

The following is an account of each and every performance that took place in May 2022 during the Future Ritual programme at the ICA London.

This is a reflection fermented and distilled over time, two months after the performances took place. As such it's based on notes taken in the moment, inaccurate recollections after the fact, and imaginings.

A few preliminary notes on particular understandings of Ritual and Performance Art:

My practice and my understanding of ritual is rooted in the treatment of its time-space container as existing outside of linear time and logic. In this sense, ritual becomes a space for timeline collapse, oracular knowledge, play, and communication with the other than human, amongst many other things.

In the meeting between ritual and performance art further considerations become relevant. Ritual as performance is punctured by the realities and limitations of venues, technology, audiences that might participate or expectate according to their capacity and/or desire, and by art discourse itself —encompassing aesthetics, context, references, critical theory, etc.

The following personal account reflects the fact that I'm both a ritualist and an artist trained in the codes and discourses of my field, it reflects my position. In declaring what is perhaps obvious, I want to call attention to the fact that there's a generative two-fold dynamic at play, a tension. While I often crossed through the portal facilitated by the four artists to access wild spiritual abandon throughout the whole duration of the Future Ritual programme at the ICA, my cognitive brain also made synaptic discharges linking images to other images in a series of performance art references.

3 Reflections2
Benjamin Sebastian
May 18 2022

3 x 3 actions on 3 altars
Live chanting, recorded and looped
Voice Soil Fire Light Blood
Mirrors

Act 1
MARKS

I called out and all that I heard is the echo of a star.

Soft warm light and the smell of soil.

Benjamin's voice touches me and I feel sadness, a sense of aloneness,
a vastness.

Why do we mark ourselves?
What is it that marks us?

Echoes are traces
and we remember by marking.
Everything fades as it collapses into something else.

We are retracing echoes, retrieving from the subtle, the whisper.

The markings on Benjamin's skin will only be legible later on.
Right now the body is being inscribed.

My decade old friend, my memories of their body through the years.
The intimacy of witnessing someone's work over time,
Our own personal anthology

The buzz from the tattoo gun triggers a sigh, I'm hit by a lonely distant feeling
and the recognition in my own body of my pain.

Act 2
MIRROR STAR

The echo of a previous time,
a cock ring and a crystal harness.

I have the legs of a man
I have the heart of a child

*I have the weight of a woman
I have the sex of a lamb
They clawed me out of the womb
the wound
I'm more than my body*

*Fractals of light
Mercury*

*My guts are glistening
Listening*

*I'm more than my body
My gods are crystalline
And my soul is made of mercury*

Benjamin rotates and shimmers
A disco ball dance sorrow diva star
A celestial body

Act 3 Wolf

Lace gimp grinding wolf
I want to write you a love letter:

You are my mirror little lamb wolf.
Cry wolf on me
haunt my heart as I hear your wail.

howl wail cry sorrow

Wolf
You
Wolf

Look

Look at the wolf in the mirror

Dare to look

Look

Defy and teach

Teach me to look
(at) my wolf

My wolf

Teach me to retrieve

I called out and all that I heard was the echo of a child
(of a lamb)

(echo chamber)

Shedded wool of shaved grey hair on the carpet:

My gods

My guts

My gods are crystalline

(my guts are crystalline)

They severed my tie to source

(and yet and yet)

The fragile crystal armour reflects the light back

at you

back at me

Flapping fallous

lashing cock

Until it comes:

Wolf!

Until it comes again

Wolf!

Flap flap

Wolf!

Tired an laboured wolf

Glistening with sweat

I shiver:

Wolf!

Is it working? Is it working yet?

How to see what others see?

How to look at the one in the mirror?

How to call out howl wail cry

Boomerang sonic vibrations

How to respond?

Sad wolf,

I'm more than wolf

My body a star

I have the legs of a man

Wolf!

I have

I have

Wolf!

Heavenly Shower of Bank Notes
Soojin Chang in collaboration with Georgie (Rei-n) Lo
May 21, 2022

A fighting ring, a stage, a feast

Meat, Fruit and Milky Drinks
Money

You must feed or pay

Do not come too close

The stiletto clad feeder and the baby-like being are joined by a braid,
like two fantastic parts of the same being.
From Rei-n's tail to Soojin's head?
Or was it the other way around?

Like the imps in The Devil card
(one is an aspiring devil)
Where is the Devil?
Are we the devil calling the shots?
Who is the unruly character?

Are they there as a pet?

Feed a treat to the bitch
A treat of meat
A treat of milk
Some dollars and a cloud of red puff

Glimmering chicken skin and shiny fruits

But who controls who? Who pulls on who?
Who calls the shots?
Us? Them?

Where are we and what's happening with this lounge music drone?
Are we in a film set? The private room inside a Casino?

(I'm willing myself in but I feel pushed back by the disjunction,
not quite enough gorging despite the mise en place.
Tame.

The images are strong and I'm searching for a tangible sense of connection between them,
between them and us.

I have the sense of intruding in the working out of a movie scene)

Until it bursts.

A sample played on a loop:
Chinese people love money
Pray to the god of money

Distorted and again, blaring.

The ritual burst like a piñata.
It popped.

(It's over too soon)

I only caught a glimpse of a gorging feast.
I remained outside.
Watching. Peeping.

Spectator.

With bare feet touching the sky I yearn
Joseph Morgan Schofield
May 26, 2022

Soil

A suspended carcass

Ribbon

A metal bucket

A video projection

A spade

Candles

Needles

The scene itself is full of ghosts and expectation.

I wait in the red light and smell the soil,
the hum gets into my spine :
I feel my inner waters vibrate as I look at dry bones.

The sizzle of a blowtorch
Smoke, a faint scent of gas

(My eyes burn)

Embers flicker on the tip of a wooden pole

Stone on a metal spade
Stone in a mouth,
play

Knocking about
knock knock knock

(A call, persistent)

What is this sense of foreboding?
Where are we?
What else is there?
Who?

The sound of fire bursts

Black wax drips on Joseph's pale chest

—Tattoos
Sigils
Lace—

Like the carcass that presides over the space

As if saying: we too are already dead

We are with death
in a tangle of shimmery ribbon

An open mouth pulling on cord

Across space
Across time
Across life

I feel Joseph's mouth in my spine and my rib cage:
pulling at my tendons, my own carcass.

Psychopomp childlike and in black satin,
their flesh pierced
as if to say:

I'm here
I bleed
I'm here

Alive

(I'm here with you)

From blood to clay
From red to fade
A desire to exit
A gesture towards absolute presence and effacement at the same time

The space has been pierced

All that's left is a sad tender holding.

EVERY TIME I TRACE THE HORIZON MY HANDS CATCH FIRE
[Book Performance, Chapter III]
Rubiane Maia in collaboration with Tiffany Auttrianna Ward
May 29 2022

Rubiane and Tiffany dressed in white boiler suits
Tiffany sits and reads
Rubiane labours with several lengths of heavy blue nautical rope

What follow is a collage of what I retain from Rubiane's stream of consciousness, as read by Tiffany, and my impressions of Rubiane's actions.

The crooked little finger making a heart
A writing that comes from a craving, a non-place, the absence of a stand point.

You must protect your hands from themselves
and the echoes from the earth, the awoken volcano

Your son's fingers touch each other as he looks at you.
In the space where your father and your son meet.

Who are you addressing?
Who are you asking to fabricate you a new body?

Turning in and out
feeling, stretching the blue rope through gloved hands

You

You give birth to yourself
Tagging at rope, at cord
The primal gesture of our embryonic state

You address yourself
You summon yourself
and more

An existence without homeland
A freedom

You labour, you work, you play with rope
Through seven rebirths and six great darknesses

You move the rope and we set off
You tug and the air shifts

You are here to pull thread across time

Your father appears again. A river.

Rope rubs on rope: the sound of friction

I zone in and out, from action to words and back again.

This is not a monologue, it's a conversation across time and a summoning
You embody these words, a polyphonic entity

You drag a huge tangle of heavy rope through the floor
You go faster, in circles

Are you tired listening to your words?
Through this borrowed voice, this ghost voice
A collapse of timelines in a body, a voice, a channel transmission

Tiffany

Rubiane, your father and your son
The spirits that you evoke, or rather invoke as they pass through you
and you pull, you tug

Your sharp voice
Your blade
My hands love everything which is not virtuous, you say
Tiffany says

The ghosts speak

You lash the rope again and again as you feel those who drowned

You summon you invoke

You cross the line that divides life and death

An echo of thousands of voices saying I can't breathe stills the room

You groan

What am I doing here?
What am I doing in this life if I don't know how to live it?

Light, you are not white,
you are polychromatic

And you are polyphonic

You pull at both ends of the rope without letting it break

Lashing the line
Curving the line
Whip

A single line carries all the structures of mutability

A rope can kill

thread noose gallows
chain cable wire
weapon twisted lines

writing
as someone would sing
exorcising demons
unravelling them

Respect for your rage
A rainbow snake, your mouth

Your voice
the rope is the tongue is the rope

Blue fire blue rope
The heart is fire
an island made of fire

Fire is the mother of earth

Your tired hands loosen their grip

Art is a privileged field for tragic confrontation
This rope is a safety device