

Group discussion for the exhibit

Swaggering Resonance: Le Boudoir 1994-2006.

Wednesday July 15, 2020

Participants: Elana, Annabelle, Robin, Dayna, Miriam, Itza

This transcript was made to make these discussions more accessible, to facilitate research and participant consent. Speakers participated with the understanding that they would only be identified by their nicknames above. For more information, please contact leboudoirarchives@gmail.com

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Miriam The 90s. What was it like hanging out or being a lesbian in the 90s in Montreal? And also, I'm curious about how Le Boudoir, what role it played or how it's situated with respect to other events and things going on in the queer community in the 90s. Would anyone like to take that one?

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Elana As you said, Miriam, DiversCité was new at that time and it was the whole transition from the traditional Quebecois gay pride to a much more diverse vision, multi-gender celebration of difference. And it was a time of recession, and so we had a lot of free time to have fun and organize.

Annabelle I was coming of age, I would say, early 20s, so it was just this exciting moment of discovery and of finding my people. And within the Boudoir, expressing that, our sexuality, in a very delightful way with the nostalgic context that you've been mentioning, but the 90s in general was the identity politics era, DIY. I was in this music scene, this indie thing, and queerness was a big part of that, and it was just an exciting time, I would say.

Robin Yes, I was a teenager. I was a queer teen runaway, so meeting you, Miriam, it was like Andy Warhol, it seemed to me. You were the pinnacle of so much of the art and everything that was happening, so yes, my eyes were blown open and I was just thrilled to become a part of it.

Miriam Didn't know you were so young back then.

Robin In the 90s, yes.

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Miriam I remember ACT UP, AIDs era, Sex Garage raid, Oka crisis. All these things were going on, but I was so really interested in my own identity and in queerness above other stuff. I didn't think as *intersectionally* as at least I try to now. And I remember all these political movements, but they were happening as I was coming out, so they were really intense moments of gathering and almost served a higher social function than a political one for myself at that time. And I have conflicted feelings about that, but I remember a lot going on but me not fully understanding it, I think, in the 90s.

Elana To follow up on that, I'll just mention that, at that time, I was actually quite politically involved, but we were limited to joining English, French, lesbian, gay, and we thought that that was enough. That was our, I think, definition of diversity, and there wasn't any work on racism.

At DiversCité, we reached out to cultural communities. I was the Community Day organizer, so we had the Middle Eastern queer group, mostly Lebanese queers, and we had the Jewish group, and we were happy about having many different groups coming together because those groups had felt excluded from the Gay Pride, which was held around Saint-Jean-Baptiste, and so having a nationalist bent in the past.

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So, there was, I think, a burgeoning consciousness of wanting to, but it was really limited to the 90s celebrating diversity approach rather than actively addressing racism.

Miriam Did any of you have a sense or a relationship about this lesbian separatist era that we were coming out of at that time?

Deb There was a referendum in 1995, just to go big separatist for a moment, so that was also a defining feature of the 90s, and Elana mentioned also the recession. How old was I? I was in my 30s and I had a kid at 33, so that also very much informed my 90s, so Boudoir and all that that was in terms of community was super important because, at the time, I entered kid world and that wasn't very queer, really. We were one of the first ones to do that. We were the ones, first ones, that I knew, so that ended up being a kind of a straight world too, the kid world.

But to go back to separation, the referendum was 95, and so lesbian separatism, to me anyway and my experience, was a bit less defined because of the larger political context.

And to make a note too about the particular recession of the 1990s, it really, really afforded artists to live quite comfortably if you managed to have a part-time job, just a little part-time job. Apartments were so cheap and abundant, and the cost of living was super cheap, so it was a really particular time for DiversCité and The Boudoir to flourish.

And also Dykes on Mykes. Elana and I did Dykes and Mykes. Dayna did it after us. I forget when we retired. 2004? Dayna, when did you come on? Something like that, but Elana and I did it for ten years together and I did it for 16 years, so all through the 90s. That was also part of the queer lesbian landscape.

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Dayna I find it so interesting that you're all talking about where you were at because I'm having a really hard time separating out performing and life and love and drama and how intertwined all that was.

I also just want to come back to this idea of lesbian separatism and the rampant biphobia certainly through the 90s, but that we still face the ghosts of. You're making me think of these shows, all these shows. This one time, Skid and I went and performed in Hawkesbury at this pseudo women's festival, and they searched our car before we got in.

As performers coming to this, we were just doing everything wrong. They searched our car when we got there. I don't know what they were looking for, because we did have booze and they said we could bring in booze. And were we smuggling in cis men or something?

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And when we had performed after the show, we went and swam in their lake and we were naked because we thought that we saw people naked, and people were yelling from the shore, "do you have your badge", as a way to get us out of the lake. And then were like, what are we doing wrong? And it was because we didn't have bottoms on, and the whole vibe was very lesbian separatist.

They loved Bob Loblaw this misogynist character that Skid does because at that time, I think I was his wife or something, and so he'd get to say offensive things and then I would throw him out, and they just loved that. But there was a real, I would say, pre-TERF vibe that was happening, and I can, also off the top of my head, of half a dozen shows that were like that, that certainly, it was like, what am I doing here? I'm entertaining these people and trying to figure out what to say and what to do.

And again, I'm thinking of some of the comments and feedback, I think, Miriam, that you've had over the years, I think more from Meow Mix because it's lasted longer, but like "why did 2boys perform at that in Meow Mix?", and that piece was so strong and so great. And just some of these ghosts that are part of that community.

Because certainly, performing at The Boudoir and enjoying The Boudoir as an audience member too, I was studying before I got here, of trying to remember stuff. And am I just glossing over things in terms of my own memory and our collective memory of what actually happened there? But again, it's so tied to each person's own experience.

Miriam I think that's a good segue maybe into the next question, but, of course, just go where you want as well, but I would invite you to share a memory of either just something that you remember on stage or offstage or it can be also just vibes, sensations, smells, just to see what's there.

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Robin I remember backstage being so fun, and The Boudoir was a professional show, so it was reminding me of every dance recital I'd ever been in, but it was the lesbian queer version. It would be booze or there were crazy jokes, fast costume changes. I remember sewing flowers onto my heels because I hadn't had a chance to do it and trying to get to do it

before the Second Act, and just stuff like that. Hair spraying your face. There was no perfume allergy stuff back then. Hilarious.

Elana I have a very formative memory, and as you were saying about the lesbian separatists, it was a moment of transition. So, the same way at Pride, we were trying to open it up away from just gay Quebecois men, I think in the movement, in the community, we were trying to open that up to lesbian separatists.

And I actually have a friend who was a driver of the lesbian separatist movement, who had welcomed her when she first came out. She was a runaway. She came out. The lesbians welcomed her and hosted her. Anyway, just became surrogate mothers, in a way, because they were a little bit older. And then she joined our community, which was much more diverse, and she's a woman of color, so she was able to really be a bit more who she really was with us, and with our community, and at The Boudoir too.

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But there was just so many intersections at The Boudoir, so I find The Boudoir was a reflection of all that dynamism in the movement especially because Francophones and Anglophones came together and women of color, White women came together. And so it created an opportunity for flirting and cruising and seducing among those different communities.

Maybe Miriam had a nostalgia for this 1930s cabaret and that's what she was bringing at this incredible vibe there, but I remember many of us also had a nostalgia for the 1950s for butch femme and Leslie Feinberg's books. Stone Butch Blues was influential. And so I had the opportunity to meet new butches who I'd never met before, and Francophones.

So I saw a woman there who was quite a bit older than me, and my French was not as good then as it is now, but I went up to her and I said, "Oh, je te trouve très beau" - I find you very handsome - but in my mind, I wasn't thinking that I was using the male adjective, but that was the right words, a very appropriate word, and so she responded, oh, and she really liked that.

But she was Francophone, and so hadn't had access herself to a more diverse community. She had only access to the more lesbian separatist community, which was the dominant lesbian community for her generation, so I think it really opened up things for her anyway that I ended up dating her for many years. So that's where it was formative, but it was just this opportunity for intersections, basically. I never would've met her otherwise without The Boudoir.

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Deb Something that occurs to me is that there were occasionally people from out of town that would come to The Boudoir, and that's when I would see it through new eyes. Because, as a regular and as somebody who went every year, the thrill of dressing up, I have to say, was a big part of it. What are you going to wear?

But when new people came to town, they were blown away. Blown away because even though we may have thought that perhaps what we had going here in Montreal wasn't

enough or wasn't this or wasn't that, there's lots of room for doubt and critique, but to have people from other cities come, from the States, from Vancouver, and to just have them see this and recognize that it's something that was very, very unusual. So, I remember that happening a couple of times and just thinking, yes, we're really, really lucky. This is amazing.

Robin I remember the quality always being something that people were blown away by, especially when they were from out of town. They would just be like "this is a whole multi-cabaret production." And even some of the smaller events that you would do, Miriam, if they had any theatrical element to it, they'd just like, Vancouver would not be a \$5 show. This is unreal.

00:16:29

Miriam Annabelle, did you want to say something? You're muted.

Annabelle There we go. I have so many tactile memories of Boudoir, and similar to Robin, the backstage vibe, the quick costume changes, the smell of the room. It was June. We were all sweating, and it was amazing.

And in terms of it being just a space for exploring our queerness as well and celebrating it, I think it was powerful to contextualize it with this historical context. The posters, they said, "We're here, we're queer, and we've been here forever." The show you did with Sappho and Artemis, that we did, and so that was just an exciting celebration, I think.

I also loved how, on the invitations, you approached inclusion... the way you said that you could come if you were a man but you had to be accompanied by a woman, which is a subversion of something that happened a long time ago where women had to be accompanied everywhere by men. And I just loved that because it meant, yes, we can bring our men friends. It doesn't have to be all women, so that was a cool aspect too, and I think it allowed some movement.

And gender-wise, for me, it was so great to wear a tie and a shirt and slick my hair back every year. I felt so good, and that was a wonderful place to do it. So, I'm doing the back-patting part right now here, but I think it was powerful in that it was the celebratory aspect of us just being there and being who we were and had a place.

Miriam That's interesting that you mentioned the images because that's one of our questions. Since the exhibit is drawn from the archive of the flyers, we'd love to know, do you remember a specific image? Anything to say about the feeling of the flyers or a specific memory or that kind of imagery, how it affected you?

00:20:16

Annabelle I can answer, but there are others as well. But I remember all of them. Two naked women fondling each other. There was one of a woman or a gender dressed in men's clothing. I had it on my wall for years. I just identified with it so much and it must've been from the 20s maybe, or the 1930s. It was old anyway, but the Strong Woman. That was fantastic. Those were ones that stuck in my head.

Robin I think that gender piece is so interesting because I have been thinking about, since you

mentioned it, Miriam, the lesbian separatist aspect, and I was just like listening to Ani DiFranco every day.

And what you've mentioned, Dayna, about the biphobia and stuff and just how there was so much gender diversity, but the language obviously wasn't where it is now, and so it was very much creating women's spaces, but there was so much female masculinity and diversity within those women's spaces. But I was that kid that was raised by separatists, more in the Michigan context, but not having had elders, starting with that framework and then coming to a place where the pendulum is just swinging back to the other side where now we have so much more language to talk about it.

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But the exclusionary aspects of women-only space, obviously, are challenging, and especially now, but I think at the time, it was cool to have a space where we were in charge and then could bring our male friends or just that it was for us and we can have diversity within that. I don't think it can happen now, but it was so great that it happened then in the same way.

Itza I'm curious to know if someone remembers this one. And there is another set that I would like to discuss specifically, but I think we can start with this one.

Miriam Itza's jumping right into the haunting object.

Itza People have to leave in not that long, so I just want to get them on record. And take your time.

Miriam I'll start because this is awkward, obviously. This is a picture of Annie Oakley. I took a lot of images from the circus. I don't know if this was from the circus collection, but that was one of my sources, and when I relooked at this, I was like, oh yes, gun. Problematic. And then Itza pointed to the background, and I had a gasp moment because I just didn't see it, or I saw it and it didn't register, and that's interesting to me.

And even just the gun thing, when I look at this again, I see how my personal preoccupations... I was so invested in whatever, being able to do the things men do and being tough and badass. And I have a funny relationship with guns in my family too because I come from, on my American side, a bit of a gun culture. My uncle is a gunman's rights activist. So, for me, it's been this access to *badassness* without thinking beyond that and all the colonial violence implications of that image.

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So, it's an example of one of the haunting images where I still have fuzzy feelings for Annie Oakley. She was such a fascinating character. Sharpshooter at 14, winning all these competitions against men, and self-sufficient, but then the way that this image contextualizes and puts power on her, very haunting.

Deb I'm curious, as a question, if you were to invoke or you want to use an image of Annie Oakley now, how would you do that? My suggestion here is that both things existed at the same time. She did win those competitions. She was a woman in a man's world. That's all still true, but then the rest of the context is also true, so let's say Annie Oakley were

still somebody that you... Just a hypothetical question, but where do you put that? Would you find another image of Annie, for example, in order to represent her or would she be gone?

Miriam I think, for me, she would be gone. I wouldn't go anywhere near that right now. I haven't looked at other images of her, but I wouldn't do that now, no, but I don't want to erase her or her image at Le Boudoir, so it will be part of the exhibit and it will be contextualized, and it'll be part of the haunting images.

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And I appreciate that *haunting image* is a term Itza came up with that I really love because haunting, it's so loaded. Haunting, it can be positive, like this feeling that inhabits you, but it also has this complexity to it, and I'm really interested in looking especially at the images that are fraught or that have complex feelings. And a lot of them do for all kinds of reasons.

And they did even at the time more because often I didn't know who the people were. I didn't really know what time it was. I didn't really know where they were from. I had no idea, were any of them even remotely consensual? Is that even possible at that time? I don't know. And a lot of them are very sexual, but they draw me in and, as Annabelle said, they gave me this feeling that we've always been here, and they gave me this sense of ancestry, of queer ancestry, in some strange way.

Robin I know what you mean, Miriam. I went through that when I did Josephine Baker, and that was my experience with Montreal in the 90s and early 2000s in general, which was one of exotification. And when I was so young, I didn't have the language for it, and I was still learning. My political analysis was still growing.

But with Josephine Baker, you had to perform her with all of that historical knowledge of - she couldn't have performed in the States. She could only perform in Paris or whatever the situation was, first of all, and then doing so with bananas, doing so with this hypersexuality that was empowering for her but was also, of course, objectifying. Who knows how much money was in her pocket, all that stuff.

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And I remember we did that, and it was a subversive *bat's off* to that moment in that time, but it brought up a lot for other people because I think there were two other women of color on stage who were doing similar references. And I remember some questions coming from the audience of like, are you really aware of all this stuff? And I think, at the time, our analysis, it wasn't as nuanced as it could've been, and I remember, as the performer, feeling conflicted, feeling proud and conflicted and all of those things at the same time.

Miriam I'm really glad that you've brought that up because I would say that piece in particular is its own haunting object for me because I've never spoken to you about it or the other performers or the choreographer.

And *La Flor de la Canela*, which was this recurring group number that happened every year,

I was frustrated with how White it was, and it was choreographed by three different people. I was in the middle years and then I lost my mojo and I gave it over to another choreographer, and I told her, it would be so nice if it wasn't White, or, I would love it to involve women of colour and also to speak about race, in a way. So, I think she took that as a guiding principle.

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And then when I saw the piece, like you, I had really mixed feelings and I couldn't see it just as a public. I was seeing it as the producer as well and a certain responsibility. And the line between subversion and reinforcing stereotypes, it's not always clear, of course, and it's very subjective.

So, I really didn't talk to many people about it, but I know that when I left, I remember Benji, who used to work the door all the time, saying, "oh, it was so great to see diversity on stage and I loved that last piece, thank you so much." So that's the only comment I got from it, so it helped me. Whatever. But then I'm interested that you had other discussions because I didn't hear those expressions.

Robin Yes. It was a look on a couple of my friend's faces like... You know what I mean? It brought up both things for them, but I think the audience of *The Boudoir* was fairly White. The queer lesbian community in Montreal was fairly White at that time, so I did think of myself and a few others that were part of *The Boudoir* community, and we were outliers. And it's been interesting living in Toronto where the queer community is so politicized, particularly with race issues because that is the City of Toronto.

So, looking back, I remember I was going to propose a piece. Maybe it was from *Meow Mix* or *The Boudoir*, but, and again, this was me at 20 or 21, to do a French maid thing. And I was talking to my friend about it and she had to mirror, and she was like, that might bring up different things, and I was like, what do you mean? And she was just talking about the history of Black female domestic workers.

I was just realizing that. It's the skin privilege for me realizing like, oh my God. I'm not in a neutral form. I'm an *other*, and with that racialization comes a responsibility of representation and just that knowledge.

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So yes, as a young person, where it wasn't common knowledge, the nuances of race analysis, I was still learning then, of course. I was like, I can't be silly. There's too much cultural pain for it to not hit on all those levels, and looking back, of course, there's domestic workers in my own family history, all of that stuff, and just being like, we are so much more than what our experiences are today.

Miriam Another thing that haunts me is that, if I'm being truthful, part of me is nostalgic for that *insouciance*, and I don't really know what to do with that.

Dayna I have a question and perhaps a suggestion, and maybe you're already doing it. Because this new project or representation of *The Boudoir* as an exhibition, it sounds like there's an academic aspect of it where I'm assuming there are articles going to be generated from

these conversations and essays. But it also sounds like you, Miriam, are trying to write or come up with or... trying to figure out an entry statement.

And I just want to come back to a couple of points that Robin brought up about learning. We're looking from a 2020 lens, and something also that Deb had asked you about the Annie Oakley image, is that that's part of this history now, and that there is learning happening. And as we know, part of being anti-racist, anti-colonial is looking at that type of participation.

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And I think it's a really interesting aspect that you're touching on, is this "nostalgia for," and being responsible for that nostalgia, and not omitting aspects of that nostalgia that are totally problematic because to not address them now is erasure, is omission. And I think that it's because that The Boudoir audience, the lesbian Anglo, Franco queer community at that time, parts of it now, are so White, I think people will see themselves in that type of introduction and analysis.

And perhaps that type of demonstrative acknowledgement, demonstrative responsibility, demonstrative learning will carry us all, but just it sounds like it's really important, and it does sound like you are crafting that context for this exhibition. And I just encourage you to do that because ownership of that type of nostalgia, like I was saying earlier, is, am I just forgetting all the problematic stuff that was personal or political or community-based because of my privilege, because of my memory, because of what was important at that time?

Miriam

Thank you. That's really spot on, but I couldn't do it alone. I feel like I lack the capacity and the articulateness for it, but I feel like I'm really well surrounded, and for me to gather the input. And also, Itza's being a real mentor as well, really helping figure out, and I'm not about to become an academic, but I don't consider myself very academic or intellectual, so it's really interesting to work with someone who's bringing a really academic lens to this as well. Do you have anything to say, Itza?

00:38:28

Itza

Thanks for your analysis, Dayna. I think it broadens a little bit, and it includes some of the intentions that we have had. Queerness has been always a space in which we talk a lot about gender or sexuality but not much about *trans-racialness*, which technically is included in queerness. Why should be only of one ethnicity or the other?

And so, we have done some effort, and it's difficult. It's not easy for anybody to talk about the discomfort or specially to pass after the initial reaction that is very like, ah, because we tend to close up no matter where we are. We don't want to stay there, and visual analysis and curatorial and archiving efforts are so much about returning to those points over and over and over that it's tiring. So, I think it's nice to not feel alone and to learn about this history at the same time that I have some capacity to intervene.

For me, Annie Oakley is not just in terms of the visual language that she's representing, but also, as a performer, the show in which she participated involved an Indian attack and a real buffalo being butchered and Mongoloids and Turks. And if I just copied the

language of the original posters of the performance in which she participated, that was Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. It's quite awkward.

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I was just like, what do I do with this? Is this my past or not? And how do I get to just create calm with it? If, in any way, these White lesbians in Montreal is connected to my past, I have to make peace with that. So also, for me, the haunting object allows me to acknowledge my huge discomfort with it, and at the same time saying, well, but I still sort of like it. And I certainly am here because I like and I respect the work of Miriam and all these lesbians that I am starting to know. I want to keep coming back and doing this effort and deal with the discomfort, and it's been rich.

Robin I agree. I would say it's been cool, in the last 20 years, to see intersections occur because I think, Miriam, it is very strong in terms of feminism, in terms of lesbian politics, in terms of all of that stuff, which was so necessary and so needed. Now we're just looking like, what was also happening? I don't remember the Annie Oakley poster. Did not catch the tepees in the background. I was like, yes, cowgirl. Awesome. And we learn, like I was saying before, that with colonialism... you can't separate race and colonialism from our collective histories.

Itza You touched base a little bit on Josephine Baker previously. Would you like to return to the representation of Josephine Baker in *The Boudoir*? It comes from a show called *Plantation*, so it is certainly loaded, like most works of Josephine, and if you don't want to, it's also fine, or if you want to just type something and then send it to me, that's also cool.

But a lot of the trouble with this collection is that the images are vintage, and they were produced in very complicated forms tied to colonialism itself. So even if Miriam is just copying and cutting and pasting, how the image was reenacted is not exactly her responsibility. And so, I'm always trying to address some of the other politics of making images, so here we have Josephine Baker and a quite complicated piece called *Plantation*.

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Robin I don't think I was part of these ones. It was before my time. I'm not sure how to comment on it. With my analysis at the time, my impulse probably would've been like, cool, women of color. Just purely happy to see representation of a Black woman in a lesbian context, but it probably would've made me feel funny for reasons I couldn't articulate, knowing myself back then, is, I think, what it would've felt like.

But again, Montreal, I was walking that road all the time. I remember I had a straw basket that I used for laundry, and people would say, "retournez chez vous", kind of thing, so the culture in Montreal at that time was like that still. Probably still is in some places, so surviving a vibe of White supremacy was a daily thing, but I wasn't a part of these shows at that time.

And I think looking back, yes, haunting, and a part of performance history at the same time. Josephine Baker was welcomed to perform in Paris, like so many other artists. Billie Holiday had to go in a separate entrance in the States and wasn't getting paid, so just

knowing that history is important too. It was radical at the time. I think I have to go, sadly.

00:45:04

Miriam But thank you.

Robin You're welcome. I wish I could stay.

Miriam Thank you so much, Robin. It was really amazing to have you here, and I'd love to see you next time when I'm in Toronto.

Robin Yes please. Le Boudoir, it was a magical time for me, really incredible. Meow Mix too. Those years, I look back on so fondly, so thank you.

Miriam Thank you for your contribution. Bye.

Robin Bye.

Dayna Bye Robin.

Robin Bye.

Itza Bye-bye.

Robin Take care.

Miriam Maybe this is a good time to close. I don't know. What do you think, Itza? Would you like to keep talking? Or if anyone has other thoughts, maybe not just about the flyers, but if there are any memories. I'm interested in how Le Boudoir interfaces with your identity at that time, whether it was political, sexual, gender. Maybe a little less with this group. I don't know. Any last thoughts about feeling discomfort or nostalgia related to this event? Or maybe, Itza, you should ask the question because I'm feeling completely inarticulate right now.

00:46:40

Itza I think probably you can come back to in general [unclear] on some [unclear], but I think since... We have artists, co-organizer, and audience member. That was your role, Deb?

Miriam Deb was videographer of several.

Deb And also, we've invoked the circus image a bit, and that was actually my overall feeling about it, is that I was part of the circus sideshow at the intermission. That's where all the sidelines came alive, and so I had a little suitcase, and I had a sign. And in the weeks before Le Boudoir, I'd go hunt down all of these temporary tattoos, which I don't even know where you find those anymore, but I used to find the most interesting ones, particularly after Halloween, of course.

And after I did this one or two times, somebody said "you should also just put advice on your sign because that's what you do at the same time," so then it became Tattoos and Advice on my wooden sign. So, all of this to say is that, outside of the stage performances, there was a whole other thing going on, and I'm calling it the sideshow.

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But for me, personally, because my interaction with somebody was so intimate and one-on-one, there was something that the audience became just as this person who approached my booth and wanted a tattoo, and it takes a while. You rub it on, you've got to hold it, you have to hold their arm or their hand or whatever limb, hold it with a wet sponge, and so you start talking, so the advice. So, I just want to invoke that too because I was one of those people, and there were people with food, and there were people who sold things, so the circle around the audience, the circle around the show.

Miriam Thanks for mentioning that. I think that's really an important element. Do any of you have memories about that entryway or the peepshow as well?

Annabelle We talked a bit about the peepshow off the record, and I was only involved with it one year, but it wasn't the flirty, sexual fun of the rest of my years in Boudoir necessarily. It was more like a weird creative expression. We created this little world in a room in the basement that people peeped into and saw goldfish hanging from the ceiling and me playing a steelpan, which is probably problematic as well, and people interacting with these fish.

So, it was sexual in a way, but it was also just a little weird door into another world, so that's my memory of the off-stage activity that I was engaged in. And people, they paid a little something and then came and looked. I'm not sure what they were expecting, but we gave them what we gave them.

Dayna It's so funny. I don't remember the peepshow, but now that you say it, it was like, oh, because it was so intimate in a way that seemed, even at that time, like, ah, what are we doing? Oh, but I want to see. Ah, uh, ah, uh.

00:50:49

But Deb, I do remember getting a tattoo from you and, here I am indulging in nostalgia again, of how you described it as a circle around the audience, almost like a container. I'm sure you're talking about this in some of your other groups too, but this aspect of community. That was almost a community day, you know what I mean?

The intermission was a community day inserted in the middle of the show, and if you had had a bit to drink, right, I have to go talk one-on-one now with someone. Get it together to get my tattoo, or I remember getting a tarot card reading, I think, from Jordi Rosen.

But also, just I remember too when you'd get there early to do your soundcheck or whatever for the stage show, and then, as you're doing the stage show, you realize, oh, there's all these other aspects of the evening that are being put together, and that community.

One thing I wanted to just mention is I just remember all this drama happening after the show. People breaking up and having arguments and people having sex in the bathrooms and all the good stuff, but it also felt good, like it was allowed or something, or permitted.

00:52:03

Because I also remember dudes trying to get in, and I don't want to be like, oh, all the butches, but I do remember some of the butches taking care of it, we took care of it.

Don't worry, we took care of it. At the time, it was like, oh, good. Elana, gross. There's this dude, and it would just be handled, but looking back on it again with this 2020 lens, it did seem that they were protectors.

At the Lion d'Or specifically, most of my memory's there, there was a container that was happening, but it depended on this community. It wasn't just about seeing a show. It was about seeing each other in the audience. It was about seeing Deb or seeing whoever on the outside, and it was, I see you. I see you and, and I've got your back, but also, there was this buffer to outside coming in.

Also, the area, where that area is, because sometimes drunk men would wander in and everybody would be like, you've got your eye on that guy? Just if something was going to happen, because, of course, something would happen, and that was an aspect, and I don't want to be emphasizing it as a negative, but it really seemed to be part of this community... I don't want to say containment. That's the wrong word, but that we were all there for each other, or at least I hoped that people felt that way.

I know I certainly felt that way, that it was such a special event, but there was all this messiness that is part of it that I remember these women crying and screaming at each other in that checkered hallway, but then later they made up and it was all cool, but it was like they felt safe enough to have this lesbian drama in public in front of, perhaps, people they don't know, but amongst the queer community, so safe messy or something. I don't know.

00:54:16

Miriam I think there's something about it being the Lion d'Or, and later also the Corona (theatre) but the Lion d'Or was in a not particularly safe neighborhood. It was a little bit inaccessible, not near a metro, so I think that sense of safety or containment was really nourished by that.

And I'm so pleased that we've spoken about the sideshow circle and the peepshow because it's often through other people's memories that I see some of my intentions because it's not like I did everything accidentally. But I have a real love for trying to create intimacy, and I think that the peepshow, it was never about a sexy thing particularly. It was always about the intimacy, so thank you for pointing that out.

Elana I just want to mention about the peepshow... I do have a memory of recruiting people for the peepshow to go in because we couldn't convince lesbians to go into the peepshow. And I can't remember who said it, but just that discomfort of going to see a naked woman. I shouldn't be enjoying this, but of course, I do want to see it, and so I struggled, and I can be persuasive, and I think I did get a few women in there.

00:56:10

Miriam I don't even remember them all even though I programmed them and did attend them all, but they were often experimental universes that you would look at.

And then I remember one year, Stella, the sex workers' rights organization, their version of the peepshow, I would love to talk to them about it, but it was this interactive live

action thing in a big room because there was that big room in the back. So, it was intimate but in a completely different way. You were part of this live action battle or something with sex workers... Oh my God. It's so funny how vague memories can be, but how you can have such a strong feeling but just these little snippets of images.

Itza We can wrap up.

Miriam Are there any last thoughts or shares before we wrap up?

Elana I hope there will be...

Deb Thanks for the invite.

Elana Yes. I hope, Itza, that there will be a component that will honor Miriam and her contribution to the community. Even though I know you're trying not to be self-indulgent, I'm sorry, Miriam, we want to honor you somehow for that. I think we're all moved by it. And even just this morning, it's very amazing to see your faces, to have Robin too. Super fun. What a flashback.

Miriam This event is hugely honoring just the fact that the exhibit is happening, that archives are no longer belonging to my cupboards. It's really wonderful just to get stuff out there. Thank you.

Elana Thanks for letting me sew while we do the interview. I like to keep my hands busy.

Miriam I don't believe we consented to it.

Elana I'm sorry.

Miriam (laughter) If there aren't any other thoughts, I will just wrap up by saying that, because Deb wasn't there at the beginning, do you see any red flags about anything that you said now? This won't be part of the recording, by the way.

00:58:59