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Cover: Juliet Carpenter *The Sun Is Not To Be Believed* (still) 2022/23. HD video with MSP patch; duration 23 mins 19 secs. Courtesy of the artist

Left: Madison Kelly *Tohu! Karaka! Braid!* (detail) 2023. Fishing netting, oil pencil. Courtesy of the artist

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**THE MEASURE OF
RETIREMENT LIVING**

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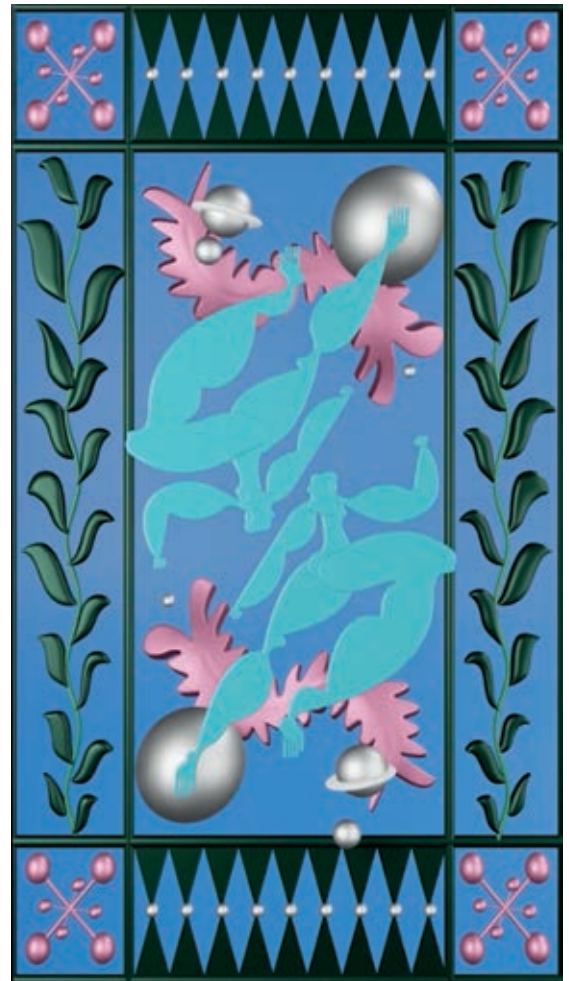
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Director's Foreword

BLAIR JACKSON

November 2023

Welcome to a very special edition of *Bulletin*. This issue is something of a change for us: the first full 'takeover' by one exhibition. *Spring Time is Heart-break: Contemporary Art in Aotearoa* is our major show for the summer season. It occupies the entire ground floor of the Gallery and offers a snapshot of contemporary practice across Aotearoa, so it is wide in scope and rich with a breadth of materials. As I write this, it's exciting to think that artists are working hard in studios across the motu, producing new works for the exhibition. In some cases, we know exactly what their works will look like; in others, they're still taking shape. That's an exciting position to be in, both as an institution and for me personally. Throughout my time as director at Te Puna o Waiwhetū, I have often talked about my desire for this gallery to be a catalyst for the creation of new work in Ōtautahi and beyond. Supporting artists to do what they do best is a key part of our kaupapa, and this exhibition is a great example of that principle in action.

Throughout the exhibition storytelling emerges as a strong theme, as the artists ask us to share meaningful experiences that relate to the current moment and the challenges we face. All the contributors to this issue of *Bulletin* have been selected to speak to some of these wider ideas, thinking about how we communicate with each other—through sound and language—and also moments where this communication might fail.

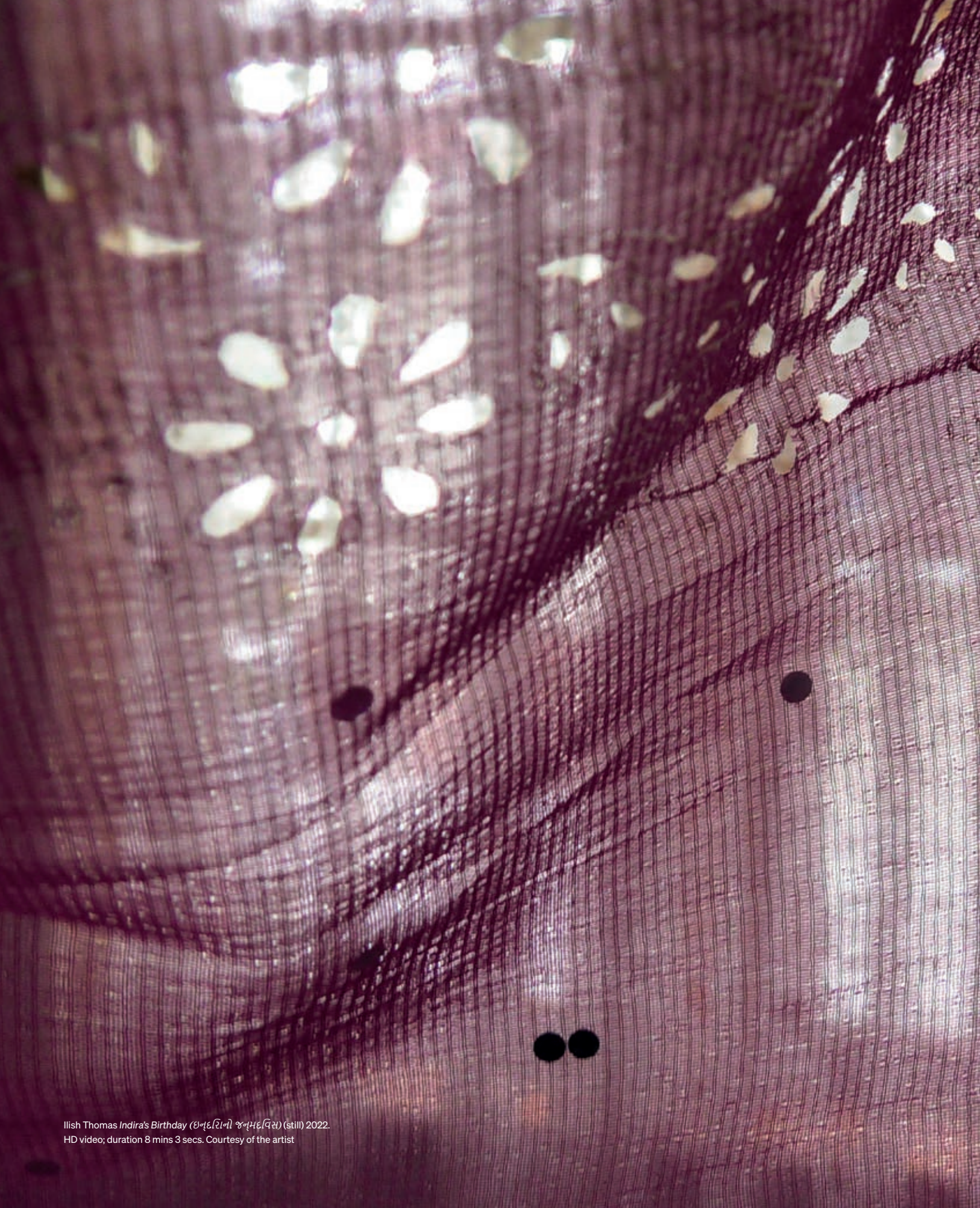
This *Bulletin* is also the first to have been produced with a guest editor. Jane Wallace is the Gallery's curatorial assistant, working with us in an internship supported by Creative New Zealand. Together with curator Melanie Oliver, Jane has helped to develop *Spring Time is Heart-break* and this accompanying issue. She has brought together a lively mix of writers and artists to delve into the exhibition from a range of different angles.

Local writer Isla Huia (Te Āti Haunui a-Pāpārangi, Uenuku) has contributed a poetic essay that explores the whakapapa of language and her relationship to te reo Māori. Huni Mancini, a writer and archivist at the Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound looks at some of the collection items she works with that enliven songs and cultural practices from around the Pacific. Tracing a reunion with someone else, Anna Rankin uses broken or distorted signals as a recurring motif—static becoming a symbol of missed connections.


Our My Favourite comes from artist Sorawit Songsataya, who has researched the Gallery's collection of snuff bottles for their new work in *Spring Time* and written about it in 'If Objects Could Walk'. This bumper issue also comes replete with two pageworks, both by artists represented in the exhibition. Megan Brady (Kāi Tahu, Ngāi Tūāhuriri, Pākehā) has developed *Kei Raro*, showing the underside of the beautiful carpet she will install under our stairwell, and Sam Norton uses the process of collage for *Eat, Prey, Love*. To round it all off nicely, and to assist with your holiday activity needs, we've got a special list of summer recommendations, contributed by the artists in *Spring Time*, and a cryptic crossword themed around the exhibition and the art world—good luck!



Sorawit Songstaya *Unnamed Makers*
2023. Two-channel 4K video; duration
11 mins 37 secs. Courtesy of the artist



Ilish Thomas *Indira's Birthday* (ઇન્દિરાની જન્મદિવસ) (still) 2022.
HD video; duration 8 mins 3 secs. Courtesy of the artist



*Spring Time is
Heart-break:
Contemporary
Art in Aotearoa*

Melanie Oliver

*The loved little bird is
singing his small song,
Dearest, and whether
the trill of the riro
Reminded, we wondered,
of joy or of sorrow -
Now I am taught it
is tears, it is tears that to
spring time belong.*

*October 1935,
Ursula Bethell*



Sriwhana Spong *Badlands* (still) 2023. 16mm film transferred to HD video.
 Courtesy of the artist and Michael Lett, Auckland

Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū's new exhibition *Spring Time is Heart-break: Contemporary Art in Aotearoa* takes its title from one of six poems written as memorials by Ursula Bethell after the death of her partner Effie Pollen. The couple's relationship mirrored the seasonal changes in the garden they tended together during the decade that Bethell was writing poetry on Ngā Kohatu Whakarakaraka o Tamatea Pōkai Whenua, the Port Hills overlooking Ōtautahi Christchurch. For the poet, signs of spring became a bittersweet reminder of her lost love. Reading Bethell's work today, her evocation of intense feelings and embeddedness with the land not only reflects the ethos of our present time, but also resonates with many of the works in the exhibition. Bethell claims that we are kin with the environment, foreshadowing ideas of human/non-human interconnectedness and echoing tangata whenua understandings of whakapapa to the whenua. Artist Aliyah Winter brought Bethell to our atten-

tion while she was conducting research for a new work; our choice of title was made to encompass seasons, temporality and emotion, as might be applied to contemporary practice in Aotearoa.

The twenty-four artists that we have included in *Spring Time is Heart-break* each have their own concerns and methodologies, yet gathered together they provide us with a snapshot of our current moment and the issues we face. There are tender stories relating to personal and collective histories; reflections on communication, correspondence and archives; observations of everydayness; perspectives that situate us with the sun, water, birds and land of Aotearoa; as well as journeys of translation from one place to another, across materials, times and languages. There is a return to storytelling, shared through the materiality, marks, sound and texture of the works, and the deliberate use of embodied knowledge and affect.

Grounding us in Waitaha, Te Waipounamu, Megan Brady (Kāi Tahu, Ngāi Tūāhuriri, Pākehā) has made a series of carpets, *Entangled and turning, we are river*, that materialise the flow of whakapapa, rivers and stories through topographical mapping of the braided rivers that are characteristic of this rohe. Having recently reconnected with her personal affiliations to Ngāi Tūāhuriri and the Rakahuri awa, Brady creates a space to contemplate our relationships with rivers and how these might define or reflect our identity.

Sound is used as a material across many works in the exhibition. Steven Junil Park and John Harris have developed a large amplifier that visitors can sit within; Abigail Aroha Jensen (Ngāti Porou, Ngāi Tāmanuhiri) considers the absence of sound as sound itself and the oro (sound) created within the rhythm of rope making. The sensory nature of sound carries us to emotional narrative content and cultural references, an undercurrent that runs through both the exhibition and contemporary practice today.

Ecological kinship and Kāitahutaka are at the heart of Madison Kelly's (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe, Pākehā) practice. For *Tohu! Karaka! Braid!* Kelly plays field recordings of captive-bred kakī (black stilt) chicks being introduced to wild birds in their wetland habitat as part of the Mackenzie Basin's Kakī Recovery Programme. The birds' calls sound from behind a large mesh drawing, and Kelly invites us to respond to them with a percussive glass sculpture, using sound and interactivity to reinforce that our voice and participation are required if we are to care for taoka species and the environment.

Call and response as both a form of communication and way of locating ourselves can also be seen in the work of Luke Shaw. Learning that his grandparents communicated using small offcuts of steel and a mirror, flashing Morse code signals between their home in Aranui and Te Heru-o-Kahukura Sugarloaf hill when his grandfather was working on the radio transmission tower in the 1960s, Shaw had an analogue reverb plate constructed from steel. Into this he plays his version of the story, translated into Morse code and then treated as a musical composition (words as notes, tempo elongated into sustained drones) enabling an estimation of the familial anecdote to reverberate in the space. *SUN TURN (Sugarloaf towards Lyndhurst)* is an echo—distorted, transformed and atmospheric—that opens a portal through time to the sweet nothings the couple likely exchanged; an act of listening in on the past.

Private languages and histories continue in the work of Aliyah Winter, who drew inspiration from Bethell's poem *Weathered Rocks* (1936) for her infrared video work

“The sensory nature of sound carries us to emotional narrative content and cultural references, an undercurrent that runs through both the exhibition and contemporary practice today.”



Priscilla Rose Howe *Different versions, different bodies, different words* 2023. Flashe, acrylic and oil pastel on canvas. Courtesy of the artist and Jhana Millers Gallery, Wellington



Anoushka Akel *Clock* 2023. Charcoal, acrylic and oil on canvas.
Courtesy of the artist and Michael Lett, Auckland. Image courtesy
of Sam Hartnett

Rock, thorn, cryptogram. A cryptogram is a puzzle, a way of making something visible only for those who can decipher the code. A *cryptogam*, however, is a plant or organism that reproduces by spores, without flowers or seeds. It has been pointed out that perhaps “Rock, thorn, cryptogam” is a more fitting combination as cryptogam is more relevant to both rock and thorn.¹ Bethell was subtle about her sexuality and, read in conjunction with her poems, this sort of wordplay allows us to draw our own conclusions about her relationship with Pollen and queer history. Using a limited part of the electromagnetic spectrum, Winter has filmed herself in a volcanic landscape to expand on multilayered narratives for body and land.

Several other works in the exhibition take personal correspondence, letters and archives as a point of departure. The basis for Ilish Thomas’s video *NAMASKAR & Merry Xmas* is a letter from her grandfather, Raman Chhiba, recording his wishes for the family, which slowly scrolls upwards as it is read aloud by the artist’s mother. While the letter details financial matters and the distribution of property, it is incredibly moving and creates an intergenerational family portrait of South Asian diaspora. Alongside this, a second video, *Indira’s Birthday* (ඉන්දිරාගේ ඉන්දිරාගේ), captures Thomas’s mother putting on a sari for her birthday celebration. Textiles are an ongoing aspect of the artist’s practice and, in addition to the fabric in the video, Thomas divides the gallery space using a domestic lace curtain. The etymology of the term textile is related to both texture and to text, and identifies a fundamental relationship of the textile to language:

*The plural of the Text depends ... not on the ambiguity of its contents but on what might be called the stereographic plurality of its weave of signifiers (etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric) ... woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages (what language is not?), antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony.*²

Thomas brings text and textile to the fore, highlighting how families and stories are woven together, like threads knitted to form the structure of a cloth that is then wrapped around the body.

The long history of using ‘unmeasured ribbons’ for ritual magic in the South of Italy underpins a new 16mm film from Sriwhana Spong. While on a research residency in Siena, Italy, Spong became interested in the writings of anthropologist and philosopher Ernesto de Martino (1908–1965), in

particular his book on Italian tarantism, *The Land of Remorse* (1961). In the ritual of the tarantella, the resolution of a personal crisis occurs through colour, music and dance. Spong’s evocative work treats film as a medium through which choreography, sound and colour might produce a somatic effect in the viewer.

The paintings of Anoushka Akel similarly employ a specific reference from Italy—the drawing *Asdrubale Bitten by a Crawfish* (c. 1554) by Renaissance artist Sofonisba Anguissola. This work is known for the depth of emotion that Anguissola was able to achieve, and the way that it inspired Baroque painter Caravaggio. Akel is interested in gestures that can be used to convey affect for her new body of work *Click Hiss Rasp Howl*, as well as the interrelationship of species. Her title lists the vocabulary of sounds that kōura, freshwater crayfish, use to communicate with each other; kōura are uniquely blue in Te Waipounamu, a particular hue that recurs in Akel’s work. Awash with marks and tones that hint at recognisable forms, the works remain exquisitely fluid and full of abstracted texture.

“Spong’s evocative work treats film as a medium through which choreography, sound and colour might produce a somatic effect in the viewer.”

Emerita Baik *Towards the Sun* / 2023. Fabric, batting, acrylic paint.
Courtesy of the artist and Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington

For *Wai Ata Āta Whāia*, Heidi Brickell (Te Hika o Papauma, Rangitāne, Ngāi Tara, Ngāti Kahungunu, Rongomaiwahine, Ngāti Apakura, Airihi, Kōtarani, Tiamana, Ingarihi) collected rimurapa (bull kelp) that had washed ashore, working with the organic shapes of the seaweed to create elegant coils. They spiral from rākau (wood) wound with dyed cotton twine, a deconstructed form of painting or drawing in space. Through this process of connecting with the moana, Brickell acknowledges Tangaroa, the atua of the sea, lakes, rivers and all the creatures which live in them, and who is also gifted with the art of carving. In looking to the moana, Brickell is also thinking about the waves, weather, our relationships to water, and the internal feelings that echo and respond to the environment. She writes:

My practice, through materials, through relationships and through the reo, is a wānanga that pursues vital indigeneity, exploring roots and journeys, and letting seeds from those journeys flourish within the soil, or the ocean, of the hinengaro. The intimacy with this whenua reflected in our language and stories builds on thousands of years of living on the ocean, and I'm particularly interested in how its qualities and the technologies used to exist with it, now inform the reo we have to express ngā kare ā-roto, or, our emotional experiences of the world around us.³

While many of the artists have incorporated historical references, there are meditations on the present moment and everyday life too. Angel C. Fitzgerald presents a video based essentially around friendship, a beautiful compilation of moments from life edited to a score. In *Nowhere*, Campbell Patterson has compiled a series of self-help suggestions handwritten on masking tape: from taking vitamins and paracetamol to eating vegetables, not biting fingernails and checking the mailbox. There is an underlying anxiety, or vulnerability, in these notes, as well as humour.

The selection of works I have described gives a sense of the tenderness that is present throughout the exhibition, the recurring moments of feeling, emotion and affect. Though *Spring Time is Heart-break* may at first seem to dwell in sadness or poignancy, it also invites us to consider cyclical forms, rebirth and the future. As political theorist Brian Massumi claims, affect opens up the potential for hope:

I use the concept of 'affect' as a way of talking about the margin of manoeuvrability, the 'where we might be able to go and what we might be able to do' in every present situation. I guess 'affect' is the word I use for 'hope'. One of the reasons it's such an important concept for me is because it explains why focusing on the next experimental step rather than the big utopian picture isn't really settling for less.⁴

Taking this view towards the affective element of works, Etanah Lalau-Talapā's meditative 3D digital work *Loto fa'afetai, loto fa'atuatua* reinforces the dual emotions of grief and celebration, while Priscilla Rose Howe proposes a vibrant queer vision of the future.

Returning to the garden, in Juliet Carpenter's compelling black and white film *The Sun Is Not To Be Believed*, a shrouded figure digs in the earth of an allotment. Combining references to Maya Deren's avant-garde film *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) and the logic of Samuel Beckett's *Quad*, written in 1981 for four performers who appear to exist in parallel time spaces, Carpenter's work is driven by a computer algorithm that decides the edits and image overlays as the video sequence repeats four times. Each permutation brings in fragments from both the future and the past to create a temporal fissure, casting the sun as an unreliable timekeeper, and our perception as inconsistent.

The sun and weather patterns loom over many works in the exhibition, just as they do in our daily lives, and while not explicitly referencing climate change, artists are addressing atmospheric conditions, the soil, rivers and oceans that are part of us. *Spring Time is Heart-break* asks us to engage in meaningful experiences with each other and the world around us; digging, listening, observing and communicating across time, place and species.

Melanie Oliver Curator

1 Janet Charman, 'My Ursula Bethell', *Women's Studies Journal* 14.2, spring 1998, pp. 91–108, <https://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/misc/charman.asp>.

2 Roland Barthes, 'From Work to Text', 1971, http://www.d.umn.edu/~cstroupe/handouts/8500/barthes_work_to_text.pdf.

3 Correspondence with the artist, 2023.

4 Brian Massumi, *Politics of Affect*, Polity Press: Cambridge, 2015, p. 3.



Watch Your Tongue

Isla Huia



Tia Ranganui *Something Safe/Te Kore*
2022. Digital print on Hahnemühle
photo rag paper. Courtesy of the artist
and Laree Payne Gallery, Hamilton



I te tīmatanga ko te hiahia
Mai i te hiahia ko te mahara
Mai i te mahara ko te whakaaro
Ka puta ko te kupu e.

In the beginning was the desire
From the desire came the remembrance
From the remembrance came the conscious thought
From the conscious thought came the word.

Rangimotuhia Kātene

*Imagine a nation of sleeping tongues.
Imagine them just at the back of the teeth.
Imagine them lolling like dogs in the sun.
Imagine that kind of potential.
Imagine them waking up, all at once.
Imagine what they might have to say for
themselves after all of this time.*

*Imagine it like a dawn chorus. Imagine it like traffic.
Imagine it like harmonising in body language.
Imagine it like a well-oiled machine.
Imagine it like glass worn soft by water.
Imagine holding the tongues in our hands.
Imagine a pōwhiri for the soft flesh.
Imagine the karanga.
Imagine the kōrero.
Imagine making room for the manuhiri in the mouths.
The mouths of babes. The mouths of kui.
Imagine taking the words straight out of their mouths.
And then imagine putting them back in.*

In my world, language is the process by which we've come to terms with everything. There is language in the stars, through which we've told the time; there is language in the soil, through which we've told the truth. My world has been speaking to me in a dialect of dust since the first thing there ever was. The *Oxford Dictionary* would have you believe that language is the principal method of human communication, consisting of words used in a structured and conventional way and conveyed by speech, writing or gesture. If you are a computer, language is a system of symbols and rules for writing programmes or algorithms. If you are Latin, your language is a tongue. If you are Māori you will know that language is a hole, a phantom limb or a supernova. If you are Māori, and you are a supernova, you are just waiting for the beginning, unrealised and embryonic. Mai i te kore, ki te pō, ki te ao mārama. My language is a body of words, swimming. My body is a language of water. My water is taking its own word for it. My own word for it, is reo.

According to Rangimotuhia Kātene, a tohunga hailing from my own tūrangawaewae of the Whanganui river, the whakapapa of words begins with wanting. It began this way in me, too: a bittersweet yearning for the language of my tīpuna, a distant yet familiar taste in the mouth that came when learning to wrap my tongue around this reo for the first time. I don't remember a time when I didn't crave the geometric shapes of those ancient words, or when I didn't recognise myself in the sounds of their line, cut and bite. I knew my language as a process, as a means by which to move, but the first baby steps born from that desire were by no means cut and dried, or easy to walk. The further I walked, however, the more I remembered. I remembered the place from where I came; the same damp, green banks as Kātene, the hips of the river so similar to my own. I remembered to elongate my vowels. I remembered to start with karakia. I remembered my tīpuna, who knew themselves so firmly, so un-halved, so concrete in their land and language. And the more I remembered, the more conscious I became. Here, a language revitalisation book. Here, kitchen windows scattered with yellow post-its. Here, a class full of my babies saying *please whaea*, and me saying, *yes*. Here, a new desire.





*“My language is a body of words,
swimming. My body is a language of water.
My water is taking its own word for it.
My own word for it, is reo.”*

Tia Ranginui *The light in you/Te ao Marama* 2022.
Digital print on Hahnemühle photo rag paper.
Courtesy of the artist and Laree Payne Gallery, Hamilton

My language became the place I came home to, but it was not yet the place I laid my head. Even now, when I wake I brush my teeth in Māori, wash my face in English and then kiss my partner goodbye in a language of our own. I drive while singing in Māori, get petrol in English, walk into work with ‘Māori’ written on my forehead, greet the students in Māori, talk to my boss in English and talk to my hoamahi in Māori about things we don’t want other people to know we’re talking about. My language is comfortable in the kitchen and lonely in the staffroom. In hui I talk smart Pākehā, ‘this-is-my-phone-voice’ Pākehā. *Kia ora whaea*, a million times, in the hallway. My language is a social, native butterfly. It seems that the healthier my reo becomes, the sicker my English. I start asking what youse are doing, my th-ankyous, my f-ankyouz. What I really want is for my mouth to forget the brutality of c, d, z, b and f, and instead fill the sockets of my wisdom teeth with reo so pure it comes from the back of the throat and stays there. *Kia ora whaea*. My language is a desert island—I know how to return to the mainland but I refuse to let my butterfly fly me home to that easy place. My language is the bravest woman I’ll ever be.

If the whakapapa of language began with the desire, then nowadays my desire is for the balance to tip in favour of my mother tongue. Let me have it this way: meetings in Māori, Burger King in Māori, hard conversations in Māori, doctors in Māori, days in Māori. My DNA will hook onto the line of learning, fumbling, then speaking. Let this raranga be strong first, and beautiful second. Let the muka bind together my languages, and then add yours, and then add yours. If language is a place then let it be right here, always. At the end of the whakapapa, at the end of the day, I am still a speaker for the coloniser; I am a speaker for the wounded, I am a speaker for the in-between, I am a speaker for my river, I am a speaker of words unedited in any language, I am a speaker moving through the world with my language tucked down my bra like a parlour trick, a favour. Friend or foe? I only give my language when I trust you not to tarnish it. At a party, I might tell you about the way in which words carry a thousand meanings. I might talk whenua—land and placenta—and we might change tack and share stories of finding afterbirths in ice-cream containers in the freezer. I might talk hapū—subtribe and pregnant—and we might chat up the whakapapa and really truly believe it when we say *it takes a village to raise a child*. I might talk iwi—people and bone—but my language knows when two things cannot exist with each other. And the bones of it is, my people are flocking to the auditoriums to learn our vernacular in their masses. It’s like a country unspinning its web and keeping the silk strung slick.

In my world, the whakapapa of language repeats itself every day. In class, I desire to give each rangatahi all the words they need to tell their own story, loudly. In the car, I remember my tipuna kuia who wasn't scared to be Māori in the butcher's shop. In bed, I am conscious of the way that information has been passed from body to body, from Papatūānuku to Hinētītama to me. In the morning, I release my words with their wings. Two languages, one mouth. I use my big-girl words to introduce myself. For me, it ends with the words it began with. My tipuna have the last say.

E rere kau mai te awa nui nei, mai i te kāhui maunga ki Tangaroa, ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au. The river flows from the mountains to the sea, I am the river, and the river is me.

Isla Huia (Te Āti Haunui a-Pāpārangī, Uenuku) is a reo Māori teacher, writer and musician. Her debut collection of poetry, Talia, was released this year by Dead Bird Books.



Tia Ranginui Mauri // 2019. Digital print on Hahnemühle photo rag paper.
Courtesy of the artist and Laree Payne Gallery, Hamilton



Anoushka Akel *Moral Messaging* 2023. Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the artist and Michael Lett, Auckland. Image courtesy of Sam Hartnett





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Pagework

no.59

The black pathways of this pagework by Megan Brady (Kāi Tahu, Ngāi Tūāhuriri, Pākehā) come together from the unknown, crossing back and forth, moving away and returning. Looking at a braided river from above, you can see similar junctions and divergences. As the water moves it creates new pathways; where the channels join and then part, islands, beaches, banks and plains are formed. These become habitats for birds and plants, as well as sites for gathering kai, for the practice of cultural traditions, for sharing knowledge, for learning and playing.

Megan Brady has just moved to Ōtautahi from Ōtepoti. Her whakapapa has led her here, winding its way up the east coast of Te Waipounamu, across the many braided rivers that flow into Te Tai o Mahaanui: Waitaki, Ōpihi, Rangitata, Hakatere, Rakaia. Across the plains, on the banks of the Rakahuri, in the shade of Maukatere, her tūpuna learned about the maramataka, gathered īnaka, made hīnaki and caught tuna. If each black pathway is a tūpuna or an uri and each intersection a meeting across time, then each space that emerges between them is a relationship, a lesson, a story, a memory, a collaboration, a conversation. In the artist's words, "my tūpuna and I ebb and flow across the landscape we once knew, moved away from, and returned to."

Working across sculpture, installation and sound, Brady often responds to patterns and details in the environment. For *Spring Time is Heart-break*, she is making carpets with wool she has collected or been donated over many years. Using a tufting gun, she draws the dark pathways and coloured islands intuitively, each line or colour informing the next. This pagework is an image of the underside of one of the carpets. Soon, it will be covered with a layer of hessian and latex, but for now, we are offered the chance to imagine what it might be like to watch the motion of a braided river from below.

Chloe Cull
Curator





Capturing the Airs

Huni Mancini

In the archive there is a stillness, an air of silence animated by the low hum of electronics: servers buzzing, computer screens flickering, wires, old analogue equipment.

I load an audio file into a software program with a few clicks of the mouse. Its waveform unfurls on my screen, a horizontal axis of blue lines accentuated by vertical peaks and troughs, rendering the singing breath and its energetic highs and lows. I press play and ambient sounds flood the speakers. The magnetic tape hisses, jumps and crackles as it winds along, the swell of laughter, singing voices, traffic passing by—inflections of a bygone era. I'm transported to the memory of learning mā'ulu'ulu, a Tongan group dance, as a young girl. After church on Sundays, in the middle of winter, we would pack into the cold hall for rehearsal, kept warm by the movement of bodies swaying together.

The boundary of the imagination stretches back and forth like the tide, untethered to concrete reality. There's a fluidity that shapes our remembering; the past touches the present, enfolding us in its soft, close embrace.

Sound is a conduit, a connector of memories, beings, generations. Not unlike the vā—the space between all things—sound is communicative in that it allows us to understand each other. Yet sound is also out of reach, beyond our grasp, because it does not last. When a sound is created it reverberates in the air for a while and, unless it's recorded, it's gone again.

The sound recording does not discriminate; it is universal, and it holds us accountable. It remembers not just important events, but ordinary ones too. Ambient soundscapes are filled with laughter and gossip, children playing, crickets chirping and rain falling. These are the sounds that make up the present moment but are easily forgotten in the reordering of our memories.

Such moments remind me of afternoons spent in my aunt's backyard, hearing the laughter of fanau, the smell of food. The recording transmits knowledge of these moments, drawing them into the present. Like a photograph traces the contours of the face, or a letter traces the movement of the hand, a recording traces the rhythm and flow of the breath. It casts you into the memory of being together, sharing space.

Oceanic peoples have used sound to preserve a record of the past since time immemorial. Oral traditions—story-telling, genealogy, song, dance and countless others—are our methods of recording, arranging and describing the past. They are our 'written documents'. Each composition is interlaced with a wealth of meaning, poetic language and mnemonics, strung together like flowers on a garland. But oral histories are often considered unreliable by scholars who favour the written word. As a result, our voices have been left out, erased and rewritten by the dominant history.

The Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound was established in 1970 to preserve vulnerable heritage from throughout the Pacific. At the time, decolonisation had already begun in Oceania, with a number of Pacific nations achieving independence by transitioning from European colonial rule back to full independence. Yet there was a growing concern that many of the older traditions had already vanished or were undergoing rapid change as a result of increasing urbanisation and Westernisation. It was also a period of great advancement in technology, which gave researchers and communities the ability to record the way oral traditions were being sung, performed, and expressed—"capturing the airs" as Sir Apirana Ngata referred to it.¹

Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound, University of Auckland. Photo: Huni Mancini



Huni dancing the tau'olunga at her uncle's ordination in Suva, Fiji. Courtesy of Huni Mancini



“How might the archive hold these distances alongside the intimacies? How might they be strung together like words in a song, like flowers on a garland, or recordings on a ribbon of magnetic tape?”



The archive dates as far back as 1910, and spans the full range of audio formats from then until now. Each format has its own materiality and characteristics. Digital preservation is the latest iteration in a long line of formats, each one designed to outlive those that came before.

One of our earliest collections is the Dominion Museum Ethnological Expedition wax cylinders, recorded between 1919 and 1923. The expeditions were initiated by Sir Apirana Ngata and Te Rangihīroa (Sir Peter Buck), who had the foresight to use the cutting-edge technology of the time to capture ancestral knowledge that was feared to be fast disappearing. It was the first project of its kind. Recording iwi and hapū around the North Island they captured knowledge of a range of fishing techniques, art forms like weaving, kōwhaiwhai, kapa haka, mōteatea, ancestral rituals and everyday life in the communities they visited.²

Since that time, an unknown number of the original wax cylinders have perished. Incredibly fragile and prone to melting, shattering and erosion after each listen, the cylinders were preserved on reel-to-reel tapes by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research in the 1970s. The preservation masters were acquired by the archive and are the last full set of audio that remains.

When listening to these recordings, the voices of tūpuna emerge like waves across generations, across time itself. They sound distant, almost haunting, their voices engulfed by an interface of abstract distortion—crackling, scratching and pulsating, symptoms of the wax deteriorating. The debris of technical decay has a rhythm of its own. It's the sound of a medium being pushed to its limit, preserving the past and breaking down with it. This is an exchange between past and present that we hear more often than we realise.

Being raised in the diaspora, I wasn't always surrounded by the songs and stories of my people, but rather TV, radio and the internet. I encountered music in mechanical ways: on CDs and cassettes or downloading files online, taking many painstaking hours over clunky dial-up connection. I was from a generation of young people who were more accustomed to the sound of European words and songs, the static of the television, the forms of silence and forgetting that ebb and flow over memories.

In the archive I've been able to reclaim some of my songs and stories. The Kingdom of Tonga collection made by anthropologists Wendy Pond and Garth Rogers holds some of the few sources of information about Niuatoputapu, the island in the northernmost region of Tonga that my

Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound,
University of Auckland. Photo: Huni Mancini





Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound, University of Auckland. Photo: Huni Mancini



grandfather was from, but spoke little about. One recording from the collection, a tau'a'alo, was composed by an old chief Loketi Lapuka and performed at a faikava gathering in Hihifo, Niuatoputapu 1969. The tau'a'alo is an ancient song, sung while paddling to maintain rhythm and synchronicity. When it was translated by Pond and collaborator Tupou Posesi Fanua, they recognised that there were two levels of meaning to its complex lyrics.

*Fie tau ē pea fokotu'u
'Alu 'o tau 'I Futuna tu'u
Kae tuku 'a Niua ni ke toka*

*Want to fight? Then stand up
Go and fight in Futuna. Stand up!
But leave Niua in peace
Leaving Niua to be the loser.*

These opening lines convey the use of heliaki, the Tongan art of metaphor, to celebrate the heroic eighteenth-century history of Niuatoputapu. Further along the nickname “Niua-teke-vaka” (Niua-which-repels boats) is used. This comes from a time when the island’s governing Mā'atu chiefs had become so powerful they were able to maintain political autonomy from Tongan rule.

But the translators found Lapuka was also commenting on the generation of younger people of the twentieth century who were leaving the island to seek work and status in Tongatapu, “leaving Niua to be the loser”. It’s a window into the helpless condition of modern-day Niuatoputapu according to Lapuka; a land without leadership, living in the illusion of its past glory.³

Seeing through Lapuka’s lens has a reparative effect for me, connecting me to a part of my own story that I had not known, a story that was made silent or absent by forces much bigger than myself.

The past is always getting away from us. It’s a distance that expands as we face away towards the illusory, impossible horizon. Yet it catches up with us in unexpected ways. Not in the way we’d like to think—not a simple projection forward—but rather the way bodies, circuits and connections take unpredictable and counterintuitive forms.

The story of the past is never done; it’s always forming and being formed by us. It’s a tapestry woven of elements that alternate between what is told and untold, what’s visible and the weight of what’s left unsaid; what you thought you knew but now see through a different lens. This balance creates a tension that shapes you.

How might the archive hold these distances alongside the intimacies? How might they be strung together like words in a song, like flowers on a garland, or recordings on a ribbon of magnetic tape? When lifted up they display the wholeness of bodies, adorning the full weight of our histories.

Our oral traditions were designed with this understanding in mind, in the way they were meant to be embodied by us, to be living, breathing reminders. Through forms of daydreaming, storytelling, the ecstasies of art and music, the poetic intricacies of language. Forms of ‘leaving’ are not the opposite of authentic presence, but forms of fluidity that shape the way we remember.

Huni Mancini is an archivist at the Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound. She is of Tongan and Italian heritage.

- 1 Apirana Ngata, ‘Preface’, *Ngā Mōteatea* (3rd edition), Auckland: Auckland University Press, pp. xxiv–xxv.
- 2 Wayne Ngata, Arapata Hakiwai and Anne Salmond, *Hei Taonga Mā Ngā Uri Whakatipu – Treasures for the Rising Generation: The Dominion Museum Ethnological Expeditions 1919–1923*, Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2021.
- 3 Wendy Pond, *Faikava: a Tongan Literary Journal*, no.8, Nuku'alofa 1982, p. 31.

Archive of Māori and Pacific Sound, University of Auckland. Photo: Huni Mancini



Highly Recommended

The artists in *Spring Time is Heart-break: Contemporary Art in Aotearoa* share their recommendations for summer activities...



Tibor Donner and James Turkington mosaic at Parnell Baths, Auckland. Photo: Patrick Reynolds

Places

Parnell Baths, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

Designed by Tibor Donner and Ralph Wilkinson, for their great changing rooms and mosaic mural by Donner and James Turkington

Wai-O-Tapu Thermal Wonderland, Rotorua

For the awe-inspiring sulphuric landscape

The Crown Hotel, Ōtepoti Dunedin

Californian Red Wood Forest, Rotorua

A hill behind the house, overlooking the city

Kaikōura Peninsula walk to South Bay

Eat and Drink

Tapatio Hot Sauce

Scrambled eggs on toast with lots of Kaitaia Fire

The Desi Food Club, Kent Street, Kirikiriroa Hamilton

Smash Palace's draft beer, Ōtautahi Christchurch

Pork stuffed eggplant

Welcome Chinese Vegetarian Café Riccarton Road, Ōtautahi Christchurch

Hibiscus flower tea

Read

Valerie and Her Week of Wonders

Vítězslav Nezval

Robotic Landscapes: Designing the Unfinished

Edited by Ilmar Hurkxkens et al.

Space Crone

Ursula K. Le Guin

The Sea, the Sea

Iris Murdoch

Watch

The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover

Peter Greenaway

Women Under the Influence

John Cassavettes

3 Women

Robert Altman

Anatomy of a Fall

Justine Triet

Tiger Stripes

Amanda Nell Eu

Saint Omer

Alice Diop

You Won't be Alone

Goran Stolevski

Poetry

Chang Dong Lee

'The Honky Tonk nun'

BBC interview with piano playing Ethiopian nun Emahoy Tsegué-Maryam Guèbrou

Only Connect

Quiz show with Victoria Coren-Mitchell

Listen

QWERTY

Saya Gray

Queer Anthology of Drums

Valentina Magaletti

Speed Drive

Charlie XCX

I'm Armed

Eiko Ishibashi

Let the Light In

Lana Del Rey

Kalimankou Denkou

Le Mystère des Voix Bulgares

Raven

Kelela

Myuthafoo

Caterina Barbieri

L\$D Fundraiser

A kārearea defending a nest

Miscellaneous

Buying heirloom veggie seeds and rare varieties of annuals and perennials on Trade Me

'How Cold is that Library?'

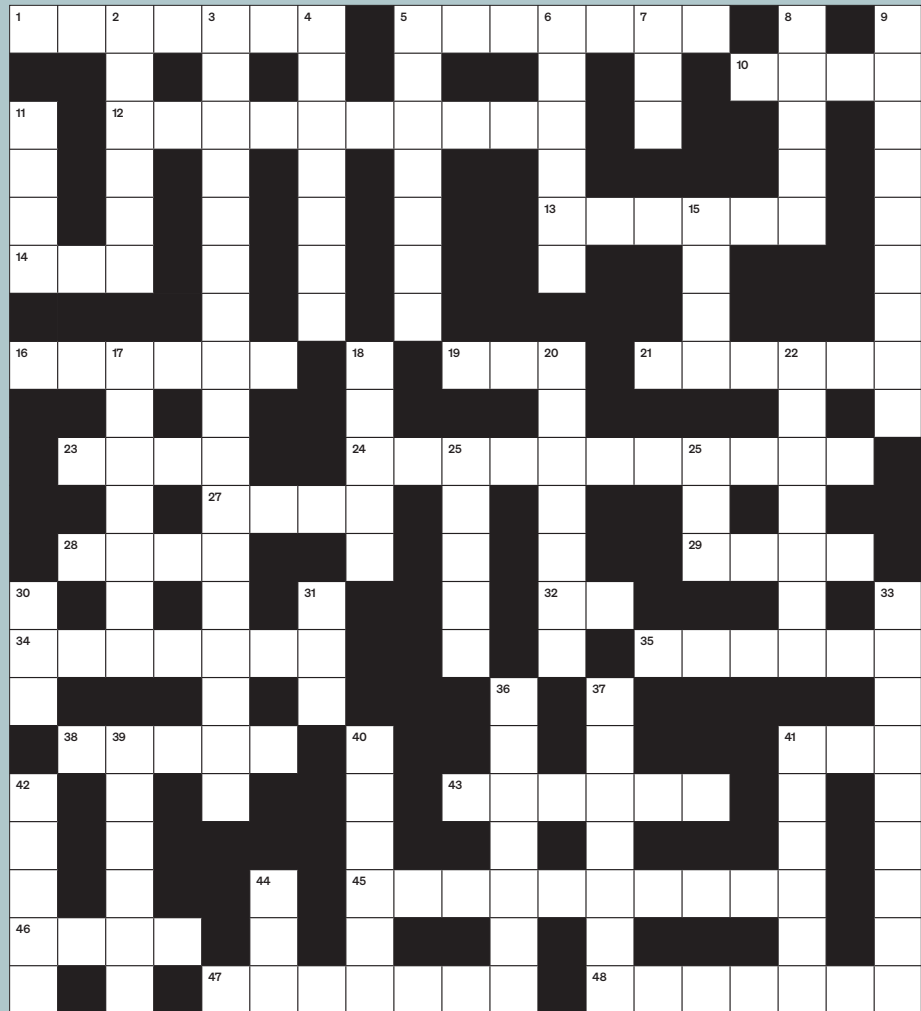
Google spreadsheet

Laurel Schwulst's Flight Simulator app

Blackwing 602 pencil

Cryptic Crossword

The solution will be available online at christchurchartgallery.org.nz.



ACROSS

- 1 It's a process to play tag on the Nile (7)
 5 You can rely on the gal in the viewing room (7)
 10 Recite the French for apple, close enough (4)
 12 Countless unused dreams, all but one (10)
 13 Change tide or she'll correct you (6)
 14 First of February, early evening, he'll make payment (3)
 16 Wept 'er over fake silver (6)
 19 There's a gull on its back in the middle of the river (3) (te reo Māori)
 21 Violent shade loses the last of the sun (6)
 23 The industry sector finds the first of gifted larks and moats (4)
 24 Shopping gives a son one hundred and two reasons to quit (11)
 27 The male faces backwards at art school (4)
 28 That's a lewd way to put two things together! (4)
 29 Conceptually, I'd rather throw a die (4)
 32 The box says tea for five (2)
 34 Stallion loses his ring during display (6)
 35 Nearly slept as they rearranged their crayons (6)

- 38 Soundtrack to a goal (5)
 41 Concealed by a scapegoat, he's getting big-headed (3)
 43 A host with ten cod (6)
 45 The ending could be cosy appeal (10)
 46 Borrowed and alone, one short (4)
 47 Ren enters, curt at the present state of things (7)
 48 Not all of your sons will be red-handed criminals (7)

DOWN

- 2 Like you're in love at the museum (6)
 3 Change the aimed rat as bed mite for a new discipline (4,5,5,3)
 4 The nude can be subtle (7)
 5 Go, you ache when you see the water-colour (7)
 6 Ring ring! It's the red lad! (6)
 7 It's our job to watch out for the first three regents (3)
 8 I'm detecting it was arson (5)
 9 Over loudspeaker, imperial gets a fail (9)
 11 Swap the flea on the page (4)
 15 Costume equal to four (4)
 17 Some waterfalls are a national prize (7)
 18 A set-up on the border (5)
 20 The main team almost changes when things start to move (7)
 22 Crop jet to make a scheme (7)
 25 The guilty queue is looking like patchwork (5)
 26 An art to taking the store from the tortoise (3) (te reo Māori)
 30 Paint your first October in London (3)
 31 A ploy for a piece of wood (3)
 33 Lana gets proof as blueprints – that's close enough (5,4)
 36 Sounds like he would press print anyway (7)
 37 Varnish the shell (7)
 39 Scan Virginia for a new surface (6)
 40 A quick fix for the pair at the emergency room (6)
 41 Escape route when the snake takes the tail of egret (6)
 42 Almost little enough to give it a name (5)
 44 You can't see yourself in a clay mirror (3) (te reo Māori)

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Above: Artist at Work tour of Hannah Beehre's studio, 2023

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christchurchartgallery.org.nz/friends

Crosstalk
Anna Rankin

Aliyah Winter Rock, thorn, cryptogram (still) 2023.
HD infrared video; duration 5 mins 8 secs.
Courtesy of the artist

*“Orpheus hesitated
beside the black
river. With so much
to look forward to
he looked back.”¹*

I drive north through darkening skies. Dim headlights diffuse a blue pallor over the sinking plains and pooling wetlands that glow in dusk. The car bends the coast before turning inland to ascend the thicket of pine that cuts across the dark island. Forest hedging the summit accedes to widening depressions in the land. Its recesses withhold rubbed secrets of a past that appear and recede without warning. I am driving into October.

It had been some months since we had seen one another and on sight I was taken aback by the feeling—nameless, but containing at once the warmth of understanding and curious misrecognition. After several glasses of peach-coloured wine and careful talk that circled the room, we retired from the bar and the quiet, empty city for the return drive.

Our conversation unfolds before us like the terrain: shadowed, recursive and unsure of its firmament. The mood rises with the tilt of the hills and on descent returns to the murmuring dark pressing at the windows. Mostly we are silent. You adjust the radio dial as occasional passing headlights illuminate the mist encircling the highway; a strip of light cleaves your face. We pass highway signs counting the remaining kilometres, indicating a long emptiness ahead. Cracked voices warp and merge as one fuzzed timbre composed of many connections; with thumb and forefinger you circle a series of sibilant frequencies, conducting the currencies of an interstellar medium before settling on the hissing static, which you prefer to music and which finds a mutual foothold in me.

We arrive after midnight. Inside, you again search through waves of atmospheric traffic for a television signal, plugging and unplugging cords into networks and outlets. The snowy screen invokes retrospections of the ferocious electrical storms frequent in this remote region; diablo winds that cut power and connection to the world beyond its cradle. The pitch of the television is indistinguishable from the sound of heavy rain hailing down on concrete. We abandon the task and leave the screen on but muted, the picture displaying a buzzing plague of tiny, monochrome insects, or a swarm of black and white birds in unison, a ceaseless rushing wind.

Nobody wants to stare directly into love and, equally, no one can write about it well because that would require

a distance love does not afford. At some point, scrolling YouTube, I come across a science channel where a bespectacled, suited man with a thick drawl describes indistinguishable electromagnetic fields interfering with what he characterises as the real signal, and the various waves of crosstalk corresponding in the atmosphere. He offers lightning storms as a causal example for the disturbance and radiation from the sun and various other electronic sources. Some interfering phenomena, he adds, contain the original explosion of the universe, routing across aeons from deep space to interface with the present moment. When troubleshooting, you'll notice a glitch or hear a random noise if the wave is offset from the original, which corresponds with a sound or pixel. If you're having issues, he continues, "remember—you're getting a glimpse into lightning storms, the majesty of our sun and the beginning of the universe itself."

Birds (presiding between worlds and described by Jorie Graham as the "living icons of poetry, associated with divination and augury"²), the watching moon, bridges, screens, fog, powerlines, shrouding the mirror, the blue city with its skyscrapers alight, looping night walks, tropical storms rolling over sagebrush, the currency of dreams, the green flash of WhatsApp lighting my phone; a phantom limb at cross-continental hours, the galaxy through a telescope; the elliptical galaxy of cyberspace, thickening snow rushing past the panes, aghast at the enormity of the inflamed orange sun descending behind the ocean, with you; on the street we held tightly to one another against the swarm, the distant planet below from an airplane window, a frozen lake on which skimmed stones lie, distant thunder, the Morse code of love where we are anatomised into units, two dozen yellow roses delivered: *Yours, waiting on the shore*, the note reads; swans doubling in dreams, returning to whether it felt the same. I sought to debug, buffeted by winds along the autumn pavement up Ninth Avenue, flanked by solemn grey angels, foehn winds in the canyon, the fused lights of traffic a curling golden snake, a line from an email that forms remnants of a dear friend no longer living, he is describing the sensation of reading a specific poem: "James' son Franz has a line which best describes my experience of reading them", he writes. "I just feel like a

“I just feel like a window with the light coming in.”

window with the light coming in.” In verse of his own, he continues: “That fist inside me: flowered.” Luminous nights in the car where we played music and said not a word. Silver ice on the dawn window, the empyrean parched salt flats of Death Valley, dried autumn persimmons sliced into half-moons; we form a dyad in an altered state and you press a firm orange disc of tight flesh into my teeth, a train sailing past in silver, the winding approach, hit play to again hear your voice, glimpses of a note from a song that once played right through, (the eye of my storm), metal weathervane spins high above rumpled orange leaves, thousands of messages that comprised a union reduced to and contained within a phone now obsolete, my teacher instructs: underlying all thought is a field of silence. I send you a smoke signal, the cemetery and its mausoleums, waking in fervid mornings to feel the shadow of a helicopter transverse the sun across my closed eyes, ravens on peeling eucalyptus trees, a kiss as a car crash occurred ahead of us, brass candlesticks, the plastic wrap in which your wooden gift arrived; bound in ribbon adorned with constructivist patterning, the yielding dawn desert, the jubilant dial-up of Skype, bright red borscht, running in the pouring rain to catch a cab to the restaurant (you were so cheerful), a low fan slicing through the thick swelter, night laps taken around the reservoir; you talked and I listened, the arcs traced in the city park, disinterested commercials on television, the boughs of a tree clawing the window, giving up on the connection, plastic airport carnations, dazzled on the narrow street, you took my hand—

Each motif emerges in my scraps of writing: notes in a diary, texts to self, impressions in a journal, records of facts all collapsing in ruination and resurrection. Reflecting on the disinterring nature of writing memoir and her own resistance to the act, Annie Ernaux writes, “deep down I remained steeped in the pleasure of unwrapping memory after memory. I refused the pain of form.”³ One writes into one’s past with its algorithmic bricolage of images and references as though description might reanimate it; that one might recover a lost object from which emerges a forgotten self. Within the tradition of the tragedy lies the notion that one’s origins are oracular; they beget one’s destiny and illuminate the map of our demise.

Memory integration refers to the idea that memories of related impressions and experiences are held as reserves within the brain and selected by the mind as overlapping representations, bound to non-temporal and non-sequential constructs. They form networks that stretch across events to facilitate the extraction of discrete information. The failure to integrate a memory, I once read, results from an encoding failure; that is, information was not processed into memory because the memory was not sufficiently encoded in the first instance. This, I think, illustrates the untrammelled capriciousness of our connections and the volatility of the unconscious; itself, perhaps, a deific ledger. It can be impossible to understand why a particular memory or encounter seizes us so. It has something to do with self-recognition. Where historical remuneration insists upon exacting reconstruction, memory resists. But some connections, their corporeal tenure notwithstanding, can fold in centuries within one lifetime.

There is a specific set of connected moments to which I return often. I am walking home from the newsroom where I work as dark falls. I remember our conversation about the terrorising rain and the fog rolling in. Then and there, during that time, every entity felt alive: the shifting hillsides, the sky a thickened bruise above the terrible harbour mouth, the river that glowered and appeared to watch one’s movements. I recall the way the sky would gather its darkening weight into a wing and broaden its reach to advance across the town as the light turned under. At that time, all apparent phenomena appeared to speak to one another in an unfamiliar language. But every evening at nightfall the lighthouse beam concentrated its ray into a single shaft and began its slow search for life. It seemed less a warning and more a pursuit, though perhaps its design had escaped its portentous origins and rather contained both.

The lighthouse, salutary on the river’s edge, stands resolute amongst a pile of rocks. Atop its cupola turns an alloy weathervane that resembles both bird and arrow. Diamond-shaped lattice windows ring the lantern room, inside which a white lamp is mounted, and illumines outward. It is a light as brilliant as the blazing sun, and from its lens extends a long, fixed beacon that draws a slow arc, brushing rooftops,

Guiding and all, children

22.12.07

Every Body, NO MERA.

NAMASKAR & Merry Xmas.

I my self & mum. getting old. Time is
 coming to our life very NEAR. So
 I am working to form TRUST. For Every
 Body. I have Property. But, all the rate
 Insurance, water, Rates. TEL. Gas. Power &
 Every thing is EXPENSIVE. CINEMA. Very Big
 Building. Big Rates. Insu. & Film not
 running. have not made any money from
 cinema just pay the Rates. Insu. and
 Now I am working to hire out cinema
 for its workout then I will be happy so
 within 2-3 month I will know leasing
 out cinema. still got some mortgage
 left on cinema and 181 Mtl hwan
 these two mortgage left to pay. over
 4 years: still I am helping out
 Johnny Super, to you 6.027 Andw/
 a month: to you. If you want to
 come to see and then no worry
 to help you out. So

So up to you I don't want any
 work is my self and mum at my
 age some time I don't get sleep.
 Night. Time that work is making me
 Hurt Problem. Mum just lucky
 she had light stroke on one hand.
 Took 1 year to get it right. now she
 is all right. But very slow to do

the emptied main street and the broadening river. On the walk home, preceding my field of vision, the searching beam broadcasts its distant gaze—a lonesome and silent mayday call that further impresses the sense of isolation. Arriving home, cutting across the grass, the beam against the black sky turns a strange, eerie blue; airborne dust and residue falls slowly through its shaft. I linger out on the lawn, following the path of its murky light shining high in the treetops.

Very few lighthouses remain in use. Those that endure are vanishing relics of the recent past; with the advance of electronic navigational systems they are considered obsolete. Equally, foghorns have modern counterparts though they occasionally blow their haunting paean across perilous harbours. Once, mariners on course to approach land were guided by fires lit on hilltops. Over time, signals were fashioned by oil lamps backed by mirrors; the Argand lamp, which burned whale, olive or rapeseed oil, was the standard for over a century before ceding to electric illumination.

“I know you feel like the lighthouse”, he once wrote in a card, now filed amongst reams of paper and sundries in a pale blue shoebox. “And you are. But the lighthouse, it’s important to remember, isn’t a searchlight. It’s not actually looking for anything, no matter how it appears from the beam. It is actually lighting the way.”

Anna Rankin is a journalist, writer and editor who has written for the Guardian, Newsroom, Metro, New Zealand Herald, New Zealand Listener among others. She is a book critic for RNZ and a previous copy editor at the Los Angeles Review of Books.

*“I know you feel like
the lighthouse.
And you are.
But the lighthouse,
it’s important
to remember, isn’t
a searchlight.”*

1 Donald Justice, ‘There is a gold light in certain old paintings’, *Collected Poems*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004.

2 Jorie Graham, ‘To 2040’, *Between the Covers* Podcast, 2023, <https://tinhouse.com/podcast/jorie-graham-to-2040/>.

3 Annie Ernaux, *Simple Passion*, New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003.



Aliyah Winter Rock, *thorn, cryptogram (still)* 2023. HD infrared video; duration 5 mins 8 secs. Courtesy of the artist

Silver Screen

*Notes on Moving Image
and Editing in Spring Time
is Heart-break*

Jane Wallace



Above and right: Sam Norton *When Love is Not Enough* (still) 2023. Two-channel video. Courtesy of the artist

Writing on the virtues of filmic possibility, Susan Sontag identifies that “the distinctive cinematic unit is not the image, but the principle of connection between the images: the relation of a ‘shot’ to the one that preceded and the one that comes after.”¹ It is this ability to manipulate the structure of film that makes the medium special; editing, Sontag proposes, is the reason for film to exist at all. The continuation or dissolution of one scene into the next constitutes the materiality of the moving image; it is defined by the seams where it also might be undone. As such, an artist’s choice to work with moving image comes from an appreciation of its distinct characteristics.

Spring Time is Heart-break: Contemporary Art in Aotearoa registers a return to storytelling taking place in artistic production. This was something discussed with some frequency during the development of the exhibition, as many of the artists involved brought a renewed attention to the way we tell stories. While there are more stories circulating than ever, what we are really seeking are meaningful arrangements of them. The moving image works in *Spring Time is Heart-break* are edited in ways that use both the breadth and limitations of the medium as tactics: as a conceptual framework, a time-machine, choreography.

Angel C. Fitzgerald’s film *Forever* is comprised of quickly filmed imagery—the video clips you take on your phone at a club, while watching a slow-moving body of water scatter

and refract its tiny ecosystem, a record of the late-night skin of a city, fireworks, your friend’s hot manicure, your own reflection, always better somehow with headphones. *Forever* is Fitzgerald’s homage to friendship and shifting circumstances, made over the course of many goodbyes as their friends moved away from Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington. Standing on the precipice of change has a unique intoxication about it. It elicits a psychological impulse like grasping, or even, gasping—a wish to have and hold as much as possible while you still can.

I start to think about editing like breathing: an activity that imposes cadence on a narrative, to which slight adjustments will radically alter the pace of the work. In *Forever*, this is experienced as an effervescent series of clips of headlights and fireworks, blossoming and receding so that it appears we might be moving toward a new destination—and subsequently leaving an old one. The sleight of moving image is used to force the experience of change into the realm of the viewer, but also becomes a way to reclaim this moment as something metamorphic.

The structure of *Forever* is driven by a score made with Fitzgerald’s friend Calum Gordon. The influence of the audio on the flow of the film sonically compels the viewer to anticipate the upheaval recorded in the content. Movie-time doesn’t have to adhere to chronology as we do, so inside the film forever is a conceivable span of time. Fitzgerald says,



“it’s not forever, but these videos/this document/this timestamp is.”² This sentiment echoes William J. Simmons’s treatise on queer formalism, which also makes peace with endings and beginnings:

“[In] queerness, we might understand and find liberation in the facts that everything has been done before and that there is no such thing as greatness, which is not to say that nobody and nothing can be truly special, but rather that all moments, all experiences, all of our daily intimacies coalesce like paint or photographic chemicals into the image of a life, and that is good enough.”³

It’s the magic of the supercut, of time sped up, that also means it can be stopped. If *Forever* accelerates its narrative, Sam Norton’s split-screen film *When Love is Not Enough* inverts this, using editing to defer reality. In black and white, a leggy stork traces small movements across one side of the work. On the other side of the screen, his dance partner is a stick protruding from rippled water, angled against a softly flowing current.

Independent from each other, the bird and the stick have a peaceful banality—they’re elegant but not totally captivating. And yet side by side, their separation is turned into a mirror. In placing these scenes together, Norton enacts the classical equation: two hearts are always better than

one. Her work often deals in this currency, giving pause to that which is otherwise degraded or ordinary to remind that these are also the truest and purest, the parts we might learn the most from.

While watching *When Love is Not Enough*, I am holding my breath. I don’t want to come up for air. Time crystallises, halts. This kind of durational video draws out the time between the image and its contact with the surface of life. While we are with the stork and the stick, love *is* enough. Film theorist Masha Tupitsyn says, “faith is both a long shot and a long take.”⁴ Tupitsyn was writing on the work of Spanish filmmaker Albert Serra, recounting the editing process for his 2008 film *Birdsong*, which centres on the journey of the three wise men, minute across a vacant landscape. Cutting images was not part of it—apparently Serra only made one cut in total—but deciding the length of time to play the shot to induce a mood of spiritual effort. There is a dual meaning to Tupitsyn’s words. In the first instance, she perceives that faith is expressed in moving image through the unedited clip; secondly, achingly, faith tends to have a slim chance of success.

Faith, I think, is very similar to love. It is a belief that someone external might be a wayfinder or a GPS—*where you go, I’ll go too*. In *When Love is Not Enough*, the juxtaposition of content allows each to recalibrate against the other, and the long cut lets this be sufficient cause for romance.



Sriwhana Spong Badlands (still) 2023. 16mm film transferred to HD video. Courtesy of the artist and Michael Lett, Auckland



As long as the stork and stick are shadows, we are suspended before heartbreak or failure—the moment where we realise the shortcomings of this relationship. The shot keeps playing, prolonging the fantasy that the stick might be kin with the stork, or the stork kin with his wooden likeness.

To return to Sontag, who early on foretold that the principles of film would easily be adopted and hybridised by theories of art, the moving image works in *Spring Time is Heart-break* also engage formal experimentation, referencing the avant-garde cinema already being made when Sontag was writing.⁵ Moving image is a surface on which disciplines can be collapsed for these artists, mining fields like choreography and computer programming for an expanded toolkit.

“The editing is where the choreography will happen,” emails Sriwhana Spong. Spong developed her work *Badlands* over the course of a recent residency in Siena, researching the literature of Italian philosopher Ernesto de Martino. De Martino was interested in the continuation of ancient magic and ritual in Italy, particularly in the south, collating accounts of the practices that were still embedded in a rapidly modernising society. There is a connection here with Pugliese filmmaker Cecilia Mangini’s output, who collaborated with de Martino in the post-war period, and admired his sensitivity for the respect between subject and observer of ritual. Filming in a documentary style, Mangini concentrated on the proletarian and the magical—two ingrained aspects of Southern Italy. Writer Allison Gramaldi Donahue points out that there are unexpected resemblances between Mangini’s magical films and those concerned with labour and the working class. Work and ritual share prescribed and repeated actions which Mangini foregrounds.⁶ This repetition is present in Spong’s moving image as well, which corrals footage of bodies and ribbons set in baked earth into a twisting metre.

The tarantella is the main embodied ritual *Badlands* interrogates. Like others, it transcends language in favour of purgative and symbolic sounds, actions and colour. Although accepted as a symptom of a spider bite, the convulsive dance of the tarantella was implicitly a metaphorical cover for an internal conflict that could otherwise not be expressed so publicly. For Spong, the question was how to reproduce the mania of the tarantella cinematically. It is a release that cannot be shown, but rather, must be felt. Consequently, the connection of *Badlands* to its seams and edits must be similarly hypnotic. The cut becomes a way to enact a choreography where only the work knows where it is going next. Ambient music overlays a series of intervals to mimic the surrealism of the tarantella dancer, who is beholden to a rhythm seemingly severed from one’s own selfhood. In this way, moving image is the most appropriate format to show this



kind of ritual behaviour as it can absorb more than one time scale—diegetic time and that imposed through editing—to evoke the altered state of ritual.

The interplay of dance and film is further augmented by the programmatic in Juliet Carpenter's *The Sun Is Not To Be Believed*. Alluding to the unreliability of moving image through the title, the work is intended to be edited in real time using a computer programme built with Róisín Berg. Filmed in black and white, a sequence of movements takes place four times over, so that the previous versions are exposed against the latter ones, loosely influenced by the geometry of Samuel Beckett's television play *Quad* (1981). Bright sunlight filters through a garden, throwing the setting into high contrast. Layers of shadow stretch and shift uneasily as the scenes are edited according to a computer's code; prime meridian no longer only occurs in the middle of the day.

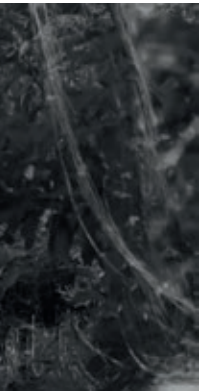
Moving through an inventory of objects that become textual markers—that is, places where we realise that we've been here before—Carpenter also references Maya Deren's 1943 film *Meshes of the Afternoon*. A knife, a woman hooded, distant; a woman, identifiable, closer up, high shadow, a

hand, a stem. These find their equivalents in *The Sun Is Not To Be Believed* in a pruning knife, a knotted joint of wood, a shrouded woman, a woman baring her torso, hands sifting through loose soil, searching for something. The deliberate placement of these signs is a red herring in both works. Though they appear to bear significance, their role is to form what art and cinema historian Sarah Keller has described as a "plateau of tension".⁷ Withholding conclusion was essential to Deren's practice as a way of refusing narrative, preferring to establish a plane of unfulfilled expectancy, where patterns of plot appear and reappear but never amount to any climax. *The Sun Is Not To Be Believed* equally rejects finality. The algorithm at its core means ceaseless additional iterations will be generated, leaving any summary of the work necessarily incomplete. Had the technology been available to Deren, no doubt she would have embraced the chance for editing to continue infinitely. As it was, she took the liberty of adding a soundtrack sixteen years after *Meshes of the Afternoon* was shown, reopening interpretation of the film at a much later date.

Carpenter folds Deren's psychodrama and Beckett's "ballet for four people" into her algorithmically driven work.



Juliet Carpenter *The Sun Is Not To Be Believed*
(stills) 2022/23. HD video with MSP patch;
duration 23 mins 19 secs. Courtesy of the artist



Beneath an upload of *Quad* on YouTube, I find someone has commented “samuel beckett invented video games”. It’s true—video games have inherited the mathematical movement of *Quad*, players destined to move along predetermined lines. Crucially, games that follow abstract strategy laws are not valued for their meaning but for their careful balance of rules and variability. Each round is rarely a replay of the previous, but the constraints allow its participants to foresee hypothetical outcomes and react accordingly. *The Sun Is Not To Be Believed* wields these same conditions. It is a work organised by rational forces to simultaneously stimulate a psychological performance, turning moving image into a cosmic game. Here, the cinematic unit dissolves, usurped by the unit of the computer. If the sun is not to be believed, what other elements are deserving of suspicion? We learned to trust the photograph, and then we learned to trust cinema. Can we learn to trust the algorithmic? Would our trust be misplaced?

Jane Wallace
Curatorial assistant

- 1 Susan Sontag, ‘Theatre and Film’, *Styles of Radical Will*, London: Penguin, 2013, p. 108.
- 2 In conversation with the artist.
- 3 William J. Simmons, *Queer Formalism: The Return*, Berlin: Floating Opera Press, 2021.
- 4 Masha Tupitsyn, ‘Everything Better Than Plot’, *Picture Cycle*, South Pasadena, CA: semiotext(e), p. 246.
- 5 Sontag, ‘Theatre and Film’, p. 110.
- 6 Allison Grimaldi Donahue, ‘Finding the real in the magic: What Cecilia Mangini gave us’, *Another Gaze* 5, October 2021, pp. 88–89.
- 7 Sarah Keller, ‘Frustrated Climaxes: On Maya Deren’s “Meshes of the Afternoon” and “Witch’s Cradle”’, *Cinema Journal* 52, no.3, spring 2013, pp. 75–98.

In early 2023, I was fortunate enough to travel to Seoul and Gwangju, Korea. This was my first time visiting this eastern part of Asia—a continent I thought I knew quite well through shared cross-cultural histories, migrations, tourism, friends and relatives, literature and pop culture. The trip reminded me, however, that many countries in Asia are still almost completely closed-off, inaccessible or strictly controlled by their governing bodies. This intensified the unease I felt every time I boarded a plane to visit another country, returning to my birthplace in Thailand, or crossing the motu. It's the mobility privilege; everywhere I go, I remember those who cannot leave.

From Gwangju, I caught a bus and a ferry to enter Japan via Fukuoka. Back in 2013, I purposefully wrote my MFA dissertation on prehistoric Jōmon pottery, to open my eyes and ears beyond the Western art history that was being taught at the university. I was also exploring and teaching myself 3D modelling and printing, and knew it was necessary to acknowledge some of the specific ways people created objects by hand and earth. The elastic, transformative properties of clay were a crucial technological advancement that allowed pre-agricultural societies to develop sedentary settlements. In my dissertation, I argued that digital modalities are not separate from these 'prehistoric' earthy technologies but intertwined across time.

Seeing the Jōmon pottery in real life after having written about and researched it ten years previously was an experience I am still processing. Some of the pieces were designated National Treasure (国宝, *kokuhō*) status—the most precious of Japan's Tangible Cultural Properties. Most archaeological sites and local museums housing them are located in rural areas and small towns that are facing depopulation issues. I had to bike for two hours to get to the Umataka-Sanjūnaba Site in Nagaoka, partly because, as I could not communicate in Japanese, I could not rent a car or take the bus. Standing in front of these sophisticated and advanced knowledge containers, I recognised our own time limitations and the strange hope that these unnamed artists and makers hold.

Following the trip to Japan, I re-entered Thailand and took an overnight train from Bangkok to Udon Thani province to visit the Ban Chiang Archaeological Site, a prehistoric human habitation and burial site that was continuously occupied from 1495 BCE until c. 900 BCE. The site is well known

for its early metallurgy, bronze and iron artefacts, and red iron oxide-painted pottery. I had heard of the site and the pottery's famous 'fingerprint' spiral pattern as a child but this was the first time I had visited.

Upon returning to New Zealand, I was invited to create a new work for *Spring Time is Heart-break* at Christchurch Art Gallery, so I decided to look into the Gallery collection to see if there were any art objects from Japan or Thailand that could relate to my earlier research. The collection holds several Asian ceramics by unknown makers, and some of unknown origin. Among these was a small collection of snuff bottles donated by Yeung Tat Che, who exhibited them at the University Museum and Art Gallery, University of Hong Kong in 1994. A variety of materials were used to create many

different bottle designs and patterns: corals, ruby, lapis lazuli, opal, jade, pearl and glass to name a few. The techniques and materials used to imitate other materials are interesting; for example, layered enamel paint was used to imitate glass, and porcelain for rare jade.

These snuff bottles, while not as ancient as the Jōmon or Ban Chiang pottery, share similar unknowability around their makers. Reflecting on what I saw in museum collections on these recent trips, I return to questions about mobility. How did certain objects get to museums (Ban Chiang pottery is held in many American institutions as a result of antiquities trafficking for example), and how to re-animate their presence

beyond museum wall labels? Would the now unnamed makers and artists ever have imagined that millennia later, strangers from around the world would cross oceans and continents to stand in front of their vessels? How would they feel seeing their objects sealed inside museum vitrines? How can they be experienced outside of these glass cases? I thought it seemed unfair that these objects never get to move or be touched again. They have been reburied inside museums. Still, I found myself reimagining these objects in a very different place, a very different location from where I had seen them. So perhaps they did travel, by crossing over into our memories and our imagination. As visitors and viewers, we allowed them to move. And to them, we were let in.

If Objects Could Walk, Where Would They Go?

Sorawit Songsataya

Sorawit Songsataya is an artist currently based between Aotearoa and Thailand. They are in London for the Gasworks Residency from October to December this year.



Artist unknown Snuff Bottle 1875–1908. Glass. Collection of Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, presented by Yeung Tat Che, 1998

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Improvising
Protection:
Cheryl Lucas's
Subterfuge

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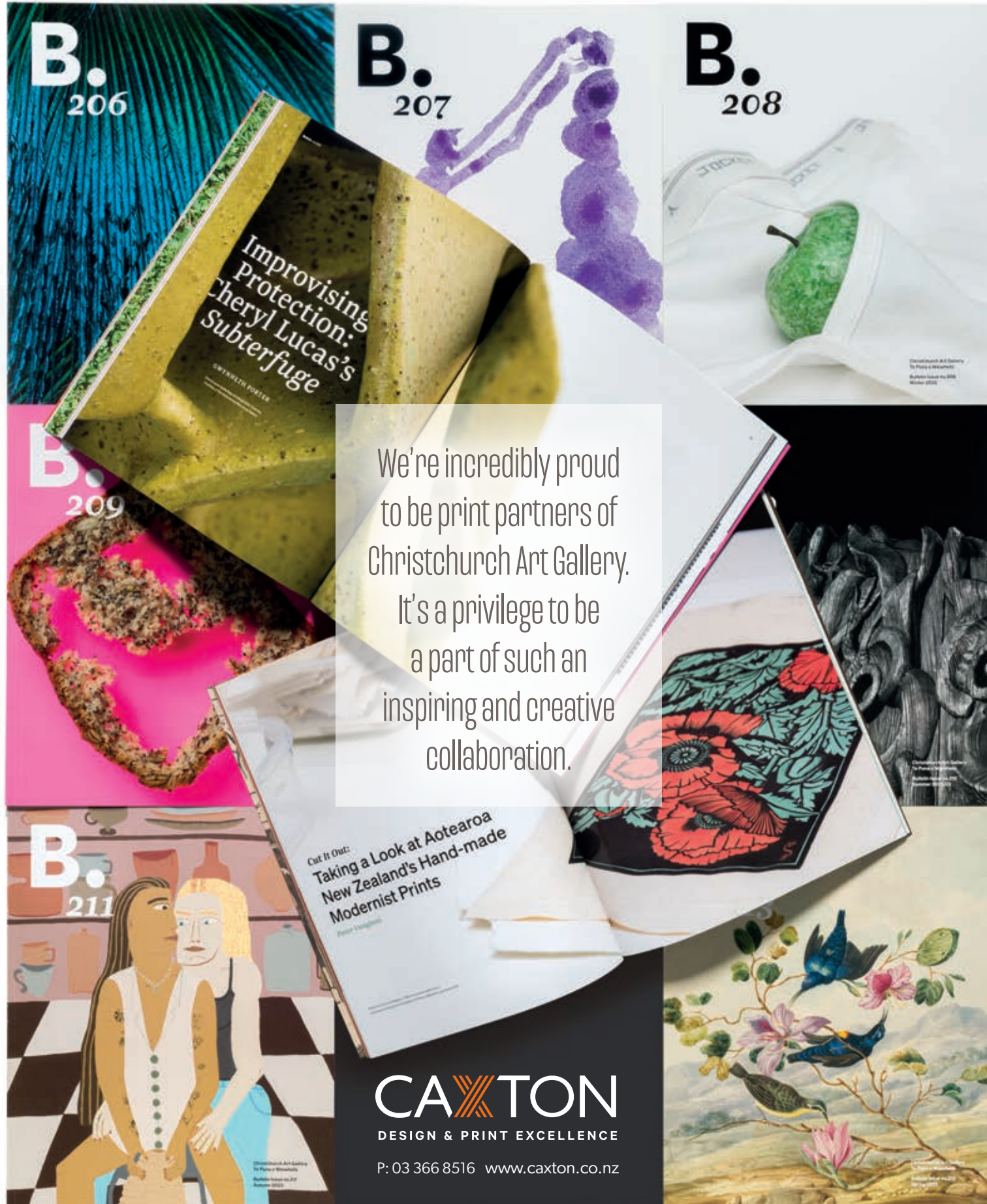
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Riffing off the title of Elizabeth Gilbert's popular romantic comedy novel, Sam Norton's *Eat, Prey, Love* is similarly concerned with the absurdity of human behaviour; here, the scavenger becomes a substitute for our own primal impulses. Though we try to disavow any animalistic tendencies, we are still motivated by basic desires of eating, hunting and copulating.

A centrefold of a bird with a vicious hooked beak—an image perhaps ripped from a back issue of *National Geographic*—is layered over a dark patch of watercolour. The painterly brushstrokes are incongruous with the nature shot, resulting in suspension between something emotive and introspective, and a kind of ironic objectivity. A surfboard becomes the bird's wing as a satirical appendage to its steely pose.

Collage forms an important part of Sam's practice as an immediate way of recombining disparate source imagery to create allegorical compositions. It is a process of improvisation where images can be unmoored from origin and context, in order to reappraise and subsequently elevate the status of everyday visual detritus. As such, the materiality of the page is as important as the subject matter, in the way that paper quality confers its own meaning. Sam seeks to disturb this legibility, flattening notions of good and bad taste in favour of cinematic treatment of the quotidian.

Eat, Prey, Love is underpinned by enduring narrative threads that drive the 'theatre of life': tragedy, romance, comedy, classicism and sentimentality. At the heart of the work, there is an unresolved psychological tension in the clash between instinct and consciousness. I am reminded of a lyric from Björk's 1993 song, in which she sings "If you ever get close to a human / And human behaviour / Be ready, be ready to get confused..." In *Eat, Prey, Love*, this confusion is celebrated; the strangeness of existence something to honour.

Jane Wallace

Curatorial assistant

Sam Norton *Eat, Prey, Love* 2023. Mixed media collage. Courtesy of the artist







Exhibitions

**Spring Time is Heart-break:
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25 November 2023 – 24 March 2024

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Strings of Light**

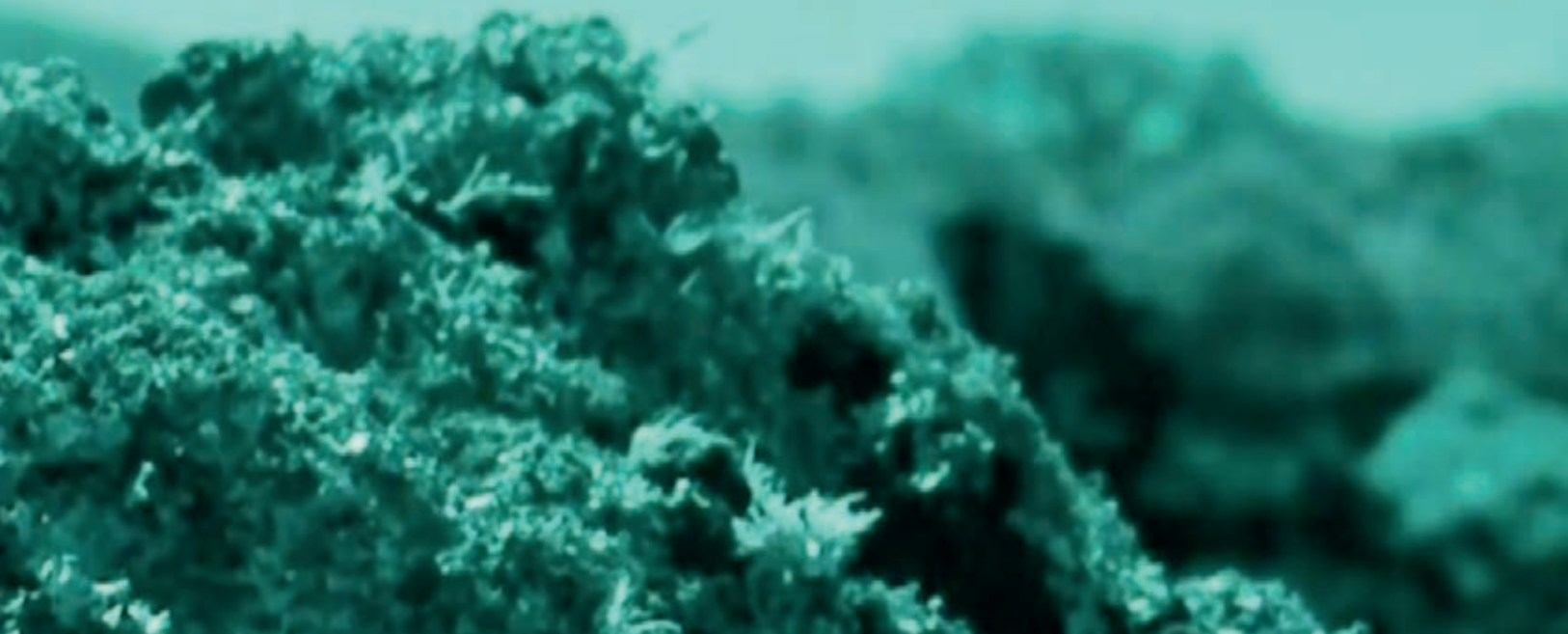
Until 21 July 2024

A magical UV light installation bringing together different art forms and histories.

**Perilous: Unheard Stories from
the Collection**

Until 21 July 2024

Making room for fresh voices, untold narratives and disruptive ideas.



Aliyah Winter Rock, *thorn, cryptogram* (still) 2023. HD infrared video; duration 5 mins 8 secs. Courtesy of the artist

Also on display

Mataaho Collective: Tikawe

An ambitious installation that descends from the skylights to zing across the foyer.

Lonnie Hutchinson: Hoa Kōhine (Girlfriend)

An intricately cut-out billboard celebrating supportive friendships between women.

Martin Creed: Everything is Going to be Alright

A completely unequivocal, but also pretty darn ambiguous, work for Christchurch.

Reuben Paterson: The End

A sparkling elevator installation providing an unexpected space for contemplation and connection.

S raphine Pick: Untitled (Bathers)

Pick's lush watercolour offers a utopian vision in the carpark elevator.

Tomorrow Still Comes:

Natalia Saegusa

A fragmented, poetic temporary wall painting by Natalia Saegusa.

Kelcy Taratoa: Te T h  o ng  Maunga T matakahuki

A vast painting about how we are bound together.

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*Te Ao o Nga Atua or Te Waka o Aoraki, 1988.
Pictured left.*



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Earlier this year, the Foundation was honoured to receive a significant bequest from the late Sir Miles Warren, a great supporter of the Gallery and himself the subject of a retrospective exhibition in 2009. The bequest helped us to reach the incredible milestone of \$5m in our Endowment Fund for the Gallery's collection programme. The Foundation is incredibly grateful to Sir Miles for his generosity and foresight in making this gift.

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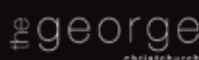
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*Spring Time is Heart-break:
Contemporary Art in Aotearoa*