

# Problems and Provocations

**Grand Arts  
1995-2015**

Edited by Stacy Switzer and Annie Fischer

Grand Arts  
Kansas City, Missouri



Октябрь 10, 2007

Ms. Stacy Switzer  
Artistic Director  
Grand Arts  
1819 Grand Boulevard  
Kansas City, MO 64108

**CONFIDENTIAL**

Re: ортостатические терпимости

В: Stacy Switzer,

Как я уже говорил вам в наших беседах за последние несколько месяцев я в условиях многолетней многоплановый проект под названием ортостатические терпимости. В Попросту говоря этого проекта вращается нашла тело человека его конечной физической крайности то, что при расширении его средств, как исполнителя для изучения. В течение трех лет я вместе с группой калибратор в совместно с рядом частных и государственных учреждений мы подготовим произведений видео, кино, скульптура, спектакли, чертежей и интерактивных штук, что приведет к окончательному выставки в конце этого указанного времени.

После полного представления предложения мы надеемся, Великое искусство для присоединиться к нам не только как финансовую поддержку, но и соавтора в этих начинаниях. Подробно этого проекта будет показал в своем выступлении, и я надеюсь, ответить на все Ваши вопросы на тот момент. Кристофер Вершина директор произведения этого проекта и Гаррет Линн из Artlogic лаборатории, которые будут в качестве Директора по вопросам коммуникации и исследований будет присоединиться к нам в форме видеоконференции.

Спасибо за помощь, и я с нетерпением ждем нашей встречи, а также долгосрочные отношения на протяжении этого проекта.

Tavares Strachan



^ Tavares Strachan, artist proposal cover letter to Grand Arts, 2007.



**Ecstatic Resistance**

**Curated by Emily Roysdon**

**Nov. 12, 2009 – Jan. 16, 2010**

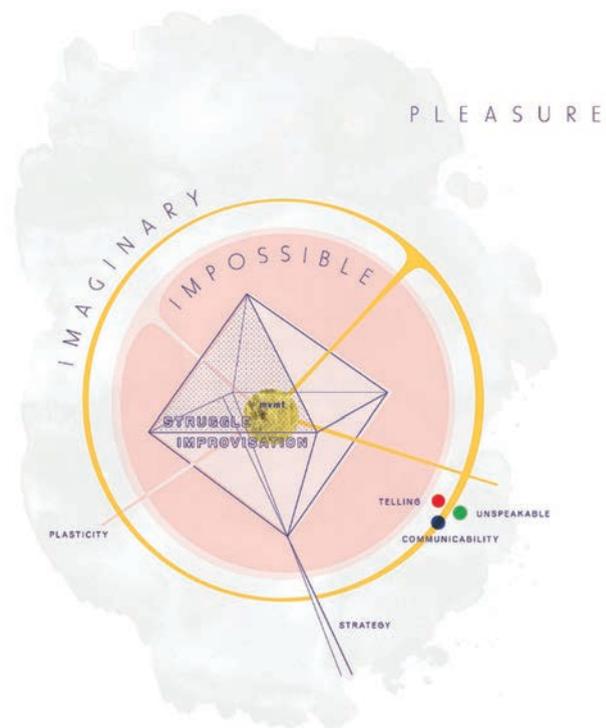
**ECSTATIC RESISTANCE**  
*a project and group show curated by Emily Roysdon, featuring:*

- Yael Bartana**
- Sharon Hayes**
- Matthew Lutz-Kinoy**
- My Barbarian**
- Jeanine Oleson**
- Ulrike Ottinger**
- Adrian Piper**
- Dean Spade and Craig Willse**
- A.L. Steiner**
- Ian White**



^ Untitled photograph, 2009. (photo: Emily Roysdon)

*Ecstatic Resistance* was a set of experiments to test the limits of the impossible, a set of strategies for transgressing the unthinkable, the unspeakable, the taboo. Conceived and developed by artist and writer Emily Roysdon, the philosophy/practice operated by motivating desire to give political protest a new look. "It wants to talk about pleasure in the domain of resistance," Roysdon writes in the essay accompanying the group exhibition. "It is about waiting, and the temporality of change."  
 →



**ECSTATIC RESISTANCE**

^ Emily Roysdon, *Ecstatic Resistance (schema)*, designed in collaboration with Carl Williamson, 2009. Silkscreen and chine collé on paper, 34 1/2 x 25 in. (print: 10 Grand Press, Brooklyn, New York)



< *Ecstatic Resistance* postcard invitation. Image: Jeanine Oleson, *The Greater New York Smudge Cleanse*, 2008. Documentation of performance, Federal Hall, New York. (photo: Khaela Maricich)

**EMILY ROYSDON, EARLY PROJECT CORRESPONDENCE, 2009**

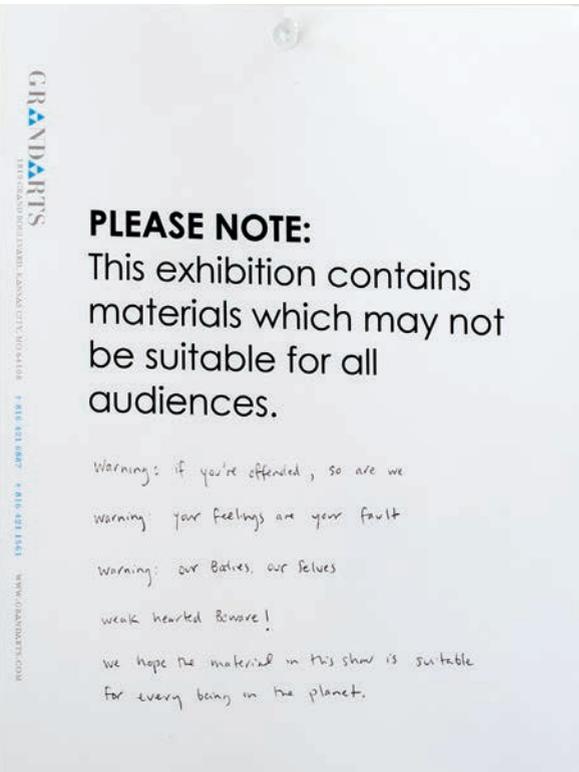
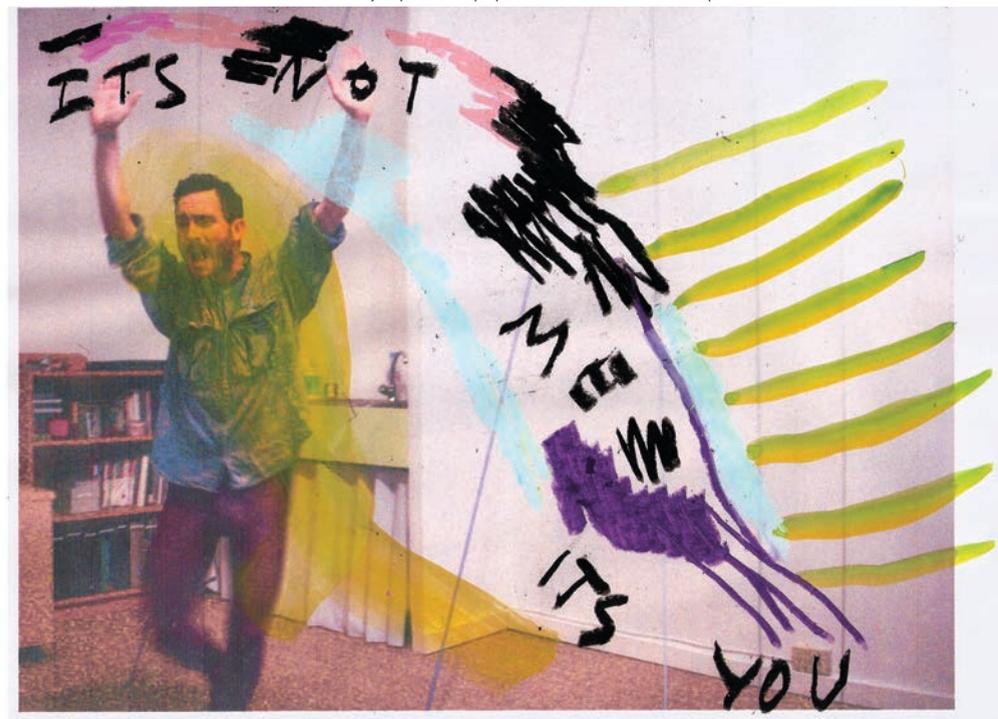
I am in the early stages of organizing an exhibition around the ideas of "Ecstatic Resistance" and I am writing to request information about your recent and/or relevant projects. Ecstatic Resistance is a term I have been using for the last few years and that I find relevant to my own practice and see reflected in many artists' work. As an artist it is important to me to engage my peers' practices and organize ideas publicly. This project is an opportunity to think through these ideas with other artists and to set up experiments in ecstatic resistance. My plans include an exhibition, performance event(s) and film screening(s) that will take place in November 2009 at Grand Arts in Kansas City, MO.

Ecstatic Resistance wants to think about all that is unthinkable and unspeakable in the Eurocentric, phallogocentric world order. Within the echo of Ecstatic Resistance are questions about temporality, the self/subject, universality, sexuality, boundaries, the unconscious, truth, transformation, technology, humor, excess, risk and ethics.

I have broken the idea down into three categories. The first is to develop a positionality of the impossible and to think about all that is unthinkable/unspeakable. The realm of the impossible is political, never naive, and always shifting. Asking what is 'impossible' is about the boundaries of humanness, intelligibility, and power. I think about the limits of respectability, to directly confront what is forbidden.

Second, I think about the possibility of creating of a new Imaginary. Projects that both deconstruct historical categories and history itself and projects that build new systems, structures, perspectives from the ruins. Works that build an opportunity for us to move forward from a new place. I'm also interested in returning to the primal scene of language and

^ Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, *it's not me, it's you*, 2008. Inkjet print on paper with watercolor and pastels, A4.



^ Content warning sign, annotated by *Ecstatic Resistance* artists, 2009.



^ Roysdon visits the set of *Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater* prior to performance, La Esquina, Kansas City, Missouri, 2009. (photo: Martin Diggs)

teaming up with the Kansas City Art Institute to do a screening/some talks.

4. I would like Grand Arts to help me make connections and travel the exhibition. I think this is a great way to then exhibit the new commissioned works and see how the discourse accumulates in new settings. If you are interested it could be interesting to then return to Grand Arts in some form [texts, panel, photo installation of happenings] to mark time, the development and commitment.

Traveling shows is one thing Grand Arts doesn't really take on, but I am always happy to try to help make connections. For solo shows, our agreement with artists is usually that we'll cover shipping to one destination in the continental U.S. of their choice ... so if you organized a next venue, we could likely send the show on to that locale [we also don't store work, so the next venue would have to be lined up time-wise]. There are a few caveats for shipping \$ in terms of work that needs to be crated [i.e., if new works are created here] and covering the expense for that ... but we can discuss these kinds of things in more detail when you come out.

Since we do have the fabrication shop and staff, it might be nice to think toward a few projects that have a strong object-based, physical presence, if this makes sense and isn't contrary to the premise of the show ...

Re: artist list/works, we would be most excited about new work and the more emerging/less widely exhibited artists on the list, though I understand the case for historical grounding [e.g. Adrian Piper]. With someone such as Piper, could you be interested in trying to get a more recent work from her? This is really a more general question about how you might hone the list ...

I know we have much more to talk about, but I wanted to get something off to you in reply sooner rather than later ... so let's keep the back and forth going, and talk soon about plans to bring you out if you are game!

Also, were you able to retrieve the packet from us before you left the U.S.?

My very best wishes!!  
Stacy



Yael Bartana, video still, *Mary Koszmary*, > 2007. One-channel Super 16 mm film transferred to video, 10:50 min.

On Fri, Nov 7, 2008, at 10:11 PM, Stacy Switzer <stacy@grandarts.com> wrote:

Hi Emily,

Thanks for your thoughts! Your idea sounds exciting and I think our next step is to bring you out as we've discussed so you can get a sense of the space, the city, and the possibilities. Quickly, a few thoughts embedded in response to specific ideas-

1. I would like to make a project that acts as both an exhibition and a series of experiments in the concept of ER [see below]. This includes doing public projects alongside the gallery space and really getting these ideas out there.

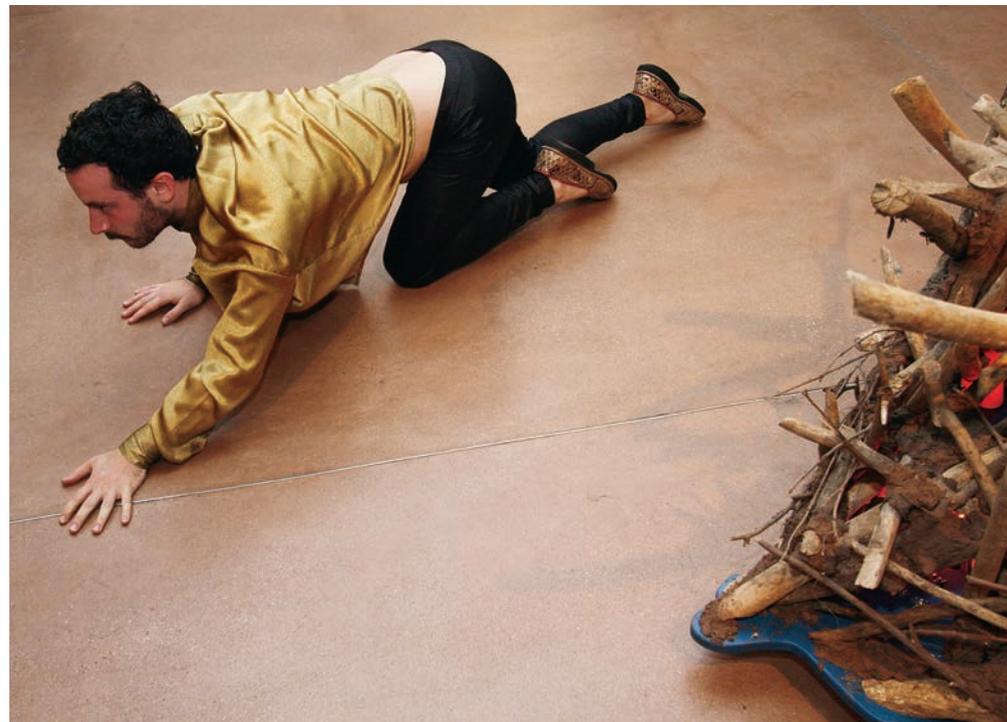
That sounds good. Could you remind me of what your timeline for the book is, and in what span you might see the show unfolding?

2. I would like to be able to commission new projects from artists. Some to be as performances during ER in Kansas City and some more open-ended for the artist to determine.

I think it would be fun to work together on this. I could see doing a mix of a couple of more involved commissions, a couple of public performances, and borrowing some pre-existing work.

3. I would like to have a film screening.

We have a nice theater called Screenland Crossroads that's within a mile of GA and has let us hold screenings for a good price. We did a screening/talk with Cameron Jaimie there, and had Laurel Nakadate's film premiere there as well. There would also be the possibility of



^ Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, documentation, *BACKSANDEDBYLUTZKINYOY*, 2009. Black and white acrylic yarn, paper, soundtrack, and live dance performance. (photo: Martin Diggs)

**[ALS] Bodies are of a paramount concern and a primary tool from which to begin a transformation. In the truest sense of ownership, the body is the only commodity.**

A.L. Steiner, excerpt from notes on *Positive Reinforcement*, 2009



^ *Ecstatic Resistance* artists' meeting in Grand Arts's loft, 2009. (photo: Emily Roysdon)

The ten artists Roysdon selected for the project's first installment knew something about the want and wait for change. They represented in their works lived experience in rejecting the status quo; in the same breath, they also produced forces of wonder. Some gave the project historical grounding (Adrian Piper, Ulrike Ottinger); others created space, in Roysdon's words, "for the impossible to thrive" (A.L. Steiner, Yael Bartana, Sharon Hayes). Jeanine Oleson and the collective My Barbarian realized new projects with Grand Arts's support, and performances by Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, Ian White, and Dean Spade and Craig Willse took place throughout the opening weekend.



Ulrike Ottinger, *Narcissistic > Hermaphrodite with Entourage*, 1981. Production photograph taken during Ottinger's *Freak Orlando* (35 mm, 126 min.); dimensions variable.

sexual difference—to go all the way back—and to cultivate the ability to think outside restrictive oppositions that affect our understanding of subjectivity, belonging and difference. New ways to think about language and the limits of representation. A New Imaginary, bring me to the place where this becomes possible.

And lastly, I want to think about the sets of strategies that create ecstatic resistance—confrontational, excessive, humorous, generous, loving, unstable, impossible things. The strategies of ecstatic resistance flow through queer and feminist political and aesthetic histories. Originating no place in particular, but showing themselves throughout time, the works I'm interested in exceed themselves in form—form as strategy. The ecstatic is taking a leap and doing something beyond logic and reason. It is an investigation into the mobilizing force of desire. Refusing claims of mastery and wholeness, ecstatic resistance develops new ways of being in the world.

This project places itself at a crux between new intellectual and aesthetic work and political activism. It addresses the shifting boundaries of individuals, citizenship and all the ramifications implied. I'm interested in the temporality of the ecstatic. What is communication in an ecstatic state? How can ecstatic boundary-shattering be articulated and mobilized—built upon? How does ecstatic resistance accumulate beyond the individual? Can we develop new ways of thinking about language and the limits of representation with a new non-biologically determined imaginary?

"The potential of this new imaginary," Roysdon writes, "is to move forward from a place that is unrestricted by patriarchal rationality and historical oppositions that serve only the man who is a man and looks like a man and wants to be a man." She also quotes Kathy Acker: "I am looking for the body, my body, which exists outside its patriarchal definitions. Of course that is not possible. But who is any longer interested in the possible?"

The show employed image, text, movement, and speech, and a component of what Roysdon calls "the telling" was asserted in each work. Her intention was to highlight a tension inherent in "communicability"—an interplay between the urgent need to share one's story and the gratification (delayed) in both sharing and being heard. Additionally, by searching to identify and push beyond presupposed limits, Ecstatic Resistance also insisted on "the centrality of plasticity"—the adaptability of our brains, bodies, and cultures to environmental change. As Roysdon tells us:

Plasticity is the subterranean quake to the caked shell of modernity. It's the cross-dressing, cell-splitting, boundary-shifting, apology-giving, friend-making mirror. Getting ready for an evening when the plasticity principle pushes up on the pleasure principle and says, "Think again. Think again. Your mind has changed as quickly as the clock."

[AF]

**[ALS] There are nuggets of wisdom embedded in such terms as visibility and invisibility. Being able to be either, one or the other, is a privileged invocation of a contextual conscription. The human, as a being, has claimed spaces for the notions, limits, and expansion of:**

- justice
- social justice
- rights
- human rights
- freedom
- political freedom
- expression
- artistic expression
- liberation
- gender liberation

**The body—the thing we all share—is our only salvation, but it has warning signs and hot lights placed all around it rendering its public-private partnership. Ecstatic Resistance helped me figure this out.\***

**\*still figuring out**

A.L. Steiner, December 2015



**"I was enjoying my second breakfast in the gallery the morning after the show opened, sat on a staircase next to a wall orgiastically covered in photographs by A.L. Steiner. Here are friends, lovers, sometimes semi-strangers in various states of expression, undress, abandon—absolutely, incontrovertibly whole, somehow, wonderfully, defiantly present without always knowing it, solid against these fleeting moments. Real sexy and full. Full of love/I love them."**

Ian White, "Ecstatic Resistance, Jingle Bells," Lux.co.uk blog, Dec. 18, 2009



A.L. Steiner, with Donnie Cervantes (pictured) > and Dane Zahorsky, installation process view, *Positive Reinforcement*, 2009. (photo: Emily Roysdon)

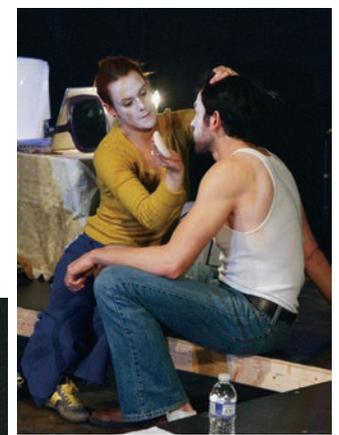


< A.L. Steiner, with Donnie Cervantes and Dane Zahorsky, details, *Positive Reinforcement*, 2009. Photo collage, three-channel digital slideshow, chicken wire, rocks, leaves, twine, grass, moss, and orchids. Soundtrack by Chicks on Speed, Cody Critchelo/Peggy Noland/Jaimie Warren, MEN, J. Ashley Miller, Motherland, Nguzunguzu, and Brock Potucek/Fortuning.



**From:** My Barbarian  
**Subject:** pls print 8 copies ...  
**Date:** November 11, 2009 11:54:03 AM CST  
**To:** Summer Farrar <summer@grandarts.com>

1. B'ROQUE  
 Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater  
 B-R-O-Q-U-E  
 Broke broke broke broke broke broke broke  
 BA-roque
2. The Five Seasons of Poor  
**Spring** -  
 it doesn't matter if you have money when you are young and healthy and gay  
**Autumn** -  
 enough to buy coffee, but you have to wear three sweaters under your blanket in your apartment at night  
**Summer** -  
 upward mobility means having a friend who has a swimming pool  
**Fall** -  
 it's all over now, they are coming, your debts will be paid, one way or another now your debts will be paid, one way or another now  
**Winter** -  
 you almost died but you stayed alive because the envelope arrived just in time



< My Barbarian, *Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater*, 2009. Documentation of performance, La Esquina, Kansas City, Missouri. (photo: Martin Diggs)



^ My Barbarian, installation view, *Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater*, 2009. Sculpture and single-channel video, dimensions variable.



My Barbarian, research image > for *Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater*, 2009. (photo: Martin Diggs)

v My Barbarian, *Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater*, 2009. Documentation of performance, La Esquina, Kansas City, Missouri. (photo: Martin Diggs)



**148**  
**From:** My Barbarian  
**Subject:** baroque theater  
**Date:** August 28, 2009  
 4:44:41 PM CDT  
**To:** aprilp@grandarts.com, Emily Roysdon

Hi April and Emily,  
 Here are some images that I have been looking at while doing my research. The idea came to us when we were in Lithuania at a theater museum and saw a large model of a baroque theater.

We want to make a [model of a] theater space for [video of] live performances, intending to create a kind of illusion of small people performing in a miniaturized space. We are interested in trompe l'oeil and forced perspective set design, as well as ornamentation, but it can still feel impermanent or unrealized, like a maquette.

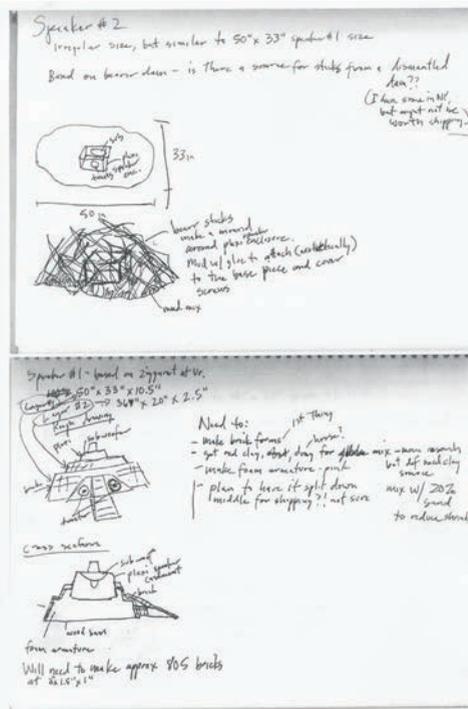
There are also some baroque gimmicks, like wind machines, dolphin fountains and magic lanterns, that would be interesting to consider incorporating, as these spectacles form part of the performance.

There should be a screen [or surface to project on] in the center of the stage, but we want to use curtains, flats, wings and a proscenium to theatricalize the space. We are going to shoot a single wide shot [in HDV] of the performance. We will need a projector, mpeg player and speakers, which should be hidden somewhere.

So here are pictures of the one we saw at the museum, as well as other models and drawings of European theater from the 17th century. I will have some drawings in a week, but in the meantime, any ideas or questions you have would be most appreciated.

Alex

My Barbarian, installation view, > *Broke People's Baroque Peoples' Theater*, 2009. Sculpture and single-channel video, dimensions variable.



Jeanine Oleson, > preliminary materials for *Building and empire and other things of no consequence ...* 2009.

**From:** Jeanine Oleson  
**Subject:** Re: components  
**Date:** Mon, August 3, 2009 7:58 pm  
**To:** Stacy Switzer <stacy@grandarts.com>  
 [more]  
**Cc:** Emily Roysdon

Hi all,  
 I just wanted to send some preliminary drawings and research ideas to let you know what I'm thinking. I hope they give you all a clear idea of what I want to do, but if not, please just ask me and I'll try to clarify.

In terms of materials, I'll need clay, sand, insul. foam sheeting, adhesive for foam, cheap scrap wood to make brick molds, maybe a cement mixer [if you have only], and then a beaver stick connection, meaning I need someone to gather sticks of varying sizes that've been chewed by beavers. Or I can too. I have had collections of them, but it seems like the junk removal guys thought they were junk in my backyard, so my collection has dwindled. Sigh. I will call you tomorrow, April, to see what you think of all this and if you have any ideas or concerns right now.

I'll email you on Wed. about speaker components with instructions of how to order them, Summer. Thanks so much for working with me, I really am excited about the opportunity!

Best,  
 Jeanine

Jeanine Oleson, installation view, *Building and empire and other things of no consequence ...* 2009. Clay, foam, plexiglass, beaver sticks, cathode lights, speaker components, audio; dimensions variable. (photo: E.G. Schempf)

**From:** Emily Roysdon  
**Subject:** Re: Sandback, ER growth and NYC  
**Date:** August 13, 2009 at 8:26:57 AM CDT  
**To:** Stacy Switzer <stacy@grandarts.com>

HELLO

I hope Jeanine sneaks her head up to the front office for a while so you can enjoy her, she is awesome, and I really hope it is going well. Jeanine has been really excited about the project and was very impressed with everyone and the help. She's been diy forever and now she's got a team of experts.

Thanks for your enthusiasm about X. I was also very excited but the date switch did throw me for a loop. I've really been thinking hard about the concept of ER, the exhibition, my own work and how it all fits together and what I want it to be/how it can grow. Working on this exhibition as the first project of ER has been awesome and I know exactly why it makes sense. Primarily so that the concept is interactive and inclusive from the beginning, not a private inspiration that later recognizes influences and legacies. And to ground it in a materiality of artists practices. And to get as many voices involved in the dialogue, to learn and then push forward.

As my year with Grand Arts nears its final months and new shows and opportunities are coming into my email box, I have been thinking about how I and it will grow and what the next steps are. I'm thinking of it as a partial philosophy, a project, a practice, a legacy, a set of strategies and an inspiration. I think the ideas will take many forms over the next year[s]. The interest the exhibition has gotten is great, and I am definitely open to traveling the show and expanding my own work around it. For X and for NY I feel like it should be a bit of both. I think I will work on the film program there [perhaps in collaboration with Light Industry] and have the idea to grow the space over time. Install some things, have new performances, maybe do some interviews, some presentations, and possibly include other works from these artists, or other artists. [...]

As always, I really look forward to hearing what you think and all your ideas.

My best,  
 Emily



[SH] Chris Marker's 1962 film *Le Joli Mai* begins with a voiceover. It is a female voice. She says:

**“This, the most beautiful city in the world. One would like to see it for the first time, at dawn, without having seen it before, without memories, without habits. One would like to track it like a detective with a telescope and a microphone.”**

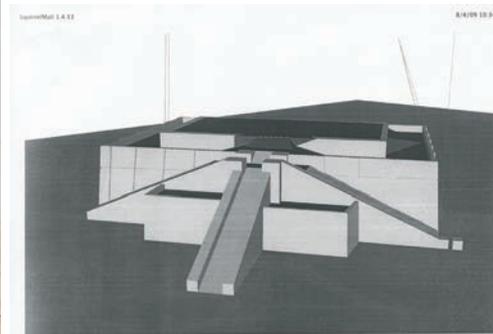
[Not yet titled] is a multiple-channel video installation that is composed of semi-autonomous video “scenes” that compose a non-linear narrative about voice, body and desire. Focusing around a central figure/character/position who moves through the piece recording sound but never speaking, [Not yet titled] attempts to tease out a relationship between politics and desire, intimacy and estrangement, and speaking and listening.

Sharon Hayes, excerpt from artist proposal to Grand Arts, 2009



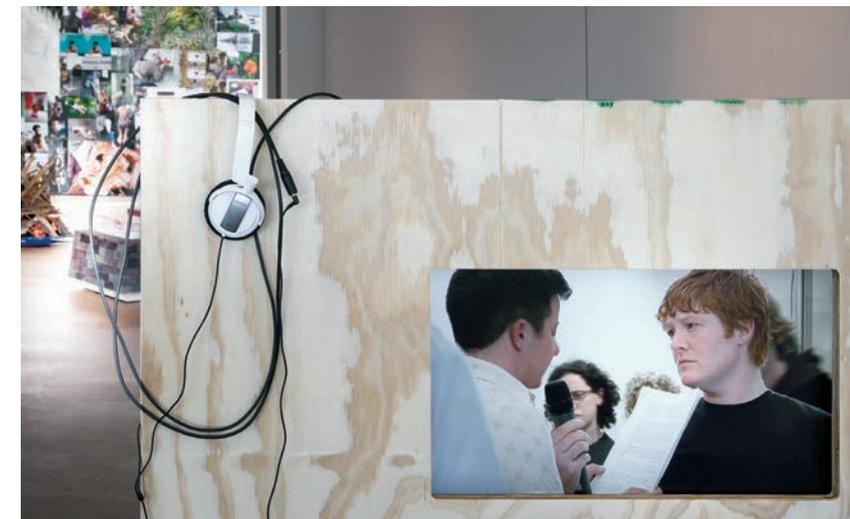
^ Sharon Hayes, installation view, *Parole: 3 of 7*, 2009. HD video, sound; dimensions variable.

< Jeanine Oleson, detail, *Building and empire and other things of no consequence ...*, 2009. Clay, foam, plexiglass, beaver sticks, cathode lights, speaker components, audio; dimensions variable. (photo: E.G. Schempf)



^ Jeanine Oleson, preliminary materials for *Building and empire and other things of no consequence ...*, 2009.

^ Sharon Hayes, detail, *Parole: 3 of 7*, 2009.



# PROVOCATIONS

Dear artists of Ecstatic Resistance,

On Saturday afternoon we have put aside some time, after Ian and Dean and Craig's performances, to have a group discussion. I would like to invite everyone to participate. I apologize for the late notice, but do take that as a sign of the tone of the meeting. I hope to keep it as a loosely structured discussion about the themes and vocabulary provoked by the exhibition. I simply didn't want the occasion of this great gathering of people to go by without a marked time to talk.

It could be good if you all have the time to read the text I put together for the brochure for the show (I will paste it below or of course grab the publication) so that we can share this as a base. As well, I propose these ideas for discussion—

–How do you understand the idea of “ecstatic resistance”?

–Do you relate to it as a strategy or practice?  
–impossible as a model of politics

–critique of representation, specifically of the vernacular of political images—what “the political” looks like to risk unrecognizability

–What is communication in an ecstatic state?

–How can ecstatic boundary shattering be articulated and mobilized—built upon?

–How does ecstatic resistance accumulate beyond the individual?

–Can we develop new ways of thinking about language and the limits of representation with a new non-biologically determined imaginary?

If you could please reply to me saying whether you will be willing to participate I would appreciate it.

I'm very excited about the show.

My best to you all,  
Emily

**[MLK] It is impossible to know what could have been running through my mind when performing this work. I almost feel like I would have to re-perform it to understand how to speak clearly about it.**

**It deals with exhaustion, the body, endurance, and the performance of pleasure.**

Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, December 2015



^ Ian White, *Democracy*, 2009. Documentation of performance with radio and powerpoint presentation, Grand Arts, Kansas City, Missouri (photo: Megan Mantia)

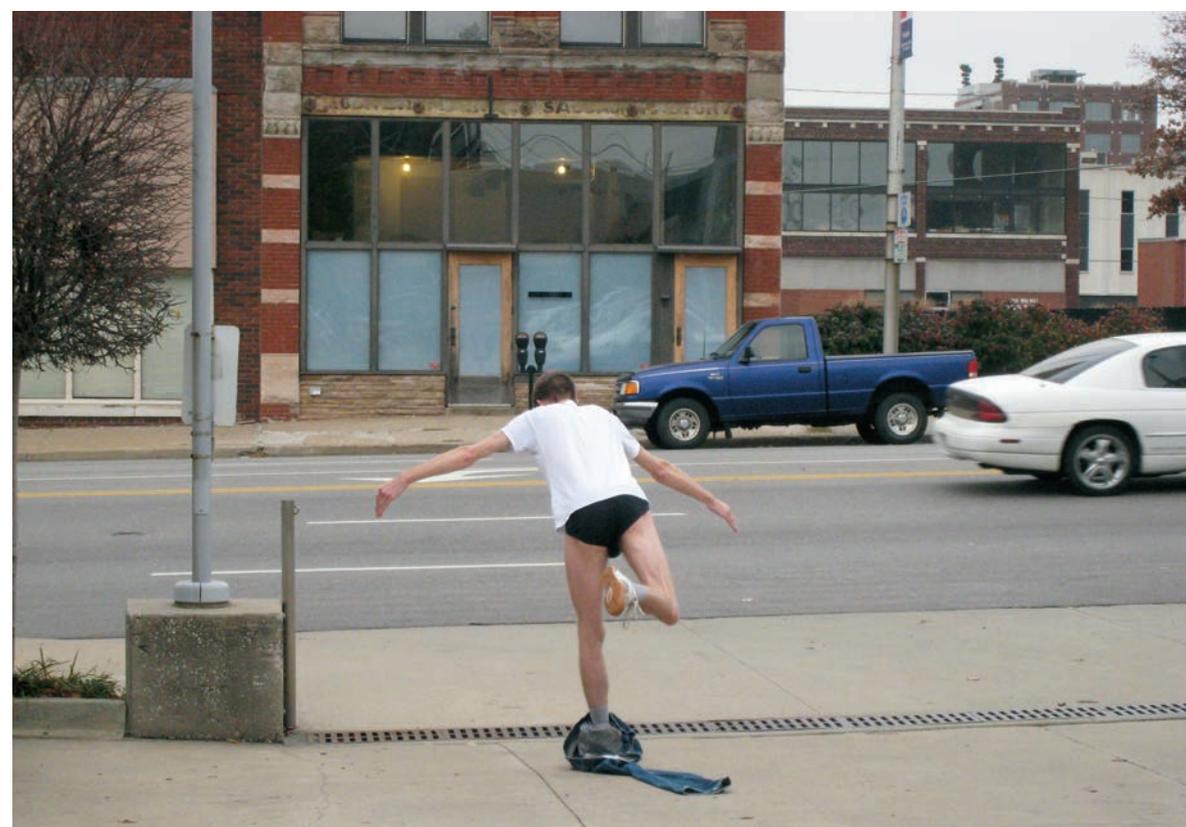
^ Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, documentation, *BACKSANDEDBY-LUTZKINOY*, 2009. Black and white acrylic yarn, paper, soundtrack, and live dance performance. (photo: Martin Diggs)



^ The audience at Grand Arts for *Democracy* and *Free State Epitaph*, Nov. 14, 2009.



< Ian White (left) and Emily Roysdon, prior to White's *Democracy* performance, 2009.



**[ER] I think the performance events and screening should be organized like a festival, packed into a long weekend. I love the energy of so many people experiencing something sustained together. I love flooding an environment with energy that lasts long after it's all over. Inspiring people, getting them excited, changing what is possible. It's the root of the exhibition as experience. I feel passionately about this, but I can be flexible if there are practical considerations or preferences on your part.**

Excerpt from early project correspondence, Emily Roysdon to Stacy Switzer, Dec. 15, 2008

# WHAT HAPPENED NEXT

A second version of *Ecstatic Resistance* opened at X Initiative, in New York, four days after the opening at Grand Arts. For that show (Nov. 21, 2009–Feb. 6, 2010), Roysdon included additional works by Rosa Barba, Juan Davila, Xylor Jane, Ulrike Muller, and Joyce Weiland, and performances by PIG/ Politically Involved Girls (Zackary Drucker, Mariana Marroquin, and Wu Ingrid Tsang) and Leah Gilliam. Reviews followed in the *New York Times*, *New Yorker*, and *Art in America*.

Roysdon's *Ecstatic Resistance* essay—used by curators Francesco Bonami and Gary Carrion-Murayari to frame the 2010 Whitney Biennial catalog essay—has been translated into German, Spanish, and Czech, and published here (an abbreviated list):

- *Abstraction*, ed. Maria Lind, Documents of Contemporary Art (London: Whitechapel Gallery and Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013)
- *Art & Queer Culture*, ed. Richard Meyer and Catherine Lord (London: Phaidon Press, 2013)
- *Reading/Feeling*, ed. Frederique Bergholtz, Tanja Baudoin, and Vivian Zihlerl (Amsterdam: If I Can't Dance Press, 2013)

An *Ecstatic Resistance* poster, with texts by Roysdon, Dean Spade and Craig Willse, and Catherine Lord, was later developed by the artist for Manifesta 8, in Murcia, Spain, and also included in these exhibitions, among others:

- *Abstract Possible*, Museo Tamayo (Mexico City), Mar. 26–Aug. 7, 2011, and Tensta Konsthall (Stockholm), Jan. 12–Apr. 22, 2012
- *Nothing Is Forgotten, Some Things Considered*, UKS (Oslo), Oct. 19–Dec. 2, 2012
- *Skeptical Thoughts on Love*, Künstlerhaus Stuttgart (Stuttgart, Germany), Feb. 14–Mar. 30, 2014

Lastly, *Ecstatic Resistance* kicked off an incredibly productive year for Roysdon. Following inclusion in the 2009 New Museum triennial, *The Generational*, she completed the NY trifecta with exhibits in the 2010 Whitney Biennial and MoMA/PS1's *Greater New York*—and celebrated both her first solo show and her first solo museum show.

### What is stateness? What is its collapse?

What part is about consent and what part is about control? Can those ever be distinguished? We know it's not about a contract. The idea of the contract just hides the conquest. These arrangements have never been agreed to, were only achieved through genocide and are only maintained through structures of violence and coercion that constantly reinvent themselves to quell and absorb resistance. But they have limits. The reach of stateness is always incomplete. There is always a crisis, a place where more stateness is being produced, where what is irregular becomes standardized, administrated, regulated. Where

the terms are offered: become regular, become legible  
**BECOME COUNTABLE OR BE ABANDONED  
killed, detained, warehoused, liquidated**

Politics is war by other means. The things we have been told about stateness. That it is the monopoly on violence. That we agree to law and order—it's not killing when they don't fix the levees, when you die without medicine in a detention center, when they close the adult daycare centers, when they eliminate the cash benefits program, when they clean up downtown. It's killing, terrorism, when you question them, when you make a website about it, when you refuse. ¶ Stateness is standardization, is redistribution, is information-gathering. It says this is one place, we move risks and benefits around it because it is one place. We keep time the same way over here as over there, use the same standard of measure, speak the same language, give nine-year-olds the same test, use the same race and gender boxes on our forms. But time must be considered. It takes time for a new standard to travel, and the resistance to it varies across spaces and populations. What makes people willing to register a birth or death with the government, willing to form their families around a monogamous two-spouse model (or to demand a "right" to do so), willing to register their guns, willing to send their kids to school, willing to match their gender to their junk, willing to smog check their car, willing to say something when they see something is different everywhere and when. Sometimes violence helps us not need to be willing. Sometimes the tv is enough. ¶ There is a lot of fear in this, fear of loss of standardization, investment in the promise that the state protects us from violence. The state acts in our interest, identifies bad guys individually to be exiled and detained, identifies threats and drains on our systems that put our way of life at risk. We need it, there is no alternative. We contracted for it to protect us. People are bad and need to be controlled. We can change things about it that we want improved, we can build it better, but we cannot live without it. If we have complaints, we ask it to recognize them, to recognize and include us, to let us into the "us" of the state. We want to be on the right side of the law, we know we belong there because we are good. We want to be free to contract with the state, to bear the rights and responsibilities it demands. Law and order. Legal equality. The promise to soothe the fear and scarcity. ¶ Property is at the center of this somewhere. Arrangements made to extract and contain.

### A freedom to accumulate or die

Nothing more or less than that, except to the extent that it maintains that. This form, this contract — its aims are extraction and exploitation. ¶ Is there room in this (yes), unclaimed space where stateness is confounded, at odds with itself, flash moments where its contours are visible and its technologies are shifting and moving. The constant innovation allows cracks of light to seep through. Something new is always being standardized, maintained, and infrastructure is always crumbling. The dismantling is sometimes barely audible. ¶ What makes the ruptures occur, the moments when people refuse stateness, decide to solve their own problems, decide the violence of standardization is not worth the promise of contracted safety? How do they muster the faith in themselves and in strangers, especially when their proposals are not for an alternative standardization? Does that ever happen? How does the hope for redistribution confront the violence of stateness once we've abandoned a belief in private freedoms? What comes after? **Dean Spade**

### The time has come to think about the end of time

There is a kind of pleasure in imagining the end of the world, the destruction of everything. Picturing all that you know and love disappearing. Except, of course, yourself. It is a sort of selfish individualism to imagine the world's end. In these dreams, you the dreamer alone survive to endure the agony of the world's end. You alone know of the end. And finally, because everything is done, you can know everything. And so it feels strangely good to imagine the death of everybody and everything, a dream of the end that in the end is

a fantasy of total mastery and control  
**followed by something so much better**

The end of time to think has come. ¶ Manuel De Landa speculates that future robot historians may write very different accounts of the world than what has been written thus far by human historians. De Landa himself writes, "The robot historian of course would hardly be bothered by the fact that it was a human who put the first motor together: for the role of humans would be seen as little more than that of industrious insects pollinating an independent species of machine-flowers that simply did not possess its own reproductive organs during a segment of its evolution.... In a similar way, Napoleon's armies could be viewed as a 'motor' running on a reservoir of populations and nationalist feelings." ¶ Perhaps it is time to re-think the world in terms of its industrious insects and the activities of machine-flowers. And in so doing think history and its end in some other way. Like De Landa asks of the future robot historian, I want to ask what utopia might look like not against a dystopic view of the mess we're presently in, but from the view of that utopia itself. What might utopias make of the history that came before? ¶ And what if the end of human history as thus far lived meant that the surplus of nationalist feelings was exhausted? Would war stop running? Is such an end so much to fear? ¶ In a critique of left critics of the war on terror, Andrea Smith suggests that a danger of the Bush regime is its accidental validation of "normal" state politics. "That is, when we critique a contemporary context through an appeal to a prior state before 'the fall', we are necessarily masking power relations through the evocation of lost origins. In even radical critiques of Bush's war on terror, the U.S. Constitution serves as an origin story—it is the prior condition of 'democracy' preceding our fall into Bush's 'lawlessness.' The Constitution's status as an origin story then masks the genocide of indigenous peoples that is its foundation." And so this is another way we might keep ourselves from imagining the end, returning foolishly to the beginning with the belief that it was the right place to start, and is the place to which we should seek a return. ¶ The time has come to dislodge utopic visions from dystopic fears and to free political imagination from the state form. We must be cautious of too much celebration when the state surprises us, or spares us, else we be lulled into thinking that stateness is a valid project, that democracy is a matter of stateness, and that legality has something to do with justice. ¶ The time has come to think about the end of time. The end of time to think has come. If the end is near, it nonetheless is never near enough. How much closer might we draw it? **Craig Willse**

< Dean Spade and Craig Willse, *Free State Epitaph* (broadside), 2009. Inkjet on paper.



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