



## ***What Do Stones Smell Like in the Forest?***

A Libretto by Chloë Lum & Yannick Desranleau

### **GOLEM**

I think of the sensation that radiates  
from the protruding knot of bone,  
where my neck and shoulders meet  
as well as its double, deep in my tailbone and  
flowing outward;  
as pain-adjacent.  
Stiff and blocked, pins and needles,  
no amount of stretching nor soaking;  
not heat, nor anti-inflammatories  
lessen the bone deep yawning itch.

### **CHOIR**

How bad must it be to be pain  
instead of pain-adjacent?

### **GOLEM**

I am always careful to not overstate pain,  
to not overuse the word.  
I know what doctors think of complaining women.  
  
It's not in my head,  
rather it's in my spine, my legs,  
the soft fleshy bit  
between my thumb and index finger.  
I keep dropping things.

I keep breaking things.  
My thumb and finger  
each twitch and shake;  
I look at them  
I look at them as if they belong to someone else.  
I look at them as if they belong to someone else.

### **CHOIR**

They do.

### **GOLEM**

It keeps me awake and keeps me dumb.  
Keeps me slow and slow me slows.  
Slowly, slow me so slow.  
The inside of my skull is hollow and heavy.  
I'm as heavy and damp as unfired clay.

### **CHOIR**

Skipped beats aren't silent when the rhythms  
in the in-between are given breathing room.

### **GOLEM**

Does the stiffness or the slowness make me more  
golem like?

### **CHOIR**

The golem lumbers stiffly, and slowly.  
It is the original cyborg,  
a created body with a task at hand.  
It does the task poorly.

When the golem moves,  
the clay pulls apart.  
It doesn't mend easily.

### **GOLEM**

How does one continue to birth a body of work  
with a body that doesn't, not labour or function?  
If only I where a solid, inanimate thing.

I am a golem!

I sit, I lean, I brace myself  
barely moving, using these objects  
in order to keep the damp, salt-and-iron-smelling clay  
in one piece.

### **CHOIR**

Does the body in pain give off a particular scent?  
What about the body in pain-adjacent stiffness and  
spasms?  
I smell myself and smell powder and lime cologne.  
Is there a whiff of pain underneath the surface?  
In the sweat, or in the blood?

What does a golem smell like?

### **GOLEM**

Wet, earthy,  
a bit salty, and a touch green.  
Somewhat like petrichor-  
with a whiff of musty stillness, tinged with iron.

165 **GOLEM** < *fff* ( $\text{♩} = \text{approx. } 110$ ) Expressed panic or discomfort > *f* < *fff*

168 > *f* < *fff* > *f*

170 < *fff* > Voc. fry 2

174 **CHOIR** *mf* ( $\text{♩} = 150$ ) Fast and hard

176

178

### **CHOIR**

The cyborg is sleeker, more beautiful, and functional  
It smells of acetone and off-gassing plastic,  
a smidge of aroma-chemical freshness.  
The cyborg is sleek but smells of the one-dollar store;  
that is its contradiction.

### **GOLEM**

If these things are contradictory,  
it's because most scents are.  
Even the tuberose has a whiff of spoiled meat  
and rubber tires.

My new friend calls me a lady  
Her flat smells like expensive things  
like old wood and candles  
she smells like gardenias and beeswax  
I must be passing as something  
other than what I am.  
It is unimaginable for me,  
that someone could see me as something else than a  
golem.

### **CHOIR**

How does one describe the scent of salt  
to those convinced that the mineral has none?  
Do they not smell the brine of the sea,  
the metallic tang from the box?  
It's as impossible as describing  
red to the colour-blind,

because what can we say about red other than it is  
red?

### **GOLEM**

She filled her pockets with stones,  
ended up on the riverbed,  
her hair floating around like seaweed.  
My pockets contain hair-ties and receipts;  
lip balm and store-brand ibuprofen,  
coated in lint.  
I don't know how long these things have been there,  
but they are in and on everything I own.

### **CHOIR**

Collections gather shed fur, dust, fingerprints  
Along with their secret histories, storage of stories

### **GOLEM**

The stones are heavy in my hand.  
They smell like water and earth.  
I slip one in my dress pocket to remember.  
I've already forgotten it there.  
My footfalls are stiff, awkward and slow  
So I dance, barely moving, using these objects and  
sounds,  
turning stillness around, into a story of thingness.  
Micro-movements set to the tiniest of gestures,  
and the slowness of the rhythms created in the few  
empty spaces.

## CREDITS

*What Do Stones Smell Like In The Forest?* (2018). Double channel digital video, sound, 18 min. 39 sec; installation.

Chloë Lum & Yannick Desranleau

The Golem: Marie-Annick Béliveau, mezzo-soprano

Choir and Dancers: Mary St-Amand Williamson, Karen Fennell, Maxine Segalowitz

Director of Photography: Oswaldo Toledano

Orchestration: Dominique Alexander

Chief Choreographer and Dramaturgy Consultant: Mary St-Amand Williamson

Outside Eye: Kim Sanh Châu

Voice Coach and Choir Direction: Louise Campbell

Sound Engineer: Steve Bates

Light Technician: Paolo Malo

Production Assistant and Still Photography: Edwin Isford

Continuity: Lisa Ceccarelli

Hair Stylist: Arahkwénte J Gilbert

Makeup: Drew McComber

