



The Fabric Workshop
and Museum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Interactive Exhibition Explores “Gender Cannibalism”
of John Jarboe at The Fabric Workshop and Museum

May 11–September 29, 2024

Press Preview: Thursday, May 9, 11:00 am



“She Summers in Vienna,” 2022. Music by Emily Bate and John Jarboe. Photo credit: Christopher Ash.

Philadelphia, PA, March 12, 2024—The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) is pleased to present ***John Jarboe: The Rose Garden***, on view from May 11 to September 29, 2024. In Jarboe’s first solo museum exhibition, the Philadelphia-based artist transforms the gallery into an immersive performance space filled with video, music, and objects exploring the complexities of trans identity and belonging. The intimate experience, asking us to wonder what and who we consume to become ourselves, opens Mother’s Day weekend with tickets available through timed entry.

As a theater artist, Jarboe (she/her) is devoted to live performance—and cabaret in particular—as a means of creating a deep level of intimacy and trust between performer and audience. In *The Rose Garden*, Jarboe seeks new ways of empowering museum visitors with agency that allows for a sense of narrative surprise, vulnerability, and catharsis.

The inspiration for the work came in 2018 when Jarboe, at age 33, came out as trans to her family back home in Michigan, saying she uses she/her pronouns. What happened next would trigger a new gender journey for the artist: John's aunt revealed that John not only had a twin sister in the womb, but that John consumed her: "You ate her. That's why you are the way you are." She began constructing a musical shrine to the consumed twin, named Rose, in both a stage performance and museum exhibition that welcomes audiences into a "feast of gender" through song, storytelling, and a full plate of wordplay.

Developed in collaboration with the FWM Studio over a two-year residency, *The Rose Garden* expands on Jarboe's visionary universe that explores her origin story as a "gender cannibal" through the character of Rose, first realized in the multimedia stage performance, *Rose: You Are Who You Eat*. *The Rose Garden* reimagines Jarboe's gender journey as a multi-room environment. Through interaction with surrealist inspired video sculptures, visitors will discover a series of short films with original songs, hidden treats, and an enveloping space filled with memories, stories, and provocations. Jarboe describes the gallery experience as "an escape room...or rather escape 'womb.'" People should be prepared for a hands-on adventure, like a scavenger hunt of identity through a forest of Midwestern denial."

The multi-room experience culminates in an open processing space made by and for trans and queer communities that will serve as a place to hang out and a site for performances and gatherings, including live cabaret, community conversations, and clothing swaps, throughout the run of the show.

"John is an artist with incredible energy and a deep passion to share her gender journey and the story of Rose," says DJ Hellerman, FWM's Chief Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs. "Our Studio team has been inspired by her ambitious ideas in transforming her cabaret performance into an immersive performance space. With the support of The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, our collaboration is pushing John's work into new experiential territory, challenging the boundaries of performance, and blurring the distinction between audience and performer, all while staying true to her darkly comedic form of storytelling."

The exhibition introduces a new method of storytelling for the artist in the form of video sculptures that audiences will access through personal actions—and transgressions—within the environment. Entering just a few at a time, participants will uncover videos embedded inside sculptures of flowers, appliances, drawers, beds, vanities, and baby books. For Jarboe, the experience echoes the gender journey in that visitors are rewarded by the search.

The experience concludes in the processing space with a presentation of "Dear Mom," Jarboe's queer rendition of The Sound of Music's "Do-Re-Mi" that she describes as a "sing-along healing ritual for trans folx." Filmed this past summer on Philadelphia's Belmont Plateau, "Dear Mom" marked the beginning of the collaboration between the artist and the FWM Studio. The production required building a stage set that recreated Jarboe's childhood kitchen and the creation of costumes for her and a group of child actors. All textiles—from curtains and oven mitts to dresses and overalls—featured a bespoke toile pattern of twin fetuses and rabbits blooming from springtime vines. Within the exhibition experience, visitors will encounter "Dear Mom" in a space inspired by the same toile pattern incorporated in the film set.

A full program of events being developed for trans and queer communities will be announced later in spring 2024.

The Rose Garden is organized by Chief Curator & Director of Curatorial Affairs DJ Hellerman, and Director of Studio Operations Nami Yamamoto in collaboration with the artist and the FWM Studio team.

Rose: You Are Who You Eat, Jarboe's live show exploring her journey as a "gender cannibal," made in partnership with the Bearded Ladies Cabaret, continues its rolling theatrical co-world premiere (begun with the 2023 Philadelphia Fringe Festival and January 2024 performances with La MaMa ETC) this summer in Washington, D.C. with [Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company](#) (June 5–23, 2024) and [CulturalDC's Mobile Art Gallery](#) (June 1–July 14, 2024).

Related Programs

Opening Event

[The Rose Garden Opening Weekend: Gender Cannibal Saturday](#)

Saturday, May 11, 12:00–5:00 pm

Free (suggested donation of \$5) | Timed tickets required

This Mother's Day weekend, celebrate queer and chosen family with the opening of *John Jarboe: The Rose Garden*. Enjoy free hugs from Free Mom Hugs (PA) throughout the day, then stay for a Gender Reveal Birthday Salon from 5:00–7:00 pm.

Celebration

[Gender Reveal Birthday Salon](#)

Saturday, May 11, 5:00–7:00 pm

Free | RSVP required

Celebrate FWM Artist-in-Residence [John Jarboe](#)'s birthday with live music and an open mic hosted by cabaret artist [Messy Lefae](#). The party will culminate with the cutting of a gender reveal birthday cake!

Please note that the rest of the museum, including *The Rose Garden*, will be closed during this event.

Opening Event

[The Rose Garden Opening Weekend: Queer Mother's Day](#)

Sunday, May 12, 12:00–5:00 pm

Free (suggested donation of \$5) | Timed tickets required

Spend your Mother's Day at *The Rose Garden*. Bring your drag mother, queer mother, and queer family* and get free mimosas, snacks, and "portable hugs" in the form of stuffed animals. The Green Room will be activated by Philadelphia-based trans performing artists throughout the day.

FWM Open House

[International Museum Day](#)

May 18, 2024, 12:00–5:00 pm

Free and open to the public

This International Museum Day, The Fabric Workshop and Museum bares all!

Explore immersive, interactive, and deeply personal exhibitions on view, then go behind-the-scenes to learn how our Studio brings the experimental visions of Artists-in-Residence to life. Stop by our Print Studio to screenprint your very own artwork for a truly unconventional museum experience.

Watch Party

[“Dear Mom” Premiere](#)

Sunday, May 25, 4:00–6:00 pm

Free (suggested donation of \$5) | RSVP required

Join the cast of “Dear Mom” for a celebration of the film collaboration between John Jarboe and FWM. Inspired by The Sound of Music’s “Do-Re-Me,” “Dear Mom” is described by the artist as “a sing-along healing ritual for trans folx that uses cinematic fantasy to imagine what it would feel like if our parents and guardians believe us when we tell them who we are.”

The event will feature composer Pax Ressler, actors from the film, and members of the Philadelphia Girls Choir.

Please note that the rest of the museum, including *The Rose Garden*, will be close at 5:00 pm.

Clothing Exchange

[Clothes for Who You Are: FWM x FABSCRAP](#)

Friday, June 7, 6:00–8:00 pm

\$10 Public | Free for members of the trans community and of FWM

Find your new fit to celebrate who you are. Peruse clothing samples discarded by the design industry and learn how to customize your garment with screenprinting techniques!

Author Talk

[Horse Barbie: Book Reading and Signing with author Geena Rocero](#)

Monday, June 10, 2024, 6:00–7:00 pm

Free | advance reservations encouraged

Join Filipinx-American model, TED speaker, and transgender advocate Geena Rocero for a celebration of her acclaimed book, *Horse Barbie: A Memoir of Reclamation*. Hailed as “a moving chronicle of trans resilience and joy” (Vogue) from one of Out100’s Most Impactful and Influential LGBTQ+ Storytellers, who “quite literally models what triumph can look like” (Glamour).

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret.

Poetry Night

[My Favorite Flower Blooms in Winter with J Mase III](#)

Saturday, June 29, 2024, 5:00–7:00 pm

Free | advance reservations encouraged

Join award winning Black Trans poet, author, educator and filmmaker J Mase III (he/him) for an evening of poetry rooted in community care.

Featured on MSNBC, Essence Live, BuzzFeed, Blavity, the Root, and TED, J Mase is the winner of a Lambda Literary Award for Transgender Non-Fiction and a Creative Capital Award. He is co-director of the forthcoming documentary, “the Black Trans Prayer Book.” His most recent solo book, “Josephine: a trans story of biblical proportions,” was released in 2023.

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret.

Virtual Reality Experience

[Kate McGee's *Girl Mode*](#)

Saturday, July 13–Sunday, July 14, 2024, 12:00–5:00 pm

Free with general admission (suggested \$5 donation)

In *Girl Mode*, players wander a surreal and desiccated VR landscape in search of memories. Combining confessional text, surreal visuals, and a walking simulator structure, *Girl Mode* is a poetic meditation on transness as absence.

Creator Kate McGee explains, “*Girl Mode* was born in a psychedelic flash of trans maternal rage. I imagined that VR technology could simulate a happy trans childhood and build empathy for trans kids in need of gender affirming care. Instead, I found myself meditating on absence as a central texture of my life as a trans woman. In *Girl Mode*, players explore a disjointed poetic landscape in search of the one thing a trans body makes nearly impossible: memories.”

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret.

Artist Talk

[Talkback with Kate McGee](#)

Sunday, July 14, 5:00–6:00 pm

Free | advance registration encouraged

Join this talk with celebrated trans lighting and scenic designer Kate McGee, who helped set the stage for John Jarboe’s multi-room environment, *The Rose Garden*. Be sure to come early to experience *Girl Mode*, her VR experience that explores transness as absence.

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret.

Summer Skill Building Series

[Rose-tinted Handmade Soap and Prints](#)

Wednesday, July 10 + 17, 3:00–5:00 pm

\$25 Public | \$20 FWM Members | Advance reservations encouraged

Learn the art of handmade soap using rose oil, rose petals, and rose-shaped molds. In the second part of the workshop, we’ll expose a screen using real roses and petals to create a nature-inspired design for monoprinting. Leave with your own prints to pair with your handmade soap.

Summer Skill Building Series

Enhance your studio or teaching practice with a focus on sustainability. Each week, we’ll find inspiration in works on view and explore new materials to use in the classroom or your own personal art practice.

Professional Development

[TransWork Office Hours](#)

Thursday, July 18, 4:00–6:00 pm

Free | Drop-ins welcome

Trans and non-binary job-seekers: spruce up your resume, conduct a mock interview, and get general counseling for your job search!

Organized in partnership with [TransWork](#) at the Independence Business Alliance (IBA) on the third Thursday of every month through September 2024, in conjunction with [John Jarboe: The Rose Garden](#).

Live Performance

[Interminable](#)

Sunday, July 21, 2024, 5:00–7:00 pm

Free (suggested \$5 donation) | Advance registration required

Interminable is a Philly-based futuristic fusion band that explores the connections of diasporic peoples through original music in Spanish and English, weaving together the common threads of improvisation and swing from Mexican traditional *son jarocho*, jazz, rock, funk, and electronic music.

This concert will feature original songs from [Interminable](#)'s first album, *rebirth::renacer*, as well as new songs to be released as part of a forthcoming EP.

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret.

Summer Skill Building Series

[Bed of Roses, Miniature Childhood Bedrooms](#)

Wednesday, August 7, 2024, 3:00–5:00 pm

\$15 Public | \$10 FWM Members | \$5 Teens | Advance reservations encouraged

What messages of hope, encouragement, inspiration, or acceptance would you send to your younger self? What objects, colors, or patterns make you feel at home? In *The Rose Garden*, John Jarboe (she/her) invites you into her childhood bedroom, where she reimagines and reclaims her own narrative. Before beginning construction in the galleries, however, she and the FWM Studio built a miniature model of the exhibition, enabling them to imagine and reimagine the space. In this workshop, revisit and construct your own childhood bedroom in miniature using found imagery, recycled materials and textile scraps.

Summer Skill Building Series

Enhance your studio or teaching practice with a focus on sustainability. Each week, we'll find inspiration in works on view and explore new materials to use in the classroom or your own personal art practice.

Works-in-Process Performance

[New Buds: MK Tuomanen and Harmon dot aut](#)

August 14, 2024, 6:00– 7:30 pm

Free (suggested \$5 donation) | Advance registration encouraged

Explore the intersection between performance and visual art with an evening of new works-in-process by Philly and Minneapolis-based trans theater artists.

GravyLand

In this nascent communal performance and transmedia piece, non-binary and autistic playwright, musician, and visual artist Harmon dot aut (they/she) traces the shared connections among neuro- and gender diverse experiences. For Harmon, who describes their self as AntiGender, the very act of speaking requires constant, focused labor—they form words and sentences by translating their

innate synesthetic language of shapes, colors, frequencies, and fractals. In “GravyLand,” Harmon reaches out after a decade of being housebound, inviting us to connect across this communication divide.

Consider the Cow

In this work-in-progress, playwright and performance artist MK Tuomanen navigates the maze of parenthood through a trans lens. From top surgery to intersex bulls to minotaurs to Doja Cat to the inherent grief of loving a child, Tuomanen drags you to the center of the labyrinth and back again.

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret.

Professional Development

[TransWork Office Hours](#)

Thursday, August 15, 4:00–6:00 pm

Free | Drop-ins welcome

Trans and non-binary job-seekers: spruce up your resume, conduct a mock interview, and get general counseling for your job search!

Organized in partnership with [TransWork](#) at the Independence Business Alliance (IBA) on the third Thursday of every month through September 2024, in conjunction with [John Jarboe: The Rose Garden](#).

Interactive Performance

[Rise Choir](#)

August 18, 2024, 5:00–6:00 pm

Free (suggested \$5 donation) | Advance registration required

Rise Choir is a genderful collective of singers that share music in free, public spaces. Led by *Rose* composer Pax Ressler, Rise Choir invites audiences to live into their fully embodied, queer, trans, *singing* selves. Through singing into our shared values, Rise Choir leads audiences in simple, soul-stirring, easy to learn songs, rehearsing the shared vision of a better world. Whether you are an experienced singer or simply want to dip your toes in, please join us. There is no preparation needed—you and your voice are welcome!

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret.

Demo + Workshop

[Tufting Circle with Bailey Roper](#)

August 29, 2024, 5:00–7:00 pm

Free (suggested \$5 donation) | Advance registration required

Join this hands-on introduction to rug tufting with seasoned tufting artist Bailey Roper, who produced the impressive centerpiece rug that welcomes all into the Green Room. Following a demo from the artist, try your hand at a collaborative artwork using our Studio’s tufting guns.

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret.

Live Musical Performance

[Emily Bate at The Rose Garden](#)

September 5, 2024, 6:00–8:00 pm
Free (suggested \$5 donation) | Advance registration required

Join *Rose* music director Emily Bate for an evening of solo music dipping into her 15-year catalogue as a composer, songwriter and performer.

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret. Proudly part of the 2024 Philadelphia Fringe Festival (September 5–29).

Intimate Evening

Conversation and Songs with Justin Vivian Bond

September 6, 2024, 6:00–8:00 pm
Free (suggested \$5 donation) | Livestream available

Not to be missed! Luminary performance artist, singer, writer, and trans trailblazer Justin Vivian Bond comes to *The Rose Garden* for an evening of music and conversation with audiences and Artist-in-Residence John Jarboe. Bond, an Obie and Bessie-winning and Tony-nominated artist, will be joined by Nath Ann Carrera on guitar.

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret. Proudly part of the 2024 Philadelphia Fringe Festival (September 5–29).

Family Program

Family Snacks: Eric Jaffe

September 8, 2024, 11:00 am–12:00 pm
Free (suggested \$5 donation) | Advance registration required

Join Bearded Ladies hosts on Sundays for Family Snacks: programming made especially for our youngest fans. Expect family-friendly live music and performances, colorful costumes, and lots of interactivity. Best of all, this series is completely FREE! Open to kids of all ages.

This week: drag artist Eric Jaffe (she/they) will read a story and perform some music on her ukulele.

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret. Proudly part of the 2024 Philadelphia Fringe Festival (September 5–29).

Community Workshop

Euphoria Quilt Project Sewing Drop-in

September 8, 2024, 1:00–3:00 pm
Included with free general admission. Drop-ins welcome.

The Euphoria Quilt Project is making a stop in Philadelphia! Meet creator, Eliot Anderberg and learn about this trans and queer collective quilt project composed of over 150 sewn blocks sent in by people from around the country. Learn hand quilting and sewing techniques, contribute your own stitches, and consider the question, “What does your gender expansive joy look like?”

Mask mandatory event: Please note: face coverings will be required and provided for all staff and visitors ages 2+ for this event.

Family Program

Family Snacks: Jackie Soro

September 15, 2024, 11:00 am–12:00 pm

Free (suggested \$5 donation) | Advance registration encouraged

Join Bearded Ladies hosts on Sundays for Family Snacks: programming made especially for our youngest fans. Expect family-friendly live music and performances, colorful costumes, and lots of interactivity. Best of all, this series is completely FREE! Open to kids of all ages.

This week: Jackie Soro (she/they) presents IMAGINATION STATION!, a musical, imagination-fueled participatory experience for kids of all ages.

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret. Proudly part of the 2024 Philadelphia Fringe Festival (September 5–29).

Professional Development

TransWork Office Hours

Thursday, September 19, 4:00–6:00 pm

Free | Drop-ins welcome

Trans and non-binary job-seekers: spruce up your resume, conduct a mock interview, and get general counseling for your job search!

Organized in partnership with [TransWork](#) at the Independence Business Alliance (IBA) on the third Thursday of every month through September 2024, in conjunction with [John Jarboe: The Rose Garden](#).

Poetry Night

Lady Dane: The waters remember the sowing of their name: poems of protest, revolution, and reclamation

September 20, 2024, 6:00–8:00 pm

Join performance artist, award winning playwright, and author Lady Dane for an evening of poetry that explores current events, ancient myths, and future cultivations of the self. Positing trans folx as walking universes, Lady Dane takes you on a journey that asks what world you wish to be.

Mandatory Masks: Please note: face coverings will be required for all staff and visitors ages 2+ for this event.

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret. Proudly part of the 2024 Philadelphia Fringe Festival (September 5–29).

Family Program

Family Snacks: Us and Jordan McCree from ILL Doots

September 22, 2024, 11:00 am–12:00 pm

Free (suggested \$5 donation) | Advance registration encouraged

Join Bearded Ladies hosts on Sundays for Family Snacks: programming made especially for our youngest fans. Expect family-friendly live music and performances, colorful costumes, and lots of interactivity. Best of all, this series is completely FREE! Open to kids of all ages.

This week: Us and Jordan from ILL Doots lead a sing-and-dance-along for kids of all ages hosted by Jarbeaux with Lili St. Queer on piano!

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret. Proudly part of the 2024 Philadelphia Fringe Festival (September 5–29).

Workshop

Krishna Isha: Creating Autobiographical Performance Work

September 27, 2024, 6:00–8:00 pm

Free (suggested \$5 donation) | Advance registration required

Join London-based performance artist, screenwriter, comedian and theater maker Krishna Isha for a workshop exploring how trans artists and performers can craft autobiographical, genre-pushing, gender-pushing works. Delve into idea-generating exercises, examining the use of personal experiences to shape diverse stories and experimenting with form and structure. Participants will be encouraged to create their own material during the workshop.

Co-presented with The Bearded Ladies Cabaret. Proudly part of the 2024 Philadelphia Fringe Festival (September 5–29).

Film Credits

Films Conceived, Written, Produced, and Co-Directed by John Jarboe

In Collaboration With

Co-director of Film, Director of Photography, Film Co-Production Design: Christopher Ash

Co-Director of Film, Performance Director and Dramaturg: MK Tuomanen

Featuring compositions by Emily Bate, John Jarboe, Daniel de Jesús, Pax Ressler, Be Steadwell and arrangements by Heath Allen, Emily Bate, Daniel de Jesús, Pax Ressler, and Be Steadwell

Film Co-Production Design, Costume Design and Fabrication: Rebecca Kanach

Music Director, Film Boom-Boy: Emily Bate

Project Manager and Film Assistant Director: Nic Labadie-Bartz

Film First Assistant Camera: Alik Barsoumian

Art Director of Films: Hamilton Guillén

Wardrobe and Set Decorator: Scott McMaster

Producer: Emily Schreiner

Craft Services and Residency Cook: Rae Kingfield

Additional Props: Jo Vito Ramírez

“Dear Mom” was created in collaboration with The Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia.

About John Jarboe

John Jarboe (she/her) is a director, producer, writer, performer, and art activist, and the founding artistic director of The Bearded Ladies Cabaret. After receiving a BA and a BFA in English and Theater from the University of Michigan, Jarboe moved to Philadelphia, where in the past 14 years she has created and performed work for organizations including The Wilma Theater, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Barnes Foundation, Philadelphia Horticultural Society, FringeArts, and Opera Philadelphia. She and her company The Bearded Ladies gained notoriety for their annual Bastille Day show at Eastern State Penitentiary, which grew under her writing and directing from a street festival to an hour-long performance attended by over 10,000 people by 2018. Jarboe has received a 2013 Independence Fellowship, was named best drag performer in Philadelphia (2018) by Philadelphia Magazine and is a 2022 Transformation Grant awardee (The Leeway Foundation).

Outside of Philadelphia she has toured original work to Miami, Seattle (Seattle Symphony) France, Poland, New Zealand (Performance Arcade), and Australia (Malthouse Theater). She has also written, performed, and directed original work for La Mama ETC, Joe's Pub, Lincoln Center's American Songbook Series, and The Guggenheim's Works & Process series. She has written for and directed original cabarets for famed opera star Anthony Roth Costanzo and is the drag dula of Stephanie Blythe's Blythely Oratonio (Lincoln Center American Songbook Series). Jarboe's original performance piece *Rose: You Are Who You Eat*, commissioned by Works and Process, premiered at FringeArts, La MaMa ETC, and Woolly Mammoth in 2023 and 2024. See her upcoming work a beardedladiescabaret.com, Johnjarboe.org, and [@johnjarbeaux](https://www.instagram.com/johnjarbeaux) on Instagram.

About The Fabric Workshop and Museum

The Fabric Workshop and Museum (FWM) is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art museum devoted to the creation, presentation, and preservation of innovative works of art. Its mission— Collaborating with artists, revealing new possibilities—embodies a 45-year commitment to helping artists experiment with the expressive possibilities of a broad spectrum of new materials and techniques. Through its renowned Artist-in-Residence Program, FWM provides artists at all stages of their careers with the opportunity to collaborate with its studio staff and take their work in fresh and often unexpected directions. FWM presents large-scale exhibitions, installations, and performative work, utilizing innovative fiber and other media including sculpture, installation, video, painting, photography, ceramics, and architecture. Founded in 1977, FWM brings this spirit of creative investigation and discovery to an eager audience, broadening access to art and advancing its role as a catalyst for innovation and social connection.

Support

Major support for *John Jarboe: The Rose Garden* has been generously provided by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, with additional support from The National Endowment for the Arts.

Major support of FWM is provided by the Marion Boulton "Kippy" Stroud Foundation. FWM receives state art funding support through a grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency. Additional support is provided by Agnes Gund and the Board of Directors and Members of The Fabric Workshop and Museum.

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