

Exhibition Prospectus

Power Positions: A Dismantling of Phallacies

January 6 - March 18, 2022

Elisabeth Jones Art Center for Social and Environmental Justice
516 NW 14th Ave. Portland, Oregon USA



Jen LaMastra, *They Said it Would Just Take Time*

The Elisabeth Jones Art Center for Social and Environmental Justice invites you to participate in our upcoming inaugural exhibition project which will run from January 6 through March 18 of 2022. This exhibition explores themes of misogyny, intersectional feminism, body politics, sex and sexuality, power/empowerment, and systems of oppression.

This exhibition includes the work of five women artists, including:

Jen LaMastra, Natalie Kelton, Juvana Soliven, Essie Somma, and Sarah Stolar.

phallacy

noun

phal·la·cy | \ 'fa-lə-sē \

plural phallacies

Definition of *phallacy*

1 a: a false or mistaken idea, constructed and perpetuated by patriarchal systems.

b: erroneous (male) character: ERRONEOUSNESS.

e.g.: The *phallacy* of their ideas about medicine and women's bodies soon became apparent.

2 a: deceptive appearance: DECEPTION

b: obsolete: GUILF, TRICKERY

3: an often-plausible argument using false or invalid inference, particularly as it relates to the role of women, their bodies, sex organs, reproduction, marriage, power dynamics, systems of oppression, etc.

Synonyms & Antonyms for *phallacy*

Synonyms

delusion, error, falsehood, falsity, hallucination, illusion, misbelief, misconception, myth, old wives' tale, untruth

Antonyms

truth, verity

This exhibition is a response to the myriad of complex challenges that woman-identifying people face in our current environmental and social climates. While great strides have been made since the first wave feminist movement kicked off the century long battle for equality, equity, and recognition, over one hundred years of forward movement has not yet leveled the playing field.

As we explore the themes of power and empowerment, we are simultaneously exploring growth, healing, and love; particularly self-love and the relational space women hold for and with one another. Our attempts to seek balance within constantly shifting power dynamics over each iteration of the feminist movement, as well as the micro-movements that battle misogyny, exploitation, and exclusion, offer new systems of engagement that disrupt the traditional patriarchal model of yester-year. We recognize spaces of power in body inclusivity, in the inclusion of the trans community, in the celebration of vulnerability. We are establishing new structures and systems, as well as building community on a greater scale. And by doing so, we have discovered that there is something ingrained, almost instinctual, in the way we trust this more egalitarian approach to governance, equality, and equity.

Humans have always sought guidance from higher powers, especially in times of major upheaval. But when the upheaval is both the root cause and the product of an outdated system intended to disenfranchise most while empowering only a select few, it's hard to find valuable guidance in the spaces in which we have traditionally sought solace. Our "higher powers" are shifting rapidly while many of us still grapple with who to trust and where we are gaining knowledge and guidance from.

This trepidation can be clearly observed in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election. For the first time in history a woman candidate was the Democratic Party's nominee for president, making her the first woman to top the U.S. presidential ticket of a major party. While there were innumerable variables in place that marred the public's ability to see her in that role, the series of events and spectacles that led to such a detrimental and regressive outcome clearly demonstrate how incapable the general public is to round this corner and trust a figurehead that doesn't look like those that have come before it.

The old systems aren't capable of providing what we need because those systems were developed out of fear, the desire to control, to oppress, and to exploit. Violence has long been the tool of the patriarchy and we are actively rejecting it and the structures it defends — a violence that persecutes anyone considered to be "other" than the status quo,

which has historically been a white, wealthy, heterosexual, and a cisgender male demographic. In the last few decades, we have all witnessed a severe increase in violence, both physical and rhetorical, toward people of different colors, races, sexualities, gender identities, religions, physical abilities, ages, and/or immigration statuses.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, our focus has shifted monumentally. We found solace in alternative forms of community and changed the way we conduct a dialogue. Traditional concepts of identity politics, of policing, labor, representation, and self-worth no longer fit within our paradigm. Our distrust for these old systems was suddenly given more space as we evacuated our office buildings and grocery stores and turned inward toward a drum beat so loud that it was hard to ignore the rhythm that resounded as truth.

With the growing chaos and upset that has characterized our last 24 months, magnified by isolation, people were pushed to look to alternative modalities and explanations for what is going on in our lives. That space for personal introspection generated the anger, frustration, and upheaval that has infiltrated our 24 hour news cycle headlines, but it also generated what could be seen as a softening, an embracing, and an offering that found its source and its momentum in kindness, compassion, and acceptance.

People have come together in ways that we have never seen in the rejection of the phallacies that we have all been spoon-fed since the dawn of organized societies. After watching the catastrophic events of the last four years unfold in Washington D.C., we have seen a significant influx of elected officials who look different than their predecessors. Communities across the nation are electing representatives who are Queer, who are Muslim, who are Black and Brown, who are Indigenous, who are Disabled, and who are Women. These delegates are taking back the power that they have been disenfranchised from for millenia.

This exhibition is a call to those who are feeling unsure or ambiguous about what could come next, as we are so clearly on the precipice of a new era. It offers new potentialities for community-making and of sharing the burden of care, in whatever capacity that entails. Without such rigid prescribed roles of power and subordination, we can be free to exist together, to uplift one another, to feel in ways that we have not felt before. This exhibition is an opportunity to practice empathy toward others, no matter their background or embodiment.