NEWS

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NEW YORK ARTIST SHARON HAYES MAKES THE PERSONAL POLITICAL AT THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION

HAYES’ PUBLIC ACTION ON SEPTEMBER 1—REVOLUTIONARY LOVE 2: I AM YOUR BEST FANTASY—INCLUDES SPEAKERS FROM THE LOCAL QUEER COMMUNITY

Minneapolis, August 1, 2008—Creative Time with the Walker Art Center and The UnConvention presents New York-based artist Sharon Hayes’ Revolutionary Love 2: I Am Your Best Fantasy on Monday, September 1, on the grounds of the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul (times to be announced). Hayes will assemble some 100 people near the site of the Republican National Convention in St. Paul for mass recitations of her script addressing political desire and romantic love. The project is commissioned by public art presenter Creative Time as part of its summerlong national public art initiative Democracy in America: The National Campaign, which includes a performance of Hayes’ Revolutionary Love 1: I Am Your Best Fantasy during the Democratic National Convention in Denver. Conflating grassroots political activism, performance art, queer theory, and national politics, Hayes’ large-scale public performance will include speakers drawn from the local queer community. Three 10- to 20-minute readings will take place over the course of two hours.

Drawing on both the history of the Gay Liberation movement, which forged a new and deep relationship between love and politics, and the current political moment, in which the war figures as a central element in the Presidential campaign, Revolutionary Love challenges simplistic oppositions between love and war. Specifically, Hayes is interested in the militaristic aspect of groups that operated at the beginning of the gay rights movement, many of whom assumed aggressive, reactionary stances to culture at large. Where the classic slogan says “Make love not war,”
Hayes references the Stonewall-era Gay Liberation movement and its chant, “An army of lovers cannot lose.”

Hayes’ performances are designed to mirror the spectacular nature of the National Conventions. Reacting against the tendency of groups to polarize feelings about homosexuality for political gain, she describes these performances as personal addresses to the power structure, or a group of people speaking their hearts as one.

“I’m interested in inviting people to come personify a kind of flamboyant queerness, which could be both an embodied position or a costumed one,” says Hayes. “In this, my model is more the early Christopher Street Liberation Day Parades than the later pride parades. I’m really interested in the way in which queers in those early parades were demonstrating, wearing, flaunting their queerness to themselves and only later to a larger, more hostile, more skeptical public for the first time. There’s something about this that strikes me as a kind of complicated flirtation that constitutes the power of ‘gay power’—a power that was at once empowerment, visibility, self-definition, and threat, much like Black Power but utilizing very different terms.

“I’ve always been drawn to the spectacle events of the political conventions. I’ve spent hours and hours at the Museum of Television and Radio watching old conventions. I know that in the disparity or depravity of the current political landscape, they tend to be huge and empty moments of unwarranted celebration. But I also think that as a ritual of mainstream national politics, we can’t help but converge on them. It’s this convergence between candidates, politicians, delegates, protestors, media, television viewers, newspaper and blog readers, passersby, and residents of host cities that I find so compelling.”

Sharon Hayes has produced challenging work in performance, video, and installation for more than a decade. Staging protests, delivering speeches, and organizing demonstrations, she creates interventions that highlight the friction between collective activities and personal actions. Employing theater, film, anthropology, linguistics, and journalism, her work engages history, politics, and public space. Her work has been shown at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, the Whitney Museum of American Art’s Independent Study Program, The New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, among other national and international exhibition spaces.

Creative Time
After 34 years of New York–based projects, Democracy in America continues Creative Time’s national program, which was launched with Paul Chan’s Waiting for Godot in New Orleans in 2007. By bringing Democracy in America to communities around the nation, Creative Time deepens its commitment to artists working outside New York City, sharing its belief in the transformative power of public art with the broadest possible audience. During the lead-up to the 2004 election season, Creative Time presented the Freedom of Expression National Monument,
a giant megaphone for public address, and Jenny Holzer’s *For New York City*, in which the artist’s truisms—including "ABUSE OF POWER COMES AS NO SURPRISE"—were pulled by airplanes over the skies of New York City. Recent projects include *Tribute in Light*, which served as a gesture of hope and healing after 9/11; Doug Aitken: *Sleepwalkers*, a film projected on the Museum of Modern Art, NY; and *Who Cares*, a series of projects that explored art and social action.

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**The UnConvention (www.theunconvention.com)**
The UnConvention is a non-partisan collective of citizens who have come together to create a forum in which to promote the democratic and free exchange of ideas on important issues. It exists as a counterpoint to the highly scripted and predetermined nature of the contemporary presidential nomination process and convention.

The UnConvention was initiated by Northern Lights, a new Twin Cities-based arts agency with support from the McKnight Foundation. Lead partners for the UnConvention are Intermedia Arts and the Walker Art Center. Local participating organizations include, among others: Forecast Public Arts, Form + Content, The Liberty Parade, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, The Minneapolis Foundation, Sandbox Studios, Twin Cities Youth Media Network, Spark24, Spark Festival The UpTake, the University of Minnesota, and the Weisman Art Museum. National Partners include Creative Time, a New York-based innovative public arts organization, and Provisions Library, a social change learning resource center based in Washington, DC.

Walker Art Center programming is made possible by its Premier Partners: Best Buy, General Mills, Piper Jaffray, Target, and Star Tribune.

**The Walker Art Center is located at 1750 Hennepin Avenue—where Hennepin meets Lyndale—one block off Highways I-94 and I-394, in Minneapolis.**

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