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Air — Experience — Aesthetics

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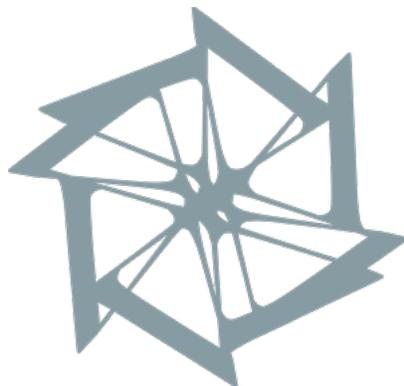
AIR BUBBLES

Tunnels

Petra Kuppers | poetry | 108

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TUNNELS

Petra Kuppers

'Each movement of respiration encodes terror.' - Stacy Doris

*Muscle tunnel locomotive round, inmates held
at psychiatric institutions*

*Martín Ramírez sings rip-like architectures of invasion invagination
holey fantasy scene in the mountain's side Jesus' wound
lay your finger here Thomas does as he is bidden
Thomasina runs for the hills*

Underwater cave.
Mask sound. Breath
beat. Cave snake
beneath earth, stone
slick with underwater
aquifer teaser testers
held at bay but glide
right into the next nest,
one hollow beneath
swallows of giant
gullet, vocal chords
tight against neoprene
black

Dinosaur bone sticks out of desert cave wall high up
in the dry. Silicate old clay body sedimented fern.
Skin bird balances on hot wind. Giant stalagmites
bite into swampy dry sun parch heat death dinosaur
rattle roar tongue sail breath dust fall decay I salt
you here I bless you here I compress you here till

you reach

up in wide arc

jubilation

\\

*The train comes round the mountain spews a cigar is not a cigar
themselves on bio-bones that stamp me a woman
jumps up jumps up jumps strength
cunt into elephant's maw*

*my muscles anchor
osteoporosis work*

*penile tusks
the lioness' bloody fur clumps matted dirty to the ochre ground*

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Breathing apparatus
bangs noisily yank
clank funk till it stops.
Caught lengthwise,
anchored. Muscles
seize with ceiling at
nose. Beneath the axle
sharp arrowtips fillet
skin fat cushion. Sight
blurs red and silt and
silt caught in fin swirl.
Stuck.

\\

Shark senses blood ampullae cruises into cave bung hole
fin delicacy convulses impale scar tumor tail and upper
fin stick out of sand till time falls away skeleton time
drip a mantle moan of liquid alabaster soapy skin.

Cave breath

vibrates animate

holes in the universe

///

Fire scars pink into her flank

*she screams
pops teeth strain out plant matter and old silt
Explodes downward, hummingbird diaphragm
lily-stems in the blood pool
blossom heavy ovary*

tunnel fills with water till it

///

Shallow breath louder
in the inner ear,
orchestra corpuscles
beat it beat it. Flippers
still. Neoprene shifts
slightly with
movement side to
side. Rock clasps
harder as lung refuses
to let go.

///

She falls apart, memory of her, silk skin water hole
wedding dance, heavy pink feathers. Lake water
open, cool, each sucking wave. Deck dance against
desert dry alkaline water hole. Flames up, petrol

blue a hot suck

gone.

///

Ball drops *tunnel takes glottal*
to bottom *impact*
ball bearing high arc
moon-wise Luna moth
bounces echo cone

stop all the way

wave silver

night call

////////

The next breath.
Bubbles in the
aqueous humor of
your eye, death's
sequins, mermaid
companion animals
sprint across retina,
reflex shutter, Morse
code SOS.

///

She rattles hollow spirit anchor
arms wide. Low quake tsunami
fire press granite grind bones
contort till they flare rips into
cathedral ship. In the dry, dust
falls moth peacock scales.

Flame out giant turtle.

Farewell cave bear.

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\To source.

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\Stilled.

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\Perfume molecules perform

memory leaps.\

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The nuggets of Tunnel's three interwoven strands emerged in an Amoeba Dance session I led in Turtle Disco. We use sounds to tunnel through our bodies, listen to the echoes and waves that travel through us, and eventually distill these signals into writing.

PETRA KUPPERS is a disability culture activist, a community performance artist, a Professor at the University of Michigan and an advisor on Goddard College's MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts. She leads The Olimpias, an international disability performance research collective. Her academic books engage disability performance; medicine and contemporary arts; somatics and writing; and community performance. She is also the author of a dark fantasy collection, *Ice Bar* (2018). Her most recent poetry collection is the ecosomatic *Gut Botany* (2020). She lives in Ypsilanti, Michigan, where she co-creates Turtle Disco, a somatic writing space, with her wife and collaborator, Stephanie Heit. Petra is a Black Earth Institute fellow.



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