

I work with ghosts. A simple definition of ghost I offer(borrowed from Derrida), is that which is no longer and not yet, but acts and enacts virtually.

I spend time creating conditions to listen to the unseen. To play, to dance, to sing, and to be with, and through the act of being with the unseen, heal or repair. Re-pair which for this instance can be felt as to make a connection right again. This work I do through improvisation, somatic/imaginative healing practices, and performance, and it aims to make space in the individual and collective senses of self with the intention of a more collaborative, which is to say Just, living.

Inspiration/approach

problematic->ghosts->ritual

My desire to know and feel ghosts comes as a response to an existential crisis of almost religious consumerism where community, and therefore self, are formed around the materials(objects, news, etc)which they consume. This problem exists in the relation between spirituality and materiality, where in pharmacopornographic capitalism the western subject is given subjecthood(or existentially we might say meaning)through the act of consuming. This pattern can be crudely illustrated in terms of this (addictive) loop:

Emptiness->loneliness->horniness->consume->pleasure/meaning(although temporary and numb)->emptiness...

Alienation(as both a feeling, and tactic of capital) is central to churning this process along, performing as a barrier in the “emptiness” separating the consumer from the producer, the self from the processes and people which create the materials which in turn create them(the self/consumer). This disconnect is simultaneously the noose of spirituality in the United States, and the driver towards consumerism. In this search for meaning, what our life means(what it has meant before) is lost.

Here enter the ghosts:

However, an empty room is always full, as an empty theatre or blank canvas is full of possibilities. “One enters a room and history follows, one enters a room and history precedes,”(Dionne Brand.) The room here can be extended to be seen as a body or the self.

Beyond the walls of alienation exists vast webs of entanglement of transpersonal making inside the self, the body, and material space. In the words of Marc Fisher “nothing enjoys a purely positive existence. Everything that exists is possible only on the basis of a whole series of absences, which precede and surround it, allowing it to possess such consistency and intelligibility that it does.” My work with ghosts is around creating embodied fictions for the felt belief of these webs of “negative” existence. Stories of materials carrying traces of humans and non-human entities who formed them, stories of a psyche which is a collection of every person

one has ever met and been impacted by, of which a simple example is the quote by Octavia Butler “all that you touch you change, all that you change changes you.”

This is why I make rituals, to hold the meetings of the other existing in our personal and collective experiences. Ritual can be simply defined, as borrowed in part from CAConrad, to connect to via presence. A simple formulation of which (in my practice) includes a container, intention, action (which must always include listening), and some sort of closure or finding one's way back to a material present.

Upon encountering ghosts one is also confronted with grief, and often grief can be an indicator of a lingering ghost which desires to be met. In my work I find grief present in relation to the erotic. The erotic being the force of connection, the infinite reaching out and making new, which could be falling in love, but also moving away for work, or a tsunami triggered from subterranean tectonic plates moving and reaching against each other. If the erotic is the constant movement, or according to Erin Manning “reaching”, then grief is located as the leftovers. That which doesn't make it forward, the bits that fall away as life continues to reproduce itself.

However, whereas grief can be seen as a positive aspect of loss, then perhaps melancholy is the negative aspect. The process of working with loss is referred to often as mourning. Mourning according to Freud can be summarized as the slow painful withdrawal from the lost object, and when this process doesn't happen correctly what emerges is melancholia. Melancholy occurs when libido (this same erotic force of movement) remains attached to what disappears, a future that didn't materialize, or the past which is no longer. Therefore in the work with ghosts it's often that melancholy is present as an energy in the space, a sense of lingering emptiness. In my improvisational psycho-somatic research, the relationships of the erotic and grief are experimentally interacted with as materials to open a door, and to engage with the possibility of the incorporation of the lost other, to meet the ghost.