

PRAISE FOR INSTRUMENT

“Both visual and sonic, Dao Strom’s *Instrument* constructs with dissolve, holds space for narrative, memory, declaration, and song. With images tender, familiar, and strange, we find ourselves held in the spaces where language or narrative fails. Transmuting the personal and historical amid brackets, talismanic twists, photographic sequences, fragments and verse, *Instrument* enacts a poetics of arrival and decial. Haunting and elemental, evocative and necessary.”

—Hoa Nguyen

“An echo is the original sound, I thought (I think, I keep thinking) while reading Dao Strom’s *Instrument*, a book—a travelogue, a record—that so overwhelms me that I am reverberating, still—seasons, lifetimes later—with its experience. Strom’s movement—through language and landscapes, image and sound, rivers and caves, memory and forgetting—is an act of ongoing conduction, by which the bereaved, unrelieved, and yet radiant lives of the past are carried through the medium of the self—of the selves—and liberated in the form of multifarious song. Because an echo is the advent of listening.”

—Brandon Shimoda

“With *Instrument*, Dao Strom tunes her three voices (of song, of text, of visuals) to play a multimodal symphony that traverses through the spaces of body, time, and histories personal, familial and transnational. Repetitions appear as refrains, as echoes, textual ghosts who remind us of the past, who can guide us to the future. With and through photography, poems, lyrical prose, and visual work in the veins of Susan Howe, Anne Carson, and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Strom weaves together the fragmentation of lives and places in order to reveal unseen fractures existent between parent and child, generations, stranger and traveler. Strom’s voices are virtuosic, moving between cultures and moments unforgotten. And what she orchestrates is elemental, essential. She begins ‘by extracting water out of the rock.’”

—Diana Khoi Nguyen

Instrument

Dao Strom

FONO
GRAF

Fonograf Editions

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The moon and sun are eternal travelers. Even the years wander on. A lifetime adrift in a boat, or in old age leading a tired horse into the years, every day is a journey, and the journey itself is home. From the earliest times there have always been some who perished along the road.

—Bashō

is the moon refugee like me
is the earth incomplete

i've always had a thing for gathering
rocks from shores



SELF-TRAVELOGUE/S





The glottal stop
sings.

—Paul Celan

i saw the word *vocal* this morning & for a fleeting moment thought it said *volcano*
the neck is constantly ajar

.

I found my voice somewhere out (t)here. Somewhere out (w)here. Some/w/here there is a fire. In my belly a hollow for a gut. I found my voice out t/here somewhere. I didn't know I had lost it or that I was not quite using it. But every voice I found along the way, even the ones I would eventually discard, were still mine. You have to claim that too. You have to love all of it as best you can. One of my first-ever jobs was the prostituting of my voice. Secret singer winging through crude songs. You take them in, into the flutter of the folds you've not yet learned are your own deepest vents for healing [but I did not then consider myself a singer and thus did not understand it would mean anything to me]— Or: I found it eventually in a loft-house surrounded by spruce. Or in a snowy woods. Or in an attic room accompanied by a man (guitar player) who would *hear* me. {Did I need witness to the fire burning inside the hollow? In the early years at first maybe I did—} my dream a man (accompanist) who knows how to unfurl a net, inside a net. Capacity to lasso disparate notes, gird deep-falls, magic dissonance...)) Or: beside a window looking out onto water. Nested inside of the voice was an egg, inside the egg a floating pearl. Everything breaks but the pearl. I don't know how it stays aloft both inside and outside of the egg, but it does. The neck is constantly ajar.

.

i know myself better when i sing the neck stays ajar.

I have loved every single note that touched me.

I want to go back to the gentle fields.

where you live as creature of light in the crowded ~~void~~ voice

The birds inside of me are crying

Isn't it time for us now please, they say

Remember the bower, remember the branch

Remember the places where you left us—

roiling?

Was it the grass or the eye

The mothers inside of me are crying.

There is no flag {flower} for their sorrow.

.

(I found it)

i saw the word vocal this morning & for a fleeting moment thought it said volcano

.

It is to the thing coiled within me. Putting me to sleep at afternoon points. What do you want. What do you need. Are these the upside-down snakes, the pool I dropped into? Everything is {not} real. Everything {is} real. Empty space being also a substance, *khaos*. I live in a body. Tumble into knowing, blinded by past knowings. All the thought you thought. It is to a coil thinged within me. That wants to sleep curled in the patch of sunlight on the windowseat. Blinking and wordless refuses to reveal its desire. Pulls the thinking mind down to sleep. Dwell inside this mind instead, it says.