Whispering Bodies

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My suggestion is to use a computer and headphones to experience this text and its’ material. Find a comfortable, seated, position for yourself and place your computer in front of you.
LET US HOLD EACHOTHER’S HANDS

This text-based piece is created out of a curiosity in how a reflection based in the written language can exist as a complementary work for a physical and tactile space, in this case *Whispering Bodies*: *The Immersive Scenography*. I wanted to create an experience that would have traces of the room filled with different bodies. I have been experimenting with how to use different mediums to make this happen, and this piece will be a combination of video, drawings, audio and text, and the text itself will be jumping in between genres. I want to invite you to take part in this journey with me. It will be dry, it will be poetic, it will be telling you what happened, both the factual and the fictional.

I want to give you this little introduction to prepare you on the messiness that you might encounter. In *Whispering Bodies: The Immersive Scenography* I invited people to interact with this immersive scenography where they entered into four other people’s bodies. All of the bodies in the room were created out of the material that was found by the participants of the workshops when they were exploring inner rooms, an exploration that was led by me. This complementary text-based work is a way for me to open up my brain a little bit, and invite you in. I will call it; *Whispering Bodies: The textual Brain*. When referring to both I will use *Whispering Bodies*.

We are going to start this whole experience with a tool I have used in this project as well as previous ones. In this process I specifically used it during the workshops and as a starting ritual for *Whispering Bodies: The Immersive Scenography*. It takes the form of a short, guided meditation where you will have the possibility to visit the four body parts where the participants of the workshop found their inner spaces.

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1 I use the word body as L.R Bryant describes it: “By “body” I just mean anything or entity that exists… “Body” refers indiscriminately to any entity that exists.” (Bryant, 2012). In this context that means that every-thing, the light, the sound, the sculptures, the performers, the chairs etc., in the immersive scenography was considered a body with agency, with a will. *Every-body has agency*. I believe that even texts have an agency by themselves. That the text becomes something else than the author’s words or ideas as soon as it is written down. The text can never be just the author’s or even the readers’ but it is an entity by itself. It wants something with you, does something to you. It is a body, as Bryant would say (2012). All bodies have different aims, and there are bodies that are part of other, larger bodies. For example, the bacteria within my body might have different aims than me as a hominid (Bryant, 2012). I see this text as part of a bigger body which could be said to be my artistic practice.

2 In this case sculptures, light, sound, smoke, tools and suggestions for actions.
When you feel ready, put on your headphones and press the following link:

TINY WORLDS INSIDE OF ME

You have now taken part in a small introspective journey yourself, and as I mentioned I have used meditation\(^1\) in art projects before this one, so before moving on to describing the process of *Whispering Bodies* I would like to say something about why I have worked with finding small worlds inside of me as well as introducing a specific room close to my heart.

I’ve found small worlds inside of my body for the last four years. I’ve gone on introspective journeys to understand myself and explore my inner universe. When I was doing this, I found material to work with artistically, visual and tactile environments that was creating a specific atmosphere. What I found was inviting me to explore specific themes, which usually was emotional and relational. The spaces in themselves were there to hold me, and ground me, when I explored vulnerability, communication and interaction with myself as well as my immediate and afar surrounding. The need of being held by spaces and sculptures arose when I started performing within the fine art context. I was using my body as the main art piece and I would push myself to the maximum, as if I was a sculpture. I worked with themes that I’m passionate about and I was also in the center, vulnerable, doing six hours performances by myself. With no one by my side.

When I found these spaces inside of me I could feel that they were giving me strength, and I saw that they could hold me. That they could be my co-creators and partners, my co-performers. They all had their own essence, their core. Their own will and agency. They had the possibility to express themselves through actions and expressions. The sculptures I made out of these inner spaces were able to communicate on their own terms, without me deciding what they wanted to tell. They created their own relationship with the visitors of the installations. They started to form their own small worlds.

\(^1\) The meditation technique I’ve used the most is inspired by Active Meditations by Osho (OSHO International Foundation, 2021) and is based in the idea that in our modern society we have to physically activate our bodies to be able to fully get away from the analytical center that is our brains, and push the center to the heart by creating chaos within ourselves. The practice is to use chaotic physical methods to start thinking with our stomach again, not our heads. I started using this method without knowing its origin, and I have now started developing my own active meditations for artistic purposes.
For me these inner spaces that I translated into performative installations, and textual works, was a way to invite people to explore something with me and through things. I could open up my body as a performer to immerse the visitors and let go of control. I let people into my expanded and artificial body to explore something, or to just be there. I felt like the things in the room transformed into performers, we were doing it together. I was no longer by myself. I felt the urgency in them, the way to hold space, the way to hold visitors, the way to hold me. They were talking with, and through, me. These spaces still live inside of me.

The Glade*

I wanna tell you about one of the rooms I have inside of me.

I wanna tell you how it looks like.

I wanna tell you about the creature who is living in the room.

I want you to imagine my bare skin. Imagine that you are really close to me. To my chest. The chest is rising in front of you and you are now unable to see anything except from this wall of skin. My chest bone. I want you to imagine that you are entering my body through the skin.

Slowly. There’s no resistance. It absorbs you.

Softly
Smoothly
Let you in
Into my chest

When you’re inside of me you realize there’s no blood.

No flesh.
No body tissues

Instead you can see this glade opening up in front of you.

You are walking towards it.

The ground is soft. Covered in moss.
It seems like it has been there forever.

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*This excerpt from The Glade is a textual room that I created 2018.
The moss is climbing up the trees that are so tall that you can’t see the treetops.

There is this
So, there is this
What I’m saying is that
Inside of me there is this forest
Tiny and enormous
In this forest
Bor en utopi
Och en varelse

This utopia and this creature
This human being
This loved human being
He moved there ten years ago
He has been living there, full time, since 7 years, 11 months and 15 days
This forest is a memory
A childhood memory
Of a forest close to where I grew up
A glade I have never seen
Som är den mest kända platsen för mig
Sometimes I meet him in the water
I can see all of him
Annars ser jag bara närbilder
10 cm from my body all the time
He lives there in the forest

Sometimes my body starts to ache
He’s creating chaos

In this room where serenity lives, where I wanna lay down on the moss, where I go to rest under the trees
In my childhood forest where I feel the most safe
He’s looking at me
The whole forest is vibrating
It’s time for the first video. There will be a total of seven videos showing bodies who were part of *Whispering Bodies; the Immersive Scenography*. There’s a voice-over text present in the video. I asked all the bodies the same question. What do you want from, or with, the humans present in the space with you?

When you feel ready, press the following link:

https://vimeo.com/561704880

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**PLANTING SOIL**

I came from the forest. All my *imaginary* friends came from the same forest. They were all my trolls, and they were so many. One thousand. We would have secret meetings. They would crawl up into our bathroom through the water system to be with me when I was all by myself in there. I, as well, was a child of a troll. My mother told me this, and she would never lie to me. She told me that they had made a pact with the trolls through exchanging babies. I don’t fully know why. I imagine it to be like a Royal Intermarriage. You know, that they would make a prince or king marry a princess, or another noble young lady, to create a bond between two countries. I think this is what they did with us, to create a bond between the forest and the farm. It would make it less tense between the ruling dynasties and serve to initiate and reinforce peace between the different species. Sometimes I wonder how it is to live in there, fulltime, and how it is for a human child to grow up amongst trolls.

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This might be a modification of a story told by my grandfather about how they found my mother. But my body says that I have lived this story, maybe it has travelled through her body into mine.
Have I ever told you that I’m afraid of the dark?

The darkness scares me, always have been, except for when I’m in the forest. Surrounded by it. Djupt in i skogens hjärta. I can see everything in there, and I melt into it like it would be my body. It is my body, I found a forest in there, a glade, a bay and a den. Jag omfamnar naturen inom mig. Låter mig smälta samman. It reminds me that I’m connected to nature. I can feel the same feeling as I used to feel as a kid. Linjerna mellan oss är suddiga, blekta, som en bild som har legat i solen alltför länge. The lines that defines what I am, what’s inside of me, and what’s around me are almost gone. I do believe that a forest is living inside of my chest, and therefore I see myself as part of the forest around my body. I know we will take care of each other.

**THE CORE**

During this project I’ve been exploring how we can work with things within art to change our way of relating to ourselves, other humans and our surrounding. I want to see if finding inner spaces within us can make us feel more connected to our external surrounding. I want to share the feeling of being connected with things through incorporating them inside our own bodies. I have therefore been leading participants on introspective journeys where they found rooms inside of their bodies. After that I have been translating these inner spaces into immersive performative Scenography, where visitors have been invited to engage with the things in the space with all their senses. All the bodies, things as well as visitors, have been given the possibility to interact on their own terms. I wanted to see what kind of relating this room of *Whispering Bodies; the Immersive Scenography* inspired and invited to, and I wished for it to be a tactile bonding with a sense of heightened empathy and listening.

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*I’ve decided to use the word things instead of objects due to being inspired by this citation by T.W Mitchell “objects are the way things appear to a subject…Things, on the other hand... [signal] the moment when the object becomes the Other… when the subject experiences the object as uncanny and feels the need for what Foucault calls ‘a metaphysics of the object, or, more exactly, a metaphysics of that never objectifiable depth from which objects rise up toward our superficial knowledge.’” (Bennet, 2010, p.2). As I understand it, using the word object means that there’s subjects and objects where the object is passive and the subject is the one with a will and power. To change the vocabulary and start using thing gives it a position of Other which changes the dynamic between human and thing.*
It’s time for another video session. When you feel ready, press the following link:  
https://vimeo.com/558948469

I decided to divide the project into four phases. Each phase has its own focus area. I’ll shortly present each phase to you.

No. 1: WORKSHOPS
My focus for this part was to take a method from my artistic practice that has come naturally for me and using that as a tool for others to access something similar. To generate material and experiences from something found inside of them through practicing introspective journeys based in meditations. Not something that the participants comes up with, but that they actually find. I was exploring how to verbalize and structurally practice this introspective visualization to be able to use it as a tool for artistic work.

This phase took the form of a workshop series with four participants: Alice MacKenzie, Sóley Freya Eiríksdottír, Carl Lindqvist and Majula Drammeh. Due to Covid-19 I decided to conduct through Zoom. I started the exploration through a guided meditation where I asked them to find a place in their body that was calling for attention. They all went into one specific body part each and they found rooms to work with. The body parts they went to was the following; the left hip, the right forearm, the knot in the throat that you get when you are sad or choke up from stress and the nose. After they found rooms, we established them through different exercises. I continued with guided meditations, they described the rooms with help of materials, with conversations and with sketching in the way the wanted. The last part of this phase was to have one-to-one conversations with each participant where I asked for clarifications, essence and guidance in the continuous work.
No. 2: CREATING THE BODIES

The second phase of this was to create the bodies for the Immersive Scenography. My investigation here was to dive into my own communication with the things and materials. To explore different tools for communication between me as an artist and the things. I was also, for the first time, transforming someone else’s sketch into reality which was a new kind of collaboration for me.

I was starting to create the sculptures, the light, the sound, the material in the room. I was exploring how I could build different elements. The materiality of it, the techniques, the visual aspect. In this part of the process I involved Adde Huumonen, Sound Designer, Maja Lindström, Light Designer and Ibrahim Bumin Kara, Performer, as well as Ruben Widén, Décor Painter and Sanna Albenius, Artist. All of these relations took very different forms, but generally I wanted them all to feel free to make their own interpretation of the material. To translate the material with me and, if they wanted, by themselves. I asked them how they wanted to work and we started from that. One thing that was communicated with them all was that every-thing in the room is considered to have agency. The sculptures, the sound, the light and the performers.

In this phase, where I created the bodies, one thing was continuously difficult, or maybe just new. I tried to stay away from interpretation in the form of deciding what the sculptures meant in the room. What each body would say, before having them there. So not what I would call talking to them, but instead deciding what they want, taking control of their agency and leaving the bodies in the scenography without agency. I tried to stay away from pre-judging and taking control.

When I do create rooms that is found in my own body, I can have conversations already before they have taken physical form, the bodies in the room. Because they are part of me. But this time – it didn’t work. So, I had to wait.

This phase was the longest one. Trying to find the right materials, asking for permission to make the right choices, trying to make these bodies materialize in the way they wanted, and at the same time in a way that was even possible. The translation in this was for me challenging. It made me slower than if it would have been a room inside of me, due to the fact that I tried to be more literal, because the symbols or the meaning of the symbols where not clear to me.
What I’m trying to express is that I met a new process where I just had to stay with the creating part. The materiality and the support in the translation from inner image to sculpture. I didn’t wanna fall into a position where I decided what everything meant, and creating a narrative based on my own interest.

I did a lot of material tests, sketching, building and also planning and creating the performance and experience for the visitors. I thought I was going to build sculptures and then create a universe for them. But they were already the universe. The sound and the light made a frame where they could co-exist.  

During a tutorial with Lisa Lie, my external supervisor, I got reminded that the room itself doesn’t have to be perfect, it’s not about that – it’s about creating a possibility for the visitors to interact with the room in a way that differs from the outside world. This made the work for me and Ibrahim take a new turn and we worked with this realization as a leading mantra during the creation of the performance part. Sometimes it was difficult to believe in the room, to still stay away from taking the control. I felt responsible for the sculptures, for the artists, for the participants but also for myself as an artist. I wanted something specific, something brave, and I couldn’t see the end result.

No. 3: OPENING THE DOORS

This is when we opened the doors to the room of Whispering Bodies for visitors. We, me, Ibrahim Bumin Kara and the room, welcomed four duos to explore and interact with the different things and elements inside.

In this part I had several investigations going on. I was interested in how to continue the translation as a performer, and how I can let the bodies in the room do the translation themselves and then of course my main investigation and core of the project that is the meeting between the things and the visitors. Questions that was with me during this phase was the following; How can we let the agency of things guide us in an artistic collaboration?

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7 In feedback and from myself I have realized that; yes, they did create a little universe. BUT I want it all to merge even more. I want the lines to be blurred. I loved that every-thing in the room got their own space and voice, but I want it all to be connected. Not stations standing by themselves in the dark. I want them to co-create, to co-exist. I want the fluidity to shine through.
How do we communicate with things? How can artistic work with the focus of the agency of things broaden human’s perspective and understanding of empathy in a way that is changing our interaction with our surroundings?

The experience started with a short introduction of the rules of the space, then we took them, the visitors, into a small space for a guided meditation, and after that they were invited to crawl into the space on their own will.

When the visitors where in the space they could feel into how they wanted to explore the space. This little world. Different actions occurred. Feeling the slime, putting beeswax things on the tree-like structure, moving the rocks, laying down, breathing, drawing, moving, being, touching. We had placed some tools that could suggest certain actions, but the visitors were also free to come up with their own ways.

When the visitors where in the space I noticed that three out of four duos barely used words. The same three duos also moved quite slowly and seemed to be in their own exploration of the room.

One of the duos moved in a different tempo, like they tried to understand, decipher something, find a solution. Solve the room. They also talked, to each other and us. One of them even tried to solve me in a way that reminded me of how you approach a puzzle. They asked questions, discussed.

It was up for two days. And then I had to take it down again. I already feel the need to build it up again. I can already sense where we wanna go. There was a certain politeness in the way the bodies were installed. It’s not what’s right for all the bodies in there. They are not all polite. They want different things, and sometimes they wanna demand attention, scream. We do work with consent. Not every-body wants to be touched by every-one that enters, but it’s not up to me how they wanna interact with all, and with who. They will let the visitors know. And the visitors should also be able to ask for what they want. I think this part of giving and receiving, taking space and leaving space can be explored in a messier way.

Now it’s time for another video session. When you feel ready, press the following link:

https://vimeo.com/559968174
No. 4: FEEDBACK and REFLECTION

This is the phase when this text is created. I’m reflecting on the work, the process and my artistic practice. This is also the time when I have one-to-one feedback sessions with both visitors of the installation as well as participants of the workshop.

In the last phase I have tried to understand what happened through conversation with visitors and participants, through being with the documentation and with the writing. I’ve spent with the scenography by myself without fixing, and I’ve been talking with the different bodies within *Whispering Bodies*. Asking them things, asking for their perspective. These bodies are slowly becoming a part of me. I can feel that. I can access them now, talk to them, almost without physical connection. I don’t believe that I pretend, I do think I find and sense the answers. That we are actually talking in some sense. It’s not fictional, not always.

The theories I’ve spent time with have been with me this whole time, not very explicit, but I have practiced them in all my steps, all my creating.

I don’t fully know what the visitors of the room experienced, if it’s close to what I have experienced. But what I saw was that something happened with the time, the tempo and the way we acted in the room. This has also been reflected upon in the feedback sessions I’ve had with the visitors. Several of them is acknowledging that their way of communicating was somehow affected. They stopped talking and felt this need of feeling the bodies, communicating body to body through touch. The visitors also witnessed and experience that their time perspective was different, or even that they lost sense of time. Like this little world somehow became a pocket in time, existing outside of our dimension.

I saw a sensitivity in the interaction, an exploration of the senses. Bodies moving differently than in an exhibition or other installations I’ve done. With more care for the non-human bodies, and maybe less care about me. Sitting there in a corner, walking around, watching, but not really watching.

I have created three maps that shows the movements from the visitors of *Whispering Bodies: The Immersive Scenography* as well as the energy from the different things in the room.
No. 1: How we (me and the things) imagined it would become
No. 2: How it was when the visitors were there
No. 3: What we are currently longing for in the future
TRANSLATION

I’m used to translating my inner spaces into external rooms for visitors. One layer of translating is fairly easy. I have something inside of me that I know very well. I feel it, I know it. The function, the essence, every little detail. Because it is me.

This time I was handling other people’s inner journeys. I thought the method would be the same, maybe with a little twist or re-thinking. Quite soon I realized that the method is quite different. I didn’t know how these spaces looked like, for them. I just knew my interpretation of their words and actions. I couldn’t feel the core of the spaces within me, I didn’t have a bodily understanding of them. One of the participants of the workshops told me that they couldn’t translate the inner spaces in a fulfilling way. In the verbalization something was lost. The space couldn’t fully be translated through words, but just by lived experience.

On top of this translation I asked other artists to translate the material I gave to them, material that I had already translated into written words and had been translated by the workshop participants before that.

I tried to make bridges in this translation through the use of different mediums. I became a bridge of sort in between the workshop participants and the artists I was working with. The bridge, the translator between the people in the process, between people and material, as well as taking the position of an artistic leader. There’s a constant combination of transformation and translation going on, and I want to highlight the translation as the concept for the communication between different bodies in the project. The reason I use the word is because of how this work is engaging a translation between different dimensions and senses. Different types of languages. Our inner landscapes are complex and detailed. We can be in them, with them and dive into it. I try to translate that into a room in our dimension. In the space where human bodies are solidified. Where we can meet⁸. I’m also taking something and trying to change the language it’s communicated in.

⁸ What do I mean when I state that we can meet? In this context I’m referring to the fact that within ourselves we can have meetings with someone internally, but without their knowledge. In the dimension within ourselves we can interact, but it will not be a meeting between human bodies. In the solidified dimension we can meet each other with our physical bodies and therefore we can have bodily points of interaction, or meetings.
We are working with translation from one language to another. From four bodies, through mine and later three more artists. The workshop participants opened up their bodies to share material and it’s their bodies we are entering in the immersive scenography. But it’s also mine and the other artists’ bodies through the act of translating. Through using our bodies to create what we can see in our dimension we are also opening up our bodies, being part of this dimension.

To be clearer, the material that is found within a body is being translated into material that can exist within our realm, our dimension. For example, the Sun existed as a painting within a bathhouse in a room in a nose. Now it has been translated into existing in a black box with several other sculptures. It has taken a new form, translated from inner to outer image.

Another translation is what happened when the visitors entered _Whispering Bodies: The Immersive Scenography_. Several of the visitors translated something into a new medium, into drawings, without any instructions to do so.
It’s time for video no. 4. When you feel ready, press the following link:

https://vimeo.com/561704706
TRANSFORMATION

I said it’s also transforming. It is transforming. It is in constant transformation in a process without a deadline.

To be honest, I believe all the bodies involved in the project is transforming. Some more than others. I have been transforming, changing, during this entire master program. I can feel that it has been a more intense journey of transformation in the last months. My art practice is also transforming, I can see new paths for it. I have fully shared my own artistic tools, like introspective journeys, with people to co-create something. I now dare to ask people to go deeper within themselves, and I believe I can hold them in that journey.

When it comes to Whispering Bodies, as a project, it has been going from my own spiritual journey to becoming a room filled with sculptures where visitors could enter. I think it’s still transforming, in this moment. I can see that the immersive scenography wants something more, it wants to be transformed into something new. It wants to be blurred and messy. It is four people’s inner spaces merged into one, and it’s longing to be even more merged. Playing with each other in a messier way.

After feedback from the visitors, I can also see some transformation. The room changed several people’s sense of time. It was like the time in there acted differently than the surrounding world, outside of the black box. It became its own bubble, or maybe a tiny universe. The room itself was transformed into a different dimension through the energies from bodies who inhabited the space.

One specific feedback showed a personal transformation. This visitor shared with me that they got insights about how they function. What drives them and that they are always looking for something to solve and a need to understand the whole picture. Almost a stress of missing out on an answer. I think that could be a step towards personal transformation, small or big.
WHISPERING BODIES

The things in there, the bodies, might have been screaming. Why do I call it Whispering Bodies?

It’s simple. I want people to listen, carefully. I want the visitors of the world called Whispering Bodies to be engaged, with their whole bodies and all their senses. I’m asking for something more than just looking around, or being entertained. I’m asking the visitor to invest by being sensitive, invest their capacity to listen so they will be present. I call all of the things inside the room for bodies. The sound, the light, the sculptures, the performers, the visitors. We are all bodies with our own agency, our own voice and all of us have the need to be listening to each other. All of us have the need to feeling heard, seen, and all of us in our different ways, and in our own roles.

There’re bodies in there that want you to touch them, but not by everyone who’s visiting. Just the ones feeling the calling. It’s conversation between different bodies. Hopefully it will be done with consent. But that doesn’t mean that all interaction has to be nice. There’re bodies in there who wants to be admired, by the ones feeling admiration. There’re bodies in there who wants to devour you.

So, I call it whispers to imply that you should give your full attention. They are all waiting and longing and asking for you.

It’s time for another video session. When you feel ready, press the following link:

https://vimeo.com/558948188

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9 They should have been screaming. I think they should have. How come did all the things act in the same way? Being respectful of space, taking the same amount of space. Why didn’t a single one make a big ass scream?

10 I want to mention that even though everyone has their own agenda, there’s also a difference in power and knowledge. I’m the only body in this project that has the whole picture, that has been following the whole journey and every step. For example, in relation to the visitors, I have a different agenda and also more knowledge and therefore more power. In relation to the things in the room, I am the creator and also, I have the verbal language which often is the dominant one. Therefore, I also have more power in relation to them.
LANGUAGE
My first best friend was a horse. I was 13 when I met her. She is the most beautiful creature. I was introduced to horses early on in my life and I’ve always felt connected to horses in a very special way. I believe that my second language is the language between horse and human. Maybe even my first. I’m humble in my communication with them. I don’t wanna win an argument. I might insist on something, but not purely out of a pre-set idea. I can be the full me at all times, and I want them to feel the same.
Our letter to Water

Jag vill berätta någonting för dig.

“We are all bodies of water.” (Neimanis, 2012, p. 96)

You make me feel safe.

I let myself sink down into you, be in you, surrounded by you and I can literally feel how everything slows down. My heart is tuning into yours. I feel you inside of me. I can feel that I’m made out of you. That my body exists of you.

“As watery, we experience ourselves less as isolated entities, and more as oceanic eddies: I am a singular, dynamic whorl dissolving in a complex, fluid circulation.” (Neimanis, 2012, p.96)

When you are embracing me, I feel how things are falling into place. I feel expanded, I feel small. Insignificant. Part of everything and completely lost. I don’t need to do anything. All I want is to feel your embrace, feel myself embracing me. Sometimes I find it difficult to state something. Hold onto something. To say that THIS IS IT!

Because I know I’m in constant transformation, in constant motion, in a constant flow of energies running through me som en långsam bäck i en hästhage, ibland stark och snabb som en värälv. I can feel you inside of me, changing me.

“Water as body; water as communicator between bodies; water as facilitating bodies into being. Entity, medium, transformative and gestational milieu. All of this enfolding in, seeping from, sustaining and saturating, our bodies of water. “There are tides in the body,” writes Virginia Woolf. We ebb and flow across time and space—body, to body, to body”.

(Neimanis, 2012, p. 99)

I take different shapes. Like you. I pretend to be like you. Fluid, plastic, filling up holes in the process, in the communication. I get inspired by you. As a performer, as an artist, as a human, as a body. I wanna be part of everything, like you. I wanna support everyone, like you. I wanna be able to destroy everything, like you. And recover, like you.

All Love,
Siri and Astrida

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11 This is a love letter written by me with citations from “Hydrofeminism: Or, On Becoming a Body of Water” by Astrida Neimanis. Neimanis’ text instantly made me feel connected to the writer, to the text, but especially the water. I see a potential in water, how it can work as a medium for inter-species communication. Between humans, animals and things. Neimanis’ text made me see that potential.
TALKING TO DIFFERENT BODIES
For me, there’s different ways that I talk to different bodies. As you read, I have a specific language for horses. I would say that it’s similar to how I communicate with other animals. Especially domesticated ones.

With humans I primarily use the verbal language because it feels like it would be easy to understand. We should have the same understanding of the words we are using. That is not the case, but we still try. Fail, and try again. It’s the language we can use to investigate intellectual ideas together. But when we stop, just for a little while, when we use our bodies and expressions, our emotions and instincts, I feel like we can be close to the core of each other.

How do I talk to things? How did I ask them questions and how are we working together?

I have different ways of doing that. Sometimes I talk to them, not with. The letter you read is an example of when this way of communicating has been used. Sometimes I imagine what a thing would say. It’s totally fictional, not even I believe that we actually talk to each other.

But most often, I slow down. I spend time with the thing I want to talk to. I establish a contact, visual or physical. It depends on the thing and me, our energies. When we are in contact I either ask a question or I just listen. It can take time. But eventually the energy I’m reading from the thing starts to take a form I can understand. It can be images, it can be emotions, it can be words. I have to direct all my focus and all my energy towards the specific thing to be able to understand.

12 I strive towards a society where interspecies interactions are considered natural. Not just with animals, but with anything. Like kids do. For them it’s not unusual to see a tree as a friend, so why should it be weird for a grown up? I’m longing to go further into experience my body as something fluid, something that is not contained, but part of something bigger. We are learning to categorize, and part of my project is to blur those categories.
SENsUALITY and EROTICA
I have noticed that a certain language is appearing in my communication with things. It tends to become sensual, or even erotic. You can sense it in the texts by the things in the videos, where I have really taken the time to listen. It’s something about the tempo. But also, about the bodily aspect of the communication. It’s not intellectual. It comes from one body to the other. It takes time and usually a bodily connection. I’m touching the material, the things to transfer the energies more easily. When some-thing can’t move or show expression, tactility becomes the way to understand each other. I can feel it. I can let me body understand the things around it. When we are being this sensitive and bodily it easily feels sensual.

I don’t strive for it to have erotic connotations, but I can see that it brings qualities to the work, and it comes from a genuine place. It’s what I sensed and heard from the sculptures. The communication is established with a feeling of consent. It’s both of us that is opening up something in the other, and therefore I believe that if someone else were to talk to the same sculptures, it might not become sensual or erotic.
MELT INTO ONE ANOTHER, becoming one
We are one.

The stones are pointing towards something that has become clear for me. I gravitate towards this wish to become one with my surrounding. I have always wanted that. I want to know everything about the people around me. I want to melt into them, be them, feel them in my core.

In the end this is political for me. It’s also emotional, but not purely. It is political in almost every way. From the small things to the big. If I can manage to visualize and believe in the fact that we are all, all the bodies, everywhere, connected and made out of the same, then my actions will change. The drive to deal with my destructiveness might become stronger. To stop being destructive, both towards my surrounding – because they are part of me, but also towards myself – because my surrounding is also hurt when I am. It is about broadening our capacity to feel empathy and relate to different bodies. To understand that we are part of the same might make it possible for us to take care of our surrounding in a different way, humans as well as things.13

My goal with *Whispering Bodies* is based in this idea. I wanted to create something where the relations between human and thing could be explored, to see if empathy and consent could be reached between the visitors and the sculptures, or at least see if a journey could start in that room. I also wanted to see if I could share tools to change our perception of our own bodies, through introspective journeys where the participants would incorporate other bodies within theirs.

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13 I wanna make something clear. It doesn’t matter to me if it’s real or not. I don’t care if you, or even I, believe that we can communicate with things. One of my teacher’s in this Master Program said that this is also what makes it work within the Performing Arts context. I want to offer a way to imagine our world in a specific way. I think that we can pretend to believe in it, we can convince ourselves to believe in it, by actually doing the actions over and over again. After experiencing communication with things, even if it’s just make-believe, it might change our way of thinking and interacting with the things around us. If we pretend, and fully indulge in that fantasy, the feeling will be as real as if we believed without pretending. As I’ve been saying I wanna change our interaction with our surrounding because of the positive effects it would have. Our surrounding within us as well as the humans and things around us.
I will continue this work. It is still happening, in me and in this text. It is still transforming, and I hope this journey will continue taking unexpected turns.

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REFERENCES LIST

REFERENCES I HAVE BEEN CARRYING WITHIN ME