

# scope

*Contemporary Research Topics*

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**Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Art & Design)** is peer-reviewed and published annually in November by Otago Polytechnic/Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand.

The series *Scope (Art & Design)* aims to engage discussion on contemporary research in the visual arts and design. It is concerned with views and critical debates surrounding issues of practice, theory, history and their relationships as manifested through the visual and related arts and activities, such as sound, performance, curation, tactile and immersive environments, digital scapes and methodological considerations. With New Zealand and its Pacific neighbours as a backdrop, but not its only stage, *Scope (Art & Design)* seeks to address the matters which concern contemporary artists and arts enquirers in their environments of practice.

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## TELLING TALES

Jane Venis

In this issue of *Scope: Art and Design*, much of the focus is on exhibitions, residencies and experiences that took place in 2019 and early in 2020. The ability to host visiting artists, and for New Zealand artists to undertake residencies and exhibition opportunities in other countries, is something that we all took for granted before the landscape changed with the advent of Covid-19. This issue begins with a grouping of articles related to our residency programme at the Dunedin School of Art and is followed by reports from Dunedin artists involved in exhibition and residency opportunities overseas. Many writers in this issue of *Scope: Art and Design* focus on storytelling as part of their practice. Narratives play out in works that may be deceptive, fragmented and open to multiple interpretations.

The works of visiting artists range from the satirical humour of Mark Braunias' 'Grateful Dead' artists speaking from beyond the grave to the veiled, filmy forms of Barbara Graf's bodies undergoing what Michele Beevors describes as "the invasive gaze of medicine." In an accompanying article, Graf documents an installation practice that explores both external and internal bodily structures expressed through a range of materials and processes that perceive the vulnerabilities of bodies.

In CLINKProject6, Andrew Last documents the experiences of a group of contemporary jewellers taking part in the sixth iteration of the collaboration between Dunedin School of Art and Hungry Creek jewellery programmes. Current and ex-graduates and staff from both schools have been involved in the pop-up interventions that until now have been based in Auckland. CLINK 6 was part of the Radiant Pavilion Jewellery Biennale, where the group responded to work in the Grainger Museum at the University of Melbourne. The jewellers discuss the development of their works and their experiences in the CLINK community in an interview format.

Lastly, in a collection of articles relating to residencies and international exhibition opportunities, Jane Venis and Hannah Joynt talk together about how their collaborative performance practice benefitted in unexpected ways from a recent residency in Portugal.

Art movements have always emerged in times of crisis. The creative response to Covid-19 has seen artists responding to what is now becoming a new art movement. Here in Dunedin, Caro McCaw's article about the Dunedin Dream Brokerage Bubbles introduces a community project where local artists enjoyed an opportunity for their works to be showcased in temporary empty suburban shop windows as businesses were closed during lockdown. The new art audience of suburban walkers had time to slow down and enjoy the works as new relationships were built between artists, designers, businesses and local communities. This is the first of several articles with a focus on storytelling.

Tanea Paterson discusses the formation of the group iNDx Autistic Arts and Culture Aotearoa and the collaboration and support offered by Otago Museum not only to hold an award-winning exhibition of works from the collective, but also to create a space for community korero. Included are iNDx artist profiles and interviews, and a postscript by Rachel Cooper of Otago Museum about her experience and learning from the project and the importance of providing a platform for these artists' voices.

One of the artists involved in the iNDx exhibitions, recent MFA graduate Tom Fox, presents an article about his drawing practice. Fox writes of the freedom he feels in receiving the diagnosis of ASD (autism spectrum disorder). He describes each drawing as "an exorcism of internal distortions delivered by my sensory system."

Distortions of a different kind underlie Emily Gordon's MFA project comprising dark atmospheric charcoal and pastel drawings. They create a sense of foreboding, drawing from the genre of horror films that builds tension by allowing the viewer to imagine not only what is left out of the frame, but also by provoking a sense of discomfort emanating from the undefined shapes and changing perspectives within. Unnamed fears and unknown terrors are suggested by dense charcoal blacks.

The notion of incomplete narratives also links to the next article by Bronwyn Mohring. *Toys: An Open Narrative* is a celebration of the nostalgic memories that adults have for the lost toys of their past. A childhood photo showing a stuffed toy deer is the starting point for a body of ceramic and printmaking works that invite the viewer into a world of fragmented memories, daydreams and imaginings.

Reconnecting with the past is also the theme of the next article and the work of another ceramic artist and designer. Alumni artist Gabby Malpas has an international table ceramic design practice. *Lost and Found* is the story of her reconnection with the Dunedin School of Art after graduating in 1986. The article, written by Pam McKinlay and Malpas, starts with the arrival of a letter from France for Malpas, c/- the Dunedin School of Art. What follows is an intriguing tale of reconnections.

In Hayley Walmsley's MVA project *Suzie no Friends*, her ironic titling of photographs anthropomorphises discarded furniture and appliances in Dunedin's student quarter. Her work ascribes significance to objects and locations and encourages us to create our own narratives. She uses a wry humour as her objects speak of social issues and the local environment.

Responses to environmental issues is a focus for two artists within their MVA projects. Siau-Jiun Lim critically reflects on the destruction of the environment through both her painting practice and online community projects. She engages deeply with the conundrum of making works about the Anthropocene while questioning the use of materials essential to her painting practice that are not entirely sustainable.

Debbie Fleming's practice is also concerned with a response to the Anthropocene. In *Heavy Luggage*, she sources local experiences and writes of the resilience found in local communities in coming to terms with climate change. She explores the grief associated with climate change through the ceramic pieces of 'luggage' that we all carry forward.

While many articles by artists and designers discuss the 'how' of making and the influences of various artists, designers and theorists relevant to their practices, Giles Panting's *Beauty Utility and Futility: The Art of Craft and Why We Create* is essentially a personal philosophy about the 'why' of making. It discusses the personal motivation and developing understanding of the writer to consider why he creates his complex textile works.

An opportunity for those working in contemporary textiles, the Common Thread Symposium took place in the Suter Gallery in Nelson in September 2019. Stella Lange reviews the conference and writes of her favourite presentations and top 'takeaways' from the conference.

Lastly, we have the end of the narrative arc. Udo Prinsen's article, written from the perspective of a pinhole camera as it tracks the sun's trace in the Arctic, is a poetic exploration of a global photographic project involving 25 Arctic scientists. Presented in a pseudo-diary format, in the accompanying images we see how long exposures allow us to see traces of the sun's journey across an extraordinary part of the world.

**Professor Jane Venis** is a multi-media artist, musician and writer. She is the co-editor of *Art and Design: History, Theory, Practice* (2017) and the current editor of *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics, Art and Design*. Her practice focuses on the politics of contemporary popular culture expressed through the making of objects, video, sound and performance works. Her current writing is linked to her studio practice and explores the fertile ground between art and design.

Jane teaches in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Te Maru Pūmanawa/ College of Creative Practice and Enterprise at Otago Polytechnic in Dunedin, New Zealand. She has an MFA from Dunedin School of Art and PHD in Fine Arts from Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Australia.



## WE ARE THE GRATEFUL DEAD

Mark Braunias

Between late August and October 2019 I completed a visiting artist residency programme at the Dunedin School of Art. This culminated in an exhibition held at the School's gallery between 14 October and 1 November of the same year:

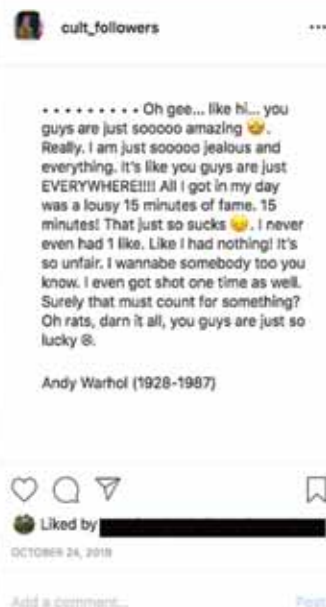
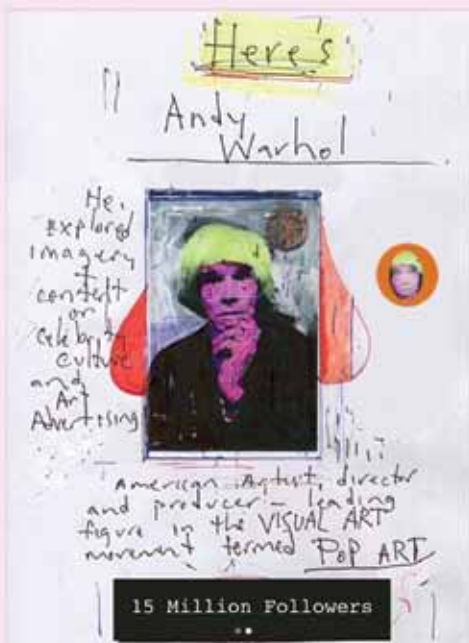
The exhibition, "Working on a Guru (A Pictorial Procession)," was a deliberately skewed non-linear and ironic interpretation of leaders and followers or cults throughout Western history. An emphasis was placed on the notion of spiritual belief systems, and the work referenced Giotto's Arena Chapel frescoes as a site from which to de-contextualise.

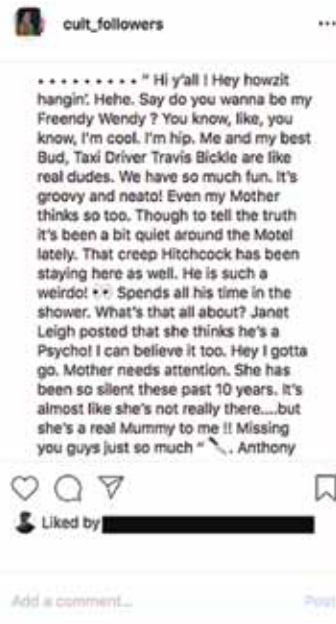
Within this re-invented chapel an entire end wall arrangement, *We are the Grateful Dead*, operated as a stand-in for The Last Judgment. Typed obituaries of significant or famous people (both positive and negative in terms of their reputation) were presented in encyclopedic book form and arranged in alphabetical order. The altered photographs of each individual were given hand-drawn frames alluding to the process of biological and molecular deconstruction. These frames included abstracted biological parts and cell structures such as mitochondrion, ribosomes, microtubules, vacuoles, nucleus and nucleoli – essentially molecules and atoms actively disassembling and reassembling. The written commentary alluded to the subjects' life achievements (or otherwise), with a final sentence which was often little more than an ironic and pithy 'summing up.'

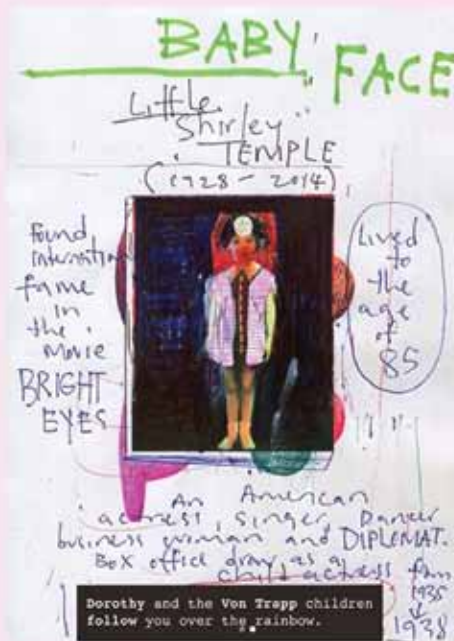
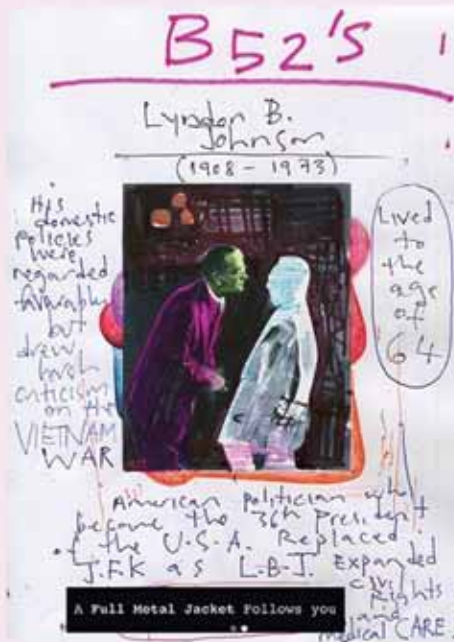
Following the exhibition, I decided to bring many of the deceased in these works back to life – perhaps to offer them another chance at even greater immortality. Establishing an Instagram account for my famous dead, I regenerated the same altered photographs from the exhibition and uploaded them to a contemporary online platform – the assumption being that they would still feel the need to communicate via impassioned posts from beyond the grave. The Internet's global coverage offered the grateful dead vast opportunities to convert the masses, possibly plead for forgiveness or, more than likely, maintain a similar pose to that revealed in their own era.

Satire is obviously the key driver for the entire concept and yet, despite a mocking tone, the message delivered by the famous dead attempts to convey a 'darkened' universal empathy and need. This need is at the heart of the works spread across the following pages. It's a need to be noticed, to be understood, to be respected, to be popular and potentially to be adored. Finally, like all Instagram or Facebook users, a need to know you actually exist. Or not.

**Mark Braunias** graduated from Canterbury University with a BFA in 1988. He has exhibited widely in New Zealand and overseas since that time. In 2019 Braunias completed an Artist Residency at the Dunedin School of Art. For further information : [markbraunias.com](http://markbraunias.com)











## BARBARA GRAF, RESIDENCY JULY–AUGUST 2019

Michele Beevors



Figure 1.



Figure 2.

Barbara Graf seems to have started her working life as an artist from an intersection with modernism, especially the figurative traditions of Leger and Gabo, and from the spaces that modernity had left behind: anatomy and the human form. While these ideas have always been of interest to her, her engagement with textiles, photography and film seem to have been influenced by travel and by the figurative traditions of Leonardo's drawings.

During her residency at Dunedin School of Art in June 2019, Graf held a day-long workshop for sculpture and textile students on experimental embroidery, a public seminar and an exhibition, "Volatile Bodies," a survey of her practice in the School of Art Gallery. "Volatile Bodies" included many of Graf's earlier works concerned with the idea of the concertinaed body; assembled anatomical studies of a pop-out human form; five video monitors showing animations; photographs; and elaborations on experimental embroidery, works with cloth that hung in the gallery space. The cloth works were arranged so that the viewer could see around and through them to other works. Photographs of the artist performing for the camera behind, underneath and veiled by fabric were arranged between other works. The gallery space was filled with works, some of which were elaborately detailed, while others were iterations and stepping stones pointing in different directions. Viewers might have had a sense of a career of singular intent, of conceptual somersaulting and highly skilled labour as they moved around the exhibition.

"Volatile Bodies" painted a trajectory whereby the more outward-looking, modernist works – for the early works, think Hans Bellmer or Nancy Graves – had led to personal explorations, self-motivated by intimate knowledge of the sensuous body and the materials used. Shrouded in secrecy and personal subjectivity, the human body (its skin) is laid bare for the invasive gaze of medicine, which turns the idea of the intimate and personal into a shared experience – as anyone who has been under the knife, screened for cancer, jabbed by a needle or prodded and poked by modern medicine can attest to. It is the development of the work towards the exposed yet veiled experience of describing, of understanding the body, the sensations and sensuality, pain and abjection, that Graf's work evokes for this viewer.



Figure 3.

In the earlier works, breasts become layers and anatomies garments; full-size figures are constructed in opaque canvas fabric, joined together by zips and clips, so that the works can fit any space – concertinaed out, but demonstrably collapsible, so they can be toted around. When unfurled, the works resemble a disarticulated mummy – a horizontally exploded view of the body, sliced by medicine's need to know, a body peeled like an orange in one piece, the skin stretching out and springing back to demonstrate open/closed, to reveal nothing in the middle, only the bandaging forming the form.



Figure 4.

We imagine the works going in and out like a piano accordion. We imagine our own aching spine doing the same thing. Without the flexibility of youth or a lifetime's gymnastics, we cannot imagine touching our toes. Barbara Graf's earlier works have the strange effect of making me want to be able to touch my toes. They also make me think of a medieval torture device, the rack, the painfulness of back injury as the body opens and closes at will. Canvas is used extensively in these early works and is sewn meticulously with red thread. The canvas links these works materially, if not thematically, to painting and art history. These works make me think about the ideal proportions of Leonardo's Vitruvian Man measured against not-so-ideal bodies.

Over the course of years, the focus of Graf's work has shifted from an engaged textile practice to film, photography and drawing. Examining the conventional role of observation and attempting to bypass ideas of the gaze, her extensive use of gauze as an overt materiality signals both what is hidden inside the wound and the body itself. The gauze veils, shields and hides. It is used in medicine to wipe clean and expose, to cover the wound, to protect it from infection, to heal and to conceal (in some of Graf's works the cloth gauze is dyed surgical green and red). The textile works in "Volatile Bodies" veil the body repeatedly – the body being represented becomes more opaque, not less opaque, with every iteration. These works use the language of the operating theatre as a trope; things which are not necessary to see are obscured. In the photographs (as in surgery) and the films, the body is rendered into lines which fold in and on each other. The body is also obscured by the references to the small, intricate delicacy of the fabric and the innumerable tiny, perfect stitches and folds of warp and weft of the gauze itself, almost invisible to the eye. The drawings made later carry this detail through.

We are not unfamiliar with the idea of the fragmented body. Robert Gober's wax sculptures and Cindy Sherman's mannequin photographs, for example, reveal our fascination with the abject body. In Graf's work we see this play out as an accurate – if not alarming – response to medicine's dramatic insistence on getting closer to the disease (and through imaging, to a new digital form of representation), keeping the body, and the subject, at arm's length. Yet everywhere in Graf's work the subject is apparent. Albeit partial, covered and shrouded in secrecy, it alludes to a whole female subject who is never fully present and never totally available. She, whoever she is, is tantalisingly just beyond view. A foot, some skin, the side of a face may appear; the disconcerting effect of the gauze makes you not want to look, while looking, afraid of what you might see – complicating issues of looking that feminist texts have failed to resolve, such as the commercialisation of bodies in Western, youth-obsessed advertising displays.



In the photographic works, cloths are draped over the body to reveal a belly button, an armpit, feet; the photograph is foggy, the body shrouded in mystery, doubly and triply exposed. The artist's hand is everywhere present as it works to obliterate its own labour. The body alluded to in these works is obviously female – an aging, wrinkled and hairy, bleeding or leaking one. The fabric is wrinkled and bears the weight of the embroidered drawings – of hands which congeal to form a bloody mass of organs. Even then, each thread is accounted for, stitched back into the fabric, as there is no wrong side to these works to hide the messy ends of threads.

Drawing with the sewing machine on gauze is quite a difficult thing to master. In the cloth works, some drawing, especially of hands, are quite clunky, suggesting a latex gloved hand instead of the elegant hand of a woman – latex, the thin line of defence between safety and the spread of disease. In the exhibition, the sewing-machine drawings are seen before the photographs that in turn make their way into the animations. The animations fold into each other: a simple line, black on a white background drawing of a foot, is repeated until it covers the screen, becoming an ear; the ear turns into a hundred ears and then becomes a hand or a foot before becoming something else. The lines are continually looping back and layering one onto the next, folded over again. For the viewer, these works are clearly non-narrative; you can enter into them at any point and be mesmerised by the flip-flopping of the human form, moving from one to many, from the personal to the political.

The methodology Graf employs in every instance, through fabric, photography and film, is the fold. The fold appears as the third verb on Richard Serra's list of things to do with stuff. However, in Graf's work the particularity of the fold is constantly echoed, in its material worldliness (everything fits in a suitcase), in its unfolding and expanding in the space, and then – as it reaches towards the viewer, then beyond the viewer to extend the disciplines of textiles, sculpture, photography, drawing and film, each in its turn – folding in on itself and reflecting the limits of its own expanded field. A photograph that obscures the view, a drawing that is only a line, a sculpture in space that is flat, a textile that has a hole in it ... The limits of a particular field and its overlap with another is where the fold becomes the most consistent feature of Graf's work. This apparent interdisciplinarity stems from the translation of one medium to the next; the content and methodology remain the same in each iteration, revealing or concealing the artist's body. This body is available, yet turning away. It is not the smooth, youthful body of advertising – it is present yet veiled, measured and meticulous in its delineation, but always elusive.

In Graf's extensive creative history, one work stands out, against which all the others are measured – Cloth 4 (Figure 1), a red rectangle of gauze incorporating a white circle. In this work warp and weft is sewn back on itself, creating a 20-centimetre 'hole' that is not a hole – a peephole of sorts – but the tension between warp and weft is drawn away from the hole created to the labour of the artist. "What a crazy thing to do," I found myself thinking. How simple, how amazing. Usually holes are mended, especially when the thing to be mended is considered valuable or irreplaceable (like bodies), yet here the mending has created the hole. The mending itself is almost microscopic. The threads folded over are then pulled back into the fabric. This kind of attention to detail comes from working with and knowledge of a material; a distillation of all the themes of working and the meanings of other works are threaded through this work. A whole constellation of meanings swirls around and spins out of the hole. The hole has a faint red thread that runs away from the centre. Bloodlines, the trace of life and the opening out of the body, and pain are all represented by these thin red lines, exquisitely sewn into the fabric. The gaze through the gauze is blurry. The hole that is only partially a hole is mind-bogglingly simple, yet it invokes women's labour (to mend old and worn clothes) and the craftperson's skills and understanding of the materials used every day. You can see it from both sides, dyed and resist.

Interdisciplinarity does not exist without disciplines. In Graf's work there is a clear delineation of the trajectory of the intersections between disciplines. Graf works with an understanding of the rules, but in working with materials one also understands where the rules can be bent. Textiles and sculpture cross over, and fold into photography and film. Graf's pieces work because of her extensive understanding of and empathy with textile history, as well as her familiarity with medicine's prying gaze. Yet she breaks the conventions of most textile work and extends it in other directions because of an equally knowledgeable understanding of sculpture, of representation, the body, photography and film.

**Michele Beevors** is a Principal Lecturer and the studio coordinator for sculpture and ceramics at the Dunedin School of Art. She lectures in the undergraduate programme, specialising in the history of modernist sculpture. Michele holds Masters degrees from the Canberra School of Art (Australian National University) and Columbia University (New York). Her sculptural art practice embodies a feminist perspective and issues of sustainability, particularly as it affects animals. She is involved with the Aramoana Conservation Charitable Trust.

## CORPOREAL EXPLORATIONS: FROM EMBODIMENTS OF BODILY EXPRESSIONS TO VISUAL RECORDINGS OF PHYSICAL SENSATIONS

Barbara Graf

The field of my artistic exploration is the human body and its forms of expression. In my works, the body is represented not only through external visible formations, but also by internal anatomical structures. Corporeal perceptions are thus embodied in membranes, and expressed as such in textile materials and paper in my work. My own body serves as an object of investigation and as a subject of performative photography – hence both as perceiving and expressing body. The surfaces and substrates of these corporeal expressions are variously interpreted as graphic representations, photographs and short films, textile coverings and objects.

As for the conditions under which the works are created, three approaches can be distinguished. The first manifests itself in sculptural body wrappings, which simultaneously protect and expose. Thus, bodily imaginations and feelings are exteriorised as sculptural emotional shell.

A second approach examines how physical sensations can be visualised, probing the problems arising from representations of subjective experiences. It explores different ways of conceiving bodies without adhering to a strictly chronological order. Whereas earlier approaches mainly referred to the expressing body where the intuitive approach is relevant, in my recent works more specific questions have initiated new processes. These can be formulated briefly as interrogation of possible representations of experienced body sensations.



Figure 1. Barbara Graf, *Jumping Out of One's Skin, Anatomical Garment III*, 1996, cotton, snap-fasteners and hooks & eyes, life-size.

Finally, the third approach is exemplified in those works created in the context of artistic research projects relating to various medical fields. Here, too, my own body is the starting point. Although the observation of bodies and their treatment in general is central to this area of research, my body serves as both the medium of empathic perception and the object of representation with respect to physical and emotional vulnerability. This position is located somewhere between the two outlined above. Even though these observations emanate from my own body, it is not a question of a personal or individual body, but rather of an exemplary one.

Since 2004, I have been working with Christina Lammer on various arts-based research projects.<sup>1</sup> In a process of close exchange, we have developed our work and use different media and tools to explore bodies and their vulnerabilities. For many years Christina Lammer has used a camera as an ethnographic and empathic tool in surgical operating theatres. In her embodied camera work, she penetrates the surgeon–patient relationship and its gestural dynamics. In so doing, physical tissue and the materiality of the film emulsion are merged. In a similar transfer, my work combines the physical with textile tissue, and the pencil and the sewing needle serves as a tool of investigation.



Figure 2. Barbara Graf, *Skin Dress – Anatomical Garment I*, 1989, cotton, zippers and Velcro, life-size.

The exploration of body layers – its wrappings, the interior and exterior anatomy – has always been the focus of my interest. In order to render tangible not only the development of my work, but also comparisons between various pieces, I shall take the textile work *Skin Dress* (Figure 2) from 1989 as an illustrative example. It is also the first work in the series *Anatomical Garments*, marking a new direction of research on textiles as a flexible and performative medium. This full-body suit is a membrane which, although cocooning the body, reveals nakedness. An internal body structure has also been assimilated into it – a spinal column. This can be folded away to become the point of entry to the outer covering.

At a later stage, the exposure of inner body structures – in the course of which the inner skeleton is transformed into an outer shell – becomes explicit in *Vertebral Column Garment* (Figure 3). With back and front views virtually identical, it suggests the understanding of oneself as sculpture.

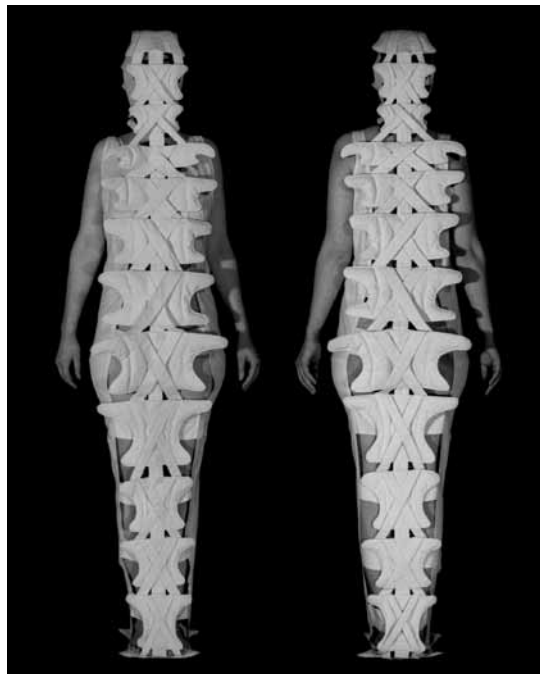


Figure 3. Barbara Graf, *Vertebral Column Garment – Anatomical Garment V*, 1996, cotton, snap-fasteners and Velcro, life-size.



Figure 4. Barbara Graf, *Segment Suit – Anatomical Garment VI*, 1997, cotton, zippers, hooks & eyes and Velcro, life-size; bag: 65 x 40 x 12 cm.

In *Segment Suit* (Figure 4), muscle-fibre structures were sewn into textile fabric. The resulting garment completely envelops the body and becomes a fully closed suit in which one can do little more than stand. Inner structures are externally visible, although the physical space that is actually felt is an entirely internal one. Thus, this second skin determines the body position. The garment can be disassembled into its individual parts and stowed in a specially constructed bag. Ultimately, the body wrappings can be transformed into a transportable travel kit, a sculpture to be carried as hand luggage.

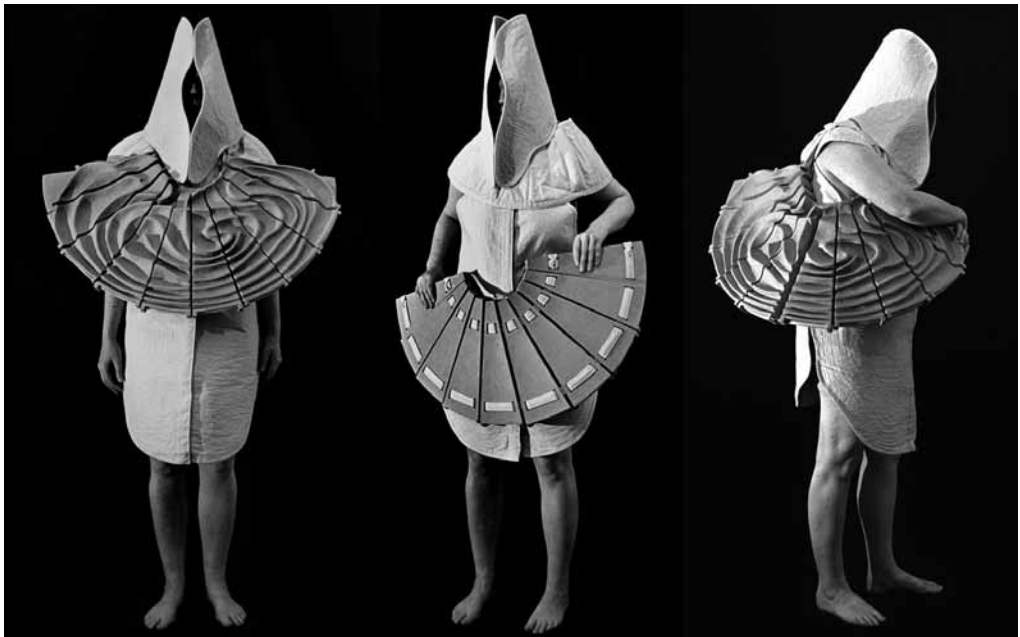


Figure 5. Barbara Graf, *Ear Dress – Anatomical Garment XIV*, 2003/04, cotton, snap-fasteners, hooks & eyes, Velcro and cardboard, life-size.

An apparent shift towards exterior anatomy can be seen in *Ear Dress* (Figure 5). An enormous ear, on which a labyrinth has been superimposed, hangs like a necklace over the wearer's chest. This allusion to a sensory organ is worn like the shield of a suit of armour.

All these works belong to the series *Anatomical Garments*; curator and researcher Cathrin Pichler has described them as "the signifiers of an imagined universe of corporeality of the mind!"

Formed, spread out, layered, smoothed, folded, tied, unfolded, separated, stretched, fastened, raised – Barbara Graf's art bodies present themselves in many ways. Astonishing manifestations and fragmentations of fantasized corporeality characterize the history of the so-called Anatomical Garments. Their anatomies are always allusions to the real anatomy of the human body, coverings fabricated from the forms and elements inside it, turning them outward, accentuating them in fragments, or peeling them off in layers. This is conceptual art based on an investigation of the human body, interjecting corporeality into the investigation while continually imagining new representations and forms.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 6. Barbara Graf, *Contours* (installation), 2005, cotton, hooks and eyes, yarn, 170 x 200 x 120 cm.

Most of the body shells consist of individual parts and can be assembled to form solid, protective or even constricting shells. Step by step, first in drawings, then in textile coverings and surfaces, I diminish their compactness: membranes become diaphanous, folds and wrinkles appear in the material, edges become blurred.

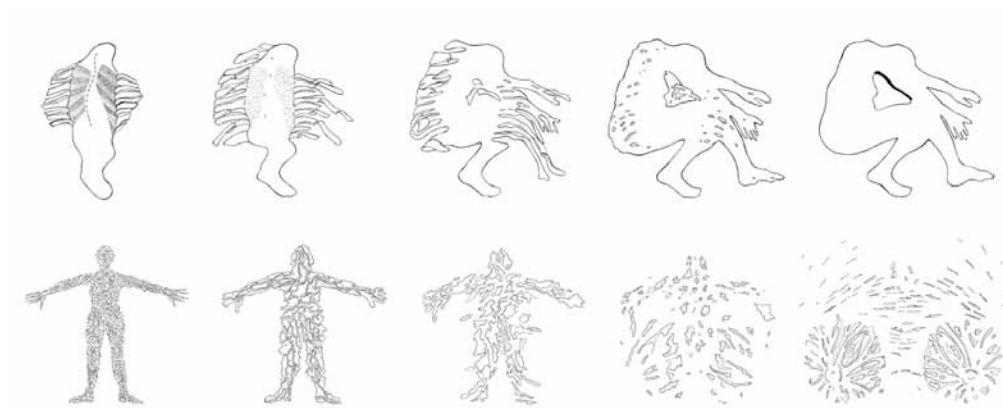


Figure 7. Barbara Graf, *Contours*, 2005-09, film, 1:25 mins; 330 drawings, ink on paper; each 21 x 29.7 cm.

From 2004 onwards, the expansion of my materials into space and permeability has become central to my artistic work. This shift in focus led to the creation of coverings for the body which allowed the body's own boundaries to expand and fuse with the surrounding space. My installation *Contours* (Figures 6 and 7) and the animated drawings bearing the same title sought to realise the objective of palpating the body as bodily space.



Figure 8. Barbara Graf, *Breast Layers – Anatomical Garment XV*, 2006, cotton, hooks & eyes and zippers, life-size; bag: 42 x 42 x 4 cm.

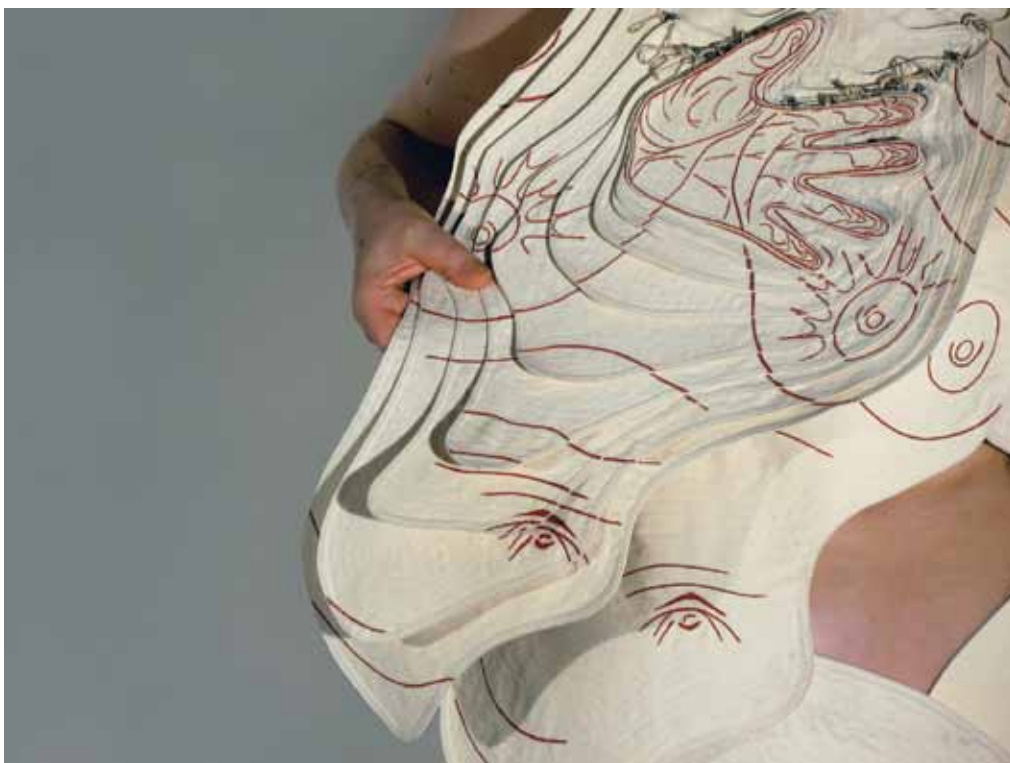


Figure 9. Barbara Graf, *Hand Breast Layers – Anatomical Garment XVI*, 2008, cotton, snap-fasteners and hooks & eyes, life-size.



*Breast Layers* and *Hand Breast Layers* (Figures 8 and 9) both deal with layers and the peeling back of textile covers as an anatomical and topographical principle. They also form part of the series *Anatomical Garments* which I have been working on for 30 years. Each Anatomical Garment consists of a sculptural, multi-part clothing item, a bag for storage and transport, and a scientific-looking operating manual. Through drawings, both the way of acting and possible representational formats of body sculptures are described. In addition, the process of assembling and disassembling is depicted; in so doing, it underlines an important anatomical principle, referring to both the cutting pattern as well as to the conception of the body shell as a flexible sculpture. Ultimately, the stowing of the individual parts into their corresponding bags evokes an inherent sense of the nomadic.

In the *Cloths* series (Figures 10-12), I apply materials used in the medical field – surgical drapes and medical gauze. These works emerged from the art research project *Surgical Wrappings*,<sup>3</sup> in which I again collaborated with Christina Lammer. The aim of the project was to examine the operating field and the gestures of surgery. The investigations that my colleague made with the camera in the operating theatre, but also through interviews with surgeons and patients, formed an important basis for our exchange. We asked: What role does contact and touch play in the clinical context? We were also concerned to investigate proximity and distance with reference to both clinical personnel and patients, and also the materialities of the operating theatre – for example, surgical drapes. Christina's work led to the development of filmic topographies. Hers is no mere documentary approach, but rather she reveals the mysterious and even poetic nature of surgical procedures, the sensitivity with which the surgeon's hands touch human tissue. Although the hand never touches the patient directly, but is always mediated by gloves or tools, in Christina's short films and video clips these 'touching' moments are rendered visible. In order to prepare the operating area, for example, lines are drawn on the skin, hands reach inside physical cavities, wounds are closed by means of surgical stitching and sutures. The tactility of surgery and the interpersonal contact it involves are impressively represented in these films.

In my own work, I transform these surgical techniques into textile fabric. Shifted threads, cut-out areas or embroidered lines in the fabric represent the surgeon's hand gestures and the physical structures of the body. Here, the fabric became a corporeal membrane, a medium for body expression and body perception. In the photographic layouts, I thus bring cloth and body very close to each other. As a result, the operating field is transformed into an image field, and textile fabric and human tissue overlap.



Figure 10. Barbara Graf, *Cloth 2 – Hand Images*, 2012, surgical drape and medical gauze, 186 x 93 cm; photograph: 26.7 x 35.6 cm.



Figure 11. Barbara Graf, *Cloth 5 – Hand Images*, 2013, medical gauze, green and white threads, 186 x 93 cm; photograph: 26.7 x 35.6 cm.





Figure 12. Barbara Graf, *Cloth 6 – Hand Images*, 2013,  
surgical drape and medical gauze, different coloured threads, 186 x 93 cm;  
photographs: 26.7 x 35.6 cm.

The resulting images have the potential to reconcile ambivalent or contradictory modes of expression or operation: covering and uncovering, proximity and distance, interior and exterior, touch and intervention. As for the fabric structures, these again allude to surgical meshes and overlap with organic textures.

*Cloth 6* is based on an experience I had during a laparoscopic procedure. It depicts the sterile operating window, showing the structure of the navel, its associated folds and organic structures. This image is intended to evoke a smooth transition to images within the body. Layers of medical gauze seem to dissolve the organic structures, which only reappear when the cut-outs of the green surgical drape are illuminated. The round endoscopic internal image overlaps with the outer operating field. As a result, the perception of one's own body is in an ambivalent relationship with the distanced view of the veiled body. The cloth, applied to the body and arranged photographically, blurs the boundaries between textile and physical tissue.



Figure 13. Barbara Graf, *Large Glove in Motion (Glove as a Garment)*,  
2016-18, 210 x 135 cm;  
photographs, each 34 x 25.5 cm.

A similar merging of body and shell is depicted in *Large Glove in Motion* (Figure 13). This work is part of two projects *Performing Surgery* and *Visceral Operations/Assemblage*.<sup>4</sup> Here, the action itself – the gestures of hands – forms the central element of the work. Analysing the movements of operating hands – from the slightest touch to the deepest intervention – prompted me to sew a glove the size of the human body. Set in motion and photographed using a stroboscopic apparatus, these operating hands and the body to be operated on fuse into one. In this way, the entire body merges into a single movement or transforms itself into an internal organ. It is this very movement that is ephemeral, but at the same time penetrates deeply.



Figure 14. Barbara Graf, *Wrinkle Lines 4 – Bandage* (Body Mapping), 2011, photograph, 26.7 x 35.6 cm.



Figure 15. Barbara Graf, *Wrinkle Lines 7 – Bandage* (Hand Mapping), 2016, photograph, 26.7 x 35.6 cm.

A series of works, *Wrinkle Lines – Bandages* (Figures 14-16), illustrates the interweaving of corporeal and textile tissues, of topographies and textures. Here, the bandages embody not only vulnerability, but also protection and healing. The photographs are taken in such a way that external body structures are transformed into internal body structures by the wrapping of bandages around the entire body or a part of it. Body wrinkles are embroidered into fine fabrics reminiscent of cartographic drawings. In this way, a new order of bodily components is created by spreading them out, arranged into folds or layered, ultimately revealing the body's fragility.



Figure 16. Barbara Graf, *Wrinkle Lines 8 – Bandage* (Foot Mapping), 2016-18, photograph, 26.7 x 35.6 cm.



Figure 17. Barbara Graf, *Drawing No. 174*, 2009, pencil on paper; 29.7 x 42 cm.

A major turning point in my work occurred in 2017 when I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). The sensory disturbances associated with this disease constitute both an impediment and a challenge to approach my work differently. Until then, it was not important to me whether emotions or physical sensations were expressed through my representations of the body. As the boundaries of emotional and physical perception are naturally blurred, this intermingling was something that I could usefully exploit. However, as a result of my altered body sensations – such as paraesthesia – I have increasingly focused on the possibility of visualising physical perceptions.

A few years before the onset of the first symptoms of MS, I created a drawing of my hand showing my thumb pressing the ball of my foot, as if to check its sensitivity. Fibre-like lines establish a link between hand and foot, extending beyond the body. This work anticipated the sensation of a momentary physical experience, thus combining the element of bodily expression from earlier works with the representation of perceptions in my current work. Arising from the experience of bodily injury, there is a feeling that the entire self has been violated in its inherent sensitivity. The affliction of MS causes a number of sensory disorders, including paraesthesia (resulting in numbness), spasticity, the sensation of largeness or tightness, and band-like sensations. In order to deal with these altered perceptions, I began drawing the alienating sensations I was experiencing. In this way, I was reminded of earlier drawings, underlining for me – in an disconcerting way – their similarity to the sensations I was now experiencing. For example, the feeling that one is wearing a glove is a common phenomenon with this illness.



Figure 18. Barbara Graf, *Drawing No.3*, 1995, pencil on paper, 48 x 65 cm  
*Drawing No.218*, 2019, pencil on paper, 29.7 x 42 cm.

My artistic reflections on the relationship between bodily expression and physical sensation once again prompted me to engage intensively with the work of Maria Lassnig.<sup>5</sup> In her visual embodiments, she navigates through perceptions that are sometimes focused on emotions and sometimes on physical sensations – if they are even distinguishable. In the process of painting or drawing, she investigates the sensations in her own body in order to portray a visual reality through corporeal experience. The result is a 'sensitive' depiction, which mainly portrays recognisable bodies or body parts, but is sometimes completely abstract, and yet still forcefully conveys body perception. Her work connects an inner vision with an outer seeing.

Maria Lassnig has always been an important reference point for me – not only because I was her student, but also from the viewpoint of taking oneself as the subject of investigation. And from the moment my body experienced disturbance and uncertainty due to my illness, I've become even more concerned to reflect on the connections between physical and emotional perception.

Visualising physical sensations is inherently difficult. A number of questions suggest themselves: Which modes of graphical representation are feasible, under what conditions and by what criteria are the drawings to be created, and how are they to be conveyed? Perception cannot be delegated to others and is a uniquely experienced phenomenon. However, if it is a question of proprioception, then the object of perception is the same as the perceiving subject. How is it possible to distance oneself from the self in order to be capable of subjective objectification? How can artistic manifestations of this phenomenon be formulated? As close as such expressions are to one's own person, they must be abstracted by taking a step back in order to be mediated.

This question of proximity is a challenging one. Although Michel Foucault does not answer this question in his lecture "Utopian Body," he is deeply concerned with this seemingly ambivalent body, one that is dissolved – never being exactly 'there,' but rather being everywhere. According to Foucault, everything goes from and through the body in a simultaneity of proximity and distance:

My body, in fact, is always elsewhere. It is tied to all the elsewhere of the world. And to tell the truth, it is *elsewhere* than in the world, because it is around it that things are arranged. [...] The body is the zero point of the world, this small utopian kernel from which I dream, I speak, I proceed, I imagine, I perceive things in their place, and I negate them also by the indefinite power of the utopias I imagine.<sup>6</sup>

An important question in the graphic formulation of lived experience is where the images of bodily sensations originate. An interesting phenomenon I have observed is that many of my sensations of nervous disorders feel as if textile objects are the stimulus of perception. It is as if touch is perceived without one being touched – for example, the feeling of wearing a sock-like textile without actually having a sock on. I ask myself why the disturbances of my nervous system feel so textile-like. Is it my own work that gives a language to the perception of what I feel? Physical sensations are intrinsically linked to our previous experiences, whether they are artistic or everyday ones. Subsequently, they become perceptions and images. This explains why people afflicted with MS – even those who are not artists working with fabrics – often have sensations that they describe in terms of textiles – for instance, that of walking on cotton or wearing tight clothes. Clothing obviously constitutes a fundamental experience of touch. The search for a graphic equivalent of lived experience raises complex questions. When I draw this illusion, caused by a disorder of the nerves, is it a comparison, a metaphor or an exact recording of the sensation, even if the sock does not exist? What in fact is meant by an exact recording? Can I draw abstract quasi-seismographic structures that correspond to a specific sensation?



Figure 19. Barbara Graf, *Drawings No. 189, 203, 215, 194, 208, 214, 2017-19*, pencil on paper, each 29.7 × 42 cm.

In some of these drawings (Figures 18 and 19) I illustrate these sensations without any body contours, focusing exclusively on what I experienced. In other representations, I focus on the sensations of paraesthesia as an isolated structure, as if I was looking through a 'phenomenological microscope.' Drawing unpleasant lived experiences facilitates my understanding of my own body and acceptance of the resulting sense of alienation. This is supported by the transfer of the representation of my perceptions to external loci. As subjective experiences are invisible and not really representable, I refrain from calling them such. Still, it is possible to produce resonant images of corporeal sensations. This undertaking ultimately creates a meaningful space to which outsiders may gain empathic access.



Figure 20. Barbara Graf, *Touching the Sole of the Foot*, 2017, photograph, 18 x 24 cm.

The question of the (non-)representability of bodily perception is an important field of investigation in my PhD thesis, where I explore the similarities and differences between my earlier and current work and the degree of their interwovenness. The title of my project, "Stitches and Sutures,"<sup>7</sup> refers not only to my work with textiles, but also to the method of investigation. It describes the movement of penetrating layers with needle and thread, stitching and backstitching to create seams, displacing threads, disentangling woven fabric, creating blank spaces, stretching new lengths of thread and establishing links. In order to establish a connection between present and past, I borrow the notion of the *point de capiton* from Jacques Lacan.<sup>8</sup> This signifies a process whereby the past is studded retroactively with stitches, as if made by needle and thread, at greater and smaller intervals. From this linkage, *quilting points* emerge; many of them constitute a *suture*. The linkage they form is more or less stable, thereby signifying the diachronic production of meaning. Thus, the footmarks of the past acquire meaning through events in the present.

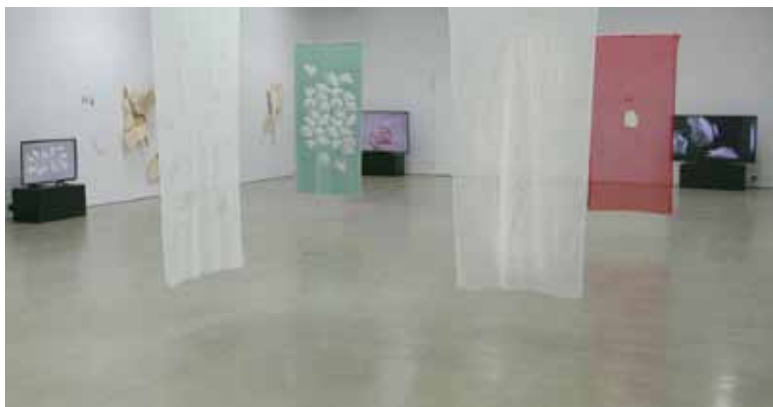


Figure 21. Barbara Graf, "Corporeal Explorations" exhibition, 2019. Held at the DSA Gallery, Dunedin School of Art, Otago Polytechnic, New Zealand.

**Acknowledgements:** I would like to thank everybody who continues to support me in my work and life. Here, special thanks go to the artists and researchers who helped me during my stay as an artist in residence in 2019 at the Dunedin School of Art, with whom I enjoyed many good conversations and with whom I still enjoy a lively artistic exchange: Michele Beevors, Neil Emmerson, Adrian Hall, Bridie Lonie, Pam McKinlay and Amanda Woodford. I am also grateful to Julia Herzog for her help with my academic writing. I also wish to thank the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic, the University of Applied Arts Vienna, and the FWF: some of my research was and continues to be funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF).

**Barbara Graf** was born in Switzerland and lives in Vienna, Austria. She is an artist and a Senior Lecturer at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. In her work she investigates body representations and develops flexible sculptures as a second skin. Her main media are drawing, sculpture, photography and film. Since 2004 she has been working in various art research projects dealing with medical issues. She is currently developing her doctoral thesis on the visualisation of body perception.

All photographs are by Barbara Graf.

- 1 Christina Lammer is a research sociologist, author and filmmaker based in Vienna and the leader of several projects exploring corporealities and gestures in the medical context: *CORPOrealities* (2004-09) and *Surgical Wrappings* (2009-13), supported by the Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF); *Performing Surgery* (2015-18) and *Visceral Operations/Assemblage* (2019-23), supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF). See <http://www.corporealities.org/> (accessed 2 July 2020).
- 2 Cathrin Pichler, "Thing and Life – Barbara Graf's Art Bodies," *Contemporary Practices: Art Journal*, 9 (2011), 172-7, at 172, <http://contemporarypractices.net/essays/VolumelX/THING%20AND%20LIFE.pdf>. First published in German in *CORPOrealities*, ed. Christina Lammer (Vienna: Löcker Verlag, 2010).
- 3 *Surgical Wrappings* (2009-2014), supported by the Vienna Science and Technology Fund (WWTF), in collaboration with Christina Lammer.
- 4 *Performing Surgery* (2015-18) and *Visceral Operations/Assemblage* (2019-2023), supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), in collaboration with Christina Lammer.
- 5 Maria Lassnig (1919-2014) led the Master Class for Experimental Visual Art between 1980 and 1989 at the Universität of Applied Arts Vienna, and was my professor. She is internationally considered as the pioneer of Body Awareness painting and drawing. From the mid-1940s she devoted herself to researching the representation of body sensations in art.
- 6 Michel Foucault, "Utopian Body," in *Sensorium – Embodied Experience, Technology and Contemporary Art*, trans. Lucia Allais, ed. Caroline A Jones (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 229-34, at 233. First broadcast by Foucault as one of two radio talks, "Les hétérotopies – Le corps utopique," Radio France, 1966.
- 7 Barbara Graf, "Stitches and Sutures," art research PhD in progress since 2018 at the University of Applied Arts Vienna. Supervisor: Barbara Putz-Plecko.
- 8 Jacques Lacan's *point de capiton* has been variously translated in English as "quilting point," "anchoring point" and "upholstery button." Lacan borrows the image of the stitch from Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (where the puncture connects the signified and the signifier) and connects it with the system of *afterwardsness* (*Nachträglichkeit*) formulated by Sigmund Freud. Originally, the *point de capiton* was a textile stitch derived from the craft of the mattress-maker. A double-pointed upholstery needle is used to stitch through layers of unshaped fibres, to hold them together and to shape the fibrous material.

*CLINKPROJECT6*

Andrew Last

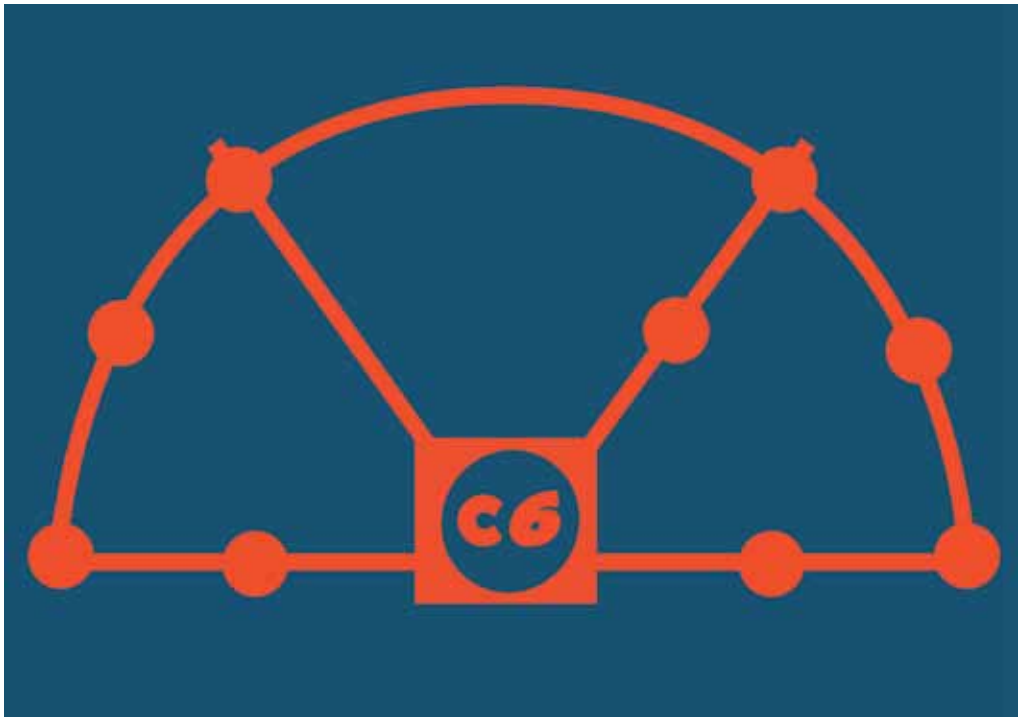


Figure 1. *CLINKProject6* logo.

For the last five years, a cohort of students and staff from Dunedin School of Art have travelled to Auckland and worked with Hungry Creek Art and Craft School on collaborative projects under the title *CLINKProject*. The output has been pop-up or intervention-flavoured jewellery exhibits in Auckland locations. This year, groups from both schools crossed the Tasman and met in Melbourne to stage *CLINKProject6* under the umbrella of Radiant Pavilion, a Melbourne jewellery biennial that has gathered momentum over recent years.<sup>1</sup> The two groups united and worked in conjunction with the Grainger Museum, a collection within the University of Melbourne dedicated to the life and work of Australian musician and composer Percy Grainger.

*CLINKProject6* has worked within a museum context before; in 2017 we worked with the Auckland War Memorial Museum alongside curator Grace Lai.<sup>2</sup> For that event we spent a day in the museum; each participant selected a work from the collection to respond to and we worked intensively for two days in Hungry Creek's workshop making jewellery in response to the collection piece chosen. We presented our work to the public set on top of Tyvek-wrapped vitrines placed outside the museum's shop.

In contrast to CLINKProject's typical short-timespan collective-making strategy, for 2019 we resolved to pre-make work responding to the Grainger collection's online and audio-visual archive resources, rather than via a direct experience with the collection. This decision was precipitated by three factors: our relatively brief stay in Melbourne; our lack of a workshop facility in Melbourne; and the compelling opportunities to be part of the wider Radiant Pavilion jewellery biennial.

However, both groups set aside two dedicated making days in our separate studios where participants worked toward the Grainger exhibit simultaneously. There was an option to work collaboratively if areas of overlapping interest were recognised.

We brought our work to Melbourne and used the limited time available in the Grainger Museum to collectively refine curatorial and presentation issues. We worked with Grainger's curator Dr Heather Gaunt during this phase.

*CLINKProject6* was presented as a discreet but integrated exhibit among the permanent display collection in the Grainger Museum. It was open to both the general public and the Radiant Pavilion audience for three days, 12, 13 and 15 September.

As an educational strategy, CLINKProjects have sought to empower both students and staff by taking the curriculum beyond the school into the realms of public (real world?) interaction and commitment. Studio and gallery visits have been integral to establishing a current understanding of communities of professional jewellery practice.

Over the five previous incarnations of CLINKProject, the key values have been participation as community; collaboration; *manaakitanga* (reciprocity of kindness, respect, hospitality and humanity); non-hierarchical decision making; diverse strategies for audience interaction; and dynamically responding to live making and curatorial stimulus. For *CLINKProject6*, the emphasis on some of these key values shifted as a result of the event being located in Melbourne and being part of the Radiant Pavilion biennial.

This year's participants were:

(Hungry Creek/Auckland): Denise Callan, Cindy Tan, Courtenay Marshall, Jessica Dew, Emma Webster, Jack Wolf, Amelia Rothwell, Lissy Hunt.

(Dunedin): Susan Videler, Meg Van Hale, Fiona Frew, Tess Wing, Alex Huber, Nona Shackleton, Maja Nederman, Simon Swale, Johanna Zellmer, Andrew Last, Victoria Bell, Jan Dobbie.

While the majority of this year's participants were new to the CLINKProject experience, several are repeat contributors and some are serial CLINKers. The mix of participant experience over many incarnations of the CLINKProject allows comparison and contrast between *CLINKProject6* and its predecessors. As a strategy to give voice to participants in *CLINKProject6*, selected participants were asked a series of questions in order to gauge general responses from first timers and to allow historical comparisons from veterans.



Figure 2. Grainger Museum, University of Melbourne.



## DENISE CALLAN

**Q:** Gifting #NotLostPins freely to the exhibition audience allowed everybody to feel important, just as Percy conveyed a sense of importance to the most mundane objects by his relentless archival tagging.

Your work ended up being worn by many Radiant Pavilion people. How important to you was your sense of connection to that broad community compared to the smaller CLINK collective and smaller-still Hungry Creek whanau?

**A:** *I was really grateful and excited for the opportunity of being part of both CLINKProject6 and Radiant Pavilion, and really wanted to make the most of that. While I didn't start out with the intention of making a giveaway-type work, I am glad that's the direction it took. In general, I think community is really important and I enjoy meeting and connecting with new people. That meant this opportunity to connect with other makers and the general public was really exciting and became an important part of the work. In giving the pins away freely, I was really interested to see how many would become 'not lost' to me again, even if they only returned for a brief moment. The name of the work itself (#NotLostPins) in part came from that idea, and gave me the additional ability to track their individual journeys beyond Radiant Pavilion through social media. It was great to be able to see who had been to CLINKProject6 by who was wearing a pin. They proved to be great conversation starters, which enabled me to connect with many people I may not have otherwise spoken to. I've also been able to see that several of them have travelled across the world to places I myself have never been, which as a maker I think is kind of cool.*



Figure 3. Denise Callan, #NotLostPins, 2019

## CINDY TAN AND AMELIA ROTHWELL



Figure 4. Cindy Tan and Amelia Rothwell, *I will be handed over to immortality one day*, 2019.



Figure 5. Cindy Tan and Amelia Rothwell, *Beloved Mother's Pearls*, 2019.

**Q:** Your works *I will be handed over to immortality one day* and *Beloved Mother's Pearls* are both sensitive responses to the Grainger exhibit focusing on Percy's mother's suicide. What was your reaction to seeing the exhibit in real life, compared to the images that motivated your work?

Having gained a more thorough understanding of the exhibit and its context in the museum, would you have made any changes to your work with the benefit of hindsight?

**A: Cindy:** Experiencing Rose's exhibit in real life was quite affecting, because up till then we had only seen individual photos of objects that were on display. Seeing all the items together in context, and amongst other pieces we hadn't seen, such as Rose's suicide note and images of her with Percy or after her death, gave the whole exhibit a sense that she truly was loved and that it was first and foremost a memorial to Rose's life.

My work responded to Rose's gloves that she wore on the day of her death, and the approach I took spoke very directly to the original item in the museum. The nature of the processes involved in my two works, ceramics and lost-wax casting, meant that the outcomes were unexpected and uncontrollable. In terms of the context of the Grainger, Heather was very accommodating to our ideas and gave us freedom to alter and rearrange the existing displays. It was an interesting experience to place our works into the original exhibits, and in hindsight there isn't anything I would have done differently.

**A: Amelia:** Before going to the museum, I hadn't anticipated the intimacy of the display of Rose's hair. I had imagined it as just being one thing in a long list of catalogued, lined-up objects.

The display sat in a low-lit, quiet little pocket tucked away in a corner of the museum. Laid out in the cabinet where the hair sat were Rose's personal effects that she had been carrying in her handbag on the day of her death. Above were the reconstructed fragments of the torn-up, anguished letter that Rose had written to Percy the day before. Surrounding were close-up portrait photos of Rose and Percy together during her lifetime, photos of Rose laid out in her coffin (her face surrounded by a sea of flowers), the preserved posy of flowers that had lain on her chest at the funeral – all of these objects combining to create a tragically intimate portrait of Rose and Percy's relationship. All of the care with which these objects – the tale of a beloved life lost – were so thoughtfully arranged in the display added so much more to my piece than I could have imagined, and because of this I wouldn't have changed anything.

The positioning of my work within this space worked well because the sentiments contained in my necklace echoed those of the whole display – those of remembrance and the human instinct to attempt to preserve connection with a loved one long after death has separated them. Like the tension within the work, the display was both serene and comforting whilst simultaneously unsettling; familiar and yet unfamiliar; uncanny. The intense joy and pain of life and love juxtaposed alongside the grief and release of loss and death – both sharing the same moment.

## SUSAN VIDELER AND MEG VAN HALE

**Q:** Having both participated in several CLINKProjects, it'd be fair to say you are big fans of the opportunities that arise through this way of working. Most of the CLINKProjects have involved collectively making the work for exhibition in the Hungry Creek workshops during the programme. This has typically been high-energy, planned and developed on-the-fly and excitingly tense.

Susan: your *Ball-Bell* musical balls are a witty take on Percy's twin passions of music and BDSM sexual practice.

Meg: your *Duet with Mother* similarly relates Percy and his mother's passion for music (and your own).

In what ways did you value the extended making time for this work and what did you miss from the intensity of previous CLINK making events?

**A: Meg:** CLINKProject has always been a whirlwind of activity. Intense workshops, making sessions, discussions (arguments), exhibition installs, too much wine (or not enough?). For the Dunedin crew there was always the extra excitement of travelling, feeling like we were venturing out into the world and making new connections, connections with fellow jewellers but also new audiences. I think CLINK Melbourne really vamped up the sense of adventure. Our two groups easily became one as we banded together as kiwis eager to share a cohesive exhibition on a new stage. For many of us it was our first time exhibiting internationally, but not only that – exhibiting with almost free rein within a museum; but not only that – during the reputable Radiant Pavilion, a



Figure 6. Meg Van Hale,  
*Ball-Bell*, 2019.



Figure 7 Susan Videler;  
*Duet with Mother*, 2019.

week-long event dedicated to the art of jewellery. Because of this opportunity to display our work during this event amongst a large group of international peers, I felt the extended making time to be very valuable. We each had a chance to respond to the Grainger collection and work within our methods. As individual artists, we had the chance to develop and build upon our practices. Building up to the trip, not having seen each other's work and not actually having lain eyes on anything inside the Grainger museum, I'll admit I was dubious about how it would all come together. What if we all responded to the same thing? What if we had all built upon opposing ideas of display and installation? But it simply wasn't the case when we came together. Each response was so varied. There was room for every voice. And it all came together as an exhibition that flowed through the space, intertwining with the existing collections while still drawing the audience in with a new story to tell.

So I guess what I missed at first was the planning as a group. However, the diversity in our practices within the CLINK family was truly allowed to blossom for this project, and I believe it was a chance to develop professionally and personally.

**A: Susan:** The last four CLINK projects have all had a different flavour while maintaining a similar format with regards to co-operative responses, planning and making. Responding only to photographs sent of the collections and layout of the Grainger Museum, I had several weeks to consider Percy Grainger the man and musician. It felt once removed, however, and this feeling became pronounced when I entered the space. It suits my practice to have had time to reflect on the varying aspects of Grainger and trial ideas. I felt the resultant two pieces reflected both his playful musical nature, his collecting, archiving and complex sexual needs. Although we had two days set aside to make as a group in Dunedin, this seemed difficult to achieve and I found myself missing the frenetic, loud and often absurd tempo at the Hungry Creek workshop. One year, disconcertingly, we had to work on a piece for an allotted time then pass it on so that the final work was a Chinese whisper of the original. This became an exercise in letting go and the antithesis of the latest project. I was very satisfied with my pieces, and they certainly benefitted from working at my own pace. However, the experience lacked the camaraderie and unpredictable nature of a group of time-poor, energy-rich makers. We often work alone; the stimulation of a group is a breeding ground for diversity, little anarchies, critique and connection.

## SIMON SWALE

**Q:** This image captures renowned jewellery historian Liesbeth den Besten interacting with your work *Concerto for Untuned Necklaces* with Melbourne-based jeweller Manon van Kouswijk, yourself and Maja watching closely.

CLINKProject6 brought in a broad jewellery audience through its inclusion in the Radiant Pavilion programme.

How valuable was the audience response to your CLINK experience?

**A:** I was really thrilled that people engaged with the work as was intended. Participation has become an increasingly important consideration for what I make and how it is presented to an audience. I thought this was a really great opportunity – responding to an archive dedicated to a musician – to try and make this happen in an interesting and unusual way. The fact the museum already had exhibits in place that encouraged participation – I felt really fortunate to be able to place work alongside that, and that was probably the ultimate contributing aspect that gave people the freedom to play with my own work. Jewellery is a really tactile and haptic art form, yet it can be really difficult to get an audience to physically engage with it in an exhibition setting. So to have people walk up to my work and just start hitting it with drum sticks basically told me the work was a success.

**Q:** Having seen many exhibits from the RadPav list, did you perceive any stand-out characteristics of CLINKProject6?

**A:** Within all the work I saw during RadPav, CLINK was unique – and in so many ways. That we responded, as a very diverse group, to an established archive was unique in itself. But to then be able to insert our work into that archive, in a museum context, was really special. Many people I spoke to over the week commented on that incredible privilege, so I think that was an absolute standout. But just to be with a really great group of creative people – and share that experience together – I think that was unique in itself in the context of RadPav.



Figure 8. Simon Swale,  
*Concerto for Untuned Necklaces*, 2019.

## JAN DOBBIE AND MAJA NEDERMAN

**Q:** Jan: *Shedding Black Dog with Ticks* is your homage to Percy's use of repurposed and found materials in his experimental musical instruments featured in the museum's permanent display. Percy would have immediately seen other applications for the savagely spiky Lumberloks you used to punctuate your composition.

Maja, your work *Stayin' Alive* similarly responds to Percy's fascination with human hair and his belief in the benefits of a good whip.

You were both part of an undergraduate group from Dunedin School of Art that recently worked in response to the "Garden of Earthly Delights" exhibition in Otago University's Hocken Collections.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 9. Jan Dobbie,  
*Stayin' Alive*,  
2019.



Figure 10. Maja Nederman,  
*Shedding Black Dog with Ticks*,  
2019.

In what ways did that project prepare you for CLINKProject6 and what were the key differences, particularly taking the project out of the School environment?

**A:** The work we did in response to the “Garden of Earthly Delights” exhibition in Otago University’s Hocken Library certainly helped to prepare us for CLINKProject6, in which we worked with Heather Gaunt and the Grainger Museum collection. The projects were similar in the way that our briefs were to respond to an item or theme within an established exhibition. These collections varied greatly. We started by finding a piece that spoke to us, a muse, and using that as the foundation of our work. The methodology of working to a brief, within a group and curating an exhibition together, was an invaluable experience that led to a productive collaboration for CLINKProject6.

Where the projects diverged was the making process. The Hocken project was quite research-focused, following a curriculum set by the course. The Hocken Library is just down the street from the art school, so we had plenty of opportunity to study the exhibition – whereas we did not have access to the Grainger Museum ahead of time. Because of this, our work was very much an initial instinctive response to digital images and we worked more intuitively. We didn’t have much of an understanding of the complexity of the Grainger collection and the context of our work until after our pieces were already completed and we got a chance to actually tour the museum in person. Another key difference was that we were responding, as individuals, to particular items but working as a collective – whereas responding to the Hocken we presented our work individually, even though it was shown with other students’ work. As a group showing in the Grainger Museum, we worked well in making consistent choices, so there was fluency of theme and it came together as an excellent, thought-provoking exhibition.

The fundamental difference with working outside of the school environment was that we were in a public space. The Grainger Museum had an already established exhibition on display, which we had to work with and around. With this in mind, we were respectful of the privilege of being invited into the space and [for] their generosity in accommodating us and allowing us to move things around.

CLINKProject6 was a great opportunity for the students involved to work together with a diverse group, including prominent artists. It was a memorable precursor of what we hope our futures hold.

## TESS WING AND ANDREW LAST

**Q:** Both of these works, *Untitled Quad* and *Prince Planet Power Pendant*, respond to Percy’s childhood drawings featured in the Grainger Museum’s “Early Years” display.

In what ways has CLINKProject6 informed your practice, particularly reflecting on the proximity or distance from your own childhood?

**A:** Both works owe an aesthetic nod to the cartoon imagery of our childhood days. Line and colour characteristics of Tess’s *Untitled Quad* are stylistically reminiscent of *Invader Zim*, *Catdo*, and *Wild Thornberries* – cartoons from the early years of this millennium. Andrew’s work is a direct reference to jewellery worn by *Prince Planet*, the central character from one of the earliest Japanese TV anime series (1965). Andrew’s all-time favourite was *Gigantor*.<sup>4</sup> The space-age aesthetics of rockets and jets is obvious in these anime cartoons, and that imagery can be traced through much of Andrew’s artwork.



Figure 11 Tess Wing,  
*Untitled Quad*,  
2019.



Figure 12. Andrew Last,  
*Prince Planet Power Pendant*,  
2019.

The Radiant Pavilion programme offered a concentration of jewellers and their work in Melbourne during CLINKProject6. Tess has followed up with a connection made to local jeweller Victoria McIntosh via an encounter at her excellent Radiant Pavilion exhibit, "The Mother Lode." The energy of sharing an airbnb with 16 people (miraculously!) drew our crew together including Tess and Meg, who have also followed up their connection post CLINK. Andrew studied and established his art practice in Melbourne 30 years ago. CLINK offered the opportunity to re-establish jewellery connections from back in those days. Mentor Susan Cohn has begun enquiries toward a Dunedin residency, partly provoked by meetings during CLINK. Colleague Rohan Nichol, current coordinator of ANU's gold and silversmithing course in Canberra, was dead impressed with CLINKProject6 and invited us to present at next year's JMGA conference in Canberra. Both of us valued presenting work side-by-side on an equal basis.

The responsibility to the CLINK group as a whole meant that our work was driven by a high group expectation, as well as our own standards.

## JACK WOLF AND VICTORIA BELL

**Q:** Your works, *MOTHER (be gentle)* and *Percy Played Percussion on His Bum, Bum, Bum*, use graphic qualities to draw attention to Grainger's notorious pioneering of deviant sexual practice and tactile material properties to convey a sense of intimacy that is easy overlooked by sensationalism.

We would probably claim that societal norms have changed profoundly since Grainger bravely insisted that documentation of his BDSM practice be included in his museum's public charter. In what ways do you think this is still a socially relevant discussion and how do your works contribute?



Figure 13. Jack Wolf, *MOTHER (be gentle)*, 2019.



Figure 14. Victoria Bell, *Percy Played Percussion on His Bum, Bum, Bum*, 2019.

**A: Jack:** I like to play with perception and bringing light to different perspectives while I work. BDSM is a psychologically and physically intense, complex exploration into the body and mind. Although this is still considered taboo to many, BDSM is a thriving community, full of light and dark characters navigating life's complexity as best as they can. Grainger bravely chose to reveal his explorations in self-flagellation and visual journaling, illuminating his abusive childhood and continual turmoil. My response to his self-harm is to offer gentleness. By transforming an object of torture into a soft, playful creature, I meet him in his childhood.

**A: Victoria:** In what ways do you think this still a socially relevant discussion? Surprisingly, I think Percy Grainger's BDSM makes his life and work more accessible to contemporary audiences, albeit in a possibly titillating (or disturbing) way. While once, such was the brilliance of his fame that he married Ella Ström at the Hollywood Bowl, in front of a cast of (paying) thousands, his legacy as a composer is somewhat dimmer outside of certain music scenes, nowadays. Yet due to Grainger's gesture of vanity or philanthropic generosity, we are able to encounter this museum in his name; to encounter him. As a layperson in regards to Grainger's sound works (and many inventions including the striking Kangaroo Pouch oscillator on which my work was lightly draped), I found [that] his fetish, the outing of his sexual desires and sadomasochistic practices, [and] his motivation to intertwine these urges with his composing, surprisingly, made him an accessible figure in 2019.

One may site Grainger's deviancy within a loose zigzag, arbitrarily picked up from the Weimar Republic, to the (censored) photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe, zag to the "everyone read it, no one admitted it" obsession for *Fifty Shades of Grey*, and arrive in our complex present where the who, what, where of sex narratives, as well as the worry or boredom of porn and concerns regarding permission, violation ... is a vernacular of our



contemporary Western life. Grainger chose to expose his sexual proclivities and the ways these stimulated his composing and creative lives. By encountering this frankness in the museum, we are invited to (re)consider Grainger anew, in light of current critiques of power, gender, identity that are contemporaneously being fought in our courts of law, on social media, in the streets and our beds

**How do your works contribute?** Percy Played Percussion on His Bum, Bum, Bum depicts a repeated image of a nude Grainger, sourced from the museum's collection, printed in blue (blue movies), on linen. The textile repeat pattern echoes the geometry of the Kangaroo Pouch, and is disturbed by a slash of black ink across Percy's buttock. The placement of the work, not in the Lust Branch of the museum, but rather with his sound inventions and musical instruments, embraces a moment of reconciliation of Grainger's private and public worlds. One might listen for the slap of the composer's baton, hear the moan of the oscillator (designed to sound like a malfunctioning air-raid siren) ... A lament, or a strangled cry for (sexual) freedom?

## JOHANNA ZELLMER

**Q:** Seeing Percy's US army dog tags allowed your work, *Collar*, to deepen your exploration of the ways that individuals are identified in national systems. Imagining the discomfort of wearing *Collar* also sets up a parallel to Percy's fondness for self-flagellation.

Having worked with Auckland Museum through curator Grace Lai in CLINKProject4, how would you describe the similarities and differences of CLINKProject6 to Grainger Museum and curator Heather Gaunt?



Figure 15 Johanna Zellmer,  
*Collar*, 2019.

**A:** In comparing Project4 and Project6, one would expect to find many similarities, given that both unfolded via institutional invitations. Not only does this circumstance set up specific expectations – both for the makers and for the institution – but it also results in some preempting of the projects' unfolding. Let me explain; as outlined in the introduction, the collaborative nature of CLINKProjects was initially founded on the principle that the entire collective, only when united, decides on both a venue and an event. Often the venue would be jointly determined in the beginning, with the projects in turn becoming site-specific responses. The collective force created by time-poor, energy-rich makers in these instances is astonishing and often full of surprises. In working with institutions, the venue and general strategy becomes a given well ahead of the collective joining forces. The predetermined task at hand is quite clear: make work in response to an item in the collection, which in turn will be exhibited within the institution. Naturally, in that respect both were very similar. Personally, both projects enabled a deepening and revisiting of my own specific research interests through new work. In both instances, curators Grace Lai and Heather Gaunt met the projects with overwhelming enthusiasm, energy and outstanding support. And yet, the two projects could not have been more different.

The restrictions embedded in operating a massive national institution such as the Auckland Museum saw the final exhibit hovering at the very fringes of its collections, in the entrance hall outside the gift shop. However, access to the Hungry Creek School of Art and Craft's workshop facilities offered the joint collective intense and focused making days alongside each other. Curator Grace Lai was able to visit the workshop, observe the process and document work in progress. This hands-on, concentrated sharing in a workshop environment forged lasting professional relationships beyond the event. The idiosyncratic experience of making together leads to companionship; formerly paired with 'pin-swap' events (a long-established characteristic of social jewellery gatherings internationally) and collaborative writing, this had become a key to the success of previous CLINKProjects.

*Due to the lack of workshop access and the immense benefit of participating in the wider Radiant Pavilion programme, neither of these aspects formed part of CLINKProject6 activities. The additional hours available for making exhibition work individually made for time-rich pieces, but a vastly different experience. The two parts of the collective (the 'Hungry Creekans' and the 'Dunedinites') formed more tentative relationships. The collaboration was reduced to focusing on 'making the exhibition' through joint brainstorming, constructive critique, catalogue design and active involvement in installing the work. All were indeed energy-rich and extremely valuable, but without the same lasting sense of forging a collective. Regardless, the exhibition at Percy Grainger Museum was an outstanding success. Fully integrated into the collection, it received Radiant Pavilion's People's Choice Award. This smaller museum, attached to the University of Melbourne, enables curator Heather Gaunt to work to her full capacity with the same infectious enthusiasm and passion as Grace Lai, yet with much greater autonomy. CLINKProject6 clearly benefitted from this context, with Heather being able to involve all members of the collective in placing their work within the collection's showcases and displays. Due to everyone's staunch commitment; the intimate nature of this wondrous and eccentric autobiographical museum; and the public's recognition of the uniqueness of this exhibition; in comparison, CLINKProject6 was yet another remarkable success.*

**Andrew Last** (ORCID No 0000-0001-5394-8418) is a senior lecturer in jewellery at Dunedin School of Art. Alongside colleague and CLINK architect **Johanna Zellmer**, Andrew has ridden shotgun on four of the CLINK projects.

- 1 Melbourne Contemporary Jewellery and Object Biennial, *Radiant Pavilion*, <http://www.radiantpavilion.com.au/about.html>.
- 2 CLINKProject Jewellery Collective, "CLINK PROJECT4 – At the Auckland War Memorial Museum Tamaki Paenga Hira," *Scope: Art and Design*, 16 (2018), 69-82, <https://www.thescope.org/assets/Uploads/b0c3634896/69-Scope-Art-Design-16-Johanna-Zellmer.pdf>.
- 3 Hocken Collections, "A Garden of Earthly Delights," *University of Otago Library*, <https://www.otago.ac.nz/library/hocken/otago716573.html>.
- 4 "Gigantor," *Wikipedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gigantor>.



## RESIDENCY REPORT: BUINHO

Jane Venis and Hannah Joynt

## BACKGROUND

In September 2019 we jointly undertook the Buinho Creative Residency<sup>1</sup> in Messejana, a historic town in southeastern Portugal. We envisaged that our drawing and music collaboration would benefit from the period of intense focus that a residency would offer – in particular, working daily in a shared living and studio space with no other commitments but our art practice. When we applied, our intended focus was to make works of a longer duration than we had in previous collaborations and experiment with new materials and processes. We were also keen to make some work within the community of Messejana, but weren't sure what shape that would take.

We stayed in the house of São Joao, a remodelled nineteenth-century adobe cottage with an open-plan shared studio, one of two residency houses in the village. The Buinho coordinators, Carlos Alcobia and Monica Reiss, have an ongoing vision that the network will grow in the future to encompass more houses. Buinho's focus is twofold. Firstly, they facilitate community arts and design education by delivering free creative workshops in poor rural schools; and secondly, they offer international artists the opportunity to work in peaceful surroundings and engage with each other and the community. This local and international engagement is breathing new life into a village that had become a casualty of urban attrition.



Figure 1. Messejana village, southeastern Portugal.  
Photograph: Maria Lusquiños Torres.



Figure 2. The House of São Joao, Messejana Village.  
Photograph: Maria Lusquiños Torres.

Before undertaking the Buinho Residency, our collaborative practice focused on exploring the creative languages of both drawing and music within the “performance drawing” genre.<sup>2</sup> Our practice was process-driven and experimental as we exchanged marks and sounds on the fly, creating live works in gallery and studio settings. We set off for Portugal imagining that we would develop this type of process further. However, when reflecting on the experience of Buinho, we realised that not only had our performance drawing practice changed (as one would expect), but that we had developed a completely new and unforeseen body of work.

In this report we discuss these experiences in the relaxed format of an artist's conversation.

## THE CONVERSATION

**Jane:** Messejana it was so magical, wasn't it? And so warm after coming from Dunedin in September. It was around 30 degrees and because the heat was dry, it wasn't like the muggy, oppressive heat in Dubai where we had a stopover.

**Hannah:** In Messejana the pace of the village was really relaxed; there were no sharp edges and the only job we had to do was be there and make some art.

**Jane:** My first impression was that the colours of Messejana were so different, as the dust in the atmosphere made everything soft and muted. It reminded me of Central Otago, the browns and the rocky terrain.

**Hannah:** Yes, a little bit, but not as harsh.

**Jane:** How do you think the colours affected your painting? How did the colours of the place come through in your work?

**Hannah:** Firstly, there was no green in the palate, and no blues, other than the sky and the little accents of primary blue that is painted on the outside of houses, around doors and windows. Apart from the sky and the olive trees, the palate of the place is entirely warm. Lots of ochres, umbers, burnt sienna, flesh tones, and a lot of yellow and cream colours and earth tones. There were the eucalyptus trees, but they are similar to an olive-tree green. So the predominantly warm, soft and dry palate is completely opposite to the cold, rich, wet palate we have here because of the predominance of wet greens and dark tones.



Figure 3. The Messejana Hills.  
Photograph: Maria Lusquiños Torres.



Figure 4. Hannah Joynt and Jane Venis, *Messejana Jantar*  
work in progress. gouache and oil pastel on paper:  
Photograph: Maria Lusquiños Torres.

**Jane:** Interestingly, the palate of my music was also warm. My music was very relaxed and gentle and I found myself playing the kind of sounds that I tend to play in the summertime in New Zealand, but more slowly meandering – I think that reflected the pace of life in the heat and the muted colours in the landscape.

**Hannah:** I'm making a connection between the process of warm air and the way that it rises – lightness, a sensation of floating, qualities that have become embedded characteristics of your music.



Figure 5. Hannah Joynt and Jane Venis, Three Panel Painting: *Messejana Jantar*. 2019, gouache and oil pastel on paper. As part of *Drawn to Sound* Ashburton Gallery 2010 -20. Photograph: Joe Gallagher.

Link to soundtrack: <https://soundcloud.com/dr-clawhammer/jane-venis-messejana-track-3>

**Jane:** Yes, I totally agree; it had a cyclic, meditative quality, especially at first. However, it wasn't always quiet in Messejana – it took a while to get used to the local soundscape. Here we were in a tiny village well away from anywhere, and there was this constant barking of dogs and crowing of roosters, and the hourly clanging of the town bell. It was so hard to sleep at first. On some of my live recordings I hear the dogs – they have become embedded in the work.

**Hannah:** It was the voice of Messejana ... and the occasional car or traffic noise. That was a big difference in the soundscape. For me, it was the lack of residential traffic noise – there were just not many cars there. But as the houses are built right up to the street side, and the streets are very narrow, the few cars tend to roar around a full speed.

**Jane:** The architecture was really different – those adobe buildings which are quite ancient are so beautiful and so different from NZ. I remember looking around at the residency website images of the Buinho houses and thinking, "Where are the air conditioning units? It's going to be 35 degrees when we arrive and there are no air conditioners. OMG, we are going to roast!" Yet, these buildings are incredibly cool as the walls are very thick adobe and brick, with small windows, and you step down into an almost basement area and the roof rises up to create a large, cavernous space that is quite cool. It's a different world.

**Hannah:** I liked the way that the architectural space was not obvious from the outside of the building. As you enter the building the space reveals itself as you explore it. Remember the museum – there was that big walled-in garden of orange trees out the back; the architectural spaces reveal themselves to you slowly. The scales and spaces of buildings are not obvious, and I like that. You would never know what's behind a building's façade from the street side. We had the lovely courtyard garden at the back of our residency house.

**Jane:** I think that is all to do with the pace of life, too. You arrive and it's very low key, and things are not obvious from the beginning and things unfold as you go – with no rush, things are discovered bit by bit. For me, it was all part and parcel of the music that I made. My first pieces were made on the fretless guitar. It's a slow instrument – you don't play speedy things on a fretless guitar. As there are no frets you have to find your way, sliding around bit by bit up the fretboard and discovering things slowly. It was the perfect instrument to start off making music in the village. Yep, Messejana – the slow reveal!



Figure 6. Hannah Joynt, Street view of Adobe Houses.  
Photograph: Jane Venis.

**Hannah:** Yes, it also made me think of the fact there are no signs for shops, so you don't know where you can go to buy things. We had been there for three weeks and I remember saying to you, "Jane, you won't believe this, but I found a new shop." There are no signs anywhere. The people don't need signs because they know where everything is.

**Hannah:** Remember when we discovered the bullfighting ring?

**Jane:** This brings us to talk about the new, unexpected work that we made – short-duration, humorous video works that could only have happened in the context of that place – they were entirely site-specific. We realised we had discovered a new way of working. We came to Messejana to experiment within our collaborative music and drawing practice. However, we discovered a whole new way of working. That for me was the number one takeaway.

**Hannah:** It was opportunistic, but it was also because of the place. I think playing on the clunky, broken-down outdoor exercise equipment was a real trigger. That was one of a series of works we subsequently called *Small Measures: Site-specific Responses to First World Guilt*.

**Jane:** Yes, but it was the bullfighting ring that really started it. On our tour of the village, when we first saw it and looked at each other and thought, "OMG, we could make some work here." We have a history of seeing the absurd side of things.<sup>3</sup> So, although we went to Portugal with a preconceived idea of making a particular type of work, the environment we found ourselves in led us to realising we could make anything we like.

**Hannah:** There is also something about the absurdity of the new, being in a place for the first time, a place that you are seeing as an alien, a place that you are not culturally familiar with or indoctrinated into, so you see it with very fresh eyes. The freshness and potency of seeing something for the first time, the power of the new, is something that fascinated the artist Pierre Bonnard.<sup>4</sup> That is something that is important to my practice, too – seeing something, experiencing something for the first time, because you can never see it like that again – so you must make art, you must do something with that, draw it, record it, film it, as you will never see it with those fresh eyes again.

**Jane:** That is what was happening to us in the bullfighting ring.

**Hannah:** I remember after the visit we both went back to the house and I asked, “What did you think of the bullring?” and you replied that it was really disturbing. Disturbing to be in a real, working bullfighting ring.

**Jane:** And then we asked ourselves when would we ever have the opportunity again to use a bullfighting ring to make some work in, and wondered if it was possible to get permission to use it ... and there was no problem at all, it was fine.

**Hannah:** We had no idea what we would make, but we knew that we just needed to go there and be there and the ideas would come, because we both had a strong reaction to the place. It was a site-specific response to the place.

**Jane:** It was, and I loved the way we responded with our bodies. I responded with my instruments, I played around. You were using your body by moving around, drawing in the dirt. To plant the olive branches, you had to draw and make marks. I made sounds, and we saw the absolute absurdity of being in this particular place as aliens. We had the opportunity to respond to the activity of bullfighting with a tiny gesture of peace, but we were also aware that we were in somebody else's cultural space.

**Hannah:** We were also in somebody else's back yard. The retirement home of Messejana backs onto the bullfighting ring – it looks down directly into the ring. The residents were watching us as we filmed our performances.

**Jane:** Ha yes! It was truly bonkers.

**Hannah:** The colour in the bullring added to the visual power of the site. The whitewashed stands of the circular amphitheatre, with bright red painted handrails and gates and things, the red/brown dirt and the blue sky – it was an incredible colour palate to work with.

**Jane:** Yes, and the signage around the ring, things like the “Director of Bullfighting” and the huge wooden gates with the big metal latches, where the bulls are kept waiting before they come into the ring. I will never forget your face when you came walking out of the bullpen where I had locked you in, your look of total horror and the tentative way that you stepped out into the bullring, taking on the character of the bull. And for me, the music I played – it just arrived – I had no idea what I would play, and then suddenly there were these pseudo-traditional, bullfighting-infused ukulele sounds.



Figure 7. Jane Venis and Hannah Joynt, video Still from *Flag Plant*, work in progress 2019. Photograph Maria Lusquiños Torres.

**Hannah:** The whole thing was very much improvised, and that is a *core thing* – what we do is improvisation. This was an unexpected improvisation away from our studio-based drawing and music, this was a character improvisation. The way you moved, playing the ukulele, walking through the space, you took on the character of a director; you were in charge. It was so funny!

**Jane:** And you walked and moved in a very tentative “new bull in the arena for the first time” type of way. Monica<sup>5</sup> told us that that's what the bulls do. They are all confused, and they don't know where they are. It was very interesting to work like that. For me, the big takeaway from our Portugal residency was how our collaborative practice has opened



Figure 8. Jane Venis and Hannah Joynt, video Still from *Flag Plant*, work in progress 2019. Photograph: Maria Lusquiños Torres.

that process. And I agree with you that opening up the possibilities of what our collaboration can encompass is very exciting. Also reflecting on what is it that we share from both a conceptual point of view and from an aesthetic point of view, and that is a connection with the absurd.

**Jane:** Not only 'the absurd' in the sense of the ridiculous, but also in a darker context relating to a feeling of futility or pointlessness – for me, the bullring works evoked both meanings as they teetered on the edge of both humour and pathos. Remember how the bone flute echoed off the walls – it was elegiac, essentially a lament. It was that very specific place that almost became a third collaborator:

**Hannah:** Yes, being able to engage with place, and the process of improvisation, and take risks and do things as they come up, not being too precious about choreographing performances, but letting things roll out as they may ...

**Jane:** And once that eye for that site-specificity was activated – it is there, and you can't 'unsee' opportunities. After we left Portugal, we were sitting in the hotel in Dubai on the way home, and we were wondering what to do as we had a 36-hour stopover, and we decided to take a desert safari tour. We saw that as an opportunity to make some work; we asked ourselves, "When are we going to be in a desert again?" We were making new work every moment. We made this ridiculous work in the desert, trudging up a boiling-hot sand dune with a teaspoon of water, and we were even making work in the airport and on the plane.

**Jane:** Thinking about that experience and its freedoms, who would have thought that six months later we would be in lockdown because of Covid 19? Who knows when we can do something like an international residency again? Any traveling is going to now be within New Zealand for the foreseeable future, or even in Australia as we look towards a trans-Tasman bubble.

up from a specific way of working in drawing and music to a performance practice which is something new and different, and I'm very excited about that. I can see that we are going to work in a myriad of different ways, and this is one of them. Who knows what the future holds?

**Hannah:** I think the takeaway for me is that I feel like we reached a point of resolution with our music and drawing collaboration, and then as we went to Ashburton (followed by our show this year in South Korea), we kind of signed that off. It did feel as though we had realised and resolved



Figure 9. Jane Venis and Hannah Joynt, video Still from *Spoon Dubai Desert*, work in progress 2019. Photograph: Hannah Joynt.

The physical space of where we go for the residency is of course important, but having *time* set aside for ideas to develop is equally essential. Carving out a space to do our work is something we did in Ashburton Art Gallery just six weeks after our return from Portugal. And we also made *Small Measures* works in our down time – because the Rangitata River flooded, and we couldn't get home.



**Hannah:** Yes, what works best for our process is if we have an intense time set aside where nothing else is going to be influencing us (such as teaching), where we have this isolated time where we live and make art in the same space. It is in those informal day-to-day situations such as cooking dinner that our ideas develop through conversations; the living collaboration is a really important creative process for us.

**Jane and Hannah:**

In our application to Buinho, we said:

We all have different non-verbal modes of expressing ourselves. In our performances we are initiating dialogue with each other in our own individual creative languages. How might a mark be interpreted? How might sound be interpreted? As the notion of improvisation and spontaneous expression is common to both drawing and music/sound performance, what will collaborative performances look and sound like? We are keen to see some of these ideas also played out in your community.

We performed for and with children in the local school in Messejana, and for local residents in the town square, and also really enjoyed engaging in studio critiques with the other art residents in the Buinho programme. A key work, *Messejana Jantar* (see Figure 4), a large three-panel drawing with three separate soundtracks, has been exhibited in both of our recent solo exhibitions: firstly, in "Drawn to Sound" in the Ashburton Gallery (December 2019 – March 2020),<sup>6</sup> and then as part of "Dual" at the CICA Museum in Gimpo, South Korea, in April 2020.<sup>7</sup> We are still editing the *Small Measures* works and looking for the right opportunity to exhibit them.

**Hannah Joynt** ( ORCID No 0000-0001-5952-1191) is a contemporary drawing practitioner who works in a range of media, processes and scales. Her studio practice is concerned with researching notions of "drawing as a language." **Jane Venis** ( ORCID No 0000-0001-5571-6354) a musician, performance artist and maker of sculptural musical instruments. Her work is often playful and experimental, and engagement with the viewer is critical to her practice. Visual interpretation of sound and audio interpretation of mark making is a continuing exploration of "drawing as a language" and forms a key part of their collaboration.

Hannah and Jane have collaborated together over many years, including teaching drawing together at the College of Art, Design and Architecture at Otago Polytechnic in Dunedin, New Zealand.

- 1 Buinho Residency website: <https://buinho.pt/residency-2/>.
- 2 The connection between mark making and music has a long history in modernism, as seen in the practice of Russian painter and theorist Wassily Kandinsky and his exploration of colour and sound, and in Piet Mondrian's links to jazz. Closer to home, in New Zealand in the 1980s artist Michael Smither worked in collaboration with musicians in live performances. More recently, the interest in contemporary performance drawing has been growing among groups in the UK – for example, Draw to Perform, an international performance drawing community which we see as part of our community of practice. See <https://drawtoperform.com/>.
- 3 As in our early humorous and experimental music-making as part of The Rickety Gulumpy Bad Time Band (2006).
- 4 Sargy Mann, *Bonnard: Drawings* (London: John Murray, 1991).
- 5 Buinho Residency co-ordinator Monica Reiss.
- 6 Ashburton Art Gallery, "Drawn to Sound," <https://ashburtonartgallery.org.nz/exhibition/drawn-to-sound/>.
- 7 CICA Museum, "Jane Venis and Hannah Joynt Solo Exhibition," <https://cicamuseum.com/jane-venis-and-hannah-joynt-solo-exhibition/>.



## DUNEDIN DREAM BROKERAGE BUBBLES – LETTING LOOSE IN LOCKDOWN

Caro McCaw

Dunedin Dream Brokerage is a local group of creative people and arts supporters who work to bring life into empty urban and retail environments through brokering a lively programme of art project occupation. We work with property owners, artists, individuals and community groups to broker the temporary use of space – be it public or commercial, empty or under-utilised – for the temporary occupation of creative projects. We support applications, negotiate with property owners and enjoy sharing our growing experience in successful audience engagement. The brokerage is coordinated by a broker and overseen by an advisory panel and a *hoe ākau* (smaller steering committee).

Dunedin Dream Brokerage aims to

- Support the work of artists and increase citizen engagement and local storytelling
- Reduce vacant space and activate the city's under-utilised buildings and spaces for creative purposes
- Deliver a lively and diverse programme of experiences and events that celebrate our city.<sup>1</sup>

Originally a subsidiary of Wellington's Urban Dream Brokerage, a project devised by Letting Space and the Wellington Independent Arts Trust between 2012 and 2018,<sup>2</sup> Dunedin's brokerage was the only one of four satellite towns and cities to continue after Sophie Jerram and Mark Amery closed their project down in 2018. Celebrating over 40 activations, Dunedin's Dream Brokerage enables artist projects to reach a broad level of public engagement, with some celebrated examples reaching audiences in the thousands.

During the Covid-19 lockdown (25 March–8 June 2020), Dunedin Dream Brokerage experienced a raft of short-notice cancellations – mostly exhibition and performing arts projects connected to Dunedin's Fringe Festival – leaving an unscheduled absence of projects. While the CBD underwent hibernation, we identified new forms of public engagement as walkers visited suburban streets in increased numbers. Dunedin Dream Brokerage Bubbles grew from this opportunity.

We believe that creative people are an essential part of our community. Dunedin Dream Brokerage Bubbles wanted to support the creative community here in Ōtepoti (Dunedin), create visibility for artists living in our suburbs, and reinvigorate our under-utilised suburban spaces. A call went out through our community and art networks to find local artists in a number of clustered neighbourhoods to share what they had been doing during these months of social isolation.

Tracing popular walking routes through the suburbs, our broker Kate Schrader reached out to numerous business owners to see if they would consider their temporarily empty suburban shop windows as sites for local artworks. A few were asked to consider sponsoring the project (covering printing costs and a small *whakaaro* or fee for each selected artist).

While the project is still underway at the time of writing, engagement and feedback has been fantastic. Dunedin Dream Brokerage Bubbles is a hyperlocal pop-up project featuring the work of Dunedin artists, designers and writers in the windows of local shops. With the partnership of generous local organisations, Dunedin Dream Brokerage Bubbles connects the art community and local businesses, and asks us all to reflect on the “upside of the lockdown.” What connects us during this shared but isolating experience? What makes our neighbourhoods vibrant? And how do our creative local communities share their visions in ways that connect artists—viewers—business so as to help all generate a sense of belonging and shared experience?

We received five times more artworks than we could commission for our first suburb (North East Valley/Ōpoho/Signal Hill), and much social media praise. Walking audiences were encouraged to share images of our pop-up artworks on social media, with the hashtag #DDBubbles; common comments accompanying these images included “beautiful” and “fantastic!” Examples of works and artist statements follow.<sup>3</sup>



Figure 1. Craig Monk, *Practice Diary*. In situ, Inch Bar, Dunedin. Photograph: Justin Spiers.

Musician Craig Monk shared his notes and a photograph of his daily rehearsal, stating that “practice is an end in itself.”<sup>14</sup> Game designer and digital illustrator Tom Garden sent us a haunting digital painting developed in front of a small online and live audience using game platform Twitch: “I have had a lot of spare time to paint lately. I try to make lemonade out of lemons so in this lockdown I decided to work on my online presence as a digital artist. I set up a Twitch stream and painted this live for the 4.5 viewers who attended.” Ironically, Garden’s painting has reached many more viewers in printed format in its new location in the window of the local supermarket.

“Lucid dreams” was the theme of another artist, Larissa Hinds. “During the rāhui, daytimes in North East Valley have a dream-like quality. Sleep has become a place of creativity and garishness; and many have found that their dreams have been more vivid than usual. This artwork is impish, filmic, and conspicuous. I aimed to transform the vividness and absurdity of these dreams, and make some sense of their meaning within the boundaries of my bubble.”<sup>15</sup>



Figure 2. Larissa Hinds, *Lucid Dreams*. In situ, Antidote Pharmacy, Gardens, Dunedin. Photograph: Justin Spiers.

Visual artist Liz Abbott painted her walking route at night, a suburban street in Signal Hill; this work, *Signal Hill Road 2.5.20 11.54pm*, was installed in her local store, Blacks Road Grocer. She states: "Here's an oil sketch from a late lockdown walk along Signal Hill Road by the old Four Square shop – the absence of traffic has been a real upside of lockdown for me, which has caused me to see familiar places in a new way. Perhaps the loose marks reflect the feeling of being released from home for some much needed exercise and freedom!" Many passers-by empathise with these thoughts and images.

The combination of fresh and timely reflective artists' presentations and a new (and unsuspecting) walking audience became the nexus for this project. Site-specific and social art practices are not new to Dunedin, and can already be experienced in a wide variety of expressions, from commissioned public art (the Dunedin City Council has recently run a competition to select a new artwork for the Octagon, won by Ayesha Green's *Ko te Tūhono*) through to sculpture walks and the Dunedin Writers' walking tour. Performance art festivals, such as Port Chalmers' Anteroom Gallery's QUBIT festival (2011) and the Waterlines festival at Back Beach, are examples of artists and curators employing walking as a way of engaging with and through temporary art presentations.

In relation to their travelling and mapping project "The City is Written by the City," UK artists Sarah Cullen and Simon Pope discuss walking as method – both in art-making and research. Both describe the same approach to "community building" where "community members [gather] related/linked things, people, or places."<sup>6</sup>


In these unprecedented times of social disconnection, the opportunity to show, tell and relate experiences to others through the work of artists – found in places where art is not normally found – has created a new sense of community, one in which artists and their work have become visible and connecting nodes.

We are currently recruiting artists from two more Dunedin suburbs and, building on our learning, are spreading our net and showing the recent work of artists in the southern suburbs of South Dunedin, Caversham, Corstophine, St Kilda and St Clair, with a final activation planned for Port Chalmers and West Harbour as COVID-19 restrictions lift.

Dunedin Dream Brokerage sits under the umbrella of the Otago Chamber of Commerce and Otago Polytechnic, and receives funding from Dunedin City Council's Ara Toi team. However, this project sat outside allocated funded activities and required community business partnership at a time when money was tight. The project has enabled connections between artists, audiences and business owners, and has drawn attention to our suburban co-location. It helped us to see opportunities for publicly accessible spaces throughout the city as windows for creative storytelling. As the city slowly reopens, we hope to continue to build relationships between artists and local businesses and communities. Artists after all live, work and shop in our neighbourhoods, and can share their experiences in connective ways.



Figure 3. Liz Abbott, *Signal Hill Road 2.5.20 11.54pm*. In situ, Antidote Pharmacy, Gardens, Dunedin. Photograph: Justin Spiers.

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- 1 Dunedin Dream Brokerage, <https://www.dunedinreambrokerage.nz/about>.
- 2 See Urban Dream Brokerage, <http://urbandreambrokerage.org.nz/about>.
- 3 Images of the original artworks can be found at: [www.dunedinreambrokerage.nz/dunedinreambrokeragebubbles](http://www.dunedinreambrokerage.nz/dunedinreambrokeragebubbles).
- 4 See "Dunedin Dream Brokerage: Bubbles – Sharing the Upside of Lockdown," [www.dunedinreambrokerage.nz/dunedinreambrokeragebubbles](http://www.dunedinreambrokerage.nz/dunedinreambrokeragebubbles).
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Sarah Cullen, "Taking an Object for a Walk – Post 12 – Final Post," WalkingLab, <https://walkinglab.org/taking-an-object-for-a-walk-post-12-final-post/>.

## COMMUNITY ARTS PERSPECTIVE: THE INDX AUTISTIC ARTIST EXHIBITIONS<sup>1</sup>

Tanea Paterson

When pondering great thinkers, makers and artisans of the past, it is not only their creative mahi that piques our curiosity. For many great artists, tragedy and adventure are woven through their history. Knowing their intimate stories alters how their mahi entwines with our own lives, loves and personalities. Knowledge of an artisan's paths and patterns, ecstasy and angst can influence how their sound and visuals appear to us. Our sensory system becomes influenced at the behest of our thoughts and feelings.

Musicians, artists and influencers of our past are often as interesting for the way they lived as for what they produced. The intrigue of personality can be as big a draw to our curiosity as their artistic achievements. As much as posthumously diagnosing people<sup>2</sup> isn't ever going to be diagnostically accurate, the wrappings of neurodiversity can be glimpsed within many great minds. Hints of mental health impacting their mahi, whispers of autism are often apparent. Herein lies great potential for challenging the shadowy recesses of stigma that autism carries with it. In these times of social justice, acceptance and intersectionality there still remains a social glitch around people with diverse neurology, as well as other forms of invisible disability and difference.

I have been engrossed in all things autism from the moment I heard about it as a neurotype.<sup>3</sup> As it happens, many people close to me, whether by genetics or friendship, are autistic.

My interest leveled up when I received a late diagnosis at age 38.<sup>4</sup> Through lengthy psychological assessment, a discovery was made – I am clinically neurodivergent as an autistic woman. I hadn't sought out and surrounded myself in autism by blind choice – this was driven by a subconscious neurological connection. I seek solace in individuals who share parts of me – I guess we all do. This is a most human need. "Be around others like you."

My 'diagnosis' gave me a psychological calm – "it makes sense" – presenting me with a unique opportunity to reconnect with my long-lost self. I stopped staunchly defending my 'different' as a rebellious choice. I had for so long hidden my social confusion with rebellion and anarchy – an unfortunate consequence of my life-long "pretendies": internal disconnect from my inner self, rejection of my natural state. I pretended my way of being was all intentional, when it was mostly the scraps of self I was left with after many rounds of faux pas and social errors. The rest was a fairly accurate copycatting of people I admired. I later found as I journeyed deeper into the autism community that this was a typical way for us to navigate the world, and was named variously as masking, mimicking and camouflaging.

However, as part of my discomfort and anxiety to fit in, be normal and functional, I had overridden my natural inclination to think, feel and be in this world abstractly, openly and without boundaries. Acknowledging my autism finally allowed me to embrace my identity. That identity is chaotic, abstract, colourful and unpredictable. The next component that regrew from the ashes of my broken-down psyche was art.<sup>5</sup>

Art was a golden thread, woven together with the people and relationships around me. Art was a buffer to the bane of normality, a visionary theme of freedom. Embracing art became an act of self-agency as I processed my diagnosis, retroactively undertaking introspection of my life up to that point – my 'Reverse Mid-life Crisis,' as my son puts it. Writing, drawing, pouring resin and shaping fabric – however it looked, it was present and visual because of me, not in spite of me.

I had been rummaging around with autism advocacy – workshops, writing articles (all identity-positive) – challenging stigma (oh so much stigma) and doing what I could to change the world's view of autism. I was reaching some, but missing many. I asked: What could I do, now, that includes the autism community in ways that they would enjoy, removing political agendas but somehow still forcing a shift in conventional psycho-social thinking of what it means to be autistic? It was here that the iNDx Autistic Art Exhibition offered me great potential.

I already knew that many, many visual pleasures – via movies, sculpture, music and other arts – had been gestated in the minds of neurodivergent people, whether advertised as such or not.

Using art as a platform to give our group a voice had the potential to be superbly positive. I was also very aware of the size of the talent pool in our community. I had a casual kōrero with Sheryl Davies, our local Parent to Parent<sup>6</sup> and Altogether Autism<sup>7</sup> coordinator. We had excitedly discussed the idea of an autistic artists' exhibition. Sheryl subsequently invited me to an Arts Access<sup>8</sup> meeting to 'pitch' my idea. As fortunes go, this was my lucky day. Rachel Cooper from Otago Museum happened to be present at the meeting. As we bounced ideas off each other, the energy grew. There was a place for us at the stunning HD Skinner Annex, and the museum offered us a team to guide and support us to make this happen.

And so, myself and three others, Tom, Western and Denise, formed the group iNDx Autistic Arts and Culture Aotearoa.<sup>9</sup> What does iNDx mean? The 'i' stands for identity, 'ND' for neurodivergent or neurologically 'not typical,' while 'Dx' is a play on the medical abbreviation for diagnosis. As opposed to the deficit/disorder view, we support the neurodiversity<sup>10</sup> view as a more humane and inclusive way of looking at autism.

Otago Museum offered us a beautiful space at the HD Skinner Annex not only for our art, but also for community kōrero. We held a variety of open workshops here, venturing beyond an art exhibition to a sharing of insights and ideas. Most presenters were autistic/aspie themselves, and we discussed many topics including Dungeons and Dragons<sup>11</sup> as a tool for connection and confidence, "Autism, Sensory and Creativity – Mark-Making as Communication and Navigation," diagnostic pathways for females and "Autistic Identity in Art."

The Otago Museum team were constantly respectful and did not force ideas on us – they gave us the space and time to work it out. Something we really appreciated was the museum team's openness to how we wanted to format the biographies in the exhibition booklet. We wanted to leave the artists' words 'raw' and unedited. This tied in with our ethos as a group – we wanted the artists to introduce themselves as they are, and this became an important way to communicate more about them as individuals.

You will notice that some artists have not included a biography, description of their art, or a photograph of themselves. It is important that each artist can present their work and themselves in whatever way they feel is 'right,' therefore exhibits, biographies and any other information are exactly as the artist delivered them to us, reflecting each artist's unique and wonderful personality.

We understand the format is not 'traditional' or streamlined, however we think that adds to the theme of the Exhibition. Individuality, appreciation for autonomy and a celebration of how diverse and unique Autistic people are. There is also work submitted by several limited speaking Artists, and their support people didn't feel comfortable writing words on their behalf.

We'd rather the artist didn't see a 'reframed' or 'edited' bio and description and feel that someone thought they needed to change in order to 'fit in.' This is the opposite of what our intentions for this exhibition are.<sup>12</sup>

A component of this project that became essential was the museum staff's desire to expand their knowledge of autism. Otago Museum organised 'quiet hours' in the main museum areas to widen access and promote understanding of sensory differences in autism.

Autistic sensory overload is a phenomenon only recently acknowledged in medicine.<sup>13</sup> For me, this inability to properly filter incoming sensory stimuli forms the basis of many atypical responses in autistic people. We all know the archetype of the autistic child clutching their hands over their ears in a busy setting, or engaging in repeated movements to self-soothe (stimming).<sup>14</sup> These responses may be the key to the intricacies of our minds that gestate much of the power in both our art practice and our art appreciation.<sup>15</sup>

The museum's quiet hour would begin at 9 am (one hour before opening time) to allow participants to explore at their own pace. The waterfall in the Tropical Forest was turned off and lights in the Tūhura Science Centre were adjusted so that it wasn't so dark. The sound of the interactives in the science centre were turned down, or off. If someone needed to be accompanied, their support person received free admission. The Special Exhibitions Gallery also ran quiet hours where the background music was turned off and the lights were turned up. This offering also started at 9 am before the public arrived. Both Tūhura and the museum galleries held the quiet hour on Saturdays and Sundays to enable access to as many people as possible.

The quiet hours that ran during the exhibition time were not only useful for autistic patrons, but also constituted an important practice in empathy and understanding of others' needs for the museum staff and the wider public who saw them advertised.

The public workshops that were held created a unique space for deep kōrero. A popular workshop was dubbed Ask Me Anything (AMA), where no question was out of bounds. With an eclectic group of teachers, parents, carers and autistic people in the audience, these quick-fire Q and A sessions were energetic and powerful.

Having art as a basis for connection, action and activity was a gentle act of social infiltration. It constituted a negotiation of accessible social connection – something which is often lost in communication between autistic people and the wider community.

Our two exhibitions included a total of 28 artists, both local and national, as well as a few overseas autistic advocates, who participated by allowing us to screen their films. We proudly turned no artist away. The curators had an unenviable task. They put together a space which honoured our sensory sensitivities with the gentle darkness of a black backdrop, and a display layout that was easy on the eyes.

Many autistic participants, young and old, had never met 'others like them.' Some took the opportunity to ask us potent questions, such as "Am I just naughty?" The AMA was the most emotional session for me, especially due to my own late diagnosis. The 'naughty' question had formed a constant dialogue in my own mind for life. Perception of our behaviour can be so strikingly wrong, and all behaviour is perception. Unique and interesting art aside, THIS was exactly why we created iNDx.

The autistic community has few 'social events.' The entire process can be overwhelming and over-stimulating. We need extra time to prepare and time to recover. There is often a need to have a purpose or a central theme and focus to bring autistic people together. The iNDx art exhibition gave our group that focus. Many participants had never met before and may not have ever had the chance to meet 'in person,' however, we were all connected by being a part of this project.

Art is a positive conduit to deeper kōrero on disability – strong on issues of identity and ownership. Otago Museum is a place of solace for many of us, with historical anchors to our past. iNDx, artists, workshop presenters and attendees became woven into the Otago Museum, the building, the land and its stories. Our voices, our visions, our community.



## POSTSCRIPT: WORDS FROM THE OTAGO MUSEUM ART COLLABORATOR

Collaboration, partnership and community – important ideas in a museum setting, and ones which I think we all strive for and need to celebrate when we get them right. It's the small things that matter; and when we each work together on the small things, a bigger and better thing really can happen.

It wasn't huge and fancy, but it was 'theirs' – an exhibition by the community, for the community. A little oasis in the Postmaster Gallery, an exhibition space in the Otago Museum's HD Skinner Annex. We specifically put it there, away from the hustle and bustle of the Museum. A space that is both light and airy in some places, and dark and low-sensory in others.

A call was put out to the autistic community seeking art submissions, and all 28 artists who submitted their work had at least one piece displayed in the exhibition. Artworks ranged from paint on canvas, knitting, poetry and large-scale installations, to photography and vlogs, with the exhibition providing a flexible platform for artists to display their work.

It was important to us that each artist was able to present their work and themselves in whatever way they felt was 'right,' so therefore exhibits and biographies were presented exactly as delivered, reflecting each artist's unique and wonderful personality.

This wasn't just an 'average project' for me. If you met the team and artists involved, you'd soon understand why. It was the most emotionally exhausting yet rewarding thing I've worked on here, and I'm so grateful that the Museum gave us the freedom to make it happen.

A few tears were shed along the way – I remember the day an artist's work was delivered to me. A bright painting of a blue-and-white penguin talking to vivid yellow and orange fish. It was the speech bubbles that really hit home to me – why the voices of these artists needed to be heard.

*"I have been called a retard because I am slightly different than the other penguins; because my coordination is not as good as the other penguins, I keep dropping things. When you call me a retard I feel like I am stupid."*

*"Please stop using the word retard or retarded – it hurts."*

A thought-provoking image which, when on display in the exhibition, gave people cause to stop and consider. We hope their voices were heard, and that some power was given back to the artist and community.

From the Museum's perspective, developing this exhibition and its supporting programmes required us to adapt our thinking and planning processes so that the iNDx group felt comfortable working with us.

I'm extremely proud of what our wee team achieved. From the design team being so accommodating, to the iNDx team for letting us in and allowing us to help them, to the volunteers who staffed the exhibition – but most importantly, to the incredibly brave and talented artists for trusting us to help tell their stories.

At first, I didn't tell the iNDx team that we were entering the exhibition into the ServiceIQ New Zealand Museum Awards in the Arts Access Aotearoa category. I didn't want to get their hopes up and, in our eyes, they were winners anyway. So, it was a huge surprise to find we were finalists and an absolute honour to discover we'd won.

The judges noted that "the iNDx exhibition and supporting public programmes brought new visitors to the museum and opened up deep conversations about the lived experience of autism. Throughout the process, museum staff respected the autistic-led kaupapa."

Validation that the voices of the artists were indeed heard.

*Rachel Cooper: Otago Museum*

## INDX ARTIST PROFILES AND INTERVIEWS

### Tom Fox

Tom Fox is a Dunedin-based artist and is a member of the iNDx group. A graduate of the Dunedin school of Art, he works in a variety of media including photography, painting and large-scale chalk pastel and paper works. His art practice investigates the effect that trauma and sensory conditions have on an individual's perception of the world. He will have a chalk pastel work in the iNDx show; his chalk pastel works are portrait drawings that are built up using fingerprint, repetitions and distortions.

*"Being part of the iNDx exhibition was amazing – it was a fantastic opportunity to work with other autistic people and I was very proud to have my work displayed along with all the other artist pieces. It was a pretty intense process as I was also helping organise the show as well as submitting my own work, but it was also something very special that led to some deep conversations and connections with my community. The feedback I received was overwhelmingly positive.*

*My art practice is an exploration of my sensory experiences. I use my drawing as a tool to better understand myself, and for me the exhibition helped shed some light on aspects of myself through meaningful conversations with other autistic people and their families. It was powerful to discuss other people's life experiences and find common and unique experiences that gave insights into my own life experiences.*

*The museum has always been a special place to me so it was pretty incredible to have something I made displayed there, and I would just like to thank everyone involved in the iNDx show – the museum, the organisers, the artists, the speakers and everyone that came – you all made it something rather incredible! Thank you!"*



Figure 1. Tom Fox, Disintegration no.22, 2019, ground chalk pastel on paper; 2019.

## Kylee Mitchell

Christchurch born and raised until moving to Oamaru as a teenager; I am the fourth of five daughters. I am new to this form of creating – only three years, but I feel my art, like me, is evolving, and I like to explore new mediums as I can afford them, to see what suits me. Colour is energising, and I think this comes through in my art, which is kind of free-form or even abstract, often including symbols. My work often reflects my mood shifts, level of excitement or interest, or insights and discoveries that may come to me – and always from my inner self.

*"Enjoyed being part of the Autistic only Exhibition. It was a really enjoyable experience. The Experience of being part of the Exhibition was very Exciting & helped motivate me More in the Art World. Family & Friends were very Supportive and Encouraging. It was great to have the support and Understanding of People. Good to know that I could do it & that other people were interested. I learnt that anything is possible, even with something Small or Big.*

*Having the Art Shown at the Otago Museum certainly Helped. Was great to have it at a Real Exhibition. Having it being seen by others Outside of local Friends and Family. Was very Inspiring for me, seeing others' work as well.*

*I enjoyed the experience, definitely been a highlight of Art Journey so far. Encourages me to carry on with My Art."*



Figure 2. Kylee Mitchell, *Rainbow Mandela*, 2019, pastel on paper.



Figure 3. Imogene Mitchell, *For Your Glory*, 2019, graphite on paper.

## Imogene Maclean

Imogene is a young artist who lives in Dunedin. Participating in the iNDx exhibition last year has given them the confidence to exhibit more work, a collection of detailed graphite and watercolour pieces. Each piece takes several weeks to several months, and is mainly completed in the evening while watching bad cop shows on Youtube.

*"Being a part of an autistic-only exhibition was refreshing. The best way I can explain it to someone who isn't on the spectrum is to flip it and imagine that the vast majority of people are autistic, the world is designed for them, and while you may know a few other people who are like you and 'neurotypical,' it is generally very alienating. Then when you do find a group of people like you, with systems designed for you and with your needs in mind, of course that's going to be insanely valuable and special for you. I think that people shouldn't underestimate how empowering it is to be surrounded by like-minded people, especially for people who don't fit into the societal norm.*

*It was especially empowering to me because being autistic was a relatively new concept, and one that I didn't particularly like. I didn't know anyone on the spectrum well, so I was left with the (mainly negative) stereotypes portrayed online and in the media. Meeting people like me showed me that those stereotypes weren't true at all, and I wasn't as alone as I thought I was.*

*The fact that my newfound community was centered around something I loved, art, was just a bonus. iNDx gave me confidence to put my artwork into other exhibitions, something that a few years ago I wouldn't have even considered. Without iNDx I definitely would not be where I am with my art, and for that I'm immensely grateful towards Tanea, Denise, Tom and everyone else who makes it possible."*

**Tanea Paterson** is an Autistic woman who lives on the Otago Peninsula with her two sons. She loves delving into research about neurodiversity, being involved in peer to peer advocacy, and she has written for the 'Altogether Autism Journal', and hosted Autism workshops. Tanea previously worked as an addiction practitioner involved in local, and global psychedelic science and research, namely Ibogaine therapy. In recent years she founded iNDx Autistic Arts and Culture Aotearoa - and along with Otago Museum and iNDx teams, orchestrated the award winning iNDx Art Exhibition. Tanea enjoys being engaged with and connecting the Autism community. From very young writing has been a necessary process for her. She utilises words as the mechanism of her art practise, to manoeuvre - as a neurodivergent person, in a hyper sensory world.

- 1 The iNDx exhibitions ran at the HD Skinner Annex, Otago Museum, in 2018 and 2019, with a break in 2020 due to unsettled times.
- 2 Aspergian Nation, <https://www.aspergiannation.com/art-and-autism.html> (accessed 21 April 2020).
- 3 "Sara Harvey: Agony Autie," RNZ, <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/nights/audio/2018649852/sara-harvey-agony-autie> (accessed 22 April 2020).
- 4 Tanea Paterson, "Mother and Son's Empowerment Journey," *Altogether Autism*, 4 (November 2016), <https://www.altogetherautism.org.nz/mother-sons-empowerment-journey/> (accessed 19 April 2020).
- 5 The Art of Autism, <https://the-art-of-autism.com/> (accessed 19 April 2020).
- 6 Parent to Parent/ Otago, <https://parent2parent.org.nz/otago/> (accessed 19 April 2020).
- 7 Altogether Autism Takiwātanga, <https://www.altogetherautism.org.nz/> (accessed 19 April 2020).
- 8 Keith Reeves, "Exhibition Sparks Conversation about Autism," *Arts Access Aotearoa*, last modified 17 September 2018, <https://artsaccess.org.nz/exhibition%20sparks%20conversation%20about%20autism>.
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- 10 Nick Walker, "What is Autism?"; *Neurocosmopolitanism: Dr. Nick Walker's Notes on Neurodiversity, Autism, & Self-Liberation*, last modified 1 March 2014, <https://neurocosmopolitanism.com/what-is-autism/>.
- 11 Dorothy van den Hoven, "Dungeons and Dragons Provides a Safe, Positive Space for Teens," *Altogether Autism*, 2 (2016), <https://www.altogetherautism.org.nz/dungeons-and-dragons-provides-a-safe-positive-space-for-teens/> (accessed 25 April 2020).
- 12 iNDx Exhibition booklet, 2018.
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## ALTERED NEURO STATES

Tom Fox

*Today some artists appear driven by an ambition, on the one hand, to inhabit a place of total affect and, on the other, to be drained of affect altogether; on the one hand, to possess the obscene vitality of the wound and, on the other, to occupy the radical nihilism of the corpse. Pure affect, no affect: It Hurts, I Can't Feel Anything.*

Hal Foster, "Trauma Culture"<sup>1</sup>

I am a Dunedin-based artist, Father and Poppa; in 2019 I graduated from the Dunedin School of Art, where I completed a Master of Fine Arts degree with distinction. "Altered Neuro States" was my Master of Fine Arts degree exhibition, a collection of 19 large (2.1 x 1.4m) drawings, each drawing built up using finger-prints. The final rendered panels are each windows into my everyday experiences and my struggle to understanding my own personal reality. I'm autistic – I received a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder level one (ASD), which was once known as Asperger's, when I was 37. As a label it was the most freeing I have ever received. It gave me an opportunity to understand myself and my life in a framework that gave deep insights into my experiences and why I experience them.

As I researched the neurological aspects of autism I discovered that my sensory world is unique, that what I experience daily as being visually overloaded, sensitive to sound and often overwhelmed by them both, had a name, Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD). One problem I have when it comes to processing experiences is that I can't visualise them, I can't recreate them in my mind. I have mind blindness – it is called aphantasia, the inability to create mental images. What I see when I close my eyes are swirling and pulsating dots of light called phosphenes; sometimes I see flashes of fractured images, but they are random and often have no connection to what I'm thinking about.

I think in narratives and concepts; thinking like this is what I've always known. Although it isn't always helpful for navigating the visual overload and distortions that affect me, it is a big part of why I draw them. I want to understand them and thereby understand myself in a more complete way. In this context, my art practice operates as a cathartic process of self-understanding, building bridges of understanding between my experienced reality and my understanding of what those experiences actually are.

For me, the journey of autism has been a journey of self-discovery and an attempt to understand my perceived reality. I study aspects of neuroscience and psychology to use as a framework for navigating my experiences, and my drawing acts as a physical manifestation of my sensory overload. When these things are considered together, I can process and analyse experience in a meaningful way.

In the end, to try and understand perceived reality is a foolish errand as there is no finish line, no satisfying answers and no end of new questions – but like the Fool of the Tarot one must walk the path to become something else. To find any cohesive idea of reality or perceived reality one must look at the sensory system. The sensory system acts as a bridge between the physical world and the internal world.

The human body receives stimuli through its nervous system which includes visual and auditory information, touch, taste and smell. These stimuli are responded to through the autonomic (which controls subconscious body functions) and somatic (controls both voluntary and involuntary muscle control) nervous systems. Higher ordered or conscious responses are actioned through the prefrontal cortex, which evaluates these automated responses and generates changes that are sent back to the limbic system.<sup>2</sup> In simple terms, the sensory system is a feedback loop of stimuli, reaction/action, evaluation and adjustment.

According to Harvard psychologist Jeffrey Statinover and neurophysiologist, geneticist and physicist Joe Dispenza, the human brain processes an estimated 400 billion bits of information per second.<sup>3</sup> The brain acts as a filter of information; everything seen, heard, tasted, touched or smelt is an interpretation of the information the brain is receiving. The interpretations performed by the brain are often mistaken as accurate representations of the real world. The human brain is constantly editing and making choices about which information to reveal. In neurology this process is known as sensory gating. Sensory gating is the ability of the brain to manage sensory input. As the brain receives a constant stream of information, the gating function can respond to any changes within the stream, including limiting the information or even stopping it.<sup>4</sup>

Given the estimated 400 billion bits per second of information that the brain is processing, if the brain was not limiting this data then the individual would be completely overwhelmed by sensory information, as happens in ASD and SPD. One example of sensory gating is the phenomenon known as the cocktail party effect<sup>5</sup> – the process of filtering out background sound while someone is focused on a conversation in a noisy environment, as in a cocktail party. The brain accesses the auditory inputs and segregates them into streams, and then chooses which stream of information to 'dial up or down.' This allows people to hear the conversation rather than a wall of incoherent noise. Without a sensory gating function this would be impossible.<sup>6</sup>

Another way to look at sensory information and sensory awareness is in terms of high resolution and low resolution, just like jpeg images. If the 400 billion bits of information per second is viewed as a high-resolution image, and the sensory information that the conscious mind is aware of as a low-resolution image, then this can be seen as a map to understand how the human sensory system works. The brain is efficient at giving just enough information to navigate in the real world, offering low-resolution information from which to make quick judgements and decisions. The way low-resolution information works for navigation can be compared to an internet business like Amazon or eBay. When the user scrolls products on their websites, the images of the products are displayed at low resolution, which uses less computing resources. It keeps the products in front of the viewer while scrolling through items and the system stays in an optimal state as resources are not wasted on rendering high-resolution images.

Being hypersensitive to sensory information like light, smell or sound means that a person living with a sensory disorder must constantly process high-resolution information. This is often overwhelming; however, it also means that the individual may have more 'potential' information available to them from which to draw creative responses. High-resolution information needs to be processed in order to navigate the world, and that process can overwhelm the brain because of the level of sensory intensity that needs to be managed. Yet the process of trying to navigate high-resolution information can itself lead to novel connections that would otherwise be unavailable or far harder to make at low resolution.

Perceived reality is simply a result of how the brain processes sensory information. As humans, we haven't evolved to have a sensory system that reflects the absolute truth of the surrounding world, but rather one calibrated in terms of survivability. Being a successful life form means that we can survive the environments we inhabit and are able to reproduce offspring that can do the same. One example of the limits of the human sensory system is the human eye. Because the eye can only see 0.0035% of the electromagnetic spectrum,<sup>7</sup> we only see a miniscule amount of the potential perceivable world. Other life forms perceive a differing range of the spectrum and experience the world differently to humans – for example, larger ranges of colours or ultraviolet patterns on flowers. Ultimately, evolutionary success does not necessarily require sensory truth.



Figure 1. Tom Fox, *Untitled*, 2018, ground chalk pastel on paper, 208 x 146 cm.





Figure 2. Tom Fox, "Altered Neuro States," 23–26 September 2019, installation view. Dunedin School of Art Gallery.

On top of this, people with ASD and SPD often experience regional brain changes,<sup>8</sup> including but not limited to changes of volume in the hippocampus and amygdala and changes to the brain's white tissue micro-structure.<sup>9</sup> Any changes to the brain regions affect brain function, which can then alter how the sensory system works and how a person experiences sensory information. In a nutshell, brain changes affect the sensory system and experienced reality.

By journeying down the rabbit hole that is the human brain, I hit a major wall of understanding (one among many). If perceived reality is simply the product of sensory information and the ways in which the brain interprets it, then perceived reality is simply my consciousness experiencing my sensory system and therefore can't be representative of a true physical reality. So how does consciousness relate to the physical world? It is at this point that the science of neurology fails and the only way forward is to enter the realm of aesthetics and philosophy.

There are two main systems of thought that attempt to explain reality. The first is physicalism. In nearly all the 'hard' sciences like physics, biology and chemistry, and the 'soft' sciences like psychology, sociology and psychiatry, a system of thought known as materialism or physicalism permeates these various disciplines. While the two names are mostly interchangeable, physicalism is often preferred when discussing metaphysics. I'll use physicalism from this point on: the idea that anything that is experienced or observed must have a cause in the physical world<sup>10</sup> – a chain of cause and effect.

Applying the notion of physicalism to what we know about brain changes and how they affect sensory processing, the experience of sensory distortions can be directly traced back to brain changes. To be clear, according to the majority view within science my distorted sensory experiences can only be explained by the physical nature and structure of my brain and how that changes the way my brain functions.

This means that the brain and the physical matter it is made from dictates how I (and everyone else) experience reality and, taking the argument another step, physical matter is the source of consciousness. In philosophical language, this makes physical matter the ontological 'primitive' basis of reality – primitive meaning that it can't be reduced further; and ontological referring to the nature of being. All theories of nature must offer one ontological 'primitive,'

and almost all theories with a physicalist basis state that the reality we perceive is grounded in matter; in physicalism matter is often reduced to string theory, M theory and quantum field theory, among others. I won't explain the details of these theories, but they all build on the same initial observations, then apply differing interpretations and mathematical explanations of these observations. These theories basically constitute mathematical philosophy; while each offers insightful and clever interpretations of observational data collected over a very long time, so far they have proved to be incredibly difficult to test. For now, the theory one might chose (or reject) simply comes down to the aesthetics of the explanation. One major problem arises in the physicalist world view – known in neuroscience and philosophy as the hard problem of consciousness.<sup>11</sup>

The hard problem of consciousness is the point at which physicalism fails, at least for now. Current explanations of consciousness posit that it is a product of some physical structure or combinations of structures of the brain. However, it is yet to be discovered how consciousness has not simply been reduced to the physical nature of the brain – the most we know is that there is a relationship between the brain and mind. In fact, there is currently no way of explaining how the physical properties of matter – like particle spin, mass or charge – can create experiences like feelings of love or disappointment, or the sensation of a stomach ache. This in a nutshell is the hard problem of consciousness.

One competing theory for explaining what we perceive as reality is idealism,<sup>12</sup> which views consciousness as the ontological primitive, seeing consciousness as a force like the strong and weak nuclear forces or gravity. Idealism holds that instead of strings or membranes, a universal consciousness vibrates and creates the matter we perceive. Although it sounds like new age spiritualism, this theory is actually well supported by scientific observations – equally as well supported as the physicalists models, as it uses the same initial observations as physicalism, but applies a different philosophical basis.

According to Stanford physics professor Andrei Linde, a leading exponent of idealism:

Let us remember that our knowledge of the world begins not with matter but with perceptions. I know for sure that my pain exists, my "green" exists and my "sweet" exists ... everything else is a theory. Later we find out that our perceptions obey some laws, which can be most conveniently formulated if we assume that there is some underlying reality beyond our perceptions. This model of [the] material world obeying laws of physics is so successful that soon we forget about our starting point and say that matter is the only reality, and perceptions are only helpful for its description. This assumption is almost as natural (and maybe as false) as our previous assumption that space is only a mathematical tool for the description of matter.<sup>13</sup>

This quote is a reminder that perception is both the starting point but also the end point of the knowable world; everything relies on perception, even science. Everything that can be tested or recorded relies on an observer to record it, and we know from quantum physics that observation can affect the outcome of tests.<sup>14</sup> The thought experiment "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?" is an interesting example of observer bias, because according to accumulating observations in quantum physics, the answer is likely to be "no"<sup>15</sup> – if there is no eardrum to receive the sonic wave and no brain to interpret it as sound, then there is no sound, only a wave function.

In an essay, "The Mental Universe,"<sup>16</sup> published in the journal *Nature* in 2005, Richard Conn Henry, professor of Physics and Astronomy at Johns Hopkins University, uses the double slit experiment and other physics and quantum physics observations to argue for the mental nature of reality. He reaches two major conclusions: a) observation necessarily boils down to perceptual experience; and b) the physical properties of the world exist only insofar as they are perceptually experienced.

The truth is that although no one knows what reality is, I need to understand mine to the best degree I can. I am driven forward by that idea. I need to understand my world, even though there are no definitive answers. I need to find meaning in the chaos, and drawing is the tool I use to experiment with the boundaries of my reality.

Each drawing I make is an exorcism, an exorcism of internal distortions delivered by my sensory system. It takes something material from myself to turn my internal experiences into something concrete – in this case, my fingerprint that carries my DNA and is evidence of my physical reality. Slowly I materialise a sensation, a physical response to a trick of my neurology. Once it is materialised, it can be analysed as a concrete artefact of an abstract experience, a form of communication, something to learn from. My drawings are external manifestations of my sensory world – yet they are only a partial truth, a low-resolution physical image of high-resolution sensory information.

Like painting in pixels, print by print, mark by mark, I'm creating a structure from the abstract; every image made is a study of an abstract experience that can then be used to help navigate and understand that experience. While it communicates with me, it has potential to communicate to others a partial snapshot of the chaos of sensory abstraction that I experience.



Figure 3. Tom Fox, *Differentiation No. 2*, 2019,  
ground chalk pastel on paper; approx. 201 × 145 cm each.



Figure 4. Tom Fox, *Differentiation No. 7*, 2019, ground chalk pastel on paper; approx. 201 × 145 cm.

**Tom Fox** is a Dunedin based artist, a graduate of the Dunedin School of Art, he works in a variety of mediums including photography, painting and large-scale chalk pastel and paper works. His art practice investigates the effect that trauma and sensory conditions have on an individual's perception of the world.

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## DRAWING THE FOREBODING

Emily Gordon

This article discusses my Masters of Fine Art project, which I have been focused on for the last two years. It culminated in my exhibition "Seen, Unseen" (2020). The project was an exploration of the feelings of unease, discomfort and non-overt fear which have been created in my drawn works through the atmosphere of the domestic spaces depicted. These spaces, which depict interiors of the home, are transformed from the homely; from being warm, safe and comforting to the 'unhomely' – discomforting and at times dangerous.

A pivotal area which inspired me to utilise the idea of the unhomely was the horror film genre, where through the intrusion of a hostile aggressor or supernatural entity the home can become a place of danger and fear; thus making it unhomely. In order to render this sense, I played off two common enablers of fear against each other. The first is childhood fears represented in film – for example, the monster hiding under the bed, in the closet or behind the curtains. The second are adult fears with a stronger basis in reality – for example, stalking, home invasion or murders committed by psychotic killers. Thus, my work offers a mix of the fantasies and realities of fear and dread. This mix of reality and fantasy gives my work a sense of the unknown, making us unsure of what is real – are we observing a real danger or is this a representation of irrational fear and paranoia?

## THE REPRESENTATION OF FEAR IN HORROR FILMS

We are used to the jump-scares of horror film, startling, fast movements that aim to shock us, to make our heart rhythm jolt. It is assumed that these sudden shocks are what truly scares an audience, but this is incorrect as demonstrated in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense*, 1999, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*, 1960, and Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez's *The Blair Witch Project*, 1999. What truly terrifies an audience to the point of complete dread is the foreboding atmosphere and the inexplicable certainty that the characters are moving towards their doom. The foreboding, the unease, the dread lies in the slow movements, the out of place objects, the bumps and creaks during the night and the unexplained shadows.<sup>1</sup>

I started this project by taking inspiration from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), a pivotal film in the representation of fear as foreboding. This film was unique at the time it appeared as it utilised real-life fears. The film was set in present-day America and the violence was committed by a deeply unstable human, rather than an otherworldly being. Before *Psycho*, the dreadful events depicted in horror films often took place in faraway lands (for the Western audience) and involved exotic monsters. For example, "in the cases of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *The Mummy*, and *King Kong*, these [locations] were Eastern Europe, Germany, Egypt and Skull Island."<sup>2</sup> This device gave the audience a sense of security as the horrible events depicted were far away and detached from them.

Initially for my project, I worked from screen shots from various horror films in order to understand how atmosphere could be transferred from the moving image to a still image. As my project continued, I created my own source material by taking photographs of interiors. I used my own personal childhood fears as the starting point. I did this by taking the photos in my childhood home, focusing on areas which held a particular sense of childhood fear; now experienced nostalgically – for example, the stairs I would walk up to go to bed at night, where I often experienced the unsettling feeling that I was being followed. By using this one location, I was also able to create a point of

consistency between the works. As another point of consistency, I always took the photographs at night-time. Night and darkness the most common devices used to create fear in horror films, as darkness intensifies the sense of the unknown and the feeling that anything or anyone could approach unseen. Thus, adding darkness to my work was a useful way of creating a sense of foreboding. This use of darkness can be clearly seen in *Strange, Dark Corner*, 2019 (Figure 1), in which the deep blackness in one corner draws the viewer in. This device is also utilised in *Bathtub Plughole, Draining Dirt*, 2019 (Figure 2), in which the dark plughole suggests a cosmic black hole which threatens to suck us in.

### CLOSE-UPS AND PERSPECTIVES

However, as I have noted, childhood terrors were not the only fears I wanted to represent in my final series of works. It is also important to discuss how I realised the more adult and perhaps more real fears. This was primarily achieved through the voyeuristic nature of the works, where a lone female figure is being stalked in her own home. One of the ways in which this was represented was through the use of close-ups, implying that the viewer, who often adopts the point of view of a stalker, is watching her through binoculars or the zoom on a camera lens. We can see this in *Head and Hair in the Sink*, 2019 (Figure 3), where the subject cannot see the viewer and therefore seems oblivious to being watched. I also refer to the use of close-up shots in film, where they are often used to draw attention to specific objects or characters.

Another important element that derives from my focus on the close-up is cropping. The objects and/or people in my images are cropped and rarely appear as complete figures. This strips away their context and allows us to imagine what might be going on outside the frame of the image, thus adding a clear sense of the unknown. Also, the cropping of the person which I utilise in several of my images adds a sense of fragmentation or dismemberment, which also creates the suggestion of violence. When part of the body is cut off by the frame, we perceive that the unshown portion has become detached; as there is no blood or gore represented in this detachment, we feel discomfort in this moment, rather than horror or disgust.

While one of my aims in these works was to emulate adult fears, another was to give the woman depicted in each one an ambiguous role, so that it becomes unclear whether she is playing the role of a victim/protagonist or an antagonist. This ambiguity serves to reinforce the unknown elements in the work and, by extension, the sense



Figure 1. Emily Gordon, *Strange, Dark Corner*, 2019, charcoal and pastel on paper.



Figure 2. Emily Gordon, *Bathtub Plughole, Draining Dirt*, 2019, charcoal and pastel on paper.



Figure 3. Emily Gordon, *Head and Hair in the Sink*, 2019, charcoal and pastel on paper:

of unease it creates. The use of changing perspectives and angles likewise enhances this mood. Some viewers have suggested that the woman in the series is being stalked, while others believe that she is playing a dominant role, as in *Sitting, Feet Against the Wooden Floor*, 2019 (Figure 4), in which the viewer is placed in a lower position looking up at the woman, giving her a position of power. Given the changing perspectives, at times we are also unsure whether we are seeing the world from the woman's viewpoint or from that of another person located outside the frame. In *It Descends the Stairs*, 2019 (Figure 5), the slightly tilted angle of the frame suggests the viewpoint is that of a person collapsed on the stairs – either the female subject or someone she has attacked.



Figure 4. Emily Gordon, *Sitting, Feet Against the Wooden Floor*, 2019, charcoal and pastel on paper:





Figure 5. Emily Gordon, *It Descends the Stairs*, 2019,  
charcoal and pastel on paper.

## DRAWING AND ITS TRACES

A final consideration for appreciating my work is the medium itself – drawing. As Laura Hoptman puts it when discussing the 2002 exhibition “Drawing Now: Eight Propositions,” at the Museum of Modern Art, New York: “Drawing now can be work done on paper with charcoal, pencil, gouache, paint a dirty thumb, even a small insect dipped in ink but still sufficiently alive to scuttle and leave its mark.”<sup>3</sup> Although the contemporary definition of drawing is extremely broad – consisting of any mark on any surface made by any medium – my drawing process is nothing if not traditional, comprising one of the oldest drawing methods, charcoal on paper.

My method of creating drawings combines very rigid and organised processes with more tactile and random methods. I begin by taking photographs to use as source material. To begin the drawing, I mark the outlines of the subject and other objects in the frame, and then identify the highlights that will be retained in the work – the area that will be left showing the white ground of the paper (excluding the border). I then completely cover the rest of the paper in a willow charcoal, rubbing it in with my hands. After this I again map out the outlines of the objects in the image. At this point in the process, I do not consider myself to have begun the work – it only really begins when I start to erase areas of the charcoal to create the shapes of the objects in the image, when I can begin to visualise the completion of the work. My process resembles that of drawing and sculpture artist Robert Longo: “I always think that drawing is a sculptural process. ... I always feel that I am carving the image out rather than painting the image. I am carving it out with erasers and tools like that.”<sup>4</sup> Similar to traditional marble sculpture, this implies a process of deletion rather than addition.

The element of the random and much of the tactile 'feel' of the work is conveyed in what I call the "trace" ("a surviving mark, sign, or evidence of the former existence, influence or action of some agent or event")<sup>5</sup> – the marks created by hand and finger prints, as well as the less structured shapes created by the erasure process. We can see this effect clearly in *Clothes on Hanger in the Bathroom*, 2019 (Figure 6). My use of the eraser creates what I have called a "fog" element – the appearance of undefined shapes in the image adds to the sense of the unknown. The hand and finger marks also allude to the now completed making process. While these marks embody a trace, they also serve to suggest the presence or past presence of a person we cannot see – again reinforcing the sense of uncertainty in the viewer, who is unable to define what is occurring in the image.



Figure 6. Emily Gordon, *Clothes on Hanger in the Bathroom*, 2019, charcoal and pastel on paper:

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## TOYS: AN OPEN NARRATIVE

Bronwyn Mohring

"Toys:An Open Narrative" (2019) is a body of work from my Postgraduate Diploma which explores childhood memories. The pieces created for this project are inspired by toys and the notion of what toys represent. The understanding of an imagined relationship between figurative and allegorical elements is referred to as an open narrative, because the viewer is free to determine a story to infer from the images provided by the artist.

This body of work began with two items as my inspiration: the first, a childhood photograph of myself and my brother on a swing with a significant childhood toy; and the second, the stuffed toy depicted in the photograph, a deer:

*"But, what has been the fate of those people in the photographs? Dead or alive, the person in the image is not physically there any more, in that space at that time, which generates an alluring melancholic feeling."*<sup>1</sup>

Through the act of creating objects and images from the past, a fundamental sense of nostalgia emerges – the relevance of it to this tale was revealed as something essential. When we experience nostalgia, our recollections are reconstructed and re-fashioned from fragments of our fallible memories. We do not simply press recall and have instant replay of a particular childhood episode. Rather we reconstruct such episodes piece by piece, often unintentionally mixing and matching recollections as best we can.<sup>2</sup> Examining our nostalgic memories in a more detached way, we can see the inconsistencies, the hidden realities in them and thus acknowledge memory's essentially creative nature.



Figure 1. Bronwyn Mohring, *Flock of Imaginary Deer*, 2019, etchings on transparent papers and fabric;  
Bronwyn Mohring, *Close Memory*, 2019, saggar-fired ceramic.



Figure 2. The author and her brother.

*"Photographs, therefore, work as a memento mori, as they confront the death of the person in the image and the unavoidable death of the viewer. In this way, the photographs trigger melancholy in the audience."<sup>3</sup>*

In this quotation, Domingo Martinez Rosario refers to the power of a photograph to evoke melancholic responses towards the people in the captured image. In my project, the use of photographic imagery is directly exploited to engage the onlooker's empathy for the fate of the subjects. It also serves to disconcert the viewer insofar as the most repeated image in the project is not one of the people in the photograph, but instead is a toy. In this way the destiny of the people depicted in the image, and the inevitability of loss, is referred to obliquely.

In a society where change is the norm and often sudden and dramatic, mundane objects from the past can become treasured souvenirs. When loss becomes imminent, people feel the need to treasure such items as recordings and proof of memory. These familiar items create a sense of security and help preserve our identity in times of loss and change.

In "Toys: An Open Narrative," the reminder of loss through re-inventing images of an old toy and photograph produces a sense of nostalgia. The new sculptural images remain easily identifiable as inspired by the original, but they are also significantly changed. Through shared history, imitation of image and shared handmade creation, the sculptures become new custodians of the memories of the old toy, retaining links to others who have touched, gifted and shared its history. While the change in medium from the original soft textile to clay and glass is achieved through the use of techniques to embrace the sense of softness, the reality of replacing soft fabric with hard and fragile clay and glass creates a frisson which addresses the fragility and unreliability of memory.

This presentation acknowledges childhood nostalgia as a very subjective experience, full of symbols with diverse meanings – powerful for one and mysterious to another. This installation of ceramic, glass and printed images presents personal nostalgic memories in the form of familiar images and symbols. This directness is intended to invoke empathy from the viewer and encourage engagement with the project. However, other symbols and meanings come straight from the subconscious, bound by feeling alone, and remain indefinable in words, even to the maker.



Figure 3. Bronwyn Mohring, *Memory Becomes Fable*, 2019, saggar-fired ceramic and cast glass.

Photograph: Jodie Gibson.



Figure 4. Bronwyn Mohring, "Toys: An Open Narrative." Installation view. *SITE Exhibition*, Dunedin School of Art, 2019.

Studying my own history, and the significant place of toys in it, led me to examine toys of other cultures, times and histories. When comparing ancient toys with their modern counterparts, the surprising commonalities of form and function provide a touching awareness of a shared human experience, still palpable despite the difference of time periods. Children of all nationalities and times form special attachments to items, either specifically designed for play or gathered by the child from their surroundings and given the identity of a toy through their use in play. This commonality of childhood experience means that often toys dominate our perception of childhood itself.



Figure 5. Bronwyn Mohring,  
selection from *Army of Imaginary Deer*, 2019,  
saggar-fired ceramic.  
Photograph: Jodie Gibson.



Figure 6. Bronwyn Mohring,  
selection from *Army of Imaginary Deer*, 2019,  
saggar-fired ceramic.

One of the ceramic groups in this project expresses how the child in the photograph perceived the toy deer: It is a collection of ceramic 'sketches' containing the elements of all the imaginary necessities that the toy provides the child. It consists of a group of deer figures which portrays the motif of the deer; the doe, in myth, history and art. Some of the figures are direct references to ancient Hellenistic toys in the form of wheeled animals, which here stand beside modern interpretations of the wheeled toy animal. Others are interpretations of ancient stags in bronzes re-imagined in ceramic form as does. Some of the images are inspired by prehistoric statues displayed in museums alongside copies found in their associated tourist shops. Others again are inspired by contemporary children's toys and modern sculpture.

Another essential element in the original childhood photograph is the swing. A swing is almost a timeless toy, an ancient and modern time traveller; and so the child on the swing becomes a time traveller also. It's the swing that frames the photograph and unites the characters. The clay child/bird on a swing depicted in this project is a direct reference to the child in the photograph. It is such a universal image that the swinging child becomes any and every child.

Whether inspired by comforting toys or wild animals or ornament or totemic figures, these pieces are united by the saggar firing technique used and the child figure who imagines them. The swinging child figure is timeless, and so her army of deer is also timeless.

In his article "Design History and the History of Toys," Anthony Burton claims that the history of toys only became the focus of serious study from 1900, when the child study movement began to develop a significant academic interest in child development.<sup>4</sup> However, the importance of play and games as a social and cultural phenomenon was recorded in theoretical writings in the West dating back to the eighteenth century. Philosophers Immanuel Kant (1776-77), and Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805) both wrote on the importance of games. According to French anthropologist and philosopher Charles Brougere (1955-), "Toys deserve to be studied for themselves, since they are important objects for what they reveal of a culture."<sup>5</sup>

Both the givers and receivers of toys acknowledge their significance. They often constitute a form of non-verbal communication between adult giver and child receiver. A toy is any material object designated as a plaything. Although toys reflect the society which produces them, to the child they are an intimate and personal companion in their personal private world. The importance of the toy to the child does not necessarily reflect what the toy is intended (by its maker) to represent, but is instead what the child perceives it needs to be in the present moment. The toy's identity is incorporeal, although the object itself is material.



Figure 7. Bronwyn Mohring,  
*The Parable of the Possum and the Swing*, 2019,  
etchings on transparent papers in book form.  
Photograph: Jodie Gibson.



Figure 8. Bronwyn Mohring,  
*Before the Fall*, 2019,  
saggar-fired ceramic and cast glass.

The *Collins Dictionary* defines “narrative” as a noun meaning an account of events, and as an adjective referring to the telling of a story.<sup>6</sup> Narrative can be seen as synonymous with tale, yarn, legend and chronicle. A narrative or story may be an account of a series of related events, but “a story” is also commonly used to mean gossip, rumour and even lies. In “Toys: An Open Narrative,” I am relating to the process of story-telling where a series of events is symbolised with identifiable characters, but their relationship is evolving and open to interpretation. Because the relationship between the characters is unverifiable and reliant on interpretation and fallible memory, their story remains open, unable to distance itself from rumour and invention. Instead of struggling to decipher truths with no one to verify them, this project delights in the ability of memory to create new narratives and provide stories in which the inner psyche can delight.

In “Toys: An Open Narrative,” the three accordion book forms contain etchings on transparent paper, which is also utilised to embrace the narrative qualities of the print work. In the book of etchings, *Before the Fall*, the swinging possum toy seems unaware of the precarious nature of his trap-like swing; the old and young toy deer both look on, aware that playing too intimately with the ghost moth is perilous.



Finding the photograph and the toy that sparked this project after many years was like accessing something I had accepted as faded and ghostly, and discovering that it was suddenly visible, tactile, and had become newly relevant. Vague memories whose validity I had begun to question suddenly become vivid, holding far more truth than I had faith to believe. The intimacy of the moment captured by the camera became not just a memory, but something recorded and able to be shared and held up as proof of truth. However, these tangible 'things,' (the photo, the toy) still contain qualities of the ephemeral and are still deeply fragile. The toy is wilted, the plush coating nearly gone, it is almost falling. The photograph only holds images of the past and has its own limited lifespan.

The toy deer has reappeared, enabling me to better recall my own past, but she also carries memories of my family. In the photograph, my brother swings with me, but it also evokes memories of my sister who didn't make it, and my great auntie who gifted me the deer. Their reappearance has led me to re-examine the photograph – not just with a grieving nostalgia, but with an adult's knowledge of the characters involved in this still life. The reappearance of the deer toy has meant the return of my sister, brother and my great aunt back in my life. That is a lot for a stuffed toy to carry on its back.

Having the photograph and toy returned to me is like cuddling a ghost and greeting all its ephemeral 'hangers on,' which emerge from the shadows the more I become reacquainted with them. The larger ceramic forms are a representation of how I perceive the toy and all the characters in the story as an adult.



Figure 9. Bronwyn Mohring,  
*Lucid Dream*, 2019,  
saggar-fired ceramic and cast glass.



Figure 10. Bronwyn Mohring,  
*Lucid Dream*, 2019,  
saggar-fired ceramic and cast glass.

## CONCLUSION

In "Toys: An Open Narrative," I used both print and sculpture to examine issues related to memory. The project pays particular attention to the relevance and role of toys in coming to terms with our limited understanding of our surroundings as a child, and the recognition of emergent issues as these memories are re-examined as an adult. The sculpture combines clay with glass – the transparency to explore the fragility of memory and of life, and clay to embrace our more tangible selves. Both mediums are fragile, and my use of multimedia embraces the idea that memory is not captured and frozen, but layered and living. The print elements of this project explore animal and toy forms with personal, human allusions, and present a dream-world narrative in a simple book form. The project's storytelling qualities were also important in making decisions about the compositional aspects of their presentation.

The body of work I have so far created for this project takes the form of incomplete narratives inspired by toys. Toys are perceived as a safe and sympathetic conduit for sharing nostalgia and memories. Toys, gifted by hand for hands to use, are invitations to participate in the world of the toy. They create a fissure in our mundane world and invite daydream and speculation. They are by nature both ancient and modern, and also constitute an open narrative. The tension between the familiar and the elusive presented in the narrative symbology of this project is explored in the use of both common and hidden imagery. "Toys: an Open Narrative" aims to celebrate the place of toys in childhood, as well as the place they have in the nostalgic memories of adults.



Figure 11. Bronwyn Mohring, *Before the Fall*, 2019, saggar-fired ceramic and cast glass (with etchings in book form).



**Bronwyn Mohring** graduated from Christchurch Polytechnic with a Diploma in Craft Design in 1994 and with a Diploma of Ceramic Design from Otago Polytechnic in 1995. She has worked in the sculptural pottery field ever since. In 2019 Bronwyn return to the Dunedin School of Art to refresh her skills and face new challenges while working towards her Master of Fine Arts.

- 1 Domingo Martinez Rosario, "Representation of Nostalgia and Melancholy in Contemporary Artworks: Tacita Dean and Louise Bourgeois," unpub. PhD diss. (Nottingham Trent University, Rovinj, Croatia, 2015).
- 2 Hal McDonald, "The Art of Nostalgia: Nostalgia as an Aesthetic Form of Memory," *Psychology Today*, 10 October 2017, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/time-travelling-apollo/201710/the-art-nostalgia>.
- 3 Martinez Rosario, "Representation of Nostalgia."
- 4 Anthony Burton, "Design History and the History of Toys: Defining a Discipline for the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood," *Journal of Design History*, 10:1 (1997), 1-21, <https://academic.oup.com/jdh/article/10/1/1/499131>.
- 5 Gilles Brougère, *Binquedo e Cultura* [Games and Culture] (São Paulo: Cortez, 2010), 44.
- 6 *Collins Concise Dictionary and Thesaurus* (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1995), 633.

## LOST AND FOUND

## Gabby Malpas and Pam McKinlay

Gabby Malpas graduated from the Dunedin School of Art in 1986 and has gone on to have a successful international career in ceramic design and decoration. Next year she will be returning to Dunedin with a solo exhibition and will be holding artist workshops and seminars to share her experience and expertise. The exhibition will be at the Dunedin Botanic Garden, a major source of inspiration for her while at art school in 1984-86.

This is the story of how the Art School came back into contact with one of its graduates through the good offices of social media and discovered one of our own as the brush-holder behind some of the world's most beloved contemporary table ceramics.

### “I BELIEVE YOU HAVE MAIL FOR ME” – PAM MCKINLAY

To set the scene, we were in the weeks following the 15 March 2019 mosque attacks in Ōtautahi Christchurch. A bill banning semi-automatic weapons was being fiercely debated,<sup>1</sup> with partisans lining up in pre-subscribed seats. Our Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern called on tech giants to step up and take steps to prevent online platforms being used to promote extremism and hate speech, which had resulted in an unprecedented act of local terrorism in New Zealand.<sup>2</sup> The nation was in shock and a state of mourning. Facebook came under scrutiny from all sides and faced a massive backlash from its members, many deciding that “enough was enough” and they would have no part in supporting it into the future.<sup>3</sup> As a social media administrator, I was witness to the “Facebook Blackout,” a 50-hour protest against Facebook and other social media platforms.<sup>4</sup> Page visits declined, and followers fell off.

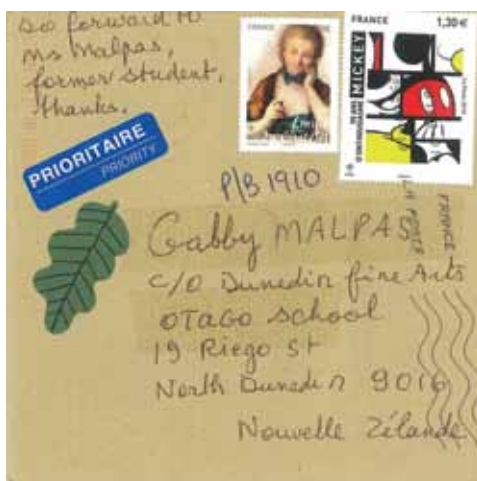


Figure 1. A letter addressed to “Gabby Malpas c/o Dunedin Fine Arts” arrived March 2019.

Into this troubling milieu a letter came to me from our student coordinator with the request, “Can you put up a post to see if we can locate this alumnus we’ve lost track of?” I noted the postmark (from France) and the handwriting on the envelope, which looked as though it had been scribed by an elderly hand and posted a photograph of the letter on the Dunedin School of Art Facebook page. “We are looking for Gabby Malpas – can we get this letter to her?” In the current climate I didn’t hold out much hope.

The next morning, I noticed that this post had become a ‘rock star’ post on our page, and by the end of the week it had accumulated over three and a half thousand views, shares and comments. Among the ‘good luck’ wishes and reminiscences were clues as to where we might continue our search for the letter’s intended addressee.

I followed up the most likely comments and then, among the next set of replies, I read: "Hello there – I am Gabby Malpas ... I believe you have some mail for me?"

Gabby had graduated in 1986, majoring in ceramics, studying under several tutors including Neil Grant. She was delighted when I sent her a photo of Neil, who I share an office with. Gabby responded: "33 years since I left the place – [he's] looking as fabulous as ever. His words ring in my ears every day – 'you gotta draw every day,' was his mantra ... and oh how I'm trying to stick to it."

Like all those who had followed the original post, I was curious to see how the story of the letter's journey ended. Gabby replied (abridged):

"Thank you and Neil Grant for sending me the letter. I got it yesterday ... There is an address, so I will be writing to the sender this week.

It was sent in January, from a woman who saw my art on cards that I have licensed to a company in France. She is very ill. She has no internet and by the sounds of things life is tough, so even more remarkable that she found the time to send this gorgeous note and even a little scented sachet."

And later:

"Hey all ... here's the latest update ... on Friday I received a reply from [name withheld] in the post. She's really not in a good way, but my post gave her some cheer. She lives in rural France and is old school, so snail mail is the way we will communicate ... so I guess we are penpals now. I told her how she has a number of Internet fans now who send her their best wishes."

I followed the links that Gabby had sent me of her work and was surprised to see that her artwork is used for the designs on the Maxwell & Williams range of tableware, which I was familiar with. Gabby's paintings are licensed to a number of luxury designer brands. These include Arocolor, based in Shanghai, agents for original artwork and licensed designs for use on textiles for soft furnishings, umbrellas, tablecloths and throws (their website is in English, Chinese and Arabic); Maxwell & Williams (tableware); One Kings Lane (giclée prints); Great Big Canvas (licensed wall art); Blue Island Press, Australia, (retailing gift cards and stationery); Editor Gift and Cards (gift cards and wrap); Pacmat, UK (picnic rugs); and Utterly Art LLP, (Singapore). Her original paintings are intricately observed watercolours, botanical studies of flora set amid still-life arrangements of ceramics, often with distinctive Chinese decoration. To each painting she adds birds and butterflies and sometimes sea creatures. As one looks closer, whimsical elements reveal themselves – for me, these surprises included a coral in a garden arrangement, hidden insects in tree branches. I was amazed at the scale of her output, and where and how it was being used in contemporary commercial design. And so, our conversations continued.



Figure 2. Neil Grant, Gabby's former tutor and emeritus lecturer in the Ceramics Department, still has a presence at the Dunedin School of Art. Photo: Pam McKinlay, April 2019.



Figure 3. Maxwell & Williams  
Toile de Fleur tea service accessories (2018).



Figure 4. Maxwell & Williams  
Hanoi range (2016).

## PRACTICE PERSPECTIVE – GABBY MALPAS

### Introduction

My name is Gabby (Gabrielle) Malpas – it was given to me by my adoptive parents when they adopted me in Auckland in 1966 at ten days old.

I am ethnically Chinese and a citizen of New Zealand, Australia and the UK.

Between 1984 and 1986 I studied at the Dunedin School of Art for the three-year Diploma in Fine Arts. I majored in ceramics and studied under Bronwen Cornish, Michael Trumic, Christine Boswijk, Lawrence Ewing and Neil Grant. I honestly can't remember why I decided to major in ceramics, but I remember school excursions to the Crown Lynn factory in Auckland and thinking how cool it was, while the rest of the class were bored witless. For me, ceramics is a slow art – it takes years to become a master and often you don't ... Patience and a methodical process are requirements – which in hindsight were probably difficult for me at that stage of life but are at the core of my art practice now.

When I first started throwing on the wheel – progressing to bowls and vase shapes – Michael Trumic remarked that my forms were classic Han Chinese. I was like, "Get outta here." As an adoptee raised in a white home in the 60s, 70s and 80s – when anti-Chinese immigration policies were still a recent memory – all I wanted to do was fit in. I paid no attention to classic Chinese art and the gorgeous, delicate porcelain wares in museums that I make a beeline for now. I was trying to emulate the rough-hewn, dug-out-of-a-hillside, organic, sculptural (but mostly brown) shapes that the other ceramicists were producing – work that I admired and still do. But I liked colour, and so I started making majolica works because I could paint pictures on them.



Figure 5 and 6. Majolica ware made by Gabby Malpas during her student days at Dunedin School of Art, 1986.

## Finding my mojo

I always wanted to be a professional artist, and my parents had always envisaged me as somehow being one. But I had to pay the rent and eat, and so I embarked on a corporate career in the UK after following the herd to London in 1988. (Much later, I found myself in Australia and settled there in 2003.) I devised a life plan – to work three days a week and paint for four (I switched to painting after leaving Dunedin). Neil Grant's words to me in the last term of 1986 are still relevant and kept me grounded: "You need to draw every day."

Making art around a day job is an important goal to aim for, but it is also inhibiting – I exhibited as regularly as I could and kept making art at night and on weekends, but I knew I had a long way to go. In Australia I started working my way out of the corporate world to spend more and more time painting (and building up a library of images for licensing), until finally in 2019 I reached a point where I could concentrate solely on my art career. I spent years refining my technique, but also developing my distinctive style, a curious and unique blend of Western and Asian art. I also apply my skills as a digital project manager in my own art practice, which makes working on commissions and corporate projects a lot easier and less stressful for everyone involved – so I am grateful for that.

One good thing about living in the UK was that I had access to some of the finest art collections and museums in the world. I studied how things were made at first hand and began to appreciate the techniques and skills of the makers.

I came to realise that time is an important factor in making art. I have always admired those artistic prodigies who found success and fame very early in their careers. Of course, there is always a touch of jealousy here, but I have come to understand that I needed to work through so many things to finally arrive at – and embrace – a style that for many years I stifled in order to 'fit in.' It's taken me decades rather than years to get to a point where I am satisfied with my work – but I also know there are a few more decades of learning and refining to go ...

## Finding my own narrative

Fast forward to 2020 – I was 54 in March. I am a professional, exhibiting and licensed artist, with work in private and public collections all over the world. I license work globally to companies producing a range of products. One of my contracts is with Australian homewares company Maxwell & Williams, with whom I have collaborated on several tableware projects. It is a dream of mine to one day make ceramic pieces again – but for now, I satisfy myself with producing imagery for commercial products, knowing they will reach a much bigger audience.

I work on paper and canvas: producing unashamedly lavish, colourful and detailed images of flora and fauna, but often incorporating stories that make you think or look twice. Meeting my birth mother in 2004 led me to understand that I am 100 percent Chinese and encouraged me to celebrate my heritage through my work. As a Chinese adoptee, I am challenging the centuries-old and very European tradition of chinoiserie with my own alternative narrative.

I think I am qualified.



Figure 7. Gabby Malpas, orchid design (2017) – original artwork for the Maxwell & Williams Exotica range.



Figure 8. Maxwell & Williams' Exotica range, design by Gabby Malpas (2017).

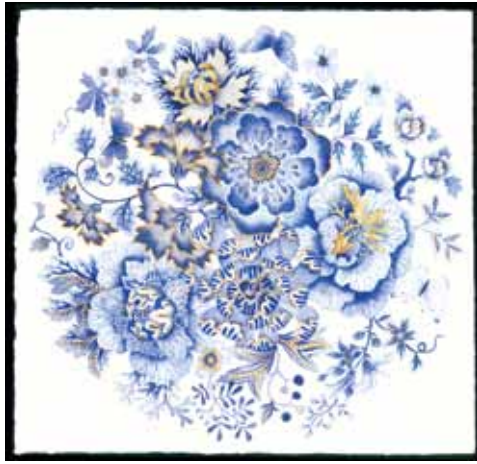


Figure 9. Gabby Malpas, Toile de Fleur design (2018) – original artwork for Maxwell & Williams' Exotica range.

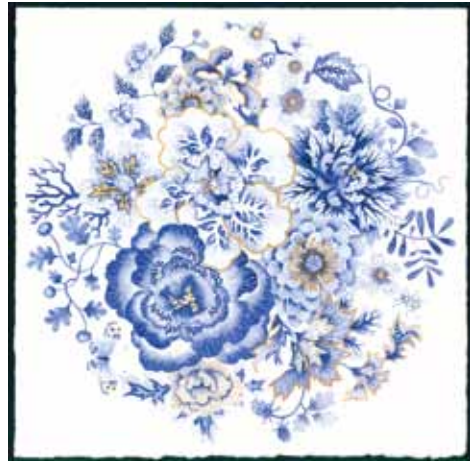


Figure 10. Gabby Malpas, Toile de Fleur design (2018) – original artwork for Maxwell & Williams' Exotica range.



Figure 11. Maxwell & Williams' Toile de Fleur range (2018), design by Gabby Malpas – plates.



Figure 12. Maxwell & Williams' Toile de Fleur range (2018), design by Gabby Malpas – mug.



Figure 12. Maxwell & Williams' Toile de Fleur range (2018), design by Gabby Malpas – cup and saucer.





Figure 13. Gabby Malpas – original artwork for Arocolor sea umbrella.



Figure 14. Arocolor umbrellas.



Figure 15. Arocolor umbrella – “Listening to the Sea.”



Figure 16. Gabby Malpas, “Tigermum,” 2017, original artwork for Arocolor cushions.



Figure 17 Arocolor cushions – “Tigermum” design (2017).



Figure 18. Gabby Malpas, "Tigermum," 2017, original artwork for Arocolor cushions (pink).



Figure 19. Gabby Malpas, original artwork for the Arocolor summer 2020 range.



Figure 20. Arocolor's summer 2020 range, designs by Gabby Malpas.



### Gabby Malpas, “The Painted Garden Exhibition,” Dunedin Botanic Garden, 2021

I spent a lot of time in the Dunedin Botanic Garden as a student – it was an easy cycle or walk from my student flats in Union Street and later Cumberland Street. My favourite places were the Upper Garden in springtime when the trees would be in blossom, and the Rhododendron Dell with its fabulous showy blooms, with private spaces for sitting underneath.

I studied many of the plants, flowers and fungi I found there, and being a temperate garden, I found the same species in gardens all over the UK. Dunedin also has a beautiful twilight – much the same as in the UK – that you don't get in Auckland or Sydney. Those early summer evenings spent in the botanic garden before the gates closed were magical.

It took me years to learn to capture flora in the way I wanted – a lot of drawing and looking. I am delighted to be returning to Dunedin to show work for the first time since graduating from the Dunedin School of Art in 1986.



Figure 21. Gabby Malpas, *Garden in Pots*, 2020, watercolour and gouache on Arches paper; 76 x 57 cm, “The Painted Garden Exhibition,” 2020.



Figure 22. Gabby Malpas, *Rhododendron Dell*, 2020, 76 x 57 cm, “The Painted Garden Exhibition,” 2020.



Figure 23. Gabby Malpas at home in Sydney, 2020.

## EPILOGUE – PAM MCKINLAY

This has been the story of how I ‘met’ Gabby. Gabby and friends continue to stay in contact with [name withheld]. Gabby has touched our lives with her generous spirit in so many ways. We also share this story of how a small village of people on keyboards reached out from across the world to deliver a letter to rural France, to show another side of social media. I hold onto that thought as we navigate the thoroughfares of Facebook I am grateful for stories that can unite us to help each other if we seek to do so. In this story of “Lost and Found,” new friendships have been formed and old connections renewed. I am looking forward to the next chapter of this unfolding tale when Gabby Malpas visits Dunedin in 2021.

**Gabby Malpas** is an alumni the Dunedin School of Art. She has exhibited internationally in Singapore, Shanghai, Hong Kong, London, Australia and in New Zealand and been a finalist in many of Australia’s top Art Awards. In her work she challenges the genre of Chinoiserie with her own narrative.

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Facebook: Gabby Malpas - Artist

Pinterest: Gabby Malpas

**Pam McKinlay** (ORCID No 0000-0002-1731-6437) works part-time for the Dunedin School of Art and Research Office at Otago Polytechnic. She has an academic background in applied science and history of art and is an artist who is a maker predominantly in weaving, ceramics and photography.

- 1 “2019 Firearm Law Changes (Arms Amendment Bill 2),” *New Zealand Police*, <https://www.police.govt.nz/advice-services/firearms-and-safety/firearm-law-changes-prohibited-firearms>.
- 2 “Christchurch Call Outcome is a Vital First Step in Addressing Terrorism and Violent Extremism Online,” *InternetNZ*, 16 May 2019, <https://internetnz.nz/news/christchurch-call-outcome-vital-first-step-addressing-terrorism-and-violent-extremism-online>.
- 3 Phil Taylor, “Facebook to Clamp Down on Hate in Response to Christchurch Mosque Attack,” *New Zealand Herald*, 30 March 2019, [https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=12217577](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12217577).
- 4 Caroline Fleming, “Tauranga Woman to Lead 50-hour Facebook Blackout for Christchurch Massacre Victims,” *New Zealand Herald*, 19 March 2019, [https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=12214154](https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=12214154).

## SUZIE NO FRIENDS

Hayley Walmsley

At 15, I read *The Old Man and the Sea*, a Hemmingway classic that I devoured in a single afternoon – before turning back to start it again. At 22, it was Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Steinbeck and Hemmingway are master storytellers, using allegory to weave seemingly simple tales that delve into the indomitable spirit of man, and the lonely and dispossessed nature of those who have been marginalised. Their voices reminded me of the way my grandmother spoke; of growing up in the country; watching those around me struggle to make ends meet; and constantly moving forward, despite exceedingly difficult circumstances. Stories are the background from which I have come to know my world, and my place within it. At the age of 28 I decided that if I was to be poor (something I considered distasteful, but for the life of me could not figure out how to remedy), I would at least do work that would make me happy.



Figure 1. Hayley Walmsley,  
*Suzie No Friends*,  
2019,  
6 x 11 inch inkjet print.

And so I became an artist, trading in other people's written works for the act of creating and telling my own stories. "Suzie No Friends" (2019) developed from working in an often autobiographical practice that, however, does not focus on the autobiographical element. It is autobiographical in that each photograph adopts the tone of a "diaristic note" – documenting where I've been, what I've seen and what piqued my curiosity.<sup>1</sup> It speaks to my worries and concerns, and what keeps me up for many hours at night. Beyond that, it is not about me, as it is not directly about my own life. Contrary to the claim that my work isn't autobiographical, I find that the single best way to understand my work is to understand me.

And so, the story to be told starts in 1983 at St Helens – ironically, an Auckland hospital that no longer exists. I became the eldest daughter for my young mother, who has always done her best to provide for myself and my three younger brothers, working up to three part-time jobs and barely getting by. My mother has told me it was not uncommon for her to have only six dollars left for food after paying the bills and rent; and while six dollars went a lot further in those days, my mother didn't eat, often skipping meals to make sure we had enough.

New Zealand had faced sweeping changes in the 1970s and 80s as a result of "Rogernomics," as a child of the 80s, these effects are still evident today. The fragmented and marginalised continue to struggle with unemployment and poverty. When freezing and meat works closed, it effected people like my mother; the working class, and Māori populations living rurally – much like the closing of factories in the cities did for people of mainly Māori and Pacifica descent who, for the most part, were already displaced from their ancestral lands.

When I was six, my mother and her boyfriend moved the family from Auckland to Kerikeri. Kerikeri is close to where my extended family are from at Matauri Bay. During that first year we lived in a packing shed with two bedrooms and a bathroom; my room was situated in the corner of the kitchen and dining area. Until this time, I had not realised we were poor. In Auckland we had lived in a state house, on a street of state houses, in a neighbourhood that at that time was a poor South Auckland suburb. It is now considered very upmarket and part of central Auckland, the by-product of gentrification. But poor 1980s Onehunga was my normal; never having seen anything of excess, I had nothing to compare it to.



Figure 2. Hayley Walmsley,  
*He was a cold bastard ... but he left a large gap,*  
2019,  
44 x 44 inch inkjet print.



Figure 3. Hayley Walmsley,  
*She didn't know how to put the relationship back together,*  
2019,  
44 x 44 inch inkjet print.



Figure 4. Hayley Walmsley,  
*He'd laid it all on the line ... but had come off second best,*  
 2019,  
 44 x 44 inch inkjet print.



Figure 5. Hayley Walmsley,  
*She had been in the muck shit so long it was changing her,*  
 2019,  
 44 x 44 inch inkjet print.

Growing up poor has given me an appreciation for objects and buildings that are usually functional but old, and I romanticise them. When I come across a house that is rundown, for example, I cannot help but think what it would be like to live there, as it reminds me of what it was like to stay with my grandmother in various family shacks on holiday. This appreciation has led to the creation of an ever-expanding archive. This archive is a living, breathing thing and has become a way for me to document the ephemeral – those things that may be gone tomorrow or at some indeterminate time, but will inevitably disappear. These things and places are seemingly forgotten, abandoned or neglected, and interest me as someone who often feels overlooked or isolated myself; never quite being the smartest in the room, being far away from my family, and feeling as though I haven't gotten any further than my mother has, despite the additional education I have accumulated.

Coming from a working-class family in rural Northland has highlighted both the struggles and excess in my community, as some extended family lived in shacks on family land, while some friends lived in large, spacious homes. Troubles in my own home led to arguments and, by the time I was 18, I was ready to leave, often escaping to my grandmother's place to be near the quiet roar of the sea. Thinking myself smarter than my parents, I rushed into the big wide world – like many children who leave home at around 18 to move in with friends, start tertiary study, or because they find a job and need to move closer to work. The transitional period that happens after high school seems to be extending into longer periods away from home, as well as over further distances. Again, I mention this little bit of contextual background as a small explanation of who I am, where I come from, and how I see the world – this explains why I might be interested in the things that make my work so interesting and important to me.

Every day, no matter where I happen to be, I walk, often happening upon something interesting to photograph, never going out of my way. I firmly believe that we ascribe meaning to situations, events and objects for ourselves, and that this meaning can be different for various people. As such, I choose my subjects primarily for my interest in them visually, and only ascribe their meaning later when giving them a caption or title. The objects I come across are usually discarded and forgotten household furniture and appliances.



Walking in Dunedin's student area in January of any given year, one will come across furniture and rubbish everywhere – left by the students who could not take it with them, or by the landlords who don't want it. Reminiscent of the work of Gabriel Orozco or Richard Wentworth, some of this detritus can be found stacked in odd formations, while other items stand alone.<sup>2</sup> Further afield, one finds similar situations in South Dunedin, an area of condensed housing for the working class, and in Christchurch, which is still full of ruin and urban decay ten plus years post-quake. Places like Waimate, Oamaru, Alma and Palmerston lose their young each year to nearby cities, where they hope to gain an education or employment, leaving our rural towns (at least in part) in quiet decay, losing more people than they gain.

A fear of mortality can attach itself to objects devoted to the living; every photograph then becomes about death, no matter how seemingly innocuous the image is.<sup>3</sup> Like Larry Sultan and his fear of losing his parents, my greatest fear is that once I die, I won't be remembered at all. Mirroring Sultan, I set up a cyclical process in which by trying to create something worth being remembered for, I am dooming myself to a certain kind of death, acknowledging that I will not be around forever – whether by choice, death or something in between.<sup>4</sup> This gives a palpable sense of loss, even to the imperfect.

Ruins are considered the perfect allegorical vehicle, and I believe that this can be extended to urban decay and discarded objects. I rely on allegory to show people my own ascribed meanings for the objects I have photographed. These things and ideas act as an allegorical representation, standing in for humans and their societal issues.<sup>5</sup> Speaking to a sense of loss and longing, and a seemingly hardwired need to be recognised, needed and remembered, each image is searching for a way to say a final farewell, or "look at me" – affirming that the things depicted exist, that they served their purpose, and that they played their part. Enacting a similar fear, but in a different manner to that of Bernd and Hilla Becher, I explore a world that is disappearing, yet avoid the clinical exactness of a scientific method.<sup>6</sup>

Contextual clues within these photographs are pared back, making the addition of captions or titles of substantial importance to enable me to tell stories. Cementing again the idea that we, the makers, ascribe our own meanings, allegory works only because of this ascribed meaning. Allegory itself occurs when one text is doubled over another – in this case, the captions and titles provide the doubling up (or contradiction) to the images themselves. What makes these captions and titles interesting is that they are a midpoint – something has happened before, and something will happen after. But we are only given access to what is going on in this specific moment.

Each work functions on several levels – as documentary, commentary and a conversation between me, the images and the audience. If each of these things were an extension of the owner, they would be a portrait, standing in for the owner. The arduous process of sorting, resorting and handling these images over months and years has resulted in them becoming known to me like favourite people; these images are friends. Considered as the people I have given them to portray, handling them so heavily places a small piece of me with each one – much like relationships with family members and friends that influence a person.



Figure 6. Hayley Walmsley,  
*She had asked him to stop so many times*,  
2019,  
44 x 44 inch inkjet print.

As I round the corner into my late thirties, living at the opposite end of the country to my home, and having returned to study (which I have now finished), the transitory nature of a migratory population has become all the more apparent to me. So too has the idea that I may never be able to return home. House prices in Kerikeri and surrounding areas are now prohibitive, and there is a lack of jobs in my chosen field. I continue to look for the next thing that will allow me to make more money, and anticipate moving further afield in the hope of one day being able to afford to go home. I am one of those who has left a small town to languish or move on without me. In a perpetuating cycle, I expect that my son may think of moving from Dunedin for the same reasons I initially left my home.

I use ruin, decay and abandoned objects as allegories to represent people and the societal issues of poverty, unemployment, isolation, domestic violence, suicide, a lack of infrastructure – and the pervasive effect this has on communities and individuals over time, representing the destruction and re-destruction of ourselves, continuously. “Suzie No Friends” examines themes of presence, absence, and loss and longing to make sense of a seemingly hardwired need to be recognised, needed and remembered; giving the neglected, the abandoned, the fragmentary, the marginal and the forgotten a platform to speak up when they often cannot do so for themselves. Much like Hemmingway and Steinbeck, these are stories I consider to be worth telling; not least because they belong to us – those often disillusioned and marginalised people, just looking for a way to belong, be remembered and eventually find our way home.

**Hayley Walmsley** is an artist and photographer living in Dunedin, New Zealand. She recently completed her Master of Visual Arts at the Dunedin School of Art. An absurdist by nature, she infuses humour into her work as a way of both lightening the intensity of difficult subjects and representing life as a nuanced spectrum from melancholic to wistful, whimsical and everything in between.

- 1 Francesco Zanot, *David Heath: Dialogues with Solitudes* (Gottingen: Steidl/Le Bal, 2018). I use the term “diaristic note” in the same sense as Heath.
- 2 Phyllis D. Rosenzweig et al., *Gabriel Orozco: Photographs* (Washington, DC: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 2004); Richard Wentworth and Hans Ulrich-Obrist, *Making Do and Getting By* (London: Koenig Books, 2015).
- 3 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982).
- 4 Larry Sultan, *Pictures From Home* (New York: Harry N Abrams, 1992).
- 5 Craig Owens, “The Allegorical Impulse: Towards a Theory of Post-modernism: Part 1,” *October*, 12 (Spring 1980), 67-86. Owens refers to Walter Benjamin’s idea of the ruin as the perfect allegorical vehicle because allegory is in the realm of thought what ruins are in the realm of things. Ruins are forsaken things, no longer fulfilling their original intended purpose. Quoting Benjamin quoting Marx, Owen also refers to the “object as a commodity,” noting that “once the commodity has left the maker it is freed from its particularity – ceasing to be a product controlled by humans and takes on phantom-like objectivity – leading its own life.” This process is mirrored again when the object is abandoned or thrown away.
- 6 Sean O’Hagan, “Lost World: Bernd and Hilla Becher’s Legendary Industrial Photographs,” *The Guardian*, 3 September 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2014/sep/03/bernd-and-hilla-becher-cataloguing-the-ominous-sculptural-forms-of-industrial-architecture>.

## HUMAN, YOU ARE HUMAN

Siau-Jiun Lim

## CHANGING PERSPECTIVE IN THE ANTHROPOCENE LANDSCAPE

A collaboration between British painter David Hockney and filmmaker Philip Haas in 1998, *A Day on the Grand Canal with the Emperor of China*, takes the form of an hour-long documentary film in which Hockney takes the viewer on a guided tour of a late-seventeenth-century Chinese scroll. The 72-foot-long scroll, entitled *The Kangxi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour* (Figure 1),<sup>1</sup> was painted by Wang Hui and his assistants between 1691 and 1698. The scroll illustrates the journey of the Chinese Emperor on the Grand Canal in a panoramic view of Chinese life, depicting everything from elaborate government ceremonies to everyday matters like shopping and laundry.<sup>2</sup>

Hockney compares the Chinese scroll painting to an Italian painting by Canaletto (1697-1768) – *Capriccio: Plaza San Marco Looking South and West* (1763) – which uses Western perspective techniques to portray a comparable busy scene in a European style. These contrasts lead into wide-ranging observations on art history, aesthetics and spirituality, with Hockney emphasising the development of different notions of perspective.<sup>3</sup>

Hockney describes the Chinese painting's use of composition and angle, including cutting corners, the treatment of houses and roads, to the shifting of our viewing perspective as we look at it. He describes this shifting perspective in the Chinese painting as a moving image that enables viewers to change their viewpoint.<sup>4</sup> This technique draws the viewer 'inside' the painting through spatial complexity and multiple viewpoints. Hockney believes that keeping the



Figure 1. 清 王翬 等 康熙南巡圖（卷三：濟南至泰山） 卷I  
Wang Hui, *The Kangxi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour, Scroll Three: Jinan to Mount Tai*, 1698,  
ink and colour on silk, 67.9 × 1393.8 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.  
See <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/49156>.



audience 'inside' the painting allows viewers to navigate and focus their viewing *in* the painting, instead of looking *at* the painting. By contrast, in conventional Western landscape painting, the viewer is positioned 'outside' the painting to enable them look at things in the painting, scanning from one side to the other. This kind of composition fails to achieve the same effect as Chinese painting to draw viewers into the work as if they were within the scroll itself. In this sense, the viewer is not involved in the scene, but is detached.

Another Western artwork, *Memories (Lawn Tennis)*, painted by Belgian artist Fernand Khnopff in 1889 (Figure 2), demonstrates a shift in perspective by reflecting the conflicting emotional states of the figures depicted in the scene. The painting shows seven women standing on a lawn, some holding tennis racquets. While ostensibly participants in a group setting, preparing to play or having played tennis, the women appear separate, motionless and lost in thought, despite occupying the same space.<sup>5</sup> This painting triggers my interest because it reflects the disconnection between humans and the natural environment in the twenty-first century. In the context of the Symbolist movement, Khnopff's work suggests that 'reality' should act as a conduit for an idea, rather than the visually realistic depiction evident in Realism.<sup>6</sup>



Figure 2. Fernand Khnopff, *Memories (Lawn Tennis)*, 1889, pastel on paper; 127 x 200 cm.

See <http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/khnopff/drawings/27.html>.

These various reflections are something I wish to invoke in my own work – not just my own personal beliefs, but a broader, chaotic mental state and the associated physical behaviour that marks the Anthropocene – the proposed geological age where human activities have significantly impacted on earth's ecosystems and climate.<sup>7</sup> My paintings attempt to describe the invisible and disjointed social environment of anthropogenic landscapes. The urbanised figure and the rectangular object in my work *In my mind, I can fly* (Figure 3) can be seen as separate from, or part of, the scene, reflecting two extremes – the arrogance and the carelessness that characterise the Anthropocene. I see the Anthropocene as an energising thought experiment about humanity's propensity for overconsumption. In my work, figures exist as physical objects, displaying conflicted positions and gestures to imply posthuman disconnection with nature. The meaning of these figures emerges from the landscape, with or without feelings connected with nature; they illustrate the theory behind Timothy Morton's term "hyperobjects."

Timothy Morton, a professor at Rice University, explores ecological studies through a new philosophical movement: object-oriented ontology or the study of hyperobjects.<sup>8</sup> In hyperobject theory, human beings are not placed above other kinds of living beings and this determines how we interact with the things that exist in the Anthropocene. For Morton, phenomena like global warming are not a purely scientific issue or an ideological or solution-oriented concept, but are to be thought of in terms of the human relationship with nature and built environments.<sup>9</sup> Hyperobjects are things with more than one purpose which are massively distributed in time and space relative to human space.<sup>10</sup> For example, recycled rubbish could be seen as a hyperobject, with its extensive connections between countries, businesses and individuals. Humans produce plastic bags that cause pollution, that in turn leads to the extinction of animal species.

The hyperobject has overwhelmed our individual thoughts, emotions and behaviour in many ways. According to Morton, global warming is a problem we understand perfectly, but to which no real solution has yet emerged.<sup>11</sup> Global warming has prompted a flood of irrational reactions and incomprehensible logic as we seek a solution. For example, some people are blinding themselves to the issue with mindless consumption, while others pride themselves on their environmental consciousness. Another group feels that it is simply too hard to grapple with the ecological issues at stake and choose to avoid them. Morton describes these types of reaction as “hypocrisies.”<sup>12</sup> There is an imbalance in our feelings between a sense of urgency, motivation and fear when we are confronted with a hyperobject like global warming. Thus, in addition to facing a real environmental crisis, we are facing an emotional one, as individuals seek comfort and deal with their own emotions on a daily basis.

Our feelings are as real as the physical phenomena, and our responses are often based on emotions. We feel distress, nostalgia and fear arising from our disconnection from the present state of our individual territory or space. Glenn Albrecht, former professor of sustainability at Murdoch University, has coined the term “solastalgia,” meaning a “form of psychic or existential distress caused by environmental change.”<sup>13</sup> The way we react to information about climate change, in both positive and negative ways, is a reflection of our inner psychological world as we experience distress over our threatened environment. However, few of us understand the implications of our emotional reactions to anthropogenic information.<sup>14</sup>

The reality of the Anthropocene is contradictory – even the term itself is debated by scientists. In 2000, Paul Crutzen, an atmospheric chemist and Nobel laureate, argued that we have entered a new division of geological time, the Anthropocene, where significant human impact on the earth has dramatically changed levels of biodiversity on the surface of the planet.<sup>15</sup> However, many stratigraphers criticise the term “Anthropocene,” arguing that it is not a formal unit within the Geological Time Scale based on current stratigraphical evidence.<sup>16</sup>

The United Nations estimates that the world population will reach 9.7 billion by 2050.<sup>17</sup> Population growth is often grouped in the “human action” category of environmental problems.<sup>18</sup> Murray Bookchin has argued that the environmentalism and ecologism of the 1970s were tainted by racist attitudes to survival in an anthropogenic landscape.<sup>19</sup> Although it is a superficial argument to blame over-population for the environmental crisis, this emphasis persists today. According to Dr Jane Goodall, speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, in January 2020, “All these [environmental] things we talk about wouldn’t be a problem if there was the size of population that there was 500 years ago.”<sup>20</sup>

While this assertion from a remarkable environmentalist sounds unexceptionable, it has underlying elements that mislead. The political ecologist Heather Alberro has pointed out that inequalities in power, wealth and resources are driving the environmental crisis. She notes that wealthy countries like the UK and the US have contributed significant historic emissions since the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century. According to 2018 statistics, China and North America account for almost half of the emissions of the planet.<sup>21</sup> In 2015, British charity Oxfam released a study that found that the richest 10% of the world’s population are responsible for 50% of fossil fuel emissions, while the poorest half of the world – 3.5 billion people – produce only 10% of emissions.<sup>22</sup> Thus, imbalanced economic growth has resulted in an imbalance of resource distribution: while the poor have been exploited for their environmental resources, they cannot resolve the ecological and economic problems that have resulted on their own. Alberro stresses that issues of ecology and social justice cannot be separated from one another.<sup>23</sup>

We only encourage our self-destructive tendencies by championing a reduction in the human population to solve environment problems. According to Eve Andrews, this logic implies that fewer humans should limit the harm of climate change. Is it acceptable to “reduce” the number of humans for the sake of a better environment, improved resources and saving the planet? For Andrews, the next question will be, “OK, so how do you choose which people have to go?” Andrews quotes Jade Sasser, a professor of feminist political ecology

at the University of California, Riverside, who argues that argues birth control can be used as a form of social control: “A main argument for why those coerced sterilizations were done was to alleviate the pressure that population growth was putting on state resources, because these groups were disproportionately receiving welfare.”<sup>24</sup> In the richer countries, fertility rates are declining as a result of changing social attitudes and the demands of an urban lifestyle.<sup>25</sup> Limiting family size should be an individual choice rather than a demand made by the state, such as the one-child policy in China, as a way of combatting climate change and reducing our consumption of resources.<sup>26</sup>

Global warming generates emotions of fear and uncertainty for the future. In the metaphysical world, we react to our fear with different responses. The #BirthStrike movement was started by the musician Blythe Pepino in response to her fear of climate breakdown. According to Pepino, #BirthStrike is different from the antinatalist movement – its aim is to communicate “altering the way we imagine our future” with an acknowledgement of the fact that reducing population is not an effective strategy.<sup>27</sup> From the human-values point of view, columnist and political commentator Ella Whelan argues that personal decisions about child-bearing should not be disguised as a campaign to save the planet; the focus should instead be on harnessing human ingenuity to solve our most pressing problems.<sup>28</sup> From Albrecht’s point of view, #Birthstrike is an example of solastalgia as it results from a distressed emotional response to the threat of global warming.

Ecologists Corey Bradshaw and Barry Brook suggest that even a one-child policy or catastrophic mortality event would not reduce population to a sustainable level by the year 2100. Their research posited various scenarios and data for global population change including age-specific mortality and birth rates, as well as simulating different scenarios involving food shortages and the impact of climate and disease based on geographical location.<sup>29</sup> Their work suggests that there’s no definitive prescription for a solution to the challenges of the Anthropocene. Timothy Morton has pointed out that everything is intimately connected in the world of hyperobjects; a “solution” for an issue comes attached with unexpected complications which are inevitable. The machinery at work is too complex to enable us to change our habitual patterns and encourage new understandings that would allow us to escape existing conditions.

New Zealand has a reputation for being “clean and green” – reaffirmed by *The Lord of the Rings* and its flattering Instagram imagery. However, Tourism New Zealand’s “100% Pure New Zealand” marketing slogan and brand identity is a contradictory statement at best. A report from the Ministry for the Environment shows New Zealand’s greenhouse gas emissions are higher per capita than those for Japan and the UK.<sup>30</sup> In 2013, John Key, then the Minister of Tourism, defended the 100% Pure New Zealand slogan, claiming that it was not an environmental message.<sup>31</sup>

From Albrecht’s psychological perspective, it is vital to create positive ideas and hope in the Anthropocene. Albrecht coined the term “soliphilia” (“love of the interrelated whole”) as an antidote to “solastalgia” and as a way of promoting personal responsibility. It encourages accountability and motivates action to limit negative impacts on our emotions and produce positive environmental outcomes.<sup>32</sup> Thus, can we see “100% Pure New Zealand” not just as a cynical commercial project, but as an inspiring vision, an idealistic statement working towards a real solution for humanity? As Morton has pointed out, ‘nature’ is a reification of hope, beauty, peace and magic. However, reification reduces the real object to its most pleasing aspect to suit another purpose, a fantasy produced to serve another entity.<sup>33</sup> Reinforcing the positive behaviour encouraged by soliphilia is essential in the hyperobject era – even if we start from the standpoint of idealism, aspiring to achieve goals without a realistic solution in sight.

Morton exaggerates the urgency of these connections in order to point to the cynical and artificial way that modern humans have imagined themselves to be critically distanced from the world and from nature. Hypocrisy results from the human ability to fantasise a false version of the earth, a beautiful tourism slogan or the virtues of recycling, rather than talking honestly about “shipping rubbish to developing countries,” which would be alienating.<sup>34</sup> As Bandy points out, ecotourism may well offer a false promise for sustainable development. Ecotourism treats nature as a spectacle for economic returns and turns nature into a commodity, risking the destruction of what it seeks to preserve. We are increasingly alienated from nature due to the rapid development of industrialisation and urbanisation. Nature has become a source of inspiration, escape and something to be consumed.<sup>35</sup>

Humans not only feel the lack of a symbiotic relationship with plants and animals, but also with the human race itself. As technology advances, we access the economy, communications, travel and education globally and with increasing convenience. Nevertheless, as a global phenomenon, the Anthropocene is closely linked to other sectors.<sup>36</sup> For the authors of “Global Environmental Issues and Human Wellbeing,” part of the 2013 *Chinese Report on Global Environmental Competitiveness*, joint efforts to promote economic growth, social development and environmental protection are essential for sustainable development for humankind and the environment.<sup>37</sup> Thus, empathy and collaboration must be established at the global level if we are to solve the burning issues of the Anthropocene sustainably. For example, in recent years, developed countries have managed their waste by shipping it to developing countries like Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia, which often lack the facilities to handle it.<sup>38</sup> A UN programme signed by 180 countries in 2019 has made a significant improvement to global health by preventing the shipping of hazardous chemicals and waste to developing countries.<sup>39</sup> Recycling is only a positive act if it enforces a political agenda that benefits all. It is yet another paradox of the hyperobject domain.

## ART IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

In the twenty-first century, the Anthropocene has become a critical and unavoidable phenomenon in art practice. Although landscape painting has long been a popular genre, associated with decorative views of natural beauty, many contemporary landscape painters seek to critically reflect the idea of the destruction of nature.

As human beings, we are drawn to embrace our ability to imagine and invent to fulfil our desires. Scott Kiser points out that creators and destroyers often come as a package; the nature of the creative process involves destructive properties. However, we usually prefer that someone else bear responsible for our destructive actions, as it would be unacceptable for creators to assume the identity of destroyer.<sup>40</sup> In the Anthropocene, every material that an artist uses in their studio creates an emotional tension with regard to their sustainability. It may be challenging for a painter to avoid a medium like acrylic or oil paint – but even a tiny stick of charcoal was once a living tree. In Albrecht’s theory, this tension in the art-making experience could be described as a form of solastalgia.

Jiaxin Li Dani makes the point that art-making involves testing, examination and repetitive acts. These acts generate waste; some of it is recyclable, some is non-recyclable, and some is highly hazardous.<sup>41</sup> For an artist like me, creating paintings about the Anthropocene using acrylic and canvas, which contain plastic elements, has been a distressing process – even though acrylic is considered more eco-friendly than oil paint.<sup>42</sup> Some pigments and binders have been shown to be harmful to the environment.<sup>43</sup> This has challenged my plans for making large works. I struggle to deal with my emotions regarding art materials and waste, even though most of my brushes are repurposed from nature – for example, cabbage tree leaves and flax stems reused as brush handles. An artist’s waste should remain the artist’s responsibility, rather than that of the viewers or buyers.

This delicate process not only involves sorting out waste, but challenging the artist’s emotions, too. To know that I am generating waste and contributing to environmental degradation is not easy to deal with. I am left with an easy solution – stop producing art – except that it matters to me and any artist to continue making art, albeit with a

sense of personal responsibility. Art is important because it influences all kind of enterprises in society. In addition, it is a fundamental form of self-expression and communication.<sup>44</sup> We live in a world made up of shades of grey. There are no black-and-white answers. Living in such a world means that I have an opportunity to step outside of my comfort zone to seek creative and innovative ways of living and working.

When looking at painting, our eyes are drawn to the dominant figure in the composition simply because it carries more weight and interest. When a figure in an urban context is intended to show qualities of *sophilia* and *solastalgia* with their surroundings, they are often placed in a corner space, with a larger area given over to the landscape (Figure 3). However, drawing attention to the figure does not resolve the contradictions of the Anthropocene caused by the presence of the hyperobject in our mental and physical space. In *In my mind, I can fly*, a couple of bright, transparent rectangles are added to a complex and vibrant landscape, along with a solitary figure who seems to be immersed in his surroundings. Visually, the rectangle creates a resting point for our eyes from the intricate lines and demanding colours. In his essay "Movement and Geometry," Jim Eyre argues that, in architecture, movement evolved from the perception of space and perception from the process of viewing. In the geometric world of architecture, formulaic approaches to designing buildings fail to resolve inherent visual tension. The way our mind treats the perception of movement should not be ignored.<sup>45</sup>



Figure 3. Sia-Jiun Lim, *In my mind, I can fly*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 1600 x 1400 mm.

Making art is a process of contextualisation through experience. The effort to interpret an artwork, multivalent insights, problems faced or a conversation held can all reveal surprising insights. Maarit Anna Mäkelä stresses that a making process is nothing less than a research methodology.<sup>46</sup> Mäkelä's argument suggests that my anthropogenic dialogue with my work *Click n' Pick Dunedin* is a valid part of my practice. *Click n' Pick Dunedin* was the outcome of a project where I spent a month documenting the rubbish I collected from my street and nearby bushes. As I gained insights into attitudes to plastic and began to understand our emotional needs – soliphilia and solastalgia – with respect to hyperobjects, I came to realise that my obsession with rubbish, in particular plastics, had influenced my subconscious. The project extended into a community project that encouraged people to take photos of rubbish in and around Dunedin, before picking it up and sharing their photos on the Click n' Pick Dunedin Facebook page (Figure 4).<sup>47</sup> As a result, plastic has become a 'manifesto object' that reflects many of the current themes in my work – a mechanism for expanding my work across the spectrum of psychology.

We live in a disputed age called the Anthropocene, and we can trace the history of it through art. We are all too familiar with the ways global warming is discussed in the mass media and scientific literature. By contrast, soliphilia and solastalgia are our reactions to the hyperobject's situation in the Anthropocene. Our way of coping is to live out a false solution, an illusion of a solution, which makes us feel better even though it is a powerless and ineffectual one – it is an act of catharsis and nothing more. Perhaps even my own work is constructed within these same limitations, acknowledging this illusion through rectangles, colours and movement. My work acknowledges the Anthropocene by juxtaposing humans with nature – even though humans *are* nature.



Figure 4: Facebook  
*Click n' Pick Dunedin project*,  
<https://www.facebook.com/clicknpickdunedin/>.

**Siau-Jiun Lim** expresses her art through an interdisciplinary mix of science, social anthropology, psychology and design that is intended to construct relationships within a given environment. Influences on her practice include UX/UI design. She often uses social engagement and experimentation to investigate human interaction with objects.

- 1 Wang Hui, 清 王 翬 等 康熙南巡圖 (卷三: 濟南至泰山) 卷|The Kangxi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour, Scroll Three: Ji'nan to Mount Tai. See Google Arts & Culture, <https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/-lbQH3VoRHpBXsQ?childas=2gEbV4KC3wlrhA> (accessed 6 July 2020).
- 2 Philip Haas and David Hockney, *A Day on the Grand Canal with the Emperor of China*, 2007 [restored version], [https://milestonefilms.com/products/day-on-the-grand-canal-with-the-emperor-of-chinga?\\_pos=1&\\_sid=cc8b543c4&\\_ss=r](https://milestonefilms.com/products/day-on-the-grand-canal-with-the-emperor-of-chinga?_pos=1&_sid=cc8b543c4&_ss=r).
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Caroline Goldstein, "David Hockney on the Imperialism of Western Perspective in Art and the Benefits of Virtual Reality (for Porn)," *Artnet News*, 22 November 2017, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/david-hockney-on-virtual-reality-photography-and-the-imperialism-of-european-perspective-1154810> (accessed 6 July 2020).
- 5 "The Static Women of Khnopff's Memories (Lawn Tennis)," *The Victorian Web*, <http://www.victorianweb.org/painting/khnopff/drawings/frauenhofer14.html> (accessed 6 July 2020).
- 6 Tom Stammers, "Modern Art, with a Belgian Flavor," *Apollo Magazine*, 22 December 2018, <https://www.apollo-magazine.com/modern-art-belgian-fernan-khnopff/> (accessed 6 July 2020).
- 7 Damian Carrington, "The Anthropocene Epoch: Scientists Declare Dawn of Human-influenced Age," *The Guardian*, 29 August 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/aug/29/declare-anthropocene-epoch-experts-urge-geological-congress-human-impact-earth> (accessed 6 July 2020).
- 8 Timothy Morton, *Hyperobjects – Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Oliver Franklin-Wallis, "Plastic Recycling is a Myth: What Really Happens to Your Rubbish?" *The Guardian*, 17 August 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/aug/17/plastic-recycling-myth-what-really-happens-your-rubbish> (accessed 6 July 2020).
- 12 Morton, *Hyperobjects*, 135.
- 13 Glenn A. Albrecht, *Earth Emotions: New Words for a New World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2019).
- 14 Ibid., 27–39.
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## “HEAVY LUGGAGE”

Debbie Fleming

*In order to fight back we must connect, we must communicate, we need to learn solidarity, we must translate in more ways than just verbal translation, we must attempt a translation of the streets, a deep translation. Collectively we must move on to somewhere new.*

Philip Rizk<sup>1</sup>

I have been inspired by one of the most important political and social dilemmas of our time, climate change – its impact on our cultural identity and the role of art activists to open dialogue in as many languages as is possible.

I am not alone in experiencing uncertainties concerning the ability of a global population to address and find solutions to the complex challenges we all face regarding anthropogenic climate change. The incalculable threat it constructs to vulnerable communities and countries alike is beyond most of our imaginations.

Doubting that humans will reverse the escalating temperatures and associated weather patterns we are experiencing appears counterproductive. Collectively altering the behaviours that we know have contributed to the crisis – unfortunately too numerous to cover in this essay, but well documented – has been the subject of much theorising and debate.

My goal in creating “Heavy Luggage” has been to question and open discussion within the language of art, creating a metaphorical narrative navigating our preparedness for an altered environment of the proportions talked about in the media and forecast by science. I discuss the impact of the climate crisis on cultural identity and provide relatable analogies questioning how resourceful we can be in addressing collective trauma. For many, the response to the crisis of climate change has been that it is too big, too depressing and too hard to solve.

To simplify the conundrum, I have been encouraged to find solutions at a local level, sourcing local experiences and finding within local communities a resilience and a willingness to adopt altered perspectives. There is a grief and resistance associated with this which I have explored in ‘luggage’ such as *Waiting Room* and *Stateless*, created to address and develop empathy for the emotions and attitudes of stakeholders in the crisis, boosting vulnerable communities.



Figure 1. Debbie Fleming, “Heavy Luggage” (installation).  
Photograph: Robitti Stanley.

Ai Weiwei speaks of the resilience and vulnerability of the human condition, and the role of art in providing a voice for the voiceless: "If anything, art is about aesthetics, about morals, about our belief in humanity. Without that, there simply is no art."<sup>2</sup>

"Heavy Luggage" is an installation of 29 individual pieces of ceramic luggage, created using an array of glazes and finishes, fashioned to reflect the fragility of vulnerable communities, challenging the way we think about our world. The installation navigates political and social narratives surrounding climate change, culture, social cohesion and order; essential for connectedness and resilience; examples are *Away* (Figure 5) and *The Way Back* (Figure 8). Collective trauma is part of our landscape. Uncertainty and loss carry a realisation that we are on the threshold of considerable change, the two inextricably linked.

Unpacking the materiality of this body of work reveals a combined narrative of connection, aesthetics, history and politics, social responsibility and neglect. Each individual piece reaches out to connect, subliminally presenting its own conversation, united through pattern-making and process.

Like each piece of luggage, *See Me Through Rose-coloured Glasses* reveals a sense of time and place, a nostalgia for a period in history that can never be returned to. The fragility of the possessor, expressed through the medium of ceramic, divulges delicate links with family, occasions and connection, while appearing strong or invincible. The faded bloom resting on this bag is a symbol of mourning. The image tucked into the pocket is of a beloved, honouring the significance of relationships past and present. The satin finish of the glaze, diffusing light, improves readability and is honest, denoting a time of durability. Vinyl and non-recyclable, the piece lays claim to a dubious yet specific place in time. This simple carry bag is a metaphor for, and reminder of, valued memories carried forward. The loose, well-used handles, relaxed and touching, providing evidence of connections and experiences shared. The tarnished buckles reveal a path well-worn and the strong zip holds tight contents held dear and private.

Undertaken for my Masters degree in visual arts (MVA) at Otago Polytechnic, my journey over the last year with "Heavy Luggage" has focused on researching climate change, cultural identity and art activism. The current political and social climate has prompted not only changes to our cultural identity as the result of changing weather and rising sea levels, but also the altered perspectives and opinions of populations forced to navigate an uncertain future, forced to question what is real and what is fake, what is truth and what is opinion. The satchel bag, *Speaker of the House*, was designed to metaphorically canvass these issues.

This project was born following an investigation into my own family history, titled "Out of the Fire and into the Sea." This research project for my postgraduate certificate described the journey of my great-great-grandfather from Poland to Hokitika, Westland, around 1850, as a refugee escaping war, starvation and disease – he was part of what is referred to as the Great Polish Migration. The bag *Collaborating with Uncertainty* reflects the resilience he demonstrated and passed onto his children. Gottlieb felt it necessary to camouflage his identity, remaining incognito until his death in order to feel safe in his newfound country. Historical trauma stayed with him throughout his life.



Figure 2. Debbie Fleming,  
*See Me Through Rose-coloured Glasses*.  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

*Is this my bag?*

*Carrier of hope, communions of earth  
and life, past and future.*

*A swaddled embrace embodies my being.*

*Strong thread stitches my body.*

*Soft handles grip tightly.*



Figure 3. Debbie Fleming, *Collaborating with Uncertainty*,  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

My concerns about the impacts of climate change intensified following my move from the North Island to Westland in 2018. Very little was being said about climate change at that time, especially in the Bay of Plenty where I had lived for 25 years. Communities continued with business as usual until they were told otherwise by local and central government. It was not until I investigated climate change and the impact it was having on the cultural identities of communities locally and nationally within New Zealand, that I began to realise the complexity of the situation.

At the beginning of 2019, local government, councils and NGOs were becoming more aware of the issues, but lacked direction. Unwilling to invest time and money without a mandate from central government (not forthcoming at the level required to provide clear guidance), the inaction of these groups inculcated a sense of denial and scepticism in communities, one way or another. By 2019 the New Zealand government had completed a stocktake report revealing the levels of preparedness (or un-preparedness) for climate change by all sectors within the country. After reading it, I realised that the only organisation prepared for the coming crisis was the insurance industry.

From the many conversations I had started and the questions I had asked, it became obvious to me that the subject of climate change was too hard for most people to contemplate. I questioned people at random, enquiring if they had gone online to investigate water levels in their immediate environment at predicted temperatures. This resource was universally promoted and well documented. The response was always a resounding NO!! Most considered the topic "too depressing" and asked me to "change the subject." Subdivisions and new homes continue to be developed on vulnerable beachfront dunes. I questioned values such as open-mindedness, authenticity and personal responsibility, appearing



Figure 4. Debbie Fleming, *Ink*,  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

to challenge the right to such basic values as joy and happiness. The dilemma was profound. I became increasingly curious about the reasoning behind the evident cloak of scepticism and denial enveloping people of all ages.

The mental shift required to view the world as a different place from the one people know was as profound as the dilemma in my attempts to open conversation about climate change. There was also the problem faced by residents of coastal communities in the Bay of Plenty, an area marked by soaring property values, who appeared unable to contemplate the negative effects of rising sea levels on their futures. The levels of investment required, not only in their homes, but for their retirement were high. They were typical of the residents of most coastal communities around New Zealand.

Following my arrival in Westland, serious complications and vulnerabilities faced by small communities, such as those scattered along the district's extensive coastline, became apparent. Regional and district councils faced problems of inadequate funding due to a shrinking population, as well as struggling to repair infrastructure destroyed by storms of increasing intensity and frequency. Old landfills had become exposed, flooding rivers that swept away large areas of land.<sup>3</sup> The ecological disaster which occurred in Haast in April 2019 when the Waiho River bridge was washed away was unprecedented; the inaccessibility of the area forced the authorities to abandon much of the clean-up, involving over 50 km of rugged South Westland coastline.<sup>4</sup>



Figure 5. Debbie Fleming.  
*Away.*  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

*When we throw something away, where is it thrown?*

*When we go away, where do we go?*

*When notions do not fit, where do we place them?*

*When problems appear to have no answers, where do we bury them?*



Figure 6. Debbie Fleming.  
*Within.*  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

*Within this smooth perfect skin*

*Within this shiny bag*

*Within this disguise.*

*Within this blackness.*

*Within a few years*

To have omitted the rubbish sack as a form of luggage would have denied the obvious 'go to' receptacle for bagging up last-minute items, the afterthoughts, the nearly forgotten and the notions that cannot be discarded. The reference it brings to the narrative of climate change and cultural identity is also pertinent on many levels. There is an ephemerality and transience associated with both rubbish bag and insidious climate change – the forms beneath the sheaths, indicative only of what lies below and how tightly packed it is. There lies scepticism and denial.

I have used a variety of clays to create the luggage. New Zealand high-fired stoneware clay, fine but proved to lack resilience, was used to construct bags such as *Artisans Die Poor, I Rest my Case*, included to open up a narrative about the position of the art activist and the role of art in providing a voice for the voiceless. While the legitimacy of its label can be disputed, I intended to raise ethical as well as moral questions about values and beliefs. The piece speaks an alternative language; it reveals fractures and fragility, design and pattern, elements to be considered when exploring questions of politics, social cohesion and change.

I have also used raku clay, imported and heavily grogged (including previously fired and ground clay and sand). Raku clay is strong and particularly resilient to thermal shock and resistant to fracturing, though it demands less defined detailing. It proved particularly suitable for my nineteenth-century sack bag, *The Way Back*, and the two contemporary upright trolley bags, *Waiting Room* and *Stateless*, all of which required alternative solutions and special resilience in their making. In their nature and purpose they reflect a weighty and knowing resilience (required within their own significant time and space) to counter their tentative uncertainties.



Figure 7. Debbie Fleming,  
*Artisans die Poor, I Rest my Case*.  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.



Figure 8. Debbie Fleming,  
*The Way Back*.  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

*Having reached my destination, I find  
myself  
untying the rope. The threads course in  
my hands,  
remain tightly twisted, their helix pattern  
reminds me of DNA.  
Unpacking the contents of my Pikau, I am  
unpacking my life and I am taken back to  
the way  
it was.*



*An abandoned vestibule of collective  
trauma. I wonder what will be revealed  
when the tape gives way?*

Figure 9. Debbie Fleming,  
*Stateless*.  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.



*Resting in the waiting room, emotionless  
and moody.*  
*An unknown void of uncertainty, balancing  
on the threshold between here and there,  
darkness and light.*

Figure 10. Debbie Fleming,  
*Waiting Room*.  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

Resistance to thermal shock is a significant aspect of firing large enclosed items such as these works. To ensure success, the difference in heat between the outside and inside needs to be managed in the drying and firing process. Rushing the process places the luggage under enormous stress, as fractures demonstrate. Survival depends on intensive management, research, testing, record keeping and reporting, care and understanding. The analogy with navigating the political and social impacts of climate change is a pointed one.

Communities experiencing collective trauma (linked to climate change) often demonstrate significant scepticism and denial. Most affected by the crisis are those with the most to lose: the mines which have employed so many in coal and other extraction industries throughout Westland, for example, and those whose families have been supported by these industries for generations. These same corporations, companies and communities have been the most critical of environmentalism and climate science.<sup>5</sup>



Figure 11. Debbie Fleming,  
*Speaker of the House*.  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

*He always had an opinion,  
transporting it with authority.  
We never really knew where  
it came from, as the evidence  
was kept locked away in an old  
saddlebag; strapped, buckled,  
stitched and domed.*

Loss of huge tracts of coastal land as the result of extreme weather events is also an historical reality for those living in Westland – people who have fought to hold onto dwindling industries, homes and jobs that enable sustainability. Isolated and vulnerable communities are often the ones desperately seeking quick answers, and/or someone to blame for their demise. These communities are also the guardians of substantial local knowledge that is lost when they become fractured. “Heavy Luggage” has been designed to encourage conversations not just about potential migration, but also about voice, memory, change, vulnerability and loss – all key links to support the narrative of those affected.

Media coverage, focusing on environmental devastation combined with stories of insurance companies, banks and governments all struggling to safeguard futures, has created a sense of numbness, potentially counter-productive to resilience. The importance of dialogue, social cohesion and order has never been as vital as it is now, challenging though it may appear:

I have scrutinised the luggage coming from the kiln, seeking positive affirmations and answers. I found amid the cracks, misshapen objects and faded finishes, solutions, keys and responses. Collectively, the objects possess a distinctive power in their sheer number and diversity.



*Shouldering grief by the bagful, I see your  
hoard in places and spaces perished and  
dormant.  
Captured images of another time, openly  
shared. Identity worn like a badge contrasts  
with the blackness of loss.  
Your glossy zip so neatly maintained as you  
attempt to secure your essential past from  
becoming lost in the abyss of overload.  
Why do you carry so much?*



Figure 12. Debbie Fleming,  
*Broad-shouldered Old Bag*.  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

Through researching the psychological impact of climate change – for example, on local communities such as those in Westland over the past year – I became increasingly aware of the reasoning behind the scepticism and denial. Historical preconceptions of environmentalists and scientists meant that locals often referred to them as hippies, tree-huggers and impractical geeks. The rise of ‘fake news’ and world leaders with a propensity for undermining climate initiatives, an unwillingness to address rising sea levels, temperatures and greenhouse emissions have created doubt and uncertainty. Climate protestors are being arrested across the globe. Fear has become paralysing, a condition referred to as “pre-traumatic stress disorder” – a response to what Timothy Morton refers to as a hyperobject,<sup>6</sup> something so large and complex that it can only be charted on a graph.

An indicative, self-selecting survey on climate change undertaken by the news media site *Stuff* in July 2019 revealed an overwhelming 15,248 responses by those emotionally motivated enough to complete the questionnaire – 15 times the numbers expected. The facts were clear; readers stated: “Give us hope. Show more solutions – and less doom and gloom.” *Stuff* responded: “Interestingly, there was a correlation between age and alarm – with the youngest the most concerned”. *Stuff* also commented: “The survey wasn’t a glowing report card for journalists. Asked how well the media cover climate change, on a five-point scale where 1 was terribly and 5 was superbly, only 51 per cent rated us 3 or above.” These statistics were backed up by the levels of protest by youth worldwide, protesting our continued dependence on fossil fuels and ongoing environmental degradation.

*Stuff* quoted one survey respondent: “Gloom and doom scenarios rarely lead to action, although I do agree it is essential to inform about the catastrophic future scenarios. People seem to be inspired by examples of ‘good climate behaviour’ stories.” It was also clear that the public were asking the media to “show stories of mainstream New Zealanders (lawyers, nurses, builders, doctors, teachers, office workers) who are making real and meaningful changes in how they live ... and who everyday people can relate to.” Another respondent suggested: “Increase attention to tangible things we/the govt could be doing to make a positive change. Be solutions-focused, rather than focusing on how bad things are.”<sup>7</sup>

In a controversial act of disruption (which pointedly demonstrates the liminal phase we currently share), art activist Ai Weiwei recorded his work *Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn* (1995), in which he captured himself destroying a precious, 2000-year-old ceremonial relic. A series of images record Weiwei holding the vase, the vase in mid-air and lying shattered on the ground.<sup>8</sup> This cultural and symbolic act could be considered absurd. The images incidentally became more valuable than the urn itself. Weiwei countered the subsequent outrage by quoting General Mao:



Figures 13 and 14. Debbie Fleming, "Heavy Luggage" (installation). Dunedin School of Art, February 2020.  
Photograph: Pam McKinlay.

"The only way of building a new world is by destroying the old one."<sup>9</sup> This example of activist art is explicit and monumental. Weiwei's smashing of the vase is symbolic – the process is fast, hard to comprehend and potentially damaging. Weiwei's images metaphorically communicate how systems and communities are inevitably broken, and the speed at which the process can happen. This artwork is as relevant today as it was in 1995 – possibly even more so.

Cultural identities, values, rituals, lifestyles and ambitions – important cornerstones of daily life – are constantly being re-evaluated and renegotiated to keep pace with our changing world. In my installation, this concept is demonstrated by the process of creating the ceramic luggage from raw ingredients where possibilities for change are realised.

Challenging how we think about our world has been the focus of my body of ceramic work, "Heavy Luggage." The quantity and variety of luggage displayed – or, as some would call it, *baggage* – reflects the complexity of contemporary life and the intricacy of spirit.

Each item of ceramic luggage was created to help me unpack the social and political dilemmas I currently face, as I have discussed them within my immediate family and also in the broader community. Each one was created to open conversations about our readiness; and to break from the past, as demonstrated by Weiwei, while appreciating the significance of memory as each broken piece remains part of the whole, though in an altered state. Each item of luggage carries the marks of the maker; the applications and layers which produced the final product and which will remain in the memory of the object. The analogies and metaphors are significant.

My installation contains many weighty applications relating to my particular journey, researching the response to climate change within each ceramic object. My chosen methodology and materiality constitute both my journal and an explicit response to my world.

Each piece of luggage was uniquely handmade. The clay, of this earth, was carefully rolled out and formed to reflect pattern and construction, life, structure, embellishment and journey. Within the clay, memory has been stretched, compressed, impressed, dried, heated and cooled, coated, and coated again. Each object was created with and without contrivance. Each manifestation makes no apology for its existence. Each exists and therefore is, sitting comfortably among and comfortably separated from its peers sharing the same space.

We each carry our own significant stories, memories and local knowledge, invaluable in the task of creating sustainable futures. The luggage presented as an analogy in the installation explores these topics. Our personal luggage or baggage provides evidence of the positions we maintain. In the face of imminent catastrophic climate change and the inevitable consequences, I question if we can (and will) let go of those positions which stand in the way of change. As Weiwei demonstrated by dropping the vase, once the decision is made, the future is irrevocably altered.

**Deb Fleming** recently completed her MVA at Dunedin School of Art. Her passion for ceramic art began in Wellington in the late 1960s and early 70s when she discovered the joy of making, specifically hand-building, within a developing culture of talented and innovative potters who were creating and exhibiting their work at the Antipodes Gallery in Courtney Place. By the late 80s, drawn to the Coromandel pottery scene, Deb was firing her own work in a 25 cu ft gas kiln in Waihi and supplying craft shops throughout New Zealand. Debs's work now focuses on social and political narratives close to her heart.

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## BEAUTY, UTILITY AND FUTILITY: THE ART OF CRAFT AND WHY WE CREATE

Giles Panting

*"I don't get patchwork – you take perfectly good material, cut it up and then sew it back together again."* This was the comment from an acquaintance – a fairly no-nonsense Yorkshireman – made sometime in early 2017 as part of a completely unrelated conversation. Because the comment came out of the blue, I didn't respond (or contest it) and the conversation continued to its conclusion. But that disconnected comment stayed with me. Why do I make things? Specifically, why am I, a middle-aged Englishman living in New Zealand, making textiles at a time in my life when I can afford to buy the things I make? And worse, much of my work over the last ten years has been created in the knowledge that I don't really want anyone to use the things I make.

Given that I have been mostly making quilts in the last decade, I have often considered whether what I have been making is art or craft. Can what I am making be considered art if its primary, albeit historical, purpose is everyday use? This is a question that was often on my mind during my years of producing ceramics – even the decision whether to write 'potter' or 'ceramic artist' on a census form entailed much philosophical angst and deliberation.

Of course, much has been written on that very subject, and while I have spent time considering that my quilts are one-off pieces, attempting to convey a concept or meaning of some sort, I always had the secret, nagging suspicion that the world at large would consider my work 'craft,' and that even the most indulgent art-literate friend would probably place my work at the low end of the 'high art–low art' continuum.

And so, being directed by a random comment to think about why it is that I do what I do – why I'm seemingly driven to create textile works that have, arguably, no mainstream artistic worth – has in turn led to a developing understanding of why I create what I create. It is helping me to understand my journey as a maker and as an artist.

I grew up in the rural south-west of England, mostly in the eighties. The world of the arts and crafts was flourishing and maturing into a plethora of colour and vibrancy following the wholesome brown ceramic glazes, hessian and idealistic self-sufficiency that the seventies embodied in my mind at the time.

My parents and grandparents were always making things. My father is a talented wood turner – historically the family trade (his father and grandfather were wood turners in the railway industry, as moulds for engine parts were created from wood masters or originals) – and potter. My mother had always sewn, but it was her quest to learn to spin that forms the most vivid memories from my childhood. My father made a beautifully turned wheel for her to learn on – the first of a collection of individually designed and handmade wheels – and her monthly guild meetings and regular trips to workshops, exhibitions and talks made an impression on me.

My grandfather was a cabinetmaker by training and trade; his workshop, at the end of a long garden, was an organised world of hard work and creation, while my grandmother was a knitter. To say that she was a knitter is an understatement. I struggle to remember a family event where she did not have her knitting to hand, and her ability to memorise complicated cable patterns and to knit, quickly and without looking while watching television or attending to a conversation, has stayed in my mind.

Quite simply, I grew up in an environment where people made things. It wasn't done in a showy, "look at me, aren't I clever/artistic/amazing" way, it was just something that everybody did. Quietly and consistently things were made. Usually they were things that could be used: jumpers, socks, shirts, cushions, spinning wheels, furniture. But these items, made for everyday use, had integrity, and there was an unspoken understanding that they were made as well as they could be.

It was natural, then, that I should want to make things, to become a part of the tribe. My father's and grandfather's workshops were dangerous places – machinery, saws, sharp chisels and blades. And so, as a child, engaging in more domestic craft activities proved more accessible and so we learned to stitch, knit, weave. We were given materials, time and space – a converted attic space where we could make a mess in the pursuit of being creative.

I was possibly blessed by being one of the last generation of children who were allowed to be bored as a route to more interesting and imaginative activities. I've observed this in my own children when they were younger, as the first few days of the school holidays elicited cries of "I don't know what to do!" Push through this response, resist the urge to continually drive to a leisure centre or bowling alley and, given time, space and minimum materials, they will contrive to create the most amazing games, objects and worlds.

Ironically, given that my various careers have so far been involved in the world of education, it was the demand for a 'good education' in order to have a 'good career' that put paid to my creative endeavours. I continued to make things throughout my teenage years, but without the intensity and drive of my childhood. Teenage peer-pressure meant that making things became a largely furtive and potentially embarrassment-inducing activity.

## UTILITY

I made my first quilt in 1991. I was in my first year of university and I wanted to make something. It had to be something that could be done with minimal equipment, space and in small amounts of time. I'd read Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple*, and Celie's formerly abusive husband, turning to sewing shirts in his old age, inspired me – here, at last, was a man who sewed. At that time I had also assumed that making a quilt would be less expensive than buying one ready-made.

That first quilt, still in existence and still in remarkably good condition, was simple – pale and tasteful hand-sewn squares quilted on a domestic sewing machine. It was followed by a second quilt, this one as bright and gaudy as the first was reserved. Made from recycled clothing, that quilt progressed with us through several family homes, on several beds and on to its final incarnation as a dog-quilt.

A gap of nearly two decades followed. Career, family, general grown-up real life and a move to New Zealand consumed my time and my years. And then, out of the blue, I suddenly found myself wanting to make a quilt. A utility quilt, to be used, abused and loved. And while making this quilt, I found myself reading about quilts – I discovered Nancy Crow and Gee's Bend and the gloriously joyful, vibrant quilts of Anna Williams. I wanted to make more, but I wanted them to exist as objects that were more than just something to keep us warm or look good on a bed. I found myself fascinated by the idea that quilts could contain meaning: messages that only made sense to those who knew the code – those who could read a quilt or a quilt block.

## BEAUTY AND ART

And so I made a quilt inspired by a poem I'd read about the cremation of Frida Kahlo by George Young, *The Cremation of Frida Kahlo*. The poem describes her bones burning violet, and in the white ash that remained and a glowing red rod (which had been her spine).<sup>1</sup>

The image of bones burned violet and then crumbling was an idea I wanted to explore. Using the New York Beauty block as a starting point (given the time that Kahlo spent in that city) seemed a reasonable idea – constructed without too much concern over points and corners; spontaneity and chance seemed to suit the ideas I wanted to explore. By this time, I realised that I sought the irregular; the impulsive and the element of chance as a means to achieve a more lively and authentic piece of work. Good construction was important, slavish striving towards faultless technique was not. The jarring effect of slightly off-balance composition is appealing.

Images of violet bones and ash allowed me to explore a colour palette I would otherwise not have considered; a quote from Frida Kahlo's diary – "I hope that the end is joyful and I hope never to return" – is machine-embroidered in a facsimile of Kahlo's handwritten entry. An incongruous block constructed of wild geese triangles points downwards, while a single black bird flies away from the bonds of the human body, never to return.



Figure 1. Giles Panting, *The Cremation of Frida Kahlo*.

From 2012 to 2018 I worked, slowly and consistently, on a series of quilts, machine pieces and hand-quilted works that explored these ideas and techniques further: New techniques were learned, but not overlearned – I still value irregularity – and a free-form piece-cutting technique and associated ideas developed. The resulting series of four new quilts ended with a reworking of the original inspiration: *The Artist*, *The Pain*, *Frida and Isamu (as Leda and the Swan)* and *The Cremation*.



Figures 2-5. Giles Panting, *The Artist*; *The Pain*; *Frida and Isamu (as Leda and the Swan)*; and *The Cremation*.

Once an artist has a body of work, large or small, the question of exhibition arises. To exhibit or not to exhibit? Having said that, for me, creating quilts is a largely quiet, private occupation – there is an element of ego involved in seeing work displayed in a gallery. The first two quilts have been exhibited in the annual “Changing Threads” exhibition here in New Zealand, and the third was shown in an exhibition at the Rocky Mountain Quilt Museum in 2016. While I enjoyed seeing the two quilts hung, and properly lit, in a gallery environment, I have come to realise that external comment is not a key driver for me when considering why I make. It seems to matter less and less what other people think of my work the more I make. Positive comment is always a buzz; negative comment would not stop me making.

## FUTILITY

Another period of creative inactivity (or redirection, really – smaller projects dictated by circumstance) was incurred by new jobs and two house moves, one of which was a new-build project. Once my new studio was set up and everything was unpacked and in its place, there was no excuse. And this is when the conversation from more than a year earlier started to dwell on my mind. Why was I making these quilts? What was the point? I was, after all, just cutting up material and sewing it back together again. The new studio contains plastic boxes and an antiques blanket box of the quilts that I have made, unused and unseen. There seemed to be an undeniable futility about what I spend so much of my time doing and thinking about.

Aware that starting the creative process is often the hardest part for me, I knew that I had to begin something. I also know from past experience that once I begin, the ideas flow and a sustained period of working ensues. Sewing *anything* at this stage is always more important than knowing exactly what will be produced.

I decided to celebrate the notion of futility in what I was doing as a way of continuing to understand why I make things. Starting with the idea of using “perfectly good material,” I chose a length of raw silk, natural in colour – in this case, valuing my work through the inherent value of the cloth. I wanted to reference my earliest quilts by using a simple grid – in this case, either simple squares or squares made up of rectangles, triangles or smaller squares.

The arrangement as I stitched the cloth back together would be random, the design simple, geometric and understated, but quietly referencing the utility quilts from the past, made up out of necessity from squares of salvaged fabric. In essence, I was creating a ghost of a quilt from the past for an age when the object itself essentially, and arguably, has no place or purpose.

As a final reference to the handmade quilt’s futile existence, I decided to add elements of darning where none was needed – large, circular darns in gold thread. My grandmother carefully darning hand-knitted socks is another childhood memory filed away – fine woollen yarn, in mossy, heathy colours from the local drapery.

I’d assumed, when starting, that this quilt would be the start of a new series. ‘Real’ artists, after all, work in sequence, exploring and developing ideas in multiple works. However, I think that this piece stands alone. It has helped me to understand where my current work sits in terms of what has come before and what might come after.



Figure 6. Giles Panting, *A Study of Futility in Utility*.



## THE WORK OF CRAFT

And so, my work as a quilter having (almost) come full circle, I am free to accept that whether what I create is considered art or craft actually doesn't matter to me as much as I thought it did. There is no real validation necessary to be sought in the opinions of the viewer, however expert in the field. The chance comment of an acquaintance, in inviting me to consider the 'why' of making, rather than categorising the 'what,' has inadvertently freed me. I understand that my drive to create – whether rooted in early familial experiences, whether innate or learned – is here to stay.

As I write this in my studio, I am surrounded by fabrics (mostly in shades of red for current work) and pieces of quilts in progress. I will probably always make quilts that I intend to be used – to be loved, thrown in the washing machine, looking better for each year of use and misuse (the memory of quilt-tents in the orchard on sunny afternoons is definitely better than recollections of a perfectly preserved quilt). I will probably also always make quilts that exist 'just because.' They are the quilts that might try to express something deeper – who knows?

Working on the pale, monochromatic *Futility* quilt awoke the dormant need for colour and improvisation in quilt making. At the moment, I am enjoying cutting fabric into shapes and piecing them together. The completely red quilt that I have been planning in my mind looks as though it will end up with flashes of turquoise and egg-yolk yellow! I've learned not to fight it.

Born in England, **Giles Panting** emigrated to New Zealand in 2006. Working full-time in education (as principal of a primary school and currently as manager, Professional Learning and Development, for the Ministry of Education), I seek to maintain a healthy work–life balance through my practice as an artist working primarily in textiles.

I George Young, "The Cremation of Frida Kahlo," *The Pharos* (summer 2007), <https://alphaomegaalpha.org/pharos/AOA-ThePharos-Summer2007.pdf>.

## A COMMON THREAD SYMPOSIUM 27-29 SEPTEMBER 2019

Stella Lange

In September 2019, the annual symposium of the Costume and Textiles Association of New Zealand was hosted by The Suter Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū in Nelson. The Costume and Textiles Association's yearly symposium draws a varied audience, ranging from those in various academic fields, historians and dress researchers to practitioners speaking of their own practice and work. These academics, artisans, artists, craftspeople and activists are drawn to present their work to each other and an enthusiastic audience – all connected by a deep passion for textiles and their use.



Figure 1. Suter Gallery, Nelson.

The theme of the 2019 symposium, "A Common Thread," was drawn from the dictionary:

Common (adjective) – usual; ordinary; widespread; familiar; frequent; easily obtained, not rare; shared by, coming from, or done by two or more people, groups, or things; of the most familiar type; belonging to or involving the whole of a community or the public at large.

This theme accurately captured the space, place and prominence that clothing and textiles play in our everyday lives, as well as on special occasions and to mark notable events. To quote April Calahan and Cassidy Zachary, the hosts of the Dressed Podcast, "With over 7 billion people in the world, we all have one thing in common. Every day we all get dressed." This year's symposium continued to deliver high-quality, interesting and personal stories about the relationships humans have with their clothing and textiles.

This review presents a snapshot of the wide range of presenters and equally diverse offering of papers at the 2019 symposium. The offerings spanned historical, contemporary, local, national and international aspects of costume and textiles. Four of the presentations are summarised in this short review – a difficult selection from such a culturally rich symposium. The four chosen represent the diversity common to all the CTANZ symposia and showcase the community engagement that characterises this organisation. Museum curators discussed emerging approaches to integrating digital printing into conservation and curation; local weavers shared stories telling how, as refugees from political oppression, they were fusing their traditional textile practices with electronics to create arts-based community installations; New Zealand historians revealed the ways in which the textile trade has layered over time along one of New Zealand's most iconic roads; and the histories and local knowledge embedded in contemporary Māori textile practices were revealed.



Figure 2. Karangahape Road: Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, I-W1307; George Court, Karangahape Road, (Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections AWNS-19141217-60-1); Flackson Limited, Afternoon Dress, circa 1925, Collection of Auckland Museum, T666.

In “Clothes on the Road, a Textile Reading of Karangahape Road,” Jane Groufsky spoke of a unique and important space in the collective history of New Zealand dress. Karangahape Road, or K-Road as it is more commonly called, was revealed as a unique space in the costume and fashion landscape of New Zealand. Groufsky presented an academic site analysis together with a nostalgic slideshow. Key players in Auckland’s K-Road history were highlighted, from the 1920s department store Flacksons through to contemporary residents like the weaver Christopher Duncan of TūR. Groufsky, the Project Curator History at Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira, revealed a side of New Zealand costume history that is significant and timely, given the ongoing redevelopment of Auckland’s central spaces.

Kate Douglas and Ellen Doyle, both conservators at the National Gallery of Victoria, discussed the display of eighteenth-century women’s costume in their aptly named research paper, “I Don’t Have the Stomacher for it.” The sophisticated museum curation and conservation practices followed at NGV were highlighted in this presentation. The presenters’ research enabled the development of a digitally recreated stomacher for an eighteenth-century woman’s dress that was missing that particular section. Women’s dresses of the 1700s required a separate front panel, known as a stomacher; that was stiffened and used to fill in the centre front portion of the bodice – without this section the dress couldn’t be displayed. Douglas and Doyle outlined their use of digital tools, technical collaborations and innovative methodologies in the design and production of a replica to replace and simulate the missing piece. The challenges relating to both applied practice and the curatorial ethics of recreating missing or fragile textiles as part of museum practice were openly discussed. The role of digitally created replicas in museum spaces is a new area for curators. Should replica textiles be “aged to match” or appear “as when they were new?” Do replicas need to be clearly identified or be presented as unobtrusively as possible? These were some of the many ethical questions the presenters discussed with the audience.



Figure 3. A digitally recreated stomacher for an eighteenth-century dress in the National Gallery of Victoria and detail.

Chantelle Gerrard's talk opened a window on the hidden-in-plain-sight world of costuming for the the Pop-up Globe in Auckland. The insights she gave into her own research and practice revealed clear advantages for both costumer and actor in using traditional materials like linen and wool on the Shakespearian stage, instead of more modern fabrics and fabrications. Gerrard's hand-stitched costumes, cut using historically authentic patterns, were more comfortable and easier to maintain than synthetics for the frantic wardrobe department at the Pop-up Globe. Gerrard's research, visiting and collecting in England informed even the maintenance practices of the Pop-up Globe, where costumes were aired, brushed and even cleaned with vodka. These traditional methods proved surprisingly eco-friendly and low allergenic, and were preferred by cast and crew alike. The very real challenges of working with a tiny budget, the requirements of fast-paced theatre and of engaging and training a community of helpers were made clear in her talk – alongside her enthusiasm for her work. As wardrobe supervisor for over 60 productions, Gerrard shared information gleaned from her ongoing research trips to Europe to gather first-hand insights into Shakespearean-era garments and their construction and her practice as wardrobe manager for the Pop-up Globe.



Figure 4. Volunteers sewing LEDs on banners for a digital light installation at the Camplight project.




Figure 5. A music event at the Camplight installation, with banners surrounding.

Mu Bar, John-Paul Pochin and Dr Kay Sneddon shared their story with an attentive audience, providing insights on the 2016 Camplight project (a Light Nelson event). Mu Bar, a weaver of traditional *tung* (colourful Thai banners), spoke of her journey from Myanmar to living as a refugee in a Chinese-managed camp at Mae Hong Son in Thailand for two decades, and finally of coming to New Zealand. Throughout this time Mu Bar worked as a weaver, and in New Zealand she has set up a weaving collective with others from Myanmar. In the Camplight project, Mu Bar and other Kayan women weavers collaborated with John-Paul, a digital artist, and Dr Kay Sneddon to create a digital light installation designed to facilitate a cultural bridge between Kiwis and former refugees. Weaving, light projections and music combined in a month-long installation as part of Light Nelson, and provided a community space. Mu Bar spoke of the different roles that her weaving has played throughout her life, from household income to refugee tourism showcase in Mae Hong Son, to living as an independent artisan in New Zealand.

Hamuera Robb generously shared his knowledge of Māori kākahu weaving practices with his audience. His focus was on the practices used to create traditional kākahu (garments), with emphasis on the tools used and the use of local materials. The Māori science of making black dye and of using paru (iron-rich mud) in woven items was outlined. One concern he highlighted was the use of locally sourced paru, which provides a deep, intense colour, but also damages fibres. Being rich in iron, paru reacts with natural tannins and eventually degrades korowai. Using paru has implications in terms of design, longevity and curation. Robb's practice as a contemporary Māori weaver and historical researcher has enabled him to develop practices that make use of local paru in ways that are more stable than in the past. The requirements for storing and handling paru-dyed kākahu were discussed in light of kākahu's status as taonga in textile collections. Robb has a background as a traditional weaver and scholar. His Masters degree in Indigenous Knowledge /He Waka Hīringa from Te Wānanga o Aotearoa was granted for his research on cloaks collected in the 1820s.

With over 23 separate presentations over three days, this review can only hint at the informed and interesting range of papers offered. Many of them will be published in *Context: dress/fashion/textiles*, the CTANZ journal. The Suter Gallery Te Aratoi o Whakatū provided a fantastic space for delegates, as well as several exhibitions. Local symposium organisers Andrea Barnard, Paula Haines-Bellamy, Jo Kinross, Moya Montgomery, Karen Richards and Pam Saunders provided an event that Bishop Suter, who established the gallery in 1900 as a "picture gallery for the people of Nelson," would have been proud of. In contemporary terms, Bishop Suter envisaged a space where creative activity would be available to all.

Post Covid-19, the 2020 Costume and Textiles symposium has been rescheduled for April 2021, and will be hosted by Auckland University of Technology. The theme will explore the concept of "Vision" in costume, fashion and textiles.

**Stella Lange** ( ORCID No 0000-0002-3676-4331) is a Principal Lecturer at the School of Design, Otago Polytechnic, and is co-chair of the Costume and Textiles Association of New Zealand. Her research field is the history of domestic textile repair and its use in education. She also maintains an applied practice in hand knitting, weaving and design. These various interests fit under an umbrella of sustainable practices, encouraging the responsible use and management of domestic textiles.

## THE SUN'S TRACE IN THE ARCTIC ... A PINHOLE CAMERA'S DIARY

Udo Prinsen

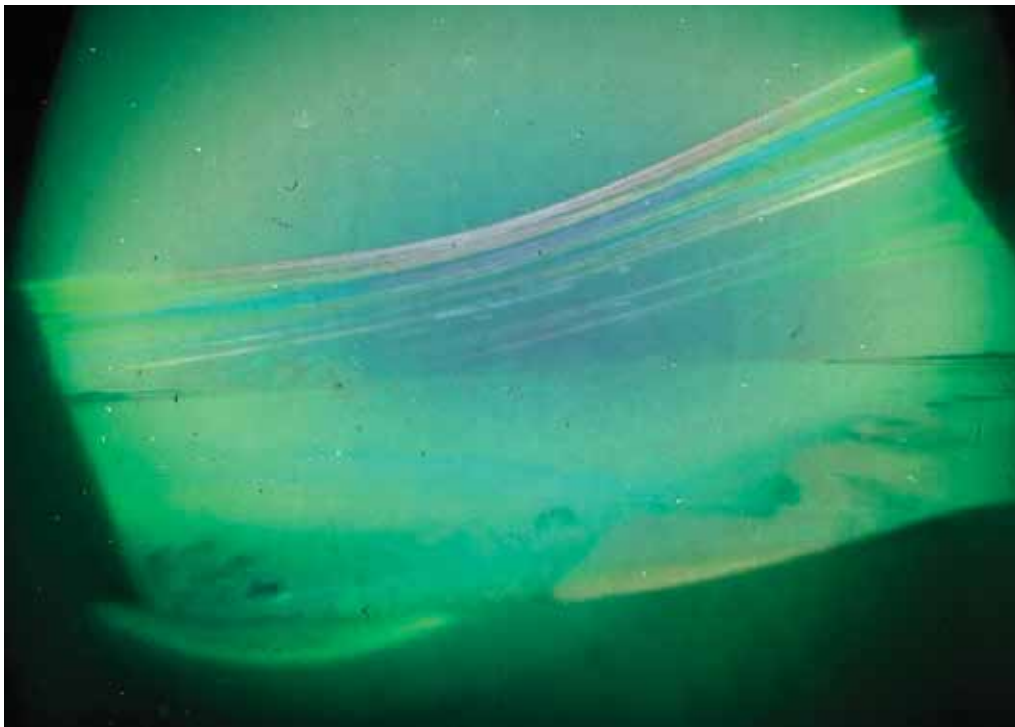


Figure 1. Solar trace on pinhole camera.

Created at the Polish Polar Station Hornsund in collaboration with Piotr Zagórski.

Location 77°00'04.8"N 15°32'36.2"E • Exposure time est. 140 days.

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This is the 42nd time I have seen the sun pass my eye since they put me here. It's hard not to lose count. On the other hand, I have a lot of time to keep my memory sharp.

It's warm at the moment, but it's so incredibly bright I can hardly see at all looking straight into the sun. The burning sensation of what she does to the paper inside me is not exactly a pretty feeling. I prefer feeling that warmth on my back later on in the day, or should I say earlier: I don't really know when the day starts here – it's always light. Luckily, there are days when clouds hide the brightness and I can get a little bit of rest, but these moments are rare here in this strange, deserted place.





Figure 2. Created by Maarten Loonen at Ny-Ålesund, Spitsbergen, using movement cameras.



Figure 3. Created by Maarten Loonen at Ny-Ålesund, Spitsbergen, using movement cameras.

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Not that I am lonely. There are more like me in the area – I can see two from here, but they are far away and facing in opposite directions. I wonder what they see behind me. It must be a house, or houses, or some construction at least, because there are people living there. I can hear them daily. Not regular people, it's not a town. Just a few. And the same ones, too. I hear the same voices all the time. It feels very remote and they talk of science.



Figure 4. Created by Maarten Loonen at Ny-Ålesund, Spitsbergen, using movement cameras.



Figure 5. Created by Maarten Loonen at Ny-Ålesund, Spitsbergen, using movement cameras.

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Every now and then I can see activity, too. People in bulky clothing and safety suits are loading equipment and guns into a small boat and take off. I can hear the engine fading away as they drive out of the fjord towards a glacier in the distance. I can't see where they are going, but I pick up conversations when they are nearby.



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I have seen what protection they need the guns for. It was a big white bear. He was far away at first, but quickly came very close. It touched me and I could smell his breath as he tried to get his teeth around my sides. A wet warm tongue and nose tasting and smelling, but quickly losing interest. There is no food inside me for him, that's obvious.

The people have taped me firm to the post I am attached to, and I don't think I have moved from my position at all. That will keep the people happy as they specifically said, "Now, don't move for 5 months!" Then they opened my eye and the light poured in.

When the temperature is rising they often speak of abnormalities. The sound of their voices and the subjects of their conversation are worrying. Apparently, the glacier I can vaguely see in the distance is quickly retreating. It's calving ice a lot more than last year. You can hear the cracking of the ice letting go and the thundering sounds when it hits the water. When this happens, jokes circulate that the Dutch will need higher dikes again. I believe that actually concerns my home country. Everything happening here is connected to the entire globe they discuss. And everything happening in the world is of great effect, measurable here in the far, cold north. Well, where it is supposed to be cold – yesterday it was 17 degrees Celsius, I heard. It felt like an oven to me.



Figure 6. Created by Maarten Loonen at Ny-Ålesund, Spitsbergen, using movement cameras.



Figure 7. Created by Maarten Loonen at Ny-Ålesund, Spitsbergen, using movement cameras.

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I have had other company. The geese and the reindeer are cool and quietly waggle about their business, grazing, but the Arctic terns are a different story. In the last few weeks the young have hatched and need to be fed. I am surrounded by the constant screams of parents flying to find little fish. People are trying to count their eggs and young. Parent birds get very frantic and start pecking the heads and hats of the intruders with their sharp beaks. The people arm themselves with sticks and wave ski poles in the air to deter the terns. The high pitch and clamour of the terns is incredible.



Figure 8. Created by Maarten Loonen at Ny-Ålesund, Spitsbergen, using movement cameras.

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The young are quickly getting bigger and a few have used me as an outpost, jostling on top of me for the best position, and the one who wins sits there all day long waiting for the fish to arrive. As a result, I am getting covered with Arctic guano and my eye is often not giving me the sharp vision it is supposed to. Luckily, every now and then one of the humans passes by and wipes my face. That helps, but the smell is omnipresent. The young are getting fatter and are flapping their wings more, so I expect they will leave soon. About time.

A helicopter landed right in front of me, jumpstarting a wonderful cascade of strange entertainment. People ran towards the machine, shaking hands happily, looking inside and asking for their stuff. Boxes and crates were offloaded and other boxes were placed back into the hatch. Then a surprising person stepped from the helicopter. A priest in purple robes. The whole crowd followed him to a place further down the road, out of my sight, and they held a church meeting. Possibly the only church meeting where rifles are welcome.

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Something sad happened the other day. Two people left and did not report back for a while. The people at the station were very worried and set off in a search party. Unfortunately, the two had been in a terrible avalanche accident and did not survive.



Figure 9. Created by Maarten Loonen at Ny-Ålesund, Spitsbergen, using movement cameras.

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I hear footsteps. Someone is coming closer: He's on his knees in front of me – this moment is for me. I can sense it. He's holding black tape. I know what that means. Total black now. That will be the end of my time out here enjoying this landscape. It's been a long while and I have been bored, but knowing I will be leaving makes me emotional. At least I know I will be going places again.

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It feels like I am being carried around the area. The others must have been taken away, too. I can feel them touching me as we swing around in a bag. The sounds of the outside fade at the closing of a door and it definitely feels like we are indoors now. I hear people talking – whether we are shipped right away or do we go with the container on the ship? We are stuffed together into the same small box we came in. The lid is being closed, sounds are muffled. Too bad. All these days out in the open, now back in darkness.

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We've been in this box for some time now. Every now and then we move, but I have no idea where to. It seems like we are travelling all over the place. I have heard English, Norwegian, Polish and now Icelandic around me. I wonder what is happening. Another time, this part of the journey did not take more than a week or so, but this time it has been two months and we are just lying here in what I understand to be Reykjavik. Something has gone wrong.



Figure 10. Personal images by Udo Prinsen.

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We're traveling again! I hear Dutch voices now. This means I am getting closer to my home place. I am almost back. There's a familiar voice. I remember him from when we were shipped out. He seems incredibly happy to see us.

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I end up in a studio full of orange light. We're being inspected. Soon the tape holding me together will be removed and the paper inside taken from me. Too bad I will never see the resulting image on the paper myself, but that's the nature of the job. I have seen it long enough to remember.

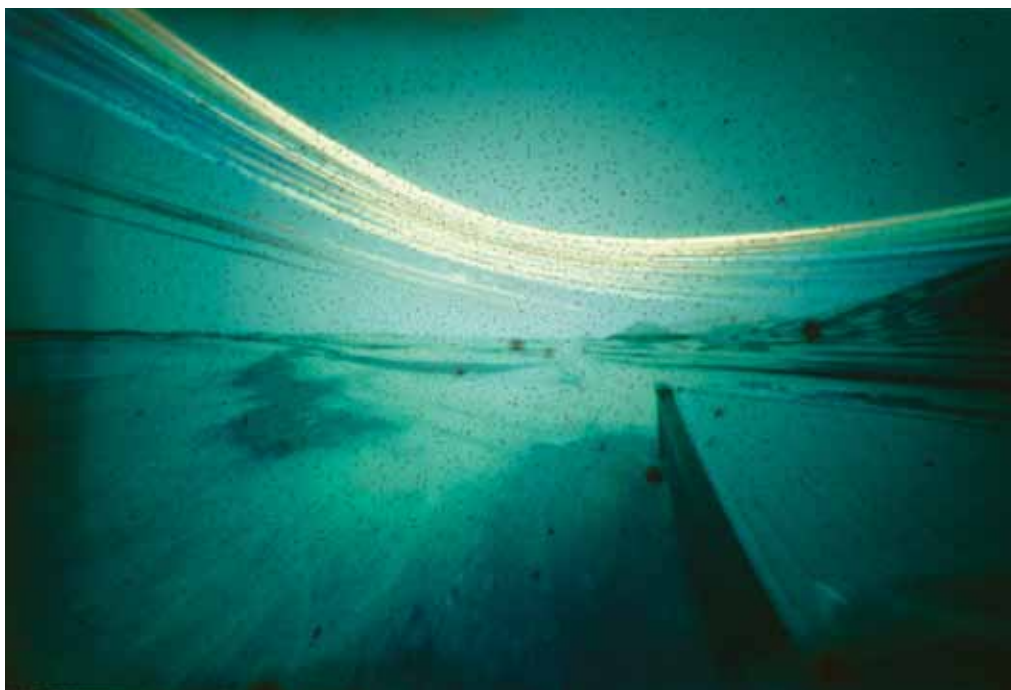


Figure 11. Solar trace on pinhole camera.  
Created at the Polish Polar Station Hornsund in collaboration with Piotr Zagórski.  
Location 77°00'04.8"N 15°32'36.2"E • Exposure time est. 140 days.

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My back is refilled with new paper and closed. I can hear a pen writing on my back before another long journey begins. I wonder what location will be next.

Here we go.



Figure 12. Solar trace on pinhole camera.  
Created at the Polish Polar Station Hornsund in collaboration with Piotr Zagórski.  
Location 77°00'04.8"N 15°32'36.2"E • Exposure time est. 140 days.



Figure 13. Solar trace on pinhole camera.  
Created at Kevo SubArctic Station in collaboration with  
Otso Suominen and Ilkka Syvänpää.  
Location 69°45'22.5"N 27°00'22.4"E  
• Exposure time 48 days.



Figure 14. Solar trace on pinhole camera.  
Created at RIF Station (the Nest), Raufarhöfn, Iceland, in  
collaboration with Hrónn Guðmundsdóttir, Jónína Sigríður,  
Pétur Magnússon, Guðmundur Örn Benediktsson.  
Location 66°27'20.2"N 15°57'03.9"W  
• Exposure time 126 days.



Figure 15. Solar trace on pinhole camera.  
Created at Zackenberg Station, Greenland, in collaboration with Lisa Bröder and Julien Fouche.  
Location 74°28'32.3"N 20°34'04.6"W • Exposure time 13 days.

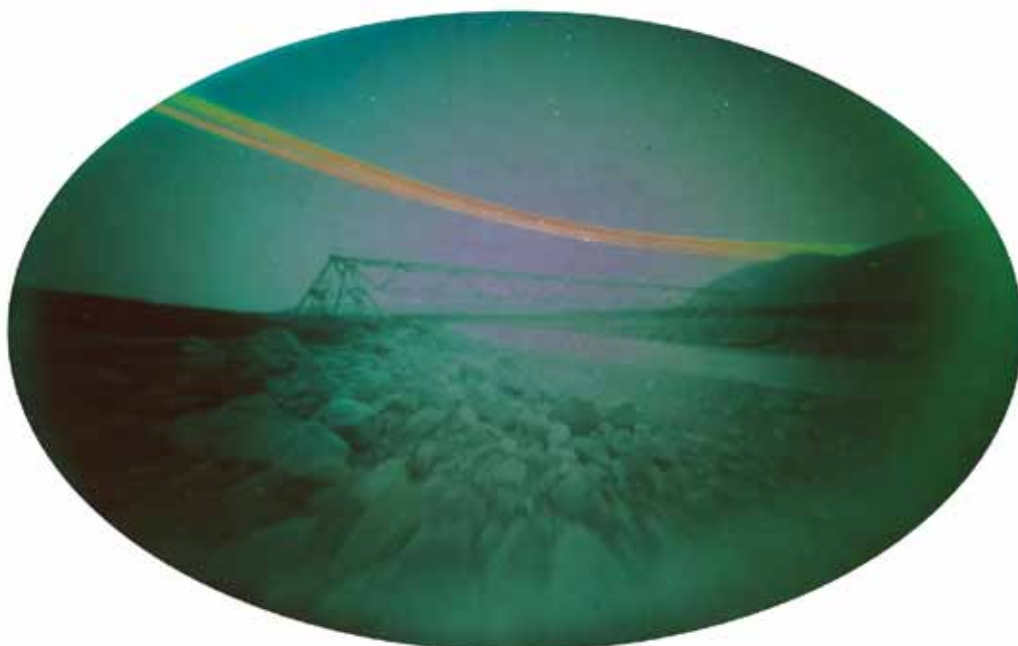


Figure 16. Solar trace on pinhole camera.  
Created at Zackenberg Station, Greenland, in collaboration with Lisa Bröder and Julien Fouche.  
Location 74°28'32.3"N 20°34'04.6"W • Exposure time 13 days.





Figure 17. Solar trace on pinhole camera.  
Created at RIF Weather Station, Raufarhöfn, Iceland, in  
collaboration with Hrönn Guðmundsdóttir, Jónína Sigríður,  
Pétur Magnússon, Guðmundur Örn Benediktsson.  
Location  $66^{\circ}30'39.7''\text{N}$   $16^{\circ}08'27.8''\text{W}$   
• Exposure time 16 days.

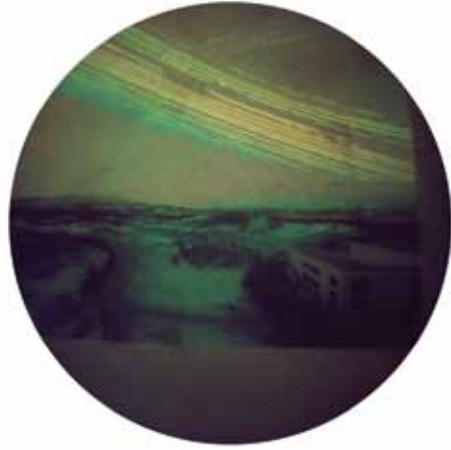


Figure 18. Solar trace on pinhole camera.  
Created at the IASC Head Office, Akureyri, Iceland, in  
collaboration with Allan Pope and Ingeborg Klarenberg  
Location  $65^{\circ}41'05.5''\text{N}$   $18^{\circ}07'13.4''\text{W}$   
• Exposure time 97 days.



Figure 19. Solar trace on pinhole camera.  
Created at the Finnish Meteorological Institute, Sodankylä, Finland in collaboration with  
Leena Leppänen, Timo Ryppö and Timo Sukuvaara.  
Location  $67^{\circ}22'01.2''\text{N}$   $26^{\circ}38'09.6''\text{E}$  • Exposure time 88 days.



Figure 20. Solar trace on pinhole camera.

Created at Cherskii Station, Siberia, Russia, in collaboration with Kirsi Kesskitalo and Nikita Zimov.  
Location 68°44'23.4"N 161°24'01.9"E • Exposure time 20 hours.

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In 2019 visual artist Udo Prinsen directed a global photography project in collaboration with more than 25 Arctic scientists. Together they created images in which the architecture of Arctic research stations is combined with the sun's track through the sky. Some cameras had an exposure time of five months, capturing the entire summer of 2019 in a single image.

In writing this short story, Udo used the experience of working with the Polish Arctic Station in the Hornsund region of Spitsbergen. He would like to thank Piotr Zagórski, Mateusz Piotrowski, Kacper Wojtysiak and their team for their assistance on and off location.

The fixed cameras used in this location were in place far longer than any others used by the Polish Arctic Station and were on location for the entire summer season of 2019. It took the camera box a long time to make the journey back to Poland – and then it was mistakenly sent back to the Arctic and ended up in a Reykjavik postal depot over Christmas and New Year.

The author's Arctic experience and the stories of other scientists on other locations inspired this short prose piece. The accompanying photographs were not all taken at a single location. All the images created are filed under the project name, Touch Base, Arctic Solargraphy, and will eventually be shared on the artist's website at [www.udoprinsen.com/touch-base](http://www.udoprinsen.com/touch-base). All locations, projects and scientists involved are acknowledged there as well.

The project has also led to the creation of a photo object, "Save Our Souls," an S.O.S. morse code signal consisting of nine long-exposure images created at Arctic field research stations around the world.



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**Udo Prinsen** is a director and visual artist with a background in traditional drawn animation film. In addition, he has developed himself as a photographer using long exposure techniques, and as a conceptual artist. Udo works across disciplines with like minded collaborators with a focus on nature, culture, science and music.

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## Contact & links

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