

Ollscoil na hÉireann, Corcaigh  
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**Repurposing Rage (or Rage Re-Boot)--**  
**How Audience's Outrage Supports Generative Processes in**  
**Theatre Making**

Thesis presented by

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*“How can you be an artist and not reflect the times?”* Nina Simone

Abstract:

This thesis explores process driven creation of new work over five months (April 2023 - August 2023) in Finland. Process included meditation in nature and performances of *OUT RAGE*, which asked audiences to participate by sharing a concern –*outing a rage*– with an eco-punk astral messenger. Final products were audience inspired potential products that integrated the overall process, including performance observations and reflections. As a theatre maker with an interest in social and environmental justice, I am invested in creating new work that speaks to the current human condition of our lack of agency on a dying planet. Embracing the certainty of global warming on a human scale, acknowledging anger in society without inciting violence, and then creating new work informed by a collective of participants are at the core of this thesis.

Introduction:

Many people, when they hear the word outrage, are triggered to immediately think of anger, violence, despair, and other heavy thoughts along those lines; after all, isn't our world currently in a state of environmental, political, and psychological chaos? My intent with this project was not to upset my audience by eliciting negative feelings that may cause emotional harm, rather it was to simply invite a voluntary audience to unburden themselves of a global worry they had been harboring.

My main research question is:

How might I best practice a methodology of creation, practice and performance that generates useful audience input for further creative development?

Sub-questions include:

How can I ground my process in nature while creating an aesthetically arresting performance that engages an audience?

How might that process then inform a generative agency for audience participation in my performance?

How can I prepare myself, as an actor, for endurance performances of remaining still for over an hour at a time?

How does setting affect audience engagement?

What new work can I create from audience input that reflects all factors of the process?

In undertaking a project that asked audiences to out their rage, I was prepared to be completely surprised by what the audiences said. In the context of this thesis, outrage denotes a response to some shocking injustice, while outing rage is airing a grievance. It is the latter that my project focused on. I wanted the opportunity to explore feelings of empathy with the audiences who bravely, humbly, and with the utmost vulnerability shared their responses. I also wanted to find commonalities in what unsettles us and try to craft a new narrative informed by that collective consciousness. I live in a politically stable country that ranks first in sustainability worldwide (Finland Promotion Board, 2021), yet my foremost concern— my outrage— is still global warming and the overall environmental crisis that threatens the future of life on Earth.

The reality to many of its inhabitants is that this world is a complicated and dangerous space to inhabit politically, emotionally, and environmentally. In an ever increasing landscape of mass violence, large scale human rights violations, political instability, and climate uncertainty, I wondered how intentionally facing negativity— *outing rage*— might serve a creative purpose in crafting a reflective narrative that spoke for impoverished societies. Poverty takes many forms here, from financial insecurity that affects housing and adequate nutrition, to a temperamental climate that wreaks havoc on ecosystems— humans included— by way of droughts, hurricanes, typhoons, heatwaves, and other devastations that render populations ravaged by homelessness and lacking adequate sanitation for survival. This cycle of chaos then requires massive efforts to restore order for human habitability, and so it goes until another catastrophe strikes. Less visible ways in which societies are impoverished are loss of community, isolation, lack of agency, and mental health disorders. It is in these

invisible spaces that I think human connection resides, and the narrative potential of that interests me very much. For the feasibility of this thesis, I put aside my own staggering climate angst and focused on a smaller, more human scale of environmental relationship by embracing natural elements in my performance with the intention of reflecting feelings of peace and unity with the environment. In order to achieve this scaled down concept, I created a costumed character that would invite confrontation from audiences rather than simply lamenting what we have lost.

The following serves to detail literature reviews that informed and influenced my process, how I engaged with this process, how my performances were received, and conclusions about the potential creative products at the outcome.

#### Literature Review:

To motivate and inform my question of how I would begin to devise a process of using performance as a tool for generating audience input, I looked to how performance artists experienced nature and used non-human objects in interesting ways within their performances, the aesthetics of recent protest theatre, and an ontological expert who's work speaks to the immeasurability of the scaling of objects. My first and main point of influential research came from Marina Abramović, mainly in the form of exploring disciplined self-practice prior to performances, but also understanding how she spoke about her performance work, in terms of its effects on her and her audiences. Next was the pioneering work of Annette Arlander, whose work in landscape performance and rich contemplative writings on the subject introduced new ways of thinking about planning artistic research with regards to nature and nature in performance. Recent protest, or theatricalized protest of climate change, was my third referential source for consideration of an aesthetic presence in a public space that stirred spectators and how. My final research into hyperobjectivity provided insight into what I initially took for granted as intuition; that is that the scale of rage, grief, climate change, death, and everything ontological is something I can never fully

comprehend or put my arms around, much less even perform with any sense of its true scale.

### Learning From a Master: Marina Abramović

In order to train myself for the task of performing in stillness for an hour at a time, I looked first to the work of Marina Abramović, considered the Grandmother of performance art and masterfully versed in durational performances that embrace pain, exhaustion, and transformational enlightenment for both artist and quite often, audience. (White, 2019) My exposure to Marina Abramović is purely academic, for I have never seen her perform live. It is only through viewing interviews and performances online, as well as reading critical analyses of her work and ethos that I have come to an understanding of her approach to art as a holistic endeavor of intimate communion with the human spirit in all of its extremes; it is by this undertaking that transformation manifests itself. Art as spiritual practice, as the following examination of Abramović's work will show, informs my own process of devising performance as a tool for generating audience input. (Burello, 2023)

In her performance of *House With an Ocean View*, the artist inhabited three rooms for twelve days while fasting with only water to drink. Audience participation, in terms of time spent in the gallery watching the artist sit, stand, sleep, use the toilet, bathe, and drink water ranged from a few minutes to several hours with repeated daily visits by some. From this installation performance where the artist is intertwined as both performing subject and receiving object, the audience then becomes both intimately voyeuristic as witness to the minutiae of movements and actions by the artists, as well as subjects themselves for the artist as a vast ocean view. On performative intent, Abramović says, "The performance is a process. The public as well as the artist has to go into it. They must meet in a completely new territory, and build from that timeless time spent together." The artist then insists that spirituality is the main solution, and art is one of many adjuncts. (Abramović, Thompson and Weslien, 2006) My goal in eliciting authentic responses from my audience would be to use art and

performance as a tool for communicating on a spiritual level with my audience – or at the very least a silently contemplative one. However, I wondered how I would know if and how they had been moved, when my engagement with them during performance would be so understated?

A hallmark of Abramović's work is audience emotion, and the artist says of another installation performance, *The Artist is Present* (MoMA, 2010), "What I found immediately, was that people sitting across from me became very moved. From the beginning, people were in tears– and so was I. Was I a mirror? It felt like more than that. I could see and feel people's pain. I think people were surprised by the pain that welled up in them... People have so much pain." (Burello, 2023) This transference of pain from audience to performer and vice versa is a daunting concept, perhaps best explored in the context of another thesis entirely, and so I remain grounded in the communal narrative potential that my project may afford.

On narrative and what I view as fundamental themes that reflect the human condition, Abramović states, "Life and death are not absolutes, but narrative functions that allow us to speculate on, recognize and announce who we are as humans in relation to the non-human world of objects." (Song, 2015) Peggy Phelan's thoughts on *House With an Ocean View* as a metaphorical relationship between the personal and impersonal speaks not only to the effects of the performance in real time, but the after effects, or potentiality of the experience. "The condition of witnessing what one did not (and perhaps cannot) see is the condition of whatever age we are now entering. Whether we call this period "the post-post-modern age" or the "age of terrorism," it is characterized both by an intimate reawakening to the fragility of life and a more general sense of connection to one another that exceeds simple geophysical, ideological, or cultural proximity." (Phelan, 2004)

Added to the former list of -isms that suggest we are in an age of post-post-modern-terrorism, we can also add Neoliberalism, that being the transactional nature of art between artist and audience in a capitalist society. Defining the value of said transaction seems to me to cheapen the intent by patently commodifying it, thereby rendering it a soulless, albeit pretty trinket. Here agency becomes the key to the transformative potential of creative action performed in a public space. "The point is that a live participatory encounter encourages both performers and audiences to face up to the consequences, potential or actual, of acting in a shared space. Hence, the risk of participating (perhaps manifested in feeling the threat of vulnerability), arising from an awareness of agency, may well promote a desire for mutual responsibility premised on an uncomfortable recognition of accountability for one's actions." (Alston, 2013) This quest for how to define the invisible in a yet-to-be-defined era became key for me in exploring the function of communal narrative as it evolved in my process of using performance as a tool for generating audience input.

#### Embracing the Unfamiliar: Annette Arlander

More guiding research came from a study of some of the works of Annette Arlander, a Finnish artist, academic, and pioneer of performance art and artistic research within Finland and beyond. (Arlander, 2014) In *Performing with Plants*, Arlander asks what forms of performance are relevant to the needs of an environment in crisis that has been radically transformed by climate change and disasters both natural and synthetic? Arlander goes on to reflect upon her work in collaborating with plants and individual trees to propose working practices aligned with posthumanist values with regard to the environment. Here posthumanism as it relates to the environment asserts that humans should act, design, build, and create in ways that alleviate, rather than accelerate the ongoing environmental crisis. (Lähde, Törmä and Salminen, 2022)

Rather than projecting the human condition upon a landscape, Arlander experiments with landscape cooperation in new performative ways, and further investigates her subject "with

action research via a cyclic structure of planning, performance, reflection, revised planning and so on.” (Arlander, 2017) It is this framework that I embraced as a working methodology for my own practice of bringing my interpretation of nature’s stillness in performance to an audience while gently inviting them to participate in the project.

#### Making Myth:

Touching on theatricalized protest, really on encountering theatre in a space and time where one may not be expecting it and then willingly, unwillingly or indifferently assuming the role of spectator was for me an informative dive into an exploration of space with all of the consequences and ramifications that either limit or delimit space. Where is the space? Is it public or private, natural or urban? Is the space safe? Is safety physical or psychological? Is the space accessible to all? Are there entry and exit points within the space? What senses are engaged, affected, validated or confronted during the performative action? If I were to theatricalize *protest*, as an action verb, it would be an embodied gesture of rejection, a pushing away with arms outstretched. So, how should I then invite protest from my audience? I had to consider how the space itself could encourage agency with regard to audience participation. Could I create a safe space where an audience felt uninhibited enough to participate?

For my eco-conscious character that would invite messages from engaged participants, I took inspiration from the vivid aesthetics of Red Rebel Brigade’s 2019 Extinction Rebellion in London.

“They wear only scarlet red clothing. Red is blood, and conveys energy which, when combined with the white visage, triggers a number of potential associations, from Greek tragedy to the apparitions from a dream - or a nightmare. The message is opaque: they are potentially frightening, but possibly uplifting, they are mythical and timeless, but in the moment. The intention, however, is clear: they are channeling the furies, and the guardians.



The ancestors are warning us, trying to wake us up before it's too late.” (Cambridge Independent, 2019)

Here costumed participants gathered en masse to slowly and silently occupy public spaces in protest of climate change. Creative director and choreographer Doug Francis described the appearances as “very slow moving, focussed [and] meditative... We just want it to be emotive and to have a message without having to explain it; the idea was that you would almost empathically feel and understand the situation, which is the power of art. We wanted to embody that ethos and convey our non-violence emotively.” (Lavender, 2019) It was exactly this sort of striking aesthetic and embodied protest ideology that I wanted my costumed performance to convey, without ever saying as much.

Audience reactions to the XR Rebellion include enchantment, tenderness, and sorrow, which speak to a catharsis similar to the intent of an ancient Greek tragedy. “It is a form of action that onlookers and activists alike see as... making room for people to sense loss and grief. Given that for many people in denial emotional awakening to grief and loss is a key motivating factor for climate action, Red Rebels are one effective way to create ritual spaces for grief and lament to manifest.” (Grau, 2021)

Measuring the Mythic:

The vastness of the hyperobject’s scale makes smaller beings—people, countries, even continents—seem like an illusion, or a small colored patch on a large dark surface. How can we know it is real? What does *real* mean? The threat of global warming is not only political, but also ontological. The threat of unreality is the very sign of reality itself. Like a nightmare that brings news of some real psychic intensity, the shadow of the hyperobject announces the existence of the hyperobject. (Morton, 2013, p.32)

Philosophizing about the end of the world is something that Timothy Morton has made an academic career of. Morton articulates and simplifies the massive and unknowable scale of hyperobjects while I grapple with my anxieties and attempts to make meaning out of a world

that seems to be in a neverending cycle of violent chaos. Hyperobjectivity is oppressively colossal, and in this context refers to the current environmental crisis from climate change, severe weather catastrophies, rising sea levels and decreased salinity of tempering ocean waters, to agricultural practices reliant on unsustainable monoculture cultivation and overuse of toxic pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers. “In the Anthropocene, Morton says, we must wake up to the fact that we never stood apart from or controlled the non-human things on the planet, but have always been thoroughly bound up with them... Our most cherished ideas about nature and the environment – that they are separate from us, and relatively stable – have been destroyed.” (Blasdel, 2017) This ecological crisis is so immense, taking up infinite space and bending time itself that it is easy to get lost in the enormity, thus losing agency to hopelessness. I can no more perform it than I can comprehend it, but I can wake up to the fact that I know both of those things, and so I scale my performance down from hyperobjectivity into something I think my audience will understand.

#### Research, Reflect, Repeat:

The following section explores how I devised this process and then engaged with it. After creating a character and costume that would become an inseparable entity, I prepared myself for endurance performances. Throughout the process, I reflected, researched, and repeated the process methodology.

Devising a process of using performance as a tool for generating audience input began with an idea for a non-threatening costumed character that would serve as a sort of container to invite confrontation in the form of outing rage in written message form. This character should take on a mythic quality of environmental connection, while incorporating the insufficiency of human intervention with regard to the climate crisis. It was important that the costume be arresting enough to draw an audience in long enough to engage them in the question, but not so appalling that audiences would be offended and refuse to participate. Alongside

building the costume and devising a performance, I practiced solitary mindfulness in nature as training for staying still in performance.

My expectations of this process based project were as follows. Solitary experiences in nature would ground all aspects of the project, a costumed character would be created, performances that engaged the public would be tested that either engaged or did not engage an audience, reflections of all processes combined with performance contemplations would inform new narrative work that was reflective of the process as a whole.

Finding the character:

I chose the messenger— also known as the herald— an archetypal character least connected to the plot of the story. Their role is purely functional, simply to carry the message of a world in conflict and then recede into the background as the story unfolds. I didn't know what the story would be at the inception stage, so I needed an audience to direct the storytelling, and that they did.

The character I envisioned was a hybrid ad hoc astronaut and mythological animistic forest fairy and was built from charity store finds and fabrics, found objects, and natural elements such as branches and pine needles. As I spent more time sitting silently in nature, I found that my character's costume iterations became more organic. I began collecting and using nature's castoffs of branches and pine needles to construct wings, which would come to symbolize a bridge between here, our terrestrial reality and there, a celestial otherworld that was to be the messenger's final destination.

Building the costume:

Nothing new was used in the building of my costume and it was important to me that I practice ethical consumption by repurposing charity shop finds. I searched for inexpensive knit fabrics in different shades and tones of green for the bodice and wig, pine and sage,

olive and basil, as well as a neon green that clearly didn't belong in a natural palette, but would inject itself like a toxic pollutant in a dangerous co-existence. The wig, made from recycled cardboard and fabric, was braided and twisted into goddess-like lengths that brushed the ground. Painted silver and green were rollerblading wrist guards, a dog harness to hold the wings, and a modified scuba mask without a clear air inlet. The character began to take a visual shape that seemed to me to say enough, but not too much. During a long nature hike, I gathered fallen branches, which would become the messenger's wings. I also collected sprigs of fallen pine needles to adorn the wings after finding two small bunches of wrapped twigs that someone had left along the trail; both took on a sort of amulet quality for me that served the mythic intent of the wings. I was careful to remove or obscure any visible branding from the fabrics and accessories, as I wanted the overall image devoid of any manufacturer's marks. This costume should look well crafted, yet handmade. My character and costume would be essential counterparts; this character/costume would wear shades and tones of green, recycled, ragged, patched, torn and made useful again. My face would be obscured by a full face scuba mask, for where I was going I would struggle for breath. My wings would be massive, mythic, branches branching like bronchii, mapping the next impossible breath.

#### Preparing for Performance:

In preparation for these endurance performances, where I as the artist would simply stay still and silent for long periods of time, I sat blindfolded for an hour at a time somewhere in nature, and later recorded and reflected upon the observations and sensations I had experienced. My practice of sitting still and listening in nature came directly from *The Marina Abramović Method: Instructions to Reboot Your Life*, a set of thirty cards accompanied by a book that further details each exercise. (Abramović and Katya Tylevich, 2022)

From the instruction card *Listen to Nature*, I scheduled visits to natural environments where my main activity was to sit still, blindfolded for an hour at a time. This time spent in nature

allowed me to reach a meditative state where ideas for character, stories, and thoughts on performance came from wind rustling through trees, the river crooning and surging into ripples and crests, then into ripples again, the fragrance of pine needles and birch leaves, birdsong and flight as various feathered performers hopped from branch to branch and tree to tree in a dance of balance and rebalance as they sang, chirped, tweeted, and trilled in concert with each other. I became aware of new sensations on my skin— early spring wind on my arms, cool, damp earth under my legs, and bees buzzing soundwaves close to my face. All the while a river flowed closeby, mirroring the endless sky, endless breath— my breath, in and out, within and without. I was nature's audience, mindfully aware of natural phenomena unfolding before me, my observations of what is rather than what I wanted, needed, or expected. Later these magnified observations would blend into fabulist storytelling grounded in themes that spoke to a collective human condition, themes the audience fed me in their outing of rage.

#### Exploring Safe Spaces/Realizations and Reflections:

Putting everything together to realize a process of using performance as a tool for generating audience input then led me to schedule performances and put my plan into action. The first setting being the art happening Maakinen Martinniemi in early June in Northern Finland, set in the forest and shore of the Gulf of Bothnia. I had visited this site with my cousins a few days after the previous summer's event. What was left of the event was a forest trail dotted with little creatures made from logs, brushes, bottlecaps, and utensils, some were even dressed with neckties and suit jackets. There was for me such a celebration of whimsy in these forest creatures that sat silently guarding or guiding a traveller along the path; I was enchanted and inspired, and the feeling had never left me. I emailed the organizer of the event and offered my performance for the next happening, which was to take place June 9-10, 2023. My performance of OUTRAGE: A Curation of Comments on Public Performance was then scheduled for Saturday, June 10th from 6:00 - 8:00 pm. The organizer and I agreed that I would find a suitable space the day of performance, and while I

remained captivated by the idea of situating my performance in the forest, clouds of mosquitoes drove me to the shore.

The experiment undertaken at this location yielded the most responses from audiences, as well as a trove of fruitful observations on audience behavior that I would later use in crafting new narratives. Although the assistant I had arranged for that would help me get into costume, keep time of the performance, and monitor security needs that I might have cancelled just two hours before I was to perform, I was able to reach out to the producer to procure a new assistant. This seemed to me like divine intervention, and whether it was or not, my choice to surrender my willfulness and ego in trying to self-direct or direct an audience was the best scenario for connecting to an audience in a transformational way. In spite of, or perhaps due to the challenge I faced being a lone and lonely, very exposed performer, I nevertheless felt completely seen, understood, and trusted as the astral eco-punk messenger I envisioned myself as. I felt the most connected to the audience in this location. Everything had fallen into place and my performance and audience interaction flowed organically and spontaneously.

In Martinniemi I faced the audience with a backdrop of the ocean and a forested island in the distance. A sauna was set up a few yards from me and from time to time, bathers would skip barefooted around me from the heated tent to the water. Observers came to view my silent performance, and some participated by leaving notes for the messenger. The following is an excerpt of reflections on this first performance.

*I stood still for close to two hours yesterday at a performance on the beach in Martinniemi, watching the audience through soft focus. I listened to their chatter, questions, and comments. Adults are a guarded lot. They notice something from afar, they make and hold eye contact (as much as can be made with a human statue obscured by a mask); perhaps they feel a pull to move closer, to join the picture this story tells? Most don't immediately move closer, though. They wait, perhaps thinking, "Am I invited?" "Is this for me, do I need to know something about art to 'get it'?"*

*Children, however, do not hold back. They approach boldly, eyes wide with curiosity, they stop in their tracks when they reach their comfortable point of proximity. They stare, moving closer, some reach out to touch my hands. One child calls out to me five separate times, jabbing and punching the air in front of my masked face, trying to make me flinch. Perhaps it is my in-action that causes them to seek re-action? I remain silent and still.*

*I see them through the crowd now, green women like three sisters eternal. Mothers, daughters, aunts, cooks, coquettes, spinsters, spinners, weavers and witches, they see me and know that we are one in a line of mitochondrial thread. Draped in hues and shades of forest, leaf and bog, their skirts swish like winds around their ankles; together we wear a skin of earth in bud, bloom and biodiversity. These sisters approach, silently circling me in soft reverent steps, weaving spells that sing rings of time, whispered promises, milk from the Mother's breast, hope for future forests even now as the land rises and water recedes under our feet.*

*A reveler stumbles, staggers toward me, lists when he stops like a boat in the water. He stands so close the brine from his breath seeps under my mask. I am sober. He leans in like a child, uninhibited, unaware of the landscape beyond us. Liquid courage makes him braver than he ought to be, but like the Fool of old, perhaps he is not wrong in being so brave? I am not here to judge, only to observe. He speaks, he questions, he laughs with abandon. He puts his arm around me and poses for a selfie. Somewhere, in his phone, our picture rests in a drunken slidedeck of artifacts. A few adults ask me if they can take my picture. They are polite, they follow the rules of privacy in the social environment. I do not answer. I do not break character. I am doing my thing, and I will let them do theirs. How do they feel after taking my picture without my explicit consent? I hope that I haven't made them feel small, like trespassers or criminals. My stage is their stage, where sand, rock, and earth meet water. I own nothing. I hope that they can embrace the vulnerability that is live performance, if only for this brief moment.*

*Some tear off a small piece of paper, write a note and put it into the messenger bag. Others have started their notes on the paper scroll for all to see and add to. I feel privileged to carry their concerns. I will keep them safe. Together we will build a new narrative, a story that speaks for all of us.*

My second and final costumed performance took place in Oulu's Kauppatori, a market square in the city center, at lunch time mid-week in late July. Here vendor stalls of foods, fresh produce, handmade goods, ice cream, and clothing provide the public with an outdoor space to meander, browse, and shop. The following is my reflection on the day.

*My cousin accompanies me to the market on a Wednesday afternoon for an OUT RAGE performance. It will not rain today, I have checked the weather forecast and scheduled accordingly. Rather, the heat of summer will hang like a heavy woolen coat over the cobblestoned market grounds. I stand silently for an hour as people pass by, most with indifference and minimal curiosity. I am hot and my mask is fogging. Sweat is running down my face, stinging my eyes and blurring my already*

*obscured vision. From time to time, every fifteen minutes or so, I shift my weight and reposition my stance, realign my spine and center my hips over my knees, knees over my ankles. My gesture of open arms with palms upturned remains. I stand alone, still, silent, feeling exposed, vulnerable, and unseen. A couple stops to observe me, then they take turns posing with me for pictures. They leave me, smiling and nodding and saying thanks. I will be a digital memento in their photo album. Another selfie partner poses next to me, puts their arm under my wings and around me, smiles for the camera. I feel as though I am in the wrong place at the wrong time, alone, exposed, and powerless. Few have stopped, most do not engage. At the end of an hour one woman— only one— leaves a note in the bag for my astral messenger. Later when I read her note “Human smallness,” I will feel a surging wave of sadness engulf me as I ponder this fitting pathos. I had felt so small and insignificant in the market square, and this woman had recognized and shared that feeling.*

My intention of engaging the audience had failed and I thought about what I didn't do to foster authentic exchange. Informative signs could have all been simplified and translated into Finnish with bold, overt instructions in how and why to participate. Though this performance yielded only one comment, it was perhaps the most profound exchange in the entire process. I felt as though my psyche had moved into the pain of all of the first performance's input to embody the last comment of invisibility. Does not invisibility speak volumes to loneliness, abandonment, disenfranchisement, and powerlessness? I am humbled by this transference of feeling.

While I expected more widespread outing of environmental injustices, what I found was more in the realm of social justice. Most people feel disenfranchised, even deeply wounded by an overall lack of connection and understanding among their fellows; this in an age of almost instant digital communication that links people to practically anyone in the world. Yet the feeling of digital connection fails to nurture authentic human camaraderie (Anderson and Rainie, 2018); such that might be found in an invited space of creative intimacy and vulnerability like a music festival or an art happening.

My expectations of this process, that solitary experiences in nature would ground and inspire me to create a costumed character and public performances would either engage or not



engage an audience, evolved as I reflected on the process as a whole. There exists in the creative process a luxury of time, and I remain grateful for the time I had to absorb the many discoveries of this process in order to begin work on new narratives in theatre making.

#### Chapter 4: Gallery Exhibition

In order to present my process work, I scheduled a gallery exhibition on the 20th of August, 2023. The space was demarcated with four main areas being *process*, *inspiration*, *audience participation* (with another invitation to add to the list of laments), and *works in progress* as a result of the overall process. I posted signs for where the visitor should start the exhibit, which was in an alcove with a storage desk, chair, bulletin board crowded with notes, art supplies, and a sewing machine. In addition to the *OUT RAGE* artifacts, I included photographs of older work (sculpture, set design, paintings, and costume design) so that I could frame my overall aesthetic as a theatre maker and multi-media artist.

The exhibition ran for two hours and included a link for a Zoom tour of the studio, which was attended by a US audience. A brief question and answer session was conducted for the Zoom audience, and I found that this practice allowed me to articulate aspects of the process that I had previously been unable to do. For five months, I had been immersed in this project, inside of it, and while I had reflected upon it I had yet to step outside of it and have a conversation about it in terms of what the intent was, how the process had evolved, and what new knowledge I had gained. Following the discussion on Zoom, an online audience survey was completed by both in-person and Zoom visitors that also served as clarifying information I could use when writing about the process of using performance as a tool for generating audience input. This brought me back to Marina Abramović's comment about giving the audience time to absorb the performance; by making space and time for my audience to emotionally process my work, I reaped new insight into my project that exceeded my initial goals of audience input and engagement. As evidenced by the growing list of laments the audience had outed, some kind of transformation had indeed taken place.

Combined with observations of my audience as performers and deeper reflections on sitting in nature as an audience member myself, the personal process I had practiced enabled me to create new work that felt more vulnerable, humble, and grounded than any of my previous works.

I asked:	They answered:
<p><i>What outrages you?</i>  <i>Write it down.</i>  <i>Put it into the messenger bag.</i>  <i>Let it go.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Racism</li> <li>● Climate uncertainty</li> <li>● Homophobia</li> <li>● Infinite selfishness</li> <li>● Injury</li> <li>● Abandonment</li> <li>● Dishonesty</li> <li>● Greed</li> <li>● Wounds</li> <li>● Narcissism</li> <li>● Blind faith in digital technology and the AI swindle</li> <li>● Alienation from community</li> <li>● Compliance with infringement</li> <li>● Invisibility and the smallness of a human</li> <li>● Neglect</li> <li>● Arrogance</li> <li>● Our loss of a bridge to the invisible supernatural realm</li> <li>● Dude, you didn't make it</li> <li>● Death</li> <li>● Everything</li> </ul>

#### Natural Narratives:

Two stories were started as a result of this process, both of which were available to read in the gallery. From the audience's list of laments I had plucked emotions that spoke to human themes of greed, abandonment, narcissism, injury, and invisibility. Those themes then framed new narratives, one fabulist tale of a selfish bird doomed to die alone and the other a time travel historical romance.

The first was *Odes to a Dead Bird*, two meditations on the death of a bird as a direct result of human neglect by polluting the environment with toxic drugs. In the first ending the death is mocked by a chorus of anthropomorphized feathered fellows that not only did not offer aid, but encouraged the self destructive and fatal dive. My audience's outing of *injury*, *abandonment*, and *infinite selfishness* informed this narrative.

*This Dipper, though, was drunk on sips of beer she beak-slurped from last night's half empty cans and bottles left laying here and there by the shore, emboldened also by the noxious habit of swallowing spent cigarette butts until her stomach lurched in liquid protest on freshly washed hoods of cars and her vision became phosphorous rings of light. High as a kite and strung out this fine spring morning, she soared above the treetops, watched the sun sparkle dizzy diamonds on the water, flew two heady arcs above the budding birches to catch speed before dipping into the bush by the river. Cool wind ruffled along her feathers and stung her eyes, barely open now as she felt her way through flight. Suddenly, a thorn caught her primary and secondary coverts, ripping soft underwing feathers from her flesh. Her breath caught like a slap and stifled any scream as a searing pain tore through her body; the humerus had snapped and pulled away in pieces from the scapula. A cellular apocalypse then seized her body as she dropped into the water, her dying body thrashing in a last attempt to fight, as flight was now out of the question. Her heart pounded fitfully, lub-dub-lub-lub-lub-lub-dub-bbb-bblub-bludddd– until she stiffened and sank under the cold water of the flowing river.*

The alternate ending separated bird from human with a window, and while the human was oblivious to the bird's ostracized existence, the bird was cynically familiar with the habits of the human.

The final story was the beginning of a Medieval – Millennial time travel love story, *Falling for Fibonacci*, inspired by the sacred geometry of the Fibonacci sequence and the Golden Ratio in fallen pinecones I had gathered during my meditations in nature.

*He was a child of the seventies, as am I, albeit eight hundred years of time separate our births. I don't want to obsess over the details, the time jump, the aspects of immortality, for those are improbable curiosities that we find ourselves laughing over, surrendering to the mystery of love that wraps itself in the curve of a universe neither of us have the patience to understand.*

Conclusions:

This five month undertaking of a creative process that employed meditation, reflection, and performance provided useful insight into what my audience might engage with in the future. I had started by asking how I might devise a process of using performance as a tool for generating audience input, then explored how that performance then became a generative agent for audience participation, and finally what new work could I create from the audience input that authentically reflected all factors of the process. I connected meditation in nature to the unscalable environmental crisis as my worldly concern, which was unspoken but embodied in my character/costume in silent performance. Audiences had responded along the way, which inspired me to write two very different narratives that connected the environment to themes about the human condition. At the final gallery exhibition, audiences responded to specific questions I posed about how they understood my process.

In response to what intrigued audiences about the OUT RAGE exhibition, they said: *deep philosophical and exsistential thoughts and ideas, study and observation of people, the depth and variety of artistic approach, imagining the art pieces and stories as a play, and the birth of the idea from sitting quietly in nature.*

The next survey question asked what the audience's understanding of the artist's process in creating new work was. To this they responded: *brave new/old worlds explored, taking time to see the details of the world around you and unfolding that into the bigger picture, discovering the abstract and depth that can be found in ordinary objects, fully immersed and open to new influence, and the creation of content being very intuitive and deriving from spiritual and emotional realms.*

There have been many benefits of this devising process that engaged audiences to collaborate by identifying themes of the present human condition. I am now more practiced in observation and able to creatively articulate the sum of what the audience said and how they said it. In practicing silence and stillness in performance, a safe space was created that transferred agency to the audience. In essence I had said to my audience "You're safe. It's your turn to talk now. I'm listening." A connection to rage became irrelevant as a guiding emotion, and audiences said that they felt seen. Perhaps they would also exercise their

agency in engaging with the process if they were asked to comment on love, or boredom, or joy?

In future creative projects, I am more apt to take on the role of messenger, rather than assuming the self-importance of an ego driven main character. So long as I am grounded in collective consciousness and ethical eco-awareness, my new process focus will be on making work that trusts an intuitive flow of ideas. Whether those ideas are absurd, morbid, spiritual, or transformatively hopeful, I can begin to archive process inspirations as future source material.

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