

IT'S A BIN THING!

Writer/director Harmony Korine talks to Rachel Potts about his new film, *Trash Humpers*, a strangely mesmerising foray into the underbelly of suburban America.

You seem fascinated by the outsider, but in 'Mister Lonely' and 'Trash Humpers' there is the idea of a longing to return to normality, do you think that's true?

I don't really think about my work in those terms. I actually learn from people saying things like that to me. This discourse becomes like psychoanalysis, and maybe it's true. When I made *Trash Humpers* I tried not to think about much that wasn't on the surface. It was supposed to work like something that was unearthed, a VHS tape that had been discarded. So anything like that which comes through is more like an accident, or from somewhere subconscious.

You've done a lot of travelling but I've read that you find you can only appreciate a place once you've left.

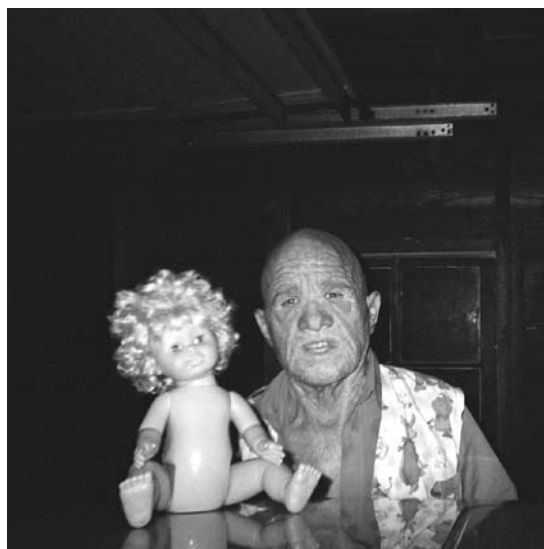
That's very true, at least from my experiences. Most of the time actually, when I'm living in a new place I hate living there. I never really like it until I've gone, and then I find out that the next place is so much worse than the place I just left.

'Trash Humpers' is based in your hometown, Nashville, so you've gone back to where you were from.

It's true. See, I'm always just going back to where I started, I don't know what's wrong with me!

Why did you want to shoot it there?

Because I live there now, so it just seemed right. I would walk my dog late at night down these back alleyways by my house and there were these big garbage bins that people put outside, and some had fallen over, and the lampposts created this dramatic lighting. They seemed like beaten humans to me. The trash took on this human



identity, and I started to fantasize about people fucking them, falling branches of trees and pooping on doorsteps and perverts peeping from windows.

I found that film weirdly optimistic, and you make a big visual deal about the banal spaces of small town America, you seem to be celebrating them.

Yes, and I think with these characters it's a celebration. Even though they're doing horrible things and are truly sadistic, I think their hearts are pure and that they're trying to transcend evil and make it into something beautiful. The act of destruction inspires them. It's like an ode to vandalism. I think that there's something creative about blowing shit up, and if you do it with zest or pride it can be just as fulfilling as the act of creation.

I was interested in the organic way you made the film – just dressing up in those costumes and wandering around.

Yes, I had an idea of a loose story that would closely mimic a home movie. It was pretty much shot in the order you see it. And you wouldn't spend more time lingering on a tree branch blowing in the wind than you would on someone being murdered; it was all just them documenting a trip.

Did it develop quite a lot as you were doing it?

Yes, it was more about feeling it. You would wake up one day and feel like this is what needed to happen, and go in that direction. So you would sleep in a big tractor tire by an abandoned strip mall somewhere, and then you'd walk through the woods, and then you'd see a house, and you'd maybe knock on the door and ask for a piece of chicken, and just film it – that's how the movie was made.

The idea of the film as a found, static object, without a story, is interesting compared to the fluid filming process. Well is there a story to a home movie? Is there a plot? Probably not. It's a search, they are searching for something. But I think they're happy just to document the journey.

And that whole approach to making a film, especially with the VHS you were using, seems close to an art film. How do you feel about it being an art piece?

That's fine, I don't really know what it is, maybe it's not a movie. It is what it is – it worked on its own logic. The idea of what movies are now, or what constitutes film, is changing. I just like to make things, wherever they fit in. All I ever hope for is that there's some kind of an audience, or that people are receptive to it.

You have said that you wanted this film to be almost like making a painting, to get rid of the trammels of making a huge production, as in 'Mister Lonely', and be really free. I like that idea.

I always just wanted to make movies as quickly as I can think of them, to work intuitively and not necessarily waste time explaining to people what I'm trying to do. I

don't always know myself, I don't always know what the point of it is. Sometimes it doesn't even have to have a point.

You could say that self imposed migrants have a much more open attitude towards the unplanned and spontaneous. And you've travelled a lot in your time; do you think that has any relation to your creative process?

Yes, obviously you learn things from travelling; you meet characters and situations that you wouldn't normally. Sometimes it's good to put yourself into messed up situations, just for the sake of the experience. It's all a journey, it's all a trip. I have fun...its nice to move and disappear.

Do you think you're going to work like this again?

I've just finished a script which hopefully I'm going to make this year. It doesn't have anything to do with *Trash Humpers*, but in some ways the process of that movie was the most important thing I'd ever done, film-wise. I learnt what I'm able to do without other people being involved, stripping everything away. So I imagine there will be more films, or whatever you want to call them, that will be more like that, coming from somewhere private.

