

Us Dead Talk Love (2021) - Programme Text shortened for alto, saxophone, e-guitar, Korg organ and percussion

Text from *A Primer for Cadavers* by the artist Ed Atkins, excerpts from the chapters *Air for Concrete* and *Us Dead Talk Love*.

A Primer for Cadavers by Ed Atkins is an intoxicating virtuosic preoccupation with the body, with flesh, with transience and fluidity. A stream of consciousness which is at times palpable, close, intimate and dauntingly present, and then the reader is thrown into its urgent dense vertiginous depths - a breathless sensuality that is both enticing and shocking. Exploring this text provided the basis of the piece, which is dedicated to the extraordinary voice of Noa Frenkel and the musicians of the Nickel Ensemble.

RS

Some excerpts from *Air for Concrete*

If I nurse the word in my mouth and on my lips and with my throat....

I want to make you aware of my mouth. I want to map my mouth comprehensively using the word 'smoke', and make you, you know, 'breathe' it.

I want to make the word lap about and plot the position of every surface in there. In my mouth. And, so turned, carefully release the word, and the word fanning out into the cool evening air, in the still gulf between my mouth..., coagulating as it goes, thickening, so that when it arrives at your ear, it's ONLY JUST.

The word has been fashioned by me to fit perfectly inside your convoluted ear. Snugly: It's a tailored word - every surface of its ever-stouter body correlating with every surface of your diminishing inner ear - prodding, caressing purposefully... - ... for the re-formation of the word 'smoke', which convulses up to your brain, then swerves left and down into your gorgeous mouth.

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to have some appreciation of the complexity of the tongue. To have licked an ice cream, a plate, softened wood, a clitoris, a stamp, a wound, a penis, etc. - So long as you can appreciate *something of the mouth and the tongue's hegemony*, then when that word "smoke" reaches into you and reveals its shape and weight and the ways in which these correspond to my stinking mouth — you should be fine materialising it, making it JELL.

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I have tried to swallow words. I have tried to force them down... I've tried to cosset them, swaddle them in saliva to give them a fighting chance. I've found the instinctive thing is to just, um, BREATHE, the word.... You may choke a little at first - you may gag.... something there, something taking shape, thinning-up, becoming itself, solidifying, fleshing-out, thickening.

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Your tongue laps this way and that, gesturing, enacting that convulsive spell to summon the body of the word while simultaneously expunging its symbolic order. Your tongue calling upon the word to shrug off its fears, its aspirations, its fucking being! - Your tongue the merry murderer.

And so the swaddled...word is swallowed, whole..., to be dispersed by various acids, ammonias, bleaches, pressures, etc...; absorbed into the bloodstream and carried, illicitly, about the body, swept along that cardiac tide, to affect its changes, to transform, ultimately, every single cell of your oblivious body.

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that atomic universality that says we are all of us, everyday, inhaling particles of dead people's bodies. Microscopic flakes..., breathed in, clogging your lungs, fluttering around the mouth of the trachea, seeding your capillares... - a shadow inside you, an abverse-you, pressed python-close to your arterial walls, nose bent, eyes bulging, tongue lolling - pressed as if against a photocopier. Again, impossible to tell; you can see nothing in there. Inside you, an abandoned colour darkroom.

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An ovoid of mercury placed on the back of your hand - slowly, impossibly... - emerging, birthed from invisible stigmata on the palm and dropping to the linoleum floor like a fatted grub only having shrunk, ... your blood obliging-shuttling those fugitive... - glimmering globules sliding about your body. TOUCHING the sides, inducing the thick ache in your veins and that dull thrum in your brain.

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Words, thing'd words, will not cure - neither are they palliative. They are functionless, meaningless - a symptom of their becoming, their deviant unshackling from deference; a symptom of their materialization. They are themselves, irreducible - etymologically, even - no, especially - when surging round your guts... That the ingestion of words... through your gut, through your mouth, through the flowering of those particular macrobiotic fungi inside your cess-pitted, ransacked innards. They materialize through your body. Surrounded by gratuitous substance in the mouth; the word is changed, inflected so much... - so much so that it cannot but *appear*.

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The shed skin of the word has drifted up to form a lens over your eyes. Your ears are clogged with the same - ambient sound is translated, filtered. Compressed, chorused, distorted, bit-crushed, reverbed, etc. - The euphoric acoustics of a CATHEDRAL OF THE FUTURE. And everything looks way too sharp, too crisp, too juicy. A lucidity to the visual world that was not there before - everything is now too close, too vivid, as if pressed on your eye - as if circumventing the whole eye thing and lunging straight to the brain, groping and pummelling every surface with unmediated bluntness. Everything is gratuitously PRESENT.

Air for Concrete, Ed Atkins, *A Primer for Cadavers*, Fitzcarraldo Editions.