

Through Her Eyes

By Robin Johnson

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A brief insight into local artist Naida Osline's creative mind

Confronted with the photography of Naida Osline, one may find themselves startled by the immediate intensity and mutually striking beauty surrounding her imagery. Many scaled to life size, in the presence of her photos viewers often discover themselves as the subject of her models gaze. Subsequently, a seeming stand-off occurs between oneself and a man gracefully wielding an octopus on his head, a scarf of snakeskin coiled around his neck, or drag "Royalty" dressed to the nines. In constant flux, Osline's photos encourage the inquisitive prodding that develops between subject and viewer while her portraits challenge the

hierarchy of any space.

A local photo-based artist, Osline employs nature and the body as a site of excavation. Manipulated through the lens of fashion photography, there is an undeniable raw and natural essence at the core of her work as she explores the constant state of organic and synthetic transformation in our culture. Inspired by the deep connections we hold with nature, her work circles around such central themes, investigating how we engage with our environment. "I think our future survival as a race depends to a large degree on a paradigm shift that recognizes that we are part of a web of connections and that everything matters because everything is connected," explains Osline.

Though Osline is a Riversidian now, she was a graduate of California State University, Fullerton, and recently found herself returning to CSUF, at Grand Central Art Center to participate in a three month Artist-in-Residence program in which she developed her series titled "Men." A pivotal set of images in her body of work; Osline's reinterpretations of traditional portraiture involve a series of semi-nude men who were provided with natural objects to adorn themselves with. A culmination of expressing one's own personal transformation, the resulting photos furnish iconic images that are both powerful and vulnerable, as their age, masculinity, and physical and mental health are placed in question. Specifically photographing middle-aged men, these intimate images face the process of aging and the transformations that inevitably take place as one enters a new phase of their being. "It's the age range I'm in and it's the real deal. There is no escaping your mortality when you are in middle age." says Osline.

With the success of this series as well as her "Royalty" series, a set of boldly authentic and fashionable images of drag kings and queens, she has most recently been completing a new body of work inspired by her residency in Columbia in 2012. Like previous works, these images are stunning portraits of men that adopt multiple functions, much like the machetes the Colombians bear in each photo of this new series. An instrument holding great importance to the livelihood of that region, Osline captures the fragile shift between tool and weapon as the machete quickly takes primacy in these images. Through the lens of an organic and anthropological point of view, her appreciation for such shifts in perception are not reserved exclusively to traditional portraiture or the male figure, as she also explores a myriad of plants throughout her work and the relationships that humans have with them.

Heightening the awareness of our surroundings while simultaneously challenging our value systems, the concern for nature found in Naida Osline's work results in the meshing stages of transformation, serving process alongside effect. Her photography is continually cultivating its own route, as her work is increasingly attracting national acclaim. Osline's work has been exhibited in numerous national and international exhibitions, including the Riverside Art Museum, and the Laguna Art Museum, as well as being featured in a number of publications such as the LA Times, OC Register, Artweek, and Artscene. Greatly influenced by her AIR experiences and working internationally, she finds it keeps her and her art alert, and aims for future creative opportunities abroad.

Osline is currently preparing for a show at the Otis College of Art and Design in Los Angeles later this year. Her works are also on display in the "Being Here" exhibit at Andi Campognone Projects in Pomona, open through April 27.

Being Here at Andi Campognone Projects, 300 W. Second St., Pomona, andicampognone.com, www.naidaosline.com. Thru April 27. Free.