

RUBIANE MAIA: FINDING GROUND

Rubiane Maia is kneeling on the ground in front of a pile of soil, her head is buried, she is using an apparatus attached to a cone to breathe through the soil. The air in the room is drawn down through the cone and travels along the tube, past the soil, into the artist's mouth. The cone rests above the artist's head, and funnels the air as she sucks up the distance between us.

The cone returns the sounds she is making to the room. The voice we hear is deep, not a wail, not a howl, it is a voice without language. We watch as her back moves with each breath, each breath becoming voice. We are witnessing its journey, from the base of her body, through, lungs, past kidneys, heart, windpipe, past tonsils, tongue, nasal passage, through saliva and into the tube, past soil, and up through the narrow opening at the base of the cone. In the room her voice becomes the very recent past, captured by the microphone and sent out into the room.

Maia's work is informed by Bergson's theories of memory, she has taken his form of the inverted cone as a starting point for her explorations, spatializing and also temporalizing her relationships to objects and the natural world. Bergson's inverted cone describes the dynamic relationship between the past and present and is a depiction of the way in which true memories or personal memories survive in the present. For Bergson the memory is not just a mental image (representation) it is a dynamic experience that involves us in duration, pure memory is beyond consciousness. Maia is placing her self into an invisible order, in a Bergsonian sense she is an "existence placed halfway between the "thing" and the "representation".

Maia presents her body as it learns to be a conduit, an apparatus, creating a line of continuity between memory and breath, the past creating a thickness in the present. These sounds she is making are ghosted sounds, recalling the pasts she has lived, they emit from a body inverted, face directed towards the ground. This a body that is seeking ground. This is a body allowing for the way time builds up like the sounds between us.

The saliva is thick. Is the fluid of the body building up? Is her mouth leaking? Is it making it hard for her to breathe?

We hear saliva in her voice, the mixing of air and waters, the sound she is making starts to become a gargle, mucus laden, we can hear spit in her mouth. In Chinese medicine water is the element of the kidneys, governing bone marrow, spinal column and ultimately, reason, perception and memory. The artist's kidneys are almost visible, as we watch her rib cage expand and contract. Kidney's and their element of water is also related to fear, it is the

element that when unbalanced makes our hearts race and our bodies perspire. It makes us hold our breath and it is that fear which keeps us alive and attentive to the world around us.

The voice is thin, elemental, now loud, it takes shape in you, now multivocal, it becomes you, now rasping, you are filled with sound, filled with fear, filled fluid from the breath.

In Chinese medicine the vocal quality of water is moaning. The sounds coming from the cone are deep, persistent. If this performance is about memory, what memories are being called on here? Is she calling voices from the earth? Not a wail, not a howl, but a voice released. This voice takes up the moan in the body and places it in the soil, reverberating the soil, giving it a sound, the sound is from the earth and it's the earth remembering.

The breath builds up, the body collapses, she reforms, the body is a cone, filled up with ghosts, breath recalling the last, not escaping, but circling, leaving a trace of moisture, carbon, absorbing molecules from the ground.

Maia is presenting this durational work in the context of a larger exhibition which shows a series of cone shaped structures, each with the potential to commune with different states, objects, elements. A series of photographs on one wall sees Maia perched in a tree, cone funnels to each of her ears, waiting, listening, becoming. We understand she is suggesting we might use this apparatus to connect, and that it might look like she is listening, but for her the apparatus has the potential to go deeper, inside the tree, inside the soil, inside the light, inside of time. In the gallery her works are presented as exquisite memory portals, each playing with the cone and its potential for new relationships to the present.

On another wall Maia presents a series of texts alongside a series of drawings of the imagined apparatus, the memory cone that features in her sculptural works. In her writing she is tracing the ways she carries tyrannies of her past into the present, exploring the way memories survive. Hers is the poetry of the voice with out language, this text is a fragment of a much longer text translated from Portuguese into English in which her language rips through the reader, her ideas twist and bend in a feat of connection and rupture.

In Audre Lorde's text *The Transformation of Silence Into Language and Action* she asks "What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and attempt to make your own until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence." In this performance Maia's is presenting a body that wont be silent and in her texts she is expelling all that she has been made to swallow.

Madeleine Collie (b. 1978, Australia) is an artist and curator who lives between Folkestone in the UK and Melbourne /Naarm. She has a Masters in Curatorial / Knowledge from Goldsmiths, London and is a current PhD candidate in the Curatorial Practices programme at Monash University, MADA, where she has a three year scholarship for her project centred on artist led new institutional forms. Her work takes the form of curatorial projects, institutional critique, pedagogy, performance and poetic practice often/always working in collectives or collaboration with others. From 2016-2019 she was curator of the award winning collective memorial project: The Ash Project. Recent work includes Rumour of Waves with Amy Sharrocks (2020), Timely Readings, A Study of Live Art in Australia with Sarah Rodigari (2019), Something Held in the Mouth (2019), Daylighting (2018), The Ash Archive (2018), Marrickville School of Economics, with Bek Conroy (2020 and 2017), States of Wake (2017). She has curated and presented work in a range of contexts, including Tate (UK) Arts House (Aus), Performance Space, (Aus), LADA (UK), Kent Downs (UK), Custom Food Lab (UK), Whitstable Biennale (UK), Wellcome Collection (UK), Folkestone Triennial, (UK), Connexions Improbables (Spain), Substation Gallery (Singapore), Cemeti Arts House (Indonesia).