

Culture-Lab 2018, research and development proposal:

With the support provided by this residency I will be beginning a process of interdisciplinary research into the Ecstatic as a physical, phenomenological and socio-corporeal field of experience. This initial research will contribute towards the realisation of a body of text and a new series of performance works, which I aim to complete by the end of 2019. I'm defining the Ecstatic in this case as an induced somatic state which is shattering in its intensity- where the perceived boundaries of the discreet ego-self are momentarily obliterated, a state in which, it could be proposed, a radical re-inscription of the self is possible.

I am situating this research in the terrain of my subjective experience, and from there drawing in broader research into culturally specific technologies/choreographies of ecstasy, their history and evolution, their points of intersection with structures of social power and processes of political change. The research will draw largely on my own long involvement and investment in what I would define as "ecstatic" subcultures and socio-corporeal practices, all of which have progressively affected profound shifts in my selfhood as a socially "aberrant" body (queer, mixed-race, gender-dysphoric, chronically sick and neurodivergent), not to mention informed my practice as a body-based performance artist. I am also coming to these practices also as an Aboriginal person who utilises them as a potential means of messily and intuitively recouperating ceremonial healing technologies that have been broken, discontinued or made-occult by the process of colonisation. I am interested in how ecstatic states, practices and histories might sit within a broader political interrogation: how might these practices be positioned as modes of resistance to dominant social and political forces which exert themselves upon the body? how might ecstatic states be positioned as responses to neo-liberalism? to colonialism? to fascism? How might the Ecstatic, conversely, be absorbed into those regimes and utilised a mode of social control? What paradoxes are presented by the Ecstatic if we examine it via the intersection of the corporeal, metaphysical, and social?

I will be investigating this area from a range of angles, all of them grounded predominantly in my experience of various practices that might be defined as ecstatic or potentially inductive of ecstatic states, or which utilise ecstatic states as a means to a different end. These include, the following (in loose/overlapping categories):

- **Acetic and Magical:** Vipassana meditation, chaos magick, ritual spell-work, fasting, breath-work.
- **Physical discipline, pain and endurance:** Weightlifting, Hatha Yoga, Butoh, BDSM (heavy impact play, blood play), ritual mortifications (branding, piercing, tattooing, razor-play).
- **Neurochemical and neurological:** micro- and macro-dosing of psychoactive substances and entheogens, both recreationally and ritualistically; also the spontaneous ecstasies of dissociative, manic or psychotic states.
- **Social and subcultural:** a decade of life in Berlin's electronic music scene, and prior to that, a late adolescence in Sydney's LGBTQ club scene of the late 1990's, and prior to that, in goth, industrial, punk and metal subcultures.

Critically and artistically, I am exploring the tensions and potentials that exist within the Ecstatic if we situate it as a queer feminist praxis of re-embodiment. I am interested in exploring how practices of which induce ecstatic states- be it through hedonic excess, ascetic discipline, physical endurance- might be framed as politically urgent responses to an embodied crisis-of-being, to fulfil the compulsion, as Mary Fallon described it "*to slip from our bodies/as soap slips from wet hands*".

The political symbiosis of queer subjectivities and spaces of hedonic excess is of course a terrain of well established critique. I will be drawing on this existing body of social theory, whilst also also seeking to synthesise with other discursive and exploratory modes which centralise the body and

its perceptions, as well as prioritising cultural knowledge structures that exist outside of the western academe.

While the basis of the project thus far has been solitary and self-directed, it is my intention with my CultureLab residency to extend my methodology to a more responsive model. My self-directed research path will be intercepted, informed and agitated by a group of nominated interlocutors. I have identified a group of individuals, whose work and personhood I admire and connect with, whom I feel could make unique and thoughtful contributions to this research in the form of critical and creative provocations. This group of people originate from a wide field of intersecting artistic, critical, physical and spiritual disciplines and knowledge systems. They include artists, musicians, writers, historians, DJ's, religious monastics, BDSM practitioners, Tantric yogis, athletes, occultists, net artists and former cult members. All are able to offer a unique perspective on the research area which will serve to advance, augment and problematise my own research.

With their permission, the contributions of each interlocutor will be documented along with my responses will be archived via an online platform.