

SARAH
BLISSETT

THE LISTENER

MAJ
HORN
TIDAL
TONGUES



Maj Horn
during the performance
at Getterön

TENTACULAR TONGUES

‘Tidal Tongues’ is a site-responsive performance by artist Maj Horn and artist researcher Sarah Blissett, performed at Getterön, Varberg, on 24th August 2025. The work explores embodied entanglements between seaweed and human bodies and unfolds in three parts: a procession and performance lecture, an exploratory workshop, and a celebratory seaweed feast. The following text is written by Sarah Blissett alongside reflections on the work by Caroline Elgh,¹ who participated in the performance and with sketches by Maj Horn. Together, we think through feminist figurations² and flows between humans and seaweeds across parts of the performance and research from the creative process. We consider the ways that tentacular tongues can weave mythical and material lineages that extend from ancient algae to past, present and future oceans.



ALGAE ANCESTOR PROCESSION AND PERFORMANCE LECTURE

Today, we invite you to think with your tongues and the tides as we weave threads between our mouths and watery marine flows through the alchemy of seaweeds. Come with us as we explore what our bodies absorb from seaweeds from the minerals dissolved in the air to traces of iodine and salt and the nutrients in our guts. We are thinking about the ways that storytelling, tasting and digesting can inspire new forms of kin-making with algae and the ocean as our bodies become porous to the seepages of seaweeds.

Sarah Blisset

Caroline Elgh

Dressed in a blue fishing net with a spoon as a brooch and dried seaweed entangled, I stand at the edge of Getterön where earth touches ocean. Where the two overlap. I conceive how earth is materialised as rocks and sand and ocean as salty surging water. Existing in-between the wet and dry, the coastal world can be described as a borderland⁴ where land and sea, wet and dry, solid and liquid, human and nonhuman, nature and culture are entangled. Here in *Tidal Tongues* the Getterön coastline form a borderland where seaweeds and humans meet: a feminist seaweed culture⁵ that allows us participants to shift focus from the view of coastlines as flat and horizontal to bring specific attention to three-dimensional fluid perspectives and the nonhuman seaweed world under water.

Algae are our ancestors; they are some of the oldest life-forms on the planet and they are responsible for producing approximately every second breath that humans breathe. Seaweeds can transform sunlight and oxygen and absorb carbon from the atmosphere through photosynthesis but, despite this, they are not quite plants. Seaweeds are ancient forms of macro-algae.

Sarah Blisset

INVITATION: CLOSE YOUR EYES

To stand at the edge of the sea is to feel a draw towards planetary entanglements. Allow yourself to seep into an awareness of gravitational forces as our tidal bodies are pulled into sync with lunar cycles. Imagine that we are floating upwards from the earth into the atmosphere and towards the moon. Here, we are amidst the orbits of other planets in the galaxy, transported to a time when life first appeared on earth around 3.7 billion years ago, when it was just a rock spinning through space. Now, let our focus gradually zoom back into planet earth as a swirling soup of particles, gases and bacteria. On earth, a single-celled lifeform absorbs another single-cell into its body through a process of digestion and integration called endosymbiosis.¹⁰ In this way, ancient micro-algae cyanobacteria first developed the ability to photosynthesise, making the evolution of life on earth possible. To think with algae is to explore the very origins of life on planet earth.

Algae ancestors gave rise to other forms of ancient life-forms and seaweeds that evolved into three branching groups based on colour: red, green and brown varieties. The oldest forms of algae are the red algae, Rhodophyta, alongside these forms the green varieties evolved, which shared a common ancestor, the Chlorophyta, and then later the browns, Phaeophyta.¹¹ These brown algae include Bladderwrack and Sugar Kelp, which we will be tasting and digesting-with¹² in this performance to explore how acts of weaving, fishing and foraging are forms of gathering with potential as collective modes of care and nourishment.

In ‘The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction,’ science fiction writer Ursula LeGuin offers an alternative feminist rendering of the spear-wielding hero narrative. Instead, she tends to the notion of gathering as a radical act. LeGuin writes: “If it is a human thing to do to put something you want, because it’s useful, edible, or beautiful, into a bag, or a basket, or a bit of rolled bark or leaf, or a net woven of your own hair...if to do that is human, if that’s what it takes, then I am a human after all.”⁶

If we look at the image of the fishing net as a carrier bag, we can consider what might be caught in the tendrils that knit together human and seaweed bodies, land and ocean. These are the stories that highlight collective care and community from threads of ancestral knowledge held within cells to acts of foraging along the shoreline.

We ask the question—What is your connection to seaweed?

Caroline Elgh

With my thready fishing net on I appear to be voluntarily captured in a tentacular thinking and doing where seaweed plays the lead role. As we have moved out to a jetty we are all handed two dark shimmering mussel shells each tied together with beige strings. I open mine and find a small note with the text “What is your connection to seaweed?” Seaweeds are thready, tentacular oceanic beings that we humans tangle with in a myriad of ways, whether we know it or not. We also tangle with fishing nets (whether we know it or not) and here at Getterön my clothing imaginatively brings me down under the water surface to acknowledge human-seaweed entanglements however also overfishing and waste in the form of ghost nets floating in the world’s oceans. Feminist biologist and philosopher Donna Haraway⁷ claims the tentacular ones, such as seaweeds, tangles us in what she calls SF where their many appendages make up a String Figure game: a multispecies storytelling for recuperation where speculative fabulation, science fiction, science fact and speculative feminism form part.⁶ *Tidal Tongues* allows me to be part of such a game for the wounds and wonders of the arts of living on a damaged planet⁸ where tentacular fishing nets, seaweeds, coastlines and humans form a cluster of living string figures opening for a performative storytelling at the rocky outcrops of the Kattegatt sea.⁹

We make our first collective gesture and offer our tongues to the sea: AHHHHHH

Sarah Blisset

As you bring your tongue back inside your mouth-what do you notice—is it salty, dry, slimy? This simple gesture is an invitation to explore ways that our bodies are entangled with seaweeds through porous ways of being. To draw breath at the edge of the ocean is to be connected to the sea and to algae.

PART 1: PROCESSION AND PERFORMANCE
LECTURE

START

Thirty pieces of salvaged fishing net are spread out on the rocks.

We welcome the participants.
Each participant is given a piece of fishing net to wear, fastened with a soup spoon brooch.
Everyone is given a mussel shell tied together with string.



Followed by the participants and holding a ship's bell in her hand, one of the artists leads a procession along the shoreline. We stop on a jetty. The participants open their mussel and take a moment to reflect on the following question:

What is your connection to seaweed?

PROCESSION



PERFORMANCE LECTURE

Together, we arrive at a grassy area nestled between the rocks and the sea.

The artists give a performative lecture about seaweed histories and entanglements involving collective gestures. Images and dried seaweed are also part of the lecture.





A communal seaweed dinner at the shoreline of Getterön

SEAWEED BODIES WORKSHOP

With seaweeds tangled in our tidal tongues, we extend our thinking beyond human timescales and touch upon elemental configurations of deep time and matter to the merging of bodies across porous borders. Workshop participants were invited to explore questions and connections to different forms of algae in two exercises that explored embodied encounters along the beach.

Extending our human tongues beyond bodily borders allows us to consider multispecies experiences of taste. For example, bladderwrack seaweeds can change their chemistry so that they have a bitter taste, which deters grazers such as sea snails. These changes in chemistry that occur inside bodies are triggered by environmental factors in ways that highlight how taste and ecological survival are interwoven. Seaweeds do not have lungs or mouths or tongues like us but their skins are also porous, enabling them to absorb carbon dioxide, minerals and nutrients from the ocean. Feminist scholar Stacey Alaimo calls this forms of material connection between bodies 'transcorporeality'¹⁵. This notion describes a transformative relationship between bodies and environments, or one body and another, through different material flows. The pores in the surface of our skin also absorb invisible elements in the air, for example iodine, which is an essential element contained by seaweeds that human bodies need for the healthy functioning of the thyroid gland. Early experiments and the discover of iodine were first made in connection with bladderwrack seaweed in 1811¹⁶. This scientific knowledge produced with seaweeds is also crucial to understanding metabolic flows between human bodies and our environments.

As forms of nourishment, seaweeds highlight entanglements between human health and ocean ecosystems through porous acts that unfurl through cycles of minerals and nutrients, what we eat, excrete and breathe. A key nutrient found in seaweeds is Omega-3, which is essential for healthy brain function and development. Fish, humans and other creatures who feed on algae absorb Omega-3 and other nutrients and minerals from seaweed bodies. Seaweeds have been an essential part of human diets for millennia and have played an especially prominent role in food cultures in China, Japan and Korea. In Western diets, seaweeds have not been such an integral ingredient but they feature in regional dishes such as in coastal parts of the UK like Laverbread in Wales and Carrageen pudding in Ireland. With our tongues and the tides, we can trace and taste connections between seaweed and human bodies across continents and ocean currents to the Varberg shoreline.

Caroline Elgh

As part of this coastal string figure game I wish to introduce myself as gut weed (*Ulva intestinalis*). Maj has just introduced herself as sugar kelp and Sarah as bladderwrack, and now we are moving to the workshop part of the performance. My group is sitting around a rock pool along the Getterön coastline looking at a bright-green thready critter. Gut weed often reside in such pools and we dip our hands into the water to move our fingery hands along the fingery gut weed forming an entangled hug. We have been asked to compose seaweed stories on a piece of paper out from a specific algae that we find here at the sea edge.

Sarah Blisset



Procession and lecture with
Maj Horn
and Sarah Bliss

PART 2: WORKSHOP

GROUP EXPLORATION

We walk down to the beach and introduce the workshop. In groups, the participants collaborate on the following tasks:

“Go on a walk and find a species of seaweed. Have a conversation together about the following:

Why have you chosen this seaweed?
What do you know about this seaweed?
What do you not know about it but would like to find out?”

WRITING EXERCISE



DISCUSSION

The groups present the seaweeds they have selected, focusing on what they do not know about it but would like to find out.

Sketches and process notes made using the juice of blackberries, by Maj Horn

Together, the participants are given questions as prompts for a writing exercise:

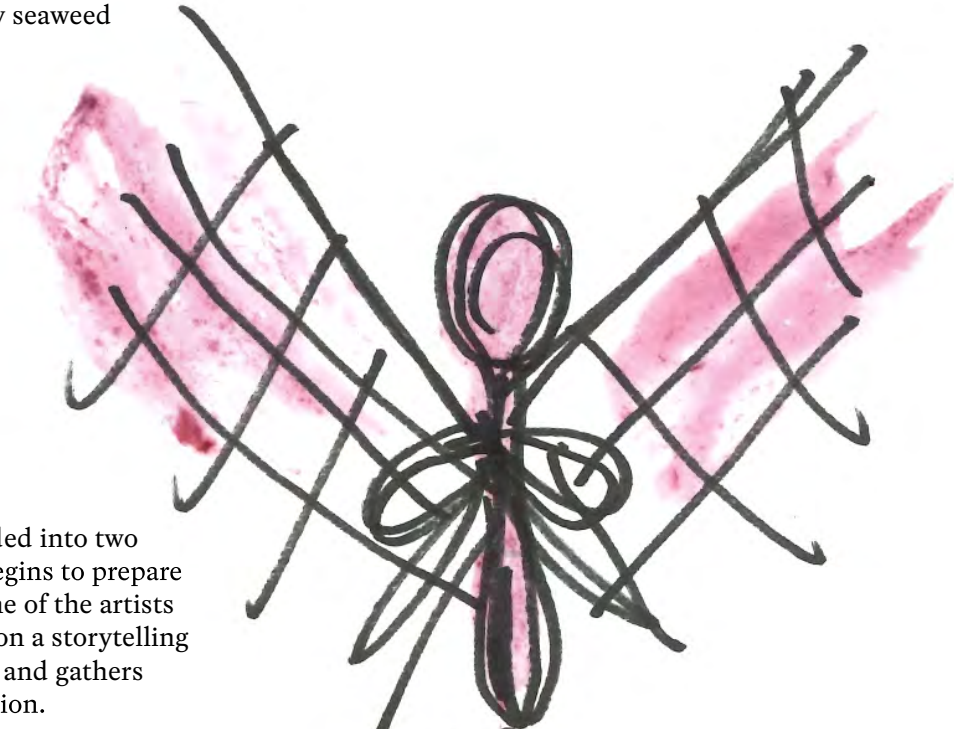
“Individually, take some time to reflect about this seaweed using your senses. Write about the sea from the perspective of your chosen seaweed. You may consider the following:

Your (the seaweeds) ecological relationship to other beings; Water rhythms and qualities (e.g. tides, waves, weather); Timescales (e.g. deep time, seasons, future).”

PART 3: SEAWEED FEAST

SEAWEED MENU

We all walk back along the shoreline to the starting point where there is a table, cooking fire and seaweed ingredients. We introduce the locally foraged seaweed, collected and prepared by seaweed harvester Eva-Maria Hay.



COOKING / FORAGING

The participants are divided into two groups. The first group begins to prepare the meal together with one of the artists while the other group go on a storytelling walk with the other artist and gathers flora for the table decoration.

The first group return from the storytelling walk and continue cooking and setting the table. Meanwhile, the other group now go on a foraging walk to find edible beach herbs.

The menu:

- Soup with sugar kelp, bladderwrack and various vegetables
- Seaweed butter made with smoked laminaria
- Cream cheese with gutweed
- Eggwrack seaweed pickles
- Candied sugar kelp with blackberries

THE FEAST



We sit around a long table. A seaweed soup is served in portions, while the other dishes are passed around. To conclude the meal we all share a toast in celebration of the seaweed!

The final act is a collective gesture on the shoreline.



Caroline Elgh

I write that gut weed got its name because its tubular fronds remind of the human intestines and the gut. Alaimo's marine transcorporeality¹⁷ comes to mind in relation to this human-seaweed borderland¹⁸ as we continuously throughout the performance get interconnected with flows of substances and agencies of algae and Kattegatt's marine environment. These specific flows move directly into our bodies as we later are feasting on cream cheese with gut weed in the cooking section of the performance. Gut weed is put into our mouths, we feel the salty iodine-umami taste on our tidal tongues (I love it!) and soon its chewed threads travel through our intestines and gut in a marine transcorporeal¹⁹ entanglement. Along the way our bodies take up iron, calcium, magnesium and vitamins that these critters are filled with. In this tentacular SF game where human intestines entangle with nonhuman algae we all become string figures along the coastline connecting with care, curiosity and concern for seaweeds and the sea where it resides²⁰.

INTESTINAL ENTANGLEMENTS SEAWEED FEAST

Sarah Blisset

Through the tides, cycles of different seaweeds connect them to changes in the weather and climate as well as the moon, so seaweed entanglements extend across planetary forces. For this performance, we worked with local seaweed harvester and chef, Eva-Maria Hay, who also provided the seaweed for the feast. She explained how acts of foraging become a way to attune to tidal flows and the seasons in the times of year when different seaweeds can be harvested. In this way, seaweed foraging can become a way to observe changes in the local marine environment as a result of climate change. Eva-Maria also described how current scientific research is being conducted off the coast of Varberg with a focus on a type of ancient coralline⁸ algae called maerl⁹. These algae form extensive beds that can be thousands of years old, which are vital marine habitats and key for blue carbon storage. Because maerl¹⁰ are slow growing, they are vulnerable to the impacts of trawling and the ecosystem can take decades to recover if they are destroyed. These algae are similar in structure to coral reefs and highlight mythological entanglements connected to corals. Part of the performance was a retelling of the myth of Medusa,²¹ interweaving Medusa's story with that of the coralline algae, maerl, and their regenerative potential.

Caroline Elgh

Sitting here together, listening to Sarah speaking, I come to think of Pierre Mignard's painting *Perseus Liberating Andromeda* (1679) where Medusa's serpent-coral-coiffed chopped-off head lies on a bed of seaweed at the coastline, as a tentacular multispecies beast. Mignard's motif draws on an ancient myth where the blood dripping from Medusa's head formed the origin of Mediterranean red coral.²² To me this specific coral is reminiscent of the red algae maerl which opens an interesting borderland²³ between algae and coral, plant and animal, storytelling and fact telling as we are threading, tangling and tracking in the *Tidal Tongues* SF game.²⁴ If we are playing string figure games with Medusa here at the Getterön coastline, the rocks we stand on would be men turned to stone by her gaze. Just like coral larvae settling on skeletons of their dead relatives in the ocean. A science fact is that coral, just like kelp, forms underwater forests acting as keystone multispecies habitats for oceanic critters. What has long been commonly unknown is that coral also resides in this cold Western Sea, in the nearby Skagerrak, namely the reef-building *Lophelia pertusa* (syn. *Desmophyllum pertusum*) that is severely damaged by trawling and climate change.

TIDAL TONGUES CLOSING

We close with a celebratory seaweed feast. After the meal, we perform a final gesture and extend our tongues to the sea as the taste of seaweeds lingers on our palates and we breathe in the salty swell.

Sarah Blisset

Caroline Elgh

Now as we approach the end of this performance we are asked to do a final gesture: to stand in a line at the coastline and stretch our tongues out in a big sounding aaaaahhhhhhhhh. Immersed in this collective doing and knowing I think of Medusa who in the myth was a woman not given agency and in many visual depictions her mouth is open, but tongue hidden. I therefore bring my *Tidal Tongue* out for Medusa to highlight the myriad of tentacles (seaweed, coral, snake, human, etc.) that will be needed for staying with the trouble on a damaged planet. Let us then put the achingly important, beautiful and yummy *Tidal Tongues* storytelling and fact telling in our net bags, our bodies covered with blue fishing nets. As networks where we all are immersed into string figures, the patterning of possible worlds and possible times, here and yet to come.²⁵

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- 15 Alaimo Stacey. 2016. *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 7.
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A communal dinner concluded the performance workshop