

## DOUBLING ALL THE WAY DOWN: AMANDA VALDEZ AT PROLE DRIFT

When I see Amanda Valdez's (NAP #99) paintings, I think of screwballs—specifically, the cherry flavored, pink cone-shaped, frozen screwballs sold from musical ice cream trucks. Despite the cough syrup-cherry flavoring, and the sad way the icy gumball at the bottom of the cone fractured in my mouth rather than gelling into chewable gum, the screwball was the only ice cream novelty I ever wanted. When I reminisce about the screwball now, I cannot avoid the latent sexuality that resonates between its name and ripe, all-over pinkness. Brooklyn artist Amanda Valdez's new work in Double Down at Seattle's Prole Drift brings to mind similar matters through its sugary hues of gumballs and cake frosting that drip and coat rounded forms, evoking primal satisfactions and their inevitable crashes. – Erin Langner, Seattle Contributor



Amanda Valdez | *Tide of Pleasure: Double Down*, 2013, Embroidery, fabric and acrylic, 26 x 30 in. Image courtesy of the artist and Prole Drift.



Amanda Valdez | *Tide of Pleasure: Double Down*, 2013, Embroidery, fabric canvas and acrylic, 26 x 30 in. Image courtesy of the artist and Prole Drift.

Cited by the artist as the mascots of the show, *Tide of Pleasure: Double Down* and *Tide of Pleasure: Double Down* play a flirtatious, back and forth game of sinister, poker smiles whose intentions are difficult to gage. Overt in their references to the sensual pleasure zones and bodily liquids we all know too well, yellow, fuchsia and red erupt loudly at (or with) each other. Foaming, dark voids hint at a high that has moved into overindulgence—a tide of pleasure that left a residual emptiness behind. The woven lines of embroidery complicate the center of each with a layered, handcrafted core that suggests something deeper is at stake between the surface-level tensions.

The series of smaller works on paper, “i sang a song of home” has less baggage than the show’s mascots, leaving behind the weight of the embroidery as the works represent weekdays with different “faces,” bringing to mind the days of the week series of teenage girl underwear that straddles a strange line between sexuality and pre-pubescence. *Cake Face* and *Storm Face* suggest the nostalgia of sweets and rainbows, countered by the stickier drips and more suggestive holes of *Moon Face* and *Death Face*. This continual banter between shiny bits and darker references seen across “i sang a song of home,” like most of the works in *Double Down*, make Valdez’s paintings easy to like, as do the seemingly playful sexuality that can be mistaken for the ephemeral weightlessness of a slyly dirty joke. But their most successful details unexpectedly lure you into the crevices of personal, relatable moments as seen through handcrafted stitches and nostalgic colors, extreme pleasures and disheartened optimism, somehow managing to make a set of circles look like the sweet, stinging and often strange symbols of your own human life: your ice cream screwballs, your days of the week underwear and your own songs of home.

*Double Down* is on view at Prole Drift in Seattle, WA through September 28. Amanda Valdez is based in Brooklyn, New York. She received her BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and MFA from Hunter College. Her work has recently been shown at Denny Gallery (New York, NY), BravinLee Programs (New York, NY) and SOIL (Seattle, WA). Valdez is the recipient of a Yaddo Artist Residency, a residency at the MacDowell Colony, and the College Art Association MFA Professional Development Fellowship. Erin Langner is a writer and museum professional based in Seattle, WA.

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