

BRING YOUR
BATHING SUIT OR
BIRTHDAY SUIT
FOR REAL

Commitment

ISSUES



NOVEMBER 16 & 17, 2011

Welcome to **Commitment Issues**, an evening of performance art at Oasis Aqualounge, where site-specific performances take place in an outdoor heated swimming pool, steam room, hot tub and locker room. Come for the performances and then stay late to enjoy the Aqualounge's amenities, which also include a sauna, two licensed bars, and multiple lounges. Secure lockers and towel service are provided.

Commitment Issues presents the work of five artists who use their bodies as the primary source material for investigating qualities and dimensions of commitment—to ideas, to performance, to audience, and to themselves. Through play, risk, ritual, and sexuality, these artists transcend fixed social, psychological, physical, and spiritual notions of commitment. Here, commitment is positioned as a subject *and* a substance that artists can stretch and subvert in the creation of their work, altering terminology, definition, and association. With this in mind, the artists have written their own personal definitions of "commitment," indirectly offering a key to understanding their work (see reverse).

You are also invited to **Processing**, a panel discussion in which the artists and the audience gather to celebrate, pose questions, and share responses to the works presented in *Commitment Issues*.

Commitment is an exceptional word, often used in varying and oppositional contexts, laden with social value and judgment. It can stand as an expression of agency and autonomy, as an exercise of one's will, or else as a state of consignment or confinement wherein liberty is denied. We might commit to a relationship or to winning the big game, but we can also be committed to prison or a mental institution. In its active state, commitment is a learned practice, not an emotion or fixed state of being. It is an engagement and a process; something that requires us to be both in the present moment and to think about the future. What does commitment mean to artists and how does it manifest in their work? For a performance artist, what is the connection between commitment and the physical/spiritual body?

In **DANA MICHEL**'s performance, *Jack*, she isolates and repeats micro-movements of her neck, finding the relationship between discipline and ritual in performance. Her commitment to something that might otherwise seem so insignificant, but which bears the weight of purpose itself in its isolation and repetition, creates profound meaning and evokes a shamanistic state. **MARY COBLE** is also bound by a course of action, a commitment to see something through. Her work asks: How does one commit to something that is unknown, untested? Is commitment a guarantee or merely a promise? For *Fighting Cocks*, Mary has recruited a second performer, a near stranger, who partners and parallels her as they engage together and simultaneously reflect an internal dialogue.

The power of commitment is the power to embrace the unknown.

ALICIA GRANT's performance, *Tidemaker*, makes us confront our own physicality through the force of her expressive movement. She compels us to face who we are, what we will do, how far we will go. Commitment makes us question how we measure success and failure. Some of the best performances happen when things don't quite work out the way we want or expect them to; we can find gifts in the unexpected. And, just as commitment requires this possibility of things going awry, there is an element of risk in all of these performances. In *Teresias*, **HEATHER CASSILS** consciously pushes the limits of her body with the knowledge that her boundaries are fixed so that she can explore their furthest edges. We see the performance as extreme, but like an athlete, she is regimented and precise. It is an exploration of the artist's mental and physical parameters with a politic in mind. Through a tough dare, she speaks to issues of social power and control, but also to the artist's own power and control of her physical body, her physique and transgender expression.

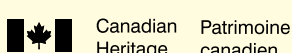
There is an element of queerness in these performances, not in regards to sexual identity, but in their unconventional and politicized notions of commitment; to social engagement, to collaboration, and to expression. It recalls a legacy of queer culture based not in heteronormative values, but rather in community; imagined, sought, and nurtured. In *Transmission*, **DOMINIC JOHNSON** relies on the audience to bear witness as he engages with his own reflection, where he meets himself in image and flesh. He necessitates the audience to be complicit in this act, exploring the space between commitment and consignment, between what we are compelled to do and how that translates into the action of doing. For this performance, we are all his partner.

Further confounding the interplay between fixed notions of commitment, the venue for *Commitment Issues* is Oasis Aqualounge, Toronto's preeminent swinger's club. The queer history of this space and the sense of community it contains, was a significant factor in the decision to bring the artists' work here. The space was formerly home to a men's bathhouse, Club Toronto; it also hosted many Pussy Palaces and was the site of the infamous women's bathhouse raid conducted by Toronto police in 2000. Oasis welcomes experimentation and a willingness to make things happen. This space doesn't sit back; it is an active participant in the event. On this occasion, the venue will also feature a special appearance by **POLE CLUB**, former students of Kitty Neptune who now operate with Kitty as a collective. Though they are performing in a space where we might expect to see pole dancers, for this event we have the opportunity instead to watch their process; to see how they work together, research, and hone their craft through an on-going practice session rehearsed throughout the evening. Removed from the sexualized experience we expect in this space, we can admire them as artists, displaying skill, dedication and hard work.

PERFORMANCE EVENT **WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 16** | **7-10** PM
OASIS AQUALOUNGE 231 MUTUAL STREET, TORONTO
\$15 ADMISSION | \$12 STUDENTS/SENIORS/UNDEREMPLOYED

COMMITMENT ISSUES | CURATED BY **JESS DOBKIN**
HEATHER CASSILS MONTRÉAL/USA | **MARY COBLE** USA/DENMARK | **ALICIA GRANT** TORONTO
DOMINIC JOHNSON UK | **DANA MICHEL** MONTRÉAL
WITH A SPECIAL APPEARANCE BY **POLE CLUB** TORONTO

ARTISTS' PANEL & RECEPTION **PROCESSING THURSDAY NOVEMBER 17** | **7:30-9:30** PM
HELEN GARDINER PHELAN PLAYHOUSE
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, 79A ST. GEORGE STREET, TORONTO FREE | ALL AGES



HEATHER
CASSILS

TERESIAS

Voice by Matthew Cassils

1 a clear, well articulated very specific and mutually consented set of rules are agreed upon to manifest a bottom line. Once agreed upon, parameters are executed to the best of both parties' abilities OR between the subject and the object (as the case may be). These terms are fulfilled regardless of doubts, fears, risk and the possibility of failure.

www.cassils.wordpress.com

STEAM ROOM / 7 to 10 PM



DOMINIC
JOHNSON

TRANSMISSION

Recorded original sound by
Othon Matagaras w/ Jacob Shirley

1 obsessions: as **a** taking advantage of a personal eccentricity **b** falling in love with a form, a style or an action **c** easing a hunch or following a pain
2 taking something apart and putting it back together again, in reverse <a commitment to a cause> **3** take me, I'm yours.

www.dominicjohnson.co.uk

DUNGEON 2nd Floor
Part One: Endurance @ 7:30 PM
Part Two: Performance @ 8 PM

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PERFORMANCE
OASIS AQUALOUNGE
NOVEMBER 16, 7-10 PM

ARTISTS' PANEL
HELEN GARDINER PHELAN PLAYHOUSE
NOVEMBER 17, 7:30-9:30 PM

commitment (noun) **1** the act of committing or pledging
2 the state of being committed or pledged
3 an obligation, promise, etc that restricts one's freedom of action
4 the referral of a bill to a committee or legislature
5 the official consignment of a person to a mental hospital or prison
6 commission or perpetration, esp of a crime
7 a future financial obligation or contingent liability

MARY COBLE

FIGHTING COCKS

Performed with D. Eli Campanaro

1 full engagement mentally and physically in a praxis of investigation that is felt to be personally and socially urgent. **2** the introduction of the potential for a "sincere" experience for both the artist and viewer. **3** the insertion of queer questioning regarding power, privilege, categorization and normalization **a** example: <queer masculinity> No exact results found for "queer masculinity". Did you mean: "questionable, tomboy, kinky, feminine, unsettled, sissy, emasculated, counterfeit, androgynous, weirdo, effeminate, aberrant, boyish, unmanly, abnormal, gay, weakened, trans, abnormal, butch, fabricated, freaky, womanly, fake, impotent, suspicious, irregular?"

www.marycoble.com



LOCKER ROOM 2nd Floor / 7 to 10 PM

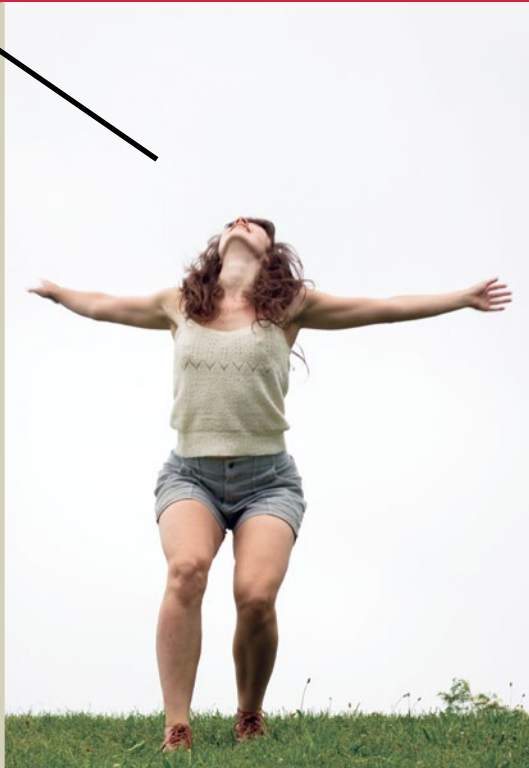
ALICIA GRANT

TIDEMAKER

Vocals by Alex Samaras and GREX

1 an act of doing something 100%; examples include a handshake, a conversation, a dance move, etc.
2 an agreement or pledge to do something in the future; personal examples include taking vitamins, flossing, meditating, keeping track of the sun, etc. impotent, suspicious, irregular?"
3 an act of following through on an agreement or pledge; also known as a function of being socially charming; actually showing up

SWIMMING POOL
9 PM



POLE
CLUB

Pole Club is:
KITTY NEPTUNE
CHARISSA WILCOX
AXLE BLOWS
SHANE MACKINNON
SHANNA MILLER

LOUNGE 3rd Floor
7 to 10 PM



The Artists' Panel and Reception is co-sponsored by the Graduate Centre for Study of Drama at the University of Toronto and the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies at the University of Toronto.

Shannon Cochrane, FADO Director | Laird MacDonald, Technician
Henry Chan, Photographer | Keith Cole, Publicity | Lisa Kiss Design
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Brenda Cossman, T. Nikki Cesare, Brendan Healy, Wendy Koslow, Luella Massey,
Mariko Tamaki, Johnson Ngo and FADO's many volunteers.



DANA MITCHELL

JACK

Sound by Bryce Kushnier

A yes to "I do".
A yes to "I will".
A no to "I won't".
A no to "I didn't".
A precursor to "I have to".
A not a maybe.

example : **a** I have made a commitment to myself to stick with this repetition and will probably need to see an osteopath a week later **b** I'm so sorry! I won't be able to make it. I've made a commitment to be in Toronto on November 16 **c** Some believe that this type of behaviour is indicative of an individual that would need to be committed. This belief is based on principles that clearly need re-evaluation.

www.bandofbless.com

HOT TUB / 7 to 10 PM