

Exhibition Guide

My Barbarian

October 1, 2022 – January 15, 2023



Over the last two decades, **My Barbarian** (Malik Gaines, Jade Gordon, and Alexandro Segade) has produced an expansive body of work that uses performance to theatricalize the social issues of our time. Motivated by a carnivalesque sensibility, the trio combines the spirit of radical theater with institutional critique to realize performances that are at once spectacular, timely, and incisive. Founded in the Los Angeles DIY club scene of the early aughts and influenced by local figures such as artist Vaginal Davis and the Chicano art collective ASCO, My Barbarian has played a central role in contributing to the experimental artistic community of Los Angeles.

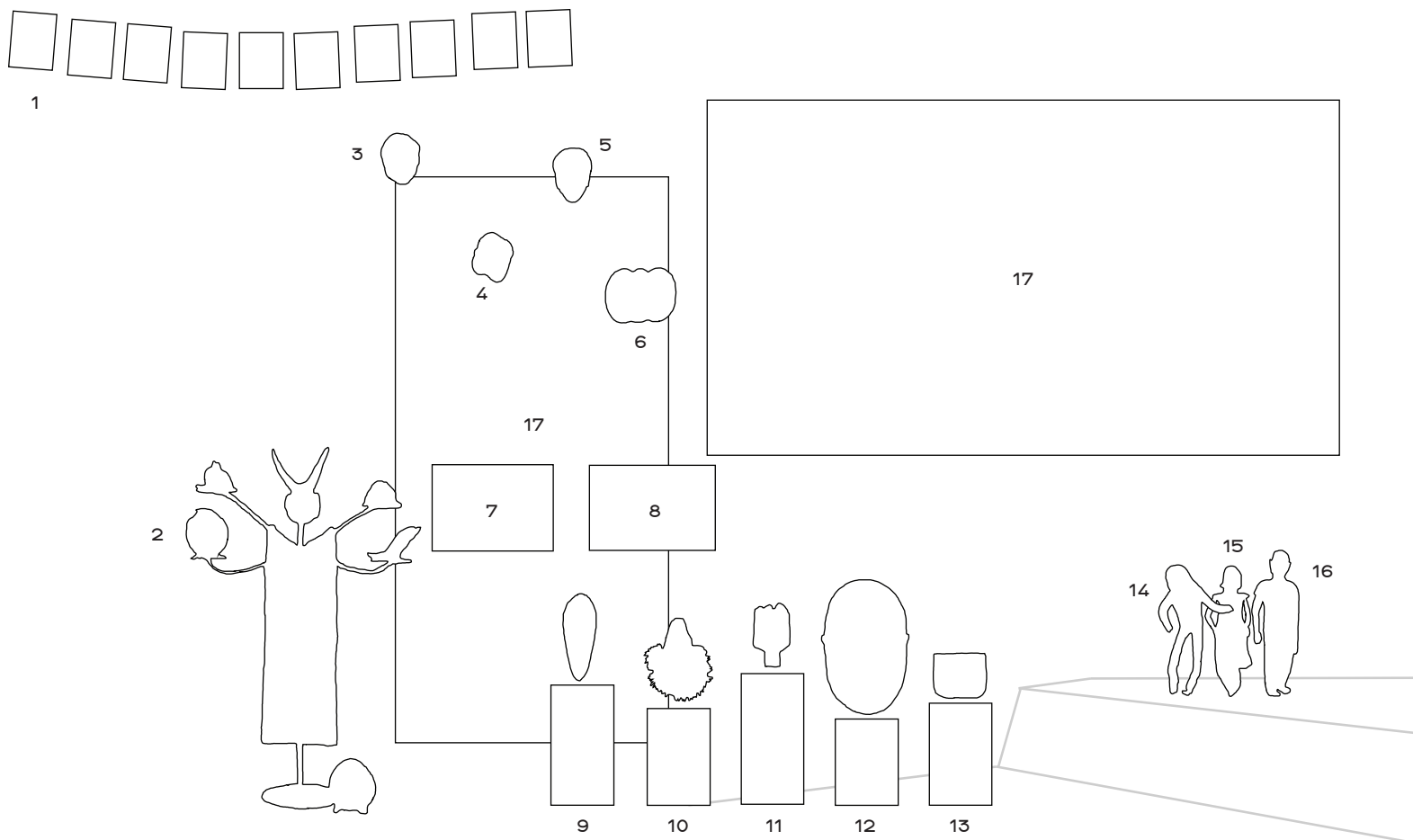
Resisting any singular logic, My Barbarian's performances are rife with references—ranging from classical mythology to occult ritual to pop culture. In the trio's works, these disparate influences are presented through a queer lens that embraces the aesthetics of camp to satirize and scrutinize topics such as capitalist greed and other forms of systemic violence. Filtered through fantastical scenes, including squirrels singing in protest (*Squirrel Radio Action*, 2005) or two employees eating the head of their boss (*Night Epi\$ode 3: Who's For Dinner? / Watery Grave*, 2009), these works invoke allegory and irony to defamiliarize the familiar, drawing poignant parallels between the quotidian and the melodramatic.

Marking an important moment in the group's homecoming to Los Angeles, this twenty-year survey traces the history of My Barbarian's work through an immersive installation featuring a two-hour compilation of edited footage from their years of performing together live and for the camera, including footage not previously released. Alongside the video installation are numerous objects from the collective's substantial archive—including sculptures, paintings, drawings, masks, costumes, and puppets—which are illuminated with and animated by choreographed lighting. Together, this dynamic, multi-media presentation demonstrates how My Barbarian performances reveal the theatricality of everyday life and occasional irrationality of society's institutions, including art institutions. By doing so, they invite the viewer to reconsider the world around them, while simultaneously participating in the collective construction of a new reality.

My Barbarian is organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York and curated by Adrienne Edwards, Engell Speyer Family Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs, with Mia Matthias, former Curatorial Assistant, Whitney Museum of American Art. The presentation at ICA LA is organized by Anne Ellegood, Good Works Executive Director, with Caroline Ellen Liou, Curatorial Assistant.

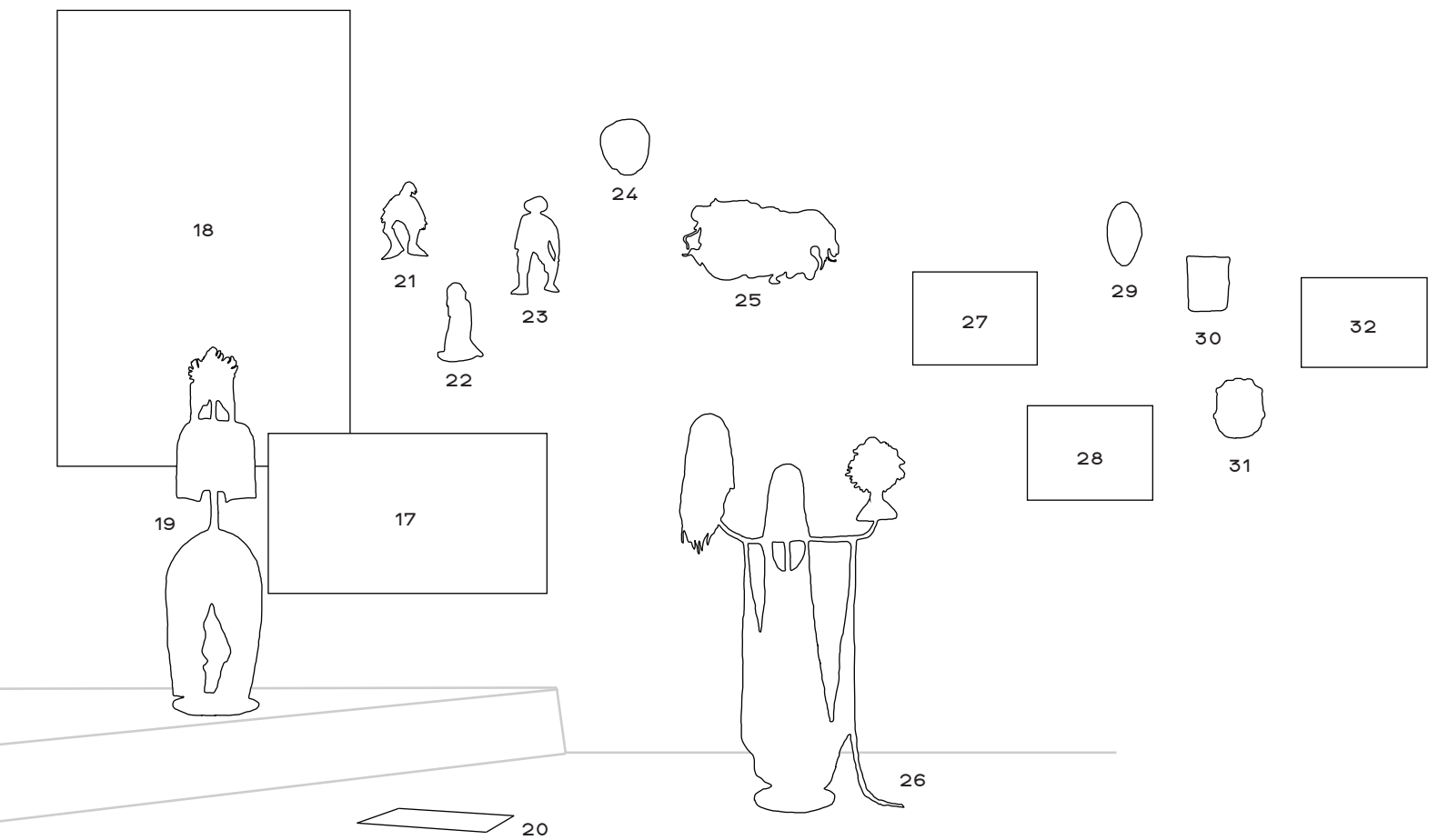
Lead funding for My Barbarian is provided by Karyn Kohl and Silas Dilworth. The exhibition is generously funded by Beth Rudin DeWoody, Tim Disney, Charles Gaines and Roxana Landaverde, Jill and Peter Kraus, Sarah and Joel McHale, and the Younes and Soraya Nazarian Family Foundation. Additional support is provided by The Audrey and Sydney Irmas Charitable Foundation and Carla Shen. Special thanks to VIELMETTER LOS ANGELES.

ICA LA is supported by the Curator's Council and Fieldwork Council.



STAGE LEFT

- | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>1 <i>Medieval Drawings</i>, 2006
Selection from thirty-eight drawings
Watercolor and marker on paper</p> <p>2 In collaboration with Jeff Ono
<i>Standelabra1 (4-Armed Bull Priestess)</i>, 2021
Steel with black matte paint
Includes: <i>Breastplate</i> (2005), <i>Phallus1</i> (2005), <i>Phallus2</i> (2005), <i>Gourd 1</i> (2005), <i>Gourd 2</i> (2005), <i>Mask (Panjandrum)</i> (2005), <i>You Were Born Poor</i> costume (2005-21), <i>Mask (Bull God)</i> (2005), and <i>Mask (novitiate)</i> (2005)</p> <p>3 <i>Günther (mask)</i>, 2014
Synthetic resin and acrylic</p> <p>4 <i>Hanna (mask)</i>, 2014
Synthetic resin and acrylic</p> <p>5 <i>Harry (mask)</i>, 2014
Synthetic resin and acrylic</p> <p>6 <i>PoLAAT Mask #4 (Mandate to Participate)</i>, 2016
Synthetic resin and acrylic</p> <p>7 <i>Three Figures at El Eco</i>, 2010
Watercolor, marker and acrylic on paper</p> <p>8 <i>Three Figures at the Espacio Escultórico</i>, 2010
Watercolor, marker, acrylic on paper</p> <p>9 <i>Masks of the World, TR.4065.3</i>, 2015
Synthetic resin, fiberglass, and acrylic</p> | <p>10 <i>Masks of the World, AC1999.251.4</i>, 2015
Synthetic resin, fiberglass, cardboard, wood, acrylic, raffia, and synthetic hair</p> <p>11 <i>Masks of the World, M.73.113.7</i>, 2015
Terracotta, glue, mother of pearl, acrylic, and sand</p> <p>12 <i>Masks of the World, AC1994.203.1</i>, 2015
Synthetic resin, fiberglass, plaster, papier-mâché, and acrylic</p> <p>13 <i>Masks of the World, M.71.73.247</i>, 2015
Brass, acrylic, linen, and foam</p> <p>14 <i>Margit (doll)</i>, 2015
Plastic, plaster, wire, and textiles
Collection of Carla Shen; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles</p> <p>15 <i>Kurt (doll)</i>, 2015
Plastic, plaster, wire, and textiles
Collection of Carla Shen; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles</p> <p>16 <i>Hedi (doll)</i>, 2015
Plastic, plaster, wire, and textiles
Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles</p> <p>17 <i>My Barbarian</i>, 2021
Three-channel video, 120:00 minutes</p> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



STAGE RIGHT

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 17 | <p><i>My Barbarian</i>, 2021
Three-channel video, 120:00 minutes</p> | 26 | <p><i>Standelabra 3 (3-Headed Oracle)</i>, 2021
Steel with black matte paint
Includes: <i>Shakuntala Du Bois</i> (2012), <i>Old Fairy</i> (2012), <i>Moon Goddess</i> (2012), <i>Gown by Alexandro</i> (2012–21), three wigs, and three porcelain busts</p> |
| 18 | <p><i>I Heart Mimesis</i>, 2008
Linen, lace, and satin banner on wood dowel
Courtesy of the artists and Artist Pension Trust</p> | 27 | <p><i>Your Son Has Been Shot</i>, 2013
Oil stick on craft paper</p> |
| 19 | <p><i>Standelabra 2 (Dancing Pagan)</i>, 2021
Steel with black matte paint
Includes: <i>Third Eye mask</i> (2006), <i>Pagan Rights</i> costume (2006–9), <i>Obama Pants</i> (2009), and <i>Head-kerchief</i> (2006)</p> | 28 | <p><i>Factory (Suklinov Works)</i>, 2013
Oil stick on craft paper</p> |
| 20 | <p><i>Sorry 4 the Plague (Squirrel Radio Action)</i>, 2005
Permanent marker on foamboard</p> | 29 | <p><i>Mimic 1</i>, 2013
Papier-mâché and oil stick</p> |
| 21 | <p><i>Death</i>, 2014
Clay, felt, and acrylic</p> | 30 | <p><i>Unemployed Man</i>, 2013
Papier-mâché
Collection of Robert and Anne Conn; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles</p> |
| 22 | <p><i>Heard-Hearted Barbara Allen</i>, 2014
Clay, silk, thread, cardboard, sand, and acrylic</p> | 31 | <p><i>Prison Guard</i>, 2013
Papier-mâché
Collection of Robert and Anne Conn; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles</p> |
| 23 | <p><i>Sweet William Wake</i>, 2014
Clay, felt, and acrylic</p> | 32 | <p><i>Home of the Teacher III</i>, 2013
Oil stick on craft paper</p> |
| 24 | <p><i>Lifeboat Monster</i>, 2009
Papier-mâché and acrylic</p> | | |
| 25 | <p><i>Red Office Worker</i>, 2009
Papier-mâché, acrylic, and wig hair</p> | | |

All works collection of the artists and courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles unless otherwise noted

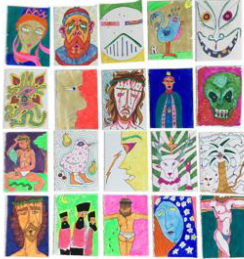


My Barbarian

Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles

October 1, 2022–January 15, 2023

ICA LA presentation organized by Anne Ellegood, Good Works Executive Director, with Caroline Ellen Liou, Curatorial Assistant



My Barbarian

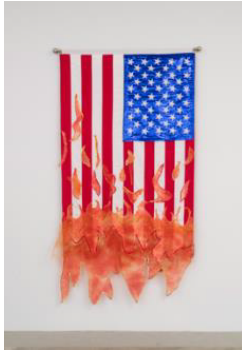
Medieval Drawings, 2006

Selection from thirty-eight drawings

Watercolor and marker on paper

Each: 8 ½ x 11 in. (21.6 x 27.9 cm)

Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian

Burning Flag, 2005/2021

Textiles, sequins, acrylic

75 ½ x 41 in. (191.8 x 104.1 cm)

Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian

I Heart Mimesis, 2008

Linen, lace, and satin banner on wood dowel

86 ½ x 56 ½ in. (219.7 x 143.5 cm)

Courtesy of the artists and Artist Pension Trust



My Barbarian

PoLAAT Mask #4 (Mandate to Participate), 2016

Synthetic resin and acrylic

13 ½ x 10 ¾ x 5 ¼ in. (34.3 x 27.3 x 13.3 cm)

Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Lifeboat Monster, 2009
Papier-mâché and acrylic
11 x 9 x 7 in. (28 x 22.9 x 17.8 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Red Office Worker, 2009
Papier-mâché, acrylic, and wig hair
17 x 13 x 4 in. (43.2 x 33 x 10.2 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Three Figures at the Espacio Escultórico, 2010
Watercolor, marker, acrylic on paper
16 ½ x 23 1/8 in. (41.9 x 58.7 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Three Figures at El Eco, 2010
Watercolor, marker and acrylic on paper
16 ½ x 23 1/8 in. (41.9 x 58.7 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Mimic 1, 2013
Papier-mâché and oil stick
11 ½ x 6 ½ x 5 in. (29.2 x 16.5 x 12.7 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles

My Barbarian
Prison Guard, 2013
Papier-mâché
11 ¼ x 9 x 4 ½ in. (28 x 15.2 x 11.4 cm)
Collection of Robert and Anne Conn;
courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Unemployed Man, 2013
Papier-mâché
11 ¼ x 8 x 4 ½ in. (28.6 x 20.3 x 11.4 cm)
Collection of Robert and Anne Conn;
courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Home of the Teacher III, 2013
Oil stick on craft paper
18 x 24 in. (45.7 x 61 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Factory (Suklinov Works), 2013
Oil stick on craft paper
18 x 24 in. (45.7 x 61 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Your Son Has Been Shot, 2013
Oil stick on craft paper
18 x 24 in. (45.7 x 61 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Death, 2014
Clay, felt, and acrylic
14 ½ x 16 ½ x 2 ½ in. (36.8 x 41.9 x 6.4 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Heard-Hearted Barbara Allen, 2014
Clay, silk, thread, cardboard, sand, and acrylic
15 ½ x 5 ½ in. (39.4 x 14 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Sweet William Wake, 2014
Clay, felt, and acrylic
18 x 8 ¼ x 3 in. (45.7 x 21 x 7.6 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Günther (mask), 2014
Synthetic resin and acrylic
11 ½ x 7 x 4 ½ in. (29.2 x 17.8 x 11.4 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Hanna (mask), 2014
Synthetic resin and acrylic
9 x 7 ½ x 5 in. (22.9 x 19 x 12.7 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Harry (mask), 2014
Synthetic resin and acrylic
11 ½ x 7 x 4 ½ in. (29.2 x 17.8 x 11.4 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Hedi (doll), 2015
Plastic, plaster, wire, and textiles
28 ½ x 10 ½ x 5 ½ in. (72.4 x 26.7 x 14 cm)
Collection of Beth Rudin DeWoody;
courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Margit (doll), 2015
Plastic, plaster, wire, and textiles
24 x 10 in. (61 x 25.4 cm) each
Collection of Carla Shen; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Kurt (doll), 2015
Plastic, plaster, wire, and textiles
24 x 10 in. (61 x 25.4 cm) each
Collection of Carla Shen; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Masks of the World, AC1994.203.1, 2015
Synthetic resin, fiberglass, plaster, papier-mâché, and acrylic
25x5x8in.(63.5x12.7x20.3cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Masks of the World, AC1999.251.4, 2015
Synthetic resin, fiberglass, cardboard, wood, acrylic, raffia, and synthetic hair
19 x 13 x 5 in. (48.3 x 33 x 12.7 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian
Masks of the World, M.71.73.247, 2015
Brass, acrylic, linen, and foam
9 x 10 x 1 ½ in. (22.9 x 25.4 x 3.8 cm)
Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian

Masks of the World, M.73.113.7, 2015

Terracotta, glue, mother of pearl, acrylic, and sand

11 ½ x 7 x 4 in. (29.2 x 17.8 x 10.2 cm)

Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian

Masks of the World, TR.4065.3, 2015

Synthetic resin, fiberglass, and acrylic

16 x 16 ½ x 2 in. (40.6 x 41.9 x 5.1 cm)

Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian in collaboration with Jeff Ono

Standelabra1 (4-Armed Bull Priestess), 2021

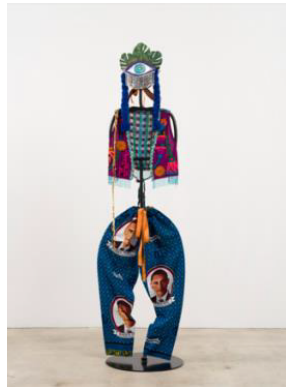
Steel with black matte paint

Stand: 48 x 15 x 69 in. (122 x 38.1 x 175.3 cm)

Base: 18 ¼ x 18 ¼ x 1 ¼ in. (46.4 x 46.4 x 3.8 cm)

Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles

Includes: *Breastplate* (2005), *Phallus1* (2005), *Phallus2* (2005), *Gourd 1* (2005), *Gourd 2* (2005), *Mask (Panjandrum)* (2005), *You Were Born Poor* costume (2005-21), *Mask (Bull God)* (2005), and *Mask (novitiate)* (2005)



My Barbarian

Standelabra 2 (Dancing Pagan), 2021

Steel with black matte paint

Stand: 20 ¼ x 7 x 69 in. (50.8 x 17.8 x 175.3 cm)

Base: 18 ¼ x 18 ¼ x 1 ¼ in. (46.4 x 46.4 x 3.8cm)

Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles

Includes: *Third Eye* mask (2006), *Pagan Rights* costume (2006–9), *Obama Pants* (2009), and *Head-kerchief* (2006)



My Barbarian

Standelabra 3 (3-Headed Oracle), 2021

Steel with black matte paint

Stand: 46 ½ x 10 x 72 ¼ in. (118.1 x 25.4 x 183.5 cm)

Base: 18 ¼ x 18 ¼ x 1 ¼ in. (46.4 x 46.4 x 3.8 cm)

Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles

Includes: *Shakuntala Du Bois* (2012), *Old Fairy* (2012),
Moon Goddess (2012), *Gown by Alexandro*
(2012–21), three wigs, and three porcelain busts



My Barbarian

Sorry 4 the Plague (Squirrel Radio Action), 2005

Permanent marker on foamboard

20 x 16 in. (50.8 x 40.6 cm)

Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



My Barbarian

My Barbarian, 2021

Three-channel video, 120:00 minutes

Collection of the artists; courtesy Vielmetter Los Angeles



About the Artists

Founded in 2000, My Barbarian's work has been presented at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Roy and Edna Disney/Cal Arts Theater, Los Angeles; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; The Kitchen, New York; The New Museum, New York; Participant Inc., New York; and many other U.S. venues. International exhibitions include those at Museo El Eco, Mexico City; De Appel, Amsterdam; Townhouse Gallery, Cairo; The Power Plant, Toronto; El Matadero, Madrid, and others. They were included in two Performa Biennials, the Whitney Biennial, two California Biennials, the Montreal Biennial, and the Baltic Triennial. My Barbarian has been supported by USA Artists, the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the Mike Kelly Foundation, Art Matters, the City of LA Cultural Affairs, and others. According to Catherine Quan Damman in *Artforum*, My Barbarian bring "high-theory arcana into bawdy populist forms, marshaling their multicultural demographics to burlesque liberal fantasies of the melting pot, and vamping the world historical only to burn it down and throw a party around the flames." My Barbarian is represented by Vielmetter Los Angeles.

*Full Transcript of
Three-Channel Video*

My Barbarian

Part 1

[27:35]

(Percussive music)

As we look about us
Things seem worse than ever
Try not to dwell on the now

I remember Gomorrah. A hotter climate, a hotter time was
had by all in Gomorrah.

[26:42]

In Gomorrah I was given the gift of a golden goat. Why
can't we go back? Go back, go back.

(Rock music)

Gomorrah, Xanadu, Babylon, Atlantis
Gomorrah, Xanadu, Babylon, Atlantis
Gomorrah, Xanadu, Babylon, Atlantis
Gomorrah, Xanadu, Babylon, Atlantis
Gomorrah
Xanadu
Babylon
Atlantis
Gomorrah
Xanadu
Babylon
Atlantis

[25:35]

You were too beautiful to live
You were too beautiful to live
In Gomorrah I was given the gift of a golden goat
I took the golden goat, I slit its golden throat
Gomorrah, golden goat
In Xanadu I learned to do the secret sacred dance
I played the Pleasure Dome, I played in Kubla's home
Xanadu
Do a dance
In Babylon I lost the true love baby of my heart
I broke a beating heart

[24:36]

I shattered it like art
Babylon
Baby heart
Atlantis, in this scene I start to swim
I swim an ocean race

I swim in sunken space
Atlantis, is the place
Gomorrah, Xanadu, Babylon, Atlantis
Pompeii, Nineveh, Carthage, Galveston
Ctesiphon, Chaco, Troy, Kumari Kandam
Ys, Koumbi Saleh, Mologa, Dresden
ncomah, Aztlan, Dwarka, Helike
Théroutanne, Tikal, London, Herculanum
Chicago, Tenochtitlan, Dunwich, Kitezh
Sodom, San Francisco, Rungholt, Hiroshima
Newark, Jericho, Nepata, Vilcabamba
Ulundi, Stalingrad, New Orleans, Eden

(Gentle music)

[23:24]

- Action.

Cassandra: I am Cassandra, princess of Troy, historically
represented as a mad, crazy woman tormented by visions
of death and destruction. I can look into the future and
see everything that's going to happen. I cannot change the
coming events, for no one will listen to me. I represent
environmentalists and others whose warnings go unheeded.

[22:37]

Lo, it is my mother Hecuba and my brother's girlfriend,
Helen of Sparta. In the future, in the future, in the future,
people will still be named Cassandra like me and Helen like
her, but not Hecuba.

Chorus: The feminist reader will decide that the female
roles have nothing to do with women. The feminist reader
might conclude that women need not relate to these roles or
even identify with them.

(Gentle music)

Tell us of the future
Tell us what you see

[21:37]

Tell us what will happen
Will it affect me
Tell us what the future
Tell us what you see
Tell us what will

(Piano music)

Sun God: Shakuntala Dubois, you must find your job.

And I, the Mighty Sun, who is God of Light and Formal Education and Careers, Spirit of Scheduling, I command you, set yourself to that Purpose, for the Mighty Sun is your boss.

[20:30]

Brunhilde: So I figured it out, and it's like a 10th of my income goes to my hair.

(Birds chirp)

Shakuntala: That is much.

Mahabharata: Your hair is so cute though.

Brunhilde: How many hours of labor do I pay per follicle per year?

Mahabharata: But you don't do labor.

Shakuntala: Mm mm. This tea is good.

Mahabharata: Mm.

Brunhilde: I go to work for a living is what I'm saying.

Mahabharata: That is so wrong.

Shakuntala: Seems like a waste of money to spend on hair, which grows so freely.

Brunhilde: I do it for me.

[19:34]

Mahabharata: Hm.

Shakuntala: Mm mm. Hm, hm, hm.

Mahabharata: You can spend your money however you want, she can spend her money however she wants, he can spend his money however he wants, they can spend their money however they want, that can spend its money however it wants.

Brunhilde: That is so great. Oh my God. Are you saying you don't like my hair?

Shakuntala: I love your haircut, that's not the point. The point is, you know how you want your hair done, do it yourself. Do your hair yourself. What kind of tea is this?

Mahabharata: I don't agree with that Shakuntala.

Shakuntala: Mm. Mm hm.

Brunhilde: I don't agree with that either Shakuntala. I agree with Mahabharata.

[18:38]

Shakuntala: You always agree with her, Brunhilde.

Mercutio: This land is beautiful for the five reasons. The first is this tree stump. It leads the eye to this clump of leaves.

Persal: I see.

Mercutio: What is the second reason this land is beautiful?

Persal: The sky?

Mercutio: That is the fifth reason. The second reason is this patch of dirt. It is warm in color.

(Bird chirps)

[17:39]

The third reason is this insect on this twig. So fragile, yet so terrifying. The fourth reason is that the land is fully rendered in perspective with a vanishing point over there. The fifth reason is...

Persal: The sky. I love the sky. One could imagine being anywhere within it or beyond it even as one is seemingly beneath it. Do the gods live up there, or is my future self in the sky? Do you know Mercutio Iglesias?

Mercutio: I wouldn't know Mr. Purcell Sam Shepherd.

(Gentle music)

[16:31]

Narrators: The hearts of the bondmaids who share the same suffering and hatred as Ching-hua burn like fire. They are torn by anxiety for her. If only they could save their class sister. The bondmaids dance. The Civil Guards drive them away. Chung-hua refuses to yield. She continues to fight courageously. She continues to fight courageously.

(Harpsichord music)

Purcell: I knew I'd discover you.

Shakuntala: You did not discover me. I have always been

here.	[13:37]
Purcell: Marry me and let me take you back to my country where you will be a very well paid consultant.	It's charming in a child, but a woman must have Boundaries and Attitudes.
[15:35]	Shakuntala: I'm going to marry Purcell, Mama, and you can't... And you... God. Get out of my way.
Shakuntala: I don't fit in well with business types.	(Harp music)
Purcell: You'll love these guys. They're rich.	I, object
Shakuntala: I'm sick of rich people.	You incorporate bodies, monies
Purcell: Come back to my hotel.	I, object
Shakuntala: What's your name?	You don't own me even though you bought me
Purcell: Hm.	[12:32]
Shakuntala: Hm. Mm mm. Mm mm.	You want to return me
Shakuntala: Uh huh .Uh huh. The sky clears.	But you don't own me, you don't own me
Narrator: Red Army Cadre Hung Chang Ching and his messenger Pang enter disguised as peasants.	Even though you bought me
(Piano music)	I, object
They are on a scouting mission.	On table or pedestal
[14:29]	You want to show me off
Hung and Pang discover the fainted Ching-Hua.	Even though it was you
(Renaissance music)	who lost the receipt
Evita: Servility, don't just toss things everywhere. Now, where was I? Oh yes my dear, I cannot possibly believe you would do such a thing.	I... Object
Shakuntala: I am a grown woman and Daddy's gone now. We're all free.	[11:34]
Evita: To get engaged to a tourist who stumbles in the yard! We don't even know what kind of people he comes from, if any.	You incorporate
Shakuntala: I looked into his eyes and I saw that he is really special.	Bodies, monies
Orfeo: I can totally identify with what you're saying.	I,object
Evita: Shakuntala, I swear you are just too sensitive.	I, object
	(People chatter)
	(Electronic music)
	My oracular vernacular
	Maybe, maybe, if and when
	Address the future imaginary
	Speculation undoes the the present
	[10:36]
	Contemplation becomes the object
	Immaterial, profound
	Saint Galadriel: Eros vita lumen. On pale afternoons, quiet clouds go by in the blue. Conscious minds alight on fervent hands. Oh, the gold dust that floats in the air behind which are the vibrant waves, tender humid eyes, mouths overcome with laughter, curly hair, and the rosy fingers that caress each other. On pale afternoons, a friendly Faerie tells me

secret stories. I began to feel a yearning for, the longing to satisfy an infinite thirst. I said to the amorous Faerie, “I want to feel in my soul, the deepest, the most profou—”

(Piano music)

[9:32]

Dido: But death alas, I cannot shun. Death must come when he is gone. Thy hand, Belinda. Darkness shades me. On thy bosom let me rest. More I would, but death invades me. Death is now a welcome guest. When I am laid in earth, may my wrongs create no trouble in thy breast. Remember me, but ah! Forget my fate.

[8:30]

Workers: And so you will see it again and again, gladly or ungladly. Gladly or ungladly.

(Sung)

Moon Goddess:

Mama, my baby, Mama, my baby

Mama mama

Ba-ba-ba-by

Mama mama

Ba-ba-ba-by

Ma ma ma

Moon

(Upbeat music)

[7:30]-

You see a troupe of Troubadours
A strolling band of nightingales
Ply their trade from door to door
Courtly love for sale
Courtly love for sale
Courtly love for sale
Medieval is our morality
Moral ist Mittelalterlich,
Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho
Medieval is our morality
Moral ist Mittelalterlich
Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho
Medieval is our morality
Moral ist Mittelalterlich
Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho
Medieval is our morality
Moral ist Mittelalterlich
Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho
Medieval is our morality
Moral ist Mittelalterlich

Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho

[6:34]

Medieval is our morality

Moral ist Mittelalterlich

Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho

Ho, ho, ho, ho, ho

Performer: We now present for ye a parable which effects ye for this, the story of Everyman. A play of morals and moral concerns, especially those pertaining the freelance artist. And so begin we do on the right, in heaven.

God: I am God.

Good Deeds: And I am Good Deeds, servant and messenger of God.

God: Look ye now my servant at Everyman going about his way.

Everyman:

(Sung)

I, my name is Everyman

[5:34]

Heaven is to my right hand
Earth in the middle, that's the plan
And left of center is hell's hot land
I, my name is Everyman
Would I were the son of God.
I am not privy to my Lord's plan
I worship him, though I find it odd.

- Everyman speaketh in a most ambivalent manner.

[4:35]

- He is nuanced, true.

Everyman: I am so poor. Mayhap I needst a new career path.

- Once again, Everyman is vulnerable. I shall take the form of a patroness of the arts. Eine Schutzherrin der Künste. I am a learned lady, a richly attired woman of profound boredom.

Everyman: I am an overeducated person of some talents and few prospects.

- Hm, mayhap ye couldst illuminate a text for me?

(Sung)

At Golgotha Three Marys stood
Three grave women in the shadow of the cross
At Golgotha Three Marys wept.
Three sad women in the
Meadow of great loss
Mary the mother lifted her head
Mournful as the wind she said

“I gave birth to you, though a virgin I remained
Pleasure never mine, though quite pregnant I became

[3:37]

Was it really worth the excruciating pain
I’ll never understand why God played tricks upon my
brain.”

At Golgotha Three Marys stood
Three grave women in the shadow of the cross
At Golgotha Three Marys wept
Three sad women in the meadow of great loss
Mary, Martha’s sister, not well known
Talking to herself ‘cause she was all alone

“I was such a convert that
I followed you around
Devout as an apostle
A Christian pound for pound
Know I’m not the fairest Mary in this town
A crush on you I had
And yet you always turned me down”

At Golgotha Three Marys stood
Three grave women in the shadow of the cross
At Golgotha Three Marys wept
Three sad women in the meadow of great loss
Mary Magdalene, wrong gone right
Cried through the ever gloomy night

“Jesus, this must end our scandalous affair

[2:35]

Remember when I washed your feet
With tears and golden hair
I soothed you with my ointments sweet
In skimpy underwear
And played with little Jesus
Till he grew up way down there”

Everyman: Look at this bill from the church. I must again
find work, else the church send the bill collectors to throw
me in the debtors’ gaol.

- Just think, in your dungeon cell, you will be free to pray
all
day long with no interruptions. ‘Tis like a residency
program.

Devil: Look upon the true face of God.

Everyman: The devil!

Good Deeds: What hath ye done with God, foul pestilence?

Devil: Taketh not that tone with me, for I am God and the
Devil.

[1:45]

And now I command the hell mouth to open.

(Rock music)
Flung down
An abysmal pit
Might as well try to
make the most of it
This is hell
It ain’t so hot
So this is hell
It’s all you got
When you’re in hell
Ignore the smell
When you’re in hell

[00:00:36]

Say it’s swell
Just say it’s swell
Swell in hell

- And so ends the story of Everyman, the story of you. Let
this serve as a warning to ye, for if ye take the path of the
artist, Dann wirst du für alle Ewigkeit in der Hölle brennen.

[00:00:00]

End of part 1.

Part 2

[29:12]

Cop: I had an uncle who used to be a cop. One day they
caught him selling cigarettes on the black market, right
after the war, and he had to leave the force. And every time
he got drunk, he’d start sobbing because he couldn’t be a
cop anymore and being a cop was something special. Then
he got sick and I became a cop.

- I already tried professional training. I'm not cut out for work, I use people instead. It got started with one who hadn't had it in a long time. Everybody's so grateful it's impossible to say anything bad about it.

- It took a long time for me to admit to myself that I like men better than women. I

[28:13]

t's frightening, if you've had a normal upbringing. I thought I'd have to live underground, bus depots, toilets. But as a matter of fact, it's completely different. My boyfriend is a dancer from Guinea and we live like man and wife, we visit friends, have fun, all perfectly regular.

- Look into my eyes. Age isn't a problem. Older wearier flesh can respond passionately. You will come to know your own skin through my touch.

- You got some ID? Shit, people who don't have ID, they don't exist.

Butcher: Now. Every Friday night, I buy myself a girl. Now I'm the butcher, and I got a kid working for me who gets hit when he deserves it.

[27:12]

- I lived with a group of women for quite a while, it was a commune, sort of. We tried to work out where the oppression of women in our society originates. We wanted to know why marriage is so much more deeply embedded in women's consciousness than in men's, stuff like that. We had decided to treat men exactly the way that we thought that they treated us. Of course, that's repressive.

- There are books, You should read them, where women become complete females. Blindfolded, or chained and tied up, for women, happiness is submission.

- I have a great deal of contact with men in my profession, and I sleep with a lot of them.

[26:15]

It's not a problem for me, it's like drinking a cup of coffee. I lie in bed and fondle myself. There's never been anyone who could do it just the right way.

- Hey, you know, you are real hot.

Lover: Your mother is a bitch.

(Eerie music)

Cop: What did you say?

Lover: Nothing. Ow.

Cop: My mother don't belong anywhere in your mouth.

(Chime dinging)

Teacher: You're going to die.

Model: How do you know?

Teacher: There's death in your eyes.

Model: You are rotten.

Teacher: First you'll feel a little sick.

Model: Oh.

Teacher: Then you'll sense, something's wrong.

(Model gasps)

[25:12]

Then, fear will set in.

Model: Stop it. Stop it.

(Chime dinging)

(Bell dinging)

(Rapid knocking)

Mistress: You may kiss my feet, you dog.

Butcher: Woof woof.

Mistress: That's a good little puppy.

Butcher: Ow ow ooooooh!

Mistress: Get off you mangy shit, you stink.

Butcher: Please don't tell me I stink.

(Church bells ringing)

Model: My husband doesn't know anything about me. We never talk.

Cop: Cigarette? I think you're beautiful.

Model: Oh, I like to hear that.

Cop: I mean this very seriously.

[24:13]

Model: I'd like to sleep with you.

(Slow pan-flute music)

Lover: We can't handle a kid.

Wife: But a child will stick by you.

Lover: Every moment I spend with you is one moment too many.

Wife: Karl?

(Slow eerie music)

Teacher: How much do you make a day?

Lover: 100, 200.

Teacher: You're very attractive.

Lover: I know.

Teacher: Well la-di-da.

Lover: I'm sorry?

Teacher: Don't you like it?

Lover: What? With men?

Teacher: Yes.

Lover: I don't want to get involved in too much.

Teacher: Why not?

Lover: I'm afraid.

(Ethereal flute music)

[23:11]

Wife: How do you get a figure like that?

Model: I take care of myself.

Wife: Me, I have to work.

Model: I'm sorry, but I work too.

Wife: Things turned out better for you.

Butcher: 12,000 marks.

Lover: 12,000 marks? That's crazy.

Butcher: Seeing as it upsets you so much, I'm gonna have to insist on prompt repayment.

(Experimental jazz music)

Model: By the way, I fired the maid.

Lover: But we worked out an arrangement for this marriage, you and I.

[22:15]

Model: I couldn't stand the freedom!

(Sung)

It is through
The conceptual faculty
That all good standing
Usually finds expression
And thus is it
Differentiated from
The faculty of judgment and deduction
As the faculty of formal reason
For judgment and deduction or reason
Are in the formal sense
Only aspects of what's understood

[21:16]

In that they appear as forms
Of abstract
Conceptual
Analysis
A concept is not
However determined
Determined in a purely abstract manner
Understanding
Understanding
Needs to be
Needs to be
Differentiated from
Differentiated from
Reason
Reason

Therefore, in the
comprehension of concepts
As a whole

(Mellow jazz music)

[19:36]

- Jazz, the Double Agency needs you to curate an exhibition
for the museum.

- The show is called Masks of the World. It's an interface
designed to reinforce ludic capitalism.

- Double Agency can't be compromised.

Tour Guide: And here we have a prime example of
European culture. Something which you as non-Europeans
may not be so familiar with. A depiction of plenitude.
European beauty—

(Bones crunching)

—increases as it moves towards the lightness on the
spectrum of values. Therefore, this image is beautiful
regardless of what it depicts

(flesh thudding)

Because it is bright and you can see it.

Lorelei: Franka Petersen.

Franka: Why, yes.

(Flesh thudding)

[18:39]

- This way.

(Fists crunching)

(Body thudding)

(Electronic beeping)

(Electronic machinery whirring)

(Phone dialing)

(Phone ringing)

(Electronic interference)

[17:58]

- The new plans will impact all areas.

(Machinery whirring)

(Electronic interference)

(Body thudding)

- Masks of the World. A touchy subject? Not really. Playing
it safe, not pushing boundaries. Universal truths. Money.

(Glasses clinking)

[17:12]

We are all the same. Language. And, I brought a mask with
me today.

(Gas hissing)

(Coughing)

- Pure propaganda, Miss Petersen.

(Glasses clinking)

- Maybe so, but isn't everything?

- I'll make sure your Masks of the World exhibition never
mounts!

[16:21]

- Maybe, but I doubt it.

(Intense dramatic music)

Welcome to all the people
We are the Board of Supervisors
Of all the places
This museum is the one
That 50 years ago today

(Distant screaming)

Was established
Using distinction
And buildings
We were so moved
When a professor spoke at the museum
She asked are the
objects really so dead
Are the people really so alive

No one knows
Masks of the World
Is anyone here from cultural affairs

[15:10]

Like the angels
Who lived in the city before us
I believe in truth
And community partnerships
It is my honor
To introduce the mayor
Mayor Jessica
Montez

(Uptempo rock music)

Thank you thank you thank you thank you Victor
I have lived in or near this city all of my life
I was a kid when I first came here
The pictures on the wall of naked people
White women with long blond hair
And muscle guys with tiny- You know what I mean

[14:12]

Or it was a bunch of blobs of paint
Or a TV playing something you would not give
Five minutes to at home
But you're tired
So you sit in front of it for six minutes
And then the bookstore
And I realized
Culture isn't something you can control
Culture is something you support
Whether you like it or not
Because you are it
And that is why I'm so excited, wow
By this exhibit
Masks of the World
Faces of people
Coming together
Being on a wall
So thank you thank you
thank you thank you, Victor
And thank you so much, Los Angeles
I am your mayor
Jessica Montez

(Intense drum music)

[13:14]

Thank you Mayor

Now it's my honor to introduce to you
Ms. Franka Peterson,
The curator of Masks of the World

(Slow ethereal music)

I chose these masks
You see on display
From the collection
Tucked away
Faces in boxes
Never seeing the light
Hiding, hidden
Kept out of sight
Are they from theater,
Ritual,
Art

[12:13]

What is a bodiless mask
With no heart
This exhibition would not be
Without the support of two very key
Individuals whose generosity
Has graced us institutionally
First, Yusef Ben Salem
Cultural attache to the Sultan of Brunisia
And Arnold St. Petersburg
Gas extraction magnate from Eastern Rusvar
Thank you both
In my home land
Of Brunisia
We have many reasons to believe
That art is something you must fear
Because it has power
So much power

[11:14]

You feel it emanate
From the surface like electricity
It is shocking
In my homeland of Brunisia
We suffer much at the hands of brutality
Imposed upon us by outside forces
In the form of political influence
And we blame you
People of the West
But art brings us together
Hey
In Eastern Rusvar we have a joke
But I will not tell it to you
You don't get my jokes
And that is the joke

Which is funny because it is true

[10:12]

Much like art, yes, it is like that
Funny because it is true
Look at the faces on the wall
Staring
They do not know what
They are talking about
I gave money
To go to parties
And everyone is so nice
Even though I know
They don't get my jokes
I am Lorelei Montoya
AKA The Eye
I am Convener of the Ninja Symposium
I know the reason for this exhibition

[9:13]

To unleash neo-liberal propaganda
On the world
This world that is no longer a world
This world that is a marketplace of ideas
About the world
Ideas with no concept behind them
To be a ninja is to be an idea
Even if no one in the world can see you

(Horns blowing frantically)

(Cymbals crashing)

[8:32]

Narrator: There's this story about the ground squirrels in Angeles Crest National Forest. Every so often a bunch of them are found dead, and we here in the park take notice of the die-offs. The squirrels are disease vectors, the fleas on the squirrels carry the bacterium *Yersinia pestis*, the black plague.

(Bright harp music)

We are the squirrels
Of the forest
We are carriers of bubonic plague
You are the people
Of the city
Heed our warning, dire
Why do you tempt fate?
Homeless coyotes eat pets in Glendale

Deer on the 210 have no place to stay
Just as the forest grows smaller and smaller
So too the city collapses from its weight
So too the city collapses from its weight

[7:09]

We are the squirrels
of the forest

Narrator: As an independent biologist, not associated with any university, but as a webmaster of a popular website, I've been documenting the activities of a particular group of squirrels. I've tracked them all the way from Angeles Crest Forest to Hollywood, to city hall in downtown LA. At city hall, they had a rally.

Squirrel: If action is not taken

(Sung)

We'll be gone
Notify the city
Notify the council
Tell Mayor Hahn
We'll be gone
Anticipate the future
Feature of your landscape
Formulate escape plans

[6:13]

We'll be gone
Councilman Reyes
Councilwoman Greuel
Councilman Zine
Councilman LaBonge
We'll be gone
Councilman Weiss
Councilman Cardenas
Councilman Padilla
Councilman Parks

Councilwoman Perry
Councilman Ludlow
Councilwoman Miscikowski
Councilman Smith
Councilman Garcetti
Councilman Villaraigosa
Councilwoman Hahn
Assert your bureaucracy
Tell the communities
Call our neighbor cities
We'll be gone

LA Police Officer: Who has a permit for being here? Do you have a permit?

[5:14]

If you don't, you need to leave.

- They can't finish singing their song for just, like, ten seconds?

LA Police Officer: No no, you can't be doing that. You can't be filming. You all have to be on the side there, you guys can't be right here.

- Okay—

- Okay.

(Rhythmic drumming)

P-o-L-A-A-T

PoLAAT, PoLAAT

PoLAAT, PoLAAT, PoLAAT, PoLAAT, PoLAAT

PoLAAT, PoLAAT, PoLAAT, PoLAAT, PoLAAT

Post-Living Ante-Action Theater

Post-Living Ante-Action Theater

- Star.

- Star.

- You are touching your pinky toes, let's not make it a big production.

(Audience laughs)

Open this up, please. There's a lot of, like, discomfort, tension, I just want you to like-

- Aah! That's right, good good.

[4:13]

- Feel the weight of your bodies.

- If you notice any tension in your jaw try and keep it there.

(Sung)

Why don't you give me something helpful I can work with
Instead of talking shit and making mean expressions

- Just feel the weight of the floor, pressing into the fat of your ass.

(Audience laughs)

If any kind of, like, spread, just feel a little self-conscious about it.

All: Suspension of beliefs. Suspension of beliefs.

Suspension of beliefs. Suspension of beliefs. Suspension of beliefs. Suspension of beliefs. Suspension of beliefs. Suspension of beliefs.

- If there's any kind of discomfort I want you to note it and then I want you to exaggerate that.

[3:10]

- Go ahead and clench your fists, almost like you're hiding something that's gonna be taken away from you. "Oh God. This is my last thing. I lose this, I lose everything."

- Make sure that your fingernails are digging into the palm of your hand.

(Sung)

El deber participar sí sí

El deber participar sí sí

El deber participar sí sí

- If you notice any part of your body relaxing onto the floor, go ahead and change that.

(Audience laughs)

I need you to start hovering, start hovering. Larissa, hover. Yes, that's better. Hold that for a little while, til it hits your—

(Jasmine screams)

(Audience laughs)

[2:14]

(Sung)

Don't tear me down

And I won't make you feel bad

To make myself feel good

I'll give you something you can use

To make improvements

Help me grow

And I'll return the favor

Face me critically but full of positivity

(Audience laughs)

- Dos, tres, quatro, uno, dos, tres, quatro, uno, dos, tres

- Now I want you to visualize.

- Amber!

- Your sixth chakra, okay?

- Sixth chakra!

[1:13]

- And I want you to visualize—

- Malik, sixth!

- A very dirty hypodermic needle sticking directly into your third eye.

(Folksy guitar music)

Draw a perforated line around your body
Draw a perforated line around your body
Draw a perforated line around your body
Draw a perforated line around your body
Draw a perforated line around your body
Draw a perforated line around your body
Draw a perforated line around your body
Draw a perforated line around your body
Draw a perforated line around your body
Draw a perforated line around your body

[00:00:18]

Draw a perforated line around your body

[00:00:00]

End of part 2.

Part 3

(Mysterious music)

[33:59]

- This wine is good. I'm so glad you're here, did you find a babysitter?

- I had to get a sitter, and that's no easy task with my kids. I hate my kids. (Laugh) You'll hate your kids too.

- Since when do you hate your kids? I thought you loved your kids.

- Well, eight more years and they're out of the house, but—

- Uh, I totally understand, puberty's gross.

- Yeah.

- Look, you look great. If that's any consolation, you look absolutely fantastic. And you're doing so well at work!

- Cheers to me!

- You're one of three women that work at Bissell, Bissell and Mortimer.

- It's okay. I'm a single mom, I'm a working mom. I'm good at my job. I'm a copy editor.

- I know.

- You are really good with computers. It's the key to the future. You know computers, you're not going to get laid off.

- You are amazing at computer graphics and these days, really everything needs graphics.

- Well, you know, I'm learning.

(Loud knocking)

- Did you hear that at the door?

- Who is it? Who is at the door?

- Oh.

- Who is it?

- Well, I'll get it.

[33:07]

You sit down because you made a great dinner. I'll get the door.

- All right.

- Oh, oh my gosh. It's Mr. Bissell. Did you invite Bissell?

- Why is your boss here?

- Well, I don't know why he's here.

- Why is he here? I'm freaking out.

- Okay, look, you look great.

- Oh my God, do I look okay?

[31:05]

- How do I look? I think I'm okay, I'm just a little drunk.

Are there any objections?

- Take a deep breath.

Audience: Yes! Yes! Boo!

- Just a little drunk. Well, whatever. He's seen me drunk before at the office parties, okay.

- Let us begin.

- Okay, I'm gonna open it. Open it.

(Knocking)

(Both inhale deeply)

(Mysterious music)

- Let's just open the door.

Narrator: In the stillest hour between night and day, you lie awake, paralyzed by fear and regret. The world is negative. If only you could sleep.

(Door creaks open)

Mr. Bissell: You're fired.

[30:05]

(Animals screech and roar)

You have so much work to do tomorrow. For an hour, neurotic images flicker before your mind's eye, and you realize sleep is a luxury in a doomed economy.

TV Announcer: You are having a Night Epi\$ode.

Moderator: So now I would like to introduce our esteemed panelists. First is nightmare curator Stel, internationally feared and hated for her work on blockbuster exhibitions that have destroyed every institution and artist she has ever worked with.

All:

(Sung)

Terror, madness, anxious fears or shadows wake you from the Night Epi\$ode.

Negative reflections, eerie recollections light the Night Epi\$ode.

(Audience laughs)

[32:07]

[29:10]

Blind curator Omez is resident alien at the University of Darkness, and is admired for his deeply flawed theoretical writings, including his recently published book "The Title is Unpronounceable".

Taxes spinning, papers dancing, numbers, figures haunt the Night Epi\$ode.

Sexual frustration at your health insurance fills the Night Epi\$ode.

Money flies like bats around all time and space within the Night Epi\$ode.

(Audience laughs)

Poorer, poorer, older, older, poorer, poorer

Ah, the Night Epi\$ode.

Poorer, poorer, older, older, poorer, poorer

And lastly, Garnic is HP Lovecraft curator of inter-dimensional practices at the Arkham Asylum for the Criminally Insane, where he has mounted major exhibitions including the infamous Gateway to Hell show, which has never closed and remains open to this day leaking demons, monsters, and other malicious entities into our world. So please join me in welcoming our panelists.

[28:11]

Ah, the Night Epi\$ode.

(Audience claps)

(Rhythmic humming)

(Eerie music)

- Now convening Westwood death panel, January 19, 2011. We shall proceed despite the obvious hostility from the audience and the negative things said about us in the media.

- As blind chief curator, my interest is in work that negates visibility, and thus, the West. As we all know, art objects are intrinsically racist and sexist and most typically homo- and

transphobic. That is why, ideologically, I curate nightmares.

(Audience laughs)

- Fuck! Fuck, someone's fucking tweeting me right now. God, who could it the fuck be.

[27:17]

"The America I know and love is not one in which my parents will have to stand in front of Obama's death panel so his bureaucrats can decide, based on a subjective measurement of their level of productivity in society, whether they are worthy of healthcare. Such a system is downright evil".

- Level of productivity in society is not a subjective measurement, carbon footprint plus available funds in checking, minus Facebook friends times a trillion.

(Audience laughs)

- We need our own criteria, this panel has to rock.

- But the question is, who deserves to die?

- That's actually the theme of my new show.

- Discuss.

- Yes, I have been appointed executive curator of the Britney Biennial. The show is called "Younger Than Britney".

- Well who's in it.

- The major commission has gone to Veronika Phoenix.

- Huh, Veronika Phoenix.

- Yet, isn't she too old for "Younger Than Britney"?

[26:10]

- I'm only counting the time that she became a dead artist, which is one year. She's one year old.

(Audience laughs)

And the youngest artist in "Younger Than Britney".

(Audience laughs)

- Well then I suppose we should Skype her into this conversation.

- She only answers séances.

- Don't you have the séance app on your phone.

(Audience laughs)

- A séance won't be necessary. Veronika Phoenix is here.

(Sung)

Driving hands free.

I loved my Prius, did he see?

In the SUV.

She's unliving the death dream now.

[25:11]

Talking to Jeff, says there's trouble, it was all toxic.

I wasn't rich compared to other

Scientologists my age.

Driving hands free.

I loved my Prius, did he see?

In the SUV.

Must confront, did it have to be.

Hey, what happened?

Should I kill him and his family?

[24:05]

Should I kill Jeff and his chosen family?

He's gay and they just adopted a Russian baby.

Driving hands free.

You convinced me to invest everything.

It's an SUV.

Fake flower, evil power, in my life Jeff.

(Mystical music)

- The patriarchy can't be solved by improving the communication skills of the men in our lives.

[23:05]

One of the most common accusations against witches is night flying. The ability to soar above the landscape of daily life, with eyes that penetrate the darkness and see what we are not supposed to see.

(Upbeat piano music)

Grave hand, melting face, guilty finger, choking choke, Scratch the window, psychic war, how did I fall off the

grid?
Heels dug into the mud as I slid.
Transformed into a distortion of my former form.
I'm a bell ringer.
Bell ringer?
I ring the bell for the Purple Cat, Black Champagne,
Green Lips, Blue Gums, Rainbow Strangler,
Violet Gun, Death Star
Death-is-Fun, Nail Polish, Steak Tartar, Worm Eyes,
Moth Breath, Ghost Car, Smell-of-Death!

[22:03]

Night flying on fabric wings
Night flying with the night things
Veronika I. Phoenix, returns again and again.
My comeback is coming back again.
V.I.P.
R.I.P.
V.I.P.
R.I.P.

- What's happening? Where am I?

(Audience laughs)

- Veronika Phoenix possessed your body and used it to promote her own pro-witch agenda.

(Audience laughs)

- Veronika Phoenix pretends to be political when her true interest is in international travel.

(Audience laughs)

[21:01]

- But today's nightmares must include inter-dimensional travel. That is why the best artist working today is Silas Shepherd Stevenson, whose sketches revealed a split entry point between planes of existence. One night, he left me a strange message. He demanded a midnight studio visit. I came right to the bad part of town. I crept up the narrow stairs to find him waiting for me.

[20:14]

He closed the door and disappeared, leaving his last drawings on the table, and immediately, upon looking at them, I went mad!

(Audience laughs)

- All of this masterbatorialist chit-chat when our mandate is to kill members of the public.

- What about that new happening group, The Wall Street Situationists?'

(Sung)

Mama! ♪

She worked so hard to send me to business school.

I saw her at a party and pretended I didn't know her.

[19:04]

Like I didn't even know her.

I'll never see her again.

(Whistling)

As you know, nightmare curators are themselves failed dreamers. I too have made nightmares. Not what you sociopaths would call masterpieces, but rather proficient adequacies, which, of course, tell the future.

[18:12]

There will be nightmare curators, murder critics, patrons of terror—

(Woman screaming)

— suicide academics, and yes, there will be artists as well. Trapeze artists.

(Audience laughs)

So much for the undead, but where are the people?

- I'm supposed to be at the LA Art Fair thing, that's across town in 13 minutes.

- You'll never make it.

- When will the humans realize that art is not a fair?

- I love the fair. Carnival rides are the best installations in the world! When I have had my fill of cotton candy, and interactive performances by Ketchup, Hotdog & Mustard, I go back to my hotel room and chat with sex strangers from the internet.

[17:05]

As night time falls on Los Angeles, my poor soul falls into the abyss.

(Sung)

\$18 Is the monthly fee, to chat and hook up with a couple.
Into one guy, he not me.
The other guy is trouble.

(Slow jazzy music)

\$80 for a lap dance.
Go-go boy got my number.
Uh oh oh oh oh.
I was bored sensing distance, his dick was big but not hard,
no.

[16:05]

His dick was big, but only so-so.
Burnin' money, wasting my life.
Cruisin' down the death drive.
Burnin' money, wasting my life.
Cruisin' down the death drive.
Cruisin' down the death drive.
The dark room is my aftermath.
Hanging out on a dark path.
800 negative bank account.
Bathhouse bubbles up from hell.
Unfortunate mens' eyes, they do abound.

[15:05]

Wander in a towel, under evil spell.
\$8000 is the devil's bill.
What can they take if I'm destitute?
Back taxes from a void I'll never fill.
I'll prostitute while I'm still cute.
While I'm still cute i'll prostitute.
If labors love it's my lack thereof.
Cruisin' down the Death Drive.
It's not erotic, not even alive.
Cruisin' down the Death Drive.
The dark room is my aftermath.
Cruisin' down the Death Drive.
Hangin' out on a dark path.

[14:06]

Cruisin' down the Death Drive.
As night falls on Los Angeles...
Cruisin' down the death drive.
My poor soul falls into the abyss.
Cruisin' down the Death Drive.
Cruisin' down the Death Drive.
Cruisin' down the Death Drive.
Cruisin' down the Death Drive.
Cruisin' down the Death Drive.
Cruisin' down the Death Drive.

- And so went the story of my friend, whose name is
Charlie, who went to the LA Art Fair to sell his soul, but
was only allowed to rent his body.

(Audience laughs)

[12:58]

Does he deserve to die?

- Oh, it's the Board. "Because of the job-killing healthcare
bill, there's going to be cut backs at every level."
Apparently one of us has to die.

- This drink for me?

(Audience laughs)

(Coughing)

(Grunts)

- Shall we dialogue with the audience?

- I think that we're all sufficiently humiliated by now.

- Well, I'm actually too busy anyway.

- Yeah, I'm actually too busy also. Excuse me, I'm so
thirsty. Garnic has some water, I'll just drink his water.

[12:05]

I'm so thirsty!

- Give me some of that, I am, after all, the chief curator.

(Groans)

(Audience laughs)

Audience Members: You lie!

(Sung)

All the teachers, there's no school.

All: No more telling lies, time to socialize.

All the nurses, there's no hospital.

No more telling lies, time to socialize.

All the lawyers, there's no love.

No more telling lies, time to socialize.

All the engineers, no engines.

No more telling lies, time to socialize.

[11:07]

All the mommas, they can't mom.
No more telling lies, time to socialize.
All the babies, they can't babe.
No more telling lies, time to socialize.
All the public service specialists, there's no public.
No more telling lies, time to socialize.
Dance for socialism now!
Nah nah nah nah nah!
Nah nah nah nah nah.
Dance for socialism now!
Nah nah nah nah nah!
Nah nah nah nah nah.
Dance for socialism now!
No more telling lies, time to improvise.

(Simultaneous singing)

(Silence)

(Fast music)

[9:13]

(Sung)

An ancient mystery, an ancient mystery.
An ancient.
An ancient mystery, an ancient mystery.
An ancient.
An ancient mystery, an ancient mystery.
An ancient.
An ancient mystery, an ancient mystery.
An ancient.
An ancient mystery, an ancient mystery.
An ancient.
An ancient mystery, an ancient mystery.
An ancient.
An ancient mystery, an ancient mystery.
An ancient.
An ancient mystery, an ancient mystery.
An ancient.
An ancient mystery, an ancient mystery.
An ancient.
An ancient mystery, an ancient mystery.
An ancient.
Heed our invocation!
To this ritual.
Mystical knowledge.
A declaration.
Incant, these principles.

[8:06]

Principles.

(Slow guitar music)

[7:17]

We can worship one another.
The goddess or her brother.
Pagan rights protect us one by one.
We, can worship stars at midnight.

Read the cards by moonlight.
Pagan rights protect us one by one.

[6:49]

We... can worship the Transformer.
Nine muses for performers,
Seven rights protect us one by one.
One!
Defy the Christians.
Two!
Dance in a circle.
Three!
Sacrifice with dignity.
Four!
Anoint your body, body, body, body.
Five!
Tell the future.
Six!

[6:06]

Respect your Mother.
Seven!
Follow your spirit guide
Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh huh huh.
Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh huh huh.
Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh huh huh.
Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh huh huh.
One!
Defy the Christians.
Two!
Dance in a circle.
Three!
Sacrifice with dignity.
Four!
Anoint your body, body, body, body.
Five!
Tell the future.
Six!
Respect your mother.
Seven!
Follow your spirit guide
Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh huh huh.
Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh huh huh.
Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh huh huh.
Uh huh, uh huh, uh huh huh huh.

[5:00]

- The night sky is broken, a black window, John.

(Sung)

Hermaphrodite, child of Aphrodite and Hermes.
Sing with your many genitals! They speak, John.
Lead my hand daemon, John!
We have lived here,
At Newcastle house, nigh on six months.
At Gordon's ancestral home.

[4:12]

We: Pam, Maisy,
Colin, Roger, Nick,
Kouf, Juju, Mary and Joan, all seek guidance in this matter
Which affects our living collective.
Should John be removed from the commune?
We turn to the cards.
The two of pentacles!
Pros and cons.
We could take one road, or we could turn and take the
other.
We have choices.
This is the unconscious mind, the nine of swords.
Fear, apprehension, we've had enough.
Knives in the old oak.

[3:05]

Shadows on the wood.
This card is our guiding force, the hermit.
We stay home.
Business and property and profit.
I trust you recognize the meaning of this symbol.
Hermaphrodite, take my hand!
The deciding card,
John must go!
Shadows on the wood.
Shadows on the wood.
Shadows on the wood.

[2:15]

- Let us pray.

(Upbeat guitar music)

Osiris,
and Isis.
Rebirth and death
And love.
Hawk-headed Horus is yours.
Testicles turn into flowers.

[1:02]

We cut them down.

(Slow guitar music)

(Rhythmic humming)

Mami wata
Green black water of life.
Wash us down, through your smoking mirror,

[00:00:16]

Tezcatlipoca, Huitzilopochtli, Xochi, Quetzal

(Repeated dings)

[00:00:00]

End of part 3.

Part 4

[29:02]

- I had to leave because my lover was driving me insane.
She painted me constantly, Nude, and I just found that
incredibly, incredibly boring. And as her muse, I felt like I
had to leave, or else her art would be shit.

- Well, that's very nice of you.

- It was a sacrifice, but I felt that I could meet someone
else. Someone else creative in Mexico.

- Oh. You might find someone here. Are you an artist?

- No.

- You seem very creative.

- No, not really.

[28:04]

- I mean, the way you dress and like this, I mean, the colors
that you're wearing are so muted yet sensual.

- That's a nice way to put it, thank you. Marie gave me this
necklace.

- It's pretty. It's really, really nice. And it actually matches
your—

- Lipstick?

- Lipstick, yeah.

- That's what I was thinking when I went out. But, I'd like to give you this necklace.

- No, no, no, no, no, no.

- No really.

- I mean, she gave it to you.

- No, I think you should have it.

- No, are you sure?

- I'm absolutely sure.

- Okay.

- Thank you.

- Oh.

(Thunder rolling and rain pouring)

(Suspenseful music)

(Thudding)

(Indistinct chatter)

(Giggle)

[26:56]

- Ok, You might wanna back away.

- Yeah, back away.

- I think Alex might be possessed.

- Malik, this wasn't part of the rehearsal.

- Sometimes it gets out of control. Oh, I'm a little frightened actually.

- I'm a little frightened also.

- Okay, I think that Alex is possessed.

(Drum thumping)

(Shaker rattling)

- You know, I keep hearing that we're speaking German right now, you and I, Malik, and the ghost seems to understand German.

- We are speaking German right now. And he understands. So, could it be Matias Goeritz?

[26:05]

- Does anybody have some other questions, 'cause this is an opportunity that may not come again.

- Who has a question for Matias Goeritz?

- Fuiste un Nazi?

- You know, we have had this conversation before, like what would we do if we had the opportunity to ask Matias Goeritz a question, you had something right?

- El Eco was your, sort of, utopian vision for collective artistic production and it closed after two months. So I guess I wonder, does that constitute a complete failure, and is the failure of El Eco the entire failure of the modernist project?

(Mystical folk music)

[24:57]

Ecos de los ecos de los ecos de los ecos
Ecos de los ecos de los ecos de los ecos

[23:33]

Producing collectivity, collective production
Oye oye oye que paso? Solamente un eco

- Escuchando lo que ya termino

- Escuchando lo que no empezó

(Sung)

Homosexuales

A fin de evitar espectáculos

El de las parejas homosexuales es complicado

Porque traen la discusión de si están casados, o no

Arquitectura emocional

Ruinas

Del modernismo socialista

- ¡Estoy listo!

- Caigo en las calles de la memoria. [21:03]

- ¿Mira? - ¡Ey!

[21:50] - Tranquilícense!

- Yo sé que es amor. - No pasa nada, ok.

- Yo sé, es más grande que todo el respeto y el miedo hacia Dios - ¡No te enojés!

- Aunque a veces, de tanto quererte... - Relájate.

- ¡Ey! - No, por favor. No pasa nada, relájate

- ¡Estamos cantando! - ¿Qué te pasa a ti?

- Sí, ya vi. Quítale la mano de encima. - Estamos cantando.

- ¡Ay, ya! ¡No fastidies! - Cantando.

- ¿Cuál otra me vas a cantar? - ¡Cantemos!

- ¿Eh? - ¡Otra!

- ¿Cuál quieres? - Isabel; si no la sacas, mañana...

- Me va a cantar. - Si no me saca, ¿qué?

- La que tú quieras. - Mañana ya no tienes bar.

- Estamos cantando. - Eh, eh, eh.

- La que tú quieras. - No me toques, no me toques.

- Estamos cantando. - Si no me saca, ¿qué?

- Ella canta. - No me toques.

- Qué bonito cantas, verdad. - ¡Ya, corazón!

- ¡Ya! - Si no me saca, ¿qué?

- ¡Qué bonito cantas! - Corazón, ahora sí muy corazón.

- ¡Hoy vamos a cantar! - Bueno, estamos aquí tranquilas, relájate.

- Hoy. - No pues no, yo no estoy tranquila.

- ¡Silencio! - No pasa nada, relájate por favor.

- Si levantas la mano. - Ya no quiere vestuario, Isabel.

- ¡A cantar! - ¡No!

- ¡Ey!

- Un gusto, mañana te cierro.

- Shhh.

- No te van a cerrar.

- ¿Por qué eres así?

- Ayúdame.

- ¡Qué horror!

- Debes ir de inmediato.

- Aquí están tus boletos.

- Lleva contigo tu pasaporte a la estación del tren.

- No puedes ir con él. Es demasiado peligroso.

- Espero tener al menos unas cuentas horas, de lo contrario, hasta la próxima vez.

- You must go at once. Here are your tickets. Comrade Irina has your Finnish passport at the railroad station.

- Mrs. Vlasova, I'm sorry, but you cannot go with him. It's too dangerous.

- I had hoped to have at least a few hours.

[20:03]

- Mother, until next time.

- Next time.

(Audience laughing)

How often you hear mothers lose their sons. I have kept my son, how have I kept him. The third, the cause, that is what united us. He and I were two, the cause was our third.

[19:04]

How often I have heard sons talking to mothers. But our talks are better. We speak of a common cause. Oh. The Oedipal dramas of art history. Are staged between fathers and sons. Across the body of the mother. To resolve the ambivalence of his active and passive wishes the son is faced with a dilemma. Should he kill the father or seduce him?

[18:03]

But what of the daughter? She is given the father's name, which positions her as his potential rival. I had the desire to be somebody different. I picked the name Alex as a nice androgynous nickname. A woman mimics a man who masquerades as a woman to prove his virility. A girl thing being a boy thing being a girl thing to be a bad thing.

[16:58]

In the first few years of the child's life, that process we usually refer to as socialization, has become rather stereotypical when we refer to the role of the mother and father. And generally we think well of the father as the law-giver, right? The one who installs this kind of a taboo against incest, which means a child can't have the first object, and in that sense is able to sublimate, and perhaps we think of most creative work coming from that place, or all social contracts coming from that place. But the mother, on the other hand, we're thinking of her as the real agent of satisfaction, or we're thinking of her as the imaginary good or evil caretaker, but she also has a symbolic role.

[16:07]

Not exactly like the one I described for the father, but it's equally important in the way the child makes that passage into language and culture. And basically she's saying you can't kill your brothers and sisters. And to negotiate that rivalry is what's absolutely crucial to any kind of communitarian project.

- Hudson river valley, 1930, Eleanor, a celebrated humanist, philanthropist and woman at large, created Val-Kill Industries as a means to employ young men, women and people of colors, hit hard by the Depression. The goal of Val-Kill was, as Eleanor put it, "To supplement the income of local families and sustain a healthy balance between rural agriculture and urban industry, all the while creating the best handmade replicas of my favorite type of furniture in the Dutch colonial style." This is the cottage workshop where Val-Kill was founded and where, today, Eleanor will sit down at her typewriter to write the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, inspired by an argument she had at dinner the night before with a well-known robber baron.

[14:58]

Eleanor will submit the Universal Declaration to the United Nations, after much proofreading. Whereas recognition of the dignity and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and

peace in the world.

- Are you listening there? Are you listening, you bastard?

- Therefore the General Assembly proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

[14:07]

They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act in a spirit of brotherhood and sisterhood.

(Hammers hammering)

(Machinery drilling)

- Not with you around.

(Stomping)

Your son has been shot. He went to the wall built by men just like him, and men like himself.

[13:04]

Made the weapons that shot him. Made the bullets that pierced his chest. Your son has been shot. The men who shot him were no different from him. The chains that held him were made by men like him. And men, just like him, put the chains on him. But they didn't blindfold him so he saw them. He saw the factories at dawn. At dawn, they were empty but soon they were filled. With men just like him, workers just like himself. He thought these will be our weapons. These workers are the weapons of our revolution.

[12:05]

At that moment, Mrs. Vlasova reached for the flag. "Let me have the flag, Smilgin," she said, "All of this must be changed."

(Audience clapping)

Because I am a policeman who must enforce the rules, even though I'm corrupt, I am forced to rip open your couch to see what you got hidden in there.
One, two, three, four

[11:08]

An ancient circle, ancient circle, ancient circle
An ancient circle, ancient circle, ancient circle
An ancient circle, ancient circle, ancient circle

An ancient circle, ancient circle, ancient circle
An ancient circle, ancient circle, ancient circle
An ancient circle, ancient circle, ancient circle
You were born poor
And poor, you will die
You were born middle class
And poor, you will die
You were born rich
And rich you will die

(Upbeat rock music)
A repetition, representation

[9:30]

Figuration, reenacted within a cave
Of that passage of which we are told
Leads in and out of the path in between
Of the go-between path that links two worlds,
Two modes, two methods, two measures of replicating
Representing, viewing, in particular, the sun
The fire, the light, the objects and the cave.

[9:02]

Of this passage that is neither outside or inside
That is between a way out and a way in
Between access and egress
This is a key passage
This is a key passage even if it is neglected
Or even especially when it is neglected
For when the passage is forgotten
By the very fact of its being reenacted in the cave
It will found, subtend, sustain the heart
Of all dichotomies, categorical differences
Clear cut distinctions, absolute discontinuities
All the confrontations of irreconcilable representations
Between the world outside and the world inside

(Sung)
Between the world above
and the world below

[8:05]

Between the sky and light and the fire of the earth
Between the gaze of the man who has left the cave
And that of the prisoner
Between truth and shadow, between truth and fantasy
Between truth and whatever veils the truth
Between reality and dream
Between, between
Everything is acted out
Between rehearsal and performance

[7:04]

Repetition and representation or reproduction
Everything is acted out between rehearsal and performance
Repetition and representation or reproduction
Everything is acted out between rehearsal and performance
Representation
Everything is acted out
Repetition and representation or reproduction
Everything is acted out between rehearsal and performance
Repetition and representation or reproduction
I heart mimesis

(Flutes and high pitched singing)

You were born poor and poor you will die
You were born poor and poor you will die

[6:01]

You were born middle-class and that won't last
You were born middle-class and poor you will die
You were born rich and rich you will die

(Harmonizing)

(Cello and violin playing)

[00:00:00]

End of part 4.

Selected Articles and Interviews

My Barbarian



TABLE OF CONTENTS
PRINT NOVEMBER 2021

HAPPIER ENDINGS

Catherine Quan Damman on the art of My Barbarian

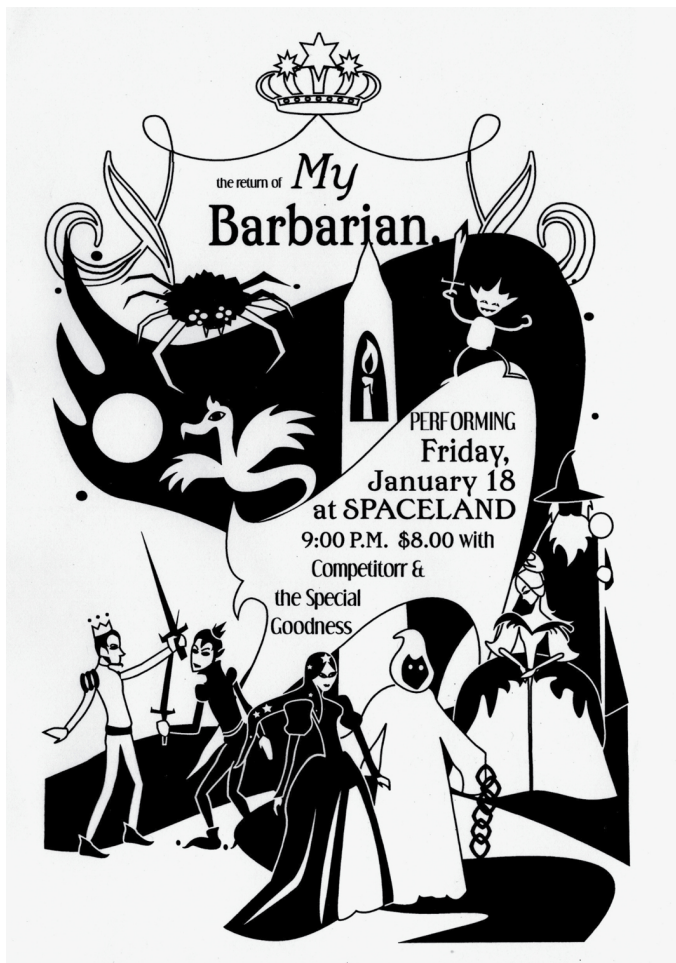


My Barbarian, *Silver Minds*, 2006. Rehearsal view, Black Dragon Canyon, Utah, March 19, 2006. From left: Alexandro Segade, Jade Gordon, and Malik Gaines.

IT HAS FINALLY HAPPENED TO ME: The cultural detritus of my adolescence and early adulthood has returned with a vengeance. My students appear in outfits—purchased secondhand, probably on Depop—hailing from my own slutty youth. Each generation must arrogate and then transform the past, lest their shoddy inheritance consume them. This is their divine right and they look lovely. Yet the source material convulses from, let's be honest, an unsightly time absolutely bereft of glamour. More important, the sartorial is but a minor planet in the universe of that era's ugliness. How to periodize this terrible epoch, which now seems to stretch all the way through the millennium's first two decades? The forever wars, the great recession, the days through which the end of history revealed itself to be a nasty farce, too many limping years now crumpled into the peculiar catastrophe of our present—my life. Contemporary problems have roots that are centuries old, but nearer histories laugh loudest.

SUBSCRIBE NOW and get immediate digital access to the current issue, our complete archive, and a year of Artforum delivered to your door—starting at only \$50 a year.

The backward gaze in medias res is also a function of the midcareer retrospective, which My Barbarian—a collective comprising Malik Gaines, Jade Gordon, and Alexandro Segade—now face: twenty shaggy years of living and making, exhumed and revived by curator Adrienne Edwards with the assistance of Mia Matthias and now on view at New York's Whitney Museum of American Art. In My Barbarian's own words, the group "theatricalizes social issues," with intemperate renditions of various dramas, high and low. Illustrative too are the operations condensed in what they call themselves: the possessive intimacy of "My" yoked to "Barbarian," that xenophobic designation measuring the distance from a supposedly "uncivilized" other. Ever on the lam from respectability, My Barbarian grab the beast by the collar and pull it close.



Poster for My Barbarian's performance at Spaceland, Los Angeles, ca. 2002.

My Barbarian bring high-theory arcana into bawdy populist forms, marshaling their multicultural demographics to burlesque liberal fantasies of the melting pot, and vamping the world historical only to burn it down and throw a party around its fire.

Gaines, Gordon, and Segade met as art students in the 1990s and officially became My Barbarian in 2000 while doing gigs at Los Angeles's Spaceland and the Silverlake Lounge; in the intervening years, they have frequently shifted modes, adopting a soft-shoe of formats under a variety of auspices. They began in the rich tradition of the semiserious art band, briefly performing under the moniker German Töötbrush, among other names. The art band is an archetype that informs our time like few others, but we still don't, I think,

quite know what to do with it. From the Velvet Underground and the Stooges to Red Krayola and Destroy All Monsters, the question was how much rage, irony, and social critique one could fit into the jangling riff, the indelible hook. For My Barbarian, the lineage purposefully invoked is queerer, less white, and more matriarchal. Vaginal Creme Davis's art-punk band, the Afro Sisters—with Davis accompanied by Clitoris Turner, Pussi Washington, Fertile La Toyah Jackson, and a temporary member, Urethra Franklin—is perhaps the ur-model. In fact, Davis, with Ron Athey, programmed the group into an early appearance at the 2002 Outfest in LA. Experimental '80s performance, often maligned or forgotten, is in My Barbarian's DNA: Think of Ann Magnuson (who was in several bands, such as Vulcan Death Grip and Bongwater) or Mary Kelly, Eleanor Antin, Lorraine O'Grady, and Andrea Fraser, all of whom they often cite. My Barbarian also sidle, however uneasily, alongside or contra their contemporaries ART CLUB2000 and Los Super Elegantes (Milena Muzquiz and Martiniano Lopez-Crozet). One work from their early era on the cusp of the queer nightlife and art-world circuits, *Morgan Le Fay*, 2004, is kind of like if you came home from the Ren Faire, on Molly, and remade Kate Bush's "Wuthering Heights" music video with your friends. It's also an earworm (find it on YouTube). Throughout, the shambolic trash aesthetics of Jack Smith, Ken Jacobs, the East Los Angeles collective Asco, and the Bay Area collective the Cockettes reign supreme. This pileup of proper names is no accident, but rather the consequence of their animating attitude: ravenous to adopt, then refashion, but also sweetly in awe of a self-selected pantheon of elders.



My Barbarian, *Morgan Le Fay*, 2004, digital video, color, sound, 3 minutes 13 seconds. Alexandro Segade.

My Barbarian shimmer, a fun-house mirror reflection of all the morbid symptoms surfacing in this particular interregnum; above all, the twinned crises of referentiality and sincerity plaguing the early Bush era (Dubya, of course), in which earnestness was both grotesquely accelerated (the “twee”) and mordantly enervated (malignant irony). Consider the forms of affiliation and disaffiliation taken up by one of the era’s most polarizing figures: the hipster. In a living autopsy hosted in 2010 by the journal *n+1*, the hipster was dissected as an intellectual poseur, ever braggadocious about the insider knowledge he alone had accrued; as a white bourgeois subject festooning herself with the baubled signifiers of the lower classes and the nonwhite; and as an endless striver enthralled by a culture industry that, as Mark Greif argued, “often kitschified—or at least made playful—the weightiest tragedies, whether personal or historical: orphans and cancer for [Dave]

Eggers, the Holocaust and 9/11 for Jonathan Safran Foer.” So too did the hipster often adopt elements from the actual counterculture, only to coddle them into market-ready submissiveness. My Barbarian reverse, then weaponize, each of these operations: bringing high-theory arcana into bawdy populist forms, marshaling their multicultural demographics to burlesque liberal fantasies of the melting pot, and vamping the world historical only to burn it down and throw a party around the flames.

My Barbarian’s political commitments are sincere, even if they rarely read as “serious.” The group are deeply versed in capital-*T* theory, and their enmeshment in academia—both as art students and, later, as faculty—indexes a contradiction facing many artists of their generation, trained in a promiscuously poststudio but increasingly professionalized MFA world. Commentators, myself included, often find it difficult to characterize their work without invoking “camp.” Setting aside the long-standing debate about whether camp is a technique or a mode of reception—that is, a read—it is My Barbarian’s continual relay between intense arch knowingness and the ecstatic *salto mortale* that makes community theater possible (and for so many, a vulnerability to be avoided at all costs), that pushes one to reach again and again for the word. To abuse a turn of phrase from Lauren Berlant (writing on “identity”), camp is perhaps what My Barbarian are attached to but underdescribed by.



My Barbarian, *In Praise of Communism*, 2013, oil stick on craft paper, 18 × 24".

They also know how to pull together a *look*. My Barbarian tend to be underappreciated for the visual side of their production—often handcrafted physical objects such as masks, prints, and costumes. See the sailor suits, a set of mermaid’s sequined fins, superhero costumes evoking the Canadian flag, the pajama pants emblazoned with Barack Obama’s grinning face. “Showcore,” Segade writes in the exhibition’s catalogue, “with its internal illogic and deep-cut referentiality, was not infinitely scalable.” My Barbarian’s sensibility—though I am loath to use that word—with its backroom apocrypha and glittering spontaneity, thrives, above all, on the anecdotal. It seems meaningfully resistant to the logics of the catalogue raisonné, making the prospect of a museum exhibition all the more thorny and enticing.



My Barbarian, *Unemployed Man*, 2013, papier-mâché, 11 1/4 × 8 × 4 1/2".

At the same time, to be properly dialectical about it, the group’s madcap presentation may best exemplify Sianne Ngai’s theorization of the “zany,” “an aesthetic of nonstop action,” the frantic energies of which reveal the “ambiguous erosion of the distinction between playing and working.” Their indefatigable production evokes the hyperextended, exhausted, somehow both underemployed and overworked generation whose frustrations exploded in Occupy. Titles in the group’s expansive project history—*Broke People’s Baroque Peoples’ Theater*, *Flat Busted Beauty Window Fatale*, and *Post-Living Ante-Action Theater: Post-Paradise, Sorry Again*—evinced their droll intelligence. *You Were Born Poor & Poor You Will Die*, performed in New York at Participant Inc. as part of the 2005 Performa Biennial, was a “ritualistic incantation of class warfare.” It began with the group busking for spare change and ended by suggesting that the contemporary economy requires something like blood sacrifice. Both despite and because of the new spirit of capitalism’s favored modes of flexibility, creativity, and regimes of individual

microdistinctions of choice, the work's invocation of fate—the motor of so much ancient Greek theater—is perhaps fitting for the grim sense that poverty and precarity are now all but assured.



My Barbarian, *You Were Born Poor and Poor You Will Die*, 2006. Performance view, REDCAT, Los Angeles, April 20, 2006. From left: Malik Gaines, Alexandro Segade, and Jade Gordon. Photo: Patterson Beckwith.

That Performa Biennial was the first, and so the *other* recent history My Barbarian's oeuvre shadows is the early-aughts fascination and obsession with “performance” or “theater” in the “art world,” which seemed to reach its frenzied peak in the middle of these two decades. The group's Post-Living Ante-Action Theater, or polaat, a system they introduced as a commission for the New Museum, began in a mostly parodic mode—a glib joke about having to teach art-world denizens about even the most basic elements of theater and its history. As the project developed, it became more genuine: Incorporating elements of Augusto Boal's Theater of the Oppressed (in which Gordon is formally

trained), Rainer Werner Fassbinder's antitheater, Judith Malina and Julian Beck's Living Theatre, Brecht, and Artaud, the group found their groove in the collective elaboration and squishy proximity that good pedagogy demands.

To abuse a turn of phrase from Lauren Berlant (writing on "identity"), camp is perhaps what My Barbarian are attached to but underdescribed by.

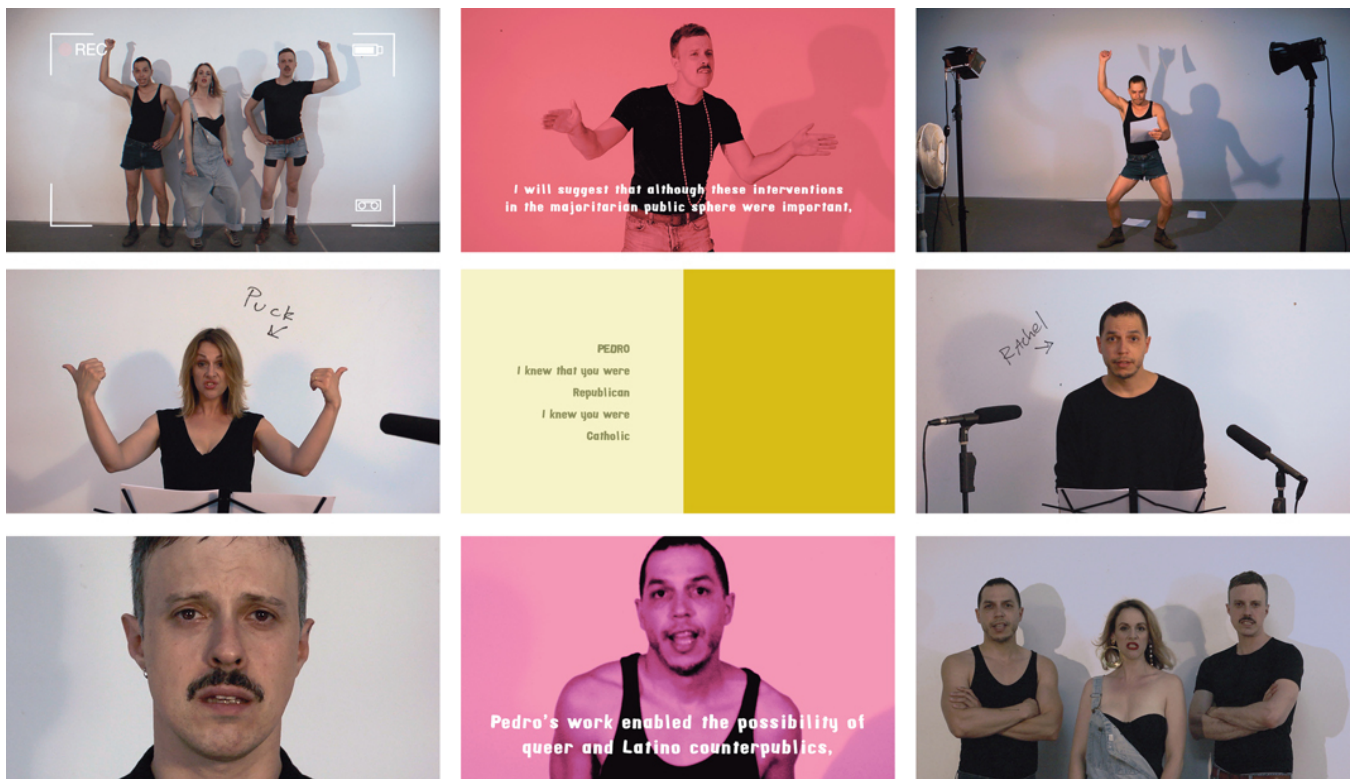


The Cockettes, *Fairytale Extravaganza*, 1970. Performance view, location unknown, 1970. From left: Tahara, Sylvester, Sweet Pam Tent, Raggedy Robin, and Marquel Pettit.

In this regard, *Counterpublicity*, from 2014, is perhaps the highest-proof distillation of the trio's years of collaboration. Its hot center is Pedro Zamora—a Cuban American who appeared on the third season of MTV's *The Real World* before dying of aids at the age of twenty-two—and an essay written about Zamora by the late queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz. Muñoz called Zamora's presence in the world "counterpublicity," a way of "being for others." A catchy jingle, lyrics drawn from the academic verbiage in Muñoz's essay, opens the piece, in which Gaines, Gordon, and Segade read lines culled from footage in

which Pedro meets his roommate Cory and members of the cast describe their questions about having a roommate with aids. The video's spare production highlights the subtle differences in each of their performing styles. Gordon looks most like an actor, not so much because of her dirty-blond hair or sharp cheekbones but because of her knowledge about how to hold her face. Segade is the most raffishly exaggerated, eyebrows scrunching suggestively, with serpentine wrists and swivels of the hip. Of the three, Gaines is the most evasive performer: Occasionally, he will look straight into the camera, as might the subject of a documentary, eyes intensely locked, and he prefers a geometric, solid equipoise. Throughout, they change positions, voices, parts. When reading aloud, they sometimes look past one another.

As the work crescendos, Segade recites a speech Zamora gave to a group of students at Stanford University about his experiences of illness. On a panel organized by Visual aids, Segade described how—despite My Barbarian's long training in theatrical distancing techniques—while performing the role he found himself unable to maintain the gap, too moved by the textures of Zamora's words: "There's not one second of my day that I am not aware that I am HIV positive, but that doesn't mean that my happier moments are any less happier." In deviating from the grammatical norm to exaggerate and amplify the adjective—not just "happy," but "happier"—Zamora puts his pleasures into political relation. How not to be "any less happier" is hard work indeed, and it is their attention to these labors that makes My Barbarian's interest in the "kind of beauty that comes from loving the flawed constructions people make to represent themselves" so indelible.



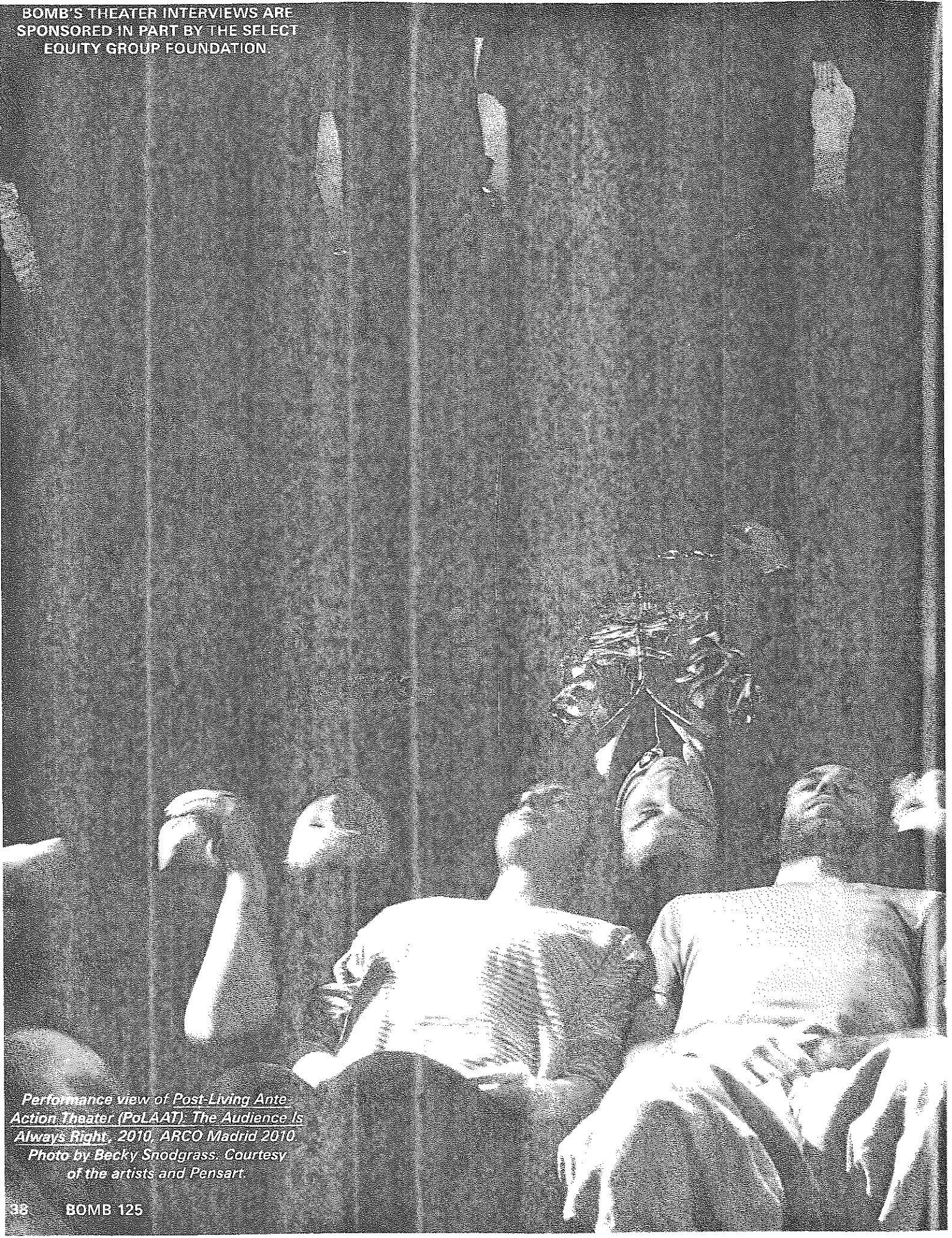
Nine stills from My Barbarian's *Counterpublicity*, 2014, HD video, color, sound, 11 minutes 34 seconds. Alexandro Segade, Jade Gordon, and Malik Gaines.

In the end, My Barbarian's capacious embrace of sources is perhaps neither pastiche nor collage but rather an acknowledgment of those ready-made containers, a little shopworn, out of which one assembles a life. After all, what are Marx's "conditions not of one's own choosing" if not choreography, costumes, scripts, and sets? Sure, you could mount a faithful adaptation, but why? Fucking with it sounds more life-giving, more happier, more fun.

Catherine Quan Damman teaches art history at Columbia University and is finishing a monograph on performance and affective labor in the 1970s.

All rights reserved. artforum.com is a registered trademark of Artforum International Magazine, New York, NY.

BOMB'S THEATER INTERVIEWS ARE
SPONSORED IN PART BY THE SELECT
EQUITY GROUP FOUNDATION



*Performance view of Post-Living Ante-
Action Theater (PoLAAT): The Audience Is
Always Right, 2010, ARCO Madrid 2010
Photo by Becky Snodgrass. Courtesy
of the artists and Pensart.*

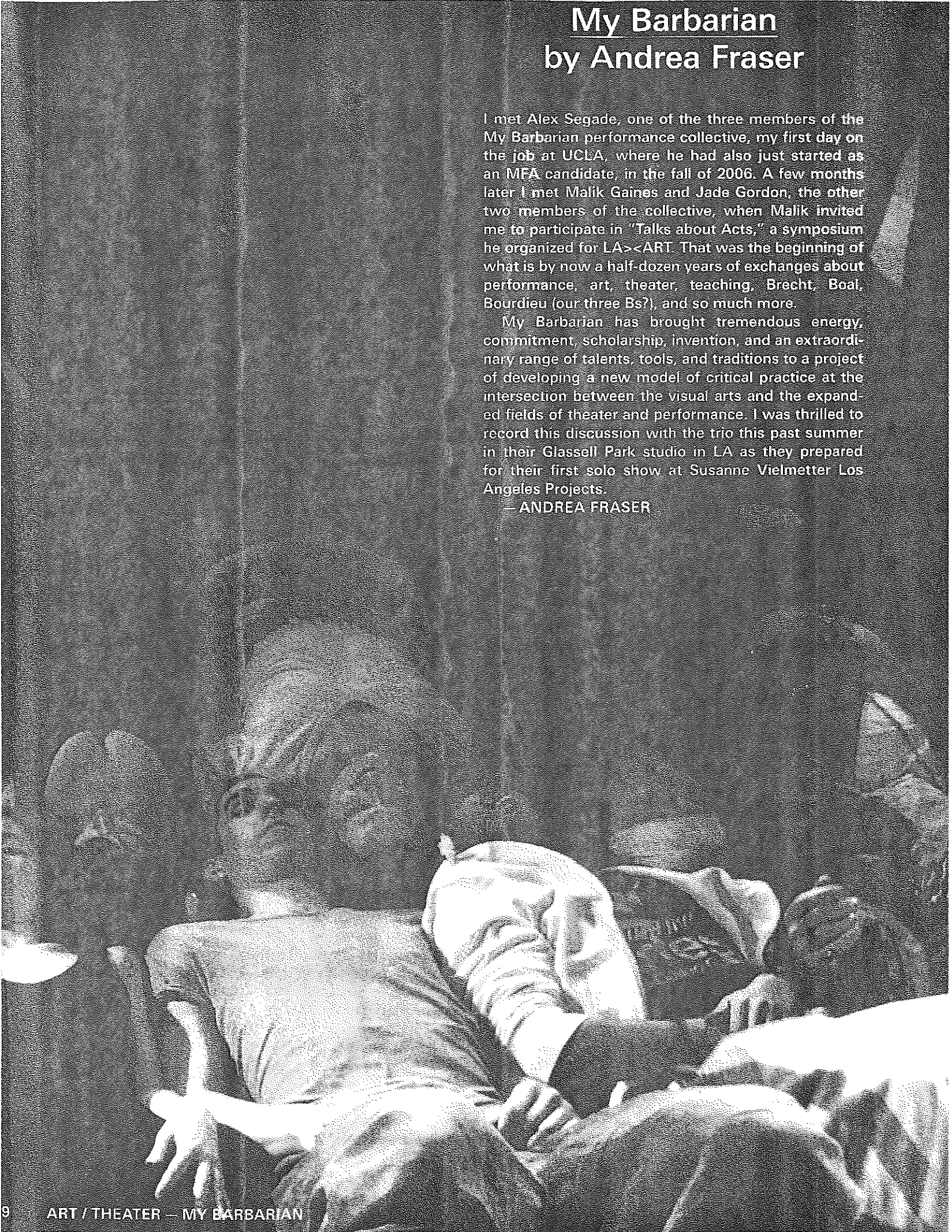
My Barbarian

by Andrea Fraser

I met Alex Segade, one of the three members of the My Barbarian performance collective, my first day on the job at UCLA, where he had also just started as an MFA candidate, in the fall of 2006. A few months later I met Malik Gaines and Jade Gordon, the other two members of the collective, when Malik invited me to participate in "Talks about Acts," a symposium he organized for LA><ART. That was the beginning of what is by now a half-dozen years of exchanges about performance, art, theater, teaching, Brecht, Boal, Bourdieu (our three Bs?), and so much more.

My Barbarian has brought tremendous energy, commitment, scholarship, invention, and an extraordinary range of talents, tools, and traditions to a project of developing a new model of critical practice at the intersection between the visual arts and the expanded fields of theater and performance. I was thrilled to record this discussion with the trio this past summer in their Glassell Park studio in LA as they prepared for their first solo show at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects.

— ANDREA FRASER



ANDREA FRASER Since this conversation is going to press, my first question is: What do you think about the press you've gotten so far? A lot of it seems to focus on "excess," "antics," "kitsch," and "camp"—with "hints of intriguing conceptual issues." Sorry to throw this at you!

ALEXANDRO SEGADE Some of my favorite writing has used what we do and extended it to other conversations, like Shannon Jackson's essay "Just-in-Time" for *The Drama Review* or José Muñoz's book *Cruising Utopia*. I also like Hilton Als's weird write-up of us in the *New Yorker*. He's like a carnival barker speaking about some sideshow—he calls us "whippersnappers." Unfortunately the term *kitsch* gets used a lot, but everything else on that list I'm okay with.

JADE GORDON Camp is okay; kitsch is not. Kitsch is sort of like garbage. *(laughter)*

MALIK GAINES Camp relates to theatrical conventions that are critical and also pleasurable. Kitsch is a misinterpretation of our work.

AF A lot of what's been written about you in the context of art journalism also seems to emphasize the theatrical aspects of your work—maybe because these strike art writers as the most novel in the context of what they are seeing in the art world. The three of you each have different backgrounds in theater, yet *My Barbarian* now exists primarily in the visual art field, both physically and discursively. How do you think the theater practices and discourses that inform your work function in an art context?

MG Those terms get picked up on because our strategies are somewhat transgressive in the gallery space since they refer to fun and entertainment. In theater you have a *play* and in art you have a *work*, right?

JG We had a set of theatrical techniques and tools that we could work with as a medium. At least for me, this was my set of skills.

AS We're all coming from different backgrounds. I went to art school, as you know, Andrea, since you were my professor.

AF Yes, you got an MFA in visual art, after having gotten a BA as an English major, and Malik, you got a PhD in theater—

MG Theater & Performance Studies

actually, at UCLA. I did writing at CalArts before that.

AS And Jade got an MA in Applied Theater at USC.

AF Applied Theater?

JG Theater for social change, with an emphasis on Augusto Boal. It's not community theater, but theater in the community, where participants are non-actors using theater for political and social change.

MG But we don't use those techniques in a way that is conventional or always legible in theater itself. The art space allows us to change topics, strategies, and genres with each specific project. We can respond to the architecture of a place, or its location, or a specific audience. Those are features of performance art more than theater.

AS Before *My Barbarian* got started we worked on theater projects together. We didn't exactly have a context; we came from a space that resembled the underground and worked in provisional, DIY venues. We still present work in places that aren't always contiguous with the visual arts, but the art world offered us an opportunity to experiment with the audience in a way that's totally different from theatrical and performance venues, where the audience has a very specific role. Getting people out of their seats is difficult. People are—

JG —passive.

AS But our first audiences were rock-venue audiences, which are not seated or passive but are actively talking back to you.

AF So your first incarnation was as a band?

AS We did theater together before we had a name, and then we started *My Barbarian* as a band. We could construct performances fairly quickly and actually get paid a little to go on stage, which was the opposite of what theater was offering us.

JG We wouldn't have to pay to produce anything. We could have a guaranteed 45 minutes to an hour on stage to figure out what we were doing. It was an incongruous space, not always unwelcoming. The question was: What doesn't belong here? That helped form what we do, because we were always allowed to transgress in the rock club.

AF So, how were you different from other rock bands?

AS For one thing, there were three lead singers, which was tricky.

JG Two of whom didn't play instrument

AS We also were heavily invested in narrative, so we were always telling stories

MG And there were costumes.

JG We required specific attention. We would stop and wait, or we'd try to battle with the clinking of glasses—

AS —and we had crazy music influences: Our models included musicals from the golden age of Broadway, mixed in with psychedelic rock and new wave dance music

AF So you weren't really a rock band.

AS We were an art band.

JG We were masquerading as an art band. We even created alter-ego groups occasionally. German Toothbrush, with an umlaut over both the o's was our avant-garde—

AF Tööthbrush!

AS —hippie, progressive band. Maybe because there are three of us and we are kind of prolific, we were too hyper to even be one band.

JG We would get frustrated if we had to play the same songs three shows in a row

AS At a certain point we became really interested in extending past the five-minute comfort zone for a song into these longer pieces—

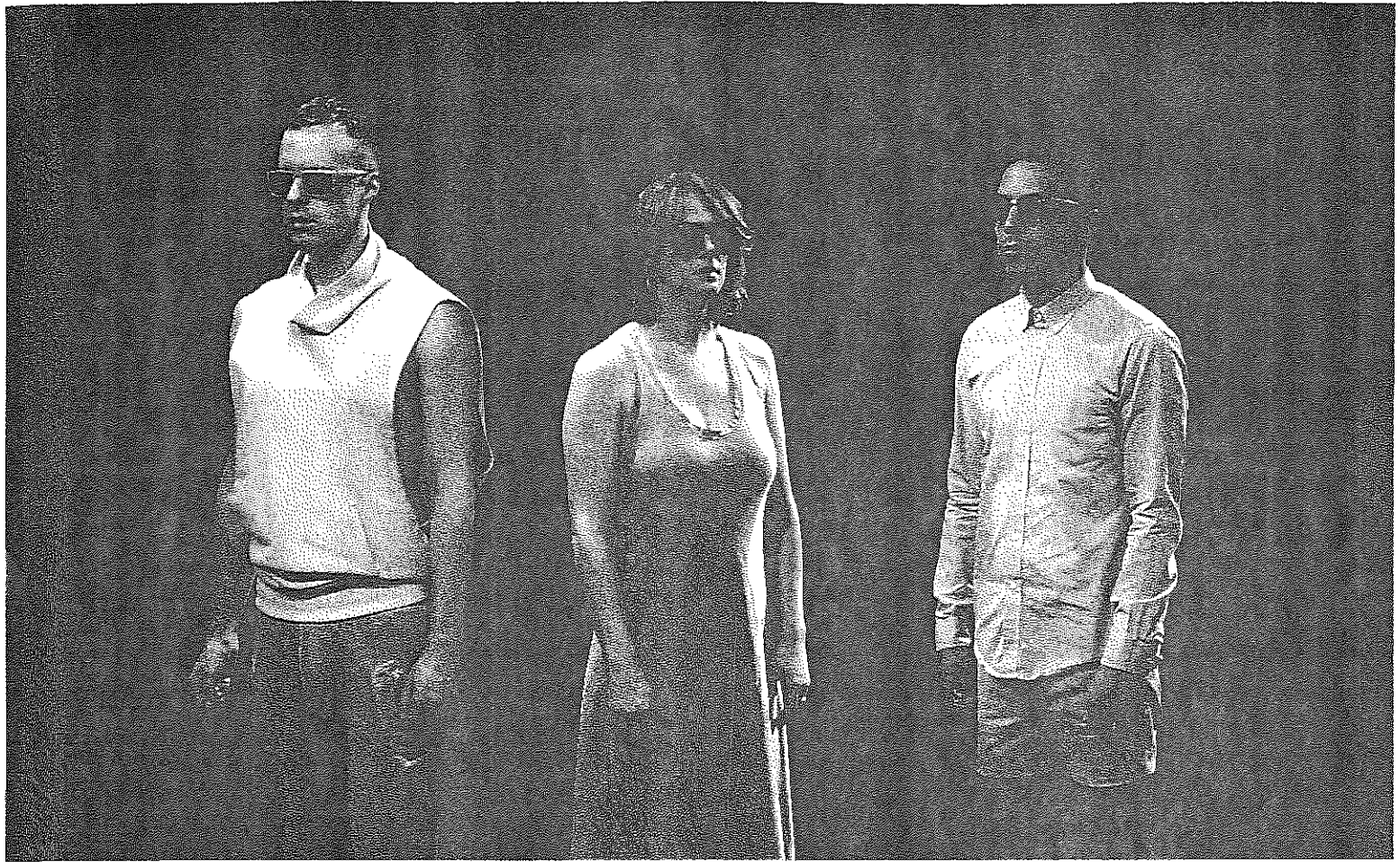
JG —and added dialogue and scenes and set pieces.

AS Then we wanted to create situations with the audience. We did our very first gay marriage piece for the Baghdad School of the Performing Arts in 2003.

AF What is that?

JG That's another alter-ego group.

AS That was at the beginning of the second Iraq War. We tried to get the audience to look at it as a ritual they could participate in. Then it became clear that we needed more flexibility. In an art



*Alexandro Segade, Jade Gordon, Malik Gaines in Universal Declaration of Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in the Creative Impulse, 2013, video, 29 minutes.
Courtesy of the artists and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects.*

context you actually have more space to decide how things are going to be set up.

AF So, after the club setting you found the gallery context?

AS 2004–2005 was the transition.

MG A few curators saw us perform as a band and knew that we really wanted to do site-specific things, so they started inviting us to develop projects.

AF It occurred to me when you were talking about audience that in some ways the theater context failed its own radical experiments from the '60s and '70s. The visual art context became a place where those experiments could develop and move forward.

JG Absolutely.

MG It hasn't been the case that doors are flung open for us to do radical theater in art museums—we've struggled with that too—but what you just described was our thinking at the time.

JG The doors weren't flung open for us to do radical theater in any theater spaces either.

AF I'm sure the doors weren't really flung open for you anywhere. More like cracked open, right?

MG But we think of ourselves as artists; I don't think of myself as an actor.

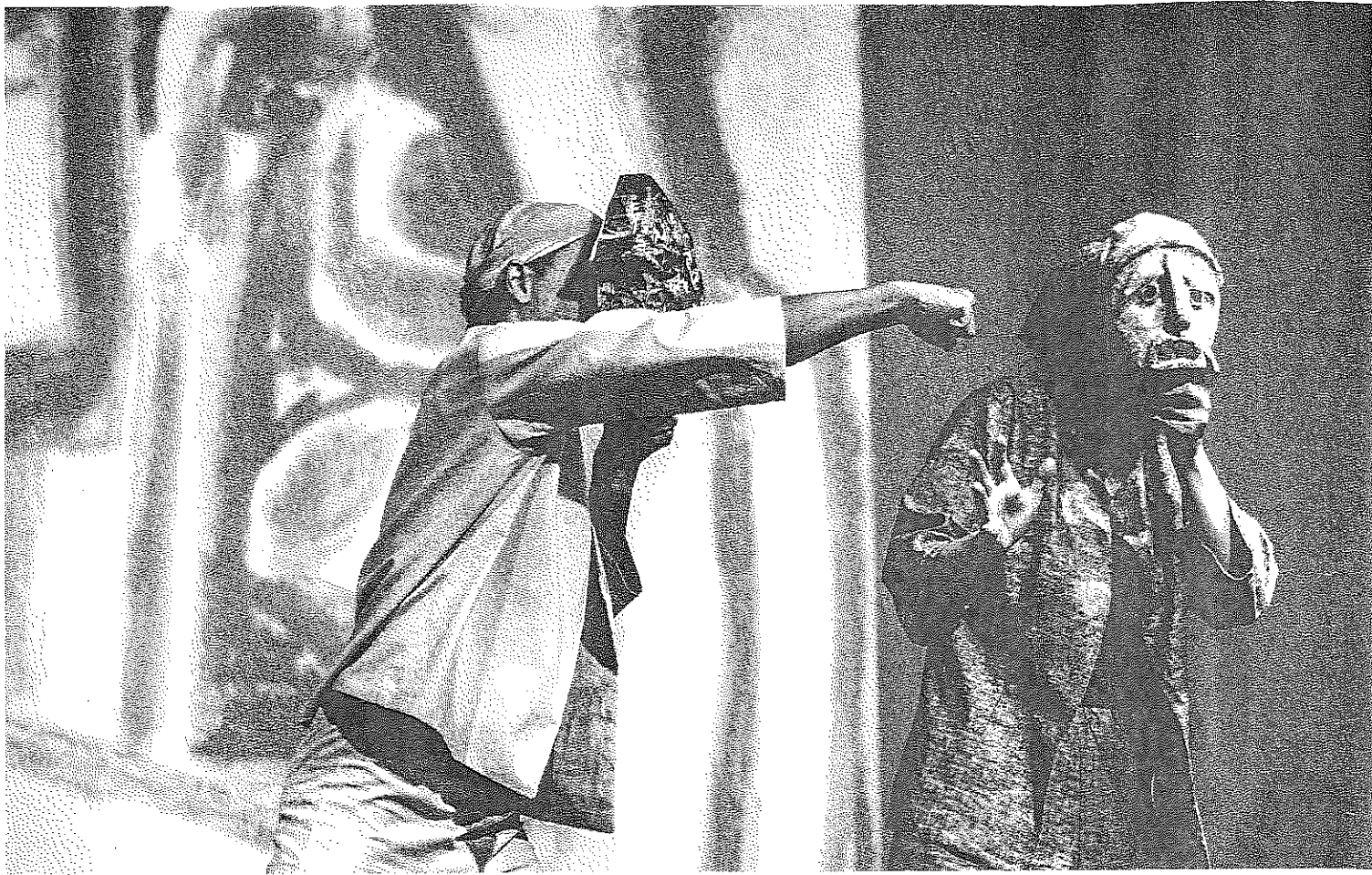
AF And yet, reading through your own material as well as your press, much of the emphasis does seem to be on theater, with many references to Boal and the Theater of the Oppressed, and to Brecht in particular. You're reimagining Brecht's play *The Mother* now for a show at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects. So theater does seem to be very defining. What does that mean in combination with the statement "We're artists"?

MG My father is a conceptual artist [Charles Gaines] and when I was very young, he told me that the idea is to introduce content and form that aren't already recognized as art and make them

art. That might be why I'm comfortable using things that have been connected to theater and calling them art. That gesture is much more a part of art than theater.

AS I was never convinced that I had to choose. One of the first criticisms we got was, "Your work is too theatrical." We were like, "Well, we all come from the theater so we don't think of that as pejorative." Michael Fried's "Art and Objecthood" essay—which is taught to every single undergrad art student—actually provides a helpful framework. Fried sees theater as a promiscuous, impure space that lies between the arts. But then you have the opposite view among theater people, who think theater is the mother of the arts. Theater may be a more productive concept within the art realm than within the theater realm. It's also connected to entertainment in a different way.

AF Entertainment may be an even more challenging term in an art context than in theater. How should art people engage



Performance view from My Barbarian's version of The Mother, adapted from the play by Bertolt Brecht, at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, July 13, 2013. Courtesy of the artists and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects.

with what is entertaining in what you do? Which leads to the larger question of the criteria by which you want My Barbarian to be evaluated: Is it pushing the art or theater envelope and moving the practice forward? Is it its social or political impact? Or is it on the basis of—

AS —the success of our spectacle?

JG Brecht said that in order for didactic theater to be effective, it had to be entertaining.

AF Actually, I see you very much in the tradition of '80s performance art, which has been erased from art history to a large extent.

MG Laurie Anderson?

AF And Ann Magnuson, Eric Bogosian, John Kelly, and the NEA four—Karen Finley, Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, John Fleck. All of the stage and cabaret-based work was considered a part of the field of art performance in New York in the '80s.

MG Right.

AF I'm shocked when I hear people saying, "There was no performance in the '80s." Hello!? The NEA Four? The most famous performance artists in the history of the United States!

AS Generationally that is the performance we saw first.

MG There are a few specific gatekeepers right now in terms of big institutions. Cabaret-oriented pop performance doesn't conform to the post-minimalist experience they prefer. I listened to Laurie Anderson's record *Big Science* as a kid all the time. I imagine there were gay men of that generation who would have been our mentors, but didn't live through the AIDS epidemic and weren't able to rise to prominence in a way that we would recognize now or know about. Of course, we were also interested in Eleanor Antin, Lorraine O'Grady, Carolee Schneemann, Adrian Piper, but that more theatrical work was very important to us.

AS We were definitely thinking about those '80s artists. Particularly Ann Magnuson, in my case.

AF Then Magnuson and Bogosian start working in film and TV. It's actually not that that history disappeared; it got split off from visual art history and became more associated with performance studies instead. It is really unfortunate that much of the connection was lost in the process.

AS We've gone back and forth between those two contexts a lot.

JG Because we are a collaboration, each of us tries new mediums and brings the results into the fold under the My Barbarian umbrella. Working in an art context allows for drawings to become set pieces and masks to become sculptures. It allows for a high level of experimentation and the constant addition of more and more ingredients.

MG Rather than occupying a particular disciplinary space, we all are interested in



Installation view from Universal Declaration of Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in the Creative Impulse at Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, 2013. Courtesy of the artists and Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects.

ambivalence as a critical mode that allows us to work as a collective rather than as an individual, to disperse past a beginning and an end. Where is the art exactly? Bringing theater into a museum destabilizes, de-centers things, which helps in the effort to raise political questions in a space that concretizes everything. Some people see ambivalence as wishy-washy or having a negative quality, but I see it as doing more than one thing at a time in a place that demands a singular kind of output.

JG Indistinction—more on that later.

AS I think it's actually more challenging to bring art strategies into a theater context. You can bring any form into a gallery space, into a white cube. There are certain things that are really difficult to bring into a theater space because of the expectation and training of the audience. Getting people out of their seats is difficult when the seats are so comfortable.

AF In the past you have made distinctions between audiences and the ways various works create different relationships to

audiences—between a seated theatrical audience and a mobile art audience that may or may not be engaged in a participatory process. Then there are the people you work with in the context of PoLAAT [Post-Living Ante-Action Theater]: they are not audience members, but rather participants who then become performers for other audiences. So there are different strategies, each generating relationships that have different dynamics and implications.

AS That's been the exploration: the question of what various aesthetic choices communicate and what sort of impact they have on different audiences.

AF And that's where site and situational specificity come in.

AS Yeah. We do tend to have a consistent position throughout, which is to ask questions about culture which are relatively difficult for us to answer: How will different approaches effectively get us in contact with different audiences so that we can ask those questions? I've

become less convinced of the idea, for example, that audience participation will automatically have more impact than a well-delivered monologue.

AF That's healthy skepticism! You've been involved in the dialogue about participatory practices, audience experiments, and collective and collaborative process that's been going on within and between the visual art, theater, and performance studies. Do you find yourself questioning the claims made in some of those debates?

AS I'm less convinced that any one-mode necessarily has a certain politics. In many ways Brecht and Artaud are at the root of what we do. There is a productive split between them: Brecht calls for an alienated audience that questions the action, while Artaud envisions a type of ritual theater that surrounds the audience and brings them into the experience. This tension has been generative for many who followed after them—Boal and others who have been huge influences on us, as well as visual and performance artists.

AF Visual artists less so.

MG People in the art world read Rancière's *The Emancipated Spectator* and say, "Oh, Brecht is just deeply flawed!" And you're like, "Have you actually seen Brecht's plays?" Of course they haven't; Brecht is a lot of fun.

AS We work with these things as tools. They shape different kinds of experiences but I don't think they have inherent politics

JG Democracy can go completely wrong. I mean, look at what's happening in Egypt

MG Look at Florida's Stand Your Ground law.

AF Your approach is difficult to locate, which makes it exciting but also challenging. We can locate you in relationship to visual art and theater, which each have specific histories, institutions, rituals, discourses and so forth—although of course there is also a long history of dialogue between them. Perhaps we can also look at the aims of your practice, which as you said, asks critical questions about culture



Performance view of Post-Living Ante-Action Theater (PoLAAT): Together Forever?, 2013, Yaffo 23, Jerusalem. Courtesy of the artists.



Mock-up image of Post-Living Ante-Action Theater (PoLAAT): Post-Paradise, Sorry Again for New Museum proposal, 2008. Photo by Alexandro Segade. Courtesy of the artists.

Of course, traditions of critique exist both in visual art history and in theater history. Are you bringing those two traditions together to develop new strategies for how one engages in a critical practice today?

MG The answer is yes. *(laughter)*

JG Good work!

AF Phew!

AS That's why the press just wants to say "they're antic" and "they use kitsch," because the rest of it is hard to deal with.

JG But that difficulty is a part of the practice, the questions make up the content and the form is the form and—

AS —it's a forum.

JG The form is the forum, yeah.

AF If the frame of the project is critical practice, then the project itself is an investigation of how one achieves a critical impact, as well as the more fundamental question of how we define critique itself.

MG Maybe there's a difference between critique, critical questions, and critical practice.

AF As an artist and performer, it's quite clear to me that most of the critical strategies that came down to me in the '80s and informed institutional critique derived, if not from Brecht specifically, then from Berlin Dada. That was the place and time when avant-garde strategies were turned to explicitly political ends. It was also when work on form, representation, discourse, and narrative came to be considered political work, understood as ideology critique and later simply as critique. So the influence of Brecht was always there. Arguably the most important additions to those strategies in the visual arts came in the '70s, with feminism. But at this point in time a post-disciplinary critical practice has become a tradition in itself that exists between fields. The breaking down of disciplinary boundaries has often been framed as a kind of internal or institutional critique, especially when those boundaries are seen as elitist, exclusionary, hierarchical, and so forth. But now that the art world has become a global, multibillion dollar industry that can gobble up anything and everything, do we need to rethink the politics of post-disciplinarity?

AS That's the thing to question: Have you been consumed, subsumed into something that needs you for a certain purpose, like to build audience on Thursday nights so the institution can actually get funding?

AF Or to "enliven the museum," which is a phrase I hear a lot these days.

JG But is the problem one of exploitation?

AS Our project for the Engagement Party program at the Museum of Contemporary Art here in LA might be an example to consider. It was funded by an endowment to support collective social practice through the museum's education and public programs department. When we did it, it was right after the collapse of the institution. Thinking a lot about your practice, Andrea, and performing a site-specific critique, we did a series of interviews with people who had worked at MOCA through the crisis and had seen their fellow employees get fired. We took those interviews and turned them into scripts for actors to learn and perform at the opening of one of the museum's shows.

AF I can't believe I missed that. Damn!

JG You would have liked it. *(laughter)*

AS We wanted to raise questions in a way that the public could engage with, in the space of the crisis itself, with the people who actually are impacted by it, like, What's happening with the security guard here?

MG When we did it, this was the only functioning funded space within the entire museum that could commission art.

JG And they couldn't actually pay us.

MG So they folded our project into having an opening for a show of works in their collection.

AS That part of the project, where we were expected to help pay for their opening party through our commission, was the gobbling thing. It happens all the time. I remember Danny McDonald from Art Club 2000 saying to Malik, "Remember, they need you more than you need them." That's a potential way of looking at things, but sometimes it's hard to remember that when you are trying to sustain a practice.

AF Your PoLAAT project seems to be very

much about formulating, even codifying, a model of critical practice.

MG It began in 2008, following a lot of work we had made around Bush-era anxieties. I wanted to be hopeful about the possibilities for democracy and participation. We wanted to bring our experiences as a group to larger and larger groups. Times have changed, of course.

AS Yeah, the attempt was to develop with other people the strategies that we had already formulated with our work. It started in the education program of the New Museum. We were playing with the self-reflexivity of institutional critique and the Brechtian impulse toward exposing the apparatus, while embracing critique as a fun, positive, and necessary part of art making.

JG The question was: How do we codify our strategies and then teach them? How do we share them and possibly let them exist in a context other than our own?

AF So they can be practiced by other people?

JG Yeah, some people in Italy used them.

AF How did that work out?

AS They stayed together as a group after we left, but they broke up after a few performances.

MG We modeled these codes after some radical theater projects including The Living Theater, Fassbinder's Anti-Theater, and Boal's Theater of the Oppressed, using our own didactic charts and graphs, while keeping in mind some of the perceived failures of '60s utopian projects: the sense that their radicality was consumed and repurposed, that their revolutions were re-contained. So there's also ambivalence there. But we do actually believe in all of the principles.

AS The five principles are "Estrangement," "Indistinction," "Suspension of Beliefs," "Mandate to Participate," and "Inspirational Critique." They all reflect the conversation we've had across disciplines. "Estrangement" is the first principle that can be connected to the Brechtian alienation effect very easily, but we also wanted to bring camp into that conversation.

JG In camp there's this emotional identification that happens across critical distance.

MG In Brecht, as in most Marxist models, all the issues of gender and sexuality and race get reduced to a subset of class, but if you're looking at queer or feminist performance strategies, they're happening together, in tandem. That's what we want to do with "Estrangement."

AS Then "Indistinction" came from looking at Bourdieu. Also, of course, from our own practice as this thing that's hard to locate. There's a joke in there too in the sense that distinction implies a kind of refinement. But as a performance strategy, "Indistinction" allows us to do things that short-circuit each other.

AF Whereas "Estrangement," with the Brechtian connection, evokes a Marxist tradition of ideology critique, "Indistinction," references Bourdieu, who rejected Marxist thinking about class in his own work on social hierarchies and domination. But "Indistinction" also takes me back to the historical avant-gardes and to what Kristeva called the revolution in poetic language: the destruction of the order and hierarchies of signifying structures. That's the Artaudian tradition, right?

MG I think so, except unlike Artaud or someone like Gertrude Stein, we're less likely to break down meaning in order to show its fallaciousness than to foreground its complexity. We would rather say three meaningful, contradictory things at once.

AF Does this notion of simultaneity have a particular history in theater? It's a core strategy in avant-garde traditions identified in the visual arts.

MG Yeah, I was just looking at some of Grotowski's scenic designs and they do everything they can to break up a proscenium view. There might be an actor here, and then an actor over there, and an actor outside—

JG Also Richard Schechner's environmental theater pieces, where it's about creating multiple points of view. The audience was dispersed around the space and depending on where you were in the audience, you would be looking at different things so that people had completely different experiences of the performance.

MG Or in a broader performance context, I think a lot about Nina Simone's strategy in the song "Four Women," in which she embodies all of them.

AS Which makes me think about the

third PoLAAT principle, "Suspension of Beliefs." That one was really hard when earlier this year we worked in Israel, where religion is so important.

MG And in Egypt too, in 2008. We changed the name to "Can You Believe What You See?"

AF Is it a way of engaging specific belief systems that emerge in your process?

JG It's actually more like letting your belief system levitate and float around, suspending it in mid-air so you can walk around it and look at it from above and from below, and maybe also look at other people's belief systems hanging in the air next to you, and ask questions and be critical of your own system.

AS Creating some distance from it, but also being aware of how belief is produced and supported. This is the one where we get very metaphysical in terms of performance. There's a lot of levitation exercises and supporting each other in—

JG —trust circles.

AF Do each of these principles represent specific phases in a workshop with a group?

JG Yes. The final workshop is the final performance, and then the circle widens from the participants in the workshop to the audience.

MG We organize a final recital as a demonstration of the principles, where all the stuff that got generated in the workshops gets connected.

AS At the end the participants of the workshop—

JG —teach the principles—

AS —to the rest of the people who are there, to the audience. "Mandate to Participate" is always a struggle. Everyone finds audience participation to be a nightmarish concept, despite the fact that participation in an art context, particularly in social practice, is always considered positive.

MG We're pretty good at it, though.

AS We got better at figuring how to "play" with a larger group of people. This is where key concepts like *play* or *critique* work with and against each other.

JG On my own, as a Theater of the Oppressed practitioner, I've worked with students or kids or old people who really don't want to do it, so you develop different strategies for mandating audience participation.

AF That's quite a skill set.

MG How does "Inspirational Critique" strike you as one of the experts in the field of institutional critique?

AF I'm ambivalent.

MG So are we.

AF I'm fine with tossing *institutional*—most people understand it too narrowly anyway—but *critique* is actually a much more problematic term in contemporary art discourse. It's seriously overused and yet very difficult to define, so it becomes a politically legitimizing term for all sorts of things that may be quite regressive. So I can relate to qualifying critique as a way to grapple with that. But then at the same time, of course, I'm protective!

MG Right.

AF I would hope also that inspiration is already a component of institutional critique, and that bringing it out could be a productive dialogue. One of the problems with critique is that it's often practiced as a kind of negation that can be about shaming or generating guilt, which just serves to activate defenses.

JG And shut things down rather than open them up.

AF Right. The aspect of institutional critique that should work against that is reflexivity: It's not about pointing at someone and saying, "Shame on you!" It's "Shame on me!" That can be comic, but there's also a pathos there that can be inspirational, like the classical dramatic protagonist who inspires by facing and overcoming—or failing to overcome—various challenges. At the same time, I still value art as an alternative to what Marcuse called an "affirmative culture" that's all about warding off anxiety and bad feeling. Maybe that's why "Inspirational Critique" makes me a little nervous.

AS Mary Kelly told me that critique is by definition inspirational, so the term is redundant.

MG It's a play on words, so it's a little

Brecht and Artaud are at the root of what we do. There is a productive split between them: Brecht calls for an alienated audience that questions the action, while Artaud envisions a type of ritual theater that surrounds the audience and brings them into the experience.

bit hokey no matter what. It also has something to do with live performance. If you've just gotten up and done your monologue, or cried or danced or whatever, it's very different from hanging your paintings on a wall and then having people a week later come talk about them, or from examining the institutional structure of a company, or whatever. Your body is on the line, everything is right there, so how can you still be critical in that space?

JG And nice.

AS And supportive.

AF That brings us to another one of the dividing lines in contemporary art positions. On the one hand, there are practices that emphasize critique and negation and bring a kind of destructive energy to existing structures experienced as bad. On the other hand, there are community-based and social practices that reject the politics of critique to a large extent and are oriented toward creating, affirming, or supporting good structures. You're trying to straddle those two, along with a third tradition, which would be—

AS —Broadway musicals.

MG Weird race performance.

AF Weird race performance and feminist and queer performance or, more broadly, identity-based performance.

MG I didn't want to say it.

AF I know, but do we have better word yet?

MG No. Though maybe identification as a process is more interesting than identity as a fixed state.

AS Part of the hope with this notion of "Inspirational Critique" is that it offers a critique that is mindful of to whom one is speaking and how it's going to be interpreted. This has a lot to do with working in an international context, and even across disciplinary lines. I mean, if you say "That was critical," in one context it can mean it was very good.

MG It was rigorous.

AS But in other contexts—

AF —you're in intensive care. All site- and situation-specific work should be mindful of context and audience. In a previous interview, Malik, you said that theater is social change. You quoted Boal: "Theater is a dress rehearsal for the revolution."

JG A dress rehearsal for reality.

MG I could stand by that.

AF We've located My Barbarian not in an art tradition or theater tradition so much as in a tradition of critical practice, itself defined by the question and ongoing investigation of what constitutes a transformative cultural practice. That's different from what one finds in other arenas of political art or social practice, where those questions are seen as already answered.

MG Right. Of course we can't insist that social change is always positive. Nor is collaboration. But through theatrical forms we can enact social dynamics that are frozen and crystalized in much visual art. I don't know if you can go so far as to talk about our work as rehearsal for revolution, but it's a place where you can envision different scenarios that maybe alter accepted terms.

JG That's pretty much what we're all about, and what Boal's work is about, creating possibilities, scenarios that reflect possibilities. But we're definitely not doing strict Boal.

AS Making work that addresses political questions is not the same thing as activism. It can be informed by activism, and it may also be critical of it. We went to Israel under the cloud of a cultural boycott: we broke the boycott and then we made a piece about the boycott. We wanted to know what the artists who we were working with thought. For us the biggest question was: What good does it do to cut off a conversation?

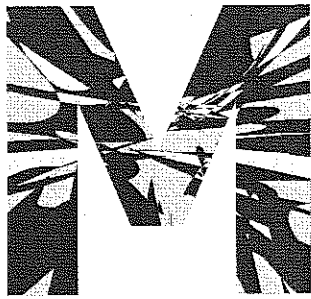
AF There are different ways of conceptualizing political practice in cultural fields.

One is direct impact on the model of activism rooted in a larger social movement. Another is the model of critical practice, which aims to impact its own cultural field: that's the model of institutional critique. Both could be considered site-specific, but in very different arenas. Then there's art that claims to be political vis-à-vis its subject matter, but we don't buy that, right? And there's a fourth model, which is direct impact in the specific arena of its participants in terms of their active relations—like the process that you're doing with PoLAAT—where it's about very immediate social and interpersonal relationships. But to describe that model as political, it seems to me that one first has to identify what forms of domination are at work in those relationships and what's at stake for participants in changing them. Actually, the same is true of the other models as well.

MG And when we discuss these fields, we also should remember the public spaces where we've worked—the park, the town square, the boardwalk, the National Mall—where many disciplinary terms fall away and content is addressed more broadly. Here politics are experienced more directly, but the work is still very different from activism.

JG When I was studying applied theater, there wasn't space for me to be an artist and a cultural activist. My ego as an artist had no place in cultural activism. I felt like I had to remove myself, like I had to sacrifice aesthetics for the good of the collective. It doesn't leave space for self or play.

AS This is where my impulse toward indistinction comes in. All of these rubrics are fun to parse, but sometimes I feel like I'm playing Dungeons and Dragons, and trying to determine, "Are you a gray-elf or are you a wood-elf? Are you a water wizard or a fire magic user?" It drives me a little bit crazy because there will be, in the end, a work that will be grappled with, and if it's any good, it's actually fighting against all of those terms.



**MOVEMENT
RESEARCH
PERFORMANCE
JOURNAL**
#45



My Barbarian

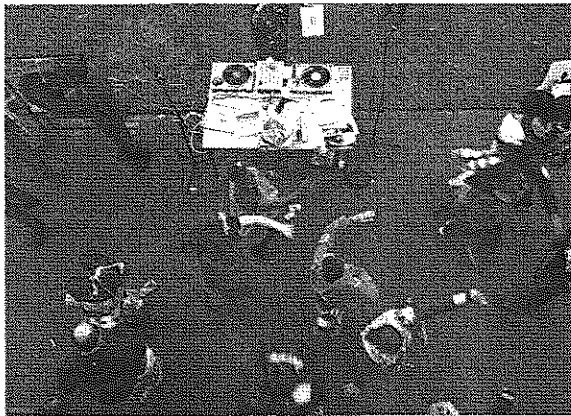
MY BARBARIAN



*My Barbarian. Universal Declaration of Infantile Anxiety Situations
Reflected in the Creative Impulse. video, 2013.*

MANDATE

In 2000, My Barbarian officially began as a band with three lead singers. According to Malik Gaines, Jade Gordon, and Alexandro Segade, playing in rock venues guaranteed a little cash and some stage time, a smarter proposition than self-funding their own theater productions. But eventually, their discordant musical influences (show tunes, psychedelic rock, and new wave) and desire to continue experimenting with theatrical narrative, scene, and costuming was not a perfect fit with rock audiences with whom they increasingly competed for attention. As Segade explains, "Maybe because there



My Barbarian, *Classical Music Dance Party*, Hirshhorn Museum, Washington DC, 2012. Photo: Victoria Reis

are three of us and we are kind of prolific, we were too hyper to even be one band."¹ Their move to the art world around 2004 has provided a more enthusiastic viewer and institutional support to work as a collective but reception has often overlooked the significance of their ongoing experimentation with audience. Approaching culture as a thing performed, not simply consumed, My Barbarian's engagement with the question of participation is at the core of their critical practice.

Post-Living Ante-Action Theater (PoLAAT) (2008 – ongoing) explores the persistence of 1960s and 1970s social and political struggles on our contemporary imagination. The performance lab, structured as a series of exercises, draws on techniques from important radical theater of the era, including Judith Malina and Julian Beck's *The Living Theatre*, Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *antitheater*, and Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Although invested in these lesser-known (at least by art world standards) histories, My Barbarian's look back does not attempt to reenact or reaffirm particular practices, but rather aims to test the durability of these projects within current endeavors to "organize our own lives in the face of increasingly powerful hegemony."²

PoLAAT's five principles—*Estrangement, Indistinction, Suspension of Beliefs, Mandate to Participate, Inspirational Critique*—lay out a program in concise, declarative prose one might attribute to a manifesto. But rather than imposing codes of belief and behavior on a group, PoLAAT's directives expand possibilities for thinking and action. *Estrangement*, for example, encourages "the performer [to] act out the distance

between themselves and what they are doing," introducing an element of self-reflexivity to encourage "active critique of the performance and the questions it poses."

The principle engenders productive antagonism between the performer and her own

actions, her participation within the group, and the group and its collective movement—a line of inquiry elaborated through similar meditations on each principle. In practice, PoLAAT's debut at the New Museum, New York, in 2008 culminated in performances of all five principles, which were explored in form and content. *Mandate to Participate* stands out for its upbeat, ensemble performance punctuated by song in vocal harmony: "Each rehearsal's a show / each show's a life / Each life's a rehearsal / For a better life,"³ emphasizing through rhyme and repetition the intertwined pursuits of aesthetic experimentation and collective agency. But the song also cautions against rehearsing tropes of a radical past, suggesting the need for new artistic strategies, new political horizons: "If we make each show / Better than the show we expect / Then our lives will get respect."⁴ In PoLAAT, historical discourse is not necessarily confined to history.

In other works by My Barbarian, participation is not explored through participatory gesture and is not always manifested as a conscious choice. *The Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater* (2010 – ongoing), another one of the collective's long-term projects of recent years, dramatizes the cost of the financial crisis through use of camp and a modest economy of means.

The mini series *The Night Epi\$ode* presented at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles (2010) riffs off Rod Serling's early-70s horror television series, *Night Gallery*, whose macabre themes seem to anticipate the grim conditions of late capitalism and the 2008 financial crisis. In the episode "Who's for Dinner?," presented as a video installation at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, My Barbarian offers up a slice of American precarity depicted through the phenomena of market speculation and careerism. Here, two female colleagues share a home-cooked meal outside of the office. The established, broad-shouldered brunette (played by Segade in drag), is the sarcastic single working mother familiar from American sitcoms. Easily annoyed and exhausted by the "freedom" of a post-1970s, women's lib life, she is counting down the years (eight!) until her youngest child leaves the house. Although well-intentioned, the younger, fresh-faced

TO



My Barbarian, *Shakespeare Du Bois*, Video, 2012



My Barbarian, Death Panel Discussion, Participant Inc, New York, 2008. Photo: Rosalie Knox

colleague in powder-pink hair (played by Gordon) can only sympathize by steering conversation back to professional life: "You're doing so well at work...[You're] one of the three women at Bissel Bissel and Mortimer." Obligated to return the compliment, she tosses a bone to her younger colleague: "Well, you are amazing at computer graphics ... And these days, really, everything needs graphics." When their boss (played by Gaines) suddenly comes to the door and fires them, reminding viewers of the 2008 bank closures and widespread layoffs, their careerist lives come crashing down as well. In the closing scene, this news possesses the two colleagues and they cannibalize their boss. Their grisly feast is not only an act of revenge against the proverbial man but also a symbolic ingestion (and embodiment) of the capitalist logic that has already overtaken them. The tension conveys the compromised position of the two protagonists, in which there is neither a clear path to redemption nor escape from the system. The work, departing from a populist late-night television show, emphasizes a zombie-like consumption of late capitalist programming that emphasizes individual achievement over commonalities of gender, class, and culture.

Featuring women formative to the collective's development, My Barbarian's recent video, *Universal Declaration of Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in the Creative Impulse* (2013), centers maternal labor, typically confined to the domestic sphere, within public discourse and political life. Featuring artists Mary Kelly and Eleanor Antin in addition to the mothers of Gaines, Gordon, and Segade, the short films that comprise the video explore notions of the maternal in ways that exceed biological or single-family affiliation. In particular, performances by the collective's mothers are striking for the imagination they bring to the role of mother. Spot lit in a black box theater, Segade's mom, Irene, delivers an impassioned speech on bullying and queer youth that includes a recitation of federal and state legal protections, suggesting the knowledge of an informed activist, despite the fact her sons have been out of the house for years. In the segment featuring Victoria, Gordon's mother, a daughter reads the diaristic writing of a single mother in the 1970s that runs parallel to a sequence of black and white stills of Victoria, elevating private thoughts to a public platform. Gaines's mother Barbara makes her appearance with a cohort of friends in short skirts, sequined halter-tops, and salmon-colored capes, flashing plenty of pasty skin in a

country-side talent show. The gathering is part of a "white trash party" conceived as one of the rotating culturally-specific dinner nights organized by the group. In her performance of one possible public perception of herself, Barbara shares some motherly advice: "it's fun to try to be different from what you really are, someone you could have possibly been." This performance of contradiction between who one is and the cultural permutations of who one could have become exemplifies My Barbarian's exploration of everyday life and its potential capacity to shape a culture of the present.

...

1 Fraser, Andrea, Malik Gaines, Jade Gordon, Alexandro Segade, "My Barbarian," *BOMB Magazine*, Fall 2013.

2 Alexandro Segade. *Museum as Hub: Six Degrees*. Exhibition brochure, New Museum, New York, 2008.

3 Ibid

4 Ibid

...

Ryan Inouye is associate curator of Sharjah Biennial 12 and is currently based in Sharjah, United Arab Emirates.

PARTICIPATE



You Were Born Poor and Poor You Will Die, REDCAT, Los Angeles, 2008. photo: Scott Grollier

My Barbarian's

Image courtesy of My Barbarian



Utopian Apocalypse

*I would build that dome an air,
That sunny dome! Those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And I should cry, Beware! Beware!
Their flashing eyes, their floating hair!
Weave a circle round them thrice
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For they on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise*

—Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Kubla Khan*

Wherein the author details the epic ambitions of a group of talented young artists/performers/intellectuals from Co-li-for-nia

My Barbarian is a collective of insanely prolific and highly adaptable artists headquartered in Los Angeles. The core cadre Malik Gaines, Jade Gordon and Alex Segade are the sons and daughter of liberal academics, a conceptual artist, and countercultural free agents of the U.S. of A.

The band came together at the University of California, Los Angeles in the late nineties through student theater projects. My Barbarian as a performance concept was first tested out in alternative rock venues, but perhaps since their Brechtian distanciation and boa feathers were too much for the average rock audience to deal with the band slowly found themselves in contemporary art and performance venues.

Their 2005 CD *Cloven Soft Shoe* stands as a document of these "art band" concerts before the group began to develop their music for expanded forms of theater and video.

The group embraces all things related to what novelist James McCourt has called the QT. What is QT? It could—in the case of the Barbarians—be *Queer Temperament, Queer Temporality, Queer Theatre, Queer Tropicatio, Queer Territories, Queer "Trompe-Brain Trickersy"* (to quote Alex and Malik's post-cony manifesto *Séance in the Dark Theatre*).

When this author met with Jade Gordon and Malik Gaines to discuss their creative output, a grouping of their informants/sources of inspiration were exhibited: the Cockettes, the queer performance group active in San Francisco in the late 60s and early 70s; the musicians and artist

associated with Brazilian Tropicalia; and Amon Dual, the political commune-cum-prog-rock outfit with ties to experimental theater. Gordon and Gaines have the strongest ties to theater in their studies and practice, while Segade is pursuing his MFA in the art department at UCLA. Their work has been invited and commissioned mostly by contemporary art venues, especially those with an interest in inter-disciplinarity and hybrid forms.

Using their "confrontational showmanship," a purposeful confusing of the performance production values and rigor of Broadway stagings with the lassitude and earnestness of Brechtian and other avant-garde theatrical strategies, My Barbarian selectively cruises the history of theater and parodies everything else that comes in their wake (e.g. the art world). My Barbarian's performances of the last few years rely on their encounter with the regional or institutional context as they mutate theatrical set pieces from their repertoire into new unheard of elements.

In 2004, the group was selected to experiment with longer form performance pieces when they were chosen to participate in the REDCAT (Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater) NOW Festival. They devised *MB: The Mary Blair Story*, a performance piece based on the life and art work of Mary Blair, an under-recognized commercial artist who designed for Disney with her signature "It's A Small World." The choice of "Marijuana Mary," this trippy feminist figure marginalized in Disneyana

was a nod to the theater and CalArts' connection to the Disney legacy.

Aspects of West coast counterculture continued as ur-theme for the Barbarians in their 2006 piece *Pagan Rights*. The initial performance piece involved employment in the cruise ships of San Diego, gay marriage in the military, and pagan rites. A video version, screened at the 2006 California Biennial at Orange County Museum of Art, involved every pagan and occult symbol from Isis to Sun Ra to the Radical Fairies and tree hugging deep ecologists.

Another theatrical piece developed for the Aspen Art Museum was *Silver Minds* (2006), a paen to the post-colonial science fiction narratives of writers like Samuel Delaney and Octavia Butler ("When landscape holograms fall flat, when surf simulations are all wet, when virtual ski-programs leave you cold, your choice is Silver Minds"). The piece also alluded to Aspen as a misty space of sidlers, mystic celebrities, and futurologists.

Adaptation is a key strategy for My Barbarian as the group renews and reformulates aspects of their repertoire to suit their venue. Their play *Medieval Morality*, originally done at the MAK Center's Schindler House in Hollywood, was retooled in the Berlin compound of art dealer Javier Peres.

Their post-colonial, pro-hedonism *Voyage of the White Widow* (2007), commissioned by De Appel, was a free-wheeling appeal to liberty (lost and gained) and a twisted love letter to the Dutch. Their institutional critique was perhaps most on display in *The Case of the Stairs* (2008) while traipsing up the stairs of the Los Angeles County Museum challenging an enormous modernist sculpture by Tony Smith to tremble as they sang a Spanish version of "One Night Only" from the Broadway musical (and Hollywood redux) *Dreamgirls*.

"I am for an art that is political-erotic mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum. I am for an art that embroils itself with the everyday crap and comes out on top." —Claes Oldenburg

Most recently My Barbarian is leading workshops devoted to using theater-as-process. In their project for the New Museum, *Post-Living Anti-Action Theater* (PoLAAT), the Barbarians use the theatrical workshop to catalyze both historiography and histrionics. Borrowing their moniker (PoLAAT) from the counter-cultural Living Theater and its radical German antithesis the Action Theater (with its connection to Rainer Werner Fassbinder), My Barbarian prompts their participants to consider different strategies for collective action. As My Barbarian co-auteur Alex Segade has written, "we figure the theatrical space as a realm of forgotten possibility that seems to let us in, to allow for fantasies eschewed, or the political discussion now ignored." While artists of late have been borrowing from theater through the use of historical recreation, insertions of the theatrical into the everyday, and the cooptation of staging devices, My Barbarian goes further than a studious or merely studied encounter moving into the realm of the mythological, the catatonic, and the Now.

...

Rita Gonzalez is Associate Curator in the Contemporary Art Department at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

This text was originally published in the Summer 2008 issue of *Work Magazine* on the occasion of My Barbarian's residency at Galleria Civica di Trento, Italy.

My Barbarian *in* conversation with:

**Zackary Drucker
Miguel Gutierrez
Simone Leigh
A.L. Steiner
Wu Tsang**

For the interview section of the portfolio, editor Matthew Lyons and My Barbarian chose to expand the interviewer role from one to many, inviting five artists to interview the collective: Zackary Drucker, Miguel Gutierrez, Simone Leigh, A.L. Steiner, and Wu Tsang. Creating a polyvocal exchange that touches on diverse aspects of My Barbarian's practice, each of the five artists proposed a few questions to which each member of My Barbarian responded separately. My Barbarian then composed this edit.

ZACKARY DRUCKER

You close your eyes and begin to walk through the desert in your mind. A road bisecting your brain, a pile of ancient rocks, a song sung about us being missed when we're gone. What are the rocks made of? What are the lyrics to the song? What do you see on the horizon?

MALIK GAINES:

I think the rocks are granite and obsidian with bronze strains. Sort of Yosemite style.

JADE GORDON:

Sea-worn green glass rocks or minerals: peridot and malachite and aquamarine. Semi-precious.

ALEXANDRO SEGADE:

On the horizon are spaceships.

MALIK:

The song might be the first song we ever wrote, sitting around Jade's living room, when we were a fledgling rock band, circa 2000, our first three-part harmony. It was called "My Barbarian," it was about projecting fantasy onto realist relations and also about having an uncivilized boyfriend, and liking that about him.

A.L. STEINER

One or two or all of you have described yourselves in various ways, one recent description of note being a "theater coven." How does this term apply, and are there any other relevant vocabulary words or idioms that might be useful in describing My Barbarian if we make it to the 22nd century?

ALEX:

"Theater coven" is not a conceptual framework, more of an oppositional banding together of allegiances across

difference, the affinity of heretics. This witchy, theatrical strain of performance art is often queer and/or feminist but always trapped in a feminine (or femininist) dimension slash alternate universe. To be more precise, the "Theater Coven" is an unofficial term for people working in performance who have never accepted the supremacy of minimal gestures over elaborate constructions. Predecessors are: Spiderwoman Theater, Angels of Light, etc. I'm not advocating for an essentialist "magic" with this term: its theatricality is an admission of the artifice inherent in making art, and its inability to transcend the context, even as it shapes the experience, of a given site. A coven, then, and not a movement, because covens last longer. We have shared the stage with many members of the Theater Coven. And yes, Steiner, I have a lot more terms to introduce to the discourse!

SIMONE LEIGH

What has struck me about My Barbarian is how comfortably you navigate being black, white, queer, not queer and now you are even with child. And it's not hurting, it makes you stronger. How do you manage what appears to be an effortless intersectionality?

JADE GORDON:

We have different backgrounds, types of educations, and interests, and we purposefully have made space within the collaboration for this diverseness. We're interested in our various desires, skill sets, and life priorities and I think this attitude expands our capacity to nourish these complexities within our interdisciplinary artistic practice.

ALEX:

None of us in the group comes from anything resembling homogeneity. It's not effortless, communicating and collaborating across a spectrum of identifications and circumstances, but it comes from early on in our lived experience, and feels as "natural" as anything can.

WU TSANG

Can you describe your different roles in the collaboration? In what areas do you individuate and in what areas do you overlap/share?

ALEX:

We all sing, we all dance, we all act.



Pager Rights, video, 15 mins, 2008. On-set photograph, La Bulevar, Mexico, courtesy My Barbarian.



My Barbarian, *Actos de los Eros de los Eros, Part 1*, performance, Espacio Encuentro, Mexico City, Mexico, 2010. Photo: Marcela Hernandez

we harmonize. We switched off playing Pelagea Vlassova in our production of *The Mother*, each portraying a different aspect of the character: Jade was the trickster mother, Malik was the ideological mother, and I played the dramatic mother. In terms of production, there is a lot of overlap in making the visuals, but we do cover certain areas, often all in the same studio at the same time. Jade has the lead on mask making, as she is the most skilled and trained in that art. I am responsible for video, especially pre- and post-production, working with people outside of the triumvirate. Malik is in charge of installation. I make drawings — storyboards, scenic designs, character sketches, slogans — and these sometimes get exhibited along with the videos and masks. Malik writes, plays, conducts, produces and records the music. Jade handles the finances. Everyone sews, and works on costumes. The rest is a collective miasma of interlocking ideational syndromes, circulating through our minds and spaces.

SIMONE

I'm seriously impressed with two things: My Barbarian's longevity as a functioning collective, and your outrageous, relentless, generosity toward your colleagues. Are these two things related?

MALIK:
The wonderful and very smart performer Geo Wyeth said recently (and I hope he doesn't mind being paraphrased): there are two kinds, artists who think everything is OK and don't care about people, and artists who don't think everything is OK and care about people. We're probably the latter, and having worked together in a group for so long, we've discovered a thing or two about how to work with people, how not to work

with people, and how to care about people while we're working. I don't think we are especially generous compared to our colleagues that we care about, though it's nice of you, Simone, to put it that way, it's just that we've developed strategies and habits for sociality. That has been the subject of much of our work, and so much of our process, and that hopefully spills out into the world.

MIGUEL GUTIERREZ

What is the role of the erotic in your process and in your performances?

ALEX:
This has been a topic of conversation for years. Miguel, Malik and I have a sexual energy that is rooted in our mutual astrological designation as Fire Signs, which tends to be inclusive, and in our case is homo. Jade is a Virgo. To me, she is like a sister, and I hope she sees me as a brother. There is a physical attraction that is among us, but also a familial honesty. So, Miguel, it's basically the eros of the Von Trapp Family, with a built-in incest taboo, sublimated into songs about goatherds, acted out through the fetishizing dirndls and lederhosen. Sometimes there is a kind of infantilizing that results from this, and we can come off like a kids TV show, which is fine because those were always really tense, sexually, and while different projects address the politics of erotics differently, there is always a queer strategy. For example, *Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater* (2011-14) is a project where the central image is masked and wigged figures with billowing togas and nothing underneath, referencing various European Classicisms, but also cultish group sex scenes in *Eyes Wide Shut*. In all our projects, we play with gender representation, and we are doing this as cisgender performers who are attracted to men. That

said, My Barbarian is more polymorphous perverse than pornographic, erotically, and I credit Jade with this productive complication. But, to really talk about blowjobs and gay orgies, Malik and I have had to work in other collaborations.

WU

What role does writing play in the process? Does everything start from the written word (of a script) or does it flow simultaneously from movement/research/rehearsal/enactment? How important is writing to the thing it actually becomes?

MALIK:
Writing is so important. Over the years, most projects have started with a title, a sentence, a paragraph setting historical, stylistic, and theoretical parameters. Most pieces have worked from a script, and from a specific music score that accompanies sung text. In our process, every other step is returning to the page. Sometimes if we get lost in the studio sewing and planning and dancing and rushing to finish something, we say, "wait, what does it say on that piece of paper?" As a collective, having a written plan gives each piece a spine, and as artists who express specific, direct content, written language is the most effective for us. We write in many ways, and we're all really good writers! Though a lot of the script writing is done by Alex, and he has a lot to do with the voice of My Barbarian. One process that works for us is deciding together on some content and terms, writing down bits of ideas, handing those to Alex, and getting a script draft back from Alex, which we then project on a wall and read through, revising together as we go. Also as the main composer of the group, I've come to like working best from a pre-existing

MY BARBARIAN MY BARBARIAN MY BARBARIAN MY BARBARIAN

text or set of lyrics; it's really fun for me to look at words on a page and make them into melody and harmony that emphasizes the content of the language.

In one sense it's a difficulty for us, as international performance artists, that our work is so rooted in language. In some projects, like the *PolAAI* (2008-13), we've made the act of translation a central element. We've had to learn songs based on our writing in Italian, Arabic, and others. Our *Non-Western* (2007) included a simultaneous Spanish translation as a video element. Other pieces have used Spanish as well, which some of us can speak somewhat. Most often, our work has relied on voices speaking and singing in English. While our work now seems to be circulating well in the States, it's harder for us to show up in Poland with an hour-long play. Maybe this is something we'll address in the next decade of work, it's always good to have a challenge.

STEINER

That age-old question: what's your longevity secret of this 14 year old ménage à trois, aka "household of three," in the face of compassion fatigue and an uncompromising hurdle towards planet-wide human-made disaster?

ALEX:

Malik and Jade and I are always researching historical models for what we do, from art collectives to theater companies. Personally, I've always been interested in group identities, casts of Broadway shows, super hero teams, new wave bands, style tribes, pantheons. I used to stare at the first B-52's album,

imagining my own group, each of us contributing our talent and personality to the collective, getting to be more than one person. My Barbarian is the most successful manifestation of this fantasy that I have yet to experience. It has lasted because it shifts shape along a spectrum of group identities: we have been many bands, teams, theater movements, and we eventually will be the crew of a spaceship.

MIGUEL

Jade, what is it like to work with a couple (of sluts)?

JADE:

Ha, you mean a couple of drunk sluts? I think it is part of the reason we've been able to work together for so long. They are connected but obviously two distinct people. They're a support structure for each other, for My Barbarian, and for me. I have different relationships with both of them. I make choices about which of them I will talk to about various things and I make those choices consciously. I sometimes feel out-voted and very occasionally a little left out but not that often. That super sensitive part of my ego that needed all the attention or to always get her way kind of went away several years into the collaboration. I sometimes play the role as mediator between them and I don't mind it. I dislike conflict and feel happiest saying, "yes, and...". Their couple-ness gives me a sense of stability. It's probably some childhood lack (single mom stuff) that I'm creepily projecting onto them.

MIGUEL

What is it like to work

transcontinentally after having worked locally for so long?

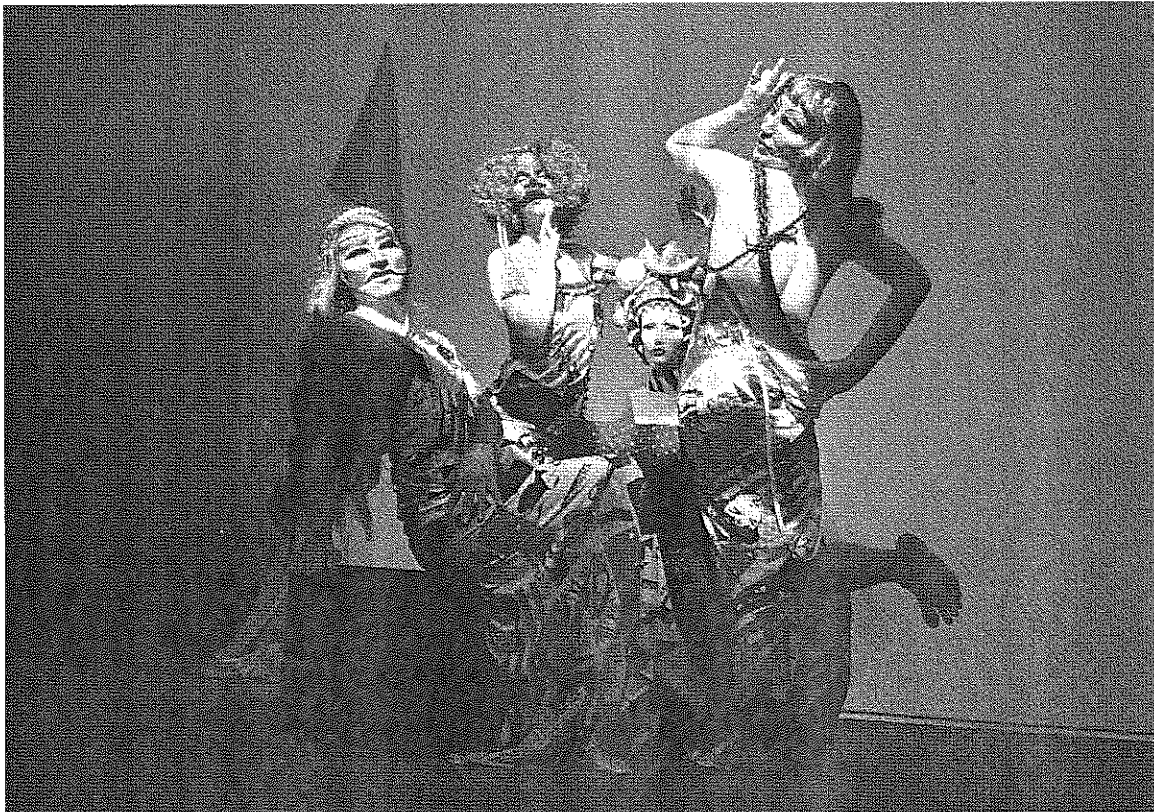
JADE:

As the 1/3rd of MB who's still in LA, it's been a bit lonely for me in the studio. I'm used to working collaboratively, bouncing ideas off of the other two, getting immediate feedback, suggestions, encouragement. It's been hard for me to self-discipline. Nobody is expecting me to show up at a certain time for dance rehearsal. But at the same time I feel like I've been able to start to develop a stronger sense of trust in my contribution to the whole. My experience of our group work together has been external, out loud, and fully embodied. Being alone forces you to spend time inside your head listening to voices, conjuring up images or characters or just doing things without immediately being praised or critiqued. My Barbarian's biocoastal transition corresponded with changes in my personal life. Working together in intense spurts, less frequently, has enabled me to fulfill my day-to-day obligations as a new mother. I have more room for the mundane everyday life stuff but must really fight for the time alone necessary to make art. It's a total cliché but a genuine struggle and it's easy to let distractions keep you too busy and tired to make work. When Alex and Malik were in LA we had a loose but fairly constant routine of just hanging out together in the studio discussing projects, rehearsing, laughing, etc. Working within the predetermined three or four hour stretches my schedule allows is a challenge. I spend a lot less time playing (with adults) these days and play is a big part of my process.

ALEX:

But I would add that in our absence, Jade has kept busy and started working

My Barbarian, *Broke People's Baroque Peoples Theater: Three Goddesses*, Performance, My Barbarian Studios, Los Angeles, Photo: Gabrielle



MY BARBARIAN MY BARBARIAN MY BARBARIAN MY BARBARIAN

on projects with other artists, as have we. We all went back to grad school in the mid-2000s at the same time but in different fields, and it enriched the collaboration. Now we are seeing other people and it has made My Barbarian more special.

ZACKARY

Alex and Malik, if you were given a choice and you wanted to fall for it, what lie could I tell you to move you back to California?

MALIK:
You could tell us that you've started an experimental new performance program at UC Santa Cruz on a compound in the woods overlooking the ocean and we're the well-compensated co-chairs and that the other faculty members are Jade, Steiner, Wu, Miguel, and Simone. And that high-speed rail has been completed, so we can get out of that hippie mess from time to time and visit our families in Fresno and San Diego and LA and meet cute guys all over the state in an hour or less. And there's water.

MIGUEL

What, in your opinion, is the most fucked up thing about the art world?

MALIK:
Probably that it's several fields that try to express themselves as one field. A "world." But planets apart. This conversation we're having here has nothing to do with the transfers of obscene wealth that go on in another part of art, except sometimes we share rooms in museums. Sometimes we sit next to people at dinners. Somehow luxury, the avant-garde, radical gestures, "quality," advanced décor, fetishism, critique, and the sublime all got mushed up together. It makes no sense at all. But we go along with it and that's a little bit fucked up.

ALEX:
There is nothing fucked up about the art world, and I like going to dinner for free.

ZACKARY

If you spoke every language ever spoken: who would you speak to and what would you say?

ALEX:
I would speak Nahuatl and talk to some high priests/priestesses about human sacrifice. Or I would speak a computer language and talk to computers about their goals. Or maybe I would just speak French and talk to European programmers about our work.

JADE:
If I spoke every language ever spoken I'd get tired of words. I would speak in images or telepathically, a new/old language that transcends nations and time.

MIGUEL

In a parallel universe, or in the multiverse for that matter, what do your life/job/relationships look like?

JADE:
I think it's dangerous to ask myself these types of questions. I've escaped a lot of potentially terrible outcomes and have probably not worked hard enough in certain ways or truly persevered when I should have. I look back and think, what if I had done this or that, or what if I did a better job, or didn't take this or that opportunity? Would I be rich and famous or with some dumpy guy or have my own TV show or be a toothless roller-skating crystal meth addict? Before he died, my very crabby grandfather always warned of having "greatest regrets." I'm still young. I'm proud of what MB has accomplished so far and feel like there's a lot I still want to do (with the group and on my own) and there's time for it. Or maybe this question is more fantasy based? Like, in a parallel universe, I

live in Italy and I'm a famous artist with a hot young boyfriend and I have no kid and don't care and I walk everywhere and speak four languages.

MALIK:
I still fantasize about a non-capitalist reality; I imagine if the hoarded resources were spread out more justly, and production were less destructive, the three of us would still be in about the same place, along with everyone else. I'm not exactly sure how it works, I'll admit. Capital incentivizes the maintenance of wacky value systems, but somehow we three, and the five of you we're talking to, were incentivized to make art and be involved in education and not to try to destroy the earth and all life on it while cruelly oppressing the disempowered. Of course we're complicit in bad things as U.S. citizen/consumers and participants in an art market, but our choices, fantasies, and identifications aren't modeled on corruption and exploitation. If our middle-class freedoms created the conditions for us to make anti-violent, anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-classist, pro-body, pro-thinking, pro-singing work, then maybe there is some state of median-ness that can be made available to more people, so that they too have incentives to promote less damaging life-possibilities. I've thought about Marxist movements and communist states all my life, and they all have terrible flaws. But the basic critique still makes sense. Maybe in an alternate universe, it's easy to solve: everyone there wants to join queer/feminist performing-arts workers councils, like the one Alex, Jade and I made up for ourselves.

Zackary Drucker is a human and an artist; she lives and works in Los Angeles. Miguel Gutierrez lives in Brooklyn and makes performances and is trying to heed the advice Alex Segade gave him earlier in the year to "work smarter, not harder," but he doubts it'll stick. Simone Leigh is a visual artist living and working in New York City. A.L. Steiner is a LA-based artist whose works use seductive tropes channeled through the sensibility of a skeptical, queer, eco-feminist androgynous. Wu Tsang is a multi-media artist and award-winning filmmaker based in Los Angeles.



Post-Living-Action-Theater (PoLATI): Post-Paradise, Never Say Sorry Again, Galleria Civica, Trento, Italy, 2008. Photo: Hugo Böhner

**YOU WERE BORN POOR
& POOR YOU WILL DIE**

BY
MY BARBARIAN



SCENE 1
A RITUAL

Enter performers, clad in religious ceremonial regalia made of body paint and papier maché dollar bill masks. THE HIGH PRIESTESS enjoys a head-dress & multi-breasted brazier. THE PANJANDRUM & THE NOVITIATE sport phalluses & jangly percussive legwarmers. MONKS in similar attire.

Synth sustains note.

THE PANJANDRUM

You were born poor & poor you will die.

THE PANJANDRUM repeats the chant. THE HIGH PRIESTESS and THE NOVITIATE collect change from the audience. The change goes into objects which function as rattle-instruments. Three-part harmony in a row with rhythmic percussion.

ALL

You were born poor & poor you will die
You were born poor & poor you will die
You were born middle class & that won't last
You were born middle class & poor you will die
You were born rich & rich you will die
Ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah
Ah ah ah ah ah ah ah ah

THE PANJANDRUM holds three flutes as THE NOVITIATE and THE HIGH PRIESTESS play the percussion objects.

All dance in a circle.

SCENE 2
SOLILOQUY OF WOE

THE NOVITIATE

God damn ye gods! I ain't nothing but a priest
Of all ye Gods' priests, I must be least
The Fates have blown my mind
Ms. Fortune's not been kind

Conscripted at nine	(soliloquy of woe)
To serve in the army	(soliloquy of woe)
By ten I served pleasures	(soliloquy of woe)
Both sweaty and smarmy	(soliloquy of woe)
When I turned eleven I sought my correction:	(There's more than one way to point an erection)

Indebted to lenders, one labors a lot	(woe-woe-woe-woe-a-oe)
In the Temple, I toil and that is my plot	(woe-woe-woe-woe-a-oe)
To answer the call of the Temple is wise	(woe-woe-woe-woe-a-oe)
The City State crumbles as new Temples rise	

Panjandrums pour in from over the land
(oooooooooooooooooooo)
Prelates and pulpiteers gather at hand
Priestess confers among all the priests high (ah ah ah ah ah ah ah)
A conference from which excluded am I
The people are anxious, the sky's gone red
The money was burnt and the treasury bled
Property owners have feverish brains
In court there's a sickness that makes them insane
Oh! What see I from the Temple tower?
As I pound dead hides this dark hour
The sentries desert us for they can't be paid
Our learned scholar has just himself slayed
The King of the City has leapt from the wall
His corpse it was eaten just after the fall

A terrible thing
to be born a king
Or is being born
the most terrible thing?

SCENE 3
IN THE TEMPLE INTRIGUE

Exit THE HIGH PRIESTESS and THE PANJANDRUM, in confusion.

THE HIGH PRIESTESS

The starchimber opens and we emerge.
Torches do tremble from this poorer surge.
The council of elders has just now assembl'd.
Now I must tally what was learned, and what was earned.

THE PANJANDRUM

High Priestess of Gonnora, exotic visions plague me.
Like flies in the summer, they penetrate my sleep.
Can the profane me see the Gods have marked out a doom?
Nay, they are fools, every one is that soon.
Your dead mother, the palace prior, never suffered them lightly,
Yet you seem to like them, eh ever so slightly.

THE HIGH PRIESTESS

Behave not with arrogance,
Mid-level Panjandrums,
Shall I discuss you to the league
From whence you've scarcely court?

THE PANJANDRUM

You are the sovereign, our King is now dead.
Volcano: forewarnings inspire my dread!

THE HIGH PRIESTESS

Point to the back of your eels at me.

THE PANJANDRUM

You are the sovereign, our King is dead now.
What of your holy sacramental eels-like woe?

THE HIGH PRIESTESS

It may seem strange
My ancient world religious beliefs
Will never change

The god is the Bull God
His head is a bull's head

The god is the Flame God
His legs are flame legs

He is part human
He is part - oxen
He is part - oxen!

Microwave ritualize
I worship him from afar

DEAD CITIES

THE NOVITIATE *revo*
Our High Priestess is said to be rightful.
Yet I find this religion so gross and frightful.

THE PANJANDRUM
Young Novitate, with navelick views,
Have you the money to pay your Temple dues?

THE NOVITIATE
I know these bills the people gave me...
I am bad at math: is it enough to save me?

THE NOVITIATE *poor some change from Mr. good, hands it to THE PANJANDRUM, who hands it to THE PRIESTESS, who throws it at*

THE PANJANDRUM

As we look about us
Things seem worse than ever...
Do not dwell on the now.
Do you not remember the Rich Days?
I remember.

THE HIGH PRIESTESS

I remember Gonnora.
A better time, a better time.
Was shared by all, in Gonnora.
In Gonnora, I was given the pill of a golden goat.
Why can't we go back? Go back! Go back!

THE HIGH PRIESTESS pounds her fists on the floor. THE PANJANDRUM & THE NOVITIATE play synth and begin to chant.

YOU WERE TOO BEAUTIFUL TO LIVE

Gomorra, Xanadu, Babylon, Atlantis, Gomorra, Xanadu, Babylon, Atlantis

You were too beautiful to live -
You were too beautiful to live!

In Gomorra - I was given the gift of a golden goat
I killed the golden goat
I slit its golden throat
Gomorra - golden goat!

In Xanadu - I learned to do the secret sacred dance
I played the pleasure dome
I played at Kubi's home
Xanadu - do a dance!

In Babylon - I left the true love baby of my heart
I broke a beating heart
I shattered it like art
Babylon - baby heart

Atlantis - In this city I was taught to swim
I swim an ocean race
I swim in sunken space
Atlantis - is the place!

Gomorra, Xanadu, Babylon, Atlantis, Gomorra, Xanadu, Babylon, Atlantis

You were too beautiful to live -
You were too beautiful to live!

I killed the golden goat
I slit its golden throat
Gomorra - golden goat
I played the pleasure dome
I played at Kubi's home
Xanadu - do a dance
I broke a beating heart
I shattered it like art
Babylon - baby heart
I swim an ocean race
I swim in sunken space
Atlantis - is the place

Gomorra, Xanadu, Babylon, Atlantis
Pompeii, Nineveh, Carthage, Calveaton

Ctesiphon, Charo, Troy, Kumari Khandam
Xi, Kowab, Saleh, Melega, Dresden

Ancorah, Azlan, Dyawka, Helice
Tetrouanne, Tikal, London, Muculaneum

Chicago, Tenochtitlan, Dumfries, Kiezh
Sodun, San Francisco, Rungthak, Htoshima

Niwazik, Jericho, Nagata, Vih-kamba
Ulundi, Stralingrad, New Orleans, Eden

SCENE 4
THE ORIGIN OF THE BULL-GOD

THE HIGH PRIESTESS
It may seem strange
My ancient world religious beliefs
Will never change

The economy crashes with THE PANJANDRUM at the pulpit, the preferences act out her terms, THE PANJANDRUM sings.

MICROWAVE MINUTARI

She woke up, three thirty A.M.
Twisted up in sweaty sheets -
A cosmic crypsis!
(mother earth / single mom)

Kids crying in the living room,
Children hungry fight for meat -
She just can't deal with this!
(mother earth / single mom)

She cracked the fridge door open once more,
Two snakes wrapped in plastic meat,
She held the tarts to her lips,
(mother earth / single mom)

"Suckle me my many-headed babes,
Drink my poison breast milk sweet -
Inger paralysis!"
(mother earth / single mom)

He held the bills upon the hill in Issad
In Jherom kid as Solomon bid
Abomination of the Ammerites
The Ring of Skeme is a God Affaire
Say Malochi (Malochi?)
Moloch - Microwave Minutari

THE BULL-GOD is summoned by THE PANJANDRUM of amazing power.

Phoned her ex at 3:30 P.M.
"The kids have not a thing to eat,
Save us from this crisis!"
(father sky / deathbeat dad)

He beds his take the infant throngs
Burn their bodies in the street
Consume the carcasses!
(father sky / deathbeat dad)

Behold the kids upon the hill in Issad
In Jherom kid as Solomon bid
Abomination of the Ammerites
The Ring of Skeme is a God Affaire
Say Malochi (Malochi?)
Maloch - Microwave Minutari

THE BULL-GOD'S pulse-uu.

BULL-GOD
Pass through the fire!
My legs are fused legs!

THE HIGH PRIESTESS & MONKS
He is part flummert
He is part - ovent
He is part - ovent

SCENE 5
THE TRIALS

THE BULL-GOD
It is time to save the city state
The demon god you eradicate
One of three must die for me!
Rich, or poor, or bourgeoisie
Who will it be?

HIGH-PRIESTESS
Obviously, it shon't be me
It's with upon the giant stone
The fire shall burn the flesh from bone
Of he who the horrid contact loses
For he it be the demon chooses

BULL-GOD
Class warfare! Na ha ha ha ha!

THE PANJANDRUM and **THE NOVITIATE** meet in bull. Dance.

THE BULL-GOD
You got to do your best in the test
Can you work hard and beat the test
It's the test, it's the test

You got to try the trial, stay in style
C'mon now show us a smile
It's the trial, it's the trial

You got to do the deed, foot, the deed
C'mon now!

THE PANJANDRUM is debased by **THE NOVITIATE**, who stands above him ready to make a death blow.

THE NOVITIATE
It should have never been allowed
That one of whom no one is proud
Should overturn the laws of fate
And into this contest, it feels great.

THE PANJANDRUM
Yet it is carved on the smaller score
Extra points if you own your home
And those numbers I've seen
I believe I will, correct, Priestess?

HIGH PRIESTESS (awkwardly)
True, twelve bonus points shall be thine.
The numbers as well will find
That post-date debts his lead shall rise
For his demerits number six

BULL-GOD
Ha ha ha ha ha!
You can never win,
For you were born poor
And being poor, must die.

THE NOVITIATE
Somehow I knew,
Do whatever you need to do.

SCENE 6
IN HUMAN SACRIFICE

THE HIGH PRIESTESS sings to the shamanic bird-krith...

HUMAN SACRIFICE (YOUR BODY)

It's gonna eat off your penis
It's hub-stay's gotta
Offer it up to the goddess Assure
Your lunar cycle ends tonight -

It's gonna open your chest up
With a bronze-age knife
Embaln your lungs, put your heart in a jar
And you can party in the afterlife, in the afterlife

Human sacrifice (your body)
Do it for me
For the sun to rise
A virgin has to die
Don't know why (it's how it's got to be)

It's called civilization
That's what it is
The city-state requires blood to stay great
Don't you know that's show biz, kid, yeah, that's show biz

Human sacrifice (your body)
Do it for me
For the sun to rise
A virgin has to die
Don't know why (it's how it's got to be)

Human sacrifice (your body)
Do it for me
For the corn to grow
You know you got to go
For the sky to be blue
We have to chop up you
For the gods to smile
It's excruciating
For the crops to thrive
Get to burn you alive
Put the beans to quail
I'll throw you down a well
For the well to flow
Jump in a volcano
Don't know why (it's how it's got to be)

Human sacrifice (your body, my body)

THE NOVITIATE is sacrificed. Euphoric.

THE VOLCANO

THE PANJANDRUM
As we know? The volcano erupts!

THE HIGH PRIESTESS
Great Bull-God, is the dust and fire to destroy our supple lives!

THE BULL-GOD
You were born rich and so you must die,
And having been rich, so you shall die.

THE PANJANDRUM
Take comfort in memories of an easy life,
The poor Novitiates did other struggle and strife.

THE HIGH PRIESTESS
It may seem strange
My ancient world religious beliefs
Will never change

THE HIGH PRIESTESS bids **THE PANJANDRUM** then state her gift
Back fortification of You Were Born Poor...

THE BULL-GOD
And so I made the Volcano to eat the City State!
And never was the order of things disturbed.

ALL
You were born poor & poor you will die
An ancient circle, ancient circle, ancient circle

You were born poor & poor you will die
You were born middle class but poor you will die
You were born rich & rich you will die

An ancient circle, ancient circle, ancient circle
Ahhhhhh...

My Barbarian Oeuvre

PERFORMANCES

2014

The Mother and Other Plays. Whitney Museum, New York, NY; Gallery 400, Chicago, IL
Counterpublicity. "Take Ecstasy with Me: A Tribute to José Muñoz", Whitney Museum, New York, NY

Broke Baroque Suite. "The Last Days of Folly," Madison Sq. Park, New York, NY; CalArts Benefit, Paula Cooper Gallery and Metro Pictures, New York, NY

2013

The Mother. Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, LA, CA
Post-Living Ante-Action Theater (PoLAAT): Together Forever? Yaffo 23, Jerusalem, Israel

2012

Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater. SFMOA, San Francisco, CA; "Art Public," Art Basel Miami Beach, Collins Park, Miami Beach, FL. Hirshhorn Museum, ArtJab!, Washington D.C.

Post-Living Ante-Action Theater (PoLAAT): Born to Kill, Learn to Love. ICA Philadelphia
An Evening with My Barbarian. Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY

Post-Living Ante-Action Theater (PoLAAT): Post-Paradise, Aren't you Sorry Now? REDCAT/Cal Arts School of Theater, LA, CA
Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater. Human Resources, LA, CA
Night Breakfast, Ball of Artists. Pacific Standard Time Performance and Public Art Festival, Greystone Mansion, LA, CA

2011

Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater. The Kitchen, New York, NY; San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego, CA
Tourists From the Future. Watermill Center, The Hamptons, NY

Post-Living Ante-Action Theater (PoLAAT): Toronto. Rhubarb Festival, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Death Panel Discussion. Hammer Museum, LA, CA

2010

Tropical Oracle. LACMA, LA, CA
Ecos de los Ecos de los Ecos. Museo Experimental El Eco and Espacio Escultórico, UNAM, Mexico City, Mexico
Death Panel Discussion. Transformer Gallery, Washington D.C.

Post-Living Ante-Action Theater (PoLAAT): Club Remix. American Repertory Theater, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

Retro-Active, Self-Appropriation. SFMOA, San Francisco, CA
Post-Living Ante-Action Theater (PoLAAT): Todo El Dinero es Sueño. Matadero, Madrid

2009

The Fourth Wall. Museum of Contemporary Art, LA, CA
Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater. Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO

Forrest Brothers and Sisters. Baltic Triennial, Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius, Lithuania
The Five Principles. MOCA North Miami, FL
Dance witches Dance. collaboration with Lara

Schnitger, Luckman Gallery, LA, CA

2008

Post-Living Ante-Action Theater (PoLAAT): The Eleven Human Senses. Townhouse Gallery/Rawabet Theater, Cairo, Egypt
Hystera-Theater. Art Basel Miami Beach, Art Positions, Steve Turner Contemporary, Miami, FL
Pagan Rights. Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY

Non-Western. Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, CA; UCLA Little Theater, LA, CA; San Diego Museum, San Diego, CA; Ground Zero, USC, LA, CA; Estación, Tijuana, Mexico
Dance witches Dance. collaboration with Lara Schnitger, Museum Het Domain, Sittard, NL

Post Living Ante-Action Theater (PoLAAT): Post-Paradise, Never Say Sorry Again. Galleria Civica, Trento, Italy

Post-Living Ante-Action Theater (PoLAAT): Post-Paradise, Sorry-Again. New Museum, New York, NY
The Case of the Stairs. LACMA, LA, CA

2007

Mountain People. International Prize for Performance, Galleria Civica, Trento, Italy
Non-Western. La Noche En Blanco, El Matadero, Madrid, Spain; Joe's Pub, New York, NY

Voyage of the White Widow. De Appel, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Performa 07 Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

Gods of Canada II: La Séparatisme Galactique. Biennale de Montréal, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

2006

Mythologic Mass. Performa, Stephen Weiss Studio, New York, NY; "Traveling the Spaceways," The Hideout, Chicago, IL; UCR Sweeney Gallery, Riverside, CA
California Sweet. Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA; Torpedo, Oslo, Norway
Medieval Morality. Peres Projects Gallery, Berlin, Germany
Double Future. REDCAT, LA, CA
Silver Minds. Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO

2005

You Were Born Poor & Poor You Will Die. Performa 05 Biennial, Participant, Inc., New York, NY; California College of the Arts, San Francisco, CA
Pagan Rights. UCLA Hammer Museum, LA, CA; Participant, Inc., New York, NY; Drake Underground, Toronto, Ontario; Evidence Room Theater, LA, CA

Gods of Canada. commissioned by the Power Plant, Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Squirrel Radio Action. commissioned by Pacific Drift, NPR affiliate KPCC 89.3, Pasadena, CA

2004

Medieval Morality. MAK Center's Schindler House, West Hollywood, CA

Web of the Ultimate: A Séance. MAK Center's Schindler House, West Hollywood, CA
HB: The Mary Blair Story. NOW Festival, REDCAT, LA, CA
Purple Eyes. Spring Break Festival, Evidence Room Theater,

LA, CA
The Monkey Machine. Vaginal Davis' Bricktops, LA, CA

2002

Nightmarathon: Halloween Hextravaganza. Sundown Salon, LA, CA
Fairy Theatre at the Fisting Motel. Outfest 2002, Platinum Oasis, curated by Ron Athey and Vaginal Davis, Coral Sands Motel, LA, CA

2001

X-Mas Special. performance at the homes of Allison Anders, Beck, Roddy Bottum, Luise Heath, Renéé Petropoulos, Stephen Prina, Kim Fisher, LA, CA

2000

Frenchboro, Maine. collaboration with Glenn Ligon & Candice Biertz for Song Poems, curated by Steven Hull, Cohen Leslie & Brown, New York, NY; Palace Theater, LA, CA
Folk Show. Holly Matter Gallery, LA, CA

2000-05

band performances (with members including Tiffany Anders, Norwood Cheek, Dustin Ericksen, Scott Martin, Gilles Miller, Andy Ouchi, Amy Yow), venues including the Troubadour, Spaceland, Knitting Factory, Echo, Smeil, Silver Lake Lounge, LA, CA; Hemlock Tavern, SF, CA; The Passerby, New York, NY; live radio performances KZSU Stanford, CA and KXLU, LA, CA

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2014

Universal Declaration of Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in the Creative Impulse. Gallery 400, University of Illinois Chicago, Chicago, IL

2013

Universal Declaration of Infantile Anxiety Situations Reflected in the Creative Impulse. Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects, LA, CA
PoLAAT: Together Forever? Yaffo 23, Jerusalem, Israel

2012

Flat Busted Beauty Window Fatale. Transformer Gallery, Washington DC
The Butterflies' Evil Spell. collaboration with Lara Schnitger, Anton Kern Gallery, New York, NY
Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater. Human Resources, LA, CA

2010

The Night Episode. Hammer Museum, Hammer Projects, LA, CA
Ecos de los Ecos del los Ecos. Museo Experimental El Eco, Mexico City, Mexico

2009

The Night Episode. Participant, Inc., New York, NY
Suspension of Beliefs. Steve Turner Contemporary, LA, CA

2008

Hystera-Theater. Art Basel Miami Beach, Art Positions, Steve Turner Contemporary, Miami, FL
Dance Witches Dance. collaboration with Lara Schnitger, Museum Het Domain, Sittard, NL; Luckman Gallery, LA, CA

The Golden Age. video project space, New Museum, New York, NY
Hacia Una Postuza Izquierdista. Studio Sound, Studio Museum in Harlem, NY, NY

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2014

Whitney Biennial. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
Unsparring Quality. Diane Rosenstein Fine Arts, LA, CA

2013

Brought Into Being: Performativity and Formative Performance. Amelja A. Wallace Gallery, SUNY College at Old Westbury, Old Westbury, NY

2012

Stage Presence: Theatricality in Art. SFMOA, San Francisco, CA
The Bearden Project. Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY

2011

I, Bear. CANADA Gallery, New York, NY
Shame the Devil. The Kitchen, New York, NY

2010

A Unicorn Basking in the Light of Three Glowing Suns. Devos Art Museum, Marquette, MI
Ludicrous! ICA, Philadelphia, PA

2009

Ecstatic Resistance. Grand Arts, Kansas City, MO; X Initiative, New York, NY

30 Seconds Off an Inch. Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY
Urban Stories. Baltic Triennial, Contemporary Art Center, Vilnius, Lithuania

Convention. MOCA, Miami, FL
Collected. Propositions on the Permanent Collection. Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY
Solution. DiverseWorks, Houston, TX

2008

From And About Place: Art From Los Angeles. CCA, Tel Aviv, Israel
California Biennial 2008. Estación, Tijuana, Mexico
Six Degrees: Museum as Hub. New Museum, New York, NY

Friends and Family. Anton Kern Gallery, New York, NY
That Was Then This Is Now. PS1, New York, NY
Freedom. The Hague Sculpture, The Hague, Netherlands
Unclassifiable. Overgaden Institute of Contemporary Art, Copenhagen, Denmark

2007

Fact or Friction. Vox Populi, Philadelphia, PA
Biennale de Montréal. Montreal, Quebec, Canada

2006

Underplayed: A Mix-Tape of Music Based Videos. Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA

Interstellar Low Ways. Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL
California Biennial 2008. Orange County Museum of Art, Newport Beach, CA

Making the Band. Bard College, Center for Curatorial Studies, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY
Cluster. Participant, Inc. New York, NY; Espacio El Particular, Mexico City, Mexico

*Each rehearsal's a show.
Each show is a life.
Each life's a rehearsal for a better life.
If we make each show better
Than the show we expect,
Then our lives will get respect.*

THE END

