

IN THE INK DARK – BACKGROUND SUMMARY – DRAFT INTERNAL DOCUMENT
FOR COLLABORATORS

Sit with me...

Tell me about some thing you have loved and lost...

In the Ink Dark

is a dance, a poem, a wander

made from memory and from conversation

a space for you to reflect, celebrate, imagine...

A new intimate, participatory project from maker and curator Luke Pell and collaborators. Taking form as a series of conversational encounters, a live dance performance, a publication and an accompanying series of podcasts as part of an online artwork.

Dreamt as a living poem, it is an impermanent collection, a wander along the water, a seat beside someone on a bench, a conversation, a landscape of words written with bodies, a space for reflection and imagination in celebration of things loved and lost.

Made and performed by an intergenerational group of artists it collects and explores people from Edinburgh's experiences of site and space, loss and landscape, memory and materiality through dance, design and poetry. It is an immersive project with different moments and modes of participation, an accumulative poem and choreography - for live and virtual space - that can only be made by the many people it meets with.

Informed by time 'in residence' talking with people in different places they go to gather and to reflect, In the Ink Dark responds to people and to place, to gift back a series of artworks. A raft of activities mean people can participate in the project in different ways online, in person - alone and together - before, between and after.

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Lead artist Luke draws upon his own and others stories to make objects, dances and installations that can only exist because of different people coming together to listen and to share. This project invites participants - people from all walks of life - to talk with him, in an opportunity to share and reflect on their own experiences about something they have loved and lost.

This might be a precious object from childhood, a garment gifted by a loved one, something special found whilst walking - that has since disappeared - a keepsake or memory gone patchy over time. It might be a person, a place, some politics, a building, an ancient tree or vista.

These one-to-one encounters and a series of specially commissioned podcasts - from poets and choreographers - will offer people different ways to find words for the things we don't have words for by attending to memory, materiality, loss, language and landscape.

Audiences will then be invited to witness the poetry of their words and these things brought back into being as something beautiful, through live - site responsive - dance performances in public spaces throughout Edinburgh. Performances will be followed by online and in-print publications comprising of content generated during these intimate encounters and dances.

Working with a range of innovative collaborators, host sites and development partners the project draws together different art forms and audiences and makes connections between the worlds of dance, poetry and digital art to find language – in words and dances - for loss.

The project has been mapped into three strands:

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Invitations & Encounters

People who live and work in Edinburgh will be invited to meet with artist Luke Pell, by chance or by appointment, in a series of public spaces for one-to-ones, small gatherings and quiet conversations. These encounters will take place in libraries, in parks, on pavements, waterside walks, benches and other community hubs.

Invited to sit beside him and tell him about something they have loved and lost, Luke will spend time with people, listening, to find a handful of words that might just touch that thing. How it felt, how it was come by, why and when, what it meant to them. Following on from his previous one-to-one and curated conversation works Luke will gently steer people to talk about detail, texture, materiality, sensation, the embodied experience of a thing or a moment, distilling their words and then reflecting them back to them. Carefully collected, these words will go on to become part of a long accumulating poem and the fabric of a live performance.

At the end of the encounter the words they find together are gifted back, inked onto a memento and postcard that connects them to the project. The postcard is an invitation to:

- A performance that honours the words they found and the thing they remembered
- The project micro-site, a digital artwork created by Luke and Valerie Reid
- Wander along The Water of Leith accompanied by any of a series of commissioned podcasts downloadable from the microsite

The commissioned podcasts are a collection of curated voices from Lucy Cash, Claire Cunningham, David Harradine, Simone Kenyon, Robbie Synge and JL Williams - artists whose works are poetic and choreographic – and invite participants to take short wanders along the Water of Leith with the touch of different kinds of voices in their ear. Each artist brings a distinct reflection on loss and life, words and movement, memory and materiality.

The artists will be briefed to create something short, open and accessible. The language used will range from every day non-art speak, to the poetic and artistic, with the intention that the podcasts offer a range of perspectives on the themes of the project, speaking to different people in different ways. Provision will be made for BSL users and visually impaired people.

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These podcasts act as poetic wonderings for before, between and after the other strands of the project. The artists have been chosen because of their distinct voice, diverse accents, dialects, embodied experiences and artistic practices.

These in person meetings, digital artwork, printed postcards, collaborators, project partners - and their networks - will all be used as means to engage people with the project. People will be able to participate in any strand, in any order, as they wish. These invitations and encounters will be spread over three weeks prior to the performances.

Sharing

Over the following two weeks a series of site responsive dances will appear in libraries in Leith and Edinburgh including McDonald Rd Library, Central Library and the Scottish Poetry Library. Audiences are invited in to wander about these distinct buildings at dusk. As they arrive greeted by Luke, an intergenerational group of dancers - Kitty Fedorec, Rob Hesp, Alex McCabe, Katie Miller, Janice Parker, Carolina Ravaiola, Jak Soroka, Richard White - will slowly unfurl reams of cloth, hung from walls, draped over bookcases to softly clad the spaces. The dancers wait, as the people who found some words for the things they loved and lost are invited to sit, to stand, settle, witness.

Over the next hour the dancers transform from their own pedestrian wanderings - with gentle inviting gazes - to fluid bodies, bodies of water, bodies of light. Seeping slowly from standing to the ground, their bodies will turn to landscapes, rolling and pouring across the floor, lapping at the viewers feet, almost touching, nearly, not quite there. Coming to surface, becoming forceful objects, vibrant matter in honour of the words found, things remembered, in the last of the evening light.

As the dancers move through these different materialities - accompanied by a specially commissioned string composition from Scott Twynholm - Luke will be live writing an iteration of a new long, accumulative poem *In The Ink Dark, Edinburgh*. Inking the handfuls of words found by people onto parchment and arranging them on to cloth cladding the room. As the dancers come to be almost still and the strings stop, Luke will read the poem aloud. The evening is a choreography of connection, a dance, a poem, made from memory and conversation in celebration of things loved and lost.

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People attending the performances may or may not have encountered the project already and will be gifted postcards which signpost them to the project micro-site with details of future encounters, performances, workshops and the date for publication of the accumulative poem *In the Ink Dark, Edinburgh*. Edinburgh performances are scheduled to take place over a fortnight 12-25 June to coincide with Midsummer and as part of LeithLate17.

Two workshops *Deep Listening* and *Moving Words* opening up elements of the process for writers, dancers, poets, artists and any interested people will be held at Scottish Poetry Library, along with a conversation *Widening Poem* with some of the artists about the relationship between words and movement, dance and poetry following the performances.

Reflection

Following each performance the poem and images – created by visual artist Brian Hartley - will be uploaded to the dedicated micro-site, a digital artwork that holds these and the reflective podcasts.

A limited edition print run of *In the Ink Dark, Edinburgh* will be then created by Luke, Valerie and visual artist Brian Hartley. The publication will consist of the poem, images and excerpts from the artist's conversation to be sent by post as a gift back to all the people who have participated in and witnessed the project.