

Valentin Brown

Image Descriptions

Slide 1:

Captain's Log: May 11th, 2020

A strong enough wind has finally blown you away.

In the Dark Blank Space, you have found mentors, healers, companions, and the inflamed contours of the Dad Shaped Hole in Your Heart.

You return to one Save Point again and again—a point by the water where there is a tree that reaches up in two directions. Every time you sit under the tree, where its two trunks meet just above the ground, you are different.

Your mask becomes more damp with every breath you take. The heat of the All Seeing Cat's Eye beats down on your forehead. Part of you is already waiting for more wind.

Slide 2:

This image depicts the pages of a small notebook spread on the bed of a scanner. The two pages are lined and yellowish.

On the left, there is a drawing in red pilot pen of three floating, severed fingers. The fingers are rendered in wobbly lines and horizontal hatching. From the stump of each finger, thin, curly tendrils meander towards the bottom of the page. The word “dance” is written above each fingertip, and each “dance” is punctuated with a period.

“DEC 01 2017” is stamped on the top right corner of the opposite page, which contains a bullet list of things that the artist did that day. The list is written in capital letters and with the same red ink as the drawing beside it. It begins with, “got up @ ~8:00 AM” and ends with, “got period?”. That last point on the list was added in pencil.

Slide 3:

In this image, there is an unedited scan of two pages in a different lined notebook. The left page contains one long paragraph written in blue ballpoint pen, which relates to image on the opposite page. Several parts at the beginning of the paragraph are scratched out.

The artist describes “a shore with salmon coloured, softly sparkling sand; warm pink is my ‘compassionate colour’, and the whole beach is lit with it.” He goes on to say that “the water [...] is a gently stirring plane of amniotic goo [and] the goo is my made-up alien dad.” The father the artist imagines says to him, “I always knew you were the shit”—a reference to Janelle Monáe’s song, “I like that”.

This lyric is written in thin bubble letters at the top of the image on the opposite page, which is rendered in acrylic paint, paint markers, and gel pens. The writing to the left, which was made before the image it describes, became an early draft of [Captain's Log: April 29th, 2018](#).

Slide 4:

This image depicts **Unidentified Remains** as it was installed for Art Spin Toronto's **Holding Patterns** in October 2018. One thousand fleshy clay objects sit on the chipboard floor of a 5 by 10 foot storage locker, which was painted white for contrast. Some of the remains are stacked up in small piles, while others are spread out evenly. Here and there, there are cloud-like gaps left in the spread of objects. The arrangement looks like maybe it had washed up there, or grew like mould.

Image credit: Priam Thomas for Art Spin, 2018

Slide 5:

This is a square image that compares a Body Farm painting to the process work Valentin used to create it. The painting being examined is described in audio in [Captain's Log: September 14th, 2019](#).

This image is divided vertically, such that the process image flows into the image of the finished work seamlessly. The left side depicts a digital collage made from scans of several Body Farm drawings. Comparing the direction and proportion of the notebook paper lines in some of the drawings show how they were cut out, resized, and oriented to create a new composition.

The right side of the image depicts the finished painting, which was made with acrylic paints and paint markers. The depth of colour and light in this side of the image is fully rendered. Vibrant lights and murky darks strengthen the core shadows that define the fleshy forms in the painting. The resulting colour harmony is reminiscent of the cover of a 80s sci-fi novel.

Slide 6:

Three paintings and several dozen drawings hang salon style in a cloud-like spread in Tangled Art Gallery. The many small drawings frame and fill in the gaps in between the large square paintings in an arrangement which suggests that maybe the whole thing grew out of the wall itself.

Image credit: Michelle Peek Photography courtesy of Bodies in Translation, Re•Vision

Slide 7:

This image depicts a person accessing the **Captain's Log**. They are dressed in black from head to toe, standing with their back towards you. Chunky headphones can be seen on their head, framing their short silver hair. A cast shadow floats on the white wall in front of them, just above their head, which spells out the word, "RELEASE" in lumpy bubble letters.

Image credit: Michelle Peek Photography courtesy of Bodies in Translation, Re•Vision

Slide 8:

Captain's Log: January 18th, 2020

Inhaling the sharp smell of your emerald green Sharpie, you write “unknown specimen” on the side of a plastic peanut butter jar. Underneath, you add the following nine-digit ID number:

“204 739 713”

This is the one-hundredth sample of unidentified remains that you found adrift in the Body Farm. Ninety-nine peanut butter jars line a locked cupboard in a basement, far away from here.

You sense that inside this one-hundredth jar, there is a fire that will never go out.

Slide 9:

This is the same image as the last slide that was described in **Captain's Log: January 18th, 2020**. It depicts a scan of a mixed media drawing.

The subject of the drawing is a peanut butter jar with a green label. The jar is drawn in marker with wobbly lines. In the centre of the label is a circle outlined in fleshy ridges; inside the circle are the words “smooth” and “crémeux,” which bleed into each other and towards some smaller text on the label that reads, “2 KG.”

Interspersed with the image of the peanut butter, like a double exposure, is a plant-like form with many stems that end in bulbs that resemble eyeballs. Framing the jar of peanut butter, there is undulating text that reads, “who are you holding accountable?” Each word in this text has a line striking through it.

Slide 10:

This image depicts an autopsy-like view of **Big Softie** from above, displaying all of his lumpy limbs and sprouting nodes, which have been fashioned from a mismatching and haphazard quilt of found textiles. He is partially buried in one thousand pieces of **Unidentified Remains**. **Big Softie** lies in fragments beneath the stacked piles and winding trails of the remains.

Image credit: Michelle Peek Photography courtesy of Bodies in Translation, Re•Vision

Slide 11:

Two people reach out to touch **Big Softie**'s guts, which are soft and dimpled and made from stuffed knee socks and nylon stockings, and examine the Unidentified Remains that are scattered amongst them. At the centre of it all lies Big Softie's heart, a red patchwork soft sculpture with tendrils extending outward.

Image credit: Michelle Peek Photography courtesy of Bodies in Translation, Re•Vision

Slide 12:

This image depicts a three-dimensional banner of bubble letters that resemble both mould and rainbow cake batter. The banner says, “RELEASE ME.” Each letter is formed from nylon stockings stuffed with shredded foam, cotton batting, and colourful pompoms. Haphazard hand stitching pinches and gathers the surface of the letters, creating lumps, wrinkles, scars, and pulling many of the pompoms out from the stuffing, like cysts. At Tangled Art Gallery, the banner hangs from fishing line, giving it the appearance of floating above visitors as they pass by. Over time, the foam stuffing in the banner yellows.

Image credit: Michelle Peek Photography courtesy of Bodies in Translation, Re•Vision

Slide 13:

Upon entering Tangled Art Gallery, visitors encounter a 13-foot wide mint coloured table that displays **Big Softie** and the **Unidentified Remains**. The walls to either side are hung with an assortment of paintings, drawings, and vinyl labels displaying the text from the **Captain’s Log**. Behind the table, hanging from two wooden pillars, hangs the soft sculpture banner that says, “RELEASE ME.” The banner casts a shadow of its letters on the back walls of the gallery, where two headphone stations are mounted.

Image credit: Michelle Peek Photography courtesy of Bodies in Translation, Re•Vision

Slide 14:

Captain’s Log: May 16th, 2020

There is an old man on the other side of the door. Flowers grow from the dimples on his skin. He flicks them gently under the door, as if emptying a well with a teaspoon, for all around him are piles of flower heads that he has plucked from his body.

He doesn’t open the door, although he wants to meet you very badly. You are the reason that he can grow so many flowers.

The coarse whiskers of his beard scratch the back of the door as he leans his head on the doorframe. Your palm feels the heat of his hand placed on the other side of the door.

“I’ve been waiting for you all along,” he says.