

# THE LONGEST MONTH

*Review on the text 'Walking with Ecological Art' by Jenni Lauwrens*

When I walked through the mountains I got in some sort of mode, a mode where I was sleeping inside myself directed by the wind. I did not feel ecstatic nor exhausted, I just felt numb, like I was in the mood of sobering up. Only when I reached the top of one big hill, something changed. I fell back into my reality and the feelings came alongside with it. Extreme exhaustion and completeness, I heard sounds again. Everything became so clear and tactile and haptic, my knowledge emerged through dimensions of sense. Everything I saw I swallowed.

I walked for days through the woods of the mountains, camped out on the best spots and ate the fruits I could find. My life consisted of the basics, I ran, I swam, I slept, I ate the rice I brought with me from home, I carved letters to my sisters into the dead branches of the forest (they never read them). I did not speak to anyone, but my body spoke with the environment. My mind could not seem to understand it, tired by the fierce emotion of the impulses that the surroundings brought with them. The days would wake me. I could live in these days only. Time lost its sense, at least the precise division of time did. I would talk to myself trying to find an indication of happenings, I'd say out loud: "two moments ago I walked down the river and washed my feet." The month was depthless. The past and future slipped away and I could only live in the thundering now. It is untellable what it feels like to lose connection to time, time is guidance. I kept walking descended in my thoughts and confusion.

Many nights had passed and the beauty wore off, I always thought that I was a girl of the mountains and not of the crowd, yet in everything I searched for a friend. Through motion in these places I had come to understand them. I knew the hills that I had lived in by heart, I knew them and I loved them, but I also started to lack interest and to miss.

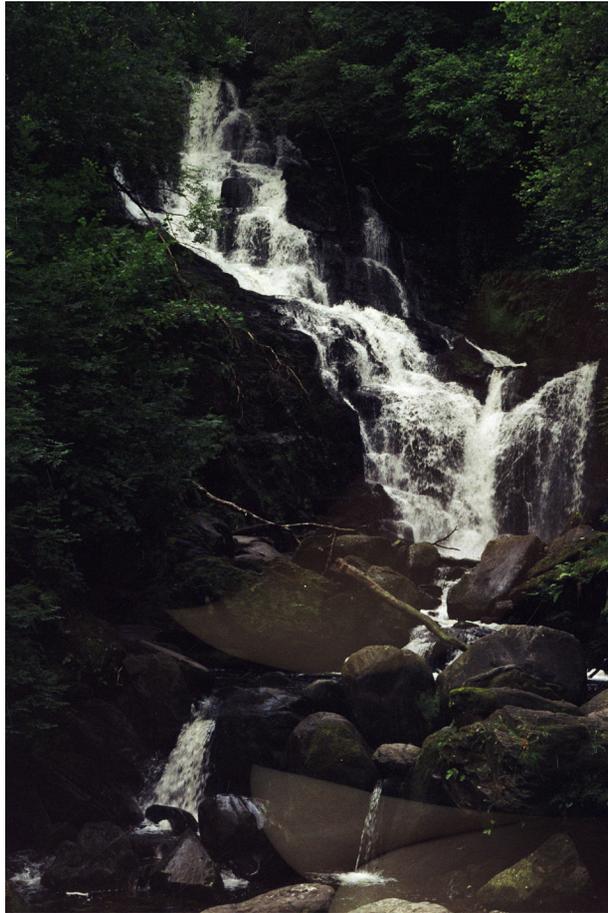
Boredom made me aware of time, like prisoners counting days on their cement walls. Like a fever that eats the being, the stretched out time consumed me.

Doing this alone was like trying to eat a mountain.

This very time that rotted me brought me back home.

Time is represented as a structured element of many, with qualities like chronology and linearity. But I don't believe that, I mean, I still live in the illusion of clocks, to create some kind of appearance of continuity but mostly because my mind does not always catch up with my beliefs.

In fact, time steals itself. There is barely time in a landscape, while walking in the mountains, the information we get from all of our senses (working hard to make an experience real), hours are being forgotten. We experience nature as if we are part of it, grounded in the roots of trees, we live in nature's sense of time, like our feet in contact with the earth we are in touch with our surroundings, we perceive the place as it is supposed to, in our own way and any way possible. The landscape is more than visual and more than symbolic (Wylie, 2014), it is felt in multi-sensualities and the most distant memories. Experiencing a place offers me time for reflection, and that reflection offers me a place to forget the time itself.



**figure 2:** Luka Ver Elst, 'Picture taken in the month I am talking about.' (2016)

*References:*

Crouch, David. 2014. "Landscape, Performance and Performativity." In *The Routledge Companion to Landscape Studies*, edited by Peter Howard, Ian Thompson, and Emma Waterton, 119–28. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203096925.ch10>.

Jenni Lauwrens (2019) Take a Hike: Fostering Environmental Values by Walking with Ecological Art, *de arte*, 54:1, 86-107, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043389.2019.1611023>.

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