a leeway to do and say things that other women and people of color are not able or allowed to, then I’m going to do those things. But it’s important that people see the trade-off: there’s an economy to emotional expression, and who gets to express what and still be taken seriously.

** Not only have you written a book for Badlands, but writing is everywhere in your practice. What is your relationship to writing?

LB: I think about myself as a writer in the same way that I think about myself as a performer. It’s not an activity that I do, but a way in which I inhabit the world. In the sense that fiction creates realities, it’s very important to work in fiction and with fiction. Theatre and performance combine so many essential parts of being human, of gathering together to look at the performance of reality. But we also live in theatre: you play the part of yourself day-to-day. Land developers create cities as sets for societies to live in. I suspect that the era we live in is so scripted by the movies, especially when it comes to technology. I couldn’t function without writing, since language is the most immediate way to manifest something into reality. **

Lex Brown’s solo exhibition Immortal Duck at New York’s Deli Gallery ran from June 9 to July 9, 2017.

HYPERALLERGIC

BOOKS

Supercharged Sex and Corporate Control in a Queer Erotic Novel

By ALICIA ELER February 24, 2016



Cover of Lex Brown, 'My Wet Hot Drone Summer'

In Lex Brown's book *My Wet Hot Drone Summer*, #4 in the *Badlands Unlimited New Lovers* series (Hyperallergic previously reviewed #1–3), the artist/writer looks at a world not unlike our own, where sex, surveillance, and loss of privacy are intertwined in a commodified world of power dynamics ruled by a fictional corporation by the name of Céron Solutions. The premise is somewhat simple: A lawyer named Mia breaks up with her cheating boyfriend William, then decides to road-trip with her hot stepbrother Derek from the East Coast to Cerón's headquarters somewhere in Silicon Valley, where Derek is planning to sell a nanochip that will completely change the way corporate America collects data and information about all people. On the way, they pick up Wes, a mysteriously super-hot dude with a gigantic dick. What ensues is a strangely tantalizing journey that explores sexuality and power dynamics.

This is queer erotica. Sexual attraction happens between basically any willing parties, regardless of gender. Sadly, no threesomes are present — unless you count getting off to watching surveillance footage of two people doing it as a way to distract someone. Part of what makes the sex feel supercharged is the use of the Xeron, a vaginal stimulator dildotron that enhances orgasms by 1 million percent. (Brown told me that this was actually based off of the Zeron, a technology created at MIT.) Manufactured by Cerón Solutions, which is owned by the ultimate M-A-N, Cerón, the Xeron is another method of masculine corporate control over the female body, particularly its pleasure principle. Cerón controls the Xeron when a woman is using it, both making her the object of his gaze

and controlling her pleasure. And it's not just pleasure he's interested in being in charge of: "Cerón has a massive file of surveillance footage that he is threatening to use as blackmail against me and hundreds of other Americans," Mia says, at a moment when it's becoming evident that she must find a way to outsmart him.

Often, this sort of overly obvious discussion about corporate control can feel redundant or just depressing, like when we read about it online, as in the NSA halting Section 215 of the Patriot Act, which previously allowed for random information collecting via phone records. But in Brown's book, the discussion about anti-surveillance activists defeating corporate control is strangely sexy.

There are also, of course, parallels throughout with the cultishly popular '80s film *Wet Hot American Summer*, about a group of teens at summer camp in 1981. In the film, summer is over but there's a lot more that needs to be resolved, and in the meantime camp director Beth is falling for an astrophysics professor who is trying to save the camp from a piece of NASA equipment that's falling from space. Similarly, in *My Wet Hot Drone Summer*, Mia is trying to save the world from the powers of the nanochip that Derek, who is not-so-secretly in love with her, created as a way to earn some real, much-deserved money. Derek's struggle also points to an issue that members of the creative working class always grapple with: how to make a living in a society that doesn't value cultural capital or the arts unless they are made profitable or marketable in a mainstream way.

The book is hard to put down, in large part due to the realistic sex scenes, which are especially hot if you're into a variety of gendered sexual expressions. The great range of sexually heightened situations leads one to further engage with a story that's very relevant to the times we live in. Brown writes in a believable way about the corporate workplace and the large number of seemingly superfluous people who seem to not really do anything, while also making a lot of money.

To further emphasize the book's sexualized nature, each chapter begins with a delightful little erotic drawing, like in chapter 6, which has a group of strange curved little hairy dicks in a downward spiral maze. The drawings further illuminate the erotic content of the book, which incorporates sex as a nexus of the power dynamics. Ultimately, those who want to save the world must figure out a way to sexually dominate the weaker ones, or otherwise gain power through their sexuality.

Brown's novel is both engaging and creepily accurate, particularly in its depiction of the power dynamics employed by surveillance culture, and the ways that surveillance functions as control.

In this dick-filled, pussy-and-ass-fucking escapade, the reader is ultimately left wondering: Who's the bottom bitch now?!

My Wet Hot Drone Summer by Lex Brown is now available through [Badlands Unlimited](#).

AUTRE

Sex as Power, Black Identity and the True Meaning of Love: A Unique Conversation with Artist, Performer and Writer Lex Brown who Just Released Her First Erotic Novel

By AUDRA WIST November 13, 2015



Lex Brown is an artist, performer and the author of *My Wet Hot Drone Summer*, recently published by Paul Chan's *Badlands Unlimited* as part of the *New Lovers* erotica series. Lex and I met in the summer of 2011, keeping in touch and crossing paths in LA. She is now pursuing an MFA in Sculpture at Yale University. It's hard for me to write about Lex as I see her as a close friend who I love, someone who I think is accomplished just as a person, aside from her remarkable work. She seems to have an casual but intimate knowledge of a pulse that goes unnoticed by most. Our interest in sex crosses over where we think in terms of experimentation or the idea of sex as power - where are there glitches and what is happening when we have a sexual encounter? In her new book, she takes on sci-fi erotica full throttle with a cloaked critique. She is electric and the book reflects that spirit with equal parts hilarity and sincerity. We sat down in Pittsburgh, PA after performing together the night before to discuss her new book, views on sex, the fluctuating temperature of our time, and how to appropriately experiment with love.

Below is an excerpt from our conversation.

**

Lex Brown: Audience praise in general is a weird dynamic.

Audra Wist: Actually, Aaron [Kunin] and I were talking about this... there's some poets that don't even want white writers to talk about black writers. No names, no mention of their work, no praise,

nothing. And I wonder is that constructive? Or how is that productive? Anyways, what is it like to do the performance you're doing or write the book that you've written and have a primarily white audience watch or read it and go "Good job, wow, great work." I have no idea what that's like. I remember [in a group dynamics class] sitting in the William Pope.L show at MOCA and we were to discuss the show and a black student blurted out "What is white guilt? Tell me. I don't know. Can a white person explain that to me?" And of course, all of us whiteys were stunned, panicked. We didn't know how to approach that question but we all knew it very well. It felt like anything we said was wrong - and here, to congratulate feels like it's patronizing in some way. There are so many intricacies to being a person of color and writing or making and looking at art that I simply do not have the experience to speak about... or I don't know what is the right or supportive response to these complicated knots.

LB: I think what is so complicated about right now is that in addition to already living in the white patriarchy, within the last twenty or thirty years, there has emerged another normalized reaction—a standardized black reactionary identity, or criticality, which does not involve thinking critically. And also the same for feminism and other marginalized groups. There's this component of people reacting in the way they think they're supposed to and not really stopping to consider and engage with things. Though, as I'm saying this, I know I can only notice things because I'm in my own very specific place of privilege... my own self-awareness of being black in an upper-middle class situation gives me a special kind of privilege of hyper-articulateness. Anyways, the point I'm getting to is that there are so many blogs in which people are going off about x, y and z. A lot of people are angry about a lot of things because they do recognize their oppression, and that is good, but in a way it can be so counter-productive to the project. I can understand where they're coming from, but as a writer, when you're talking about systemic oppression, you cannot throw that phrase around without providing the facts and experiences that are evidence of that oppression. You need to back it up because the things you are saying are true and are important but if you don't back it up the only reaction you're going to get is that you're just being emotional and then you can't be mad when somebody only sees that emotion. You can't get mad at some white male reader when he says "all you're doing is reacting emotionally" when the way that you're writing is with the expectation that people just automatically understand you. You need to write as a black woman as if nobody understands, explain everything, because people can be ignorant.

AW: And that goes for anyone making an argument about anything, right?

LB: Yeah, you really need to because if you're in a position of marginalization, there's nothing about systems that are organized that benefit you. You need to be like a razor blade if you're going to cut through the bullshit. You have to be! It's really important to understand the intricacies of what you're talking about and the identity of the person with whom you're talking to.

AW: Or the context perhaps, like who it's being sent out to or where it's being published.

LB: Yes, this is something I learned in the clowning workshop. If you really want to change someone's mind, they need to feel like you see them and they need to feel like... or, they need to have the experience of seeing you saying "I'm marginalized, you're not, can you understand this?" There is a certain amount of acquiescing or compromise that has to happen. Making things a little sweeter. Not everybody feels that way. But my perspective on this is that the little song and dance... you know, it helps because in order to-- I don't know if this is coming out coherently.

AW: I'm totally following. This is making sense.

LB: Okay, so, for example, to be a woman and talking to men and trying to get them to see you, you have to be like "Don't worry, man, I see you." You know?

AW: Yeah, of course.

LB: And of course I see you because I live in your world! I understand-- well, no I don't understand what it feels like to be white... but I also kind of can because I imagine it would be like if I turned off some things in my brain. For a long time, I have had a guilt that I had to get over that I imagine feels similar to white guilt because ultimately white guilt is a class guilt. It's a privilege guilt. That's what it has to do with and for me I felt guilty about privilege and a very complicated guilt about being black and I felt like I didn't have anything valid to talk about because I was not suffering or something. And then, slowly I realized, oh, wait, I have this very unique position in combination with my disposition, which I also like thinking about those words: position in society versus a disposition, or personality, what does a disposition mean? Dispossessed?

AW: Or out of position?

LB: Yes, something to explore. Good title for a piece. But, I also relate that to the book in the sense--

AW: I was just going to say that. That's perfect for the book: position and disposition.

LB: There's the position of the book and the disposition of the book. There's funny stuff in there, too. Erotica is something that people don't take seriously but arousal is a serious and real thing. It's a fun book. You know, I hope people even read it. That's the whole question I have. Are people even going to read this book? And maybe that's a larger question about books.

AW: Who reads 'em?

LB: Who reads 'em? Seriously! I'm reading books right now.

AW: What are you reading?

LB: Right now, I'm reading Taipei by Tao Lin, Franny and Zooey by J.D. Salinger, and Citizen by Claudia Rankine.

AW: That's an interesting combination of books.

LB: I love when I can get into a book and I feel like I'm into all of them. Taipei because it's just so... god, yes! That is how it feels to be a young person today. Have you read it?

AW: I haven't read it yet.

LB: It's really remarkable. I think someone on the back cover describes it as "relentless." The intensity and specificity with which he describes an anxiety about vagueness that we experience now in the information age: a vague sentiment about being and existing. Especially because his character is a writer like him, everything that comes with existing as an artist that is existentially questionable and that is not present in the New York Times article where they're talking about the "Creative Class" and asking "Do these doodles make you feel better?" That is the difference between this self-help doodling and being an artist - it's confronting that existential vagueness that is the reality of life and being like, fuck!

AW: Disposition.

LB: Yeah, and Franny and Zooey is great because Franny's character kind of talks about that, too. It's actually very contemporary. Have you read it?

AW: Yes, I was always struck by that, too.

LB: Yeah. There's this part with her talking to her boyfriend and then she runs to the bathroom crying and tries to pull herself together... there's this affective nature with which she presents herself that I really identify with. Like you can't help but have affectations and play with those when you are a conscious thinking intellectual person who is aware of that intellectualism as a marginalized person. You can't help but be interested but also grappling with your own affect and what do I do with that? Citizen is great. I only just started, but she talks about Hennessy Youngman and him giving instructions to black artists on how to express feelings of rage, but Rankine is talking about the real rage that is the undercurrent of this rage, Hennessy Youngman's rage, that is subdued. She has this brilliant line about making oneself visible to death. And I read it and was like, yep, that's me. This craving for visibility. To be visible at all costs. Listen to me at all costs.

AW: Visibility at all costs, yeah, I feel that.

LB: I hope people read this book! Just look at me.

AW: Yeah, look at me.

LB: Like in your performance, you said "they never let you speak."

AW: Yeah, they don't. And when you do speak the whole thing is really dependent on the fact that they listen. That's the hard part. You try to give them the opportunity to listen as best as you can but... you give it your best shot.

LB: Yeah, last night with our performances back to back and then Moor Mother Goddess - that was great!

AW: It was a great trifecta.

LB: I feel like when some people perform they ask "look at me" instead of saying "look at me."

AW: Yeah, you don't need to ask for permission and that's actually the problem is that you shouldn't have to ask for permission. I will take that.

LB: Or it's something else to do while doing something else and saying look at me.

AW: Like I said last night, women are typically very good at being direct. Is everyone in the Badlands New Lovers Series female identified?

LB: Yeah.

AW: The ability to be direct is really specific to women, I think.

LB: That's something Michaela asked me on the panel about being a woman, or writing as a woman, and she made a point—and I'm glad she made this point and it was pretty bold—she said, "We got submissions from men but they just weren't as good - they just weren't." And the way she said it was very straight up, no apologies, and I appreciated that. I think she was asking why do you think, as a woman, you're a better writer? And my response was...

AW: Women are better.

LB: [laughs] Yeah, women are better. But as a woman, you experience sexuality beyond the bedroom.

AW: You do!

LB: In a way that most men do not.

AW: You put your finger in the fucking wound. Men don't even see the wound, they don't even know. Women are in there, feeling around, touching it.

LB: Or the wound is wounding you, just walking down the street, whatever. There are so many infinitesimal interactions of sexuality that women live and breathe. For me, I constantly feel like I'm living and breathing identity as a woman, as a black woman. And because I'm black, I'm so sensitive to other aspects of class that might be harder to feel if you were white. But people of color, when you're in this weird position... somehow my ancestors made it here and I'm so aware of here.

AW: Of course, that lineage and the time.

LB: I'm so aware of my ancestors all the time. I really visualize myself almost with a cape trailing behind me—my parents, grandparents. Who are mostly black, but some white and Native American. My mom knows a lot more about it than I do. I need some money to do some research. You know some issues are too big or complex for me to take on right now because I don't have the money or can't devote the time.

AW: Something else I thought of while reading the book was sex as transactional.

LB: I think I need to peg somebody. I think I need to have that experience.

AW: Oh, yeah. That's an absolute. I think men have this fantasy about it. They think women are so turned on or are getting so sexually aroused by it, and that's a part of it, but I think it's mostly... I mean, I've said this before: sex is not that interesting, power is and pegging is about power. Power is in that wound.

LB: Yeah, I was having sex with this guy and afterwards, I was explaining to him what I was thinking about the whole time and he said, "Wow, you think a lot." The instinct I feel when he makes that comment is I'm going to push this. You're obviously fascinated by me thinking a lot or you're trying to destroy it. That's hyperbolic but, there's an attraction in sexual attraction, at least this is the way it works for me... is that there's something that you want in a person and at the same time there is something you want to erase or destroy, even if the thing you want to erase is your own desire for wanting something that isn't you. Does that make sense?

AW: Yeah.

LB: So, when he says something like you think so much, I'm thinking yeah, I do, but I don't know if you realize what it sounds like you saying that me... but also I don't know what I sound like to you telling you this. That aspect of sex is very interesting to me as a transaction between people.

AW: It's almost as if sex can be an intellectual transaction.

LB: Oh, sure! When we were having sex, I was thinking about so much stuff! I always do when I'm having sex. And I really feel that also has to do with when you're in the receiving position. Physically, you are equally engaged in making it happen but you could, in the receiving position, you could ostensibly just be completely flat and have all this time to think which I often do.

AW: [laughs]

LB: You don't have to do anything to make intercourse happen. I think it's true too that you could be a passive top. Sort of.

AW: But putting them in that position, the importance of pegging, is putting them in the position of receiving so that their mind has that time to do what we usually do.

LB: Yeah, totally. I really fight that impulse and what this guy and I talked about on the train, it was a difficult discussion. I have this impulse to go towards things that are difficult. I want to change your mind. Bottom line, I really do. When you're attracted to somebody and you feel like they have something that you don't, that's what makes the attraction.

AW: It does.

LB: Projection.

AW: Absolutely.

LB: Projection is attraction. And so I know what it is that these white guys have that I don't. But, what is it that I have? I feel like they don't know, but it's there and it's an interesting mystery. What is it that I have that they don't know that they want? And so on the one hand, I'm like fuck, fuck these white dudes, I can't keep having sex with them because I feel rejected and in pain and then on the other hand, I want to do it because it's an experiment to push somebody. But it takes me so long to get over everyone. Through all of these relationships, I've learned and learned and learned to constantly try to get to a place of truth with love.

AW: I think that's a really good outlook though. I've been thinking about the same thing.

LB: I don't know if I've ever even had sex with somebody who loved me and I loved them.

AW: And even when you do, sometimes it can't work. I have so much love for [my ex], but I'm not sure if we can ever fuck again, there's too much love between us.

LB: In a sense that sex diminishes that or is superfluous?

AW: It diminished the unconditional nature of our love. Sex can introduce a possessiveness and necessitates something else, something more. Whereas when we're just friends, it's an unconditional love.

LB: I don't know if they can go together.

AW: Neither do I. I'm very skeptical. But I've also had weird sexual situations work in all types of ways, good and bad.

LB: At this point I think love is really grappling with your inner shit and being challenged to throw some stuff away. But also own some stuff—own your shit in a way that's uncomfortable. Within the act of loving someone, you have to come to terms with how you construct yourself, as well as how you construct the other person. I've had to come to understand love as a non-possessiveness.

AW: I see what you mean. There are also some types of love can be play pretend or a security blanket to shield you from your own cracks. I wonder sometimes if I am really looking at love for what it really is.

LB: I imagine love as the essence of the universe, which is beautiful, but not peaceful. Each person is a universe, and you have to come to an understanding. Maybe real love is unexpectedly coming to the same definition of what love is.