

Stay with me by Xenia Benivolsky

"Suppose you were told there was a tiger in the next room" starts off the wikipedia page on the source of the word *numinous*. I am searching for an Island. *Numen* is a spirit or a deity associated with a fear of the unknown. In the exhibition *Numinous Islands* by Jamie Ross and Tara Nicholson there is an island, maybe several islands but they are one and the same. You leave someone behind and jump in the water. You fall asleep on one island and wake up on the other, the water carries you through. Water, in its most common interpretation, refers to the subconscious, to sleep, to fear to secrets and to death. Water flows under and around the Island, carrying away sounds and smells, embracing its shores. Manhattan is an island, so is Montreal. In every island is the possibility of being deserted, of being stuck together or being completely alone. A tree falls on an island. The water remembers but the Island forgets.

The art of self-remembering is a concept introduced a 1949 book by Russian philosopher P. D. Ouspensky, which recounts his meeting and subsequent association with George Gurdjieff. Published posthumously after Ouspensky's death, the book was titled *Fragments of an Unknown Teaching* and *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten* before a publisher insisted on adding the tagline *In Search for the Miraculous*. In the book, Gurdjieff is famously quoted as saying "*Man lives his life in sleep, and in sleep he dies.*" Giving a distinct perspective on various ancient texts such as the Bible and many religious prayers, he claimed texts such as "*Sleep not*"; "*Awake, for you know not the hour*"; and "*The Kingdom of Heaven is Within*"² are examples of forgotten knowledge in support of his thesis. Ouspensky's pupils in England had all thought that Gurdjieff was dead. They discovered he was alive only after Ouspensky's death.

The Ocean wave was the name of the pocket cruiser in which Bas Jan Ader had set out to make a west-east crossing of the North Atlantic on July 9, 1975. Jan Ader was most famous for his performative installations such as *Don't Leave me* (1969). He was at sea for 3 weeks enacting the performance piece *In Search for the Miraculous* (1975-ongoing) before losing contact with land. Prior to his disappearance, Ader's most famous films include one where he is hanging on a branch until his grip gives out and he falls into a stream, and a film in which he rides his bike into a canal.³

1 G. I. Gurdjieff, philosopher and a composer born in Armenia. Gurdjieff believed that most humans do not possess a unified mind-body consciousness and thus live their lives in a state of hypnotic "waking sleep", but that it is possible to transcend to a higher state of consciousness and achieve full human potential. The exact date of his birth remains unknown though authors argue it to be 1866.

2 *The Kingdom of Heaven (is within you)* is the last track on The 13th floor elevators' debut album, released in 1966. The Album's top charting single *You're gonna miss me*, later became the title of a documentary on the band's lead singer, Roky Erickson. In 1974, after having been released from state psychiatric hospital, Erickson formed a new band which he called "*Bleib alien*", *Bleib* being an anagram of Bible and/or German for "stay," and "Alien" being a pun on the German word *allein* ("alone") – the phrase in German therefore being "*remain alone*." In the 80s, Erickson had become obsessed with mail, spending hours poring over random junk mail, writing letters to solicitors and to celebrities (dead or living). He was arrested at the end of the decade, Erickson picked up mail from neighbours and taped it to the walls of his room. Since he had never opened any of the mail, the charges were ultimately dropped.

3 Ader's mother wrote the poem *From the Deep Waters of Sleep on 12 October 1975*, after having what she described as a premonition of his death:

*From the deep waters of sleep I wake up to consciousness.
In the distance I hear a train rumbling in the early morning.
It is going East and passes the border. Then it will stop.*

*I feel my heart beating too. It will go on beating for some time.
Then it will stop.
I wonder if the little heart that has beaten with mine, has stopped.
When he passed the border of birth, I laid him at my breast,
Rocked him in my arms.
He was very small then.*

*A white body of a man, rocked in the arms of the waves,
Is very small too.*

*What are we in the infinity of ocean and sky?
A small baby at the breast of eternity.*

*Have you heard of happiness
Springing from a deep well of sorrow?
Of love, springing from pain and despondency, agony and death?
Such is mine.*



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