



THE  
UNSAUNG:  
VOICES FROM UNDERGROUND

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## KEYWORDS

creative process  
contemplative practice  
esoteric art  
interdisciplinary art  
liminality  
lyricist  
mixed media  
perception  
poetics  
voice

## ABSTRACT

The material and non-material or 'unseen' worlds correspond; every law of physics has a metaphysical twin. This document focuses upon the creative process as a bridge between these spheres. From this perspective, an artist is one who transmits and translates, who finds or lends voice to reveal those essential intimacies between phenomena and spirit that glow beneath surface appearance.

The artist's charge lies in discovering or developing a method to access what painter Max Ernst has called a 'poetic objectivity', the mark of which is expression as free as possible from the affectations of the self-conscious persona. Works that arise from this place, "[remain] open, as proposals, methods, [and] processes." (Schmied 24) This portfolio is a document forged from the aspiration to inhabit poetic objectivity.

Herein, I use the term 'divinatory poetics' to describe a contemplative approach to composition, the cultivation of lucid receptivity and the exploration of methods of perception and thought. Divinatory poetics refers to the use of language and ritual to enter into a conversation or inquiry. Embedded in this concept are the notions that: 1) One chooses and participates in what is (subjectively) 'real' by where one places attention 2) The 'gap' or liminal space between form and formless, imagination and matter, silence and sound, etc. is where creativity is born, and 3) Conceptual binaries cannot convey the ephemeral, effervescent, non-conceptual continuum of unfolding vitality that poetry serves.





## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Keen on the poignant tension of juxtaposition, I am compelled to traverse the distance between ideas, objects and beings, until I have found the pathways of their intimacy. My work is contemplative in nature and comprises processes and tools that I liken to the instruments and art of navigation. As echo-locators in a vast dreaming ocean—the ocean of mind—each composition seeks to catalyze a revelation of the luminous mundane.

I make songs. I call them Voicings because they are a mixture of things that the word 'song' doesn't quite describe. I make visual-textural arrangements. I call them Cartographies because they concern themselves with orientation, boundaries, texture and ritual.

This is a divinatory poetics: a re-cognition of symbol, an intersection of psyche and genius loci. This work dwells at the crossroads where imagination and phenomena meet.

A NOTE:

THIS DOCUMENT WAS CREATED IN TANDEM WITH A WEBSITE, WHICH REFLECTS A CENTRAL GOAL IN MY GRADUATE STUDIES: THE WEDDING OF INSPIRATION AND VOCATION.

[UnSungStudio.net](http://UnSungStudio.net) REPRESENTS MY PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO AND THE PLATFORM BY WHICH I AM ESTABLISHING MYSELF AS A FREELANCE ARTIST. EACH OF THE AUDIO AND VIDEO PIECES FEATURED IN THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE ACCESSIBLE VIA CLICK-ABLE LINKS HOSTED BY THIS SITE.

IF YOU HAVE IN YOUR HANDS A HARDCOPY OF *VOICINGS FROM UNDERGROUND*, PLEASE VISIT UNSUNGSTUDIO.NET > MUSIC > VOICINGS FROM UNDERGROUND ([HTTP://UNsungSTUDIO.NET/SONGS/#/VOICINGS-FROM-UNDERGROUND/](http://UnSungStudio.net/songs/#/voicings-from-underground/)) OR REFERENCE THE FILES LOCATED IN THE APPENDIX OF THIS DOCUMENT, IF YOU WISH TO EXPERIENCE EACH WORK IN ITS ENTIRETY.

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Text boxes  
reveal memories,  
reflections and  
journal excerpts.

*If we live in a world of consciousness, where our every thought and feeling is compartmentalized to fit the constructs of our mental grasp of the world, then what we refer to as creativity may just be the rearranging of these constructs in a clever and artful way. If we wish to be truly creative, then isn't it necessary to go beyond the rearranging of symbols to produce something that comes from the very source of our being?*

~ANDREW JUNIPER

*Everything is gestation and then bringing forth. To let each impression and each germ of feeling come to completion wholly in itself, in the dark, in the inexpressible, the unconscious, beyond the reach of one's own intelligence, and await with deep humility and patience the birth-hour of a new clarity: that alone is living the artist's life, in understanding as in creating. There is no measuring in time, no year matters, and ten years are nothing. Being an artist means, not reckoning and counting, but ripening like the tree which does not force its sap and stands confidence in the storms of spring without fear that after them may come no summer.*

~RAINER MARIA RILKE

## INTRODUCTION

*A creative act is anything that touches a genuine, unguarded place in a human being.*

~ BILL VIOLA

Here is an echo and a  
reverberation. Here is a glistening  
trail. And here emerges a question  
from beneath divine longing.

The beginning of these studies marked a period of great personal transition, the apex of which saw my relocation to New England. I had departed this place of my birth and childhood 18 years earlier—at age 17—to seek myself. This reunion with homeland accompanied the integration of a lifetime of pursuits, stretching from earliest memory.

This portfolio includes notes, reflections and principles of practice that may serve as guideline, inspiration or anecdotal evidence to anyone interested in the integration of artistic practice and home-coming. It is also a catalog of the work I created during this profound and tumultuous period: a body of Voicings, Vignettes and Cartographies that represent the fruits of my inquiry and praxis.

What does it mean to 'inhabit'?  
What are the origins of this  
voice?

My relentless drive to compartmentalize, categorize and psychologize reflects the marks of a society that is dangerously biased toward the rational, objective, and quantifiable—the product and the productive—over that which is unquantifiable, ineffable, unknown and unseen. This journey is largely about the process of realizing the blindness and disconnection within myself and slowly shifting my orientation. It has involved the formidable task of accepting the exiled, the shadowed, the weak and undermined aspects of my own character: learning to inhabit myself.

I am feeling for  
the circularity of  
time; weather  
patterns, imprints,  
the traces of what  
has dwelled—what  
dwells here now.

In the practice of divination, patterns are discerned and then interpreted in order to clarify or surface the innately known answer to a query. I understand composition as a divinatory process: equal parts surrender and discipline that combine to permit the revelation of some root-rhythm, some *knowing* that is ultimately larger than hope and fear.

**I identify three modes within my art practice:**

**I.** My **body practice** began as a response to a feeling of ambivalence and anxiety regarding my own physicality. It describes the process of finding bodily alignment within the field of gravity and includes cultivating the ability to extend tentacularly out into the world, simultaneously curious and receptive. The aspiration of this study is to access movement that emerges from stillness or presence. This is foundational.


**II.** In **music practice**, my voice or an instrument is the vehicle. Making sound is so essentially physical that it is an anchor: for a soul to its material home. In my song-craft, I seek connection to the underground stream that courses beneath or behind the rushing of traffic, of hungers, of discursive thinking—not separate from these things, but encompassing them. This is a way to pray, to explore emotion, to reveal inner dialogs, to articulate the mythology embedded in my own skin.

**III.** The **visual-tactile practice** of making Cartographies weaves ritual, semiotic investigation and composition. Juxtaposed elements reveal unexpected metaphorical or literal correspondences, while the composition process provokes alternative modes of attention, thinking and gesture.

**Within each, listening is foundational.**







Widow's Walk

*6 minutes 10 seconds*  
*audio recording*  
*El Galope Ranch: Colonia, Uruguay*  
*February 2016*

*This voicing incorporates the sound of  
a vintage organ and  
jazz brushes on a drum kit.  
The cadence approaches, passes and then heads away.  
This is a song about movement*

A dusty wind blows over the empty fields.  
Under a February sun, the days  
are very quiet, long and hot.

I have cut my tethers.

I am drifting farther  
and farther away from  
what I once knew.

I am transparent  
unfamiliar to myself:

i am made of sand

i am made of paper

i am made of glass

i am made of water

i am of the wind

i am of the waves

i am of the unseen

i am of the other.

## THE TERRITORY

This journey is presented as nine linked audio tracks accompanied by images and short videos. The videos, which I refer to as 'Vignettes', represent a method of inhabitation via 'deep listening'<sup>1</sup> and ritual.<sup>2</sup> The still images or 'Cartographies' further elucidate the particular psycho-geographical atmosphere of a Voicing.

In Chapter 1: Invisibility and Hauntings, I condense the experience of ghosting in the audio/video piece **Juno**. The sound collage **Opening the Gate** features fragments of interviews with two artists whose perspectives reflect central themes within my work.

In Chapter 2: Frame, Edge, Silence, the audio/video piece **Liminal** embodies and maps the approach to a threshold by way of a ritualized traverse.

In Chapter 3: Finding Rhythm, the soundscape **Suspended** explores the aural atmosphere and sensuous possibilities of technology. **Metronome** depicts a mundane correspondence.

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1. Pauline Oliveros coined this term, which describes a state of receptivity that might begin in the aural realm, but extends into all fields of perception.

2. I define ritual in this context, simply as any symbolic act infused with intent directed toward the 'unseen' or ineffable realm.

In Chapter 4: Exile: Shadows and the Dark, the Vignette/Voicing **Centaur** is a metaphor for the process of integration. The audio track **Magdalena** sings the conflict of the divine feminine from within the modern guise that has subsumed it. The audio track **Red Fox** tells the story of the ally who rescues a domesticated soul.

In Chapter 5: Emergence, the track **Soul Retrieval** and painting of the same name convey a dive into the Otherworld to retrieve exiled soul parts. The piece **Threshold** commemorates the bridge between the symbolic world and the manifest world and signifies the choice to embark upon a journey and to mend a fragmented soul. The audio track **Linen Chest** concludes this cycle with a story of reconciliation and rebirth on the shore of a new territory.

HANDLING

L

I

M I N

A L

I T

Y

AND

LONGING

*What is essential is invisible to the eye.*

~ ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

*In your passion to uncover yourself you become transparent;  
in that transparency your deep particularity becomes visible.*

~ W.A. MATHIEU

*I was eager to address the world of words — to address the world with words.  
Then M. instilled in me this deeper level of looking and working,  
of seeing through the heavenly visibles to the heavenly invisibles.*

~ MARY OLIVER

# I

## DISAPPEARANCES

*For most members of a cultural community, the liminal is a point of transition, a state entered into briefly and at particular points of their lives, as a passage to something else. They are dipped into non-identity and self-forgetfulness in order to change who they are. But for some, the liminal becomes their only dwelling place, becomes home.*

~ JANE HIRSHFIELD

I am bewildered by school and the absurd protocols of the adult world. In a memory, I am standing, eight-years-old, in front of my math class. I have been asked to recite a times-table. The crucial information vacates my mind at the moment I attempt to retrieve it and I find myself unable to speak. Ms. J has vermillion hair and a mole on her lip. She is not pleased. And I do not understand what a times table has to do with me.

I am called a chameleon more than once, though changing skins according to one's substrate seems an intelligent enough behaviour. The catalogues of identity offered by screen and brochure, clique and club seem dangerous, overly-committed to a thin, plastic veneer.



I learn to  
make myself  
very small. I  
can slip in  
and out of  
the kitchen,  
the bedroom  
window, the  
classroom,  
the school  
building  
without  
being  
noticed. I  
blend with  
my  
environment,  
shifting  
identity to  
conform to  
the contours.  
I am an  
excellent  
thief.  
In this way, I  
escape  
critique. In  
this way, I  
steal  
permission to  
be as I am.

*Not that. Nope not quite. Not really.*

Something restless and indignant in me refuses categorization, refuses to land, wrestles with a claustrophobia that is sometimes nearly unbearable. I prefer possibility to definition. Identity = rigour-mortis. I am limitless.

'Choose a major.'  
The list looks like a tax form and reads like a digestive ailment. I do not recognize myself in any of these words.

As a college undergraduate, I barely eat, barely sleep. My diet is comprised primarily of chocolate, coffee and liquor. In this way I create a protective haze, a threshold between myself and the sun-scoured world that burns skin and intrudes upon dreaming. I come and go unnoticed and this is how I like it. I am a stranger, in the deep American South more than 1,300 miles from my hometown. Transparent, ephemeral, I become a ghost: nebulous, amorphous, fugitive.

I am never long in one place. It is common for me to startle people, common for them to stumble over me, having not noticed my presence. In the unavoidable engagements that job or school require, it is also common for people to clear their throat or wave a hand in my face. I am accused of 'fuzzing out' or 'acting lost'. I have succeeded too well at my hauntings.

I drop out of one and then another large university before I discover, with great relief, a small Buddhist College that offers an undergraduate degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. I sign up for a class called 'Voice and Sound.' In the first session, we are asked to sing a section of a song in front of the group. I count the seconds, pray that time will end before it comes my turn. In the poetry class I take as an alternative, I make a mask to wear to recite a poem I've written. When I have finished, the class tells me they couldn't hear my poem. I had worked very hard to memorize it, but had made no mouth in the mask.

## II

### SHADOWS

On the second floor of the old house in Chelva, Spain, is a hallway behind the stair. It leads to a small bedroom with misshapen stucco walls. Beyond this is another bedroom, smaller still, with low, rounded ceilings and an old brass bed crouched in the corner. There is one window, cut like a ship's portal through stucco six inches thick, that looks out on fields and a valley with the seam of a river below. The walls are periwinkle blue. This is the room I choose.

The Dwarf Periwinkle is a plant native to Portugal, homeland of my maternal grandmother. It is a trailing, vine-like subshrub that spreads along the ground and roots through its stems to form large clonal colonies. At one time, it was commonly planted in cemeteries in the American South and continues to indicate the presence of graves no longer marked.

A colony of me takes refuge now in the deep South of a reverie: on lazy rivers, in gothic ruins veiled with moss, in the spare-haunting melancholy of the blues.

My South: the deep down-there where a meandering river—curious, gently probing—meets the muddy banks of me like a tongue between thighs.

Perhaps I feel at home down South because everything is softer in the heavy-wet heat. Things are sultry and weighted, covered with glistening perspiration or a halo of haze. Edges are diffuse, less defined. In the summer in New Orleans, air presses into the skin, saturated, thick. It asks for nothing, takes nothing; it is already full, filled up with itself.

I used to leave for work in the morning and wave to my neighbours, sitting on their front stoop—just sitting and sipping their drinks—looking out on the street. Six or eight hours later, when I returned in the evening, there they would still be, sitting and sipping, murmuring as light ebbed and the heat stayed on.

The Periwinkle Snail is native to the North-Eastern coasts of the Atlantic Ocean, including England, Wales and Ireland, homelands of my paternal grandmother. Snails are a source of nourishment for nearly every species of carnivore.

My birth was induced because I was 'past due'. Teachers suggest I remain an additional year in nursery school. My menses don't begin until I am nearly seventeen. Always late. But being early means enduring some awkward unpredictable liminality. I wait for the anxiety of consequence to become greater than the anxiety of transition.



# Juno

*2 minutes 51 seconds  
video & sound-scape  
Bosch & Simons Artist Residency  
Chelva, Valencia, Spain  
July 2016*

*This piece is titled after it's sound-score:  
a collaboration between Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross,  
released as a digital single on June 30, 2016  
in commemoration of NASA's Juno Mission,  
which arrived in Jupiter's orbit on  
July 4, 2016.*

This otherworldly soundscape draws me into the empty, wind-blown plain of a place where silent, chthonic creatures live. I move like a mollusc, leaving a glistening trail, naked in my periwinkle cave. Me the shadow, spreading across a periwinkle wall. The desire for light haunts me and I loathe the way it penetrates. This is footage from the womb.

From the left, the looming shadow of a bed leaps. I put out my tentacles and feel along the seam where edges meet. I grow and reach into places of dreaming. I emerge from below, hands in my mat of hair and then ebb, gently willing back into the place of my origin.

Jupiter is the largest planet in our solar system, orbited by 16 moons. Astrologically, it is said to govern systems of law, codes, philosophy and stories: how meaning is made. It represents a craving to expand beyond the familiar, to cast a net in foreign seas, to gather, sort and feed a village with the catch. I am Juno. I trace the edges of maps and then move beyond their penciled lines, courting Jupiter: the grand expanse I long for.

### III

#### BRIDGE

'The Singing House', it's called; empty but for a piano, a bench, a chair and a shrine holding flowers, bones and a box full of torn paper. I write my intent for today's session: 'I want to discover a hidden voice.'

Ethie is a student of Roy Hart Theatre, an actor, a vocalist and pianist. In our time together, she has introduced to me a taste of the seemingly infinite potentials and depths of the human voice. She works from a variety of entry points to guide each exploration. She may, for example, play a note on the piano and ask me to echo it vocally. Many of the notes she chooses are deliberately beyond my natural range and initially I feel silly and exposed. She encourages me to articulate my experience spontaneously through un-edited, full-body movement.

I roll back and forth on the floor growling. I hop on my toes screeching at the ceiling, then clench my arms into my chest and moan. I tap my face with my fingers and arch myself over the chair, reaching and straining to get into the corners of the sound, to shake free the frozen threads in my throat. Laying on my back, I roll my eyes toward the crown of my head and send a yodel through the soles of my feet. The floor drops out and suddenly I am a wild-haired,



shrieking, hysteric. The floor drops out and now I am a wolf, snarling, lips drawn back from my teeth. I open and open and open my mouth, frustrated at the limitations in my jaw, then an ocean begins to pour in and I resist a sudden urge to duck.

"The piece I lost..." Landscapes open up before me, crowds of people, face after face pressed against my own . "The piece I lost..." I shriek it an octave higher. Growl it an octave lower. Ethie's face is a mirror of my own, mouth open, eyes wide and in the next moment lidded, as if in a reverie. My hair is flying and the sounds I make are inhuman. The voice that emerges is often unfamiliar. It is shame itself that shames me. I cringe witnessing my cringe, caught hiding from myself.

"I see a widow. High up. In your back." Ethie says. I feel pale yellow light streaming into this window. There is a clean blue sky reflected in it and the dense, cold place that was the back of my heart is breathing. There is a mouth back there too. And there is a strong, even sound: a woman's voice. She stands with ease, with the stillness of a stone. And she is full of windows.

## Opening the Gate

An Aural Collage

2 minutes 48 seconds

sound collage

Interviews conducted in Boulder, CO

September 2015

*Mixed using Ableton Live, this piece is composed of  
two interviews:  
one with vocalist, actress and vocal facilitator Ethie Friend  
and the second  
with musician, professor and shamanic practitioner Julie Davis.  
It includes chanted excerpts from a Bon Buddhist practice:  
'The Eight Manifestations of Sherap Chamma'  
and an 'appearance'  
by vocalist Paul Fowler.*

This piece was prompted by my curiosity about the musical perspectives of these two influential women: one who approaches voice as a gateway into secret chambers of the self, the second—a musician and shamanic practitioner—approaches composition as an offering and a way to connect with the unseen. I was also motivated by the wish to build a relationship with music liberated from competitiveness, inhibitions and the trivialities of pop culture.

A R J  
M  
E

E D  
G  
E

SILENCE

*A frame need not be physical, it can be conceptual, emotional, experiential, social, temporal....Each frame illuminates not only experiences and sensations, but also the framing process itself.*

~ KAY LARSON

*Space and awareness of space, this is the basic message.*

~YESHE TSOGYAL

# I

## RITUAL SPACE

*Our culture has bebed with suspicion unproductive time, things not utilitarian, and daydreaming in general, but we live in a time when it is especially challenging to articulate the importance of experiences that don't produce anything obvious, aren't easily quantifiable, resist measurement, aren't easily named, are categorically in-between.*

~ ANN HAMILTON

I have spent countless hours in meditation, in dance, in day-dreaming, (in therapy) and I blame myself for all of them. What the hell do I write on my resume? To counterbalance my mystical tendencies, I implement a military schedule that accounts for every hour. I call it a 'rhythm guide.' To be an artist and work a day-job leaves little room for indulgences. I must not sleep.

I daydream about opening a napping house with gauzy curtains and gauzy music innumerable beds. I search for a vessel to mitigate the painful opposition of productivity and presence. How can I be at ease and cut my moorings to allow for the aimless wanderings that feed muses? How do I return to productivity with heart-fulness and inspiration?

A fleeting sense of peace visits unexpectedly;  
when I am lost in reverie, while dancing in the  
dark or listening to music. Glimmering, baited  
hooks recede into dim water and many slippery  
fishes elude me as I swim, breath held, looking  
for a treasure I can't quite describe. I am  
certain only of an unrelenting impulse to write  
on the walls of the world.

Is the existential conundrum with which I have struggled to do with a certain absence of spiritual or vocational lineage? I have not customarily placed trust in institutions and I recognize few opportunities for inspired apprenticeship within my reach. So, what pathway is there for me? What noble structure might direct my days?

I learned as a child to interpret waiting or fallow time as evidence of ineptitude or laziness. I am in feverish pursuit of unruffled confidence and perfect foresight. I am pulled between the songs of the muses—who like whimsy and wandering—and developing the necessary technical knowledge to progress my profession. To try to rest within these paradoxes is the crux of cruxes.

Within me, need for containment co-exists with a wild indignation against parameters of any sort. I slowly learn to navigate this schism. My rituals occupy a frame of time, dedication to some specific undertaking and a selection of physical alignments. I begin to collage a methodology—an infrastructure: the ringing of a bell, the lighting of a candle, the offering of a bit of food to announce my wish to serve a purpose or being beyond myself. I shift into low gear and find a rhythm as regular and simple as walking. I sail the discursive mind out into the currents where its static protests are only a vague, and almost comfortingly familiar background: tethered just out of reach of concern.

I come to understand that willingness to reside in not-knowing is essential: the unknown is a great, mysterious incubator where keys appear unbidden and in the 'wrong' place, and insights float up from the depths like stirred leaves in a black winter pond. But the 'non-doing' bandied about so casually in progressive circles is as elusive as trying to define the word 'Art'. The un-charted, un-named, un-quantified experience is teeming with potential and unnerving. Thus, I practice my hover, suspending myself with the aid of partially improvised, partially composed scores, in continuums between muse and governance.



*A schedule defends from chaos and whim. It is a net for catching days. It is a scaffolding on which a worker can stand and labor with both hands at sections of time. A schedule is a mock-up of reason and order—willed, faked, and so brought into being; it is a peace and a haven set into the wreck of time; it is a lifeboat on which you find yourself, decades later, still living. Each day is the same, so you remember the series afterward as a blurred and powerful pattern.*

~ANNIE DILLARD

I cleanse my palette by observing a minute of stillness and silence, clear a space for the singularity of the task at hand. I do this in order to enter the place behind thoughts, to tether the endless list of 'things to do', worries and perceived obligations, to the tail of a kite and let the string unravel in the stiff wind of determination. I evoke a sanctuary, within which the radio-static of distractions is dialed down, rendering the contours of attention and phenomena in vivid focus. The procession of time fades away.

## II

### REVERBERATIONS

The Obras residency is located in a century-old firehouse outside of the Portuguese village of Evoramonte. During the day, forty goat-voices, each accompanied by the unique timbre of his bell float across the hills. At night, the sky is very clear and there are millions of snails. I tip-toe to avoid crushing them. I imagine carrying my home on my back and leaving a gossamer trail.

The firehouse is like a monastery. The afternoon quietude is thick. I am aware that pressure to prove and produce has distanced me from myself; I have become disciplined to the point of rigidity. I wish to hush my ambition but fear the dulling of my carefully-honed edges.

The countryside is gently rolling hills shaded by the serpentine limbs of Cork Oaks. A light, chill, May rain falls most days, adding an accompanying murmur to the darkening skies. The atelier where I practice is a wide, stone emptiness. I begin with the word 'Liminal.' I taste this word in my mouth, feel the shape of its sound, swim around in a strange feeling of ambivalent, expansive disorientation.

*One might say that immensity is a philosophical category of daydream. Daydream undoubtedly feeds on all kinds of sights but through a sort of natural inclination it contemplates grandeur. And this contemplation produces an attitude that is so special, an inner state that is so unlike any other, that the daydream transports the dreamer outside the immediate world to a world that bears the mark of infinity.*

~ GASTON BACHELARD

As a child, I am disappointed to discover the burdensome compulsion of breathing. I try to stop, hoping to liberate myself from it, but am frustrated by an irrepressible impulse—after barely more than a minute—to continue. I am dismayed by my stupidly short and jarring overland sprints and find, much to my chagrin, that the fastest and most majestic-looking creatures on planet earth can only sustain their run for a few minutes at a stretch before exhaustion. Flying seems out of the question. I am crestfallen to realize these mortal implications. I press my nose to the car window and imagine myself soaring over vast, empty landscapes. I imagine myself as a horse with wings, galloping tirelessly, effortlessly clearing obstacles. I seek timelessness and absorption. Where is the map to the place where limitation dissolves?

While visiting the city to rent a cello, I find refuge in the cavernous Lisbon cathedral where refracted light from the stained windows be-stills me with contemplative awe. I am imprinted by the sound of footfalls on stone.

Reverb<sup>3</sup> is the sonic signature of a space. Sound waves travel out, encounter a surface and return to the ear. The characteristics of the echo depend on the qualities of the space. Reverb occurs organically but is often meticulously cultivated in music production; it adds depth, fullness and atmosphere to sound.

Reverb is the voice of time's decay, a voyage out and back again, a marking of boundaries. To experience grandeur requires familiarity with limitation—a sense of the edges against which an expanse might be measured. The walls of a cathedral collaborate in rendering the celestial atmosphere called up by an organ or choir. Reverb speaks also through the quality of its silences, measuring depth and decay, remembering always the void as it describes a space.

This is echo-location: I strike a note, call out into the darkness—the sound encounters—and returns. Reverberations build a cathedral around me. I feel outward through sound; I connect replies like points of light in a constellation.

---

3. **Echo** occurs when a sound wave encounters a surface more than approximately 55 feet or 0.1 seconds from its source and reflects in its entirety—a fainter version of the original. Sound endures in memory for 0.1 seconds, so the delay between the origin sound and perception of the reflected sound creates the experience of echo. **Reverb** occurs when a reflected sound wave reaches the ear in less than 0.1 second. A shorter distance means that the imprint of the origin sound still exists upon the return of its reflection. The two waves combine as a single prolonged wave, giving a sense of dimensionality or depth.

### III

#### VIGNETTES & VOICINGS

I am magnetized by the cemeteries that nest in cities, reservoirs of stillness timeless as bones within halos of chaos. Encounters within these places are more intimate than most conversation. In the mutually agreed-upon containment of them, I recognize and am recognized: awkward, brittle, gorgeously-asymmetrical. Without the shield of words, we are naked-and-together, we are faceless, ephemeral, vulnerable—our mortality palpable, the noise of thought temporarily drowned. I've heard sound artists say that what they love about noise is its silence. Silence is an absence, but not necessarily the absence of sound. It fills, omnipresent, and contains and is also empty: a vacuum. All manifestation emerges from and decays into it.

I recall a professor's response to an assault that occurred in my hometown the previous year. In the wake of incensed cries for retribution, she calmly remarks that the most potent thing to do, is go to the site of the crime and sit in a silent meditation on compassion. Her words open a gate inside me. In that moment, fearful rage is replaced with a sense of empowerment. I begin to understand the landscape as a field of memory and my body as an altar within it. I begin to recognize the power of the unspoken and the un-done.

What strange landscapes! My own voice becomes a beacon as I settle into the drone of the cello. I hear things I am ordinarily too busy to hear. How does the body-beneath-thinking sense geography aurally? What ripples, resonances, echoes are here? What is contained in these grains of sound like grains of sand on the beach of me? What imprints itself? Like fossils, memories are embedded in the sounds I produce. This is a tracing of origins.





## Liminal

*5 minutes 3 seconds  
Vignette with Voicing  
Obras Artist's Residency  
Marmadeira, Portugal  
May 2016*

*A spare and repetitive rhythm:  
cello and a voice,  
crumbling walls and echoes—  
small cracks...  
the threshold.*

*Things are never what they seem.*



How does an image inspire the language that describes it? How does experience resonate and give birth to sound? I am contemplating the triangulation of encounter, impulse and response. This is an investigation of catalysts.

The Liminal sound-score features a deliberate, repetitive bass pizzicato that reverberates off the stone floor and down the empty halls. I wear black and clasp a bouquet of wild yellow daisies in both hands. There is a scarf in amber and teal across my eyes. A yellowish cast from a hazy afternoon sun reflects off the uneven walls. As I step backward, I select one daisy, invoke the poles of a particularly vexatious internal dichotomy, and as the flower falls to the floor, envisage its mingling and dissolution. A loose medley of voices on the recording slide, mutter and wander melodically, elongating vowels, spitting consonants.

Suspended above the doorway at the end of the hall is a globe. When I arrive beneath it, I explore the doorframe with my fingers, then, still blindfolded, back through into the dark space beyond, pulling the doors closed in my wake. I am backing into the unknown, blind. I offer up my conflicts, accept my confusion and move toward the inner-most cave.

# FINDING RHYTHM

*Rhythm is life the space of time danced thru.*

~ CECIL TAYLOR

*The poet is able to exploit the spaces between thing and symbol, denotation and connotation, music and 'meaning'. He thus takes us to the border regions of speech. And it is in those regions that language approaches the threshold of the mystery.*

~ MICHAEL TUCKER

# I

## ARRHYTHMIA

I like the feeling of containment: to be in a cave, a place where the walls and ceiling are close. *She's two weeks late*, the doctors said, and they cut open the sky and pulled me out of my close womb screaming. No passageway. No threshold. No gate. It might be that I was never born at all.

My wish for graduate school is that it birth me into the realization of my vocation. I don't have a final destination in mind as I make plans to depart the town I've lived in for 13 years. I arrange a series of residencies: Argentina, Scotland, Portugal, Morocco, Spain, Germany and the American South.

I have been accepted into a residency in LaPlata, Argentina. I long for warmth. Not just temperature, but colour and rhythm and a culture that loves dance. It is February. I spend one month in a large studio-house with an Australian visual artist. In the days leading up to and during the residency itself, I sustain numerous small injuries: a cracked calcaneus,<sup>4</sup> a twisted ankle, a perpetually inflamed left hip.

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4. The human heel supports our verticality. It is this structure that allows us to balance and maintain a plumb-line: direct contact through our structure into the ground.

I only come to respect the difficulty of this transition much later on. My injuries correspond with the dissonance I feel. I'm literally colliding with things and throwing myself frantically about, but sometimes change just ain't gonna happen without an intervention. I twist my other ankle searching frantically for a Tango class one night and limp home. It is now nearly impossible for me to move anywhere quickly and this comes as a surprising relief. I slide out from under the drill sergeants of ambition and perfectionism and begin a deep-dive into the origins of voice.

I had encountered Kristin Linklater's book, *Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language*, months before, discovered that she ran retreats from her home in the Orkneys and immediately applied. I am drawn to these outlying Scottish isles; there's something about the remote, stormy, wildness of them and a feeling I can only inadequately describe as ancestral longing.

Kristen's work includes a body of guided imagery and somatically-based exercises aimed at relieving the vocal mechanism of inhibitions. The idea is to wed language to breath and to voice, and move attention away from conceptual judgments and into sensuous experience. I end up on the floor, on my back, under a warm February sun, feeling the vibrations and rhythms within my breath. I try to find a thread of continuity: something tangible that I can trust.

I am  
always on  
the run:  
literally,  
physically,  
psycho-  
logically,  
spiritually-  
fleeing or  
pursuing,  
I'm not  
sure  
which.  
Here I am  
again, a  
stranger in  
a strange  
land,  
having  
jumped the  
mired ship  
of my  
former life,  
somewhere  
between  
what was  
and what  
might be.

## II

### ABSTRACTIONS: THE SENSUALITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Katherine, the Australian artist with whom I share the Residencia Corazon (Argentina) studio asks if I might compose a piece for her exhibition. Her project, entitled *Fluorescent Dreaming* plays at the intersection of synthetic and organic, seeking harmony between the two. I am learning how to record and mix music using Ableton Live.<sup>5</sup> Working with a digital interface is a significant edge for me. I want to find what I come to call the 'sensuality of technology.' I contemplate the correspondence between introducing technology into an analog music practice and the internal quest to integrate *techne* and *psyche*.<sup>6</sup>

Relating with the digital world feels like a betrayal. Hands on strings or keys is a tactile intimacy with timbre and tone, velocity and volume. Rhythm and lyricism is found in the breath and in the heartbeat. Programming these variables is an altogether different process. Can sound generated by a chain of coded commands and electrical signals be wedded to that which is born from resonating bodies of flesh and wood? What happens when sound is digitized?

---

5. Ableton Live is a DAW or digital audio workstation: a computer-based platform on which music can be recorded, arranged, produced and composed.

6. *Techne* represents the side of human nature that creates order, *psyche* refers to intuitive being. (Arguelles 286)

Inner dissonance: a war of hemispheres is always raging. One side endlessly, compulsively orders, categorizes, rationalizes and articulates, while the other wanders away and becomes lost, hums and imagines and forgets. I seek reconciliation of this existential crisis in esoteric philosophy, contemplative practice and by launching myself at any art-form I can get my hands into. I want nothing so much as to mend the feeling of fragmentation, the confusion of being an ephemeral solid.

*As a quality of consciousness, abstraction is peculiarly modern. Abstraction literally means 'to pull away, to remove from.' That modern man has uprooted himself from the direct experience of nature through the process of urbanization constitutes the primary level of his abstraction. A secondary level of abstraction results from mechanization, the sequential as opposed to the simultaneous ordering of reality. As such, mechanization is a separative process that in the human organism destroys the unity of the senses. A third level of abstraction is brought about by the proliferation of the electronic media into a technological environment that pulls sensory experience away from the body.*

~ JOSE ARGUELLES

I notice an oddly comparable internal conflict when I shift from improvisation to editing a piece of work: the conceptually precise churning, figuring, planning and composing feels reductive, contrived and almost violent after the expansive and curious reverie of a freestyle session. But the possibilities for expanding my palette, layering and mixing, not to mention ease of publishing, are far too enticing to resist, and I am no purist.

Do I have something to prove? Probably. I want to prove that I can mix my own music—that I have a technical mind capable of technical fluency—in the same way I proved that I have the mechanical ability necessary to repair a motorcycle.

I set up a template and select sound textures for a palette. Then, for twenty minutes at a time, I dive in. The sound inside my headphones, a midi keyboard<sup>7</sup> and a computer that acts as a palette, sound-generator and mixing board occupy my awareness. I dive into an ocean of samples<sup>8</sup> and emerge tranquil.

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7. A midi keyboard is a control device that transfers midi signals through an external synthesizer or sequencer, such as a computer. It does not generate its own sound.

8. A sound sample is a measure of the intensity of an audio signal at a given moment in time. In general, tens of thousands of samples are taken per second. From these, the architecture of an analog wave can be determined.







# SUSPENDED

*22 minutes 11 seconds*

*soundscape*

*composed with the Arturia Keylab 25 and Ableton Live*

*Residencia Corazon, Argentina*

*February 2016*

---

*This minimalist sound-scape is a composite  
of samples and MIDI instrumentation.*

*It represents my first forays into the  
other-worldly sound library  
of digital instruments.*

This is the slow world:  
Within this endless ocean,  
luminous orbs undulate heaven-ward  
depths fall away silent  
and transparent creatures  
skitter and billow.  
I hover,  
tentacles drifting.

### III

#### THE SLOW WORLD

I am haunted by this feeling that I am too slow, too late, that I have been left behind, forgotten. In dreams, I sprint for buses that have already left or desperately wend my way through labyrinthine airports hoping to catch flights already departed.

Practice is a frame into which I pour my mind. It is a method of alignment, a point of orientation. My practice sessions have a score: I mark the edges, define the area of inquiry, lay out aspirations. Yet an equal measure of unguarded territory is necessary. A door must be left ajar for unexpected visitations. In every session, I reserve time for improvisation. Improvisation is where seeds of the best work are dropped. When expectation is abandoned and agendas are replaced with listening, waiting and attention, this is when beauty that I could not have planned emerges.





# Metronome

*55 seconds  
video*

*Fort Worden  
Port Townsend, WA.  
March 2016*

*This short video  
describes an antique faucet  
methodically  
dripping...  
each drop clinging—  
trembling—  
falling.*

Each droplet clings, trembles,  
and then, pulled by  
its own ripened weight,  
falls into space: regular as a  
metronome.

My reflection is there,  
fleetingly, in the water before it  
plummets.

The next drop emerges,  
rapidly grows heavy and full:  
its departure leaves

a  
ripple  
in the air.

*Instances of improvisation are both event and trace[...] A moment of improvised [music] is a time value. The understanding of improvisation as time value, as presence, rather than as a purely aesthetic form, puts our common sense representation of time into question.*

~ JACQUES COURSIL

*Where performers need scripts, improvisers need stimuli and constraints[...] The composer becomes an architect of environments, a contriver of situations.*

~ VIJAY IYER



Convention assumes that time is a line, stretching between past and future. But past/future are activities of thought and as such, they occur in the subjective present. The unpremeditated gesture blooms like an underground spring: memory, desire and imagination circulate, churned by invisible under-currents. Improvisation opens up eddies, lacunae. Existing kaleidoscopically in 'real-time,' it is a situational state intersected and evolved by each new event. It rests upon eloquence: intelligently plucked, yet spontaneous articulation that gleams in its frame. Improvisation is a string of transformations, a shifting labyrinth.

Improvisation is a collaborative ecology between muse and compositional mind. It describes a substrate stilled and then penetrated by irreverent precision. Improvisation is a journey out, an encounter and the return.

Snail glistening in  
the petals of a poppy  
her eyes feel.

When I arrive at the Obras residency in Portugal amidst soft rain and mist, I am enchanted. She is hermaphroditic, cannibalistic and a source of nourishment for nearly every species of carnivore. Joined by the gossamer secretions of her body-foot to the world, her connection to substrate uninterrupted, she is fluid, an ornament on petals and lichens. Her home is herself, an infinite inward spiral and pathway of limitless expansion. She continues on her direction, paced and persistent. If startled, it is from within unified simultaneity that she contracts and within which she waits—pulled inside herself—for the right moment to release and re-extend.

*One doesn't arrive — in words or in art — by necessarily knowing where one is going. In every work of art something appears that did not previously exist, and so, by default, you work from what you know to what you don't know.... You have to be open to all possibilities and to all routes — circuitous or otherwise.*

~ ANNE HAMILTON



EXILE:

SHADOWS AND THE DARK

*Articulate the nature of your exile and you're on your way home.*

~ DAVID WHYTE

*...she cannot be healed until she retreats entirely to the quiet, deep, removed place that the world knows so little about.*

~ GERTRUD MUELLER NELSON

*The hurt self returns again and again to its original site of separation, the source of its alienation[...] it's possible to make art of a high (subtle) order from this cyclic return.*

~ KAY LARSON



CENTAUR  
24"X 24"  
OIL ON CANVAS  
FEBRUARY 2017



# I

## CENTAUR

Pleasure is indulgent. Pleasure must be sneaked. Pleasure is guilty. Pleasure corrupts. Pleasure is obscene. Pleasure is wanting. Pleasure must be stolen. Pleasure is obese. Pleasure is expensive. Pleasure is for men. Pleasure is a reward. Pleasure is a pursuit. Pleasure is a part to be played.

It was an arranged marriage—this body and me—joined at conception. We were never properly introduced. For a long time, she dutifully obeyed my commands. But then something changed. I woke in alleyways, in bathrooms, on unfamiliar couches, bruised and disoriented. There were furious binges. I pounded the floor, slammed doors, tore at my hair with inexplicable rage. I had been such a quiet girl.

I dream of centaurs. That which is exiled, haunts. What is this half-beast, half-human of lust and appetite? I try to decipher the ephemeral impression by painting it, but it remains beyond reach, playing at the edges of my mind. I cover a canvas with ochre. I have never painted with yellow before. I am frustrated by my limited ability to render my imagination figuratively, but there is something about this colour—hungry and broad and brilliant—a stark contrast to my ordinarily muted palette.

I want to find where I don't feel, and why: reach back through the years and decades and centuries of blood and bone and soul memory and retrieve the lost fragments of myself. I want to reclaim the exiled.

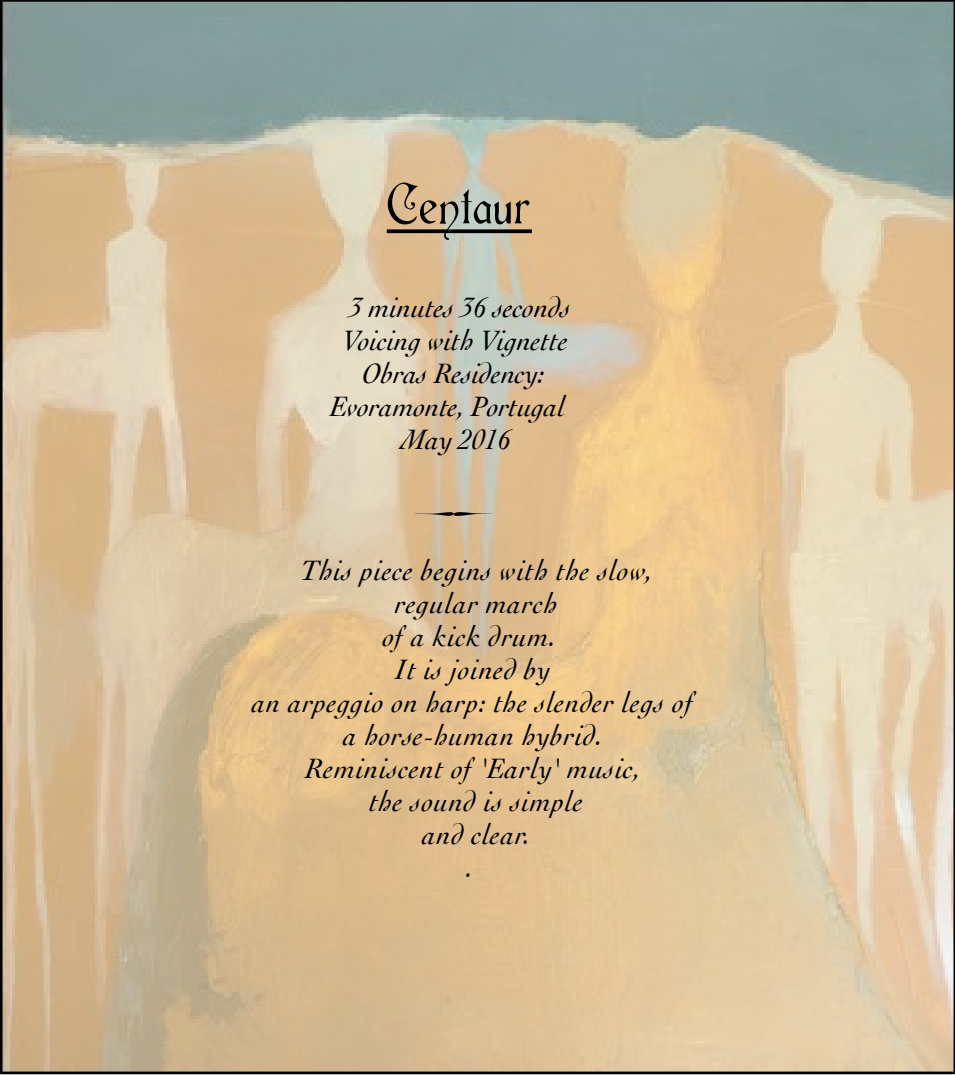
I have displaced my sexuality. I am a caricature, stifling carefully this inconvenient body: its whispering magnetisms, its baited tension. I wear my sex like a style. I want to be desired. What is desirable? Trends constantly shift and I, chasing them, disappear out from under myself and become vacant, consumed by a ravenous and desperate hunger.

*In myth, the centaurs were of two families: The descendants of Ixion's encounter with a cloud represented ignorant, brute force. The children of Philyra and Cronos, (of whom Chiron was the most famous) represent strength and nobility in the service of right[...] There are undoubtedly few myths which teach so clearly the battle between instinct and reason.*

~ DREAMICUS

These two centaurian families live within me, separated by a broad night-river. I stand on one bank while a siren song from the other entreats and seduces. I fill my lungs, dive into the water and begin to swim. When at last I arrive, haggard and relieved, on the opposite shore, I am at once aware of mournful cries from whence I came. Here it is again, this quest to reconcile and unite that which was divided on the plain of some remote place: instinct and language. I am a messenger. I am a bridge.





## Centaur

*3 minutes 36 seconds  
Voicing with Vignette  
Obras Residency:  
Evoramonte, Portugal  
May 2016*

*This piece begins with the slow,  
regular march  
of a kick drum.  
It is joined by  
an arpeggio on harp: the slender legs of  
a horse-human hybrid.  
Reminiscent of 'Early' music,  
the sound is simple  
and clear.*

The cadence of a shaker, soft and regular: this is a sound I use to settle myself before meditation. A swelling baritone choir brings an ominous awe to this enchanted procession. I summon the creature from within and from without, I am only part human. This is a supplication to the Other.

As the piece continues, a celestial choir of female voices takes the place of the baritones, bringing the sound from earth into the heavens. An eerie synthesizer fills the background as the harp ebbs and swells. There is echoing piano, like clear, cold drops of water, and a whispering voice that vanishes into the kick. Half-sung, half-charned, this is an invitation toward something I can't yet conceive: a source of power I have been afraid to touch.

*The way that mythologies work their magic is through symbols. The symbol works as an automatic button that releases energy and channels it.*

~ JOSEPH CAMPBELL

*We are offered a veritable cure of rhythm-analysis through the poem, which interweaves real and unreal, and gives dynamism to language by means of the dual activity of signification and poetry[...] With poetry, the imagination takes its place on the margin, exactly where the function of unreality comes to charm or to disturb—always to awaken—the sleeping being lost in its automatisms.*

~ GASTON BACHELARD

I invoke the centaur and in the singing toward my unknowns, I become the centaur. I step through a gate into a conversation that has but one voice. I sing open the covers of mythology and call the beast off the flat page into being. Poetry is language moulded to the service of raw and actual encounter. It mends a mind divided. Invoking sensuality with language, it unifies the 'real' and the 'unreal,' image and matter, divinity with desire.

Who is this creature that traces each small pleasure into the pink bud, that follows a glistening trail into the heart of creation?

## II

### THE DARK GODDESS

Here in the 300-year-old stone house in the hillside town of Chelva, outside of Valencia, Spain; Tim, (friend, collaborator, etc.) and I alternate between war and peace. We work in darkness: he on keyboard, me belting, bellowing, howling.

How did the sound feel to you?

It wells up and drowns me. It invades my ears and vibrates around me. I can't escape it. It mocks me, forces itself on me. Rage wells up. I feel powerless.



# Magdalena

*4 minutes 58 seconds*

*Audio recording*

*Lyrics: Regan Drouin*

*Music/Arrangement/Production: Tim Moixana*

*Bosch & Simons Residency:*

*Chelva, Valencia, Spain*

*July 2016*

*A prayer in minor-key  
composed with Ableton Live  
and a generous amount of red wine.*



How to inhabit the room of a song? Who hears? Who is listening? Is it dangerous to be loud? Little by little I expand. I am in an attic above a sleeping town, a foreigner in a tucked-away place. It feels safe to be unknown. The landscape is dry, with purple thistles and small red canyons. On the news; the report of another suicide bomber.

I am surrounded by images of Mary Magdalene. She is an icon. She is a mockery; simultaneously a caricature of and symbol for feminine wisdom. She offers solace and provokes longing...and dark fury. Who is this cloistered lady? She who for thousands of years before Christianity went by another name: Isis, Eponia, Sophia, Athena, Minerva, Diana, Brigid. She has been spayed. Where is the wrathful one, the fearsomely-protective mother, the devouring queen-whore?

### III

#### ORIGINS

*If we use the pagus etymology, Paganism becomes the religion appropriate to 1) the physical environment, and 2) the cultural environment, of the worshiper. This includes the structures of cities. In this sense a Pagan would have to answer the question, 'how does my religion fit into the place where I find myself?'*

~ CEISIWR SERITH

As the March sun begins to set each evening, I go to run on the golf course near my apartment. Twenty years ago, I went into self-imposed exile in an attempt to escape: family, memories, the self I couldn't accept. Now, unexpectedly, I have returned. Each evening, a red fox arrows across my path. My heart erupts when I see her, feline/canine in this little island of wild. She is messenger: untamed, silent, horizontal, tail extended, moving across the landscape like a beacon.



## Red Fox

*3 minutes 48 seconds*

*audio recording*

*lyrics, vocals & music: R. Drouin*

*Arrangement & production: Eric Davis*

*Providence, RI*

*November 2017*

*In this raucous medley arranged by Eric Davis,  
there is a fuzz of distortion and atmospheric fills  
over a loping instrumental phrase  
juggled between keys, guitar and synths.  
The embedded voice is alternately broken, then smooth,  
then randily sensuous. The medley shifts to  
a dissonant interlude with a brass section  
and then finds its lope once again.*

**R**ed Fox describes the reclamation and recovery of the non-ordinary soul. Like the Selkie or Swan Maiden—women stolen out of their element, pelt or feathers hijacked and held captive by rationale—when one loses contact with one's animal body, the essential self is forgotten.

Be a leop. Be a white-feathered bird. Be a Red Fox. Every evening as dusk crawls in, she darts across the path. Follow her until she fades beneath curtains of falling dark and the skirts of trees. Follow her call like a path. Follow her down into the loam. Let her wake you from your drugged sleep. Let her thaw the miasma. Make a gift. Ask.

There is something that calls to me in the sound of certain musics: embracing, fierce, melancholy, profound, and far beyond the petty clichés of discursive mind. It is the sound of raw emotion, together with the invocation of that indestructible and universal strength that glows like a beacon through fog.

Spirituals and gospels raise voices in chorus to the divine. The blues—deep in the mud—sing the bleeding and enduring heart. In punk, can be found a luminous poetry, forged by the jagged edges of brazen rebellion. The revivals of Celtic and Norse musics are dipped in the recognition of the mythic landscape from which they were born.

I love a music that marries the ancient call of the soul to its elemental source. I love the direct revelations of spiritual outlaws who don't need an intermediary to receive their epiphanies for them. I understand now that much of my relentless searching has been a muddied attempt to locate roots, to find evidence of a personal, ancestral connection—a bloodline, buried within a spiritual/musical/artistic tradition. I have traveled to Slovakia, Portugal and Ireland. I have studied Japanese arts, Tibetan meditation and tribal dances. There is a feeling of depth and integrity in unbroken lineages, a living river of memory that I hunger for. To sate this hunger, I have turned toward the mystic's way, seeking memory in the feel of the ground beneath my feet—and in the flesh and bones of the feet themselves.

*The pride that people feel in their nationality, and the attraction to discover details about their Ancestors, is more about a living energetic connection than a desire to satisfy curiosity. The pull is from the roots; it is a calling to take the position of a bridge and to be a vessel that connects past and present.*

~ RAVEN GRIMASSI

# EMERGENCE



*Poetry is always discovery, risk, revelation, adventure, and activity of the mind, a method of knowledge leading to revolutionary solutions to the fundamental problems of life.*

~ PENELOPE ROSEMONT

*The job — as well as the plight, and the unexpected joy — of the artist is to embrace uncertainty, to be sharpened and honed by it. To be birthed by it.*

~ DANI SHAPIRO



SOUL RETRIEVAL  
OIL, TEXT, ENCAUSTIC  
50" X 36"  
PROVIDENCE, RI  
AUGUST 2017

# I

## SOUL RETRIEVAL

*When the sacred is no longer set above the mundane, then every mundane thing is sacred[...]. When the hurt self is not pushed away—when it is thoroughly experienced, embraced and welcomed home—suffering is transformed into compassion, ignorance becomes enlightenment, and the artist frames the world-as-it-is and shows us a picture we recognize.*

~ KAY LARSON

Here is a long hallway echoing with footfalls. I gather up shards, fragments, pieces dropped along the years. These are the voices of lost gods.



## SOUL RETRIEVAL

*5 minutes 50 seconds*  
*audio recording*  
*Zeta Electric Cello, Guitar, VL5 Pedal*  
*Providence, RI*  
*January 2017*


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*A simple, repetitive drone.*  
*A chant.*  
*A thrumming bass-line.*  
*A subdued electric guitar*  
*circles, pads around*  
*smooth vocals that swell and ebb,*  
*burn and fade like fireflies.*

This song narrates a dream I dream while waking and again in sleep. I am curious now, as never before. Have I arrived already on the opposite shore?

I descend. I call out across centuries, tracing pathways down halls of remembrance. I am seeking for the abandoned, lost, disallowed, exiled. I begin my re-collecting anew each night: angling downward, walking slowly along corridors that echo into an endless distance. I call out to scattered pieces of the un-lived and forgotten.

And they answer: singing through the tunnels and labyrinths of this body-dream like a zephyr, like phantoms over a night sea.



LINEN CHEST

*4 minutes 30 seconds*  
*audio recording*  
*guitar, VL3*  
*Hadley, MA*  
*July 2018*

*a magician and the sea*  
*sing to me—*  
*washed up upon this foreign shore...*

i straddle the landscape.  
spear chaos and eat her.  
she is a fish.

they emptiness pours in  
like night sea.

and pregnant  
i lay on the beach.

## II

### DIVINATORY POETICS

*Not knowing, waiting and finding — though they may happen accidentally, aren't accidents. They involve work and research. Not knowing isn't ignorance. (Fear springs from ignorance.) Not knowing is a permissive and rigorous willingness to trust, leaving knowing in suspension, trusting in possibility without result, regarding as possible all manner of response. The responsibility of the artist[...]is the practice of recognizing.*

~ ANN HAMILTON

Antique Red, Oxblood Red, Indian Red, Cadmium, Venetian, Alizarin. I have never used red for more than an accent. This is pulsating, menstrual, it is the heat of sex and of sacrifice. Letters and words float up from below—*Inglese, Dictionary of, Oo, Uu, Therefore*—traces of words, fragments awash in red. At the centre is the door: a gateway. It emerges and it recedes. At its base, naked branches reach upward; they are cracks, they are briar roses around a sleeping castle. Three tattered strands of silk, white and black, cross the front like barbed wire: hung with three guinea fowl feathers catching dreams.





GATEWAY  
10"x10"  
OIL, PHOTO-TRANSFER, ENCAUSTIC, TEXT, FOUND-OBJECTS  
PROVIDENCE, RI  
AUGUST 2017



THE DOOR  
DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH  
PROVIDENCE, RI  
FEBRUARY 2017

\*Please refer to the accompanying article, *Liminal Spaces: The Strange Poetics of Mixed-Media* for a more in-depth exploration of the process behind Cartographies and Divinatory Poetics.

Collage is divination. Things call: a colour that pulls the gut, a feather on the morning stoop, the eggshell beneath a tree-full of tiny robin shrieks. Particular details catch my attention, crack me open. Following the weaving of attention through cradles of phenomena; this is a practice of recognition.

Spontaneous juxtapositions reveal unanticipated intimacies. The inquiry contains a reply—a coded reflection that was somehow invisible before. I am captivated by the wanderings shepherded by my hot air gun as I prod them like paper boats in an eddy. I can only suggest and whisper. Here is a gateway, an approaching door. There is an implicitude, suggested by the velocity of blue-shattered shell.

Many months after completing the *Gateway* painting, I find a photograph entitled, '*The Door*' in my files. On a desolate and grey February day, on my way to town, I glimpsed this door, masquerading beside a busy thoroughfare. The duration of its guard was measured by a lattice of vines, exuding a slightly ominous air. I stood riveted, not a doubt in my mind that behind it lay a sleeping kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

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9. In the faerie story of Briar Rose, (Sleeping Beauty) the princess pricks her finger on an enchanted spinning wheel and falls (along with her entire royal court) into a 100 year sleep. The spell can only be broken by a particularly curious and intrepid soul who dares to challenge the thorny vines grown up around the castle.

### III

#### ALIGNMENT

*What makes the internal technologist a "centre" is the interior wedding of the feminine right hemisphere and the masculine left hemisphere[....] Whatever the internal technologist does is art, for art in these terms is an integration of the open way, (psyche) and the way of power, (techne). The open way is the decent of the goddess, the yin[...]. The way of power is that with which we usually identify art or technique[...]*

*For the revitalized artist of whatever sex, the intrinsically feminine psyche no longer is the disembodied muse of the Romantic poet but is incorporated once again as the vitally functioning intuitive structure of being.*

~ JOSE ARGUELLES

The dojo is uncluttered; white walls, sea-coloured 'tatami' mats, space. A katana in a black sheath lays lengthwise on a stand beneath a black and white image of O'Sensei on the kamidana at the front of the room.

Initially, I chose to study Aikido, 'the art of peace' because I liked the idea of being a martial artist: able to fearlessly defend myself from enemies, lithe as a cat. I didn't, at that time, comprehend that the worst 'enemies' are often internal.

Aikido is the art of re-directing or neutralizing aggression. This begins within the body, with the observation of tension and release, contraction and expansion: observation of the breath. The principles of aikido seep slowly out of the dojo into my compositional work: I locate myself, standing before a naked canvas, a ply of wood, a page, or a screen or an empty room. Sensations approach and recede, I approach and recede. These tides are my body and also somehow encompass it: pigments of emotion, textures of mood, the weight of perception.

I feel gravity drop through the basket of my pelvis and call myself back from the tumultuous, and sometimes frantic edges of hope and fear. Alignment, a core principle of aikido, describes resting in and moving from the plumb-line or core of the body, from a place of non-reactive awareness, alertness and responsibility. This is intent and receptivity—two hemispheres<sup>10</sup> in concert. It requires continual adaptation and adjustment. The line is a lighthouse, as experience courses through and around me. I return again and again, feeling the stack of my bones as I move, as I reach for my tools, my instrument, as I wander into and out of recall and reverie, constellating the elements of phenomena.

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10. The brain is comprised of two cerebral hemispheres separated by a groove called the 'longitudinal fissure.' The corpus callosum connects these two hemispheres and allows them to communicate.

## CONCLUSION: THE HOUSE OF DREAMING

I am at a pool party when a tear opens up in the fabric of the world. Then, all around me I sense and feel the tall, luminous shapes of beings whose tendrilly extentions radiate outward like moonlight on restless water. I am drawn to them and their attention is trained on me as I walk through the tear in the world and find myself in an enchanting, high-ceilinged victorian-era room. The room is softly aglow, yet its generous windows are boarded up or filled with concrete blocks. Scrawled in red across the boards and cement are the words *NO. NO. NO.* The presences evaporate and I am alone.  
I am vexed. Who vandalized this place?

The dream arrived as I worked to complete this portfolio in April of 2018. It is of a different quality than the frequent and familiar dreams that echo and elaborate upon the experiences of my waking life. I have a sense of having been visited—and of having received a message.

I re-enter the dream through a technique known as Active Imagination. I stand in the NO room again in a lucid waking-state, and articulate my wish to clarify the symbolic import of it, and suddenly know that it was *I* who scrawled the red *NOs*. *I* bricked and boarded the windows. I begin to understand that the room had been a place of meeting and exchange between myself and the luminous

beings, but that as time passed, I said *no* more and more frequently to their communications. Finally, I ignored them altogether, denying the many small evidences of their invitations. I wrote NO. NO. NO. across the windows of that sanctuary, because I thought it was making me late for the world: too slow and too soft and too uncertain.

I invite the luminous beings to return. I tell them I would like to open up the windows and repaint the walls, but that I need their assistance. This is a spirit house, a room of collaboration. At first I hear nothing. The room remains empty. So, I decide to clear away some of the debris. I use a sledge hammer to break the cement in one frame. When I have made an opening, I lean though into a vast blue sky and fresh, sharp air. If this is my tower, I have found its view.

I go to the second window and break through its NO. Here is a dirt wall. I start to chip away at it. Stone and clay and rocks—it is very dense—but behind this is softness like a living body. I touch it, this great, soft, abstract animal, and it is my own body that I feel.

There is a third window: bricked over. I break my way through and there is a sunny meadow. The room around me begins to soften, its edges curving and expanding outward. Pillars rise up from the floor....

*I daydream about opening a napping house with gauzy curtains, diaphanous music  
and countless beds...*

This is a dreaming house. One vivid image is all it takes for a dreamer to awaken into unguessed possibility. The key to the house, its chambers, its gardens and cellars, lies buried within patient collusion with that strange, subtle radiance that tugs at the corners of attention: Here is a seam, the outline of a gateway, a passage that sometimes, leads into an other dimension. And this parallel universe may be so subtle, that the most radical act is simply to recognize that you have passed through the dreaming house and emerged somewhere else.

In the rooms of the dreaming house are tools for countless journeys, and always there is a frame amongst them. This, the dreamer places, and then peers through, as like to a lens. Here is a glistening trail. Follow it into places of reverie: places for sitting still as a glacial boulder with ears like copper trumpets, places for swimming and floating and others for spinning and mad ricochet off the mores of convention. Here in the tangle of yes-rooms are invitations that lead further and ever deeper; to antechambers and quiet thresholds that open again into tunnels that descend like the gullets of wild geese, dropping away swiftly into what is yet or ever undecided. The guinea feathers, the robin's egg, the tentative shadow, these chthonic fragments embedded like gems in rough stone, lead ever *into*.



## A FINAL WORD

As I prepared this portfolio, I witnessed the birth of a yes-room: one which is a shrine for the creative endeavour—accompanied by all of its spirits, misshapen bits, missteps, doubts, luminous beings, traces, gaps, memories and snails. It has been nothing short of profound to begin to inhabit this place. I am ever-grateful for having had the privilege to experience this MFA-IA right-of-passage and launching-pad. I will that UnSung Studio—the unseen, the virtual and the literal—serve not only as a platform for my work, but also as a haven for radical creativity and a template for dreaming-houses yet-to-emerge.



*May I be the arc of a bridge,  
adamantine, translucent—  
that emerges from the depths of silence  
traverses the space that stretches between  
and returns to silence again.*

## INDEX OF AUDIO/VIDEO FILES

1. Widow'sWalk\_ReganDrouinHalas2018

<http://unsungstudio.net/voicings-from-underground/#widows-walk-song>

2. Juno:

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3. OpeningTheGate\_ReganDrouinHalas2018

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4. Liminal:

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6. Metronome:

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11. LinenChest\_ReganDrouinHalas2018

<http://unsungstudio.net/voicings-from-underground/#linen-chest-song>

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### ART AND MEDITATION

**Abromovic, Marina. *Walk Through Walls: A Memoir*. New York: Crown Archetype, Penguin Random House LLC, 2016.**

*I thought all this decorativeness was bullshit. When it came to art, I only cared about content: what a work meant[...] Only layers of meaning can give long life to art—that way, society takes what it needs from the work over time. (ch3.p79)*

This memoir of performance art pioneer, Marina Abramovic is a harrowing, sometimes humorous view of the artist's life and work. Born in Yugoslavia under Tito's regime to war-hero parents, Abramovic's childhood was harsh. Her mother, however, was a great admirer of the arts and encouraged Marina to pursue painting. Abramovic emerged from painting into a radical approach to performance while still in her twenties, pushing her body-mind to extreme limits in the interest of exploring consciousness. She relates that she is often able to transcend fear and pain and discover a state of awareness and connectedness that draws her back to the work again and again.

*Human beings are afraid of very simple things: we fear suffering, we fear mortality. What I was doing in *Rhythm 0*—as in all my other performances—was staging these fears for the audience: using their energy to push my body as far as possible. In the process, I liberated myself from my fears. And as this happened, I became a mirror for the audience. (ch3.p71)*

I admire Abromovic's commitment to a search for what I would call reconciliation and forgiveness and her own in-exhaustible provocation and exploration of the difficult and uncomfortable: that which provokes fear, threatens certainty, questions morality. Some of Abromovic's pieces anger me, lead me to question what appears to be internalized aggression. But it is this quality that also makes her work potent. It helps to clarify too, what I am not. I am not a performer, nor am I a political artist, but there is an intersection between Abromovic and I and that might be called a search for the essential, the desire to dive into the bedrock of the soul.

It is Abromovic's approach to creativity that is most important to me—she expands my idea of what 'being an artist' might mean. She does not limit herself with conceptualizations and rationalizations of what can and cannot be done. She has worked broadly, across medium, across culture and across the span of her life, pushing the limits of her endurance and exploring the outer reaches of Mind. She is uncompromising of her ideals and of her vision and honest with her own very human vulnerabilities. In her story I find faith in myself and my own tangled, rocky, path.

**Baas, Jacquelynn and Jacob, Mary Jane, editors. *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art*. University of California Press, Berkeley Los Angeles London, 2004.**

*To begin I try to be without expectation. I stand, I walk 'round and 'round, I pace. I try to be very blank, to see what comes to attention, what patterns my walking takes, what questions or observations come to the surface[....]That is the practice—to be blank and to listen—and to wait.*

Ann Hamilton (from an Interview p179)

This book is an outgrowth of (editors) Baas's and Jacob's collaborative project, "Awake: Art Buddhism, and the Dimensions of Consciousness." From 1999-2005 they brought together artists, curators, critics and others to explore the relationship between the meditation, perception and creativity and the implications of Buddhist view on contemporary art. It contains 26 essays by writers from a range of disciplines accompanied by interviews with several of the artists: Laurie Anderson, Marina Abramovic, Ann Hamilton and Bill Viola to name a few.

Most exciting for me were the interviews with artists about their process, which is herein emphasized over product and mediumistic technicality. Threads of contemplative practice, creative process and perception are woven together with fragments of Buddhist philosophy, but the content is by no means religious or even genre-oriented in nature; the tone is existential, methodical and humanist. The artists speak about art as a way of life and a daily practice, much the way sitting meditation is for a Buddhist practitioner. It is not Buddhist identity that is highlighted, but the common themes—of awareness and attention, observation of bodily experience, attention to space and the arising of phenomena within space—which can be applied and appreciated regardless of religious orientation.

The content of this compendium is a multi-faceted and nuanced integration of spirituality and art practice: an orientation that looks towards deepening and expanding consciousness, exploring its limits, the process of self-revelation and transformation and art practice as an avenue for the cultivation of a flexible, alert, engaged mind. In sum: Buddhism and contemporary art practice are natural allies in a quest to cultivate transcendental aesthetic experience.

**Dilley, Barbara. *This Very Moment: Teaching, Thinking, Dancing*. Naropa University Press, 2015.**

Memoir and handbook both, this spiral-bound book contains the life story and also the methodical presentation of the work of Barbara Dilley, a woman who has made a profound impact on my own perspective of dance, creative process and art.

Dilley developed the form "Contemplative Dance Practice" when she was invited by the Tibetan meditation master Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche to teach dance at the newly formed Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. A classically trained ballerina, Dilley formulated an approach to movement studies based in meditation and awareness practice, as a foundation for ensemble approaches to dance. Within the pages of this work are examples of exercises, scores and structures as well as anecdotal tidbits for guiding the practice. This material is woven into the bedrock of Dilley's captivating life story, from her days as a professional dancer to her time as the President of Naropa University.

Dilley's unique and articulate way of speaking about dance, art, improvisation and mindfulness is unmatched. She is an artist-monk, a pioneer in interdisciplinary art and a teacher of a rare and fine ilk. This is a pedagogy of mindfulness in dance accompanied by the geographies within which it arose. It is a guidebook relevant to anyone interested in the creative process, but especially so for those for whom the immediacy of the moving body is an unavoidable centrality in practice.

**Juniper, Andrew. *Wabi Sabi: The Japanese Art of Impermanence*. Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 2003. Kindle edition.**

*If an object or expression can bring about, within us, a sense of serene melancholy and a spiritual longing, then that object could be said to be wabi sabi. (11)*

Emerging from the aesthetic philosophy of the 15th century Japanese tea ceremony, wabi sabi refers to a quality of awareness as much as an aesthetic. It describes an encounter with the elegant decay of an object: simple, organic and earthy. This concept relays the sense of impermanence as well as the exquisite perfection of that which dies; the sense of space, fragility, simplicity and loneliness that is the mark of ephemerality. Wabi sabi appreciates the subtle, the imperfect, the humble and the hand-made.

*If we wish to be truly creative, then isn't it necessary to go beyond the rearranging of symbols to produce something that comes from the very source of our being? (96)*

The wabi sabi aesthetic describes the texture and atmosphere of my favourite worlds; those hand-crafted things that bear the mark of time's passing, of long use, of the passing-touch of many hands. Quite a long time after I first encountered this philosophy, I realized that it describes precisely the feeling that I wish to cultivate within my own work. It represents something about the inner essence of being: the perfect imperfection and vulnerability that sings to the sore heart.

This book, notable amongst the handful I have collected on the subject, is both articulate and simple, written by a gallery-owner in the UK who found himself intrigued and then magnetized by this poignant antidote to the synthetic, glaring,

mass-produced rush of contemporary material culture. I use this treatise as a reference and a reminder of the qualities I find so enduringly, timelessly exquisite.

**Trungpa, Chogyam. *Dharma Art*. Shambhala, Boston & London, 1996.**

*“Creating art is like meditating. You work with one technique for a long, long time, and finally the technique falls away. There's ongoing discipline and continuity, stubbornness. You are willing to relate with it even if the object rejects you or the light isn't right or something else goes wrong. You still go on and do it.” VCTR (115)*

Contemplative practice prioritizes state-of-mind and embodiment. It eschews aggressive productivity based upon the blind pursuit of pre-conceived goals. The process of practice is the avenue through which art is manifested once technique has been internalized.

This book introduces Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's teaching on meditation, perception and artistic expression, which he called, 'dharma art.' *Dharma* might be translated as "truth" and describes a state which is very natural, calm, receptive and free from neurosis. *Art* as Rinpoche used it, refers to all the activities of life: not an occupation, but *being* as a whole. Rinpoche referred to art practice as on-going and all-pervasive. If you are a musician, for example, you are a musician always, not only when you pick up your instrument, but always practicing an awareness of sound and silence. In his view, art extends to all aspects of one's environment as well as details of personal decorum.

The book is based on various public talks, discussions and seminars that Rinpoche gave on the subject and range from examinations of the process of perception, to styles of expression and the cultivation of non-aggression. Each essay is preceded by an epigraph and is transcribed with faithful attention to Rinpoche's approachable, elegant and exquisitely-precise speaking style.

I find this book invaluable as a guide for returning to the essence of creative practice. The teachings are sometimes maddeningly simple yet elusive, humbling, provocative, often humorous and infinitely important. This is an approach to being that emphasizes trust, patience and persistence. Neither conventional nor for those following a track toward materialistic ambitions, this content is vastly applicable and sometimes a bit daunting in its raw appraisal of the ego's motives.

**Wangyal, Tenzin. *The Tibetan Yogas of Dream and Sleep*. Snow Lion Publications, NY. 1998.**

*The whole philosophical principle behind the practice of lucid dreaming is to eventually be able to connect that experience to the waking state, and to realize that everything in this waking life is also like a dream. When you can see it's like a dream—that appearances are not inherently and independently existing as threats to you, rather, that they are your own created projections and that the control and power are within you, not in the appearances—you have the choice to change them or to leave them as they are.* -TWR (Sacred Creativity Workshop 2017)

Dream Yoga is a way to orient toward recognizing the dream-like nature of waking life and of cultivating awareness within sleep states. Not in contrast to James Hillman's, (founder of Archetypal Psychology) perspective of dream, these practices

place importance on attention to and interaction with the phenomenal-energetic appearance represented by a dream, rather than on symbol analysis. The practices include a significant focus on felt-sense or somatic experience.

I have long been intrigued by dreamwork as a way to access the content of the unconscious mind. Tibetan dream yoga represents the core of my personal meditation practice and this book is an essential guide, written by a man who has influenced my outlook profoundly. The exercises presented are simple, yet require persistence and dedication. Similar to the protocol of shamanic journey, they offer the possibility of waking up to a previously untapped dimension of awareness. Instructions encourage one, for example, to recognize, pause and witness experiential provocations, (in daily waking life) against a backdrop of silence, stillness and spaciousness, (the basic nature of changeless reality).

Instructions for the nighttime include focusing on specific energetic matrices within the body, visualization and the commitment to 'waking up' or becoming lucid within the sleeping-dream state. These protocols are part of a larger view of preparing for death—a time when orientation to the material body dissolves, yet the potential for maintaining consciousness persists.

Tenzin Wangyal's writing is clear, warm and approachable. He has a remarkable gift for elucidating esoteric Tibetan practices for the Western mind. I feel humbled to have had the opportunity to attend a number of his retreats.



**Wangyal, Tenzin. *Tibetan Sound Healing*. Sounds True, Boulder, CO. 2006.**

This book is as useful and pithy as it is profound. Here, Bon Buddhist teacher Tenzin Wangyal Rinpoche presents the five 'Warrior Seed Syllables'. These "seed" sounds are introduced one-by-one along-side a cohesive practice in which they are used to clear obstacles blocking access to the basic, clear, essential nature of mind.

I have found that the particular practice presented here, which engages visualization, sound and breath is one of the most effective ways to 'drop anchor' when I am full of anxiety and speed. It is a very tangible way to experience the effects of meditation, particularly when more subtle practices feel elusive or evasive. This is not to diminish the effectiveness of this form, however. I use it daily, before my music practice, and it has revolutionized my approach, (and often rescued me from hours of frustrated floundering) simply by offering a way to blend my own voice with active intention.

Tenzin Wangyal is the most lucid conveyer of teachings that I have had the pleasure to encounter. He uses his extensive scholarly background, (both Eastern and Western) to translate esoteric teachings clearly, vividly and with touches of humour. Perhaps most of all, he presents practical examples of how this work applies directly to lived experience throughout the text. I would recommend this book to anyone wishing to begin a meditation practice and especially, those who suspect that sound might offer an important key to healing.

## SHAMANISM AND MYTHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Arguelles, Jose. *The Transformative Vision: Reflections on the Nature and History of Human Expression*. Shambhala Boston & London, 1975.

In this thought-provoking and affirmative book Arguelles focusses on creative visionaries, (DaVinci, Yeats, Rimbaud, Blake...) in an assessment of human expression from the Renaissance to the present. He traces the ever-widening schism between the *psyche* or intuitive being and *techne* or that which creates order within human nature and examines aesthetic activity as a facilitator of harmony between these apparent polarities of being.

*What makes the internal technologist a "centre" is the interior wedding of the feminine right hemisphere and the masculine left hemisphere[....] Whatever the internal technologist does is art, for art in these terms is an integration of the open way, (psyche) and the way of power, (techne). The open way is the decent of the goddess, the yin[...]. The way of power is that with which we usually identify art or technique[....] For the revitalized artist of whatever sex, the intrinsically feminine psyche no longer is the disembodied muse of the Romantic poet but is incorporated once again as the vitally functioning intuitive structure of being. (286)*

By applying modalities that support and develop the relationship between the two sides of human nature, (sometimes known as 'internal arts' and exemplified by such practices as Hatha Yoga and Tai Chi Chuan) unity is cultivated and self-arising wisdom finds expression through bodily being, thereby counteracting external technological dependencies.

I committed myself to engagement with so called 'internal technologies' in order to reconcile internal conflict. I agree with Arguelles that this training of or discipline of psychic energies is an essential foundation beneath rejuvenative creative work, though the pathways to the goal be varied. Arguelles articulates his examination and diagnosis of the current state of psychic, physical and spiritual disarray with precision, scholasticism and substantial historical reference.

**Campbell, Joseph, "The Symbol Without Meaning." *Belief and Power in Myth, Digital Edition*, edited by David Kudler, Joseph Campbell Foundation, 2013. (E-singles) Kindle Edition.**

This exciting essay by master mythologist and writer, Joseph Campbell, explores the function of symbol and its relationship with art in the context of contemporary society. Campbell begins with an exploration of the origins of symbols currently indexed as "religious" and proceeds to expand the inquiry with an examination of the contrast of ritual form and function between hunting societies and agricultural ones. The essay then connects the Japanese Zen concept of 'no-mind' or raw experience to the original function of symbol as an "energy- directing agent."

*We have to ask ourselves whether it can be properly claimed that these geometrical forms, which have become the commonplaces of our modern psychological discussion of archetypal symbols, actually do represent basal structures of the human psyche, or may not, rather, be functions only of a certain type or phase of social development incidental to the history of a limited portion of the race. (Loc 465)*

Campbell articulates the nature of human alienation as a result of a habitual retreat into conceptual reference-points, illustrating the tendency to slot encounters and funnel sensory stimuli into tidy, familiar packages of 'the known' or conceptually pre-constructed, and in so doing, inadvertently deflect potential revelatory perceptual processes.

*The phenomena of dream commonly impress us more strongly than those of waking life just because in sleep the brain is off guard[....] We are all protected from each other by our references, the engrams of those cosmic systems to which we have been educated and to which our minds immediately refer the data of the senses. Following these references, we let the concept swallow up the percept, and so reverse the process of a revelation, thus defending ourselves from experience. (Loc 1135)*

Campbell brilliantly elucidates the essence of the drive to create, the necessity of the creative endeavour to society and person, as well as its inseparability from metaphysics, religion and philosophy. This article sums up the core motivation behind my own creative practice: an existential quest to access the naked unknown, free from the veils of projection, rationalization and habit.

*Art is a quest for and formulation of experience-evoking energy-awakening images: A sensuous apprehension of being. (Loc 1178)*

The function of art, Campbell maintains, is to rouse a sense of the mysterious, the intangible and sublime, not to confirm pre-established meaning. Art may render a symbol or invoke a symbol, but power lives in the manner and means of the evocation and these means reside beyond the scope of the rational mind. It is the cultivation of relationship with these ineffable forces that gives rise to the gesture or symbol, which is, by its nature, art: a channel of cosmic space.

**Casey, Caroline, W. *Making the Gods Work for You: The Astrological Language of the Psyche*. Three Rivers Press, NY, 1998.**

*Our affinities, those things to which we are strongly attracted, lead us to our gift and hence to our way of serving the larger community[....] Astrology defines the task of being fully human as discerning the pattern of evolutionary intelligence, the liveliest possibility at any moment in time, and aligning with that.*  
(From the Introduction xvii)

Written by astrologer, activist and semiologist Carolyn M. Casey, this book is a procession of evocative essays aimed at elucidating a reader's own relationship with the god-forces, (externalized anthropomorphisms corresponding to forces within the psyche) represented by ten planetary bodies, (eight planets, the sun and the moon).

Beginning with an overview of the zodiacal signs and moving into descriptions of the houses, aspects, transits and retrograde motion within the cosmic mapping system of Western astrology, Casey next moves into an analysis of each celestial body from a psycho-mythic point of view. Synthesizing her studies of (Western) mythology into qualitative descriptions that include psychological correspondences with the archetypes of astrology, Casey's casual, often humorous and anecdotal writing style is peppered with gleanings from Depth/Transpersonal Psychology. Each section includes a simple, applicable ritual protocol or suggestion to encourage an active engagement with the forms.

*Astrology is a language that catalyzes your memory of your mission. (32)*

Alignment with guiding forces lies at the root of my creative process. Tapping into the stories, archetypes and myths within the substrate of culture nourishes imaginal cartographies and gives me a sense of being psychologically attuned to ancestral wisdom. I appreciate Casey's tone and insight and found this book both entertaining and applicable. The inclusion of both the benefic and malefic sides of each planet as well as associated personality types, (strengths and struggles) is revelatory and I gleaned much from the Casey's perspective of cosmology. It is notable that I am not an astrologer and my aim is not to read astrological charts; my purpose, which was to be nourished imaginatively, practically (through ritual) and creatively was well met.

**Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Orlando: Harcourt, 1959.**

This book has been particularly instrumental in my exploration of non-linear time, ritual and those aspects that seem universally to delineate sacred space. Eliade is a historian of religion, but his perspective and writings are far more immersive than those of a bookish academic. Though built on a structure of academic language and analytics such as the comparison of religious and non-religious persons, this writing extends beyond, into the fields of philosophy, phenomenology and psychology.

The clarity found here penetrates an often abstract and intangible subject. This could almost be described as a guide-book on sacred outlook, but one which leaves behind the often maddeningly effervescent or vague language of the 'spiritual how-to'. Eliade speaks as one who is immersed in the experience and practice of his field. While complex, his writings are approachable, and once digested, revelatory.

Eliade is able to satiate a hungry intellect in regards to the exploration of sacred perspective on such immeasurable abstractions as time and space, and by articulating and differentiating ideas such as sacred and profane. He attends to such questions as:

- What comprises a perception of sacred space?
- How do we make the world sacred?
- What are the elements or aspects of sacred time and how does this relate to myths?
- How time is regenerated through cyclic rites and rituals?

Importantly, (though written a few decades ago) this work inquires into the 'current' state of affairs in regard to the sacred and the profane. What has/is happening to ritual and religious outlook in the modern age? How are these realities being navigated? or ignored? or re-fabricated? The knowledge and perspectives offered are relevant and of great use in expanding and challenging perspectives in the field of spiritual thought.

**Tucker, Michael. *Dreaming With Open Eyes: The Shamanic Spirit in Twentieth Century Art and Culture*. Aquarian/Harper San Francisco, 1992.**

*xxii. Image maker, dancer and drummer; actor and singer; healer and holy one, the shaman epitomizes the human need to bridge worlds—to fly beyond the everyday realm of the visual in order to conjure worlds of visionary presence and power.*

In this well-researched and skilfully-written book, Michael Tucker's ability as a curator is evident. He introduces a broad range of contemporary artists who embody or exemplify the qualities of what he calls 'a shamanic spirit'—the ineffable ability to invoke the symbolically-rich world of what I would call the 'archetypal unconscious'. Tucker juxtaposes vivid descriptions, (as well as personal opinions) of creative work

with the excerpted pontifications of psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists as well as a number of quotes from traditional shamans. The writing prompts a reconsideration of what is meant by 'the sacred' and its place within contemporary art.

Notably, Tucker writes that he emulates Meret Oppenheim's perspective that, 'the mind is androgynous'—we all have male and female aspects—and that it is with this spirit that he has investigated intersections between modern art and shamanism. He reveals a well-developed understanding of shamanic view and practices, though he is neither an artist, nor a shamanic practitioner. I will note that while the insights of the artists themselves are sometimes included, themes remain relatively broad and commentary maintains an academic tone.

Tucker's writings do begin to become redundant at a point—not surprising for a compendium of this size. I found myself wanting for more insight into each artists' actual practice and process rather than an ever-lengthening catalogue of examples. Ultimately, I prefer first-person insights and directly applicable information, but that is neither Tucker's purpose nor angle. This book lends itself happily to being read 'out of order'.

**Woodman, Marion. *Addiction to Perfection; The Still Unravished Bride*. Toronto: Inner City Books, 1982.**

*Femininity is taking responsibility for who I am—not what I do, not how I seem to be, not what I accomplish. (126)*

In this examination of the psychology of modern women, Jungian analyst Marion Woodman seeks to unravel and defuse the archetype she calls, 'the evil witch'. She



examines the upsurge of this poisonous and crippling affect as the result of a cultural one-sidedness that favours the patriarchal values of goal-orientation, productivity, hyper-specialization, conceptual materialism and spiritual perfectionism. Then, through the framework of case studies, she explores ways to restore creative sovereignty, receptivity and empowerment to the feminine psyche.

I found Woodman's writings astoundingly accurate in their articulation of my own struggles to relate to the world and the body into which I was born. Her elucidation of disordered eating, internalized fascisms and the resulting imprisonment of the feminine aspect of the psyche is both heart-breaking and liberating. Weaving together dream-material, literature, mythology, religious iconography and methods of body-imaging, Woodman maps out a pathway to integration that has aided in my own symbolic and literal mending process as well as providing insight into the marriage of creative work and healing. Some of Woodman's language is a tad dated, but well worth the read.

### WRITING, POETICS AND VOICE

**Cixous, Helene and Calle-Gruber, Mireille. *Rootprints: Memory and Life Writing*. Psychology Press, 1997.**

*What is most true is poetic. What is most true is naked life. I can only attain this mode of seeing with the aid of poetic writing. I apply myself to 'seeing' the world nude, that is, almost to e-numerating the world, with the naked, obstinate, defenceless eye of my nearsightedness. And while looking very, very closely, I copy. The world written nude is poetic. (from the Introduction)*

This book, which begins with an interview by Calle-Gruber, is, in its essence, a departure from the academic architectures of most of the published writing I have read. I truly appreciate Cixous' differentiations between shades of meaning, experience and writing. She points out that all that is easily transmittable; all that is neatly caged within concept, is somehow 'less true' than the transmission and continuity that poetry is. She is careful not to eschew theory and concept, but says simply that they cannot be taken by themselves.

In her exploration of the nature of writing and it's applications, Cixous does much for me in sculpting a panorama of the inherent undecidability that gives rise to poetics. She is an advocate of 'thinking from both sides'. She reveals the immediacy that is ambiguity and implies the necessity of 'straddling'. She is an artful philosopher—the rhythms of her mind bleed through her words.

*The secret of our eternities: one must manage to live in one's house, inside one's time[....] as soon as one is in time, one sees that it is not what goes by but what stays, what opens itself. What deepens itself. (34)*

Cixous delves into the natures of the mind and writing from this living place of poetry. She addresses the nature of fear and the way the triumph of one's own life fuels a particular spark of giddy liveliness. She speaks on ambition as a possible 'enemy of the present'. She writes of the art of writing: as the ability to play with language and the vulnerability that allows a richly felt existence. It is exciting thinking, this work. Sometimes dense, but always waiting to be unraveled, it is Cixous' exquisite articulateness that makes her work challenging to read.

**Linklater, Kristin. *Freeing the Natural Voice: Imagery and Art in the Practice of Voice and Language*. Hollywood: Drama Publishers, 2006.**

This book is a guide to Kristin Linklater's method of voice work. In it, she presents a progressive series of exercises that encourage subtle bodily release via guided imagery and experimentation with the vocal mechanism. The purpose herein is to cultivate awareness of the origins of emotional impulse with an emphasis on releasing physiological blockages and inhibitions, thereby allowing the voice to be an instrument moulded, but not restricted by intellect.

Initially, I was resistant to taking on what I suspected was yet another variation of a contemplative practice, but Kristin's rough Orkney edges, gruff humour and specific expertise, (which I have since encountered in person) seeped through the pages and I found myself challenged to meet the bar set by this unique and intelligent scientist of the voice.

Because I was working alone, I recorded myself reading the visualizations. Kristen's language is refreshingly absent of both cliché and dry rhetoric. The exercises were interesting and often simply fun, introducing me to unfamiliar liminal states of attention, subtle and inexplicable discomfures and otherworldly sounds, (self-produced ones). I learned to differentiate muscles and regions, particularly around the head and face, that I was previously oblivious to, and found the imagery and detailed descriptions easy to relate with.

Kristin breaks far and away from traditional approaches to voice training; her approach is inside-to-out and holistic. Throughout, she offers amusing and insightful anecdotes from her more than fifty years of teaching experience, that were helpful in steering me clear of obstacles and pitfalls. In the appendix can be found some illuminative writings on imagery and its relationship to voiced word and text. I look forward to continue working with this material to facilitate my explorations of voice. I trust Kristen, a feeling that only increased upon meeting her. She reveals keys worth digging for in this ample, well organized, (and sometimes frustratingly precise) guidebook.

**Rosemont, Penelope (Edited with Introductions by). *Surrealist Women: An International Anthology*. Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1998.**

*For surrealists, poetry is always discovery, risk, revelation, adventure, and activity of the mind, a method of knowledge leading to revolutionary solutions to the fundamental problems of life. (xxviii)*

I consider the Surrealists my cultural predecessors. This anthology introduces the work of 98 Surrealist women writers: hidden luminaries, who helped to revolutionize the process of creative thinking. Almost entirely overlooked in historical and critical literature, (though the movement itself was non-segregationist and included the highest number of active women participants outside of specifically feminist organizations) women whose expression took the form of the written word, contributed largely to Surrealism's radical/poetic vision.

*Freeing the imagination is the heart of the process by which everyday life becomes the realization of poetry itself.*

-Andre Breton (149)

I appreciate the editor's clarification that the anthology was not arranged to exclude men, but to create a space for the numerous voices conspicuously absent from other Surrealist compilations and celebrations. A brief introduction to each writer is followed by a selection of her writings. I find the diversity of representation and content exciting. The substantial text is also peppered with images created by the authors themselves; many explored across genres as concurrent with the experimental perspective of Surrealist research.

*Based on the dialectical resolution of the contradiction between conscious and unconscious, surrealism indicates a higher, open and dynamic consciousness, from which no aspect of the real is rejected. Far from being a form of irrationalist escapism, surrealism is an immeasurably expanded awareness. (xxxviii)*

Central to Surrealism was the notion of an unmediated, direct, creative outpouring of the imagination, that hoped to transcend the distinction between conscious and unconscious mind. It was founded upon two fundamental processes: automatism and collage. Automatism describes activity that originates from lucid trance, characterized by relaxation and a state in which the rational mind recedes, (or is otherwise occupied) so that other faculties of intelligence, such as intuition, can move to the foreground and guide the creative process.

*In many fascinating psychological studies Jung has shown how the alchemist would release the contents of his own subliminal fantasy by intently watching the contents of the alembic."*

Ithell Colquhoun (The Mantic Stain: Surrealism and Automatism 220)

Recognition of the inherent wisdoms of somatically-rooted processes and the value of non-rational states of consciousness are keys in my approach to work and process of thinking. To varying degrees, the Surrealists observed and placed value upon dreams and explored the possibility of a reconciliation between the experience of sleeping dream, imagination and waking life. They cultivated states of lucid trance in order to bypass the reasoning mind and deconstruct the distinction between the visible and the invisible, attempted to melt the walls of binary thinking, celebrate apparent contradictions, and used spontaneous juxtaposition, automatism and collage to realize unconventional realities. Word usage, naming perception and symbolic meaning, all underwent critical analyses and challenge. Many of the creatives in these traditions shared an interest in esoteric spiritual practices and Eastern Philosophy. Evidence of these tenants and ideals is embedded in the strange, unique and provocative work found within the covers of this book. I find the material, but even more so, the aspirations and life choices of these women to be profoundly evocative.

**Whitehead, Derek. "The Artist's Labor," *Contemporary Aesthetics Online Journal*, Vol. 5, January 20, 2007.**

**<http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=466>**

**Accessed Nov. 2017.**

This article approaches 'the artist' as a phenomenologist of aesthetic experience, one who embodies and navigates what the author calls, 'artistic sensation'. It considers Phenomenological inquiry as an approach that asks for a more complete or holistic engagement within contemporary art practice.

Whitehead describes the artist as a sort of scientist, researcher, explorer and revealer of modes of perception and experience specific to (her) choice of medium, substrate,

subject or process, and maintains that the translation of these (internal) experiences is only possible through symbolism, (that is, art). He puts forth that embodiment is a twofold dynamic: that of perception and expression, and that it is the particularity of these experiential insights and perceptual practices that distinguishes an artist's vocation as such. The task of the artist is to "penetrate to the source of things", he says, "beneath their surface appearances".

I have been, quite frankly, thrilled with the articulations that Whitehead puts forth in this article. Perspectives that I've struggled for years to understand, explain and validate are neatly unfolded here in a compact and well-written treatise. The long-anticipated integration of my own range of disciplines, is here satisfyingly and rather simply put forth in a language sophisticated enough for academics yet not too dense and abstract to hold my attention.

Whitehead acknowledges the esoteric notion of *correspondences* by noting that all things have an internal equivalent in the body and that it is the artist's work to allow her expression to transmit genuinely through the medium of her own being. The difficulty in this, (as my portfolio attests) is the challenge and method of establishing what Max Ernst has called 'poetic objectivity', in the making of a work. Further, the work itself is never an answer or a final solidification, but only a proposal, a question and a process: it is simply the revelation of a journey to an other world. To discover this perspective well and precisely articulated is a treat. I do believe I will hand this article out when people ask me what it is exactly that an artist does.

**Winterson, Jeanette. *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* Grove Press, NY. 2011. (Kindle Edition)**

Jeanette Winterson's writing has influenced me very profoundly, more than any creative work I can at present call to mind. Her novels explore the boundaries of identity, physicality and imagination in ways so intimate, so poetic and so raw, that in a way, they have become a sort of underlying narrative score in my life. And here is her memoir, the poignant tale of Winterson's upbringing: the repercussions of coming out to her staunchly religious foster mother, how books saved her, the story of pressure and conflict that help forge this diamond of a writer.

In this book, Winterson writes candidly of the mid-life breakdown that led her to investigate more penetratingly than ever before, an adoptive upbringing lorded over by an evangelical Pentecostal Christian foster mother. As a girl, Winterson was frequently locked out of the house and deprived of food. Her foster mother burned the books she took refuge in. When she was discovered in bed with a girl, she was beaten, taken to church and subjected to a ritual exorcism. Despite the intensity of the storyline, the narrative is often provocatively funny. After running away from home, Winterson is encouraged by a sympathetic teacher to apply to Oxford, where she is finally able to nurture her talents for writing.

The penetratingly honest and poetically gritty details of Winterson's struggle through the emotional upheavals and bureaucratic rat's nests of locating her birth mother, are memorable, salted by contradictions and paradoxes at every turn. Many of my own creative efforts have been undergirded by the desire to evoke or express worlds as poetically precise as Winterson's. Her articulations leave me in awe and stir me as no other author's work has. I was happy for this opportunity for a literal window into the life that shaped her and which offered me comfort as well as inspiration: a piece of bold evidence that hardship often tempers an exquisite soul.



**Zorn, John, (editor). ARCANA II, III, IV: Musicians On Music. (An Anthology) Hips Road, NY. 2008.**

*"This will be our response to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully and more devotedly than ever before."* Leonard Bernstein (Arcana II : v preface)

This unique anthology of writings by musical-minds on the fringes of the contemporary music world has expanded my ideas of what it means to work with sound. The variety of essays collected in these books offer insight into vastly different approaches to everything from improvisation, to performance, to technique, to composition—with instruments, with voice, with pen, with ears—in the words of the artists themselves.

Common throughout is a spirit of experimentation, innovation, risk-taking and diversity. Each book offers a look at how a wide variety of unconventional musicians approach their craft and what inspires them to make music.

*When beginning a new piece of music, I like to be working on a new piece of art. I use visual art as a catalyst to free my mind[....]Working with under-painting and developing the work over a period of time, is much like composing a piece of music—they simultaneously complement each other. (369)* Yarnell, Carolyn. "Music You are Unto Me As Light is Unto Color," *Arcana IV*. (Ch. 5, 359-370).

The series represents a wide variety of writing styles within essays that can easily be read in a single sitting. Editor John Zorn has tapped into an underground stream that I was previously unaware of: one beneath the radar of the music industry,

entertainment and pop culture. These books have fertilized a seed that has lain waiting within me—that desire to take my work off-roading, in the direction of radical and unbounded exploration.

*Keeping the mind in balance is difficult. Because I do not know when I might fall, I use T'ai Chi Chuan techniques with my voice. (110) Much imagination and power are needed to create a new vocal language. First, you must doubt your own voice. Your personality. And throw away your prejudices. Open up and search for your real voice. (111) If you don't control your vocal chords, the voice will sing on its own. (112)*

-Koichi Makigami. "How to Sing?" *Arcana III*. (Ch. 14 109-113).

Unsurprisingly, the writings of female artists working with voice pleased me most as I perused volumes II, III and IV. This may be because I am young in my exploration of instrumentation and find technical references off-putting, it may be because some musicians simply aren't good writers, it may be that I often find it easier to relate with experiences told by a woman, that voice is my primary instrument or that amidst a wide variety of topics, this was a practical way to narrow things down. The vast majority of essays here are by men, which mirrors the current state of the music world.

