



*XOXO: Performance,
Love, Affection*

August 9 - September 20, 2024

Featuring artists David Mramor, Genevieve Waller, MG Bernard, Natalie Sharp, Steven Frost, Su Kaiden Cho, Kalyn Heffernan, & Venus Cruz.

Curated by Genevieve Waller & MG Bernard

EAST WINDOW 

Curatorial statement

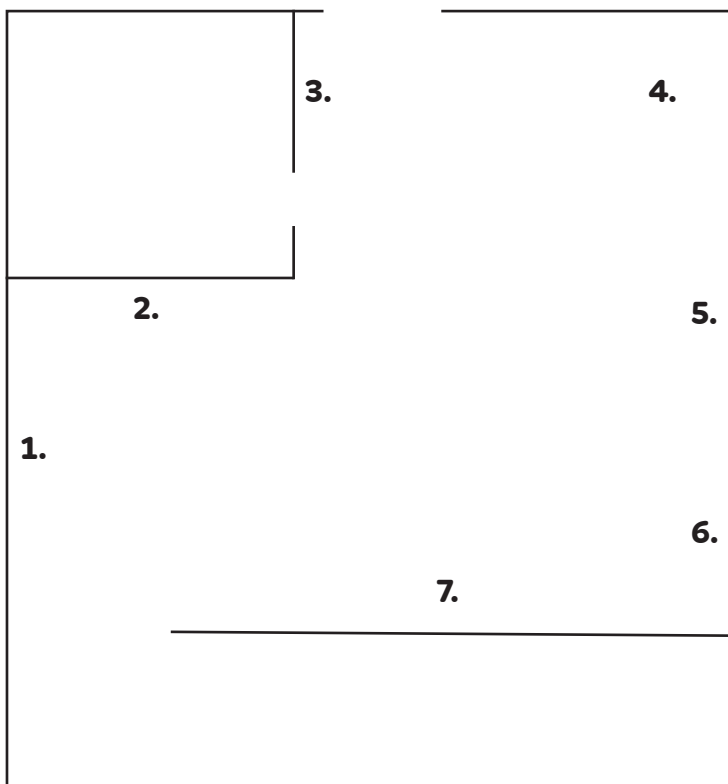
As the Trinidadian-German singer Haddaway asks in his hit dance single, "What Is Love?," artist-curators Genevieve Waller & MG Bernard complicate what is "right" and what is "wrong" about love via an exhibition of eight artists titled *XOXO: Performance, Love, Affection*. They posit that love is a journey of radical self-actualization and argue that the medium of performance art is uniquely suited to speak love to power.

Through the intentional artifice of performance, the artists in this exhibition reveal their greatest truths. They turn the tables on constructs of ableism, gender, organized religion, & sexuality while expressing what it means to be yourself & radically love yourself as an individual within the context of the United States. *XOXO* is a love letter to the artists, viewers, & all humans who want to be embraced as their most revolutionary & celebratory selves, & are embraced for who they are outside of normative hierarchies.

Further reading

bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (1999)
Sonya Renee Taylor, *The Body is Not an Apology* (2018)
Robert McRuer, *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (2006)
Michelle Handelman, *BloodSisters: Leather, Dykes, and SadoMasochism* (1995)
Amelia Jones, *Body Art: Performing the Subject* (1998)
Bob Flanagan and Sheree Rose, *The Pain Journal* (2000)
Alison Kafer, *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (2013)

Gallery guide



1. David Mramor (he/him)

Gay Green, 2021

Video documentation of performance staged at How! Happening
(Footage courtesy of How! Happening)

Originally presented by White Columns at How! Happening, in 2021, *Gay Green* is a performance featuring Enid Ellen, artist David Mramor's ongoing persona and musical project. Enid was born out of private performances from Mramor's childhood, which first took place in their mother's closet, eventually with her as their audience. Following his mother's death, Mramor continued performing drag often with the makeup and clothing she left behind, discovering a way to recreate the freeing and compassionate space that his mother provided in his youth. The performance pays homage to cinema, fashion, nature, and gay icons, with nostalgic nods to Mramor's personal history and the history of drag. The artist incorporated props/sculptures as well as costumes, live singing, and a new video projection for the performance.

2. Su Kaiden Cho (he/him)

The Other Side of Things (Chair), 2021

Thermo PETG Plastic

30" x 23" x 22"

Self Manifesto, 2022

Short film, 2:48 (loop)

The *Other Side of Things* is an experience that evokes both fear and fascination, awe and attraction, leaving one feeling overwhelmed yet inspired. There are certain intrinsic aspects of ourselves that we cannot alter, including the disorientation and strain we endure while seeking our own identity and reflecting on the foundations that have shaped us. This hollowed chair represents the journey of rebirth through reconciling our true selves with our masked selves. It invites us to explore the phenomenon of concealing our true nature and serves as a guide to help us navigate away from a path of confusion and loss.

In [his] short film *Self Manifesto*, [Su Kaiden Cho] reads out [his] manifesto to create a sense of clarity and introspection. The underwater setting symbolizes the personal and intimate nature of our manifestos, emphasizing that these truths are often kept deep within ourselves. This piece highlights the importance of embracing our individual identities and the ongoing struggle to reconcile our internal beliefs with external perceptions.

3. Venus Cruz (she/her)

The Accident, 2024

Music video, 1:39

From jazz to soul, hip hop to Afro-Latin, Denver-based vocalist Venus Cruz has opened for artists such as Black Thought of The Roots, Meshell Ndegeocello, Saul Williams, Zap Mama, Al Green, Guru, Vieux Farka Toure, Tinariwen, Big Freedia, GoGo Penguin, Corey Henry and Marc De Clive Lowe, to name a few.

In 2019, Venus played the part of freedom fighter "Lola Devine" in the futuristic multimedia project, "The Five Pointers," created by artist Thomas "Detour" Evans for Red Bull Music. Venus has won several Westword Magazine music awards and was a 14-year host of the popular radio show "Jazz Odyssey" on 89.3 KUVU, where she enjoyed interviewing music luminaries such as Taylor McFerrin, Derrick Hodge, Dave King (The Bad Plus), Dennis Ham (Thundercat) and many others.

Currently, Cruz performs and hosts "Madd Titties," an all improvisational band that also welcomes other musicians to jam and explore within a variety of genres.

4. Steven Frost (they/them)

Helen and Alice Have a Grandchild, 2024

Performance: 5 min

Dress: Plastic webbing, landscape fabric, 70x20x20

Shoes: Fake plastic flowers, Size 12 Go-Go Boots

Frost was inspired by a collection of photos featuring their Great Aunt Helen and her partner of over 40 years, Alice. In each photo, one can be seen alone in their suburban Massachusetts home, looking at the other through the camera's lens but never standing together. A pair of ordinary lawn chairs always appears in these photos, which Frost interprets as a stand-in for them. Using this lawn chair material, Frost constructs a 60s-style dress that fits them perfectly. Wearing the dress and a pair of fake flower-adorned go-go boots, Frost's performance imagines they are the grandchild of Helen and Alice while telling the story of their life together with humor and adoration. This performance moves Helen and Alice's partnership from the margins of history into a conversation about people who defied the conventions of their time.

Images of the Artist by Ash Stafford, 2024

Image of Chair and Garden by Helen Smith, 1967

5. Kalyn Heffernan (she/he/they)

Duchess Doo Wop, 2022

Music video, 2:40

Written for Phamaly Theatre Co.'s original production of *Alice in Wonderland* (2021), Wheelchair Sports Camp went all the way down the rabbit hole until they stumbled deep into the Duchess's frazzled Doo Wop. What seems like a pleasant time for supper, dissolves into an unraveling and riveting display of "keeping it together."

Filmed by Sam Grabowska, PhD

Edited by Juli Williams

Directed by Kalyn Heffernan

Co-Direction by Charlie McCain

All Hands Man - Lily Farias Torres

Hair/Makeup - Michelle Rocqet and Abi McGaha Miller

Set overlay - Moe Gram

Filmed at Redline Denver, 2022

Funded by Colorado Creative Industries

Vocals, piano - Michelle Rocqet

Trumpet, snaps vocals - Wesley Watkins

Sax - Abi McGaha Miller

Drums - Gregg Ziemba

Organ - Felix Ayodele

Vocals, plates - Kalyn Heffernan

Mixed by J.P. Bendzinski

Mastered, drums recorded by Tyler Lindgren

Artwork by Julio Alejandro

Partially recorded at Youth On Record

Vocal Engineers - Michelle Rocqet and Kalyn Heffernan

6. Natalie Sharp (she/they/any)

Scritta, 2024

Garment: found scritta paper, craft glue, nylon thread

Pole: PVC pipe, chrome spray paint

Shoes: Holier Than Thou by Hella Heels

Performance and music mixing by Natalie Sharp

On December 15, 2007, shortly after their 15th birthday, Natalie was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Six years later, Natalie was "disfellowshipped," the Witness term for excommunication and group ostracization, for having premarital sex. The stated purpose of disfellowshipping is to "bring [the sinner] to [their] senses," often with encouragement to follow the apostle Paul's example of "pummel[ing their] body and lead[ing] it as a slave." However, after a year spent in isolation while trying to display sufficient repentance, Natalie realized that she could not both be a Witness and genuinely adhere to her own values of self-determination, compassion, and curiosity. Thus, they made the painful decision to leave the religion.

Scritta emerges from a decade of the artist's reflections on accepting her body and its needs and desires, asking the question of what happens when the body makes itself undeniable despite the indoctrination's constraints. For Natalie, her sweat is an enduring symbol of her ungovernable body, having drawn comment from their family, classmates, co-congregants, and lovers. Sweat is deeply connected to desire, exertion, feminine transgression, and performance anxiety, the same forces that shaped so much of Natalie's experience as a Witness. The scritta paper dress is modeled after Natalie's baptism dress and constructed from the pages of the Bible they grew up studying, the 1985 edition of the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. For this piece, Natalie specifically utilizes passages from Bible readings that they completed during the year that they were disfellowshipped.

7. MG Bernard (she/her) and Genevieve Waller (she/her)

Black Mass Blood Ritual, 2023-2024

Performance ephemera and site-specific installation

First performed in October 2023, *Black Mass Blood Ritual* is an occult reimagining of a Catholic mass through the lenses of chronic illness, BDSM culture, and non-normative bodily desire. The Dark Manner—Genevieve’s sentimental leatherman drag persona—interacts with MG as a disabled individual who needs care but also orchestrates her own care. He facilitates a ceremony that entails preparing MG’s body for worship, involving the audience in a faux eucharist, and prompting the audience to interact with MG as a religious icon. The work combines visual art, theater, and crip and queer theories, and it looks critically at religious institutions and the medical industrial complex.

**Special thanks to Todd
Herman for his tremendous
amount of supprt and
Kiko Juelle for his Spanish
translations.**



EAST WINDOW
4550 Broadway Suite
C-3B2, Boulder, CO