

portfolio of texts
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adrift: graphic notations for watermusic ii

self published artist book; limited edition of 300

21 x 15 cm, softcover, centre-sewn, english

2025

artist book distributed by [Press Works \(India\)](#) and [Printed Matter \(USA\)](#)

“a friend said that there are people who live life with a background score running all the time. for quite a while, watermusic ii was that for me, and i was adrift. the drawings are the residue of that drift. at the same time, i was reading various texts, whatever held my attention—another kind of drifting. at my day job at a museum, i was trained by another friend in writing alt text and image descriptions. she kept saying, isn't this like poetry?”

a deck of drawings and image descriptions based on Water Music ii, an hour-long, one-track album by William Basinski, released in 2003. 'adrift: graphic notations for watermusic ii' is imagined as a triad: to be heard, read, and seen together.

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this essay is about letting go or sleeping in bent light

2023
essay

The Context:

A playlist acts as a memory. The after-effects produce a sensorium that has already been felt and lived. A memory to drench myself in, to feel familiar. It has been months since this loop formed and now i don't know if the comfort is a sedative or a stimulant.

The Mise-en-scene:

Walking. Along the street, the park, while getting groceries; the rhythms of everyday life. Thinking of the 'what ifs' and 'perhapes'. i take a screenshot of a poem titled 'Small Sentence to Drive Yourself Sane' by Lew Welch¹ from my Twitter feed.

The next time you are doing something absolutely ordinary, or even better the next time you are doing something absolutely necessary, such as pissing, or making love, or shaving, or washing the dishes or the baby or yourself or the room, say to yourself: "So it's all come to this!"

The Gesture: An Incantation.

Close your eyes and feel the earth moving beneath your feet.

Think of the sky; it's night and the light makes it appear violet [read as violent]. The clouds move rhythmically, with soft changes in shape. And then there is volume. He tells me to look up as much as i can, and when he does that, i think he wants me to escape or he wants to escape, for those few brief seconds.

¹ I send the poem to a friend as a message. We share poetry with each other when we come across something resonant. She sends a smiley emoticon as a reply. i can feel her smile over my blue screen.

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He said: i want he who can bend gravity, and when he bends light, he shall see me.

i told him:

The world has to survive the long episodes in which one or one's people do not know what to want, apart from something vaguely affective; then there are episodes in which crisis threatens survival norms and everyone's scrambling to find an anchor and the resources seem limited, except for those of aggression, which are unlimited; and then there is the ordinary in which incompatible needs and fantasies are always on the table, related to structural crisis or the singular chaos people bring to relationality. My point here is this: incompatible needs and fantasies induce ambivalence. Internal chaos produces external chaos, that expresses it without copying it. Any social theory worthy of its ambition requires a space for enigmatic, chaotic, incoherent, and structurally contradictory attachments; it needs a way to assess the attachment needs that put people in relation without promising to deliver "a life" that feels cushioned. There is no cure for ambivalence. This is what it means to move within an object world.¹⁰

Exit Seductress.

¹⁰ Berlant, Lauren. "A properly political concept of love: Three approaches in ten pages." *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 26, no. 4, 2011, pp. 683-691.

¹¹ *Cosmic Leviathan*, NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope image (open source) See: www.spacetelescope.org, https://www.spacetelescope.org/images/potw2310a/, Accessed 22 Nov. 2023.

¹² *Cosmic Snake Pregnant with Stars*, NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope image (open source) See: www.spacetelescope.org, https://www.spacetelescope.org/images/potw174a/, Accessed 22 Nov. 2023.

A self-recursive refrain that i keep telling myself: i am open to you because i can afford you. i think of you, all of you. i oscillate between affordance and attendance;² does my affordance to you translate into attending to you? Memory takes over at this point, the sky, your smile, the frown, the sharpness of your nose, your boyish gait in an old man's body, the old man's charm, the rush in your speech; his sense of certainty, the ease with which he moves, the assuredness of knowing who and what he is. i take all of this in, look at the sky, and say to myself: repeat the incantation for however long you want.

[This text is written at 37,919 metres above sea level; suspended. Flatness and depth dance in a mirage.]

Robert Ashley in *Private Parts: The Park* at 06:28, speaks, *the other side works with the things that are alongside us, the attachments.*³

For the longest, i thought i was bound to him and to the idea of him, bound in the ways he moves, how he sees the world, what he makes of it—all of it. *There was a madness to it.* And then i replaced 'bound' with 'attachment'. The attachment of being in relation, reciprocity, reconciliation, and resignation, with him.

i make a playlist for him and i call it: *fragments: i see you in shards.*⁴ The list of songs in it moves between joy, longing, hope, and what it might feel to hold power. There are five tracks in it: a two-part EP released by Parallax Editions, the tracks titled, *Ride* and *Flowers*; *the theme from Gay Man's Guide to Safer Sex*; *Japanese Planetarium* by Legowelt; and *IWD4U* by Prince interpreted by El Perro Del Mar.

The soundtrack is the genre of ineloquence most conventional to melodrama: it is what tells you that you are really most at home in yourself, bathed by emotions you can always recognize, and that whatever material harshness you live is not the real, but rather an accident that you have to clean up after, which will be more pleasant if you whistle while you work.

² i would like to thank Shveta Sarda, for pointing me towards this shift from affordance to attendance. She speaks of attendance in the context of care-givers and the question of what it means to attend to a care-taker. See: "SEA Conversations - To Inhabit, With Care #8: A Collective Reading on Care." *YouTube*. 30 Sept. 2023. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vS5_wdr9boY.

³ i first heard Ashley years ago, and like most music, i go back to it at points when i feel i need to slow down. The first track in *Private Parts: The Park* begins with a man in a hotel, trying to figure something out. What makes me go back to *Private Parts* is 1. Ashley's voice 2. the narrative structure: the loops and arcs he forms in telling this story, which are vague at best, but leave me with a sense of comfort. The album ends with Ashley describing various kinds of twilight, and then says, "Dear George, what's going on? I am not the same person I used to be." See Ashley, Robert. "Robert Ashley - Private Parts (1978) Full Album." *YouTube*. 7 Feb. 2018. youtube.com/QpHjWjNSL_k.

⁴ See: "fragments: i see you in shards." *SoundCloud*, soundcloud.com/arshad-hakim-192546503/sets/fragments-MF60e4594FHsi-bb462e4ee9e403c8cd5dec9cc14319a&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing.

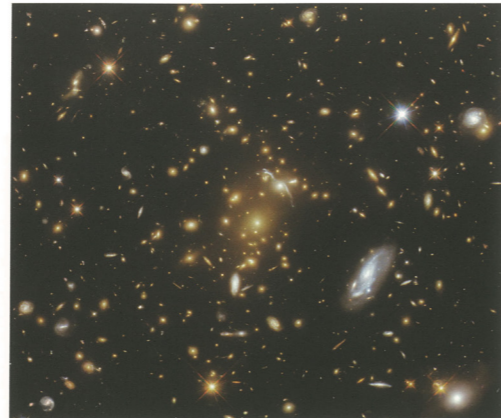
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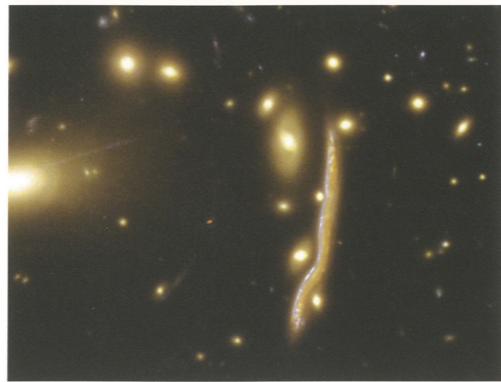
2023

essay in a publicaiton titled, *inordinate skies*

link to the essay, [here](#)



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Suspended Volatility: Act 2

An Interior Image

ARSHAD HAKIM | AUG 20, 2022

How should I describe getting into water?

Do I mention how cold the water felt, or that being submerged felt like I belonged, or that the moisture felt like home, or that I wanted to be swept away by the high tide, or that looking at water hypnotised me, or that the twilight reflecting on water possessed me, or that I was haunted by golden light crashing on the shore.

Wet
glistening, yet
inundated
a movement that is between levitating and floating.

Time is reduced to 75% of its actual speed.

Hunted.
Windswept.

How do I describe how the wind feels?

[David Wojnarowicz](#): *In the shadow of forward motion*: the meaning of the title is: Consider you're in a car and you're speeding along the expressway, and everything you see out of the corner of your eye that doesn't register in the pursuit of that speed, in terms of motion, is what's in the shadow. It's all things quietly occurring within the absence of sight that take place in the pursuit of speed, in terms of motion.

he
him
his

suspended volatility: act 2: an interior image

2022

essay

this piece was commissioned for ASAP, Fiction.

link to essay [here](#)

In an experimental piece—part-prose, part-poem—arshad hakim stays with an image. Through jumps, cuts and loops he tells and never shows, a moment as freeze-frame, as screenshot, as kinetic imprint. A force that suspends everything. Interlaced with music, literature and theory, Suspended Volatility takes us on the transmutative path of a lived moment to image to memory to software and finally, to history.

—Arushi Vats, Editor, ASAP Fiction