

'Adrift'  
Marilyn Arsem  
September 7, 2013

Viewer conversations and/or interactions:

1:10pm- Mother, Father, and son sat close together and didn't communicate with spoken words. I perceived them as feeling tense.

-Young man and woman speaking to one another, "I think it's about death", "doesn't that hurt... how long does she have to do this?"

-An older man approached me asking, "Is she anchored?", I asked him in what way, and he said "is there something she is tied to under the water?", I said, "no, she's just adrift."

-A man and woman speaking to each other, "is this healthy?"..."what will happen to her skin?"... "does she know what will happen to her skin?"

3:30pm- People were trying to find you but the edge of the cliff above where you were didn't give them a view of you.

4:10pm- A group of friends talked among themselves. They wanted to know how you were floating/ if other floatation devices were being used. Some of them thought you had extra floatation devices strapped around your entire body. One girl said she thought you looked dead, but obviously knew you weren't. The group stopped talking after she said that and just watched you.

-Another group of people came in, they were sitting above me so I listened to their conversation from below. They started talking about stories of people they knew that recently passed away. Most of them involved slow painful deaths in hospitals. They kept exchanging these memories (this is while you were floating face up)

4:30pm-The end of the performance. Minutes before you started drifting towards the staircase all the viewers seemed to be talking to one another. When you got within 20-15 feet from the stairs, everyone stopped talking and waited for you. After you came out of the water and left, no one said a word. Everyone there was just staring blankly out at the water (not at each other). It was a heavy feeling. The ones closest to me were breathing deeply. Before you had come to shore they were talking to me, and after you left they didn't look in my direction-just into the water.

4:35pm-Almost on the five minute dot, people started to talk again.

My response:

Face up, eyes closed, adrift in the reflection of the sky. It was as if there were two separate times existing in the place she was, for her body remained still, as the pieces of pine and pollen on the surface of the water moved past when the wind blew. Her physical body faced toward the sky, and her reflection faced into the depths below. Repeatedly, she confronted her reflection, which looked downwards, by turning herself over, lying face down in the water. Time felt more tense, more constrained, when her body took this position; it is easy for too much time to pass. But always she returned, and faced back to the sky. Every time she moved, ripples took over the surrounding area of her body until they disappeared. Her body, the wind, and the animals were the only influences on the way in which the waters surface would move. The ripples also made me think of the way in which the

universe works (repetition, cycles, what comes before will come again, etc). Though she was floating with her eyes closed for hours, she did not look dead, but made one think about death. She floated across the quarry, onto the edge, where she laid. In another moment, she was able to move her body into a cutout on the edge of the quarry. Only those who were across the quarry could see her, while those attempting a view from above her were not able to see. She again entered the water and drifted. Her small movements, the moments when I could see she was breathing deeply, reminded me that I am also here. At the end of the piece, she pointed a finger into the sky, and told the audience “ Look up! Look up!” It made me aware that while I was looking up, I may have been missing something else, but I looked up.

Side note: In relation to the ripples/ and the insertion of your body into the larger body of water, I thought of one of my favorite quotes by Leonardo Da Vinci. “When you put your hand in a flowing stream, you touch the last of what has gone before and the first of what is still to come.”

Chelsea Coon