

Bronwyn Bailey- Charteris

nivus

23rd biennale of sydney



Image: Bronwyn Bailey Charteris, *Penelope and Lucinda* (film still), 2016

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I'm raining in your lungs
A precipitational score to
carry you between the art
school and the gallery
– Listen here

I'm raining in your lungs

A precipitational score to carry you between the art school and the gallery

Bronwyn Bailey-Charteris

PART 1

Hi, hello. Hi, it's me. Can you hear me? I'm here. I'm raining. I'm raining here. I'm raining today.

Is it raining for you? I'm raining today, on you.

Hi. Are you there? Hi. I'm not sure how to tell you this but I'm raining in you.

I'm raining in your liver.

I'm raining in your spleen.

I'm raining in your index finger.

I'm raining in your left cortex.

I'm raining in your lungs.

I'm the sudden 3pm rain. I'm the rain you've been avoiding. I'm the rain you've been waiting for. I'm raining and raining all through this town, and now I'm actually flooding. Right out of this art school.

See the art school, is it behind you now? Did you see the big sandstone walls that keeps the art in and the rains out? See the leaks and the creaks, and the cracks in the street? That's where my rain overflows.

Remember when we were at art school together? Just a moment ago, and years ago too? Remember how much I needed you and you needed me? You were so thirsty for me, the rain.

The art school has flooded now, it's dripping down Oxford St, it's melting down Burton, it's telling tales down Bourke, and William is overflowing. All these old white men are evaporating away, while you follow me, you're walking in my footsteps, the path of least resistance, down the hills out of the flooded art school, I'm the wet imprint of a sudden morning storm that washes the night away.

Can you feel my rain in your lungs?

Can you smell my rain in your breath?

I'm thick in the air, rolling in, do you remember me?

you're my home,

I'm longing to fill your cracks,

To seep into your sandstone,

To trickle down your chin,

I'm waiting to be captured,

I'm hoping you might help me.

I'm dropping down from the sky, oh so high, just to meet you.

Precipitating our engagement.

I've come all this way to meet you.

Look down at the pavement that is escorting you to the art gallery. Look for the puddles I've left you. Puddles are portals. In your kinetic gestures, be that feet moving, or wheels spinning, or any other way of getting between the art school and the gallery,

Look for the portals, the puddles, who reflect me back to you, and you into me.

Please, while we wait for the rain to fill the puddles and make the portals, I'd like to tell you a story.

PART 2

It's a story about how the rains have been singing.

I'm Cloudbusting with Kate,
I'm Purple Rain with Prince,
I'm the Echo of Ocean Rain,
I'm November Rain with Roses and Guns,
I'm supa raining with Missy,
I'm raining on your parade with Barbra,
I can see Both Sides Now with Joni, but still,
I can't stand the rain with Ann and Tina
I'm with Otis when he knows You Don't Miss Your Water, till your river runs dry
Oh look, Here Comes the Rain Again with Annie, and
Shirley is Only Happy When It Rains
I'm the grey rain of Sweden, with Doris,
and I'm with Aretha, looking out on the morning rain,
and I think, I think, it's going to rain today, just like Nina, Neil and Dusty said.

And yet, before the B sides and the covers. There were some original rains, *first rains*. In *The Sea Around Us*, written in 1951, the poetic science writer Rachel Carson describes them best.

Now pause, close your eyes momentarily, breathe the rains through your lungs. Listen to the first rains.

Rachel says, that when the earth was molten, shifting, angry reds, hard to hold down, not yet settled, pubescent in some way, the planet we live on was unstable. This was right near the beginning. Clouds began to form. Dense and diligent the clouds gathered, they grew in common. Rachel says, that "the gradually cooling earth was enveloped in heavy layers of clouds, which contained much of the water of the new planet". There was no release. The clouds became fuller and fuller, like maternal breasts with plentiful milk. Keep your eyes closed. There was no way to see through the clouds. As Rachel says, the "rough outlines of the continents and the empty ocean basins were sculptured out of the surface of the earth in darkness".

In darkness the clouds can form.
In darkness the pleasure is heightened.
In darkness the suspense can grow.

And as this new young planet, all larva and unsettled, was just as uneasy as it had ever been, it reached a tipping point, it touched something cool, and immediately began to cool down itself. The hot land beginning to become what would eventually be land, but still rocks, no bacteria yet, no whales or unruly forests, that was all still to come. As the earth released its tantrum breath, let go of the heat, in the dark still, just then, quite suddenly, the first rains began. The clouds who had held in everything they had buried deep inside, started to rain down. Rachel says "...never has there been such rains, and she says they fell continuously, day and night, days passing into months, into years, into centuries".

The original rains were the first movement.

Precipitation - it's always going somewhere. It's busy, impatient, lustful. Someone told me the rain remembers where it has been and it's always trying to get back to where it was. It's searching. Always listening to the longing of the land, trying to return.

The first movement, you could call it the first dance, the first rhythm, was the rain, moving minerals from the land to the hollow oceans. Like wide mouths gaping open, waiting to be fed, the concave empty oceans slowly began to fill, with the rains, and the minerals who the rains brought with them. Rachel says that "over eons of time, the sea has grown ever more bitter with the salt of the continents".

The saltiness of the seas are starting to brew.

Bitterness. A taste in your mouth.

Try to taste the bitterness that the rains delivered.

Run your finger from forehead to chin, follow the contours, sense what the rains delivered. They brought the salt. They moved. The first dance.

In their first dance the rains landed as puddles, and then overflowed, unsatisfied, they moved into lakes, still hungry, searching they became rivers and deltas. In their durational performance piece, the rains were insatiable, playing to full houses, the crowds were wild. Fans of the rains threw themselves into rivers, dragging themselves along, throbbing, moving, wild parts.

This was the beginning of the great dissolving. Endless, relentless, inescapable. The rains continued to make new pieces. They became a classic. Books were written about them, myths and cosmologies, tempests stormed, arks floated, the rains always played their part. Prayed to, hoped for, the rains continued their rhythmic performative practice of watering fields and oceans, substantiating every surface. In this era the precipitational flourished.

And yet, as waters began to be controlled, the rains lost work. Regular venues had shut down. Tours were cancelled. As the waters became piped, resource management took over, grey bureaucracies, toxic run offs, the fun had started to go out of it. The rains became illusive, regressive, cancelling last minute. Songs were still sung about the rains but they were never the headline act. The precipitational was harder to locate. More and more the rains became a worn-out backdrop. They were rolled in for special performances here and there but the rains were frail.

Dusty. Tired. Toxic. Drained.

Try to taste their frailness. The rains are exhausted.

Try to see the faint cloud in the corner of your vision.

It's a gentle shimmer, a small cloud hanging around on the corner. Waiting at the lights. Sitting in the tree tops. Flickering on the city stage.

Try to see the quiet mist rolling up to you.

It's a cloud, it's approaching you.

Close your eyes again if you wish, and become slowly undone. Pieces of you, and me, drifting, gathering, a sense of hunger returns.

You can drift too now.

Breathe into particles.

Become vapour.

Consensual, sensual cloud making.

Maybe the rains will play again.

PART 3

Hi, can you still hear me?

Hi hi

The story is over. We are almost at the gallery now.
But I

I was wondering, if it might be ok, if you might like to, would it be ok, we could maybe, just for a moment, rain together?

You could bring your rain into the gallery, and I'll be in there waiting for you, heavy with unraind rains, and maybe we can rain together in there?

See, when you rain in the gallery, the guards comes running with umbrellas.
When you rain I'm running to meet you
I'm raining on the old masters.
I'm raining on the shiny floors, and I'm making them all slippery
And after flooding the art school I'm slipping into the drains, as fast as I can, and at the gallery I am served as tea, and wine and coconut icing on chilled cake slices,
I'm raining in the contemporary galleries, I'm in the fountains, I'm regulating temperatures, I'm raining on the collection, I'm raining on the screens, I'm a gentle mist over the reception desk, I'm a stormy cloud pelting down in the gift shop, I'm raining in the stairwell. I'm leaking in the staff toilets. I'm raining all over this place, precipitation, evaporation, looping hydrological cycles, rain by the wayside.
I'm actually hoping to get a more prominent display in the gallery. I'm raining all through the gallery and I'm the rain of your imagination, and I'm the flash flood on Level 2.

I'm thirsty rain. Precipitating between us, of us.

I'm hoping you'll sense me. I'm hoping you'll see me, I'm hoping you'll see how I'm always arriving, cleaning, filtering, filling up gaps, watering everything, I'm hoping you might elevate me, move with me, perhaps direct me in the right direction, let me move onwards not just downwards, let me rise and maybe, just maybe, you could really see me? I'm not an inconvenience, I'm not a static state, I'm rather cataclysmically fundamentally always cycling onwards,

I'm the hydrocommons,
I'm planetary in my sprinklings,
I'm raining everywhere.

So, if you can, please, just remember I'm raining in your liver.
I'm raining in your wrist.
I'm raining in your neck.
I'm raining in your heartbeat.
I'm raining in your lungs.

Precipitating between us, of us.
Precipitating above us, below us.

I think, it's going to rain today.

The author acknowledges that this sound walk takes place on Aboriginal land that was never ceded, and wishes to pay respect to the Traditional Owners of Country on which this walk takes place.

To accompany this score there is a playlist on Spotify entitled 'I'm raining in your lungs'. [Click here to listen.](#)

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