

FEATURED

Send Nudes, Local Gallery Show on Privacy, and Intimacy

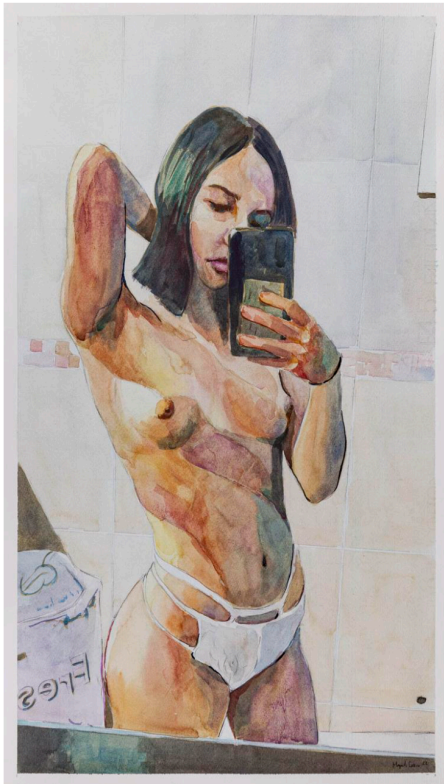
Elliot Waples Oct 24, 2022 0

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When I first walked down the steps, I was awash with a wave of nervous sexual energy. I wasn't alone staring at nudity on my phone in privacy and safety. I knew what I was walking into, but I was still surrounded.



In the basement gallery at the Tube Factory, along two white walls, there is a stream of portraits with irregular space left over between each portrait; Each is a nude or partially nude body, and each differs in minor ways. Each person shows their personality in what they choose to cover up, how they pose themselves, and what's in the room behind them. The artist Miguel Casco renders each nude in watercolor and gouache. It gives a dreamlike quality to everyday bodies.



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After my nervousness began to reside, I was surprised by how fast time could pass in the gallery. It felt nice to have permission to stare. It takes only a moment to take, send, or receive a nude. By replacing the digital format with that of a brush, the artist elongates the process of the creation of the naked form. This then encourages the viewer to contemplate the effort that it takes to depict the art, both technically but also conceptually. I noticed the little things about how the artist captured people feeling comfortable. It was here I began to interpret the artist's statement that "masturbation is one of the greatest ways of self-discovery." The figures themselves weren't aroused. I went back and forth in my body, feeling like the art was pornographic, till I realized that masturbation is not just of the body. It's also observational. It's of the mind. I took time just noticing what I was noticing, who I found attractive, and who I found creative or brave. That more women hang on the wall than men.

A mirror by the stairs asks you to see yourself fully clothes amongst nakedness. It's in these subtle misdirections in this interplay between subjects that the artist Miguel Casco's work lives.



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This Art show, “Send Nudes,” has a playful title referencing the eroticism of texting and online culture that the exhibit is poking fun at by elevating sexting to the social space of the gallery. For hundreds of years, artists have been doing nude renderings, yet the taboos around nudity are still there. Casco’s rendering resembles a change in that the photos, like the one below, are not dreamscapes, drawing classrooms, or decorated studios. Through his recreations, there is an otherworldliness effect that the watercolor brings to the everyday places, the bedrooms, living rooms, bathrooms, and unmade beds, that people truly feel comfortable enough in their own mess to get naked.

Miguel Casco is a visual artist, cultural manager, and museographer, whose work has been exhibited in Mexico, the United States, and Germany. In partnership with Arte Mexicano en Indiana, Big Car, an Arts Collective that focuses on placemaking and contemporary art, commissioned Casco. Since 2018, Casco has been accepting nudes from the general public. Casco’s art argues that nudes are a part of an evolving history of art, which he acknowledges in the statement, “Before there were sculptures, paintings, daguerreotypes, and other representations, but there wasn’t always a way to send them too far or share them.” The conceptual side of Send Nudes has people do the tasks that the artist has historically held every day. The subject decides the amount of the body shown, how recognizable they want to be, the lighting, the frame angle, and whether the work is good enough to be recreated by the artist.



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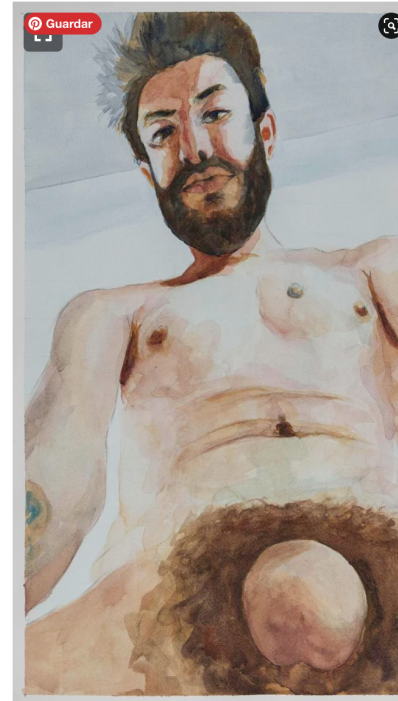


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The artist's clever inclusion of willing donations from the general public mimics the anonymity that the internet creates. The willingness and consent of the subjects to be seen by all also speaks against an underlying fear of sending a nude. Everyone might one day have access to this photo. Others might use it to harm you or find it unflattering. Does this mean that we should not take the photo then? It's a question we can all answer individually. It's this kind of ethical and social pondering on responsibility, freedom, kindness, and consent that the artist is attempting to stir amongst the public.

The depictions of everyday nudity in "Send Nudes" helps me reflect on how the nude symbolizes intimacy of privacy. By looking at these people's nudes, their bedrooms, and their phones, I realize that I am the person who sees myself naked the most. Most of the time, I'm naked, which will be while I am alone. Standing in the basement gallery, I stare into the full-length mirror, Contemplating in my clothes how I want to be seen and how I want to be seen naked. I realize it's okay and perhaps healthy to stare at your reflection till you find happiness.

It can be perceived as narcissistic to want to show your nakedness, to share what you only know best with others. But in an age where this is a consistent social phenomenon, should we judge that shame others for doing so? As art has long been, "Send Nudes" is an interesting form of exploring the ethics of what we do when we're alone, how taboos change and sustain, and how nudity makes us feel, think and behave.



If You Go

Right now through the 28th of November, the exhibit is at the Tube Factory, a gallery near Garfield Park.

Tube factory

Wednesday -Friday 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Tube is also open until 10 p.m. each First Friday.

Closed Holidays



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Elliot Waples



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