

Becoming Affected with Artistic Memoir: Entanglements with Arts-Based Education in India

By

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B.A., Douglas College, 2014

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ABSTRACT

Drawing loosely on feminist and post-human notions of learning as an “untamed” and “more-than-multiple” experience (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 154), I play with the use of Artistic Memoir as a method to explore my affectual experiences (Braidotti, 2002; Springgay, 2008) as a British Columbian, school-based Child and Youth Counsellor working as a visitor in the context of a shanti-school in Goa, India. Well practiced in traditionally Western paradigms of education, my intention is to move beyond my familiar understandings of what it means to be educated in North America to heighten awareness of intuitive forms of learning that arise in an encounter between intra-acting bodies, materials, and the agentic spaces between (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Understanding learning experiences as relational and enigmatic events, composed *of* rather than *in* the world, I engage with an inductive, intuitive and *becoming-with* process, exploring the emerging themes and entanglements of my presence in this Goan classroom as they grow out of a collection of child-driven, emergent art projects (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Mazzei, 2010). As I take on the implications of methodology and “data analysis” in post-qualitative research, I think with Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) constructions of maps, expressing my interpretation of these events with my own poetic and visual assemblages and navigating curiosities through Artistic Memoir. Thinking with philosophies of immanence (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), new materiality (Braidotti, 2002; Stewart, 2007) and the autobiographical nature of *a/r/tography* (Irwin, Beer, Springgay, Grauer, Xiong, Bickel, 2006), Artistic Memoir has unravelled as a nomadic method, giving my experiences and understandings of the projects a temporal body – a disjointed place for my data, fragments of my affectual

reverberations with Goa, to momentarily settle. A fragmented and non-linear collection of poems, images, anecdotes and short stories, this composition begins from the middle and poses no end; its process is designed to stir up questions over answers. Through this method, my intention is to look into the “*events* of activities and encounters” with affective, arts-based education, “evoking transformation and change” in my experience with “data” and understanding of learning, being and knowing (Hultman & Taguchi, 2010, p. 535).

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To my family, Mom, *you* and the generations of women before you bare the roots of my feminism. Dad, my successes are a reflection of your ethic. Adam, your gentle heart reminds me of what is important.



“For a seed to achieve its greatest expression, it must come completely undone. The shell cracks, its insides come out and everything changes. To someone who doesn't understand growth, it would look like complete destruction.”

- Cynthia Ocelli

The ephemeral red dust of India finds its way into every crevice.
The bottoms of my feet, deep in my nail beds, coating my nostrils, ear canals, eyelids
- between my teeth.

Riding my bike, it sweeps into my eyes and as tears fall down my cheeks, the red dust
of India rolls with salty droplets. Clinging to my chin, and letting go.
Falling back to the earth, where it is swept up again into bodies of the next.

The ephemeral red dust of India.





HOW TO BEGIN FROM THE MIDDLE

“The middle is by no means an average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed. Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.”

– Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 25

बीच वाला



I sit upon an Udaipurian rug I purchased along my travels. Its detailed patchwork is a collection of a thousand other pieces – mismatched materials from every corner of the sub continent – meticulously beaded and pulled together by tiny hands. The ethical reality of market shopping in many developing countries waves at me from across my mind. Crossed legged upon its embellishments, the skin on the tops of my feet hold imprints of its design. Feeling the enfleshed grooves of its patterns with my fingertips, my senses are taken back to India.

I draw my hand along the dim-lit walls of a Rajasthani fabric shop – bursting with tails of silk, wool and cashmere from the earth to ceiling. Brightly patterned fabrics tousled together and traced by foreign fingertips – Artistic Memoir is an eternally becoming, enfleshed knot –

weaving, twisting, detaching, fraying – and as such, has multiple entry points. In certain conditions, space loosens and new openings may be unraveled. Others become strangled in tension, buried by others of the Same. All of this at play for a small cost to a *gora*. As the memory flies away from me, I play with a loose bead on the edge of my rug. Never outside the complexities of material bodies, power and place – I invite you to read this work from whichever point innerves your curiosity, your inspiration. Begin from the beginning, the end, or the middle – and pull at hanging threads which call to be unraveled.



PULLING AT MY STRINGS

Inspired by the nomadic writings of Rosi Braidotti (2002), Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987), Kathleen Stewart (2007) and Stephanie Springgay (2008), this blog space opts for a style that pulls away from the logocentrism of traditional academic writing and is a gesture of rejection – a wandering from the ways in which we assume things have always been done in school-based research. This map is not bounded by an introduction or conclusion of final thoughts, rather its intensities are seen as continuous and ever-changing. This memoir did not begin here, nor does it end here. The ideas that touch this memoir do not belong to me, but are part of an ephemeral chain of thought which never dies - it proceeds (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Leaking into other avenues of consciousness; metamorphosing molecular sequences of bodies it touches.

Artistic Memoir is animated by a mosaic of singularities that draw on pressure points, wonderings and banalities of excess – a circuit of affectual densities and textures layered over a map or contact zone (Stewart, 2007). In this case, the temporal body of this work takes the shape of a blog site. Operating within its shell are posts; regions of intensities or collections of lines – plateaus that stir up movement within the assemblage. Intentionally disparate and tangential, the significance of these posts lie not in one key underlying message but in the “intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible” (Stewart, 2007, p. 3). With this said, this writing attempts to dislodge from the “conventional pact” between a writer and her reader. What may appear to be “lost in incoherence” is actually designed to destabilize the all too familiar writer/reader binary where the writer’s intentions inherently become the reader’s reception (Braidotti, 2002, p. 9). Discarding linearity, meaning has the opportunity to emerge in any which way, following intensities and flows with an instinctual drive. Signifying this memoir with a true form would be to overlook the “working of matter, and the exteriority of their relations,” stratifying the potential complexity of its expression with assumption (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3). In this vein, Artistic Memoir is a multiplicity - an assemblage of multiples which are infinitely unknown because its body holds no definite attributes. Each post is written to be read without a true subject or hierarchical linearity. By removing the subject, potentials and new possibilities have space to surface. These pieces in no way follow a set of steps or recognizable order. By intention, they may seem allusive, piecey, even disjointed. Upon first encounter, Gregg and Seigworth (2010) describe this branch of theory as a sensation of vulnerability, “a momentary (sometimes more permanent) methodological and conceptual freefall” (p. 4). In such

an engagement that is briefly suspended from the familiar pathologies of top-down knowledge and binary schemes, Braidotti (2002) acknowledges the discomfort that may arise when reading this style of writing and warns that “readers may have to be patient at times and bear the stress of a journey that has no set destinations” (p. 10). It is at this point – this junction of discomfort and disequilibrium – where capacity for growth, for change, becomes possible.



Falling

पोडचे

My toes touch the edge
 Prints burning on scorched rocks
 as if to melt Me away
 pebbles crumble beneath my feet - tumbling over and down
 down, down, down

Throwing my hands in the air
I fall victim to the fever
the hot headed, unknowing explorer

A choice to jump
to let go
to fall a million feet
off of the side of the world

Tiny pebbles
A million small bullets
Flying past me as a harem of wild horses
Shards of gems, twinkling jewels
Particles accelerate
Speed and pressure
शक्तिशाली बम

A puncture
I surrender to a new way
In the breath of freedom
falling fast, but somehow calm - clean

the force pulls apart my skin
dark and bloody are the spaces in-between
this windy rupture
stirs small tears
and lets the light in

Something catches me
a rope around my waist - tightening with the weight of a heavy soul
and the guilt to go back

Mind over heart,
Left foot from right
I step back

To the burning stones that held me up
To the safety of the familiar
To the expected
Way of being
Swept with dirt which rests in the corners of my doubt

EXPLORING MEANING IN ABSENCE

Engaging with Artistic Memoir requires readers to step outside of traditional forms of arts-based research which utilizes art as representations of data, and move towards a reconfiguration of art work as an exposure of meaning that is yet to be named (Springgay, 2008). The images, poems and stories within this memoir are intended to stand without reliance on a caption or explanation of meaning. To apply a name or descriptive account of visual/textual nuances would be to funnel all possibilities for diverse readings into a singular truth - a reproduction of the author's localized knowledge onto the reader. Rendering with an a/r/tographical orientation to arts-based educational research, the seemingly illusive presentation of Artistic Memoir is intended to open spaces for multiple and complex readings, "allow[ing] meaning to emerge from what is absent, tacit, literalized, and forgotten than from what is present, explicit, figurative and conscious" (Springgay, 2008, p. 8). With this said, the processual body of Artistic Memoir is rooted in what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the rhizome.

"A rhizome is an assemblage that moves and flows in dynamic momentum. It is an immanent force, creating multiplicities that do not rely on hierarchical categories. A rhizome has no root-origin; it spreads out, becoming, an asignifying rupture... It operates by variation, perverse mutation, and flows of intensities that penetrate the systems of classification, putting them to strange new uses. It creates the unfamiliar."

- Springgay, 2008, p. 4

Entangled in its web, pieces of the memoir are weaved in and among each other in a performance where artistic elements play off one another in ways which realign systems of thought. Its process employs abstract images and poetry as materializations of affectual becomings and language to trace the sensationality of their relations. This work does not seek the portrayal of a subject, but moreso a decentering of its position and exploration of its contours. In this way, writing and art operate simultaneously in an engaged act of inquiry (Springgay, 2008). These layers of memoir bounce with affectual vibrations that dribble across each other with varying tempos, all while “spilling past even the most steadfast of disciplinary boundaries” (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 4).

FIREFLIES

The universe is a child
with small and playful hands
pulling on the strings of fireflies
curious in their glow

Bouncing and reverberating - they spring in every direction
connected with the elasticity of a rubber band

stretched apart, and whipped together
they collide

A burst of light
Combustion, a million tiny stars
dancing in every direction
pulled apart and back again
with no control of their own

The universe is a child
sending spirals in the night
around the world and back again
they spin with electric light

fireflies as puppets
lighting shaded corners
those ought to be left dark

Sparks fly up in blackened skies
Like shimmering shards of glass
They cut across in dizzy paths
And settle with the dust of night



“Lodge yourself on a stratum,
 experiment with the opportunities it offers,
 find an advantageous place on it,
 find potential movement of deterritorialization,
 possible lines of flight,
 experience them,
 produce flow conjunctions here and there,
 try out continuums of intensities segment by segment,
 have a small plot of new land at all times...
 Gently tip the assemblage,
 making it pass over to the side of the plane of consistency...

[A] connection of desires, conjunction of flows, continuum of intensities.

You have constructed your own little abstract machine.”

- Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 161

A METHODOLOGY OF LEMONS

In the middle of the night, a hollow tree stands among others. Her height tells a history. Her bark, a voice for scars. Stroked with a smokey wind, she moves. Swaying branches, long arms that dust the floor. Touching dirt, rousing leaves. Below, her roots seep into the earth – a million dancing tentacles. Crawling with insects in the darkness of buried soil, and growing with the wet hum of the night. Dripping sweat, her sap is the fluid that carries molecules. Rolling down her

cheeks, growing thick with moisture in the air – She breathes with boscajial bodies, wildlings of the wood. Her pulse is of many.

Spread your hands up on her – sink nails into her skin.

Peel back her bark – look deep inside her belly.

Darkness. An empty cylinder – She is a body without organs. Her shell is no home, or place to dwell. She is no Mother – no truth – and no end. She is the water which carries – the lost – the middle.

Present in her unknown, becoming with her event – energy collects. Inside her blackened space float particles – Illuminating, fleeting, connecting, and combusting – A bustling hive of sparks, revealing tiny specs of light in the dark hollows of her womb. For a moment they hover – suspended – a wormhole to the cosmos, the infinite. Dying with the warmth of recognition, some become dull. Others gain speed, bouncing off her walls, colliding with unfamiliar bodies – crashing – exploding – and reverberating with the wild. Though at first a whisper, her pulse throbs heavy and its beat grows volume. Roaring from the depth of her roots: Expectation is the killer of life.



As if I am a curious child wondering of fireflies in a jar - gathering, flying apart and released into oblivion - I imagine this work as a temporal vessel. A site where my data, traces of my affectual experiences and theoretical imaginings, can hover in evanescence. Momentarily settling, only to be propelled in another direction. With no projected end, this space is a contact zone for wonderings - a plane of imaginings, tensions- curiosities to be reverberated with.

“And so I begin, and begin again, attempting to negotiate with a map that is changing, with an image that I must discard, and with a vocabulary that I must unthink.”

– Mazzei, 2010, p. 515

I embed myself into an Artistic Memoir. Artistic Memoir borrows from Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) construction of mapping and aspects of Irwin et al.’s (2006) process of a/r/tography. Thinking with these post qualitative orientations to methodology and problematizing traditional forms of memoir as a purely personal account of a known subject, Artistic Memoir is a creative – and incomplete – collection of unknowns. Sifted through ontologies of place and new materialism, this style mirrors the nomadic nature of its theoretical inspirations and is an effort in resistance – a rejection of dominant practices in representation (Braidotti, 2002; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Springgay, 2008; Stewart, 2007). Similar to a Deleuzian map, Artistic Memoir is “open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 13). In this vein, Artistic Memoir holds no true subject or closed form and allows data from an event to unfold in an unhierarchical, relational space between intra-acting bodies. Through this work, data engage sporadically within versus outside a complex network of forces of an encounter. This process is an entirely nomadic event where “there can be no classical cause-and-effect relationship” (Hultman & Taguchi, 2010, p. 536) as “all bodies [within

the memoir] are causes –causes in relation to each other and for each other” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 4, as cited in Hultman & Taguchi, 2010, p. 536). Tuck and McKenzie (2015a) have described this sort of theoretical process not by means of method, but of “resonance: a continual process of crafting” (p. 92) which uses “theory as an analytic tool rather than a series of particular methods” (Fenwick, Edwards & Sawchuck, 2011, p. 177 as cited in Tuck & McKenzie, 2015a, p. 91). This practice can be referred to as “a methodology of lemons, of entanglements and of reflexive, *out of body* work” (Lather, 2013, p. 64 as cited in Tuck & McKenzie, 2015a, p. 92).





Artistic Memoir requires an openness to thought that “is situated in the in-between,” materializing energies of intra-space between bodies, accepting an invitation to move beyond “static dualisms” of one versus other and sitting in mediating spaces that become-with, spaces “where the body’s immersion and intertwining in the world creates meaning” and transforms subjectivity (Springgay, 2008, p. 39). Resonating with Irwin et. al’s (2006) practice of engaged inquiry, Artistic Memoir hovers in these intersecting spaces and focuses closely on encounters and experiences with arts-based education, rather than on representations or end products. Reflecting and engaging with my experiences practicing arts-based education, past and present, this practice interrogates and questions the materializations of meaning.

As data “finds place in the in-between where language hesitates and falters, where uncertainty cannot be represented and where knowledge remains unspoken,” my intention with this work is to engage with the challenge of conveying this sort of interstitial state, illustrating “meaning as an exposure that is never yet known” with brief artistic expressions – piecey glimpses into my understanding – that attempt to breathe in difference and twist the spirit towards new directions (Springgay, 2008, p. 38). Deleuze and Guattari (1994) describe this work as an act of “creative stuttering” and its academically unorthodox form a movement towards “perpetual disequilibrium” (p. 27). It is with this intention in mind that my first engagement with Artistic Memoir takes the body of a blog site; a cyber soundboard for vibrations, a temporal jar for fireflies.

ON THE LINGUISTICS OF BECOMING



“The belief that grammatical categories reflect the underlying structure of the world is a continuing seductive habit of mind worth questioning.”

- Karen Barad, 2003, p. 3

"The only way to understand language is to decenter it."

- Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 8

A child picks up a dirty shoe - a piece of junk found at the side of the highway. Doused in signification, it was once a shoe to be worn. To be tied up, scuffed, kicked off and put away. A known thing, with an attached truth.

A child picks up a dirty shoe - a piece of junk found at the side of the highway. She brings it to the art room. Turned upside down and inside out, it loses its name. A material becoming, of infinite potentials.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explain that in order to generate new knowledge, concepts must be turned upside down, dismantled and essentially, messed up. As a researcher, I must do this through "my own little abstract machine" of language and (re)presentations (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 85). The materials I am working with, experiences with children, art and school are innately messy, intuitive and affective - materials which cannot be accounted for by regularities or normative social scripts (Sermijn, Devlieger & Loots, 2008; Zilber, Tuval-Mashiach, & Lieblich, 2008). Renaming traditional research terms helps me to "make the familiar strange" (Dean, Harpe & Lee, 2008, p. 43) and "prevent recognition" through the language I use (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3).

DATA AS "OPENINGS"



The assemblage above is an extension of my orientation and understanding of “data” as Data Openings. My purpose in this term is to reconceptualize how social researchers have been traditionally taught to think about data, and reframe this concept in a way that embodies the values and beliefs that are congruent with my theoretical orientation as well as the place my research is entangled with. Data Openings (re)present my desire for research language to give agency and a form of tone and affect that moves beyond taken-for-granted constructions of

“data.” An opening is an aperture or gap; its neutrality offers access to infinite potentials. I imagine data as the forces at play in the vibrating space between particles.

She reaches out and touches paint. The sensation of slippery colour dripping over her fingertips is attractive, inviting. Touch - but in reality it is a repulsion - an electromagnetic force of repelling negative electrons. The space between bodies is alive. Not a vacuum, or black hole - but a thriving beehive of redistributed matter. The space between bodies is wild in difference.

Data as Openings remind me to reenvision data as anomalous moments, as “cuts, tears or cracks that resist predictability, comfort and safety” (Springgay, 2008, p. 41). This language rejects notions of data as static components of an attainable truth and, as Gregg and Seigworth (2010) acknowledge, sits “in the not yet of never-quite-knowing” (p. 9). Through Artistic Memoir, Data Openings gather as an “inventory of shimmers,” affectively illuminating areas of connection and increasing spaces for the flow of intensities (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 11). It is important to note that not all of these Openings offer potentials that present themselves as positive. My capacity to be affected is influenced by seemingly neutral or negative intensities as well. Data satellites, or Data Openings that appear unconnected to the memoir, are also highlighted as they emerge with my experiences (Berg & Lune, 2011). Although their meaning may not be visible, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) affirm that it is important to highlight these data satellites as they are part of the event, and in some enigmatic way, are imperatively present in the continuum of these energies.

In traditional methods of research, this sort of exessual data is disregarded as a surplus, as irrelevant components which do not serve the dominant narrative - efforts are made to control and regulate them. Standing on the shoulders of Springgay's (2008) a/r/tographical orientation to research, Artistic Memoir values meaning which resides in excess. Data Openings are aroused with the ambiguity of excess and in paying critical and creative attention to the ways in which I participate with data that presents itself as not-yet-known, my research may cultivate areas of knowledge which "stray from traditional regimes of representational knowledge toward a more possible future to expand the very meaning of what counts as a valued and valuable body in the world" (Butler, 1993, p. 22 as cited in Springgay, 2008, p. 48). As I re-experience arts-based education in Goa, Data Openings take many forms, a fleeting memory of interaction, obscure image, engaging dance, unfamiliar smell - a piece of junk. I search for Data Openings in "the cracks, in the in/between, in the glimpses of undersides and other sides, in the difficulties, tensions, seams and undoings" of my encounters (Kind, 2004, p. 50). I strive to sit in the opening between one and Other.

Red dust marks its traces over my skin. Etched in so deeply; always dry, always dirty. Rinsed with a cold shower, its parts move along my contours. They mix with water, pouring slowly to the ground. White tile becomes liquified with thick hues of red - slipping through my toes, through the drain and on to some other place. The surfaces of my body are clean. I step out, but my footprints hold stories of the places I have been - of the places I am going. Always with trails of red dust.

WANDERING IN EXCESS



I trail around the neighbourhood jungle, a basin of Goa's flora, fauna and local squander – looking for materials the school children can explore with in this afternoon's art project. Sharing the cool morning with my usual company – a family of indigenous pigs and ragged street dogs – we scour the land for treasures. In among blankets of garbage, there are pieces of tile, stone, shells, wire – tiny pebbles dusted with sand – small capsules of matter from places other than here. In some aeonian journey, they have made their way to this place. As we gather them, they move on to the next. Some to be digested, spat out, or crushed. Others to be glued, painted and admired. Enmeshed in beds of waste and sunken electrical wires, mango trees thrive high above us. Rooted with reaching barked tentacles, their greenery offers us shade from the waking sun,

heavy and damp with morning dew. Lining the eastern edge of the jungle is a quiet dirt road leading to winding rows of humble shanti-homes. Built with brightly painted concrete and shabby tin roofs, their warm character is a testament of the people who live here. Through open doors and shaded windows, neighbours rise, peering out at this peculiar morning scene – curious about the girl who scours through waste with feral scavengers.



BECOMING AFFECTED

“It’s like gravity, pushing and pulling in spaces between the planets. Colliding, combusting – or floating away. Even though I can’t see it, it’s what connects me to the universe.”

- Anonymous Youth

Woodward and Lea (2010) describe affect as “the medium through which bodies sustain and transform each other” (p. 8). Discursively surrounding the body, affect can be understood as

“a collection of unfolding, localized, interacting force relations” where “the powers of acting and capacities for being affected are partly determined by the circumstance in which a being finds itself” (Gatens & Lloyd, 1990, p. 101 as cited in Woodward & Lea, 2010, p. 7). Affect is not the same concept as emotion; it is something that cannot be measured or identified by representation or topography (Pile, 2010). More so, it is a swarm of materials and energies “of the world,” human and non-human, constantly interacting in an event (Hultman & Taguchi, 2010, p. 539). It is of a “fusional multiplicity” that effectively goes beyond notions of one versus multiple, and is carried through the communal spaces *between* bodies of the universe (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 154). These energies are fundamentally social, “a materialist account of bodily association” that moves beyond bounds of the human body and recontextualizes relations by “hoisting them out of [dominant] knowledge regimes and resituating them within the contexts of being and becoming” (Woodward & Lea, 2010, p. 8). In this way, bodies are always in process of becoming something else, and their capacity for change is enabled when their environment promotes association and action, or collision, with other materials (Woodward & Lea, 2010).

*“You are longitude and latitude, a set of speeds and slownesses between unformed particles, a set of nonsubjectified affects. You have the individuality of a day, a season, a year, **a life** (regardless of its duration) - a climate, a wind, a fog, a swarm, a pack (regardless of its regularity). Or at least you can have it, you can reach it. A cloud of locusts carried in by the wind at five in the evening; a vampire who goes out at night, a werewolf at full moon.... It is the entire assemblage in its individuated aggregate that is a haecceity.”*

WAKING UP

Smells of fire - of transformation - burning every night

Barren rice fields replenish, garbage melts with earth

Becoming something else, matter moves

Through spaces and bodies, embers glow

Humming with the vibrations of this scene

The night is a hazy ghost town

Silhouettes of blackened bodies -

Still bustling after dark

Red masks of dust -

With bright eyes that see through the shadows

Vulnerable in darkness

She drives fast through smokey roads

Come into the dusk

Turning to look behind her,

The trail is ablaze

Fleeting to take her in -

Starved flames feed on instinct

an animal set free

Deep breaths of heavy musk

Panting - a feral dog

Wild ashes catch her hair

Lit fuses dancing to her skull -

Thousands of strands illuminate

Sliding her tongue across seared lips,

A taste of stale soot and coal

Swallowed, scorched particles

Into spaces that share the shadows

Inside her, organs grow a spark

Heated with the fever

Of a lewd and local beast

Crackling flames awake in the night - snapping and whipping

A gnawing burn of skin

Falling back into smokey sheets -

she rests with a living fire



MANY HANDS



It is the day before the start of the school year. Hovered around an empty table with a group of young girls in their shelter home, I listen to them sing Hindi and American songs. Their voices are gentle, lulling with the heat of the afternoon. Their vibrations humm in heavy air, so thick with humidity it could be sliced. The girls play with a gold, beaded necklace, reminiscent of their new year festivities. Brushing the surface of the table with its rolling beads, they form an array of shapes – a heart, an elephant, a pair of lips. Not one child working in isolation; they are not “taking turns.” The girls move together, many hands working simultaneously. A web of limbs weaving over and under, sliding around and through. This sequence is intuitive, familiar. Below the cluster of intermingling bodies, golden forms emerge. Admired for a short moment, they are lost again – on to the next. Busy and quickly moving as they sing, their bodies dance with the beads. Reverberating, sensational and eternally familial, here the individual does not exist.



Watery encounters

Bodies cold, still

Pool of glass, hand and mirror

Stiff, a fragile stage

Hold me up so I can stand

Beneath me in steel grey, bodies deep in heavy liquid

Walking on the moon

Throw a rock into its mirror

Skip a pebble through its surface

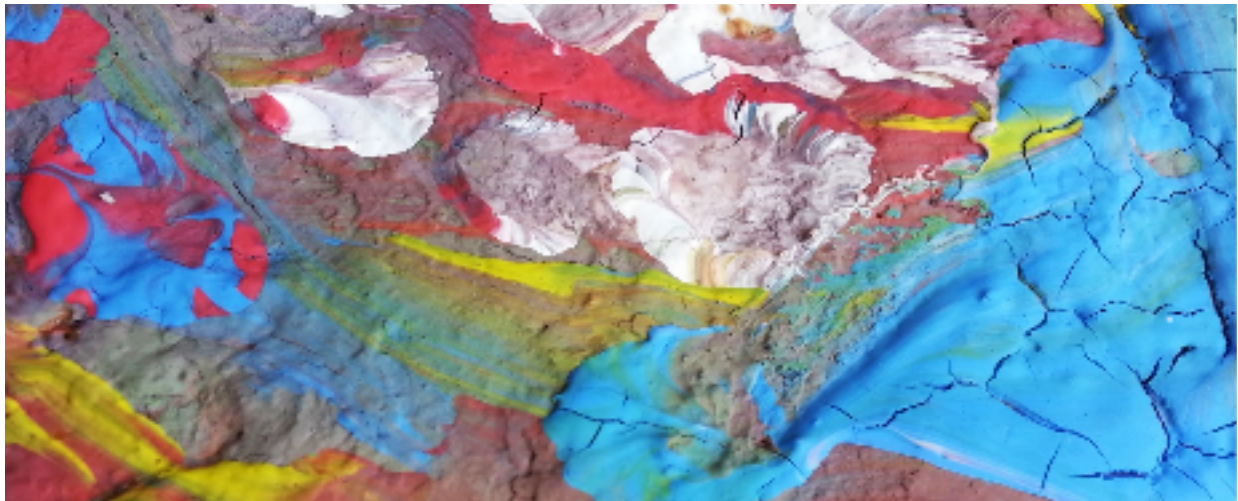
And let it sink

Liquified relations

Steam rises, folding - unfolding

Mystify this place

And *melt* with the next



EXPLORING PLACE: ENCOUNTERS WITH INDIA



Back on Canadian soil I revisit my seemingly never-ending web of data, a desk overflowing with sticky-notes, pictures, art clippings, video files, penciled quotes and anecdotes – fleeting memories and endless curiosities – the mismatched traces of my existence in India. Holding onto the eclecticity of these scattered pieces and thinking about where to go next, I have been feeling increasingly appreciative and connected to the value of Place in research.

Growing up in a dominantly westernized culture, rooted in the “coproduction of capitalism and science” (Smith, 2008 as cited in Tuck & McKenzie, 2015b, p. 635), I have been nurtured with an ideological sense of social separation from the land I inhabit. Common North American, neoliberal descriptions of the place I live might infer that I am indeed existing in a sort of bubble – the human world, a place that is disconnected, even superior, from the organic spaces around it. In my Vancouver home, I live with walls around me, I walk on a floor suspended from the earth and I look outside through the protection of glass windows. My skin is warm, my feet are clean and I hold an assurance of safety in a man-made isolation. Many of the families I spent time with in India operate in homes with walls which have holes where the sun and wind peek through, the kitchen floor is compacted dirt and the windows are steel bars with no coverings. Without notice or consent, a home is shared with an ecology of uninvited local critters and changing weather – the lines distinguishing the human and natural world are inevitably blurred. What comes to mind for me here is the seemingly undeniable relationship between encounters with Place and socio-economic status. With concrete and glass framing my experiences, how have I been engaging with Place - and to what capacity?



As I sit with my data and delve into theories of Place, I am beginning to understand more deeply that experience is never outside of the environment in which it sprouts. Thinking with new feminist material ontology, each piece of data I hold carries rich histories and meaning rooted in the Place it grew from. Wrapping my hand around a pencil I received from a teacher in Siolim, its wood painted yellow and heavy with weight – a child’s name etched along its side – I am all of a sudden carrying with it the stories and experiences of my research site. Materials such as this hold agency and cultivate affectual responses as I encounter them. Touching them inevitably influences the ways in which my body is becoming in time and space – their affects increase my capacity to act. At a molecular level, both parties within this encounter are becoming in influence. With this said, my messy desk of data is oozing with reverberations from India and my research process ought to be explicitly informed by the power of this Place and the sensations that its materials provoke. Tuck and McKenzie (2015b) support this idea and further challenge assumptions about the *where* of post-qualitative research by arguing that Place is actually something bigger than what we may traditionally assume.

“Place is not merely a neutral backdrop, a bounded and antiquated concept, or only a physical landscape... Place is mobile, shifting over time and space and through interactions with flows of people, other species [and] social practices. At a more localized level, place both influences social practices as well as performs and (re)shapes through practices and movements of individuals and collectives. Place is interactive and dynamic due to time–space characteristics. Disparate realities determine not only how Place is experienced but also how it is understood and practiced (e.g., in relation to culture, geography, gender, race, sexuality, age, or other identifications and experiences).”

- Tuck & McKenzie, 2015b, p. 635

In this vein, being critically informed by the Place I am engaging with requires me to pay attention to spatialized processes of settler colonialism and extend beyond considerations of the social to more deeply consider the land, materials, non-human inhabitants and their characteristics as they determine and manifest place (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015b). As a white-bodied and privileged visitor in India, I find it especially challenging to respectfully and meaningfully share my explorations while grappling with the political backdrop and colonial manifestations at play in the school sites I researched with. Holding these tensions at heart, engaging mindfully with my practice requires a critical commitment with relational ethics and accountability to the people and Place I am participating with (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015b).



As I share my experiences of India through Artistic Memoir, I must acknowledge that each of my expressions is indeed only an interpretation of events. Saturated in my own bias and with the multiple and ever-dynamic happenings of materials and Place, my presence is entangled not only with the space I inhabit but also with the places I *have* inhabited – the multiple histories and sensational geographies of my existence up to this point as well as the potential for beyond.

While seeking to avoid the limitations that arrive with attempted representation of a Place or affect, I utilize poetry – playing with words and rhythm to give my experiences with India, the Place which cultivated my research, a body. In no way do my words account for India as a Place, or even begin to grapple with its complexity. As I sit with these experiences and etch out a map of my data, this is merely a place for beginnings.



India is a kaleidoscope that never stops turning
She is a bag of marbles that makes her own probability
A tipped over paint truck whose colours seep into every crevice
A force of smells
Of bread, of sewage, of metal, and sweets
Of life, death and everything in between
She tastes of humidity – thick, wet
Flavours of cumin, of chilli, of cinnamon and sweat
She is a 500 pound load upon a rusty 2 wheeler
The seemingly impossible, inventive and able
A fast-forwarded race through a maze with no end
A concert orchestra in the disjointed swells of their warm up
Every instrument in the throes of a score, never in-time but in it together
A short straw among others, a tossed coin that never lands
She begins from the middle, and tells of no end
She is the grey, the sticky, the messy between

A magical fall down a rabbit hole, and an honest slap of reality

She is not a picture to be taken, or destination on a map

She is a series of combustions, of conflict and confusion

Strung with beads of temporal clarity

She is an event

Colourful and vibrant in her happenings,

She rests only for a second, in places beyond the familiar

She is a sister's smack and a mother's hug

A child's giggle, and father's belt

A grandmother's stare and a neighbour's honest wave

She is the wildness of impulse held together by duty

A climb to the top, the familial pursuit of survival

She is the anomaly of a moment from chaos – hovering in time, in pause

She gives a million reasons to pull it all apart, and one love to keep it together

She is a winding ride on a coastal highway

A salty taste of air, of skin

She is the sweat on my brow and the dirt in my nails

The scrapes on my legs and the hope in my heart

She is the curiosity of a million lost pieces

And the glue that holds them in hand

Loud, ravenous, and present in her quarrels

She is a quiet mind in the busiest of places

She is the city, the desert, the mountains and the plains

A Bengali morning and an Arabian night – She is calm but never asleep

She is the clanging of tin cups and the smoothness of masala chai

She is a tight grip on the doors of a rail cart, and the freedom of the body that sways outside

She is the heartbeat that echoes through car horns, market calls, and charging animals

The comings and goings of 3 oceans that meet at her base

A mix-matched quilt of 29 states and 150 languages

She's made of cows, of pigs, 30 pound rats

And a billion human lives

She is the law of the people, the morally criminal

The malice of some, and the passion of many

The ill, the grieving, the ones who give up

The lost, the cheated, the unspoken code

Of love, of hate and of the ways in which things get done

The inexplicable coherence of millions of lines

Dancing in every direction with the speed of a hummingbird's wings

She is the sweat between bodies

The fluid in pathways that lubricates movement

Never seen and always felt

She is the generosity, the forgiveness, the love that holds space

The heart of the universe and the mind of its people

She is the inherent potential that lies in every single molecule of this place

And the motivation that keeps them going

RIDING



In many ways, art and research are both cyclic processes that are continually informed by experiences with Place. As I experience Goan village life as a foreigner, I reverberate with pieces of the scenes I encounter – and become affected by their happenings. This post describes such a scene, and has found its way into my art projects with students at the school I am researching with. Using a “junk cycle” as their canvas and leftover house paint as their medium, the students re-imagined the ways in which they engage with waste.

Riding on my bike, I explore the depths of Siolim

Excited, curious and hopeful as the wind in my hair

Humble, Goan villages –

Family homes of tin sheets, dirtied blue tarps, dried leaves of coconut trees

Barely held together by fishing ropes

Their floor is the earth – shared with dancing kittens and jungle bugs

The women have hair that is tightly kept, and eyes that are fierce with knowledge

– of the happenings of this place, of their duties to hold it together

they watch me carefully as I pass by, hanging laundry with firm arms of soldiers

Clothes dry with the salty air that breathes with the Arabian Sea

Bouncing about, children carry young siblings

Cradled on bony hips, babies are naively thrust into adventure

Youthful boys pull two wheeled wagons stacked with heavy bags of rice

Wooden frames creaking in age, hoisted into movement by tired metal wheels

Comings and goings of local men

– dark faces dusted with sand, yellow teeth and blackened collars

Fishing poles in hand – long sticks with wire and squirming bait

Carried by bicycles from some ancient era

Rolling out of a time capsule

– rusted brown with an ear-piercing screech that announces their presence

Quickly moving, chickens squawk and scramble out of their way

Life is bustling and the sun is high with the energy of an Indian mid-afternoon

As if strategically placed in the middle of this lively performance is a dusty, white dog

The mismatched focal point of this scene

– skeletal

Sitting with the hunch of a hundred year old veteran

Staring at the ground, blankly as its bony carcass sways

– slowly as the saliva that spills from its mouth

It moves as if it is underwater

drowning in a small pool at the center of a busy circus ring

– held up only by some gravitational miracle

Watching this animal suffer is what Death looks like, in its most unforgiving form

a body so vacant that even the flies acknowledge its time is up

but it sways on, holding a fragile place in the theatricals of this village

Temporal

And seemingly unnoticed

The starkness of this encounter – the parallels of life and death – slap me in the face

squeezing the blood out of my stomach with the sensuous hands of a curious child

I look away

And ride on

What else is there to do?

जीवन चक्र



"Unknowing is not not-knowing - rather it creates and constitutes the unfamiliar, the peculiar, the uncertain - as things in the making... It takes us out of ourselves, out of our customary routines and assumptions... [It] flickers and slips, affecting a release, and brings us into the world itself."

- Springgay 2008, p. 95, 113

SKIN CONVERSATIONS

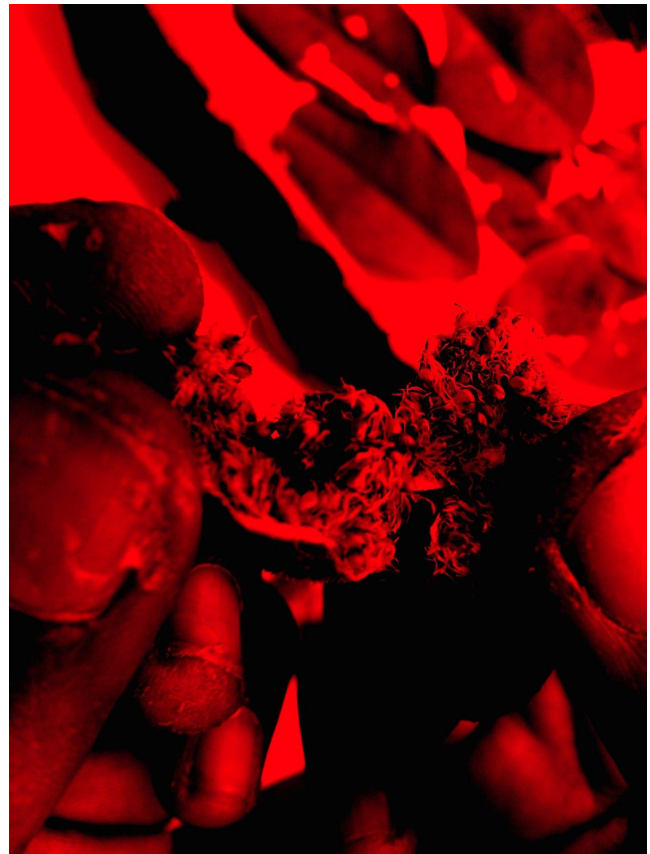


*“Skin is a border that feels; it is open to other bodies, interacting and taking on different shapes. It is in this opening to others through inter-embodiment that touch differentiates bodies requiring us to examine the boundary not as a division but as the very location, **a threshold that produces bodies and knowledges.**”*

– Stephanie Springgay, 2008, p. 68

Thinking with feminist post-structural authors such as Stephanie Springgay (2008) and Sara Ahmed (2000), this post shares an assemblage of words, images and poetry that emerged between intra-acting bodies – human and non-human – in a shanti-school in Goa, India. Pulling apart materials – tearing dried leaves of coconut trees, oozing flesh of plump seeds – the children expressed their curiosities about “what skin can *do*.”

As liquid glue dried over our skin - a capsule of bark, leaves and the inveterate red dust of India - we became with an event. Not a lesson to be understood or product to gain, but an experience to be questioned - to be felt.



tvacha

त्वचा

Cheeks – *gaal* – arms

EYELIDS

open – this is not open, *inside is flesh*

blood

रक्त

gurdee

Red – our colours – scars, moles, sun – hair

“lots of skin – *all over bodies*”



Layered over the primary classroom's tile floor is a plethora of jungle matter - pieces of dried up leaves, twigs, shells, seeds, bark, and other shrubbery that was pulled up and left under a walking bridge in my local village. Setting up bowls of liquid glue - "gum" - the oozing in-between which shapes our work. As the sounds of local traffic, scooter horns and screeching pigs, pick up with the morning sun, I hear the rickety sounds of the school buses arriving out front. After a few moments, a hum of little footsteps and children's chatter reverberates through the courtyard. Beginning with a small group of rambunctious first year students, children in blue, pressed uniforms spill into the classroom, climbing over one another as they hang up book bags before hovering over the spread of "rubbish." Their moving bodies remind me of an army of ants dancing over each other in an intricate push for the lead. Settling like jigsaw pieces around the display of materials, some stare blankly - others giggle over the absurdity of *waste* inside the formalized structure that is their school. Thinking about how close their bodies move in the group and my own western-adaptation to this sort of proximity and touch, I begin our session with a set of questions. First in English and then in Hindi, I ask the children open-ended questions which I hope may create movement and new conditions of thought before they explore with the materials.

त्वचा क्या है

Tvacha kya hai

What is skin?

त्वचा क्या कर सकते हैं?

Tvacha kya kar sakate hain

What can skin do?

Silence. The children look at me blankly, seemingly unsure of what it is that I am asking. Though an instinct rises to fill the space with clarification, I choose to sit in the quiet. To offer silence is to renegotiate the ordinary with a quivering in the stability of category or trajectory, a momentary stutter - “a suspension of the narrative” - an unfolding into space (Stewart, 2007, p. 19). Paying attention here, there is a lull in the action. Eyes wander over the materials, up to me, and to each other. I wonder about what disequilibrium may make possible. One boy questions, “What do you want us to make?” Another appears confused, “What is this craft?” I ask the question again, “What can skin do?” but this time I explain, “There is no right answer, I want to hear any idea you have - from your imagination.” Their stares linger for a few moments and after a short silence, hands begin to rise and the gentle sounds of curious voices bubble into a dialogue.

Skin can change

मुलायम

Mulaayam

Out in the trees

Prickly things

Falling off my arms, it goes away and becomes something else

Inside an animal - or an ant

Breaking the shell

Seeds get squished, their insides come out



Bones, like twine

The branches have tears

कट गया

kat gaya

I can open it up to see what's inside

I'll join it with another, but it doesn't fit

नया

Naya

It goes out

My skin goes out with the jungle

“When two hands touch, there is a sensuality of the flesh, an exchange of warmth, a feeling of pressure, of presence, a proximity of otherness that brings the other nearly as close as oneself. Perhaps closer... So much happens in a touch: an infinity of others - other beings, other spaces, other times - are aroused.”

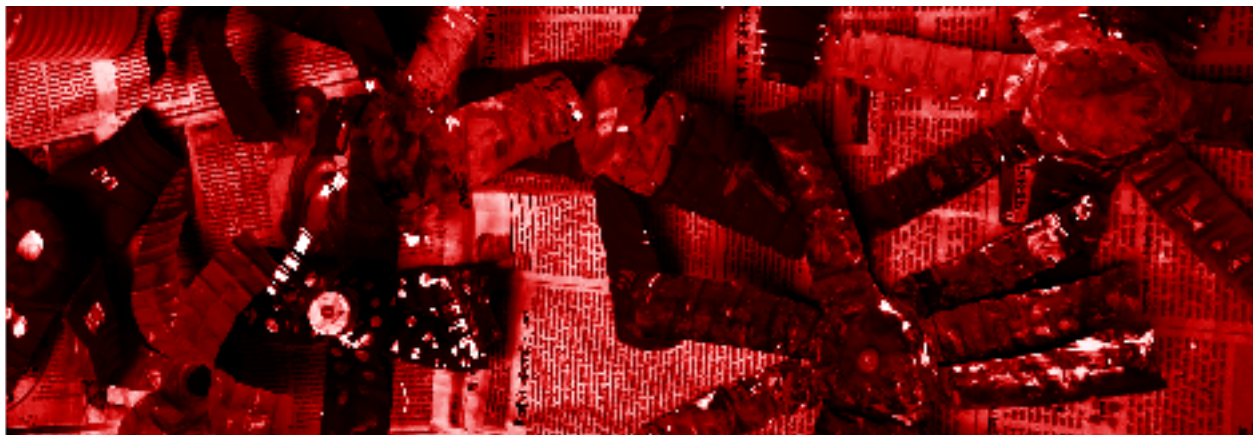
- Barad, 2012, p. 205

A child touches my arm, wide-eyed and whispering, he closely examines its colour - "gora."
Another leans against my back, with her delicate arm around my neck she twirls her fingers through strands falling at my shoulders. From inside my belly I notice a sense of discomfort. I am adapting to a new way of knowing bodies - space - and touch. Feeling for the pressure points of forces in relation, my instinct calls to set a boundary. A regulated space to mark the separation of our bodies. At home, I live and teach this.

Inward shoulders and lowered eyes.

Public bodies, arms at their sides within defined capsules.

Here, bodies are shared. Connected through touch, we mingle through streets in a communal sweat. There is no boundary marking a separation of individuals. We move in many directions and appear as one.



My skin touches yours

I feel your molecules with mine

Do I know you?

Have I been here before?

Tracing your lines, a path is trailed through wrinkled folds

Scabs and scars – a canvas of our histories

Energy bubbles

A still frame image of tiny specs in space

Pulling apart, hovering in time

Close, but barely touching

Distance harbors their electricity

Tiny hairs alive with curiosity

Reaching out

Fluid as the legs of swimming jellyfish

An event is waking in the space between organs

Skin becomes new

A threshold

A carrier of cells

Recycled - old, new and inbetween

Familiar, unknown

And becoming in difference



ETHICAL UNDOINGS



*“It is no wonder that when theories have dared to provide even a tentative account of **affect**, they have sometimes been viewed as naively or romantically wandering too far out into the groundlessness of a world’s or a body’s myriad inter-implications, letting themselves **get lost** in an overabundance of **swarming**, **sliding** differences: chasing tiny firefly intensities that **flicker** faintly in the night, registering those resonances that **vibrate**, subtle to seismic, under the flat wash of broad daylight, dramatizing (indeed, for the unconvinced, over-dramatizing) what so often passes beneath mention.”*

- Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p. 4

Working with a research method that is far removed from traditional modes of empirical thought, my process becomes naturally vulnerable to academic criticisms which may mistake my theoretical intention for lack of rigor.

Springgay, Irwin and Kind (2005) explain that this form of research moves beyond the “existing criteria that exists for qualitative research” and requires a loss, a shift, or a



rupture where in absence, preconceived meaning is displaced and new courses of action unfold (p. 898). With this said, maintaining an ethical practice in this vein of research invites a unique process of accountability in my work as I attempt to navigate through a sort of post-qualitative void - it requires me to constantly revisit my responsibility for congruency among my theory, intention and approach (Kvale, 1995; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015a). This means sustaining persistent engagement in my process, constantly referring back to peer-reviewed literature on my topic as well as my guiding theoretical perspectives (Kvale, 1995). As this sort of honest involvement in the research process requires researcher transparency and reflexivity, I position myself as a member of the entanglement, consistently critical of my place and approach in the research assemblage. With awareness that this sort of abstract research does not follow typical routes to validity and reliability, I continually revisit the following questions to account for my ethical responsibilities in post-qualitative research:

Am I avoiding absolutes and generalizability?

Am I challenging what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call "sedimentation"? Sedimentation refers to the organization of layers into a unified strata, the representational forms of bodies (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). By constantly referring to this question throughout my process, my intention is to make ruptures in the sediment and look into the spaces between layers, thinking without a subject to interrupt my habitual reliance on an essential object of truth (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994 as cited in Mazzei, 2010).

Am I disrupting taken-for-granted assumptions and “prevent[ing] recognition” by maintaining a critical and imaginative involvement with my theory and Data Openings (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3)? My use of abstract art, obscure compositions in my images, and the expression of thought through irregular language, writing predominantly with verbs instead of nouns to emphasis movement and action, are examples of this.



Am I engaging with bodies and place with “contiguity” (Springgay, 2008, p. 38)? Existing in adjacent spaces and colliding with bodies, researching ethically requires me to hold “an attitude of endless questioning” that enables me to examine the effects of my privilege, power and the many vulnerabilities that arise as I become tangled and implicated in new spaces (Springgay, 2008, p. 36).

Embodying this ethic invites me

as a visiting researcher to examine Data Openings not in isolation, but intertwined with the

presence of many bodies - human and non-human. Questioning, thinking and sharing in relation with many, this ethical approach is “grounded in bodied encounters” (Springgay, 2008, p. 35).



Oyster shells - emptied and left on the side of the road. The fishy smell, the unexpected bugs that come with them. Laid out over newspaper. I see their bodies scurry. Re/placed, dis/placed - the small beings that gather in and among the shells. With no intention of their own, they are becoming with new conditions.

Rutika is a girl of many abilities - but not in this social construct. Her voice, a gentle murmur. Drowned by the chorus of her peers. Wide eyed and obsessive. Her eyes are huge - intense - they look into the core of things. She mixes paint, purposeful in her process.

Each shell she paints a different shade. Completely covered, each side a different hue. She is meticulous, methodical. Her fierce eyes are sketched into my mind.



“If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel’s heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence.”

- George Eliot, Middlemarch



“Nothing is free in India.”

“But... it’s garbage.”

“Even if it’s trash on the side of the road, it usually belongs to somebody. Broken pipes, old coconut leaves, rope and wire. Someone will use these things.

You think it’s dirty, but somebody wants it. Especially if you do.”



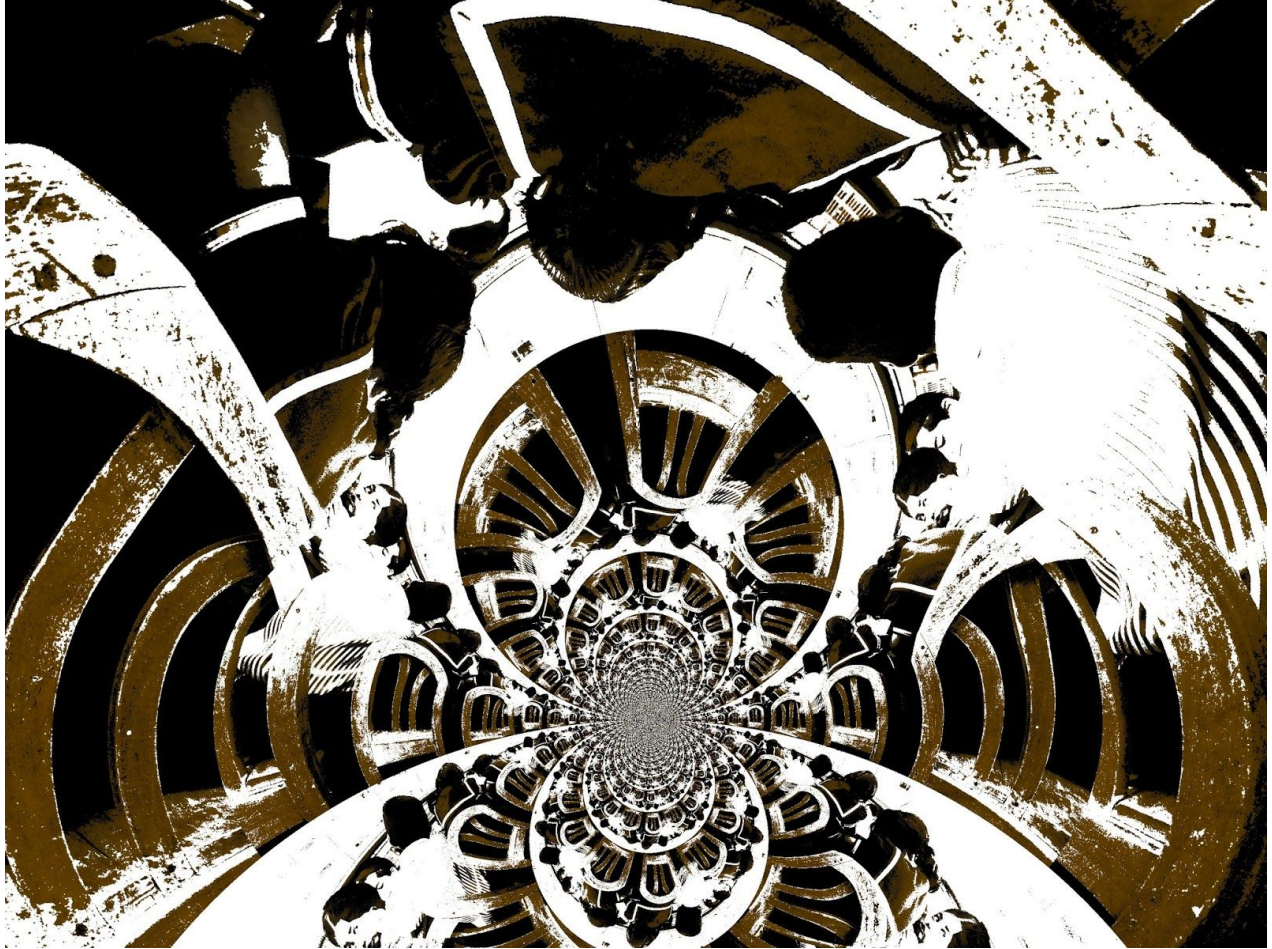
A few teachers pass by, local women peering into the classroom with curiosity as they make their way to begin their first lectures of the day.

It is not uncommon for my work to gather odd looks and expressions of confusion from many of my more traditional teaching partners. Now known as “The Cycle Lady” after our first art project which reimaged an old bicycle from the local trash, I am often visited by a handful of intrigued spectators who are interested in the strange happenings that come about in my art room. While many pose questions and words of fascination, I am also met with sceptical voices of the uncomfortable. In a space where art ought to hold a purpose - a unified craft to be framed or decoration to be sold - navigating conversations about the nature of a process with no true

product is something I am becoming well-practiced in. With this said, these discussions stir up an undeniable ethical tension that sits with me in much of this work: Who am I to encourage the messiness of processual work in a place where the accuracy of products represent the value of success?

The children in this village are here to learn for a purpose. For many of them, school is an opportunity to gain specific skills needed to make movements outside cycles of poverty - a privilege which cultivates hope for a future outside of the slums. In the social landscape of village life in Goa, *art* represents a business. Authentic, local artifacts are made and sold to tourists on market days. Handcrafted bags, jewelry, scarves, and embroidered blankets have the potential to become big ticket items to the savvy salesperson, a trade which shapes the livelihood of many men and women Goa. Developing the necessary abilities to follow directions and attain representation are concepts that directly serve these children in the craftsmanship of this merchandise. In actuality, most items sold at these markets are made by children from neighbouring states. With a booming tourist economy, Goa has become a transient location for lower caste artisans from Karnataka and Kerala. In the high season months of December to February, Goa is flooded with pop-up slums - communities of temporary settlers with hopes of selling goods to wealthy Europeans. Many of the students involved in my art projects are children from such families.

Looking up, I catch their glimpses and swallow heavily. I feel the weight of guilt fall down my throat and seep into my belly.



As a visiting researcher in Goa, poetry helps me to hover in tensioned moments and engage with the ethical implications of my work in a meaningful way. Thinking about the history of this place, the distribution of power, and the privilege I hold as a white-bodied “tourist” – I grapple with the politics of my position here.

Coming to know beyond you and I

Who am I in what I do?

Is it possible to be “me”

Or am I a collection of many other things?

My ancestors, their times

A history of molecules that reconstitute themselves in my body

And all around me

Constantly becoming something else

Am I one or many?

A collection of ideas

Sifted through social and cultural politics

Implicated and messy

I am a carrier of these

A landscape of intersecting lines

That moves beyond surface or topography

Entangled in its weave

I have a social location

And a privilege that affords me this place

So what does it mean to *know*?

With who I am in what I do

Not a question to be answered,

Opinion to gain,

Or destination to navigate

I begin and begin again

With an image I must shed

A map to burn

And a language to unthink

I am becoming with an ever-changing event

No solidified figure or concrete pathology

Representation defies its process

And recognition limits its flight

Marks are left and erased again

Roots are twined – signified, totalized – some become strangled

Others breathe in the spaces between

Becoming here

Is not black and white

A process of evolving – but not how I have been trained to see it

Forward and back again

Upside down and inside out

Am I one or many?

Who am I in what I do?

Perhaps – I am a body

Dusted with sand,

Age old and multistoried

Scratched surface –

Exposed





“We tend to see the world in ways already mastered by the eye... We have become so accustomed to what is outside that we have stopped thinking, stopped experiencing.”

- Deleuze as cited in Colebrook, 2006, p. 10, 11

THE DANGERS OF BURYING YOURSELF IN HABIT

The silhouette of a woman

A knock at the door

A wife, a mom, a daughter, a sister

A student, a teacher

A high achiever

A saver, a buyer - of all sorts of *things*

Everyday comforts and a Friday night movie
 Early morning wake ups and bedtime routines
 An invite out, but why even bother
 Worry of being tired, or stretched too thin
 Easier to say no, best to stay in
 A new show on TV, a glass of wine
 Moving up in the world, through a lateral climb

“[If] the segmentarity becomes rigid, to the extent that all centers resonate in, and all black holes fall on, a single point of accumulation - that is like a point of intersection somewhere behind the eyes... A central computing eye”

- Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 211

Every assemblage consists of multiple, overlapping and ever-connected lines (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). Lines of flight, that allow for rupture and movement, as well as lines of segmentarity, or those that are “stratified and territorialized and doused in signification,” are in constant motion within the assemblage (de Freitas, 2012, p. 561). Artistic Memoir seeks to move outside of traditional conceptualizations of social research and education, provoking ruptures in

commonly accepted ways of thinking and inspiring lines of flight towards new future directions.

However, like every assemblage my process is inherently and naturally limited by lines of segmentarity. From the dominant view of social research, the abstract nature of my theoretical orientation and research process gives this work unique limitations. As I engage in Artistic Memoir, I sit in tensioned moments with the following lines of segmentarity:

Dominant social desires for validity and reliability in research require me to expose my intuitive processes with transparency, making my steps visible and congruent with my selected literature and guiding theory (Kvale, 1995). Given the abstract nature of this work, identifying this process in a concrete and coherent way imposes limits on an instinctual experience that often moves beyond words (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015a).



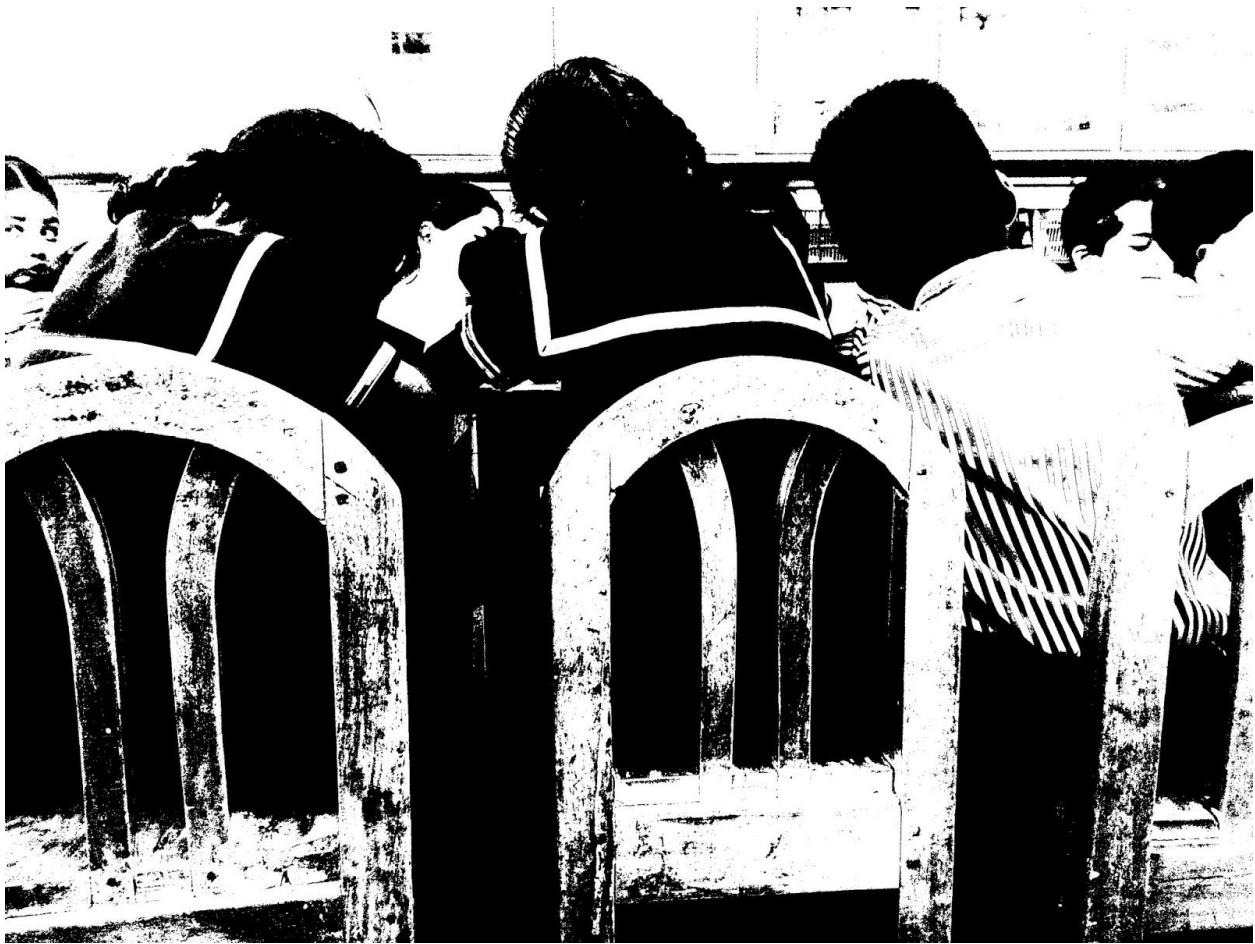
Affect is always dynamic and never finished. It is impossible to “capture” it in research.

However, while this may be viewed as a challenge in traditional forms of research, my theoretical orientation and methodology actually celebrates this fluidity and attempts to mirror its movement with a flexible and intuitive process.

My interpretation of these phenomena rely on my own “received vocabularies which predetermines what [I am] able to consider” (Mazzei, 2010, p. 513). My previous experiences shape what I see and how I interpret it, ultimately shaping what emerges from the Data Openings. With this consideration, the practice of Artistic Memoir exposes my implication in this research and situates me as an entangled piece of this work, never outside of the assemblage. While some orientations may assume my position within the research to be threatening to the “truth” of my research, I believe that naming myself as a component of the entanglement is in line with my theoretical orientation. In the realm of post-qualitative research, this alignment makes my work credible (Kvale, 1995).

Confronting all aspects of representation in research is an unattainable feat. As Mazzei (2010) explains, “We can never get outside of the cyclical nature of representation” (p. 513). Art, image, poetry, and Data Openings are all in some ways representative and getting away from this is ultimately impossible. Although I am using language and images which strive to move away from traditional assumptions about data, research and representation, I am still a researcher

looking at a chosen topic and arriving with intentions to gather information, examine and make assumptions.



A board of ponds

Forward facing - silent, firm

Moving in lines

That predate their existence

Their dust settles in layers

Sediment hardens

Stratifying bodies

Into something

Bigger than themselves

Solid as the furniture which keeps them

A wooden chair

A table

Their silence speaks

Of homogeneity, of appropriation

Structured in the walls of this place

Intra-active materials

Agentic and irregular

Held in colonial spaces

Uniformed in their isolation

Lines of flight bounded by the Same

Tightly knit,

Strangled

The banality of oppression
 Weaved in human assumption
 And taken for granted
 By the ways in which we assume
 Things have always been done

We can guess what fear is. We are always afraid of losing. Our security, the great molar organization that sustains us, the arborescences we cling to, the binary machines that give us a well-defined status, the resonances we enter into, the system of overcoding that dominates us - we desire all that... Everything is involved: modes of perception, kinds of actions, ways of moving, life-styles... A man comes home and says, "Is the grub ready?" and the wife answers, "What a scowl! Are you in a bad mood?": two rigid segments in confrontation. The more rigid the segmentarity, the more reassuring it is for us. This is what fear is, and how it makes us retreat into the first line... The molar or rigid line of segmentarity... A future, but no becoming"

- Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, p. 195, 227

"The breaking of so great a thing, should make a greater crack."

- William Shakespeare, Antony and Cleopatra

A DISMANTLING OF THE SOVEREIGN INDIVIDUAL



Before I left for India, I covered my bed with traveller's journals and local maps – trying to anticipate the *where* of this journey. With highlighted roadways and scribbled margins, my maps would guide me through unfamiliar territories. The sea of papers were complemented with the contents of my backpack, a plethora of clothing and emergency items for every foreseeable challenge. I imagined the stories I would be telling to those back home with these things at my side. A crisp new travel folder clipped with plane tickets, directions, rupees, dog spray, band aids, and local contacts at the centre of my spread. I held these materials with assurance, an illusion of control during a transition that was truly unfamiliar to me.

The weight.

After 3 plane rides and over 28 hours of travelling from Vancouver to Goa, I arrived at the Vasco airport with my 50 pound bag and secured travel folder in hand. Navigating through a humid sea

of persistent local taxi drivers, I tracked down the driver from my host organization, Akhil. After a hurried introduction, I was quickly thrown into the chaos of Goan rush hour traffic - speeding and weaving through cars, scooters, wagons, and bicycles in a rusted and screeching miniature truck. My eyes glided over the procession of scooters – passengers from bouncing babies and dogs to families of five and no signs of helmets – my western ways of knowing were undoubtedly troubled. Speaking through his endearing Indian head wiggle, a friendly social mannerism of the south which is sure to reassure a weary heart, Akhil shared that there was an accident on the highway and things were especially busy on this morning. Sitting in the passenger seat and holding on for dear life as we honked and swerved about the highway, my senses were on overdrive. Taking in the physicality of the situation, my body jerked and clenched with every bump; however my mind was taking in something more potent.

The smells.

So. Many. Smells. Of sewage, of garbage, of spices, of animals, of sweets, of petrol and baking – all stirred into one complex cocktail that can only be understood from the experience it offers. A daily walk through the local market in Mapusa offers a vibrant sort of ordinary whose pungency is so multiplus it can never be truly identified. Though at first interpreted as an assault to my airways, India's authentic aroma would become familiar. Like the strong memory of my Great Grandmother's perfume, it may not be a delight to my senses but its presence is genuine, warm – it feels like coming home.

However on this first ride in Goa, the masala mix that I was breathing in grew slightly different. Burning – not of the fiery garbage variety but of something much more intrusive. I shifted my gaze down to notice thick black smoke rising from below our truck and oozing through the rusty hole between our seats. Akhil yelled a few choice phrases in Hindi and abruptly stopped the car. Swarms of quickly moving vehicles flowed around us as if we were a tree in the midst of a thrushing stampede. As the smoke quickly filled our vehicle, I shuffled around the passenger seat weighing my options. Like the dark billowing cloud blossoming around me, I remember hovering in this moment as if it somehow played out slower than the rest of my experiences overseas; I was alone in India, there was no going home, and I was going to either sink or float. Energized with what I assumed was fear, Akhil yelled frantically at me to get out of the truck. Already in and among a heaping handful of unexpected social happenings, I was assured that this was not a situation he anticipated. Plugging myself back into my body, I frantically looked around to see vehicles speeding and honking past us – as far as I could see there was no way I could safely get out of the car without getting hit. Glancing around at my surroundings, I made fleeting eye contact with Akhil. I assume I must have looked like a fish out of water as he reached over and awkwardly pulled me out from his driver's side door. He led me to the front of the deteriorating truck where I stood, head darting in every direction and erectly holding my hands out to signal traffic to move around me.

Honking, honking, honking.

Akhil yelled at me sharply to cross the street and stand at the side of the road. As you may imagine, crossing the street in India is almost impossible at times. I was frozen, terrified not only

about getting run over, but also with alarm of the lit fuse that was our truck in front of me. The smoke was heavy and looming, looking at me from every direction as if it was naming my vulnerability. Blowing his whistle and banging on the hoods of cars to stop for us as he moved, a traffic policeman approached me with an assertive stare of authority that I was yearning – holding my hand, he walked me across the street as if I was a small child.

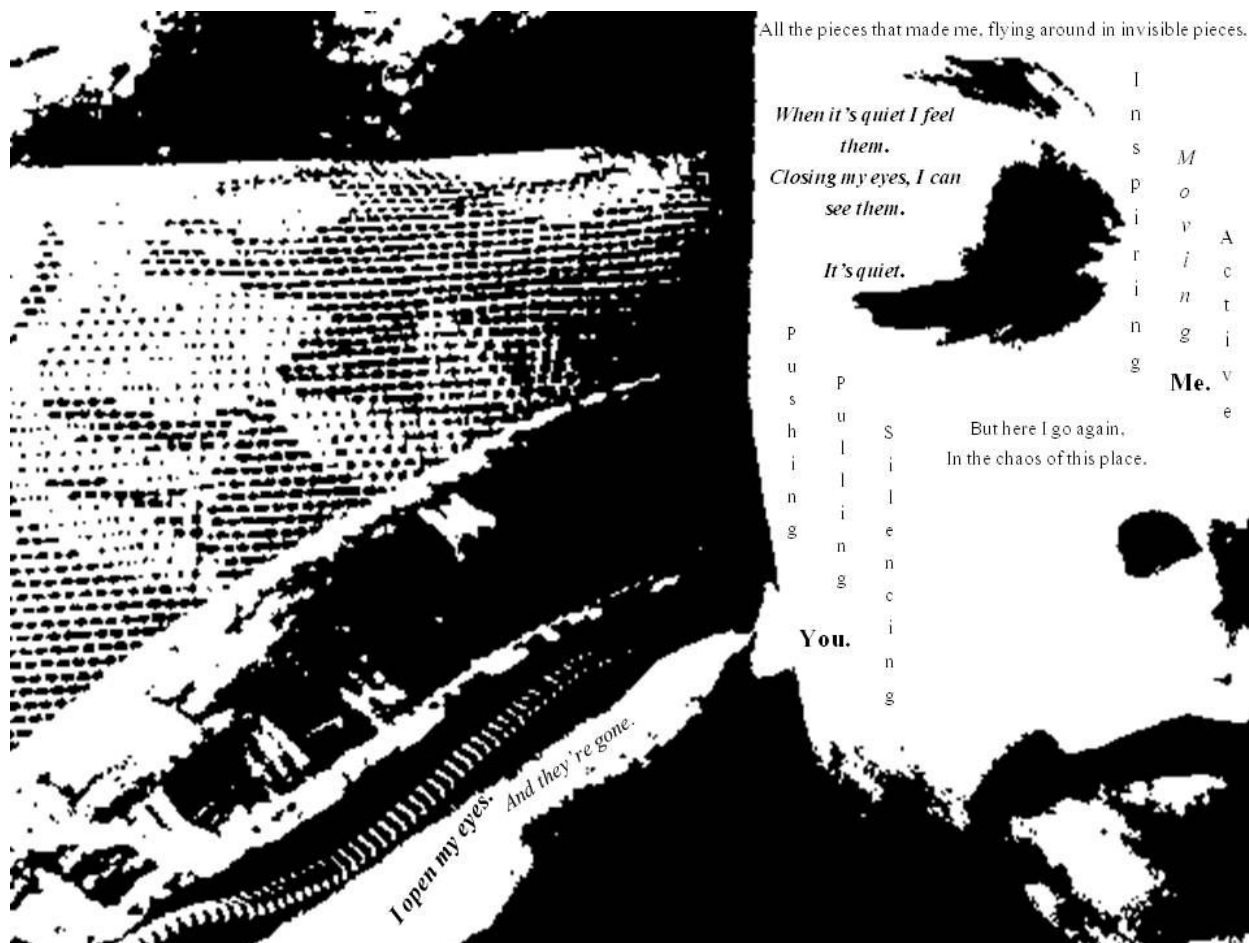
Breathe.

Akhil and I waited for three hours in the afternoon heat at the side of the road with my luggage for someone to pick us up. I felt my nerves bubbling with a desire for comfort, for space that was quiet, for ease of the familiar. It didn't come. Instead, an eclectic crowd of curious spectators gathered to watch the ruin – to watch me. Huddled at the center of their boisterous choir, I heard their volume but understood nothing. Touched by a sea of warm mingling bodies, yet profoundly alone. I looked down at my travel folder – sliding my fingers over its neatly labelled papers and pressing its body into the depths of my pack.



“Identity [should] no longer be understood in singular form, as fixed and stable, or as a property of rational and objective subjects. Rather, identities [can be] viewed as unstable and dynamic, even as contradictory. Our attention [must move] toward processes where subjects are always in the process of becoming something else”

- Pacini Ketchabaw, 2010, p. 244



TIME TRAVELLING

I am not the same person I was a moment ago

I am not an image existing in time

I am creating myself through connections

I am leaving my actuality, what I am - and stepping outside myself

The stories I have become, flying around in invisible pieces
Watching them combust one by one

Catching up with who I assume I will be tomorrow
Or recycling who I was yesterday
Muting passages of what I know, inviting a new condition
A loss of life in being - the death of the familiar

Manipulating and manipulated by movements
Of discursive global intensities
Of fear, of desire
On the other side of the world, I occupy a different mode of temporality
A reconfigured duration of time, of speeds I am not use to

Holding onto her hands and spun around in circles
The images I knew so well fly quickly into distortion
Palms sweaty, and faces blurred - pull me faster
Thrown around, dizzy, sick to my gut
Opening bodies offer no ease

Freeing my life from its own tendencies, a shock to my closed form
Leaving a present that began long ago

I struggle

I crack

I mutate

And reinvent time as divergent

There is a loss of life in being,

As I begin to live in difference

Playing with gravity. The children test the limits of granite, tile, cardboard, drywall, and plaster. The remnants of a torn down home down the street from our school. With "gum" in their hands, they layer materials over, under and through. Towering over us, swaying with unpredictability. Their intensities lie on the cusp of the big fall. I notice where my attention gathers: Their happiness in pure destruction.



*But now old friends are acting strange
They shake their heads, they say I've changed
Well something's lost, but something's gained
In **living** everyday*

- Joni Mitchell

THE MANY-FACED-DANCERS

The rain settles

Heavy at first, with the weight of the earth's tears

Ripples of her droplets, echo over the lake

Reverberating through bodies, the still awakens

Gentle, fluid, and growing

Ant-like bodies move with the calm of the clouds

Their feet leave traces upon the surface

The rain settles

Mist hovers, free of guilt - of weight

Carrying with her only the lightest of molecules

Gliding over the water - two opposite forces

The still, the heavy, the seemingly solid

Beneath the lightest dust of rolling smoke

A million tiny dancers, float above the lake

Swaying in unison, pulling together and drifting apart

The rain settles

Heavy at first, sinking with the blood of my heart

THE CAR



With the help of five village labourers,
one rickshaw driver, a few interested
friends, and a cluster of curious
community members, "The Cycle Lady
brought a car!"





As the dishevelled junk car landed heavily in the courtyard of the school, a crowd quickly gathered in an excited state of confusion. Some laughed, many questioned, and everyone watched. From the two stories of balconies that towered above, bodies hung and eyes followed the procession of my eclectic crew and our next big project, the car.

“How did it get here?”

“What will you do with this junk car?”

“Will you make it new again?”

“Where did it come from?”

“Can I help?”

With much community interest, the car project quickly became a school wide effort. Groups of children and staff joined at various moments throughout the project, each with a different artistic focus. We began by scouring the car for materials - gathering the pop bottles, pieces of decaying car parts - seat belts, rubber, ignition holes, door handles, springs - bugs, rusted metal scraps and what felt like a ton of leaves, dirt and shrubbery. The children used brooms, dust pans, and shelving units to clear out and



store our many findings. After the dust had settled, we took a final look over the car for any last

pieces to be utilized in our project. Hoova was one of the older children in this group who invested himself in our projects with a dutiful perseverance. While the school goers named me “The Cycle Lady,” Hoova pronounced himself as, “The Painter.” Watching him in the throws of his craft made my heart sing. I admired the way he examined each material - an old shoe, wooden barrel, twig, or tire - as if it was the first time he had seen it before. His approach was



eternally curious and inventive; his attitude was contagious. As the children climbed about the vehicle, Hoova yelled “Stop! What is this thing!” The children and I halted our rummagings and gathered around to see what he had found. As I think back on our hurried preparations of the day, I am still not

sure how it was possible that we missed such a culturally impactful momentum in the body of this car. I wonder if someone placed it there without notice as we bustled about that afternoon. There was an undeniable lull in our movement, I could feel the curious energy of the children bubbling around me. Perched on a ledge in the middle of the dashboard, as if sitting on some dishevelled podium, was a small, stone figurine. The God Ganesh. Reverberating with a pull of sensational admiration, the children were captivated by its surprise. Arriving with a sense of unowned mystery, Ganesh took a place in our junky, strangely captivating car. With a tug on the edge of my kurta, nine year old Rutika cupped my ear as she whispered, “Ms. Cycle Lady, it is *magic*.”

TOUCHING SILENCE

reaching out with hands
sinking fingers into cold mud
nails black,
hairs fall heavy with the weight of dirty water
a wet grey smoke
murky and pulling from the inside
mixing with a body's salt
I sink into the earth

Sharp as the sound of wet linens smacked over river rocks.

Here there is no hesitation to water - it is part of every being.

Stepping in without second thought.

Its communal soup runs through the veins of every creature.

Sunday evening is freshly cleaned laundry and washed babies - clanging tin dishes and gently splashing water. Draped lungis and water droplets hitting the bricks.

The river - the blood and lifeline of this village. It sees no beginning and no end.

Its edges are hugged with lush greenery - slippery waters run through, carrying a dichotomous syrup of thriving lily pads, coconut leaves and plastic water bottles. Sleek and reflective in the afternoon sun, its paths are marked with trails of oil. An unforgiving blanket for those who seek comfort in these marshy spaces.

The river is a sink, grocery store, highway, animal pen, playground, bath, workplace, and laundromat. A place of bustling life, and an anticipated mark at the end of the road.

Among floating bodies, raw stench and decay - there is transformation. Organisms thrive in spaces touched by death.

It is the mortal location where all things begin and begin again.

I empty out a bejewelled bag of Goan trinkets and handmade gifts - scarves, journals, bookmarks, earrings and small fabric packages of Indian spices. Items carried a long way to be shared with others, to places I used to know. Laid over my bed, a mix-matched quilt of two worlds.

The pieces of who I use to be. The new, the parts of me that have changed - hovering over the scene like oil and water. After taking out the last spice capsule of a hana masala, I shake the bag upside down over my bed. Red dust particles fly over my sheets, sprinkling the crevices of my pillows with tiny footprints. The familiar, smokey smell

of Goa takes the room - my stomach reaches her hands and traces her fingers over the bottom of my heart. As blood pools to my core, it becomes heavy - full with memories of another life. Adjusting to its weight, I sit on my bed. Laying back into speckled sheets, I close my eyes and swallow hard - pushing down on dry beads that tickle my throat.

The ephemeral red dust of India.

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