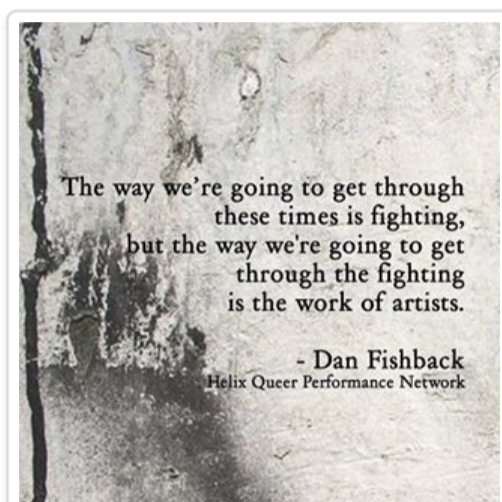


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Wednesday, October 30, 2013

6 QUESTIONS: Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew



Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew is a New York based theater designer in lighting and video. She is also an accomplished puppetry artist. Jeanette's latest puppet work, **ARE THEY EDIBLE?** will premiere at The Club at La MaMa as part of the 2013 **La MaMa Puppet Series**. Jeanette took time out from preparing for the show to answer our 6 Questions.

1. What was the initial inspiration for this project?

The project was inspired by my visit to the Arlington Cemetery when I was struck by the juxtaposition between the miles of white tombstones and a gift shop that primarily sells movies that glorify war and victory. I began to contemplate a few concepts:

- The hero myth: Is this a necessary national narrative to perpetuate war, particularly given how pride is evoked through the lineage of military service that is prominent in American society? This definitely speaks to patriotism; the collective "goal" or the collective "good".
- The uniformity of sacrifice – all the tombstones are almost identical; how replaceable are our soldiers?
- The relationship between consumption and war
- Validating killing, which can take many forms - film, legend and myth.

During that period, I was also re-reading the Iliad and the Odyssey. Through this lens I felt that Homer was struggling with the same thematic questions, particularly when looking at the connection between the underworld chapter in the Odyssey with the Iliad and with the journey and conclusion of Telemachus.

Furthermore, from a storytelling standpoint, I connected Odysseus and his crew's consistent need to consume, which ultimately led to their demise - devouring the Cyclops' food, the lotus island, and the golden cow. The act of consumption becomes an image of devouring and destruction and is systematic and automatic and parallels how the machine of war devours people. I was also pondering if their need to consume is connected to post-traumatic stress. Are Americans in a constant state of perceived siege, and is consumption an escape from that? Based on these thoughts, I began to conceptualize a piece for which the culinary arts are part of the structure. By having the audience consume through out the entire performance, with the food and drinks serving as the puppets and the landscape, eating becomes an act and a metaphor.

2. What was the most challenging element in making this show?

Creating an immersive environment where the audience becomes fundamental to the narrative.

3. What do you hope the audience comes away from your show with?

First, a feeling of fullness and intoxication physically or emotionally. Second, experience the juxtaposition between the desire to consume and the follies of consumption. Third, contemplate their collective roles in

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4. Who has inspired you?

Robert Smithson and Gordon Matta Clark are two artists that really inspired me. Their works were immersive, political and succinct.

5. Do you think of your work at political?

Yes, definitely. I think, also, it is impossible to be non-political because we are political beings as Peter Schumann from Bread and Puppet once said. I think audiences are often stuck on the political theatrical images from the 60s and the 70s so they are hesitate to engage with works that self-identified as political. This piece is attempting to break this notion and it is a political and humanitarian comment on citizenship, war and consumption.

6. What does working at La MaMa mean to you?

OMG – where to begin.....first I am, naturally, being intimidated by the giant and super excited to be included as part of the La MaMa community. Second I am soooooo honored to be curated by a place not only is known for extremely experimental theater but for experimental puppetry. It is very difficult to present adult oriented contemporary puppetry in the US and to have a home to do it in is amazing. Finally, thank you for giving me the space and time to define myself as a puppetry artist in additions to being a theater designer.

La MaMa ETC presents

ARE THEY EDIBLE?

by Jeanette Oi-Suk Yew

November 7 – November 10, 2013

Thursday – Saturday at 9pm
Sunday at 5pm

Tickets: \$18 Adults; \$13 Students/Seniors; a limited number \$10 tickets available for all performances.

Are They Edible? is a multi-sensory puppetry performance inspired by Homer’s epics, The Iliad and the Odyssey, takes place in an interactive setting where food consumption is used to engage the audience in a tactile discourse on the relationship between war, heroes, and hunger (or the urge to consume).

For tickets and info: Click Here

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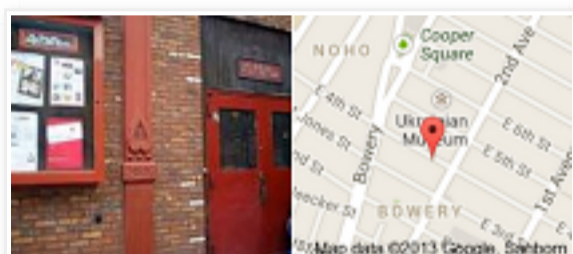
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