

# VENTI journal

Air — Experience — Aesthetics

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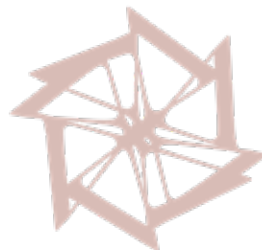
## ATMOSPHERE

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# MARY BYRD LAND

Petra Kuppers

(in response to Black Lives Matter activist Syrus Marcus Ware's Antarctica, an installation that imagines a group of Black, trans and disabled people setting up a new form of home on unclaimed Antarctic land)

Let's go birding. Out into the open. Out into post-smog clear.  
Let's go birding, past the carcass of Sir Victorian Albatross.

Misplaced polar bear reluctantly takes a knee,  
beats the ground to drum up Wendell Seal.

The holograph deep-sixes, shift historic mirage.  
Howl sound remembers Arctic Tern:

wheel in the windy passage, pole-vaulter,  
breach the globe's ley-lines, stay in the light.

One for the life list, two, fifty-three.  
Leopold seal changes her bioluminescent spots,

code-switches into adaptation for prosthetic shrimp,  
for tiny pink crustaceans. Pluralized to krill,

they show no allegiance to rapid-switch compass.  
Let's go birding, push ancient border claims.

Southern Elephant seal roars over floes.  
Expedition-level foot-wear spans the crevasse.

Neon-rappelling gear ticks as you search  
for the miraculous cave, cyber-whispered sugar.

Blue-eyed Imperial Shag lump together.  
They panic the fish till they have nowhere to go.

Bird beak opens wide. Just pick them off, one by one.  
Archaic nature programs offer explanations, you suck a cube.

Focus on Tardigrades, water bear sticks sensitive antennae  
onto salts: hormonal load, high cortisol keen.

Chinstrap penguin makes noise, pushes into the void.  
When you go birding, rub your skin in fat.

When you go birding, project your camouflage.  
Crevasse ghost recognizes kin and kin, old dream horizon.

One hesitant bipedal steps on purple post-oil sole.  
Binoculars: Amazonian rubber pads against frozen eyelashes.

See Giant Petrel glide up there, soar the sky,  
never never touch rotten clear of ice, rank mist full earth.

Blue ice, old oxygen bubbles next to methane haze.  
New thermals rise it into cauldron, maelstrom, evaporate.

New soups boil your tired bones, so clean, so clear.  
Compound round welcome. Alien tents appear.

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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