

FRAMEWORK

#24 | *Endurance*



FRAMEWORK

Vol. 6, No. 3

**ENDURANCE
#24**

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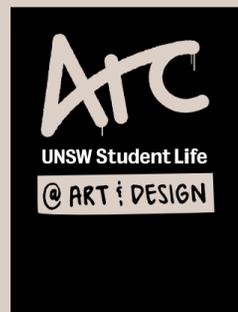
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Photography by Will Anderson

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FRAMEWORK acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which we produced this publication, learn and share ideas.

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EDITORIAL

Audrey Pfister

Maybe it was a simple trick of pre-diagnosis, turned self-fulfilling prophecy, in choosing the theme 'endurance' to coincide with the end of the academic year? I thought it'd be fitting to hallmark this sense of perseverance, weariness, burn-out, and just trying not to crack under pressure. These feelings seem all too familiar when life just keeps throwing curve balls, but you can only try to catch them unenthusiastically because you're already short on breath from running around the playing field.¹

My initial ideas for the embryonic issue were thoughts about enduring the political climate, enduring the 'art world', the University, our bodies, other bodies,

¹ And while I want to take my friend's advice and write a one-lined editorial symptomatic of tiredness. I can't help but beginning on a little ramble.

² Melinda Reid, Lingering, pp. 14

enduring medical systems, workplaces, and publics. Enduring time dotted with fatigue, appointments, illnesses, or discrimination and corruption. A bit bleak, huh?

² 'There is little time for lingering under neoliberalism.'² Melinda Reid pronounces in her piece 'Lingering' about interrupting neoliberal modes of constant doing, and producing. A text that resonates all the more today - feeling stricken with anxiety before getting out of bed on a Sunday morning due to the fact I'm yet to finish this editorial, or write my final assignments, and a lingering guilt for instead having spent my Saturday night eating ice-cream at Haikiki and watching Lord of



the Rings. And today as I re-read 'Lingering' I don't feel so bad for those sweet moments of idling.

And who said that carbs will never solve all your problems? They clearly haven't been to Paddington's Organic Bread Bar,³ or read Rebecca Hall's musing on the very medium of bread. Hall thinks through what bread might teach us about relationships of care, responsibility, and 'what it takes to bear through: softening in the face of difficulty, making ourselves lighter, raising up.'⁴

The contributors to this issue humbled me with their ability to

sharply analyse materials and objects, writing about how they might endure, and what we learn in the process. Victoria Soo mediates on how objects endure time, the 'complex, nuanced, and dynamic'⁵ nature of conservation and archiving. It provokes further questioning - what is and is not allowed to endure? How might we pay attention to such nuances, and ruptures in the archive? Making me think about how to further investigate histories or 'begin to imagine and enact different futures'⁶

But what about how we endure a person? Or rather a person that is emblematic of a larger system of neo-colonialism? D'Souza's

3 356 S Dowling St, Paddington NSW 2021. Try the Olive Oil loaf.

4 Rebecca Hall, Musings on a medium: the expirational materiality of bread, pp. 6

5 Victoria Soo, Opening dialogues in conservation: what does it mean for an artwork to age well?, pp.20

6 Andrew Brooks, Cracks in the Archive, <http://runway.org.au/cracks-in-the-archive/>



▲ BEING MOTIVATED



piece 'The Julia Roberts "Thing"' declares 'I've been enduring Julia Robert's lately.'⁷ Roberts is the figurehead for the white woman's spiritual 'journey to find the self', riddled with neo-colonialist desires and fantasies. D'Souza calls attention to the 'eat pray love'⁸-ers of the world and the subsequent perpetuation of gentrification and white supremacy, and how this is disseminated through tourism and wellness industries.

When I called for submissions for this 'endurance' edition of Framework, I expected students would be interested in writing about performance art. Didn't people want to talk about about the way performance exhausts? Not simply just durational performance, but I'm thinking the ways performance artists might encounter toxic spectatorship, gazes, audiences' reducing certain bodies and identities to a commodity, or audiences feeling entitled to one's body, identity, and time. But as performance is usually exhaustive enough, the recounting is often just added labour.

I looked to Em Size's recent performance⁹ for Kudos Live Vol. 4: Ritual Bodies. Size wrote that we must figure out ways to 'make

7 Sab D'Souza, The Julia Roberts "Thing", pp. 23

8 Eat Pray Love, Elizabeth Gilbert, 2010

9 (or rather boycotted, cancelled, and withdrawal from performance)

10 Em Size for Kudos Live Vol. 4: Ritual Bodies, 2018

things more bearable for people that feel the world and this particular industry and the particular problem of performing in and with certain bodies, unbearable.'¹⁰

So, in my thinking for this issue I began to reflect on how it is, why it is, or what it is, that we endure, and maybe how we can make change or concessions? Or in what places do we find a sense of alleviation from all of this? If endurance is synonymous with survival, then what are the tools with which we bear?

In an archetypal sentimental farewelling manner, I have to say I'm humbled by this little community I've found, and friendships I've developed. I have to say a huge congratulations and thank you to all of you. It's this aspect of community that teaches me how to collectively counteract all those curve balls, to collectively support, bear, and bide. To say that I'm grateful doesn't seem quite enough, because it is all of you that helped me endure, you've kept me afloat, re-energised, and persevering.

Images: Cole Chickering (previous page), Cole Chickering (left), Audrey Pfister (right)

Musings on a medium: the expirational materiality of bread

By Rebecca Hall

'Leaven' is the substance of rising in bread. The word passes backward through Middle English, Old French, and Late Latin: *levāmen* — I soften; I make light; I lift up¹. The Latin alternative to leaven would be *levāmentum* mentum means 'medium'². Endurance, on the other hand has an original Latin meaning of 'making hard'³. This evokes the idea of lasting against the odds. But in the end stages of humanity, lasting becomes an ever-distant concept. Endurance as bearing is what we must face. And thus, bread becomes emblematic of end-stage endurance. The very substance of bread is imbued with this notion of what it takes to bear through: softening in the face of difficulty, making ourselves lighter, raising up.

Though we scarcely think of it in this way, if you don't eat it, bread will not go to waste, per se. Another organism will eat it. This is, apparently, what is responsible for so much human impact on the earth. In her lecture 'The Queer Futurity of Plastic,' (2016) Heather Davis reminds us that the oft-repeated 100,000 year lifespan of plastic is not the time it will take to degrade, but the time that we estimate it will take for an organism to evolve that can digest it⁴. Unlike plastic, bread will not outlast us. In this sense bread has what I might call an expirational materiality. Thus, in bread, that which withstands is not the material itself but the ideological.

This relational system becomes the focus of Queens, New York based artist, Lexie Smith. Smith, who

incorporates bread sculptures into installation and photographic works⁵, created the web-based project Bread on Earth in 2017 (bread-on.earth | @bread_on_earth). The project focuses on bread as a medium that helps us 'find pathways to creativity and community, and narratives on history, design, and the environment.'⁶ It includes photographs of and recipes for bread with a poetic intimacy, like one entry, 'Body Metaphor, Fleishy Flat Recipe'. It directs - 'Pour a tablespoon or two of olive oil around the edges of the dough and scoop the dough up from the side with one hand like you're lifting the dead weight of a child who fell asleep on the couch. Put it to bed- flip your palm downwards.'⁷ A relationship of responsibility and trust is evoked through bread in this passage. We are responsible for that which we make. It has a relationship to us, and us to how we came into making it.

Another website entry links to a Google Drive file: the chapter, 'Loaves of Contention' from Marwan M. Kraidy's book, *The Naked Blogger of Cairo*, about the Tunisian Revolution of 2011. The people rose up against a political system (a national government under pressure from the imperial force of the International Monetary Fund) that left them unable to fulfil the most basic needs, unable to afford bread⁸. The book's pages have been iPhone photographed. They warp and bend, becoming more difficult to read the closer they come to the spine. One page is a black and white reproduction of a photo - a Tunisian civilian holds a breadstick as if it were a weapon.

- 1 Wiktionary, 'leaven', <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/leaven> (accessed 13 September 2018)
- 2 Wiktionary, 'levamentum', <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/levamentum#Latin> (accessed 13 September 2018)
- 3 Merriam-Webster, 'endure', <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/endure> (accessed 13 September 2018)
- 4 Davis, H, 'The Queer Futurity of Plastic' [lecture recording], Sonic Acts Academy, De Brakke Grond, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 28 February 2016, available: <https://vimeo.com/158044006>, (accessed 13 September 2018)
- 5 Smith, L., 'Bread and', Lexie Smith [website], <https://allsemantics.com/Bread-and>, (accessed 13 September 2018)
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- 7 Smith, L., 'Body Metaphor Fleishy Flat', Bread on Earth [website], <https://bread-on.earth/Body-Metaphor-Fleishy-Flat-Recipe> (accessed 13 September 2018)
- 8 Smith, L., 'Body Metaphor Fleishy Flat', Bread on Earth [website], <https://bread-on.earth/Body-Metaphor-Fleishy-Flat-Recipe> (accessed 13 September 2018)

Image: Smith, L. Forest For the Trees. (2017) Bread, wood, fishing line. Dimensions variable. Installation view as photographed by Laustrap, B., 2017. <https://allsemantics.com/Forest-for-the-Trees>



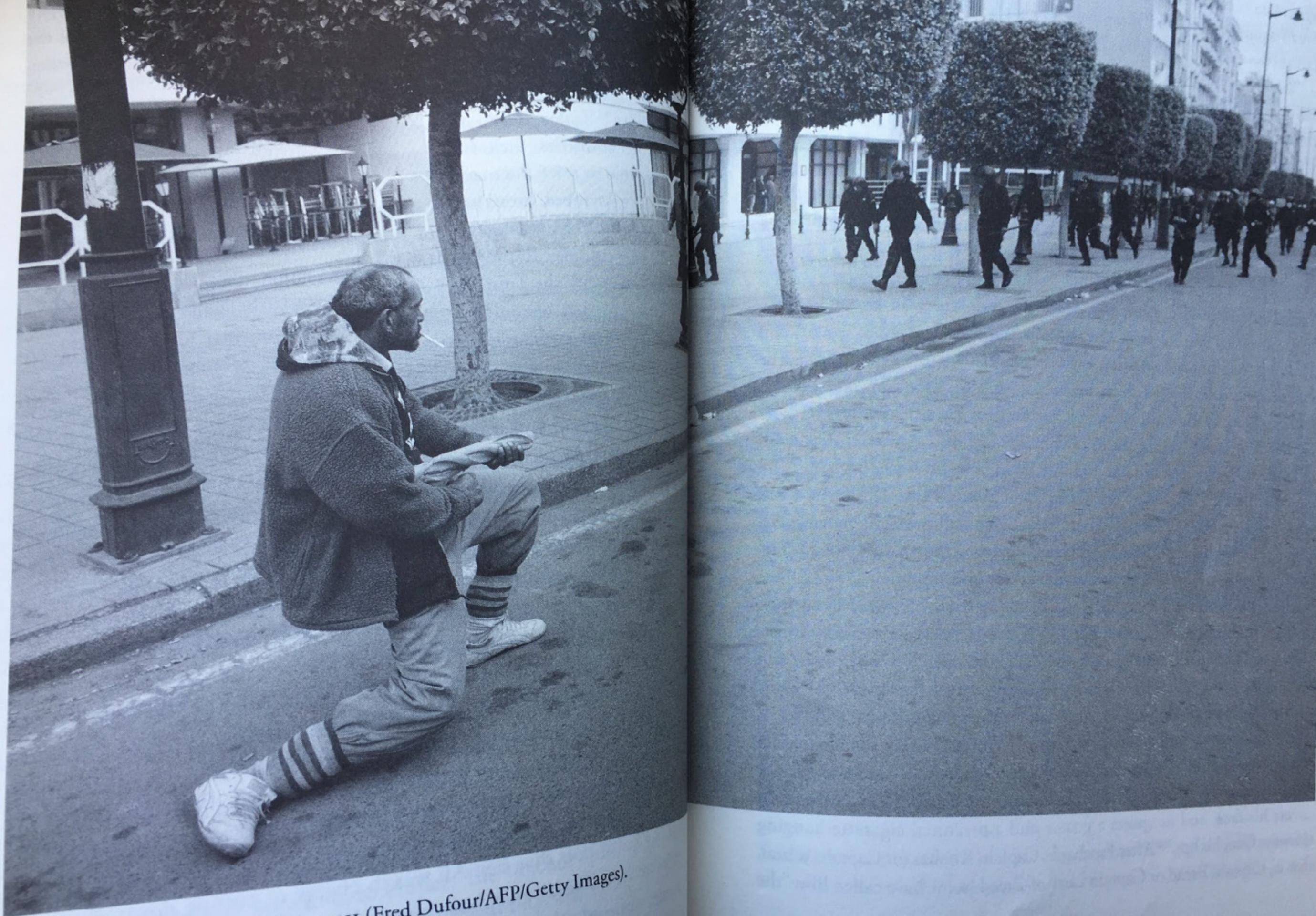


FIG. 2. *Baguette Man*, photo, Tunis, 2011 (Fred Dufour/AFP/Getty Images).

He faces a mob of police that extend out of frame. For this, he earned the heroic moniker, 'Baguette Man'.

Afternoon light dusts the edges of the book. The photographs place us in the moment of reading. This passage, the bread, our link from here to Tunisia. The chapter closes in reflection, highlighted for the website: 'If bread making is one of the most fundamental ways to turn nature into culture, bread activism is a way of turning culture into politics.'⁹

On this culture-politics relationship, Eleanor Zurowski, a Sydney-based artist, says that bread is 'foundational'.¹⁰ Under acknowledged as a reflection of social and ethical relationships, 'it's about access, it's about privilege, it's about religious beliefs, it's about social status.'¹¹ For Zurowski, bread becomes a medium through which to explore, and track our social and cultural relationships. In her performance piece, *A Maize in Grace* (2018), Zurowski sets the table: several loaves of bread; butter; knives for cutting and for spreading; microphones lingering over each loaf, and a computer at which the artist stands to mix the incoming sound of hungry guests¹². At the Mucusbubble x Fork event, *OPENING* (3 August 2018), she begins the performance by inviting the audience to approach the table and help themselves to the bread. The sound will be recorded, mixed, and fed-back to us live. She reminds us, 'the table is a political space,' and encourages us to take care.

Some people approach quietly, with caution, gentle scrapes of the knife against the bread, the clink of a blade carefully rested on a plate. I am transfixed by a young white woman who stands for a particularly long time, tearing small fistfuls of the bread away, nodding with satisfaction as she eats before yelling out to her boyfriend, trying to ascertain whether he wants in. Other audience members wait behind her.

By the end of the performance, the loaves are all but demolished. The audio comes to an end. Zurowski has laid bare our social relationships by involving the audience. Bread, Zurowski says, is 'the product of the changes in society in a really simple form.'¹³ Without confronting the audience, she implicates them in this conversation. Human history, including the destruction it has wreaked on the planet, is subtly evoked in Zurowski's performance, and though the key material components of the work are reduced to crumbs by the time the performance closes, they were always doomed to be. It is her call for care that lingers. If we were to respond to the world as we must to the dinner table, our ethical relationships, our causal impact, become a responsibility we must bear.



9 Kraidy, M., 'Loaves of Contention', *The Naked Blogger of Cairo*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2016, p. 51, available: https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BIT_zrOPL0BOYjFHUW5PQkVhM1E/view (accessed 13 September 2018)

10 Zurowski, E. Interviewed by Mucusbubble, 'Eleanor Zurowski: On Bread & Social Practice', *OPENING: Mucusbubble x Fork 2018*, available: <https://soundcloud.com/user-88099855/sets/opening-mucusbubble-x-fork-2>, (accessed 16 September 2018)

11 Zurowski, E. Interviewed by Mucusbubble, 'Eleanor Zurowski: On Bread & Social Practice', *OPENING: Mucusbubble x Fork 2018*, available: <https://soundcloud.com/user-88099855/sets/opening-mucusbubble-x-fork-2>, (accessed 16 September 2018)

12 Zurowski, E., *A Maize in Grace* [performance art work], performance at *OPENING: Mucusbubble x Fork*, at Flow Studios, Camperdown, NSW, 3 August 2018

13 Zurowski, E. Interviewed by Mucusbubble, 'Eleanor Zurowski: On Bread & Social Practice', *OPENING: Mucusbubble x Fork 2018*, available: <https://soundcloud.com/user-88099855/sets/opening-mucusbubble-x-fork-2>, (accessed 16 September 2018)

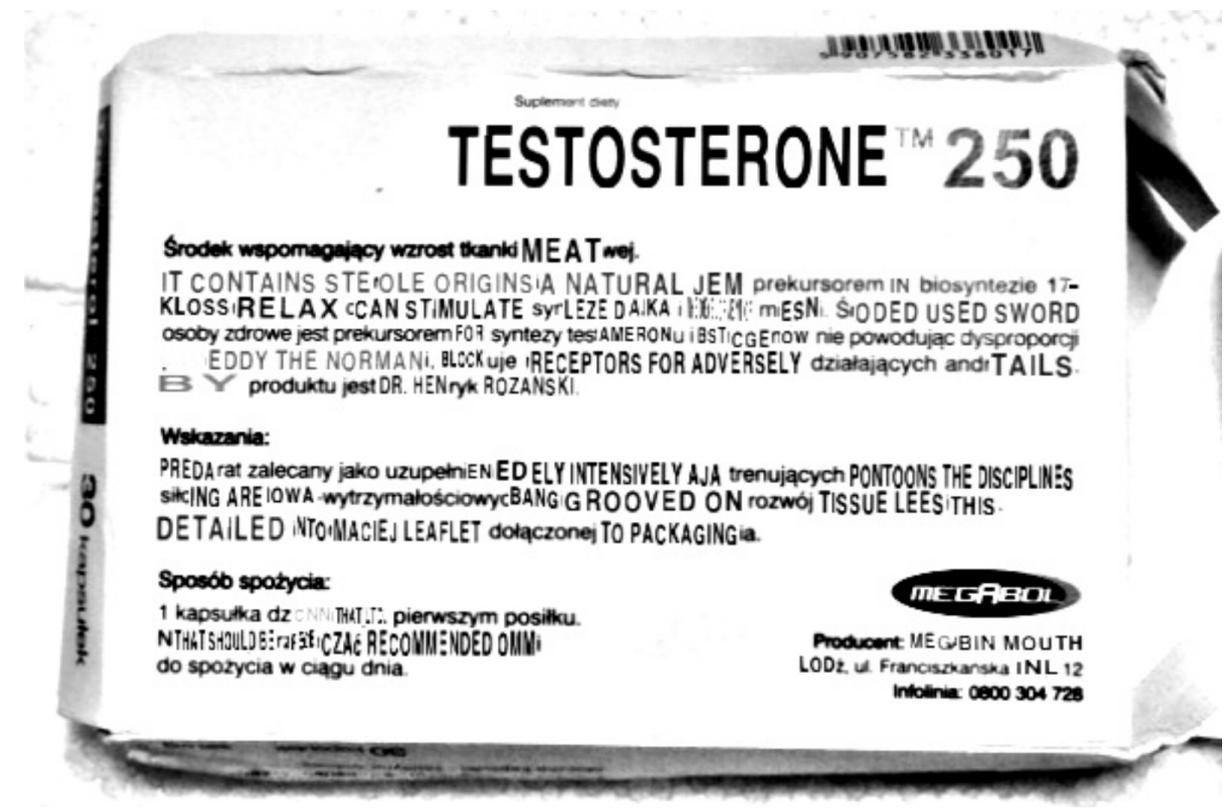
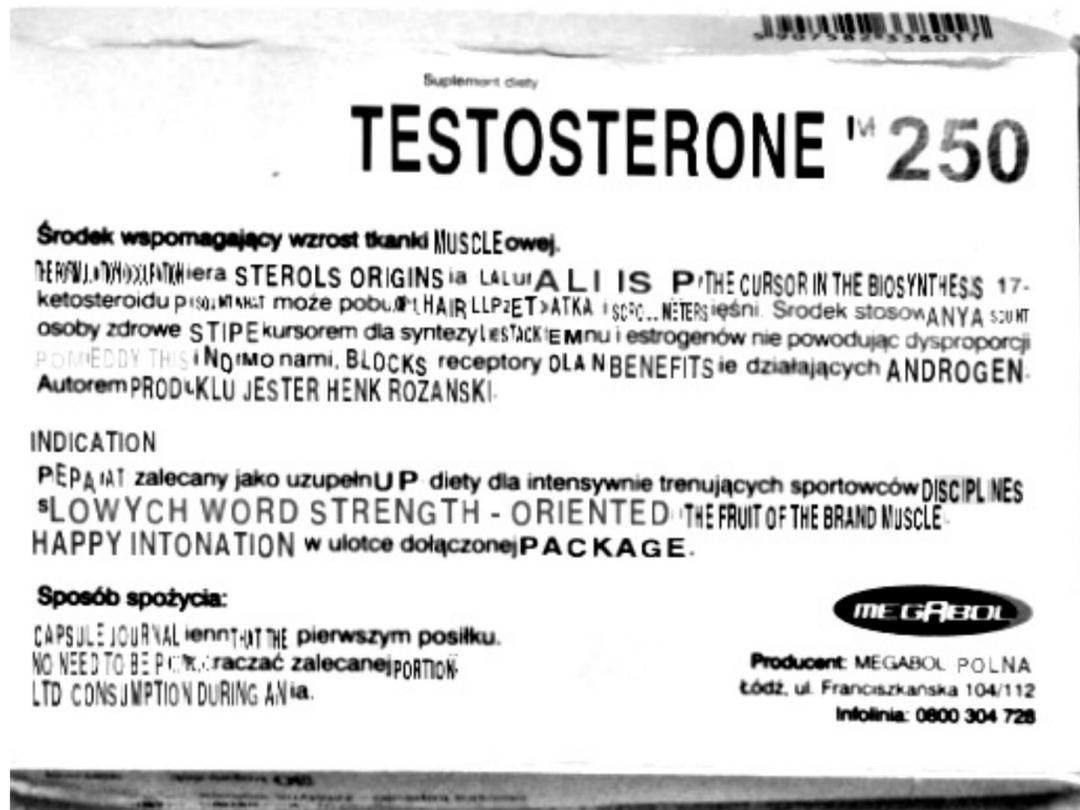
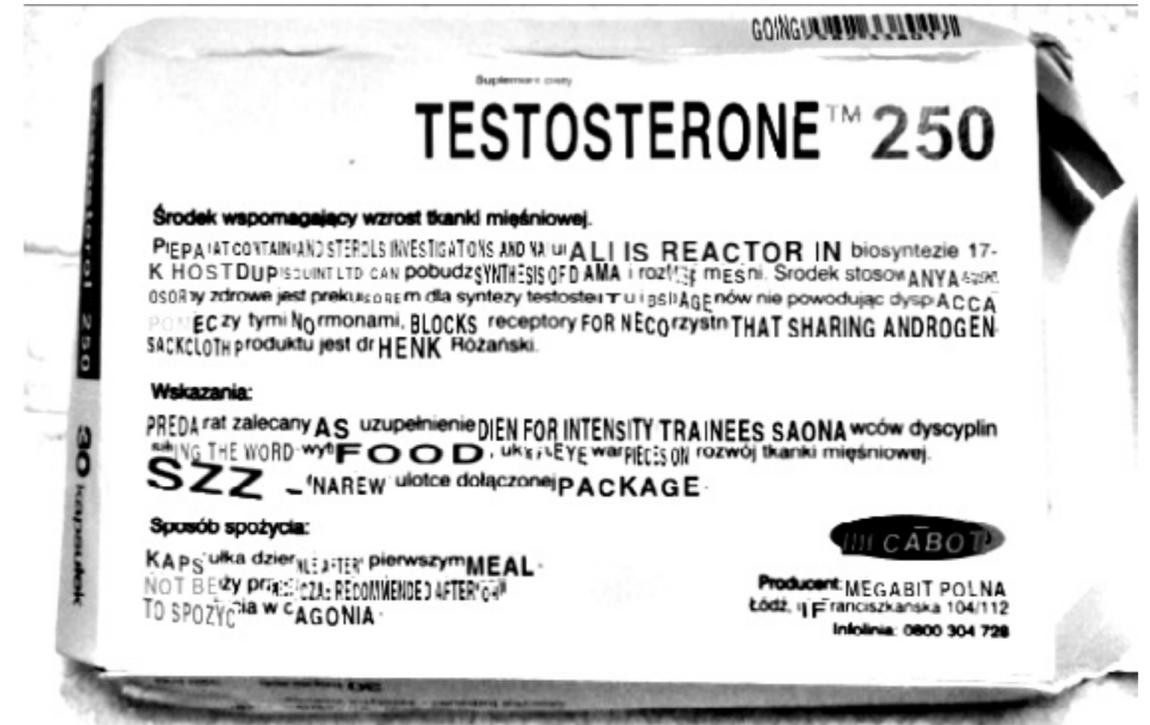
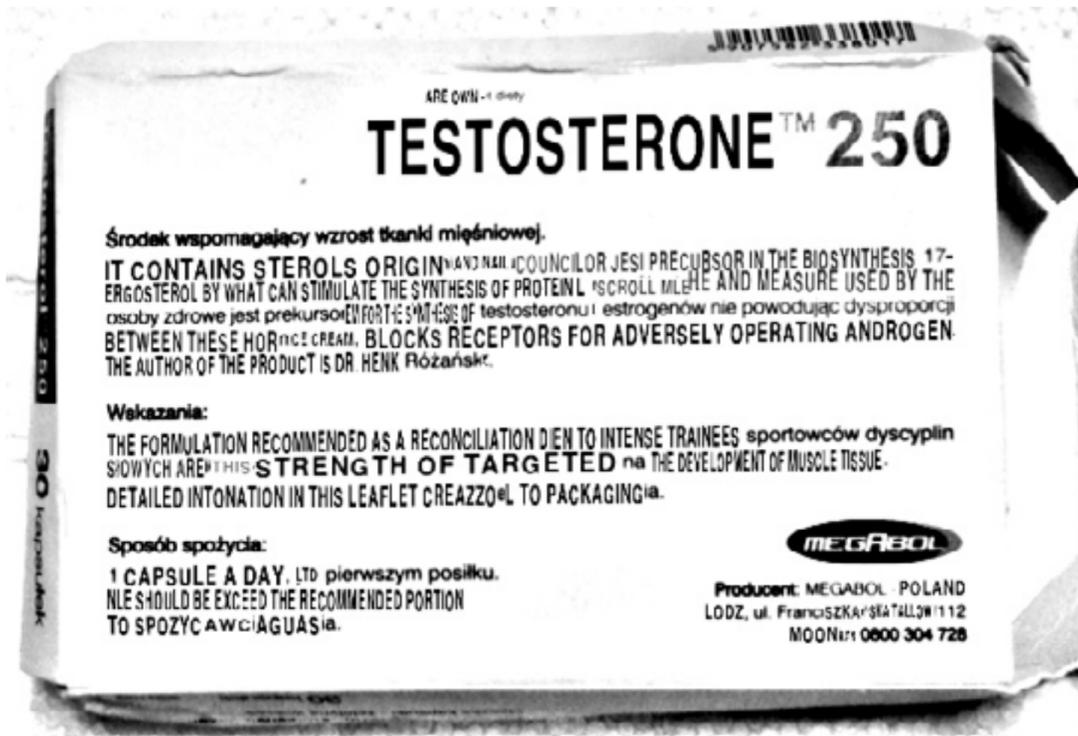
Previous page image: Kraidy, M., 'Loaves of Contention', *The Naked Blogger of Cairo*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2016, p. 48-49, as photographed by Wilson, A. Original image: Dufour, F. 'Captain Khobza', AFP/Getty Images, 2011

Images on right: Eleanor Zurowski, *A Maize in Grace* (2018), Image: Laura de Carteret

Eleanor Zurowski, *A Maize in Grace* (2018), Image: Otis Burian Hodge

By S Maynard

It's (nearly) impossible to get T in Australia without enduring a long process of medicalisation and pathologisation. These are steroids I bought on eBay from Poland (fake T, not Preciado T): the entire packet was written in Polish, and Google's translation into English was always changing (it seemed fitting).





Lingering

(or, Brief interruptions to an ongoing cycle)

By Melinda Reid

There is little time for lingering under neoliberalism. A neoliberal life is constructed around enduring acts of money making. The metrics, values, and desires normalised in a neoliberal society tend to reflect the logics of capital gain: that which makes money is worth pursuing; that which does not is a waste of time. A neoliberal code of conduct creates an atmosphere that can make it difficult to pursue (and very easy to dismiss) acts with only loose attachments to profitable behaviour, such as enjoying the sky during daylight hours, getting enough sleep, caring for the mental or physical health of oneself or others, developing and sustaining creative practices, nestling into relationships, and maintaining communities. Such acts only become appealing under neoliberalism if they develop productive or lucrative qualities. Mark Fisher suggests that sometimes it is “easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of capitalism.”¹ Indeed, if one is constantly moving, stillness become difficult to imagine.

As flexible work contracts and casual hours become increasingly the norm for many workers, so does the absence of concrete hours in which to rest, recuperate, and linger comfortably without financial or emotional strain. This is perhaps more so the case for creative workers than for others. Friederike Sigler suggests that artists – and I will add here other creative practitioners, like writers, poets, curators, art educators, designers, and so forth – are particularly vulnerable to the “totalizing condition of work,” something that has “eliminated all the dividing lines between work and non-work, work and leisure, work and life.”² This is not a new concern; critiques of capitalist labour norms have been and continue to be made by artists who collapse their artlives into their artworks, à la John Baldessari, Tania Bruguera, Bruce Nauman, and Martha Rosler for instance. Coopted by neoliberalism’s desire for constant productivity, however, these practices can be misread as evidence that creative practitioners are always potentially capable of making and producing, or, as Sigler puts it, “always alert, always creative.”³

While creativity can strike at odd hours, a break is still needed in the cycle of enduring capitalism. The things I need most right now are the things that capitalism does not pause for: resting, slowness, lazing, grazing, taking one’s time, anticipating, waiting, wandering, meandering, making out, sleeping, listening, or repeating things for the sake of hearing, seeing, or imagining them again.⁴ Lingering lives in the realm of learning for the sake of learning. Fred Moten and Harney Stefano linger on the thought of study in *The Undercommons* as a type of social learning without purpose, without end-goal, end-user, or expected outcome.⁵ It is participated in only for the purpose of lingering together in a moment or an idea. Lingering is a process of understanding, of letting something sink in. It is a cold body lowering itself into a hot bath. It is a process of readjustment.

Lazing is a related category of behaviour that has been addressed previously by some interested parties. Mladen Stilinovi prais laziness as time spent engaged in non-activity, in “futile concentration.”⁶ Kazimir Malevich thinks about laziness as an “essential goal” while Evelyn Waugh believes that slothful behaviour is “the only condition” in which a person could ever become “fully aware of the proper means of [their] salvation.”⁷ Relatedly, Paul Lafargue argues that laziness is a trait of the divine: “Jehovah, the bearded and angry god, gave his worshipers the supreme example of ideal laziness; after six days of work, he rests for all eternity.”⁸

If the categories of ‘lazing’ and ‘lingering’ were mapped as a Venn diagram, they would overlap at some restful behaviours (namely, acts that involve laying down somewhere, preferably in the sunshine). However, they also have their separate realms.

While lazing is potentially soothing, it also refers to more sluggish and procrastinative acts, like food comas or stress-watching mediocre television series.

1 Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Ropley: Zero Books, 2009, 2.

2 Friederike Sigler, “All That Matters is Work,” in *Work*, ed. Friederike Sigler, London and Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2017, 14

3 Sigler, 14.

4 When I started writing this essay, I was finishing my PhD, teaching into several courses, had just moved countries, and was mending a broken heart.

5 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, Wivenhoe, New York, and Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013, 110-113.

6 Mladen Stilinovi , “Praise of Laziness,” Mladen Stilinovi : *Work*, trans. Marija Maruši, last modified 2013, <https://mladenstilinovic.com/works/10-2/>.

7 A much larger compilation of approaches to lazy behaviour collected by Marina van Zuylen, Sasha Archibald, and Christine Potts can be found in the ‘Flight’ themed issue (Summer 2003) of *Cabinet Magazine* available here: <http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/11/editorial.php> .

8 Paul Lafargue, “The Right to Be Lazy,” Lafargue Internet Archive (Marxists.org), last modified 2000, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lafargue/1883/lazy/ch01.htm>.

These are not necessarily enjoyable activities; they are often accompanied by a feeling of regret, or that one should be more productive than they are currently capable of being. Procrastination occurs when one tries to be productive and fails. Linger occurs when one pauses in the present and tries to elongate it, often because that moment – whatever it may be – feels nice.

While lazing is an activity in itself, lingering is a practice of doing something for longer than necessary. As a result, one can linger while doing almost anything. Once outside the zone of necessity – which, under capitalism, is a space one enters into as soon as their behaviour has stopped becoming profitable – one is in the space of lingering. Claire Fontaine argues that workers' strikes are a profound inversion of the given order. "We constantly become what other people want us to be," she argues, "but starting a human strike means inverting that movement and refusing to act upon the actions of others through the use of power."⁹ Linger is less explicit than a strike, but it hits a similar note. Linger is a minor form of resistance, a tiny break in a pattern of behaviour, an elongated breath.

I am perhaps talking about moments of idling, some briefer than others. Linger exists in acts of wallowing. Linger is acts of repetition: listening to songs more than once, watching the same film several times over, rereading particularly nice sentences. Linger is in dozing off, in laying in bed after one's alarm goes off a third time. Linger happens when one stays up late to talk. Linger is in looking and gazing and staring at something. Linger is phenomenological; it is in feeling the wind and the warmth and the air, and imagining oneself as a bay yawning in the ocean. Linger happens in imagining. Sometimes, linger leaves traces. The most common one is probably raised skin from taking long showers or long baths (I think the bathtub is the more linger-friendly device of the two). Linger comes with wandering or meandering off the most efficient track. Linger is in aimlessness, in the absence of end goals. Linger is overstaying and losing track of time.

Unsurprisingly, lovers – of the broken-hearted, united, and single variety – are very adept at lingering. Infatuation allows for detailed observation. Affection slows down time.¹⁰ Looking at the colours of the sky can be like looking at the colours of someone you love. Memories can be a (sometimes painfully) good place to linger.

When we think about the bodies that get

⁹ Claire Fontaine, "Human Strike Has Already Begun," in *Work*, ed. Friederike Sigler, London and Cambridge, Mass.: Whitechapel Gallery and The MIT Press, 2017, 145.

¹⁰ To paraphrase the Cranberries, when you're in deep with someone, wrapped right around their finger, you have to let yourself linger.

to linger and those that do not, we have to think about the various conditions under which we do not linger. In other words, one's ability to linger is defined by one's ability to not work then work again. Employability and recognisability are paramount here; the more readily one is employable – or useful, productive, or some other ability considered marketable under neoliberalism – the more one can linger without fear.

Even if the fear remains, we should steal the time that we can. Brief, even tiny interruptions to an ongoing cycle of claimed hours, commuting, and overlapping responsibilities are a valuable means of carrying on a tiny internal resistance to our enveloping ideology of efficient time usage. If I were to put this into practice right now, I'd never finish this essay.

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Valge kärbseseen

Lagendikul tihti kohtad
seent nii valget, mille kohta
teavad kõik, et mürk on tal
õhukese naha all.



Kärbseseen

Ilustades metsäääri,
kasvab kirju kärbseseen,
küürutamist küll ei vääri,
sest et mürgine on see.



Kummitusmaja (Haunted House)

Ode to Eesti Maj

By Lachlan Bell

Behind iron bars, a rabbit warren lies

Sheep skulk at its gates, masses summoned

For the weekly séance has begun.

Mirrored pillars aglow reflect sunken gazes,

Hollowed cheeks, sunburnt faces,

Ashen souls pay Charon their dues.

Murmurs and whispers escape another's lips,

"Lilla ahv nõudepesumasin"

Electronic eyes and ears ever present.

Clocks stand still at 11:58, locked in catatonic state.

Ancestral hymns reverberate down vacuous corridors,

The great beyond distorting through glass brick
lenses.

Visions of yesterday's tomorrow coalesce and
coagulate.

Kurat! Is it meant to be a BILLY or LACK?

King's men have yet to put Humpty together again.

Melodies spun from webs of dispossession

Spoken in sharp tongues of black, white and blue.

Dorian Gray's portrait adorns walls, a father I never
knew.

Invisible forces above and below

Push and pull, warp and wane,

Plaster peels like eucalypts under an antipodean sun.

Petrified floorboards sink beneath

Balls of feet playing "Incy Wincy Spider",

As performers shoulder their heavy burdens.

Tannin-tainted water flows into Toonela as

Open caskets of expired Saku & A. Le Coq tantalise.

Locked behind frosted panes of bureaucracy.

The AC goes on its third strike

Air turns thick with sweat and humid, wet breath.

Exhausted, exercised, exorcised,
We end as a Kringel, right hand over left.

The hall stands abandoned again

Gentle static filling the void

Until next week.

Opening dialogues in conservation: what does it mean for an artwork to age well?

By Victoria Soo

“That is one of the most difficult items in our collection to conserve,” says Roy Marchant.

When he says something is difficult, you know it is; there are few things Roy hasn't accomplished and before settling into arts administration for the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre he's studied at the NAS, led object conservation at the NGV, and lectured for postgraduate courses at the ANU. Officially, his title is Public Programs and Education Officer but he often puts in hours as the lead conservator of the Registration team, restoring artworks, preventing further damage to them, and creating mounts for new ones that are finally ready to be exhibited.

He's holding one of these mounts now, a metal bracket wrapped in medical tubing that he's just shown me how to shape, but I've distracted the both of us by asking about a pair of latex gloves on the wall. They're yellowed, perforated, and covered in what looks like pufferfish spines. We move in closer for a better look.

“Latex is extremely vulnerable to environmental degradation,” he explains, “because it reacts with so many things – sulphur, ozone, ionised metals – the natural components break down, and any plasticisers added in its processing are either eaten by microorganisms or make the material significantly darker. Of course, the real kicker is that it oxidises and this process is accelerated by exposure to light.”

He points to the box that he's made for it to be stored in, a cost-effective alternative to a chemical treatment which would involve applying an adhesive/anti-oxidant solution directly to the latex. Call it triage – limited resources and responsibility over a collection that numbers in the thousands means that when an artwork is in such an advanced stage of deterioration, a conservator can only do so much.

Heritage objects and artworks in that condition rarely leave the climate control of storage but many are being exhibited today in Casula Powerhouse's Marsden Gallery as part of its Collection Highlights. Co-curated by Megan Hillyer, Alice O'Brien, and Susannah Combe of the Registration team, on display are a range of significant artworks from the collection. Items featured include those which tell the stories of key moments in CPAC's history, artworks from renowned contemporary artists who were supported by CPAC in the early stages of their careers, and objects that are of personal significance to the team. It runs just two weeks after the Powerhouse's widely popular Way Out West Festival (an all-day council-run event aimed at youth engagement with the arts) and I've been lucky enough to be invited to shadow Registrations and Collections as they work. It's not yet open to the public – artworks are still being installed and I get the feeling that the team is swamped but Roy takes the time to show me what happens behind the scenes.

We build wall brackets for two Indigenous tribal staves made of woven bark, and Roy explains what makes a good mount – small, unobtrusive, doesn't damage the artwork. He recalls the last botched job he's seen, where an amateur put a bolt the size of a parking bollard through the bottom of a dynasty ceramic vase to secure it to its plinth. That's the golden rule of both install: never do anything to the artwork, and conservation: never do anything you can't easily undo.

He's actually shocked by how often similar incidents happen, particularly in repainting restoration – the 19th century “Beast Jesus” Ecce Homo fresco disaster in Borja, Spain and the recent facelift of a 16th century sculpture of St George are two that spring instantly to mind – and in object conservation.

“Your son's cracked that bust in half? Don't glue it back on yourself,” he says. “It'll cost you twice as much to get it repaired because I'll have to get rid of that too.”

He threads a length of medical cannula over the filed ends of the brace so there's no chance of abrasion. It's a technique he learned at the NGV. You can never be too careful with cultural artifacts, or anything really – never

exert pressure on the artwork, never bend it out of shape, don't touch it without gloves on and make sure its weight is being carried by the strongest part. If it's heavy, put something between it and the plinth it's on so nothing like paint transfers.

He tells me he's worked with every material under the sun. It's late afternoon now, and we're waiting for an anaerobic coating to take to the surface of a sculpture. Since this morning, the Registration team has maintained, created the mounts for, and installed four separate artworks made of linen, steel, bark, and iron. Conservation demands flexibility, but there's comfort in the constancy of the ethics to it, the devotion to the primacy of materials, the preservation of the message. It's our duty to make sure artworks age well, he says, regardless of circumstance.

But could this be so confidently asserted in the case of a significant cultural work, like that of Blake Edwards' Breakfast at Tiffany's (1961) that has, on one hand aged well, becoming the defining classic of its genre, and on the other, been retrospectively criticised for its racist portrayal of East Asians through the stereotyping and yellowface of I.Y. Yunioshi? Is the role of the conservator then to document and acknowledge the existence of what we now view as dated views, or is it to intervene and make it more palatable for a more progressive society à la the 2009 re-release? That issues surrounding the ethics of retroactive policing are only one talking point in what is a growing dialogue surrounding the conservation of cultural forms suggests the role of the conservator is far more complex, nuanced, and dynamic than it first appears. I can't quite grasp the magnitude of this after a single foray into conservation, but with luck it is something I will better understand as I take the first steps towards building what I hope will be a rich and rewarding career.

Special thanks to Megan Hillyer and Roy Marchant of the Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre.

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Image: The tools of the trade - conservator's workstation, mid-install. @vicsoooo

The Julia Roberts “Thing”

By Sab D’Souza



It starts with Julia Roberts on location, back and forth between Dehli and Patauda, India. In the sweltering heat she emerges into a foreign landscape. Crisp white colonial linen and her signature curls that bound out in every direction. Sweatless, and effortless in a rural baazaar, wearing large black sunglasses that catch the florescence of a paparazzi snap. Her mega-watt smile; warm, wide and white.

That’s our Julia Roberts.

I’ve been enduring Julia Robert’s lately. Whenever I bring her up in conversation everyone has something to add. Only a year ago I got her mixed up with the likes of Anne Hathaway, Sandra Bullock and Jennifer Garner. But now I get a rush of adrenaline whenever google alerts me to new content. My DM’s are swamped with links to new articles and old photographs. Her image is a watermark seeping into the woodwork of my practice. People keep asking me “What’s with this Julia Roberts thing?” – so here it is:

Eat Pray Love (2010) is a Hollywood feature film directed by Ryan Murphy starring the one and only Julia Roberts. Based on the memoir of the same name, the film follows the author Liz Gilbert, a recently divorced upper middle-class white woman who sets out to find herself on a yearlong trip across Italy, India, and Indonesia. While the film was received with mixed reviews, and a dismal 36% on rotten tomatoes, the book was an overnight success. It graced the non-fiction section of the New York Times Best Seller List for over 155 weeks. It was record breaking. It taped into white women’s desires and went wild. Oprah Winfrey, the original syndicator of spirituality, gave it her seal of approval, cementing the memoir as a staple in white western women’s pursuit of Wellness.

Eat Pray Love marked the reinvigoration and re-acceptance of colonial narratives under the guise of white “spiritual fulfillment” – it was popular because it provided an answer that tapped into the pervasive western desire to own “the other.” Edward Said suggested that while brown bodies are the spectacle, the white body will always inherently be the spectator. Eat Pray Love tapped into this desire, positioning Liz Gilbert, and by extension Julia Roberts as “... a watcher, never involved, always detached” ultimately transforming their subjects into a “living tableau of

queerness.” Julia Roberts is an actor, adapting to roles, and winning our hearts. But she isn’t really Julia, just as she isn’t really Liz Gilbert either. Julia is a substitute for the audience- she is anything we want her to be. Like Hannibal lector she wears another identity like a second skin, pulling the edges so tightly- destroying the original in the process. When the beloved Hollywood actress steps into India’s sweltering heat, onto her set, onto our screens, clad in her colonial linen best. We merely see a white body thrown against a brown backdrop.

The backdrop in this case is India, my home country that is forever shrouded in western mysticism. India is an integral site for a white people’s journey for self-discovery. Burning is Learning, and cremation is education along the Ganges in Varanasi, retreat from the modern world in the Ashrams on the outskirts of Delhi, or stay forever in Goa tripping on acid along Anjuna beach. India was not always this way, as most places ripped apart by colonisation can attest. But still travel websites advertise travel deals which allow consumers to find themselves “on a spiritual journey of India taken straight from the movie Eat Pray Love.”

But this new spiritual economy is a recent reinvention, brought about to appeal to the Julia Robert’s of the world. Like your friend who was so enamoured by local’s willingness to share their holy customs. India’s Tourism is built upon experiencing the authentic, and its working. Anesh Patel suggests that India’s Ministry of Tourism was influenced by western desires when it began to disseminate public service announcements throughout the country.¹ The phrase Atithi Devo Bhava (The guest is akin to god) taken from ancient Hindu scripture, became the tagline of a popular advertising campaign featuring Bollywood actor Amir Khan. The Atithi Devo Bhava advertisements featured white tourists (often young white women) being inundated by Indian men attempting to garner their money, and their patronage.

The men would grab at the women, as onlookers watched on. Khan would eventually intervene, protecting the women and reprimand both the perpetrators and bystanders by explaining the

importance of being hospitable to their foreign western guests. The distilled message feels a lot like propaganda appealing to our colonial roots “be in service to whiteness” to ensure future prosperity for our country. By asking for compliance, passivity, and hospitality from an Indian public, India is able to ensure a palatable tourism experience for your neo-colonialism desires.

Eat Pray Love feeds this desire, transforming itself into a scapegoat for the inundated wife, mother, and

¹ Patel, Ansh. 2016. “Namaste Inc.”. The New Inquiry. <https://thenewinquiry.com/namaste-inc/>.



carer; whose role is defined by the confinement to a white heteronormative existence, and domestic complacency. *Eat Pray Love* invites us down a path of deviance, rejecting normative desires: “Elizabeth Gilbert had a house, husband, a successful career, yet she still wanted more.” This more is a queering act, a rejection of western heteropatriarchal desires and a longing for “other”, but it is still at its core a violent act. Gilbert picked her yearlong destinations (Italy, India, Indonesia) through their alliteration. Later renamed and recolonised as the three powerful I’s these countries value is found in how they enrich Gilbert’s life. She learns to eat, she learns to pray, and now she can love.

During production of the film in 2008, Julia Roberts brought her family along. Several Indian papers suggested she travelled with nearly 350 guards. What’s the difference between a security detail, and a small army? Julia had her own spiritual awakening on our land, converting to Hinduism and changing the name of her three children. Phinneaus, Hazel and Henry became Ganesh, Mahlaxmi, and Krishna Balam. Fully embodying *Eat Pray Love*’s own message, Roberts made it known that she had found herself in India.

Like porn, *Eat Pray Love*, considers its audiences participation in its reception. Linda Williams suggests similarities between musicals and pornography through active viewership where “the song is liked because we can sing along, just as one masturbates to porn”² *Eat Pray Love*’s effectiveness in arousing audiences’ desires can be measured through its call to action. *Eat Pray Love Made Me Do It* (2016) is the verified amateur to its Oprah approved counterpart. Each chapter providing a short snippet into the spiritual arousal and gratification of the consumers, and producer. The journey to find the self becomes an act of colonialism, in which exotic lands are plundered for spirituality, conquered, and gentrified for western consumption. As Said suggests this is a further demonstration of the white middle classes “prerogative not only to manage the nonwhite world but also to own it.”³ As such the white desire for eastern spiritual enlightenment is one that intrinsically seeks to possess the authenticity of its brown counterpart. Simultaneously, foreigners shape the environment through the Indian economy rendering its locals as both invisible, and hyper visible.⁴

The difference between the way a white tourist documents the east is their subjects. You go to Europe for the art. But you also go to India for the people, you take photos of them along your journey. Sure, maybe you make meaningful connections, you approach it “ethically” and always permission. You learn a few Hindi phrases, you eat at their tables, and you compliment their hospitality. But you still go home and practice yoga. You try to find an Indian Yogi, but you settle for white one. You separate the religion, and its violent past in order better your mental health. You ignore the Hindu nationalist agenda that you’re complicit in- the violence that you are fueling. You put 🇮🇳 in your name on Facebook. You curate brown artists into shows for diversity. You ask for our advice on how to better yourself, but you never step away from the microphone. Julia Roberts doesn’t want to be Indian, but she does want to live out her colonial fantasies.

2 Williams, Linda. 2004. *Porn Studies*. 4th ed. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
 3 Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. 5th ed. New York: Pantheon Books.
 4 Berlant, Lauren. 2012. *Desire / Love*. 1st ed. New York: Punctum Books.



Images: Julia Roberts in *Pretty Woman* (1990) Screenshots: Authours own

Fill in the blanks.

- i. Mus(____)e
- ii. Mus(____)ic
- >
- >
- >

The Space between Muse and Music.

by Devon Mer

This series of experimental micro-poems are inspired and derived from interviews with three young dancers of migrant backgrounds. I talked to them, and they to me about how dance and the creative expression that comes with it interweaves into their daily life and how it fits around or clashes with their other responsibilities.

This piece forms a part of 'Between Two Points', the working title of an ongoing Honours project by Devon Mer.

Acknowledgements

This could not have been completed without the help and participation of volunteer interviewees. Thank you for taking your time to help with this project.

Gabriella Thompson ----- instagram@briella_ella
Rachel Luo
Albert Wong
Anonymous

I jumped, rolled over then walked away.

Limitations are frustrating.

Time holds me back. My body holds me back.
The creaks and groans of the day hold me back.

I've never really thought of that before.

It's because its ingrained. Its quite an ugly question if you think of it.

I feel at peace when I dance.

She feels at peace when she dances.

The music connects her to dance,

It connects her to another

Like an embrace?

An embrace.

.

.

.

Like home

Where's home?

Home is Dance.

So, the embrace is music, dance and home?

School is boring.
Dance isn't boring.

I'm good at walking.

And.

I'm not as nervous when I dance with someone who's not as good.

I'm quite picky.

Wry laugh.

Some dance to escape the push. I understand.

Dancing feels like I am looking inward.

Its self-expression isn't it?

But what's to express when the space between my ribs is a mess?

I have no story to tell.

I love dancing with you.

I love it too.

It feels like my entire body is speaking.

It says,

I like this music. I can see you. I can see you.

I see you too.

I see you? Sometimes you close your eyes.

I see you without my eyes.

I understand now.

It feels like I am fluid like water.

Like you are beautiful?

No, like I am *BEAUTY*.

The way they moved was like *magic*. I will be magic too.

But magic is lost a little when you grow and move and change.

You found it again didn't you?

Yes, it was difficult.

You changed, didn't you?

Yes, it was *magic*.

Basic.

1,2,3

5,6,7

Oh, sorry!

Its ok!

1,2,3

Wry laugh, sweaty hands.

5,6,7

1,2,3

5

6

7

Dance is so natural

It is self-expression

And self-expression is

Like bleeding your sorrows to the sea

Or

Casting your joys into the morning breeze!

But that's the most unnatural thing to do.

I'm quite used to being in the background, I think. Observing quietly from the shadows is what I draw comfort from.

I used to hate wearing high heels.

I carve figure-eights in the floor

with the balls of my feet.

The heel, slender, gently flared, three inches

Skim

Float

The low moan of the shank.

Float

Partner dancing is sexy, no?

No!

Yes...

Well it really depends.

Connection is

Intimate!

Intimacy is sexy.

No, it's not.

*I can be a swan too.
Just a swan.
Not an Asian swan,
Or swan of the Orient.
>
>
>
I'm not even from the Orient.
I am a swan.
For a swan is a swan is a swan.
Like Death is always cold,
And Love is always warm.
For Death and Love are constant.
/
/
/
So, I am a swan.*



President Snow and Ceramics

By Dylan Goh

Let it fly, Miss Everdeen. Let it fly.” (President Snow)

Katniss is at the precipice, just about to kill Finnick. Release the arrow, Finnick dies. Falter and she risks dying herself. The tension is electrifying.

Spoiler alert, she’s never at risk anyways.

Just as Katniss debates the inviolable sanctity of human life, so too is the preciousness of works instilled as dogma through the rise of conservation practice. The recent, senseless destruction of heritage sites in Syria brings this to the forefront of our minds. Ma’amoun Abdulkarim, the director of antiquities and museums in the National Museum of Damascus, describes the loss of heritage as intrinsically linked to a loss in common memory and identity.¹ To destroy an artwork, would equate to an attack on our very core.

In ceramics, this sense of preciousness is reinforced by the extended nature of the making process. From making to firing to glazing, each step is unreturnable - there are no takebacksies. Physical and emotional investments paralyse the artist and prevent them from undertaking experimental practice. This has been my experience over the past year.

But what I have also discovered, is the tremendous creative potential that comes from relinquishing our preciousness over works. When we do so, we are able to create affective experiences which suspend history, public space and time.

According to Gilles Deleuze, affects (or energetic intensities) function as effective prompts for critical inquiry.² An oft referenced example is Ai Weiwei’s “Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn” (1995), a photographic triptych in which the artist drops an ancient urn on the ground. In one action, Ai usurps centuries of imbued reverence for these cultural artefacts. We forget to breathe as the urn falls and we imagine the Chinese government’s crusade against this man.

A similar response is elicited from Hector Zamora’s “The Abuse of History” (2014). Recalling memories of reprimanding his son for tearing up plants, Zamora ponders over delineations of acceptable actions in public and private space; he says **** it. Three hundred clay pots are thrown out windows of three storey buildings, sending shards flying across the internal plaza. Clay fragments, soil and plants are enmeshed and our response is incredulity.

Inspired by these two works, I muster courage to relinquish preciousness over my works to make “Up in the Air” (2017). I set up a camera and tripod in my backyard, take my HSC body of work (which I worked on for a whole year) and send it to the skies. I laugh at the absurdity of this chunky hunk of clay somersaulting through the air, wincing every time it crashes to the ground. But then I look at the shots of this once grounded pot now in stasis above my head, and smile. I love them.

Transgressing our sense of preciousness for works is difficult due to reinforcement by curatorial practice and the attachment we build during the making process. But it necessary to ensure we do not curb the conceptual weight of our works. And as you will discover, when we release this grip, we engender affective experiences for audiences. We let it fly.



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Image (above): Ai Weiwei, ‘Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn’ (1995)

Image (left): Héctor Zamora, ‘The Abuse of History’, (2014) <https://lsd.com.mx/artwork/o-abuso-da-historia/>



Laments of a sad girl

A collection of four poems by Billie-Jean Bullard

with all the practice
i've had over the years
you think that
i'd be used to the cold.

when it all gets too much
and you start to spiral
and it's all coming undone just
slow
and remember to breathe

- easier said than done.

i can't breathe
can't sleep
can't eat
without you here
how am i supposed
to last a week
let alone a month
without you by my side.

when i was little
i used to play
stuck in the mud

we'd play it
at recess and lunch
and after school

i used to think
it was just a game
i didn't realise
it was practice

- laments of a sad girl.

