

Pi*llOry

*disrupting Queer trauma through performative embodiment
practices

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Photo by Aedan Crooke

A Note to the Reader,

Pi*llOry was created as the creative component for my graduate thesis research at York University. This book intends to highlight the artists who presented work at Pi*llOry from the premier event in 2019 until 2020 and introduce some of my academic research. The book is divided into two parts. Part one presents my thesis research, edited by Dr. Frances Latchford, and part two illustrates the artist's works in Pi*llOry. Each page in part two represents an individual Pi*llOrist and was created in correspondence with that artist. Each artist was interviewed either in a one-on-one experience over zoom or administered privately at their leisure in a written correspondence. I have chosen to highlight answers from each interview, with the artists' permission, that I feel illuminates or disputes Pi*llOry's intention to shift Queer trauma through embodiment and performative action. I have chosen to include the complete interview in pages for the collective [field] as they illustrate not only their personal experience in Pi*llOry but exhibits the events process.

This book was designed so that my ideas and research, along with performances by Queer people (who worked so graciously in Pi*llOry), are presented as ways in which Queer's advocate and are activists in how Queer trauma enumerates our identity and experience as Queer people.

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Land Acknowledgment

I would like to begin by acknowledging that the event Pi*llOry and the research I conducted took place on Tkaronto, the ancestral and treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit, First Nation of the Anishinabek Peoples.

As a settler, I acknowledge that I am a visitor on this land both physically and spiritually. Long before today there have been indigenous peoples who have been the stewards of this place and I am forever grateful to all the generations of people that have taken care of this land for thousands of years and continue to do so. In particular I acknowledge the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples. I recognize and deeply appreciate their historic connection to this place. I also recognize the contributions that the Métis, Inuit, and other Indigenous peoples have foraged, both in shaping and strengthening this community, our province and country as a whole. As a settler I believe the recognition of contributions and importance of Indigenous peoples must be made clear by our collective commitment towards making Truth and Acknowledgement real in all communities. I recognize the intergenerational impacts of colonization, attempts at assimilation, and cultural genocide endured by the indigenous people along with the critical roles Indigenous peoples have held in the creation of Canada, their global importance, and every day challenges faced within our colonial borders.

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Pi*llOy Introduction

Pi*llOry is a Queer performance event wherein Queer performers infiltrate nontraditional spaces and performatively embody trauma. The premiere event took place July 18th, 2019, in Toronto, Ontario, and has had five iterations with twenty-six participants. Choosing to name this Queer performance event Pi*llOry was done to invert the traditional occupational trauma enforced by pillories. As defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, the pillory was used as a form of punishment; to publicly shame and humiliate the subject within (Pillory. Merriam-Webster). Queer punishment involving the pillory is exemplified in Rictor Norton's online essay "Popular Rage (Homophobia)". He writes that in the eighteenth century, those found guilty of an attempted act of sodomy were hanged, fined, imprisoned, or sent to the pillory (Norton, Rictor). He continues to write towards the pillory experience, saying,

The lesser punishment—to be stood in the pillory—was by no means a lenient one, for the victims often had to fear for their lives at the hands of an enraged multitude armed with brickbats as well as filth and curses ... the victims in the pillory, male or female, found themselves at the centre of an orgy of brutality and mass hysteria. (Norton, Rictor)

In reclaiming the word pillory through a Queer performance event, we mean to embody resistance to trauma in creating a counterpublic where Queerness can be seen, recognized, and celebrated rather than shamed and humiliated.

I believe that there is a shared knowledge within Queer performance counterpublics where the relationship between performer and witness acknowledges nuances of individual

complexities surrounding trauma. Pi*llOry recognizes that experiences of Queer trauma differ in consideration to race, class, gender, and sexuality; thus, we take an intersectional approach when collectively inviting artists to perform. Pi*llOry operates as a collective, expanding with each iteration to embrace everyone's individual, complex experience of trauma. Working as a collective, Pi*llOrists dismantle hierarchies that reinforce traumas concerning class, race, and gender. I observe that in performance curation hierarchies, the most privileged individuals are secured seats of authority where they can reign in power above others. Performers, in our case, are chosen and invited collectively by Pi*llOry predecessors. Curating as a group creates a system where we can hold each other accountable for remembering our intersectional dedication to illuminate many kinds of Queer trauma narratives and shift some of the trauma instilled within hegemony.

Part One: Research

Queer

Queer history illustrates many repeated violences resulting in individual and communal traumas. The repetition of violent acts in Queer culture emboldens heteronormative structures and authorities in their desire to erase Queer bodies, narratives, and histories. Pi*llOry investigates how Queers personally and politically resist their erasure by illuminating trauma narratives within counterpublics. Within all iterations of this event, we see that Queer performers embody and shift both individual and communal traumas through performative actions. This event demonstrates how Queer performers use their lived experiences to create work concerning trauma and how Queer communities, bound by shared trauma narratives, support the work presented. It is within these Queer performance communities that trauma is revisited and transformed to reshape the future.

Queerness is that which fundamentally links Pi*llOrists together. We take pride in and celebrate our differences as we unify through our lived experiences of being Queer. In recognizing the many ways Queerness is embodied as identity, Pi*llOry's mandate attempts to express our collective interpretation of Queerness and how it is employed in our performative works. The mandate reads,

Pi*llOry's performers are liberating queer bodies as a primary agency that can harness the transformative power of presence, space, politics, shame, and (dis)/ability while refracting their infinite incarnations. Pi*llOry's artists renounce the binary and traditional gender roles, they not only create new ones for themselves, but give space for others to create their own as well. Through oral, visual, and visceral mediums,

Pi*llOry explores the depths of fragmented gender/queer identity, pushing beyond labels and classifications. On the edge of complete uncertainty, with only the already structural, limited, and bound ways of description and discrimination of Queerness, Pi*llOrists arm themselves with the unknown in hopes of navigating the surrender that comes with being Other.

I use the word Queer to represent identities of marginalized LGBTTQQIP2SAA¹ *Queer Theory* by Annamarie Jagose presents a brief history of the word Queer and illustrates the complexities Queerness encapsulates. The Queer community has not always celebrated the word, Queer. Historically it was an oppressive word used as slang for gay people and uttered as a form of homophobic abuse (Jagose 1). As an act of resistance and resilience, Queers repossessed the word, and it has now become an "umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self -identification" (Jagose 1). Jagose explains Queer as a term that embraces elasticity in and resistance to definition as it actively resists normativity (Jagose 1). As concepts of identity explode binary representations, Queer has evolved beyond only gay and lesbian portrayal, and thus Queer is unaligned with any specific identity category (Jagose 2).

Broadly speaking, queer describes those gestures or analytical models which dramatize incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex,

¹ LGBTTQQIP2SAA is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, asexual, and ally. I employ this acronym to represent the community that, throughout this paper, is also referred to as 'Queer.' I hope to acknowledge as many kinds of non-normative identities as possible with the use of this acronym and acknowledge that the abbreviation can forever fluctuate to include others that may have been left out or misrepresented.

gender, and sexual desire. Resisting that model of stability - which claims heterosexuality as its origin, when it is more properly its effect - Queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender, and desire. (Jagose 3)

Catherine Lord and Richard Meyer's art book *Art and Queer Culture* continues to note the difficulties in defining Queer and further investigates Queer as it relates to many complex identities. Meyers writes towards the robust nature of the word and how it is used now to represent Queer people and communities:

We have chosen the term 'queer' in the knowledge that no single word can accommodate the sheer expanse of cultural practices that oppose normative heterosexuality. In its shifting connotation from everyday parlance to phobic epithet to defiant self identification, 'queer' offers more generous rewards than any simple inventory of sexual practices or erotic object choices. (Meyer 9)

In part, the unstable definition of Queer results from its openness to accept a plethora of identities. Many different people come together with the shared interest of continually and creatively challenging social and sexual norms. Catherine Lord writes that "activism, personal testimony, academic work, and visual culture enabled the word 'queer' to assume the function of describing political and cultural alliances that only partly intersect with the categories of gay and lesbian" (42). This opened the door to have *Queer* become a personal embodiment and representation of political convictions. Lord further examples the fluidity of the word Queer by quoting David Halperin in his work *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*. Halperin writes that (qtd. in Lord and Meyer) "Queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant. *There is nothing in particular to*

which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence” (Lord 42).

Queer performers in this event embody trauma with the intention to learn from it, provide meaning to it and develop the trauma into something new. I use the term Queer as an umbrella term for LGBTTTQQIP2SAA people, recognizing these people's lived experiences as knowledge. I define Queer as an identity that envelopes sexual preferences, individual subjectivity and participates in active resistance practices to heteronormative views and ideals.

Trauma

Pi*llOry examines shifts in trauma through performance art practices. It is imperative for me to note some essential differences between performance art and theatre as they are often thought to be the same. As I define it, performance art lives in the moment, is specific to the lived experience of the performer, and does not re-enact, repeat, or reproduce past experiences. A performance can only live once as it is particular to the situation in which it is presented and the parameters in which it is witnessed.

Trauma, as it ultimately relates to performance, is the focal point of Pi*llOry because I see trauma as something that is connected to self and community creation. Trauma and its connection to survivors is considered and defined in many ways. In 1987 the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R)* characterized the individual's experience of trauma in this way: "The person has experienced an event that is outside the range of human experience" (250). In 1995, Kai Erikson defined trauma in "Notes in Trauma and Community" as a "blow to the tissues of the body – or more

frequently now, to the tissues of the mind that result in injury or some other disturbance" (183). Erikson suggests that trauma invades the survivor and becomes a dominant feature of a person's identity (Erikson, 183). He also notes that trauma involves a continual reliving of some wounding experience (Erikson, 184). As it is relived and reexperienced by the survivor, trauma plays a significant role in the creation of self.

Trauma is a point of interest in many fields of research. Psychiatry is explicitly interested in understanding trauma and human reactions to violent events. The introduction to *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* by Cathy Caruth reports that in 1980, The American Psychiatric Association recharacterized trauma as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which now includes many symptoms thought originally to stem from post-war shock and stress (3). Trauma, as PTSD, currently serves as an umbrella term for the diagnoses of folks affected by war(s), human/natural catastrophes, rape, child abuse, and other violent happenings (Caruth 3). As a category, PTSD refers to the response felt by survivors of overwhelming, violent events (Caruth 4). The official categorization of trauma as PTSD serves mainly as an acknowledgment of pathology, but the phenomenon of trauma is not yet fully explained or understood (Caruth 5).

Medical trauma discourse recognizes a pathology, but it does not consider how the survivor responds to trauma. Ann Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feelings* challenges the medical enterprise surrounding trauma. She suggests an enhanced, contemporary, Queer approach to trauma, one that emphasizes "ways of thinking about trauma that do not pathologize it, that seize control over it from the medical experts, and that forge creative responses to it that far outstrip even the most utopian of therapeutic and political situations" (3). Trauma is queered

when reconsidered in connection with everyday life experience that is social and political (Cvetkovich 3). Occurring in moments of everyday afflictions, trauma is arguably part of an affective realm that extends further than a medical PTSD diagnosis (Cvetkovich 7). Where it is invisible, trauma requires a more profound exploration than is offered up in medical discourse.

Queer trauma is investigated herein as it relates to the erasure of Queer bodies, narratives, and histories. Avery Gordon writes, in *Ghostly Matters*, about the violence of erasure by way of disappearance; “Since we disappeared you, you’re nothing. Anyway, nobody remembers you. You don’t exist” (78). To make someone disappear is an attempt to erase their story, to remove their narrative from existence. Disappearance or erasure of this kind inflicts feelings of loss and hopelessness upon the individuals and communities affected (Gordon 78). Although the body may be no longer seen, Gordon notes that there persists a shadowy knowledge of that which seems not to be there (79). Trauma by way of erasure may remove the body, but it leaves an affectual imprint of the trauma evoked. The imprint of trauma is felt in other bodies not yet erased.

Theories of genocide are not usually associated with Queer trauma; however, the idea of genocide can pertain to Queer lives insofar as these lives are often subject to a form of erasure. *Genocide and Global Queer Politics* by Matthew Waites examines genocide and its relation to Queer people, demonstrating that although gender, sexuality, and sexual orientation are absent in institutional explanations of genocide, the violence endured by Queers, in fact, is due to acts of genocide (2). Article II of the *United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (1948) defines genocidal acts as “(a) Killing members of the group; (b)

Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” (United Nations, Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide 1948). An essential element within this definition of genocide is the broad range of erasure strategies it encapsulates. These strategies demonstrate the ways in which oppressed communities can be eradicated beyond acts of murder.

Intersection of Race, Class Ability, and Queer Trauma

Individuals within marginalized groups may experience layered or complex traumas that are specific to each individual. Thus, when discussing Queer trauma, an intersectional framework must be applied to consider gender identity and sexuality and factors in race, class, and ability. Intersectionality acknowledges that oppression and discrimination are interconnected within all systems of marginalization. The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics". Crenshaw examines the problem of considering race, gender, sexuality, and class as mutually exclusive categories in experiences of discrimination (140). She writes that the dominant analysis towards minorities is limited to what she called a single-axis framework where only the most privileged group members are taken into consideration: "In other words, in race discrimination cases, discrimination tends to be viewed in terms of sex- or class- privilege Blacks; in sex

discrimination cases, the focus is on race- and class- privileged woman" (Crenshaw 140). By limiting the analysis to consider only privileged group members, the multidimensionality of distinct, personal experiences of discrimination is deemed negligible, and therefore individual narratives are erased (Crenshaw 140). Crenshaw uses an intersectional framework to include individuals' nuanced experiences to analyze discrimination, arguing that "the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of race and sexism" (140). Thus, without applying an intersectional approach to embrace the entire framework of individual experiences, we cannot thoroughly analyze how oppressed people become subordinate and are erased.

Trauma and Community

Erikson looks at how individual traumas can create a greater group culture than the individual wounds combined. He defines trauma as a "blow" and looks at two ways in which trauma can impact a community. The first way is individual trauma, in which a 'blow' happens so suddenly that the individual reacts physically and/or emotionally; the second is collective trauma, in which the blow affects the social life of the individuals within a group or community. (Erikson 187). He argues that individuals who share similar experiences of trauma seek out one another, developing a community or common tie based upon the shared experience (Erikson 187). Erikson writes, "the tissue of community can be damaged in much the same way as the tissues of the body...traumatic wounds inflicted on individuals can combine to create a mood, and ethos-a group culture almost- that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up" (185). As such, trauma becomes collective when others share individual suffering

within the group and, in turn, it becomes part of the community's identity.

Members of a collective subject to an abhorrent event that results in a shared trauma that affects both the individual and community experience are defined by Jeffrey Alexander as a “cultural trauma.” He writes that,

Cultural trauma transpires when the components of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrific event that leaves ineradicable marks upon their group awareness, marking their memories forever and changing their future individuality in fundamental and irreversible ways. In connection to the subject, cultural trauma, people have constantly used the language of trauma to explain what happened to themselves and the collectivities to which they belong. (Alexander 1)

Alexander demonstrates how trauma felt by the collective alters the individual's experience within the group; the community identifies with the existence of suffering in cultural trauma. Individuals within the community define their relation to the group in ways that allow suffering to be shared (Alexander 1). He suggests that in recognizing and sharing the traumas of others, communities practice union and solidarity (Alexander 2). Alexander further notes that "Trauma is not the result of a group experiencing pain. It is the result of this acute discomfort entering into the core of the collectivity's sense of its own identity" (7). Alexander concludes that the collective core of trauma, shared by the individuals of a group, holds everyone's suffering within a collective consciousness, which also imbues the community with a particular character: the collective core of trauma is held within a group or shared as a collective knowledge or identity.

Performance Art

Performance art creates a collective body wherein ritual acts/actions, experimental aesthetics, and resistance to acts of violence can flourish. Performative action employs embodied practices that function epistemologically, offering alternative ways of knowing. Performance art that bears witness to trauma has the potential to produce alternative knowledge, and this is the aim of Pi*llOry: Queer performers use their lived experiences to create works concerning trauma, through which Queers may form a community wherein trauma the meaning and knowledge of trauma is not only revisited but also transformed.

Performance art encompasses processes of visual art that involve the body. It is also known as Art Action, Body Art, and Live Art. Defining performance art entails particular challenges as each practice is unique to the individual performer. Contributing to the challenge of defining performance art is its interdisciplinary nature. It envelopes many fields, including philosophy, anthropology, fine art, and dance. David Davies investigates the more traditional and perhaps scholarly aspect of performance art in his book, *Philosophy of the Performing Arts*. Davis writes:

all performances, in the sense that interest us, are actions, whether individual or collective. In a collective performance, different individuals not only act but do so in a way that aims at coordination of their individual efforts. As actions, performances involve behavior that falls under at least one description specifying a purpose governing that behavior and, implicitly or explicitly, a result at which it aims. (Davies 5)

Performance art, as it is described here, discusses intention channeled through action(s). Given its emphasis on action, I would argue that the body is the primary tool in performance art – it is by way of the body that actions are developed to communicate the performer's intention or purpose.

In her book *The Archive and the Repertoire*, Diana Taylor regards the function of performance to reside in acts of transfer that transmit "social knowledge, memory and a sense of identity" (2). Everyday life and personal experiences are embodied and guide in acts of transfer. In this way, performance, to some, could be seen as an ephemeral non-event. But engaging with everyday experiences, performers use their immediate environment and experience of it to construct situations wherein personal knowledge can be transmitted (Taylor 3). In doing so, a wide range of traumas may become visible, including histories of cumulative Queer trauma. Taylor suggests that "trauma becomes transmittable, understandable through performance - through the reexperienced shudder, the retelling, the repeat" (Taylor, 208). As performance art engages with the complexities of personal relations, it functions as the axis in acts of transfer.

In *The 7th Sense*, Sylvie Tourangeau, Victoria Stanton, and Anne Berube contend that performance lives in the invisible and calls upon "intuition beyond the unconscious," bringing the unknown into consciousness (152). They explain that performance materializes affectual potentialities and cannot take place without "vulnerability, self-surrender, and a willingness to question what we think we know and are" (Tourangeau 8). Beatrice Allegranti looks at performance through a feminist lens in *Embodied Performances: Sexuality, Gender, Bodies* and describes performance as the relationship between a performer and spectator. She sees performance as a

process of embodiment, of lived body experiences, and she examines how we “embody both nature (our biological body) and nurture (our socially constructed body)” (Allegranti 1). *Blacktino Queer Performance* by E. Patrick Johnson and Ramón H. Rivera-Servera considers the social/political interrelations between performance, blackness, Latinidad, and Queerness. They envision “performance as a key transcendent temporal and spatial trope [that] symbolizes nicely the promiscuous and frisky relations between black and brown” (Johnson and Rivera 6). Jon McKenzie also takes up the connections between everyday life and performance art in “Performance Studies”. He examines performance as a central element of social and cultural life, including performance art, ethnicity, race, class, sex, gender, and cultural enactments through living and mediated bodies (McKenzie 726).

Although performance art is defined in various ways by various authors, some connections and parallels can be extracted to better define performance art. Performance art is a practice that engages with social and cultural life while employing individual and communal lived experiences as knowledge. It involves a personal and political engagement of the body in space wherein lived knowledge's actions may bring intangible thoughts and feelings into being. It encompasses themes of transference, intuition, consciousness/unconsciousness, complexity, that which is visceral, and affect. Performance art examines the relationship between self and other, time and space while creating communities wherein both witness and performer can be transformed.

Embodiment

Embodiment, as it pertains to performance art, engages the body, consciously and unconsciously, to be present and aware of all the resonances inside, outside, and in-between the physical self and sensed experience. Elizabeth Chitty describes the process of embodiment in her essay *Asserting our Bodies* as a "conscious awareness interconnecting our physical bodies with our emotions, thoughts, and spirits." (73). Sylvie Tourangeau builds upon Chitty's description, asserting that a ripple effect happens while being present in embodiment that allows the performer to develop "an active mode of listening, with a more holistic sense of the here and now, encompassing both art and life" (Tourangeau 60). Both Chitty and Tourangeau suggest that embodiment allows the artist to exist in the present and future. Many visceral and physical resonances of self, other, time, and space are embodied as the conscious and unconscious body is acutely present in performance art.

Stephanie Springgay and Debra Freedman compare embodiment to a Möbius strip in *Curriculum and the Cultural Body*, wherein body and mind are intertwined and continuous. Springgay writes that "embodiment disrupts the notion that the inside (psyche) and outside (corporeal) are separate but rather flow one into the other and the surface or border becomes a place of interaction and transformation" (xx). The Möbius strip metaphor aids in understanding how the body and its experiences are intertwined in embodiment praxis. For Springgay and Freedman, the embodied experience traverses' bodies beyond physical objects into meaning as the material body and its lived experiences are intermingled (xx). The authors continue to reflect upon embodiment as an "understanding of the interrelations between knowledge, life experience, and social reconstruction" (Freedman and

Springgay xxi). The body/mind, consciousness/unconsciousness continuum is central in embodiment praxis, as is our lived experiences as they all work together to create embodied knowledge.

Embodied practices connect individual experiences to experiences of others, shaping a collective embodied social knowledge. Dianna Taylor's book *The Archive and the Repertoire* notes that the creation of embodied social knowledge entails an interconnectedness between I and You (Taylor 191). Taylor clarifies that I and You may be intertwined as "products of each other's experiences and memories, of historical trauma, of enacted space, of sociopolitical crisis" (191). Embodied social knowledge engages the interconnections within individual experiences of trauma, experiences of others, and the "cumulative and collective nature of the trauma" suffered by the community (Taylor 193). In this vein, embodiment is a collective act wherein individuals acknowledge their connections to present, past, and other and thereby illuminate many trauma narratives that create embodied social knowledge.

Embodying Queer trauma through performance is a collective act as it continues to create and inform Queer communities. Springgay calls this "Inter-embodiment". Inter-embodiment engages with the public, social, and collective experience of being embodied; "[i]nter-embodiment proposes that the construction of the body and the production of body knowledge is not created within a single, autonomous subject (body), but rather that body knowledge and bodies are created in the intermingling and encounters between bodies" (Springgay, xxi). Being embodied in this sense affirms that embodiment is a collective activity through the interconnectedness of I and You.

Counterpublics and Queer Performance

Queer performance addresses trauma communally through acts of personal and collective embodiment in public spaces where trauma can be re-examined through counterpublics. Counterpublics are publics that form through a mutual recognition of their exclusion from or in wider publics. They are publics that resist being excluded and resolve to overcome their exclusion. José Esteban Muñoz's work *Disidentifications* asserts that Queers form counterpublics by engaging in public actions that challenge normative public spheres (1). He also describes counterpublicity as "disseminated through acts that are representational and political interventions in the service of subaltern counterpublics" (Muñoz 147) and adds that counterpublic spheres "strive to envision and activate new social relations" (Muñoz 5).

Ann Cvetkovich observes the importance of counterpublics created through Queer performance and the significance of affect. She echoes the idea that Queer performance brings bodies together in public, creating a community constructed by both performer and witness (Cvetkovich 9). Cvetkovich argues that "[t]rauma can be a foundation for creating counterpublic spheres rather than evacuating them" (15). She expands on the formation of counterpublics in light of how Queer performative acts may pursue affective experiences of trauma, collectively understand it, and respond to it (Cvetkovich 10). Embodying trauma in Queer performance counterpublics takes up the affective experience of trauma as the performer refracts their embodied trauma outwards to the community generating collective responses from the witnesses (Cvetkovich 19). Queer performance counterpublics example, the social, collective, and

affective experience of Queer trauma as they discuss and respond to trauma through performance.

Affect Theories and Employment in Queer Performance Art

Many factors take place while engaging in the shared embodying of felt trauma in performance. There is a hyper-awareness in and around the body in embodiment practices that I consider to be a felt sense. Beatrice Allegiant describes this felt sense in *Embodied Performances: Sexuality, Gender, Bodies*. She writes that felt sense consists of body awareness, body presence, and/or inner awareness of an ambiguous sensation (Allegiant 34). She continues that felt sense is something other than emotion as it is something first unrecognizable, something other than an emotion, yet still felt in and by the body (34).

The body has the ability to feel things that cannot be seen. Enlivening narratives of trauma in performance allows us to travel through time and space to access a silenced awareness of what resonates or is felt all around us as a kind of Queerness. Avery Gordon describes this process of accessing felt experience by way of hauntings in *Ghostly Matters*. Gordon writes about hauntings as a felt experience of something that is there and, yet not there – it is what is living in the past and present or the in-between (6). She writes that "being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into the structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition" (Gordon 8). To be haunted then is to embody the felt experience of something that is not there but seeks presence (Gordon 22). Being haunted is "not a methodology or consciousness you can simply adopt or adapt as a set of rules or an identity; it produces its own insights and blindness", and it is

about "making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located. It is about putting life back in where only a vague memory or bar trace was visible to those who bothered to look" (Gordon 22). When being haunted, a change within the self is evoked as one develops a new understanding of an embodied felt experience, which creates new knowledge about the source of the haunting and can transform it for the future self.

The embodiment of trauma happens by acknowledging the interconnectedness between self/other, mind/body, past/present/future, and the interrelations between social knowledge and lived experience. In embodiment praxis, the body, as a sense, forces that which resides inside, outside, and in-between the body and its surroundings to engage with this sense to guide performative action. Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg describe this process in relation to affect in "An Inventory of Simmers". They define affect as a "state of relation as well as the passage of forces or intensities" (Gregg and Seigworth 1). They write further that "affect is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise), in those resonances that circulate about, between, and sometimes stick to bodies and worlds, and in the very passages or variations between these intensities and resonances themselves" (Gregg and Seigworth 1). Thus, Gregg and Seigworth's notion of affect refers to visceral forces that challenge conscious knowing, traverse emotion and carry us towards an extension of self (1). Affect demonstrates the capacity of the body to travel in and amongst the world's intricacies, experiences, and matter of all kinds (Gregg and Seigworth 2). The quantum superposition experienced by way of affect exhibits the details of body, mind, space, and time interconnectedness that embodiment acknowledges.

Sylvie Tourangeau, a core member of TouVA and an author of *The 7th Sense*, suggests that the idea of a "seventh sense" encapsulates the importance of presence, awareness, and listening within performance. This sense is found inside the performer and guides their actions as an increased sensibility that emerges in the context of performative action. The seventh sense is similar to affect in the acknowledgment that the body consciousness/unconsciousness contains a magical force. When a performer engages with the seventh sense, the unknown is brought into awareness, and it is reflected in their performative intention. Tourangeau explains this magical process when she writes,

Thus, the performer carries out an action in full awareness of the impossibility, both of grasping the entirety of what the action contains and knowing in advance everything it might imply when presented within public space. From the beginning, the performer accepts that the events of the performance will overtake him or her. Based on my intuitions as a performer and my observations of performative actions in progress, I believe that the action always comprises an element of mystery for both the performer and the viewer.
(Tourangeau 54)

This illustrates the idea that the performer can access a connection with something greater than oneself and trust in what the body knows. In trusting the seventh sense, the performers' connection to self becomes amplified. It allows them the ability to travel through time and space, creating new awareness towards memories that reside within the body. The body moves through liminal affectual spaces and becomes itself a liminal affectual space as inner/outer connections and art/life are intertwined.

Affects are involved in transformations in performative action, as discussed herein, within transitions between states of being. When moving from one state to another in performance, the sensations felt involve an awareness of the internal and external forces. Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie write, in "An Ethics of Everyday Infinities and Powers", that a gathering of forces can open up the possibility of future change as "an erratic and evolving distribution of both coming into being and the power to affect or be affected" (Bertelsen and Murphie 145). The process of coming into being is an ongoing one. The past and future are embodied in a continuous motion, much like Sringgay's example of the Möbius strip, where the future and the past flow into and out of each other. The awareness of this fluid motion between past and future is developed into a new state of being in the present, thus shifting history and reshaping the future.

In "Taking an Affective Approach to 'Doing' Queer Histories in Performance," Alyson Campbell argues that performance is one of the most productive ways to engage with queer history as it holds the possibility to transform and repair past trauma experiences (Campbell, 224). Performance makes trauma visible and offers it a reparative interpretation, one that may also create the possibility of a social discourse for change. Campbell writes that "[a]ffect is placed as the key to an engagement with the past that can draw on the embodied experiencing of one political-social-cultural moment to open up our thinking about the present one" (225). Through performative actions, many Queers resist the erasures within our history while connecting with the past (Campbell, 224). Merging space/time, historical/contemporary, performers consider the past's affect on the present and transform it in the present to shift the past, "which allows us to frame historical moments as a way that disrupts the flow of contemporary

hetero- and homonormativity" (Campbell, 235). "In this theatre encounter, the materiality of the body of the performer insists on its presence, forcing its way past historical distance and theoretical 'evacuation' to enable a performer/character hybrid to look out, speak, to move: to live" (Campbell, 225).

Part Two: Pi*llOry

The pages to follow illustrate the works presented at P*llOry part unill Pi*llOry part five. These pages were constructed in close correspondence with each artist. It is my desire to highlight each work with integrity to that of each artist. All artists were presented with an interview where they spoke about their experience in Pi*llOry, the work they showed, and how their performance related to trauma, Queerness, and identity. I have chosen (with each artist's permission) to highlight sections from their interview that speak about their work and its connection to Pi*llOry's intention to shift Queer trauma through its communication in performative action.

Pi*llOry

*first edition

PERFORMANCES BY

David Frankovich

Holly Timpener

Leena Raudvee

Matthew Moir

Sophie Traub

THURSDAY JULY 18TH 2019

7PM-10PM

TMAC, TORONTO MEDIA ARTS CENTRE

32 LISGAR ST, TORONTO, ON

Poster by Jackie Timpener

Pi*llOry *part one

As I began this project, I sat with myself for a long while and thought upon Queerness and Trauma. I thought about past conversations and past collaborations focusing on these themes. I found myself calling upon David Frankovich, Leena Raudvee, Matthew Moir, and Sophie Traub, asking them if they would be up to the task of creating the first group of Queer performers to explore and embody trauma in Pi*llOry. With each individual's acceptance of this invitation, our first collaboration began. Meetings were held in homes and bars to discuss the event's potential and our individual interests in embodying trauma. From these meetings, our Pi*llOry mission statement came to life. Our humble group plastered Toronto with posters, and to our delight, many people came to witness our work.

Pi*llOry part one took place Thursday, July 18th, 2019, at TMAC (Toronto Media Arts Centre). The evening was held with constant performance as Frankovich, and I worked durationally from the beginning until the end of the night. There were no introductions to performances. The space was engaged with suspense as a performance could happen anytime, anywhere. The group and I embodied trauma in ways unique to ourselves and our experiences. Witnesses held the space for acts of urination, negotiating im/mobility, archived persona creation, performative conversations, and object deconstructions within the three hours that our first Pi*llOry took place. The event felt rich and complete with the support of our witnesses in our transformations.

Leena Raudvee (She/Her)
leenaraudvee.ca



Photo credit: Clement Kent

Artist Statement

Leena Raudvee speaks from the precariousness of negotiating im/mobility through disability and aging. Stumbling between being visible and invisible she revels in the unwilling body in performance.

Teetering on an Edge...making space for the fumble, the fall, the ambiguity of the line.

For several years I have been falling, the result of a muscular degenerative disease that makes falling frequent and getting up almost impossible. This performance was a response to the

accumulated trauma of being publicly shamed and outed as disabled. It was an opportunity to reframe my own narrative. Although enacting a fall and its consequences, I was able to place it within the context of the conceptual metaphor of a drawn line. It referenced both the vertical line drawn by my standing body and the horizontal lines drawn by my walking sticks lying next to me and my body stretched out and struggling to move forward to a stool and my only way up off the floor.

She would like to thank Clement Kent for the sound recording and Leila Kent for technical assistance.

Photos by Aedan Crooke





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted October 23rd, 2020. Revised February 24th, 2021.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence you practice at large? How was the witness *implicated* in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Leena: My performance, *Teetering on an Edge*, was about trauma. I was addressing the precariousness of disability and aging and the trauma of exposing the unwilling body in public space. This was an “outing” of that trauma, looking at it though metaphor but also through a controlled enactment with witnesses. And this was an opportunity to name it. So much of the trauma comes from feeling the need to hide or disguise the disability, the inability, the vulnerability. It was really important that I was able to frame it in a way that allowed me to speak directly to it. The loud dissonant cacophonous sound helped me to express and share the magnitude of the internalized trauma. Sometimes it just surges, like a seething inside. To find a way to reveal it, portray it, and to find a receptive audience for it was transformative.

It was essential to have witnesses for the performance. I’m working on a piece right now which is an extension of this one but because of COVID I’m working at home and alone and it is very different. At the end of the performance of *Teetering on an Edge*, I interacted with some of the audience members, giving them each a drawn line, as program, as document of what they had just been part of. A kind of gift. I realized then that there

was also something transformative for the audience in the witnessing of the performance as well as for me in the performing of it. A performative exchange.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

Leena: It is the presence and actions of the body that describe things that are not describable in words, the more intangible ideas and thoughts. In performance, it is about the body, so much about the body speaking and all the associations we have with the body, body memory and our own personal associations with our own bodies. And when we look at other bodies performing, we travel within our own body to connect with the body that is performing. And I think of my work in the visual arts and drawing as performance and I look at the way the two practices intersect. When I'm drawing it becomes a performative act, my hand performing the act of drawing a line. And I take that same idea into performance and how I draw a line with my body. It is an embodied way of thinking of each practice.

Q: When invited to perform at Pi*llOry you were provided with a mission statement. Do you feel the event was successful or not in achieving its goal of creating a space where queer healing can be achieved through the embodiment of trauma?

Leena: I think it was successful. I didn't understand at the time how important having this mission statement was for that first evening of performance, how it brought together all the other performances that happened under Pi*llOry, as Pi*llOry, and how it was a defining statement. Because the ideas can get lost. The "renouncing the binary of traditional gender roles", helped

focus all the performances and was the glue that was somehow holding them together. I look at “the transformative power of presence, space, politics, shame and disability” and I thank you for adding disability. I think the idea of transformation was central to the work. There is something transformative about taking your body into a public space and speaking to your own trauma, whatever that is, through the body. Revealing it and releasing it can be important ways to begin healing. Thank you for creating space that allowed for this to happen.

Matthew Moir (He/Him)

www.matthewmoir.com

<https://vimeo.com/matthewmoir>

<https://www.instagram.com/maffhewmoir/>



Photo by Dillon Baldassero

Artist Statement

Through queering body politics and gender performance, Matthew Moir transcends lived experiences through his work as a filmmaker and multidisciplinary artist. He often approaches his work through dark humor, using himself as a tool to provoke and satirize conventional representations of gender and queer states of being. His work envisions queer futurities by considering the affects of change, shifting perspectives, and fractured boundaries.

NEW BIO!

The text featured in this performance began in June 2017, where each “NEW BIO” was shared via Twitter, creating an archived persona of self-mimicry. Bringing the text to material, Moir walked into the gallery space, rapidly wheatpasted all 60 tabloid posters onto the wall, and walked away.

When I was 10, I was driven to be a filmmaker. I got a paper route and had my sights set on attending the New York Film Academy. I went three years later. After high school, my creative drive became diluted by expectations to identify with what was in and on my mind. I began to engage with the multiple possibilities of who I could be, how I’d use my voice, and the weight that one idea could bare. Bringing this voice into material, I present a passage from me here on Out.

Photos by Aedan Crooke





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted October 26th, 2020. Revised February 16th, 2021.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Matt: It's so valuable to be in a space with queer people and queer work, and with that comes a certain comfort that I don't necessarily always feel. As I was initially starting to think about what I was going to perform, if it hadn't been for the trust that I had in knowing you and being able to meet the other artists, I don't know if I would have come to the performance that I did.

Queerness has absolutely affected my work. Even when it wasn't named, since the beginning of my performance and video work, I have represented personal experiences and how questioning and consistently engaging with identity has shaped who I have become. It is an integral part of what I'm trying to do – in terms of posing questions and bringing visibility to narratives that continue to be misrepresented or still fail to be acknowledged.

I don't think I'm ever approaching something like "this must be queer." I never have. And you're right, when we first met [in 2018], there was still a veil of resistance. I seem to have found my way through and it has proved to be an symbiotic process of coming into myself while creating. Finding the confidence to stand up for what I have done and speak about my past with no barriers has been a part of the work too.

Q: How does gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

Matt: I have always felt a large responsibility with acknowledging how gender affects my practice. So much of the work that I've consumed and favored as a young person was feminist work, and my gender has been an ongoing journey for me personally. I began my University studies with a lot of self-hate, acknowledging the context that men in society hold while being a cisgendered man, what that means, and the power that it holds in a patriarchal society. So, as I create work and define my practice, I acknowledge that and bring it into conversation: To pose questions about how we can interfere with that notion. To dismantle patriarchy and challenge heteronormative ideas by pushing against it. It can be quite abrasive, as it certainly has been for me, unlearning and transcending from those expected roles. If I think about how that influenced my work for Pi*llOry, this idea of having a vulnerable "man" sharing this text might be someone's read on it, but I don't know.

Holly: I think that with performance and any work that engages the body, for the witness gender comes into play so much because we see someone presenting male, doing this work. And I am considering your work as someone who knows you, witnessed the work blindfolded, then have had seen it though photo documentation. Having had conversations about the work, the delicacy of the work and attention to detail you put into the work says something about you and how you feel about maybe your body or yourself pastly. And with that attention to detail and you in your body I think your action was really beautiful and you gave people an opportunity to explore the connection between you and the words on the paper.

Matt: I think I understand what you are getting at— that the text was an inner-channel for maybe an opposing way of how some might read my body at first. To alter expectation? I was really conscious of the action being enforced, overly expressive and really trying to get it out.

Holly: I remember how the residue stayed on the wall and how the performance carried onto the next day into the action of taking it off and our conversations then. It really feels like a time-based work, and it is a time-based work. It goes forward and backwards.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

Matt: I've consistently had a challenging relationship with my body. For a great deal of my life, I've had difficulties with eating and coming into the weight of a six-foot eight stature has been challenging for me. Throughout my early twenties, my experiences with mental health have pushed me to want to see more of that represented. In that way, my practice is embodied, in the fact that a lot of my work is an extension of myself, that begins from my body first and foremost.

In my previous work, I am vomiting on camera and really facing this dread within me. Understanding the more subjective weight that I carry, having this gendered body, and what the implications are read upon having this body. How that is a relationship within myself, and how that follows and trickles down to what I am doing here. My description of embodiment is to be able to hold space to what you have genuinely experienced and to be able to share that is such an intimate pillar of my practice.

There is a challenging thing with it because I don't feel like – and maybe specifically when I did this performance – I didn't feel comfortable in my body. To be able to use text and to express that performance art has (sometimes) made me feel further discomfort, it's like, how do I engage with this? How do I remain honest of this insecurity, while still doing the work? To

really push that out of me in some way. I was conflicted because I was at a very challenging point in my life and knowing that I had to perform this piece created a nexus between truly coming to this, truly embodying the work, and this idea of a force (in terms of needing to do it).

An interesting entry into performance art, I suppose, is the fact that I had seven years of musical theatre performance and film experience, where you are in your body but in a different way. In a way that is all about escapism. And then to create a performance practice, you're truly at one with your body in the present. It is quite the shift.

Holly Timpener (They/Them)

<https://hollytimpener.wixsite.com/hollytimpener>

<https://www.instagram.com/hollytimpener/>



Photo by Aedan Crooke

Artist Statement

Timpener's lived experience with Body Dysmorphic Disorder informs their work which uses the body to confront issues surrounding gender divides, expectations of gender, and the judgement placed upon physical appearance. Their work challenges the perceptions and expectations surrounding the body within our society. Performing using the body as an object creates the capacity to disseminate complex issues within the idea of "the personal is political" in modern socio-political

context. They challenge the viewer to consider nonbinary ways of witnessing the physical body and work to transform their physical and sensed self as they work affectively with their trauma.

There is a dissonance and density within my body

This work is an emotional and physical response to trauma that lives in my body in the present, past and future. I am searching for the potential of transformation while exploring self, object, and place; welcoming space for trauma to be expressed and explored. This work engages ritual performative actions while activating ancestral consciousness, exploring how it inhabits, distinguishes and connects me to self and other.

Photos by Aedan Crooke





David Frankovich

https://www.instagram.com/d_frankovich/

<https://www.facebook.com/dfrankovich>

Artist Statement

Frankovich is an artist based in Helsinki and Toronto working in performance and experimental media. Their work is based the relations between queer bodies and queer objects.

Watershed

noun wa·ter·shed | \ 'wò-tər-,shed , 'wä-\ Definition of

watershed 1 : a crucial dividing point, line, or factor :

TURNING POINT 2a : a region or area bounded peripherally by a divide and draining ultimately to a particular watercourse or body of water b : DIVIDE sense 2a

Phots by Aedan Crooke





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*
Conducted February 7th, 2021.

Q: How did you feel working in that particular Pi*llOry event? Did you have a positive or negative experience?

David: My experience was complex. It was a challenging piece to perform, emotionally. I don't know if I can describe it as positive or negative. I would call it intense.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

David: We are of course "marked" by our queerness, and it would be impossible for this experience of otherness to not affect our work. It has always been important for queer people to have places of our own, where we are not the "other" and can simply be ourselves.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence your practice at large? How was the witness *implicated* in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

David: I approached the theme from the perspective of queer shame, and the idea of the queer "other" being pilloried or publicly shamed. Since I was doing a durational piece, I was a constant presence throughout the evening, and the audience had the choice to give as much or as little attention to me as they wanted to. As the evening wore on, I became increasingly

aware of the audience milling about me, socializing while I sat there as an abject image.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

David: I have a body, and all my experiences of the world happen via this body. As a performance artist, my body is the primary material I have to work with. My embodied experiences inform who I am as a person and as an artist.

Sophie Traub aka wisdomfruit (They/Them, She/Her)

<https://www.instagram.com/wisdomgrapes/>

<http://www.beyondboomandbust.com/>



Photo by Sophie Traub

Artist Statement

Sophie Traub is a gender-fluid, queer performing artist, scholar and theatre/film creator with extensive strategic artistic leadership experience through their work as Co-Director for The School of Making Thinking. Sophie is invested in impact-focused arts programming, facilitating individual and group transformation through creative engagement towards social change. . Sophie completed their Masters in Theatre and Performance Studies from York University in Toronto in 2019, and their performance work and research focuses on the politics of cultural production and group dynamics in collaboration. In recent years, Sophie was Associate Curator for the Canadian National Arts Center's Cycle on Climate Change and worked with Toasterlab on GROUNDWORKS Performance Project at Alcatraz led by Dancing Earth. Currently, Sophie is a

contributing artist to Beyond Boom & Bust, an initiative focused on building cultural and social resilience through performance in rural Southern Oregon, where they currently live.

“Erotically Leaning In”*

Extricating our conversations from our private life to a private in public context, I will have a conversation with my partner and collaborator, Eliot Feenstra, and invite witnesses. We will build explicit agreements to support ourselves within the vulnerable risk of being witnessed in process. We will invite the pleasure of being witnessed as we build contracts of intimacy. We will perform the space between us. We will employ crude co-counseling methods drawn from internet resources and Meisner’s repetition to re-ground in the present moment. Aiming to shake up the primacy of coupledness in relational ecologies, we process in public to touch the vital unknown between us.

*term from interview with Esther Perel from On Being Podcast interview

Photos by Aedan Crooke







Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted November 5th/6th, 2020. Revised February 12th, 2021. *Due to technical issues, the interview was conducted twice.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Sophie: Having only Queer performers felt like a relief. Like a tonic or a balm or something. I'm so invested in what's possible in spaces that are queer and queer spaces that have the invitation to be queer and when people are given permission to be queer. So being in a space with other artists where that's the baseline shared context or at least *a* baseline shared context feels like it opens doors or possibilities to worlds that I believe in. That feels really really good to be a part of.

Q: How does gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

Sophie: It's not the central catalyst in how I was thinking about this work, but again since yesterday, I think I've thought about it some more. My sense is that I'm performing genderless or that by performing in relationship and not centering on a specific gender, I think I am experiencing my own fluidity and my own lack of gender specificity. And also, the lack of a need to clarify my gender for anyone, which is a very peaceful space for me and a very preferable space. So, I think that by taking attention off gender and even taking attention off of myself as the subject; in some ways I'm really inviting witness to myself as the subject but by being in relationship. I think I'm throwing attention to the relational rather than just my body subject as a performing body subject. And so, by throwing attention to the

relational its throwing attention to something that is in motion, something that is emergent and that's how I experience my gender. And I experience my gender very much as a relational phenomenon.

Q: The Montreal performance collective TouVA investigates performance in their book *The 7th Sense* and defines this seventh sense as a place inside the performer that guides their actions, creating a kind of pathway for increased sensibility that emerges while in performative action. Do you feel there is some sort of seventh sense, or ghost like presence that guides you while in performance?

Sophie: Yeah. I feel like there are a lot of ghost like presences and that maybe a seventh sense puts one in relationship with them. I think this sense of a rock or a need to anchor and return to that anchor is a part of that seventh sense feeling. Really the guide in this performance was, I think I described yesterday, we had a set of tools. 5 kinds of relational tools we could draw on. But that there was no script for when and if or what we would draw on at any given time. It was like a needs-based thing. And need being a deep question. To really feel connected to thoughts of necessity in the moment. And need, not as in like a paramedic type of energy to try and remedy something but actually feeling connected to a sense of necessity that is emergent and happening and drawing a path. So definitely. And to me its interesting and I find it very thrilling to do that sort of following of necessity or following of a sense while also triangulating need with another performer or another person in relationship and also triangulating that with an audience. I feel like there is a logic of the performance that gets created through that necessity tracking or that sense of the thing that is guiding within this aesthetic worlds of a performance.

Pi*llOry ^{*part 2}

An LGBTQ
Performance
night with
works by

Enok Ripley
Racquel Rowe
Claudia Edwards
Brian Smith
Nicole Nigro
Holly Timpener
Emma Qulaghasi

Friday November 15th
Kensington Market
214 Augusta Avenue
7-10pm

PWYC All proceeds go directly to the artist

Poster by Jackie Timpener

Pi*llOry *part two

In meetings for part one of Pi*llOry, we discussed our desire to challenge hierarchies within the curation process of performance events. It was decided to move forward, continuing to work collectively as we nominate and invite the next group of Pi*llOrist. Enok Ripley, Raquel Rowe, Claudia Edwards, Brian Smith, Nicole Nigro graciously agreed to work as our artists in Pi*llOry part two. On Friday, November 15th, 2019, we gathered in an old garage down an ally in Kensington Market, Toronto. It was unusually cold this November night, yet there was little space left in the garage once witnesses gathered inside. The artists braved the weather working to embodying trauma through repetition, object manipulation, body manipulation, dance, sex work, and washing.

Nicole Nigro (she/her)

<https://www.nicolebnigro.com/>

<https://www.instagram.com/nicole.b.nigro/>



Photo courtesy of Divadlo Continuo

Artist Statement

Nicole Nigro is a 3rd generation settler in Kanata (Canada). She is a dance-theatre artist based in Tkaronto (Toronto) with ongoing international collaborations. Her performative work interlaces her interests in behaviour, sensory perception, language, and connection. Rooted in explorations of effort, memory, motivation, and intuition, she examines the contact between body, voice and space, creating performance installations, which are a synthesis of her dance, somatic, vocal, and physical theatre practices.

SHIFT 2019

For Pi*llOry *part 2, I attempt to find liberation within a controlled state. I relinquish control to the witness and invite their instructions. Can I find autonomy within this governed state? Who shapes my state? My corporeal state? My emotional state? My psychological state? My spiritual state? My conscious state? My autonomic state? Is it me? Or the witness? Can I liberate my body within a constant state of oppression? Can we liberate our bodies? Their bodies? How do I succumb? How do I oppose? How do I define? How do I find power and ownership? How do I *shift*?

Photos by Chris Blanchenot







*Pi*llOry Performer Interview: There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted October 25th, 2020. Revised February 13th, 2021

Q: How does gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

Nicole: The construct of gender binary originally limited the scope, breadth, and depth present in my artistic practice. Spending the majority of my early learning within the confines of institutionalised dance training, I believed I had to fit into a specific mould, shape, and archetype. This impacted the way I thought, moved, created, and existed. This has shifted. Mostly, I feel I have a body: dense, weighted, breathing, bleeding, shitting, dying... like all bodies. I am other and I am the same, simultaneously. I am currently searching within the confines of structured definitions, this bleeds into both my way of living and creating. For Pi*llOry I was exploring my corporeal responses.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

Nicole: I believe embodiment is the practice of turning to ones' sensory perception of self. It is an embrace of physicality. It is the belief that flesh holds truth and is a vehicle for understanding, presence, healing, and transformation. I attempt to practice embodiment in my life as a performer and dance artist, as well as in my daily existence. Through theoretical and practice-led modes of engagement, my main objective is to embody my performative practice and shift into a heightened vitality. To return to the body time and time again, is a way home, it is a search for freedom, it is a radical act in a society full of disconnection and polarization. Embodiment is presence. It is trying, failing, breaching and exposing, both joys and crises, like cracks in time. It is an ongoing attempt to open a window into the present with an awareness that can make me feel more alive.

Q: The Montreal performance collective TouVA investigates performance in their book *The 7th Sense* and defines this seventh sense as a place inside the performer that guides their actions, creating a kind of pathway for increased sensibility that emerges while in performative action. Do you feel there is some sort of seventh sense, or ghost like presence that guides you while in performance?

Nicole: I believe that performance opens up a liminal space. For me, it is a mystical space of uncertainty and contingency, where ideologies are questioned, and new thoughts are yet to be formed. In everyday life I may avoid this space, striving for productivity with less opportunity for play, imagination, or the

concept that a world exists beyond my own tangible realities. This lack of acknowledgment of the otherworldly, of spirituality, of metaphysical dimensions, not only limits my imagination, but also my kinaesthetic empathy and ability to connect. We often live in fragmented ways, separating our spiritual and daily lives. This lack of integration is so extreme that one may view science and spirituality on completely opposite ends of the spectrum when really, they can be considered proximal. I believe performance is a space where spirituality and the mundane are not separated, and the concept that the body is a channel from one world to the next is readily accepted. We see this 'channeling' in ritual and also artistic practice: when an author picks up a pen, and the words flow as though the source is not the writer themselves, but something other; or when a dancer begins to improvise and is transported into a trance-like state, the movement generated beyond their own individual cognition. These are modern rituals; through them we accept the liminal, and the artistic process becomes a conduit that is larger than the individual author or creator. Art becomes universal, activating mirror neurons and empathy that exceeds the limits of anthropocentric ideals. Perhaps this is comparable TouVA's *The 7th Sense*?

Racquel Rowe (She/Her)

<https://www.racquelrowe.ca/>

<https://www.instagram.com/kellrowe/>



Video still by Carolina Benitez

Artist Statement

Racquel Rowe is an interdisciplinary artist from the island of Barbados who currently resides in Canada. She uses history to represent how historical events and perceptions shape modern day depictions of black wom*n and black culture and thus how these things affect our lived experience. Action and then causation are a common method for working through concepts for her and she is often compelled to do things and then spends a long time investigating and contextualizing what it is that possess her to do them. After a performance, rather than before Rowe finds herself uncovering deep rooted memories of home that become stronger the more a performance is repeated.

Washing Rice

Washing Rice is a durational work in which the artist attempts to individually wash the grains in a bag of rice. This arduous task usually results in failure with the artist either being too tired to complete the tasks or getting frustrated and quitting. This work deals with myth, folklore and Barbadian traditions that are still very prevalent today in and around black communities when it comes to food preparation and labour.

Photos by Chris Blanchnot





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted November 26th, 2020. Revised February 12th, 2021.

Q: How did you feel working in your iteration of Pi*llOry? Did you have a positive or negative experience?

Racquel: I had a very positive experience working at Pi*llOry Part 2. To be able to collaborate and work alongside other queer individuals in the name of performance and community engaged practice was fulfilling. Those who attend were also thoughtful and engaged respectfully with myself and the other performers. I left the night on a high after being able to engage with so many creative people in one space and share our collective thoughts around trauma, memory, labour and movement.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Racquel: Any positive space that highlights queerness in all of its forms is a step in the right direction for me, this even truth be-told actually helped me to openly embrace my queerness even more as a straight passing person with a male partner, it's not a privilege I take likely but something that made me nervous trying to make my way in the queer art community for fear of not being 'queer enough', but the community that Pi*llOry has built is one of inclusion for everyone and everybody across the field. It is even more important to me that as a black woman Pi*llOry centers artist of colour.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence you practice at large? How was the witness *implicated* in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Racquel: I can't escape my identity; I walk around as a black woman every day and experience everything that comes with that. For me history and historical tropes play a large roll in my work, especially coming from the Caribbean, those traditional folklore practices are what I want to center. Many having dark traumatic roots but are practices people take pride in. I think the narrative we see around black bodies is often about trauma and death and violence, and white people love that shit. Yet we lack a focus on black mental health, childhood traumas and many other things that are often overlooked. I guess trauma is very broad term though. I make it a point to try to make socially engaging work about myself and my culture. Maybe I'm not quite ready to deal with my own traumas in my work, perhaps after Grad school, I feel like that takes up all of ones mental capacity and is definitely TRAUMTIC in and of itself.

I'm not sure that the audience was implicated in the work as much as I wanted them to be, to participate, to experience the washing of the rice and the laboriousness of the task, this is something I'll have to think on more for the future.

Q: How does gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

Racquel: Most of my works are rituals and practices passed on by elders, namely Matriarchs. I think a lot of Caribbean countries are Maternal primarily. I don't think I've ever centered male people or masculinity in any of my work now

that I'm thinking about. Unless it was to do with confronting the male gaze. I'm always thinking about how and why w*men do things and how they move through the world as beings.

Claudia Edwards (They/Them)

<https://www.instagram.com/claudiaedwards.info/>

<https://www.instagram.com/alienbusterkeaton/>

<https://linktr.ee/alienbusterkeaton>

<https://claudiaedwards.info/>



Photo Credit: Tram Nghiem

Artist Statement:

Claudia Edwards is a performance and visual artist based in Toronto, Canada. Of Indo-Guyanese and British descent, their work explores issues of identity, memory, queerness, power, and decolonization. Their approach is conceptually driven, and formally determined by operation and circulation. In somatic performance, their use of scores allows for an interdisciplinary and relational approach, integrating ritual, voice, rhythm, and

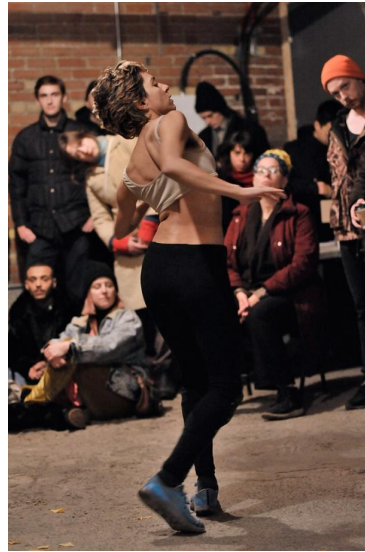
dance to achieve specific states of being and consciousness. Edwards has created performances for Pi*llOry, FADO, The School of Making Thinking, Flux Factory, Virtual International Exchange, and more. Their curatorial work includes HOTWIRE, a live art series featuring QTBIPOC artists hosted in residency at Hub14, and serving on the Rhubarb 2020 curatorial collective. They obtained their BFA at Concordia University in 2016.

Regenesis

- What happens when we start from the end?
- Rather than giving healing away, this is an exchange.
- This might be permission to watch / receive / give pleasure.
- I'll dance with you, but our souls are fundamentally separate.
- Fanon's muscular orgy, or, buss a whine.

Photos by Chris Blanchenot





*Pi*llOry Performer Interview: There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted September 29th, 2020. Revised February 16th, 2021.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence your practice at large? How was the witness implicated in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Claudia: I feel that to look forward, I must also look back. Like most people of Caribbean descent, my heritage is mixed, in my case both settler and colonized. I have been seeking deeper connection with that history which has been hidden by colonial erasure and diaspora: the history of indenture. I have a responsibility to learn and to honour my ancestors' struggles, and one step towards healing the wound of intergenerational trauma, to decolonizing my own generation, is retaining cultural

practices. This is where Fanon's "muscular orgy" comes in: dancing for pleasure, dancing as exorcism, dancing socially and not in the western stage tradition, connecting to specific folk and hybrid rhythms, whining like my aunties taught me how when I was six years old. The result is more than just catharsis, it keeps history alive. Lately I am using dance to process grief, both the very real grief I have experienced in recent years, but also to grieve and release colonialism and white supremacy, feeling out for a body that has escaped their rule.

In the witness, a mirroring effect takes place. Without doing any of the things the performer is doing, they experience automatic responses as if they are. To observe a body shudder, undergo violent contortions, then relax into a state of pleasure, puts the viewer through these motions and emotions, prompting them to recall, wonder, and find meaning in them indefinitely.

Q: How has gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

Claudia: The queer/trans body has traditionally occupied the roles of jester, trickster, storyteller, knowledge-keeper, shaman, and healer across cultures and societies. Our bodies have been seen to hold divine spiritual status, as a fusion of male and female wisdom, or as alterity, as an otherness connected to the spiritual realm. Fundamental to how I understand my gender and queerness is this mythic societal role. It felt natural to me even before I had words for it. In this way, what I'm doing is actually quite traditional for my gender!

Each time I perform, watching my body defy gendered expectations leaves an impression on the viewer. Whether they intellectualize it or not, it expands their perceptions of strength, vulnerability, agency, gender, and so on.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

Claudia: We are all embodying things from moment to moment, awareness helps us to recognize what. By eating ginkgo leaves in my performance, I was seeking to embody the memories of a living fossil, one of the most ancient species still in existence, one so resilient it survived the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. I moved from consuming these memories of resilience, to exorcising the violence that intersects in my body, to embodying ancestral pleasure through calypso dancing. Carefully considering the movement through these embodied states and building the somatic tools to trigger entry and exit safely, are essential to maintaining a sense of control.

Holly Timpener (They/Them)

<https://hollytimpener.wixsite.com/hollytimpener>

<https://www.instagram.com/hollytimpener/>

DIVA

DIVA is a performance in 3 parts: creating connection within an organically created community; flipping the power dynamic of our patriarchal society; reclaiming the body within the community. Gathered in an indoor location I introduce myself by way of shaking hands with each member of the audience. In the second portion of the work I physically carry five cis-gendered men, one at a time across the room, putting them down to create the new performance location. In this new location I will perform a strip tease to a slowed down version of the song DIVA by Beyoncé; dancing at the original tempo of the song. Being all together in the created intimate space I am creating a shift in the viewers thoughts, generating a new awareness towards the space and each other. I believe that these moments together can start a ripple of healing and, ultimately, generate a collective peace.

Photos by Chris Blanchenot





Brian Smith (He/Him)



Photo by Coman Poon

Artist Statement

Brian Smith has a ceramics practice exploring landscape, fragility and transition. He is an Architect (retired), installation artist, and workshop facilitator. His pedagogy and art-works focus on the concept of “in between” spaces. He was 1st runner-up for the Toronto Aids Memorial with a project of LGBTQ Tribal totems. With Victoria Stanton he created “The Threshold

as Interval: exploring the space between place and creation”, presented by RAIQ in Montreal from 2018-2020.

Performance/installation collaborations with Coman Poon: *How to Survive While in Exile* (Rhubarb Festival, Buddies in Bad Times Theatre, Toronto); *EcoTOne* (Built for Art/Nuit Blanche, Toronto); *()ound* (Proud Voices Series, Glad Day Bookstore, Pride Toronto) ‘*A Home for...*’, by [field] and five iterations of *1+1=0:performances in preparation for death* (Dances at MuCCC, Rochester NY; The Gathering, Arcadia Theatre; activation of Tectonic Plates exhibition, Arcadia Gallery, for Pi*llOry 3, Collective Space, Toronto).

Coming out/in 7 movements

The work for Pi*llOry 2 will incorporate a very physical aspect of clay manipulation connected to my LGBTQ experiences at various time throughout my life and career as follows:

coming out/in

7 movements

Toronto 0

Cornwall 1

Ottawa 2

London 3

Toronto 4, 5, 6, 7

Each movement expresses through handling of clay the significant experiences of coming out/in emotional, spiritual and physical ex[pressions].

Photos by Chris Blancheno





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted October 21st, 2020. Revised February 12th, 2021.

Q: How did you feel working in Pi*llOry? Did you have a positive or negative experience?

Brian: I would say very very positive. What I loved about it was this hidden venue off the back lane in Kensington market without any *predictable* quality about it, no profile like a performance space. It was using a space that had much history of other activities which I really loved. Also, I loved what I would call the negative aspect, that is the extreme cold but that for me became a very positive thing.

Holly: I love how artists take the negative things, embrace them and transform them.

Brian: And partly my performance, my action called up a lot of energy and heat from me. At one point I was sweating and everybody else was freezing. I thought of Enok on the floor and I thought “they are freezing to death”. I’m up here “*wamping and wamping*” and dripping sweat. Is that a positive? Or just kind of an event that happened from it? You know, but I would say definitely a positive experience.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Brian: Curious. I would say it made me comfortable to be myself, but the traumas I carry (some of the trauma I carry) and it has to do with being seventy-three and coming from a different time about being queer and coming through a whole series of queer landmarks, part of my issue is passing, which

comes out of trauma.

Holly: Passing as queer?

Brian: Passing as not queer. Though putting myself in that, not that I'm not queer, but putting myself in that, in a public space about queerness had mixed emotions for me. It contributed or helped me with this aspect of trauma and being performative of it. I think, on the whole, having only queer performers was a great liberation in some ways. But it didn't feel, how to describe this? It didn't feel like I was centered out or we were being centered out, or we were being "Oh you Queers". It just felt normal in a way. Even though I do carry this thing with me about "I'm a white guy", you know. I wanted to talk at some point when we get to it about why I performed what I did. And what was behind what I was doing and I want to reference that as well.

How has Queerness affected you and your work?

Performance work is so new in my life. Like four or five years, six years that kind of thing. I think it allowed me to step outside "normalcy", step outside being this old white guy who had a profession and worked with that kind of conventionality. And so being queer and doing performances with queers in a queer environment with a queer idea, freed me. That's how it affected me. It allowed me to explore.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence your practice at large? How was the witness *implicated* in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Brian: What I sent you originally was *Coming Out/In in Seven Movements*. And then I identified some cities in Ontario where I

had lived, and I numbered them as those traumas. Now I didn't stand and talk about those traumas, I didn't present myself in a way that was beaten up by this; it was just that I was pounding the clay. As I was doing that, I told the stories to myself about the trauma. So, they were embodied traumas and the performance kind of brought them out, brought them forward. Powered the energy that I needed to do the work that I was doing, if that makes sense.

Holly: It does. It was very emotional to watch. The action was the same each time, but each time it was different. It holds different emotion, different energy, and feelings and was super powerful how nuanced that one action can be.

Brian: Yeah! Because the traumas start with the death of my father, when I was six. So being orphaned, living in poverty. I mean it's a lot of internalized traumas. I also think that, not that it may be queer, but I am from that generation. But I think that my queerness: even not presently discussed, I was assigned certain tasks as a result of my father's death. Like "you will be good", YOU (looking at me) "I want you to be good". So, I became the 'good little boy'. So that trauma of losing wasn't acknowledged as "your lose" or how your feeling is "you must be", and I suspect based on historical information and based on other people's experiences, that my mother (who said that) was somehow picking up something that told her I would be the good one. My two older brothers weren't, and my younger brother was a prince and my sister was an infant, so I believe that was... "Damn it, Fuck You"... I was doing that; I was performing that. That was trauma in a decade, I did these in decades almost. The next was incest, and sexual abuse, onto me by an older brother. That trauma closed the door sexually for me. Like from puberty until I was in my mid-twenties, I built barriers, I built walls. So again, using the clay, using that kind of violent action to say, "Fuck you for that too", "Fuck you for

abusing me”, “Fuck you for closing me off”, “Fuck you for removing from me my choice”. The option and the choice to be sexual when it was appropriate was stolen from me. So, again these things were all in there. And then after that there was another one. An unrequited love, which works as a trauma in a way. Cause I didn't know what it was. I fell for this guy, but he was not available, number one, and he was a friend. But I didn't know where to go with that. And that was mid-twenties, I was like “What do I do?”. And I lost that friend, I lost another chunk of time working my way through that. And again, another trauma. And also, the first, on the other side of that, the first sexual activity that I initiated, that I moved into. That was mid-twenties for god sake. I've already past the best before date. I'm not sure it is a trauma, no, it is a trauma. I was in a park in London Ontario and I was not attacked. Wait, I was attacked, by another gay person who forced me into a sexual act, that I welcomed but it wasn't my choice. And then I moved everything down to Toronto, because after being in London where I went to art collage I moved to Toronto.

There was a horrible event in the late seventies. I was on Young St, across from the St. Charles Tavern, which is now going to be a condominium, but at that point was a gay club and on Halloween all the drag queens would dress up and go to the club. Accept the horror of this is, across the street there were barriers so other (straight?) people couldn't cross the street. People were throwing eggs at the drag queens. And cops were there, not to protect anybody, but to prevent the drag queens from going into the back door so they made them walk the *gauntlet* of this howling crowd. I stood on a corner asking “What do I do? What do I do?”, Like who am I? So again, informing my experience in the performance was this confusion, but also a desire to smash through it. A year later the bathhouse raids happened and although I wasn't in a bathhouse

a number of people I knew were. The trauma of that exposure for everybody: I came out, I was already out but I came out to the world. It was like “Fuck this, I’m queer!”. I was on the streets screaming and yelling and demonstrating at 52nd division when they flipped the cop car over and set it on fire, yelling. It was just like “AHHHHHHHHHHH!”. But at the same time, I was in an abusive relationship. What do you do with all this shit? I guess the last trauma is the potential of loss again. If I can just bring that line forward. Am I now going to die without any resolution? Is this another loss? So, I’m struggling with that trauma. I think when we go to part three of Pi*llOry and talk about [field] and that performance with my life partner, we are doing performances in preparation for MY death. Which is sooner rather than later. And so, kind of doing that as well, thinking as I kind of stood there at first freezing to death and then aching from throwing this, and then very conscious of the anger of that *BOOM BOOM BOOM*. It kind of freed me from... That was the outcome of it. Being continuous of all of this but at the same time battling thought them. I don't know if this is useful.

Holly: Oh my God Brian, this is so useful. I think you are a very important person, first of all. You are important to me. How you are informing the work that I am doing is so great. And I thank you for that.

Brian: My pleasure. I'm glad to have had the opportunity to look at this for myself internally and perform an action that I won't say freed me from it but put it out into the world. And the second part of the question is *How was the witness implicated*; They got it. They were implicated in the sense that they were on that journey with me.

Holly: Do you think that there is any harm in witnesses absorbing trauma and not knowing how to work through it? I'm

curious and I think this is where having an all queer community to do these actions is important. Because we all have trauma there is a way we can witness trauma because we are already concerned with our own trauma that we are working through. So, the danger for me isn't there but I was wondering what you thought?

Brian: You know, even though the situations are different, I feel when I watched the others performing what I saw was their trauma(s) are less overt and more personal. A lot of what impacted me was a result of society. Of being queer in a non queer world. So what I think your right, as a queer in this world no matter what, you are hyper sensitive to trauma. But because of that sensitivity you're also working or searching for ways of dealing with it. So maybe witnessing it gives clues to how to do that or affirms their struggle and their techniques of dealing with the trauma. I'm an elder in the gay community, in the queer community. I don't know if you saw someone writing about the pandemic and saying "wait a minute. We went through a pandemic in the 80's" and we're still here. No vaccine but we're still here. People died all around me. I was at so many memorials, funerals. Classmates from school. Older people, younger people. Mostly younger people. And that trauma, and that maybe the final trauma now with COVID is that is being repeated again. I don't know. It's been a long life.

Q: When invited to perform at Pi*llOry you were provided with a mission statement.

Do you feel the event was successful or not in achieving its goal of creating a space where queer healing can be achieved through the embodiment of trauma?

Brian: Yes. First of all, I think it was an incredible event. It allowed me to present my trauma and it kind of legitimized that.

I don't know if that's the right word. One of the things that I carry is “What are you crying about, people are starving in the world”. “You think you've got it bad, tough luck”. And the reality is, No, I don't have it bad. I have a very nice life, in terms of the world and starving children and all those things. But I do have trauma. Massive trauma. So, this legitimized me. Being able to perform it meant that I could present my trauma to a community that was welcoming of that, that kind of reached out to me for that. So, I would say, yeah. The answer is that it was successful, and it achieved its goal, for me. Thank you.

Enok Ripley (They/Them)

<https://www.enokripley.com/>

<https://www.instagram.com/enokripley/>



Photo by Alexander Harbaugh

Artist Statement

“Is healing a performed action or an embodiment of time? Does it transform us or protect us, render us changed or re-assembled? With the same care and love shown by the slow manifestation of a scar, I stitch, I mend, I reassemble. Accumulating the marks of time passing, of learning, of healing through relentless transformation.

My work dwells within the body and my experience of it as a transgender and disabled person. I endeavor to create work that stands as a testament to a body autonomy- a need to honor its desires, its betrayals, and search for a connective human experience. From this sensitivity flows my engagement with other subjects; small relics, memories, fibres, nature and ultimately decay.”

Enok Ripley is an emerging Performance artist based in Montreal, whose work explores themes of healing, ritual creation and transformation. They have exhibited work in USA, Italy, Germany, as well as across Canada.

Forlorn: Stitching wings made of tender fallen leaves.

Photos by Chris Blanchenot







Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted February 7th, 2021. Revised March 22nd, 2021.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Enok: I think that its important to make spaces for only queer people to express themselves, queerness as an identity and embodiment as an art practice go hand in hand and its so important to me that something like this was able to exist.

Queerness is a part of my work so far that I am visible as 'other' any time I take off my clothing. I confront the audience with my queer body, and all its scars and history. It is a privilege to be allowed into an intimate space, a performance is that for me. Queerness often also is about a rewritten narrative, taking the power back to transform ourselves, not into something other than ourselves but to explore all there is to be in this body. There is a multiplicity in queer identity that doesn't have one clear answer and that's where I find the most hope. There is hope in a body that is other, because other is an infinite series of possibilities.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence you practice at large? How was the witness implicated in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Enok: My work often depicts trauma as a mark over time, of distorted time. I think that violence is not found within my work, in fact I would say I often work to reject the notion that any of my work contains violence. The work I make depicts trauma, but in a compassionate lens. How do we learn our trauma, befriend it, and allow it to live with us? My practice is mark making, and how it can help us find our way through trauma; to heal the injury of the body and spirit, over time, with care and love.

The marks of resistance, the stitch of a needle or the bite of steel are all tools to unlock something more. To find the power within myself to say I am more than the violence and trauma I have endured, this body is still flesh, I am still here.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

Enok: A painter can use the paintbrush, her tool, to create a painting. She then she steps back and says 'here it is, my painting' She has created something outside of herself, and is presenting it as a portal in which to view something through her eyes.

As performance artists, Our bodies are the tool, the painting, and the artist. Embodied performance creates a trinity of aspects as one; the creator, the actor and the object of action comprise the artist.

We can embody any and all roles and create immaterial art, ephemera that is only 'painted' in the emotions and memories of the people who joined you.

Q: The Montreal performance collective TouVA investigates performance in their book *The 7th Sense* and defines this seventh sense as a place inside the performer that guides their actions, creating a kind of pathway for increased sensibility that emerges while in performative action. Do you feel there is some sort of seventh sense, or ghost like presence that guides you while in performance?

Enok: I think that we are complex creatures that contain multitudes. There are aspects of myself that remain hidden, others that I have discovered through my practice... These other

selves guide me. What to call them, a sense? A ghost?
Something is present there for sure.

Pi*llOry

***part three**

An LGBTQ+
Performance night
with works by

Randa Reda

Madeleine Lychek

[field] Coman Poon &

Brian Smith

Nicole Lynn Deschaine

Amber Helene Müller

St. Thomas

lo bil

Broadcasted LIVE from our Instagram

@pi.llory

Saturday July 25th

7-10pm

**Please contact Holly Timpener at htimpener@hotmail.com or
416.949.5785 if you have any need for accommodation.**

Pi*llOry's performers are liberating queer bodies as a primary agency that can harness the transformative power of presence, space, politics, shame and (dis)ability while refracting their infinite incarnations. Pi*llOry's artists renounce the binary and traditional gender roles, they not only create new ones for themselves, but give space for others to create their own as well. Through oral, visual and visceral mediums, Pi*llOry explores the depths of fragmented gender/queer identity, pushing beyond labels and classifications. On the edge of complete uncertainty, with only the already structural, limited and bound ways of description and discrimination of queerness, Pi*llOrists arm themselves with the unknown, in hopes of navigating the surrender that comes with

Poster by Jackie Timpener

***part four**

Pi*llOry

An LGBTQ+
Performance night
with works by

Simla Civelek

Sadie Berlin

Tess Martens

Johannes Zits

Sheri Osden Nault

Holly Timpener

**Broadcasted LIVE from our Instagram
@pi.llory
Sunday July 26th
7-10pm**

**Please contact Holly Timpener at htimpener@hotmail.com or
416.949.5785 if you have any need for accommodation.**

Pi*llOry's performers are liberating queer bodies as a primary agency that can harness the transformative power of presence, space, politics, shame and (dis)ability while refracting their infinite incarnations. Pi*llOry's artists renounce the binary and traditional gender roles they not only create new ones for themselves, but give space for others to create their own as well. Through oral, visual and visceral mediums, Pi*llOry explores the depths of fragmented gender/queer identity, pushing beyond labels and classifications. On the edge of complete uncertainty, with only the already structural, limited and bound ways of description and discrimination of queerness, Pi*llOrists arm themselves with the unknown, in hopes of navigating the surrender that comes with

Poster by Jackie Timpener

Pi*llOry *part three and four

Enveloping our new Pi*llOists from part two, a collective decision was made as to whom we would invite to perform at Pi*llOry part three. Scheduled for Thursday, March 19th, 2020, at an old Toronto church called the Roseneath Theatre; we began to prepare for our next iteration. At this time in early March, whisperings began of a global virus called CORONA-19. Pi*llOrist met at the church eager to press on with our project. But as the whispers grew louder, we could not ignore the severity of the pandemic. As Toronto went into lockdown, Pi*llOry part three was postponed.

Months in challenging isolation when by. It felt as if performance, as we knew, was something in the past and that it would never again happen for live witnesses. However, in warmer months, as the numbers of infected folk started to dissipate, I eagerly began getting Pi*llOry part three performers on board to not only present our postponed iteration but have a two-day event with Pi*llOry part four. Many skype meetings were conducted as we made a game plan to keep everyone safe while coming together in real-time to make work. A little storefront operation called Collective Studio approved our COVID safety measures, ensuring we would only have ten masked folks enter the space, plenty of sanitizer available, and enforce social distancing outside of the space.

Thus far, Pi*llOry had been a pay what you can event that happened only in real-time on the chosen day. Word got around that our troupe of trauma performers were braving the storm, dedicated to filling space with live actions. Shannon Cochrane, founding member of FADO Performance Art Centre, a non for profit, artist-run center for performance art in Toronto, heard the news of our endeavor. I received an email from

Cochrane asking if I would be willing to discuss how we were going about such a project in these dark times. After a short email back and forth, Cochrane decided on behalf of FADO to fund both Pi*llOry part three and part four.

Saturday, July 25th, 2020 Randa Reda, Madeleine Lycheek, [field] Coman Poon & Brian Smith, Nicole Lynn Deschaine, Amber Helene Müller St. Thomas, and lo bil assembled as our part three Pi*llOrists. Then the following day Sunday, July 26th, 2020, Pi*llOry part four took place with Simla Civelek, Sadie Berlin, Tess Martens, Johannes Zits, Sheri Osden Nault, and me as the performers.

The two consecutive days exemplified trauma being embodied through new considerations towards old traditions, a communal gesture of care, ceremonial cleansing, death ritual, object relation, object deconstruction, protest, map-making, and narration. For the first time, we chose to live stream both days of performances from our instream. Existing not only in real-time but extending out into the cyberworld, a wider audience was reached than in the previous Pi*llOries, resulting in new online conversations regarding our work of shifting Queer trauma through performance art.

Amber Helene Müller St. Thomas (They/ Them)

www.amberhelenemullerstthomas.com

www.instagram.com/amberhelenemullerstthomas/



Photo by Amber Helene Müller St. Thomas

Artist Statement

My practice involves gestures of interaction and connection. I create artworks by working with everyday objects, drawing inspiration from mundane life experiences. I am interested in exploring the implications of collective contact, tactility and desire through the communal holding and passing of objects or textiles. I primarily employ photography, performance and textiles, frequently questioning and moving the lines between these media within a single project.

I work with movement in various forms, and I am concerned with its history; where something has been and where it will go. I am interested in creating objects and experiences that are produced through enactments of multifarious gestures I consider queer. The gestures I adopt focus on themes of touch, reversal, reconstruction, shift, and the relationship between erasure and visibility.

Care Pack

Care Pack used sound, video, and body actions to facilitate supportive experiences of gratitude and giving. Ten sanitizing care packs were distributed to the audience/collaborators to pass on to elders within our community. The conversations and experiences that came out of this initial gesture were an integral part of the project allowing us to ask ourselves: *How can I care for you now?*

Photos by Natalie Logan





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*
Conducted October 17th, 2020. Revised February 16th, 2021.

Q: How did you feel working in that particular Pi*llOry event? Did you have a positive or negative experience?

Amber: I had a mix of emotions in regard to performing because of the pandemic. I was excited, afraid, and hopeful at different intervals. I think because we had been meeting as a group via Zoom and discussing our own needs in regard to the safety of the event, we had fostered an atmosphere of respect and attentiveness. I think this method would be productive to adopt for any live art event.

The experience of performing was positive and felt cathartic, but the period of development was difficult. My original idea had to be scrapped for safety reasons during a pandemic. I found it challenging to come to terms with the fact that changing my initial idea at all would compromise the work entirely, and that I would have to think of something entirely new. This was especially difficult because of the amount of time I had already spent making the necessary props.

It made sense to hold off on performing *Reciprocal Measures*, my original proposal, until we could all safely eat together. I am hopeful that when finally performed, this project will be celebratory. Out of this struggle came the piece I ultimately performed, *Care Pack*.

Because part of *Care Pack* was an open letter to our 2SLGBTQQIPA+ elders, I felt a sense of urgency to be clear and struggled to finish the piece. It was emotionally strenuous

and the writing, video editing and sound creation were very time consuming.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Amber: I found the experience and company to be generous. Because all of the performers were queer, the energy in the room seemed sacred. Queerness of some sort is intentionally embedded within all of my work, but I am not upset if the viewer does not recognize this. I don't feel like I own other people's experiences, nor do I want to. I feel that queer is not a single aesthetic, material, or way of being.

I am interested in ways of being queer that are excluded from our own communities, so it is important to reject forms of gatekeeping. This is why I have made work about objectum sexuality, bisexuality, and fluidity. I am aware these subjects may make people uncomfortable.

The affect of queerness is really too big a question to answer here but deciding to come out as bisexual in 2011 was one of the hardest things I have experienced. I wasn't expecting discrimination from people within the queer community and now realize it is important to make sure you have a strong support system before coming out. Perhaps being bisexual and gender fluid has made me a divergent thinker, never seeing things fully one way or another. As a result, I feel compelled to make work that connects to my own experience while working with people from our community. I am certain that growing up in the anti-queer WorldWide Church of God and in a highly religious household has influenced this compulsion.

Q: When invited to perform at Pi*llOry you were provided with a mission statement. Do you feel the event was successful or not in achieving its goal of creating a space where queer healing can be achieved through the embodiment of trauma?

Amber: I feel the event was successful in achieving its goal. I think working with our bodies together and witnessing each other is an important step. The fact that no one became ill from attending the event proves that we were all responsible in our planning. I think the fact that we came together during such a traumatic time and worked to make this event occur safely is a testament to the strength and resilience of our community.

[field]

Coman Poon (He/Him) & Brian Smith (He/Him)



Photos by Henry Chan

Who we are

Named in reference to an essay by John Berger, [**field**] is the name of an ongoing collaboration between architect & installationist Brian Smith and interdisciplinary performer and life/art researcher Coman Poon.

“We are life and artistic partners with a 22 year age span between us. Additionally, as an intercultural partnership, we inhabit and grow a living practice that taps into the embodied wisdom, sensibilities and epistemologies we bring into our conceptual and relational arts practice.”

At Hospice Toronto, Coman offers Expressive Arts sessions for those living with life limits. He serves as a support person to Brian's pedagogical and arts practice. Brian lives with diabetes and concomitant limits to his physical and mental capacity. We unpack our dynamic as one that is beyond the simplistic division of care recipient and care giver, older and younger lovers, disabled and able-bodied individuals.”

Coman Poon,[**field]**

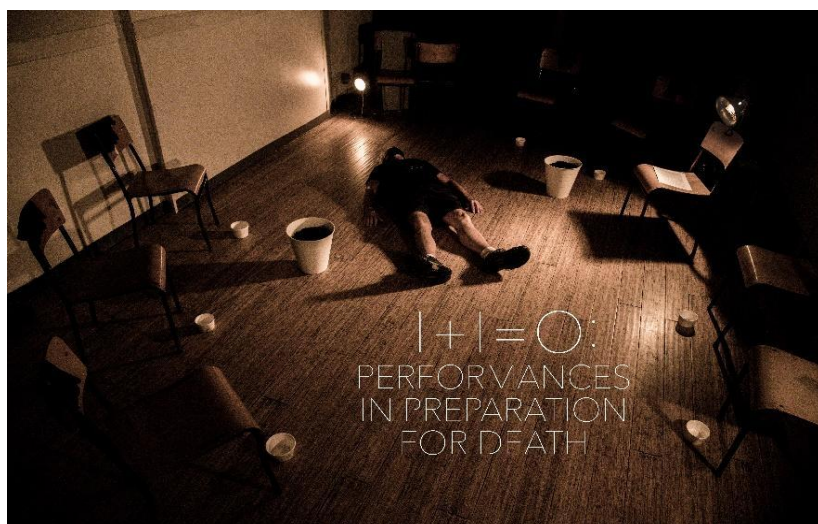
1+1= O: performances in preparation for death (COVID)

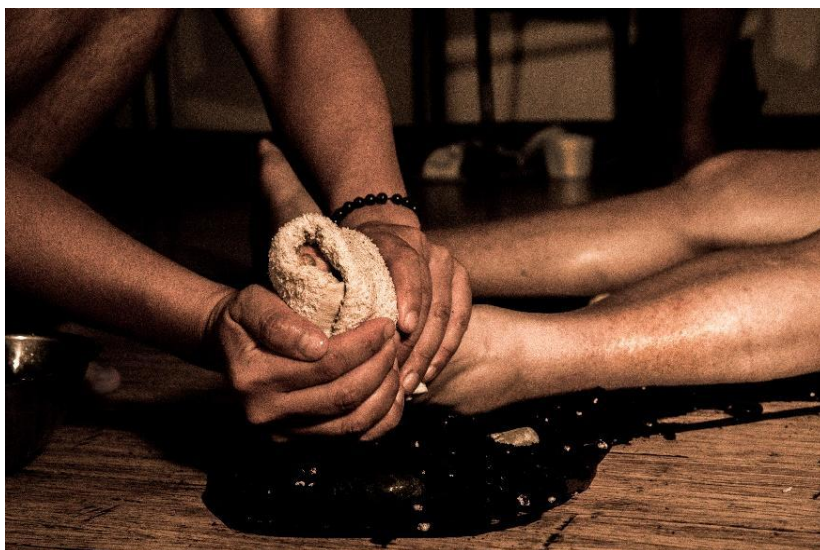
Extending from Bracha Ettinger's concept of "wit(h)nessing", our collaboration *1+1=O: performances in preparation for death* invites and que(e)ries the role of intimacy and compassion in working with levels of trauma and co-healing.

Varyingly iterated as an ongoing (re)immersion in numinosity within the context of an intergenerational and intercultural love relationship, *1+1=O: performances in preparation for death* emerges from a couple's domestic ritual and is inspired by the ceremony of washing and dressing the deceased featured in

2008 Japanese film *Departures*, and the non-dualistic Buddhist concept of ‘self/Self’.

I+I= O: performances in preparation for death (COVID) is an evolution of a participatory art ritual uniquely iterated for 10 participants (as part of Pi*llOry 3 on July 25, 2020). As a site for performance research and a death meditation on intergenerational, queer and cross-cultural sites of love, this ritual and installation offers access to shifting and simultaneous layers of meaning accessible through perception, affect and energetic sensing.





Photos by Alexandra Gelis

July 25, 2020

Collective Space, Pi*llOry 3, Tkaronto (colonially known as Toronto, Canada)

Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted December 9, 2020. revised Feb.15, 2021.

Q: How did you feel working in that particular Pi*llOry event? Did you have a positive or negative experience?

Context/engagement

On January 2, 2020, Holly Timpener reached out to me through FaceBook Messenger to ascertain whether I would be interested to perform at Pi*llOry 3 (planned for March 19th).

As I indicated to Holly, I was initially hesitant to accept because my arts practice had evolved to become largely land-based and site-responsive, eschewing traditional transactional ways of making and consuming performance.

In response, Holly informed me that the venue/site would likely be a spacious and well-appointed gallery in the east end of Toronto and that weather-permitting, presenting work outdoors might be possible.

My first impulse was to propose a ritual practice my partner Brian Smith (who presented at Pi*llOry 2 in November 2019) and I co-developed.

With *I+I+O: performances in preparation for death*, an additional concern I held was around the availability of quietude as well as having the opportunity to separate/sequentially order performances so that we would not be overlapping with other performances (such as was the case for most presentations at Pi*llOry 2).

To their credit, Holly generously offered to curate around our needs. In fact, I want to emphasize that my experience of Holly as the creator and co-curator of the Pi*llOry Series is of generative collaboration, one where I consistently felt heard, consulted and cared for.

Throughout the whole Pi*llOry journey that I was part of, Holly modelled transparency and consensus-building approaches. This is no small feat given the number of people involved and the many changes brought about by the pandemic around health and safety and the evolving limits on public gatherings.

Like many in the arts, I have had to endure a series of traumatizing (negative and instrumentalizing) experiences with curators of large events and institutions of higher education. I am grateful for being part of this supportive and rare carte blanche spot of paid artistic opportunity where fostering a sense of collectivity was a living practice and integral to the presentation of art works.

Lockdown/contingencies

Due to the global pandemic triggering a national lockdown across Canada, the planned March 19th iteration of Pi*llOry 3 was forced to postpone. In hindsight, it was a boon to have had an advance IRL meeting with all participating Pi*llOry 3 artists. This convivial meet-and-greet allowed for us to not only introduce ourselves as artists to each other but to set the direction for our collective intentions:

1) to build and support LGBTQ+ community amongst diverse artists with a spectrum of practices at different stages of their artistic development (as live/performance artists);

- 2) to find ways of supporting each other to feel safe in being early instigators of initiatives inviting the public to return to live art;
- 3) to uphold and centre space for regional QTIBPOC and gender-diverse performance artists to share a platform in context of an small/insular Toronto performance art ecology that often instrumentalizes or marginalizes IBPOC and queer artists and
- 4) to share our work with each other and with our invited guests.

In the course of the COVID-19 virus spread across the GTA - resulting in the relatively slow relaxing of initial restrictions - several potential venues with indoor and outdoor potential were explored (from Northern Contemporary, St. Anne's to Arcadia Performance Space) until we arrived at the cosy Collective Studio in the Junction Triangle.

The optimal time for incarnating the performance series moved from Spring (March 2020) to Summer (July 2020). Along with Holly, Pi*llOry 3 artists co-curated the next set of artists and Pi*llOry 3 & 4 conjoined to form a contiguous two-night showcase.

Contingency plans and personnel came and went/evolved. Throughout this evolving process, Holly actively stayed in conversation with all of us to ensure transparency and collective decision-making, instigating discussions around the linkage between curatorial & equity practices, promoting all artists on multiple digital media platforms and practicing positivity and diligence while expertly producing Pi*llOry 3 & 4.

As a curator, seasoned community developer and emerging accessibility advocate, I enjoyed the

process of being part of an intimate and collective effort without having to be the leading producer, especially with the laborious and logistically demands of holding and tending to all the loose ends and changing needs of each and every artist/presentation during a pandemic!

Throughout our many discussions and communications Holly never failed to speak and act with genuine care and supportive collaboration. This included convening meetings IRL and on Zoom, scheduling and hosting staggered site visits, establishing mutually agreed upon safety protocols, coordinating design of event e-flyers and posters, promoting the series and individual artists, organizing volunteers, tending to individual preferences for photography/videography/live streaming, coordinating which curators/participating artists would share or cede available 'seats' to arriving audiences so that we did not breach the limited indoor capacity of 10 amongst innumerable other details.

It was clear that there was a strong cultural commitment by all of us to work horizontally (versus hierarchically). The mutual care and consideration was both felt and seen. On the day of [**field**]'s ritual offering, Holly even stepped outside to cede a spot to arriving guests, after helping set up the space.

Their willingness to step in and assist us (after we had been in performance for 1h 20m) made it possible for us to survive/execute the post-performance/cleanup process. In the artistic culture where, as performance artists, we are often expected to clean up ourselves (at the point where we need to re-centre and come back to the quotidian), these generous assistive gestures are

deeply, deeply appreciated.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

The queer space of Pi*llOry is co-creative and collaborative. It presences celebratory difference and radical tenderness. Being in this family of colleagues felt no different than if I was cooking a special meal both *with* and *for* chosen family. By this I mean that I felt seen and heard, supported and inspired to offer something from deep within that could enrich/provoke/transform everyone.

I centre this cultivating a culture of care in my own practice and honour the politic and labour it takes to work in this considered manner. Often in consensus-building contexts, there is something or someone I do not feel comfortable or safe with. With the artists in the Pi*llOry 3 cohort, I felt the freedom to be myself and to offer space to support others to bring their authenticity to each moment. This is, sadly, a rare circumstance in my many engagements with presenters, festivals, publishers, media, documentary teams, and so I treasure this respectful and uplifting experience/co-journey with so called Pi*llOrists.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence your practice at large? How was the witness *implicated* in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Both Brian and I live with acute, chronic and complex forms of trauma. These stem from our respective experiences that range from perception of parental abandonment, and incident of near-drowning, childhood sexual abuse/emerging queerness as well as ongoing experiences of threatening homophobia, racism, agist and ableist

microaggressions as well as the inherent violence of coloniality-Modernity.

In the West and expanding out to the rest of the world, trauma produces isolation and seeded in our post-Enlightenment denial of inherent interdependence. Corporate capitalism and neoliberalism is founded on the illusion of separation. If we separate ourselves from nature, from other humans, from the false binary of the so called 'non-human' (animal, plant and mineral kingdoms) and the 'more-than-human' (Mother Earth, ancestors), we can, with a clearer conscience, better control, exploit and dominate over 'them'. This includes the fundamentals: birth, sex/reproduction, death, composting/re-embodiment/rebirth/afterlife.

In upholding the illusion of separation, we can stay in denial about our complicity in harms that is the foundation of our privileged way of life. Within sacred ritual, we are present to be queerly entangled (in relationship). Ritual evidences the reality that we are not so much separate as we are threaded together.

““Healing” and the Wolof term “Faju”...are understood as a process of repairing traumatic relationships through non-Western epistemologies and cosmovisions. It is about unlearning hegemonic and Western-centric patterns, including extractivist forms of knowledge appropriation.”

-#Healing (Faju), New
Alphabet School

Healing is not just about restoration; it is about getting lost and being transformed by the process of decentering and staying in a place of unknowing. Healing is not about going back to 'normal',

especially when normal is the problem with the system we uphold in a million ways, consciously or not.

In creating a participatory frame for entering the experience of ‘ritual-as-performance’, *I+I=O: performances in preparation for death (COVID)* offers witnessing participants connection to these (foundational) questions:

What has given way to, or allowed you to ‘see’ with fresh ears and to feel with embodied sight? What has been (temporarily) lost and what can be (re)gained? What seeds of new ways of being can be uncovered during this pause from the everyday? What is the nature of your fears, darkness or suffering? How have you been touched by the witnessing of intimacy and beauty? What dreams, intuitions or longings are surfacing for you? What are their deeper messages and meanings?

If death is a crisis of the ego/mind, what are your innermost values (name them) that transcend the mind? Without embodiment, could reverence, compassion, humility and respect exist?

I+I=O does not offer directives. Instead, it floats in the liminal in order to create portals of embodiment, dis/re-membling and insight.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

Embodiment is a contingent tethering between what is felt and corporeally understood. As a practice, regardless of whether it is in service to the ‘work’ of performance or healing, it is active and experienced. Embodiment is the work working on me. Embodiment takes place at the

confluence of impulse and tension. It is at once simple and emergent, hollow and fugitive.

This artful way of dancing with evocations offers the truth of poetry instead of science or therapeutic theory and points to what is beyond so called ‘intra-intersubjectivity’. In my practice with [**field**], $I+I=O$ begins to offer openings to experientially ‘know’ what lies beyond the inter/subjective.

Participation in ritual is not a ‘buy-in’ tactic to manipulate an audience to walk into an experience they cannot leave. Similarly, across cultures, folk dance is not about what it looks like from the outside as much as what it feels like from inside the experience of dancing.

There is nothing further to be said except to share Pi*llOry 4 artist/witness Simla Civelek’s response to $I+I=O$: *performances in preparation for death*:

“As much as I didn’t want to take someone else’s spot, I sooo wanted to be there and I was!

There was so much care and beauty. It was like a river, slightly cool for the hot blood, flowing gently surrounding my body and my thoughts. I became aware of the resistance in me to let go, to follow and of course, what good is any art if it doesn’t challenge us. I dove in and out of this river and that was my way of being in it, participating.

The vulnerability of our bodies, and you being there to hold, to comfort...I saw myself in both Brian and you, my thoughts taking care of my body and my body surrendering to love.

The sounds that accompanied were distant and it made it much more real for me, as if [sic] did I think that, did I really hear that or was it a memory, or a dream?

Time was an element and my relationship to it also shaped my experience. You know how there could be a warm and cool spot in a river at the same time...layers...many beautiful layers.”

Gratitude for this question. I am inspired to revisit it again, like crossing a river twice.

Q: The Montreal performance collective TouVA investigates performance in their book *The 7th Sense* and defines this seventh sense as a place inside the performer that guides their actions, creating a kind of pathway for increased sensibility that emerges while in performative action. Do you feel there is some sort of seventh sense, or ghost like presence that guides you while in performance?

Yes and no. On the one hand, performative intuition can be just a sense (and not a more-than-human/ghostly entity). Emergent composition and live art ‘performativity’ can be about having one foot outside the making and one foot inside the making. What differentiates the so called ‘7th sense’ from such mixture of performativity and intuition?

My life/art research takes me into the unknowable, entangled and deterritorialized. Performative ritual and ritual-as-performance are differentiated by intention and how the imagination is engaged. Perhaps the former occupies the grey area between art and healing; perhaps the latter is a grammar of the transactional. What produces ‘real’ change? What is ‘real’?

This ongoing live art research ignited with the experiment *Performance as a Healing Action* at PROCESS 5 to the various iterations (from 2018 onward) of experimenting and working with the ‘ritual body’ in *1+1=0: performances in preparation for death* (which offers a circulating space for both the embodied and the disembodied) and more recently, rituals for Land where the witnessing is by the more-than-human.

Q: When invited to perform at Pi*llOry you were provided with a mission statement. Do you feel the event was successful or not in achieving its goal of creating a space where queer healing can be achieved through the embodiment of trauma?

This is a tricky question because the (re)embodiment of trauma is not 'healing' per se. Without a shift in intention and an ensuing release of grief and rage (amongst other emotions/symptoms), sometimes involving an unlearning over a longer cycle of time, it is merely re-iteration/reinforcement of trauma-oriented neural pathways.

I don't really know that 'catharsis' is needed for transmutation or transmogrification of traumatic impact on the human mind-body and spirit. It feels like a multi-various connection is the 'medicine' I am engaged in: something emerges from within and between as one connects.

To what? Many traditions around the world count on ancestors (physicalized by the lit empty chair in the ritual circle in $I+I=O$) to be called upon to heal the past and to gain alignment with our purpose.

By ancestors, one can mean both biological human ancestors (people who are dead and *here*) but also historical figures, sources of inspiration, evolutionary ancestors or non-human ancestors such as water, rocks, smoke and earth, etc.).

What I am curious about is what happens when we can shape-shift? When is 'fugitivity' a refuge?

What if seeing is a form of blindness? que(e)ries Nigerian thinker and writer Bayo Akomolafe. Another way of thinking about queer healing is to

learn how to see from the eyes of our ancestors.
How might we heal ourselves through the healing
of ancestral trauma?

In ritual practice, we move that which matters to
us into a (physical) form. Ritual transmits core
values of renewal and enacting of relationship. As
such, that which is unseen can also support
cleansing, alignment and reconnection.

The iterations of Pi*llOry 2, 3 & 4 that I was able
to bear witness to offer in their totality a vision of
a collective co-curatorial process that feels
affirming and ethically rigorous. In that manner,
I can imagine that it offers sanctuary to queers
and IPOC folk who live marginalized and are
wearied by instrumentalization, micro-
aggressions and abusive hierarchy.

However, individual healing is something else
altogether different (and I daresay deeper) than
having the experience of being offered sanctuary.

Healing begins with an embodied realization that
one is not one's suffering. I believe it is not as
based on outer conditions being improved as it is
focussed on the release of binaries of victim and
victimizer, harm and self-harm, imprisonment and
emancipation.

Coman Poon

lo bil (She/Her, They/Them)

<https://lo-bil.tumblr.com/>



Photo by Dahlia Katz

Just Playing

After my Pi*llOry performance, an audience member said, “Ah, I see. You’re just playing.” I’m happy when a witness can articulate what I’m doing. Because I’m in it, there’s a lot I can’t see. At the same time I felt a little sting from the words ‘just playing,’ like she was trying to tell me that it’s not a resolved composition or it’s not art, or maybe even: You are not doing your job. But if all the preparatory work I do results in ‘just playing’ I feel this is really transcendent. To me it means that in this moment with audience presence, I can attend to images and desires that are in the room but not visible. And it takes a lot of focus for an adult body to play in a public performance venue where generally it is hoped that you to show up with the perfected thing, so if that’s how it read, I see that as an achievement in creative research.

Playing is a way for me to move through my resistance. If there was no playing involved, I would not be able to bring myself to the venue on the day. I have a whole history of not feeling worthy enough to be alive let alone show something of myself, so I have to approach the task as if I am rolling through a field of long fragrant grasses or I am going to make noise with the squirrels in the forest, or maybe I am going to throw a ball around in the gallery space despite all the behavioural teachings in etiquette I have received in my lifetime through social codes.

Photos by Tina Bararian







My performance approach has emerged from the question: How can I perform? How can I stay awake to the possibility of being myself with others when most often my body shuts down and I can't think? Play, confusion, 'throwing myself off the cliff' and following the 'anti-objective' are ways I can be with people in a

way that feels more like me. I have to consciously work to convince myself of my value, to supplant the messages of colonization, of societal evaluation, systems of punishment and self loathing that I have internalized from the culture and from a family members who didn't have the tools to deal with their own trauma, who didn't have sense of self worth of their own or the resources to reframe the struggles in their lives. I'm in a cis-gender queer white body but everyone suffers from the destruction and reigns of terror that is colonization - white minds are psychologically immersed in the thinking that leads to BIPOC being the direct recipients of this terror, disenfranchisement, misrecognition, ongoing systemic violence, unjust treatment and Othering. In torturing, killing, stealing from, exploiting and displacing people for their own needs, white ancestors were doing violence to themselves, their psyches, their ancestors, their neighbours - a system of violence creates violence for us all. My ancestors were working class people who didn't have a lot of power but from stories heard, I believe their poverty status made them feel compelled to conform to the dominant order. I believe that most of my ancestors haven't wanted to harm, judge or exclude anyone, but it's hard to see the water we swim in, how many ways our thinking is perpetuating violence against ourselves and others. I acknowledge that the thinking I have been culturally immersed in has led to my own sickness, and by sickness I refer to my inability to celebrate and protect who I am, my queerness, my divinity, my beauty, my intelligence, my agency, my connection to the land, body as land, as creature body, my life in the service of community, the air I breathe and the water I drink.

My childhood survival was tied into the scarcity model of my community who had no means to understand their own predicament or anger with me. I felt no safe place to be myself

and felt too insecure to connect with other communities. When I resisted the insistence that I was required to be someone other than who I felt I was, I was homeless and unloveable. But largely through performance training, I learned ways to show up with a spirit of delight and curiosity, to be with people in a joyous and loving way. Coherence between felt and seen self became an actionable reality although a lot of damage had been done. So while my resistance took me out of the immersive thinking of the culture around me, I internalized a lot of judgement and I'm still physically resisting showing up as myself. So that's my work. Performance Art can be especially reparative as it invites movement outside of disciplinary technique and offers opportunities to learn responsive behaviours that are non-harming, self-sourcing, and not predetermined in ways that invite in other people's presence. I'm doing something while listening to you, audience, ready to respond. Practicing this relationality will take time. But we are here for these moments of discovering what it means to be together in our collective unknowing.

I know that in order to do the work, I need to be in life and I need ways to show up. The beauty is in the reality. I need to disconnect self worth from societal expectations and behavioural codes of propriety. If that looks like 'just playing' to you, I'm glad you can see my playfulness. Without play there's either self sabotage or a paradoxical freeze around systemic barriers and the ways in which I am framed as crazy, as lost, as wrong, as not able, as poor, as dilettante, as naive, as fragile, as not belonging - as anything other than precious and beautiful and able. Behind the playfulness is a whole ocean of emotional integration and political resistance, of agency and desire for connection and collective harmonization that is active and restorative. Performance making leads me into new

thinking that energizes me and reminds me why it's vital to keep fighting and believing that a more connected, respectful, beautiful and alive future is possible.

Play is my performance action. If I am invited to a venue to show something of my artist self, I am going to show up at whatever stage of resistance and self doubt I am in, and I am going to play my fucking heart out. And I won't know what I'm doing. And I'm going to get lost. And there's going to be moments where things fall apart, things don't work. And I will laugh and smile and shrug and say, "Oh well." And for me that is all right, that is fine. I'm fine. We will get through this messy underside because that's where the magic hides, that's where the knowledge of what I have been missing and not able to see or connect with resides. It's not a lack of preparation to put a yellow ball on the floor and say hello to it. I love you, I hate you, whatever words usurp the judge in my brain, this is the way I need to show up in the service of my art. What are we living for? I have to do political work of showing up with my feet planted on the ground at times. Responsibility and accountability are my priority. But art offers a space to play, to be with the part of me that is celebrating beauty alongside the confrontational justice-seeking me. I believe play is political because it involves taking back the parts of my life that are beyond fighting. Play asserts that I am not what you think I am, not what you call me, I exceed categories, I am thriving outside of your perception.

I actually don't think people come to see art to see the art, I believe they are coming to be with people. Who knows what we are going to see anyway? Myself, I am compelled to witness art because it's about people, someone's perspective and my reaction and others' thoughts and feelings as to what the artist does, what the art evokes in my body. I actually want to see

what people do from an honest place rather than layering on a curatorial gaze that might try to validate what the artist is doing based on what we have already seen. I want my doors of perception to open to that which is unrecognizable. On a good day, I imagine I am a rigorous heart acrobat able to witness my own absurdity and laugh about it right there and then, turn and wink, have my back and yours. I'm hopefully giving you the best version of myself in leaps and bounds of emotional fluidity. This form of performance becomes an attitude, a way of carrying myself to a home I have never had, of being in the world in a way that makes sense to me. So, I'm going to continue playing because it's a way into my heart self, so that I can be with you as my truer identity, so that I can share in a way that is not obstructed by my own prejudices against myself that have shut me down for a lifetime. Thank you to the audience member who revealed to me their perspective, and to Holly and the Pi*llOry community for making space to be with the Me who is forever moving weirdly with a wink and a deep dive into the long grasses.

Madeleine Lyчек (She/ Her)

<https://lmaoidk.com/>

<https://www.instagram.com/iamlyчек/>



Photo by Madeleine Lyчек

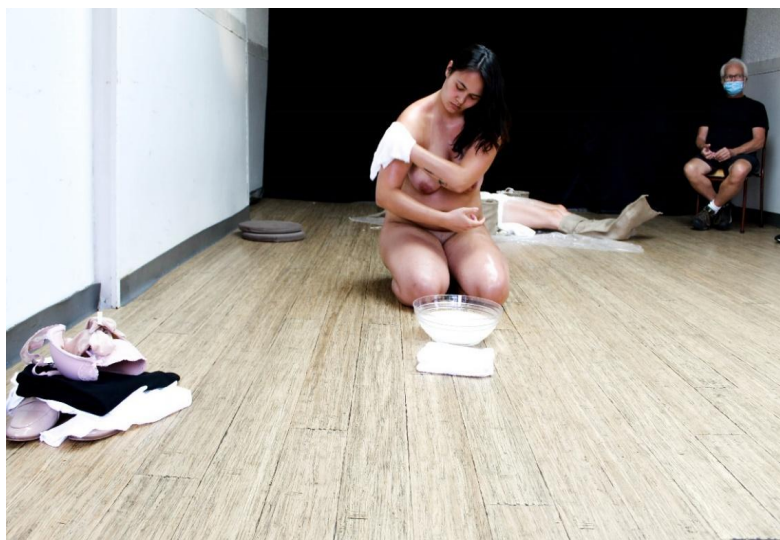
Artist Statement

Madeleine Lyчек is a queer Filipino-Canadian performance and video artist. She uses social media as a digital playground to engage with conversations surrounding power and play, exploring how a body and it's consumption can be used as a radical act of self-discovery. Lyчек completed her Honours BA in Studio Art at the University of Guelph and currently works as the Digital Education Coordinator at Ed Video Media Arts Centre.

Absolving Myself

“Using simply a bar of soap, a basin of water and a few hand towels a ceremonial cleansing is performed. The ritual liberates the actor of past transgressions, starting a regenerative process that will allow them to move forward and start fresh.”

Photos by Tina Bararian





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted October 8th, 2020. Revised February 12th, 2021.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence you practice at large? How was the witness *implicated* in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Madeleine: “Using simply a bar of soap, a basin of water and a few hand towels a ceremonial cleansing is performed. The ritual liberates the actor of past transgressions, starting a regenerative process that will allow them to move forward and start fresh.” The aim of this action is to absolve the actor (myself) of past traumas. Reflection and acknowledgment of harmful experiences has proven very therapeutic for me as an individual. The witness is implicated in the suffering of the work as they see someone try and shed their past self and begin again. This performance is a physical act of ‘washing away of sins’ so to speak, although unattainable the cleansing is cathartic for the actor.

Q: How does gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

Madeleine: My gender informs how I am perceived. A lot of my work is centred around digital censorship. An ex-boyfriend equated my video work to ‘soft-core porn’, I made a zine in response to this which was vandalized with sexist comments urging me to cover-up and reconsider my practice. Male acquaintances have condemned me for posting naked photos of myself online for the sole purpose of seeking attention. The

criticism is frustrating, but fuels the fire inside me to continue making the work I do. Art is supposed to disturb the comfortable and comfort the disturbed.

The work I created for Pi*llOry required me to be naked. It was very simple; it was about ritual and cleansing and no one bathes with clothes on. Naked bodies are not inherently sexual, however, women's bodies are often sexualized. This is so fascinating because our bodies are just capsules-flesh and bone, but they are very politicized. Any work involving the body is instantly political. There is an immense freedom with being comfortable in your own skin and being comfortable naked in front of others. Especcailly, when young women are taught to hate their bodies and conceal due to the threat of sexualization and violence under the hetero-patriarchy.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

Madeleine: Embodiment challenges something, it's a manifestation of an idea or ideology. This is something that emerges in my work whether I am conscious of it or not. There are always notions and ideas that come to the forefront of my work. I often reflect on systems of oppression: white supremacy and hetero-patriarchy and naturally my work not only rejects but persists in direct opposition to the threats they impose and reinforce.

Randa Reda (She/Her)

https://www.instagram.com/_randa_r_/



Artist Statement

My work reflects my censure to fundamentalism and traditional culture's prejudiced judgements on women's behaviours and desires. Through protest gestures, I urge to amplify my struggle against paradigms of inferiority and resist being oppressed and exploited, whilst I was taught to always be subservient. I explore the tensions between my lived bodily experiences as a migrant Arab woman and my cultural meanings and family prescriptions inscribed on my female body. Within live performance art I aspire to feel my existence and understand my identity and my place in this world. I feel the urgent need to speak out against voices of oppression that used to suppress my freedom and silence my voice.

Flesh

Photos by Tina Bararian





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted November 25th, 2020.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Randa: I feel am powered by the energy and honesty of queer art. Queerness makes me feel true to myself and to the audience witnessing the art. I feel brave to break my silence and take off all the masks; masks that are forced by traditional concepts and social judgements.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence your practice at large? How was the witness *implicated* in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Randa: In my work I try to challenge taboos. I try to articulate a context of oppression and symbolize resistance through the acts of suffering in long durational performances. I aspire to make the witness feel my physical and emotional stamina and also my insistence to overcome the pain. Durational performance provokes my memory through experiencing how my body remembers trauma over the extended time of performing a simple action.

Q: How does gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

Randa: In my work I seek to liberate myself from patriarchal culture and fixed dogmas. I condemn the negative stereotyping of Middle Eastern women. I translate traumas related to the cultural prescriptions inscribed on my female body. I test my female body's boundaries and its tolerance to learn how to deal with pain whether it's sensory physical pain or emotional psychological pain.

Q: The Montreal performance collective TouVA investigates performance in their book *The 7th Sense* and defines this seventh sense as a place inside the performer that guides their actions, creating a kind of pathway for increased sensibility that emerges while in performative action. Do you feel there is some sort of seventh sense, or ghost like presence that guides you while in performance?

Randa: When I perform, I feel nostalgic, I feel bliss, I feel pain, I feel ecstasy. Time passes by; I elevate into a next level of perception and I float in the infinite universe.

Johannes Zits (He/Him)

<http://www.johanneszits.com/>

<https://www.instagram.com/johanneszits/>



Photo by Ed Pien

Artist Statement

My art invites a questioning of our preconceptions of nature that continue to be imposed by dominant histories and reductive, binaristic constructs. It is more than a passive backdrop in which we live and take from. Like the rest of nature, a tree is a responsive and creative body and should not be fixed simply in the realm of the material and sublime.

To achieve more immersive conditions in my encounters with trees, I take time to observe, experience, contemplate and share.

These extended moments open up spaces for reflective, as well empathetic actions and interactions.

Working With Wood: Beaver Remnant

Working With Wood: Beaver Remnant is a performance exploring the inner struggle, conflict and anxiety over my love of our woodlands. The piece laments the disappearance of our forests and how they have been exploited for profit and greed. The log used in this performance was felled by a beaver in Toronto on the shores of Lake Ontario, in an environment that is not particularly hospitable to wildlife. While some consider the beaver to be selfish animal creating environments to suit themselves, they are not nearly as wasteful and destructive as us, claiming to be of superior intelligence.

Photos by Tina Bararian







Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted October 18th, 2020. Revised February 12th, 2021.

Q: How did you feel working in that particular Pi*llOry event? Did you have a positive or negative experience?

Johannes: In general, it was a positive experience, and I really enjoyed the sense of community that you were able to build through the discussions on how to protect ourselves and around representation. I wish I could have attended them all, but I had to miss some of them due to my schedule.

COVID and the restrictions around the gathering did present a certain kind of anxiousness at the event but that was overcome for the most part by the people who attended. Because I did a durational performance, I was only able to see a few of the other performances but that's always the case when I'm doing it durational piece.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Johannes: I don't know if it's just a reflection of my age, but I am almost beginning to feel that the word queer has become so broad and inclusive that most of the performances I go to, whether it be dance or performance art, a large percentage of the audience is queer, or I perceive them to be in the realm of queer. And since the 80s, the word queer, has "loosened" so much that I am not sure of it's meaning any more.

Holly: I find it interesting trying to define Queer now and specifically within this context at Pi*llOry because there's people who aren't gay who were performing. But how else can

we define Queer? It makes sense that that word has transformed quite a bit. How do you feel about that?

Johannes: Words and language evolve, and I think it is all for the better that we acknowledge that it has evolved but I don't think queer should necessarily be equal to enlightened, my God don't wanna go there! Another word I came up with is that we're not myopic.

Holly: What is myopic?

Johannes: I had to look up myself “the lack of imagination foresight or intellectual insights”. I think that the audiences of the performances I go to are not myopic, they're open to receiving and taking in what is presented, whether it be good, bad or not to their tastes. I personally hope to get something out of what I see; to be open to it.

Holly: Do you think that having the audience as primarily queer has something to do with myopic?

Johannes: Changing it around, its those who are the right wing radicals and Christian thumping Bible people that have already established some kind of worldview that are not open to different interpretations; other than their own.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

Johannes: I had to look up what Embodiment meant, and this is the phrase found in the Wikipedia; “representation or expression of something in a tangible” and then I had to look up tangible, "perceived by touch, clear and definite, real, so an expression of

something tangible or visible form”. So, embodiment for me is NOT tangible in that it is not something clear; it's not something that's definitive or necessarily even real. It is real to me when I'm in my performance. When I'm in a performance I want to be totally “there”. I don't want to be there as Johannes who needs to go to the bathroom or forgot to shave this morning or is concerned how the audience is perceiving this particular piece at this moment. I want to be into the idea and materials I'm working with and for most of my works I have a mantra or score that I'm working around, through, or with, and I want to embody these ideas during the performance. I want to lose my Johannes. The performance is not about him, he is just a vehicle through which to carry an idea, a message.

Q: When invited to perform at Pi*llOry you were provided with a mission statement.

Do you feel the event was successful or not in achieving its goal of creating a space where queer healing can be achieved through the embodiment of trauma?

Johannes: Now I have a problem with the question because I wasn't sure about the healing part of that and for me healing is placing things in a binary, in terms of ...it's not just a yes or no question, “I was healed” or you know that kind of thing and so in that sense, can we ever be healed from certain things? I don't know I'm just putting that out there.

Holly: I wonder then, is healing or the objective to healing in itself traumatizing?

Johannes: Healing then would be a sense of forgetting what it happened. And in that sense should I ever heal from losing my mother, should I ever heal from the pain inflicted by someone or

can we heal or how do we heal from certain things that are happening in the environment or to a tree and all those kinds of things. And is loving a tree the answer? For me it can be and being a proponent of showing compassion to a living being that is not human that's what I'm hoping to do that.

Holly: It sounds like healing for you has a different definition than "To make things better"

Johannes: Better is such a difficult word as well. We can say it for a temporary thing or, it's one of those abstract words. Like love or like many other things that I personally (and it's only personal). I know that there are people that can heal, that will overcome, that will transform themselves through healing. I don't know; it's a real question for me.

Holly: Healing is such a big part of many works; many topics of discussion and I don't think your saying that that shouldn't be something not talked about.

Johannes: Healing is abstract and a process.

Holly: Healing can become such a word of unattainability, we are broken. If we are not healed, then we are broken. So, to look at it abstractly kind of gives people more autonomy to live in what they have.

Johannes: Yes, but to see healing as a process rather than a goal that is reached at the end. It's an active word; continual.

Sadie Berlin (She/Her)

<https://www.instagram.com/sadiediamorphine/>



Photo by HAU I

Artist Statement

Berlin is a theatre and performance artist who documents how social intolerance and oppression shape ever-mutable and fluctuating aspects of self-definition. In her sometimes racialised work, Berlin uses her many intersections to reflect cis-straight whiteness back to audiences. This telegraphing of oppression as an infection that engraves itself onto and inside marginalised bodies, interrogates notions of free will and freedom to create/conjure/imagine without boundaries. The gifts in the added textures and modalities of marginalisation have in them the constraints of oppression, and, how the marginal and marginalised artist navigates this complex path is a major preoccupation of Berlin's work.

Untitled

This untitled work delves into the racial dialectic of the Black and the White as played out on Indigenous land. The creation of whiteness, a construct with clear economic ends, is flanked by the screening of footage with a working-class, Black-American family and audio of diverse incidences of police brutality against Black folk. 845 tiles with the names of Turtle Island Nations, stacked in 64 piles, are removed from a table and laid out in the space between the screen and the audio. The empty piles reveal a chessboard on which the pieces are placed, with chess pieces representing the bounty of Empire.

Photos by Tina Bararian







Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*
Conducted November 30th, 2020.

Q: How did you feel working in Pi*llOry? Did you have a positive or negative experience?

Sadie: I can't talk Pi*llOry 4 without mentioning the world and my world around it. "The" world during the pandemic affected Toronto more brutally than my sparsely populated, sleepy town and so the idea of being in Toronto made me feel anxious. "My" world because this was my first time driving to Toronto after recovering from involvement in a major car accident. Knowing Holly, I trusted that they work with artists who are respectful, and I felt at ease once I got there.

Considering a pandemic, a Summer of civic unrest and many instances of police brutality which clung to the Summer heat

like sea kelp, I was surprised, in the midst of all this, to find mental centredness while I performed. I felt supported by the other performers and the very tiny audience. The limits that public health imposed on the environment, in the performance space, gave the evening a sense of sparsity which seemed to heighten and give the event a special importance.

Pi*llOry 4 was a highlight in a very difficult year.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Sadie: I find assumptions about queerness in the arts to be exaggerated. Once I got a foot in, I found the worlds of art, their communities and siloed disciplines are about as heteronormative as the rest of the world which means very het. And so it was a privilege to perform in a queer environment, an opportunity that has seldom been presented to me. And I do believe that when queer folk find themselves in such ad hoc collectives, they often create a bond that resists facile description.

Performing in an all-queer event, I was as a goldfish that had found its bowl. A space to breathe our own oxygen.

Queerness has influenced every aspect of my being and my being is my work. Queer artists and queer audience have taught me to hold on to the margins, as the margins hold the pages together.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence you practice at large? How was the witness implicated

in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Sadie: It is difficult for me to engage with trauma as its shortcomings cover a wide spectrum from self-indulgence to traumatising myself in order to give catharsis to what is often a white cis-het audience. As my untitled piece engaged with police brutality, it also projected, onto a screen, a film about a Black working-class family living their lives. I wanted to engage with the living, not just the impeding carcasses of lives destroyed by state-sanctioned violence. As trauma is an inevitable part of being marginalised, my upcoming work will be engaging with the concept of “Black Joy” and challenge those who believe that the marginalised are intrinsically tragic and incapable of joy unless they are saved by the mainstream.

Q: How does gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

Sadie: Gender fluidity is a natural if not deliberate part of my practice. Being assigned a gender at birth which happens to feel “right” is a luxury and I have been fortunate to be able to express my “semi-but-ness” without fear and without adverse consequences. This is a female privilege, and perhaps a rare Black female privilege. A UK artist friend of mine who uses the pronouns they/them allows Black folk to also refer to her as she/her because they find that Black womanhood encompasses a much wider spectrum of experience within the female gender and I must agree with that assessment.

Sheri Osden Nault (They/Them)

<https://www.sherinault.com/>

https://www.instagram.com/so_nault/

linktr.ee/so_nault



Photo by Min-Taylor Bai-Woo

Artist Statement

Sheri Osden Nault is an artist of Michif and mixed European descent. Situated within personal and political contexts, their art practice and research are grounded in queer, feminist, and Indigenous world-views. They strive to elicit a sense of social and ecological responsibility and intimacy on a damaged planet, recently focusing on connections between bodies, sexuality, and nature. Recent exhibitions include *Where the Shoreline Meets the Water* at the ArQuives, Toronto (2020); *Shapeshifters* curated by Amanda Amour-Lynx,

Toronto (2019); *Off-Centre* at the Dunlop Art Gallery, Regina (2019); *Fix Your Hearts or Die* at the Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton (2019).

miina kawapamitin

miina kawapamitin (until we meet again, in Michif) is an act of labor, love, and embodiment in the form of ongoing research, beading, piercing, naming. It is a hopeful gesture towards healing for those Indigenous to Turtle Island who have been taken from us in so-called Canada by the violence of policing. For each person I find record of, I bead a piece which is held on my body by a needle pierced through my skin. I remove the literal and metaphoric wound of their loss from my body, resting the beaded piece with sacred medicines and eventually washing the blood of the wounds off of my body.

Photos by Tina Bararian





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted October 19th, 2020. Revised February 14th, 2021.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Sheri: think having performance space occupied by people who share common intersections of marginalization is significant and I was greatly appreciative of that as an aspect of the event. I felt more connected to some performers than others, which I think speaks to further shared intersections of privilege and marginalization. My work is inseparable from my experience of the world as queer, trans, and Indigenous - work that's abstracted from vulnerable and real experiences rarely resonates with me. In particular, existing in-between easily described binaries as 2S, as mixed race, and as someone who is bi/pansexual has been deeply influential to the desire within my practice to break the boundaries between bodies (human/human, human/nature, nature/nature, to oversimplify). That has often taken the form of exploring chimeric bodies, intimacy, and, in this particular performance, the boundary of my skin to speak to emotional and community wounds in a physical and spiritual way.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence you practice at large? How was the witness *implicated* in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Sheri: This is actually really interesting to me, though my practice often deals very much with the intersections of my

identity and concern about social disconnect, injustice, and ecological crisis, I am usually largely focused on depicting and trying to elicit connections rather than speaking directly to trauma. Taking my work in this direction as well as focusing on a performance piece (as my practice takes many forms) led me to create work that felt very important in the current political context of Turtle Island, especially social uprisings against the police and police violence. It's important to me that my work comes from a place centered in my own experiences, and so connecting to my own life, mental illness, and family history as a Metis person who lives with the internal and external effects of intergenerational trauma from colonialism - and whose family has often dealt with psychological crises in relation to this trauma - I wanted to acknowledge and take action for Indigenous people who had been killed in so-called Canada by colonial police forces.

Trying to figure out how I would acknowledge, honor, and even offer peace to those who had been killed without making the work a spectacle for what would likely be dominantly (white) settler-colonial viewers was the greatest challenge in developing the work. While I do believe witnesses were implicated in the work, the work was not enacted for them or about demonstrating Indigenous trauma for consumption. Instead, I tried to orient the work in a way where it was about witnessing those who had been killed and inviting viewers to witness with me, with intention that there might be some healing and catharsis in the act for Indigenous viewers. The piece absolutely takes on the role of being somewhat educational, but I did not want the focal point to be white and settler viewers. Non-Indigenous, settler viewers and especially those who are safe from police and perhaps do not even fear or

dislike them are implicated in their privilege to be free from the violence the work speaks to.

Q: How does gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

Sheri: Gender and, in that, a trans non-binary experience, is as present in my practice as any other aspect of my being, while rarely being the focal point. Bodies are highly present in my work, as well as breaking down the assumed boundaries of bodies, and I think there is something very trans that is spoken to in that. This is something that has felt really present showing my work in *the body as a fever dream* curated by Dallas Fellini recently, where, as peers who have changed our bodies, we were able to speak about imagining the body differently as a very transgender experience.

There was a really interesting aspect to creating this work where even though I was only wearing snug black boxers, and know that my body is one conventionally read as that of a 'woman,' I did not feel as though gender was highly present in enacting it. I've had a breast reduction and have visible scars - my version of top surgery - and I often present in a very masc way, so I think the parts of myself that defy certain gendered assumptions were simply present while being beside the point. I think that can be very important sometimes, that our trans bodies just exist without being the statement we're making. My body was the ground for enacting this piece, without comment, simply present.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

Sheri: I'm not sure why I find this question particularly complex to answer, I actually googled embodiment to feel like I had a point to start from. I think I'm inclined to say something like "it's all embodiment." and "objects and things aside from the human body can and do embody things." At the same time, the piece I made is an act of physically embodying the wounds of Indigenous deaths caused by police forces in 'Canada.' I literally wear the wounds as well as beaded pieces to honor and represent each person lost to colonial violence in that way. I remove the needles from my skin and the beaded pieces, laying them with medicines in a gesture of trying to release some of that pain, to unburden myself and my community and hopefully allow catharsis and healing. Enacting the piece is also the embodiment of the research attached to it - I'll speak to this more when we get to the question about memorialization.

Holly Timpener (They/Them)

<https://hollytimpener.wixsite.com/hollytimpener>

<https://www.instagram.com/hollytimpener/>

There is a Dissonance and Density Within my Body, part two

This performance builds on the work presented at Pi*llOry part one. It is an emotional and physical response to trauma that lives in my body in the present, past and future. I work to discover information residing within my body as to why I feel such a disconnect with myself. I employ my body in ritual actions to transform my physical self with the desire to also transform my sensed embodied trauma. As I present my body, I am affected by my unconscious internal resonances and also by the witnesses. I feel both myself and other in the space and call upon both to transform my body and my trauma.

Photos by Tina Bararian





Simla Civelek (She/Her)

<http://www.simlativelek.com/>



Photography by Kylie Sivley (Holy Moment Photography) and Meng Ying Li

Artist Statement

“I don’t want realism, I want magic.” I came across this quote recently, once again, years after reading *A Streetcar Named Desire* for the first time. Things feel inherently different now in 2020. An outside world in turmoil and an inner world with angst, fear, and weariness. Blanche makes more sense, or rather, I understand her need. When I have the cynical question of “why make performance,” I also have the inclination to start from the present moment to find an answer, or rather, to look for an answer.

Re-constructing De-construction

Language is a glue that binds human interaction. Human interaction then becomes all-encompassing verisimilitude. Let's take away the glue, let's take away the familiar reciprocity. Let's go backwards. What truly speaks to gut also speaks to mind. The act is the hero, the words support the act. My intent was to de-construct a solid piece of furniture. I, then attempted to re-construct it with no skill but a desire to create something new. Its purpose existed only in the moment. The moment is the only lasting structure.

Photos by Tina Bararian





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted October 26th, 2020. Revised February 13th, 2021.

My name is Simla Civelek. I am 46 at the moment. I performed in the 4th edition of Pi*llOry on July 26, 2020.

I found in the Pi*llOry event, a community, whose members were focused on their uniqueness and diversity and celebrated and commented on their place in society while being inclusive and respectful.

I would like to speak of my work and my experiences in the context of otherness in the hope of answering the questions you are posing.

As a woman growing up in a matriarchal family in a male-centric culture, I became aware of the different social dynamics at an early age. My performance work develops from the desire to react to these dynamics in an idiosyncratic way. I identify as female and a feminist and I believe that I carry the record and knowledge of past gestures in my body. My identity along with these gestures build a foundation on which creation can take shape.

In my work embodiment may happen in different forms (e.g., I embodied a “character” in my one-in-one piece “black box” by building a small wooden structure covered in black fabric that was suggestive of niqab, stepping into it naked and inviting audience members inside to engage in a discussion.) Embodiment is the intention to make something visible through

the body so at times I use my body to translate “nothing” into “something.”

I prefer to approach performance in a nonrepresentational way in an attempt to make the personal, universal. By sincerely bringing myself into a performance, I also resurface my traumas and my methods to deal with them, perhaps in a performative manner. Once this experience is shared, then the witness can choose their agency in order to respond to it. The performance can have a transformative power but the transformation cannot be forced.

As humans we are resilient, complex and diverse with untapped resources. Performance is a smorgasbord where we can tap into the undiscovered psyche. This tapping can be identified as a 7th sense. The body as an organism has a rich memory and its intelligence can be the source of creation of many kinds.

Tess Martens (She/Her)

<http://www.tessmartens.com/>

https://www.instagram.com/tess_martens/



Photo by Tess Martens

Tess Martens (she/her) currently based in Montreal, Quebec, graduated from the University of Waterloo with a Master of Fine Art focusing on performance art in 2018. In her art practice, personal experiences are re-contextualized through performances. Humour is often used in her performances to invite and engage the audience. In 2019, Martens performed a performance on her identity in The Hague, The Netherlands, Later that year, she performed a political performance in New Mexico, USA. She attended the Venice International Performance Week in January, 2020. She also performed in a

small underground gallery in Berlin, Germany called Pandora Art Gallery in 2020 before the pandemic. She has also performed in Ontario and Quebec, Canada. When she is not performing, she is painting in her kitchen and working with seniors at a Montreal senior residence.

Ashes to Ashes

Ashes to Ashes is a ritual act where I will first pour water from a pitcher on the slip & slide and the grass turf referencing the tarot card, The Star. I wear white underwear like The Virgin. I pluck the petals of daisies and I repeat, "They love me, they love me not!". I lie in the petals and water like the painting of Ophelia. I sing "Ring Around the Rosie" and turn in circles and fall to the lyrics, "Ashes, Ashes, we all fall down!". A performance about love and not being loved in the same way, womanhood, life and death.

Photos by Tina Bararian





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted February 13th, 2021. Revised February 24th, 2021.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Tess: I feel like the queer community is a strong, understanding and a supportive community. I was really inspired by the queer performances that weekend. There are voices that need to be heard and important issues to be acknowledged.

Queerness affects my work as I am so happy to be different, odd, and I encourage difference in gender, sexuality and being. Growing up, many people called my strange, different and often weird. I often tried to figure out why I was looked at strangely for wearing my two older brothers' hand me downs and exploring crushing on different sexes in elementary school. As a child, I accepted the queer community, and my parents were really queer-positive. As they let me be one of the boys with my brothers as well as wear princess dresses. I think also growing

up with a mental health diagnosis, I identify as the woman out sometimes and therefore queer. I often to this day, attempt to always seem “okay” in society’s norms. I try to hide my real emotions and am very much a people pleaser. However, with my queer performances, I am free to express myself as I would like. Queerness is liberating.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence you practice at large? How was the witness *implicated* in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Tess: My performance, *Ashes to Ashes*, 2020, was about healing from a past love and romance. The TRAUMA of a death of a relationship. The memories and the childlike naivety that it will last forever and ever. I brought the slip and slide in as I work a lot with water and the healing qualities. I also bridge childhood memories and my current adult memories a lot. There was VIOLENCE as I plucked the pedals from the once beautiful bouquet then beauty as I laid like the painting “Ophelia” in the water and pedals. I also discussed self-healing and self-care as I illustrated with my body, “The Star” tarot card. As much as I want to blame my past lovers for my pain and loss, I often need to look within and heal myself. The witness witnessed all of this as well as me launching my large body on the slip and slide with no hesitation. The emotional pain is always harder for me as a performer yet often witnesses view the physical pain that is derived from the emotional.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

Tess: Embodiment is when thoughts and feelings exist and are communicated through my body. I often take past childhood experiences and other past experiences that I have embodied and once again embody these memories in my performances. In my P*llOry performance, *Ashes to Ashes*, 2020, I embody love and loss through my experiences as a child and adult with family, friends, and lovers. My whole body communicates gratefulness for the love of others and my own love as well as the pain and suffering caused by others and my own interpretations of others' actions and verbal communication. The witness then may embody my experiences and feelings through my performances as well as additional personal embodiment. It is a way of connecting and communicating my life lessons to the witness. In an age of technological barriers, I tell my story through my body which translates into the witnesses' body.

Q: When invited to perform at Pi*llOry you were provided with a mission statement. Do you feel the event was successful or not in achieving its goal of creating a space where queer healing can be achieved through the embodiment of trauma?

Tess: I cannot speak for the other performance artists and witnesses. I do not believe that performance art is often healing more eye opening and sharing of experiences. It is always important to talk through our bodies queer trauma and trauma in general. This is how we connect and communicate as humans and feel less alone in this very lonely world. Thank you, Holly, for providing a safer space for people who identify as queer and a space where performance could be life with safety measures during this pandemic. Also, thank you for allowing people to experience each other's actions and power as people. Thank you to the performers for being so vulnerable and sharing what is truly important to them.

Pi*llOry ^{*part 5}

An LGBTQI+
performance night
with works by

B Wijshijer
lwrds

Raki Malhotra

Aisha Lesley Bentham

Santiago Tamayo Soler

Holly Timpener

speranza spyr

Hosted by
Tianna Henry



Saturday November 21st
7 pm – 10 pm EST

Broadcasted from Glad Day TV
<https://zoom.us/my/gladday>
PW: 1970

Pi*llOry's performers are liberating queer bodies as a primary agency that can harness the transformative power of presence, space, politics, shame and (dis)ability while refracting their infinite incarnations. Pi*llOry's artists renounce the binary and traditional gender roles, they not only create new ones for themselves, but give space for others to create their own as well. Through oral, visual and visceral mediums, Pi*llOry explores the depths of fragmented gender/queer identity, pushing beyond labels and classifications. On the edge of complete uncertainty, with only the already structural, limited and bound ways of description and discrimination of queerness, Pi*llOrists arm themselves with the unknown, in hopes of navigating the surrender that comes with being Other.

Poster by Jackie Timpener

Part five

Our spirits had risen with the success of Pi*llOry part three and four; however, the feeling was short-lived. Another lockdown was ordered for Toronto, placing live performance again on hold. Our Queer collective decided to move forward with Pi*llOry part five, embracing the new parameters in which performance was headed, technology. Partnering with Glad Day TV², we had the support needed for our final iteration of Pi*llOry. Saturday, November 21st, 2020 P*llOrists Becca Wijshijer, lwrds, Raki Malhotra, Speranza Spir, Aisha Lesley Bentham, Santiago Tamayo Soler, and I were broadcasted by Glad Day TV. Some performances were live and streamed directly through the Glad Day channel, while others performed through pre-recorded videos. We were challenged to consider what embodiment is when working with technology. Movement, sound and voice improvisation, cooking, meditation, connection to place/space, naming, and hypnosis were ways in which Pi*llOry part five performers worked to embody trauma.

^{2 2} Glad Day Bookstore is a Queer bookstore and hub on the infamous Church Street in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March 2020, Glad Day has been fundraising money to aid Queers in need. They also launched their Zoom channel, giving artists and performers who lost employment opportunity to work.

Aisha Lesley Bentham (She/Her,They/Them)

<https://www.instagram.com/missbentham/>



Photo by Aisha Lesley Bentham

Artist Statement

Cooking is nostalgic and active, as you coexist in the past and the present. I am fascinated by how a mundane task can be amplified into a magical experience by intentionally creating an atmosphere that lives in two spaces simultaneously. It demands everything and nothing from you at the same time and is connected to rituality and memory as you are able to bridge who you are culturally, ancestrally and spatially. Cooking is the embodiment of those before us, but how does this connect to performance? My belief is that it is through performance that we remember who we are. It is through the mundane that we discover our magic.

Aisha Lesley Bentham MA, BFA, is an artist-scholar and vegan chef who's work and research centers ritual, aesthetic and labour. Her love for cooking and performance led her to investigate the many intersections of these disciplines, from ancestral connection, to spatial turn, to spirituality. Aisha's transdisciplinary approach to creating continues to push her to explore the many embodied aspects and possibilities that the work offers. She looks forward to continuing her performance-research by completing a cookbook.

Movements with my Ancestors

In 2019, I created *movements with my ancestors* which is a durational performance-installation that uses food preparation and cooking techniques as participatory and reflective storytelling. Through a non-verbal narrative, I am connecting with movements and gestures that speak of an intricate relationship to time and space. The installation is designed to engage the audience through smell, taste, colour, memory and with questions that motivate a deeper bond to food and self. This expanding threshold between cooking and performance is bound together by ritual, labour and aesthetics, which is first revealed in the kitchen. Cooking is nostalgic and active, as you coexist in the past and the present. I am fascinated by how a mundane task can be amplified into a magical experience by intentionally creating an atmosphere that lives in two spaces simultaneously. It demands everything and nothing from you at the same time. Cooking is the embodiment of those before us, but how does this connect to performance? My belief is that it is through performance that we remember who we are. It is through the mundane that we discover our magic.

Photos courtesy of Aisha Lesley Bentham





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*
Conducted February 17th, 2021. Revised February 28th, 2021.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Aisha: Great. It's so interesting for me as somebody who feels like I'm new to queerness, I'm not, but I'm saying it feels new to me because often, my communities, like currently my main communities are not queer communities. And so, whenever I go into queer spaces, I often feel like I'm a newbie, even though I'm not. And so, it's exciting. And also, I sometimes can feel very isolated because I don't know these communities. I'm like, is there a way to *do* or *be*? I just don't always feel like I have the information or don't always feel equipped. And so, to be in

that space, I constantly over and over again have seen the benefits of having queer only spaces, and there is just a little bit more space in those spaces. Whether or not I always take up all of this space, I know that the space is there, and I'm always so grateful for that.

I've been sitting with the second half of this question because I, I don't know. Part of me is like, yeah, obviously it affects your work because you are somebody who's queer, you're doing the work. But to be able to pinpoint connect it to the effect, I'm not sure. Through my research, I talked about being in these two spaces of being hyper visible and invisible at the same time and this kind of threshold between those two worlds.

And that's where my work lives. The choice for me to take this very important practice of cooking, this very historical practice of cooking that is so wrapped up in slavery, it's so wrapped up in being a black woman and really taking that and putting myself, like, on the forefront of it. Like really being at the forefront and that very conscious choice. And then on top of that, being a black, queer woman. I don't speak about it very often in my work, but I know that I am that. And so, I guess I would say that, yes, it affects my work. But to be able to articulate the ways in which it does that, I'm not entirely sure yet.

Q: How does gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

Aisha: Yes. Absolutely. This goes back to the fact that I said that I am a black queer woman doing this work. There is something about me in this particular form where I appear a fem, bodied form. There is something very particular about the roles in

which have been implicated within and on me as a woman. I am very aware of that. This idea of care and taking care and feeding and supporting and almost feeling like its part of my duty. My purpose. And the contradictions and conflicts with that, with being like “Why”, “Why does that have to be a thing”. And understanding that there are complexities in the feelings around it, having these ideas and ideals of women, specifically black woman, doing this work and then me being like this is so attached to my purpose. So those two spaces are constantly kind of budding up against each other. Questioning why I have to do this.

Holly: Expectations of gender is something that is important to confront. I feel like in any kind of performance work we are doing an action and we are visible. So then, what are the expectations of our perceived gender? This, to me is something interesting because we present in different ways at different times.

Aisha: Yeah, Its so much more complex than that. Also allowing it to be as complex as that. Like not feeling subject to stay in this structure or the ideas around my femininity or my femaleness. My womanness, which is a whole other conversation. And knowing that it can be as complex and as transitionary as possible, knowing that I have the space to do that. So that goes back to what I said initially about going into queer spaces, knowing that the space is there even though I might not always take it up. And I really do feel like that within my queerness, I feel like parts of me definitely is all out, taking up all the space and other parts of me are still kind of testing the waters a little bit.

Holly: I think there is a certain level within queer spaces of

knowledge of being able to be viewed or given space or giving witness to work that is more nuanced, more understanding of these fluidities and how complex things are. There is a different view, instead of witnessed as an image we understand that there are deeper complexities, and we investigate those complexities because of our traumas and the way that we are situated in the world and our connections with each other we really investigate things further than a face level.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

Aisha: Embodiment would be described as a coming into a version of oneself. Embodiment is a basis of my practice and it relies on ancestral knowledge to play a lead role in my installation.

This is a big question. I'm going to talk about the second part of the question. It is definitely something I use within my work. A lot of time I try not to dissect this part of my practice, I *choose* not to dissect this part of my practice. This is the part of the research: that you will not get anymore than what I'm telling you. So, a big part of me, when I go into and prepare to cook anything, I often time have no idea what's happening. I come out and I'm like "what just happened". And not that I'm not paying attention, I'm totally paying attention, totally full of alignment but whatever is transpiring is so much beyond me. So, people ask what I've made, and I have no idea. People ask, what did you do, and I don't know. This is why I find it very difficult to do recipes. I just want to create. And then whatever happens is what happens. And so, when doing installations having an audience is a really great experience, because then

them as the audience are able to witness something that I can't see. I am only in the feeling of it. And that is really exciting. So, yes embodiment is part of my research.

Q: The Montreal performance collective TouVA investigates performance in their book *The 7th Sense* and defines this seventh sense as a place inside the performer that guides their actions, creating a kind of pathway for increased sensibility that emerges while in performative action. Do you feel there is some sort of seventh sense, or ghost like presence that guides you while in performance?

Aisha: Absolutely. There is definitely something that is guiding me and instructing me. It also feels like I am so much in alignment, with not only myself but with everything that's happening around me. And its so sharp. And its so specific. And its almost paper, paper thin and very intense. That's where I think some of this exhaustion comes from, cause it's a level of intensity. What I kind of describe, this is another part of my research, where I talk about the extraordinary. Its like you are tapping into this layer of extraordinary that you don't always get a chance to do. Its really in particular spaces or environments that you are really able to tap into that space. So, I think about why its now super important to perform an installation on the land. Cause its rally to tap into that energy that is so heightened. Its other dimensional.

B Wijshijer (They/ Them)

<https://www.instagram.com/bwijshijer/>

<https://www.instagram.com/shrimpychip/>

youtu.be/mrlfb_MMbVk



Image by B Wijshijer

Artist Statement

B Wijshijer is a research-based artist working within digital media, video and performance. Wijshijer utilizes online trends and subcultures to deconstruct mediated intimacies and personas on digital platforms. Informed by acceleration aesthetics, their work plays with excess and artifice to interrogate the ways in which late capitalism affects our digital lives. Wijshijer received their BFA in Printmaking from OCAD University in 2017 and an MFA from the University of Waterloo in 2020.

shrimpychip: GUIDED MEDITATION

shrimpychip: GUIDED MEDITATION shows my persona, shrimpychip, multiplied and following a guided meditation spoken in an AI rendered clone of my voice. While developing the script I was thinking about ‘data trauma’, a term which describes the effects of exploitative use and our alienation from our data, and ‘data healing’ as a caring response. As contemporary cyborgian beings of physical and online form, I wanted to take a viral guided meditation, which already begins to bridge these realms and see how the words are interpreted when applied to digital bodies.

Photos are stills from *shrimpychip: GUIDED MEDITATION*, courtesy of B Wijshijer







Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*
Conducted December 7th, 2020. Revised February 24th. 2021.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

B: I am always so honoured to participate in events concentrated to queer creators. It's a kind of comfort and understanding that is so infrequent in work environments. As a queer performer, queerness becomes this innate thing that is always part of my practice even when the theme isn't specifically queer. My work is always presented from a queer point of view simply by using myself as a character.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence you practice at large? How was the witness *implicated*

in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

B: Trauma is a theme I find myself returning to throughout my practice. As a net artist, I think about how trauma exists and persists online and different methods of collective and individual healing. In my Pi*llOry performance I focused on data trauma and data healing --- trauma inflicted by surveillance, capitalism, and online architectures built by people with the power and privilege to do so.

Q: How does gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

B: As a nonbinary AFAB performer who presents more 'feminine' I am constantly misgendered. My performance character is also nonbinary and I sometimes use them to directly confront gender binaries while other times it's not so explicit (either way these gender themed videos are part of shrimpy's history and world). My work for Pi*llOry doesn't directly mention gender but I reuse the character of shrimpy and through the affirmations spoken "It is safe for me to be myself" it is suggested that the character actually doesn't feel this way and imply that there is more to shrimpy's identity than what is immediately displayed.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

B: Feeling present in the body, being able to use the body to express emotions and ideas. When I perform, I try to focus on

an emotion or a scenario to react to and use my body to respond. I think it makes my gestures and expressions more believable.

Holly Timpener (They/Them)

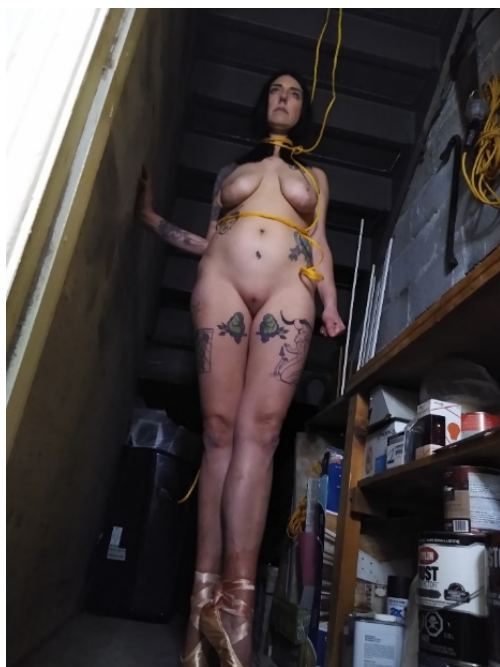
<https://hollytimpener.wixsite.com/hollytimpener>

<https://www.instagram.com/hollytimpener/>

There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: part three

This performance continues to explore physical and sensed experiences that live in the present, past and future. I stand for two and a half hours in ballet shoes, on point, in a closet, attached to the ceiling by a rope that anchors around my neck and waist. This will be my last performance with my breasts. I engage in this durational action in search of internal affectual transformations regarding my lived experience in this body. As I stand alone in the closet, witnessed only through the screen of my phone, I welcome the physical pain creeping up my legs. As I feel the sensations in my body, I transform it into something new, something that inspires me to continue. It is my desire to continue this relationship and transfer it to the disconnect I experience in my body. In doing so, I intend to shift my internal traumas so that I may be inspired to move forward.

Photos by Gabriel Dorais





lwrds (They/Them)

<https://www.instagram.com/lwrds.art/>

<https://www.instagram.com/lwrds.sss/>



Photo by lwrds

Artist Statement

My studio practice—much like myself—is 100% brujería mixed with ancestral wrath. Conjuring performance, sculptural, illustrative, poetic, and remediated mixed-media outcomes, this brujería praxis emerges from a foundation of transgressive witchy knowledge, traversing the multiple realms of my idiosyncratic spirituality. My work as an artist responds to my personal journey of healing sexual trauma at the intersections of gender variance, Blackness and Indigeneity (complicated by an imposed latinidad I vehemently reject due to its colonial underpinnings), and

disability for reasons of neurodivergence and chronic illness. A born storyteller with a deep commitment to healing personal and collective traumas, my material approach is an intuitive process of learning with other non-human beings, valuing energetic exchanges with all that exists.

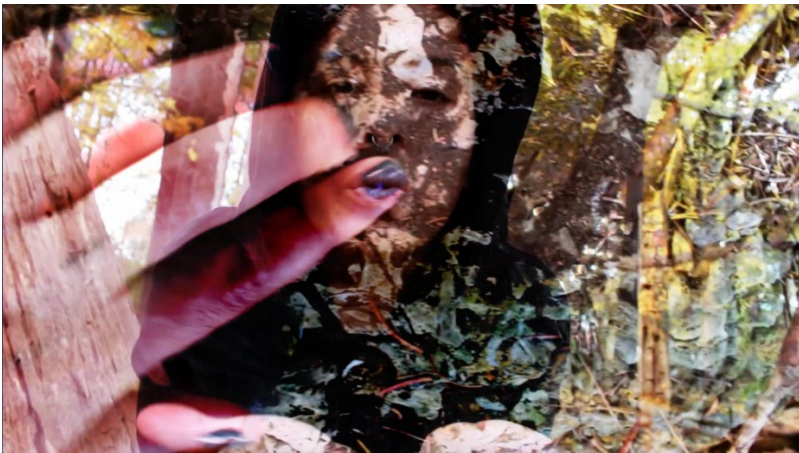
cut memory

I'm fascinated by the idea of layers
nebulous spacetime membranes
throbbing trauma memories
aching for release

cut memory is the documentation of ritual connection to place
an exercise in extrasensorial perception
knowledge transference through osmosis
obscuring traces of truth deep in sensorial chaos
non-linear multi-reality compressed
an attempt to make tangible a dissociative experience of life

trauma split me into many bits
and i love them all
for they make us
me

Photos are stills from *cut memory*, courtesy of lwrds





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted December 19th, 2020. Revised February 23rd, 2021.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence you practice at large? How was the witness *implicated* in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

lwrd: my practice looks at intergenerational trauma, cyclical patterns of trauma, and the known/unknown effects on my body (due to PTSD for example). My own body and expressions of embodiment are the site where i'm able to connect to all that exists.

Q: How does gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

lwrd: i find it helpful for myself to think of gender as a traumatic assignation. through my practice i've been able to continue exploring this notion, expanding my own fluid experience of sex/gender as an intersex person of feminized experience there's no way i can separate that from my art.

Q: How would you describe EMBODIMENT? Is embodiment a method you employ within your performance practice and how does that affect your work?

lwrds: i think of embodiment often because i dissociate just as often. performance has had the biggest impact in my experience of self/multiple selves because it allows me to confront all of me in and outside my body.

Q: The Montreal performance collective TouVA investigates performance in their book *The 7th Sense* and defines this seventh sense as a place inside the performer that guides their actions, creating a kind of pathway for increased sensibility that emerges while in performative action. Do you feel there is some sort of seventh sense, or ghost like presence that guides you while in performance?

lwrds: 1000%!!! it's ancestors working through me, human and non-human alike; it's like Lorca's theory of the "duende", accessing an underground river of collective energy that is all-consuming and with me always.

Raki Malhotra (She/They)

@rakimalhotra

Artist Statement

In performance, I explore the contemporary biases that are likely surfacing among us at this time; ordering the micro-society that exists right now in the space in which together we are present. Collaboration has a major role in this process, and my intention is to listen and respond. My collaborator is a witness, a viewer, a group member, another artist, a space, an object, or perhaps something/someone else.

Raki Malhotra is an interdisciplinary artist from Toronto, Canada who is currently working out of Mexico City.

Performing: *Nadee Achambha*, a musical. 2019-present
Nadee Achambha is the durational self-correctional performance of my post-colonial experience-currently in its second year- in which I perform as 'Nadee Achambha'.

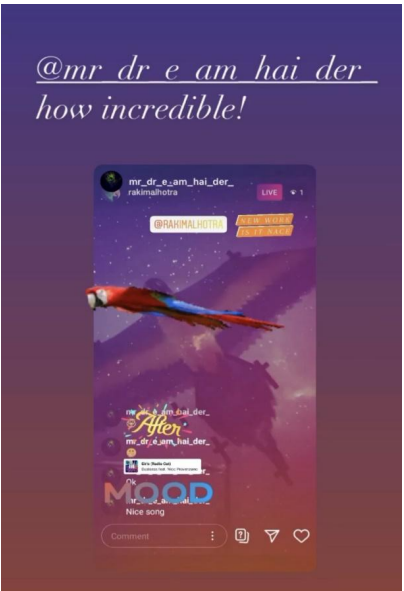
Nadee is a name change, rather than a roleplay or a character performance. Nadee will perform IRL actions in order to try to acquire knowledge/info from what I believe is my- ancestral connection/my core self. I will additionally try to acquire knowledge/info associated with/assigned to— my cultural/diasporic identities, for example- I will try to learn Urdu via language practice. When I am functional in my day to day life; the performance will begin with Nadee's morning hours of core practice, which consist of things like movement, geomancy, digital and/or live noisemaking, acquired language and sargam practice. By the afternoon, provided I'm functioning well in my day to day life, Nadee will **nps** continue to learn something (nps=no pressure situation). In the evening--provided

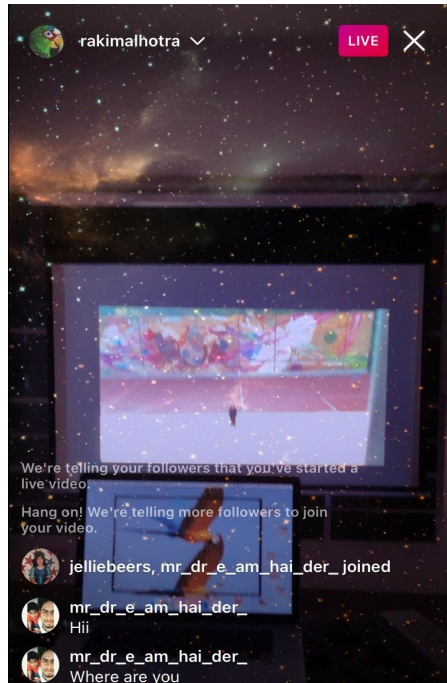
I am still able to function in the performance-- Nadee will cram/memorise ~info.

Unfortunately--- my internet addiction, along with other situations and states of being (that are in relation to an **antecedent of intergenerational trauma**—and impacted by the colonisation of my self and my ancestors, my global experience of otherness, racialisation and gender inequality-- while living on colonised land——) often renders me completely non-functional in the performance of Nadee. When I'm not functioning well in my day to day life——little to no actions are performed to acquire knowledge/info from my ancestral connection/my core self, nor to acquire knowledge/info associated with/assigned to— my cultural/diasporic identities. When I'm not functioning in the performance, (and thus, Nadee is no longer able to be present in the space,) I will try to save Nadee, by taking a break for as long as needed and/or talking through the performance—to (re-)locate/(re-)direct myself from that point ——>in the performance of Nadee. It is anticipated that the performance will happen over the course of several years.

The cumulative result of my actions over time has so far produced a multimedia work anchored by digital performance via self disclosure, musicality and the critique/analysis of my performance of *Nadee Achambha*.

Photos courtesy of Raki Malhotra





Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted: December 19th, 2020. Revised February 17th, 2021.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence your practice at large? How was the witness *implicated* in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Raki: I don't consider trauma a theme as it relates to my work therefore as a theme ~no~ it does not influence my work. At this time, I do *locate* trauma as part of my performance practice.

Holly: How was the witness implicated in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Raki: For me the implication of that evening of performance had more to do with the format of the zoom event, where passive witnessing of performance becomes the norm. Another implication was the manner in which the night was scripted by the co-organizer, Glad Day Bookshop. For me the acts of hosting an event on zoom and also scripting the format of the evening's progression, acted much like an Instagram filter or some other way of filtering or forming my performance. The witnesses who are named as 'participants' by zoom seem to have their own experience of the evening that I have little access to. That is neither good or bad to me, it is my observation of how I relate to the participants or witnesses during the evenings performances.

Q: Do you feel that within your performance at Pi*llOry you were engaging in an act of memorialization and how do you feel that affects the community witnessing the work?

Raki: Yes and no. The event is being catalogued. As an individual performance, no I don't believe that my part in the event was (or should be) memorialized. For example, I don't believe that my performance was important to those who witnessed it. I don't really use the word memorialize often therefore I'm only touching upon the surface of the meaning of this word —at this time I believe that for an event or action or a performance to be memorialized, it needs to be identified and understood, and it needs to be important to those who witness it.

Q: When invited to perform at Pi*llOry you were provided with a mission statement. Do you feel the event was successful or not

in achieving its goal of creating a space where queer healing can be achieved through the embodiment of trauma?

Raki: I do not feel it was successful in creating a space where my healing could be achieved through the embodiment of trauma. It's nice when it happens though I don't expect that from an art space.

Santiago Tamayo Soler (He/Him)

<https://www.instagram.com/santiagotamayosoler/>



Image by Santiago Tamayo Soler

Artist Statement

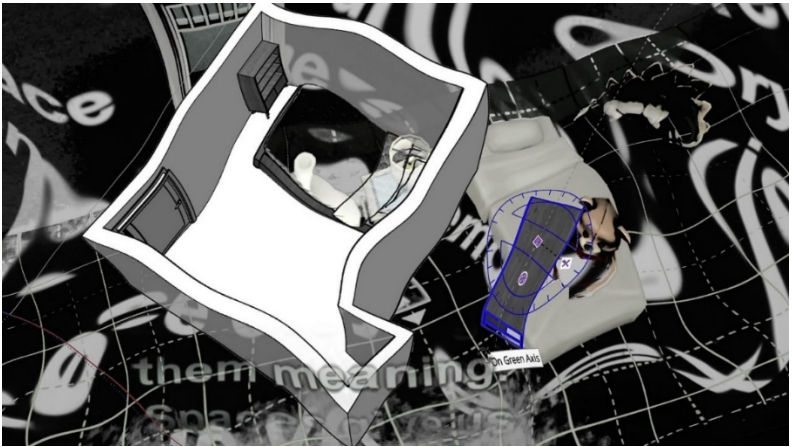
Santiago Tamayo Soler (b. Bogotá, Colombia) is a Montreal-based interdisciplinary artist working mostly in video, performance and painting. Following a degree in Film Studies at the Universidad del Cine in Buenos Aires, Argentina, he completed a Bachelor in Fine Arts at Concordia University in 2019. Interested in the intersection of fictional narratives, cinema and live action, Santiago's work tries to translate and integrate various elements from the cinematic language through ritualistic studies and practices.

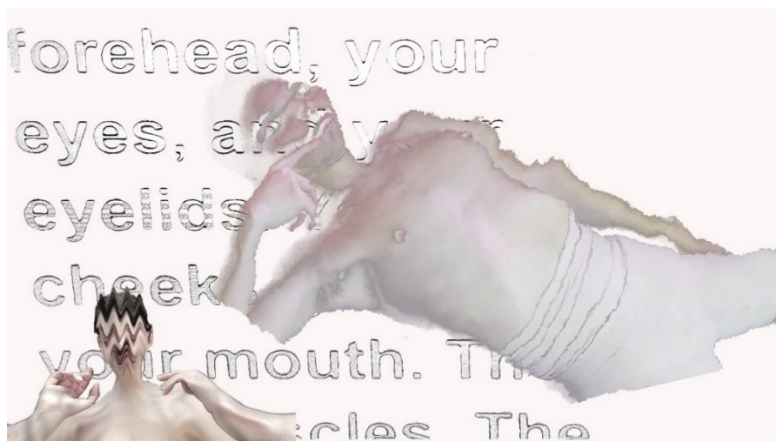
spatialhealing.mp4

Short Hypnosis Session to free yourself from Spatial Attachments - Reflections on Architectural Links to memory/ies. Disclaimer: This recording should not be used as a substitute for any medical care you may be receiving. You should always refer to a doctor when necessary. Do not listen while driving or operating machinery, only listen in a place where you can relax and let go.

Photos are stills from *spatialhealing.mp4*, courtesy of Santiago Tamayo Soler









Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*

Conducted November 24th, 2020. Revised January 22nd, 2021.

Q: How do you feel having only queer performers influence the evening? How has queerness affected you and your work?

Santiago: It's amazing that queer artists have spaces like this to showcase art works, specially during lockdown times.

I wouldn't say that queerness has 'affected' my work, but more like my work often fell into the 'queer' category. I am personally conflicted and suspicious of umbrella terminologies, If I have to think of a more 'accurate' description, I'd rather think of myself (and my work) as cis/gay, Colombian-ish/Colombia-referential, and immigrant, as opposed to queer, latinx, etc. Queer and Latinx are terms that people often use to refer to me (and my work) and although I understand the intention and that probably sticking to the terminology will open doors for me or whatever, I find the action kind of lazy and at risk of cheap tokenism.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence you practice at large? How was the witness implicated in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Santiago: Due to it's autobiographical nature, trauma has always been somehow present in my work, I have played with trauma a lot - changing the levels of how much of it I include in my work through fictional reenactments. Before, when I fictionalized trauma, I did it to test audiences, and audience's expectations of me as a performer with whatever politics were associated with my body. I however became less and less interested in including explicit demonstrations of trauma in my work because I got tired of exploiting myself for the sake of someone else's entertainment and for the sake of my own sense of 'validation' and 'worth' as an artist. Performing became a traumatic experience by itself and reenacting trauma or addressing trauma made the whole thing extremely redundant, unnecessary and harming of my own wellbeing. I stopped performing live in mid 2019.

During quarantine, I found myself and the people close to me dealing with tons of anxiety. Some (most) of us didn't have good health insurance and few ways of accessing mental health professionals, so free online meditations and workouts 'substituted' the role. I became particularly interested in self-hypnosis videos teaching techniques to 'rewire yourself' physically and mentally, and the poetics and language of meditation scripts. 'spatialhealing.mp4' is more of a collage of those free online resources. In this work I tried to translate the performative aspect into the digital, being particularly interested in the blend between spiritual practices

and virtual 3D spaces as a way of escapism. I tried to address trauma through this concept of 'rewiring' yourself in order to 're-consider how we interact with a space through memory', the meditation hypnosis however ends up being irrelevant, and lost in the distortions of the 'deep trance'. I created digital spaces with The Sims 4 and SketchUp, both digital platforms (a videogame and a 3D architecture modelling app), I don't think I can talk from the viewers' experience. Reactions are always very different. There's no explicit violence or suffering in this work, that I'm aware of.

Q: The Montreal performance collective TouVA investigates performance in their book *The 7th Sense* and defines this seventh sense as a place inside the performer that guides their actions, creating a kind of pathway for increased sensibility that emerges while in performative action. Do you feel there is some sort of seventh sense, or ghost like presence that guides you while in performance?

Santiago: Although I understand the concept, I don't experience it like that at all -I don't feel comfortable performing. I think that what moves me is how disassociated and anxious I am at the moment (mostly live with an audience). I have the habit to stick to scripts, so it's easier to continue no matter how stressed I am. What guides me, I think, is pure adrenaline and my desire to not fuck up. In the case of this project, the movements I did were very random and then twisted in Premier. Since it was just me and the camera, I was able to try different things in a more calm way and reshoot as much as needed.

Q: When invited to perform at Pi*llOry you were provided with a mission statement. Do you feel the event was successful or not in achieving its goal of creating a space where queer healing can be achieved through the embodiment of trauma?

Santiago: I don't necessarily think of performance as an artistic practice whose function is healing oneself or others' trauma. That being said, I think that this event was quite successful in reflecting Pi*llOry's mission of bringing together a group of queer artists to display their works in their own terms. It was quite interesting to see how we all adapted to the event being live-streamed, and very cute to see how during the event some of us used the chat group we had to throw comments here and there. Thank you Holly for inviting us! <3

Speranza Spir (She/Her)

<https://journeypagesblog.wordpress.com/>



Photo by Speranza Spir

Artist Statement

A Montrealer, somatic practitioner, poet & multidisciplinary performer. Speranza Spir is interested in overlapping feminist issues with Butoh inspired performance improvisation. How all this coalesces, gives insight into her constant creative process in dealing with the challenges of negative, vulnerable-izing and invalidating present-time issues still present for many women. She is certified as a Manual Osteopathy practitioner (NAO, 2018) and obtained an MA diploma in Somatic Education

(UQAM, 2008), specializing in the Gymnastik Holistique Ehrenfried™ method. In addressing many of these issues as a movement practitioner, she connects to the " intelligent body " enhancing cognition and how its relevance informs performance and authenticity, identity and emotional empowerment.

Bush is declaring war, !Ladies wear your Keleb!
CONFIGURED/RE/CONFIGURE

A movement, sound and voice improvisation, sometimes "tongue-in-cheek", sometimes traumatic, and dealing with paradoxical relationships with clothing. For speranza, wears have an emotional charge, pressed between layers of the psyche.

She dives into some of her internal conflict to revisit the battleground of feminism she stepped onto decades ago.

This idea came about during her studies at Concordia in photography and video production in september of 2001, some time after George W. Bush declared the war on terror. speranza began a photo-choreography series from women's wears which inspired her in light of this conflict. The image of Muslim women fleeing for their survival and having very little with them impressed on her the power of the thobe (or thawb, the traditional long robe worn by men or women), for example, as a protective wear. Yet other pieces of clothing, such as a silk fuchsia nightgown, also came into the exploration as global conflicts escalated at the beginning of the millennia.

Please note that the word 'Kelebia' in the title is the greek-language equivalent for 'thobe'.

The poem recited written by Gertrude Stein, Yet Dish Music, by Maria Callas, Casta Diva, 1958.

Photos are still from *Bush is declaring war, !Ladies wear your Keleb!*
CONFIGURED/RE/CONFIGURE, courtesy of Speranza Spir







Pi*llOry Performer Interview: *There is a Dissonance and Density within my Body: Disrupting Inherited Historical Trauma Through Performative Embodiment Practices*
Conducted December 2nd, 2020. Revised February 14th, 2021.

Q: Pi*llOry has a running theme of TRAUMA, how did you engage with this theme in your performance and/or does it influence you practice at large? How was the witness implicated in the violence or suffering they experienced from within your work?

Speranza: The interesting thing about dealing with trauma for me is that I am a body worker and somatic educator, so I have often seen and tended to others' traumas. For a refreshing change, I explored MY vault of conflicts, fears, traumas and sufferings and realized that I should do more of this inner exploration. I received some positive feedback, although I am not sure what the group felt or said about the work.

Q: How does gender affect your practice, and did it influence your work for Pi*llOry?

Speranza: Gender was at the root of this piece presented for Pi*llory 5. I intend to pursue and further the work on a regular basis. My current working environment (OBORO.net) permits some hours per week to work on personal projects.

Also, my private clientele is exclusively women of varied self-identification, so I believe it can also influence more open relationships and discussion about body trauma and pain.

Q: Do you feel that within your performance at Pi*llOry you were engaging in an act of memorialization and how do you feel that affects the community witnessing the work?

Speranza: It's a great and pertinent question. I myself have been engaged in my artistic practice with this concept or reality of remembering, preserving the memories, and daring to expose. It brings me to a place which concerns the 'care of the self' because one is an inventory of oneself! I don't pretend to know how it affects the community witnessing the work..we all have diverse experiences. I feel that for a short while it brings people together to think about specific factors in life and to see if there is an interesting connection with community to be made or

some answers to some questions. I always have the hope and intention that it is meaningful for others.

Q: When invited to perform at Pi*llOry you were provided with a mission statement. Do you feel the event was successful or not in achieving its goal of creating a space where queer healing can be achieved through the embodiment of trauma?

Speranza: In my opinion, the success of the event went beyond its goal! There were some works focused on working from the healing perspective and others invoking/evoking the trauma and suffering. Either way, as a spectating participant, I experienced surrender and its generous effects. I am very interested in knowing more on how it will evolve.

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