

GLEN FOGEL: Upon initial glance of this film, is it something you are interested in?

ANTONY: Yes, it's beautiful. I love it. I would definitely love to do a soundtrack for it.

G: That's good 'cause in making it I was thinking about you and your work and trying to bring in some elements that aren't really in my work. I thought you might have some attachment to the ocean void for some reason, and the birds.

A: There's more realistic imagery than I have seen in any of your other films.

G: Much more.

A: More natural imagery, but with an alienated sense, a lonely sense. It's a bit desolate. Why did you have the man shave his head? What were you thinking about?

G: Well originally I thought the shaving of his head was going to be put into the film, but then we started to work on it and it looked like shit. Actually we were on ecstasy when we were shooting.

A: Really?

G: It ended up making for a really fun evening. But I wanted to shoot at sunrise and by the time sunrise came around we were just so...obliterated...and I tried to shoot him shaving his head and it did not work at all! (laughing). I looked at it later and I had a couple shots of the shaving that I liked, but it was just way too heavy-handed. It had this kinda abject, art school, "I hate myself" quality to it.

A: How did you treat it so the colors separated like that?

G: That's something that was done in editing called a color offset. I imagine, actually, that the two layers of color will be constantly shifting back and forth between coming together and splitting apart- perhaps with a double projection, one on top of the other.

A: When the red and blue come together does it go to the natural color?

G: Yes.

A: Well, I wonder how to work on it. Are you imagining that I am going to make a song, or more of an ambient soundtrack?

G: I am thinking perhaps more ambient, but it could have song elements. There is something interesting in the ambient sounds that are already present and their juxtaposition, like between the sounds in the tunnel and the ocean sounds. I think it might be best if the sound was very tightly and rhythmically cut with the image, instead of just music playing.

A: It will be fun to think about it and see what I can come up with. Do you think I should use words? Are words going to place it too much?

G: I don't have a specific idea as to whether or not there should be words. I have never used words before. It could be good as long as it's not incredibly concrete, but your lyrics often aren't that concrete. As I said, I am very interested in the idea of it not just being my film. I want it to be something that we work on together, so I want you to take it somewhere else. I don't want you to just be thinking, "How can I make sound for this film?" If you think of words that make sense, and you think of specific images that aren't there, I can go shoot something else to put in. The picture is not set. I am actually going to go back and shoot more.

A: Where did you shoot the ocean sequence?

G: It was shot in Montauk. I have to go back there I think.

A: So when did you begin making films?

G: Let me take my shoes off...

A: Where did you get those slippers?

G: I got them at the Adidas store. Do you like them?

A: They're sooo cute.

G: Don't they kinda look like sneakers that have been duck-taped?

A: Yeah, or they are sorta '70s.

G: '70s gay porn star.

A: Is that the look you are going for?

G: (laughing) Not necessarily. But when I looked at them it's what I thought of.

A: You thought '70s gay porn star?

G: Not the Colt aesthetic, but the basketball team, locker room, tube sock thing. (laughing)

So, when did I start making film? I started making films...

A: Wait, just back to the locker room. I couldn't go into them. Did you go into locker rooms when you were little?

G: Oh, I hated locker rooms. They terrified me.

A: You see, I don't really have a lot of memories about them.

G: I think most of my experience of locker rooms is through movies-more pornographic than narrative.

I spent as little time in locker rooms as possible.

I was always really shy about being naked around other boys, and I was really embarrassed about my body.

A: Did you have to change for P.E.?

G: Yeah, I had to. Luckily we didn't have to shower though. Did you have to do that?

A: I only took one semester of P.E. in high school during my freshman year. Then I took dance classes substituting for P.E., and I would wear my outfit underneath my day outfit so I wouldn't have to change. So, I would never go into that area.

G: You would just never even go there?

A: No, I wouldn't. I couldn't go in there. I practically wasn't allowed.

G: I always found it really terrifying. I didn't get beat up in the locker room but one time I was dragged down the stairs by this awful guy in middle school. He pulled me down the stairs by my hair while calling me a faggot.

A: Did you have long hair?

G: It was long-ish. It was parted really far over to the side, it sort of swooped over, and it was really feathered. My hair was bigger than my head.

A: Wow, nice long hair. That sounds terrible, being pulled by the hair.

G: Well I was such a late bloomer, which was part of the problem. I was constantly tormented about being really small. People would ask things like, "Are you a boy or a girl?" 'Cause all the other boys had already developed, and were much more masculine with these deep voices. I was just this little pip-squeak.

I mean, my voice didn't crack until I was 16.

A: Oh, that's so nice. But it must have been torture.

G: Yeah it was- that was where a lot of my fear of the locker room came from, you know. Because I would see all of the other boys getting naked, and they all had these masculine, developed bodies with hair everywhere, and I was just this little pre-pubescent child.

A: Yes, how horrible (laughing). Oh god. So when did you start making movies?

G: Wait, I wanna know about your experience with puberty. I just revealed everything.

A: Well, I almost wish that people still mistook me for a girl. I miss those days. I wish that I still had that androgyny...naturally.

G: You have some of it.

A: Yeah, but I am 6'3" and covered in hair and I'm losing my hair. You know what I mean? I have a lot of secondary male sex characteristics now. I would much prefer to have that 14-year-old thing where people thought I was an adult because I was really tall, but always asked me if I was a boy or a girl. But, I also wore a lot of make-up- much more than I would wear now. When I was 13 I was wearing the most make-up, like death-rock make-up. It was 1982 or '83, so it was very Goth. I was definitely at war with the world, but that all mellowed out by the time I was 15 through a series of quite dramatic events.

G: Such as?

A: This and that. Dropping out of high school my freshman year, leaving home, getting arrested, and then going through the whole system. I was eventually put in one of those centers for wayward children for a few months, and was then re-integrated into society, forced to not wear make-up and put in an art school. So, then everything sorta mellowed out. It was a compromise- if I wouldn't wear make-up, and I was non-volatile, then I could go to an arts high school where I was basically left alone. I was just called "The Thing."

G: So, when did you start making music?

A: I started when we first moved to America, in 1981. I was 11. My mother bought me a keyboard and I used to get all the early '80s English pop magazines by land-

mail, like Number 1 and Smash Hits. Boy George, Alison Moyet, Yaz, Marc Almond, Depeche Mode and Duran Duran, you know. I listened to all those things before they were really popular in America, but they were getting very popular in England. Actually, I could even backtrack. I bought my first Kate Bush record in 1977 in Amsterdam. I started thinking that I wanted to be a singer when I was 11 or 12 because Boy George and Mark Almond were the only type of sissies that I knew about in the whole world. The only really effeminate, or feminine, arty type of people I knew about were in music. That was the only place that I saw myself represented. So, I immediately just adopted that as where I should go. As a kid I was into drawing and crafts, like making puppets. I used to like singing, I was in a choir, but I never was an exceptional singer. I have these very poor notes from a second grade teacher that says, "He's very enthusiastic, but he sings off-key."

G: (laughs) So you really started exploring your singing in college?

A: No, it was really since grade school. I have boxes of tapes of songs that I wrote when I was like 13.

G: Oh wow, I would love to hear them.

A: (laughs) Oh, they are horrible! They are really bad.

G: So they aren't going to be put out as previously unreleased Antony?

A: Oh I hope not, when I die maybe, if anyone is interested. But I doubt before then.

G: Oh Antony...

A: So in college I did a long diversion in experimental theater—draggy, transvestite, after-hours theater. And that eventually segued back into making music, which is what I should have been doing all along.

G: But perhaps that diversion was a good thing?

There is a strong element of performance in your work. I first heard your music on CD and I liked it, but I wasn't completely taken by it. But when I saw you live for the first time I was blown away. You have such an amazing presence as a performer.

A: That's just because my eyes are too big. They take up too much room.

G: (laughs) No...

A: It's like watching E.T. You have to be fascinated.

G: Do you feel more strongly about your live work versus your studio work?

A: So far, I am a much better live performer than I am a studio musician. I haven't quite figured out how to record yet. I am trying to make a new album and I don't know how to capture the moment. It's very difficult for me to construct a moment in a contrived setting. I am much better when I have an audience and it's a real situation and the stakes are up and there is something emotional, a transaction. It's difficult for me to do it in a void or on cue. Honestly, I feel like my first album is too arch and a lot of the intimacy of the live show hasn't been captured.

G: How about live recordings?

A: Actually, I am releasing a new CD next month that is a live recording of me just playing piano and singing, and it's my favorite thing that I have done so far. Even though it is much simpler.

G: Sounds great.

A: Also, my work is changing, it's becoming less grandiose, less...

G: Dramatic?

A: Pompous, and yes dramatic. Less melodrama.

G: I love the melodrama though.

A: Thanks. I am still interested in emotional movement, but I think it is becoming more seductive, more intimate. You know, you never actually told me, when did you start making films?

G: I didn't make art growing up. I wasn't skilled at drawing and painting and never really thought of myself as an artist, but I had a deep connection to art and have always felt that some of my best experiences growing up was seeing artwork or going to concerts, films, etc. It was something that I always wanted to do, but never felt that I had the ability to actually do it. So when I went to college I started studying philosophy, film, and cultural studies on a totally theoretical level and found it incredibly boring. I had a really hard time with all the reading and writing. I knew that I wanted to express myself creatively, so I started dabbling with drawing and painting and photog-

raphy, but nothing was really clicking. I wasn't bad at photography, but I wasn't great at it either. So, I was on the verge of dropping out of school and unable to jump through the hoops of writing essays anymore. I approached one of my professors about making an alternative project to a final essay and she agreed. I ended up making a video, but it was also somewhat performative—I used an auditorium at school and set up three screens: one massive screen for video and two other screens with slides of text. There was also a live spoken word element to it. It was really, really ambitious (laughing). Everyone seemed to like it, but in retrospect it's totally embarrassing.

A: Where was that?

G: It was at McGill in Montreal.

A: And then what?

G: Well, out of that success, or what I thought was a success, I began to think that I really wanted to do this kinda multimedia performance. I was really into Laurie Anderson, but I didn't know how to approach that type of art-making. Eventually I decided that film would be the best way. If I could at least learn film, then I could turn it into something else. And in the process of starting to make films and videos, I realized it was what I wanted to be doing, not this multimedia performance thing. But, some of that interest in performance is still carried out in my work. I have always felt that it is really important that I project my own work. It can't really be seen without my presence or without me setting it up, because some of it involves double projection and is rather ephemeral.

A: It was so nice doing that show with you at Tonic.

G: That was really great for me as well.

A: Charlie Atlas loved your movie, and his opinion is the only one that ever really matters.

G: I am really flattered by that. I was really curious when you asked me to show a film during your concert how it was going to connect, because our work is really, really different. You know, I really admire what you do and I was so nervous that night because you were playing and I thought it was totally amazing, and then I had to show one of my films right in the middle of it!

A: It was so great. I just loved it. It was so fresh. It was a

lovely, lovely moment to see your film in the middle of that. It seemed like a performance to me as well because there is a random aspect to it. It's never exactly the same each time.

G: Going back to Charlie Atlas, have you seen the documentary that he did on Leigh Bowery?

A: Yeah, I saw it. It's beautiful. It's great. You know that was a long time coming.

G: I couldn't help thinking about you when I was watching it..

A: Why's that?

G: What is your connection to him? Were you at all influenced by him?

A: Well my connection to him is weird. I became friends with Charlie the year before Leigh died. Charlie was coming to a performance group I used to run at the Pyramid called Blacklips, and I honestly wasn't really aware of Leigh. I had seen him just once the year before in the early '90s when he did a show at Wigstock. He did the birth scene with Nicola. It was fantastic, and I just couldn't believe my eyes. So stunning! I had never seen someone so audacious and so punk, it was fabulous...a queen like that! Later that night he did a deconstructed version of it naked at Mother, the same thing with Nicola in the harness, and I just worshipped him. I fell at his feet immediately. But apparently he had a penchant for the Blackclippers, and he came and saw one of our shows the night we did Jack the Ripper at the Pyramid. Charlie had been coming to the Blacklips shows with Dance Noise and Laurie Weeks and all those folks. Charlie approached me about making a film of one of my plays—which never ended up happening—but we became friends. Then a year later Leigh died and it was a strange situation. I wasn't really aware of it at the time, but looking back it's painfully obvious that I tried to be Leigh for Charlie for a couple of years.

G: How were you being Leigh for Charlie?

A: I tried to be a muse for him. I started dressing up when I would go out with him. I had always dressed up, but I had never been a surrealist with my visuals. I had a penchant for something that was feminine and sort of punk or whatever, but I wasn't in the design realm at all. Leigh was a designer, a visual artist. I was a singer, and

sort of in theater. It was a weird time. Some if it is embarrassing to look back on, but it's what I did. Then I went back to who I was a couple of years later. But he is definitely an inspiration to me. He is an inspiration to everyone because of the extremity and the clarity of his beauty. He was a really great star, and there are hardly any of those. He was so incredibly original.

G: He had a pure vision.

A: Yes, you can't argue with it. And so beautiful, and I am such a whore for beauty. You know, Rosie O'Donnell is bringing the Boy George musical about Leigh to Broadway. Did I tell you about this?

G: I heard that you might be Boy George's understudy.

A: They asked me to read the Leigh part, so I went up there and did my best London club voice. They were into it, so they might ask me to understudy. But I don't know if it's appropriate for me to carry his mantle. There are certain obvious parallels like I'm 6'3", I have this big round face.

G: Big eyes.

A: I am sort of androgynous and kinda out there with a big presence like Leigh. But we are very, very different. I am basically much more feminine in my approach to things. Although he was definitely a homemaker, with his stitching and all.

G: I honestly do not know enough about him to truly discuss it. He was a bit before my time.

A: I really wasn't aware of him until after he died. But after he died, I would be at Charlie's watching his videos while Charlie and I kinda became best friends. It was a weird, wild time. It was also the end of that terrible AIDS period. There had been such massive cultural devastation. In my mind, Leigh's death was one of the final terrible losses of that late '80s /early '90s era, where 60 to 70 percent of the greatest cultural producers of our time died. I lost almost all of my heroes. Now we are in different cycle. I feel as if some of that fog has lifted, but I don't know what is going to happen.

G: I don't have the same connection to that time because I didn't watch people around me get sick and die. It must've shifted right before I arrived here. I have

been in New York for just over four years, and I don't know anyone who has died of AIDS. I have friends who are positive, but they are healthy for the most part.

A: I was an AIDS baby. In 1984 I was 14 and that was when AIDS really hit the national media. My sexuality was developing parallel to this notion of the homosexual pariah and the death/disease thing. I was obsessed with it throughout high school and college. It seemed as if sex equaled death. I moved to New York in 1990, and it felt like I had come to a city that had just been hit by a big bomb. On one hand, there was a surface of parties and hedonism, but on the other hand, it felt like the moment between when a body has been shot and when it falls down. The city was suspended but full of holes. I didn't go through that trauma people suffered, of being at the end of their life while watching all their peers die, but I became acquainted with people who had. And since I am always one to carry a burning cross, I internalized the landscape that I found, and in turn, a lot of my work revolved around the themes of loss and death.

G: I think that your work still does.

A: Yes, but more so then. I used to have a very apocalyptic sense of things. Now the landscape is more internal. It reflects the ideas I have about the world situation, but through a more personal set of images. It is not so archetypal anymore. What about you, what fuels your work?

G: It comes from exactly that same place—the internal landscape. I think it has relation to how the source is deeply personal and stems from experiences, like relationships that I have with people, love, loss, etc. I don't think of myself as an artist by vocation. I know other artists that can constantly produce work, but that is definitely not how it is for me. I only make something when I feel as if I have to make it. Events in my life happen and images build up in my head, and then the pressure builds and it has to be released. The ideas aren't always there. I have a very hard time being able to just sit down and make something.

A: Do you feel that your work is timeless or do you think it is very rooted in the "now?"

G: I have often felt like it is not rooted enough. Sometimes

I feel pressure like I should be commenting on something, making people question and re-evaluate social norms and constructs. I often wonder if my work is almost too personal, and if it can actually bear any relevance.

A: You don't think that it does?

G: I don't know. How do you perceive it?

A: Well, I think what you showed me today is very relevant. I definitely read it through a lens of "now," a lens of alienation. In the massiveness of the ocean there is the solitude of the birds. Anorexic is not the right word, but there is something starved about the landscape, something very gray and lifeless, full of sorrow. It is not promising a natural world that's rich with wonder. I think it is very contemporary.

G: It's perhaps contemporary, but it's not necessarily time specific. There has always been sorrow.

A: Yes, but tying it specifically into the landscape is a theme that I would attach to "now." Also, the bald head immediately makes me think of cancer, radiation, and people losing their hair. It represents this horrible vulnerability that revolves around disease and, perhaps, separateness. That all seems to me like "now." It's such an interesting time to be an artist. I think it is really important, whether it's to catalyze change or just to document what's going on. I think it all gets logged in the big unconsciousness.

G: Do you ever feel the pressure to have your work be more outwardly relevant? I believe your work comes from your heart. Do you ever feel the need for it to be more politically catalytic?

A: Well perhaps I'm fooling myself, but I feel like my identity has innate political ramifications. Just the fact that I am allowed to be alive, that I have a platform.

G: That you're not in a death camp.

A: Or buried under a wall in Afghanistan. I think a lot about the fact that I have been given this opportunity to give voice to a kind of person that doesn't often have a platform in history. I always think that I was born and I will die and that's that, but actually there is a very long story that goes through each of us. I am really interested in the way that a voice can echo through the line of life from me to the beginning of time, and manifest itself.

I am the end of a line of life that has never stopped since the beginning of creation. That's amazing. I am really interested in who I am speaking for. The emotional or the spirit line that resonates through me. I know it sounds really grandiose. On a local level, I could say transgendered people. When I sing I feel like I give voice to that, but I want to give voice to more than a local sense of myself. There is something very joyous about creating a voice for the collective. It's a thrilling experience.

G: It is inspiring to hear you speak of your work within a larger framework, to hear you vocalize your thoughts about being at the end of this massive line of life, and actually be at the end of it speaking. Because I always feel so caught up in my personal dilemma and struggle to make work that seems real. It is always about me, me, me, which can stand in the way of making great work. I feel crippled thinking this way, whereas your outlook is so liberating.

A: Maybe I am just fooling myself.

G: No, I don't think so.

A: (after a long pause) So, what do you like to do in the summertime?

G: I like cruising for boys. Yes, I always like a cute boy. Too much. That's what stops me from making artwork. I am just always thinking about it.

A: Well, I know very little about relationships.

G: We are not talking so much about relationships.

A: It is a grade of a relationship. But you have had long-term boyfriends. You know what that is about too.

G: You haven't had long-term boyfriends?

A: Not years like you have had. It's funny, I wonder what the future holds.

G: It's definitely what I think about most.

A: Boys, boys, boys.

G: And love. **Sk**