

Interaction

Topic This session considers the possibilities of interaction. Through acts of holding, touching, consuming and licking, it explores how and whether we can interact with colour, beauty, the universe, life and each other.

To arbitrarily pluck one pertinent view, here's the Portuguese writer Fernando Pessoa from *The Book of Disquiet*: 'When we grasp an attractive body, it's not beauty but fatty and cellular flesh that we embrace; our kiss doesn't touch the mouth's beauty but the wet flesh of decaying, membranous lips...'

To pluck another, here's John Locke: 'light, heat, whiteness, or coldness, are no more really in [fire and snow] than sickness or pain is in manna. Take away the sensation of them; let not the eyes see light or colours, nor the ears hear sounds; let the palate not taste, nor the nose smell; and all colours, tastes, odours, and sounds, as they are such particular ideas, vanish and cease...'

Props One cherry and something beautiful

Action 1 Ask a volunteer to eat a cherry.

- *Question 1* *x* ate a cherry. Did she also eat its redness?
 - If yes: is she now digesting its redness?
 - If no: Where did the redness go?
 - Is redness part of the cherry?
 - Can colours be chewed?
 - Did she also eat its shape?

Action 2 Show the class something beautiful (a flower or a stone, say). Go round and ask a few students to touch it.

- *Question 2* When you touch a beautiful thing, are you touching its beauty?
 - If you can destroy with your hands, does that mean that you can touch it too?
 - If beauty can be touched, does it have a distinctive feel?
 - Is beauty part of the object?

Action 3 If you happen to have class pets, this would be an excellent opportunity to give them the limelight. Otherwise ask for two volunteers, preferably one strong and the other light, and instruct one to lift the other up.

- *Question 3* When you hold a living thing, are you holding its life?
 - Is your life entirely within your body?
 - Does your life exist entirely in the present?
 - If life can be ended with one's hands, does that mean that it can be touched too?

Action 4 Ask the class to lick their lips.

- *Question 4* When you lick your lips, are you licking the universe?
 - Are your lips part of the universe?
 - If you lick part of something, are you thereby licking that thing?
 - If no, then what do you have to do lick to lick the universe?