

unknown quantities

intimacy

How do you express your thoughts and feelings?

What do you share and what do you keep to
yourself? Where do you turn for solace?

Here lie remnants of feelings, fleeting moments
and memories. We are thinking of beginnings
and endings and what remains in the aftermath.

This is the fourth issue of Unknown Quantities (UQ), a collaboration between students on MA Culture, Criticism and Curation and MA Communication Design at Central Saint Martins. Our team of ten women, came to our theme – intimacy – through our collective passion for “intimate” texts, the type of writing that reveals personal and hidden parts of human existence. As with the previous issues of UQ, we have translated and transformed an abstract concept into a physical form – a publication filled with words and images.

We have collected a multitude of voices to express the difficulty in grasping a universal understanding of intimacy in today's context. Each contributor approached the topic in their own way, bringing their own understanding of intimacy to our shared journey. It asks us to reflect on how we connect with one another.

The essays, poems and artworks are in an ongoing conversation with each other and also with you, the reader. Writing and reading are a collaboration, intrinsically connecting one stranger to another through an imaginary exchange, which lies within the words on a page. Writing has mostly remained a solitary and private practice while reading is a constant re-appropriation of meaning.

We have constructed a narrative that we consider challenging, intuitive and emotional. Maybe you will recognise yourself in some of the works or perhaps your vision is entirely different. These are open pages, an invitation to read and think with us.

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Felix's project examines the revealing nature of information that can be collected through people's Google search terms. This data usually remains hidden. During the creation of the publication, he gathered and anonymised the Google search terms of the ten UQ team members to create an imagined idea of what can be understood about a person from the data they give away.

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Unknown Quantities event was held on 4 September 2016 at the Hornsey Town Hall Arts Centre.

SHOKO KIMURA

Live illustration

Communication Designer and Illustrator | Japanese | Based in London

ALISTAIR SMITH

Healing the Self through Sound

Sound Healing Practitioner | British | Based in London

YASMINA AOUN

Hearing Aid

Graphic Designer | Lebanese and Canadian | Based in London

Yasmina's practice revolves around music and sound and their relationship with print media. Her research focusses on the translation and curation of non-tangible mediums into print design. *Hearing Aid* is a visual response to the sound recording of the Sound Healing workshop during our event *Reveal: Intimate Limits*.

MICHELLE MILDENBERG

Visual journal

Communication Designer | Colombian and French | Based in London

Michelle's project explores different states of mindfulness through merging drawing, illustration, communication design and creative storytelling.

HYUNJUNG (JJ) NOH

Pleased to Eat You

Communication Designer and Writer | Korean | Based in London

JJ's project is a collaboration that uses dumplings from a range of different countries as a catalyst to start conversations between cultures. It consists of a series of workshops and events that help spark conversations with strangers by making and eating food.

private space

public sphere

undress

onions are thickest on the outermost layer
fingernail puncture and tear
away brown hunks like
buttoned jackets

underneath reveal pearlescent layers
slipped off by juice-stained
rubbery fingers

each skin shed strengthens the scent
that stings in your eye
acid tongued

If we're told to think of intimacy, we might think of ideas of familiarity, of friendship or of love; certainly a sense of closeness, whether sexual or platonic. I'm interested in a different kind of intimacy, the accidental transient intimacy between strangers.

Think of what happens when heterosexual men meet in a gym, or in the changing room. They might exchange an awkward glance, perhaps a brief touch as one attempts to edge behind the other on their way to the showers, like a child leaving the dinner table behind a parent who refuses to budge their chair in. Maybe these men meet in the gym quite a bit, their daily routines matching, and so come, eventually, to talk to each other – what kind of regime they follow, what part of the body they are punishing this week in order to help it expand. Perhaps one will compliment the other on the growth of his delts, or the tone of his lats, or something else from the exercise idiolect. Those two men, big as they are, straight as they protest themselves to be, are engaged in something incredibly intimate. They are encountering each other body-first, they are meeting at their bodies and building a relationship based on their appreciation of the other.

I think we have several encounters like this each day. It's easy to run straight into the realms of cliché when one writes this, but think of the cashier giving you your change in the supermarket, the woman who accidentally sits on the unfurled length on your coat on the bus, the dog-walker you enter into an awkward dance with as you both try to second-guess which way the other is likely to go. Each of these things is an intimate act.

Now imagine we stayed in that moment longer – that we didn't hurriedly pull the coat from under the passenger, that we looked into the eyes of the cashier as they handed over the money, that we kept shifting from foot to foot in front of the pedestrian – rather than ignoring or running scared from these small moments of intimacy, we'd sink further into them, open ourselves up to the possibilities that they might contain.

That's really what any art needs to do, to linger in the moment, to resist the urge to get out when things get uncomfortable, to see where the moment can take us. This feels particularly true with poetry, which is such an intimate art form. When giving a reading you can be on stage in front of a hundred people (normally five or six to be honest) and by the time you've finished they can know things about you that

not even your closest friends know. It's a swift-won, if shallow, intimacy. Think also of the reader, at home on their own with a new slim volume – it is both a solo exploration and an intimate encounter with one other, the author, on the settee, or in bed, or in the bath, or on the toilet.

That defensive thing you see a lot of young lads have these days is a barrier against such fleeting intimate encounters. We've all had that one dramatic friend who says something like "I'm not going to let my guard down so then I won't get hurt". The friend usually means it in relation to dating, or relationships, but if intimacy is something which happens on an hourly basis, with people we hardly know, then a different type of protection is necessary. So the big, bruising dogs, or the hands down the front of the trousers or that general swagger they might adopt, is all part of resisting that intimacy. If you model yourself as someone nobody would want to sit near, or encounter, then you reduce the chances of having to deal with a moment of fleeting intimacy.

And why would an encounter such as that be so scary? Because it offers the potential for the realisation that the life we have is not the life we could have had, or not the life we really want, or not the only potential version of our life which exists. Because intimacy means, on one level, seeing people exactly for what they really are, and if that someone is ashamed, or scared, or can't match up to society's expectations then it's best to keep it hidden (so the thought-process goes).

This isn't that same article you've read a hundred times, telling you to put your phones down, stop texting and get yourself out in the world to have these encounters; texting can sometimes feel just as intimate as real contact (ask any of the politicians who get themselves entangled in sexting scandals); intimacy doesn't have to mean the physical presence of someone next to you, it can just as easily be a sense of being known.

Of course anonymous or fleeting intimacy is easier; it doesn't have to withstand the petty undulations and seismic shifts that lifelong relationships have to endure if they are to keep growing. Yet they captivate me; the potential in each person, the beauty of each person. The job of any artist, and particularly poets I think, is to look at people closely, to examine them, to show them something of their own lives, their own world, and to take that, distill it, and offer it back to them.

Andrew McMillan

I like the word "intimacy" because it's somehow smaller than a word like "romance", and yet feels as though it has more power. And isn't that the job of poetry, to take the big, the sweeping, the all-encompassing idea, and contract it into something that loses none of its power for being smaller? Each day contains a hundred intimate acts, and each of those could alter the course of your life.

Good luck.

COMFORT

6

Andrew McMillan

Last train

the threeseaters have become beds
for the last workers out of Sheffield
one young man reclines as if in
a sauna when the heat has loosened
the body and the balls are at their lowest
what would it be to lay with him
naked as a navvy to lick him dry
of the day he's had to be still with him
as the night outside hardens down to coal

First published in Hwaet! 20 Years of Ledbury Poetry Festival,
Bloodaxe Books, 2016.

COMFORT

7

Sophie Helf



Sophie Helf



warmth

Don't you post?

I see my body made up with words.

My entire life would mean nothing without words. As a teenager, they came to my mouth. Nowadays, they arise through posts. That is quite a change, the most accurate adaptation to modern times one could attain.

Adversity: it is in those times when my best friend is the keyboard below my fingers. My fear always has the words. The more I fear, the quicker they arrive. Like if they have never been inside my mind. The minute they ring, they have to be expelled, they urge me to find this compulsory exit to the world. My anger behaves in a different way: it obtains the exact words. Morbid, taunting and specific words. The angrier, the better I hit the mark. Both fear and anger appear sound, big, devastating.

Necessary.

Prosperity follows some kind of reversed exact pattern. Good things are easily announced. One may yell at a social network as high as exclamation marks, smiles, winks and various other emoticons allow. A written image capable of creating a big smile in the real world is the very great impact on social media. It shadows whichever other story. We live in a world where happiness is required, desperately sought, no matter the shape.

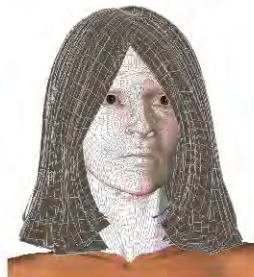
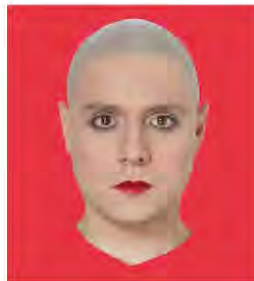
I much prefer words to images. I tend to avoid personal photographs. Images are so very much self-explanatory, but they stick like glue to internet files. It also seems as if words, though explicit, could hide my deepest intimate essence that otherwise would show off – naked – in a photograph.

Like it or not, we all live in and around social networks: the Kingdom of Words, Lord Mayor of Opinions, President of Free Sayings. The widest communication path. The dangerous path. The place where one's failure spreads far more efficiently than success. So it does in real life.

Anyhow, internet communication and efficiency have become a must in daily life. A constant reward comes in the form of response to a certain post. Quick, countless and right to-the-point answers.

And you... don't you post?

offline



Where do you live?
Pleeeeee answer! :)
Hello!
Peckham babes and you?
Nice... me in Clapham
What are you doing today?
I have training later
tonight, but no plans yet
until then
You?
Training?
Still in bed by the way,
how's weather like?
Yeah, volleyball
Is lovely
I'm panning to go
sunbathing
Cool, then Will try to get
some sunlight
:)
Sounds a typical idea
How about Clapham common
for this?
Don't forget the sun cream
when you go
I'm in Bahamas! Lol
Aaa ok
You made me believe it was
sunny in this city
Seriously you are in
Bahamas?
I'm slightly jealous. Here
I opened the window and
discovered the truth!
I'm just looking at the
from my window
Sea!
You woke up early! I think
it's 7:43am over there?
From my window I can see
mostly clouds, but there's
a small hole so I can see
around 12cm2 of sky
I'm Back to London! How
Is you week going
ciao ! how are you??
Full and satisfied...
Room for dessert
;))
do u like ice cream?
Depends where it is
hoxtton
Mmm close
20 min enough for u?
or meet me at big chill
briklane
I need more time
i am there til midnight
I don't travel for men
so at yours?

Sunday's the lords day
?
I rest and pray
On my knees
I wanna see more
Hi x
What do you want to see?
All of it
Give me your mobile number
I'll send you my pics
I don't know how to send
you with this
I like chatting here
I've posted one
Where?
On my moments
That's not enough!
I told you.
Mobile number it's better
for privacy....
I don't have one
+44 7801 267737 that's my
one
I was robbed in Nepal!!
When?
Two days ago
I hope they don't look at
my pictures!!
Why?
Use your imagination
Nasty
Also video?
Pics of my dog!!!
What's his name?
Who cares
I'm not here to talk canine
Anyway.
How can I send you other
pics?
Be brave
I can post another one on
this
:p
So?
You're lame
And beautiful
Beautifully lame
Like a dying deer
Nice
So do you like bloody lames?
Not bloody
Well done
Ahah;))
Your really attractive
:o Which picture do you
like the best?
Second one
Joking, first one!
Night kid
Night darling

offline

the others

closeness

I'm a lover

The first time I saw her, she was rubbing wrinkles out of a sheet of paper she held in her hand. She was one of the dumb kids my mother tutored. She kept glancing at me as I opened the fridge and pulled out cold chicken.

"Guy. Upstairs." my mother said.

"Excuse me," I smiled at the girl. The girl looked away blushing. She was plain. In that way – and others; she was a girl – she was the opposite of me.

She started staying longer after her tutoring lessons, and my parents didn't mind. We sat in the backyard – it was spring – and talked. I dwelled on the details of her. A tiny braided bracelet. How delicate it looked wrapped around the protruding wrist bone. I wanted to take the bracelet in my mouth, taste the dirty threads that had accumulated her sweat.

Her knees. A dark spot from a scab that left a mark, like a kitten's paw. Also, the way her hair looked wet on a hot day when it got too greasy from being outside. Or how she scratched the side of her leg and then would sometimes clean the same nail with her bottom teeth, which was disgusting, but somehow wasn't.

She was a collection of images, impressions – artefacts that I'd bag up and file for later. All those images, parts of her brought out something in me – a need to be in contact with another human being. Not just any human being: her, specifically. It was sexual, but it was not exactly about sex. I couldn't tell what it was. It felt as if there were a short-circuit in my brain. It was very pleasant. Yet, I was troubled by this need; it was as if I absolutely had to be around her all the time. I hoped it would pass. I wasn't sure if this was okay, what I felt.

In retrospect, it was probably just puberty.

It happened on the weekend when my parents were away.

She undressed me like I was a child. She undressed herself.

We lay side by side on my parents' bed. We looked over each other's bodies.

We didn't talk.

I had already guessed the outlines of her breasts and predicted the flat stomach. But I was still shocked by her neat-but-bushy mound. It was the same mousy colour of hair as on her head. She looked nothing like the hairless women from the nudie magazines full of pneumatic lips and tits.

She pulled me on top of her and aimed my dick at her little vagina. She moved her hips. She was soft and wet and hot like

breath. Inside her, it felt eternally comforting. I fell into her softness.

I came.

She laughed with delight and then wrapped her arms around me, enveloping me; she was bigger than me. She breathed "I love you" into my neck. We fell apart; she threw her arm over my chest.

Immediately, I started to develop a headache. It was the sort of headache you get from running for too long. Her arm around me suddenly felt too heavy, as if it was her leg instead. There seemed to be no escape from it.

Still, her heat and smell made my own body respond with an intensity that terrified me. I was getting hard, again. I wondered if by sleeping with her I had unleashed something bad. Was I now capable of violence? Murder? I felt capable of it. I kept thinking of fucking: her, the women in nudie mags. My mother too, or someone who was like my mother. My homeroom teacher.

I didn't know what to do but to lie still until the feeling passed. I imagined that the arm pinning me down was capable of protecting me from whatever was happening inside me. I kept still. I waited.

Eventually, I fell asleep and dreamt of being covered in thick, dense blankets.

After that weekend, things were different between us. I developed other acquaintances in the neighbourhood, other boys. I spent my afternoons playing video games in their basements, or smoking in the garbage-infested park by the river that ran through town.

One evening, Caroline accosted me on my way home. The meadow near our house was loud with buzzing insects. She came out of the darkness and threw herself at me.

I did nothing. I let her hold me with my arms at my sides like a doll. I imagined myself to be a doll. Like a doll, I waited patiently for it to be over, to be put back in my box. Instead, Caroline tried to kiss me.

I moved my face away until she stopped trying to kiss me. "Do you love me?" She squeaked like an ugly little animal getting stepped on.

"No. I don't think so," I said, truthfully.

"Wanker," she pushed me away. She lifted her hand as if to slap me. She stroked me instead. And then, for a brief moment, I felt what I had felt before, the longing.

"I'm sorry," I said.

"Piss off," she said, her voice not meaning it. She turned away, her shoulders spasming once with sobs.

She loved me! After all, I had done a good thing. I didn't love her but I gave her love. I changed her. I knew then I would do it again. I'd get better at it. I knew now I was capable of changing someone, someone plain and insignificant like her, of turning her into a person who could light up from inside. I wanted to make that magic again (and again!) because that was what I seemed to be good at.

I became instantly addicted to it. You cannot fight addiction. It installs itself in your head and doesn't leave. You can try to control it. But it's always there, a faint whisper somewhere behind you.

She ended up dating a senior from her high school. He didn't knock her up. She didn't drop out of school to do drugs. She didn't become obese. She finished school and went to college to become a nurse. She became a nurse.

Excerpted from Guy by Jowita Bydlowska, Wolsak and Wynn 2016, with permission of the author and publisher.

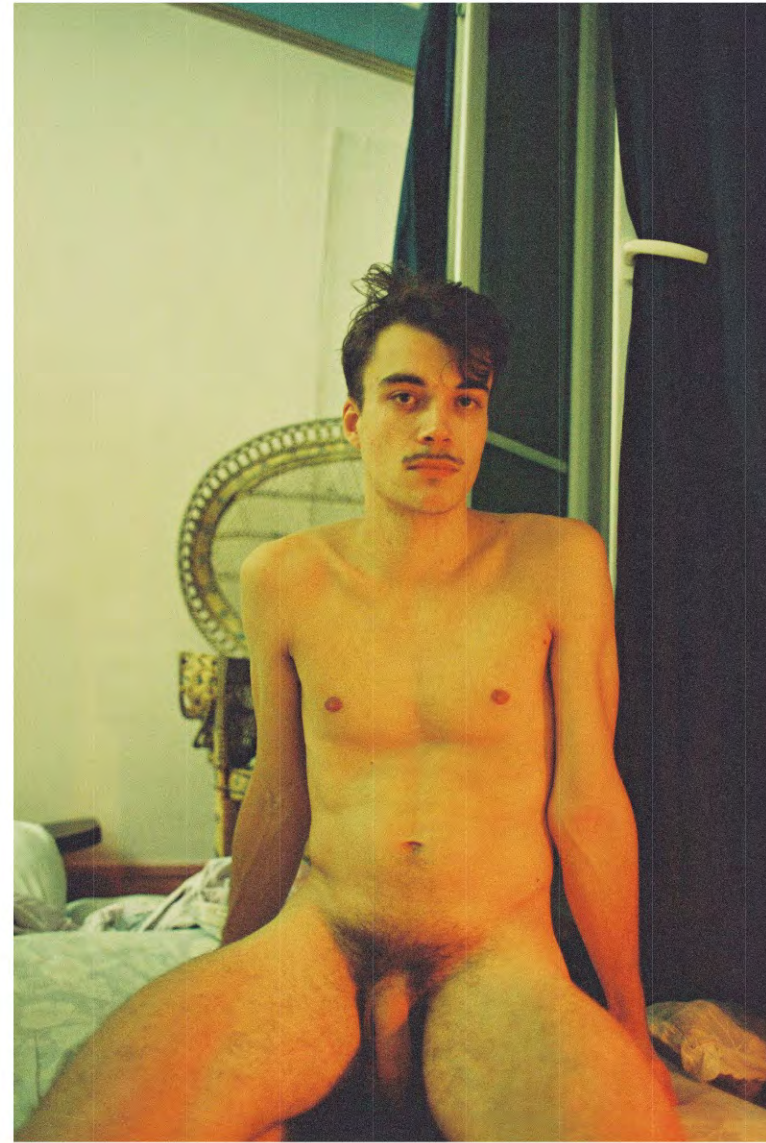
George Downing

comfort



George Downing

comfort



WANG GONGXIN and LIN TIANMIAO are Chinese artists who have received international recognition. When they first met, Wang, who is a year older than Lin, was a teacher at the Capital Normal University in Beijing China, and Lin was his student. Their relationship was constantly discussed on campus. They moved to New York together and set up business before moving back in 1995 to Beijing, where they now reside. Their work *Here, or There* (exhibited in the 2002 Shanghai Biennale) is their only collaboration. They combined their divergent practices through a fabric-based installation and video art. Lin made wearable pieces for nine models, using cotton, genuine hair and netting. Wang recorded videos of these models performing in front of destroyed and abandoned traditional landscapes such as fields, gardens and parking lots. The cooperation process was tumultuous and caused constant arguments which led to the decision to never work together again.

As an artist couple, does your relationship have any influence on the creation of artworks?

LIN: My sensitivity and pursuit of exquisiteness are channelled through my artworks, and less through my daily life – I am content as long as I have basic needs, such as food. I am not particular about other material pursuits, such as clothes – if you asked me to find a lost button in five minutes, I would not be able to do it. Before a large-scale exhibition, I would struggle with doubts. It is Mr Wang's support that pushes me forward, giving me the final push.

WANG: When we were young and naïve, we would often guide each other. Once we had both established our individual artistic values and developed maturity in our artworks, it became difficult for us to compromise on concepts and ideas. So now we can only have discussions about other people's artworks. During our creation processes, we became independent and do not exchange ideas and opinions. I only get involved when she asks me to, and similarly, I will not ask her to see my work until it has been fully developed.

How would you describe each other's characters both in life and in art creation?

LIN: We both have a bad temper. We have no patience for people or things, and socialising isn't either of our strengths. When problems arise, he is resilient, but not in every situation, for instance, illness. His simplicity, honesty, punctuality, loyalty to friends and respect for sentiments have all inspired and positively affected me.

WANG: She may not constantly be coming up with new ideas, but once she devotes herself to one, she is able to persist to a level which normal people can't and won't reach. She uses straightforward expressions and simple methods in her artworks: she twists threads around objects, once, twice, three times, until she has wrapped all the pots and pans. When she pushes limits to points you cannot imagine, you will start to feel a sense of threat. Insistence is an essential quality for every artist.

LIN: Although it may appear that Gongxin's work is not touching, the intention and message behind them play a really important role. He has a lot of brilliant ideas that are flexible and adaptable. Each of his works may seem dissimilar and disconnected but once you see them comprehensively, the links will emerge naturally.

In my creation process, I don't have the ability to express my thoughts as clearly as Gongxin. It normally takes me two or three months after the exhibition to organise my hazy and abstract thoughts into specific description. My artworks must be viewed in real life in order to experience details and my sense of sensitivity to the materials. Every work is a huge "project" that requires a lot of labour. Every time I complete a work, my hands and feet are swollen. The processes are a way to provide me with new understandings of traditional craft and cultural concepts.

Could you tell us more about the creation of your collaborative artwork *Here, or There*?

LIN: That artwork was a great challenge to us. It was also our first time working on an artwork together. Although we lived together for a long time, it was really hard for us to work together. We had different thinking and working habits. We were quarrelling all the time, we even thought about exhibiting nothing but a divorce certificate. However, when the exhibition date drew closer, we calmed down and there was no time left for quarrelling. We could do nothing but find points that we both agreed on.

Нежным по Нежному Tenderly on a tender surface

Нежным по нежному писаны лучшие строки –
кончиком языка моего по твоему нёбу,
по груди твоей, почерком бисерным,
по животу...

Нет, любимый мой,
я написала о тихом!
Можно, губами сотру
твой восклицательный знак?

Tenderly on a tender surface
the best of my lines are written:
with the tip of my tongue on your palate,
on your chest in minuscule letters,
on your belly...

But, darling, I wrote them
pianissimo!

May I erase with my lips
your exclamation mark?

Laura Pannack

belonging



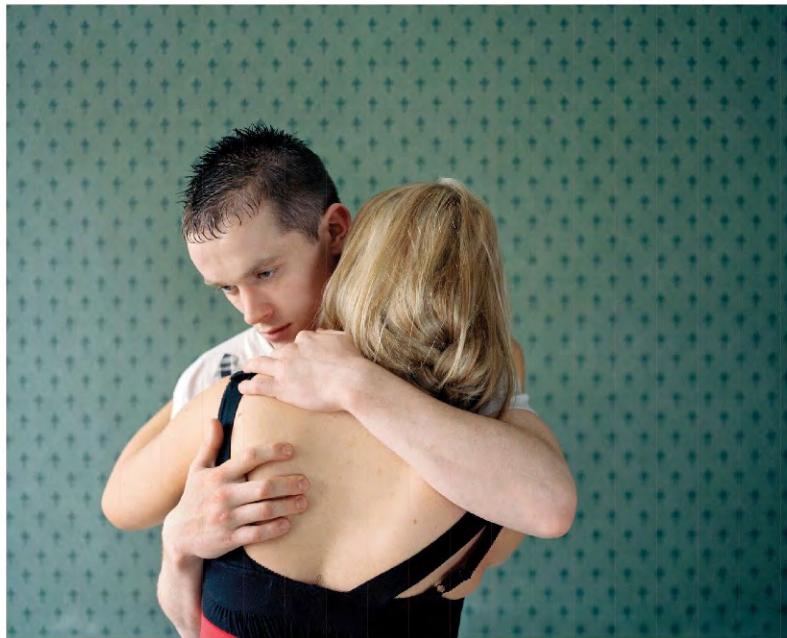
Laura Pannack

belonging



Laura Pannack

belonging



Laura Pannack

belonging



Notes on Friendship

I have selected different types of fragments for reprint, that I am putting in relationship with each other, as is often the case in my practice. So that the cumulative sum of these things, words, ideas, somehow proposes something that each part alone could not; through this I speak, not so much through an individual authorial voice, but also through a multiplicity of voices. To try to say something, I try to think, and find my position through collecting and navigating through material; I also try and make work that speaks in the same way, that works by articulating a complexity of material, explicitly in both form and content. Perhaps this is a way of doing things that creates close ties and connections between things, people, and myself, and that is something that more often than not has the feel of a friendship of sorts. I work by spending time with things I have collected, the references that I carry along, like friendly voices in my head, the numerous voices that are part of the process of thinking through and developing work – of friends, acquaintances and peers – but which also include the essential voices of inspirational thinkers from the past, that populate our thoughts and conversations and are in this way, also present.

Friendship then, is perhaps a condition of work in my practice – even though it may never be the actual subject of the work, however close it is to a long term object of my practice, support – but a formative, operational condition that works on multiple, simultaneous levels. With this peculiar awareness in mind, I collected here material that exposes what it may mean to consider friendship as a condition for thinking, and does so through the specific friendship of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy. Much of the following thoughts and observations have developed in conversations with philosopher Johan Hartle, who very generously offered his knowledge and time to think with me. Also, a note: age 37, I decided to stop apologising for being an intellectual and an artist.

Friendship is a fundamental aspect of personal support, a condition for doing things together; I'd like to address it as a specific model of relationship in the large question of how to live and work together – and autonomously – towards change, as a way to act in the world. Friendship, like support, is considered here as an essentially political relationship, one of allegiance and responsibility. Being a friend entails a commitment, a decision, and encompasses the implied

positionings that any activity in culture entails. In relationship to my practice, friendship is, at its most relevant in relation to a labour process: as a way of working together. The line of thought that threads through the following material therefore, is that of friendship as a form of solidarity: friends in action. Also, as we know, working together can both start from and create forms of solidarity and/or friendship, which are therefore pursued as both condition and intent, motivating actions taken and allowing work undertaken.

The ancient tradition defines friendship as an exercise in freedom, which needs to be exercised in freedom, meaning exclusively by and with free and equal subjects. As usual, such a freedom is defined negatively: freedom from oppression, coercion, from unreasonable external constraints on action, but also from affects and inclination, from the slavery of desires etc. However, jurisdictional equality is what counts – so that in a world in which women and slaves are not considered part of the polis, of the democratic space of the city, but just occupy the physical space of it, then friendship can only take place amongst men. Which means that according to that tradition, freedoms like friendship can only be exercised by free men, and that in a world in which women are subaltern, they cannot be addressed in friendship, and are therefore also excluded from its discourse. As the discourse around friendship is born and develops in ancient Greece, where women and slaves are excluded from democracy, this rather heavy footnote is bizarrely carried through the history of philosophy all the way – but only sometimes consciously so – until it reaches us; so that this discourse, like many things, replicates the same exclusions it was born in. Hannah Arendt – the only woman on the philosophers' shelf – revives the polis model of freedom and places politics in the realm of action (what she calls *vita activa*, active life), but in her terms separates it from labour (the production of humanity's own survival) and work (the construction of the material world). She doesn't explicitly exclude slaves or women from the space of democracy, but neither does she include them; and she continues to disqualify what has traditionally been attributed to women and slaves: sensuousness and materiality. I really like and am drawn to the idea of living together and sharing acts and thoughts in common, in a way that what is shared is not things, objects, property, qualities (being brothers, men, French, artists, or whatever) but an activity,

a process of co-existence through doing and thinking. What this proposes is a process of association that remains open as to what or whom may partake in it. Furthermore, could a woman speak in friendship? And in that way overcome the structure of classical philosophical discourse by occupying it, and acting within it? If we were to engage in the work of friendship this could lead to what Arendt recalls in her friend Mary McCarthy: "It's not that we think so much alike, but that we do this thinking-business for and with each other." The thinking-business is work in friendship, and friendship in work.

Abridged excerpt with permission of author. Originally published in Mousse 32, (February 2012) and in Self Organised, Open editions (2013).

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Towards a Linguistic Embrace

Ophelia Stimpson

Comment peut-on parler du corps? Et d'abord, faut-il parler d'un corps ou plusieurs corps?

— Roland Barthes, 'Encore le corps'

So far as I can tell, most worthwhile pleasures on this earth slip between gratifying another and gratifying oneself. Some would call that an ethics.

— Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

— Walt Whitman, 'Song of Myself'

It's hard to know intimacy without knowing the body. And it's hard to know the body without knowing language. I am using the verb "to know" and not "to understand", or "to talk about", here, because "knowing" seems to capture that hazy territory between talking and understanding whereby we are aware of and familiar with something, yet unable to fully articulate its nature. I look upon intimacy, language and the body through the same lens, or at least I have come to know them as creatures of the same ilk. To me, all are interminable shape shifters; inky, Technicolor blots that seem to have visible, comprehensible perimeters but which, upon attempts at embrace, become conceptually intangible and difficult to grasp.

As Ferdinand de Saussure taught us, there is no essence to language, only difference. On the whole I am convinced that this is true of the body, too. It is in the most intimate or extreme moments, of course, when this understanding becomes most apparent to me. I can try so desperately to ascribe a discrete and distinguishable place to a word on my vast and frangible web of meaning that I drive my understanding of it into oblivion. Likewise, during moments when limbs and epidermic borders become entangled and blurred, I am no longer myself as such — I mean this in terms of the conception I have that, much like my conception of words, I exist as a finite, differentiated human entity. In (good) sex, the grammar of me is lost and dissolved — or perhaps fused — with that of the Other. I am submerged, or even adrift, in a deregulated compound of thought and flesh: intimacy is abject; words escape me.

My body is also a container for difference. I am referring not just to the notion that I contain multitudes, but that I am the living sediment of *other people's* multitudes, acquired from the intimacy wrought by love and friendship. I embody linguistic idiosyncrasies picked up from private moments with others, words and phrases that bear no significant meaning except in the context of their utterance, who said them and my relationship to the speaker. As this language is reiterated by me, it evolves and reforms, just as the closeness I feel wanes from some and surges towards others elsewhere. If a loved one is no longer with or near me physically, I can conjure them by repeating a word or phrase that they embodied distinctly.

In this way, our body is an intimate vessel in and of itself, transporting language from flesh to flesh. It's strange how this phenomenon plays out through new moments of intimacy. I feel my reiterations redoubling to the point of fraudulency when a more recent loved one begins to embody linguistic tropes characteristic of someone I have loved and lost. In these moments I recognise that they have acquired language through me, but it is by this very process that I possess the language that they begin to embody: it is not something I have birthed myself. It is as if I have conjured and perpetuated a ghostly presence, disrupting the specificity of the original context in which the phrase was uttered and unraveling the safety that comes with being able to attribute a linguistic signifier to a singular place.

Bodies, language and intimate relationships are all slippery in meaning. A body takes seven years to replace all its cells. We acknowledge by now that the self is not a constant. Words and intimate relationships evolve, past definitions forgotten. I can most consciously define myself through my words, but what I say changes: past evidence of my language appears to me alien and peculiar. The same occurs with representations of my body: be it in the mannerisms or details of adornment, or in the more obvious elements of height, weight, age and experience, when faced with representations of the me of yesteryear, I can never quite relate to the flesh from which this language must have been projected. Of course, certain aspects remain a constant – some facial expressions and reactive tics – but it always strikes me how little remains.

[Notes]

I sometimes wonder if this is perhaps the result of incessant narcissism as opposed to the passage of time – in not being able to escape my own subject, representations of it are thus relentlessly fascinating to me.

But like the body, language is also perishable.

[Perishable]

[Language – container]

Language, like the body, is perishable

by which I mean that funny tool we've learnt to use in order to project who we are so that we might connect with, and be understood by, other perceiving subjects.

Here Lies “Helmut Lang”
(1986–2005)

In Vienna,
It's a balmy Wednesday in June.
I arrive at the museum on a Sunday afternoon, when it's free
to get in.
I've been here before, but not as A Researcher.
I walk up the stairs, through the atrium, and down into the
basement.
I hang around in The Archive –
It's low light, minimalist; all concrete, glass and metal.
It's eerie, like a fashion morgue.
Grey, numbered archival boxes are visible behind locked,
glass cabinet doors, underneath a long steel bench top.
Relics of another time.
It's open access, and there's no one around, so I spend
plenty of time looking, watching, scrutinising, recording,
photographing.
I think I feel the Gallery Assistant's eyes on me.

The next day I arrive back at the gallery and ask the woman at
the front desk to call The Curator.
Pretty soon I realise I won't be seeing or touching any of the
clothes but the conversation is great,
I record it.
I get to spend some time in The Curator's Office and we look
through some archival material, she tells me plenty more.
I feel like I've been ushered into The Inner Circle.
You have my full attention.

Months later, in Bath –
A rainy August Friday in the tourist town.
I arrive for my Study Appointment,
There are garments on racks and shoes laid out for me to see.
Handling but not touching,
I work independently, but at a self-conscious, hurried pace,
I don't want to take up too much time and I'm being watched
with one eye.
I got here at 2.15pm and I want to see it, touch it, all.
I flick through the rack gently, nervously lift pieces from
calico-lined baskets;
One by one, with cotton-gloved-hands. As I finish with each
basket, I approach The Conservator cautiously, aware that
I'm disturbing her work.
She helps me move a new basket to the study table.

Unfold, unwrap, unzip.
 Photograph the front, photograph the back.
 Note the object reference number – this is from 2003?
 Looks 90s.
 What's this, a top or a skirt?
 Fold it, wrap it back up, zip it back up.
 Put it all back just as I found it,
 or maybe even neater than how it was.
 Catch the train back home.

Digging.

Visiting the cities, the places, the institutions;
 Searching databases, websites, looking, sometimes "touching"
 Speaking with Curators, Researchers,
 People who have had contact with the man, the myth,
 the Lang.
 Swapping stories and anecdotes.
 Each interaction brings me closer to the "man", the "brand"
 – or does it?
 Am I just adding to the fabric of the 90s minimalist fashion
 myth?
 Did Helmut Lang cut this, sew that? Did Kate Moss wear this,
 did Juergen Teller photograph that? Did Louise Bourgeois
 and Jenny Holzer look at that?
 Names, names.

Do I even care? Yeah.
 Here Lies "Helmut Lang" (1986–2005)

~

In 2011, following Helmut Lang's retirement from the fashion industry and his namesake label to pursue a career as an artist, he offered his entire archive to fashion museums and collections across the world; pieces from past collections, as well as items from the Graphic and Corporate Archive, such as look-books, floppy disks of music created for collection presentations, coat hangers, fragrance bottles, the top of a New York taxi cab, etc. Post-donation, as part of Lang's art practice, he industrially shredded the estimated 6000–7000 garments and accessories remaining in his collection, and set them into resin poles in a work titled *Make It Hard*. This came after a fire in the Helmut Lang Studio damaged and destroyed a significant

portion of pieces from the archive. Notably, the last collection Lang designed for the label was destroyed in the fire.

Fashion Museum, Bath and MAK, Vienna are two of the 18 institutions that acquired donations from Lang's archive. I recently visited both museums as part of research for my MA dissertation, in an effort to trace the now-diffused material legacy of the Helmut Lang label, from the period of 1986 to 2005 when Lang himself held the post of designer. In widely donating a significant portion of his collection and archive to institutions, and destroying the rest, Lang made a clear distinction between his Helmut Lang (1986–2005) and the label post-his retirement, following his sale of the company to the Prada Group, which Prada would later sell to Link Theory. Lang effectively freed himself from his fashion past, while ensuring a portion of it remained as a reminder of his contribution and was preserved for others to enjoy.

Closeness: Agnes Martin's Methods of Art-making

Some of Agnes Martin's delicate works were on view at Tate Modern, London in 2015 before travelling internationally. Their nuanced surfaces entice viewers to move closer. So light in touch and finely measured are the iterations of graphite, paint and ink that, as visitors leaned in to inspect the surfaces, alarm wires repeatedly sounded. Her ruled lines, which are never exact and which were preceded in her early work by wires pulled tight over wood, were lightly drawn in sections across wide canvasses, creating slight tonal variations. Strokes of graphite and ink are fractionally uneven. Paint is not quite contained within the boundaries set down by the artist, adding to the sense that these paintings are not only the result of careful deliberation, but also inclined to the fragility of the handmade. They are imperfect attempts at perfection.

Recently, art historian and contemporary art writer Roger Cook recalled his impression when, in 1966, he saw one of Martin's six feet square canvases, *The City*, a grid of blue lines on gesso. He wrote of being "drawn to the containing quietude" of that painting, and described the time and space of viewing as an "intimate rendezvous" between the painting and its beholder.¹ To better understand the contemplative experience offered by Martin's paintings, I have given my attention to her careful methods, enabling me to make similarly quiet artworks in a present-day context. This required my thoughtful inspection of her surfaces, as well as consideration of her meditative attitude towards artwork.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Martin experimented with materials found close to her studio in a former shipbuilding area at Coenties Slip, New York. Like many other artists in that neighbourhood, she retrieved these from the demolition of buildings that cleared the way for high-rise buildings along Wall Street. Martin assembled constructions of wood, together with other found objects, and she transcribed into abstract form the landscapes seen in her early years: wheat fields around her childhood home in Saskatchewan, Canada, and the mountains and plains of New Mexico experienced in young adulthood. She also recalled lines of uprooted trees and rows of planted crops on her uncle's farm. In their place, she set nail-heads within pencilled grids, as in the 12-inch square painting *Little Sister* (1962), with their points driven through the canvas surface. Between 1958 and 1959, objects were replaced by painted circles, surrounded by a ring of graphite to mimic the shadows.

At the Tate exhibition, my attention was held by one of her

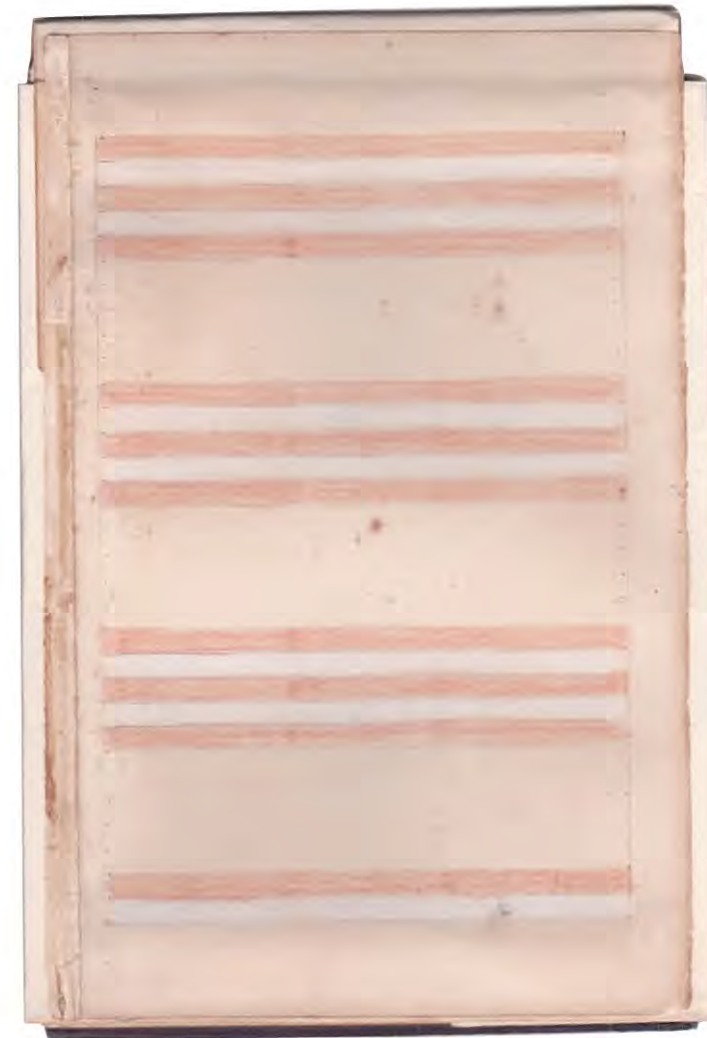
paintings entitled *The Islands* (1961), a six-foot square painting with a central grid containing touches of paint that resemble tufts of cotton pulled through a weave. There are 32 vertical columns with pairs of painted marks on a light brown surface the colour of unpainted linen. The cream-white dashes of oil paint do not fully extend across the pencilled grid, so that there is a mesh of empty pencil lines protruding around its outer edge. A wide margin surrounds the composition, enclosed within a thin cream-white painted line. My eye travelled to the area just within the canvas-edge, and was fixed by small dark puncture-like dots aligning the grid.

Through my own work, I responded to the elements that drew my attention in Martin's refined paintings between the late 1950s and her death in 2004. Interior limits of a small composition framed within a larger piece. Stitched lines cut from book bindings sit alongside ruled graphite lines, pale colour is pencilled on old discoloured paper removed from discarded books and impressions are made through the surfaces by a pencil or sharp pointed implement. The artworks are small in scale and available for others to hold. Layers of paper and card permit the viewer to look beneath flaps or open pages to reveal subtle detail beneath. I have retained the qualities that I have seen in Martin's tranquil surfaces, and sought to recreate the sense of intimacy between artwork and spectator that her paintings provide.

¹ Roger Cook, 'Doorknob in the Desert: Agnes Martin's Queer Becoming', *Journal of Contemporary Painting*, vol 2, no 1, 2016:22.

This research forms part of a PhD thesis by Sharon Phelps, titled *Agnes Martin: Painting as Making and its Relation to Contemporary Practice*, for completion in Spring 2017. It draws from the following resources:

- Agnes Martin, exhibition, Tate Modern, London, 3 June – 11 October 2015.
 Agnes Martin, 'On the Perfection Underlying Life', in *Agnes Martin, Writings*, Schwarz, D ed, Ostfildern: Cantz, 1991.
 BrionyFer, *The Infinite Line, Re-making Art after Modernism*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.
 Agnes Martin, quoted in Ann Wilson, 'Linear Webs: Agnes Martin', *Art and Artists* vol 1, no 7, October 1966.
 Christina Bryan Rosenberger, 'A Sophisticated Economy of Means, Agnes Martin's Materiality' in Cooke, L, K Kelly and B Schroder ed, *Agnes Martin*, New York: Dia Art Foundation, 2011.



Sharon Phelps, *Untitled 2*, Pencil on book cover, 20.5 × 14cm, 2015.

undoing

loneliness

Into the Swims – or She's Leaving Home

Martyn Crucefix

A remarkable thing has happened in our house this week. My daughter's room has been tidied – and it has remained that way.

The duvet is unrumpled on the bed. A phone charger remains thoughtfully unplugged on the floor beside the bed. The pages of Donna Tartt's *The Little Friend* have not been turned any further. The few coins on the desk wait to be spent. No rubbish is accumulating in the plastic bin beside the desk. A laundry basket has been emptied and seems not to be refilling as it usually does. There are few clothes hanging in the wardrobe. The door stands open onto the landing for days on end. There is hardly a movement in the wave-shaped mirror beside which, vertically, a friend wrote in pencil "Don't crack the mirror". Actually, to be truthful, there is the slightest of motions to be seen there – it's me standing in the centre of the room, staring around.

We took her to university last weekend. We miss her. And in the absence of more detailed news we're pretty sure she's having a good time. She's never friended us on Facebook but she somehow did so ages ago with my parents. So we hear remotely about smiling pictures, roseate cheeks in flashlight, black backdrops. I think yesterday she was supposed to be attending her first dissection (I remember that vividly).

In the meantime, to wish her well and permit myself some lovely sentimental thoughts of her in younger days, I thought I'd share an older piece I wrote which she is featured.

The following poem originally appeared in *Hurt* (Enitharmon, 2010). It derives from a walk we pursued when she was about five, I think. By walk I mean, she walked a bit and I carried her on my shoulders the rest of the way. This was probably in the hills near Sedbergh – sheep country, close-cropped grass, heather, little stony paths. I suspect we plotted a waterfall or two into the route for a few squares of chocolate (temptation) for her and her older brother.

open

One thing after another

The ivory, angular vertebra I found
the day after the day my daughter found

and tried out her new word – fuck –
was bony, spiky to touch, rough as fuck.

I thought: *Depths! Essence! Bone!*
She bent to it, touched it, turning bone.

Leave it, I called. She said, *Is it real?*
White in the grass the contrast was real.

Here is An Illusion of Choice, We've Made it Very Pretty for You

I think this is a Life Juncture, or what might be a teachable moment
(if falling onto the train tracks had actually made a difference,
if spending every Sunday alone weren't motivation enough).
What does it mean "That was then, this is now", does it mean
"believe in yourself"? Most minutes I feel sick.

There's a diligence to having a body I might not ever master:
my face is always slipping off my face.
Most of the time I'm believing there's a false panel in the armoire
and behind it the bear skin, personal credentials, the uncut
diamonds of future peril. I've discounted marriage

and begun to dream of someone who'd just lie down
in the snow with me and die. I have taken
to carrying a dagger inscribed with *How should a person be?*
There's a daydream in which I'm kneeling on the bridge
trying to fit a you into the photo (an angle I'd never allow).

Though I've mastered the aesthetics of aloneness
made it pristinely melancholy,
I'll not be remembered for how the crystal bird box
makes pretty the wall when the conditions are right.
I'm just standing up as though this never happened.

Wisdom & Folly (A Short Allegory)

Timi Oladeji

"Folly, folly", a despaired voice whispers in my ear.

I steadily lift myself up off the floor. My soul is weary; a cold bitter taste lingering at the back of my throat and feeling as though the weight of a thousand boulders were hanging over my neck.

"Do I not call?" the voice whispers again.

I place my right palm on a wall in an attempt to buoy up my ascension but I smothered something. It felt like the silhouette of a protruded carving.

Intrigued I stretch forth my left arm, now placing both my hands on the wall.

Then I saw her looking at me through the window. Her face glowing, her stark brown eyes reflecting my minuscule face – as clear as a mirror.

The burden over my neck ever became lighter. "It is I", she coolly said and immediately my soul began to tremble.

She came running towards me, her garment swaying majestically in the wind. I tasted the sweetness lasting into eternity and I had all but forgotten that I was forsaken. Then came the crackling roar of thunder outside and the rhythmic sound of raindrops beating over my head. In a moment's breath I was brought back to my desolate abode.

I slowly sit back down to the cold earth pondering my situation.

"How did I end up in this mire?"

I gazed into the darkness with no answer. Then the wailing started up again. It was a pattern I had noticed. At a certain time of every day, a voice began screaming in agony as if the poor soul was dragged away to an unknown destination. Often times the voice would cease upon what sounded like a heavy blow, other times dissipating into the distance. The cries were frightening, so much so that I often wondered when it was going to be my turn.

But I thought of her, desiring to hear her pure voice again: pure, as silver tried in a furnace. O her words are sweet to my taste, sweeter than the dripping of a honeycomb. Her beauty became etched in my mind's eye although I still could not behold her.

"Bang! Bang! Bang!" came the beating on the door, which startled me. Perhaps I was next. "Bon appétit", a voice uttered as my daily supply was slid into the cell and the door slammed shut! The tasteless food is always served lukewarm, but my system is used to it by now and besides, it keeps me alive.

On a certain day while I was sleeping I heard a whispering

voice, on this occasion coming from the wall to my right. I woke from my half sleep eager to find out if she was the one calling again. "Anyone there?" the person spoke.

It was a masculine voice. I was reluctant to answer.

"Please, speak to me if anyone is there?"

"I am here," I replied. Then I heard a sigh of relief.

"What's your name sir?" he said.

"Folly. People call me folly."

"How did we end up in here folly?"

"I don't know. Who are you?" I quickly replied, also eager to get some answers.

"I'm Earnest. I am a country farmer."

"Where were you before you were taken, Earnest?"

"I was working in the field. One minute I had my head down with my hands to the plough, next minute I woke up in this forsaken abode."

"Tell me what you see?" I asked.

"What do you mean?" he replied.

"Tell me what you see around you in your cell?"

"Scratches everywhere. And symbols. Ancient-looking symbols plastered all over the walls."

"Can you read any of it?"

"There is a symbol of what looks like a house being built and another one in another place of the same house being torn down by another set of characters. I also see a signature of a person who was here before."

"What does it say?"

"It is not very visible but it shows a name beginning with 'W' & 'I', and some other letters that have eroded next to the sentence 'was here'. I'm sorry I don't know what the rest means."

"Hmm," I exclaimed, pondering to myself.

"How long have you been here folly?" Earnest broke my thought.

"I don't know for sure, perhaps just under 40 days," I replied.

"Well whatever our lot, I am ready," he said. "I am ready to meet my maker."

Then he suddenly stopped speaking. It was as if he was never there.

Curious, I got up in the dead silence of the night and began investigating the four walls separating me from freedom. Perhaps this will give me some answers. I made my way from one corner to the next, doing this for many days.

On the seventh day of my investigation, with no progress made, I heard a loud bang on the door. This was unusual and it did not sound like the call for supper.

I quickly fell to the floor, in a sitting posture.

I heard the gentle screech of the door open and a voice calmly said, "Let's go home."

"Who is it?" I replied sceptically.

"It is I, Wisdom. Do not be afraid."

"What of the others?" I inquired.

"Right now, worry for yourself," the voice replied.

I got up and slowly walked through the door. Then I saw a bright white light, shining in my face. Her appearance suddenly made plain. I took one more step forward and woke up from my dream.

Nightfall

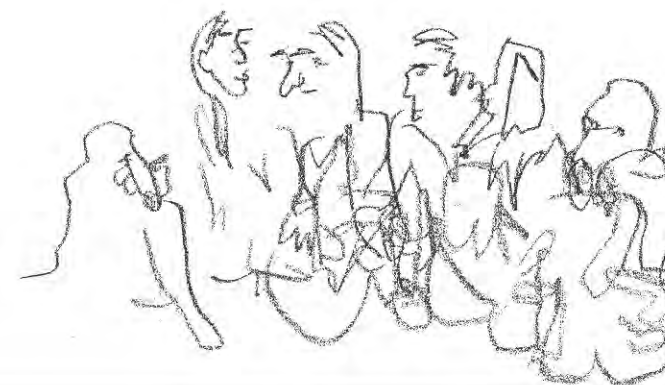
The curtain of a long night, falling
Gently before my sight, something appalling,
Is yet so quiet, its drifting vapours mild
Silently erasing the painless wild,
Where shadows shape the light on corn and fell,
And beauty's tenderness says all is well,
That darkness creeps like rust amongst the fruit,
Betrays the harvest, curdles stock and root,
In shameful secret increments of grief,
As loss and doubt corrupt the golden leaf.



Reveal: Intimate Limits

From the beginning, it was important for us to experiment with what intimacy means today and to see how people experienced and reacted to different versions of it in real time. In parallel with the publication we organised an all-day event on 4 September 2016 at the HTH Art Centre. *Reveal: Intimate Limits* delved into the theme of intimacy through its form and content.

We share with you some of the outcomes and different approaches through which we explored intimacy. We would like to offer them, not only as documentation, but also as a tool.



I use the voice a lot in my practice, as it is one of the most powerful tools for self-healing. This is because our voice is uniquely our own; its characteristic sound identifies us and expresses us. Not just who we are but how we are. We can tell when a person is sad, happy, elated, angry, tired or in pain, just from the sound of their voice. When we speak, we are expressing more than words; the subtle variations and inflections in our voice may reveal more intimate details than we are aware.

This insight into vocal expression can be used to our benefit. We can learn to become more sensitive to our voice in order to assess our own state of mental, emotional and physical wellbeing. We can, of course, also learn to be more attuned to others' conditions and needs as well.

Stopping for a moment, taking the time to go inward and get in touch with yourself, is the first step. Then the idea is to allow yourself to express vocally whatever sensations, feelings or notions are there, without analysing, judging or holding back. We are not really talking about words, however, rather a form of vocalisation where any sound can be appropriate. This kind of true self expression would have to come from a place of pure honesty. This is a depth of self-intimacy that can lead to a level of self acceptance that can be very healing in itself.

Once you have got in touch with yourself and become present with how you are, the next step is to vocalise a sound with a healing intention. We can use specific sounds

that have qualities that are useful therapeutically. This idea actually comes from a natural human impulse. Perhaps we may spontaneously make sounds to calm, soothe or release something. For example, a mother uses soft calming sounds to settle her baby, and we often make a long "ah" sound when experiencing something touching. The sound "ooh" is often used to soothe pain or we may groan, moan or cry to express discomfort or sadness. Why do we do this? If you injure yourself and try not to make a sound, it would feel worse. The sound, therefore, is a way of releasing some of the pain to make it more bearable. Similarly, the "ah" sound seems to appeal to a softer, more emotional part of ourselves. So Sound Healing is already there, in our daily life. All we need to do is make the right sound with the right intention, in the right place and we have a self-healing practice. It is not complicated, it is a very simple and natural thing for us to do.

The voice also connects us, through communication, yes, but this occurs on more levels than the mere meaning of words. There is a hidden subtlety that reveals more intimate details that we can become more aware of, thus deepening our knowledge of ourselves and of each other. Perhaps in this world of fast electronic interaction, we are missing this level of intimacy. Perhaps we could stop for a moment and feel exactly where and how we are, evoking a more profound and intimate presence of being.



②
SET
Rules & Systems



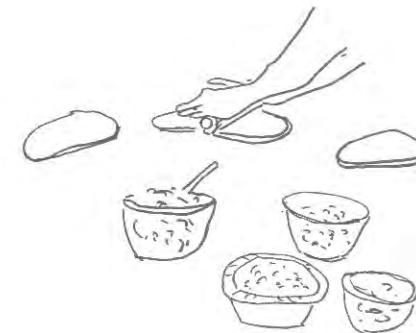
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Choose and
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It has become increasingly common to meet people from different cultures and backgrounds in big cities. I have developed a form of cultural diplomacy through a collaborative project, *Pleased to Eat You*, which uses food as a catalyst to conversations between cultures. The project consists of a series of workshops and events that help spark dialogue between strangers by making and eating food.

However, food varies from culture to culture, so I decided to select foods which are common to many cultures – dumplings. They are a gateway to shared conversations, cultural backgrounds and personal experiences. In order to facilitate communication *Pleased to Eat You* also makes use of Cornish pasties, samosas, ravioli and many other types of dumplings that are not always categorised as dumplings.



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