

2008 BIENNIAL EXHIBITION CATALOG

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MK Guth

Born in 1963 in Stevens Point, Wisconsin; lives in Portland, Oregon. Through video, photography, and social sculpture, MK Guth re-imagines traditional fables and popular fantasies, inserting new, hybrid mythologies into the public realm as vehicles for agency, empathy, and social engagement. In her often humorous narratives Guth collides art and life in performative orchestrations of practical magic, confounding discrimination between fantasy and verity. Her method is especially poignant given popular culture's obsession with reality television and other forms of mass mediation. Indeed, Guth's practice takes an axiomatic that "what if" are destined to become real despite their hypothetical premises.

Red Shoe Delivery Service (RSDS) (2003-) began with one such transformative hypothesis, inspired by *The Wizard of Oz*; "What is Dorothy's ruby slippers did not just take you to Kansas?" To find out, Guth, Molly Dilworth, and Cris Moss formed an art collective dedicated to realizing the inherent promise of Dorothy's magical shoes. Creating, as they put it, "art that moves you," their van picks up willing passengers randomly chosen on the street and ferries them wherever they wish to be taken. The travelers don red glitter-encrusted footwear-chosen from a so-dubbed "cornucopia of tastes" including athletic shoes, slides, and pumps- and pronounce their destination on camera in documentations that become part of an expanding archive and fodder for future projects. Adapting its figuration to each city and venue, the site-specific *RSDS* remains part transit service, part mobile gallery, and, literally and otherwise, part vehicle of wish fulfillment.

Guth's interactive *Our Rapunzel (2006)*, as well as *the way I see you the way you see me (2007)*, similarly creates space for the articulation of intention. Transforming the fairy tale into an open-source story. Guth invites participants to write a desire or regret (or in the most recent iteration of the project, their opinions of Americans) on colorful ribbons to be braided, often communally, with artificial hair into long thick locks. Although the active performances are temporary, the results linger: room-scale installations intersected with multicolored plaits cascading from the ceiling and pooling on the ground. Like *RSDS*, Guth's braid installations cross make-believe with all-too-real social and political disappointments; they are shot with the same potential born of disillusionment evident in *The Wizard of Oz*, which moved Salman Rushdie to note of the film "[its] driving force is the inadequacy of adults, even of good adults... [whose] weaknesses ... force a child to take control of her own destiny." S.H.