



GRAAT On-Line Occasional Papers – November 2009

An Interview with Q. Allan Brocka, the creator of *Rick & Steve: The Happiest Gay Couple in All the World* (May 5, 2009)

David Maillet

Université François Rabelais – Tours

Would you explain when and why you made the decision to more specifically focus on LGBT themes in your work?

Originally I started making films that were science fiction and comedy, just kind of broad comedy, when I was a child, when I was about twelve, so I really didn't have much of an identity, an idea of who I was. It was kind of just comedies or science fiction. Then when I came out I felt like I had something to make movies about, and the first serious short-film that I made to get into film school was about a kid coming out; that was in the early nineties. And there just weren't a lot of films about that at the time, and so just because of this subject matter—it was not even that good of a film because I didn't know what I was doing—because there was so little of it around, it got a lot more attention than it would have had it just been a broad comedy. It gave me more resources to actually explore my craft and hone my voice; all because of the subject matter that people wanted to see more of, of this gay experience that they could relate to. So I started just making a lot of short gay films and that's what got me into film school. And that's where I ended up making the first—I was just so militantly gay—I guess it was a representation of my life too, I felt like I did not belong anywhere until I came out, and then there was this community that I kind of belonged to, so I made films about it.

When you came out, were you still in Guam or in the United States?

I was in the United-States when I came out. I left Guam when I was a little kid.

Were you influenced by any LGBT filmmakers and/or producers in particular? Do you remember any television series and/or movies which specifically appealed to you as a gay person?

Well, once I came out the first thing that really influenced me LGBT-wise—after coming out—was John Waters and his work. I mean it was old by then, but I just hadn't heard of it or been exposed to it. There was this, like, six-foot-five drag queen one day in my dorm—when I was in college—he was like, “You haven't heard of John Waters? We have to watch!” You have to watch *Desperate Living* and *Pink Flamingos*. I realized that films could be about so much more than what Hollywood, like the feature films, could be about, more than plot.

What about your uncle, Lino Brocka? I have read that you never got to know him personally, but I imagine you had time to discover his work later on. Did he influence your work in any way?

Not really. Unfortunately—or not—I had pretty much found my voice and my approach by the time I was exposed to his work. I still haven't been able to see a lot of it because I don't speak Tagalog and there is not a lot available with subtitles. But his career, and his name, and his impact on people have definitely made these giant footsteps that are really intimidating to even attempt to fill, especially when I talk with the Filipino community and particularly LGBT people in the Filipino community, because he changed a lot of lives not just in his filmmaking but in his activism outside of it.

Lino Brocka was nominated twice for the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival—with *The Jaguar* (1979) and *Bayan Ko: My Own Country* (1984). Have you seen those movies?

I haven't seen either of those movies, no.

What do you think of the evolution of LGBT representation and visibility in the mainstream media of America since the 1990s?

I think it's been phenomenal. We started out as kind of oddball characters, or very special episodes where a person would come on for an episode or two and have a brief storyline, to supporting characters who would appear every now and then—like, on *Ellen* there was a gay supporting character first—and then to lead characters, which was really exciting. *Ellen*, then *Will and Grace*, and then *Queer as Folk*.

I was about to ask you if there were any particular sitcoms or movies that you particularly remembered, that you found groundbreaking?

Well, I remember all of those. And at the time... I first made *Rick & Steve* in 1999, so there wasn't—there was *Ellen* and *Will and Grace*, I hadn't seen *Queer as Folk*. I actually first saw *Queer as Folk* the same week that *Rick & Steve* showed at its first film festival. They were both at the same film festival, it was the British version. And I made *Rick & Steve* because all of the portrayals of LGBT I had seen had been single, just single men or lesbians coming and trying to find love, and I wanted to go to the next step and portray a family. Largely because that's what most television shows are based around. Things that I really like, like *The Simpsons*, or almost any sitcom, are about a family unit, and I thought that showing a queer family would really kind of show that we do have the same kind of problems and the same idiot scenarios in our families, the same silly situations. That's where it all came from; it was just starting with a family.

Your animated sitcom is groundbreaking, since it is the first animated narrative exclusively dealing with LGBT characters and plots in the USA. While non-politically-correct animated series like *The Simpsons*, *South Park* or more recently

***Family Guy* were able to reach mainstream primetime TV, do you believe that the concept of *Rick & Steve* might have been or could one day be accepted on a mainstream channel?**

Maybe a show like *Rick & Steve* could, maybe not *Rick & Steve* itself, here in the US anyway, because of the language and how much of it has to do with actual sex; like *South Park* isn't on public channels here, just simply because it is kind of dirty. So, you know, but I think it could happen. *Rick & Steve* airs on a lot of more accessible channels in other countries. There is only one other country where it airs on an exclusively gay channel, everywhere else it's... like in Canada it's on *Teletoon* which is *Cartoon Network*, and on *Virgin 17* in France [a cable channel]. So almost everywhere it's on cable because it's adult, but it's not necessarily a gay channel anymore. Just here and Germany are the only two places where it's on a gay channel.

The current version of *Rick & Steve* is a spin-off of a homework assignment that you completed at the California Institute of the Arts in 1999. I understand that the choice of Lego blocks and figures in the original concept was motivated by the fact that you had just moved to California and had no friends to include in your film project. Working with toys was the solution that you had found to your "casting problem." However, maintaining such an aesthetic in the recent version of *Rick & Steve* must be deliberate. Could you tell us about the advantages and drawbacks of the animation genre as a storytelling device?

The advantages are: on such a tiny budget I can do so many big amazing things. I can have lots of exterior shots, so many characters, big sets that I could never build if I were doing a sitcom that wasn't animated, and I can have so many locations. That's the only way that this show could be made. I would never even consider doing it as a live action show. With a live action show it would just be a sitcom format where we would spend most of the time in one of their living rooms. It would be an entirely different show; and then the humor would be completely different because when you have real-life people saying some of the things [*Rick & Steve's* puppets] say, it

would not work. Because when you do cartoon or animation, it's all about taking things to the next level, or expanding a stereotype, or doing something that is beyond real to make a point.

***Rick & Steve's* animated puppets still seem to be strongly inspired by Lego and Playmobil figures or Playschool. Were you in trouble with such companies for that resemblance? Is there a subversive will to use mainstream-inspired toys which are recognized to strongly emphasize normative gender codes and roles?**

Yes. So, originally I only got into trouble when I was using actual Legos, because the short film was just out of Legos, and Lego did not like it and sent me a cease-and-desist letter, a bunch of cease-and-desist letters in fact, so I stopped doing that, but oddly enough the very next year they released a Lego movie-making kit that encouraged people to make movies out of Legos—so I don't know what *that's* all about... I just steered clear of using Legos. I actually preferred to use my own things because what I did not like about Legos is that it was a very specific brand, and what I do like about the *Rick & Steve* characters now is that it is somewhere in this world between Lego and Playmobil and Playschool and a Burger King toy set. I wanted it to feel like something manufactured that comes from some gigantic company that sets an example for how life should be, and how life should be structured, and everything is plastic and fits together very nicely, and there are very few choices in everything. So, every person, if they are fat or skinny, they have the same body. We just call them skinny or fat on the show. There are only two races on the show. There is dark and there is light, because a lot of toys do that, so the dark puppets represent every single other race and then the light puppets are white. Colors: there is only one blue, one red, one green. If you watch the show there is never a variation on colors, and if there is it's an accident, something that I come down really strong on. I don't even allow any other kind of paint in the workshop. It's only one of each color. So, I wanted it to feel very rigid and structured, like these toys do that come out, and yet when we get those toys as kids, when we get those playsets, no matter how many rules have come in the making of those toys, we can still do whatever we want with

them, and that's kind of how I feel with life. There are all these rules that we're born into, but we still can make any family we want and any decision we want, and say anything we want.

So I guess you had a precise image when writing your script of what you would like your puppets to look like. Did you supervise the creation of the animation from day one?

Yes, every frame. In a way that was almost offensive to my crew. I can explain the questions about any little thing you have, there's always a reason; it might not be a good one, but there's a reason why it's that way in my head.

Were you inspired by any characters/persons when constructing your stock character types? Is there a part of your own personality in any of those characters?

No, there weren't specific people. They were more generalizations which would then make them stereotypes, but I wanted to make them "real" stereotypes; like, I've seen so many stereotypes on TV that I did not actually see in the gay community. I wanted to portray the stereotypes that I know. When it first came out I heard a lot of people saying, "it's just all stereotypes." Yes, but there are stereotypes that you know and not stereotypes that you see, there are differences. They're kind of real. There are a lot of influences. Rick is Filipino, he is kind of a nerd and he would like things like animation; that's definitely me, I have those tendencies, but there is a lot of him that isn't me as well. Steve is kind of—I guess I've known a lot of Steves—very body-obsessed and not that bright. I also feel a lot a part of Steve as well, I feel a lot a part of each of the six characters, and how I approach them is very—I took a part of... a way I relate in the gay community, and the personality that I have, that maybe isn't necessarily gay-related, and just put that under a microscope and pushed it to the limits. Like Kirsten is very naive and worried about the way everything she says comes across, and what might happen to her, and I am definitely a little like that sometimes. It's just that, kind of expanded. Dana is most like what talking to me is

like. She's just sarcastic and dark and she sees the worst in everything, and believes that the worst is going to happen all the time. So they are kind of like that.

Gay male characters in the first season of the series significantly outnumber any other gendered and sexual identities and/or categories, not only numerically, but also in terms of number of lines. Can you tell me why?

Well, because I am a gay male and the couple at the center is gay. So, that's two, right there. You start with that. Your two leads are already gay. And that's kind of reflective of my point of view and where I'm at. I do have lesbian friends, I do know a lot of lesbians, but I know more gay men. And so the first season is more about being truthful to what I know and not trying to represent what I don't know. So, I needed to do that really well first, set up that world, and then in the second season we definitely go more into women, largely with the baby and the pregnancy and the baby girl, because I wanted more women characters. That's why, because two of the three couples are gay.

How would you define the lesbians' aesthetics in the series, and their feminist perspective?

With the aesthetics I guess what I did with all the bodies of the puppets was like any of those toys, like Legos. The only way you can tell a boy from a girl is by the hairdo or by it wearing lipstick, and that was one of the things about Legos that was always odd to me. You put on lipstick or a hairpiece and that's what makes it a boy or a girl, and a lot of times other than that you can't really tell the difference. So I wanted to keep that. So there is no physical difference at all with the puppets other than hair and the way their faces are painted. The colors of the clothes too; for example Kirsten is a girl because she has lipstick. She has pink overalls on but if she didn't have lipstick and the little eyelashes that she has on her eyes she would be a boy, people would just think she is a boy. So I made her pink, put lipstick on her, put eyelashes on her, and also with her I wanted to... in my experience of lesbians the femmes at

the time didn't have long hair, they were more boyish, I wanted a boyish lipstick lesbian, so that's kind of why she looks a lot like a boy. And then, Dana, I wanted the butcher one to have the longer hair, and if it weren't for her hair and the boob line, people would probably assume that she was a man; she doesn't have the eyelashes or the lipstick.

What about Ebony and Ivory? They seem to be somewhere in between butch and lipstick.

Ivory was the one which without the lipstick everyone thought she was a boy, so that's the only thing she has, whereas Ebony comes across girly, she's more femme I guess, so she didn't need the lipstick. A lot of times the determination of lipstick was really just not a political statement but just to make it less confusing. Someone was telling me that they were confused about what this character was and especially with the characters who did not have a lot of lines. It was more important to me that people realize that's a lesbian couple rather than to think, to be wondering about what gender they are.

What could you tell us about the status of bisexuality within the West Lahunga Beach boundaries? Dana, for instance, contends that bisexuality is "better than gay [and] worse than straight" in the first season of the series.

That's not my view, or what I'm saying should be the view. But that's what I think a lot of people think of bisexuality. So it's definitely a tongue-in-cheek conversation. But, definitely that's how we are in the community, like at least it's better than straight, but honestly those three things should never be put in order. I think it's actually a little bit different for women and men. I was listening to two women having a conversation and they were at least acknowledging the existence of bisexuality, had it been two men they probably would not have even acknowledged it. They would have just said "gay" or "straight," and if someone brought up "bisexual" they would have just called that "gay." They would not have been able to

understand it. So, that's where it is in West Lahunga Beach because that's where it is in our community.

What about transgender individuals? It is pretty hard to categorically determine Falaysha's and Dylan Ram-Brick's transgender identities in the first season of the series. Any particular reason why?

In the first season it is kind of hard to determine. They were not in it a lot. So in the second season I was pretty clear on who it was, because there were so many questions about it in the first season. Dylan is a man—I think that's probably what Dylan was going through too—but a female to male transgender man who I think was on a journey because he has a girlfriend and they were trying to have a baby in the first season, and he is also a porn star, so he was trying to steal some sperm while his girlfriend was just dressing up as a boy; they were just trying to get pregnant. So, he identifies as a man and he's just not in the first season a lot, in the second season he is around more, he's just a full-on FTM transgender man. In the *Wizard of Oz* episode he kind of explains that he is the lion.

Does he still identify as a lesbian in the second season of the series?

He no longer identifies as a lesbian. If I do a very special episode, if I'm lucky enough to do that, I think that's something that I would definitely explore. That's a story that's really interesting to me because a lot of transgender men identify as lesbians at the beginning because that's what... there's an option, somewhere, where they kind of fit in at first before they realize what else is available to them and that there are other people, that there's a whole other community where they can fit in.

How would you define the mother figures present in the series: Joanna, Charo and Minda?

I think that they're all very overbearing mothers, but I'm taking it to different extremes. So Minda is the super, super supportive overbearing mother, and Joanna is the not very supportive at all, kind of more self-centered mom. I don't think it's just a gay thing, she's really all about herself no matter what her son might be. I don't have a thing against mothers, I don't know why I keep coming up with these crazy moms—my mom has asked me that—like Dana's mom appears in the second one and she's kind of nuts too, and I was like "huh, I never really thought of that! OK I'll make a nice mom now!" Minda is the cool mom, a little bit overbearing but she's the cool mom, I like her, and everything she does is out of love for her kid. That's a little insane.

A majority of the heterosexual characters accepted and/or praised within the boundaries of West Lahunga Beach are either celebrities or over-the-top characters. Why are West Lahunga Beach Members so mesmerized by stardom and celebrities?

For the same reason gay people are. We're obsessed with celebrities, especially here in Los Angeles. When I live here everyone is—we like it, I don't know why! Do *you* know why? It's not just acting! We love Monica Lewinsky, we love singers, we love all kinds of supermodels, and we love fame! What's with that? But it's something that's fascinating to me! I love this whole cult of celebrity bloggers, like Perez Hilton's obsession. I have it too and I had it before I even knew I was gay! It's like, fabulousness I think, this fabulousness gene. It's just a reflection of this obsession that we have with fame and celebrity whether or not someone has even actually accomplished anything, once they're famous it kind of peaks our interest more so than in the straight community I guess. I don't know. There are no straight people in West Lahunga Beach, unless we make an issue of it, unless I go out of my way and say they are: Condi, their parents visited, and then celebrities. But everyone else, if it's just a little extra who is walking down the street or just has one line, they're gay or they're queer in some way.

You just mentioned Condi Lee. Would you define her as an outsider or as an insider in *Rick & Steve's* LGBT-segregated enclave?

Both; I think everyone is both. No-one ever feels like an insider all the time. I think the way we see her, we see her as an outsider trying to be an insider. I think she definitely sees herself as both and goes back and forth. On major swings she'll definitely be so in, and she's controlling the entire community in her head, and then other times she feels so out that she's about to kill herself.

The characters' comments and jokes on AIDS and disability are pretty non apologetic. Could you tell us why?

It's just something that I—particularly AIDS and HIV—it's something that I hadn't seen at all addressed in a comedic way in any media. When it came to covering LGBT experience... whereas in real life most people that I knew dealing with HIV or AIDS, notably in a relationship with someone, there is a lot of comedy there, so I just wanted to express that. I wanted to give that a voice, so I did not want to just make AIDS jokes about people with AIDS. I wanted it to really feel more like it was coming from a community that was not represented. So, every joke about HIV and AIDS has to really feel like it's something where you're learning more about this person, or where that person is kind of empowered. I'm really careful with those jokes, but it's really important to me that they're there, because I think it represents a point of view that is in our community that we just don't hear a lot of. And one of the reasons is because it is so much work, so why bother when you might offend a bunch of people, why make an AIDS joke when a whole bunch of people might get pissed off? So it's just much ignored, and I didn't want to do that. And the same thing with disability; it's kind of the same approach, where when I make jokes about being in a wheelchair or having a disability or just being a head in a wheelchair. It's really more about having fun with the experience, what people who have to go through that experience, rather than making fun of them.

Straight-acting, queenie, butch, lipstick... what is according to you the safest and/or most acclaimed role to perform within West Lahunga Beach?

I don't know. One of the things that I like is that everyone is just kind of themselves and we see all these different points of view of West Lahunga Beach. Dana is just going to be herself and everyone else can bite it, she does not care what other people think. Steve is going to think that he has to be kind of butch and straight-acting whether he is in West Lahunga Beach or not, wherever he's at. Rick is always going to kind of feel like he doesn't fit in or like he's not cool enough, wherever he's at; whether it's West Lahunga Beach or not. Evan's vision of the way he's going to be accepted is that he is fabulous and fierce. Steve would never feel that, and they're in the same neighborhood. It's just kind of what each person brings to it and who within that community they want to impress. I think that's kind of true in real life too. I go to the same club as someone else who just comes in screaming and snapping their fingers and getting control of the room and I come in and stand in the corner. And I think it's just my character, it's what I feel I need to do to best represent myself. Sometimes I wish I could do what they do, and sometimes when they do what I do people are like, "what's wrong with you!" I don't know if there is a way, we all have to kind of navigate what works for us.

What I meant is that in the first season beauty ideals are pretty fierce in West Lahunga Beach, and I think that being straight-acting in the first season is considered as the most desirable performance. What do you think?

If you're watching Steve it's definitely it, because Rick is with him all the time and that's what Rick is insecure about. But if you're watching Evan, Evan is never going to be straight-acting and he doesn't think that he suffers for this. Evan is going to walk in and be fierce and fabulous, and he thinks that's what everyone should be in order to be noticed and to be the best. So, it really depends on which character you can identify with. Steve definitely represents—I think—this pretty big faction of the gay community that's obsessed with being straight-acting and fit and buff, but

there's also a pretty big faction that's obsessed with being stylish, and looking good and having some swagger in a more flamboyant way. And then there is the faction that Dana or Kirsten represent, which is really about the politics that you wear on your sleeve and how you appear to the outside world, as being politically there and aware, and how solid your mind is and what your intentions are. Kirsten is horrified at the thought of being judged politically incorrect.

Self-image and beauty ideals are pretty severe in West Lahunga Beach. Young, muscular, lean and smooth are the basic "four commandments" to follow. Many characters are depicted striving to match those beauty codes, and are quickly considered as outsiders when they fail to do so. Although magnified, I believe that West Lahunga Beach beauty standards are pretty realistic. What do you think? Is body fascism pervasive within the LGBT minority? Do you think gay males are generally more affected by those codes?

No, I think that everyone is. I felt like I just examined it more on men because in the media in general it's usually more about women feeling fat, and I wanted to show that it's something that's not exclusive to them. I feel like women are victimized more in the mainstream media, and I wanted to victimize men a little bit, talking about their obsession with body fat and abs, but that's the whole reason why; just because I have seen it a lot, where boobs aren't big enough, butt isn't big enough, waist is too big, too fat and I wanted to have fun with it, with men.

Sex in general is at the center of many of the puppets' lives. Why did you choose sex as a central focus of your narrative? Is sex in general a theme that you like to address or were you not satisfied with the way it was addressed in other shows for instance?

Sex is something I'm really interested in; it really excites me story-wise because I feel like it's this gigantic part of everyone's life, whatever gender or sexual orientation you are. But there is this giant taboo that we've kind of taken it out of our

conversation about relationships and life and family, and yet it affects everything so heavily. For me it's just this untapped resource of amazing conversations and hilarious situations that we're only now allowed to start talking about frankly.

Were you ever blamed for portraying characters who only define themselves according to their sexuality?

Some people have said that there is more to homosexuals than just being gay, like, "I'm just a person who happens to be gay, gay is not me." There's some truth to that, but the reason the show exists, and the reason these relationships exist and these people know each other is because of their sexuality, that's what brought them into each other's lives, so it's what they have in common.

In terms of sexual politics, you do not seem to spare anyone in the series. Those praising assimilation to mainstream society or the more activist and separatist ones are equally poked fun at. It creates a sort of balance. Is it a way for you to put into perspective the need of a third way, a compromise between those two radical ideologies?

Yes, that's because I get that from both ends and I get a lot of criticism from both ends. I've seen papers written about how I'm homonormalizing or I'm attempting to homonormalize the gay community representing us in this structure that only works for heterosexual families. Yet, I know lots of gay families and there are people who are like, "why should I be penalized because I'm single or because I want to be polyamorous?" I want to represent both because that's who we have; and it all falls back to a family structure being the basis of the show essentially because that's what works in entertainment. That's how we can relate to this little circle of characters, and that's what I know. In real life they all make me laugh whatever their political visions and even if I agree with them. There is something funny especially if you take it to the extreme, and I wanted to take it to the extreme.

You are an outspoken gay figure in the film industry. What is your own stand regarding the recent Proposition 8, as a Californian citizen?

I'm against Proposition 8. I'm for gay marriage but I definitely... my politics lie beyond that, to why marriage is at all in the government, and why you are penalized for being single. I think that's kind of odd, but since that's nothing that I'm going to change or feel that strongly or passionate about, like I don't want to get rid of marriage, out of society, I don't like religion in the government but I do get tradition, although I'm not always supportive of it, but since it's there I think we should definitely have equal access to it. Just like gays in the military, I don't want to join the military, I don't understand why anyone would join the military, I don't want to go fight a war and kill anyone, I am against that, but since it's there, I know we're not going to abolish the military or the need for one, there should definitely be equal access to it for those who want to go. So, that's how I feel with gay marriage. I want that right whether or not I choose to exercise it.

You address racism in the series, and in particular towards Asians. Rick is constantly rejected because he is Asian for instance. What do you think about the place of racial/ethnic minorities in the LGBT community today? As a Filipino-American, did you feel there was prejudice against you?

I think it's getting better today, throughout the nineties it was pretty awful. I think it's getting better in all media. It was pretty hideous. I had never seen an Asian man portrayed as anything remotely sexual or attractive, and as an Asian myself, it really kind of gives you a complex. And you just find a lot in the community where people are like, "I'm just not into Asian guys, I don't like Asian guys, it's just not sexual for me," or you see in ads "no fatties or Asians." So, it's something that I definitely wanted to address. I also wanted to have a lead character who was Asian just because I don't see it ever anywhere. You know it's just now starting to happen; in *Lost* there is this hot Asian guy and we've never seen that, so I think we're coming around, and I just want to be part of that with this. The whole Pacific Islander, Asian

thing is... something that happens a lot in the Filipino community, because there is such a stigma to being Asian—I don't support that, it's just the way it is—a lot of people will say, "I'm not Filipino, I'm Pacific Islander," and somehow that's seen as more acceptable, more desirable than being Asian, because maybe people can see themselves as, "oh I guess I'm more with a Hawaiian, that's not really Asian," and a lot of Filipinos will even identify as Hawaiian or Spanish. That's one of the reasons I think our culture is largely invisible when it comes to American media. Most people know a lot about Asian or Japanese or Thai culture and tradition and food, but people don't know a lot about Filipinos even though we're the largest Asian population there is in America. Because we blend, and because we can get away with it more, so a lot of people go out of their way to not identify as Asian, and it's sad.

What about the importance given to interracial couples in the series?

I just did not see a lot of it. I'm half Filipino and half White, and even the White isn't all White—there is Native American in that, I'm about an eighth. So, anyone that I'm with, whatever race they are they are not going to be the same mix as I am; so I'm in an interracial couple whether I'm dating someone who's Asian or Black or White or anything, it's interracial... so, that's why I want more, because I'm interracial, I'm the product of an interracial couple.

From your personal experience, are interracial couples something that you see a lot in the LGBT community?

It's something that I see more of now in all communities. I see a lot more of it now than in the nineties and eighties.

Because in terms of beauty ideals the image of the young, muscular, lean and smooth Caucasian, even within the LGBT minority itself, is still very present. So what do you make of that?

It is, and if someone dates someone of color it's immediately thought that they have a fetish, and often they do, and people are attracted to someone only of a certain race, and I don't know if that's right or wrong or why it happens or how. It's this weird political thing in your head that you try to navigate, as to, so this guy is only into Asians, if you see that he only dates Asians and he is dating you. Is that OK, is that weird, does he like me only because of that? There are just so many weird politics involved if you're attracted to someone because of his/her color... A lot of people just don't bother.

Still talking about ethnic background, another point which is striking in the first season of the series is that Ebony and Ivory—who are both very feminist and activist—never really articulate the interracial dimension of their couple. Why?

I haven't explored Black and White a lot yet. I do a little bit more in the second season of the series. But there's still a pretty big barrier there in the gay community. I don't know a lot of Asian gay clubs or Latin gay clubs. There's like a Latin night but they're kind of mixing a little bit more. Asians seem to be—I don't want to say segregated—but there will be an Asian section of the club. But Black and White, they're totally different clubs. There are Black gay clubs where a White person goes and is like "I'm the only White person here, it's so weird, and I don't fit in and people are going to think that I only like Black guys, and they're going to come up to me and tell me that I don't belong here." It's almost like going to a lesbian bar as a man where it's suddenly, "Oh my god, I'm a minority somewhere." It's just a little bit of that, and I think what's really interesting about that—that we just don't get—is that it's an experience that we all have when we go to a straight bar and we're the only gay person there, like any of us can have that experience of what it's like to be an Asian in a White bar, or a Black guy in a White gay club and just feel totally in a different world. And any White gay guy can have that experience and does have it but isn't able to make that connection.

How would you define West Lahunga Beach? Is it a utopia?

It's not a utopia! That's not what I want, that's for sure. I think it's what it is taken to the extreme. It's a mirror; it's a warped mirror of all the gay ghettos; I've been to gay ghettos all over the world and there are certain things that I've seen in common everywhere, no matter where you go. If you go to a gay neighborhood they've got this, they do this, and it's taken to the extreme. I don't want that and I don't think most people want it. It's a parody of a gay community.

What about the third season of *Rick & Steve*? When is it going to be broadcast? Is it already written?

I don't know. It's not written; I'm waiting for [MTV] to either renew or not. They have until August to make that decision, and they usually wait till the very last day.

You asked your fans through a vote on the *Rick & Steve* website who they would like to see as Dixie's father? Do you have a preference?

No, I have kind of ideas for whatever the answer is, but it's totally up to the public.

You are working on the casting of *Eating Out 3* right now, what are your future projects?

I'm working on a children's animated film about a dog that learns ballet after he dies. So I just wrote that script. It's for a Broadway producer actually, so we're trying to put that together. I just sold a pitch to MTV for a puppet show about celebrity teens.

So, it's a lot of animation?

I guess so. I have a lot of live action scripts, and I'll do live action when I get the opportunity, but those are the two that have just kind of taken right now, that actually have something behind them.

You told me that you were particularly interested in science fiction when you first started to think about filmmaking. Do you have any science fiction project including an LGBT plot? Is it something that you are thinking of?

Yes, I have a script that I've written actually. It's not an LGBT plot but there are a couple of LGBT characters. The plot is really about sleep deprivation. There are those options by a company that's kind of going nowhere now, so I'm waiting for the options to run out, and hopefully I can resell that somewhere where they will be able to make it. Yes, science fiction still interests me, but since I've written many different kinds of scripts and since the gay ones are really easy to make at a really low budget, they all got made, and there was a demand for that, and that's kind of where everything got built, it's where I'm concentrating my efforts now, on stuff that I feel that I have the power and resources to get made. But if something else really speaks strongly to me, I'll still write it out and see if I can find a home for it.

Thank you very much, Q. Allan Brocka

Thank you.

© 2009 GRAAT & Q. Allan Brocka & David Maillet