

## **Instructions for performative film screening**

Date: 1 September 2023

Address: At the TV-studio Valhallavägen 189  
Stockholm, Sweden

Number of participants: 2-20

This document collects instructions and serves as documentation of *the performative screening* of the work *A Sweetness from Nowhere* as part of the artistic PhD thesis *voice under*.

*The performative screening* consists of audio, moving images, and somatic exercises. At the screening, I guide the audience through seven parts:

1. Gathering
2. Exercise. Grounding and contemplation on bone
3. Film. Breathing back
4. Exercise. The board game
5. Film. Montage
6. Exercise. The live montage/The bumblebee
7. Exercise. The inner cinema

## **1. Gathering**

The participants gather outside the TV studio and the elevators. There, the guide goes through what is going to happen.

*This is a 6-part screening, consisting of film and exercises.*

*It will take place in silence.*

*Please turn off your cell phones.*

*It is an invitation to see what happens if we include more senses in the experience of film.*

*Not to achieve anything special.*

*It is an invitation to investigate, with curiosity, if something happens.*

*Welcome in.*

The guide leads the participants through a side door to the studio, through a control room, and then further into the studio. The studio is half lit. It is not so dark that it is difficult to orientate yourself, but still dim enough in the corners that it is not completely illuminated.

The studio is in a state between different film shoots and parts of a decor remain. There is a TV crane in the corner and there are film studio walls lined up. What is placed there and what belongs to the environment is difficult to discern.

In the middle of the room, under a soft warm white light, 10 tables and 20 office chairs are arranged.

To the left is a movie screen. And next to it there is a small lamp and a chair where the guide sits down after inviting the participants to sit down.

## **2. Exercise. Grounding and contemplation on bone.**

The light dims.

The first exercise is a sitting body scan meditation and a contemplation on the materiality of bone. The aim is to come into contact with the body and the bone material, which in turn is about getting in touch with deep time. In the body scan, different bone parts are mentioned without becoming too anatomical. Like the sit bones, jaws, and spine. These are parts of the bone structure that are found in everyday speech.

The meditation begins by closing your eyes or lowering your gaze. Feeling contact with the surface. Then begins the body scan, where you focus on the sensations in different body parts.

After the body scan, the focus is gently shifted to the breath. The spontaneous breath, which just happens without us having to do anything.

The meditation ends with a contemplation.

*500 million years ago, minerals joined together on the earth's surface and created the material bone, which has enabled us humans to walk, sit, and kiss.*

*When you hear sounds from the film, you can slowly open your eyes.*

## **3. Film. Breathing back. 10 min.**

The film begins with a dull rumbling or hissing sound, consisting of several breaths being breathed together simultaneously, followed by entwined bodies that are then separated and then emerge in different and new formations.

#### **4. Exercise. The board game.<sup>1</sup>**

In the board game, objects from the room are used as game pieces in a kind of board game.

The participants sit down two by two at the tables.

The "pairs" collect 5 objects together. One thing each that they have with them; it could be keys, mobile phone, pen, or something else they carry with them, maybe a receipt. The remaining three things are found in the room; it can be a post-it note, algogel, a screw, or something else that is in the room. These 5 objects are the "game pieces."

The game consists of making every second move as in chess. The participants do this by moving the game pieces on the table. The game goes on for about 5-10 min, until the guide says they have three moves left each.

The exercise ends with the participants looking at the last formation for a little while. A sculptural montage.

#### **5. Film. Montage. 27 min.**

About curiosity, fear, memory, transformation; time and death.

The film begins in tentative close-up shots. Images of vegetation that cuts out to a room. We hear a story about a hate crime, but instead of the narrator focusing on the violence, a fascination grows for our nervous system, and we hear about the defense mechanism "freeze" that we mammals share with jellyfish and jawless fish.

This mechanism is also called "playing dead." Playing dead can be a last resort for staying alive. In the montage, aerobics are practiced in a diorama in front of stuffed animals; the stuffed animals imitate life instead of playing dead and then they play alive, frozen in time.

In a hall of mirrors, a person tries to sneak up on a mirror to see it before it becomes fixed into an image. Image-making, representation, life, and death, different levels and different ways that encapsulate and limit experiences.

A trauma means that the event being relived takes on a static form, it is repeated and formulated in the same way over and over again, and the memory is therefore not integrated into a dynamic whole but continues to haunt you. Just like a film where the recording remains

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<sup>1</sup>The board game is an exercise by choreographer Susan Rethorst (the game), as I have learned from dancer, teacher, and choreographer Juliette Mapp.

unchanged, the trauma is also a time capsule. In *A Sweetness from Nowhere*, trauma and fear are used to find a way out and glimpses of other possibilities.

## **6. Exercise. The live montage / The bumblebee.**

This practice is a silent exploratory meditation. To see with open eyes where we are impulsively drawn in the room and follow that impulse, stay for a while, and then let us travel on.

We let curiosity guide us to places in the room. Keep "playing", let you and the world make every other move, see where it takes you, stop for a while. And wait for the next impulse, the next move. Let the experiences unfold one step at a time and see what happens.

## **7. Exercise. The inner cinema.**

The screening ends with everyone gathering back in their seats, facing the screen, and closing their eyes, letting the mental images that appear come and go. Appear and disappear.

Include feelings that arise in relation to images and memories, try not to hold on to anything but let it come and stay for a while and then disappear. Be a witness to the experience rather than an observer.

After a while, open up to the sounds in the room and after that to the minerals in the body and finally to the other participants. Feel their presence around you.

Finally, slowly open your eyes and carefully look around the room and at the others.

The guide opens the large studio doors on the short side of the studio. The participants may leave or stay for a while.

Thanks.

## Inspirations

The performative film screening has several sources of inspiration, such as Juliette Mapp's seminars at SKH about her artistic kinship line with various artists for generations after Black Mountain College. Choreographers are present here, such as choreographer Susan Rethorst. I was particularly drawn to Barbara Dilley's contemplative dance practices. Another important inspiration is the meeting "Elsewhere & Otherwise" at Performing Arts Forum (PAF), especially the meeting in 2018 with the theme Tools for Visceral Sensibility – Trauma, Love, Work and Polyvagal Theory. At that meeting, I got to take part in the practice of performance and sound artist Neha Chriss, who introduced me to Polyvagal Theory. Fiona James led workshops in trauma/tremor release exercise (TRE). I came into contact with practices and theories that are based beyond language with the body's nervous system in focus. After that, I started an education in the trauma therapy Somatic Experience (SE). I have also trained as an instructor in mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) where I am now in the process of taking the step to hold my own courses under supervision. Although I am very critical of the mindfulness industry, these have been very valuable tools for me in healing from my meningitis.

During my doctoral studies, together with Mia Engberg, I completed the course "Contemplation and Artistic Research". Together with Mia, Shaon Chakraborty and I held a study circle about the book *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art* edited by Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacob. An important inspiration throughout this project has been the queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz and his work on queer temporality and ephemera.

I am inspired by artists like Agnes Martin – how she thinks about sensitivity being a tool we can practice through solitude. Tehching Hsieh – how he mixes life and art, challenging and exploring what life, art, and experience is. Ralph Lemon's work *Walter*, which is both a performance, a film, and a literary text. Neha Chriss – a sound designer and noise artist interrogating the field of neurophysiology, bringing polyvagal theory into the field of art making. Film makers Tsai Ming-liang and Apichatpong Weerasethakul – who both work with what I would call "queer slow cinema" in their respective works. Laurie Anderson. Pauline Oliveros' deep listening practice. Yoko Ono's *Grapefruit: A Book of Instructions and Drawings*.

*Inspiration is pervasive but not a power.*

*It's a peaceful thing.*

*It is a consolation even to plants and animals.*

*Do not think that it is unique.*

- Agnes Martin