

Timothy Cummings



Posted by [Camilla Bjørnbak](#) on Friday, April 26, 2013

Prettily clad they are, the childhood nightmares of Timothy Cummings. They dress up in colorful stockings and silken sashes. They wear precious crowns of gold and paper. They ornament themselves with masks of lace and bird's feather. They carry luscious flowers in their hands and buttonholes. They dance and jump and sing...

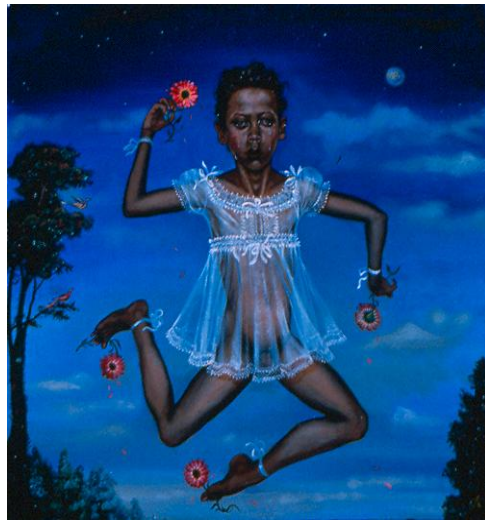
But there is no joy. No childish gaiety. No frivolous laughter. No flippancy.

There is only solitude and despair. Awkwardness and pretense. Fear and sadness.



Timothy Cummings grew up in New Mexico surrounded by the influences of Hispanic and Native American cultures – both are very much present in his work. You find the effects of the folk art of the *retablos* of the region in his images. These little oil paintings of patron saints were based on catholic icons from the old world and reinterpreted by indigenous artists in the new world. Created mostly by untrained artists and reflecting the traditional religious views of post-conquest Mexico, they were an extremely popular art form to be found decorating most home altars.

The small scale of Cummings' paintings, alongside their vivid coloring and simple dimensions, lead us back to the folkloric *retablos*. But most of all, there is a sacredness in his images. Though, they do not depict catholic saints there is a delicate sense of suffering in his characters,



making them almost holy.



Cummings' characters are a clouding jumble of age and gender. In some pictures, you will see children's faces with rosy-red cheeks and five-o'clock shadows, wearing adult apparel. You will meet boyish figures in girlish clothes and with soft pink lips. There will be adult characters performing

childish games and childish characters performing adult games. But they all have one thing in common: awkwardness.

Whether these figures are unconsciously moving too fast or too slowly, whether their intention is to go in one direction or another, they seem to be stuck. Stuck in the transition between childhood and adulthood. Lost in the mystifying ways of sexuality and gender. They are out on perilous roads without a guiding map and when you look at the pictures, you will see the danger and their fear ever present

