

LUMkA

Scourtes, Zoe. "LUMkA: Abstraction as Reality," HAZZE MEDIA, 24 January 2024.

HA

LUMkA: Abstraction as Reality

by Zoe Scourtes



In our current society, there exists an inherent endangerment in the performance of femininity. As I sit with art curator Cortney Connolly to discuss LUMkA gallery's most recent exhibition, we discuss this endangerment as Connolly questions "how to express female sexuality outside the ranges of specialized media."

LUMkA opened their first exhibition entitled SKIN/IN SITU this past December 2023 at an intimately sized space in the East Village of New York City. With works such as paintings, sculpture, and experiential film by upcoming artists Ruby Chen, CC and Nina Gonzalez, alongside an environmental performance, ENVIRONMENT 001 for the opening night, the gallery found itself farther from intimacy and closer to a space of abstraction.

As I talk with Cortney Connolly in our interview, she claims that "abstraction is the most truthful explanation of reality." SKIN/IN SITU attempts to explore sexuality, not through means of objectification, but in a way that allows sexuality to be expressed by the means of abstraction. The exhibition "dances in the gray area between active and passive sexual expression" Connolly stated in a press release at the exhibition, while "examining the cycle of endangerment applied to the performance of female sexuality."

The exhibit's live performance, ENVIRONMENT 001, creates an environmental happening that visually allows the audience to view this dance between active and passive sexual expression, one that relies on what Connolly calls an audience activation. The active and passive sexual expression result from the two performers — one as dancer and the other as caretaker — which creates a juxtaposition that poses the two against each other yet into each other, serving as an attempt at finding equilibrium of sexual expression.

www.LUMkA.com | INFO@LUMkA.COM | [@L_U_m_k_A](https://www.instagram.com/L_U_m_k_A)

LUMKA

As the performance begins, the lights dim, and four walls of clear vinyl enclose the two performers. A pole stands in the center of the enclosure, with one performer dancing on it as the other, the caretaker, moves around the space, with motion that attempts to protect. A mix of clay, water and red pigments are spread across the scene as a blood, one that changes the visual experience alongside an ever changing sensory experience as smoke and experimental ambient music continues. Red light illuminates the room and despite the intimate space for the viewer, the actual performance feels far away, witnessing a scene that is so everchanging that the only thing to do is watch. The caretaker creates holes in the vinyl enclosure and sews them up, momentarily granting visual access to the audience then immediately taking it away. No narrative of the performance can be contrived, as the audience seemingly loses control of the ever changing environment.

Yet, losing control may be what protects the feminine sexuality of the performance. When exploring the concept of ENVIRONMENT 001 in our interview, Connolly describes this scene as what she calls an “embryonic chamber,” one with a caretaker and dancer, both working together to protect, yet express sexuality. The whole performance works against each other, but also into each other, simultaneously attempting connection and detachment at the same time. The caretaker exists to protect the dancer, walking around innately, but focus is still drawn to the dancer. The two performers are seen, but also protected, as the vinyl that encloses them is opened and closed. The performance is actively sexual, but also passively, as the focus alternates between the dancer and caretaker. Connolly explains that “through all of history, sexuality expressed in a feminine sense is always endangered,” and the balancing act acquired by the performance disables endangerment as no narrative can be formed. The feminine sexuality is now protected.

The paradoxical expression of femininity that the LUMKA gallery produces dances between the lines of active and sexual expression in order to protect. But what does it mean to protect femininity? In ENVIRONMENT 001, the caretaker must exist in the performance for the dancer to continue, for the scene to not be objectified. Abstraction thus forms to protect, rather than explain reality as Connolly mentions. The paradoxes must continue to avoid audience narration and instead produce audience activation. SKIN/IN SITU successfully attempts to find an equilibrium amongst its many paradoxes, expressing female sexuality through abstract means.

SKIN/IN SITU was on view December 2-4, 2023 at 616 E 9th St, New York, NY. The next LUMKA exhibition will be held in Spring 2024. For more information, visit lumka.com.