

NO TAX

Pe Ferreira

„For Mattresses To Floor Waterbeds Into Air“

Dec 14th 2024 – Jan 5th 2025

If you know Pe you know that she plays with language when she speaks, almost always. “hannah baerback,” she calls me, “hannah baer witness.”

Jokes in language are different than jokes in an image; for someone whose use of language is so elliptical and sliding, Pe’s photographs disarm with their directness – the phrase “come correct” comes into my mind, wet with all the meanings. The images come too, come to you full on, not beating around the bush, but properly, openly, bared.

In the pictures, it seems like everyone and everything is wet. Even a toilet paper roll on the leg of an upside-down stool reminds you that you might have to wipe something up. Sock feet on a duvet are dry enough, but you see the feet and you think about sex, so wetness seeps back in. Then basically everything else is actually wet - wet pores, wet swollen glans, damp breakfast sandwich, wet dead fish, wet body in the ocean, wet just getting out of the ocean, dripping sunset, wet first thing in the morning after you didn’t sleep, wet late when you didn’t sleep, wet because it’s warm, wet because you wanted to be, wet because your body made it that way.

“I baerly like you, I hannahstly love you,” Pe texts me. In real life, the jokes repeat, and in these pictures, there is repetition too. The question of a formal exercise comes up when there is not one but two images of blinds, not three but four images of a sunset. Everything good repeats, everything sensual repeats, most good jokes are about repetition, doing something over again because how could you not, first blush, second glance, third base, fourth wall, repeated repeated repeated.

It’s hard not to smile looking at the images, a string of spaghetti hangs between two mouths, a foot presses into a scrotum, an asshole blinks in the sun. But if the jokes are at visual level, there’s something else a little more diffuse, a sensual evocation that arrived to me at the level of smell

It started for me with Pe’s picture of David’s abs in particular, there is a flash of green behind him and you realize that you are outside in a place of natural abundance, a place with redolent land and earth and plants. His skin is undeniably damp and you know that the picture is partly also capturing a smell. Sometimes these smells are more overt (hot tub, again the fish) and sometimes more subtle (sunscreen in the ocean, cheeks spread bathing suit pulled down, cigarette smoke in car interior, no cigarette or smoke pictured).

The way a joke or an image repeats is often discrete, punctuated, but the way a smell repeats is more subtle; smell is linked to deep memory, you may realize a smell is repeating and then search around for what it came from. Other times, a familiar smell overwhelms you, undeniably linked to its original. The way being in love with your friends is a day-in-day-out texting back-and-forth of jokes, and the way being in love with your friends is a kind of being-in-love-with-the-world, a joining together of individual experience and collective sensuality, wet containers and damp thresholds, open and closing portals, smells that drift and ones that linger.

If you know Pe, you know that she always smells good, really good, for me sometimes so good that I don’t want to let go of her, so I keep her arms around me, or keep my face pressed between her cheek and her shoulder. This, the smell, is no joke.

Hannah Baer