

## Emily Promise Allison, Dream Sequence, Untitled Art Society, Calgary

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### Emily Promise Allison

*Dream Sequence*, performance,  
Untitled Art Society, Calgary, 2018.

Photos: Elyse Bouvier, courtesy of the artist &  
Untitled Art Society

## Emily Promise Allison *Dream Sequence*

Wilted carrots dangling from an armature built around the artist. Silver feet and hands dancing on the grass among flowers. The artist's long blonde tresses hiding her face reflected in a mirror. At the 4th Street Lilac Festival (Calgary) Emily Promise Allison swirled on a grassy knoll allowing the audience to join her in her reveries. *Dream Sequence*, commissioned by Untitled Art Society, was a durational performance that intertwined dreams and reality in a magical dilemma: how to bring our nighttime dreams into our daytime lives lit by the sun.

Over the course of four hours, Promise Allison brought together a collection of disparate and banal objects: vases, water, balloons, flowers, carrots, bananas, candles, tomatillos, mirrors, gridded structures, and silver spray paint, in a series of strange and playful scenarios. A banana is locked in a cage-like structure, much to the chagrin of the men in the audience. The artist's silver painted hands submerged in arm-length vases full of water, she studying them carefully as bubbles rose and fell. Small translucent balls dropped onto a mirror, rolled towards the hands of the audience. Small children reached out towards her and became equal participants, as if crossing a veil into the liminal space she created.

The artist invited the audience to reconsider how we relate to quotidian objects in our waking hours. How do these objects perform in our dreams? Can they perform in a similar manner in real life? In particular the artist's play with water brought light and imagination to our regular interactions with things we take for granted. Promise Allison performed a dance with the objects she chose. As if dropping weightlessly into space, she moved silently around her dreamscape; every act took on a magical significance creating a harmony in time that was both ethereal and unexpected.

As the hour of five approached, Promise Allison moved laboriously across the grass, her silver palms outstretched

to the base of the water-filled vases. She pushed and prodded the vases across the space, surrounded by lilies she had laid out on the ground. In a moment that by chance became the closing, as if through an act of divination, the artist lay down, raising her arms to allow the water to pour over her in a moment of symbolic cleansing. The end of *Dream Sequence* became an instance of translation: translating memory and forgotten time, banality and fascination, but most of all dreams and reality. Through ingenuity, strength, and endurance, Promise Allison created an occasion for dreaming while she and the audience were wide awake.

Maeve Hanna

Untitled Art Society, Calgary  
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