Re:Birth

*Re:Birth* was a piece of site-responsive performance art, performed on 18 March 2022 at Water’s Edge beach in Simon’s Town (50km from Cape Town centre), starting at 8am. Full moon would come at midday. Water’s Edge looks east across False Bay, one of many coves along a kelp-lined shore on the way to Cape Point some 30km distant. It’s a quiet swim and snorkel spot inhabited by kelp, penguins, cormorants and plentiful fish (including small non-dangerous sharks)

A low tide at sunrise gave me a square of compacted sand between a set of rocks, which provided a small playspace. Here I set up a display table/shrine, on which I sat four plastic babies each wearing dried kelp, collected wet some weeks before at the same beach. As drying kelp stiffens it partially takes the shape of the object onto which it is draped. Also on the table: two minature horses (one yellow i.e. a Palamino) draped in kelp; a miniature hospital bed and a bone from a sheep’s foreleg. The horses reference a treason trial for rebellion of 1852, where the defendant, a Gonaqua (Indigenous Khoikhoi) colonial official, was accused of stealing a yellow horse.

While I did explain to the small audience the genesis of *Re:Birth* in the commission to show the Birth Zine, and spoke briefly about kelp, I said nothing about the horses and other objects, which regularly appear in my works as hidden references. My use of history is as idiosyncratic as my use of kelp, and my use of cosmic and conceptual diagrams in setting up the performance area (in this case line-drawn on the beach). I’d wrapped *Birth* in plastic, tied it with thick string, and fixed it to a length of bamboo stuck into the sand alongside the playspace. The audience of around 15 consisted of invited friends and curious beachgoers.

I began by standing facing the rising sun, then, entering the playspace by a pathway drawn in the sand, invited the audience to gather on the edge of the space. I briefly explained what I was doing, then recited a short poetic script written for the event. Leaving the playspace I detached the wrapped Zine from its mooring (the bamboo pole) and dragged it to the water, threw it in, played with it in the waves, dragged it back out, danced with it, then headed back to the playspace where I invited the onlookers to take the kelp babies onto the sand and pour water onto the kelp to soften it. I opened the Zine packaging and let it be passed among the audience. Finally I gathered all the softened kelp from the babies into a bucket of seawater, and poured the lot into the waves.

Script Poem

**And More and More**

And more and more

the long-lost scuttles in,

circling the winds, gathering light

And more and more

the long-lost scuttles in,

gathering winds, circling the light

And more and more

the long lost scuttles in

unhooking us all

in blossom phrases

and and

And more and more gathering light

the circling winds unhinge the mouth

that orders up more and more

And more and more

the long-lost scuttles in,

gathering winds circling the light

And more and more

circling the winds gathering light

a further birth begins