

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Johana Austin

A Communion of Former Zygotes Touching Rocks

by Caitlin Green

[Meg Foley](#) convened guests in a circular seating arrangement, divided in half by bright red shower curtains that hung from the ceiling. We arrived there after journeying through the Touch Library - an interactive installation co-created with [Lucia Alber](#). The library invited folks to engage with a collection of sensory items, a craft table, and rocks, so many rocks! They ranged from coin-sized to palm-sized, rocks from the Earth and large paper mache rocks painted neon bright. Just moments after entering the [Headlong Studio](#), rocks became a familiar theme of the evening. They served as a conduit between their own physical and conceptual representations: a piece of ground, a tool for grounding.

Communion, one of five offerings in Foley's *Blood Baby*, was an improvisational performance exploring corporeal identities through guided mindfulness exercises embedded in storytelling. *Blood Baby* was a series of performance works, an interactive installation, and several community gatherings honoring queer parenthood that took place at several locations around Philadelphia, including [The Painted Bride](#) and [Imperfect Gallery](#).

Once audience members had settled into their seats, Foley introduced herself and pulled aside the red curtain that separated the circle of guests into two halves, joining us together. Foley's introduction brought guests to her embryonic past. "I'm Meg. I'm 42. 43 years ago I was a zygote." She reminisced about her gestation expedition, her mother's, her grandmother's. All from a cellular perspective. In admiration of this miraculous life-giving process, her words carried enough excitement to go around. Her erect posture, activated by a full body tribute to cell division, drew her to the very edge of her seat. Lively open-palmed gestures extended toward guests, animating her passionate tone and demonstrated an eagerness to share these accolades of our biology.

Soon, the gestation process was compared to the rock cycle in a detailed synthesis and passionate analysis of queer occurrences in geology and procreation. Foley pointed out that minute differences in detail make each composition process both formulaic and uniquely

it's own. Her words emerged from her body at a speed that required breath to come secondary to storytelling. She admired the divergences in form, origin, and development of rocks and people. She brought attention to the pace at which rocks are made, the slowness.

Then eventually... "I'm getting ahead of myself."

A Pause.

A Breath.

A Grounding Exercise.

This sequence (pause, breathe, ground) was revisited throughout the evening. Foley frequently guided us back to the present through mindfulness practice, honing our attention on specific body parts, encouraging us to notice them in a particular way, and offering imagery as an accompaniment. She also grounded us by sharing her rock collection. She invited us to hold one, assess its form, and evaluate its touch.

"What ways is the rock touching you back?"

A Pause.

A Breath.

A bridge for mind and body, thought and feeling.

And just like that, the question ushered us back into the present moment.

The grounding exercises were often followed by opportunities for connection and even intimacy between Foley and guests. Audience volunteers participated in several exchanges that involved a combination of introspection, listening, and sharing. For example, two participants and Foley took turns reading from a passage similar to a Mad Libs word game. Together, they created a collective first-person narrative. Each person filled in the blank using singular adjectives to share physical and emotional observations of the moment. They leaned in close to one another to read from the same page, sometimes exchanging laughs that were echoed back by the rest of the audience in response to their honest, impulsive remarks.

In *Communion*, Foley occasionally shared family stories. She contrasted her reflections of caregiving for fast-moving kiddos with her desire to move at slow speeds like a rock taking form, uttering, "they [children] move with such velocity, it's startling!" I was reminded that as caregivers, we're responsible for regulating our own nervous systems to best show up as guides for our kids while also accompanying a young person into the procurement of these skills themselves. She artfully demonstrated a self-regulatory practice that I appreciated both witnessing and being a part of, especially since becoming accustomed to self- and co-regulation as a parent myself. Foley's work mirrored ways to make ourselves available for loved ones after needing some time apart to maintain homeostasis. It's fundamental to childrearing, yet we are not often provided with the know-how to achieve such balance.

Communion was a fun, informative joining of former zygotes celebrating our queer formalities. It was an activation of the self-soothing technologies provided by our own corporeal being.

Blood Baby: Communion, Meg Foley, Headlong Studios, June 14-22,

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