

Wednesday, June 13, 2012

## No Wave Performance Task Force

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June 23rd 2012. 10am-1pm. Gibney Dance Center.

*What is the No Wave Performance Task Force?*

The No Wave Performance Task Force seeks to create an open-source, artist-driven, feminist Bill of Rights for working in performance.

Call us communal, call us matriarchs, whatever, the ethical demands of the performance field probably shouldn't be centralized in the hands of its men. So, the Task Force begins with a gathering for women, women-kind, women-identified, partially female-identified, people who have vaginas, people who in some way, somehow, in some part of themselves, identify with *female-ness and performance-ness*. Knowing these are complicated monikers these days, we're not going to split hairs about it, but what we are looking for is people who feel they can share in (rather than empathize with) female-hood and performance-hood in some way.

The task force will gather for a few hours with the intention beginning the discussion that will eventually be the basis for a *Bill of Rights and Responsibilities*, a document to be published and made available to the public as collectively written by the members of the Task Force. This document will behave as a living document, and will be, from its inception, open to the continued discourses around ethics in performance processes. Though the task force will root the Bill of Rights in feminist standpoints, the document will be free to explode multi-directionally from there.

After the initial meeting on June 23rd, the Task Force will have two more meetings over the next year and numerous smaller working groups. In participating, no one is obligated to further involvement. Instead, the Bill of Rights will behave in open-source fashion, and as it begins to develop, it will be available online for editing, suggestions, and discussions. The Bill of Rights will develop from the free-flow of womenfolk who come into contact with it, in the end, the hope is that it will have been touched by as many of us as possible. Further, individual statements of womenfolk who pass through the Task Force will be documented as well. That way, we can balance the collective statement of the Bill of Rights with the individual statements of its creators.

Bill of Rights!?!

As we begin to lay the groundwork for this document, we will first seek to understand each other's perspectives on the ethical demands and obligations we have in performance work. In the simplest terms, our questions are: What do we need and what do we need to give? We will consider, of course, the ethics of working with our performers, our audiences, our peers, and ourselves. But the development of this document must also begin to address the much more difficult question as to what our work means, what its capacities are/ what its generosity is toward a context that isn't necessarily immediate to it. Call it social conscience, call it societal obligation, call it what you will. The underlying goal of the Bill of Rights is to experiment with what it means to build community with each other as we seek to understand the ramifications of our work.

The creation of this Task Force was driven by (but may not remain as) the following:

### Within the field of performance

1. We are working in a field that seems to exist outside the normal societal expectations of labor and compensation. If we do not begin to take action and imagine what might be appropriate parameters, we will fail to give ourselves any guidelines. If we don't ourselves describe the meaning of our labor and our expectations for compensation, we leave it up to others to define our worth for us, which has historically meant that our worth reduces and our resources reflect that.

2. As we vie for institutional resources, we pit ourselves in competition with one another. What are the repercussions of this? On what basis do we cooperate? What are our ethical obligations to one another as we face a situation in which there are not enough resources for all of us, or even most of us, or really, even, some of us? In an economy that so values rarities, struggle, and exclusivity, how might inclusivity also operate?

3. We work in a field in which the profiling of race, gender, hotness, age, you name it, is not only encouraged, it is considered an important part of our work, and provides numerous frames by which curators argue the social value of our work. For better or for worse, performance discriminates as a way to frame social value. The identities we display, and those sussed out from us in interviews and reviews, determine how desirable we are to directors, curators, granting organizations, and audiences. In some way, we have to address this, and we have to figure out how to support (and how to challenge) one another within this context of production.

And for these reasons, though more esoteric and less rooted in the direct problems we're facing:

While we are lost within the relativistic aftermath of postmodernism how do we navigate our empowerment?

While we refuse to wield our work as a kind of leftist evangelism or political propaganda, how do we understand the action of performance as a force of change?

While our focuses as activists is driven by the subjectivity of our personal lives, how do we fight for one another?

While our ever more experimental work flies off the charts of critical interpretation, how do we understand the value of our work and what it gives?

While our resources dry up so we ourselves are "a community in need," how do we treat ourselves, each other, and other communities in need?

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