

As seen in the Vermont Standard – Oct 8, 2020

Art in the Time of COVID

Here we are. It's October, eight months into a pandemic that shows no signs of losing its grip on the nation and the world. The President and a posse of his supporters now diagnosed with COVID just add to a situation many thought could not possibly go further south. It is for this reason we must find slivers of light, moments of hope streaming in like the morning sun through dew covered autumn day leaves.

I found my sliver of light in the dark watching masked teenagers clasp sleeping bags, puffs and snacks enter the back lawn of the North Chapel to watch a movie under the stars.

Teachers and administrators have a lot on their plate these days. But that didn't stop, Joannie Kennedy and Heather Vonada from wanting us to host a screening for the Spectrum Teen Center. After what was probably another stressful week of managing hybrid schedules, and outdoor classes in the rain, they arrived as bubbly and enthusiastic as the teens themselves.

We all need to continue to navigate the pandemic safely with a "yes we can attitude" finding ways to bring us out of isolation, create a sense of community, and enjoy the moment. We will continue to look for ways in which we can keep the arts alive, despite the shorter days and colder temperatures.

As I write this, I am reminded of my own anxiety that surfaces in recurring dreams about the movie operation. I've dreamt multiple times that I've failed to show up to screen the new Bond film, *A Time to Die*, (the release of which was pushed back again) leaving a full house of angry patrons. I wake up relieved but also sad that there are no new releases and really no timetable for a return to a regular schedule. Yes, I too need to get comfortable with the uncomfortable.

No movie releases, but writers, actors, poets, and musicians continue to express themselves in a myriad of ways.

Here's a poem by Eddie Maisonet, written in April, when we were still wiping down our groceries with sanitizer! Eddie Maisonet is a Boston-based queer nonbinary afroboricua storyteller, teaching artist and writer. I hope that with Maisonet, and through the arts we might recall the urgency of finding joy and in finding it grow during these coming and continuing doldrums.

Egg Cream/ New Normal

Healer affirms I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be. Spirit & community got me.

Three summers at an ice cream shop, I made two egg creams. One during training- it found the drain. Brash boston accent ordered a chocolate one. Seltzer, syrup, milk. Manager told me it's a Great Depression vestige.

Who'd choose this over real rich ice cream. We have a deep need for richness, sweetness especially when everything is falling apart.

I find myself with roommate discussing shortages: using three squares or less of toilet paper per trip.

I find myself offered 90 day refills, teletherapy, newly livestreamed events. I didn't have to ask.

I find myself full off smelling roommate's clever use of overripe banana, a lone cup of apple sauce, pantry oats ground, dry roasted nuts: a vegan, gluten free recipe worth repeating.

I find myself before the man I can't touch yet and he finally becomes my boyfriend. Through a screen, we shower one another with words and quality time.

I find myself remembering our fingers intertwined between us in his car. Queer internet adolescence prepared me for love when touch is dangerous and impossible.

I find myself in a new home during a pandemic, in a new normal. If I make it, I embrace this. Never thought I would understand the urgency of an egg cream until I adapted my idea of what makes a treat sweet.

I affirm I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be, and thank everything I'm anything but alone.