Opening the Black Box to Close with Free Performance on Winter Solstice

Chicago—Between 4:22 and 6:03 p.m., a free performance will close the acclaimed SAIC exhibition Opening the Black Box: The Charge is Torture on the Winter Solstice (Friday, December 21) at SAIC’s Sullivan Galleries (33 S. State St., 7th Floor). Performance collective atom-r (Anatomical Theatres of Mixed Reality) will present “The Breaking Wheel”—a live, site-specific installation, signaling the end of the collaborative exhibition from the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials Project and the passing of the solstice “with a ceremonial homage to the broken body.” The performance begins at the start of sunset and concludes at the astronomical end of twilight.

Incorporating a fourteen-foot long “interactive operating table,” the performance situates “the crudeness of early surgery in relation to the 21st century vision of a body enhanced by data and information.” Participating atom-r members include SAIC faculty members Mark Jeffery and Judd Morrissey along with Justin Deschamps, Sam Hertz, Christopher Knowlton, and Blake Russell.

Co-organized by the Chicago Torture Justice Memorials Project (CTJM), Opening the Black Box presents a selection from more than 70 proposed monuments to memorialize reported cases of torture by the Chicago Police. On November 8 Newcity named CTJM the “Best Critical Art Project In Chicago This Year,” calling the related exhibition “a sprawling illustration of the networked curating that has characterized so many great Chicago projects over the last decade.” In an article listing the exhibition’s “tremendous lineup” of programming events, Bad at Sports contributor Caroline Picard writes, “CTJM seeks to uncover and air out the darker edges of our past and present, pulling them into focus with the help of survivors, artists, activists, community organizers and lawyers.”

Along with the performance on December 21, one other program remains on the exhibition’s schedule. On December 15 A Film Festival Against Torture will present three powerful films about torture, featuring discussions with the filmmakers, at SAIC’s Sullivan Galleries. Films include The End of the Nightstick by Peter Kuttner, Cyndi Moran, and Eric Scholl; To Turn A Blind Eye by Jackie Rivet-River and John Lyons; and Beneath the Blindfold by Ines Somer and Kathy Berger. More information is available in the SAIC Press Room.

The Breaking Wheel is funded in part from a Chicago Dancemakers Lab Artist grant and developed from a commission from ELMCIP’s (Electronic Literature as a Model of Creative and Innovative Practice) Remediating the Social Conference, Edinburgh College of Art and Inspace, Edinburgh. Thanks to the National Museum of Health and Medicine (Chicago) where the collective is in residence. Tables by Bryan Saner; coasters designed by Adam Horrigan (MFA 2014).

Image credit: cris cheek
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