

Tom Holland opens Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. As he reads, he drifts off imagining Gregor Samsa's villain arc. He imagines Spider-Man called in to save the city from a "huge verminous insect" terrorising the streets. He dissociates, seeing himself reading *The Metamorphosis* at the same angle as the '98 photograph of Matt Damon reading *The Odyssey* on the set of *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. He cringes at how performative he feels right now but then again that photograph looked staged with Matt Damon holding the title page open. Tom Holland texts Matt Damon, "Hey, were you really reading the odyssey in that old photo of you reading the odyssey? 😊" Damon: "Hey mate! No! lol not sure where that rumor came from... I was reading Dostoyevsky's crime and punishment. It's not that clear but you can kinda make out the cover."

Tom Holland is on set, in Peter Parker's apartment. Anthony Mackie surprise visits him in his Captain America costume. "Dude!" Holland exclaims. They exchange quips and the cast and crew laugh. Tom Holland leaves Pinewood Studios and is picked up by a taxi. He is driven to his apartment. He video-calls Zendaya. As she is talking, her makeup is getting removed by the makeup artist. Timothée Chalamet enters the screen. "My spider senses are tingling!" Tom Holland laughs. He gestures firing his left web-shooter at the screen.

Christopher Nolan texts Tom Holland, "We're editing these shots of you right now." He sends a photo of the monitor with Tom Holland as Telemachus learning how to fight. He sets his iPhone down and wonders how the film's going to be received. He replays the scene as he remembers it. He imagines Timothée Chalamet as Peter Parker; a much more emotional and brooding Peter. 'But would his style of performance translate well to a Marvel film?' he thinks. In this judgement, a swell of envy passes over his stomach. He sees Spider-Man ripping off his mask revealing a black and blue Timothée Chalamet. The vivid crimson hue of food colouring and corn syrup catching the light off his chin. His sunken eyes capture the emotions of a teenager grappling with god-given abilities, his desire to live his teenage life with MJ and Ned, and losing both parent figures, Aunt May and Tony Stark. One close-up, all in a few seconds, his orphic countenance conveying everything. He thinks about Robert Pattinson playing Vengeance. How he and director Matt Reeves conceived of a Kurt Cobain-inspired Bruce Wayne. '...But if Chalamet got the role, I would have got Paul Atreides in *Dune*.' Nirvana's 'Something in the Way' plays.

'The Odyssey' Cast Answer The 50 Most-Searches Questions. Robert Pattinson holds the card up, "How old is Telemachus in *The Odyssey*?"

Tom Holland, "16, I think?" He casts his gaze past Anne Hathaway over to Matt Damon.

Matt Damon: "I think it might be 18... because if I'm 20 years away..."

"Damn it, I played it like 16... Fuck!"

The cast laughs.

"But if I left when you were two, and I come back 20 years later, are you 22?"

"That would be correct."

Robert Pattinson, through laughter, "This is very easy to figure this out... How would you be 16 when he's gone for 20 years?"

"Yeah, I don't know where I got that from."

Matt Damon chimes in again, "I think you playing him young and you come of age in the movie so -"

"Yeah! I... I have started sweating, 'cause I think I realised a major flaw in my performance."

Tom Holland and Zendaya lay in bed. Zendaya has her AirPods in, watching Netflix on her MacBook. Tom Holland is reading Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. A passage:

He had long since eaten his fill, and was now lying lazily in the same place when his sister slowly turned the key in the lock as a sign that he should move back. This startled him, although he was almost asleep, and he scurried back under the sofa. But even for the short time his sister was in the room it cost him a great effort to stay under the sofa, because he had eaten so much that his body had become rather swollen, and he could hardly breathe in the confined space there. Between brief bouts of suffocation he watched with protruding eyes as his unsuspecting sister swept up with a broom both the remnants of his meal and the food he had not touched, and as if this too was no longer of any use, threw everything hurriedly into a pail which she covered with a wooden lid, and took it

all outside. Scarcely had she turned to go than Gregor pulled himself out from under the sofa, stretching himself and taking deep breaths.

Tom Holland pauses. 'I didn't think insects could breathe,' he thought. In his mind's eye he conjured a textbook schematic image of a grasshopper with bold arrows pointing inwards towards the abdomen indicating where oxygen intake would occur in the spiracles, the tiny openings in the body wall that direct oxygen directly to tissues via a tubular network of tracheae. He looks over to Zendaya on her iPhone, zooming in at her face and then the bejewelled spiderweb detail of the vintage Galliano silk dress worn for the Spider-Man: Brand New Day Los Angeles premiere. He thought about the latest character arc of Peter Parker's mental health compounding with developing arachnid DNA. 'What if Spider-Man turned into more of a spider? Grew an exoskeleton and several eyes instead of, you know, just becoming stronger, attuned to the senses, and with the ability to shoot organic web. There's probably a comic book adaptation of that out there somewhere where Spider-Man becomes as hideous and unbridled as his villains.'

Kosta Bogoevski / Tom Holland opens Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*

Fire Horse

Three horses stand on a plinth.

There was a horse in my heart from the time of childhood, before I learned fear.

Before I learned fear, there was a horse.

From amongst the collection of works by over ten different artists, it is the three horses on a plinth.

We are never undone from ourselves, never neutral ground for encounter. I have brought the atmosphere of my heart to the gallery, and there the three horses stand, waiting to greet me.

One is a pale glossy, with the kiss of soda and wood ash, licked blue and turquoise, mottled auburn on one side.

Another is a shade darker, also glossy.

The third is the dark horse, rough. It is the firebox horse. Placed not in the chamber with the rest of the pots, but right in the hearth. I watched it go up in flames. I call it Fire Horse.

The show is Off the Rails. Beth Harris, a friend and ceramic artist I am lucky to know, displays her horses alongside other works by artists and potters affiliated with Driving Creek Railway. It is not without premonition that I would love these horses the most – I have come to know them.

I saw Beth place them in the kiln, and I sat and watched as the flames licked their bodies.

I know that they were made by modelling scrunched newspaper into naive horse-shapes, which clay was then sculpted around. At some point early in the firing, the newspaper alights. It is not seen but it is known.

The horses are hollow because there was a fire inside.
They burnt up from within.

Wood becomes paper, becomes fire, becomes smoke
and ash.

Rock becomes gravel, becomes clay, becomes
earthenware, becomes stoneware.

There was once a little girl who loved horses.

*

The three horses bear the stories of their journey
through the fire. Placement in the kiln, flame direction.
Tales of exposure and protection.

It is the dark one I want.

Read the alchemy of existence in its body. Tail-less,
lost to the fire. Body rough and burnt metallic, one side
coated in an obsidian sheen, glimmers of green in the
light. I like how casually, quick-handed, the sculpting
of Fire Horse's body seems. It contradicts the truth of
its existence, which is meticulous labour and hard-
won miracles. Its back is sculpted into a candle holder,
which bears the scars of a melted nail, which will have
burnt away from a pellet used in the firing.

Yes, I want it. It's the most imperfect of the three. But it
is the year of the—

*

Fire Horse has come to sit on my shelf, and I light a
candle on her back whenever I need her to carry a load
for me.

It is the year that heatwaves crack and floods burst
banks and fascism is a hot flame being fanned by
desperation. I've become obsessed with the mystics.
I've been told my embracing of Rilke's "live out the
questions" could be a convenient excuse for apathy,
but gaining intimacy with the language of contradiction
seems necessary to survival.

Fire Horse is made strong by a burning up, hollowing
out, from inside.

Fire Horse is the master of transformation, and I am the
apprentice.

*

On my shelf, near where I keep Fire Horse, is a book
of Joy Harjo poems. Harjo was also a girl who loved
horses. She understands the intimacy of contradiction.

In 'Promise of Blue Horses', it is by running with "the
blue horses of electricity that surround the heart" that
she can "imagine a promise made when no promise
was possible."

Here I will be then, running with fire horse, burning
up, and burning a candle on her back when I've burnt
too fast and need to come back to something sacred,
something still.

It was the atmosphere of my heart that brought her
home from the gallery with me, and here it is again, hot,
in this writing.

I have always been a girl who loved horses, before I
knew fear.

Millie Godfery / Beth Harris, as exhibited in *Off the
Rails*, Driving Creek Gallery, Coromandel, 2 April – 3
May 2026



The day we turned to petrol,
I wrote nothing in my Notes app.
I'd written variations on the same two words
every day, the past two and a half years:
"Free [REDACTED]. Free [BLACK BOXES]."
Free petrol.

Hotdad69 diligently amended
A sub-article on the 'US military invasions
since World War II' Wikipedia page.

History happens to some of us more than others.

The day we turned to petrol,
we all huddled round the crackle and pop of the radio
and tuned in to the latest gallantries from our
valiant Chief Executive:

*"Look, I've been very clear on exactly what our position is,
which is that we're working to confirm our position,
which is that we do not support, or condemn,
or empathise with anything or anyone."*

Anyone can become petrol, if they really set their mind to it.
Study hard, and don't take no for an answer.

Anyone can be saved from tyranny, and injustice,
if they're actually willing to sacrifice
– themselves, and their families, and their schoolmates –
and be liberated from their physical form through the regular,
targeted application of self-driving American–Israeli cluster bombs.

Anyone can be Christian,
So long as they welcome into their heart the hyperviolent nature of God,
Accept the immaculate conception of Genghis Khan,
And patiently await the resurrection of Caligula.

Anyone can be American, as long as they condemn
themselves for dying
and congratulate the bullet
on its laser-focused, forward-facing approach
and go-getter attitude.

The day we turned to petrol,
they all went wild on the driving range
– Don and Ben up front, Chris and David in the back,
Sam Altman and the Ek guy carrying the bags
and all the tech bros live-posting themselves giddy, over X.

They all plus-oned their nubile AI girlfriends
to an Elvish-language pōwhiri just outside of Queenstown,
and cut the ribbon on their doomsday bunker re-creation of Jackson's Hobbiton,
the world's first subscription-based survival structure.

They drove crop circles round the Mackenzie Country's
expansive Alps-to-Sea golf course,
on the off chance an extraterrestrial audience peeking through the ozone hole
might be keen to connect, boost engagement, drive leads and expand their network.

The day we turned to petrol,
they guzzled us down and cranked up the Bluetooth,
singing out of time and out of tune:

*"Radioactive, radioactive,
Woah-oh-oh-oh I'm, woah-oh-oh-oh I'm,
Radioactive, radioactive."*

Solomona Vasa Davis / The day we turned to petrol

thinking about Maree and Alex's collaboration

in relation to their depictions of the mangrove's roots

holding land, water, and air

like a claw, like hands

hands as roots

shifting liquid horizon

uneven horizon that becomes about above and below

breathe in, breathe out

as homes

When reading about the māra, you must be active and ready because the garden is a “living place of learning and connection.”¹ Nurturing the land is about listening to the soil, seasons, cycles and tohu and this is best done collectively.

At the beginning of the year, as the stars related to your region rise above the horizon, Rob Small (Penny’s dad), launched his book *Te Taonga o Ngā Kūmara*. The project started with Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei and has extended to tracing the whakapapa of kūmara at Dignan St Community Garden in Point Chevalier, Auckland.

There are 16 varieties of kūmara detailed, one of which is the Beauregard or orange kūmara. You can find these piled in modern pukepuke in your local supermarket showing us that provenance is a part of everyday rituals. I like this book because it is only touching the surface, much like an artwork, and continues to give back to you long after you have finished it.

Java Bentley / When reading about the māra in Small, R., *Te Taonga o Ngā Kūmara*, Boy Tiger Press, 2026

¹
Rob Small, *Te Taonga o Ngā Kūmara* (Auckland: Boy Tiger Press, 2026), 81.

Ngahere behind a pile of metal
(a song)

Ngahere behind a pile of metal
Eyes sting as the sawdust settles

Clenching teeth like razor mountains
Metal waves, an amber fountain

Bleed the ancient giants who
Embraced the sky and soil too

Millenia in days can fall
When land is but a boundary wall

Send their heavy bodies hence
To ships that wait to carry them
On ocean where the whale sings
A fading song of mourning

Ngahere behind
A pile of metal high
Ngahere behind
A pile of metal, I
Am yearning to find
The ngahere behind

Through the ribs of tohorā
Blows a wind of charcoal dust
When the pile of metal rusts
Join the soil as it must

May the sapling thrive again
Over where the metal stained
May tohorā song become
A chorus endlessly sung

Ngahere behind
A pile of metal high
Ngahere behind
A pile of metal, I
Am yearning to find
The ngahere behind

Steven Junil Park / Ana Iti, *Ngahere Behind a Pile of Metal*, Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, 7 March – 26 July 2026

On the Thursday I saw Wishbone at Public Record, Emma Wallbanks and Chloe Rose Taylor’s exhibition of wearable garments, jewellery and photography. The following Tuesday I had surgery. I went to the exhibition with the intention of writing about it, and the conviction not to self-referentiate in said text. Over the following weeks in hospital with complications from surgery, it became apparent that I couldn’t possibly write about Wishbone and Emma’s wider practice without self-referentiating what I was experiencing with my body. Before and during the making of this body of work, Emma had experienced long periods of hospitalisation for similar medical complications, and her work became both a profound comfort to me, as well as unmistakable proof of my own precarious mortality.

The surgeon inserted two laparoscopy instruments into the left side of my abdomen, one into the right, and a fourth above my belly button. I think he made two attempts at positioning the instrument into the belly button site because the resulting scar is puckered. When the arteries and vessels supplying blood to my uterus were severed by the surgeon's laparoscopy tools, heavy bleeding caused him to abandon his instruments, make a horizontal incision across my lower belly, and eventually seal it up with special glue.

You snatch the moment of energy transfer, hold it to your body, warm it up. The sheets are stained. You hold the stain up to the light, trace its circumference. It's shaped like an egg, like the piece of glossy bowel that erupts from your belly. The little pink crater, Whakaraupō, no longer extinct, your daughter tracing its cone with her bare running feet.

Your garments hang in their own body spaces, counterbalanced with rocks tied up in twine. You've cobbled them together with great care, not skipping the bloodstain, handstitched, clothing not for a hypothetical future wearer, but for all the bodies its fabrics have served in the past. When bleach is used on blood it oxidises organic components but leaves behind the iron. Same like the volcanic basalt that built Te Pātaka o Rākaihautū Banks Peninsula. Same like what makes your stoma pink and my womb extracted. Silver bones strung vertically, white noise and woolgathering, oil spills of seashell. Something for hills or ghosts to wear.

Two weeks after surgery I was at home with my mum. She had arrived that lunchtime in an Uber from the airport to care for me. I was finally home after being readmitted to hospital with sepsis following the surgery. We ate lunch together. I stood up from the table with some difficulty, still sore and slow, then without sensation the left side of my surgical wound opened and began pouring fluid. When my daughter's eczema flares up I fill a pillowslip with pantry oats and run bath-water through it, squeezing the bag so that the thick, gluey oat liquid seeps through the cotton, pools on the gauzy surface, and can be scraped into the bathwater. The fluid expressing from my wound was similarly viscous and pushing its way through the fabric of my high knickers. It gushed in time with my heartbeat. Or maybe in time with my breath.

Is this what the plague smelt like? We're in a bright room deep in the ED, with special doors to seal off my infectious disease. I'm still bundled in towels from home, swaddled like nappies, holding them to my belly, they're saturated by the fluid I'm trying to contain. It's a serious question. T laughs. We both read Horrible Histories when we were kids and we're frequently hypothesising about how our love existed in other lifetimes. So we laugh together because this probably *was* the smell, a smell worse and infinitely more intense than anything you could imagine or remember, a human experience infrequently lived in our sanitary age, the smell of rot and death.

The towels probably would have washed out. Two or three cycles. Cold for blood but hot for pus? The nurse tied them into plastic bags and took them away. *I'm sorry*, I kept saying, and my mum had to stand in the hallway. Scarred by productivity, the body continues to nurture. How much can it tolerate? Most people tolerate this.

Most people tolerate this. He's holding up a long swab between thumb and forefinger. Latex gloves, apologetic eyes. *I'm going to explore your wound.*

You were sick for a long time. Before you went to Japan to source antique silk and before you made Wishbone with your childhood friend, you had your colon extracted. Obstipation, catheterisation, cauterisation. Medicalisation. I like how *ation* words contain both the action or process and the consequence, so much crammed in. Colonisation. Devitalisation. (In that order? Are you talking about the harbour or our bodies now?) You got an abdominal infection too. Back in through the sinewy scar tissue, hand-stitched repairs, peritoneum weaving itself back together. There are seven layers in the abdominal wall. Operation. Reparation. Or as Ernaux put it: "Is it possible to feel nostalgic about a moment entirely conditioned by the possibility of death?"



In the same corridor of the hospital where I had ultrasound scans of my daughter in utero, my pelvic ultrasound is a wall of silver static, blank. While I'm lying there watching my empty pelvis float around a wall mounted monitor, I can hear heartbeats from other rooms. It sounds so improbable, a constructed metaphor for loss, but it's true and it wasn't profound. It's just that the corridor is small, six or so doors to rooms with ultrasound equipment, each with the door wide open and a hospital curtain pulled for privacy. The volume must be right up because the beating of those babies' hearts is loud, unmistakable. Swooshy and thumping. Metaphorisation.

The nighttime dirge of a shared ward (beeps, sobs and tearing velcro): syncopation.

Seeing a photo of my liver, so pink: exteriorisation.

The curtain fabric, grey and ochre gingham, reels of celluloid: familiarisation.

Ribbons on your wrists: intubation.

Multiple exposures, used bed sheets, seashells, found photos of flowers, superpositions: quantisation.

Sophie Bannan / Emma Wallbanks and Chloe Rose Taylor, *Wishbone*, Public Record, Tāmaki Makaurau, 21 May – 7 June 2026

Never welched to the merry ground alone
—that place was for kids, that time too,
and lovely souls.

Take off the skin of one boy
and like a wreath the same boy underneath.
He put himself so many cavities he became.
Impossible to tunnel through.

There are parts of boys that come.
And parts that don't come back. He undressed
the sun just to see and vanished. Some son.
Parts come undone.

He wished on things
or so he said, but the sky right there above.
The merry-g'-round, it swung its axis
around his centre getting faster, faster,
so its segments rhymed

or rhymed like rhyme.
Other islands out there. No man is one but...
a lovely soul is a lonely soul. Some scarred
boy plays the vanquishing hero.

Some scar the vanquished.
I can't even remember them or bring myself to,
so absolute it was the way they vanished.

Josiah Morgan / poem for Bruno Hart, written whilst rehearsing and performing Jack Thorne's *Let the Right One In* at The Court Theatre, Ōtautahi, 20 April – 20 June 2026

kick off your shoes. admire tamanuiterā melting the
horizon. step forward. regard the collapse of each
wave. breathe in.

worries drain out
wrinkled feet
akin to your grandmother's

love, why don't you visit as often?
there is more salt to share/pūrākau to hear

rimurapa, tairaki and hūwai have gathered
love, will you stay a while?

find you are not plastic
when āio seeps in
open pores

breathe out. splash your face. *mahia ngā mahi kei*
tamariki ana. be open to the next phase. carry me.
keep your chin up.

Paige Walker / double liwuli poem, *E lē galo le tai*
The tide is never forgotten, curated by Brown Town,
Centre of Contemporary Art Toi Moroki, Ōtautahi, 11
July – 16 August 2026

Repositories of Life

This forgotten language is the one I long to speak

Echoes of tondo and Latin text
cut across domestic seasons

Green bowls, sugar bowls, lemons, and plums;
a bedstead, a window, and a cedar gate;
patterned cloth, rosemary, green apples, and a red one—

things that speak with temperance, and restless bliss

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

Peaches and Cream billboard: “pleasure evolves with you”.

What kind of music does Dame Lisa Carrington listen to?

New Zealand’s sports role models are wholesome; racy sports people are frowned upon. It’s not supposed to be explicit, Tiger Woods.

Justin Bieber crashes his car. Tiger Woods crashes his car. Kiri Allan crashes her car.

Elvis got cancelled for gyrating like a Black man? People loved Elvis for gyrating like a Black man.

Druski loved Justin Bieber for having the soul of a Black man.

“Your soul is Black.” ‘Thank you,’ says Justin Bieber.

Usher taught him to dance, remember.

Nicki Minaj brought sex to Justin Bieber, “but I got to keep an eye out for Selena” (‘Beauty and a Beat’ (feat. Nicki Minaj), Justin Bieber, 2012).

Sexyy Red said, “Put that d*ck in my a**, make my heart stop.” Sexyy Red said, “I’m like, ‘What you need, baby?’ This the coochie shop” (‘Sweet Spot’, Justin Bieber and Sexyy Red, 2025).

Millie Dunstall / Role Models, 2026

You’ve seen them, I’ve seen them, the streets know them even better.

That is unless you spend your time in Ōtautahi hiding from the craypots’ newest gatherers.

At least the ratepayers have stopped yabbering on. Now complaints are about the citywide cutoff when events of utmost importance are on.

At least now we’re officially known as Aotearoa’s 2nd largest city.
This spotlight eases our winter blues and takes the attention away from the bi-weekly climate disasters in Wellington.

But 6% of CNZ funding for Chch sinks us off the New Brighton pier.

I would make this the roast of Paul Goldsmith, but thank fuck we got Dominic Hoey working overtime on his artistic merit.

I would be mildly careful tho – he is a black belt after all.
Maybe don’t be, the worst that’ll happen is a response from one of his spokespeople outlining how the Minister for Arts and Culture cannot comment on the matters of Arts and Culture.

Now, what was I saying –

Oh, that guy that does it all without even opening a CNZ funding application.
Usually at his own expense, out of his own pocket, for the sake of creating in NZ.
Giving an oversized middle finger for the price of a bus lane ticket up in the 04.
No application, no panel, no six-week wait for “Thanks but try again later” – just a printed middle finger strapped to the car roof and a Wellington Council camera creating the work for him. It’s absolutely positively the fastest grant approval the country’s ever seen.

We are now fortunate enough to receive these intermittent, tongue-in-cheek stagings in the 03.

If I were a ratepayer, this is the shit I'd be proud of. Money well spent going to Citycare to maintain. Maybe the bro works for Citycare – or he diligently cleans up after himself. Like the work with the daisies, already arranged in a public bin on Colombo St. An artwork disposing of itself. No plinth, no didactic panel, no deinstall date sitting on a SCAPE spreadsheet – just a bunch of flowers left to wilt on council time, in a council bin, doing council-adjacent labour, only instead of being on a council payroll, it's his own. It's public art that already knows how temporary it is, which is more honest than most funded work manages to be. The thing is this guy works at all hours so we just don't really know when it's happening.

And the signs – those CCC look-alikes, the Christchurch City Confusion, wearing the council's own font back at it – work a different angle entirely. Our eyes stopped taking in signage years ago. We just pattern-match by default. Hunt's signs are built to slip past that filter and then not reward it, using official typeface, official layout, and then a walking speed of 2.83 km/h, or a warning that the old Dux de Lux building is "slightly haunted but manageable." The joke only works because the aesthetic of authority is doing all the convincing, and the words underneath aren't doing any. That's the real material here, not the streets, nor the plywood, but our own trained refusal to read.

Ahhh, somehow I made it without connecting him to Banksy... Cameron Hunt is Batman, not Banksy.

Ok, he's actually more like Robin Hood.

Giving art to the Ōtautahi vernacular, whether funding shows its face or not.

Max Lowe / Cameron Hunt, various happenings from around Ōtautahi and Pōneke, 2025.

At the Giardino Mistico, I visit the Holy See exhibition, The Ear is the Eye of the Soul. Before entering the garden, you are given a pair of headphones that activate when you cross the threshold. It is mid-summer – they call it the canicula – the temperatures high and storming for weeks. The heat map engulfs the whole country in a field of red. Everything is seedheads, dry, deathly fragrant; heavy bunches of black grapes hang on the vine.

The Giardino Mistico dei Carmelitani Scalzi – the Mystical Garden of the Discalced Carmelites – is a careful garden, usually closed to the public, where the sect still resides. It functions as a preserve for the Venetian lagoon's viticultural biodiversity and cultivates varieties that have existed here for hundreds of years. Hemmed by bushes of oregano, lemon balm, fennel, the seven main planting beds are deeply connected to the seven mansions of the order's foundress, St Teresa of Avila, and her spiritual journey.

This septet structure has been borrowed and expanded on by the curators of The Ear is the Eye of the Soul to form several overlapping sonic zones. The installation begins with Holly Herndon and Mat Dryhurst's droning machino-liturgy, a work made through training an AI model with hymnals. The pace of progress through the garden becomes connected to the piece's rhythms, folding into the work of Brian Eno, then Moor Mother and so forth, each seamlessly shifting into the next, moving around the herbs and the outlook onto the lapping canal waves. There is a shared sound of spirituality between these compositions, a rising polyvocal tide. It scores The Ear is the Eye of the Soul and everything in it. Everyone is moving at a languid pace, silent, bound by these circles of sound. The water flows and recedes with the soft quaver of the olive trees as if in time – as if they also had a pair of these awkward headphones on.

It is a hefty roll-call involved in this project across a breadth of sound artists, pop stars and canonised avant-garde or alternative musicians. At the chapel end of the garden, you enter Patti Smith's spoken-word contribution. Smith is a figure who always gestures towards the divine – asking the angels – but also, as filmmaker Adam Curtis has noted, is a beacon for the transformation of counterculture away from something collective “towards this idea that I as an individual will be a self-contained expressive being and I will express radically my criticism of the system.”¹ Without articulating oneself through acts like protesting – or even writing, music or art – an individual sought to buy things that could signify their political affiliation or position without actually needing to do anything. Smith's oeuvre is now beloved by a mainstream audience who romanticise her beatnik friendship with Robert Mapplethorpe, her fairytale poetry, and the sense that they too, are part of something cool and underground. The schema of *The Ear is the Eye of the Soul* feels related to this withdrawal from collective action, whether spiritual or otherwise.

Pleasant though the experience of headphones is, I wonder what more it adds to the contemplation that is already possible in this holy giardino. The installation is described as a sonic prayer and I think of Simone Weil, who wrote that “attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer.”² Certainly, with these headphones on, moving through FKA Twigs' choral or Devonté Hynes' instrumental melding with the voices of Benedictine nuns, attention towards the garden and everything in it increases. I can't shake the impression, though, that this is aesthetics cloaked as attention, a quasi-spirituality that also diverts attention away from the hardship that exists outside of this sealed experience. It is important to remember that the Order of Discalced Carmelites was founded in 1200 on the slopes of Mount Carmel in Palestine. The special character of the order – discalced – is a commitment to simple or no footwear, a sign of poverty and humility.

What this experience scrubs is the actual radicality of a mystic like Hildegard von Bingen, to whom the exhibition is dedicated; and more than that, the difficulty and perseverance involved in spiritual devotion. There's a feeling of goodness in circulating in a pristine garden, with the knowledge that it is tended by a sacred sect and connected to centuries of spiritual work, and in knowing that you are participating in an order set out by St Teresa. But no one reaches divine communion in an afternoon and certainly not in a Ben Vickers and Hans Ulrich Obrist-curated sound garden.

Listening has become an institutional cipher for politics. It allows a loose affiliation with global issues without demanding a legible stance and the risk of compromise. Instead, the prevalence of 'listening' casts an elegiac tune of apathy over the whole affair, so you can feel mournful – about Gaza, about the climate crisis, about police brutality, about things stolen and violated – in an abstracted way. There are many sonic practices that of course speak more directly, but when listening is deployed as a disguise for indifference its effect collapses. Listening, after all, is not the same as speaking.

The most revolutionary sound is one that punctures. At the end of my visit, the enormous bell tower chimes for half-past the hour; I can hear it suddenly over my headphones. That pair of bells, swinging seriously at the foot of the garden, is an antidote to the dream-state of *The Ear is the Eye of the Soul*.

Jane Wallace, *Listening II / The Ear is the Eye of the Soul*, Holy See Pavilion at the 61st Venice Biennale, 2026.

1
Adam Curtis in conversation with Jefferson Hack, <https://www.jeffersonhack.com/article/adam-curtis-interview/>

2
Simone Weil, 'Attention and Will', in *Gravity and Grace* (London: Routledge, 2002), 117.

Marie Celeste Lawrence's *The Future Was a Feeling* reprises a ritualistic chamber, half in jest, half in dormitory reprise. It's an alpha slumber zone, the Stoddart Cottage. The way it presides over the village green of Diamond Harbour. This bastion of settler moxie. Rocks in the wall, beds in the ceiling. Innovation at every turn and leisure too. The picnics, the watercolourist trips, the smiles. The Stoddart sisters isn't a dour settler narrative. There's a pleasure principle at play. But huh, colonial hangovers; no wonder Lawrence places a massive gong in the middle of the room, to excise such spirits.

I mock but there's something bad-faith about the Stoddart Cottage and Lawrence's show toys with it. I'm not sure how to crack it open, when we should just be attending to all the suns Lawrence's mounted onto the wall. They're what David Joselit would have called a generic image, derivatives, but interchangeably so. They are like a stock format. Open and porous, accepting of any projection, but also charged! I mean how many suns *are* there on that wall. They're overwhelming, and revolving too. The very mechanism through which Lawrence constructs them. They are constantly capable of being fine-tuned. Do the colours and patterns not alternate too depending on mood? How easily they fit into the format. Like it's a dictate. It's a feathered nest. So much preening in the sun. Just like any good little settler should.

We could say that Lawrence's dials oscillate just like a Merlin Carpenter trope. One form amongst many but exploit it all you can. Whether it's Carpenter with his penguins or steam trains, or Lawrence with her suns, both seem to pillage the literal value of the format, erstwhile exploiting its associative rambling. And when it comes to the sun as stock, as format, as generic banality, no one haunts it as much as Bataille. The question of course is how not to write that exegesis. I do not want to read *The Accursed Share*! Let me crib instead from *Leper Creativity*, the symposium on Reza Negarestani's *Cyclonopedia*, where Bataille's general economy is underwritten by the sun's "profligate expenditure". It is the energy source from which we all suffer. The pleasure principle is inverted so that we are all so many actors linked to this into labyrinthine corridors of excess and entropy. It finds its tether in the petropolitics of Negarestani's novel. That glub glub glub. Fuck let's just quote from the symposium:

Petroleum was formed under pressure and heat in the absence of oxygen while sadistically counting organic death tolls for millennia. Under such extreme conditions, petroleum grew a satanic verve for reanimating the dead and puppetizing the living on a planetary scale... From a nethermost point of view, Bush and Bin Laden are merely petropolitical puppets convulsing along the chthonic strings of the blob just in the same way that a Chinese plastic toy and equally an American predator drone are brought to life by the strings woven from the hydrocarbon corpse juice.

Or worse:

The Anthropocene Age of Plastic is but an instant whereby the cumulative subterranean mineral corpse of the planet's initial millions of years of life, now rendered into mineral gas and fluid by the Earth itself, is given another zombie life in the animated forms of worldly Plastic: oceans of plankton resurrected as skyscrapers, trillions of trees haunting the world as textiles, as food additives, artificial hearts, and even as fake plastic trees spinning in circles through the Pacific garbage gyre. Here "Peak Oil" represents a clock measuring the speed by which the present can consume the past and a linear, indexical quantification of how much of the past remains for future consumption.

I forget where this was going. I always swoon under the weight of those narratives, the way they ensnare everything else. Cast us not asunder. For the sun is *the* omnipresent deity. It needs to be slowed down by Māui or now harnessed by 'wired' revolutionaries who, having conquered the cherry farm, want to turn the whole of Aotearoa into a web of cabling. Again more profligate expenditure. No wonder the Stoddart girls wanted to rest. To picnic, to frolic, to indulge in watercolours.

Wait, wouldn't we say they were painting the world the way they wanted to see it? That this mark-making is again a qualitative act, a pioneering wiring. Again it's an expenditure, accounted for as so much leisure-time. A downsizing of the colonial enterprise but yet somehow active, aimed at recording, aimed at indenturing the environment. So many screeds of info(con)tainment, just as it is in Lawrence's gong. That withered-looking piece of corrugated iron, the hammer encased in the rubber of a salvaged computer keyboard. And most pointedly of all, the pillars, ensnared in so many keys, literally objects of access and enclosure, of a kind of accounting. The centrepiece of the show couldn't be more obvious. It's a wayfarer locked into access, into accounting modes. It's invitational. The gong functions as a cleanser. It's a totemic presence. What Lawrence would call, an instrument of "attention, transition and resonance".

The gong traipses so much latent energy. It's parodic too. Recall Bataille's notes in *The Solar Anus*, his inversion of the sun's omnipresence: "Everyone is aware that life is parodic and that it lacks an interpretation. ... Beings only die to be born ... Plants rise in the direction of the sun and then collapse in the direction of the ground." No wonder Bataille frames everything on eros, on an accounting of the way "wealth is to be squandered". There's no right expenditure in Bataille. Just excess and hubris. We think we understand this but we don't. We still don't really understand how parodic we are. It's all there in Lawrence's gong, fittingly titled *Everything Typed Still Exists*. It's like one of Borges' labyrinthine banalities. We have all the information in the world and still no Ariadnic thread, nothing to piece it together, purely because it's all expenditure, it's all excess. It's like Lawrence's suns, replicated ad nauseum. This isn't that hallowed function follows form, but the revenge of the generic, like those plastic trees bobbing in the gyre. Sucking in the wallow.

Hamish Win / Marie Celeste Lawrence, *The Future Was a Feeling*,
Stoddart Cottage, Diamond Harbour, 4–26 July 2026

Is It Really Radical?

Over the last year or two I have noticed that the word 'radical' has gained some significant and yet questionable currency. It crops up as an expletive, an adverb or an adjective in advertisements, conference calls, book proposals, policy propaganda, exhibition blurbs and art reviews. I even surprise myself employing it in my own writing practice and critical feedback to students. Such is the way of popular trends; they seed readily. It is as if it trumps all other recent fashionable ways of claiming something is the best of all, the most noteworthy, the most innovative, the most progressive. Looking to grab a piece of that spotlight that outdoes something else, to be first, to stand out, to be exceptional, to signal progress.

I ponder exactly what it is to be radical, in this place, Aotearoa, and in this time, in the twenty-first century.

Though not a fan of the authority attributed to dictionaries in general, in this instance, it assists to jump-start a thought process. Again surprised, I find the word "radical" residing in numerous domains of knowledge, and of course, my liberal and transdisciplinary nature finds synergy between them. Its etymological origins are in the Latin word "radix", translated as "root". I snicker like an immature adolescent at its

apt and crude shorthand for sexual intercourse. I say the word aloud several times – route, rooooot, ro-ro-ro-ot – as it is released through pursed lips with pleasure. But, more seriously, it references something that is deeply rooted or fundamental to something else. Here, a metaphor leaps from botany and the way a plant digs itself into the ground to establish primary structural support, to accusations flung at those who have staunch religious beliefs, reject secularisation and resist interpreting their sacred texts with any sort of modern revision or allegory. Fundamentalists. And in one breath and five syllables, ‘radical’ flips from vegetal life to bold newspaper headlines calling out the far-right evangelical Christians, and with equal vehemence, most every Muslim person, especially since 9/11. (But would Jesus Christ, the man, a hero, a victim, not have had olive skin?) In this context, the word ‘radical’ conjoins two long-term warring factions. It causes me to question if indeed it is possible for two fundamentals to co-exist. Is that what the argument is all about? Is the world essentially still fighting over what constitutes truth, law and the highest of principles? Might not the notion of pluriverse squelch this traumatic and long-term disagreement?

Phew, that root grew deep and wide.

I recall meeting the term ‘radical’ in my college algebra class. I loved, and still do, its symbol: a check mark mated with a horizontal line (called the vinculum), as if hiding something (the radicand) under the table and kicking something (the index of square or cubed root) further afield. While those mathematical equations are considered radical expressions, there is nothing political about them. Maths is considered as one manifestation of absolute truth, even when it is a null set or an imaginary number. It is always and forever the same today, yesterday and tomorrow. Verifiable. Constant. Unflinching. Based on hard and fast principles. Much like the nature of fundamentalism mentioned earlier.

In the world of science, there are also free radicals – highly reactive, unstable oxygen molecules known to steal electrons from other stable molecules in the body. Unpaired thieves that redistribute power, even take it away, damage DNA, as well as help the immune system fight off pathogens, free radicals are managed by antioxidants, which may in fact affirm that old chestnut “An apple a day...”. I know them well as the stress that robs my body of its youth and freedom to move without pain. Funny to imagine those molecules swimming freely, liberated from the compulsion to pair, as if harbouring a radical internally. I think about Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Lai, Martin Luther King, Aung San Suu Kyi, Anne Frank and even Julian Assange. Each of them tested the right to free speech with fierce advocacy for solving societal problems by attacking the root cause. To replace, transform or revolutionise an existing prejudicial system rather than merely adjust it with incremental patchy improvements. They paid the price, sometimes with long-term imprisonment, sometimes with their life. Would you hide one of these extreme free radicals in your house? The semiotic twist points to the muddy and troubled waters between freedom, liberation and individual/collective responsibilities.

Adopting a lighter, less contentious tone, I consider the morphology of what it was to be called ‘rad’. Today, it is unclear whether it is vintage slang or retro/ironic. In the 1980s and 90s, it took the place of ‘groovy’ as lingo for ‘cool’, ‘sick’ or ‘dope’. Think back to radio and TV broadcasters narrating surfing, skateboarding and BMX events or fashion walkways. ‘Rad’ was the compliment describing the most daring manoeuvres or exceptionally stylish outfits. Awesome. Absolutely fabulous, darling.

To be ‘radical’ has transformed over time; all references remain in use, none of them archaic. I know the difference is signalled by their context. I know I have been playing havoc, crossing one with another.

Closer to home, I hear that good art is radical art and radical art is provocative, even down right confronting, breaking with traditional rules, disruptive, challenging societal norms or introducing new concepts. I see it rewarded in university art programmes, especially the loud, extroverted works that sometimes find worth in the controversy they stir. It is not long before I ruminate on Ai Weiwei’s Dropping a Han Dynasty Urn (1995), Yoko Ono’s Cut Piece (1964), Yayoi Kusama’s universes of dots, Georgia O’Keeffe’s erotic flower paintings, Hermann Nitsch’s Orgies Mysteries Theatre (1962), Valie Export’s Tap

and Touch Cinema (1968), and, to round it off, Damien Hirst's The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living (1991). Subversive. Participatory. In your face. Blending art with political activism. Oh, how we cherish them!

To recoup some semblance of what radicality is, does and how it operates, I turn my head towards art in this country, especially in recent years when its pitch and presence has increased substantially. I recall some artists who have been honoured/labelled radical here in Aotearoa: Robyn Kahukiwa, Tāme Iti, Brett Graham, Ralph Hotere, Shona Rapira-Davies, Kura Te Waru Rewiri, Robert Janke, to name a few. Dr Nina Tonga declared Mataaho Collective's work Takapau radical. Lana Lopesi speaks of Ahilapalapa Rands' work as radical. Their radicality has shaped the contemporary art scene in Aotearoa by mixing traditional forms with western technologies and media. Tradition has not been abandoned in honour of modernism's edict, rather it is practised steadfastly, playing the long game. If there is one message that weaves through every one of these works, it is the assertion of sovereignty that challenges colonial narratives enabling political injustices. It is a privilege to live amongst radicals. To witness their work as part of everyday experience.

A recent experience lingers profoundly. Te Rākau Hua O Te Wao Tapu Theatre Marae is a radical group creating live, unapologetic, therapeutic, socially challenging, political, emotionally charged performances. Their primary aim is to decolonise theatre by revisiting and re-investing in kaupapa Māori principles. Here is when the penny drops for me. Tucked in my sketchbook from October last year, I found the programme for their live performance Out the Gate, a show I saw at Māoriland Hub. The feeling of what it was to be in the presence of radicality that night still echoes in my belly. Though I sobbed with empathy in private, that work rekindled my faith that to be radical still held integrity, no matter how much it made me jump in my white skin. Being radical is not some frivolous attribute tacked on to make something sound savvy, progressive or edgy. Being radical still exists as a transformative force ploughing through all the rhetoric, art-speak and hype that tries to draw our attention with a big blinking neon sign pointing a finger. Which finger, and pointing where, is any one's guess.

Julieanna Preston / Is it really radical?

I am resisting the idea of flattening. I am thinking about the connection between gypsum and vapes and the idea of a continuum between them or an entanglement. How could I articulate this beyond flattening? Wasn't there another suggestion, that a flattening could be a horizontal vector, a way of protracting the connections, or sending them off in different directions? Commingling the unlikely, bringing the glaringly obvious into view. We often think of a flattened ontology as the end point but it's just where things get started. Vapes and gypsum share the same industrial complex, the same insidious particles. It's a kind of a circulatory system. Where might it take us?

It was difficult to follow the conversation. Zoom can do that. No doubt there were some really poignant statements and phrases in the text that captured imagination and conjured deep thought. But frankly, much of it lost or eluded me in all of its capitulations, art jargon and declarations left unpacked. I know this way of writing well and have, in the past, become proficient at doing it and pretending to know what it conveys when I read it. I know I am supposed to let the text lure me into some kind of immersive fluid state, perhaps even atmospheric itself. I realise that my resistance to this writing is related to my sense that discussions and discourse on atmosphere are as slippery, ambiguous and there-but-not-there as the aether that stimulates atmosphere. I am surprised by my reaction as I usually reside with my head in the clouds contentedly. Now, I am looking for anchors.

Tyne's GIB Board scarification stresses the idea of subtraction as an overarching thematic concern. As a painter myself, I find the discarding of frames on the smaller painted works remarkably freeing. Positioning the works inside the walls acts as a spectatorial reversal that has the paintings surveilling the weary horde of instagram painters sottishly circling the gallery floor, inscribing their own trauma into its wooden lock grooves. Panoptic prisms peering out onto a communal, corporeal prison. Audience as performer.

landscapes>portals>total-objects>fields>forces>buildings>fract
ions>fragments>insertions>discoveries>interjections>revelation
s>was that already there?>I KNOW that wasn't already there>is it
in-built or built-in?>are we pretending that was already there?>do
we KNOW that was built-in?>I just went and saw Backrooms
(2026)>does this have anything to do with Backrooms (2026)?>was
Tyne trying to find something in that gypsum?>is there something
inside that gypsum?>should we scrape more gypsum?>is this a
form of *rootedness*?>is this a presentation of *locality*?>this work
was made with a body>and a tool>not with a machine>not with a

robot brain>this work was made by an organism>a human one>is this becoming unique?>is the human body precious?>can a robot sense atmosphere?>is the human body a form of *conservation**?>am I in a conservator?>is the work going to be plastered over after the exhibition?>can the work be entombed?>would this make it *contained**?>would the work then *endure*?>would the work become *insulation*?>would the work be *isolated*?>would the work go into *hibernation**?>if I could get inside 1 what would I see?>I want to scrape my teeth over the edges>there is a lady that eats gib board>she thinks they all taste different>there is a film crew documenting this?>like when they watch the penguins die>walking out into the cold>in the wrong direction>

I am full of frescoes, and I see these works worked into the walls and their softness, their earthy colours and I see all the walls and ceilings I have been seeing here on the other side of the world. I read that Desert Rose refers to a mineral growth or repository in petal-like patterns, but I am too far away to see them. I wonder instead about unconventional conditions for growth: Magical flora: Sting's 1999 song of the same name about a tormenting, unrequited love. I want to touch the edge where the wall gives way to the paintings. They are like Madonnelle everywhere, streetside Marian shrines for everyday neighbourly devotions built into the walls with little ledges for candles. I feel distance instead. I cannot breathe in its atmosphere. I will not be part of this ecosystem. The windows are just that to me. I can see through them, but I am separate. I cannot hear the sounds in the speakers. I cannot tell if the orbs would fit in my hand.

Remember all the windows in the buildings you've inhabited: bedroom, sick room, kitchen, classroom. More windows so often means less freedom; a reminder that you are not *out there*, a portal in optics alone. In The Yellow Wallpaper, the narrator's view out the window – her obsession with tracking the way shadow-figures moved in the garden – heightened her paranoia towards the domestic environment. Tyne and I talked about the shack as an economic minimum of architecture, as Lisa Robertson said. A shack might have gaps where things leak, escape or enter, but rarely windows. It's a porous architecture. I imagine a shack as a desert form of shelter, a concentrated volume of energy. This panelled structure, Tyne's Desert Rose, is a psychic retreat, both in its meaning as a safe place and stepping back. It is a place to return to over time and inhabit, a different kind of dwelling.

There is an institutional sublime. The Wilson twins excel at it. I remember them rubbing their hands with glee as we approached yet another abandoned institutional ward. This time in the Maniototo. We'd already been at 'Seacliff farm'. This one pushed me over the edge. It had been taken over by devout Christians. It was run as a salvage operation. I remember recoiling at these jars of buttons. The man silently sitting there sorting through the detritus whilst Louise and Jane asked their hundred questions. It reminded me of a Christian Boltanski exhibition, where you're overwhelmed by the miniature of the spectacle. Where you can grasp the sheer terror only in the smallest of infractions. Like forfeited shoes, like salvage buttons. There's the landscape too. Seacliff was an amazing site. How could such savage practices occur there? It wasn't the same in Maniototo. It's lunar, bare, exposed. Remote. Anything can happen.

This sublime lurks in the back of Tyne's exhibition. The scratch marks in the porous substrate. They're an act of inscription as much as removal. It's a proclamation. Not so much "I was here" but "this happens here." It's a palimpsest, literally so, in its slow accretion. Its mute testimony. It's imbued with that sublime where we imagine the worst that can happen. It's a blank slate, accepting of our projections. But why the appeal? We see the same anxiety manifesting in different

ways in Kate Newby's work. There the scratch marks and the pawing around constructed puddles, or floor tiling, in her poured concrete sites, Newby is always roughing up the terrain. Adding her mark, making it idiosyncratic, but again too always poking around this notion of the sublime. As that which overwhelms us. It's a condition of affect. Of the individuation of a capitalist regime that metabolises us. That hooks us through the lure of a mass serialism, where every individuation promises so much and yet so little. As Brian Massumi suggests we are enraptured with this sublime, by this idiosyncratic moment, precisely because it allows us "to rescue luminous intensities" in order to "engender a world of independent outcomes and autonomous subjectivities".

You can see the same operation in Tyne's aesthetic. The paintings are embedded into the walls; the paintings are a blur of sensation. The soundtrack is ephemeral and yet quaint. It's pitched like birdsong, like a refrain you can enter. It offsets the stark enveloping of the white walls. The alcove. It's protracted and staccato. Punctuated like so many perforations. Entry and exit points. Again, another luminous intensity, another quixotic sublime. Just like it is in Warhol's dual fixation with the celebrity and the banality of the everyday. The car crashes, the 'most wanted', the soup cans, Liz Taylor, Elvis. They're all anonymous in their banality, in their sheer diffusion. They're firmly situated within the society of the spectacle as an affect of media. And yet, by calling attention to them, by probing this sublime, as Tyne does, as Newby does, they keep registering what Hal Foster calls 'the creaturely' – that vestige of human participation, of human sensation, the luminous intensity that resists the mobilisation and metabolism of our mass sensory experience.

In the same week that I went to Desert Rose, I watched *Sirāt*, which was set in the Moroccan desert. I was a massive Bedouin fan as a child – the black tents and robes, the rugs, the rifles on horseback/camelback, the no-architecture, the nomadism – pristine. The desert has its own way of sorting you out. It resists all human will. Like that of the film's orientalist Euro-drifters that went to a desert rave and got caught up in WWII and came face to face with their anthropocentric frailties and foolish sense of entitlement. The desert does not want their noise. The minefield they encountered exploded several of them, and the remaining three left by train, like people from an older war: in Islamic eschatology, as *Sirāt* is the hair-thin, razor-sharp bridge over the abyss of hell that every soul must cross to reach paradise.

The desert's explosions can be very, very slow, and when I look at a little desert rose that I have, the gypsum crystal bloom, it could be a model of an explosion. About the size of a bantam egg yolk, this grew in the desert. These roses, available in crystal stores the godforsaken world over, seed and expand in the sand in the Sahara, Mexico, Utah–Arizona–Texas, Australia, Spain. They come in several distinct forms, all enflowering crystal habits of minerals like gypsum, celestine, baryte. They crystallise from evaporating groundwater forming rounded clusters of petals that can be in bud-like form, or more opened systems of flat, rounded, interlocking petals. Tiny desert architecture. They make me want to eat something very sweet. Or was that the new knowledge that there are vast clouds of raspberry sugar in space?

When I walked into Desert Rose, even though I had walked into that room many times already, I did not recognise the space. 'Have I been here before?' I thought, rather dimly. But I liked that it tripped me up right off the mark. There was the vast physical presence of the plaster form in the middle of the room, elephantine, but rectilinear. It was incised, patiently, obsessively, vaguely – any purpose is hard to discern, purpose being presently irrelevant, as if I had already agreed. I had the vague feeling of the logic being set as it is at the start of a

dream – what happens from then on in is part of a sphere and a series of occurrences that has already happened, and it the ground on which this dream takes place.

The marks on the surfaces suggest it is being coaxed or tapped in some sort of new acronymic modality of healing. And it takes energetic space too, warming the air with a psychic static that makes my ears feel a little deafened. (Did you know that an explosion doesn't sound that loud because it deafens you as it blows up?) It refers to architecture only as a vague proposition or evasion, or non sequitur. Like a flowering of sense following time in abandoned municipal buildings. But if it is, there is nothing documentary or illustrative here in a conventional sense. It seems the flowering of an oneiric process—desert, the play of the unconscious, of fictioning imagination, rather than of shallow reason. Its skin is touched across its entire surface as if someone is trying to determine its giant dimension with their hands.

The practice I am seeing is somatic and rigorously against predestination or any fait accompli. The walls of my house and its dragged plaster ceiling now want to grow roses, or ripple with crusts, and to have windows cut into them in accord with the paintings that have gathered the walls around them like skirts, or their very own Valentine Schlegel-style plaster fireplace. I was also reading *The Abbess of Crewe* and *The Wax Child* at the time, so perhaps the bents of Muriel Spark and Olga Ravn might explain this bodily, superstitious frame of reference. Or it could be attributed to hypnagogic hallucinations of geometric patterns over walls, curtained windows or ceilings seen from bed in the eighth-light and spiked energy of the swelling, nearly full moon.

I was also reading *Praying with Julian of Norwich* by Gloria Durka (1989) (along with which I was given *Praying with Hildegard of Bingen* (1991) at a Hospice op shop in Dunedin) and here I was brought into intimate relation with the word anchoress, the term for a female anchorite, or one who elects to be sealed inside a recess in architecture (or maybe a grotto) and exist entirely to be consulted with on profound spiritual matters. This is also perhaps why to my eye the abrasions on the sculpture's surface are not the result of scraping (in the sense of scratching with a metal implement, or machine learning's devouring and subsuming of all digitised information), but a palliative or inquiring or attending and very patient series of gestures. Like the undoing of a sharp noun or verb or adverbial or adjectival name.

One passage in *The Wax Child* relates a conversation among people gossiping about possible practitioners of witchcraft in their village. Their delighted disavowals were conveyed in the writing by a series of utterances followed by <, somebody said.> Desert Rose is atmospheric in the sense of Sohrab Mohebbi's 'Drifting in the atmospheric' in that found object-based work draws the rest of the world into the space and makes it infinite, somebody said. People mistake atmosphere for something very light, airy; but if you go bigger, atmosphere is dependent on gravity, which is the pull of a huge heavy mass toward itself, to hold it around the earth; that gives atmosphere a quality of solidity and weight, someone said.

I like the feeling of clay litter beneath my paws (sodium bentonite, Fuller's earth). It is far superior to claggy suburban soil in the winter, or the frankly ridiculous paper pellets or coir litters they are trying to popularise. Look at my stripes, my claws, weakling. I anchor the universe when I close my eyes. All domestic cats hail from North Africa, someone said.

The quality of mercy is not strain'd, someone said. What is wrong with sieves? someone said.

Think of a cloud.

Think of eyes lifted toward Tīoreore and Tikatakata.

Think of waka cleaving water, muscled arms heft, a voice raised in greeting:

He ao, he ao, he aotearoa!

Think of a cloud.

Think of hoisted sails billowing white, making landfall.

Think of slick ink on paper:

At 2 p.m. saw land from the mast head bearing W by N, which we stood directly for, and could but just see it off the deck at sun set.

Think of a cloud.

Think of the pillow of a dying race.

Think of the peaceful sleep of our early politicians.

Moehewa (verb): to dream. Moehewa (verb): to be under a wrong impression, think mistakenly.

Think of a cloud.

Think of meaning: of rock mass, of clod of earth.

Think of derivation, of origin, of source, of root.

For dust you are and to dust you will return.

Think of a cloud.

Think of a gallery.

Think of white walls like stratus raised, a centre of crumbling cumulonimbus.

There is one marked peculiarity about this paper, a thing nobody seems to notice but myself, and that is that it changes as the light changes.

Think of a cloud.

Think of crystal clusters, of life after life.

Think of tūhononga, of starry-eyed connection:

Ngā Mata o te Ariki Tāwhirimātea.

Tessa Boraston, Meg Doughty, Millie Dunstall, Nick Harte, Gwynneth Porter, Julieanna Preston, Jane Wallace, Hamish Win / response to Tyne Gordon's *Desert Rose* at The Physics Room, Ōtautahi, 13 June – 2 August 2026, and discussion of Sohrab Mohebbi's 'Drifting in the atmospheric' (*Mousse Magazine*, 92, 2025) at the Attention Studies June hui

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