

The Pathos of Things: A Painting and Chime Exploration of
Making Time Palpable in The Everyday Encounter

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Abstract

My practice-led research explores the passage of time within everyday encounters and its palpability through an installation of painting and sound. My painting practice reflects the way I attune myself to fleeting encounters and ordinary details of the everyday. Confronted by a rigid, linear understanding of time within the everyday, I turn to painting and sound to explore its malleability. Allowing process and material to mark, suspend, reenact and distil temporal experience.

My paintings distil memory into images that evolve through drawing, watercolour, and oil painting, echoing how recollection shifts over time. Rather than simply documenting an experience, I re-encounter it through the process, mirroring its emotional resonance. In doing so, I attempt to hold onto something inherently ungraspable, a fleeting moment, while reshaping it through the act of painting.

In my painting installation practice, I incorporate sound, particularly chimes inspired by Japan's five o'clock chime broadcasts. These intermittent chimes offer a heightened, ephemeral moment that both disrupts and recedes, embodying the paradox at the heart of my practice: the tension between the fleeting and the enduring.

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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 used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), 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.”

Rita Takeuchi
15 May 2025

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Introduction

I sense that ordinary moments carry a profound depth in their quiet, unspoken presence. Being in my early twenties, a period marked by constant change, has naturally heightened my awareness of time and its progressive acceleration. As I transition out of adolescence, the rapid shifts in daily life seem to compress time, prompting deeper reflection on its passing. Through external forces—such as the pressures of adulthood and the relentless pace of contemporary life—I often feel confined by a constant sense of urgency, where the opportunity for stillness feels increasingly rare.

Amidst this dilemma, I am constantly contemplating the reality that time is limitless, continuous and ever-present, yet our experience of it is impermanent. *Mono no aware*, a Japanese concept embedded in my culture, has become foundational to the ways I engage with everyday moments that confront me in this current situation. It posits that within a life adorned with transience, the observation of mundane details can reveal profound emotions instilled in ordinary moments—a pathos of things. In finding comfort in time's impermanence through *mono no aware* and its gentle appreciation of time's passage, I become more attuned to my everyday encounters. This sensibility has culminated in the development of this practice-led research.

Through my practice I explore the concept of time as non-linear and malleable; reshaping its seemingly rigid and measured perception. Through this practice-led research I have found that the problem is not the acceleration of time itself, but rather our lack of presence with it in everyday life. This disconnection makes it difficult to experience time in its full duration and to notice the subtle, fleeting moments that often pass by unnoticed.

In my painting practice I counteract this by cultivating an awareness of time's flux. The layered process of painting reflects a sense of continuous, subjective time, not single frozen instants on canvas, but a temporal unfolding that suspends the everyday and invites a quiet reflection on the emotional resonance of these

encounters. The sound component extends this presence into the physical space through an installation of intermittent chimes. By punctuating the space at intervals, the chimes draw attention to time's passage and duration. Together, the installation creates space for attunement—to both time itself, and the quiet details of daily life.

In Chapter One: *Unpacking The Everyday* I explore the notion of 'the everyday' as the foundation of my practice, and how time manifests within everyday encounters. I explore the everyday as a space of flux, and how its rhythms are reflected in the habits and attentiveness I cultivate in everyday life. Paintings of ordinary moments accumulate into a connected language of the everyday. I also reflect on my cultural experience and identity to uncover how a migrant perspective deeply shapes my attentiveness to ordinary moments.

Chapter Two: *Time and Timelessness in Practice* outlines the timelessness of painting as a medium, drawing from John Berger's idea of painting sitting at the intersection of the past, present, and future. I explore how the static nature of painting, in relation to the fleeting moments depicted in my work, contributes to this sense of timelessness. I also discuss how the process of distillation as a methodology in my practice mirrors recollection and memory, which are intrinsic to the passage of time.¹

Chapter Three: *Chime as Atmosphere* examines the Japanese tradition of the five o'clock chime. I discuss how chimes, originally a civic signal, operate differently in an exhibition space to make the passage of time and its impermanence palpable in the physical space. I also introduce chime boxes, which act as spatial drawings that hold and extend the presence of the chimes in the installation.²

¹ In my practice, distillation refers to the methodical process of translating a single image through stages of sketching, watercolour and finally painting. With each stage, the image becomes less tied to its original visual context, and more focused on the emotional resonance of a fleeting encounter. Paradoxically, as the pictorial representation shifts through this process, the feeling of the moment becomes clearer. Clarifying not what was seen, but what was remembered.

² The chime boxes are handmade wooden structures designed to house the speakers which play the chimes in the installation space.



Figure 1. Rita Takeuchi, *idle*, 2024, oil on canvas, 400 x 300mm.

Chapter 1: Unpacking The Everyday

This chapter explores the everyday as the foundational space of my practice, where my ordinary encounters exist in a constant state of flux. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's idea of appropriation, I explore how the habitual nature of my painting practice allows overlooked moments to emerge. These moments become recurring motifs, reflecting my attentiveness to daily life. I introduce the concept of *mono no aware*, a cultural lens that shapes my sensitivity to time's impermanence and the transient beauty found in fleeting encounters. I also examine how my migrant upbringing has layered my perception of the everyday, where ordinary life shifts between cultural contexts, heightening my awareness of these moments.

A key aspect of the practice is my sketchbook, which serves as a tactile space where observations and memories materialise. Echoing Michael Taussig's concept of notebooks as spaces for intuitive and fluid recording; this sensibility extends into my installations. The fragmented nature of my sketchbook practice informs how my paintings are displayed; counteracting a rigid narrative.

1.1 Attending to the ordinary

I am drawn to ordinary moments, a tendency that has only deepened as I grow older. I find value in objects and the way things simply are, and this way of seeing has become foundational to how I navigate everyday life. This practice-led research has uncovered that the everyday is a notion layered with contradictions. It denotes the repetitive, yet ever-changing; it is mundane yet profound. I once thought of the everyday as merely routine and simple daily activities, but now I understand it as the vast universe that my practice inhabits.

Ben Highmore's analysis of the everyday as existing in flux, constantly shifting between routine to unpredictability, has been useful for the project.³ Highmore suggests that in a modern reality, we have become conditioned to sensory overload, from technology to work, where our internal monologues constantly drift. However, he says that "the drift, then, isn't the emptiness of the ordinary, but the ordinary submerged, hiding in an expanse of shadows."⁴ In my practice I explore this drift or flux hidden in the shadows of modern-day distractions, which are not voids, but spaces of potential for my work.

The work *idle* depicts a moment I encountered when I was walking home from work, noticing the roads drying from the rain (fig.1). As I passed the same grate I always walk by, something held me there. The rain made the leaves cling to the metal bars in uneven patches. Some had been swallowed into the drain, while others were caught by the wind. Then, nestled between the bars, a mandarin glistening from the rain, just sat there, a small, glowing object in a very ordinary moment. These moments, almost invisible in their familiarity, can hold an unexpected emotional depth. In noticing them, I find the everyday, not as a backdrop to life but as a layered space, constantly in flux.

³ Ben Highmore, *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday* (Routledge, 2010), 4.

⁴ Highmore, *Ordinary Lives*, 4

University of Oxford Professor Michael Sheringham's book *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* suggests that the everyday is not simply a routine of activities, but something lived and practiced.⁵ Sheringham highlights Lefebvre's concepts of alienation and appropriation as a way of engaging with the site of the everyday. For Lefebvre, alienation arises when routines feel imposed by external forces like work, making daily activities monotonous. Appropriation, then, is the act of reclaiming and reshaping daily life through habits, rituals and attentiveness, imbuing them with personal significance.⁶ This suggests that while societal structures may impose constraints leading to alienation, there remains the potential for individuals to appropriate their experiences. Sheringham argues that the challenge lies in this reclamation, in learning to attune ourselves to the rhythms and nuances that give the everyday its depth.

I embody this concept of appropriation through my practice. This becomes visible through the recurring visual motifs and rhythms that emerge as my paintings are installed, as well as in my sketchbook practice, where images reveal their connections to one another. These motifs, which surface subconsciously, reflect the habits, rituals and attentiveness I cultivate in everyday life. Their repetition is not deliberate but a result of what I am consistently drawn to. They are within fleeting moments that many might overlook, but accumulate through a certain attentiveness. For instance, glowing circular motifs appear across multiple works: the mandarin nestled on the drain grate; the bright yellow moon casting its glow on an SUV parked in an empty lot; the soft glow from a passing lamppost on a 4am drive to the airport (fig. 2). Other recurring forms include the dotted snail trails mirrored in the painting of firework sparkles in the sky (fig. 3), as well as a repeated presence of fruits and vegetables (fig. 4).

The repeated attention to these ordinary details in my paintings becomes an act of appropriation in Lefebvre's sense. It is a reclaiming of the everyday from imposed

⁵ Michael Sheringham, *Everyday Life: Theories and Practices from Surrealism to the Present* (OUP Oxford, 2006), 143-158.

⁶ Sheringham, *Everyday Life*, 143-158.

routines using personal rituals of noticing. In attending to what might otherwise pass unnoticed, I transform fleeting encounters into something quietly significant.



Figure 2. Rita Takeuchi, testing installation strategies in studio, March 2025



Figure 3. Rita Takeuchi, testing installation strategies in studio, March 2025



Figure 4. Rita Takeuchi, testing installation strategies in studio, March 2025

The emotional resonance of these everyday moments is emphasised by their impermanence, which I approach through the lens of *mono no aware*, a concept embedded in my Japanese culture. This concept is a way of being, embedded within Japanese traditions, as well as literary and artistic practices. For example, cherry blossoms, as depicted in *The Tale of Genji*, a classic Japanese novel by Murasaki Shikibu, symbolise the transient beauty and impermanence central to *mono no aware*.⁷ This has become a foundation to the ways I engage with the everyday and approach ordinary moments, and it posits that within a life adorned with transience, the observation of mundane details can reveal profound emotions instilled in ordinary moments – a pathos of things. Just as cherry blossoms symbolise ephemerality, painting allows me to hold onto the small ephemeral moments that would otherwise fade, both physically and from memory. This awareness of impermanence makes even the most fleeting, quiet moments feel profound. So profound they demand preservation; not to resist their passing but to acknowledge their fleeting essence. Through painting, I enact this awareness, recording ordinary moments, not as static memories but as markers of time's movement.

⁷ Murasaki, Shikibu. 紫式部, *The Tale of Genji*, (Knopf Publishing Group, 1978).

1.2 Cultural resonance: the everyday through a Japanese Lens

With the Japanese concept of *mono no aware* at the core of how I experience the everyday, I have come to realise how my cultural background is inherently embedded in my work, and how I engage with the everyday.

Every couple of years I visit my parents' homeland for a few weeks and come back to my daily life here. Through these experiences, I move between two ways of living, which has heightened my sensitivity to the everyday, and how 'ordinary life' can shift across different contexts. As a child, visiting Japan felt like stepping into a world that was both familiar yet distant. When returning home to Aotearoa I would long for the small details: the sound of the train station jingles, the hum of the grocery stores, or the sliding doors in my grandparents' house. Nostalgia is often sweet, but it can also carry an ache, an awareness of what is absent. Perhaps these experiences also shaped my attentiveness to the subtleties of daily life, where moments, though ordinary, are forever in flux and full of emotional resonance.

Tāmaki Makaurau based painter Brunelle Dias's practice is also grounded in her everyday. Dias articulates how a migrant perspective creates an acute awareness of what is absent in daily life, which in turn can make one either more attentive to or less present in the everyday. In her master's exegesis *introspective fieldworks: the everyday in flux* she stated:

Idealistic thinking, in terms of yearning for a better life, had caused me to ignore my present. Therefore, introspective fieldworks arrived from a desire for groundedness to the land I am on. The very crux of this project is to make peace with the idea that as part of the Indian diaspora, home is a fluid notion in Aotearoa. Introspective fieldworks accepts that a fluid mindset is a means to stay in touch with my present. ⁸

⁸ Brunelle Dias, "introspective fieldworks; the everyday in flux." (Master's exegesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2021), 49-50.

I align with her expression of the innate fluidity of a migrant's idea of home, which is represented through the fluid materiality of paint; through painting, she depicts her everyday life, especially her familial moments in flux.



Figure 5. Brunelle Dias, *across the kitchen counter*, 2020, Oil on Linen, 154 x 375 cm.

I resonate with this contemplation, which emphasises why *mono no aware* as a lens is so significant to me. My everyday life is filled with fleeting, impermanent moments, which can be uncovered through a certain attentiveness. Growing up in Aotearoa, I often felt distant from my cultural identity. In recognising *mono no aware* in my practice and understanding it as a way of being that is deeply valued in Japanese culture, it has become a way of reclaiming a part of my identity.



Figure 6. Rita Takeuchi, *pillar*, 2024, oil on linen, 800mm x 950mm

Wim Wenders' *Perfect Days* (2023) is a film which embodies *mono no aware* and mirrors these Japanese sensibilities towards the everyday⁹. The film follows Hirayama through his daily routines; from tending to his plants and drinking coffee from the same vending machine to carefully curating his music during his daily commute. These seemingly unremarkable, mundane acts take on significance through their repetition and quiet observation. Wenders' portrayal of Hirayama's daily habit of capturing the light filtering through the trees during lunch, is also an act that resonates with my own impulse to preserve fleeting moments in my work. The specific moment of light through the trees is called *komorebi* in Japanese and is a core concept within this film, defined at the film's close: "KOMOREBI: is the Japanese word for shimmering of light and shadows that is created by leaves swaying in the wind. It only exists once, AT THAT MOMENT."¹⁰ This moment encapsulates *mono no aware*, and the value placed on the ephemeral. This sensibility permeates my practice, and is reflected in my paintings, such as *pillar*, which depicts a laundry line (fig. 6). I painted this laundry line which stands throughout the seasons, witnessing the passing of time. It's always there, greeting me when I open the curtains each morning, serving as a perch for the occasional kingfisher or pair of ring-necked doves that always arrive together. Over time it has become a quiet pillar of observation; it's quiet enduring presence mirrors how I experience moments in my everyday life, where shifts in time are subtle yet ever present.

In my recent trip to Japan, I visited the small town of Otaru in Hokkaido and witnessed its rich culture of craftsmanship. I found each ceramic and glass piece I encountered, held a sense of care and purpose, revealing how everyday objects are imbued with meaning. This experience resonated with Japanese philosopher Soetsu Yanagi's book, *The Beauty of Everyday Things* where he writes, "Habits robs us the power to be moved. Thus, it has taken us all these years, all these ages to detect beauty in common objects."¹¹ His words reshaped my perception of daily life,

⁹ Wim Wenders, dir. *Perfect Days*, 2024. Bitters End, Film.

¹⁰ Wenders, *Perfect Days*.

¹¹ Soetsu Yanagi, *The Beauty of Everyday Things* (National Geographic Books, 2019), 33.

encouraging me to view it through the lens of the Japanese folk craftsmen he admired. It reminded me not to let habit dull my sensitivity to the emotions embedded in what feels like the most ordinary moments.¹²

This way of seeing led me to the painting *yakan*, (fig. 7) depicting a simple tea kettle in my grandparents' home. It is always resting on the stove against the soft pink kitchen tiles, waiting to be used for tea after every meal. It holds a quiet weight of waiting: waiting for the water to boil, waiting for it to cool. Simply being present with these moments feels like time is suspended. I am drawn to the care and presence imbued in objects like this, ordinary within the habits of daily life; and revealing their depth through painting. Like the handcrafted objects I encountered in Otaru, the depicted objects speak to a culture of attentiveness and craftsmanship. This sensibility within Japanese craftmaking has influenced not only my approach to painting, but also how I later explore object-making as an extension of these values.

¹² Habit, in this context, parallels Lefebvre's notion of alienation, where imposed routines lead to a monotonous experience of the everyday. However, Yanagi emphasises attentiveness to ordinary encounters, aligning with Lefebvre's idea of appropriation, where routines can be reshaped and imbued with meaning.

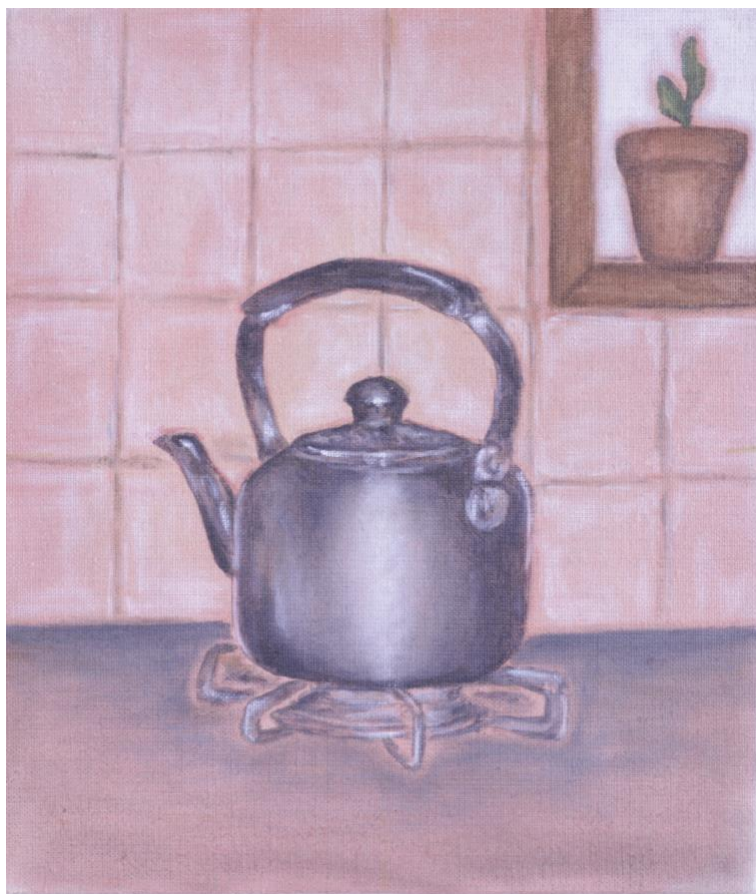


Figure 7. Rita Takeuchi, yakan, 2024, oil on linen, 250mm x 300mm.

1.3 Collecting and recording in the sketchbook

Keeping a notebook of sketches began when I went to Japan in 2023. I aimed to preserve those ordinary encounters that I would feel nostalgic for when I came back home. I sketched the napa cabbages my grandma put out to dry waiting to be pickled, and the flowers that grew between the gas bottles of the local apartments (fig. 8). This process quickly became more than just a method of recording — it became a daily ritual, a way of collecting fleeting moments. As I filled its pages, I started to see each drawing as clusters of time, each one preserved and remembered.

This ritualised practice of gathering fragments of the everyday eventually became an essential part of the creative process moving forward. The sketchbook is not only a container of memories, but a material site where the everyday is collected, reframed, and made into an image. It acts as a living notebook within my everyday; a tactile, responsive place where noticing becomes embodied.



Figure 8. Rita Takeuchi, sketchbook from a trip to Japan, 2023.

The text *Fieldwork Notebooks* by anthropologist Michael Taussig has influenced me to think about the materiality of the notebook itself. He expresses that notebooks are objects imbued with presence; living entities constantly with a hunger for input.¹³ He suggests that notebooks are not merely repositories of information but active participants in a creative process. This mirrors my use of sketchbooks, where drawings are not just static archives, but a space where memories take shape and evolve.

Taussig describes the distinction between a notebook and a diary as lying in their function and structure.¹⁴ While a diary follows a linear, orderly timeline, a notebook is fragmentary and unpredictable, responding to the act of noticing rather than an obligation to record. I see my sketchbook in line with Taussig's idea of the notebook—spontaneous, intuitive, and shaped by an attention to everyday encounters, rather than a chronology. My sketchbook shares this looseness in the habitual patterns which emerge within them: pages often hold clusters of small moments; square formatted drawings; captions and timestamps placed instinctively (fig. 9).¹⁵ But unlike a notebook that primarily captures ideas through writing, mine forms a visual record. It's a tactile space where drawing, colour, and materiality come together to hold how I experienced something, not just how I observed it. Through drawing, I can reframe, edit, and reconstruct my encounters in a way that brings me closer to the experience itself.

I find solace in the blank pages of my sketchbooks; a space where I can surrender to intuition, accumulating thoughts and reflections without rules. The sketchbooks I have filled throughout this project function like filing cabinets for my memories and encounters, each page preserving something fleeting yet significant to me.

¹³ Michael Taussig, *Michael Taussig: Fieldwork Notebooks: 100 Notes, 100 Thoughts: Documenta Series 001*, (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz eBooks, 2011), 6.

¹⁴ Taussig, *Fieldwork Notebooks*, 10-11.

¹⁵ Timestamps became an important tool within my sound compositions, where I created chimes within my installation with particular times in mind.



Figure 9. Rita Takeuchi, pages from the 2024-2025 sketchbook.

Having a sketchbook as a site of freedom and fluidity is significant within my creative process, and this has become clearer through looking at other artists' sketchbooks, such as sculptor Do Ho Suh. While Suh's works are primarily large-scale installations exploring place and identity, I am drawn to his replicated sketchbooks (fig. 10). They are copies of his originals dating back to 1991 and filled with drawings and notes that seeded his expansive projects.¹⁶ In regard to Suh's decision to replicate and share these sketchbooks, he states, "people only see what's in the show, and they don't really see things in between. But for me, it is one continuous practice, on multiple levels."¹⁷ This shows that the sketchbooks come from a desire to reveal the oftenunseen stages of his creative process. Marcel Duchamp's *The Green Box* (1934) is an early example of this approach, where he compiled notes and sketches related to his work *The Large Glass*, (1915-1923) presenting them as a fragmented, non-linear archive. It reflects an ongoing lineage of artists thinking through the scattered, provisional forms which inform the final work.¹⁸ Similarly, by creating replicas of my own sketchbook pages, I invite viewers into the in-between, where everyday observations and fleeting moments are recorded, reframed, and carried forward into the paintings and installations (fig. 11).



Figure 10. Do Ho Suh: *Sketches 1991~*. Art Sonje Center, 2024.

¹⁶ Do-Ho Suh, *Do Ho Suh: Sketches 1991~*, Art Sonje Center, 2024).

¹⁷ Andy St Louis, "Artist Do Ho Suh: 'It's a Ridiculous Idea, but I Take It Seriously,'" *Financial Times*, August 28, 2024, <https://www.ft.com/content/7212916e-463b-427a-ba35-7b6f43213a84>

¹⁸ "The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (the Green Box)," Duchamp Research Portal, accessed April 12, 2025, <https://www.duchamparchives.org/pma/object/51727/index.html>.

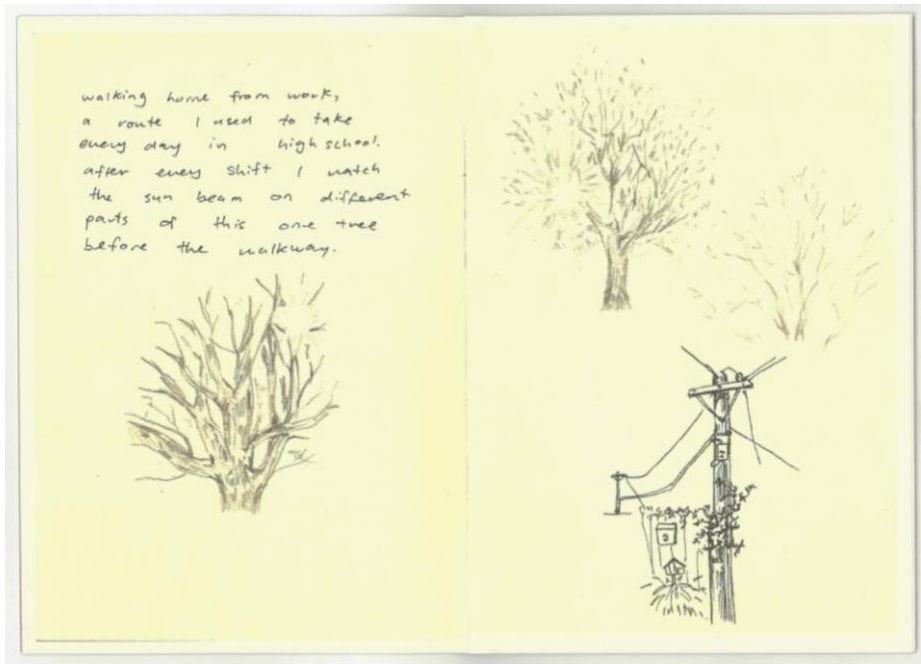



Figure 11. Rita Takeuchi, replicated sketchbook, 2025.

The sketchbook, as a repository of my everyday experiences, shapes the way I think about form, composition, sequence, and materiality. I then develop these fragmented, nonlinear, malleable qualities of the sketchbook into my painting and installation. Japanese photographer Rinko Kawauchi captures the delicate, sensory rhythms of everyday life, evoking a deep connection to the simple, often overlooked moments. Her photobooks, such as *Utatane* (2001), eschew rigid narrative structures in favour of a lyrical, fragmented sequencing that offers a fluid, meditative experience with her work. Recurring motifs such as water, sky, soap bubbles, cracks, and light halos (fig. 12) imbue her images with a sense of wonder and emotional charge.¹⁹ Her photographs transcend personal documentation—the visual language reveals an analysis of seeing itself, examining how and where fleeting beauty emerges. Kawauchi's photographic practice, presented through photobooks, mirrors the fragmentation and fluidity of everyday encounters that I explore in my own sketchbook practice.

¹⁹ Rinko Kawauchi, *Utatane*, (Little More, 1998).



This image has been removed for
copyright reasons

Figure 12. Rinko Kawauchi, *Utatane*, 2001.

Her work also extends into the exhibition space, where her photographs are installed in ways that reflect the rhythms of a photobook, varying in scale and height. For her 2022 show *M/E*, exhibition designer Hideyuki Nakayama described the installation layout as “symmetry reminiscent of the act of picking up a photobook, where images shift and flow” (fig. 13).²⁰ This influenced how I installed my paintings, bringing the fragmented, non-linear qualities of the notebook into the gallery space by hanging various scaled paintings in a dispersed manner on the wall (fig. 14). Small-scale moments, such as mackerels for dinner are painted large, while moments in an expansive field are rendered on a smaller canvas. The spontaneous flow of these moments and their unfixed, fluid installation reflect the concept of the notebook, and the way these memories are collected in my sketchbook.

²⁰ Hideyuki Nakayama, “Comment from exhibition space designer Hideyuki Nakayama,” *Rinko Kawauchi M/E: On this sphere Endlessly interlinking*, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, n.d., <https://www.operacity.jp/ag/exh255/e/installation.php>.

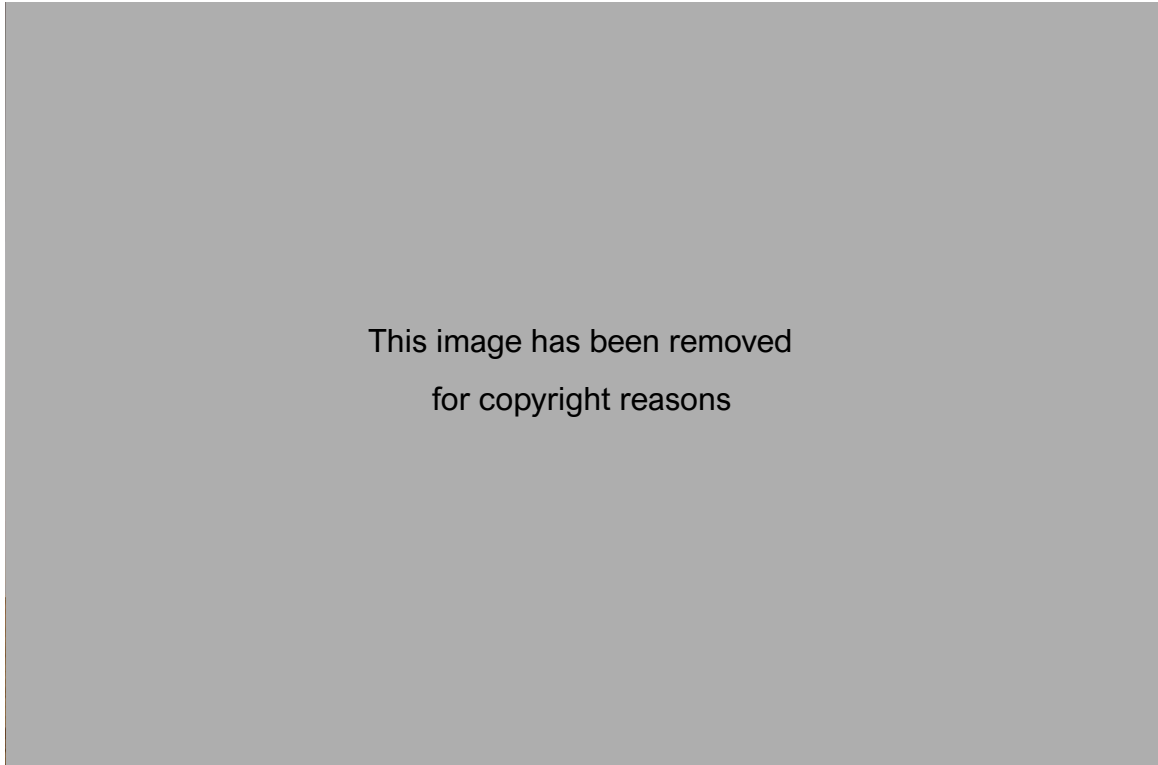


Figure 13. Rinko Kawuachi, *M/E*, 2022, Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery, Tokyo. Image courtesy of the artist and Tokyo Opera City Art Gallery. Photographer: KIOKU Keizo.

The layered notion of the everyday in my practice is shaped by an attentiveness to ordinary encounters hidden within the flux of daily life. This sensitivity is revealed through the habitual act of painting in the sketchbook, which has become an essential space within my process. My cultural upbringing also shapes the lens through which I observe the everyday, with the nuances of a migrant experience influencing how I perceive and respond to these fleeting moments. Together, these elements form the foundation of how I engage with the everyday in my work.



Figure 14. Rita Takeuchi, installation view of my exhibition practice, 2024.

Chapter 2: Time, Timelessness and Recollection in Practice

In this chapter, I explore how painting serves as a process of transforming fleeting encounters into timeless experiences. Building on John Berger's idea of timelessness, I argue that painting does not merely preserve a past moment, as photography does, but instead creates a new temporal encounter. For Berger, the stillness and material presence of paint point to an underlying timelessness that bridges past, present, and future. Henri Bergson's concept of *durée* further informs my practice, positioning painting as a space where time is experienced subjectively. The accumulation of layers, brushstrokes, and tactility invites reflection on the fluid and ever-changing nature of time.

I introduce distillation as a methodology, where each image passes through the stages of sketching, watercolour, and canvas, until it evokes the emotional resonance of a memory. This layered approach mirrors how memory functions, not as a static recall, but as something shifting, shaped by time and repetition. Drawing on Marcel Proust's idea of involuntary memory, fragments of my encounters resurface and dissipate across different mediums. The final painting becomes less a direct depiction and more a poetic translation, where memory is recollected, reimagined, and made visible through the act of painting.

2.1 The timelessness of paintings

Because we don't know when we will die, we get to think of life as an inexhaustible well. Yet everything happens on a certain number of times, and a very small number, really. How many more times will you remember a certain afternoon of your childhood, some afternoon that's so deeply part of your being that you can't ever consider your life without it, perhaps four or five time more, perhaps not even that? How many more times will you watch the full moon rise? Perhaps twenty, and yet it all seems limitless.

The Sheltering Sky (1949), from Ryuichi Sakamoto's 'fullmoon' on 'async'²¹

I have always felt daunted by the passage of time, even as a child when I would look up and feel swallowed by the vastness of the sky at night. In these moments, the ever-present motion of time felt infinite, yet I was aware that my experience of it was impermanent; as *mono no aware* emphasises. Moments are fleeting; we age, and things change. Yet we do have control over how we perceive our encounter with time, perhaps as an inexhaustible well. In finding comfort in time's impermanent reality through *mono no aware* and its gentle appreciation of time's passage, I become more attuned to my ordinary encounters.

My painting practice comes from the longing to preserve moments and to counteract the inevitable forgetting of fleeting encounters. However, as art critic and novelist John Berger emphasises in *Painting and Time*, it is impossible to do so through paint. He writes, "One might be tempted to say that paintings preserve a moment. Yet on reflection this is obviously untrue. For the moment of a painting, unlike a moment photographed, never existed as such."²² Unlike a photograph which stops a moment in time, preserving it from the past, painting exists as something new to be experienced; both in the depicted subject matter and materially.

²¹ Paul Bowles, *The Sheltering Sky* (New York: New Directions, 1949), quoted in Ryuichi Sakamoto, "fullmoon," on *async*, Milan Records, 2017.

²² John Berger, "Painting and Time," *Journal of Contemporary Painting* 4, no. 1 (September 22, 2017): 11–15, https://doi.org/10.1386/jcp.4.1.11_7.

Paintings inherently carry a mimetic relation to what they depict. They imitate life, but unlike real life, they cannot show time literally passing. Their static-ness by nature denies the passage of time in a linear sense.

The tension of painting as unchanging and static, and the depicted moments that were once in flux, results in its timelessness that keeps me drawn to painting. Through visible traces of its making, a painting holds the memory of its creation (past), invites immediate engagement (present), and remains open to future reencounters, culminating in an intersection of the past, present and future. This tension reveals that painting is timeless. As Berger notes, "what the present and the future had in common, and to which painting through its very stillness referred, was a substratum, a ground of timelessness."²³ Overall, Berger expresses that painting serves as an underlying, unchanging ground within this point of intersection, emphasising painting as a language of timelessness. The timelessness of painting is best understood through its contrast to photography which serves as an important step in my practice yet only remains as an initial tool. I use my iPhone to quickly record fleeting moments before they slip away—my sketchbook, in contrast, is a starting point in my practice where everyday encounters are re-experienced and transformed. Where memory, intuition, and reflection unfold.



Figure 15. Cy Twombly, *Yard Sale*, 2008
Edition 6 Dry-print on cardboard 17 × 11
inches.



Figure 16. Cy Twombly, *Boston*, 2007, Dry-print on
cardboard 17 x 11 inches.

²³ Berger, "Painting and Time," 13.

I came across an archived collection of Polaroid photographs taken by abstract painter Cy Twombly (fig.15 and fig.16). Known for his gestural and expressive works, the sense of translation between photography and painting in his work, resonates with my practice. First taken in the 1970s, these images were never intended as standalone artworks. They were simply informal records of his daily life which served as a tool for his paintings as “mutual extensions and translations of each other.”²⁴

Like Twombly’s Polaroids, my iPhone photos are a starting point to painting.²⁵ They are the raw material waiting to be reimagined through the more tactile process of painting, to evoke the emotional resonance of the photographed encounter. For me, an iPhone photo rarely conveys the feeling of a moment as I experienced it, with images often ending up skewed, blurry, disproportionate; stored haphazardly among countless screenshots and photos in my camera roll (fig.17 and fig.18).



Figure 18. iPhone photo as a record of my encounters.



Figure 17. iPhone photo as a record of my encounters.

²⁴ Helen Chang, "Cy Twombly," *Frieze*, October 1, 2009, <https://www.frieze.com/article/cy-twombly>

²⁵ The iPhone photographs serve as initial notational tools to record a fleeting encounter, not as a reference for pictorial accuracy. Instead, the subsequent process—from sketch to watercolour to painting—centres on distilling the emotional resonance of the moment, rather than reproducing the image itself.

In a photograph, the depicted moment is also frozen in the past, stuck as a record of something lost. On the other hand, even in a painting's stillness, the presence of paint, the traces of its process and the layers built over time reveal that paintings are not simply a record of a lost moment but imbued with an active force.



Figure 19. Lois Dodd, *Natural Order*, 1978, oil on linen, 50 x 38 inches, © Lois Dodd, Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York.

This force is reflected through the visible tracing of a painting's making, through brushstrokes, revisions and layering of paint. In the work of painter Lois Dodd, quiet scenes from everyday life feature an accumulation of layered, streaky brushstrokes which embody what writer David Whelan describes as “hushed work with an active surface.”²⁶ Her paintings capture the paradox of stillness and energy, encouraging sustained viewing while reflecting the slow unfolding of time (fig.19).

Although the static nature of a painting denies time in a linear sense, the medium itself offers a malleable, fluid approach to time. In my paintings, this is reflected through the accumulation of paint mediums, and the tactility of surfaces creates a layering of marks, colours and tones. For example, my painting *SUV* is monochromatic, only using thin blue acrylic paint against a bright yellow underlayer to construct an image of a parking lot at night (Fig. 20).

²⁶ David Whelan, “Lois Dodd: *Natural Order*,” *The Brooklyn Rail: Critical Perspectives on Arts, Politics, and Culture*, May 4, 2023, <https://brooklynrail.org/2023/05/artseen/Lois-Dodd-Natural-Order/>.



Figure 20. Rita Takeuchi, *SUV*, 2024, acrylic on canvas, 350 x 300mm.

The image is seemingly static, but these layers produce a depth that cannot be captured in a single glance, allowing for a continuous rediscovery of the image. The visible layers of paint are imbued with time, not existing in a rigid linear sense, and instead become fluid, in flux. French philosopher Henri Bergson's concept of *durée*, or time as lived duration, aligns with this approach to painting.²⁷ Unlike measured 'objective' time, which Bergson describes as a sequence of divisible units, *durée* is experienced subjectively in a continuous flow. The layered process of painting embodies this sense of continuous, subjective time: the viewer does not encounter a single frozen instant but is drawn into a temporal experience that unfolds across and within the work.

This idea of timelessness parallels my experience of the airport, where time feels suspended despite its constant flow. Airports act as a junction of time, where people arrive and depart in an endless ebb between time zones. I am drawn to painting because of its timeless quality, which is reflected in my painting of a drive to the airport at 4 am, the usual time when catching a flight from Auckland to Tokyo (fig. 21). When familiar streets I pass by take on an unfamiliar glow, transformed by the quiet stillness of an early morning. The soft glow of yellow, and the faint tint of streetlights evoke the emptiness of the moment, alive with a quiet energy. The ordinary journey becomes extraordinary through painting, as it suspends a fleeting moment in time, offering a quiet reflection of that moment. Encounters like this reflect the sensitivity to time that I inherently carry through all my everyday observations.

Although time *feels* limitless in these moments, it is an illusion because time keeps moving, no matter what. This is true in both the timeless feeling of the airport and in the way the painting creates an illusion of stillness.²⁸ Through painting, I take an encounter I experience and carry it into a realm of timelessness—one that captures the essence of a fleeting moment, offering a way to relive it continuously, even as time itself continues to move forward.

²⁷ Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F. L. Pogson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1910), 100–104.

²⁸ However, the timelessness I refer to in painting is not the same as the timelessness attributed to historical works of art, which transcend their time of creation and resonate across different periods.



Figure 21. Rita Takeuchi, *Airport*, 2024, oil on canvas, 350mm x 350mm.

2.2 Memories distilled

In my painting practice, I question the emotional resonance of memory: to reach this point, I allow a single image to pass through different stages of processes—sketching, watercolour, and painting. These processes help clarify this emotional resonance. I consider it a process of distillation, where the image is filtered through each stage to extract the emotional essence of the moment I encountered. This process also prompts me to examine my memory of a fleeting encounter experienced in my everyday. How it changes, what lingers, and what fades as the image gradually moves further from its original moment, both pictorially and through time. In this way, the act of painting becomes inseparable from the act of remembering. The shifts the image undergoes over time reveal that memory is not static but constantly evolving, reshaped by the time that passes and the act of making itself.

The act of recollecting past experiences can be described as anamnesis. Anamnesis is notably used to articulate Marcel Proust's experience of a madeleine cake in *In Search of Lost Time*, where the taste of a madeleine dipped in tea transported him to a world of forgotten memories simply by the sensory experience of taste.²⁹ Proust coined this phenomenon as 'involuntary memory,' which is a type of memory which appears without conscious effort, triggered by a small insignificant detail, revealing how memory can emerge unbidden and with vivid clarity.

I connect this with my own process of distillation in painting. As a single image moves through sketch, watercolour and paint, I repeatedly engage with colour, composition, and form. Through this process, certain details unexpectedly resurface and fade from memory. These fragments are not consciously recalled but emerge and dissipate through the act of making—emotional impressions that echo the original encounter, much like Proust's madeleine. Each stage becomes a layer of recollection: the initial clarity captured through sketching, the fluid reimagining shaped by watercolour, and

²⁹ Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, vol. 1 of *In Search of Lost Time*, trans. C.K. Scott Moncrieff (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 44.

resolution as memory takes form on canvas. The final painting is not a pictorially accurate moment, but an image shaped by memory's shifting nature and a mirroring of recollection itself.



Figure 22. Rita Takeuchi, *untitled*, coloured pencil sketch, 2024.



Figure 23. Rita Takeuchi, *untitled*, watercolour, 2024

For example, recollecting an encounter through the process of painting *fireworks* feels like this Proustian moment (fig. 22 and fig 23.). Through distillation, the memory of this night walk home where I encountered fireworks in my neighbourhood gradually transforms. The fireworks appear in the sketch, disappear in the watercolour, and reemerge in the final painting as soft white shapes. On canvas, they resemble shooting stars—an interpretation that isn't realistic but becomes a poetic elevation of the memory (fig. 24). In this painting, the sparks carry not just visual energy, but a sense of excitement and nostalgia during that cold, dark walk home.



Figure 24. Rita Takeuchi, *fireworks*, 2024, oil on linen, 900 x 800 mm.

Peter Doig's paintings offer visions of memory, depicting the mundane in an otherworldly light. In my exploration of recollecting memory through distillation, I am particularly fascinated with his *Country-Rock* series. The works in this series centre around a familiar landmark for Toronto locals; a tunnel with a painted rainbow known as the Don Valley Parkway. Between 1998 and 2000, Doig created three major canvases of this tunnel, alongside several smaller paintings, drawings, watercolours, and aquatint etchings (fig. 25 and fig. 26). Each version differs, with the shifts in medium and perspective reflecting the fluid, evolving nature of recollection of his memories of his years living in Toronto.³⁰ Doig positions the viewer as a passenger, both through the literal framing of the tunnel from a car window, and through the shifting terrain of memory this series evokes.



Figure 25. Peter Doig, *Tunnel Painting*, (*Country-rock*), 2000, 40.5 x 30.5 cm.

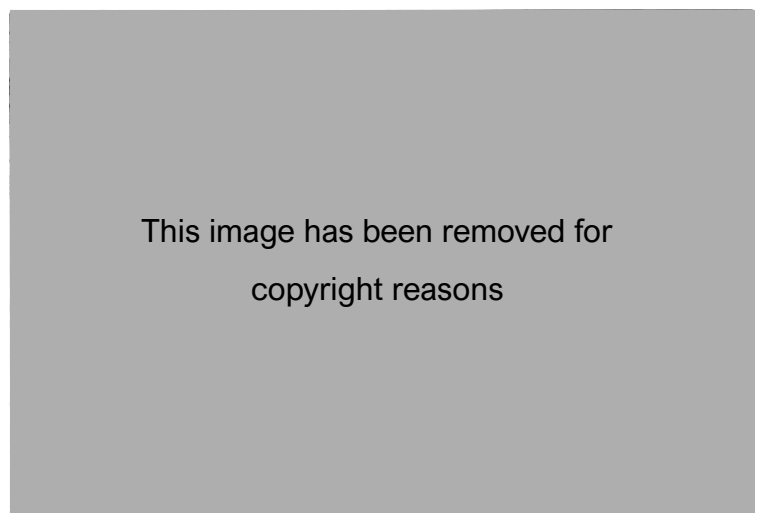


Figure 26. Peter Doig, *Country Rock (Tunnel)*, 1999, ink and sugar on paper, 50.8 x 69.8 cm.

Similarly, in my own practice, the movement between sketch, watercolour, and painting, allows memory to unfold, fragment and be reassembled. Distillation in my practice reflects how time, memory and painting are all intertwined in a constant cycle of recollection, reinterpretation and transformation.

³⁰ "Peter Doig: A Reverie of Pure Nostalgia," *Phillips*, n.d., Accessed April 17, 2025. <https://www.phillips.com/article/13839433/peter-doig-a-reverie-of-pure-nostalgia>.



Figure 27. Rita Takeuchi, coloured pencil sketches, 2024-2025.



Figure 28. Rita Takeuchi, watercolours, 2024-2025.

Chapter 3: Chime as atmosphere

This chapter examines the tension at the core of my practice which lies in between time's limitlessness and the fleeting encounters within my everyday, which heightens its impermanence. This dynamic is brought to practice through the interplay of painting and sound. Inspired by the daily tradition of the five o'clock chime in Japan, creating chimes is a key methodology in my installation. The chime's repetitive, ephemeral nature highlights time's impermanence through its brief resonance which disrupts the stillness of the paintings, bringing the continuous flow of time into the physical space.

In creating the chime boxes through the sensibilities of Japanese aesthetics, I transform the speaker, an essential object in this experience. The construction of the chime box reflects my cultural upbringing and Japanese values, embracing the intrinsic nature of materials. Giving the chime box both functional and poetic significance, which extends my visual language beyond the canvas.

3.1 The five o'clock chime

At the heart of my practice lies a tension: while time is limitless and continuous, the fleeting and impermanent moments we encounter make us aware of its transient nature. Although time itself stretches endlessly, our experience of it is marked by moments that come and go, reminding us of its impermanence. This layered understanding of time becomes palpable within an installation of paintings and sound. The five o'clock chime tradition in Japan, with its brief and recurring sound, resonates with this contrast and has become a foundation of my practice

Across most major cities and small towns in Japan, a chime is broadcast daily at five o'clock through the town's loudspeakers. Lasting for about a minute, the melody varies by region, often drawing from familiar children's songs and is heard across the whole town. The primary function of this chime is to test the local emergency disaster broadcast system, as natural disasters such as earthquakes occur on a regular basis in Japan.³¹ It also serves a dual purpose for Japanese society, marking the transition from work and school to personal and familial moments, while also acting as a safety measure, reminding children to head home before nightfall. More than just a functional signal, the chime is embedded in the rhythms of daily life, reinforcing a sense of cyclical time.

Although I was born and raised in Aotearoa and have not directly experienced this tradition from my culture, I feel deeply aligned with it. I am drawn to how something so ordinary and repetitive can reveal layered experiences of time in everyday life. It reflects the structured flow we consciously follow each day yet also offers a pause and an invitation to slow down and step into a more contemplative state for a short duration. In my research, I collected five o'clock chime video recordings from YouTube, which were the inspiration for my own chimes.

³¹ Bos Eleonore, "The 5 PM Chime: Discover the Meaning Behind Enigmatic Melodies That Echoes Through Japan," *Sabukaru*, February 7, 2024, <https://sabukaru.online/articles/the-5-pm-chime>.

I listened to these chimes and imagined myself in those towns in Japan, hearing them broadcast at five o'clock. Composed using simple chord progressions, they echo with natural reverberation across valleys and cityscapes.

I felt the experience created a collective recognition of time's passing while creating a momentary suspension of it. This tension—between marking time and stepping outside of it—invites an experience where time is both observed and felt, rather than simply measured. Bergson's concept of time emphasises this. He distinguishes *objective time*, the external measurement of hours and days, and *durée*, the internal flow of lived experience.³² The chime, brief yet resonant, invites a shift into *durée*, where a minute can seem suspended or linger, or pass in an instant, depending on how it is *felt* rather than how it is *measured*.

This research into the five o'clock chime in Japan led me to adopt it as a methodology to draw attention to the palpable passage of time and its impermanence through an installation of paintings and sound. The chime's brief duration, repetitive nature, and inevitable fading stand in contrast to the static, enduring quality of the paintings. This contrast brings awareness of the flux of time into the physical space; where the chime disrupts the stillness of the paintings, and highlights the continuous, ever-moving presence of time.

Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010) also informed how I might actively situate viewers within time.³³ This 24-hour video installation is constructed from a vast archive of film clips featuring clocks, watches, and timepieces that represent each minute within the 24 hours. The work unfolds in real time, synchronised with the actual time the viewer is experiencing the video in the gallery, forcing an awareness of time's continuity. Marclay's use of repetitive, fleeting sonic markers, such as ticking clocks and ringing alarms, immerses the audience in a durational experience where time's passage is both seen and felt. Similarly, I seek to create an atmosphere where the audience becomes aware of time's movement in a physical space.

³² Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, 100–104.

³³ Christian Marclay, *The Clock* (2010), single-channel video installation, accessed online via Tate Modern, April 12, 2025, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/christian-marclay-clock>.



Figure 29. Rita Takeuchi, installation view of five o'clock chime, June, 2024.

I started to create short 50-second chimes in response to my paintings with a laptop and MIDI keyboard. Sound composition also became symbiotic with my painting practice. Layering chords and field recordings allowed me to draw out the poetic essence of the everyday, transforming it into something extraordinary.

The small notations of time in my sketchbooks became an important foundation—anchoring how I began to intuitively build melodies.³⁴ They helped me imagine how particular times of day might be felt sonically, and how sound could carry the emotional resonance of a fleeting moment. This process deepened my connection to the scenes I was building on canvas; painting became not just a way of observing time's passage, but of being more present within it. The first chime I installed played through two black speakers alongside works depicting the time noted around five

³⁴ Time notations became a habitual pattern within my sketchbooks, where I timestamped the encountered moment I was sketching.

o'clock (fig. 29). The bright yellow underlayer glows through the darkness of the winter evening, reflecting the quiet moment when the chime might ring at five o'clock, as early dusk settles (fig. 30).

While the paintings recount fleeting moments, embedded in the rhythms of daily life, the chime introduces a physical, auditory reminder of time's ongoing passage. The sound punctuates the stillness, momentarily disturbing the space and drawing attention to the otherwise invisible current of time moving through the room. The contrast between the static, enduring presence of a painting, and the ephemeral moving quality of sound, creates a dynamic tension. The limited, short 50-second durations of the chimes provides a heightened moment, an ephemeral presence that disrupts and then recedes, playing into the paradox at the heart of my practice: an experience of time as both fleeting and enduring. This confrontation with impermanence makes me question my process of documenting, recording, and collecting fleeting moments: does collecting these encounters allow me to fully reinhabit them in the present? Rather than attempting to resolve this tension, the work exposes it. Through re-experiencing the fleeting essence of everyday moments, through painting or sound, I attempt to hold onto something that is, by nature, ungraspable. Through this interplay, time is not simply a backdrop but an active participant in the viewer's experience, rendering the passage of time palpable within the space.



Figure 30. Rita Takeuchi, *five o'clock chime*, 2024, oil on canvas 900 x 800 mm.

3.2 Duration and waiting

Time is often measured in precise units, in minutes, hours, and days, but the way we experience it is far less rigid. Those interstitial moments of waiting and anticipating shape our perception of time's passage, stretching and contracting its flow. In an installation test in the foyer of the studio building, I left 30-minute gaps between each chime which created intervals of waiting, and an awareness of duration. This emphasised that viewers must *endure* time rather than simply registering its passing.

In the long silence between the chimes, the paintings continue to hold and shape time. While the flux of time is emphasised when a chime plays, it is also embedded in the stillness of waiting between the chimes, where time seems to drift and unfold across the painted surfaces. The accumulation of paint and the depiction of fleeting, everyday moments allow each painting to exist in its own pace, whether in a state of waiting, or slowing down. The anticipation that builds in between the chimes gives time a kind of volume or mass, making it something to be felt rather than measured. Within this ongoing flux, the paintings and the installation as a whole immerse the viewer in the present, where multiple temporalities intersect and overlap.

My fascination with James Benning's experimental documentary films has informed my exploration into the experience of waiting. Benning's film *BNSF* captures the slow movement of a setting sun, unfolding in real time.³⁵ Unlike conventional cinema, which constructs time through narrative, *BNSF* presents duration in its rawest form.³⁶ Viewers are placed into an awareness of time's passage and wait for the event to unfold. In my practice, the gap between chimes becomes as significant as the chimes themselves, much like the gradual interplay of light and shadow in the sunset in *BNSF*.

³⁵ James Benning, dir. *BNSF* (2013), film, YouTube, accessed March 10, 2025, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Ga-gs_Xjno.

³⁶ Samuel Adelaar, "A World in the Making: Contingency and Time in James Benning's *BNSF*," *FilmPhilosophy* 21, No. 1, February 26, 2017, 60–77, <https://doi.org/10.3366/FILM.2017.0031>.



Figure 31. James Benning, *BNSF* (still), 2012.

By integrating the chime and intervals into my installation, I create an experience of waiting that cannot be bypassed or controlled. However, it also becomes a moment where time is malleable, and viewers come into a space where time is simply experienced rather than measured. In this way, my work mirrors both Bergson's philosophy of *durée* and Benning's approach to time in film. I create an installation where the work not only depicts time but also enacts it the way I encounter it every day.

Time in my work is not fixed; it shifts between being experienced, anticipated and remembered. Much like *BNSF*, where time unfolds through the slow movement of light and shadow, my installation creates a space where time's presence is felt through both sound and silence, presence and absence. The chime, like the setting sun, reminds us that time is always moving, even in its quietest moments.



Figure 32. Rita Takeuchi, chime boxes, reclaimed wood, 2024



Figure 33. Rita Takeuchi, chime boxes, reclaimed wood, 2024



Figure 34. Rita Takeuchi, chime boxes, reclaimed wood, 2025.



Figure 35. Rita Takeuchi, chime boxes, reclaimed wood, 2025.

3.3 The chime box

The chime box is a significant object in this project. Just like removing the context of the five o'clock chime away from its civic function, I took the function of the speaker and started to create chime boxes with reclaimed wood and placed a speaker inside the housing to play the chimes. The chime box is functional, but also their presence evokes anticipation and curiosity, waiting for the chimes to come. I considered the chime box as an object which functions to anticipate sound. It holds the traces of its making and exists within the sensibilities and atmospheres I cultivate.

To fully embed the chime box within the installation, I approached their objectmaking with the same sensibilities I brought to the paintings. Valuing imperfection, material presence, and an intuitive process, these sensibilities stem from my cultural upbringing. Japanese aesthetics often value the contribution of each element, including the accidental or imperfect, to form a balanced whole. Philosopher Saito Yuriko explains that Japanese aesthetics value an acceptance of the unexpected and uncontrollable, that in both life and art, there is virtue in embracing things as they are, including their painful, challenging, or imperfect aspects.³⁷

I am moved by this sensibility, which finds significance in the imperfection and ephemerality of materials. These values were also embedded in my upbringing. For example, my dad would often reuse bamboo from our backyard or off-cuts of wood, keeping them in their natural state and shaping them into functional elements for our home. He often uses the word *mottainai*, which means not to waste what holds value, even in its flawed or unfinished form. This reflects how my culture has shaped my making sensibilities and the way I approach materials in object making. Therefore, the chime box becomes not just a vessel of sound, but an extension of my thinking — it holds time and presence with care, grounded in function, yet carrying poetic weight.

³⁷ Yuriko Saito, "The Japanese Aesthetics of Imperfection and Insufficiency," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 55, no. 4 (January 1, 1997): 377, <https://doi.org/10.2307/430925>.

Reflecting these sensibilities, I made the chime boxes by repurposing old pallet wood, then using a jigsaw I cut out the holes of the box (fig. 32 and fig. 33). I embrace the curves, marks and grain of the wood, allowing the roughness and irregularities to remain visible. This gave the constructions a sense of immediacy and openness as if the objects were caught in a moment of becoming rather than being polished or final. Like my paintings, these objects carry the physical trace of their making, the weight of a gesture, and the way materials absorb time. They function as drawings in space, extending my visual language beyond the canvas and into physical form.

My approach to materials and valuing what is flawed, incomplete, or ephemeral, echoes the sensibilities of Isamu Noguchi, particularly as explored in *Salvaged Time* at The Noguchi Museum.³⁸ Like me, Noguchi was a second-generation Japanese immigrant whose cultural background shaped his making. He often repurposed salvaged pine and driftwood, and reclaimed stone, embracing their imperfections and histories. His belief that “the waste in the world... makes for the beauty of the world” reflects a deep sensitivity to material and form, one that also guides my own practice.³⁹ His work affirms that poetic weight can be found in what is overlooked, an idea central to the making of my chime boxes and paintings.

³⁸ Matthew Kirsch, “Salvaged Time,” *The Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum, The Noguchi Museum*, November 8, 2024, <https://www.noguchi.org/isamu-noguchi/digitalfeatures/salvaged-time/>.

³⁹ Kirsch, *Salvaged Time*.

3.4 Sound as event, not listened to but heard.



Figure 36. Rita Takeuchi, installation view of my exhibition practice, 2024.

I think of sound as an event to capture the confrontation of time through an installation where chime shifts our mode of looking into a mode of experience. Artist and sound theorist Brandon LaBelle's text *Background Noise* examines sound's role beyond mere auditory experience, positioning it as an event that actively interacts with space and perception. He discusses that sound "as an event" constructs environments and shapes spaces by connecting acoustic phenomena with infrastructure and social contexts.⁴⁰

This thinking is reflected in an installation I did in the foyer of the studio building, which consisted of a singular wall of paintings of various sizes, along with two handmade chime boxes on the opposite wall (fig. 36). The foyer, a transitional space punctuated by elevators and infrastructure, became a site where I could intervene

⁴⁰ Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (London: A&C Black, 2006), 9-16.

with sound to cultivate temporal awareness. By integrating chimes, reminiscent of the five o'clock chime originally embedded in civic systems, I recontextualised a functional signal into an exhibition setting with paintings, shifting its role from its regulatory role to an invitation for introspection. Public sounds such as announcements, sirens, alerts, or muzak, whether as functional signals or for the ambience of an environment, structure how people navigate space and time within their daily lives.⁴¹ In my practice, the chimes are recontextualised within the exhibition context, no longer tied to civic infrastructure. The relationship between the chimes and paintings heightens the passage of time within the exhibition, not to regulate movement but to cultivate a different kind of engagement with time.

This approach aligns with musician and composer Hiroshi Yoshimura's use of sound in public and exhibition contexts, particularly his locational sound design for museums and other public spaces. Yoshimura's practice in *kankyō ongaku* (environmental music) shaped how I considered sound's role in my practice, not as an attention-demanding presence but as a subtle intervention which shifts perception.⁴² Yoshimura's approach began to provide a sonic backdrop for public spaces like malls and train stations, fostering patience and attentiveness within everyday environments. He notably composed sound logos for the Museum of Modern Art in Kamakura and Hayama, which were five-minute-long ambient compositions played twice daily, marking the opening and closing of the galleries.⁴³ These sound logos significantly shaped how the chime operated in my installation. It blurs the notion of public sound into something that restructures time through the way it is simply heard rather than listened to.

⁴¹ Muzak refers to background music originally designed to be played in public spaces like offices, elevators, and shopping malls.

⁴² Sam Thorne, "Hiroshi Yoshimura 'Ambience of Sound, Sound of Ambience,'" *e-flux Criticism*, September 8, 2023. <https://www.e-flux.com/criticism/558398/hiroshi-yoshimura-s-ambience-of-soundsound-of-ambience>.

⁴³ Thorne, "Hiroshi Yoshimura."

This distinction between hearing and listening is informed by the text, *Listening, Thinking, Being*, by philosopher Lisbeth Lipari. This text unpacks the etymology of listening and hearing to analyse the differences in how they operate in the human experience. Lipari writes, "The ideas of 'gaining' and 'possessing' found in hearing foreground a focus on the self's experience, while the ideas of attention and obedience found in listening focus on the other."⁴⁴ This expresses that listening requires focused attention to sounds and is an active, intentional act which engages with the content of the sound. On the other hand, hearing is more of a passive act. It is about the ability to perceive sound and the sensation that happens when sound reaches you. My chimes, like Yoshimura's sound logos, invite an experience of hearing. They create a momentary pause that, even without demanding active listening, heightens awareness of time's passage and cultivates a temporal experience within the space.

Ultimately, just as public spaces are subtly structured by their sonic environments, the chime shifts the exhibition from a place of viewing to one of hearing, seeing and experiencing. It offers a temporal structure that, rather than enforcing routine, allows for attunement to time's passing, both marking and suspending it at the same time.

⁴⁴ Lisbeth Lipari, *Listening, Thinking, Being: Toward an Ethics of Attunement* (Penn State Press, 2015), 349.

Conclusion

Through this practice-led research grounded in painting and chimes, I have explored the layered nature of the everyday. I examine how fleeting encounters within the flux of time evolve into a visual language that reflects their emotional resonance, and an installation with intermittent chimes, which makes time palpable in a physical space.

The everyday serves as the foundation of my practice, where fleeting encounters unfold through time. *Mono no aware*, a concept deeply rooted in my Japanese culture, has provided a lens through which I encounter the everyday. It has helped me find comfort in the impermanence of those moments and to become more attentive to their quiet presence. This attentiveness, shaped by cultural experience, allow fragments of the everyday to resurface as recurring motifs in my paintings.

I lend these encounters to my painting, offering a sense of timelessness, a new temporal experience, in which to hold the emotional resonance of each moment. I draw on Berger's idea that the stillness and material presence of paint evoke a deeper sense of time, through the way they bridge the past, present, and future. This is reflected through the traces of painted layers and accumulated brushstrokes within my paintings which evoke time's passage through the presence of its process. Even in stillness, the painting invites a renewed encounter with an everyday moment, rather than merely reproducing my encounters on canvas. Distillation as a methodology is central to the process, allowing an image to evolve through sketch, watercolour, and canvas. Through this, fragments of my encounters resurface and dissipate through the use of different mediums until it captures the emotional resonance of a memory. The final painting becomes a poetic translation, where memory is reimagined and made visible through the act of painting.

The Japanese tradition of the five o'clock chime deepened my engagement with time's ongoing, limitlessness, and experience of its impermanence. This tension became tangible through the interplay between the painting and the chime, which I adopted as a methodology in my installation. Drawing on the five o'clock chime's repetitive, ephemeral nature, the chime's brief resonance disrupts the stillness of the

paintings. It emphasises time's impermanence, while bringing its continuous flow into the space through repetition and intervals of waiting. The speaker, transformed into a chime box using reclaimed wood, embodies anticipation and curiosity. The embrace of imperfection and material sensibility reflects Japanese aesthetics, which have shaped my cultural upbringing. The intrinsic nature of these materials gives the chime box both a functional and poetic significance, extending my visual language beyond the canvas.

In my practice I reimagine time, not as something daunting or confronting, as I have often felt it to be. Through this project, I have found a way to present time not as something that controls me, but as something malleable that I can touch, shape and move through. What I carry forward from this is more than a way of making art, it is a way of being in an everyday imbued with *mono no aware*. Even when time presses in, feeling rigid and unyielding, there are still ways to slip between its cracks, to experience it as soft, fluid, and tender.

Appendix: Installation view

Te Wai Ngutu Kākā, Gallery 2
2–5 July, 2025

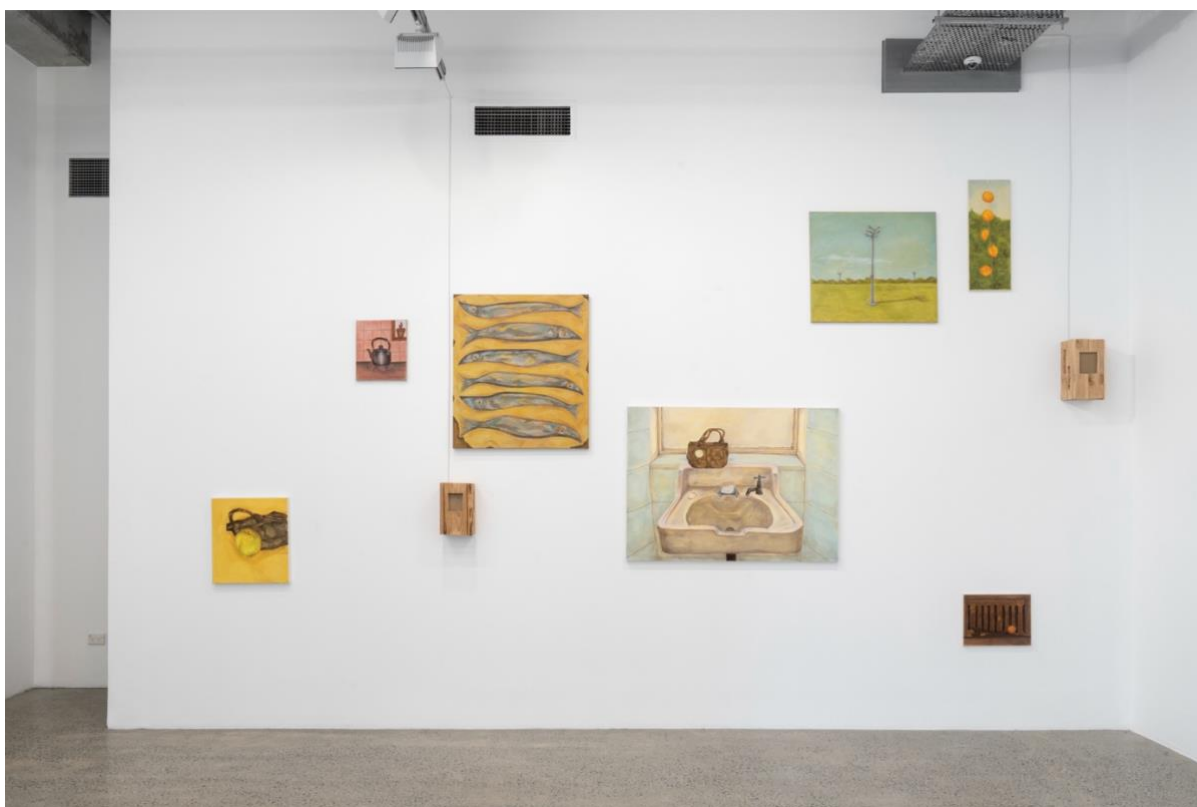


Figure 37. Installation View #1, Te Wai Ngutu Kākā, Gallery Two. Image taken by Paul Chapman.



Figure 38. Installation View of chime boxes, Te Wai Ngutu Kākā, Gallery Two. Image taken by Paul Chapman.

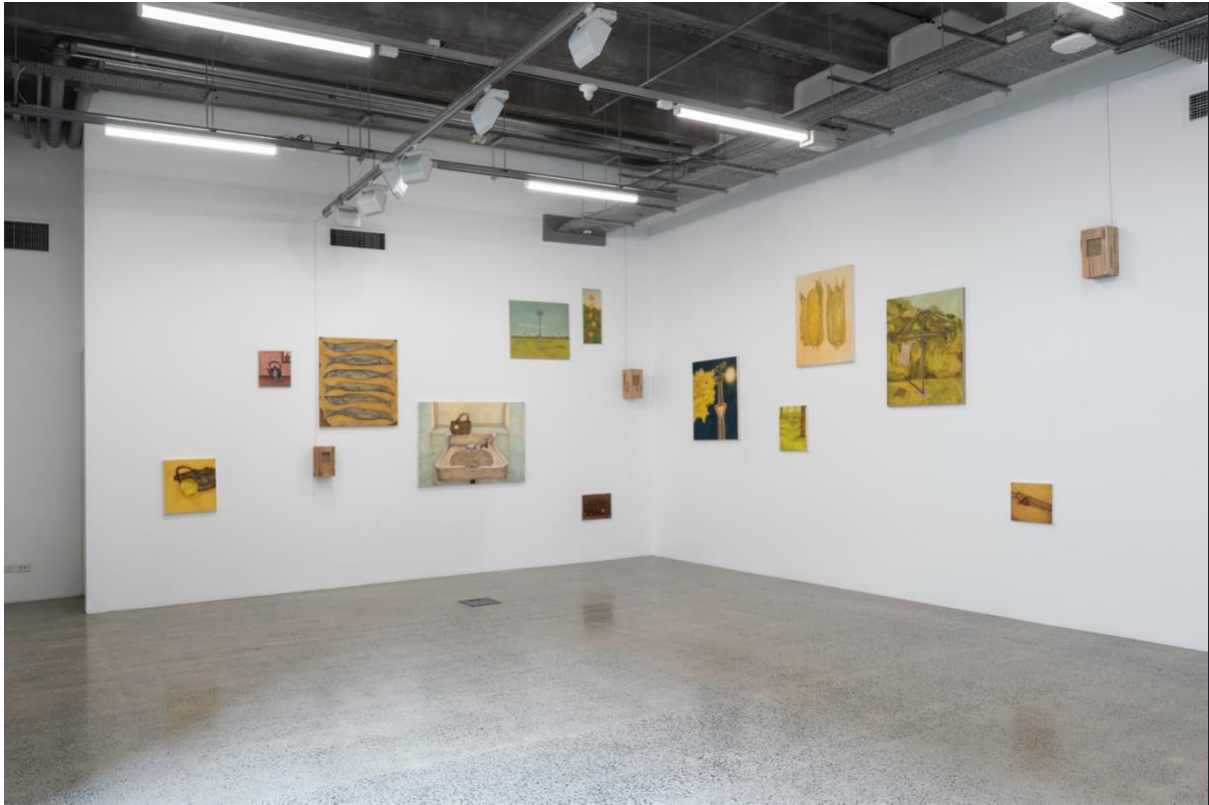


Figure 39. Installation View #2, Te Wai Ngutu Kākā, Gallery Two. Image taken by Paul Chapman.



Figure 40. Installation View #3, Te Wai Ngutu Kākā, Gallery Two. Image taken by Paul Chapman.



Figure 41. Rita Takeuchi, *Pocket*, 2025, Oil on canvas, 900mm x 1250mm. Image taken by Paul Chapman.



Figure 42. Installation View #4, Te Wai Ngutu Kākā, Gallery Two. Image taken by Paul Chapman.

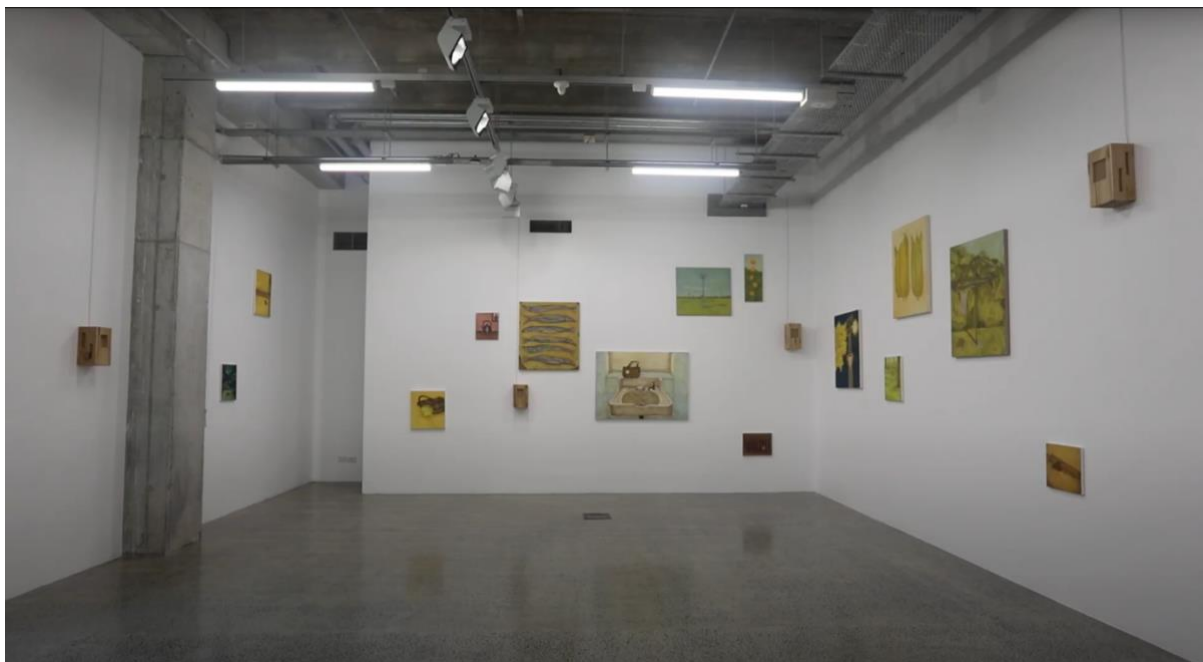


Figure 43. Video documentation of chime, Te wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery 2.

Watch here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=92sE3g0VDiM>

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