

Imagining Being Pregnant (“Pregnant Man” a work by Christoph Both-Asmus)

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Having a daydream is quite common. However waking up from a daydream can be confusing, especially if the dream feels real and waking up becomes an impossible reality. Drifting away from reality, fusing conscious and unconscious feelings and desires of the daily life with a new imaginative reality. This is how Christoph Both-Asmus perceived (in English they say also perceiving a child;-) the performance piece “Pregnant Man”. The imagination, a personal inside space, is a fruitful environment to be inspired by and to create a strong personal connection with an art piece. Both-Asmus was led by this connection, during the process of making, years later.

After the daydream, which occurred in the year 2000 when Both-Asmus was 16 years old, an empty feeling, the absence of a pregnancy, was the early starting point for the performance. By creating drawings of this daydream, using expressive primary watercolours, the first visuals of the work came into being. Not yet with the intention to become a performance or an artwork, but more as an instinctive artistic expression, purely for the artists personal satisfaction. However Both-Asmus was invited in the same year, to decorate a room for a feminist meeting, at the International Woman’s Day in his hometown Fulda/DE. He used this drawings and they were very appreciated. In 2007, at AKI ArtEZ Academy for Art & Design, Enschede/NL, the drawings served as sketches to create the performance art piece for a live audience.

Recreating the daydream (in which he was pregnant and woke up not being pregnant) by wearing a big pregnant belly while sleeping in front of the audience, is a way to not only share his personal daydream with an audience but to also embody it. Lying naked on a big-pack and rubber band, he brought the daydream and his drawings to life.

“I did not want the memory of such a special moment in my life fade away” – Christoph Both-Asmus.*

Using the colours of the sketches on his belly (yellow) and penis (blue), the image looks “unnatural” even though he is completely nude and showing a pure innocent self. A pregnant man is by itself not something that can naturally occur, putting emphasis on the masculine, by making his penis blue, and the feminine by making the pregnant belly yellow, he questions what gender is.

Post script

“I was in the years 2007/08 almost solemnly working with found materials, often from the streets or from containers and upcycling them, a custom that I want to get back to.”
– Christoph Both-Asmus*

*quotes based on a Skype call with Christoph Both-Asmus in October 2016