

On CBD and other Nutrients

Paula De Martino

Tutu Gallery

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Paula grew up in a Catholic home in Chile, a neo-colony of the United States. She often thinks about Coca-Cola in relation to the United States of America, a group of people responsible for Pinochet's dictatorship. A massive company controlling a series of industries with its signature dark fizzy drink with a pH value of around 2.6 that dissolves teeth, cleans rust, and wakes you up, propelling you with sugar and caffeine. In Spanish Coca-Cola's slogan was "la Fabrica de la Felicidad", translated as the happiness factory, which Paula deems an accurate description of the American dream. She remembers Coca-Cola's old mascot, a polar bear. It used to be a good marketing strategy, but now it is just depressing.

April grew up in an atheist household in China, where most see the United States as competition without ever visiting. She remembers watching the footage of 9/11 live on TV from her kindergarten classroom. Her father worked at a German company that produced transformers. They are not the ones from famous Sci-fi movies by DreamWork and Paramount, but passive components that transfer electrical energy from one circuit to another, or multiple circuits. The entire family suffered from food sensitivity, they abstained from most processed foods, and nobody drank or smoked.

Nowadays, Paula and April would talk about their new liquids of obsession over video chat, for Paula, it is CBD energy drinks that remind her of Silicon Valley culture, and for April, White Claw, alcohol disguised as carbonated water enjoyed by a race of people hinted in its very name, when in reality, this beverage dehydrates the human. Paula was working on her new work for a show at April's home, a series of polar bear wax miniatures. Paula told April she resents the transient state of melting. April then remembers inhaling poppers with a friend during the previous night, who giggled and went on to describe how he loves the sensation of dissolving. Popper is a slang term given broadly to drugs of the chemical class called alkyl nitrites, an antidote to cyanide poisoning, which commonly happens during breathing in a housefire, and it was also used in mass suicides and Nazi genocides.

There is a fuel shortage in New York City, or perhaps many parts of the world. According to some news, it is possibly caused by the ongoing war on another continent. The avocado from the nearest store was 1 dollar each at the beginning of the month and is now 1.5.

April invited Paula to create this exhibition because of her fondness of Elon and Greta, a sound sculpture that Paula made that is a montage of Greta Thunberg's voice extracted from her UN speech, calling out "I do not want to believe that you're evil" echoing to Elon Musk's "That is one of the hardest things to do", a clip from the Joe Rogan podcast where he smoked a joint and opened up about not being able to turn off his brain. This work reminds April of the experience of dating a couple of older guys in STEM, who vaguely assembled her logical but timid father.

April found it difficult to write about Paula's work. She shares the same understanding that they have both been powering their bodies with substances and beliefs produced in their homes, introduced from another land by those who captivated their bloodline with shiny promises. The fuel on the mind and body caused macro and micro symptoms, evidenced by global warming and the daily anxiety of personal incompetence. Amid chronic disorientation, both Paula and April started to crave navigation. But there are only two ways on the map of old and new, of sin and redemption, of subordination and power, of men and women, of father and mother. The words are all different but the feeling is the same.

The Church is now Silicon Valley.

Agnus Dei is now a polar bear.

Coca-Cola is now White Claw and CBD energy drinks.

Love and Hate turn into Obsession.

A mental disorder of believing that we can make time faster by speeding up the human heart rate.

One dissonant relativity.

But wait, I thought I was supposed to appear in this writing like my father, factual, dissociated, and melancholic. Why is it that I now sound like my mother, zealous and obviously jealous? Why is it that I also sound like Elon, whose invention of vehicles exceeded the speed record? Did I take too much Focalin in the morning when I thought I couldn't put Paula's work into words? Why does it become about me now when the show is about Paula?

I must go and buy some White Claw to slow this down.

When I got to Mr. Kiwi's, I found out that avocados are back to 1 dollar each although the war is still going on. I passed the aisle where they restocked a brand of sweet and salty popcorn that I've been quite obsessive about, they are called Cretors. I picked up some mango-flavored White Claws. The rim of the can is orange, designed to remind you of the color of the mango, not the fruit whose name is also a color. Do you know that the fruit orange primarily refers to a hybrid of pomelo and mandarin, one originating from Southeast Asia and another one possibly from China, because the name mandarin orange is a calque of Swedish mandarin apelsin, the latter word originated from German apfelsine, meaning Chinese apple, which literal form derived from the French name for this fruit in the 18th century? It is weird that they called orange apple in the old times, did people back then think they were the same fruit? With the same texture and taste?

I will never know, there are too many things to find out since I gained access to Google, which was banned by the Chinese government while I was growing up. My mother just texted to tell me that the re-election of Xi is going well and they might open the border for her to visit. She sounded happy and content, perhaps a bit ignorant and clueless. I am writing a press release that sounds a lot like a ramble, which is considered bad for a curator or a gallerist. But I sometimes think I am just Tutu's unpaid assistant and can do whatever I want with gallery logistics due to Tutu's oppression. By the way, Tutu is the name of my cat, the name of my boss, and the name of the space.

It is a mystery how one can ever understand these words with only smile or frown. And now I also find it quite funny that most of us spend all our energy on reaching an end before our

own death, perhaps like how Paula felt when she re-read the Bible and get preoccupied with Elon's big, fat rockets.

Paula De Martino & April Zhu

10.19.