

HAMILTON'S MY LADY



Kiera Boulton: Hamilton's My Lady

CENTRE[3] MAIN GALLERY
MAY 8 – JULY 27, 2024

**It's Kiki's Hamilton,
We're Just Commuting to it.**

WRITTEN ESSAY BY DELILAH ROSIER

JUNE 2024

It's Kiki's Hamilton, We're Just Commuting to it.



Kiera Boulton, *Hamilton's My Lady*, (2024) installation documentation, Centre[3]. Photo by Amy Su.

Kiera Boulton's first solo exhibition, *Hamilton's My Lady* is a video installation four years in the making. The main gallery of Centre[3] houses a backlit white arch that reads "Kiki's My Lady" alongside near life-sized cut outs of the artist in variations of classic

Kiki drag. The exhibition's centerpiece is a 16:49 minute video that melds recordings from two back-to-back live performances of *Hamilton's My Lady* the first, at Toronto's 2022 7A*11D Performance Art Festival and the second from Hamilton's 2022

Artist: Kiera Boulton
Writer: Delilah Rosier
Book Design: Amy Su

Supercrawl. Throughout, Boulton intersperses archival footage from real-estate development ads with Kiki in iconic Hamilton locations, festivities and attractions.

The title of the work is borrowed from a tune sung by comedian Martin Short in his 2012 comedy special *I, Martin Short, Goes Home*. But while Short noted: "I would not say that my work at Second City had intellectual appeal as much as more of a clown quality"¹, *Hamilton's My Lady* gives us camp, clown and intellectualism; wrapped in pink velour. Squat upon a stool, enveloped in a perfect shade of Kiki pink and watch as picture in picture Kiki's foreshadow and bounce

across the screen. Be serenaded by Short's isolated vocals, interrupted by live audio: "Ladies and gentlemen... Kiki!" Her sidekicks shuffle and high kick, and Kiki takes over where Martin left off, hamming in cheetah print inside a suburban garage, crooning before a lot strewn with empty cop cars, and on stage, traipsing whilst caped. Not unlike the switch from Emo Kid to Scene Kid that a young Kiki once embarked upon, the artist walks us through the many rebrands of Hamilton, from Steel City to Art is the New Steel.

Aesthetically rich, self-reflective and impeccably researched, Boulton's timing in



Kiera Boulton, *Hamilton's My Lady*, (2024) video still



Kiera Boulton, *Hamilton's My Lady*, (2024) installation documentation, Centre[3]. Photo by Amy Su.

Hamilton's My Lady is distinct; comedic, always but in her editing of the piece, the artist offers quiet breathing room for contemplation, posing in stillness, as though anticipated. Take the shots of Kiki, captured by the brilliant photographer and curator Alex Jacobs-Blum, posed and regal descending the escalator of the eerily empty but still then bright and alive City Centre Mall² that look almost uncannily digitally animated. Or, the shots of the new character introduced into the Kikiverse, The Iconic Hamilton Slag Hag, a retired mermaid who reclines, tail to the

camera, propped up and caught cracking the spine of S. E. Tomas' self-published *Crackilton*. With a voice inspired by the late Big Ang that makes for a coughing fit should anyone else try it, the Slag Hag is a living and underwater breathing cautionary tale. Moments of exhilaration from the live performances are left fully intact, like Kiki's desperate plea not to frolic in the waters of Chedoke Creek for fear of "Chedoobies" delivered in partial scatological sing-song resulting in a catchy earworm (and, if following Kiki's advice, not a tapeworm.)

¹ "Martin Short," The Second City, accessed May 17, 2024, <https://www.secondcity.com/people/martin-short>.

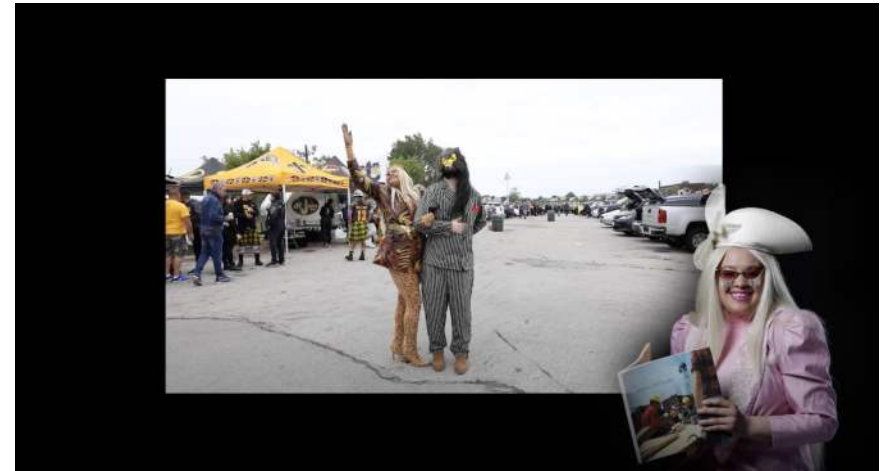
² The City Centre Mall was acquired by developer Darryl Firsten, the very same who plans to demolish me from my Toronto apartment.

I suppose, I ought to disclose my bias and positionality as dear friend, co-performer and dramaturg of *Hamilton's My Lady*, in which I play the professorial role of Delores Derosier aka Dr. DD Rosé. Rosé is a fangirl scholar-stalker and leading in the field of Kiki & Kikiology. Her self-appointed purpose is to contextualize Kiki for the academic audience, "parodying" the codependency of artist and academic as well as the racial dynamics of between the Black artist and white academics inside the institution.

While Dr. Rosé aims to contextualize, Kiki works to critique, herself included. The Hamilton Slag Hag might have dipped it and done it, but Kiki can dish it and take it. Delivered thoughtfully, she offers up addendums; glamorous footnotes to her 2022 live performances, admitting what makes her cringe most, all the while peering from texts, that leap from the screen and onto the Kiki pink shelving. Have a peruse of *Pardon my Lunch Bucket*, procured by Boulton from the Antique Mall that reads as though written from



Kiera Boulton (with Delilah Rosier), *Hamilton's My Lady 7a*11d*, 2022, video still, Henry Chan



Kiera Boulton, *Hamilton's My Lady*, (2024) video still

the future, with lines like: "People move along on travelling sidewalks on second-level streets, well insulated from the noise and fumes of traffic below."³ But while *Pardon My Lunch Bucket's* predictions might have been off, Kiki's live performance ends with what I will call a premonition: allow Hamilton to be branded in the image of Kiki, and, a threat: "If you don't let me brand you, some other white piece of shit will."

Our Scholarly Queen also offers us up context to the Hamilton Tiger Cats Vs. Toronto Argonauts Rivalry. I

had the privilege to accompany Kiki and The Hamilton Tiger Rat (played cooth and stoic by visual artist Josh Las, suited and masked) to the annual, unofficial Tiger Cat's Tailgate in the parking lot at Chapel and Lloyd. There, I was privy to witness the brotherhood of the kilted, kindred and kindly Box J Boys who shot-gunned, stewed, crumped, and congregated on an overcast morning. The video concludes with footage of Kiki in her ancestral home of Caucasia. Waving with a gloved hand through the sun roof and her durag trailing mesmerizingly through the wind that echoes "Oskee Wee Wee!"

³ Graham Rockingham, "When Hamilton Said 'Pardon My Lunch Bucket,'" *The Hamilton Spectator*, June 26, 2017, https://www.thespec.com/news/when-hamilton-said-pardon-my-lunch-bucket/article_55f5e686-e1c6-569c-84a8-96ffc4ad0280.html.

Boult's campy, funny, gorgeous persona of Kiki acts as Guiding Lightskin™ to the people of Toronto and Hamilton alike. She has been known to tackle themes of desirability, neoliberalism, white supremacy and the role of the artist in the social constriction and gentrification of the city. Hamilton has always been a place for which Kiki works through the complicated relationship between race and place. In *Hamilton's My Lady*, Kiki succinctly encapsulates and expands on her repertoire, speaking to colonialism, tradition, rivalry and transformation, mapping these themes onto her own body and presence.

Near the end of the opening, three children with painted faces enter the gallery. Enthralled, they sit quietly and watch the video all

the way through. One child notices a woman nearby wearing the very same piece of jewelry as the mermaid, a diamond collar necklace. Boult, in her Tiger Cats jersey dress, grandmother's tiara and necklace, overhears this observation and rewards the child's keen eye. "That's because I'm the artist!" The children's jaws drop. After a pit stop for ice creams from Chocolat on James, they return to watch the video a second time over. With sugar induced courage, they request group photos with Boult. Beaming on their way out the door, a child says, "I can't wait to tell everyone at school on Monday that I met a celebrity!"

Hamilton's My Lady is on in the Main Gallery at Centre[3] for Artistic and Social Practice till July 27th.

Bibliography:

"Martin Short." The Second City. Accessed May 17, 2024. <https://www.seconddcity.com/people/martin-short>.

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Artist Biography

Kiera Boult is a Hamilton-based artist working in performance and video installation. She uses tropes of stand-up comedy, camp, and reality TV to skeptically address issues that surround the role and/or identity of the artist and the institution. Her work often features the performance persona Kiki, who offers audiences critiques and "hot takes" from her skewed position as a celebrated Black bi-racial (light skin) icon and self-described "guilt-free" celebrity. Presentations of Boult's work explore the intersections of identity, popular culture, urban planning, and the social constructions of cities.

Her most recent performance, *Hamilton's My Lady* (2022), was a part of the 2022 7A*11D performance art festival and Supercrawl – Hamilton's Music + Arts Festival. In 2019, Boult received the City of Hamilton Arts Award for Emerging Visual Artist. Her work has been exhibited at the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Art Gallery of Hamilton, and Artcite Inc. Windsor. She holds a BFA in Criticism and Curatorial Practice from OCAD University and is currently Vtape's Manager, Outreach & Public Programming.

Writer Biography

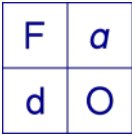
Delilah Rosier is an artist and writer born, raised, and based in Tkaronto/Toronto. Her work concerns performance, popular and visual culture through a lens of queer theory, race politics and intersectional feminism. She holds a BA from OCAD U's Criticism and Curatorial Practice program, an MA from York University's Theatre and Performance Studies program, and an MA from OCAD U's Contemporary Art, Design and New Media Histories.

Dr. Delores Derosier aka **Dr. DD Rosé** is the leading expert on Kiki & Kikiology. She is the Dean, Associate Dean, Chair, Head Administrator, Administrative Assistant, Lecturer, Sessional Lecturer, Professor, Adjunct Professor, Head Researcher, Exploited Intern, and Custodian of the underfunded and understaffed Faculty of Urban Criticism and Kikiology (F.U.C.K). Her dissertation *The Icon Wore Spanx: From James Street North to the Stages of the Institution* is suspiciously untraceable. Rosé has been banned from Hamilton, Ontario since 2020.



Kiera Boulton, *Hamilton's My Lady*, (2024) video still

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