

HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE

Beyond the White Cube: Dawn Kasper's Studio Within A Museum

by Yasmine Mohseni
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LA-based artist Dawn Kasper has been receiving attention for "This Could Be Something If I Let It," her studio-within-a-museum installation at this year's Whitney Biennial. The exhibition is up for just one more week so this is the last chance to view a performance that stands out as one of the most compelling pieces at the Biennial.

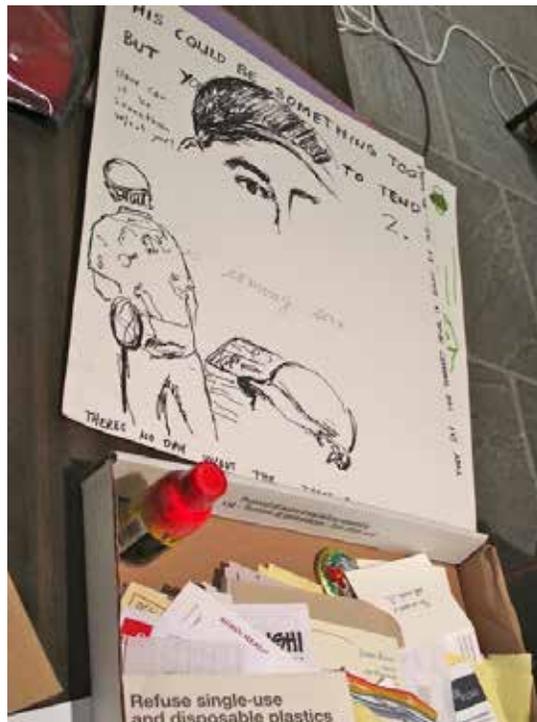


By opening up her studio to the public and being present to interact with museum goers, Dawn challenges the notion of an artist's creative space as an insular and private environment accessible to a select few from the art world. The concept of performing and creating work within various exhibition sites was born out of necessity when the Dawn lost her studio, and it has now become an integral part of her artistic practice. She has performed and exhibited internationally at galleries and institutions including The Migros Museum Für Gegenwartskunst in Zurich, the J. Paul Getty Museum, Art Basel Art Positions Miami, LACMA and The Hammer Museum. Kasper is currently one of the acting co-directors of the performance and experimental art venue Human Resources in Los Angeles. In October, she will travel to Paris to participate in a performance-based collaborative exhibition between LA's Machine Project and the non-profit experimental art space Mains d'Oeuvres in Paris. While in New York several weeks ago, I caught up with Dawn at the Whitney.

Yasmine Mohseni: Tell me about your current exhibition.

Dawn Kasper: The objective is to create a nomadic studio installation environment and perform within it as a living sculpture over the course of the exhibition. I'm doing a mash up of three on-going projects: Clues To The Meaning of Life; Visual Poems: Studies In Time and Space; and On The Exposure of Process: A Nomadic Studio Practice

Experiment. These last two components started when I lost my job in 2008 and had to give up my studio, which was very difficult for me emotionally. Since then I have been without a studio and making work when I can and wherever I can. When I'm invited to perform, I use the space as a studio, making new work, have studio visits, and playing music. I've had performances last for as long as a whole month to as little as twenty-five minutes. I managed to make it a point to create something from nothing and maximize the time there as studio practice. My time in process is very much an important part of my performance work, as is revealing that process publicly. I've been present inside of the installation as a 3-month durational performance plus as a "work in progress" installation. This three-month residency enables me to fully realize the process of creating "This Could Be Something If I Let It" as a performance and sculptural installation. The end result is an entire body of work that includes a new performances series and a sculptural installation environment. Key words: nomadic, desire, living sculpture, music/sound art, visual score, durational performance, sculpture, hoarding, energy, intense, focus, concentration, being, time, existentialism, ritual.



Describe your style.

Dawn Kasper: My work addresses relentless obsessive fascinations with topics such as exposure, desire, process and meaning. I perform in a calculated yet spontaneous manner, using props to punctuate my actions. Combining slapstick comedy and monologue to emphasize my thoughts and questions about one's existence, I want to ask, What is existence? or What is a physical object? I then attempt to answer these life questions, and more, while inhabiting different characters and personas, each differentiated through costume and costume changes, with all shifts taking place before the audience. Each character has a task and an action to accomplish.

The environments I perform in provide the forum, an open-air laboratory, creating a theatrical space, which also doubles as a platform for living sculpture. I transform the space through the use of props, musical instruments and personas. Everything is in play and everything is mobile. I often ritualize my performance environment through the repetition of actions and words. The culmination of these actions finds my various characters physically building a sculpture that marks my study into being and process, illustrating my findings, resulting with a sculptural installation, activated by performative action. Thus exposing the artistic process to the audience.

Seeking a balance that seems impossible to achieve, but I continue to try through the use of a D.I.Y. mentality and a belief that there is simplicity to be found in the complexity of life. I am not striving for perfection as society deems it but for a want in taking responsibility for the emotions I feel. Fear. Panic. Hate. Envy. Lust. By touching on emotions that our corporate society plays on to manipulate us, I strive to bring others and myself to a place of shared camaraderie.



Which single artwork in art history has inspired you the most?

Dawn Kasper: Uno Momento. The Theatre in My Dick. A Look to the Physical/Ephemeral from 1996 by Jason Rhoades.



Which artists (living or dead) do you find most inspiring?

Dawn Kasper: Buster Keaton or Andy Kaufmann

If you could have dinner with one deceased artist who would it be?

Dawn Kasper: Buster Keaton or Andy Kaufmann.

Dawn Kasper's "This Could Be Something If I Let It" is on view at The Whitney through May 27, 2012.

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