

Symposium SYMPOSIUM «ALL INCLUSIVE – KUNST AUF NEU»
18. Juni, Zürich, Museum für Gestaltung

Mat Fraser, Julie Atlas Muz,

If Dreams Come True:

Performing as an Artist, Forgetting about Disability»

Through the power of dance I tell stories that are beautiful, political, and emotional, with a bold and theatrical irreverence. I use humor, positive sexuality, nudity and glamour to address serious topics in a playful manner.

I consider myself a renegade performer whose work reaches across genres, venues, demographics and tax brackets to champion the notion that performance in any context can challenge beliefs and change behavior.

Recently I began collaborating artistically with Mat Fraser, an artist who I have profound respect for and who is disabled. We met at the Coney Island Freak show about three years ago. Coney Island is the artistic oasis in the depths of Brooklyn New York, where Freaks come from all over the world to together to perform. By Freak I mean artists who do something with their bodies that is outside of the mainstream. My friend Incestavora is totally tattooed, Serpentina just split her tongue to look ore like a snake, Bambi eats worms, ladies of all ilk's take off their clothes in humorous and political ways and of course there are born freaks, people like Jennifer Miller who has a beard, Little Nick, who is well... little and Mat Fraser who as you can see has little arms. In American carnivals and sideshows there is a long history of Freak Shows and Live Nude Girlie Shows operating side by side with the same audience gawking and objectifying both types of bodies, the disabled body and the naked lady.

Nuevo burlesque or the neo burlesque movement, in which I am internationally acclaimed star, (that means I was Miss Exotic World and Miss Coney Island 2006) is in theory inclusionary of all body types. Once born from an economy that exploited the loose and freaky, burlesque is a folk dance movement that now comes from a celebratory place where all body types are invited to participate in the positive sexuality. However as burlesque joins the mainstream, more and more, the look of the burlesque girl is fading from a rubinesque-tattooed woman on the fringes who is at heart wild back into a typically beautiful pin up model body. This does not promote a fuller definition of a positive sexualized movement but instead maintains the boring standard of what we think we should find beautiful as opposed to actually is beautiful.

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In response to this I have produced shows in which I have hired Mat Fraser to be the emcee, from small underground burlesque shows like Sealboy and the Blondes in a nightclub in NYC at midnight which always culminates in a naked pie fight, to a huge 900 seat theater in Seattle as part of the highly respected music festival Bumbershoot. It is important for me to have representation of different body types in my shows. I am very very satisfied when tons of people consider Mat, who you know, Dirty Martini, who is literally larger than life, Tigger who is gayer than Cher the sexiest and hottest people on the planet.

You know, in the arts and entertainment world, talent, drive and contagious good feeling have always been more important than your outer body type. Sammy Davis Junior, a tiny half blind black Jew, was a rising star in a time when all those things really worked against him. He could sing and dance great. Showbiz to me is the utopia, where a cunning and contagious positive attitude and the need to make lots of people think, feel and love you is the leveling factor, not how many legs you have, but what you do with the body that you do have.

When I suggested to Mat that we should do "Beauty and the Beast" together I first suggested it kind of as a joke that had such a ring of truth and fun to it that both of us paused. HHHHhhhhmmmmmm that could be good.

Since then we have been working and developing the show and of course both of our baggage comes up. Me with my feminist agenda, and Mat with his Disability Agenda, and not surprisingly there are many aspects that overlap. But I don't really care so much about the political agenda anymore, although it is so ingrained in me that I can't forget it, like riding a bike. However if the work is strong and tender enough, both Mat and myself are experienced and strong enough performers that we can make an audience laugh and cry. It's really great working with Mat. He is a very hard and talented artist who has a very funny dark streak. I quite enjoy his take on the world.

I don't really know how to work this into my speech but I really want to say it. Clowns are paid to make the King laugh. Buffoons tell the King the truth. I believe that with Beauty and the Beast, Mat and I are trying to tell the truth in a love story in which both characters learn how to embrace the scariest parts of the bodies, their sexuality.

Mat Fraser

Performer ist einer der bestbekanntesten Performer mit Behinderung in England. Für das Fernsehen drehte er den Dokumentarfilm «Born Freak» über Freak-Shows. Bekannt ist er auch als Darsteller in Filmen und TV-Serien, unter anderem als Hauptdarsteller in «Kunf Fu Flid» (2008), einem Actionfilm, der Kultstatus erlangt hat. Seine Bühnenwerke beinhalten das preisgekrönte Stück «Sealboy: Freak» (2001/02). Die neueste Produktion mit Julie Atlas Muz «Beauty and the Beast» ist seine bisher gewagteste Arbeit und bezieht verschiedene Kunstformen mit ein.

Julie Atlas Muz

Performerin, Choreographin, Burlesk-Künstlerin ist eine der bekanntesten Akteurinnen der konzeptuellen Kunstszene New Yorks. Mit ihren Auftritten überschreitet sie die Grenzen zwischen Performance, Tanz und Burleske. Sie ist Co-Moderatorin einer beliebten burlesken Fernsehshow, leitet Theaterprojekte für Kinder und arbeitete in Filmen mit Wallace Shawn, Michael Moore, Pavol Liska u.a.m. Sie tanzte in Choreographien von Sarah Michelson, Sally Silvers, Cydney Wilkes.