

UCR Sweeney Art Gallery, UCHRI, & UCR's English Department present

## ***You Belong To Me: Art and the Ethics of Presence***



"You Belong to Me" celebrates artists who turn their audiences into more than spectators. Joined by the shared experience of performances that are alternately tender and intimate, intense and cathartic, we do more than watch them perform. In "being there" we become a body of witnesses, a collective, a community. At issue in these artists' performances is not just their presence to us but our presence to them, and to each other.

### **PART ONE: Friday Feb 13- Monday Feb 16**

#### **Seminar on performance led by Ron Athey & Jennifer Doyle**

16 area artists spend 4 days with Athey and Doyle, who share their archives and work as artist and critic respectively – parts of the seminar will be open to the public:

**Public Lectures by Professor Jennifer Doyle** (author of *Sex Objects: Art & the Dialectics of Desire*)

##### **"Critical Limits: Difficulty and Contemporary Art"**

**Friday Feb. 13 2:00pm-4:30pm 2112 Humanities Building, UC Riverside**

What happens when we encounter our limits as critics, as spectators – and why should we spend time unpacking them? Doyle models a new approach to the subject of difficulty and visual art via a parallel reading of the challenges posed by Thomas Eakins's painting *The Gross Clinic* and Ron Athey's recent performance, *Incorruptible Flesh: Disassociated Sparkle*.

##### **"My Bloody Valentine: When Sex & Performance Meet and Queer & Liberal Feminism Part"**

**Saturday Feb. 14, 2:00pm-4:30pm downstairs at Back to the Grind (3575 University Ave)**

In the spring of 2008, the artist Aliza Shvarts found herself in the middle of a national controversy about a conceptual performance that engages with the possibilities of abortion. This talk maps the nature of that controversy, and asks a) why this work was so controversial, b) where feminism stands regarding abortion and art, and c) why, with all its talk about "reproductive futurism" queer theory has been relatively silent about abortion.

**Ron Athey** began making performance art in small galleries in a collaboration called *Premature Ejaculation* with Rozz Williams (1981). In 1992, after years of performing in nightclubs, his first theatrical performance, *Martyrs and Saints*, was shown at LACE gallery in Los Angeles. Since then, his work has toured festivals and art centers in the UK, Europe and Mexico. With Vaginal Davis he curated the Platinum Oasis Outfest live art extravaganza at the Coral Sands Motel (2001-2) and *Visions of Excess* (2003) at a lap dance club in Birmingham, England. In recent years he has staged performances at (for example) the Redcat Theater (*Judas Cradle*, with Julianna Snapper), The Chelsea Theater in London, and at the Politics of Ecstasy Theater festival in Berlin.

Associate Professor **Jennifer Doyle** is the author of *Sex Objects: Art and the Dialectics of Desire* (2007 Lambda Award finalist, and Honorable Mention for the Alan Bray Memorial Book Prize). She has published a range of essays about contemporary art and performance engaging the work of such artists as Tracey Emin, Andy Warhol, Vaginal Davis, David Wojnarowicz. She writes occasional essays and reviews for *Frieze* magazine, and also writes a feminist blog about the cultural politics of soccer (From A Left Wing). In 2007-2008, she was in a Leverhulme Fellow in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths College in London – the work presented here grows out of her work on *Critical Limits*, a book about difficulty and the politics of emotion.

#### **Evening salon-style screenings of performance video & experimental film curated by Athey & Doyle**

**Downstairs at Back to the Grind (3575 University Ave)! 5:30pm-7:30pm Friday Feb 13 & Saturday Feb 14.**

Join us for an eclectic program of performance "classics" and oddball cinematic texts representing Athey's performance & filmic archive. Expect lots of nudity, explicitness, and creepy investigations of art & intimacy. Intended to be a relaxed and social gathering - discussion and talking back to the screen encouraged.

**PART TWO: FRIDAY FEBRUARY 20, 2009**

**8:00pm-11:00pm**

## **James Luna & Ursula Rucker Live in Concert**

at 3787 Main St (at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup>), in downtown Riverside, CA

Performance artist James Luna and feminist poet & hip hop musician Ursula Rucker perform at Back to the Grind in downtown Riverside.

Selected by the National Museum of the American Indian to participate in the 2005 Venice Biennale, **James Luna** is internationally recognized for his moving and critically engaged performances. One critic writes, "The rich reward of Luna's probing performance pieces is learning more about our own cultural perceptions, learning where the edges are, where the discomfort starts. His voice and imagery carry the gift that a good artist can bring – the enlarging of our conscience and the increased awareness of what it means to be human." Here, he expands into spoken word and music.

**Ursula Rucker** is one of the architects of Philadelphia's poetic revival. Drawing on influences from Black Arts Movement activist poet and icon Sonia Sanchez to Friday Kahlo, Zora Neal Hurston and even Prince, Rucker balances motherhood, activism and artistry with aplomb. With her rhythmic stories of struggle, she's confident, never preachy. Explaining her quest to rouse people from the dismal depths of the matrix and dish verse on subjects that society often keeps in the closet, she keeps it simple: "I am driven to deal with real issues." She's transfixed audiences from Tokyo to Capetown alongside the likes of Gil Scott-heron, Mos Def, Macy Gray, and the late Nina Simone.

**PART THREE: SATURDAY 2/21, 2009**

**11:00am-3:00pm**

## **Artists in Dialogue:**

### **James Luna, Ursula Rucker, Ron Athey in Conversation**

at Back to the Grind (3575 University Ave in downtown Riverside)

11:00am – 12:00pm **James Luna** in dialogue with U.C. Riverside Professor **Michelle Raheja**  
12:15pm – 1:15pm **Ron Athey** in dialogue with UC Riverside Professor **Jennifer Doyle**  
1:30pm - 2:30pm **Ursula Rucker** in dialogue with UC Riverside Professor **Erica Edwards**

A public conversation with each of the artists covering a range of subjects like the difference between performing inside and outside museum walls, about battles with AIDS panic and phobic reactions to performance, about poetry and politics, music and text, the body as text – and the when, where, and how of art that creates new worlds. Audience participation will be encouraged, and these discussions will be recorded for future podcasting via the Sweeney Gallery's website. Michelle Raheja is an Assistant Professor at UCR, and is the author of *Reservation Reelism: Redfacing, Visual Sovereignty, and Representations of Native Americans in Film* (forthcoming from University of Nebraska Press). Erica Edwards is also an Assistant Professor at UCR, and is currently working on her book, *Contesting Charisma: Fictions of Political Leadership in Contemporary African American Culture*. Professors Doyle, Raheja, and Edwards teach in the English Department.

**PART FOUR: SATURDAY 2/21, 2009**

**8:00pm-11:00pm**

## **Resonate/Obliterate I.E.: A Night of Queer Performance**

### **Ron Athey, Julie Tolentino, Heather Cassils & Zachary Drucker**

at 3787 Main Street (at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup>) in downtown Riverside, CA

Ron Athey's work has significant, recurring themes: dissociative sparkle, self-obliteration, and incorruptible flesh, each played out upon the historic body, the queer body, the AIDS body, the body in the grip of ecstasy or sorrow of death. This evening centers on a performative dialogue with dancer/choreographer Julie Tolentino in which the artists, in essence, perform and archive each other in rituals of beauty and decay, abjection and ecstasy. Heather Cassils and Zackary Drucker frame Athey and Tolentino's performances with their own dialogue of embodiment.

All events are sponsored by The University of California Humanities Research Institute, The Sweeney Gallery, and the following departments and programs at the University of California, Riverside: The English Department, The Center for Ideas & Society, The College of Humanities, Arts & Social Sciences, The Chancellor's Office of Excellence & Diversity, The Rupert Costo Endowment, The Art Department, Women's Studies Department, Media & Cultural Studies, Department of Creative Writing, African Student Programs and the Women's Center. Special thanks to the Marriott Hotel and to Back to the Grind. See website for location information: [www.sweeney.ucr.edu/exhibitions/belong](http://www.sweeney.ucr.edu/exhibitions/belong)

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Websites: [www.sweeney.ucr.edu](http://www.sweeney.ucr.edu) [www.artsblock.ucr.edu](http://www.artsblock.ucr.edu)

The Sweeney Art Gallery is an artistic laboratory that engages diverse audiences with exhibitions and programs that are committed to experimentation, innovation, and the exploration of art in our time. The Sweeney places a special emphasis on inspiring projects that explore new ideas and materials and re-envision the relationship between art and life. UCR ARTSblock consists of three premier art institutions—the UCR/California Museum of Photography, the Sweeney Art Gallery, and the future Culver Center of the Arts (2009)—located on a single city block in downtown Riverside.



