Repairing the Rupture: A Collaborative Performance Paper with Elder

Ecological philosopher Timothy Morton in *Being Ecological* posits that “humans are traumatized by having severed [our] connections with nonhuman beings, connections that exist deep within [our] bodies” (Morton, 2018:32). And it was the enclosure of the commons that instigated such a severing, argues Marxist feminist Silvia Federici in *Caliban and the Witch*: our peasant ancestors forcibly removed and denied access to land they had relied on for their subsistence resulting in a damaging transformation in the web of relations between humans and the natural world (Federici, 2004). Entangled within this removal, cunning folk, and in particular women were persecuted, tortured, and killed during the witch trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which “underlies the entwined oppressions of race, sex, class, and ecological destruction” claims Neopaganist, Starhawk in *Dreaming in the Dark*, (Starhawk, 1988:xxvii). The ramifications of such a rupture in relations is also evident in the medical profession, where enclosure of women’s bodies and knowledge led to them being outlawed as healers and herbalists (Federici, 2004 & Ehrenreich and Deirdre, 1973).

By way of the elder bush, *Sambucus nigra,*for Articulation/Experience/Embodiment, Amanda Couch will facilitate a participatory performance paper, *Repairing the Rupture: A Collaborative Performance Paper with Elder* which explores these contexts with the aim to unearth, revive and disseminate knowledge lost as a result of this separation from the land and the more-than-human. Couch will weave together practice, theory, autobiography, and examples of her own art and research projects to bridge the divide and build connection, exploring and celebrating wild plants that would have been used as food and medicine.

Together we will become intimate with the elder, imbibing a homemade elderflower reviving cordial. Whilst sharing our memories of kinship with wild plants, foraging, nourishment, and healing, we might absorb the knowledge of the elder as it infuses and flows through our bodies to re-construct and heal our collective cultural inheritance.

For participants who will be attending online, prior to the event, you will be invited to forage for elder flowers and given instructions to make your own homemade elderflower cordial to drink alongside those in the onsite space.

Amanda Couch: Biog

Artist, curator, researcher and senior lecturer in Fine Art at the University for the Creative Arts Farnham, Amanda Couch researches, reinterprets and reimagines histories, myth, ritual and embodied knowledge weaving the theoretical, personal, and material processes. Her work straddles the domains of performance, sculpture, photography, print and the book, food, the everyday, participation, and writing.

Alongside Catherine Morland, she co-curated *The Commons: Re-enchanting the World* (2020-22) at The MERL, University of Reading; performed online (2021) and in person (2016, 2019) at the Wellcome Library, London; performed and exhibited at the Royal College of Physicians, London, (2020). She had a solo show and performed at Ivy Arts Centre, University of Surrey (2018).

Her writing is published in journals, online, in books and as part of her artist book publications, with recent publications including, ‘Becoming with Wheat: Photosynthesis-Respiration Collaborations’, in *Performance Research*, (2022); ‘Divining the world through an artist’s almanac’, Part of Modern Encounters with a Medieval Almanac, Wellcome Collection (2022); and (2019) ‘Reflections on Digestions and Other Corporealities in Artists’ Books’ *The Journal of Medical Humanities* (2019).

Framed as participatory performance, she convenes a Commons Feast Virtual Monthly Meet Up on the third Tuesday of the month, to share foraging and commons knowledge. Her work is in public and private collections, nationally and internationally.