

***TENDER POINT RUIN, 2021***

**Single-channel video (color, sound); 26:00 mins.**

**Courtesy of the artist, LUMA Foundation, Arles and  
Project Native Informant, London**

**The Angel:** The sun is a camera which operates only in black and white. White, white, white is the color of terror. The color of terror.

**The Slug:** This is called the Rouge Test. It's a self-recognition, like cognitive thing, where they put lipstick traces on a baby's forehead, right over the pineal eye, and they show themselves in the mirror and the child either does or doesn't recognize themselves. As we get older and separate from our mother, we absorb the other in the mirror into me, and then construct an increasingly sophisticated sense of self. End of story. Basically, that's what becomes the royal "we." And we become the main character in the reading of this never-ending story.

**The Slug:** What is it, pal? What do you see, we don't see?

**Speaker:** Color.

**The Slug:** This is night vision, neither can we. You can smell this though, can't you? You can sense the fear in me.

I followed blind one night and we got lost out here, got to play first thing, and now my memory's not so clear. Then,

I dreamt about a prophet who came and whispered in my ear.

**The Prophet:** Big storms are coming, baby, going to wash away your fear.

**The Mudlarker:** How long were you down there?

**The Slug:** I don't know, but I followed a pattern tract. I memorized the lines and kept ruining it. Borders of reality were disintegrating a little. I wandered deeper into the wilderness and sometimes there was hunger, and often there was war and there was a lot of sadness and a lot of pain. I really lost myself down there.

What's this?

**The Mudlarker:** Oh, sort of Mosaic Tesseract. But, I think it's marble.

**The Slug:** That's pretty [unintelligible].

**The Mudlarker:** Turns the light.

**The Slug:** Look at this one.

**The Mudlarker:** Ah.

**The Slug:** Flower.

**The Mudlarker:** Yes, that's some 70s printed China.

**The Mudlarker:** What's this?

**The Slug:** How'd that get across the channel?

**The Mudlarker:** Then untended as...

**The Slug:** Et puis negligé comme...

Pante.

Pante. Pante. Quite a find. From the future or from the past?

**The Mudlarker:** From the present.

**The Slug:** You want to keep it?

**The Doctor:** Bonjour, Sophia? Or should I call you Safi?

**The Slug:** Call me Slug.

**The Doctor:** Are you comfortable, Slug?

**The Slug:** Not really. But can ask me anything.

**The Doctor:** What is your earliest memory?

**The Slug:** When I was little, we used to play a game called Wolf. Whenever we'd go out to the desert, we'd be running around finding snakeskin and drawing pictures in the sand. Sometimes an older kid or a grown-up would come and sweep you up and spin you around. *Dhib, dhib, dhib, dhib, dhib.* They'd be trying to scare you like some wild animal was going to come jump out of the dark. Then, the grown-up would suddenly really urgently ask you a pointless kind of obvious question like, "Where is

the camera?" Then you'd be all panicky and have to think real fast and separate the words from the action because you'd be pointing in the opposite direction of wherever, whatever they asked for was. It was really confusing.

**The Wolf:** *Dhib, dhib, dhib, dhib, dhib.* Where is the sun?

**The Slug:** I don't know who made that game up, but I guess it taught us to question authority.

**Moon [on-screen text]:** woke up in a fog / slept like a dog

**The Slug [on-screen text]:** sup?

**The Dealer [on-screen text]:** in the studio. hbu?

**The Slug [on-screen text]:** struggling w script.

**The Dealer [on-screen text]:** can I help?

**The Slug [on-screen text]:** maybe? I'm rly stuck.

**The Slug [on-screen text]:** like wtf is the point of art?

**The Dealer:** Thanks for sharing the script. I know it's vulnerable. It made me think about the name "tender point ruin" in fast space-time. Where was I, having been lost in the ellipsed dance I read on, then realized as a

viewer that you're given inside from the seer. Art is a gift from those who want to see outside of the frame or the given or the comfort of function. The point of art, art is a gift.

**The Artist:** The point of art is detritus. Detritus is in fact the little pieces of stone left after two big stones rub against each other. It also means those things left behind. It's something nobody told you what to do with. Art is supposed to be something that nobody knows what to do with. Art is this thing that floats and it tries to find a place where it belongs. It bangs against things and that's its function. Art is essentially adolescent most of its time. You know it has a value. You know it has a meaning, but you can't quite place what it is, very much like a young person and, then, it has a use and it enters the society and it does whatever the hell people do when they enter the society.

**The Slug:** Where am I?

**'The' Umi:** We're in Egypt, Mother of The World, baby.

[Umm Kulthum singing]

**The Slug:** I love this song.

**The Other Mother:** So did Gamal Abdel Nasser. Did you know he quoted Al-Atlaal to announce the defeat of our military?

**The Slug:** Which war?

**The Other Mother:** The Franco-British interventions, when we nationalized the Suez Canal.

**The Slug:** What's this?

**The Other Mother:** This is the only time Umm Kulthum performed in Europe, Paris 1970. The same year Egypt flooded in Nubia.

**'The' Umi:** Sometimes it feels like the end of history. Then, I think of our ancestors and the wreck of this world as a future memory. Did you ever find the name of this song?

**The Slug:** Yeah, *Al-Atlaal*. It means *The Ruins*.

**The Poet:** *Al-Atlaal* is one of the major themes of Arabic poetry. The Ruins, when Al Qaseedah, these old poems usually end as petitions to patrons but they almost always start the same. The lonely lover is in pursuit of a distant beloved. Crossing deserts, they come to an abandoned encampment and directly address the traces they find in the sand. These remain conjure nostalgic memories of the ashes of a home fire, a poet can never return. Love is taking them and they're taking us to the tender point of the ruin. It's beautiful.

**The Prophet:** Rue. Ruin. Ruinate.

Ruination.

*Ruinate*, the adjective, and *ruination*, the noun, are Jamaican inventions. Each word signifies the reclamation of land, the disruption of cultivation, civilization, by the uncontrolled, uncontrollable forest. When a landscape becomes *ruinate*, carefully designed aisles of cane are envined, strangled, the order of empire is replaced by the chaotic forest. The word *ruination* (especially) signifies this immediately; it contains both the word *ruin*, and *nation*. A landscape in *ruination* means one in which the imposed nation is overcome by the naturalness of ruin. As individuals in this landscape, we, the colonized, are also subject to *ruination*, to the self-reverting to the wildness of the forest.

– Michelle Cliff, *Caliban's Daughter*

**The Slug:** What happens to these ruins now?

**The Goddess:** 20/20 vision dissolves. The point of view is decentralized, culture is dehumanized, paralyzed, broken down, made transparent. The cosmic color of the non-human alien other is exalted. Here you are going through the garbage of the alpha man.

Always searching for clues to answer some big unasked question.

**The Slug:** Which is?

**The Goddess:** Where do we begin, babe? Where do we begin?

**The Slug:** Give me a spoiler. I just want to know how the fuck this is going to end.

**The Goddess:** Believe me, you do not want to know.

**The Slug:** Damn.

**The Goddess:** Just remember something, there is wonder.

**The Slug:** I dunno which one it should be, a floral sun, a green sun, yellow sun, a red sun, a lunar sun.

**Radio [Arabic, English subtitled appear on screen]:** -or like the tattooer sprinkling lampblack again and again over hands on which symbols appear. Then I stopped and wondered at the traces. How do we question these mute immortals whose speech has become indistinct?

**The Slug:** Swiftness, also known as the eight of wand's, the last opportunity given to us to create a perfect work.

**The Slug:** We almost done?

**The Healer:** Almost. Just one more point.

**The Slug:** [unintelligible]

**The Healer:** Oh, it's so neat.

**The Slug:** I think I found an answer on page 55. Now, to end this drunken song with its essence in refrain. Art is the conversation between lovers.



**The Treasure:** What's this?

**The Slug:** It's for you.

**The Treasure:** For real?

**The Slug:** Yeah.

**The Treasure:** I'm really obsessed with the sound of it. It's like chattering.

**The Slug:** It has so much to say. It's been under the water for 200 years.

It really is like a moon rabbit. It's for you.

**The Treasure:** Like really?

**The Slug:** Yeah.

**The Treasure:** Like actually?

**The Slug:** Yes.

**The Treasure:** Okay.

**The Exquisite Corpse:** So, what are you learning in death doula school?

**The Slug:** [inaudible] I have had a couple of very tender and emotional moments. [inaudible] there's lots of really crazy details about the bureaucracy of this country. For example, you can keep a corpse in your house for five days if you need to mourn it.

**The Exquisite Corpse:** How long would you keep a corpse in your house?

**The Slug:** Me, personally?

**The Exquisite Corpse:** Yes.

**The Slug:** It depends on the corpse and how exquisite it is.

If it was your corpse-

**The Exquisite Corpse:** Oh god.

**The Slug:** -I'll keep it.

**The Exquisite Corpse:** I'd never leave. Didn't they embalm before in ancient Egypt?

**The Slug:** They did actually, a kind of embalming. It was, umm, randomly I know about this.

**Speaker:** Oh.

**The Slug:** They basically would take the organs out and wash them in wine and spices, like a mulled wine emulsion.

What is the lipstick actually called?

**The Exquisite Corpse:** I can't, I have no idea, wait-- It's so old that it's rubbed off.

**The Exquisite Corpse:** [unintelligible] matte moisture 123.

**The Little Creator:** Oh, what did I do? I roll on the ticket.

## CREDITS

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“Al-Atlal” - Om Kalthoum  
“We are really worried about you” by Divide & Dissolve  
Imzad played by Alamine Khoulen  
“Prelude : Refrain” from Akhnaten by Philip Glass

Objects found in the Ruins:

Venus Mounds - Ishtar Glass  
Moon Vessel - Tek Sing Shipwreck Artifact  
“& Then Untended As” Washer – Lawrence WEINER  
Imzad – Maïa HAWAD  
Cassette Tape - The Ruins - Om KALTHOUM  
COVID coloring book - Tosh BASCO  
Corpse Exquis - Wai Kin SIN and Sophia AL-MARIA

“The Arab Apocalypse” by Etel Adnan read by Tosh Basco  
“Caliban’s Daughter” by Michelle Cliff read by Kelsey Lu  
“The Muallaqa of Labid” by Labid ibn Rabī’ah read by Ahmed  
Kelhy

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