



Acts

of

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Katy Beinart

Lizzie Lloyd

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A collaborative project by
Katy Beinart & Lizzie Lloyd

Texts – Lizzie Lloyd

Preface

Acts of Transfer is a project about returns, re-enactments, repetitions, and retellings. A collaboration between artist Katy Beinart and writer Lizzie Lloyd, *Acts of Transfer* documents and reactivates a selection of artworks from the past that contain elements of social engagement or public participation.†

Our title for this project is borrowed from a chapter in Diana Taylor's book *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (2003) which explores different forms of archive, and questions the documentation and recording of performance. Taylor identifies a rift between the 'archive' as a Western approach that privileges the textual document, and the 'repertoire' of performance as embodying 'vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory and a sense of identity.' The artworks that we revisited in our project range from performances, events, and films, all of which were developed or enacted through some form of social engagement or public participation. We began by thinking about what the afterlife of projects like these might be. We wondered how they are, or could be, archived and what an active, creative, or experimental archive might look like. We knew that revisiting a participatory or socially engaged project after the fact of its occurrence would never be a neutral process, so we have foregrounded our subjectivities in the process while, at the same time, attempting to retain some sense of the original artwork too.

As the winter lockdown of 2021 eased, we organised a series of visits to meet with nine artists and project participants to return to the site of a participatory artwork on which they had previously worked together. These encounters reflected on the experience of thinking about an artwork from the past, to consider its ongoing effect in the present. The conversation turned on how the memory of the original artwork shifts in the retelling, how the return to a particular site prompts new memories, and how bringing back together artist and participant sheds light on the impact of this relationship. All along we were keen not to lend sole authority to verbal or written descriptions of the events and instead to think about how the feeling of these projects might be transferred in bodily, emotive, site-specific and non-verbal ways that register the emergence of (part-)remembered events.

† We use the terms social, participatory, and relational practice loosely throughout this project as we're interested in their mutability.

The sites we visited ranged from the urban to the rural: a bridge over the Avon River, community centres in Brighton, and the site of an old coking mine near Sheffield. We stood amongst the reeds of Rainham marshes, traipsed through a manmade forest near the Scottish border, spent a morning on a canal boat along the Thames and a day circling Tate Modern.‡ Mostly we were together, sometimes apart.

Key to this project was an interest in drawing to the surface the complicated processes and relationships that are inherent in practices that rely on participation. We wanted to make this complication tangible and retain the fragmented nature of conversations and shared social experiences. We wanted to register the sense of emergence that took place in our encounters by setting ourselves the task to communicate the feeling of being a part of projects like these, to be in the middle of them, rather than just presenting a neat and tidy narrative around them.

The communication of this feeling is where the transfer of our title comes in. By setting out to return either physically to the site of a previous artwork or to the metaphorical site of an artwork through conversation and memory, we sought to join the artist and participant in reimagining and partially reliving the work. Interestingly, despite our seeking out physical proximity and understanding, the artworks to which we returned remained like absent spectres in our own work.

The outcomes of the project include a series of short films, an audio work, photographs, drawings, performances, and texts. Throughout, we were acutely aware of Taylor's claim that, 'embodied memory, because it is 'live,' exceeds the archive's ability to capture it.' We knew that our transfer would be an imperfect translation of the original experience and that we would need to embrace these imperfections: the wobbly camera lens; the overexposed photographs; the background noise of audio recordings; the meandering focus of unscripted and unstructured conversation; the distracted attention of each other and our participants. All of these, we knew, would need to be relayed in *Acts of Transfer* and so they appear here in grainy images, in passing commentaries, of unfinished sentences that register our multiple voices, and in the overlay of pages and thoughts and words and walks and people and places that are set in relation.

‡ The drawn shapes that punctuate this book roughly outline the routes we took at each site.

From a place of grace

On *Futurist Women* (2018)
by Eelyn Lee

With Eelyn Lee
& Annetha Mills

Here we are on the concrete estuary edge of the Thames. On one side lies water at low tide, over the embankment is Rainham marshes. Usually when I meet with artists for studio visits or interviews I make copious notes. I interject frequently, asking for elaboration or clarification, taking the artist on diversions that may or may not prove useful later. But today my pencil barely touches paper: *the draw of the Thames*, I write, *reckoning with the past, crystals: rose quartz, black obsidian etc.* And then stop.

Your words are threaded through
mine and hers and ours here.

D'you want to say that again?

Delayed waves lap the shoreline
as boats pass by.

I stop to follow your lines of thought that, increasingly, overlap. You look at each other directly to help dislodge the name of one of your collaborators, you guess at the ending of each other's sentences, you nod excitedly in agreement, reaffirming each other as details from the day emerge through your retelling. I stop trying to root around for what I think I'm after and instead listen to what together you are uncovering.

These waves are out of sync,
out of alignment with the tide.

We pause.

Water rises, gradually blanketing the tangled clumps of sun-baked seaweed, rocks and sand. It strikes me that what we're up to is the inversion of that: in coming here — where Eelyn Lee and Annetha Mills worked together on *Futurist Women* three years ago — we are exposing that film, or at least its making,



or at least its aftermath. We are thinking about how it came about, what it felt like to be a part of (then as well as now), and how its affect lingers. We're trying to look beneath the film, to the time before the film and the time since the film, because, actually, the film itself is just one small part of the work they did together. But I can't hold onto all of this and instead become lost in your story and my pronouns are slipping and my tenses invert.

Do you remember the silver hand?

The making of costumes, and the moving of words around a page, around a space, around your mouths, feed into each other.

*You read the film differently,
given what we know now.*

Futurist Women is short and otherworldly. Dreamlike shots pan across bodies and diaphanous fabrics and marshlands. The lens meets the gazes of the women pictured directly, it roves over their billowing, costumes, and follows their footfall and outstretched arms. Lines of golden reeds push in and out of focus and a series of female voices speak of homes and goddesses and violence and quiet power.



*Being able to just play a
different version of yourself.*

Here as well as there.
D'you want to say that again?

We retrace our steps. Under our arms and over our shoulders we lug a pink sun parasol and stand, two wooden garden chairs, along with the rest of our bags and recording equipment, back up the bank of wild roses and purple flowers I don't know the name of. Our skin is wet from the June heat. As we leave the estuary behind, Eelyn and Annetha's words ring on: *space for healing, the memories it brings back, out of alignment, a survivor*. The film only alludes to all this through words written by Annetha and other survivors of sexual and domestic violence. But here Annetha goes further. She recounts setting up her own organisation 'by and for women of colour' to support and empower other survivors marginalised by their race and gender. It is called Niara, which means, with the utmost purpose. She retraces her steps.

*I said enough is enough.
Enough is enough.*

Annetha reads. She wears part of the headdress that she made in workshops before filming *Futurist Women*. It's made of twigs and moss spray painted ice-grey that splay out around her head. She holds her head still and high to keep it from slipping off. She reads, falling into the cadences I'd become familiar with from watching and re-watching *Futurist Women*. She looks up and away. She begins again.

*Are you filming this?
If you wanted to look up,
look into the distance to
that horizon line.*



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