

YOU WERE HEAR A MURIWAI SYMPHONY

METTE HAY - 2020 - SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN



Figure 1. Mette Hay, *Tākapu Call*, 2020, multimedia.

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FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DESIGN

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ABSTRACT

This project has grown from a previous body of work that used sound as a medium for visualising the presence of participants in the artwork. This work employed water and light to transform the visual expressiveness of sound. Sight has become the dominant human sense, with the result that unseen elements, such as sound, often pass unnoticed. This research explores ways of illuminating the invisible elements of nature through engaging in active attention. Using perceptive awareness of the moment, I will collect and make experiences and artefacts that enable me to open up a dialogue with the unseen. This dialogue will form the basis for creating an immersive experience that will allow participants to encounter and connect with dimensions of nature that go unnoticed or are hidden from the eyes.

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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: _____

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NOTE ON TEXT

This document is an interactive PDF containing hyperlinks to Google Earth locations, videos and sound files. To engage in a fuller sensorial experience, headphones are recommended when listening to the soundscapes marked LISTEN.

INTRODUCTION

How might the transformation of environmental sounds evolve into an organic approach to making as a gateway into a dialogue with the unseen?

Sub questions

How can sound move from invisible state to visible through tactile artefacts?

How does a mindfully attentive approach inform this research?

Opening a gateway to the unseen through a practise-based research approach has required a commitment to stillness and attentive listening to my local natural soundscapes. I have explored the acoustic landscape ecologist Bernie Krause who said, “The music of the natural world holds the secrets of love for all things, especially our own humanity.”¹

Krause insists that to truly experience this music, one must learn to be silent and to listen. Practising stillness and deep listening during my wanderings through the local forests, ocean rock pools and clifftops of Muriwai, Aotearoa, New Zealand, I have been led beyond the sonic into the realm of presence. Presence, I have discovered, means turning curiosity and attention openly and deliberately over to, for example, the colony of Tākapu² (Australasian gannet) at Ōtakamiro Point. Questions of, “What is your story?, What do you want me to comprehend?” continually emerge and an understanding of kinship through presence develops.

¹ Stephen Most, Nature’s Orchestra Sounds of Our Changing Planet. Video Project, 2015.

<https://www.kanopy.com/product/natures-orchestra>.

² I have chosen to use the Te Reo Māori name for the Australasian gannet to recognise the colony’s place here in New Zealand.

This work also exists in the dimension of *ways of listening*. Listening to nature, music, the mindbody³ and *silence*. Listening refers to the information that is delivered by all of the body's senses, including sonic vibrations, inner voice and presence. In Olafur Eliasson's⁴ immersive and evocative installations, he describes engaging with his audience through the use of presence as a communal act, a connection in the here and now, where all are engaged in *giving attention*.

³ Mindbody from a Vipassana perspective (which is the form of mindfulness I practise) focuses on the deep interconnection between mind and body, which can be experienced directly by disciplined attention to the physical sensations that form the life of the body, and that continuously interconnect and condition the life of the mind. "Vipassana Meditation," Accessed December 4, 2020, <https://www.dhamma.org/en/about/vipassana>.

⁴ Danish/Icelandic artist

CONTEXTUAL REVIEW

A Welcoming,

You are invited to participate in *embodied listening* as a way of opening yourself, your imagination, senses, and emotions, to this living Earth. On this journey through an immersive, evocative experience with nature's orchestra, I will guide you. Together, we will explore this collection of crafted material forms, nature's soundscapes assembled as vignettes. These forms become portals into dimensions of nature that may otherwise go unnoticed, bringing to the surface spatial-temporal patterns of the universe. As you experience this work by paying close attention to curiosity, joy, beauty, relationship, and hope, you will discover a personal narrative.

Influenced by deep concerns over the effects of climate change and life-altering pandemics, my intension is to bring you into my inquiry of what it means to be human in relationship with the living Earth, now.

Naturing

The concept of *naturing*, presented in this research, describes an immersive approach to experiencing local flora and fauna from a nurturing and interrelated perspective. Through *naturing*, I explore the silent conversations arising from what I hear, feel and see. Naturalist and poet, John Burroughs wrote, "I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in tune once more."⁵ As a naturalist, Burrough's understanding of *nature* opens a space to appreciate Earth's wildness, from oceans and forests to the smallest creatures residing in the backyard.

⁵ Richard Louv, *"Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder,"* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books), 55.

In the exhibition *Heartshock*⁶, installation artist Janet Laurence demonstrates the idea of being in relationship with nature from a perspective of responsibility. A large tree lies on its side with bindings and medical implements attached as a form of life support, asking whether the tree is spilling out its last remaining bit of life or receiving life through these fluids to start life anew. She states,

There is a language of healing in my art practise. What I am trying to do is bring us into a love relationship with trees that I think we're going to need to care for our planet.⁷

My extensive library of experiences has allowed me the privilege of developing my relationship with nature through time spent in diverse natural and wild ecosystems on several continents. I felt an intense aliveness as I floated down the tranquil waters of the lower Zambezi River in my canoe, showered in the beauty of bright red flecks of Carmine Bee-eater birds, their homes are built into the mudbank cliffs. This experience juxtaposed against the underlying rawness of a lone hippo moving below the surface of the water with uncertain intensions. A simultaneous call to strength, fragility and the transitory nature of being, as well as an embodied understanding of my own being and belonging, a relationship that is both cooperative and conflicting but completely interconnected and interdependent. Microbiologist and ecologist David George Haskell's warning that,

These living networks are not places of omnibenevolent Oneness. Instead, they are where ecological and evolutionary tensions between cooperation and conflict are negotiated and resolved. These struggles often result not in the evolution of stronger, more disconnected selves but in the dissolution of the self into relationship.⁸

⁶ MCA Australia, "Janet Laurence: After Nature: behind the scenes," May 2019, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHcmIQz_3eA

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ David George Haskell, "The Songs of Trees: Stories from Nature's Great Connectors," (Penguin Random House, 2017), Preface, iBooks.

During Haskell's research, he explored, for a year, the same square metre of old-growth forest as a portal into the natural world. Through listening and observing this tiny patch of Earth temporally, he experienced its seasons, witnessing a multi-layered relational understanding of the complexities of life's interconnected network whilst acknowledging the ever-present elements of mystery. Through attentive explorations of local landscapes, I, too, collect, record and translate the soundscapes encountered into material form, intending to bring some of these mysteries to the surface.

Nature's Orchestra

The Great Animal Orchestra is Bernie Krause's⁹ recounting of soundscapes¹⁰ he has recorded in pursuit of the music of nature in its purest form; he states that,

In this one verdant spot, thousands of creatures sing in choruses at all times of the day and night. The visual spectacle is impressive, but the sound is absolutely glorious.¹¹

It also acts as an impassioned call for the conservation of one of the most overlooked resources - the voices of natural, wild places. Krause coined the term biophony to define the collective sound that groups of living organisms produce in a given ecosystem and posits that a healthy habitat is similar to an orchestra whereby a developed, complex harmony exists.¹² The audio recordings of these habitats provide vibrant and valuable indications of the health of whole ecological systems and highlights that each has its own,

⁹ <https://www.wildsanctuary.com/>

¹⁰ A soundscape is the total acoustic environment that we perceive in any given moment. Bernie Krause, *Wild Soundscapes: Discovering the Voice of the Natural World*. (U.S.A.: Yale University Press, 2016), 194.

¹¹ Bernie Krause, "The Great Animal Orchestra: Finding the Origins of Music in the World's Wild Places," (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Profile Books Ltd, 2012), 4.

¹² Bernie Krause, "Wild Soundscapes: Discovering the Voice of the Natural World," (U.S.A.: Yale University Press, 2016), 194.

unique, acoustic signature. Krause explains in his seminal work, *The Acoustic Niche Hypothesis*, that each instrument must have its voice and place within the orchestral spectrum to achieve an unimpeded resonance.¹³ He posits this also occurs within ecological systems, stressing that birds, insects, and mammals have been finding their aural niche since the beginning of time.

Krause describes it as, "... a narrative of our living world that tells us how healthy a given habitat is, how the habitat is doing in relation to our effect on that place." Emphasising that while a habitat may look healthy, the biophony can indicate that it is not. In a more evocative way, he explains that if we listen, our ears tell us that the whisper of every leaf and creature speaks to the very sources of our lives.¹⁴ With biophony as a way of linking human forms of speech, music, communication to other species on Earth, I have extended my listening to encompass the ecological soundscape; revealing deep interrelations.

Using software-generated spectrogram images created from captured audio data, Krause demonstrates the frequencies at which the various organisms within a biophony communicate through visualisation. On viewing the initial spectrograms, he discovered that the image patterns displayed were reminiscent of musical scores.¹⁵ This technology-driven form of visualising sound illuminates otherwise invisible elements poetically. In my creative practise, I have also worked to bring to the surface these patterns and registers.

Our most basic definition of hearing is vibrating sound waves of air sensed by the ear. The work of percussionist Evelyn Glennie suggests that this presents a very narrow way

¹³ Bernie Krause, *The Niche Hypothesis: How Animals Taught Us to Dance and Sing* (n.d.): 6.

¹⁴ Stephen Most, "Nature's Orchestra Sounds of Our Changing Planet," 2015, video, <https://www.kanopy.com/product/natures-orchestra>.

¹⁵ Bernie Krause, "The Great Animal Orchestra: Finding the Origins of Music in the World's Wild Places," (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Profile Books Ltd, 2012), 98.

of understanding the intricacies of hearing.¹⁶ Sound *heard* through direct vibration of the bones in the body is defined as bone conduction. Glennie explains, “My whole body is similar to an ear, every surface has learnt to become a conduit, bringing meaning and sense to my brain.”¹⁷ Hearing low notes through her feet and legs, mid notes in her chest and high notes in her hands and face, her whole body becomes a sound receptor. Experimental use of bone conductors placed on my hands, chest, feet, and face has brought me to a sharpened understanding of how to widen my perception of what listening is and into a closer relationship with how Glennie perceives this cryptic world of listening through sensation. Vibrations, Glennie asserts, are the basis of sonic experience.¹⁸ If hearing is the physical reception of sound waves by the body and listening is the perception of what we hear, a more inquisitive approach to the various ways in which hearing and listening are perceived and the forms they take, is demanded. Asking the question, Where does silence live?

Silence

As a young girl, while living in Edmonton, Canada ([53°33'01"N 113°06'07"W](#)), I experienced my first and only silent landscape. I marvelled as a shimmering aurora borealis danced across the night sky in a wave of rainbow colours. Not a breath of wind, no wolves chorusing, only silence but for my breath and heartbeat. A sense of utter peace, tranquillity and awe set on a glacial winter's night at sub 40 degrees has never been forgotten nor repeated. While the silence I experienced that night was ostensibly devoid of sound, I did not perceive it as emptiness or lack but full of aliveness. Glennie speaks about this also, having spent most of her life encouraging people to engage in a richer world of sound by tuning into the *pretence* of silence.

¹⁶ Evelyn Glennie, “Hearing Essay,” Evelyn Glennie, January 1, 2015, <https://www.evelyn.co.uk/hearing-essay/>.

¹⁷ Evelyn Glennie, “Listening to The Tempest: a Tale to Cure Deafness,” Evelyn Glennie, December 12, 2016. <https://www.evelyn.co.uk/listening-tempest-tale-cure-deafness/>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

It is my belief there is no such thing as silence. To experience this, we need to turn off all surrounding sound and contemplate the remaining chasm, which should be silence. You will discover thus another sound world, where you can truly begin to understand how to tap into a different way of listening.¹⁹

The cellist Yo-yo-ma expressed his love of the space between movements in a Bach suite. The end of one musical movement and the start of the next is not written by the composer but is a place to be interpreted and moved through by the musician.²⁰ One can also view this *chasm* from the perspective of the Japanese concept of *MA* 間. *MA* is the gap or negative space between these movements, the pauses in conversation that allow the words to stand out, the space that exists between the walls of a structure, though empty, is the essence of the room. Yoko Kawai²¹ also expresses *MA* as a boundary between the mind-body and space which is ephemeral, blurred, always in motion.²² Here is a mystery I am seeking to understand, how to create the resonance of invisible *in-between* spaces; capturing and revealing them, through my practise, as visualised soundscapes.

Listening, according to installation artist Ann Hamilton, often takes on a form absent of sound. At the beginning of all her projects, she questions what configuration listening needs to take to understand how her (installation) projects will take shape.²³ In this

¹⁹ Evelyn Glennie, "Listening to The Tempest, a Tale to Cure Deafness," Evelyn Glennie, December 12, 2016, <https://www.evelyn.co.uk/listening-tempest-tale-cure-deafness/>.

²⁰ Krista Tippett, "Yo-Yo Ma — Music Happens Between the Notes," The On Being Project, July 2018, <https://onbeing.org/programs/yo-yo-ma-music-happens-between-the-notes-jul2018/>.

²¹ Dr Yoko Kawai is an architect and professor at Yale School of Architecture

²² Japan Society NYC (2018). Designing Mindfulness: Spatial Concepts in Traditional Japanese Architecture. [video] Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gcGH6rqssfs&t=12s> [Accessed 16 Aug. 2019].

²³ Krista Tippett, "Ann Hamilton — Making, and the Spaces We Share," The On Being Project, February 2014, <https://onbeing.org/programs/ann-hamilton-making-and-the-spaces-we-share/>.

context, listening could be seen as *giving* attention to silence as a means of communion. In contrast to the notion of paying attention, I view *giving* as a freer way of thinking of the exchange in that communion, one that recognises an experience is taking place. Practising the act of giving attention to listening, in the presence and absence of sound when walking through the woods, for example, clarity deepens, my mind quietens, I am present, yet absent of thought and enriched by immersion in the sensory experience. For me, the most challenging aspect of achieving a quiet mind is lulling the inner voice, getting the inner critic to let go of judgement. This *letting go* facilitates direct connection to life experience through the nuance of colours, forms, textures, in soundscapes, as well as landscapes.

Through *heartful attentiveness*²⁴ of what I am experiencing, I am in the moment, totally absorbed by the natural wildness around me. I am given permission to *not think* but simply *to be* and to observe, taking me closer to finding the *essence* of belonging, the invisible and the visible relationship of self to the mysteries of the universe as a whole. Through my practise I then question how what I discover translates into my creative practise and how that is then shared with a wider audience.

Evocative Experience

Artist Olafur Eliasson presents reality in a hyper-realistic way seeking the intangible made tangible through engaging the senses. He sees a gallery and juxtaposed outdoor spaces as opportunities to encourage an audience to be present in the experience, reflecting on aspects of the natural world that may otherwise go unnoticed. The

²⁴ Heartful attentiveness – from my perspective, is understood to be – purposefully giving attention to the present moment, without judgement and with a quieted mind.

installation “Ice Watch ”(2014, Copenhagen Town Square)²⁵ encouraged one to experience the cold of a piece of transported iceberg as it melts under the touch in an attempt to bring one closer to the enormity of climate change. Other works encourage one to feel the mist off a waterfall and smell a moss-covered wall, releasing oneself to the sense of being enveloped by the wall. He insists the viewer discover their narrative around the experience, their connection to it and asking them to pay closer attention, viewing from a place of wonder, hope and joy.²⁶ There is an affinity with Eliasson's desire to enhance the human experience in order to draw attention to what it means to be human at this moment in time. My multi-disciplinary work seeks to create similar awareness of our interconnectedness with nature and each other by revealing the normally invisible patterns of constituents such as sound. The use of water and light transforms the unseeable and brings about a sense of wonder and magic of our natural world, asking for our attention.

Through David Haskell’s immersive approach to experiencing local flora and fauna from a nurturing and interrelated perspective, I explore the conversations arising from engaging with all of my senses. I examine Evelyn Glennie’s ways of embodied listening and understanding silence and the spaces in between. I explore Bernie Krause’s use of soundscapes and Janet Laurence and Olafur Eliasson installation practises as vehicles for connecting an audience with the natural environment.

²⁵ Underground Channel, “Ice Watch,” October 26, 2014, video, <https://olafureliasson.net/archive/watch/MDA119148/ice-watch-by-olafur-eliasson-and-minik-roosing-city-hall-square-copenhagen>.

²⁶ Associated Press, “Stunning Olafur Eliasson installations at Tate Modern – In Real Life Exhibition,” August 21, 2019, video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuugO22MjGg>.

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The Mindful-Nomadic

Embodying a mindful-nomadic methodological approach, I mix the physical act of journey-making with mindful attention to the moment. As a practising²⁷ mindful-nomad, I listen, gather, sort, make, store and reveal moments specific to time and space as a connection-making adventure. This attentiveness when journeying allows for a subtle migration towards slowness and pause as a portal into conversations with the universe's seen and unseen elements.

²⁷ Practising in the sense that attentiveness is not a constant state of being but a continuous practise as a way of being.

METHODS

Nomadic Wandering, Attentive Listening

Wild Geese

This content has been removed by the author due to copyright issues

— Mary Oliver²⁸

Everything is always in motion, no less in my life of constant change, moving and living throughout the world. I've lived in built-up spaces and wild places, each informing the

²⁸ Stephen Roach Knight, "Mary Oliver Reading Wild Geese," September, 20, 2013, video,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv_4xmh_WtE.

nomadic lens through which I view the world as I move through it. The practise of giving attention to the moment in the act of listening, of seeing, of collecting, of being within and being immersed in nature's landscapes enhances my imagination and my understanding of nomadic wandering.

In my daily meditation sittings, I exercise attention by focusing on the breath and on bodily sensations without judgement. This leads to clarity of mind and heightened awareness of the moment, allowing intuition to play its role in my journeys through this life of wonder.

Making in two parts:

Collecting & Intuitive Connection

At Muriwai, where I currently live, I listen using a method I call *intuitive collecting and connections*. Making has become a way of illuminating the invisible elements of what I sense around me on hikes through the bush, walks over the cliff tops and along the water's edge. The sounds I record²⁹, the silences I search for and the objects I collect while journeying act as portals, opening the unseen through the seen, breaching perceived boundaries. I find boundaries in motion between the foam of a wave and the rim of the rock edge, the invisible current of air and a Tākapu's wings in flight, the transparent veil of a skeleton leaf and the aliveness of the forest floor beyond. Installation artist Ann Hamilton describes this process thus,

²⁹ Using the 3DIO binaural microphone I recorded and edited soundscapes in the three areas of wandering. The 3DIO records sound that mimics how we hear with the human ear, through the spacing of the silicone 'ears' that funnel the sound to the internal microphones. When listened to with headphones the soundscape has a 3-dimensional quality that allows for the immersive aural experience I would like people to have.

How I start projects is, in some ways, just to try to listen. And what is the form of that listening for what something needs to become?³⁰

Engaging in intuitive collecting and connections raises questions that open possibilities for more profound curiosity, wonder and exploration.

Bringing to the Surface

Through a cyclical, organic process, my experiences' manifestations continue to evolve through the objects I create. Moments of magic, of alchemy, reveal themselves in recorded sounds projected through water, the vibrations rising to the surface, the undulating patterns illuminated by light creating conversations. These moments, suspended in porcelain objects and textile pieces, make the invisible visible.

There is an exchange that unfolds between myself and my physical and mental engagement with materials; connections are forged through the combined acts of collecting and making. Making, conceived as a journey, tends to be less focused on the outcome and more on conversations with the materials resulting in a relational unfold process with which objects reveal themselves. This bringing to the surface - making manifest, continues as the conversation develops into an installation.

³⁰ Krista Tippett, "Ann Hamilton — Making, and the Spaces We Share," The On Being Project, February, 2014, <https://onbeing.org/programs/ann-hamilton-making-and-the-spaces-we-share/>.

Nomadic Sættekasse

Keeping a life-time's collection of curiosities, conversations, memories, and understandings necessitate a *nomadic sættekasse*. In my home country of Denmark, a sættekasse was traditionally used to store letters for letterpress printing. These boxes were later repurposed or, in my case, made by my grandfather, Oscar, to keep and curate found objects, trinkets, and mementoes collected on my travels safe. A sættekasse stores touchpoints in a nomad's life of journeys.

Artist Janet Laurence speaks to her practise of storing collected objects in clear acrylic boxes as they allow for organic associations to develop that also change and move through time, depending on the project.

As a method, nomadic sættekasse allow the organisation and curation of my collected memories - found objects and soundscapes sitting amongst the artefacts I produce. While the sættekasse was traditionally used as a container, I have repurposed it as a conceptual space - as interstice's where preserved memories can form conversations that change with time, creating new nomadic stories and understandings.

DESCRIPTION OF PRACTISE

A Muriwai Symphony



Figure 2. Mette Hay, *Ōtakamiro Point*, 2020, photograph.

Throughout this extraordinary nomadic life of mine, a flowing river of accumulated discoveries, perceptions and encounters have settled like droplets of water on my skin. This research stems from one such encounter — a way of making sound visible using water and light.

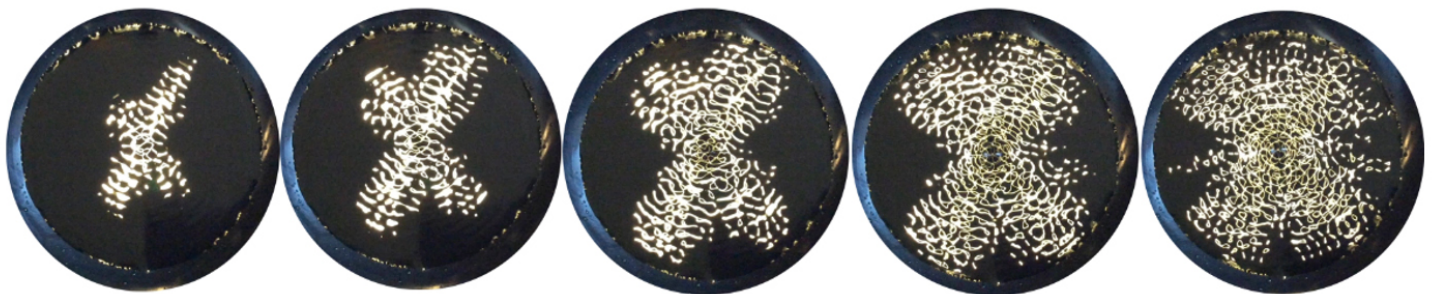


Figure 3. Mette Hay, *Sound Spread*, 2020s, mixed media.

This is the story of paths travelled and connections made as a result of that touchpoint in time, as sounds moved from invisible state to visible artefacts.

In *The Great Animal Orchestra*, Krause states:

Each cohesive habitat expresses itself through its own special niche composition - its unique voice. Think of moving from one biophonic territory to another as moving along the path of an acoustic spectrum - from one point in time to another through space.

The unique characteristics of each separate habitat are reminiscent of the signature sounds that permeate the body of a composer's work.³¹

I use the notion of the movements³² of a symphony to navigate and organise this research in concert with my local, wild soundscapes that edge the urban areas of Muriwai. In doing so I have learned to listen, observe, be wholeheartedly present and in relationship with nature's magnificent orchestras. Selecting three local areas I have composed a sonic, tactile and experiential symphony.

Recognising that a soundscape, or voice, for example, of a Canadian wilderness area will sound very different to that of an island home in Denmark, I have chosen three distinct sites that produce different soundscapes for this project.

³¹ Bernie Krause, "The Great Animal Orchestra: Finding the Origins of Music in the World's Wild Places," (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Profile Books Ltd, 2012), 171.

³² The movements (or parts) of a symphony are usually free standing; one movement ending, a pause, followed by the beginning of the next movement. The sections, conceived as parts of a whole, relating to one another in some way. "Classical Music: The Movements of a Symphony." Dummies, n.d. Accessed November 25, 2020, <https://www.dummies.com/art-center/music/classical-music-the-movements-of-a-symphony/>

Nomadic Wandering

An invitation to join me,

I invite you to join me on a wander through my local landscape in Muriwai, starting with a few slow, gentle inhalations to bring you into the present moment. Focusing your mind intentionally on your natural breath, from the moment it enters your nostrils and following it as it gently baths the whole of your body. Repeat this as many times as you need to relax your mind and body, leaving behind any expectations or judgements; as your breath slows and deepens an opening of the senses arises. When your mind wanders, gently return to your breath — and follow me.

In these pandemic times, the possibility of travel to far off places, which I thought defined me as a nomad, has drastically narrowed. Through local meanderings, I have found, to my delight, that much of what it means to be a nomad exists in my insatiable curiosity. There is an abundance of life to be discovered all around me, so I pause — and give it my attention. The mindbody³³ is a great teacher of natural history, it is here an embodied awareness that nature is not separate — we are one and the same, is understood. I carry this knowledge with me on naturing walks to listen, observe, collect and be, opening me up to the quiet contemplation that feeds my intuition.

I acknowledge Te Kawerau a Maki, the tangata whenua³⁴ that hold manawhenua³⁵ of the area as my home is a stone's throw from the cliff's edge that overlooks the black sands of Maukatia Bay. Ōtakamiro Point, the Tākapu colony and the kauri forest by Mokoroa stream down the road are three rich habitats for a curious nomad. I am reminded how

³³ Mindbody: through my Vipassana mindfulness practise I have come to the understanding that both my mind and body are intrinsically linked, inform and affect the other and, as one, experience life.

³⁴ tangata whenua - people of the land

³⁵ manawhenua - customary authority

Mary Oliver so eloquently posed, that “the world offers itself to your imagination ... announcing your place in the family of things.”³⁶



Figure 4. Mette Hay, *Painted Wave*, 2020, photograph.

³⁶ Stephen Roach Knight, “Mary Oliver Reading Wild Geese,” September, 20, 2013, video, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv_4xmh_WtE.

Walking the Muriwai Symphony

Feel the warm sun above and a light breeze moving the hill's flora like a dance. The orchestra of plants, wind as their conductor, pushing leaf against leaf, rustling. Flax flowers in bloom, like little flames in the sunlight, complementing the call-out of a tui flitting black and white up the slope. This is the Ōtakamiro path.

Around the corner, they come into view. Tākapu soaring; elegantly, smoothly; some just floating, allowing the air to hold their graceful bodies in place as they contemplate a landing or a fly-by if needed. Many are back for the summer; the strong smell and raucous sounds tell us that. Dropped seaweed and piles of white feathers are pushed up against the fence, billowing and holding on in the wind, occasionally losing grip and gently floating off. Would the pillow of feathers sound as soft as they look if we could dive in and hear them?

Widen the gaze and follow the skilled flight of a Tākapu as it sets off over the cliff edge and out to sea; gold head leading a pure white body and the black streaks of broad outstretched wings. Silence lives there for me, for these are the things I cannot hear. I cannot hear the bird's soft feathers in flight, or Oaia Island in the distance or the gentle curve of the horizon where the Earth meets the sky. With that knowing, the other senses come more into play and attentiveness grows stronger.

Over the edge, the cliff leads to the black volcanic rock forty meters below, a collection of wave carved pools sculpted by the sea over millennia. The rock's surface warms the soles of bare feet and the fresh, salty smell of sea air invites lungs to breathe deep. I stretch my body out and connect fully with the Earth, look up at the painted wave-shaped cliff that repeats the ocean's voice. Nothing to think about, just watch the birds fly, listen to the cliff's conversation, feel in harmony with the Earth.

Away from the wild coast's dominating sounds lies the kauri-lined path to Mokoroa stream on the northern boundary of the Waitakere ranges. Here the sound of the ocean fades, replaced by the birdsongs of kereru, kingfisher, morepork and tui. Speckled light filters through the forest of adolescent kauri overlooked by their elders further in the forest.³⁷ The cleaning station and signs remind us of the real threat of kauri dieback disease³⁸ to these ancient trees, reminding us of our responsibilities here, stay on the path. Sit for a moment, with eyes closed and just listen. Birds flutter past, a bumble bee buzzes, it starts to rain, the sound of large droplets bouncing off leaves fills the air. Look for silence—it sits in the bark of an old kauri.

³⁷ Kauri have had a large part to play not just in the landscape and early history of Aotearoa, but the important role kauri has for Māori. Kauri are considered a taonga by many New Zealanders, particularly Māori, who see the health of kauri as a sign of general wellbeing of the ngahere (forest) and the people. "Significance of Kauri to Māori Culture," Keep Kauri Standing, accessed on October 28, 2020, <https://www.kauridieback.co.nz/significance-of-kauri/>.

³⁸ Kauri dieback disease is a fungal disease caused by a microscopic organism that lives in soil and infects kauri roots, damaging the tissues that carry nutrients and water within the tree, starving it to death. "Significance of Kauri to Māori Culture," Keep Kauri Standing, accessed on October 28, 2020, <https://www.kauridieback.co.nz/what-is-kauri-dieback/>.

Collecting & Connections

Collecting Soundscapes & Giving Attention



Figure 5. Mette Hay, *Kauri Recording*, 2020, photograph.

When recording soundscapes, I close my eyes and focus on the sounds, reorienting myself away from the visual and into the realm of the other senses. This allows for deeper attention to the nuance of individual sounds as well as the collective acoustic signals of a habitat. Opening my eyes, I find deeper awareness spreading to what I feel around me, releasing a slow breath and in turn filling my lungs with the breath of the kauri forest; I am reminded we are one and the same.



Figure 6. Mette Hay, *Surrender*, 2020, photograph.

A bird died in the crook of two branches. The pose seems to be one of surrender, does it not? It has been here for months. Has anyone noticed it's bowed head? I find incredible sadness and beauty in this encounter, a testimony to the fragility and transitory nature of life. On closer observation I see it is a kingfisher; they nest in holes in the ochre sandstone cliff faces. This one won't be coming home. I imagine the sound of its final note. Heartfelt enquiries are echoing Haskell's "dissolution of the self into relationship."



Figure 7. Mette Hay, *Lichen Bark*, 2020, photograph.



Figure 8. Mette Hay, *Black Line*, 2020, photograph.

Further on, the colour and texture of lichens blends in with the bark of the kauri. What is the conversation that occurs between the two? So many organisms living on just one small patch of bark — is it a symbiotic relationship? A line of black - is this a sign of disease? Distress?

My fingertips pause, taking in the cool, damp, rumpled surface of the kauri. Is there anything to be heard as I run an empathetic hand down the bark? Does the tree feel my touch?

Searching for Silence

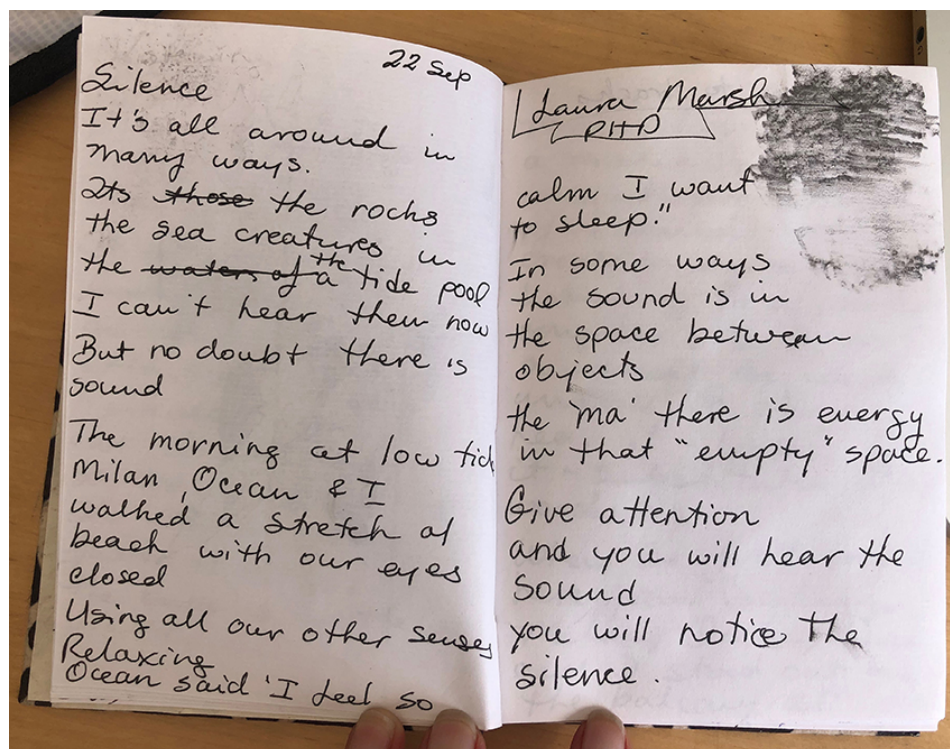


Figure 9. Mette Hay, *Wondering diary: Silence*, 2020, pencil on paper.

In the noisy world of Ōtakamiro Point, one can assume there is no respite. The crashing of waves, the bumping of wind on the ears, the enthusiastic greeting of mates when they land, the continuous chatter of the tara. I am compelled to search for the respite of a pause, a search for silence, reflecting on Glennie's belief that there is no such thing as silence, only the discovery of another world of sound and new ways in which to listen. Bring the gaze to the geometric lines of the resting Tākapu body. The markings on its face. The silence of the feathers. Stretching the eyes out wide, take in the curvature of the Earth, silence in the horizon line. Silence is there.



Figure 10. Mette Hay, *Tākapu Rest*, 2020, photograph.



Figure 11. Mette Hay, *Tākapu Pause*, 2020, photograph.

Making Connections

The more one searches for silence, the more patterns and connections are revealed.

Movement — everything always in motion, ever changing, including sound, silence and time. Is time as simple as the past, present and future? When we are fully aware, does time reveal itself like thin veils between moments where we can see past and possible future and present in one moment?

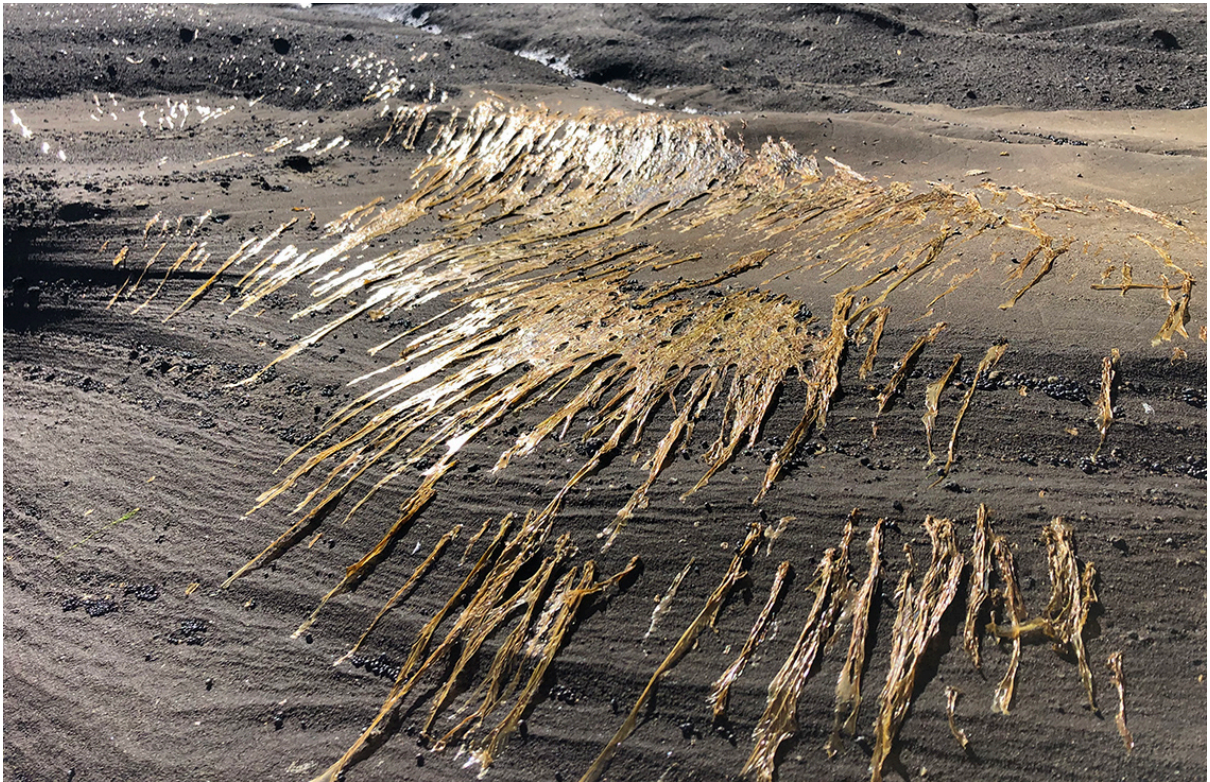


Figure 12. Mette Hay, *Gold Spray*, 2020, photograph.



Figure 13. Mette Hay, *White Spray*, 2020, photographs.



Figure 14. Mette Hay, *Skeleton Leaf Veil*, 2020, video. [Skeleton Leaf Veil](#)

These collecting and connection making adventures are where I fill my mindbody with new learnings, many subconscious that reveal themselves in their own time, often through making.

Bringing to the Surface

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Figure 15. Example of a spectrogram of a complex biophony of recorded sounds of a dawn chorus in Borneo. Bernie Krause, "The Great Animal Orchestra: Finding the Origins of Music in the World's Wild Places," (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Profile Books Ltd, 2012), 98.

My collecting and making process is intentionally organic, open and cyclical in nature, whereby the outcome is an unfolding, not a pre-determined destination. This opens the door for rich, more unintentional experiences, for unanswered questions to exist and insights to reveal themselves. In Haskell's work, "The Forest Unseen", he asks:

What lies beyond the theories we impose on nature? This year I have tried to put down scientific tools and to listen: to come to nature without a hypothesis, without a scheme for data extraction, without a lesson plan to convey answers to students I have glimpsed how rich science is but simultaneously how limited in scope and in spirit... What was that insight that brushed past me as the squirrels basked?³⁹

³⁹ David George Haskell, "The Forest Unseen: A Years Watch in Nature," (New York: Penguin, 2012), 369, iBooks.

Recorded soundscapes from each location go through an editing process⁴⁰ to bring forth the essence of these landscapes. Listening to these soundscapes when making connect me to place.

Krause's use of the spectrogram graphically illustrates a specific habitat's biophony, similar in fashion to musical notation.⁴¹ As an exercise in ways of listening, I don headphones and take charcoal to paper. Noting my representation of the musical score to "Wanderings"⁴², a soundscape recorded at Tawharanui Bird Sanctuary.

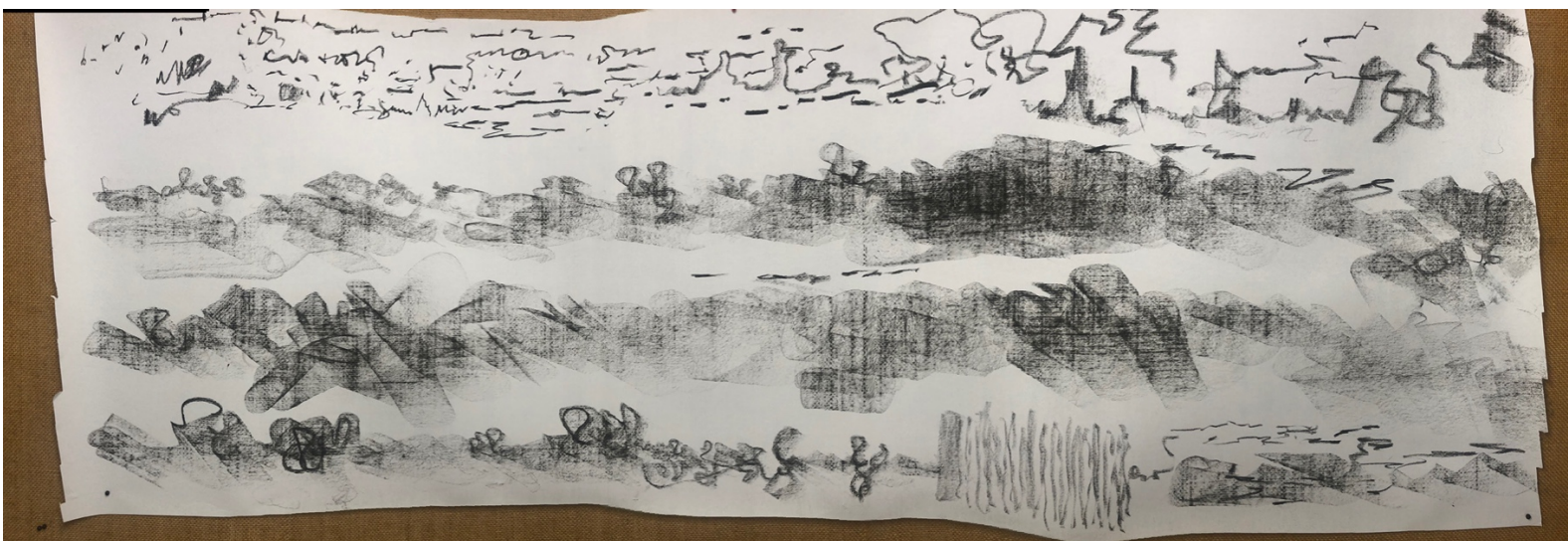


Figure 16. Mette Hay, *Tawharanui Song*, 2019, charcoal on paper.

Whilst the process of ear through body - to hand - to charcoal - to paper was a beautiful translation both in process and outcome, sound translated by water and light has an element of mystery and magic.

⁴⁰ Apple Garage Band used for editing soundscape

⁴¹ Bernie Krause, "The Great Animal Orchestra: Finding the Origins of Music in the World's Wild Places," (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Profile Books Ltd, 2012), 142.

⁴² Mette Hay, "Wanderings," recorded October 2019, streaming audio, <https://soundcloud.com/user-686546186/wanderings-291019-0143>.

When the water-translated patterns of the Tākapu soundscape came to the surface, an extraordinary image flashed, like a hidden announcement popping up for a brief moment, a moment only noticed if giving full attention.



Figure 17. Mette Hay, *Tākapu Calling*, 2020, photographs.

Sound vibration rose to the water's surface, revealing the first and only occurrence of a bird-like form in the 24 frames that make up one second of videoed, projected sound. It felt like alchemy, like I had been privy to a moment of magic. In conversation with a formally trained musician friend, he shared his understanding that the first *attack* of a musical instrument is the truest representation of that instrument.⁴³ Could this be the case with the sound of the Tākapu? I feel no need to answer the question but only to be open to the possibilities.

⁴³ Dave McGregor, interviewed by author, Auckland, October, 2020.



Figure 18. Mette Hay, *Maukatia Bay Sound Bowl*, 2020, photograph.

Finding giant bowls in cliff faces that reflect sounds back out to sea.



Figure 19. Mette Hay, *Rock pool Bowls*, 2020, photograph.

The smaller bowls of the rockpools add to the curiosity of the sounds I cannot hear but can feel the faint vibration of.

Explorations through making start with moulding clay into thin bowls, perfectly imperfect in shape, texture and glazing, reflecting the beauty of the rockpools.



Figure 20. Mette Hay, *Bowl of Silence?*, 2020, porcelain.

As I work with the materials, I discover the ability to let go of control more often and giving attention strengthens. The clay bowl is not as successful in translating sound into visible patterns which leads to new materials being explored and more suitable bowls being used. Eventually the rockpool soundscape reveals itself and the process continues.

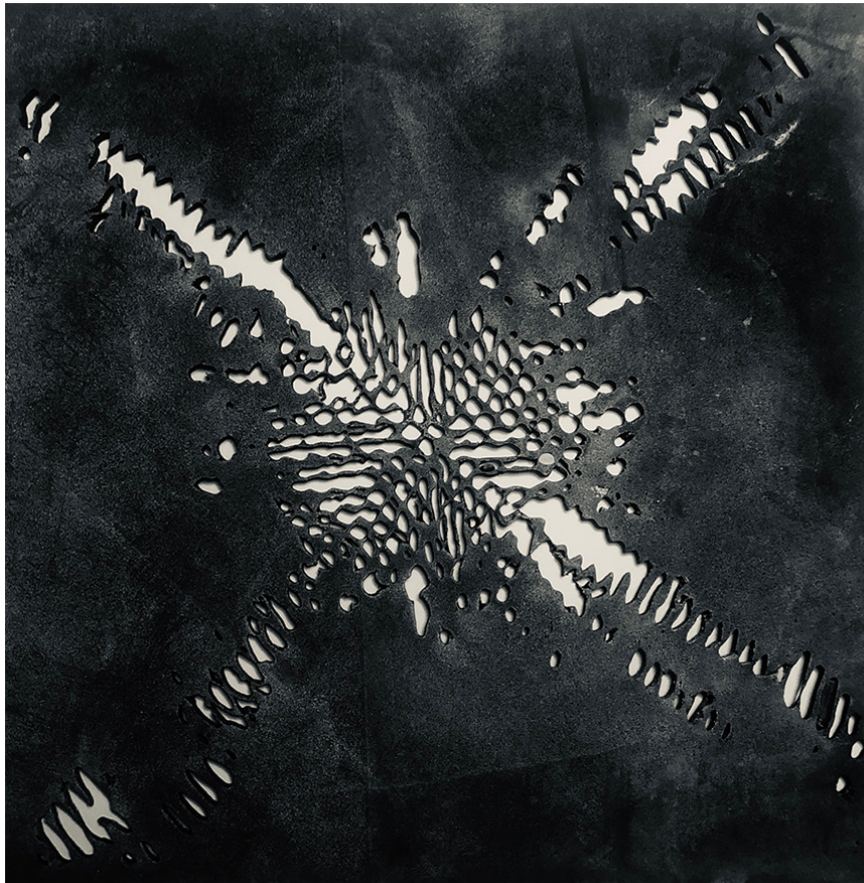


Figure 21. Mette Hay, *Water Sounds1-2*, 2020, Laser cut images in EVA foam for imprinting clay.

I find myself contemplating my exploration and experiential understandings of *MA* through the ephemeral boundaries between wet clay and my hands, between clay and imprinting of sound images, between clay and kiln. These eternal boundaries in motion and *spaces in between* are often invisible or go unnoticed - what conversations are taking place?

I am reminded that sound is not two-dimensional, as depicted in Krause's spectrogram, but three dimensional as it moves through a medium, whether air or water or otherwise I being to explore the imprinting of captured sound.

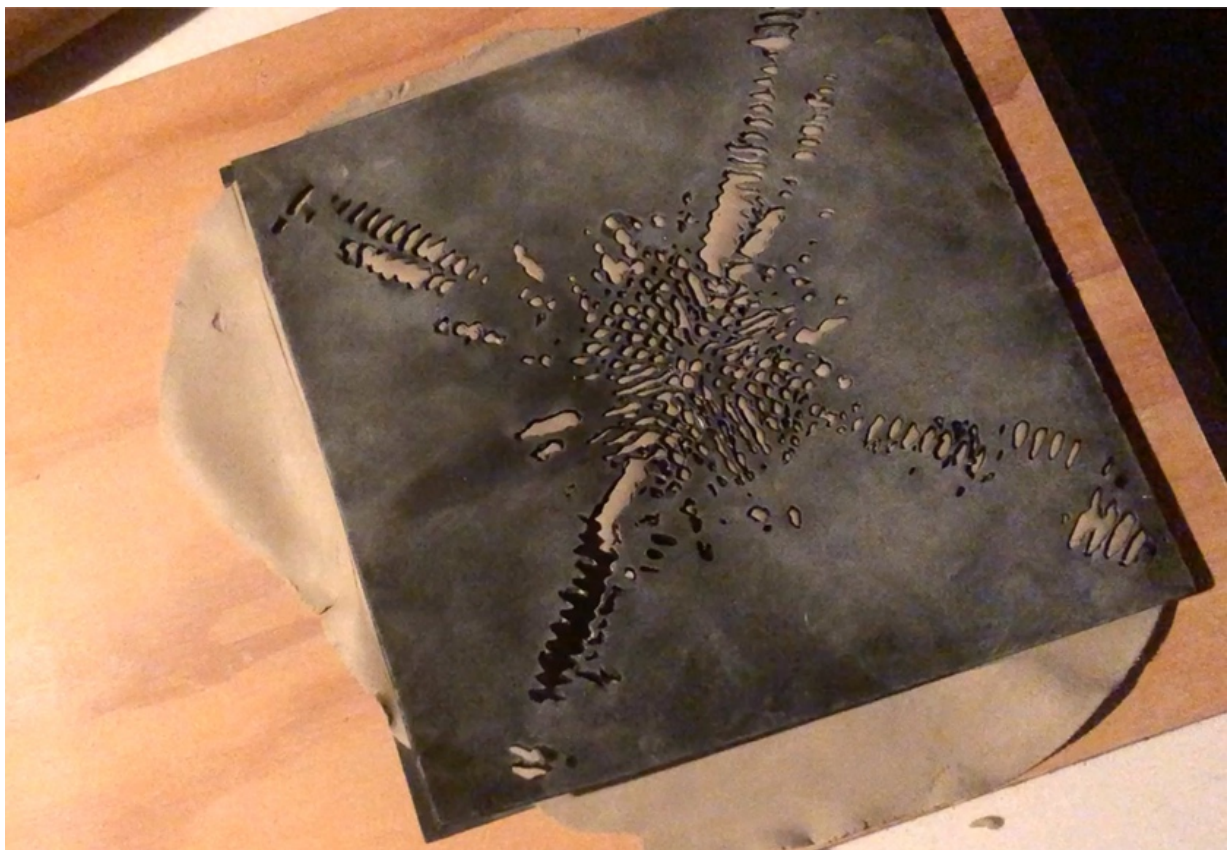


Figure 22. Mette Hay, *Parting*, (process demonstration), video.
<https://vimeo.com/488233465>

This short video captured this notion as I contemplate the space between the mould and the clay being imprinted with the sound.



Figure 23. Mette Hay, *Soundscape Landscape*, 2020, clay.

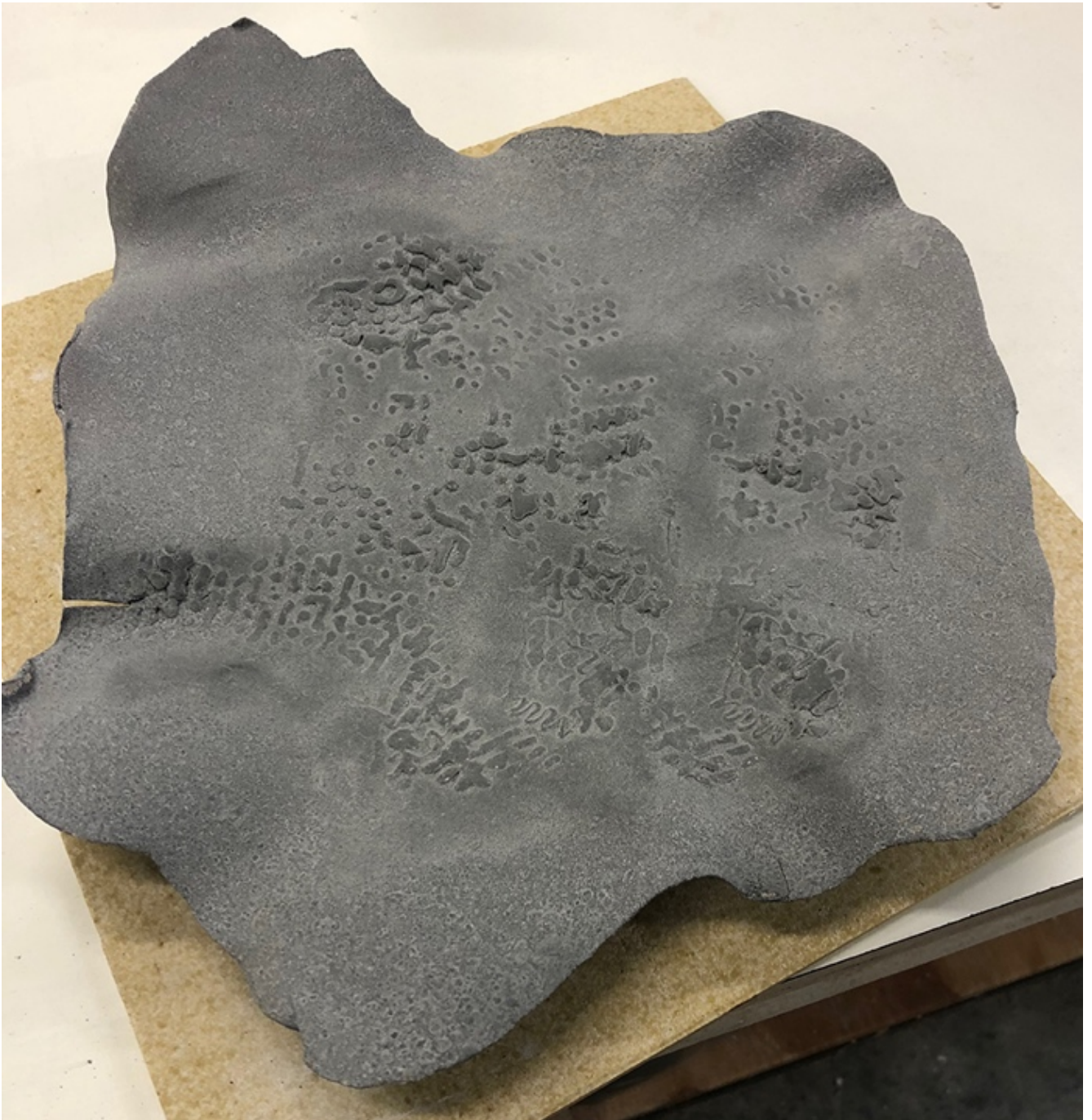


Figure 24. *Mette Hay, Flat Shell, 2020, clay.* A small amount of Muriwai sand is rubbed into the clay, a testament to where the sound was captured.

And *shell creatures* emerge.



Figure 25. Mette Hay, *Gathering*, 2020, collection of porcelain clay vessels.

Using porcelain for its hard, transparent and yet visually delicate properties, I am reminded of the fragility of the kauri forest, despite its legacy of strength and our complicity in the demise of these natural ecosystems that Krause has heard fall silent due to our mishandling.⁴⁴

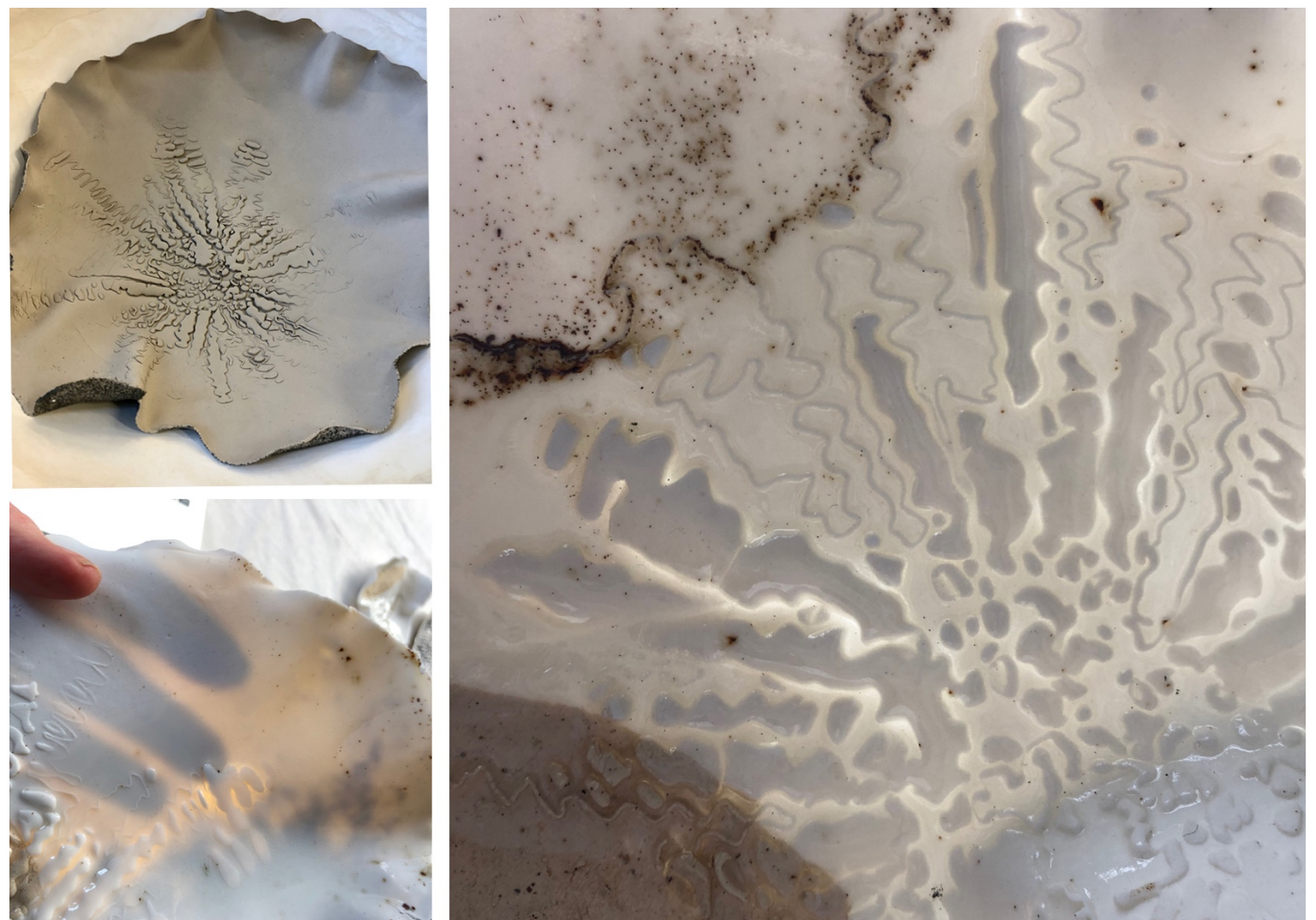


Figure 26. Mette Hay, *Bloom*, 2020, porcelain pre and post kiln firing, photographs.

⁴⁴ Bernie Krause, "The Great Animal Orchestra: Finding the Origins of Music in the World's Wild Places," (London, UNITED KINGDOM: Profile Books Ltd, 2012), 71.



Figure 27. Mette Hay, *Mysterious Landscape*, 2020, clay and sand.

Local clay surprises and delights under high firing, going from grey to yellow, a nod to the golden head of the Tākapu.



Figure 28. Mette Hay. *Tākapu Landscape*, 2020, clays and sand.



Figure 29. Mette Hay. *Tākapu Patterns*, 2020, photograph.

I imbed Tākapu sound and feathers in clay, as a memorial to captured moments. What conversation occurs between these elements? Between sound and clay, feather and clay?



Figure 30. Mette Hay, *Feathers in clay*, 2020, porcelain clay and collected feathers.

On removal from the kiln a new questioning begins. As part of this organic approach to making I intentionally let go of control and give over to the unknown experience of the object and the kiln. Cracks and warps are welcome, the imperfection reveals a partially hidden tale. The whisper of an ephemeral feather disappears with the slightest touch. These new iterations surprise and delight in the tale that started with a sound captured at a moment in time.

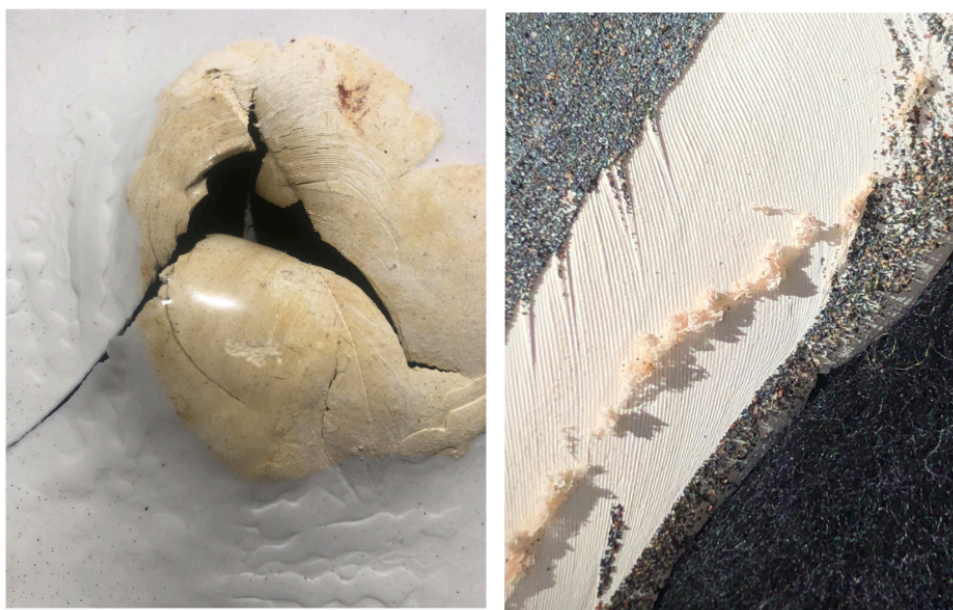


Figure 31. Mette Hay, *Tākapu Feathers crack and whisp*, 2020, photographs.

Bringing the sounds to the surface, I find the need to give mark to when the sound was captured using *moment stamps*. (GPS coordinates, elevation, date and time), As with memory, there is imperfection in the GPS data⁴⁵ and in the futility to perfectly trap a moment in time and space considering the universe is continuously in motion. I see these stamps not as a tool of absoluteness but as a touchpoint for a memory, a *fingerprint* that gives a moment place that can be left as memory or shared.



Figure 32. Mette Hay, *Moment Stamps*, 2020, laser cut wood.



Figure 33. Mette Hay, *Moment Stamp Tests*, 2020, clay.

⁴⁵ GPS- apps on smartphones are accurate to within a 4.9 m radius under open sky, however, their accuracy can be impacted not only by buildings, bridges, and trees but also by the moving satellite constellations from which the position is calculated. Frank, van Diggelen and Per Enge, "The World's First GPS MOOC and Worldwide Laboratory Using Smartphones," 361–369, 2015, Accessed December 1, 2020, <http://www.ion.org/publications/abstract.cfm?jp=p&articleID=13079>.



Figure 34. Mette Hay, *Sound Etched Fabric*, 2020, porcelain.

In contrast to the hardness of porcelain as a material and the *fossilising* of elements within the ceramic objects, I move into the softness of textiles to speak to the ephemeral nature of all things in the form of *veils*. *MA* speaks of boundaries always in motion from moment to the next and one space to the next. Exploring the use of textiles to express this idea and to juxtapose with the ceramic objects

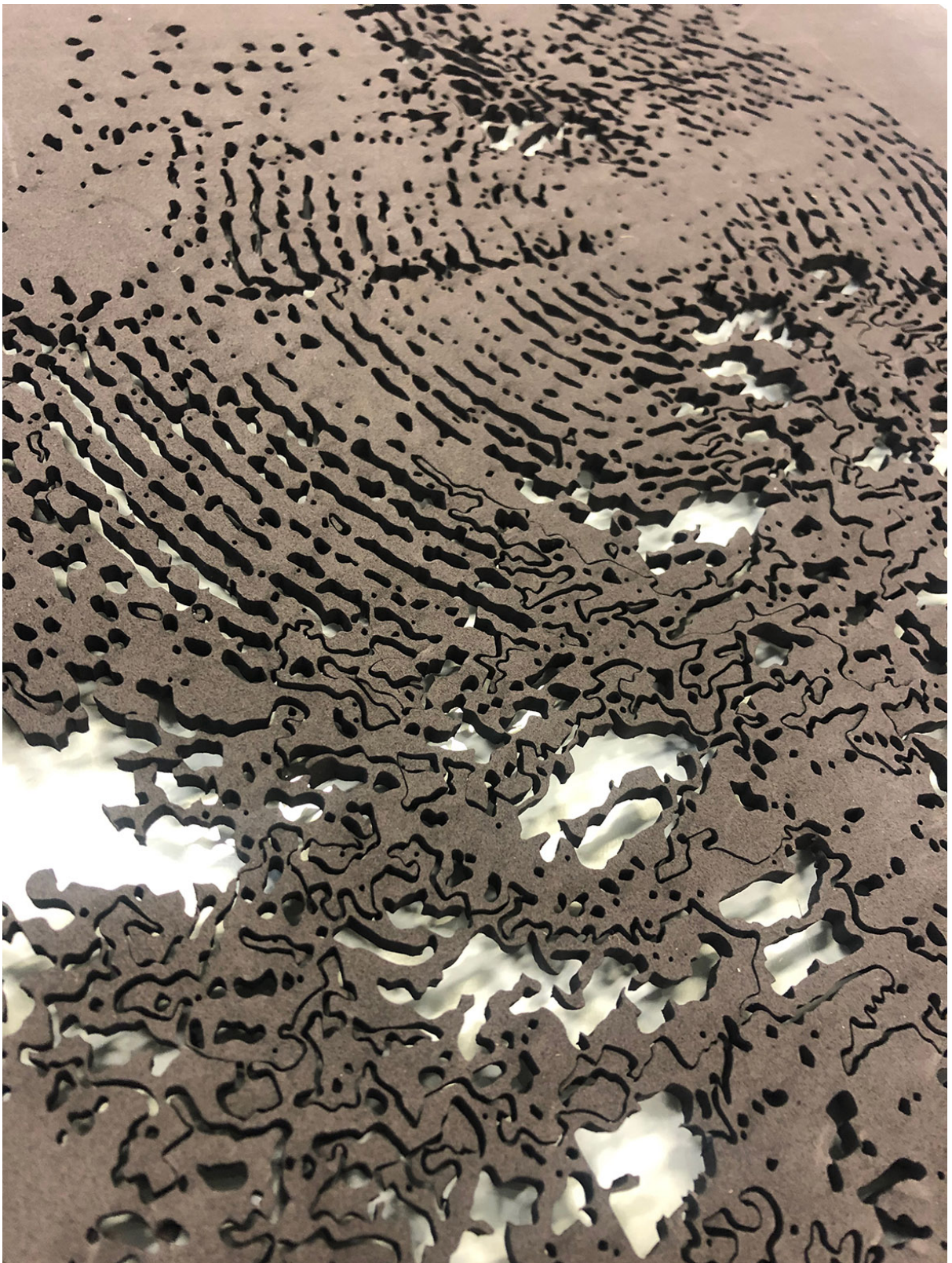


Figure 35. Mette Hay, *Ring Landscape*, 2020, laser cut EVA foam.

Textile veils of digitally printed and felted wools and silks results in pieces that embody movement, transparency and softness, speaking to this transitory nature of time.

An image from the kauri forest soundscape reveals the rings of a tree, each ring representative of time past.



Figure 36. Mette Hay, *Trees Rings Veil*, 2020, printed, felted, laser cut wool.

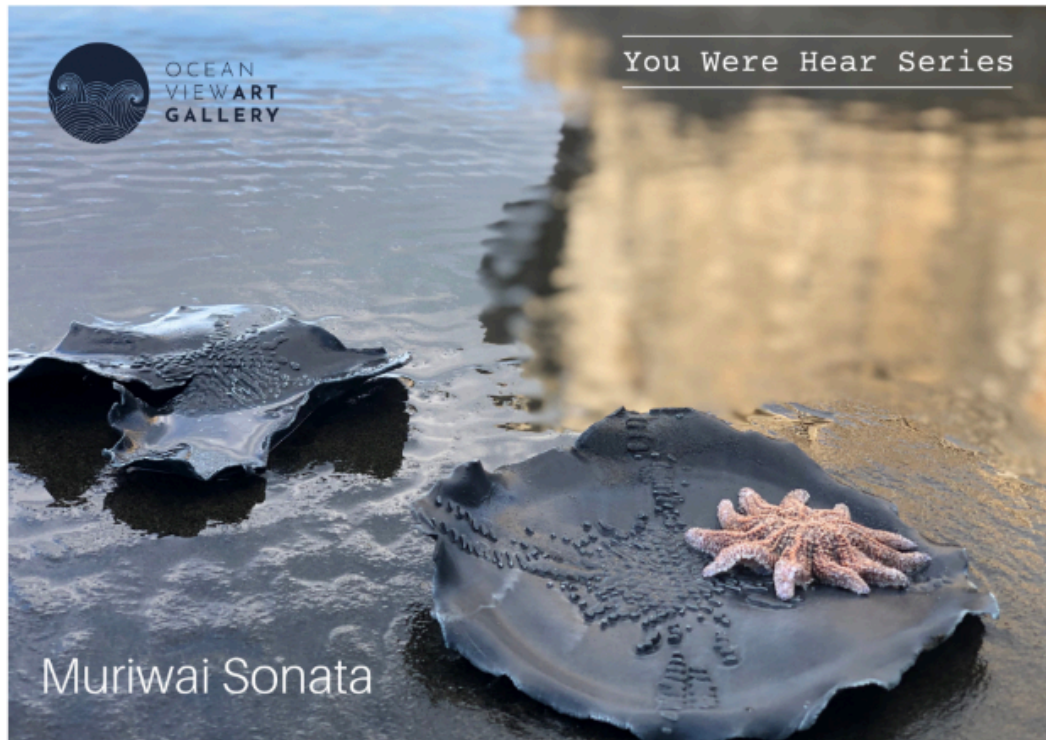


Figure 37. Mette Hay, *Muriwai Sonata Exhibition*, 2020, postcard.

The opportunity to exhibit at a local gallery as a way of experimenting with installation is welcomed. I open my studio to the public to share my sound work and the process of preparing for an installation.

The commercial nature of the gallery has been a challenge as it masks how I might fully use the space. Falling back on the *process* of what I do (which people often found fascinating), as a way of engaging, was encouraging, however the aim is to allow viewers to engage in the same way that I have, by being present in a landscape and engaging fully with the artifacts. The soundscape, as an ambient track on speakers was not as effective as hearing the soundscapes on headphones which allow for a much deeper immersion and ability to feel uninterrupted in the space. I am interested in whether I am able to share what I have experienced when I'm in nature in such a way that it people to engage with nature in a new or different way than they might otherwise do.



Figure 38. Mette Hay, *Ocean View Gallery*, 2020, photograph.

Nomadic Sættekasse

Memories of the sound of gently lapping waves caressing the pebbly beach of my tiny island home of Thurø, in Denmark, send me back to childhood summers. The *coo crrooing* of the local barbary doves of Muriwai, to my grandfather's farm where doves nested under the thatch. Sounds can bring one into a feeling of being moved in time and space.

Please click on the GPS link to the individual habitats, then on return, using headphones, click on the LISTEN link to enjoy a few minutes of being in that soundscape.



Figure 39. Mette Hay, *Pools*, 2020, photograph.

Rock pool Movement [36°49'59"S 174°25'29"E 10m](#)

LISTEN: [You Are Hear - Rockpools](#)



Figure 40. Mette Hay, *Shell on Shells*, 2020, photograph.

Having embedded sand and sound and history in these pieces, I take them back to the sea. Laid amongst the colonies of mussel shells, shallow pools and moving tides, imagine the connections and relationships that may be developing. Look *into* these little rock pool worlds for clues, for an understanding of human narrative located in the non-human.



Figure 41. Mette Hay, *Welcome*, 2020, photograph.

Sand starts to enfold a ceramic piece placed under the water as a starfish slowly makes its way onto the surface – the movement of sand, water, light, patterns, and a starfish, all in conversation.

Firmly attached, the starfish takes a ride.

[Starfish Ride](#)

Figure 42. Mette Hay, *Starfish Ride*, 2020, video



Figure 43, Mette Hay, *Trilobite*, 2020, photograph.

A ceramic piece that resembled a *trilobite*, is taken by the sea on the incoming tide. Searching amongst the rock pools, I am tempted to call out — hoping for a response. I ponder where it would travel to, what it would see along the way, what conversations it would have and if it would come back? I let it go.

Tākapu Movement [36°49'57"S 174°25'29"E 40m](#)

LISTEN: [You Are Hear - Tākapu](#)



Figure 43. Mette Hay, *Ōtokamiro Point*, 2020, photograph.

Imagine your eyes stretching far and wide out to the horizon line showing you the curvature of the earth. White, gold and black Tākapu hover, soar and glide, where the land meets sea meets the sky.



Figure 44. Mette Hay, *Tākapu Sounds Come Home 2*, 2020, photograph.

Ceramic pieces attached to metal rods planted in the earth allows them to hover and sway with the breeze. Bringing my attention to the energetic space between their movements, I recognise the fundamental notion of *MA*.



Figure 45. Mette Hay, *Tākapu Sounds Come Home 3*, 2020, photograph.



Figure 46. Mette Hay, *Tākapu Patterns*, 2020, photograph.

Feathers and sand removed from the earth are returned in a new form where I ponder the micro of the feather traces in the pieces are mimicked in the macro of the landscape.

Kauri Forest Movement [36°50'38"S 174°26'54"E 135m](#)

LISTEN: [You Are Hear - Kauri Forest](#)



Figure 47. Mette Hay, *Kauri Path*, 2020, photograph.

On entering the kauri forest at Mokoroa stream, my eyes stretch up to the light dapple high in the canopy and out beyond the family gathering of kauris standing straight and tall. Rich in flora, texture, colour, light and a diverse, nuanced soundscape. The sound of rain and wind in conversation with the trees, a distant stream, birds and insects that come and go. Bringing these made objects back, I am ever conscious of the potential threat I could carry on the soles of my feet, I tread lightly.



Figure 48. Mette Hay, *Kauri Kinship*, 2020, digital silk print and wool felted.

Thin, transparent textile and ceramic works sway with the breeze, a testimony to the movement of all things in the universe, even the things we cannot see and a hint of what lies beyond. Veils between the kauri and self, self and kauri speak to the passage of time and the ephemeral nature of all life.

Clay collected from the kauri trail speak directly to the kauri and its painted bark. The local clays introduced to the porcelain are fragile and fall off at the slightest touch, once again reminding me of the fragility and temporality of life.



Figure 49. Mette Hay, *Kauri Bark*, 2020, porcelain and local clays



Figure 50. Mette Hay, *Kauri Painting*, 2020, photograph.



Figure 51. Mette Hay, *Leaf Ghost*, 2020, porcelain.

Immersive Installation

I ponder how these created objects can elicit a response when placed, not only back in the environment from which inspired, but as installation in environments that are out of context, for example, urban. Eliasson often uses elements such as live moss, light, water, reflection, and sunlight in his installations, asking questions related to ecology, sustainability and the lived experience juxtaposing the installations with an environment that is counter to the subject, e.g., urban. Similarly, Laurence approaches her installations, often from a space of relationship to nature and the necessity of care as an integral part of human life and well-being.

Each of the three habitats that I spend time in has me immerse myself in different ways. At the rockpools, I find myself looking down and into the volcanic formations. On top of the cliffs where the Tākapu live, I look out as they fly and down where they nest and preen. The kauri forest is a nurturing, deep breathing space that I feel enveloped in but not *captured*. How can the made artefacts and found objects be arranged to reflect the essence of each of these habitats? How can the audio soundscapes and textile veils be used to placemark and create moments of pause, allowing each to be heard individually and as part of the whole? Listening to the Muriwai Symphony soundscape on headphones elicits an inward response that immediately immerses one in the environment they were recorded and feels necessary to facilitating an engaging experience. Bringing all of these elements together as an installation to be shared is the next aspiration.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for joining me on this journey of opening a gateway to the unseen and making manifest the invisible through a commitment to stillness and attentive listening to the local natural soundscapes of Muriwai. Through this research, I have learned and practised ways of letting go of expectations, assumptions, and judgements, discovering not just our innate human relationship and connection to this living Earth but our kinship to it; we are one and the same. The recorded soundscapes and resulting objects are a testament to this emerging, embodied understanding. Through practising attentive ways of listening, being and making, especially in a very challenging year of global crisis, I have strengthened my ability to be present and open in all parts of my day. I have developed a clear trust in myself, my voice, and my belonging. Moving forward, I hope to share these discoveries through the experience of an immersive installation that helps people come to a deeper understanding of what it means to be in kinship with this living Earth now. Thank you for your time.

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APPENDIX

(Installation)

You Are Hear – A Muriwai Symphony

Continuing the journey of creating and installation, additional textile pieces for each area of Muriwai were created to reflect the landscape in synergy with the porcelain artefacts and found objects, the multi-sensorial experience.



Figure 52. Mette Hay, *Kauri Die Back*, 2020, wool and silk.



Figure 53. Mette Hay, *Tākapu Flight*, 2020, wool.

In orchestrating the installation, the intention was to enable participants to immerse themselves in these soundscape landscapes. These pieces made of silk and wool were instrumental in speaking to the spaces we move through and the affect that has. Scale and placement were considered to allow for the billowing movement of the pieces to be obvious as the air was disrupted.



Figure 54. Mette Hay, *Rockpools-1*, 2021, photograph.

‘You Are Hear’ a Muriwai Sonata at St Paul Street Gallery 2 evolved into an immersive, embodied listening experience for participants that guided them through each of the three movements of the symphony that reflected each of the areas of Muriwai.



Figure 55. Mette Hay, *A Muriwai Symphony*, postcards.

The *symphony* soundscape was accessed through a QR code and using headphones allowed for participants to shut out the urban noise and transport themselves into the present moment. An emphasis was placed on the importance of touching the artefacts, moving them, feeling them with all the senses in order to be as present as possible. Interestingly, for some, there was still hesitancy in doing so. For fear of breaking? Was it not thought of? Was sight enough? At this point in the journey, I purposely decided that this was where I let go of the work. The experience that a participant has is of their own making. My intension was purely to provide the opportunity to experience an interpretation of our natural world and our kinship to it through embodied listening. I thank two eight year old girls who completely immersed themselves in the whole experience in the way I had hoped so many would have the openness to do. They stayed

for over an hour; moved, touched, smelled, listened, played with everything around them. There is much to be learned from that.



Figure 57. Mette Hay, *Rockpools-2*, 2021, photograph.



Figure 58. Mette Hay, *Rockpools-3*, 2021, photograph.