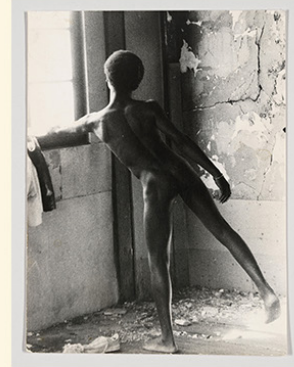


Nasher
Sculpture
Center

Shelf Life

an archive of nonperishable cultural sustenance
from friends around the world



*“the individual with their sheer willpower can sure give the system
a hell of a hard time”*

– KATHRYN ANDREWS

Artist

In 2016, during the presidential election, American artist Kathryn Andrews presented the exhibition *Run for President* at the Nasher, which considered the circus-like absurdities of the American political system and its close ties, actual and imaginative, with the entertainment industry. While it seemed certainly prescient then, four years later Andrew's work is even more of a bell clanging out a warning about the state of the nation. We checked in with her to see what she's been thinking about during this time of lockdown and digital consumption, and she sent along these thoughts.

1) *Westworld*, all episodes

I began watching *Westworld* early in the lockdown and struggled to get into the first season with its extreme violence. By the second, I was deeply hooked as the series revealed itself to be a constantly twisting feminist Groundhog Day revenge plot. Its machinations about whether this reality or that one is the good one or the bad were trippy to watch as governments around the globe were fudging their Coronavirus data while making extreme life-impacting decisions. As the quarantine wore on, Jacinda Ardern and Angela Merkel began looking quite like Maeve and Dolores in the last season.

2) Sports Movie Binging

Throughout March and April, I reflected more and more about the importance of commitment to one's vision as the regular grind screeched to a halt and one was left with the question, “What should I do?” I watched quite a few sports documentaries and bio pics on this topic, including *Rush* (2013); *Lindsey Vonn: The Final Season* (2019); *Diego Maradona* (2019); and *The Game Changers* (2018). In each, athletes defy all odds, propelling themselves forward with their laser-focused dream, always navigating hurdles to make their next leap. In the case of *The Game Changers*, a few veggie burgers help too.

3) Luther Conover

I came across Luther Conover one night after reading way too much toxic news. (I enjoy looking at the history of furniture when I can't sleep.) Working in Sausalito after World War II, his forms were primarily produced from rebar and wood. They are incredibly simple and yet still playful. I've been a fan of Paul McCobb for a long time, but finding Conover was a good surprise, and it has now led me to the work of his colleague, Muriel Coleman, also in the Pacific Design Group. Something to look forward to if the lockdown resumes in the winter.

4) The Beatles: *Eight Days a Week* (2016)

Okay, it is becoming obvious now, I watched a LOT of movies recently. Another favorite was Ron Howard's Beatles documentary where he chronicles the rise and subsequent disappearance of the band, and their own perspective on possessing a degree of fame never before known. Before watching all of the footage I had not fully understood the level of the fan response. Sure, I knew. But I didn't really *know* until I saw this footage. The film turns when the Beatles conclude it's all too much—their own image has destroyed the ability to keep moving forward creatively. Some years later, after the radical decision to stop performing and after producing gads of incredible new albums, they scratch their public performance itch one last time on a London rooftop. Passers-by convene in the streets catching bits of the music, but they cannot see up above. From the camera's perspective, one glimpses the Beatles happily performing in obscurity with only a handful of people around far above the fray of the city.

5) Alvin Baltrop

Definitely at the opposite end of the fame spectrum, one finds Alvin Baltrop, a wonderfully gifted photographer from the Bronx who documented gay life during the 60s, 70s and 80s during his time in the military and later as a frequent visitor to the Hudson River Piers. I keep thinking about Baltrop. I saw the recent retrospective at the Bronx Museum weeks before the shutdown and was extremely moved by the development of his vision over time and his curiosity about seeing all things, including the forbidden—many of his photographs are voyeuristic. Baltrop struggled financially throughout his life, undoubtedly as a result of growing up in a post-war system that remained highly racist and homophobic. Despite all odds, he produced a very powerful body of work. Sadly, he passed away in 2004, prior to its coming to light.

6) I've been reading Alexander Junger's *Clean* and it has radically changed the way I am thinking about the body and the stuff I put in it. An excellent overview of everything wrong with modern medicine and how simple it can be to heal all sorts of illness, this book is a must-read and perhaps helpful in this moment of trying to avoid hospitals.

7) The experience of being more or less trapped at home led me to two other films, Scorsese's *Shutter Island* (2010) featuring Leonardo DiCaprio and *The Island* (2005) featuring Ewan McGregor and Scarlett Johansson. Both movies depict scenarios where the protagonists are trapped and are trying to see through the charade of what the higher-ups are feeding them, in terms of why the island is “good” and “necessary.” In one film, there is a successful escape, in the other, the outside can never be proven. Each reminded me of today's post-truth moment where the extreme excesses of capitalism have been normalized and individual life has become less valuable. If there's any redemption in these movies, it's that the individual with their sheer willpower can sure give the system a hell of a hard time.