

OPENSACES

BY ERICA CICCARONE

Socially Engaged Art

Liz Clayton Scofield Unpacks Trans Identity through Performance



Nobody Can Eat 50 Eggs, 2014, Video stills from performance video, 42:22
This performance, in both its manifestation as live interaction and as video, reenacts an iconic scene from 1967 film *Cool Hand Luke*.

I first came across Liz Clayton Scofield's work in 2013 at Ground Floor Gallery with their video *The Nature of Codependency*. In it, Scofield rams into a closed door, full force, again and again. On the other side of the split screen, they complete the fruitless task of planting a seedling in gravel. It's an endless loop of violence against the body and a thwarted attempt at growth that struck me hard.

Scofield is a queer trans artist born in West Tennessee who uses performance, video, and sound to explore and critique gender constructs. Scofield, whose pronouns are they/them/their, creates performances that subject their body—and social norms—to inquiry, often by enduring great discomfort.

"In a large way," Scofield says, "these performances came from me accepting and beginning to unpack my trans identity and the anxiety that came with that." They use their body as a tool, a collaborator, and, essentially, an object. "Yes, I was expressing violence against it, but in many ways, I was testing it. How could I change my relationship to my body?"

Their performances contain a slapstick quality that both tempers and draws the pain of the process into focus, like when Scofield attempts to fit themselves into a cardboard box labeled "Safe," or when they perform the famous scene in *Cool Hand Luke*, when Luke takes on the challenge of eating 50 eggs to prove his prowess. In a recent project, Scofield scanned their body and 3D printed dozens of action figures. The "LiZes," as they call them, were just on view in Detroit in *CROTCH: Contested Territory*, and they'll appear in Scofield's Modular Art Pod, coming to Oz Arts Nashville in June.

Scofield envisions a revised queer art that doesn't concern itself first with narrative and isn't tailored to a heteronormative, cisgender audience. "What I hope for," they say, "is an anti-assimilationist, dirty, never finished, violent and playful, loving and feeling, heart-on-its-sleeve, rebellious queer art, or, you know, a quiet, reserved, covert queer art, but at the heart of it is a 'screw you' and a hug."

To learn more about Scofield and read their manifesto of a queer art, visit www.lizclaytonscotland.com. Read the complete version of this story at www.nashvillearts.com



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