

Sharon Chohi Kim

Los Angeles, CA

www.sharonchohikim.com



I came into the retreat at Montello after a year and a half of the Covid-19 pandemic. Before the pandemic, I was secured in a decade-long race of constant performances, creation and noise. The first day I arrived at the retreat, I experienced something I never had before - silence. It wasn't an empty silence. It was a plump, spongy silence, and it deliciously hugged my eardrums. The desert around me felt bare at first, only the ocean of sagebrush and hearty junipers. I felt I needed to shed my embellishments and hats in order to exist among them. This desert felt as if it were timeless and zoneless, so I shed my sense of time and place as well. And once I did, the landscape revealed to me its secrets and many faces. The colors morphed when shadowed and lit, and the movement of the sun revealed to me the prisms emanating from each plant or rock. The sameness and patterns of the landscape burst with



This image and left: *Unseal Unseam: An Electroacoustic Opera*, 2017
Unseal Unseam is a retelling of the folktale “Bluebeard”, viewed through the eyes of his bride. This immersive opera examines the often invisible world of domestic violence in order to hold space for healing and solidarity.

complexities and wisdoms. By aligning myself in this environment, my brain started to align with the functions of these organisms. I thought of life cycles, interdependence, metamorphosis, reproduction, violence and healing. I felt how closely beauty and danger live side by side.

I created so much at the retreat, constantly and quickly. The solitude and silence fired this flow, especially since I had been on the go as a performer in Los Angeles for years without much space and time. At the Montello residency, I went from my long daily walks straight into the studio, to work out vocalizations and sounds and movement that emerged from the walks. I worked on an opera titled *unstuckness practice*, with music and movement that inquired into these ideas of cycles, interdependence and metamorphosis. I composed vocal cells that sometimes work in sequence, and sometimes interweave, without a sense of beginning and end, or time. I allowed patterns to unfurl, and sonic repetition to open ears to complexities. I found that these vocal gestures and utterances revealed themselves as meditations or spells, perhaps sacred or ritualistic. I recently workshoped *unstuckness practice* with a small audience in Los Angeles, and I plan to present it on a bigger scale next year. My two weeks at the Montello were vital in realizing the beginnings of this piece.

