

# The Museum of Breath

*A Guide to The Collection of Expiration*

Danielle Hewitt



# The Serpent

## *Calls Heard In C*

The essentially barbaric day of the serpent would have been far more appropriate to the ashes of the bloody tremor of the trumpet, than those of the cold blooded sound.

There is only one exception to be made.

The case where the serpent is employed in the sepulchers for the regions to reinforce the terrible plain throne of the death nature.

Then, no doubt it's cold and abominable howling is in remission.



## Birds In Bell Jars

### *On the Properties Of Air and Sound*

A small heart, that of a bird, is suspended in the bell jar. A network of fine silks coloured in rich greens and golden yellows lightly harness the heart. A little distance above the heart two small distinct lungs can be glimpsed suspended between the threads. The network of these many fibres obscure attempts to identify the origin of their support. The heart beats out a regular rhythm as the deep red muscle that describes its four chambers swells and contracts. From outside of the bell jar the speed with which this tiny iridescent core repeats its movement is audible as a low but distinct hum.

A thick rubber tube leaves the bell jar at its base and leads to a pump which also moves with a rhythmical regularity albeit one much slower than the heart. As the pump rises and falls the air inside the glass is depleted. To the amazement of the spectator the beat of the heart is replaced by silence and the heart's redness turns a dull yet beautiful blue.



# Schellenlaufen

## *Running with Bells*

The Curator has been undertaking research into the functioning of memory in peoples of the northern hemisphere during the period of weeks preceding the vernal equinox. The research has identified a phase during which the subject recognises his/her self with increased familiarity.

To date, three objects have been identified:

- The peal of dinner plates and steel cutlery, sounding from partly opened windows between the hours of four and seven.
- The effect of quickly cooled hair in the passage from areas of winter sunshine into areas of shadow.
- The tang of soil and salts on skin that has been newly exposed to the outdoor air.

Such objects permit an informed projection and reoccurrence of the remembering subject in perception of the subject's self knowing. In this instance memories are not of a time passed but form a recognition of a self that is soon to occur.





# British Pond

## *Ophelia*

The young woman is singing as she falls through the water. Her red hair follows the path of breath up to the surface of the stream where her muffled words settle for a moment as domes of water.

The grasses on the bank of the stream are wet, and it becomes difficult to step any closer to the water without slipping down amongst the reeds and flowers.

But through the tall nettles and small heads of daisies we can see her. Palms and face break the surface and her sodden yellow skirts float up around her.

Look at the fingertips we are told. Look closely.

A smooth fingertip, swollen yet not punctured, sank without regret.

A shredded fingertip fought at the stony bank and clutched the spiked nettles.



# Pigeon

## *The Successive Climatic Solution*

The decision to take birds out of flight was unprecedented but the month had been incredibly hot and it was thought that restricting their aviation to a distance of between 5 and 6 feet above ground level would create the desired breeze.

The birds were restricted to specially silenced 'feather parlours' where those who afforded leisure time could escape the stagnant afternoons.

As the grounding had incapacitated the sole form of inter island communication messages were instead carried by boat and exchanged between persons. A new capacity for speech was realised and messages were passed by tongue lip and jaw. Such utterances were repeated back and forth until, from the turbulent air priori breath, a sound rose up that was comprehended by each and all islands.



# Tortoise

## *Trinket*

A steel drum spins inside the body of the tortoise. A fine steel comb strokes this rotating drum. As the drum turns the many raised pins of its surface pluck the comb creating a slow metallic melody.

It is the proper thing to offer the gift of a live tortoise on the event of a marriage. The duration of the tortoise's life far exceeds that of the couple's mortal union and hence serves to symbolise the longevity of commitment entered into by the beloved.

Should the actions of either party cut short their union then it is customary to remove the visceral parts of the tortoise, replacing them with the delicate parts of a musical box. This is set within the tortoise's hollowed carapace and locked neatly behind its hinged breastplate.



# Oolite

## *On Calculus Construction*

The pair of calcified lungs was once coveted for use as ornamentation in building. They were thought particularly suited to civic structures built of sandstone. Exemplary collections of such lungs are often placed on podia at entrances to signify the succession of hierarchical chambers.

Of course, they are not so commonly employed in current practice. Their lace like delicacy is not in vogue with contemporary style and instances of this particular phenomena are increasingly rare to come by, having been avidly plucked from caves throughout the nineteenth century.





# Wolf

## *Archetype*

“why do you not look around? I believe that you do not hear how sweetly the little birds are singing; you walk so gravely along”

-shall I have to fill your belly with stones, Wolf? So that you are unable to follow me?

“open the door, dear children; your mother is here and has brought something back with her for each of you”

-shall I have to drop you in the cooking pot, Wolf? And boil the skin from your bones?

“let me in, let me in. Truly they have wounded me and I mean you no ill”

-shall I have to believe what you cry, wolf? I've read what came before.



# Kiskadee Flycatcher

## *To Hawk*

To the other figures in the street scene the girls that peddle their small trinkets are known as The Flycatchers. Pale faced, dark haired, and dressed in yellow aprons. One identifies the Flycatcher by sound before sight. To some who pass through they are forewarned by the cry in which they insist they hear the words “well you see”. Travelers who approach the town from elsewhere say that they hear some repeated question. Others hear nothing but a distinctive abstract cry of girls seemingly without speech.

Should the Flycatcher choose you from her location high in the balconies, faster than you would believe she is beside you on the pavement. The Flycatchers offer their arbitrary collections of glassware, scraps of bone, hide, rock, and trivial implements to those that pass briefly through the town. Most are unsettled by their calls and hurry quickly by. But some visitors are enamored by these mysterious mute figures and they travel on home, loaded with their curios.



The Museum of Breath can be found within the collections of the Horniman Museum.

100 London Road, Forest Hill, London SE23 3PQ.

Or around nine miles as the crow, or any other determined bird, might fly from London's Charing Cross.

This guide may be downloaded as audio. Please visit [www.themuseumofbreath.blogspot.com](http://www.themuseumofbreath.blogspot.com) where you will also find a map to accompany you on your visit.