

At the

To accompany our exhibition
There, where we promenade, we
invited audiences to contribute
descriptions of their dreams for
a new project, *At the threshold*.

Here, the 'threshold' signifies an opening or entryway that crosses the border between dreaming and waking. Our open call for people to send us recollections of their dreams, created a space for their voices to drift and reverberate through the screen and form a digital catalogue of the subconscious.

These anonymous dream diaries offer moments of connection and reflection with our own inner monologue that rests at the point where memories are formed.

threshold

• I perceive myself inside of an island, the Banaba Island, buried deep inside of its earth. I have no connection to this particular island, I only know some fragments about its history, its inhabitants who had been forced to leave their homes to make way for phosphate mining. Now it is an uninhabited wasteland, full of asbestos. I know that I should be leaving, I should be on my way out, I can feel the poison getting closer, slowly changing my thought structures, and the way in which my blood flows through my body, it thickens and becomes lazy. It is very clear I should be leaving. But there is a strong resistance, I want to remain here. There is a feeling of finally having found the place I have been searching for all this time, a place where I belonged.

There was a shallow awareness of the utter contradiction of my desire and feeling of belonging that seemingly connected me to this place. There wasn't anything in my past, no ancestry that would have brought me here, and yet all of this was just shallow knowledge; it didn't matter, the feeling of attachment

made itself into a truth. It told me that I belong here, inside of this soil.

I sunk deeper into the soil. I looked up and saw a woman in a yellow blouse running past, I froze. I began to remember a woman I had known, no, it hadn't been a real woman it was a character in a story that I had meant to write, I want to call out to her. I then realise that my mouth has changed, it's no longer attached to me the way it used to be. It is dry, the jaw is locked. I cannot close my mouth, my jaw has become misshapen, my lips no longer close, the upper lip is too far away to meet the lower. In the darkness, there is nothing else but this mouth. I feel my whole existence placed inside of this mouth. It feels numb and soft whilst carrying all the words inside of it, colliding with the chewed pieces of sustenance I had forgotten to swallow. All the words I ever wanted to use have accumulated inside my mouth but they lack shape, hovering flat and meaningless inside my mouth before being swallowed down, then lying lazily and heavy inside my stomach.

- I dreamt I was walking around London. I looked up and saw The Shard, then I got on an Overground train. When the train pulled into the station it had been renamed 'Spring' and there were pink hydrangeas everywhere, all over the sign; then I woke up.

In the back of my mind the stations had been renamed 'Winter', 'Summer', 'Autumn' depending on the coordinates of the city, like north and south.

God I miss London so much.

- In my studio, which handily in my dream was huge, I waited nervously for my crit with my fellow Turps painters. I'd rearranged the space so that everything was tidy, and there was loads of floor space (joy!). Marcus, Phil and Helen came in and spent what felt like hours not starting the crit. We sat around with the other painters talking about the weather, our commutes... anything except the art. Then, just as seats were moved and action looked imminent, my old headteacher from my primary school teaching days

turned up – with the whole of KS2. It seemed that my studio providers had double-booked my space.

The children filed in and sat around the congregated painters. Assembly began. Everyone, as dreams often do, carried on. Although I did look at Helen and Phil during the recorder performance and noticed bemused looks on their faces! I felt so frustrated. What was going on? By the time the children filed out, it was announced that the crit was over. And so was my dream.

- I am edging down a street lined with old-fashioned stores: a blacksmith's, a sweet shop etc. As I pass each doorway I encounter a scary figure. Out of one of the doorways comes a large boy who shrieks unintelligibly. From another doorway, a huge 12-foot-high cartoon bird. It makes an obscene downward peck at me each time I try to pass.

- It is nineteensixtysomething. A dead blue whale holds up traffic. We get out of a Ford Anglia 559 COL. Two showmen tour the whale on a flatbed trailer as a visitor attraction. Its dimensions are hard to fathom. It is vast, and sad and ancient and smells unlike anything else. For years I thought I'd dreamt this.

Twentyeighteenish. I am inside the belly of a whale. Contained in its ribcage is a library. The ground begins to shift as it gets ready to dive. Through the blowhole appears a circle of sky and the face of Captain Birdseye (Ricky Tomlinson), who asks me to pass him books. It's an Aladdin moment, paused on choice ...

- As part of a job, I have been told to cut the feet off big sponge-foam sculptures of elephants because the legs need shortening. The sculptures are in gardens suspended in flower beds filled with old tropical plants. The elephants have been carved out of sponge by a female sculptor. They are beautifully carved and look like old grey stone with patches of lichen. Me, my old friend Gary Orange and a few studenty girls have been given the task of shortening the legs. We set about hacking them off with yellow Stanley knives. It's making me feel sad.

I think to myself that I might keep some of the feet, which look like

stone because they are so old. I tell the others that it's making me feel sad. I hold the feet in my hands and say, 'They used to be such strong hands'; it's a quote from the Rockbiter in *The NeverEnding Story*, a film I watched as a child. The studenty girls don't get the reference; they are too young. Even Gary has never seen it. We are laying the elephants' feet upright in lines under a bay windowsill after we cut them off. There is something absurd about hacking off the feet, as if the elephants will look okay with shortened legs! They are so beautifully constructed, but that's none of my business, it's a workaday job, I'm just following orders.

- 1. Waves thrashing aqua marine icy jump off swim tear through the deep thrown onto the land calling to Abigail (Reynolds) on this intrepid voyage to see the nothingness of mountainous ice. No gloves no go. Back in the spaghetti dirt of London roads.

2. Daddy you lied. You said we were going to the woods to shoot dogs. But we are in the forest with the deer.

3. I was really really really tall and I walked over to the princess and she asked me to marry her.

- When the energy of the day whirs into the night

the most violent storms come at 4 a.m. night after night of similar ones, interior ones, able to raise oneself at that sinister hour of the in-between.

Every second held uncountable *rayos** that shook my sense of time and spatial positioning.

The rain came down without metre, a million thoughts pouring.

– betrayed by nature I thought the sea would come to my door, with urgency.

This is where in the centre of my own mental storm, amidst the *rayos**, thunder and deluge of water, I haven't yet drained.

I slipped off the raft,
it was a silent exit and I didn't scream as I
was listening to something I had once read:

*'Tu destino es de la playa y mi vocación del mar.'***

*In el piélago**** – its centreless turbulence where we are never able to see the whole –

is where my internal met the external, when the salt entered the *agua dulce*****

and I thought I woke able to see the warm orange sunlight on the horizon again, in contrast to the heaviness of the Payne's Grey clouds, I went outside to look for the whole rainbow beyond the coastal pine trees grown wild like my hair. I realised then, I always look for part of the rainbow, that is the woman I am – despite not seeing one, I had faith I would in time.

* lightning strikes

** 'Your destiny is of the beach, my vocation is of the sea.'

*** the deep sea

**** fresh water

- I had to get round to the other side of the building which meant going past a group of men with dogs, but they had closed in, leaving only a very small corridor for me to walk down, between the building and the dogs.

As I walked towards them I asked them to hold on to the dogs and I tried not to act afraid. There were some really big scary-looking dogs barking at me and then a small fat dog clamped its jaws around the back of my neck and I crawled

along on my knees trying not to drag the dog too much because it would hurt me more.

Once I got round to the other side of the building the owner of the dog said to me, 'It's okay it's only a small Jack Russell' and I managed to get my hands around the dog's jaws and unclamp it from the back of my neck.

Then it took all of my effort to stay calm and walk away without running and without looking scared.

- I take my lover's hand and lead him away from where he's cooking and into the wide river shallows. We run, splashing through the water, I wonder what that crashing noise is, then we are suddenly leaping and I'm terrified, out above the waterfall and falling, falling. We strike the water and the pounding force pushes us deep. Still hand in hand we push up from the greasy stones beneath our feet, pressure in my ears and burning lungs ... rising, struggling for a moment and then that first breath as my face breaks the surface, exhilarated to still be alive, a bark of laughter as we stand dripping on the shore. We turn to climb up again. I awaken.

• For about ten years, I have recorded my dreams in journals. Day by day, in the early morning, without falter, but with the occasional lapse of memory. As this effort became a habit, I started to see patterns. Certain dreams came at certain junctures of my waking life; similar symbols, characters, emotions. I tried to map the oneiric landscape on to the empirical landscape, mindful of the connections. Did I dream my mother every time I argued with my girlfriend? Was the tiger doubling for the fear of an aggressive colleague? Why did I sleepwalk in the same dark corridor of the cellar that impressed me as a child?

On the night of the second of February 2019, I stepped into a shopping mall. I sat in the food court, sharing the table with a father and a son. They looked alike, but were different heights. They had woollen hats – one blue, one red,

knitted and ribbed – and they kept a pile of them in a drawer. Many hats, similar to the one I always wear. Are they me and my father? I usually picture myself as a boy, but maybe in this dream *I am* the father – or am I both? Back in the food court, I decide to steal a hat. This is because I am often afraid of misplacing my hats; you see, I am bald, and it annoys me to lose my hats. I like to have spares. I grab one, unnoticed, from the father or the boy. Still I am not sure whether I am being watched; are there security cameras? I step outside and it's Canada. I am far away from London, but it is still vaguely familiar. It's a Canada that *looks* like London. I need to catch the train or I will be caught. I'm afraid, but satisfied. That's where the dream ends. The emotion is anxiety, but also greed – I really want to keep that hat. I scribble that in my journal. Anxiety. Greed. Hats. Is there a pattern?

- I dream that I am on an overnight ferry to Cork, in Ireland, sleeping in the top bunk of a cabin. It is a cramped space with a single porthole window the size of a dinner plate.

It is dark outside, but raindrops on the glass tell me a storm rages. I do not enjoy travelling by boat, and grow seasick easily, a feeling which is especially strong on this choppy night on the Irish Channel.

The boat lurches abruptly to one side, and the sky comes into view through the window. The clouds are illuminated against the lightning – they are purple and violent.

Then, alarms are ringing, and I hear shouting from outside the cabin.

I climb down and look out into the corridor. Adults in uniform run down the gangway, buffeted from wall to wall with the movement of the boat. Their faces are blurry, but I know they are panicked. Sea water gushes down after them.

I slam the door to the cabin shut. Another look outside the porthole reveals that the ship is submerged. How did that happen so quickly?

Now, water is seeping through the hinges on the door. I hear it creaking. It is going to give way.

When the door finally bursts, I wake up. I am no longer dreaming, but I am still aboard the ship. We have arrived in Cork. I look outside once more. It is a fresh, sunny morning.

• I was in Spain. I was swimming in a pool at a resort with some friends who live in Barcelona. We weren't in Barcelona but somewhere close to mountains. One of these friends is Catalan, the other English. They are a couple. The sun was blazing down and it felt warm and pleasant. When I was in the pool I was playing with the Catalan friend and they were underwater. I went underwater too for a moment and came up and met with them above the water. Their face was close to mine, and they said something I didn't understand, but I nodded, and remember thinking about how much water from the pool had been captured in their beard as it dripped out. I was then outside of the pool, not remembering how I got out, and it didn't matter, but I was looking back at it, and the water in the pool shone blue in the sunlight and everyone was enjoying themselves. All around us there were mountains and a stunning view that stretched my eyes as it went on. I think it was autumn.

It reminded me, after I'd awoken, of being on holiday in Spain this previous autumn,

although I was with different friends. In the dream, the Catalan friend was leaving, they had to go to get back to work. I stayed with the English friend, who is a long-time close friend of mine outside (and inside) of dreamlife. We were excited because I'd made up my mind in that moment, that I would retire to this place. I knew it would be a warm, dry and comfortable place for me in my older age. But, then it dawned on me that I wouldn't be able to, because of the end of freedom of movement that was coming with Brexit.

I felt envious of my English friend who had officially settled in Spain, so would have the right to stay there. But I would be denied the right that others would be free to enjoy. I felt sadness and loss in the dream, as I grieved the loss of this freedom. Upon waking, I continued to feel sad, as the feeling of loss settled in my stomach, and it dawned on me that this was my first dream of grieving for this lost potential, for what the philosopher Judith Butler describes as *that which will not have been*.

- I am floating on the waves of a wide blue-green ocean, wearing a huge dress that billows and inflates – keeping me afloat.

The sun shines down on to the surface of the water, making it glisten and sparkle with flecks of silver.

I worry that at some point my dress will deflate and I will sink down into the dark, below the surface of the sea, into another place.

But for now, I glide over the waves as each one comes, my clothes and hair blowing in the breeze.

- I was being shown around, about, below deck, which required all sorts of odd routes to go in certain directions. There were undulating floors, fixed but with inclines and declines. To turn left you had to go in a loop to the right, for instance.

I asked if it was about the ups and downs and it wasn't. I couldn't find the key or internal logic of it but I was keen to understand it. I was new to the boat.

Up some stairs the animals that lived in the boat were walking across the deck along a corridor. I was told they were wild animals, but they were friendly when you got to know them and we could all feed and interact with them. I was new so I was told to stand back for now.

I didn't feel scared of them. A small bison-type animal with curly horns walked past and I could hear a low growling from a tiger.

Suddenly it appeared from the right, very close to the edge, very big. It lay down with its head on its paws and looked at me with golden eyes. I stepped back down the stairs, I think I was told to.

As I stepped back I momentarily lost sight of it over the top of the steps and then it slid forward right to the edge and leant on its paws and looked at me full in the face with the most amazing golden eyes. There was humour in them.

I was meeting its gaze and looking deep into the eyes trying to work out if it symbolised someone I knew.

It was relaxed and powerful and mocking me.

It was breathtaking, I found it mesmerising and I loved that it was focused on me.

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