

Hi everyone! For those who don't know me, my name is Madelyn.

We've now reached the end of the Festival of Fools, and some of you are probably still wondering what this project is about. To be honest, I'm still wondering that myself.

People who've been here since the start may recall its earliest murmurs in stories of coyotes, a mysterious bag of scrolls, and a tiny praying clown. But if this project definitively started anywhere, it was with the question, "How can we make it easier for people to change their behaviour, without telling them what to do?"

I came upon this question while ruminating on the potential for change in a time when mass extinction and ecological collapse appear imminent on the horizon. Until this project, I had been focused on how we might ease the external constraints faced by those with a desire to mobilize in response to these types of large-scale challenges. Yet what if we all woke up tomorrow to a 15-hour work week, a basic income, and accessible resources for the work of our choice? Would everyone suddenly feel prepared to change their habits and behaviour or pursue their life's work?

I'm sure it wouldn't hurt, but...

When it comes to behaviour change, the constraints are not only external, but internal. We all recognize that someone who is sick or injured may not have the same capacity to work, dream, or play as someone in good health. Yet afflictions of the mind and heart are far more likely to go unaccounted for.

Parallel to all the partying and performances, the Festival of Fools has had a strong undercurrent of discourse around mental health. I would say the majority of this project was actually just my journey of self-discovery as I sought to investigate my own invisible afflictions, revisit the experiences that have shaped me, and build a healthier relationship with myself. This process took time and was not always pleasant, yet I am privileged that I could do it at all. It is the performance of introspection and self-care, and it is far from universally accessible in our society.

The performance was made participatory by my corresponding effort to initiate conversations with others and be there for them as they engaged with matters of mental health in their own context. Equally, these people were there for me, listening and supporting as needed. For this I would like to extend a special thanks to Anastasia Statsenko, Viv Crowe, Maya Jain, Thomas Heinrich, Gabriel Townsend Darriau, Joelle Dube, and Sevan Belleau.

In her essay "Sharing One Skin," Okanagan First Nation scholar Jeanette Armstrong writes that in Okanagan culture, emotions and feelings are understood as the capacity whereby community and land intersect in our beings and become part of us. By this capacity we are one with others and all our surroundings. This bond is fundamental to individual wholeness and wellbeing. Dissociation, by contrast, is the sense of feeling disconnected from yourself and the world around you. It is a survival response that ensures the basic functioning of those experiencing trauma by reducing their capacity to feel for, with, and into their broader relations. This enclosure enables an immediate sense of stability at the expense of

certain depths of feeling and the ability to transcend one's experience as an individual; to feel a part of something bigger.

I believe humans, in their "natural" state of connectedness, experience the subjugation and needless suffering of other humans and non-humans alike as unbearably painful. It is a form of trauma. Dissociation is the survival response that follows when we do not feel capable of resolving a conflict or walking away from it – in short, when we feel trapped and without hope.

The metaphor of a house on fire is often invoked in relation to climate change. I raise it the metaphor of humans on fire. How can we expect people to feel prepared to address external crises without first acknowledging and attending to internal ones?

I don't mean to suggest they are entirely separate. Studies in restorative justice demonstrate how systemic violence produces intimate partner violence. Intergenerational trauma is another example of how painful histories live on and continue to cause harm in diffuse, hard-to-measure ways. By making this distinction, my intention is rather to draw attention to how the quality and character of our relationships reverberate at different scales.

What is the difference between the person who is crippled by the challenges they face, and the person who rises above them to break the cycle of violence they were born into? Is it strength? Courage? Where do these traits come from?

I'd like to talk about something that has given me the strength and courage to confront certain challenges that have historically felt overwhelming to the point where I just shut down and gave up. This year I have felt more seen and supported than ever before. I've been lucky to find an incredible network of people who've walked beside me, talked with me, asked me questions, had my back, cared for me, and just generally made it possible for me to feel less dissociated and more capable in every way.

When humans meet each other with understanding, encouragement, and support, everything changes.

I'd like to quote my friend Andrew Woodall and state that art brings people together. *Music* brings people together. *Parties* bring people together. *Free access to space* brings people together. *Talking* brings people together. *Collaboration* brings people together.

The Festival of Fools has been a deeply collaborative venture. Special thanks to casual miracle worker Sarah Brown for sharing her time, creativity and mentorship, and for sending me the call-out that got us this space through Art Souterrain's program, Creer des ponts – which happens every year, so if you're interested, check it out!!

Thank you to the freakishly talented Skylar Aung-Thwin for saving my ass both at the opening and closing events. I've been inviting you all to come watch me trip, stumble and fall while she's been kind enough to provide something actually worth showing up for.

Thanks to Alexandre Leroux and Backwood Studio for bringing us 'Shadow Work', the sickest Halloween party of the season. Thanks to Marianne Rouche and Eva Giard for shadow-dancing with me, and to Sarah and Rami Farhat for exhibiting their soulful art.

Thank you to everyone at DASA for their insane effort in bringing over a dozen emerging artists to the space for the pop-up event A/MUSE. No thank you to whoever brought all the spray paint to A/MUSE. Thank you to Thomas for play-fighting with me. Thank you to Grace Karam for exhibiting the gorgeous series of paintings in the front. Thank you to Florencia Vallejo for saving me a lot of money on printing. Thanks to anyone I forgot to thank. And finally, thanks to all of you for being here tonight.

Now, onto the main event: finding out if time travel is, indeed, possible!

I've been a little more secretive about this for obvious reasons, but the Festival of Fools has also involved multiple pie-based time-traveling experiments. I've yet to make a successful trip into the future, although I did at one point manage to relive the past using apple pie.

If my calculations are correct, then this banana pie, propelled at just the right angle and velocity, may be able to transport me to the point in time that I am trying to reach.

\$50 to the first person to volunteer to smash this pie into my face!

\*pie is smashed into Maddy's face\*

WHAT YEAR IS IT?!

As it turns out, time travel is both impossible and unnecessary.

Whether you want to right past wrongs, pursue your dreams, or tell people how you feel...  
THERE'S NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT!