



The Fabric Workshop
and Museum

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Fabric Workshop and Museum Presents
John Jarboe: The Rose Garden

May 11–September 29, 2024

Press Preview: Thursday, May 9, 11:00 am (pre-registration required)



John Jarboe's *Rose: You Are Who You Eat*, 2022. 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.

More programming will be announced soon.

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 Oratorio (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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Media Contact

Frank Luzi
Luzi Media
215.779.7614
frank@luzi.media

Justin Rubich
Senior Marketing and Communications Manager
Tel: 321.422.9734
jrubich@fabricworkshopandmuseum.org