

**EMBODIED STORYTELLING/NATURE PORTAL WORKSHOP - Erin Cooney**  
**Teaching As Art Teaching Day @ NYU Bobst 3.2.19 Computer Rm 619 1-1:50pm**

Paideumatic: “the tendency of cultures to be shaped--in their major symbolic inspiration and dominant forms--by their own geography, soil and climate.”

The natureculture divide has given the western world the idea that we are apart from nature, it has been imagined into a construct of an entity outside of ourselves. Before there were separate ideas of nature & culture, and nature was extracted to create culture, culture was made *with* nature. There is constant interspecies communication in the animal/plant/fungal world, that humans used to be more intimately entangled with on a wider scale. What kind of energy/information can we receive and what are ways we can prime ourselves to be open to communion with non-humans? Using our whole bodies to commune with non-humans, we can find stories/energies throughout our physical selves. Our feelings and emotions live not only in our minds but throughout our bodies. What stories live there? What stories come from nature outside our bodies?

Drawing inspiration from our natural tendency as children to be animists, multi-perspectivism, & the ability that story has to collapse time & space as polytemporal beings - we will explore how we can create a state for ourselves that allows stories to emerge. A slow, nebulous, analogue generator/portal.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVE AND OUTCOME:**

- A fun and empowering group experience that will offer participants a new tool for composition via connecting with their bodies and “nature”, through breath, visualization, vocalizing, sensing and writing.

**PREMISE:**

- Looking at how mythology was formed and how it was shaped by the landscape.
- I have a lot of references for this workshop but specifically i’m inspired by Golden Dome Mystery School’s Eliza Swann and Laura Stinger, Iele Paloumpis from Movement Research, CAConrad’s Soma(tic) Poetry Rituals, Pauline Oliveros’ Deep Listening and Ruth Laborah’s Action Theater. I’ll send out a follow up email with more info on this, but will briefly speak of the practices.
- “Natureculture”, no space, is a newer term that means: a synthesis of nature and culture that recognizes their inseparability in ecological relationships that are both

biophysically and socially formed. So we're trying to mend this "divide", and stop thinking of "nature" as a construct outside of ourselves.

- Multi-perspectivism - We're trying to cultivate perspectives outside of ourselves that include plant, animal, fungus, bacteria, things...
- The idea that our experiences, our minds, our emotions are stored throughout the body and that working with our bodies can act as a synthesis (somatics)

## **SETUP:**

- There will be 3 stations that include: plants, rocks/soil and fungus. Everyone will be assigned a number from 1-3, which will determine what station you start at and there will be 3 rotations so everyone visits each station. Every station has a basket with a writing prompt that each participant will pick out to assist with free write.

## **STEPS:**

### **Introduction and ice breaking exercises: 15 minutes:**

- Shake our bodies, toes upwards, roll shoulders back, then forward
- Breathe up and raise our hands and drop hands down on exhale
- Roll our heads to the right and then to the left.
- Wipe down our bodies of energies from outside and clap it away up the circle
- Deep Listening Exercise: "Teach Yourself How to Fly":  
"...Begin by simply observing your own breathing. Always be an observer. Gradually allow your breathing to become audible. Then gradually introduce your voice. Allow your vocal cords to vibrate in any mode which occurs naturally. Allow the intensity of the vibrations to increase very slowly. Continue as long as possible, naturally, and until all others are quiet, always observing your own breath cycle. Variation: translate voice to an instrument."

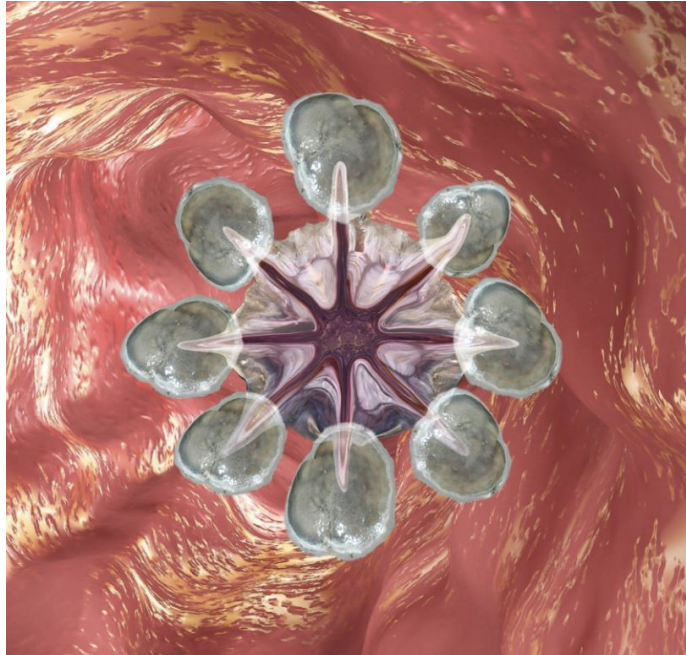
### **Station Rotations & Final Writing Exercise: 30 minutes: (Note: for the people at the fungus station feel free to drink the tea at any point during the exercises)**

I'll guide you through the sensing stages and then you'll take a prompt out of the basket. You'll then free write for 2-3 minutes. **NOTE:** don't be precious, i.e. it can be beautiful, poetic or not, personal, political, funny, I hate being in the library etc... We're really trying to quiet our critical minds with all of this - so that we can make ourselves receptive, so write anything that comes up. Have fun.

1. 1st station: we're going to run our hands together warm them up, shake them and now we're going to close our eyes and sense with our finger tentacles and palms for a few minutes and just see what comes up. Free Write.
2. 2nd station: we're going to take a moment to settle in, close your eyes & when you're ready, tap into what's in front of you. And we're going to try to identify where in the body this resonates...take a moment to let that reveal itself, if you can't identify that, just make it up (still valid). From that point we are going to start generating sound, what does that part of your body want or need? What sound does it want to make?
3. 3rd station: take a moment to connect with your eyes in a non-piercing type of way but more of a watery 2 way mirror. We are going to be reading with our backs, which are very sensitive to energy but since our eyes are in front of our bodies we favor our frontal plane. Now turn your back to it and let the communion begin. Free Write.
4. Now that the station rotation is finished, find a place to sit. Circle all the words or phrases that stick out for you in your 3 writings. Now we are going to piece these 3 narratives (or whatever they might be) together in one piece in any form you choose; poem, story, dialogue etc... This can be taken home to be a seed of composition for a personal project or can live as is. Time permitting we can some if you'd like.

### **Closing 5 mins:**

- Let's get back together in a circle in the center and close our eyes, take 3 big breathes counting in for 4 and out for 6, letting sound out on the last exhalation (and we'll lead into one last short group sounding to close).
- Shake hands in the middle, imbue it with all the energy that has been cultivated, lift their hands up to the sky and send the energy to anyone that needs it and bring some back down for yourself.



## REFERENCES:

**Eliza Swann, Laura Stinger & Edgar Fabian Frías** of Golden Dome Mystery School of Golden Dome Mystery School:

Eliza: "The Golden Dome School is an educational and curatorial platform dedicated to studying intersections of art, metaphysics, and ecology. The Golden Dome School's practices seek to destabilize the authority of conventional structures of knowledge and power through an engagement with mysticism and the formation of heart centered communities of learning. We believe that magic has a large role to play in restoring health to people and planet, and that animism\* can act as an antidote to capitalism. We encourage a questioning attitude and support intellectual, spiritual, and creative freedom in our work."

**Iele Paloumpis** - "Witchcraft: a corporeal practice" at Movement Research

"Several years ago changes in my health and body shifted the ways I approach dance and daily life. Without answers from doctors or bodyworkers, I began looking to witchcraft and earth-based rituals as somatic practices of integration, acceptance and healing. For this workshop we will look to astrology and the lunar calendar, as well as our own unique and defiant bodies to generate restorative movement. Astrological influences have a visceral effect, so we will simply be tapping into what is already there to generate somatic healing. Come with an awareness of something you might like to shed, heal and/or embrace."

**CAConrad** - SOMA(tic) Poetry Rituals: "Creating a poem is more important to me than having written poems. The rituals where the writing occurs are capable of connecting us to all consciously enacted ritualistic behavior from the past and future. To me it is the opposite of time travel, it is the halting of time, it is the collapsing of the walls separating us from where we have been, where we are going, and beyond. And this is in the best sense of the word "ritual," the ritual to find the energy lines under our feet and fire rituals to acknowledge the mysterious and fastened 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit inside every human being no matter where we live. It is through our connection to ritual where the experience is horizontal, where we can imbibe with everyone living and dead and with people yet to be."

**Pauline Oliveros** - "Deep Listening":

"an aesthetic based upon principles of improvisation, electronic music, ritual, teaching and meditation. This aesthetic is designed to inspire both trained and untrained performers to practice the art of listening and responding to environmental conditions in solo and ensemble situations"

**Ruth Zaporah** - "Action Theater":

"Spontaneity: Where does our material come from? The interaction of sensation, imagination and memory. Another goal of this training is to access all co-existing realms of experience, even those our language can't describe -- the states that can't be named, that at best, we call "states of spirit". When we act from an open mind, with the various realms accessible, and express ourselves through body, voice or language, we're spontaneous. We can travel through primal and emotional states, states of cognition and exaltation, and dream or fantasy states that order phenomena in extra-ordinary ways."

**Suzanne Césaire** - "Plant-Human"

At the symposium Year Zero, professor & author Vanessa Agard Jones spoke about Suzanne Césaire who was a Martinican writer, teacher, scholar, anti-colonial and feminist activist, and surrealist. "Drawing upon the Frobenian notion of the Ethiopian type of civilization as vegetal, Césaire claims that the Martinican is, fundamentally and in the depths of consciousness, "plant-like," tending toward a state of abandon to "the rhythm of universal life" ... "evoking plant consciousness for liberation", in contrast to the violent interaction with plantlife in the plantation system of monocropping.