

Dress Me Blue/ Window Me Sky



*a performance installation by
Lisa D'Amour and Katie Pearl*

Dress Me Blue/Window Me Sky, an installation created by Lisa D'Amour and Katie Pearl, is a three-part performance tour which exists in the space where visual art, performance, and architecture overlap. The performance documented here was created as an off-site performance commission for Frontera@Hyde Park Theater's *FronteraFest*. In it, the audience comes to know the external environment and internal landscape of a mysterious woman known only as the "Blue Dress Lady."

The piece relies on the interplay between audience, performer, and space in order to explore issues of identity, agency, and the mechanics of sight— all of which shape that which we perceive ourselves to be. With text written by Lisa D'Amour and excerpted from the work of Peggy Phelan, Ranier Maria Rilke and John Berger, Dress Me Blue/Window Me Sky is a uniquely layered collage composed of moving pictures, shattered maps of crisis, whispered secrets and diagrams of loss.

The performance was created for an empty, odd-shaped boutique space in an Austin, TX strip mall. It was subsequently re-imagined for the Argyle Zebra Gallery in St. Paul, MN. The movement, text, and visual components of the piece will always be adapted to respond to the specific space in which it is performed.

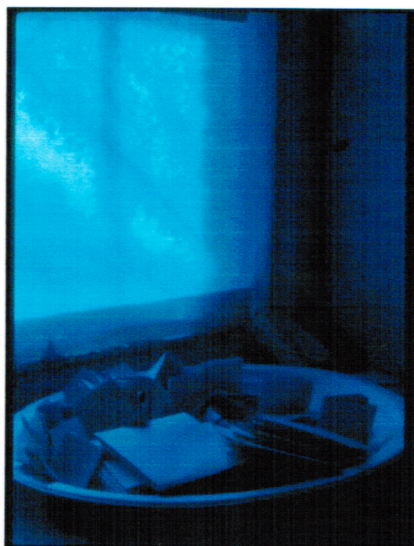
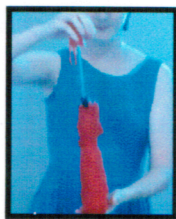


plate with notes in front of window

Turn page for an overview of the **SPACE , MOVEMENT, AND TEXT..**

The Space

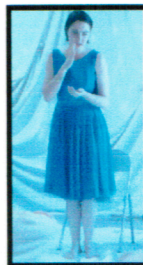




White. Asymmetrical.
Very white, like the interior of a house, closed up for winter.
Everything is covered
in
white
sheets.

Intruding into the white there are objects:

a box (a shrine?) covered in red velvet
a mural: a drawing of a sister in component, scattered parts
a giant eyeball with a trapdoor in its pupil
assorted snacks
many, many lists pasted upside down on a wall
many, many optical illusions interspersed with the lists
six red umbrellas
three girls in red dresses



And
of course the
Blue Dress Lady
is there.

The Tour



Part 1

You enter to the sound of Chet Baker (barely audible). You are led through the white by the Red Dress Girls and the red umbrellas. You reach the Blue Dress Lady. She sits on the edge of her chair. She is very very nervous. She offers you snacks. She smiles and shifts. Eventually she speaks. You see, part 1 of the tour is an attempt by the Blue Dress Lady to organize and explicate the world in which she lives. She tries to show you around the place. She tries to dismiss a mysterious "sister" which she had at one time but does not have any more. She cannot dismiss the sister. The tour begins to crumble: teeth fall out, lips appear out of nowhere, birds fly from eyeballs, and hats seem to be shoes (you've had one of those days). Finally, after literally turning herself upside down in an attempt to keep things right side up...



a skull comes out of her mouth and speaks



...she asks the audience to please leave, just for a second. The red dress girls leads you out. You watch through the window as the Blue Dress Lady does a contained, high-wire walk with two red umbrellas.

Part 2

You return. The Blue Dress Lady is changed. She is frustrated. She is sloppily assertive. She speaks into a microphone and tells you to divide into four groups. Over the course of 10 minutes you will participate in various “stations”. The stations are composed of objects and architectural structures you were introduced to in part 1 of the tour. You move at a furious pace, driven by the orders of the Blue Dress Lady over the microphone.

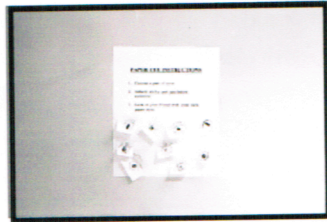
Here are some examples of the stations you go to, attended to by the Red Dress Girls :



talk through giant eyeball



draw an outline of yourself on the wall



try on some new eyes



play optical illusions

All at a furious pace, until she says **STOP**.
You look at her. She looks at you.
She says: **End of part 2.**

Part 3

The Blue Dress Lady organizes the red umbrellas into a pile. The Red Dress Girls escort you to some seats. They give you a tiny program. You see, Part 3 of the tour is a small performance. The Blue Dress Lady walks towards you. She can see you now, and can look at you looking at her. She “performs” for you a piece which intertwines text, gesture, and dance. By doing so, she seems to somehow come to terms with her relationship to her “sister”, and thereby herself. Hands. Birds. Umbrellas become bones, sinew, hearts.



At the end of the dance, she lays herself on the white sheets, and you are invited to stand on your chairs so you can look down on her. She says:

To have a bird's eye view
of myself.
To see myself without needing
You
to see me.
To realize that outlines
are an invention.
Clouds gather visibility,
then disperse
into invisibility.
All appearances
are the nature of clouds.
To look:
at everything which overflows
the outline
the contour
the category
the name of what it is.



You are invited to look into the box (a shrine?) which contains relics from her life. In the box, on tiny cards, are words for you to take with you. At the end of the printed text, you read: **end of part three. thank you for coming.**

The Text

(excerpts)





I'll tell you a secret: This room wasn't designed for me. It was designed for somebody else. You'd never have guessed, would you?... There is a story about this house: at one time it was inhabited by two sisters who couldn't go outside because of a rare skin disease called echocrioptic exfoliation syndrome, also known as EES. When exposed to too many sights and sounds at once, the very top layer of their skin began to peel off in thin, distinctly shaped patterns. When examined by a doctor, the doctor concluded that their skin was trying to mimic exactly all the light and sound waves that were bombarding their body at any given moment. Metabolically, they were trying to be themselves and everything else at the same time.



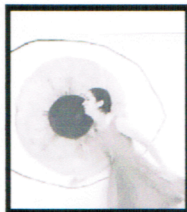
Needless to say, they moved inside.

Anyway, let's continue.



A mouth in the pupil of giant eyeball whispers frantically while she is off getting snacks:

She told me she was going to take me to see it. She laced up my boots, packed a snack, and the two of us set out under matching red umbrellas. We arrived at the window she told me about. Now we sit and wait. We sit. And wait. And wait. The sun moves down my fingers to my toes. She raises the binoculars to her eyes. I see her breath quicken. She rises to her feet: *Yes! Yes yes yes! Oh it's perfect! See how it stretches its wings! Let me see. Just one more second!* I tear the binoculars from her eyes. I can't focus. It's a leaf, no, a caterpillar, no, a cloud, no, no. *Do you know how RARE that bird is? Do you know how many people have SEEN it? I am one of the FEW.* I lower the glasses from my eyes, but I cannot see her. She is tiny as a bug, giant as the sun, far too present for my crude eyes.



When I was a very little girl
and of course very, very bored
I would pass the time by standing
underneath this skylight.
I would stand here for hours at a time
watching the clouds
take shape

and disappear
take shape

and disappear

I stare and
I stare

until finally
all that was left was the image of my sister staring back at me.

When I asked my mother about this,
she gave me along winded explanation
about my body position cutting off oxygen to the primary and parietal cortex,
the part of the brain that locates objects in space.

There wasn't really anything there
(even though I SAW it).

I was just getting my signals crossed.



Here, do you want to try it?

For coverage and acuity, human vision takes a backseat to those of birds. A baseball pitcher has to crane his neck to check base runners and his catcher's signal before delivering a pitch. An American Woodcock on the mound could see all the bases, home plate, the entire outfield and the entire stadium, including most of the ceiling of an astrodome - without moving its head.

End of Part Three.

Thank you for coming.