

# DRIFT – JENNIFER TEE

Location	Teijin Auditorium
Date	January 24 <sup>th</sup> 2020
Times	7–7.30 pm 8.30–9 pm
Language	Multilingual



Jennifer Tee, *DRIFT*, collage, 2019

WhyNot Festival and the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam proudly present *DRIFT*, a new multilingual performance by Jennifer Tee. *DRIFT* takes inspiration from eco-poetics, a genre in which poets respond to the growing climate crisis through their use of language, mimicking ecological processes such as recycling and looping. In collaboration with poet Jane Lewty, Tee compiled a collection of poetry and novels—titled the Eco-Poetics Stack of Books—that focus on the vulnerable relationship between nature and culture, language and perception, beauty and destruction. Lewty assembled these publications into a new collage of poem-texts, performed by singers and dancers of diverse languages and nationalities, choreographed in collaboration with Marjolein Vogels, Co-Director of WhyNot Festival. Set against a backdrop designed by Tee, the performance explores how language plays into questions of land rights, nationality, belonging, and ecology.

Language is a system through which we discover and identify ourselves, both as individuals and collectively as a society, and has long taken a central role in Tee’s practice. Whether writing systems such as alphabets or pictographic characters, as bodily movement or “body language,” communication in its many forms is of prime interest to Tee, and reflected in her visual art and choreographic practices, respectively. Further, while we experience political discourse through language, language also bears a politics itself: in a time of increasing globalization, the loss of land and language to colonization often go hand and hand, and mark a troubling march toward cultural homogenization. Tee proposes that a new poetic language is

needed to discuss the intersectional relationship between the climate crisis and its increased impact on marginalized communities.

## ABOUT JENNIFER TEE

Jennifer Tee works across sculpture, installation, performance, and collage. Her work is the exploration of a continuous dialogue between material experimentation and philosophy. Often working with charged cultural artifacts and symbols, she opens dialogues between instilled esoteric ideas and the materiality of objects she engages, evoking the cultural landscapes of Western art history and Eastern philosophy. Tee pairs her diverse points of inspiration to form new dialogues and encounters, bringing together disparate formal and conceptual references such as Hilma af Klint, Wassily Kandinsky, and Taoist magic. Embracing their duality, the works hover between their material and their laden meaning. Tee has exhibited in exhibitions and biennials throughout the world, most recently participating in the 33rd Bienal de São Paulo (2018) and the 16th Istanbul Biennial (2019).

## ABOUT WHYNOT

WhyNot is a platform that stimulates innovation in the field of contemporary dance and performance and creates an open and accessible environment to encounter these art forms. WhyNot takes dance and performance out of their “natural” theater habitats and places them in carefully chosen locations that offer a different perspective on the work. In addition to the biannual WhyNot Festival, WhyNot organizes various activities throughout the year and produces interdisciplinary works to experiment with new formats.

## DRIFT

[Drift : difference in diameter, gradual change in a language

Glacial drift / thrust of an arched structure. Movement of charged particles in an electric field. Oscillation around a fixed setting / to deviate from or between a course or model or idea. To wander.]

1. Sun dim and strange, a coda wheel.  
"Whereabouts" is a strange word.
2. *dark is the garden garden is the dark*
3. Look, we have ruined the lively air.
4. The lattice, all so cracked
5. the windows closed
6. against a ribboned city, its
7. *drones heat denial*
8. *shrapnel dislodges skull*
9. *through smog*
10. Heat rises, heat circles
11. An able body with just one life, one intent.
12. Note to everyone:
13. *Beloved, the trees branch over our roof, over our bed, and so realize that when I speak of parrots*
14. *I speak about love and their green colors, love and their squawks, love and the discord they bring*
15. *to the calmness of morning, which is the discord of waking*
16. We will miss the birds, our ancestors.
17. How does the poem go? I wake to sleep and take my waking slow?
18. There seems to be no concord in the passing of days
19. Corrosive, torpid.
20. Remember, *we are in this with each other the way the night geese*
21. *in migration need the stars*
22. Remember, we have left everything out in the rain
23. Remember, we have glossed over our deepest loves
24. Remember, we are in this with flash and neon
25. Remember, sadly, *some things on this earth are unspeakable*
26. *A shy wind threading leaves after a massacre*
27. A mirage in all the wrong place
28. A collective thought left to cook in terror
29. Note to everyone: There is a recent over-belief in Astrology
30. due to the times
31. the precarity, the "this is your ONE life but not your only 'life' "
32. Burning my body, then, I guess I owe no stature to it
33. *I have a triple helix in the form of a prison*
34. *many dead birds in my cellular structure...*
35. *many small prisons in the interstitial tissues*
36. I can ruin it time and time again.
37. Reading the news
38. I rush back to life, silent for a few minutes. There are gales.
39. There's fractures and worry
40. There's the morning commute
41. I cut my own throat with my own tongue, cut short into a wrong wind
42. *Why are my edges all sharpening -- what am I going to gouge?*
43. I have a lone-deck feeling,
44. various evil thoughts,
45. all in one blood, bored down
46. not at peace, shouldering the
47. asphalt city, with its
48. bones and flat pebbles.
49. Over-reading the turn of leaves, I always wake in winter, when I can clothe.
50. I am thin like a sky sign, spelling caution
51. I cease
52. to be real, ever
53. to be in
54. more than one place
55. *as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands and*
56. *the space around the hands and the space of the room and the*
57. *space of the building that surrounds the room and the space of*
58. *the neighborhoods nearby and the space of the cities in and out*
59. Azimuth:
60. Arc of the horizon between the meridian of a place and a great circle
61. passing through the zenith and the object observed
62. *what remains of air is a layered terrarium*
63. This is where I am: close, near, far, back, I am in to I fall into
64. the cleft of a continuum. I drift
65. with no-one to hear my words
66. they circle like heat.
67. "Whereabouts" is a strange word.
68. *Trees of ashes wave goodbye to goodbye and the map appears to disappear*
69. The sheets of ice diminish
70. How they crack and bleed in their own way.
71. *The farther south the better*
72. *Light comes on*
73. *Slantwise through thin*
74. *Shiver drift the light*
75. *Breath, far south tearing*
76. I have visions, for example, I am positive
77. I saw a person I

78. grew up with ablaze,  
79. fleeing, and in the path  
80. of fire saying  
81. it is *always* and yet *never*  
82. your fault.  
83. Do you know the damage  
84. you cause? Just remember  
85. *the drowned face always staring*  
86. Remember  
87. *the ribs of the disaster*  
88. *curving their assertion*  
89. *among the tentative haunters*
90. I see burning ships in the sky  
91. In the sky, on the road, or desert.  
92. There's irregular clouds,  
93. through which small bright radio stars be-  
come diffuse  
94. for many days.
95. I think of a satellite train, a stream  
a body in its disintegration.  
96. and if little shards die, as they always do  
97. then save them, shake them. All our bodies  
will come to this.
98. *One particular day, four hundred*  
99. *million years ago, the mud stiffened*  
100. *and held the strokes of waves.*  
101. Now there is an entire nestful of suns  
102. Many cold stars  
103. A wealth of marks and grazes  
104. Everyone wears the folds of water, old water  
105. The whereabouts  
106. of slow burn and floodtide  
107. All our bodies will come to  
108. you/I/the mutinous dead  
109. weighing lightly and always.
110. When all sides slip away is the residual  
the too unbearable to face  
111. put away in a book when a language is lost.
112. *corrode me there in excess by*  
*oxygen*  
113. *heat, by need, eat, mold of the first furl*  
*pressed flat into mud, spore, germ*  
114. *preliminary gut, foothold, resin, niche, the*  
*long moan of rivers*  
115. *shifting as veins across the surface, cutting*  
*through the first face; regard*  
116. *me, face, under the harsh light & circling*  
*wind, circle, wind, turn*
117. in four hundred years, the lightning in the  
Arctic  
118. will scissor and gleam, ebb and fall back  
119. viewed by one single soul  
120. with history's old fears, asking over and over  
121. *Could there be other weather,*  
122. *other divas stalking the cringing country*  
123. *with insistent eye?*  
124. *Could there be other rain,*
125. *laced with the slick flick of electric*
126. And if someone is gone  
why would they talk again?
127. Out of a long oblivion  
128. where the non-valleys non-mountains  
129. have no need to ask  
130. what the "e" is for, for once:  
131. Ear  
132. Epoch, Earth  
133. *THE SEA, THE METALLIC AND URGENT*  
*MOUTH OF THE SEA GROWS*  
134. ELECTRIC  
135. *IN THE SUNS INCESSANT RAYS & INCITES*  
*A CHAIN*  
136. *REACTION INTO ALL THE THINGS*
137. So many gods, but no call for them.  
138. Our animals, *their lives still stick stubbornly to*  
*my insides*
139. I remember a fox that leapt from the road into  
the arms  
140. of a bemused man  
141. It was 2019.  
142. The sun's incessant rays incited a chain  
143. the slick flick of electric  
144. the shiver drift light.
145. How is it that lines of force must end?  
146. --- *the wild fields bisected*  
147. *by the scenic highway, canyons covered with*  
*cul-de-sacs,*  
148. *gas stations, comfortable homes, the whole*  
*habitat*  
149. *along this coastal stretch endangered,*  
*everything,*  
150. *everyone, everywhere in it danger as well*  
151. And here are the lines the single soul will  
remember  
152. Waking to sleep  
153. in the night of the fox  
154. in the night of Scorpio and Saturn  
155. in the night of future foretelling:
156. *When the market fell into flames*  
157. *they learned to play*
158. *in the oceanic room*  
159. *of their empty stomachs*
160. Look, the troposphere  
161. has stopped all the waves  
162. and silence is hung by thread  
163. Feel in this stand-alone wind  
164. no lively air, a cold
165. Like nothing
166. Else felt  
167. The cold
168. Like nothing

- |      |   |      |                           |
|------|---|------|---------------------------|
| 169. | Else felt   | 185. | Of mine                   |
| 170. | <i>Voice as chain</i>                                     | 186. | Of ice                    |
| 171. | <i>As zephyr</i>  | 187. | The sound of              |
| 172. | <i>As sandalwood</i>                                      | 188. | Carbon                    |
| 173. | <i>As psychopomp</i>                                      | 189. | Cohered                   |
| 174. | As snakefur   | 190. | Graphite                  |
| 175. | As false ribs   | 191. | Matter like               |
| 176. | <i>As vaped</i>   | 192. | Nothing else is           |
| 177. | <i>As hung valley</i>                                     | 193. | Like the cold             |
| 178. | <i>Begging all the skins that are lived</i>               | 194. | That                      |
| 179. | <i>And everything that ever was so deeply<br/>tenuous</i> | 195. | distills                  |
| 180. | The heat  | 196. | That distills all         |
| 181. | Kicks out   | 197. | Else felt                 |
| 182. | The sand  | 198. | Where will the dreams go? |
| 183. | The salt  | 199. | They had better go        |
| 184. | The sand  |      |                           |

*DRIFT* is a poem by Jane Lewty that interacts with, and collages material from, other writers' work in the *Eco-Poetics Stack of Books* that deals directly or indirectly with environmental concerns. Some of the writers use their poetry as a site of meditation for what is lost; others celebrate the sublime terror of nature; many draw distinct parallels between personal or cultural upheaval and the shifting state of our planet.

Denoted in italics, these specific lines are quotes from the following books:

- Line 2: Anne-Adele Wight, *The Age of Greenhouses*, p. 32  
 Lines 7-9: Brenda Iijima, *Remembering Animals*, p. 146  
 Lines 13-15: Juliana Spahr, *The Connection of Everyone With Lungs*, p. 20  
 Line 17 references Theodore Roethke's poem *The Waking*  
 Line 20-21: Mai Der Vang, *Afterland*, p. 20  
 Lines 25-26: Joy Harjo, *Conflict Resolution For Holy Beings*, p. 117  
 Lines 33-35: Cody-Rose Clevidence, *Beast Feast*, p. 8  
 Line 42: Han Kang, *The Vegetarian*, p. 33  
 Lines 55-58: Juliana Spahr, *The Connection of Everyone With Lungs*, p. 5  
 Line 62: Anne-Adele Wight, *The Age of Greenhouses*, p. 22  
 Line 68: Joy Harjo, *A Map To The Next World*, p. 19  
 Lines 71-75: Forrest Gander, *Science & Steepleflower*, p. 42  
 Lines 85, 87-90: Adrienne Rich, *Diving Into the Wreck*, p. 24  
 Lines 98-101: Forrest Gander, *Science & Steepleflower*, p. 23  
 Lines 113-117: Cody-Rose Clevidence, *Flung Throne*, p. 29  
 Lines 122-126: Patricia Smith, *Blood Dazzler*, p. 11  
 Lines 134, 135-136: Cody-Rose Clevidence, *Flung Throne*, p. 21  
 Line 138: Han Kang, *The Vegetarian*, p. 49  
 Lines 146-150: Camille Dungy, *Smith Blue*, p. 17  
 Lines 156-159: Mai Der Vang, *Afterland*, p. 87  
 Lines 170-179: Ma i Der Vang, *Afterland*, p. 86

## CREDITS

Jennifer Tee (NL) in collaboration with poet Jane Lewty (UK), choreographer Marjolein Vogels (NL), narrator/singer Björk Nielsdóttir (IS), performers Miri Lee (KR), Ayhan Karaağaç (TR), Christian Guerematchi (SI), Lív Smáradóttir (IS/SE), Aika Goto (JP).

For more information about the performers, please see our website.

*DRIFT* is part of the WhyNot Festival that takes place January 22–25 at different locations in Amsterdam. For more information please see [www.festivalwhynot.nl](http://www.festivalwhynot.nl). This performance is made possible with support by Stichting Stokroos.



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