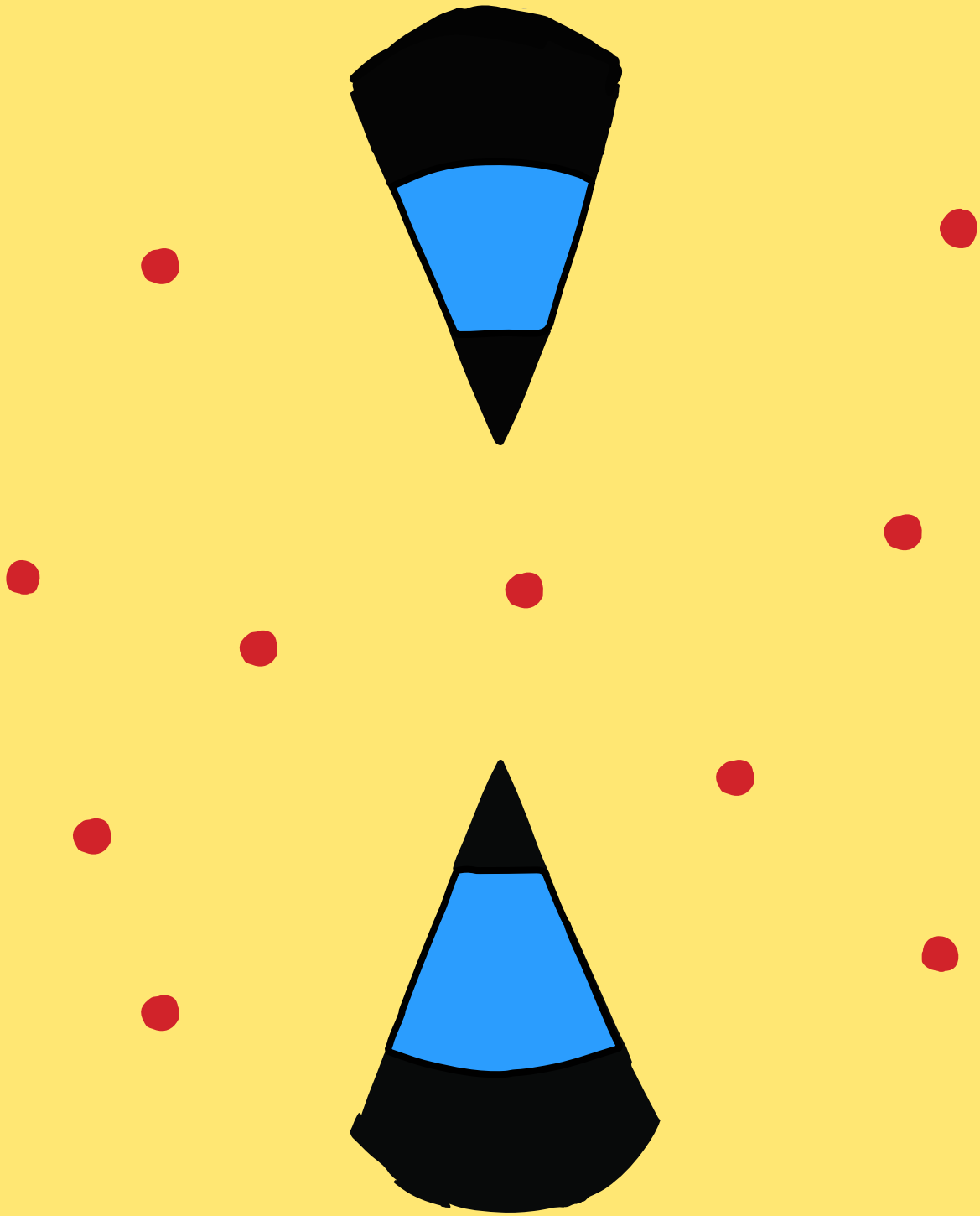


SENSING



A WRITING AND CREATIVITY WORKSHOP
BY FRANCESCA EKWUYASI + SHAYA ISHAQ

ABOUT

SENSING is a writing and creativity workshop that invites participants to engage with the exhibit, Library of Infinities, alongside other prompts in an ekphrastic practice to write/create their own work. This workshop is for storytellers of all styles, genres, and media; as well as folks who are interested in learning to use writing/creativity prompts.

The workshop prompts are divided into four categories, all of which correlate to some of the senses, as a way to encourage participants to experience the process of writing/creating somatically. The intention here is to explore how storytelling and artmaking can be an embodied practice as much as an intellectual one.

Participants are invited to contribute a song to the workshop playlist at the time of registration and bring the following items to the workshop:

- Earphones if possible
- Something with which to write or create such as a pen and paper, electronic tablet, sketch pad, sculpting clay etc.
- A small object, for example, a small smooth rock, an earring, a lighter, or something small that holds some significance etc; folks will be asked to trade their object with another participant and use what they receive as a writing prompt.
- A small individually packaged snack, for example, a piece of candy, a packet of cashews etc; folks will be asked to trade (with food allergies considered) their small snack with another participant and use what they receive as a writing prompt.
- A passage or excerpt to read out loud; folks are welcome to bring a passage or excerpt from their own work, or the work of a writer/artist that they enjoy.

SCHEDULE

Welcome and Introductions

Facilitators and participants introduce themselves. Please share your names, pronouns, and whatever you'd like to share about your creative practice.

Group Reading

Participants are invited to read an excerpt from the passage they have brought to share.

Writing/Creating Session One

Participants are invited to use the first prompt provided below as guides to writing/creating something.

Sharing/Feedback

Folks are invited to share what they've created and ask for feedback if they would Like.

Check-in/Conversation

Short Break

Writing/Creating Session Two

Participants are invited to use the second prompt provided below as guides to writing/creating something.

Sharing/Feedback

Folks are invited to share what they've created and ask for feedback if they would like.

Check-in/Conversation

Long Break

Writing/Creating Session Three

Participants are invited to use the third prompt provided below as guides to writing/creating something

Sharing/Feedback

Folks are invited to share what they've created and ask for feedback if they would like.

Check-in/Conversation

Short Break

Writing/Creating Session Four

Participants are invited to use the fourth prompt provided below as guides to writing/creating something.

Sharing/ Feedback

Folks are invited to share what they've created and ask for feedback if they would like.

Check-in/Conversation

Thanks and Check Out

PROMPT 1

Spend 20 minutes exploring the Libraries of Infinities; taking note of the following:

- How do you feel in your body as you walk through the gallery?
- What colours and shapes make the strongest/most palpable impression on you?
- Describe, in vivid detail, you're favourite part of the exhibit; what do the shapes resemble? Of what do they remind you? What else comes to mind?
- Read the following poems for inspiration, then write/create a response to the exhibit using some of your answers to the questions above:

Ghazal for Becoming Your Own Country by Angel Nafis

After Rachel Eliza Griffiths's "Self Stones Country" photographs

Know what the almost-gone dandelion knows. Piece by piece
The body prayers home. Its whole head a veil, a wind-blown bride.

When all the mothers gone, frame the portraits. Wood spoon over
Boiling pot, test the milk on your own wrist. You soil, sand, and mud
grown bride.

If you miss your stop. Or lose love. If even the medicine hurts too.
Even when your side-eye, your face stank, still, your heart moans bride.

Fuck the fog back off the mirror. Trust the road in your name. Ride
Your moon hide through the pitch black. Gotsta be your own bride.

Burn the honey. Write the letters. What address could hold you?
Nectar arms, nectar hands. Old tire sound against the gravel. Baritone
bride.

Goodest grief is an orchard you know. But you have not been killed
Once. Angel, put that on everything. Self. Country. Stone. Bride.

Milos by Anis Mojgani

let us take a sack of spray paint and
 spray paint over the paintings
let us dance through paris
kiss in the shadow of the louvre
crawl inside its windows

unearth everything from before
bury each other inside the other
feed grapes to the ants
light fireworks in the fists of sleeping
 kings
kill a monarch
 break back outside, find a
 world to do all these same
 things to, up, and upon, against
 break the bricks
climb over them
and when the sirens scream, laugh
 loud

hold my hand
and run fast

run through these streets with me
 with a bunch of bottles
a bucket of gasoline, a mouthful of
 matches
a pocketful of paintings and a fresh-
 faced batch of policemen to
 chase the fires we're lighting
laugh on a shoulder of gold

and i thought that the museums were
 cemeteries where the dead
 pay the walls to hold what we
 have
so we can walk through what we once
 were
where children take their skulls to
 turn into gardens
to pluck for forefathers and farther
 stars

scrawl manifestos over the canvases
write morse code on the sculptures
roll a sleeping bag on the floor to
 sleep inside of
tell one another a story by flashlight

to fling at the black-gloved riot
 soldiers as another shadow
 we are trying to lose
so every giggle is filled with lust
let us laugh this night away and i will
 fuck you like you were a
 prayer
i could save me by having my mouth
 around you
and i will hold you afterwards like
you were the pulpit and i was the sky
and this love that danced between
 that hardness
was a telephone line of holiness that
 those two things spoke
 through

take me into your heart like i was a
 saint
and you were a face of forgiveness
blooming in a valley destined to sink
 further

be a river with me
be the storm
the bend in the path
the front porch
the heat in the south
be a boot full of banjo strings
a fistful of written songs
a mouthful of chocolate dust
when they come to take us, stab them
 between the eyes
do not take your hand from around
 mine
make a fist with the other and punch

that on some nights resemble an
armless mother praying for
her arms to return

every tooth we tear from our jaw

and ask to hear penance come from
inside of us

say with me loud and trembling but
loud and clear

i have already emptied myself
i kissed regret goodbye
took the hands of another backwards
angel and rode backwards into
the rain

when the hangman of morrow comes
to hang the sun in its daily
execution

spines like guilt
spit, sweat, kiss them like a
grandmother
howl open-mouthed, terror love-filled
and when they come to cut our hair

say this with me:

sarah, we are apples
our love is an arrow
i'm unbuttoning my shirt
painting the circle over my heart
please, just shoot straight

PROMPT 2

Spend 20 minutes listening to the co-created playlist; taking note of the following:

- Where do you feel the music in your body?
- Are there any songs that rouse certain emotions in you?
- What songs? What emotions?
- What do you see/imagine when listening to the fourth song on the playlist?
- Can you imagine the colours of any of the songs on the playlist? What song? What colour? Can you explain why?
- Imagine something you love as a song? What is it? What does it sound like?
- Read the poems below for inspiration, then write/create a response to the playlist using some of your answers to the questions above:

**ancient parts of you will be summoned by some freaky
nasty beat sometimes** by Amaris Diaz

god said hips & there we were. skinny jeans
no trae nada. our asses were built for these
songs. puro barefeet & dirty floor. que somos
puras piernas. puro back sweat y smeared
eyeliner. this is your only bible. this is the
only prayer. demos gracias a cuerpo y
canción. demos gracias a mujer y hueso.
que the beat le bendiga. today is for shaking
the dirt back into your skin. resurrect in
sweat & tongue between the teeth. return
your body to its first, buried home. summon
the dust. did you know that we were once
rivers? that first our arms were waters.
reach. beginning cities carved with rain to
shoulder blade. we were nobody's wives.
nothing anyone could own. we were water.
nothing to obey but our own moving.

Before the Last Dance by Ryka Aoki de la Cruz

I do not deserve to be saved, for
I am not in love with salvation.
My lovers fold like old
newspapers, converse like a car
with a broken radio.

They stumble in old sneakers
that no longer match any outfits,
while beholding the cosmos.

I am a fish who appreciates
a good fish stick.
Murder me, and part of me
is your partner in sin.
My anger comes from every second
you cannot see the lotus, rising

from the silt, the offal. Believe.
When the radio and the dharma
and the blood have not become one,
dig your nails into my forearms,

or even any sports.

Their kitchen cabinets are slashed
where they danced with malt liquor
and butcher knives.

No one who loves me
should handle cutlery
your teeth deep into my thigh.

My lover took 48 years
to put on a lipstick and dress,
and for the rest of his life
will know what it means
to be beautiful. Believe.

Break our wine glass and
fill it with hope. As a fragment
opening to candlelight.
Believe

PROMPT 3

Trade snacks with another participant/ or select a snack. Taste the snack imagining you've never had anything like it before like it's the first snack of its kind you've ever seen. You are visiting a different universe, everything about this snack is new to you.

- What does the snack look like? Taste like? Smell?
- What is the texture in your mouth?
- What sensations arise? Does your mouth pool with saliva? Does the snack dry up your tongue?
- Describe your tongue, your teeth, the insides of your cheek, the taste of your spit.
- Does the snack remind you of anything? What else comes to mind?
- Read the poems below for inspiration, then write/create a response to the playlist using some of your answers to the questions above:

Love Poems for Harrowing Times by Oki Sogumi

Love Pools

Flush and teenage
I begin life in a pool
Jump in with my dress
ballooning
Life opens this way

On a farm
That grows nothing
That keeps no animals
Driven by hunger
I jump in the pool
My hair radiant
To begin

In the beginning I am
cold
for the hours after-birth
twisting in a towel
All the citizens know
the story of my birth—
Every pore weeping
chlorine

& the weeping is golden
& the bits of gold catch
feeling
The feeling catches in
my mouth
& I keep it there
Every time, I gather
these lights
they fall into my body
into unsure and slanted
places
& they jostle as the pop
songs do
Slam into each other,
brakeless, body to body
& they rhyme nation to
party
Durational testing the
amphetamine of night

Floating under a
jacaranda blanket
stitched with secret
commentary

I dreamed your comment
citing a book and an
author

I dreamed this parallel
world

I birthed this author, I
raised her, fed her,
I gave her a sister

I wrote her whole book
I wrote the comment and
the cited passage

I dreamed of a you freely
offering yr thought

I dreamed the thoughts
mingled with the wet of
the bodies
under the glowing
blossoms

I woke up thinking

This was everywhere: a
commentary of the sky

I soak in this infinity pool
a cascade's unbroken
loop

a beaded hole and
thread

Is yr question a
multitude question?

I feel it tangle the lights

I feel it pollinate hourly

The manyness coming
up

That manyed mouth
touches yours over time
Marking before now and
after now and now and
now and now

Possession

the ocean is a better
kind of family
the short story is a kind
of plate breaking
there's a way of carrying
a body only partway to
heaven and then letting
go
and the drop can be
senseless
the way a room can
disappear into embrace
the forger gathers all the
air out of the room and
claims divinity
the long con holds you
under and you fill with
salt, all stunned and blue
you confess to a
narrative you think
you've never heard
before

this feeling is so new,
you say,
all the lines of this split
are radial

the secret interstices of
where they eventually
meet are where we lie
this illegal harbour

Cosmos

sometimes I eat
moments
slowly like a red bean
bun
& wonder if
we can finally have birds
without dying
if this blanket pessimism
is necessary for
collective liberation

Love Poems for Harrowing Times by Oki Sogumi

if quietude is part of
learning to love
or if I should be laughing
more
my attachment has
sesamed
a pattern so
unconcerned it makes its
own perfection
its own rivets
mid laugh swings
it enters me
does it enter you

Hold

death is political but our
politics are not adequate
tonite all the ugly
feelings
previously memorialized
return
like the earth is cut up
like fuck this migration
of fear across and out
from woundedness
like fuck state and
capital and how nothing
is for us
except this love, is
something, and i don't
want that to be about
containment
i want this too to be
in excess, if the air is
gonna bleed like this
let go, hold tight

PROMPT 4

Trade the small object you brought with another participant. Hold the object imagining you've never had anything like it before like it's the first object of its kind you've ever seen—perhaps the only object like this in existence. You are a scientist, a seeker, a recorder of small mysteries;

- What does the snack look like? Taste like? Smell?
- What is the texture in your mouth?
- What sensations arise? Does your mouth pool with saliva? Does the snack dry up your tongue?
- Describe your tongue, your teeth, the insides of your cheek, the taste of your spit.
- Does the snack remind you of anything? What else comes to mind?
- Read the poems below for inspiration, then write/create a response to the playlist
using some of your answers to the questions above:

Vocabulary by Safia Elhillo

fact: the arabic word هواء (hawa) means wind

the arabic word هوا (hawa) means love

test: (multiple choice)

abdelhalim said you left me holding wind in my hands

or abdelhalim said you left me holding love in my hands

abdelhalim was left empty

or

abdelhalim was left full

fairouz said o wind, take me to my country

or

fairouz said o love, take me to my country

fairouz is looking for vehicle

or

fairouz is looking for fuel

oum kalthoum said where the wind stops her ships, we stop our

s

or

oum kalthoum said where love stops her ships, we stop ours

oum kalthoum is stuck

or

oum kalthoum is home

Two Boys Bathing During a Ceasefire by Ocean Vuong

Up to their waists, the river is calm
enough to be false.

The older one, lips just-fuzzed
warms a bit of water in his mouth

before guiding an indigo braid
over the younger's shoulders.

For he had been shivering.
He had been shivering

all night. For the body, touched
by newer terrors, becomes a wing

attempting, not flight, but to fold
in a way that makes

flying, when it comes, a kind
of severance. The older boy cups

his full hands over the Braille rising
on his friend's neck, like a beggar

asking for a lack he cannot keep.
Peter? the younger one whispers,
I'm ready...

I'm ready. & the raised palms
open. A gasp, then black

water shattering over his back
like bullets—or wing bones

salvaged
from tomorrow's shadows.

Good Bones by Maggie Smith

Life is short, though I keep this from my children.
Life is short, and I've shortened mine
in a thousand delicious, ill-advised ways,
a thousand deliciously ill-advised ways
I'll keep from my children. The world is at least
fifty percent terrible, and that's a conservative
estimate, though I keep this from my children.
For every bird there is a stone thrown at a bird.
For every loved child, a child broken, bagged,
sunk in a lake. Life is short and the world
is at least half terrible, and for every kind
stranger, there is one who would break you,
though I keep this from my children. I am trying
to sell them the world. Any decent realtor,
walking you through a real shithole, chirps on
about good bones: This place could be beautiful,
right? You could make this place beautiful.