

# THE MONASTERY

Bardo States

P E R  
F O R M 1 9  
A T I K

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DIY MONASTERY THU 14 > SUN 23/03 10:00 > 20:00

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LIVE RITUAL THU 14 > WED 20/03 12:00 (BURIAL) + 18:00 (EXCAVATION) | 2H

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IN ENGLISH

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*BARDO STATES is a ritual playground for the monks and the visitors to practice the art of dying. Feel free to practice yourself in the Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Monastery: the labyrinth can open up space for reflection and provide an inward journey. There are videos to support your skills to let go, and you can Meet Your Demons and Allies through an audio meditation. Next to the DIY MONASTERY there are also live rituals (BURIAL, WAKE and EXCAVATION) guided by the monks.*

*Feel free to just sit, watch, meditate, listen to the interviews, or simply do nothing (if you can...).*

## THE DIY (DO-IT-YOURSELF)

THU 14 > SUN 23/03 10:00 > 20:00

### OUTSIDE LABYRINTH

Walk the labyrinth and unroot your core.

### PREPARATIONS FOR DYING

The videos and audio meditation will help you to prepare for dying, and for entering the Bardo State. Feel free to perform the rituals together with the monks on the videos, or at your own pace a bit later. Or just watch how to do it at home...

#### *Burning Your Life* (video 1)

paper strips, candle and bowl

In this ritual, you make up a bilan of who you think you are. Going back over your life you choose seven moments that really moved and transformed you. These can be memories of events, of people, or of things that you came across. After writing them down on seven strips of paper, you stay with each of them, recollect-

ing them as clearly as possible. Then burn them to ashes. The ashes can, after the ritual, be scattered on the earth of the graveside.

#### *Spitting it Out* (video 1)

bowl with earth, glass with 'water'

Watch the monk doing the ritual once, you can then join in for 3 cycles. Every time you take the glass, think of a burning question in your life. Something you really need a clear YES/NO answer to. When you drink, keep this question in mind, start moving and gurgle, and let yourself be surprised if you swallow the water, or spit it out into the earth. Swallowing means the answer to your question is YES. Spitting the answer is NO.

#### *Meeting Your Demons* (Little White Space)

two cushions, mp3 player

In this audio meditation monk Elle guides you into a journey to meet your demons (fear, sadness, anger or other negative emotions) and turn them into allies. Tsultrim Allione borrowed this practice from the 10th Century Tibetan Chöd practice, and gave it a more contemporary outlook. The monks practiced this meditation every morning during the creation process and became very fond of the regenerative power of the practice.

#### *Breathing into the Bardo* (video 2)

reed and blanket

Practice to go into Bardo by going into darkness and breathing through the reed. In this way you let go of the outside world, and come into a state of concentration and surrender.

#### *Bardo with Two* (video 2)

reed

Share the reed practice with a partner until your breathing bodies start to dissolve into one another.

#### *Greeting the Earth* (video 2)

Documentation of the monks connecting to the Earth before going into Bardo.

P R E S E N T E D      B Y      Z S E N N E      A R T L A B

## TESTIMONIES / MONK SELF-INTERVIEWS

mp3 players in front room

Elle and Robert recorded the tentative answers to some of the questions that came up during the practice. Choose your channel and join them on their journey.

1. Why we do what we do - Elle
2. Why we do what we do - Robert
3. Paradox and non-dual practice - Elle
4. Joining our loved ones - Robert
5. What is the sense of ritual - Elle
6. What is the sense of ritual - Robert
7. Connecting to the Earth - Elle
8. Connecting to the Earth - Robert
9. A prayer for Dying - Elle
10. A prayer for Dying - Robert

## LIVE RITUAL

THU 14 > SUN 20/03 12:00 > 18:00

The live rituals are structured around the live burial of one of the monks. You can participate in supporting the different phases of this process.

### 12:00 THE BURIAL

Every day one of the monks will be buried for 6 hours to enter the *Bardo State*. You are invited to join the burial ritual and help the monk go under the earth. You will be guided through the ceremony, you can also join into the recitations or meditations (depending on which monk is leading the ceremony).

Some text that might come up:

1.  
Be still and know that you are gone  
Be still and know you are  
Be still and know  
Be still  
Be

## CREDIT

WITH Elle (Elke Van Campenhout) & Robert Steijn | PRODUCED BY ZSenne Artlab, The Monastery | SUPPORTED BY VGC | IN COLLABORATION WITH Kaaitheater

2.

Before you die,

fly

Spread your wings,

your body wrapped in darkness

Become the adventurous kid

in meeting the dragon

Don't fight it, just ride it

When did we lose our inner fire that made us

fly?

You are not buried to disappear

You are planted

A seed, that needs its time to crack

Crack of doom/crack of dawn

### 14:00 > 18:00 THE WAKE

During the wake you are invited to sit with the body (or continue the DIY practices).

Some possible ways of joining the wake are:

- To accompany the buried monk on their Bardo journey by singing a song that might help them pull through.
- To sit with the body and meditate on the temporary nature of your body or your relation to loved ones.
- To think of things you want to let go of, and whisper them into the earth, for the monk to leave behind in the Bardo.

### 18:00 THE EXCAVATION

The body of the monk is unearthed, and you are invited to help bring it back.

## IN THE BARDO

Bardo States are states of transition, a moment of being in-between. When you move out of one situation but have not yet arrived in the other. In Tibetan Buddhism, after the physical body dies and before we get reborn in another body, we travel for a long period of time through the Bardo, meeting up with our fears, losses, attachments and grief in the form of demons (or gods) and possibly even torturous events. But in our daily lives as well (which itself is a Bardo state between birth and dying) there are several moments in which decisions for change announce themselves, but we are not yet ready to move on and let go.

In the Bardo you confront what it is that prevents you from moving on. The demons lurking in the crevices of the mind and body. The anxieties that keep you hostage. The good intentions that prevent you from exploring your juicy insides/insights. The idea of a 'good life' that is stifling your creative juices. The concept of ourselves that is harnessing our vitality, creating habits and obstacles on the way. Truths and convictions. Certainties and expectations. Reducing the space of life to the size of a handkerchief.

Going through the Bardo is a process of cleaning up the shit. Or, to put it like my teacher once did, to put your head down the toilet. It is surprising how refreshing that can be. The return full of lightness and potential. Coming out of the earth (as the monks literally do) is a moment of reset. Not only because you are no longer weighted down by what was bothering you, but even more so because you overcame the weight already while being under.

### INTO THE SOIL

When we get buried, we return to the earth, returning to the womb. The soil as a dark place that ignites birth and welcomes death. Inspired by Buddhist traditions, we organized a ritual, that comes close to a physical burial with only one exception, we still can breathe through a small reed. So we let ourselves be covered by layers of soil, put our bodies in the physical fear of dying. On this verge of imaginary death, we get confronted with the discrepancy between who we thought we were and how we really feel about it now we have to say goodbye to it. The live burial is a kind of radical meditative exercise, that forces us to keep the mind on dying and not get lost in the turbulence of being alive again. We will be at least six hours under the ground, to get rid of the feeling of time, to breathe into an endless vacuum, without any expectation. The one who faces this fear of loneliness in the not knowing, expands his mind

into a reality he never dreamed of: the earth becomes his ally.

### UNDERGROUND

To go 'underground' is to leave behind societal norms and expectations. Since most of these life expectations have become embodied in our daily routines and ideas about ourselves, it takes quite some effort to be able to look over the wall: of who we think we are, what we feel we have to do, who we aspire to become. So instead of trying to peek over the hedge, we dig into the earth. The underground practice work is the work of unrooting our beliefs, be they political, aesthetic, emotional, intellectual, existential or otherwise. While diving under the surface of the everyday we discover a lot of our truths have no grounding. A lot of our hurt is imaginary. A lot of our expectations are futile. And a lot of what seems to matter so much actually dissolves into nothingness. I lost my love, and my love was gone. I buried my despair and it grew back into a shy inspiration. I took down my fear and it became my ally. Going underground in that sense is not a flight. We don't go there to stay. It is a temporary upside-down movement. Disappearing from the grid to reappear in another constellation.

### NON-DUALITY

The dying rituals are practices of connecting two seemingly opposite poles. In order to be able to live fully, there needs to be an understanding of who or what we are. It is by recognising death that life gains its momentum, its sharpness, its vivacity. In undoing the sharp divisions between life and death, grief and joy, constriction and liberation, a lot of the great problems that confront us in daily life, unravel and disperse. The demon becomes an ally, practicing death makes us feel alive, to love is to let go. This is the practice of non-duality. To go beyond the certainties of dichotomy and classification. What is also is not. In the non-dual there no longer is anything to fear or to lose. It is not a form of indifference, or of easy relativism. But a way of seeing more clearly the connection between the one and the other. Between Western psychological suffering and the exploitation of the South, for example. Or between the mishandling of our earthly resources and a great sense of uprootedness. Or between my personal disquiet and the suffering of my ancestors. So as not to misdirect responsibility, blame, creating scapegoats and easy solutions. My actions and thoughts are shaping the world around me. And are being moulded by the world in return. There is no me separate from that world, as there is not world outside of my perception. We train to let go. To surrender. And see our lives unfold.

## BIOGRAPHY

The Monastery is a real-life community in the centre of Brussels (Rue de la Limite 93, 1210 Sint-Joost-ten-Node). It is a place where fulltime and part-time monks live together, following a monastic order of the day that repeats itself over and over again: 6AM Morning Ceremony, 7AM Movement Practice, 8AM Silent Breakfast, etcetera. The days are both disciplined and open. The community is in one way separate from the 'regular' world and on the other porous to everyone who wants to drop by. What the monks share is the practice of everyday life. Sitting, singing, dancing, eating, cooking. They create communal and overlapping lives, sharing the same sleeping space, living in simplicity, and practicing openness and gratitude.

It is a practice that 'listens' to the other, willingly or reluctantly, in which bodies and minds tune into each other, creating an ever-changing landscape of interindividual exchange, of interbeing. With every monk that comes or goes, the Monastery changes palpably. The rhythm continues, but the sense of live-ness has changed considerably. In that sense, the Monastery is a place of commonality, as well as it is a place where the singularity of each of its members gets vitalised and becomes more visible.

For more information or to come for a visit or a residency: [monk@themonasterybrussels.org](mailto:monk@themonasterybrussels.org). The Monastery also organises regular classes, workshops and meetings on the limits between arts and spirituality at Studio La Limite. All info at [www.studiolalimite.org](http://www.studiolalimite.org)

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