



Finding the art of true love

Conceptual artist Kathe Izzo cheerfully calls herself 'a cross between a prostitute and the Dalai Lama'

Leah Rumack

National Post

April 10, 2004

They say true love is hard to find. They say true love is never having to say you're sorry. They say true love is a bitch. But they don't usually say true love is art -- but guess what? Now it is.

Next week, true love is for sale for Toronto art patrons when New York performance and "conceptual love artist" Kathe Izzo breezes into town with her project *Lost: An Exploration of Trust, Love and True Connection*, hosted by the Gladstone Hotel.

"I'm a cross between a prostitute and the Dalai Lama," Izzo says cheerfully. Male or female, young or old, she'll love you all in a one-on-one appointment that may involve titillating e-mails, cellphone flirting, exchanges of gifts, lunch, hand-holding, usually no sex -- but she might write about it in the morning anyway.

Um, pardon, ma chere? Is she some sort of avant-garde gallery-dwelling libertine? Is this therapy? A date?

Well, sort of.

"The only difference is that I put a frame around it and make it art," Izzo says. "Andy Warhol can put a frame around a soup can and call it art, Marcel Duchamp can put a urinal in an exhibition and call it art, I can put a frame around the human experience and call it art. And by doing that, you alter the person's experience of it."

Lost is in fact a mini travel-sized version of Izzo's popular ongoing True Love Project, which she has performed in New York, Los Angeles, Europe and Miami. For True Love, Izzo woos someone for 24 hours straight (though she might not be with them physically the entire time). *Lost* lasts one-to-four hours and basically consists of some pre-wooing, then an eventual meeting through a series of besotted clues and messages.

"It's like people's wildest dreams come true that they have found someone they know will love them and they know is committed to them for a particular time period," Izzo says. "It sounds really simple, but something really magical happens every time -- some spark of connection takes place. I'll love them unconditionally without wavering, even if their behaviour is bad, with no judgments. They can have whatever agendas and whatever neurotic impulses they want."

In her travels with True Love, Izzo, like most lovers, has certainly come across her fair share of neurotic impulses. "One curator in Europe employed me to do the True Love day," Izzo recounts, "and he asked me to love him 'like a slave loves his master.'"

"He kept trying to get me to meet him at his apartment and finally I just e-mailed him and said, 'I think I'll just love you from here.' He freaked out and said 'You're a crazy American, you're lying and all Americans are liars!' I wrote him back and said: 'Even though you're misbehaving, I will love you anyway.'"

In Florida, Izzo went clothes-shopping and smoothie-sipping with a woman at a mall. In Germany, she met a young guy in a gallery and had a cyber love day with him in an online cafe. In the age of online dating and love reality shows, is this just the heady continuum of a bizarre cultural moment? Or is this just a date?

"Whenever I start to talk about the True Love project, my daughter always starts rolling her eyes," Izzo says with a laugh. "She thinks I'm on the make. On one hand I'm so earnest and so sweet and on the other hand I'm so perversely wicked. I enjoy the controversy."

But really, most important --how does one become a true-love artist?

"I've always done art where I'm physically present, like I'd live in a gallery," she says. "And I'm very flirtatious. I've fallen in love a lot and I was asked to be in a show, and the person who was curating said just do something you do all the time and call it art. So that's what I did. I chose falling in love. And it was just the best thing I ever did, so I just kept doing it."

© National Post 2004

CLOSE WINDOW

Copyright © 2003 CanWest Interactive, a division of [CanWest Global Communications Corp.](#) All rights reserved.
Optimized for browser versions 4.0 and higher.

