

MC Baumstark, *Menstruatin' Rodeo*, participatory performance with embroidered textiles, ceramic vessels, 2024-present.

Menstruatin' Rodeo is a performance and participatory artwork. MC Baumstark plays part camp counselor, part rodeo clown hell set on walkin' her cowpokes through the early years of menstruation. Inspired by Mary's lived experience as a young menstruator with endometriosis, non-menstruating participants compete in a variety of feats while learning about the early years of menstruation, something nearly half the population experiences. Coached by experienced menstruators with years on the frontier, the result is a playful, informative half-hour relay-race-of-sorts for up to 25 participants.

The first *Menstruatin' Rodeo* events occurred in summer 2024. As the projects evolves, so too do the games, props, and prizes with communal experience at the center. The second *Menstruatin' Rodeo* is scheduled for winter 2024/25.

Craft sits at the heart of many celebratory gestures, but is often overlooked by participants. While we know the exact choreography of a celebratory shot of alcohol, we rarely pause to consider the glass in hand. Instead, we are giddy in the experience, giggling, coughing, and intoxicated on whatever moment lead to the celebratory gesture.

As an advocate for craft, and for bodily autonomy, I want to take advantage of this moment, where joy and excitement rush us past thoughtful consideration of details. In combining celebratory rituals with stigmatized subjects like menstruation, participants are whisked out of their comfort zone with familiar gestures, suddenly eager to take a shot of bright red liquid from a porcelain, menstrual-cup-shaped shot glass, or to race against their peers to unwrap a tampon blindfolded.

In a time where difficult conversations are constant, these artworks guides participants through thoughtful, science-based, gender-neutral discussions around menstruation with joy, humor, and novelty. By grounding these conversations in familiar, ritualized celebrations and recognizable craft objects, the work offers participants an opportunity to bypass defensiveness and discomfort with play, adornment, and, sometimes, liquid courage.

Centered in play, gift economy, and shared learning, these artworks position participations and *periods* in joyful proximity, where we grow within shared knowledge, experience and ritual, rather than in isolation, shame, and miseducation. Works are appropriate for participants aged 9 and up, with a caveat around language in *The Menstrual Brooch Project*. During performances, donations are accepted for local organizations engaged in reproductive and sexual health.

Testimonials

the menstruatin' rodeo is a collaborative, immersive experience that allows people of all genders to expand their empathy for the experience of bleeding across the lifespan. it delivers an inviting circus energy to what for many people is marred with shame, secrecy, and lack of knowledge. highly recommend!!

I was a participant in Mary's menstruation rodeo. For context, I am a man. While the rodeo itself was fun and creative, the underlying messages were presented in a way where someone who has never menstruated ever

could empathize with the standing occurrence women deal with. I think it's a great platform to educate and would gladly participate again.

As a menstruating woman, I had a lot of fun with Mary's rodeo and was surprised to learn a few facts that I didn't know of before. I thought each component was fun, thought provoking (especially for non-menstrators), and put the difficult experiences I had in my youth into a new light. I realized I wasn't alone in the embarrassment and shame and that there is power in exploring it with a safe community.

Participating in the Menstruation Rodeo along with my husband gave us a really safe, functional, and light hearted way to open up conversations around my health and body that I have always been shamed into keeping hidden or too bashful about to bring up in conversation before. Having this rodeo as an icebreaker was a fantastic way for me to bring him into my world and my experience as a girl in a way I would not have known how to do otherwise! Plus it was just damn good fun.