

Wingshan Smith, Picnic, 2020

This is a spell to welcome a little chaos. To find strength in disorder. To purge the unwanted. Perform this spell on a waning moon. A time to put something to rest. Welcome wildness this season.

Let Wingshan Smith guide you through a meditative seasonal ritual to create wild flower seed balls infused with the intention of releasing your troubles. Plant by throwing them into any space where things can grow – your garden, unloved roadsides, alleyways, urban tree pits and so on.



Materials

Paper
Pen
5 Parts Soil
3 Parts Clay powder
1 Part Wild Flower Seeds
Jug of Water
Incantation
Incense or Candles

Transcript

This is a spell to welcome a little chaos. To find strength in disorder. To purge and release the unwanted. Perform this spell on a waning moon. A time to put something to rest. Welcome wildness this season.

“it grows as it goes”

Write down on a piece of paper what you seek to bury. It may be political, personal, simple.

Tear it up, release that energy, place the remnants in a bowl.

“it grows as it goes”

Fill your lungs with air to feel cleared.

4 breaths in

Take five parts soil to three parts clay to one part seeds

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Take five parts soil to three parts clay to one part seeds

“Earth take hold. Ground us. Humble us. Root us.”

One hand pour the water slowly.

Another hand mix.

One hand pour the water slowly.

Another hand mix.

One hand pour the water slowly.

Another hand mix.

Let your fingers wade in the mixture to heal misgivings.

Now take handfuls of mixture and form into balls.

As you do so, read the incantation in front of you until all the mixture is formed.

“April is the cruelest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain.”

Now we let air dry them.

The next day, leave the balls in a sunny spot. Connect with the fire, allow it to instill its wrath and energy to take back the land.

Repeat after me.

“It grows as it goes.”

“It grows as it goes.”

Artist Notes

I was approached by Mansions of the Future to deliver a Communal Lunch, in the form of performance workshop at the end of March 2020. The Communal Lunches programme seeks to bring people together to create new networks and inspire new thinking and debate through the universal gesture of conversation over a shared meal.

Due to Covid-19 the Communal Lunches programme was postponed and we were unable to deliver as planned. I have reimagined the performance workshop into a new video work accompanied by a PDF with instructions and transcript of the video. We have also decided to send out a number of free material packs to participants.

Part tutorial, part spell ritual, participants can now experience the work safely, in their own time, space, and pace.

The choice of incantation is taken from TS Eliot’s iconic poem ‘The Wasteland’. The poem shifts between broken fragments of voices of satire and prophecy set in a vast and dissonant range of locations, times, and cultures. It is a mimetic account of life in the confusing world that continues to frustrate us a century later.

“April is the cruelest month”

This was written into the performance a couple of months before Covid-19 became pandemic. What makes the line incredible, is its concision and uncertainty.

The people who inhabit the ‘Wasteland’ are those who follow a routine life of idleness and order. April is the beginning of Spring, a time of rebirth, forcing change and reminding them of their follies.

There is work to do. Time for disorder. Time to unlearn. Time to change.

When April 2020 came about we were banned from non-essential travel and contact with people outside one's home. The rug of everyday order was pulled from beneath our feet as the uncertainty of what our world may look like when we eventually emerge from the safety of our homes became palpable.

Amongst this, lockdown has made its presence felt within the work. Dreamy home filmed rememberings of picnics with family, old paintings of European markets brimming with fresh produce from around the world, and gardens preened to be proper have all found their way into this video. All were included to conjure complicated feelings of personal responsibility with messy colonial histories of food and its 'ordered' dominion over nature.

As much as I am looking forward to breaking bread with new and old friends once again. The pandemic has caused a break in a constant moving line of production, allowing time for an internal pause, a reconsideration of our values, and a redefinition of the word 'urgency'.

We begin to move on from Spring 2020. It feels important, now more than ever, to reconnect to one another and think about the space we inhabit as we take our first steps towards a 'new normal'.