

The 3rd of May saw The Green Room close its doors one last time. The shed-cum-micro-gallery returned to the scene for an unexpected victory lap after last August's pre-emptive closure. Despite its short life, the gallery facilitated a spirited programme of shows by an eclectic cast of local artists in various stages of career. Those who frequented openings were ultimately charmed by the lovely chaos of the bottleneck courtyard, spilling drinks on shoes of gallerinas, fashionistas, lecturers and friends' fathers. Through a unique mix of ambition, urgency and generosity, The Green Room somehow managed to conjure the oft-mourned spirit of Ōtautahi's post-quake art scene, thus cementing their place in a lineage of significant ARIs.

The exhibition schedule reached its climax with 'Skin Flick', a new video work/peepshow by Emma Wallbanks. The gallery door was locked, a clever workaround to the space's tiny footprint, the work instead viewable through peepholes cut into black rubbish bin liners fixed to the annexe's rear window, its textured glass kaleidoscopically distorting one's view. The artist tells our correspondent that the work collages clips of the ocean and trashy pornography, made whilst confronting memories of a live sex show in Amsterdam. To commemorate The Green Room and its final show, our man on the ground and hobbyist mixtape artist has compiled a steamy little playlist in response to Skin Flick: part imagined soundtrack, part farewell.

BLUE GREEN

String Trio TLF Trio
The Secrets of Life Tree Kroke
Cookie Butter Kim Gordon
The Pink Room Angelo Badalamenti
Je T'aime Psychic TV
My Kimono Polvo
Bull Believer Wednesday
Initial Treat Michael Nyman
Amor Kékht Aräkh
Sexual Healing Anita Lane
San Francisco Aldous Harding
Box Leslie Winer
Nothing Lasts Karen Beth
 知己知彼 (*Know Who You Are at Every Age*) Faye Wong
Goodbyehouse Snuggle

Oscar Bannan / Goodbye Green Fridays, The Green Room, Ōtautahi, April 2026

Such a complex of indiscernible images he calls a 'crystal-image': the original point at which actual and virtual image reflect each other produces, in turn, a widening circuit of actual and virtual images like a hall of mirrors.¹

What lies within the recesses of the rock face?
 There hums the gentle roar of a memory, of a memory transmitted, chewed up and reconstituted. It has been consumed by the image itself: the mourning of a story that was not your own and that flickered only before you for a brief, transient moment. At the crumbling precipice of one's ontic footing, the rhythmic undulations of what stares up at us trace the silhouette of an unrecalable landscape.

¹ Marks, Laura U. *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural cinema, embodiment, and the senses*. 1999, 65.

2
See Marks on use of Teshome Gabriel's 'Third Cinema as Guardian of Popular Memory: Towards a third aesthetics' (1980) and the shared responsibility of constructing a text, *ibid.*, p. 62.

3
Deleuze, Gilles, *Cinema II: The time-image*, 1985, p. 85.

4
See Marks on Jalal Toufic's *Over-sensitivity* (1996), Marks, p. 51.

The two-way mirror looks back at you, seducing you into the double role of performer and creator.² There is a present that passes and a past that is preserved, both occurring simultaneously. Reflected between the two, there lies that which cannot be grasped, that which cannot be seen, and that which cannot be said: the vanishing limit, a mobile mirror that endlessly reflects perception in recollection³. It circumvents the established registers of symbolic and causal legibility. Along the bridge of your nose, it rolls forwards to linger for some time, but is never to be seized. Trying to discern what you are seeing leads one into a hall of mirrors wherein the crystal-image constitutes a horizon of created but true events⁴. Here, the mutual image renders the distinct indiscernible, and the indiscernible distinct in a repeated cycle of exchange. Through the paramnesiac haze of this increasingly widening circuit of virtual images, an arm's length comes to stretch across the continents, disrobe you and fill the pothole at the end of your street.

Kenji van Oosten / Emma Wallbanks, *Skin Flick*,
The Green Room, Ōtautahi, April–May 2026



Lessing, Doris, *Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1971.

Danchev, Alex, (ed.), *100 Artists' Manifestos: From the Futurists to the Stuckists*, Penguin Classics, 2011.

Contemporary Art Issue, 'The Story of: Gerhard Richter (1932–Today)', YouTube, 18 May 2022.

Public Service, 'Oscar Dowling + Model', Public Bar, 20 May, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

'Smut', Eilish Dwyer, Sophie Greig, Arapeta Hākura, Chloe-Rose Purcell, 15 May–20 June, Peg, Pōneke Wellington.

Te Kani, Samuel, 'Peak', a short story to accompany 'Smut', 2026.

'Kababayan', Abigail Legg, 22 May–6 June, Twentysix, Pōneke Wellington.

Mrs. Chippy monument, Karori Cemetery, Pōneke Wellington, installed 2004.

'Peal the Bells', Noor Abed, Anoushka Akel, Qianye and Qianhe Lin, Maree Sheehan, Mo H. Zareei, curated by Abby Cunnane and Vera Mey, 18 April–21 June, Te Pātaka Toi Adam Art Gallery, Pōneke Wellington.

'Pinhole', Rea Burton, 7 May–30 May, Robert Heald Gallery, Pōneke Wellington.

'Postmodern Old El Paso', Nick Austin, 7 May–30 May, Robert Heald Gallery, Pōneke Wellington.

'Back in Five', Wayne Youle, 9 May–18 October, Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt.

'Sweet Meats', Georgie Agius, 21 February–1 August, Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt.

'The Vessel', Steven Junil Park, 21 February–21 June, Dowse Art Museum, Lower Hutt.

*Note: I completely forget there was an upstairs to The Dowse :'-(

Zines NZ: Punk to Present, Bryce Galloway, book launch, 23 May–29 May, in association with Massey University Press, The Engine Room, Massey University, Pōneke Wellington.

Strange Universe (Winter), 'Cass McCombs + Holly Arrowsmith', Double Whammy, 26 May, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

Baudrillard, Jean, *Selected Writings: Simulacra and Simulacrum*, Mark Poster (ed.), Stanford University Press, 1988, pp.166–184.

The Museum of Modern Art, 'The Underground Archivist: 50 Years of Saving New York History', YouTube, 24 November 2025.

'In Our Time: Dadaism', hosted by Misha Glenny, BBC Radio 4, 16 April 2026.

Carr, Cynthia, *Candy Darling: Dreamer, Icon, Superstar*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2024.

Diederichsen, Diedrich, 'American Surrealism as Asylum: Critique and Glorification in Goth and Other Shadowy Movements', *Texte zur Kunst*, no. 65, 2007.

Strange Universe (Winter), 'Dry Cleaning + Womb', The Hollywood Avondale, 3 June, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

Plath, Sylvia, *Crossing the Water*, Harper and Row, 1971.

Backrooms, Kane Parsons (dir.), with performances by Chiwetel Ejiofor and Renate Reinsve, A24, 2026.

Moin, Paste, AD 93, 2022.

Arrangement, Coconut Mango (single), Arrangement Entertainment Group, 2018.

Psychic Ills, One Track Mind, Sacred Bones Records, 2013.

Rhododendron, Ascent Effort, The Flenser, 2026.

Michael Nau, Some Twist, Suicide Squeeze Records, 2017.

Water From Your Eyes, Water From Your Eyes (EP), Water From Your Eyes and Many Hats, 2016.

School Fair, Unexpected Violence, Mutual Records, 2026.

De Stevens, Big Small Town (EP), 772143 Records DK, 2020.

Chanel Beads, Your Day Will Come, Jagjaguwar, 2026.

Cass McCombs, Interior Live Oak, Domino Recording, 2025.
Serebii, Nothing Grows Here, Serebii, 2026.
Rhododendron, Protozoan Battle Hymn, Happy Family Records, 2021.
Mandy Indiana. ... (EP), Fire Talk, 2021.
Radio Anorak, Rememberer, Rememberer, 2025.
A Shoreline Dream, Avoiding the Consequences, A Shoreline Dream, 2006.
Dead Leaf Echo, Beyond.Desire, PaperCup, 2017.
Cologne, Vanilla Abstract, Memory No. 36 Recordings, 2015.
Arthur Russell, Another Thought, The Estate of Arthur Russell, 1993.

Millie Dunstall / Art-related consumption (since my last submission), 20 May 2026

Devolution always comes packaged in the shiny language of empowerment. Take the 2001 health system reforms, where the planning, funding and delivery of healthcare was devolved to twenty-one newly-established district health boards. These changes were supposedly intended to facilitate innovation, with the State setting out a “broad direction and structure for the system” without being “overly prescriptive” about what this should look like in practice (Waitangi Tribunal’s Hauora: Report on Stage One, p. 40.). While its proponents waxed lyrical about strengthening local autonomy and community participation, the following decades exposed many of the tensions inherent in devolved governance. Quality of and access to care varied widely depending on location, while boards differed in their organisational capacity, accountability mechanisms and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Fragmentation also hindered implementation of a coordinated national strategy, with districts developing individual responses to challenges experienced across the country.

This history was at the forefront of my mind when Creative New Zealand recently announced its plan to transition to a regional funding model. Instead of administering funds directly, CNZ will devolve this responsibility to sixteen regional organisations – “enabling regions to make decisions about their arts development needs.” The registration-of-interest process to become one of these bodies closed on 29 May, a remarkably tight timeframe given the announcement came only earlier that month. Successful applicants will be notified in June, with their responsibility for delivery beginning from July next year. How will these be selected? All we know is that CNZ is looking specifically for “trusted organisations, collectives or consortiums deeply connected to their communities, who understand their local creative ecology” and “have a base infrastructure to build on.” Whether or not a suitable organisation exists in each region is another question. The role of CNZ, meanwhile, will shift to leadership and oversight.

Perhaps one of the greatest ironies of devolution is that it is always done in the name of efficiency, while in practice adding further levels of bureaucracy. This proliferation of bureaucratic complexity is addressed in Marek Poliks and Roberto Alonso Trillo’s *Exocapitalism: Economies with Absolutely No Limits* (2025). While the book makes some bold and controversial claims that I don’t necessarily agree with, its core theories of ‘lift’ and ‘drag’ feel relevant here. ‘Lift’ is described as capital’s innate drive away from the messy human layer and its physical dependencies towards abstraction, while ‘drag’ involves attempts by the State to embed itself within this lifting process. Increasingly, the scope of the State is “redirected from direct social reproduction work to indirect management work” (p. 109), with the delivery of public goods and services occurring only after a “cascade of deferrals” (p. 111) through intermediary layers.

For the authors, this kind of bureaucratisation functions to enlarge the surface area of a problem, courting the “attention of drifting exocapitalist eddies” (p. 108) and creating opportunities for “interstitial value-added generativity” (p. 102). It is worth keeping in mind that the arts sector is especially amenable to these kinds of activities because it already works explicitly with abstract forms of symbolic and speculative value. In this regard, the most revealing claim from CNZ is arguably that the regional bodies “will be supported to focus on growing investment and building stronger regional relationships, including with councils, iwi, philanthropy and business.” Their role, in other words, will not be limited to funding arts production, but instead extends to attracting capital, cultivating networks, leveraging partnerships and mediating between artistic practice and external funding sources. To be fair to CNZ, perhaps this is all somewhat inevitable given that the level of government funding to the agency has remained the same since 2006. This might be the most damning detail of all.

Lucy Reid / The Drag of Devolution

To whomever it may concern.

I'm a recent graduate from Ilam School of Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury, majoring in Sculpture and finishing with Honours.

I'm starting to think that doesn't actually mean too much, as I see your advertised position – as with most positions I'm interested in – calls for 3–4 years of work experience. I have rigorous experience in longform essay writing, gruelling research tactics, quick assignment turnarounds and artmaking. Your position also calls for knowledge in modern office technology, which my entire schooling career has required me to be fluent in. Sorry oldies, that's my (only) leg up.

My recent employment history includes an assistant technician role at Ilam Campus Gallery, which I basically bothered into existence and lasted for about two shows before the position was scrapped.

But here I will write about it like I'm a trained pro, of course. I loved working with people to put up their artwork, the technical aspect engaged a part of my brain I didn't realise I had. My dad says I ought to go into a trade – he says it to me every time I call him. The rest of my employment history consists of seven years of hospitality work.

I have excellent front-facing work experience. This mostly means I have an ability to smile even when people are being complete and utter assholes and I can pour one hell of a beer. While being a job I can tolerate, with aspects I do enjoy and find fulfilling, my degree sits and stares at me, collecting dust in its frame.

If I was being genuine, I'd say I wouldn't be applying for this job if I didn't really want it. There's an external dread to this whole daily work thing. I'd like to find one that I can finally put some of the knowledge I gathered from university to the test and maybe finally feel fulfilled after spending an entire day at work. It's hard writing a CV and hoping your personality somehow shines through. Ultimately, though, I'm aware that really wanting a job isn't actually seen as a skill, that my lack of 3–4 years of experience will be the thing that doesn't land me the position, and I will sink back into the comfortable familiarity of my hospitality job and try not to think about how many years it will take me to pay off my student loan.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing back from you.

Cherry N T Mitchell.

Cherry Mitchell / Curriculum Vitae

My poem responds to Joanna Margaret Paul's desire that our connection to the natural world can inspire creativity and subvert oppressive norms. Central to her intimate and artistic exploration of feminine subjectivity and care, nature serves as a sanctuary not to shy away from. It morphs into a poetic object, an intimate room, and an embodiment of time and place.

Mimosa pudica

I plucked a flower
from the earth

its petals fell

as if all the vitality

secretly held

was scattered

to whom

needed it most

Cindy Zeiher / Joanna Margaret Paul, *Imagined in the Context of a Room*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, 2021

Les Misérables is a musical powerful enough to withstand almost anything. The logic of the musical is clear. Its emotional core is protest action, revolutionary thought and standing up to power. The musical itself should, therefore, be able to withstand activist scrutiny.

On 4 October 2023, five protestors from the UK protest group Just Stop Oil stormed the stage of the Sondheim Theatre during the major protest song from Les Misérables in front of a West End audience. The logic of the protest action was clear, and yet the West End audience booed the protest action as it took place, therefore betraying their own complicity in the spectacle of real politics made into airless theatre. Peter Brook argued that “[g]ood theatre depends on a good audience, [therefore] every audience has the theatre it deserves.” So, surely, a great production of Les Misérables must be one in which its audience could conceivably be compelled into revolutionary action at any moment. Or perhaps one in which the performance itself might be interrupted by the real spectre of death.

How is it possible, then, for there to be genuine political efficacy to the airless and boring production of Les Misérables I saw put on by Christ’s College and St. Margaret’s College?

Christ’s College and St. Margaret’s College are two of New Zealand’s most expensive private schools. So when they staged an average production of Les Misérables, much like Just Stop Oil, they forced an unwilling audience to contend with an ethical double-bind.

The logic of this production was obvious at once – private school children got an opportunity to put on two costumes: one was the costume of justice, law-making and the bourgeoisie; the other was the costume of poverty. There are jokes in Les Misérables and they’re always at the expense of the poor. As I watched the rich boys from Christ’s College perform these songs, the jokes twisted in on themselves and stopped being funny. The production became an opportunity for the most talented actors in the school to reveal themselves as individuals ready to scapegoat the poor as caricatures devoid of the full spectrum of human emotion. In this production, the only emotions that poor characters could express were misery and horniness.

It’s impossible to watch Les Misérables without viewing it as an anachronism for the struggles of the here and now. This meant that in 2026, Les Misérables played effortlessly as a musical about the struggle for Palestinian liberation. What else could it possibly be about? In the years since 2023, the imaginary potential of activism has become clamped down in public discourse. The general public now accepts increasingly authoritarian approaches to legislating against activism and to enforce an anti-activist version of the law. There is no arguing it: these legislative changes have come about because of Israel’s continuation of a massive ongoing genocide in the Gaza strip.

This change has accidentally made the theatre a vital forum for public discourse and thought again. It was impossible to sit in the Christ’s College auditorium and view Les Misérables as anything but an airless cosplay of real revolution. Watching the material performed like this exposed how tricky the political needs of our current moment actually are. But it also exposed how ill-equipped the grown-up rich kids of our nation will be to deal with change if and when it comes.

There were all the usual signposts of a high school production – inconsistencies in blocking logic, overenthusiastic performances, imprecise vocal technique, passive background actors, lead performers that became energised only when it was their turn to sing, and dead bodies that miraculously sprung to life in blackouts so they could walk offstage.

This zombification of the revolutionary body in the Christ's College auditorium was the most politically radical image in the production. There are many scenes in *Les Misérables* in which characters are shot, including ensemble chorus members. These mimetic representations of death mean nothing inside the context of the theatre – the same deaths will be repeated every night. A dead revolutionary never stays dead.

And every image reveals its shadow-image. All theatres are silos from the outside world, and *Les Misérables* in this rendition acted as a silo separating us from images of dismembered school children in Palestine. Here we could watch the high schoolers of New Zealand play at their own dismemberment. But just for a moment it was possible to imagine a radical transmutation, and a stage littered with the corpses of the wealthiest white men in New Zealand.

Josiah Morgan / *Les Misérables*, Christ's College and St. Margaret's College co-production, Christ's College Auditorium, 14–17 May 2026

A single-channel video performance by Li Binyuan called *Freedom Farming* (2014), part of the exhibition *Forever Tomorrow: Chinese Art Now* at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, made me feel nostalgic for something that doesn't belong to me. I reroute my thoughts because belonging is a construct that has helped to create separation.

The wall text says that the artist returned to his homeland in the Hunan Province, Yongzhou, and in front of his community he throws himself into the water and mud until he collapses. The camera pans out so we can see his community and some of them look like they are laughing and grieving.

"Li described each leap as an attempt to escape his origins and each fall as an inevitable return." I didn't watch the beginning or the end so my experience happened somewhere in the 5.02min video, imprinting in my memory a visual endless loop.

Prescribing nostalgia to an experience of an artwork feels a bit like a constructed reality. I think that it is okay to long for something that was never yours, in the same way homesickness can exist without a clear beginning or end to it.

Java Bentley / *Returning to your land, Forever Tomorrow: Chinese Art Now* at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, viewed Mothers' Day, 10 May 2026

Himene

When I am weary and burdened with hunger
for home
or my mother,
which is the same thing –

I put in my headphones,
take a walk and scroll
The Bad Book,
till I find the Gospel, that is –

The 'Māori Shed Party' playlist.
Yea, though I walk through the valley
of Hawkhurst Road,
I give thanks to the Creator –

Spotify username @Tyra Dunn,
94,355 loyal disciples.
I pay my tithe (*any koha are appreciated*),
And lo –

I te marama tuarima,
God said, "Let there be music,"
And there was music:

E Papa, e ipo, e hine hoki mai.
I raise my eyes to Rangi and shout āe!
Maumahara noa ahau, engari,
You're slippin' away from me.

But storms never last,
do they, baby?
After all, these are just silly love songs.

How bizarre,

that these misty frequencies,
these pearly shells,
should feel like magic.

See what love can do?

So with the moonlighting
The Way home:
I am haloed.

Prince Tui Teka takes hold of my right hand,
And I pray –

God, please do keep my mum.

Tessa Boraston, Response to Te Marama
Puoro o Aotearoa / NZ Music Month, May
2026

On discovering the teeth motif

Black host strung with ghost teeth
Running through like a chain.
Cog's transmission's path? Struth,
Grab ahold, take a ride, don't complain!

Whistling through the black swathe
Like a night train. All lit up!
Transparent and opaque, 'til bathed
In the grease of realism's muck.

Gloopy, hard resinous earth,
Echoed in the painting's plan.
It holds its hostage with such mirth
Binding and threading beyond deadpan.

In jest these teeth bite and thrive,
Flexing the web of painting's drive!

Towards a taxonomy

These recurring motifs suffuse:
Coat hangers, ships, cog's teeth.
Chains make refrains, links to use
Semiotics wither like widow's wreaths.

Suplicants gravitate in such absence
Confusion swarms the unmarked ground
Diffusion, agglomeration in happenstance
Aleatory strategies deployed and found.

Territories are marked and observed,
Then seamlessly stitched back together.
It's a constant reminder how absurdly
We're all haplessly bound to such tethers.

These seemingly innocuous disparate
rituals.
These compunctions are always
salvageable victuals.

Reversals

White on black reverses tonality
There's a topography implied
Assured as semiotic banality
To rent plunder the veiled

Lucidity. We need to hold you hostage.
So snugly, so tight, no one can decide,
Who imbibes who? This distilled latch
Cross-hatched and over-fed regicide.

Realism, even if it's a second order
Reflection. Cadges an expression,
A codex for our troubadour
Cargo, no dispositional explication.

Can't you loosen your talons beyond this
Imposition and negation? Why gissa kiss!

Recto/Verso

Recto, verso. One's dictate stays mum.
Structures imply a code to follow.
Take the tall plinth-like column,
Mirrored on the floor as a horizontal
shadow.

Echoes are responses. The gallery's
Architectural excess is dragged
Into the framework. Distilleries
Of fashionable filigree are bonded

To mute obfuscation only to be held tight
By the excess of draughtsman's clarity
Measure for measure, with such delight,
There's no escaping this disparity.

Where the noise abates infinitesimally,
Grey always pads out the adjectival fixity.

Hamish Win, Four Sonnets on Oliver
Perkins' *A Contiguous Body*, Whangārei Art
Museum, February–June 2026



Pure improvisation is the sole rule when playing. This group has never rehearsed for a recording or performance. Performance *is* rehearsal.

Obstruction is seen as a virtue. Players may experience limitations which seek to drag the music into unforeseen transcendental predicaments. Cinematic blocking can limit the player's movements while advancing the organic quality of the documentation process. This limitation can lead to ecstatic bewilderment, while occasionally, though merely temporarily, crippling the performer.

The players embrace a communal, anti-hierarchical approach to ensemble playing. While Nick Harte and William Callaghan may herd the brethren together for recordings and recitals, no one is 'in charge'.

Documentation is a key Dyschezian component. Archiving of the music for future reference is of assistance to all the communities of the earth.

The recording device (a Tascam Portastudio II 4-track) is considered by the transcriber to be an instrument in itself. It is as erratic, analogue, unreliable and warm as any human being and will capture human error accordingly. Error and failure are virtues. The machine's sound may be repellant to humans born after the beginning of the 21st century due to its ability to push the instrumentation it transcribes into the red stratosphere, adding an unvarnished patina sorely lacking in digital technology. For this reason it retains a link to late-60s free music and the New Zealand free noise scene of the 90s.

Recordings will be made available to the public within 24 hours of the documentation process. This is for the mental health of the transcriber, Nick Harte.

All archives will be available to the public through a 'pay what you want' model if the listener wishes to contribute to the brethren's campaign. As Albert Ayler said, "Music is the healing force of the universe", and as such should be as freely public as possible.

Configurations of the group in performance before an audience or during the documentation process should not be repeated as discovery and development are the goal. A successful ensemble should only be repeated if it is of benefit to the mental health of the public at large.

Observation and communication are guiding principles that seek to move the music into unexplored realms. However, *intentional* negation of such principles may also yield unorthodox plateaus that will generally assist the blossoming of the ensemble's process.

Process *is* the Dyschezian methodology and documentation is part of the procedure, allowing the brethren to observe their past mistakes and atone for their sins.

Any human being may participate in a performance but must first undergo a Dyschezian initiation ritual devised at the discretion of founding members Nick Harte and William Callaghan.

The ensemble's name operates as a declaration of intent and was inspired by real events. Co-founder Nick Harte, after two days of fasting and recent sexual intercourse, experienced Dyschezia while defecating, which led to fainting and fracturing a rib on the sharp, metallic rim of a clothes basket. The emergency department refused to grant any pain relief due to addiction issues.

Dyschezia is described as the medical term for difficulty, pain or straining during a bowel movement. Tenesmus is regarded as a distressing, painful and often ineffective urge to empty the bowels, even when they are already empty. This near-tautology expresses not only the desperate intent of the ensemble to exhaust every potentiality, but also the sonic result of such an activity.

hour films are simply an excuse for directors to not edit their films. Oppenheimer did not need to be three hours long. Kokuho, as good as it was, did not need to be three hours long. I am not wasting \$16 during a cost-of-living crisis on a three-hour film because a director felt they were above editing.

Queer censorship

When I learned at the age of 11 that queer censorship was the reason my beloved Tamen De Gushi was put on permanent hiatus, I became a lifelong hater of this kind of censorship. This is a personal matter, and I guess you could say this was also my political awakening.

The lost art of having a personal style

I've noticed less and less people have a style that is actually personal to them. The rise of curated clothing boxes, aesthetics and -cores, and the commodification of personality have diminished the opportunity to actually explore style and develop it as something personal to the person wearing it. Additionally, I believe that social media has amplified awareness of ourselves. You can be recorded and be exposed to online criticism at any point whether or not you're aware of it. As a consequence of this, there is more incentive to constantly look good which then leads to a fear of experimenting. Why learn how to layer clothes through trial and error when you could watch a video? With more self awareness of how we appear to others, and more reliance on learning style through social media, style is becoming less and less personal.

Andy Warhol

I simply do not like him, no further explanation. Especially his piss paintings. There is a lot of art I will defend, but not that.

For the past few months, I've been in a writing funk. However, the other day I was watching an interview with John Waters in which he listed things he disliked for one minute straight. Safe to say, this was very inspiring. I feel like I've been so wrapped up in thinking about what I'm supposed to write rather than what I actually enjoy writing. That I should be writing something deep and meaningful. However, John Waters reminded me that, deep down, I am a hater. I don't care if that comes across as cynical or makes me seem pessimistic. I enjoy nothing more than taking out my anger through ranting. Therefore, as a way to reconnect with this part of myself, I have written my own list of things in art and culture that I currently dislike.

Three-hour movies

There used to be a time where having a three-hour runtime was somewhat absurd, so, the film would need to justify its run time with a strong story. Currently, three-hour films have become more and more common, and it has begun to feel like three-

When people dismiss GL (Girls Love) and BL (Boys Love) media

Whether you like it or not, this kind of media is many people's first instances of LGBT+ representation (especially for younger generations). Rarely do you see LGBT+ characters treated just like any other character in mainstream media. For these reasons, I will always be a defender of GL and BL because God forgive me if I want to see LGBT+ characters who are happy.

The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

This is a sham of an institution. More and more we are seeing non-rock artists be inducted. Look, I like Dolly Parton, but she isn't considered a music legend because she makes rock music. There is no question that Wu-Tang Clan had an impact on music, however, once again they aren't famous for being a rock and roll group. At this point, they should rename it the Music Hall of Fame rather than assigning the hall to a specific genre that inductees aren't famous for participating in.

AI Drawing (I know, really original)

I don't like when people use AI and claim it's because they're "not good at drawing". I can guarantee that a bad drawing will always be a million times better than anything AI creates purely because it has actual emotion behind it. Regardless of whether you are for or against the artist's meaning being important to an artwork, I believe that people are attracted to art because of the humanity behind it. The way in which someone draws something or their selected subject matter are all impacted by their own lived experiences. AI strips this away and replaces it by scrapping the internet for human-made artwork before frankensteining it together. A cat that is poorly drawn will always be better than using a machine to plagiarise from artists. Drawing isn't a gatekept skill, anyone can do it.

Christopher Nolan's Odyssey

It hasn't come out but I'm sick of watching dim, poorly-lit films with bland costume design.

The 2026 Met Gala

I'll admit there were some very beautiful and well-made clothes this year. However, with Costume Art as the theme, I was hoping for more treatment of clothing and costuming as an art form in its own right. Despite this, the majority of looks played it too safe. Suki Waterhouse, Connor Storrie and Jennie looked great, but for a show where the theme is Costume Art, their outfits didn't look like anything special. On the other end of the scale you had people who may have gone all out; however they relied too heavily on simply referencing pre-existing art. Ben Platt, Madonna and Hunter Schaffer who, again, looked great, it's just their outfits largely relied on the references being the focal point rather than the outfit itself. Of course, it wasn't all doom and gloom as occasionally there were outfits on theme (Miles Chaney-Watson, Cardi B and Sabrina Carpenter were my favorites) yet they were far and few between. While I feel like this year's Met Gala highlights how celebrities and designers are too caught up with looking good rather than taking risks. It's becoming a fight between playing safe and looking good and taking a risk and potentially failing. Risk vs. Reward. It also highlights how people seem to believe that clothing cannot sustain itself as an artform, that it has to rely on referencing already established artforms to be taken seriously. Although I would say I hope next year's Met Gala is better, I highly doubt it will be.

People who don't understand how clothing construction works

I have had enough of watching people attack sewers online purely because they do not understand how constructing a garment works. If you don't understand basic garment construction, then maybe don't comment on a plus-size sewer's Instagram insisting her seams are incorrectly placed.

People who are against season 5 of Bridgerton

Imagine being homophobic enough to prefer seeing an abusive straight relationship instead of a happy lesbian one. Seriously, get a life.

The Victoria and Albert Museum

In the depths of the V&A archives there is a dress from the iconic gothic Lolita brand Moi-même-Moitié. Anyone who knows me knows that I absolutely adore this brand and its creator Mana Sama, therefore I have consumed as much content on him and his brand as possible. Therefore I was absolutely appalled to see that the V&A's label for this dress was blatantly spreading misinformation. For the gallery label, the V&A have written that Moi-même-Moitié has "two main lines: Elegant Gothic Lolita (EGL) for women and Elegant Gothic Aristocrat (EGA) for men." This is so incorrect that, in my opinion, it not only disrespects Mana Sama and the Gothic Lolita empire he has built, but it also reflects a wider issue with museum institutions. Either a simple Google search or brief glance at Moi-même-Moitié's website would reveal that neither EGL or EGA are defined by gender presentation. EGA is focused on androgyny while EGL is enjoyed by both men and women and has never been restricted to one gender or the other. Mana Sama himself is famous for dressing Lolita and he is a man. It makes no sense to claim EGL and EGA are gendered fashion choices and reflects poor research on the V&A's side. I also think this is an example of how western archives have a tendency to project their own ideas onto objects within their collections. Rather than allowing an object to exist in its own cultural context, western notions of a gender binary are applied in order to appeal to a wider audience. However, this leads to not only a gross misrepresentation of Moi-même-Moitié and the Lolita sub-culture, but also is disrespectful to Mana Sama and his beliefs.

People who think Maurice should have ended up with Clive

I hate seeing posts from people who think Maurice should have ended up with Clive instead of Alec. It's almost as if Maurice didn't spend four pages essentially bullet-pointing why he can never be with Clive. I think that if you think Maurice should have been with Clive then there is no hope for media literacy.

Molly Noven, Fighting Writer's Block with a List of Things I Don't Particularly Like

He¹ says all will be well once the Earth reduces the population by half. He² says that the snow never fell, often, and that the dryness in May is a fair by-product of a more volatile summer, as if there is some weathered private sector separate from our atmosphere. He³ lulls about how lovely our methane emissions are, how sweet, and threatens anyone who will pull its production from his teeth. He⁴ ridicules the *costly and irrational climate change response* and peels back the skin to expose more bones.⁵ The *apostle of industry*⁶ is on his⁷ knees, cries for our survival to stop being a barrier for his⁸ needs.⁹ He says¹⁰ the fish are sailing south, mourns for them in his lifetime. As if his¹¹ is the only lifetime. And there, in the distance, the great¹² man¹³ calls,¹⁴ *we're out*, and turns the fingers of his right hand to flint. And we¹⁵ write, wondering how we¹⁶ can still see the page in such a deep night.

Sian Alexia / No Other Place to Stand: An anthology of climate change poetry from Aotearoa New Zealand, edited by Jordan Hamel, Rebecca Hawkes, Erik Kennedy and Essa Ranapiri, 2022.

- 1

good on you babe.
/ You got what you
wanted. The juicy
earth / the factoried
women / the rivers /
the mountains / all
bowing for you.
- 2

But now / the
atmosphere is
betraying you / and
you are reddening
in places / where
I can bare it. / A
warrior / like my
ancestors I survived
/ annihilation.
- 3

Our country has
forgotten where
it lies.
- 4

we have a living
mother
she breathes and
breathes
and she will cast
us out
- 5

e kāore tētahi e
mawhiti ora
- 6

Fishing nets on the
high seas are fifty
kilometers long.
In the freedom of the
high seas
a mass killing goes
on, expertly, and on.
- 7

The ocean is an
open question
- 8

The ocean is an
open sewer. So far
it takes
what it gets
- 9

The land is like a
knife, out
of its sheath and
glinting in the sun.
I'd like to hold that
pointed knife.
- 10

I'd like to speak with
that knife.
I'd like to save a
home, a tribe,
and a heritage with
that knife.
- 11

How shall we save
this land
for our children
- 12

e kāore tētahi e
mawhiti ora
- 13

no delight in
apocalypse
when we're made of
flammable histories
- 14

You do cry.
You press the dust
deep into your
fingers
- 15

All I can do is plead,
all I can do is call...
- 16

All I can do is write

1 June 2026

Tēnā koe Theia, aka Em-Haley Kukutai-Walker.

I have been yearning to write you for more than a few weeks.
A lack of courage held me back. It is a yearning different to desire, quite apart from longing, pining, craving or hankering. I still am yet to figure out what I have to say to you beyond the typical vacuous blubbering of admiration. Pale compared to your fierceness and fearlessness.

I imagine at this point, if you have any people that screen your post, they will cast this letter into a pile of all the other crazies, possibly stalkers, that worship your image as portrayed in social media. Somehow, I doubt that this is a fabricated persona; I sense that you live this person genuinely. Perhaps, like with me, there is no divide between art and life. For it was no theatrical performance, stage set or recording studio in which you spoke your truth at the 25th United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in

April this year. I am responsible for at least twenty plays of that FB reel, mesmerised by the clarity with which you melded pop-music superstar life with cultural leader, feminist demonstrator and political defender of democracy and peace. You sat, in a posture of defiance to the normative king's throne, with two guardians by your side, renouncing past wrongs, current policies and on-going Te Tiriti o Waitangi breaches. You told them by golly. You called this an intervention. Those pointed ornamented nailed finger/claws threw accusations to the ears of the house. Intelligent, emotional, persuasive, clear and forthright, you made it a good day to be a feminist, a good day to be a Treaty ally, and a fine day to be an artist. Here, I heard you live out the lyrics of Hine-nui-te-Pō:

You fear the teeth between my thighs
Carved from the flame of ancient time
I am the dark, I am the door
I am the silence after war
My womb is not your story to twist
My name's a curse upon your lips
My legs are mountains you'll never shift
I am the judge, the pain, and the pit

Looking forward to the day your book chapter about traditional Māori Peacebuilding Practices is launched!

I suspect your costumes are your clothes and vice versa. A blurred divide between everyday life and performance. What I would give to be that unapologetically brave, flamboyant, eccentric, expressive, outlandish! It speaks volumes to the stories that underpin your name: Thia, Thea, Theia, all variants of the name for Euryphaessa, a Greek Titaness, goddess of sight, divine light and the shimmering blue sky, the daughter of Gaia and Uranus, mother of the Sun, the Moon and the Dawn. And let's not forget maker of moonbeams, the personification of aether and a named prophet. And if that was not profound enough, the name of a protoplanet in the early life of the solar system thought to hit the young Earth planet so hard metallic magma burst to the surface to explode and scatter the planet Theia as debris. It was this scientific cataclysm that created the moon. And I believe you can prompt a geological shudder. (In fact, like many, I am counting on it.) And doesn't it seem fitting that a character named Theia awakes from centuries-long sleep in the seventh episode of the television series Xena: Warrior Princess?

That gig you played as Te Kaahu last year at Māoriland Hub was far too short for the intensity of experience it conjured. I was that dowdy, white, middle-aged, feminist, standing out like a sore thumb in the dark room of dark faces, moving to the beats, grooving like I was young and uninhibited by fibromyalgia. That venue was so intimate, so close, that the show embraced the audience as satellite performers. You were bathed in a sunset-sunrise luminosity that shifted from rosy to pale ghostly blue as the song's emotional tenor shifted. I recall a song that sounded much like the chanting of a mōteatea; stomping made the building structure rumble. We were in the real presence of ancestors summoned by your voice as it spoke to current leaders' egregious fast-track dealings throwing the country and Māori back several decades with regard to race relations, environmental protection, poverty and economic prosperity. All these things were already moving at a glacial pace but, until now, progressing. Those words you flung out into the sonic atmosphere cut to the core. I had to listen; I had to let it have a deep and long-lasting affect. I held no sense of fear, just an honest reckoning.

I cannot breathe please step off of my chest
Loosen the noose tightening round my neck
I wish for freedom and to sing my song
We're prisoners on the very land we're from
That was slamming poetry for sure.

I don't believe in casual coincidence. It is not an accident that today it is the King's Birthday, and we both know it is not a rangatira that it honours. BALDH3AD indeed. No mincing words. True respect. And here it is when I realise a serendipitous collision as I turn to page 187 of Tina Makereti's new book *The Compulsion in Us*, a chapter by the same title. Like your early songs, in which you called out as healing and lullaby-ish, her words are gentle truth-tellers bearing out secrets of her life, their life, our lives in the nomenclature of unpretentious language. (Oh, how I still strive for that quality you both exude!) I found a likeness between your formidable drive and her calm yet far from bucolic story-telling; you expanded what it is to create with compulsion and she expanded on what compulsion is. Highly persuasive compared to an irresistible inner

urge to act. Tina's essay boils down to being captivated by things that are old and odd, romanticised and beautiful, horrifying and voyeuristic, things that attract and repel strangely so about "what human beings are, what we are capable of." The dresses, bodices, dressing gowns and hair styles you wear reference older times brought forward. They are reminders of what was in the context of what is. Like you, Tina confirms that rocks, birds, mountains, plants, fish, and so on, are live, that bones and pounamu should be kept warm, cherished, rather than kept in a glass case or dark cold archival drawer. She had to go to Germany to re-realise the value of being a custodian of taonga, to rehearse in a foreign land amongst artefacts that yearn to come home what it is to commune, shake hands, share food in relational physical gestures. She compels me, us, to look closer, deeper, slower. You went to the UN to remind the world about atrocities happening right now under their nose, right down under. That is the savage world you refer to. I think your voice is more like ripping a plaster off to reveal the infected wound it hides. Both valuable voices, tools to use wisely on the right occasion.

Perhaps my next letter should be written to Tina.

Would it burden you to hope that you are summoned by way of your namesake, a literal and metaphorical call for peace? A next enlightenment that undoes The Enlightenment and all the trauma it has brought to so many? I know it may mean very little; I am with you, perhaps as another guardian standing in the back row of an equity chamber. I may be a deluded foolhardy Pākehā to confess this: I have a dead-serious attraction to your message, to your presentation, to your performing body and voice. That reads a bit creepy even to me. Let's rephrase that: I am a fangirl exerting all the normative dimensions of being an avid, highly devoted follower, on the cusp of being light-hearted and giddy to being obsessed; someone who expresses passionate enthusiasm for what you bring to the world.

Consider this fanning of the highest order.

Te aroha mahana,
j

Julieanna Preston, Fanning

Maybe I am Paranoid.

When I was thinking about what I would write about, or what I was even interested in, I felt lost, and a bit overwhelmed by both choice and the lack of it entirely. I felt this until I was having a conversation with my mum, and she was doing that very attentive and loving parent thing where they ask you question after question, interrogating you to try and pull any tiny piece of information out of you. Admittedly, it was 9am, and I had worked till midnight, so I was about as close to a grumpy teenager as I could get, and I was far more interested in the fact that my three necklaces had knotted themselves together in my sleep.

On maybe the fourth question, about an essay, 'Paranoid and Reparative Reading; Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You' by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (written in 1997 and revised in 2003), I finally let something slip and managed to form something of a sentence longer than four words. It was finally an answer worth chewing on, an answer that distracted me momentarily from tugging at the knots pulling at my neck. We were talking about critical thinking, and Sedgwick's, and the cautious roots that a paranoid stance has in suspicion, as opposed to a more connective and hopeful, reparative positioning.

Sedgwick's writing explores two modes of analysis, paranoid and reparative. While the anticipatory paranoid reading has been essential for many of the theoretical frameworks that made incredible bounds towards



dismantling hegemonic ideologies, such as queer and feminist theories, to me, this kind of analysis often felt as though blinds were being pulled back to reveal some tangled, knotted socio-political infection.

While such identification can be an excitement, it's also a point of impending doom. Deeply entrenched heteronormativity, patriarchy, colonial harm are frankly terrifying. They make my stomach anxious, my hands fidget, my senses on edge to where the string of one necklace wrapped around and through the beaded cord of another feels suffocating again as I desperately try to unravel them. Until I give up, hopeless, and take the whole matted thing off.

In research, I have enjoyed unwinding these structures in a problem-solving manner – picking at the tangles, finding the knots, until the chains are once more singular. Yet, despite being separated for a moment in a flattened, linear form, the necklaces are still intact. Until, that is, they are put back on and worn again, as they are intended to be, and inevitably become tangled once again. I could just stop wearing them. I would be free of the untangling and the frustration; but, I would also be exempt from the participation of wearing them, excluded from the performance and the experience.

The revealing and dismantling impacts paranoid reading and theoretical frameworks such as queer theory have made have been essential; however, in some ways, this stance has become such a dominant mode in criticality that the end point of analysis looked like exposure itself. At the time, Sedgwick beckoned for reparative reading to come more readily into conversation, so new ways of thinking and feeling might begin to materialise. There is such a hopeful search for possibility, for new connective tissue, and comfort with ambiguity held in Sedgwick's idea of reparative reading.

My necklaces mean so many things to me: gifts from friends, markers of a birthday or achievement, reminders of family and people I hold dear. They are also pretty, things of aesthetic value, spiritual value. Yes they tangle, they have broken and even accidentally bruised me before. I can untangle them, not without frustration, and I will always put them back on. They connect me to people, to places and to myself; but maybe I should stop sleeping with them on.

(I won't.)

Sophia Daellenbach, *Untangling Necklaces* / Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's 'Paranoid and Reparative Reading; Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You' in *Touching Feeling: Affect, pedagogy, performativity*, 2003

She's wearing the yellow dress.

Yes.

The one from Egypt?

Yes. The family found it when they were travelling through.

When was that?

In the 60s.

The whole family?

No, just the four of them, overland from Egypt to Thailand.

With the little baby, the little girl.

Yes, and her older brother, around eight years old.

He looked after her, just a baby.

He was from her first marriage, his sisters are not there.

And the baby?

She is from this pairing, her father and mother, they are unmarried.

Four of them in the Volkswagen Kombi. And they started in Egypt?

Yes, that is where the father is from.

And the jacket?

No. The silk jacket is from somewhere else.

It doesn't look Thai, and it is misshapen.

Yes.

Too hot for this climate.

It looks like a Turkmen design.

The embroidery makes it heavy.

Yes.

She has a serious expression.

She is reciting a poem.

One that she wrote?

It is the start of a longer poem she wrote for the house.

Does it make her sad?

It is impossible to say.

And what of the floor? Misshapen too.

They do not know. It is collapsing.

And they will sell the house.

Yes.

What of all the things?

It is in boxes.

And the gold?

They do not know.

The gold bars which were used to hold the edges of the mosquito net down at night?

They may be gone, to buy the land which is being sold.



What's that sound?

It is the frogs.

They make a lot of noise.

They will be here a long time.

Orissa Keane, Script, after Marguerite Duras

Edith,

How often could you be enticed to capture the essence of a moment in bold charcoal strokes? Would you still feel it 350 paintings later? Would home still call your name?

EDITH HOW OFTEN COULD YOU BE ENTICED TO FURTHER STEP
COULD YOU HAVE BEEN WORDS BETWEEN THE ESSENCE
COULD YOU STILL FEEL IT

Would you hear the colours as they were or as you saw them? You saw them as they were and now modernity frames them, seeks to shrink, to sterilise, reintroduce the water you once logged your life and livelihood with. How long may you have continued capturing it all?

How relentless you must have been. What words between the leaves in 400 journals? Did they still make sense when you crossed the ocean, forbidden to further step into your dream?

What sound of an egg cracking in her delicate cup; the stillness and sanctum of a nursery. What sound of women wearing cuffs above their knees, of the sunshine in their eyes and their slow crawl to freedom?

EDITH THE AIR IN BOLD CHARCOAL STROKES WOULD ALL SHIFT
ESSENCE OF WOMEN WEARING CUFFS ABOVE THEIR SLOW CRAWL TO
THE OCEAN; FORBIDDEN CALL

What sound of an egg cracking in her delicate cup; the stillness and sanctum of a moment in bold charcoal strokes?

Art galleries are quiet places; hush the fishermen, slowly mute the water lapping weathered wood.

THE FISHERMEN SLOWLY MUTE
YOU MUST HAVE EVIDENCED LIFE AND CAPTURED THE OCEAN'S
FORBIDDEN CALL

In stillness you have evidenced life, and so it continues — — — the air in here is thick with the salt and grit of St. Ives. Slow echo of cobbled steps. The wet starch of potatoes passed from her hand to mine.

MOMENTS IN HERE ARE THICK WITH THE WEIGHT OF ST. IVES. BOLD
CHARCOAL STROKES STILL FEEL LIKE HOME. IT CONTINUES AFTER
THE FORBIDDEN CALL

Edith, what memory could you bear to release, what of life could you leave unseen? Did you know then you had grasped desire by its neck, know it would all shift in your absence?

**EDITH YOU MUST HAVE CONTINUED CAPTURING IT
YOU CROSSED THE WATER LAPPING WEATHERED WOOD
COULD YOU GRASP DESIRE BY ITS NECK THEN**

How often could you bear to release, what of life could you bear to release, what of life could you bear to release, what of life could you leave unseen? Did you ever think you were to be held by us this morning? One day, Rata says, they'll display our handbags in glass cases too.

Were you burdened by the weight of your work, even then? Did you ever think you were to be held by us this morning?

THE FORBIDDEN CALL, THE CHARCOAL STROKES WOULD ALL SHIFT,
BOLD CHARCOAL STROKES WOULD ALL SHIFT, WOULD ALL GRASP DESIRE
BY ITS NECK

One day, Rata says, they'll display our handbags in glass cases too.

Ella Sage / *Edith Collier: Early New Zealand Modernist*, Christchurch Art Gallery
Te Puna o Waiwhetū, 2026