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Live Fully and Well: Art at Slag Gallery in a Time of Trauma

by Jessica Holmes

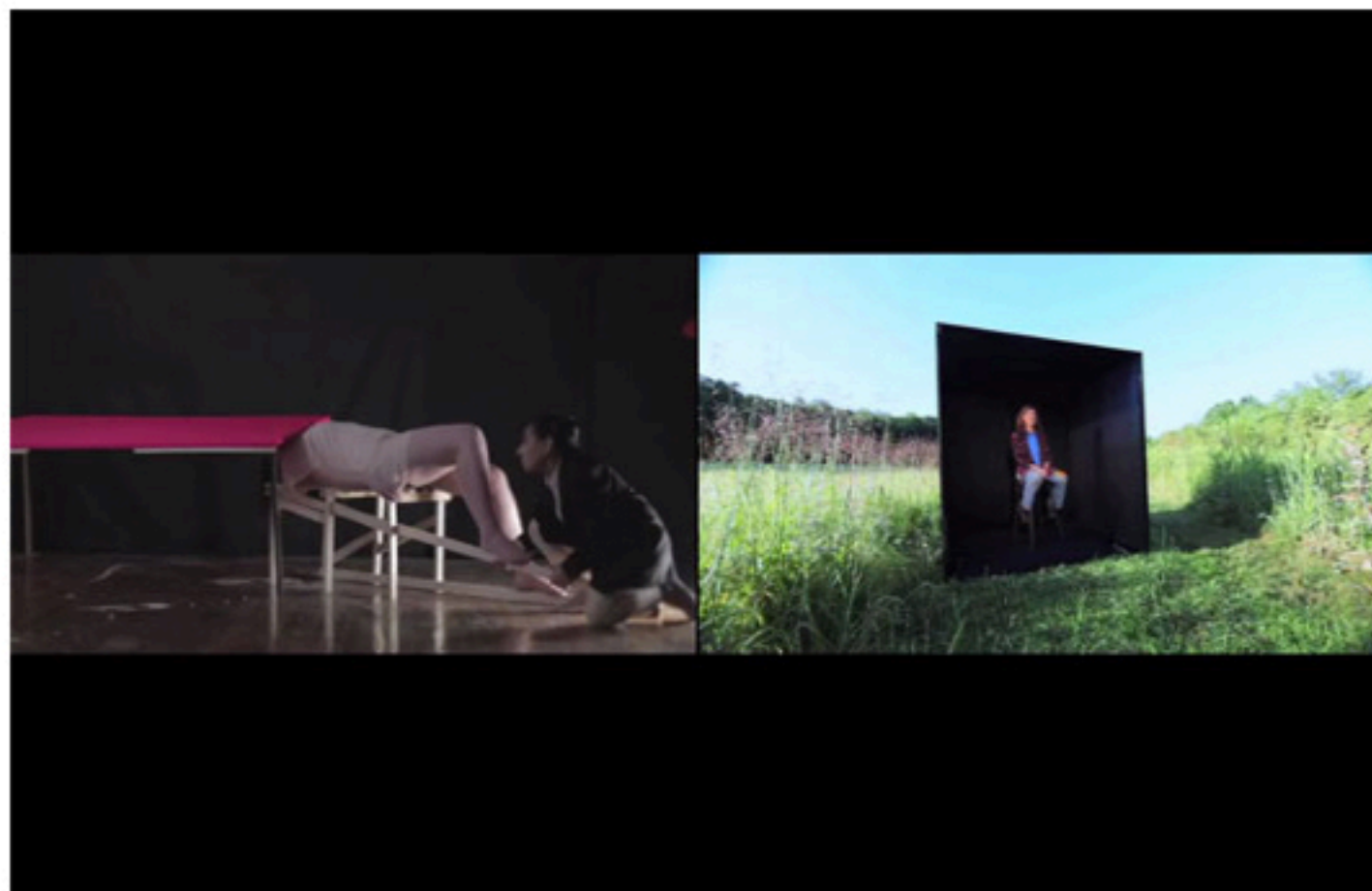
With Passion at Slag Gallery

June 3 to July 17, 2016

56 Bogart Street (between Harrison and Grattan streets)

Brooklyn, 212 967 9818

"A love ethic presupposes that everyone has the right to be free, to live fully and well. To bring a love ethic to every dimension of our lives, our society would need to embrace change." –bell hooks



Jody Wood, still from *In the Black Box (Looking Out)*, 2016. Two-channel HD video, TRT: 8:20, edition of 5. Courtesy of the artist and Slag Gallery.

Some of the strongest works in the show are those that directly counteract suffering. Socially engaged artist Jody Wood's video work *In the Black Box (Looking Out)* (2016) and its corresponding photographic series, *Client Abstraction* (2016), present here, are derived from a project she completed earlier this year. In *Choreographing Care* (2016), Wood ran a workshop where a theater troupe taught social and care workers to make use of warm up and cool down techniques actors use in preparation to play characters in agonizing situations. Workers in these therapeutic professions experience a high degree of "secondary trauma" as a result of the constant support they give to others enduring extreme circumstances. In the two-channel video, actors demonstrate these methods on one screen while on the second Dionisio Cruz and Jan Cohen-Cruz, a married couple who are a therapist and a drama professor respectively, discuss secondary trauma as it relates to each of their professions. Hearing them relay their personal experiences while simultaneously watching the actors demonstrate the exercises is stirring. One actress, lying supine, has her hair stroked by another while a third gently caresses her legs and feet with a soft cloth. The love and mindfulness put into these efforts is plain, and underscored by the Cruz couple's intimate discussion of the significance of emotional release. Soon, the woman to whom these ministrations are being applied is sobbing cathartic tears.