



Mark Aguhar

16th May 1987 – 12th March 2012

Mark Cagaanan Aguhar was born in Houston, Texas in a Filipino American family. She attended the University of Texas at Austin and was an art student in the MFA program at the University of Illinois, Chicago. Aguhar's works include performance-based pieces, watercolours, collages, and photography. Often the work was of self-portraits with hair extensions, make-up, gender-specific clothing and a beautiful, unashamed portrait of herself, curves and all and reminds the viewer that Aguhar's life and mere existence was an act of confronting white hegemony.

Mark was an American activist, writer and multimedia fine artist known for multidisciplinary work about gender, beauty and existing as a racial minority, while being body positive and transgender femme-identified. Aguhar was made famous by her Tumblr blog that questioned mainstream representation of the "glossy glorification of the gay white male body".

She posted to Tumblr under the handle 'calloutqueen'. Critical theory and personal drama disillusioned Aguhar; in a self-consciously and self-critically politicised move she renamed her blog ' Blogging for Brown Gurls'. Here she dismissed whiteness, masculinity, thinness, and all things hegemonic while affirming brownness, femininity, and fatness.

Aguhar's 2011 video, "WHY BE UGLY WHEN U CAN BE BEAUTIFUL" demonstrates how - for someone whose everyday existence as a queer, transgender person is vulnerable to harassment and violence - the daily act of fixing one's hair can be a form of radical resistance. Aguhar created artwork that claims space for people who exist outside the gender binary, and insists on our right to lead fulfilling lives.

Mark "was a queer and trans-feminine Filipino American who relished her fatness and her fire" wrote James McMaster. Mark's work is a continuous exploration of queer expression and what it means to have grown up gay on the internet. Aguhar collects visual artefacts from queer online communities and uses them in their work to define and redefine who they are and what their body is. Aguhar's work combines porn, fashion, textile patterns, optical effects, Trans identities, and queer jokes. Aguhar demonstrated playful and colourful potentials in femininity

"Mark preferred the use of the pronoun "they" to convey their gender identity. It was the manifestation of that gender identity that drew me to Mark. Here was someone who was unafraid to express themselves in the way that spoke to their experience. Mark did not seek to express or explain the lives of people who lived outside the gender binary." (Simon Thibault).

"My work is about visibility. My work is about the fact that I'm a genderqueer person of colour fat femme fag feminist and I don't really know what to do with that identity in this world. It's that thing where you grew up learning to hate every aspect of yourself and unlearning all that misery is really hard to do."

Mark was only months away from earning her degree from University of Illinois at Chicago when she died by suicide in Chicago. Since then, there is a "Mark Aguhar Memorial Grant" available through Chances Dances for queer artists of colour.

Image designed by Andrew Dobbin, Schools OUT UK

"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."

Dr. Martin Luther King Jnr.



2022:
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the arc is long

