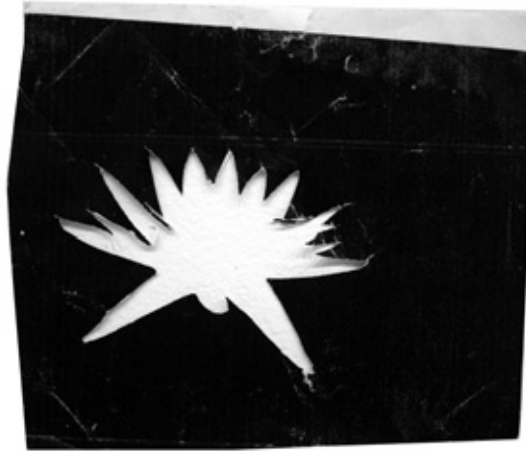




Found Object: Torn gay pride postcard

Gay pride marches always leave a lot of litter and trash along the streets that take days to clean up. I found this postcard littered along the sidewalk. It has such a simple imprint; a beautiful saying for understanding sexuality without the need for corporate sponsorship, without the need for anything more than something so abstract and so affirming that anyone can be part of it. And that's what I liked about it, that it didn't have the commodities that sometimes co-opt and redefine subcultures.



Found Object: Small paper cutout

The absence of a flower...

I met a man who flew me to Vancouver to meet him and spend time with him... for us to learn from each other. I was a little naïve; he expected sex, even though he didn't outright say it to me. He was negative towards me, assuming of certain things about myself, and throughout the course of my time there it became unbearable and I ended up leaving, crashing on an artist friend's couch I met in town. During my time in Vancouver, I went to this incredible Japanese garden. I saw an old lady on a bench making little cutouts of flowers. Her craft was so delicate and intricate; she only used a scissor to cut away at the paper, making incredibly detailed cutouts, looked like a traditional ritual. I ended up keeping a piece of paper that she threw out and I bought a couple of her touching pieces as gifts for friends. To me, this discarded paper reminds me that certain assumptions are still present even though they're not said... A lesson I'm still learning.



Relic: Styrofoam cup with dried jasmine tea leaves

I met a boy who was dealing with cancer, and was told that he had 6 months to live. He never had sex with another guy before and he really wanted to. His touch was passionate and engaging and throughout the experience he kept whispering in my ear what a gift I have given him, and how pleasurable it was between us. We shared each other's bodies and emotions and opened our hearts to the world, and I was glad to give him a part of myself. It was a touching reminder for me about how precious the moment is. I was sad to know he will never be able to fully explore love and sexuality. He was a fascinating guy, a Russian gypsy, a religious figure, spoke and wrote over 3 languages. After we had sex, we sat down on his patio and he made me some tea in a cup which reminds me very much of my Jewish upbringing, and we talked about what his plans were for the last 6 months of his life. It was a very clear reminder for myself to always be honest and truthful and to be present in the moment; to enjoy every little bit of it. I realize he also gave me a gift...



Found Object: Headless teddy bear

Death is always a hard thing to confront in life... My father passed away in the summer. I went to the funeral and the rabbi ushered me into a room where the immediate family congregates. I just stood there stoic, unsure of how to feel, especially considering I never really knew my father and that he wasn't really part of my life. I stood there alongside his wife and my "step family," feeling a little distant, a little sad and very angry. The rabbi asked if anyone wanted to see the body and I said yes, and as I did so my stepbrother told me I really shouldn't. I just looked at him, into his eyes, and without words I walked up to my father's casket. The rabbi made an announcement that if anyone wants to stay to see the body they could but the others should leave the room. He lifted open the casket and I stared into my father's head, unadulterated, unfiltered, feeling very raw, no makeup just a head surrounded by white sheets, pale skin... and my body tingled. I felt my entire being resonating somehow realizing that this moment there was no life in that body and whatever memories I had were the memories that I need to keep. My sister came up alongside me because she was curious; she took a step forward, looked in, took a gasp, and fell backwards. It was too much of a feeling for her. She was a lot closer to him than I was. So after the funeral service at the chapel, I went in my sister's car to the gravesite to bury the body. We were stuck in traffic, there was a long line with no one moving, and I noticed outside the window that there was a teddy bear on the floor, a teddy bear that was drawing me towards it. I went to look at it and my sister looked at me and said no, don't leave the car. She knew what I wanted to do. I told her no, I'll just be a second, and she told me she didn't want to be embarrassed by me. And at that moment I realized I can't be listening to other people's own insecurities or ideas of conventionality, of what you're supposed to be doing... what I'm supposed to be feeling, what I'm supposed to be thinking, and how I'm supposed to act. I decided to get out of that car and pick up the teddy bear. And I did so even though my sister was scolding me out of her own embarrassment, I don't understand why or how but for some reason that teddy bear is a reminder for me, a reminder to never listen to my head and always follow my heart.



Gift: Old painted wooden tiger

I used to call my boyfriend a tiger because I felt he was protecting me, and at the same time I would always ask him to watch for his claws. We used to get into nasty fights and they would show up on occasion. And he gave me this as a gift one day, inscribed with a story... "Now you have 2 tiger spirits watching over you. This is a piece of my history I wanted to pass on to you. This tiger was a gift I presented to my boyfriend, Kevin, in 1986. His nickname was tiger, also a Leo, and a very special soul. He happened to be a writer and was also involved in doing community service. He died at the age of 25. His passion and outlook on life always gave me strength and protected me even after his death. And now I see I inherited this tiger position and I wanted to support and protect you."



Gift: Colorful scarf woven from acrylic

Mutability of Innocence.

I slept with a man in the back of his pickup truck one night because I didn't have a place to sleep. And we cuddled all night. I sort of had a crush on him and he wanted to have sex with me, but that's all he wanted. It came at a point in my life when I realized that sex wasn't really everything for me. I was pursuing some idea of love... something more fluid. I learned about his life, his attitudes, perspective and apparently he had a partner, but would spend a week in this part of the country where we were staying to just go off on his own and have as much sex and drugs as he wanted to. He told me that it was a playful way of interacting and keeping himself sane inside a relationship. I didn't quite understand why at the time he needed that kind of vacation; I think I was a little naïve and innocent in trying to understand that if you're in a relationship and have sex outside the relationship it kind of removes the importance of the relationship. I'm a little older now, looking at this magic scarf he gave me, how it has very transformative powers. There's something in the weave that allows it to stretch in either direction; either wide or long, but it won't hold its shape for too long. And somehow that's a metaphor for me, for relationships, how they change and shift and don't really stay in the same place for too long and you have to kind of give it that moment of opening and allow things in your own life to help it shift and change.



Found Object: Metal railroad spike

I've always been drawn to and fascinated by railroad tracks. It becomes a metaphor for me of my journey in life. I went to visit a friend at his home outside Santa Cruz. There's a series of railroad tracks near his home that I would walk across almost every day. It's a man I met online, who fell in love with me and carried a special place in my heart and I almost fell in love with him. I realized early though, that we weren't going to be lovers, but he still bought me a ticket to spend 2 weeks with him because he wanted to get to know me better. It was a little difficult to spend time with him, but we learned how to work between those feelings. I learned more about him and his particular ways of experiencing as I was learning how to engage with my own sense of identity and sexuality. I lost touch with him after I came back home, and a couple years went by without a word or response from him after I several attempts to contact him. When I realized he wasn't getting any of my messages or phone calls, I searched for his name on the Internet and came across an article about him. It turns out that a week after I met him, he died suddenly, to much dismay from his coworkers at the nonprofit he worked for. I cried after I read the article, saddened because I didn't realize that those 2 weeks we spent together were the last weeks of his life. And I feel a little disappointed in myself that I couldn't give him a little more... I was probably one of the last persons he fell in love with...



Gift: Plastic gems

I always feel like my friends are jewels, waiting to be discovered, and also waiting for them to realize the same thing. And it's always a pleasure when I do find on rare occasions, moments when things become in sync and they see their own light... and I share and revel in the experiences with them.



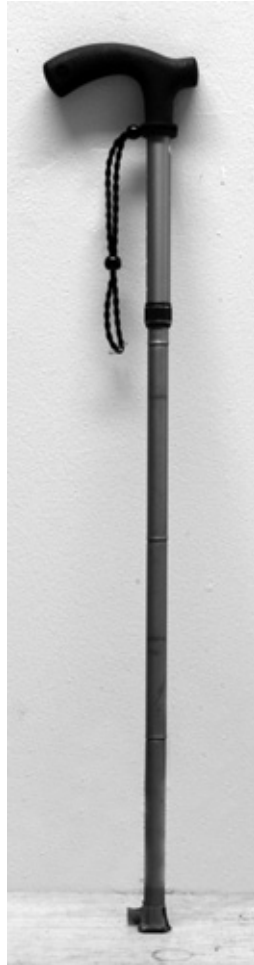
Gift

Artist: Rios O'Leary-Tagiuri

Medium: Sketch on canvas board

I hung out with a dear friend at his apartment and was just surfacing through some of his old drawings... He had all these beautiful drawings he didn't want people to see because they were unfinished. It was as if he was unearthing a certain level of sensibility in his own life, afraid to show anyone... insecure about himself and his sexuality. I met him at an early stage in his life when he was just exploring these desires. And to me, seeing these feet in that pose expresses that same kind of innocence, the innocence of trying to awaken certain feelings and desires within ourselves, the feeling of shame and uncertainty. And I asked him if I could have this drawing, but he was nervous and hesitant about giving it to me. At a certain point he finally let go and gave me this sketch, this painting; a symbol of our friendship, and also a symbol of him struggling with his own sexuality, exploring desires, of learning about himself and his insecurities and being comfortable sharing it with others; awakening deeper bonds with his own relationships. Its something I find inspiring. At certain points in our life, we do finish drawing the picture of ourselves and move on to learn to grow and accept the feelings we have that awaken within...

I'm always thinking of you even when I'm kissing another boy, 2010
Ethan Shoshan



Found Object: Foldable pink metal cane

This cane is something I found in the trash one day and decided to take it. About a month after I picked it up something happened to my leg. I was hiking 7 hours up the side of a mountain. I was walking for a couple days after the hike and realized that I hurt myself and it wasn't just a muscle ache, I tore a ligament. I became aware of the failure of my body. Its visceral and experiential, something that frustrated and scared me; the understanding that the body has limitations and even though my mind was racing, my body couldn't keep up, realizing that I had to slow down my pace and couldn't go everywhere I needed to. In the city it gets to be pretty difficult walking around as a disabled person and even though I was temporarily disabled, I could feel the lack of access and public transit to the point where I didn't want to go out. The unfriendly glances I would get from people as they tried to rush by me. It made me aware of that difficulty that less privileged people have to deal with on a daily basis, became an awakening for me, that my body is fragile and I need to care for it; that I need to slow down... that sometimes we need things surrounding our lives to hold us up and keep us going...



Found Object: Black stand with a venting face

The irresponsibility of relationships...

Talking with friends after a long absence; each person going through their own emotional problems, I found this on the street with them, just standing there on the sidewalk... and I'm imagining a funny moment, thinking that even the sidewalk has a ventilation system from all the traffic and stories it can tell... and I said out loud to my friends, "sometimes you just need to vent..."