

## Portfolio

- I. Audio (documentary or sound-rich productions)
- II. Multimedia Work Samples
- III. Links to selected, additional audio work

### I. AUDIO (documentary-oriented)

1. **The Assignment Bureau Podcast** trailer (2 mins), 2017.

An independent podcast project that I conceived of and produced about people facing personal challenges by doing creative tasks. For more, see second item on this list.

2. **"Bingo xox"** (59 mins.) is the pilot episode of the above podcast, which features the story of Faith, who is trying to get over a broken heart by co-inventing a game of "kissing Bingo". This game functions as a form of participatory or performance art that drives the action forward.

The pilot combines elements of two audio documentary traditions: European (more scene-based) and American (more narrated approach). In a way, this piece involves two narrators, both of whom are involved in the action in some way. The main subject of the documentary reports on her progress with the game to the producer, who riffs on the themes that emerge and conducts interviews (or tries to) with people who can help her shed light on them.

The piece plays with layers of audiences: Faith has many audiences – the people she asks to kiss her, her friends who witness this, the producer whom she sends her recordings to, and the eventual listeners of the podcast. The producer's audiences are Faith, listeners, and other interviewees. I was interested in how these layers of audiences can be an incentive for people to take actions that require a bit of courage or daring, here towards the goal of self-help. The work draws on theories from behavioral psychology, to do with self-image making, and on methods from participatory design. Although I have not presented this in an academic context yet, I believe active audience theory could be useful in understanding aspects of it, as well as how listeners received the documentary.

*You can read more about the project and find the credits here <http://www.theassignmentbureau.org/>. The independent project launched in 2017, and the pilot was selected for presentation at the International Features Conference in Prague, in 2018, the theme of which was "Hearing the Author".*

3. **"It's Private"** in 2014 (29 minutes)

It's Private stood out as a humorous and exacting engagement with the themes of motherhood and privacy . . . A very timely find. – Jay Bernard, *The Double Negative*.

I produced this documentary through the Stockholm Academy of Dramatic Arts (now Stockholm University of the Arts) using methods of artistic research through practice as I sought to get information from my interviewee, who preferred discretion. Building on the "process interviewing" techniques that I was learning about in class, I believe I found a way to satisfy both of us through an imaginative approach. The way forward contained something of the daring spirit of performance art, as a way to expose foibles or insecurities of the self, and again, it worked with the concept of audiences: the producer and interviewee as each other's audiences, aside from the eventual listeners. The performance aspect was woven into the process of participating in the documentary.

This piece was nominated for a Prix Europa in the radio documentary category, and it received an

honourable mention from In The Dark at the Sheffield Doc Fest. (It was also included in independent producer Rikke Houd's Amazing Radio Vertikalisator session at the Third Coast International Audio Festival.)

4. "[Stranger Still](#)", 2015 (7 min.)

I use the making of this short doc as a vehicle to find connections with strangers through what could be termed participatory art.

This piece was shortlisted at Tempo Short Dox in Stockholm, Sweden.

5. "[Mafune Gonjo](#)" 2016 (3 mins).

I produced this sound-rich piece as part of a non-narrated (meaning, there is no host's voice, only the voice of the subject) series about several artists in Stockholm.

*More audio samples follow the next section...*

## II. MULTIMEDIA WORK SAMPLES

1. "A Touching Story", printed text, interactive performance, and installation with projection, suspended furniture, bowl and pitcher, water, soap, hidden cupboard. Presented as my MFA thesis project at Konstfack University of Arts, Crafts and Design, 2010. This work is prefaced by the abstract for that thesis.

### Context of *A Touching Story*

Abstract from the written portion of the M.F.A thesis at Konstfack, 2010

With the advent of virtual book technologies, the traditional experience of reading novels is in crisis. While conventionally, such reading requires long periods of uninterrupted concentration, the modern experience can be one of distraction and fragmentation. Some worry that this will re-habituate people to a shallower mode of reading, which they predict will have deep and negative ramifications for society. Using artistic research-through-practice and the methods of experience design, this thesis proposes ways to make productive and positive use of this fragmentation. With special regard to content, timing and persuasiveness, this thesis project proposed and tested activities for the reader *to do and perform* that relate to a given text, aimed at creating a sort of theater-for-one from a book. Interspersing special instructions ("action-notation") throughout the text provided the reader with sensorial, active and expressive experiences that created an invitation to play and made the text resonate in a special way. Some experiments were successful, especially the introduction to *A Touching Story*, a story which embodies the research and which became the final exhibition project.

# A TOUCHING STORY

By Brett Ascarelli

DO NOT OPEN UNTIL YOU  
ARE IN THE MOOD TO READ.



## *Prologue*

Water splashes occasionally, but otherwise, the library is quiet.

Running her hand along the books' spines like an unending xylophone is I, pronounced like the seeing organ. As the first child born to a pair of eccentric Latin scholars, she wound up with the Roman numeral for 1 as her namesake. Predictably, what started as a gag led to a thousand minor identity crises, still rippling through her expanded circle. To the parents, however, each confusion meant a small triumph over a too-ordered world. Leaving behind this system of havoc creation as their legacy, they died happily and would have grinned to see the puzzled faces reading their obituary: "...I survives." In any case, Dear Reader, just remember that her name is no fault of her own.

I hums to herself while xylophoning, and eventually she finds what she's looking for.

DEAR READER, PLEASE  
DOG-EAR THIS PAGE  
NOW.

## *A Touching Story*

At the check-out desk, she undergoes a required procedure to prevent characters, page must, and molecules of fiction from mixing. Contamination leads to perverse fiction. Before I can open her book, the librarian will wash her hands. He opens a card catalog drawer and chooses a small leaf of--is it paper? Nope, too slippery for that. It's actually a thin sheet of soap, which he wets in a porcelain basin on the desk.

## *Prologue*

At first, this particular soap reeks of the centuries, which I expect. But as Mr. Spectacle lathers I's palms, fresh lavender subsumes the mustiness. By the time he reaches her pinkies, lavender gives way to sandalwood. Strange--even book soaps don't usually change so much in character... The hand wash lasts a few book minutes, and as flowers and musk mingle in I's nasal passages, a queue forms behind her.

CLOSE YOUR EYES AND SLOWLY RUN  
YOUR FINGERTIPS BACK AND  
FORTH OVER THIS PAGE.

## *A Touching Story*

Suddenly, I's shoulder blades go numb.

Sneaking a glance over one unfeeling shoulder, she sees the next man in line glaring at her and Mr. Spectacle. The librarian is too engrossed to notice. Cupping his hands with clean water, he delivers the rinse. It lasts as long as it takes them both to silently count to  $\sqrt{-25}$ . But instead of concentrating, I can only focus on the uncomfortable non-feeling in her shoulders and wonder if the man is somehow its cause.





2. “YOU + NON-YOU: ASSIGNMENTS FOR APPROACHING INFINITY”, several of a set of instructions sent periodically to participants by text message and e-mail as part of the Walking Festival of Sound, 2021.

This project borrows from traditions of instruction art in order to foster connections between listeners and their human, non-human, and ancestral milieus. As such, it's imbued with the spirit of actor-network theory, deep listening, and Donna Haraway's idea of situated knowledges.

## YOU + NON-YOU: ASSIGNMENTS FOR APPROACHING INFINITY /

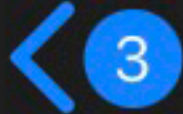
Brett Ascarelli

*"Initially I was confused about how to enter the dialogue and couldn't find my voice." - Julie Ault*

An aspen. An ancestor. An adolescent. An alga. "You + Non-You: Assignments for Approaching Infinity" provides a set of assignments inviting you to try to embody elements of non-you things and beings whom you might not at first understand. Can listening help you find out where you overlap with a non-you, thereby revealing and even erasing the edge of your understanding? Some assignments hinge on making an actual connection with a non-you (like, picking up the phone), whereas others are faster and rely solely on your own imagination (think Ono's Grapefruit). There won't be any grades, but if you choose, you'll be able to share the fruits of your labor. Sign up to receive assignments throughout the festival. Indicate whether you'd like to receive them via WhatsApp, e-mail or SMS (only for iPhone). Most assignments will be delivered during the waking hours of Central European Time, but other deliveries may be timed to coincide with optimal conditions in your city or town, so please list where you are located.



23:10



+1 (917)

Fri, 9 Apr, 15:17



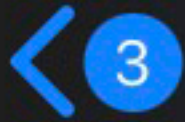
## YOU + NON-YOU Assignment "Present"

Make a short, sonic gift to delight the ears of the youngest person or critter you know.

It can be recorded or live, musical, a concrete sound, a story, nonsense, whatever you think they would really like.

Deliver your gift to them however you see fit, and, if possible, listen to their reaction. If it's a good one, tuck this moment away for yourself.





+1 (917) [redacted]

Sun, 18 Apr, 18:04

## YOU + NON-YOU 4th Assignment: "Umbilical or Other Continuities"

Today, call someone you love who is much older than you.

That's enough.

But if you're curious . . . what is their dream for your future and the world in which you will live after they're gone? Ask them to elaborate.

If the people whom you love are younger than you, call one of them.

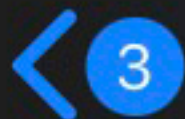
That's enough. But if you're so inclined, tell them your dream for their future and the world in which they will live after you're gone.

Elaborate.

Pay special attention to the sound of their voice.



23:11



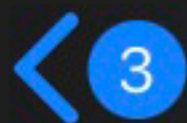
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Tue, 20 Apr, 21:44

YOU + NON-YOU 5th Assignment:  
"+/+"

Choose someone who speaks a language that you don't understand at all. Ask them to tell you a story or poem in that language. (If no one who speaks a language that's foreign to you is available, remember that someone from a different generation might speak a language that's hard for you to understand.) Then, tell them what you think the story or poem might have been about and listen to how they respond.





+1 (917)

know if you'll be attending!

Sunday 11:57

YOU + NON-YOU 7th Assignment:  
"Embodying the Ancestral Voice"

Find a quiet space.

Think of a specific ancestor of yours. Imagine what their voice and accent would have sounded like on a day when there was hope in the air.

Place your hand at your throat like a turtleneck collar and hum or try to embody their voice somehow. How similar do you think your voices would have felt or sounded? What would a harmony sound like between your voice and their voice? How are the inflections of your dreams compared to theirs?

Document your reflection if you'd like and keep for yourself or to share.

### III. Links to selected, additional audio work that I have produced and reported.

These segments don't have to do with academic theory, but I've included them to give a sense of professional journalistic work that I've done over the years, since my work at CMAC would also include some of the same skills: research, writing, recording, interviewing, editing. Unless otherwise noted, I wrote the scripts, conducted the interviews, did the audio editing, etc.

#### --Public Service Reporting (for Swedish Radio)--

##### **“Discrimination against elderly in Sweden is so bad”** 2021 (6 minutes)

This was part of a series I reported on this year, in collaboration with all the language groups (Somali, Arabic, Persian, Kurdish) in my department at Radio Sweden. It dealt with what it's like to reach pension age in Sweden, especially for immigrants, who tend to have a significantly lower pension than people born in Sweden. Other pieces in the series included [facts and figures \(I did not have very much to do with this particular piece, aside from translating and voicing it\)](#), [advice](#) for newcomers who want to save up for a decent pension, an interview with a young newcomer who is [concerned](#) about his retirement, and interviews with foreign-born people who have reached retirement age but [continue to work](#). A colleague and I also made a video on the subject for social media, and I did a 2-way about the issue in our weekly broadcast and podcast.

##### **“Return to sender? Why some packages don't make it through customs”** 2021 (7 minutes)

Radio Sweden's listeners have complained of an array of problems they encounter when they get shipped parcels from abroad, often from their friends and families. Those problems can range from what listeners call "unnecessary fees" to packages never arriving at all. Listeners are baffled. I visited the postal terminal at Arlanda airport to see what happens to post as it arrives in Sweden, and what the pitfalls can be when sending post to Sweden from abroad.

##### **Why Sweden has so few drinking fountains** 2016 (5 minutes)

When you're thirsty on a hot day here in Sweden, that generally means having to buy a bottle of water. But it didn't always used to be that way. It's hard to say exactly how many outdoor public drinking fountains remain in Sweden today, but a lot of people Radio Sweden has spoken to agree they used to be more common fixture. What happened to them? Also, [Could drinking fountains be making a splash once more? \(July 2016\)](#) and a version in Swedish, [Från dricksvattenfontäner till plastflaskor](#), recorded with the help of a colleague (Sept 2016).

##### **“25 years after Chernobyl, how Sweden found out”** 2011 (29 minutes)

In the spring of 1986, Cliff Robinson was working at a Swedish nuclear power plant when the alarm went off. But just what had gone wrong was a mystery. I produced and reported this narrated history feature for broadcast.

##### **“Refugees coping with PTSD and depression through group self-help”** 2018 (5 minutes)

In this report, Radio Sweden hears from Ali, who came to Sweden seeking asylum in 2015, about how a therapeutic technique developed in Norway helped him overcome his nightmares about violence. One study concluded that the method is promising but "this is not to say that [it] should be the treatment of choice". The treatment is fast and cheap though, in contrast to waiting for individual therapy



appointments at Red Cross Centres or Child and Adolescent Psychiatry units, which has been known to take a long time, --sometimes as much as a year.

**“Rural Problem: giving birth in a car”** 2018 (7 minutes)

An exhibition at the Kiruna city hall, up above the Arctic Circle, is about women in the north of Sweden who've had to give birth in their cars, because the nearest maternity ward is too far away. Marie Rahkola's account of giving birth in a parking lot during a snowstorm, is one of five women's stories that make up the exhibition. She and the artists behind the exhibition hope to rekindle a debate on the shortage of maternity care facilities in rural areas. Radio Sweden also speaks to the deputy chair of the regional executive committee of Norrbotten about what's being done to alleviate the need for women to deliver babies in cars. One other colleague was involved collecting material for this story.

**“It's year 2100. Are there crocodiles in Sweden?”** 2015 (29 minutes)

I produced this a few years ago to envision how the country could change as the global temperature rises.

**“Will your bed lie where the water cooler once stood?”** 2021 (6 minutes)

Against the background of Covid-19 restrictions, this is about what might happen to architecture in the future.

**“Many leave Lost and Found empty-handed”** 2013 (6 minutes)

Did you lose a pair of brown gloves on December 7<sup>th</sup>? There's a box just for that at the Lost and Found in Stockholm... I produced this lively piece after losing a special item.

**“We don't answer on the roof”**, for Swedish Radio in 2011 (5 minutes)

Who needs a corner office when you have the best view in town, working to clear ice and snow off the rooftops? I produced and reported this segment, which was later featured by the Stanford Storytelling Project.

*Please get in touch if you'd like to hear more of a range of subjects, including political reporting. You can also find links to more pieces here: <http://brettascarelli.com/radio/>.*