



*NO MINCING ALLOWED AS THE ENEMY IS NEVER*

*ABSTRACT:*

Some thoughts & notes on the Whitney “performance” *Mortal Combat*

My Transcription of the event:

—Ariana & actor person are outside the museum, the audience inside. We can see them through the window. They are jump roping, running, gyrating away from each other. They are showing us the “warm up” phase. they are showing us they are serious about this

—Ariana & actor person come inside. They circle around a space to make a pathway. They stand at a distance for a while. She puts her smartwater bottle and one sheet of paper with notes down. Throughout she opens the water to drink it, but not even a quarter of it is gone. I only notice this because so little happens for so long.

—Ariana & Actor person stand at opposing points of the pathway. Maybe 20 feet away from each other? I am bad at math.

—Ariana takes off her white tank top . She is left with black leggings, knee pads, a black sport bra that reads “bikram yoga lower east side” on the back and bare feet. She looks fit and ready to rumble.

—Actor person takes off his white shirt. He is left with black leggings and knee pads. He does not look fit nor ready to rumble.

—Actor and Ariana meet in the middle. He makes faces at her. The audience laughs. He opens his eyes wide. They separate and go to opposite sides. This repeats a few times. It is painfully dull.

—They meet in the middle again. This time he punches her. Then he punches her again. He punches her in the same spot. The sound is not loud but it is not fake. It does not appear skilled but it happens so much. She doesn’t say anything. She doesn’t fight back. They return to their end points. You can see the red print his fists have made. She doesn’t say anything

—Some members of the audience leave

—They meet back again. This time she slaps him twice. I think she’s going to leave the same print, the same red print he left on her. But no, he immediately strikes back. He punches her. And she slaps him but he punches her. He fights back. It doesn’t matter that she didn’t say anything. Cuz he will not be treated the way he treated her. She punches him a few times.

—More audience members leave

—They go away and come back and she yells a word. It’s an irrelevant word. “Frebreze” is yelled—this is the tenor of the words.

—They go back and return to meet in the middle. This time they are ready to wrestle. So they wrestle. But he is taller than her and apparently stronger and she cannot seem to win. Is the point that she doesn’t win? That she can’t? Even in her own script in this refrigerated museum space she can’t fucken win?

—He comes to her point and she is still. Like the game “Light as a Feather Stiff as a Board” but she is like limp stiff—she wasn’t invited to enough sleepovers perhaps? Anyhow, he picks her up. Look he can pick her up! And spin her around. And he can walk with her body in his hands. And he can pick her up again and again.

—And then they wrestle

—Variations of this repeat

—It’s lam and it’s been an hour of watching a “performance” where a man overpowers a woman, and we are being told that she cannot win in this constructed combat between two people who are neither dancers (uh was there dance? was it the light as a feather game?? & please let this not be “you are missing the dance in the everyday” kinda shield) nor fighters.

—Variations of this repeat

I no longer have patience for art that believes it is the excess of “middle-class” time. What one does out of fancy, what one makes out of loyalty to its genealogy. I do not say this because I want art or poetry to be simpler, to be more clear, to mimic slogans—ruptures are complex, they are without expected rhythms. They cannot be

predicted. I will not protect artists who are devoted to promoting their idiosyncrasies (as Jacob Wren has written) as art.

My charge is that art must be read contextually. I will read it alongside my everyday, our history. I need it to bear the burden of context—I will ignore all pleas for abstract space, white cubes. This is not a limitation. It is its bourgeois liberation—from the notions of art as sidekick, as excess as fancy.

Revised Mortal Combat (a one-time exercise, not as a prescription) / Street Fighter:

The female performer spends weeks learning how to spin. Chun Li only had one special move—but her spinning side kick could often defeat any male opponent. To fantasize about combat that is immortal, video game like role reversals for FUN as experiments to waste time waiting for afrofuturism.

The female performer’s spinning side kick decapitates highly trained martial artists. It’s just special effects but it looks so real everyone cries a little (even in our fantasies we cry when men die). An audience member asks why she is allowed to do this here, are boxers artists too then? Will they be allowed to invite guests at 11:45pm on a Thursday night and hit individuals labelled “performers”? Can mixed martial arts fighters apply for residencies? They expect an answer from her but this is too complicated too a priori so someone tells them to shut up.

She decides the decapitation is boring and changes the music. choreographs steps the remaining performers can follow, head blown, on the floor. forever & always anything everything except the power running through us—

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NO MINCING ALLOWED AS THE ENEMY IS NEVER ABSTRACT: DO YOU WRITE THE POETRY WE NEED TO SURVIVE. OR IS POETRY YOUR CORPORATE EXCESS:

POETRY WITHOUT STAKES. WITHOUT SURVIVAL. PRETTIEST POETRY FOREVER ALWAYS ONLY. POETRY AS PRIVILEGED EXCESS. CAPITALIST EXPRESSION POETRY. ME ME ME POETRY. POETRY ABOUT NOTHING THAT'S REARRANGED TO LOOK LIKE SOMETHING NEW BRUTAL FASHION POETRY. POETRY AGAINST COMMUNIST SURVIVAL. POETRY ABOUT PERSONAL EXPRESSION BECAUSE I AM AN IMPORTANT CORPORATE WINNER & MY HEART IS MOST VALUABLE POETRY. POETRY THAT SAYS WE ARE ALL COMPROMISED SO WHY CAN'T WE MARVEL AT THE TORTURE POETRY. RISK THAT'S NOT YOURS POETRY. INVESTMENT BANKING POETRY. WE MOVE DAMAGE FOR TRADE POETRY. POETRY AGAINST HISTORY 2 POETRY. POETRY TO SERVE HISTORY 1 POETRY.

TAMEST OF ALL POETRY. ARE YOU THAT MODEL POETRY. ARE YOU MY MINOR POETRY. ARE YOU PALER THAN ME & CAN YOU WRITE ME THE PROOF POETRY. WILL YOU MOVE WITH ME WHEREVER I GO POETRY. WHITE FLIGHT POETRY. WE DID NOT SELECT THE NORTH POETRY. COLLABORATORS UNITE POETRY. POETRY TO GIVE YOU THEIR HOPE POETRY. POETRY THAT REFLECTS THE WORLD WE LIVE IN & NOT THE WORLD WE DREAM OF POETRY

## *Let the Snails Take Over*

Man discovers insect  
Wishes it a girl  
Girl it becomes

My father is the sea king  
But I'm stuck here doing your laundry  
I must be the cast away

Or maybe it was a conspiracy all long  
To take the kingdom away from the sea gods  
Through the peasant farmer  
—I can grove with that

The girl who lives in a jar and comes out to clean your clothes and cook your meals  
That girl. Who is that fucking girl.

Stop telling this version of her story