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Gabriel Embeha



LOST AND DESPERATELY DRIVING (AROUND THE BED OF REALITY)

first performed on October 18, 2013

Popps Packing—A Multi-Purpose Space for Art, Detroit, MI
performed once in 2013

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LOST AND DESPERATELY DRIVING (AROUND THE BED OF REALITY)

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The writer Louis Ferdinand Céline was obsessed with dance, and ballet in particular. In his book of stories *Ballets Without Music, Without Dancers, Without Anything*, is a story called "Scandal in the Deep." This performance merges this tale with

Celine's trip to Ford's Rouge Factory Complex in Detroit as part of a League of Nations medical delegation in 1926. It incorporates an account of his affair with an American named Molly in Detroit, and superimposes Céline's own personas onto Henry Ford's strange environs and world.

These personas and that of philosopher Louis Althusser run together in an extended, thirteen-minute dream encounter between a conflicted industrial heir named Louis, and an alluring, fish-like woman he tried to love and now fears has been "disappeared."

A masked witch figure kneels on a dark stage in front of a doll tied to a chair laying on its side. The witch's face is only partially illuminated by the light of a phone. Behind her is a projected film clip, the camera set just above the dashboard level of a moving car. The voice of Céline's writer persona comes through the telephone. He tells her the story of the industrial heir named Louis, asleep and dreaming, driving through the dark, winter streets of a town as the image of a beautiful fish swims in his windshield.

This is a story in which traditions of the violence of anti-union strongmen and libertarian, anti-semitism and conspiracy theories—still alive and well in Michigan today—are confronted with Louis's patronage of the arts and the ambivalent, possibly hopeful feelings for lives so different from his own.

Allusions to human sacrifice—in an African slave port and to the

underwater musical world of Detroit techno pioneers Drexciya—help further expand the scene. These and the piece’s other content are crafted from my own years of experience as a cultural anthropologist, focused on the subtle and sometimes liberating uses of terror and fetishism in different parts of the world.

In combining these personas in this setting, this piece marks not the external, reified economic obstacles faced by Detroit today, nor those of the city’s history itself. Instead, it expresses something much less easily reified, a quality of violence and creation that remains the key element in the dreams of some other kind of life in America’s rustbelt today.



ALTHUSSER, LOUIS

ANIMALS

ANIMALS FISH

BALLET

CAR

CELL PHONE

CITY

CÉLINE, LOUIS FERDINAND

DREAM

FEAR

FILM

HISTORY

HUMAN

HUMAN HUMAN SACRIFICE

JOURNEY

MASK

MUSIC

PERSONA

STORY

TELEPHONE

TERROR

THEORY

THEORY CONSPIRACY

TRAILER

TRIP

TRUCK

URBAN

VAN

VIOLENCE

VOYAGE

WITCH