

Salon d'Amour by Margret Wibmer.

Feedback from performance participants in Kanazawa, Japan. 2024.

1. *Since the other person was wearing a mask and I could not see their facial expressions or reactions, I did not know how they were feeling about what I was reading to them. Therefore, I gradually felt as if I was reading to myself. When we changed roles and I wore a mask, for me, that time felt like a time to face myself rather than the other person. In that space, I could free myself from many things; social position, constraints, and other factors such as race and gender. I mean, I was able to return to my true self, unbound by anything. That space was a comfortable place where I was isolated from society and others. And I could just immerse myself in the world of the story and immerse myself in the poetic words.* [Arisa Kasama]

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2. *When it was my turn to read, I felt strange. I came there with a friend but I was no longer sure if I'm reading to humans. Because the person I was reading to was wearing a mystical costume and mask. When I took the role of the listener, I felt even less like a human being because I was wearing a special costume and mask. I felt like a god or a spirit or something like that.* [Daishi]

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3. *I read the poems by Frida Kahlo. She wanted to convey a lot of things to Diego Rivera but she chose to use only a few words. Words that become a sequence. As I was reading out loud to my masked opposite, using my voice, I could better imagine what she was trying to say. Words become images and material when reading out loud. I also read Mohamedou Ould Slahi's text which is sad and dark but I could imagine the space he describes and the relations he built. As I was reading out loud, my words filled the mask of the listener.*

*When I was wearing a mask, the reader repeated some texts 4 times. It made me feel like I was driving in a car, seeing different sceneries passing by or rather seeing the same things each time in a different surroundings. This impression was strengthened by the voices of the other readers which created the drive. The voice of my opposite was like high resolution material, a high resolution view. The entire experience felt like traveling into another world. It was like a movie.*

*I felt it was very special to perform in a house where people used to live because the house has a story. We don't know the details but we feel it. The house has a spirit and all the objects in it as well. I went to this house many time before the performance. After the performance these rooms took on a different meaning, they became very special.* [Shu Yamamoto]

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4. *As a reader I was struggling to read the texts in the booklet and could not easily focus on the content. I was not able to get emotionally involved in what I was reading. When I took on the role of the listener, the person with whom I was paired read the same passage that I had read. Now I was able to get the content of the passage into my head. Gradually, as time*

*passed, I felt a strange sense of immersion as the same phrases were echoed by those around me in different voices and tones. Also, perhaps because I was physically cut off from my surroundings by wearing the mask, I felt like I was not here, and gradually the content of what I was hearing did not enter my head and I felt fluffy. Perhaps the fact that I wore a kimono this time, made me feel a little different from my usual self, which may have contributed to the feeling of not being here. It was an experience that made me realise how important physical isolation from my surroundings and the clothing I wear are for my consciousness. [name will be added]*

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*5. Participating in the performance was unique and the 40 minutes seemed very short. I felt it was similar to the illusion of time in a painting. The readers seemed to feel self conscious while they were conveying someone else's story. Enveloped in the atmosphere of this unusual setting, they seemed to change from one position to the other in a kind of pendulum movement. The masked listeners appeared like foreign objects. When I took on the role of the listener, it felt like I was listening to something in far distance. Struck by rational thoughts, I thought to myself "I understand your feeling, but I cannot help you". [Yuka Kawanishi]*

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*6. Wearing a mask and listening to my opposite, I tried to visualize the scene of the story but the voices, lights and the unusual sight blocked my vision and I felt as if I was floating in the air without being able to reach anywhere. [name will be added]*

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*7. This evening, I joined a participatory performance titled 'Salon d'Amour' by Austrian artist Margret Wibmer, in a place that is disappearing while being born. One participant wears a mask and kimono provided by Margret and the other randomly chooses to read from a collection of novels, love letters and poems that Margret selected and assembled in a little booklet. The first letter that was read to me was sent from an unknown location. The last was sent from 17th Street in New York City.*

*I was on the phone with my partner in New York during the day, and he said, "This is close to 17th Street", he said. Wearing a mask it felt as if I had received the letters from New York, which naturally brought tears to my eyes. I am very happy that I can communicate with my partner. Through the internet we can express our love whenever we want, whether by text or voice. People might take it for granted, but it is not. Today's performance made me reflect on "communicating love".*

*Then four pairs started reading at the same time. If you listen carefully, you can hear words of love coming from various places and the abandoned house became a very warm space overflowing with love. It was truly a 'Salon d'Amour'. The way to convey and receive love and appreciation is different for each person. Is it through words, actions, or both? It feels a little uncomfortable. In Japan, direct expressions of love are not commonplace. If there are people who want to express their gratitude and love now, I think it is very human and beautiful to express it when you can, and receive it with an honest feeling of gratitude. Margret big thanks for making me aware of this. [Hiira Mizu]*

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8. *During my short stay in Kanazawa, I was invited by Shu Yamamoto, to visit the exhibition "A place that is vanishing while being born" and participate in a performance titled 'Salon d'Amour'.*

*Having been absorbed by a stressful job I lost any sense of what is normal or abnormal or how to give shape to my personal life. This resulted in mayor emotional challenges. In Kanazawa I feel a little more stable and although I was hesitant to explore the topic of love through this performance, I decided to participate.*

*At first I chose to be a listener. Having someone reading love poems out loud is not something that occurs in everyday life, in a society where we are expected to "react" to other people rather than listen. Because of the nature of my job, I am always concerned about how my reaction will be conveyed by others. On the contrary, during the performance, the mask and kimono protected me and enabled me to listen and receive.*

*The voices echoing in the room appeared like the surface of water. I stared at the faint swaying of the plants outside the window. Although I could not take in everything the reader said, it was interesting to experience words floating, entering my body, creating a momentary drama, and observing my mind and body reacting to the words.*

*Shu seemed to have "tried to pick out poems with as many different kinds of words, countries, textures, and forms as possible." As a result, various scenes changed in the mask like a slideshow, and I felt that the words were being put into the mask.*

*I particularly liked the second poem by Frida Kahlo that was read to me. I knew very little about her, except that I had seen some of her paintings. When he read her poem to me, I wanted to read it myself. There were other poems that I found interesting, but I wanted to listen to and read Frida Kahlo's poems many times.*

*When I took on the role of the reader, I noticed that Shu seemed to be attracted to the vividly colored scenes in Frida Kahlo's poems. As I was reading, I recognized my own conflicted feelings and sympathized deeply with Frida Kahlo. The five senses, which show us vivid, beautiful, living scenery, can sometimes develop into perceptions that pierce our emotions and drive us crazy.*

*I turned the page that Shu read. My eyes were drawn to the phrase "She who has colour, he who sees color". The kimonos we wore were bright red and pink. These were the colours I wanted to wear. The phrase "She who has colour, he who sees colour" perfectly matched our kimonos.*

*I imagined filling Shu's mask with "colour". I read Frida Kahlo's poems one by one, re-reading some phrases from the prologue, consciously picking the poems in which colour appears.*

*In contrast to my red mask, Shu's black mask seemed to have various colours with emotions, flowing in and out, overflowing. Shu's seemed to be enjoying the sensation of returning to the same scenery, over and over again.*

*I felt very safe in a world where emotions were converted into colours. The emotions that continued to sting me like a curse were relativized through the various poems, and I was able to accept myself a little more, which may have helped me to find balance. I felt like normality had returned to my extreme confusion. [Sion]*

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*9. I participated in Margret Wibmer's performance 'Salon d'Amour' with other people that I have never met before. We were all assembled in the same room, reading and listening. When I took on the role of the listener, wearing a mask, I remained still and silent, my ears strained to hear. When the reader began, I closed my eyes and stared at my feet, trying to tune into the other person's voice. However, her words were lost in the whole. Perhaps I should have looked at the reader or moved a little closer but I stayed in my position with my head bowed. I was in a daze. When I took on the role of the reader, I chose short texts rather than the longer one's. I read John Cages love letter and repeated the parts that I was particularly interested in. I became more and more concerned about the voices around me so gradually I took more pauses in-between reading. I don't remember the last time that I experienced silence and am wondering what we can do to be better listeners? [name will be added]*

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*10. I was curious about 'Salon d'Amour' so I took a chance and joined the session. I did not know anyone in the group. I wore a mask and sat opposite a stranger that was reading to me. They were a little nervous but tried their best to convey their love to the masked opposite. As a masked listener I felt like I was not in the same space with the other participants. I was listening to their voices, the various styles of reading, various tones and voices overlapping. During this performance I realised that communicating directly rather than through social media, is the best way to show my love. Thank you Margret. I am glad I was able to participate [Yusuke Fukumura]*