The beauty of a sun kissed brick empty room darkness fills them an appealing decay time standing still building - Body passer byers look but don't see.

The city inspires me with its many textures and colors people, places and things.

Summer days loud and fast
water bikes and face wash to warm their faces brushing past tunnels of wind and concrete its sexy fast and warm popping a wholey during rush hour.

Things move fast my eyes carefully look for surprises, beauty, and mundane happenings my queer lens.
"I'm standing across the street
The man smokes and peeps passing cars and each
fancy. They wave.

"Hi, how you aint today?"

My body bends in and also stands out but
sometimes invisible
sometimes audible on being permanent.
My reflections swimming on car windows, business doors,
more that look like mine and also

"Your hands are clean and well
 Coupe, alcohol, hairspray, oil, black, white, yellow.

does that look like mine and also

4 sets of eyes
"Think, think, think, what good?"
What's up?
How many nations
2 and 3 then you
II and again you
III and three
IV and so on a surgeon

I went to touch your and made me to log good
I feel good. Her hands are lettered and
City"
11 Chars

5 voting people.
I came today yesterday they were closed.
Some of the men are old,
some of the men are young.
Wearing grey socks, shield hats, tight pants, waiting
in this place. We're waiting for them.

I have a relationship that is both intimate
and cold. With one man here,
We sold a time,
A glass of a day.
We silently agree I will see them and
no one else. For this service.
Our monthly meetings of your hands and my

The usual

I ride past the Str8
men singing, rapping
loud in the night
Sky corner and
Corner handsome and
relaxed
In my blue fitted hat he looks like someone I knew knew mouth full of lemon he holds its seeds sourly showing his lips his beard is soft my hands are empty

Nigga cut cut cut Cut Cut Cut Cut Cut Cut Cut Cut Cut Cut Cut cut out my heart heart
I saw him across the barbershop.

It was him. A gray avatar made real.

There was one faceless profile, 100 ft. <. It was him. I became curious. Could be fun.

Hello. Sent!

There were others— in the chairs, standing, cutting hair, waiting like us.

But

we see each other.

But

It was him.

I looked up, and we caught a brief glance.

It was no longer him.

I was me, and that was the problem. I made them visible. So I’m erased. I’m used to it.

You know me.

Who are you?

You don’t want to know.

Cold.

I melted into my phone’s screen again. That faceless profile was now a nothing, an absence.

All I did was look up.

Were you ever there?

Would be fun.
I’m blue from all the holding I had to do. I am doing.

Lungs full of breath for words stacked, peering whenever provoked. They spilled.

Sorry, you didn’t deserve that.

Brain barely there, nothing to stimulate. I’ve erased the memory and tread cautiously now. Blind.

I’m blue from loving you. It was good. Until it wasn’t.

Where do I put it?

Angst. Regret. Upset. It was more than just you. It was that version of me that reveled in our creation. I said goodbye to the past and imagined future.

Are no expectations enlightened or simply a coping mechanism for the frightened?

I’ll hold that, too. For you.

They wouldn’t get anyways.

You’re welcome.

Grandad asks, “You my grandson’s boyfriend?”

“Yes,” then-boyfriend replies.


I love him.

I never wanted to be a girl. I just wanted to be pretty.

I liked being a boy, but everything pretty wasn’t for boys. As active as it was, being a boy meant being boring. It was routine, expected, dim.

I wanted to shine. I wanted to question, and adorn, and laugh freely. I wanted to move toward my attraction— look at her nails, her hair, their dolls. Girls had fun. They could live with their inner worlds in material matter.

When I became a man, everything was beautiful.

“You cheating on me?” my handsome barber asks. I smile.
Philadelphia writer and activist Joseph Beam’s proclamation that “Black men loving Black men is the revolutionary act” has reverberated since its introduction in a 1986 issue of the National Coalition of Black Lesbians and Gays’ Black/Out journal, of which he was the editor. Fellow Philadelphian Jonathan Lyndon Chase takes up this mantra in loving depictions of queer worlds. In Chase’s work, we experience bodies intertwined, pregnant, penetrated, connected, and reflected. Little separates the figures; they become one body. Looping through another in myriad modes of connection, we may find new ways to care for ourselves. Our vision of ourselves may be clearer, fuller, when reflected in the eyes of another, a brother. Eyes peering back, with similar desires unsaid but mirrored in our active longing.

The scenes of Jonathan’s work remind me of personal vignettes of the Black men whom I love. A core memory of mine is holding the gaze of my good friend Khari as he shaved my head. I recall what Khari’s eyes said to me, about me, and how he and I understood each other in that moment. The energy between us spoke of the years of our relationship and forecast years in the future. In his Baltimore studio apartment, incense coating the air, I sat on his toilet. He leaned toward my face, scared but willing to offer his first shave to someone else.
Khari started as a teenage crush, moved into my early twenties as a lover, and later, in a better alignment, became a close friend. We shared many firsts. That spirit of togetherness, holding each other’s hands, has sustained our friendship. Khari is the person you look forward to watching grow because you are privy to their journey thus far and see what others may not see, even what they may not see within themselves.

I asked Khari to shave my head to ensure that I avoided my habitual mistakes, where I miss the parts I cannot see. It’s hard to shave your head, and for that reason, I am attracted to perfecting the process. It feels like a commitment to myself, and as this shave reminded me, sometimes that task requires those close to us to offer a hand.

Hesitantly, Khari obliged. Our eyes in contact but trembling, we broke out in laughter. It was a part of our mutual discomfort at the newness of it all. Silence. Stillness. Exhalation. When it was over, we smiled; we’ve completed the final step before an evening out. I don’t remember where we were going, but I remember that feeling—the hand at the nape of my neck; the paintings above me, including one we made together in the park. This shave becomes another relic, albeit temporal, of our relationship, another sweet moment I’ll cherish forever.

After our success, we talked about our grooming rituals, sharing tips and tricks. We realized we had come to it all through trial and error, without instructions or guidance. Our grooming journeys were a part of our manhood. Perhaps bitter-sweet: the journey was one traveled primarily alone, for our gender expression, and overall self-conception, are partially of our design, unique and fitted specifically for us. However, there remains a little longing for familiar supervision, for someone with a Band-Aid ready for the likely nicks of a straight blade.

Black Queer folk grow up navigating a multiplicity of worlds, often with caretakers unfamiliar at best and uninterested at worst in traveling those terrains. There are no coming-of-age rituals or milestones to celebrate our journeys; we are children, and then we are adults. The in-between is of our own making. We often make that in-between meaningful with our girlfriends, our fellow butch queens, our gworls. These relationships are vital to our self-development. I thank you.

In Jonathan Lyndon Chase’s work, I see those relationships and am reminded of these gentle moments in the home, like those I share with Khari. Jonathan’s practice reflects these relationships with self and others, often mirrored several times within one painting, video, or sculpture. The material forms become generous hybrids,
breaking disciplinary barriers, moving away from binary codes and value systems of aesthetic form. The works’ embedded narratives and psychological landscapes distill value systems that infringe on the lives of Black Queer folk.

With lips full, arms open, breasts plump, dicks erect, and bussies boastful, Jonathan’s work invites pleasure that requires no body and nobody. The physical is as present as the energy that binds together the figures. Gazing into mirrors, gazing up at the barber’s hand and looking back at it, there is always something outside the figures to actively influence, affirm, challenge, and otherwise enunciate elements that define them. Their figures move in and out of focus, in and out of a distinguished body. Feeling, fucking, and folding into themselves; they are one body, almost a still from a long motion picture of our imagining. Whether through barber or beau, Chase’s works suggest our need for each other to help us recognize and realize our fullest potential, pleasure, and possibility.
sides///men involved in unrecognized parallel play
with the S of your fist, you rap the carapace of your honed instrument.
you knock your flesh against metal and another’s desire.
the buzz announces teeth beneath a plastic sheath, impatient
to graze briar down to the quick, clean dome and temples.
a slick gown slides between you and every patron.
you swivel leather under every man and cradle his skull.
each closes his eyes, a promise of devotion to your tending.
you mark out a line and part, feint, and fade.

you vowed to never withhold attention to their beauty.
but this man clutches the armrests of your silver chair
and folds nervy hands in his lap as if to disregard the unspoken.
he closes his laughing mouth on queue or command.

you hover over his lips to level his forehead and notch his brow.
breathing each other, a brush edges you both into a single boat.

static waves/reclining waves/a single boat
i am not used to waiting for someone to come home.
to a head in my lap, to massaging another scalp.
to the point of annoyance, i ask: do all barbers have barbers?
can you trust a barber with a fade? a man who is on time?

the end of the road . . . it’s unnatural . . . I belong to . . .
too quiet? can you see the back of your own head?
i brush your hair we giggle, dizzy soon, the bristled paddle slips
and my couch is the only safe place to be awake with you.
everything you empty on to me is a succulent ocean.

the end of the road . . . it’s unnatural . . . I belong to . . .

my laced fingers and legs around your waist make me a dragnet.
there is only a little day outside, but the night always watches.
draw me after you, but first, draw the curtain. spin me around,
spin the blinds down on any eyes pressing us to outlines.

did anybody see you come into my . . .
that you wanna do anything I like alright . . .

a single lamp dressed in silk drains the room
to a glint and softens our skin to petals.
the ends of our durags hang a bridge between us
pelt the pleated clench i offer you with a rough tongue

guts, our heads, metaphor, mirrors, oil sheen thaw to sweat
i trickle into you, and you spit out recuse to moor the oars of night.
I pulled the chain
Don't run from my
bright eyes

Several men have
heard about me
soft bitches cooing
gargling barks

my hair he says
his back is cold and
smooth until prickly.

my favorite is his scrotum chis
favorite is my peach for
my tattooed breast.

licking mustaches, noses tell
we have a early morning blue
hues gooey on finger
or fresh cuts, happy streams
blow and dry on our 2 day
vow wearing the last light

he smells nude and hungry
he rolls a foil from hi
his lips are dry now
my pussy laced in stray
lips wet and drying and
something like problems &
Track after Track electra
ocean waves
We shaven three trim
short blow out and
my foot looks good
looks fine.

Talke off my dress so
his hand is cold and
smooth until prickly.
Jonathan Lyndon Chase: his beard is soft, my hands are empty is presented at Artists Space, September 8–December 2, 2023. Major support is provided by Beth Rudin DeWoody, Noel E. D. Kirnon, Tony Salame—Aïshti Foundation, and George Wells. Exhibition support is provided by Bernard J. Lempkin and Emmy Azimy in-kind support is provided by Company Gallery.


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