Tara Mateik

Statement and Project Description

My artistic practice investigates transgender representation within a feminist context. In my videos, performances, and assemblage, I create historical reenactments with queer iconography underscoring moments of collective transfeminism. For example, in the lip-synch performance *Friends of Dorothy (2013),* I conduct auditions as Victor Fleming (director, *The Wizard of Oz)* and Sidney Lumet (director, *The Wiz*) in drag. Re-enacting excerpts from *The Wizard of Oz* and *The Wiz*, Judy Garland and Diana Ross impersonators try out for the role of Dorothy Gale. The same characters, dialogues, and visual references from the movies appear repeatedly. These citations and repetitions—misplaced, replaced, and displaced—create a transfeminist battle cry by emphasizing the liberation narrative extant in the materials.

I understand the story of Oz— its position in popular culture, its myriad manifestations, and its devoted fans— as a structure through which people queer the concept of home. In May, I collaborated with the world-renowned WOW! Café Theatre, described in their mission statement as an “all women and trans feminist collective theater,” to produce a 60-minute piece. Acast of seventeen performers, including Milan from *RuPaul's Drag Race* and Sapphira Cristàl, Miss Gay NY USofA, performing as Diana Ross; MargOH! Channing as Judy Garland and Liza Minnelli; and K8 Hardy as Jane Pauley, performed to a sold-out house. My script, culled from the texts of L. Frank Baum’s original books, The Wiz, and the movie version of The Wizard of Oz, posits a liberation narrative and proposes a utopian space where patriarchal structures and their attendant exclusions have no role. These aspirations are shared by the long-standing mission and the collective governance of the WOW! Café Theater. Staging this transfeminist performance on their historic stage doubled the impact of primary goals in my work: to present the imaginable as real, to manifest gender possibilities on actual bodies, to allow transfeminism to structure the room.

Army of Revolution

Film Studies Working Group at The CUNY Graduate Center • Fall 2013

As part of this interdisciplinary seminar I will develop the final stages of *Friends of Dorothy.*In a 16 mm silent film,*Army of Revolution,*I will source text, characters, and plot points from *The Marvelous Land of Oz.*In L. Frank Baum’s sequel to *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* its transfeminist influence. Baum’s interest in the heroine was inspired by his reverence for his mother-in-law, Matilda Joclyn Gage, an eminent suffragist and abolitionist. She co-authored *The Declaration of Sentiments* and edited the first three volumes of *The History of Woman Suffrage*with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, and her home was a station on the Underground Railroad. Baum lived with Gage. Her influence permeates Oz and is demonstrated when the ‘all girl…Army of Revolution’ overthrows the Scarecrow’s reign in favor of rule over men who are, in turn, required to do the housework and take care of the children. After the coup, Tippernicus, portrayed as a young boy throughout the book, is revealed to be ‘under a spell’ and transforms back to Ozma, the rightful heiress to the thrown of Oz.