

VIDEOSCREENING

FAT PIG

February 11th, 2015, 7pm
Defibrillator Gallery Chicago (US)

Perceiving yourself in your body and on pictures often is ambivalent, in a powerful journey the performer Eileen Rosensteel talks about studying hundreds of photographs of her fat naked self. In Herrick's work we will be introduced to a whole new species "THE OBEAST" – in an anthropological and hilarious manner the artist turns the whole topic of obesity upside down. – Julischka Stengele, a performance artist, faces the audience with a simple experiment: Fitting into "normal"-sized clothes. – What does it mean to be skinny asks the poetry slammer Aisha Oxley who opens the topic of bodies from the other side. The video artist Frederic Moffet shows us the perspective of a body fetish, especially big male bellies, while the artist Maria Raquel Cochez who underwent weight-loss surgery shares a vulnerable view on her own belly in connection with the unjudging playfulness of her child.

curated by Veronika Merklein



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BIO Eileen Rosensteel is a bodacious Bohemian committed to embodying sacredness. Her portfolio includes a show about circus fat ladies, dancing in a non-normative body and poetry about what it's like being a fat woman in today's society.

STATEMENT ON BODY-DIVERSITY The fat acceptance movement has taught me that I don't have to wait until I'm skinny to live my life. My art is a way to express my joy in my body. I create art that works to remove the shame we have around our bodies.

My wish for the movement is that we learn to listen to each other and make room for the voices of everyone not just the mid-range large, athletic, hetero, and white people.

BIO Rachel Herrick is a multi-media artist best known for her detailed Museum for Obeast Conservation Studies (MOCS) installations, which have been exhibited throughout the US as well as in Ireland and Canada. MOCS has also been the subject of activist and academic writing in the US, Canada, England, and Australia.

STATEMENT ON BODY-DIVERSITY The Museum for Obeast Conservation Studies (MOCS) stems from exasperation with the identity I felt was being culturally ascribed to me as a fat woman. (...) At a genesis moment for the project, I remember thinking, "Ok, fine. I'll be fat just the way the world thinks I am. I'll live the stereotype." - To embrace the culturally endorsed version of fat personhood I decided first to sew myself muumuus to wear. (...) The task of autodidactical sewing drew out, leaving me with long stretches of time to let my mind wander. I thought about how new food labeling legislation was trying to save us fatties from ourselves, and about how the headless shots of fat people on the evening news were dehumanizing and darkly hilarious. I began to think of myself (and all fat people) as a kind of wild animal—a creature that lived outside human culture but was of concern to humans. Thus the North American Obeast was born. - The Museum for Obeast Conservation Studies (MOCS) project is part catharsis, part confession, part accusation, and part shaggy dog joke. I have been asked repeatedly who I am satirizing with this work, and the answer is all of us. I am taking the mickey out of those who treat obesity as a source of fear and anxiety, those who tap into fear and anxiety in order to sell ads and fads, those who don't think critically about what the media tells them, those who diet obsessively but long for dessert, those who fail to recognize fat people as a stigmatized group, those who do not understand the complexity of weight gain and fatness, (...) those who buy into unrealistic standards of beauty, and those who are too ashamed and self-critical to demand to be treated as fully human.

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BIO My name is Julischka Stengele and my transdisciplinary work is mainly situated between the creation, organisation and communication of arts and culture and activist practices. My education includes training as a chef, studies of visual communication, photography, performance, action and live art, cultural theory with a focus on queer- and gender studies, as well as a good chunk of non-academic and self-educational training in arts and socio-politics in Germany, Austria, Finland and elsewhere. Currently, I live in Vienna and work at any place of interest.

STATEMENT ON BODY-DIVERSITY I have inhabited a fat body, ever since. In performance, one of the main materials used is the performer's body. Sometimes I did a piece that specifically dealt with fatness and body norms and sometimes I didn't. If I did, people (let's be specific: people with non-fat bodies) would sometimes criticise me for it being self-referential, 'not enough' or not of relevance (for others than me). But even if I didn't do a piece about it, people read anything immediately and exclusively in relation to my fatness. To me, that speaks more for the spectator's superficiality, desires of othering, internalised fatphobia and their inability to reach beyond.

Until today, putting a fat body on display is a radical act (in the context I am in). Display meaning here: the street, the swimming hall, the arts, the academia. Learning about the fat-acceptance and body-positivity movement, my arguments have grown stronger and more precise and my voice has been strengthened, amplified and accompanied by others. That, of course, also influenced my work. And today, some of people who used to criticise me for taking on this topic have turned to me with appreciation and thankfulness.

BIO Aisha Oxley is a spoken word poet from New Jersey, best known for her poem, "Skinny." In 2014, she was awarded third place at the College Unions Poetry Slam Invitational along with her team from Princeton University. She is a junior majoring in history with a certificate in visual arts. Her works, both poetic and visual, explore the themes of race, intersectionality, and body image.

STATEMENT ON BODY-DIVERSITY Growing up, I was always the skinniest kid. Even now, I don't usually find people smaller than me. My size has always been a mark - usually not a flattering one. In a way, I felt I owed it to myself to reclaim my size and find beauty in what had been a source of trauma for me. And what I've found from the popularity of „Skinny“ is that what I thought would simply be an act of catharsis for myself, has the power to recognize a community of people suffering from the same trauma - a community that is often overlooked in discussions of body image. I plan to continue calling attention to the problem of skinny-shaming, because as much as it's a process of healing for me, it's an endeavor that I find incredibly necessary for young girls, and boys, struggling to find self-love.

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BIO Frédéric Moffet is a media artist, educator, video editor, cultural worker and cat lover. He lives between Montreal and Chicago. His work explores the slippery territory between history, lived experience and fantasy. Some of his projects include: “Adresse Permanente”, “The Faithful”, “POSTFACE”, “Jean Genet in Chicago”, “Hard Fat” and the upcoming “The Magic Hedge”.

STATEMENT ABOUT BODY-DIVERSITY *From: Trans-Fat: Gainer culture and performing queer becomings in „Hard Fat“. First question of an interview with Liz Rosenfeld:*

LR: What ignited your initial interest in gainer culture? Did you obtain a new perspective on your own body image through interviewing self-identified gainers, and through the process of making this film?

FM: I have always been very preoccupied with (read: disliked) my body. Since being a kid I always thought I was awkward, that I move strangely and most of all, I was way too thin, weak and not masculine enough. I guess opposites attract, I have always been into strong, solid and somewhat chubby guys. So when I discovered this online community, I became totally obsessed with them. First of all I thought it was amazing to have men talking (writing) about their bodies, which is pretty rare compared to women. I also thought that it was electrifying to see people completely go against the system, and value fat as beauty; which is contrary to everything in most fashion/health magazines. It was also amazing to finally see media images of men that I thought were sexy (...)

BIO Maria Raquel Cochez was born in Panama. She has had several solo shows and numerous group exhibits internationally. She represented Panama in the Central American Visual Arts Biennial in 2010 and 2013 and has received several grants and awards including the 2012 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant.

STATEMENT ON BODY-DIVERSITY Beauty is a lot more encompassing than we are raised to believe. We can spend a life time struggling with the belief that beauty is a very exclusive characteristic of an elite few based solely on a short list of physical attributes. I arrived at body acceptance through a set of questions posed to my audience through a public processing of the issues inevitably projected in autobiographical and self referential art pieces. I then understood that my discriminating, judgemental, and narrow-minded beliefs of the body could simply be modified. Only then was I able to put things in perspective and find relief and a freeing indifference toward the physical self.