

CHARMING FOR THE REVOLUTION

A Congress for Gender Talents and Wildness



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and Wildness
1–2 February 2013
The Tanks, Tate Modern

Charming for the Revolution is an experimental congress of artists, activists and thinkers who seek to unpick underpinning, pressing questions of contemporary sexual and gender politics; exploring strategies that divert and destabilise normative gender and its representations. The series of events gathers major international figures who explore radical expressions of sexuality and gender. Their work invokes what Kathy Acker called the 'languages of wonder, not of judgment' to imagine new paths to liberation and social justice. This constellation of events at Tate Modern will highlight a range of positions, representations and manifestos to assess and debate an exciting, emerging field of shifting identities, active communities and political dreams.

The series of events features films, performances and a symposium and brings together the UK premiere of **Wu Tsang's** award-winning film *Wildness* 2012, followed by a new performance by Tsang in collaboration with **Kelela** and **Ashland Mines**; a symposium convened by **Carlos Motta** with **Xabier Arakistain, Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad, Giuseppe Campuzano, J. Jack Halberstam, Beatriz Preciado, Dean Spade, Terre Thaemlitz, Wu Tsang & Safra Project, Del LaGrace Volcano** and **Campbell X**; a performance by **Carlos Motta** and **Matthias Sperling**; and a screening of works by **Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz**.

Presented in collaboration with Electra
www.electra-productions.com

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Curators Stuart Comer, Curator: Film, Tate Fatima Hellberg and Irene Revell, Electra
Assistant Curator Fiontán Moran
Production Steve Wald

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INTRODUCTION

By Jack Halberstam

As we gather at Tate Modern for an unprecedented weekend of culture, queerness and charm, we take time to reflect upon the meaning of revolution in the here and now. We live at a time of unparalleled recognition for mainstream gay and lesbian lives but we also live with increasing disparities between rich and poor, between North and South, between global elites and global multitudes. What does it mean that the legalisation of gay marriage coincides with the illegalisation of increasing numbers of undocumented migrant workers in Europe and the US? Is the recognition of gay and lesbian coupled households a sign of progress or a sign of how quickly white and middle class gays and lesbians have been folded into new modes of rule? Given the wave of revolts that have rippled around the globe in recent years in response to flagrant abuses of political and financial power, this is a good time to consider the meaning and the form that revolt takes when it departs from the politics of marriage and recognition and is crafted and articulated by an eclectic group of queer artists, thinkers and activists.

Our event comes together under the pleasingly enigmatic phrase, 'Charming for the Revolution,' authored by Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz for their film about small but significant acts of resistance. The title for this weekend of insurrection and inspiration is also framed by the concepts of 'Gender Talents' and 'Wildness.'¹ Carlos Motta, a multidisciplinary artist who creates spaces for reflection, introspection and radical pedagogy, conceives of 'Gender Talents' as a way of putting gender and sexual politics into conversation with other kinds of discourses about social justice and social change. Seeing the trans body as not impaired but as *talented*, as occupying a space of special knowledge

and special skills, the event turns to the archives and ways of knowing particular to the gender talented and invites pronouncements, manifestos and interventions. Within the space created by Motta and framed by the activity of 'charming', we are also encouraged to think of ourselves and our missions in relation to what Wu Tsang, performance and installation artist extraordinaire, calls 'wildness' in his recent film of the same name. The *wildness* that Tsang chases but never proposes to catch is a fleeting sense of possibility that springs up not simply in queer performance spaces but in those zones where queer performance and avant-garde cultures rub up against other zones of unregulated engagement and pleasure.

So, in that case, does the phrase that lends its name to this event, 'charming for the revolution', refer to a method, an actor or a practice? Are we to be 'charming' for an ongoing revolt or are we to *charm* revolt into being? Is the revolution something that lives in us and that we must perform upon each other? Or, does it lie curled up in the dark waiting to be called forth like the proverbial snake in a basket in Orientalist tales? Perhaps, the revolution is already in full swing, like a party, and we, whoever 'we' may be, have been called upon to perform some magic tricks for all to see?

However we may interpret Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz's phrase as it drifts away from their film, the framework of this two-day event proposes the possibility of some kind of change that can be seen through the lens of gender and embodiment and that takes the form of an eccentric set of activities that gather under a heading situated outside of the usual vocabulary of revolt. While we are accustomed to *outrage*, *uprisings*, to the idea of *moving* or preparing for a revolution still to come, 'charming' opens us up to a new vocabulary.

With this new lexicon of motion and emotion, we can break with conventional, masculinist and 'straight' notions of change that posit it as the end result of a linear process of an enforced transition. While revolution in its conventional form, in its propulsive mode, then, says 'no' to some current arrangements of power and rule and offers new coordinates for governance and social relations under new leadership, the revolutionary mode offered here disperses the concept of leadership through a generalised sense of shared charisma: to make change, we must break with the ordinary, the predictable and the expected. We must learn to move differently as Carlos Motta and Matthias Sperling's choreography project proposes. To have a new movement, in other words, movement itself must be experienced in new ways.

Charm school is in session. The material collected here for the symposium gives no unified sense of either charm or revolt, instead it contests unification altogether. In his delightfully, dare I say *charmingly*, grumpy contribution Terre Thaemlitz declares himself 'leery of acts of solidarity' and suspicious of calls upon transgender people to be 'campy and entertaining'. Thaemlitz therefore promises to pull our attention away from 'euphoria' and to refocus it on 'trauma and violence'. Given the focus in recent queer theory on 'negativity,' Thaemlitz's resistance to the lure of community and to celebratory modes of collective expression is timely and sobering. And even if we do not want to rain on the parade of utopian possibility with Thaemlitz, we may, like Thaemlitz be deeply suspicious of pronouncements for change that come in the form of sunny collective sentiments about possibility and potential. We are more likely to dream of revolt in the mode favoured by José Esteban Muñoz's recent book, *Cruising Utopia*. Queer utopia for Muñoz is far from a happy

gathering somewhere over the rainbow, and much more akin to a scanning of the horizon for slivers of hope. Muñoz who borrows his topologies of hope and futurity from the radical thinker Ernst Bloch, always attends to the differences within queer collectivities – differences marked by race and class most obviously but also by all kinds of less identitarian and more haptic vectors of being. The charmers gathered here might also want to wander, amble and cruise their way to a *somewhere* unknown rather than locating a destination and aiming for it. The ambulatory detour is much more likely to result in a new elsewhere than the rush towards the happy ending.

Not that all of the queer thinkers gathered here reject the idea of a rush to freedom. Indeed, in her engaging, mad dash towards becoming, Beatriz Preciado – no stranger to the manifesto having written a *Manifeste Contra-Sexual* years ago – rides the libidinal surge of testosterone as it courses through her/his eccentrically gendered body and experiences the junky's crystal vision alongside the addict's shattered confidence in any world that extends beyond the next fix. And while Preciado pushes hard against the notion of genderlessness as anything but castrated, s_he also strives to embody a new kind of phallic gender, not a third term in the see-saw of binary sex, but a postporn, postproduction, postpost attempt to occupy the body differently.

Whether the act of charming comes in the form of a manifesto, a call, a rush, a denunciation or a prediction, it must commit to rapture. Not rapture of the Christian kind – a day of reckoning where all will be revealed; not rapture of the erotic kind, where the body is given over to sexual abandon – this rapture must lure, will, seduce and lead. And like the story of the Pied Piper leading both the rats

that have infested the town and the children who must be protected from destitution to their doom, we don't know whether the revolutionary noise made here will lead to a new dawn or a new disaster. All we know for sure, is that everything must change; that the catastrophe of the present in its environmental, economic, territorial, political and violent dimensions, has been made by all of us, by humanity in all of its terrifying contradictions. And the only way to sink the ship of fools upon which we all sail, is to go down fighting, fighting not for survival but for the end of *this*, this society that has created these conditions of catastrophe, this world, this notion of humanity and this sense that all can be saved. *Charming for the Revolution* may well be akin to being mesmerised by the cobra before it snaps its beautiful head back to unleash a terrible bite.

So, with that, prepare to be bitten, bare your neck, your hand, your nether regions. Find a spare piece of flesh where the infectious, potentially fatal wound of history can write itself upon you, leaving you for dead, marked as part of the disease that brought us here and separate from the cure that awaits a different configuration of bodies, desires, vegetation and their ecological balance. And as we wait for the revolution to come, the 'Coming Insurrection' as one French collective has named it, as we wait for a clue to which *somewhere* we are ambling towards, let us charm and be charmed, let us use our collective talents to imagine otherwise, let us go mad and completely wild. Charm school is out for summer... charm school is out forever!

¹ The title *Charming for the Revolution: A Congress for Gender Talents and Wildness* departs from three works by the participating artists: Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz, *Charming for the Revolution*, 2009; Carlos Motta, *Gender Talents* 2012-; Wu Tsang, *Wildness*, 2012.

CHARMING FOR THE REVOLUTION A Congress for Gender Talents and Wildness

1 FEBRUARY 2013

19:00

FILM

Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz

No Future / No Past 2011*Charming for the Revolution* 2009*Normal Work* 2007

SATURDAY 2 FEBRUARY

10.30–16.30

SYMPOSIUM

Gender Talents: A Special Address

With Xabier Arakistain, Esben Esther Pirelli

Benestad, Giuseppe Campuzano, J. Jack

Halberstam, Carlos Motta, Beatriz Preciado,

Dean Spade, Terre Thaemlitz, Wu Tsang, Del

LaGrace Volcano and Campbell X.

16.30

PERFORMANCE:

Carlos Motta and Matthias Sperling

The Movers 2013

With Ingo Andersson - Wotever World, Jason

Barker, Dan Daw, Simon Foxall, Fred Gehrig, Nia

Hughes, Helka Kaski, Huai-Chih Liang, Vicky

Malin, Malinda Mukuma, Carlos Maria Romero,

Mickel Smithen and Ebony Rose Dark

20.00

FILM

Wu Tsang

The Shape of a Right Statement 2008*Wildness* 2012**21.30**

PERFORMANCE

Kelela, Ashland Mines, Wu Tsang

Breakdown 2013



Pauline Boudry / Renate Lorenz *Charming for the Revolution* 2009 Photo by Andrea Thal

Charming for the Revolution: A Congress for Gender Talents and Wildness

PAULINE BOUDRY/RENATE LORENZ Friday 1 February, 19.00



Pauline Boudry / Renate Lorenz
No Future / No Past 2009 Photo by Andrea Thal

Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz have collaborated since 1998 and their work has been extensively exhibited internationally. Recent solo shows include Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers (Paris Triennale), 2012; Swiss off-site Pavilion, as part of Chewing the Scenery, Venice Biennale, 2011; Les Complices, Zurich, 2010; Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, 2010

www.boudry-lorenz.de

The event coincides with Boudry/Lorenz's solo exhibition at the South London Gallery, *Toxic Play in Two Acts*, until 24 February 2013.

The work of Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz reflects on the interplay of sexuality, sexual perversions and representation, continuously returning to unrepresented or illegible moments in history.

¹ Gregg Bordowitz, 'Repetition and Change: The Film Installations of Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz' *Afterall*, issue 31, Autumn/Winter 2012

² A term coined by Elizabeth Freeman, see *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010.

This screening and artists' conversation brings together three recent works by Boudry/Lorenz: a staging of punk archives from a period between 1970 and 2031 in *No Future/No Past*; a radical reimagining of the housewife set in Berlin Zoo in *Charming for the Revolution*; and a layering of labour, class, desire and drag in *Normal Work*. Here a host of characters are portrayed, 'living – indeed thriving – in defiance of convention, law and economy'¹, a collapse of category and time sometimes described as 'temporal drag'².

These films demonstrate the command and pleasure the artists take in the cinematic medium and their focus on informal relations and affective work: ongoing and close collaborations with a host of contemporary performers, friends and accomplices. The artists will introduce and reflect on each of the works followed by a Q&A after the screening.

NO FUTURE / NO PAST
Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz
2011, Super 16mm transferred to HD,
30 min



Pauline Boudry / Renate Lorenz
No Future / No Past 2009 Photo by Andrea Thal

'The 1970s appear as a "revolting" decade in a slightly different way: they glimmer forth as an embarrassment, as something that remains to be thought, as the text's indigestible material, and/or as point of departure for resistance but not for grand revolution.' Elizabeth Freeman

No Future/No Past is a film installation and part of a series of two films that both work on punk archives from the period between 1976 and 2031 investigating the radical negativity, the self-destructiveness and the dystopia of this past moment. This work takes another look – anachronistically – at the punk policy of aggressively slating and rejecting the present without ever proposing its own movement as the guarantor of future social justice. Instead of demanding social change, the five performers – four musicians (Ginger Brooks Takahashi/Men; Fruity Franky/Lesbians on Ecstasy; G. Rizo; Olivia Anna Livki), and a choreographer (Werner Hirsch) – stage and practice outmoded acts and sentiments of the past that have been deemed useless. The musician-performers provisionally take over the positions of four musicians from the punk movement: Darby Crash, the gay band leader of The Germs, Poly Styrene the singer of the very influential band X-Ray-Spex, Alice Bag, lead singer of the LA Band The Bags, and Joey Ramone, singer of the band The Ramones. The title of the films ironically quote the punk movement's demand for 'no future' and thus the film takes up the paradoxical premise that we are already in the future, which – according to the temporal ultimatum issued by the punk movement – would never come about. In the films the performers also demand an abolition of the past – though the past is considered the basis of the human psyche but also of subjectivity and thus of the existence of human beings in general.

FILM CREDITS

Performers Ginger Brooks Takahashi, Fruity Franky, Werner Hirsch, Olivia Anna Livki, G. Rizo
Camera Bernadette Paassen
Sound Tom Schön, Karin Michalski, Tobias Neugebauer
Make-up Tan Nguyen
Set photography Andrea Thal
Sound design Rashad Becker

CHARMING FOR THE REVOLUTION

Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz
 2009, 16mm transferred to DVD,
 12 min



Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz *Charming for the Revolution* 2009. Photo by Andrea Thal

'The film is charming, but it is still labour. The labour to engage in demanding what should already be ours.'

With a wink to Jack Smith, the New York underground performer and filmmaker from the 60s to the 80s, as well as to the history of queer and feminist calls such as 'Wages for Housework!', the film recreates the 'housewife' as an ambiguous figure with an open future. Additional references extend from Deleuze-Guattari's 'becoming-animal'; the dandy of the 19th century, who out of protest against the clock pulse of the industrialisation walked turtles on leashes, as Walther Benjamin described him; to Pasolini's ironic-capitalism critical film *The Hawks and the Sparrows*.

FILM CREDITS

Performance Werner Hirsch
Camera Bernadette Paassen
Sound Karin Michalski
Sound design Rashad Becker
Set photography Andrea Thal

NORMAL WORK

Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz
 2007, 16mm transferred to DVD,
 13 min



Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz *Normal Work* 2007

Hannah Cullwick not only cleaned from early in the morning to late in the evening in various households, she also produced a series of remarkable staged photographs, numerous diaries and letters. These materials present her strength, her muscles, and her big, dirty hands: embodiments of her gender that were obviously directly connected with her working practices and of which she was very proud. Hannah Cullwick's portraits and self-portraits, which show her not only as a domestic servant, but also in 'class drag' or 'ethnic drag', were part of a sadomasochistic relationship that she had with Arthur Munby, a man from the bourgeoisie. Interestingly, it was the elements of her hard work in the households that provided the material for their shared SM scenes. The work that Cullwick carried out as a domestic servant was later restaged together with Munby in their meetings in his home. The crossings of social positions that she staged in the photographs – which show her as a bourgeois woman, as a young bourgeois man, or as a slave in blackface – partly also play a role in Cullwick's everyday life, for instance when she traveled with Arthur Munby in 'bourgeois drag'. The photographs can be understood as a technology to control these

crossings, or to reflect on the great efforts and constant deliberation that were connected to them. The film *Normal Work* asks whether the crossings of social hierarchies of class, gender, and 'race' that Hannah Cullwick staged and that she obviously desired have today become generalised into a paradoxical requirement in the field of labour.

FILM CREDITS

Performance Werner Hirsch
Backdrop photograph Del LaGrace Volcano
Camera Bernadette Paassen
Sound Karin Michalski
Sound design Rashad Becker
Photography credits 13 Photographs from 1860 until 1904 of Hannah Cullwick, courtesy Munby Archive, Trinity College Cambridge

1 Gregg Bordowitz, 'Repetition and Change: The Film Installations of Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz' *Afterall*, no.31, Autumn/Winter 2012

2 A term coined by Elizabeth Freeman, see *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2010

THE DAY OF GHOSTS The Film Installations of Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz by Gregg Bordowitz

'It was the days of ghosts. Still is. Not the death, but the actual forgetting, even the death of sexuality and wonderment, of all but those who control and those and that which can be controlled. Since an emotion's an announcement of values, in this society of the death (of values) emotions moved like zombies through humans.'

Kathy Acker¹

The composition of the image is carefully staged. The subject stands in front of a wall-size landscape painting. A tall handsome woman, dressed in a work shirt and apron, rolls up her sleeve to reveal the bicep of her tensed muscular arm. She looks directly into the camera, proud of her physique. Visible in the lower part of the frame, some bananas and other fruit are arranged on a tabletop. A potted palm occupies the corner of the foreground. This is one of a number of tableaux vivants that comprise the film loop *Normal Work 2007*, part of an installation by the collaborative artists Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, and featuring the performer Werner Hirsch.

Hirsch reappears in a number of film loops by Boudry and Lorenz. In *Charming for the Revolution 2010*, Hirsch plays a character dressed in a leather jacket, tight white shirt and plaid bell-bottoms. The costume connotes masculine working-class style. The German film director Rainer Werner Fassbinder comes to mind. We learn that the character is a housewife, as Hirsch declaims a revolutionary speech:

*I know how work functions
I have done that before.*

*We housewives. They make us work for free!
But in return we don't get anything for free!
The only thing that we get is anxiety
and the fear of losing a lousy job! ²*

Lest we be convinced of this revolutionary message – haltingly delivered, read off index cards – another character, also played by Hirsch, appears in *Charming for the Revolution* as a counterpoint to the 'housewife'. An extravagantly dressed dandy enters the scene, walking a turtle, slowly biding time, indulging in observation and reverie. Housewife or flâneur, which of the two is the real star of the film?

There's no choice to be made. Each is a star existing in a larger constellation. The housewife is a gender queer feminist, and possibly Fassbinder. The dandy is Oscar Wilde and Jack Smith. Composite and jumbled, the characters appearing in Boudry/Lorenz productions represent modes of existence rather than particular persons (even when the characters bear the names of actual historical figures, as is the case in later films). The artists portray the actions of individuals and groups living – indeed thriving – in defiance of convention, law and economy. The subjects of each film differ significantly, from historical personages to fantasy figures. It is significant that their films feature performances executed by stars from the artists' own milieu in Berlin and beyond – performers, film-makers, cultural figures and friends. Projected large scale, on walls or screens, the looped films serve as the central focal points of exhibitions, but they are not the only works on display. All of the film installations are supported by an archive, photographs, letters and texts, that extends to a body of writing, leading from the gallery to conferences, catalogues and the internet. Still, their film practice is their central organising activity. The film loops are not conventional documentaries. They are theatrically driven

spectacles. The performers are given a certain amount of autonomy. The artists shoot long sequences of performances without cuts or interruptions, but Lorenz is adamant that 'these films are neither meant to be a unique performance nor a documentation of one'. Boudry insists that 'the performance doesn't exist outside the film – it's not staged for the audience that was there the day it was shot, but for the audience that watches the film when it is projected'.³

The filmmakers use well-established critical strategies to foreground the constructed nature of each film: self-reflexive gestures such as revealing the apparatus, having performers directly address the camera and breaking narrative continuity. No 'character' is shaped by individual psychological motivations. The performances in the films are copies, imitations or enactments of previously documented poses, actions and behaviours. The performers are self-conscious and complicit with their representation by the camera. Boudry/Lorenz are alert to the function of the lens as both a means of disciplinary observation and a point of resistance. The artists have an ethical mandate not to perpetrate violence against their subjects, who have often been demeaned by photographic representations. Posing for the camera in advance of anticipated capture by the lens is a form of self-defence in the age of surveillance. It's an act of self-authorship. This was the case in the outrageous styles of early punk, where fashion was a means of resistance to the investigative eyes of law enforcement and sociology. Showing up publicly as a fabulous self-creation was a strategy to confound hostile spectators – shutterbugs and scientists eager to police the field of visibility by imposing norms of decency upon the depicted.⁴ Boudry/Lorenz's installations are similarly founded on the premise that subjectivity is lived in public, shaped by history.

As they have written, 'the freak is a figure that acts and meddles in the practices of staring, knowledge production and constellations of power and desire.'⁵

Boudry/Lorenz understand the determining features of neoliberalism and they are not so optimistic about the possibilities of liberation. Still, their work does contain a strong belief in the chance probabilities of novelty emerging from the irrepressible differences that exist among people. Their work invokes the 'languages of wonder, not of judgement' that Acker calls for as a necessary precondition of 'travel', or mobility, through selves and worlds.⁶

The project *No Future / No Past* is constituted by a pairing of two films, one set in 1976, the other in 2031. Both exploit the look and feel of Andy Warhol's films – shot in real time, and with white exposed leader separating takes. *No Future / No Past* features a group of five performers – three sitting, two standing – their faces looking off-screen. Each takes the name of a famous (or infamous) punk musician; the film draws on archives from 1970s punk 'to interrogate the radical negativity, the self-destructiveness and the dystopia of this past moment'.⁷ In *No Future*, for example, Fruity Franky, playing Poly Styrene, delivers the following 'political speech':

*Basically I have one feeling, the desire
to get out of here and any other feelings
I have come from trying to analyse
why I want to go away. I always feel
uncomfortable and I just want to walk
out of the room. It's not going to any other
place or any other sensation or anything
like that. It's just to get out of here.*

Such deep dissatisfaction with the present and the imperative for another way of being – the desire for something else, a world radically

reorganised – are qualities Boudry/Lorenz's work shares with the punk movement. As with previous films, mimicry and imitation drive the actions of the performers. Werner Hirsch plays the on-screen director feeding the cast members their lines. At one point everybody is ordered to look bored. They all oblige, with vacant stares and glum faces. 'Emotions move through humans like zombies.' 'It's the time of ghosts.' The Acker quote I chose as the epigraph to this essay rings most true with *No Future / No Past*.

Still, beyond the disdain expressed by Hirsch's on-screen directions, there is something energetic in *No Future/ No Past*, something that escapes the gloomy affectless performances of the punk characters. Three musical acts, which happen at the edge of the frame or just outside it, generate moments of enthusiasm and expectation. If there is a promise of finding a way out of the staged torpor, it lies beyond the camera's range. Boudry/Lorenz create a counterhegemonic genealogy of ways of being-in-the-world.

The article is a short version of one that first appeared as Gregg Bordowitz, 'Repetition and Change: The Film Installations of Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz', *Afterall*, no.31, Autumn/Winter 2012, pp.15-25

¹ Kathy Acker, *My Father: Demonology*, Grove Press, New York, 1994, p.14

² *Temporal Drag: Pauline Boudry/Renate Lorenz*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern-Ruit, 2011, p.1943

³ 'Stages: A Conversation Between Andrea Thal, Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz', Berlin, September 2010, available at www.boudry-lorenz.de/texts/

⁴ The tactic of 'hiding in the light' was developed out of a history in which the 'lower classes' were particularly vulnerable to the conjunction of law enforcement and modern photography in the early and middle parts of the twentieth century. Scholars such as Dick Hebdige

and John Tagg made significant contributions to the theorisation of the emergence of subcultures as a response to the vigilant eye of the spectacle and the history of the camera as a sociological tool in the hands of the law. See D. Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Images and Things*, Routledge, New York and London, 1989; and J. Tagg, *Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1993

⁵ Pauline Boudry and Renate Lorenz, 'Laughing about N.O. Body', available at www.boudry-lorenz.de/texts/

⁶ K. Acker, *Bodies of Work*, Serpent's Tail, London, 1997, pp.91-92

⁷ P. Boudry and R. Lorenz, 'No Future/No Past', www.boudry-lorenz.de/no-future-no-past/

GENDER TALENTS: A SPECIAL ADDRESS Saturday 2 February, 10.30–16.30



© Carlos Motta

With **Xabier Arakistain, Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad, Giuseppe Campuzano, J. Jack Halberstam, Carlos Motta, Beatriz Preciado, Dean Spade, Terre Thaemlitz, Wu Tsang, Del LaGrace Volcano** and **Campbell X**

Gender Talents: A Special Address, convened and moderated by Carlos Motta presents an international group of thinkers, activists and artists in a symposium that uses the manifesto as a structure. These 'special addresses' will explore models and strategies that transform the ways in which society perversely defines and regulates bodies. The event asks what is at stake when collapsing, inverting or abandoning the gender binary. Here the relation between self-determination and solidarity in processes of systemic change form the foundation of a pragmatic exploration of ways of being ungoverned by normative gender.

Gender Talents is an ongoing project realised with the support of Creative Capital, which through concrete, theoretical and abstract routes seeks to radically depart from the binary logic of sexual and gender representation.

SCHEDULE

10.30

Welcome

10.40

Carlos Motta *Gender Talents*

11.00–12.10

Esben Esther Pirelli Benesta *Nature*
Del LaGrace Volcano *Bodies that Queer*
J. Jack Halberstam *Gaga Manifesto*

12.20–13.30

Dean Spade *Impossibility Now*
Terre Thaemlitz *We are not Welcome Here*
Beatriz Preciado *Pharmacopornographic counter-fictions*

13.30–14.20

Lunch

14.20–15.40

Giuseppe Campuzano *travesti manifesto*
Xabier Arakistain *Personal and Transferable*
Campbell X *How to love being the outsider - A manifesto for QPOC online creativity*
Wu Tsang & Safra Project *With intent*

15.40

Coffee break

16.00–16.30

Discussion and closing remarks

SPEAKERS' MANIFESTOS

ESBEN ESTHER PIRELLI BENESTAD Nature

Physicists still ponder, postulate and demonstrate new building stones of the universe, some other educated people seem to believe that they perceive a complete image of the world. In that image millions of people are made misshapen, sick, sinful, criminal or non-existent. Numerous individuals, whose talents of gender contain great potential values, are doomed to a life as walking bundles of symptoms, medically named 'syndromes'.

At the same time, an increasing number of reflecting people realise that as of today, it is apt to say that human culture is primitive, while nature is complex. There is no real, mature human culture before that culture can embrace and affirm all that is human, including that which is uncommon. Likewise there is no resting ground for any kind of humanity, until we can serve as integrated parts of nature's own complexity and vulnerability. This talk of nature will address these issues.

DEL LAGRACE VOLCANO Bodies that Queer

To write and perform work about the queer body is my kind of Mission Impossible because although queer is most often considered a noun, in my world, it's actually a verb in drag passing as an adjective. Queer bodies are 'Bodies That (Don't) Matter'. Bodies that are disposable and often disowned. Bodies that are not valued

or valuable. Bodies that through the radical act of existence embody resistance. Consider my body, a body that has chosen to amplify rather than erase it's inter-sex-iness. A body that is unwilling to conform to claustrophobic cultural definitions of female or male. A body that puts itself on the line to be judged by you. What does the queer body do? It performs abjection and provides a visceral demonstration of marginal magic. Through this act of repudiation, the queer body screams, look at me and love me... if you dare.

J. JACK HALBERSTAM Gaga Manifesto

At a time when the very rich are consolidating their ill gotten gains at the expense of the growing numbers of the poor, the queer, the dispossessed, the criminalised, the pathologised, the foreign, the deportable, disposable, dispensable, deplorable mob, at this time, we should start to talk about anarchy. When the state is actually the author of the very problems it proposes to cure – lack of public funds, low rate of education and health care, business models for everything from governance to education, no redistribution of wealth, homelessness – we need to seek alternatives to the state. When the church has more power than the people, when the military gets more funding than schools, when white people get away with murder and people of colour linger in overcrowded prisons for possession of marijuana, when queer people are cast as perverts unless they get married, we need to seek alternatives to law and order, to discipline and punishment. We need queer anarchy now.

DEAN SPADE Impossibility Now

This short film manifesto examines how trans politics emerges to resist and dismantle racialised gender norms in the context of growing apparatuses of criminalisation, immigration enforcement and war. It calls for a critical trans politics that refuses recognition and inclusion on neoliberal terms and proposes a world without bosses, prisons, borders, or wars – a world that, like trans people, has already been declared impossible.

TERRE THAEMLITZ We Are Not Welcome Here

Gender Talents proposes 'the relation between self-determination and solidarity in processes of systemic change form the foundation of a pragmatic, but also euphoric exploration of ways of being ungoverned by normative gender.' Like many, I disbelieve in the fundamental premise of self-determination. And like many, my scepticism towards constructs of community, which is born of social traumas, leaves me leery of acts of solidarity. Furthermore, amidst a cultural climate of globalising humanism that demands enthusiasm and optimism of its participants, I feel politically averse to participating in public displays of euphoria and joy. This aversion is doubled within music and art contexts, where transgendered persons (particularly anyone fitting into an MTF category) are expected to be campy and entertaining. During our time at *Gender Talents* I will do my best to draw focus away from the euphoric, and towards the traumatic and violent.

BEATRIZ PRECIADO Pharmacopornographic counter-fictions

At the time of global extension of biopower and pharmacopornographic techniques of production of sexual subjectivities, a new alliance of critical movements is needed. We, the pharmacopornographic workers of Earth, transbodies, migrants, animals, indigenous, gender-queer, crips and sex workers, are inventing new technologies of production of life and subjectivity. We refuse the narrow specialised position of the gender-equality NGO, as if the domains of economic and political production of life will exceed gender politics. We are the somatic and sexualised workforce of global Postfordism. Genderpolitics is Terrapolitics!

Against the extension of the Warfare State, we produce resistance within common networks of affect, music, seeds, joy, water, words, microbes, molecules... We are the post-porn Parliament to come. They say Represent. We say Experiment. They say Identity. We say Multitude. They say Debt. We say Sexual Cooperation and Somatic Interdependency. They say Human Capital. We say Multispecies Alliance. They say Crisis. We say Revolution.

GIUSEPPE CAMPUZANO travesti manifesto

The travesti manifesto dismantles the gender binary through certain moments of the body, both historical and invented. An indigenous androgyne, mediating the known and the unknown produces culture. Veiled rebels are anonymous power from non-essentialist societies. A daubed hero that sexualises chronic messianisms. Virgin archives: a Marian postporn, her devotees and their sexual work through the press; their fluids to re-

read archives. While history becomes transitory, the gender bubble bursts due to such overlapping of experiences. Transgender from Androgynopolis, as the core of history, a strategic post-identity carnival to problematise a little binary world.

CAMPBELL X How to love being the outsider – A manifesto for QPOC online creativity

Queer People of Colour (QPOC) have increasingly found ourselves to be a tokenistic presence in mainstream LGBTI media. Our narratives are stolen, and our truths re-mixed to conform to Eurocentric post-colonial imaginings. We take back our desires, our stories, our lives through social media and social video. Our revolution will certainly NOT be televised!

XABIER ARAKISTAIN Personal and Transferable

Feminism is knowledge. Knowledge that is especially useful for sexual, gender and sex dissidents. On the personal level, the discovery of feminism in its third wave, that 'the personal is political' and the scientific verification that sex, gender and sexuality are cultural, not natural, constructions was a relief in order to fight pressure and also an indispensable map for understanding my own position and the genesis and dynamics of sex, gender and sexual oppressions. That same feminist wave made it possible for women for the first time to participate in artistic practice and theory from the 1960s onwards. On a professional level, I contribute to this movement by using sex as a curatorial criterion and combining the Nochlin and Pollock perspectives as complementary within a contemporary project of feminist

transformation in the field of art and in the societies that produce it.

WU TSANG & SAFRA PROJECT With intent

Stories have the power to transform seemingly random information and experiences into something relatable, follow-able, or even entertaining. If you are communicating it's impossible to avoid narrating, because you have to put things in sequence in order to make sense. As organizers, we often use storytelling to relay ideas or analysis – to give an account or expose the underlying links between things, in hopes of affecting peoples' consciousness. But in a sense stories are also dishonest because they can offer only a condensed version, a perspective, or an interpretation of a more complex reality. This manifesto is an attempt to make meaning without telling any story or lie.

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS

XABIER ARAKISTAIN

Xabier Arakistain is a feminist curator and art critic. He was Director of Montehermoso Art Centre, Vitoria, from 2007 to 2011, making it a pioneering institution in the development and application of feminist policies in the fields of contemporary art, thought and culture. He has lectured widely on this project and on the relationship between art and feminism in several cultural and academic institutions.

GIUSEPPE CAMPUZANO

Giuseppe Campuzano is a transvestite philosopher. In 2004, Campuzano created Museo Travesti del Perú, The Transvestite Museum of Peru, a bodily counter-narrative to makeup voids and de-makeup boundaries. Parasitising the museums of contemporary art of São Paulo, Santiago and Barcelona, and the Reina Sofia, Madrid; universities of Lima, Brighton, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Bogotá, México D. F. and Quito. Working the streets. Spawning libraries with *Museo Travesti del Perú* (2008); *Chamanes, danzantes, putas y misses: el travestismo obseso de la memoria* (2010, Ramona) and *Veiled Genealogy for a Transfuture in The Future Lasts Forever* (2011). Campuzano is recipient of the Foundation for Arts Initiatives grant in 2013.

J. JACK HALBERSTAM

J. Jack Halberstam is Professor of American Studies and Ethnicity, Gender Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Southern California. Halberstam is the author of five books including: *Female Masculinity* (Duke,

1998), *The Queer Art of Failure* (Duke, 2011) and *Gaga Feminism: Sex, Gender, and the End of Normal* (Beacon Press, 2012) and has written articles that have appeared in numerous journals, magazines and collections. Halberstam blogs at Bully Bloggers and www.jackhalberstam.com. Halberstam is currently working on several projects including a book on queer anarchism.

ESBEN ESTHER PIRELLI BENESTAD: EEPB

Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad: EEPB, born 1949, is a medical doctor with an expertise in family therapy and sexology. Hir was appointed Professor of Sexology in 2012. EEPB is the father of two and is an open transperson in Norway appearing both as male and female. In 2002 hir son Even Benestad realised the feature film *All about my Father* which put both of them on the celebrity lists. To be well known has been a good platform for gender/queer activism, fighting injustice and pathologisation. EEPB is continuously fighting orthodox psychiatrists and health bureaucrats.

CARLOS MOTTA

Carlos Motta (Colombia, b. 1978) is a multi-disciplinary artist whose work draws upon political history in an attempt to create counter narratives that recognise the inclusion of suppressed histories, communities, and identities. His work has been presented internationally in venues such as The New Museum, Guggenheim Museum and MoMA/PS1 Contemporary Art Centre, New York; X Biennale de Lyon; Serralves Museum, Porto, among others. He was awarded the 2012 Creative Capital Grant in support of *Gender Talents*.

BEATRIZ PRECIADO

Beatriz Preciado is a philosopher and queer activist. S/he is the director of the Independent Studies Program at the Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (MACBA). A Fulbright Fellow, s/he earned a PhD in Philosophy and Theory of Architecture at Princeton University and an MA in Philosophy and Gender Studies at the New School for Social Research. Preciado's works include the critically acclaimed *Contra-Sexual Manifesto* (2000), *T Junkie. Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics* (2008), *Anal Terror* (2009), and *Pornotopia* (2010) for which s/he was awarded the Sade Prize. S/he teaches Gender Studies and Political History of the Body at Université Paris 8-Saint Denis, France.

DEAN SPADE

Dean Spade is an associate professor at the Seattle University School of Law and is currently a fellow in the Engaging Tradition Project at Columbia Law School. In 2002 he founded the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, a non-profit collective that provides free legal help to low-income people and people of colour who are trans, intersex and/or gender non-conforming and works to build trans resistance rooted in racial and economic justice. He is the author of *Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics and the Limits of Law* (2011).

TERRE THAEMLITZ

Terre Thaemlitz is an award winning multi-media producer, writer, public speaker, educator, audio remixer, DJ and owner of the Comatonse Recordings record label. Her work and writings combine a critical look at identity politics – including gender, sexuality, class,

linguistics, ethnicity and race – with an ongoing analysis of the socio-economics of commercial media production. He has released over 15 solo albums, as well as numerous 12-inch singles and video works. As a speaker and educator on issues of non-essentialist Transgenderism and Queerness, Thaemlitz has lectured and participated in panel discussions throughout Europe and Japan. He currently resides in Kawasaki, Japan.

WU TSANG

Wu Tsang is an artist and filmmaker whose work has been exhibited recently in the 2012 Whitney Biennial and New Museum Triennial in New York, the ICA Philadelphia, MOCA Los Angeles and the Gwangju Biennial (South Korea). Tsang's film *Wildness* received its world premiere at MoMA's Documentary Fortnight. He is a 2012 Louis Comfort Tiffany Fellow and has received support from the Good Works Foundation, Frameline, the Wexner Center for the Arts, the IFP Documentary Lab, Art Matters, and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. He is the recipient of a 2013 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grant.

DEL LAGRACE VOLCANO

Del LaGrace Volcano is considered one of the pioneers of queer photography and has published five books. *LoveBites* (1991); the first photographic monograph of lesbian sexuality; *The Drag King Book* (1999), the only book to date exploring the performances and lives of drag kings; *Sublime Mutations* (2000), *Sex Works* (2005) and *Femmes of Power* (2008), the first photographic monograph celebrating queer femininities in the USA and Europe. Volcano is a regular contributor to academic publications, television programmes and films on queer

visual art and theory. Volcano lives and works in the UK and Sweden.

CAMPBELL X

Campbell is an award-winning filmmaker/curator and writer/director of *Stud Life* (2012), an urban queer feature film which screened at the BFI London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, Frameline, Outfest, Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival and Africa in the Picture. Campbell was honoured by Queer Black Cinema festival, New York in 2009. *Image, Memory and Representation* was a retrospective of Campbell's work at the BFI LLGFF 2007. Campbell curated *No Heroes* as part of the *Progress Reports* in 2010 at Iniva, which also screened at the Red Cat Arts Centre in Los Angeles and Mix NYC in New York in 2010 and at BAAD NYC in 2011. Campbell was a selector for GFEST in 2009, 10 and 11 and BFI LLGFF in 2004 and 2005. Campbell was festival director for arts festival *The Fire This Time! – Queering Black History Month* in 2006.

CARLOS MOTTA Gender Talents

'The dream I find most compelling is one of an androgynous and genderless (though not sexless) society, in which one's sexual anatomy is irrelevant to who one is, what one does, and with whom one makes love.'
Gayle Rubin, *The Traffic in Women: Notes of the 'Political Economy' of Sex*, 1975

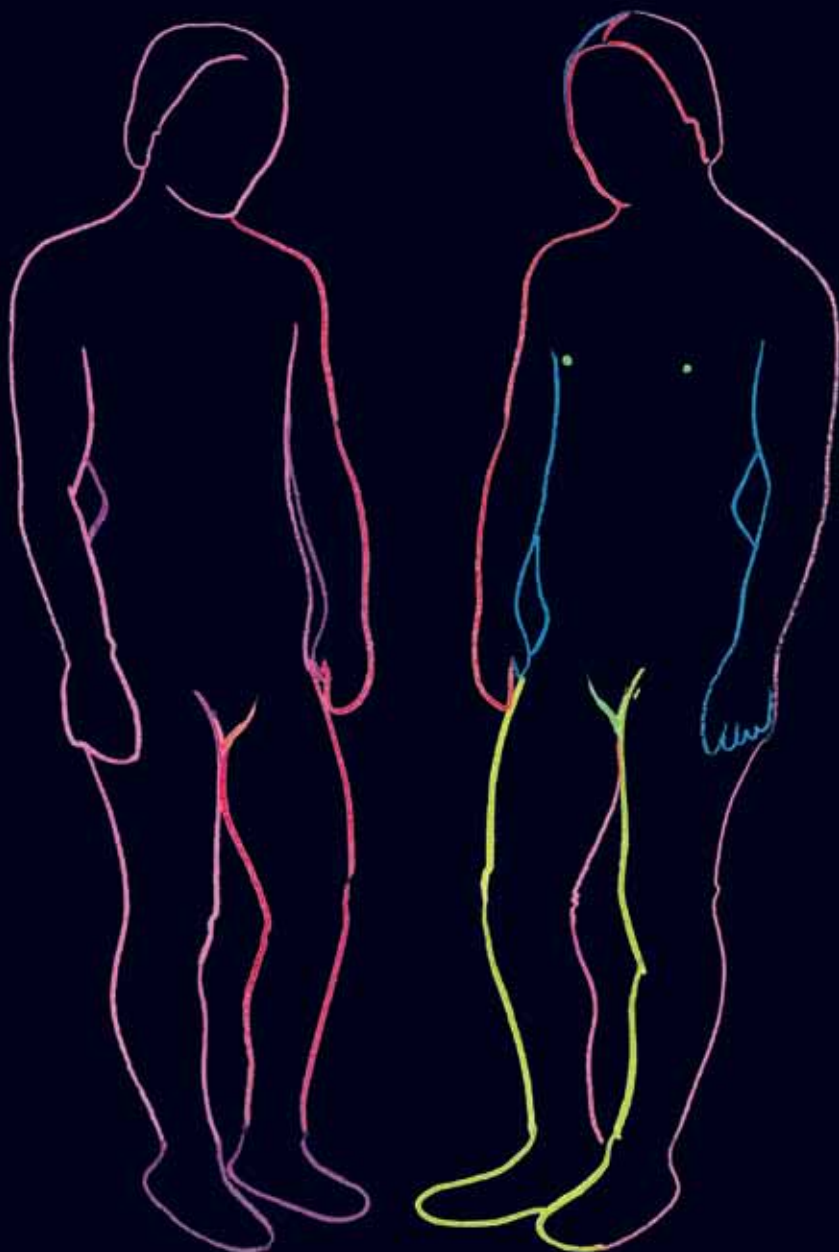
We live in a time of pervasive conformity and of strategic pragmatism, where begging for inclusion in discriminatory legislative, social, religious and cultural systems has become the political aim of LGBTI movements, instead of challenging, resisting and producing the transformation of those very structures that have neglected and denied our (deviant) identities and (feared) bodies historically. The notion of 'equality' has been hijacked by homonormative career-bureaucrats whose vision of the world adapts to systemic norms – crippling the hope of a truly mutable sexual and gender revolution that would free us from patriarchy, militarism, racism and classism.

Today, we gather to sketch a world of impractical (im)possibilities, transformative political dreams and radical expressions of sexuality and gender. We come together to consider the recurrent violence and phobia that have made us a 'community' and to suggest potential paths to liberation and social justice. We convene here to focus specifically on the politics of gender injustice and to ask what is at stake when questioning, collapsing, inverting and abandoning the gender binary – to challenge the bio-cultural 'foundations' of society and critically question gender norms from the perspective of sexuality, class, race and disability in order to counteract neoliberal models of (identity) institutionalisation and normalisation.

Today's events are part of *Gender Talents*, a long-term research, documentary and art project-in-progress I am working on that engages discourses and movements for gender self-determination within trans*, intersex and queer communities. This project seeks to present and document the perverse ways in which society conditions and regulates bodies and how activists internationally build politics of resistance and action. From traditional Joggapa** communities in India, to sex workers in Colombia, to gender progressive activists in the United States, these groups collectively fight for state recognition, the right to self-govern their bodies, access to work, against racialised incarceration, etc. The intersection of gender politics with other pressing social issues proves the LGBTI movement's identity-based approach insufficient at best and begs for alliances of solidarity beyond discourses on gender or sexuality. The transgression of gender norms seem to be one of society's greatest anxieties – inverting expectations of gender expression is deemed to be a (legal) impossibility and (moral) failure. There is no path to gender and sexual equality without reconfiguring existing norms and institutions.

Today's events at Tate Modern take the form of a symposium and a performance; two 'in production' moments of *Gender Talents* that were conceived with the desire to contribute to ongoing critical trans*, intersex and queer discourses and to stress the importance of opportunities for (self) representation and its relation with the building of communities.

Gender Talents: A Special Address is a symposium that brings together a group of remarkable thinkers that call for a queer politic of deviance, disruption, rejection, transgression, transition, freedom and emancipatory power. The participants were invited to deliver short manifestos – a public declaration that desires



and calls to action – that would concretely address the construction of a *genderless* and heterogeneous society. The form of the manifesto was chosen to convey a sense of urgency and encourage a (speech) act of performance; to propose a different world order where sexual and gender difference present an opportunity to reclaim queer bodies and affects unapologetically.

The performance *The Movers*, developed in collaboration with choreographer Matthias Sperling, is a collective movement experiment with thirteen performers that abstractly embrace the idea of self-determination as a series of group and individual decisions and negotiations based on performative tasks.

I take the opportunity to present *Gender Talents* at Tate Modern seriously. Recognising the museum's institutional influence as a legitimising agent of culture, I am aware of how important it is to use the museum operatively. It is not a coincidence that we have gathered here today to speak about transforming institutions, to speak to the 'margins' from the 'centre' with unapologetically radical queer ideas into a publically funded museum. Hopefully the movement of queer ideas and bodies inside these walls will let our views of a generous world perforate the concrete and reach the minds of Tate's audiences and its countless visitors to encourage renewed attitudes about sexuality and gender well beyond the building itself.

* *Trans* here is used as an umbrella term that includes among others, transsexual and transgender people, transvestites, travesti, cross dressers, no gender and gender-queer people. (GATE, transactivists.org/trans)

** The Jogappa community is comprised of male-born individuals who identify themselves as women and who have been dedicated as young boys to Goddess Yellamma. Most of them are economically deprived, illiterate, and come from the oppressed castes. (Shubha Chako)

I would specially like to thank Fatima Hellberg and Irene Revell (Electra) and Stuart Comer and Tate Modern's staff for their generosity and dedication to this project. Many thanks to Matthias Sperling for his commitment to The Movers, and to all the symposium and performance participants for their inspiring work. Thanks to Oreet Ashery, Mathias Danbolt, Justus Eisfeld, Tiger Howard Devore, David van der Leer, Miguel Lôpez, Cristina Motta, Diane Torr and Reagan Truax.

BEATRIZ PRECIADO Testo Junkie

'I live in a world where many things I thought impossible are possible.'

Guillaume Dustan, *Dans ma chambre*, POL, Paris, 1996

The day of your death I put a 50mg dose of Testogel on my skin, so that I can begin to write this book. The carbon chains, O-H3, C-H3, C-OH, gradually penetrate my epidermis and travel through the deep layers of my skin until they reach the blood vessels, nerve endings, glands. I'm not taking testosterone to change myself into a man, nor as a physical strategy of transsexualism; I take it to foil what society wanted to make of me, so that I can write, fuck, feel a form of pleasure that is post-pornographic, add a molecular prostheses to my *low-tech* transgendered identity composed of dildos, texts and moving images; I do it to avenge your death.

I spread the gel over my shoulders. First instant: the feeling of a light slap on the skin. The feeling changes into one of coldness before it disappears. Then nothing for a day or two. Nothing. Waiting. Then an extraordinary lucidity settles in gradually, accompanied by an explosion of the desire to fuck, walk, go out everywhere in the city. This is the climax in which the spiritual force of the testosterone mixing with my blood takes the fore. Absolutely all the unpleasant sensations disappear. Unlike speed, the movement going on inside has nothing to do with agitation, noise. It's simply the feeling of being in perfect harmony with the rhythm of the city. Unlike coke, there is no distortion in the perception of self, no logorrhea nor any feeling of superiority. Nothing but the feeling of strength reflecting the increased capacity of my muscles, my brain. My body is

present to itself. Unlike speed and coke, there is no immediate come down. A few days go by, and the movement inside calms, but the feeling of strength, like a pyramid revealed by a sandstorm, remains.

How can I explain what is happening to me? What can I do about my desire for transformation? What can I do about all the years I defined myself as a feminist? What kind of feminist am I today: a feminist hooked on testosterone, or a transgendered body hooked on feminism? I have no other alternative but to revise my classics, to subject those theories to the shock that was provoked in me by the practice of taking testosterone. To accept the fact that the change happening in me is the metamorphosis of an era.

The changes within neoliberalism that we are witnessing are characterised not only by the transformation of 'gender', 'sex', 'sexuality', 'sexual identity', and 'pleasure' into objects of the political management of living, but also by the fact that this management itself is carried out through the new dynamics of advanced techno-capitalism, global media, and biotechnologies. We are being confronted with a new type of hot, psychotropic punk capitalism. These recent transformations are imposing an ensemble of new micro-prosthetic mechanisms of control of subjectivity by means of bio-molecular and multi-media technical protocols. Our world economy is dependent upon the production and circulation of hundreds of tons of synthetic steroids, on the global diffusion of a flood of pornographic images, on the elaboration and distribution of new varieties of synthetic legal and illegal psychotropic drugs (e.g., enaltestovis, Special K. Viagra, speed, crystal, Prozac, ecstasy, poppers, heroin, Prilosec), on the flood of signs and circuits of the digital transmission of information, on the extension of a form of

diffuse urban architecture to the entire planet in which megacities of misery knotted into high concentrations of sex-capital.

In order to distinguish this new capitalism from the nineteenth century disciplinary regime, I shall call *pharmacopornographic capitalism* this new regime of production of sex and sexual subjectivity.

After World War II, the somatopolitical context of production of subjectivity seems dominated by a series of new technologies of the body (which includes biotechnology, surgery, endocrinology, etc.) and representation (photography, cinema, television, cybernetics, videogames, etc.) that infiltrate and penetrate daily life like never before. These are bio-molecular, digital and broadband data transmission technologies. The invention of the notion of gender in the 1950s as a clinical technique of sexual reassignment, and the commercialisation of the Pill as a contraceptive technique characterized the shift from discipline to pharmacopornographic control. This is the age of soft, feather-weight, viscous, gelatinous technologies that can be injected, inhaled – ‘incorporated.’ The testosterone that I use belongs to these new gelatinous biopolitical technologies.

When I take a dose of testosterone in gel form or inject it in liquid form, what I’m actually giving myself is a chain of political signifiers that have been materialised in order to acquire the form of a molecule that can be absorbed by my body. I’m not only taking the hormone, the molecule, but also the concept of hormone, a series of signs, texts and discourses, the process through which the hormone came to be synthesised, the technical sequences that produce it in the laboratory. I inject a crystalline, oil-soluble steroid carbon chain of molecules, and with it a fragment of the

history of modernity. I administer myself a series of economic transactions, a collection of pharmaceutical decisions, clinical tests, focus groups, and business management techniques, I connect to baroque network of exchange and to economic and political flow-chains for the patenting of the living. I am linked by T. to electricity, to genetic research projects, to mega-urbanisation, to the destruction of forests of the biosphere, to pharmaceutical exploitation of living species, to Dolly the cloned sheep, to the advance of the Ebola virus, to HIV mutation, to antipersonnel mines and the broadband transmission of information. In this way I become one of the somatic connectives that make possible the circulation of power, desire, release, submission, capital, rubbish, and rebellion.

As a body – and this is the only important thing about being a subject-body, a techno-living system – I’m the platform that makes possible the materialization of political imagination. I am my own guinea pig for an experiment on the effects of intentionally increasing the level of testosterone in the body of a bio-female. Instantly, the testosterone turns me into something radically different than a cis-female. Even when the changes generated by this molecule are socially imperceptible. The lab rat is becoming human. The human being is becoming a rodent. And, as for me: neither testo-girl nor techno-boy. I am just a port of insertion for C19H28O2. I’m both the terminal of one of the apparatuses of neoliberal governmentality and the vanishing point through which escapes the will to control of the system. I’m the molecule and the State, and I’m the laboratory rat and the scientific subject that conducts the research; I’m the residue of a biochemical process. I am the future common artificial ancestor for the elaboration of new species in the perpetually random process of mutation and genetic drift. I am T.

I do not want the female gender that has been assigned to me at birth. Neither do I want the male gender that transsexual medicine can furnish and that the State will award me if I behave in the right way. I don’t want any of it. I am a copyleft biopolitical agent that considers sex hormones free and open biocodes, whose use shouldn’t be regulated by the state or commandeered by pharmaceutical companies. The consumption of testosterone, like that of oestrogen and progesterone in the case of the Pill, do not depend upon any ideal constructions of gender that would come to influence the way we act and think. We are confronted directly by the production of the *materiality* of gender. Everything is a matter of doses, of melting and crystallisation points, of the rotary power of the molecule, of regularity, of milligrams, of form and mode of administration, of habit, of praxis. What is happening to me could be described in terms of a ‘molecular revolution’. In detailing this concept in order to refer to the revolt of May ‘68, Félix Guattari certainly was not thinking of cis-females who self-administer testosterone. On the other hand, he was attentive to structural modifications generated by micro-political changes such as the consumption of drugs, changes in perception, in sexual conducts, in the invention of new languages. It is a question of becomings, of multiplicities. In such a context, ‘molecular revolution’ could be pointing to a kind of political homeopathy of gender. It’s not a matter of going from woman to man from man to woman, but of contaminating the molecular bases of the production of sexual difference, with the understanding that these two states of being, male and female, only exist as ‘biopolitical fictions’, as somatic effects of the technical process of normalisation. It’s a matter of intervening intentionally in this process of production in order to end up with viable forms of incorporated gender, to produce a new

sexual and affective platform that is neither male nor female in the pharmacopornographic sense of the term, which would make possible the transformation of the species. T is only a threshold, a molecular door, a becoming between multiplicities.

An excerpt from Beatriz Preciado, *Testo Junkie. Sex, Drugs and Biopolitics*, translated from the French by Bruce Benderson. Forthcoming from Feminist Press, September 2013.

CARLOS MOTTA AND MATTHIAS SPERLING: THE MOVERS Saturday 2 February, 16.30

Performers: Ingo Andersson - *Wotever World*, Jason Barker, Dan Daw, Simon Foxall, Fred Gehrig, Nia Hughes, Helka Kaski, Huai-Chih Liang, Vicky Malin, Malinda Mukuma, Carlos Maria Romero, Mickel Smithen & Ebony Rose Dark



© Carlos Motta

The Movers is a performance conceived in collaboration between Carlos Motta and choreographer Matthias Sperling. The work attends to movement as a means of exploring the connections between collective politics and a sense of the individual. Based on a choreographic score of performative tasks that engage performers in individual decision-making processes, *The Movers* abstractly asks how self-determination is both a deeply personal project and continuously negotiated in relation to others.

The performers are a group of multi-disciplinary artists whose practices extend from performance to visual arts. What unites the performers is an interest in gender and sexual politics and a questioning ideas of gender performance by using movement and the body. They were invited to participate through referrals and research.

The Movers is part of *Gender Talents*, a Creative Capital Project

Carlos Motta's (Colombia, born 1978) work has been presented internationally in venues such as The New Museum, Guggenheim Museum and MoMA/PS1 Contemporary Art Centre, New York; X Biennale de Lyon; Serralves Museum, Porto, among others. He was awarded the 2012 Creative Capital Grant in support of *Gender Talents*.

www.carlosmotta.com
www.wewhoefeldifferently.info

Choreographer and performer **Matthias Sperling** is an Associate Artist with Dance4 and winner of the Bonnie Bird New Choreography Award. His commissions have included *Diplomacy* (Dance Umbrella London, 2009), *Duet*, *Duet* (Southbank Centre, 2010) and *Walking Piece* (Siobhan Davies Dance, 2012). He has also presented his work at Victoria Miro, Ikon, Hayward and Whitechapel galleries.

www.matthias-sperling.com

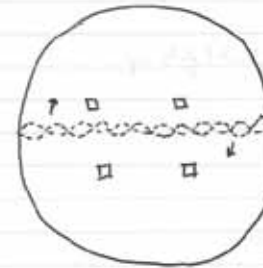
Matthias Sperling on *The Movers*

Can movement enable manifesto to become manifestation? Can radical aims be achieved through the incremental accumulation of small acts, singular choices, or subtle shifts in perception? I see *The Movers* as being activated by an attentiveness to the complexity of our embodied experience, on an intimate and individual scale, as a localised but concrete way to disrupt categorical fixity.

The non-linearity of embodied experience is always available to us and it overflows any attempts at linear categorisation. It disturbs fixed patterns in our collective encounters, generating slivers of possibility for dissociation from them. Reality always goes beyond

classifications. In my view, the unfolding reality of our bodies in relationship with others in time and space becomes a resource for going beyond classifications through our choice to attend to it.

- thought of a spatial structure that gathers this activity into a collectivity, but doesn't let the audience rest undisturbed



a long line that covers the whole diameter of the space, and rotates slowly around it like a propeller, combing through the audience. Performers weave along it, so that they are constantly more in the centre of the space (where I'm seeing four audience members will be) and sometimes coming directly through the audience, giving up space as they go, a sort of circular thruster of the room.

The Movers move their perception.
The Movers move their expectation.
The Movers move their practice of relationship with others.
The Movers move their practice of relationship with their own bodies.
The Movers move categories -- reclaim/neutralise categories
The Movers move to open up spaces for movement that weren't there before (or weren't seen to be there)

Wu Tsang *Wildness* 2012 © courtesy the artist

Charming for the Revolution: A Congress for Gender Talents and Wildness

WU TSANG: WILDNESS

Saturday 2 February 2013, 20.00

Wu Tsang *Wildness* 2012 © courtesy the artist

Wu Tsang (USA, born 1982) is an artist, performer and filmmaker based in Los Angeles. This special live screening event features the UK premiere of Tsang's acclaimed film *Wildness* (2012), followed by *Breakdown*, a new performance by Tsang in collaboration with Kelela and Ashland Mines.

THE SHAPE OF A RIGHT STATEMENT

Wu Tsang, USA 2008, HD Video, 5'15 min

Staring directly at the camera, Tsang re-performs one section of 'In My Language,' a forceful address by autism rights activist Amanda Baggs. Tsang's powerful video manifesto was shot at The Silver Platter, home to his club Wildness, following a year in which the artist had presented live performances of the Baggs text. Tsang mimetically reproduces the voice of Baggs's Speech Generation Device, stating, 'It is only when I type something in your language that you refer to me as having communication.'

Camera AL Steiner

WILDNESS

Wu Tsang, USA 2012, HDCAM, 75 min

Wildness is a portrait of the Silver Platter, a historic bar on the eastside of Los Angeles that has catered to the Latin immigrant and queer community since 1963. With a touch of magical-realism, the bar itself becomes a character in the film. Voiced by a transgender actress from Guatemala, it whispers the histories of the LGBT community for whom it has provided sanctuary and a 'safe space' for generations. The film captures the creativity and conflict that ensue when a group of young, queer artists of colour (Wu Tsang, DJs NGUZUNGUZU and Total Freedom) organise a weekly performance party, also called Wildness, at the bar. This emergent underground interfaces with the immigrant transwomen who have long populated the venue and the Silver Platter becomes a charged forum for forging coalitions and exploring class, community and activism.

www.wutsang.com
www.wildnessmovie.com

FILM CREDITS

Writers Wu Tsang and Roya Rastegar
Producer Kathy Rivkin
Camera Michelle Lawler
Editors Claire Didier and Wu Tsang
Original Music NGUZUNGUZU, Total Freedom and Robbie Williamson

BREAKDOWN

Kelela, Ashland Mines, Wu Tsang, 2013, performance

The screening of *Wildness* will be followed by *Breakdown*, a performance conceived for the Tanks by Kelela, Ashland Mines, and Wu Tsang. Part grand illusion and part humble direct action, this stage show is meant to explore the idea of honesty. Honesty not in the sense

of morally upright, but in the sense of being true to desires or needs. The artists use basic elements of voice, sound, and light to create continuity (storytelling) through a series of constructions/breakdowns, in which the song is simultaneously the derivative and the original. *Breakdown* is part of an ongoing series of parties/sound/experiences that began in Los Angeles.

Kelela is a Los Angeles-based vocalist and songwriter who brings the traditions of timeless songwriting and heartfelt vocal performance to the world of innovative electronic music. She has been featured on records by Daedelus (*Bespoke*, Ninja Tune), Teengirl Fantasy (*Tracer*, True Panther), and Kingdom's upcoming EP (*Fade To Mind*). As a performance artist, Kelela participated in the Blasting Voice series curated by Ashland Mines (a.k.a. TOTAL FREEDOM) at Suzanne Geiss Company in New York. She most recently opened for Solange Knowles and her mixtape (featuring production by Girl Unit, Nguzunguzu, Kingdom, and Jam City) will be released Spring 2013 on *Fade To Mind*.

Ashland Mines is an artist living in Los Angeles. Known internationally for his DJing and music production under the name Total Freedom (and recently called 'the best DJ in the United States' by *Interview Magazine*), Ashland is also known for his work curating and producing events. Recent projects have been presented at the New Museum and Suzanne Geiss Company in New York, as well as the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the Museum of Contemporary Art (MoCA) in Los Angeles.

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The following texts were written at different stages of *Wildness's* development. Dean Spade wrote his essay in the Fall of 2010, in response to an early test-screening, and I wrote mine a year later just before finishing *Wildness*. Looking back I see two very different films struggling to tell a story and stay open about the process. Now that *Wildness* is officially done and out in the world, people often ask if I'm concerned about how the film will affect the Silver Platter, if it will expose the community to unwanted attention. I was initially stumped by this question, not because I hadn't thought about it, but because I'd thought about it so much I didn't know where to begin. The simple answer is YES, of course I am scared. But the more complicated answer, which is the one that feels more risky and true, is that I have to trust my intention. My mentor Jonathan Oppenheim (who edited *Paris is Burning*) once told me, '*intention* is everything.' What that means is elusive, but I understand it vis-à-vis something that Nicol (host of Silver Platter) says in the film, in response to a transphobic article written about Silver Platter: 'What [the journalist] saw is what the Silver Platter *is*. It is *not* what his mind dictated to him later, that he wrote.' I came to understand through her wise words that the Silver Platter, like many safe spaces, is rooted in a place. It also happens to be a business that is open to the public, where anyone can go inside and encounter what they will. They can take a picture, write an article, or make a film, and that representation will always turn out to be a reflection of what they wanted to see; what their intention truly was. So I felt that it was important—in the process of trying to make a film that was supposedly 'about' trans resistance, or somehow 'represented' trans Latina experience—it became essential to expose the inner workings of how I got involved and what the pitfalls were. It was like shining a light into all the dark recesses that the camera *didn't* expose, because at the time

of filming I wasn't ready to see. In the end, I hope I was able to capture the realness of this world in all its contradiction and complexity. I think intention is not something we can control or mastermind. It passes through us, like the spirit of a nightclub or a social movement. We are merely temporary vessels for intentions, which are ever-shifting between the past and future.

Wu Tsang

WILDNESS by Wu Tsang

There is a bar called the Silver Platter in the MacArthur Park neighbourhood of Los Angeles that has been a safe space for a group of immigrant transgender women – to earn a living, create community, and to form a chosen family – for decades.

Or at least, that’s the story I wanted to tell.

I came to know the Silver Platter through Wildness, a performance-party that I co-organised at the bar from 2008–10 with my friends Asma Maroof, Daniel Pineda, and Ashland Mines. In deciding to make a film about my experiences there, I was torn between my desire to ‘give voice’ to an under-represented movement (critical trans resistance) and the problems of representation itself – the burden of speaking on behalf of experiences that were not entirely my own. These negotiations were held in the balance by the daily challenges of doing the Wildness party, which strove to be a fun, entertaining, and critical space that was respectful and engaging of its site, and willfully *not* a site for any one group of people or form of creativity. I felt I needed to reach beyond the visual art audience, but still I wondered: who was I really making this film for, and why? The project became as much about the process (from within which I still write) as the product, a realisation that led me to make my private artistic decisions public in the form of a blog called CLASS. Central to all this was an unresolved question. I’d set out to make a film about a safe space, but what did that mean? What is a ‘safe space’, and can it ever be said to really exist?

According to the nonprofit GLBTQ organization Equality Network, the average lifespan of

transgender people worldwide is *twenty-three*. Known causes of early death are suicide, murder, homelessness, criminalisation, imprisonment, poverty, risky behavior – i.e., all the stuff that makes for the expected dramatic trans narrative. But there is also a more insidious violence: the violence wielded by the seemingly banal and neutral agencies of state administration – the DMV, parole officers, homeless shelters, criminal courts, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and departments of housing, unemployment, social security, and welfare, to name a few. Critical trans political resistance tries to expose how these entities systematically exclude and collude against gender variant people, as well as poor people, immigrants, people with disabilities, and people of colour. This kind of violence doesn’t kill us outright; it shortens our lives through consistent exposure to violence, humiliation and deprivation.

Living in Los Angeles today, in a social climate that is demonstrably and increasingly hostile to immigrants (as evidenced by the passage of SB 1070, H.R. 4437, and other anti-immigration laws), it is hard to imagine a more intense time and place to be poor and trans and undocumented. Without a doubt, the Silver Platter is a refuge, a place where we can live a kind of life made almost impossible by contemporary conditions of oppression. It’s a space not only where trans people ‘get by’; it’s a place where we can party and make art, have friendships and drama – and really live life.

But is it a ‘safe space’?

I once asked Gonzalo Ramirez, the 72-year-old owner of the Silver Platter, if he thought of the bar as such. His response was very matter of fact: ‘Yes, we have security guards every day.’ I struggled to communicate what I meant by ‘safe’. I knew the bar had been around since the

early 1960s, and I was digging for Stonewall-era stories. Did the place ever get shut down? Were there raids by the cops? Queens pumping their fists in the air? It turns out the bar has been gay on this block for forty-eight years, virtually without trouble. ‘Simply put, the city does not bother us at all’, said Gonzalo. Except for people sometimes driving by and throwing eggs or insults, the Silver Platter has remained in peaceful coexistence with its surroundings.

I remember being a little confused by this first interview because it didn’t fit with my idea of queer liberation. But I felt such a strong connection to the energy and to the scene that I was compelled to keep trying to put the pieces together. With the help of many participants, friends, and a documentary crew over a two-year period, we filmed more than 30 interviews and 150 hours of life at the bar. I thought that I’d already come to know the place inside and out, but the story of Silver Platter that emerged was far more singular, radical, and complex than I could ever imagine. In the process of making *Wildness*, I came to realise I had a fantasy of queer liberation that was based on documentation of past civil rights movements, on the recorded images and voices that were my only access to those historic moments. There was a nostalgia I felt for what I imagined were more ‘urgent’ times, when demands were somehow more concrete, and the path to change was more connected to marching in the streets or rioting outside the bars. It was a fantasy that propelled me to pick up the camera and want to capture what was happening around me. But the material revealed truths that didn’t necessarily fit with my ideas of what a ‘cohesive’ resistance movement looked like (if ever there were such a thing), and these were sometimes hard to look at. The project grew into an unwieldy story, barely holding all the vibrant and conflicting pieces together, just like the bar itself.

Today the Silver Platter remains a safe space for a really special group of immigrant trans women. Wildness didn’t end up blowing up its spot, as I sometimes feared it would. However, I anticipate that, because of its accessible format, the film will bring an unprecedented amount of attention to the bar. It will raise uncomfortable issues about exposure and exploitation (as a documentary inevitably does, because you are using people’s lives to tell a story). But I’m ready for such confrontations and dialogues because my experiences taught me that real change comes through building coalitions, which are often painful and never safe. It’s an endless process of reevaluation and struggle, which I hope continues to unfold as *Wildness* makes its way out into the world.

WILDNESS By Dean Spade

On a recent trip to LA I had the opportunity to watch a rough cut of Wu Tsang’s new film, *Wildness*. Gathered with trans activists and artists in Tsang’s living room, I was pulled into a complex story about the Silver Platter, a Los Angeles Latino gay/trans/drag bar, and the events that unfolded when a multiracial group of queer performance artists brought a party called Wildness to the bar. I typically avoid documentaries, including autobiographical ones, about trans experience. They tend to be sensationalist, individualising, depoliticising redemption narratives about how trans people are ‘human’, ‘normal’, or otherwise sympathetic characters struggling to fit in. They rarely move beyond those paradigms to ask harder questions or to question the project of representing trans life. The rough cut of *Wildness* demonstrates that more is possible.

Wildness depicts not one but several stories, none of them simple. It tells the story of a bar

that, when it opened in the 1960s, refused to serve trans and drag-wearing patrons, but later became a haven for those gender benders, a gathering place for Latin@ performers and their admirers. It explores the lives of the women who make their home and sometimes their living at the Silver Platter. These women describe their lives and identities not in the one-dimensional frames that are typical of trans documentaries, but instead in ways that reveal complexity and contradiction. Their stories of migration, their struggles for survival, their pleasures in finding connection as well as their disagreements and tensions are cut with footage of their performances and the social life of the Silver Platter. The global conditions of U.S. imperialism and capitalism that produce gendered and racialised realities of migration and lead Latin@ queer and trans people to LA are a part of these stories – so important given the erasure of those realities in the whitewashed, corporate-funded gay and lesbian politics most visible today. The depiction of the Silver Platter patrons, of the struggles and resilience of Latin@ queer and trans people outside of limited frames of victimhood or fabulousness, not produced for a trans-fascinated audience allured by the freak show, not creating narratives of overcoming that suggest some generalisable experience of a desire to assimilate into straight/white/American life alone make *Wildness* an important intervention into the world of trans films. The Silver Platter patrons interviewed in the film face police violence, poverty, immigration enforcement, and criminalisation, and also have a good time with friends at a bar that is important to them, and they have differing thoughts and opinions and experiences within those shared realities.

The love and respect that Tsang feels for the Silver Platter and its patrons is palpable in this depiction – the film is for them, not just about

them – and sets the stage for the themes of appropriation, class difference, gentrification, and displacement that the film examines by exploring the events that occurred when the Wildness party (co-created and hosted by Tsang) came to the Silver Platter. Tsang again refuses to provide a simplistic or one-dimensional narrative for viewers. The film shows a range of reactions to the changes that Wildness brought to the Silver Platter: the welcomed business, the enjoyment of creative collaboration and overlap between Wildness performers and spectators and Silver Platter regulars, the displacement and alienation of some Silver Platter regulars (one of whom described Wildness attendees as ‘college kids’), the significance of racial difference between the Latin@ clientele of the Silver Platter and the Wildness crowd, which often had a significant white presence.

The depiction of this complex relationship comes to a climax when we learn that Wildness received some high-profile publicity in 2008 when *LA Weekly* journalist Sam Slovick published a review of the night in the *Weekly*’s ‘Best Of’ issue despite the pleadings of Wildness organisers for him not to do so. Slovick’s racist, transphobic coverage depicted Silver Platter regulars as lascivious, predatory, and completely disposable, reproducing harmful stereotypes of trans women of colour, sex workers, and Latin@s. The film shows the complexities of solidarity and difference being navigated by the Wildness organisers, who were horrified that their event had produced the coverage and the potential increase in displacement that it might generate. Slovick’s review positioned the Wildness organisers firmly as ‘outsiders’ to the Silver Platter scene – a group of ‘art-damaged students’ – which speaks to the tensions about gentrification and displacement the film grapples with, but doesn’t quite capture the complexity

of Wildness’s demographic. Some Wildness organisers and performers also responded to Slovick’s writing as trans people and/or people of colour, also marginalised in (gay and straight) mainstream culture and also vulnerable to the violences produced by the kind of rhetoric Slovick used. I won’t spoil what happened when the filmmakers confronted Slovick on tape, but needless to say the portrayal of the creation of Wildness and its impact on the Silver Platter engage a complexity and self-reflectiveness that is rarely represented in film and yet is a constant companion of activists, artists, and organisers.

The film refuses the structures of documentary that I’ve become accustomed to avoiding – it refuses to tell just one story, to obscure the role of the filmmaker, to pretend to present objective truth, to ignore the politics of representation. This engagement affects the viewing experience in ways that I imagine will make some audiences encourage Tsang to reduce the complexity, to tell fewer stories, to produce neat conclusions. I hope he retains the sense of unfolding, self-critical, imperfect process guided by love and a desire for connection that I think is palpable both in the stories the film tells and in the ways it is crafted. It is something we (trans people, people fighting white supremacy and capitalism, organisers and activists, artists and advocates) all desperately need to see right now.

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