

LETHE. The river of forgetfulness.

You are here, right now, white walls around - behind four walls of string. Sitting. Looking. Listening. Have you been here before? A similar place, perhaps? Another exhibition space that looks similar? Do you remember? Do you want to remember? As you sit here, you know that there are other connected spaces out there. With white walls. With objects. With people. Also places where there are no people.

Right now. There is a space deep underground, with a river running through it. It is the river of forgetfulness. Pale, cold water caresses the hard-shady rock type for miles and miles. The streams flow on in soft wavy motions, through big caves devoid of sound and light. Still, the water seems to glow from within, in a milky, misty hue, as if pigment of bone grit and pulverised dreams has eroded into the water over eons of time. As it flows on, the motion gives off a drowsy, eerie vibration that intensifies where the water reaches areas of small cascades between various levels. Not many people know about this river. If anyone has ventured there, they are bound to have forgotten. But the ancient Greeks knew it, and they gave it a name. The river Lethe. They say that if you submerge yourself into this water, or drink it, you will forget everything, everything about what went on before. They call it oblivion, forgetfulness, concealment.

Does it seem familiar? Would you have wanted to forget? Or would you want to know?

Know. There are no seasons underground. But there is a very slow ebb and flow of sorts. Around every century, the river Lethe starts rising. Slowly and steadily the current intensifies, and the water eats its way up the sides of the riverbed. Once this wave is building, there is no stopping until it has run its course. The water keeps increasing, as if the very earth itself has started to sweat its moisture out. Lethe rises, until it fills all the caverns and creases, and further, pushes up through layers of mineral and earth, towards the surface.

There is a story that at the beginning of time, this happened at every full moon in the Garden of Eden. The white liquid would seep up into the soil, making the forest ground moist and silvery pale, glittering in the moonlight. The massive root net of the garden would stretch its tentacles down, reach. Draw in the sweet liquid, so that the whole biosphere absorbed an air of innocence and newness, resting in a forever lasting present. However, there was an especially high ground in the garden, where Lethe would not penetrate. After an eternity, this was the only place where forgetfulness had not sustained the growth. Here, the plants carried with them all the memories of an ever-turning wheel of seasons - sprouting, draught, mutations and death. On this spot the most beautiful fruit trees grew.

Can you imagine? If you had been there? Would you have wanted to forget? Or would you want to know?

If you had a choice. Have you been there before? Would you choose to remember?

If you had a choice, right now.

It could be now. It could be today that the river of forgetfulness would rise and push itself up through the ground. You can imagine how it would look, if it soaked up into all the structures in the room around you. Filling them up like sponges of white puff. After a while, the walls would begin to sweat access liquid, milky drops growing on white paint. As they increase you would see them run down the walls like long white lines, drawn by an invisible hand. Running down. They would start to form little pools on the floor. Little pale mirrors, moving over the floor, in-between objects or people, that which is there, towards your feet, gathering, closing in around your shoes. And as the water pours down the walls more intensely, like an indoor shower surface, the milky liquid will slowly grow around you, crawl up around your shoes, seep into the material, giving you a cold sensation under your ankles, then around your toes and sole of the foot. Rising. Reaching towards the strings that hang around you. White, wet, vibrating surface, sucking on white strings. Rising. Slowly ascending to your knees, pushing the cold sensation up, as you will literally watch how it closes around your thighs, hands. The strings around you getting heavy, disappearing into the white, as if the cold wet floor itself is rising, or you are sinking into the ground, slowly, reaching your belly. Feeling a light pressure on the lower body, and the wet, cold that is fading into a fuzzy neutral temperature, as Lethe somehow adapts towards the body. Now the legs start to disappear from view, in the white mist. Rising, wondering if you should move your legs to check if they are there, not sure if you can actually feel that part of the body anymore. Not sure if the legs are there at all. You can see them. But you can also not see them. A funny, sinking vertigo feeling. The water reaching your upper chest, and as you know this is not real, you might not really move, but also you cannot be sure that this is not real on some level, never mind... Now the surface of white shiny liquid is under your chin, and you would be able to reach down and drink it if you wanted. Do you drink? You might not, the movement would look stupid, if people are watching. You might just notice how the line between water and air slowly moves up your neck, and cheeks and then you have to make a choice about whether you open or close your mouth. The white liquid pulls up over your face in a steady scanning movement. You are now covered with the water of Lethe. Do you breathe in? Do you swallow, or do you keep it out, mentally or physically, by holding back?

If this is a real choice? What would you do? Would you choose to forget? Do you remember? Have you been here before?

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Do you remember?