



Treading Consciously

**Socially-engaged art for mindful
place-collaborations with urban
non-human occupants**

Exegesis in support of practice-based Thesis
Master of Visual Arts
Auckland University of Technology
Publication design by Gabi Lardies

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2022**

For my Nana

Moe mai rā

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Thank you to my fellow classmates, our time together in studio has been such a joyful experience and an inspiration in the pursuit of visual arts practice. To all my friends and wider support crew, I know I missed out on so much hang time over the past year and a half. I look forward to reconnecting with you all.

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed

Hamish Carter

8th June 2022

Abstract

This practice-led, socially-engaged, art project develops an approach for acting in conscious reciprocal exchange with ecological sites in urban Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland. Reframing the use of tools and objects typically embedded in a 'survival' or 'bushcraft' context, this practice aims to be present in '*meeting-with*' these ecosystems. Through a site-based, diagrammatic approach, and an expanded provisional walking methodology, methods such as wood whittling, graphite frottage (*trunk-transfers*), and printmaking (*cambium-collaborations*) have contributed to a shift in the project's terms of engagement. The resulting research now understands the role of the artist as collaborator with the 'more-than-human' trees, rocks, plants, birds, and water occupying urban ecosystems in Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland.



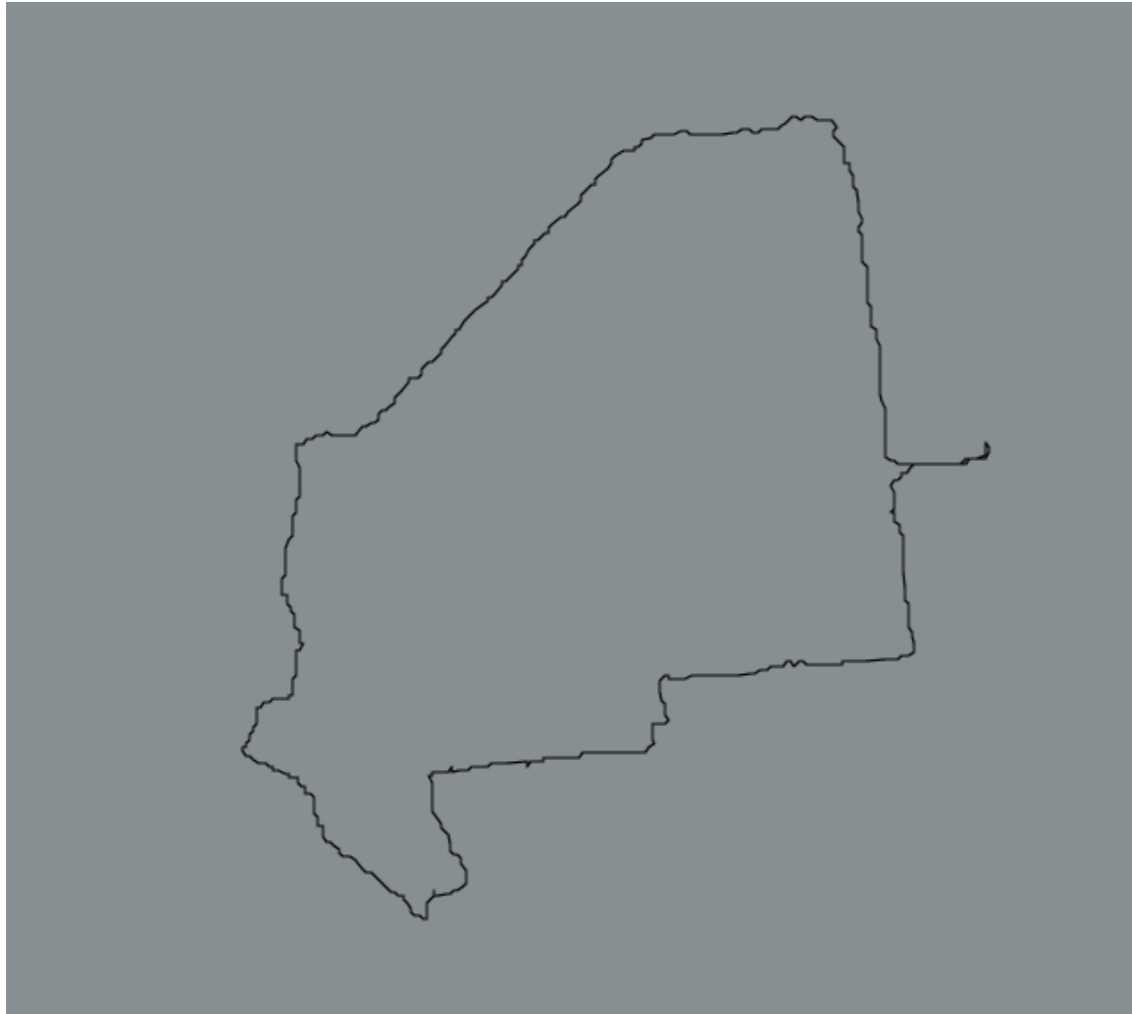


Fig 1. Photo documentation for *Pack Training* (2021); provisional art-performance around my local neighbourhood with backpack containing 24 hours of food supply and equipment for an overnight hike. (previous page)

Fig 2. Map indicating GPS route taken for *Pack Training* (2021)

Stepping onto the pavement: an introduction to this project

The first artwork I made for this research project was an experimental, performative artmaking walk, guided by a set of rules intended to get my body attuned to carrying the weight of a backpack of equipment. I donned my 11.75kg tramping backpack, laden with the usual equipment I'd take with me into the bush for 24 hours, and documented myself walking around my local neighbourhood. The instructions for the walk were as follows:

1. Turn right out of the gate onto Pompallier Tce. >
2. Turn right onto Ardmore Rd >
3. Go left on Jervois Rd >
4. Turn left onto West End Rd >
5. into West End Racquet Club >
6. Walk along the path down into Cox's Bay Reserve >
7. Cross the bridge and turn left on the other side >
8. Walk up the boardwalk adjoining the estuary >
9. Turn left at the small steps connecting the boardwalk with the park entrance to Parawai Cres >
10. Turn Left out onto Parawai Cres, then right as it turns into Hukanui Cres.
11. Walk along Hukanui Cres until it turns into Kelmarna Ave, then turn right onto Trinity St.
12. Turn Left at the end of Trinity St onto Ardmore Rd.
13. Turn Right back onto Pompallier Tce.
14. Turn left into the gate at home and finish the walk.

The documentation and extra information for *Pack Training* (2021) were later developed into an A5-sized hand-bound book of GPS maps, timekeeping data, direction lists, elevation profiles and photo documentation of the walk. This artwork marks a leaping-off point for the project and its socially engaged, provisional approach at a local scale.

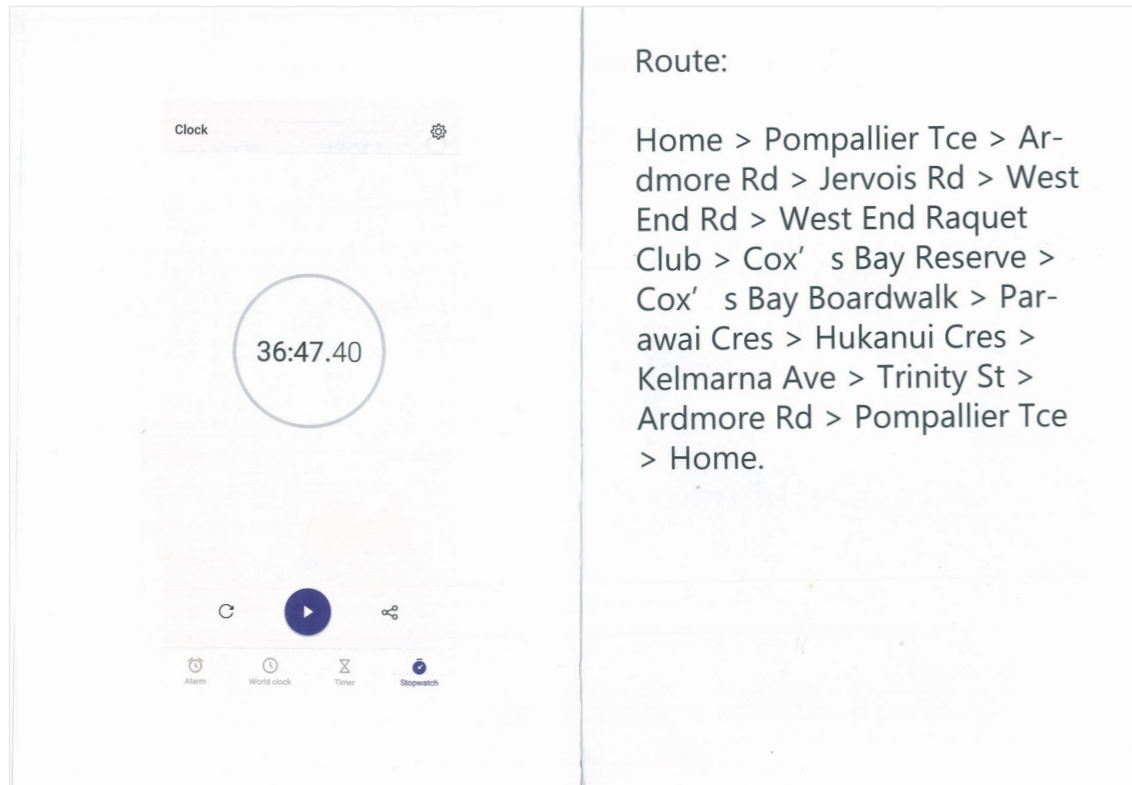


Fig 3 - 4. Spreads from *Pack Training* (2021) A5-sized 56 page hand-bound book.

Australian sculptor and multimedia artist Bianca Hester's interdisciplinary research project *movements materialising momentarily* (2015) at AUT's ST PAUL St Gallery has been a key influence on my work's methodological approach. In her recent book *Groundwork* (2021), Hester documents and discusses site trips, gatherings, making and fieldwork made around the Greater Tāmaki / Auckland Volcanic Field¹. Early on, Hester sets up her terms of engagement for the project, navigating her place as an Australian artist making artwork in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Hester's aim in slowing down her presence as manuhiri (visitor/guest) was to "reflexively challenge" the habits of her spatial mobility. Here, she quotes Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, who refers to this work as "Homework", the process of "recognising one's situatedness by reflexively unpacking habits, assumptions and entanglements"². This active engagement began when Hester stepped onto the tarmac at Auckland Airport and has remained a core methodology throughout her practice. There is a likeness in our practices, with Hester's steps onto the tarmac as manuhiri (visitor/guest) akin to my steps on the pavement around my local neighbourhood at the beginning of this project.

- 1 Bianca Hester, *Groundwork*, vol. 069, Perimeter Editions (Melbourne, Australia: Perimeter, 2021)
- 2 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues*. (New York: Routledge, 1990), 62-63.



Fig 5. Bianca Hester, *movements materialising momentarily* (Installation View), Curated by Abby Cunnane, ST PAUL St Gallery, Auckland, 31 July - 11 Sep 2015. Photo credit Sam Hartnett.

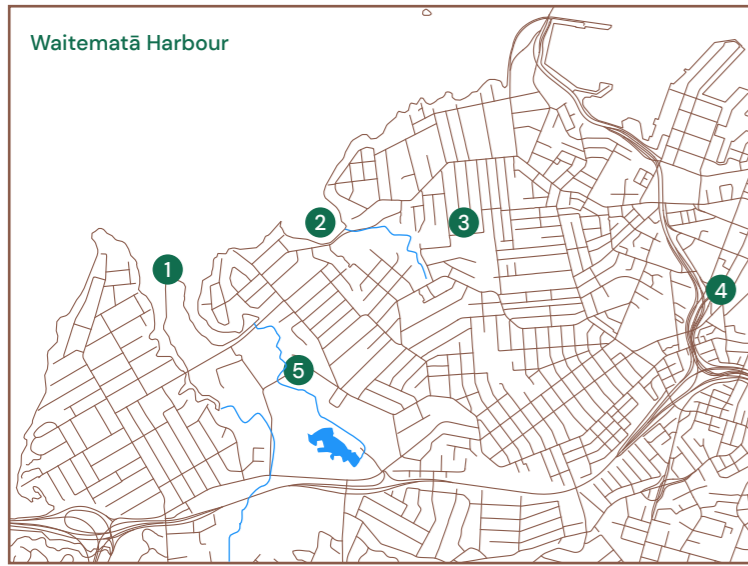


Fig 6. Map of Central Auckland outlining my local neighbourhood for this project.

1. Te Tokaroa / Meola Reef
2. Ōpotukeha / Cox's Bay
3. Backyard Studio (Aug-Dec 2021)
4. Where I Currently Live
5. Te Waiōrea / Motion's Creek

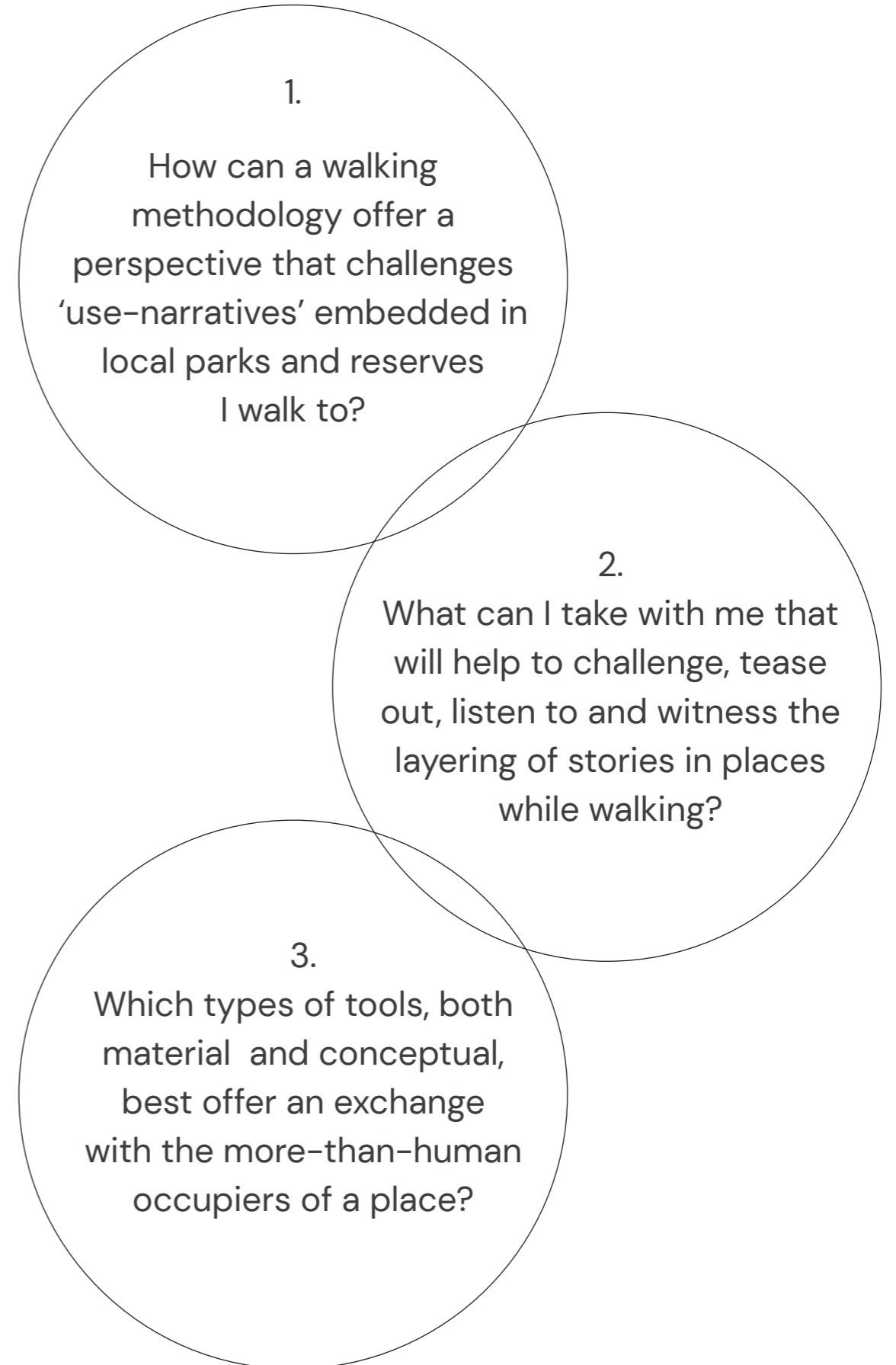
I live in Central Auckland, a comparatively densely populated suburb and home to less tree cover and public access to green spaces than in its surrounding central suburbs. Most green spaces in Central Auckland and surrounding suburbs are introduced species, with almost no old growth or indigenous forest remaining³. Waterways within walking distance in my area are paved over and piped underground, such as Te Wai ō Horotiu is a stream that runs through Myers Park and under Queen St. These waterways are subject to sewerage overflow during rainfall events due to Auckland's 'dated' wastewater infrastructure⁴. Living and working as an artist in my neighbourhood takes into consideration these realities, and my practice is, in part, a reflection of where I live.

In coming to appreciate Hester's situated approach to 'stepping onto the tarmac', the central purpose of this site-specific, socially engaged provisional art project has been for me to learn how to *work* more consciously *with* the locations where my practice takes place. Through that process, I work closely with space, site, found woods and natural materials, and use a backpack of equipment to convene space between myself and more-than-human occupants⁵ in the local ecologies I visit on foot. Three questions arise that are useful for tightening up my mindset and toolkit for walking as a methodology within my practice. These questions are as follows:

3 Nancy Golubiewski et al., *Auckland's Urban Forest Canopy Cover: State and Change (2013-2016/2018)*, Revised April 2021, 2020, 18, <https://www.knowledgeauckland.org.nz/media/2066/tr2020-009-2-aucklandsurban-forest-canopy-cover-2013-2016-2018-revised-april-2021.pdf>.

4 Charlie Mitchell, "Harbour of Doubt: The Tiny Creek That Drains Auckland of Its Waste," *Stuff*, December 21, 2019, sec. environment, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/environment/117958444/harbour-of-doubt-the-tiny-creekthat-drains-auckland-of-its-waste>.

5 The term "more-than-human", coined by David Abram (1996), is used in the context of a developing of relations between humans and non humans occupying the environment around us. Rather than 'othering' ecological entities as part of 'nature' and humans remaining separate, "more-than-human" offers a way to see all living, sentient and non-sentient beings as equal and living in scales beyond a human level of comprehension.



This practice involves methods of graphite frottage, wood whittling, site walks and camp-outs, fuelled by an underlying methodological framework of conscious reciprocal exchanges. Through these engagements, I have become conscious of working in reciprocity with places and their more-than-human occupants through the adaptation of typically settler-colonial methods of bushcraft and survival. Coined by David Abram (1996)⁶, the term “more-than-human” is used in this context to refer to trees, plants, fungi, leaf litter, water, rocks, mud, sand, and airflow at timescales that sit outside a human capacity of comprehension. Through utilising socially engaged multi-disciplinary artmaking activities, I become immersed in the moments of wonder present in my interactions with local urban more-than-human occupiers at a slower pace. The pace of immersion that is active in my practice draws on theoretical tools and concepts that encourage slowing down, slow observation and being present⁷. While *present* in my multi-disciplinary approach, I enmesh a slow pace with an awareness of “deep-time”,⁸ a term devised by John McPhee (1982), originating from 18th-century geologist John Hutton’s Theory of the Earth (1795).

This exegesis lays out the journey of my research and its development of a methodological artmaking approach to respond consciously to local urban ecosystems. Firstly, by outlining this project’s terms of engagement, I discuss how changing the location of my practice, has allowed a shift to responding with care for local inhabitants in the ecological areas I work in. In Chapter One, I discuss the context of the backyard studio and how this has led a developing methodology around a dedicated studio space, my ongoing relationship with wood and other artists who master it, a provisional site-specific response to place, my reciprocal exchange methodology and getting to know the more-than-human occupants in my neighbourhood. In Chapter Two, I discuss and explain my response to local ecosystems in my neighbourhood through a continuing walking methodology, the development of a mobile kit and the importance of staying overnight. In Chapter Three, I discuss where my practice has arrived at, and the tools I use to work in reciprocity with local ecosystems. Here, I outline the development of two process-driven techniques: cambium-collaborations and trunk-transfers.

6 David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1996).

7 Shari Tishman, “*Slow Looking: The Art and Practice of Learning Through Observation*” (Taylor and Francis 2017).

8 The term “deep time” was first coined in an article by John McPhee (1982) as an adaptation of 18th century Scottish geologist James Hutton’s *Theory of the Earth* (1795). McPhee’s reading of Hutton’s theory looks at geological processes in the Western United States, to demonstrate their vast size and time scales in contrast to the scale human existence.

The project’s terms of engagement

This project’s terms have been defined by engagements in different locations, both local to where I live and local to where I grew up. An early site of response for the project was Pirongia te aroaro o Kahu (‘the fragrant presence of Kahu’), a 959-metre forested stratovolcano mountain and ancestor of Waikato hapū (sub-tribes) who have a direct whakapapa (genealogy) to Pirongia. It is located thirty kilometres southwest of Kirikiriroa (Hamilton) in the Waikato region on Te Ika ā Maui (North Island) of Aotearoa (New Zealand). In 1971, Pirongia was designated as part of Pirongia Forest Park and, since 1987, it has been managed by the Department of Conservation (DoC), a Crown entity. I chose to align the project with this place based on its significance to me through my upbringing in the Waikato. Although I have no genealogical ties to the Iwi (tribes) who identify Pirongia as their ancestor, reflecting on its importance as a place of learning and as a Forest Park during my youth between 1991 and 2010 has challenged me to explore new perspectives on how I might interact with the Maunga. These approaches counteract how I was taught to interact when I frequented Pirongia as a Forest Park when on school trips, scout camps, outdoor programmes, and later as a part of Youth Search and Rescue, the youth training wing of the Hamilton Search and Rescue Group. These contexts positioned the Forest Park as a place of recreation, fitness, scientific knowledge, camping and conservation for me at this time. This early part of my research repositioned my interpretation of a sculptural language and an objecthood for infrastructure built by DoC in the forest park.

Fig 7. Looking east from viewing platform at the summit of Pirongia te aroaro o Kahu.





Fig 9. Pre-1990's Pirongia Forest Park CNC routed track signage at junction of Mahaukura and Tirohanga tracks.



The aesthetic DoC uses on their signs is standardised, homogenising the same 'DoC green' in its track signage across all of Aotearoa/New Zealand's national and forest parks. Older signs predating the 1990s use a format of recessed CNC-router text, within which yellow lettering is painted to contrast the surrounding 'DoC green'. My work involved mimicking these yellow and green visual conventions and experimenting with arrangements of words and different texts, such as "you", "me", "in", and "out". These directional words had the intention of causing a shift in my understanding of the way text is used on signs as information holders and wayfinding tools and my view that signage and boardwalks prompt users to walk, sightsee and pass through without considering the passage of deep time inherent in places such as Pirongia.

I drew on concepts of 'Memory Markers' in painter and photographer Elliot Collin's project, *Memory markers in the landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand* (2018)¹⁰ and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's (2015) *stone* as "conducting affect when engraved or shaped by human hand"¹¹.

Fig 8. Map indicating location of Pirongia te aroaro o Kahu within upper Te Ika-a-Māui / North Island of New Zealand.

9 "DoC Green" is the name used by Dulux paints to name the exact tone of green that the Department of Conservation uses in its painted track signage.

10 Elliot Collins, "Memory Markers in the Landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand" (Thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2018), <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/11414>.

11 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Stone* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 51



For my DoC sign artwork, *I stand here witness to your passing footfall, Observing the Impermanence of Epochs* (June 2021) (Fig 10), routed text painted with DoC green and yellow became an important signifier in conveying alternative imaginings for overlaying the meaning and agency of Pirongia as more than a Forest Park. This early challenge, to rethink how I act and think in the forest regardless of DoC's signage prompts, helped lay a foundation for my later walks to 'meet-with' the forest and its more-than-human occupants.

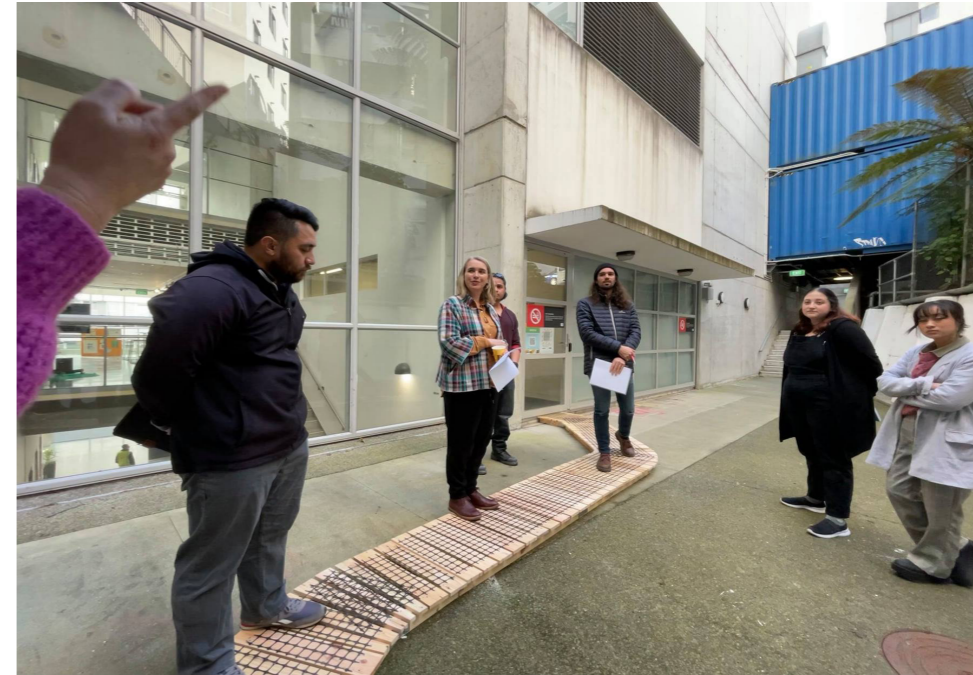
Fig 10. *I stand here witness to your passing footfall, observing the impermanence of epochs* (2021), CNC routed text, painted rough sawn wood, bolts.



Fig 11. *you, me, in, out series* (May 2021) CNC routed text, painted wood, milled wooden stands.

What followed this artwork was a series of boardwalk objects made to the specific size and material application of similar boardwalks found along the summit tracks of Pirongia. This work was built to fit the dimensions of AUT's Level 2 external courtyard, a concreted and fenced space adorned with overhanging Kawakawa (*Piper Excelsum*) and Ponga (*Cyathea dealbata*) ferns. Presented as part of Visual Arts Talk Week in July 2021, participants were invited to walk along or upon the boardwalk and be present within the space. The boardwalk directed participants to move within the scent of the kawakawa, and the work itself aimed to entice interaction with the plant and its dwelling in this somewhat marginalised urban setting. The group's experiences of the boardwalks set up the beginnings for framing a collaboration between my body and the more-than-human occupants in the urban ngāhere (forest) I have come to work with.

Fig 12-14. Boardwalk objects made for Visual Arts Talk Week July 2021, repurposed pallets, plastic netting, staples, nails.



Considering the role of decolonising methodologies for this practice.

Two years on from Geo, my partner and I embarking on our Te Reo Māori journey together¹², I made a decision to pursue a Master of Visual Arts at AUT University. This decision was based on a change of perspective I had about my place in Aotearoa as a descendant of settler-colonial migrants. I wanted to explore this perspective shift further to challenge my understanding of National Parks in Aotearoa through an ongoing provisional, socially engaged, conceptual art practice.

With an art practise informed by decolonising methodologies, this project has challenged my presumptions about how I enter into dialogue with a place. Indigenous researchers Kuni Jenkins and Alison Jones talk about collaborative research's intersection between the Indigenous and the Coloniser and the dangers that this work can entail.¹³ However, the trouble inherent in this “hyphen-space” can also be a fruitful place of discussion and collaboration.¹⁴ This project has considered how my artwork sits in relationship to this hyphenated space that exists between Tauīwi (foreigner), Pākehā (New Zealander of European Descent) and Māori (Indigenous New Zealander) perspectives. One convention widely used in the western academic tradition which acknowledges others' ideas is one used throughout this document; Citation. However, the context of citation as a practice doesn't exactly hold up as equally ‘acknowledging’ information, especially when this information stems from differing epistemological systems from the western academic tradition. As Hana Burgess (Ngāpuhi, Te Roroa, Te Ātihaunui a Pāpārangī, Ngāti Tūwharetoa), Donna Cormack (Kāi Tahu, Kāti Māmoe), and Papaarangi Reid (Te Rarawa) discuss; citing within the western academic context only stands to bolster knowledge circulated within its own settler-colonial academic realm.¹⁵

A potential recontextualisation of citations to best serve an indigenous worldview is framed by Burgess, Cormack and Reid (2021) as acknowledging the whakapapa or genealogy of an idea. As discussed by Burgess and Te Kahuratai Painting (Ngāti Manu) (2020) here, knowing the whakapapa of something allows you to position yourself in relation to its past, present and future.¹⁶

¹² Across the span of a 2-year period in 2018 and 2019, my partner Geo and I embarked on a journey to learn Te Reo Māori, the indigenous language of Aotearoa New Zealand. This was an important undertaking, firstly for Geo who saw learning Te Reo (language) as an opportunity to connect with her Whakapapa (genealogy) and secondly for myself, understanding the importance of support by engaging in this journey together. Geo has dual whakapapa on her Dad's side, descending from Ngāti Rangiwewehi, an iwi near Rotorua in the Western Bay of Plenty in the North Island of Aotearoa. Her second line of whakapapa is tied to Ngāti Kuri in the Far North of the North Island, in Matauri Bay. I myself descend from Northern English genealogy on my mother's side. My Grandmother, Grandfather and Mother emigrated to Aotearoa New Zealand from Aspull, just outside of Manchester when Mum was 4 years old in 1961. On my Dad's side, I descend from Scottish heritage, the diaspora of which tracks to Aotearoa via Australia.

¹³ Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins, “Rethinking Collaboration - Working the Indigene-Colonizer Hyphen,” in *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies* (Sage Publications Ltd, 2008), 474,475.

¹⁴ Jones and Jenkins, 482.

¹⁵ Hana Burgess, Donna Cormack, and Papaarangi Reid, “Calling Forth Our Pasts, Citing Our Futures: An Envisioning of a Kaupapa Māori Citational Practice,” *MAI Journal: A New Zealand Journal of Indigenous Scholarship* 10, no. 1 (June 29, 2021): 59, <https://doi.org/10.20507/MAIJournal.2021.10.1.8>.

¹⁶ Burgess, Cormack, and Reid, 61

Chapter One – Backyard Studio

Although the project still carries elements from my time spent with Pirongia, it was Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland's August—November 2021 extended Covid-19 lockdown¹⁷ that necessitated a shift in both locations and project trajectory. In August 2021, I began operating out of an outdoor ‘pop-up’ studio in my backyard, instigating a series of conscious reciprocal material engagements.

In this chapter, I consider the conditions for setting up the backyard studio and its improvisational methodology that drove the practice during this time. To expand on this, I will discuss and reflect on the role of Paul Cullen's provisional diagrammatic approach to arranging objects in site-specific locations¹⁸ and Jill Sorensen's experimental spaces addressed in her project, *Domestic Hub – wilding the back garden: 2016-2019* at Ōwairaka Tāmaki Makaurau.¹⁹

¹⁷ For context, at 11.59pm on 17th August 2021, all of New Zealand moved into a level 4 lockdown imposed by the Government, due to a new wave of the Covid-19 Delta virus strain having breached the country's border quarantine and testing system and made its way into the community. Level 4 at the time was the strictest of Government's Covid-19 alert level system. Between 17th August and 21st September, Aucklanders were not able to leave their homes or the region for anything other than essential services or a travel exemption. Until the country had sufficient rates of vaccination, Auckland remained in at least level 3 restrictions, preventing inter-regional travel from 17th August 2021 until 3rd December 2021.

¹⁸ Paul Cullen (1949–2017), *PA Ihumatao 2015, Rocks, tables, ladders, 2015*, <https://www.paulcullenarchive.org/work/pa-ihumatao>.

¹⁹ *Domestic Hub – wilding the back garden: 2016-2019* at Ōwairaka Tāmaki Makaurau was part of Jill Sorensen's PHD Thesis *Between elsewhere and Away : Small Acts of Cohabitation* (2020).

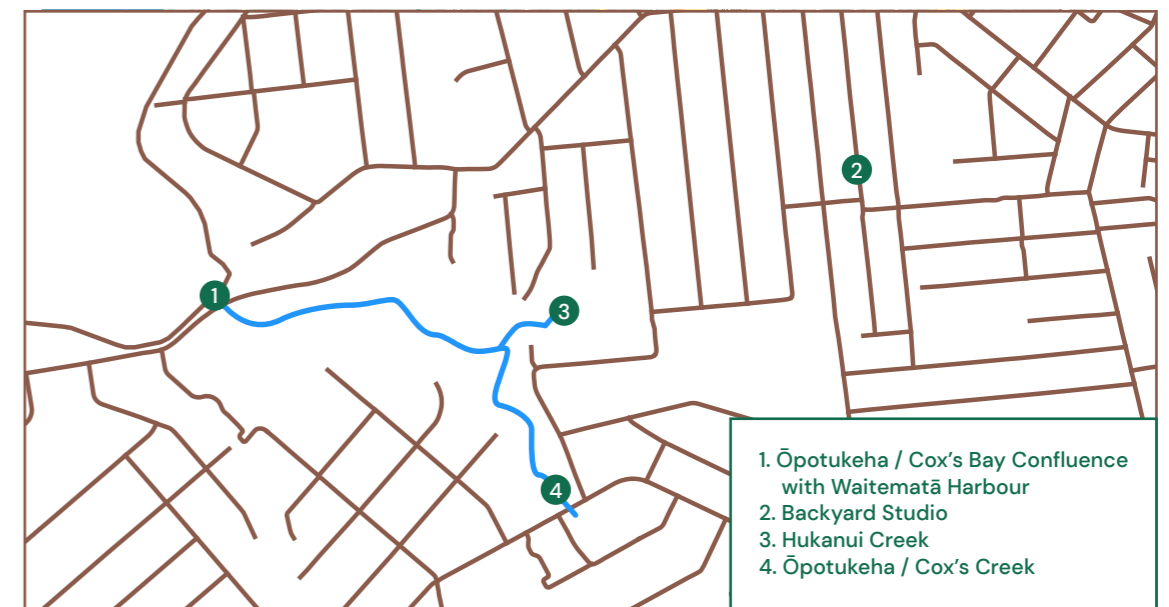


Fig 15. Map of my surrounding neighbourhood including key local features.



Fig 16. View of backyard studio with green and grey marquee, tripod, table, stack of materials and equipment insitu, Aug 2021.

A dedicated studio space

When I am practising, making comes first, along with my need to bring ideas into physical form before I can build and reflect on their conceptual framework; this is an important process and order of events for my practice-led research. For example, the concepts inherent in the boardwalk artworks I made in 2021 (Figs 12-14) could not have been developed without testing prototypes and life-scale versions for human use first. During the early days of lockdown, making inside my home proved a difficult task for me when seven passersby (my flatmates) would check in regularly to see what I was doing, and I found packing down my work daily broke up the creative process.



Fig 17-18. View of backyard studio with green and grey marquee, tripod, table, stack of materials and equipment and myself insitu, Aug 2021.



Fig 19. Interior view of backyard studio. Wooden table with range of wood whittling and ropework gear, Aug 2021.

I needed a space where I could leave things as they were, to pick up where I left off the following day, and without an audience to question if what I was doing was interesting or not. This prompted a move into the backyard and setting up an improvised studio space. It was located on a patch of grass in one section of the tiered garden out the back of my flat at 47 Pompallier Terrace, Ponsonby, Auckland, New Zealand. The backyard studio was a shelter from the elements, a temporary structure, a thinking space, a making space and a site for improvisational installation and was home to my studio-based activities for this project between August and December 2021.

The backyard studio consisted of a dome-style green and grey nylon camping marquee with a 4.5m x 4.5m footprint by 3m tall. Within the marquee, a 2.4m long wooden outdoor table sat along one side and a white plastic bifold trestle table measuring 1.8m along the back side of the marquee wall. A seat was positioned at the wooden table, and a stack of wood piled underneath the trestle table, arranged neatly on pallets to keep it off the wet grass. Having a designated and project-specific studio space prompted a productive shift in my practice. Being outside meant I could develop a studio routine away from the house. I would wake up, have breakfast and 'go into studio' each morning. This meant following a daily procedure of preparation by putting on a raincoat and tramping boots, a routine that welcomed the adoption of 'outdoor survival' practices into the domestic space.

The backyard studio as a site; testing in provisional space

To put into action a testing modality and explore some of my hunches I had around challenging the use of urban space, I drew on the tools within the mobile backpack kit I had taken with me to Pirongia (prior to the August 2021 lockdown). Again, I used materials I had on hand, such as 5mm braided nylon rope, a 1.8m x 2.4m blue tarp, a folding knife, and wood I collected on walks around my neighbourhood. In arranging and improvising with these tools and materials, the backyard studio became a diagrammatic and provisional site to test objects in the space and in making processes, using a kit loosely characterised within an outdoor survival context. This improvised approach moved from an urban to a local dialogue with my provisional backyard *working* space and my surrounding neighbourhood. The ability to tie things together, stack objects, place stakes into the ground, whittle down pieces of wood and arrange objects on the lawn considered their relationship in space, and ultimately helped drive a shift in the project's terms of engagement.

Before Bianca Hester's project movements materialising momentarily (2015) placed Ihumatao as a site for dynamic field research within the greater Tāmaki Volcanic Field, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland-based sculptor Paul Cullen (1949-2017) worked at Ihumatao on a series of "Provisional Arrangements".²⁰ Installed as sites out on the estuary adjacent to Ihumatao, one site for *Provisional Arrangements (Ihumatao), 2015*, consists of a formica camping table propped up by an orange and black striped surveying style rod, upon a plastic drop cloth sheet which is pegged out with aluminium tent ground stakes. Upon the table rests a pile of estuary mud and, dug from deeper down, layers of ash and sand from Maungataketake Ellett's Mountain. Cullen's diagrammatic approach points us to consider the layered history of this place and the forces that came to form it. It seems fitting, then, that it was Cullen who encouraged Hester to visit this site²¹ for movements materialising momentarily (2015). Hester takes on similar considerations in her visits, making casts of wood petrified from the eruption of ash from nearby Maungataketake Ellett's Mountain.²²

I considered how my own work utilised a diagrammatic site-based approach in similar ways. I arranged objects and materials,

²⁰ Cullen, *Provisional Arrangements (Ihumatao), 2015*.

²¹ Hester, *Groundwork*, 069:87.

²² Hester, 069:91.

which drove a process of revealing tensions, colour relations, and each object's material potential to link with one another in my backyard. This shifted my thinking towards how I could repurpose objects and materials on the kit gear list from my 'everyday' overnight tramping backpack and build a new material framework with a local lens. For the series *Ropework* (2021), these gear-listed objects and materials were integrated into 'tension-arrangements'²³ with wood sourced from walks to nearby Ōpoutūkeha / Cox's Creek and Hukanui Creek. These provisional, on-site artworks used 5mm braided nylon rope and aluminium tent ground-stakes to hold pieces of locally sourced wood upright and under tension. This tension places these objects in a relationship with the turf of the backyard and the context of the backyard studio, in much the same dynamic as the table is to the pile of ash deposits within Cullen's *Provisional Arrangements (Ihumatao), 2015*. (Fig 20-21).

²³ Tension-arrangements' are provisional testing techniques within my practice using the tension of rope and tent ground stakes to hold objects upright under tension. This technique derives from conventional tent-rope fastening conventions and uses various outdoor survival and fishing knots.

Fig 20-21. Paul Cullen, *Provisional Arrangements (Ihumatao), 2015*. Photos by Paul Cullen, courtesy of Paul Cullen Archive.





Fig 22–24. Tension arrangements, Backyard studio 2021, as part of “Ropeworks” series.



Fig 25. Still from *24 Hour Spring Equinox*, 3:48, HD Video, Sep 2021.

All of these activities occurred within a dialogue of videos, utilising tightly framed shots of myself demonstrating steps in a “how-to” process²⁴, representing stacking, stretching and tying elements into bushcraft and survival techniques. Beginning as a demonstrative documentation tool, the video in this context folded into my work as a way to capture the passage of time for activities occurring within the backyard studio. For example, in my work *24-Hour Spring Equinox* (2021), I aimed to place myself and my backyard actions in close relation to the passing seasons and further address my responsibility to act within a local timescale. Bushcraft activities were filmed in segments over the course of a 24-hour period from 7:20 am, Thursday, 23rd September, until 7:21 am, Friday, 24th September 2021 to capture time spent camping out and working from the backyard studio. This work aimed to think adjacently about time as a proponent in my relationship with the local neighbourhood through bushcraft and survival activities performed over the course of the Spring Equinox²⁵ in the backyard studio.

²⁴ How-to videos are a popular online convention used in content published to Youtube, Instagram, Facebook and Tiktok and are usually shot in a step by step sequence which helps users learn a technique or skill. In the context of this project, my ‘How-To’ aesthetic refers to step by step, tightly framed shots of myself and my hands performing a single action. These single framed actions are then strung together to form a complete video sequence of the technique adopted from a survival or bushcraft context.

²⁵ The Spring Equinox is a marker in time (usually falling in September in Aotearoa / New Zealand) where the day’s length is equal to the length of its corresponding night. It is understood in this project as a time-locating event to align my backyard studio’s activities with a delineation of time outside of the human.

Making space to think

“Bivouac”, a term derived from the Swiss-German “Biwacht”, is a form of camp-out and refers to any lean-to, temporary open shelter used to camp for a short period of time²⁶. My work, named *How To Build a Tarp Bivvy* (2021), uses a blue tarpaulin, rope, two pieces of wood and six aluminium ground stakes. These four elements allow for different arrangements of the bivouac structure in the backyard to explore scale, tension, space, bodily relationships and weather relations. Installation, in this context, occurs as a result of thinking in relation to the confines of the backyard, and my installation approach is acutely influenced and permeated by access materials I have on hand.

The temporary provisional role of the tent and bivouac as a site in the backyard became an important site and base for being present within my backyard, my neighbourhood, and with the more-than-human occupants in the nearby Ōpoutukeha/ Cox’s Creek, Hukanui Creek and Te Tokoroa/Meola Reef. Jill Sorensen’s 2021 PhD Thesis, titled *Between elsewhere and Away: Small Acts of Cohabitation*²⁷, explores aspects of site-specific art and positions the role of temporary structures, huts and interior/ exterior spaces as participatory support systems within her work.

In Chapter Three, *REIMAGINING SPACE/SPACE FOR REIMAGINING*, Sorensen’s expansion of Miwon Kwon’s *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2004) embodies three paradigms of “phenomenological, social/ institutional, and discursive approaches” that are “overlapping”²⁸ within site-specific art. Sorensen’s temporary structures build on this paradigm, framing them as “Immersive Installation” (immersing the viewer), “Dwelling-Spaces” (a place to provide comfort and stay a while) and “Dwellings within Dwellings” (a hut or tent-like construction inserted within a larger dwelling space of the home, gallery or social event).²⁹

26 “BIVOUAC | Meaning & Definition for UK English | Lexico.Com,” *Lexico Dictionaries | English*, accessed May 27, 2022, <https://www.lexico.com/definition/bivouac>.

27 Jill Sorensen, “Between Elsewhere and Away : Small Acts of Cohabitation.” (Doctoral, Massey University, 2021), <http://hdl.handle.net/10179/16481>.

28 Sorensen, 99.

29 Sorensen, 102–4.



Fig 26. Still from *How to Build a Tarp Bivvy*, Sep 2021, 3:26 HD Video.

Fig 27. Still from *Collecting Rainwater*, Sep 2021, 3:29 HD Video, as part of 24 Hour Spring Equinox series.

In her “object-oriented-provocations”³⁰, I am interested in the way Sorensen explores the role of the tent or temporary structures to hold space for conversation that challenges the use of objects and space. In the work series *Conversation Pit* (2018), participants are asked to enter one of her improvised structures staged inside a gallery, at home or in the backyard to engage in conversations seeded by a provocation; “how might we, as humans, relate to other entities in a post-anthropocentric manner?”³¹ By asking this provocation in the context of the conversation pit, Sorensen draws parallels with questions I ask myself within the backyard studio when connecting consciously and expanding my relationship with more-than-human entities living in my neighbourhood.

30 Sorensen, 115.

31 Sorensen, 110.



Fig 28. Jill Sorensen, *DWELLING SPACE, I SEE YOU SEE ME SEE YOU.* 2020, DOMESTIC HUB.



Fig 29. Jill Sorensen, *TO DREAM WHILE WAKING (WILDERNESS OF THINGS)* 2019, Participatory Installation AAANZ Conference, Ngā Tūtaki – Encounter/s: Agency, Embodiment, Exchange, Ecologies.



Fig 30–34. Jill Sorensen, *DOMESTIC HUB – WILDING THE BACK GARDEN:* 2016–2019.

Acting in Multiplicity

Centred in and around the backyard studio, the methods I use trace back to a ‘bushcraft’ or ‘survival’ context. Geoff Park’s (1995) framing of colonial thinking around the forest³² through an organisational lens Anne Salmond describes as being derived from the “Great Chain of Being”³³ has challenged the role of these methods within my practice. It is important here to acknowledge that in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the notions of ‘bushcraft’, ‘survival’ and ‘tramping’ emerged from the 19th-century colonial context (and later, the Boy Scout movement). And that, if left unchecked, I suspect my actions and artwork could potentially teeter on the edge of ‘recolonising’. So with this prompt in mind, I consistently ask myself; How might a reciprocated approach to activities such as wood whittling, bivouac shelter construction, and woodchopping subvert these activities embedded in the colonial narrative?

32 Geoff Park, *Ngā Uruora* (Victoria University Press, 1995), 28–33.

33 Anne Salmond, *Between Two Worlds* (New Zealand: Viking, 1997), 32–33.

Fig 35. Collecting mānuka from Hukanui Creek catchment.



Fig 36. Collected and whittled mānuka pieces drying in backyard studio, Oct 2021.



Fig 37. Using the Morakniv 120 to whittle a piece of locally sourced mānuka in the backyard studio, Sep 2021.



Fig 38. Photo of Morakniv 120 whittling knife and sheath.



To provide some context around the term “reciprocated approach”, it is worth mentioning here that this term is not of my own design. Rather, my methodology around giving back to the environment has been heavily influenced by the thinking and work of Robin Wall Kimmerer’s book *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013), who positions acts of reciprocity at the forefront of her work. Kimmerer is an indigenous scholar, scientist and member of the indigenous Potawatomi Nation in Oklahoma³⁴. Throughout *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer writes through a perspective of storytelling, indigenous epistemology and ecological science, weaving together possibilities for humans to learn from the world of plants. In the chapter *The Honorable Harvest*³⁵, Kimmerer discusses the concept of giving back through acts of reciprocity with plants. Here, she summarises how the Honorable Harvest “asks us to give back for what we have taken” and that as human beings, there is a responsibility for us to “enter into reciprocity with the more-than-human world”³⁶. Kimmerer understands that knowing the origins of food and other materials can help us build a conscious engagement with plants and, therefore, give back to the world.

34 Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass; Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, 1st ed. (UK: Milkweed Editions, Penguin Random House, 2013), 12.

35 Kimmerer, 175.

36 Kimmerer, 190.

Knowing the history of deforestation, waterway degradation and industrial pollution in the Ōpoutūkeha catchment³⁷, and with an awareness of the guiding principles outlined in Kimmerer's Honorable Harvest, I took on an approach that was deliberately conscious regarding material collection — questioning which wood I could take, and what should be left to contribute to the ongoing local ecological processes. In the case of a site near Hukanui Stream, there was a fallen mānuka tree lying next to the walking path that had since died. The steep brittle sandy soil and rotted roots of the mānuka were unable to hold the mass of the tree's weight, and it had fallen over. After walking past the fallen tree several times, I began to consider the implications of taking this once living tree for my project. What could I give in exchange, and what technique could I use that treated this material with respect?

I collected three long lengths of the mānuka tree's trunk branches, leaving behind five other lengths to remain as part of the natural biodegrading process. I took these collected pieces back to my backyard studio, choosing to work with the bark and not to imprint the mānuka with my own unrelated representative form. Instead, I followed the natural topography of the wood using my whittling knife³⁸. The Morakniv 120 allowed for a firm grip, a precise transfer of kinetic energy from my arm through the blade, and encouraged an accurate cut-angle to pitch underneath the bark of the mānuka. This whittling approach demands respect for the mānuka by offering the best possible tool for meeting respectfully with the wood. The resulting 'Wood Webs' are true to the mānuka's specific shapes of growth based on the availability of certain nutrients, air temperature, water and soil characteristics and the available light at the specific place of growth.

Working in reciprocity with found wood foraged from a local ecosystem created a different and more productive conversation about my developing relationship with Hukanui Creek, Ōpoutūkeha/Cox's Bay and Te Waiōrea/Motions Creek, moving away from a critique of the loaded meanings of signage associated with Pirongia Forest Park's public use and its maintenance by the local government. Taking onboard Burgess, Cormack, and Reid's framing of whakapapa (genealogy) of ideas, it is necessary to acknowledge the genealogy carried by Māori practitioners who employ a mastery of wood and like materials in their practice. In order for me to step consciously into working with materials such as wood, water and trees, I have found it important to take notice of Pākehā and Taiwi artists' conscious approaches to working

37 Kaaren Hiyama, *High Hopes in Hard Times : A History of Grey Lynn and Westmere*, 2nd ed. (Auckland: Media Studies Trust, 1991), 46

38 The whittling knife I use is a Morakniv 120 carbon steel knife with cylindrical birch wood handle and interior steel tang made in the village of Östnor in Mora, Sweden. The Morakniv style of knife is popular in Scandinavia as a survival and whittling tool and is stiff, sharp with a short blade the width of the palm.



Fig 39. Image of Wood Web, Oct 2021.

as manuhiri and to acknowledge the whakapapa, but not to appropriate or copy methods or styles from Māori or indigenous art practitioners.

Ralph Hotere (Te Aopōuri, Te Rarawa) employs whakapapa through a material understanding of wood in his work *Black Phoenix* (1984-88)³⁹, Brett Graham (Ngāti Koroki Kahukura, Tainui) repositions wood's use as a settler-colonial architectural material in *Monument* (2018)⁴⁰, and Ngatai Taepa (Te Atiawa, Te Arawa), Hemi McGregor (Ngati Rakaipaaka, Ngati Kahungunu, Ngāi Tuhoe) and Saffron Te Ratana (Ngāi Tuhoe) explore the role of wood as a way to re-imagine an indigenous forest for their work *Tu te manu ora i Te Rangi* (2008)⁴¹. As wood carving has a whakapapa through whakairo (woodcarving) in te ao Māori (the Māori world), it is important to acknowledge contemporary artists who carry on this lineage, but not to appropriate any of their techniques to my own work.

Looking to tauwiwi research from Formafantasma's *Cambio Project* (2021)⁴² as well as Aotearoa New Zealand-based artist duo Amanda Fauteux and Miranda Bellamy's *radiata* (2021)⁴³; both projects consider the implications of wood as a commodified resource, encouraging an imagining of wood as a living being. In addition to Bianca Hester's manuhiri field research approach of movements materialising momentarily (2015), my project's alignment

Fig 40. Miranda Bellamy and Amanda Fauteux, *Radiata* (Exhibition View), Blue Oyster Art Space Dunedin 2021.



- 39 Ralph Hotere, *Black Phoenix*, 88 1984, burnt wood and metal, 5650mm x 5000mm x 12900mm, 88 1984, Te Papa, <https://collections.tepapa.govt.nz/object/37093>.
- 40 Brett Graham, *Monument*, 2018, Paint on Recycled Pine, 10600mm x 4200mm, 2018, <https://tworooms.co.nz/exhibitions/monument/>.
- 41 Saffron Te Ratana, Hemi Macgregor, and Ngatai Taepa, *Tu te manu ora i te Rangi*, 2008, wood, paint, mirrors, mixed media installation, 2008, X2020/55/1.1-7, Auckland Art Gallery. <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artwork/31231/tu-te-manu-ora-i-te-rangi? q=%2Fexplore-art-and-ideas%2Fartwork%2F31231%2Ftu-te-manu-ora-i-te-rangi>.
- 42 "Cambio - FormaFantasma," accessed August 18, 2021, <http://formafantasma.com/work>.
- 43 Miranda Bellamy and Amanda Fauteux, "Radiata," Blue Oyster Art Space, 2021, <https://blueoyster.org.nz/>.

with other tauwiwi perspectives seeks to clarify my position in relation to a whakapapa of knowledge through material encounter.

Whittling wood taught me about the layers that make up the mānuka tree's structure, thinking about the elements that shaped this tree's form, and being present in my body while peeling off layers of bark. Similarly to Kimmerer, I see these 'encounter events' as teachings, gifts from the tree⁴⁴. In exchange for these gifts, I chose not to be wasteful with the residual bark in the whittling process, collecting the shavings in a large tub. These were later returned on another walk to the Hukanui stream's surrounding forest floor as composting humus. As mentioned, I hadn't taken all of the lengths of mānuka at the Hukanui Creek site, instead leaving some to rot away on their own, forming a home for bugs, insects, fungi, lichen and moss to grow and break down the wood on the wood's own terms. During and after the Spring Equinox in September 2021, I had also been collecting kōwhai seeds from roadside trees along my walking route from my house and propagating seedlings to be given as new growth in exchange for the offerings of wood. The shavings became a water-retentive mulch for the kōwhai seedlings when they were planted back into the Hukanui ecosystem. These are all ways I can ensure my studio activities are not in debt to the environment I am working with and that my art practice continues to encapsulate additive reciprocal actions to nurture a giving relationship with the places I work with.

44 Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass; Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*, 183.

Fig 41. Still from *Kowhai Planting* 2021, HD Video 13:59.



The “More-Than-Human” project inhabitants

First coined by David Abram in his 1996 book *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*, the term “more-than-human” is a concept used within this project to identify entities, objects, beings and things that occupy space in the local ecological sites I visit. By referring to the entities living in local ecosystems I collaborate with as “more-than-human”, I can view them much like Kimmerer refers to plants using a “grammar of animacy”, as people within a wider network of living organisms⁴⁵.

To expand on this territory of non-human-otherness, ecofeminist, philosopher, and distinguished Professor Donna Haraway’s thinking is also useful in my developing methodology for the acknowledgement of other living beings. In her article, *Anthropocene, capitalocene, plantationocene, chthulucene: Making kin* (2015), Haraway often refers to a naming and categorisation of living beings as “critters”, considering the etymology around how humans (homo-sapiens) came to be understood as separate from other beings in the living world.⁴⁶ According to Haraway, humans were once “critters” and have simply evolved to re-name ourselves. Haraway levels the playing field, referring to herself as a “compost-ist” and that in the current destruction and degradation of earth, human beings and other critters are all made of the same stuff; compost.⁴⁷

Haraway also refers here to feminist, quantum field and post-structural theorist Professor Karen Barad’s concept of “intra-action”⁴⁸, an alternative framing of the word interaction, presuming that two bodies interact with each other⁴⁹. Instead, intra-action proposes agency between bodies as a dynamic and constantly evolving exchange of forces.⁵⁰ When applying this thinking to my practice, it may be possible to think of my artwork as an intra-acting dynamic, inseparable between myself and the trees, birds, crabs, rocks, and water I meet with.

⁴⁵ Kimmerer, 56.

⁴⁶ Donna Haraway, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin,” *Environmental Humanities* 6, no. 1 (May 1, 2015): 161.

⁴⁷ Haraway, 161.

⁴⁸ Haraway, 159.

⁴⁹ Karen Michelle Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁵⁰ Whitney Stark, “Intra-Action,” *New Materialism*, May 29, 2022, <https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/i/intraaction.html>.

My role as artist-collaborator with the environment

Between December 2021 and March 2022, I was appointed as an AUT Summer Research Assistant on Professor Janine Randerson and Phil Dadson’s contribution to World Weather Network, which is being staged in conjunction with Te Tuhi Contemporary Art Space in Pakuranga, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. A global network established by Artangel in London, the World Weather Network aims to present data from a network of local ‘weather stations’ based out of arts and climate-conscious organisations around the world. Te Tuhi’s contribution⁵¹ to the project “Huarere: Weather Eye, Weather Ear”, consists of a calendar of four ‘weather stations’ by four different artist group collaborations happening throughout the Maramataka (Māori Lunar calendar) and beginning around Matariki (the start of the Māori New Year) from 24th June 2022.

My contribution to the project as a research assistant was primarily focused on resourcing sonic and intermedia artist Phil Dadson’s project, “Te Koea o Tāwhirimātea / Weather Choir”, a weather/sound/art collaboration between a series of Aeolian wind harps, planned to be installed across the Pacific. Phil’s used audio and visual data produced from the sound of the great ocean’s wind passing over the passive harps and beam this back to Te Tuhi to be uploaded to the World Weather Network’s online interactive portal⁵².

So, what did I learn from being a research assistant, and how have these interactions influenced my own practice? Phil’s project puts elemental thinking at the forefront of what he does. This approach struck me as foundational for bringing out hidden resonances embedded in stone, wood, metal and string. The Aeolian harps⁵³ for “Te Koea o Tāwhirimātea / Weather Choir” involved prototyping in testing how the harp might behave when wind passes over its strings. We tested different thicknesses of fishing nylon, bridging tautness and the dampening effect of the strings in contact with wood, metal and foam. In understanding the behaviour of these materials, Phil was able to facilitate elemental forces of wind from the local environment to interact with the harp’s material resonance and vibrate its strings.

⁵¹ <https://tetuhi.art/world-weather-network/>

⁵² <https://worldweathernetwork.org/>

⁵³ Oxford English Dictionary, “Aeolian, n. and Adj.,” (Oxford University Press %C, n.d.), <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/3106?redirectedFrom=aeolian+harp>.

Phil's backyard at Beachhaven backs onto an estuary in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. His position as collaborator, mediator and facilitator with the elements (wind) specific to the place he had set up the harp, for me, demonstrated the potential to 'meet-with' elemental occupants on-site. For my own work, this shift became instrumental in understanding my place as the artist in collaboration with the local ecosystems specific to my project.



Fig 42. Video Still, *Matariki Trunk Transfers*, 20min 57sec, 9 channel HD Video

Chapter Two – On the move: working at a local scale

In order to develop an ongoing local response to ecological areas in an urban context within walking distance of where I live in Central Auckland, the project utilises artmaking methods such as planned walks, frottage, whittling, printmaking, site-conscious filmmaking⁵⁴, site-specific camp-outs, GPS walking drawings and field audio recordings. By packing a mobile walking backpack kit and focusing on being present, acting in reciprocity and remaining local, this project develops relationships with the more-than-human others through repurposed settler-colonial bushcraft activities, printmaking, place-videos, walk-drawings and site-specific place-occupations and opens an opportunity to act in multiplicity with living things and non-human others.

This chapter aims to outline the development from my kit within the context of the backyard studio towards a more mobile version. To summarise what has influenced this development, I will explain the place of walking as a methodology within my practice, as well as some approaches taken by local practitioners who utilise walking methodologies at the heart of their artmaking. These practitioners make use of several walking methods, which are key to the way my practice understands walking as a methodology for meeting with more-than-human occupants and local ecological areas.

⁵⁴ Video work for this project began as a means to capture a sense of the passing time during walks up on Pirongia Maunga between March and July 2021. As a result of developing a decolonising methodology, I began to flag my lens-based activities as possibly recolonising. This was due to the DoC infrastructure I filmed on site and the static-framed style I chose to shoot with. My lens-based approach has now been reframed to be situated within a framework of reciprocal collaboration 'with' local ecological sites.

Walking as methodology for engaging with the more-than-human

My practice utilises walking as a methodology in a variety of ways. As a means of access to and from ecological areas near to where I live; as a haulage system for transporting materials on my back that enable me to respond with care for such places; as an on-the-go ideas generator or workshopping tool, as a way to stay present to stimulus in around me; and as a mindset for responding consciously to local ecological areas and their more-than-human occupants.

In my viewpoint, walking as a socially engaged artmaking approach is a methodology for bringing my awareness of the world on a more-than-human scale. This is demonstrated across practice-led research projects such as Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E Truman's, *Walking Methodologies in a More-than-human World: WalkingLab*⁵⁵ and, more locally, *About walking; 15 Months of Artist Walks in Tāmaki Auckland* (2020), a series of “walks-as-artworks”⁵⁶ produced by twelve artists between September 2019–November 2020. This walking series brings together the work of local Aotearoa New Zealand artists who hold walking at the core of their methodology for connecting with the more-than-human world. I first encountered this series of walks at Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland via the publication the gallery released as a documentation of the events.

55 Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman, *Walking Methodologies in a More-than-Human World: WalkingLab* (Routledge, 2018), <https://walkinglab.org>.

56 “Walking about – Te Uru,” accessed May 26, 2022, <https://www.teuru.org.nz/index.cfm/whats-on/calendar/walking-about/>.

Fig 43. Documentation of wrapped parcels for Jeremy Leatinu'u's *Kāwea* 2019, a participatory walk as part of Te Uru's Walking About series 2019–2020. Photo credit: Lea Schlatter.



Fig 44. Documentation for Christina Houghton's *Wayfinding Waikumete: Walking Glen Eden* November 2019. Sourced from *About Walking* 2020.



Of particular interest were the participatory walks led by Jeremy Leatinu'u's (Ngāti Maniapoto (Māori), Safune, Pu'apu'a, Vailoa, Fatausi, Safotu, Safotulafai (Sāmoa). For his walks *Kāwea* (2019) and *Mauria* (2020) which can be translated as “to carry”, Leatinu'u asked that participants bring a specially wrapped item, to entrust this to another participant for the walk's duration. By the end, each participant's parcel contents were revealed, talked about, and handed back to their original owners. Leatinu'u showed me how walking could manifest as an artistic practice of responding to a locality through participation, collaboration, sharing, carrying, trust, and kōrero (speech/conversation). This development culminated in printing and publishing my earlier art performance (*Pack Training 2021*) into a book, carrying it with me on my walk up Pirongia, sharing it at the DoC Hut I stayed at, and trusting that it would be looked after once gifted there.

Artist Christina Houghton's work within the *About Walking* (2020) Series, *Wayfinding Waikumete: Walking Glen Eden* (November 2019), also influenced the way I have developed my walking methodology. Houghton's walking project consisted of two walking events spaced a year apart, based around the Waikumete/Glen Eden suburb of West Auckland. These walks created a “wayfinding”⁵⁷ for the lost names of Waikumete and Waikomiti (the waters of the kumete bowl) now associated with Glen Eden and encouraged participants to explore a series of sensory provocations engaging between humans and non-humans. At 108 hectares, Waikumete is the largest cemetery in Auckland. Houghton's organised walks through the cemetery and its surroundings provided participants with lists of potential engagements to bring forth an awareness of the area's underlying history⁵⁸.

57 Christina Houghton, Melissa Laing, and Becca Wood, eds., *About Walking; 15 Months of Artist Walks in Tāmaki Auckland*, 1 (Te Uru Gallery, 2020), 43, <https://www.teuru.org.nz/index.cfm/whats-on/calendar/walking-about/>.

58 Houghton, Laing, and Wood, 44.

Fig 45. List for Christina Houghton's *Wayfinding Waikumete: Walking Glen Eden* November 2019. Sourced from *About Walking* 2020.

WAYFINDING WAIKUMETE
Saturday 23 November 2019

Waikumete (waters of the kumete bowl)
Unveiling stories of past, present and future.

THE CEMETERY TRAIN • THE FINAL STOP • THE PERFUME RUN
Train Ride to Waikumete (Glen Eden)

4:27	.....	Mt Eden Train Station
4:40	.....	Avondale
4:44	.....	New Lynn
4:50	.....	Glen Eden Train Station
5:00	.....	Cemetery
5:15	.....	The Chapel in the Oakes
5:30	.....	Ixia Road
5:45	.....	Eucalyptus Ave
6:00	.....	Acmena Ave

1. Recite a karakia and enter the cemetery
2. Take notice of the first headstone you see
3. Acknowledge the labour of the cemetery workers
4. Take a procession along Ixia Road
5. Enact rituals for those who have passed
6. Remember those who passed in November
7. Visit the memorial to all of those lost to the 1918 Spanish Flu Epidemic
8. Find the markers that mean something to us
9. Share stories about what we remember
10. Enact actions of care: weed a grave
11. Wash our hands as we perform an exit prayer and leave the cemetery

Houghton's list-making and instructions utilise conventions such as the need to "take notice" adjacent to my own work. Although I make lists for myself instead of for participants, for me, instructions and list-making help me explore my relationship with local leaves, bark, and sand. Lists of tasks encourages me to focus in on particular elements during my walks and differ depending on the intent of the walk. For example, *Un/paving Tukituki muka* (2022) walks the paved-over upper reaches of Ōpoutūkeha/Cox's Stream from where it once began as a puna (spring) from underneath the DYC Vinegar factory that once stood at the top of Williamson Ave in Grey Lynn, Auckland⁵⁹. The instructions that I set for this walk are as follows:

⁵⁹ Sean Kohingarara Sturm, "Meanderings about Cox's Creek," *Te Ipu Pakore: The Broken Vessel* (blog), March 14, 2010, <https://seanstorm.wordpress.com/2010/03/14/meanderings-about-coxs-creek/>.

1. Begin the walk at the top of Vinegar Lane. GPS Coordinates: -36.85875522, 174.74978296.
2. Slow down, stop, take a deep breath and observe your surroundings.
3. Acknowledge the humans and non-humans who were past occupiers of this place.
4. Acknowledge the local hapū (sub-tribes) of Ngāti Riukiuta and Ngāti Paoa as guardians of this waterway.
5. Start your GPS app and let your phone connect to overhead satellites before moving.
6. Try to feel the beginnings of Ōpoutūkeha Creek based on the area's topography.
7. Acknowledge the more-than-human occupants living in this area, native and non-native.
8. Begin to follow the natural depression of the land, acknowledging
9. Use your intuition and follow the underground stream's topography to 'link'⁶⁰ the waterway on foot between private and public spaces.
10. Look for indicators such as manhole covers and stormwater drains that might indicate a piped waterway below the surface of the road.
11. Greet any trees, rocks, logs, dogs, grass, plants, fungi, tuna (eels), birds and insects you encounter along the way.
12. Follow the underlying creek across roads, parks and walkways all the way to where Opoutukeha Creek meets with the Waitematā Harbour at Cox's Bay.
13. Smell the salt of the Waitematā and make a note of where the tide is currently placed in the Maramataka (lunar calendar).

⁶⁰ To 'link' here means for me to try as best I can to walk with the waterway despite it running under private properties, homes, roads and parks. For example, linking may require me to walk down a street at a time to walk across at its lowest point where the creek is piped below, before moving to the next street.

Fig 46. Documentation from *Un/paving Tukituki muka* 2022. Observing key indications on surfaces throughout the walk showed evidence of Ōpoutukeha running underneath Grey Lynn Park.



Fig 47. Documentation from *Un/paving Tukituki muka* 2022. Topography of streets and indicative stormwater features revealed locations of where Tukitukimuka / Ōpoutukeha Creek runs underneath.



Instructions helped me to become more aware of my surroundings, keeping me focused on the task at hand and to hold myself accountable for my actions when bringing forth historical, underlying and present occupations by human and non-human entities in the places I walk to, through and with.

Walking as a conscious approach for ‘meeting-with’ the more-than-human realm is one tool within my methodology that ensures that I have a responsibility to challenge my own presumptions associated with Cox’s Bay Reserve, home to Opoutukeha stream catchment and Meola Reef, home to Te Tokaroa, the long volcanic tongue protruding out into Waitemata Harbour. These two suburban spaces have been designated by Auckland Council as dog walking parks, playing fields and leisure pathways. In my view, this narrow use-based structure discourages thinking about these places’ deep human and more-than-human histories. By driving a private car to these sites, knowing I can simply drive away at my convenience, I underplay my responsibility towards my time spent in that place, thereby accepting their designated usage as places set up for sports, pets and fitness. Alternatively, by walking to these places, my responsibility to them changes. I challenge their use-based structures, choosing instead to actively pay attention to the ecological processes on-site and to align my work with the passages of time happening at a local scale.

Mobile Walking Kit

While I walk consciously and with accountability, I have always taken a ‘kit’ of equipment with me. An ongoing theme within the project is around the development and reframing of this gear list, or kit, as the project has evolved to suit. My kit has developed over the course of the research project to serve the specific activities I carry out during fieldwork, but also as a part of my methodology of conscious reciprocal exchange. This kit of equipment is split into two purpose-driven categories. Firstly, fundamental items that keep me going while walking include a warm polyester-fleece sweatshirt and rain jacket to stay warm and dry, as well as snacks for on-the-go, and a gas cooker and teabags to boil water for a tea break. Secondly, the mobile backpack kit is comprised of a list of items that help to encapsulate the interface between myself and the environment I am collaborating with. An example list of these particular items includes:

1. 45 gsm A4 paper
2. Short block of 3B graphite rod
3. Tascam audio recorder
4. AA batteries
5. Earbud headphones
6. 5mm blue polypropylene braided rope
7. Blue tarp
8. Pens
9. Notebooks
10. Handsaw and whittling knife.

The above-listed items were included in a kit specific for walking through Te Waiōrea / Motion’s Creek from my house in Auckland Central. As I had left behind the tarp, sleeping bag and cooking equipment required for an overnight walk, I had enough weight left to take the camera, tripod, spare lens and audio recorder. I weigh 69.2kg at the time of writing, so based on statistics, the ideal pack weight to body weight is a ratio of 20%⁶¹; the maximum I am able to carry on my back for a distance of between 16-18km over a 6-hour walk is 13.84kg. There is a balance within my kit-planning methods between taking enough equipment that I can capture chance encounters with the environment and carrying enough food, water and clothing to sustain myself. Additionally, I plan purposeful artmaking for each walk so I can leave behind the equipment that won’t be

61 Joe Pasteris, “How Much Should Your Pack Weigh,” REI, accessed May 31, 2022, <https://www.rei.com/learn/expert-advice/learn/expert-advice/backpacking-weight.html>.

used and setting a destination/route to minimise ‘side-quests’, distractions and fatigue.

Being specific about the intentions of each walk helps determine the artmaking tools and fundamental equipment I take in my backpack. On later walks to this place, I altered the contents of my backpack to reflect more specific activities intended for that day’s walk. For example, on a return day-walk to Te Waiōrea/ Motion’s Creek, I left behind the paper and graphite materials for making frottage and instead brought camera equipment to focus on site-conscious videomaking with the waterway for the day.

The mobile kit is an expansion of the improvisation inherent to the backyard studio as a provisional site. The kit is fluid and adapts to the walks based on my intentions.

Fig 48. An example of my mobile overnight kit with a mix of fundamental items and encountering tools for collaborating with more-than-human occupiers in the environment.



Here is the list of the tools and equipment that I took with me on an overnight walk to Te Waiōrea/Motion’s Creek:

Fundamental Kit:	Meeting and encountering tools:
1. Socks	1. 200gsm A3 cartridge paper pad
2. Boots	2. 45gsm A4 tracing paper pad
3. Shorts	3. Tascam audio recorder
4. T-shirt	4. Spare batteries
5. Beanie	5. Hand grip
6. Raincoat	6. Small tripod
7. Polyester fleece long-sleeved top	7. Wind cancelling microphone fluff cover
8. Zip-up pant bottoms	8. Earphones
9. Merino pants	9. Uniball pen
10. Merino top	10. 0.2mm nib permanent pen
11. Sleeping bag	11. Ballpoint pen
12. Silk sleeping bag liner	12. 3B graphite stick
13. Inflatable pillow	13. 2B graphite pencil
14. Ear plugs	14. Charcoal pencil
15. Tarp bivvy	15. Whiteboard marker
16. Rope, pegs	16. Vivid permanent marker
17. Toilet paper	17. Charcoal pieces
18. Gas cooker	18. 50 x plastic orange track marker triangles
19. Gas canister	19. 2mm orange polypropylene rope orange
20. Aluminium pot	20. 5mm woven polypropylene rope blue
21. Aluminium pot grip	21. 2 x field notes waterproof notebooks
22. Spork	22. 2 x moleskine pocket notebooks
23. Knife	23. Handheld LED torch
24. Cup	24. LED headlamp
25. Lighter	25. Masking tape
26. Stove stand	26. Charging cable
27. Insulated foil pot cosy	27. Power bank
28. Tea	28. Phone,
29. Coffee	29. Morakniv whittling knife
30. Sugar	30. Silky handheld folding wood saw,
31. Milk powder	31. Compass,
32. Porridge	32. Canon 5D MkII DSLR camera with 17-40mm Lens,
33. Mashed potato flakes	33. Spare camera batteries
34. Dehydrated shepherd's pie sachet	34. Tripod.
35. Scroggin	
36. First aid kit	
37. Insect repellent	
38. Water bottle.	



Fig 49. Example of tarp bivy set up next to Te Waiōrea for an overnight walk.

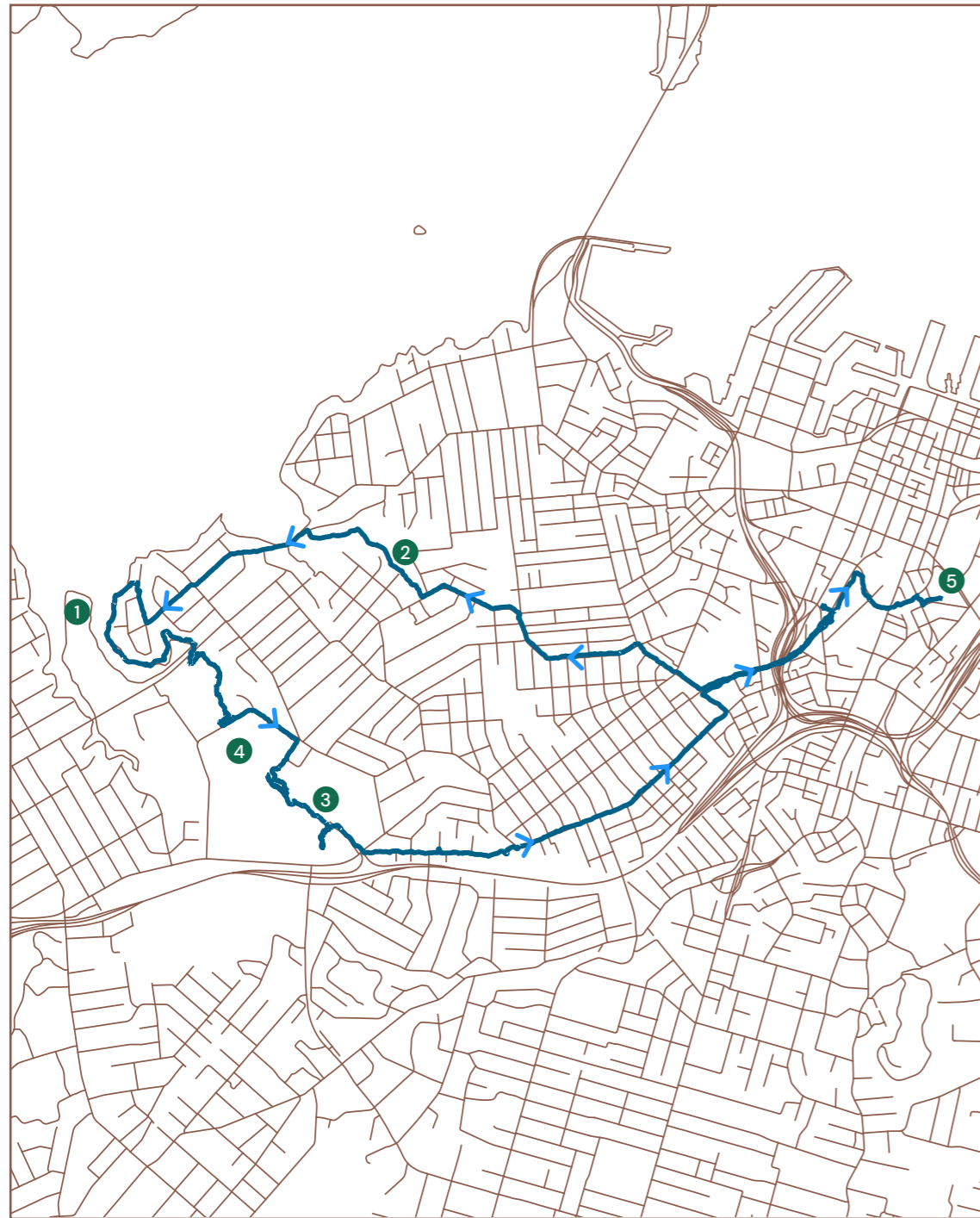
Fig 50. Foam mattress used for staying overnight. Photo was taken after I had slept in this location and indicates marks left behind by my body.

Staying overnight

On this walk to where Te Waiōrea/Motions Creek connects with the Waitematā Harbour, I chose to take the equipment that would allow me to stay overnight on-site. My kit included a tarp, rope, aluminium ground stakes, foam sleeping pad, inflatable pillow and sleeping bag. This fieldwork draws a connection with my time-based artwork *24 Hour Spring Equinox* (2021), when I camped for 24 hours in the backyard studio, conducting provisional bushcraft activities over the course of the September 2021 Spring Equinox. Like that work, I wanted to explore the possibilities of collaboration on a Te Waiōrea timeframe, setting up guidelines for my encounter in a similar way to Sorenson's provocations for participants in *Conversation Pit* (2021). As well as the physical items in my backpack, I also gave myself a set of instructions to remain open to encounters with the more-than-human entities among my surroundings:

1. Bring enough food to feed you for the evening.
2. Be open to altering your course if you encounter anything that reveals more about your collaboration with this location.
3. Make note of the tides, moon cycle and how occupants you collaborate with are present in these scales of time.
4. Remember, everyone is in their own world; most people aren't bothered by what you're doing. If they ask, try your best to tell them. You never know whom you might bump into.
5. Wake up early; the best encounters happen with dew on the grass and fog on the water.

This led to exploring a further differentiation between 'overnight-walks' and 'day-walks' in the context of this project.



- 1. Te Tokaroa / Meola Reef
- 2. Ōpotūkeha / Cox's Creek
- 3. Te Waiōrea / Motion's Creek
- 4. Auckland Zoo
- 5. AUT City Campus

— GPS Walking Route
 > Indicates Direction Walked

Fig 51. Example of a GPS walking drawing, starting from AUT campus and following the Ōpotukeha catchment down to the Waitematā then along and up Te Waiōrea Stream.

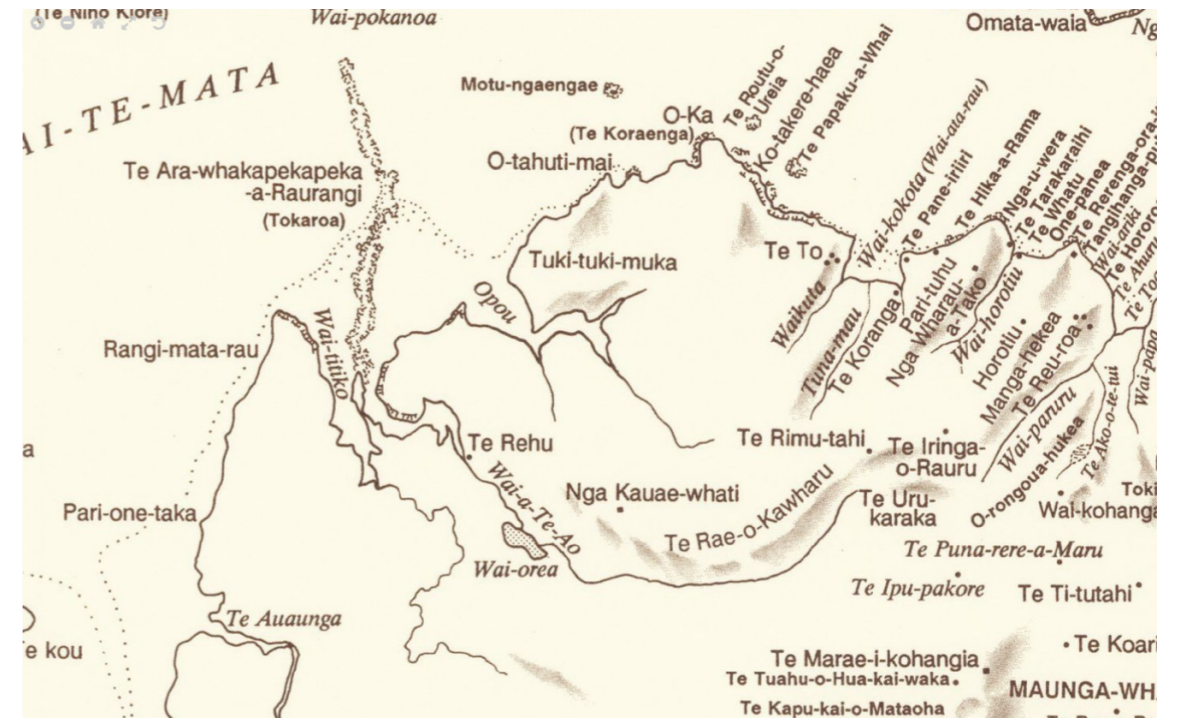


Fig 52. Detail of Map of the Tāmaki Isthmus With Māori Place Names (Kelly and SurrIDGE 1990) showing Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland's traditional waterways. Sourced from Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections Map 9502.

Fig 53. Te Waiōrea / Motions Creek seen from Motions Road overbridge during an overnight walk April 2022.

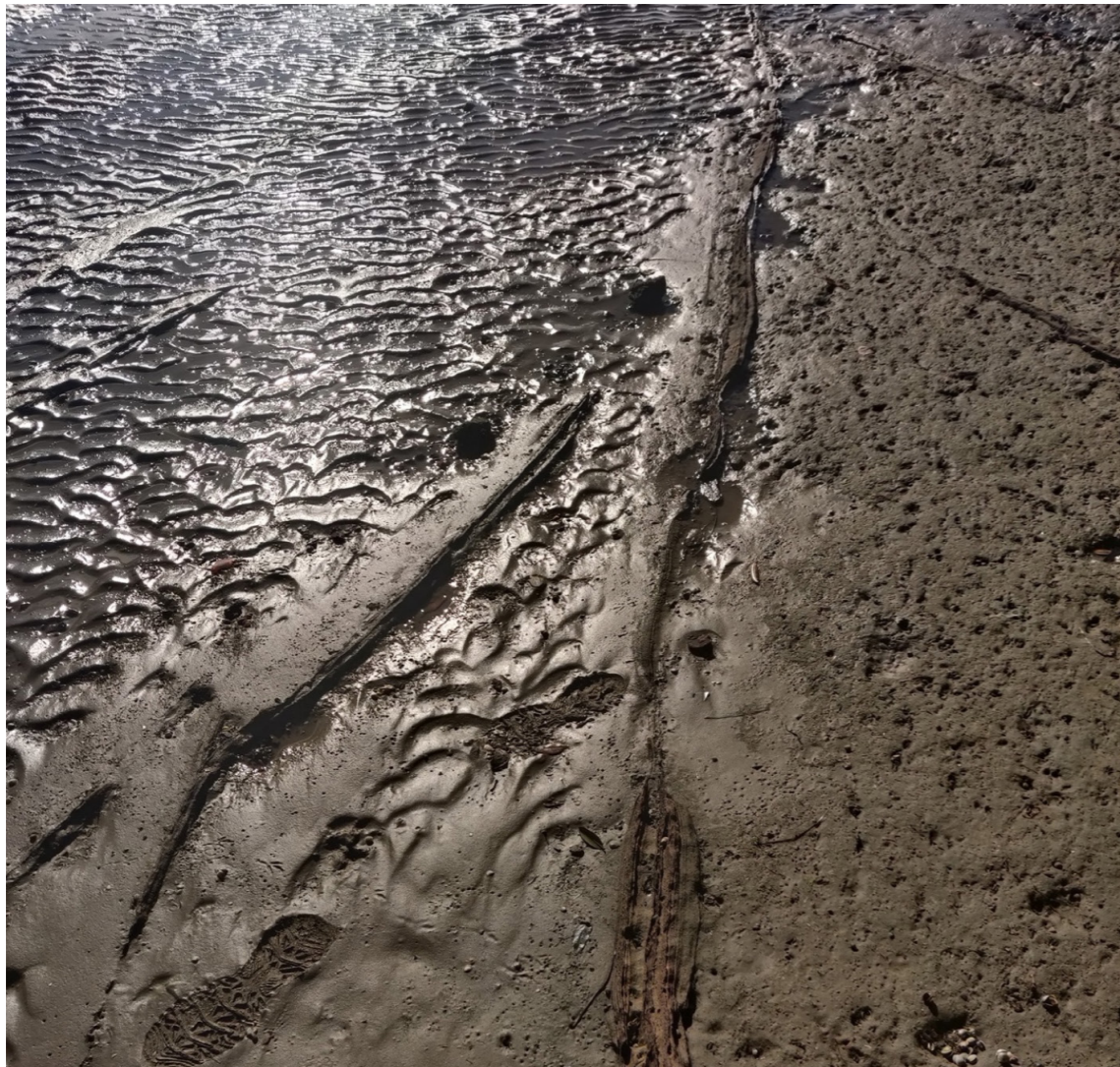


Fig 54-56. Photo showing detail of textures on trunks of Tī Kouka / Cabbage Tree, Karō and Karamū as seen on overnightwalk in Te Waiōrea, April 2022.

Fig 57. Stone patterns and footprints in mud at confluence of Te Waiōrea / Motion's Creek and Te Tokaroa / Meola Reef as seen on overnight-walk April 2022.



Fig 58. 'Meeting with' the kawakawa during day walk along Te Waiōrea / Motions Creek April 2022. This technique involves placing my notebook under the kawakawa leaf and drawing the shape of the hole on the leaf.

Chapter Three – Cambium Collaborations

Where has the project arrived at?

The project has resulted in a culmination of developing my mobile kit, a conscious walking methodology and continued visits to local waterways in my neighbourhood. I have introduced artmaking techniques and processes that encourage a direct relationship between myself and the environment I am collaborating with. This chapter outlines the details of these techniques and how their material language speaks to a consciousness of my body in collaboration with trees, leaves, plants, sand, rocks and water. This thinking and my actions have in mind the practice of artists such as Monique Jansen.

Getting to know a place is a process. In terms of this project, this has, in part, been about a process of getting to know myself and my own presumptions about the places I visit. In my work, getting to know local bodies of water and the beings that occupy them, I have needed to return multiple times to continue developing an ongoing relationship. New encounters in the environment during each walk have led to a change in what I choose to bring with me and a change in how I see my agency in mediating with plants and others. In this section, I will talk about the development of certain parts of my kit, their development and how they have led to understanding more about the role of site, materials, tools and conscious exchanges operating within my project.

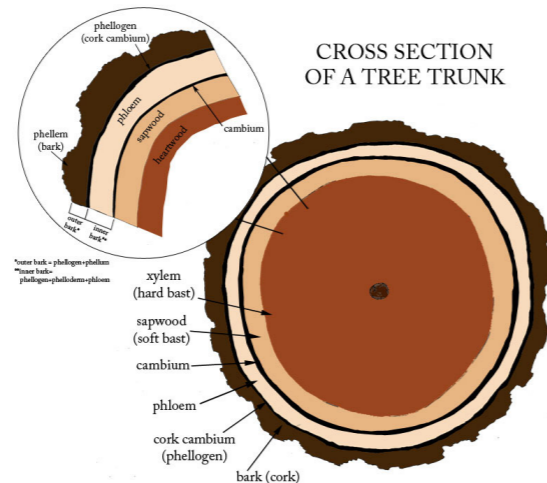


Fig 59. Diagram indicating cork cambium layers of tree beneath the bark. Sourced from New York Botanical Garden Steere Herbarium Glossary for Vascular Plants. Illustration credit: M. N. Sashital.

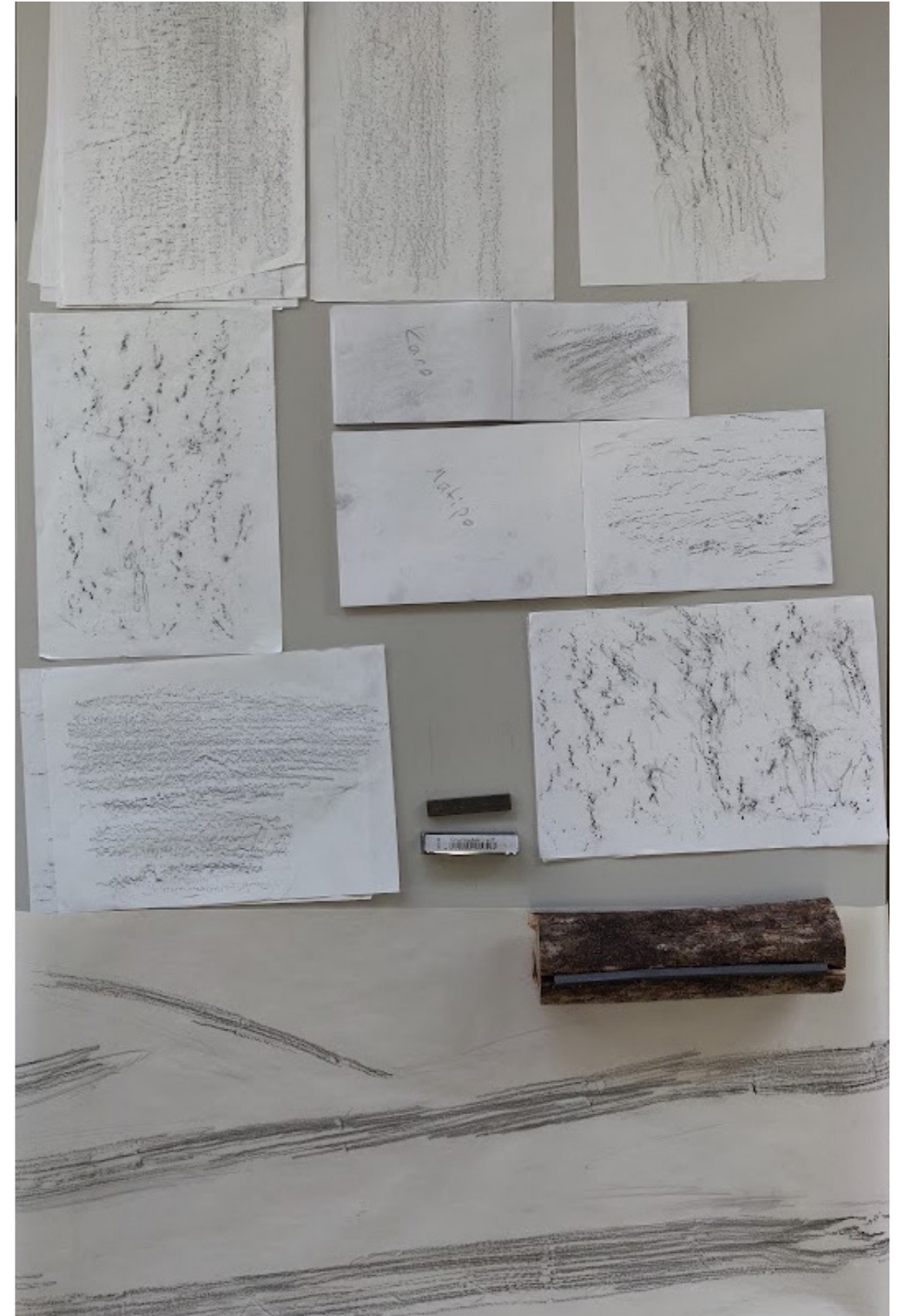


Fig 60. Examples of 'Trunk-transfers' from day and overnight-walks in Te Waiōrea / Motions Creek April-May 2022.

Printmaking – Meeting with Material Membranes

In April 2022, my studio practice began to once again engage in an improvisational approach that made use of materials and tools I had around me, much like the backyard studio. These materials included locally sourced mānuka wood⁶² and a green 1820mm x 48mm x 10mm thick foam roll mattress, a piece of kit that I carry on *overnight-walks* as an insulation layer from the cold⁶³. In the studio, the mattress was repurposed as an experimental tool laid flat on the floor to make textured impressions of the wood's outer bark left by gravity pushing them into the mattress. This helped me to form questions about the relationship between the bark of the tree and its impression left on a foam object designed to cushion the length of a human body. In questioning the bark's relationship to the mattress, Barad's (2007) concept of intra-action⁶⁴ illustrates this tension for me as the push and pull of space, leaving recessions, filling volume and alluding to texture.

To further this line of thinking, I employed my earlier whittling technique outlined in Chapter One as a method of collaboration with the wood. I shaved the layers of bark, leaving an impression from the marks of the knife. Thinking about the properties of the foam mattress as a cushion, I was interested in developing mark-making methods that revealed the recessions, volume and texture of the tree's grain underneath the bark. Through an experimental approach, I have developed a customised printmaking kit that utilises marks left by the wood as mediation between myself and the tree. After a series of tests, the resulting artwork, *Mānuka roll* (2022), is a collaboration between myself and the section of whittled mānuka tree. Dipped into a foam-lined tub of India Ink, sections of wood are rolled up on the paper, imprinting whittled marks from my knife, but also grains of the tree. I call them cambium-collaborations and see these marks as a collaboration between myself and the mānuka, requiring both the effort of me rolling the log up the paper and the effort of the tree's growth contributing to its marks left on the page.

62 This mānuka was gifted from a fellow classmate living in Kaipātiki (Birkenhead) whose property backs onto a gully on the North Shore of Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. These 'gifts from the forest' as Kimmerer (2013) would call them, had come down in a storm some months ago and were sitting in my studio drying out.

63 MSC Team, *NZ Bushcraft Manual | Digital Version | 6th Edition 2021, 6th ed.* (New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, 2021), 65, https://issuu.com/nzmountainsafetycouncil/docs/msc_bushcraft_manual_-2020-digitise/1.

64 Stark, "Intra-Action."

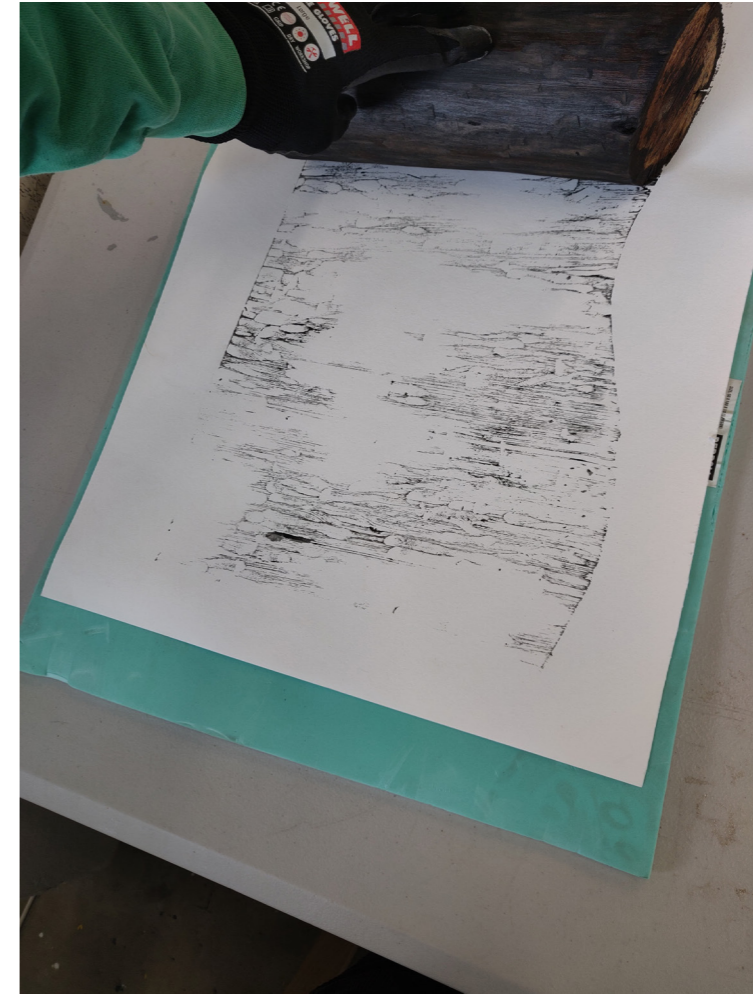


Fig 61–62. Steps in the 'mānuka roll' process for cambium collaborations series April 2022.



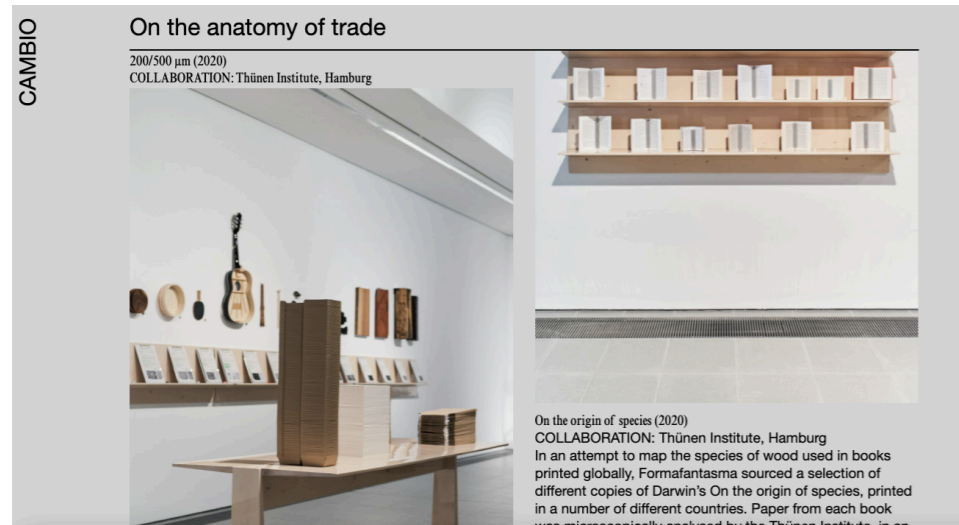


Fig 63. Web Page for FORMAFANTASMA's *Cambio Project* presented at Serpentine Galleries, London 2020. Sourced from <https://www.cambio.website>. Accessed 8/6/22.

This practice has become process and materials-led, considering the role of paper and ink in participation between myself and the tree I am working with. Formafantasma's *Cambio Project* (the name of which references the cambial layer under the bark around the outside of a tree's trunk) considers the human implications of wood as a global commodity.⁶⁵ The research found the presence of some rare and protected wood-fibre being used for everyday products such as popsicle sticks and cardboard takeaway containers.⁶⁶ My practice uses a variety of weights of paper to bring out different mark-making with trees I work with, and it is worth reminding myself that the paper is, in fact, a material derived from wood and that globally, its origins are complex. Understanding that the paper has a "whakapapa" of fibres, as I call it, ensures my responsibility to use the paper as a vessel for a collaboration with the environment.

As a material, it seems fitting that the membrane I use to collaboratively mark-make with trees was once made of trees themselves. Tāmaki Makaurau/Auckland-based drawing artist Monique Jansen's in-situ drawing event *Overcast* (2017)⁶⁷ has a similar materials-led approach that offers a consciousness of care with the materials she makes drawings with. Jansen uses biochar, charcoal derived from low-oxygen heat that captures carbon, emitting little into the atmosphere⁶⁸.

65 "Cambio - FormaFantasma."

66 Ibid.

67 Monique Jansen, *Overcast*, 2017, Biochar on paper, 7000mm x 3000mm, 2017, <https://www.drawingopen.com/heat>.

68 Te Uru Gallery, "HEAT: Solar Revolutions - Te Uru," Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Art Gallery, 2017, <https://www.teuru.org.nz/index.cfm/whats-on/calendar/heat-solar-revolutions/>.



Fig 64. Monique Jansen making *Overcast* in-situ, as part of a four-day drawing performance, at Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Art Gallery, 2017, Biochar on paper, 7000mm x 3000mm, 2017, <https://www.drawingopen.com/heat>

My quest to experiment with different paper weights and sizes also had me question the materials I was using. Decisions such as the weight of paper and the sharpness of the image are important to my work but I have to also consider my conscious framework of reciprocal material exchange with local ecological inhabitants.

After some attempts at developing my own ink from the Te Waiōrea / Motions Creek area on 'day-walks' using crushed foraged berries from karamū, karō and tītoki trees, it surprised me to know that Indian ink is itself made from natural biodegradable materials; mainly lampblack pigment, a fine soot made from wood, water and gum from the sap of trees.⁶⁹ As the kit for cambium-collaborations emerged out of the studio, I needed a way to bring this kit out on my overnight-walks and day-walks to visit the trees in Te Waiōrea / Motions Creek. The next section outlines my strategy for developing a more mobile version of this paper kit.

69 Oxford English Dictionary, "Indian Ink, n." (Oxford University Press %C, n.d.), <https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/94397>.



Frottage – Surface, Skin and Body

To develop a more mobile version of the *cambium collaborations* printmaking kit, I looked back to earlier tools I had brought with me in my backpack on walks on Pirongia. Frottage was used to make rubbings of DoC signage and recessed carved graffiti on Pirongia’s summit track lookout platforms and infrastructure. On these walks, I took a 3B stick of graphite and would rub it across the sheet of A4 sized 45gsm white, resting on top of the impressed texture I wanted to take. The Oxford Dictionary defines frottage as “taking a rubbing from an uneven surface as a point of departure for a work of art”⁷⁰. It is worth noting the word “take” here as an act embedded within the making of the work. In developing an underlying framework of reciprocity and exchange with the more-than-human entities, I saw fit to reframe this notion of “taking” inherent within definitions of Frottage.

For meeting *with* the more-than-human occupants present in Te Waiōrea / Motions Creek, I now use the term *trunk-transfer* to refer to frottage as a collaborative dialogue between the bark skin of the tree and my body. Bark as the skin of the tree is a site of collaboration for this project. Springgay and Truman (2018) refer to The Bark Studio’s use of bark as a learning tool to “shape “lively stories” about human and non-human intra-actions for sensory inquiry”.⁷¹ As an example, Māori artist Charlotte Graham’s (Ngāti Mahuta, Ngāti Tamaoho, Te Ākitai Waiohua, Ngāti Whanaunga, Ngāti Pāoa, Ngāti Kotimana) textured learning experience *Te Hā o Te Wao Nui a Tāne / The Breath of Tāne* (2021)⁷² embodies the use of textures of the ngāhere (forest) as a relational learning platform. A sensory bodily relationship with the bark of a tree can be tactile, moving and layered. Bark as a relational skin is an important framing to this project’s material engagement with local ecosystems. The bark of a tree acts as a mediation between bodies.

My body and its size now play an important role in *meeting-with* trees at Te Waiōrea/Motions Creek. The paper I take on my walks is cut from a roll of 60mm wide, 45gsm newsprint and pieces are cut to the exact length of my body at 177cm tall. Held up with my body, I use a handheld piece of

70 Oxford English Dictionary, Frottage (Oxford University Press %C, n.d.), <https://www.oed.com/viewEntry/74988?redirectedFrom=frottage>.

71 Springgay and Truman, *Walking Methodologies in a More-than-Human World: WalkingLab*, 36.

72 Charlotte Graham, Taarati Taiaroa, and Emma Jameson, “Te Hā o Te Wao Nui a Tāne | The Breath of Tāne,” Auckland Art Gallery, accessed June 3, 2022, <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/whats-on/exhibition/te-ha-o-te-wao-nui-a-tane-or-the-breath-of-tane>.

Fig 65. April 2022 – Study for *Trunk Transfer* series; graphite on 45gsm paper cut to height of artist at 177cm tall.

graphite⁷³ to make contact with the trunk through the paper. Big gestures are required to span the length of the tree, using my whole body to reveal textures in the bark. As my *trunk-transfer* technique has developed, so has the mobile kit that carries it. I use both a handheld kit for making transfers while walking⁷⁴ and a site-based kit to make large trunk-transfers with trees I meet⁷⁵. A combination of my mobile kit, my walking methodology, and a reciprocal exchange methodology to meet with more-than-human trees now forms the basis for my art practice. This is demonstrated through methods developed in my *day-walks*, *overnight-walks*, *trunk-transfers* and *cambium-collaborations*.

- 73 One of these tools is made from a small piece of fallen and rotting Māhoe wood taken from an earlier walk along Te Waiōrea / Motions Creek. Using my whittling technique, I carved out a channel in a pre-existing split in the wood to embed a section of graphite along its length. This graphite-grip serves as a solution to holding my fingers up off the paper, but also plays a part in giving back to the ecosystem that it came from.
- 74 My handheld kit for trunk transfers as I walk consists of three pads of 45gsm paper and a pocket-sized 8cm length of 3B graphite.
- 75 My site-based kit includes pieces of 45gsm paper cut to the length of my body and a graphite grip



Fig 66–67. Example of the graphite grip making a trunk transfer.



Conclusion

This project set out to develop an approach that questioned my socially engaged artmaking, working with Pirongia te aroaro o Kahu as a site of learning and recreation during my upbringing between 1991 and 2010.

Through outlining some terms for engagement early on in the project and a framework for understanding my place in response to both ecological areas in close proximity to where I grew up and in my current neighbourhood, an acknowledgement of adjacent decolonising methodologies has been one important factor in further developing the project's aims.

Building on this development and shifting the location of my practice to the *backyard studio*, my project has established diagrammatic, improvisational, and site-based conditions to 'act in multiplicity' with Ōpoutukeha / Cox's Creek, Hukanui Creek and Te Waiōrea / Motion's Creek. With inspiration from artists and projects such as Bianca Hester, Paul Cullen, the *About walking* project, Jill Sorensen, and Monique Jansen, these conditions have allowed me to be present *with* the local ecosystems I visit on foot.

Theorists such as Karen Barad, Donna Harraway, Stephanie Springgay and Sarah E. Truman and Robin Wall Kimmerer have also helped me to foster my place through an ongoing observational approach for being present with the environment.

My most recent artwork, developed around site-based methods and artmaking tools that fit into my mobile backpack kit, situates my artmaking to 'meet-with' local more-than-human others. Methods such as *cambium collaborations*, *trunk transfers*, *day-walks* and *overnight-walks* and tools like the *graphite grip* encompass a relationship between my body and the bodies of others present in the environment.

This project has allowed me to work collaboratively with the trees, rocks, birds, tuna (eels), crabs and plants who occupy space in my local neighbourhood's ecosystems, and my research has now opened up to include these 'people' as participants in my practice.

Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace

Documentation and abstract for MVA final exhibition July 2022

This practice-led, socially-engaged research has developed a methodology for acting in conscious reciprocal exchange with ecological sites in urban Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland. Reframing the use of tools and objects typically embedded in a ‘survival’ or ‘bushcraft’ context, the practice aims to be present in ‘meeting-with’ the occupiers of these ecosystems. *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (2022), presented at AUT’s St Paul St Gallery, is an installation based on the project’s earlier ‘backyard studio’, a provisional site developed during Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland’s August 2021 Covid19 lockdown. Out of this structure and through an expanded provisional walking methodology, methods such as wood whittling (*wood-webs*), graphite frottage (*trunk-transfers*), and printmaking (*cambium-collaborations*) contribute to an ongoing kit-based approach working collaboratively within the Ōpoutūkeha / Cox’s Bay and Te Waiōrea / Motion’s Creek catchments.

In this installation, trestle tables, tarps, poles, rope and stacked wooden boardwalk structures form a site for whittling, woodworking and printmaking activities that act in mindful collaboration with locally collected wood, sticks and seeds. As a way to “give back” for the use of these collected materials, kōwhai seeds from within walking distance of the backyard studio have been propagated, repotted and since planted out on the spring equinox, summer solstice, autumn equinox and winter solstice (Matariki), tying the duration of the project’s activities to the passing of the seasons. The 20:57 HD video *Matariki Trunk Transfers* (2022) documents nine graphite trunk-transfer collaborations with trees, walked when the nine-star Matariki cluster was in its second day rising, marking the start of the Māori new year. This trunk-transfer series situates time as a catalyst for being present with the non-human occupants in Ōpoutūkeha / Cox’s Creek and puts texture, surface and materials at the meeting point of human/non-human relations for the project. Overall, this installation enacts the project’s methods in action, an approach that considers the role of the artist as collaborator with trees, rocks, plants, birds, water, sand and air occupying the surrounding waterways and ecosystems in urban Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland.



Fig 68-69. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Installation view, various dimensions)





Fig 70. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Privet wood sourced from Te Waiōrea / Motions Creek, 29/04/22)

Fig 71. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Cambium collaborations Installation view; India ink on paper, foam roll, whittled locally sourced mānuka wood)



Fig 72. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Installation view, privet wood tethering log, nylon, tarps, foam roll mats, various dimensions)

Fig 73. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Installation view, various dimensions; kōwhai seedlings, mānuka bark shavings, tarpaulins, foam roll mats, bench seat, locally collected mānuka wood).



Fig 74. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Morakniv whittling knife, Silky folding hand saw, mānuka wood and bark shavings, tarpaulin)

Fig 75. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Mallet, Silky folding hand saw, mānuka wood and bark shavings, tarpaulin)

Opposite: Fig 76. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Wood web, Mallet, Silky folding hand saw, mānuka wood and bark shavings, tarpaulin)







Fig 77-79. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Installation view; various dimensions, graphite grip detail and other tools)

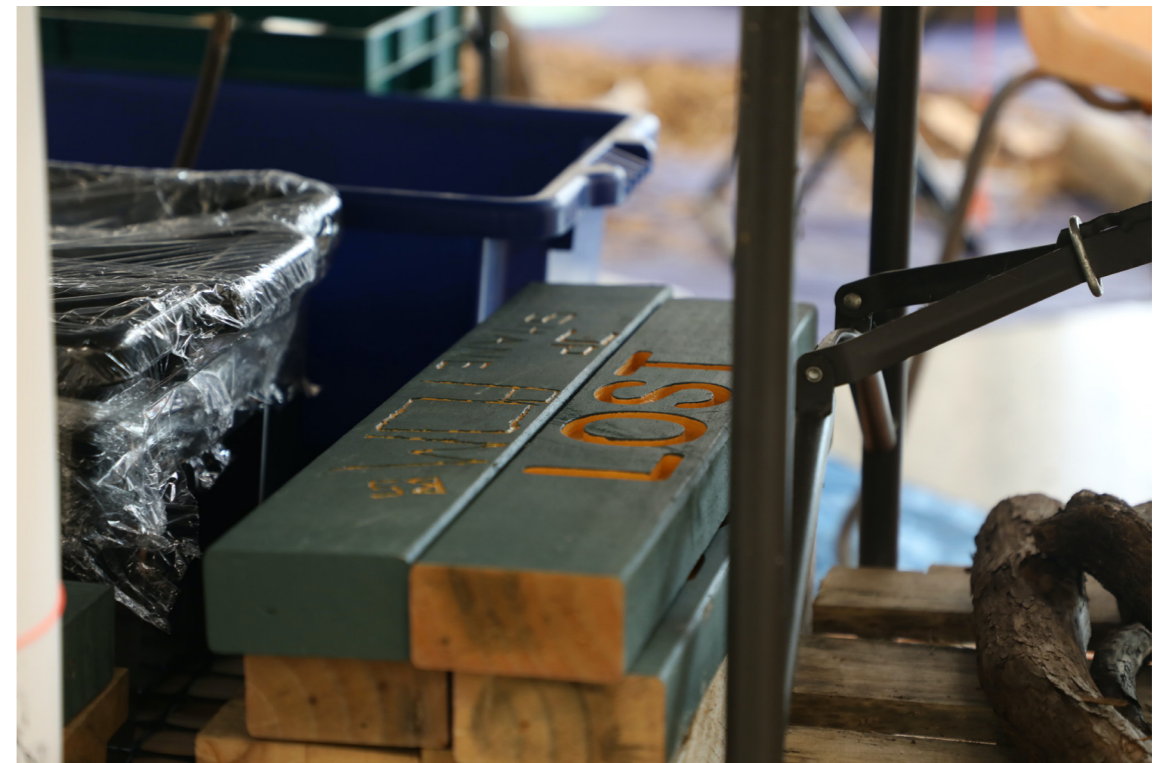


Fig 80. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Installation view; various dimensions, cambium collaboration detail)

Fig 81. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Installation view, detail of track sign stack, trestle table, pallet)



Fig 82. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Installation view, backpack, mountain safety council plastic pack liner; various dimensions)



Fig 83. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Installation detail; *Pack Training* and *Kawakawa Cutouts* books, various dimensions) – Image Courtesy Emily Parr.

Matariki Trunk Transfers

22-06-2022

Tangaroa-ā-mua lunar phase.

Matariki rising.

9 trees.

9 locations along
Ōpoutūkeha and Hukanui
stream catchments,
Tāmaki Makaurau.

2hrs 07mins.

4.5km of walking.

Paper cut to the height
of the artist at 177cm tall.

Fig 84. Video Still, *Matariki Trunk Transfers*, 20min 57sec, 9 channel HD Video



Fig 85. Video Still, (Pōhutukawa) *Matariki Trunk Transfers*, 20min 57sec, 9 channel HD Video



Fig 86. July 2022, *Walking-Witness, Treaded-Trace* (Installation view, various dimensions)

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