

KÖNIG GALERIE

DAVID ZINK YI

in collaboration with ANGIE KEEFER

BEING THE MEASURE

25 AUGUST – 23 SEPTEMBER 2018

ST. AGNES | CHAPEL

OPENING: FRIDAY 24 AUGUST, 6–9 PM, PERFORMANCE: 7.30 PM

I don't know where you're at geographically or spiritually, but I'm sitting here at my desk, it's August, it's summer, I'm on the top floor, right under the roof, and it is skin-melting hot in this place. I'm looking at three half-finished bottles of plastic-polymer-leaching bottled water that are all half-done, because by the time I get half-way through with one, the remaining water has turned sickly tepid in this heat, and the top dome of the plastic bottle has fogged up, and so the water tastes foul, and I've got to go out and get a new one from the store around the corner so that I can drink a few sips of acceptable water to make up for all the vital body water I'm losing while I'm sitting here in my underwear looking at an eye-singeing LED panel and pushing a bunch of plastic buttons on a heat-emitting titanium-encased electronic computing machine. I've got no fridge and no air conditioning in my studio, and that's because, in the past, up until around last summer or two summers ago, back before a critical mass of friends and neighbors thought to themselves, "Hey, you know, maybe fascism has been given a bum rap all this time," then got carried away thumbs-upping radical propaganda on the internet, and soon enough started doing that together live and in public, and then proceeded to elect a bunch of autocratic strongmen to gin up substitution pleasures like resentment and bloodlust on a global scale, we didn't need air conditioning where I'm sitting, because we hadn't yet tipped past the climate change point of no return, and we weren't yet sliding so rapidly down the oily back slope into the eco-trauma that is our most likely future and our children's children's children's, should such a generation ever come to be. But #TBH the real issue I'm really focused on in the present moment here at my desk concerns the one water bottle that happens to be turned around backwards and happens to have this piece of slogan on the back label that I just happened to notice because I was sitting here not writing, because if you want to try to live in a way that is less full of shit, which you inevitably do want when you're way too hot, then the sort of task that is really going to challenge you and push you to the edge of your abilities is to try writing a direct and inviting description of an art performance—that's going to be particularly hard to do in the circumstances. And so, not being up to the job right off, my gaze was wandering around, and my mind was wandering, too, and that's both why I noticed something to read in the first place and why I was so sensitive to everything that's wrong with it, which, when you get right down to it, is everything that's wrong with us. The thing it says on the label is "WATER AT ITS BEST." Water at its best. Water—at its best. Like, think about water. And then imagine: water at its best. That's it. That's the whole slogan, and the way I see it, that's the whole problem, too, the main reason everything has gone straight to hell. You know and I know there's no water at its best. There's drought, which is no water at all; there's dirty water full of waste and toxic algae; there's chlorinated water; there's water in the taps that comes out a little brown; there's tepid water in hot plastic bottles with higher than humanly acceptable trace amounts of synthetic molecules that also happens to turn river fish into hermaphrodites; there's water, water all

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around and not a drop to drink, like when the place where you live is submerged by flash floods and rising sea levels; and then there's water that's fit to drink. There's clean-for-drinking, acceptable water, and there's unacceptable water, and if the people deciding what to print on the bottled water label cared a nit about politics and the future of life on earth, then they would print "ACCEPTABLE WATER" there on the label, nothing else, and we'd all be a lot better off, because we'd be dealing head-on with nothing but the real, unvarnished truth, and we'd daily come to terms with the fact that the only differences among bottled waters are the looks of the packages and the kinds of crap the bottling companies are adding to something that was already perfect in order to make it into something far less perfect, but rather more marketable, and we'd take that insight and make it the lens through which we view the world and the magnetic pole by which we calibrate our moral compasses. Except of course, in a world like that there'd be no demand for bottled water, because in a world like that we'd all be able to drink from streams and puddles by bending down to the source and making a little cup shape with our two hands placed together, so pure would the earth and its elements be. Now, by comparison, the performance David Zink Yi and I have worked together to create with the participation of some of the most talented musicians alive is refreshing and invigorating in that whatever scant spoken words there are seep into at first halting then momentous percussive phrases that will stun you and grab you and guide you to an elevated state of being that may well restore your faith in the potential of art to cultivate meaningful experience with minimal means. I can assure you, the work is acceptable. But as you and I well know, no amount of clear, potable truth I could pour into this paragraph, no mere description of miraculous events, could ever convince you how to feel about 'Being the measure', because you, friend, are no sucker. Therefore, you must simply show up on FRIDAY, AUGUST 24th at 7.30 PM to the Church of St Agnes at 121 Alexandrinenstrasse, Berlin—the place where the performance first evolved during the slightly less searing, slightly more democratic summer of 2016, which is no longer a house of God but is still glorious and imposing as KÖNIG GALERIE—to see and hear and consider for yourself how a musical composition improvised by a handful of geniuses tapping out complex polyrhythms on colorful plywood boxes is an appropriate and timely response to the cynicism, anti-intellectualism, fear of difference, and abuse of power running rampant in our overheated world.

Text: Angie Keefer

'Being the measure' brings together minimalist sculptural and musical forms based on David Zink Yi's intensive research of Afro-Cuban musical contexts with a spoken word score composed by Angie Keefer, regarding opposing physiological and philosophical concepts of being and knowing.

For the performance, Zink Yi will be joined by preeminent Cuban musicians Marvin Diz (New York), Adonis Panter Calderon (Cuba), Gerardo De Armas Sarria (Cuba/UK), Alain Perez (Cuba/Spain), and Regis Molina (Berlin). Together, they will activate Zink Yi's constellation of percussive sculptures to generate an improvised polyrhythmic composition permeated by Keefer's text.

A video work created from footage captured in the nave of St Agnes during the initial development of the performance in 2016 will be projected in the chapel.

'Being the measure' was commissioned by Williams College Museum of Art (WCMA), where it was first performed for a live audience in late 2016.

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