

MAX DEAN

Still - Living Through Cancer and Covid

Exhibition Dates: May 1 – June 26, 2021*

* The exhibition will open virtually on May 1st.

Once Ontario's government health guidelines allow us to reopen to the public, the gallery will open by appointment from Tuesday to Saturday from 11am – 6pm.

Information on how to schedule a visit and our gallery procedures will be available after May 20th.

The gallery is pleased to present for CONTACT, Toronto's annual photography festival, "Still – Living through Cancer and Covid", our second solo exhibition with multidisciplinary artist Max Dean. The exhibition of photographs and sculpture includes the cooperation of Andy and the lads, the animatronic figures that Dean rescued from Ontario Place's decommissioned Wilderness Adventure Ride. This coincides with an itinerant installation developed for CONTACT. Dean's life and work are also subject of a feature-length documentary film, *Still Max*, by Katherine Knight of Site Media, premiering at the 2021 Hot Docs International Film Festival. Over the course of eight weeks, their sculpture will be disassembled into an ever-evolving installation. During the first weeks of the exhibition, while the gallery is closed to the public due to Ontario's government health guidelines, the unravelling of the sculpture will be recorded and released Tuesdays and Fridays at noon starting Friday May 7th. A link to the videos will be available on our website. Andy and the lads have provided us with this exhibition statement:

Hey, Contact! It's been some time since we last connected. It was back at the Lever — remember? — when our gang from the Wilderness Adventure Ride devised that giant bubble machine and exhibited some photos with our good buddy Max Dean. Well, that led to a gig at the Toronto art fair, where Andy's humongous floral frame with the soap film glazing was a total success (though it was nearly overshadowed by the Boy's hit Instagram account).

Since then, things have taken a more serious turn. Max has been dealing with his prostate cancer and he's enlisted our support to explore possible treatments. We have been doing research and capturing our findings in photographs with Max and Andrew, while our friend Katherine Knight has been producing a film to document this leg of our odyssey. We are planning a preview at Stephen's for the festival.

I guess you might call the show "Living through Cancer and Covid". The exhibition includes a photographic series picturing our conversations with Max about his illness. For our little family, the disease found its way all over. It became the elephant in every room. Since we think best with our hands, we made the metaphor visual: from a 3D model of Max's prostate, we constructed the tumour, which grew and grew to the size of the studio. Once it got so big, we decided to operate, so we cut the growth in half, removed it and brought it here to the gallery for examination.

It's a bit ironic this exhibition is about cancer. Previously, our art addressed self-imposed obstacles, the issues of our own making. But this sickness fought against the backdrop of another ... these are obstacles of a different order. Some situations, we've learned, are thrust upon us.

Who'd have guessed we'd find ourselves in a moment when it's maybe even a bit enviable to be a mannequin. No organs or cells to get sick. Here we are, so to speak, immune. We're beginning to realize, though, that it might entail some other duties. What can we do? What tasks and responsibilities can we take on? How do we help others manage these challenging times? How does anyone really manage when, like us, you are constrained and restricted — sometimes by choice, but more often by circumstance?