

## Sincerity and Satire

*“Sexuality is a part of our behavior. It's part of our world freedom. Sexuality is something that we ourselves create. It is our own creation, and much more than the discovery of a secret side of our desire. We have to understand that with our desires go new forms of relationships, new forms of love, new forms of creation. Sex is not a fatality; it's a possibility for creative life.”*

- Michel Foucault

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Oliver Cain uses ceramics to make work which engages histories, and fantasies. By exposing futures of queer resistance and dreams, he masterfully inserts the personal as the source material for his art. If art claims to serve as the comprehension and understanding of the inner self, the power of Cain's work is focussed on identity, sexuality, gender, and the body. Looking to examine ideas that empower queer storytelling, the work seeks to centre representation and desire as the building blocks of our inclusive future.

Shaping and tracing the imprint of the popular culture and the birth of conceptual art, Cain situates the “international” within the present context by bringing multifaceted Marcel Duchamp's readymade *Fountain* into the central narrative of his work. It is the perfect example of object impermanence, fluidity (lol) and how turning something upside down can alter not just its meaning but also its entire reason for existing. I love the sense of humour of this very famous sculpture and how it remains radical today. It's a story of how a porcelain urinal, an object of utility, continues to question and shape the very definition of contemporary art. Through cunning encapsulation and by absorbing the *Fountain*, Cain's *Fruit Bowl* sets up the groundwork for the artist's satirical motivations. It brings together an ensemble of thoughtful, wily, boisterous, intentional, attitudes and gestures that are both ambitious and inexhaustible.

Using the idea of displacement that enables the object to shift from one familiar context to another, Oliver Cain continues in the long tradition of artists that were first and foremost masters of subversive humour. Deliberate in meaning-making, the urinal and a bunch of bananas flooding it with adult enthusiasm has a fresh and feverish take on the old master narrative. It is the sharper tool in the pop tool-shed. This methodology of weaving art

historical tropes without cannibalising them, is also a guide for our gaze. The aim is to renegotiate entangled art references and visual clues, to ensure queer storytelling isn't defined by a single narrative but remains open-ended and fluid. We are often being reminded that viewing is not a simple act of reception but an act of engagement and a lasting relationship with the subject matter and narrative. This deliberate rendering and artistic dissonance allow the work to be both subversive and commercially pleasing.

In the company of his ceramic sculptures, through this provocative yet charming lens, we are bearing witness to the result that is poignantly, profoundly human. It reconfigures the limitless longing of the human person to be seen and accepted, while questioning the concept of 'enoughness' and the need of having that primary self-worth fulfilled. It is offering complexity while primarily reflecting on political conditions of our desire in the contemporary society.

Michel Foucault teaches us that body is the central object of all politics. It's a reminder that we are all part of this social criteria that either privileges or excludes, offers marginalisation or protection, love or loneliness. This affinity of juxtapositions is reflective of Cain's practice that advocates for safe exposure of queer communities and a voice within the pop culture narrative. It is an offering that is humours, a device to produce counternarratives, and a portrait of life and its intersections.

Art that strives towards a more equitable future may present itself as idealistic, but it is equally unrealistic to separate it from life and body politics. Here, framed by ceramics, life and art are coexisting, merging, and unfolding in search of the principles of joy and pleasure.

Oliver Cain's work is addressing key queer issues of both past and present, equity and justice through thought-provoking and intricately made ceramics. Using the practice of reconstitution, they are reminding us that while our emotional histories of longing and invisibility bind us, our narratives of boldness and authorship help us to reimagine the future. Here, the histories are intertwined with the experience of the physical form that results in both sincerity and satire.

It's a commitment to making art accessible to all.



FRUIT BOWL