

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Emily Harvey Foundation is proud to present:

Paul David Young's *Curtain Wall Part 3: An Immersive Landscape Theater Performance of Christopher Marlowe's Hero and Leander*

Thursday, December 3, 2015 at 7 pm, Emily Harvey Foundation Gallery, 537 Broadway, 2nd Floor, N.Y., N.Y. 10012. Contact: ehf@emilyharveyfoundation.org



Paul David Young swam across New York Harbor to Governors Island on August 22, 2015, in completion of Christopher Marlowe's poem *Hero and Leander*, left unfinished at the time of his murder in 1593. On December 3, 2015, at 7 pm, Young will present his video of the performance and talk about his investigation of the legend, Marlowe, New York Harbor and the bureaucracies that control it.

Hero and Leander is a drama predicated upon a landscape. Leander falls in love with Hero, a virgin nun of Venus, and swims to her nightly across the Hellespont, a treacherous strait that runs between Asia and Europe in what is now Turkey. Though Leander captures Hero's heart and takes her virginity, he eventually dies while crossing the strait, and, in despair, Hero kills herself by leaping into the water.

The landscape in theater theory, first explored by Gertrude Stein, deemphasized the narrative text and cultivated a decentralized composition in which visual design and other elements might bear equal weight. The swim silenced Young as a writer. He reduced Marlowe's text to the action described and three words ("Love, I come").

The swim crosses the lines of visual art performance, theater, and sport. As Richard Schechner theorized, sports such as swimming share with theater and art performance the common elements of spectatorship, rule-based behavior, liveness, improvisation, ritual, contest, and space and time constraints. His project *Curtain Wall* began as an installation while he was a resident at Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Workspace (2011-12) and in its next phase was staged in a theater (2014). This iteration was a performed pun on so-called "immersive theater." He is currently a participant in LMCC's Process Space Program on Governors Island and developed this project as part of his LMCC Process Space residency.

The distinction between sport and theater, between action and the representation of it, runs to the core of the antitheatrical prejudice in Western culture, which Jonas Barish identified. Plato feared theater for its mimetic function, which had the power to seduce, distort the individual, and destroy the republic. Aristotle, on the other hand, embraced theater and the pull of emotion caused by imaginative reenactment.

Apart from Marlowe's poem, the legend has been treated extensively in literature (Ovid, Virgil, Keats, Tennyson, Byron), painting (Rubens, Turner), and music (Victor Herbert). Byron swam the Hellespont in 1810, enacting the legend and catching a cold, which he celebrated in verse.

Although a heterosexual romance, *Hero and Leander* dwells in homoeroticism. The last part of the poem that Marlowe wrote before his murder swirls around the sea god Poseidon's infatuation with Leander. Marlowe is believed to have been homosexual or bisexual. Just as others have offered alternative endings, he completed Marlowe's poem by swimming to Governors Island to meet his fiancé, the visual artist Franklin Evans.

A Contributing Editor at *PAJ* (MIT Press), he also writes for *Hyperallergic* and *Art in America*. His book *newARTtheatre: Evolutions of the Performance Aesthetic*, about visual artists appropriating theatre, was issued by PAJ in 2014. Residencies: LMCC's Workspace and Process Space, Millay Colony, Djerassi, Ensemble Studio Theatre's Summer Conference. Plays: *Kentucky Cantata*, HERE, 2015 (Howard Miller, Talkin' Broadway: "devastating" "brilliantly composed" "a masterful work"; Angel Lam, *The Easy*, "a dark, poetic play."); *In the Summer Pavilion*, 59e59 Theaters, 2012 (Erik Haagensen, Backstage: "a highlight of 2011 FringeNYC" "a quiet winner"); *Clown Play*, FringeNYC, 2013 (*Village Voice*: "intelligently bizarre."). Winner, Kennedy Center's Paula Vogel Playwriting Award; Finalist, Keneda Fellowship and Kennedy Center's John Cauble Short Play Award. Other performances at MoMA PS1, Marlborough Gallery, Living Theatre, apexart, The Brick, LMAK Projects, Lion Theatre, C.O.W. Theater, Kraine Theater, Chain Theatre, Emerging Artists Theatre, Red Room, and Kaffileikhusid in Reykjavik. His translations, with Carl Weber, were published in 2012 as *Heiner Müller: After Shakespeare*.

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