

Heart of Glass



Transcript:
Reflections on In Every Bite of the Emperor
with Youngsook Choi (she/her) and Wendi Sia (she/her)

Part of With For About: Care and the Commons

heartofglass

Length of audio: 56:19

Recorded on 25th May 2023 at One Knowlsey, Court Hey Park

heartofglass

Youngsook Choi:

Hello everyone. I'm Youngsook. I'd like to start the presentation by relating to Fiona's proposition about listening by paying attention to what's happening beyond four walls of this room. Let's take a moment and try to listen and be present to the outside of this building. There are other gatherings happening around on this site, in this site, and excitement or anxiety of opening new cafe. Not separating this room and our bodies and this presentation, the stories to be told throughout the day from the surroundings. So we are situated this within. And also, not just the gatherings and happenings of humans, there are lots of movement under the soil in this ground and birds are resting after a busy morning. So let's try to notice all of this. And also, let's think about the spirits that are staying in this room. We're living through really difficult system that puts profit above everything, that puts progress above care. It's almost a nonsense to think there is no ghost in this room. There must be one or two, even more. Let's try to acknowledge that, too. I think this noticing and acknowledging and the sense of interconnectedness with the unseen in the seen, the unheard, in the heard is the critical context of In Every Bite of the Emperor.

In Every Bite of the Emperor is the ongoing long term ecological grief project that weaves transnational narratives and inter species healing around damaged lands and their broken communities. Grief has been the focus of my practice since 2020. It started with my previous project called Not This Future. Not This Future commemorates the Essex 39 incident. I don't know whether you know that incident. 39 Vietnamese people found dead in the back of the lorry in Essex. It was about three and a half years ago. That incident, we build such an intricate

heartofglass

structure of extraction, the global majority is living through, and we are pretty much part of it. And that incident is also related to environmental disaster back in Vietnam, which you will see the details later. So after finishing that project, I realised that the remit of grief should be extended beyond the loss of human lives. And that that emergence is how in how Every Bite of the Emperor was born. And here I'm proposing grief beyond mourning and sadness over the loss. I proposed grief as collective interrogation. It's more like a socio political autopsy.

When you go to wake and funeral, what is the first question pops in your mind? The first question is what happened to this body? What is the cause of the death and this loss? But when you do this question collectively, it can be really powerful interrogation process. That's how I propose grief. In that sense, grief also can be the leverage for social change. Because when you think of what if, what if, because when you lose your loved ones, there are lots of what ifs pops in your head. What if I've done this? This wouldn't have happened. Something like that. So it's also about reimagining different possibilities, different futures through the process of grieving collectively.

And this project engages four different geographical sites. The starting point is not far from here. It's Colliers Moss in St Helens, right next to Liverpool. A series of destructive industrial activities was held here, but it is quite remarkable how the land is vigorously recovering in last 20 something years. But there is a small patch of land that still refuses to grow anything. It's a very, very special land. I'm planning to organise a witnessing community with a group of women from Chrysalis Center for Change, a local charity for the survivors of domestic violence. So it's

heartofglass

going to be quite powerful witnessing process. People who understand what trauma and violence means sitting with the land who went through a series of violence.

And through that journey of witnessing, we're also trying to create the ecological grief ritual. So that will start from next month. And second site of ecological grief project is Perak and Pahang in Malaysia. I'm particularly interested in learning healing ritual process as the core of a spiritual knowledge system from Indigenous communities. And also there is a link between this area and Colliers Moss is a mining business. Malaysia used to be the largest team producer under British colonial rule. So there is a connection in terms of colonial extractivism.

Third site is Sampyoung Village in Korea. It's a very small farming village in the Southern part of Korea. And there is a group of women elders who had protested for seven years against the government plan of expanding nuclear energy power plant. And the reason of opposing wasn't about protecting their properties. It was about very spiritual one, which you're going to find later again.

And lastly, it makes sense to go back to the fishing village in Vietnam, where this future project is related. So it's a making closer of this grief circle. So these are a few sites that are related to ecological grief project. So when I finished the preliminary research around what ecological grief means, I wrote the prologue. So this prologue is more like a compass. What stance I'm taking in this long journey of ecological grief and what are the grounding thoughts I need to carry throughout the process.

heartofglass

For me, it's very important to set the critical ground, but that critical ground is not just based on theory, it's based on the stance. And stance is often pretty much about ethics. What is your ethical stance? So I'm going to share short visual essay of Prologue.

(Prologue)

And the list of losses goes on,
on and on, and on and on, and on and on.
My father warned me, Don't go near seashore.
There is a horror you cannot bear.
Of course, I didn't listen to him.
Seventy tons of dead fish, no sign of life.
I see my reflection in their rotting eyes.
I wear indescribable stinks of their intoxicated flesh.
I can hardly breathe.
Chest pain, wet cheeks.
But Father, if I don't witness this, where my blind sight would take me?

In October 2019, 39 people were found dead in the back of a lorry in Essex. They died in suffocation whilst trying to cross the UK border illegally. The home office and the media quickly agreed to condemn people smugglers as a cause of this tragedy. However, the mainstream narratives around this incident did not acknowledge most victims are from two fishing villages

heartofglass

in Vietnam where the marine ecosystem is completely destroyed. The multinational steel corporate directly dumped their toxic waste into the ocean. Fishing became impossible. Tourists soon quickly died out. Most people in these two villages lost their livelihood and became people smugglers targets. Desperate young people decided to take a risk to help their families survive and follow their dreams. The youngest victim was only 15 years old.

When Franz Fanon says, I enter the list, I immediately think of death, death of all kinds of lives and of course, death of stories. Adrienne Maree Brown says, grief is not linear and it is everywhere. If grief is everywhere, they must be connected here and there. I have been looking for these thoughts.

God, angels, humans, animals, plants, minerals.

God, angels, humans, animals, plants, minerals.

God, angels, humans, animals, plants, minerals.

The great chain of being in this this mediaeval order of the world. Everything descends from God. Prolineus, a revered botanical scientist, spent his whole life refining the taxonomic system for nature. First, he removed the spiritual sphere from the world of science. Without God, without angels, the hierarchy of his science kingdom descends from a very specific human variety. Europaeus Albus, white European, along with sub racial species of red Americana,

heartofglass

tawny Asiana, and black Africana. The white European became the equation to God. Since then, the world has had to follow their order and serve them.

In 1872 Japan, the Meiji Emperor ingested meat in public as part of the New Year's celebration. Proposing the West as the cultural sphere, Westernization was accelerated in the Meiji era, including the ambition of transforming Asian bodies into Western ones. This transformation wasn't just about cutting hair short and changing into the Victorian attires, but also about everyday diet. Meat centered Western food consumption was declared as a national benefit. In times, meat eating was a social taboo. It was a forceful institutional gesture. I imagine myself as one of the spectators quietly witnessing my Emperor chewing the red meat and dismissing 900 years old social taboo. I foresee the forests are getting wiped out, the slaughtering of trees and flora and species inhabiting them. In every bite of the emperor, I feel the blood filling up in my mouth. The taste of westernization, the taste of great empire. I feel sick.

When you become a widow, you see widows everywhere. When you lament, the ghost becomes no longer a stranger. Every loss directs us to all other worlds co-existing. They're beyond our eyes, beyond the Latin alphabets. History might select a few, but the story is all of us. The story is not from your head, but your belly.

The field was full of bright yellow spots, a calling from dandelions. I imagined a bitter salad, tea, and liquor containing mineral goodness. I imagined my hands touching the wet soil, tightly cuddling around the dandelion roots. I thought of my mother. She always managed to forage

heartofglass

something, regardless of the season, whenever we go to the mountain together. I started digging up the harvest of the dandelions. But soon a man with the angst approached me.

'Excuse me, I'm the keeper of this garden. What are you doing here?'

'I'm just harvesting a few dandelions.'

The man started raising his voice. 'Can you not see you are irritating the landscape? There was nothing here before I came. I secured the funding and have been working hard to create and protect this ecosystem. And now you're destroying it.'

I was frightened and quickly hid my dirty hands and dandelions behind my back. 'Sorry, I didn't know.'

At that moment, it wasn't just the scolding man who upset me. The whole situation must have been comic to these dandelions as I heard them laughing and giggling and saying, 'Who protects whom?' 'Did he just say nothing was here before he came?' I wished it wasn't just me who could hear the dandelion voices. I wish that the man could understand the land he is standing on is beyond his capacity of protection or destruction, and certainly beyond the funding schemes for conservation.

heartofglass

In 2014, the elders of Sam Pyong Lee, a small farming village in Korea, gathered around their shaman tree. The purpose of this gathering is to call for protesting against the government plan to install the high pressure transmission towers across their spiritual land. Two towers were scheduled to be built in this village, one in the No-In Mountain where the community rituals are often held, and the other just behind this shaman tree. The construction for the first tower launched already with a series of explosions that upset the spiritual mountain. A few days later, the village suffered from the excessive amount of hail. It damaged all the orchards and onion fields. In that year, farmers' income declined to almost zero. The elders see it as a curse. Without funded scientific research and all those complicated numbers, the elders just know this is the result of ecological disruption and human arrogance and exploitation towards nature. The villagers are asking the mountain for forgiveness and praying to the tree for protection from further destructive progression. Clearly, our elders' trust is not on the state authority, but on their ancestral tree and mountain who came to this world before them. Their grandmothers recognized the importance of forming interspecies solidarity, calling not only humans, but also all spirits of nature.

Anna Tsing in her book, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, says that gathering becomes happening when the self starts getting contaminated by the others, the indeterminate moments of self and other transformation. The others were trying to shape their transformative moment by blurring not only self and other, but also humans and non humans, the material and the spiritual. And I'm here with a list that is almost never ending. I beg you not to give up reading every name on it.

heartofglass

Early this year, I had the privilege to finally visit mining sites and Indigenous communities in Malaysia. But I couldn't have made much out of it if I didn't set up the local partnership with GERIMIS. GERIMIS has extensively researched and archived around Orang Asli communities, Indigenous communities, and their trustworthy relationship and extensive knowledge really helped me out to have a deep, dense time while I was there. So, Wendi is going to share what we excavated together during this field trip. Wendi is tuning in from Malaysia.

Wendi Sia:

Hi, everyone. My name is Wendi and I was doing a few work with Yongsook, I think, two months ago. Before I start my presentation, I just want to share with you just something that a friend of mine from the village shared with me. He said that this world has many realms and every realm has its laws. Just as an opening before I go into my presentation. I just want to give a context of where we were in Malaysia two months back. This is one part of Malaysia, which is the peninsula. In the centre of the peninsula, there's actually a very long mountain range which is known as Banjaran Titiwangsa Mountain range. And overlaying this map with where the indigenous tribes in Malaysia, there are 19 tribes. This is only in peninsular. And when we say Orang Asli is referring to the indigenous tribes in peninsular Malaysia. But if you include the indigenous tribes in Borneo, there is a different name.

Our work focus on the Orang Asli in peninsular and they actually only make up less than 1% of the population. So they are very minority in Malaysia. Most of the tribe names that you see on the screen here, whether it's Semai, Temiar, Mah Meri, Temuan, they all translate to their

heartofglass

own language as humans or people of the forest. So why they have that label? Because when the British came to Malaysia back then, when they go into the forest and they meet the tribes, they asked them, 'What are you' or 'Who are you?' And they reply them, 'We are humans.' So then the name stuck with them until today. And they live in forest reserves. And which means that their customary land rights are not recognized, which their ancestral lands are not recognized. And it gets complicated because land matters are within state jurisdiction. So when you go from one state to another state in Malaysia, there's different laws that govern the land, so it gets very complex.

So where Yongsook and I were at was in the West and East Semai regions of the peninsula. There's quite a difference between the East and West Semai, even though they share the same name. Okay, so who are the Semai? They referred to themselves, when you ask them, they call themselves Sengoi, which translates to people. They were traditionally semi-nomadic, so they would when they plant their hill paddy or their Cassava, their corn, so on and so forth. They follow the fallows, so they would stay within the place between three to four months before they shift to another place. This was a long time ago. And under the Senoi group, which is Semai is under that group, they are known for their dream practices. So their dream practice actually becomes a very important foundation to their cosmology, which they view the landscape as not only comprising of themselves or the plants, the forest, or the animals. There are also unseen beings that govern the land as well. As well alongside the people. These are things like Ruai, which translates to soul, Mai Serak, which translates to people of the forest, and then the various souls and spirits of the land. Because of how they view the world and how

heartofglass

they position themselves within the cosmos, it's actually what I call a cosmology of care, because everything that they do, it's about looking after themselves as well as the seen and unseen creatures around them. The Semais do not see a difference between themselves and the rest of the cosmos. It means they're actually one with the universe, I would say. This means that they actually recognise the role of the Ruai or the spirits and the shaman, playing a role in maintaining the wellbeing of the community. What this means is that the shaman actually holds a very important position where whenever there is an imbalance between the human and the spirit world, they are the ones who would try to gain back the balance through these rituals. Because when there is an imbalance between the human and spirit worlds, this is reflected in illness or disasters. So then they believe that whenever someone falls sick, or when there is a very huge storm, or there is a huge flood, which means that something has gone wrong within the cosmos. And this is usually when people have done something that made the spirit angry.

So then the shaman comes into play to regain the balance and the health of the cosmos. So there are two types of shamanic rituals. One is the Kebut or we call it the Dark Sewang, which happens in the dark, or the Gensak, which is more celebratory. Within this Sewang, they are the shaman which is the center who takes the lead in the ritual. And then there will be the ladies in what they call the jijoi that would play the songs. So then they would echo after the shaman. So the shaman would sing the song that they would call the spirit or his spirit guide to come within the ritual. And this is where we in this Sewang ritual is where they try to regain the balance as I explained earlier.

heartofglass

So then I want to point out two different types of rituals between the East and the West Semai. The West Semai, they have something called the Genggulak, which is only present in the West, which is in Perak. And the Jenulak is the one which is the original ritual before the Genggulak was introduced to them, but we will get into this later in the presentation.

In our field work, we looked at two landscapes, one that has been damaged by extractive economy, which is mining, especially in Perak, and one that has been taken care of by the Orang Asli generations of the Indigenous people in Pahang. So we spent about 10 days there and we used landscapes as dichotomies where we center on reverse rituals and because we wanted to look at how generations of old institution of customs and laws of the land helped by the Semai maintained stability of their place and how the disregard of this has brought upon destruction of a landscape which affects the Semai until today in the name of growth and expansion.

Why rivers, rituals and Ruai? Because rivers are life, which is water and healing, to the Semai in which shamanic ritual employ because they will use the water as part of their healing and also maintenance of the souls within the cosmos. As I was mentioning, they are spread between two regions. Where the West Semai are they are very close to the Malays, which are the dominating group in Malaysia. And because of how the geographic landscape is, it's very easy for companies to open the land to extract from the land. And therefore, a lot of their traditional belief system has been altered because of the contact between the Malays. And then East Semai, until today, they still maintain their traditional values and way of life because

heartofglass

where they live is very close to... I mean, it's a very challenging terrain. So to get in there, there are lots of hills and rivers that you have to cross. So then a lot of it has been maintained until today.

So the West Semai area, where the once the largest tin mining, one of the most productive tin mining places in the world back then, was where the East Semai lived. And as you can see in the picture here, how all of the blue dots that you can see, those are actually ex mining areas. And the Kinta River played a very main role because there was how they transported the the tin dredger. That's why all of the tin mining places are close to the rivers. And because of how thin it was a very important source of revenue in Perak back then, they actually changed a lot of the land status into state reserve. So then there was an agreement with the Indigenous back then, like, give up your land and then we will return it to you when we are done extracting the tin. But the Semai do not have access to a lot of land.

The difference between the Malay shaman versus the Semai shaman is that the Malay shaman use a very power oriented way of talking to the spirit. So they would control the spirit of the land when they are opening the land versus how a Semai shaman, when they are when they want to tame an area which is very strong spiritually, they would spend many years communicating with the spirit of the land. So they reached the point of agreement.

So this is how a lot of the traditional ways of the Indigenous people of this area, the West Semai area, has been changed because of contact and because of how the state wanted to actually

heartofglass

extract the area. A lot of my Semai friends who are living in the area where heavy mining was done back then. They are still suffering from the effects of mining because first, they do not have a lot of land to maintain their traditional way of life. And as well as it's very hard to recover an ex mining area. So there are lots of land that has just been left there.

Just to share something that my friend shared with me who's living in that area that she said that the rich will never have enough, but she also said that they themselves don't have enough. The only difference that the rich keep wanting more. And for the Orang Asli Semai, they just want to maintain what their ancestors have been doing for many generations, which have been changed because of how the state government wanted to change the way that they dealt with the land back then.

So we move into East Semai in Pahang, and we looked at the river as well. And they have the main river there, which is the Jelai Kecil River, and the tributary, which is the Kenderong River. And for them, they viewed the river as a source of life and source of their customs. Along the rivers, there are actually a lot of sacred sites. And one of it is the waterfall that I went with Youngsook, and also a hot spring which we didn't manage to go because we require permission from the spirit to actually be there. And there's also the most sacred of all, which is the Telaga Tujuh or the Seven Wells, which is very far away from this river that you see in the picture here. And they believe that this area is the source of all water. And we can actually see how they take care of the area because it's not only a sacred site for their spiritual purposes, it's also a source of clean water. And actually in one of these rivers at the hot spring actually, there is

heartofglass

gold that exists within that hot spring, but they do not take the gold. And when I asked why they do not take the gold is because they said that first of all, gold don't belong to them because they believe that it belongs to the spirits that are in other plane of existence who supply water to them. So if they do take the gold and then these people within that other plane of existence would stop supplying water to them. And then secondly, they do not take the gold because they have no use for these rocks. They cannot eat it and they will never trade their land for money.

But the most recent threat, which is a micro hydro project which would encroach into their sacred site. And when the shaman that you see in the picture here, his name is Jais, he communicated with the spirit of the hot spring and asked, Is it okay that the micro hydro project touches into your area? And the spirit said, No, because if the place is disturbed, something bad will happen. And this has already been proven true in other parts of Orang Asli community because when sacred areas have been turned into dams or has been locked, and then there's very bad floods that happen, which also goes back to not scientifically, forest is where the water is maintained. So when it's been destroyed, that's when floods happen. But this goes back to how our state government do not recognise or respect age old institutions of shaman and of customs because they would just say, 'I'm just going to do this project because I don't have whatever... I'm not superstitious, so therefore I will not listen to you.'

And there's another shaman in the same area. His name is Bah Cip. And when talking about a development project sanctioned by the state government, he said that the government may

heartofglass

set rules and laws governing the land, but the Orang Asli's are the ones who have lived there and who have looked after the area for many generations. And he said that it's very important that their own customs and their own laws are also respected when decisions are made because it would impact their lives. Which brings back to the opening of this presentation about how there are many realms that exists in the world and each realm has its own laws. When this... And he said that no amount of money would equal to the richness given by nature. So therefore, he would never let go of his land for any amount of money that was given to them in purchasing of their land.

So as a conclusion, the neglect of this duality of this other world of modern humans has actually brought our world to it's state today in terms of climate crisis, heat waves, flooding, which is an illness of the planet because an imbalance has already occurred. But I believe that within this lies solution to the crisis that we face today, which is when we should start listening to our Indigenous people and returning to ancestral ways of caring for the Earth. So it's really about understanding our relationship with the land, understanding the relationship that we have helped with nature, since ancestral times.

Thank you.

Youngsook Choi:

heartofglass

So holding on to the amazing insight Wendi shared, I'm going to tell you the story about the elephant named Larut. It's a mixture of research discoveries, conversations I had with the elders from Indigenous communities, and the speculative narratives. And that's usual style of writing I work around. Because my digestion of this dense, deep time in Malaysia is still ongoing, the story is quite raw and heavy. So I'll leave the responsibility of refining the story as a collective one. So you can feel the gap of the fragments of the story.

A theodolite is a precision optical apparatus for measuring the angles distances between designated points. As a primary tool for land surveying, it is extensively used for mining and engineering construction. The readings of this machine dictate the plan of land use and the position of buildings and infrastructure. A modern theodolite measures electronically and its measurements are stored directly in computer memory. It's called a total station.

Angle measurement, distance measurement, coordinate measurement, data processing, the land geometrics, meters, squares, hectares, acres, only the numbers are approvable stories. Fragmentation, ownership, extraction, total station.

The Halak, a village shaman of an Indigenous community in the Malaysia rainforest, is asking me, throw the black stone into the fire. He insists, let's see the smoke first. I brought this stone from the land that refuses to survive. Nothing can grow there despite the persistent nurturing attempt of the silver birch trees and most communities around. This land used to be a clay pit. Then the dumping ground of coal mining spoils for decades, and more recently, the backyard

heartofglass

of glass manufacturing. I imagine this land as my body. I feel its resistance against recovery from the abyssal layers of toxic sedimentation. It is still grieving from the underpaid trauma. The soil is mourning. Tears form into a solid black stone. After explaining to the Halak and elders what happened to this land, I carefully seek for advice. If the spirit guide would show the pathway to healing. If I bring up this stone during Sewang, the healing ritual of the Semai tribe.

The Halak replies, 'You see, no smoke. It's not possible to bring them back for a very long time. The land wants to be the reminder of all the loss.'

One of the elders quietly adds, 'Every inch square of soil has a unique spirit. The land you are talking about seems to embrace none.'

The silence around the fire, my heart is sinking deep and dark, thinking of countless spirits displaced from the land. A theodolite would never be able to measure this loss. It's coordinate numbers make up only a half story, if it could be a story at all. Long Jaafar had an elephant. Long Jaafar is one of the sultans. He had an elephant named Larut as a pet. One day, Larut wandered off into the deep jungle. After missing several days, Long Jaafar sent his men to look for Larut. They found the elephant covered with mud containing a significant amount of tin ore. This discovery led to the establishment of Larut, a tin mining belt in Taiping, Malaysia.

This is the story that would greet you at the beginning if you visit the tin mining museum in Perak. However, my suspicion brewed a different story. It's a little bit longer than this one. Long

heartofglass

Jaafar used to tell Larut how his mother abandoned him and ran away, how he rescued a vulnerable baby elephant from starvation and harsh wilderness, giving him a name. One day, Larut dreamed of his mother standing in dead silence, crying, happy. The dream was so vivid, Larut took it as a calling. He decided to venture out to find the truth. But the jungle Larut remembered was no longer present. Every direction and every path of the rainforest was laid with palm oil plantations. Endless, endless, endless rows of the same trees, planted on the same day to be slaughtered on the same day. Now, got many signs of other lives, including Larut's tribe.

After days and days of searching, Larut reached the most beautiful mud field he's ever seen. It was shimmering with a silvery texture. Straight away, he jumped in. So much joy to forget all other worries for a moment. But somehow Larut started feeling disoriented and suddenly fainted. When Larut opened up his eyes, he found himself back in captivity. And people around him looked so excited and buzzy. They were talking about numbers, big numbers. Larut knew what these big numbers really meant to the land and its communities. It means no home, no life, refugees, orphans, blood and tears. The foreseeable horror unsettled his stomach. Larut started crying, crying heavy, just like his mother in the dream.

Following monoculture plantations, mining is the second largest cause of deforestation in Malaysia. It threatens 78% of species inhabiting only the rainforest and Orang Asli communities. Tin deposit spreads across Western peninsula of Malaysia, particularly the Kinta Valley in Perak. In 1883, under British colonial rule, Malaysia was the largest tin producer in the world.

heartofglass

In the 1920s, dredging machines were introduced to scale up tin production. They were built in the U.K. for the Malayan tin companies with the heavy holdings of foreign investment. It is a machine for mass destruction that leaves a biophysical environment permanently damaged.

Today, there is only one remaining tin dredge in Malaysia, Tanjung Tualang Tin Dredge number 5, also known as Tanjung Tualang Tin Dredge No. 5, also known as TT5. It continues its operation for 44 years until August 1982. It is now fully open for visitors to experience the TT5 guided dredge tour. TT5 has been proclaimed as part of the Kinta Valley National Geopark since October 2018. A 'Must-Visit' Heritage Site by Tripadvisor. What brilliant capitalist magic of transforming this destructive machine into friendly tourist site.

Have you ever looked at the map of Kinta Valley? It has hundreds of lakes around the Kinta River. They didn't arrive by geological time. They are manmade lakes, the consequential geography of violent tin dredging. The topography of Kinta Valley is made of large tears, and this deeply touching presence of a grieving geography trickles down to every tin of preserved food, especially the ones served as army rations in war times. And every electronic circuit board in our computers. However, the real magic is happening here. Magnificent solitary stocks, chatty swallows, and sweet rands are gathering together, witnessing and healing through Larut's tears. The broken land embraces all of them with gratitude.

In December 2022, the Malaysian newspaper, The Star, reported the death of an Indigenous woman. The report says she was trampled by wild elephants who attacked the house of nine

heartofglass

residents. All managed to escape except the mother who was found dead near the banana trees. I'm thinking that must be Larut. He wants his mother back. He terribly misses the forest.

Bah Cip, the shaman in another village asserts his craftworks for selling. One of them is the Udun elephant sculpture. He mentions the tragedy of the mother of five children who died from the elephant attack. He also adds this is because of the relentless timber logging that has been getting worse in the area. Hundreds of years old trees are falling down by electric chainsaw, and the excessive amount of logging residue blocks the river.

Bah Cip worries about elephants going hungry and thirsty. No sign of a revenge plan for the loss of their own. The increasing conflict between humans and elephants is a national concern in Malaysia with an estimated 30 million ringgit worth of damage over the six year period between 2015 and 2020. Various measures have been implemented such as electric fencing to prevent trespassing on plantations.

So far, the most effective method seems to be wildlife corridors that provide food sources to elephants. Malaysia Palm oil Green Conservation Foundation is incorporating a nephier grass, also known as elephant grass, cultivation project in the wildlife corridor so that the elephants have food to eat and need not wander into plantations. They say it's the act of harmony that encourages humans and elephants to co exist. As part of the project, they will also fix satellite collars on several elephants to study their common roots before the green corridor is created.

heartofglass

How much would you pay for consuming Larut's orphanage trauma? It turns out quite affordable. 10 ringgit for an adult, 5 ringgit for a child, about two pounds for a full price. Referring to Tripadvisor, you will never forget the day you helped to give an elephant a bath. Get up close and personal with the amazing Semai wild elephant at Kuala Gandah Elephant Orphanage Sanctuary. Be sure to book in advance because the centre has strict daily visitor quarters.

However, Tree Tops Elephant Reserve in Phuket, Thailand, informs cautiously. 'In the wild, elephants love to bathe in rivers, ponds, streams, and muddy wallows. They need space to splash, roll around, submerge, and cover themselves in mud. Elephants like peace and quiet, not loud groups of visitors throwing mud or buckets of water at them. If people are crowding around them, it is very stressful for the elephant. Also, the handler needs to control the elephant by forcing it to stand still or lie down, not giving any freedom for the elephant to play.'

Sewang healing ritual starts after sunset, but the elders are getting ready in the morning for climbing up the mountain to collect sacred leaves and flowers. Along the way, the elders point out all these significant medicinal plants for different pains, including dark, red brown, waxy skinned bastika mushrooms for crying children. The stalk of the mushroom is cut into seven pieces and threaded into a necklace for the children who don't stop crying. One of the elders picks one beautiful bastika and quietly handed it down to me. Does he notice I'm still crying every night?

Sun goes down.

heartofglass

Villagers gather in the ceremonial house. Balei Pancur, the plant's totem offering for the spirit guide is hung up and beaming with the heavenly floral scent. The Halak starts singing and calling for a spirit guide. Midwife hits the gong and mothers beat the bamboo tubes to join the song. Eventually, everyone gets up for dancing. Our bodies are swaying like tall, steady elephant grasses. I see the mother of five children appears right next to Larut. She's gently wiping Larut's tears with forgiveness. They are also swaying to the healing sound. The boundaries between different spirits are collapsing, all marching and dancing to the pulse of the rainforest. This swaying is our acute witness, our joyous prayer.

The Immortal Bodies, built in concrete, painted in the Lego blocks colour scheme. Once all perfectly measured, categorised, unnamed, unrooted, separated from motherland and mothers. The debris of the colonial abuse remarks the signs of disorder and malfunction. Hands cut off, skin peeled off, cracks all over. But wait, the mighty fern spores have landed in the wounds. They are telling the only beginning lies in the absolute ending. Persistently returning the ongoing prophet of our broken world, ferns are casting an ancient old spell. They are taking down a total station.

Thank you.