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**An Exhibition: AS FAR AS THE HEART CAN SEE  
ELIZABETH FOUNDATION NYC – September-TBA 2018**  
323 W. 39<sup>th</sup> Street 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor New York, NY 10018

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**MALTA NATIONAL COLLECTION ACQUIRES BILLY**  
Hold on to your hats and maybe your socks. Billy's performance and solo exhibition in the 2017 Valletta International Visual Arts Festival VIVA led to his work joining the national collection at MUŻA – the Maltese National Art Museum.

He flew to the Island Nation of Malta with a small carved-wood, sculptural self-portrait, miscellaneous documentation and *Water Vial #22* of 110 from the first day of his 2,367.4-mile Mississippi River Swim as performance and environmental statement. Additionally, there were some site-specific materials, sculptural elements and an inscribed brass plaque to *Honor the Hidden & Collected Waters* on Malta.

With the assistance of Google Translate and DL Hunt of Bluff Echo Arts, he created a multilingual audio file and 6 foot graphic scroll of the Standing Rock water protectors' chant *Mni Wiconi* ("Water is Life" in Lakota). The mantra, translated into over 100 languages, filled the room and flowed down one wall.

His collaborators, Toni Sant, Sabrina Calleja Jackson and Marco Cremona, gathered other prescribed materials for rituals around the island followed by an installation and performance in the St James Cavalier galleries next door to the Malta Parliament building.

Water usage on Malta has been deemed unsustainable by European Standards. Put simply, there are just too many people and not enough water. Guided by world-class hydrologist Marco Cremona, water samples were collected in a series of performance rituals. Margarita Baumann recorded video and stills of the process - with editing and explanatory titles added later by Toni, Marco and Billy – for the multi-media installation and eventually a wider *Water is Life* release.

Marco has won numerous environmental awards for his projects including the Hoter, which takes basically sewage – black not gray water – to potable standards. Hoter water became *Sample #1 of 9* with digital read-outs confirming a toxic to drinkable transition. Water takes on a character from its containment as it drinks in minerals and other elements along the way. This was dramatized with a stone Marco had collected on the first Maltese Expedition to the top of Mount Everest. He placed the stone into purified water to create *Sample #6, Water touched by Everest*.

*Sample #8* was left empty. Imagine a world without water or water contaminated to a point beyond repair. **NO WATER.** *Sample #9* offered relief from #8. It was simply drawn from the

bathroom tap in room 509, Sliema Marina Hotel.

The Maltese waters collected in performance rituals and the Mississippi Swim waters became part of the installation. The newly edited *Water is Life* video and a live performance brought the work full circle - from points around the island - back to the formal exhibition space. Portions of all the samples were combined in Billy's Ocean Harp for a brief recital. He followed that with a condensed and altered - especially for Malta - rendition of his signature *River Rap* on Mbira. Afterwards, the precious fluids were poured into the glass and steel sculpture, *Collected Water*, as a final resting place destined for the nation's permanent collection - along with other items from the exhibition.

**BILLY X KEYNOTE'S ART IN ODD PLACES NYC**

"Meet the AiOP Keynote Speaker – A Conversation between Nicolás Dumit Estévez Raful and Billy Curmano" became the 2017 Art in Odd Places festival invitation on [artinoddplaces.org](http://artinoddplaces.org)



The Expeditionary Art Adventure Team, High-line Elevator, NYC  
Selfie-Photo: Bella Via

The 13th annual curated event featured 61 artists altering the everyday in every way with "provocative works of interactive art

in unexpected public spaces along 14th Street in Manhattan". The AiOP mission has always been to promote the unfettered exchange of ideas by stretching the boundaries of communication in the public realm with diverse art works outside the confines of established public space regulations.

It began as an artists' action led by Ed Woodham around the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. In 2005, Ed re-imagined the idea for NYC as a response to dwindling public space and civil liberties. It caught on and has become a much-anticipated annual New York event as well as spreading to other cities. It's a grassroots project fueled by the goodwill and inventiveness of its participants. When asked to keynote, Billy was honored and thrilled, but unsure as to AiOP expectations. He was set at ease when advised he could simply do whatever he wanted.

With a nod to "water, water everywhere, but not a drop to drink" and "in the abundance of water the fool is thirsty", Billy formed an Expeditionary Art Adventure Team to search out water sources along, above, below - and - from and between the East and Hudson Rivers. The newly collected water, along with two vials from the Mississippi River Swim and a touch of Dada accompanied his band of "Ambassadors for Clean Water".

He developed the *Sculptural Acoustic Roller-Vessel* (SARV) in his MN studio. It's a convertible airline style roller bag that can change from luggage to sculpture and back. It was equipped with twin Pig-Nose amplifiers to accommodate the pre-recorded *Water is Life* mantra in dozens of languages along with his musical instruments.

His merry mariners, Margarita Baumann, Bella Via, Dr. David Christenson, Lilith Dorsey and John Pendergast, recorded data and created spectacle all along 14<sup>th</sup> Street and beyond. The project's scout team, Billy, Dr. Dave and Margarita, set out on Oct. 12 at 11:46 am with *MS Swim Water Vials #1 & #2*. They stretched the festival's normal limits on 14<sup>th</sup> Street to the bank of the Hudson River Park where they collected *Vials #3 & #4*. (40° 44' 15" N. and 74° 00' 36" S. with Elevation 20') The daily water and data collection continued through October 15<sup>th</sup>.



*Sculptural Acoustic Roller Vessel*

Photo: Ed Woodham

Back on 14<sup>th</sup> St. for the reception, AiOP founder Ed Woodham, joined the ranks of the other festival organizers to serve pizza and drinks from street side vehicles. The Expeditionary Art Adventure Team continued with a "catch as catch can" free form improvisation interacting with AiOP artists, tourists and New Yorkers as they traveled. The Keynote occurred on the street colored by Billy's Ocean Harp, Mbira and vocals accompanied by the legendary John Pendergast on violin. We acknowledge with great gratitude, three blessings from Mother Cabrini arranged through the co-operation of NYC artist extraordinaire LuLu LoLo.



Mother Cabrini courtesy LuLu LoLo Photo: Margarita Baumann

**2017 ART IN ODD PLACES: SENSE** was curated by Jodi Waynberg, Nicolás Dumit Estévez Raful and Rocío Aranda with Curatorial manager Christina Daniels and curatorial assistants: Claire Gohorel, Katelyn Ahladas, Sofia Reeser del Río, Jing Cui, Kara Nandin, Paulina Kowalczyk, Zoé Fornara, Emilia Shaffer-Del Valle, Katrina De Wees, and Susan Joy Rippberger.

**TRAVEL TRAVAILS:** The twin alligator heads are a bit too large, but - for the most part - the *Sculptural Acoustic Roller Vessel*, its wheels, axle and multiple accoutrements folds into itself for travel and flight. I suspected the twin amps, cables, clock and test tubes would raise an eyebrow or two at X-ray. The TSA was thoughtful enough to leave a nice note that read in part:

"To protect you and your fellow passengers, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) is required by law\* to inspect all checked baggage. As part of this process, some bags are opened and physically inspected. Your bag was among those selected for inspection.

\*Section 110(b) of the Aviation and Transportation Security Act of 2001, 49 U.S.C. 44901(c)-(e)

### **THREAT LEVEL 3 AT WAC & THE WAY BIG OOPS**

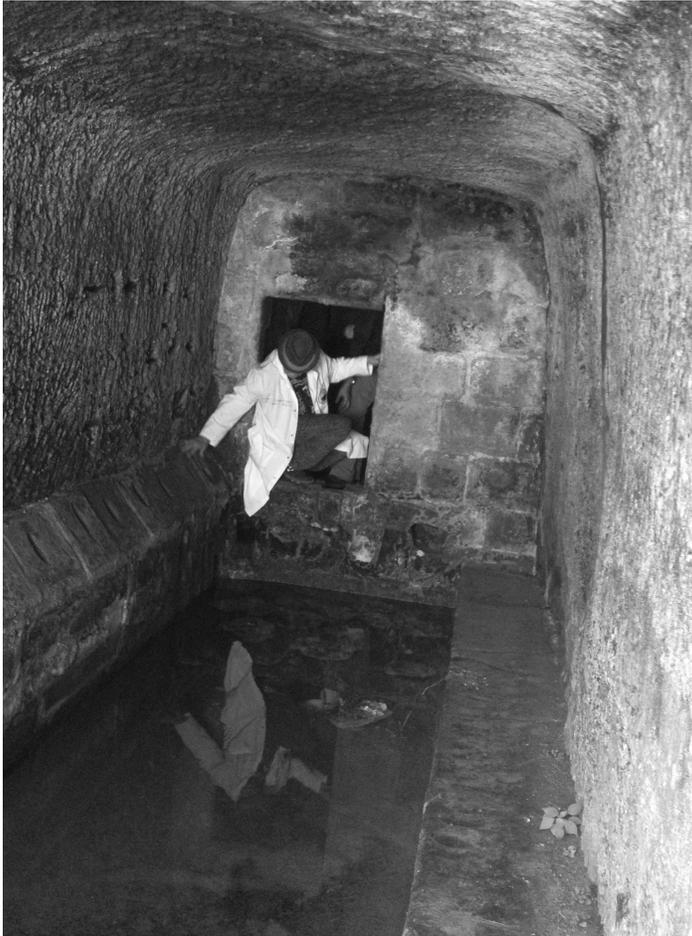
"Threat Level 3 turns their Orange Alert into electro-acoustic free jazz meditations on world music. Ex-Milwaukeeans Billy X. Curmano and John Pendergast pluck, strum and bow their stringed and keyed instruments as Minnesotan Steve Smith blows tenor sax and didgeridoo." -Jamie Lee Rake, *Shepherd Express*, Milwaukee (02/19/09)

*ORANGE ALERT* was recorded back then, but the CD was only recently nominated for a Just Plain Folks Experimental Album Award with two cuts, *Fuzzy Wasn't Fuzzy* and *My Rose*, nominated for Song Awards. At the time of this post, we haven't received the results, but we are hopeful. Incidentally, *Billy X; Solo Set* received a 2006 JPF Experimental Album Award.

The bands live appearances are somewhat rare since the guys live in 3 different states, so when they agreed to play for a Winona Arts Center accessibility fundraiser in July - excitement was in the air. Unfortunately and a big whoop de oops, Billy fractured his humerus and seriously dislocated his shoulder on May 16<sup>th</sup> (A date that will live on in infamy). Details are unimportant, suffice to say months have passed and he's still recovering.

His doctor sat him down and said – in sports parlance – I’d call this a season ending injury. He advised against playing the gig and even offered the classic “Dr’s note”. But, as the show must go on, Billy devised a harness to hold his shoulder in place and altered his repertoire for limited mobility. Things went well enough and New Xers, D.L. Hunt, Sean Dalton and Richard Harding, joined in for a grand finale. While shoulder slung, he also managed to pull-off a live performance for Wisconsin Public Radio’s *Big River Radio Wave*. It was broadcast statewide on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Fortunately, his broken humerus hasn’t left him humorless.

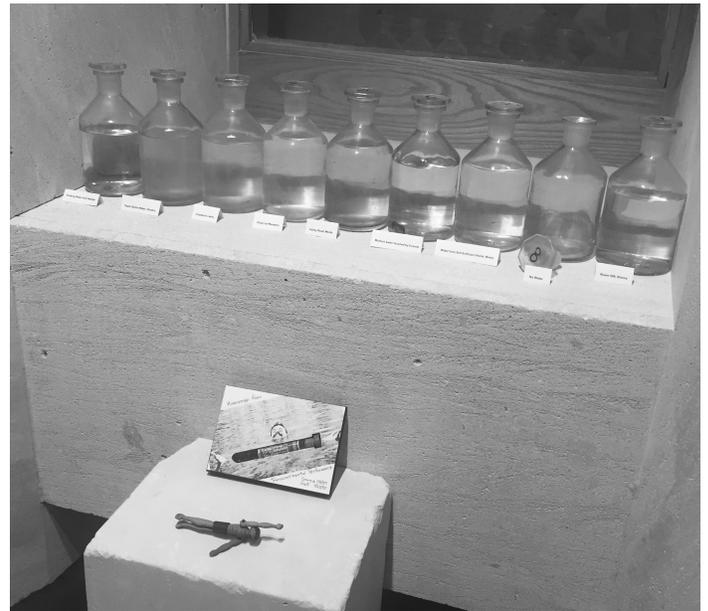
**A Picture is worth a thousand words so - HERE’S MALTA:**



*Hidden Water Collection Sample 4: Dingli, Malta 4/12/17 14:20*  
Photo: Margarita Baumann



*Installation View Honor the Hidden Waters (VIVA) St James Cavalier, Valletta, Malta*  
Photo: Ms Elisa Von Brockdorff



*Installation View Collected Water Samples 1-9, Sample 8 No Water, MS River Vial #22 and Mini Billygig #3*  
Photo: Margarita Baumann

The 9 cruets were numbered, identified and displayed along with Vial #22 and collected as follows:

*Water Vial #22* was collected the morning of 8 July 1987 from the Mississippi River Headwaters at Lake Itsaca, MN on the first day of *Swimmin’ the River*.

The Maltese Water Samples were all collected on 12 April 2017:

*Sample 1:* Drinking Water from Sewage via the Hoter - 11:51;  
*Sample 2:* Hyper-Saline Water Ghadira Nature Reserve - 12:50;  
*Sample 3:* Chadwick Lakes - 13:55; *Sample 4:* Ghajn tal-Hasselin, Dingli - 14:20; *Sample 5:* Soakaway Valley Road Msida - 14:59; *Sample 6:* Maltese Water touched by Everest - 15:30 (Purified Mater dei Hospital water with Mount Everest stone); *Sample 7:* Water from Self-Sufficient Home, Mosta - 18:54; *Sample 8:* No Water - No Time; *Sample 9:* Bathroom Tap, Room 509, Sliema Marina Hotel - 15:20



*Installation Detail Headwaters with MS Water Vial #22 & Mini-Billygig #3, Carved Maple & Paint*  
Photo: Margarita Baumann



Collected Waters Photo: Margarita Baumann Inscription:

Honor the Hidden & Collected Waters  
Mississippi River & Maltese Waters  
Unite  
Valletta International Visual Arts Festival 2017  
Mni Wiconi Water is Life



Live Art with collected waters Photo: Ms Elisa Von Brockdorff

The Minister of Culture and other dignitaries made opening remarks for the festival before joining Billy's performance at St James Cavalier. They came together with the backdrop of a solo exhibition, the continuous *Water is Life* mantra playing quietly and evidence of live art from around the island. The children in the front row were especially delighted and giggled as Billy spilled then admitted to often spilling some of the waters and making a mess.

His serious underlying messages are often cloaked in humor. He realized early on, there's a more lasting connection with laughter than preaching.

#### NEW TO THE MALTESE NATIONAL COLLECTION

These are objects Billy left behind for Fondazzjoni Kreattività and MUZA the Maltese National Art Museum:

*Headwaters* -2017- Altered *Mr. Ambassador* Post Card (Pub. 1988) embedded with a signed and numbered, hand etched glass vial (#22 of 110) filled with water collected the first day of the Mississippi River Swim from Lake Itasca, MN (8/July/1987)

*Mini Billygig #3* (8.5" x 3 3/4" x 4) 2000 - Carved and painted wood sculpture (Maple), edition of 5

*Collected Water* Pyrex flask, stopper, support stand, ring, clamp and engraved plate with Maltese and Mississippi River Source Water, 8 glass cruets with *Honor the Hidden and Collected Waters* and 1 empty glass cruet.

They also retained the Mp4 video documentation, *Mni Wiconi Water is Life* (13' 38") and the Mp3 sound file (3' 13"). For context, he donated *The Search* DVD with *Performance for the Dead* (14' 00") 1983; *Swimming the Mississippi* (29' 00") 1997; *Death Valley Desert Classic* (42' 22") 2000 and *Earth Speaks* (01' 00") 2009. Last, but by no means least, he left a copy of *Futurisms Bastard Son*, published by Mark Pezinger Verlag, Vienna, Austria in 2012 for the library.

The smart money is on buying up Billy's work while you can still afford it.

#### ALI'S UNITED KINGDOM REQUEST & RESPONSE

This handwritten letter from the United Kingdom greeted Billy on his return from Art in Odd Places:

Dear Mr Curmano,

My name is Ali. I worked as a Receptionist for an engineering Co. I have a copy of *Who's Who in American Art* and whilst I am not in anyway connected to this Publication, I am hoping that you might consider drawing on the enclosed Postcard?

My plan is to write to everyone in the Book and see what happens. Some people collect autographs, I have always been fascinated by "Artographs".

Kind Regards Ali

It reminded Billy of several postal art projects - so he responded by working up the card and returning it to Ali. After he returned from Germany a month later, another package from Ali awaited him:

Customs Declaration Gift/Cadeau Sweets 100g 2.00

It contained Jelly Tots, Candy Kittens and a Tate Britain Postcard

Dear Mr Curmano,

Thank you for taking the time to respond to my cheeky request with your riotous Picture Postcard.

You are most kind

Best wishes Ali

The shameless commerce department adds "No copycat freebies" there's a store at the [billyx.net](http://billyx.net) site where you can purchase Billy's work. He's gotta eat.

#### PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS REVOLUTIONARY

Revolution was in the air. Revolution was in Billy's head. And Revolution was the theme for the 58<sup>th</sup> Midwestern Invitational at the Rourke Art Museum in Fargo/Moorhead.

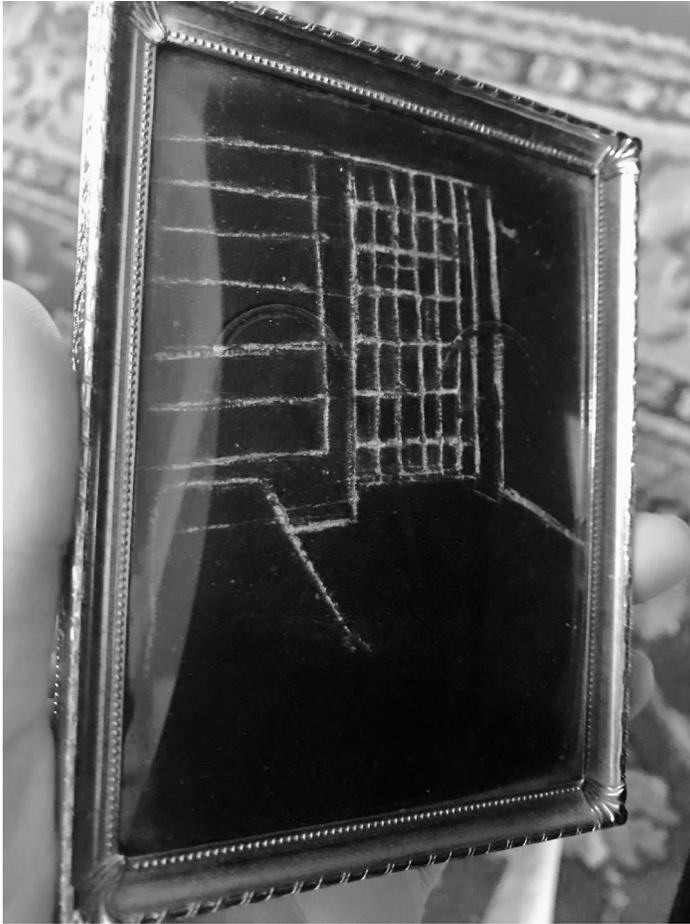
The overlap inspired Billy to hand-color a front-page Milwaukee Journal Sentinel press photo of him being dragged off to jail from a protest demonstration. Several riot-stick wielding and helmeted Milwaukee Policemen - with badges removed to mask their identity - carried him away. He had the distinction of being the first "Arrest" in the *Student Strike to End the Vietnam War* at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee.

In those days, the officers were sometimes more concerned with beating their prey than thoroughly searching them. Billy was

able to conceal a leather wallet and small P-38 military style can opener on his person. He etched into the leather a partial interior view of his cell – looking out.

He sent the newly altered image, *Portrait of the Artist As Revolutionary*, to the Midwestern Invitational and added the etched wallet, *And You Lands in Jail*, as a diptych for a Winona Arts Center Exhibition. Ironically, it's a photo of Billy, but to be on the up and up, he paid the Journal Company for the rights to use it in his book, *Futurism's Bastard Son* (Find it on page 79 and the book in the billyx.net store).

Patricia Watts, a founding director of the environmental art organization, Eco Art, was poking around Art Works USA when she discovered *And You Lands in Jail*. She was working on a video interview with Billy for their library collection. The little etching tickled her enough to snap a hand-held image.



*And You Lands In Jail* (3"x4")

Photo: Patricia Watts

### **Emergency INDEX - UGLY DUCKLING PRESSE #6**

The latest *Emergency Index* was launched at The Kitchen, an iconic NYC experimental performance space. *Volume 6* of what's become the "Bible of Performance Art" will feature *Time be my Bitch*, Billy's opening night performance for *Enacting the Text* at New York's Center for Book Arts. The independent annual publication attempts to collect the best of the year's performances in the artist's own words. It's a great gift and resource for those that want to be in the know. Suggest it to your local colleges, libraries and so on. Copies are "lovingly hand-packed in Brooklyn" and available from:

[www.uglyducklingpresse.org](http://www.uglyducklingpresse.org)

### **A NO-PRO SHOOTS "THE FACE OF THE SWIM"**

A volunteer's snapshot has sort of become the "face" of the Mississippi River Swim. Among other uses, it was the banner image for Salt Lake City's annual water festival, AiOP ran it in a *Brooklyn Rail* ad and the Hemispheric Institute for Performance and Politics has requested it as a full page spread to complement the text of the *River Rap* for their new catalog.

The image is not just a fashion statement. The hour after hour, stroke after stroke – Zen - of a daily swim in open water, often left Billy at the Sun's mercy. The solar rays could burn direct and reflect off the surface. Sunscreens were inadequate. Even his eyelids once caught the burn. He began coating his ample Roman Snoz with zinc oxide and wearing large brimmed hats. A winged ally dropped a feather near Oquawka, IL. It dressed up his brim and he swam off happy as an otter. The all-volunteer project lacked professionals and relied on everyday people to record what they could and let editing sort it out. Dr. Darlene Hlidek snapped the iconic moment.

It's not the first time non-pros have risen to the task. Their support and dedication helped him land the 2002 *Henry Hampton Award for Excellence in Film and Digital Media* with the video *Swimming the Mississippi* –shot by volunteers. *Deface Billy* has become another face that stretches beyond its expiration date. The 1981 *Deface Billy Project* was re-created in a fall 2016 Center for Book Arts invitation and it will be included as an interactive page in their new catalog due out soon.

2017  
**aiop SENSE**  
NYC

Curated by Nicolás Dumit Estévez Raful  
with Rocío Aranda-Alvarado (El Museo del Barrio)  
and Jodi Waynberg (Artists Alliance Inc)

Launching  
**AiOP 2017 SENSE Thinkers-in-Residence  
Program and the Archive of Festival Projects**

Thinkers-In-Residence spent time on 14th Street throughout the Festival weekend (October 12-15) reflecting on artists, pedestrians, publics, and participation. Their responses take the form of writing, walking, image-making, and on-the-spot conversations with the public. Featuring: Blanka Amezkua, Hector Canonge, Shereshe Francis, Matthew Morowitz, Ali Osborn, Marlène Ramirez-Cancio, Joseph Shahadi, Harley J. Spiller, & Priscilla Stadler.  
Visit: <http://www.artinoddplaces.org/blog/>  
Archive of artists projects: <http://sense.artinoddplaces.org/artists/>  
Image: Billy X. Curmano, *Swimming the Mississippi* (1987-1997) photo by Darlene Hlidek

AiOP Brooklyn Rail NY Ad

Photo: Darlene Hlidek

### **AS FAR AS THE HEART CAN SEE - Exhibition - Fall 2018**

**The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Project Space - NYC**  
Billy joins Nao Bustamante, Irina Danilova Project 59, Beatrice Glow, Ivan Monforte, Linda Mary Montano, Praxis, Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens, Martha Wilson and others in an Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts Project Space exhibition curated by Nicolás Dumit Estévez Raful.

"*As Far as the Heart Can See* explores creative efforts that, however connected to historical artistic lineages —the avant-garde in general, performance art, social practice, or the effort to

meld art and life—have shifted gear, broken away, found a space in the wilderness, or gone astray from institutional canons and the search for validation in order to speak truth.

This exhibition focuses on some of the bold acts that artists have given themselves permission to carry out to achieve self-transformation, expand their own fields, or to push one to rethink disciplines such as ecology, thanatology, gender studies, anthropology and social work. Many of the established contributors refer to what they do as a vocation. Their work also indicates the efforts and decisions younger generations may have to make and the risks they may need to take in order to respond to art as a call from the heart, to be pursued boldly" - Nicolás Dumit Estévez Raful

The Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts is a public charity, dedicated to providing artists across all disciplines with space, tools and a cooperative forum for the development of individual practice. The Foundation is a catalyst for cultural growth, stimulating new interactions between artists, creative communities, and the public.

The EFA Project Space on 39<sup>th</sup> St. launched in September 2008 as a program of the foundation. It is a collaborative, cross-disciplinary arts venue founded on the belief that art is directly connected to the individuals who produce it, the communities that arise because of it, and to everyday life. By providing an arena for exploring these connections, artists are empowered to forge new partnerships and expand ideas. Plans are still sketchy, but Billy plans to bring or send objects to New York and perform during the course of the exhibition. He's delighted to share the spotlight in such great company.

**KSMQ PUBLIC TELEVISION (MN)** has requested a 2018 studio visit with Billy for their popular "Off-90" art series. Stay tuned and don't forget to support public broadcasting.

#### FREE POSTAGE REFUND

Limited time opportunity - Save a stamp when you join. For a free postage refund, copy the following paragraph on a separate sheet of paper, check the box, sign and return the form along with your membership application and dues.

#### REQUEST FOR FREE POSTAGE REFUND:

I request the full refund value of the U.S. postage stamp used to apply for my membership in the Billy X Curmano Fan Club. I understand if I am selected as a potential member, a U.S. Postal Stamp of equal or greater value or its equivalent will be included in my membership package. I understand further, if my membership is denied, I will forfeit the postage and any and all benefits of membership.

Sign \_\_\_\_\_



The Keynote (AiOP) Photo: Nicolás Dumit Estévez Raful

## Your INVITATION To FUN & ADVENTURE

### The Billy X. Curmano Fan Club

If you enjoy contemporary artist Billy X. Curmano, here's a great way to stay abreast of his projects. Join the discriminating crowd and become a member of Billy's own Fan Club. Send the form, all correspondence and annual membership dues to:

**ART WORKS USA 27979 COUNTY ROAD 17  
WINONA, MN 55987 RING: 507.452.1598  
billyx.net@gmail.com**

Momma Curman, President Ex Officio Perpetuitas  
Kimberly Haedtke, Vice President Emeritus

#### MEMBERSHIP TYPES

**\$2 CHEAPO:** Wallet size membership card - some mailings.  
**\$15 IRREGULAR:** As above, plus well wishes from all of us.  
**\$25 REGULAR:** As above, plus a handsome wall certificate.  
**\$50 DELUXE:** As above, plus Great Moments In Performance Art Non-adhesive stamp series. All appropriate club mailings.  
**\$250 DELUXE PLUS:** As above, plus original print.  
**\$750 SUPER DELUXE:** As above, plus gift certificate and weekend vacation at Scenic Art Works USA (travel from Winona, MN included).  
**\$1500 SAINT:** As above, plus vacation extended 1 week.  
**\$5000 BUDDY:** As above, plus 1 of Billy's special pizzas and Billy will pal around with you for 1 week.

**Institutional rate:** Add 20% surcharge for 2 newsletters. 1 to circulate - 1 to archive. **Family rate:** Add 10% and the whole family gets membership cards. Make checks payable **Art Works USA**. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery. Premium substitutions may be made at our whim.

#### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Okay Kimberly! I just can't wait; here are my 2016 annual dues. I want to join Billy X. Curmano's Fan Club.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Type \_\_\_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Add E-mail and we might send up-dates and so on.