

# **REVIEW: Luna Loba VIII Moon of Floods: Part 2**

Luna Loba VIII is, "Performance art, sound, body/voice, video. Female + gender neutral artists exploring home, water, flood, cleansing, destruction, the act of building, deluge, flow, connectedness, generosity, roots, force, violence, safety, arrival, departure, movement, borders, spaces of in-between, to overflow."

Audience members can expect the unexpected because Luna Loba is hosted at AS220 Blackbox, where anything can happen ranging from an operetta written by children (Manton Avenue Project) to a giant dinner party with the servers performing, rollerblading and throwing food across the audience seated around the giant table.

There are some consistent aspects of Luna Loba, which has been a highlight on Empire Street since January 24, 2016. First, it is an evening divided by numerous stellar performers. On this seventh installation, there were so many interested artists that the evening had to be divided into two parts. The first part coincided with the November full moon. This was the beaver moon, and the invited performers were inspired by the building of homes and setting roots in volatile conditions, politically and environmentally. Connoisseurs of the Luna Loba series might follow certain recurring performers, but they know that the individuals are never predictable. Shey Rivera, AS220 artistic director and curator of Luna Loba, is discerning in her choices for performers. She brings on the best, the riskiest, the bravest, the most innovative, and the most globally conscientious.

Second, an audience member can expect there to be a full house. The audience is a combination of smitten and supportive performers, surprised and appreciative acquaintances of the line-up, and unsuspecting theater goers. Third, when the audience members enter the space and see tech pro Kimberlee Beggs at the helm, they can expect a well-run show (albeit fresh from the oven) with the calm and ease of something put on by true professionals.

On the December performance I attended, the evening began with musician Laila Aukee, who is part of the Providence-based band Sugar Honey Iced Tea. Aukee's piece built musical ambiance with a loop, and was well-received by respected musicians in the audience.

Soon, Joan Wyand, who had been literally camped out on stage left during the entire show, enters the stage. Wyand is an award-winning performance artist who was featured at another fascinating event at AS220: a fashion show directed by International legend Guillermo Gomez-Pena. Wyand is also a spirited activist who keeps New Englanders on their toes and fights the good cause. Wyand illuminated quotes on the screen such as, "I spoke up for myself" and, "Don't feel bad about someone else's drama."

Mary Kim Arnold, recipient of the RISCA fellowship in fiction, perched stage center sewing in front of moving images of the Korean War. Her piece, "(Re-)Dress: One for Every Thousand," stunned the crowd into thoughtful silence.

On screen, Lilliam Nieves was smart and intriguing as she joyfully tried on a variety of iron-sculptured crowns. She could have reigned in any one of them. Nieves welded the materials from broken gates in Puerto Rico. Nieves' work reflects on both beauty and sovereignty.

“Grief,” a video with vocalist and performer Anqwenique Wingfield, was so beautiful and soprano that many viewers might have expected the glasses full of water showcased in the scene to break from the power of Wingfield’s voice.

Muggs Fogarty appeared as Sweetpea Pumpkin, delivering a carefully crafted piece that one can only hope to hear again and again.

And then there was Marleny Luna. This poet/performer offers the audience the quintessential labor of navigating between her charm and beauty juxtaposed with the cerebral punches she throws. She is like a helicopter landing at sea, checking for the aerial view, and landing with precision. Marleny Luna lures the audience into listening intently, then reminds them not to stop working.

Then the audience witnessed many of the reasons Medusah Black received a “Making An Impact” award from Rhyme Culture Rhode Island. She had full command of the stage and gifted the audience with her adrenaline and talent.

Also featured in this revolving and evolving series: Corinne Wahlberg, Rose Jermusyk, Liz Oakley, and Julie Mallis and Kimberlee Beggs at the helm of the sound booth.

What can one expect from the next Luna Loba on January 8? There is something for everyone. There will never be the same roster, but there will always be a fascinating, extraordinarily well-crafted and curated, rich evening of profound artistic interventions. It is the type of event that makes people proud to live in Providence, and brings visitors flocking to Rhode Island.