

Performing Arts

MFA Performing Arts

I Will Not Bury My Romantic Soul

*Letters to Lygia Clark, Adrian Howells
& Claude Cahun*

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Ellen Vanderstraeten

August 2018 - August 2019

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Abstract

A few months ago I started to write one letter everyday to three different artists. They accompanied me along my way in the development of my artistic practice as well as personal struggles in my life. Lygia Clark, Adrian Howells and Claude Cahun may come from very different backgrounds and different times but to me their practices are significantly intertwined. Their practice intersects in their immediate way of connecting art making, therapy and life, their approach to total theater and one-to-one performances, always with the greatest attention to the tiniest detail and sensorial qualities of carefully chosen materials. In this book you can find several of those handwritten letters written by me to either Lygia, Claude or Adrian.

ELLEN VANDER- STRAETEN

BIO

Ellen Vanderstraeten is an object explorer who works with performing arts in diverse spaces including but not only the stage, her own home as well as the homes of others, abandoned places and shop windows. Her cross disciplinary performances explore a mix of media from objects, print, costume, music, dance, documentary, storytelling and video. Her work implicates the spectator in a playful and immersive experience in order to connect art, therapy and life. She investigates themes such as the relationship between fiction and truth, body and object, the self and the other. Her work often involves a set up of intimate one-to-one encounters, one-to-one encounters that can be spectated and collective actions. Ellen Vanderstraeten is from Belgium and is based in Brussels.

A few months ago I started to write one letter everyday to three different artists. They accompanied me along my way in the development of my artistic practice as well as personal struggles in my life. Lygia Clark, Adrian Howells and Claude Cahun may come from very different backgrounds and different times but to me their practices are significantly intertwined. Their practice intersects in their immediate way of connecting art making, therapy and life, their approach to total theater and one-to-one performances, always with the greatest attention to the tiniest detail and sensorial qualities of carefully chosen materials. In this book you can find several of those handwritten letters written by me to either Lygia, Claude or Adrian.

04.04.19
REYKJAVIK

Lygia,

I hold a plastic bag filled with water in my hands,
I squeeze a plastic bag filled with air between my hands
on top a stone going up and down.

Exactly one year ago I caressed the back of my hand
back and forth
for half an hour
touching the lips of a person I never met before.

Yesterday somebody asked me so careless
what my relation is like with my mother.

Today I understand the arising of new pulsation
of sensations in the empty-full space and time.

"Is this the nostalgia of being a wet stone,
a stone-being under the shade of a tree,
outside time?"
-LC

I could never have imagined somebody would feel like a mother to me.
ELLEN

04.04.19 REYKJAVIK

Lygia

I hold a plastic bag filled with water
in my hands, I squeeze a plastic bag
filled with air between my hands on
top a stone going up and down.

Exactly one year ago I caressed the
back of my hand back and forth, for
half an hour, touching the lips of
a person I never met before.

Yesterday somebody asked me so careless
what my relation is like with my mother.

Today I understand the arising of new
pulsation of sensations in the empty-
full space and time.

"Is this the nostalgia of being a wet
stone, a stone-being under the shade
of a tree, outside time?" - LC

I could never have imagined somebody
would feel like a mother to me.

Ellen



I need to spill my guts out to you!
 CLAUDE!

05.04.19 REYKJAVIK

It's about more than spending too much time with
 souls that cannot reply.
 I'm still afraid of you seeing me.
 with my silly struggles and silly questions.
 why always this need to confess the ugly
 in beautiful ways?

Editing previous letters on a terrace in the sun,
 making them disposable.

I'm a cheap childish artist.

"Above all else I despised
 the way I despise myself."
 -CC

Today I felt dressing like BUDA but didn't
 have the energy to do so.

05.04.19 REYKJAVIK

I need to spill my guts out to you!
 Claude!

It's about more than spending too much
 time with souls that cannot reply. I'm
 still afraid of you seeing me. With my
 silly struggles and silly questions.
 Why always this need to confess the
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 I despise myself." - CC

Today I felt dressing like Buda but
 didn't have the energy to do so.



18.04.19 Sejdísfjörður

Adrian?

I feel like the boat drove right through me when it left to the Faroe Islands



It damaged the organs from between my legs towards my arse my intestines are stretching out polluting with vibrant yellow green pulp the sea every time it bends towards itself, leaving behind my womb dark red brown blue black everything is up side down and the neck of my uterus is tightened up with a sailers knot, let me live without all these dysfunctional organs, they aren't good to, my lips are ejaculating watery white liquids smelling like seaweed that's drying on a stone in the sun outside time, an unbearable pain is pulsating on the rhythm of the waves in my right upper arm Ooooh I want to squirt my bulimia with the force of a volcano all over these freshly white snowed, canvas what a poor portrait gobble gobble gobble gobble explode! so I can scrape your lovely chyme with a blade I will gather it all together again, I promise, just, Please Please Please, today, some creature invite me to talk by walking let me run by crying let me regret by sliding let me listen by jumping let me drink by sweating let me follow by hurting let me forget by singing let me touch by looking let me flex by screaming

"I am a masochist and I screamed so loudly with joy that your feeble human ears couldn't hear a thing."-CC

Today I will force myself to eat a chicken. I will clean the bones. I will gather them in a plastic bag. I will shake the bones in the plastic bag. I will shake the bones in this envelope contouring a body. They will deorganize and organize on a repetitive rhythm. Let the organs sink into the bones. Let my soul dissolve in the in between of the execution of an action, let it be an event. Let my body become a house I can live in, again.

I feel like the boat drove right through me when it left to the Faroe Islands
It damaged the organs from between my legs towards my arse my intestines are stretching out polluting with vibrant yellow green pulp the sea every time it bends towards itself, leaving behind my womb dark red brown blue black everything is up side down and the neck of my uterus is tightened up with a sailers knot, let me live without all these dysfunctional organs, they aren't good to, my lips are ejaculating watery white liquids smelling like seaweed that's drying on a stone in the sun outside time, an unbearable pain is pulsating on the rhythm of the waves in my right upper arm Ooooh I want to squirt my bulimia with the force of a volcano all over these freshly white snowed, canvas what a poor portrait gobble gobble gobble gobble explode! so I can scrape your lovely chyme with a blade I will gather it all together again, I promise, just, Please Please Please, today, some creature invite me to talk by walking let me run by crying let me regret by sliding let me listen by jumping let me drink by sweating let me follow by hurting let me forget by singing let me touch by looking let me flex by screaming
I AM A MASOCHIST AND I WAS SCREAMING SO LOUDLY WITH JOY THAT YOUR FEEBLE HUMAN EARS COULDN'T HEAR A THING -CC
-CC
TODAY I will force myself to eat a chicken.
I will clean the bones
I will gather them in a plastic bag
I will SHAKE THE BONES IN THE PLASTIC BAG SOURCE BETWEEN MY TWO HANDS
I will shake the bones in this envelope contouring a body
They will deorganize and organize again on a repetitive beat
let the organs sink into the bones
let my soul dissolve into the bones
let my soul dissolve in the in between of an ACTION
let it be an EVENT.
let my body BECOME A HOUSE
I CAN LIVE IN.
AGAIN
18.04.19 SEJDISFJORDUR

21.04.19 sejdísfjörður

CLAUDE, ...

yesterday night I fried the chicken in the pan,
 skin light glazing brown we ate dinner and made
 love in silence. I died inside wishing myself into the abyss between
 folds of clammy sheets and skin.
 I swear I could taste the strong smell of seaweed and
 rotten fish on my tongue arisen from between
 my legs.
 I excused myself by biting my tongue and SHAME away.

"WHAT I CANNOT CHEW
 IS PRECISELY WHAT
 I LIKE TO BITE OFF."
 -CC

He fell asleep.

I cried in the absence of speech when I finally
 went out the bed to smoke a cigarette,
 when I got up again I held the bones in my hands,
 How could I have mistaken their size for
 a chick?
 Tomorrow I will carve them into smaller pieces

before I commit a murder again



"DON'T GO LEARNING OVER
 OTHERS, GUARD
 YOURSELF AGAINST THE ABYSS
 I MIGHT SQUASH SOMEONE
 WHILE FALLING."
 -CC

21.04.19 SEJDISFJORDUR

Claude,

yesterday night I fried the chicken in the
 pan, skin light glazing brown we ate dinner
 and made love in silence. I died inside wish-
 ing myself into the abyss between folds of
 clammy sheets and skin, I swear I could taste
 the strong smell of seaweed and rotten fish
 on my tongue arisen from between my legs, I
 excused myself by biting my tongue and shame
 away.

"What I cannot chew is precisely what
 I like to bite off." - CC

He fell asleep.

I cried in the absence of speech when
 I finally went out the bed to smoke a
 cigarette, when I got up again I held
 the bones in my hands, how could I have
 mistaken their size for a chick, tomor-
 row I will carve them into smaller
 pieces before I commit a murder again.

"Don't go learning over others, guard yourself
 against the call for the abyss ...
 I might squash someone while falling." - CC