

INTERVIEW WITH THE PUSH POP COLLECTIVE

December 16, 2015 / arianne keegan

I first met Katie Cercone and Elisa Garcia de la Huerta, members of the [Go! Push Pop Collective](#), at an opening curated by Coco Dolle of Milk & Night Curatorial this fall. That evening I met so many inspiring and energized women, who were all genuinely eager to speak to and connect with one another. The sense of community and earnest motivation to create, share, and collaborate was undeniable, and as I learn more of these women and this collective in particular, it's plain to see their mission and vision radiates true. It is horribly easy in the modern art world, and in New York City, to get swept up in the rat race, to compete rather than support, to envy rather than grow. The Push Pop Collective and their practice is an enthralling reminder that things can be done another way.

The Push Pops describe themselves as a radical, transnational queer feminist art collective geared toward engendering "Embodied Feminism," by employing the female body in tactical, ideological strategy; exemplifying a new wave of feminism moving toward showing rather than telling female power; in a hybrid amalgamation of indigenous myth and ritual, new age spiritualism, hip hop/pop culture, and 70's feminist performance and body art. "Neo-Dada, Fluxist and Feminist, their performance work posits the body as a danger to the operation of reason and patriarchal economy of lack. A wild leap, an elusive slogan, a paradoxism of the flesh – The Push Pops reinscribe the body through participatory ritual, spontaneous performance and interactive multi-media installation." >>>gopushpops.blogspot.com

What is the Go! Push Pop Collective all about? Where does the name come from? In the description on your website, you describe using the female body to confront the "patriarchal economy of lack" - can you describe further what this means to you both and your work?

We began during our first year of grad school at SVA as a remedy to the general art world climate and the pressures of art school that we felt we were participating in and thereby reinforcing the "patriarchal economy of lack." This is simply the idea that there is not enough resources, money or energy to go around, and we as humans must manipulate, control and compete not only to "succeed" but to survive. As Feminist New World leaders we believe this is simply not the case - money is a symbol in a system in which human beings are the true currency. The energy you put out into the world comes right back, and we set the example of sharing, caring and holding a huge force field of love in Art as life. Working together, and not against each other, as women, and as human beings. Resisting the fetishization of bodies and objects the art world upholds as a mechanism of imbuing value within the systems and social hierarchies of consumer capitalism. Using immersive performance to restore Art to its rightful place as a binding agent of community and space of collective effervescence during which we as humans hold a direct line into the purest source of limitless, divine energy everlasting. The name comes from always wanting to anchor our work in the vernacular of the masses (Pop Culture) so that we can push the collective consciousness until it pops. It's also a way of cheering ourselves on and giving praise to all of the people we work with.



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Rainbowdickbitch! A Go! Push Pops Winter Solstice Ritual captured by Laura Weyl on 35mm, Bushwick, Brooklyn, NY, photo: Laura Weyl, 2014

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X MARKS THE SPOT, Go! Push Pops in collaboration with XHOSA for the Cue Art Foundation Hysteria Magazine Release,
photo: Ishmail Thoth Ra, 2014

You also describe the collective as radical, transnational, queer, and feminist - how do each of these elements influence the motivation behind the collective's work and ultimately inform the output?

We uphold a Third World Women of Color Intersectional Feminism addressing the matrix of oppression along the lines of race, class, nation, religion and gender. We are punk as fuck riot grrrls who give NO FUX and nasty 4th wave cyber feminists and neon pop Shivas and mama shamans rolled into one – embodying the Goddess/Creatrix in all her elements of Creator/Destroyer in the cycle of Birth-Life-Death-Rebirth. We are queer because we view gender as a rainbow spectrum; we are shape-shifting and gender-blending our way back into full authenticity and sacred balance. We are transnational because our founding members hail from Chile (Elisa Garcia de la Huerta), Russia (Anna Souvorov) and the U.S. (Katie Cercone) and we continue to work globally with people of all races, religions and walks of life, refusing to believe in nations or borders that have been falsely inscribed. We are feminist, because we believe in Gender equality and human equality and strongly believe it's time to celebrate, embrace and resacralize the Female principle in order to heal ourselves, our brothers, the children and especially the Earth.





Photos left to right: Go! Push Pops x Prince Harvey, Club Republic, Bushwick, Brooklyn, NY, photo: Gretchen Robinette, 2015 / RACKED UP SHAWTY, Performative Lecture and Gaia Matrix Freestyle, during CUNTemporary's Deep Trash Italia: Not For Sale, Bethnal Green Working Mens Club, London, UK, photo: Thomas Henshe, 2014 / Go! Push Pops perform Block Watching (Re)Mix at the Brooklyn Artists Ball upon the invitation of artist Luis Gispert, Brooklyn Museum, photo: Billy Farrell Agency, 2013

Tell us about the work you did this summer in Deep River, Connecticut, and what that retreat was all about.

We were drawn to this retreat initially because it promised daily yoga, healthy food and a real retreat into nature amongst women culminating in an interactive dance experience we built together as a collective in harmony with the surrounding environment. It was a really beautiful experience and a number of amazing artists – members of BabySkinGlove, Monica

Mirabile of FlucT, Artits6666, India Salvor Menuez, Claire Christerson, VivaBody Roll in a new collaboration with Bailey Nolan as BUOY, and others – all made the experience pretty out of this world. For us, camping for a week and mostly checking out of the social media/internet rat race for a minute really amped up our spiritual powers and intuitive capacities. Slowly, our contribution to the project emerged as a Rainbow Temple in the Center of the field where visitors could bring sacred offerings to us, the High Priestesses, in exchange for a mystical healing. We became like ugly old wise women cackling in the woods and left visitors with handmade adventure cards detailing the wild plants and mushrooms natural to the land. Then when they came to us, we sang songs and called down heavenly spirit guides with glittering wands and graced them with healing blessings and masterful mantras to the divine Mother. At the end, the owner of the land came up to us and said our work made her very happy as she felt it was honoring the spirit of the land and the lineage of the Native Americans that had gathered there for generations to celebrate the earth and our humanity in this way.





Go! Push Pops do BUOY: An Interactive Dance Experience, at the Peace Barn in Deep River, CT, photo: Rebecca Smeyne, Paper Magazine, 2015

You two are friends who met in college, correct? Can you tell us more about how this collective came to be and has evolved over time? How have you two changed as artists and individuals since you first met?



The Clitney Perennial, feminist performance protest at the Whitney Museum during the Biennial, organized by Go! Push Pops and several other feminist collectives of NYC, photo: Marie Tomanova, 2014

We had studios right next to each other in grad school at SVA and that's how we met. One thing that has really held us together is that we have grown and transformed together through our work in a similar direction. We are very similar and very different at the same time. For both of us the work has been very healing and transformative in and of itself, and we've always been mindful of letting Go! Push Pops continue to be whatever we need it to be, as a sacred practice based in friendship, justice, passion and love. Over time the work has become much more anchored in a spiritual path. Katie is a long time yogi and Elisa is currently in an extensive study of Ayurveda, the nutritional science and philosophy of yoga. We always say that Elisa holds down the Earth medicine and Katie the Cosmic crunk. We're

a lot more balanced and connected to our power center; in the beginning the performances were mostly fueled on adrenaline, very much about purging and anger, clearing and release of aggression and blocks. Now, we're ready to hold space for more and more people, and we do that by staying anchored to a deep source of faith in ourselves and our power as women to serve as natural conductors of divine frequencies.

The collective collaborates with a lot of different artists - who have you not worked with yet that you would love to and what kind of project would you work on?

Yes, we would love to work with Madonna. Snoop Dogg. Pretty much any rapper from the Dirty South. Yoko Ono and Yayoi Kusama. We love musicians and people that we've admired and slowly become friends with like Bunny Michael Nature Slut. We have major plans to escape to India and work with indigenous and folk communities there. In February, Elisa is traveling back home to Chile where Go! Push Pops will partner with her on a collaboration with the Queer Machi of the Mapuche indigenous people, healing the damaging effects of colonialism and neocolonialism. We like to let things be pretty fluid and allow the project to unfold as an organic relationship to the people and the environment so it's hard to say exactly what type of work we'll do next. Doing what we truly believe in without compromising our work also has taught us to think on our feet and learn step by step how to creatively sustain our practice based on a model of exchange. We want to work with the energy we are receiving from each other and from the Earth, exchanges we don't always acknowledge. Next year, we will offer a Goddess Retreat in Jamaica on organic farmlands right on the beach.



Go! Push Pops Rainbow Warrior Talisman Workshop with High School students in Tokyo, Japan, organized by Seiko Kitayama, 2015

That Goddess Retreat sounds magical! I also read that you all put on a workshop at a high school in Tokyo called the Rainbow Warrior Workshop - tell us more! What other workshops have you put on and where?

The crystal children being born into this world right now and the young rainbow kids have a lot to teach those of us in older bodies, and we try to involve younger people in our work as much as possible so they can lay the new paradigm on us real thick. Our first workshop of

this nature was called the “Warrior Goddess Workshop” and it was a fusion of feminist art practice, a cross-cultural study of the Great Goddesses of time eternal, yoga and martial arts. We were funded by the Brooklyn Arts Council Community Arts Fund Grant and worked with at-risk youth from the non-profit Art Start and the Living Gallery. We’ve since expanded this model into rainbow warrior talisman workshops like the one in Japan with laughter yoga, spirit animal workshops, monster puppet parades and more, mostly with at-risk youth and non-art world populations. One thing that helped us to develop this type of work quite a bit was receiving the Culture Push Fellowship for Utopian Practice in 2014. We’d much rather be working in social practice than prancing like show ponies in Chelsea, but we continue to straddle both worlds and many more for strategic reasons. Recently, on the full moon we concluded a two-part workshop at the Sixth Street Community Center on the lower east side with special guests Paperboy Prince of the Suburbs and Greem Jellyfish culminating in a Good Monster cipher jam session and spirited parade through Tompkins Square Park.





Pray Wild, Go! Push Pops Spirit Animal Workshop and Parade during Roppongi Art Night, Tokyo, Japan, with support from the iHouse Tokyo, NEA and the JUSFC, photo: Taro Hirayama, 2015

Your work has been described as shamanist - tell us more about what this means, what elements of shamanism do you incorporate, where did you learn about shamanism?

Shamanism began to creep into our work largely unbeknownst to us. It's always been a current that runs through Fine art practice, but we feel a certain responsibility of expressing

the feminine and the contemporary elements of shamanism we've made our own. We have studied shamanism in books and experientially in sacred rituals in the Brooklyn area and across the globe. We identify shamans as tricksters and gender benders, interlopers from the archetypal realm and the animal spirit kingdom. Shamans bring the Earth Medicine; they are the chiefs that keep the stories of the community, and heal by sending the people into trance and shifting the consciousness. As much as we thirst for knowledge passed down from well-seasoned elders of various shamanic traditions, we also always strive to draw out the most pedestrian and pop in our work highlighting the sacred in the everyday, ultimately attracting a much broader audience than say, all the white collar folks in Williamsburg who can afford to travel or pay hundreds of dollars for "authentic" ceremonial experiences with celebrity gurus of the spiritual marketplace. Shamanism is as simple as recognizing that dance comes from humanity's urge to mimic animal behavior and is a gateway into ecstatic experience. It's as simple as a drum beat and the imagination used as keys to unlock otherworldly and semiconscious knowledge. We also view yoga (originally) as an outgrowth of sacred meditation/movement and Enlightenment science anchored to Earth and Sky awareness as a practice of sacred, indigenous community in reverence of the Great Goddess. We remain committed to smashing the misconceptions around spirituality and the trappings of "spiritual commerce" that serve as stumbling blocks in the paradigm shift. We draw equally from yoga as we do witchcraft, shamanism, hip hop and other folk "vernaculars" we consider contemporary expressions of the OG Mother Tongue.



Go! Push Pops and Laura Weyl ritualize naked in Prospect park during the dead of winter, photo: Ian Reid, 2015

Who are some women role models you admire?

We love Siri Rishi and Kunanate of the Moon Womb circle in Harlem who have passed down some great wisdom to us. Also Pussy Riot, Bjork, Laurie Anderson, Grimes. All the artists we previously mentioned we'd love to work with...Marilyn Minter who was our teacher at SVA. Xenobia Bailey is amazing and extremely under-recognized for her artistic achievements. Great revolutionaries like Angela Davis and scholars like bell hooks and queer poet revolutionaries like Sappho and Audre Lorde. And of course the pantheon of world

Goddesses such as Kali, Lakshmi, Oshun, Yemaya, Isis, Nut, Bridgit, the Black Madonna...and maybe Nicki Minaj?



Guerilla Fashion Action with Legacy Fatale, Lincoln Center during Fashion week, photo: Marie Tomanova, 2014

How do you handle criticism of your work?

We haven't had a lot of direct criticism of our work, other than people getting offended or too turned on or both by the sexual content – which we attribute to our collective cultural schizophrenia around sex and sexuality yoking shame to women's bodies. More than criticism we've had to deal with being dismissed and misunderstood by the Art World. Although we've had a lot of good press flaunting our flashy visuals and flowing rainbow locks, we've only very recently had a few brave mainstream critics begin to clearly acknowledge the power of what we're doing, for instance a recent article in Art Slant called us "life affirming and subversive." Our work is at times both too familiar and too next level, too complex and too simple for viewers to digest. And we fall into the trap too. Sometimes when something feels so natural, so innate, so inevitable... we undervalue it. We trace what we do back to our Mothers, and the healing lineage that has existed in our bloodlines for a very long time, only now reemerging as something we can name, value and respect. For both of us, our Mothers held the keys to the magic, creativity, healing and connection to nature for the family and local community. Like most women of their generation, their work was not compensated or valued for what it was. We do a lot of our own writing about the practice, which helps. We continue everyday to digest and understand why we do what we do in regards to weaving the new paradigm.

Have there been any obstacles you've had to overcome in your creative journey, and how have you done so?

Too many! Regular financial peril, attack baby mamas, hate mail and public slander, disgruntled phone calls from Dad, neurotic curators got you on speed dial, adrenaline junkie tendencies, the false trappings of internet celebrity, creepy old men in Chelsea that think they can call you Miley even though we ain't seeing that Miley money, thirsty fan boys (ideally who we can put to work), constantly being asked to perform for free, unruly libidos, geographically specific vata imbalance, random churchmen and soldiers abroad on twisted

Facebook witch hunts, more financial peril and... our own shadow sides! There is no light without its shadow, as the stars only come out at night. Pray wild!

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