

Dale Guy Madison

Artist Profile

Part of West Hollywood's One City One Pride Queer Arts Festival

Name: Dale Guy Madison

City of Residence: Inglewood, CA

Age: 55



No Photo Credit

1) Who are you, where do you live, and what kind of art do you make?

I am a performance artist, but I also make dolls.

2) How old were you when you came out, and what is your coming out story?

I came out in high school at 18. My Dad put me out and I never looked back.
(See Story Written Below for More info)

3) How does being queer affect your artwork?

I always loved dolls and was made to feel different as a kid. As an adult, I made a line of dolls and ran a successful doll making business. As a performance artist, I was a part of a troupe that created educational theater. First we did substance abuse, then we created HIV prevention messages, then I left and started working on personal messages that dealt with intra-discrimination within the gay community.

4) In your mind, what is gay pride and how do you celebrate it?

I believe gay pride in standing in my own truth. I celebrate it everyday.

5) Where can we see your artwork during the One City One Pride LGBT Arts Festival this year?

- a) Name of event: My Life in 3 Easy Payments
- b) Date of event: Wednesday June 5, 2013
- c) Time: 7 PM
- d) Location: West Hollywood Library
- e) Admission charge, if any: Free, donations accepted.
- f) For more info visit www.weho.org/pride, www.damngoodman.com or <https://vimeo.com/63067167>



Doll Triangle by Dale Guy Madison

I'M COMING OUT

*The time has come for me
To break out of the shell
I have to shout
That I'm coming out...
I want the world to know
Got to let it show*

(From Diana Ross' 1980 album *Diana*)

I must have been six years old. I walked into the bathroom and there was my father, naked and leaning over the sink, shaving. I looked up and saw his hairy ass and knew that was where I wanted to be. He was musty and had a man-smell that excited me. It was my first memory of desiring a man. It wasn't that I was sexually attracted to my father; he just represented the male

figure I so longed to connect with. I so seldom saw him as a child, since he was often away in the navy and since he eventually divorced my mother, that my young life was spent in a world with a lot of adult women.

Kids, observant and intuitive as they are, would sense a different energy in Ricky and I and would pick on us and call us "sissies." But I never associated the word "sissy" with being gay because I liked girls and had girlfriends throughout my school age years. I loved the look and feel of women. I loved their long pretty hair and I liked to feel their breasts and insert my finger into their sticky vaginas.

On the other hand, I also loved watching the other boys pee. I got excited in gym class whenever they snatched towels off each other and ran around the locker room naked. I was always thrilled when my classmate, Kenny, would turn off the lights and pull somebody's dick. I wanted him to choose me so that I could feel his touch, but I kept that secret to myself.

By the time I was sixteen, all kinds of sexual thoughts were running through my mind. My dad always encouraged my mother to keep open discussions with us kids about sex. I actually discussed my first heterosexual experience at the dinner table and was even allowed to own girlie magazines like *Oui Magazine*, which was like a French version of *Playboy*. My subscription arrived each month in a brown paper wrapper and my mother would browse through it before I got home. It would begin a life long passion for porn that everyone in my family (except my father) would enjoy, long into our adulthood.

One Saturday during the summer of 1974, I traveled to downtown Norfolk, Virginia with my neighbor, Combo. We were both sixteen. He was so light skinned that people called him Boo, (since he was fair like a ghost.) We had decided to get fake IDs at this place we'd heard about, then go to a peep show and see pornography in a booth and look at hard-core magazines.

For anyone reading this who has never traveled to the dark side of sexual curiosity, a peep show basically plays dirty

movies in a booth for as long as your twenty-five cents will allow. As soon as you get a good hard-on and the guy on screen is about to "put it in", the movie stops and you have to deposit more quarters if you want to see more action.

At the x-rated shop, Boo was up front looking at dirty magazines when I ventured towards the back room to see what the booths looked like. There is an odor in a peep store that never leaves; how do you describe the scent of cum and cleaning fluid? I still remember the movie I watched -- it starred a thick, sexy, black man who had kidnapped this woman and tied her up to a chair. He began having oral sex with her, and she eventually got so turned on that he untied her and they began to have intercourse, mutually.

When the actor in the movie mounted the actress, I couldn't figure out which of them was getting me hot. I liked the penis, but I also liked the hole it was going into. Before I could figure it out, things got interesting.

Usually when you enter a booth, you lock yourself in so you can enjoy some privacy while masturbating to an erotic masterpiece. Or, if you want company, you can leave the door unlocked so someone might follow you in, magic can ensue and both of you can get it on. Still more sophisticated places have a hole drilled through the booth, or even a two-way mirror so you can watch the person in the next booth masturbate without actually having to touch them. (Some people prefer this method.)

I had left the door open. An attractive, brown-skinned man about thirty-years old, sporting a thick black beard, entered. "Is it all right if I watch this movie with you? he asked.

"Sure," I said. He sat next to me and dropped quarters.

"Is this getting you hard?"

"Sure," I replied.

He pushed forward. "Can I touch it?"

"Sure."

"Have you ever given a blow job?"

"No. But if you show me, I'll figure it out."

The stranger then taught me oral pleasure as he fed quarters into the greedy slot. I was soon on my knees with my pants down, enjoying the movie and giving my first blowjob. I was getting it on like the porn stars in the video when Boo scared the shit out of me by bursting in the door I had forgotten to lock.

Shocked and embarrassed, I leapt up immediately and quickly slammed the door shut. Then I tried to figure out what lie to tell.

I told Boo that the stranger had discovered we had fake Ids, and said that he was going to tell the manager if I did not do as he asked. I said I was so afraid and ashamed that I did not ever want to speak of it again. (To Boo's credit, we never did discuss it again until twenty-five years later, when I bumped into him at a gay pride event in Washington D.C. He told me then that he knew I was lying that day, but had kept my secret.)

I was in my denial, secure in the belief that my lie had worked on Boo. He was the least of my concerns at that moment. I wanted to experience more of the forbidden sex of the peep store booths.

I went home that night and dreamt of the sexual experience, relishing in the excitement. How I wished I could have taken it further. The stranger had whispered in my ear how much he wanted to take me to his place and show me other things. I yearned to learn more about homosexuality.

I began to have wet dreams shortly after that experience. Every seven days it would back up, and on Sunday night it would explode. I knew the pattern so often, I would prepare on Sunday night by wrapping my penis in toilet paper to avoid staining my underwear.

The only talk my mother had given us kids on the topic of homosexuality had been after we watched an ABC movie of the week called *That Certain Summer*. It starred Hal Holbrook and Martin Sheen. The story was about a husband who leaves his wife (played by Hope Lange) for his male lover, and the effect it has on his

teenage son who comes to visit for the summer. My mother explained that some guys like guys instead of girls. She never said it was bad or wrong.

At the time of my first homosexual experience, I was still involved with girls and had been pursuing Shari Rodgers, an amazing girl who was a year ahead of me in school at Manor High. Shari was dark chocolate with eyes like Bette Davis, was shapely and had beautiful, full breasts. I loved the way she smiled, and she had a gap between her front teeth that was slightly wider than my own, which captivated me. Besides her beauty, I was also attracted to her talent. She had a clear, beautiful, alto voice, and I loved to hear her sing. Not only did she sing on the school choir, she was also in the school's drama department. Consequently, we were cast in school plays together.

When I met Shari, she had a crush on an older guy and would not give me the time of day. I tried things I had seen in the movies to woo her -- I wrote her poems, sent her gifts, and romanced her by phone. I walked her home and made her laugh until I wore her down. She eventually became my first girlfriend.

My best friend at the time was Bruce Melvin, another student in the drama department. Bruce was cool, light skinned, and had a huge perfect smile set in a handsome, square jaw. He had the deepest voice I had heard for a guy at sixteen. We both wore our hair in the huge Afros of the day, his in a square shape to match his face and mine in a fitting oval shape. He was ultra smooth with girls and had scored lots of sexual conquests. Whereas I had only been with three girls before I met Shari, Bruce had been with dozens. Once, when we were engaged in a conversation with some female friends, Bruce made an argument in favor of oral sex; he reasoned that it was cleaner than kissing, because fewer germs reached the vagina than the average mouth. It made sense to me at the time -- until I realized that it takes a mouth to perform oral sex! But I could see that Bruce was really winning a few fans over to his side.

Bruce was fun to be around. We had been best friends since the fourth grade, even after he took the lead away from me in the play *No Man Is An Island*. He had played Bob Marley in *A Christmas Carol* the year that my voice changed and I almost lost the role of Ebenezer Scrooge. He gave me the nickname I had always wanted, calling me "Big D", (D as in Dale, not dick). I was taller than him by half an inch; in stature he was a little guy, and I called him Lil' Stud because he was such a ladies' man.

Bruce, Shari, and I had been involved in every school play during our years at Manor High. Our first production was Douglas Turner Ward's *Day of Absence*. We followed that with Jean Raymond Maljean's *Message from Cougar* and Bruce and I played brothers, one shy and one very aggressive. Next, I got to direct and write a modern version of *Romeo and Juliet* with Bruce as Romeo, ("Juliet, you are such a fine fox!") By the time we did Jerome Lawrence's *Live Spelled Backwards*, the three of us had a great rhythm on stage together.

Live Spelled Backwards is a one-act play that tells the story of five lonely people who visit a bar in Morocco. Each is given a super drug by the bartender, and it leads them to expose their darkest, innermost secrets. Later, they discover that they were given no drug at all. I played the bartender and Bruce and Shari played two of the patrons. Before we all became involved with the play, I thought of Bruce as the outgoing brother that my own brother was not. And I thought of Shari as the girl I would eventually marry. All of that would change as the performance drew near.

One day after rehearsal, we were driving home after smoking a joint when I found myself sitting in the car next to Shari, but reaching my hand towards the back seat to touch Bruce's manhood. He gently removed my hand from his penis and did not speak of it.

Sometimes, Bruce and I would rehearse his big scene without anybody else around. His character's name was "The Most Evil Man in Washington Court House, Ohio." The scene required us to stand face to face as he recited his monologue. As I stared into

Bruce's eyes, I was completely lost in affection for him -- I had fallen in love with my best friend. He was oblivious as he spoke his lines:

And so this man decided to go to the most wicked place he could find on the map of the world - and try all the things he'd been accused of, everything. And he hated them, they revolted him, they made him sick! He has tried every evil and he is sick of them. Doesn't that make him purer than the people who never dare? The people who cling to their longing for sin, and hang on to it, and live with it all of their lives - aren't they the dirty ones?

I realized I was one of those people, clinging to my longing for him. I had to dare to go for it. The love I felt for him was very real to me. "I need to tell you something," I confessed one day after school.

"Just spit it out, Big D," Bruce said with a huge smile.

"You never mentioned anything about that night I tried to touch your dick."

"What's there to mention? We were all high."

"I was high, man. But I knew what I was doing. I'm gay, Bruce."

"And you are my best friend and I love you. Just not that way."

"So, it doesn't bother you?"

"I think I have always known. I'd be lying if I said I hadn't had thoughts, but I don't feel the need to act on them. So are we cool?"

"Yes, I guess so."

"So Big D and Lil' Stud still gonna tear up NYU come fall 1976?"

"Dayeem skippy," I said.

My confession did not seem to bother him one bit. He had rejected me sexually, but that made me love him even more.

Bruce and I became even tighter after that incident. Our plan was to go off to New York University and study acting and become famous actors. Along with Shari, we were always hanging out -- performing in plays, entering poetry contests, and

immersing ourselves in any other kind of artistic extra curricular activity. I was so confused. I loved Shari, but I also loved and desired Bruce. Everything started building up inside of me. Then one day my father came to visit.

*Somehow, I have to make them
Just understand
I got it well in hand
And, oh, how I've planned
I'm spreadin' love
There's no need to fear
And I just feel so good
Everytime I hear:
I'm coming out*

It was April of 1975 and I had just turned seventeen. My father had come to town to get my mother's signature on papers that would give him equity in her family property, so that he could buy a bar in Baltimore. I was junior class president and my brother was leaving for college. My mother had refused to let me attend an honors program that would have allowed me to enter college a year early. Bruce had been considering that same program. We were anxious to leave Portsmouth and begin living in the real world, but when my mother nixed that program for me, we went back to our plan of just going to NYU in the fall of 1976. I began to wonder -- how could I prepare myself for the future if I was stuck at home with my mother? What could she teach me about the adult world? Not much, I figured. But most importantly, if I stayed in Portsmouth, how was I going to experience homosexual sex?

I devised a plan that would change the course of my life. When my father arrived, I told him that I had been molested by a man in a peep store in Norfolk and had started smoking weed as a result. To sweeten the story, I told him that I had hidden a bag in the house. (Bruce and his new girlfriend had surprised me with a nickel bag as a gift for my seventeenth birthday, so the evidence was already planted.) I told him I was afraid to be in Portsmouth because I thought the man would try to come back and do something to me. My father took me out of school the next day

and I packed my bags to go live with him in Baltimore. Sadly, though, he flushed my weed down the toilet.

My plan was to learn the art of survival from my dad, complete my senior year in Baltimore, then head off to meet Bruce in New York when we both graduated high school. Baltimore would offer plenty of opportunities to meet homosexual men, so I could complete what had started in the peep booth that day.

Dad had a small duplex apartment, so I was forced to sleep on a rollout cot in the living room while he and his wife slept behind a curtain not more than ten feet away. My stepmom had also moved her grown daughter into the apartment, along with her daughter's two small kids. Other things had changed since my last visit; my father no longer took me to Druid Hill Park to play tennis or jog. I had planned on it being just the three of us, but now there were six!

I would have had my own room had I stayed in Portsmouth, because my brother would have been away at MIT. Instead, I was sleeping on a cot in a cramped living room in Baltimore, all because I wanted to find dick. But at the time, I would not have had it any other way.

Being a year ahead of Bruce and I, Shari was attending college that fall and had decided on Morgan State University. So she would eventually be moving to Baltimore as well. Bruce was devastated that both of his acting buddies would be gone for his senior year. I kept in touch with Bruce, Shari, and my mother by phone, as my father allowed me a few calls per month. (But no longer than five minutes each.) Bruce and Shari wrote me letters every week and I was determined not to let my relationship with Bruce disappear.

Bruce visited me during my first summer in Baltimore. I don't know how my father allowed it, being that the place was so small. Bruce slept on my cot and I slept on the floor. I remember his feet dangled off the cot and I gently touched them and inhaled his scent. I think that's what started my love affair with the male foot.

That summer of '76, Shari visited me as well. During that summer, she gave me her virginity. It was romantic and magical, just like I had seen in the old time black and white movies. I bought her chocolates and flowers and we drank Boone's Farm apple berry wine. It was passionate but also erotic, like the porn I had seen. I mastered the art of licking pussy and when Shari climaxed for the first time, she was afraid she had suffered a heart attack. It was an amazing feeling, bringing a woman to orgasm.

Since Bruce was a ladies' man, I introduced him to my neighbor, classmate, and eventual business partner, Vanessa Peaches Mack. She became enamored of him quickly. Vanessa and I ended up taking a bus trip together to Virginia to visit Bruce and Shari. It was on that occasion that Shari and I secretly watched Bruce and Vanessa having sex, through a cracked door in my mother's home. When Shari and I had sex later that night, the fantasies that played out in my mind had me even more confused.

It was during my senior year at Baltimore's Northwestern High School that my sexuality really blossomed. I was still dating Shari, who was by then a freshman at Morgan State, and I was still involved in drama. Northwestern's drama department was headed by the fabulous Michael DeBoy, who cast me in the musical *Godspell*. The experience evoked memories of my sixth grade production of *A Christmas Carol*. I had to learn the song "We Beseech Thee" for the role of Jeffrey and, while I was a great actor and dancer, my singing was not supreme. Mr. DeBoy replaced me halfway through the production but later called me back, just like Mr. Brown had done in the sixth grade for my role as Scrooge in *A Christmas Carol*; he'd rather have an actor who couldn't sing than a singer who couldn't act. He made me join the gospel choir and take voice lessons to up my game. Though my singing was off tempo, at least my voice did not crack! And making it through that production is what allowed me to get closer to Eddie Greene.

Eddie was chubby and light skinned with big, full, beautiful lips. He had long eyelashes and wavy hair, cut in a

"shag" style. (The Afro was beginning to play out and the shag haircut was what guys were transitioning into. The best way to describe it is that it was the black version of the mullet haircut.) Eddie was playing the lead of Jesus in the production of *Godspell*. Every time we would rehearse his death scene on the cross, you would have thought the real Jesus Christ had died up in that theater. He was loud and talented. In fact, he was voted "Most Talented" out of the senior class. We started going out and began a torrid affair. He had his own car and seemed to come and go to school whenever he felt like it. His dad had died a few years earlier and his mother spoiled him terribly, basically letting him do whatever he wanted. I'd spend the night at his house and learn the ways of gay sex. I also bought the book *The Joy of Gay Sex* and taught myself everything there was to learn about gay sexuality. It was Eddie who took me to my first gay bar on my eighteenth birthday. It was called The Pink Hippopotamus and was located on the corner of Charles Street and Eager Street in Baltimore City. (It is now called The Hippo and is still in the same location.) My stepmother started getting suspicious because of all the time Eddie and I spent together, but my father was living in a state of denial because I was still involved with Shari.

Being a boyfriend to the most popular kid in school made me feel special. Our affair was very passionate. Eddie and I would cut class and make love in his car, or slip away to the park or spend the afternoon in his home when his mother was at work. In those days, kids who were having sex would wear their hickeys on their necks, (or wherever else on their body!), as a medal of honor. It was an advertisement that told all your friends, "Hey, look at me -- I'm having sex." It was like all those broken blood vessels were actually something to be proud of.

One day I came home and my dad asked, "Which girlfriend put the hickey on your neck?"

I proudly responded, "Or boyfriend?"

My arrogance surprises me to this very day. Foolish high school love makes a person feel like Superman. I felt like nothing could hurt me because I had the love of Eddie Greene.

My father walked out of the house. When he returned twenty minutes later, he told me that I had to move out of his home. My life changed in that moment. I knew I did not want to move back to Portsmouth, Virginia. I had four more months of high school. My dreams of going to NYU to study acting had just flown out the window. With my father disowning me, I wouldn't be able to get his financial information so that I could provide it to NYU and be considered for financial assistance. And I had to figure out where I was going to live. While my friends would be preparing for the high school prom, I would be shopping for an apartment and just trying to graduate.

I also had to face Shari and tell her that her boyfriend had a boyfriend. That MTA bus ride to Morgan State was one of the longest I had ever taken. That girl had given me her virginity. She could have had any college guy on campus, but she had been committed to me, a high school senior who was about to tell her he was gay. I don't know how she ever forgave me, but she continues to be one of my closest friends to this very day. Now that's a real life "Will & Grace."

The next seven days were a living hell. Each night, my father had to walk past my cot in the living room. One day he confessed, "If I had a gun, I would have shot you in your sleep." I knew I had to get out of there really quick. When I told Eddie about the scene with my father, he became so scared that he dumped me immediately. He was afraid of getting caught in the crossfire. "What a punk," I thought. In the gay teenage world, don't count on your boyfriend to stand up to your father. It ain't gonna happen.

Earlier in the school year, Vanessa had helped me get a job at McDonalds. So, I asked my manager to change me from part-time to full-time and I quickly found an apartment near by. It was a one-room efficiency, located in the basement of a row house off

Garrison Boulevard. Everything was included for one hundred and twenty dollars a month. It even had a kitchenette with bar stools and a red sofa bed. The down side was that whenever it rained, I'd wake up to a sea of water bugs. In retrospect I should have planned to go ahead to college, I should have devised a way to get there on my own. But it was 1976 -- I was eighteen and could go to clubs, it was legal for me to drink, the draft was over and I could party and live my life without anyone telling me what to do. I did not want the added pressure of figuring out how to pay for school. It was easier for me to just live each day at a time.

Fate must have known that NYU was just a dream, because Bruce ended up going to Syracuse University that fall. The week before he was to leave for college, he came to visit me at my little ghetto apartment. We shared my fold-out sofa bed, never touching, but I craved his body. We hung out every day and went to see movies. We saw the film *Cooley High*, the African-American version of *American Graffiti*, complete with Motown music. I imagined that it was our story up on the screen -- Bruce was ladies' man Richard "Cochise" Morris and I was nerdy Leroy "Preach" Jackson, who left town to become a writer.

When I would leave the apartment to work at McDonalds at night, Bruce was never at a loss for meeting females. He would meet some girl and bring her back to fuck in my bed! I came home one night and he had fucked some girl who was on her menstrual cycle. The sheets were so gross that I had to throw them out.

Because I worked the night shift, our time during the day was limited because I had to sleep part of the day away. So, as the week drew near its end, I played hooky just to hang out with him on his last night. I told him again how much I wanted him and he told me again that he could not and would not be with me in that way. In a final act of desperation, I swallowed a whole bottle of aspirin and refused to speak to him. Bruce called an ambulance. The medics told him that I wouldn't die from an overdose of aspirin, but that I'd be very nauseous. They kept me

a few days for observation at the hospital. When I returned home, Bruce had left for college. I would not see him for many years after that.

My first year of "out" gay life had held its share of dark moments. I was young, inexperienced, and did not have a mentor to talk to about what was happening to me. There were no gay talk groups or community centers where I could go and find other young gay people out on their own. I was out of high school and soon to be out of a job for calling off work, even though I eventually ended up in the hospital and thus had a valid excuse for my absence. My mom, living in Virginia, was going through menopause and dealing with my budding baby sister starting to date. My brother was away at college in Boston. I was not speaking to my father, who lived less than two miles away from me. I had made an enormous step out into an unfamiliar world and I wasn't quite sure what to do next. I was living on instinct, determined never to live life in a closet.

Even today, my friends know that I leave all closet doors open in my house. It became my personal mission to teach all straight people that gay people are basically no different from them. We don't have three heads. Most of us aren't even recognizable, what is there to be afraid of? We just have sex with the same sex instead of the opposite sex. Everything else is pretty much the same. I don't dislike heterosexuals just because they have male / female relationships.

A buddy of mine, not knowing I was gay, once went on incessantly about a strip club he had gone to as he recalled a hot lap dance he'd received from a busty female. Instead of pretending that women were my sexual interest, I shared with him an experience I'd had with a male stripper at a gay bar. After he picked his face up off the floor, he had to admit that he respected me for being open and for treating my gay life just as normally as he treated his straight life. (Yeah, that's me, spreading universal acceptance by teaching one straight person at a time.)

1976 represents more for me than just the bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence or the year I turned eighteen, the year I took my first legal drink, voted, or moved out on my own. That was the year I stumbled out of the closet and fell on my face, got up, knocked the dirt off and said, "Hey, look at me. I am gay and I am proud."

*There's a new me coming out
And I just had to live
And I wanna give
I'm completely positive
I think this time around
I am gonna do it
Like you never knew it
Ooh, I'll make it through*

♩ **"Being honest with oneself may be painful, but the pain of denial is even greater."** ♪