

March 8 2021 - April 21, 2021

OOPS! POW! SURPRISE!

Erin Peisart



DEPS Artist Profile

Glass Curtain Gallery – Columbia College Chicago
1104 S Wabash Ave, 1st Floor, Chicago, IL 60605

Gallery Hours: Monday–Friday, 9 a.m.–5 p.m.

Capacity of gallery is 10 visitors, and masks are required.

OOPS! POW! SURPRISE!

An exhibition by Cristal Sabbagh

OOPS! POW! SURPRISE! Takes a deep look at Cristal Sabbagh's interdisciplinary practice that includes traditional portraiture, ceramics, and performance. While movement is the spine of her practice and the core that all her other work emanates from, intentional spontaneity, reverence, and bliss are threads woven throughout.

Sabbagh's performance practice, rooted in improvisation and Butoh, walks a line between the everyday, the divine, the personal, and the political. In embodying in her art transformational memories while simultaneously celebrating pop culture and the experimental, she challenges power structures and awakens viewers' senses.

Working both in a solo capacity and with collaborators, Sabbagh is equally attuned to individual perspectives and collective structures. As with Sabbagh's previous projects, *OOPS! POW! SURPRISE!* will also incorporate collaborative work. Her collaborators include **Erin Peisert, Scott Rubin, Keisha Janae, Ramah Malebranche,** and **Sara Zalek.** In various configurations, these collaborators have regularly engaged in improvised performances, opening up new avenues for Sabbagh's material and conceptual exploration.

Although her work is defined in movement, her practice also looks outward to portraits of the world around, taking the forms of traditionally drawn portraits, figurative ceramic sculptures, and nontraditional portraits on ceramic mugs. Sabbagh labors over each piece, that act as homage and memorials and are a resistance to white-supremacy. Her traditional portraits include images of Black Trans lives that have been taken or disrupted. And her nontraditional portraits take the form of Black creatives lovingly emblazoned on ceramic mugs intended to be shared by friends and family. Not only do these works infuse the user's everyday coffee and tea rituals, but their ceramic forms will stand the test of time, potentially outliving the user by thousands of years and leaving traces of how we lived, recorded by Sabbagh's hand.

Erin Peisart

Erin Peisert's work considers mortality, consciousness, power, and nationality by activating endurance and fatigue within her own body. Material aspects include organic transformations of growth and decay that aim to elicit a sense of time-sensitive and place-based corporeal awareness. She also performatively disrupts social spaces with intent to question dominant narratives and to elicit a sense of collective biography.

Erin Peisert is an interdisciplinary artist working with performance, installation, video and sound. Her performance work has been on view at Duo Museum of Modern Art, Power Station of Art, Ying Art Center, and Basement 6 all in China as well as Defibrillator and Out of Site in Chicago, and Inverse Performance Art Festival in Arkansas, among others. After repatriating from China to the US, she received her MFA from School of Visual Arts in New York City.

rincolleen.com

[Instagram](#)



Fact or Condition w/ Amy Whitaker, 2020

Performance

Video shot by Liina Raud





Having a World, 2020
Performance (video clip)
Video shot by Anthony D.



J7107904, 2019
Performance
Photo by Jared Mimm



Public Safety, 2020
Performance (video clip)



USA Marriage, 2017
Photo of performance
Photo by Geoff Broz



Dresser and Thread, 2021
Photo of performance
Photo by Myra Rodriguez

Interview with Erin Peisart

Conducted by Kaylee Fowler

Kaylee Fowler: How did you get started performing, and where do you draw inspiration from?

Erin Peisart: I started as a visual artist working in painting and drawing. I enjoyed making object-oriented art for a long time, but the part of me that thrives on communication grew increasingly unsatisfied with making artwork that existed outside of myself. I craved an art that engaged a live dialogue between artist and observer. I began to demand that my work initiate a reciprocal energy exchange in real time. I studied theater and butoh to expand my creative vocabulary and to learn how to use my body as active artistic material. Learning butoh deepened my awareness and demanded deliberate intention in every moment. It changed my approach to performance and permeated my consciousness indelibly. Fluxus, the Viennese Actionists, and Art Interventionists were also essential influences. Their radical, unconventional, and fearless approach drew me to them, and as an artist I have always aimed to embody these qualities.

KF: Why is endurance and fatigue something you find important to

your work, and how do you maintain a healthy practice with such elements as a part of it?

EP: Endurance and fatigue highlight the absurdity of life. They bring forth our basic components: consciousness and matter. I wonder how and why we can continue doing anything and I explore this in my work. I mine for reasons why consciousness endures when material signs point to futility. I consider how to frame a human experience, to find meaning and within the context of a performative action, either carry on or not. In this way I consider mortality and death, without morbid reflection, as facts of life.

My goal in every performance is for my actions to end of their own accord either by exhaustion or by external intervention. Something could eventually wear down or experience an unexpected force, but I rarely choreograph an end. I want the performance to finish spontaneously and naturally, like death. Endurance can cause suffering. I'm interested in embracing suffering as an unavoidable truth rather than disallowing it. I think about elevating suffering in my work in an attempt to transcend it on a path to higher consciousness.

Interview with Erin Peisart

Continued

KF: How does a performance differ when it is in public versus a select audience for you, and does the intent of a performance differ depending on the space?

EP: Space and place are so important in performance. They define context, imply intent, and inform relationships between artist and observer/participant. When working with a select audience in a theater for example, a degree of disbelief suspension is usually required. There are time limits and designated spaces for a play. In a traditional setting, a hierarchical relationship is implied between audience and viewer which constitutes their behavior. The audience behaves uniformly and according to a certain social standard. When working in a public space, the expectations that we have in a theater are lifted. If we assume that the action unfolding before us is done in earnest and without the pretense of rehearsal, we become freer to engage. My public work deliberately embraces elements of chance that the specific environment offers. Passersby may interact with the work in unexpected ways and derive new meanings. My site-responsive approach takes into consideration

various factors: the history of a given place, its inhabitants, current events, local social struggles, layout of a building, and all of the objects therein. These are the parameters that I use to draw contextual information, and to guide my action.

KF: You've done a lot of work in China. What brought you to start working there, and do performances there have a different feel or intention than the work you do in the United States?

EP: I lived in Shanghai for several years. One difference is censorship. Being politically mindful of my words and actions was an adjustment for me both personally and artistically. I also became hyperaware of my nationality when performing in public. Context is everything in performance art so all the weight and implications that come with holding an American passport in China imbued meaning into all of my artistic actions. That aspect was very different from my previous work in the US. Now that I'm in the US again and making work as an American here, nationality carries different meaning. Going forward in my creative practice, I will continue to acknowledge that significant component.

Interview with Erin Peisart

Continued

KF: Your relationship to the material and object work in your performances is very intentional and infused with its own meaning. How did you develop this relationship with the material aspect of your practice, and do you have a favored object or symbol you like to work with?

EP: I lean toward materials that transform over time. Rotting, melting, evaporating, decomposing, growing, accumulating, enlarging, or allowing gravity to force movement are all qualities that I look for when selecting material. A process of change draws attention to the element of time and highlights the reality of times passing. This is an acknowledgment of our shared mortality and the absurdity of consciousness inhabiting these decomposable bodies. My vessel is composed of the same decaying organic matter as everything else. Working with earthen material centers me in that perspective.

KF: Where do you see your practice developing in the future?

EP: Recently, I've begun to work on a slightly larger scale by incorporating video, text, sound, performance, installation, found object, sculpture, drawing, and site-specific action into a sort of Gesamtkunstwerk. Earlier this year, I worked with an ensemble of sound makers and action artists; aiming toward the creation of an immersive experience. Work at this scale offered deep sensory engagement and made me wonder what else is possible.

In the future, I would like to investigate the potential for entering a new reality by continuing to develop immersive, site-specific, and improvisational environments. If we consider reality from this perspective, would it also be possible to question dominant narratives and to imagine a large-scale alternative to our present reality?

Through place-based performance, is it possible to confront deep rooted societal issues and investigate how we can address them? Can an immersive experience facilitate a new way of perceiving? Of being?

The DEPS Artist Profile Series

The DEPS Artist Profile Series, presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Exhibitions, Performance, and Student Spaces (DEPS), is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the DEPS Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the DEPS Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with and support the arts community.

The DEPS Artist Profile Series is managed by Fine Arts major and DEPS Exhibitions Assistant Kaylee Fowler. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at colum.edu/Pow

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