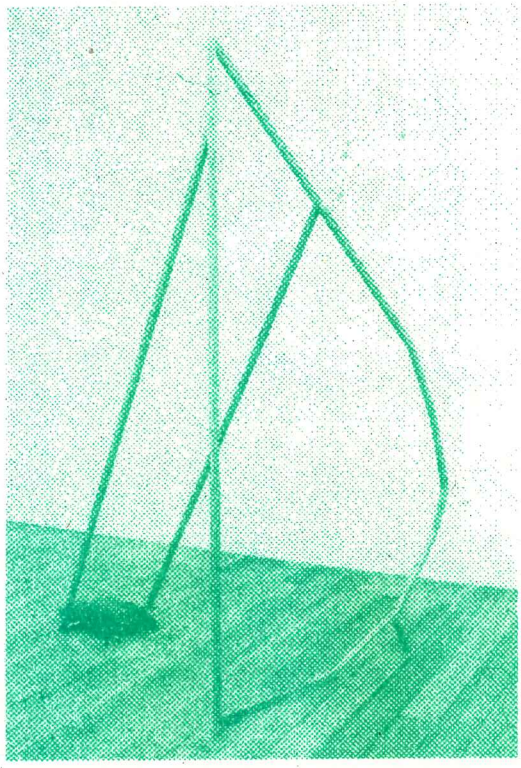
The theatre of Bosra was beautifully preserved because it was filled with earth for so many years.[1] Cold soil, pushed into my indentations. Is it worth being preserved if there is no room for your lungs to expand? At what point does the integrity of the building start to fail? The stage was once again silent. *Theatre came to Rome rather late.*[2] I am pushing myself out from the wings, missing the first beat. At-once dancing and hiding in the pockets of black between the spotlights. The audience has not been present for years. Would I rather be worn down and tired, soaked in experience? Or beautiful and empty, from being too full? We sat solemnly together—myself and myself. Two parts. Seats were sized according to status and value. We are all valuable, even with flaws—I must remind myself of this. I'll use language to reclaim things and to carve out room for meeting others. Awakening to the sound of a collective exhale, I am stage-subject and I am sitter. A conversation is a circle that can be opened or closed. *It's strange how fear can come and gulf you – in waves – before a show.*[3]

I am archiving myself, under rubble and hay, bound in books of past civilizations, swept up in ancient effigies. I am laid bare on slabs of cold stone and warmed by funeral pyres—I am history. I am breathing for the first time and scaling sacred mountain passes. I am coming into myself. Standing in front of ancient Roman gravestones in Istanbul, I was reminded that love and loss are timeless experiences, crossing divides. We made love in Florence while I cried. The doctor wasn't sure what to do next. To hide the truth forsakes the reasons behind art-making. To what extent should you still figure in my poetry? I am writing my own body and coming up with silence. [The myth of Aktaion and Phoinike] *attributes writing to the female figure.*[4] Do my words come from the tears of women, past? I am standing deep within my silence and their pain is bound within the marrow of my bones. The artists provide remedy and respite and I sink into their prose.

Photography is an emotional resource. I build sculptural assemblages to capture light hitting spectrum. Their meanings unfold later. I am pushing myself as hard as I can, moving fast, lacking the proper equipment, turning stills into cinematic motion. Anchoring my body within an endless series of *tableau vivants*. Recording images and words. *You must find your form.*[5] The sculptures are anchored as printed image on paper. I am self-anchoring and throwing myself under waves simultaneously. I am moving out towards the ether, blanketing myself in as much knowledge as possible. I am seeking constructivist corners and am coming up with curves. The lights dim; my body begins to settle.

I am building an archive from listening—an audible library with words already forgotten. One day I will be entombed within the books that I am writing. I'll be packed away in photographic plan drawers, able to exhale heavy in my bones, rolled up and resting on my photographs. Tears cocoon my body and create a shelter. The spotlights turn on and burn my eyes. They are warmer than the fluorescent lights above me. I am a tired ship with deflated sails. I felt uncomfortable and couldn't work out why. I realised that I felt happy and hadn't felt that way in a long time. Moving on without time for reflection. To be full and bursting. I am circling and I am ready. You spoke to me from the belly of the stage. Your voice, soft. The ancient acoustics carried your words up to my ears, as if you were beside me. The trouble only started when you stopped talking. Our narrative was lost within the belly of the theatre. We will be swept over by time, losing hard surface, turned into sand. Applauding hands sought stillness. There is no hope for new conversation. I want to take a photograph of a leg breaking backwards.

Write a sentence and then deconstruct it in as many ways as possible. I am spotlight, subject and cyclorama. I am fixed and in motion; light hitting spectrum. I am every word and every letter. The sentences fall from my hands. *Critical writing, with its citations, quotations, allusiveness, and intertextual resonance is a field of grief and longing.*[6] I am writing you in hopes that you will leave me. I am pushing letters through my body, in hopes that it will settle. I am reading as much as I can, in an effort to go further. I am needing to repeat pages. I am falling through sentences and being marked by poetic prose. *You seem to have this attachment to the relationship.* I was swallowed whole, clinging on. *The attachment* was consuming my thoughts less and less. It was starting to leave me, but never travelling far. I was full of words of sadness, never spoken. Carving through letters and wading through tributaries of tears. *In this context, I did not know how to read.*[7]



Peonies as delicate as crepe paper. I saw them dried in the Turkish desert and sewed them into a frame. (Now I can't look at them without thinking of you). When soft substance suddenly crumble to dust. The flowers are fragile in the same way that my body is fragile. A soft petal, accidently dried by the sun, turned to powder. Will I ever move out of the space of this image? In the ether of the repository, the whole world existed. The conversation remained closed. Silence by way of punctuation. Speech can be controlled through grammar. I am broken thoughts but I am breathing. The pictures were designed to *hold the wall.*[8] Pushing visible; the mechanics of making, provisional. Was the idea of holding up the cloth bore from the subject's directive? I am photographer and I am dramaturge. Applaud my phrases, without opinion. I couldn't have melted into the project this much if you still needed me. I swim past archipelagos of words and my waist is warmed with liquid phrases.

Greek balustrades, archways and mottled light. Did I fall into the stage play or was I merely swept up, heavy velvet, curtain? I seek to find ease through unsettling myself—a contradiction. Is everything that we ever write just an ode to our future selves? I don't want *the attachment* to keep coming up, so I'll carve out space for reading. The most interesting work comes from a heart that is broken. I am language—full of failure and mispronunciation, lost in translation. I like the way that my hand moves up and down and across the page, in curves; leaving stream of ink. I slow down your name when I flourish your letters. I give time to acts of talking. I can inscribe you into symbolic rhythm. Gertrude Stein left out punctuation because she didn't want to control your breathing. I like the way I can fill your lungs with the inclusion of a single comma. I am present and open to discourse, missing sentences, moving from one still image to the next and attempting to remain there. I am the Conversation.

— Josephine Mead, 2018

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[1] Frank Sear, Lecture: *Ancient Theatres*, Potter Museum of Art (Melbourne, February 24, 2018).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Olga Bennett, *Written correspondence* (July 21, 2018).

[4] Quinn Latimer, *Like a Woman: Essays, Readings, Poems* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), 209.

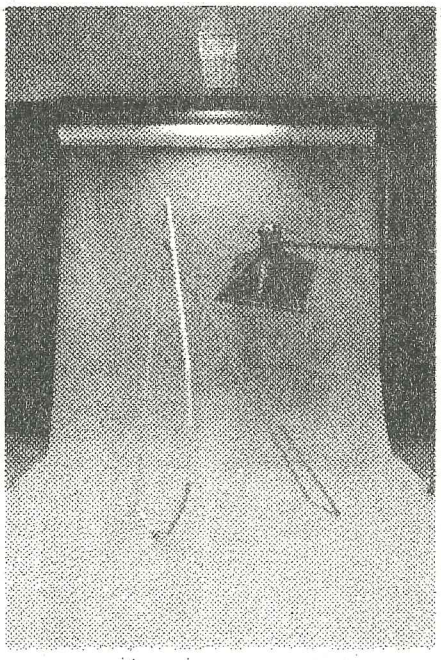
[5] Ibid., 17.

[6] Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (New York: Routledge 1993),150.

[7] Jen Hofer, *Sin Puertas Visibles: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry by Mexican* Women (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2003) 2.

[8] Wikipedia contributors, "Tableau vivant," Wikipedia, accessed July 16, 2018, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tableau_vivant#cite_note-fried08-5.

She writes well but she has no conversation.[1]
The word conversation connotes talking. Which two halves of myself are in discussion? What is it that I am trying to reconcile, work through and work around? A potential outtake. Their bodies are close, but their feet are drawn apart. They are moored to one another, by the cloth and by their footing. The curve of the two sculptures will be echoed by the seat. *One always locates one's own image in an image of the other* and, *one always locates the other in one's own image.*[2] A place of theatricality. The performativity of self-realization. The sculptures function as stand-ins; as props. There is a roundness here. Are you breathing with me? Are you breathing too? *Doctors have a vast platform to investigate, tabulate, and disseminate just how miserable they are.*[3] Is the conversation or the talking taking place now? What is the difference? We are drawn to things that both reflect and repel us. Think about the image's predecessor. To become marked by language. A tired ship with deflated sails.
I am rehearsing for roles I am yet to understand.



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[1] http://www.dictionary.com/browse/disseminate?s=t. Accessed April 14, 2018.
[2] Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance.* (New York: Routledge, 1993.) 18.
[3] http://www.dictionary.com/browse/conversation?s=t. Accessed April 4, 2018.