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## MADAM & EVE

ANNIE SPRINKLE AND ELIZABETH STEPHENS MAKE VOWS TO MOTHER EARTH  
IN ONE OF THE SEASON'S MOST UNFORGETTABLE WEDDING CEREMONIES

PLUS: A LOOK INSIDE UCSC'S CREATIVE ART ORG,  
**INTERVENE! INTERRUPT!**



A photograph of two women in elaborate green costumes with large peacock feather headdresses, standing in a forest. The woman on the left is wearing glasses and holding a black feather. The woman on the right is smiling and has her arms outstretched. The background is a lush green forest with a mossy stone wall.

# LOVE

*(the new sex)*



Guillermo Gómez-Peña



# Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens head to the altar for the fourth time in one unforgettable—and eco-tinged—performance art wedding BY GREG ARCHER

Annie Sprinkle hands me a plate of farm fresh-eggs and sits down at the kitchen table in the rustic Boulder Creek home she shares with her life and art partner Elizabeth Stephens. Sprinkle bites into a piece of whole wheat toast, chews it a few times, looks over at me with calm eyes and says, "Love is the new 'sex:'"

It's not your typical breakfast condiment but I take in the verbal seasoning, use my fork to break open the egg yoke on my plate and silently recite the Sprinkle-ism back to myself, each time placing emphases on a different word: *Love is the new sex. Love is the new sex. Love is the new sex.*

Love is the new ... sex.

Is Sprinkle suggesting that 21st-century human beings have entered a new paradigm, one which finds them wanting to penetrate something more than just each other's bodies; plunge deeper, perhaps, into the essence of the four-letter word Hallmark totally screwed with?

"I think it's sort of horny-making in this fourth chakra way," Stephens will later tell me, adding that she and Sprinkle have all sorts of "orgasms" now, many from the heat and not just from their bodies touching. "I don't want to say it's more evolved because sex is great," she says, "but when you say 'Love is the new sex,' it's about a different chakra and that's what's so great about this project."

Stephens is talking about the couple's seven-year art adventure, which finds them pledging their romantic allegiance to each other in a wedding ceremony every year

until 2011. Dubbed "performance art weddings," they tend to unravel like modern day art festivals. Each year, each wedding focuses on a different theme, a different color and chakra/power point in the body. If you had hosed off a smaller Woodstock, allowed it to mature a bit, then spritzed it with something more grounded, centered and affirming, you'd find yourself at an annual Sprinkle-Stephens affair.

Their project was inspired by Linda M. Montano's "14 Years of Living Art" and came into being in 2005 when Sprinkle and Stephens answered a call to artists from Montano to create a seven-year art project. The couple wanted to do something in response to the violence of war, the anti-gay marriage movement, and the rampant cynicism they found in today's culture. They launched Love Art Laboratory and decided to create various art projects that explored "love." "We hope the Love Art Laboratory will help make the world a more fun, sexy, tolerant, love-filled place," the couple notes on their website, [loveartlab.org](http://loveartlab.org).

This year's wedding, the coup de theatre of UCSC's "Intervene! Interrupt!" conference (it's the closing event, see related story this section), promises to attract national and international artists. The color theme is green and the focus is on the heart chakra. Fittingly, the theme is love. In addition to exchanging vows with each other, the pair will take on Mother Earth as their lover.

To that end, the couple's intentions are clear, as noted on their website: "We will vow to make more of an effort to biodegrade, sustain, spend more time cleaning the beach, drive less, walk more and will promise to install a grey water system in our house. Will do new theater

projects about our journey into the environmental movement to help educate ourselves and the public about how to have a more healthy relationship with the earth. We will vow to make the environment more sexy. We will do our part to leave earth in a nice after-glow."

Another post further crystallizes this year's intentions: "People often think of the Earth as 'Mother Earth' but today the Earth is so battered, abused, exploited, polluted, blown up and ripped apart that she can't handle the burden of being a 'mother' any more. It would better to think of the Earth as a 'lover' because we take care of our lovers instead of expecting them to take care of us."

It may sound "out there" to some, but, if anything, Sprinkle and Stephens' fourth-year wedding has to be one of the most provocative unions of a female troika—we're including Mother Earth here—with enough soulful symbolism and orgasmatronated eco-consciousness raising to keep the masses internally satiated for quite some time.

In other words, it's destined to provoke thought.

The couple wouldn't have it any other way. But it's curious to note how these two very diverse, creative women found their way into each other's hearts.

Originally from Philadelphia, Sprinkle's past is full of transformations and re-inventions. She was a sex worker and adult film star who eventually became one of the most inspiring crusaders in the '80's "sex positive feminist movement." When she morphed into a bona fide performance artist, her titillating work not only debunked sexual taboos but managed to push the conventional envelope right off the table. Her videos and books often sported wild titles: "Post Porn Modernist," *Fire In The Valley: Female Genital Massage*, and "Hard Core From the Heart; The

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## INTER- NTERVENE! RUPT!

Inside "Rethinking Art as Social Practice"  
by JOHN MALKIN

Santa Cruz may never be the same after this weekend. "We're going to have a really fun time and we're going to turn the city upside down and inside out," predicts Guillermo Gómez-Peña, a San Francisco-based performance artist. More than 50 radical performance and interventionist artists from around the world will be at UCSC for Intervene! Interrupt! Rethinking Art as Social Practice from Thursday, May 15 to Saturday, May 17. Exhibits and events in conjunction with the conference are at The Sesnon Gallery at UCSC ("Interruption of Hierarchies"), The Lab in San Francisco ("Subversive Complicity"), and San Jose Institute for Contemporary Art ("Art and Life"). View the schedule for all events at [may2008.artintervention.org](http://may2008.artintervention.org)

Internationally known artists like the politically astute Yes Men and New York-based performance artist Linda Montano are here for a variety of exhibits, panel discussions, low-footprint performances and art surprises. Michael Trigilio and Lee Townsend of Neighborhood Public Radio will be broadcasting

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Interventionist art is about digging in the dirt of *habitu tendencies* and discovering where we are stuck in beliefs that *do not serve life*.



## LOVE AND MARRIAGE

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Pleasures, Profits and Politics of Sex in Performance." Then, in 2002, she surprised some critics by earning a doctorate at San Francisco's Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality. She is now a sexologist.

Stephens hails from West Virginia. Her passion for art and, perhaps more specifically, creating work that is often avant-garde, eventually caught the attention of numerous museums, galleries and nonprofit spaces throughout the United States, Europe, Japan and Russia. Her bronze sculptural installation, for instance, "The Academic/Porn Star Party Collection" certainly generated buzz. So, too,

did a video installation, "Kiss." Other works, like "Exposed: Experiments in Love, Sex, Death and Art" (with Sprinkle) illuminate Stephens' ability to combine different art forms. She entered the UCSC circle in 1994. She is currently chair of the art department.

The duo first met in 1989 at a party in Manhattan, where Sprinkle was living at the time—Stephens was attending Rutgers. They flirted, but things didn't heat up until 2002 back in California, where Sprinkle was encouraged by friend Joseph Kramer to meet with Stephens. The women agreed to see each other and something clicked.

So much so that the couple became domestic partners in San Francisco March 25, 2003. (They were "legally" married in Calgary in January 2007.) These days, their union goes beyond them. Their seven-year endeavor acts like a ripple effect, affecting the communities in which they are held.

Back at the brunch Sprinkle prepared—organic eggs, salad greens and sunflower seeds—the conversation dives even deeper. In a *GTQ&A*, we probe the Sprinkle-Stephens marriage in search of fruitful insights into their life and artistic times.

**THIS SEVEN-YEAR PROJECT SEEMS TO BE GIVING YOU BOTH ENERGY FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIP AND EVERYTHING ELSE APPARENTLY.**

**Annie:** It's a big theater piece. It's a big production. It has the exhilaration, the fear, the nervousness, the anxieties and the excitement and creativity of any wedding.

**BUT IT'S NOT JUST ANY WEDDING.**

**Beth:** We're taking a huge risk. It's a big risk for me, personally, because I will be in front of all my students and the administrators at UCSC. And I really want

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# MARRY ME again and again and again and again ...



2007: Yellow wedding



2006: Orange wedding



2005: Red wedding, the year Sprinkle had breast cancer.





## LOVE AND MARRIAGE

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it to be good. I feel like this is my hometown. I want it to be good for them. I want them to have a great time.

**Annie:** Exploring love is sort of taboo. As an artist, you say your work is about love and people sort of roll their eyes. When I used to say my work is about sex, it was taboo ... same thing about love, now. They think Hallmark cards. They think it's really wimpy. So it's kind of like we're doing experiments about different aspects of love and it's every bit as fascinating and multi-faceted as it was exploring sex.

**Beth:** It's just really exciting to see this come together artistically. Three galleries are a part of this—the Sesnon in Santa Cruz, the ICA in San Jose and now The Lab in San Francisco are now doing Interventionist-type shows.

### THE WORK IS OUT THERE NOW.

**Beth:** Yes. And I've gone through years and years of evaluations in my career, and I don't know if people really know what I do. I've done different things throughout those years, but now I am doing something that is especially hard to put down on paper. This is an opportunity for us to show what our work is about. It involves things like new forms of art, which are hard to evaluate. It involves things like collaboration and it's really an experiential kind of

thing. There's a lot wrapped up in this for me. I hope it goes off well. Whatever that means. I don't even know what that means.

**Annie:** Everybody knows the narrative of a wedding. That's what I get a kick out of. Everybody has been to a wedding. Or maybe this is some person's first wedding. I remember the first wedding I saw and it was very powerful for me. It was this hippie wedding ... 'Here Comes the Sun' and everything. Weddings are a part of our culture. It's a ritual that we do in our culture that is loaded with symbology. And there are many parts—the vows, the garter toss, the cake-cutting. People know those parts. So it's really exciting for me as an artist to take something that is so well known, that people hold very dear—or hate—and fuck with it in the best sense of the word.

### YOUR WEDDINGS ATTRACT MANY PEOPLE. WHY DO YOU FEEL OTHERS ARE SO JAZZED ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING?

**Beth:** This wedding is not about getting ahead in any kind of way. It's not about career. It's not about making more money. I think it's outside of a certain kind of boundary that people long for. I think people need public ritual. People really need to be able to contribute to a thing that is bigger themselves. And really, the wedding is not about Annie and me.

**Annie:** It's not really going to be about us at all. We really don't want it to be. We want to be catalysts for something—for love. If we do it right, it won't be about us. We've already done weddings about our relationship. We want it to be ...

**Beth:** ... about bigger issues—issues that are bigger than us.

### I WAS GOING TO ASK YOU THAT: IF YOU BOTH FEEL THIS THING IS BIGGER THAN YOU?

**Beth:** Yes, of course. One part of it is about these artists coming in from all over the world and it gives people, in general, an opportunity to come together. I mean, really, these days, don't we all spend a lot of time home alone doing email?

**Annie:** This whole thing is very post-orgy.

**Beth:** Well, in your case. But I have never been to an orgy.

**Annie:** I just think we all have to create all this room to receive. And this event is like a big pillow, this uplifting thing.

**Beth:** And, in the concept of Intervene! Interrupt! ...

**Annie:** ... we could have a few interruptions. But these events are very spontaneous.

### DID YOU KNOW AHEAD OF TIME WHAT THE THEME OF EACH WEDDING WOULD BE?

**Beth:** No, we didn't. The years really seemed to build themselves around the themes of the chakras. The first year, the first chakra, was about survival and security, and then Annie had breast cancer. The second year, we were just so happy and that was all about sexuality and creativity. The third year was about power and courage, and that was the year I became the chair of the art department. The years have opened themselves up in a way that really supported us. This year, which is about the environment and the earth, we happened to move to Boulder Creek, which is all about living in the environment. I also just started working with the Harrisons, who will be giving the keynote speech and the homilies at our wedding, and they are true pioneers at creating environmental art. There has been a huge synchronicity that happened through the years.

### DO YOU FEEL AS IF YOU'VE BEEN CALLED TO DO THIS?

**Beth:** Well, Linda Montano put out a call on her website to do a seven-year art project and we answered it. So, literally, we were called.



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### WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT FOR THIS YEAR'S WEDDING?

**Annie:** Well, actually, here in the United States, technically, these aren't "marriages" because two women are not legally able to marry. What we do is have multiple weddings, and we make various vows. The first wedding we made vows to each other and to our seven-year Love Art Lab project. The second wedding we made 100 vows to 100 members of our community. The third wedding we got legally married in Canada. This time we will make vows to enter into a committed relationship with the Earth—we'll take the Earth as our lover.

**Beth:** What comes to mind, for me, is how lucky I am to be an artist and to be able to use my life as the content of my art. I'm most excited that I get to marry this beautiful, sexy, amazing being (again) in the heart of the Shakespeare Glen.

**Annie:** I'm excited about so many aspects of this wedding, that I can't pick just one. Having a wedding with Beth is so deliciously romantic. Each time feels like the first time. I'm so in love with her. I'm also very excited about the art aspect. The weddings have been really interesting art experiments.

**Beth:** I've also discovered that I enjoy public rituals and performances as they create community. Others love to be involved in our work because the work provides an opportunity for collaboration and generosity. Our work gives permission.

**Annie:** I've discovered that all different kinds of people really respond well to a big love fest.

### WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING THING YOU BOTH HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT EACH OTHER AND YOURSELVES?

**Beth:** I have learned the joys of being more open, flexible and willing to see the world(s) differently than if I had not dedicated myself to this project.

**Annie:** I've learned that Beth is the most wonderful partner a girl could ever have. And that I'm actually a pretty good partner myself. Who knew? I've learned that not all big whores' lives have tragic endings—some turn out to be big winners. Love is indeed grand.♥

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*Learn more about Annie Sprinkle, Beth Stephens, Love Art Lab and a bevy of other art-related things at [loveartlab.org](http://loveartlab.org).*

## INTERVENE! INTERRUPT!



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audio sculptures and giving away small radio transmitters. Local interventionist Grant Wilson and the Santa Cruz Guerilla Drive-In will be projecting short films in public areas. Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens, chair of the UCSC Art Department and a co-creator of this groundbreaking conference, will perform their fourth annual Love Art Lab wedding—a Green Wedding—and marry the Earth during the conference's closing event.

Intervene! Interrupt! is the first-ever conference of its kind, designed to interrupt hierarchies, intervene in the status quo and map hidden systems. Interventionists, art-activists and Fluxus artists will share ideas,

artwork and performances, as well as seed our community with creative tools to explore political, public and private concerns. The following highlights the possibilities of viewing life as art and creating free and liberated communities in the present moment.

### Art is Revolution

"A society that claims to be a democracy cannot possibly be one without acknowledging the critical voice of the artist," candidly explains Guillermo Gómez-Peña, who uses performance art to bring attention to racism, anti-immigrant policies and the possibility of crossing borders

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