

DERDIEDAS / THETHE THE

In, *DerDieDas*, Jeff Hallbauer works with personal mythologies through chosen imagery, appropriated from various sources in film, photography, and the internet. Plants and animals are strategically placed alongside the artist's references to construct dynamic collages, through which this inundation of imagery evokes a kind of beautiful violence. Disparate in source, but together the images create poetic pairings of romanticism, love, lust, attraction—and darker sides of human existence such as repulsion, violence, envy, addiction.

The word *DRUGS* is boldly presented to the viewer, a reference to Cookie Mueller and Glenn O'Brien's lost play of the same title. Cookie was an American actress and proudly advocated for heroin use during her time as New York City's it girl in the 1970s. Best known for her roles in John Waters films¹, Cookie represented a certain spirit of freedom and grit, one that pushed against the grain of conservative culture. Hallbauer reflects on this as a performance of idealized lifestyles—a romanticization of youthful freedoms, unconcerned with biases of morality or behaviors deemed profane. These euphoric suggestions also consider artistic lifestyles, as substances are often a large part of creative output and exploration.

In contrast, Hallbauer also provides the acronym *D.A.R.E.*²—a reference to 1990s youth culture. Created as part of America's war on drugs, the program targeted youth and was described as “a drug abuse prevention education program designed to equip elementary school children with skills for resisting peer pressure to experiment with tobacco, drugs, and alcohol”³. Yet Hallbauer reveals the hypocrisy of conservative culture with the statuesque Marlboro Man photographed by Norm Clasen. Posing for us as a cowboy, this idealized all-American-boy stoically smokes a cigarette. Hallbauer draws the connection between Norm Clasen and Richard Prince in this reference as well. Prince notoriously stole Clasen's Marlboro Man images, rephotographing the originals and claiming them as his own, for which he garnered vast amounts of wealth and clout. The artist humorously plays with these dichotomies, further emphasizing ideas of appropriation by presenting a punk aesthetic through irony, confictions, and the repurposing of imagery.

What compounds the effects of Hallbauer's multi-dimensional and divergent images are the means of production. Through photographic transfer processes, the works in *DerDieDas* are at once painting and drawing, photographic and sculptural. Images are sourced and transferred onto fabric, some by means of vigorous mark making, others by contrast of smoother duplication. We can think of this transfer media as an application of new ways of experiencing. Experimental in touch and sight, the artist's mark is present, embracing imperfections and chaos as a natural indicator of beauty and human existence.

If the word *The* in the English language denotes “persons or things already mentioned, under discussion, implied or otherwise presumed familiar”⁴, then Hallbauer's play on words, *DerDieDas / TheTheThe*, begs the question, what is the *the*? in this instance. What is presumed, implied, or familiar? Hallbauer propositions a new significance and potency to the word. The collages in *DerDieDas* therefore establish an origin – a Garden of Eden, one not bound by petty morality, but one that insists on beauty, freedom, chaos, and the natural indulgences of human existence. The figure of Lilith becomes Hallbauer's protagonist, a modern-day version of the demon ushering in a new beginning, a time of frenzied pleasure.

*Fortunately I am not the first person to tell you that you will never die. You simply lose your body. You will be the same except you won't have to worry about rent or mortgages or fashionable clothes. You will be released from sexual obsessions. You will not have drug addictions. You will not need alcohol. You will not have to worry about cellulite or cigarettes or cancer or AIDS or venereal disease. You will be free.*⁵

Text by Alex Gibson.

¹ Most famously for having sex with a chicken on screen in *Pink Flamingos* (1972)

² Drug Abuse Resistance Education

³ “Drug Abuse Resistance Education.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 19 Apr. 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drug_Abuse_Resistance_Education.

⁴ “The.” Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation, 10 July 2022, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The>.

⁵ “Cookie Mueller.” Visual AIDS, <https://visualaids.org/artists/cookie-mueller>.