

Saliva becomes spit only on its exit from the body. From the mouth.

Maybe if it is a child or a toddler with spit on their mouths we will coddle the language more.

We will add a suffix to the name in an attempt to differentiate it from an action that produces an object of the same name more purposefully (I spit, spit) to instead a noun that denotes some kind of lacking agency (She has some spittle on her chin)

Spit is the name of the action and the object.

Spit as boundary markers, when men, walking in front of me with swagger, turn their heads to the side and spit on the pavement.

As therapy, when I remember my mother telling me about spit being good for wounds and I instinctively spit and kiss my arm, grazed on rocks and pebbles from a fall.

As intimacy and interiority made-exterior, and then maybe made-interior yet again, when I looked up at him and he looked down at me and he said softly open your mouth, and so I acquiesced. He spat cleanly, a perfectly formed globule that travelled through air before landing on my tongue.

I preferred to imagine it landing cleanly in the deep dark of my throat, an open cave. But it didn't because my throat is not an open cave nor is my mouth a cave-mouth but a body-mouth instead. His spit landed on my tongue, joined my own saliva, and I swallowed it down performatively.

As custom, spitting on the Heart of Midlothian, on the site where a prison once stood.

As ACAB sentiment.

As excess, when sharing a joint makes my throat dry but manages to gather all the saliva in the roof of my mouth and I spit in the plant pots that sit in a neat row at the side of my house.

As landmass, a stretch of sand spiralling outwards. Something about longshore drift.

As pedagogy, Rose and Jack leaning over the handrail, her failing to spit, dribbling, and him showing her how to improve the trajectory.

As disgust, spitting when we say the name ██████ or █████.

The transition from interior to exterior, from air to breath, is not as deliberate as the transformation from saliva to spit. But the ability for what spit / water / saliva is doing, can be denied and registered differently depending on who is encountering it.

The body and its gestures of transformation, visible in several objects scattered around a clean room.

I can't help but think of spit when I read backwash on a gallery guide or promotional material.

Nor can I disconnect the feeling of something inside put outside .

body of work, work of body.

Sounds that we would classify as bodily, simply to provide a broad, encompassing and not too restrictive (read: erroneous) definition, for our own ease, is playing somewhere, where images of children carrying water in plastic buckets to and from lapping shores others are gathered, around a kid buried partially in sand, I'll return to this.

A home video not in the home.

Sounds of something organic. Maybe saliva being gathered in the mouth. Maybe the insides of cheeks being chewed and sucked or wet food being handled or prepared. Maybe something being squeezed or pushed out of place. Maybe something being prepared to exit from the body or something being prepared

to enter it.

Gallery Assistant [To a visitor]: Some people have asked if it was a performance made for the exhibition.

The two of us, somewhere else, telling them how nice it is that it's now safe to swim in Edinburgh's beaches again, they are clean now, right?

R, laughing, maybe, my memory tells me they are laughing, tells the rest of the group that it's because that is where the largest sewage treatment works in Scotland is, close to the country's second largest city.

On vivait dans la proximité de la merde. Elle faisait rire.  
We lived in close proximity to shit. It made us laugh.

The coast where the shit flows out into open water is a firth of the North Sea, where borders and histories touched and Empires and Kingdoms found reason to trade and kill and barter and grandstand.

The beach where children play is unnamed, not-remembered, it is in Jamaica, somewhere. The location is unclear as some of the moments of the 90s home video recording where glitchy squares delay the movements of limbs and torsos, faces and hands.

Putting it out there. Getting it all out.

A breath, an exhalation, a spit.

Making-exterior not a neatly-defined narrative, of silting and dredging histories of Black Life in Scotland, nor of a healing or a resolution that might be received in a manner more tidy, but instead, an exteriorisation of what gathers and hangs around the corners of the interior-body, a spilling out and a being-spilled-out. Being-spat-out.

Ptuiiiiiiii.

## ENDNOTES

or

### Things Unfinished, Exeriorised

A frame and mould growing inside it, where somewhere underneath the mould sits Scottish Landscape, an 1871 painting by Robert S Duncanson, the most accomplished landscape painter in the West, the most accomplished African-American painter in the United States from 1850 to 1860.

It is painted only three decades following the tour of Frederick Douglass around this same country, who will carve words of protest in graceful characters into the rocks of the Crags, who will in over two-hundred years be described as The slave who became a Scot, by a Glasgow-based newspaper, as if those two things were antonymous, or that even the concepts of slavery and Scottishness could only be situated far from one another.

Spitting it out, dredging it up, traversing waterways, watching slowly as the beam from a lighthouse makes somewhat visible the contours and surrounds of an estuary through which trade lived and died.

Navigation here, unruly, housed within an observatory designed to speak to a dock several miles north and downhill, and several points mark different gestures within the space;

children laughing, playing and building atop a friend buried into the beach

an oak rectangle which holds a metallic print, deteriorating [read: changing; transforming] through contact with rum and salty sea water from a beach in Barbados

deterioration that moves as slowly as the sunset displayed on a blinking monitor set against a clean wall

a black A-frame, under which is suspended the images of these children and a young woman with them

she looks around herself on the Jamaican beach, seeming to occupy herself with the movements of the many children around her

her hands continuing to build castles from sand, and her eyes still moving across and through laughs and screams as waves wash against shore

**Commissioned by Camara Taylor** in accompaniment to their exhibition *backwash*, which was on display in Hillside Gallery from 18 June – 4 September 2022. For *backwash*, Camara created a multimedia installation using archival materials, with artefacts from the banks of Scotland's waterways. The exhibition connected two ports called Leith: one in north Edinburgh, and an abandoned whaling station on the coast of South Georgia Island. These sites of colonial expansion and restriction anchored the exhibition, sifting through backwashes of ecological ruin and repair.

### About the Writer

Seán Elder is a curator and writer currently based in Birmingham, originally from the Scottish Highlands. Elder works with artists to develop events, exhibitions and text for organisations which have previously included: Jerwood Arts, London; BALTIC 39, Newcastle upon Tyne; Grand Union, Birmingham; and LUX Scotland, Glasgow. Previously Associate Curator at Grand Union, and Writer in Residence at Cooper Gallery, Dundee. Elder was named the inaugural recipient of the Stuart Croft Curatorial Award in 2020 to support a new project: The Birmingham Critical Film Forum.

### About Satellites Programme

Satellites Programme is Collective's development programme for emergent practitioners based in Scotland. Satellites aims to support diverse practitioners to produce a new commission and includes a critical development programme of retreats, workshops, studio visits and group discussions, public exhibitions, events and publishing. Practitioners are selected from an open submission by a new panel each year. The 2021/22 participants are Stephanie Black-Daniels, Mina Heydari-Waite, Katherine Ka Yi Liu 廖加怡, Joey Simons and Camara Taylor.