



ARBO

REAL





# ArboReal

is a practice developed by dance artist Bettina Neuhaus. It investigates the vibrant field of communication and action that can emerge from within our relationship with nature and in particular with trees.

The practice looks at ways of engaging in a more embodied and felt awareness of ecology. ArboReal aims to facilitate the experience and (re)discovery of our own inherent belonging within the natural world and how through engaging in our relationality and interdependency with all co-existing forms of life might reveal new insights and possibilities for action.

The following outdoor scores have been developed with the desire of sharing this practice with a larger community. Enjoy the scores!

## 4 Tree Scores for a Woodland Walk



**Score 1: Arriving – Encountering– Engaging**



**Score 2: Tree Dialogue**



**Score 3: Rhythms of Materiality**



**Score 4: Tree Blanket**

ArboReal was developed as part of choreographer [Vanessa Grasse's](#) and [The Land We Are](#) projects. It was commissioned, produced and mentored by Vanessa Grasse and supported by Arts Council England.

[#TheLandWeAreproject](#)



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## SCORE 1 – ARRIVING - ENCOUNTERING - ENGAGING *[Take your phone with you]*

Find an area that calls and invites you.

### **Arriving in yourself**

See, smell, touch and listen to what is around you.

- As you open your senses play with little shifts of weight. Let your feet connect you to the ground and the three-dimensionality of the earth.

Brush your hands over your body to awaken your sense of your own three-dimensionality.

- Give some extra space to your skin by playfully loosening your clothes with your hands.

Notice the movement of your breathing as you inhale fresh air and return carbon dioxide with each exhalation. Move the whole body to bathe it in the air.

- Curl, uncurl, twist your spine, let your skull float, your arms and legs travel freely through the air.

Allow movement to unfold taking in the support of earth and air.

- Let yourself sink into an ongoing rhythmical exchange with your environment.

### **Expanded Self**

See what is above, below, in front, behind, around you.

- Let your eyes touch and be touched by what is far away and close by: a flower next to your feet, a stretched cloud on the horizon, a group of trees in the space behind you, a bird flying over the meadow, .... Notice how this affects your sense of self.

As you move give attention to the elastic adaptability of your gaze.

- It alternates continuously between expanding and decreasing to engage with the world.
- Notice how the motion of your eyes involves the fluctuating and tensile quality of your body and your attention.
- See details and larger configurations close by or far away.
- Touch them with your eyes, your skin, your entire body.

Use your senses to re-orientate yourself and inspire your movement

- Let this evolve into a movement exploration.
- Add moments of closing your eyes if you like.

### **Dimensions**

As you move, stand, sit or lie look at either very small or very big things:

- A blade of grass, an insect in the air, a little stone, a detail of a leaf...
- Sit next to a big log, gaze out to the sky, pick up a big branch...

How does what you see or touch affect the sense of your own dimension?

Let this become a fluid exploration of your dynamic and tensile self with the environment.

### **Web of connections**

As you are part of the natural world and its entangled web of connections go on a playful movement journey in it.

- Let the outer world affect your inner world and vice versa. Let them permeate and change.
- Move and be moved. Touch and be touched. Listen and be listened to.
- Engage with what calls your attention, follow what invites you.

Let the dance resolve.

### **Poetic report**

Find a spot to stand, sit or lie to do a poetic report by audio recording some of your experiences with your phone. If you like with closed eyes.

### **Back home**

Back home find a moment to listen to your audio recording. Take time to either rest, move, write or draw and welcome some echoes of the natural world into your domestic habitat.

## SCORE 2 – TREE DIALOGUE

*[Take a paper bag, a notebook and a pencil with you]*

### Tree Habitat

Walk, wander, meander through the woods.

Notice the trees around you, their individual size, shape and presence.

- Follow their invitation to enter their habitat: move through the space between them and become aware of atmosphere and the different zones you are passing through.

Their roots spread out twice as far as their crown

- Can you sense them as you walk? How does this awareness affect your way of moving?

Far above you at 10m or even higher the branches are reaching towards the sky and light.

- What does this do to your sense of being connected to both the earth and the sky? Being rooted and suspended.
- Let this become a dance.

### Cleaning Ritual

See the leaves, branches and seeds that have all been dropped by the trees and the grass, flowers, moss, mushrooms or seedlings that are growing out of the soil. Your eyes might also touch insects, frogs or other animals.

- Notice the tremendous diversity of entangled animate and inanimate life-forms that co-exist and create a vibrant ground for this tree habitat.

Are there any materials that don't belong to the habitat but have been dropped by humans?

- With your paper bag collect cigarettes, pieces of plastic, cans, carton, glass, ... and clear the habitat from materials that aren't part of the forest life cycle and can't be processed by the ecosystem.

### Tree Dialogue

Follow the call of one particular tree.

Notice your immediate vibrant connection.

Take time to be and move with each other and let the field of your relationship propel your actions.

- Touch the branches with your gaze, send your breath to the crown as you move, listen with your steps to the roots in the soil, rest with your back against the trunk.....
- How does the materiality of the tree speak to your own materiality and move you?

Play with proximity, touch, far distance, movement, stillness.

- Where does the tree invite you? What do you offer in return? What unfolds between you?

Allow time.

*[When working with a tree be aware that it is a highly intelligent living being with the ability to smell, taste, see, sense vibrations or stress and even perceive touch. If you want to climb on a tree ask it beforehand]*

Let the end of your dialogue find you.

### Writing to the tree

With your notebook find a comfortable place close to the tree or at distance.

Let experiences, images, sensations or memories of your dialogue flow from your body onto the page. When you've finished share your writing [or parts of it] with the tree either in spoken language, silence, movement or other ways.

Find a way to say good bye.

## SCORE 3 - RHYTHMS OF MATERIALITY

*[Take notebook and pencil with you]*

Go for a walk in the woods. Find an area you feel comfortable in.

### Tree materiality

Notice different shapes and sizes of branches and pieces of wood: their curved, twisted, straight or gnarled forms. Let your eyes follow the patterns of different structures: compact or spacious density, fluid or sharp lines, smooth or irregular surface. How do you feel their movement and rhythm?

### Body materiality

Take a moment to connect with your own materiality: let your hands touch and brush along arms, face or any other part of the body.

- Become aware of different shapes, densities and rhythms that co-exist within you

### Touching - drawing - moving rhythms

Pick up 2 branches / pieces of wood of any size and find a place to sit with your notebook and pencil.

*[Leave branches with insects, moss or mushrooms as they house particularly many life forms]*

#### Branch 1

**Seeing hands:** close your eyes and let your hands investigate shape and rhythm of the branch by moving along its surface.

- Allow your whole body to listen and taste.

**Drawing rhythm:** take your notebook & pencil: with closed eyes let the rhythm you felt flow with immediacy onto the paper. Trust fully your kinesthetic experience! Open your eyes and come onto your feet.

**Moving rhythm:** let your eyes take in the rhythm of the drawing and flow further through your whole body.

- Let the rhythm pass through the entire body or specific parts, in any size. Play for a while.

#### Branch 2

**Touching eyes:**

with the branch in one hand or on the ground let your eyes travel along its contours, engaging in its rhythm

- If you like you can sing at the same time the rhythm from within. After a while let the rhythm flow into the whole body and let it move you.

### Dialoging Rhythms

Find a big branch of 1-2 meters on the ground. Make sure you have enough space to move in, if necessary move the branch to another spot.

*[Leave branches with insects, moss or mushrooms as they house particularly many life forms]*

Open yourself to its presence and materiality to enter a playful dialogue in movement and stillness Stand next to it - sit on it - lie under it; be close or distant.

- Touch and be touched by its materiality with gaze, hands or any other body parts. Notice rhythms of details, texture, shape and let them move you
- Let the branch and its rhythm inspire your actions, let your dancing become its amplification.

Find an end to your duet.

### Returning home

Bring the branch back to where you found it or find a new place where you feel it might belong. Say goodbye.

## SCORE 4 - TREE BLANKET

*[Take smartphone or photo camera with you]*

### **Materiality of the ground**

As you walk bring your attention to the materials that the trees have dropped onto the ground.

- Let your eyes notice / touch branches, pieces of bark, leaves, needles, cones, nuts,...

Abundant materials create a layered blanket for the trees.

- They protect roots, store air, warmth and humidity for the zone around the tree
- Notice how each tree has its particular blanket of materials.

As you walk let your feet listen to the different blankets they touch, taking in their soft, spongy, hard, irregular or brittle quality.

- How does this permeate into your own materiality?
- How does this inspire movement?

*[As your walk take into consideration the fact that you are moving through a living eco-system]*

### **On the blanket**

Allow your hands to touch and be touched by different blankets.

- Let temperature, texture, qualities speak to your own materiality and imagination.

Follow the invitation of the blankets to sit or lie on them.

- Become part of the blanket yourself with your own vital and porous materiality. Take time to rest – to move.

### **Creating a blanket**

Walk and find a tree or be found by a tree.

- Notice its particular presence and the space around it.

Take some time to create your personal blanket for that tree.

- What kind of materials does it call for?

Gather materials from different places rather than exhausting one area.

*[Don't take moss or mushrooms as they are particularly important for the circle of forest-life]*

Let intuition and imagination guide you in your choices and the way you design the blanket.

### **Souvenirs**

Once the blanket is finished take 2 photos:

- 1 photo of tree and blanket
- 1 photo of you or a part of you with the blanket

Find a way to say good bye to the tree.

# ArboReal Practical Information

## Scores

- Each of the 4 scores investigates a different aspect of our relationship with trees.
- In the course of the series the mover is guided from a rather broad exploration to working with more specific aspects of the practice. If you are new to outdoor practice you may wish to follow the proposed order.
- You can do the scores separately on different days or one after the other.
- Print out the score and read it a few times [either at home or once you have arrived in the woods] before you actually start doing it. This will help you to immerse yourself deeper in the experience. Having the printed score in your pocket you can always go back to it to orientate yourself.

## Duration

- Allow approximately min. 30min to 1hour for each score [not including the time it takes to get to the forest].
- You can take longer if you wish.
- You can also do the same score several times.

## Poetic report and materials

- Each score includes a moment of capturing your experience by an 'immediate' and intuitive way of reporting, allowing sensations, associations, images and observations to emerge fluidly from your body.
- Depending on the score the poetic report might happen through writing, drawing, taking a photo or an audio recording with your smartphone. The kind of 'material' needed is mentioned in the score.

## In the woodlands

- During your outdoor practice take into consideration the fact that you are moving through a living ecosystem in which countless life forms exist on micro- and macro levels.
- When working with a tree be aware that it is a highly intelligent living being with the ability to smell, taste, see, sense vibrations or stress and even perceive touch. If you want to climb on a tree ask it beforehand.

## Finding a spot

- Find an area in the woodlands where you feel comfortable so you can work with ease.
- A spot that is hidden from the main itinerary and not easily visible by joggers and other people might enhance your process.

## How to prepare yourself for the walk

- Comfortable clothes which allow freedom of movement and that are suitable for outdoor activities. You might get dirty!
- Long sleeve shirt / or light jacket + long trousers you can tuck into socks are recommended in case of ticks. Layers are useful for changing body temperature.
- Depending on the weather, good waterproof clothes that allow you to sit, kneel or move on the ground.
- Shoes (ideally waterproof) with a good grip.
- If needed insect repellent, scarf, cap, sunglasses
- Bottle with water and, if wanted, some snacks.
- Bring minimal or no valuables and personal belongings! Belt bags or a light rucksack are ideal if you can fit everything in.
- Bring the score or scores and the required material for the poetic report.

## Ticks, health & safety measure

Working in green areas might expose you to come in contact with ticks, which can cause Lyme Disease [read here](#). Please check for ticks after your outdoor practice and remove any correctly. Read about safe tick removal [here](#).

**Open your senses and change your view of the world and yourself.**

**Enjoy!**

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