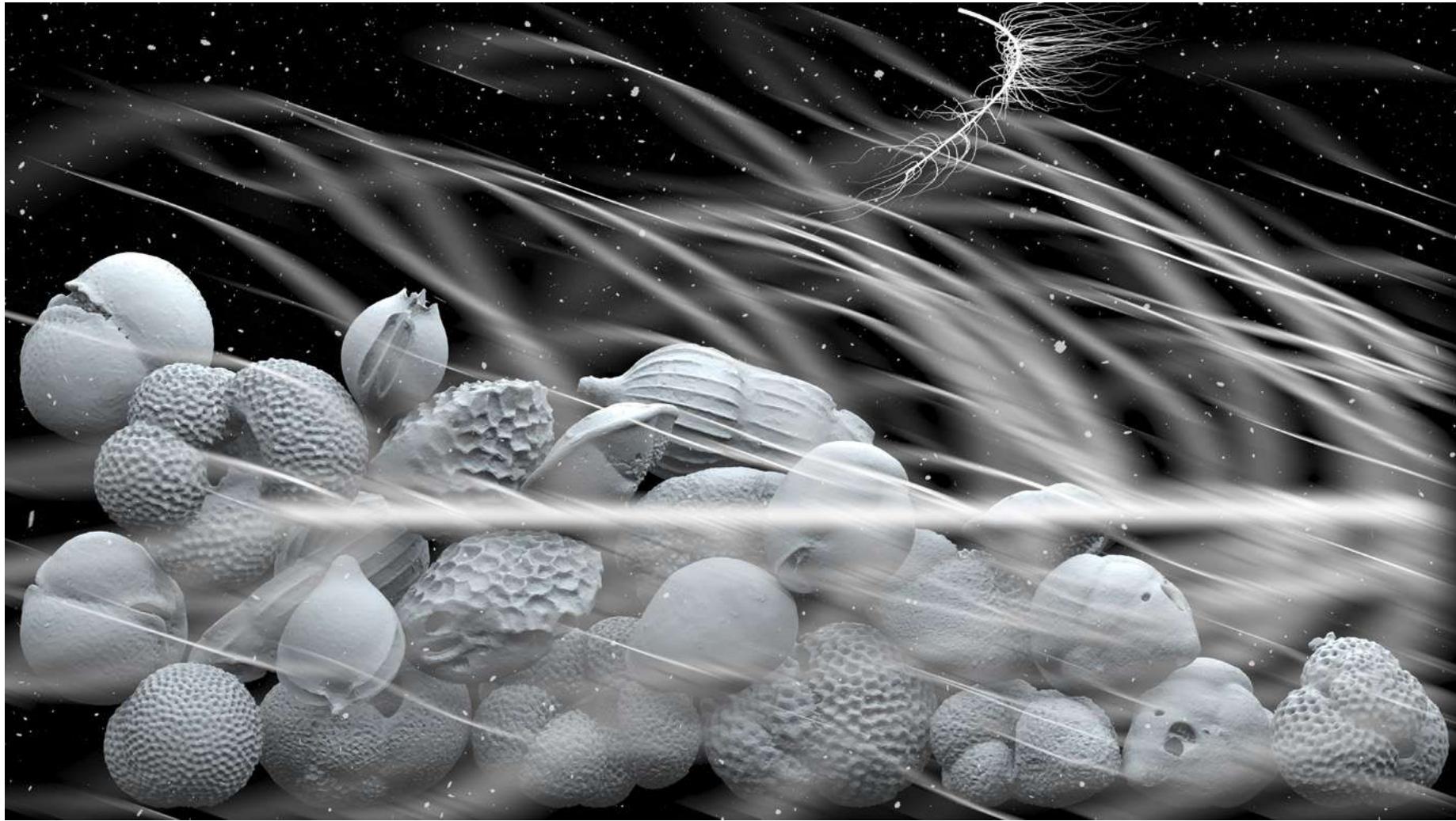




Unnamed Islands (installation view), 2023
Single-channel digital video with sound, 24'38"
Part of *Nirun*, a Frances Hodgkins Fellowship exhibition
First exhibited at the Hocken Gallery, University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo



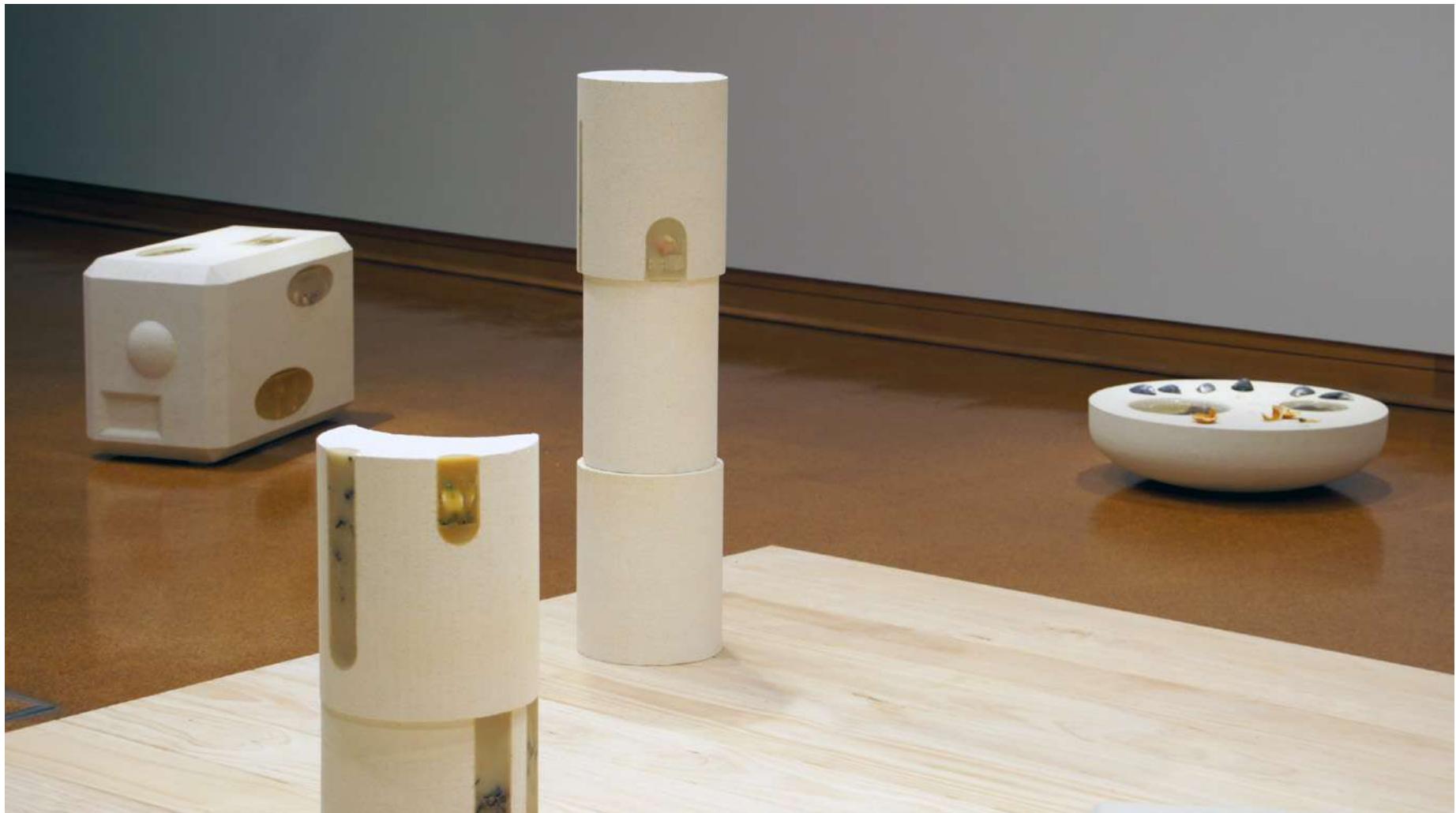
Unnamed Islands (still), 2023
Single-channel digital video with sound, 24'38"
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Unnamed Islands (still), 2023
Single-channel digital video with sound, 24'38"
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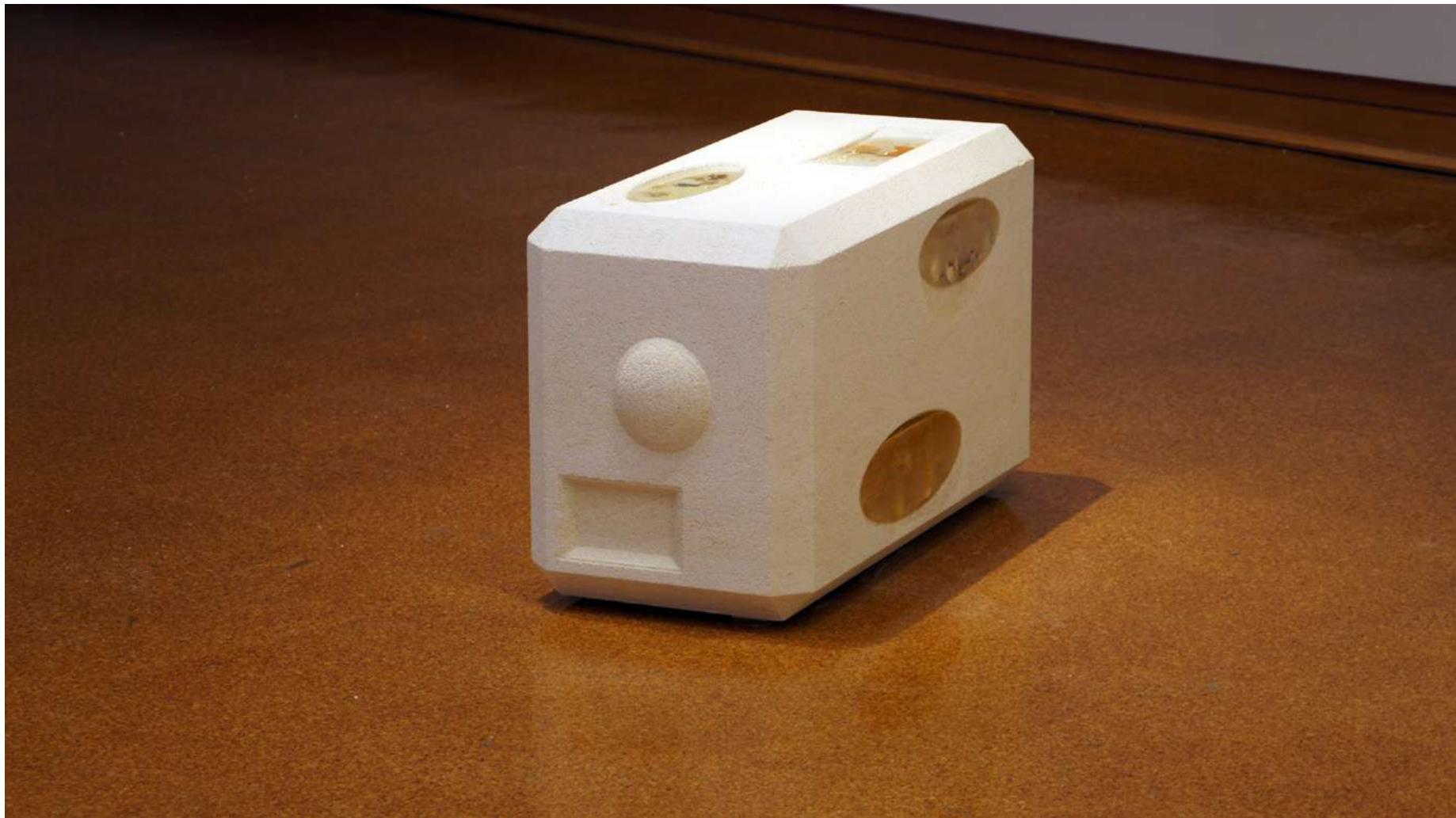
Unnamed Islands (installation view), 2023
Single-channel digital video with sound, 24'38"
Part of *Nirun*, a Frances Hodgkins Fellowship exhibition
First exhibited at the Hocken Gallery, University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Otago



Amongst the people (installation view), 2023
Ōamaru limestone, beeswax, shells, dried plants, synthetic nails and eyelashes, resin
Part of *Nirun*, a Frances Hodgkins Fellowship exhibition
First exhibited at the Hocken Gallery, University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo



Amongst the people (foot basin), 2023
Ōamaru limestone, beeswax, shells, dried plants, synthetic nails and eyelashes, resin
Part of *Nirun*, a Frances Hodgkins Fellowship exhibition
First exhibited at the Hocken Gallery, University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo



Amongst the people (large speaker), 2023
Ōamaru limestone, beeswax, shells, dried plants, synthetic nails and eyelashes, resin
Part of *Nirun*, a Frances Hodgkins Fellowship exhibition
First exhibited at the Hocken Gallery, University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo

Nirun

Sorawit Songsataya

18 March – 17 June 2023

Frances Hodgkins Fellowship Exhibition
Hocken Collections, Ōtepoti Dunedin

Taking its title from the Thai word for eternal, *Nirun* explores (im)permanence, motion, the cyclical and the accumulative nature of ‘home’ at varying scales. Shaped by the richness within Te Waipounamu, the exhibition includes a series of Ōamaru limestone sculptures, prints, films and LED animations that investigate our relationships to place, distance and people. Embedded in the works are short moments of the artist’s personal history: dried kōwhai petals and tī kōuka leaves from their studio and home environment; fruit peels and seeds of mandarins that sustained and nourished their body; synthetic nails and eyelashes that once extended from their skin. At the heart of the exhibition is the acknowledgement that beings are interrelated, even the ones we might perceive to be inert or lifeless. Rocks and stones are in constant motion and transformation. Continents move and shorelines erode; keeping within them records of time and connections.

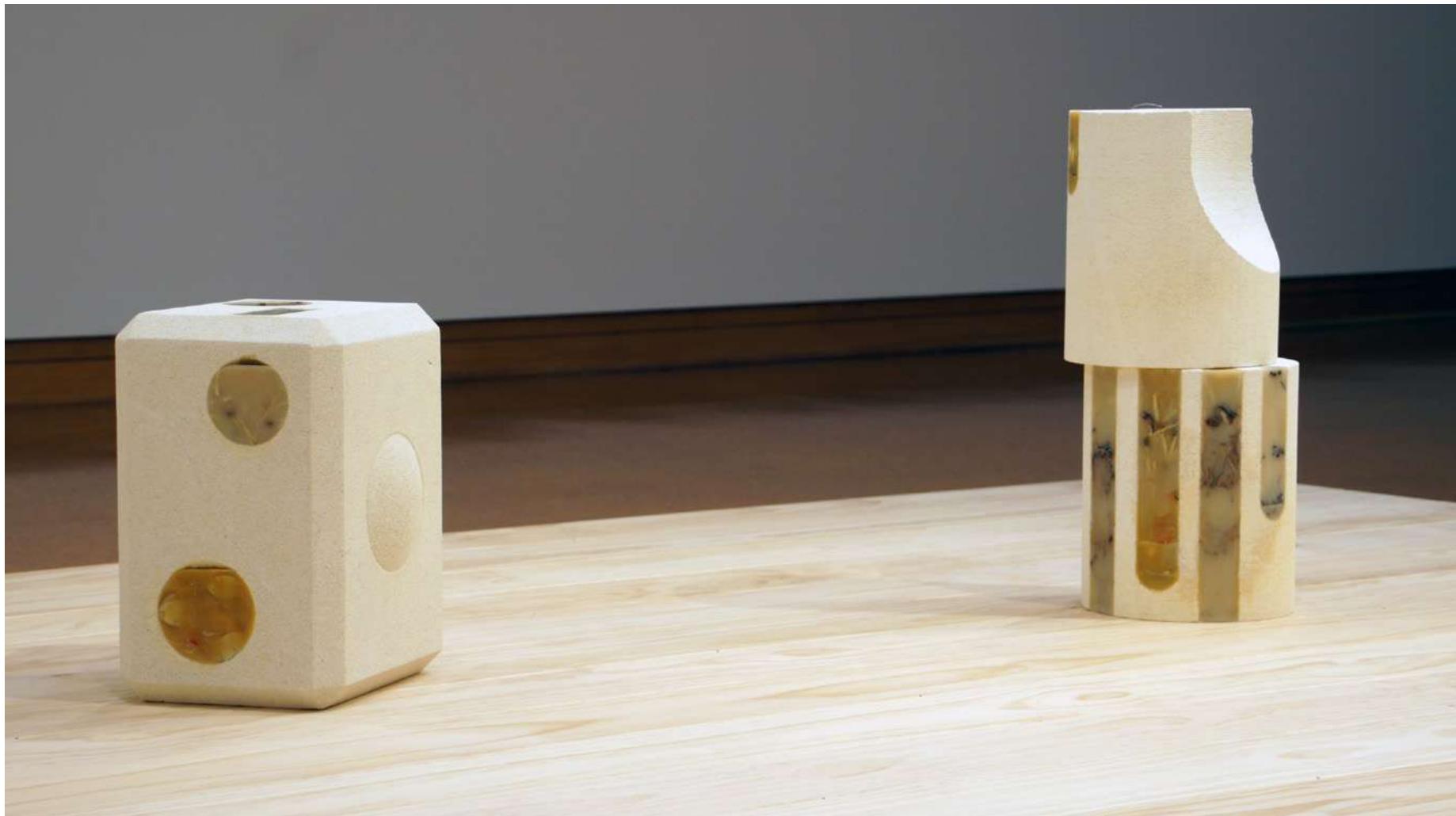
The works in *Nirun* are layered and linked with one another. Stacked limestone, bleeding soundscapes, and animations that echo in different forms throughout the gallery. *Amongst the people*, a series of limestone sculptures, sits at the centre of the exhibition. Carved from 3D computer models by a high-pressure waterjet, the forms of the sculptures reference architectural pillars of an ancient Thai temple, a foot basin and speakers. Songsataya has shaped the porous stone to house a cast inclusion of beeswax and resin. The beeswax, made by colonies of bees from across Te Waipounamu, embalms dried plants and seashells: remembering places here and in-between Aotearoa and Thailand.

Two moving image works flank *Amongst the people*. On the left, *Shoulders of Giants* intermingles film footage of Otago schist and limestone with images of the mineral composition of the rocks, captured through polarised light microscopy. Symbols of Thai vowels and digital watercolour marks appear among the sequences of stones, conveying historical ties between languages, drawings and bodies that record them. On the right, *Unnamed Islands* extends the artist’s rumination on relationships to place and the cyclical nature of our world through footage of the kōtuku nesting site on Te Tai Poutini the West Coast. The kōtuku sequences appear alongside a collection of digitally animated water creatures and 3D renderings of foraminifera shells, tiny organisms that contribute to limestone formation on the sea floor: connecting earth, sky and sea.

Both moving-image works are accompanied by sonic components composed by Songsataya. The sounds travel through and bind the space: singing to the vast and complex land. Exploring a range of sound recording and digital instruments including the khim, a Thai stringed musical instrument, the artist approaches sound as a language to commune and converse with land. A three-channel holographic animation on LED blades, *Summer Rain*, and a digital print of 3D-rendered polygons titled *Strata* pull out visual elements from the two video works, mixing in new potential narratives with ancient stones in the main gallery. Together, the works remind us of the transitory, ever-changing nature of our place.

Nirun offers an opportunity to interrogate our complex and shifting relations to the diverse elements that make up a place – a dynamic that cannot be fixed because each being is alive. Throughout *Nirun*, Songsataya is attuned to the multiple histories, the whakapapa and potential animacy of the Otago landscape. They gently encourage the viewer to consider the humming frequencies of the whenua – sounds we may not hear upon first listen.

The artist would like to thank Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou, Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki, Te Rūnanga o Moeraki, and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu for their permission and support in working with Ōamaru limestone and filming in central Otago, and acknowledges mana whenua of Kāti Māhaki ki Makaawhio, Poutini Ngāi Tahu, as the kaitiaki of the takiwā where the kōtuku nest.



Amongst the people (small speaker and temple), 2023
Ōamaru limestone, beeswax, shells, dried plants, synthetic nails and eyelashes, resin
Part of *Nirun*, a Frances Hodgkins Fellowship exhibition
First exhibited at the Hocken Gallery, University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo



Amongst the people (small speaker), 2023
Ōamaru limestone, beeswax, shells, dried plants, synthetic nails and eyelashes, resin
Part of *Nirun*, a Frances Hodgkins Fellowship exhibition
First exhibited at the Hocken Gallery, University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo



Amongst the people (detail), 2023
Ōamaru limestone, beeswax, shells, dried plants, synthetic nails and eyelashes, resin
Part of *Nirun*, a Frances Hodgkins Fellowship exhibition
First exhibited at the Hocken Gallery, University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo



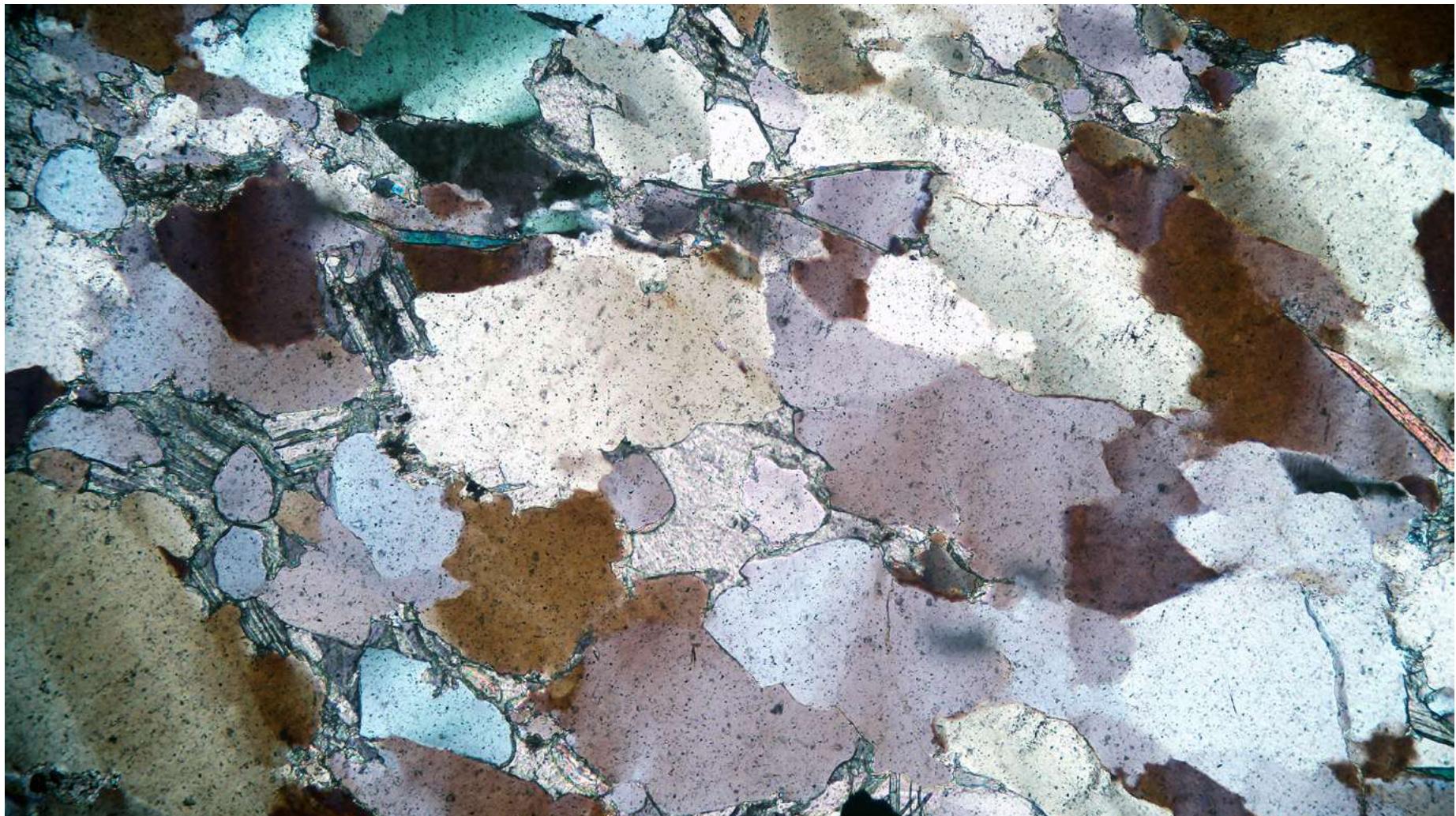
Shoulders of Giants (installation view), 2023
Single-channel digital video with sound, 45'58"
Part of *Nirun*, a Frances Hodgkins Fellowship exhibition
First exhibited at the Hocken Gallery, University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo



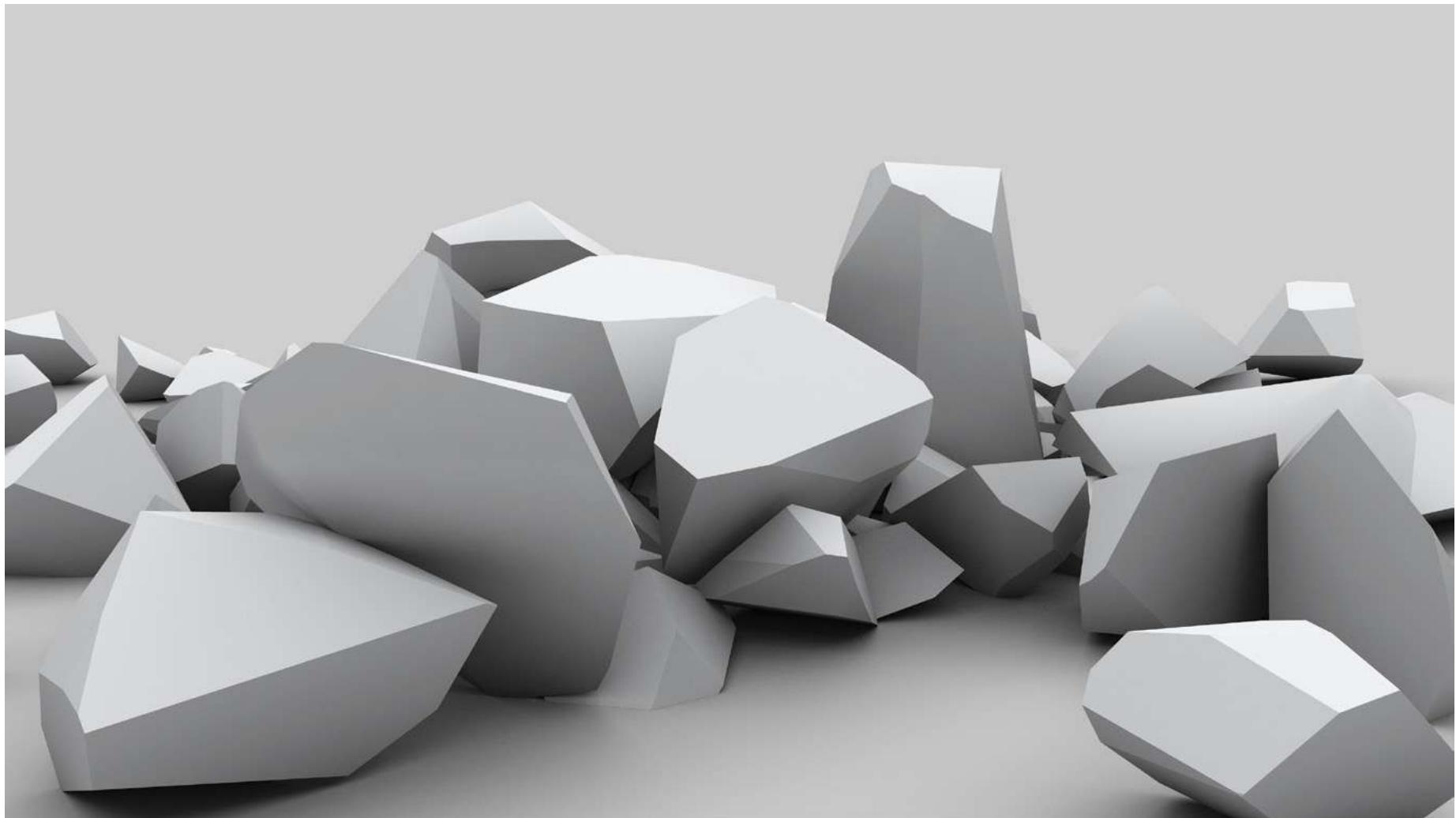
Shoulders of Giants (still), 2023
Single-channel digital video with sound, 45'58"
Part of *Nirun*, a Frances Hodgkins Fellowship exhibition
First exhibited at the Hocken Gallery, University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo



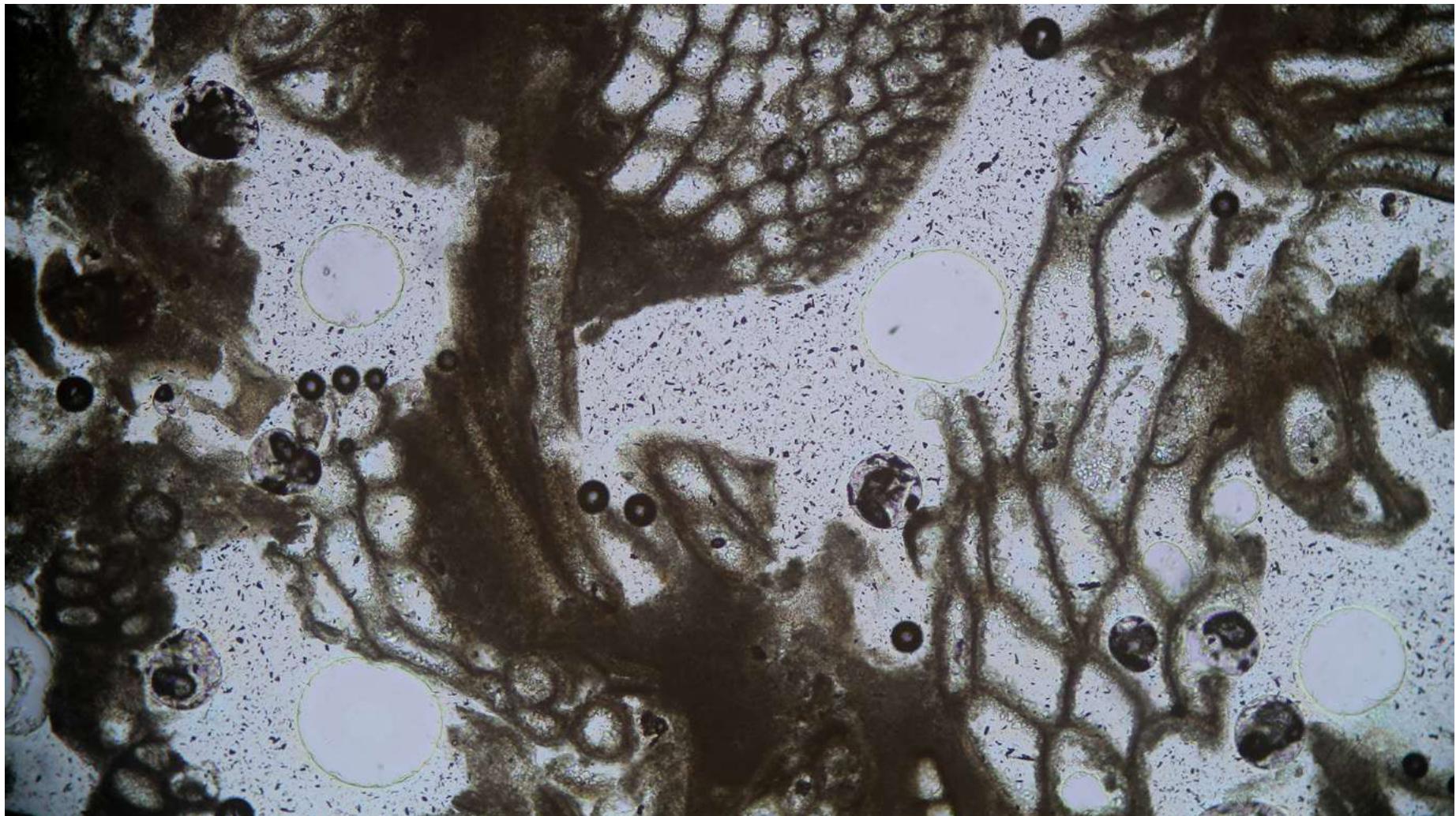
Shoulders of Giants (still), 2023
Single-channel digital video with sound, 45'58"
Part of *Nirun*, a Frances Hodgkins Fellowship exhibition
First exhibited at the Hocken Gallery, University of Otago Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo



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Single-channel digital video with sound, 45'58"
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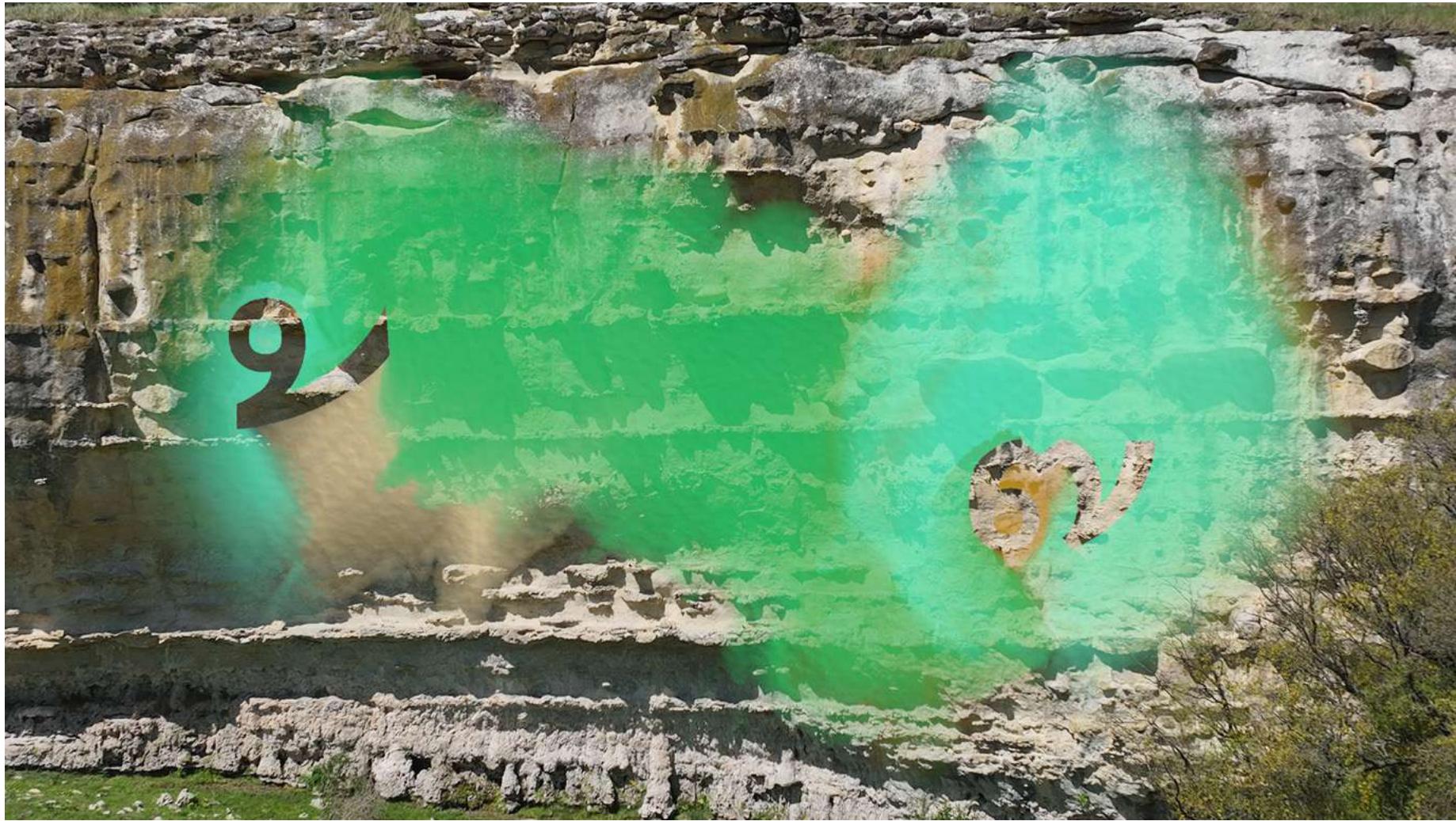
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SORAWIT SONGSATAYA

Born Chiang Mai, Thailand. Lives and works in Aotearoa New Zealand

Awards and Residencies

- 2024 Singapore Art Museum Residency, Singapore
2023 Gasworks Artist Residency, Gasworks, London
2022 Frances Hodgkins Fellowship, University of Otago
2021 Creatives in Schools, Ministry of Education, Mount Roskill Intermediate
2020 Creative New Zealand Arts Grants (Round 3)
Digital Artist Residency, Media Department, Massey University Manawatū
Govett-Brewster Artist 'In Residence', Govett-Brewster Art Gallery
Molly Morpeth Canaday Award 3D (First Prize Winner)
2019 Enjoy Summer Residency, Rita Augus Cottage, Wellington
2018 MASS Alexandria Guest Artist, Alexandria, Egypt
2018 IASPIS Studio Residency, Stockholm, Sweden
2018 McCahon House artist residency, Auckland
2016 National Contemporary Art Award (First Prize Winner), Waikato
2013 New Graduates Award (First Prize Winner), University of Auckland

Selected Exhibitions

- 2023 *Spring time is heart-break: Contemporary Art in Aotearoa*, curated by Jane Wallace and Melanie Oliver, Christchurch Art Gallery
Comfort Zone (solo), curated by Sophie Davis, Hasting City Art Gallery
Nirun (solo), Hocken Library, Uare Taoka o Hākena University of Otago
2022 *Nature and State*, curated by Misal Adnan Yıldız and Çağla İlklar, Christina Lehnert, and Sandeep Sodhi, Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden
At Thresholds, curated by Moya Lawson, Wellington City Gallery
nature danger revenge, curated by Sophie Davis, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Otherwise-Image-Worlds, curated by Tendai Mutambu for CIRCUIT, Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, Auckland
twisting, turning, winding: takatāpui+queer objects, curated by Richard Orjis, Objectspace
Stilt House (solo), Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington
Homefire (solo), Paludal Art Gallery, Christchurch
Wild Once More, curated by Chris Ulutupu, Silo 6 Project by Te Tuhi Contemporary Art
2021 *Listening Stones Jumping Rocks*, curated by Susan Ballard & Sophie Thorn, Adam Art Gallery
Thinking Hands, Touching Each Other, curated by Assaf Kimmel, Çağla İlklar, Misal Adnan Yıldız, Ural Industrial Biennial, Yekaterinburg, Russia
Heavy trees, arms and legs (duo), curated by Abby Cunnane, The Suter Art Gallery, Nelson and Coastal Signs, Auckland
The Turn of the Fifth Age, curated by Esther Lu, Shih-yu Hsu, Chabib Duta Hapsoro, Taipei Contemporary Art Centre in collaboration with Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung, Indonesia
2020 *Secrets and Lies*, curated by Jamie Hanton, SCAPE Public Art

Come up for air (solo), curated by Bridget Riggir-Cuddy, The Lightship
Rumours (Mermaid) (solo), curated by Hanahiva Rose, Govett-Brewster
Cherish TV, curated by Mohamed Almusibli, Cherish Gallery, Geneva

- The Interior* (solo), curated by Natasha Conland, Auckland Art Gallery
Offspring of Rain (solo), Enjoy Contemporary Art Space, Wellington
hippies use the side door to enter the bazaar (group), Critical Path, Sydney
Jupiter (solo), Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, Auckland
Atropelos, organised by Luiza Prado and Daniel Rourke, arebyte gallery
Art and Shop, organised by Hanna Nordell, Tensta Konsthall
Step-sister (solo), curated by Matt Hansen and Mohamed Almusibli, Zürich
<Bright Cave>, curated by Robyn Maree Pickens, Blue Oyster
Soon Enough: Art in Action, curated by Maria Lind, Tensta Konsthall
Starling (solo), Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland
Cabinets of Curiosities (solo), Papakura Art Gallery, Auckland
Acting Out, curated by Stephen Cleland, Adam Art Gallery
Dark Objects, curated by Faith Wilson, The Dowse Art Museum
A Room of Our Own, curated by Rachel Duval, Terror Management
I hate you, I hate you, organized by Misal Adnan Yıldız, Michael Lett Gallery
Potentially Yours: The Coming Community, curated by Tendai John Mutambu, Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland
National Contemporary Art Awards, Waikato Museum, Hamilton
A bone, a flesh, a daddy's nest (duo), RM Gallery, Auckland
The Non-living Agent, curated by Andrew Kennedy, Te Tuhi Contemporary
Ditch, curated by Ophelia King, Knulps Gallery, Sydney
Merry Weather (duo), Bowerbank Ninow gallery, Auckland
2015 *The Dairy Project* (duo) curated by Rebecca Boswell, The Physics Room
Midnight (solo), Window Onsite, Auckland University, Auckland
Cobalt Sun (solo), Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery window space
Let The Cobbler Stick To His Last (group), curated by Tim Gentles, New York
Piti Montessori (duo), Blue Oyster Art Project Space, Dunedin
2014 *Locating the Practice: Circuit Critical Forum* (duo), Elamprojects, Black Market, collaborative video project for Window Online
Unstuck in Time, curated by Bruce E. Phillips, Retail, exhibition at Fuzzy Vibes gallery, Auckland
Everyday Backwash, curated by Henry Davidson, Michael Lett
Campaign Furniture, curated by Henry Davidson, Dunedin Public Art Gallery
Jacques (solo), Audio Foundation, Auckland
Weeping Touchestone (duo), Gloria Knight Gallery, Auckland

Public Screening and Talk

- 2023 *Routes*, curated by May Adadol Ingawanij for CIRCUIT and Storage Gallery
Otherwise Worlding Reader: Screening, Playstation Gallery and Te Uru
2021 *Transversal Orientations: Looking Sideways*, C-Map Seminar Series, MoMA moderated by Wong Bing Hao, C-MAP Asia Fellow
A Messenger That Flies, with Esther Lu as part of *The Turn of the Fifth Age fathomless: an online screening programme* curated by Janine Randerson, ASLEC-ANZ Aotearoa conference *Ngā Tohu o te Huarere: Conversations Beyond Human Scales*

Public Screening and Talk (continued)

- 2020 Recent Animation, Square Edge and Massey University, Palmerston North
2018 *Recent Video Art From Aotearoa New Zealand*, Studio Kura, Itoshima, Japan
2018 *IASPIS Open Studio*, IASPIS, Stockholm, Sweden
2016 *Labor Zero Labor*, curated by Caterina Riva for Benjamin Valenza in collaboration with Triangle France
2015 *Circuit Artists*, Rotterdam Film Festival, Goethe Institut, Rotterdam
2014 *Artist's Cinema*, Circuit Artist Film And Video Aotearoa, AUT University
Artist's Cinema, Circuit Artist Film And Video Aotearoa, Wintec Institute

Collective Projects (with Ayesha Green)

- 2017 *Hapori Volume 6: Rabbit on the Moon* by Wai Ching Chan, Olivia Hong, Darryl Chin, Auckland
Hapori Volume 5: community by Olivia Blyth, Corban Estate Arts Centre
Hapori publication workshop, Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington
2016 *Hapori Volume 4: Waltzing Macabre* by Tom Tuke and Ronan Lee, Auckland
Hapori Volume 3: anti-heroine by Anna Rankin, Auckland Women Center
2015 *Hapori Volume 2: little metonym* by Robin Murphy, Auckland CBD
Hapori Volume 1: Dead to the World by Bridget Riggir, Auckland

Design and Publication

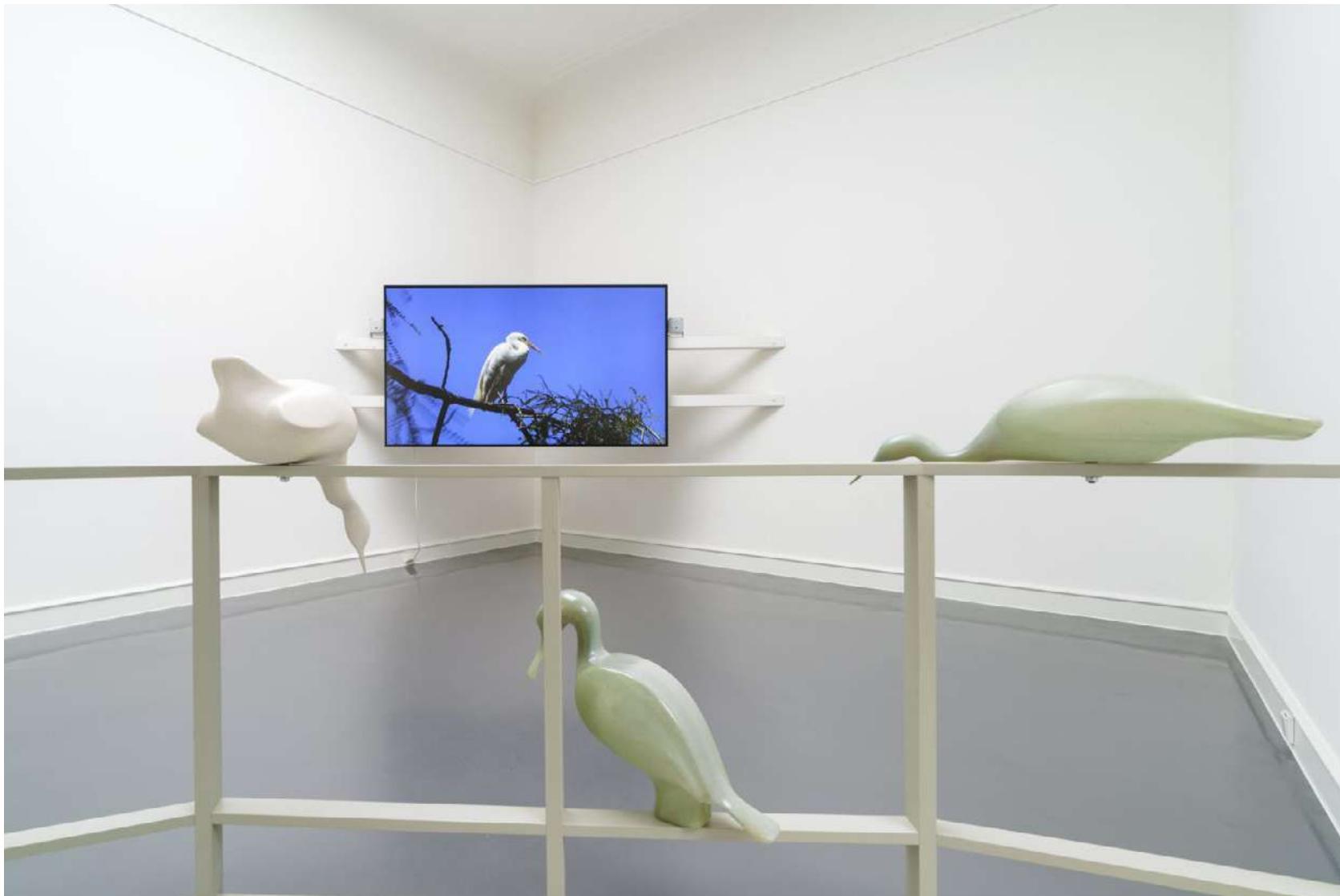
- 2023 *Nirun / Sorawit Songsataya*, Frances Hodgkins Fellowship Publication
2017 3D animation for artist Juliet Carpenter, the Chartwell Show: *Shout Whisper Wall!*, Auckland Art Gallery
2016 *Keeping You in the Loop: Te Whai Wawewawe a Maui 'Maui's Clever String Game*, Artspace Aotearoa Education Programme
Animated-GIFs for an online essay by Emilie Räkete organised by Bridget Riggir-Cuddy
3D modeled a replicate of Jean Arp sculpture for Oscar Enberg
Hapori Volume 3: Anti-heroine, Auckland
2015 Animated flower for *Summer of Supine* video by artist Juliet Carpenter
Hapori Volume 2: Little metonym, Hapori Project, Auckland
Press image and video trailer for *The Shadow of the Dome of Pleasure*, Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland
Hapori Volume 1: Dead to the World, Hapori Project, Auckland
2014 Promotion material for Ben Clement exhibition *SEEDER*, Blue Oyster Gallery
Animated a 3D Polaroid for *Half Bianca* video by artist Juliet Carpenter
Interview, Magasine Issue 3, Auckland
Tahi Moore *AUTONOIR* exhibition poster, Artspace, Auckland
Dakapo's Photostream, Dog Park Gallery, Christchurch
A Jaw for an Eye (or two), ISON magazine#4, Auckland
Tangential Structures, Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington
Claude Lévi-Strauss, ISON magazine#2, Auckland
2012 Julia Moritz public program poster, Artspace, Auckland
Yona Lee public talk poster, Artspace, Auckland
He ran, he walked, he ran, he walked publication, George Fraser Gallery

Selected Bibliography and Press

- 2023 *The act of reciprocity with the living land*, Hana Pera Aoake, CIRCUIT
The Shoes Off Your Voice, Bridget Riggir-Cuddy, Art News, Autumn 2023
Mapping Love: Sorawit Songsataya's Mnemosyne, Ruth Watson, Otherwise Worlding, CIRCUIT
2022 *Heavy Trees, arms and legs: Nicola Farquhar and Sorawit Songsataya*, edited by Hamish Petersen and Gwynneth Porter, published by The Physics Room
I have a stone that once swam, Bridget Riggir-Cuddy, Robert Heald Gallery
Homefire: Exhibition by Sorawit Songsataya, Jane Wallace, Vernalular
Homefire, Orissa Keane, ARTBEAT
2021 *Portraits of Flower*, Chairat Polmuk, post, MoMA
Animation Practice, Process & Production Volume 7, edited by Miriam Harris and Samantha Moore, Intellect Books
Some Kind of Travelogue, Esther Lu, Contemporaryhum
2020 *Speak My Language: Art in New Zealand Addresses Inclusivity and Accessibility*, Claire Voon, ARTnews.
Episode 65: Sorawit Songsataya – Rumours (Mermaid), Sugar Loafing Arts Cast Radio
2019 *Art in Aotearoa 2019*, Francis McWhannell, RNZ Arts
Pearly dewdrops drop, Charlotte Forrester, Enjoy Exhibition Essays
Sounding out feeling in Offspring of Rain: Sorawit Songsataya & Antonia Barnett-McIntosh at Enjoy, Jane Wallace, Circuit
Planetary Wind, Bridget Riggir-Cuddy, Post McCahon House Residency
2018 *Starling by Sorawit Songsataya*, Rebecca Boswell, Matter 8
The exhibition as ecosystem, Elle Loui August, Art News New Zealand
Sorawit Songsataya: Starling, Lucinda Bennett, Art and Australia
One Mind: A Multitude of Bodies, John Hurrell, EyeContact
The Human Texture, Sue Gardiner, Art News New Zealand, Autumn 2017
Potentially Yours, The Coming Community exhibition review, Edward Hanfling, Art New Zealand journal issue 161
Gesturing 'whatever'; Potentially Yours, The Coming Community, Victoria Wynne-Jones, Circuit Artist Film and Video Aotearoa New Zealand
2016 *My Little Pony as resistance: A review of 'Good Kiss'*, Ellie Lee-Duncan
Mere pockets of aspiration: A review of 'Potentially Yours, The Coming Community', Lana Lopesi, The Pantograph Punch
Intervening Agents, John Hurrell, EyeContact
2015 *Piti Montessori / Merge Nodes*, James Thomson-Bache, Blue Oyster Art Project Space Annual Publication
Dimensions Variable, Simon Gennard, The Pantograph Punch
Black cat, night owl, Annie Mackenzie, The Physics Room website

Education

- 2013 Master of Fine Arts (First Class Honours), Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland
2012 Postgraduate Diploma in Fine Arts, the University of Auckland
2010 Bachelor of Design (Visual Communication), Unitec Institute of Technology



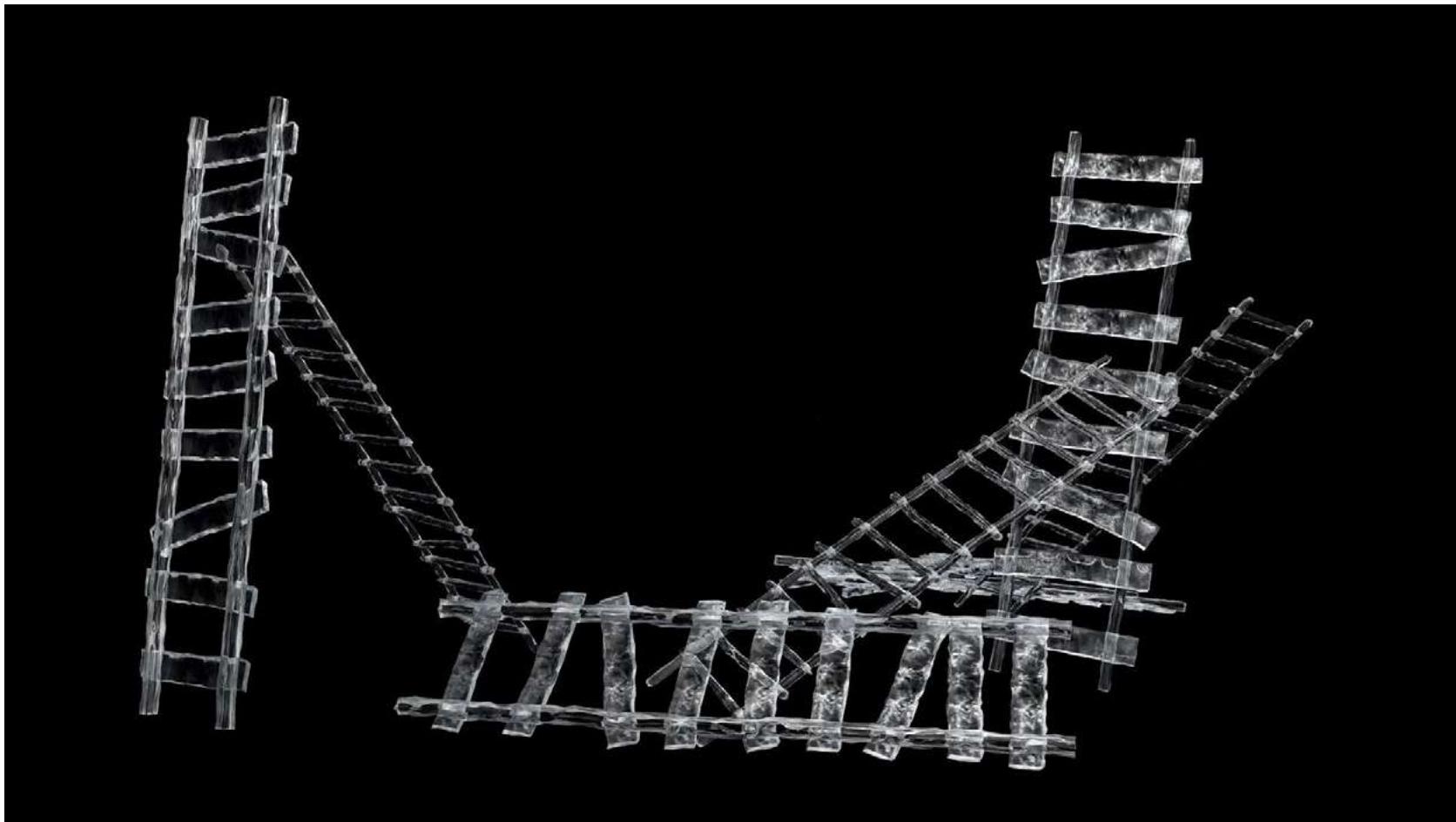
Nature and State (installation view), 2022, Kunsthalle Baden-Baden
The Interior (2019): Oamaru stone, fibreglass, polyester resin, acrylic lacquer
Comfort zone (2021): Single-channel color HD-video with sound, 10:00 min
Voice by Awa Puna (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairoa)



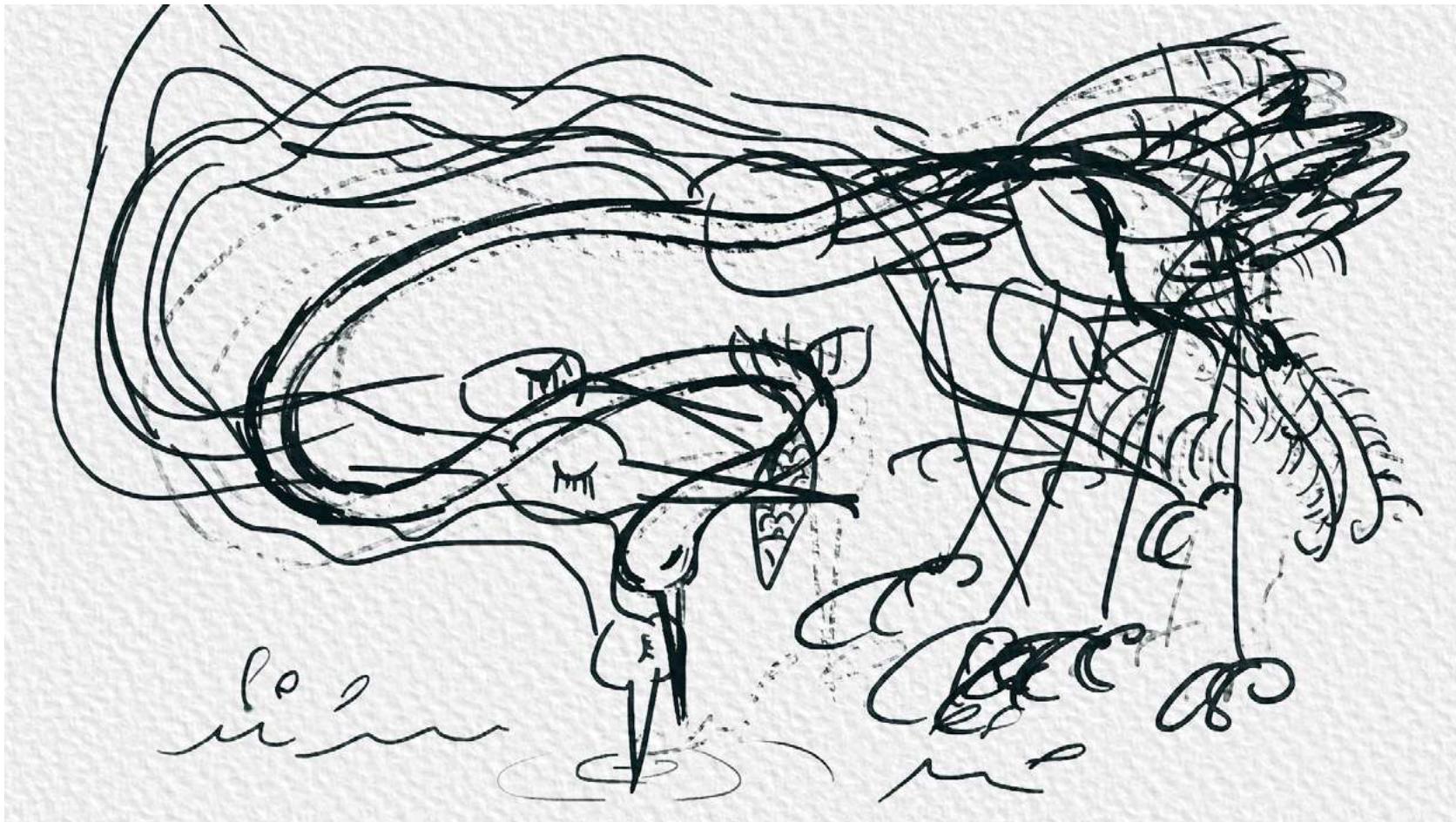
Comfort zone (still), 2021
Single-channel color HD-video with sound, 10:00 min
Voice by Awa Puna (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairoa)
https://youtu.be/vi5dvVE_CZY



Comfort zone (still), 2021
Single-channel color HD-video with sound, 10:00 min
Voice by Awa Puna (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairoa)
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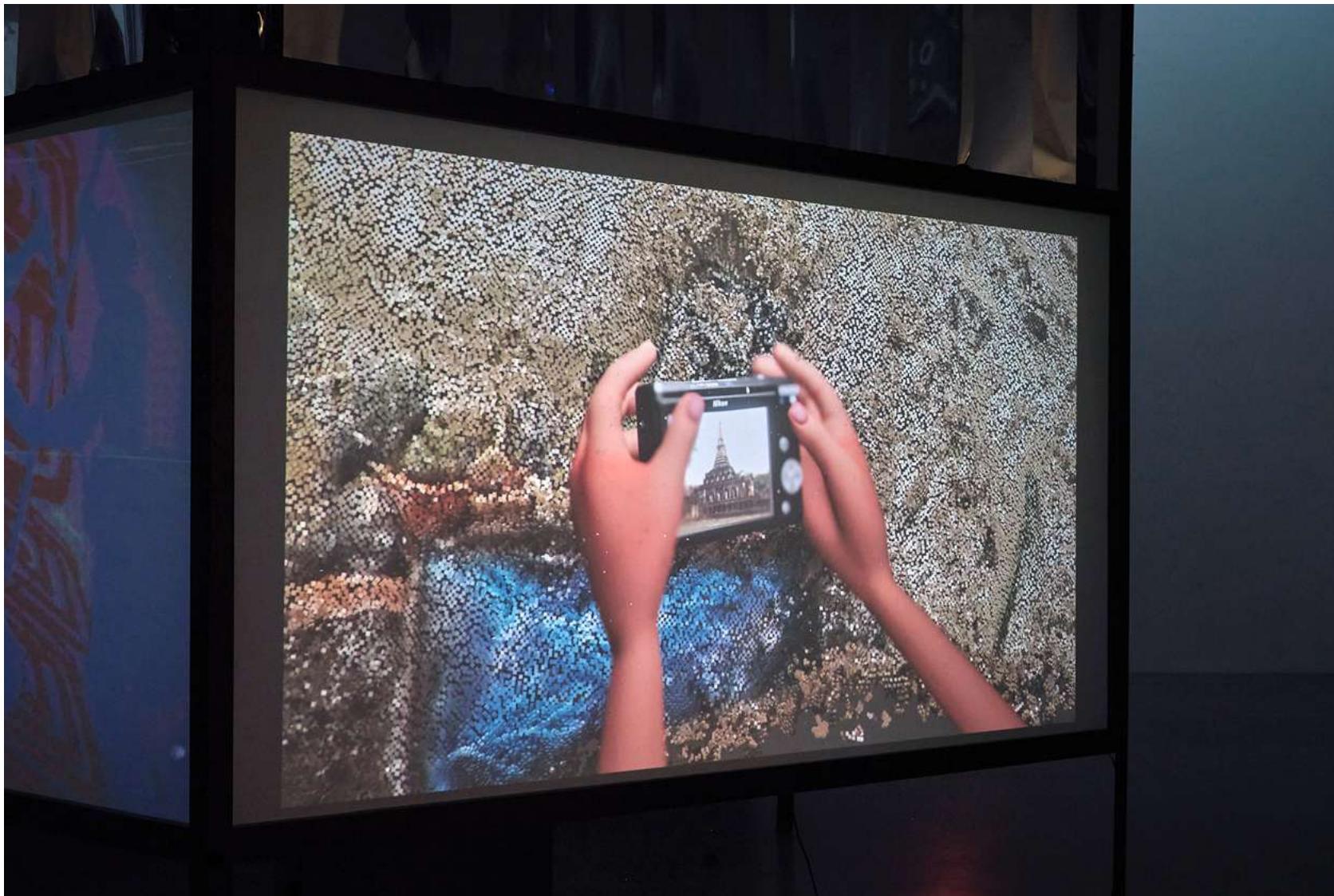
Comfort zone (still), 2021
Single-channel color HD-video with sound, 10:00 min
Voice by Awa Puna (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairoa)
The 6th Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art



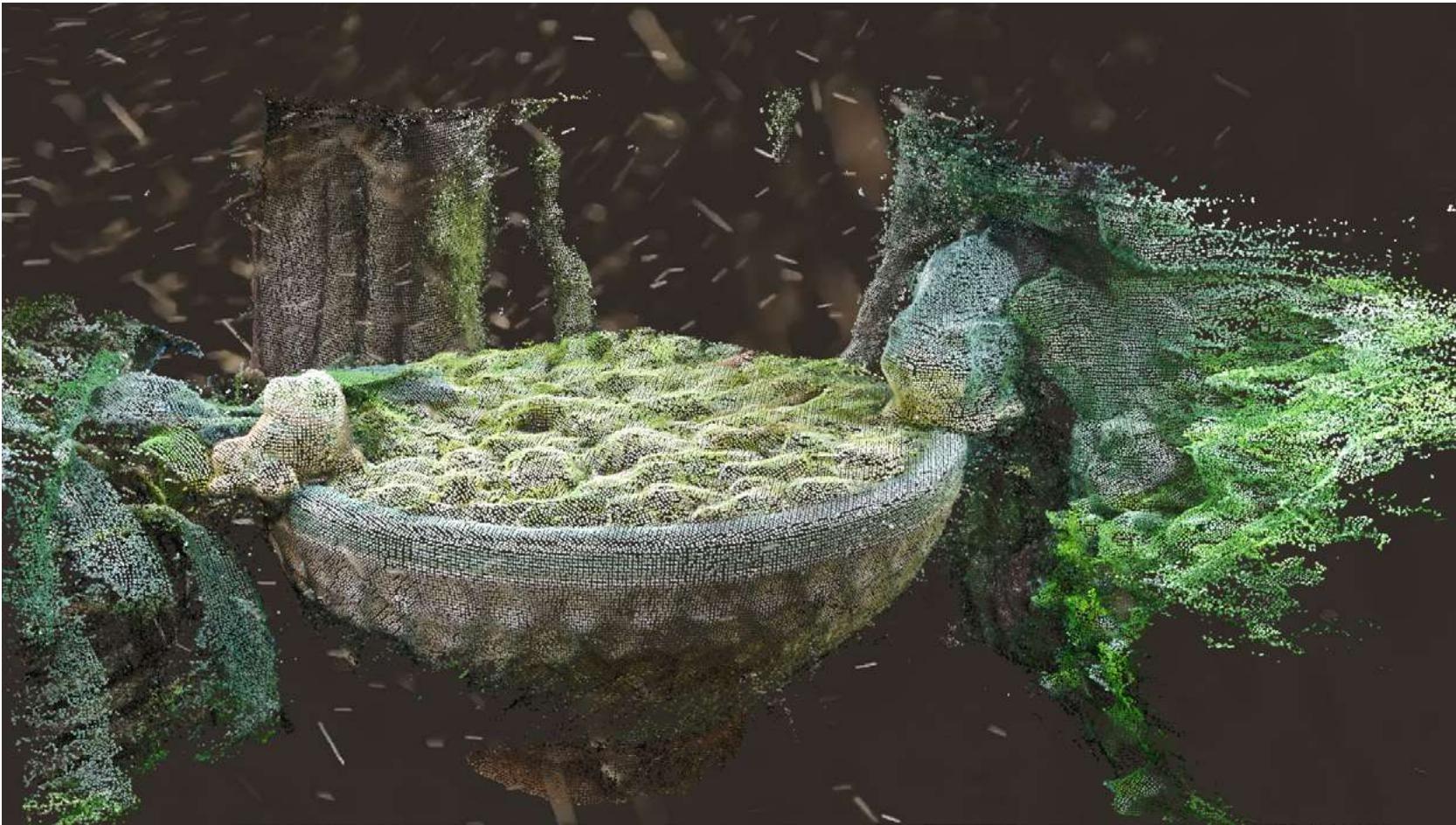
Comfort zone (still), 2021
Single-channel color HD-video with sound, 10:00 min
Voice by Awa Puna (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairoa)
The 6th Ural Industrial Biennial of Contemporary Art



Crown shyness (installation view), 2022
Single-channel color HD-video with sound, 10:56 min
As part of *nature danger revenge* curated by Sophie Davis
Commissioned by Dunedin Public Art Gallery
<https://youtu.be/mibsSpPvmug>



Mnemosyne (installation view), 2022
Single-channel colour HD-video with sound, 09:48 min.
Commissioned by CIRCUIT and curated by Tendai Mutambu as part of
Otherwise-Image-Worlds, Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Auckland



Mnemosyne (still), 2022
Single-channel colour HD-video with sound, 09:48 min.
Commissioned by CIRCUIT and curated by Tendai Mutambu as part of
Otherwise-Image-Worlds, Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Auckland
<https://www.circuit.org.nz/work/mnemosyne>



Mnemosyne (still), 2022
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Otherwise-Image-Worlds, Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Auckland
<https://www.circuit.org.nz/work/mnemosyne>



Strata I (installation view), 2022
Strata I: digital print on aluminium composite material panel, 208 x 40cm
Salt marsh: digital animation, 3D holographic fan (edition of 2), 50cm diameter, 5'50"
Stilt House: oamaru stone, beeswax, organic soap, shells, dried plants
and synthetic nails, 20 parts, dimensions variable



Stilt House (detail), 2022
oamaru stone, beeswax, organic soap, shells,
dried plants and synthetic nails, 20 parts
Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington



Stilt House (installation view), 2022
Salt marsh: digital animation, 3D holographic fan (edition of 2), 50cm diameter, 5'50"
Stilt House: oamaru stone, beeswax, organic soap, shells, dried plants
and synthetic nails, 20 parts, dimensions variable



Strata I (installation view), 2022
digital print on aluminium composite material panel, 208 x 40cm
Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington

I have a stone that once swam

I emptied the stockpot off the bridge at the end of the road for the eels to eat, “the eels ‘ill clean em.” The shells fell in a bright clear grouping amongst the cobbled Waiarohia stream. Maybe I had seen an eel on that bend before.

The tuatua had sighed from their saltwater bucket as we drove the Tutukaka Coast home the day before. We didn’t have the time to spit them. Their grit dusted our pasta and sanded our tongues. Side plates piled with shells, instinctively, we kept a record of our individual eats. The biggest we named “Sorawit’s Midden.”

I have always thought of Sorawit in the way stories tell artists. Remote and full-on experiment and poetry. Sometimes I have worried about this figure kept up in the studio, moving city for the next residency, talking to birds, talking to mountains.

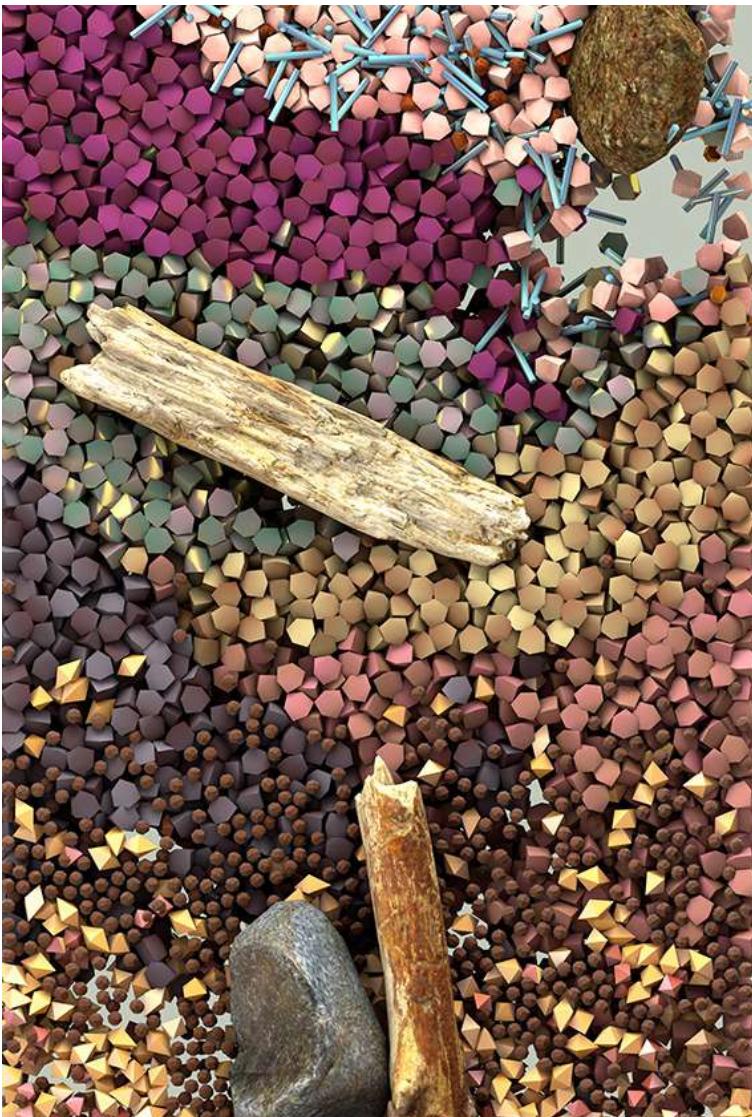
Only now I find this thread between them, Sorawit and Keri. It wasn’t when Sorawit was a temporary resident of the author’s West Coast village to study kōtuku at their nesting ground. Keri’s seaside being seemed definitive of an Aotearoa artistic recluse: the writer you might see collecting food and words down on the rocks.

Last year, I met Sorawit in Auckland City Library, where it was their studio for the day. We lingered on our way out, sitting on our knees in piles of pulled books. I took out a copy of *Te Kaihau, The Windeater*, wanting to absolve myself for having half-read *the bone people* too young. I don’t think we spoke of Ōkārito then. Reading her stories in the announcement of her death, a week later, my head was full of the place. Looking at Sorawit’s stonework now, I see this place let in. A world the colour of whitebait.

Perhaps it is in the rock itself - *Te Waipounamu*.

Keri found belonging articulated in the language of land and climate. In the wind abrading rock, limpet constellation, the ocean ceaseless on the peninsula—the author sourced in place and its processes the expression of genealogical material and time. Keri wrote narrative inclusive of both the human and non-human, collapsing identity with place to tell a “mutually constitutive biography/geology.”¹

¹ Elizabeth DeLoughrey, ‘Ordinary Futures: Interspecies Worldings in the Anthropocene,’ in *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches* (page 354). London: Routledge, 2004.



Strata I (detail), 2022
digital print on aluminium composite material panel, 208 x 40cm
Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington

Working from a limestone source, Sorawit records both local and ubiquitous place. In warm and shallow waters, limestone forms an evolving record of life in its environment through the accumulation and compression of marine organism waste. Applying artefacts and substances non-natural to Oamaru stone, the artist embellishes the material record of local geology with details of human narrative.

Expressed as samples of a subsurface, our encounter with these objects takes place in a time long after the activity that informed the mineral behaviour on view. Bearing the physical impression of ‘human general,’ the artist’s geology belongs to both possible past and possible future. Set to this earthly time-scale the artist writes human-life small. A sense that is heightened by the lack of their own trace in the work—by the appearance of artistic material as neutral, as naturally occurring.

Like learning to read the biography in rock.

The stilt house is traditional to Thai architecture and to the eastern seaside of the province Sorawit’s family is from. These houses line the banks of the Chanthaburi river, where locals cook “muddy-mussels” in a brown brew of shrimp paste and palm sugar.

Houses are, and have been, raised on stilts to provide a tactically secure and comfortable position. The remains of around 1000 prehistoric wooden stilt houses around the European Alps record past social and climatic rhythms. Built at the edges of lakes, rivers or wetlands, rising water levels conserved their remains underwater.

Water is suggested in the installation of *Stilt House*. The material action of the scene belongs to the submarine. Limestone piles map the foundations of a wooden stilt house and portray the structure in material transformation. Through its floor map in the gallery we enter a moment of suspended change: wood becomes stone; house, earth; social place, natural. Just as limestone forms from the shells and skeletons of organisms, long-empty of human occupation the house turns to stone.

Shifting our view to the scale of microbes and particles, *Strata* and *Salt Marsh* animate the geological processes by which the house transforms. Pulling our empathy from the human structure, microscopic liveliness illustrates the continual exchange of the social and the natural in the formation of place. Within an immense sculptural time-scale, *Stilt House* records the remains of human life ordinary to geology.

“Change, change, change. Where is solidity? Where is the rock?”²

² Keri Hulme, ‘Floating Worlds,’ in *Stone Fish* (page 6). Wellington: Huia Publishing, 2004.



Strata II (installation view), 2022
digital print on aluminium composite material panel, 210 x 40cm
Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington

A house is an understructure to an individual's identity. In its design, surroundings, its occupants' practice, a person can find both social and natural foundations. Keri kept with her whakapapa through place and in her stories. The sedentary author wrote a spiral house to remedy her characters' colonial illness.

Sorawit's stilt house is a figure of migrant identity. It, too, a design inherited from memory. Though on legs, it diagrams a structure of genealogical/geological being. Both spiral and stilt houses propose a continual mutation and adaptation between life and place: stone, a language recording our deep belonging. Home, a ubiquitous place.

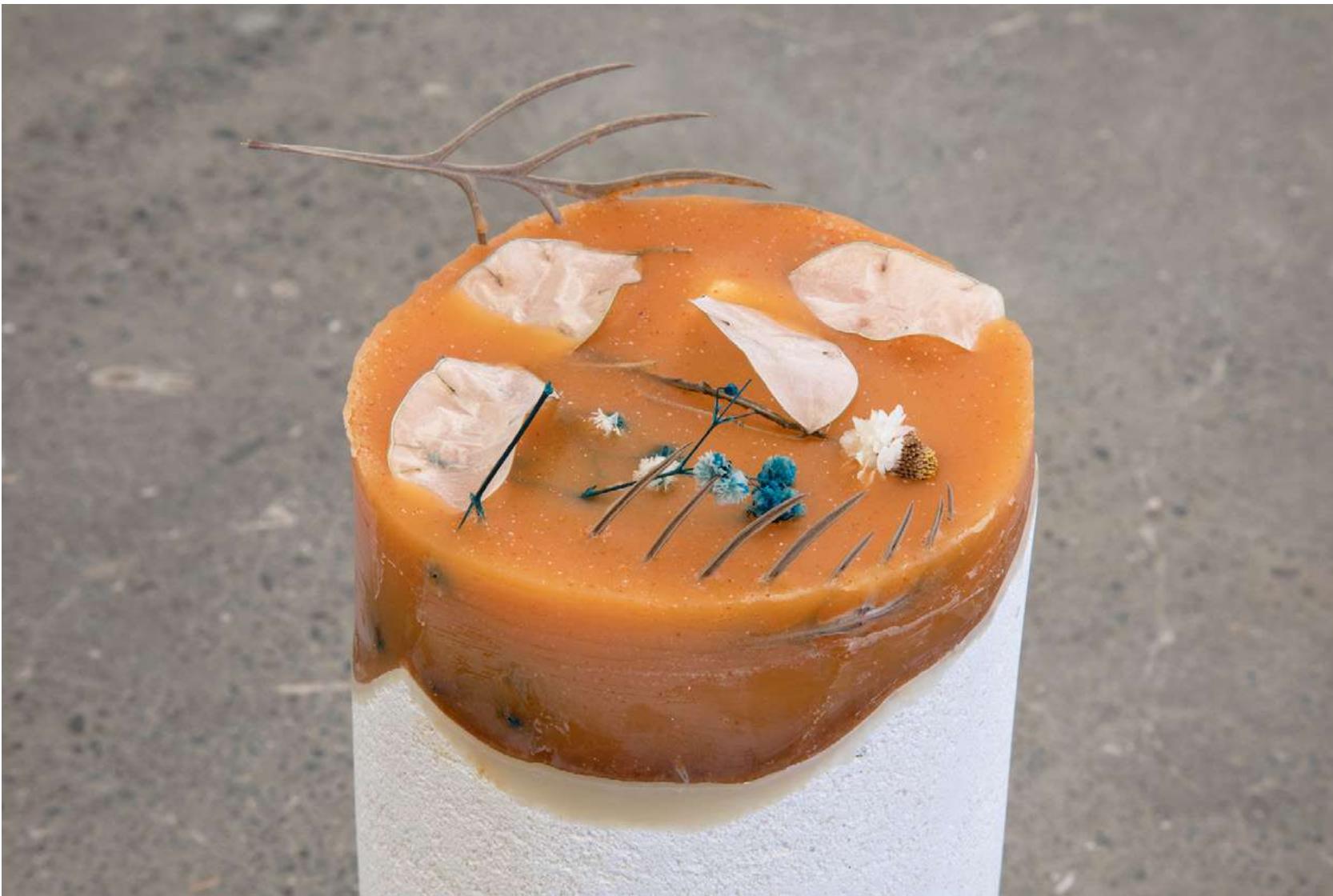
Keri Ann Ruhi Hulme Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe (1947 - 2021), was a novelist, poet and short-story writer who gained international recognition in 1985 when her debut novel, *the bone people* won The Booker Prize. Keri built a house in Ōkārito, where she lived for more than three decades, reading, writing, and catching whitebait. "I have a stone that once swam" is the first line of the poem *Stonefish*, which appears in Hulme's 2004 collection of the same title.

Bridget Riggir-Cuddy is a pākehā writer and curator based in Tāmaki Makaurau.

This text was first commissioned by Robert Heald as part of the exhibition.



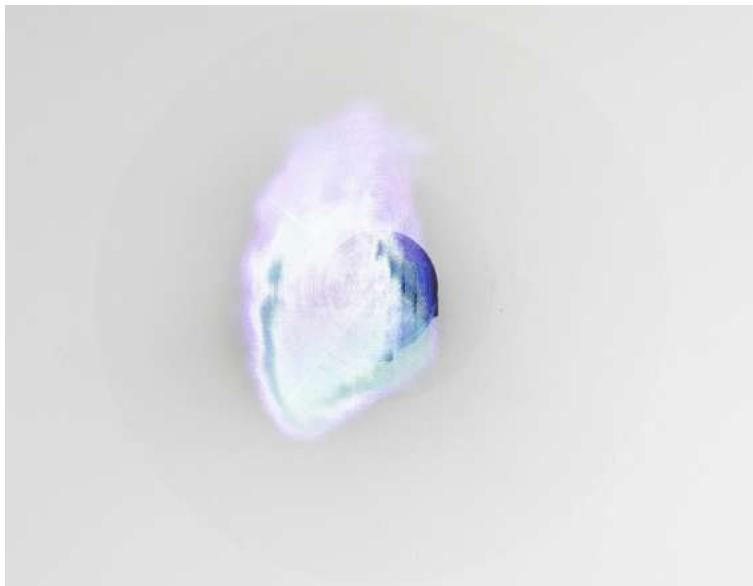
Strata I (installation view), 2022
Strata I: digital print on aluminium composite material panel, 208 x 40cm
Stilt House: oamaru stone, beeswax, organic soap, shells, dried plants
and synthetic nails, 20 parts, dimensions variable



Stilt House (detail), 2022
oamaru stone, beeswax, organic soap, shells,
dried plants and synthetic nails, 20 parts
Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington



Stilt House (detail), 2022
oamaru stone, beeswax, organic soap, shells,
dried plants and synthetic nails, 20 parts
Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington



Light years (still), 2022
Two-channels digital animation
3D holographic fan
08:00 min (loop)
500 x 500 mm
<https://youtu.be/3QQX6WDi4h4>

Cabined, 2021
Oamaru stone, beeswax
630 x 630 x 430 mm
Exhibited as part of *Homefire*
Paludal Gallery, Ōtautahi Christchurch



Seaside town, 2021
Limestone, beeswax, fishbone, shells, pebbles,
dried plant, synthetic eyelashes and nails
400 x 300 x 300 mm



Seaside town (installation view), 2021
Limestone, beeswax, fishbone, shells, pebbles,
dried plant, synthetic eyelashes and nails
Coastal Signs Gallery, Auckland



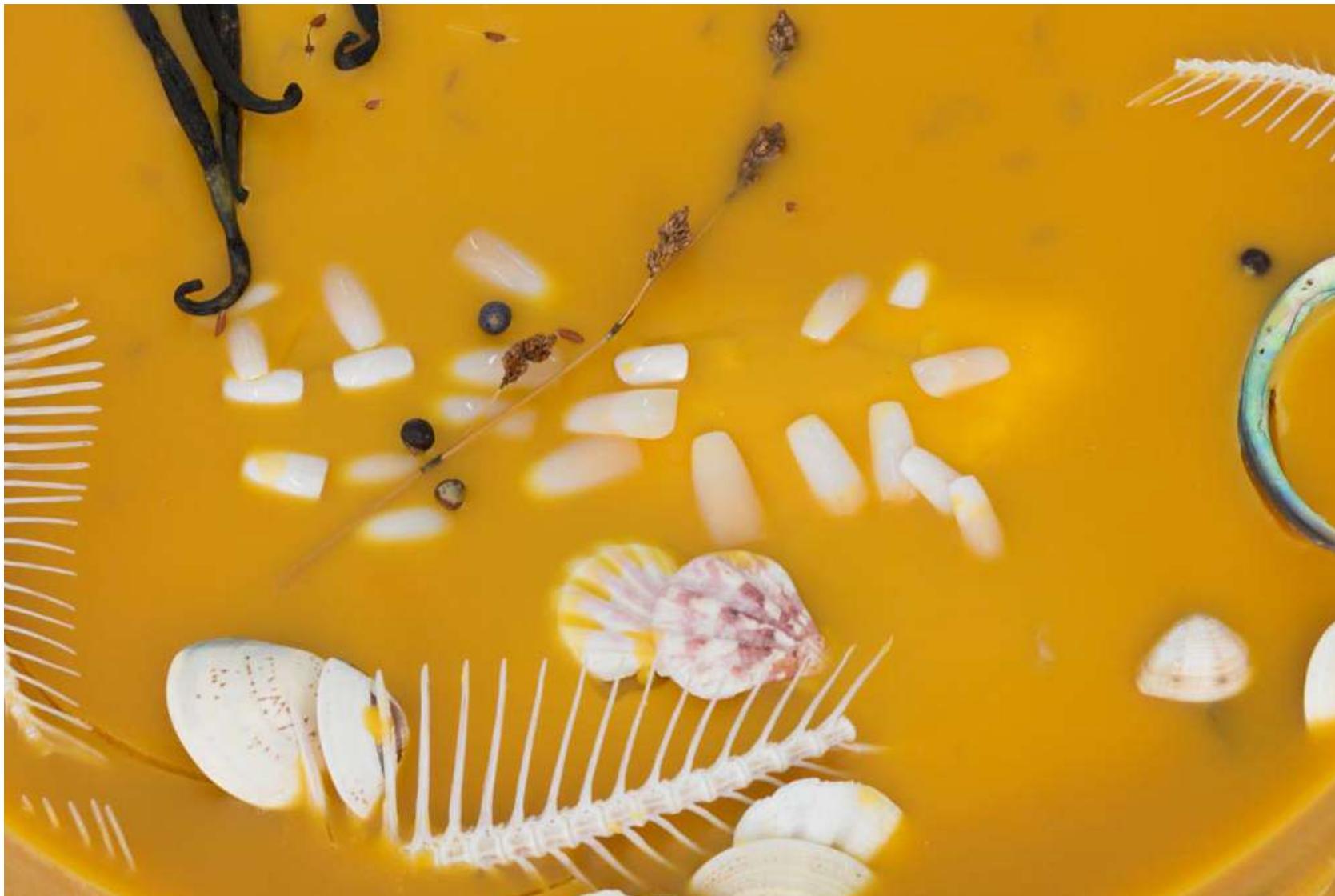
Seaside town (installation view), 2021
Limestone, beeswax, fishbone, shells, pebbles,
dried plant, synthetic eyelashes and nails
Coastal Signs Gallery, Auckland



Shredded, 2021
digital animation, 3D holographic fan
00:56 min (loop)
500 x 500 mm



Seaside town, 2021
Limestone, beeswax, fishbone, shells, pebbles,
dried plant, synthetic eyelashes and nails
500 x 400 x 400 mm



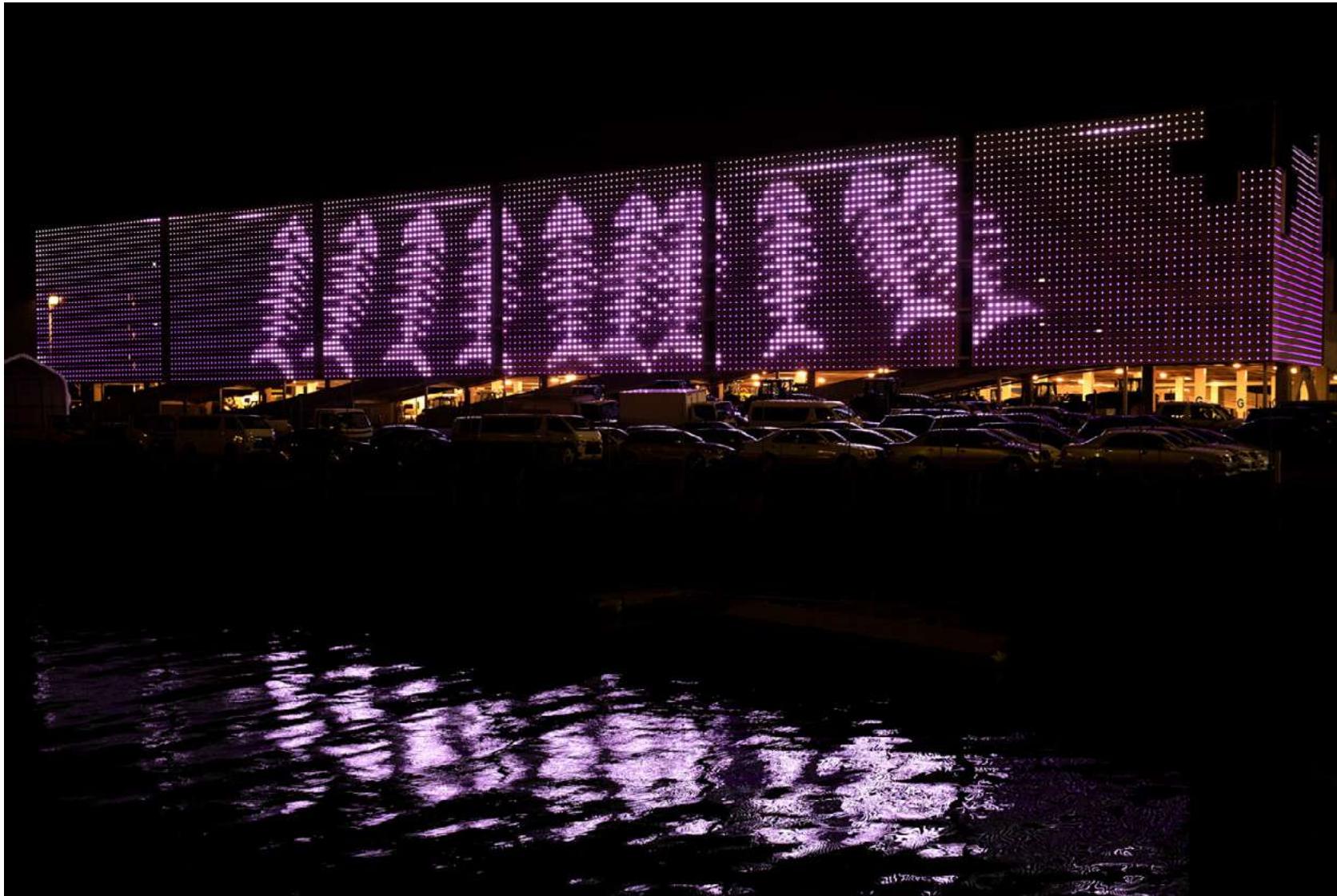
Seaside town (detail), 2021
Limestone, beeswax, fishbone, shells, pebbles,
dried plant, synthetic eyelashes and nails
500 x 400 x 400 mm



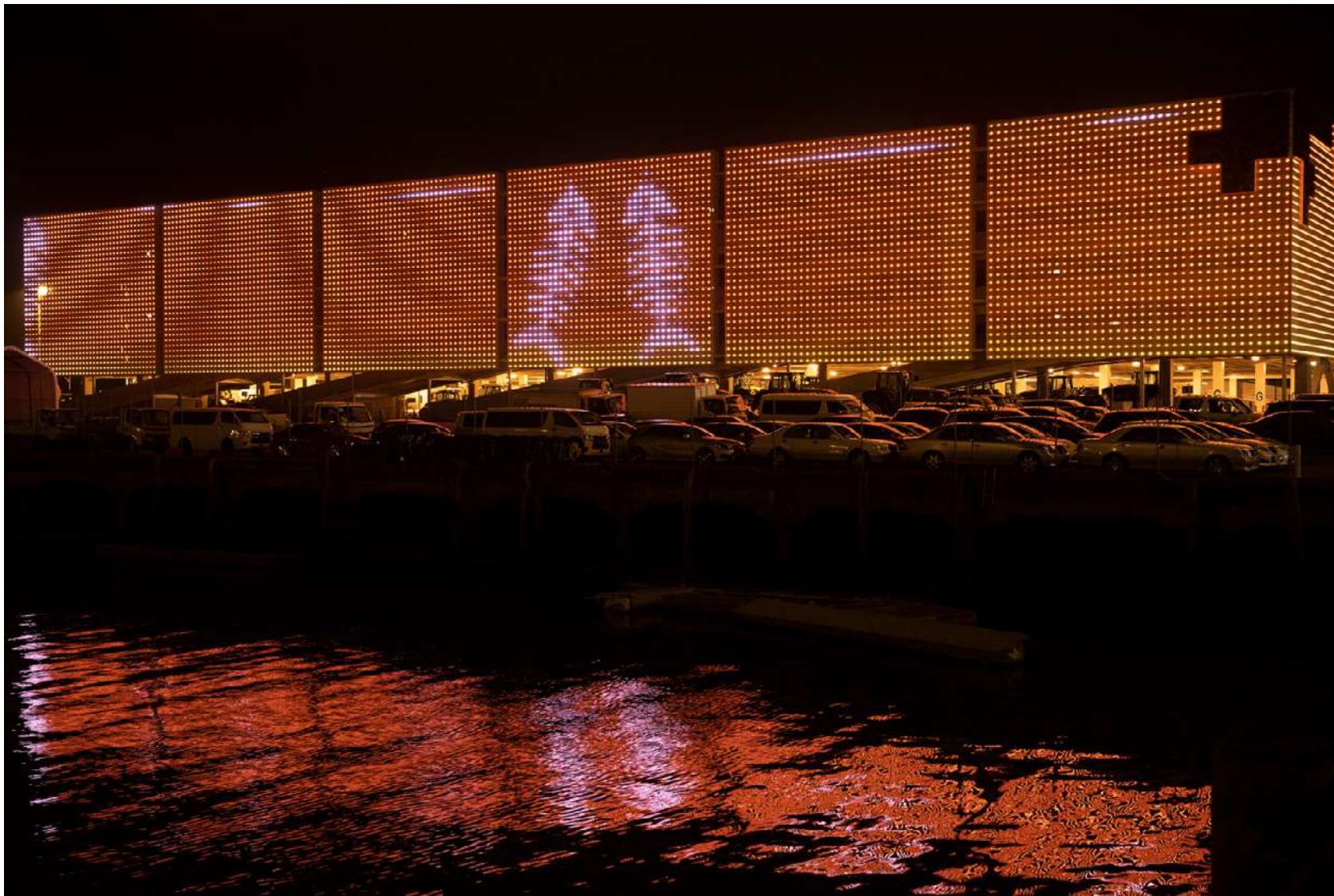
Seaside town (installation view), 2021
Limestone, beeswax, fishbone, shells, pebbles,
dried plant, synthetic eyelashes and nails
Part of *Heavy trees, arms and legs* curated by Abby Cunnane
The Suter Art Gallery, Nelson



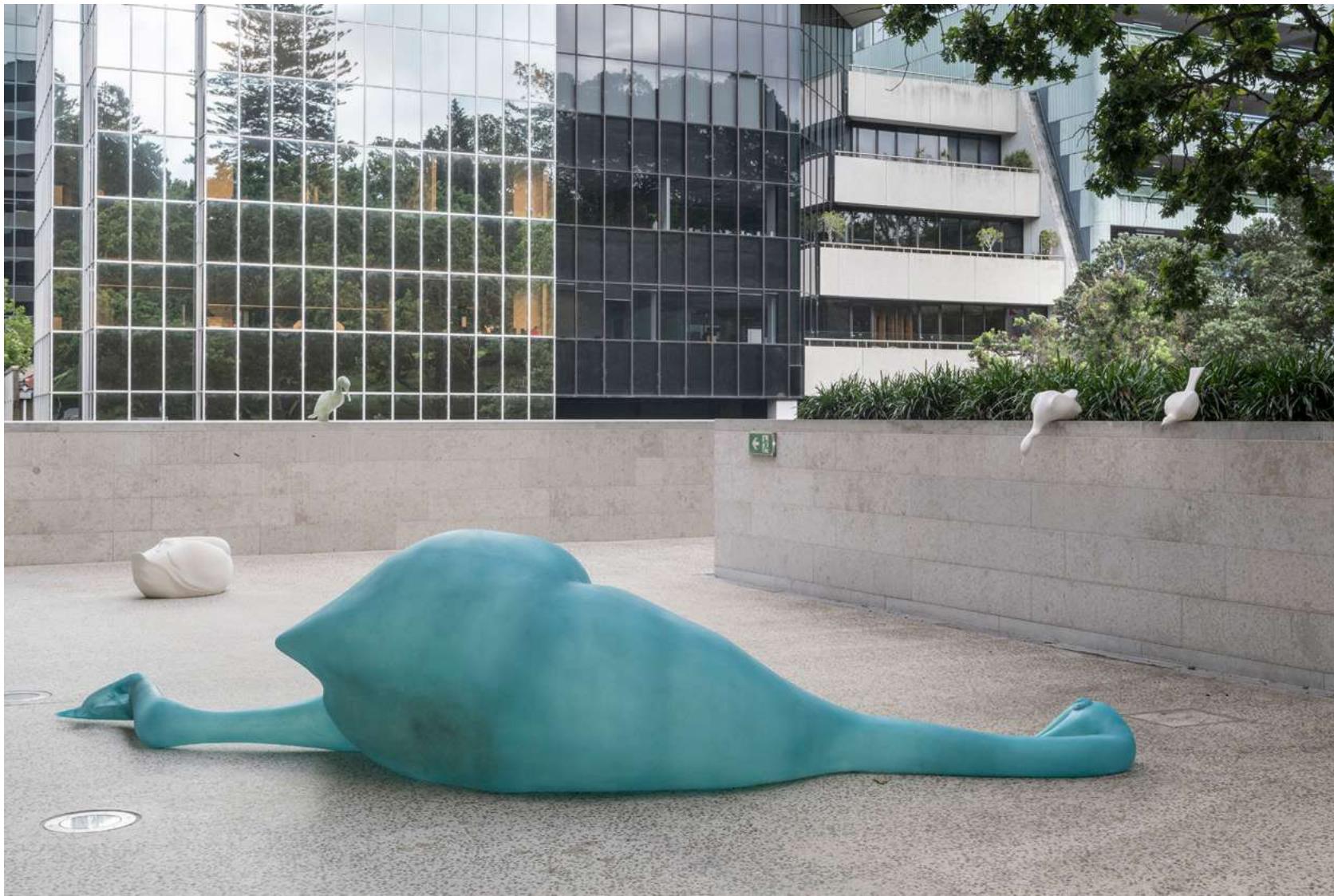
Seaside town (installation view), 2021
Limestone, beeswax, fishbone, shells, pebbles,
dried plant, synthetic eyelashes and nails
Part of *Heavy trees, arms and legs* curated by Abby Cunnane
The Suter Art Gallery, Nelson



Come up for air, 2020
Digital animation, LED Light Wall, 7:06 min
110-metre-long, 13-metre-high
The Lightship, Port of Auckland



Come up for air, 2020
Digital animation, LED Light Wall, 7:06 min
110-metre-long, 13-metre-high
The Lightship, Port of Auckland



The Interior (installation view), 2019
Oamaru stone, fibreglass, polyester resin, acrylic lacquer
Auckland Art Gallery North Terrace, Curated by Natasha Conland
Photograph by Jennifer French



The Interior (installation details), 2019
Oamaru stone, fibreglass, polyester resin, acrylic lacquer
Stone carved by Brett Tutauanui Keno (Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāi te Rangi, Ngāi Tahu)
Photograph by Jennifer French



The Interior (installation details), 2019
Oamaru stone, fibreglass, polyester resin, acrylic lacquer
Auckland Art Gallery North Terrace, Curated by Natasha Conland
Photograph by Jennifer French

Life in the interior

Ka ngaro i te ngaro o te moa (Lost like the loss of the moa).¹

We become-with each other or not at all.²

The calls, croaks, and song of ngā manu (the birds) in Sorawit Songsataya's sculptural assemblage *The Interior* 2019 are silent. Birds of different species native and endemic to Aotearoa New Zealand congregate in an intimate relational space. This is an imagined gathering of ngā manu across varied geographical distributions and asynchronous time. Here birds from Te Ika-a-Māui (North Island) and Te Waipounamu (South Island) commingle in one location, and extinct species commune with the nationally endangered and critical, and the not threatened. Without a shared song, ngā manu nevertheless commune through position, orientation, posture, and body language. Together, the elegantly dipped neck of the kōtuku or white heron (*Ardea modesta*), the attentively extended neck of the matuku moana or reef heron (*Egretta sacra*), the tail-up curiosity of the kererū or New Zealand pigeon (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*), and the stilled reverence of the parekareka or spotted shag (*Stictocarbo punctatus*) incline towards the two prone bird species, the moa (*Dinornis robustus*) and the poūwa or black swan (*Cygnus sumnerensis*). In this intimate gathering, those with breath remember those without; those that can still exhale materialise those that can no longer. It is as if the perching birds are enacting a ritual for the prone birds that gathers together the vast yet interconnected emotional states of memory, mourning, and tangihanga (funeral rites). Of the prone birds, the two poūwa each loop and lace their long sinuous necks over their spines and rest their heads between their tucked wings, while the single gigantic, flightless, wingless moa appears as if laid to rest with its long neck stretched out, and grief held in the curl of one claw.

In this reading of *The Interior*, ngā manu are engaged in remembrance and silent incantation amongst themselves and *for* themselves. It is a reading that privileges the sociability of birds first and foremost. Yet many different elements, taxa, and species interact with each other, and the relationship of birds to humans is only one possibility amongst many (birds to air, wind, water, insects, fish, trees, flowers, nectar to name a few). Given the ritual, even refuge-like feeling of this bird-centred gathering, how can we, as humans, approach this event? Might we, as Thom van Dooren writes in a discussion about crows, mourn not just *for*, in this case, moa and poūwa and the gathered birds, but *with* the shadow of moa and poūwa and the gathered birds?³ What kind of interspecies attentiveness and attunement might be required of us in this speculative undertaking? That is, how bird-like might we need to become? *The Interior* not only invites us to go within ourselves and the lives of avifauna, but to consider human and more-than-human relations in greater breadth. While birds and other fauna (and flora) have been used to understand human behaviour through metaphor, parable, and story, the silent incantation of this congregation of birds seemingly invites us to simultaneously honour ngā manu for themselves as we go exploring, and to not solely use them for our own elucidation.

As we listen with ngā manu, their attentiveness towards the moa and poūwa could potentially bring us into an encounter with the unfolding climate emergency through the finality of extinction and the expressions of mourning that accompany these particular

historical losses. While there is a physical finality to extinction, species make homes in ecosystems that are entwined with others, be they reciprocal, dependent or predatory. When one species passes forever, other species live or die with this absence, which is why, as Anna Tsing writes, 'extinction is a multispecies event'⁴ that, either through choice (intentional noticing) or necessity, includes humans. Certainly the remembering and mourning of the perching birds in this gathering are echoed by human practices such as the many whakataukī (proverbs) by tangata whenua (people of the land) and iwi (tribes) including *Ka ngaro i te ngaro o te moa* (*Lost like the loss of the moa*) that dwell on the passing of the moa. In whakataukī such as this the moa lives on, without a body, in the genealogy of memory. In this sculptural assemblage, the moa and poūwa have rematerialised in, to borrow Bridget Sutherland's phrase, an 'uncanny return'.⁵ This moa shares little resemblance with the skeletal remains or motley recreations of the 'natural history complex',⁶ rather it is caught somewhere between 3D modelling and a translucent hologram. It is digital-smooth, without plumage, the colour of an iceberg or fittingly, the blue crystalline substance of the iron phosphate mineral vivianite that forms on decaying bones.

The colour of the moa mediates between epochs to encompass both historical and contemporary extinctions (which far exceed Holocene losses), and the as-yet-unknown relationship between contemporary and future biodiversity losses. In this context, any evocation of an iceberg is an invocation of solastalgia (distress over ecological destruction). By reanimating and rematerialising the figures of two historically extinct species endemic to Aotearoa (moa and poūwa) in our present moment, we are invited to consider our relationship to the rest of nature in a time of climate emergency and the sixth mass extinction. The digital, iceberg blue of the moa simultaneously travels back in time and brings the moa into our present-becoming-future. Likewise, the presence of the perching birds, whose population status ranges between not threatened and endangered, encourages us to enter into a relationship of care, or as van Dooren writes, to 'hold open space in the world for other living beings'.⁷ How might we begin to hold open space for others? Perhaps by enlarging our sense of community, which may involve going beyond human communities, and certainly by recognising ourselves as part of the rest of nature we are in continual relationship with. Donna Haraway suggests that one of our tasks in this unfolding socio-ecological crisis is to recognise kin, to make 'inventive connections as a practice of learning to live and die with each other'.⁸ Who else could be our kin?

In *Offspring of rain* at Enjoy Gallery (Wellington, 2019) Songsataya explored our relationship with the elements of water and wind and, as with *The Interior*, birds occupied a central focus in *Starling* at Artspace (Auckland, 2018). In all three exhibitions, Songsataya has held open space for the other entities we share this earth with; he has created artworks, exhibitions, and immersive environments for visitors to apprehend, recognise, and engage with potential kin. One of the central themes present in *Offspring of rain*, *Starling*, and *The Interior* is how to move beyond the dualisms of nature and culture, other and self, for certainly an inability to see ourselves as part of the rest of nature contributes to distancing, alienation, and the view of "nature" as a resource and therefore expendable. Instead of nature/culture dualism, Songsataya aims for a continuum between nature and culture. This is evident in the exhibition title, *Offspring of rain*, where implicitly, we too are rain's offspring. Likewise, this exhibition's title, *The Interior*, which is clearly installed in an outdoor setting, can be interpreted as a desire to present

this congregation of birds and their imagined nature-culture rituals of remembrance and mourning as equivalent if not profoundly related to our own ceremonial practices. How we see ourselves in relation to the rest of nature matters, especially as we contemplate the losses around us and to limit the grief to come. Meanwhile some birds are perching to varying degrees of population precarity and some are forever prone.

Robyn Maree Pickens

¹ Priscilla M Wehi, Murray P Cox, Tom Roa, Hēmi Whaanga, 'Human Perceptions of Megafaunal Extinction Events Revealed by Linguistic Analysis of Indigenous Oral Traditions', *Human Ecology* 46, 2018, p 464.

² Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2016, p 4.

³ Thom van Dooren, *Flight Ways: Life and Loss at the Edge of Extinction*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2014, p 143.

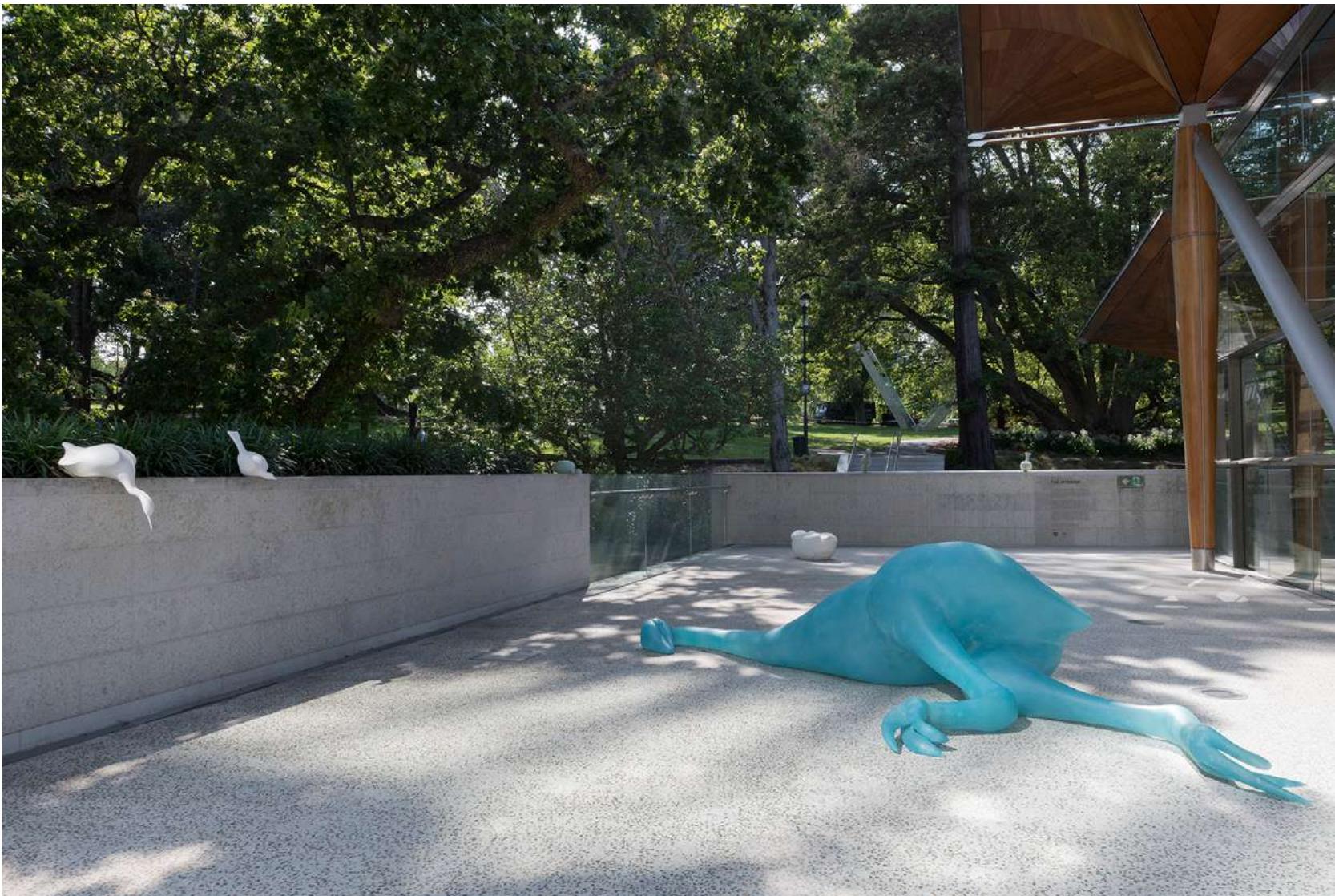
⁴ Elaine Gan, Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Nils Bubandt, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2017, p 4.

⁵ Bridget Sutherland, 'Colin McCahon and Imants Tillers: The Care of Small Birds – An Ecological Perspective', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*, vol 17, no 1, 2017, p 29.

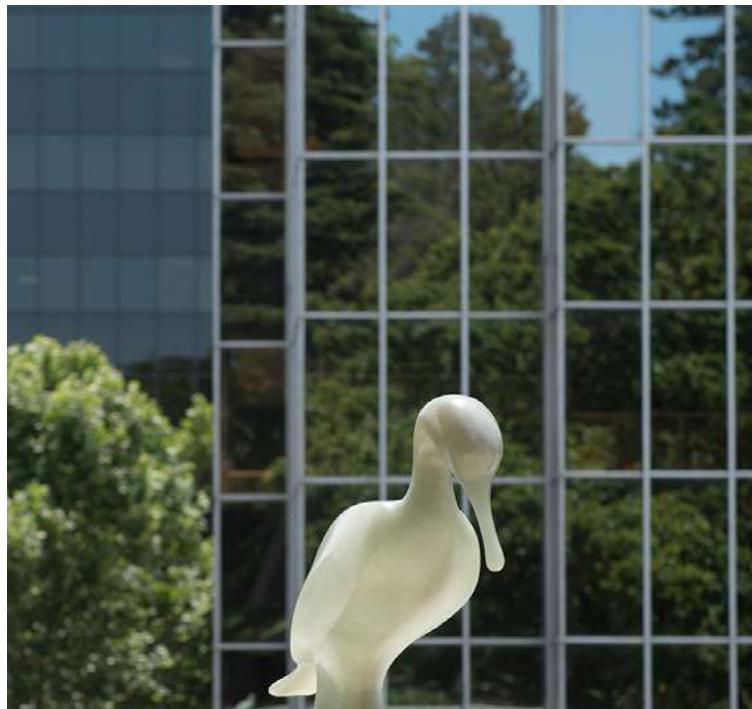
⁶ Petra Lange-Berndt, Keynote Lecture 'The Natural History Complex' ART/NATURE Conference Berlin, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNRH8Im1Gpo>, accessed 2 November 2019.

⁷ van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, p 5.

⁸ Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p 1.



The Interior (installation view), 2019
Oamaru stone, fibreglass, polyester resin, acrylic lacquer
Auckland Art Gallery North Terrace, Curated by Natasha Conland
Photograph by Jennifer French



The Interior (installation details), 2019
Oamaru stone, fibreglass, polyester resin, acrylic lacquer
Auckland Art Gallery North Terrace, Curated by Natasha Conland
Photograph by Jennifer French



Morning dew (installation view), 2019
Cast resin with heat-pressed and dried plant material
Sound installation by Antonia Barnett-McIntosh
Enjoy Contemporary Art Space, Wellington



Morning dew (installation view), 2019
Cast resin with heat-pressed and dried plant material
Sound installation by Antonia Barnett-McIntosh
Photograph by Cheska Brown



Morning dew (detail), 2019
Cast resin with heat-pressed and dried plant material
Dimensions small: 50 x 50 x 50 mm each
Photograph by Cheska Brown



Morning dew (detail), 2019
Cast resin with heat-pressed and dried plant material
Dimensions large: 60 x 60 x 30 mm each
Photograph by Cheska Brown



Offspring of Rain (installation view), 2019

Plexiglass, epoxy resin, digital video 10:00 min

Sound by Antonia Barnett-McIntosh

Photograph by Cheska Brown



Offspring of Rain (installation view), 2019
Plexiglass, epoxy resin, digital video 10:00 min
Sound by Antonia Barnett-McIntosh
Enjoy Contemporary Art Space

**Sounding out feeling in Offspring of Rain:
Soravit Songsataya & Antonia Barnett-McIntosh at Enjoy**

In his book *Crowds and Power* (1960), which I come to through Gwyneth Porter, Elias Canetti describes rain as a crowd symbol, a natural phenomenon that summons the energy of a crowd and transforms it into myth, dream, speech and sound.¹ For Canetti, the motion of rain is intrinsically linked to its magical qualities. He writes, “*rain falls in drops...it is seen as parallel streaks and the number of the falling drops emphasises the uniformity of their direction. There is no movement which makes more impression on man than that of falling... three senses at least— sight, hearing and touch— participate in the experience of rain, and to all these senses it is something multiple.*”² Soravit Songsataya’s exhibition *Offspring of rain*, at Enjoy Contemporary Art Space, has shared concerns with Canetti’s conception of rainfall. *Offspring of rain* presents sculptural components, moving image, and original composition in order to imagine how an encounter with the natural world can return to being something intimate. The show is the result of Songsataya’s research at the Mākara West Wind Farm. The moving image work *Offspring of Rain* — which also lends the exhibition its title — most explicitly illuminates Songsataya’s unravelling and reinterpretation of natural experience.

In the Western world, the everyday encounter with nature is usually mediated by technology, science and commerce. When the forecast is for rain, the symbol on the iPhone weather application seems to perfectly condense the mood that it brings. The weight of the rain cloud is heavy, bearing the load of an afternoon of precipitation. The chilly blue registers the driving force of the rain, carried by the wind, the way it stings cheeks, that it’s rarely misty or drop-like, but falls as sheets, dashes of water jetting in from the sky. The kind of rain that is illustrated by this symbol is conscious of the way the human day can be altered or transformed by the weather. The endearing quality of these tiny graphics reinstates the phenomenological dimension of the weather. I think about how the combination of weather and graphics can offer a gateway into understanding the way that Songsataya’s practice traverses documentation and animation.

Offspring of rain begins with a small and chubby globe, bobbing up and down on the screen. The animated world falls, like a rain drop, into an similarly simply rendered pair of outstretched hands. Wobbling between cartoon fingers, Songsataya imagines Earth as liquid and malleable. The globe turns into a crystalline sphere, water to ice, and then its form changes again, to a pronged star, and to a crescent. In Gayatri Spivak’s book *Death of a Discipline* (2003), she writes that the conception of the world as a globe is way of insisting on our difference from the place where we live. Instead, Spivak proposes, Earth should be conceived of as a planet, and its population as planetary subjects. It is in this understanding of Earth that it becomes possible to reject an anthropocentric understanding of existence.³ The exchange that takes place in this fragment of animation — between earth, human, liquid and ice — realises Spivak’s proposition that the world and humankind are not separate entities. The playful nature of Songsataya’s animations are central to their critique of human exploitation of the natural environment.

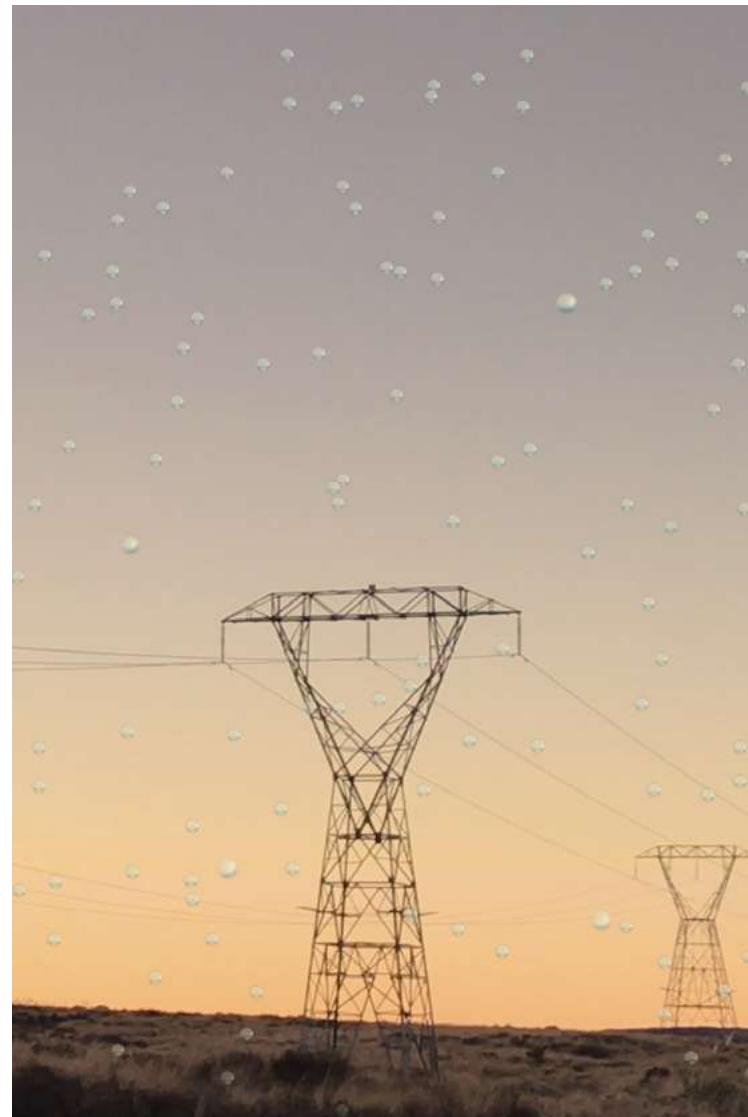
The moving image changes to a camera tracking through a rural landscape in Aotearoa, filmed from a car. Rows of pylons puncture the landscape. These industrial interventions into the landscape recall something of Edweard Burtynsky’s sickened sublime. The sublime has always been a way to insist on a state of alterity from the geographies we

inhabit. However, unlike Burtynsky's work, *Offspring of rain* allows for a synergy with the natural world. In the backdrop of the video, Songsataya has studded the sky with Pixar-like stars. These animated stars disturb any effect of the Industrial Sublime, by realising that to be planetary, in Spivak's sense, is to be of stars and space too. They acknowledge the scientific transformation that has been enacted on the weather — harnessing, tracking, measuring, recording — by pointing to an alternative mode of perception. Rainfall has become about what can be extracted from it, rather than an admiration of cycles of condensation and evaporation.

As with the wind turbines of Mākara Wind Farm that Songsataya has also recorded, these industrial inclusions charge *Offspring of rain* with the politics of harnessing the weather as an energy source. Mākara's Wind Farm is operated by Meridian Energy, the largest provider of electricity in Aotearoa. The notion of "farming" the weather draws attention to the cultivation of the environment that is necessary for such procedures to take place. Meridian Energy's installation of wind turbines is another instance of the built environment encroaching on the natural world. It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate this activity from the ways in which colonisation is ongoing. However, in contemporary discourse, particularly from a Pākehā perspective, the conversations about colonisation focus on the physical land, but ignore how colonial dominance of Aotearoa seeps into every dimension of the environment. Meridian Energy has not only claimed the land area that their wind turbines have been planted on, but assert a mastery of the sky space too. As such, Songsataya's focus on weather activity emphasises that the colonial Western mindset is predicated on ownership of any and all natural resources at hand.

Superficially, this harvesting of natural events appears primarily as a commercial endeavour, whereby the weather is a commodity that can be sold back to consumers to power their homes and lives. Yet, with the crowd as a vehicle for ideas, *Offspring of rain* also suggests that this type of natural exploitation is about more than the literal energy that water and wind provide. Instead, to collect and resell the weather does not only regard functional resources, but also ownership and distribution of the abstract qualities of meteorology. To return to Canetti, he writes that rain is the "*crowd in the moment of discharge... the drops fall because they can keep together no longer.*"⁴ Falling rain is a moment of energy transferral, and so, analogously, it represents the moment where a crowd becomes a unified whole. Throughout *Offspring of rain*, the properties of a crowd are present, perhaps most pertinently in Songsataya's inclusion of Antonia Barnett-McIntosh's composition.

As the exhibition text notes, the Mākara Wind Farm has historically been a site for receiving and transmitting sound, in its capacity as Mākara Radio during the second half of the 20th century. The acoustics of weather are essential to a human experience of it, so it is fitting that at this location, cultivation of both weather and sound intersect. For *Offspring of rain*, Antonia Barnett-McIntosh composed an original score to accompany Songsataya's moving image. The composition weaves through the space, a vaporous audio lingering in the visitor's passage. To introduce the sound of rainfall into the exhibition, Songsataya and Barnett-McIntosh have recognised that it is unnecessary to replicate its rhythm — that instead, acoustics can be transposed. The score is tinkling and rattly and cold. The motion of weather patterns is present through its nebulous and experimental texture. Here, in the score, is where the falling happens. These moments,



Offspring of Rain (still), 2019

Digital video, 10:00 min

Sound by Antonia Barnett-McIntosh

<https://youtu.be/lPxqRg3F7PU>



Offspring of Rain (still), 2019
Digital video, 10:00 min
Sound by Antonia Barnett-McIntosh
<https://youtu.be/lPxqRg3F7PU>

where the audio crescendoes, but in a hazy way, are echoed in the sculptural panes of resin that sit alongside the screen. The resin is cracked, and so together, this element and Barnett-McIntosh's composition are able to signal to rainfall without being didactic. To go beyond rain as well, to think of the percussion wind enacts through foliage, or the absorbing silence of a snow blanket, sonic experiences of weather phenomena are encompassing. Rain falling heavily sounds a lot like the indiscernible and accumulated murmur of a crowd, and subsequently, being enveloped by something aural is a reminder of communality.

What of the crowd? A crowd formation establishes some commonality between everyone present. The crowd is a unifying force, at least insofar as it establishes some sort of connection between people by virtue of them existing together, in a shared space and time. The basic configuration of the crowd and its simple criteria of presence serves to eliminate or obscure difference between members or participants. As such, to summon the crowd is also to summon the concept of crowding out, of pushing away and flattening difference by taking up more space than is granted to any individual. Entering *Offspring of rain*, a grid of golf ball-sized resin spheres is arranged. Each sphere contains a unique piece of flora: some preserve pansies from Songsataya's garden, others comprise ferns gathered during research. The area that this element of the exhibition takes up forces the visitor to the edges of the gallery, toward the walls. The amassed effect of this installation, *Morning Dew*, is greater than the sum of its parts. When *Offspring of rain* and *Morning dew* (2019) are experienced simultaneously, the effect of being encompassed, crowded out, works in two ways. Firstly, the omnipresence of the composition qualifies sound as a site of refuge. The visitor can navigate the space, undetected, because their movement is always overwritten by the audio activity around them. Secondly, this anonymity, which can only breed within a crowd, enacts a radical invisibility within *Offspring of rain*. It destabilises the authority of physical existence in favour of sensation. To be invisible in a crowd is to forfeit the physical body to a greater structure, and prioritises the personal, inner and perceptive experience.

Jane Wallace

¹ Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, as cited in Gwyneth Porter, "Rosemary Johnson's Cloud Works (1975-76): The Opposite of Neglect," *Natural Selection* 7 (Winter 2010): 21.1, accessed 27 December 2018, https://www.naturalselection.org.nz/s/7.21_Gwyn_Porter.pdf.

² Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 82.

³ Gayatri Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press, 2005), 72-3.

⁴ Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, 82.

Sounding out feeling in Offspring of Rain: Sorawit Songsataya & Antonia Barnett-McIntosh at Enjoy, an essay by Jane Wallace. Commissioned by CIRCUIT Artist Film and Video Aotearoa New Zealand 2019.



Jupiter (installation view), 2019
Six-channels digital video, 7:17 min
copper, wool fibre, silk, pressed flowers, jute twine
Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery



Jupiter (details), 2019
copper, wool fibre, silk, pressed flowers, jute twine
Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery
Photograph by Sam Hartnett



Jupiter (detail), 2019
Six-channels digital video, 7:17 min
copper, wool fibre, silk, pressed flowers, jute twine
<https://youtu.be/KGpzqyljSSw>

Jupiter

In the exhibition *Jupiter*, Sorawit Songsataya draws us towards the horizon, an in-between space that binds, yet remains neither land or sky. Operating in this liminal zone, and animated by the unseen forces of wind, he uses the humble form of Thai kite to bring together an oscillating range of references, connecting local traditions with a grander social fabric; the handmade with the digital; land with clouds.

Uniting conventionally perceived binaries, *Jupiter* helps us envision the multiple worlds that traverse traditional boundaries. A series of videos capture a kite-flying festival in Thailand, interspersed with computer-generated animation. They play alongside kite-objects crafted from New Zealand wool, Thai silk, and dried petals. The juxtaposition of moving image works and objects places each into co-dependence; the kite propels the fun of a festival and the creativeness of digital making just as the kite also relies on these conditions for flight – realised, digital or latent. A further set of moving image sequences presents footage of wind turbines and coloured fluorescent windmills, revelling in the interplay between visible human agency, and that which both enables and exceeds it.

Jupiter suggests a collaboration between human and non-human forces, each contributing with varying intentions. In mapping the multiple connections that emerge from a single object, Songsataya places the very notion of singularity under pressure. Rather, the artist playfully exposes a false divide between human and non-human, agency and happy accident.

Ioana Gordon-Smith

Post-McMahon House Residency Exhibition
23 February – 26 May 2019
Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery



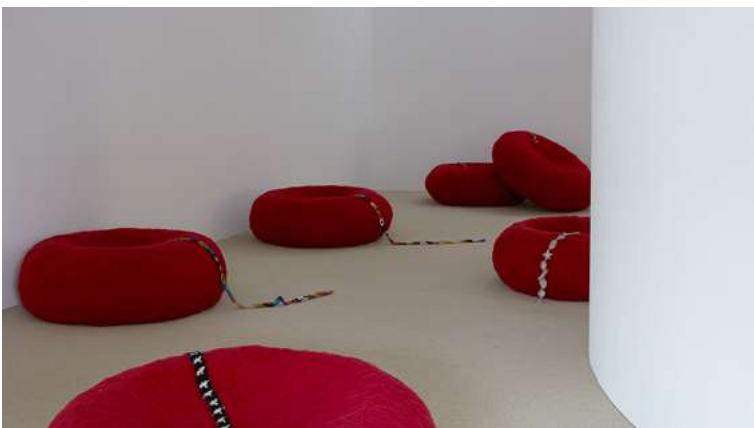
Jupiter (details), 2019
copper, wool fibre, pressed flowers, jute twine
Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery
Photograph by Sam Hartnett



Starling (installation view), 2018
Digital video 7:03 min, merino wool, polystyrene, carpet
Artspace Aotearoa. Photograph by Sam Hartnett
<https://youtu.be/SJotGKYvHUo>



Starling (installation view), 2018
Digital video 7:03 min, merino wool, polystyrene, carpet
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Lovebirds (still), 2018. Digital video, 7:03 min
<https://youtu.be/SJotGKYvHUo>

Four Chambers, 2018. Wool and Polystyrene, 1200 x 1200 x 400 mm each
Part of *Starling*, Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland

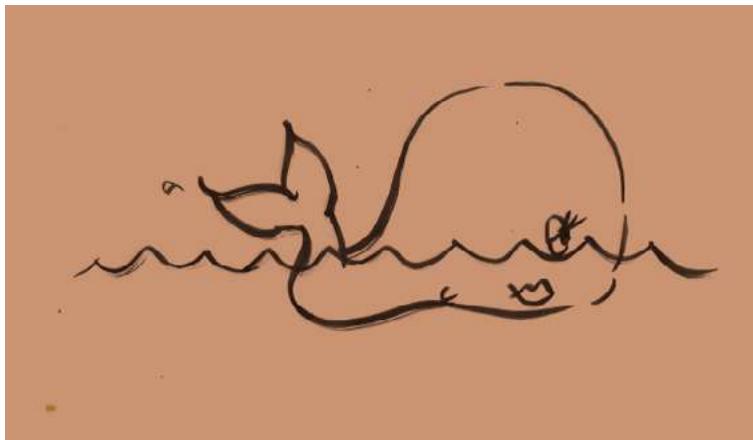
Starling

Kinship by birth or blood is the primary means through which an individual understands their place and sense of belonging. Kinship as defined by the family unit – blood as the material of commonality – is a primal medium of connection, one that can symbolically order our earliest notions of relation. However, relying on what is contained by bodies in close containment, these models of kinship restrict notions of belonging. They are closed systems that prioritise linear human-to-human relations above all else. *Starling* refigures behaviours found within the human body and more-than-human-worlds to offer an approach to kinship emergent from the collaborative, symbiotic patterns of biological organisms and complex ecologies. *Starling* images a world stripped of human centrality, a world composed of nonlinear relations.

With the blood cell as one principal actor, Songsataya utilises scale as an entry point into this relationality. Animate blood cells position us within a microcosmic view of our own bodily processes. In this positioning, we might become aware of the potential subjecthood of these processes and their actors. They also provide a platform – a language even – which helps to understand our embeddedness within complex, universal processes. It enables us to view ourselves as a set of ‘systems’ within systems, existing in a state of continual commune and collaboration. By picturing the agency of what is most often understood as “not alive” we may begin to access our relational and emerging composition from the perspective of the environment within us, and us within the environment.

The woolly, membranous blood cells around us appear intimately familiar, yet normally only known through the lens of a microscope. Hand-felted ribbon chains are draped over the blood cells, mimicking the language of genetic coding, a twist towards more ancient lines of connectivity, genealogy and the order of humankind in the world. At once enlarging and abstracting biological forms and processes, Songsataya renders affinity with “the stuff of us”, the materials and bodies that are our most immediate collaborators. Informed by studies of multi-species biological patterns – how living organisms interact as open systems – the exhibition’s structure and collaborative process attempt the qualities of these highly adaptive networks. It looks at such systems as a means of permeating self-understanding and creative processes. Co-authorship, or thinking-making-practicing collectively, is tested in order to tease out the question, “is singularity naturally collaborative?”

non-hyphenated, a non-linear, multi-platform work authored by Robyn Maree Pickens, is partly modelled on Stacy Alaimo’s transcorporeal idea that “the environment’ is not located somewhere out there, but is always the very substance of ourselves”¹. The work, a series of writings, explores the innate interconnectivity of all beings. A set of five micro-texts, each published across different mediums (within the pages of *Art News New Zealand*, as street posters, through Instagram, as a specially designed website, and in print within the gallery) staggered throughout the exhibitions length, to be read as a cohesive whole, or in parts. *non-hyphenated* is a textual system that allows for the context of each microtext to infect and permeate the others, establishing a collaborative generation of meaning. Similarly positioned is the reader, who – perhaps encountering a microtext in isolation – brings certain gaps and rhythms that can be accounted for by the text’s embrace of the generative.



Lovebirds (stills), 2018
Digital video, 7:03 min
Part of *Starling*, Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland
<https://youtu.be/SjotGKYvHUo>

Set amongst this understanding of self-as-ecology and ecology-as-self, *Starling* works towards imagining a kind of boundless subjecthood composed by collective kinship. Traditional and orienting divisions collapse into a holistic ecology: symbolic to material, subject to object, us to world, it to me to they.

Such holistic conceptions of the world are not new: The artist honours this directly with the work *Lovebirds*, and its reflection on the story of the whale and Kauri tree. Indigenous notions of kinship very often encompass a binding relationship between all organisms; human, animal or otherwise. In this whakatauākī (of which the origin is unknown) the whale and the kauri are placed in a reciprocal relationship. The whale longs for the Kauri to return to the sea, but the Kauri must stay earthbound and guard the forest. They decide to exchange skins, each giving a part of themselves to form the other, explaining why the Kauri bark is so fleshy, and dense with oily resin. This mutual exchange takes on a variety of forms in *Lovebirds* as it moves through a cast of actors and scenes.

Blood is central to *Starling*, used to suggest the limits of its human lore. In bearing witness to and participating in a network of interacting systems, entities, and materials, the attitude of making kin with the world as a political act emerges through the exhibition: a kinship of love without blood, premised on the fundamental connectivity of the world. This more-than-human image of kinship becomes an ode to ‘love processes’: mundane exchanges of flows, energies, and encounters between every conceivable entity. Looking to our world as an ecology in which no “material expression of it is hierarchised above another”², gives us the opportunity to re-examine and rewrite the agency of human and nonhuman actants alike, to understand the collective processes making up the world, and to increase our capacity to make kin with the world.

Bridget Riggir-Cuddy

¹ Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the material Self*. Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2010, pg 4.

² Rākete, Emilie. *Inhuman: Parasites, Posthumanism, and papatūānuku*, 2015.



Weave Me In felting workshop, 2018
Merino wool, felting needles, polyurethane, printed booklet
Part of *Starling*, Artspace Aotearoa, Auckland
Photograph by Sam Hartnett

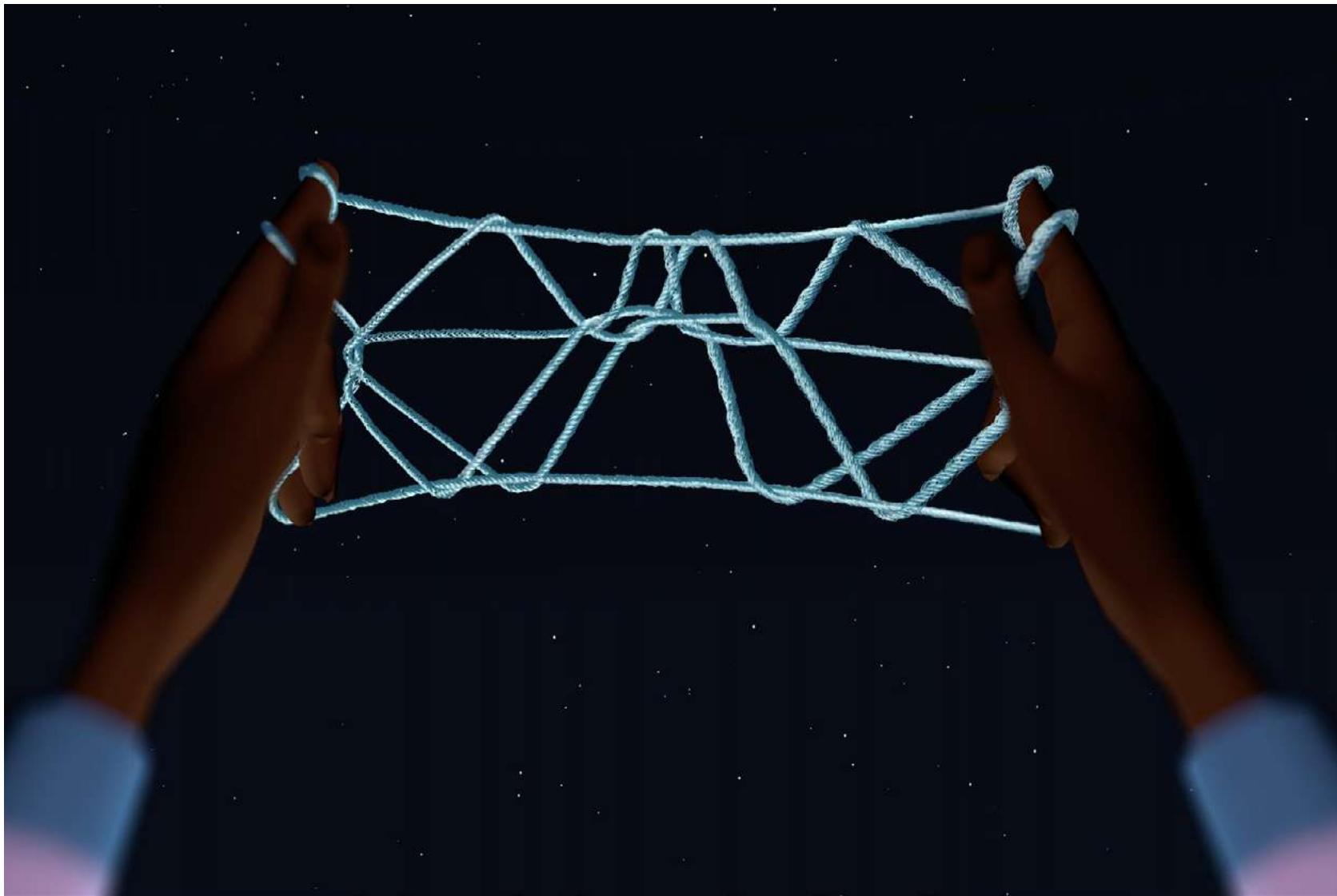


Coyotes Running Opposite Ways (installation view), 2016

Part of *Potentially Yours, The Coming Community*

Artspace Aotearoa, curated by Tendai John Mutambu

Photograph by Sam Hartnett



Coyotes Running Opposite Ways (still), 2016
Digital video, 4:58 min
Part of *Potentially Yours, The Coming Community*
<https://youtu.be/H5JV6mytl9c>



Coyotes Running Opposite Ways (detail), 2016
Glazed ceramics, magnolia branches, custom made pine wood deck, machine-felted wool fibre,
machine-knitted mohair textile, copper wire, wool string, coloured fluorescent lighting
Part of *Potentially Yours, The Coming Community*, Artspace Aotearoa



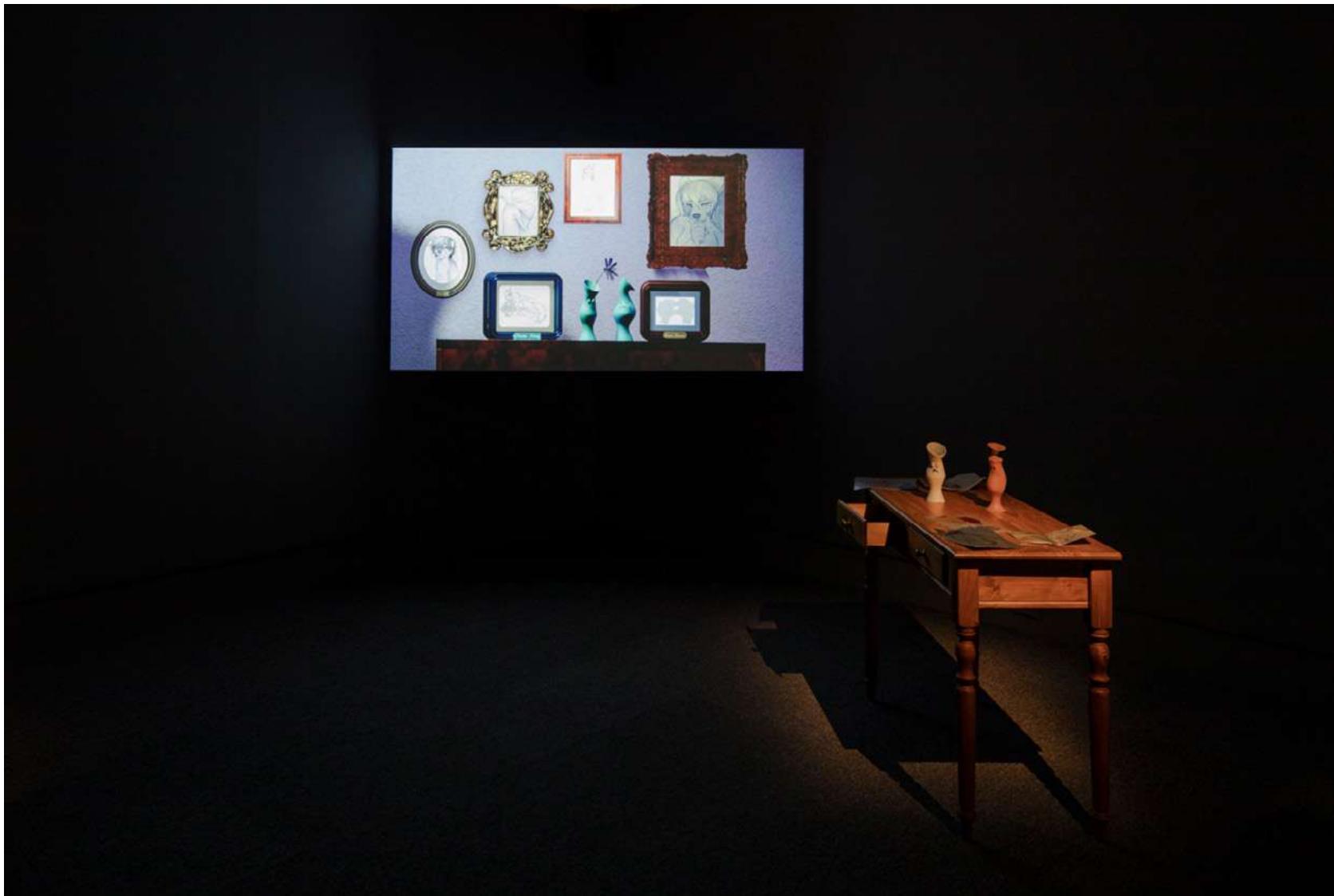
Coyotes Running Opposite Ways (detail), 2016
machine-felted wool fibre, 90 x 1500 mm each
Part of *Potentially Yours, The Coming Community*
Artspace Aotearoa, curated by Tendai John Mutambu



Keeping You in the Loop: Maui's Clever String Game workshop
Part of *Potentially Yours, The Coming Community* public programme
Organised between Rebecca Hobbs, SOUL Project;
Salome Tanuvasa and the artist, Ihumātao, 2016



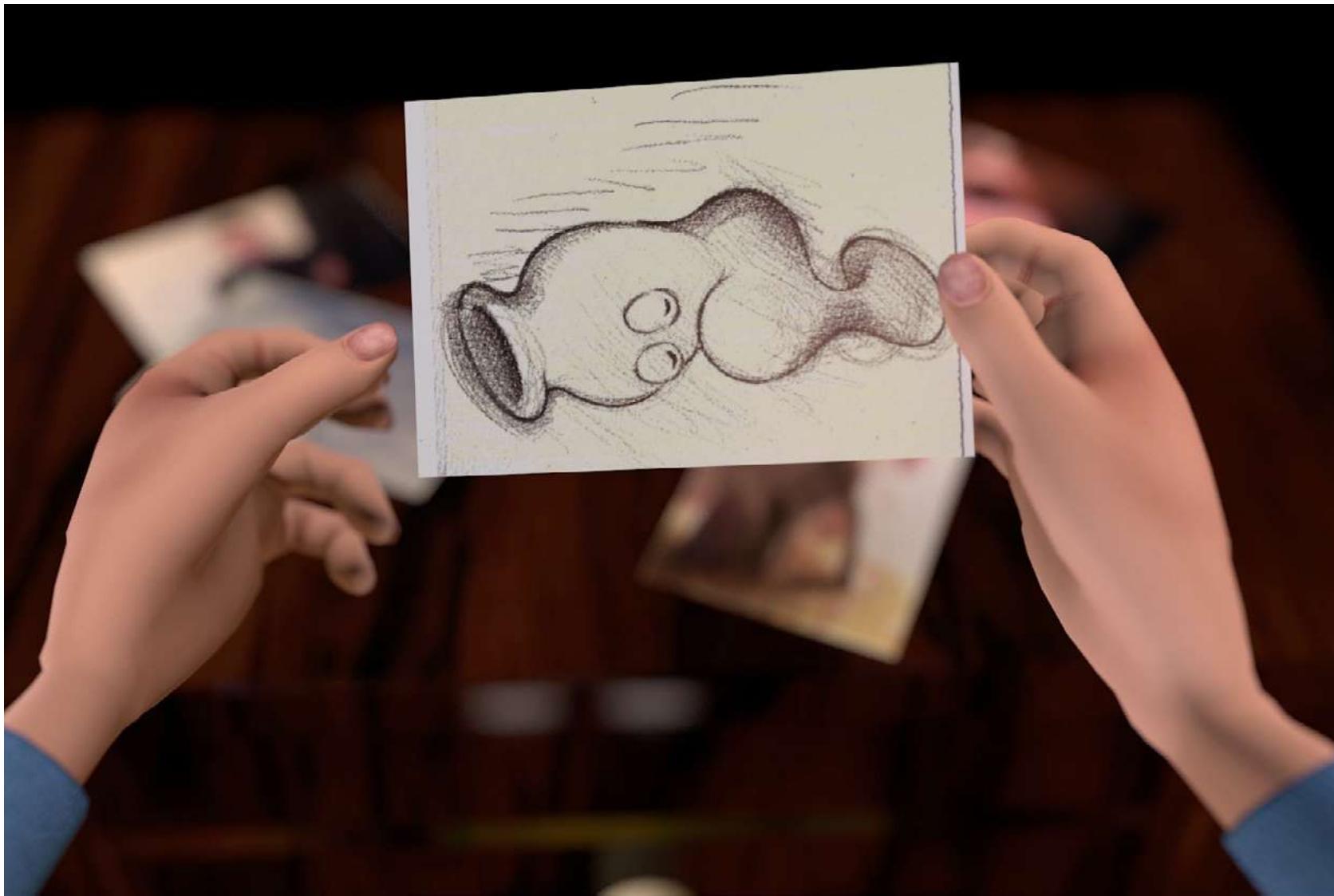
A bone, a flesh, a daddy's nest, 2016
Digital video, colour, silent, 3:07 min
RM Gallery, Auckland
<https://youtu.be/QyYQ5qNAmTo>



Bronies (installation view), 2016
Part of *The Non-Living Agent* curated by Andrew Kennedy
Te Tuhi Contemporary Art
Photograph by Sam Hartnett



Bronies (detail), 2016
3D printed vases, antiqued wooden hall table,
inkjet print on aluminum. Dimensions variable
Photograph by Sam Hartnett



Bronies (still), 2016
Digital animation, colour, sound, 3:13 min
Part of *The Non-Living Agent* curated by Andrew Kennedy
<https://youtu.be/DsVAL-ApJnM>



Afternoon Pick (installation view), 2015

Digital video, colour, sound, 4:57 min

The Dairy Project curated by Rebecca Boswell

<https://vimeo.com/155265046>



Tip Top (installation view), 2015
Inkjet printed on silk charmeuse, nylon rope
The Dairy Project curated by Rebecca Boswell
The Physics Room, Christchurch



Midnight (installation view), 2015
Digital video 2:21 min (loop), terracotta, pyrography on balsa sheet,
machine-knitted denim textiles, wrought iron racks
Window Gallery, Auckland. Photograph by Sam Hartnett



Midnight (detail), 2015
Machine-knitted cotton denim, digital embroidery,
wrought iron rack. Dimensions variable
Window Gallery, Auckland



Midnight (still), 2015
Digital animation, colour, silent, 2:21 min
<https://vimeo.com/132595496>
Window Gallery, Auckland



Bishop, 2015. 3D printed vase, 70 x 70 x 200 mm
Cardinal, 2015. Machine-knitted and digital embroidery;
merino wool, polyamide, acrylic, viscose, polyester, rayon
Let the Cobbler Stick to His Last curated by Tim Gentle and Matthew Ward, New York



Piti School Uniforms, 2015
machine-knitted merino wool, pine coat hanger
Blue Oyster Art Projectspace, Dunedin



Southland Carpenters, 2015
3D printed plastic particle, 70 x 150 mm
wooden vase stand, 270 x 1050 mm
Blue Oyster Art Projectspace, Dunedin



Dolly, 2013
Digital video, colour, silent, 5:03 min
https://youtu.be/mehW_F0TsBk
Gloria Knight Gallery, Auckland