

**Thao Votang**

**Q+A with Seripop's Yannick Desranleau and Chloe Lum**

**Where did you two meet? What was your first project together?**

We met in the summer of 1999 at a Christian Marclay performance and started dating and playing music together soon after. As musicians and visual artists, it made sense for us to make show posters so we did that for quite a long time. We had a couple of bands that performed locally/regionally before we started AIDS Wolf in 2003, shortly after we began making posters pretty seriously. Things converged for AIDS Wolf and we met a lot of likeminded people in other cities who'd invite us to play or record.

Many of the curators we worked with early on were people we met through the noise/noise rock scene so music, posters, and our gallery art all worked pretty symbiotically, our posters being collected by the Victoria & Albert Museum. <http://www.vam.ac.uk/> A lot of people who are or were involved in noise/noise-rock are also involved with visual art so a lot of productive and inspiring meetings happened and relationships deepened from being on the North American and European gig circuit.

We often stayed with other artists and would do short term collaborations. To this day we get invitations to show our work or speak from people who we met through touring with our band or who collected our posters and are now working in galleries or art schools. Additionally, all that touring allowed us to visit galleries and museums all over the place and just absorb so much work.

Once we started doing a lot of our installation work, it made sense to slow down on our poster production because the installations were much more labor intensive. We disbanded AIDS Wolf in 2012, playing our last gigs in June of that year, in order to return to school and to be able to spend more time on our visual art. The last poster we made was for our final Montreal show and was a collaboration with AIDS Wolf guitarist Alexander Moskos, who now plays guitar in Dan'l Boone and performs solo as Drainolith.

**How has your practice evolved over the last 15 years that you two have been working together?**

Our interests and actions spanned many fields over the course of the years we have worked together. In the evolution of things, what we ended up producing, as fragmented and schizophrenic could it have been, seems to always manage to inform or complement itself, either in the immediate, or by delayed response. Our association started by playing in the same band, while we were both doing our own art thing individually. Performance and installation were already our main

focus then, and we saw the band as some kind of practice that was strongly related to that but just evolving in an other realm — medium and audience-wise.

But still, this awareness of space and the physical environment around us, and an abstract sensibility to materials — being either physical matter or sounds — seems to have been the drive behind our projects. When we started doing posters, it was a way to get the existence of our band out in the world and a way for us to meet and forge alliances with people all over the world.

We also had this specific desire, beyond the formal ditties happening over the printed surface of the paper, that those objects would exist, evolve, and interact with the environment/space. And the city became that way this big laboratory.

Luckily there was this existing structure of people and small cultural institutions and favorable by-laws that enabled that. But it was crucial to prepare us for our return into sculpture and performance outside the context of music.

Since then, we are riffing on lessons taken from those experiences: how materials evolve in time, the quality and nature of the ‘performance’ of ‘actions by and with materials, and how this affect our comprehension of history and knowledge. We are fascinated by how relations between things and ‘actors’ can be complicated and unpredictable and how certainty or a sense of ‘security’ can bias our actions or decisions. It is a constant search and it gets more complicated and exhilarating at the same time.

**During your time at UT Austin, you will be doing an installation and performance in an outdoor space. What interests you about working in a non-gallery setting?**

The setting is important and not at the same time. We think that any intervention should reveal an awareness of its site. Space is space and as neutral a gallery can be, well, each of them have their specifics. We really try to keep awareness of that in our works — so in a way being outside the gallery does not course things for us, the difference is there might not be four white walls around us while the performance happens.

Often convenience, or a necessity, dictates the space of the intervention, on top on the interest in the site and the nature of the work dictating for a particular setting.

Being in this courtyard space in the Art Building will also give us a chance to interact with aspects of architecture that we never had the chance to really encounter before. From the period of the building to the way the work will be viewed from the widows around us. This ‘agora’ type of setting brings us to

concepts we have of ancient agoras or ideals of what ‘public’ spaces are for— this common construction of what should happen in one of those open (but ultimately still enclosed) civic spaces.

**Have you spent time in Austin or the university before? What are you most looking forward to?**

We’ve been to Austin a half dozen times, the first time to attend Flatstock, the poster convention that is part of SXSW and the other times to perform as AIDS Wolf. It’s a city that is easy to like, there’s good food, good music venues, enthused audiences, and a tons of interesting folks doing art and DIY stuff.

We’ve never spent any time at the university; it’s always been music venues, friends’ houses, and vegetarian restaurants. What we are most looking forward to about this visit is that we will be doing something totally new to us. In our work, we’ve often seen the decay of the material (such as the viewer walking on printed paper glued to the floor of the gallery) as a way that our work functions performatively. We’ve never used human performers, but instead precarious objects and fragile materials that would undergo stress in a normal gallery situation.

Since we will be working with actual performers but no strict script, we’ll be venturing into new territory for us that should be pretty exciting. We will be staging several performances that will likely be different from each other. We see this very much as a research project, from which we will learn from to stage further performance pieces using dancers or other performers and ephemeral materials.