

17/05/2021

I want to acknowledge that for the same reasons listed in the essay, that I did not want to post this in any static form.

It is the same aspects of my being that 'check boxes' that also mean that, for me, this could never be a mere intellectual or aesthetic exercise. That this was, and is, heavy, sacred, and as a result, desires to be private. I desire to protect it, and to protect me.

But we sign contracts, and I signed this one.

Among other things, this was a learning curve in access, advocacy, compromise and the notion of 'perpetuity'. Who has access to me, who decides how we present what we present? What assumed but not overtly stated protocols are we signing up to be contained by? And who wrote them? How do we reconcile the fact that there is no way, that I have yet witnessed, to consider invisible labour in the writing of a contract?

There are many more words to come, and there are many questions. Many more impediments of art to unpack.

This is not static. Conversation is reciprocity, conversation is dance. Dance releases. Reciprocity relieves. Through it, these words became lighter to offer. Through it, we share the weight. Through it, we lighten, in all senses of the word, for those who will come after.

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28/03/21

When I dance I remember. My body knows what to do because the movements predate me. We have been dancing, long before I could conceive of what any of this meant consciously. The intuition is a logic that runs faster than conscious language can keep up with. We have been dancing long before we came to be watched.

Improvisation trains the intuition, or I could say improvisation trains us to listen to the intuition that is always present but not always heard, understood, valued and honoured. We have always known how to move, before the world taught us that we didn't, and so we stopped, for fear that there was a right way and that we might be doing it wrong, and that alienation and exclusion would be the consequence if we did get it wrong. We required training and validation from a system that didn't listen to what felt good for our bodies, and trained us to also ignore these signals. I cry as an artist, witnessing the loss of artists. I cry as an animal witnessing the destruction of disconnection.

I think about the antidotes. I think about the way BAHAY PERLAS and their in house choreographer Joseph talk about their relationship, that the choreography is developed through a process of listening to what movements feel natural to the bodies of the Queens. For the dance to feel like it is truly theirs, not something imposed upon them. Not someone else's script being read and enacted. I think about Joseph describing that in each traditional Filipino Singkil dance each Princess performing the dance makes it entirely their own, in reciprocity with the existing story as passed onto and now lived through them.

I was tempted to begin this essay with a precursor that stated that this was not a polished product. A disclaimer that would free me, in aim to be less measured against value systems that were not designed for someone like me to thrive within. That would free me of the manifestations of those systems, as internalised by all of us, manifested in expectation and assumption. I hear Jeanette's voice saying, "It can be an undefined expression! Not finite! Mutable..."

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I want to honour that my body is telling me not to do this, to be in this 'space' at all because it feels unsafe. Staring into a one-way mirror, broadcasted live to the audience that can only be imagined. One of the reasons I want to acknowledge this, is to minimize the possible self-resentment I may feel toward myself for not listening to that boundary that my body is trying to make. For not protecting me when I'm asking for protection.

Two questions I had written down from the discussions after Jeanette and Emily's workshop were,
"What are we protecting right now?"

"What kind of agency do you need for yourself?"

And Jeanette's expression of a desire to create for the world what she needed for herself. Ultimately I wrote, "How can I feed myself?"

So often I hear the question in my mind, "How do people make this work?"

as in, how are people not paralysed into silence by the fear?

The answer is obvious but wildly cliché so I won't say it out loud.

The other morning I dreamt of questions like these swirling all within me, not in solid lines, but all overlapping. Regardless of the specific words to frame the question, eventually, the antidotes come to me. In my dream I see a visual design that maps out a collection of antidotes. The first in capital letters reads,

FEED YOUR KIN.

It's usually hard for me to remember words from dreams, but this message is clear as day. And I wake up with it still in my mind noted and noting. I fall in and out of sleep multiple times as I'm pulled back into the dream and pulled back out by my snoozed alarm clock. At each breach of waking I see the words again. Of course, as I did when they first came, I note them. I know to remember them because I know how to listen.

FEED. YOUR. KIN. and that includes yourself.

When I signed up for this I pictured us being together in person for this small ending-party event. And that we'd all actually know each other, at least have met each other by the end. We would hold physical space, fluidly, with laughter and with food, with peripheral interactions, chatter. We could move toward the energies we were drawn to move toward. We would have autonomy, agency to choose which energies to further engage.

To reconcile this with myself I have to reconsider this fluid motion in a larger picture. That our meeting here today is a part of a larger party. One interaction within the fluid network.

I need these images to understand. To orient myself.

Offerings as orientation. Orientation offerings.

I have been gifted offerings from these artists and I offer them this in reciprocity.

I also offer this as love letter to all my kin, I haven't had the capacity to offer much else.

You are my sustenance.

I have never been able to birthe anything of value that wasn't a love letter.

Dear Sustenance,

how do I sustain you?

how do I charge the charger?

feed. your. kin.

but how *do* I feed my kin?

What do *I* need?

to feed on?

when the sun is offering me its rays how do I ensure I bathe

in a way that sustains this lift in me through the night until the next day

sustains me through the days where it doesn't visit again

how do we continue momentum beyond the seedling?

you plant it amongst a family of seedlings

Just like the Indigenous tradition practiced by many nations on Turtle Island of the Three Sisters¹

squash, corn and beans planted together to thrive beyond what they could ever be alone

siblings

with different approaches, different strengths, different offerings

they feed each other because they speak to each other,

they can be vulnerable and witness vulnerability, they can hold and be held

they are safe to express their needs

growing alongside one another in reciprocity

that is sustainability

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I dream about dinner parties
dinner parties are a birth place
revolution starts at a dinner party
the ideas for BAHAY PERLAS' project were born around a dinner table hosted by Hazel
At their workshop, Jeanette and Emily prompted us to eat together
to feast together
dinner parties are where we vibe check
dinner parties are where we find out that other people are tired too
dinner parties are where we troubleshoot
dinner parties sustain us
to prepare and share food is a reciprocal foundation
upon it, held by it, we feel safer to give and receive other things, like healthy feedback
in lieu of the physical feast, reply all becomes dinner party

I was so excited to meet with the Bahay Perlas team because it was going to be the closest thing I had experienced to a Filipino feast in years, albeit we did just sit in a park drinking cocktails. Inevitably, or at least it felt inevitable to me, although we had just met, we danced together that night.

I grew up spontaneously singing and dancing with my family all the time.

Every other kind of communication, eh, there's a lot of gaps, but when the music starts, there's a language that transcends. With Bahay Perlas, I felt like this wasn't going to be misunderstood. I felt like I didn't have to code switch, and that's also because I was amongst queers of colour.

I don't want to have to mask any facets of who I am, which is why I'm writing this the way I'm writing it. Without the pressure of it being polished, because I mean, polished to who's standard? Edited to who's constraints?

This is enough. This is being made as I speak it. This will be made in the conversation that follows.
This is not mine. This is ours. And I hope that this space does come with as little judgement as possible, not just for me, but for us collectively. And the antidote for judgement is curiosity.

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I feel fed by the work of these artists.

I feel empowered by the power of these artists.

I am honoured to have had the opportunity to meet and be in conversation with Jeanette, Emily, Hazel, Christian, Kiel and Joseph.

It's an honour to witness the vulnerability of creation.

It's healing to witness comradery, advocacy.

Community creates and sustains momentum.

Witnessing folks in their power, empowering each other.

Expanding through vulnerability.

Buoyed by abundance mindsets.

Witnessing folks talking about what they are genuinely passionate about, is healing as fuck.

So within the web of reciprocity. There has been pollination.

and seeds are in the wind, with all possibility of landing and planting

and rooting and growing

and birthing new seeds

birthing new fruit

yet unfathomed

that we can eat and share

and thats more than enough

and thats what sustains me.

1. Kimmerer, R. W. (2016). *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Tantor Media, Inc.