

never in our image

Stephanie Rudig
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You might call D.C.-based artist Stephanie Mercedes an arms trader of sorts. The artist has built a practice out of melting down guns and bullets and reconfiguring them as totems, memorial objects, and instruments. "You take these objects of harm that are very hard and durable and are built so they can't be destroyed, and you literally turn it into liquid metal and that you then transform into something else," she explains. The opera that she is developing, *never in our image*, uses the physical steps of her sculptural process as the framework for three acts. The sounds of these metallic experiences will be part of the opera's soundscape. The first act will be a gun-cutting ceremony, and the artist explains, "I'll have two dancers that will be emotionally reacting to what's happening at that moment." Act II will comprise the melting stage of the process, and, similar to Act I, will be a one time performance with spontaneous choreography. Act III will be performed for two weeks in September at Source Theatre. Of the title, Mercedes says, "The opera is going to be primarily queer, and there just seemed to be a nice reversal that queer people will be destroying these weapons of oppression that were never made with our image in mind." Act I of *never in our image* will be performed in May and Act II will be performed in June, but specific dates and locations have yet to be announced. culturaldc.org.