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## These Artists Draw Inspiration from Vampires, Zombies, and the Supernatural

Alina Cohen | January 8, 2019

### Will Boone



Will Boone, *Backslider Mask*, 2018. Photo by Lee Thompson. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles.

You can tell how happy a society is based on which supernatural monsters are most prevalent on television, according to Heidi Zuckerman, director of the Aspen Art Museum (AAM). "When people are comfortable and things are going well, then you see a lot of vampires, because they're sexy," she recently told Artsy. "In times of cultural agita or angst, you see a lot of zombies."

Case in point: *The Walking Dead* is the most pirated show on television, and Drew Barrymore now stars in a production about the undead (*Santa Clarita Diet*). With their infected brains and addled gaits, zombies warn us to be vigilant and take control of our circumstances—before we, too, become contaminated grotesques.

Zuckerman is so enthralled with the metaphor that she recently opened an exhibition entitled "Zombies: Pay Attention!" at AAM, on view through May 5th. While some of the included artworks directly reference the brain-hungry beings, many simply relate to Zuckerman's primary source material for the show: the tongue-in-cheek 2003 book *The Zombie Survival Guide* by Max Brooks (heir to Mel).

Below, three of the show's exhibiting artists discuss their personal experiences with the supernatural, their favorite monster stories, and their openness to vampire seduction.

"One of my heroes is the musician Roky Erickson, who was the singer of the psychedelic group the 13th Floor Elevators. He created rock 'n' roll music about monsters, love, and religion. I listen to his album *The Evil One* constantly. He once wrote a group of songs about Jesus and God, then went back and changed them to be about demons. He has songs with titles like 'I Walked with a Zombie' and 'Night of the Vampire'—and my personal favorite, 'Two Headed Dog.'

"Monsters are interesting because they are archetypal, whether it's Freddy Krueger or the Minotaur. They're a part of how we understand evil and how we process fear and death.

"The *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is one of my favorite [stories about the supernatural]. I like it because there is so much information and energy around it. There are lots of stories about its production, and people make fanzines about it. There is a whole subculture. It was a pretty bootleg operation: They had very little time and money, so the movie feels direct and raw. It's punk. I think they shot the whole thing in less than a month, they collected roadkill off the side of the road to use for props on set."