



LOS ANGELES CONTEMPORARY EXHIBITIONS  
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# QUITTED

## ***A curatorial statement that is, in part, a love letter to LACE***

As a teenager in mid-'80s Los Angeles, Ron Athey, Luis Alfaro, and Vaginal Davis were but some of the artists who schooled me in what it meant to use the body – their bodies – to investigate a matrix of race, sex, power, community, activism, sexuality and desire through performance art. Many of the spaces where I first saw these artists are long gone: The Onyx Café, Club Fuck!, Glaxa Theater, Troy Café and countless alternative, temporary spaces in and around Downtown Los Angeles when Downtown was a vastly different landscape.

LACE isn't only one of the few venues from that era that has survived but a vital creative force in Los Angeles, offering a space in which to present work deemed difficult or transgressive by many other established arts institutions. LACE has always occupied an awkward space – not really a gallery, not really a museum -- and perhaps it's this awkwardness that has kept it alive, flexible to change and adapt more quickly than a larger institution. Some of my first memories of seeing live arts in Los Angeles happened at LACE on Industrial Street. I'll never forget Nina Hagen prancing around the outside patio of LACE performing intergalactic opera or feeling the spray of warm sparks blanket my face during a Babyland set when Michael Smith applied rotary saw to oil barrel. LACE exposed me to Tom of Finland for the first time (my fingers just typed "fist" initially and I'm sure it wasn't an accident). When LACE asked me to curate their annual benefit exhibition, I was flattered to have been invited by a place that played an informal role in my arts education.

Performance art, a practice defiant of a clean and easy definition, makes people anxious in ways that more traditional forms of theater do not. For me, performance art continues to be one of the most compelling and powerful forms of art practice. Ephemeral by nature, part of its power stems from the work's ability to be created, commissioned, attended, documented, critiqued, and dismissed -- but the work itself can never be bought, sold or traded. Tickets and detritus might be sold, but not the work itself. And documentation of a performance isn't experiencing it first hand.

The impetus for GUTTED stems from my love for performance as well as my ongoing interest in the work of French philosopher and social critic Jean-Luc Nancy, particularly his work Corpus. In this work, Nancy articulates that there is no ontology of the body, but rather, the body is ontology itself. The body is a familiar subject of discourse in the arts, as we have and will always already work from the body. A body of work. A body of knowledge. Through Nancy, I view LACE – the space – as a body that will fill with bodies, where the ongoing conversation about our / their / your bodies will continue.

GUTTED showcases a daring ensemble of live performance, texts and objects speaking of, from and to the body. With a roster of creative talent spanning thirty years of live performance, GUTTED illustrates an array in which the body has been addressed by artists over a chronology of performance practice. This chronology reveals punctuations and cycles in ways artists have interpreted domesticity and labor, AIDS, race, social activism, war, queerness, straightness, bodybuilding and body destruction, identities, sexualities, fantasy & grotesquerie.

Performance continues to be powerful as it furthers the celebration that there is no conclusion and there are no answers. Thank you for supporting LACE and helping to contribute to these ongoing conversations.

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