

# ARTFORUM

INTERVIEWS

## CLAUDE WAMPLER

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Claude Wampler, *N'a pas un gramme de charisme.* (Not an ounce of charisma.), 2013, digital collage.

*Claude Wampler is a New York–based artist who investigates the boundaries of spectatorship in the visual and performing arts. Here, she discusses the impetuses behind her latest work, *N'a pas un gramme de charisme.*, (Not an ounce of charisma.), which she created in collaboration with Amelia Saul, Antonius Wiriadjaja, and John Tremblay. *N'a pas un gramme de charisme.* will be presented at the Kitchen in New York from January 31 to February 3, 2013.*

**I'M A VISUAL ARTIST**, but I also work in the field of performance. I always consider myself a visual artist because it is all visual art in the end. I find that using the terms *performance art* or *performance artist* immediately evokes something for the audience that is very different than what I'm making or what I want to be seen as making. It's not that I don't like performance art. I do. I have a great deal of respect for it, but it seems to have this sort of stupefying effect on the viewer as soon as they categorize the work as such. The audience often rely heavily on what they believe they're going to be consuming and they will see the work through the lens of the medium that they assume it inhabits. In some ways this is great for an artist because he or she can use it to the advantage of the work. But it has a limiting effect on how people view the piece or the pace with which they view it. It also affects how flexible the audience can be while watching a work unfold. For instance, how is a piece different if it's called "dance" versus "sculpture"?

More and more institutions are showing performance and highlighting these questions. For Sarah Michelson to win the Bucksbaum Award last year, for example, is significant, and that means something has shifted. But I'm not sure if that's trickled down to the audience yet. I'm still very interested in the boundaries of these categories—by putting sculpture in museums and then putting performance around that sculpture, for instance—because people don't really expect or suspect the person next to them to be part of the work. Similarly, I'll do something like that with a performance, in which people assume the focus is on the stage and that's where they're supposed to look: The lights go out, they stare forward for however long the piece is, and then they clap and leave. That relationship to the work is very clear. Here, an audience knows how to behave; there is a choreographed or rehearsed conduct. They are often extremely obedient, which is a little scary to me, but it's also very useful because it creates a field for disruption, where artists can play with their willingness.

I'm also interested in the durational work of theater—that it has a beginning, middle, and end. I enjoy these boundaries because I know that it's quite possible for a work to be endless. *N'a pas un gramme de charisme*. began a long time ago and it doesn't end on February 3; it just keeps going. I've always worked with this kind of ambiguity: Instead of having a curtain call at the end of the show, I've emailed the audience two weeks later with the curtain call, which could include people they didn't expect to be in the show—

like the person sitting next to them. *N'a pas un gramme de charisme.* is part of this territory. It extends the time of the work beyond what happens at the Kitchen. I might find that the audience has no appetite for this—that really the liveness is what it's all about and beyond that it's just a bunch of MP3s and little video clips that people don't really care about. I don't know; I'm still figuring that out.

I found the title when I was reading a review of a performance in a French magazine. I came across that sentence describing the actress in the film, and I thought, “Oh my God, that's so beautiful. If I could only achieve ‘Not one gram of charisma.’ What does that even look like?” I find some performances today on a death march toward excitement. It's always a one-upmanship of how hard you can work your dancers before they collapse of exhaustion or how much artwork can we stuff in one space or how much can be endured; how many people can you stare at for months on end? It's all about charisma and people's personal abilities to capture the attention of audiences. What if I have no charisma? What if I sit there and no one wants to even look at my face? I think that's what the show is. It's a contrary reaction to the total hysteria of the performance art world right now and that demand for the next big thing that someone's going to do. I think audiences really want somebody to entertain them and make them feel special. I want to refuse this demand. Although, it is true that I am making work and it is going to be dramatic and I can't help that.

— *As told to Samara Davis*

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