

Who was Jeanette Yanikian?

Jeanette was an incredible composer and performance artist who was married to Louis Andressian. And I actually became friends with her before I became friends with Louis. She was this incredibly interesting, strange, funny and deep person. So when she died I thought I'd like to do something that remembers her but it can't be a public kind of memory because no one else will have known her, you know, unless you were in Holland and experienced her in person. So in that case, what's the point of a memorial piece: is the point that everyone should watch me have a grief experience? Or should I make believe that this person is universally beloved, known and make you try to understand who this person is? Or should I make a big public statement something about her condition but not really about her? There are lots of different ways to do this but I thought what I would really appreciate in this experience is to have an hour set aside to allow me to think about my relationship to her, who she was and what she meant to me. And I'm going to make that experience neutral enough so that you will have permission to think whatever you want to think and you can actually project your own emotional life onto it. Or you can use it as a grief object to think about your relationship with someone else.

Is this the first time you've used this idea?

I've done it before actually for another memorial piece, called the passing measure. Again it was in memory of a friend of mine who was this incredibly important person to me who very few will have known. It was for the City of Birmingham symphony and choir and it's the very beautiful, new-agey meditative thing. What I felt like was doing was to put people in a mood to have an emotion. But I wasn't going to tell them what emotion and I wasn't going to tell them when to have it. So I really enjoy doing that and for me the experience was very satisfying and moving. When Jeanette died, I thought I'm going to do this for her as well.

You know, Jeanette used to do these performances that Suzanne and I have never seen. But they were performances where she would put microphones all over her body and then she would monitor the sounds of her bodily functions, you know her nervous system, her lymph system and broadcast and process them live.

What kind of microphones? Just little contact mics?

No, no she would have a gigantic sound system and she would have intravenous microphones

Wait, what?!

You know, I've never seen them. But according to her she would say "Oh, I will hook myself up to all of these microphones and then I would take a lot of drugs and the drugs would change my system and you will hear the changes." And those were these incredible installations that she would do. She was so insane, in a great way, and so, so, so funny.

Does recording of that exist somewhere?

I have no idea.

We gotta get our hands on that.

So I'm sure that in Suzanne's mind, when I asked her to collaborate on this piece...

Were they friends as well?

Suzanne knew Jeanette, but she wasn't really friends with her. You know we double dated and stuff like that. But I think Suzanne came up with the idea for the liquid light show because we have this association in our mind with fluids and Jeanette.

And maybe something psychedelic.

Yeah, psychedelic fluids. She was just an amazing person, she was so strange and so funny. And she looked bizarre also, she was incredible. And that why it's so funny, you know I have the incredible personal memory of her but no one else does. And also my particular memory, so you know I met Louis in 1983 at a party, probably at the Dutch consulate's house or something. So I got invited to this party where I didn't know anybody, you know, it's 1983 and I'm just a pipsqueak. So I'm hanging around...not talking to anybody... and I see this bizarre looking woman who also not talking to anybody. So I walked up to her and said something and she replied with this outlandish joke. We were just talking the entire time and when the party was over, Louis comes up and says "Oh, yes you've met Jeanette" So I felt like I had this funny relationship with this woman, and she died this really horrible death. You know in Holland there's assisted suicide, so she went through that which was really horrible so Louis went with through that with her, and you know it was really terrible.