

## Sound Plots: *Aporia (Notes to a Medium)*

### Episode 4: Artist Talk with Katie Kozak and Lucien Durey

March 21, 2024

This is an excerpt from an online conversation with Katie Kozak and Lucien Durey on the occasion of the exhibition *Aporia (Notes to a Medium)*.

Lucien Durey: We had a show at the Gordon Smith Gallery in North Vancouver last year called *Endless Summer*, curated by Jenn Jackson, and this artwork was initially made for very practical reasons in that we wanted to transform the overall space of that gallery, primarily the back wall. In this particular instance, there is an architectural approach to making the gallery space – there are a lot of details, like sliding walls that are supposed to be windows, or strange angles or combinations of materials that kind of, your eye goes to. So our immediate desire when working in that space was to figure out a way to transform the space, or at least your first impression of the space. We wanted to come up with a practical way to transform the space and so in conversations with Jenn Jackson and my mom and some other people, we decided to source these used bed sheets and create this work.

Katie Kozak: I really liked that it's kind of like cover work, but also becomes curtains for the doorway, but then it also hid the doorways.

LD: We thought about this talk as being organized around some ideas of what queering of a space means, so I would say that applies here certainly, like, the hard lines, the stark whiteness, this idea of like bringing the decorative in and transforming what you might call masculine lines or features into kind of this smooth, soft, but also loud kind of texture. I think that's something we were thinking about. Also, this idea of holding, so creating a space that was a reprieve from the rest of the exhibition or dramatically different, kind of like a holding space. Going back to the Belkin and *Aporia*, that also happens here in a different way. The viewer enters the partition and is kind of held between the curtains, and whereas in the original exhibition it was sort of a change in lighting and sound, here the lighting is not as dramatic but it's still noticeable and there is an immediate sonic difference in being outside the curtains versus wrapped up inside them. That was something we were excited about. And the fact that the curtains in the first installation were fifteen feet tall, while here there's a sort of extra four feet or so that folds over and almost creates more of a drapery or window-like treatment.

KK: The white spots are from beeswax, which would have to go on first, then the dyes were laid and then we would put salt on it and leave it to dry and the salt would kind of pull the colours so the oozy, whirly, runny bits are the salt pulling the dye. Once it was dry, we'd have to iron all the beeswax spots out, then you get that kind of illumination of the beeswax spots and for me, it feels very cosmic, which I'm into.

LD: Yeah, we talked about micro and macro in a few of our projects, so some of them are looking almost like mould or spores or microscope views, but then also kind of relating to the cosmos and the celestial, so we've done that with other works, but I guess also as part of

trying to defamiliarize a material from its immediate association, so maybe to make them not-so-recognizable as bed sheets but to point to other places, essentially.

KK: We had the idea that if you go back to the original one, sewing the sheets in lines would allow our dye patterns to be more kind of congruent, but because the fabrics were all different and sourced from different spaces, it actually created more of a patchwork effect.

LD: Right, some of them are the exact same dye bath but the difference in colour is dramatic.

KK: You also wanted to leave the tags on from the sheets.

LD: Yeah, it's not something that is immediately perceivable, but if you get closer and look and you know wander through them, you encounter these tags that talk about the blends of cottons and the weave perhaps in a more precise way. Also thinking about the idea of bodies, we talked about the material of the sheets and the material of the dyes and the beeswax, but there's also these kinds of inherent materials in them, like the bodily oils of strangers, or rather *potential* bodily oils of strangers, and detergents and bleaches and softeners, you know, which in the process of making these were very apparent. It's kind of amazing how the smell of working with some of these when you wet the material became so overpowering in some cases. And then what you get when you are walking through them is a scent experience, I think, still, being the beeswax, the detergents, the dyes – it smells a bit like laundry and a bit like beeswax and a bit like bodies. Also, we processed a good portion of the wax ourselves, so it had chunks of bees' bodies in it, wings and legs and parts that we kind of didn't intend to leave in the wax but made their way in, so there's evidence of that, too. One of the elements of this that both Katie and I point really directly to is the people who made our practices, that being family and friends. I would say 90% of these sheets came from my mom, Maggie Halford, who sourced them from Abbotsford thrift stores, which is a relatively conservative place. They largely came from church thrift stores, so there's an element of those spaces – and being in those spaces – as queer people, already being part of the material gathering. And then there is the act of turning something into it outward – queering of a space is sometimes just being in a space and being queer. And holding space or asking for space in a space that maybe isn't welcoming to queer people.

KK: With *Covers*, people touching it, going through it, seems like a good thing. But part of me thinks that part of that push-pull that goes with what you said about *Aporia* being about holding two truths at once is that, often, when each of us agree and is happy with a final work, like *Covers*, we're sometimes happy for two different reasons.

LD: Cooperation is conflict. I say that a lot, I think it's great. We wouldn't be here without the necessary conflict. The work gets refined through our own individual lenses, like crashing into each other. So I think this has to do with the theme of *Aporia* – the uncertainty of collaboration.