

Alex Podesta
Statement on Recent Work
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In all of my recent work I have culled the rich fantasies and experiences of my childhood and re-contextualized them through the filters of adulthood, experience and education. This effort has been made in an attempt to re-connect with the creative naiveté of youth and to illustrate in engaging, even humorous, ways the role of fantasy, “othering” and conflict in nascent self-awareness.

This has been approached in several different ways. In the *Self-Portrait as Bunnies* series, adult-sized and adult-featured versions of myself are presented as bunny/man chimeras in specifically childlike vignettes – turning a stuffed bunny into an effigy of themselves, making marionettes to act out their relationship, making drawings of each other – in order to underscore the earnestness of pre-adolescent industriousness and to open a window into the richness of the interior dialogues children often seem to weave for themselves. Another work, *The Hero*, explores the role of fantasy and escapism in playing make believe, and the degree to which we carry that escapism into being adults. The two boys are engaged in their play but they seem palpably concerned, worried even. They can’t quite give into the escape entirely. In another approach to these ideas, *Conjoined*, two bicycles are joined to form a sort of “pushmipullyu”, acting as stand-ins for the bunnies found in the other pieces and as analogs for the participants in a playground dustup.

This exploration of elements of childhood and things childlike is also evident in recent photographs, collages and drawings. In *PodestaManet* and *PodestaMorrisSchneeman* this takes the form of recreations of a well-known painting and subsequent performance, using Barbie dolls dressed as bunnies. Replacing the figures with dolls is meant to be reminiscent of children dressing up in their parents’ clothes and playing grownup. In the *Let’s Dance* series, doubled and tripled self-portraiture is combined with memories of children’s book illustrations. However, my adult figure is substituted for that of the kids.

This focus on the development of awareness and the experiential mashing of child-like and adult-like is present, to a greater or lesser degree, in most of my work. For the viewer though this is subtle, discernable primarily in only a visceral sense of theme and leaving multiple strands to be leisurely unraveled. In this way, the work seems additionally to offer the viewer a quiet invitation to indulge in a little solipsistic navel gazing.