

## Going Live: Matteus Huvaere's *Honoring the Heatwave*

*runner*

Biba Bell

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A sizable group assembled in the backyard behind Spaysky Fine Art in Hubbard Farms for Matteus Huvaere's anticipated performance *Honoring the Heatwave: I Have to Save my Family*. Huvaere and I recently met onset during a music video shoot. Huvaere was the talent, I was the movement director. During our rehearsals Huvaere shared that he was planning a performance where he would lose twenty pounds of body weight in two hours. An impossible task... how? I remembered my training in ballet, where dancers would cover their bodies in plastic wrap to shed water weight before a performance. What measures we but our bodies through under the auspices of training, where laborious discipline targets the extraordinary.

*"20 POUNDS OF FLESH, 2023  
TWO PIECE PLASTIC SAUNA SUIT,  
BROTHERS MARINE CORPS HOODIE,  
SWEATPANTS, STAINLESS BOWL, SWEAT"*

The audience mingles and waits. Huvaere emerges from the enclosed back porch that serves as the exhibition space. He walks down the steps, sheds his clothes, and mounts a small scale. The backdoor doubles as a blackboard. Huvaere writes: “213.6, 6:03.” He puts on a sweatsuit and black plastic “sauna” suit, wraps his feet, enters the back door, and shuts it firmly. A rhythmic, pounding sound pierces the walls of the backroom gallery. One-by-one, rapt onlookers tentatively open the door and enter, closing it securely behind. *DON'T LET THE HEAT OUT.*

Inside the room, Huvaere grounds and pounds into a heavy bag lying on the floor underneath him. Throwing and landing blows with forearms and elbows, the bag begins to take shape. It anthropomorphizes. Who is this opponent? He spits out words that form into a steady current. *I HAVE TO SAVE MY FAMILY.* “I wasn’t a loser until the first time something was expected of me. I promise I wasn’t. Not until I could let someone down.” In intervals he stands up, puts on headphones, and sings-screams into a mic—a nod to Bleeding Hearts Club, an open mic performance event he once hosted in his basement. Every 20-30 minutes, Huvaere goes outside, disrobes, and weighs-in. “208.4, 7:29.” Sweat pours, the room heats, spectators crouch, a splintered hole peeks through floorboards. After two hours and change, Lynard Skynard’s Free Bird procures a final release.



Martial arts and artmaking run in Huvaere's family. Of Afro-Brazilian American heritage, his mother was capoeirista and his brother, Kaio Huvaere, is an artist, musician, film maker, and primary interlocutor. With a background in Mixed martial arts, wrestling, kickboxing, and Jiu Jitsu, Huvaere conduits these practices towards artmaking, experimenting within body and performance art's established sites of endurance, abjection, and austerity. Adding to the material's list cited above, Huvaere's performance includes physical risk, testing the limits of what a body, his body, can do. The body is a site of energy, labor, affect, and transformation. In a lineage of performance artists who expose both vulnerability and excess, the question persists: What is at stake? *I HAVE TO SAVE MY FAMILY*. The significance of their presence at *Honoring the Heatwave* was palpable, intrinsic to the work itself. Family as anchor, stabilizing the precarity of self. One must fight for family. It is reason to fight. *Honoring the Heatwave* presses on the 'how' of physical immersion, strategizing a means by which to reframe the depths of expulsion towards the shores of self-actualization. Huvaere dives into the wreck, to use Adrienne Rich's terminology; he comes for "the wreck and not the story of the wreck." Performance as doing, not demonstrating; as "going live."



Huvaere's younger self found wrestling after realizing his adversity to team sports, preferring the sport that "is all you." Eventually, the practice took on spiritual significance. A particularly impactful moment came before a meet, when Huvaere, while jumping rope, began to repeat the phrase, "a space devoid of sound and light." Mantra-turned-incantation to effect "a distinct and intense visceral feeling." The subsequent match lasted only 15 seconds; Huvaere won. He found his "flow state," an experience of discovery and creativity theorized as forgetting of self, space, and surroundings. *A SPACE DEVOID OF SOUND AND LIGHT*. The question becomes: How to gain access to this state at will? Not (only) to win, but to exercise what Lois Wacquant refers to as its inherent "emotional work," to call on emotions—rage, anger, frustration, restiveness—to harness and focus their cumulative force. virtuosity lies in one's capacity to manage emotions in real-time, to "know, according to the circumstances, how to contain or repress them or, on the contrary, how to stir and swell them." Such discipline lends itself to the structured spaces of ritual and thus transformation. Huvaere describes fighting as a theatre of "killing and getting killed," where, going into the fight he says, "I don't hate the person. I'm learning to love them."

1. Matteus Huvaere, *Honoring the Heatwave: I Have to Save my Family*, program notes, Spaysky Fine Art LLC., 2023.
2. Huvaere, program notes.
3. Adreinne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971-1972* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 1973).
4. Matteus Huvaere, interview with the artist, October 6, 2023.
5. Huvaere, interview with the artist.
6. Ibid.
7. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996), 121.
8. Loic Wacquant, *Body and Soul: Notebooks of an apprentice boxer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 91.
9. Ibid., 91.
10. Huvaere, interview with the artist.

THIS IS PERFORMANCE:  
**HONORING  
THE  
HEATWAVE**  
SCREENING  
ARTIST TALK: MATTEUS HUVAERE



*Honoring the Heatwave* as a performance premiered at Spaysky Fine Art Gallery LLC in the summer of 2023.

On November 30, 2023 at Trinosophes, Sidd Finch presented a film that functions in tandem with the performance.

**Honoring the Heatwave**

Directed by Sidd Finch

Director of Photography: Noah Elliot Morrison

Music Score by Eddie Logix

You can find the film online at:

[runnerdetroit.run/HonoringTheHeatwave.MatteusHuvaere.html](http://runnerdetroit.run/HonoringTheHeatwave.MatteusHuvaere.html)

*Honoring the heatwave I have to save my family. I have to do something that matters. I don't want to die. I don't want to know what it feels like. I don't want to be a loser anymore i want to be a regular person again i cant keep living with my back against the wall i want to feel how im supposed to feel i don't want to taste dirt anymore i don't want to scrape my knuckles and crush my ears i want to feel proud. Boobs on camera too many boobs on screens it should be illegal to give teenagers brain altering pills. I didn't have ADHD until my first vaccine. Maybe I can sweat the mercury out.*

*runner*