

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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‘NEA FOUR’ ARTISTS TAKE STAGE IN A TWO-NIGHT LANDMARK PERFORMANCE AT CARPENTER CENTER

2012-13 Season Launches with Performances from Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, John Fleck, and Karen Finley

LONG BEACH, Calif. – Performance artists Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, John Fleck and Karen Finley— notoriously known as the ‘NEA Four’ from their role in the historic controversy over public funding and the arts—will perform over two nights at The Richard and Karen Carpenter Performing Arts Center on the campus of Cal State Long Beach to kick-off the theatre’s 2012-13 Season. On Sept. 27 at 8 pm, Holly Hughes will present *Sapphic Sampler Platter*, followed by Tim Miller’s *Sex/Body/Self*. The following night, Sept. 28, John Fleck will perform *Mad Women* and Karen Finley shares a first look at a work in progress titled *Catch 23: Broken Negative* at 8 pm.

The four artists became champions for the arts during the “culture wars” of the 1990s, and received national attention due to their legal battle that went to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 1990, the NEA overtly vetoed the artists’ grant requests on the basis of subject matter after the artists had successfully passed through a peer review process. In 1993, the four artists won their case in the lower courts, as a federal district court declared the so-called “standards of decency” provision—which the NEA had based their denial ruling—unconstitutional. However, the case was heard by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1998, and part of the case was reversed and remanded as the justices determined that “standards of decency” are constitutional criterion for federal funding of the arts.

Born and raised in Saginaw, Michigan, Holly Hughes moved to New York City in 1979 shortly after graduating from Kalamazoo College. Her career began at the Women’s One World (WOW) café, NYC’s self-declared “Home for Wayward Girls.” She became known for performing pieces dealing with subjects of sexuality, religion, and feminism. She describes *Sapphic Sampler Platter* as “monologues about being reared in Michigan by feral republicans, becoming a major irritant of the moral majority, and if that’s not enough, I will explain the following terms: teaser bitch, standing heat and the formal come.” A 2010 Guggenheim Fellow—she is an associate professor at the University of Michigan, with appointments in Art and Design, Theatre and Drama, and Women’s Studies.

Southern California native Tim Miller is internationally recognized for his creative work in exploring the artistic, spiritual and political topography of his identity as a gay man. Miller has presented his humorous and passionate pieces in North America, Australia, and Europe in such prestigious venues as Yale Repertory Theatre, the Institute of Contemporary Art (London), and performed *My Queer Body* on *The Tonight Show* with Jay Leno. Miller describes *Sex/Body/Self* as a “highly stimulating and analytical piece about identity and challenging social texts, and how performance can be used to embolden communities and connect people with one another.” Miller has taught performance at UCLA, NYU, and

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the Claremont School of Theology, among others. He wrote an anthology of his performances, essays and journals titled *1001 Beds*—which won the Lambda Literary Award for Best Book in Drama/Theatre.

The rousing and award-winning John Fleck, who openly addresses his homosexuality through his solo pieces, has made a career of confronting the cultural and sexual norms in his pursuit of discovering what it really means to be a “man” in the world. While the NEA Four were deemed “too obscene”, Fleck believes they “were championing moral rights” and “coming from a humanist point of view.” With *Mad Women*, Fleck pays tribute to Judy Garland and his mother, Josephine—as he sings and twists through the cultural mindset of the late 1960s. As the piece is a journey about discovery and survival of existential self, “Mr. Fleck’s irrepressible energy and engaging presence make yet another trip over the rainbow an agreeable expedition,” said Andy Webster in his review for *The New York Times*.

While Karen Finley is best known for her controversial performance art career, she has exercised her talents in virtually every creative medium. Finley recorded her first album in 1988, setting her Beat-influenced poetry to a variety of dance backings on *The Truth Is Hard to Swallow*. Finley’s broad career has ranged from playing Tom Hanks’ doctor in the film *Philadelphia* to authoring several books—including *Shock Treatment* and the self-help satire *Enough Is Enough*—to last month’s appearance at *Perform Chinatown* in Los Angeles, where she channeled spirits of dead celebrities through automatic-writing exercises which resulted in watercolor paintings and dramatic readings. At Carpenter Center she shares a first look at her new work—*Catch 23: Broken Negative*—which revisits the inspiration of her earlier iconic works that confronted subjects such as abuse, female rage, violence, homophobia and the outsider.

The performances are part of *The B-Word Project—Banned, Blacklisted and Boycotted: Censorship and the Response to It* at CSULB, an 18-month campus-wide initiative led by Carpenter Center that consists of performances and other activities to stimulate wide-ranging discussions that examine what happens when a voice—whether in artistic endeavors, journalism, scientific research or other areas—is stifled through governmental, commercial, or social restraints. “This engagement with all four of these remarkable artists is one of the major events during the project,” said Carpenter Center Executive Director Michele Roberge, adding “The appearance at Carpenter Center marks the first time they have come together to perform on the same stage.” The B-Word Project is generously funded by the Association of Performing Arts Presenters and Doris Duke Charitable Trust.

General admission tickets for Holly Hughes/Tim Miller and John Fleck/Karen Finley are sold separately, and are on sale for \$25 at CarpenterArts or by calling the CSULB Arts Ticket Office at 562-985-7000. Discounts for seniors, students and groups are available, call for details. This presentation is made possible in part by Season Media Partner KPCC 89.3FM.

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CALENDAR LISTING

Photos are available – Please contact Francisco Juanillo at (562) 985-1822

What: **Holly Hughes / Tim Miller
John Fleck / Karen Finley**

When: **Thursday, September 27, 2012, 8:00pm
Friday, September 28, 2012, 8:00pm**

Where: **Carpenter Performing Arts Center**
6200 Atherton Street
Long Beach, CA 90815

Tickets: **\$25 to each show sold seperatly.**

Ticket Office: **(562) 985-7000, www.CarpenterArts.org**
Box Office Hours are Monday-Friday, 11am-6pm
Saturdays are closed except on season performance days from Noon – 4pm.

In Brief: In *Sapphic Sampler Platter*, Hughes unleashes her experiences—from being a poster child for the cultural wars and a fellow traveler at the WOW café (a home for wayward girls), to a feminist cooperative for feminists who were kicked out of other feminist groups for having the wrong haircut and her misadventures in academia. It's a middle life crisis in the key of canine, shot through with poetry and biting wit.

In *Sex/Body/Self*, Tim Miller shares excerpts from his work and speaks about the role performance plays in constellating identity in this highly stimulating, fiercely funny, an opinionated rant with performance about identity, the culture wars and queer strategies for the future.

John Fleck takes the audience on a hair-raising roller coaster ride with a pair of *Mad Women*: Judy Garland & John Fleck's mother, Josephine. Buckle up and hold on tight as they twist, wind & sing their way through the cultural mindset of the late 1960s!

Plus *Catch 23: Broken Negative*, a work in progress by Karen Finley where she uncovers and reveals the desperation of making meaning out of trauma creatively. The piece—part memory, part emotional individuation, part research and discovery—revisits the inspiration of her earlier iconic works that confronted subjects such as abuse, female rage, violence, homophobia and the outsider.

Additional information and tickets available at the Carpenter Center's website: www.CarpenterArts.org

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