

# The Four Chambered Heart

Institute for Research,  
Understanding and  
Documentation of Social  
and Cultural Influence  
on Love and Relationships

11.08.—12.22.2011

A solo presentation from  
Leila Hekmat

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On November 8, 2011, Leila Hekmat will begin seven weeks of work at Recess as part of its signature program, Session. Session invites artists to use its storefront space as studio, exhibition venue and grounds for experimentation. Over the course of The Four Chambered Heart: Institute for Research, Understanding and Documentation of Love and Relationships, Hekmat will fuse the therapist's office, researcher center, and performance set. Untrained and unlicensed as a counselor, Hekmat will offer the public complimentary love advice while documenting society's influence on how we define our sexual selves and romantic relationships.

Within her visually rich, curated set as medical facility, Hekmat will generate a series of videos as well as written and photographic documentation. Costumes and props will be on hand to aid in role-playing and visitor anonymity. In this laboratory where private love lives are on view for public consumption, the artist will probe modes of self-representation and honesty while charting the ubiquitous performance we engage in on a daily basis.

## Statement Of Intent From The Artist

The project titled The Four Chambered Heart has been taken from the 1959 Anais Nin novel of the same name. Nin extracts vignettes from her own life to reflect on emotions, doubts, decisions and her own sacrifices, inflecting the narrative with observations on love informed by social conventions.

It explores the complexity of identity and how social systems define and construct that identity. I am interested in the gap between our online selves (how we represent, maybe even expose ourselves to the world) and what we do/say in private. It is a space where the confessional is put on display. In this space the private becomes public and raises questions of self-representation, honesty (with others, as well as ourselves) and performance.

We are led to believe we are individuals in control of our own destinies, choices, desires, and our own expectations. But we are in part largely defined by a social construction of what we think we should be, want and expect from each other and ourselves. We believe we need certain security, certain comforts, and we come to demand these things and feel disappointed and conflicted when we do not have them.

I hope to create a place of healing through exhibition of one's deepest questions, conflicts, and observations on love. I will not attempt to cure anyone's love sickness, but to reflect on the healing power of inverting private spaces.

In many ways we become something constructed out of narratives we create about our lives. I hope to build an interesting document and portrait of how we see ourselves, how our relationships define us, and how social systems play a role.