

Making-with Marlo: an exploration of cross-species sentience through nosey means-to-an-end props and other attempts

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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:

14/02/2024

Abstract

Along with the project's cocreator, Marlo (a Rottweiler), this research explores a domain of cross-species sentience. It attempts to reach across irreducible differences and access experiences that disrupt or transcend a human-centric lens.

Manoeuvring within frameworks of 'surface encounters' and 'sympathetic leaps,' this practice-led project operates through a methodology of making-with cross-species. By employing a studio-based, speculative approach to art-making that includes sculpture and participatory events, the research positions the making of props as a facilitating action, enabling potential access to cross-species knowledge. Also at play, are attempts to take deeper notice of the indefinable in other beings through cocreated social intimacies and a collaborative commitment to a 'worlding' of mutual grounds—all mediated through sculptural props as gadgets of play and tools exploring mutual sensory borders.

From these approaches, the research probes the capacity of objects to transcend the varied and shifting human signs we attach to them. It grapples with their ability to act as repositories of, or conduits towards, enigmatic cross-subjective knowledge that goes beyond accountable experience. The practice negotiates the possibility of embodied actions to bring an artwork into strange realms. It considers provisional objects as props to provoke or invite relation—what I call means-to-an-end props—bespoke props with a nose purpose, that being a desire to experience life as someone else.

The thesis references the writings of Ron Broglio on animal phenomenology and surface encounters; Donna Haraway on companion species and collaborative assemblages; Science-fiction's core principles and select narratives, pondering the potential of science-fictional thinking as an approach to art-making; Susan Ballard on ecological sympathies; and others. The practice finds synchronicities (and differences) with artworks involving other animals, such as works by Catherine Bagnall, Shannon Te Ao, Kalisolaite 'Uhila, Malcolm Whittaker, Diane Borsato, Joseph Beuys, and Lucy Meyle. The research also references artists Franz Erhard Walther, Lygia Clark, Natalie Jeremijenko, Layne Waerea, Chris Braddock, Monique Redmond, Eva Kofátková, Sandy Gibbs, James Tapsell-Kururangi, and (the film) *Interstellar*, that explore the way props can act as conduits towards relations.

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To my family, zauvek vas volim. Thank you for your belief and love. This project would only have happened with you. Thank you to my mum Marina, my dad Vladimir and my brother Andrej for always being there for me, for being the rock of my life in good times and bad. This work is respectfully shared with and dedicated to you.

To our Marlo, everlasting love. <3

List of works

(in approximate order of first begun)

playthings; felt, furry fabric, very textured linen fabric, stuffing, foam sponges, knotted rope, cotton thread, string, squeakers; ripped, bitten, trodden, thrown, unstuffed; before death October 2019-March 2020.

Black Scent Map; black felt, crumbled dog biscuits, coffee grounds, lemon leaves, sprigs of grass, dried peppermint, soap, laundry powder, bark, pebbles, liver treats, black thread; before death the scents of one shared day with Marlo in October 2019.

Hay Fever; yellow felt, artificial grass, pale blue thread, snap fastener; before death 2020

Leaning Post (1); wood, staples, hot glue, blue felt, grey felt, cushion stuffing; before death 2020.

Leaning Post (2); MDF, foam, staples, hinges, brackets, spray paint; before death 2020.

Leaning Post (3); felt and thread, stuffing; before death 2020.

Unfolding hangout seat; faux turf, foam, wool stitches; before death 2020.

6 litres of fluid and the failing of a physical heart; felt, ribbon, hot-water bottles, water; before death 2020.

The Scent of a Walk; smells of interest collected with Marlo, distilled into one joint scent and bottled into travel-size spray bottles. One bottle per walk; before death September-October, 2020.

White & black holder, polymer clay, an imprint of a fascinating tube near Ti Rakau Drive that must be full of different smells, a distillation of plant matter around the tube sprayed onto the object, foam, plaster strips, acrylic paint; after death 2021

Rock handle, polymer clay, an imprint of a big rock Marlo always stopped to sniff at the corner of Kenwick Place and Burswood Drive, a bit of the rock pounded to dust and mixed with embossing powder to create a scratch and sniff surface (not very successfully, or perhaps my nose isn't up to the job); after death 2021.

Yellow Sand Sheets; sand taken from around Little Bucks Beach, with water from the area around the steps where Marlo liked to swim sprayed onto the surface, PVA glue, yellow felt, after death 2021.

Mellons Bay Cheesecloth; cheesecloth, salt water taken from a favourite rock pool at Mellons Bay, epsom salts, dried over rocks from Mellons Bay beach, after death 2021.

Mellons Bay Rock Formation; a rock of the same kind Marlo loved to methodically dig out of the water at Mellons Bay beach during low tide, crushed to dust, flour, salt, water; after death 2021.

Blue Tree Arm Tube; foam formed around a special tree in Tolben Place, plaster strips, a distillation of the tree bark coated onto the tube in a scratch and sniff experiment; after death 2021.

Lemon Puff; rescued shower puff, wire, epsom salts, distillation of fallen lemon tree leaves from the tree Marlo used to dig and sleep under, sprayed onto the puff; before and after death 2020/2021

Yellow Snifters; air-dry clay, acrylic paint; after death 2021.

Long Yellow Snifter; cardboard, papier-mâché, yellow acrylic paint, matte blue Flashe paint; after death 2021.

Golden Digging Gloves; furry golden yellow fabric for warmth, thermoplastic appendages for easier digging of holes in the sand, after death 2021.

Kneeling Pad that might be kneeded for digging holes comfortably; MDF, foam, springs, hinges, super glue; after death 2021.

Yellow Snifter Lanyards; fabric and thread, keyring hooks, Polymorph thermoplastic pellets moulded around my face to approximate a funnel-like focused nose; after death 2022.

Suspended felt rest for arms, elbows, paws, hands, chins, and heads - and to bring someone in the backseat closer to those seated at the front; felt and thread, string, hook closures, velcro; after death 2022.

Foldable carrier for storing and transporting means-to-an-end rock digging props, felt cut to fit into the boot of a 2005 Toyota Passo; stitched together with wool yarn, artifical turf, string, glue, thermoplastic handle, velcro closures, bespoke grooves for each prop; after death 2022.

Tandem Rock Carrier; a pair of felt carrying aids for when a rock is too heavy or unwieldy to move on your own, attached together with wool yarn woven in a friendship bracelet pattern; after death 2022.

Hinged Rock Carrier; with holes to allow sensation on your hands, shaped to approximate the hinged action of a powerful mouth carrying heavy rocks without the use of opposable thumbs, felt, yarn, hinge stitches, balsa wood; after death 2022.

Continuing Scent Maps; felt and thread, scents of interest; after death 2022-ongoing.

Relivings; 2021-ongoing.

List of prop outings

(in chronological order)

Conduits, props, leftovers and other attempts to reach across irreducible differences in the search for knowledge of an intimate other; 24 September to 10 October 2020. RM Gallery & project space, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Talk Week I event; *The nose behind the sniff, the hand behind the touch*; after death February 2021.

Talk Week II event; an exploratory outing of props; after death August 2021.

Mellons Bay Beach Walk 1; after death June 14, 2022.

Halfmoon Bay Marina solo walks; after death June 2022.

Mellons Bay Beach Walk 2; after death June 26, 2022.

Talk Week III event; *Smelly Exchanges with Scent Maps*; after death August 2022.

Walks, sniffs, diggings and other activities; before and after death 2011-ongoing.

*Greeting each other:
an introduction*

Prologue

When I met Marlo for the first time, he was extremely affectionate, friendly and cute—and immediately, got up to mischief. At some point, he wandered off unnoticed and disappeared into the bushes beyond the iron fence of the Drury property where he was born. When we humans noticed him missing, all our swivel-headed looking around was no match for Chaos, Marlo’s mother, and her knowledge of the terrain and her son. Chaos realised that we were searching and immediately padded off to the bushes, returning a minute later with Marlo, the chubby pup, carried happily back to the group by the scruff of his neck. This was my first encounter with the personality and intelligence of Chaos and Marlo, and the beginning of many such dealings with Marlo himself. Beyond us, in that moment, stretched the limitless horizons of possibility and new beginnings ... we didn’t know then what was to come.

My dad had been longing for a dog for much longer than anyone in the family realised. I didn’t think his desire would amount to anything because we lived in a rental house, but he kept looking on the SPCA website and on Trade Me—and then, one day, he phoned to ask if I was free to go somewhere with him right away. I was, and so we set off on another shared driving adventure, eventually reaching the low metal gates of a sunny, weatherboard house where a big, calm, black dog with copper eyebrows came to inspect me. By the time we were on our way in my dad had already told me the backstory; the landlord had given his okay and I was there to meet a potential new family member. Unbeknownst to the rest of us, my dad had been in Drury the day before, investigating and making plans. He’d met a little Rottweiler puppy who reared up on his hind legs to reach my dad and covered him in kisses as soon as they were face-to-face. I believe, for them, it was love at first sight.

It certainly was for me.

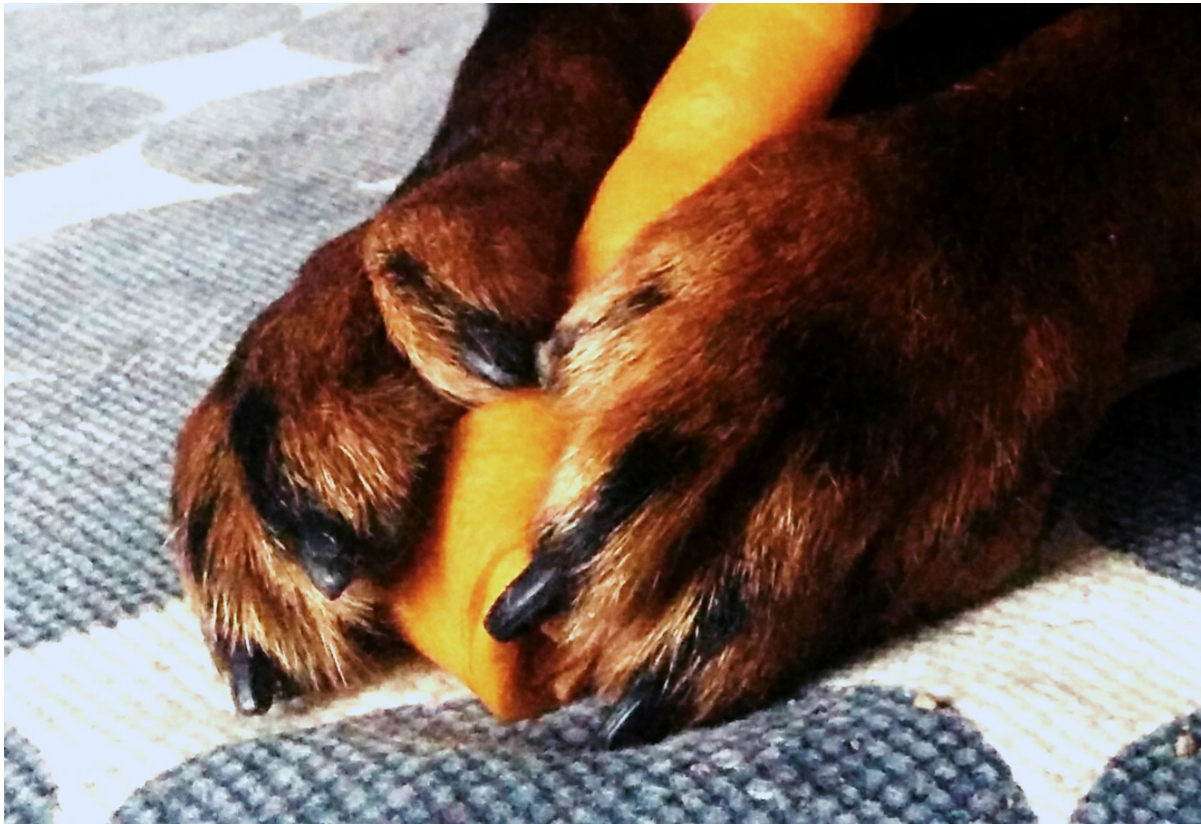


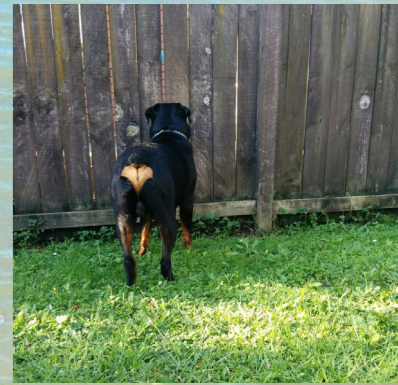
Image 1: A close-up photo of Marlo gripping and chewing on a rawhide bone, some time in 2016.

Marlo

Marlo was a nine-and-a-half-year-old Rottweiler and the love of my life. He was tall and chunky, with glossy black fur and a single white hair on his neck. Like all Rotties, he had copper cheek and chest markings and two little, round, copper eyebrows. His eyes were a warm, light brown. Marlo's preferred way of getting attention was to slowly and officially sit before you, making intensely communicative eye contact. Often, he'd deliberately employ a paw to touch you, an item in your field of vision (like the chair you're sitting on), or the object of his desire (such as the front door when he wanted to go out). Often, he combined a meaningful huff with these actions. He was smart, stubborn, joyful, curious, protective and very loving—and I will always love him deeply.

Marlo is no longer alive. In late January 2020, he was diagnosed with cardiomyopathy. This serious heart disease made it harder for his heart muscle to pump blood to the rest of the body. Marlo's vet described it as his "heart being too big", with walls that had stretched too much and so could no longer contract enough to function correctly. It meant that Marlo started gradually losing weight and his (previous) physical strength. He got tired faster and his abdomen started swelling with fluid which the vet had to pump out. One of his medications was Dilzem, prescribed for people with an irregular heartbeat, and which we used to pick up from regular human pharmacies.

Marlo's heart failure led, too quickly, to his quiet death in the early hours of the morning of October 29th, 2020.¹ We'll never know exactly how it happened, but his tired heart stopped beating, and he passed.



Images 2-8: Marlo doing things he loved, 2012-2019.

1. I was one year and three months into the PhD at this point.

Love

At the risk of situating this project in the murky and unscholarly thickets of raw emotion, there is one thing I would like you to know upfront: at the centre of this project is love. When I talk about love, I am not only talking about the deep feelings linked to love. I am talking about love as a guiding force in the relationship between Marlo and me (and the rest of our family) from which the project emerges.

Love is a force that exceeds definition. In *A Lover's Discourse*, Roland Barthes offers the reader not so much a definition of love but the manifold, chaotic experience of being a 'Lover' without the 'Loved One' answering back. Love is unspeakable, indescribable, and indefinable. All that is left to do is to talk around it, stepping forth linguistically over and over again, treading a path that might arrive at a kind of centre through varied attempts to express the inexpressible. These attempts together allow a broader understanding of an experience, the lover's discourse, that to Barthes, is "of an extreme solitude." He states:

This discourse is spoken, perhaps, by thousands of subjects (who knows?), but warranted by no one; it is completely forsaken by the surrounding languages: ignored, disparaged, or derided by them, severed not only from authority but also from the mechanisms of authority (sciences, techniques, arts), once a discourse is thus driven by its own momentum into the backwater of the "unreal," exiled from all gregariness, it has no recourse but to become the site, however exiguous, of an affirmation.²

This project, too, affirms love.

Dogs do not speak human languages. Telling your dog how much you love them while smooching their face will not elicit a linguistic response, but there will be a response, unlike for Barthes' poor Lover. Walking past the romantic love I mainly see portrayed in *A Lover's Discourse*, I consider the "ignored, disparaged or derided" love for an animal by a human-animal and the disenfranchised grief that is inseparable from this love. Embedded as it is in cross-species contact zones and shared surfaces, love as it is present in this

2. Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 2.

project is a site of affirmation, connection and attachment, even in the face of bemusement or misunderstanding by those who have never experienced it.

The novel *The Friend*, by American author Sigrid Nunez, recounts a love story of loss and friendship in which Apollo the Great Dane, silently grieving the loss of his human, and the unnamed narrator of the novel who takes him in and is herself grieving the same man, grow in love together through the daily acts of life. A passage reads:

Watching Apollo sleep. The peaceful rise and fall of his flank. His belly is full, he is warm and dry, he has had a four-mile walk today. As usual when he hunched in the street to do his business, I guarded him from passing cars. And, in the park, when a texting jogger bore down on us, Apollo barked and blocked his path before he could run into me. I have played several rounds of tug-of-war with him today, I have talked to him, and sung to him, and read him some poetry. I have trimmed his nails and brushed every inch of his coat. Now, watching him sleep, I feel a surge of contentment. There follows another, deeper feeling, singular and mysterious, yet at the same time perfectly familiar. I don't know why it takes a full minute for me to name it.

What are we, Apollo and I, if not two solitudes that protect and border and greet each other?

It is good to have things settled. Miracle or no miracle, whatever happens, nothing is going to separate us.³

That definition of love as "two solitudes that protect and border and greet each other," is a poignant way to describe a shared life between a dog and a human.⁴ It is a relationship enacted in mutual trust; acts of care and attention that occur in idiosyncratic ways, which are sensitive to the particular needs of each individual. It was a pleasure reading about the varied activities that Apollo and the narrator undertook and watching their love grow. I saw my relationship with Marlo in them, remembering Marlo as a younger dog, sitting sideways with me, leaning with his full and considerable weight on my leg as I scratched his neck. Marlo, who loved dragging rocks from the water and chewing the caps off empty milk bottles. Marlo, who could not walk through doors that were ajar but needed someone to let him through. Marlo, who sometimes loved to run off in search of dead critters, pretending not to understand being called to come back,

3. Sigrid Nunez, *The Friend* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2018), 146.

4. Nunez, *The Friend*, 146. The novel refers to various writers and published works, including the Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926). The definition of love in this passage directly references Rilke's definition of love in *Letters to a Young Poet* (1904).

even as he made full eye contact. Marlo, who needed strength in his last days of life, my dad and me propping him into a more comfortable position as the vet pumped fluid from his abdomen. Was this last experience an example of Barthes' "other-ache", an aspect of love exiled from gregariousness, a suffering-with?⁵

In Nunez's novel, Apollo is not a symbol of love or loyalty. Nor is he a metaphor for grief or loss. He does not signify grand themes about humanity, as some other literary dogs might. Apollo is a grieving being finding new life and love, just like the human-animal narrator. In the ways the novel registers such minute everyday acts of living with a dog (nosing out real love over a grand, symbolic load that Apollo might have been foisted with), I find it helpful to consider Donna Haraway's concept of significant otherness, a concept steeped in love, and key to this project.

"Dogs are not an alibi for other themes ... Dogs are not surrogates for theory; they are not here just to think with. They are here to live with," argues Haraway in *The Companion Species Manifesto*, focusing on the need to pay attention to dogs' differences and idiosyncrasies, as well as our similarities, as we move together into the future.⁶ The concept of significant otherness which Haraway describes as "striving to fulfil the messy conditions of being in love." And part of this messiness is the acceptance and awareness of the unknown—that we can never really know what happens in another's mind. And therefore, all we can do is abandon ourselves to the "permanent search for knowledge of the intimate other, and the inevitable and tragic mistakes in that quest."⁷ That permanent search is one of the significant operations of this project, enacted through living-with and making-with.

In 'Encounters with Animal Minds', Barbara Smuts, an anthropologist and psychologist noted for her research into baboons, dolphins, and chimpanzees, talks in touching detail about her relationship with her own dog, Safi. After an astonishing account of her experiences getting to know a troop of baboons over many years, her relationship with Safi comes across as something even more intimate and loving. While her argument shares the same core as Haraway's

5. Barthes, *Lover's Discourse*, 57-8.

6. Donna Haraway, "The Companion Species Manifesto," in *Manifestly Haraway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 97-8. Interestingly, Haraway, like Barthes, associates love with something potentially curable: "Significantly other to each other, in specific difference, we signify in the flesh a nasty developmental infection called love." See Haraway, "The Companion Species Manifesto," 94-5. For Barthes' the love story is subjugated "to that general opinion which disparages any excessive force and wants the subject himself to reduce the great imaginary current, the orderless, endless stream which is passing through him, to a painful, morbid crisis of which he must be cured, which he must "get over". See Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, 7.

7. Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway*, 126.

idea of significant otherness, Smuts seems to further complicate her (our) relationship with dogs, talking about it in more affective ways, embracing love more effusively than Haraway. Smuts says:

When two beings delight in one another this much, their relationship becomes a haven for free and creative expression of being. Trust deepens, mutual attunement grows, and that elusive quality we call consciousness seems to extend beyond the boundaries of a single mind.⁸

Living with, thinking with, and making-with enact love in this project of cross-species sentience. Love here is a potential to "protect and border and greet each other," the possibility to connect and attach across fissures of species difference.⁹

Love is a powerful force. It exists at the core of this research practice as a furnace. It has informed the artwork made within the project from the start and was the engine that enabled the project to continue after the death of my collaborator. Love is a great connective tissue in the life we shared with Marlo. The connections and attachments of this project, across many dimensions through time, have only been possible because of the potential of this force. Though love cannot prevent loss, its connective threads can allow a relationship to continue. Now, even when the worst possible thing has already happened, whatever may happen next, nothing can separate us—this is the potential that love offers and that the methodology and artworks in this project have made possible for me as companion, friend and artist.

Cast of characters

This project has expanded from the close relationship between Marlo and me and my love for him. It also includes my family, who have been in the picture through their connection to, and love for, Marlo (and me). My dad, especially, has participated in the project framework of practice, joining me on trips to cast

8. Barbara Smuts, "Encounters with Animal Minds," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 8, no. 5-7 (January 1, 2001): 306.

9. Nunez, *The Friend*, 146.

plaster objects at the beach, on smell-and-sound walks, and early on in the project, walks with Marlo himself. These adventures have all formed a part of the methodology.

My human friends, studio colleagues, and other canine friends have taken an important role in activating and enacting the artworks created within this project. They have gamely joined me on trips to test things out or have taken part in staged events/encounters with the props made in the project. Their enthusiasm and willingness to embrace the sentiment of my intentions have been essential to how the project unfolded.

A diverse array of other participants (canine, feline, avian, piscine and unseen) have been involved in different parts of the project with greater or lesser intensity. Marlo himself is a collaborator and coresearcher in the project and none of it would have happened without him.

Conflict of interest

I love Marlo deeply.

In this project, my relationship with Marlo is vital to the art-making and research engagement. I have pondered as to how I should refer to Marlo, whether he is a participant, a collaborator or both. Our relationship keeps changing, being built upon as the works develop (and as life goes on), which essentially is how Marlo gained agency within the research. This is an anthropocentric fallacy because he had an innate agency to begin with. Still, it is an important point—Marlo's agency in this project is critical and asks us (me, our human participants and viewers) to consider all animals as having agency and sentience.

An emerging and productive problem arose early on regarding the risks associated with including Marlo in the project. These perceived risks were primarily my own, revolving around questions of bringing Marlo into the project without making him simply a subject or mere topic of the research; how to include him from a non-anthropocentric viewpoint. Even the question of whether to involve or introduce him at all was something I deliberated, acknowledging the power associated with assuming his participation without announcing or asking him about it, which of course would have been impractical. These were the kinds of insidious potentialities the project has continued to move through by making-with.

Making-with

A significant shift in this project and my practice came about when I started making *with* Marlo instead of *for* Marlo.

This shift in methodological space ('with' instead of 'for') was a discovery that has happened in the development of the project through the continued building and recognition of Marlo's and my relationship. The actions taken with Marlo during the early stages allowed me to recognise how the relationship we had built revealed possible approaches to art-making within the project. It is an active mode of practising where decisions regarding what to do and how to generate an art object have raised the questions central to the research project.



Image 9: Marlo and my dad hunting for rocks at Mellons Bay Beach, 2018.

The *with* space of the project is also relevant to this text itself. How do I write an exegesis that does not keep the core of the project at arm's length? A text that does not speak from the outside (speaking about) instead of from within (speaking *with*), in the voice of the project across species.

How can this writing be “a performance of its primary proposition” while doing the work of the exegesis?¹⁰ How do I speak-with the project, as I work-with Marlo?

Talking-with Marlo

Science-fiction essayist Cat Yampell writes about some of the problems of language when it comes to animals; that “nonhuman animal”, “animal other”, etc., are acceptable designations commonly used by theorists. However, these terms clearly define animals solely through a comparison with humankind, perpetuating animal/human binaries, disassociating humanity from the animal sphere and maintaining anthropocentrism without examination. Yampell instead deliberately uses “human-animal” to represent our species, in order to “re-vision, re-order, re-mind rather than perpetuate and problematize.”¹¹ I have borrowed that term from her and will be using it in this text from now on, and to describe myself, as it seems apt in a practice that attempts to broker relations cross-species while avoiding human exceptionalism.

I have also borrowed Donna Haraway's term ‘critters’ which she uses to indiscriminately refer to all “myriad intra-active entities-in-assemblages—including the more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman, and human-as-humus.”¹² This term is used to position Marlo and his ‘crittiness’ (alongside mine), but there are other critters present in the research too. It is a small group, but not exclusive, and has included two collies (Clover & Oto), two exotic shorthair cats (Morris & Milo), a Siberian forest cat (Winnie), a chihuahua (Bug), a golden retriever, a coyote, magpies, sparrows, mynahs, a piglet, adult pigs, snails, a swan, chickens, geese, a donkey, a rabbit, a wallaby—as well as human-animals.

Additionally, the idea of me as a translator of Marlo or a dog's experiences while making means-to-an-end props has been a thorny question to wrestle with throughout. Who, if anyone, is the expert in these translated situations and experiences? The pitfalls of translation/communication cross-species are part of the project, which operates in the zone of this question itself, leaning towards potential and possibility rather than seeking a final verdict.



Image 10: A satisfyingly ripped up woven rubbish bin, 2011. **Image 11:** Marlo observing and sniffing out cows in a field, 2019.

10. Céline Condorelli, *Support Structures* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009), 13.

11. Cat Yampell, “When Science Blurs the Boundaries: The Commodification of the Animal in Young Adult Science Fiction,” *Science Fiction Studies* 35, no. 2, *On Animals and Science Fiction* (July 2008): 220.

12. Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2016): 101.

Potentialities of science-fictionality as a methodology

There is no definitive consensus about the origins, nor indeed the definition, of science-fiction, but what is clear is that the genre boomed in popularity and critical standing during the 20th century.¹³ The period roughly from the 1930s to the 1950s is commonly known amongst science-fiction fans and scholars as the Golden Age of the genre, which firmly established the enduring tropes and icons of the science-fiction field.¹⁴ This period of tremendous technological advancement in the world was when influential science-fiction authors like Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, Theodore Sturgeon and Arthur C. Clarke came to prominence and “laid down entire strata of sf motifs which enriched the field greatly” through what Australian literary critic and scholar Peter Nicholls calls their “wild and yearning imaginations.”¹⁵ These motifs still form a shared conception of science-fiction in most peoples’ minds. Here, we figure science-fiction as rationalist tales of wondrous possible futures, featuring what one might associate with science-fiction; space warfare and galactic empires, robots and Artificial Intelligence, conflict with alien civilisations, dedication to scientific believability, and an optimistic belief in scientific and technological discovery with a kind of fetishism of new technologies and how they might solve

13. Deciding on how to refer to science-fiction throughout this exegesis was strangely complicated. Most academic writing on the topic uses the term ‘sf’. Donna Haraway also takes the term ‘SF’ and expands on it in *Staying with the Trouble*. She says SF becomes-with lots of things: science fiction, speculative feminism, science fantasy, speculative fabulation, science fact, string figure etc. Other possible terms I could have used included ‘sci-fi’ and ‘science fiction’ but the term I settled on in the end is ‘science-fiction.’ These are my reasons: the term ‘sci-fi’ is too fan-ish and tied to commercial science-fiction products like Star Wars and their fandoms. The term ‘Sf’ is overwhelmingly used in scholarly discussions of science-fiction. Since this isn’t a literary/scholarly project about science-fiction, this term felt irrelevant and like I should not wade into the debate between the meanings of sf & sci-fi. Also ‘sf’ is quite hard to read. I decided against the generic term ‘science fiction’ because this project is not fictional and the space between the words emphasises ‘fiction’ to me. ‘Science-fiction’, then, seemed like an appropriate option for this project, which operates through attempts at connection and attachment across sometimes very big gaps, the useful hyphen here attaching two disparate words and reflecting those connections.

14. The ‘pulp era’ of the earlier 20th century, in which pioneering publisher Hugo Gernsback popularised the term ‘science fiction’, preceded the Golden Age. The ‘New Wave’ of science-fiction of the 1960s and 1970s followed it. Works created during the New Wave cast off the stereotypical action-adventure tales of the Golden Age, engaging instead with experimentation with the form, emphasising social commentary and ‘inner space’ with the belief that science-fiction should be taken seriously on its literary merits. New Wave science-fiction also consciously avoided the ‘Hard SF’ of the previous decades, delineating between ‘hard science-fiction’ solidified by the Golden Age and ‘soft science-fiction’. In hard science-fiction, the creation of a world adheres to and applies general principles of astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology (and so on) within the world. The differently speculative worlds of soft science-fiction are more concerned with the interior experiences of fictional characters, as well as society or politics, without the emphasis on the technical and scientific details of hard SF. It is tempting to place this PhD project in the field of soft science-fiction because the ideas explored within the project have much to do with the interiority of others and sentience across species.

15. Peter Nicholls and Mike Ashley. “Golden Age of SF”. *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* edited by John Clute and David Langford. London: SFE Ltd and Reading: Ansible Editions, updated 23 June 2021. Web. Accessed 22 April 2023. https://sf-encyclopedia.com/entry/golden_age_of_sf.

our problems. Although this is not a project about science-fiction history, *Making-with Marlo: an exploration of cross-species sentience through nose-yes means-to-an-end props and other attempts* is attached to other nodes of the ever-evolving science-fiction web. We now need to access these nodes by moving past the space operas, alien conquests and the individualist protagonists that all live in other spaces of the science-fiction field, all spaces we will not travel to as we move into zones of cross-species sentience.

“Science fiction is many things,” says science-fiction theorist and critic Sherryl Vint in her pluralistic exploration of the genre, *Science Fiction: A Guide for the Perplexed*.¹⁶ Instead of a fixed genre, it is helpful to think of science-fiction as a field of multiple conjoining participants; fictional works primarily in literature, film and television (often of a hybrid nature that smudges various genres and subgenres) and the communities of practice that contribute to the field, including as this thesis suggests, nonfictional art practices too. Vint argues that science-fiction is “a way of thinking about and experiencing a reality that is itself slightly askew and not merely a particular configuration of settings, plots and images.”¹⁷ Author and critic David Seed’s discussion of a science-fiction narrative as “an embodied thought experiment whereby aspects of our familiar reality are transformed or suspended”¹⁸ adds to this framing of science-fiction,

16. Sherryl Vint, *Science Fiction: A Guide for the Perplexed*, e-book, Guides for the Perplexed (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 118.

17. Vint, *Science Fiction*, 10.

18. David Seed, *Science Fiction: A Very Short Introduction*, ebook, Very Short Introductions (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), <https://academic-oup-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/book/838/chapter/135452745>, 2.

which I have taken up within *Making-with Marlo*. Here, Marlo's familiar reality intra-acts with my familiar reality through props of cross-species sentience. There is a disturbance of assumptions. They permeate my perceptions of our shared material world and "[rewrite] common knowledge"¹⁹ —knowledge of the animal/human-animal divide, of temporal flow, and of the gap between the dead and the living.

On a structural level, what attracts me to science-fiction is also present in many art practices. Science-fiction is "always in process, something actively made (and often in competing ways)". Vint continues, "the vision of the whole [provides] not a simple or singular image, but rather multiple, and at times contradictory, possibilities, held in productive tension."²⁰ Movement through multiplicity is a central spine of science-fiction. This project is beholden to such flexibility. *Making-with Marlo* engages with science-fiction as a point of departure for a type of thinking that not only enables new ways of considering cross-species sentience but also explores how a sculptural and participatory art practice might be science-fictional. This includes how it could attach an art practice to a node of the science-fiction web by harnessing the eclectic nature of science-fiction which accrues, flows and abounds in multiplicities.

There have been many major critical works about science-fiction which, as a field, has been self-reflective over the decades. For the purposes of this exegesis, I will mainly discuss the ideas of two science-fiction scholars whose work is particularly relevant to this practice-led project: Sherryl Vint, whose writings on 'animal alterity' and the question of the animal in science-fiction have been vital, and Australian curator, writer and art historian Amelia Barikin, whose work on the cross-connections between art and science-fiction has been crucial from the very beginning in allowing me to see the potential paths this project could travel through.

As outlined by Barikin, the project explores through practice some of science-fiction's core principles: "alternate temporalities, speculation, consciousness of mutability, and imagined possibilities."²¹ An exploration of how, as Barikin says,

"works of art have begun to actually embody the operating systems of their content; how science fiction might be performed, materialised or enacted within a contemporary context" is active here.²²

This project is not about science-fiction as such. It does not analyse science-fiction as an academic field or genre. Likewise, it is not a work of science-fiction either, being a practice-led research project happening in 'real life' and not on a fictional page or screen. Instead, this project embraces literary theorist Istvan Csicsery-Ronay's *science-fictionality*, which he calls "neither a belief nor a model, but rather a mood or an attitude... a way of entertaining incongruous experiences in which judgement is suspended."²³ Through a sculptural and participatory practice, it explores how such a science-fictional mood or attitude of open potential could be activated within art.

Working with science-fictionality in such a way (like a wobbly bolster woven through the fabric of the practice) positions science-fiction as a tool of thinking and engagement with art and life. Vint says, the "power of sf" as an imaginative tool has the "astonishing power of changing perceptions."²⁴ A power also found in the potentialities of art, which in this project occur cross-species, in an open field of unwitting participation, contingent attachments, and significant bonds.



Images 12-13: Experimenting with making thermoplastic appendages, 2021.

19. Vint, *Science Fiction*, 14.

20. Vint, *Science Fiction*, 11.

21. Amelia Barikin and Helen Hughes, eds., *Making Worlds: Art and Science Fiction* (Melbourne: Surpluss, 2013), 11.

22. Barikin and Hughes, *Making Worlds*, 8.

23. Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*, ebook (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 3.

24. Vint, *Science Fiction*, 108.

A multiplicity of timelines

Marlo's death cleaved my life in two: there was life with Marlo, and then suddenly, life without him. I will not talk about this upheaval directly since I know you, the reader, can imagine it, even if you have not experienced it for yourself. However, this before-and-after colours everything about the project, and I would like to provide some clarity around how the 'life-stuff' of life with Marlo became the art project and how the project gained and continued its momentum.

Throughout the exegesis, I will be referring to two discrete timeframes/phases of making, which are determined relationally.

Before death – a phase of making-with Marlo concretely

Marlo and I physically collaborated on this project from September 2019 until his death in October 2020. At this time, Marlo was 9 years and 7 months old. The earliest collaborative phase, before Marlo's diagnosis and subsequent decline in health, entailed object-making directly involving him, from reciprocal *playthings* we'd swap and alter together to what became a critical artwork of the research, *Black Scent Map* (before death October 2019), discussed in-depth in Chapter 1, *Means-to-an-end-props*.

These artworks allowed me to start thinking about collaboration in the project, mainly what this might look like cross-species. Collaboration within this project is defined as making-with; experiential relations which are explored through objects and materials with other species.

The term, making-with, has its origins in Donna Haraway's writing on 'sympoiesis'. This word (suggested by environmental scholar Beth Dempster in her writing on sympoietic and autopoietic self-organising systems in environmental management) is used by Haraway to describe the complex, always-moving-together processes of 'worlding' or becoming-with others.²⁵

25. Dempster suggests the term, sympoiesis, for "collectively-producing systems that do not have self-defined spatial or temporal boundaries. Information and control are distributed among components. The systems are evolutionary and have the potential for surprising change." Beth L. Dempster, "A Self-Organizing Systems Perspective on Planning for Sustainability" (Ontario, Canada, University of Waterloo, 1998), abstract.

As Haraway uses it, sympoiesis describes a type of self-making that happens collectively through a co-evolution and is applied to all the "myriad intra-active entities-in-assemblages."²⁶ In this project, I use the phrase, making-with, in a more literal way, but I have found that it also usefully encompasses these other entanglements as part of the broader world Marlo and I live/d in.

After death – a phase of making-with Marlo without his physical presence

After Marlo's death, the path of our cross-species project forked out along new branches that could no longer include him in the same way. Now, and since death, Marlo has different registers of presence. Although physically no longer here, Marlo is still living in the project as part of my continuing life. We are also still cocreating and collaborating.

Marlo may not be visible any longer to a naked eye, but he is present materially, emotionally, and relationally. He can be found in the echoes/reverberations/shockwaves triggered by the actions lived out as part of our relationship and through the knowledge he transmitted to me while he was still alive.

So, I wonder, how does Marlo still activate these traces of action and participation? How can the ongoing relationship central to the project drive continuing action through making-with means-to-an-end props?

26. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 101.

Grief

Death is not a phase in the project but a temporal membrane and mode of exploration. In considering how making-with cross-species might tap into an unleashed potential of participation, grief occasioned by death is also enfolded in this potential/this whole. As part of a whole, grief itself moves with the changing nature of a relationship. I have wondered, could grief be the vehicle for participating with Marlo across the unknown and uncontrollable zones of time and space?

The following quote from *Jayber Crow* by Wendell Berry speaks explicitly to my perception of grief and how it functions in this project:

New grief, when it came, you could feel filling the air. It took up all the room there was. The place itself, the whole place, became a reminder of the absence of the hurt or the dead or the missing one. I don't believe that grief passes away. It has its time and place forever. More time is added to it; it becomes a story within a story. But grief and griever alike endure.²⁷

I sometimes think of the moment of death as instantaneous. Still, in this project (as in life), death is something that stretches across the experience of time and space, colouring the past, affecting the future, and triggering grief that itself endures for as long as the griever does. It is also a changing state—a living-with. Grief is therefore present and unavoidable; however, I do not understand this as a project about grief. Neither is it a project of therapy, a memorial, nor eulogy.

One of the things it is, is an ongoing exploration of what it means for a relationship to continue after a life is completed, with all the problematic what-if's this contains, all the tensions between the possible and the impossible, and all the potentialities of participation. These explorations have happened because of Marlo and me, our friendship, and so making-with Marlo continues.

What you will encounter in this exegesis

Chapter 1, *Means-to-an-end props*, positions the significant artworks of *Making-with Marlo* as means-to-an-end props. Navigating means-to-an-end props as tools of access to cross-species sentience, I nose out the development of the artworks and discuss the pivotal props of the project. I consider the work of artists Franz Erhard Walther, Lygia Clark and Catherine Bagnall and their sculptural engagements as mediation through cross-subjective experiences. Through the work of artists Natalie Jeremijenko, Layne Waerea & Chris Braddock, Eva Kořátková and Walther, I explore possible approaches to encounter the means-to-an-end props as well as potentially inadequate directions in spaces of cross-species sentience.

Chapter 2, *Making-with*, taps into horizontal cross-species thinking and contextualises the making-with methodology of the project through contingent attachments of the open field of Chris Braddock's unwitting participation and Timothy Morton's 'symbiotic real', which position *Making-with Marlo* as open to potentialities of participation beyond human-animal activity and perception. Through the 'always-already' nature of participation, cross-species living-with one another becomes the technique of ongoing mutual transformation. I discuss the work of artists Lucy Meyle and Shannon Te Ao in the contexts of local habitats, shared spaces and the risks in cross-species participation. Through Te Ao's work *two shoots that stretch far out* (2013–14), I find a valuable extension of 'making-with' and position it as a methodology of ongoing attempts at connection. The second part of Chapter 2 explores significant bonds and attachments that matter through Donna Haraway's concepts of significant otherness and Susan Ballard's writing on time spent together and sympathy as a synchronous activity. I discuss the work of artists Malcolm Whittaker, Joseph Beuys, Kalisolaite' Uhila, Diane Borsato and Krõõt Juurak and Alex Bailey's *Performances for Pets* as I explore intimacy within making-with.

Chapter 3, *Tugging on time*, considers the alternate temporalities the project embraces. I explore the complication of chronology through artist Sandy Gibbs' transformative methods, which situate restaging as a basis for a new set of actions that could reveal new and unanticipated paths, engagement methods and endless ways of living and making-with Marlo.

27. Wendell Berry, *Jayber Crow: A Novel* (New York: Counterpoint, 2001), 148.

In this context of pivoting after heartbreak and disappointment, I explore a phase of making-with Marlo that I have termed 'relivings'. Through the artwork *Living with My Grandmother for One Year* (2019) by James Tapsell-Kururangi, I examine the ongoing nature of making-with Marlo, navigating questions around access and relational commitments that allow an artwork to become a contingent experience for living through.

The last section, *A permanent search*, concludes this exegesis.

Research questions

How can the ongoing cross-species relationship drive continuing action through making-with means-to-an-end props?

How could a science-fictional method of sculptural practise shift encounters with unknowable others to cross-subjective exchange based in concrete materiality?

How might the sculptural and participatory methods explored in this research add to a discussion about cross-species sentience?

How might participatory practices with Marlo inform approaches to collaboration in visual arts research?

Chapter 1:

***Means-to-an-end
props***

Accessing cross-species sentience through props

Exchanges with Marlo

Marlo and I were/are making objects together. Marlo is a dog and I am a human-animal, so it is a priority to situate the project within the context of animality in art, the question of animal phenomenology, and the domain of cross-species sentience. Due to the entangled nature of this project, I cannot speak about the cross-species zone of the practice without speaking about the sculptural objects that take us there; the artworks I call means-to-an-end props.

Additionally, in trying to avoid an anthropocentric demand, the research considers the problem of language and the way it is used to refer to animals (human-animals and the rest of our planetary neighbours), as well as dichotomous language in general. This problem of language is enacted within the practice, where the framework addressing the language becomes central. It is achieved through the making, playing with the language of objects as a way of positioning ideas about how we refer to other animals and how materialism stretches the framework of how we understand things; for example, choosing a material because of a texture that might appeal to a dog, or a pocketed grid of different scents being relational to different sites of interest to Marlo.

Another example is the focus on blue and yellow throughout the project. Early on, I learned that dogs can identify two colour combinations (yellow and blue), in contrast to human-animals, who can identify three (red, blue and green). This is because of the differences in the structure of our respective eyes. Most mammalian eyes (dogs and humans included) contain two main cell types: rods and cones. Rods perceive light levels and motion (with dogs having more rods and better-than-us vision in low light), while cones differentiate colours. Human-animal eyes contain three cones, giving us trichromatic vision and a broader spectrum of perceivable colour. Dog eyes contain two cones, giving them dichromatic vision with a comparatively smaller range of discernible colours. Blue and yellow are therefore the only colours we might perceive in similar ways.

I do not know what Marlo thought about colour. Early on in the project, my curiosity around this question made me aware of my own love of colour and that I needed to do more than ‘repeatedly’ use the same tones of blue and yellow. The starting idea that sprung out of learning about dog colour vision became imbued with my subjectivity, with an artistic ‘charisma’ as part of my role as a collaborator in a cross-species project. I did not want to escape my fascination with colour, so I played with different shades of blue and yellow (incidentally, all still very visible over other colours in the Dog Vision app I sometimes used to view the props I made and the world around us). I utilised varied versions of both, from International Klein Blue to soft warm aquas, from a buttery Laib-like yellow to more astringent citrus hues. I was conscious of wanting to shift the project’s palette from the colours often seen on pet toys and the pet industry to a more personal field—a Marlo and me palette. There is always a play between function and the look of things. I wanted to avoid a primary colour overload. Of course, other colours are also present in the project. I think about the black, grey and green (of the artificial turf, also a mix of blue and yellow) as administrative colours: hues used on objects that do not necessarily hold a canine use or experience within them. They are the kit carrier’s flecked beige and olive green—the colours of a prop for props. The colours of a Rottweiler’s coat—black, copper, mahogany—also occur relatively often in the project, for example, in the *Scent Maps*’ felt fabric. Including Rottie colours was a personal amusement that I began to recognise as a part of the fluxy ecology of my art-making process. My perceptions within the project have kept changing and aspects of the practice, like colour inclusion, are always in suspension, inflected by new things as the practice and my life go on.



Image 14: *plaything* after an exchange with Marlo, edited to approximate a dog’s colour vision.
Image 15: Mellons Bay Beach at low tide, after death 2021. Edited to approximate a dog’s colour vision. It is interesting that the yellow plants stand out so much. Marlo did love trying to climb up the cliff into that vegetation, but I always assumed he was guided by scent. My nosy photo edits do not account for the fact that dogs have less visual acuity than human-animals, which would probably result in smudgier images. There is an online dog-vision tool available that does a better job: <https://dog-vision.andraspeter.com/tool.php>.



Images 16-24: Selected *playthings* exchanges; felt, furry fabric, very textured linen fabric, stuffing, foam sponges, knotted rope, cotton thread, string, squeakers; ripped, bitten, trodden, thrown, unstuffed, before death October 2019-March 2020.

An important early exchange with Marlo occurred through the *playthings* and triggered the realisation of making-with (see images 16-24). The *playthings* are the first objects Marlo and I made collaboratively. I constructed a new *plaything* for Marlo each day and brought it home to him. He would then take the offered object and either inspect and interact with it or inspect and abandon it. In the best-case scenario (for my ego), he would take the *plaything* away to another room to chew and ‘play’ with it—always the sign of a quality treasure he wanted to keep others from taking. They underwent two separate transformations. Firstly, there was a recurring transformation. For each successive object, I would have to consider all the others before it and Marlo’s reaction. If he liked an object, I would try and figure out why to duplicate that responsive element in the next one, thus ensuring further enjoyment on Marlo’s part. For example, was it a furry texture, a handy hanging appendage perfect for ripping off, or maybe an extra object buried inside that Marlo must irresistibly dig out? The second transformation the objects underwent occurred on an individual level. This transformation was enacted by Marlo himself through chewing, tearing, ripping, drooling and so on.

Initially, I had focused on each *plaything* as a singular object, documenting them into a grid with the backgrounds removed before I offered them to Marlo. Once I began taking photos of the leftovers of the *playthings* within the context and environment Marlo left in them, these artworks moved into a more prop-like space. We were now focused on the exchange of fun and affection itself. The *playthings* became tools for shared activity and a mutually good time. The ritual between Marlo and me (a practice extended from the ordinary times of bringing presents and treats home for Marlo’s enjoyment) was paramount. The *playthings* became a recording of each exchange, emphasising making-with and allowing the project to develop down paths of cross-species collaboration.



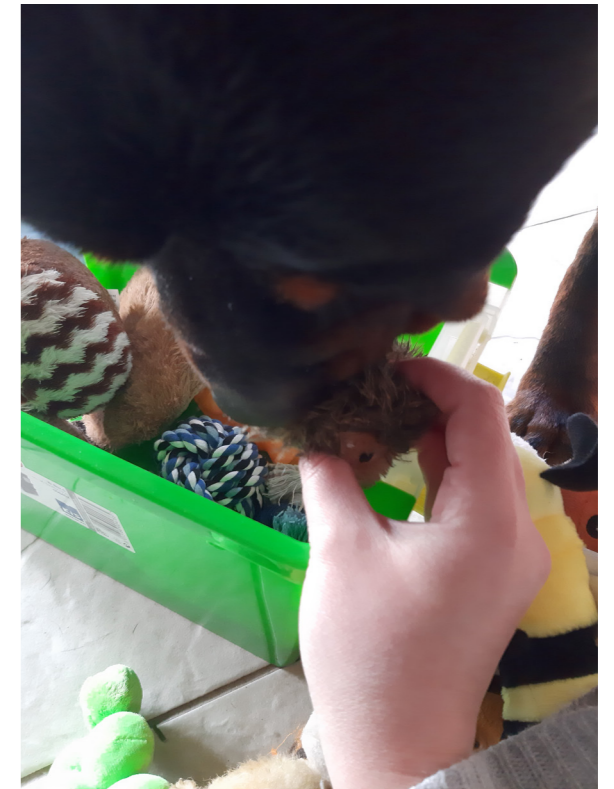
Image 25: Remnant of a *plaything* exchange in situ after Marlo’s ripping and unstuffing, before death 2020. **Image 26:** A drawing, prototype, or test this *plaything* emerged from, before death 2020.

Cross-species communication

Identifying with other animals is often experienced as a series of reflections of ourselves that we see in them. And indeed, as science-fiction and techno-cultural theorist Sherryl Vint states in 'The Animals in That Country: Science Fiction and Animal Studies', "Too often ... we fail to encounter other creatures in their concrete materiality, to allow an exchange with a recognised fellow-subject to take place."²⁸ This raises a core question for the research: how could a science-fictional approach to sculptural practice shift encounters with unknowable others to such cross-subjective exchange based in concrete materiality?

Science-fiction's long history of "grappling with alterity and granting subjectivity to the non-human"²⁹ makes it a potentially fruitful method of engaging with the idea of cross-species sentience in such a way. There is a long-established desire in science-fiction to communicate with beings that are not human-animals. Television shows like *Star Trek*; novels, including eco-science-fiction novels like *Grass* by Sherri S. Tepper (my favourite); radio plays; and films have, over time, explored human-animal encounters with members of different species and the possible cross-connectedness of sentient beings. This has all been done through imaginative practices. Inherent in science-fiction is using the imaginative realm as a tool for remaking worlds, engaging with ideas and possibilities of potential. I have been interested in employing this realm through sculptural practice as a channel for empathy that might allow me (with others) to reimagine and reshape a reality, as equals. The concrete materiality of sculpture, focusing on materials and an abundance of things to touch, see, hear, smell and taste, is full of potentialities in exploring sentience cross-species.³⁰ However, as we can never truly know another being, such an exploration will always be mediated to some extent through our imaginations.

Vint argues that although authors like J. M. Coetzee suggest that science-fiction literature enables us to become more deeply aware of another's experience by giving us the tools to imagine the world through their perspective, there is a danger of conflating an encounter *with* another being



Images 27-28: Rare photographs of Marlo and I playing a game called 'choosing' in his box of toys and chews, July 12, 2020.



Image 29: Marlo in the aftermath of an event some time in 2014.

28. Sherryl Vint, "The Animals in That Country': Science Fiction and Animal Studies," *Science Fiction Studies* 35, no. 2, On Animals and Science Fiction (July 2008): 181.

29. Vint, "The Animals in That Country," 180.

30. Within the project, this exploration will be restricted to planet Earth and all of us who make our home here.

with a voice that speaks *for* them through contrivance. “In sf, the animal can be given a voice to address and to look back at the human,”³¹ says Vint, and rightly points out that such a voice of the animal is not real; it is a human imposition. The “sympathetic imagination” offered to us by science-fiction could be used as a tool in attempts to reshape worlds and for challenging the binary opposition of animal/human-animal.³² Engaging with the materiality of another’s experience, and paying attention to embodied encounters, seems to be key to what Haraway talks about as the “energetic work of holding open the possibility that surprises are in store, that something interesting is about to happen, but only if one cultivates the virtue of letting those one visits intra-actively shape what occurs.”³³ Haraway, whose work and thinking proliferates in critters “making each other up in the flesh” and is steeped in science-fictional thinking, negotiates the possibilities of science-fiction as a methodology.³⁴

In Haraway’s writing and thinking, which has consistently challenged category divisions, I find a key science-fictional context that informs the objects that are created within this practice. “‘The species’ often means the human race, unless one is attuned to science fiction, where species abound,” states Haraway.³⁵ This situates science-fiction as a space where human-animal exceptionalism is routinely questioned—a space teeming with different species, where borders smudge and new relations are enacted. This is important in terms of Marlo’s and my relationship and the resulting artworks, where our experiences of the world have tangled together. Additionally, the idea of slippage between borders is key for me regarding the individual artworks in this practice, which deliberately exist in a zone of unlocatability. They avoid clear narratives and

31 - 32. Vint, “The Animals in That Country,” 179. Vint’s sympathetic imagination is contextualised also as ‘sympathetic leaps’ in Chapter 2, Making-with.

33. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 127. Haraway’s writing on “holding open the possibility that surprises are in store” is also key to the discussion of the open and always-available potential of participation in Chap. 2.

34. The paraphrase ‘making each other up in the flesh’ comes from Haraway’s writing in the *Companion Species Manifesto* as she speaks of the process of becoming-with. Haraway outlines all the ways she and her dog, Cayenne Pepper, have molecularly cross-infected each other in irretrievable, uncontrollable ways and that such a coconstitution across the broader species of dogs and humans has made us “constitutively, companion species. We make each other up, in the flesh. Significantly other to each other, in specific difference, we signify in the flesh a nasty developmental infection called love.” This cements the term ‘companion species’ as an apt way to speak of the ‘nature’ of both our species as essentially relational—unable to be ‘sorted’ into pure territories. See Haraway, “The Companion Species Manifesto,” 93-5.

35. Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 18.

clear explanations because these might reinforce some of those previously (conceivably) dissolved borders and close down the possibility that surprises are in store. I am interested in these objects having the power to open up and instead lead to agency and potential—theirs, Marlo’s, mine.

Tools of access & bridges of communication

An extraordinarily enormous object, beyond the bounds of human conceptions of size and volume, opens some time and somewhere in a black hole. A gridded structure, this vast object is constructed from taut strings of time manipulated into a three-dimensional form by unknown human-animals from our very distant future, in director Christopher Nolan’s 2014 science-fiction film *Interstellar*. Inside this object, the tesseract as it is known in the world of the film, a man named Joseph Cooper (Matthew McConaughey) floats, desperately searching for precise singular moments in his shared past with daughter Murphy (Jessica Chastain), who remains on Earth. Through these moments, Joseph knows he can physically reach Murphy and get her attention by manipulating the strings of time into actions of gravity on Earth that she will witness (as she has before, in this time-bending tale).



Image 30: Marlo leaning on my leg at night, September 2020. **Image 31:** *Leaning Post 3* in progress, before death September 2020. The dog bed pictured was very new and one of the few surfaces Marlo could sleep on for a long time in comfort because it was large enough to hold him without Marlo having to bend or contort himself, and it was also very padded and supportively soft. The *Leaning Posts* emerged from an intensified leaning ritual between Marlo and me, which did not involve this dog bed. However, while cutting and piecing together felt for *Leaning Post 3*, I couldn’t help but be struck by its presence. It also orbits some of the same spaces the *Leaning Posts* do, spaces that speak with worry, comfort and support. **Image 32:** Marlo sitting in the centre of a piece of black felt I was trying to cut, September 2020.

By using the tesseract to create these actions—books on a shelf falling to the ground in specific patterns, a watch ticking in morse code—Joseph transmits to Murphy vital data gathered from the black hole, which allows her to complete a mathematical equation necessary for the construction of an interstellar ship that will rescue all of humankind from life on the rapidly dying planet Earth. In this context, the tesseract is extremely useful.

While *Interstellar* is overwhelmingly praised for its scientific accuracy, particularly the complex subject of time and time dilation at the vast cosmic scales in which the film is set, what I take away from it, and the tesseract, is much more personal and experiential.³⁶ In my reading of *Interstellar*, the tesseract acts as a bridge of connection through time and space by utilising a personal relationship (the love of a daughter for her father and her father's love for her) as an anchor point launching an action that changes the world of the film in material ways.

For an interstellar science-fiction narrative, this film remains very close to Earth, tethered to the tiny relationships found here. Unlike many of his other films, the lives of most of Nolan's characters in *Interstellar* move linearly, from beginning to end. Only Joseph intra-acts with the tesseract in a space outside of his, and Murphy's, linear timescale. In this strange space, with this strange object, *Interstellar* connects the two great forces driving the narrative; the indifferent force of time, and the enduring force of love which allows Joseph to transcend linear temporality, only once but with enormous effect.

36. Famously, the visual depiction of a black hole in this film was extremely accurate and matched the first actual image of a black hole taken in 2019 (five years after the film's release) by the Event Horizon Telescope.

Without the attachments of his relationship with Murphy (shown in the film in moving scenes of intimate objects, books and watches, and shared adventures), Joseph would not have been able to use the tesseract and might not have saved humanity together with her. The tesseract, an object activated by these intimate attachments—the simple actions of a life lived with others—speaks directly to what Amelia Barikin argues is science-fiction's "capacity to construct alternate realities and affects out of the very stuff from which the present is made."³⁷ A key term, 'with', is also important here. As already stated, the phrase make-with is key to my PhD project and how I maintain Marlo's presence in it. For Barikin, science-fictional thinking is a "lens through which the world—including the world of art—is able to be grasped anew."³⁸ This thesis engages with such thinking and asks how a science-fictional approach to sculptural practice can shift cross-species encounters through tangible materiality to be grasped anew.

While the tesseract is not an artwork, in the universe of Nolan's *Interstellar* it functions as an atemporal tool of access and communication by presenting time as a physical dimension that Joseph can understand, perceive and manipulate. For me, the function of this object corresponds to certain artworks which engage with the object of art as a kind of mediator or aid to a difficult-to-access cross-subjective experience, which in this project can also be termed a difficult-to-access cross-species-subjectivity.³⁹

37. Amelia Barikin, "Making Worlds in Art and Science Fiction," in *Proceedings of the 19th International Symposium of Electronic Art (ISEA2013, Sydney, 2013)*, <http://ses.library.usyd.edu.au/handle/2123/9475>, 3.

38. Barikin and Hughes, *Making Worlds*, 8.

39. Within this project so far, I have attempted to use the word 'intra' rather than 'inter' whenever possible, while speaking about inter(intra)action and inter(intra)-subjectivities. This is because the word 'inter' implies dualities, that things can be halved or broken down at a point between, and that movement is always from one to the other (for example, from 'Animal' object to 'Human' subject and vice-versa). But, like 'cross', 'intra' implies possible movement in any direction. This is a term found in the writing of theorists Donna Haraway and Karen Barad. Using the term 'intersubjective' was an attempt to make clear to the reader the kind of experience I mean - a coconstitutive one, one across separate minds, and in this project in particular, across species. However, much like the term 'interaction', 'intersubjective' does not seem to account for the wobbly contingency of the kind of science-fictional sculptural action described above. They have not been useful terms in this project, unlike Karen Barad's term 'intra-action' or Donna Haraway's terms 'significant otherness/companion species', which both capture the kind of entangled relation I meant, in which there are "no pre-constituted subjects and objects". Intra-action and intra-subjectivity describe a dynamic process of "mutual constitution and unending iterative reconfigurings," so might be more useful as a term in this project to make clear that those pre-existing, separate subjects/minds are revealed to be much more entangled, to begin with, once such action within an artwork takes place. In an attempt to find appropriate language, I use the terms 'cross-subjective' and 'cross-species subjectivity', which take their cue from Haraway and Barad's writing on the term 'intra' but do so in a way that is specific to this project, i.e. to explore potentials of access to unreachable cross-species spaces of sentience. For more on Barad's intra-action see: Karen Barad, "Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/Continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come," *Derrida Today* 3, no. 2 (November 1, 2010): 240-68, <https://doi.org/10.3366/drt.2010.0206>.

Props as conveyors of real experience

Franz Erhard Walther is an artist who has been instrumental in thinking about sculptural engagements as a mediation through cross-subjective experiences; his work invites viewers to do and act-with by placing objects in relation to their bodies. He “incorporates the viewer as protagonist” in series like *Wandformationen* (Wall Formations) 1979-1985, which require activation by viewers or ‘users’, according to Walther’s instructions.⁴⁰ Sometimes, Walther demonstrates these instructions in person; other times they are demonstrated by “trained activation facilitators” at the exhibiting gallery.⁴¹ Instructional diagrams have also been a part of the presentation of Walther’s artworks.

For Walther, his users are protagonists in action with the object, which then guides them towards a specific choreography to places they have never been. This action is in contrast to other artists working in the same period who also worked with objects to ‘do something,’ however, theirs was a different conception from Walther’s action. For example, artist Joseph Beuys often used objects more theatrically as props full of symbolic, preestablished/historical meaning. Walther’s concept of action resonates with me in that it emphasises “art as a conveyor of real experiences.”⁴²

Like Walther’s, mine is a material practice. It is a collaborative cross-species making of objects. For me, there is excitement about the unpredictability of outcomes in the objects, the situations they are used for and the playfulness of each potential encounter.⁴³ The practice uses strategies and elements from the performative arena (things unfold as a doing and playing process without the need for a clear result or a winning strategy). Not all parties will necessarily relate to the concepts of artworks in the same way. It is also an object-based practice. The project focuses on cross-species traces—out of actions, out of events, out of happenings—and the idea of objects as leftovers, rather than a singular, resolved sculptural object as outcome.



Image 33: Franz Erhard Walther; *Gelbmodellierung*, (1980-1981); sewn dyed canvas, canvas-covered wooden sticks, a canvas coat, a canvas coat in two parts and a canvas suit in two parts, each fixed with laces and bands; 520 x 1100 x 60 cm. © Franz E Walther. VG Bild-Kunst/Copyright Agency, 2023.

40. Jana Baumann, *Franz Erhard Walther. Shifting Perspectives - Exhibition Film* (Haus der Kunst, 2020), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1OfAUEQ48NM>.

41. Ingrid Langston, “What Can I Do with It?": Activating Franz Erhard Walther's First Work Set," *Inside/Out - A MoMA/MoMA PS1 Blog* (blog), December 12, 2012, https://www.moma.org/explore/inside_out/2012/12/12/what-can-i-do-with-it-activating-franz-erhard-walters-first-work-set/.

42. Franz Erhard Walther, with Michael Lingner, in *Zwischen Kern und Mantel* (Klagenfurt: Ritter, 1985), 29, 39-43, 47, quoted in Erik Verhagen, Susanne Richardt, and Franz Erhard Walther, *Franz Erhard Walther Dialogues*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Madrid Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2017), 26.

43. This excitement used to be shared with Marlo, too, when he was alive - I am thinking of the *playthings* made specifically for him in the early phases of the project, as well as the ordinary routines of living we did together that resulted in collaborative works based on specific experiences (e.g. the bottled walks).

The props in this project are provisional, often quickly constructed and fit-for-purpose; they are aids, conduits for empathy and relation and are therefore called means-to-an-end props. The research has grappled with the idea of these objects being repositories of enigmatic knowledge and that to touch, experience and play with them is to use them as tools of access to other realms, as aids of the making-with tesseract to cocreate and reshape worlds as equals. In asking how “territories of art” can be “accessed through the delirium of estrangement, through the vortices of science fiction, in ‘no-knowledge zones’?” Barikin speaks about how “dealing with things not yet to come, with images charged with a state of future potential ... puts us in touch with the ability to imagine, and with the imaginary’s capacity to build new worlds.”⁴⁴ This capacity and potential are essential to the means-to-an-end props in this practice. Art and science-fiction are entwined here as fields that can move us to “confront ideas and conventions that have been made to appear natural and inevitable, by giving us a world founded on other premises.”⁴⁵

Without enlisting them as tools towards an unattainable utopian purpose, the means-to-an-end artworks in this practice, charged with potential, are objects of recurring attempts to reach across irreducible differences in the search for knowledge of an intimate other. Like the tesseract in *Interstellar*, which materially affected an aspect of relational experience through time—an experience generally understood to be somehow unreachable ‘in real life’—in this project, the making-with of means-to-an-end props is also conceptualised

44. Barikin and Hughes, *Making Worlds*, 11. Estrangement here refers to the theories developed by the writer, critic and philosopher Darko Suvin in his *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* (1979), one of the first academic definitions of science-fiction as a “literature of cognitive estrangement,” which, in Barikin’s reading, is a revolutionary ability to “render thought itself strange, revealing the fragility of perception in the making of meaning.” Suvin writes this is a “creative approach tending toward a dynamic transformation rather than toward a static mirroring of the author’s environment.” Estrangement is a technique that implies “not only a reflecting of but also on reality” – the world of the science-fiction story must be dynamically different from our empirical world but be necessarily connected to it. Critical to cognitive estrangement is the ‘novum,’ the presence of a new thing or device in the world of the science-fiction work, which acts as a “catalyst for the difference between the textual and the reader’s world,” pushing the reader away from habitual assumptions, extending to a political desire for a better world. Suvin emphasises that these discontinuities and differences from our reality must be based on rational speculations that are “not internally contradictory,” not mere flights of fancy that define fantasy literature in this context. Still, estrangement as a technique that allows us to recognise the world of a work of art as familiar while seeing it as strange and skewed allows us to reflect and imagine different ways of understanding our lives. “That art disorients in productive ways is critical,” says Amelia Barikin. This productive disorientation speaks with cognitive estrangement and science-fictionality. It is an estranging effect that Barikin discusses as not always a rigorous intellectual or theoretical process but “a sensation, a kind of sensual, vertiginous pleasure invoked by the creation of a hole through which another reality might emerge.”

45. Vint, *Science Fiction*, 33.

as science-fictional in nature. These sculptures attempt to allow human-animals to access unreachable cross-species spaces of sentience, which are both cross-subjective and coconstitutive.

Practically speaking, the means-to-an-end props and objects can also be a way of thinking/planning. In this respect, I consider some objects made throughout the project as a type of drawing (See images 35-36).

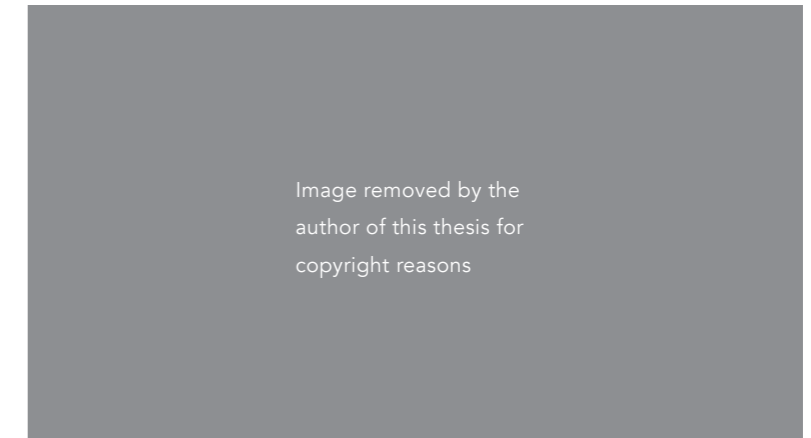


Image 34: Behind-the-scenes photograph of the filming of the tesseract scene in *Interstellar*. It involved the physical construction of the tesseract, and minimal digital effects. <https://www.thisiscosossal.com/2015/06/interstellar-tesseract-set/>



Images 35-36: Drawing as part of making-with the means-to-an-end prop called *Hinged Rock Carrier* (with holes to allow sensation on your hands, shaped to approximate the hinged action of a powerful mouth carrying heavy rocks without the use of opposable thumbs), after death 2022. The drawings grouped together in the photograph on the right are all preludes towards other means-to-an-end props constructed in the project.

Black Scent Map: one shared day with Marlo



Image 37: *Black Scent Map*; black felt, crumbled dog biscuits, coffee grounds, lemon leaves, sprigs of grass, dried peppermint, soap, laundry powder, bark, pebbles, liver treats, black thread; the scents of one shared day with Marlo in October 2019.

Five sculptures: *Black Scent Map* (before death October 2019), *Hay Fever*, and the three *Leaning Posts* works (before death March & August-September 2020), are made-with props that shifted how I thought about sculptural engagement and the use-value of objects. *Black Scent Map* was made as a prop; an action object to be used, handled and intra-acted with to explore more-than-other sensations. Constructed at a size that approximately covers a human-animal face, this object is horizontally oval with cut-out slot handles on each side as an invitation to bring it up to the nose to sniff. *Black Scent Map* prioritises a kind of immersive attempt to draw back the curtain of another's accountable experience (in this case, Marlo's), providing a channel towards more intimate knowledge of 'his' world. It is pivotal because it expanded the way objects are generated within the project, where the ideas around sentience, collaboration, and access to more-than-human knowledge are folded more expressively into making an object and, thus, into how the object functions once it has come into being.

As a very 'nosey' person limited to knowledge of the universe received through a human body, I wanted to make some objects that could perhaps allow me and others the opportunity to experience a slice of the world through a dog's nose. My world is mainly made of metaphorical visual bricks, supplemented by the mortar of sound, touch, taste and smell. I wondered how would I go about entering a realm where scent, not visual information, could be the main approach to my universe. It is the sense that allows you to investigate, remember, plan and learn without (over)reliance on optical information.

The idea of scent is personal to me because it was Marlo's preferred way of getting information about neighbouring dogs, happenings in his world near the ground, and even future events. Scent seems to cross time—one whiff could take Marlo back to a time past when a possum climbed up a tree he just happened to be sniffing. (Or is this statement just my anthropocentric imagination at work?) Another smell might allow him to anticipate what was yet to come ... perhaps a meeting with a new friend further down the street or the loathsome Courier Post van in the distance somewhere. Using *Black Scent Map* now takes me too into the past, to the particular day the scents inside it were collected with Marlo. It also triggers in me a scent awareness that I take into the future.

Black Scent Map consists of two sheets of black felt (a material with no apparent discernible smell), with nine different compounds inserted in between the felt layers in small mounds and stitched into place in a grid formation. The compounds include crumbled dog biscuits, coffee grounds, lemon leaves, sprigs

of grass, dried peppermint, soap, laundry powder, bark, pebbles and liver treats. *Black Scent Map* as an object has been displayed on handmade pedestals, on the floor, on hooks, and in various human-animal hands. Although it is meant to be handled, used, and sniffed, its direct purpose is a kind of record of one fine day with Marlo in October 2019. To experience a tiny moment of life as a dog, a rat, or any other fellow animal that uses scent as their guide to the world and its happenings, you are invited to take up the means-to-an-end prop *Black Scent Map* and press it to your face. Not only will any visual information be obliterated, but your face will also be enveloped in myriad scents, allowing for a focused olfactory experience. Through the act of wearing *Black Scent Map*, the work asks if we can distinguish between the different scents and find our way around this world the way Marlo would with the same set of compounds.

Black Scent Map: exchanges of smelly curiosity

An aspect of the abject is present in artworks like *Black Scent Map*. The abject has been a curiosity simmering in the background soup of the project rather than being a concept I have engaged with overtly. Working with a dog and with objects activated directly through the senses, the abject has inevitably been something the project has provoked. For example, Marlo's slobber was material in objects such as Marlo's *playthings*; the proximity to potentially unpleasant smells in works like the *Scent Maps*, and actions like *The Scent of a Walk* placed the resulting objects into potential contact with dog urine. Additionally, some means-to-an-end props produced during this project have been touched, sniffed and passed around many human-animals.

Furthermore, questions around Covid-19 have also become part of this dialogue, outside of the generalised potentially abject experience of sniffing an object someone else has sniffed before. However, I see all of this as the stuff of life, not something I have wanted to pathologize through the concept of the abject since it is not the research topic, but more importantly, none of this would be abject to Marlo. On the contrary, he would probably be delighted at these new and mingled scents. It is important to me that methods of artmaking with cross-species sentience undo some of those potential pathologies.

The empathy between us and other species seems to easily fall into a black hole from which it is difficult, but not necessarily impossible, to escape. There is always potential to break out from anthropocentric thinking. As I enter the tesseract of making-with through cross-species sentience, I am searching through the strings of time for precise singular (perhaps smelly) moments in my shared past with Marlo. I hopefully pluck a string of time, and an action of

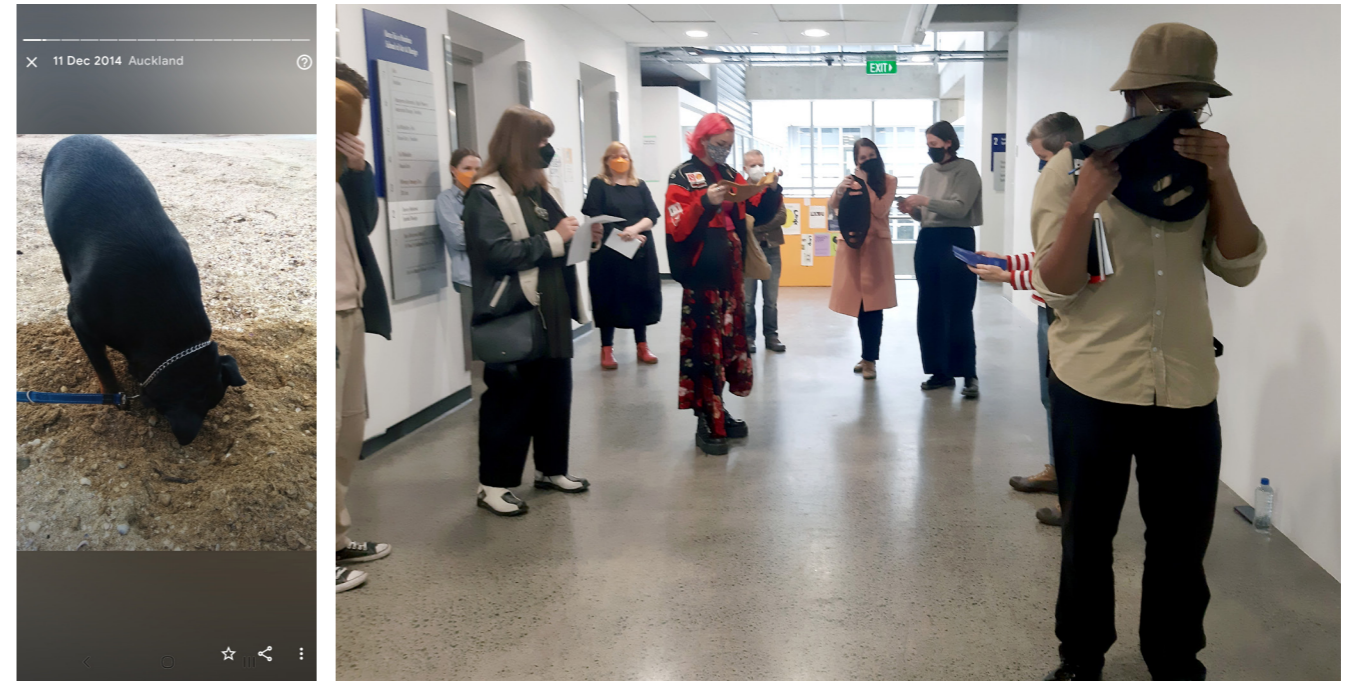


Image 38: Screenshot of a Google Memory of Marlo digging a hole in the sand at Eastern Beach and sniffing deeply. December 11, 2014. **Image 39:** A human man sniffing *Black Scent Map* and several other *Scent Maps*. After death, August 16, 2022.



Image 40: My supervisor, Chris, gamely trying out an ochre *Scent Map*, after death 2022. Photo taken on June 23, 2022. **Image 41:** Chris in my studio, playing with a *Yellow Sniffer*, a potential aid for focused sniffing, after death 2021. Chris here is using it to look through instead. An unplanned variation of an experience with a means-to-an-end prop, emphasising the potential of a playful encounter. Photo taken on July 27, 2021.



Image 42: A series of bottled walks sitting on a shelf in my studio. *The Scent of a Walk*; before death September-October 2020.



Image 43: Collected matter ready for distilling into one scent per walk.



Images 44-45: Wearing *Hay Fever* and fastening it around my shoulders, before death March 2020. No documentation of my rolls using *Hay Fever* exists.

gravity here on Earth constructs a means-to-an-end prop. Allowing this object to aid me in taking part in a corresponding sympathetic action/leap, I pull a cross-species experience from an inscrutable fissure between Marlo's dog world and my human-animal world. Wobbling across time and space towards Marlo, this experience is a filter through which I can experience Marlo differently, not abjectly, in a way that builds connection across the distances between us and turns potentially (anthropocentrically) unpleasant exchanges of smell or touch or sound into exchanges of curiosity and fun.

The Scent of a Walk: bottling smells of interest

Another smelly curiosity occurring in parallel during our making-with before death in 2020 was a series of bottled walks. For a long time, even before starting this PhD project, I had been taking photos of objects Marlo took a marked interest in on our regular walks. In 2020, with scent on my mind, I began to sample varied matter Marlo showed considerable interest in sniffing during our walks. These samples were a wide variety of things—leaves, tree bark, gravel, parts of bushes, swabs of fence posts, flower petals, bits of rubbish and so on. I distilled each walk's collected scents into one joint scent through a stove-top distillation process. Each walk's scent was then bottled into a travel-sized spray bottle and dated. Very few bottles of the *Scent of a Walk* exist.

Hay Fever: fit for purpose

Hay Fever is another means-to-an-end prop related to *Black Scent Map*. Roughly pelerine-sized, it is a flat and wide donut-shaped object made to be fastened around the shoulders. It has a layer of artificial grass sandwiched between the two pieces of yellow felt stitched together with pale blue embroidery thread. It feels satisfyingly crinkly and oddly stiff to the touch—it does not drape fetchingly as a real cape would but is very sturdy and tactile when worn. With *Hay Fever*, I wanted to make an object you could put over your neck and shoulders and roll around on the ground to learn what rolling on the grass is potentially like for a dog. Literally rolling on grass seemed less dog-like than rolling around with the help of an object that might amplify some of those sensations. After all, for dogs, it is a normal thing to do. For humans, a dog's roll does not feel necessary

or even enjoyable. *Hay Fever* was intended to offer a bridge between worlds, a way of experiencing another's sensations in the comfort of your own home or the potential discomfort of public space. The work is riding the relational line here—part of a dog's world but not necessarily fit for purpose when encountered by human-animals.

Hay Fever: surface thinking

Hay Fever is the second prop engaging in surface thinking that attempts to collapse animal otherness and activate mutual sensory borders. It is also the sculpture that allowed means-to-an-end props to come into being; it is a prop in its own right in that the action it invites is central to its conception. Additionally, while it allows for a real-time physical experience of rolling in the 'grass' anywhere, like so many of my attempts to reach across species divides, there is also an element of the imaginary. I ask participants to imagine what rolling on the grass is like for a dog and why they might want to do so. In this way, *Hay Fever* was critical in considering the imaginary's capacity to build new worlds of relation.

Hay Fever was also the first prop in this project to invite a more vigorous activity or activation. *Black Scent Map* and the *Leaning Posts* are more like support structures, as in props for a calmer activity. There is a difference between rolling on the ground whilst imagining the doggy compulsion of this action, versus curiously sniffing *Black Scent Map* in one place, or leaning against the *Leaning Posts*. *Hay Fever* invites movement, a different kind of comportment, and it led to the digging means-to-an-end props for use at Mellons Bay Beach and all of the digging actions/recordings that took place there (See images 157-174).

Hay Fever: unstable contact zones

In *Surface Encounters: Thinking with Animals and Art*, Ron Broglio begins with seemingly unanswerable questions about the kinds of unaccountable experiences this project broadly engages in: "What is an animal phenomenology? What does it mean to be an animal, not as observed from



Image 46: *Hay Fever* (unfolded); yellow felt, artificial grass, pale blue thread, snap fastener; before death March 2020.



Image 47: *Leaning Post 2* in progress in my studio. Figuring out the best angle for leaning, as well as the padded surface. Before death August-September 2020.

an objective perspective of natural history, but from the fur of the beasts themselves?”⁴⁶ Broglio asserts that these questions are not about similarity, likeness and imitation, or about running “like a cheetah”, but rather “what is running for the cheetah?”⁴⁷ Broglio points out that phenomenology is distinctly anthropocentric because it is concerned with how humans are “embedded in their world.”⁴⁸ Engaging with animal phenomenology is, to Broglio, an opportunity to probe the limits of human-animal knowledge, and at the same time to let go of notions of animal otherness through an exploration of mutual sensory borders. So, what happens to phenomenology/animal phenomenology in a cross-species discussion within visual arts practice?

Broglio’s central concept in *Surface Encounters* suggests that such thinking and engagement with animals is possible through the conscious reversal of what he contextualises as the surface/depth split, which has traditionally placed animals below human-animals in value. Culturally and philosophically, “animals do not engage in the self-reflexive thought that provides humans with an individual and cultural depth of being; instead, animals are said to live on the surface of things.”⁴⁹ This surface living is like a pale shadow of human-animal ways of being in the world and lacks the depth of human interiority. Broglio argues that the surface of things, the unstable contact zone of animal and human-animal perspectives can instead be turned against its “negative uses” into a productive territory of engagement with fellow critters.⁵⁰ Art, with its focus on material surfaces of all kinds, is the ideal site to bring out an “infectious wonder at the animal world on the other side of human knowing,”⁵¹ and employ this wonder in a project of joined-up thinking with, through, and beyond rigid models/ notions of animal phenomenology.

This context is key in informing the making of the objects in this practice and the ways the project focus shifted to making-with Marlo and engaging with cross-species sentience. For example, *Hay Fever* sprung to life from just the infectious wonder Broglio writes about. *Making-with Marlo* is a lifelong curiosity about the lives of other animals whom we live alongside, finding its focus

46. Ron Broglio, *Surface Encounters: Thinking with Animals and Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 1.

47-49. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, 16, 17.

50. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, 18. The term ‘contact zone’ was coined by noted literary scholar Mary Louise Pratt, in her linguistic/social research. Pratt used the term to “refer to social spaces where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today.” Broglio argues that that “grappling” between animals and human-animals “forms a topography much like the space described by Pratt.” See Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession*, 1991, 34. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25595469>.

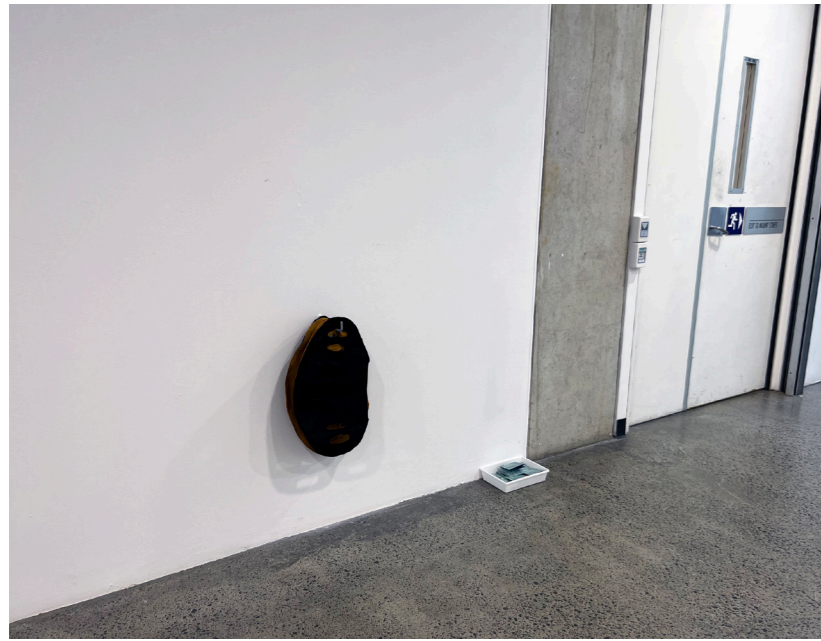
51. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, 24.

through a loving friendship with Marlo. *Hay Fever* opens up the possibility of experiencing the unstable tactile surface of things as a contact zone of animal-human-animal engagement; perhaps with your back and shoulders unaccustomed to the satisfaction and joy of rolling. It does what writer and science-fiction scholar Istvan Csicsery-Ronay describes as a core of science-fictionality, a “[calling] into question all verities, except curiosity and play.”⁵²



Image 48: *Hay Fever* ready to go in the boot of my car, before death March 2020. This folding, storage and resulting photograph was the first time in the project that I began to consider my car not just as a vehicle of transportation, but also of storage-in-waiting.

52. Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*, e-book (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2008), 10.



Images 49-60: A smelly exchange with Scent Maps during their outing at Talk Week III, after death August 2022. I hung these means-to-an-end props on a hook near an exit door and at Marlo's height, wanting the Scent Maps to be encountered in a 'passing-through' space of the building. Hanging on a bespoke hook, along with a collection of printed guides at your fingertips, the Scent Maps here are ready to go and take you somewhere.

Black Scent Map: on a hook

Felt is a porous material so scents will never last as long inside a felt object as in a sealed glass jar. A sniff of *Black Scent Map* in 2023, three years after it was made, reveals that most scent lumps are no longer distinguishable to me. I know they would be to Marlo though, or even another fellow animal/canine friend.⁵³ There is a limit to how long these handmade objects can last as olfactory conduits between the experiential worlds of different species. *Black Scent Map* managed to lift the veil between us and create a mutual material experience for a short time. Now it is a leftover. It makes me wonder, how does it perform for someone who never knew Marlo in the first place? Would it arouse curiosity? Does it tap into a sense of play?

In August 2022, I had the opportunity to test out how an artwork such as *Black Scent Map* might be experienced by people who had never met us before and were unaware of Marlo and this project (See images 49-60). This *Black Scent Map* outing took place during an event called Talk Week (Talk Week III).⁵⁴ I used Talk Week throughout the three years of this project for testing events and installations of the props I made (See images 150-156 and 231-246).

Talk Week III (August 2022) included a pared-down presentation of a group of *Scent Masks* on a bespoke hook. Like other Talk Week events, Talk Week III also included printed ephemera that participants could look at, read and keep (See images 64-66). The printed ephemera and my preludes acted as entrance points or guides into the work—or perhaps warm-ups. All my Talk Week experiments included me speaking directly to the rest of the participants at each event and briefly situating the work within the context of the relationship between Marlo and me. The Talk Week III event unfolded as a workshop, where people passed the scent maps around, sniffed them with varying degrees of seriousness. The original *Black Scent Map* (made-with Marlo) was accompanied by subsequent

Scent Maps (made-with Marlo after his death). In making these after death *Scent Maps*, I took to our well-known and well-loved walking routes and tried to recall the objects and areas that Marlo found of interest, and where he would pause and sniff (or mark). Some were easy to find and remember, for example, a big gnarly log lying decoratively on pebbles at Bucklands Beach Marina. This log and pebble patch is a site of many markings by Marlo, and a piece of the log is now inside one of the *Scent Maps*. Other objects tugged at my memories, but to this day, sadly, not at my nose. Others I guessed at, trying to suss out from their bearing, from the lay of the land, from the likelihood of exciting smells, that they could be something Marlo would notice and be intrigued by. I sniffed plants, posts, fences.

The *Scent Maps* present for the Talk Week III workshop came about after a planned group trip and smell-walk to Halfmoon Bay Marina had to be postponed. As I had already prepared ephemera and a prop-like guide to smells we might encounter, I spontaneously decided to go on a solo smell-walk instead in the hopes of transforming a disappointment into an event of interest. This was a modest action/event and returned me to *Black Scent Map* as the recording mode of such an action. I smell-walked at the marina that day, and collected nine different scents. I later enclosed these into a new copper-coloured *Scent Map* made-with Marlo, through the gap between us, with the olfactory aid of varied shared surfaces. From this second *Scent Map* flowed the others. Each is a smell record of a single walk and the potentially delightful smells to be found there, all collected and noticed without Marlo's physical presence, but with a leaning transformation of perception within me that has 'walked' with me since Marlo and I worked together on the first *Black Scent Map*.

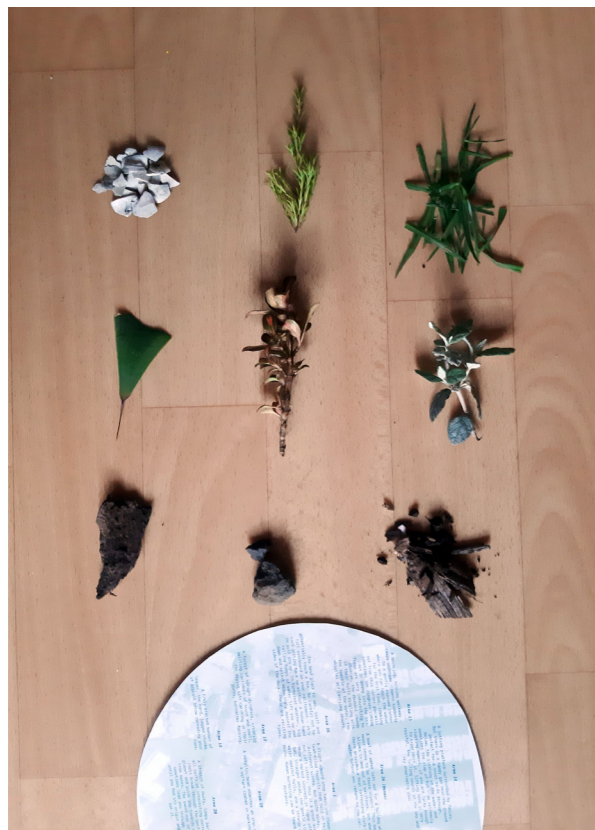
Talk Week III workshop participants had a good whiff. A lively conversation arose around a variety of topics: the idea of a line between an experience for dogs and an experience of dogs for humans; whether the *Maps* were recordings or documents (the liveness of the smells as recordings more than documents);

53. The part of the brain used for analysing smells is proportionally many times larger in dogs. Dogs' noses, too, are constructed in a way that makes them perfect for sniffing out and analysing scents. With millions more olfactory receptors than ours, a dog's nose can also separate air. When they inhale, the airflow splits into two paths - one for breathing and one for olfaction. They can also breathe in and out simultaneously, amplifying all scents and allowing the dog to investigate them more deeply and for a longer time than we can. These are all physiological barriers I could never overcome to learn to be a better sniffer. I can still sniff and use my nose as an investigative tool, but a disappointment in the outcome always looms.

54. Visual Arts Talk Week is an annual critical practice-led forum (Visual Arts, School of Art & Design, AUT University) involving a week of dialogue. Students can present artwork for discussion to a panel made up of Art & Design staff, fellow students and guest critics (from the art world; artists, academics, curators, writers, gallery professionals, and alumni).

the strength of the relationship between scent and memory; the volume and intensity of fragrances (scent being something quite confronting to human-animals). My favourite exchange came when a participant said she was extremely curious about what the objects inside the *Scent Maps* looked like; she wanted answers and said she felt like ripping the maps open. Another participant responded with: “A dog would!”

These workshop conversations, as an atmosphere of openness to surprises, cemented the *Scent Maps* as means-to-an-end props. Unlike Marlo, I am not naturally a social critter, so it is strange, but also delightful to me, the extent to which Marlo’s sociality enables such cross-species sentience and the potential ways these works could be offered to others. The talking-with others was one action of the *Scent Maps* in this particular workshop form, enabled by the action of cross-species sentience held in potential, inside them.

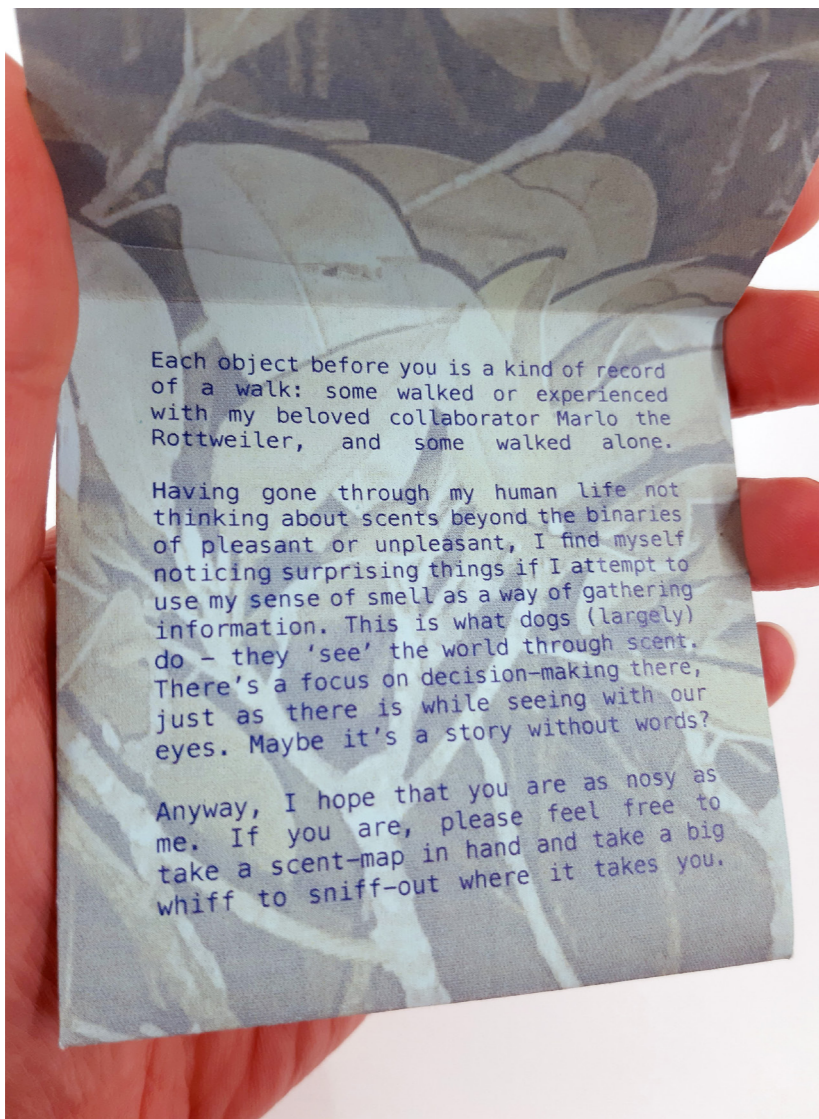


Images 61: Scents collected at Halfmoon Bay Marina, after death June 2022. **Image 62:** A resulting *Scent Map* in progress next to *Black Scent Map*. After death July 2022.



Image 63: A photograph taken on my solo smell-walk that led to the second *Scent Map*, after death June 2022.

I am holding a collected source of scent. In my lap is a printed guide to the smells you may encounter if you smell-walked Halfmoon Bay Marina. I generated the smell areas that the guide refers to through purposeful walks after death, during which I tried to recall Marlo’s sites of interest at the Marina. I walked it with my senses of smell and hearing in focus, attempting to tamp down my reliance on sight to nose out what I would notice this way. I wrote the text for this guide from Marlo’s point of view, with sensory description in mind. It has yet to be used by anyone but me (and even then, it was redundant since I was the one who wrote the guide to scents in the first place).



Images 64-66: Close up images of *A Guide to Scent-Maps*, the printed ephemera provided as part of the Talk Week III workshop. The guide unfolds, revealing information about the Scent Maps and an invitation. Fully unfolded, it shows lists of possible scents in each grid 'pocket' of the Maps present for Talk Week III, after death, August 2022.

Leaning Posts: speaking through touch

Like *Hay Fever*, the leaning posts relate to what Broglio describes as “a knowledge leading to physical comportment, a manipulation of [our] own body surface in relation to the animal’s.” (See n55). This kind of surface thinking has been pivotal in making the props and how new avenues for object-making emerged during the project. It is where a kind of “physical bearing” and “animal reaction” combine to “[serve] as a syntax for the pidgin language between species”⁵⁵ – a language ‘spoken’ through physical touch and surface thinking, which in turn also creates an “event structure.”⁵⁶

The first *Leaning Post* prop consisted of a vertical rectangular wooden frame, padded with stuffing and two pieces of felt draped and secured over the entire structure, roughly the scale of a large square cushion. The *Leaning Posts* came about because I noticed Marlo leaning more heavily on my legs when he stopped to be patted. I felt his weight. This was part of his illness. Although from puppyhood he had always leaned on me for pats and companionship, his need for firm support became more pronounced as he gradually lost strength. I realised a strange shift; I felt I had to keep my leg stiffer and stronger than normal to provide the physical support he needed while leaning on me. This original *Leaning Post* is stuffed on the blue side for comfort and to create a more intimate feel, and it has a groove at the top for comfortable human-animal arm placement (since we have monkey limbs, not dog limbs). It is surprisingly very pleasant and easy to sit with on the floor. Three *Leaning Posts* were made (See images 67-72).

I was interested in making a portable object that could be used to lean on wherever you happened to be (for respite and/or love).⁵⁷ I imagined it acting in

55. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, 94.

56. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, 128. Broglio discusses the work of artists Olly and Suzi, an artistic duo that encounters endangered animals in the wild in order to make collaborative paintings with and of them. These collaborative actions require a co-creation of a ‘pidgin language’ between the artists and their collaborators, an always-moving event where individual identity may be undone, where “motion and environment contribute to the individuality of the pidgin language, and the space in which this language is formed. Rather than an imposed form, pidgin language created between species arises from tentative gesturing, assertion of ground, meanings conveyed or missed; the lack of structure creates possibilities, but also threatens collapse of all meaning. Contact zones bring together physicality and linguistic exchange in order to create new tentative meanings and temporary societies...The surfaces and bodies refuse signification, and in doing so they take us elsewhere, to the “poor in world” of the animal that is rich in its own textures...The hand-over-hand method of the artists, along with the interaction of the animal, diffuses the agency of the artwork and creates an event structure.”

57. This *Leaning Post* has been on a short walk with me during the first 2020 Covid-19 lockdown, and might still go on a few more in the future.

the same way as my legs and body in the moments when I was Marlo’s support. It is a nice feeling being leaned on; it makes you feel trusted and accepted. However, I note it is socially unacceptable for us to use other human-animals we meet as physical leaning supports, except in dire situations or among the closest of relations. *Leaning Post* offers a solution and a prop. It is a kind of bespoke object, a ‘fix’ for a particular absence of relation that we do not readily consider. Fix perhaps, is not the right word—maybe it is a stand-in, an augmentation? Bringing to mind being ‘support crew’ too.

In those last few months of Marlo’s life (March–October 2020), I went out of my way to hold and support Marlo with my leg wherever he sat. Sitting/leaning/patting was one of our lifetime rituals, but it took on a new intensity during this period. It became an augmented ritual for him to sit in front of me as I angled my legs.⁵⁸ The angle provided the greatest cushioning and support for his weight so that he could rest (while I patted him and enjoyed his company). *Leaning Post* was not involved in this intra-action between Marlo and me, but as an artwork, it was an external channel through which to glimpse or enter this minuscule and recurring world of relations between us.⁵⁹ The work invites you to sit with it. Drooping on it, you may begin to imagine what it’s like to be an old dog or anyone else, animal or human-animal, whose strength is failing and who requires a braced leg to be held up.

Leaning Posts: approximations and bonding

The *Leaning Posts* bring in another kind of movement/comportment integral to dog worlds. Many dogs (and cats!) lean as a form of greeting and bonding (with humans), even when they’re not sick, as Marlo was. However, springing from

58. And without having any proof, I somehow also knew that Marlo felt the same - that it was a new ritual, requiring new comportment from both of us, new time-keeping, more support asked for by Marlo, and more support offered by me.

59. Contextual material was part of the exhibition the *Leaning Posts* were presented in. The public could access information about the background of the props in order to know the project stemmed out of Marlo’s and my relations.



Images 67-68: *Leaning Post* (1); wood, staples, hot glue, blue felt, grey felt, cushion stuffing, before death March 2020.



Images 69-70: *Leaning Post* (2); MDF, foam, staples, hinges, brackets, spray paint, before death August-September 2020



Images 71-72: *Leaning Post* (3); felt and thread, stuffing, before death September 2020.

Marlo's world, specifically from the particular timeframe they were constructed, the *Leaning Posts* also speak to a context of illness, weakening bodies and (mutual) caretaking. This context obviously stems from a personal relationship but can expand beyond Marlo and me, beyond humans and dogs, and humans and humans, beyond mammals even. For me, the *Leaning Posts* acknowledge shared corporeal comfort in sitting and leaning together, the temperature of another being's body diffusing into yours.

The *Leaning Posts* themselves are not conceptualised in this project as living critters. They are, first and foremost, art objects, imperfect technology that approximates a corporeal/lived experience. They make me think about the robot and AI pets, like Sony's Aibo, which has been around for 25 years (with recent updates), or the furry Qoobo, a tactile therapy bot that responds to touch, or the recently launched DOG-E that has been designed to develop a personality through encounters unique to its human-animal owner. Gaining popularity during the Covid-19 isolation months, in heavily urban areas where it could be challenging to live with an actual dog in small apartments, AI pets are a technology that taps into our social-animal capacity for bonding with others.⁶⁰ In adjacent ways, I think the *Leaning Posts* provide support that feels individual and caring. Recalling the function of *Interstellar's* tesseract, which corresponds to artworks that operate as an aid to a difficult-to-access experience, I think of the *Leaning Posts*. Calibrated through a precise experience of life with Marlo, a leaning post acts as a mediator to an extended moment of cross-species cross-subjectivity. The *Leaning Posts* did not create this moment, they are a way into it, a means to an end.

60. Lucy Craft, "Robo-Dogs and Therapy Bots: Artificial Intelligence Goes Cuddly," CBS News, January 3, 2022, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/robo-dogs-therapy-bots-artificial-intelligence/>. For further information on robots mentioned see: SONY, "Aibo | Robotic Puppy Powered by AI," aibo, accessed May 23, 2023, <https://us.aibo.com/>. "MINTiD Dog-E | The One in a Million Robot Dog," MINTiD Dog-E, accessed May 23, 2023, <https://dog-e.com/>. Inc Yukai Engineering, "Qoobo | A Tailed Cushion That Heals Your Heart," Qoobo - Petit Qoobo, accessed May 23, 2023, <https://qoobo.info/index-en>.

Doable actions and cross-subjective objects

Action and Franz Erhard Walther

In an interview with artist and art theorist Michael Lingner in 1982, Franz Erhard Walther stated: “the aspect of action as a part of the work has been the constant underlying motif in my output—it’s my fate.”⁶¹ Fundamentally reimagining what art could be when he first began making and exhibiting his participatory objects in the 1960s, this concept of *action*, where the ‘work’ of the work of art bubbles up in the in-between space formed by the intra-action of a user with an object, has driven Walther’s practice for over six decades.⁶²

In a 1981 interview with Barbara Schnierle, writer for the German arts and culture magazine *tip Berlin*, Walther stated:

First of all there must be some idea of what this action is. It is action free of any purpose, and that is by no means easy. We are used to acting purposefully, economically in everyday life. And then the question of meaning appears. If someone comes and asks what it’s supposed to mean, you can forget it. There is no meaning to the thing as such; meaning first comes when the action is performed with the piece. That must be clear. The viewers have to be in a position to develop a meaning with the thing that is there.⁶³

61. Franz Erhard Walther, with Michael Lingner, “Die Wiederentdeckung des Optischen,” in *Franz Erhard Walther, 40 Sockel: Schritte seitwärts*, exh. cat. (Munich: Kunstraum München, 1982), 14, quoted in Erik Verhagen, Susanne Richardt, and Franz Erhard Walther, *Franz Erhard Walther Dialogues*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2017), 21.

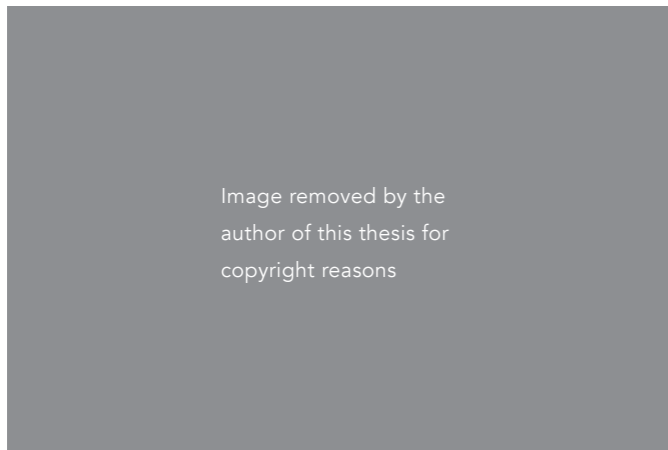
62. The concept of ‘action’, or *Handlung* in German, which Walther states is his preferred use in order to avoid “something programmatic” in the English version of the word. Instead, the translation of *Handlung* as “just doing” is his preferred way of thinking about action. (Franz Erhard Walther, “Interview with Georg Jappe,” *Studio International* 192, no. 982 (July-August 1976), 65, quoted in Verhagen, Richardt, and Walther, *Franz Erhard Walther Dialogues*, 17.)

63. Franz Erhard Walther, with Barbara Schnierle, “Die Grenzgänge des Franz Erhard Walther,” *Tip*, no. 7 (1981), 48–49, quoted in Verhagen, Richardt, and Walther, *Franz Erhard Walther Dialogues*, 20.

Although Walther’s pioneering participatory practice has paved the way for many performance artists since he first began presenting his artwork, his focus on sculptural objects as brokers of the action is a vital contribution to this project. Art props remain the focus of my practising and play a key role in this project. They form a kind of springboard for a cross-species experience. For example, a series of thermoplastic digging appendages eventually came about through my experience of digging holes in the sand and the need for protection that aligned with Marlo’s paw-like ease and digging style (See images 86-89). These accessories are sturdy, protective finger aids that allow for more efficient and comfortable digging than human-animal hands are suited for and therefore attempt to provide an experience that better approximates the doggy joy of digging holes in the sand. This joyful aspect of the experience had not been translatable as an artwork while my hands were hurting from the cold and rough sand, pre-appendage. Similarly, the object I call *Kneeling Pad that might be kneeded for digging holes comfortably* (after death 2021) also came about through this experience. It was tied to kneeling on the ground and the unsuitability of the human-animal (my) physique to dig large holes at the pace and intensity that a four-legged dog is capable of doing in a similar physical configuration. (See images 290-293).

Props in my practice allow the viewer/sniffer/digger/leaner to ‘develop a meaning’ in an attempt to embody cross-species sentience. Like the tesseract and Walther’s objects, they are aids towards reaching for what Pōneke Wellington artist Shannon Te Ao (Ngāti Tūwharetoa) calls “long distance communication”—in this project, towards “long distance relationships.”⁶⁴ As with Walther’s practice, the artworks in *Making-with Marlo* are propositional and embody an invitation. However, less like his meticulously constructed and tailored action objects, mine are lumpy, provisional and prop-like. As already stated, they are a means-to-an-end.

64. Shannon Te Ao, *Shannon Te Ao | Massey University*, video interview, July 25, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGJgxn-zXSQ>, accessed July 18, 2022.



Images 73-74: Franz Erhard Walther; *Handlungsbahnen #38*, 1997-2003. *Handlungsbahnen* (Action Paths) is a series of 55 action sculptures. Photos: KOW, Berlin. © Franz E Walther. VG Bild-Kunst/Copyright Agency, 2023.

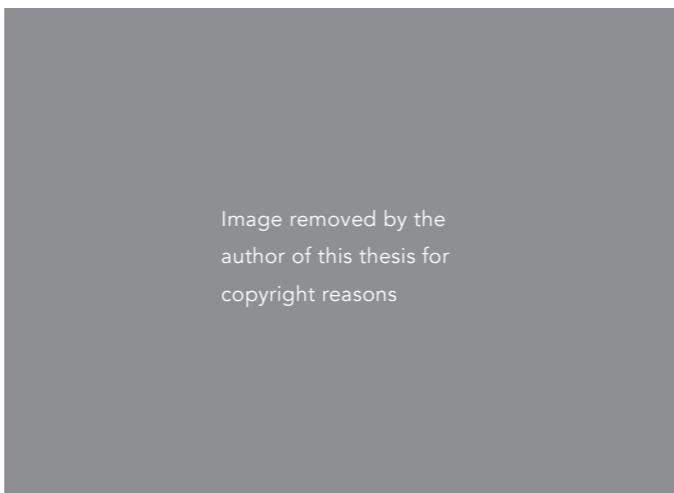


Image 75: Franz Erhard Walther; *Spots*, no. 57, 1969, canvas, cords. Performance view, Museum of Modern Art, New York, January 1970. From 1. *Werksatz* (First Work Set), 1963-69. Photo: Virginia Bell. © Franz E Walther. VG Bild-Kunst/Copyright Agency, 2023.
Image 76: Franz Erhard Walther; *Sammelobjekt (Neun)* (For Collecting [Nine]), no. 39, 1967, canvas. Performance view, Hochrhön region, Germany, 1970. From 1. *Werksatz* (First Work Set), 1963-69. Photo: Timm Rautert.

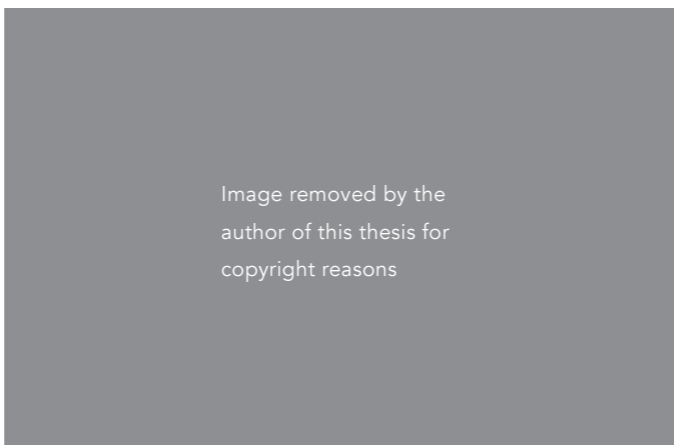


Image 77: Franz Erhard Walther; *Probenähungen* (Store of Trial Sewn Pieces), cotton cloth, foam, wood, various dimensions. Installation view, *The Body Decides*, WIELS, Brussels, 2014. Photo: Sven Laurent. © Franz E Walther. VG Bild-Kunst/Copyright Agency, 2023. **Image 78:** Franz Erhard Walther; *Objects, to use / Instruments for processes*, 2018. Installation view, Museo Jumex, Ciudad de México, Mexico. Photo: Abigail Enzaldo and Emilio García.

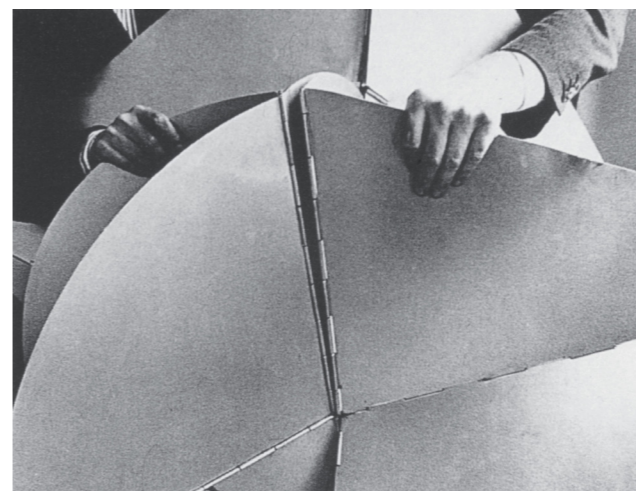


Image 79: Lygia Clark; *Lygia Clark at Signals London, First London Exhibition of Abstract Reliefs and Articulated Sculpture*, 1965. *Bicho* in action. Signals Gallery, London. Image courtesy of Associação Cultural Lygia Clark. ©Associação Cultural Lygia Clark, 2023. **Image 80:** Lygia Clark; *Esculturas de Lygia Clark* (Sculptures by Lygia Clark), 1960, *Bicho* in action. Galeria Bonino, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Image courtesy of Associação Cultural Lygia Clark. © Associação Cultural Lygia Clark, 2023.

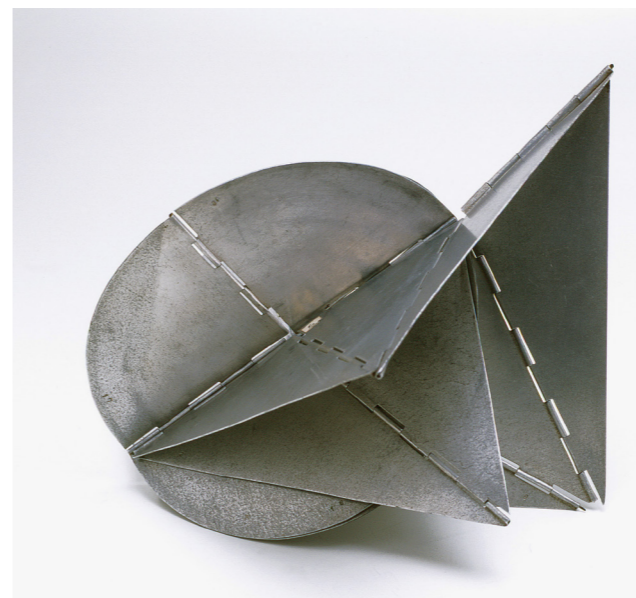


Image 81: Lygia Clark; *Contrário 2*, 1960, aluminium, 310x310mm. Image courtesy of Associação Cultural Lygia Clark. ©Associação Cultural Lygia Clark, 2023. **Image 82:** Lygia Clark, study for *Contrário 2*, 1960, balsa wood, scotch tape, graphite. Image courtesy of Associação Cultural Lygia Clark. © Associação Cultural Lygia Clark, 2023.

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Image 83: Lygia Clark; an unknown *Bicho* being activated, 1960. **Image 84:** Lygia Clark; *Desfolhado* (Leafless), 1960, aluminium, hinges. Image courtesy of Associação Cultural Lygia Clark. © Associação Cultural Lygia Clark, 2023. **Image 85:** Screenshot of a YouTube video showing Walker Art Center curator Peter Eley handling Lygia Clark's *Bicho* with gloves on as part of educational content created for the Walker's exhibition *The Quick and the Dead* in 2009. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7Cq2OVD7dvA>.



Images 86-89: *Golden Digging Gloves*; furry golden yellow fabric for warmth, thermoplastic appendages for easier digging of holes in the sand, after death June 2021.

Cross-subjective objects and Lygia Clark

When Walther was creating his first participative works in the 1960s, other artists were also experimenting with the idea of invitational objects that required the touch and consideration of the spectator in order to create an opening to some variation of a metaphysical experience —the kinds of experiences available to the viewer through sensorial guidance of a specific sculptural object. For example, Brazilian artist Lygia Clark's (1920-1988) 1960s *Bichos*, hinged metal constructions that imply movement and could be moved but have no obvious up or down, front or back, beginning or end, and no obvious use-value.⁶⁵ The *Bichos* could be manipulated by viewers via hinges although I have not found evidence that there was signage in place to direct them to do so; it seems to have been a (verbal) invitation extended by the artist.⁶⁶ The first time Clark had made participation integral to her work, and intended to be handled by visitors as part of the encounter, *Bichos* embody an array of possible experiences. Sculpturally speaking, through the joining mechanisms that provoke or invite movement, play, manipulation, and mutation, Clark's audiences could now directly affect her work through touch; *Bichos* needed the viewer's hands to "become whatever they can become."⁶⁷

Though their touchable size (roughly lapdog or cat-sized) makes them inviting to take in hand and manipulate, the *Bichos* appear somehow unhaptic. Something about the cold, metal planes and sharp edges does not fully translate for me as an invitation to reach out, feel and explore. Still, I can see how the untouchable, uninviting aspect of these objects could result in a fresh noticing of their materiality through my sense of touch as they are manipulated into variable compositions.⁶⁸ Clark constructed the *Bichos* in different sizes and a variety of metals such as aluminium and brass. No single *Bicho* is identical to

65. 'Bichos' translates as Animals or Beasts in Portuguese, and in Brazil has a light-hearted, colloquial tone. According to a Brazilian friend, in the 1960s and 1970s, the word bicho was used as slang and meant 'man' or 'bro' - for example, the phrase 'fala bicho' literally means 'speak animal,' but colloquially, it meant 'what's up man'. This use is "extremely outdated" now, but I still find it funny. (Anonymous Friend, online chat with the artist, April 2, 2023.)

66. For example: photographic documentation of Clark's *Signals* exhibition in London in 1965 - plenty of handling of the *Bichos*, but no overt, signposted invitation to do so: <https://portal.lygiaclark.org.br/acervo/11340/lygia-clark-at-signals-london>. Also her granddaughter was recorded saying: "On many occasions, Lygia had problems during her openings when she asked people to play with her works, but collectors started picking up the works that they had purchased because they didn't want people to touch them." - https://playart.org/essay_difficultcomm.php

67. Tatiane Schilaro, "The Radical Brazilian Artist Who Abandoned Art," *Hyperallergic*, August 11, 2014, <http://hyperallergic.com/142956/the-radical-brazilian-artist-who-abandoned-art/>.

68. This is purely happening in my imagination as I write since I've never handled a *Bicho* in real life.

another. Each is covered in a personal surface (or coat) of scratches and patinas arising from individual construction and handling.⁶⁹ There is an explicit connection between critters and the *Bichos*. Clark notes:

Each *Beast* is an organic entity that only reveals itself totally within its internal expressive time. It has affinities with the conch and shellfish. It's a living organism, an essentially active work. A total, existential integration is established between it and you. A passive attitude is impossible between you and the *Beast*, either on its part or on yours. What occurs is a kind of embrace between two living entities. It's in fact a dialogue through which the *Beast* reacts—thanks to its own specific circuit of movements—to the spectator's stimulus. This relation between the work and the spectator—until now a virtual one becomes effective.⁷⁰

Though their handling by the human-animal hand is a central concept in their execution, their resulting give-and-take is also essential. They conduct an exchange with Clark's participants and respond to and with them. The participant can pat them, and the human hand can manipulate them, but because of their hinge mechanisms, the *Bichos* refuse to give in entirely. They do not bend or move in certain ways. And, although I have never handled a *Bicho*, I would imagine that their metal surfaces would gradually warm up through extended handling and touch by a human-animal, emphasising the cross-connection of a *Bicho* and a participant. More than just an animal metaphor, "the Bicho represents an effort by the artist to recover the bond with reality and not only the reality of living beings, but also social reality and conviviality—an art of participation", states art critic Ferreira Gullar.⁷¹

In works such as *Pedra e Ar* (Stone and Air), Clark continued to explore how objects might affect or awaken our senses through what she termed an "abandonment of art"; the making of relational objects and participatory *proposições* (propositions). With Brazil's military dictatorship and Clark's exile simmering in the background, she conceptualised these later 'non-art' artworks

as a therapeutic tool.⁷² Rather than discrete sculptural objects, the relational objects and the objects involved in the collective exercises of the *proposições* are considered "mediators" to help Clark herself, as well as her clients (Clark's preferred word for her participants), tune into their senses. She sees them as objects that can enable direct experiences "that [offer] a kind of psychological or sensorial healing" based on the psychoanalytic methods of Clark's invention.⁷³



Images 90-92: Lygia Clark; *Máscaras Sensoriais*, 1967, cloth. They were made in a variety of colours, from blue and yellow, to orange, red, black and beige. Images courtesy of Associação Cultural Lygia Clark. © Associação Cultural Lygia Clark, 2023. **Image 93:** Lygia Clark; *Pedra e Ar*, 1966, stone, PVC. Image courtesy of Associação Cultural Lygia Clark. © Associação Cultural Lygia Clark, 2023.

69. See Associação Cultural Lygia Clark, "Obras : Bichos," Lygia Clark, accessed May 23, 2023, <https://portal.lygiaclark.org.br/obras/55680/bichos>.

70. Lygia Clark and Yve-Alain Bois, "Nostalgia of the Body," *October* 69 (Summer 1994): 97, <https://doi.org/10.2307/778990>.

71. Ferreira Gullar, "A Trajetória de Lygia Clark," in *Lygia Clark*, exh. cat. (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1998), 65, <https://portal.lygiaclark.org.br/acervo/1596/lygia-clark-retrospective>.

Translated from the Portuguese original by Google Translate: "A vinculação dessas obras com o mundo orgânico não se reduz ao seu nome, não é meramente metafórica. Na verdade, o Bicho representa um esforço da artista para recuperação do vínculo com a realidade e não apenas a realidade dos seres vivos, mas também a realidade social e o convívio - uma arte de participação, como porá em prática mais tarde."

72. See Christine Macel, "Part 3: Lygia Clark: At the Border of Art," Post - Notes on Art in a Global Context | MoMA (blog), July 20, 2017, <https://post.moma.org/part-3-lygia-clark-at-the-border-of-art/>. And Guy Brett, "Life Strategies: Overview and Selection. Buenos Aires-London-Rio de Janeiro-Santiago de Chile, 1960-1980," in *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979*, ed. Paul Schimmel (Los Angeles: Thames and Hudson & The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1998), 197-226.

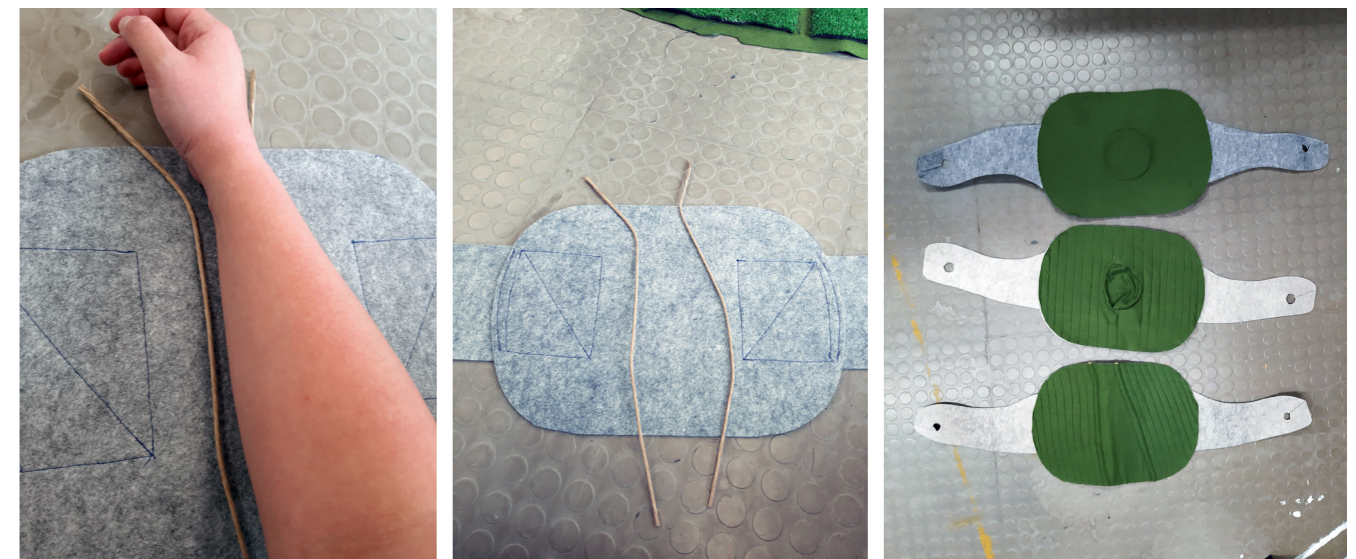
73. Schilaro, "The Radical Brazilian Artist."

Clark's *proposições* eventually shifted in register from the individual, such as the *Máscaras Sensoriais* (Sensorial Masks) and her first relational object, *Pedra e Ar* (Stone and Air),⁷⁴ to the collective, in what Clark named the *phantasmagoria of the body*. These exercises were performed by Clark's students at the Sorbonne, Paris. Such a shift in practice changed the nature of the objects, from discrete artworks to becoming what art critic Guy Brett (1942–2021), who wrote extensively on Clark's work, described as “not an object apprehended by the senses but a sensory filter through which the world is experienced.”⁷⁵ The expression “sensory filter” could also be used to describe some of the means-to-an-end props in this practice. For example, *Yellow Snifter Lanyards* (after death 2021) were made as thermoplastic aids to focus on sense of smell and an attempt to treat scent as vision might be treated—a method of wayfinding, investigation, and a trigger for curiosity (See images 99-101). Elsewhere in the means-to-an-end zone of this project are sculptures like *Suspended felt rest for arms, elbows, paws, hands, chins, and heads - and to bring someone in the backseat closer to those seated at the front* (after death 2022) or *Unfolding hangout seat* (before death 2020), which act as facilitators of relation; they are props that facilitate making-with actions. Rather than focusing intently on sensory inputs, they broker connection and hold the potential for physical compartment/collective comportment to reveal shared sensory zones and experiences.

In Clark's collective relational artwork, *Baba Antropofágica* (Anthropophagic Slobber), a group of people surround a person lying on the floor, push coloured threads into their (own) mouths and then pull them back out, draping the slobbery strands across the body of the prone participant, much like a giant, many-headed spider. When the prone participant is wholly encased in a cocoon of threads, the other participants “reconnect” with the slobber by winding the tangled threads around themselves until they snap. The final stage of the work's proposition includes a verbal exchange between all of the participants



Images 94-95: *Suspended felt rest for arms, elbows, paws, hands, chins, and heads - and to bring someone in the backseat closer to those seated at the front*; felt and thread, string, hook closures, velcro, after death June 2022.



Images 96-97: Making *Suspended felt rest* in the studio. **Image 98:** *Suspended felt rest* (bottom) accompanied by its predecessors that didn't bend flexibly enough while suspended.

74. *Máscaras Sensoriais* included such components as bells near the ears and mirrors near the eye sockets to help minimise visual stimuli in order for the participant to become more aware of their other senses and their inner selves. They also look a little menacing, perhaps associating with gas masks or kidnapping hoods in the context of the military dictatorship in Brazil. *Pedra e Ar* consisted of a sealed plastic bag with a stone nestled on top that moved up and down rhythmically through pressure placed on the bag of breath, by the hands of a participant.

75. Guy Brett, “Lygia Clark: Seis Células (Six Cells),” in *Lygia Clark*, exh. cat. (Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1998), 21, <https://portal.lygiac Clark.org.br/acervo/1596/lygia-clark-retrospective>. Translated from the Portuguese original by Google Translate: “Com as Máscaras Sensoriais, este processo atingiu uma nova fase, o objeto já não era “lá fora”, mas ligado ao corpo, tornando-se não um objeto apreendido pelos sentidos mas um filtro sensorial através do qual o mundo é experimentado.”

recounting their own perceptions and sensory experiences of it. Clark's work is vital to my thinking because it explicitly involves a cross-subjective exchange. I also find the connections between its human-animal slobber and Marlo's dog slobber involved in some of the artworks produced, quite funny in the way such encounters expose cross-species connections, as well as hold the science-fictional potential to "confront ideas ... that have been made to appear natural and inevitable."⁷⁶ (For example that a dog's slobber is more bothersome than that of a human-animal, or alternatively, that our slobber is more intimate and therefore more unpleasant.)

The means-to-an-end props that contain a certain kind of embodied experience of 'being-Marlo' in the last months of his life, are also relevant here. *6 litres of fluid and the failing of a physical heart* (before death 2020), is a prop made of blue felt, which envelops three hot-water bottles that collectively contain the same volume of liquid that Marlo had pumped out of his abdomen in a procedure related to his heart condition (just a few weeks before the exhibition where this artwork would first be encountered was due to open). Strapping this object to their abdomen might allow a viewer (including myself) to feel the extra weight Marlo was carrying. *6 litres* speaks more directly to Marlo's medical condition



Images 99-101: Yellow Snifter Lanyards; fabric and thread, keyring hooks, Polymorph thermoplastic pellets moulded around my face to approximate a funnel-like focused nose. In my hand, on my dad ready to go, around my neck on a night smell-walk, after death in March 2022.

76. Vint, *Science Fiction*, 33.

and a specific moment than any other artwork in this collection of props (See images 104-107). It takes us to a dimension of time that had chronologically passed by as soon as Marlo was back home from the vet, but could be relived through the object indefinitely, bringing us back to the struggle. In a project based on love and affection, these threads of discomfort are important. They characterise Marlo's direct experiences at a particular point in time (and, by extension, ours in the witnessing) and hold open the potential for a myriad of cross-species experiences stemming from our shared, bodily and sometimes unpleasant animality. Clark's notion of the 'collective body' (and the abject slobbery threads of her artwork) is relevant here. Clark says when "the word communication is too weak to express what happens in the group," the collective body and the "[unpleasant] exchange between people of their intimate psychology" is, therefore, an "exchange of psychic qualities."⁷⁷ In this project it could be seen to operate cross-subjectively cross-species through works like *6 litres*. In contrast, the *Leaning Posts* that also referred to unwellness and sickness, operate on other levels and speak about comfort, intimacy, trust, and the quiet gesture (and generalised doggy behaviour) of leaning against those you feel affectionate towards. *6 litres* could also be seen as a kind of storage unit—storing an unpleasant experience.



Images 102-103: Lygia Clark; *Baba Antropofágica*, 1969. Images courtesy of Associação Cultural Lygia Clark. © Associação Cultural Lygia Clark, 2023.

77. Clark quoted in Guy Brett, "Lygia Clark: In Search of the Body," *Art in America* 82, no. 7 (July 1994): 62.



Images 104-107: 6 litres of fluid and the failing of a physical heart; felt, ribbon, hot-water bottles, water, before death August 2020. My brother is shown strapping 6 litres to his abdomen during the exhibition at RM Gallery & Project Space.

Much like Walther's conveyors of real experience, Clark's objects were ingredients of an extensive exploration rather than an end unto themselves. Her audience was "much more than spectators" whereby participants became key in the continued life of each object.⁷⁸ This turn to participatory exchange was a hugely important repositioning of the object and viewer participation in art. Clark's practice helped enable the artist's capacity to shift from the individual creator of self-contained objects to a performer who not only invites the viewer to participate but also "enables experience" and "produces relationships."⁷⁹ Clark's practice prefigured the participative and relational artistic currents we see today. As described by writer, curator, and artist Tatiane Schilaro, it offers an "extreme potential of the intermingling of art and life," to which this project is directly indebted.⁸⁰

Extensions of the human-animal body and Catherine Bagnall

I am interested in how Clark's and Walther's artworks sometimes function as wearable objects, not as costumes but perhaps as an extension of the human-animal body, to facilitate the indescribable action at the heart of the work. Catherine Bagnall is an Aotearoa artist who engages with creating objects specifically for wearing on the body and whose practice sits much more firmly in a performance space.

Art critic and theorist Martin Patrick writes about Bagnall's performance work; the wearing of fashion-adjacent, costume-like garments on walks and in ordinary situations, and how this practice "asserts an identification with animals via a kind of empathic imaginative event."⁸¹ Bagnall uses playful dress and what could be termed prosthetics (fabric tails, ears) in her work to tap into a kind of physically shared territory in which she might "hunt for new sensations and for what [she] can become."⁸² These "surface encounters" between Bagnall and the landscape she inhabits on her walks and her clothing enter into and intimately explore the "embodied sensations" of another.⁸³ It is an encounter with fellow critters mediated through a material object. If there is an anthropocentric risk

78. Jason Farago, "Lygia Clark: Nice to Look at, Lovely to Hold," *BBC Culture*, October 21, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20140529-hands-on-art-you-can-touch>.

79. Farago, "Lygia Clark."

80. Schilaro, "The Radical Brazilian Artist."

81. Martin Patrick, "Exploring Posthuman Masquerade and Becoming," in *Animism in Art and Performance*, ed. Christopher Braddock (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 222.

82 & 83. Catherine Bagnall, "Explorations into Creaturely Sensations and Trap-Lines," *The Senses and Society* 11, no. 2 (July 15, 2016): 203, 199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17458927.2016.1196886>.

in her practice, it may be that it is situated within Bagnall's human-animal imagination and, by extension, our imaginations. We cannot know another's experience, but we can attempt to take deeper, more profound notice of intelligences other than our own through such embodied actions and material means.⁸⁴

While this understanding has strong relevance to my research, the important difference I see between Bagnall's practice and my work is that in creating and using means-to-an-end props and encouraging other participants to use them, I am conscious of not entering into scenarios which become openly performative or clothing and costume-adjacent, simply because those scenarios are distant from the relationship at the core of this project. There also may be a difference in intent between Bagnall's and my work. My focus in this project is on being-with, doing-with, making-with. The 'with' space differs from the performance space of Bagnall's work, though we both still engage with the possibility of embodied actions and material props to take us into cross-species realms.

Having made such a disclaimer about my practice, it needs to be noted that Bagnall also explicitly states that she does not view these garments as costumes, which I take to mean they are not intended to be imitative. Bagnall is not pretending to be another animal.⁸⁵ Her additions of tails and ears to carefully constructed, artful garments that she might wear in human-animal worlds without being *noticed* as an animal, act as a kind of prosthetic; they are an augmentation designed to allow Bagnall access to another's experience through the surface boundaries of our respective ways of being. Bagnall uses these prosthetics to put a toe over the threshold of the human-animal world into the animal world, smudging these ideological, territorial lines behind her, which are then revealed to be more flimsy or ambiguous than first understood. I am also interested in the potential of material objects to allow the possibility of reshaping dividing lines into 'openings' of fellowship or kinship; actions revealed to have been there all along and by learning something new through the embodied sensations also experienced by another, we might not be so far removed from each other. Existing in the same territory as Bagnall's garments but consciously avoiding a performance/theatre space, this practice engages with sculptural props as tools for use, to open up potential and possibility.

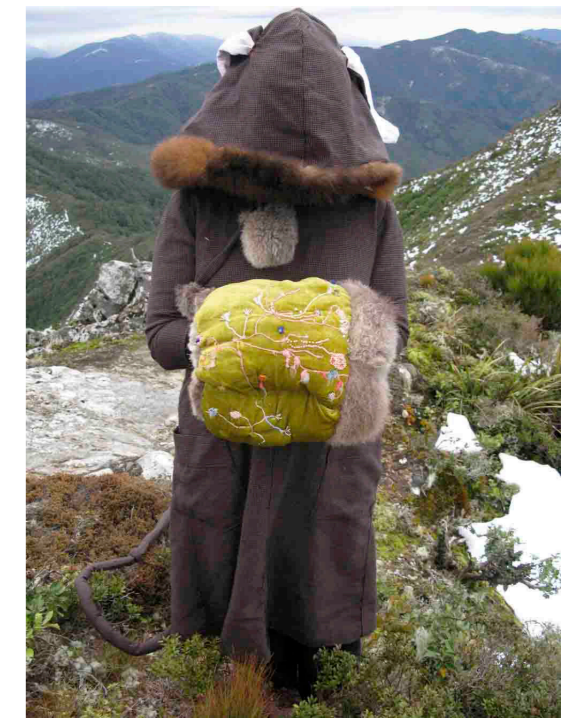


Image 108: Catherine Bagnall; *Becoming Penguin* (Performance Walk), 2016. Part of *Still Waving* (Climate Change Theatre Action Aotearoa 2017) production. Image courtesy of Elspeth Tilley and Frank Sligo. Photo: Frank Sligo. **Image 109:** Catherine Bagnall; *Hooded Dress with Tail*, 2014, inkjet print (documentation of a durational performance work) 200 x150 cm. El Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Monterrey, Mexico. Also exhibited in the exhibition *Inhumano* at MARCO Museum of Contemporary Art in Monterrey, Mexico. Image courtesy of the artist. Photo: Julian Bishop.



Images 110-111: Catherine Bagnall; *Wearing a tail and alpine walking*, 2013. Documentation of a one-day performance in the mountain landscape of Tongariro National Park, as part of the *Strange Baroque Ecologies* symposium. Images courtesy of the artist. Photos: Catherine Bagnall.

84. My use of the word 'another' refers to other species but also fellow humans. This is an attempt to signal that there is no difference in 'value' between members of different species - we can't 'know' a dog's experience any more than we can another human's. They are equally inscrutable, equally removed from our subjective selves. To me, the word 'another's' encapsulates both us and everyone else.

85. Bagnall, "Explorations into Creaturely Sensations and Trap-Lines."

Working-with tensions of possibility

Bagnall's engagement with prosthetics and augmentations is an extension of Amelia Barikin's thinking about science-fiction as a "mode of thought" which acknowledges that the "sensible world," the world in which we all live and feel, is "mutable, and as such can be changed."⁸⁶ For Bagnall's practice, and my own, this mutability, potential or possibility is a "world as a speculative proposition, a realm purposebuilt for extrapolation."⁸⁷ When the 'what-ifs' of this realm are confronted by an artist, Barikin says, this grappling "often begins not with a question of delineation but of navigation: how to work with rather than work out the powerful tension between a limitless fantastical wilderness and the real business of being-in-the-world."⁸⁸

Propositional art objects, like the means-to-an-end props of this project, exist in this working-with space, where they attempt to negotiate the wilderness of difference between the lives of beings of separate species (and now, of different times also) through the real business of surface thinking cross-species. They partly exist within the science-fictional context of the art object as a speculative proposition. The tesseract of Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*, or other objects in science-fiction works, are profoundly interesting objects and transformational to the works of the narrative art they aid.⁸⁹ They have also helped transform how I make and think about the role of objects in this project. Conversely, they are also fictional objects created to illustrate fictional narratives in film or literature. In contemporary art, I have found that such propositional objects can, as Barikin says, "[pull] science fiction off the page or the screen and into the here and now", as Bagnall and Walther do with their augmentations and action objects.⁹⁰ As this project has unfurled, the means-to-an-end props have also

86-88. Barikin and Hughes, *Making Worlds*, 3.

89. Some examples: the Subtle Knife (also known as Æsahættr) in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy - a blade with an edge capable of slicing open the 'fabric' between different universes in the world of the novels, allowing instantaneous travel across time and space and into new lives. See: Philip Pullman, *The Subtle Knife*, Collector's ed. (New York: Scholastic, 2007); The Empathy Box in Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* - a machine/network which links separate users into a kind of collective empathy or consciousness, enabling them to feel the painful experiences of Wilbur Mercer, a central, prophet-like presence in the novel - "This is the empathy box, my dear... when you take hold of these handles, you're no longer watching Wilbur Mercer. You're actually participating in his apotheosis. Why, you're feeling what he feels." The Empathy Box triggers connections the people in this world lack in corporeal life. "I had hold of the handles of the box today and it overcame my depression a little-just a little...I felt everyone else, all over the world, all who had fused at the same time." - Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (New York: Doubleday, 1968). Sophia Brueckner, a futurist artist/designer/engineer designed and built a real-life Empathy Box, and a corresponding wearable Empathy Amulet in 2014. See: <https://www.sophiabrueckner.com/empathybox.html> and Sophia (Sophia Agnes) Brueckner, "Out of Network : Technologies to Connect with Strangers" (Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2014), <https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/95592>.

90. Barikin and Hughes, *Making Worlds*, 3.

also endeavoured to achieve this influence, although in the attempt to bridge the wild chasms between two lives they may not succeed and therefore remain an imperfect technology. Through them I attempt to navigate impossible spaces, and in these bids at connection, and attendant disappointments, I have found the work of the artwork to live within this project.

Embodied knowledge and just doing

As well as solo explorations of embodied knowledge, Bagnall's work also unfolds with others in participatory performances such as *Wearing a tail and alpine walking* (2013). This performance involved a Bagnall-guided walk through Tongariro National Park, held during the *Strange Baroque Ecologies* symposium in 2013. Participants were provided with ears and a tail to wear during the walk, which included a picnic and a concluding discussion. The 'provocation' given to participants before the performance was that the project would explore "how embodied knowledge can play a role in shaping how we think about nature."⁹¹ The images I have found of this performance give it the air of a collective voyage. They show a variety of human-animals wearing Bagnall's cross-species garments and walking together on the varied terrain of Tongariro National Park (See images 110-111). Connected through the teamifying appendages, I imagine the participants finding the shared movements of the body (perhaps arrested in novel ways when a long tail gets caught up on a plant)⁹² a technique for feeling their way along the unstable contact zones present at Tongariro. By engaging together, they might become aware of the tenuousness of perception, butting up against other realities that are a little bit skewed from the ones we unthinkingly inhabit as human-animal.

91. Catherine Bagnall - *Wearing a Tail and Alpine Walking*, "Strangebaroqueecologies" (blog), October 6, 2013, <https://strangebaroqueecologies.wordpress.com/provocations-the-abstracts/catherine-bagnall/>.

92. Catherine Bagnall, "An Experience of Becoming: Wearing a Tail and Alpine Walking," in *Experiencing Liveness in Contemporary Performance: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Matthew Reason and Anja Mølle Lindelof, vol. 47, Routledge Advances in Theatre & Performance Studies (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), 124-29.

“Knowledge is a rumour until it lives in the body,” says the titular character in *The OA*, a metaphysical Netflix original created by Brit Marling and Zal Batmanglij.⁹³ In this series, the protagonists discover the existence of five movements that, when performed collectively “with perfect feeling,” open a route to another dimension where they will no longer be imprisoned; “a form of travel unknown to humans.”⁹⁴ To the antagonist of *The OA* (a researcher scientist driven by a need to know the unknown and who considers his imprisoned subjects as collaborators), the five movements are a technology he desperately tries to quantify, map out and understand, losing his morality in the process. However, to the five people brought together by the search for freedom, the five movements are embodied knowledge of attachment and potential towards innumerable forking paths.⁹⁵ Through an embedded narrative—a story within a story—and an unreliable narrator, *The OA* leaves a lot open to interpretation. The (perhaps familiar) frustrations of dealing with uncomfortable actions potentially leading to nebulous results are shared by almost all the characters; “I have no idea how to talk about this,” says the titular character at one point. “That’s why we’re just doing it.”⁹⁶ Recalling Walther’s chosen word for action, *handlung* (“just doing”), perhaps this commitment to just doing is important to artworks like Bagnall’s garments and my cross-species props: moving-with the unknowable, working-with others through playful, doable embodied actions. This plays out, deploying Broglio’s words, by way “of noticing [Marlo’s] comportment alongside [my] comportment in [a] space and the handling of materials in this zone of contact between species.” (See n 56). Furthermore, it explores a doable material engagement that can lead to a new awareness of the structures we human-animals erect and inhabit.

Doable action, doable collaborative structures

As example of how doable actions and collaborative structures might occur in art can be found in the project *Leisure Conversations in Papakura*, by Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland performance artists Layne Waerea and Chris Braddock, hosted by Papakura Art Gallery in 2022. *Leisure Conversations* is the latest iteration of an ongoing collaborative conversation between the two artists who work together to explore how performance art can cultivate social critique through “surprisingly playful actions and by extending social dialogue.”⁹⁷ A group performance event took place during the exhibition’s run. Departing from the gallery, the artists and participants each carried a *Free sweat cushion-bag* (2022) on a guided walk through the local neighbourhood, passing through carparks, and an overbridge, leading to the nearby Massey Park, with its athletics track.⁹⁸ This track was the site of a group walk and talk, culminating in a series of guided exercises using the cushion-bags to their fullest extent. This involved the participants unfolding the objects, lying on them while doing gentle leg exercises, pulling the hood inside each bag over their bodies like a cocoon, and at the end of the exercises, ceremoniously folding their sweat-bag up again and strolling over to the nearby tiered seating, where a group conversation about competition in leisure, art and sport took place. I was struck by the way the humour of this performance poked at familiar rhythms of suburban life; exercise, finding conversation spots, being passersby to others on the street as we walked to the athletics track, everyone negotiating pathways and social structures of who should go first. No one wore a *Free sweatsuit* on this occasion.

93. *The OA* (Netflix, 2016), episode 4, <https://www.netflix.com/nz/title/80044950>.

94. *The OA* (Netflix, 2016).

95. Some of these possible story paths are shown through the modular narrative structure of the two seasons of the series. Hinting at further possible futures for the characters, which would have been “not simply temporal but ontological,” *The OA* was cancelled by Netflix after its second season, suspending the story in perpetuity and leaving *The OA*’s fans (including me) desolate. Quoted here is Australian film critic Matthew Campora in his review of the book *Modular Narratives in Contemporary Cinema* by Allan Cameron (2010): “Forking-path narratives represent the multiple possible futures of their central characters... The “disjunctive leaps” made by these films are not simply temporal but ontological, and the alternate realities they feature show the different outcomes that follow from “small changes in a single event or group of events” (p. 10). The modularity of forking-path narratives takes place at the level of the story (rather than simply at the level of narration or plot) and represents mutually exclusive realities.” See: <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2010/book-reviews/modular-narratives-in-contemporary-cinema-by-allan-cameron/>

96. *The OA* (Netflix, 2016), episode 6.

97. Layne Waerea and Christopher Braddock, “Leisure Conversations in Papakura,” exh. sheet (Papakura Art Gallery, December 22, 2022). Prior to *Leisure Conversations in Papakura*, the artists collaborated on two iterations of the performance *Free Public Sauna: Sweaty conversations in Ngāmotu*, as part of *Public Relations: A Performance Series* curated by Simon Gennard and hosted by Govett-Brewster Art Gallery in 2022. These performances unfolded in two public sites in Ngāmotu - Pukekura Park on September 10 and a coastal walkway on September 17. Both performances activated Waerea’s custom-made *Free sweatsuits* and Braddock’s *Free sweat cushion-bags*. The artists led their participants through gentle exercises designed to generate free sweat with the unfolding, useable *Free sweat cushion-bags*, while wearing the *Free sweatsuits*. Working with a shared interest in “Ngāmotu’s coastal location, the cultures of public sport, and questions around the use, ownership and guardianship of natural resources - including fresh and salt water,” Waerea and Braddock used playful action, humour and open conversation to explore “how social and legal norms determine behaviour and relationships, and where opportunities for thinking and relating otherwise might emerge.” *Sweaty conversations* continued as *Sweaty Conversations in Tāmaki Makaurau* as part of the *EQUINOX_1:03PM NZST_23-9-22* exhibition at ST PAUL St Gallery in 2022. On October 4, on Braddock’s *Conversation Mat*, a large, cushioned orange object for hosting dialogues, Waerea and Braddock activated the *Free sweat cushion-bags* (minus the sweatsuits) by leading their participants in a series of simple exercises that utilised these objects. A conversation followed. The *Conversation Mat* was activated on other occasions, too, by other artists and groups during the exhibition.

98. Including me in a documentary role, but still carrying a *Free sweat cushion-bag*, which carried out its promise.



Images 112-113: Layne Waerea and Chris Braddock; *Leisure Conversations in Papakura*, 2022. Curator: Richard Orjis. Images courtesy of the artists. Photo: Zahrah Khan.



Images 114-115: Chris Braddock; image from 'Dialogue / Silence / Contact_19-11-22' Workshop (participants: Ziggy Lever, Nikki Donald, Hamish Carter), *Loveseat Cushion*, 2022. Cotton. Fabricator Arlo Pavlovich. In *Leisure Conversations in Papakura*, [multiple performance-sculpture-props, performance & workshop] Papakura Art Gallery, Auckland. Curator: Richard Orjis. Photos: Ena Kosovac.

Nevertheless, we were still noticeable as a relatively large group of people, all intent on moving in the same direction, all carrying a mysterious orange object in our arms. I noticed as I hung near the back to take photos of the group how, in the eyes of people passing by, the sweat-bags turned the participants into a team. Speaking from my perception of events, the sweat-bags also made the participants a team internally, bonding the group through a collective corporeal experience, in plain view of others. To paraphrase author J. K. Rowling, there are some things you can't share without ending up liking each other, and going on a sweaty performance walk in public is one of them.⁹⁹

This bond was helpful in the next set of events that took place on return to Papakura Art Gallery. Braddock introduced other objects related to the *Free Sweat Cushion-bags*, such as *Back-to-back Cushion* (2022) and *Seven-fold Cushion* (2022), both constructed from fabric the true orange of safety-wear, associated with infrastructural operations. Braddock calls these 'performance prop sculptures' for multiple participants to explore, holding or facilitating a dialogue with no hierarchies or agenda.¹⁰⁰ The *Leisure Conversations* participants volunteered to test out these new objects, each form holding several people in variable poses: the *Seven-fold Cushion* held seven people sitting train-like one behind another; the *Back-to-back Cushion* held two people back-to-back; and the yellow and grey *Loveseat Cushion* (2022) held three people on their backs looking up at the ceiling. The prompt given by Braddock's workshop instructions for *Loveseat Cushion* was for all three participants deploying the prop to speak simultaneously about one agreed-upon word, letting their thoughts run free, allowing the utterances of the other speakers to wash over them, potentially influencing what they were thinking and saying. This was a delightful series of workshop/performances to watch, hearing only certain words and phrases in the enveloping babble and seeing the participants' sometimes sheepish grins. It seemed freeing since no one was put on the spot to speak alone—a doable way of deflecting or evading the default structures of social conversation, leading to other ways of relating and making-with. As to the kinds of relation or bond the participants felt while interacting with these objects, I cannot know. However, this lack of conclusion is perhaps the point.

99. J.K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1997), 160. "There are some things you can't share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve-foot mountain troll is one of them."

100. This conception of dialogue takes its cue from Braddock's earlier work *Invitation to Dialogue* (2018-ongoing), which took up the ideas of quantum physicist David Bohm to talk together with no leaders, no plans, and no outcomes. The participants try to "suspend their beliefs, opinions and judgements in order to shift the emphasis from the content of thoughts to the process of thinking... The intention of a dialogue group is to unravel the view that an individual's thinking is all their own, singular and fragmented...." (Christopher Braddock, "Invitation to Dialogue," 2019, <http://www.christopherbraddock.com/artworks/invitation-to-dialogue/>.)

When an art prop doesn't work out for someone else

Bagnall, Braddock and Waerea deploy prop-like objects to work-with others through playful and doable embodied actions that can lead to new awareness about human-animal structures. Like the characters of *The OA* and their unreliable narrator, much is left deliberately open to interpretation. In my practice, living with the unknown, with potentially inaccurate assumptions, is especially unavoidable while working with a member of another species. From approximately May – October 2020, Marlo made it a habit to visit me in the middle of the night. I am not sure if he was hot or could not sleep. Without explanation, though, a paw woke me up at around 2 a.m. most nights during that entire period. This touch was my cue to get up and give Marlo a biscuit. After he had eaten his night-time treat, he would lead me outside, where we would sit in the back area near the lemon tree, listening to the sounds around us. Marlo also sniffed. I had the impression that the cool air was a relief to him. We would sit outside together for an unspecified amount of time and then return inside and back to sleep at Marlo's discretion.

Sitting on the hard concrete was uncomfortable, and I worried that his increasingly skinny frame would not have enough internal padding for the rigidity of the surface. So, I cut a piece of artificial grass large enough for us to sit next to each other and stitched it to bits of foam, creating a folding seat for two—a sculpture related to the *Leaning Posts* and made about four months after the first (before death July 2020). I thought this would be a more comfortable way for Marlo to spend those times outside with me. In reality, though, he never made use of this means-to-an-end artwork. It was a literal prop only in this instance, a support structure for more comfortable seating which would not have led to a meaningfully different experience sitting together, just a more physically comfortable one. I offered it several times in different configurations, with me sitting on it, with me not sitting on it, but he never took up the invitation. It seemed that hanging out casually and leaning on my leg for support seemed perfectly adequate to Marlo. Was this prop a failure in that sense? He chose to look but not use, yet it still showed how fragile my human-animal perceptions and assumptions about Marlo were, even at that late stage of our friendship. Foldable seat for two still holds the potential for two animals to sit side-by-side in physical comfort, but maybe will never be used.

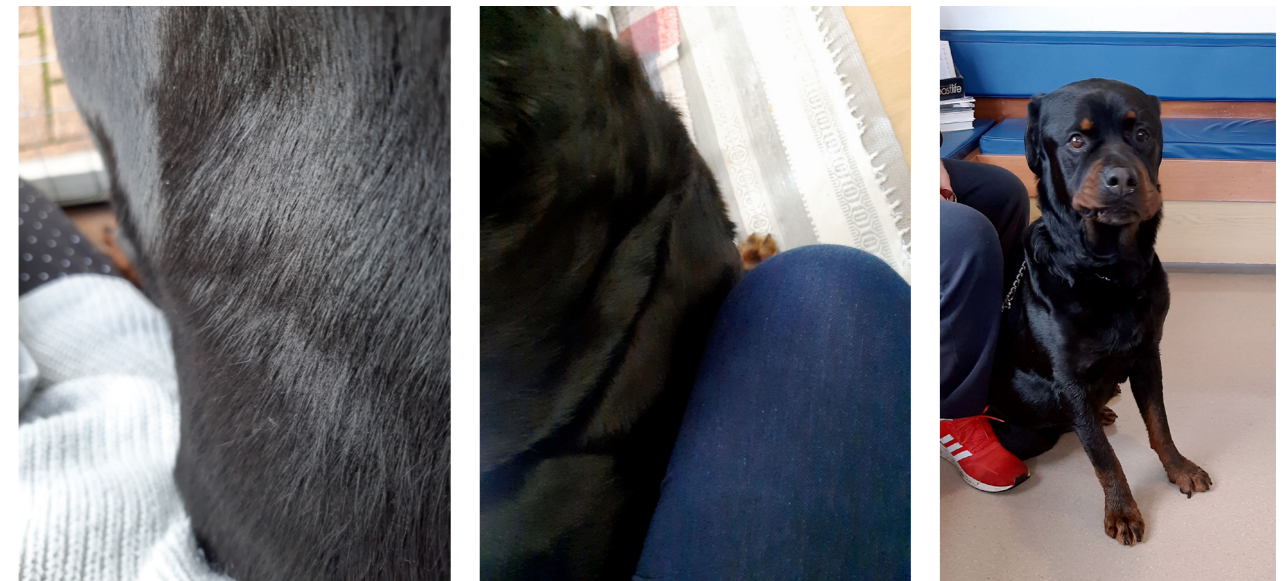


Image 116: Leaning together on the hard ground, July 12, 2020. **Image 117:** The last leaning on October 28, 2020. **Image 118:** Marlo propped up by my dad's feet, July 2020.

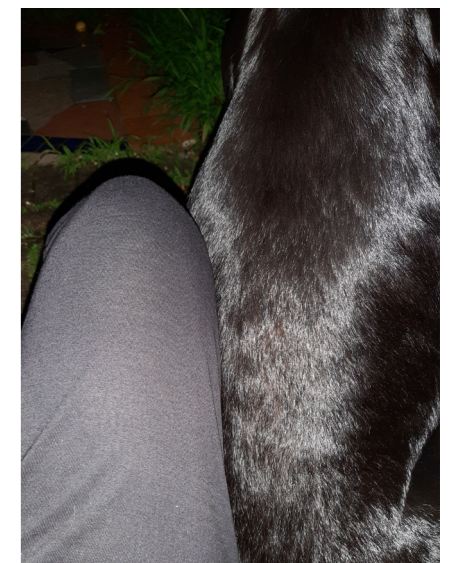
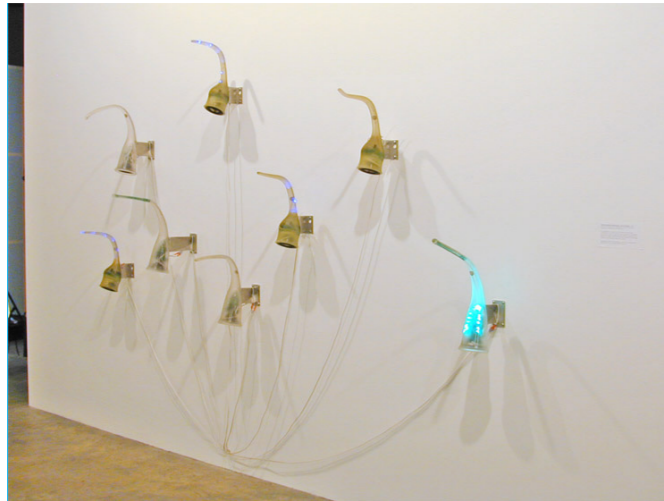


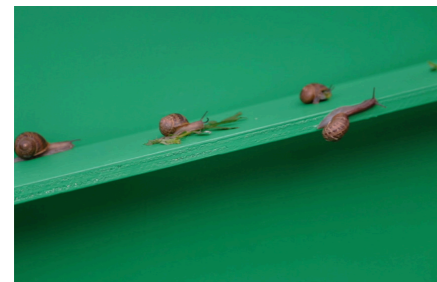
Image 119: *Unfolding hangout seat*; faux turf, foam, wool stitches, before death in July 2020. **Image 120:** Leaning while on concrete August 20, 2020 in the early hours of the morning.



Images 121-122: *Unfolding hangout seat* unfolded and unused.



Images 123-124: Natalie Jeremijenko; *OOZ Inc. (...for the birds)*, 2006. Postmasters Gallery, New York. Installation views of the rooftop garden. **Image 125:** Natalie Jeremijenko; *Communication Technology. (...for the birds)*, 2006. Installation view of electronic perches. **Image 126:** SYSTEMarchitects LLC; *Burst BOP (Bird of Prey)*, *OOZ, Inc (...for the birds)* limited edition bird housing project, 2006; prefabricated marine ply house for local Kestrel (sparrow hawk). All images courtesy of Postmasters Gallery, New York.



Images 127-128: Lucy Meyle; *Snail and duck ramp demonstration videos*, 2018. Duration: 17:55 minutes. Video stills. <https://vimeo.com/422035972>. © Lucy Meyle. With thanks to the artist.

Props and structures of comfort and mutual enjoyment

An artwork I am reminded of when I think about sculptural objects geared towards the comfort of a fellow animal is the iterative project *OOZ Inc.*, by Australian artist, engineer and inventor Natalie Jeremijenko.¹⁰¹ With a background in biochemistry and neuroscience, and using digital and mechanical technological systems, Jeremijenko creates interactive and deeply speculative cross-species experiments that reimagine environmental activism and the quotidian structures of life among different species, particularly in urban areas. Choosing to work with art and design rather than science (as her background suggests) is central to Jeremijenko's practice. Instead of opting for quantifiable results as expected in mass-market technologies or scientific experimentation, it taps directly into speculation and possibility. Akin to props like *Unfolding hangout seat* – an artwork made to improve the comfort of another – is *OOZ, Inc. (...for the birds)* (2006), a “model urban development... for the birds” located on the roof of Postmasters Gallery in New York City.¹⁰² In collaboration with architects and designers, Jeremijenko's installation was an “environmental experiment in interaction with the New York City bird population.”¹⁰³ It involved a 1000-square-foot rooftop garden tailor-made for bird comfort. Amenities included water systems, landscape design with appropriate foliage and insects, a concert hall with a stage and mirror system, a shopping mall, designer perches and an array of limited-edition architect-designed bird housing projects. These included multi-level and multi-family shelters and gathering spaces that provided a “range of comfort zones for different birds throughout the year by assuming various spatial and thermal conditions in response to climate.”^{104, 105} Human visitors were not given access to the rooftop infrastructure and facilities, so a live projection and four video feeds were transmitted to the gallery below, showing the daily events occurring in the garden.

Another project with a similar approach is Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland artist Lucy Meyle's artwork *Duck and snail ramps* (2018), two upright green structures

101. 'Ooz' refers to the word 'Zoo' spelled backwards, emphasising the project's move away from anthropocentric environments like zoos that locate human-animals as separate from other animals, literally demarcating space and constructing hierarchies, where the only possibility for cross-species existence is a kind of one-way street.

102. Natalie Jeremijenko, “NATALIE JEREMIENKO - OOZ, Inc. (...for the Birds)”, exh. floor sheet, (Postmasters Gallery, 2006), http://www.postmastersart.com/archive/natalie06/natalie06_chkl.pdf.

103. “NATALIE JEREMIENKO - OOZ, Inc.” exh. press release, (Postmasters Gallery, 2006), http://www.postmastersart.com/archive/natalie06/natalie06_pr.pdf.

104. Jeremijenko, “NATALIE JEREMIENKO - OOZ, Inc.” exh. floor sheet.

105. “NATALIE JEREMIENKO - OOZ, Inc.” exh. press release.

constructed with built-in ramps for the particular use of snails and ducks (Woody, Alo, Halo, Buster, Waldo and Splodge) in the artist's garden (See images 127-128.) The artwork was presented as a video work titled *Snail and duck ramp demonstration videos*.¹⁰⁶ The spontaneous solo events in zoos enacted by science historian and writer Laurel Braitman also fit in this space of bespoke cross-species comfort props/actions. Braitman, who explores the topic of mental health and recovery among animals, only "goes to zoos... in one very particular way. [She] goes as kind of a clown." In a somewhat bashful tone on the podcast that I listened to, Braitman describes her actions:

LB: One thing I learned at the Bronx Zoo, from some wonderful folks who work there, is that the apes' favourite day of the year is Halloween. Because people come into the exhibits and they're dressed in a costume. Well, it turned out that a lot of the animals, particularly the apes, totally acted completely different on those days ... Because all of a sudden, the people were interesting! ... They look at us as much as we look at them. Imagine how boring it is to be sitting inside your living room and have five thousand people come through and everyone does the exact same thing: they come in. They may or may not knock on the glass. They lift their hand. They wave, expecting the creature to wave back for some bananas reason. Then they pull out their iPhone and they film you for a few minutes. Maybe they point at you, and then they walk away!

PJ Vogt (host): You're having the exact same interaction all day.

LB: Yeah! Imagine how boring that is.

PJV: So, you go, and you're like: I'm going to entertain. There's a suffering here which is boredom and I'm going to try and alleviate it by being a clown.

LB: Yes, and you have to be brave. Wear something crazy, wear a bright colour, wear a hat... I don't know, bring a musical instrument, that's always interesting.¹⁰⁷

In *OOZ, Inc. (...for the birds)*, explicitly interactive objects like *Communication Technology ... for the birds* (2006), were included in the exhibition alongside the rooftop garden. *Communication Technology* consisted of several electronic bird perches which responded to touch, lighting up and emitting a sound imagined as a message from an individual landing on a perch, and intended as a prompt for the human-animals around the object to respond in kind, potentially leading to a new form of communication between birds and humans (the only two animals who can speak human languages anyway). These perches were previously installed in the courtyards of the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art for actual birds to land on. However, at Postmasters Gallery, installed as they were in the gallery space, only humans were able to touch them. Jeremijenko openly recognises the limits of cross-species objects and experiments, noting that *Communication Technology* was "intended to be installed in bird accessible site" but that here it was "reinstalled for remedial human education, in [the] gallery. Although birds have mastered the technology, humans require technical support of a gallery."¹⁰⁸ Further instructions prompted visitors to "act like a bird landing on a perch; (i.e., gently touch landing area; act to complete feedback cycle)."¹⁰⁹

Absurdity, humour and fun join together in *OOZ, Inc. (...for the birds)* to toe the line of a serious concern. In seeking to make the city a better place for all, how can we infer the intentions of another being without falling into the trap of projecting our own human-animal needs, wants and assumptions? Through a discussion of Jeremijenko's work, which here applies "architectural notions of 'luxury'" to cross-species spaces, as well as indulging in potentially 'fictional' cross-species communication, writer and artist Matthew Fuller argues that even this kind of anthropocentrism is potentially turned against its uses to act as an "interpretative layer for one species, whose cognition is partly organized by glamour, without ruining the primary emphasis on addressing the perceptual and experiential capacities of another."¹¹⁰ It seems to be a question of 'and' rather than 'or'; Barikin's question of navigation rather than delineation, working with rather than working out tensions between

106. Lucy Meyle, *Snail and Duck Ramp Demonstration Videos*, 2018, <https://vimeo.com/422035972>. Running time 17:55.

107. PJ Vogt, "Search Engine: How Sad Are the Monkeys in the Zoo?," accessed May 16, 2023, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/how-sad-are-the-monkeys-in-the-zoo/id1614253637?i=1000612760518>. See also: Laurel Braitman, *Animal Madness: Inside Their Minds* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015).

108-109. Jeremijenko, "NATALIE JEREMIJENKO - OOZ, Inc." exh. floor sheet.

110. Matthew Fuller, "Art for Animals," *Journal of Visual Art Practice* 9, no. 1 (2010): 17-33, https://doi.org/doi:10.1386/jvap.9.1.17_1, 25.

an anthropocentric imagination/approach and the real business of being in cross-species worlds. Artworks like *OOZ, Inc. (...for the birds)* deliberately stay with the difficulties in this question through an ‘entertaining’ working mode. Using methods of cross-species sentience, Jeremijenko taps into what designers Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby say is the potential of speculation, that “reality will become more malleable and, though the future cannot be predicted, we can help set in place today factors that will increase the probability of more desirable futures happening.”¹¹¹ Jeremijenko’s practice of speculation does not avoid or explain away inadequacies of communication cross-species but embraces them as a project of hope towards mutually enjoyable artworks that are often humorously pragmatic.

Testing grounds and props for fictional narratives

The practice of Czech artist Eva Kořátková, who describes herself as a “passionate collector of stories”, connects to Jeremijenko’s entertaining working mode of reimagining social structures.¹¹² Unlike Jeremijenko, who works directly with other species to create mutually enjoyable or helpful environments and propositions, Kořátková’s immersive installations, though sometimes speaking to the critterly world, are targeted towards use by human-animals only and focus on the ways institutional, political and social structures and rules impose restriction on and shape individuals. As the props in *Making-with Marlo* are also mainly geared towards human-animal use, Kořátková’s work has been instructive regarding the possible approaches towards making means-to-an-end props available to others in a gallery context.

Kořátková’s practice tends to focus on groups disenfranchised by the restrictive societal systems she questions – human-children, mentally ill populations, human-elderly. However, it has also often included the experiences of animals which in Kořátková’s work, perhaps necessarily, tends to occur from a distance. For example, this distance has taken the form of human-performers activating a wearable costume/prop while narrating another animal’s imaginary story, as in the artwork *In the Body of a Fish Out Water* (2018).¹¹³ Comprising sculpture, wearable props and costumes,



Image 129: Eva Kořátková, *In the Body of a Fish Out of Water*, 2018. Still image from documentation, performance at Flat Time House, May 2021. © Eva Kořátková and Flat Time House.



Image removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons

Image 130: Eva Kořátková; *Daydreaming Workstation*, 2022. Screenshot of audience activation captured from report filmed by producer Zeynep Gokce for Showcase, TRT World’s arts and culture programme, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFh4Yg1Qqpo>.

Image 131: Eva Kořátková; *Daydreaming Workstation*, 2022. Installation with sound, textile, fabric, net, rope and shoes, dimensions variable. Arter Contemporary Art Museum, Istanbul as part of the exhibition *I Sometimes Imagine I’m a Fish with Legs*. Curator: Eda Berkmen. <https://www.arter.org.tr/EN/exhibitions/eva-ko%C5%A5%C3%A1tkov%C3%A1-i-sometimes-imagine-i-m-a-fish-with-legs/1211>

111. Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, *Speculative Everything: Design, Fiction and Social Dreaming* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2013), 6.

112. Eva Kořátková quoted in *NGP On Air | Eva Kořátková: Moje Tělo Není Ostrov*, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30FBDwV0q9w>.

113. Eva Kořátková “In the Body of a Fish Out of Water” 2018, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YnoBvKIBbd4>.

text, collage, narrative and performance, Kořátková's complex environments urge the visitor to dwell inside them, functioning as a never-fixed, continually transformed, multi-zone structure Kořátková (similarly to Clark) calls a "collective body".¹¹⁴ Within the collective body, artwork zones, such as in the exhibition *I Sometimes Imagine I'm a Fish With Legs* (2023), curated by Eda Berkmen at Arter Contemporary Art Museum in Istanbul, contain, host and mediate varied stories from varied sources. They also support visitors, where the exhibition environment is posed as a "setting and a situation that appeal to the entire body, calling for an exploration by touch, movement and imagination."¹¹⁵ The visitors are cast as collaborators "in a quest to create a communal testing ground within the gallery space," a testing ground that proposes the building of "nets and collective organisms rather than isolated islands [in order] to listen to the stories of those who are not often given enough voice."¹¹⁶ In the case of *I Sometimes Imagine I'm a Fish With Legs*, these are predominantly stories shared with Kořátková by human-children in various cities, including Istanbul, where the exhibition was hosted.¹¹⁷ Kořátková's participatory approach draws in visitors as participants through the 'dwellable' artworks in the gallery space. It also draws in earlier participants, like human-children, through meetings and workshops, which seem to be a fundamental operation in her practice. These overtly participative phases of Kořátková's work influenced my workshop during Talk Week III described above. The way Kořátková presents the outcomes of these workshops in exhibition form makes me think of how the means-to-an-end props in this project arise from life events and experiences with Marlo. This assists in responding to my key research question about the ways participatory methods might contribute to discussions on cross-species sentience.

Kořátková's meetings and workshops not only result in collaboratively made sculptural objects such as *Room for Restoring Empathy* (2019), an installation of strangely altered, primary-coloured, child-size jackets lining a wall of Arter Centre cloakroom-style, but are also the site from which a lot of Kořátková's collected stories come into visibility, and take on a life of their own through the individual artworks in various zones of the gallery. For example, the artwork titled *Daydreaming Workstation* (2022), created for *documenta 15* is

114. Eda Berkmen, ed., "Eva Kořátková: I Sometimes Imagine I'm a Fish with Legs | Guide" (Arter Contemporary Art Museum, 2023), https://www.arter.org.tr/Upload/Documents/EvaKotatkova_Guide.pdf. watch?v=YnoBvKIBbd4.

115. Eda Berkmen, ed., "Eva Kořátková: I Sometimes Imagine I'm a Fish with Legs | Guide" (Arter Contemporary Art Museum, 2023), https://www.arter.org.tr/Upload/Documents/EvaKotatkova_Guide.pdf, 3.

116. Berkmen, "Eva Kořátková: I Sometimes Imagine I'm a Fish with Legs | Guide," 3.

117. At the time of writing, this exhibition is still on at Arter Contemporary Art Museum.

replicated in the Arter exhibition (See images 130-131). *Daydreaming Workstation* consists of predominantly pastel blue and pink stuffed and human-sized textile props attached to the ceiling with rope. The shapes of these props bring to mind beds, pillows, hammocks, duvets and quilts, and cartoonishly anthropomorphic critters or monsters, owing to the 'eyes' and 'mouths' embroidered on the upper portion of each prop. All these props are enclosed in a specific gallery zone by an orange hanging net, creating a delineated temporary play space. Visitors to the gallery can enter the *Workstation* and participate in its daydreaming proposition by winding their limbs through a prop, lying down on (or in) one, or wearing some like a cocooning duvet, all offering support and propping up their muscles. A zine produced as an instructional guide to *Daydreaming Workstation* provides visitors with a starting point:

Imagine that, in the world you live, there are no boundaries between bodies and species. Just because bodies look different doesn't mean they can't find a way to understand each other. Fur, scales, feathers or thorns should not be a barrier. Imagine that you don't have to speak to be understood by others. There are so many other ways to communicate with each other. Imagine that bodies do not end at the skin but connect with other bodies just by breathing in and out and by mutually exchanging and storing water.¹¹⁸

If imagining and daydreaming proves too hard or uncomfortable in this space, the visitor can rest on a prop and listen to sound recordings of daydreams shared by human-children in Kořátková's workshops, one of the dreams giving the exhibition its title.¹¹⁹ The way *Daydreaming Workstation* functions as an environment that invites activation by a visitor represents a difference from some of Kořátková's other installations.

For the National Gallery Prague *My Body Is Not an Island* (2022-23), Kořátková employed and rehearsed professional performers who activated the exhibition every Saturday during its run, the performers sharing "with the public the different stories it contains: that of a child bullied at school,

118. Eva Kořátková, "Daydreaming Workstation" (Arter Contemporary Art Museum, 2023), <https://arter.egnyte.com/dl/nvgbOhSXRQ>.

119. "Dream n. 115: I sometimes imagine I'm a fish with legs, but I need water and I need to get to it fast. Otherwise, it's going to be bad. I imagine I'm in the city like I am now, and the water is quite far away. I have to take a tram, then change to another tram, I have to drink a lot, so I don't get dehydrated. When I imagine this and think about my life being in danger and running out of oxygen, I don't linger so much, and I get home quicker." See zine PDF: Eva Kořátková, "Daydreaming Workstation" (Arter Contemporary Art Museum, 2023), <https://arter.egnyte.com/dl/nvgbOhSXRQ>.

of a shrimp being boiled alive, or of a bush torn away from its native surroundings to be replanted in the suburbs.”¹²⁰ This kind of overt theatricality that risks speaking on behalf of another is something I have tried to avoid for *Making-with Marlo*. Koťátková is aware of this potential problem manifest in her ‘performed imaginaries’ as she asks: “What does it mean to speak for someone or something?”¹²¹ Acknowledging the difficulties of this question, especially with respect to cross-species encounters, she remarks, “Are we entitled to speak for them and in what language?”, and concludes:

Still, with this controversy and difficulty in my head I think I was speaking stories that talk about the very *visible* operation and the very visible violence towards these bodies. So, something we can probably agree on that it’s wrong [sic] what we do to the more than human world.¹²²

This lends Koťátková’s artworks a further prop-like operation, where these generalised and fictional narratives prop up the visible ‘realities’ of animal existence or suffering on the platform provided by the exhibition for all the human visitors to hear. Unlike the *specific* stories of the human-children involved in the *Daydreaming Workstation* workshops, Koťátková’s animal narratives, to paraphrase Vint, have given the general animal a voice to address and to look back at us. However, through these fictional generalities, it seems harder to leave our human-animal impositions behind. Although not free from its own difficulties, making-with remains a methodology for *Making-with Marlo* that attempts to reach for the specific, for the significantly other, where means-to-an-end props function as conveyors of more direct experience, even in the face of inevitable disappointments.



Images 132-133: Eva Koťátková, *Eva Koťátková: Moje tělo není ostrov* (Eva Koťátková: My Body Is Not an Island), 7/12 2022—4/6 2023, National Gallery Prague, Trade Fair Palace - Exhibition view. Curators: Sandra Patron and Rado Ištók. Photos © National Gallery Prague 2023

120. National Gallery Prague, “Eva Koťátková: My Body Is Not an Island,” December 7, 2022, <https://www.ngprague.cz/en/event/3473/eva-kotatkova-my-body-is-not-an-island>.

121. Eva Koťátková in conversation with exhibition curator Sandra Patron. See: NGP On Air | Eva Koťátková: Moje Tělo Není Ostrov, 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30FBDwV0q9w>.

122. NGP On Air | Eva Koťátková.

How means-to-an-end props could be encountered

The risk of an arrest of potential actions

Layne Waerea and Chris Braddock’s collaborative performances with the aid of props, Jeremijenko’s structures of shared enjoyment, and Koťátková’s collaborative testing/playing grounds come together as possible approaches towards thinking about how, where and when the objects in this practice live. Each of these artists use objects and props to create environments that can be inhabited, creating an event structure of sorts. For this project—which is not as explicitly a performance project like Waerea and Braddock’s and is not based on interactive technological systems like Jeremijenko’s—it has been critical to think about how the props and objects created in my own practice are or could be encountered.

Exhibited at MoMA in 2014 in the *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948-1988* exhibition, I was interested to learn that Clark’s *Bichos* were installed centre stage but could not be touched by visitors. Instead, two replicas were made that could be manipulated as initially intended by Clark while the *Bichos* looked on from their static display, split from the complex ideas and feelings that gave rise to them.¹²³ This threat of a conventional display taking the ‘life’ out of an object is something I have also come up against many times during this PhD project. There is a potential redundancy for the art object when it is in display mode versus prop. What is a means-to-an-end prop if it is not currently active? How can props be authentically encountered or felt when not being used by a viewer? From the project’s beginning, a tension has existed within the made objects between their material reality, imaginary potential, and fit-for-purpose-ness. I have often felt that being displayed in an exhibition closes them down, transforming them from propositional objects and an entry into a cross-species sensorial experience to something that could be understood as a discarded remnant of the same experience, distanced from the viewer by time, space and reserve—potentially withholding them as an ongoing invitation to cross-species relation.

123. The replicas could also be considered means-to-an-end props. There is a doubling of prop-ness here, props to the original props, approximating the original experience.

This feeling is amplified by the quick, provisional, means-to-an-end manner in which many of the project objects have been made.

In my 2020 exhibition, titled *Conduits, props, leftovers and other attempts to reach across irreducible differences in the search for knowledge of an intimate other* at RM Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau, I placed an assortment of means-to-an-end props into the gallery space with an explicit invitation inside the accompanying printed matter for visitors to “touch and experience any of the objects in the space” as they wished. While several people did engage, especially when I was there to give what amounted to a personal invitation, I think the objects remained mostly looked at and not encountered corporeally. For the most part, the props which had held potential, now felt frozen and static arranged in this conventional white-walled gallery space. Like reading the final pages of a science-fiction story and closing the book, there was a distance created which felt like the arrest of potential actions.

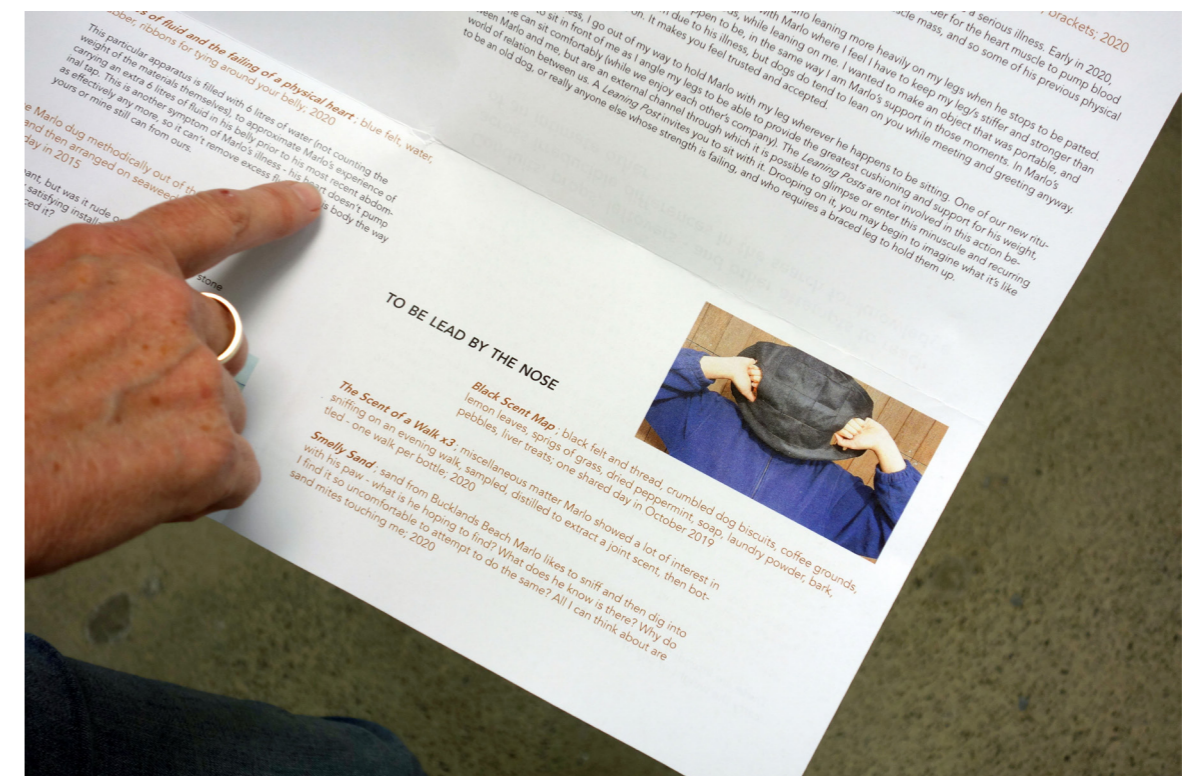
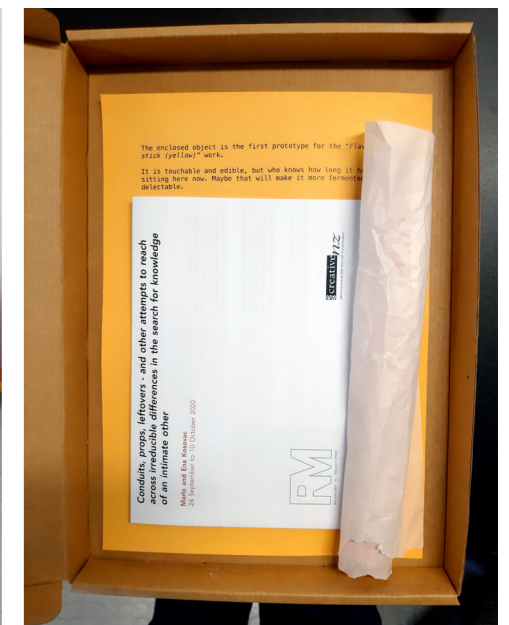


Image 134: A detailed view of the printed matter guide to props that I produced for *Conduits, props, leftover and other attempts* at RM Gallery and project space, before death 2020. Photo: Deborah Rundle & Shelley Simpson.



TO LEAN ON
Landing Place (2019) 100% felt and thread, coffee, hair, ropes, wood, paper, fabric, leather, 2019

TO LICK, CRUNCH AND ENJOY
Please do not lick or crunch on the wall. The wall is made of paper and is not intended to be eaten.

TO CARRY THE MESSAGE
A blue bag of felt and the feeling of a hand on the floor. The bag is made of felt and is intended to be carried by the viewer.

TO BE LEAD BY THE NOSE
Black Bag (2019) 100% felt and thread, coffee, hair, ropes, wood, paper, fabric, leather, 2019



Images 135-149: Marlo and Ena Kosovac; *Conduits, props, leftovers and other attempts to reach across irreducible differences in the search for knowledge of an intimate other*. Installation and detail views. 24 September to 10 October 2020. RM Gallery & project space, Tāmaki Makaurau. This was the first outing of the props in the project. Photos: Ena Kosovac. Bottom left photo taken by Robbie Danger.

I wondered if perhaps a more overtly playful installation would have engaged visitors differently. I am clear that I want to avoid entering into a kind of gamified, interactive art arena where playing with the props almost becomes a winnable game or goal rather than a durational cross-species experience that can be returned to.¹²⁴ My perspective hinges on the way such deliveries of art seem to close down the potential variations of an experience and appear to be “determined by a temporal logic of ending” rather than a “much more difficult logic of continuation.”¹²⁵ As talked about by writer, art critic and curator Jan Verwoert, this logic of continuation speaks to the temporal dimensions of familial life and ongoing relation, which form one of the central spines of this entangled project (made possible/made active by the specific relationship between Marlo, myself and family). Verwoert talks about this as the spacetime of coinhabitation, that “we might have the courage to inhabit when we do away with the heroic fictions of art as instantaneous moments of delivery of great ideas or moments of bringing questions to a final solution.”¹²⁶ The means-to-an-end props are not solutions or immovably defined experiences. They are aids to potentially unlock access to fields of experience that emerge through ongoing relations, props to openings of possibility instead of conclusions. In this way, I am responding to a key research question in this thesis about how an ongoing cross-species relationship between Marlo and me drives the project’s continuous action through making-with means-to-an-end props. It is this relationship that determines the props as potential aids rather than solutions.

In this project, a conventional display of sculptural objects does not serve either the project or the individual artworks. It restricts the potential of props to be taken by the hand (or by the nose, or abdomen) in order for their speculative potential to be considered with any sort of earnestness. This earnestness is less a presumptuous demand and more a part of the desired sense of play or curiosity which is embedded/implied in the project as a whole. My thinking around this

124. Brian Massumi makes a distinction between *interactivity* (a “contracted dynamic form that tends to shrink to the parameters of its objectively embodied instrumental function”) and *relation* (“the full spectrum of vitality that the dynamic form really includes, potentially, abstractly self-expressed in its semblance”). In this context, Massumi discusses the “trap” of interactive art: how “Interactivity backgrounds its own artistic dimension when it concentrates on the function of the instrument to the detriment of the semblant expression.” Massumi argues that is what happens when an art participant/viewer/audience says that the experience of an interactive artwork feels like a video game: “You often feel there’s a trick you need to find and master, and once you’ve done that, you lose interest because you’ve got the feel of it and know how it ‘works.’ When something loses intensity instead of becoming more compelling when you get the feel of it, it is a sure sign that it is operating more on a level of predefined objective function than fully lived relation.” Brian Massumi, “The Thinking-Feeling of What Happens: Putting the Radical Back in Empiricism,” in *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2011), 46.

125. Jan Verwoert, “Why Are Conceptual Artists Painting Again? Because They Think It’s a Good Idea” (36th Association of Art Historians Society Conference, The Glasgow School of Art, 2010), <https://vimeo.com/60549110>.

126. Verwoert, “Why Are Conceptual Artists Painting Again?”

question developed into several different strands of potential engagement with the means-to-an-end props:

- Prop outing for Talk Week I (after death February 2021), where I invited people to sit together and sniff/handle an assortment of means-to-an-end props as an exercise in story-telling and using our senses of smell to engage with art. This was also the first engagement with After Death means-to-an-end props, taking into account the distance between Marlo and us in this moment of engagement.
- Solo events in external sites important to the project in their relation to Marlo, my family and me. These events mostly occurred in my neighbourhood and on Mellons Bay (sites of many adventures with Marlo) and consisted of walking, rock finding and carrying, digging, plaster casting the dug holes, building faux rocks, activating means-to-an-end props in my car on the way to a walking site.
- Prop outing for Talk Week II (after death August 2021). This was an installation of objects, seating, and printed material in my studio space, using the means-to-an-end props and objects as well as the experiences gathered during my solo actions/events at Mellons Bay as a starting point for a broader engagement with further possible participants, beyond me and Marlo alone and my dad.
- Considering my car as a site of the artwork.
- Taking trips (solo and with others) to Mellons Bay and Halfmoon Bay Marina in my car, where various means-to-an-end props were used to activate experiences of cross-species sentience.
- Considering my studio as a hub of potential experiences and actions.
- Installing bespoke equipment offering an engagement with means-to-an-end props in art spaces in workshop format (for example, the *Scent Maps* on a customised hook during Talk Week III, August 2022).
- Experiment with a cross-species prop, *Guinea Pig ramp* (before death 2021). The ramp is a means-to-an-end a prop intended to be worn on the shoulder, and unfurled into the distance of a back yard, where two guinea pigs were roaming wild. This guinea pig legend was part of a story shared during a group dinner, where the storyteller talked about her neighbour’s guinea pigs. They had been seemingly forgotten in the wake of the arrival of both a dog and a human child in the neighbour’s household and let loose to live alone (which they seemed to be excelling at). I intended the *Guinea Pig ramp* as a kind of gift to the storyteller, a ramp towards potential connection with these guinea pigs who seemed to be quite wary of coming close, but by the time I had constructed the ramp the storyteller was no longer living in the same house. This was (unfinished) experimentation with a means-to-an-end prop as a gift for another’s particular use, where I pondered my distance within the artwork and prop. Here the potential action of the prop springs not from a significant cross-species bond, but a conjecture ‘twice removed’ about both the desires of the human-animal and the guinea pigs in question.

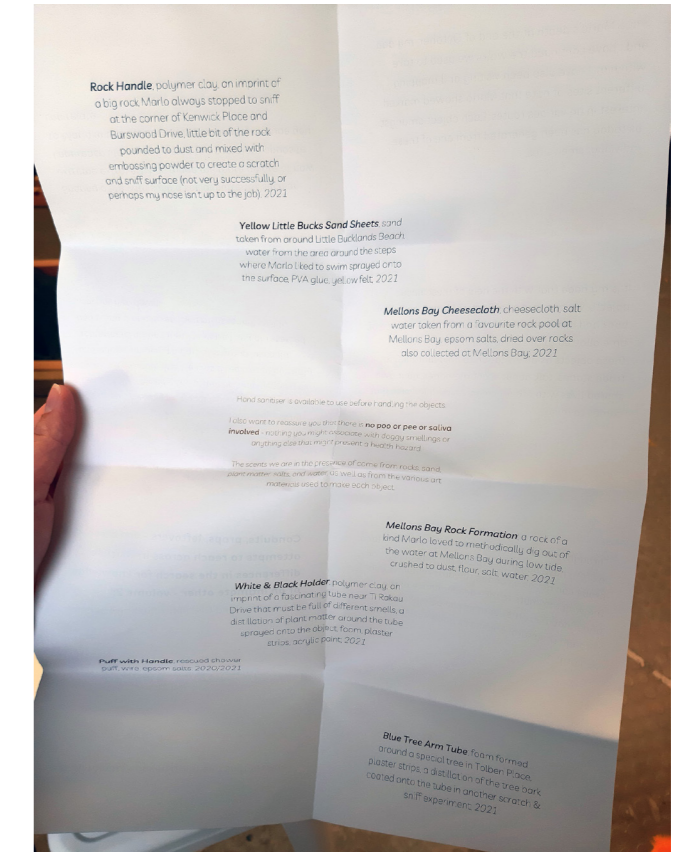
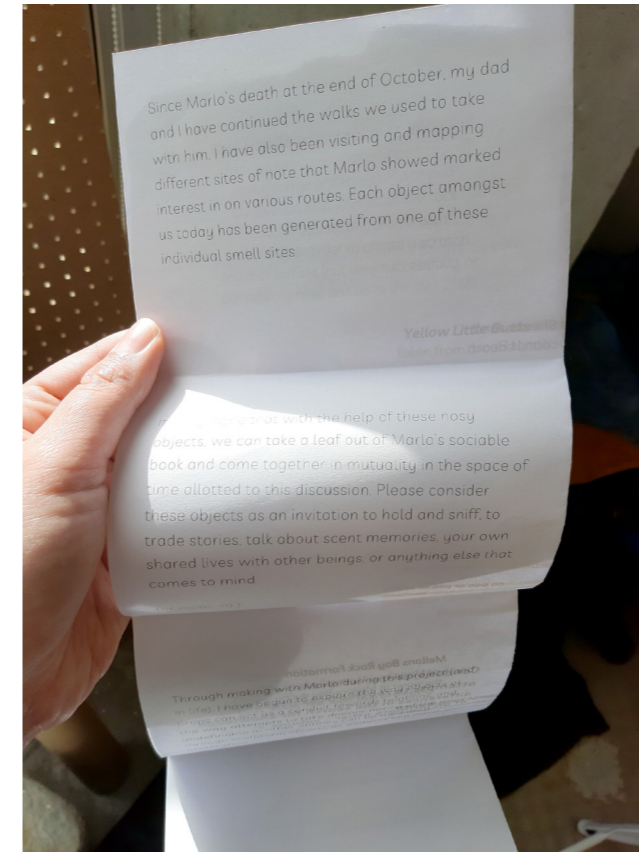
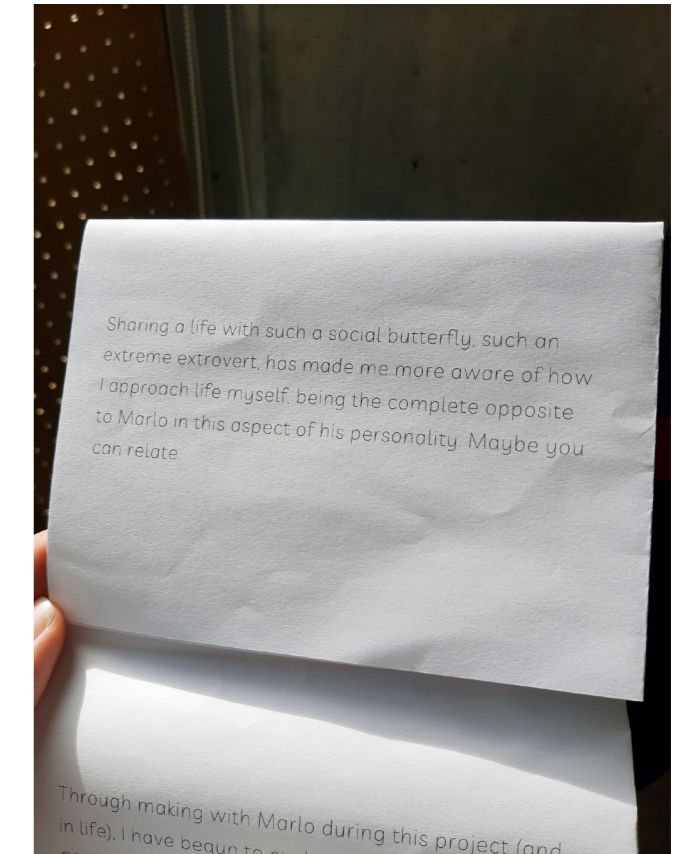
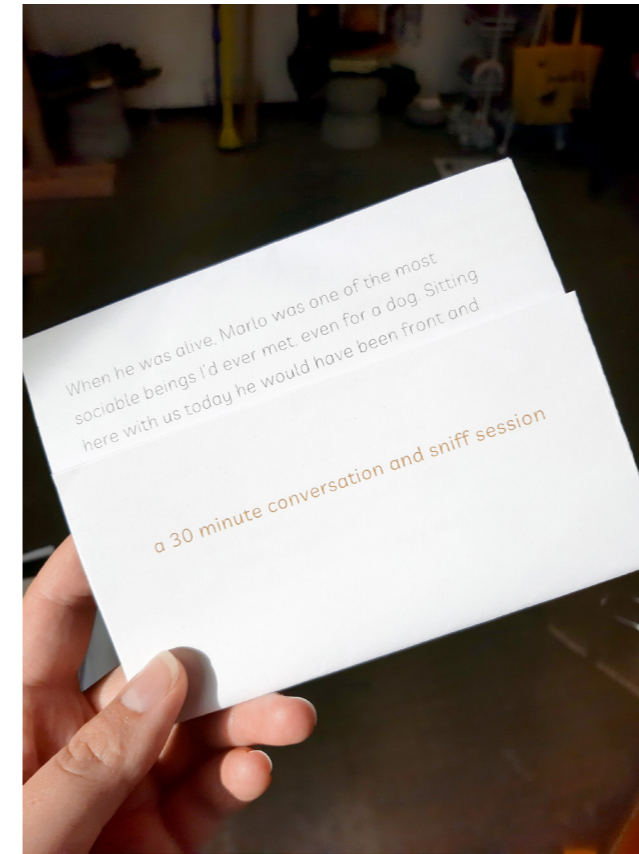


Image 150: Set up for Talk Week I event in progress. I set up comfortable seating and an array of props on two moveable studio tables. A stack of printed matter guides to the event/props eventually sat alongside the props on the tables. **Images 151-152:** Means-to-an-end props in progress for Talk Week I. Each prop was generated from an individual smell site Marlo showed interest in. These sites of note were visited and mapped by my dad and me on continued walks in the weeks following Marlo's death.

Two examples of the smells/props present: *White & black holder*, polymer clay, an imprint of a fascinating tube near Ti Rakau Drive that must be full of different smells, a distillation of plant matter around the tube sprayed onto the object, foam, plaster strips, acrylic paint, after death 2021 & *Rock handle*, polymer clay, an imprint of a big rock Marlo always stopped to sniff at the corner of Kenwick Place and Burswood Drive, a bit of the rock pounded to dust and mixed with embossing powder to create a scratch and sniff surface (not very successfully, or perhaps my nose isn't up to the job), after death 2021.

Images 153-156: Views of the unfoldable printed matter guide for the props offered during the Talk Week I event. I called this outing of the props *the nose behind the sniff, the hand behind the touch*, after death February 2021.



Images 157-174: Mellons Bay activities, after death 2021. In no particular order, these activities are: walking, digging, sitting, plaster casting, foam casting with my dad, building faux rocks, activating means-to-an-end props in my car on the way to Mellons Bay, finding the need for a digging prop.

Storage situations, inventory spaces, supply hubs

In thinking about different approaches to enacting encounters with the means-to-an-end props, two aspects of Franz Erhard Walther's work have been fundamental to this project; his idea of a storage situation, and his parallel instructional practice that works in tandem with the three-dimensional objects.

Walther's first participatory work, a set of 58 separate objects titled *1. Werksatz* [First Work Set] 1963-69, was demonstrated at *documenta 5* in 1972. In reading accounts of this demonstration, it seems that the audience response and participation was in some ways disappointing to Walther as an artist.¹²⁷ After *documenta 5*, Walther packed up each of the objects into canvas-covered bundles and stored them on a wooden shelf he had built. He called this new iteration *Lagerform* [Storage Form] and for around two decades until 1997, *1. Werksatz* was only exhibited as *Lagerform*.

I am very interested in this notion of a "storage situation"¹²⁸ as "a designation that names both an object and a state of being," where Walther's objects in question were folded and placed as they would be if they were stored.¹²⁹ I like the idea that they are awaiting activation. In a storage situation, they can be encountered as functioning stored objects, like clothes in a wardrobe, speaking to the potentialities of the objects within. When a viewer intra-acts with them, they become something else again. Crucially, Walther's conception of *Lagerform* places it at equal value to the potential work's actions and treats them as two poles of the same sphere of purpose. For Walther, *Lagerform* takes up the notion that the "action can also be performed in your mind, starting from the storage form."¹³⁰



Image 175: Franz Erhard Walther; *1. Werksatz* (First Work Set) at *documenta 5*, Kassel, 1972. View of the action *Zentriert* (Centered), 1967. Photo: Timm Rautert. © Franz E Walther. VG Bild-Kunst/Copyright Agency, 2023.



Image 176: Franz Erhard Walther; *1. Werksatz in Lagerform* (First Work Set in Storage Form), 1963-69, canvas, foam, wood, mixed media. Installation view, Kunstmuseum Luzern, Switzerland, 1992. Photo: Emmanuel Ammon. © Franz E Walther. VG Bild-Kunst/Copyright Agency, 2023.

127. Caroline Lillian Schopp, "Active Duty: The Art of Franz Erhard Walther," *Artforum* 56, no. 6 (February 2018). In her translation of a recording of Walther's demonstration at *documenta 5*, art historian Caroline Lillian Schopp notes that as Walther finished his demonstration, there was a rush for the door, and Walther could be seen and heard shouting "indignantly" to not walk over the piece. He then answered questions from the remaining viewers in a "markedly ill-tempered tone" about the "message" of his work which Schopp translates him describing as "open," "equivocal," and "not purposive."

128. Franz Erhard Walther, with Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Attempt to Be a Sculpture: Franz Erhard Walther," *Mousse Magazine*, April 1, 2014, <https://www.moussemagazine.it/magazine/franz-erhard-walther-hans-ulrich-obrist-2014>.

129. Schopp, "Active Duty."

130. Franz Erhard Walther, with Manfred Miersch, in *Skulptur antwortet* (Berlin: Mies van der Rohe Haus, 2009), 24-25, quoted in Erik Verhagen, Susanne Richardt, and Franz Erhard Walther, *Franz Erhard Walther Dialogues*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Madrid Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2017), 41.



Image 177: The boot of my car during the first trip to Mellons Bay Beach I took others on, after death June 14, 2022. Several means-to-an-end props are available. I took the photo before our walk on the beach.

Lagerform relates to my thinking around my car, particularly the boot area and the extendable back seat where Marlo would sit. I have a little red Toyota Passo, with a strangely spacious hatchback boot that has been very useful in the project. The boot here is a storage of potential containing means-to-an-end props awaiting use at a stop on a trip. Additionally, the extendable car seat (moved for Marlo's comfort) speaks to some of the resourceful 'administrative' means-to-an-end-props found elsewhere in the project—custom structures of support for either the props themselves or for participants. This thinking extended into the making of fit-for-purpose objects such as *Foldable carrier for storing and transporting means-to-an-end rock digging props* (after death 2022), *Hanging backseat pouch for carting around golden monkey hands and other means-to-an-end props* (after death 2022) and *Suspended felt rest for arms, elbows, paws, hands, chins, heads and to bring someone in the backseat closer to those seated at the front* (after death 2022). The car itself can be seen as a roving device; a transport object supporting transitory experiences and holding potential within, much like Walther's *Lagerform* structures. The car takes us into the world of smells, slobber, digging spots; all those doggy enthusiasms and fun places Marlo enjoyed visiting and exploring, which are now inextricably attached to him and form an echo in my car. For me, including the car as a site of storage and zone for the means-to-an-end-props, was the opportunity to take the project away from the studio and gallery context into unstable cross-species contact zones to negotiate anthropocentric defaults in art-making and installation.



Images 178-179: Using *Long Yellow Snifter* while driving through the site of an old walk with Marlo, after death August 8, 2021. *Long Yellow Snifter* is a variation on the shorter, face-scaled *Yellow Snifters*. Could it funnel distant smells towards your nose?



Image 180: The boot of my car holding a folded *Foldable carrier for storing and transporting means-to-an-end rock digging props*; felt cut to fit into the boot of a 2005 Toyota Passo, stitched together with wool yarn, artificial turf, string, glue, thermoplastic handle, velcro closures, bespoke grooves for each prop, after death 2022.

The storage space is a space of potential that flows into a kind of rehearsal space as props are activated. *Hay Fever* (before death 2020), when folded and sitting on the gallery floor is static and strangely disappointing. Located on the floor, rather than a hook or pegboard (or the boot of a car), it appears as a sculpture whose invitation is obfuscated and inappreciable. Yet, when picked up and draped across shoulders, it is activated into a means-to-an-end prop that encourages you to ‘rehearse’ or maybe ‘sample’ the action of a dog rolling on the grass. In this regard, my studio space vacillates between making space, storage, active use of objects and a central hub of potentialities.

Some of the objects made in this practice are a specific means-to-an-end prop, others are drawings, or casts, recordings—leftovers of actions. They have a fluxy relation to each other. In these experiments and potentialities, and what artist Diane Borsato refers to as the “epistemological potential”¹³¹ of being close to things, I find a useful methodology that art historian and critic Briony Fer discusses as “[t]hinking... through things, where material things are a necessary condition of thought” and that this “suggests that we do not think about things so much as through things.”¹³² The accumulation of props, objects, drawings, photographs, and casts in the hub of my studio then becomes a space of experimentation and testing (and potential ongoing action), thinking through a “sensual encounter with the world at hand.”¹³³ (Or ‘at nose’). Artist Gabriel Orozco’s *Working Tables* (1996–current), an important early reference in the context of leftovers, perform in that manner, not as inventories or archives but as explorative spaces, testing spaces. Orozco states that they are an “accumulation of explorations,”¹³⁴ of objects that have been kept on standby for the future. I consider the leftover used in this practice similarly—not just as a record, but as a suggestion of “forever-fluctuating possibilities”.¹³⁵



131. Diane Borsato quoted in J. Paul Halferty, “Intimate Interventions: An Interview with Diane Borsato,” *Canadian Theatre Review* Winter, no. 137 (2009): 17.

133. Briony Fer, “The Scatter: Sculpture as Leftover,” in *Part Object Part Sculpture*, ed. Helen Molesworth (University Park, Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press and Wexner Center for the Arts, 2005), 224.

133. Fer, “The Scatter: Sculpture as Leftover,” 231.

134. Gabriel Orozco, *Gabriel Orozco. Working Tables, 2000-2005*. 2005 (The Museum of Modern Art, 2005), <https://www.moma.org/multimedia/audio/174/1933>.

135. Fer, “The Scatter: Sculpture as Leftover,” 228.

Images 181-203: My studio as a working hub throughout the project.

Choosing-from

In *Making-with Marlo*, the objects I make result from imperfect technologies. No amount of making or using the props will ever allow me to truly experience the world as a dog, even one very close to me. So, the speculative artworks I have been making in the form of means-to-an-end props can only really ‘take off’ in the realm of art, allowing me to explore such charged and unanswerable questions through a participant’s sentience and their openness to an encounter with the sentience of others.

The state of being in storage awaiting some activation could be shifted in register from a static state to a more practical solution for a potential encounter with these objects. Storage not as a coddled archive of material for some future purpose, nor a dusty, uninterested pile of bric-a-brac not in use, but storage as a choosing-from. A selection of objects and potentialities at your nose tip or fingertips. An exhibition as a kind of inventory space, a supply hub.

My thinking around this also inevitably turned to Marlo and his green box of stuffed toys; chewable objects and balls repeatedly played with, chewed, ripped, unstuffed, enjoyed, and explored at some point. They would then be neatly placed into the box by one human-animal or another, only to be uprooted and selected from again in the future (now in the past) in moments of Marlo’s excitement or boredom. We also liked to play a game, which I will translate as ‘choosing’, where the practical tool of my human-animal hand would act as an extension of Marlo’s ‘will.’ It would find and extract the correct object of interest more easily than a dog’s snout. During this game, we communicated



Image 204: Marlo investigating an object with his mouth, July 12, 2020.

in ways that I cannot adequately describe in words—through body language, facial expressions, eye contact, waiting and watching, sounds—but, which I am confident in saying, was a fun way to spend time together for the both of us.

Could such an encounter allow viewers to take the objects’ playful invitation seriously? Could it offer the opportunity to seriously consider their potential towards smudging the threshold between two different species in the privacy of your mind without having to be on display yourself?¹³⁶ How could this be done?



Image 205: Rare photograph of Marlo and I ‘choosing’, July 12, 2020. **Image 206:** Green box after ‘choosing’ had finished on this day. Only five photos exist of this game. I never took any others, before or after.

136. ‘Smudging’ for me is interesting for its meaning of smearingly rubbing something to make it indistinct. Within the cross-species context of this project, smudging is a way to describe the potential of what the means-to-an-end props do or attempt to do, which is to smudge borders between species. These borders exist because different species exist. Those differences are fundamental and should be honoured. However, the project seeks to muddle the way borders are wielded as tools of hierarchy in anthropocentric framings of life. It is less about erasing or merging a border between a dog and a human – a means-to-an-end prop will never turn one into the other, and you will not suddenly transform into a Rottweiler if you sniff a tree using the Snifter. Instead, it is more about smearing or smudging that border in a way that reveals its inherent permeability, its inherent potential of attachment as a surface contact zone, thus revealing that the ‘smudging’ is already ‘in action’ before my human involvement.

Instruction through construction

While all the objects in *Conduits, props, leftovers* were concerned with the sensations of a body, I found that people did not seem to be comfortable or unselfconscious when publicly interacting with the objects. In pondering these difficulties, many questions came to mind in my attempts to navigate the potential ways the means-to-an-end props could be encountered. Would private dissemination be more effective if I only wanted people to interact with the means-to-an-end props by using them to sniff, lean, dig? Additionally, is an imaginary/mental reaching-with enough? Or does the hand (or nose or abdomen) have to physically reach or lean for the truth of the Marlo-doggy sensation to be perceived and understood? No matter how deeply imagined, it seems to me that the material truth of an embodied experience can only be perceived through the senses. For example, is reading the backstory behind an artwork like *6 litres* enough to take you into the opening of the threshold to another's world? Or is strapping the object to your stomach the only way to have a genuine experience of being-Marlo in that phase of his life? Does engaging this action in a public setting like an art gallery somehow undo the speculative potential? Can you really focus on the shared sensations of someone else if you feel like you are being forced to do so in public? I wonder, is this just my situational response?

In its workshop formation, the encounter with *Black Scent Map* and other *Scent Maps* at Talk Week III (August 2022) is interesting to consider in context. The props were all hung on one hook, low on the wall near an entrance way to the building with an invitation to take them off the hook and pass around. The participants did not know what they were doing until they were doing it. I wondered if this was the difference between being-in something or with something rather than talking about something.

An intra-active element is only sometimes clear or comfortable when encountering art objects. People tend, as a rule, to refrain from touching art. Without the backstories and narratives behind each prop, such as *Black Scent Map*, it would likely be encountered as any other sculptural object; looked at but not touched. This brings me to the second fundamental aspect of Walther's work that has shaped my thinking about encountering the project artworks.

The invitation to action is a cornerstone of Walther's practice. It can be seen both in how Walther physically demonstrates his action objects to potential users and as an embedded invitation or guide within the shape or form of the actual objects themselves. I understand this as invitation/instruction through

construction. His participatory objects exist as a kind of guide to themselves. A user can only activate each object in a certain way, which then turns into variation through repetition. For example, *Für Zwei* (For Two), 1967, from *1. Werksatz*, 1963–69, is made from canvas fabric containing two oval holes designed for two participants to put their heads through and face each other. Through activation over several participants using this object, alternative formations could potentially occur. Considering Walther's work in light of current discourse around cross-species or more-than-human contexts forty years on, this aspect of his practice appears exciting to me.

The almost-controlling nature of Walther's sculptural forms is also interesting in terms of how his work is sometimes conceptualised as emancipatory by creating "ever larger structures for collective action."¹³⁷ How much agency is there, however, if the object intra-acted with prompts positioning the body in a certain way to 'reach' what you cannot attain without it? Some of Walther's objects bring strangers together but do so as an extension of an overall arrangement of bodies that the artist engages with and not as an act of participative community-building or liberation. They might bring people physically close but "with no promise of redemption."¹³⁸ To me, this is relevant in terms of negotiating anthropocentric defaults in art-making and art installation within *Making-with Marlo*. Walther's objects are not subordinate to his human users. I wonder, then, is everyone subordinate to Walther himself?¹³⁹

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Image removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons

Images 207-208: Franz Erhard Walther; *Für Zwei* (For Two), 1967, green tent fabric with two oval openings through which two participants can put their heads, activating the sculpture in tandem, 460x1220mm. <https://www.artforum.com/events/franz-erhard-walther-3-197276/>

137. Elena Filipovic, *Franz Erhard Walther: The Body Decides* (Brussels-Capital: WIELS, CAPC & Konig Books, 2014). Exhibition catalogue published on the occasion of the exhibition "Franz Erhard Walther: the body decides" held at the WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels, 21 February-11 May 2014.

138. Schopp, "Active Duty."

139. There is something also here for me about freedom of movement and walking a dog on a lead - the problematic but unavoidable pet space.



Images 209-230: Mellons Bay Beach Walk 1; after death June 14, 2021. These photos are presented in very rough chronological order. This outing of props happened with my friend and studio colleague Emelia French, and my supervisors Monique Redmond and Chris Braddock. Photos: Monique Redmond, Emelia French, Ena Kosovac.

Inadequate directions

I view Walther's demonstrations as instructions of a kind, but instructions aware of their potential inadequacy; the inability of words and language to fully communicate a viewer's experience of said actions. Walther talks about the unsuccessful reach of his mediations between the users and objects during the *Spaces* show at MoMA in 1969 in his diary written and published after the exhibition:

the public was not at all prepared, and definitions and ideas got mixed up. For the process to be activated, the participants had to be given something capable of familiarizing them with the evolution of a concept of utilization. This made it necessary, first of all, to communicate exactly the data specific to the □¹⁴⁰ in order to make explicit, in relation to the □, their connections with time and distance, their surroundings, their psychic and physical state, their awareness, and movement, dilation, transferences, etc. To the extent that these explanations cannot always be conveyed by language, one must try through activations to make the possibilities and concepts of utilization explicit. The words evolution, engenderment, formation, awareness, process, time and concept recur frequently in the *Tagebuch*. The aim is not to say something about the WORK.¹⁴¹

In my project, it became clear that the person faced with a means-to-an-end prop needs some guidance or assistance if they are to do anything with the object, besides look at it. As this project springs from such a personal place, the relationship between Marlo and myself (and my dad and the rest of my family by extension), some backstories are needed to situate the viewer with-Marlo, in spaces of cross-species sentience and not spaces and encounters which might stir up confusion or difficulties in connection or understanding. In his diary, Walther talks about definitions and ideas getting mixed up for the unprepared public, and that was just between humans! A cross-species project presents still greater stumbling blocks. How could I possibly make explicit any connections with time and distance, or psychic and physical states across the gulfs of species, while exploring cross-species spaces? I have tried different methods of sign-posting or guiding participants into cross-species encounters with the means-to-an-end

artworks. For example, the printed matter accompanying most objects and car trips included titles, backstories, extended descriptions and experimental pieces of writing from other-than-human perspectives. Are these written pieces and printed ephemera also prostheses to the reception, understanding and connection with the means-to-an-end props? Do they also open sometime and somewhere in the making-with tesseract of this project and invite or guide us into cross-species spaces beyond the bounds of human-animal conception? Geared towards humans (much like the means-to-an-end props themselves), the guides flirt with anthropocentrism and navigate it, perhaps as Matthew Fuller's "interpretative layer" through which human-animals, creatures of speech and stories, encounter and process the world—and not to take away from the different perceptions and capacities at play in the cross-species action of a means-to-an-end prop the guides work-with.

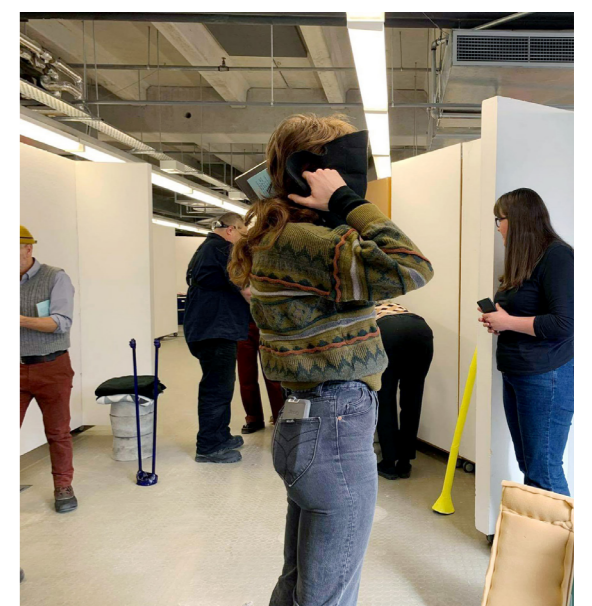
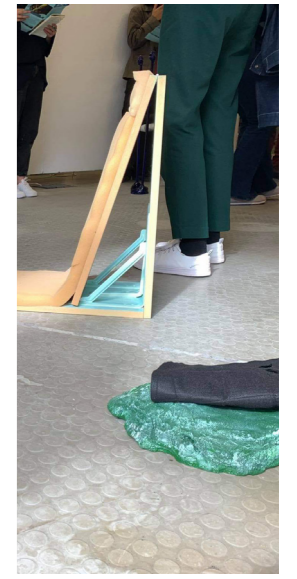
Additionally, in considering how Walther's work is documented (because the action at the centre of the work cannot be documented or grasped *without* the action), Walther creates *Diagramme* (Diagrams) and *Werkzeichnungen* (Work Drawings) as a parallel practice augmenting his action-works. He states explicitly that he "Never!" sees them as instructions but instead views them as "parallel stories: reports of experiences and an attempt to formulate ideas and projections that came about in the pieces"¹⁴²—prostheses to the reception and understanding of his action-works, which are difficult to know without a direct experience.

What I have referred to as the integral failures of this project are also continual attempts at reaching (with-Marlo) the anchor points that might help to construct a bridge to a direct and meaningful experience of connection, even when such a connection can seem desperately impossible. As atemporal tools of access and communication, means-to-an-end props offer the potential to help. I can sense that bridge; parts meeting haphazardly, somewhere, sometime, across the gap between dog and human, the gap between the living and the dead. A *Snifter*, a *Golden Digging Glove*, small but still acting in their own personable way as the mighty tesseract of *Interstellar* might do, continually reaching towards those anchor points of personal experience. It's nice to imagine that all those wavering points of a shared life will lock together and pull us, tilting, towards one another (again). Maybe it's just a matter of reaching a little further.

140. Walther represents the "limitations" of language by using an icon of a square box to speak to all the potentialities present.

141. Verhagen, Richardt, and Walther, *Franz Erhard Walther Dialogues*, 7-8.

142. Verhagen, Richardt, and Walther, *Franz Erhard Walther Dialogues*, 30.



Images 231-246:- Talk Week II outing of props, after death August 2021. The props available to my group all arose from my trips (solo and with my dad) to Mellons Bay Beach in the months after Marlo's death. For this iteration of Talk Week, I set up seating (by casting concrete in the plastic buckets I had used to create plaster casts of dug holes), provided a new printed matter map to the props and introduced this hub of potential actions in the context of Marlo. Photos: Emelia French, Antonia Nisbet, Ena Kosovac.

Chapter 2:

Making-with

Contingent attachments

Tapping into horizontal cross-species thinking

While attempting to make sense of the participatory contexts in which this project exists, I came up against an anthropocentric framing that I found challenging to nose my way out of. For example, I used the terms ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ participants. In writing about an artwork like *Mellons Bay Walk 2* (after death 26 June 2022), where two dogs, Clover and Oto, were explicit participants, I named them primary participants. I grappled with how their critterly/doggy participation changed the shape of the ‘art’ walk into something more akin to a ‘simple’ dog walk in the context of everyday life with a dog. By contrast, my thinking about the art ‘action’, the art we were there to activate, became secondary to what was happening in the moment with Clover and Oto.

As this thesis explores smudging lines of division (making-with as a meaningful art-making methodology), this way of thinking is a problem. Instead of following the scent of the project, I reverted to vertical human-animal thinking and categorisation. Vertical thinking is from a distance, at an upright, human-animal remove, prone to categorisation and classification—oriented to an end through logical, top-down steps that indulge in hierarchies. Horizontal thinking as an alternative is, to me, closer to the ground (the ‘problem’), like a dog’s nose, in the thick of it. Horizontal thinking is flexible, sniffing things out as they become apparent. It is open to new approaches and different angles without hierarchies. Ron Broglio’s writing in *Surface Encounters: Thinking with Animals and Art* has influenced my definitions. In *Surface Encounters*, Broglio traces philosophical lines of enquiry into the question of the animal and how the human-animal world has been invested with “manic-depressive heights and depths... It is human uprightness—verticality—that sufficiently dis-places us from our surroundings...”¹⁴³ Why should the participation of Clover and Oto

143. By contrast, Broglio writes, animals “do not have this distance”, and their world has (culturally) been made “decidedly flat”. Without heights and depths, the animals are left with marks on the surface; these marks are a “cross out” that (re)marks in our language the place of their relations.” One of Broglio’s central premises in *Surface Encounters* is that “[considering] animals and [taking] seriously the role of surfaces to thought and language means to reevaluate the physical and metaphysical uprightnes of humans.” - Ron Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, 87.

change an art walk into an everyday walk? Why would the planned action be secondary? I was prioritising art even while acknowledging that all of us were changing the artwork in question by participating in unexpected (to me) ways. There were still binaries in my mind; art vs. life, art vs. relationship, less important vs. more important, dog vs. human, implicit vs. explicit participants. I needed to nose out a zone of contact among these categories that I had separated in my mind, a zone that intrinsically lives in cross-species sentience and the potential of participation.

In thinking through these problems that have cropped up at many points in this entangled project, and in learning how to hold and ‘tremble’ such terms as ‘participant’ and ‘passersby’, ‘art’, and ‘everyday action’ so that none have priority, the writings of Christopher Braddock, Susan Ballard and Timothy Morton have been especially useful.

Potentials of participation

In his book *Performing Contagious Bodies*, Braddock explores live/performance art and installation practices (and their documentation and traces) through concepts of contagion, animism and magical ritual participation. These explorations traverse complex questions about where and how ‘liveness’ operates. Braddock’s term ‘unwitting participation’ has unleashed for me a consideration of the open and always-available potential of participation as a “value or force that precedes a contingency of subjects and objects.”¹⁴⁴

Through Braddock’s exploration of philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s concepts of the “oppositional forces of potentiality and impotentiality”¹⁴⁵ the term ‘inoperativity (inoperosità)’ (along with the term ‘unwitting participation’) has helped me to enfold the notion of participation into this project as an open field of potential, a field of “unseen networks that infiltrate bodies,”¹⁴⁶ and an “unwitting drawing out of participants.”¹⁴⁷ Sometimes interpreted as mere passive inactivity or an absence of activity, Agamben’s inoperativity actually implies a suspension of potentiality, which is to understand that potential

144. Christopher Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies: Ritual Participation in Contemporary Art* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 143.

145. Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies*, 25.

146. Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies*, preface xiv.

147. Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies*, 70.

does not necessarily equate to action. Open potential means not only the capacity to act or perform in a certain way, but also the capacity not to. The zones of participation within this project are not bound by my saying that this project is ‘about’ participation and ‘here are three different levels of participants’ (as I did in the beginning stages of my writing). Rather, it is an affirmation that the project is open to the potentiality of participation, which includes all other beings, whether we can see it happening or not. In other words, the participants of this project will unwittingly participate in ways peculiar to themselves, outside of planning or suggestion on my part.

This allows the notion of participation to remain open to possibility and potential—we are all participating all of the time, whether we plan to or not, whether we know it or not—holding open Haraway’s possibility that surprises are in store. The golden retriever passing by an ‘art action’ on the sands of Mellons Bay Beach is no less a participant of this project than Marlo or me, neither are the sandflies he sniffs out near me. This cross-species project is open to potentialities of participation beyond human-animal activity and perception. How could Marlo, Clover and Oto, the unnamed-to-me golden retriever, the birds leaving their traces in clay objects, not be considered participants? Whether I, the human-animal, designate them to be or not. The unwitting nature of such participation does not minimise the possibilities of participation but expands the potentialities and perceptions at play in the participatory context of this project. As Braddock states:

My emphasis on a temporality of unwitting and ambiguous participatory affect that precedes participation is different from [Amelia] Jones’s emphasis on a phenomenologically inspired notion of ‘intersubjectivity’. From the point of view of magical ritual participation, it becomes almost impossible to speak of subjects and objects, organic and inorganic.¹⁴⁸

While Amelia Jones’s intersubjectivity highlights the “intertwining of self and other,”¹⁴⁹ as a complex process of exchange, it also “takes place through the engagement of bodies/subjects as well as, more specifically, the *reversibility* of expression and perception (as well as of subject and object)” (emphasis in original).¹⁵⁰ This reversibility signals a problem with the ‘inter,’ which implies dualities and directional movement from one to the other (see n. 39), treating

distances in a way that might owe more to an anthropocentric notion of ‘becoming-Marlo’ rather than ‘making-*with* Marlo’; turning him into the artist and me into the ‘animal subject’ and vice-versa. The reversibility of intersubjectivity is an intertwining that does not seem to allow for ambiguous movement in any direction in the knot of motion.¹⁵¹ Braddock’s “temporality of unwitting and ambiguous participatory affect that precedes participation” speaks more meaningfully with a project that embraces cross-subjectivity and significantly other relations. In these, Haraway argues, “[t]here are no pre-constituted subjects and objects, and no single sources, unitary actors, or final ends... there are only ‘contingent foundations.’”¹⁵² From the point of view of this crierly project, I have found it becomes almost impossible to speak of participants and passersby, of primary and secondary audiences, of art and life. Instead, all are encompassed, all are active, all are potential. All tremble with one another, and again, the ‘with’ space of the project remains crucial.

Philosopher and ecocritic Timothy Morton talks about this trembling potential or symbiotic “stuckness” as the irony of ecological awareness. For me, the idea of participation as open potential can be extended within a cross-species practice through the writings of Morton and Susan Ballard.



Images 247-248: Birdseed slumps; clay, birdseed, traces left by birds, before death January 2020. These clay objects are very early cross-species attempts that I abandoned a few days after they were fired. Just after the firing, Marlo received his diagnosis and I lost the will to continue working with unknown birds.

148. Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies*, 18.

149. Amelia Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 38.

150. Jones, *Body Art/Performing the Subject*, 106.

151. Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway*, 98 n. 6. “Beings do not preexist their relating. ‘Prehensions’ have consequences. The world is a knot in motion.”

152. Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway*, 98.



Images 249-266: Mellons Bay Walk 2; walking, running, swimming, exploring and finding a rock to place on the site of Marlo's former rock collections, with my friends Kirsten Dryburgh, Clover and Oto, after death June 26, 2022.

(Contingent) attachments in the symbiotic real

Timothy Morton discusses ecological awareness as embodying a “type of irony [which] involves realising that you’re caught in these phenomena in some way that’s inextricable.”¹⁵³ He goes on to say:

We like to think in our anthropocentric way, that irony means that you transcended something, but actually what it means is that you’ve realised that you’re stuck in something and you have this kind of uncanny awareness of that, and there’s not much you can do about that feeling of stuckness.¹⁵⁴

Morton’s uncanny awareness that we are stuck in something is how I see this project’s trembling and inseparable relations. The word ‘stuck’ has some negative associations that I don’t feel are relevant. So instead, for this cross-species project, I will use the word ‘attached’, which expresses the inseparable relations and open potential of participation while also speaking to the emotional attachments and connections that exist within the practice. That is an ‘uncanny awareness’ of being attached to all the potential and unwitting participants of this project through the open, accessible and unleashed nature of participation itself.

Morton’s concept of the ‘symbiotic real’ is also relevant here and has been vital to my thinking and practice. This term speaks to a result of ecological awareness: to become aware of the cross-connection of all beings. It describes the intrinsic human-animal participation and kinship with the broader environment of this planet. The symbiotic real arises from Morton’s critique of the word ‘Nature’, which, as a concept, senselessly separates us human-animals from other living beings and systems we live with; the ‘us’ in one enclosed spot, everything else over the fence is Nature. For Morton, Nature as an “anthropocentrically scaled concept, designed for humans” is not entirely relevant when discussing the cross-relations of ecology.¹⁵⁵ Instead, the ‘symbiotic real’ suggests a horizontal relation between humans and other animals, with no hierarchies or pecking order. In Morton’s words, “ecological relationships are best described in terms of symbiosis, and symbiosis is a very interesting thing

because it’s always a sort of fragile, contingent, uneasy relationship in which it’s impossible to determine which entity is the top entity.” We are not separable from other beings and this contingency and inseparability extend to the notion of participation in this project.

The golden boy and unwitting participants

On a winter morning in June 2021, when I was out digging and casting holes at Mellons Bay Beach using some bespoke hole-digging means-to-an-end props, a human woman and a golden retriever happened to be passing. The retriever came over to meet and greet me and then proceeded to sniff the holes and the casts I’d been making. His human stayed further back and didn’t get to see anything up close, but we said hello. It was a brief and pleasant exchange human-to-human, but I realised I liked the golden retriever coming up and taking a good look at what I was doing more.

The digging and casting were intended as a private event. I was hoping no one would come across me, not least because I did not want to have to explain what I was doing on my knees in the sand, digging what might appear to the public to be purposeless holes and filling them with plaster in broad daylight. But somehow (typically!), the golden retriever’s interest was okay. I didn’t mind him knowing about my activities in any way whatsoever, and in fact, it was gratifying to see these holes were worthy of further inspection by like-minded makers.

This encounter with the golden retriever started my thinking about the terminology around audiences and participation. The golden retriever was a passerby, unwittingly implicated as a participant.¹⁵⁶ Referring to Braddock’s discussion of the open potentiality of participation, this dog is already a participant whether he was in-the-know participating or not; there was already a field of participation at play. What is at stake here is human-animal attentiveness to others, a sympathetic leap occasioned by playing with the means-to-an-end props. My aim, and a significant outcome of this thesis, is that the actions for “understanding other bodies” generated by these tools of the

153. Timothy Morton, *Timothy Morton: Ecology Without Nature*, interview by Roc Jiménez de Cisneros, December 13, 2016, <https://lab.cccb.org/en/tim-morton-ecology-without-nature/>.

154. Morton, *Timothy Morton: Ecology Without Nature*.

155. Morton, *Timothy Morton: Ecology Without Nature*.

156. Chris Braddock in discussion with the artist (May 2022).

making-with tesseract, make us human-animals more attentive to this shared field of participation, our shared animality and attachments.¹⁵⁷

Thinking around beings of other species as passersby and witnesses to the work could be another way of allowing the objects out of the zone of the gallery; out of art-like contexts.¹⁵⁸ The portability of props within their own habitat is also relevant here, specifically, the context of domestic animals, their local orientation, and the locally-engaged alignment of this project.¹⁵⁹ Other species can or will be participants passing by. They can witness the work and are as significant as any witting participant or viewer. How they might do that is beyond us human-animals due to the nature of habitats, touching on how different species do things differently when faced with a participatory art experience in their regular lives.

Local Branch, two shoots, shared spaces and local orientations

A relevant reference point for me regarding habitats and the local orientation of artwork is Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland artist Lucy Meyle's *Local Branch* (2021), a subscription project developed for the Aotearoa Art Fair after the artist accidentally knocked down an empty bird nest in her garden.¹⁶⁰ Feeling bad over this event, Meyle kept the nest in storage for two seasons "out of indecision and guilt."¹⁶¹ Eventually, she deconstructed this artisanal object into its constituent twigs and fibres, individually photographed, catalogued and numbered (total 398) in a publication hand-distributed by the artist during the Art Fair. Extra copies of the publication were kept in a generic wire frame stand "that newspapers or real estate brochures are distributed from at the front of supermarkets," linking the spirit of the work to its dispersed nature across Tāmaki Makaurau.¹⁶²

157. Susan Ballard, "New Ecological Sympathies: Thinking about Contemporary Art in the Age of Extinction," *Environmental Humanities* 9, no. 2 (November 1, 2017): 265, <https://doi.org/DOI 10.1215/22011919-4215229>.

158. Artist Allan Kaprow makes the distinction between "artlike art" and "lifelike art": "In other words, there is art at the service of art, and art at the service of life." Allan Kaprow, "The Real Experiment," *Artforum*, December 1983, <https://www.artforum.com/print/198310/the-real-experiment-35431>.

159. The useful framing of 'the habitat of a prop' came out of discussions with my supervisor Monique Redmond.

160. Lucy Meyle, *Local Branch*, 2021, <https://localbranch.site/>.

161. "Lucy Meyle." *Aotearoa Art Fair*, December 15, 2020. Aotearoa Art Fair, press release, <https://artfair.co.nz/artwork/lucy-meyle/>.

162. Meyle quoted in Lucy Meyle et al., Present Tense, interview by Michael Do and Becky Hemus, Roundtable discussion published in *The Art Paper*, March 10, 2021, <https://www.the-art-paper.com/journal/auckland-art-fair-present-tense-micheal-do>.

Seeing this method of storage/action-poised-to-take-flight was generative to *Making-with Marlo* in terms of thinking about how I might make means-to-an-end props available to others, perhaps through similarly invitational storage equipment whose 'affordances' prompt visitors into taking an object in hand.¹⁶³ (For example, the bespoke hook used with the *Scent Maps* in Talk Week III.) Dressed in an all-brown postal service worker outfit and cap (that I initially assumed replicated the brown colour of twigs), Meyle handed out copies of the publication to visitors at the Art Fair and engaged in conversations about the project's scope. The publication invited people to apply for a twig of their choosing by filling out the bound order form and posting it or scanning and e-mailing it to: twig@localbranch.site. Participants would then receive the twig in the post.



Image 267: Lucy Meyle; *Local Branch*, publication and subscription, dimensions variable, 2021. Photo courtesy of and taken by Monique Redmond.

163. The term 'affordance' was coined by American psychologist James J. Gibson, whose definition can be found in his writing on the theory of affordances in the book *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1977). Gibson defines it this way: "Affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill. The verb to afford is found in the dictionary, but the noun affordance is not. I have made it up. I mean by it something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment." Gibson's theory of affordances implies "that to see things is to see how to get about among them and what to do or not do with them." An affordance therefore refers to the potential action someone might effect on an object - for example a door knob affords being turned, a light switch affords being flicked up or down. In Meyle's case, the wire stand affords having its contents taken. All these are based on human-animal visual perception. See James J. Gibson, "The Theory of Affordances," in *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 127-37, https://monoskop.org/images/c/c6/Gibson_James_J_1977_1979_The_Theory_of_Affordances.pdf.



Images 268-269: Lucy Meyle activating *Local Branch*; publication and subscription, dimensions variable, 2021. Top photo courtesy of and taken by: Monique Redmond. Bottom photo: Luke Foley-Martin.

Once received, they were asked to relocate the twig to a place where local birds could reuse it during the 2021 nest-building season.¹⁶⁴ By drawing the unknown-to-us avian participants into the cycle of *Local Branch* through the craftsmanship and artistry of the original nest, Meyle's artwork is open to the potential of cross-species participation. Here, individuals engage in a creative, participatory role unwitnessed but linked by us all engaging in the same action and sentiment. Additionally, the nature of participatory contribution would expand again after the dispersal of the posted twigs into new spaces, when other birds might forage them to build new nests. Being implicated in a durational event with other critters, yet leaving them space to react or not according to their own needs and wants, is significant to me as a case study for this project as it brings forth ideas around "extractive practices that can be involved in human relationships with the more-than-human."¹⁶⁵ Meyle tangles with the commercial exchanges of the Art Fair, emphasising those based in reciprocity and humour (as well as unknown exchanges in the birdly spaces of Tāmaki Makaurau, with no perceptible relation to us human-animals). In turn, complicating narratives and structures around "collection, extraction, and possession that are often features of human-animal/nonhuman animal interaction,"¹⁶⁶ as well as asserting what Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland artist Monique Redmond writes about as an "interesting friction, in regard to reciprocity...It is as if the artwork has a second life."¹⁶⁷ In Meyle's project this 'second life' (now an unknown number of lives through the participation of unseen birds) also flows within a murky undercurrent (a feature of cross-species participation that this project is always face-to-face with). Meyle's continued guilt over the broken nest signals a kind of human-animal trespass into the daily structures of bird life in the work.¹⁶⁸

164. I chose Twig #233 from the publication and relocated it to Burswood Reserve in Botany Downs, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. I placed it in an indentation on a big council boulder under a copse of magpie, sparrow and mynah-filled trees - once a site of many noticings by Marlo.

165. Meyle, Present Tense.

166. "Lucy Meyle." Aotearoa Art Fair, press release, December 15, 2020.

167. Monique Redmond, "The Event within Temporary Practices and the Public Social" (PhD thesis, Deakin University, 2020), <http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30148103>, 101.

168. Lucy Meyle, Present Tense, <https://www.the-art-paper.com/journal/auckland-art-fair-present-tense-micheal-do>.

Two shoots and local habitats

In his video work *two shoots that stretch far out* (2013–14), Pōneke Wellington artist Shannon Te Ao (Ngāti Tūwharetoa) is depicted reading a waiata to a group of animals: a donkey, a rabbit, a wallaby, chickens, geese, a swan, all introduced species. The space which they all share in the video is the animals' daily space, their barn in Waikanae where they spend time training for roles in TV and film.¹⁶⁹ This makes the barn a kind of rehearsal area for them, a “socially provisional space” that Te Ao attempts to navigate.¹⁷⁰ The words that he reads aloud function as a relational conduit with the animals around him. Te Ao communicates with them in the only way he can, through human-animal means but does not attempt to encourage a response. *two shoots* suspends all the participants of this performance (witting and unwitting) in a field of potential cross-connection that also interrupts some underlying anthropocentric priors we might have as viewers of the work. In the context of Braddock's potentialities of unwitting participation, it seems irrelevant to even state that Te Ao's fellow participants are not explicitly responding. There is space for those present, physical but emotional and psychological too, a space to do what they will in the presence of Te Ao and his shared expression of human-animal grief.

The waiata Te Ao reads to the animals, *He Waiata Mo Te Moe Punarua* or *A Song about Two Wives*¹⁷¹, was written by a human woman, Matahira from Ngāti Porou, and it addresses the breakup of her marriage.¹⁷² It is a “a lament for lost intimacy, an expression of the deep feelings of betrayal and longing caused by her husband taking a new lover.”¹⁷³ Throughout the artwork's five attempts to read out different versions of the same English translation of the waiata, Te Ao extends and navigates this lost intimacy, beckoning us viewers to the lost intimacy between himself and his fellow performers. He speaks, but how does that affect them? It is through movement that the animals respond to Te Ao;

a tiny wallaby walks with Te Ao, almost tangled in human-animal feet as the two make their way across the frame, a swan balls up tight in a nap, long neck folded, face hidden in plumage. They “resist being pinned to metaphor”¹⁷⁴ they are on their own turf and Te Ao is there as an outsider attempting to create a shared space, turning the barn “into a world of overlapping physical and phantasmagorical presences,”¹⁷⁵ contingent attachments in an open field of unwitting participation.

Two shoots and a time of attempts

I find Te Ao's attempts to reach a shared space with his fellow animals, attempts “defined by [his] own failings and [his] own inconsistencies... variation [coming] through errors in [his] delivery,” very moving to witness in this artwork.¹⁷⁶ Te Ao's approach offers insights to *Making-with Marlo* concerning our limitations when it comes to having a go at creating cross-subjective experiences with others and negotiating the pitfalls of communication. For me, a methodology of attempts embraces the potential of Donna Haraway's “tragic mistakes” in an ongoing search for knowledge of another. When asked if his work is about translation, Te Ao responds that it is more “transportation.”¹⁷⁷ Here again, I see Amelia Barikin's idea of navigation rather than delineation, working-with rather than flattening out the bumpy roads leading to cross-species spaces, even if these attempts are continually spent in provisional spaces of being-with others.

In a video work like *two shoots*, these attempts can potentially go on forever, tapping into a layered perception of time, connecting to a field of past, present and future “particularly if,” as Martin Patrick says, “one acknowledges

169. “Hero Animals - The Best Trained Animals In The Business,” accessed May 14, 2023, <http://www.heroanimals.com/>

170. Shannon Te Ao, *A Torch and a Light*, interview by Nathan Pohio, February 28, 2017, <https://christchurchartgallery.org.nz/bulletin/187/a-torch-and-a-light>.

171. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, “Two Shoots That Stretch Far Out,” Shannon Te Ao - Two shoots that stretch far out, 2016, <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/explore-art-and-ideas/artwork/23577/two-shoots-that-stretch-far-out>. The title references a whakatauki “about two gourds facing in opposite directions, “as an analogy about relationships that are inherently flawed” - relationships here being all the potential relationships across space and time, including Matahira's relationship with her husband, and with Te Ao, Te Ao's relationship with the performers in his work, our relationship to all of them as viewers and so on. Shannon Te Ao quoted in Megan Dunn, “The Abode of Indifference | Arotakenga Exhibition Review,” *CIRCUIT Artist Moving Image*, October 11, 2015, <https://www.circuit.org.nz/writing-and-podcast/the-abode-of-indifference>.

172. *Artist Shannon Te Ao Speaks on the Use of Te Reo in His Work*, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hfOvuV8IXtQ>.

173. Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, “Two Shoots That Stretch Far Out.”

174. Dunn, “The Abode of Indifference.”

175. Anthony Byrt, *This Model World: Travels to the Edge of Contemporary Art* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2016), 159.

176. Te Ao, *A Torch and a Light*.

177. Shannon Te Ao, *Off the Dome: An Interview with Shannon Te Ao*, interview by Megan Dunn, August 12, 2017, <https://pantograph-punch.com/posts/interview-shannon-te-ao>.

indigenous notions of time, and the Māori proverb *ka mua, ka muri* (one walks backwards into the future).¹⁷⁸ Important here is Te Ao's interest in *whakataukī* (proverbs) and *waiata*: both ways of sharing *kōrero* (to tell, to speak, forms of oratory).¹⁷⁹ *Kōrero* and the "orality of Māori cultural knowledge," says photographer and moving image artist Natalie Robertson (Ngāti Porou, Clann Dhōnnchaidh), is a way to "keep alive connections between all beings, including those who have passed on but live on as *tīpuna* (ancestors)."¹⁸⁰ That surely includes other species, and is reflected in Te Ao's work, and my own. Robertson's thinking about *kōrero*, however, raises another question for *Making-with Marlo* that concerns the human-animal voice. "Through *kōrero* or oratory, the human voice activates the process of communion with ancestors, along with movement, touch and presence,"¹⁸¹ says Robertson. Once again, this emphasis on the human-animal voice returns me to the risk of centring my voice and speaking for Marlo instead of *with* him, allowing that voice to activate the means-to-an-end artworks rather than the sympathetic leaps of shared experiences. However, Te Ao notes that the artistic handling of "dark material, complexity, history, and the insertion of our own agency within that, can be a murky business." He goes on to say that "There is no 'one way' and so you can never get it 'right'." Perhaps in a similar way, *Making-with Marlo* too lives in the murk (the smudge) of attempts where there is also no getting it right. These attempts at cross-species sentience do not rest in one place. Again, in the words of Te Ao, "If and when the dust settles it doesn't stay that way for long."¹⁸² In the context of discussing Vivieros de Castro's incorporative view of the notion of 'animism' (while discussing the artwork of Bagnall), Martin Patrick underscores how unjustified it may be to claim any specificity about human-animals as he writes: "perhaps our claims to how specific the human animal is become more and more precarious."¹⁸³

Although videos of dogs 'talking' to their owners abound on the internet, and animal actors like those trained by Hero Animals in Waikanae are a common fixture in media, they are speechless animals, at least in the terms we function by as human-animals. However, as with other nonhuman animals, that speechlessness does not equal uncommunicativeness, a lack of presence or consciousness. Haraway says, "somebody is at home in the animals

178. Martin Patrick, "Exploring Posthuman Masquerade and Becoming," in *Animism in Art and Performance*, ed. Christopher Braddock (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 227.

179. Te Ao, *Off the Dome: An Interview with Shannon Te Ao*.

180. Natalie Robertson, "Activating Photographic Mana Rangatiratanga Through *Kōrero*," in *Animism in Art and Performance*, ed. Christopher Braddock (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 46-47.

181. Robertson, "Activating Photographic Mana Rangatiratanga Through *Kōrero*," 57.

182. Shannon Te Ao quoted in Patrick, "Exploring Posthuman Masquerade and Becoming," 227.

183. Patrick, "Exploring Posthuman Masquerade and Becoming," 223.



Image 270: Shannon Te Ao; *two shoots that stretch far out*, 2013-14. Installation view, City Gallery Wellington. Image courtesy of the artist. Photo: Shaun Waugh.



Image 271: Shannon Te Ao; *two shoots that stretch far out* (still image), 2013-14. HD video, single-channel, 13.22min, colour, stereo sound. Image courtesy of the artist.

[we] work with.” Dogs communicate with us in other ways that are just as dynamic and effective. Anyone who has ever experienced the gaze of a dog wanting some thing or some action, intimately experiences that funny psychic beam of ‘influence’ directed precisely towards what feels like their very soul. While it is true that dogs, in particular, are animals that can connect with us easily in multiple ways, to me the idea of speechlessness imparts a strange promise of communication that is very potent, even in critters we do not know as intimately as we do dogs. Haraway again; “we are training each other in acts of communication we barely understand.”¹⁸⁴ The idea of speechlessness is something I keep returning to in my art practice, mediated through the idea of Broglio’s “pidgins and forked tongues of the animal-artist alliance” by creating or tapping into a contact zone of experience at the threshold of language.¹⁸⁵ What fills the void where human language pauses?

Risks in cross-species participation

In considering *two shoots*’ inbuilt errors and inconsistencies, Te Ao’s evasion of translation and his reveal of the limitations of communication cross-species, I found the ideas of artist and writer Liesbeth Huybrechts fruitful. While defining participatory practices in *Participation is Risky*, Huybrechts talks about participation standing “in contrast to [the] ‘cult of the specialist’, wherein an expert is expected to provide answers to certain questions.”¹⁸⁶ There is no ‘answer’ in a cross-subjective, cross-species project. My project operates in the space of the question itself, tending towards possibility rather than a resolution.

Neither I nor any other human-animal can genuinely ‘become’ a dog, for example by using scent to orient ourselves. Sadly, you will never meet Marlo in person. Any number of disappointments are present. However, I think the means-to-an-end props hold the ongoing potential for an experience of the world beyond human, whether practically achievable or not. This makes me wonder, are the means-to-an-end artworks I make expected to provide answers when encountered? Is Marlo the expert? Or do I take on the role of ‘expert’ by translating Marlo’s point of view to others? Does this translation make the project inherently untrustworthy? Here I come up against a feeling of uncertainty, which simmers between Marlo and me as makers and others as

184. Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway*, 94 (see n. 6).

185. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, 93 (see n. 46).

186. Liesbeth Huybrechts, *Participation Is Risky: Approaches to Join Creative Processes*, Antennae Series 10 (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2014), 12.

participants. This feeling is part of the ‘risk’ of participatory projects, according to Huybrechts, who states: “Since participatory projects rely on the input from both makers and participants, they are never finished. Their process and ‘final’ form is inherently undefined, which may lead to a feeling of uncertainty among makers and participants.”¹⁸⁷ On my part, there is uncertainty around whether I am ‘translating’ correctly and whether you can trust me in place of Marlo. Am I just putting words into his mouth by translating my perception of his experiences of interest into objects for human-animal activation?

Developing Huybrecht’s ideas around the characteristics of participatory projects in relationship to the cross-species experiences of my project, I see the means-to-an-end props as “[allowing] input from other participants”¹⁸⁸ because they invite participation of others, across species. Therefore, the cross-species experience they enable is built further on the “insights, experiences and practices of others.” This is two-fold: through the insights and experiences of the human-animals activating the means-to-an-end props, and insights and practices of animal others (specifically a domestic dog, Marlo the Rottweiler), whose experiences have channelled the props into being (through me, the artist) in the first place. In this way, our cross-species participatory sculptural project does not “aim for social cohesion or technical improvements,” but attempts to centre the perception and practices of nonhuman others and to question “the dominant structures in society.”¹⁸⁹ To Huybrechts, this is a key marker of participatory projects. For me it also speaks to the contingency and inseparability of attachments, rather than only possible cohesion, through Morton, and as seen in *Local Branch, two shoots* and artist duo Krôôt Juurak and Alex Bailey’s *Performances for Pets*.

Sniffing through borders

Contingency and inseparability of attachments address the idea of constructed borders, which in a cross-species project is something to confront. I am attached to Marlo; human-animals are attached to dogs and vice-versa through thousands of years of coevolution—where do we end and dogs begin? Writer Pearson Bolt’s reading of the idea of borders as attachment-breaking

187. Huybrechts, *Participation Is Risky*, 12.

188. Huybrechts, *Participation Is Risky*, 12.

189. Huybrechts, *Participation Is Risky*, 11.

structures/delineations concerns the spreading borders of the possibly malevolent Area X in the science-fiction series *The Southern Reach Trilogy* by American author Jeff VanderMeer. The strange Area X, from which no one has ever returned, is a mysterious expanding manifestation and physical space that is gradually reclaiming and changing the ecosystem in the world of the novels as we know it. Bolt speaks about the spreading and permeable ‘border’ of Area X as a kind of metaphor for the violence of “border imperialism” in the 21st century, with borders expanding and “gobbling up land for resource extraction” and the “immiseration” of those who dwell there.¹⁹⁰ Although Bolt discusses borders specifically with geopolitics in mind, his concept of the “horror of borders” has been helpful to me whilst coming to grips with these ideas.

Bolt suggests that a border, in Jeff VanderMeer’s words, “[does] not allow half measures: Once you touched it, it pulled you in (or across?).”¹⁹¹ Bolt’s premise here is that borders, as a tool of control and demarcation, do precisely that:

[Borders] pull us into accepting the concept of two distinct categories: us and them, human and animal, the subject and the Other. Both the “us” and the “them” are polarized, ostracized from each other and alienated from the very conditions that engender their immiseration.¹⁹²

The animal/human divide Broglio undoes through surface encounters is such a border. Timothy Morton’s ‘Nature’ is such a border, and attachments in his symbiotic real seem to be a possible way through (and with), along with the embrace of potentialities through Chris Braddock’s unwitting participation. Some basic questions might remain here; where is the border exactly, and how does it look? VanderMeer’s answer in the *Southern Reach* novels is that this is a “child’s question” – also an anthropocentric question – “A question whose answer means nothing. There is nothing but border. There is no border.”¹⁹³

Working with methods of cross-species sentience in this art practice, let alone living-with a dog in the first place, has made the fundamentally unstable and manufactured nature of these human-erected borders self-evident to me.

190. Pearson Bolt, “Monolithic, Invisible Walls: The Horror of Borders in Jeff VanderMeer’s Southern Reach Trilogy,” *MOSF Journal of Science Fiction* 4, no. 1 (August 16, 2020): 27.

191. Jeff VanderMeer, *Authority* (Book 2 of the Southern Reach Trilogy) (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), 78.

192. Bolt, “Monolithic, Invisible Walls,” 28.

193. Jeff VanderMeer, *Acceptance* (Book 3 of the Southern Reach Trilogy) (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2014), 5.

This is an awareness that will travel with me throughout the rest of my life. The double meaning of Bolt’s “horror of borders”—the geopolitical and ecological horrors borders can enact when wielded by human-animals, as well as the unease we might feel about borders as tools of delineation—here speaks directly to my project. Attempts to collapse or do away with the grand manufactured borders and structures that signify a hierarchy or a difference in value (i.e., animal lives on the surface of things and human at the pinnacle of vertical hierarchies) are a given in this project. This is a kind of bedrock of intuitive assumptions from which everything in the project springs: that dogs have feelings that are so recognisable to me as another animal, it is quite logical to describe them in my own human-animal words (this project focuses on curiosity, joy and playfulness); that they have ways of learning and investigation that are just as valid as anything human-animals might engage with; that their attachments are just as complex; that, though their methods might differ from ours, they seek happiness and love, and so on. It seems unfit for purpose to construct borders between levels of participants, between species, instead of facilitating a sniffing through them *with* others. In this practice of multiple parts, the key has been in attempting to hold all the parts, including myself, in Morton and Broglio’s trembling horizontality. However, being only human, my attempts to do so have often revealed how ingrained the anthropocentric worldview is, even as I attempt to work my way through and around it. Mine is a project of multiple parts and multiple attempts.



Image 272: A photo taken from the passenger seat of my dad’s car as we were driving past the Drury off-ramp on our way to the kind of adventure Marlo would have joined us on in ordinary times. After death April 24, 2022.

In these multiple attempts are revealed other, in-built borders of life that exist more granularly. A dog and a human *are* animals of different species. No literal transformations into a Rottweiler occur within the project (that I know of). I know I can never be a dog, even if I play in the tesseract of making-with to try and suss out what it might be like in some peculiar way. Through the means-to-an-end props, I might play around here, sniffing out the unease of being separated from someone I love, but there *is* a separation at play. Unlike illusory structural human borders these lines of separation cannot be entirely collapsed and, Haraway argues, should not be:

Making kin must be done with respect for historically situated, diverse kinships that should not be either generalized or appropriated in the interest of a too-quick common humanity, multispecies collective, or similar category. Kinships exclude as well as include, and they should do that. Alliances must be attentive to that matter...Making alliances requires recognizing specificities, priorities, and urgencies.¹⁹⁴

In a similar vein, in *Animal Alterity*, Sherryl Vint argues that if “we want to take seriously the prospect of a new logic of life and justice, we must think through its concrete specificity.”¹⁹⁵ In discussing science-fiction literature’s long history of considering “alterity, subjectivity and the limits of the human” Vint posits that science-fiction is an “excellent tool” for situating engagement around how we conceive cross-species relations within “a material history in which we have always-already been living with ‘alien’ beings.”¹⁹⁶ Through reference to Ralph Acampora who argues that “to gain ontological access to the varied life-modes of different animals, one must enter environments not wholly of human making”¹⁹⁷ Vint figures the observant nature of science-fiction as one possible technique of navigating the smudgy territories of living-with others. A science-fictional sculptural practice of embodied attempts that observe the specificity of another critter seems to fit here. Vint writes that science-fiction literature is “a particularly productive site for exercising...

194. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 207 (see n. 12).

195. Sherryl Vint, *Animal Alterity: Science Fiction and the Question of the Animal* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 153.

196. Vint, *Animal Alterity*, 2

197. Ralph R. Acampora, *Corporal Compassion: Animal Ethics and Philosophy of Body* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 12.

198. Vint, *Animal Alterity*, 15.

sympathetic imagination, striving to put ourselves in the place of the animal other and experience the world from an estranged point of view.”¹⁹⁸ Through Derrida, she posits that a reveal of a “shared vulnerability – recognition of similar, mortal embodiment – becomes the basis for a new conception of subjectivity and a concomitant new human/non-human sociality.”¹⁹⁹ In science-fiction literature, this reveal, of course, happens on a page in metaphorical ways. Science-fictional methods of “experiencing the world from an estranged point of view” in a nonfictional art practice of cross-species sentience also reveal Haraway’s necessity of recognising specificities while making alliances (and ongoing kinships). As Haraway argues through her concepts of companion species and significant otherness, kinship here is a continuing transforming intra-action with one another. As Vint might put it, this takes place through corporeal exchanges “across the border of alterity.”²⁰⁰

We need help crossing these borders. The potential of a means-to-an-end prop does not necessarily equate to a measurable result. These objects will not turn you into a Rottweiler as they might in a work of fiction. However, they might unleash the potential of collaborative action, a sympathetic leap through which it might be possible to become aware of the permeability of the lines of separation with other animals and carry that awareness with you through life. In such a way, the sympathetic imagination becomes more than awareness, more than a ‘mere’ projection of empathy. It becomes a leap, a technique to live in ongoing ways in what Acampora terms a “cross-species conviviality”²⁰¹ acted out through his term ‘symphysis’, a fundamental state or embodied “starting position” of “corporeal compassion with other species.”²⁰² This returns me to Morton’s ‘symbiotic real’ as a dynamic becoming aware of the cross-connection of all beings, to unwitting participation where “audiences must be configured as all possible audiences”²⁰³ through the “always-already”²⁰⁴ nature of the field of participation cross-species. In these spaces,

199. Vint, *Animal Alterity*, 154.

200. Vint, *Animal Alterity*, 12.

201. Acampora, *Corporal Compassion*, 31, 45. “Regarding spatiality, an existential body schema is charted, which establishes a perceptively and affectively sympathetic awareness: “the [body-]subject has in principle an inner connection with and feeling of everything which appears anywhere in the [life-]field.” This is the space of cross-species conviviality.” Acampora quotes from Tiemersma’s *Body Schema*: “The animation of the lived body brings about a mingling of psychological experience with the experience of matter and of material bodies.” Douwe Tiemersma, *Body Schema and Body Image: An Interdisciplinary and Philosophical Study* (Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger, 1989), 348.

202. Acampora, *Corporal Compassion*, 94.

203. Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies*, 151.

204. Vint, *Animal Alterity*, 2

living-with/making-with one another becomes the technique of ongoing mutual transformation. The nature of the artwork in this project, perhaps like science-fiction as an art form, operates through or reveals the dynamic cross-species “contamination” in the relationality of participation.²⁰⁵ A science-fictional approach to sculptural practice becomes more than fiction, and the means-to-an-end props create more than a sympathetic awareness. Science-fictional methods in this practice allow us to live with these dynamic forces. The means-to-an-end props potentially provide the help we need in crossing these borders.

“I need help crossing a border that’s hard to define,” pleads the main protagonist in *The OA*. Through collaborative movement with others, she manages to cross this border in unusual ways.²⁰⁶ I return to science-fictional making-with that trembles incongruous experiences, to Barikin and navigation of the tensions between the possible and the impossible, not destruction,²⁰⁷ to Shannon Te Ao’s question of transportation rather than translation. In *The OA*’s case, this is moving through death into other dimensions through deep bonds and embodied knowledge; in the case of Te Ao’s *two shoots*, it is a holding of connections through kōrero and meeting on another’s turf. In this project, it is also a sniffing through species differences with-Marlo, a leaning through the threads of space and time into contingent spaces of cross-species sentience.



Images 273-276: Marlo digging out and collecting rocks at Mellons Bay Beach in 2014. The pictured bed of seaweed was his preferred site to place each day’s collection of rocks.

205. Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies*, 151.

206. *The OA* (Netflix, 2016), <https://www.netflix.com/nz/title/80044950>.

207. With destruction perhaps resulting in a reassembly of delineations and invented structural borders.

Significant bonds

Attachments that matter

The contingency of attachments in the relationality of participation holds the potential of failure: “Symbiosis can fail in various different ways: if there’s too much stomach bacteria in my stomach, I might have some problems,” is an example Morton gives.²⁰⁸ For him, there is a “dynamic system there,” ungraspable by a hand. The cross-connection of all critters, living and nonliving on Earth, is a planetary process that we can neither opt out of nor steer. The attachments here are out of our hands. What becomes crucial then are the attachments closer to the ground, so to speak, the specific bonds of Donna Haraway’s significant otherness—a term that asserts the importance of specific attachments that matter, relationships that are “multiform, at stake, unfinished, consequential.”²⁰⁹ In this project working with significant otherness has directly produced the means-to-an-end props which spring from specific experiences in the relationship between Marlo and me. Every prompt a means-to-an-end prop might invite is initiated by Marlo and his enjoyments (and sometimes sufferings) in life. Haraway’s concepts of ‘companion species’ and ‘significant otherness’ offer the potential to reimagine practices through which we could cocreate emergent worlds differently. For Haraway, we are always ‘becoming-with’ others, and reality is a matter of worlding or inhabiting.²¹⁰ Significant otherness asserts that we cocreate with each other and our new worlds and ways of becoming. Not a process of one-sided communication and domestication; it is a coevolution; “we are making each other up in the flesh.”²¹¹ To borrow Karen Barad’s thinking, this is a process of intra-action, a “mutual constitution and unending iterative reconfigurings.”²¹² An ongoing commitment to a mutual future, a continuous action comprising many small acts—many small attempts at ongoingness.²¹³

208. Morton, Timothy Morton: *Ecology Without Nature*.

209. Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway*, 122.

210. Moira Weigel, “Feminist Cyborg Scholar Donna Haraway: ‘The Disorder of Our Era Isn’t Necessary,’” *The Guardian*, June 20, 2019, sec. World news, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/20/donna-haraway-interview-cyborg-manifesto-post-truth>.

211. Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway*, 94.

212. Karen Barad, “Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/Continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come,” *Derrida Today* 3, no. 2 (November 1, 2010): 240–68, <https://doi.org/10.3366/drt.2010.0206>.



Images 277-281: A kit of rock-collecting and digging props held in their bespoke carrier. In use by Chris Braddock and Chris/me, after death 2022. They are: *Tandem Rock Carrier*; a pair of felt carrying aids for when a rock is too heavy or unwieldy to move on your own, attached with wool yarn woven in a friendship bracelet pattern, 2022. And *Hinged Rock Carrier*; with holes to allow sensation on your hands, shaped to approximate the hinged action of a powerful mouth carrying heavy rocks without the use of opposable thumbs, felt, yarn, hinge stitches, balsa wood, 2022.

213. For me, the idea of companion species must also be parsed in terms of speciation, the formation of new and distinct species in the course of evolution. All species are companions in this process. Unlike the classification of animals into genera which is always situated in the past, speciation is a continuous process and always in the now. There are interesting associations here for me in terms of alternative temporalities, breaking through the dogma of linear time but also a seed of potential for the future. In speciation I find a useful relationship between indeterminacy and the determined. As it is a continual process always happening in the now, it is always about growth, about change, about simultaneous expansion. Speciation here is a part of making-with. Could speciation be an art-making methodology? For example in Lygia Clark’s propositions where participants became key in the continued life of each object.

In a footnote in *Staying with the Trouble* Haraway defines her concept of the Chthulucene, a conceptual framing of an ongoing temporality, where “[w]e are at stake to each other,” a temporality “made up of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with in times that remain at stake...”²¹⁴ Haraway quotes from field philosopher Thom van Dooren’s book *Flight Ways: Life at the Edge of Extinction*, where he disputes the helpfulness of the “brand of holist ecological philosophy”, which asserts that “everything is connected to everything”.²¹⁵ Instead, van Dooren, like Haraway, like Morton, argues that the contingency of attachments and participation in the symbiotic real means that “everything is connected to something, which is connected to something else.” Therefore, while ultimately, on an untouchable ecological and planetary scale, we may all be connected to one other, “the specificity and proximity of connections matters — who we are bound up with and in what ways. Life and Death happen inside these relationships,” says van Dooren.²¹⁶ The specificity of difference here, the “capacity to create solidarity across difference, rather than imagine harmony because the [dog] proves, after all, to be just like the self” is key to what Vint writes about as the ability of science-fiction to function as cognitive estrangement, a “tool that helps us see more clearly the ways we [create our world].”²¹⁷

In Haraway’s concept of significant otherness, I find a way that the specific cross-connections of this project reverberate through the open and unwitting potential of participation which emphasises the importance of what she terms “experimental practices where consequences are at stake.”²¹⁸ As artist Ben Denham argues in his review of *Staying with the Trouble*, for Haraway these experimental practices could be the experimental practices of art as well as science. What matters is the “worlds produced by experimental practices of all kinds in which the problem – the risk, the danger, the mess – of an engagement with forces we don’t fully comprehend, of our experiments not turning out as we might want, hope or imagine, is fundamental to the practice.”²¹⁹

214. Donna Haraway, “Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene,” *E-Flux Journal*, no. 75 (September 2016), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67125/tentacular-thinking-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene/>.

215. Thom van Dooren, *Flight Ways: Life at the Edge of Extinction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 60. Quoted in Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 173.

216. van Dooren, *Flight Ways*, 60. Quoted in Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 173.

217. Sherryl Vint, *Science Fiction: A Guide for the Perplexed*, e-book, Guides for the Perplexed (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 36.

218. *Sawyer Seminar: The Challenge of Animism* (UC Davis, 2015), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZSqCwA5Mc-4>.

219. Ben Denham, “Review: What Matters: Staying with the Trouble by Donna Haraway,” *Sydney Review of Books*, April 7, 2017, <https://sydneyreviewofbooks.com/review/staying-with-the-trouble-donna-haraway/>.

Staying with the trouble here means moving through the “universalising tendencies that destroy diversity, whatever its forms”²²⁰ and remaining open to the unfurling potential of unwitting participation through the significant bond between Marlo and me, an attachment in the symbiotic real that matters to the project because it mattered to us in life. In this practice with its own risks and mess, unwitting participation and an attachment to contingency contribute to “an ethical commitment to avoiding pronouncements on what is *really* real”²²¹ ... who is really a participant, where the differences between species lie, where species differences are unbreakable, where Marlo is located, what the means-to-an-end props *really* do.

Specifically with dogs

Dogs matter – to Haraway and us – and in this project, Marlo matters specifically. Haraway expands upon the term significant otherness in her *Companion Species Manifesto*, an essential text for *Making-with Marlo*. While it probes profound ideas that can be applied to other entities, the manifesto is decidedly about dogs and “taking dog-human relationships seriously.” Haraway argues that dogs can teach us profound things about recognising and embracing difference and engage with her idea of significant otherness. Creating a profoundly cross-subjective relationship, cross-species, is possible with any animal and involves recognising the complex nature of all beings. Haraway argues that in our relationship with dogs, particularly with working dogs bred for a purpose, the practice of taking deep cross-subjective notice of one another to create a new world of trust and meaning is more readily apparent than with other species, due to our shared history. In the manifesto, Haraway explores how these shared histories can potentially teach us to construct , to ‘world’, a

220. Denham, “Review: What Matters.”

221. Denham, “Review: What Matters.” Emphasis in original.

mutual and ethical ground for cross-subjective relationships between different entities of all kinds. I believe Haraway's argument is that if we are awake to coevolutions and differences as we cocreate new worlds, we can avoid blindly allowing entanglements to coalesce into some of the same divisions that lead to oppression (of animals, of humans, of everyone). The bond of significant otherness in companion species offers the potential to reimagine practices through which we can cocreate emergent worlds differently.

Crucial is the idea of a collective commitment that Haraway speaks about when defining the Chthulucene, a temporality allied to the operations of the tesseract:

I also insist that we need a name for the dynamic ongoing sym-chthonic forces and powers of which people are a part, within which ongoingness is at stake. Maybe, but only maybe, and only with intense commitment and collaborative work and play with other terrans, flourishing for rich multispecies assemblages that include people will be possible. I am calling all this the Chthulucene—past, present, and to come.²²²

The “collaborative work and play” with others to construct “multispecies assemblages” for ongoing life is the lifeblood of Haraway's thinking and writing on ecology and companion species. It has informed much of this project. As I have lived-with and made-with Marlo, an awareness of collaborative assemblages as one method of fostering ‘ongoingness’ in this project and in life has become apparent. In the tesseract-like temporality of making-with, the configured assemblages (attachments) of specific bonds and unwitting participation create collaborative structures which hold the importance of ‘with’ as an art-making methodology. Without ‘with’, everything falls apart.

Adrift, attached

The enactment of ideas around crossings over borders and collaborative structures varies in the visual arts. For example, in Pierre Huyghe's science-fictional 2013 retrospective installation at the Centre Pompidou in Paris,

222. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 101.

discussed by Susan Ballard in ‘New Ecological Sympathies’, multiple adjoining artworks “introduced viewers to the exhibition environment as an endless swarm of life” with no boundaries between the individual artworks nor between the artworks and viewers as participants.²²³ Bees occupied a sculpture and made work of their own, altering the environment of the installation. Human, Huyghe's Ibizan hound with a painted pink leg, wandered freely through the installation, weaving through and with visitors and artworks, her image “doubled on a video screen where it inhabits both the past and the present.”²²⁴ Everyone was “tied into a perpetual exchange of surfaces”²²⁵ across time and space, operating in an assemblage of alterity. By presenting reality as if it were science-fiction, Huyghe is, in Vint's words, “[estranging] the [viewer's] experience so that we too feel the contingency and mutability of things we normally take as fixed.”²²⁶ Huyghe's installation was open to the potential of knotty relationships that float to the surface and wobble with equally knotty and trembling materials in art galleries, open to cross-species connections and relationships created in the intensity of what Ballard, through Bergson, terms the “sympathetic flux of encounter.”²²⁷ This is another way of approaching Morton's uncanny awareness of ‘stuckness’ in the symbiotic real, or Braddock's unwitting participation. Ballard, Morton and Braddock here seem to be hovering around similar issues; a contingent and fluxy field of attachments. In Braddock's words, this might be “unseen networks that infiltrate bodies,” a flux that precedes (or enfolds) the potential of sympathetic leaps across the surfaces of multiparticipant assemblages.²²⁸




Image removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons

Image 282: Pierre Huyghe; installation views of *Pierre Huyghe* at Centre Pompidou, Paris, 2014. Photos: Centre Pompidou. <https://www.centrepompidou.fr/fr/programme/agenda/evenement/c9nnKkx>

223. Ballard, “New Ecological Sympathies,” 262.

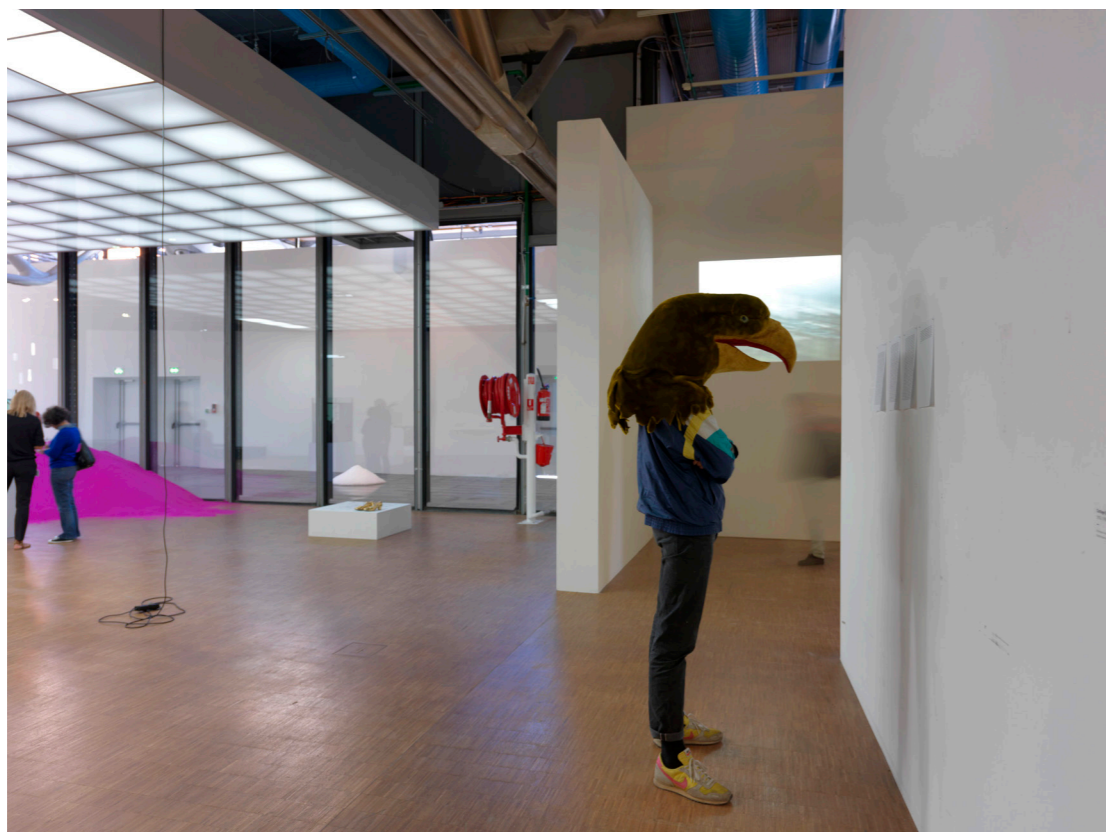
224. Ballard, “New Ecological Sympathies,” 276.

225. Ballard, “New Ecological Sympathies,” 262.

226. Vint, *Science Fiction*, 106.

227. Ballard, “New Ecological Sympathies,” 276.

228. Braddock, *Performing Contagious Bodies*, 14.



Images 283-284: Pierre Huyghe; installation views of *Pierre Huyghe* at Centre Pompidou, Paris, 25 September 2013 - 6 January 2014. Curator: Emma Lavigne.
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Photo © Centre Pompidou, MNAM-CCI Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Philippe Migeat

In thinking about such multispecies and multiparticipant assemblages, I was reminded of the artwork *My Best Friend*. Organised by Australian artist Malcolm Whittaker in 2014, it was a “performative walk” held at the Edinburgh Gardens in Fitzroy, Melbourne. The event was orchestrated in loving “memory of departed pet dogs” of Melbourne, after the passing of Winnie, long-time member of the artist’s family. Through a communal “walking ritual” that used to be regularly shared between these dogs and their humans, *My Best Friend* brought people together and allowed them to share stories of the dogs that “lived, loved and who have been lost.”²²⁹

Bittersweet and playful, with Whittaker using a ball thrower as an imaginative wayfinding prop for the group, *My Best Friend* employed story-telling and story-sharing as a form of commemoration and as a way of building connection between a diverse group of people who’d been ‘left adrift on the sea of grief’, in all its various expressions. Speaking both to loss and the idea of honouring those who have departed, this performance centred on the individual dogs, as well as the specific relationships each dog had with their humans. At a time when hierarchies of loss are still in place, and people react differently to the death of a dog (or cat, bunny, guinea pig, etc.) than they would to the death of a human-animal, *My Best Friend*’s ceremonial unfolding speaks to a seriousness and earnestness that places each individual dog, having led a full life ‘worthy’ of tribute and remembrance, at its heart. In Whittaker’s words, this performance allowed for the expression of “disenfranchised grief.”²³⁰

My Best Friend is an artwork open to the potential of participation and holds all its participants; planned, unplanned, witting, unwitting, Haraway’s ‘past, present, and to come’, in equal fluxy suspension. This includes the dead—something very relevant to *Making-with Marlo* since Marlo has died. The convivial and collaborative commitment of *My Best Friend* (echoing the “convivial” way dogs live their lives) figures participation as an ongoing and loving process.²³¹ Continual calibration in terms of trembling cross-species relations is also an intrinsic part of this project, necessary for ‘ongoingness’ and tapping into a mutual future. As an example, the first draft of this section on *My Best Friend* was written in April 2021, relatively soon after Marlo’s death. I wrote the dramatic phrase ‘left adrift on the sea of grief’ at that time of grief, when

229. *My Best Friend - Micro Parks Documentation*, 2014, <https://vimeo.com/104915522>. See also: Clay Lucas, “Suburban Dog Walks Remembered in Art Event,” *The Age*, August 27, 2014, sec. Victoria, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/suburban-dog-walks-remembered-in-art-event-20140827-1093sz.html>. And: Field Theory, “Site Is Set (2014),” *Field Theory*, accessed May 25, 2023, <https://www.fieldtheory.com.au/work/sis14>.
230. *My Best Friend - Micro Parks Documentation*, 2014.
231. Lucas, “Suburban Dog Walks Remembered in Art Event.”

I possibly might not now, two years later. However, I have also decided to leave it in the exegesis, in its full of-its-time-ness, as a signal that the project involves itself in the changing of sorrow, how that might materially manifest in the project and how it could register as an ongoing thing, a life thing.

‘Adriftness’ was an active material component in my practice in the days/weeks after Marlo’s death. It has impacted the project (and Marlo and me) and now floats with and through all these artworks. For example, in November 2020, I read a short piece of writing to our PhD reading group in which I spoke of Marlo and invited others to share stories of their lost loved ones. This was personally quite a difficult thing for me to do in a few ways, but the way this micro art event unfolded with people responding in kind made me (freshly) aware of the meaningful potential of ‘with’ in the project. Coming across *My Best Friend* in 2021, I was struck by the synchronicities. Similarly, the first collection of means-to-an-end props I made after Marlo’s death created for the Talk Week event in February of 2021 (four months after Marlo’s death) involved a conversation with others and an invitation to sniff and/or handle objects containing different scents related to Marlo’s smell-based experiences in life, moving the ‘adriftness’ closer to the ‘with’ space of the project again. (See images 150-156). Leaving the phrase, ‘left adrift on the sea of grief’ in its entirety in the text seems like a useful way to acknowledge the state of relations that my/our work engages with—that this project is not ‘about’ sorrow but about these relations.

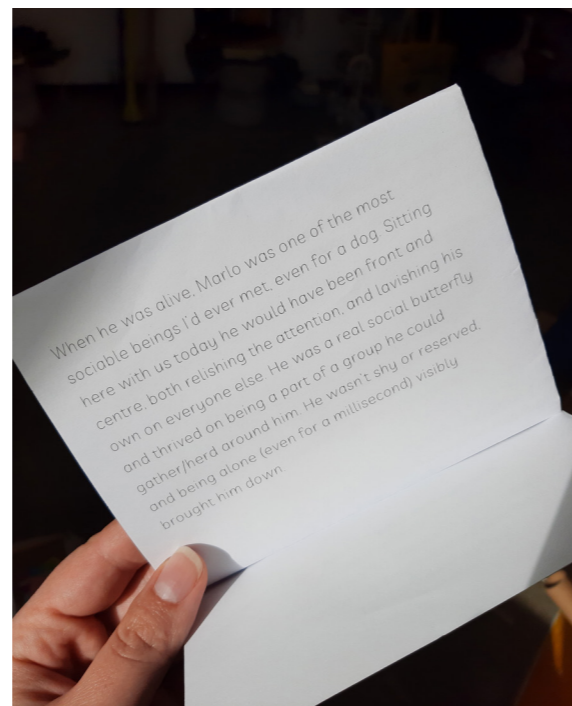


Image 285: Another view of the unfoldable printed matter guide for the props offered during the Talk Week I event, after death February 2021. In it I write about Marlo’s personality as a social butterfly.



Images 286-289: Screenshots of Malcolm Whittaker; *My Best Friend*, Micro Parks Documentation, 2014. <https://vimeo.com/104915522>. © Malcolm Whittaker. With thanks to the artist.

Sympathetic leaps and time spent together

Crucially, *My Best Friend* also takes place out in the world outside, where it draws on structures of sympathy, symbiosis, and inseparability, not in a gallery or ‘official’ performance space but in parks and daily walking routes. By contrast, I am also interested in Susan Ballard’s discussion of art galleries as spaces of sympathy because this border (maybe another vertical and manufactured border) between art gallery and out in the world, is something that has had an impact on the artworks made for *Making-with Marlo*.

In “New Ecological Sympathies: Thinking about Contemporary Art in the Age of Extinction”, Ballard discusses art galleries as spaces of sympathy where we can “[locate] ourselves in the place of others.”²³² She approaches sympathy through a discussion of Henri Bergson’s definition of sympathy as a “transformative form of ‘feeling-knowing’” and through Samuel Butler’s “broader ‘imaginative web’ of interspecies and machinic relationships” that takes Bergson’s sympathy as a starting point.²³³ Sympathy, as Ballard contextualises it through the art gallery, is a technique “through which we process our concerns and understanding of other bodies, both human and nonhuman.” Art galleries for Ballard are spaces that “[weave] together humans, space, time, animals, objects, and machines in sympathetic environments.”²³⁴ By hosting artworks and facilitating environments that openly diffuse borders between subject and object, participant and passerby, living and nonliving, animal and human, art galleries are spaces where sympathy is a key element to becoming aware of countless relations and bodies (and therefore, of living-with in ongoingness). To me, then, sympathy seems to be another crucial element of the suspension of all possible participants and, therefore, of the open potential of participation. But is an art gallery a place where this project can tap into the flux?

Importantly, and highlighted by Ballard, the word sympathy in this sense is removed from its associations with care, kindness or softheartedness. In this gallery context, sympathy is not a feeling but a “synchronous activity for understanding other bodies.”²³⁵ It is not chained to affectionate intimacy or concern; it is a way of “knowing from within”²³⁶, which depends upon time

spent together, synchronously rather than sequentially, and not necessarily in convivial friendship or care. Through Bergson, Ballard suggests that sympathy “reflects togetherness rather than a sequence of evolving habits” and is the “means through which we spend time together and begin to know and understand other living bodies.”²³⁷ In such a way, sympathy, through Ballard, Bergson and Butler, is a method of thinking about the “lived [rather than represented] relation between all things.”²³⁸ Performance artist Diane Borsato talks around these ideas while discussing her practice:

I’m also interested in not just the subversive potential of enacting intimacy, but also the epistemological potential – the ways of knowing – generated by being close to things, quite literally. And by that I mean, not just by looking at things. So, for example, in *Artifacts in My Mouth*, where I’m putting museum objects in my mouth, it’s about the limits that we have for knowing things conventionally, like just looking through the museum vitrine glass. What would it mean to taste these things, smell them, feel the shape of them, not just with my hands, but with my face, have them in my body – how much more can I know? What does it mean to be close to things? It’s like an experiment. And it’s a way of knowing another person; and it’s a way of knowing the material world.²³⁹



Images 290-293: My friend and studio colleague Shelley Simpson on October 13, 2022 testing out *Kneeling Pad* that might be kneeded for digging holes comfortably; MDF, foam, springs, hinges, super glue, after death July 2021.

232. Ballard, “New Ecological Sympathies,” 277.
233. Ballard, “New Ecological Sympathies,” 256.
234. Ballard, “New Ecological Sympathies,” 257.
235. Ballard, “New Ecological Sympathies,” 265.
236. Ballard, “New Ecological Sympathies,” 261.

237. Ballard, “New Ecological Sympathies,” 260.
238. Ballard, “New Ecological Sympathies,” 259.
239. J. Paul Halferty, “Intimate Interventions: An Interview with Diane Borsato,” *Canadian Theatre Review* Winter, no. 137 (2009), 17.

Being close to things as a way of learning, and the potential of Ballard's time spent together, I find very useful contexts in this project since it is only me, my family and a few friends who ever had first-hand affection towards and with-Marlo. Human-animals who try using a means-to-an-end prop, or passersby and other unwitting participants, won't necessarily have this same emotional attachment to Marlo. And, nor would I expect them to.²⁴⁰ The means-to-an-end artworks all spring from lived experiences with-Marlo. They are often joyous and fun tools for a good time. This is important to me as a way of drawing out what artist Monique Redmond writes about as a "wish for a viewer to share in my excitement – to feel as though they are engaging in an art experience."²⁴¹ For Redmond, whose distributed practice operates through a quiet and committed community of relations and approaches for the production of "temporal and durational artworks that seek to recognise and celebrate common modalities of exchange" this is an excitement about (and a love for) flowers, the 'floral-event' and systems of "shared mutual appreciation."²⁴² In *Making-with Marlo*, engaging with means-to-an-end props, this would be sharing in the shared excitement between Marlo and me. For Redmond, who sniffs out a difficulty in the way art is encountered – "often defined by [the public's] desire 'not to have to' perform and, most especially, not to be witnessed in the act of participation" – enjoyment can be seen as a "positive modality of participation" within the floral exchange-events of her practice.²⁴³

In considering time spent together in this project, being close to things, such a mutual appreciation would always be with-Marlo, even if you never knew him in life. Held in potential through the means-to-an-end props, enjoyment—in this project, curiosity, playfulness, fun—seeks to operate in similar ways to Redmond's blooming enjoyment, as the "experiential element that assures an authentic experiencing of the floral event."²⁴⁴ In the case of *Making-with Marlo* this is the potential of an authentic experiencing of Marlo's doggy joys, curiosities, loves, appreciations and noticings. Springing from these experiences, the means-to-an-end props extend to and with others and exist as conduits towards the nosey possibility of sniffing our way into an alterity of perception cross-species. Marlo has lent the means-to-an-end props this power of possibility

240. The experiential trips using the means-to-an-end props as starting points in places like Mellons Bay, work in a slightly different way. They include me (and therefore my first-hand connection with Marlo) more overtly. The differences between these forms of my role as 'interpreter' or guide in the project are something that I'm actively thinking about as I work towards the next point of encounter with cross-species means-to-an-end props.

241. Redmond, "The Event within Temporary Practices and the Public Social," 17, 203.

242. Redmond, "The Event within Temporary Practices and the Public Social," 17, 223.

243-244. Redmond, "The Event within Temporary Practices and the Public Social," 17, 203.

and potential because he made them with me. Through the "ongoing sym-chthonic forces and powers" of a making-with tesseract, the question becomes not only one of Ballard's sympathy as a "synchronous activity for understanding other bodies", but also of an ongoing attentiveness to this ongoing potential. (Attentiveness in me, and in others).²⁴⁵

This sympathetic, sym-chthonic leap, activated through an exploration of unstable contact zones between species by playing with a means-to-an-end-object, I see as a leap of potential— a flowy, in-between space of sympathy towards another being and an awareness of the attachment of self with other potential participants. From such a perspective, the means-to-an-end props are cross-species efforts to reach through dog/human differences in the search for knowledge of an intimate other. They are an extension cord for spending time together, even when one of us is no longer physically here. The objects in this project prop open the potential of togetherness outside of time and space; what Ballard talks about as an "assemblage that can travel backward and forward in Time" in her discussion of Norwegian artist Ann Lislegaard's work *Time Machine* (2011).²⁴⁶ In a similar vein, Braddock talks about "action-at-a-distance," which might mean crossing the gap through sympathetic leaps with the aid of a means-to-an-end prop. *Time Machine* as an artwork creates a sympathetic space to "think these relationships into the future."²⁴⁷ For Ballard, this is unlike Pierre Huyghe's installation, which remains "trapped in the present space of the gallery" like a time capsule where we are entangled with the works in the gallery, but "at the border of the gallery we experience the edge of our sympathies."²⁴⁸ The question of attentiveness to the ongoing potentials of making-with is important here. Although my practice has been encountered in art spaces much like the present space Ballard talks about, the means-to-an-end props hold the potential of a transformation of perception that walks-with our sympathies beyond the borders of the gallery.

Ballard's discussion of sympathy is linked to species extinction and suggests how "sympathetic engagements" with "ecological transformation, and thus the confronting possibility of our own extinction" might occur in spaces of the art gallery, offering new ways of understanding our shared ecological catastrophe.²⁴⁹

245. Ballard, "New Ecological Sympathies," 265.

246. Ballard, "New Ecological Sympathies," 269.

247-248. Ballard, "New Ecological Sympathies," 265

249. Ballard, "New Ecological Sympathies," 255.

Sympathy here is scaled up to planetary size. However, I see it as being active on a smaller scale, too, in a suburban/familial ecology of life with Marlo and the project that comes out of that “time spent together”, a concept directly related to the methodological ‘with’ space of this project. Ballard’s ecological sympathy, the attachments in Morton’s symbiotic real, and Braddock’s potential of unwitting participation also work in another way, which is that those two scales, the planetary and the familial, are necessarily the same and cannot be distinguished hierarchically. We are part of sympathetic, simultaneous systems in which borders smudge and cross-species entanglements are always open to potential in the “flux of encounter.”²⁵⁰

Making-with and intimacy

There was a point at which, while watching historical footage of Joseph Beuys’s 1974 performance *I like America and America Likes Me*, it struck me that a lot of people would be afraid to be locked in a cage with a wild coyote. To me, the coyote, little and alone, was nothing to be scared of; I saw him²⁵¹ as someone already familiar with his cute canine face and doggy-ish mannerisms. But, was this me putting down Haraway’s significant otherness in favour of indulging in a kind of unproductive ‘animal fantasy’? The coyote is a wild critter, not as precisely attuned to human-animal emotions and expressions as a domestic dog like Marlo. And dogs themselves, while coevolving with us over millennia, are still sentient beings of their own, with minds and wills not actually in servitude to the minds and wills of humans, despite popular belief and personal anecdotes. There are boundaries here, one mind butting up against another

250. Ballard, “New Ecological Sympathies,” 276.

251. Not much has been written about the coyote. Beuys named him Little John. According to Caroline Tisdall, the art critic who documented *I Like America and America Likes Me*, he came from a ranch in New Jersey. See: Elena Passarello, “Origin Story,” *The Paris Review*, March 16, 2017, <https://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2017/03/16/origin-story/>.



Images 294-295: Screenshots of a YouTube video showing historical snippets of footage of Joseph Beuys’ *I Like America and America Likes Me*, 1974. René Block Gallery, New York. The full video can be viewed here and was posted by Erika Estacio Ortiz in 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r9NWCOF0c5M>.

but never fully merging into one.²⁵² Boundaries, we (I) think we can collapse inside our minds, but find out otherwise when a dog does not understand a (clear-to-us) call to action or when a coyote rips up Beuys's gloves and attempts to dismantle his felt wrapping.

Beuys's primary interest in his artistic life focused on the potential of art to bring about transformation and social change, on an individual and communal level. Central to this proposition was Beuys's concept of 'social sculpture' (an example being this performance), that life and society is an artwork and that every human being is an artist who can contribute to it through their actions.²⁵³ In watching clips of *I Like America and America Likes Me*, this stance is evident. The action like other Beuys performances involving animals, for example *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965), is calibrated towards its human-animal participant and the human-animal spectators, with the coyote playing a symbolic role only—a trickster spirit and a symbol of transformation found in many traditional Native American myths. For Beuys the coyote was an archetypal symbol of America who could help reveal the possibility of healing of social wounds through communication and connection (with Beuys, the self-styled shamanistic figure effecting this transformation). In this sense, politically

and ethically *I Like America and America Likes Me* is of its time.²⁵⁴ However, Beuys' seemingly genuine belief that you really can change the world through art, as well as his attempt to enter into a transformational state with the coyote, makes me wonder how Beuys might reperform this artwork if he had the opportunity to do so today.

In *I Like America and America Likes Me*, the coyote is not entirely implemented as a prop, like the actual props Beuys uses for activities within the work (gloves, triangle, felt shroud, cane, copies of the *Wall Street Journal*—all used in a mystical ritual repeated every day, the sequence beginning with the ringing of the triangle three times), but they are all undoubtedly being instrumentalised for a human drama. As anecdotal accounts go, the coyote and Beuys did get to know each other over the three days of the action in the gallery, and the coyote even accepted a hug from Beuys. I wonder, is such a short-lived intimacy enough to communicate across irreducible differences? In reappraising this artwork, questions about intimacy arise such as: can intimacy be forced and is it necessary to cross-subjective awareness? How does intimacy relate to empathy, and what capacity does it have to alter the ways we relate to one another without reducing the undefinable perspectives of others “to our own,” as Ron

252. Taking a sideways step to another species, in Peter Dickinson's dystopian science-fiction novel *Eva*, the titular character undergoes a literal transformation into a chimpanzee through an experimental procedure to prolong her life after a serious car accident. The scientist carrying out the procedure implants the neural “pattern” of Eva's memories and consciousness into the body of Kelly, a chimpanzee from the research facility Eva's family runs. Eva wakes up in a chimpanzee body with her thoughts and memories intact and quickly becomes aware of Kelly's consciousness and memories bobbing to the surface. We learn that this was not the first such procedure carried out and that other human/chimpanzee pairs have also undergone a conjoining unsuccessfully, with neither individual accepting the other as part of a new whole, eventually leading to their deaths. Kelly and Eva's conjoining has worked because they do not fight each other's agency and instead open themselves up to the experience of another. Eva starts seeing herself as “a new pattern, not Eva, not Kelly—both but one.” (pgs. 37-38). An awareness that allows them both (in a sense) to live in a contingency of attachments and change things for the better during the course of the novel's plot. The phrase “both, but one” is a potential way of imagining the ongoing relationship between Marlo and me (and possibly other participants). Both in terms of the closeness any one of us can experience with a loved one and in terms of an opening into Donna Haraway's 'ongoingness' beyond death. An opening into 'ongoingness' across divisions separating our two species. An opening into 'ongoingness' across borders of space and time that separate us as individuals, all of which I become aware of through collaborative sensory encounters experienced through the making of, and playing with props that have a nosey purpose. Do means-to-an-end props hold that kind of potential for someone who has never known Marlo?

253. Tara Galliver, “Dialogue, Encounter, Exchange: Joseph Beuys's Visual and Textual Presence in Art into Society - Society into Art (1974),” *Tate Papers*, no. 32 (Autumn 2019), <https://www.tate.org.uk/research/tate-papers/32/beuys-visual-textual-presence-art-into-society>.

254. This is perhaps not surprising considering the anthropocentric orientation of much art made during this period in history, which seems to be tied to the “need to assert the primacy of human subjects over inanimate objects” in the aftermath of WWII, and as a response to the catastrophic devaluing of life during the Holocaust, in the atomic decimation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the horrors of the Vietnam War. It was humans, not coyotes, being marched into gas chambers. This context of the deep need to prioritise human life is understandable, but it inevitably leads to the lives of others being instrumentalised for their (human) symbolic value only. For example, performance works like Kim Jones' *Rat Piece* in 1976, in which the artist burned live rats to death to demonstrate the dehumanisation of war and the audience's complicity in being unwilling to stop him despite witnessing his cruelty. As one artist actively trying to engage with the possibility of making-with other species, I am tempted not to give such objectively cruel historical precursors any real attention within this exegesis. But as Steve Baker writes in his introduction to *Artist|Animal*: “simply to condemn such works is to learn nothing from them.” This historical context is vital in navigating visual art practices today. See Steve Baker, *Artist|Animal*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).



Image 296: Kalisolaite 'Uhila; *Pigs in the Yard*, 2011. Documentation of performance, Aotea Square Performance Arcade, Tāmaki Makaurau. Image courtesy of Michael Lett Gallery. Photo: Linda Trubridge and Sam Trubridge. **Image 297:** Kalisolaite 'Uhila; *Pigs in the Yard*, 2011. Image courtesy of Michael Lett Gallery.

Broglio warns, “and without throwing out parts of these others’ worlds that we cannot understand”²⁵⁵ As Marlo and I have collaborated throughout this project, the importance of Haraway’s significant otherness has become apparent here, always leading to a methodology of ‘with’ – cross-species bonds that matter. In a footnote to *Staying with the Trouble*, whilst discussing the pioneering work of biologist Lynn Margulis, Haraway presents Margulis’s definition of symbiosis as a “physical association between individuals of different species for significant portions of their lifetime.”²⁵⁶ Little John and Beuys here would not seem to qualify, but this definition does not account for the potential of props, or the potential of Shannon Te Ao’s socially provisional cross-species spaces in art.

A relevant connection here is the work *Pigs in the Yard* (2011–2017) by Tongan artist Kalisolaite 'Uhila whose broader practice of brokering relation and fellowship goes to poignant cross-species spaces in this work. Taking form through iteration, in *Pigs in the Yard* 'Uhila engaged in a series of encounters with pigs, from living with a piglet in a shipping container for a week (recalling the coyote and Joseph Beuys), to a performance in which the artist facilitated the possibility for a group of pigs to roam free in the courtyard of Māngere Arts Centre in South Auckland, while he and the audience were confined behind fences. This first iteration, performed in 2011, took the pigs’ potential experience as its starting point, facilitating an action where they might be able to enjoy similar freedoms as if they were in Tonga, where pigs are considered sacred, political, vital to human society, and are allowed to roam free. Subverting both the undeserved associations of pigs as unclean, as well as the realities of life for most pigs in Aotearoa as animals whose ultimate destiny is to provide food for humans, often living in crowded, stressful conditions, this iteration of *Pigs in the Yard* also “clearly delineated an alternate perspective of the sacrosanct ‘white cube’, occupying it as if it were on Tongan fonua (land).”²⁵⁷

The second iteration is more relevant to the methodologies of this project. Performed at the Performance Arcade in Aotea Square, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland in 2011, 'Uhila here created a joint pigpen inside a shipping container, outfitted with hay for comfort, individual water bowls and a piece of hessian on which 'Uhila and his chosen pig companion could rest together.

255. Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, 2.

256. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, n.189.

257. Leafa Wilson, “Kalisolaite 'Uhila: The Pig and Its Friend,” *White Fungus*, accessed March 15, 2023, <https://www.whitefungus.com/kalisolaite-uhila-pig-and-its-friend>.

For eight days, the young pig and ‘Uhila lived closely, slept clumped next to one another and seemed to, as Haraway might have argued for *Pigs in the Yard*, “inhabit an intersubjective world that is about meeting the other in all the fleshly detail of a mortal relationship”²⁵⁸ – an intimacy of surfaces and significant otherness where both the pig and ‘Uhila hold open space for one another.²⁵⁹ For the duration of the work, the pig, unlike the coyote in *I Like America*, was an individual sharing an equivalent experience with ‘Uhila. The context of the common life of a pig in contrast to the common life of a coyote is important here. Domesticated pigs have lived closely with us human-animals for approximately 9000 years.²⁶⁰ As with dogs, this could not have been a relationship of a ‘one-way-street’ – yes, ancient humans domesticated wild pigs, but they must surely have also domesticated us. There is something about the comfort-kit provided by ‘Uhila in the shared pen that speaks to this—the hay nods to a familiarity with certain forms of comfort that both species seem to share. This is unlike the coyote (also given a bed of hay), whose fellow coyotes do not live contained in domestic human spaces the way pigs (and dogs) and human-animals do. There is a specific attachment here, amplified by the significance of pigs in Tonga. It’s a significant bond between the pig and ‘Uhila that Beuys and the coyote do not share. For that reason, I see *Pigs in the Yard* as a short-lived world of making-with, which turns the surface of things into a significant cross-species engagement. Additionally, artist and curator Leafa Wilson argues that, in a Tongan relational sense, any potential subversion of anthropocentric orientations present in this work is “not [‘Uhila] lowering himself to the lifestyle of a pig. Rather, it is him being afforded the privilege of accompanying the pig, which in this instance is the being of most importance to ‘Uhila’s work.”²⁶¹ I would like to contextualise my own making and living-with Marlo in a similar way—making-with as accompanying each other across time and space.

Despite the pockets of affection between the coyote and Beuys, this wild critter is not considered a sentient being of his own within the work (and, in effect, is the only one in any real danger in that gallery space). How would this action have been different if Beuys had lived with an animal he knew well, or as performance artist Diane Borsato did in a playful response to *I Like America and America Likes Me*, a pet cat?

258. Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway*, 126.

259. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 38.

260. Amke Caliebe et al., “Insights into Early Pig Domestication Provided by Ancient DNA Analysis,” *Scientific Reports* 7, no. 1 (March 16, 2017): 44550, <https://doi.org/10.1038/srep44550>. E Giuffra et al., “The Origin of the Domestic Pig: Independent Domestication and Subsequent Introgression,” *Genetics* 154, no. 4 (April 1, 2000): 1785-91, <https://doi.org/10.1093/genetics/154.4.1785>.

261. Wilson, “Kalisolaite ‘Uhila.”

This response is part of an artwork titled *Three Performances (After Joseph Beuys, Marina Abramovic, and Bonnie Sherk)* (2008), in which Borsato reenacts Beuys’ *I Like America and America Likes Me*, Marina Abramovic’s *Dragonheads* (1990–1992) and Bonnie Sherk’s *Public Lunch* (1971) with her “precocious house cat” as a co-performer in place of the exotic animals in these original historic performances.²⁶² Borsato refers to this artwork as “domesticated versions of the original heroic and iconic works... a proposal for how such insights – and even more subtle and complicated ones – might be found without leaving the house.”²⁶³ *Making-with Marlo* draws on the type of provisional, at-hand making that Borsato here hints at and utilises. She talks about being “very interested in little experiments, in materials, sensations, and certain kinds of gestures... not really... in the theatricality of things,” linking to the ways means-to-an-end props in this practice tap into cross-species gestures “on a modest scale” – sniffing, digging, leaning, walking, napping, rock collecting and so on.²⁶⁴ It is an intimate, cross-subjective scale of the daily life adventures with Marlo, differing from *I Like America*’s theatrical and heroic scale of mystic experience and Borsato’s reenactments. These are specifically set-up situations in which Borsato and her cat intra-act in short-lived ways removed from the intimacies of their everyday lives. This project, by contrast, lives in a temporality of ongoing attachments and attempts at connection, an ongoing lived collaboration, with no conclusion being readily available.

Borsato’s interest in intimate interventions is relevant as a form of art-making methodology of attempts that this project embraces. Here she speaks about another artwork, *Wondering How Long He Can Keep Up the World* (2005), a video of Borsato’s father kicking a globe-painted football up in the air without allowing it to hit the ground as she records the action, all the while talking to each other:

And throughout the video, you can hear these exchanges between us, and you can witness our relationship. You can see how hard he is trying to do this as well as possible for me, and how badly I need him to keep doing it, forever... I’m also interested in that kind of intervention, one in which I make a video about my dad. Is that lofty enough? Would it be more legitimate to reference a French philosopher? Or is it that those insights

262-263. Borsato in Halferty, “Intimate Interventions,” 14

264. Borsato in Halferty, “Intimate Interventions,” 15.

might be available if I just immerse myself in that one relationship? Or the one with my cat? I am so overwhelmed by what's at hand, and what's in my kitchen, or my bedroom, or in the city. I feel that the insights are available there, and I want to be able to mine that territory, and those materials, and those relationships.²⁶⁵

Through cross-species sentience mediated by my specific bond with Marlo, *Making-with Marlo* contributes to a field of art-making that is similar to Borsato as she circles with her father; a “personal, immediate sphere” of intimate relationships, of working-with what is readily at hand in sensory exchanges, experiences and opportunities, through gestures on a modest scale. This is making-with through living-with, potentially adding to the multi-layered, dimensional approaches to collaboration in visual arts research. Responding to one of my key research questions, these participatory and sculptural methods actively contribute to the discussion on cross-species sentience.



Image 298: Diane Borsato; *Wondering How Long He Can Keep Up The World*, 2005. Stills of video recording. © Diane Borsato. Image courtesy of the artist.



Images 299-301: Diane Borsato; *Three Performances (after Joseph Beuys, Marina Abramović, and Bonnie Sherk)*, 2008. Three-channel digital video installation. Details of Joseph Beuys re-enactment. © Diane Borsato. With thanks to the artist.

265. Borsato in Halferty, "Intimate Interventions," 19.



Images 302-305: Krõõt Juurak and Alex Bailey; *Performances for Pets*. Screenshots of *Performance for Anwalt*, 09.01.2014. Single-channel video, 13.43min, colour, sound. <https://www.performancesforpets.net/library/2016/5/7/performance-for-anwalt>. © Krõõt Juurak and Alex Bailey. With thanks to the artists.

For versus With

Another artwork enacted in adjacent spaces of short-lived intimacy to *I Like America* is *Performances for Pets* (2014–ongoing) by artist duo Krõõt Juurak and Alex Bailey. This is a playful series of filmed events held at the homes of dogs and cats whose humans commission a performance especially for them, from the artists. Wearing matching attire (leopard-print for cats), the two artists perform bespoke dance-like movements geared toward the animal they are performing for (developed through a preliminary consultation with the human-animal of the household). Responses from the animal viewers in question vary from “pretending [the artists] are not even there to enthusiastic play.”²⁶⁶

Happening in the animals’ home turf, much like the habitats of this project and Borsato’s *Three Performances*, Meyle’s *Local Branch* and Te Ao’s *two shoots*, *Performances for Pets* was conceptualised as a gesture of thanks and an offer of enjoyment to pet animals in return for emotional labour they share in their lives with humans, often not recognised as actual work. Juurak and Bailey say:

Contemporary pets no longer have a practical function in the household. Cats don’t need to catch mice, dogs no longer need to guard the house. Pets have upgraded their job descriptions and line of work to what we call immaterial or affective labour. In short, pets manage to make a living out of just being themselves instead of producing something. And that we find very contemporary.²⁶⁷

Also attentive to the locations of participants, Te Ao’s listeners in *two shoots* are professional working animals, not pets, and the filming happens in their everyday working space in ways that do not engage with ‘play’ or ‘entertainment.’ How does this affect Te Ao’s attempts at connection? Could a space of play, like the space *Performances for Pets* inhabit, bring forth different intensities of connection – perhaps what Borsato refers to as the engagement with “intimacy as a way of knowing another with the body and as a way of acknowledging one another...”²⁶⁸ Though not light-hearted or humorous in the

266. I found this recounting of a typical cat response amusing: “A typical cat always leaves the room as soon as the performance starts and comes back after a few moments to follow us around the house, in some cases even to the door after the performances already finished.” The artists also note our limitations in recognising the full scope of a response to the performances from a member of a different species: “Human understanding of eventfulness is quite different for the non-human perspective. We feel it would be unfair to point out some moments that seemed like events to us. Only the pets will know of the most eventful moments for them.” See: Krõõt Juurak and Alex Bailey, “Performances for Pets - Q&A,” Info, *Performances for Pets*, accessed May 14, 2023, <http://www.performancesforpets.net/info>.

267. Juurak and Bailey, “Performances for Pets - Q&A.”

268. Borsato in Halferty, “Intimate Interventions,” 17.

way *Performances for Pets* is, Te Ao and his fellow performers in *two shoots* nevertheless occupy an improvised space that has been transformed into a space of potential through art. In a talk on art for animal audiences discussing *Performances for Pets*, art historian and curator Jessica Ulrich speaks about art and play as related spaces or activities. To Ulrich, “The space of art and the space of play are both undetermined places of freedom that give room for ideas and provide opportunities for the development of possibilities and potentialities.”²⁶⁹ Embracing the question of why other animals should not be given the opportunity to enjoy performances and art, this iterative artwork is nevertheless enacted through structures that could potentially tip the work into parody, something that Te Ao is explicit about avoiding. For example, the pet parents are always present, beaming, phones in hand, recording ‘their’ animal’s encounter with the artists —is the performance, therefore, actually for them? (I suspect it might be.) As viewers, we are also implicated in much the same way. These artworks invite us to consider the difference between a performance *for* someone and a making-*with* someone, where the making-with space provides new potentialities for relating and living with other species, even when we mix the human-animal structures of contemporary art with the joint lives we share.

Participatory links and joint lives

I have been thinking about the slippage between different characteristics of audience communities engaging in the project. In conversations with my supervisor Monique Redmond, the idea of a ‘pet-sympathetic’ audience emerged as a potential audience zone. This group includes people who share their lives with animals, love them and show that love by doing unique things their pets might need or want. For example, sewing a suitably padded medical cone for their dog who does not enjoy the ready-made varieties.²⁷⁰ Constructing a makeshift cooling space with a bedsheet and a repurposed fan for the benefit of a dog with thick fur.²⁷¹ Even an ad showing a hotel room tour from a dog’s

perspective, emphasising the ‘pet-friendly’ amenities of the hotel, signals towards these actions of love their potential customers engage in.²⁷² Like the custom *Performances for Pets*, these actions parallel the prop space of the project. They are bespoke actions/activities explicitly tailored to the personality or needs of each animal, and similarly use construction methods that align with how I engage the making of sculptural objects (means-to-an-end, provisional, fit-for-purpose).

Another pet-sympathetic audience would include people like Kirsten, my friend and fellow human-animal participant in *Mellons Bay Walk 2*. They are the people who are all-in, who come in through the emotional space of the project. People who ‘know’ Marlo even though they might not have met, and who know me. People who are believers of the project and who “join in with the ethos of [my] intent”²⁷³ and who are responsive through their participation. Kirsten responded to the walking event by surprising me with a gift of a ‘Dog Daisy’ bouquet and a thank you note ‘written’ by Clover and Oto on a small flat rock we found together on the walk. This is a material exchange that naturally fits with the project: a site-specific thank you note and flowers that allude to the doggyness of the project through their name and the convivial gesture they represent, as well as their nature as a ‘friendly’ flower for a friendly occasion (unlike say, a mournful, funereal white lily). Kirsten’s in-kind reciprocity expanded this walking work into a relational experience that I could never have facilitated or organised. These participatory links are continually evolving and turning up, even at the time of writing and are shaping the project’s development and ‘stretching’ the edges and zones of the practice.

269. Jessica Ulrich, “Art for Animal Audiences” (Animal Forms & Formulas - On the human-animal-relation in contemporary performance, Sophiensaele, Berlin, October 1, 2017), <http://www.performancesforpets.net/text>.

270. @lucythemaker. “Update: he fell asleep in his new cone and he wouldn’t even lie down in the old one 🐾 #goldenretriever #doggo #dogtok #coneofshame” TikTok, 2021, (<https://www.tiktok.com/@lucythemaker/video/7020333960702004481>).

271. @mayapolarbear. “Life hack to keep your polar bear cool in summer 🐾 #dog #samoyed #polarbear #lifehack #diy #fan #summerhack #fyp” TikTok, 2022, (<https://www.tiktok.com/@mayapolarbear/video/7104267246851116293>).

272. @hilton. “POV: room tour from a pooch’s perspective. Pull up, cause we’re pet-friendly like that! #tonithedancingdog #petfriendly #hilton #hiltonforthestay @Biachi” TikTok, 2022, (<https://www.tiktok.com/@hilton/video/7161498112542919978>).

273. Monique Redmond, in conversation with the artist, July 7, 2022.

Chapter 3:

Tugging on time

Living-through and relational commitments

Alternate temporalities

Throughout this project, particularly when Marlo was still alive but dying, I've felt tugged by time. I've yearned to sink my hands into the temporal flow, grab an anchor point and heave us back to happier days. Like Joseph Cooper and the tesseract in Christopher Nolan's *Interstellar*, I've wanted to pinch the strings of time and hold them still; to swallow the weave of dog-time which might transmit knowledge through the cross-species threshold; to attend to Marlo's needs even more thoroughly. At particularly intense moments while at the vet, I yearned to scoop us all out of the situation and then land us neatly and efficiently in the near future, with our troubles in the past. But I knew that yearning was impossible to fulfil in a real-life sense—I can't build a tesseract or a time machine any more than I can live out the experience of time of another being.

This project is not about a fictional attempt at the impossible. Nor is it about illustrating flights of fancy and engaging with art's temporal or science-fiction themes. Yet, the project continually threatens to pull me into impossible spaces within the research, spaces that might only be able to illustrate fantastical ideas rather than enacting from within. There is a tension between the 'possible' and the 'impossible' operating in the project's infrastructure. This tension has made me extra conscious throughout this practice-led research about how I might articulate the alternate temporalities at play in the project and the relationship between Marlo and me in ways that are possible and not at the risk of being impossible (for example, expecting to make a working time-machine that can change the past and bring Marlo back to life on this planet). How might the works made during the project enact what Amelia Barikin calls

science-fiction's "capacity to construct alternate realities out of the very stuff from which the present is made."²⁷⁴

Trying to articulate alternate temporalities means that chronology has presented a useful problem in the project, which has operated through various experiences of time and intensities. The chronology problem is that it cuts a clear path towards a permanent end, which is different from how this research (and the relationship that gave rise to it) has occurred. The issue also with a linear progression is that it places more value on the goal at the end of the path (e.g., a 'finished' sculptural object) instead of the walk on these paths themselves, a walk which means being attentive and open to unanticipated events and detours. This attentiveness to cross-connections is what art historian Christine Ross refers to as the "simultaneity of events and vantage points rather than their succession."²⁷⁵ Such simultaneity is an active consideration in the field of contemporary art which, Ross argues, "has positioned itself as a pivotal site of temporal experimentation."²⁷⁶

Ross quotes the illusion of "temporal passing" designated by philosopher Yuval Dolev as "the becoming present of future events and then their becoming past"²⁷⁷ and how the strategies and methodologies of contemporary art, in particular, media arts as she calls them, attempt to complicate or interrupt this illusion which is "unreachable as an objective reality."²⁷⁸ In the field of art, Ross finds the "functionality of humans as temporal beings and the human possibility to phenomenologically manipulate temporality."²⁷⁹ In *Making-with Marlo*, I have explored the possibility of art objects to take us to those impossible spaces—that means-to-an-end props could be tools of access towards such inscrutable experiences. And that art is a field in which new experiences of time can be explored and inscribed in both the viewer/participant and in me. As I will discuss in this chapter, the project engages with alternate temporalities through a personal cross-species relationship. The artworks made within the project perform that relation in different ways. So, what happens in art if you do attempt to time travel or change the past?

274. Barikin, "Making Worlds in Art and Science Fiction," in *Proceedings of the 19th International Symposium of Electronic Art*, 3 (see n. 37).

275. Christine Ross, "The Suspension of History in Contemporary Media Arts," *Intermédialités : Histoire et Théorie Des Arts, Des Lettres et Des Techniques / Intermediality: History and Theory of the Arts, Literature and Technologies*, no. 11 (2008): 125-48.

276. Ross, "The Suspension of History in Contemporary Media Arts," 125.

277. Ross, "The Suspension of History," Yuval Dolev quoted, 127.

278. Christine Ross, *The Past Is the Present; It's the Future Too: The Temporal Turn in Contemporary Art* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2014), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=967738>, 7.

279. Ross, *The Past Is the Present; It's the Future Too*, 7.

Working with disappointment and heartbreak

A good place to start this passage of writing is to acknowledge that every yearning comes from disappointment. In this project, that disappointment came in the form of heartbreak that built and built until it finally burst at the moment of Marlo's death in his sleep.²⁸⁰ From then on, the project began operating more overtly in different registers of time. Not only the familiar perception of past, present, and future stacked one upon the other, but also of other phenomenological experiences of time: urgency, continuity, waiting, dilation and compression, ephemerality, repetition, and returning, all activated through a personal relationship with a member of a different species. And therefore, all bound up in the attempted and inaccessible experience of dog-time.

In the practice of Aotearoa artist Sandy Gibbs, who explores the potential of failure and “interrogates restaging as a video art methodology”, I found two significant synchronicities with my own practice.²⁸¹ Firstly, in the way Gibbs' PhD visual arts project pivoted and refracted down new paths after what at first seemed a significant and poignant failure. Secondly, Gibbs' methodology of restaging, which she conceptualises as transformational and considerably different to reenactments or reperformances (which, to her, close down outcomes by relating strictly to a/the past). These synchronicities are important to my project in terms of the ways my practice has emerged and been shaped by different phases and registers of relation.

The springboard for Gibbs' sincere project of redemption through restaging, *The paradox of failure: sport, competition and contemporary art*, focused on the Women's 400 m Individual Medley Final at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics. In this race, New Zealand swimmer Tui Shipston (Gibbs' childhood hero) came in second-to-last, seventh place. For Gibbs, a massive fan of Shipston and a young swimmer herself at the time,²⁸² this could be seen in retrospect as the first disappointment of the project, stretching across time once more and returning to the present.

280. I actually woke up suddenly in the early hours of the morning that day with a weird feeling that a loud rush of wind had just blown by me. I went back to sleep but woke again about an hour later – when I learned of Marlo's death and saw his body. I can't be sure of the timings, but because Marlo was still a little warm, that is my best guess as to the timeline of events. I don't even know if this footnote will survive to the final exegesis, but it was such a strange and weirdly significant moment for me that I am compelled to write about it. I think about it all of the time. The moment of Marlo's actual death and the moment we learned of it. These events occurred on October 29, 2020.

281. Sandra Leigh Gibbs, “The Paradox of Failure: Sport, Competition and Contemporary Art” (PhD thesis, Deakin University, 2021), 3.

282. Gibbs, in conversation with the artist, 2021.



Images 306-308: Video stills of Sandy Gibbs; *Recalling Tui*, 2016. Single-channel video. Duration: 10:01. © Sandy Gibbs. With thanks to the artist. <https://sandygibbs.art/portfolio/the-paradox-of-failure-recalling-tui/>

Decades later, and now an artist doing a PhD, Gibbs wanted to offer Tui Shipston a chance to change her Olympic fate by taking part in a restaging of this disappointing race. When Shipston summarily dismissed the idea of taking part in the fantastical art proposal,²⁸³ Gibbs' practice and project about failure "came to be constituted by failure."²⁸⁴ What could have ended the project before it even got off the starting block, actually "opened up the project's potential, catalysing it through failure."²⁸⁵

Shipston's firm No in a tense phone call was earnestly restaged from memory by Gibbs in the 2016 tragi-comic video work, *Recalling Tui*.²⁸⁶ Watching this video, full of repetitions, rehearsals and reutterances, we know, as Gibbs knows, that the painful and funny reattempts to communicate with Shipston are doomed to failure, just as they were the first time around. But out of that failure arises the potential for contingency and movement down new paths and into the uneasy borderland between stark reality and a "wished-for outcome."²⁸⁷



Image 309: Sandy Gibbs; *Recalling Tui*, 2016. Single-channel video. Duration: 10:01. Installation view at RM Gallery & Project Space, Tāmaki Makaurau, 2021. Image courtesy of the artist.

283. Shipston actually did not want to speak to Gibbs at all.

284. Gibbs, "The Paradox of Failure," 3.

285. Ziggy Lever, "Restaging Potentiality: On Sandy Gibbs' The Paradox of Failure: Sport, Competition and Contemporary Art" (RM Gallery and Project Space, 2022), <https://rm.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/paradox-of-failure.jpg>.

286. *Making-with Marlo* has engaged with what novelist Margaret Atwood calls "stretchy time." This refers to the experience of reading a novel in contrast to the experience of watching a film (occurring in "set time"). In stretchy time a reader has the wiggle room to move in and out sections, to slow down or speed up the experience of reading. A film instead guides you on a predetermined narrative course - I find this intriguing when considering Sandy Gibbs's video works. Gibbs's methodology of restaging as transformation seems to jostle her video works into a time that is adjacent to stretchy time instead - maybe closer to Shannon Te Ao's time of attempts? Atwood discussed stretchy time in a radio interview aired on National Public Radio in 1990, quoted in Jerrold Levinson and Philip Alperson, "What Is a Temporal Art?," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (1991): 439-50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4975.1991.tb00252.x>.

287. Gibbs, "The Paradox of Failure," 56.

Gibbs called this work a "catalyst for a paradigmatic shift into an engagement with repetition and humour as inherently transformative."²⁸⁸ In other words, this disappointment (that felt like catastrophe) led to a transformational shift of the yearned-for engagement with an "invisible companion" throughout the remainder of *The paradox of failure*[']s chronology.²⁸⁹

Furthermore, after many adventurous attempts to track down and enlist the other competitors of the 1968 race for a restaging, none of the original swimmers Gibbs found agreed to swim.²⁹⁰ The swimmers are "present in the project only through their absence"²⁹¹ finding connection with *Making-with Marlo* through the open potential of participation holding not only the capacity to act or participate, but also the capacity not to. A starting line-up of invisible companions, who through their No's opened up new regions of art-making where Sandy Gibbs herself could say Yes.



Image 310: Sandy Gibbs; *Recalling Tui*, 2016. Single-channel video. Duration: 10:01. Installation view at RM Gallery & Project Space, Tāmaki Makaurau, 2021. Image courtesy of the artist.

288. Gibbs, "The Paradox of Failure," 55.

289. Gibbs' term 'invisible companion' comes from the Acknowledgements section of Gibbs', "The Paradox of Failure".

290. These adventures took the artist to three different countries, and even involved the hiring of a private investigator to track down the two former East German swimmers. Gibbs actually got to connect with two of the original swimmers! She met Shelagh Ratcliffe, the English swimmer and asked her if she would race again. Shelagh's answer left nothing to doubt: "Not at all. No. There is no way ... I don't even think there is any way I could train enough to finish it in any ... in anything that would allow my pride, my vanity, and my ego to even attempt it ... it is hard work ... no, I would not be interested." In a phone conversation with Lynn Vidali, the US swimmer who came second, Gibbs received another No: "I am pretty sore these days. My shoulder is injured and won't do 100 fly. I think getting the women together is great but not a 400 IM (Individual Medley). I am not usually this girl but I'm too sore these days." Sandy Gibbs, over e-mail with the artist, 2023. More details can be found in Gibbs, "The Paradox of Failure".

291. Lever, "Restaging Potentiality."

While constituting different types of loss at its core, Gibbs' experience of being forced to pivot after an externally placed full stop in her project does remind me of my own PhD experience. What does it mean to keep on with an artwork when your beloved cocreator has died? I regularly asked myself after Marlo died how he might be present in the project after death. Can death be viewed as a catalyst of transformation into different registers of presence? How can previously collaborative art objects continue when the cocreator is no longer physically present? All of these questions and more have been approached through the making-with methodology, which crosses both space and time.

Through "re-inscribing Tui's invisible presence" in her ever-transforming practice, Gibbs embarked on a methodology of restaging that allowed her to enter "into the spaces between [her] real life and [her] imagination," which might have been closed to her otherwise.²⁹² These in-between spaces are familiar to me within my practice, which engages with sentience across species—a gulf between two beings that is tricky to cross. I pondered whether Gibbs' methodologies of restaging could be applicable to my own project as a kind of tool of access to those smudgy spaces where species mingle. During the four-month Covid-19 lockdown in Tāmaki Makaurau, 2021, I had an opportunity to nose out and engage with some similar strategies and contingencies myself, as discussed further in this section.

Restaging as transformation

After the "rehearsal of the failed phone-call-of-the-future" in *Recalling Tui*, Gibbs embarked on a "series of 're-stagings'" that would move *The paradox of failure* beyond attempts to produce a singular reenacted outcome; a reswum Olympic swimming race. The strategies of repetition and looping would become key, much as they are in the repetitive rituals of training that lead towards a swimming race and which used to rule Sandy's life through the "dual tyrannies of space and time."²⁹³ Restaging as a concept in Gibbs' work breaks through these tyrannies by complicating chronology and by utilising

292. Gibbs, "The Paradox of Failure," 59.

293. Sandy Gibbs, "Swimming My Way to Failure," *Drain* 12, no. 1 (Athleticism) (2015), <http://drainmag.com/swimming-my-way-to-failure/>.



Images 311-312: Sandy Gibbs; *The swimming race (Mexico City)*, 2018. Single-channel video. Duration: 4:10. *Stadium walk (opening ceremony)*, 2018. Single-channel video. Duration: 2:18. Installation views at RM Gallery & Project Space, Tāmaki Makaurau, 2021. Images courtesy of the artist.

the potential of restaging as an artistic strategy; a basis for “a new set of actions and events” that could reveal new paths, new spaces of engagement, and unanticipated consequences.²⁹⁴

Gibbs frames the concept of restaging an event as significantly different to an “artistic reperformance” (artists reperforming artworks) or a “historical re-enactment.” Unrehearsed, unscripted and untethered to faithfully recreating a historical event or narrative, Gibbs’s restagings are video artworks performed for the camera.²⁹⁵ Dressed in DIY costumes and wielding handmade props (including a pleasingly wonky cardboard flame in *Lighting an old flame* [2016]), Gibbs leans into fantasy as a method and lives her own versions of true events through video²⁹⁶ embracing “contingency and happenstance” through “a constant manoeuvring around obstacles, blocks and failures.”²⁹⁷ Gibbs’ restagings are “buoyed along by a kind of precarious optimism that opens up unexpected possibilities...these being unknowable and unpredictable from the outset, much like the restagings themselves.”²⁹⁸

I have also reached inside the flux of time, pulling whatever strings I could find to return with-Marlo to true-life events that occurred before his death. Sometimes this was a light-hearted and gentle plucking, ferrying me to leafy days and naps in the sun. Other times, particularly in the zones of first grief, it was desperate yanking in the overflow. The earliest example was when my dad and I returned to Mellons Bay Beach shortly after Marlo died to select a rock that he would have enjoyed finding himself. We placed this rock on Marlo’s grave. This event occurred in November 2021. I have a video of this walk and rock-finding, but it is too private to share here, and in any case, I have found it to be untranslatable as artwork. Since then, I have found myself often going on walks to remembered, familiar places we experienced with Marlo, as well as taking part in other actions that seemed to bring us back together again in the space of my mind.

These walks were initially very therapeutic, a way to be physically close to Marlo by touching the same things he sniffed, by tracing the same terrain he moved across. Many of the means-to-an-end props I made in 2021 and 2022 sprang directly from these revisited walks and relived experiences. For example, *Long Yellow Snifter* came about after a drive where I remembered

how Marlo would stick his head out the back window of the car and sniff wildly as we drove down State Highway 1 past Hamlins Hill Regional Park, where we knew cows were out there in the distance.²⁹⁹ This is an action familiar to most dogs, and most dog people know it (I think), but this object did come from specific instances of our ordinary routines of life with Marlo. Sticking *Long Yellow Snifter* out of your car window and taking a deep whiff, you can try and sniff out more distant smells than you could with your own human-animal nose. It might not work as well as Marlo’s nose, but it isn’t impossible.



Images 313: Video still of Sandy Gibbs; *Lighting an old flame*, 2016. Single-channel video. Duration: 2:24. © Sandy Gibbs. With thanks to the artist. **Image 314:** *Long Yellow Snifter*; in use in East Tamaki, cardboard, papier-mâché, yellow acrylic paint, matte blue Flashe paint, after death 2021.

294. Lever, “Restaging Potentiality.”

295. Gibbs, “The Paradox of Failure,” 21.

296. All events related to the fateful 1968 race, and Sandy Gibbs’ own life as an Olympic hopeful and dreamer.

297. Gibbs, “The Paradox of Failure,” 20.

298. Gibbs, “The Paradox of Failure,” 27.

299. Marlo knew this through his sense of smell, of course, even when the cows were not visible to our eyes.

Living and relivings

I call these looping attempts at connecting cross-species and cross-time, relivings. By and large, these are unassuming attempts to reach across irreducible differences between Marlo and me. Like means-to-an-end props, relivings operate in the making-with space, tugging on the attachments that emerged in zones of time when Marlo was still alive. Relivings do not utilise props as a methodology; however, their provisional/makeshift/spontaneous nature approximates the means-to-an-end artworks. The relivings generated a new phase in the relationship between Marlo and me, once the anniversary ‘firsts’ of death had already happened.

The term reliving, for me, has a science-fictional connection to an “experience that is future, present, and past, and simultaneously happening all at once...” an alterity of experience through what Sherryl Vint calls a “changed temporal orientation.”³⁰⁰ The terms I might have used, reenactment, reperformance, I find (like Sandy Gibbs), hitched to a past, as well as fixed to predictable outcomes. However, unlike Gibbs’ restagings, the originating events that led to the relivings had nothing to do with a performance (or sports) context, so the framing of a ‘stage’ seemed both unproductive and limiting. Reliving then seems to work best as a term that speaks to a life of ordinary events with a dog but also leans towards a smudging of the borders between life and death.

My own relivings were not made as performances for the camera, although I did make scattered documentation in the form of note-taking, screenshots, sound recordings and photography. The relivings occur in daily life, in real-time, and emerge from relational experiences with Marlo. I say real-time, but this ‘present’ is interlaced with a past-time-with-Marlo, a past-time-alone-attempting-to-be-with-Marlo, and future-times-with-Marlo. Accordingly, the relivings unfold into a transformed time (and a *transformative* time), an ongoing time-of-attempts attached to contingency.

This aspect of my practice has become somewhat cyclical. In the looping of Gibbs’ video works, I see something similar occurring with Marlo and me. It is an endless cycle towards the possibility of connection—a taking back of time and disappointment where, out of the shuffle, come new possibilities and chances. The curly tendrils of time in relivings are not premised on

“differences between the present and the future;” instead, the present here “is different from the present.”³⁰¹ The relivings also offer the potential for redemption, not only yanking back time but opening up spaces of possibility where the originating relational events with Marlo unfold throughout my life and lead to the creation of new works that are enfolded into this same stream.

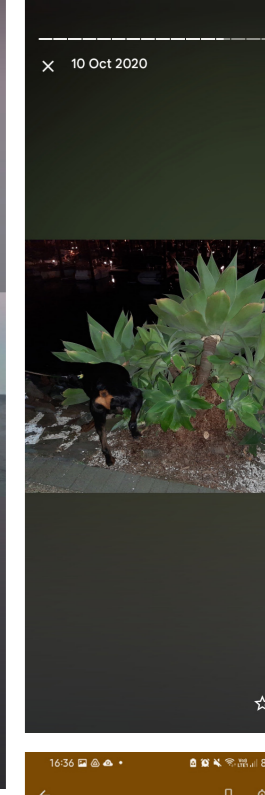
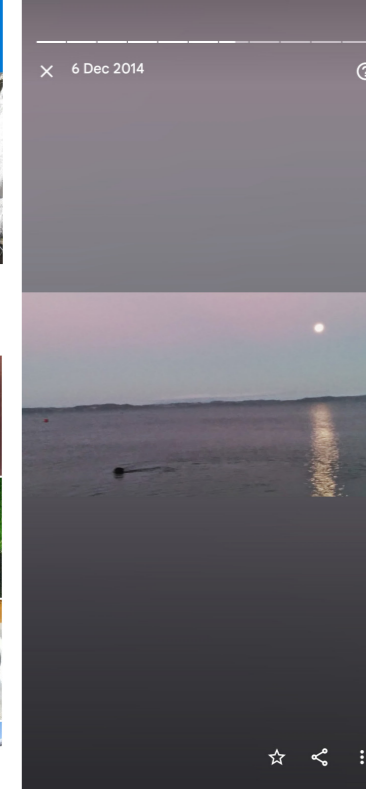
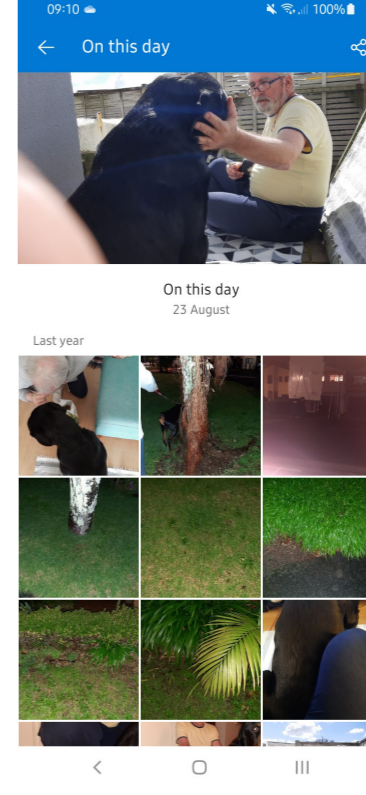
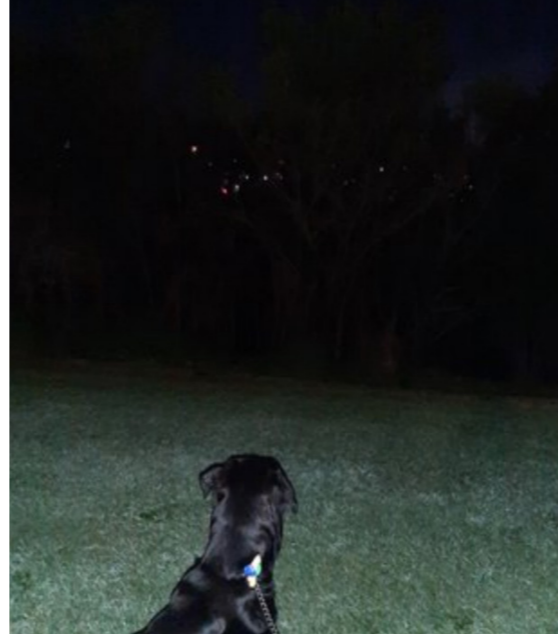
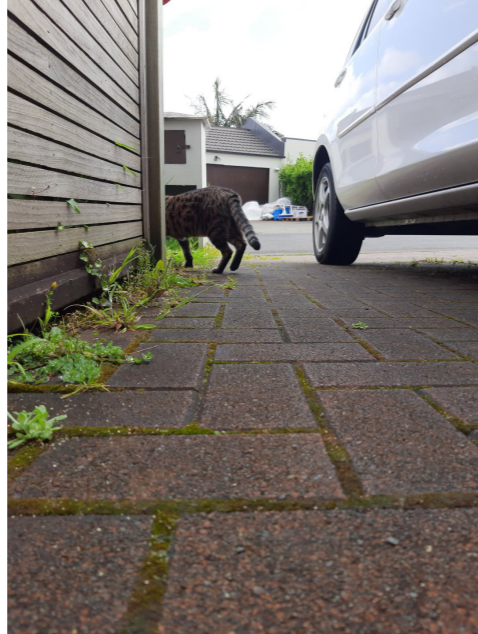
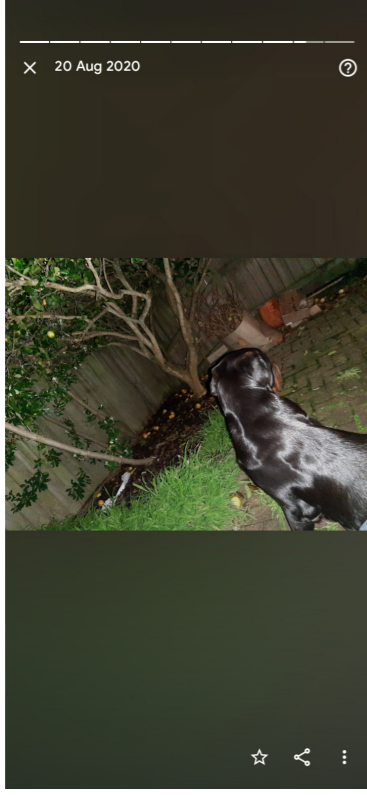
The relivings occurred through the following activities: rewalking and renoticing, renapping and redriving (which led to the car trips and means-to-an-end props being taken there).

As well as resuming the regular walks with my dad that Marlo went on before he died, I utilised the Memories feature in Google Photos and OneDrive’s ‘On This Day’ feature, which had been feeding me memories of the last year of Marlo’s life. These algorithms generate themed collections of photos on your phone, notifying you of these memories on the appropriate date in the future. During Tāmaki Makaurau’s sixteen-week lockdown from August–December 2021, I took up the invitation of these time parallel memory prompts and relived as many as I could in 2021. If the memories showed us going on a walk or drive, I endeavoured to go to that same destination on the same day (at approximately the same time as the memory). This was happening in spring, heading into summer, usually in the evenings and at night, when it would have been cooler for Marlo. If the memories showed a more low-key activity like Marlo napping, sitting with me, or leaning on me, I would approximate those best I could alone.

I began to see how these methods have shaped the way in which this project engages with alternate temporalities through a personal cross-species relationship. Making-with Marlo the means-to-an-end props pulled from the flow by these activities, was a way to turn potentially eulogistic events into strategies for engaging in the relational space of the project. The relivings are not about homage or archiving the past but focus on new possibilities in living with/loving Marlo.

300. Vint, *Science Fiction*, 104 (see n. 16).

301. Vint, *Science Fiction*, 117.



22 sept reenactment - sound recording too

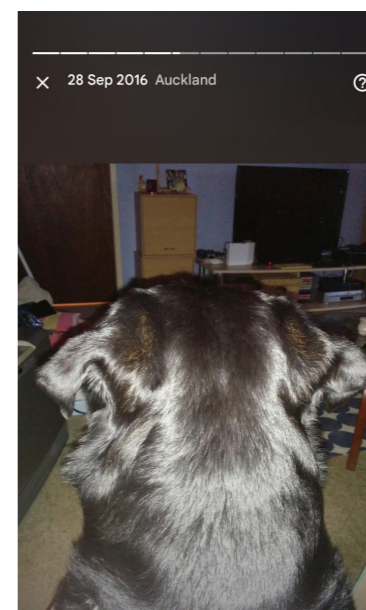
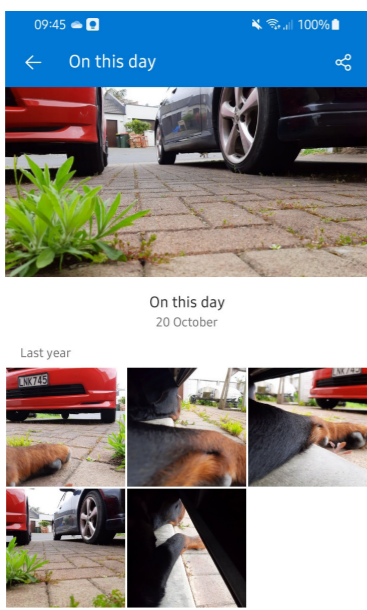
22 September 2021 - 9pmish
Rily pissed off with all the cars
Where are you all going on a Thursday night in lockdown
Only short moments of quiet on TR
Could hear the rain and the "outside" of the wind - nothing deeper
My hood on the rain jacket didn't help - nearer the end of the walk took the hood off. To hear more layered sounds.
Glasses fogged up and covered in raindrops so couldn't rely on eyesight as much.

Found myself turning around and watching waiting listening for anyone following behind when I was about to go into dark desolate areas - Marlo did similar things, only his reasoning was his own. It didn't matter to him if it was a dark place - only he knew why he needed to stop in particular spots and watch for threats.

Found myself feeling really out of place on the big road - if Marlo had been there, or my dad, it would have felt more normal. Felt like a lunatic. Marlo's presence gave me the permission to be in places that feel weird walking alone - in the middle of the night in the pouring rain on a big road in the middle of lockdown. He gave a place of belonging.

Couldn't smell anything but the wet asphalt and general plantiness.

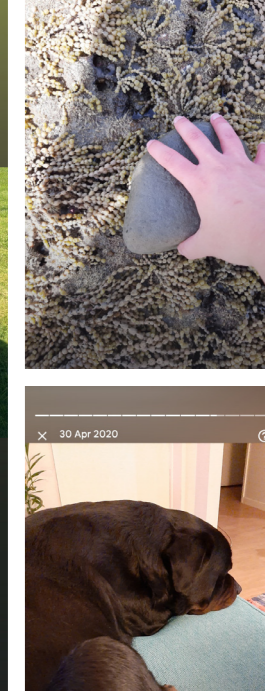
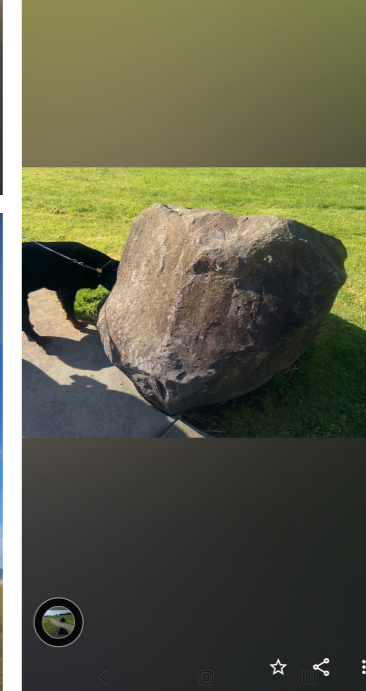
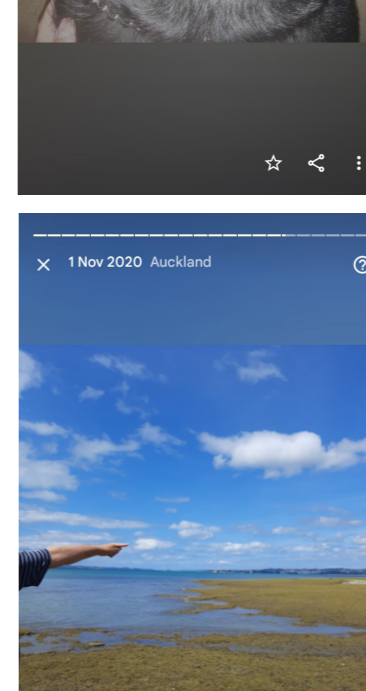
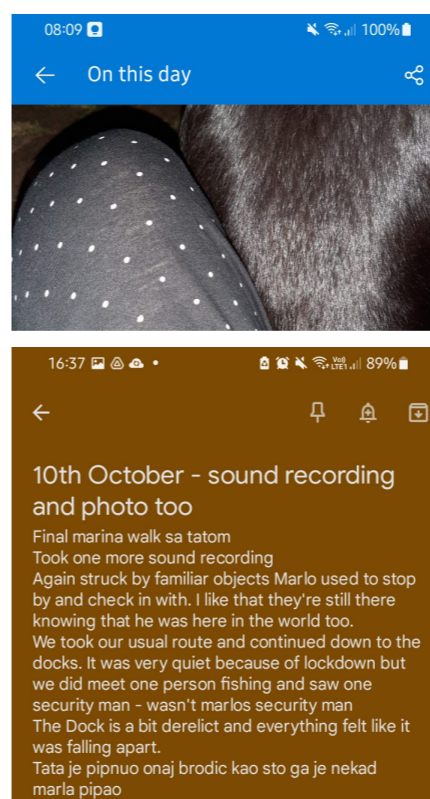
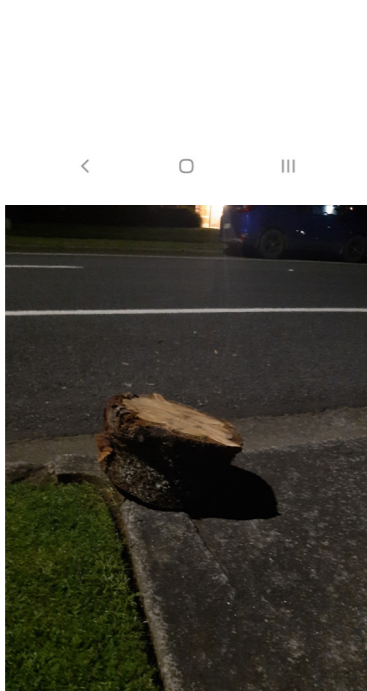
Edited 27 Sep 2021



24th sept 2021

24th sept 2020 reenactment in 2021 - one of last full 2am hangout
Half the time spent out there today since only of us is here :(
Rainy wet and submerged
Wasn't raining heavily just sort of misting
Marlo probably wouldn't have sat out there on night like this. It's a few minutes earlier than the actual event last year (1:15pm now after recording)
Friend hangout but also giving up something with him
My bb
Visceral felt his warmth and the weight of him leaning against my legs as we hung out
Lots of layered sounds close by and in the distance but very wet tricky sounds this time around
Weirdly lots of traffic noise even though it's a Thursday in a freaking lockdown
Love doesn't just give it gives up

Edited 28 Oct 2021



Images 315-340: relivings; 2021-ongoing. Photos, screenshots and notes taken of the 2021 relivings and relivings prompts (some of the prompts stretch further back than 2020), in no particular order. These are walks, noticing, naps, nosy investigations. I also made a few sound recordings during this period, to work with the many sound recordings Marlo and I made together in 2020.

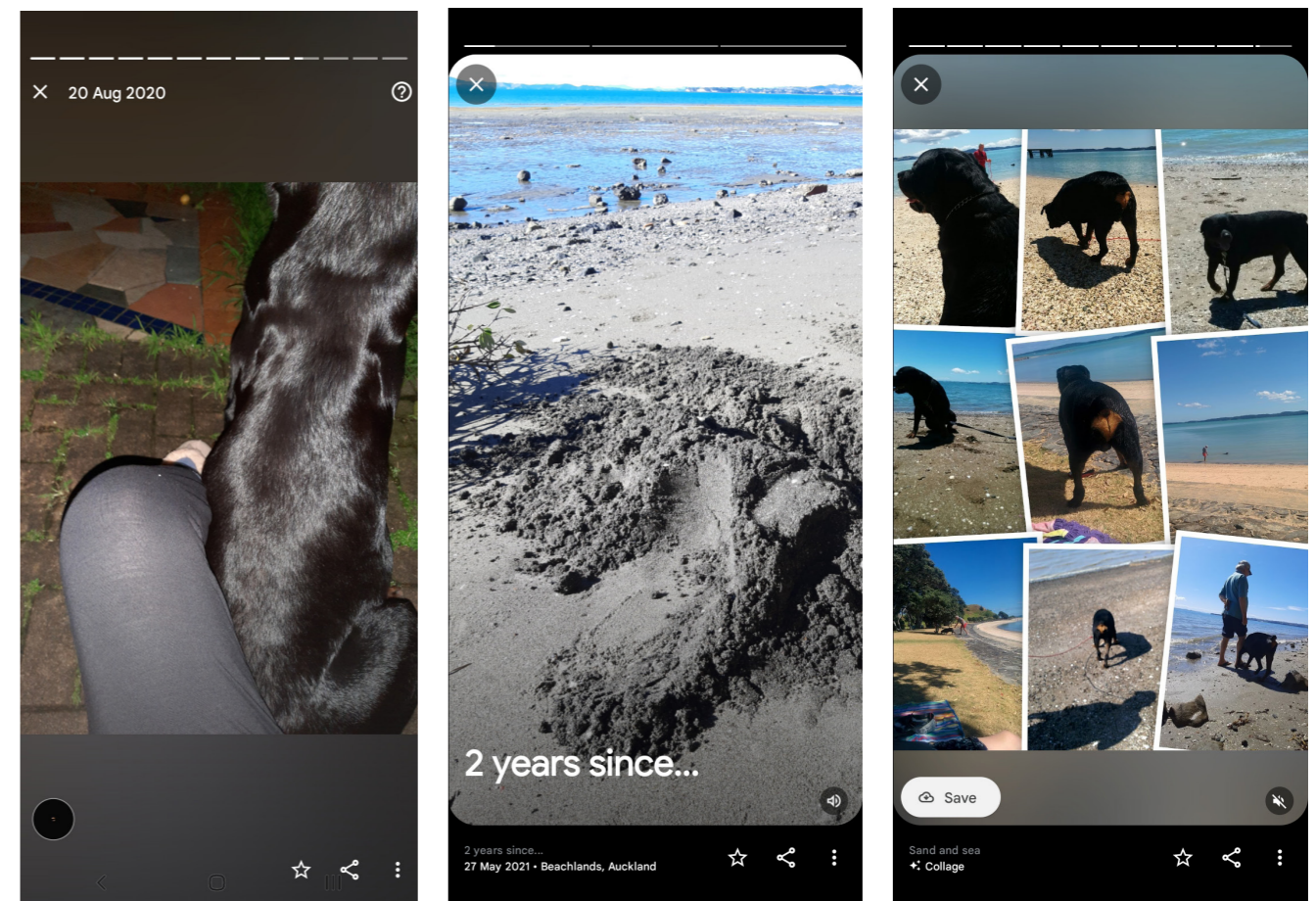
Reliving and learning

The cycle of time and repetition in the relivings has made these particular experiences a field of potential modest annual events (which I did relive during 2022 too, as much as was possible through Google Memories, which showed me scattered prompts of my 2021 relivings). I like the idea of continuing them now so that they become an ongoing celebration of Marlo through small habits and a transformed way of experiencing the world. They are quite easily doable, they fit in rhythms of life, being walks, naps, drives, sniffs. The cyclical nature of these iterative events also enacts in practice the notion of the emergence of potential and possibility through failure (as in Gibbs' practice). There is something to be said about learning as a part of reliving. Returning again and again to the contact zones of a dog's life inevitably allows me to learn to sniff and investigate in a new way. Our shared material world of surfaces cannot remain static as cross-species sentience permeates my perceptions and "rewrites common knowledge."³⁰²

The artworks envisaged as annual gestures in the durational practice of Tāmaki Makaurau artist Monique Redmond, offer insights here into seasonal or cyclical tactics. In a practice with a keen interest in and celebration of a methodology of 'daily practising' and the "seasonal shifts of flora", Redmond writes about ways seasons could be "understood as a structure, a system that governs the artworks from within."³⁰³ In the relivings of this practice, the season here is clearly not a season of flowering, a season of spring or summer, but it does enter into a rhythm, which expands into new possibilities through misalignments, and difference created through repetition. Specifically, this has already happened through sometimes 'misaligned' relivings, when the algorithm of Google Memories did not always send me the same prompts as it did in 2021. I ended up having to make-do, reliving relivings in strange new ways. The differences drawn out there also reflect the changing relations between Marlo and me.

The different registers of duration in the practice when it comes to these cyclical relivings differ from the duration of the means-to-an-end props. There is a tilt here in the practice between a prop awaiting activation, a prop being used, and these personal events guided by an external framework.

When the ongoing nature of the project—a project of multiple parts and Ross' "simultaneous events and vantage points"—and the attempts to reach for (or reach-with) emerged more clearly as an overarching concern of the project, I began to wonder: what do these 'art events' need to generate in order to translate as an artwork? Does anyone else need access to them in order for them to count as such? *Should* anyone else have access to them? This also speaks to questions of access and communication in cross-species relationships. An artist whose work was generative in this regard, living with the risks of Diane Borsato's gentle gesture, is Māori artist and curator James Tapsell-Kururangi (Te Arawa, Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Pīkiao, Ngāti Māhino, Tainui, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau-a-Rākairoa).



Images 341-343: Screenshots of Google Memories notifications showing me Marlo and me in a lean on August 20, 2020; a digging activity at Mellons Bay Beach after death on May 2, 2021; a collage of photos taken between 2018-2020 that Memories titled 'Sand and sea'. Marlo's last Mellons Bay Beach walk is shown in the bottom right photo.

302. Vint, *Science Fiction*, 14.

303. Redmond, "The Event within Temporary Practices," 47, 149, 157 (see n. 167).

Helen Jean Linton and James Tapsell-Kururangi

For the exhibition *How to Live Together* at AUT ST PAUL St Gallery in 2019, Tapsell-Kururangi took his work offsite to the residence of Helen Jean Linton in Rotorua, in a long-term performance titled *Living with My Grandmother for One Year*. Helen Jean Linton, Tapsell-Kururangi's grandmother, had passed the previous year.

In a publication documenting this year spent at his late Nan's house, *Gains? Grandmother. Grey Street.*, the artist wonders how this life action might work as an artwork:

I was wondering what would be useful for an [REDACTED] to read.

I know I have a responsibility to look after Nan's house. And my whānau.

I don't really know if these fragments of text are anything close to a year spent living at Nan's house.

You're not supposed to make art about [REDACTED].

It was a year spent living.

I wonder what I would show at a [REDACTED] ?

I would like to be generous to an [REDACTED].

I don't think, or I don't want, the year spent living at Nan's house to be a [REDACTED].

I do not want to aestheticise her or my life and family as [REDACTED].

I do want to ask: can a year living at my grandmother's house be an artwork?³⁰⁴

Redacting words like 'audience', 'performance', 'art' and 'death', Tapsell-Kururangi grapples with the slippage between his life and all those things which comprise it (his whānau, the house itself, daily rhythms, a sense of responsibility) and the literally unspoken presence of art itself as a kind of distancing spectre that might somehow loosen all those important connections of life, simply by being in the mix.³⁰⁵ This is a real fear the artist seems to have, and it is something I understand very well and have felt myself in this project.

304. James Tapsell-Kururangi, "Gains? Grandmother. Grey Street." (Enjoy Contemporary Art Space), accessed May 20, 2023, <https://enjoy.org.nz/publishing/other/as-needed-as-possible/gains-grandmother-grey-street>.

305. The redacted words in the PDF of the publication itself are unreadable. I didn't realise until I copied and pasted Tapsell-Kururangi's writing into a Word document, that in this form, the redaction bars could reveal the words beneath. I have not revealed the redacted words fully here in order to echo the artist's intentions.

Curated by Balamohan Shingade, *How to Live Together* (2019), the exhibition which 'hosted' Tapsell-Kururangi's work offsite, was occupied with the question in its title. Roland Barthes' concept of idiorrhythmy, meaning 'one's own rhythm', pointed to the curatorial methodology:

It is an experiment in reconciling the differing speeds and slownesses of each project within the format of an exhibition.... Not everything may be visible or unequivocal at various stages, but by the end, an experience will have been lived through, a landscape sketched in, an approach figured for a life together.³⁰⁶

A long, deep and sprawling exhibition, the ethos of *How to Live Together*, "[respecting] differing rhythms, temperaments and needs", afforded the work of Tapsell-Kururangi to engage in ideas that might not usually work within the confines of gallery mandates. Offsite and unknown/unseen by gallery visitors unless they asked about it, *Living with My Grandmother for One Year* defines intimacy outside a gallery setting.³⁰⁷ What matters is not really the random visitor who may walk into the gallery, happen upon his work and enter into its intimacy (through conversation with the staff at the gallery), but the intimacies extended within his own family, including with his dead grandmother.

The fears about art with a capital A, that Tapsell-Kururangi seems to have wrestled with, seem to me to be helped by this ethos and curatorial strategy. It somehow levels the playing field and allows art to remain in the mix—one slippery part of a slipperier whole—without taking over and prising apart the artist's connections and attachments for the sake of Art. The mix is vital here. Differences honoured, differing rhythms respected, and "an approach figured for a life together."³⁰⁸ Again I am returned to the 'with' space of my own project as a significant methodology of art-making cross-species, which holds its mix in the trembling horizontality of surface thinking.

What remains for other people to access now of *Living With My Grandmother For One Year* is the fragmentary document of the *Gains? Grandmother. Grey Street.* publication. Filled with photos of Ms Linton's house and belongings, Tapsell-Kururangi's screenshots, selfies, e-mail transcripts, and conversational

306. Balamohan Shingade, "How to Live Together | Exhibition Guide" (ST PAUL St Gallery AUT, August 14, 2019), https://stpaulst.aut.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/298903/Exhibition-Guide-v1.2.pdf.

307. Balamohan Shingade, "On TK Returning to Rotorua," *Drain* 17, no. 1 (Social/Affects) (2021), <http://drainmag.com/on-tk-returning-to-rotorua/>.

308. Shingade, "How to Live Together | Exhibition Guide."

notes and musings on various aspects of the year he spent at the house, this publication is a way into the work from a distance, just like a potential conversation with the gallery staff at AUT ST PAUL St Gallery was a way into the work from a distance. The publication is more accessible—you don't have to risk talking to anyone, asking for access to the intimacies of the artwork in the wrong way—but it does not allow a relational commitment. It is a kind of leftover. In this way it is an analogue to the printed matter I've created to accompany each 'outing' of the means-to-an-end props. I've found it can be challenging to find a foothold in spacetimes of cross-species sentience, and this printed ephemera is an aid to an experience we can attempt to (re)live.

Navigating access

I am also interested in thinking about how not everyone could (or even should) have access to Tapsell-Kururangi's artwork and access to this experience? An important question too for my project; where is the artwork, and why should people necessarily have access to it? The artist had/has access to the artwork by living in it, but was not physically present in ST PAUL St Gallery for the *How to Live Together* exhibition. "For most visitors," says curator Balamohan Shingade, *Living With My Grandmother for One Year* "remained a rumour accompanied by text in the exhibition guide." A further way into the work was possible only if visitors asked for more information from the guides at ST PAUL St Gallery; "It was only then that a visit to Rotorua and a friendship with Tapsell-Kururangi was possible to be opened up."³⁰⁹ The necessary commitment to Helen Jean Linton (and to the artist) on the part of these potential visitors echoes Tapsell-Kururangi's own commitment to living-with his grandmother where he "hesitated to change the order of things: He reshelved linen in the way she had in the linen cupboard, he relearnt the use of her cookware, and when her clock stopped ticking, he wondered whether it would be appropriate to replace its batteries."³¹⁰ This is a deep relational commitment that smudges the outlines of an artwork, from easily accessible for "consumption and contemplation" to a contingent "experience to be lived through,"³¹¹ something I find synchronicity with in terms of my relivings, and

309-311. Shingade, "On TK Returning to Rotorua."

importantly also in terms of overall operation of means-to-an-end props in a methodology of ongoing attempts. However, living through it would also enable Tapsell-Kururangi to live-with Helen Jean Linton even when he leaves her house. The attachments formed in a commitment like that are ongoing, with past, present and future "[operating] contemporaneously in unbounded space."³¹²

Sociologist Joanna Kidman (Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Toa Rangatira) here notes that Māori concepts of wā (spacetime) are "intimately connected to tribal geographies." In this way, wā forms "the realm of connection between people (both living and dead), the land and the invisible and spiritual spheres that stretch across a vast, unbounded totality in which times past, present and future are coterminous."³¹³ Tapsell-Kururangi's tūpuna, his grandmother Helen, inhabit these vast spaces with him in ongoingness. The one-year long duration of the artwork then becomes an opening, a string of time vibrating in the tesseract, that allows potential visitors to tap into the same temporal flux Tapsell-Kururangi and his grandmother flow within. They will always be held together in wā, even after Tapsell-Kururangi leaves his grandmother's house, but the structure of the artwork offers *others* an anchor point to an attachment with Tapsell-Kururangi and Helen Jean Linton, if they are committed enough to accept while they can. By contrast, I have never fully invited anyone else into the relivings of this project. Even my dad has only ever gone on a few relived walks with me. What is written about the relivings in this document (including some photographs and screenshots) is all anyone else will have access to. Performance artist Diane Borsato describes this way of enacting one's own experiments and attempts, as risky: "Just being alone at home, or being funny as an artist, or not having control or pre-conceived ideas about your co-performer animals, these are risky ways of going about things too."³¹⁴ Perhaps living with that kind of risk is all part of the mess of *Making-with Marlo*. However, through the tesseract of making-with, means-to-an-end artworks twitch vast, unbounded attachments of time, activating a temporality as props which hold the potential to invite you, too, into a 'lived through experience' of a reliving with-Marlo and with me, even if you have never known him in ordinary times of life.

312. Joanna Kidman et al., "'Native Time' in the White City: Indigenous Youth Temporalities in Settler-Colonial Space," *Children's Geographies* 19, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 24-36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14733285.2020.1722312>.

313. Kidman et al., "'Native Time' in the White City."

314. Diane Borsato quoted in J. Paul Halferty, "Intimate Interventions: An Interview with Diane Borsato," *Canadian Theatre Review Winter*, no. 137 (2009): 15.

*A lasting search:
in conclusion*

A pause

The ordinary times of life are the space from which this project sprung. The practice of *Making-with Marlo* highlights an ongoing lived collaboration between two critters, with no easily attainable resolution at paw or hand; no grand finale. No matter how much we tug on time, how many strings of the making-with tesseract we pull on, no matter how many aids to cross-species sentience we create, we will never really close the gap. Ordinary times are the spacetime of love, the guiding force in the relationships from which the project emerged and continued. Through love, I nosed out the potential to connect with Marlo, bordering and greeting one another across vast rifts of species and time through a new attentiveness to significant otherness and collaborative assemblages, which must occur in ordinary ways (among shared surfaces, materials and smells mediated for our benefit by means-to-an-end props). Yet these strategies hold the potential of pulling us into extraordinary times and experiences. This cross-species attentiveness disturbs assumptions and diffuses into perceptions of our shared material world in endless ways, tilting it forever. There is a leaning towards an awareness of our shared animality and of contingent attachments in a field of unwitting participation across species.

One of the pivotal realisations in this project was the need to maintain an attitude of being open to surprises and places I have never been, similar to how Istvan Csicsery-Ronay describes a “way of entertaining incongruous experiences in which judgement is suspended.”³¹⁵ I have tried to walk alongside adventure, a joy of noticing, of sniffing out things as they came. The project has occurred through making-with, following the trail of love and curiosity into a dog’s world; Marlo’s world, and the available smells, textures and activities found there. This approach to sculptural practice has shifted encounters with unaccountable experiences into cross-subjective exchanges based on concrete materiality. As we made the artworks, things would happen and not necessarily what I expected. Unanticipated misalignments, misperceptions, misunderstandings and disappointments have led to the emergence of means-to-an-end props, to events (solo and with others), to relivings, and all the subsequent variations of each. A complex and trembling ecology is

315. Csicsery-Ronay, *The Seven Beauties of Science Fiction*, 3.

at play, a continuous process perhaps akin to Jan Verwoert’s “difficult logic of continuation.”³¹⁶

I have contextualised the means-to-an-end props of this project as tools of access and bridges of communication, echoed in the extraordinary function of the great tesseract. The tesseract has helped me take up the scent of an object of art as a mediator, aid or host, and follow it to a difficult-to-access cross-species subjectivity. As I move towards the final presentation of artwork for this PhD project, I am considering the tesseract. How does it actually work? How does it correspond with sculpture? Does it have to be participated with? Is it an object or a spacetime? Is the methodology of ‘making-with’ the actual corresponding tesseract-like operation in this project? What came first? What is coming next?

In negotiating the complexities and difficulties at the heart of *Making-with Marlo*, I embrace Franz Erhard Walther’s “art as a conveyor of real experiences.”³¹⁷ This project operates through real, corporeal experiences of touch and scent – sculptural engagements as a navigational tool through experiences of cross-species sentience and cross-species subjectivity. Walther’s concept of a storage situation has also been pivotal in considering a space of storage as a space of potential. This project has included my car as a site of storage and my studio as a space of experimentation: a central inventory hub of “forever fluctuating possibilities” to choose from and activate.³¹⁸ The means-to-an-end props embody a propositional invitation to cross-species exchanges of curiosity. Indebted to Walther’s concept of action and his preference of ‘just doing’, they also relay a way in for others, specifically other human-animals, negotiating the (perhaps anthropocentric) inadequacy of instructions and directions, as acknowledged by Walther and Lygia Clark. Lucy Meyle’s practice offers potential strategies through being open to the potential of cross-species participation in reachable, local habitats, including very close to home in her garden. Meyle’s varied methods of dispersal, communication and exchange – publications, reciprocal subscriptions, in-person conversation, websites, invitational equipment – further illuminate possible platforms for sharing cross-species experiences with others, and facilitating openings to a cross-subjective exchange.

316. Verwoert, “Why Are Conceptual Artists Painting Again?.”

317. Walther, *Franz Erhard Walther Dialogues*, 26.

318. Fer, “The Scatter: Sculpture as Leftover,” 228.

Clark's cross-subjective objects, like Catherine Bagnall's animal prostheses, broker connection and make the possibilities of collective comportment apparent, revealing shared sensory zones and experiences. What would this project be without the means-to-an-end props operating as similar brokers of connection? Clark's *Bichos*, in particular, also reveal the danger of severing a propositional object from the complex attachments from which it emerged, allowing it to look on from a static display in an arrest of its potential actions. This danger looms large over the artworks in *Making-with Marlo*. Are the printed matter guides I have produced in the project enough to evade this danger? Will they let you in over a cross-subjective threshold? What about the viewer who has never read this exegesis or knows about Marlo? What would the means-to-an-end props be for them? Here Natalie Jeremijenko's speculative structures of shared cross-species enjoyment underscore the importance of Amelia Barikin's navigation over delineation - the importance of 'and' rather than 'or' in a practice that occurs among the difficulties found in the gap between species. In this gap, when considering how to present this work, I might have to consider anthropocentrism as an interpretive layer for human-animal art audiences. This does not feel very reassuring.

Diane Borsato's epistemological potential of being close to things reveals a way of thinking through things (a methodology relevant to a cross-species sculptural practice full of surfaces to touch and smell) and the potential loosened by time spent close together. The notion of time spent close together is at the core of making-with, which helps turn the surface of things into a shared cross-species, cross-subjective, mutually affecting world. Making-with happens in Malcolm Whittaker's convivial and committed ways of building relationships through shared walks and in Kalisolaite 'Uhila's *Pigs in the Yard*, contextualising making-with as a mode of accompanying each other across time and space, reaching for the specific; the significantly other, and informing approaches to collaboration in visual arts.

Borsato's intimate interventions also tap into this art-making methodology and the stream of attempts I have embraced in *Making-with Marlo*. They will continue operating even when the PhD is complete, enacted through making-with. I am grateful to be able to continue with these methods as an ongoing practising through doable, liveable actions: through walks, relivings and sniffs, time spent together and the improvisational making of means-to-an-end props: tools for a good time. We've had a good time making them! But we have also had sad times, desperate times, confused times. I suspect the longing inherent within this project might never be satisfied.

The project has been difficult to place. I have pondered about things I could do and the different possibilities found in the work of other artists, but any singular choice would be a compromise. As discussed, the means-to-an-end objects are not precisely props, and they are not exactly sculptures. The events enacted in the project matter, but they matter less if not experienced with Marlo. I marvel at James Tapsell-Kururangi's intimate performance with his grandmother and wonder how the artworks of *Making-with Marlo* might live for others too. Yes, participants could try out the means-to-an-end props, but how could this become more than playful amusement?

Experiencing the project as a whole feels essential. An experience that includes curiosity and playfulness, and which seeks to embrace enjoyment as an experiential element that props up the potential of a genuine experiencing of Marlo's joys and curiosities. Does this mean presenting the 'evidence' of the project (the means-to-an-end props and documentation) close to how they were initially used? Or might it mean presenting a project in a state of storage as in choosing-from? Or in a Lucy Meyle stack, ready to go and take you somewhere new?

The final exhibition

The need for a final presentation of this practice-led research feels risky and perhaps like an artificial complication in a project that has negotiated the complexities of unanswerable questions. It will be a compromise; a 'productive disappointment'. Throughout the exegesis, I have pointed to moments where the practice has fallen short of its grander aspirations and where disappointment has made itself known. I could not dig like Marlo without a prop to aid me. I could not orient myself through scent; sniffing and distinguishing the compounds in *Black Scent Map*, or remembering the smells of objects at Bucklands Beach Marina. A roll on the grass with the *Hay Fever* prop could have been more enjoyable. Marlo refused to share a foldable seat with me. And, some of the private events with my dad have proved impossible to translate into artwork. Moments and attempts have fallen short. However, this 'falling short' talks to some of the visual language of the means-to-an-end props as tools for navigating murky frontiers of cross-species sentience, echoing the potential futility of the overall project. I will (possibly) never be able to get there, let alone get you there.

Shannon Te Ao's holding connections in time through worlds of overlapping presences in *two shoots* revealed to me how inbuilt inconsistencies can be a way to negotiate difficulties through ongoing attempts. Attempts in this practice signal the smudge of connection/attachment cross-species where there is no way of getting it right or reaching a particular output. Reaching itself becomes the undertaking of the project.

I know it is disappointing that you, the reader and participant, will not fully experience this project and the world with Marlo. What you might encounter in the gallery or car will disappoint and be beyond reach. It is not lost on Marlo and me that this presentation of artwork cannot do what we needed it to do, in the same way that it cannot do what the project spent four years attempting to do. Perhaps it can provide evidence, offer possibilities, and enact a nosy sculptural engagement, taking us into a world of smells, digging, and fun. It may even convey love, affection, and empathy. Maybe this project has always been about a hope, a striving to know more about a beloved companion of another species, enigmatic in his significant otherness. Striving to have his nose and to have a cross-subjective experience across the membranous distances of species and death. The significance of this project has been the constant problem of how these enigmatic things are experienced and exhibited, and our inability to fully walk in someone else's paws. But you can try to get there, and an artwork will aid you in your attempt.

While the questions of the project are not answerable in a straightforward manner, they are the things that keep this project and practice ongoing. That is the heart of the productive problem of disappointment. There is no conclusive artwork to see here, no instantaneous moment of great delivery, no right way to deliver outcomes. Again, the significance of this project lies partly in its attempts at signalling an always-reaching; an ongoing action revealing the gravitational push and pull of disappointment's mass as an inescapable operation of this practice. The leaning into disappointment is a symptom and relinquishing of the unanswerable questions at the core of this project. Making-with leans with me, a methodology of attempts, time spent together, of sculptural engagements as mediation with and through inscrutable experiences of cross-species sentience. Making-with shows me what an art practice might look like when it flows with life, when it occurs in intimately scaled gestures and hard to place props. So I must lean on, embracing the pivots like Sandy Gibbs, and navigating disappointment in the cross-species smudge. Somewhere, sometime maybe, just out of reach, I might sense something ... a slight waft, a vibrating string, an opening of a new trail to step on.

I have abandoned myself to this permanent search; an ongoing time of attempts enacted through making-with, living-with and loving Marlo. It is a precarious path to follow. Nothing here is definite; nothing is sure. Marlo walks on with me as a friend, a companion and a lifetime collaborator. I return to him. It is strange thinking about how this project might have unfolded had Marlo not become ill and died as early as he did. In what new activities and fun could we have taken part? What kinds of means-to-an-end props would have emerged from these unknown noticings? There are not many things I am sure of, but this is one: Marlo would have had a ball should he have had a chance to sniff out and run around the final exhibition, and he would have absolutely loved meeting you, tail wiggling all the way.
(Trust us.)



Image 344: Marlo having fun at Mellons Bay.

Epilogue

Post-examination reflections on contribution to knowledge

Making-with Marlo consisted of a set of sculptural elements that included means-to-an-end props, assorted activities and journeys, and printed matter that were all party to the life and loves of a Rottweiler named Marlo who, in both knowing and unknowing ways, as phrased by one of the thesis examiners, contributed to an inquiry on perception, sentience, decision-making and cross-species communication.³¹⁹ They observed the following in the affirmative: In full awareness of the possible risk of wading into the brackish waters of maudlin animal fantasy, this project has hinged on the exceptional capability of practice-led art research to speak about love and emotions and the deep connections humans can have with members of other species.³²⁰

A significant contribution of this research is that Marlo played a vital role in the decisions made during the fabrication of the artworks, helping to move the practice of sculpture down new, more-than-human material paths. In the larger context of the project, which walks paw-in-hand with current thinking around the complexities of cross-species relationships and human-animal participation in the broader environment of our planet, these paths lead to the fostering of cross-species communities, spaces and experiences through which we might arrive at a disturbance of assumptions. Providing different perspectives on art making and its value could transform our familiar reality and lead us to a reworking of common knowledge.

The shared experiences of this project offer new understandings of “sculptural syntax and haptic knowledge.”³²¹ The examiners’ reports and their experiencing of the project provided insight into what it means to “lean into or lean out of [or lean on]”, as well as what it means to collapse, carry, support, or fold.³²² Their thoughts on what the abundance of “textures and phenomena”³²³ might offer when considering the overall experience within the installation helped to

319-320. Paraphrased from examination reports.
321-323. Quoted from examination reports.

deepen my awareness that coming into contact with this artwork, the means-to-an-end props, is a significant element of the practice. It harnesses haptic joy and enjoyment as an experiential element beyond the human. Positioning memory and past actions within an exhibition context, sculpture becomes an experiential system that builds new understandings of intimacy and loss. The artworks of *Making-with Marlo* clarify how the materiality of sculpture can surpass other art forms like video, photography, and artistic reenactment in producing an effect that enhances our understandings of cross-species corporeality. The artworks do this through a lingering materiality—traces of use, traces of fur, hair, sand and grass, Marlo’s past impressions—as well as by relishing in a multiplicity of surfaces to smell, touch, rest on and think with, emphasising the epistemic potential of a sculptural artwork.

Making-with Marlo offers new knowledge on how to employ both visual and tactile affordances and prompts in a sculptural exploration of mutual sensory borders, probing the capacity of sculptural forms to transcend the shifting human-animal signs we attach to them. Important sculptural elements in the project included colour, texture, mass, shape, and scent. The construction of the means-to-an-end props incorporated these elements, and then took on animal and human-animal body trace and use-quality, ultimately producing new, rough-and-ready sculptural forms.³²⁴ These amalgams/means-to-an-end artworks were always potent in their own right to me as Marlo’s immediate friend. It was gratifying to discover that for visitors, even if they had never met Marlo, they created and propped up a gamut of affects that exceeded their situation as leftovers from what might be assumed to have been a more meaningful live event.³²⁵

I wanted the artworks of *Making-with Marlo* to offer a response to the research question: how can these art objects impart a deeply felt and meaningful experience to others? How do you show love in a static object? The complexities and tragedies are challenging to record. Another contribution to the field focused on the unique capacity of sculpture to sustain particular and intimate memories and experiences over extended stretches of time. In this context, sculpture has worked to bring Marlo back to us corporeally (me, my family and the audience), even across the distance of death.

324-325. Some wording is paraphrased from the examiners’ reports.

There were moments early in the project when I feared art with a capital A and what it might do to Marlo and my relationship. I feared what artist Allan Kaprow states as “life bracketed by the physical and cultural frames of art quickly becoming trivialised life at the service of high art’s presumed greater value.”³²⁶ This trivialisation is something the methodology of making-with has made clear that it is not an inevitable part of art-making. Far from trivialising his/our life, or worse still, using Marlo’s individuality, intelligence, humour and idiosyncrasies as a gimmick, art turned out to be a generous playground for conducting surface-and-scent-obsessed cross-species sculptural research. Art became the vehicle through which I realised a specific cross-species friendship can be a site for the emergence of new awareness and knowledge regarding the agency of objects. The agency and power of the touchable sculptural object opened up new paths of materiality instead of a closed-down representation of a life and relationship.

Embracing the fruitful nature of this hovering uncertainty, and the emerging awareness and knowledge that it gives rise to, has been vital in the project. A significant aspect for me was the potentiality of continually ‘reaching’ towards Marlo; the potential and value of reaching beyond the limits of our human knowledge, in time and space, in search of cross-species experiences of sentience and connection against all odds—of reaching for what seems beyond art’s limits.

Discovering a way of practising that mingles with life, with all the small things, big things, sad things and changes it contains, has been a profoundly transformational experience. *Making-with Marlo* has fundamentally shifted my perceptions of our shared life thanks to Marlo and his canine being, his knowledge, and the continual possibilities inherent in making this work. In the tilting of my animal perceptions, I have reaffirmed for myself the profound possibilities of sculptural props, of thinking through and with material things, and of continuing to hold art in the wobble with other aspects of life—using it as a tool for reaching towards those difficult-to-access locations of animal and human-animal interiority that other forms of research may not be able to approach. I am very grateful to this PhD project, which I now understand as ongoing—and to the props for letting me find a way to walk with Marlo still.



Images 345-346: *Making-with Marlo* exhibition, ST PAUL St Gallery, August 2023. Installation details. Photos: Emily Parr.

326. Allan Kaprow, “The Real Experiment,” *Artforum*, December 1983, <https://www.artforum.com/print/198310/the-real-experiment-35431>.

PhD exhibition

The exhibition comprised several parts:

The central installation of props on the floor of Gallery II.

- All of the artworks on the floor were means-to-an-end props that I or others had activated during the various timeframes and outings of the project;

A4 printouts of photos taken on my Samsung Galaxy A30s phone of events and trips undertaken during the project, and photos of Marlo enjoying himself during various adventures in his life.

- These were pinned up with spherical push pins (blue, yellow, white, transparent) at Marlo's height on the longest wall of the gallery, mimicking my studio wall, which had hosted an evolving, working assemblage/collage of A4 printouts throughout the four years of this project. These configurations of photos were pinned up in different formations as things happened, trips occurred, and new artworks emerged. For *Making-with Marlo*, I pinned the photos (and neighbouring *Scent Maps*) 78cm from the floor—Marlo's height from his paws to the top of his head when he stood in a loose, relaxed position;

Two MDF shelving units from my studio located near the back of the gallery space.

- The first shelf contained the very early props of the project (for example, a few *playthings*, the bottles of *The Scent of a Walk*, props from the event *The nose behind the sniff, the hand behind the touch*), as well as drawings for props and printed ephemera used for previous trips and activities in the project. The second shelf held all of the props I had made that are still to be used or activated. It was like a rack of future possibilities. The shelves were wheeled into the gallery by my dad and me directly from my studio in a perilous adventure involving broken wheels, misbehaving lifts and wobbling shelf supports. Present in my studio during PhD, the shelves held a range of the project's moving parts over time. They were an essential space of making, play and exploration, and a central hub of activity—and it was important they had a part in the final exhibition;

A printed ephemera guide to the exhibition.

- This guide included a piece of writing providing visitors with some knowledge of Marlo and the central contexts of the project, as well as a visual floor map (a written compass for the installation elements) on the back of the unfolded guide. It was designed as an orientation tool for us human critters and guided heavily by our ocular expectations when we visit an art gallery;

My 2005 red Toyota Passo parked on the street outside every day of the exhibition.

- I always parked as close as I could to the sightlines of the gallery. Noted on the guide and sometimes verbally communicated by myself, visitors could walk to the car, with or without me, to have a look. In the boot was a newly made props kit. In the front interior, between the seat headrests, was another suspended prop hinting towards the car being in a state of readiness to take 'you' on an outing with its props. I moved the back seats into the extended position Marlo used them in while he was alive. The various stains and marks he left on the fabric also became a part of the installation, tangling the project times—before, after, now, tomorrow. I was prepared to take anyone on a drive if they asked or wanted a turn in the car themselves.

A parallel element was the documentation of the week's activities that I posted on the project's Instagram @making_with_marlo.

I approached the installation of *Making-with Marlo* as an activation point in the project rather than an outcome—I saw it as a testing and playing ground. I wondered what (and how) the curious power of the props might bring about for the project and the visitors.

I invited all visitors to feel free to touch and play with anything in the gallery, extending this invitation verbally whenever someone visited the gallery and I was there. The written guide also included the invitation. I had committed to 'hanging out' inside the installation for the entire week of the exhibition's public run, Monday to Sunday, 10 a.m. – 6 p.m., treating it as another activity/outing in the project. My overt invitations to (human) visitors to touch and play with the props were a part of this event—a sociable aspect that I committed to in Marlo's physical absence, a facilitatory role as 'greeter' that attempted to activate the beginning of relations between visitors and the props. The hope was that this, combined with the relaxed, touchable, low-to-the-ground orientation, might be one of the factors that would allow human visitors to feel more inclined to handle the props rather than keep an art-like distance. I discovered that canine visitors seemed to need no such encouragement!

However, the installation also hoped to enact this invitation by itself. As always, I did not want the exhibition to become ‘about’ Marlo and me—making-with remains the project’s critical backbone. While our relationship is embedded in all these objects, others can experience them without us.

Floor

Before the installation, I tested different variations for arranging the props in the space. I wanted them to feel less precious in their display and more like they were ready to go, to be picked up and do something with you as a visitor. Franz Erhard Walther’s storage situation was crucial for my thinking, recalling Marlo’s green box of toys and notions around storage as a ‘choosing-from’—an installation as a supply hub. The idea of artworks in active storage also spoke to different notions of time essential in the project: once/now, past/present/future, before death/after death. I tested various arrangements along the walls—a leaning method of storage. I tried configurations in straight lines and orderly grids across the floor—a baggage carousel of things to sniff out and explore (although these particular tests felt more like a garage sale than an invitation for a shared experience of the kind this project engaged in).

Eventually, I decided on a more casual configuration. It was important for all of the sculptures to be set out on the floor so they could speak to lively, dog-approved activities and—vitality—that they did not follow usual display tropes as precious, untouchable works of art but instead posed as modest invitations to explore and play. Since the props on the floor had already been used and activated in the project, they carried some of that use-quality with them as a further invitation to touch and interact. I hoped visitors would meander through the props as if on a walk, moving about the installation so that the acts of walking and touching might activate different memories and sensations, allowing access to a world of making-with Marlo. I noticed this in action multiple times as different groups of visitors came through, touching, smelling, leaning, shaking, trying things on. The artworks drew out curiosity from visitors, human or canine, resulting in shifting and idiosyncratic dealings with different props. Interestingly, the human visitors often attempted to return a prop to where they had picked it up, while the canine visitors did not seem to worry about that at all. The props shimmered and moved across the space (without any ‘resetting’ on my part) as visitors touched and tried them out during the week.

Perspectives

Heights and vantage points were also crucial considerations. Throughout the project, an exploration of sculptural scale was active with props and prop activations oscillating between Marlo’s height, my height, Marlo’s vantage point, my vantage point, Marlo’s reach, my reach. As collaborators, Marlo and I calibrated the physical scale of everything in the project. The particular always mattered in *Making-with Marlo* because it spoke to the specificity of the relationship that gave rise to everything.

The installation’s low-to-the-ground orientation of the floor and wall elements exemplifies Marlo’s presence in the project—the height at which Marlo experienced life, which shifted how someone taller on two legs might approach these objects. The body actions they would have to make to get up close and personal with the props (leaning, sitting, crouching, reaching) shifted perceptions, potentially leading to moments of discovery, surprise or curiosity.

Shelving

Where the floor element was a space of walking, movement and exploration, the objects on the shelves—which are vertical and upright for express use by comparatively taller creatures on two legs—included drawings, tests, plans, unactivated props and written/printed guides to the project’s work. Their vantage point and frame of reference was human-animal.

Walls

The banks of A4 printouts of photos on the gallery walls were all part of the making process, which was an essential reason for their inclusion in the exhibition. However, there was also a more personal and emotional reason: having Marlo in the gallery with me was lovely and felt right. As you entered the space, the first bank of photos to the right was a version of a ‘Marlo photo wall’ that I had pinned up in the studio for the entire study. It was like a scrapbook of family photos. The photos and printed matter speak to the blended artistic method I developed during this research project, which combines narrative storytelling and shared journeys with sculptural forms.

Noticings

Witnessing the exhibition's week-long run, I noted how relations played out and the individual ways visitors investigated different elements: what drew people in and how the props brokered relational moments; individuals playing with props together, offering them to one another, and using them in tandem. When visitors began bringing in their canine friends and companions, I was utterly delighted and loved witnessing their reactions and actions with the artworks in the space. I documented the entire week on Instagram and took photos of all canine visitors and their families. As you might imagine, the canine way of experiencing the works differed somewhat from human methods. There was a lot more enthusiastic sniffing, satisfying mauling of soft props, running and rolling, and a lot more unselfconscious moments of rest and pause on top of the props while dozing in the sun streaming through the windows.

One thing that really struck me was the self-contained nature of the human/canine family units that visited the gallery and how these idiosyncratic and shared 'fun days out' emphasised the backbone of this research as a project exploring subjectivities and distances, and the ways we might attempt to bridge them.

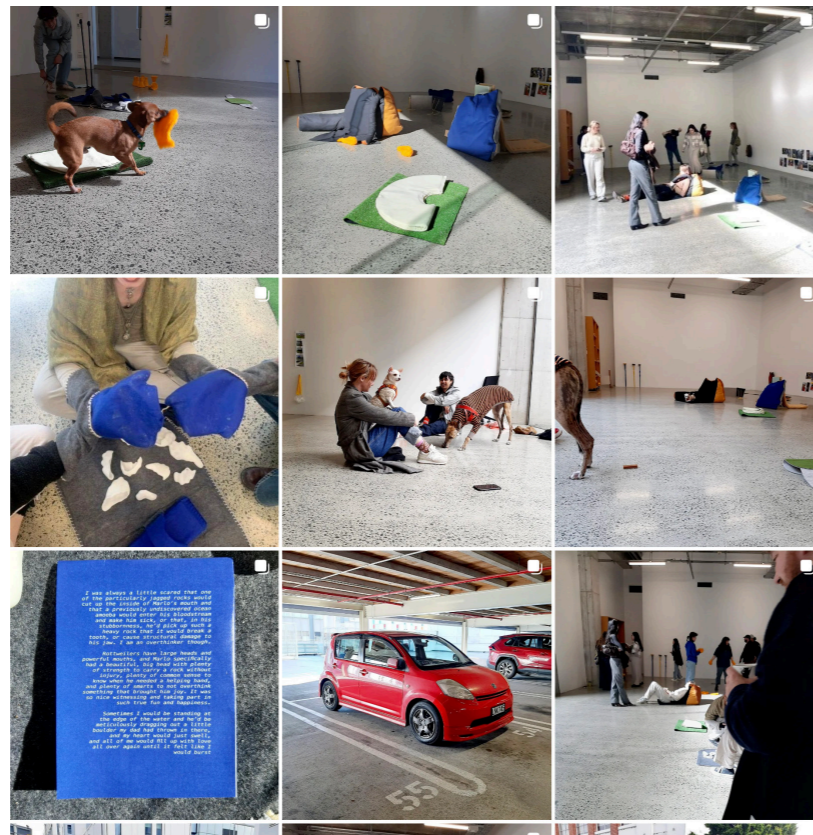


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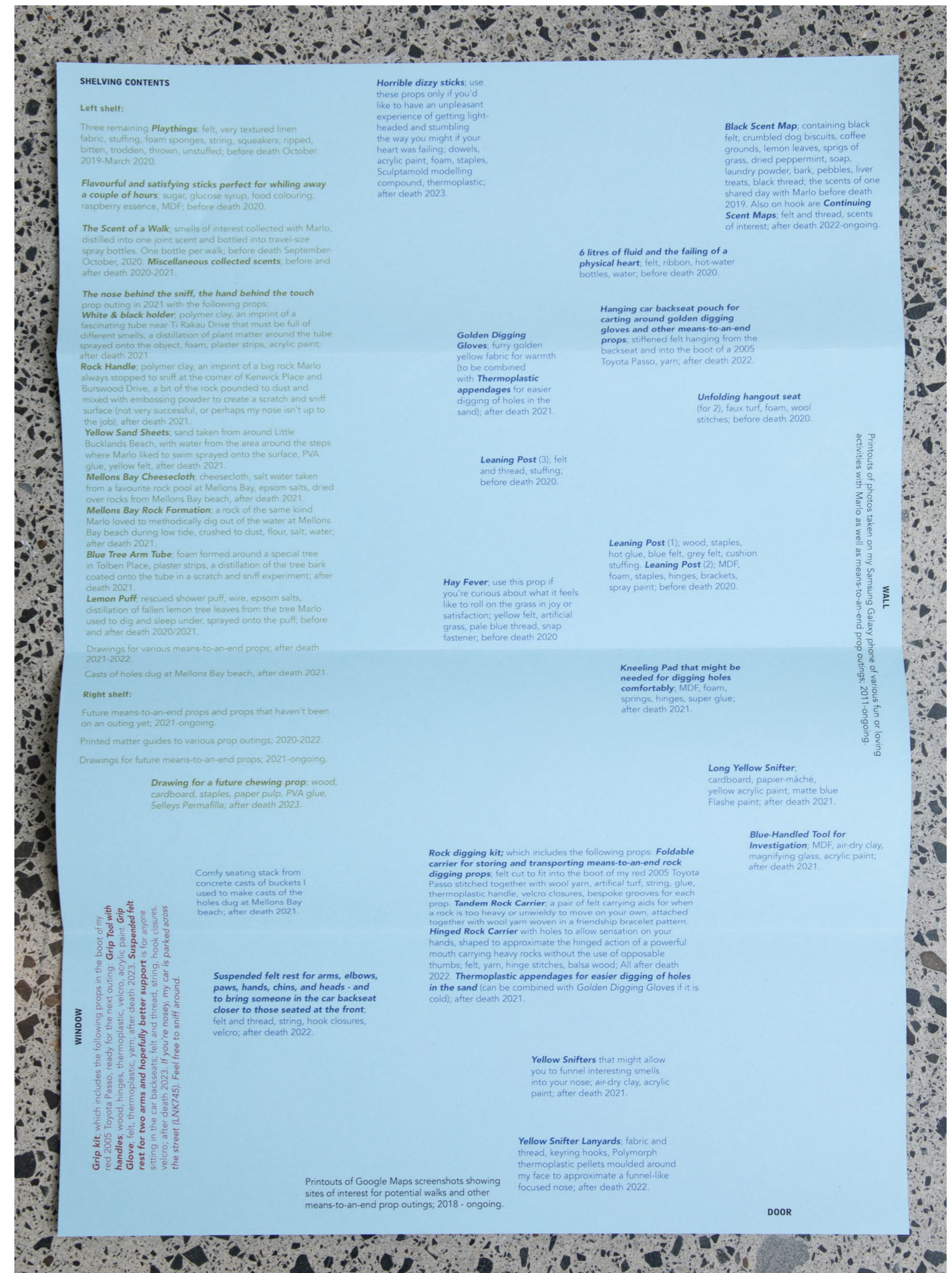


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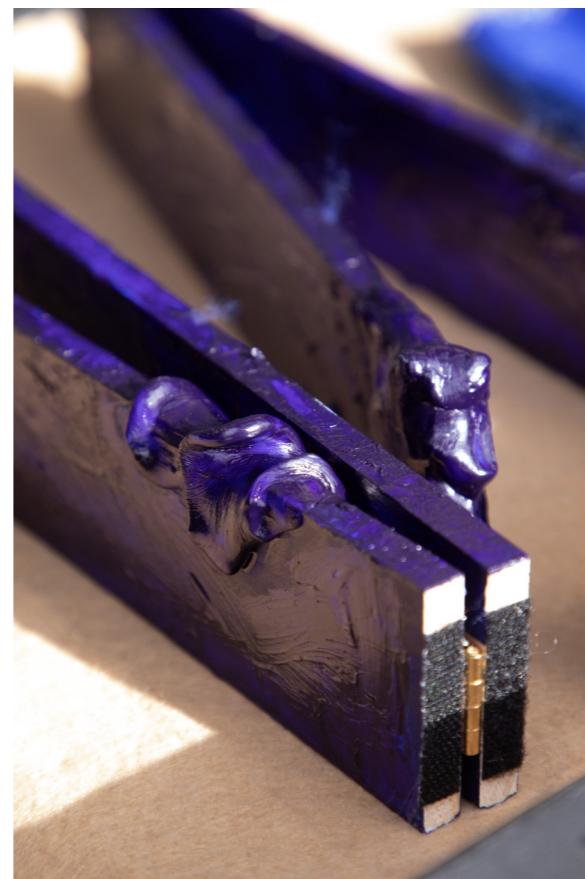
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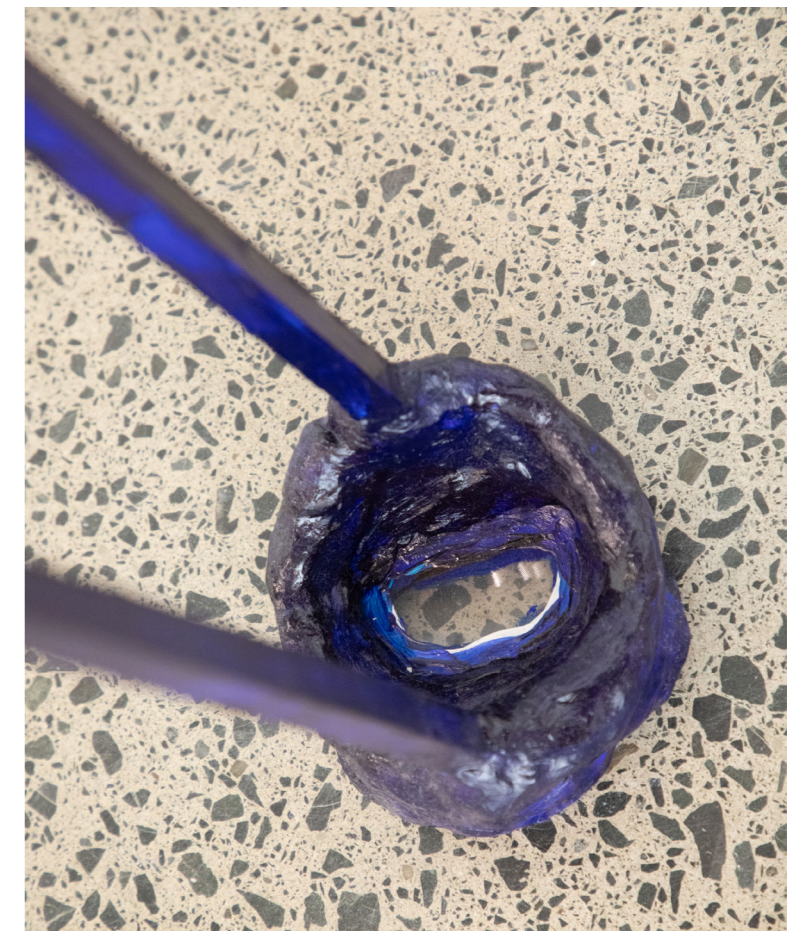
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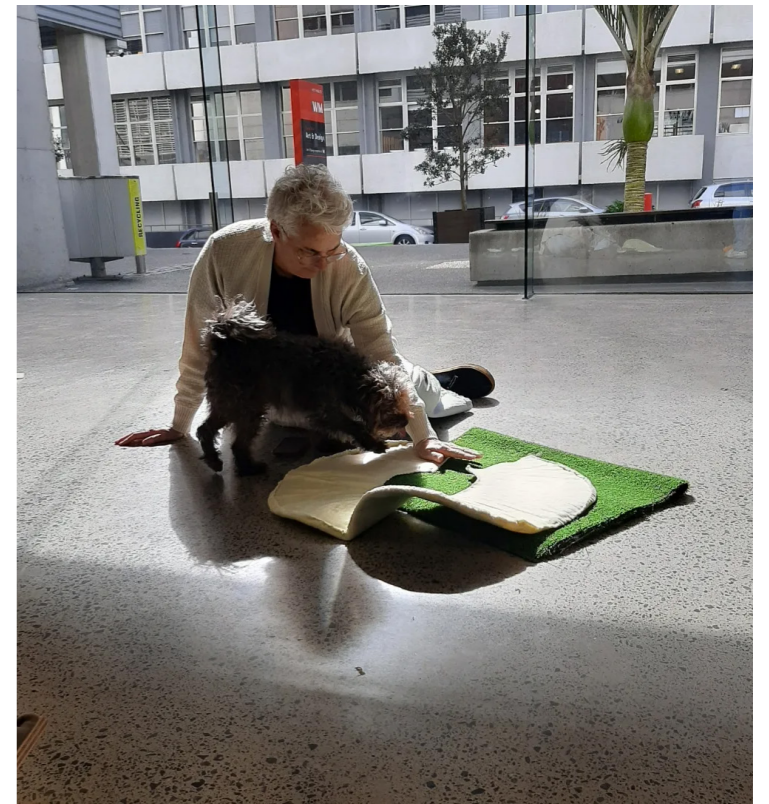
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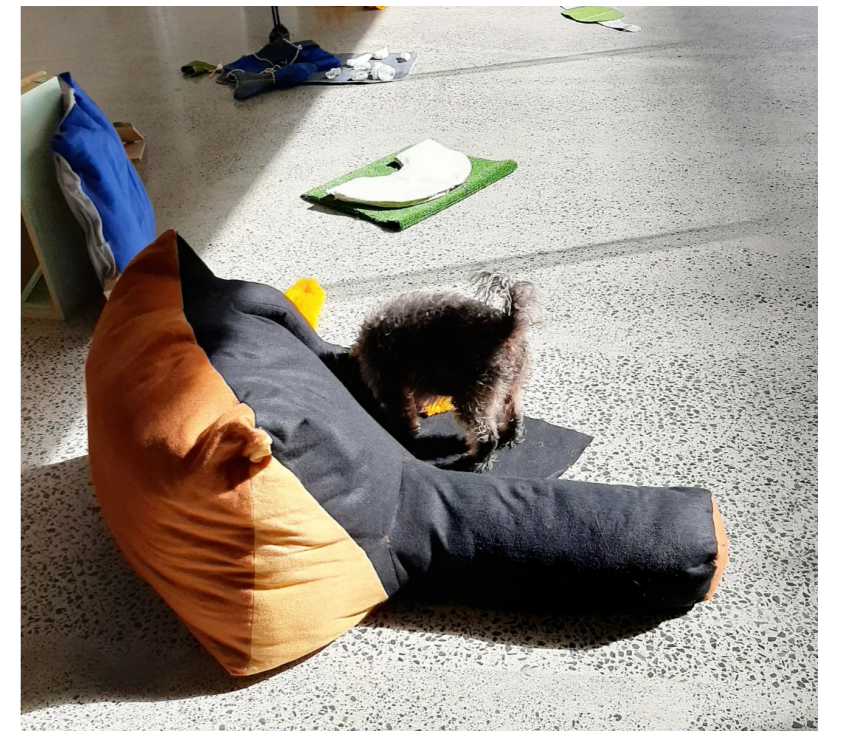
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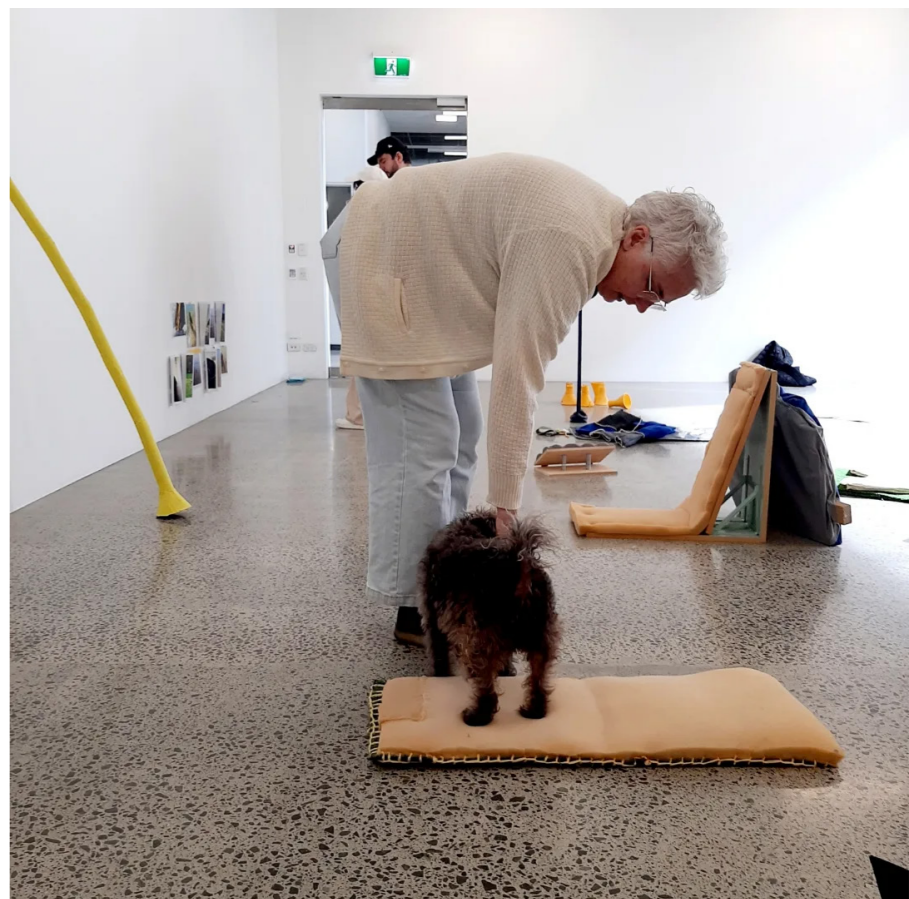
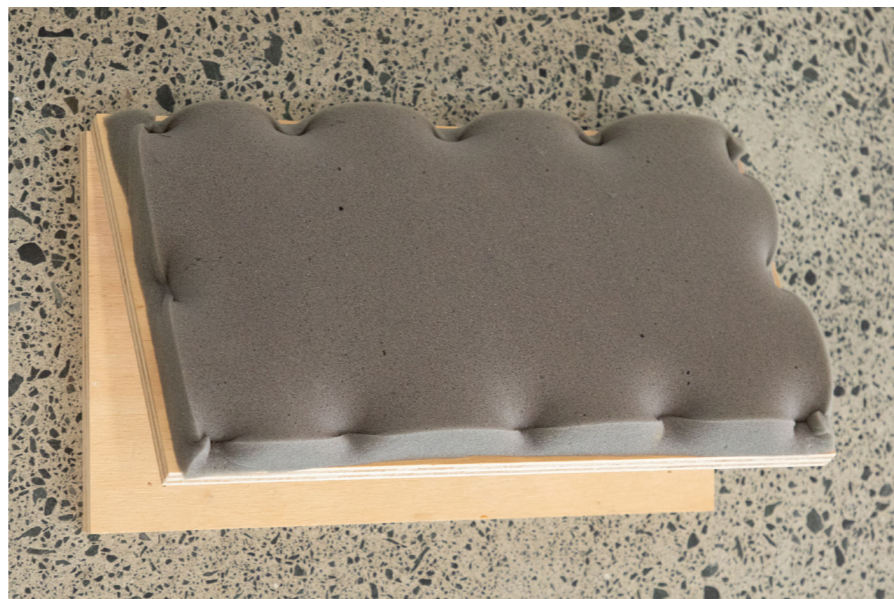
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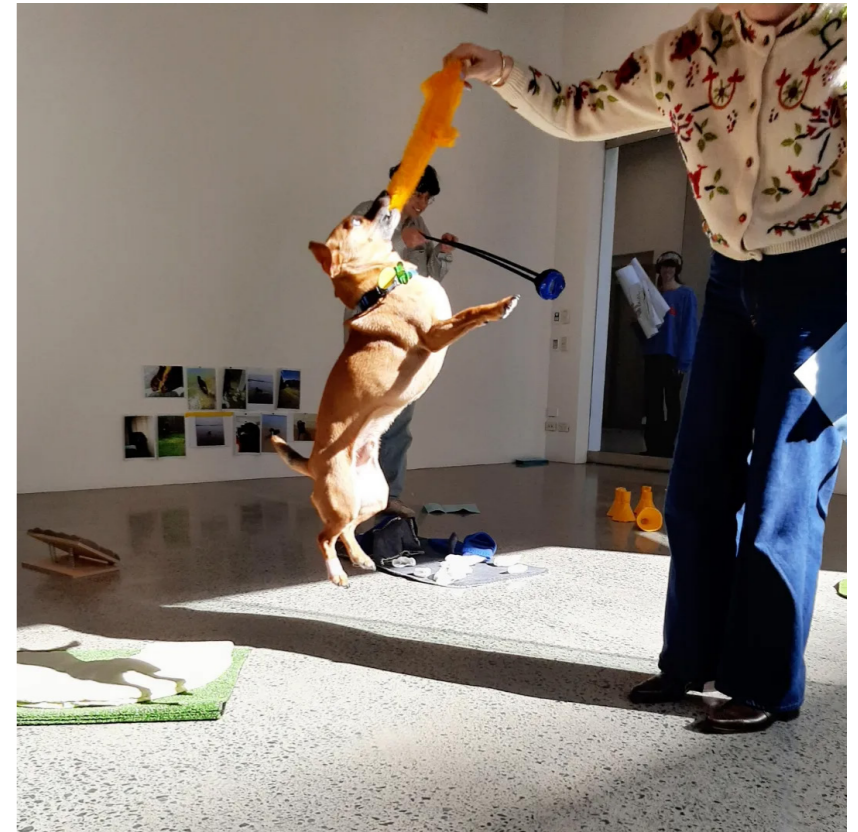
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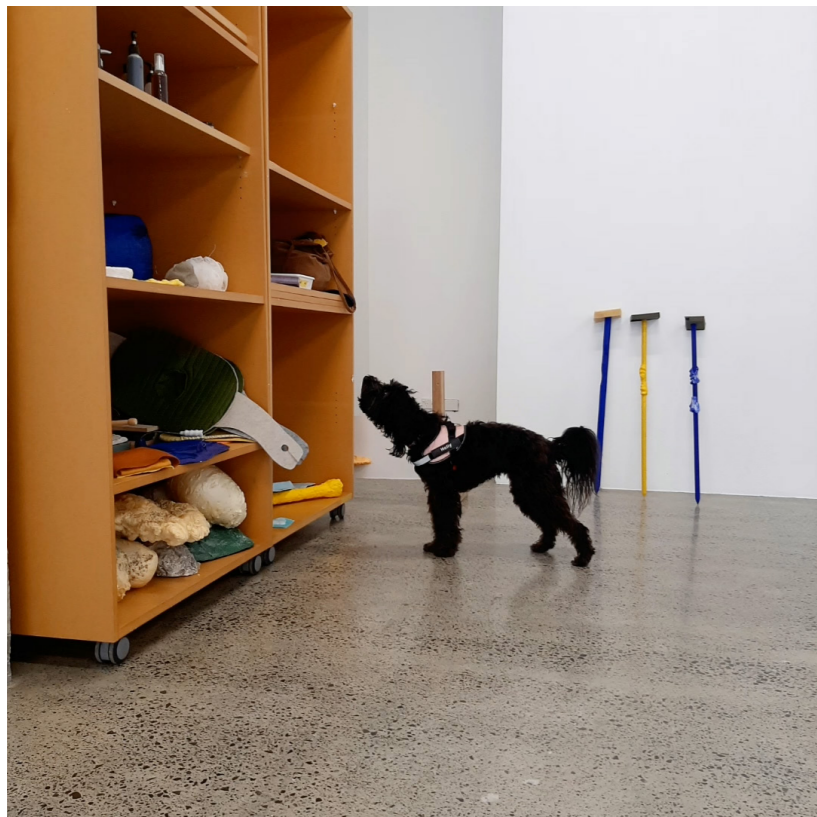
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Images 299-301: Diane Borsato; *Three Performances (after Joseph Beuys, Marina Abramović, and Bonnie Sherk)*, 2008. Three-channel digital video installation. Details of Joseph Beuys re-enactment. © Diane Borsato.

Image 302-305: Krōōt Juurak and Alex Bailey; *Performances for Pets*. Screenshots of *Performance for Anwalt*, 09.01.2014. Single-channel video, 13.43min, colour, sound. © Krōōt Juurak and Alex Bailey.

Images 306-308: Video stills of Sandy Gibbs; *Recalling Tui*, 2016. Single-channel video. Duration: 10:01. © Sandy Gibbs.

Images 309-310: Sandy Gibbs; *Recalling Tui*, 2016. Single-channel video. Duration: 10:01. Installation view at RM Gallery & Project Space, Tāmaki Makaurau, 2021.

Images 311-312: Sandy Gibbs; *The swimming race (Mexico City)*, 2018. Single-channel video. Duration: 4:10. *Stadium walk (opening ceremony)*, 2018. Single-channel video. Duration: 2:18. Installation views at RM Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau, 2021.

Image 313: Video still of Sandy Gibbs; *Lighting an old flame*, 2016. Single-channel video. Duration: 2:24.

Image 314: *Long Yellow Snifter*; in use in East Tamaki, cardboard, papier-mâché, yellow acrylic paint, matte blue Flashe paint, after death 2021.

Images 315-340: *relivings*; 2021-ongoing.

Images 341-343: Google Memories showing me Marlo and me in a lean on August 20, 2020; a digging activity at Mellons Bay Beach after death on May 2, 2021; a collage of photos taken between 2018-2020 that Memories titled ‘Sand and sea’.

Image 344: Marlo having fun at Mellons Bay.

Images 345-346: *Making-with Marlo* exhibition, ST PAUL St Gallery, August 2023. Installation details. Photos: Emily Parr.

Image 347: Screenshot of the project’s Instagram grid @making_with_marlo.

Image 348: The back of the unfolded guide for the exhibition *Making-with Marlo*, showing the floor plan page. Photo: Emily Parr.

Images 349-361: *Making-with Marlo* exhibition, ST PAUL St Gallery, August 2023. Installation views. Photos: Emily Parr.

Images 362-370: *Making-with Marlo* exhibition, ST PAUL St Gallery, August 2023. Installation views showing the interior of my Toyota Passo. Photos: Emily Parr.

Images 371-448: *Making-with Marlo* exhibition, ST PAUL St Gallery, August 2023. Installation details. Photos showing props in use: Ena Kosovac, Antonia Nisbet, Shelley Simpson. All other photos: Emily Parr.

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