

7A*11D

festival

of performance

art 2014

Toronto

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF PERFORMANCE ART
7A*11D

In Memoriam

Frank Moore

June 25, 1946 – October 14, 2013



Frank panhandling in front of Altman's department store, New York, USA early 1970s. PHOTO unknown

I [...] encourage artists who have not been so blessed with bodies that mark them as misfits to aspire to be misfits anyway, to do misfit art anyway — even if you are handicapped by your normal body. Your road is definitely harder than my road. But that's life.
(FRANK MOORE from *Art of a Shaman*)

Frank Moore was way ahead of his time — which is to say that he made his own time and made time his own.

Frank was born with a form of cerebral palsy that left him unable to walk or even speak. Luckily, magically, he was a fearless adventurer who managed to achieve what most radical and uncompromising artists only dream of: respect, notoriety, a loving tribe of family, colleagues and friends, and a profound and enduring body of work that encompasses performance, video, web media and writing. For Frank, luck and magic were qualities that could be nurtured: luck, by learning to bypass or reshape personal expectations that corresponded to limitations; magic, by delving into the power of human intimacy to transform reality.

Spending time with Frank felt a bit like taking a psychedelic drug: heightened intensity, an altered sense of awareness and bodily sensation, and a tendency for everyday tasks to take an eternity while being absurdly engaging. Eating together — which meant having to feed Frank, since he couldn't hold a utensil — could take hours, and was a messy, boisterous affair that sometimes shocked onlookers (especially restaurant owners and patrons) but was a sensual, libidinal celebration for those doing it. Talking with Frank meant speaking his words for him as he spelled things out using a head pointer to identify letters on a tablet that was a bit like a Ouija board. It took time and a lot of attention and filling in the blanks and careful verification to communicate this way, but all of that effort contributed to a sense of the significance of what was being said. Sometimes being with Frank meant dropping words altogether, diving

into a universe of touch punctuated by Frank's raucous cooing and frequent muscle spasms, and guided by a trust in the warmth, intelligence and mischievousness that seemed to pour out from his pores.

Frank actively promoted an image of himself as a wounded healer, a shaman who used performance art as a way to create a sense of intimacy and community and connectedness. He revelled in facing taboos and exploring the power of erotic play. Yet colourful and exuberant as he could be, Frank was also never afraid of boring his audiences, because he understood boredom as being a doorway to a different state of consciousness. Things always got way more interesting once the impatient ones left.

If Frank was a pioneer of intimate, body-to-body performance, he was also a champion of the way new technologies can amplify individual expression and creativity. He was an early and prolific DIY publisher. Rather than focusing on a limiting image of his spastic body as isolating, he realized his body as a node of myriad connections and endless extension. So much so that even though Frank is dead, one might just as soon say that there is something prescient in his words still posted on the Shaman's Cave page of his website: "I am always here!" He is here, in the bodies he touched and invited to touch him, in the circle of caregivers who carry on his work, and in the vast archive of materials that his collaborators continue to upload to his website and Vimeo channel.

— PAUL COUILLARD

www.eroplay.com | vimeo.com/frankmoore



Playing With Reality,
Berkeley, USA 1988
PHOTO Linda Mac

Based in Berkeley, California, **Frank Moore's** remarkable output of work included countless intimate ritualistic works for individuals and groups, an ever-changing popular cabaret show called *The Outrageous Beauty Revue* that ran for three years in the Bay area (San Francisco), numerous videos, publication projects (including a regular 'zine called *The Cherotic [r]Evolutionary*, personal manifestos such as *Art of a Shaman*, and his extensive website *The Web of All Possibilities*), even a web radio station (LUVeR) and a Vimeo channel. Along the way he attracted a community of creative collaborators, including his wife Linda Mac, colleague and former student Michael LaBash, as well as Corey Nicholl, Alexi Malenky and Erika Shaver-Nelson, who were with him when he died.

Frank Moore appeared in the first 7a*11d festival (1997) as part of a series called *Five Holes: Touched*, curated under the auspices of FADO. Frank's promotional text for *The Cave of the Metasensual Beast*, his performance with Michael LaBash and Linda Mac, asked audience members, "Will you let yourself be guided into the cave of passion, imagination, healing human exploring touch, and the unlimited erotic possibilities of blindness? The Beast is waiting for you!" Staged in the basement of Symptom Hall as one of eight simultaneous performance installations, the piece took place in a fabric cave where, unbeknownst to the audience, Frank lay naked on a mattress. Participants were required to drink a small cup of "somala" (ordinary tap water infused with thousands of years of mythological

imaginary around the ability of magical elixirs to invoke altered states, provide protection, and bestow magical powers) and then allow themselves to be blindfolded before entering the cave. Only a few audience members were permitted in the cave at any one time. What happened inside the cave was determined by — and remains the secret of — the individual participants. This was Frank's second trip to Toronto; the first was in 1995, when Pleasure Dome presented his work *The Passion Cave* at CineCycle. Frank returned to Toronto once more in 1999 as part of FADO'S *TIME TIME TIME* series, orchestrating *Dying is Sexy*, a 48-hour erotic, musical, ritualistic, intimate, personal experience that featured a cast of friends, artists, musicians and co-conspirators from Toronto and the United States.