

What Do Stones Smell Like in the Forest?

Chloë Lum & Yannick Desranleau
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A Libretto by Chloë Lum & Yannick Desranleau

GOLEM

I think of the sensation that radiates
from the protruding knot of bone,
where my neck and shoulders meet
as well as its double, deep in my tailbone and
flowing outward;
as pain-adjacent.
Stiff and blocked, pins and needles,
no amount of stretching nor soaking;
not heat, nor anti-inflammatories
lessen the bone deep yawning itch.

CHOIR

How bad must it be to be pain
instead of pain-adjacent?

GOLEM

I am always careful to not overstate pain,
to not overuse the word.
I know what doctors think of complaining women.

It's not in my head,
rather it's in my spine, my legs,
the soft fleshy bit
between my thumb and index finger.
I keep dropping things.

I keep breaking things.
My thumb and finger
each twitch and shake;
I look at them
I look at them as if they belong to someone else.
I look at them as if they belong to someone else.

CHOIR

They do.

GOLEM

It keeps me awake and keeps me dumb.
Keeps me slow and slow me slows.
Slowly, slow me so slow.
The inside of my skull is hollow and heavy.
I'm as heavy and damp as unfired clay.

CHOIR

Skipped beats aren't silent when the rhythms
in the in-between are given breathing room.

GOLEM

Does the stiffness or the slowness make me more
golem like?

CHOIR

The golem lumbers stiffly, and slowly.
It is the original cyborg,
a created body with a task at hand.
It does the task poorly.

When the golem moves,
the clay pulls apart.
It doesn't mend easily.

GOLEM

How does one continue to birth a body of work
with a body that doesn't, not labour or function?
If only I where a solid, inanimate thing.

I am a golem!
I sit, I lean, I brace myself
barely moving, using these objects
in order to keep the damp, salt-and-iron-smelling clay
in one piece.

CHOIR

Does the body in pain give off a particular scent?
What about the body in pain-adjacent stiffness and
spasms?
I smell myself and smell powder and lime cologne.
Is there a whiff of pain underneath the surface?
In the sweat, or in the blood?

What does a golem smell like?

GOLEM

Wet, earthy,
a bit salty, and a touch green.
Somewhat like petrichor—
with a whiff of musty stillness, tinged with iron.

165 **GOLEM** < *fff* (*l* = approx. 110) Expressed panic or discomfort > *f*

 $\leq fff$ 

I am a go-lem_____ I sit I_____ lean I brrrr - ace my-self_____

168 γ f 

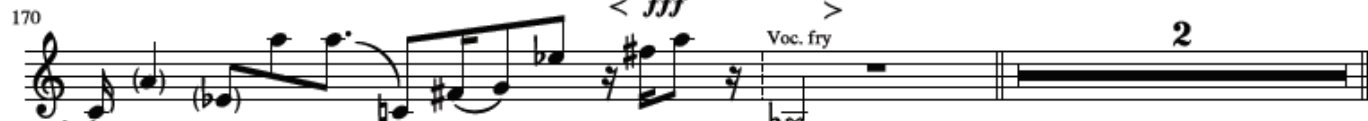
_____ barre - ly mo - ving u - sing these o - bjects in or - der - to _____ keep the

170

 $\leq fff$

Voc. fry

2



damp salt-and-iron smelling clay in one piece

174 **CHOIR** *mf* ($\text{♩} = 150$) Fast and hard



Does the body in pain give off a par - ti - cu - lar scent

176



what a - bout the bo - dy in pain ad - ja - cent stiff - ness

178



and spa - smsZZ_____ I smell my - self and smell pow - der

CHOIR

The cyborg is sleeker, more beautiful, and functional
It smells of acetone and off-gassing plastic,
a smidge of aroma-chemical freshness.
The cyborg is sleek but smells of the one-dollar store;
that is its contradiction.

GOLEM

If these things are contradictory,
it's because most scents are.
Even the tuberose has a whiff of spoiled meat
and rubber tires.

My new friend calls me a lady
Her flat smells like expensive things
like old wood and candles
she smells like gardenias and beeswax
I must be passing as something
other than what I am.
It is unimaginable for me,
that someone could see me as something else than a
golem.

CHOIR

How does one describe the scent of salt
to those convinced that the mineral has none?
Do they not smell the brine of the sea,
the metallic tang from the box?
It's as impossible as describing
red to the colour-blind,

because what can we say about red other than it is
red?

GOLEM

She filled her pockets with stones,
ended up on the riverbed,
her hair floating around like seaweed.
My pockets contain hair-ties and receipts;
lip balm and store-brand ibuprofen,
coated in lint.
I don't know how long these things have been there,
but they are in and on everything I own.

CHOIR

Collections gather shed fur, dust, fingerprints
Along with their secret histories, storage of stories

GOLEM

The stones are heavy in my hand.
They smell like water and earth.
I slip one in my dress pocket to remember.
I've already forgotten it there.
My footfalls are stiff, awkward and slow
So I dance, barely moving, using these objects and
sounds,
turning stillness around, into a story of thingness.
Micro-movements set to the tiniest of gestures,
and the slowness of the rhythms created in the few
empty spaces.

CREDITS

What Do Stones Smell Like In The Forest? (2018). Double channel digital video, sound, 18 min. 39 sec; installation.

Chloë Lum & Yannick Desranleau

The Golem: Marie-Annick Béliveau, mezzo-soprano

Choir and Dancers: Mary St-Amand Williamson, Karen Fennell, Maxine Segalowitz

Director of Photography: Oswaldo Toledano

Orchestration: Dominique Alexander

Chief Choreographer and Dramaturgy Consultant: Mary St-Amand Williamson

Outside Eye: Kim Sanh Châu

Voice Coach and Choir Direction: Louise Campbell

Sound Engineer: Steve Bates

Light Technician: Paolo Malo

Production Assistant and Still Photography: Edwin Isford

Continuity: Lisa Ceccarelli

Hair Stylist: Arahkwénte J Gilbert

Makeup: Drew McComber

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