Imaginary Activism: The role of the artist beyond the art world

A brand new spoken-word monologue by Guillermo Gómez-Peña.

In recent years, Gómez-Peña has explored two distinct territories in his solo work: The ongoing re-writing and re-enactment of some of his classic performances (he calls this his “living archive”), and writing and testing brand new material dealing with radical citizenship and what he terms “imaginary activism.” In both cases, the artist’s unique format for revealing to an audience the process of creating, languaging and performing material becomes the actual project. It is precisely in his new solo work where his literature, theory, pedagogy & live art come together in a wonderfully strange mix. Not one solo performance is ever the same.

Gómez-Peña has spent many years developing his unique solo style, “a combination of embodied poetry, performance activism and theatricalizations of postcolonial theory.” In his ten books, as in his live performances (with his troupe La Pocha Nostra), digital art, videos and photo-performances, he pushes the boundaries still further, exploring what’s left for artists to do in a repressive global culture of censorship, paranoid nationalism and what he terms “the mainstream bizarre.” Gómez-Peña examines where this leaves the critical practice of artists who aim to make tactical, performative interventions into our notions of culture, race and sexuality.

- This piece is well suited for a traditional theater but can also be presented in a black box, auditorium or gallery space.
- Interdisciplinary workshops of anywhere from 1-5 days can be added to a presentation of Imaginary Activism to create a fuller residency.

For bookings and project materials please write to: pocha@pochanostra.com

Some background on the piece:

“Tonight I am standing on the ruins of globalization. I am reentering the world; a witness to the collapse of the global economy and the emergence of myriad citizen movements against authoritarian regimes worldwide. I can see the political streets of planet earth from the balcony of my recent memory: mostly youth across class and race, rebelling against a world without jobs, quality education, equality, justice, dignity and any kind of hopeful future; many Pocha alumni and young friends and peers are part of it. I am so proud of them. My source of hope is in their vision and performative actions.

Organized primarily through texting and social media, the Spanish indignados are quietly filling up La Puerta del Sol in Madrid as the valiant Arab youth are defying autocracies from Cairo to Tripoli. The joyful camps of the Occupy movement across the world are capturing our imagination. Wikileaks releases “classified documents” that reveal the corrupt intentions of governments worldwide. Topless women in the Ukraine are embarrassing corrupt politicians and the church. The silent marches against violence led by a Mexican poet often number half a million people, including relatives and friends of those who have been killed by organized crime. Everywhere I turn, I see imaginative and brave citizen actions. I feel humble and temporarily hopeful.

Unfortunately, time passes and everything goes wrong. Muslim autocrats replace civilian autocrats. The Spanish right wing wins the presidential election. The Occupy movement moves to page 12 of the NY Times, and then disappears altogether. Julian Assange is in hiding at the Ecuadorian embassy. Marcos is dying of lung cancer, and the PRI is back in power in Mexico -- What?!!! Now we happily vote with nostalgia for authoritarian regimes and rampant corruption?? Nowadays it seems like hope can only last for a few months.”