

Tasseography of a Rat's Nest (extended)

Sunday 13 May, 2018.
Govett-Brewster Art
Gallery, Ngāmotu
New Plymouth

Sunday 27 January,
2018. Pump House
Gallery, London

I found it on its side, and at first I thought it was dead. The next day it was still there but on all fours now, and it was building a nest. One day it left a white bread roll on the window ledge. While it was gone for the afternoon, I opened the window and tossed the bread into the garden below. The next morning the bread was back, but whittled down to about a third of its original size. The rat was curled around it, like the dark shadow on a gibbous moon.

We sleep side by side with the window between us. The rat ignores my presence, and I watch it constantly. I have started to see messages in the nest, signs created from its leaves which have been shaped by the weight of the rat's sleeping body. I now spend my days dissecting the nest, extracting the leaves one by one in the rat's absence and applying the method of tasseography, which is the practice of reading tea leaves and coffee grinds, to each leaf of the nest. I am aware that this process slowly destroys the nest, eats away at it, but it has become imperative to understand the language of the nest, to try and grasp its meanings.

What to make of a forecast? The temperatures climb; the air catches in my throat; the seas advance; and it no longer rains. The nest burns on the window ledge, but the rat still hugs its gluten moon. What follows is a record of the nest, its predictions, projections, projected benefits, its estimates of risk indexes and risk factors, its forecasts of futurities and sureties.

Fig. 1 PRAWN: This is the shape of the rat as it sleeps, its back to the window, its belly to the dawn. **PRAWNS:** These bring pleasures and satisfactory arrangements.

Fig. 2 WINDOW: An open window shows you are regarded with favour by many. The need for the separation of two species indicates that this is the sign of a closed window, which unfortunately means the favour of many will be elusive.

Fig. 3 FENCE: Success lies one step away from you, on the other side of an

A performance by Sriwhana Spong on the occasion of her exhibition *A hook but no fish* at the Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth (12 May–22 July 2018) & Pump House Gallery, London (10 January–1 April 2018)

obstacle. This knowledge designates the area outside the fence, or the window ledge outside the window as a site for the incomplete. A precarious state that threatens contamination to those on the inside of the fence, where 'success' is to be found.

Fig. 4 TAIL: A tail intertwined with the vines that climb the exterior wall of the house. There is nothing I can tell you about the symbolism of a tail. I've possibly misread this leaf, and it is not a tail but a snake. **SNAKE:** a sign of treachery, disloyalty and hidden danger—the danger of a line on the move, very much like a woman writing or a woman dancing.

Fig. 5 TOOTH: A pair of yellow teeth with a voluptuous overbite, perfect for tearing the skin off things to get to the flesh of things. This calls attention to the fact that a visit to the dentist is required.

Fig. 6 EYE: Signifies penetration and the solving of difficulties. I am trying to view the rat with ambivalence, but most days its wet, black eyes seem to say to me, 'I will swallow you.'

Fig. 7 RAT: A monstrosity, an unpleasant symbol, which brings the threat of treachery and other impending troubles.

Fig. 8 FINGER: This indicates a special need for attention to be paid to adjoining symbols. So back to **RAT**.

Fig. 9 RAT: The only threat being that, through a scopic inversion where the internal becomes written onto the object before me, the only monstrosity or threat here is, quite possibly, located within myself. Which means the rat is also a mirror. **MIRROR:** This brings prophetic dreams and a love of truth.

Fig. 10 FOOT: This forewarns of an injury or accident. While dissecting the nest, I received this email:



Sriwhana Spong
Rat, Moabit, Berlin, 2015

Tasseography of a Rat's Nest
Fig 23: Rat pose
Hamburger Bahnhof, 2015



Sriwhana Spong
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Pump House Gallery, London

Dear Sriwhana,
Here is something you need to be aware of as it is going to affect us all. A Global World Government is coming which will change the way we live and will control mankind. Other things for you to google. The Illuminati, an elite, powerful group of very wealthy individuals behind all this. The Obama care microchip, chem trails, FEMA camps. Just a few for you to do some research on. This is prophecy being fulfilled. I hope you are settling into Berlin.
Love Mum

Fig. 11 FLAG: The danger from wounds inflicted by an enemy, which is my face at the window and the watcher watched.

Fig. 12 CLOCK: A desire to hurry over the present. Also the fortuity of a timely event. All things have their own pace, for example, the rat and the vine move at different speeds. If the vine moved faster it would suffocate the rat while it slept. The threat of the vine, in its slowness, becomes a shelter for the rat. And in its quickness, the rat weaves a nest from the leaves of the vine, which in its slowness the vine can do nothing about.

Fig. 13 BELL: A warning to pay attention to something close to your heart. In order to understand the quickness of the rat, I took to playing a metronome set to the rate of its heart beat:

Play Instrument C (Frances) at 330 bpm

In order to bring myself back to the time of my own body, I would set the metronome to the rate of my heartbeat because one can't stay in rat-time for too long. Today doctors call this travel into rat-time tachycardia.

Play Instrument C (Frances) at 82 bpm

Fig. 14 LUTE: This is the sign of a secret sadness of which those around you know nothing about. The different tempos of vines and rats form an ancient song to which I am still learning my part because the conductor is dead, the namer of names is dead, the king of the rats is dead, and all that is left is this secret song.

Fig. 15 DRUM: Forewarns of a hazardous enterprise or expedition. In order to understand the size of the rat, I took on the rhythm of its breathing as I sometimes do when lying next to a lover. This is the rhythm of the rat's lungs played by my body. This is also an example of smallness inside bigness:

Breathe at 85 breaths per minute until you feel time stretch and the need to return to the text

Fig. 16 TABLE: This means that collaborations and consultations are needed. Rats are commensals, living off other organisms without affecting them. Commensal (eating at the same table) from commensalis, medieval Latin for 'sharing a table.'

Fig. 17 QUESTION MARK: This shows doubt and indecision, for example: a) How big is the table? b) What is a table without a head? c) Is receiving you generously the same as giving to you freely?

Fig. 18 EGG: A birth and also a sentence someone once wrote: 'The life in me does not have my name.'

Fig. 19 DOG: As seen by Giacometti and the effort to neither ennoble nor degrade.

Fig. 20 CUP: A large cup tells of a splendid opportunity coming your way that will ensure your future success. A small cup means that a little anxiety is before you. I can't tell if this is the sign of a large cup or a small cup because neither speak of a gentle fit.

Fig. 21: The sound of evening in the hollow of a nest:

Be still and silent until you feel the need to return to the text

Fig. 22: Hiding pose

Fig. 23: Rat pose

Fig. 24: The bend of a paw on the windowsill.

Fig. 25: The satisfactory act of scratching.

Fig. 26: The feeling of fur on the tongue.

Fig. 27: The strange truths revealed by the contamination of different species and the enigma that dwells in the gaps between them.

Fig. 28 QUESTION MARK: This shows doubt and indecision. For example, on the threshold of the window, which last night I decided to open, midway between the exterior and the interior, is the rat: a) dead, b) alive, or c) both?



Sriwhana Spong
Fig. 1 PRAWN, 2015

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Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, New Plymouth

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