

The Golden Jester: A performance/sculpture in First Among Equals



Miranda: Posing-RP

The golden jester is part of a work by [Kathryn Andrews](#), who is consulting with photographer Aaron Iglar about whether the images should be vertical or horizontal. “Do you see it as a landscape, or as a tall sculpture?” he asks.

They agree that horizontal works best. Kathryn snaps a picture on her phone and shows it to the jester, who smiles to see what she looks like.

Kathryn’s artwork, “Serial Killer,” consists of a freestanding chain link fence on wheels and a series of six performances, of which the jester’s is the first. The exhibition *First Among Equals* will open with the fence blocking the gallery entrance. Then the jester will push it across the floor to a spot quite close to a work by [Wu Tsang](#), a silkscreen and glitter poster advertising his film *Wildness* which will be screened here this summer. “I hope he doesn’t mind,” Kathryn says. “It’s kind of a violent thing to throw your work against someone else’s.”

Which is the point. Kathryn’s piece, the title of which invites the question of who the serial killer is here, will abut each of six other artists’ pieces over the run of the show—the fence pushed to a new position once a month by a new statue who will pose in front of it for two hours before exiting the gallery. “Certain formal relationships will emerge,” Kathryn says, admiring the way the jester looks next to Wu Tsang’s piece: “She’s all gold, and he has this gold text.”

What happens when one artist’s work begins to encroach on another? Is it a detraction or an enhancement, a problem or a gift? How different is this juxtaposition from what happens in every gallery every day—works changing subtly because of the context in which they are installed? “This functions as a critique of that,” Kathryn says. “In a joking way.”

While Aaron finishes setting up his equipment, the gallery buzzes with last minute preparations for the opening. One crew member hangs wall labels. Paul, the chief preparator, shows the guards where visitors can’t walk, and what walls they can’t lean against. The jester stretches, bows, shakes out her arms, making her bells jingle. “I’m ready!” she announces, getting up on the plinth and striking a pose.

“That’s better,” Kathryn says. “More confrontational.”

In her mask and puffy sleeves, the jester shakes out her hips and makes some disco moves.

“Can you look down?” Kathryn asks. “Now look at us again.” She asks me, “Which way do you like it?”

I like the eyes up. It makes the statue look more alive, more sentient. Kathryn agrees. “It looks weirder,” she decides.



(l to r) Kathryn Andrews, *Serial Killer*, 2012, mobile chain-link fence with intermittent performance, installation view. Courtesy of David Kordansky Gallery and Christian Nagel Gallery. Wu Tsang, *WILDNESS*, 2012, silkscreen and glitter. Courtesy the artist and Clifton Benevento. “*First Among Equals*,” March 14- August 12, 2012, installation views, Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania. Photo: Aaron Iglar + Matthew Suib / Greenhouse Media.

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First Among Equals is open at ICA through August 12. The next performance/sculpture will be on view Wednesday, April 4, from 6-8PM, as part of the official exhibition opening.

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