

KAJE

MAR 8–APR 13, 2025
We shall not miss it
 AMY RUHL

We shall not miss it considers the life and work of Shulamith Firestone, whose *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970) proffered revolutionary demands for gender abolition, artificial reproduction, child liberation, and “cybernetic communism.” Exiled from the women’s liberation movement before the book was even published, Firestone’s only other published text, *Airless Spaces* (1998), fictionalizes her experiences living in and out of mental institutions in New York via involuntary hospitalizations. Through an immersive exhibition that culminates in a live performance, Ruhl’s six-week engagement at KAJE explores both the timely promise and problems with Firestone’s anarcho-communist manifesto, relating her own experiences of mental illness and hospitalization with Firestone’s extraordinary second book.

Once deemed the “demon text of radical feminism,” *The Dialectic of Sex* has been excoriated by feminists and anti-feminists alike, most notably by Angela Davis and Hortense Spillers for its lack of consideration of people of color, as well as her use of racist stereotypes when addressing the Black Liberation Movement. *We shall not miss it* uses the text as a means of reckoning with the noxious legacy of white supremacy in feminism, in this case within a Marxist feminist genealogy, wondering what kind of “undetoxified energy from the past” — to borrow a term from Elizabeth Freeman — one

might find in Firestone’s proposals for radical alternatives to familial and loving relations under capitalism.

In “The Vanishing Dialectic: Shulamith Firestone and the Future of the Feminist 1970s,” Kathi Weeks suggests that the artificial womb concept in Firestone’s earlier text acts like a novum — a scientifically plausible technological innovation that drives science fiction narratives and their corresponding cognitive estrangement. Ruhl’s installation environment evokes the basis of Firestone’s reproductive utopia with inflatable sculptures that serve both as projection screens and, in the context of performance, as noise-generating instruments. On the evening of Thursday, March 27th, curator Rachel Vera Steinberg will lead a screening and discussion that highlights the speculative and science fiction elements in *The Dialectic of Sex*.

The exhibition ends with a performance on April 12th, where Ruhl will be joined by collaborators, Mel Elberg and Kite. The performance expands upon Ruhl’s piece “Triple Monolog” in performance ensemble *Flowers in the Basement’s* engagement at Participant Inc. in January 2024. Alternating different voices that channel 1970s Firestone, a contemporary essayist and stand-up comedian, Ruhl will perform the slippage between utopian longing and “cracking up.”

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ARTIST BIO

AMY RUHL is an interdisciplinary artist working across fields of performance, new media, moving image, installation, and experimental theater. Her practice spawns long-term projects that flesh out complex narrative and conceptual worlds, create embodied fictions, and continually branch off into correlative work and collaborations. In 2021, she organized the rotating feminist performance ensemble "Flowers in the Basement," which has thus far included Kite, Alisha B. Wormsley, Mel Elberg, Frances Ines Rodriguez, and Tsedaye Makonnen. She has exhibited her visual art and films at galleries and venues such as Participant Inc, Lubov, Essex Flowers, Storefront for Art and Architecture, Anthology Film Archives (New York), Kansas City Art Institute Gallery: Center for Contemporary Practice (KC, Missouri) Vitrine Gallery (London), Public Fiction (Los Angeles), and Pleasure Dome (Toronto, Ontario). Ruhl has performed at NYU Skirball Center, Roulette Intermedium and Irondale Theater (Brooklyn, NY), The Broad Museum and REDCAT (Los Angeles, CA) and the Live Arts Biennial at Bard Fisher Center (Red Hook, NY).

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