



Recently some writer at the San Francisco Bay Guardian went to the new Ikea in Emeryville hoping to find it a yucky part of the same consumerist ethos as Home Depot, Big K, Walmart, et al. Despite his "I'm a Bay Guardian writer, so you can't call me a yuppie" thing - which suggests that he would have trashed Ikea's name even though he probably lives in a \$2,500/month live-work space reeking with retro Swedish charm - the writer found the blue-and-yellow monster and its affordably priced, euro-hipster offerings beyond reproach. What megastore could inspire such forthcoming class allegiance? I, too, have been excited about Ikea, since I'm moving in less than a month, but mostly I've been engaged in a delightful parody of Ikea's bus-stop propaganda with my friends, mocking the hep-cat stylings the ads beckon to. Oh how I love to shout the Swedish product names with mispronounced conviction - "Ahhh! Anslut! Mjukdun! Frolunda!" Despite my cynicism, Ikea sure seemed like paradise for all left-leaning exponents of retail therapy, even those of us on a budget. Upon visiting, however, I found that anywhere that there's folks who are cultivating some version of the American Dream - marriage, kids, and imported housewares - there's folks who will be threatened by my fat, queer, alien ass.

Historically my ass has been an object of others' scorn and my own consternation. I've weighed over 200 pounds for most of my life (except my anorexic and bulimic periods), and my rump is my fattest part. In the past, I've generally tried to keep it covered up as much as possible, but more recently my girlfriend and many sweet homeless men in San Francisco have convinced me that my ass is, well, Fine (yep, capital F.) Fine, fat ass.

The day I went to Ikea it was an ungodly 90 degrees in San Francisco. I hadn't worn a tank top since driving through Utah last summer, so I felt unusually over-exposed in my tight, sleeveless, waist-length shirt, jeans and flip flops. Still, I refused to overdress for this unheard-of weather and made my way to Rainbow Grocery to pick up some lunch before battling the traffic on the Bay Bridge to get to Ikea. Pulling my shirt down self-consciously as I climbed out of my car, I was greeted by a homeless man who did a double-take and then said, "God blessed me today because

you are so GORGEOUS! May I escort you?" I'm terribly shy, but was flattered, so I accepted his kind escort to the store and felt lovely on the arm of such a gentleman in my skimpier-than-usual get-up.

Ikea, however, was a different story. After spending a half-hour trying to park, I found myself on the escalator up to the "showroom" with a dozen overheated and already frustrated heterosexual couples, some with screaming children. The escalator was packed and much to her chagrin, my aforementioned Fine fat ass was in the face

of a trying-too-hard-to-be-cool blonde 20-something. "Some people shouldn't wear tank tops," she whispered, just too loud, to her boyfriend. He snickered with tattooed frat-boy hypocrisy. Fortunately my lunch at Rainbow allowed me to muster up a fat, vegetarian fart for me to summarily expel, silent but deadly, into the plastic faces of the of-

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE!

fenders. As they looked on, horrified, I purposely dropped my bag so they could get a better view and a better whiff for the next fifteen seconds. Maybe I reinforced a stinky stereotype, but it was sure fun to make them pay.

I got off the escalator with a large, sweet, and sick sense of satisfaction. Only the hardy would make it through the nightmare weekend traffic at Ikea, and I damn well would be one of them. I continued along through the life-size home dioramas, wistfully yearning for the not-too-far-off day when I would leave my passive-aggressive, smack-and-booze-head roommates behind for a studio apartment. Yes, I had pinned down that elusive bay-area apparition, even as a well-paid (but not for here) non-profit worker: an affordable studio. Sure, it was an illegal unit, sure it was in the basement without a stove or a bathroom sink, sure the landlord was a creepy old man who had multiple tattered, sticky-looking copies of the "Hef's Twins" issues of Playboy displayed prominently in his office. But it would be all mine! And I would furnish it, come hell or high water, cash or 20% APR, harassment or not. See, I too needed to live out my own fucked up version of the American Dream, and Ikea was going to help me do it.

Loft bed. Studio? Loft bed. Right? I beelined for it. Pushed

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past pregnant moms and 3-year-olds out of my way. I asked the blue-vested salesperson: "Will this hold the collective 450-pound weight of my girlfriend and me when we are fucking?" Small ears are covered. Looks of horror are flashed! A path is cleared for me. I get to inspect the loft bed in complete privacy. Oh, the glory of being a pariah! I copy the product number.

After consulting the map every five minutes and successfully ignoring the puking claustrophobic feelings I'm getting, I make my way down to the first floor where the pick-upable stuff is. I get a cart and go to kitchen wares. A fat girl's gotta eat. \$1.95 cheese grater, fry pans, kitchen scissors, an adorable teapot for \$6.45. I'm in heaven. Except for the dark-haired, black-and-grey clad, skinny couple who are blocking my way to the dish towels. I roll right up to them as they coo to each other. Looks like they're getting ready to cohabitate. "Excuse me," I say. They look at me like I'm a piece of shit. I push my way toward the towels, ignoring them, and the guy says to his Bettie-Page-banged gal, "There's too much fat here." He must mean me and the fat Samoan mom who's behind me. She and I have a moment. Guess they don't need kitchen stuff, since they don't eat," she tells me. It's then that I begin to break down. Ikea is not all I hoped it would be. I shed a tear for the woman's fat Samoan kids who'll be in grade school with the spawn of those motherfuckers.

Then it was time to get out. I bought my "Anslut" and my kitchen supplies on credit. I'm living off of cash from a payday-advance place since I put a deposit down on my new studio. I roll my cart up to my parked car. It's then

that I realize something. Everyone is here in couples. All the women and femmey fags are holding open the hatchbacks for all the men and butch hombres. I'm the only person I see who is shopping alone. Then, despite all the harassment, I thank Jesus for my Fine, fat ass and the power behind it. Thank god I did not end up enslaved to some prick and bearing his offspring, trying to starve myself all the while. Thank god my girlfriend and I can be in love, live without each other and have good sex despite the apparent contradiction. Thank god I'm not a Christian, while I'm at it.

I drive home and am crying again, but this time about Ikea, the Bay Area, and myself. When I moved here from backward farm country 3000 miles away, I thought I was finally going to find my people. I had that idealism about Northern California and the queer/punk/activist scene here born out of growing up in the 80's and hanging out with my older brother and his pothead friends. San Francisco was the promised land, much like Ikea. Although there's some folks left who still remind me what I was looking for when I came here, most of the people here are living some kind of lefty lie, it seems, maybe even myself included. It costs so much money to live here, and everyone has to work so much to survive, that it's no wonder a fat, queer dyke like me would try to find solace by buying this time with a bunch of slick, over funded dot-commers, who would just as soon spit at me as they'd take my apartment, my job, and the last few vestiges of my promised land. Well, I say, fuck them. I beat them at their own consumer-culture game. Me and my fat ass got us the last "Anslut." 🏠

