

blóm + blóð

WhiteFeather Hunter



Fig. 1 blóm + blóð (Icelandic for “flowers + blood”) presents performance as embodied research, in the landscape as laboratory/ studio. [8:00, digital video]

The artist navigates the autumnal terrain of Norðurland vestra (Northwestern Iceland), collecting natural dye and fibre stuffs, using landscape elements as tools for making and experimenting with flora + fauna in the creation of a textile work. The end (textile) result is never shown, as the emphasis is on site-specific process as the creative work in focus, resulting in the acquisition of new knowledge and the acclimatization to a new environment. Utilizing the landscape as a laboratory means more than simply the outdoor acquisition of art/craft materials—it mobilizes human empathy through experiential learning towards gaining an ecological awareness of the source of materials

one works with, fostering a working relationship between a human actor and the environment and its agents. The video plays with notions of temporality and labour, but also with ideas of material agency, as elaborated in Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter* (2010), where “efficacy or agency depends on the collaboration, cooperation, or interactive interference of many bodies and forces” (20). Human-scale time-space around the performance of labour is compressed through editing software fades, much in the way that geological time is compressed in popular nature videos. This editorial trick means to slightly decenter the principality of the human (visitor) in the overall exchange.

A deliberate touristic romanticization of the coastal landscape is disrupted by the practical necessities of Icelandic life, such as the sheep slaughter and the use of horse blood harvested for the pharmaceutical industry. In particular, during the entire month of the residency, the artist witnessed an endless briny billowing of blood, from the annual sheep slaughter being funneled from the slaughterhouse floors into the tides that washed in and out, day and night, next to the residency site. The constant scream of gulls as they feasted on the bloody water and the sea life it attracted became part of the background drone of the coastline. Running counter to (or alongside of) the commodified packaging of Iceland, this visceral representation of the cultural landscape presents a more acute embodiment of entangled traditional livelihoods that include craft-based relationships to the land.

blóm + blóð has been screened as part of *Cultivars*, the Subtle Technologies Festival v.20's banner exhibition curated by Zach Pearl at InterAccess Gallery, Toronto; also, as part of *Fermenting Feminism* (Lauren Fournier, curator) shown at Büro BDP, Berlin, Front/Space Gallery, Kansas City and at the McGill University Institute for Gender, Sexuality and Feminist Studies, Montréal as part of the *Leavening the Conversation: Food, Fermentation and Feminism* conference. Additional screenings include as part of *The Body Electric* (Dr Allison Crawford, Dr Lisa Richardson and Bryn Ludlow, curators) at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada International Conference on Resident Education (ICRE) in Quebec City and at the Associated Medical Services (AMS) Phoenix Invitational Conference in Toronto. The video was also presented at ODD Gallery, Klondike Institute for Arts and Culture during the Dawson City International Short Film Festival, and most recently in Fremantle, Western Australia as part of the exhibition, *The Mess e In* (Tarsh Bates, curator) presented by the Unhallowed Arts Festival.

blóm + blóð was first published as embedded video in York University's e-Journal, *InTensions* in the Spring 2018 issue, entitled, *Food for Thought: Food, Embodiment, and Knowledge*. Additionally, video stills and a transcript of subtitles are published in *Fermenting Feminism* (Lauren Fournier, curator) in collaboration with the Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology (LAE), Berlin/Copenhagen and Broken Dimanche Press, Berlin.¹ *blóm*

+ *blóð* has also been spotlighted as a feature on Labocine, "home of films from the science new wave." Funding for the project was generously provided by Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des arts et des lettres du Québec and by the Textiles and Materiality Research Cluster and the Milieux Institute for Arts, Culture and Technology at Concordia University.

Transcript of subtitles (in English and Icelandic)

gather 2 c. krækiber
 season: réttir, and ber are dead ripe
 mash together in pot w/ 1 c. sykur
 fill pot w/ vatn, add ull garn + simmer on low 2 hrs
 cut 1 bucket lúpínu
 lúpínu is a Canadian invasive species
 simmer stíkar + lauf in pot full of vatn 2 hrs until
 vatn is gold
 dip in mordanted garn, leave o/n to cool
 never eat shaggy manes and then drink áfengi
 colour on ull will be ljósgrár
 knitted swatch will show subtle variegation
 an old horseshoe in the pot will work as mordant
 briney vatn evens the dye process by slowing up-
 take
 dry ull can be wound on Lopi bones as bobbins
 ask for Ægir's blessing
 Lopi will go to the sea to eat þara
 haust ull is the best ull
 dirty ull takes dye better b/c of ammonia in the
 old reiðan
 "scabs of the gods" must be fermented to release
 colour
 pick the slow-growing scabs from a wide area in
 order to not overpick
 there will be others after you
 also collect reiðan in jars while collecting gods'
 scabs
 reiðan aging process will take a number of weeks
 crush gods' scabs and add to reiðan
 réttir is slátrun time – collect blóð from státruhús
 ull dipped in blóð must be left o/n to dry and set
 the colour
 do not heat the blóð
 blóð will clean up best when worked with úti
 rinsing garn in the sink afterwards is bad as it will
 smell like dauða
 there are no villtur animals in Íslands to steal your
 blóðug garn left úti
 the best place to rinse the blóðug garn is in the sjó
 that's where the slátruhús rinses itself too
 Ægir will take the blóð fórn
 give + take, gefðu + taka
 always keep one eye open for the Fjörulalli

bury your hjarta in the gufu + mud
 for one month to make an impression.

blóm + blóð (2016)<https://vimeo.com/196461170/370f36e266>**References**

Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Endnotes

1 A downloadable PDF of the complete publication is available online through e-ARTEXTE, here: <https://e-artexte.ca/id/eprint/28709/>, last access February 1, 2019.