**Konjuring Killjoy – Episode 3: Inside Killjoy’s Kastle**

Hi again folks – you’re friendly feminist killjoy narrator here. It seems like all the domestic, admin work gets pushed in my misconstrued gender direction. In any case, continuing to give props to my inspiration and cite each other into existence, this episode relies heavily on *Inside Killjoy’s Kastle – Dykey Ghosts, Feminist Monsters and other Lesbian Hauntings,* edited by Allyson Mitchell and Cait McKinney – the book about the Lesbian Feminist Haunted House, *Killjoy’s Kastle,* that Allyson and fellow lesbian feminist artist Deidre Logue built and performed in Toronto, LA, London, and Philadelphia.

When you hear this

you will know that I am citing directly from the script from Mitchell & Deidre Logue’s lesbian feminist art installation, Killjoy’s Kastle. For those exercising your lesbian habitus, yes! That is the iconic “All-American Jewish lesbian folksinger” Phranc’s Bulldagger Swagger, which they performed at the LA staging of Killjoy’s Kastle.

And don’t forget, when you hear this

I am sharing one of Ahmed’s feminist killjoy truths, commitments, maxims or equations…

What a happy tune. And another thing that makes me happy? This episode… Let’s get to it!

[INTRO BUMPER]

Episode 3: Killjoy’s Kastle

My podcast project, *Kamp Krystal Killjoy* grows from the intersection where radical queer feminist theory meets activism, through media/creativity.

I draw huge inspiration from Allyson Mitchell & Deirdre Logue’s large-scale multimedia walk-through installation/performance *Killjoy’s Kastle: A Lesbian Feminist Haunted House*, which they staged in Toronto in 2013, London in 2014, Los Angeles in 2015, and Philadelphia in 2019.

When discussing the inspiration for their work on Artblog Radio in 2019, Mitchell and Logue cited process first – the desire to leverage collaboration, the gathering of people together to make a different world.

KILLJOY COMMITMENT: I AM WILLING TO TAKE FEMINIST KILLJOYS WITH ME WHEREVER I GO

What intrigues me though, is the making a different world part. In the Feminist Killjoy Handbook, Ahmed declares killing joy a “world-making project… [through] our cultural criticism, our philosophy, our poetry, our activism we are making other worlds possible” (2023, p. 233). I’m tempted to improvise my own equation:

KILLJOY = A WORLDMAKING ENDEAVOR

The duo next cites an inspiration for the structure or form of their work – the evangelical Christian tradition of “hell houses.” Meant to literally put the fear of god into (mostly) young folks and scare them straight, hell houses bring to life (with varying degrees of graphic realness) “sins” like homosexuality, abortion, drugs, etc…

They saw the 2001 documentary “Hell House” Directed by George Ratliff

[INSERT HELL HOUSE DOC CLIP]

While recognizing the problematic content – the scenarios depicting reasons why people were going to hell – they were intrigued by the methods used to bring people together to think through an ideology.

They started to think in broad, conceptual terms - What does it means to attach lesbian feminism to something that is unexpected to be lesbian feminist? Lesbian feminist Santa Claus parade; lesbian feminist back to school windows… In even bigger terms, what would make these things, these experiences, queer?

In a collaborative session Mitchell and Logue posed a compound question to contributors – what would be scary in a lesbian feminist haunted house? And who would be scared?

Altering traditional horror tropes to prey on the public fears of queer culture, Killjoy’s Kastle offers an “exhumation of lesbian feminism’s complicated histories” (p. 55), which can be read as both a love letter, and critique of 2nd wave feminism.

Performers play the roles of Lesbian Zombie Folksingers, the Menstrual Trans Man with Diva Cup, The Polyamorous Vampiric Grannies, and welcome visitors into spaces like The Graveyard of Dead Lesbian Organizations, Businesses, and Ideas, and the Marvelous Emasculator.

While the size and scope of the physical Kastle and it’s ideological critique are too large to mention *everything*, let me give you a little taste…

Right out of the gate, Killjoy’s Kastle uses satire and humor to bring terrifying stereotypes of lesbian feminists to life. Visitors waiting in the queue to enter the Kastle are greeted by the Society for Cutting Up Men, or “SCUM” Manifesto auteur, Valerie Solanas as the Welcoming Committee…

“Welcome to Killjoy’s Kastle: A lesbian feminist haunted house.

I’m Valerie Solanas. I wrote this book – The SCUM Manifesto. Society for Cutting Up Men. You should read it. Every night before bed. Also, read it to your very, very, very small children every night – in utero is best. Start ‘em young…

First off??? You can take pictures. But no flash. No video. No movies. No audio record – matter of fact, why not keep your phone in your goddamned pocket or purse and just experience the beautiful darkness that is the Kastle? Let the only light that exists be the light that emanates from your cunts or assholes and shines up to the sky leading us to the magnificent truth! If you don’t have a cunt or asshole, stand near someone who does.

Also, okay, there are naked bodies in there. Not your scene? Cool, leave. I don’t give a shit. I got like five hundred other people who are dying to come in.

And because we know not everyone is so smart, we’ve hired Demented Women Studies Professors to guide you through the Kastle so that you can truly understand what it is you are experiencing… “ (p. 82-83)

Solanas declares the group “a band – a clan” and directs them to use “lesbian processing” to come up with a name so their Demented Women Studies Professor can find them. They are then escorted into what might be their own “version of heaven or hell – the “Lesbian” Zombie Folk Singers’ courtyard where they will enjoy the show and wait for their professor.

[BULLDAGGER SWAGGER CLIP]

Groups are picked up from the courtyard by their Demented Women’s Studies Professor who leads their tour…

“Are you ready?

Welcome to Killjoy’s Kastle. I have been selected by a committee of killjoys who confirm I am qualified to lead this tour.

It is commonly suggested that feminists (particularly lesbian feminists) are, in fact, killjoys. They just aren’t any fun, just won’t play the game – reveling in the destruction of good times, they are happiness murderesses.

Millenium upon millennium of persecution, ridicule, erasure, and abject misunderstanding would put anyone in a bad mood.

People have also said that women’s studies is a training camp for hardline man haters and that our program of study has ruined the nuclear family.

Yes. We are that powerful. But we aren’t here today to talk about the pros and cons of academe. We are here to talk about the lesbian feminists who “made” this haunted house.

Let me get this crooked for you – some lesbian feminists are maligned, pushed into corners and intentionally wounded by lesbophobes, misogynists and the like… There are other lesbian feminists who are indeed monstrous, ones who would rather stomp their own movement, resting comfortably in race and class privilege, then budge on stale ideas about gender and sex and bodies and… Let’s face it, it can all be very confusing, even if you are an insider like me… chained to this duty.

Killjoy, who lives in this kastle, tries to find balance – being mean when necessary and nimble as required…

Now we enter the inner sanctum of a complicated killjoy to see what she has to offer and learn what she knows…” (p. 98-99)

The tour starts as visitors are led through the Great Emasculator, which Mitchell and Logue describe as not being a man hating kind of emasculation, but rather a “shaking up of gender roles” that encourages visitors to open their minds to transformation.

Making their way through the Kastle, we meet the Paranormal Consciousness Raisers who are forever trapped in the stereotype of uptight, suburban white women gazing at their own vaginas; The intersectional activist – a grotesque version of Rocky Balboa, boxing gloves and all in the meat locker of multiple, overlapping oppressions. Visitors must make their way past/through the swinging slabs of racism, colonialism, transphobia, etc…

In the Library, who’s shelves are filled with gender, feminist, and queer theory texts, a Gender Studies Professor and Riot Ghoul Dance Party is in full swing. Visitors peek in on the Ball Bustas who are hard at work, well, busting balls. The tour *almost* ends in the Killjoy Processing Room, where your group sits with a real-life killjoy to process what y’all have just experienced… It *really* ends as you exit through the Ye Olde Lesbian Feminist Gift Shoppe.

You get the gist.

I have to admit, I’m smitten with Killjoy’s Kastle. It’s big. It’s bold. It (re)inserts feminism into the contemporary, cultural milieu by playing with hyper-present presence, absence, and a past that is needed to reimagine a future. Even though I am not an artist, this is the kind of work I want to do.

In the Artblog Radio interview, Logue considers how the Kastle creates ruptures around misconceptions about lesbian-feminism and how humor can make feminism a bit more accessible. Making feminism more accessible is a goal of mine also, which I inherited from bell hooks.

hooks cautions against the “academicization” of feminism and laments how feminist theory was “too full of words folks could not understand” (p. ix). So, she set out to “write and easy to read book that would explain feminist thinking and encourage folks to embrace feminist politics. In the year 2000, *Feminism is for Everybody* was published by South End Press.

While the ease of understanding the critiques within Killjoy’s Kastle is up for debate, namely amongst people who are not part of the lesbian-feminist habitus – there are the Demented Women’s Studies Professors, and the real-life killjoys in the processing room who are there to provide lessons.

Indeed, the artists considered Killjoy’s Kastle to be “a classroom, an archive, an art exhibition, an insertion” (p. 18). In the Inside Killjoy’s Kastle collection, Helena Reckitt called Killjoy’s Kastle “embodied education” (p. 66). Feminist teacher/scholar Ann Cvetkovich, in processing her own performance as “real life Killjoy” in the Processing Room towards the end of the installation, found an “unexpected similarity between teaching and performing killjoy” (p. 126).

In developing my courses, and performing activism on campus, I’ve always asked myself – what can I do to make feminism more accessible to 21st century students? I’ve created classes on feminist/intersectional readings of *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*. I’ve become obsessed with what makes media, feminist media?

I’m ready to jump into the lake of feminist media production – Kamp Krystal Lake that is. And that is where we are going next…

**Resources and References:**

*Hell House* documentary - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNFGjQ_QydA>

Artblog interview with Mitchell & Logue - <https://www.theartblog.org/2019/10/allyson-mitchell-and-deirdre-logue-on-the-history-and-future-of-killjoys-kastle/>

Tour of Killjoy’s Kastle (LA) by Wifey TV - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4S-OORBj9o>

Phranc’s performance of Bulldagger Swagger @Killjoy’s Kastle LA - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG79Z1_S_L8>

hooks, b. (2015). *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate politics*. Routledge.

Mitchell, A. & McKinney, C. (2019). *Inside Killjoy’s kastle: Dykey ghosts, feminist monsters, and other lesbian hauntings.*UBC Press and agYU.