

Shit, definitionally, is waste.

Yet nothing is more generative.

Life runs on shit like America runs on Dunkin' like representations run on experience.

**Shawn McBride** (b. 1990; Ashland, OH)—he painted the paintings—says that "*Fertilizer* came from the idea of growth through shit."

"Stupidity, rudeness, disappointments, and absurdities all influence me. I'm influenced by the 'shit' I go through and see on a daily basis. I enjoy seeing and hearing terrible, negative things."

Perhaps one can smell something in the air. Sophie Friedman-Pappas's current show *Transfer Station* at Alyssa Davis Gallery centers on Edward Bellamy-esque utopian proposals to collect all of New York City's piss and use it to tan leather and ecologically breakdown buildings. One sculpture was made of urine-tanned sheepskin. At the opening a yellow-orange dust got on everyone's clothing. Friedman-Pappas's exhibition text ends with the following call to bladders and colons:

How could we put our collective shit to work? Once repurposed, perhaps waste could be the answer to a more just society, or in the very least, it could hold up a mirror to the absurdities of capitalism. You once read about human urine being utilized to tan leather in the Middle Ages. What if our city sewers could be repurposed into a functional leather tannery, and we could all benefit from the profits?

I like Friedman-Pappas's conceptual thrust here, after all, I'm a communist. But I find McBride to be more honest:

"All we have are our lived experiences. *There is nothing else going on.* There's no real theme to the show. The meaning is 'seeable.' It's strictly selfish and about painting. I love painting."

During last year's uprising—the real best summer of our lives—one could detect a spontaneous moratorium on the self-promotion of artists on social media. Suddenly, to call attention to one's art was in bad taste, and most artists are nothing if not bourgeois when it comes to the observance of social propriety. But didn't they know, like me, that the moral thing has always been to stop making art? Then Biden's election signaled to these liberal careerists that all was clear for their flyers and Patreons, and now my feeds look as they did before the pandemic.

Artists and their confused attempts to figuratively or literally fix social problems through representations have never seemed so futile. If there's redemption for art production, it's aesthetic joy. It is "I love painting," and it's "the meaning is 'seeable.'"

Though McBride told me he hoped the viewers would "feel disappointed," that's all I've ever really asked.

And anyways, if one wants to get serious, fertilizer makes bombs too.