

The Last Dance

Emily Laurens, Persephone Pearl & Rachel Porter

The idea for Last Dance came not only from our deep and prolonged thinking around species extinctions, but also from chronic feelings of helplessness associated with the pandemic and climate change and the cycles of news we are constantly exposed to - the relentless horrors of war, climate chaos, economic collapse.

How do we deal with irreversible change and the aftermath of loss?

How do we find purpose, meaning and even joy in the face of loss, ruin or collapse?

What happens when we face impossible choices?

How do we create ritual out of chaos, and the transpersonal through the creative act?

Through the performers' visceral exploration of the ways in which we deal with the death of something we love, we face the struggle to accept our powerlessness and redefine what power could be. The piece will explore how expressive culture can use metaphor to move beyond romantic escapism and individualistic narratives (facets of extractivist capitalist culture) finding ways to transcend them and re-vision future possibilities by 'staying with the trouble' (Haraway, 2016).

Last Dance will be a performance ritual. A suspended form resembling an abstracted body, made of fabric and filled with sand - a quarried natural material - will be animated by us. At any time, one performer will partner the object in a strange dance. But it has a small hole through which sand pours slowly out. So, this suspended body with which we play is gradually changing, shrinking and eventually becoming soft and lifeless.

Visually inspired by Louise Bourgeois' suspended sculptures, the piece will be a study of loss, cycles and 'tipping points' (Lenton, 2013): when does something stop being that thing? When something changes beyond recognition, how does that change how we interact with it? A significant quantity of sand will remain after the Last Dance performance. We will take this opportunity openly to highlight and think through the disposal of materials and its capitalist, colonial and racist histories.

“As the Anthropocene proclaims the language of species-life – anthropos– through a universalist geologic commons, it neatly erases histories of racism that were incubated through the regulatory structure of geologic relations. The racial categorization of Blackness shares its natality with mining the New World.... That is, racialization belongs to a material categorization of the division of matter (corporeal and mineralogical) into active and inert.” (Yusoff, 2018)

References

- Haraway, D.J.** (2016). *Staying with the trouble*. 2016. Duke University Press.
- Lenton, T.M.** (2013). Environmental Tipping Points. *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*. Vol. 38:1-29 (Volume publication date October 2013)
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-environ-102511-084654>
- Yusoff, K.** (2018). *A billion Black anthropocenes or none*. 2018. University of Minnesota Press.

Biography

Rachel Porter has worked as a drama therapist in London and Belgium with a special focus upon pre-linguistic communication. She teaches on the MA Drama and Movement therapy training at the Royal Central school of Speech and Drama as well at the Agape Dance Movement Therapy programme in Belgium and Artevelde Hogeschool, amongst others. Rachel has her own company - ATTUNE, <https://attunementprocess.co.uk/>. She is a founder member of Feral Theatre. In this performance she will be performing as Feral Theatre with co-directors Persephone Pearl and Emily Laurens <http://feraltheatre.co.uk/>.

Recent publications and conference presentations

Porter, R. (2023). Performance, talk and workshop: **Yale ISM Religion, Ecology and Expressive Culture Initiative**. Yale University, USA.

Porter, R. (2023). Workshop: Society of Somatic Medicine, Antwerp, Belgium (April 2023).

Porter, R. (2017). **Multimodality**. In: R. Hougham and B. Jones: Dramatherapy, Reflections and Praxis. Palgrave and Macmillan.

Porter, R. (2021). **Intuition, interrupter or interrupted?** In: R. Hougham and B. Jones: Dramatherapy, The nature of interruption. Routledge.