ECSTATIC RESISTANCE
A project by Emily Roysdon

X Initiative is pleased to present *Ecstatic Resistance*, a project and group exhibition organized by Emily Roysdon. As a curator, writer and artist, Roysdon has spent the last decade formulating a vocabulary with which one can formally discuss "the impossible as lived experience" as it occurs within the context of contemporary artistic practice. Included here are works by more than ten international artists and performers who are re-picturing the aesthetics of political protest while improvising new forms for the impossible to thrive. The artists embrace the occurrence of pleasure as it exists within the realm of the political and challenge the entrenched iconic imagery of resistance.

Considering the disparities between the collective and the individual, the public and the private, **Sharon Hayes**' (b. 1970) *YARD (Sign), 1961/2009* (2009), originally created in response to Allan Kaprow's seminal work *Yard* (1961), evokes the American archetype of the suburban yard, in this case functioning as a transitional space adorned with bold displays of political campaigning, religious proselytizing and real estate advertising. Further describing new modes of collective practice, **Jeanine Oleson**'s (1974) *The Greater New York Smudge Cleanse* (2006-2009) features the world's largest sage "smudge stick" in a series of ritualistic performances that intend to cleanse "the negativity from New York City". Documenting a strike at the Dare Cookie factory in Ontario, Canada**, Joyce Wieland**'s (1931-1998) film *Solidarity* (1973) shuns documentary convention by refocusing the camera on the process of participation and not the iconic voices and faces of the striking workers. The entirety of the film has the word SOLIDARITY superimposed over the center of the frame.

Reconsidering key social, political and cultural events, *Ecstatic Resistance* "challenges traditional historical reasoning and patriarchal hierarchies". **Yael Bartana**'s (b.1970) *Mary Koszmary* (2007) continues the artist's predilection for the psychological trauma of politics. In a speech delivered from the abandoned ruins of Warsaw's Stadion Dziesiçiolecia, itself a remnant of the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, a committed left-wing Polish politico calls for the return of Poland's Jews. **Juan Davila's** (b. 1946) screen-prints critique a range of themes including oppressive political systems, the cultural disintegration of capitalism, sexuality and the staid structures of the art world. Two images here, *Adrift* (2002) and *Woomera* (2002), address the controversies over the Woomera immigration detention center in Australia. Davila's transvestite representation of Simon Bolivar, South America's "great liberator", in the painting *The Liberator Simon Bolivar* (1994), triggered an international diplomatic scandal that reconfirmed the colonial undertones of Latin American and Australian relations.

As a forum for artworks to extend the scope of "what is possible", **Rosa Barba**'s (b. 1972) *Outwardly from Earth's Center* (2007) investigates the fine line between documentary and fiction. Telling the story of an island that drifts off towards the unknown: every year moving further from the coast as the inhabitants make unsuccessful attempts to anchor it to the mainland, the film combines a surreal atmosphere with an almost documentary approach, resulting in the creation of a new parallel reality. **Xylor Jane's** (b. 1963) intricate paintings and works on paper, which are created from mathematical algorithms, highlight the hidden curiosities and subtle patterns that exist amidst complex patterns and groupings of numbers. The works here mark time in calendar form and also as an oppressive force of linearity. **Ulrike Müller**'s *One of us (Freakish Moments)* (2004) investigates both language and the body as corruptible vehicles of human expression, coaxing viewers to critically examine the motives and means of communication between the artist and the spectator, the speaker and the listener.

With an emphasis on the perversion of language and culture, **My Barbarian,** a Los Angeles-based performance collective founded in 2000, in collaboration with **Liudni Slibinai,** offer *Forest Bros. & Sisters: Myth Appropriation Exchange Pogrom* (2009), a site-responsive video installation that utilizes exaggerated theatrical play to coax allegorical narratives out of mythical conflicts. **A.L. Steiner**'s (b. 1967) constructions of photography, video, installation, collaboration, performance and curatorial work serve as seductive modes of communication through which the artist channels her sometimes scathing queer eco-feminist sensibility.

Ecstatic Resistance "develops strategies that bypass and subvert entrenched theoretical constructions" providing a forum for artworks to extend the scope of "what is possible", thus "setting the stage for future actions

and articulations." A project that has taken a variety of forms–texts, performance, exhibitions and objects, this manifestation at X interrogates the "limits of the intelligible" and focuses on strategies that "re-imagine the representation of power."

(Quotes taken from Emily Roysdon's essay on *Ecstatic Resistance*, available at the desk and online through www.ecstaticresistance.org)

Performances by:
Leah Gilliam, Sharon Hayes, Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, Jeanine Oleson and **Julianna Snapper, Dean Spade** and **Craig Willse, Wu Ingrid Tsang, Zackary Drucker and Mariana Marroquin, Ian White.**

Emily Roysdon (1977) is a New York and Stockholm based interdisciplinary artist and writer. She is editor and co-founder of the queer feminist journal and artist collective, LTTR and contributing lyricist in the band MEN. Roysdon's work has been shown at the Participant, Inc. (NY); Generali Foundation (Vienna); New Museum (NY); Power Plant (Toronto); and Studio Voltaire (London). Her videos have been screened at Whitechapel Gallery (London); Arsenal: Institut fur Film and Videokunst (Berlin); The Kitchen (NY); and at the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen. Her writings have been published in Cabinet Magazine, the Journal of Aesthetics and Protest, Zehar, and Women & Performance: a Journal of Feminist Theory. Roysdon completed the Whitney Museum Independent Study Program in 2001 and an Interdisciplinary MFA at UCLA in 2006. In 2008 she was a resident at the International Artists Studio Program in Sweden (IASPIS). She is a recipient of a 2008 Art Matters grant and 2009 Franklin Furnace grant.

A related exhibition is on view at Grand Arts in Kansas City, MO through January 16th, 2010.

About X Initiative

X is a not-for-profit initiative of the global contemporary art community that will exist for one year and present exhibitions and programming. Advised by a 50+ advisory board comprised of artists, curators, museum professionals, gallerists, collectors, art historians and critics, X is reaching across traditional boundaries to form a consortium interested in responding quickly to the major philosophical and economic shifts impacting culture. X will feature durational artist interventions, site-specific projects, historical in-depth exhibitions, one-night performances, lectures and weekly events. Questions posed in the form of programming will address relevant and pressing issues pertaining to the changing landscape of contemporary art. For press inquiries please contact us: info@x-initiative.org, or 917.697.4886.

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