Kandie Contretemps

by Brian Michael Barbeito

She sat in a tall chair and there was only one time in the interview that she took her sunglasses off. She didn't really take them off, but just pulled them down for an instant with thumb and forefinger in order to look out at something going past the window. They said that she was a genius but I didn't see it. I thought she was faking. Her art had been praised and the paintings were selling for a couple thousand a piece. It was early on and she lived in an industrial chic studio just south of 45th and Maple. Kandie's people had told me beforehand that I would not have much time. They also told me not to question her answers. Kandie is a genius unparalleled in the art world, said her publicist, and if you don't understand now, maybe you will in time.

Question One: Kandie, how did you get your name?

Answer: I used to walk in a place called Londontown. Through where there were affluent houses.

(At that I waited for more, but nothing was being offered. Kandie's expressionless demeanor was a parched sky devoid of color and cloud, and the only chem-trails around were perhaps the ones in her paintings.)

Question Two: What artists or movements were you influenced by. I see you must like cubism, and you speak like a Dadaist character.

Answer: A field is a world. And if it weren't full of mice and neon vortexes, I might even inhabit it. And listen buddy, the seas of solipsism are many, and I am my own. Write that in your interview, that I am my own.

At that moment, after Kandie said 'own,' she reached quickly to the top of a set of dresser drawers (painted blood red), that doubled as a secondary work area, and retrieved her fourteen dollar specialty coffee. I detected something, some vibe close to anger or resentment, but couldn't place it. Kandie mentioned also, after a couple pronounced swigs, the name of her coffee concoction. It

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cannot be reproduced in this section of the interview, or any section for that matter, because it was too difficult to discern. I gave a verbal version to the fact checking team at one point, or at least a part of what I thought it sounded like. They spent days but came back empty handed. Even Kandie's publicist by that point had become 'unavailable for comment...' I kind of regretted it. I mean, her fans would like to know, because, as I would learn time and again on the art beat, no trivia is really trivial, especially to the sycophantic fan base, or, even more importantly, the potential buyers. But at the time, the unraveling of the title of the coffee had impressed me as simply involving too much effort, such as an involved passage from Don Quixote. Besides, my short hand was terrible, my translator had acquired a case of influenza that day, and if I wasn't careful enough with my words, Kandie could end the interview at any time, and I wouldn't get in my last question.

Question Three: Kandie, what do you see in your future? In terms of your work. Your projects…

Answer: The cream of the crop is not what you think. Feral cats don't always look for fights just because they don't have peas and rice or even lima beans. Sometimes the world of art is a world of listening and at other times it can appear as plastics from a contemporaneous century, and even a century that has yet to have taken place. And another thing. Please don't forget that lime green will save the world.

That was it. Her publicist entered the room and offered me the exit while Kandie started texting. I was hoping that the young art genius would have not texted, because that is what everyone else does. But there she went. The publicist hovered politely and I got up and thanked them both. Outside the crowds vied and jockeyed for positions in the hallways but I made my way through. It was gray and the day was saturated with rain, fog, and general doldrums. If Kandie was for real, she was too far through the looking glass for me to understand. If she was playing a game, well, in a way, I thought, how could she be blamed for such?

Everybody was trying to make a buck.