

AS IF

29 February 2020

Organised on the occasion of the exhibition Transparent Things
23 Feb - 03 May 2020

Schedule of Performances*

15:00: Korallia Stergides, *The Distance from Earth to Sun*

15:50: Rebecca Jagoe with Beth Bramich, *How Deep Is Your Love*

16.30: Reba Maybury, *John's*

17:00: Verity Birt with Alys North and Ania Mokrzycka, *Deformation Attends Her*

As If is a day of performance drawing on fiction as a methodology for future world-making.

The event is co-curated by Goldsmiths MFA Curating students: Harriett Henderson, Mariana Lemos, Dot Zhihan Jia, Clémentine Proby, and Melanie Scheiner. This event builds on their shared interest in performance art and brings together their diverse fields of research, spanning intersectional feminism, queer theory, moving image, language and writing, and the politics and poetics of space.

The texts in this booklet are five separate narrative responses to the performances, written by each curator respectively. We have created this booklet with the intention of opening up this shared experience, this “common reality”, to the endless possibilities of meaning and understanding. We encourage you to do the same.

*Some performances contain soft verbal allusions to bodily functions, sexual pleasure, and death. If you have any questions please ask one of the events team.

Moving my hand in the shape of a wave in front of my face, I like teasing the blinding sun. It strikes me in the eye, alternating between light and shadow, *on and off, on and off* – in waves. It gives me a kind of tingling pleasure in my skin. In the winter, the memory of these pleasures always lingers on, like a ghostly promise of yet another summer to come. My unhappiness can be measured by the distance from the earth to the sun.

And what a distance! Moving my hand up now and around, above my head – in circles. My arm grows long, taking the shape of an elongated neck, like a giraffe's neck, or one of those vegetarian dinosaurs. I can see up high into the deepest blue. Perhaps still blinded from the sun, I can not distinguish the sky from the crystal blue water, there is no vertical or horizontal. Instead it is as if the world was a full circle of sparkling blue. The sun, a yellow liquid glittering in the sand - so otherworldly. All in all – one tingling pleasure.

Someone is calling my name in sexy low whispers - *on and off, on and off* - can it be the waves? The tingling is now very persistent, but I am feeling slightly diluted. I am certain of my feelings, but are they retributed?

*Is the world still spinning around
I don't feel like coming down*

Still unsure what parallax is, I look through the window for the cat. Maybe she knows that I am observing her. She has super powers. Senses that connect her to the sun. Maybe she talks to it, to this large yellow bastard that shines too bright now. "As if it were the sun's fault!". I know, I'm being stupid. Of course it's not. It's just all ours. It's OUR fault.

The yacht you've been staying on unloads tons of fuel in the sea. Imagine seahorses, beautiful tiny little creatures living in corals, gossiping with starfishes and crabs, saying hi to sea cucumbers - all of a sudden they start coughing, asphyxiated by the underwater fumes, a dark liquid covering up their flowing sky. At the surface of course, you can ignore it. Continue sunbathing on the deck - but the sun hates you, it is going to burn you, it wants you to understand! What's happening is irreversible, you're going to grill with barbecue sauce thank you. But you don't get it. It's not the only thing you don't think too much about. To be honest you rarely reflect, because then you get a bad conscience, and that oh dear, is no good. That's how rich people get depressed. So you just shut up this part of your brain, the one that cares about baby seahorses sleeping quietly in their dad's pocket, the one that whispers to pay attention to others, to people (this large, indefinite mass yet made of individual personalities) - *la plèbe*. But you just can't. Can't stand their clothes. Can't stand their fat. Can't stand their gestures. You don't want them on this boat.

*It's in your eyes
I can tell what your thinking*

Coffee smell. I wake up with difficulty. It's been several days now that I have left these lovers aside, ghosting impudently. They are harassing me, they want me. Why is online sex somehow better than the real thing I wonder?? Or rather, desire is better. It's sour and uncertain. It's naughty and precarious. Desire is more delightful than physical pleasure itself. That's what capitalism understood, that's what we need to fix: we need to stop dreaming about it, we need to fuck and enjoy it.

*My heart is sinking too
It's no surprise*

But maybe that's just my case. Maybe they don't feel this way. They enjoy our presence. They feel proud to be with us, buy us fancy drinks and chat about their work. Bragging. And looking. And touching. While I wait, eyes to the ceiling, here without being. This is their fiction, we try to escape it. Sometimes they want to reassure themselves that this is no bedtime story - this is genuine. Then they slightly brush my hand, pinch my arm. "Ouch!" Confused smile. Again! You don't get it. I'm pretending. My presence is real, my feelings are not. I make them up for your little novel.

*I've been watching you lately
I want to make it with you*

Imagine we are yellow and squishy. Sexy yellow flubbers. Plasmas, able to mould and melt into each other. Our intelligence and compassion expand exponentially, through an infinity of subjectivities - because everytime we meet, we mix and conflate. We leak. We leak smoothly, languorously. As if we were wet sponges. In this world we could choose if we prefer to live deep down in the sea, or up up up there in the sky. If you're unsure where you would be more comfortable - that's fine babe, sit back and co-star will tell you what's your type - "water signs down to the ocean!!! Fire uppppp! Earth you need to CHILL". And we would listen, because co-star is the voice of the stars? Or that's what we like to pretend. It's just man-made, as everything else. It's just easier this way. Go along with the church of the stars.

The days were loud
Fiery words.
So long to the *distance from*
Earth to sun.

When it rains,
She thinks about the primitive sailors,
And the naked Amphitrite
Sinking into the blue sand.

She remembers the first thing said that morning.
Arachibutyrophobia is the fear
Of having peanut butter stuck
To the roof of your mouth.

She comes upon, for example
To touch John's delicate bones and the
Deformation attends her;
Water overflows onto rocky shores.

She is where she usually is,
Doing what she usually does.
She falls asleep;
These are sanitary places.
But how deep is your love?

A sparrow saw her at daybreak
With whine;
In the folds on silk, amputated leg
She stays.

This is weird.
She still listens to it anyway.

Suppose opposable thumbs were evolutionarily not for holding but for holding *on to*. For moulding on to. For taking the sun, in all its plasmatic glory, in one's mouth and leaping into the ripe air alive with closed eyes.

The myth of our bodies, dry and distinct, was precisely designed to keep us vulnerable and alone. Even the wet was cause for distrust because of its ability to deform and transform. So they severed our strength from the summoning springs: from the rock, from the water, from the sun, from the other. You see, plasma – this ionized gaseous substance – is a powerful conduit, easily dominated by electro-magnetic fields. These dictate the behaviour of our molecular structure. Like the infinitesimal tug between your hand and hers. Like two eyes on the tube searing into your back and a long dog in the pub with the eyes of your lover. By the light of the Flavin, it's the neon cathode or its bath of light. In Pumbian terms: those celestial balls burning millions of miles away. It's the radiant moon caressing the tide, licking the shore, drawing line upon line in the shifting sand.

And you thought you *weren't* a vessel? A too-tight skin bag wrestling to contain that pure light and consciousness in you that honours the pure light and consciousness in me? Like you swallow this liquid gold plasma of the sun and skies and earth and summon the energies of living rocks through the souls of your feet and it all just sits in you? Why do you think your piss is yellow? And what's wrong with wanting to leak into someone else? To dissolve one's water-logged body into bodies of water. Plasma to plasma, screen to screen. The shallow abyss of identity stockrooms. You know, there is no death. Only transformation. Undulating polyphonous whispers building to one rapturous howl. Music is energy-shifting. Vibrations surge through us when we sing, plugging us into this grand grid of light.

let me hold you
caress my body
turn me on

can we?

assume an alternative state
where cash flows, like water,

have time to imagine
to imagine time.

let's pretend we are

bored

rich

white

men

go on

stroke my outer surface,
shape my fantasy

to be luxuriously composed, complete.

a pearl in an oyster.

a yacht at the dock.

a new form, a new shape, a new temporality,

a unique encounter

of the fourth kind.

or suppose

as if

we could reject corporeality

this state

of dense actuality.

open the valve

to fill our holes

with sunlight, with liquid.

ride the

wave

set ourselves

off

to

drift

become fluid

a liquid

a collection of cells

vibrating at the same frequency

our forms

softer,

yet stronger than before.

ARTISTS

Korallia Stergides is an MA student of Fine Art Media at The Slade School Of Art and a graduate of Central Saint Martins Performance Design and Practice in 2016. Her work interweaves choreographic and spatial processes with experimental film, objects, poetry, performance, and installation to construct alternative places of fiction. These works become hyper collages of fragments informed by autobiographical narrative and historical and ecological fact. Often, there is a process of abstraction of the notion of Home and a focus on human and non-human shared mythology, interdependence, and intimacy. Stergides recently collaborated and exhibited at Phytorio Project Space (2019); Well Projects (2019); Siobhan Davies Dance (2019); Milton Keynes Arts Centre (2019); Toynbee Studios (2019); Her video "Whale For An Ear" was screened at The Table, Swiss Church (2019), Whitechapel Gallery (2018), Arnolfini (2018) and ICA (2018); Stergides was a selected participant of Stop Play Record, Film in partnership with ICA, Chisenhale Gallery & Channel 4 (2017); Shortlisted by Bloomberg New Contemporaries (2017).

Rebecca Jagoe is an artist, art writer, and editor, based in London. Their practice examines how within European culture, the Feminine as an ideology and identity has been shaped at the meeting point of medical rhetoric and the aesthetics of high fashion. As a genderqueer, non-binary person AFAB, they reinforce that femininity is neither an essentialist component of female gender identification; nor is femininity itself essentialist. Their work is rooted in personal narrative: to explore how any one person's subjectivity and experience can be seen as a distillation of historical and cultural imperatives. Jagoe has previously exhibited at Jupiter Woods, London (2019); Wimbledon Space, London (2019); Sissi Club, Marseille (2019); Kelder Projects, London (2019) and Pimlico Projects, London (2019). Their writing has been published in The Happy Hypocrite 11 edited by Erica Scourti (2019), Orlando Magazine Issue 3 (2018); and The Interjection Calendar by Montez Press (2016). Following the anthology ON VIOLENCE edited together with Sharon Kivland, they are currently working on the forthcoming ON CARE.

Reba Maybury is a writer, artist, lecturer, and political dominatrix based in London. In 2015 she founded Wet Satin Press, a publishing company exploring eccentric corporate male sexuality. 'Dining with Humpty Dumpty' is her first novella and was released in 2017. Her radio show 'Mistress Rebecca's World' is regularly broadcast on NTS. Maybury is represented by Arcadia Missa and she has exhibited and read at Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw (2019); White Columns, New York (2019); P.P.O.W, New York (2019); ICA, London (2019); and Luma Westbau, Zurich (2019); Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York (2018); Balice Hertling, Paris (2018); Karma International, Los Angeles (2017); Bridget Donahue, New York (2017); Schloss, Oslo (2017).

Verity Birt is currently a practice-based PhD researcher at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art and Northumbria University (BxNu) in Newcastle. Birt's practice involves writing, performance, sculpture, and film-making situated in a Western feminist tradition. She works to perform stories that empower womxn and other non-conforming bodies (human and more-than) in our destructive patriarchal and androcentric society. Forthcoming exhibitions include: YOKE, Strauhof Museum Zürich. Birt has previously exhibited at: Well Projects, Margate (2019); Art Earth Tech, London (2019); On Curating Project Space, Zürich (2019); Thames Side Gallery, London (2019); Caraboo Projects, Bristol (2019); TOMA, Southend-on-Sea (2019); Black Tower Projects, London (2018); Artbyte, London (2018).

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