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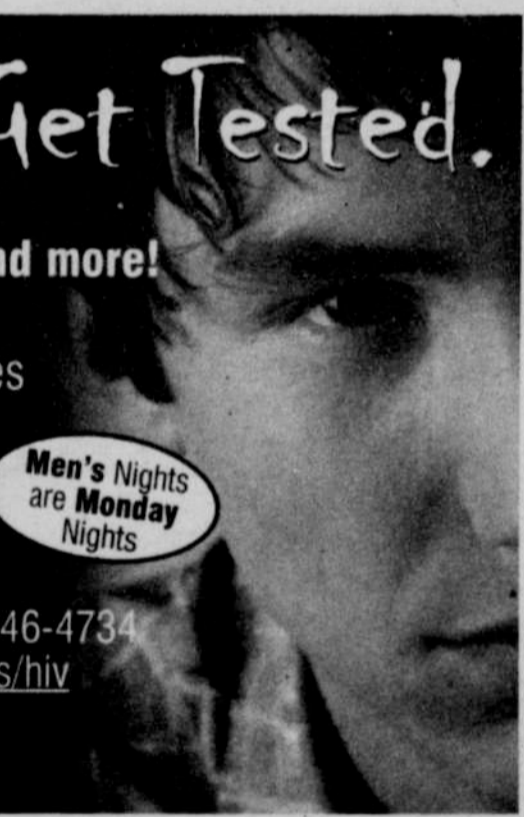
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"The sight of your own blood, brought forth from your hand, is a violation that you yourself now control," Ron Athey writes in his online biography.

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with queer and trans subjects, shot a series of Polaroids with Athey in 2000 that captured his androgynous St. Sebastian persona. Each one, blindingly lit and lush in color, is a unique print. In one of them, Athey, wearing stiletto heels and leaning forward with his ornate cloak drawn back to expose his lower body, has a long string of pearls trailing from his rectum to the floor. As Opie admits, it's an homage to Robert Mapplethorpe's self-portrait with a whip coming out of his ass, but it's also in keeping with past work of Athey's—in particular, *Solar Anus*.

The title of this piece comes from an essay by French writer George Bataille, whom Athey has acknowledged as an influence on his artistic philosophy. Gilles Lazare describes the performance in his long essay "An Endless Insurrection": "With an alchemical sun tattooed around his anus, Athey proceeds to turn his back on the audience and pull an Ariadne's thread of pearls from inside himself; a defecation of white globules which suggests how base matter digests the luminous violence of the sun through a scandalous eruption." In doing so, Athey has taken the ultimate taboo and turned it on its head: The place "where the sun don't shine" has become the sun itself. Somewhere Fred Phelps just had a heart attack.

Solar Anus is included as part of Athey's starring role in the Danish gay porn film *HotMen CoolBoyz*, released in 2000 by Lars von Trier's production company, Zentropa. The film was nominated for five GayVN Awards (presented annually to honor work in the gay pornography industry), including a Best Solo Performance nomination for Athey, who also narrates the film.

Performances of *Solar Anus* carried Athey into the new millennium, during which time he was also perfecting a theatrical multimedia performance, *Joyce*, in collaboration with soprano/musicologist Juliana Snapper. *Joyce* debuted in February 2002 at the prestigious Kampnagel Theater in Hamburg, Germany. "In *Joyce*, I use real and imaged footage of schizophrenia, disassociation, self-mutilation and mother/daughter incest," Athey says. "The rhythm is set by an EEG pattern, which is echoed by an automatic writer on video and an action painter on stage." The climax of the performance comes when maniacal Mother Joyce, having been trapped in a makeshift one-room insane asylum, finally smashes through the plasterboard walls of her symbolic prison and hangs upside down before the (presumably traumatized) audience.

Snapper joined Athey in 2005 for the premiere of their multimedia operatic drama *Judas Cradle*, his first Los Angeles performance in 10 years. The title refers to a medieval torture device replicated for the show, a pyramid-shaped structure on whose point Athey sits anally impaled while Snapper interrogates him from an adjacent podium. Their multilingual libretto is composed from a mosaic of sources including authentic transcripts from Inquisition hearings, and quotes from opera and author Jean Genet. It concludes with Athey speaking in tongues, yet another eerie homage to his messed-up childhood.

In addition to his performance work and journalism, Athey occasionally teaches workshops on performance art and has been composing a memoir based on his Pentecostal upbringing titled *Gifts of the Spirit*. Unfortunately, the book is on the back burner for the time being. "I've written a huge chunk, but I wasn't happy with writing that type of memoir-based book in my spare time," Athey says. "I'm waiting for an imaginary time when I'll have focus to give the writing style some clarity and continuity." 

2 Gyriz Performative Arts presents RON ATHEY with Samantha Sweeting, Aria Benner and Micah Perry 8 p.m. April 4 at Hippodrome, 315 S.E. Third Ave. Cover is \$8.

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