



TENDER

a symbiosis between sensorial experiences,
ecological encounters and community care

Beyond Darkness x Baum & Leahy

Part of The Care Project by Beyond Darkness



TENDER is a performance and an installation initiated by performance duo Beyond Darkness in collaboration with the visual artist duo Baum & Leahy. It is an immersive sensorial experience centred around care, tactility, multispecies kinship and community. TENDER is part of a bigger research, The CARE Project, which envisions developing an entrepreneurial practice of care within the performing arts to ensure long-term compassionate, sustainable and care-giving artistic processes.

TENDER is planned to premiere at the end of January / beginning February 2024 as a performance and continue as installation throughout the month of February, with scheduled communal activities such as readings on care, caring choreography workshops, and communal gatherings.

PERFORMANCE & INSTALLATION

As you enter the room, lit by sunlamps, you are guided by a performer to a spot on the outer edges of the space, forming a collective circle. On the walls are a variety of wheat grass sculptures, and in front of them, natural bean bags await you. The three performers invite you to sit/lie down while the lights slowly dim. Then, the performers uncoil a large circular wheat seed scarf which they gently place over your eyes, allowing them to reset and open up your other senses. A voice narrates a poem, followed by a soft tactile soundscape inspired by the sounds of our inner bodily lives. After a while, you are asked to remove the scarf and let it rest on your lap, still keeping the connection with the others. The lights softly come back on, the performers are now in the centre, inside a wheat grass landscape and immersed in a slow tactile sensing choreography. The soundscape transforms into vibrations, a tactile experience which allows you to sense your whole body.

Then, the performers reconfigure the space by moving you with the bean bags from the outer to the inner space, bringing you closer to the wheat grass landscape and the semi-overgrown and hanging sculptures which are made of wood, roots, hemp fibres and glass, some containing living organisms (microorganisms from natural waters, soil, mycelium). You are invited to place the scarf over your shoulders, enveloping you further with the others. The voice shares stories about kinship, gradually transforming into a live song, filling the room with acoustic sounds. The performers eventually remove the scarf and hang it on the wall, connecting it with the wheat grass sculptures. You are now given time to linger in the space to absorb the previous experiences, explore the different tactilities and engage in dialogues with the other people present.

The installation part of TENDER includes the same visual, haptic and sonic material without performers. Differently sized seed scarfs and smaller seed masks are provided to cover your eyes to reconnect with your inner rhythm(s). You can also explore your sense of touch through the different tactile elements and sculptures. TENDER also focuses on different relationships of care by observing other organisms and invites you to tend to the grass by trimming it and collecting its cuttings in a glass bowl for decomposition. Each week, we will host a workshop or activity in the space with different perspectives on kinship, community and care.



Image from 'Cellumonials' by Baum & Leahy

PURPOSE

The topic of care and caring practices has become a quite frequent one with self-care methods, retreats, and the concept of radical softness making it to the mainstream. Yet, as we continue to face political changes all over Europe, a war without end in sight, an evermore urgent climate crisis, and a rise in anti-feminist/-queer movements, we believe that we have to put more emphasis on care as a form of activism and resistance.

By placing care at the centre of our work we hope to make a stand that we need to implement care within all kinds of institutions and structures. Only from a perspective of care can we evoke the socio-political as well as environmental changes we so direly need. Through slowness, softness and tenderness, we oppose ideas of dominance and exploitation, and instead opt for a form of resistance starting from the artistic realm, and hopefully expanding it further through tender caring events and activities. Furthermore, as an all women collaboration, we would like to reclaim care as work that is not only expected from us or overlooked by external structures, but that needs to be given its due value within our society and organisations.

AUDIENCES & RELEVANCE

As this work aims to bring the experience and importance of care to individuals with the purpose of tending to community-building across a variety of differences, TENDER is developed for adults of all ages. Since (unpaid) care work is predominantly attributed to women and femmes, they are our main focus group, alongside other workers in the field of care, people with vision impairment, people with physical/mobility impairment, and elderly people.

We want to ensure that the TENDER experience can reach these often marginalised or neglected members of our society to whom we would like to extend care and well-being. We also aim to make it an all-access friendly space to refrain from catering only to normative people, extending our work beyond normative expectations and structures as a part of our caring approach to our audiences.







COLLABORATORS

TENDER, as part of The CARE Project, is developed by the performance duo Beyond Darkness, composed of choreographer Nanna Hanfgarn Jensen and director-dramaturg Nadja Mattioli, in collaboration with the artist duo Baum & Leahy, Amanda Baum and Rose Leahy.

The haptic sound art will be developed by Eliza Bozek; Cecilie Kjær, Anna Stamp, and Camilla S. Tellefsen will be the care-providing performers. Together, they will co-create the concept, performance and installation of the TENDER cosmos with the support of producer Emma Arnoldi. For a historical and contemporary study of care, Solveig Gade who co-authors the research project "Oikos: Care and Crisis in the 21st Century" assists the work as a consultant.

BEYOND DARKNESS

Beyond Darkness is the artistic cosmos of choreographer Nanna Hanfgarn Jensen and director-dramaturg Nadja Mattioli. Together, we create highly sensorial and experiential realms through immersive performances and ecocentric installations. We view our works as ecosystems in which new human and beyond human perspectives, lives and relationships are explored.

Beyond Darkness was born out of our fascination with the dark and exploring what is possible when we create from the unseen and the unknown, allowing our state of being to be entirely transformed and our senses and imagination to be heightened. Thus, we often incorporate complete darkness in our works and create at the verge of fantasy and reality.

We are also curious about the lives and experiences that extend beyond the human and therefore often take inspiration from natural environments and/or engage in multispecies collaborations, like fungi and plants. Ecological care and an appreciation for our interdependence with other species is central to our personal and artistic stories as well as the materials we work with.

Our artistic works are inherently collaborative and cross-aesthetic as our collaborators are professionals from various artistic, scientific and social backgrounds, such as dancers, sound artists, video artists, mycologists, care workers, and more. Together, we aim to inspire new perspectives of the now, collective visions of possible futures, and nurturing symbiotic (artistic) relationships with other-than-human beings, materials and objects.

www.beyonddarkness.dk



BAUM & LEAHY

Baum & Leahy (Amanda Baum, DK, and Rose Leahy, EN) is an award-winning international studio exploring biophilic, collaboratively-driven artistic creation through interactive installation, art direction, scenography and experience design.

Collaborating with experts across disciplines, from microbiologists to musicians, quantum computer scientists to architects, dancers and creative technologists, they open up, question and sensorialise scientific research into tactile, participatory experiences. Through research-led worldmaking and material storytelling, their work allows the beholder a proximity to alternative realities, melting between the feasible and fantastical.

Since meeting at the Royal College of Art, Baum & Leahy have exhibited and run events at internationally renowned venues, including Somerset House, Victoria and Albert Museum, Wellcome Collection, (UK), Kunsthall Charlottenborg, The National Gallery of Denmark, Medical Museion, Roskilde Festival (DK), Museum Het Valkhof, MU Hybrid Art House (NL), Centre for Book Arts (USA), Dansens Hus, Vega Scene (NO), Art Laboratory Berlin (DE), and MMMAD – Madrid's Urban Digital Art Festival (ES).

Baum & Leahy recently won the 'Post-digital Landscapes' Prize with Sensory Cellumonials. They were shortlisted for the Hedda Prisen 2022, Lumen Art Prize in 2019 and 2021, The Rapoport Award for Women in Art and Tech in 2019, and received both the Bio Art & Design Award and the British Library Labs Artistic Award in 2018. During 2020-2021 they were commissioned artists for One Cell at a Time, a public engagement program for the Human Cell Atlas. They were recently selected to be part of The Danish Arts Council's career development grant 'The Young Artistic Elite' 22/23, and are currently residents at BOM (Birmingham Open Media).

www.baumleahy.com



TENDER

Concept: Beyond Darkness x Baum & Leahy

Choreography: Beyond Darkness

Installation / scenography: Baum & Leahy

Performers: Cecilie Kjær, Camilla Tellefsen, Anna Stamp

Sound art: Eliza Bozek

Text: Nadja Mattioli

Producer: Emma Arnoldi

Consultant: Solveig Gade

Supported by: Statens Kunstfond



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