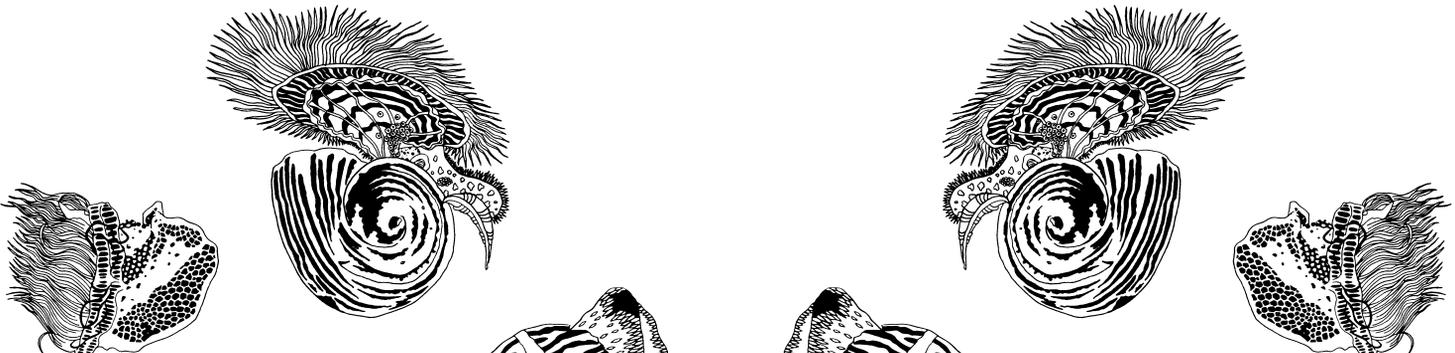
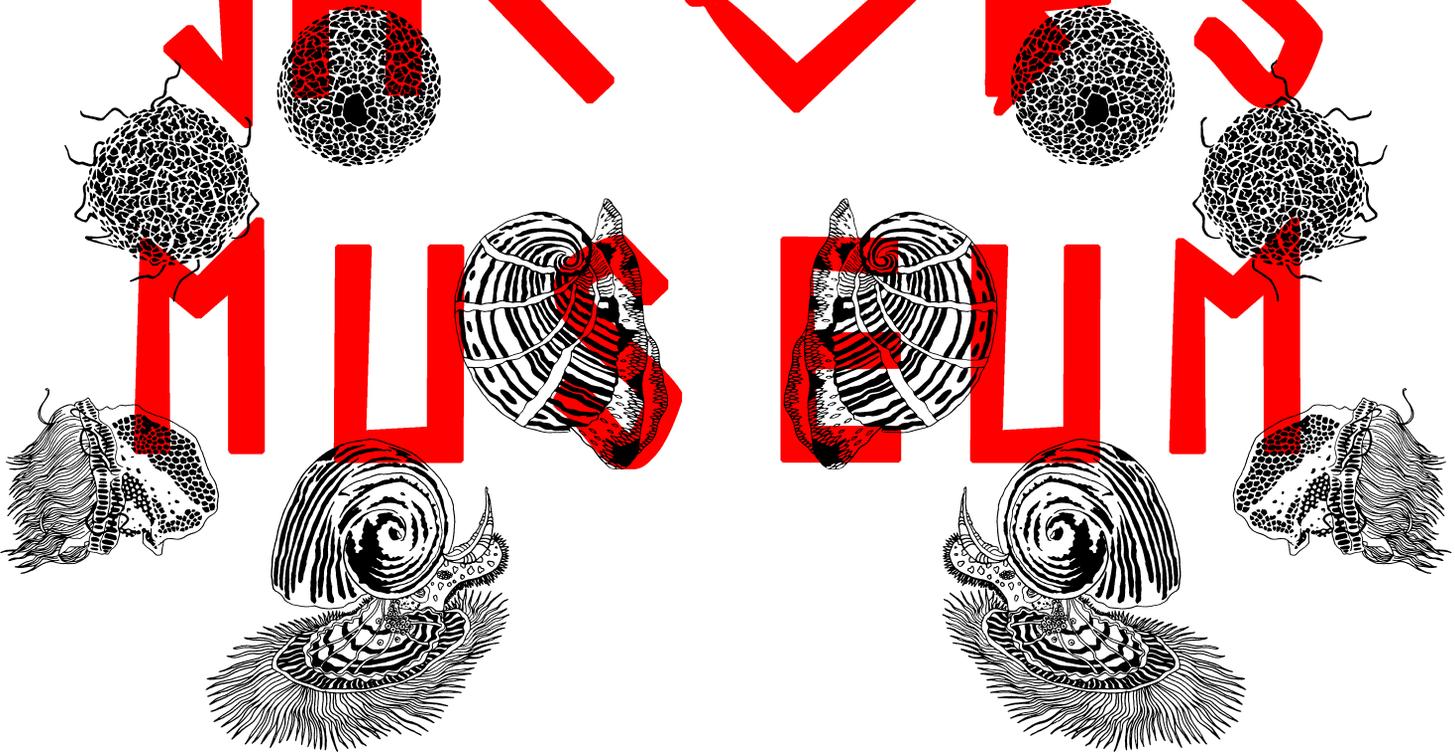


JOHANN

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A SEASON

IN SHELL















## 8. 點綴 和 吸收 Adorned and absorbed

“Yes hello?” is the Bull’s catchcry .

We have become a functioning office, operating by it’s own clockwork  
And a bejewelled fixture crowning our daily labours  
It is the mother of all pearls  
And carries promises that drinking the prized  
muscle soup does  
Infused with a belief that it can cure your ailing eyes .  
The Bull is seeking new skins  
A new passport  
A new cloak that brings mutual comforts  
In the meanwhile, business carries on but not without caution. I find  
myself mysteriously the subject of strange, sly, shoot and dash  
photographic incidences, which prompt me to think, are we under  
surveillance? “They probably have a file on you by now, especially  
foreigners who frequent the mansions regularly .” The Bull proceeds  
to tell me how he picked up a habit of regularly and inconspicuously  
photographing crowds over his shoulder. “I had a strange feeling I was  
being followed once in Uganda, while I was on a motorbike, and sure  
enough, there was someone following me. Ever since then I’m watching  
my back literally ...” he reminisces . Trust is truly the last bastion.  
Later on, we find ourselves enmeshed in discussing the credentials  
of a character we encounter together . It becomes a fine line between  
paranoia, mistrust, instinct and reason. The Hawala agent asked  
to speak to me from Dubai and we were both taken aback by our  
respective Australian accents .

“Why do you want to transfer money with us and not a bank?”

“I need to get money from Australia to Hargeisa and this is how  
I was advised to do it”

“What is the amount you want to transfer?”

“10,000 US dollars .”

“We’re not very competitive. We usually do smaller amounts .  
What’s your occupation?”

“Artist .”

Silence .



## 9. 貝殼裡的季節

### A Season in Shell

Our island rains soon give me a fever and as I lie in bed all day, all I see is shells. Hundreds, thousands, millions of those gastropods, floating and multiplying in space before my eyes, alien creatures with tentacles and antennae that clutch beneath rocks. I see shells moving across the dim ocean floor then travelling in the darkened bellies of shipholds, wrapped in hessian, moving between entrepots in Berbera, Dubai and Zurich. And then I see us and the Bull in the shadowy confines of cells. A voice battling fogs of fever tells me to pick up the phone immediately.

## 10. 追債 Debt collecting

One day the Bull, rubbing his hands together, wryly suggests, "Why don't we go collect a debt?"

We enter the office without knocking. It's dark, empty, disordered. A man is sitting alone at a desk at the far end of the room engrossed in the image of a Cantonese siren on his phone. He makes no acknowledgement of our entry and as we stand over him, our eyes adjusting to the darkness, the Bull asks, "Where's your boss?"

The man doesn't respond.

"Ok, so let me call him....this number doesn't work"

The man hands the Bull a phone without looking at him. I stand behind looking out the window, trying my best not to look intimidating.

"Where's the rest of my payment?"

An unintelligible voice responds on the speaker phone.

"Ok, ok, I'll be back later...Tell your boss to get his phone fixed"

We return to the elevator

"Let me tell you, I gave this Tanzanian guy, whose been in Hong Kong for 12 years, I gave him 20kg of abalone to find a buyer for me, and this guy calls me back and says he left it in a taxi. These people are all criminals, they look like they've been in prison, they're all monkeys! So I tell him now you owe me \$20,000 USD. It's taken me 6 months to work the debt down to \$8000, I had to follow him, find out where he lived. Make him feel like I am a desperate man who could do anything to him, and then he pays"

