



Press Release

The Body of the People was a site-specific multimedia performance by Jeffrey Baykal-Rollins, interweaving iconic language and visual imagery into a poetic discourse concerning current socio-political disruptions. *The Body of the People*, commissioned and curated by Lanfranco Aceti, premiered at the Old South Meeting House in Boston as part of THE SOCIAL, the International Association for Visual Culture's Fourth Biennial Conference, on September 29, 2016. This project was made possible by generous grants from The Pollination Project and the Awesome Foundation.

The Body of the People was a reflection upon the state of current protest movements in the United States at the site of the very first protest in America: The Boston Tea Party in 1773. The work drew from protests that Baykal-Rollins had personally participated in and documented to create an immersive artwork questioning individual and class representation in the political upheavals taking place in the United States today. For this project, the artist created a series of large-scale drawings of protesters to be printed onto placards and digitally projected sixty feet wide.

He also compiled slogans, mission statements, and manifestos from the major protest movements in the United States at the time, including Democracy Spring, Democracy Awakening, and Black Lives Matter. From these documents, Baykal-Rollins formed a surreal and poetic text that was delivered as an address and sung by opera singer and body builder Tiffany Jackson (a.k.a. Necessary Diva), accompanied by a jazz trio for the duration of the performance (Rex Cadwallader: piano; Mike Asetta: bass; and Arti Dixon: drums).

Ultimately, Baykal-Rollins set the stage for a re-thinking and analysis of what society means and what 'the body of the people' stands for, in a political moment in which larger strata of society are disenfranchised, disconnected and isolated both financially and politically. The sociopolitical implications — of what is a very simple action — will speak volumes towards the understanding of a society devoid of conflict and will invite people to consider and re-interrogate the roots of social and political processes, which appear to be historically cyclical and stagnant.

This project is a collaboration between the Museum of Contemporary Cuts (MoCC) and the Old South Meeting House in Boston, an important historical venue and landmark as well as an active center for civic dialogue and free speech.

Biographies



Jeffrey Baykal-Rollins, Biography - Artist

Jeffrey Baykal-Rollins is a multimedia artist and educator, now based in the greater New York City area after living for many years in Istanbul. His “art as social practice,” combines drawing and painting with performance, alternative education, institutional critique, and cultural studies. Baykal-Rollins creates site-specific projects reflecting upon current socio-political disruptions such as the Arab Spring, citizens in democracy, Black Lives Matter, and gun violence in the United States, working in collaboration with numerous museums and universities nationally and internationally including Istanbul Modern Art Museum, MoMA, MoMA PS 1, SALT Istanbul, Boston University, Sabanci University in Istanbul, Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Utah Salt Lake City, University of Hawaii Hilo, and is currently working on a multimedia commission for The Connecticut Philharmonic.

Baykal-Rollins completed his BFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Glasgow School of Art in Scotland, and holds an MFA from the University of California, Santa Barbara.



Lanfranco Aceti, *Self-Portrait of the Artist as a Young Revolutionary as Performed by Francesco Sacco*, 2021. Digital photography and mixed media. Dimensions: 100 cm. x 67 cm.

Lanfranco Aceti, Biography - Curator

Lanfranco Aceti works as an artist, curator, and academic. He is Editor in Chief of the Leonardo Electronic Almanac (MIT Press, Leonardo journal), for which he has edited more than twelve volumes. He worked as the director of Kasa Gallery in Istanbul, where he exhibited a range of innovative artworks including *75 Watts* by Revital Cohen and Tuur Van Balen (acquired by MoMA) and Paolo Cirio's *Loophole4All* (awarded the 2014 Golden Nica at Ars Electronica). Recently he performed and curated *Hope Coming On* at the Museum of Fine Arts Boston, as well as curated *The Small Infinite* at the John Hansard Gallery.

In 2011, he curated the exhibition *Uncontainable* as part of the 12th Istanbul Biennial and an exhibition of digital artworks on the media facade of the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb. In 2017, Aceti curated a series of exhibitions and projects including a large public installation on the promenade of the city of Thessaloniki, coinciding with the Thessaloniki Biennial, and curated a public intervention at documenta14. In 2020/2021 he exhibited a large body of works of art at the Venice Architecture Biennale, challenging established notions of white cube and public space. As a result, he is now curating *ad infinitum*, together with Alessandro Melis, the Italian Pavilion 2021 for the Museum of Contemporary Cuts and completing *empty pr(oe)mises* for the EMST, Athens.