

OSMOSIS

Erica Rivera: statement of plans

Content/trigger warnings: discussions of settler colonialism, medically transitioning, mental health, state violence, incarceration, and ableism; brief reference to apartheid.

statement of plans

Provide a Statement of Plans in which you explain your writing plans for the duration of the program. Statement may not exceed 1000 words.

What do you want? You want me to tell you the truth? That I plan to fuck your shit up? That I'm gonna mess with the minds of your little cohort 'til they're unrecognizable—to you, to their owners? My plan is to enter your space like a Martian who's learned to wear human skin, then begin the process of conversion. In what ways does this make me a missionary? In what ways am I a super secret colonizer, but colony as in microorganisms, blooming in the medium of culture, a process impossible to perceive until it's too late? Is it still colonization if you're an army of one? Is it still colonization if your target is the propagandist heart of the colonial cor(ps/e)?

150 words.

For the duration of the program, my plan is to strengthen my skill as a writer by exchanging ideas about craft and the political economy of publishing with my classmates. I've never been formally trained as a creative writer, and I've had very few opportunities to be part of a writing community, especially after publicly coming out as a transgender woman last year. Programs like these have historically lacked participants that are trans, of color, and Latinx/e, so my hope is to provide the

institution, as well as my cohort, with a new and unique perspective on writing.

Coming from a background in STEM, particularly technology and mathematics, I approach writing the way a mathematician might approach assembling a proof, or a technologist might come at a problem of engineering. Edgar Allen Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition," Teju Cole's *Tremor*, and Kim Thúy's *em* are key influences.

300 words.

I'm a fucking maniac—that, you've got to be aware of. I mean "maniac" as in Benjamin Labatut's *The Maniac*, about a man the jacket copy calls "a prodigy whose gifts terrified the people around him." Literally, *same*. Not really, of course: "maniac" and "prodigy"—and even the idea of educational-privilege-as-"gift"—are silly colonial constructs, tied up with the histories of what I like to call perceptual incarceration (maintained as much with pharmacological restraints as with physical cage-and-straitjacket ones) and the socioeconomic apartheid we farcically refer to as "meritocracies." The suffix *-iac* indicates a person afflicted with a certain disease, says

one source; another defines it more simply as “of or connected with.” I am a person afflicted with a certain disease, that of or connected with man. I was born with a penis and assigned male at birth. Thankfully, I have my hands on the cure.

450 words.

By the end of the program, I hope to have completed my first novel, *Artist*, about two transgender best friends who switch places in order to dismantle a nefarious corporation. It’s a distillation of my interests in biology, physics, history, technology, mathematics, and art, with half of the novel written as a series of letters that explore critical ideas from each field. The other half describes the journey of main character Erica, who assumes the role of researcher at roommate Erick’s “culinary logistics” company, in what she believes will be a mission to blow the whistle on corporate malfeasance. What she uncovers instead is a species-defining scheme beyond the imagination of anyone but the most amoral capitalists. The novel grapples with the question of how artists put food on the table, and the problem of complicity in a world in which every settler is ultimately beholden to colonialism.

600 words.

What happens when you can forget that you're trans? That you're on stolen land? That your ability to breathe and drink and eat and think and love and mourn and write and cry is built on top of someone else's grave? What would you do if I told you everything you know and suspect about the depravity in this world is true, and also barely scratching the surface? What if you knew—if you were *certain*—that very few have any idea just how bad it can possibly get? Will *certainly* get? That we will look back with something like fondness on today, when we finally become privy to the horrors of tomorrow? Some time ago, I looked over all I knew, and I felt the abyss gaze back. In response, I wrote a poem. I've been trying to devise a method for disseminating its contents ever since.

750 words.

Another core part of my writing practice is engaging with communities of writers and artists. At the beginning of this year, I and my *Art, Strike!* co-editor built one that aligned with our values: that creative labor should always be paid at a living wage; that

artists and writers should have total autonomy over the process of producing their work; and that the repressive hierarchy between creative workers and editorial gatekeepers needs to be abolished. Though ultimately modest—and eventually derailed by a paucity of funding—our efforts signaled to the publishing landscape that a reckoning is underway, that long-held norms which privilege the few are being challenged and rewritten with increasing aplomb. *Art, Strike!* is currently on an indefinite hiatus, one which we hope to soon return from; building ambitious, value-driven projects like it during my time in this program is another component of my writing plan.

900 fucking fucking words

Sometimes I think of the process of transition as one of compression: I'm fitting an entirely novel person into a vessel previously home to another. If every space is an archive, then when I entered, I could still detect traces of the former inhabitant on every wall, in every corner—like an apartment out of which the last tenant hastily exited. I'm settling in, for better or worse; the body is inhabitable, for better or worse.

They say the brain is like a computer, only so much it can store.

I think they're wrong.

I feel absolutely infinite.

exhortation

Pick a word count between 1 and 1,000. Write a series of short, connected pieces that each have that exact word count. Choose two radically different styles between which to alternate: for example, use plain, stilted speech in the even-numbered pieces, and extreme, hyperbolic language in the others. As you write, consider your multitudinous identities, and the different ways in which they communicate. What does it mean to put them in conversation? How much time do you have before they collapse into each

other, like atomic particles during nuclear fusion? What incalculable energy will be released when they do? What will you use it to fuel?



Erica Rivera

Erica “ERN” Rivera (she/they) is a performance writer, editor, and collage artist. “statement of plans” will appear in her debut collection of essays, *The Ecology of Art Strike!* (tRaum Books, 2025). Her work appears in *manywor(l)ds*, *en*gendered*, *Sophon Lit*, *JAKE*, *beestung*, *The Emerson Review*, *Under the Sun*, and *Isele Magazine*, and is forthcoming from *The Offing*, *HyphenPunk Magazine*, and *Broken Antler Magazine*. For fun, she likes to watch TV and pretend all the characters are trans.

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