

Feel the Love

Kathe Izzo is to love what Tracey Emin is to sex

She is the Love Artist. In her True Love Project, she loves the world one person at a time, for one day, hour or afternoon, concentrating on performances of live love with an audience of one. Kathe has loved people in Miami, New York, Toronto, Boston, LA, San Francisco, London, Cardiff and Manchester as well as in Frankfurt and Berlin. So does she make love out of art, or make art out of love?

Colette Meacher gets loved up with Kathe...

CM: So how did you become the love artist?

KI: I was a lover, I had an open marriage, I had eleven relationships back to back – until the start of the love project, when it suddenly became really hard to date anyone, which is interesting. I wanted to know why life is not art. I'm a conceptual artist; I've always been really interested in that thin line between everyday life and art so I thought I'd just love people as art. It started as a joke because I realised that my love life is more interesting than my art work! I've been making art for twenty years and it was obviously the right thing, as it's had more legs than any other thing I've done! 9/11 had just happened too, I'd moved away from my ex-husband, my mother died and I broke up with a girlfriend, so there was no net. I was forced to look at my life, and the True Love Project came out of that.

“A couple of people have expected me to be a prostitute, but it was with those people that I've probably had the most meaningful experiences”

CM: How much for an hour of your time?

KI: It's free. When I used to love people for a whole day at a time, when I was also hung up on making a living as an artist, I felt really competitive, I used to ask for donations of 500 dollars. But now it's free it's so much easier, it goes so much better. It's obviously meant to be free.

CM: What exactly do I get for my hour of love?

KI: Well it's a conversation... If it's an installation, I like to have a toaster, a kettle, lots of chocolate, usually flowers and candles, tons of books. The stage looks something like a cross between a red-light window in Amsterdam, your grandmother's kitchen, it's also quite pagan... I offer them whatever I have, I ask a few questions, there's a lot of love paraphernalia lying around for people to look at, whatever I feel like bringing, some leather, some photographs.

CM: What's the weirdest thing that's happened to you?

KI: The weirdest things are the most ordinary. One woman tried to seduce me by taking me to a sauna, for a massage etc. Another woman just took me to the mall and wanted me to love her by going shopping with her, trying on clothes. It's just so funny that you propose to someone that you'll love them for the day, they get to choose what you do together and they decide to take you shopping!

CM: So you're something between a personal shopper, an escort and a therapist?

KI: Yeah, right! I've offered so many people the opportunity to just be silent for the whole day, I've always really wanted to do that, but nobody's taken me up on it; I think that's so scary for people. I just think it would be interesting to be silent in front of a stranger all day.

CM: Have you ever fallen in love with one of your clients?

KI: Yes, I have. A couple of times I've been so charismatically enmeshed with the person and thought it was love and then it didn't really work out in real life.

CM: Love is...?

KI: I think of love as Chi, a life force, it's this energy that everything is made of and is in different concentrations – between people, animals, plants and whatever. It's something that things grow out of and what brings life into the world.

CM: How many people have you loved in your lifetime?

KI: Well, you know, there are different levels of love. I give equal value to the love for my children, people on the love project, my partners; so in that way, there's hundreds and hundreds. But I've had five primary partners and I've felt them all to be pretty much as soulmates. I've also ended up sleeping with about five people on the love project, which isn't so many considering I've loved over 400 people...

CM: How deep is your love?

KI: I think that my love is very, very deep because it's so focused and true. But it's shallow also because of the idea of equal value – you know, that I'll love in the moment and then in the next moment I'll love someone else. I think it's enough to love someone for a few moments and I don't have to prove that love by doing something really heroic.

CM: Do you make art with your clients?

KI: Yeah, I think we collaborate. I call them patrons...

