



CASSILS 2024

CASSILS is a transgender artist who makes their own body the material and protagonist of their performances. Cassils's art contemplates the history(s) of LGBTQI+ violence, representation, struggle, survival, empowerment and systems of care. For Cassils, performance is a form of social sculpture: drawing from the idea that bodies are formed in relation to forces of power and social expectations, Cassils's work excavates historical contexts to examine the present moment.

Cassils has upcoming solo exhibitions at SITE SANTA FE, Walter Philips Gallery, and Banff Center for Art and Creativity. They had recent solo exhibitions at HOME Manchester, Station Museum of Contemporary Art, Perth Institute for Contemporary Arts, Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, NYC; Institute for Contemporary Art, AU; Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts; School of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston; Bemis Center, Omaha; MU Eindhoven, Netherlands.

They are the recipient of the Ford Foundation (2023), the National Creation Fund (2022), a 2020 Fleck Residency from the Banff Center for the Arts, a Princeton Lewis Artist Fellowship finalist (2020), a Villa Bellagio Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship (2019), a United States Artist Fellowship (2018), a Guggenheim Fellowship and a COLA Grant (2017) and a Creative Capital Award (2015).

They have received the inaugural ANTI Festival International Prize for Live Art, California Community Foundation Grant, MOTHA (Museum of Transgender Hirstory) award, and numerous Visual Artist Fellowships from the Canada Council of the Arts. Their work has been featured in New York Times, Boston Globe, Artforum, Hyperallergic, Wired, The Guardian, TDR, Performance Research, Art Journal, and was the subject of the monograph *Cassils* published by MU Eindhoven 2015 and their new catalog *Solutions* is published by the Station Museum of Contemporary Art, TX (2020). Cassils's work was recently acquired by the Victoria Albert Museum, London, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, and the Leslie Lohman Museum.

CASSIUS
TRESIAS
2013-2023









Tiresias is a durational performance in which I melt a neoclassical Greek male ice sculpture with pure body heat. The mythological figure of Tiresias, known as the blind prophet of Thebes, was transformed from a man into a woman for seven years. Here I recast the myth of Tiresias as a story of endurance and transformation, performing the resolve required to persist at the point of contact between masculine and feminine.

At the South Bank Center Marina Abramović Take Over, I premiered a three-day expanded version of **Tiresias** by melting three different sculptures inspired by sculptural busts found in the Victoria & Albert Museum as advised by trans curator Zorian Clatyon. Literally dissolving the canon, I melted the Mestrovic torso on the first day, the Legros Torso on the second day and on the third day I melted with a block of ice, letting the negative shape of my body create a new form. The ancient Greek concept of beauty was based on a pleasing balance and proportion of form. My work counters traditional modernist and homogeneous ideals around beauty and value, which have been housed and rarified in museum collections for centuries. In this context my performance ruptures the past while demonstrating the inherent instability of both the body and identity. We are embracing fluidity and no longer can be fixed in marble.

CASSIUS
BECOMING AN IMAGE
2012-PRESENT







In the live performance **Becoming an Image**, Cassils unleashes an attack on a 2,000 pound clay block in total darkness. The spectacle is illuminated solely by the flash of a photographer, burning the image into the viewer's retina. These "retinal burns" sear a hovering after image into the eyes of the viewer, turning the audience into a living, breaking archives which house these ephemeral images.. Becoming an Image was originally conceived as a site-specific work for the ONE Archives in Los Angeles, the oldest active LGBTQ archive in the United States. This performance points to the evidence of queer and trans lives that are often missing from historical representation: all the darkness and lived experiences that live in between the flashes, outside the realms of statistical notations. The work strives to problematizes and complicate the very act of documenting itself. In this work the photographer is a performer and an instrument of light. The interaction between us undulates from moments of pure symbiosis to power struggles. We enter into a blind dance in the pitch darkness. Our relation to each other made evident by the digital instrument, the sounds of our footfall and our collective breath.

Performance photographs, taken blind and at random, are then hung over wall paper that dipoles the audience grimacing and startled. The audience finds their own eyes gazing back at them. This is my way of carrying forward the ethos and red thread of the idea, which germinates in the live action into an installation and extends the work to those not present for the performance. Presenting the elements in this way I triangulate the viewers, the performer and the camera by folding their gaze into the work itself. I don't believe in the passivity of an audience. No one gets to stand on the side lines. If you are a witness, it means you too are present, alive and accountable.

I have performed this work 14 times internationally and will continue to perform it as a life work. Eventually the still images, taken blind and at random, will be compiled into a feature length stop motion film, that will feature my body as it ages and continues this Sisyphean struggle.

"This project by Cassils epitomizes a new mode of hybrid practices that draws on a legacy of body, conceptual, and installation art to render new complex art experiences that are performative yet exist in various material forms."- The Drama Review, Amelia Jones

CASSIUS
INEXTINGUISHABLE
FIRE
2007-2015





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CASSIUS
IN PLAIN SIGHT
2020

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