

Apron Not Flag

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2018

Performance for Victoria Fu and Matt Rich at UMass Boston's University Hall Gallery

Apron Not Flag is customizable to the talents and interests of performers. What follows is a score that requires rehearsal and some interpretation in performance. The score derives from a conflict of feelings of rage and eternal optimism. It is important that the performance feel intentional, but mostly light-hearted and amusing, not overly dramatic, heroic, or spectacular. Performers will embody persona resembling their everyday selves. The performance has three sections. The sections can be performed one after another. Or, the sections can be performed as stand-alone pieces. But, each section can only be performed uninterrupted. A performer can read this introductory explanation aloud and call out the number for the sections when they begin. The audience will sit or stand in front of the performance area wherever possible. At moments, the performance becomes about violence and sexual abuse. It is also about visibility and invisibility, testing those, and the scope and limits of love.

START

Section 1

The performers each take an apron off the wall. They put them on slowly, finding the wrong and right place for hands, arms, heads... tying, untying, and re-tying apron strings... finding what looks good or what looks weird and good. The performers are careful to keep their backs to the audience. Together, when all of the performers are dressed, they walk slowly forward in a line, coming closer together as they do.

The performers hum the song, "Baby Love," by Diana Ross and the Supremes.

The group of performers singles out one performer and points at them accusingly. That performer then looks ashamed and walks backwards towards the wall. They walk away carefully, trying not to expose their backside to the audience, as if they have just discovered that the apron is not covering their butt. This action of the group pointing and an individual retreating repeats until all of the performers have been singled out, and there is only one performer left with no one to point at.

One of the performers stands still while the other performers bring aprons forward and hold the aprons up in front of the group of performers so that it looks like the single performer has a long flowing train of fabric in front of them splaying out on the floor, their head emerging from one big apron. The performers might also use one extra-long apron. Perhaps the performer behind this apron even dons a little plastic crown. This performer speaks: "Blah. Blah. Blahblah. Blah. Blahblahblah!"

All of the other performers boo loudly. Then, one of the performers coos adoringly.

The performers put a number of aprons together like a curtain, then raise this curtain up slightly to reveal two pairs of feet exposed. The feet do a little funny dance.

All of the performers take their aprons and shake them vigorously, shake the aprons out, shake them as if they are shaking out rugs on a porch. Some slap their apron with their hand like they are making sure to get the dust out. The performers keep shaking the aprons until they can establish a collective rhythm to their shaking. Once they establish a rhythm, they also stomp their feet, yelp, shout, and cry out to further accent and nuance the rhythm. One performer has two big wooden spoons that they use.

Two of the performers approach one another and start to caress one another. The rest of the performers watch, interested.

One of the performers watching shouts: "Don't touch me!"

All of the performers except two bring the aprons back to their original hooks and stand next to them.

The two performers who remain then carefully examine their aprons as if they are discovering an unfamiliar object of scientific curiosity. They try on one configuration of their aprons, then another. They switch aprons and try other configurations.

Another performer comes forward and describes a personal experience of falling in love and falling out of love. While this narration takes place, the other performers walk around and quietly show individual audience members what they see as the curiosities of their aprons—their points, curves, and painted flourishes.

All of the performers take an apron in their hands. It is as if the aprons have gotten minds of their own and have turned into apron-kissing fanatics. For a few minutes, the room dissolves into a kind of puppet-chaos where the aprons are dragging the performers with them so that the aprons can kiss each other. The performers make smooching and kissing noises and the occasional gasp or moan.

Two performers hold one apron taut, horizontally, like a big screen. The performers take turns running into the apron. When they make contact with the apron, the performers holding it engulf them in it. Most performers take a turn at this.

Perhaps overlapping with the previous activity, or the next, one performer says (echoing Eminem and Rihanna, but not singing, only speaking): "I'm friends with the monster that's under my bed. Get along with the voices inside of my head. You're trying to save me, stop holding your breath. And you think I'm crazy, yeah, you think I'm crazy."

Two of the performers take one of the aprons and work together to carefully fold it up. All of the other performers watch, then imitate this action, taking the other aprons and carefully folding them up.

The performers throw the folded aprons up in the air and let them fall on their heads. They repeat this activity, then freeze as bodies with aprons draped over their heads, then unfreeze and put the aprons back where they found them at the start of the performance.

Section 2

The performers pace around the performance space.

One Performer speaks, quoting from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: "I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited, where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life."

Two of the performers shout protest slogans that relate to the concerns of the day. The rest of the performers, in pairs, take one side of an apron, hold it high and stretch it out as if it is a protest banner.

Two of the performers imitate sounds of bullets firing. The rest of the performers fall to the ground and play dead. One performer uses the aprons to cover the faces and bodies of the performers on the ground as if draping them in flags or covering corpses with sheets.

One performer sits on the ground and the rest of the performers cover them in aprons. The performers laugh loudly at the performer sitting on the ground covered in aprons. The performers take off those aprons and use them to make a sort of fence around that performer who stands up and barks like a caged dog.

The performers place the aprons back on the wall and pace around the performance space.

Section 3

The performers find aprons that can be worn by two or more people at once and activate them. To do this, the performers may have to talk to each other quietly, one performer may have to crawl while the other walks, two performers might have to embrace, one might sit on top of another, etc.

While this is happening, one performer at a time comes forward and reads from a small scrap of paper. The action continues as the text is read out.

One performer says: "I am a violin. I am a cheese grater. I am a leopard. I am a threat. I am tree veins. I am a car. I am angry eyes. I am a pendulum swinging back. I am a vacuum cleaner. I am a bullet. I am a ballet. I am sun bleached emulsion. I am a neon toilet seat life preserver. I am a spoon. I am a medallion. I am a corpse. I am a hook. I am editing out. I am fabric on the wall."

One performer says: "But, I don't feel well. My stomach hurts. I am terrified. I don't think I can make it tonight. I shouldn't go out. I need more time. I didn't have lunch. I was waiting for something. I don't know what. I feel like I want to be covered up, but I can't be covered up, and I feel like I am coming undone."

Another performer says: "Stop. Don't touch me right now. All of my pockets are sizzling, full, and heavy. It isn't funny. I have things to do."

Another: "The problem is the innuendos, the jokes, him saying my laugh is girly. His comments on my clothes, my eyes, my hair. The sexually suggestive pictures, the gross cartoons in his office. So many pats on my back, his brushing up against me all the time, showing me pictures of his girlfriends on his phone."

Another: "As a young musician, I thought it was par for the course that I would be treated that way, made to feel second-rate, like my job was to go get a Danish. Now, I've had it. Absolutely. Fuck it."

Another: "I have fallen in love with all the wrong men. They have run over me, and it must stop. I am not interested anymore. I thought they were good at their work, so I would overlook the rest. Now, I could care less about any of it."

Another: "Some things feel unruly. They need wrapping paper, frames. Some things you can never wrap up."

Another: "How does one make a difference if they are so exhausted they can't get out of bed?"

Another: "I want two heads, the second one born new every day."

Another: "Will you hold me here? Press your thumb against my temple while we speak of waves? Feel my heaviness, where I am odd, prickly, unusual, and with you, unashamed?"

The performers put their aprons back where they found them and walk away.

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