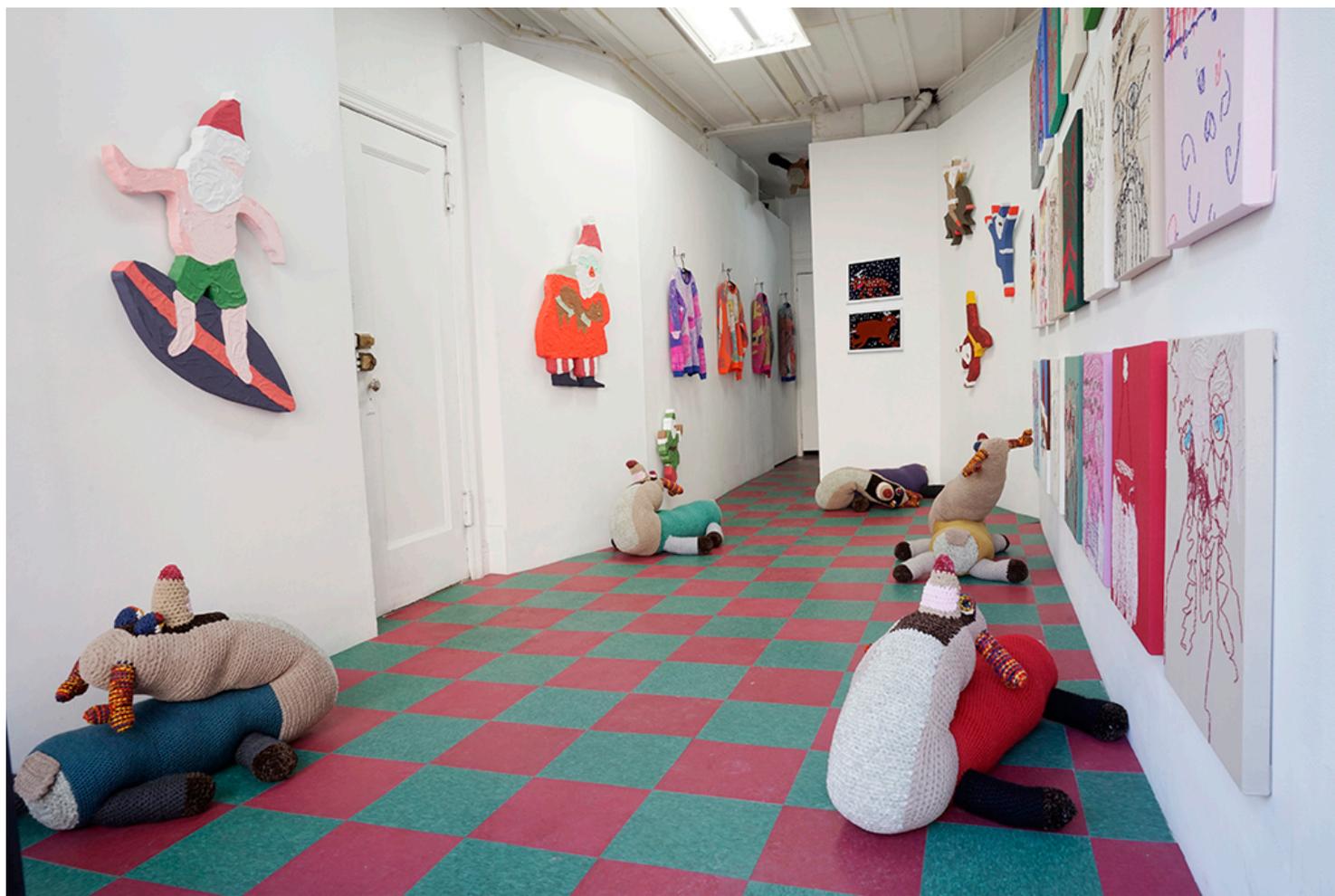


HO's in this House

On the occasion of the show *HO's in this House* at Soloway, Santanimus sat down to do an exclusive interview with the elf cohort Crumpet Fuzzy Bottom, Minty Muffin Tin, and Yoyo Tinsel Toes.

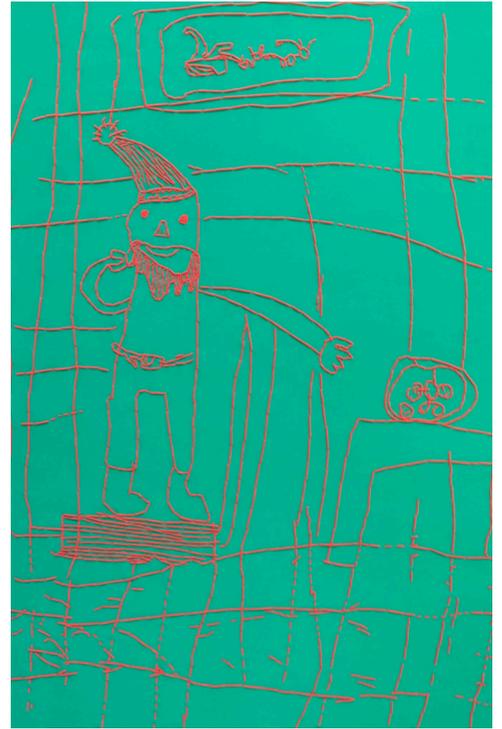
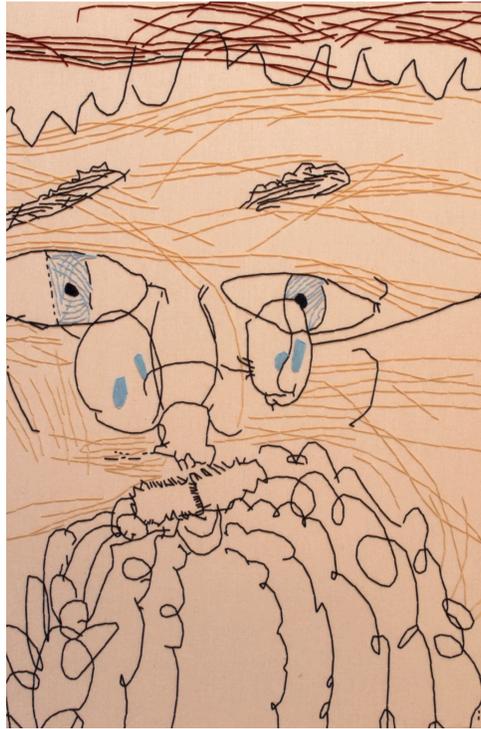


HO's in This House Soloway Brooklyn, NY

Crumpet Fuzzy Bottom: Santa is a bizarre subject for a body of work let alone a show. Can you talk about why you would do such a thing?

Santanimus: Santa is a reset button. If I were an anthropologist I would research the role that Santa plays in conservative cultures. All children experience disillusionment when they stop believing what their families tell them after being coerced in the elaborately dogmatic existence of this omnipotent being that rewards or punishes their behavior throughout the year on one fateful day. I don't think most

families are aware how subversive it is to participate in and reenact this tradition. It foreshadows the process of individualization that most people go through as they negotiate their relationship to their cultural programming received from their family units as they discover who they are and weigh how enmeshed they want to be in society. Santa is the door to discovering the self!



Minty Muffin Tin: This is not your first Santa show or is it? Why do this in January or February?

Santanimus: This is my second solo Christmas themed show and the third Christmas show that I've participated in. The first version was *Christmas in July* at Sanctuary in Pittsburgh in 2014. My friends Rachel Schmidhofer and Scott Penkava did a pop up gallery that summer. *Christmas in July* explored the pagan roots of Santa. Mr. Rogers' wife came to the show and brought some of his neighborhood swag. She said that he would have loved it and Mr. Rogers' approval beyond the grave has meant more to me than any press I've ever received.

The second show was a bit more punk rock. Laurel Sparks who is also a Santa fanatic curated this wild holiday show at Kate Werble in 2016 titled *XXXMASS*.

When Hakim asked me to do a show at Soloway last year, I immediately wanted to do a Santa show and that desire intensified when Manal said it was a stupid and terrible idea. I figured that we would still be in the pandemic and the dysfunction of having such a show in January and February would make sense because time has stretched and folded these past two years. I envisioned it as a good way to do a holiday party and see people I haven't seen while spreading much needed cheer.



Yoyo Tinsel Toes: Wow. The santa obsession is deep. What did you discover when you were researching the pagan origins of Santa?

Santanimus: I wrote this text titled *The Sequel of Trolli* on Santa. The format is a listory. A listory is a list, a history, and a story.

The Sequel of Trolli

Anthropologically and mythologically Santa is a harlequin(ian) patchwork of rich and disparate narratives. Santa has worn many a Mithras stylized cap as Thor, Odin, a horrifying Dutch slave master (which causes me to cringle), and Apollo to name a few. Archetypally the magician and the clown are the same figure on opposite sides of the wheel- one perhaps esteemed as more nobler than the latter- and best of all Santa indiscriminately inhabits both! 'He' and in the Siberian shamanic variation 'she' in drag as 'he,' Santa occupies a special place in the hearts of all good boys and girls and gender non-conforming folks as the most well known Shamanic figure globally. The Germanic Santa works closely with the devilish figure Krampus, which I'm convinced is just Santa on a bad day. Once upon a time, Santa forgot to shape-shift into Krampus and was caught eating children by Goya in "Sa(n)turn Devouring His Son." Santa likes to make things by hand and is the ultimate crunchy-granola. He lives at

the North Pole (the axis mundi), communes with flying reindeer (mushroom junkies), and works with magical elves (creators of language) to bestow gifts of liberation to those who are pure of heart. Santa sees the world through honeycomb specs which are a secret tool for weighing the heart(s) of humanity. Chimneys are his preferred portal to distribute the sacrament for trans-dimensional travel. Cookies are strange attractors at the end of time. In the off season, Santa hangs up his red suit to don an electric blue fur and moonlights as Cookie Monster in a state of eye rolling ecstasy.



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Crumpet Fuzzy Bottom: Tell us about the title of the show.

Santanimus: The title is an homage to Cardi B. feat. Megan Thee Stallion's song *WAP*. The majority of the work in this show are b-side hits in my oeuvre. That title in relationship to more broadly shown bodies of work might make people think that they are walking into a sex positive queer feminist show. I'm into the idea of using the act of naming to cat-fish in order to serve up surprise. My favorite artists surprise me and I hope to do the same. Play and material experimentation are foundational to my studio practice. Minty Muffin Tin, how did you get your name?

Minty Muffin Tin: How dare you! Moving on, there are many kinds of work in the show. Reverse glass paintings, embroideries, hand crocheted sculptures, knit sweaters, charred cookies, peppermint spiral t-shirts and cakes. What role do cakes play?



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Santanimus: Baking cookies and cakes and decorating them with my dad was my first introduction to painting. I think of most of the cakes or cookies I make as cake fails. This poem based off of Kahil Gibran's *On Children* best clarifies my relationship to cakes.

Your cake fails are not your children.

They are the gender queer icons of Life's longing for itself.

They come through you but not from you,

And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give your cake fails love but not your thoughts,

For they have their own thoughts.

You may try to domesticate their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the HOMO-House of Dufresne of tomorrow,

WHICH YOU CANNOT VISIT, NOT EVEN IN YOUR DREAMS.

You may strive to be like your cake fails,

but seek not to make them like you.

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday...

Because cake fails aren't basic.

Cake fails are the subconscious promise of normativity yearning for the exception.

The future is cake fail.

Yoyo Tinsel Toes: The cover is a big part of your practice. In your crocheted work you often look back at art history and queer it. Do you have covers in this show?



Santanimus: Yes! My mom has a cover of this Ammi Phillips painting titled *Girl in Red Dress with Cat and Dog* (1830-1835). I grew up thinking that it was an original until I saw it at the American Folk Art Museum when I was 20 during my first trip to New York. William Hawkins made an incredible cover of this work. When I saw it 2 years ago, I screamed and knew exactly what the reference image was. *Lady in Red* is a cover of this work meditating on Hawkins' version and my mother's cover. Except my cover features Santa as a bearded lady serving some Virgin Mary and Baby Jesus/Isis and Hathor enthroned animal-kin vibes. I'm into Donna Haraway's mantra in *Staying with the Trouble*, "Make kin not babies!"

Crumpet Fuzzy Bottom: We loved the Santa story about you and your sister at Wendy's. The press release was funny and set the tone for the show. We will include it at the end of this interview. There seems to be some shade regarding the candy toppings on your cookies. How are you thinking about casting in the work?



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Santanimus: Casting is really similar to covers in the work. Covers are more about translation and how our bodies serve as filters in relationship to the iconic. Casting is more about passing and I think of it as a way to explore an aspect of trans identity through a material process.



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Minty Muffin Tin: The hand crocheted reindeer in the show slump on the floor in a dazed stupor and gather communally on the ceiling in the back? Why are they serving train spotting vibes?

Santanimus: I learned from Terence Mckenna that reindeer have a relationship to the mushroom *amanita muscaria*. *Amanita muscaria* is a sacrament used by Siberian shamans. The shamans are women that donned beards and dressed in red suits. In the winter they enter into snow insulated homes via the chimney to distribute the sacrament. Reindeer seem to experience psychoactive effects from consuming the mushroom and this relationship points to lore around why reindeer fly. It is unclear how one receives psychoactive effects from *amanita muscaria*, whose red and white doppelgängers are their Siberian Shaman counterparts and Santa. The mystery has lead some adventurous thrill seekers to drink the piss of reindeer to access another dimension.

Yoyo Tinsel Toes: Thanks for chatting with us Santanimus. We look forward to seeing you at the closing reception Sunday February 20th 1-4pm. Press release is below:

If Carl Jung misgendered me, she would probably tell me that my animus was Santa. Santanimus lives inside of me. Santa is my destiny. Challenging normative standards of decency and taste through craft and excess, *HOs in This House*, is a queer fever dream that celebrates the best of what Christmas has to offer without the psychosis of family. Start the new year right! One month behind! Who's really counting anyway? Embroidered poor-traits of employee of the month mall Santas gather for Santa therapy. Charred cookies are strange attractors at the end of time. Trompe l'oeil casts of candies serve toppings so convincingly that visitors will ponder 'how are those preserved?' because they can't read a materials list. Amanita muscaria junkie reindeers fly and slouch in a psychedelic stupor. Peppermint spiral t-shirts are the perfect breath-mint your body needs to start the new year fresh.

Wear your best soiled ugly holiday sweater and slap on a mask with a white beard glued to the face. Join us at Soloway to celebrate Santa and the degenerate mind of an artist who needed to make yet another Santa themed show. Oh there he ho again!!

* Dad joke origin unknown

Santanimus/Wells Chandler (he/him) is a Bronx based artist who explores ecology, community, gender and queer iconography through the mediums of crochet, embroidery, drawing and cake. He received his MFA from Yale University in 2011 where he was awarded the Ralph Mayer Prize for proficiency in materials and techniques. From 2016-17 he was a recipient of the Sharpe Walentas Studio Program. Chandler is a 2015 Queer Art Mentorship fellow paired with the inimitable Angela Dufresne. Recent solo exhibitions include Andrew Rafacz (Chicago, IL), Diablo Rosso (Panama City, Panama), Galerie Eric Mouchet (Paris, France), MOCA Tucson (Tucson, AZ), Mrs. (Maspeth, NY), and Union Gallery (London, England). Recent group exhibitions include Leslie Lohman Museum of Art (NY), Museo Tamayo (Mexico City, Mexico), The Pensacola Museum of Art (FL), Choi and Lager (Cologne, Germany), and Marvin Gardens (Queens, NY). His work has been reviewed by Roxane Gay, Art Forum, The New York Times, Hyperallergic, The Huffington Post, TimeOut, Modern Painters, Maake Magazine, Two Coats of Paint and AEQAI. Chandler is a Visiting Assistant Professor at SUNY Purchase.

Crumpet Fuzzy Bottom is Head Elf in Santa's Workshop. In his spare time he writes for Art in North Polica, Freeze, and Art Forbun, a subsidiary for Art 22. Mr. Fuzzy Bottom was the original archetype for the no pants look that has been misattributed to Winnie the Pooh. His robust pubic hair growth allowed for this fashion forward statement. He has graced the runway in Balenciaga fashion shows sans pants.

Minty Muffin Tin is Top Chef in the Cookie Division at Santa's Workshop. Prior to this stint, she worked for Martha Stewart as Martha Stewart. Legend has it that Minty Muffin Tin was Martha Stewart's disappearing twin extracted from what was considered a goiter on her neck. She has served as a guest judge on the Great British Baking show disguised as a callus on the hand of Paul Hollywood. If you shook hands with Paul, you shook hands with Minty. Do not ask her how she got her name.

Yoyo Tinsel Toes is a TaskMaster Elf and takes pleasure in bossing around the other elves. Yoyo is into kink and runs a BDSM dungeon that meets on third Fridays every month. Frequented by off-season mall santas, reindeer are welcome. Rudolf is a regular.

[Wells Chandler \(https://wellschandler.com/home.html\)](https://wellschandler.com/home.html)

Instagram: @bugloverphat