

A TEMPERATURE REPORT: WARM SUBTLETIES IN COLD MATERIALITY

by Isabel Carvalho and Kia Yee

We built the following dialogues from emails and zoom meetings, in a temporality from 2 December to 9 of February.

2 december 2020: *The plan!*

I — Nice to meet you, Kia Yee!

K — Hi Isabel! How should we start the process?

I — I've sent an email to Anna and I'm proposing three days a week. Two weekdays for zoom meetings, for one to two hours and Saturday for some info exchange or a brief update with no time limit. The rest of the time should be used freely for your research. I also wish to ask you to propose a platform for posting and exchanging images and text (Google Drive, blog, Instagram account, etc). I have marked the next holidays in the timetable. Probably you will have some to add too. I excluded working during holidays as I don't think we need it. It could happen that I have to miss some our meetings (mainly due to the Covid restrictions), but if that happens I will inform you with sometime in advance.

I thought it could be interesting to start by doing a cultural exchange. I'm not sure if you are interested in Portugal, but I'm certainly super interested to know more about Singapore. It would be very helpful if you could kindly prepare something like an introduction for me. A shortlist of books, magazines, films, food, traditions, documentaries, music, editorial projects, etc. Apart from what is here briefly planned, I hope you can bring, by your own initiative, what you think is interesting and appropriate for the project. I'm not sure I'm forgetting something, but I'm hoping to develop the project at our own pace. And of course, everything is still quite open.

K — Dear Isabel, this is my image of Singapore. I am very happy to be embarking on these research phases with you. I'm not very good at expressing my joy when I speak, so I shall express it here: I am very happy! My brain is very excited by the ideas you are interested in, and I hope I can offer the project many things too. Oh dear, this ended up being so much! (17 pages!!!!) I think I really wanted to give you as expansive a view of Singapore as possible...

3 december 2020: *What is LEONORANA about?*

I — Hi! Are you doing well?

K — I've been super busy, so I'm quite tired. But I went running this evening, so I'm feeling quite energized. Awake.



I — Awake? At 8pm? [Laughs] I hope you enjoyed yourself. Shall we start by contextualizing the magazine? The title of the magazine – comes from Ana Hatherly's "Livro III – LEONORANA (1965-70): Trinta e uma variações temáticas sobre o mote de um vilancete de Luís de Camões", published in the book *Um calculador de Improbabilidades*. This project is a direct tribute to this author. It resumes and updates the central focus of her work, namely concerning the study and experimental practice of the complementarity between verbal and visual languages and the combinatory game and ludic aspects of knowledge, as well as its dissemination.

Due to her vast visual, literary and academic art experience, Hatherly symbolises the relevance research has in terms of artistic practice and the way it is perceived as knowledge (e.g., historical research on the poetry developed by the author). Although the validity of this approach may seem obvious in certain contexts, it is still vital to reinforce the connection between research and art and the understanding of the latter as a form of knowledge; more specifically, research that bases itself on creativity and the desire to learn, as well as its dissemination among the artistic and civil community. Hence, this magazine aims to present forms of research carried out by artists and creative individuals in general who, according to their experience and path, reinforce the presence of research and assume artistic expression as a specific form of knowledge. Accordingly, one can consider this magazine an open space for discussion, where ideas, practices and strategies for teaching and learning can be debated.

K — From the beginning, you felt a double responsibility: to be able to guide our work and even control it, as well as letting our process flow towards an uncertain destination. In fact, most of the time, you thought we had to get to some safe place on the run, but you also wanted to counteract that and lead us to "navigate" in a completely new experience that wouldn't necessarily be safe or predictable.

I — I had the intention of giving you as much space as possible for your suggestions, and I put myself in a position to ask you for help (as I am very insecure with my English) as well as I made myself available for what



I named “homework”). You were my intermediary for a life experience, which I thought was capable of radically questioning my roots and so I possibly demanded something too ambitious (and possibly too demanding). It doesn’t mean that together we haven’t been up to the task, but I think I just didn’t recognize from the beginning the limits of the experience.

K — I was expecting to be told what was needed and to then have to find a way to get things done for you - to speak to whoever you wanted me to talk to, to move around the city to gather information for you. I didn’t expect to be welcomed in a more collaborative capacity. I feel you also welcomed me as another human being or friend. These are things I am very grateful for.

4 december 2020: Music

I — Hi! Good morning!

K — Good morning, good evening.

I — Oh, right, it’s evening for you.

K — How are you? How are things in Portugal?

I — Oh, I’m fine. I have been going through my notes from our meeting and I think it went well. At least I feel much more into the place. I will wait for your contact tomorrow with your suggestions for our culture exchange. Meanwhile, I wonder if you could prepare something about music concerning the production of environments, as well as its uses in public and in the private sphere (having in mind “efficiency”). Basically when/how/why(...) people listen to music. And thank you for the Instagram account. It seems an excellent way for you to show me more about Singapore. (I loved the video of the rain. And what was that thing that looked like a colourful vitral at the window?).

K — I looked at absolute music, programmatic music, procedural music. Also ambient music. There are these amazing tracks called The Disintegration Loops by William Basinski, where the tape loops are disintegrating as the recordings are being converted to digital format. Also this performance called 100 Pianos.

I thought about what Singapore sounds like: lift dings, road traffic, MRT trains rumbling, automated doors sliding open, fast footsteps... I tried to log the genres of music made here, like noise rock, post-apocalyptic



rock, art rock, Japanese-influenced minimalist ambient music, electronic, folk, dream pop, indie rock, pop rock, lo-fi. I also wondered about the kind of language the musicians used to describe their own music, like “wistful” and “resigned”.

8 december 2020: The Portuguese revolution of ‘74

I — Hello, Kia Yee! I’ve prepared this very-very-short-list of references from portuguese culture. As you will notice, I live in a very old country with a long history and it’s hard to choose what to name. Apart from the cities and food obviously, most of my references are post-revolution of 1974 and in majority are women. I might say these are my personal choices, however, not necessarily my absolute preferences. The revolution of ‘74 marked an important turn in the political environment in Portugal.

K — Thank you for these! I’m curious... What was it like studying and growing up in Portugal?

I — When I asked for questions about Portugal I wasn’t expecting these kinds of questions! But hm, studying and growing up...

K — What do people in Portugal like to do in their free time?

I — I will answer that next.

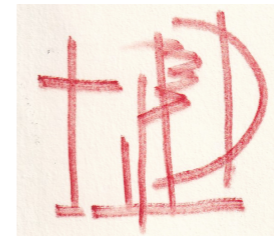
12 december 2020: Sunbathing in Portugal and the ideal essay

I — Hope you are well. It must be already very late/night for you.

I will start by answering you about how we deal with temperature in Portugal... We almost die from heat during summer and with cold during winter just because it has always been like this forever and we didn’t transition to get better solutions. Only a few people use aircon. Now it’s a bit better, but when I was a child we used to put woolen gloves on our hands when inside of classrooms in order to write/draw or whatever in school. Otherwise our hands would be frozen. But, in terms of environment in general (not just temperature): We give huge value (in a strange way) to health so it’s privileged the environments with clear fresh air. We do resist the use of technology like microwaves or aircon because it’s believed that it ruins health.

As for social environments they are probably thought mainly to be friendly and familiar. But I must say that I believe it is not that much planned. Not even in institutions. About the natural environment: that is still so much to protect specially because we have huge forest fires during summer. And only recently we have done something about it. This could be expanded endlessly, it might be better for me to think a bit more.

All I can conclude for now is that environments are not that much planned or controlled for a specific objective such as efficiency. From what I have read from that book you have sent, *Airconditioned Nation* (only 2 essays so far) it seems that for Portuguese the comfort it’s



not as important. Probably we keep with the French/European tradition of freedom before comfort. I’m not the best person to say this (I’m too pale and I get sunburned very fast), but sunbathing along the beaches, during summer, are the ideal occupation of most Portuguese.

We/They love summer and walking by the seaside. Or just to be dumb under the sun. Probably because of vitamin D! :-) And the seaweed minerals.

K — Could you send me an example of what kind of essay you wish to have in LEONORANA?

I — Surely, I have to find an example of an ideal essay for LEONORANA to send you...

By coincidence a good friend of mine, to whom I also complained about the LEONORANA essays I’ve been publishing, said I was overreacting and that there are great essays! That made me happy. Still, I will do my homework soon.

Thank you for sketching the invitation.

I will take a look at the names you have listed.

We should keep improving the invitation. It’s starting pretty well!

14 december 2020: Flow...

K — Hello! How are you today?

I — I feel that I’m a little bit behind with all of this info but at the same time I feel we should let it flow. :-) Yesterday I took a look at the videos you have sent and read my homework about which I will answer along this email. Normally I’m a bit messy with the info I gather and I start to organize it bit by bit in temporary tables — I love tables...!

At the moment I feel I should pay more attention to 1. the suggestion of people to collaborate and see how they fit in the theme, 2. the topics by area. See if the same path works for you and fill with whatever comes to your mind. You have done lots of research and now you can put it all into these 1. and 2.. A small note: If I didn’t say this before, we can opt to publish already published articles/essays. I must say that the homework you ask me to do is very curious and challenging. I haven’t yet chosen the ideal essay for me but I can name a few projects that were/are very influential to LEONORANA.



K — The tables are great! And yes, tell me more about what you see and imagine for LEONORANA.

22 december 2020: Feeling better

I — Just a short message to tell you that today the internet broke down and I only have I-phone and that I felt a bit sick because of the low temperatures. I’m back home tonight and hope to catch up our conversation/work very soon.

K — It seems we are a little bit in sync. I’ve been unwell these last few days, so my research for LEONORANA is on pause. I will get back on track soon.

I hope you feel better once you get home.

24 december 2020: wi-fi connection and astrological conjunctions

I — Yesterday I returned home by train already late at night and I thought that at least there I would have a wifi connection. But, no, I didn’t.

I know — mostly because so many people posted something about it on Facebook — that we had a special astrological conjunction between Saturn and Jupiter, but did it interfere with all the www?? It was a bit frustrating as I thought I was going to be able to do more than I did. Maybe I have to be more realistic about being able to work while travelling. Meanwhile, at least, my headache is gone.

(By the way, someone was reading Tanizaki yesterday next to me on the train and today my book has arrived. As I’ve told you, most of Portuguese have read this book so I can easily imagine that I and that person were the only ones left to catch up with the “shadows”).

My question is, shall we keep our meeting tomorrow? I feel a bit uncomfortable about skipping work, but in this case, stronger forces are sort of keeping me away from it. But also this season (Xmas) can be a bit demanding in terms of homecare. Anyway, I leave you to decide. Even if I don’t have much new work done to tell you about, I do feel we can easily meet and be productive and I always enjoy our meetings a lot. So this may be my point of lack of capacity of decision...

24 december 2020: Postponed meetings?

K — I’m sorry you had such a rough time! The astrological conjunction is supposed to be a good thing, so I’m not too sure. We are moving into a very Aquarian year though. Maybe that had some effect on the Internet (since Aquarius is partially about technology).

I have a couple things I think we can chat about in our meeting. And we can do a more relaxed one maybe. So let’s go on with the meeting at 11h.

That being said, next time if it’s better for you to take more time for homecare and things like that, I’m alright to postpone or do more emails instead. Whatever is less stressful for you.

31 december 2020: New year's eve!

I — So the year is ending with a broken aquarius aspect but will rise triumphantly from it in 2021 with lots of emphasis on technology :-)!
Thank you for your words. I guess I've got used to stress & anxiety and the only way to deal with it is to be more organized and realistic. And that is something I hope to improve next year.

Have you made plans & wishes for the next year?
K — Hm. I don't really have resolutions the way I used to any more. But I have a list of things I plan to learn, like swimming, cycling, driving.

I — Oh, you didn't learn to swim or cycle when you were a child?
K — No... I know that most people do, but I somehow didn't. I was taught but I didn't pick it up. I've realized over time that I struggle with activities where my feet are off the ground. Even being on a swing can make my body anxious.

I — That's so curious!

9 january 2021: The theme!

I — Good morning! How are you? Oh sorry, I keep saying morning when we it's already evening for you.

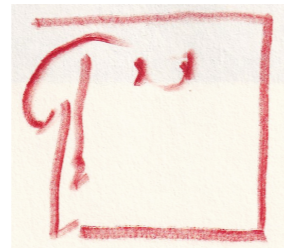
K — No worries. I just went running after a long day and am feeling pretty good. You?

I — I did a walk yesterday, but the weather's not helping with being outside.

About how to communicate the theme when sending the invitations to collaborators I have a few notes: The theme we choose to work with functions as a central point from where speculative thinking departs. Going to the 5th issue of *LEONORANA*, is now clear to me that there is a thematic chain. Most of the new themes comes from opening and expanding of the previous ones. For example: the 3rd issue that was dedicated to climates opened questions related to the environment in a general sense leading us to choose environments as the new theme. The same will most probably happen in the next issue's theme, meals, which is a derivation of the 1st that was dedicated to diets. It has been said that *LEONORANA* has an encyclopedian drive. While not refusing it, we are focused on the "natural" derivation from one to another theme and we choose the ones that — at a certain time and place — make sense to us.

15 january 2021: 4 aspects for guidance

I — I will read from what we've wrote so far: We began by doing research into the theme to derive working guidelines for contributors, as well as to give



ourselves parameters within this expansive area. This phase is not entirely separate from the one which follows it — choosing collaborators to invite. This is because some of the guidelines may (or should) be derived based on the contributors and contributions we envision for the issue. In other words, the research "about what" and the choice of "whom" are linked. When thinking about what could be understood by environments, we derived a working definition through an open approach with four aspects for guidance: the limits (1), the features (2), the values (3) and the objectives (4).

(1) **Limits:** To define an environment, we considered how any environment fits within certain parameters, usually physical. For example, the concrete and specific parameters and conditions of environments such as a planet, a continent, a nation, a building, a room, a shop, a restaurant, a garden (or a park), a workspace, a forest, a school, the human body and its close surroundings, etc. Of course, the physical limits of the environments listed here are only operative to begin an approach to specific environments. Ultimately — to us at least — no environment is complete and truly self-contained; all environments are inter-conditioned and inter-determined. (2) **Features:** Environments are better defined and particularized through the identification of their features, such as: aquatic/terrestrial, low-tech/high-tech, uncontrolled/controlled, clear/toxic, rural/industrial, populate/deserted, silence/noise, cold/warm, dynamic/monotonous, slow/accelerated, human/non-human, etc. Similar to the notion of limits, these abstract, binary characteristics serve primarily as a starting point from which we must depart and expand. (3) **Values:** The values we give to environments are subjective but more specifically, how we feel is closely-linked to the cultural value system by which we judge them, hence the attribution of: good/bad, healthy/unhealthy, comfortable/uncomfortable, amicable/aggressive, livable / inhospitable, etc. All values are susceptible to criticism and deserve our attention. At times they demand an examination of their genealogy, as well as transvaluation. (4) **Objectives:** When analysing specific environments, by objectives we imply the intentional ends that precede its conception and construction, such as: efficiency, productivity, comfort, power domination, intimidation or relaxation, among other possibilities. Here, we refer to global, human environments, not forgetting, however, that environments beyond planet Earth and this dimension have their own design.

4.



3 february 2021: A point of balance — in fact we have created an environment!

K — You mentioned that, with the public sharing coming up, it would be good for us to talk about how the process has been. What are you thinking right now?

I — While we worked on conceptualizing the editorial parameters of *LEONORANA* dedicated to the "environments", we were in fact, working on ourselves and in the environment that together we constructed. Didn't we start to think about the guidelines precisely departing from "limits" as a concept? So, I wonder if we can use those guidelines to describe our environment? Let's do the exercise to account for what we have as a constructed environment:

1. **Limits:** Spatial and Geographical, two countries, two buildings, two rooms, two bodies, two beings. We both dislike this separation in two, and the decision of "either this or that" doesn't make special sense to us. So where are the limits of this environment? The imposed ones: the geopolitical borders are closed and we have been confined to home due to the pandemic context. Are there more? The time we decide that our meetings will have? But specially our images on screen: we only see our heads but we are not aware of our real plural dimensions.

K — There is a loss of the body and the kinds of sounds, movements and energies it emits. We've spent quite a bit of time together now, enough that I have a sense of your energy, but there is still some distance we cannot close. It would be nice, eventually, when the world permits, to sit together and have a cup of (addictive) coffee.

I — Our main limits are for sure mainly established within the information sent across the globe. What do we decide to communicate to one another? What kind of information do we think it's relevant for our work?

K — I think we communicated far beyond what was 'needed', which made the process good. As you wrote in the PDF, affections and relations are a key part of the editorial process. I feel that by taking interest in each other's lives and cities, by building a connection and understanding, we inevitably added to the work process. We made it more enjoyable, more open. I think you initial intentions of guiding while keeping things open was what made this possible.

I — 2. **Features:** Concerning the features: from our conversations specifically about the weather, I proposed us to think about warm and cold but in relation to technology materiality. My computer is metal cold but when I use it, it gets warmer. I have been reducing my uses of the computer to our meetings so that I can have more



5.



time to be in the studio. By consequence are the subtleties of the uses of technology in our meetings that sets this environment? (Funny to think I'm a metal dragon in the chinese astrology.)

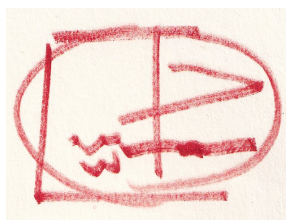
K — Yes. Despite the coldness, there is an intimacy to our devices. From my interest in object agencies and inanimate things in general, I would call them affectionate, whether in how they are ergonomic - mapped against our bodies in their design - or are simply familiar to us in ways that other people may not have access to. This doesn't take away from how they can also feel aggressive, or how certain elements are built to manipulate our desires and consumption. I think the two co-exist. Also, in relation to what you say about a computer heating up, a funny metaphor seems to emerge if we think about the fact that I am a fire rat and you are a metal dragon.

I — I wish to add beauty as one of the main features of our environment. We talked about make-up a few times and we have used it all the time: eye shadow, nail polish and lipstick. I give that importance because we present ourselves as we wish to be seen. We could even build better avatars, but this is already a start. By providing beauty to ourselves we take control of how we wish to be seen & known to each other detached from external expectations as this environment permits us freedom.

But we also cared about the simple beauty of our background images on screen: as I still wonder if I could have changed my background to a better digital landscape instead of showing off my pile of books.

K — I wonder about the rectangle of space we each occupy on Zoom, about people who just wear their office shirts with pajamas pants because they are only seen from the waist up. It is a form of theatre - oddly funny and yet in some ways it carries a loneliness? Also, I enjoyed seeing your books! I like seeing people's spaces instead of digital backgrounds, even though I use those too. I think I use them for some sense of privacy, especially on days when I feel my room is a giant mess, or when I take a work call with someone I don't know well and feel I should look professional instead of having them possibly see my bed behind me...

I — 3. **Values:** In retrospectively, thinking about this (almost) three months, I reflected at every moment whether this socialization environment was in accordance with some of my principles. Isn't that the only certainty we have in such unpredictable times? For me, the ideal environment is always hardly hierarchical, anti-authoritarian, which gives space to express the differences of each one of its parts, and that's mostly joyful. Did we agree on this without saying it?



K — Perhaps this environment was in accordance with your own values and desires, but I think they aligned with mine too. Whenever someone asks me about how this process with you has been, I always say: I am very lucky, because we work in similar ways and with similar rhythms. So yes - I think we agreed without saying it. There was, is an understanding.

I — **4. Objectives:** The main one was and still is to invite people to join us, to build a community to be gathered at a final printed object — the magazine *LEONORANA*. We spoke several times of how fast I am - I would say that I am always in a hurry, anxious and perhaps hasty — but that only means voracity in meeting new adventures. I crave for more dialogues, for more email answers, for more contact. You tell me: “oh everyone needs their time, we are all super busy!”. I agree.

Being more calm about the reception of what we construct in this endeavor as itself an environment, I’m super happy with the possibility of the people we choose to call out, think about it and let them give it value, at their own pace.

K — I actually tend to move super fast too, so I relate to you! It was really nice to be near your energy and to see you take interest in things with such excitement. I think it was the pandemic that made me really conscious of how slowness, or going with the flow, is also needed. Also because of living with anxiety for so long - I think I harbour a strong desire to slow down. There is a balance we’re still finding, I think! Between how time flows for each of us and other people. And knowing how fast or how slow to go at each moment. This residency also happened to overlap with Singapore Art Week... which I’m guessing explains quite a number of the slower responses.

9 february 2021: Notes on editing

I — In the work of editing — editorial conceptualization — it might be predictable and even expected that there would be no marked difference in the transition from physical to virtual contact. However, we discussed how the physical and bodily is involved in editing - in the choice of both collaborators and content to be proposed. For the simple reason that all the choices and decisions made in a magazine like *LEONORANA* (as-



suming itself as an artistic project) always start from the knowledge obtained through intuition and even affections, as well as from relationships of interpersonal affinities created and friendships built. Therefore, we can’t help but “feel” how much of what we call *Printed Matter* demands sociability. We recognize, however, how inevitable it is that the work we are doing will be marked by this Covid-19 pandemic and we have taken advantage of this alternative both as a necessary way to carry out the project and as a new aspect to explore, which may result in an innovative future form of work.

Thus, our work has been developed essentially through the creation of a common environment through online platforms. For that, we start by introducing ourselves and making an introduction to our social and cultural environments. Thinking about these platforms where our work happens to develop does necessarily bring us questions related to online life.

We have spending time together mediated by cold materiality that does not permit a full expression and reading of more subtle aspects of communication.