

Kate Barry

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Justice (After Margaret Dragu)



Kate Barry's *Justice (After Margaret Dragu)* is imbued with symbolism. Barry, maintaining a direct meandering gaze, leads us through a cycle of potent gestures. Her gaze is defiant and unwavering. Throughout these rotations there is a ritualistic pattern of sampling and allusion. She is looking back and onward through her sites of reference and toward the audience witnessing. The carefully titled work implies a riff. This piece is both a mirroring and an homage to one of Margaret Dragu's most illustrious personas – Lady Justice. This role is something like a mask we employ when we feel less than fine, well, or victorious. There is a beautiful image I wish to return to over and over in my head. In the frame there is a rose in Margaret Dragu's mouth. Barry's work positions itself in a historical lineage. This unwinding scroll reveals invocations of sexual violence, empowerment and intersubjectivity. This scroll is unending.

Kate Barry ascends before the audience dressed a white Grecian gown and balaclava. The stage holds a tree stump as well as a table covered with a white cloth. We are waiting for something or someone to arrive. We are waiting for some meal or content to reveal itself. In the far right corner of the stage sits an enclosure concealing a string of objects. Barry steps behind the enclosure and emerges carrying a stack of fake paper mint from a game-board and a clock. She steps onto the stump on the opposite end of the stage. She is holding the clock and stack upwards and outwards. Her hand holding the stack is loose. Leaves invariably fall to the ground. She steps off the stump and places the clock and the remainder of the stack on the table. Barry emerges from the enclosure a second, third and fourth time. She is holding a pillow and a block of ice. She is holding roses and a bottle of wine. She is holding a My Little Pony and a measuring cup. Between these cycles she interjects her strides by carrying a large piece of paper along the parameter of the stage. A rape statistic is etched on each sheet in blue marker.

“Studies of rapists state that rapist are ordinary or normal men.”

“The trauma from rape does not cause homosexuality.”

“Sexual assault within relationships has been illegal in Canada since 1983.”

“Only 6% of sexual assaults are reported to the police.”

“No one asks to be raped.”

Barry returns to the centre table. She shuffles the stack of money and begins to deal them into the measuring cup. She gently removes a rose from its bouquet. She holds it for a moment and continues to gaze at the audience. She pull the petals off the rose. Her grasping is firm and smearing them she lets go. The petals fall on top of the pretend mint. She re-presents the bottle of wine before opening it and pouring it down her arm, palm, and fingers. This elixir conjures a melange of meaning. There is blood, love, violence, birth and death.

