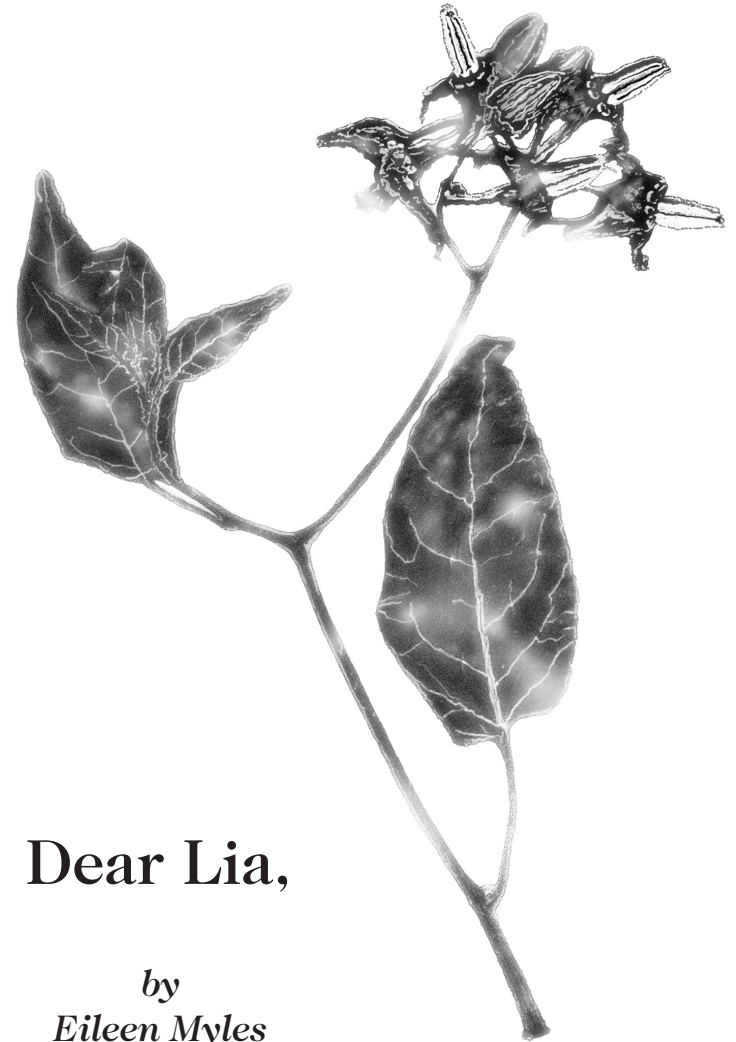


BELLADONNA* PROSE EVENT



BELLADONNA* COLLABORATIVE

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Dear Lia,

by
Eileen Myles

*deadly nightshade, a cardiac and respiratory stimulant, having purplish-red flowers and black berries

Dear Lia, © Eileen Myles 2011

Belladonna* Chaplet #128 is published in an edition of 126--26 of which are numbered and signed by the author, in commemoration of her performance on February 4, 2011 at the Hamiltonian Gallery in Washington D.C. alongside Vanessa Place and Bhanu Kapil. This marks the first installation of PROSE EVENT an ongoing series curated by Kate Zambreno, for Belladonna* Collaborative.

Belladonna* is an event and publication series that promotes the work of women writers who are adventurous, experimental, politically involved, multi-form, multi-cultural, multi-gendered, impossible to define, delicious to talk about, unpredictable, dangerous with language.

The 2011 Belladonna* Chaplet Series is designed by Bill Mazza.

Chaplets are \$4 (\$6 signed) in stores or at events, \$7 (\$9 signed) for libraries/institutions.

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Dear Lia,

Eileen Myles

Maggie Nelson, Douglas Martin, Bruce Benderson, Cecilia Dougherty, Ishle Park, Laurie Weeks, Joe Westmoreland, Hannibal & Tika, Roberto Tejada, Pam Swarts, Antony Hegarty, Michael Basinski, Gail Scott, Thurston Moore, Chris Kraus, Sini Anderson, Noah de Lissovoy, William Pope.L, Henry Flesh, Elena Georgiou, Tom Cole, Suzanne Wise, Emanuel Xavier, Cynthia Nelson, Juliana Snapper, Jordana Rosenberg, Samuel Delany, Marci Blackman, Thalia Zedek, Madigan Shive, Michelle Tea, Shulamith Firestone, Ellyn Maybe, Ali Liebegott, Edmund Berrigan, Bitch and Animal, Jocelyn Saidenberg, Bob Gluck, Samuel Topiary, Kevin Killian, Dodie Bellamy. These are some of the most amazing artists I know. I mean these are them.

The person I most regret we never got is Elliot Smith. You knew him, right, Lia. I saw him once at Tramps. It was the quietest room I ever saw. Place was totally crowded. Just him on a chair with his guitar on his lap. One homely Beatle. That's my review. Yeah, from now on let's dedicate Scout to him.

Love,

Eileen

in Buffalo, before Hallwalls. I managed to rope Kim Gordon and Thurston Moore and Chris Kraus into coming to Buffalo to do a benefit for the Scout to come. At the moment it seems amazing that we would have done that. Why go to Buffalo twice, right? And then September 11th happened. This is like Sept. 26th. Kim wouldn't go, that was it. But Thurston agreed to go, he brought Jim O'Rourke. And Chris went and so did I. It was crazy, because we were all shell-shocked New Yorkers. I was trying to "talk" about it in the event and I even wore a New York City teeshirt. People thought I was nuts. What was I talking about. Upstate New York. It was already another country. The Scout at Hallwalls was kind of strange. The artists had a wonderful time with each other, loved each other. But the audience didn't really come. Hallwalls kind of forgot to publicize it or something.

Thread Waxing Space asked me for a graphic for the Scout card. We always used the same card. I found a Davy Crockett graphic of a guy in a coonskin hat crouching with a gun. It was a different color for every scout but it was like our kids show. You don't really want to think about what Davy is shooting. The entire list of artist who performed were:

Dear Lia,

It's about a week after I agreed to send you something about Scout for the Thread Waxing book. I don't know when I thought I'd do it. I've been home sick for about a week, and now I'm totally backed up on everything, but starting to feel good. I'm so off the chart that I feel kind of free. I figured I'd start writing this tonight. Lynne Tillman was here a couple of weeks ago and we started talking about David. David Rattray who I always talk about when I talk about Scout. He's been dead for ten years now and of course we're long overdue to do a David event, bringing all his old friends together and seeing what's left of that scene, and who considers themselves part of it now. It's amazing how fertile a dead man becomes in time. I feel comfortable talking about David in that gross kind of way. He was always very proud of being gamey-smelling and any kind of vulgar thing you could throw his way. He was a very impressive man. Drop him anywhere and things would grow. Parts of my mind are still gathering water from some stalactites he left. I always remember — Oh God it was Lynne Tillman's book party, a Semiotext(e) book. Lynne never did a Scout so I feel kind of weird about it. But I wound up there

with David and Liz Kotz and Nicole Eisenman. And somehow we all agreed to get the hell out of there together and began walking east, winding up in a café not far from where Participant Inc is now. So it was three dykes and David and you've never seen a man get so high. He started trotting out all his lesbian stories for us. David's sister, Mary, had been a lesbian in Paris in the 50s, so he had some amazing shit: Bataille used to pay his sister's dyke friends to have sex and let him watch. You couldn't stop David, he was on a roll. Liz already knew David, so she was having a good time. I think none of us were having a really good time at the Semiotext(e) party so there was a rebellious note to our having fled together to swap dyke gossip. David had gone to Paris as a teenager and visited his sister so there was an element of being included in our confidences that made him feel young, and he was only a few months short of being 54. Nicole had never met him before and her own amazing face was lighting up at his brilliant lantern. They became quickly intimate. It was just one of those perfect nights of becoming three or four and seeing everything perfectly from that corner. And laughing, laughing so much.

to people like myself. The part of it that attracts me is where the procession that forms the subject of this great work trails off or thins out from a great imperial progress to finally, a straggling group of scouts. Irregulars who are not under any visible military discipline but are simply foraging their way through the country. Somehow these final images rooted themselves very deeply in my mind, I have dreamt of creating a work that would trail off in the same way as "The Triumph of Maximilian," from something grandiose and processional into something that had lost its original character and became unrecognizable as a group that was under a special kind of discipline or formative patterning. Of course the patterning in the Dürer work is very strong and very beautiful but the ending no longer has anything to do with an imperial triumph, or with the values, I suppose, of organized culture and civilization. I should add to this that these scouts do not in any way resemble Quantrill's Raiders or other similar raiders. A very notable aspect of their appearance is that they are not threatening; they do not look like a group of dangerous evil fellows, to the contrary they look almost as if they might be harbingers of a future golden age or utopian state. They certainly do not look like cutthroats or bandits but perhaps pioneers of a new and different world. However this point is left ambiguous, happily so, the whole scene is enveloped in mystery that I find magical when I consider this work and the way it trails off into a kind of organic shapelessness.

Feb. 17, 1993

So I thought we would be those scouts, the series would be kind of a living memorial for David, this ambiguous thing, coming together and falling apart. The lineup, forty something people, in ten events at Thread Waxing, one at Hallwalls in Buffalo, New York, and one at Participant Inc. Oh, and there was a pre-Scout

Most amazing about doing Scout at Thread Waxing was that everyone got paid. Not a fortune—but more than most anywhere else! Each artist and the curator got three hundred bucks for doing an event. Even in this great city, actually probably more here than anyplace else because everything we do here is publicity, writers are often asked to do things for free. And they do. But a nice chunk of cash, enough to pay a couple of credit card bills, or--go to the dentist and get your dog's shots. It's living change. This makes an incredible difference in the life of artists. And artists make an incredible difference in the lives of their audiences. And audiences came out for Scout every time. I called it Scout because of David. It did seem to me that the art world runs on friendship, the continual effect we have on one another. David died freakily a couple of months after the lesbian evening in Soho I described. Just before he died he wrote this inspiring piece:

For years I've pondered the conclusion of Albrecht Dürer's collection of images, titled "The Triumph of Maximilian". These pictures were commissioned I think, by the Emperor Maximilian in the 1520s and executed possibly by Durer himself, possibly by his school. This work which I have admired all my life, was published some years ago in a cheap reprint by Dover Books, it has been out of print for some time but was a boon to the public,

Lia, you and I met in Boston, right. Because ICA was doing a Mary Heilmann thing, or was it Pat Hearn and the Boston School, something? All the Jack and the Nan people. Some part of that scene. Then you had me read. And I met Kathe Izzo that night and wound up living in Ptown for four years. But you said: If you ever want to do something. I guess you meant if I wanted to curate something. Why would I want to do that? Would I? You mean paintings? No, readings, performances. Whatever. Huh.

It was so much fun curating a reading series at Thread Waxing. That's how Scout began. I thought, I could do "one." I don't really want to do a "series." I'll do one event. So, normally the event would be people reading and then maybe someone performing, music especially. The thing I know about going out in New York and especially going out and going to readings, sitting in an audience, this is really what I have learned in thirty years of New York life, how to go to a reading. You look at the card and go Oh Lynne Tillman book party, I'll go because Liz Kotz, Nicole and David Rattray will be there. You know, not actually, but people really plan their evenings around who will be there.

So as a curator you really want to plan the audience side, when you put an event together. That's where most curators fail. They think about who the artists are. What's the point of that? I always know what people think of me when they invite me to do something. I can tell by who they put me with. And usually what they think is so boring. They don't even try! I had Michelle Tea and Shulamith Firestone and Ellyn Maybe read. OK this event screams feminism, but like a Jellyroll. Like an acid trip of feminism. Michelle is a punky radiant spirit, a dyke too, a sweet tough writer girl who is popping out one after another classic manifestoes of our time. Shulamith Firestone! Did you read *The Dialectics of Sex*. It was the serious book of the second wave of feminism. Elisabeth Subrin who made *Shulie*, a remake of Shulamith's mythic never seen film that documents the utopian moments of the second wave. Elisabeth was in the room that night. She and Shulamith could have met, but they did not. But it could have happened. It almost did. Shulamith's life turned a difficult corner in the years after *The Dialectics of Sex*. She got sent off to a mental hospital and after a short stay came home and lived for years on SSI and continued to be Shulamith. She published *Airless Spaces*, a memoir of being a young writer on

the lower east side in the 50s and 60s and contains portraits of Valerie Solanas and Allen Ginsberg. Ellyn Maybe finished off the trio. She is a self-proclaimed virgin and a committed lefty, a west coast poet who writes funny, Whitmanic jingling complex pop complaints that wiggle all the way to the last line. Her poems are pure surprise. She laughs and she whines. The crowd that came out for these three women was astonishing. Because (I'm bragging now) they should have all known each other, the people who knew each of these women—but they didn't. Curating, it seems to me is about remembering to draw lines between people. Making a human chain of connection and concerns. I guess this sounds corny, but now that there is no real politics, we really have to take our art seriously, and launch its politics continually. In order to do this event I had to write some publicity, I had to come up with a blurb on each of them—which I gave to the then PR director of Thread Waxing, the lovely Johanna Fateman. Jo was so tough and beautiful. I felt so honored that this amazing punk girl was doing the publicity for Scout. It was almost more kind treatment than could be believed. One day Jo was gone and then there was LeTigre. It happened like that. But even just working there, she was legend.