

I've got a positive addiction to site specificity - or site-responsiveness - I'm never totally sure of the difference. I guess it just means speaking to context really specifically.

This guides me when I make performance, when I'm making things and in a curatorial sense.

At points I've described this kind of thinking as a practice of listening - although that's started to irritate me recently. I also feel frustration with the kind of psychic listening that soaks into some skins.

Pauline Oliveros' 1998 score '*Ear Piece*' differentiates between practices of listening and hearing. It goes:

- 1) *Are you listening now?*
- 2) *Are you listening to what you are now hearing?*
- 3) *Are you hearing while you listen?*
- 4) *Are you listening while you are hearing?*
- 5) *Do you remember the last sound you heard before this question?*
- 6) *What will you hear in the near future?*
- 7) *Can you hear now and also listen to your memory of an old sound?*
- 8) *What causes you to listen?*
- 9) *Do you hear yourself in your daily life?*
- 10) *Do you have healthy ears?*
- 11) *If you could hear any sound you want, what would it be?*
- 12) *Are you listening to sounds now or just hearing them?*
- 13) *What sound is most meaningful to you?*

In the first pandemic lockdown last year, I spent a load of time writing emails to someone I fancied. I felt like I could look this person right in the centre of the eye.

I used our conversations as props. Our bodies clashing between a doorway - a door frame - became the content for a Simone Forti choreographic exercise of 'memory snapshots' performed in a seminar with students - as I tried to understand the moment in language and kinesthetically.

In one email I wrote to this person, I talked about Patsy Rosenberg's 'Circles of Attention'.

I said:

In a stupid online lecture I gave the other day, I was on about Patsy circles of attention. It's voice/actor training stuff. She tells us about voice, how it connects to listening.

In the 1st circle, Patsy says the voice falls back – it's like you're speaking to yourself – she says it's of the past.

In the 3rd circle the voice is used like a generalised energy that's pushed out. Like when people take your space, take the oxygen out of the room. The voice is often visible in the

body – an inflated chest. These voices are often too loud for the context they are in. She says.

Patsy says that in the 2nd circle we are present – here the voice is grounded through the act of exchange with something – a person – toy – book – a piece of music – your connected to it – it's connected to you – in a dialogue of give and take, which is what happens in the act of being present. Patsy says we are born here. In the second circle. That the 2nd circle is absolute intimacy. Patsy says if you want to seduce someone, take them out to dinner and be in the 2nd circle with them.

The 2nd circle is the circle in which we continually stay connected to our presence.

In an energetic space between speaking and listening.

Do not think you have to say

Anything back

But you do

Say something back which I

Hear by the way I speak to you

Is a quote by W. S. Graham, cited in Denise Riley's 'Say Something Back'. My pal sent it me on a postcard, written out in felt-tip pen.

I thought it was kind of complicated but it's just about listening - or hearing.

I started a job as Senior Lecturer in Fine Art and Curating this week here, and I'm focusing this introduction to my practice through thinking about pedagogy - which is another word for teaching - the theory and practice of teaching. It's a practice - or ideally praxis, a term Sylvia Wynters' uses to define humanness - as presence informed by race, location and time.

Two weeks ago I was on residency at Wainsgate Dance, which is a dance space in Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire with my friend and collaborator Harriet Plewis. I call her Haz.

We're tryna make a work for a generic kind of Higher Education lecture theatre - not unlike this one. A performance piece that draws attention to the presence (and treatment) of embodied knowledge in academia. The performance might be something between a complaint and a prayer - maybe.

During my time teaching at Leeds University which was 2019 till 2021, I organised a project with students (initiated by students Zipporah Blake-Gravesande and Carmen Okome) where we encouraged and supported students and staff to make complaints in relation to experiences and observations of structural racism. Anonymous and anonymised complaints were published online, as a mucky kinda resource to inform structural change in the school. All the way through, we were fuelled by Sara Ahmed's definition of the term complaint as an intersectional feminist practice.

On each morning of that residency with Haz, we attended something called OPEN PRACTICE at the space. Is a kinda class organised by the centre. For this, everyone turns up, takes a space in the room and moves (in whatever way they want) to the music playing.

You don't talk to other people or look at them so much - although your eyes do follow your body around the room if you let your head be loose (if you turn your fucking head like Deborah Hay says). In OPEN PRACTICE you're half in your own world and still totally being absorbed into the energy and movement vernacular of others. Voice-noting another friend about OPEN PRACTICE, I said it's really moving - being in a space where there is an absolute commitment to exploring expression and communication through movement alone.

On one of those days with Haz, I also shared a memory from my undergraduate training. A total touchstone memory I carry around with me. It focuses on a seminar with a tutor of mine during my degree.

And I was in touch with this person last year too, writing them emails in the haze of my first 6 months teaching as a regular salaried member of staff in Higher Education - asking for advice. The subject header of the email was 'academonia'. I wrote:

Hi

I've really bigged this up. Anticipation because of my fan girl crush or because I tell this story to myself and to other people really often. Leaning in and looking them dead in the eye. Making the shapes with my hands. Building it up. Making them wait. Pretty sure no one ever gets it though, the punchline. Or reacts how I'd like. No one enjoys the story as much as me.

It's a story about you and an artwork. Misremembered or made up. I love that I might have totally made it up. Maybe please don't tell me if I have or I haven't though, if you don't mind?

We were in a seminar, watching that Matthew Barney film from Destricted. The DVD about sex. In my memory, the camera starts really close up, just texture - hairy and earthy. Very slowly the camera zooms out. Skin and metal, something in a circling motion turning against skin. Out out and out, it's Matthew Barney covered in dry earth hanging from the body of a tractor with a root vegetable up his ass. A rotating cog is working against his cock and balls. The cog gets him hard and he comes. Films finished.

The film was projected onto a wall not playing on a tv, and I don't remember if the projector got turned off or if the DVD went to the home screen. Anyway, we all looked at you. Everyone was silent. You didn't say a word. You had a coffee + a Twix. You sat and ate one finger of the Twix, dipping it into your coffee. You ate one finger of your Twix, dipping it into your coffee in total silence. Us just sat staring at you.

Eventually you said - and I imagined the inside of your mouth sticky with chocolate and warm.

Eventually you said, 'Yeah so it's, you know, it's all about spunk.'
And in my memory the lecture ended there.

I carry this story around with me as a very good instruction for teaching.

In that email to my ex-tutor, I told them that my most engaged moments of pedagogy so far, had been asking students for a tampon and kinda crying on Microsoft Teams.

Children improvising in front of children, as Simone Forti says of her experience learning with her teacher Anna Halprin. A practice of exchanging kinesthetic knowledge.

I'm letting you know that if you watch me talk you can tell a lot about what was going on in me. That you can do this simply by watching how I hold myself, and at exactly what instant I shift my weight. That you can sense these rhythms and tensions. That you can sense how what you see feels.

The term engaged pedagogy comes from bell hooks.

I did have another blissed out moment of teaching last year, alongside the tears and the tampon. In a seminar I gave to MA Fine Art students at Leeds on Milford Graves work. Graves - artist, acupuncturist, herbalist, martial artist, programmer, professor - and total pioneer of free Jazz.

Graves studied the human heartbeat as it relates to rhythm. His incredible connection to sensory knowledge - makes me think about the knowledges we exchange in the University - what's exchanged in the act of pedagogy? Genuine question.

Graves says, of his percussion and performance work - that it's a practice of polymetre rhythms.

The playing of different kinds of metres.

In other words different feelings.

Different feelings.

That this is doing one feeling, [looks at raised, slightly bent, right forearm and right hand].

And that this is doing another feeling, [looks at raised, slightly bent, left forearm and left hand].

Whereas this may be doing a sad feeling, [looks at raised left hand].

This may be doing a happy feeling, [looks at raised, shaken, right hand].

Ruinous empathy is a term I heard last week - in a Zoom meeting with a cultural organisation and a charitable service for people seeking Asylum and Refugee Status. The topic of the meeting was how cultural organisations can actively oppose the hostile environment, campaign for the rights for migrants and also ensure that their organisations racial consciousness or anti-racist practices line-up with this outreach work. Ruinous empathy is a term used to describe situations where a person doesn't speak honestly and critically to a friend or 'colleague' for fear of hurting their feelings.

That same day, I listened to an audio recording of a performance called 'How to Wash a Heart' by poet Bhau Kapil at the ICA in 2019. In the performance, she spoke aloud a text she had wrote to the audience ahead of time. Imagining herself speaking in that moment. Time travelling. Intense colour and light, with brutal tiny brown hands.

As a preface to her talk, she shared an account of a 'karmic' email exchange she had with a doctor - a Interventionist Cardiologist based in Ohio who had asked her to read and review their book of ecstatic love poetry and heartbreak. Bhau wondered at her research, how her

research at the intersection of stress, migration and mental health extended to the heart. Asking this question to the doctor - the Interventionist Cardiologist - he replied in email:

Of course anxiety and stress have an effect on the heart, there is medical diagnosis attributed to it - it's called broken heart syndrome. The heart gets stunned during acute emotional or psychological stress and affects the heart muscle and pumping function. It loses a lot of its pumping function. It can be life threatening. It is more common in women. And does recover again once the acute stressor fades away, is absorbed or processed.

Over the summer, I had a fantasy that I wanted to make a big promise as part of my beginning to teach here. I used the word ritual when I described my fantasy to friends. I wanted to make a big ritual promise with myself and students I would be working with. A promise to take risks in our shared learning, borne from a deep commitment and a shared desire to understand - meta understand - the institution - in brackets the university, the prison, the hospital, the state). I'm getting to this not fully formed instinct via my desperate re-readings of Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's 'the university last words.'

With these thoughts up in the air - and as I was reading Notes of Sanskrit by Nisha Ramayya last week, whilst eating breakfast - opening it up as soon as it landed through the post, I circled this section:

[Ritual] is activity governed by explicit rules. The important thing is what you do, not what you think, believe or say. In India this has become a basic feature of all religion, so that we should refer, not to the faithful or orthodox, but to the orthoprax (from Greek orthos [meaning] "right" and praxis [meaning] "action." (Staal 1996: 116 - 117).

For the next two months - so all October and November - I am on a research residency at St Portmeour studios in Cornwall. I have planned a 4 hour daily routine - or ritual - of vocal and movement work over that time. The order of which will go a little like:

Weight training - to knit up my nervous system (and so I can protect myself and others when we abolish the police)

Yoga asana practice - to open my heart and fire up my solar plexus

Pranayama (the yogic limb of yoga that focuses on breath) - which is to expand my belly

Carnatic song (classical Indian singing) - to change the shape of my mouth

Improvising with sound and words - to feed my imagination

And then improvising with sound, words and movement - to join me up

This plan connects me to a performance to camera test-work I made earlier this year 'Gloomy Fantasy' - at a moment where I was feeling desperate for liveness and connection with an audience.

For this research work, I moved around a local community centre hall, speaking, singing and sounding through an improvised flow of words and noises - and trying to surprise and resist myself in that flow. I wore a butterfly costume - which was a bit like a double medallion or something, whilst my friend and artist Lauren de Sá Naylor crawled around the floor filming me on her phone.

I love the practice of improvisation (in writing, for voice, in movement) cos it feels like a process of getting under the skin - around the brain - into the voice - with stuff. And this residency plan is somehow maybe a process of moving to that into as praxis.