

## ***Artist Uniform #13: Once upon a time...The End*** (5/16/2015)

Tyler Rowland

Welcome to the last day of *Artist's Uniform* (May 16, 2002—May 16, 2015).

For Artist Uniforms #1-6, I wore only one kind of clothing for approximately one year, for six years. Then I abandoned this strict, repeating structure of discipline and sacrifice and thought I could conceive of myself *as myself*, and set out newly attired in *Artist's Uniform #7, Tyler Rowland*. AU also includes alter egos (noted in #10 and #11) and the question of what in the world to do with the growing amount of clothing (AU #9). Tonight I am wearing *Artist's Uniform #13*, a reversible apron made by my mother and myself using a pattern passed down through her side of the family.

*Artist's Uniform* lasted 13 years because this is how long I wore a school uniform/dress code when I was growing up. I did not document this performance myself, so almost every image you see here has been generated in the course of life by family, friends, or the institutions where I have worked.

All the clothing I have worn for the last 13 years is installed variously in my apartment, a Lower East Side coop built in 1959 using funds from the pensions of the United Hatters, Cap & Millinery Workers, International Union as well as Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers of America.

### Foyer

-- Artwork made from clothes from Artist's Uniform #2 ("Martin and Me")

### Living room

-- Clothing from Artist's Uniforms, installed variously in my studio area.

-- Binders and boxes containing Artist's Uniform #1-13 ephemera, press, and snapshots. Note: AU #5 (Zebra) has its own binder, containing research and the results of the call to my "herd" to dress me.

### Hallway

-- Documents from each Artist's Uniform #1-13, starting from top left corner, photo credits listed. (Top row, L to R: pre-AU (Rena ?); AU#1 (Ina Steiner), AU #2 (Lara Newsom). Second row from top: AU #3 (Edward Everett Elementary School photographer), #4(a) (Barbara Ralf) #4(b) (Jessica Hayes) #4(c) (self-portrait after Lovis Corinth). Third row: AU #5 (Los Angeles Zoo photo booth) #6 (Bruno Jose) #7 (Photo of painting by Ruth Orbach). Fourth row: AU #8 (exhibition announcement), #9 (Manhattan Mini Storage), #10 (Andres Janacua). Fifth row: AU #11 (notes), #12 (Wanted poster after Marcel Duchamp).

-- Closet with Artist's Uniform special selections. Please touch.

### Bedroom

-- Dresser & radiator display of solicited and unsolicited gifts received throughout AU #5 year and beyond.

-- Pink Panther in suitcases (AU #1: Halloween costume); AU #4 large binder with "How to explain a conceptual artwork to a class of kindergarteners."

-- Artist's Uniform-inspired gifts purchased by friends and family for my daughter, Union Harris Rowland, since her birth.

***Artist's Uniform #1: The Year I Dyed All My Clothes Pink*** (5/16/2002—5/16/2003)

*AU #1* involved removing all color from, then dyeing, my entire wardrobe pink, as well as re-branding the clothing by replacing the original labels with my own. I sacrificed all the clothes I owned in an attempt to shift their material identity to that of “art”. I wore this new monochromatic uniform for 365 days while attending graduate school, working construction, traveling across the country, and every other minute of the year. This activity was not only a challenge to conventions about male identity but also engaged almost everyone I encountered in a discourse about the effects that fashion and consumption have on an individual’s life. This project ended May 16, 2003, the day I graduated from California Institute of the Arts.

***Artist's Uniform #2: The Year I Paid People To Buy Me Clothes*** (5/17/2003—11/3/2004)

*AU #2* transferred the responsibility of forming my new post-pink identity to others. Because the pink project ended the day I graduated, I decided to invite seven members of the art faculty (Martin Kersels, Leslie Dick, Jessica Bronson, Mille Wilson, Shirley Tse, and visiting art faculty Liz Young and Charles Long) to collaborate on the next installment. This gesture not only reflected the semi-parental relationship between student and teacher but also mirrored the financial investment I had made in them. Once they agreed to participate, I gave them my measurements and paid them each \$142.86 to purchase new, used, or commissioned clothing. They had no restrictions or rules, but were collectively responsible for and independently expected to provide me my new uniform. This project lasted until I felt that I had “cut the cord” from CalArts and had established my own identity as an artist in Los Angeles.

***Artist's Uniform #3: The Year I Wore My Catholic School Uniform from Kindergarten to Eighth Grade (USA/STA Red, White, & Blue)*** (11/2/2004—8/1/2005)

From 1982 to 1992, at St. Thomas the Apostle in Phoenix, Arizona, I went to school in navy blue corduroy pants and red, white, or blue (robin’s egg or navy) short-sleeved collared shirts. All sweaters or jackets also had to be solid red, white, or blue. This first uniform became a departure point for *AU #3*. Linked to the idea of “starting over” or a “new beginning”, *AU #3* was an optimistic gesture towards attracting major change in my life.

Naturally I decided to start this project on Election Day (November 2, 2004), with the hopes that America would elect a new president and propel us in a different direction. To mark this event, and add a nostalgic 80s twist, I purchased a red heather-knit cotton sweater with a large American flag to wear to my neighborhood polling place in Los Angeles. In February 2005, I moved to South Boston. *AU #3* ended back in LA on my 27th birthday while installing a new artwork about my move across the country.

***Artist's Uniform #4: The Year I Realized I Wanted To Be Like Everyone Else Or, More Accurately, The Year I Realized I Missed Shopping*** (8/2/2005—2/13/2007)

On a spring day in 2005, I ventured into Boston's Filene's Basement. By this time it had been four years since I'd gone shopping. Afterwards I sat down in a park and considered the past years' “accomplishments.” I had achieved my goal of removal from the cycle of consumption—but I felt completely removed from American society. I decided it was time to readopt the popular agendas of consumption, individual choice, and brand allegiance. *AU #4* allowed me to re-approach mainstream culture, engaging individual taste, current trends, and the moral decisions one confronts when designing an identity. Apart from a birthday shopping trip in Baltimore funded by my mother, almost all clothes for this project came from two thrift stores in South Boston.

***Artist's Uniform #5: The Year I Became A Zebra*** (2/14/2007—2/28/2008)

My transition to Harvard life (I got a job as a teaching fellow and lived in and worked at an undergraduate “house”) was a little rocky mostly due to the institution’s overemphasis on civilized behavior. My next uniform played off the question “If you were an animal, what would you be?” *Artist's Uniform #5* sought to make my answer—a zebra—a reality while incorporating my herd into the process. I sent out an invitation that explained my desire to become a zebra\*. I requested my herd’s assistance in creating my stripes, and wore only the generous donations of “zebra-striped” clothing received from family and friends. (I had been sporting a mane [not a Mohawk] since my move from Boston to Cambridge in March of 2006.) I also discovered a few ancestors at Harvard’s Natural History Museum and was able to conduct some research into the psychological and societal impact of transforming into another animal.

\*Note: In addition to having an attraction to black and white animals, I also relate to the zebra’s inability to be domesticated (and/or lassoed) by humans. This is partly due to their unpredictable (impulsive) and aggressive (antagonistic) behavior. Also, once they bite into something, they don’t let go. I am also intrigued by the unique markings that adorn and identify each of these beautiful equines. Plus, I love their hairdos!

**Artist's Uniform #6: The Year I Became Gustave Courbet and Was Not Only A Man But Created "Living Art"**  
(2/29/2008—5/16/2008)

After being a zebra for a year, I was ready to become a human again. Anticipating this return, I began to grow a beard six months prior to my planned conversion. *Artist's Uniform #6* corresponded with my own ongoing interest in Courbet, whom I had been exploring in my installation work and whose *Realist Manifesto* seemed to have a lot of meaning for the performance work as well. My wardrobe was made up of vintage and period reenactment-wear as well as an exact replica of the outfit Courbet is wearing in his 1854-5 painting *The Artist's Studio*, meticulously handcrafted by my mother and me. The duration of *AU #6* corresponded with Courbet's retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Feb. 27 – May 18, 2008), which I frequented during visits to the city. On May 16, 2008 (the 6th anniversary of the Artist's Uniform project) the Courbet project came to an end.

**~~Artist's Uniform #7: Tyler Rowland~~** (5/17/2008—present)

After six years, I decided to abandon the existing structure of Artist's Uniform, in which I retired all my clothing at the end of each "year" and then started over every time based on a new idea. I was tired of propagating a model based on the Catholic principles of sacrifice, piety, and discipline. I renamed the artwork *Tyler Rowland*, and determined to spend the remaining 7 years of the project building my identity based on what I had learned and what I wanted to be. As opposed to the strict singular nature and relentless restarting of the first six years, it would be about the constant evolution of an identity and has incorporated a range of ideas and strategies. (Why not be Gustave Courbet as Tyler Rowland?)

From Jorge Luis Borges' short story "Pierre Menard, Author of Quixote": *Initially, Menard's method was to be relatively simple: Learn Spanish, return to Catholicism, fight against the Moor or Turk, forget the history of Europe between the years 1602 and 1918—be Miguel de Cervantes. Pierre Menard weighed that course (I know he pretty thoroughly mastered seventeenth-century Castilian) but he discarded it as too easy. Too impossible, rather!, the reader will say. Quite so, but the undertaking was impossible from the outset, and of all impossible ways of bringing it about, this the least interesting. To be a popular novelist of the seventeenth century in the twentieth seemed to Menard to be a diminution. Being, somehow, Cervantes and arriving thereby at the Quixote—that looked to Menard less challenging (and therefore less interesting) than continuing to be Pierre Menard and coming to the Quixote, through the experiences of Pierre Menard... "The task I have undertaken is not in essence difficult," I read at another place in that letter. "If I could just be immortal, I could do it."*

**Artist's Uniform #8: "... to sail gaily, in brave feathers, right in the teeth of a dreary convention"** (10/27/2010)

Dear Audience:

Let me introduce myself. I am an artist in New York City and have been wearing a different *Artist's Uniform* for each of the last 8 years. All these uniforms were uniforms for one. But this installment takes the form of an invitation to others.

After living abroad in Italy and Mexico, the British author D. H. Lawrence dreamed up the following dress code in a column for London's *The Evening News*, published on September 27, 1928:

*Start with externals, and proceed to internals, and treat life as a good joke. If a dozen men would stroll down the Strand and Piccadilly to-morrow, wearing tight scarlet trousers fitting the leg, gay little orange-brown jackets and bright green hats, then the revolution against dullness which we need so much would have begun. And, of course, those dozen men would be considerably braver, really, than Captain Nobile or the other arctic ventures. It is not particularly brave to do something the public wants you to do. But it takes a lot of courage to sail gaily, in brave feathers, right in the teeth of a dreary convention.*

This exhibition invitation can be folded into a green hat (please follow the diagram above). It's to help you get started on our adventure. Please wear this green hat--and your own red pants and rust-colored jacket--to the opening event announced on this poster. Wear the hat (as they say in Spanish)! Together we are stronger.

This open letter was part of the exhibition invitation I designed for the show *En Cada Instante, Ruptura* at Sala de Arte Publico Siqueiros (SAPS), Mexico City. The invitation was accompanied by a performance at the opening titled "*Mass Ideas, Reiterated Like Parrots*" that included my mother and step-sister, hair-dyeing, reading, and translating another text by Lawrence.

***Artist's Uniform #9: Tailor Rowland*** (rejected proposal, March 2013)

After each *AU* ends, all of its clothing and accessories are removed from use and stored. I have been saving this performance residue with the idea that I would alter (customize) it into artworks in a range of ways, as yet undecided. *AU #9* is a proposal for a tailored exhibition / installation using this material.

Some possible “alterations” include: a shoe-and-sock rainbow arch; a Bedouin-inspired tent; custom uniforms for specific people; fabric T-shirt or jacket paintings; saw-horses with zebra-print pants; a double-sided clothing mosaic created by weaving items through a metal storefront grid; Russian nesting dolls (in the order of the Uniforms); decorative / narrative quilts; stuffed animals with miniature uniforms; a costume-making party; and/or new clothes for my two-year-old daughter Union, made from my old clothes. These sculptural experiments may have various direct or poetic relationships to the themes and experiences of each *Artist's Uniform*.

***Artist's Uniform #10: Tomás Valentine*** (7/27/13—present)

*Tomás Valentine* is my Mexican Catholic alter-ego. The name is derived from my middle name, Thomas, and my Catholic confirmation name, Valentine. My maternal grandmother, Rosalie Placencia Ralf, was of Mexican decent and raised Catholic in El Paso, Texas—this piece is dedicated to her. Tomás was born during a residency organized by galería perdida in Chilchota, Michoacan, Mexico in July 2013. Rosario Garcia, a retired Los Angeles hairdresser, cut my hair and beard every morning for a week, creating TV's interesting look. He was also chosen to serve as the delegate from Holy See at the *People's United Nations (pUN)*, a project by Mexican artist Pedro Reyes that premiered at the Queens Museum in November 2013.

***Artist's Uniform #11: Kellie Ines Doge Reno*** (8/2/1978—present)

Kellie Ines Doge Reno is my life-long female doppelgänger and a pseudonym that I occasionally use in my art and writing. At 8 a friend's mother dressed me in make-up and girl's clothes to fool a babysitter—it worked for hours until I changed and removed the makeup. Over the years, I have occasionally enjoyed wearing women's clothes in public—from comfortable sweaters to Charles Long's contributions to *AU #2* (all women's clothes from Target) to a watermelon pink bridesmaid's dress at my brother's wedding.

***Artist's Uniform #12: To Be Announced (To Be Determined)***

This is a wild-card—a time-warp or worm-hole that will allow me to do more *Artist's Uniforms* whenever I want.

***Artist's Uniform #13: Once upon a time...The End.*** (5/16/2015)

*AU #13* was conceived as a one-night only event and installation in my apartment that celebrated the completion of the 13 years of my *Artist's Uniform* project. A custom double-sided apron which reads “Once Upon A Time ...” and “The End.” as well as this handout were created exclusively for this fiesta / finale.

LASTLY, A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS AND EVERYONE THAT I ENCOUNTERED OVER THE COURSE OF ARTIST'S UNIFORM (MAY 16, 2002 – MAY 16, 2015) – THIS ARTWORK COULD HAVE NEVER EXISTED WITHOUT YOU.

VIVA,

Tyler Rowland