

Earth as Mother, Mother as Earth: Evolving Topographies of Body and Terra

an inter-media drawing practice



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*For my beautiful babies,
Theodore Valentine, Romy Louis and Margot Alexandra*

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Documentation of Earth as Mother, Mother as Earth: Evolving Topographies of Body and Terra, Exhibition, Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery 3, AUT August, 2023.

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge, 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 accepted for the award of another degree or diploma or a university or institution of higher learning.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Afelint Hama". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Acknowledgments

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To Dad, how I miss you so. Thank you for the ways you spoke into my life. I feel your presence with me and hear your "way to go, babe!" in my quiet mind. So, this one's for you, big guy. I'm so proud of the parts of me that were the parts of you. I will love you forever.

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Abstract

This project offers a visual and aural means to re-understand our contemporary eco-political position through the lens of the queer, internal, pregnant and post-partum bodily landscape alongside Earth's ecology and geology. This amalgam enables attunement to matters of care, interdependence and responsibility. The research is embodied in an inter-media drawing practice of digital, interactive environments, printmaking, sound and sculpture. The methods in inter-media drawing reveal a process of world-building that is synergetic with the multifarious realities of life and non-life on our planet.

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Introduction

The passage through the birth canal is a short journey but one with complex, distorted temporalities. With every twist and push, my firstborn son made his way to the outside. Days seemed like hours, yet hours felt like minutes, and those minutes felt like seconds, but also like days, weeks, years, decades, centuries, and millennia. Between the tightenings of my belly, rivers of lava descend bodies of rock, incising valleys and river beds. In the final moments of his descent, my son reached up, grasped my heart and took it with him. Holding it in his hands, as I held him in mine, my wife cut our umbilical cord, disconnecting him from my ever-giving placenta, releasing him to become his autonomous self among his whenua, only known to him through the stretch of my skin.

Our warm bodies embracing, I offered my breast for comfort and nourishment, whispering his name in his tiny ear. Like most new parents, I was struck by feelings of immeasurable love and, immediately, an understanding of the weight of this responsibility. Our midwife gently peeled back the curtains of the hospital windows; the sun was rising over Tāmaki Makaurau. I could feel the cold breath of May pressing against the glass – I always found winter rejuvenating.

Rising slowly from the haze of birth, the sounds around me ascended. People moved faster; lights shone brighter. I looked towards the city, with its plumes of smoke and waking creatures, that weight of responsibility shifted momentarily to fear. Within that moment, a moment outside of time and space, a question already embedded within me rapidly multiplied – how do I keep us safe? What now of the climate? What world have we brought you into? Is your future fait accompli and helpless for change? I looked at him, at the picture of the family I so desperately wanted, and never had I been so afraid. It drew forth a rage, an arcane fire, a crippling anxiety.

Childless, I had the same fears but differently. Now, I had to figure out how to not only keep my child alive but also to keep alive a spark of hope for a bright future and a healing Earth.

Here, in the depths of fear and hope, this project began.



Figure 0.2. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Aerial Observations Series*, 2023, photographic sketch, iPhone 11 Max Pro, 3024 x 4032

It is in our evolutionary makeup as humans, like all animals on Earth, to assess our environments and respond with caution, ensuring survival for our species. It is even more immediate among the intoxicating hormones in the mother's mind.¹ The heedful amygdala stands guard, ready to move our babies as the tiger approaches, as the clouds gather. Mothering, parenting, or caregiving for children or vulnerable kin in our current time is exhausting work. Our planet is responding to "anthropogenic pollution", as art historian and cultural critic T.J. Demos describes it, with rapid

¹ Whilst my work refers specifically to my relationship to motherhood, I do not define a "Mother" by a cis-gendered body. Anyone identifying with the word or role of Mother is included here, and the context can be applied to any parent or caregiver of children or dependent others. This also relates to how I speak about post-partum bodies.

warming and increasingly recurrent calamitous weather events.² It is so easy to slip into a mode of perpetual disquiet when what is reflected on the news and in community conversation - not to mention the experience of recent temperatures and severe weather - is an uncertain and treacherous present and future.

*I think of the human race as someone who became separated from their mother's hand in a department store – for 15,000 years.*³

– Terence McKenna, ethnobotanist

Underneath the worry and climate anxiety is a simple desire for a more harmonious existence on Earth. Not a utopia, but an attuned harmony defined by a multi-species symbiosis, mutual respect, engagement and interdependency between life and non-life. While the desire may be simple, when unravelled, it lays bare complex, interwoven threads. It begs the question of how homo sapiens – who flourished in our evolution through our interdependence with each other, the planet and all living things – became so disarticulated from the entity we call Mother Earth to have allowed the capitalistic greed of some to transform our environment so monumentally. As 1 of the 7.8 billion humans on this planet, my potential for influence feels trivial - besides encouraging sustainability practices to those closest to me. Even when utilising our developed systems and democratic freedoms (by protest, vote, or action on a micro level) it feels inconsequential when standing beside vulturous corporations and billionaires and their private jets, like an ant in the shadow of a mountain. However, a sentiment shared globally – and rapidly too, thanks to social media – is seeing millions of our billions concerned more than ever for our planet, even if underpinned by our species preserving instincts. As climate catastrophe knocks on our doors and more humans experience climate change through the palms of our hands and the soles of our feet, our collective motivations to mitigate global temperatures through political pressure and our individual, grass-roots efforts rise. In opposition to the attitudes that brought us to this place in time, more people are looking to the future of rising temperatures not for themselves but for the generations who are growing, those to come, and generations of all living beings we leave on this Earth when we die.

Through this artistic, practice-led research, I ask three main questions: How might an inter-media drawing practice enable attunement to the matters of care and relationality needed to navigate an Earth in ecological crisis? How does listening to and seeking through the pregnant and post-partum human body and the ecological enable forms of care and sensitivity to post-humanist ethics in a world in distress? What connections can be drawn through world-building within an inter-media drawing practice to embody pluriversal politics?⁴

² T.J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 8.

³ Terence McKenna, "The Edge Runner," The Library, accessed June 22, 2023, <https://www.organism.earth/library/document/the-edge-runner>.

⁴ Pluralverse Politics, or Ontological Pluralism is a term coined by Didier Zúñiga in his book, "Pluralist Politics, Relational Worlds: Vulnerability and Care of the Earth". The idea infers the multiverse of realities of people and the more-than-human, rather than reducing diversity to multiple versions of a single reality, a current practice of identity politics. This is with particular reference to indigenous communities and others who live marginalised within our current social, economic, political, relational systems of which I will expressly include LGBTTQIA+ people.

Contained in the sections to follow are discussions of the methods, methodologies and the contextual neighbourhood operating within this research project.

Part I: *Matters of Earth* begins by reflecting on the environmental pedagogy of Marina Bachmann, an early childhood educator who owns and runs my children's centre in Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Embedded in the theoretical framework of Queer Ecology and referencing artist Adham Faramawy, this part considers how the various pathways into formal and informal landscapes within my work were achieved by considering an alternative view of the Earth, namely through the queer and the bodily.⁵

Part II: *Matters of Attunement* will divulge what attunement is and what this project seeks to attune to. Looking at my methods surrounding the development of a visual language, *Matters of Attunement* investigates Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason's work on kinesthetic empathy and Laura Marks' haptic visuality as pathways to attunement through body and voice. Artist and animator Leo Castañeda's game *Levels and Bosses* (2024) will be interpreted here alongside my own digital, interactive environments, printmaking and sound works.

The conclusion, *Matters of the After-Birth* illustrates what a post-partum body is, the transformations that occur and introduces the body touched by pregnancy and birth as one we can seek through to reach attunement and adaptation to, in hope for, the Earth. The temporalities embodied by the post-partum figure are both linear and non-linear, deep, amorphous and fluid, and beg the question of what we are to become if we allow ourselves to transfigure.

Early Approaches

In 2019, I produced a sound work called [*I Can Hear You Calling/The Time is Near* \(2019\)](#). I position this work as the catalyst of my master's research project. As my body traversed the state of pregnancy for the first time, *I Can Hear You Calling/The Time is Near* was the first of my work to touch the realms of motherhood, parenting, growing and becoming more than yourself. How awe-inspiring it is to produce another human, but how difficult and scary it can also be.

A recording of my son Theodore's heartbeat through a fetal doppler (ultrasound heartbeat monitor) became the basis for the work, but not in its entirety. Instead, we hear a chopped, beat-like sound, a semblance of the heartbeat with a watery, distorted quality. Droning, reverberant tones begin to swell and recede, and a human voice appears, vocalising a combination of sustained, harmonious notes and improvised, random non-words. Breathing a sound outward from a contracting diaphragm and into the world. *I can hear you calling*. The harmonies begin to sustain at such length that they become chords resounding in the midground. Amongst the euphoric nature of these choral resonances, darkness exists simultaneously, moments of tension and dissonance, an other-worldly essence. The work crescendos, like a story. *The time is near*. And decrescendos abruptly, leaving the voice distorted, reversed, and continuing to call.

⁵ I wish to acknowledge that 'Queer' is a term of identity that has been reclaimed by the LBTTQIA+ community but remains offensive and unused by those who remember its derogatory beginnings. I use queer to describe myself and my identity, my relationship to a community, and as an act of defiance against those who have historically pursued and continuously seek to quieten or abolish us.

In my becoming – as a mother, a birthing body, a sustainer of life, a dreamer of futures – I felt so consumed by the experience. The intersection of the Earth’s contemporary position of climate catastrophe, of political tensions, of social disharmony during a global pandemic, and the existence of my children erupted forefront of my creative practices. I wanted to explore how this newfound sense of responsibility, of immeasurable, terrifying love, might bring us closer to a mode of response-able, interdependent, harmonious being in relation to the Earth and all who live on it.

Early in my research, I was spurred by the work of Donna Haraway and her post-humanist text, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*.⁶ With Haraway, I recognised the condition of being inextricably present, painfully, and joyfully, in our world. Concerning our human selves and more-than-human others, our response-ability is critical in our navigation of living and dying on Earth as it exists today.⁷ I began to wonder if none of this is about whether we survive or not as a species through end times, but rather how we go about participating and responding now. In my own immediate present, and for context, my second child, Romy, was born mere months before the commencement of this master’s project. With this in mind, Haraway’s notion of fastening to a “thick present” initially navigated my practice to the everyday domestic environment where most of my life currently resides.⁸ The patterns and routines of life with children determine my movements and responses, so to be completely present, I felt it imperative to stay there for a while - to begin a process of attunement to the Earth, to all life and non-life, somehow, through this very human, domestic space.

Whilst autobiographical and subjective, the experience of growing and raising ourselves and others is rudimentary to human existence; granted, it is a diverse experience culturally and globally, from household to household. However, when focusing on the essence of domesticity, a habitat: of family, of home, of place, of purpose, of becoming who we are (whoever and whatever that is) and the subtleties and relationalities within (belonging, interdependence, growth, care, nourishment, hunger and neglect), there are certain universals, and this extends to our more-than-human kin.⁹ I explored the entanglement and layering of my domestic world with my immediate natural environment, including my backyard and surrounding neighbourhood. Wordless vocalising and harmonising became a signifier, as in *I Can Hear You Calling/ The Time Is Near*, occupying both a Mother and child’s voice and offering ideas around pre-language; how infants and caregivers communicate using their bodies, cries, nonlexical noises, eye contact and more to traverse a world without words. These ideas manifested in soundscapes and experimentations, where – using a Zoom H1 hand recorder - I collected a plethora of domestic sounds like the bathtub filling, the ringing of the water as it flows through the pipes behind the wall, pancakes sizzling in the pan on a Saturday morning.

⁶ Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 1.

⁷ María Puig de la Bellacasa describes the posthumanist concept of more-than-human as “objects, other animals, living beings, organisms, physical forces, spiritual entities, and humans.”. She argues the use of this idea “is vital as it has become indisputable, if it ever wasn’t, that in times of binding technosciences with naturecultures, the livelihoods and fates of so many kinds and entities on this planet are unavoidably entangled.”. María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More Than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 1.; Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 1.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ It is not my intention to frame the home, nest, burrow or den as utopic and void of conflict. While it’s my hope and wish that all homes are full of warmth and conducive to a healthy upbringing, there are many that aren’t. I don’t address these issues in this master’s research, but do not wish to leave this experience unacknowledged.

The work moves outdoors in another of my early sound pieces, [*We Say Goodnight and Remember the Day \(2022\)*](#). We hear the wind through the trees, crickets as they chirp, and my son's squeals of laughter in concert with squeaking springs in the trampoline - he jumps and plays with joy. In his exuberance, we might sense the warmth of the afternoon, a caregiver watching on, recording the event as in this case. After 36 seconds, we hear a faint voice, a hum. A nonverbal prompt, an agreeing and sympathetic tone. The repetition of the hum suggests a call, and as the call builds, we hear harmonies augment the voice. As the voice calls and builds in harmony, static hiss rises like a rush of water. The sounds of the day, of play and of parental instruction, fall in the atmosphere of a darkened bedroom. Pink and white noise, generated by combining many audible frequencies to the human ear, is used in a child-rearing context by parents and caregivers. In the way it emulates the flow of water, white, pink and even brown noise is used as a tool for soothing, echoing what a baby hears inside the womb.

From here on, domestic and familial notions transformed into bodily understandings through pregnancy and post-partum states alongside the Earth's capacity to nourish all that exists on its surface.

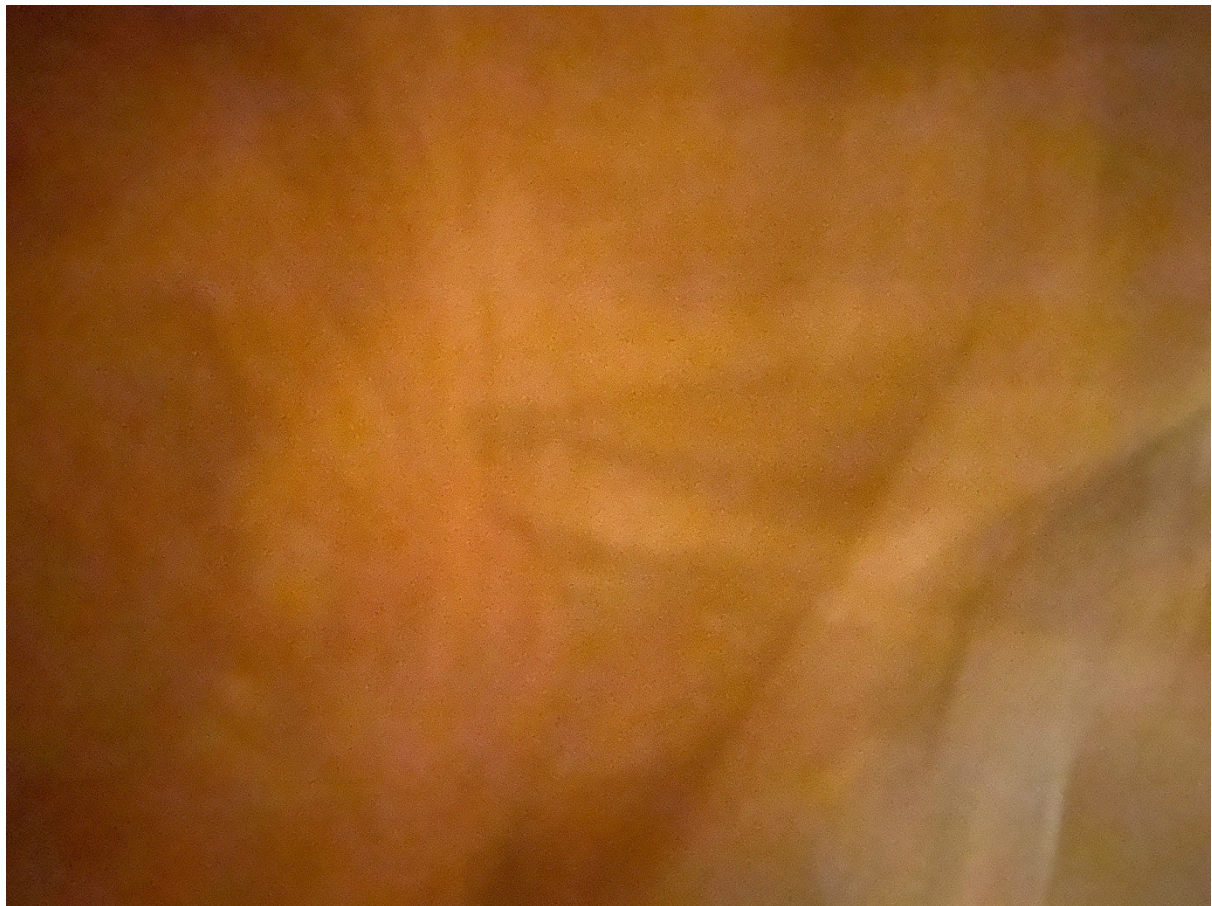


Figure 0.3. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, long exposure photographic sketch, 2022, iPhone 11 Max Pro, 3024 x 4032

On Inter-Media and Expanded Drawing

While the beginnings of this project emerged from sound, visual mediums always existed alongside, initially inspired by my children's drawings. At some point in my life, I heard that children's drawings,

in all their scribbled, abstracted goodness, directly represent true images they see and understand in the world. Indeed, my own children bring me every piece with a real vision of what they have just created. I jot it down next to their name and age in the page's bottom right-hand corner. Perhaps it's the bird we were watching out the window. More often, it depicts our family amongst the natural elements – a disproportionately giant sun, rain, a tree, a rainbow, a muddy puddle. In my inability to physically see what they see on their page, I acknowledge the loss of this magical lens. The wonder and awe that children hold embraces the infinite potential for creative attunement to the Earth. Their drawings act as a reminder to seek beyond our routine and basic comprehension into unknown and even forgotten epistemologies.¹⁰

Throughout this project, pencil and graphite drawings became digital play spaces, flowing back to printmaking techniques and simple clay objects. Later, wire objects became conduits for exploration. Leaning into the practice-led methodology, I spent hours poring over the big ideas, philosophical links, and other methodologies throughout this research. I created five versions of a plan for this exegesis. Over and over, I analysed what I was making. Forever asking, what is the work doing? I found editing crucial to a practice-led research methodology, especially for keeping a master's project succinct and poignant. Through this reflective process - clasp my hair with my hands, a tired Mother's mind at the brink of extinguishing - I realised that, much like my children, the various media I used to mediate this research were embedded within a more significant drawing practice.

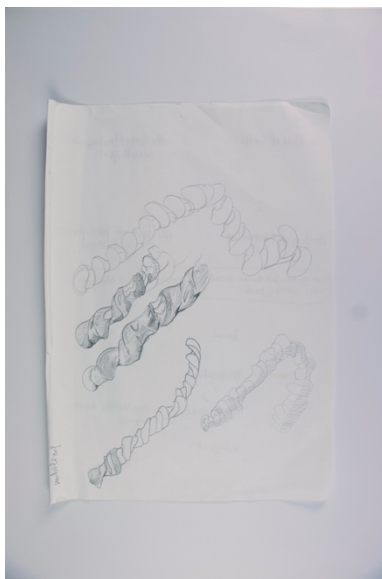


Figure 0.4. Initial umbilical cord sketches in studio, photograph by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, 2023, pencil on paper

Figure 0.5. Braiding green and grey Playdoh, 2023, expanded umbilical drawings, photograph by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna

To contextualise my inter-media and expanded drawing practice, amongst many voices, I will focus on media theorist Gene Youngblood and his observations on the methodologies of the Us Company or Company of Us (USCO), art historian Rosalind Krauss and the more contemporary text by artist and curator Rebecca Waterstone.

¹⁰ I note that not all children are equally privileged with drawing tools or opportunities to be in the environment.

In his 1970 publication, *Expanded Cinema*, Gene Youngblood reflects on the emergence of the practice of artists as ecologists. He writes: "Ecology is defined as the totality or pattern of relations between organisms and their environment". He describes how an artist practising in this new context divulges: "previously unrecognized relationships between existing phenomena, both physical and metaphysical". Youngblood continues to say that by seeking through an ecological lens, we unearth an artistic practice that proliferates our understanding of human reality.¹¹ Youngblood uses the example of Us Company or Company of Us (USCO), a collective of artists and engineers who "pioneered in the development of multimedia performances and kinaesthetic events" throughout North America and Europe.¹² USCO worked to define the term 'Inter-Media' as "the simultaneous use of various media to create a total environmental experience for the audience".¹³ The group noted the physical and emotional nature of the use of Inter-Media, rather than a transposing of information and ideas through "abstract literary language".¹⁴

I also draw on the term 'expanded field' in this research to describe the origins of expanded methods and methodologies. While American artist Robert Morris coined the term 'The Expanded Field' in 1946, it was Rosalind Krauss, who, in her 1979 essay *Sculpture in the Expanded Field*, described the changes to the sculptural mode in postwar America and beyond. Krauss constructs and deconstructs the importance in historical shifts that led art-making - then dictated by a rigid logic of representation and marking - to a place of anti-self/site, of the negative, of contradiction – "a kind of sitelessness, or homelessness, an absolute loss of place."¹⁵ Which is to say one enters modernism."¹⁶ The field of sculpture, as Krauss examines, expanded from monuments to abstract expressionism and Neo-Dada, Minimalism into Conceptual Art.¹⁷ In other words, artists went from producing site-specific, representational monument-based sculptures or painting-objects, to working in a wide open field of environmental, responsive installation responses, and crucially everyday practices were recognised as artistic endeavour.

Artist, curator and educator Rebecca Waterstone curated and produced work for the exhibition, *Drawing in the Expanded Field* (2017) as part of Kiosk Studios 3x6 Series in the Blue Mountains of New South Wales, Australia. On expanded drawing Waterstone writes, "Through this project, the act of drawing has been broadly redefined as being a universal human activity with inherent value, without the need for a finished outcome. Celebrated in this way, in its raw form, we can all find ways to connect with drawing as a potent and primal way of engaging with, understanding, recording, and reframing

¹¹ Gene Youngblood, "The Artist as Ecologist," *Screening the Past*, accessed June 9, 2023, <http://www.screeningthepast.com/issue-32-classics-re-runs/the-artist-as-ecologist/>.

¹² Gene Youngblood.; USCO, known as US Company or Company of US was founded by Michael Callahan, Steve Durkee and Gerd Stern in 1963. Much like the operation of The Institute of Queer Ecology, USCO rotated the collaborative efforts of artists including Jonathan Ayers, Sara Ayers, Stewart Brand, Lois Brand, Barbara Budd, Jane Burton, Adrienne Callahan, Bob Dacey, Barbara Durkee, Bob Kugler, Mary Orser, Brian Peterson, Judi Stern, Paul Williams, Dion Wright and Jud Yakult. "USCO," National Gallery of Art, accessed July 2, 2023, <https://www.nga.gov/collection/usco.html>.

¹³ Gene Youngblood, "The Artist as Ecologist."

¹⁴ Gene Youngblood.

¹⁵ Katia Schneller and Noura Wedell, "Introduction," in *Investigations: The Expanded Field of Writing in the Works of Robert Morris*, Signs (Lyon: ENS Éditions, 2015), <https://doi.org/10.4000/books.enseditions.3804>; Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field," *Monoskop*, 1979, https://monoskop.org/images/b/bf/Krauss_Rosalind_1979_Sculpture_in_the_Expanded_Field.pdf.

¹⁶ Rosalind Krauss, "Sculpture in the Expanded Field."

¹⁷ The term "Conceptual Art" was coined by Sol LeWitt in 1967.; Rosalind Krauss.

our world.”¹⁸ Here, through Waterstone, we are drawn back to the core principals in the traditional understanding of drawing; representation and mark-making, and like the cultural shift that evolved in painting and sculpture, so too has drawing become a method that shifts beyond its historical borders, revealing itself in all matter of medium.

The core of a drawing might be understood as simultaneously rudimentary and developed. An idea becomes a sketch. In an alternative reality, the sketch becomes an image in detailed completion. The potential a drawing holds is endless, and its final but infinite state of being is defined by a decision reverberating throughout multiverse iterations.¹⁹ Drawing in the context of my practice can happen on paper with pencil and graphite. It often occurs through printmaking, using charcoal and wax pastels activated by a gel medium, print paste on a silk screen. Or, as a series of linocut prints, experimenting with texture and repetitive imagery like the ripples in the ocean surface or rain as it pelts the window and makes its way to the ground. Using a pencil, drawing directly onto the surface of the linoleum is the only kind of planning that only sometimes occurs. More often, I carve marks directly onto the lino, drawing with the cutters as I create shadow and lightness with the depth of each carving. A quality of the work that could be defined by sketching. I also draw through digital means using the game engine Dreams on PlayStation 4, sketching and shaping directly into the environment, a practice of world building through an accessible platform, which I will expand on in Part II: *Matters of Attunement*.²⁰

To draw back to my historic source, USCO described ‘Inter-Media’ as the simultaneous use of a range of media to generate an environment. My practice does precisely this – using a range of media to generate an environment, a series of bodily topographies, weaving between the macro and the micro, drawing through print, digital world sculpting, sound and object. In *Matters of the After-Birth*, I will expand on how this all comes together in the final stages of my research.

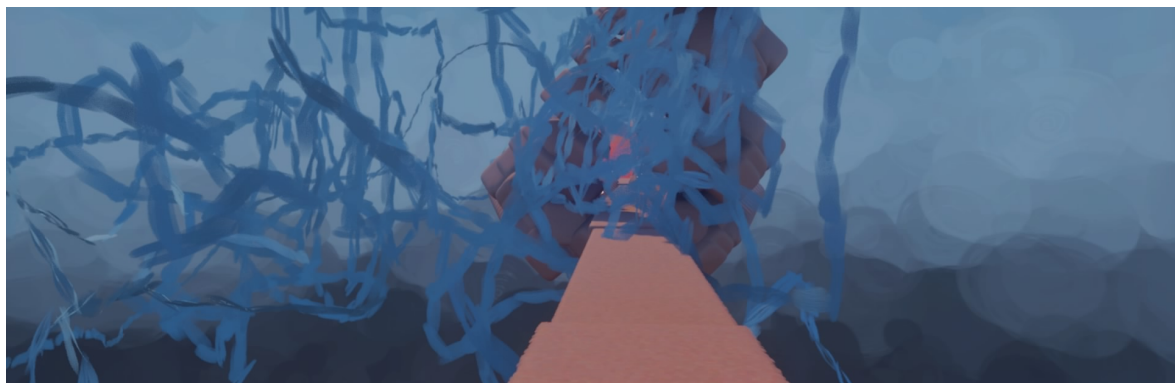


Figure 0.6. Gameplay still of *Nourished Becoming II*, 2023, screenshot by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna

¹⁸ Rebecca Waterstone, *Drawing in the Expanded Field* (New South Wales, Australia: Modern Art Projects Blue Mountains, 2017), <https://www.rebeccawaterstone.com/drawing-in-the-expanded-field>.

¹⁹ This vision of drawing connects to my wider methodology informed by Didier Zúñiga and his concept of Pluralist Politics which I will divulge in the first Part, *Matters of Earth*.

²⁰ “Dreams,” InDreams, n.d., <https://indreams.me>.; Accessibility in the context of this research is important. The issue of underrepresentation in gaming for women let alone mothers is not something I address specifically in this project, however, using a platform that allows me – an everyday, time-poor, sleep deprived, artist and working parent - to access an intuitive and flexible engine for building is crucial. Using Dreams via PlayStation 4 is a counteract to the idea that parents, specifically women might not have the time or energy (which is simultaneously true) to complete complex digital projects like game or world building and therefore remain unseen and unheard in that space. That is also not to say there aren’t women, mothers or parents who are working successfully in less readily accessible game engines like *Unity* or *Unreal Engine* for example, with immense talent and contribution.

Part I: Matters of Earth

*The desert is the place where I learned that even stone changes, given enough time; the Earth reworked through transition just as I have been.*²¹

- Riley Black, vertebrate paleontologist and writer

I: I (Re)generations

My children attend an early childhood centre focused on environmental education. The owner and lead educator, Marina Bachmann, is – I believe – an extraordinary figure in early childhood education in Aotearoa. Bachmann prioritises equitable and accessible education focusing on children’s rights to an environmentally sustainable future, teaching babies and young children about their rights as autonomous citizens with social currency, a sense of social justice, and our Te Tiriti o Te Waitangi commitments.²² Under Marina Bachmann’s care, children are immersed in daily rituals of kaitiakitanga and manaakitanga for themselves, each other and Papatūānuku, Mother Earth. Our centre will often hīkoi along Carrington Road in Point Chevalier, Tāmaki Makaurau, a practice of protest. A red painting hangs on the fence, presenting to the busy thoroughfare for all to see. It bares marks that evoke the presence of a potato stamp, the base of a bottle, can or other recycled, predetermined shape repeated around the edges of a faint cloud. I imagine 10 children hovering shoulder to shoulder above the painting in process, pressing flower-like assemblages of dots in white, purple and yellow. Inside the cloud reads, “No rubbish in the whole world: a message from the tamariki of Collectively Kids”, in a child’s emerging handwriting. A banner, raised far above my children’s heads, reads, “Give us a chance, give us a future. Cut Emissions”. Tamariki chant as loud as their young voices allow, “Help Papatūānuku, save our planet!”. This example provides insight into the messaging humans give and receive concerning the Earth’s current condition and our vulnerable place within it. The banner speaks to an understanding that our youngest generations, including those screaming at the roadside and our non-human kin, will bear the brunt of climate in-action. The chant infers activism on behalf of the planet, of care and hope for its health. We know that humans may be amongst the species eradicated by the anthropogenically induced sixth mass extinction, if it continues at such a scale and rate. However, the planet itself, the core, mantle and crust, will survive until it is perhaps swallowed by our sun or some other cosmic encounter. Our planet can weather its own storms, and certain organisms will flourish after our perceived disaster just as they do now. But in the case of its saving, we are entangling Earth with everything that lives on it. By helping Papatūānuku, our personified Earth Mother, we help the delicate, multihued coral reefs, the sprawling root systems of boundless flora, the kingdom of fungi and precious animal life. A faithful enactment of kaitiakitanga.

²¹ Riley Black, “Unearthing Queer Joy,” *Atmos*, January 6, 2023, https://atmos.earth/unearthing-queer-joy/?mc_cid=ed900a9a55&mc_eid=6f193bf2ff.

²² “HOME,” *collectively-kids*, accessed June 24, 2023, <https://www.collectivelykids.com>.



Figure 1.1. A red sign reads, *'No Rubbish in the whole world: a message from the tamariki of Collectively Kids'*, photograph by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, 2023, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

I: II A Delicate, Queer Nature

Alongside environmental education, Bachmann designed and implemented a gender-neutral policy for the centre. This can loosely be described as informed processes for dismantling gender norms by means of non-gendered play, use of clothing, choice of language and community roles i.e. cooking, cleaning, and tuakana, older children, caregiving for teina, younger children. What Bachmann evidently presents are practices embedded within queer ecology and ecofeminism. A rejection of and counter to cis-heteronormative ideologies that insist the natural world consists of a fixed and finite ideas of sex, sexuality and other ways of existing. Didier Zúñiga, in his book *Pluralist Politics, Relational Worlds: Vulnerability and Care of the Earth* (2023), describes how we are entrapped by a “hegemonic onto-epistemic framework”.²³ Zúñiga’s term refers to “the dominant set of practices, discourses, institutions, regulations and so on that form the structure of knowledge” humans use to interpret the world.²⁴ Cis-heteronormative ideologies are part of that structure. Zúñiga notes that the most aspiring alternatives to issues like climate change come from communities “whose lives and cosmovisions are closely attuned to the earth and its multiplicity of more-than-human inhabitants.”²⁵ While the community is not homogenous, I am reminded of LGBTTQIA+ people in Zúñiga’s description. What strikes me most in Zúñiga’s writings is that our current trajectory of identity politics, including cultural politics, endeavours to amalgamate the human and non-human differences of thought and being into a shared, single reality. Zúñiga reminds us that our differences occur in multiple realities, perspectives, worlds. From this standpoint, and as it relates to my inter-media practice, worldbuilding informed by my queer, womanly body and its experiences manifests pluralist politics. It seeks to re-imagine topographies, present what I understand to be true, and subordinate the hegemonic onto-epistemic framework.

Queer Ecology draws connections between the oppression of LGBTTQIA+ bodies, colonial destruction and the fight for environmental justice.²⁶ Like Bachmann’s synergetic initiatives, deconstructing sex, gender, sexuality, and societal roles go hand in hand with our fight for Earth. The environmental cause insists we continue to evolve in our biopolitics, something - I believe - much of human society has embraced as we inch (slowly, painfully) closer to a world possibly without gender and sexuality separations and discrimination. Art can provide insight into the ontological pluralism where alternative forms of being and relational ethics lie.²⁷

London-based Egyptian artist Adham Faramawy works closely with plants as subject matter. He describes how the way we name and categorise plants, how they feel and look and behave, is used as a means to “deprogramme [himself] from the idea of cis-heteronormativity as neutral, or as the norm which creates or presupposes ideas of deviation or the un-natural”.²⁸ In his film, *The Heart*

²³ Didier Zúñiga, *Pluralist Politics, Relational Worlds: Vulnerability and Care of the Earth* (Boston, UNITED STATES: University of Toronto Press, 2023), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=7161629>.

²⁴ Zúñiga.

²⁵ Zúñiga.

²⁶ Catriona Sandilands, “Queer Ecology,” *Keywords*, January 12, 2016, <https://keywords.nyupress.org/environmental-studies/essay/queer-ecology/>.

²⁷ Zúñiga, *Pluralist Politics, Relational Worlds*.

²⁸ “Queercircle,” *Queercircle*, accessed June 24, 2023, <https://queercircle.org/in-conversation/adham-faramawy-and-rachel-pimm-in-conversation>.

Wants What the Heart Wants (2021) Faramawy's human subjects entangle with a local ecosystem in movement that borders contemporary dance and voguing. The entire piece is closed captioned, describing what we can hear - a solo flute piece. A creature with calcified horns, bronze scales and accompanying bugs seen crawling on their skin in mutualistic synergy appears on screen. The creature tells imagined, personified, trans and gender non-binary life histories of plant species like *Sebania Sesban*, the Sesban Tree and *Artemisia dracuncululus*, Dragonwort. In the scenes following, factual histories are told of flora like yarrow and oak, Faramawy recounts their various names throughout time and their societal and medicinal potencies. The creature is also a channel for prose and poetry interspersed throughout the work. The movements of the queer, human bodies intensify as we hear Faramawy disclose troubled thoughts and experiences as a queer person of colour. We are drawn back to a human experience of complex relationalities. Towards the end, we hear the creature's voice, "And somehow, and I know this sounds stupid, but I needed to hear it. I just needed you to say, "All of you is welcome."."²⁹

Faramawy's investigation into categorical processes brings to mind Aotearoa-based artist and curator Richard Orjis' dissection of Michel Foucault's, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (1976). Foucault discusses the scientific structuring of desire and pleasure in the 1800s through to the 1900s transformed sexuality into a discursive entity and, in turn, an identity.³⁰ Foucault suggests that this manufacturing of sexuality as identity became modus operandi for ratifying power within medical, political and social realms.³¹ Orjis adds that this shift "[policed] the line between normal and abnormal, natural and unnatural".³² Drawing through to an Aotearoa context, Orjis aptly argues that Foucault's interpretations can be examined in the establishment of colonial New Zealand: "where compliant, reproductive (heterosexual) and productive bodies were desired in the colonial creation of the nation-state". Here too, I am reminiscent of the once peaceful and integrated LGBTTQIA+ people who lived harmoniously within indigenous cultures across Oceania prior to a Christian and colonial infiltration.

Image removed for copyright reasons.

²⁹ Adham Faramawy, *The Heart Wants What the Heart Wants*, 2021, Film, 2021, <https://adhamfaramawy.com/work/works/>.

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, First American Edition, vol. 1 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986).

³¹ Michel Foucault.

³² Richard Orjis, "Below, behind, across: Bttm Methodology and Queer Representation in Contemporary Art" (Doctoral Thesis, Auckland, New Zealand, Auckland University of Technology, 2021), <https://hdl.handle.net/10292/14319>, 12-13.

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Figure 1.2. Adham Faramawy, *The Heart Wants What the Heart Wants*, 2021, film, video screenshot by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, accessed on 8 June, 2023, <https://adhamfaramawy.com/work/works/>.

Figure 1.3. Adham Faramawy, *The Heart Wants What the Heart Wants*, 2021, film, video screenshot by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, accessed on 8 June, 2023, <https://adhamfaramawy.com/work/works/>.

Queerness, we claim, is a strategy as important as imagination, rooted as it is in a history of establishing alternative worlds of mutual support and care that bloom in the spaces underneath and between this one.³³

- The Institute of Queer Ecology

I: II Nourished Landscapes

The body of work produced in this research follows an evolutionary timeline of formal and informal landscapes. Beginning with domestic landscapes, the research traversed image and sound to understand my domestic space with my wife and children, our immediate backyard and the neighbourhood environment. Seeking through sights and sounds of the inner habitat, I drew closer to listening to the outside from the inside. Noticing the wind, the rain, cicadas and birds, and the traffic as it crescendos and enervates when humans start and end their days. Soon, the weather came into focus beyond its stationing as a primary issue in my position on our climate. Using a device of the everyday - an iPhone - to record weather events as they unfolded and affected my immediate environment became an informal capturing method that allowed me to record these fast-moving

³³ "Metamorphosis - IQECO," accessed June 26, 2023, <https://queerecology.org/Metamorphosis>.

happenings. In the videos produced during this experimentation, trees are foregrounded as battering storms move through episodes of high winds, heavy rain, light rain and back into the sunshine. The colour and visibility in and of the atmosphere slowly transform, and the saturation increases. Sketched notations captured as a practice of attunement to my environment and the forces that govern it. A study of environmental colours. Similarly, for a series of experimental photographic sketches, I would walk to a corner of the Waitemata, Westhaven Marina, the body of water closest to my home then. Using my iPhone, I recorded how the wind interacts with the surface, determining the ripples and direction of the water. Capturing moments of interference between the waves. Diffraction caused by a rock, a buoy, or the fathoms unseen. Light reflections contingent on the meteorological conditions and currents below. The salted wind blew through and around my body while I documented. My skin and hair, watering eyes, responded to the chill, the sensation grounding me in place and time. Studying the water's surface, I felt like I was in it. The rhythmic, turbulent flow touches my form and moves me with an internal sway. I begin to map the way that I feel, emotionally and physiologically. My queer, human body in relation to this aquatic body, Tangaroa, and both our shared and unique histories across deep time and the multiverse.

As I move through the proceeding Parts, *Matters of Attunement* and *Matters of the After-Birth*, I will describe my artworks that define this research as worldbuilding and reimagining of body and terra. This includes a linocut print work, *Surface* (2023), the outcome of these observational sketches.

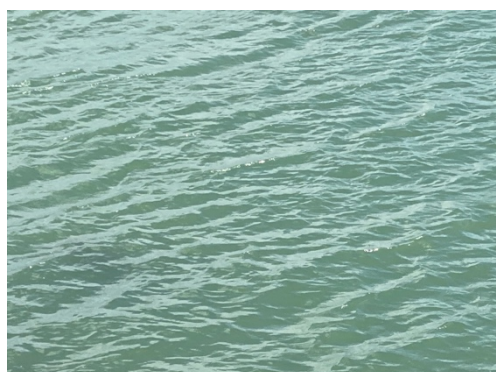


Figure 1.4. Photographic sketches of the surface of the Waitemata, photographs taken by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, 2023, Tamaki Makaurau, Auckland



Figure 1.5. Photographic sketches of the surface of the Waitematā, *colours*, photographs taken by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, 2023, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

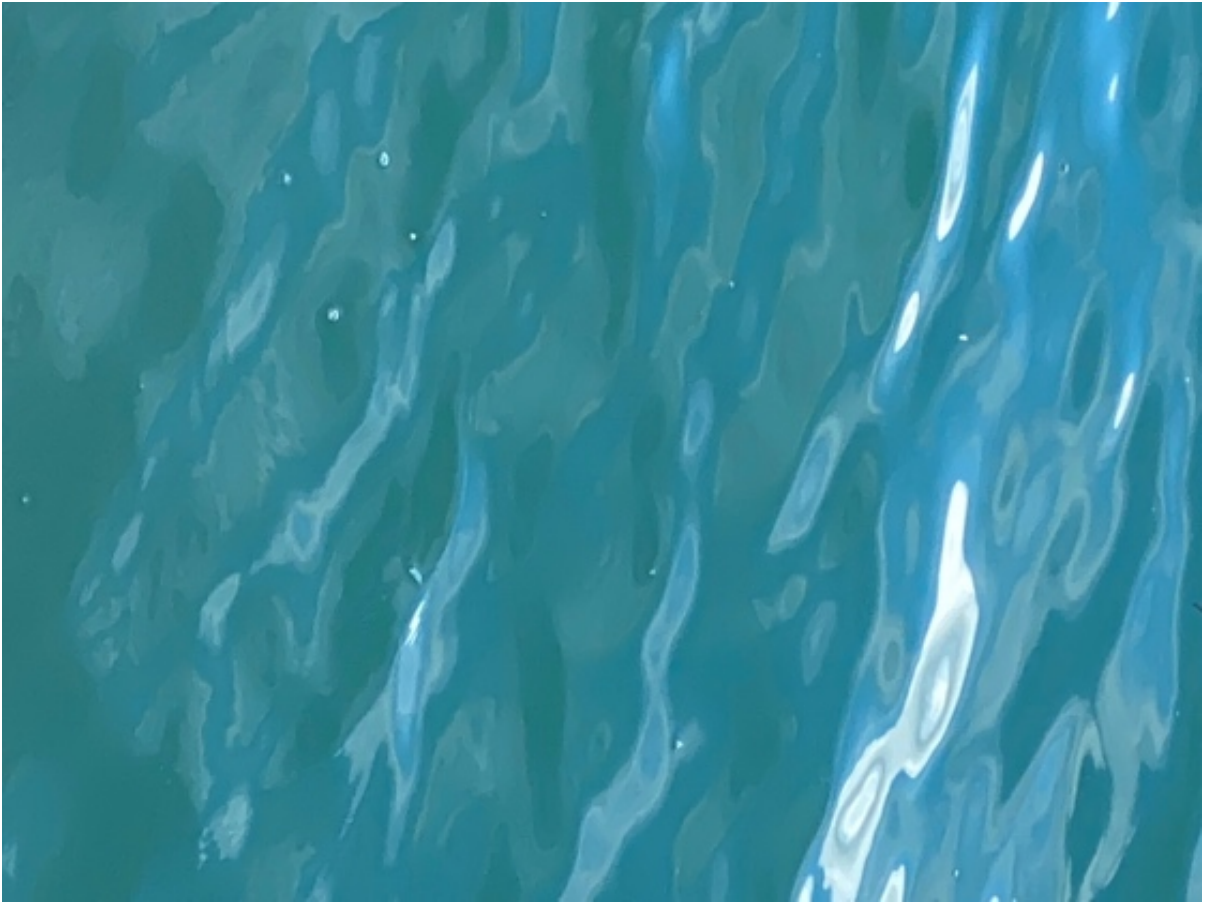
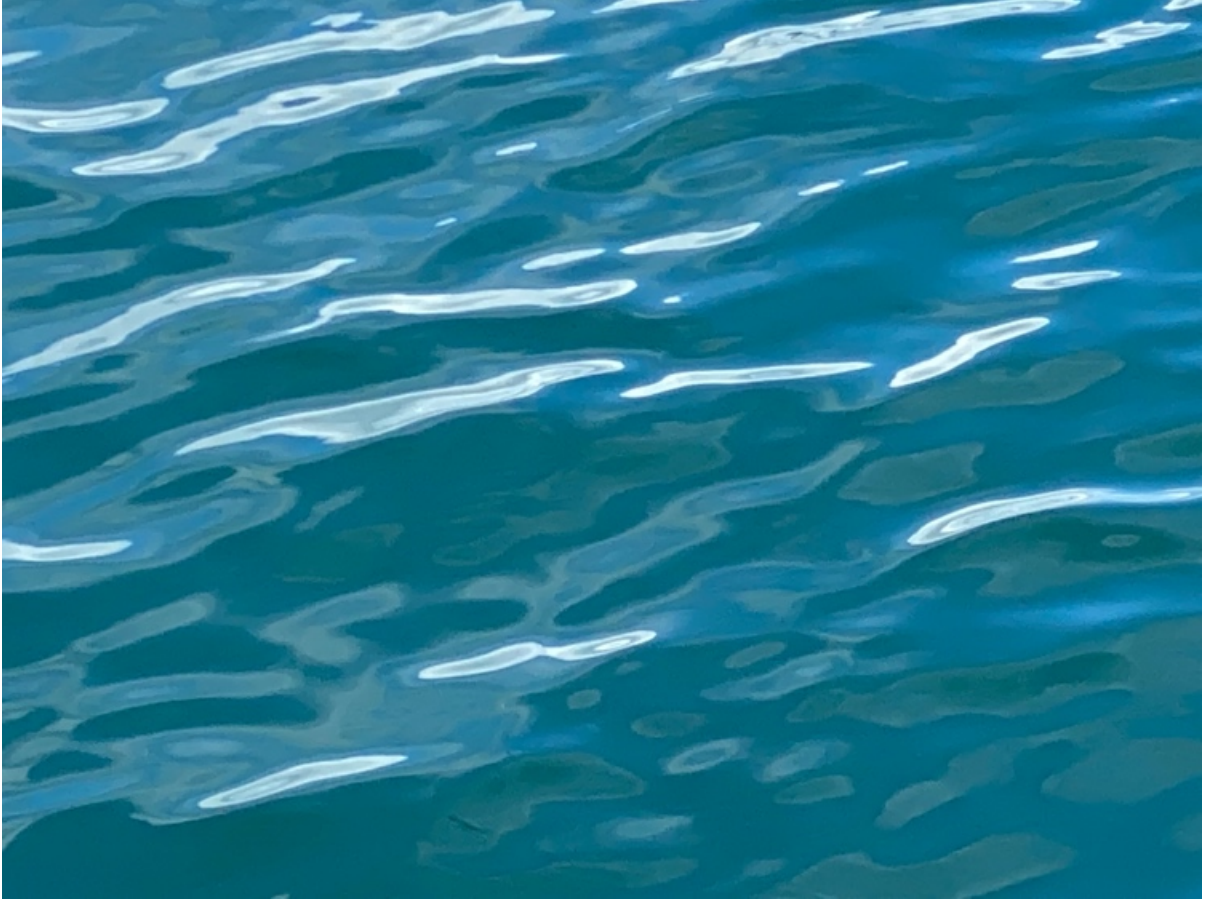


Figure 1.6. Photographic sketches of the surface of the Waitematā close up, photographs taken by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, 2023, Tamaki Makaurau, Auckland

Part II: Matters of Attunement

II: I Placenta as whenua, whenua as placenta

Attunement is a process of establishing a connection and awareness. A harmonious interlinking.³⁴ This project explores how art, and in this case, an inter-media drawing practice, might enable attunement to the Earth by looking, listening and feeling through haptic visuality and kinesthetic empathy – terms I will define in this Part. By imagining through a queer body that sustains life, as Papatūānuku does for all matters of life and non-life, we can build a picture of what it means to care enough to see it continue to raise us.³⁵

I am encouraged by how my children present an innate attunement to the natural world. My nearly 2-year-old son, Romy, exclaims, “A sunny day!” on any day without rain and raises his face to the sky. When the rain comes, he announces its presence all the same. The weather, the animals, the rocks and ridges of the Earth, cracks in the pavement where imaginary lava might burst and flow forth at any moment. I connect to my children, myself, other humans, our more-than-human kin, and the planet through my experience as a vessel for life. In te reo Māori, the word ‘whenua’ translates to both *land* and *placenta*. Whenua is spoken about as something to draw back to, a sense of place and belonging. The placenta is an organ grown simultaneously to a fetus, taking over from the yolk sac to provide nutrients in vitro. After giving birth to the baby/babies, a carrying body will perform a second birth to the placenta. In te ao Māori, the placenta is often taken to significant whenua and planted in the soil. The dual meaning of ‘whenua’ reminds us of the nourishing power of the Earth and our beginnings and endings as organic matter. It also draws us back into our bodies, our feet pressed into the terra.

Matters of Attunement will focus on pivotal works from this research project, beginning with *Nourished Becoming I and II*; iterative digital, interactive environments that evolved throughout my research, and the body of printmaking that followed. The works connect to my more expansive methodologies by embodying haptic visuality and kinesthetic empathy as pathways to attunement for an audience. Leo Castañeda and his soon-to-be-released game, *Levels and Bosses* (2024) will be interpreted as an example of ecologically and theoretically informed worldbuilding. Interspersed through the Part, I will reference the observational sketches I produced - by means of photographs, drawings and Playdoh and re-purposed wire objects - to materialise the primary artistic outcomes of the project.

³⁴ “Definition of ATTUNE,” June 18, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/attune>.

³⁵ It’s important to note here that “caring” about the Earth can be a matter of privilege, and it can also occur in so many different forms beyond activism or practices that accumulate cost and/or time.

II: II On Haptic Visuality and Kinesthetic Empathy

Standing at the edge of the rock wall, looking out over the surface of the Waitematā, I experience an understanding in my body. Memory, perhaps - an experiential knowing. Or haptic visuality and kinesthetic empathy in action.

I've found philosopher Laura Marks' writings on haptic perception from her book *The Skin of Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (2000) influential when thinking about the place of the body in my digital and drawn spaces. Marks argues: "Haptic perception is usually defined by psychologists as the combination of tactile, kinesthetic, and proprioceptive functions, the way we experience touch both on the surface of and inside our bodies."³⁶ In haptic *visuality*, Marks describes the eyes as organs capable of touch. Haptic *composition* doesn't have a focus on a distinguishable figure, object, or image as optical visuality does, but rather, haptic *looking* involves a glancing over surfaces, perceptions and illusions, engaging tactile relationalities through texture.

In their book *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices* (2012), Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason pull apart *kinesthetic* and *empathy* to describe the combined term clearly.

'Kinesthesia' refers to complex sensations of the movement of our body and position in space.³⁷ Kinesthesia is often interchangeable with proprioception, as informed by senses of movement and force, including vision and hearing, to sense space. For 'Empathy', Reynolds and Reason look to English psychologists Edward Titchener and James Ward and their English translation of the German word 'Einfühlung', which literally means "feeling into".³⁸ In 1973, German philosopher Robert Vischer helped to develop a theory of *einfühlung* concerning German aesthetics and describes a 'versetzung', a 'transfer' of one's imaginary body into another, feeling what it feels to be in that other body or environment.³⁹ In the writings of Vischer, and even earlier, of the German philosopher Theodor Lipps in the early 1900s, kinesthetic sensations were of fundamental influence for empathy.⁴⁰

As Reynolds and Reason note, the term 'Kinesthetic Empathy' can be troublesome to pin down. Its application as an idea can be widely stretched.⁴¹ Of my making and methodologies, I understand kinesthetic empathy to be a descriptor for the exchange of feelings, knowledge, positions, and experiences of beings or environments - life and non-life. Through senses of movement and other accompanying sensorial stimulation, we can better understand and attune to all creaturely, microbial, aquatic, weather and terra bodies and our spatial positionings. In other words, an

³⁶ Laura U. Marks and Dana Polan, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, UNITED STATES: Duke University Press, 2000), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=1167652>.

³⁷ Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason, *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices* (Bristol, UNITED KINGDOM: Intellect Books, 2012), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=1069402>.

³⁸ Reynolds and Reason; Joanna Ganczarek, Thomas Hünefeldt, and Marta Olivetti Belardinelli, "From 'Einfühlung' to Empathy: Exploring the Relationship between Aesthetic and Interpersonal Experience," *Cognitive Processing* 19, no. 2 (2018): 141-45, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10339-018-0861-x>.

³⁹ Ganczarek, Hünefeldt, and Olivetti Belardinelli, "From 'Einfühlung' to Empathy."

⁴⁰ Ganczarek, Hünefeldt, and Olivetti Belardinelli.

⁴¹ Reynolds and Reason, *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*.

embodiment of experiential relationalities. I see haptic visuality as a means to access kinesthetic empathy in my work, which always contains some form of movement through space.

Leo Castañeda is a multimedia artist and animator exploring notions of interdependence within post-humanist philosophies and ethics.⁴² Based in Miami, Florida, Castañeda is the arthouse game studio, Otro Inventario's, co-founder and game and art director. Castañeda's game *Levels and Bosses*, soon to be released on Steam, is a major influence on how I have considered post-humanist ethics concerning worldbuilding in my work.⁴³ *Levels and Bosses* uses a range of "interdependent abilities such as camouflage, vibrational-touch terraforming and electromagnetic communication" to face adversaries in non-traditional gameplay. The game invites players to attempt adaptation to a world in the wake of a "cataclysmic implosion."⁴⁴ While our digital environments are worlds apart in terms of rendered detail, and mechanical complexity, I draw from Castañeda an alternative approach to game space through contemporary art. Castañeda's work embodies tactile hapticity, responsive environments, forms and atmospheres, creating open-ended moments for deep attunement.



Figure 2.1. Trailer stills from Leo Castañeda's video game, *Levels and Bosses*, 2024, screenshot taken by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, accessed 11 July, 2023, <https://otro-inventario.webflow.io/levels-bosses>

⁴² Leonardo Castañeda, "ABOUT," Leo Castañeda, accessed July 11, 2023, <https://leonardocastaneda.com/about.html>.

⁴³ Leo Castañeda, "Levels and Bosses: Otro Invenar," accessed August 1, 2022, <https://www.otroinventar.io/>.

⁴⁴ Leo Castañeda.

II: III *The Formation of Body and Terra*

In July 2022, I began developing the first iteration of a digital interactive environment, [Nourished Becoming I](#). In this work the audience can traverse an unknown landscape using a handheld controller, moving through permeable thresholds that tower like the face of a mountain or undulate like the waves of the sea, or jump over breast-like geysers that foam with a milky, steaming substance. Variations of imagined terra and tangible atmospheric conditions sit contiguous, creating a textural topography for exploration. Travelling to the edge of the land mass, we see that it floats in an amorphous space, with potential for the pregnant character used to navigate the environment to fall, die and respawn. In one section, tubular, winding pathways reveal foggy chasms, insisting balance and concentration, things I felt were difficult during pregnancy. My choice to use a pregnant figure was the first shift towards re-imagining pregnancy and post-partum in relation to this research. In this early version, marks and gestures were extracted from my children's paintings and playdoh objects we created together as I continued to navigate relating my artmaking, methodologies, and my experience as a mother. I also experimented with DALL-E 2, an AI system by OpenAI, feeding keywords relating to my research resulting in bizarre and intriguing images which I used for object and image construction that have developed through all iterations of *Nourished Becoming*.⁴⁵

With only the PlayStation 4 controller, I drew directly into the environment using Dreams' built-in tools and modes for drawing and sculpting. Dreams lends itself well to an expanded drawing practice by providing multiple avenues for creation in an almost in-game worldbuilding experience - a feature of its accessibility important to a time-poor parent. The iterative process allowed me to develop my own practice of inter-media drawing within the digital, and I continued to build on the ideas and the environment of the last. It allowed me to present the development of my wider research as each environment changed to encompass the movements from the domestic to environmental, geological, and bodily. In the title, *Becoming*, references this process of change and being, and each unfinished iteration reflects the acceptance of something as it is and the desire to grow or shift, a notion I share in motherhood.⁴⁶

The [sound work](#) accompanying *Nourished Becoming I*, is an atmosphere assembled from recordings of domestic objects and appliances, joined by a simple and consistent dance beat and the sound of a person shushing.⁴⁷ White or pink noise is often present in my sound works as I explore its potential as nothingness and everything, all at once, emulating the sounds inside the womb. From afar, it can sound like the running of a tap, or rain outside, an example of aural hapticity with its malleable, textual and indistinguishable nature.

⁴⁵ "OpenAI," accessed July 10, 2023, <https://openai.com/>.; Artificial intelligence is a direct consequence of our own human biases, implicit and explicit, a reflection of the current world that exists as information on the internet. By feeding keywords like 'domestic everyday', 'care', 'climate change', 'more than human', 'mother', 'home', 'restoration', 'making some pancakes', 'colonisation', 'ecological', 'ethics', 'babies', and 'extinction' relating to my research, I could take a snapshot of AI's current understanding of those things, a reflection of parts of humanity.

⁴⁶ While I don't dive deeply into the theory of *becoming* in this research project, this is a reference to philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari and their work, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980). It is more pointedly a reference to more contemporary, feminist evolutions of the theory of becoming, namely Rosi Brandotti and her work, *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (2002).

⁴⁷ The use of a low key but driving dance beat signifies the consistent, at times relentless movements of a parent or caregiver, be it mind or body. When asked during Talk Week 2022 - for which *Nourished Becoming I* was presented - why I didn't use a more ambient track, I explained that for me, life as a sustainer of multiple young lives right now was just, busy. The suggestion that parenthood or caregiving would be soundtracked by an ambient composition isn't wrong - there are certainly peaceful moments - but highlights a misconception and systemic overlooking of the work it takes to raise the young and vulnerable.

Nourished Becoming II was developed alongside printmaking processes that resulted as a means to investigate the imagery developing in the digital. By ebbing and flowing from digital to more hands-on, physical processes, I tapped into inter-media drawing processes, accessing haptic and kinesthetically empathetic making. The body of print work I produced began with blind embossings made of paper with differing calipers. The blind embossings were an anecdote to my question of how to take the images I was producing in *Nourished Becoming* and make them touchable. I considered rendering 3D prints, for example, of the erupting geysers. The 3D casts seemed to me too linear a connection, and I decided blind embossing would be a more tactile way forward. Next, I used the linocut technique to practice deeper grooves for pressing, creating image and haptic tactility, in the inverse direction of my touch to blind embossing. I began inking the linocuts and producing reliefs, at times combining the ink and embossing processes.

I look to artist Worden Day, an active member of New York's art scene and Atelier 17 print school and studio throughout the 1940s and 50s. Day's woodcut work, *Marginal Peripheries* (1952), was created as part of an environmentally responsive informal series.⁴⁸ Day was among the many women overlooked in their trailblazing and expansive printmaking methods and methodologies within post-war Atelier 17. Day printed *Marginal Peripheries* (1952) after her travels across the southwest of the United States, from Wyoming to Utah and California.⁴⁹ The print communicates the expansive American landscape through earthen tones and layered textures.⁵⁰ Evocative linework references primordial histories stimulated by the "ancient petroglyphs, unfathomable geological structures, and dramatic stratifications" Day encountered on her journey.⁵¹



Figure 2.2. Worden Day, *Marginal Peripheries*, 1952. Woodcut, 60.9 x 71.9cm, accessed 14 July, 2023, <https://hyperallergic.com/560448/the-women-of-atelier-17-christina-weyl/>.

⁴⁸ Christina Weyl, *The Women of Atelier 17: Modernist Printmaking in Midcentury New York* (Yale University Press, 2019).

⁴⁹ Weyl.

⁵⁰ Weyl.

⁵¹ Weyl.

Finally, I found a process that embodies expanded, inter-media drawing through printmaking and with an iterative nature – mono-screen drawing. Utilising charcoal and Caran d’Ache wax pastels in cerulean blue, black and scarlet red, I drew directly onto a clean, raised silk screen and ran through it with a gel medium print extender when lowered to paper. Multiple prints spawn from one drawing, and with each pull of the print paste, each print differentiates itself, picking up more or less of the charcoal or pastel, rendering the image in individual becoming. I see the screen as an intermedium between the body and the image, much like the screen in relation to the digital. In printmaking, the artist is held at the mercy of so many uncontrollable factors, but with deep respect and integrity for and with the process - an act of relinquishment, acceptance and discovery.

[Printmaking] is a meditative act, and a means to ground and orient myself. By drawing attention to printmaking’s association to touch and embrace, I draw attention back to my body.⁵²

- Luca Nicholas, artist

There are many analogies and interpretations of geological bodies as other bodies within this research, developing through my inter-media drawing practice. Rivers run like veins and milk spills forth from pressurised geysers or engorged breasts. Most recently, I began to study the umbilical cord as a channel of nourishment and information. When a baby floats in vitro, the umbilical cord, each as individual as the entity it’s connected to, links the growing being with their placenta, their whenua. The scribbles of my children’s drawings and the light blue, oscillating line gestures that carry through all iterations of *Nourished Becoming*, were the first perceptions of the umbilical. Using re-purposed wire, I constructed umbilical structures to think through their shape. Finally, mono-screen drawings let linger the twists and turns of the gelatinous substance and connective tissues that make up the cord. The overlapping of multiple cords are worm-like, rope-like, tornado-like in their form. The printed works bring to mind the interdependence and re-imagining of our human selves that is needed to live and die well on this Earth. These are the imaginative notions that art can communicate.

Nourished Becoming II, to return to the digital iteration, focuses on a single pathway that the audience can negotiate as the carrying body. Developing on many of the same images, objects, land masses and thresholds as the first iteration, *Nourished Becoming II* intensifies the textures, scale, and occurrences of objects on the visual plane, discoveries through printmaking, and further envelops the body.

The sound is experimental in *Nourished Becoming II*. Unlike my other sound works and drawings, where I used Logic Pro and my own field recordings, I utilised Dreams’ built-in digital audio workstation (DAW) and its audio library. I pulled from an earlier sound drawing, [Play](#) (2022) which combined found audio of a group of children, including my own, gathered and playing music, their laughter and squeals resonating amongst the clatter of drums and percussive instruments. Alongside the children, I arranged found, live choral music, reversing it and creating musical configurations that highlighted deep harmonies; humans singing in togetherness but without words

⁵² luca nicholas, “Terms of (Be)Longing: Queerying the Embrace and Trace of Print Media” (exegesis, Auckland, New Zealand, Auckland University of Technology, 2020), <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/13711>.

or construed meanings.⁵³ For *Nourished Becoming II*, I continued investigating the use of choral singing, with another dynamic human action – hand claps – as the rhythmic component.

By building new, textural and immersive topographies of body and terra, I offer haptic images in these iterative digital environments and printmaking processes and provide opportunity for haptic visibility. Attunement to our planet, all life and non-life, might be achieved through kinesthetic empathy here; the audience is invited to explore an unknown yet familiar territory, performing an exchange with the pregnant form or the environment itself either by the digital or the tactility of the prints.

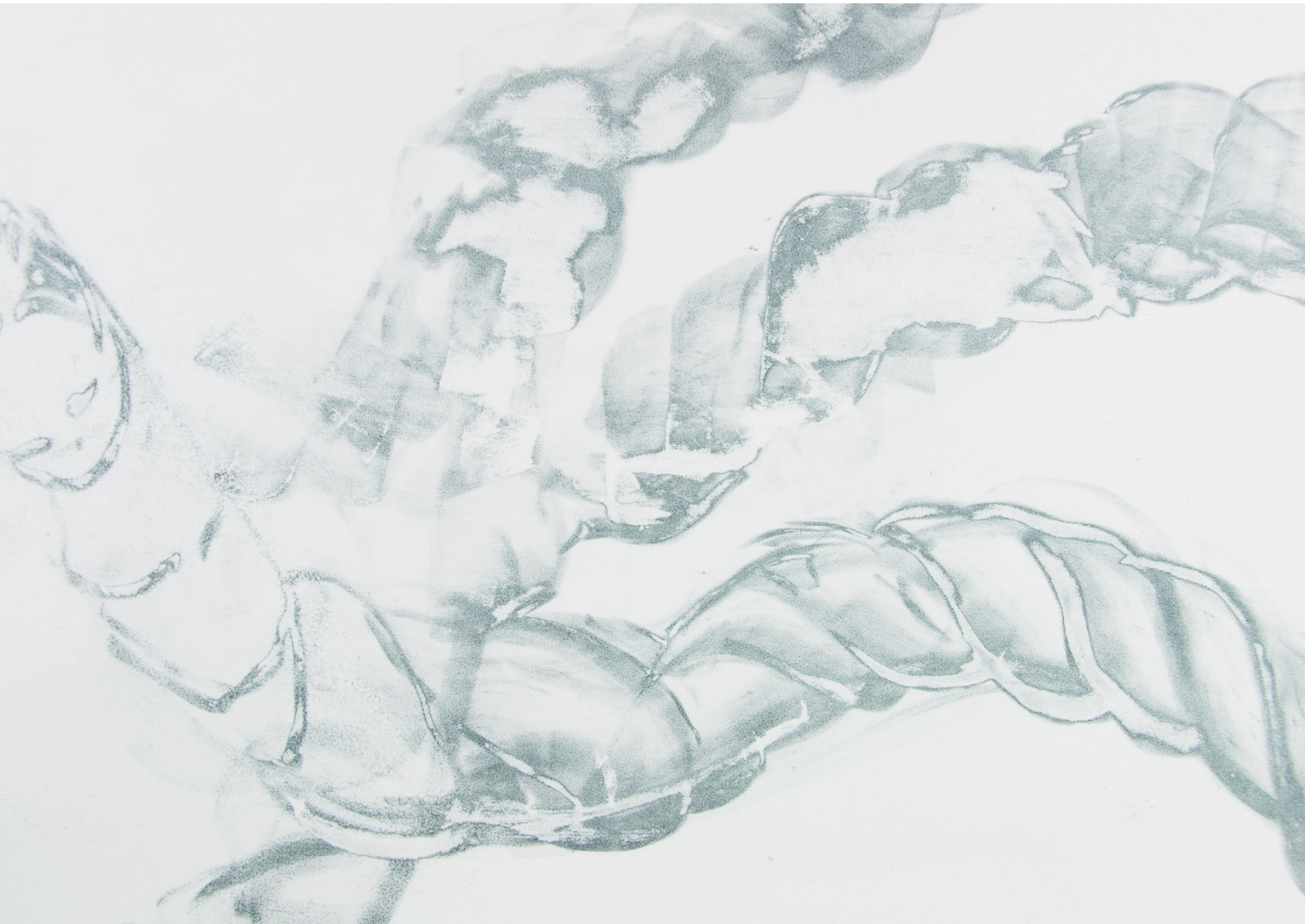


Figure 2.3. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Braided Series*, 2023, mono screen drawing on paper, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

⁵³ The choral music I used is of my own school choir of which I was a part, recorded at the public event, The Big Sing (2009), and available publicly on YouTube. Choral music and the action of humans singing together and in harmony is for me a metaphor for the potential of interdependence and connection.



Figure 2.4. Playdoh Experimentations, photograph taken by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, 2023, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Figure 2.5. Playdoh Experimentations, photograph taken by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, 2023, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Figure 2.6. My children, drawing with wax crayons in the bathtub, photograph taken by Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, 2023, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

 Move


 Look Around

 Jump



 Move

 Look Around

 Jump



L Move

R Look Around

X Jump



L Move

R Look Around

X Jump



L Move

R Look Around

X Jump



L Move


R Look Around

X Jump




 Move

 Look Around

 Jump



 Move

 Look Around


 Jump





Figure 2.7. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Nourished Becoming I*, 2022, digital gameplay stills, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

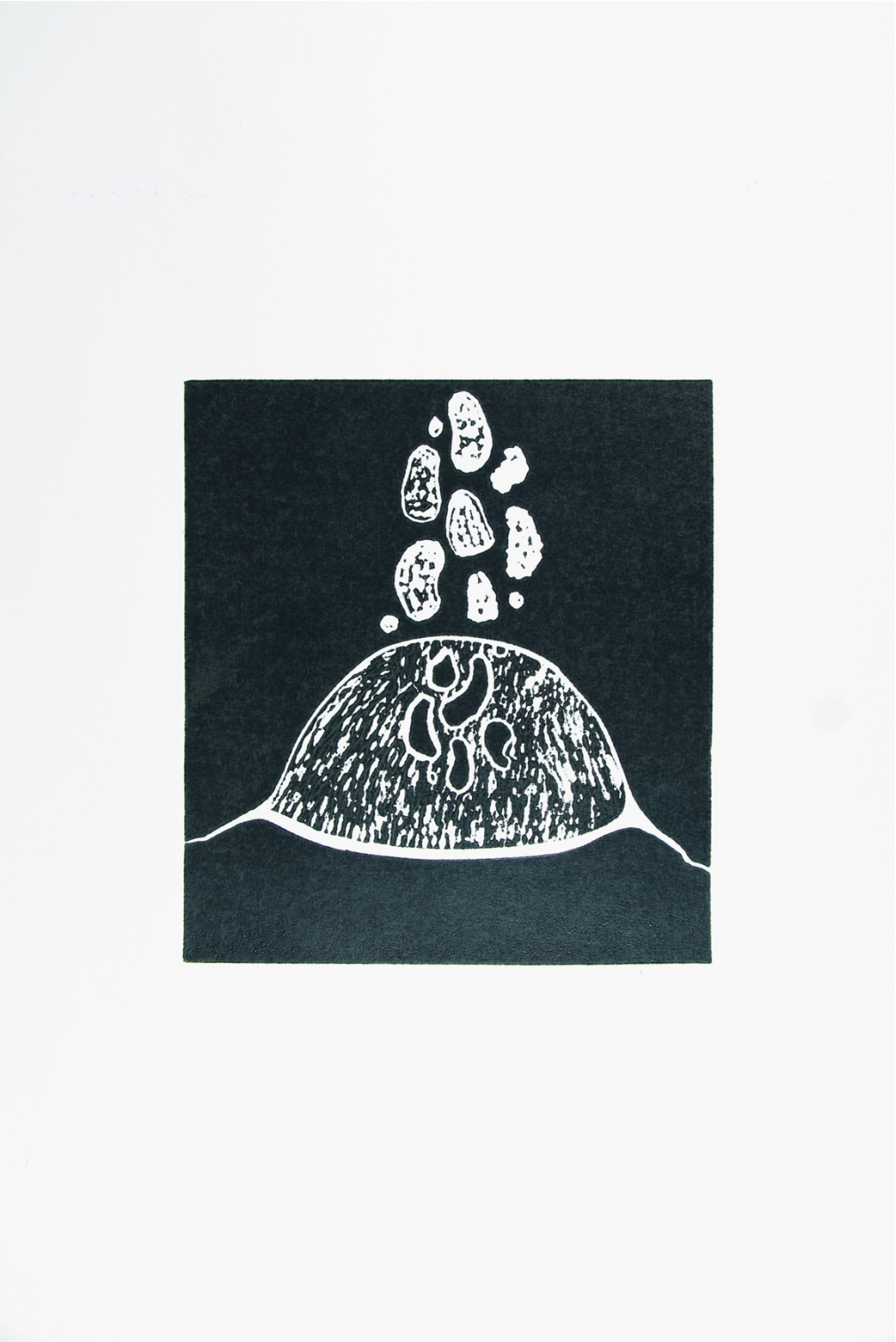


Figure 2.8. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Geyser*, 2022, linocut on paper, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland



Figure 2.9. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, (*m*)other, 2022, details, blind embossing on Fabriano Tiepolo paper, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

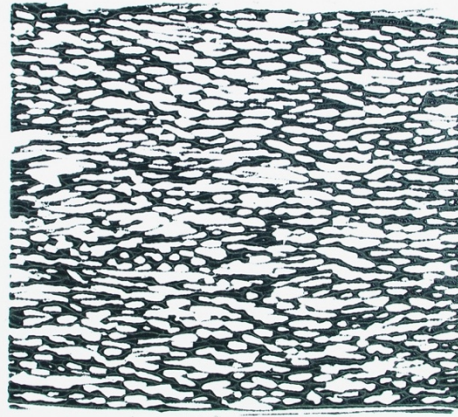


Figure 2.10. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Surface*, 2022, mono screen drawing on paper, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

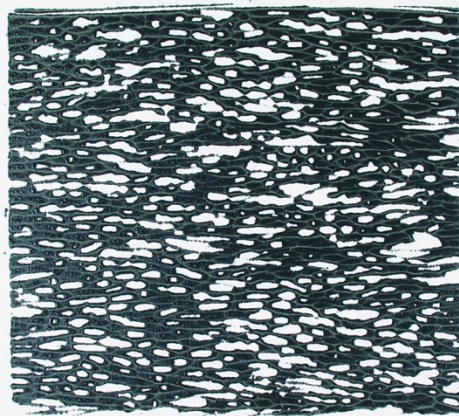


Figure 2.11. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Surface*, 2022, details, blind embossing on Fabriano Tiepolo paper, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland



Figure 2.11. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Surface*, 2022, details, blind embossing on Fabriano Tiepolo paper, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland



Figure 2.12. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Marking Wind Patterns in My Backyard*, 2022, blind embossing with charcoal on Fabriano Tiepolo paper, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland



Figure 2.13. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Marking Wind Patterns in My Backyard*, 2022, linocut on paper, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

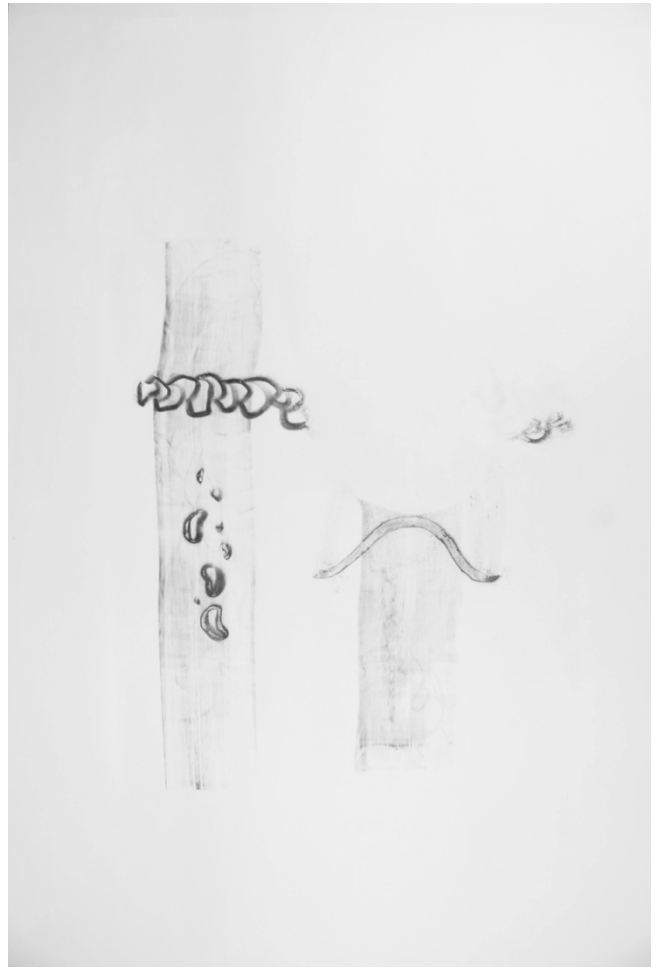




Figure 2.14. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Eruption Series*, 2023, mono screen drawing on paper, Charcoal, Ajax, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland



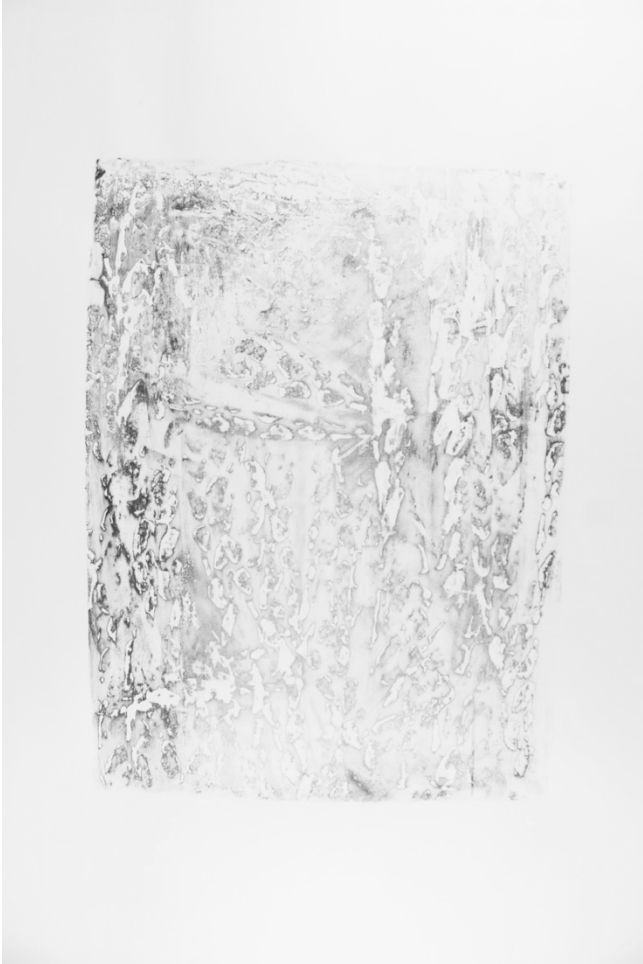


Figure 2.15. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Volcanic*, 2023, mono screen drawing, linocut rubbing on paper, Charcoal, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland



Figure 2.16. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Untitled*, 2023, mono screen drawing, Caran D'ache Wax Pastels, Tamaki Makaurau, Auckland



Figure 2.17. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Untitled*, 2023, mono screen drawing, Caran D'ache Wax Pastels, Charcoal, Ajax, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland



Figure 2.18. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Untitled Series*, 2023, mono screen drawing, Caran D'ache Wax Pastels, Charcoal, Ajax, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland



Figure 2.19. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Untitled*, 2023, mono screen drawing, Caran D'ache Wax Pastels, Charcoal, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

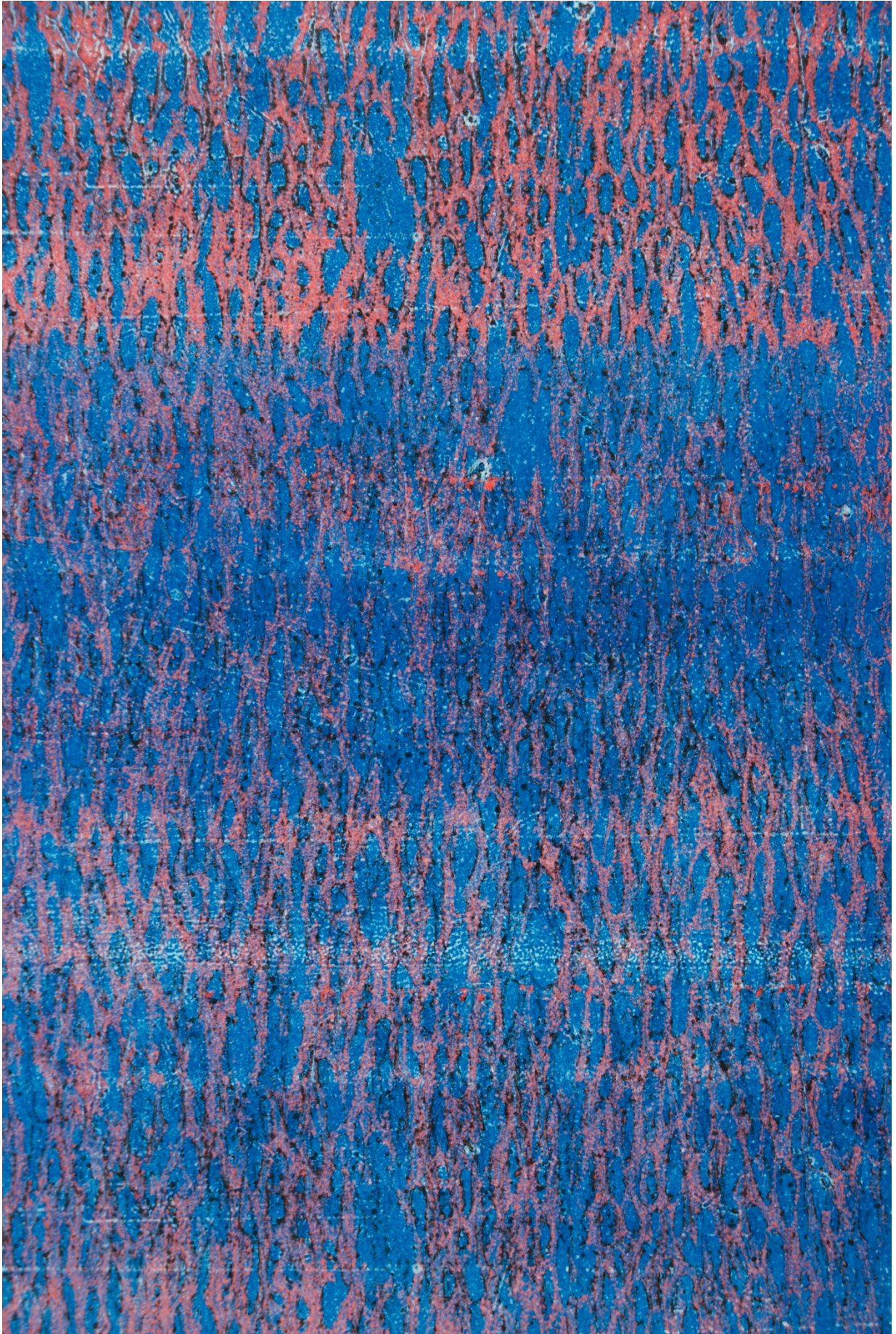


Figure 2.20. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *(m)other*, 2023, linocut on paper, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

- Move
- Look Around
- Jump



- Move
- Look Around
- Jump



- Ⓕ Move
- Ⓖ Look Around
- ⓧ Jump




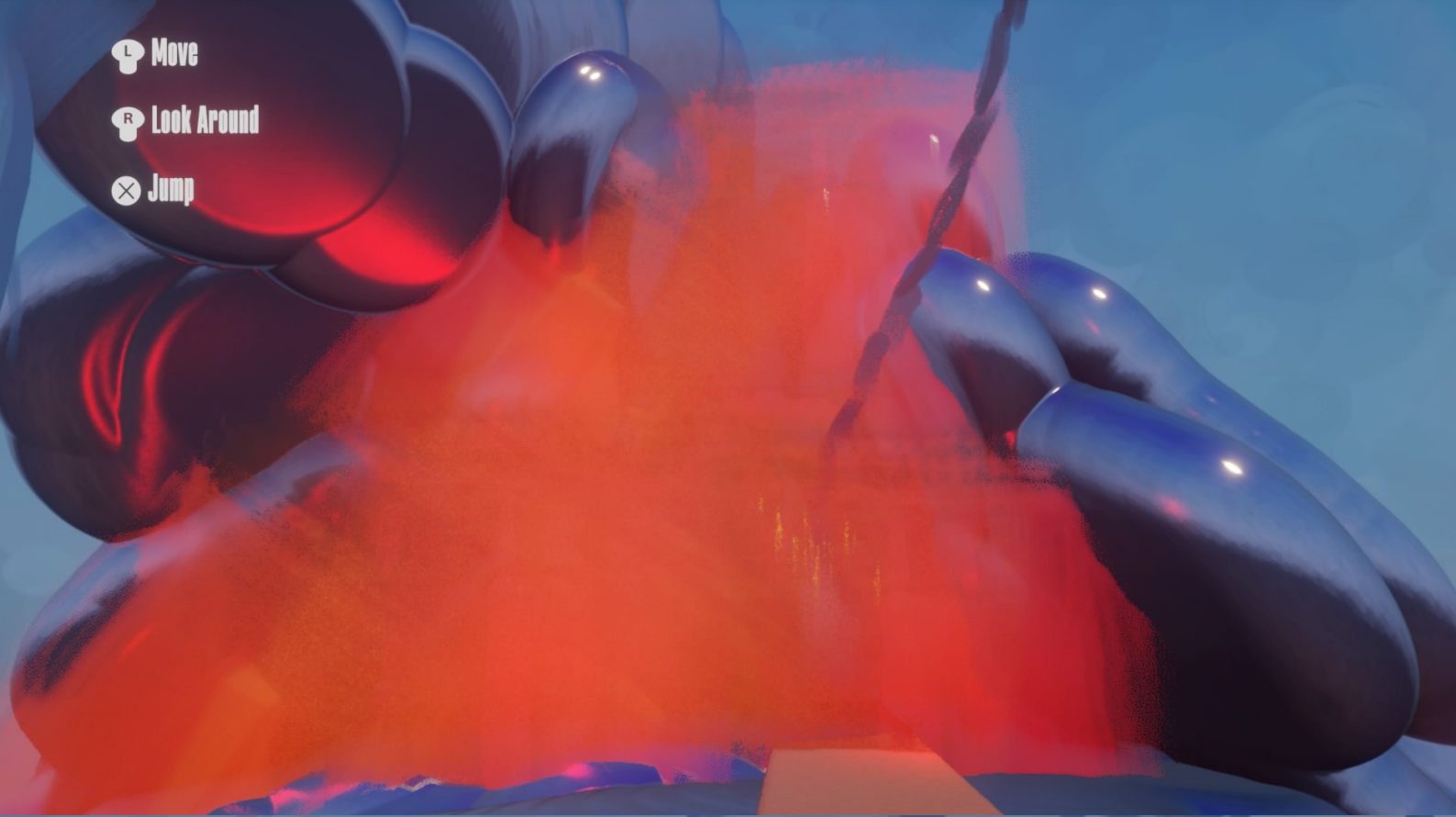
- Ⓕ Move
- Ⓖ Look Around
- ⓧ Jump



 Move


 Look Around

 Jump



 Move


 Look Around

 Jump



 Move


 Look Around

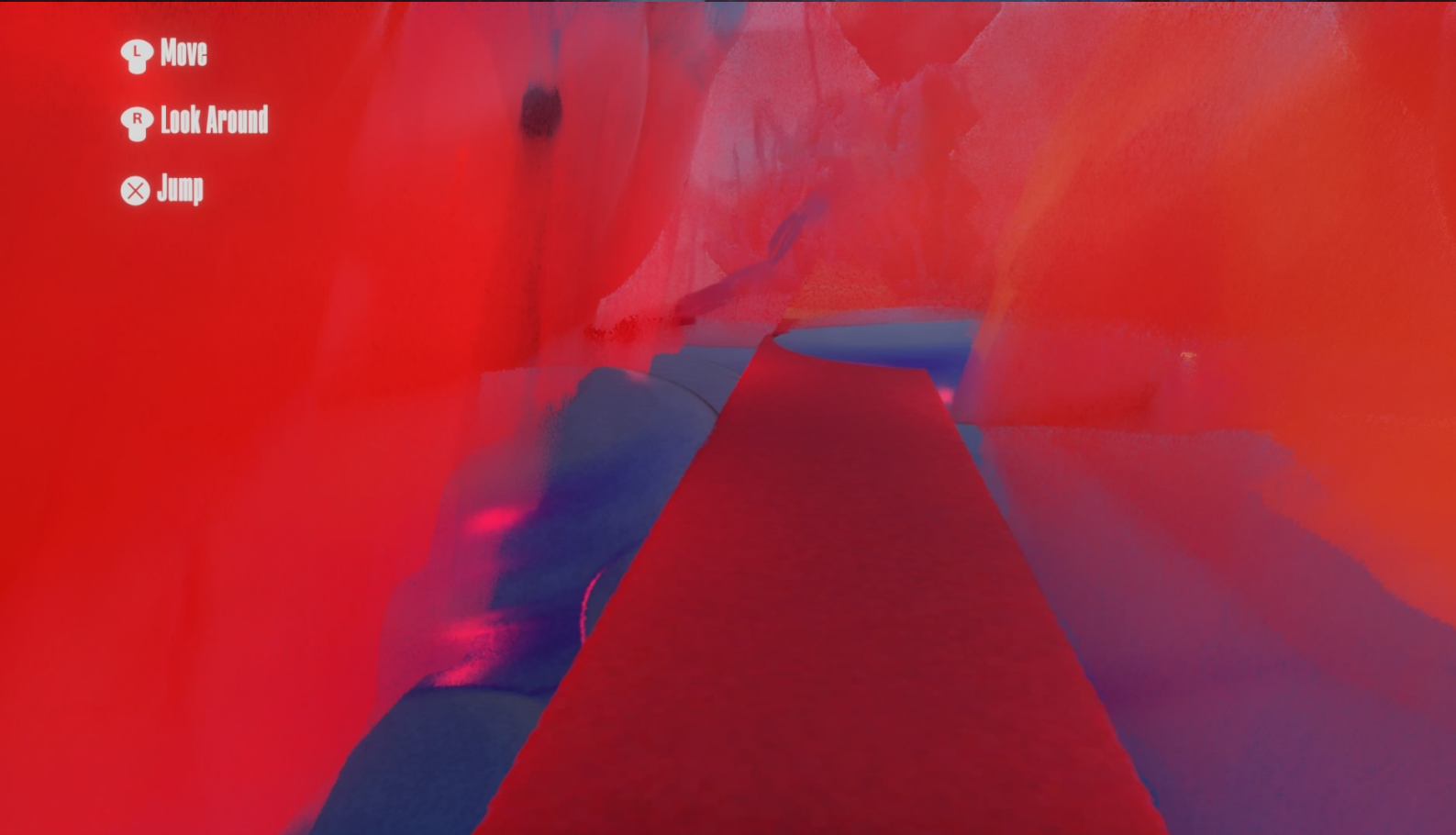
 Jump



 Move

 Look Around

 Jump



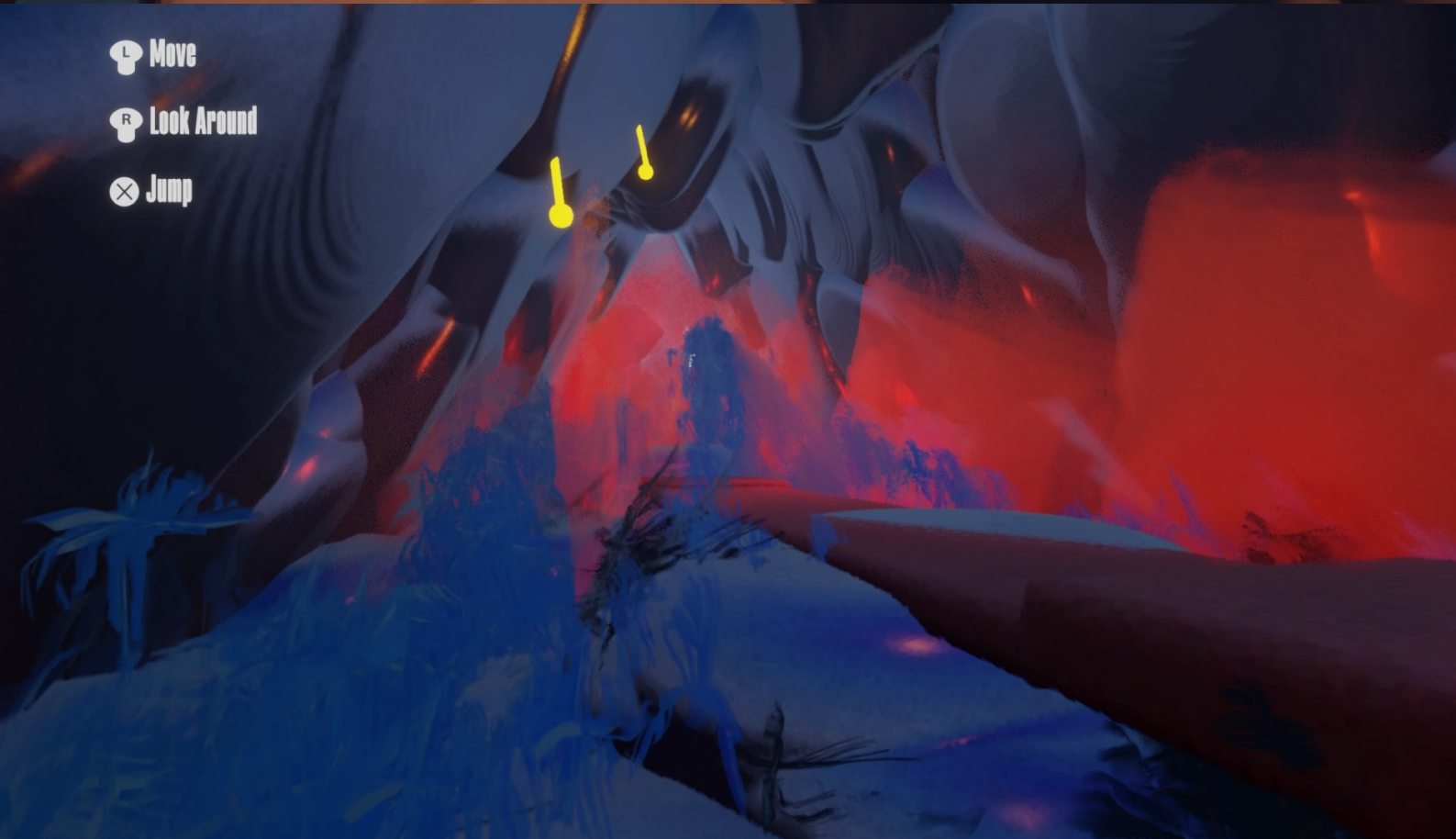
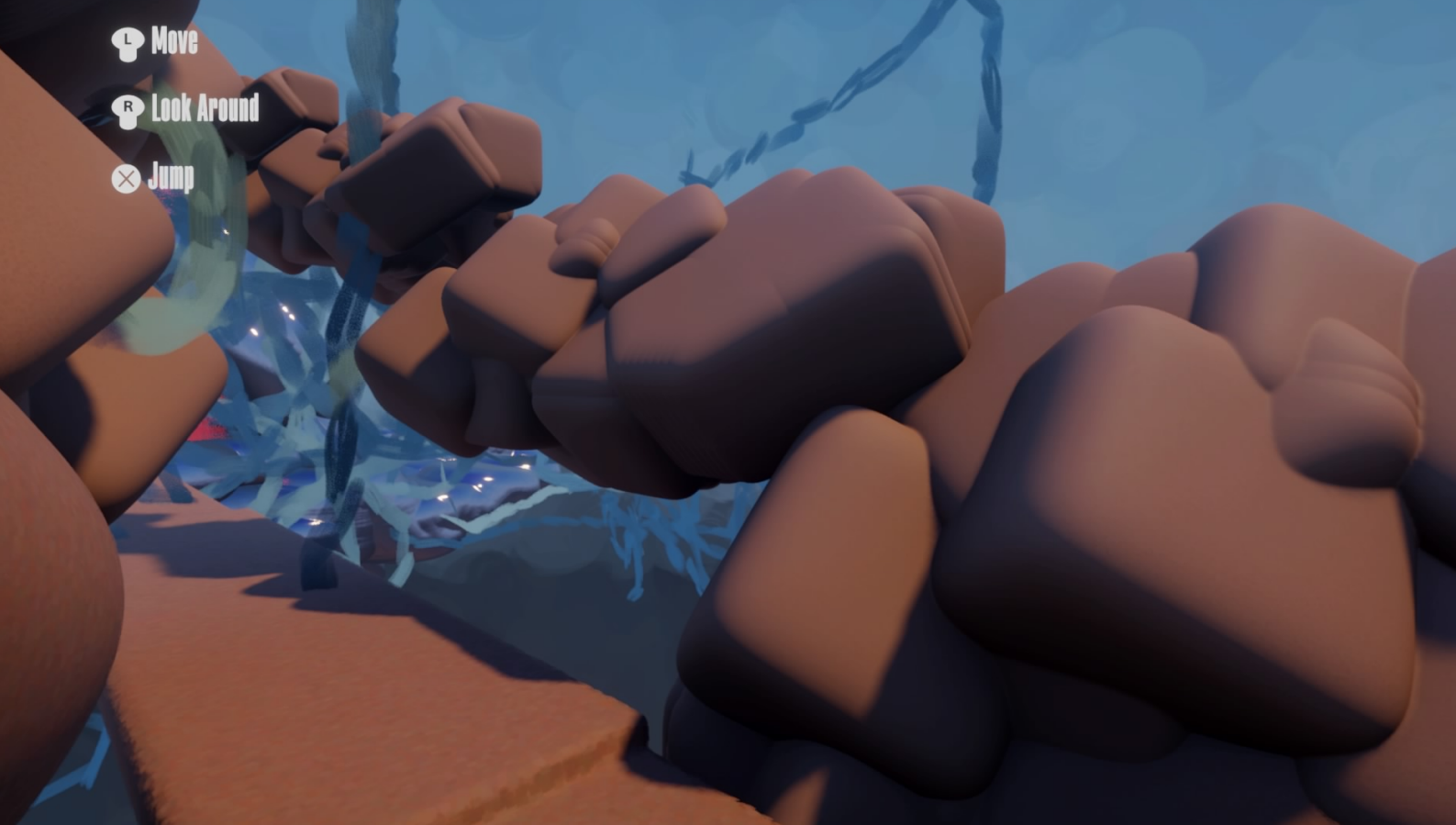


Figure 2.21. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Nourished Becoming II*, 2023, digital gameplay stills, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Conclusion: Matters of the After-Birth

When you have a child, so begins the braiding and in that braid you stay.

- Aldous Harding, musician

As I healed from the transfiguration of pregnancy, learning to care for such a fragile being and communicate with the body and without words became my evolution. The post-partum mind, thanks to the biological flux of hormones, often experiences imbalances resulting in heightened anxiety, depression and in rare cases, even a consuming psychosis. In my case, the post-partum state was one of connection, adaptation, and fluidity to and from an amorphous body and mind. I am irrevocably changed, forever post-partum.

The shifting states that convoy growing life reminds us of our ability to change and evolve on a larger scale. Like the journey through the birth canal, like the nature of the post-partum period, time is and isn't.⁵⁴ The evolving topographies of body and terra are laid bare for queer speculation, re-imagining new landscapes we can use to attune to the Earth. I have found through this practice-led research that my initial questions considering exploration through the pregnant and post-partum body have evolved to consider aspects of queer theory, offering analogies of ecological connectedness across the gender spectrum.

The elements in my exhibition for examination include a publication drawing into my printmaking practice as part of this research, illustrating linocut, blind embossing and mono screen drawing techniques discussed in *Part II: Matters of Earth*. Projected versions of the interactive digital environments, *Nourished Becoming* feature. At the same time, a sound work comprised of wordless human vocalising and harmonising will be heard throughout Te Wai Ngutu Kākā, Gallery Three, Tāmaki Makaurau.

I have proposed in this thesis that our responsibility as kaitiaki of Papatūānuku and our responsibility towards the climate crisis might be accepted, understood, and actioned by attuning. I have created landscapes, formed and informed by an expansion of drawing that utilises a range of media simultaneously, acting as an analogy for the interspecies and cross-cultural, social and political interdependence we must enact to recognise and ameliorate our contemporary climate position. The research acknowledges the multifarious ways of being, and the multifarious ways of making as pluralist politics in praxis.

⁵⁴ The post-partum state is broadly understood as the six weeks after giving birth. In this after-time, the hormones that assisted the creation and birth of a baby will all together increase and decline before returning to pre-pregnancy levels. The uterus continues to contract and shrink in its sudden emptiness. In the experience of bodies with the ability or desire to breast or chest feed, colostrum transitions to milk and finds equilibrium in flow.



Figure 3.1. Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, *Braided Series*, 2023, mono screen drawing on paper, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland

Appendix

The works in the final MVA exhibition at Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery 3, AUT offer a visual, haptic and aural means to understand our contemporary eco-political position. This amalgam offers a means of attunement to matters of care, interdependence and responsibility. The research is embodied in an inter-media drawing practice of digital, interactive environments, printmaking, sound and sculpture. The methods in inter-media drawing reveal a process of world-building that is synergetic with the multifarious realities of life and non-life on our planet.

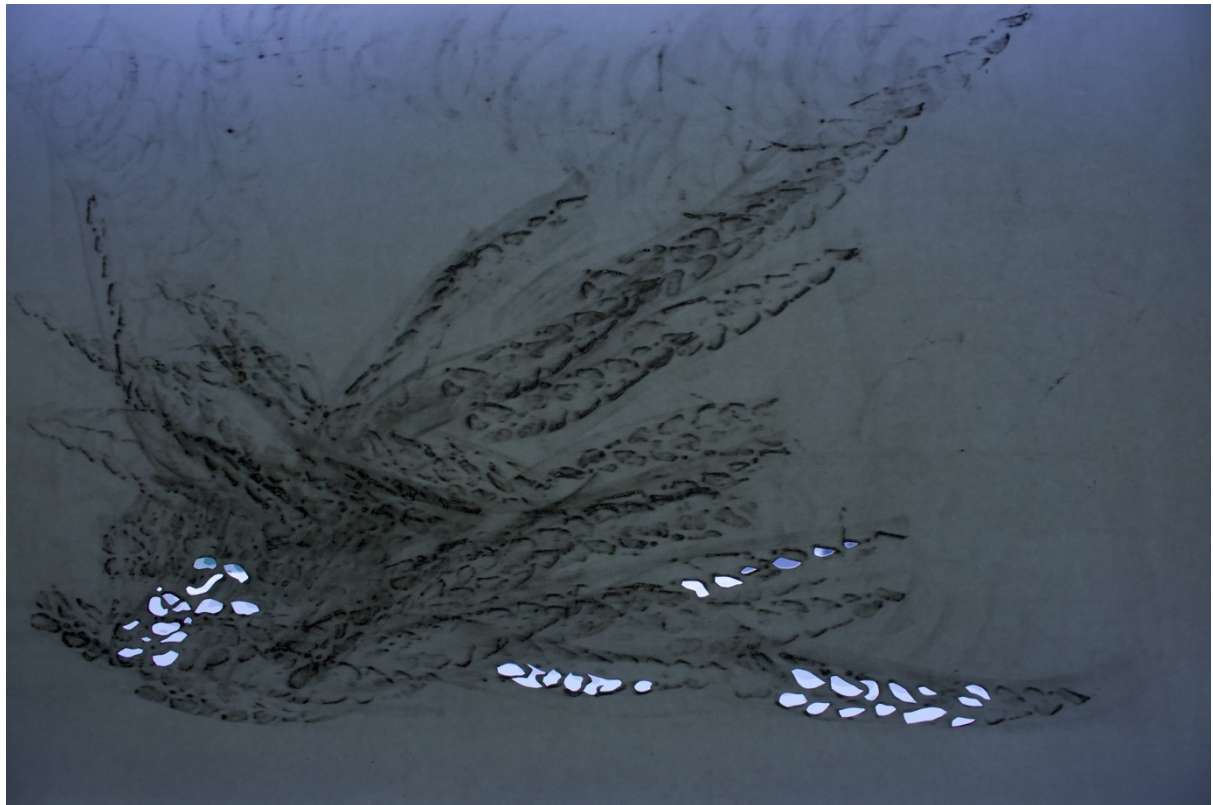
The exhibition elements include: two interactive digital environments *Nourished Becomings I* and *Nourished Becomings II*, with two PlayStation 4 controller and two projectors suspended by wire cables; two mono screen print drawings on paper with cut-outs on the window panes; a large-scale video projection with excerpts from the *Nourished Becomings* series game development; the sound composition *Okay, I hear You* (7:44); and a publication illustrating linocut, blind embossing and mono screen drawings.



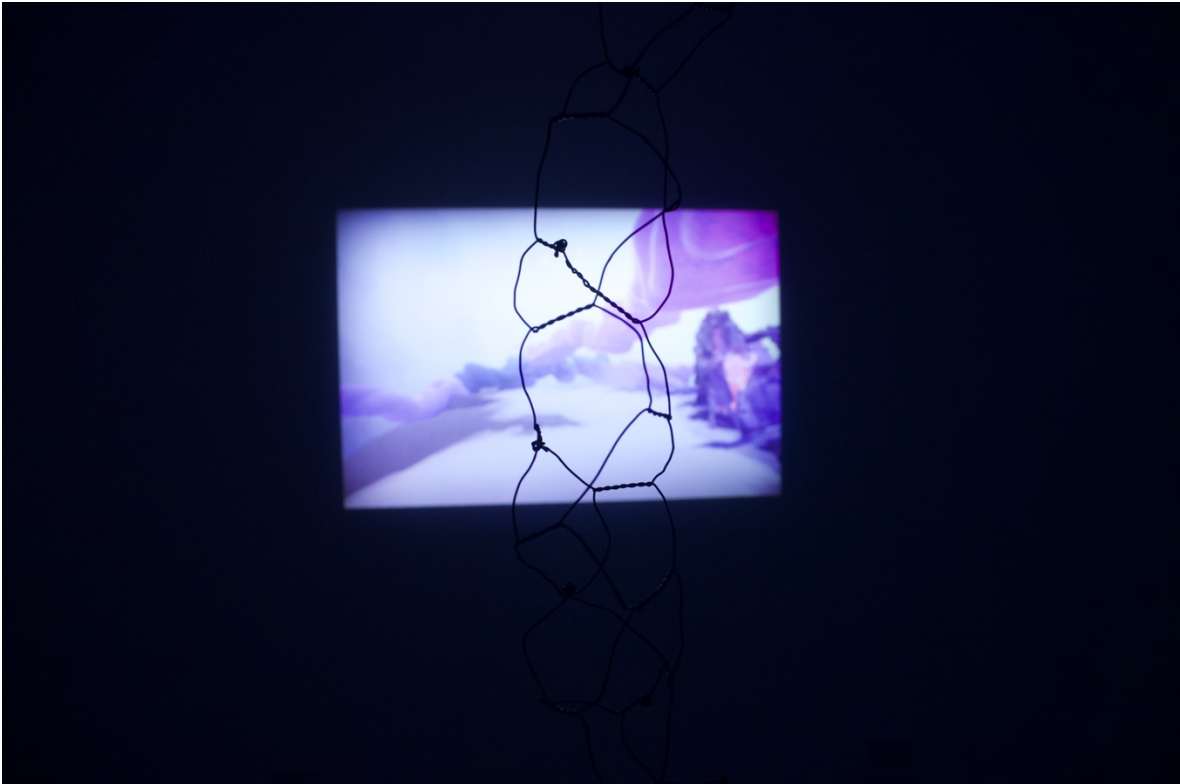
Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, Installation stills from graduation exhibition. *Earth as Mother, Mother as Earth: Evolving Topographies of Body and Terra*. An Inter-media Drawing Practice. Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery 3, AUT, Tamaki Makaurau, Auckland. August 11 – 14, 2023.



Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, Installation stills from graduation exhibition. *Earth as Mother, Mother as Earth: Evolving Topographies of Body and Terra*. An Inter-media Drawing Practice. Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery 3, AUT, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland. August 11 – 14, 2023.



Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, Mono screen Drawing with cut outs. Installation stills from graduation exhibition. *Earth as Mother, Mother as Earth: Evolving Topographies of Body and Terra. An Inter-media Drawing Practice.* Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery 3, AUT, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland. August 11 – 14, 2023.



Alexandra Selkirk-Hanna, Installation stills from graduation exhibition. *Earth as Mother, Mother as Earth: Evolving Topographies of Body and Terra*. An Inter-media Drawing Practice. Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery 3, AUT, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland. August 11 – 14, 2023.

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