

O Solo Homo

Performances by Marga Gomez and Tim Miller

Wednesday, September 6, 2017, at 7 p.m.

Joyce J. Camilleri Hall, USC Brain and Creativity Institute

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

- ◉ **MARGA GOMEZ** is a performance artist and standup comedian. She was one of the first openly lesbian performers in the United States, and was a founding member of the groundbreaking Latino performance group Culture Clash. She is also a teacher of performance and artist-in-residence at Brava Theater.
- ◉ **TIM MILLER** is a solo performance artist and was one of the NEA Four. He has been involved with activist groups including ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and often creates work relating to his identity as a gay man.

THE NEA FOUR

The NEA Four are performance artists Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes, and Tim Miller. They were not a performance ensemble, but rather independent artists who found themselves joined in a common fight. Here's what happened:

1965 The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) is established by Congress to provide public support for the arts.

1980s Upon entering office, President Ronald Reagan aims to push Congress to abolish the NEA. He eventually abandons the plan due to political pushback. Throughout the 1980s, conservatives start to call for NEA funding standards that align with their values.

1989 Two art projects, Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ* and Robert Mapplethorpe's *The Perfect Moment*, spark a national debate about how the NEA spends its money.

1990 The NEA's peer-review panel for the Solo Performance category unanimously recommends funding for 18 artists, including Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes, and Tim Miller.

Controversy ensues in the media and in government about the content of their work. Fleck, Hughes, and Miller's work prominently includes gay and lesbian themes; Finley is known for feminist art addressing themes of sexual violence.

Congress passes the "decency clause," which says the NEA must consider not just artistic merit but also "general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs of the American public."

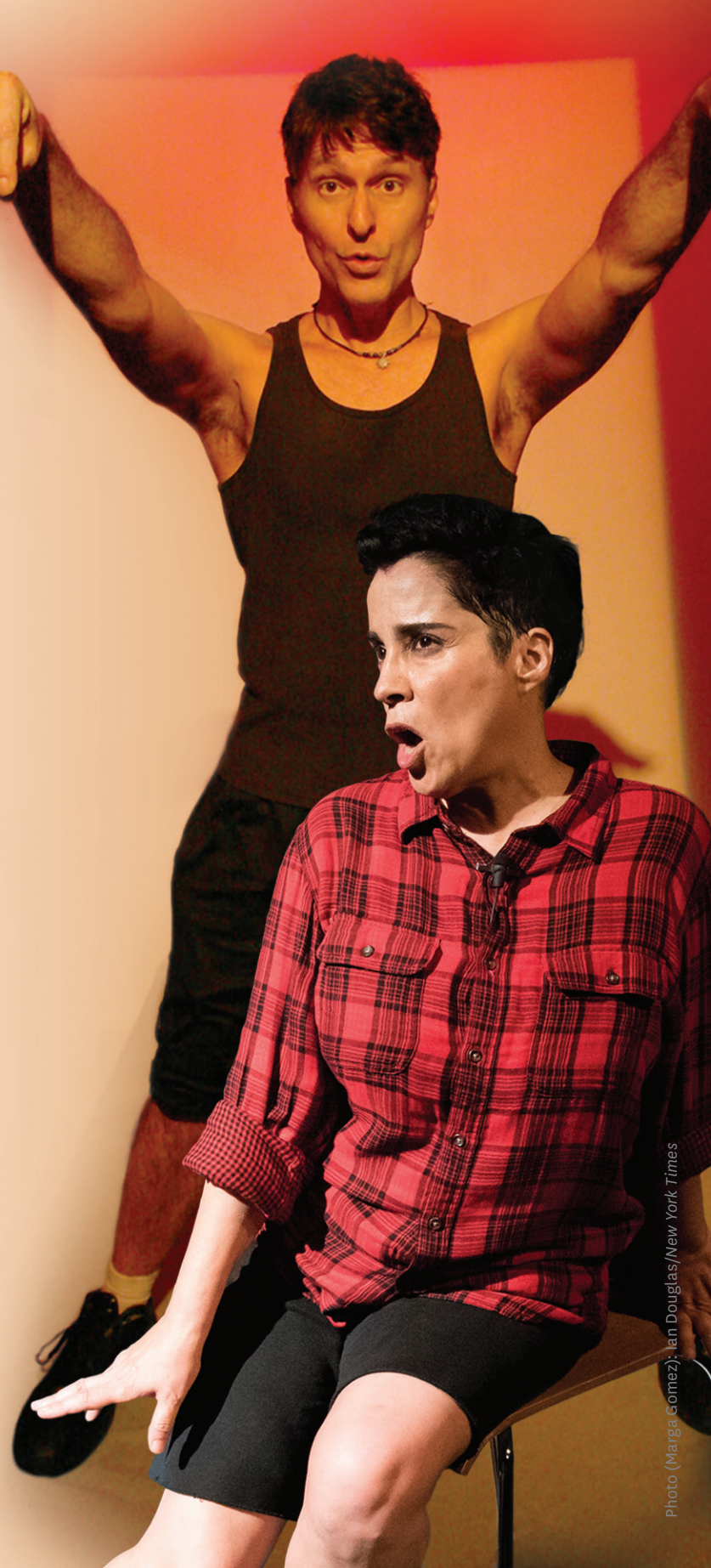


Photo (Marga Gomez); Ian Douglas/New York Times



The NEA Four performance artists: Karen Finley, John Fleck, Holly Hughes, and Tim Miller

The NEA announces the defunding of Finley, Fleck, Hughes, and Miller. They become known as the NEA Four.

The NEA Four file a lawsuit against the NEA, charging that their grants were denied for political reasons.

1993 The NEA Four settle out of court and receive their previously denied grants; they decide to litigate against the decency clause.

1998 The U.S. Supreme Court upholds the decency clause.

CULTURE CLASH

Culture Clash is the nation's most prominent Chicano-Latino performance group, known for their irreverent political and social satire. The group was founded on Cinco de Mayo, 1984, at San Francisco's Galería de la Raza by José Antonio Burciaga, Marga Gómez, Monica Palacios, Richard Montoya, Ric Salinas, and Herbert Siguenza. The current members are Montoya, Salinas, and Siguenza.

VOCABULARY CORNER

HOMO: Sometimes used as a homophobic slur, *homo* has been reclaimed as a term of pride and affection.

QUEER: Long used as a slur to describe effeminate men, the word *queer* began to be reclaimed in the 1980s by people who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender. As queer theory developed in the 1980s and '90s, *queer* came to be an umbrella term that could describe any sexuality that exceeds the boundaries and limitations of normative heterosexuality.

PERFORMANCE ART: Performance that is presented within a fine-art context. The term arose in the 1960s to describe the many live, interdisciplinary art events happening at that time. Performance art can be scripted or unscripted, improvised or carefully planned, live or via media. It can happen anywhere, at any time.

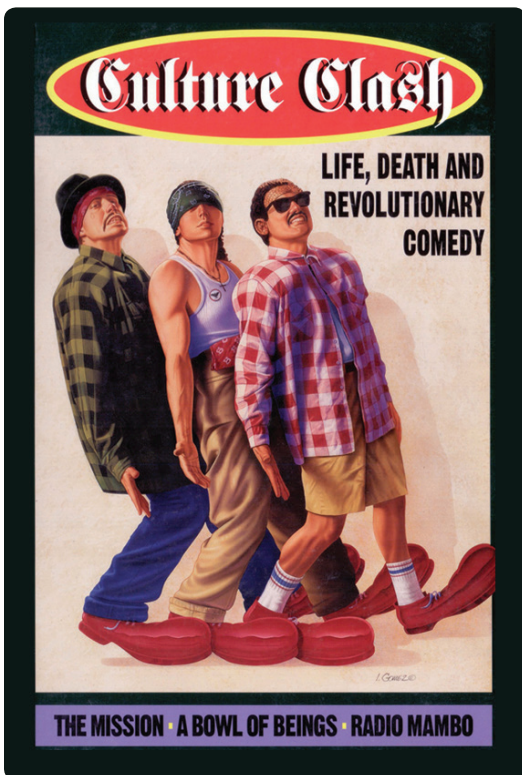
SATIRE: A topical work of art used to critique human vices, folly, abuses, or shortcomings through ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, or other method, often with an intent to inspire change.

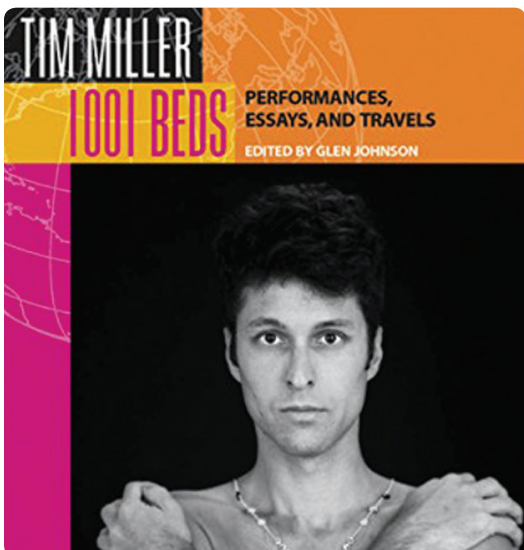
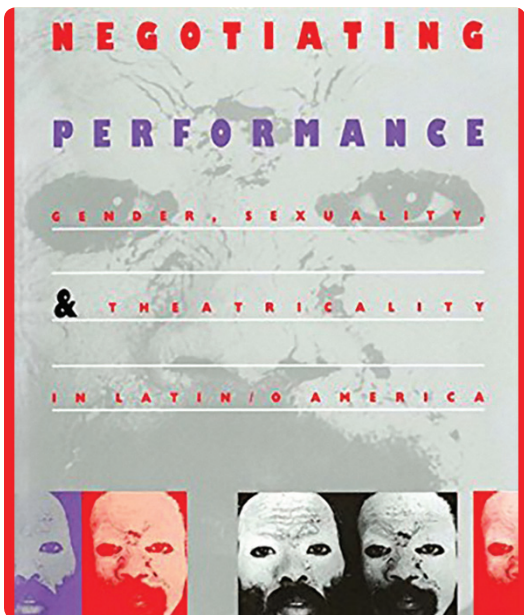
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- 🕒 What is the role of identity in creating art? What is the role of art in shaping our ideas about identity?
- 🕒 Do you think it's a coincidence that three members of the NEA Four were queer?
- 🕒 How would you define "decency"? What do you think of the Supreme Court's decision on the NEA "decency clause"?
- 🕒 How do you think art should be funded?

TO LEARN MORE, EXPLORE THESE RESOURCES:

- 🕒 Watch videos of Tim Miller's performances at <http://www.timmillerperformer.com/video.html>
- 🕒 Watch videos of Marga Gomez's performances at <http://www.margagomez.com/projects/>
- 🕒 Follow Marga Gomez on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/themargagomez/>





DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

ELIZABETH GALOOZIS of the USC Libraries has selected the following resources to help you learn more about the themes highlighted by tonight's performance. Except where a call number is noted, you can access these resources through the search box on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

Recommended Books and Films

- Cregan, David. *Deviant Acts : Essays on Queer Performance*. Dublin, Carysfort Press, 2009.
Doheny Memorial Library: PN26O1 .D48 2009
- Meyerson, Andrea., et al. *Laughing Matters*. New Almaden, Calif., Wolfe, 2004.
DVD available for check-out from the Leavey Library circulation desk.
- Miller, Tim, and Johnson, Glen. *1001 Beds: Performances, Essays, and Travels*. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.
- Montoya, Salinas, Siguenza, Salinas, Ricardo, Siguenza, Herbert, and Culture Clash. *Culture Clash : Life, Death, and Revolutionary Comedy*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1998.
Doheny Memorial Library: PS3563.O5459 C85 1998
- Taylor, Diana, and Morales Villegas, Juan. *Negotiating Performance : Gender, Sexuality, and Theatricality in Latin/o America*. Durham, Duke University Press, 1994.
Doheny Memorial Library, Leavey Library, and ONE Archives:
PN23O9 .N45 1994

Recommended Articles

- Davies, Cristyn. "Proliferating Panic: Regulating Representations of Sex and Gender during the Culture Wars." *Cultural Studies Review*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2008, pp. 83-102.
- Whitney, Elizabeth. "The Dangerous Real: Queer Solo Performance in/as Active Disruption." *Comparative American Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3-4, 2016, pp. 246-260.

Recommended Archival Collection

The ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives at the USC Libraries contains many art, book, and archival collections about queer art and activism. Search their collections and check out their events at <http://one.usc.edu/>.

Recommended Databases

LGBT Thought and Culture

LGBT Thought and Culture is an online resource hosting books, periodicals, and archival materials documenting LGBT political, social, and cultural movements throughout the twentieth century and into the present day. The collection includes documents ranging from letters, speeches, interviews, and ephemera covering the political evolution of gay rights as well as memoirs, biographies, poetry, letters, and works of fiction that illuminate the lives of lesbians, gays, transgendered, and bisexual individuals, and the community.

International Index to the Performing Arts Full Text

This database provides indexing and abstracts for more than 260 international periodicals, plus full text for more than 100 of the indexed journals. The database currently includes half a million records, the majority from the most recent ten years of each journal. IIPA covers a broad spectrum of the arts and entertainment industry—including dance, drama, theater, stagecraft, musical theater, circus performance, opera, pantomime, puppetry, magic, performance art, film, television, and more.