

SPRING 2014
WEDNESDAY LUPYPCIW: ALLIES HONOUR YOU



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ART
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IN SITU

Wednesday Lupyciw: *ALLIES HONOUR YOU*

Curated by Blair Fornwald, Assistant Curator

JUNE 14, 3:30 PM

Victoria Park

Presented in partnership with Queen City Pride

A Conversation with Wednesday Lupyciw

by Blair Fornwald, Assistant Curator

This will be the third time that you assemble a group of (mostly) female kit drummers to participate in a living sculpture/sonic superjam/political meltdown. Can you tell me about the origins of the *ALLIES HONOUR YOU*?

Wednesday Lupyciw: Four years ago, I started going to a million rock shows, and I noticed how much more fun and active people were, compared to art openings. Those audiences, they're like a receptive membrane. For this performance I wanted to concentrate on the best parts of a rock show, distill them, and make it about things I was really into.

Another thing driving the formation of the project was my big, big, mega-deep respect for (Calgary artist and rock drummer) Rita McKeough. I wanted to create something worthy that she could participate in, something that would manifest this deep appreciation that I have for her.

The first performance was at Sled Island Music Festival in Calgary, with Rita, and drummers from some of the bands performing at the festival. Most of the drummers I wanted to meet, and could see myself collaborating with were women, which was exciting for me.

Why did you decide to work with drums and drummers?

Drums are the coolest. Of all the instruments, they're the biggest, oldest, and most stationary. They're like miniature sets, or like a house, so complicated and complex. Drumming the rhythm and the beat provides the backbone. And it is an embodied act – you can make so much noise with a drum kit, and it's all your body. You don't have to even mic the drums because the sound is just that mighty on its own.

It was also kind of irresistible to use drums because of the reference to womyn's drum circles, where everyone is hand-drumming and chanting and healing together, in Birkenstocks.

You reference the drum circle, but have configured the drummers in a triangle formation, a potent symbol of magick and the divine, and a reclaimed symbol of queer pride.



In Calgary, we performed in a circle with the four directions marked out, like a compass, reaching the outer limits of this triangular plaza in front of City Hall. In Toronto, we performed *QUEER NOISE SOLIDARITY* in Christie Pitts, this big park that gets not-nice after dark. Forming a triangle was an automatic response. I mean, what other shape would make sense? A rectangle? A parallelogram?

In the context of your practice, I also relate the triangle to Judy Chicago's 1970 sculpture, *The Dinner Party*. Could you speak a bit to your relationship to the aesthetics and politics of 1970s-era feminist art?

I studied in the textile department at the Alberta College of Art and Design, and all of my teachers came of age and made really good work in the 1970s. They definitely covered *The Dinner Party*, it was a lesson they really wanted to transmit to their students. Years later, I had work in a show with Judy Chicago, so she's definitely part of my lexicon. If I could be so bold, I would trace my lineage to her era. The artists of the 1970s craft revival were doing their work for such utopic reasons – it was all about the community and the land and the weaving. It was very bold at the time, but now it seems like a magical era, with a pleasant haziness around it, and aspects of that work are extremely challenging to empathize with. My engagement with that period is detached by time, and by having so much more access to complex, nuanced, and non-essentialist information and ideas.

Can you tell me about the role of collaboration in this piece?

It is a way for me to provide meaningful, gainful employment to women in the arts. Collaboration recognizes the limits of my capabilities and gives me an opportunity to champion the skills of others and to learn from them. I want my collaborators to be compensated for their talents in a way that is fair and reflects the synergistic benefits of the endeavor.

You've assembled drummers who are super-accomplished alongside amateurs and beginners. What role does non-proficiency play in your work?

I'm attracted to things that are unfixed and flexible. Non-proficiency doesn't look or feel like art, so it provides more opportunities for access.

Amateurism is an abundant place, rife with possibility. When you are learning a skill, you have a lot of avenues for where you might want to go, and you're highly engaged. You think about practice differently. When you assemble people of varying skill levels, there's room for mentorship. Everyone learns from each other. In rehearsals, we develop a group brain; intelligence of our overall collective is what counts and shows, it's what people come to see. You can have one person that's a deadly showboat, but they have to learn to function as part of the group. And because it's an endurance piece, nobody's on their game the whole time. It's the responsibility of the group to carry the performance through these individual moments of fatigue.



Do you think of this project as site-specific or site-responsive? What can we expect in Regina?

While the project always features drums in unexpected places, it's flexible and responsive to different communities and geographies. Regina will be the first time that we'll be directly linked to an event – the Pride festivities – instead of to a significant location.

This iteration will focus on the role of the ally in queer communities. Not everyone in the triangle will necessarily identify as queer, or be in same place on that spectrum, but the work is public declaration of alliance. We'll take that experience of queerness and allyship, and broadcast it loudly, as a way to celebrate and honour it.

Artist Biography

Wednesday Lupypciw is from Calgary, Alberta, where she pursues a video and performance art practice. To make money she is a part-time maid. She maintains a concurrent practice in textiles — weaving, machine knitting, embroidery and crochet — but this is done mostly while procrastinating on other, larger projects. The performance art collective LIDS, or the Ladies Invitational Deadbeat Society, a loosely knit group of purposefully lazy womenfolk, is one of those projects. She is a Fibre programme graduate from the Alberta College of Art + Design, and has worked and exhibited in many artist-run spaces throughout Canada.

CREDITS

WEDNESDAY LUPYPCIW, *ALIES HONOUR YOU*, 2014, performance

Photo: Carey Shaw

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