



Hazel Meyer: Muscle Panic

Blueprint for a Team

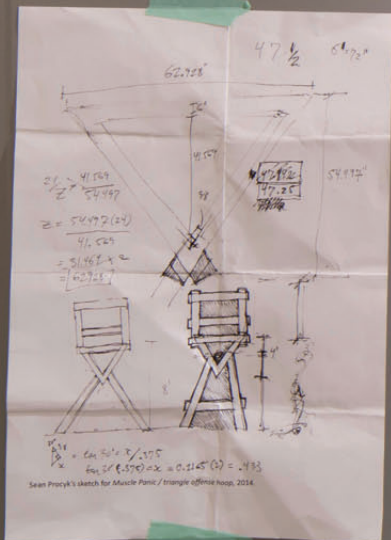
Hazel Meyer: Muscle Panic

In celebration of the 2015 Toronto Pan Am and Parapan Am Games, the MacLaren presents Hazel Meyer's *Muscle Panic*, an ongoing, multifaceted project that proposes new interrelationships between artistic and athletic practices. Comprising a major outdoor sculptural work, a collaborative performance and an immersive site-specific installation, *Muscle Panic* thwarts typical assumptions of athletic culture by highlighting the creative, emotive and queer dimensions of sport.

Muscle Panic began in 2014 in the village of Warkworth, Ontario, as part of Mercer Union's offsite programme and Sunday Drive Art Projects. From the rafters of an old barn, Meyer hung handmade banners reading "Muscle Panic", "Endurance" and "Girl Jock, Lez Hulk, Sport Dyke". A custom-built, sixteen-foot basketball hoop was mounted on the barn's straw-covered dirt floor. Inlaid with a translucent pink triangle—an international symbol of gay rights—

the structure is based on an archival photograph of a 1901 women's hoop the artist uncovered in her research. Meyer's hoop is not actually functional. The net, crocheted by the artist, is stitched together at the bottom, which would leave a ball trapped post-shot. Instead, the structure serves as an altar, a meeting place, an unlikely monument that encourages play, sweat, acceptance, hard work and camaraderie. It asserts the right of women, specifically queer women, to participate in sports. In the Warkworth barn, tiered bleachers encircled the hoop, forming an illicit basketball court on which a rogue team of red jersey-clad women scrimmaged and ran drills during a one-night performance.

Muscle Panic comes into its second iteration in Barrie, Ontario during the summer of 2015. The towering hoop is installed in the MacLaren's Massie Family Sculpture Courtyard, transforming this space into *Muscle Panic*'s home court. The courtyard is lined



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on three sides by large windows, which evoke a gymnasium atmosphere in which fans spectate from behind protective glass. A series of illustrations, hand-drawn by Meyer, enlarged and printed in white vinyl, are adhered to windows and visible from both inside and outside the court. The drawings, which represent basketball referee calls ranging from “time out” to “three points” to “intentional foul”, provide a visual link between the courtyard and the accompanying installation component located on the MacLaren’s lower level.

The MacLaren’s Molson Community Gallery becomes *Muscle Panic*’s locker room, stocked with custom painted basketballs hanging in crocheted nets, hand-drawn posters and playbooks, banged-up lockers, cast-off jerseys and sweaty socks. The underground change room serves an incubator for *Muscle Panic*, a sanctuary in which players can exchange moments of strategy, tenderness and team spirit. On a gym bench (borrowed from a nearby elementary school) lie copies of the team’s handbook. Peppered with Meyer’s drawings of referee calls, ponytails and basketballs, the handbook offers insights on subjects as diverse as contact, desire, drills, rage, practice, sweat and seriousness. In the words of the handbook’s author, and Meyer’s collaborator, Cait McKinney: “the handbook takes on the status of a sacred text. Drills are instructions for learning with others, the blueprint for a team, and so these drawings carry the affective weight of feeling part of something, succeeding or failing together.”

Just before dusk on July 9, 2015, the night of the opening reception, five *Muscle Panic* teammates burst through the









MacLaren's front door, red-faced and sweaty, after a five-kilometer run along Kempenfelt Bay. The athletes maneuvered through the crowd and into the courtyard—their courtyard—to stretch, run drills and peel off damp uniforms. Between exercises, Meyer read aloud passages from a variety of theoretical and historical texts, addressing the struggle for gender equality in sports. Near the end of the performance, Meyer and McKinney re-enacted a contentious moment in basketball history: the infamous on-court kiss between WNBA players Diana Taurasi and Seimone Augustus. Through moments of raw emotion, repetitive gestures, hard-earned skill and steadfast concentration, the performance revealed an aspect of ritual that is central to both sport and art.

A feeling of camaraderie threads together the various tenets of *Muscle Panic*. Notions of pride, community and equality are palpable at every juncture. In an interview on the opening night, Meyer comments: "As a woman, as a queer woman, as a person with Crohn's disease—with a sick body—as somebody who grew up poor, these are all things that are implanted in you to *not* take up space. A big part of it [my practice] is to fight back against societal forces that tell you if you are A, B, C, D then you should be quiet and move to the side. It's a politic that, to this day, I feel strongly about. And it's quite true: if given space, I will take it up." And she does. Strategically, Meyer uses installation and performance to stake her claim in both the art world and the athletic world. Her art serves as a validation, and celebration, of her position as artist, as athlete and as teammate.

– RENÉE VAN DER AVOIRD, Exhibition Curator



ENDURANCE

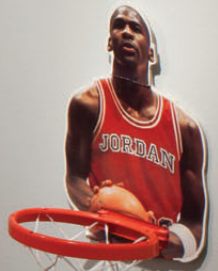


PEPSI
THE STATIC THAT PULLED THE FIBER FROM THE GYM FLOOR TO MY HAND VIA THE BALL WAS DRIBBLING

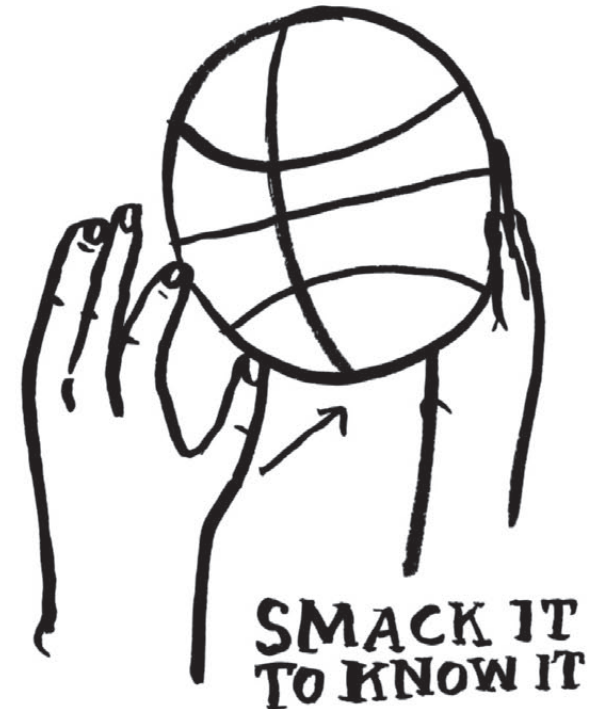


Drills

- 1) Do Them Perfectly
- 2) Do Them First; Hard enough That You F*ck UP
- 3) Then Do Them Perfectly



HAZEL MEYER holds a MFA from OCAD University, Toronto (2010) and a BFA from Concordia University, Montreal (2002). Her multidisciplinary and collaborative practice explores seemingly disparate yet overlapping preoccupations—athletics, feminism, the absurd, the body and textiles—using strategies such as scale, language, play and repetition. Recent exhibitions include those at Open Studio, Toronto; AKA Artist-Run Gallery, Saskatoon; Eastern Edge Gallery, St. John’s; and Artspace Art Projects, Peterborough. Meyer was born in Ottawa and currently lives and works in Toronto, where she coaches girls’ basketball at Queen Victoria Public School.





Acknowledgements

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Hazel Meyer, *Muscle Panic*, installation view, MacLaren Art Centre, 2015 (Cover, pages 3, 4, 5, left, 8)

Hazel Meyer, *Muscle Panic*, performance, MacLaren Art Centre, 2015 (Pages 5, right, 6, 7)

Hazel Meyer, *Muscle Panic Handbook* (detail), 2014 (Pages 9, 10)

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