

“The Grey Area”

Show Essay for The Connor Brothers:
ALL THIS HAPPENED, *MORE OR LESS

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Have you ever had a Zombie? The fruity classic, which matches the colour scheme of, “I Tried To Drown My Sorrows”. The creator was “Don The Beachcomber” and his 1930’s new concept cocktails were so different to anything pre-existing, that he kept their makeup a secret for years. Even his longest bartenders made drinks off of instructions like, “2 Parts Don’s Mix #9”, which came from plain glass bottles. For years, consumers and professionals alike, guessed at their ingredients. But what do the particular makings matter of something great, so long as the desired outcome is reached?

The Connor Brothers flirt mercilessly with this very idea using painted badinage and enthralling images... These themes, that question our pre-conceived realities, resonate through their current exhibition, “All This Happened* More Or Less”. You may not entirely understand the description of “Pulp Fiction” book covers, (for books that do not exist,) “Bastardized 19th Century Engravings” and “Bastardized 17th Century Oil Paintings”, but it is hard to take their messages at face value. With the outcome proving aesthetically dynamic and viewers intrinsically engaging with it, then who are we to protrude into their creative process?

Post-modern art is often ridiculed for it’s sincerity. With all the controversy in their identities, does it matter more that they lied to us, or their reasons for doing so? And who is the judge of such actions- deeming them right or wrong, truth or fiction, white or black? Aren’t we *all* stuck living in a reality we can call, *The Grey Area*?

The influence of the World War II era subject matter and appearance is apparent on their witty “Pulp Fiction” book covers, and are extensions of their euphemisms for society. “Pulp” were disposable novels of the deadly-sin nature, printed on rough, low-quality paper that were quick, easy and available entertainment geared toward the first of the mass literate generations. Their content was a far cry from their high-brow counterpart, “Slicks,” which were a simple and visual class divider for the reader holding them. Pulp often depicted women as one dimensional terrified victims and, or, as alluring villains- an idea we find again, bridged to their 19th century engraving, “The Temptation of Adam”. Just because a book as famous and old as the Bible states it, do we truly believe women to be the root of *all* evil? The “Bastardized Oils” and “Engravings” are cultural renovations, appearing like static DJ remixes- visual samples of our culture over time, sewing together different perceptions of the human experience.

The Connor Brothers quote Albert Camus’ idea that by removing one’s self from their soap box, the veil of anonymity provides a safe zone in which people are far more willing to touch deeper facets of themselves, and in that raw manner, can expose those discoveries to the world. It appears that throughout history, society has made us so scared of saying, or even *wanting* something different from everyone else, that we have instead invented stories to illustrate our actuality.

These supposed societal successes are forced on us from every direction throughout our lives as modern Anglos, appearing as pressures like “secure lots of money,” “look pretty,” “get married” and so on. Women walk down the street toting monogrammed logo bags, hoping to be judged- the originals standing as symbols of these superiorities, and therefore proving her value in having one. However, “Is it the real deal?” The trained eye sees right through the imposters and, for those astute enough to deduce, it’s worse to be found out carrying a knock-off than it is to have an original bag of a less recognizable designer. What is in a label, anyway? Originality turned mainstream? This constant paradox is seen in judging the subject matter of these works as well- the silent battle pulling us in one direction toward consensus logic, (the mainstream,) and another, toward invisible trust, (original creativity). They have, in effect, drawn back these curtains, as Toto did to the Wizard of Oz.

In the constant battle to overcome their demons through the bastion of creativity, Snelle and Golding are seeking support, and urging others to do the same. By connecting with The Black Dog Institute here in Australia, they are acknowledging an unfulfilled requirement of social responsibility. Our thoughts are often taunted and divided by what we *should* think, what we *do* think, and often the most important one of them all falls by the wayside- what we *could* think of ourselves. Our reality is suspended in the energy required to move between what exists now and what can exist if we create it. If a more beautiful or healthier future comes from a lie, do we support it then? When a friend is hurting, don’t we drop our otherwise practiced and strengthened façade exposing our own weaknesses to comfort them?

On the opposite side of the spectrum from depression and feelings of low self-worth is that of hypomania, peaking with narcissism- all of which, are driven by assumptions of exterior factors and lack of coping skills, (ingredients to mental instability, be it historically present or not). The abundance of instant gratification and outside validation through social media seems to be making both of these isolating realities more prevalent in the world. Where are we finding these indications of our “should’s”, and why do we allow them that power over us? In the negative depths of these thoughts are generally feelings of lacking- unattained possessions, feelings, appearances, etc... But with the right support, we can switch this downward spiral.

Khalil Gibran said, “Verily you are suspended like scales...” which The Connor Brothers’ work provides evidence of: hanging between right and wrong, truth and fiction, white and black... As we all are, living in *The Grey Area*.

“And That Was The End Of The Beginning Of That”.