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WOMEN IN PERFORMANCE SERIES



Oklahoma Contemporary and Fresh Paint debut *Honey*

Inspired by narratives of desire and intimate moments between strangers, *Honey* is a new work about women and how much they're willing to give to get what they need. Tickets are now on sale for the show, which will run June 14-16 and June 21-23.

Oklahoma Contemporary is partnering with Fresh Paint, an aggregate of Oklahoma City performing artists, to produce the world premiere of *Honey*. Katherine Wilkinson, queer director and creative producer based in New York City, will direct.

Commissioned by Oklahoma Contemporary, *Honey* is the second production in the Women in Performance series, which began in March with *The Other Mozart*. *One Woman Sex and the City* will take the stage this October.

"We have assembled a dream team of powerful and dynamic women from New York and Oklahoma to help create this immersive theatrical experience dealing with our relationship with our bodies and how we use our bodies to get what we want, need and desire in a capitalistic society," said Fresh Paint Artistic Director Chelcy Harrell. "The creation of *Honey* perfectly aligns with Fresh Paint's mission of cultivating and developing new works and working collaboratively with artists from a variety of different backgrounds."

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Inspired by interviews conducted in 2017 and 2018 with Oklahoma sex workers and patrons, *Honey* is a devised theater piece about female labor and the ways in which our bodies and work are valued in America. *Honey* features an all-female-identifying ensemble.

“The differences between an actor, domestic worker, server and sex worker are slim,” Wilkinson said. “They all utilize their bodies, charm and interpersonal skills to earn capital. The way we differentiate value of work has to do with a complex matrix of classism, sexism and racism. *Honey* is a discussion about the ways in which we look at labor and why we give more weight to certain professions and shame others.”

Honey is a devised work, a play made from scratch. Starting with narratives, ideas and core questions (and not a set script) the creative team built the play in a room at a farmhouse just outside Oklahoma City. From experimentation, improvisation and research, *Honey*'s collaborators brought the show to life in a unique and nontraditional way. Each artist in the room had a direct hand in the formation of each moment, motif and scene onstage.

“We believed that the best way to build this work is collaboratively, and our devising process has involved an all-female team conducting interviews, physical explorations and live improvisations,” Wilkinson said. “We have been immensely inspired by the bravery and courage of the many folks who shared their story with us, and our performance will hopefully illuminate the ways we can all be more compassionate and understanding towards one another regardless of our professional choices.”

Jeremiah Matthew Davis said *Honey* was a logical fit for Oklahoma Contemporary's Women in Performance series.

“Through three distinct works, the Women in Performance series explores various facets of contemporary society and the diverse roles women play within it,” Davis said. “In both its unique creative process and subject matter, *Honey* is a groundbreaking experimental project that engages with issues of labor and gender. Oklahoma Contemporary is proud to create the space for Oklahoma artists to collaborate with artists from New York and contribute their perspectives to the national conversation.”

Wilkinson said those perspectives are key to *Honey*.

“*Honey* brings to light voices that have traditionally been marginalized,” Wilkinson said. “The narratives of sex workers are often vilified and stereotyped. Our production creates space for a different conversation around sex work and challenges our preconceived notions of what sex workers do in their day-to-day lives. *Honey* examines the motivations, choices and parallels that sex work has with other professions and lifestyles.”

More about *Honey*

Honey was initially workshopped in collaboration with Columbia University in September 2017. The show will be workshopped again in New York City next spring.

The creators' description of the show: “Melissa has found herself on yet another business trip, alone in a hotel. Holed up in room 305, she is left to wonder about the worth of her life, her self, and her body, as those around her struggle to build the lives they long for. Can she do the same? *Honey* is a new work about women and how much they're willing to give to get what they need.”

Produced by Fresh Paint Performance Lab and Oklahoma Contemporary

Executive producer: Chelcy Harrell

Core Collaborators and Writers: Morgaine Gooding Silverwood, Emma McFarland, Chelcy Harrell, Katherine Wilkinson

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Director: Katherine Wilkinson

Original Music: Ben Harrell

Scenic Design: Nicole Emmons-Willis and Meghan Buchanan

Props and Costume Design: Lia Oldham

Lighting Design: Candace Tyson

Performed by: Kaylene Snarsky, Korri Warner, Holli Would, Claire Fountain, Morgaine Gooding-Silverwood, Julia Watts

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A media kit, including this press release, production photos and headshots, is at bit.ly/OCHoney_drop. Past press releases and additional information are archived at oklahomacontemporary.org/about/media. Interviews with Fresh Paint and Oklahoma Contemporary staff can be organized through Director of Communications Lori Brooks (lbrooks@okcontemp.org).

About the Women in Performance series

Oklahoma Contemporary launched Women in Performance, three major performances created and performed by women, in 2018. With three unique shows, the series highlights the incredible creative contributions made by women in the performing arts.

About Fresh Paint Performance Lab

Fresh Paint Performance Lab is an aggregate of Oklahoma City performing artists committed to cultivating a supportive space for local artists to experiment, collaborate, and produce new and developing works. Since their inaugural performance in October 2016, Fresh Paint has workshopped several local artists' new plays, musicals, dance pieces and other multidisciplinary performing arts pieces, including Ben Harrell's new musical *Walk*, Michael Todd's paranormal folk opera, *Gallow Walkers*, and Isaiah Werner's play *Scissortail*. Fresh Paint strives to build and foster a community of local artists, regardless of background, medium or style, and to provide a forum in which artists can see their work come to life.

About Oklahoma Contemporary Arts Center

Oklahoma Contemporary ignites creativity. An arts center for learning currently located at State Fair Park, our mission is to encourage artistic expression in all its forms through education, exhibition and performance. We focus on living artists, the art of now and the art of what's next. We are committed to providing accessible, inclusive arts experiences for everyone by hosting free exhibitions, events and performances year-round and by offering low-cost, high-quality arts classes and camps for youth and adults.

Oklahoma Contemporary is in the midst of building a spectacular new arts education and cultural resource on a 4.6-acre site at NW 11th and Broadway. In addition to providing a world-class facility for exhibitions, performance and education and a breathtaking addition to the OKC skyline, the new campus will become a "creative commons," a place for community to gather, create and experience art. Our Studio School will tell the stories behind the art of now and teach the skills to create what's next. Incorporating programming from our community partners, Oklahoma Contemporary will be a hub for artistic experiences of all kinds and offer the city an event space like no other.

Oklahoma Contemporary is a regional 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization founded in 1989 by businessman and philanthropist Christian Keese and Kirkpatrick Foundation Director Marilyn Myers.