

**These Things Are Agents of the World and They Announce Themselves:
the Sculptural Object in Artworks by Maddie Leach and Bianca Hester**

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Abstract

This thesis considers the sculptural object in artworks by Maddie Leach and Bianca Hester. Looking at the way the object is deployed in these practices has consequences for our understanding of matter and its relationship to subjectivity, which, in turn, affects our understanding of place and cultural context. Consciously situated in Aotearoa, the reading of these objects draws on two strands of thought: the work of contemporary indigenous Māori thinkers including Carl Te Hira Mika (Tuhourangi / Ngaati Whanaunga), Amiria Henare [Salmond] and Moana Jackson (Ngāti Kahungunu, Rongomaiwahine and Ngāti Porou), and that of feminist materialist philosophers including Donna Haraway, Karen Barad and Elizabeth Grosz.

As a Pākehā curator and writer, I argue that while these lines of thought are fundamentally different and should be acknowledged as such, it is necessary within a bicultural context to articulate a relational perspective that works between and through such differences. Objects here, in Aotearoa, read differently through the double lens of colonial presence; what does this mean for practices, such as my own, in which material objects are primary? I am not interested in simply inverting the terms of a human/object, active/passive binary, nor in seeking terms of equivalence or reconciling ontological standpoints. Rather, I undertake a shift in emphasis: a strategic foregrounding of the material object, and of Māori philosophical thought in which the material world is sovereign entity. This offers a way of thinking through the inter-relationship of things in the world, as an ecology within which humans function but do not have authority; are within, rather than omnipresent to.

Mika (quoted in the title of this thesis) suggests that in Māori philosophy, the idea that thought originates from the individuated self is both erroneous and colonising. Aligning with this position, I argue that what is able to be observed in this research is possible only through the acts of ‘disclosure’ on the part of the material world in the first instance; that admitting partial apprehension of the material thing compels re-thinking the dominant ‘knowing’ vocabulary with which objecthood is addressed.

The project is shaped as a curatorial writing practice. That is, ideas of cultural identity, materiality and the decolonisation of discourse are processed performatively through

writing. The writing is approached as a material form in itself, effecting change as well as recording this process. As such it operates as a thing in the *transitional* sense conceived by Grosz: as a compromise between mind and matter. Rather than writing *about*, I situate the writing within a field also occupied by the objects under observation. Like the sculptural objects, the writing is a thing with its own material specificity: it produces affects, it moves us and changes things. One of the things the writing changes is my own subjectivity.

The research returns to a question paraphrased from Grosz's essay "The Thing": What are the significances of acknowledging the thing as the condition and resource for the subject's being and enduring? What happens when we attempt to address the material object and its effects as primary, as culturally located, and with a different set of conditions and possibilities to those of people-centred acts of making and interpretation?

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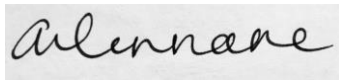
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I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Lennane', is shown on a light gray rectangular background.

5 March 2018

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0. Prologue: Where to begin

It's January in Hamilton and my grandmother Cecil Margaret Brooke is dying. She's about to turn 90—she was born in 1927—and over this last year dementia has changed her so much that she no longer recognises me, or perhaps even the white house in Gordonton in which she has spent much of her life. During a conversation with my mother about my grandmother's life, an intermittent conversation we continue through the summer, mum tells me that my grandmother told her that on her side of the family, we have written genealogical records going back to 1066 and the Norman conquest of England. This violent invasion and occupation is a beginning in the narrative of our family, as my grandmother Margaret would tell it. In irregular leaps, it would then include the arrival of my English ancestors five generations back, Sarah Mounsey and William Hutchinson, to Auckland in February 1880 on the S.S. British Empire from East India Docks, London, then moving to the Waikato where they bought land on the Piako Block. That land was originally part of government confiscations in 1865, following major conflict in the Waikato in 1860-64, during what became known as the New Zealand Land Wars, Ngā Pakanga o Aotearoa, or Te Riri Pākehā (the Pākehā anger). Here they cleared and drained the swampy land along with other settler colonial¹ farmers, in doing so radically altering the land so that fires often occurred in the peat underground. They farmed small gold Jersey cattle, less heavy than Friesians on the still-boggy paddocks. Many of my extended family on that side are still in the Waikato, still farming dairy. My grandmother moved at the end of last year from the home farm into hospital care in a rest home in Hamilton East. Right now I think she'll be sleeping.

None of these details are remarkable. I share a history of arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand similar to that of many other Pākehā settlers in this country. I begin with it though because through the process of this research, I've realised that it's important to begin by acknowledging who and where I am. For me, that begins with the story of how I came to be here. This is because how I came to be where I am now has everything to do with who I am, and, significantly, the position from which I conduct this research. I'm here because my ancestors came along with other colonisers, looking for a 'new'

¹ I use the term settler colonialism to refer to a process of colonisation in which settlers come and do not leave. Settler colonial presence is structural rather than an historical event, that is, it is sustained through government control over indigenous land and people. For a discussion of this in a contemporary context, see Lorenzo Veracini, "Settler Colonialism and Decolonisation," *borderlands e-journal* 6, no.2 (2007), np.

place to start, and stayed. Today I identify as Pākehā, a non-Māori, non-indigenous person, and this word holds within it two related facts: that of my predecessors' arrival, and the ongoing—and in many ways profoundly negative—consequences of colonial presence for those indigenous to Aotearoa. I am Pākehā in relation to Māori. As Māori lawyer and philosopher Ani Mikaere (Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Porou) pointed out in her 2004 lecture “Are We All New Zealanders Now? A Māori Response to the Pākehā Quest for Indigeneity,” there is no other place in the world where you can be Pākehā.² I take this to mean that there is no other place in the world where I have the same invitation, or responsibility, to work within this specific cultural relationship, and to work out what that means. This research is founded in questions of what living and working in bicultural relationship means for my thinking, and everyday practices.

What does being Pākehā mean for this research, sitting as it does within the field of contemporary curatorial work and art practice? Firstly, it means that I am learning as I go. That is, I relinquish expertise for the position of learner and listener. Part of this is acknowledging that the Western-dominant model of art history that I was taught in undergraduate art history is insufficient when it comes to working critically in a contemporary bicultural context. By insufficient I mean both conceptually limiting and relationally harmful. Repeating this model of art history in contemporary practice re-entrenches colonialist assumptions about to whom the land in Aotearoa belongs, and the way that material things are allowed to make sense, including how they are read as art objects.

Secondly, it means that this project comes from a ‘decolonising’³ impetus, that the ongoing philosophical consequences of colonisation are something I am alert to in this project, with regard to the way this is evident in contemporary art, curatorial practice and art historical scholarship. That is, I acknowledge that the forgetting or invisibility of colonisation is a foundational condition for dominant art discourse in this country, and further, that settler identities (including economic wealth, and other material aspects of

² Mikaere goes on to say, “Whether the term remains forever linked to the shameful role of the oppressor or whether it can become a positive source of identity and pride is up to Pākehā themselves. All that is required from them is a leap of faith.” Ani Mikaere, “Are We All New Zealanders Now? A Māori Response to the Pākehā Quest for Indigeneity” (Bruce Jesson Memorial Lecture, The University of Auckland, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, November 15, 2004).

³ I use inverted commas here, conscious of Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang’s critique of the ubiquity of the term in recent scholarship: “The metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions, or ‘settler moves to innocence’, that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity.” Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 1, no.1 (2012): 1. Without over-emphasising decolonisation per se as an outcome of the research, fundamental to that process is a self-awareness.

privilege) such as my own have been established and affirmed, and continue to be sustained, through this forgetting.

However, I argue that rather than decolonisation as such, the critical positioning of this research is simply the consciously politicised *remembering* of the context in which I am working as a Pākehā curator. It is my intention that it should be understood on these terms, as a project purposefully limited to the realm of art and curatorial writing practice, but within the awareness that coloniality infiltrates all aspects of institutional practices.⁴ How do I work critically and within the academy, while identifying the multiple ways the colonial legacy (the education academy no small part of this) has in the past, and continues to suppress an entire cultural history indigenous to Aotearoa?

As many have pointed out, it's not up to indigenous thinkers to educate non-indigenous people about the effects of colonisation; the responsibility in this context lies with Pākehā to educate each other.⁵ This holds across all academic disciplines. What I set out to do here is to work towards a discussion of materiality that does not default to the dominant discourse, as a way of developing more honest relationships with the place in which I live. I undertake the project on finding myself with insufficient language to address, in a bicultural context, the objects that are a core element of my working practices as a curator. There are others like me who write from a settler perspective, as tauiwi, manuhiri, or other positions of 'foreign-ness' or stranger,⁶ and are also working through how to hold this subject position in a way that has intellectual integrity and is practically useful. I also want it to be something I can talk about with my grandmother.

⁴ It may be argued that even the term 'curatorial practice' is hinged to an assertively Western Eurocentric institutional legacy, and that as such it should be interrogated in research with decolonising intentions. I have decided however to continue to work with the term for the purposes of this text, as for now it relates most clearly to my understanding of the work I do, and the site of critical discourse in which this research sits. I am however aware of its limitations and within the research continue to question these limits, for example through the range of non art-specialist texts referred to throughout. For me the word 'curator' primarily denotes the obligation of care in working alongside an artist, and as such still feels appropriate to the context of this project.

⁵ I take heart and direction here from a number of settler scholars working critically within colonial contexts. See for example Canadian scholars Allison Hargreaves and David Jefferess, who write "We have come to understand this process as a humbling one: . . . it requires us to enter into a relation of sorts with those who have done much of this de-colonized thinking 'for us.' In entering into this relation, we recognize a responsibility not only to acknowledge these influences upon our thinking, but also to engage in a collaborative spirit with this creative and critical work. This entails taking our cues from the work of Indigenous scholars, artists, and activists, while not appropriating this knowledge as our own; it involves speaking from our own subject positions, while understanding the limits of our worldviews; it means learning to think and act differently, while not making Indigenous people responsible for the re-education this transformation requires." Hargreaves and Jefferess, "Always Beginning: Imagining Reconciliation Beyond Inclusion or Loss," in *The Land We Are*, eds. Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill and Sophie McCall (Manitoba: Arp Books, 2015), 201-2. See also Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010).

⁶ For relevant recent local articulations of these positions, see Danny Butt and Local Time, "Hospitality," "Colonial Hospitality: Rethinking Curatorial and Artistic Responsibility," *Journal for Artistic Research* 10 (2016), <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/228399/228400>; and Lana Lopesi, "Allyship, Not Ownership: On Good Curatorship and Being Tauwiwi," *The Pantograph Punch*, December 14, 2016, <http://pantograph-punch.com/post/curatorship-and-being-tauwiwi>, with particular reference to indigenous-self determination, gestures of hospitality and reciprocity.

The project is shaped as a curatorial writing practice. That is, I am working through ideas about materiality or the decolonisation of discourse through the reading of specific artworks. As part of this exercise, in most instances, I deliberately isolate the materiality of these objects from the scope of artists' intentionality, and from the installations within which these objects sit. This is only made possible, reasonable or fair, through the closeness of our working relationship. Maddie Leach and Bianca Hester are both non-indigenous artists. Leach is Pākehā and currently lives in Gothenburg, Sweden; Hester is non-indigenous Australian and lives in Sydney. All the works discussed were however presented in Aotearoa. I experienced each of these works, and in many cases, was actively involved with their realisation in some way.

I chose to focus on the material objects in these two practices with the awareness that both artists have throughout their practices been interested in how objects carry within them histories, relationships, forms of liveliness, and relate to place both as it is culturally and geographically defined. I have worked and spoken with both extensively, and know they are acutely aware of the way that material objects are cultural as well as 'just' material, and that as non-indigenous artists they are alert to the complexity of deploying such objects in their respective practices. That they are non-indigenous is significant in that I feel some agency in working alongside each to come to terms with a common colonial inheritance, and from this position, broadening or challenging the existing vocabulary for reading the objects in their practices. I am aware that like me they are interested in recent conversations around feminist materialisms, and the agency of objects, without being satisfied with this coming from an exclusively Western perspective.

So to start I situate the research explicitly, here in a country with more than one history and intellectual tradition. This grounding is echoed in the structure of my source texts. These include contemporary feminist materialist philosophers including Karen Barad, Elizabeth Grosz and Donna Haraway.⁷ I turn also to the work of contemporary Māori thinkers including Carl Te Hira Mika, (Tuhourangi / Ngaati Whanaunga), Amiria Henare [Salmond] and Moana Jackson (Ngāti Kahungunu, Rongomaiwahine and Ngāti

⁷ The approach I've found is informed by feminist epistemology in the broadest sense, contributing to the project of undoing universalising, abstract, rationalistic perspectives on the world. It was and is important to me that the theorists I began to read on materiality positioned themselves within feminist discourse around materiality. However, there is I think finally more integrity in the admission that the research is primarily responsive to what I found through spending time with the objects and the narrative, inter-textual and interdisciplinary relationships they evoked.

Porou), with reference also to Māori Marsden (1924-1993). It is clear to me that objects here, these artworks included, read differently through the double lens of a colonial presence. As Pākehā I am a part of that presence; it is both because of, and in spite of this that I find it necessary to develop a language for talking about art objects that takes account of, and materialises in writing, an awareness of its cultural context. This is why I turn so frequently throughout to indigenous writers as holders of knowledge—a not uncomplicated ‘turning to’ as few of these texts directly engage with contemporary art discourse. Further, they only infrequently address a Pākehā audience with specificity,⁸ or refer to singular objects as they are typically identified in the practices discussed.

I recognise, however, that in doing this research it is partly reassurance I am looking for, a way to feel ‘okay’ about a colonial inheritance, from within the relative safety of an institutionally recognised curatorial writing practice. While I may claim to be critically pursuing professional and personal reflexivity, how can this be a critical project if it simply substantiates the existing regime by re-centering my whiteness or non-indigeneity as *the* problem?⁹ A ‘danger’ in a project like this is that it simply expands the vocabulary of the existing power regime, diverting attention from useful structural critique of contemporary art discourses in Aotearoa, with the self-improvement project of a Pākehā curator seeking affirmation.

Here I have two responses. The first is that this mode of research is what I term ‘closed’. That is, it operates in relative containment or specificity, in contrast to much exhibition-making and curatorial practice’s publicness and visibility. The written thesis is therefore a more appropriate form in which to work through questions concerning the cultural positioning of a practice than in a public exhibition context where representation is primary. Secondly I argue that self-censorship has a fundamental relationship to fear. While the ambition to communicate within an awareness of my own

⁸ A relevant exception to this is Moana Jackson’s keynote lecture for Facing the Future: Local, Global and Pacific Possibilities Museums Australasia Conference, 2016. In this lecture Jackson directly addresses ‘Pākehā museum institutions’ and the different ways peoples “imagine and remember their history, [and] the role that museums play in the silencing or the promotion of that way of remembering.” Jackson, “Context: The Evolving Story of Te Tiriti o Waitangi” (keynote, Museums Australasia Conference, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, May 16, 2016), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hCMUb7GJ5tU&t=6s>.

⁹ Poet Ailish Hopper has written about how this maintains the structural hierarchy in her article “Being White”: “White dominance can even hide behind the guilty, silenced, personal defeat that examined whiteness often expresses (read: ‘I’m so stuck!’), doubling down on white privilege, as, once again, white problems are presented as central, ‘unique’, and not merely the expressions of an oppressive group. The self-censoring and sense of futility that white people may experience are not disruptive, but part of race’s design, a narrative policing that preserves roles and power by not presenting, which is to say suppressing, information that runs counter to race’s claims.” Hopper, “Can a Poem Listen? Variations on Being-White,” *Boston Review*, April 23, 2015: <http://bostonreview.net/poetry/npm-2015-ailish-hopper-being-white>. ‘Race’s claims’ are those of biological essentialism; making whiteness the central issue upholds this as a form of exceptionalism, in this way avoiding structural and self-critique.

coloniality is not radical, finding a viable position from which to work relationally, and language that is adequate to respond to both indigenous and non-indigenous practices, is the fundamental challenge of a Pākehā curator working in a bicultural context.

So while this research is undertaken with an objective that could be called decolonising, and I use the word in solidarity with that agenda, I qualify this with the reiteration that it is objects within Leach and Hester's practices that I am focused on. That is, I am not setting out to write 'about' decolonisation. However, acknowledging my own privilege as an inheritor of the dominant discourse also means taking a risk: I have deliberately chosen practices and works I feel close to, and the closeness of the relationship implicates me in all critique. A realisation I came to through the initial phase of research is that a comfortable position can not, and will not, be found in a methodology or philosophy that *reconciles* indigenous and settler perspectives on objects. There is no safe or formulaic synthesis, and this in-betweenness is part of my inheritance as a settler-researcher. Rather than seeking resolution of this often-discomforting feeling, I'm learning to understand the research itself as a form of movement, and my own subjectivity within it as in-process, itself a moving entity.

As non-indigenous scholars such as Paulette Regan have argued, the "pedagogy of discomfort"¹⁰ is an ongoing learning process in which unsettled relations are sustained, not resolved. Haraway upholds a similar argument, when she says, "We...live in disturbing times, mixed-up times, troubling and turbid times. The task is to become capable, with each other in all of our bumptious kinds, of response."¹¹ Haraway's point is also about being in the present, and actively working within its difficulty rather than trying to make the future *safe*. In their work on decolonisation Tuck and Yang also set forth an "ethic of incommensurability", rather than one of reconciliation, that is, one where 'we' all agree on how to move forward. They write, "Reconciliation is about rescuing settler normalcy, about rescuing a settler future. Reconciliation is concerned with questions of *what will decolonization look like? What will happen after abolition? What will be the consequences of decolonization for the settler?* Incommensurability

¹⁰ Regan's term is extrapolated in her book *Unsettling the Settler Within* (2010), which looks at the post-apology reconciliation processes in Canada (Regan is Director of Research for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada). A related argument is presented by Butt in his essay "Tracing We," which proposes a constant oscillation, or movement between past, present and future as a way of destabilising the colonial imaginary in which the past is discontinuous from present and future. Butt, in *What Do You Mean, We?*, eds. Bruce E. Phillips and Rebecca Lal (Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland: Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts, 2012), 45.

¹¹ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 16.

acknowledges that these questions need not, and perhaps cannot, be answered in order for decolonization to exist as a framework.”¹² Working within a decolonising framework for me means returning to the source texts mentioned above, which don’t match up, or parallel each other, and asking where there are points of possible relation in the consideration of material things in a bicultural context, and what remains incommensurable. Setting up a dialectic is not intended.

A further point. None of the texts referred to in this study are specifically art oriented; they address instead materiality, the cultural and critical framing of ‘things’. I made this choice as a way of trying to infiltrate what can feel like an insulated and self-referential discussion in art language. Rather than perpetuate that, I wanted to adopt instead a mode of ‘listening’, to texts which typically lie outside of mainstream art discussion.

Australian educator Colleen McGloin has written of the implications of a practice of listening, and its potential to initiate change in thought patterns: “listening—or hearing—what the ‘other’ has to say, in fact, *must* be a risk-taking venture in order for a change in thought, perception and action to occur. If we are only to hear what is safe or familiar, there will be no conflict, no ‘poles of contradiction’, no impetus or motivation for transformation.”¹³ Through this project the listening has taken me to places I had not anticipated, to acknowledging the relevance of my own whakapapa in research, as a foundation that allows for relations to be built.

Secondly, personalising the language I use, addressing each text to a specific person—my grandmother, Hester and Leach, my sisters and mother—has been a practical way of engaging this thinking within existing relationships. If I am to convincingly argue that material things exist only in relationships, as does subjectivity, then I situate myself in this way also. Initially I found myself addressing a generic ‘you’ in the text, often with an imperative. This was done subconsciously, perhaps to mitigate the de-personalisation of the academic register, maintain anonymity for myself or evade the vulnerability of a recognisable voice. Ultimately I took on the use of personal pronouns more directly so that rather than these being intended as directives, they become parts of dialogue with people I know and trust to listen, and respond.

¹² Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor,” 35.

¹³ Colleen McGloin, ‘Listening to Hear: Critical Allies in Indigenous Studies’, *Australian Journal of Adult Learning* 55, no.2 (2015), 11.

Because of this mode of address, the temporality of each section is specific—for example this prologue was begun while my grandmother was dying, and completed after her passing; it is written for her and in one sense forever located in that time. Other sections were completed and revised at specific intervals throughout the period of research. I have kept conspicuous time markers in them: the non-linear temporality further reflects the fact that text itself is always written and edited over time. The conventional inference (through grammar and tense use) that writing comes into being in an instant and is forever ‘current’ is antithetical to this approach to text, as itself a material and therefore aging thing also.

Finally. There are a lot of rocks in this research. While on one hand this accurately reflects the presence of rocks in the practices focused on, and the recurrent idea of a bedrock of whakapapa, it must also be said simply that I love rocks, geology, volcanic processes, minerals. This has undoubtedly narrowed and concentrated my vision in a way that is entirely intuitive. In response to this realisation I have come to think of the text as a single, whole rock, with multiple states: sedimentary, metamorphic, or igneous—and facets: jagged cross-section, weather-worn porous surface, and water-silked gleaming face. In this focus on materiality, it may be useful to consider each chapter as both a form and a process, like a rock. As a cliff face and something able to be held in the hand.

So this is for you grandma, who didn’t make the future safe for me, but instead gave me the boldness for risking real relationships, the strong bones for working hard, and the awareness that criticality should be founded in compassion and an awareness of the past.

For my grandmother, Cecil Margaret Brooke Annals (31 January 1927 – 10 February 2017)

1. Introduction: A function of the ecology¹⁴

The protagonists in this research are all things: a meteorite, a bronze pole, a concrete wall, a magnet and a pacemaker, a storm warning and a boatshed. This is not a text about people. *Art is always a story about people you say: you're telling it, for a start.* I'll start again. This is a story in which the people—viewers, participants, artists, curators—will for the most part be held in the subtext, subverting the dominant representation of human status in relation to the rest of the things that make up the material world. I am not interested, however, in simply inverting the terms of a binary, active and passive, or in seeking terms of equivalence. Rather I undertake a conscious shift in emphasis, a 'strategic foregrounding'¹⁵ of the object: of *matter, material, things*, rather than artworks per se. I adopt this as a way of thinking through the inter-relationship of things in the world and humans, of approaching this as a system within which humans function, but do not have authority. The sculptural objects in this research are addressed as sites where this inter-relationship plays out explicitly, and not in a vacuum but in a specific place, time, and cultural context: here, Aotearoa.

In making the decision to focus on things I'm not intending to erase the presence of humans in making the artworks, nor diminish the gravity of the scale and weight of human agency within the material world in more general terms, for example, in the anthropogenic impacts of climate change. Rather, I'm interested in the personal and political consequences of shifting the way we look at objects from the material world, to a perspective in which humans are situated *within* a broader material ecology. In Barad's feminist science studies framework this would be called "thinking the social and the natural together."¹⁶ More specifically, in the frame of this study, I want to know what happens when we 'zoom in' to look at the sculptural objects within Hester and

¹⁴ This phrase is Emilie Rāketē's. In the text from which it comes Rāketē revisits the common translation of *tāngata whenua* as 'people of the land', to question the way this translation is predicated on the human subject being in the foreground. She offers instead a broader ecological perspective. Rāketē, "In Human: Posthumanism, Parasites, Papatūānuku," *Anarchic Cannibalism* blog, accessed January 15, 2015: <http://anarchicannibalism.tumblr.com/post/99890543754/in-human-parasites-posthumanism-papat%C5%AB%C4%81nuku>, later published in *The Documenta 14 Reader*, eds. Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk (Munich: Prestel, 2017), 633-643.

¹⁵ I look to Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins' work here, aligning with their question about method in such studies: "What occurs when we strategically foreground the material events over their interpretation? To put it another way, we have a deep curiosity about whether the language of the material and materialization might have different epistemological and political effects from the language of interpretation and the subject." Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins, "Indigenous Discourse and 'the Material': A Post-interpretivist Argument," *International Review of Qualitative Research* 1, no.2 (2008): 126.

¹⁶ Karen Barad's point—"we need a method for theorizing the relationship between 'the natural' and 'the social' together without defining one against the other or holding either nature or culture as the fixed referent for understanding the other"—is that as there is not a fixed reference, so too, even what is subject and what is object is not defined in advance. The relationship is instead one of entanglement. See Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 30.

Leach's practices as material phenomena, with their own level of agency. At what happens when we attempt to address the material and its effects as primary, with a different set of conditions and possibilities to those of people-centred interpretations of art making.

You have questions. We perhaps think alike and they are ones that I'd have too. What are these material things? How do I usefully define them for this study, given the assertion that they have their own agency and co-define us through relationship? As a starting point, I look to the physical, identifiable elements of the artworks themselves: what I encounter when I 'go to see' the work. I do not intend this research to take shape as a theoretical model, but rather as a series of focused observational encounters with specific material things: sculptural objects. I am however less interested in interrogating what makes them 'sculpture' within a Western art historical lineage, more with looking directly to the material elements in these works to think through how they are culturally identified as objects in the first place.

Further, this reading of the sculptural objects encompasses that which is immaterial, taking as given an argument articulated by artist and writer Terri Bird: "immateriality (is implied) within the limits of materiality. This immateriality is neither beyond matter, nor tied to a transcendent ideal, rather it exceeds the confines of material limits while at the same time being an effect produced by material operations."¹⁷ In the frame of this research, materiality embodies this continuity. For a related reason I use the words *matter* and *material* interchangeably throughout. Though they have different dictionary and popular definitions—'matter' being substance or mass; 'material' being that from which something can be made—I deliberately ignore this distinction as a way to avoid foregrounding human-centric dichotomies of being/resource, and presence/instrumentality, in deference to a fluidity between these categories.¹⁸

¹⁷ Terri Bird, "Matter's Medium," unpublished essay (2006), 1, as cited by Bianca Hester, "Material Adventures, Spatial Productions: Manoeuvring Sculpture Towards a Proliferating Event" (Doctoral thesis, RMIT University, 2007), 45.

¹⁸ This stems from a wider distrust of the binaristic thinking underpinning modernity; as new materialist scholars Rick Dolphijn and Iris Van der Tuin propose, dismissing dualisms enables "a new conceptualization of difference (structured by an affirmative relation). . . . an ontological philosophical practice predicated on leaving behind all prioritizations (implicitly) involved in modern dualistic thinking, since a difference structured by affirmation does not work with predetermined relations (e.g. between mind and body)." "Pushing Dualism to an Extreme," in *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, eds. Dolphijn and Van der Tuin (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Open Humanities Press, 2012), np.

More broadly, with regard to ‘things’, I adapt a definition from Barad. “‘Things’ don’t pre-exist, they are agentially enacted and become propertied and bounded within phenomena. Outside of particular agential intra-actions, ‘words’ and ‘things’ are indeterminate.”¹⁹ That is, things materialise within situations. While it is not possible to access “things-in-themselves” outside of human perceptual, physical or conceptual awareness, in deploying a provisional or qualified form of realism, I’m working with the understanding of things as those which come into visibility as forms we can recognise, and within relationship to us as humans.²⁰ So while I might at one level define ‘things’ as being ‘not human’, this is wilfully complicated by the corresponding assertion that what interests me most is how we are co-constituted in this relationship. Foregrounding the objects does not in this sense dislocate them from a relational context.

This is not my own idea. Most relevant in this place, Aotearoa New Zealand, is the Te Ao Māori organisational principal of whakapapa, which situates humans in relation to the Earth, Papatūānuku. Emilie Rākete (Ngāpuhi) writes of this relationship: “From a political ecological perspective rooted in Papatūānuku, we could translate ‘tangata whenua’ . . . as ‘land-people’—‘people’ not as its own epistemological category, but as a function of the land, of the whenua. We are not beings who are *of* the land but the land itself in the act of being. We are a function of the ecology, we are ecology foremost.”²¹ Ecology is a biological designation; the model here is that of organisms within a system, their relationship to each other, and their surroundings. In Rākete’s statement this goes further than being a passive role. She says, “in the act of being.” This study will consider these acts of being which are not just those of humans, and which are fundamentally relational or intra-active.²²

Rather than emphasising subjectivity as that which individuates the individual, as such (influencing and informing judgements and decisions about so-called objective reality),

¹⁹ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 150.

²⁰ Following physicist Niels Bohr, Barad’s unconventional form of realism is premised on the idea that the apparatus of observation (scientific or otherwise) interacts with what is under observation in ways that are not able to be fully determined. Therefore “things-in-themselves” are not observable, separable entities. This underpins Barad’s concept of intra-action. *Ibid.*, 30-31; 128.

²¹ Rākete goes on later in the text (in which a louse is one of the main characters), “Through Papatūānuku I can sit on the beach, and know that my self is not in the louse’s guts inside the louse, nor in the louse inside my hand, nor in my body inside Papatūānuku, nor in Papatūānuku herself, but distributed at every possible point throughout that system.” Rākete, “In Human,” 2015, np.

²² The term is Barad’s. Rather than interaction, predicated on there being pre-existing individual entities, Barad’s neologism intra-action “signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. . . [It] recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action.” Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 33.

here subjectivity is also understood as developing intra-actively. That is, as a generative thing, reciprocally situating the observer and act of observation as relative, responsive to, and affected by the thing under discussion. In this sense the research embodies what might be seen as a fundamental paradox: while initially focusing on what are commonly perceived as objects, it does not set out to retain a fixed subject/object distinction, but rather to intentionally complicate this as a colonial philosophical mechanism. Mika suggests that “We are . . . taught that thinking originates from the self. This is not the case in Māori philosophy, which moderates the centrality of the self in perception. Our disciplining that we are the source of our thinking is both erroneous and colonising.”²³ It follows from this that what is able to be observed in this research is possible only through the acts of ‘disclosure’ on the part of the material world in the first instance; that admitting partial apprehension of the material thing compels reconsidering not only the dominant definition of objects, but also self-identity.

Mika’s writing on selfhood is foundational in the approach to matter undertaken by this study. For him there is no clear self-world division. On the relationship between people and the Earth, *whakapapa*, he speaks of the introductory *mihi* as “calling on the ground where [one is] from, and speaking to,”²⁴ suggesting that saying one’s *pepeha*²⁵ names mountains, rivers, other people, not as abstract ideas, but in the sense that the self is constituted by these things as well as being among them. He writes, “For Māori, the thing in its most basic sense is like the self: it is immediately connected to everything else, so discussion about ‘things’ itself constitutes some sort of materiality that links the thing to the self. Thus, there must be an ethical way to comport oneself towards things so they are discussed in a way that does not constrain them.”²⁶

I am interested in Mika’s proposal for approaching things through what he calls a “counter colonial poetics” or “ethics of uncertainty”²⁷ destabilising cognitive-dominant ways of knowing the world, while remaining firmly grounded in the certainty provided

²³ Mika, “Dealing with the Indivisible: A Māori Philosophy of Mystery” (keynote lecture, *Ipu ki Uta, Ihu ki Tai*, St Paul St 2017 Symposium, AUT University, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, August 17, 2017).

²⁴ Mika, “Possible Contributions from Spinoza: A Māori Response” (paper presented as part of Pacific Spinoza/Pacific Spaces panel, 2017 Interstices Symposium, AUT University, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, May 28, 2017). Expanding on the same idea, he writes “[T]here is a sense that in these sayings that the self is only uttering those things’ names to begin with *because of* their manifestation....They...reside in the very utterance because of the self’s link with them”, Mika, “The Thing’s Revelation: Some Thoughts on Māori Philosophical Research,” *Waikato Journal of Education* 20, no.2 (2015): 64.

²⁵ Translated literally as ‘saying of the ancestors’, a *pepeha* or recital of *whakapapa* is given in formal situations where personal introduction is required. See *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, s.v. “*pepeha*,” <http://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

²⁶ Mika, “The Thing’s Revelation,” 61-2.

²⁷ Mika, “Thereness: Implications of Heidegger’s ‘Presence’ for Māori,” *ALTERNATIVE* 11, no.1 (2015): 10-11.

by one's whakapapa.²⁸ What I observe of these objects contains much that is hidden from me, as does the indigenous thought Mika writes and speaks of. This both a limit and a prompt: "It is possibly the darkness behind the glaringly evident object that draws us on to continue thinking."²⁹ That is, I start with the objects before me, and a Pākehā inheritance, conditioned by an institutional education that directs me towards 'research' as initiating knowledge. I recognise that Pākehā are not exempt from the effects of coloniality in their thinking; this recognition is a motivation within my research. But I also start with the deep sense of unknowingness that comes with living in a bicultural context. I anticipate, rather than know, that the material objects I address in this study are in-themselves meaningful in ways that may alter how I understand subjectivity, or practice research. What I currently embody as knowledge may hinder rather than help in this process. In a related sense, I am not looking for new manifestations of meaning, as separate from the objects, but to find ways to relate to them as already and always meaning-*full*.³⁰

Other local writers such as Alison Jones and Te Kawehau Hoskins have recently focused particular attention on the consideration of objects as *volitional*, a capacity to act freely of human will, and to effect things. Identifying that the same ontological assumptions (subject-object dualism) underlie empirical and interpretive analyses of objects, they point out that indigenous ontologies never had a culture/nature division, rather a living awareness of the human, non-human inter-dependence.³¹ Further, Jones and Hoskins write, "The identity of 'things' in the world is not understood as discrete or independent, but emerges through, and with, everything else. It is the relation, or connection, not the thing itself that is ontologically privileged in Indigenous Māori thought."³² So while the 'new materialists'³³ (and in this respect, also this research) may

²⁸ In other places, Mika reiterates the integral connection between concept of self and thing in both spoken and material expressions of whakapapa: "things arise not just from 'whakapapa' as it is constructed, but from whakapapa *itself* as a participant in Papatūānuku or 'rock foundation beyond expanse' [see Māori Marsden, 2003, 22]." Mika, "The Thing's Revelation," 63.

²⁹ Mika, "Thereness," 11.

³⁰ An extension of this idea may be found in Amiria Henare [Salmond], Martin Holbraad and Sari Wastell's *Thinking Through Things: Theorising Artefacts Ethnographically* (London: Routledge, 2007), 4: "meanings are not 'carried' by things but just *are identical* to them. Such a starting point neutralises the question of 'knowledge' at the outset, because meanings . . . no longer need to be excavated, illuminated, decoded and interpreted."

³¹ They emphasise this in both historical and present contexts. "Much of Māori everyday life is shaped by awareness of the human-non-human dynamic, as humans (*as* Māori) constantly negotiate with the natural world, endeavouring to meet its dispositions and participate in its balances." Alison Jones and Te Kawehau Hoskins, "A Mark on Paper: The Matter of Indigenous-Settler History," *Posthuman Research Practices in Education*, eds. Christina Hughes and Carol A. Taylor (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 79. Jones and Hoskins write collaboratively, from different cultural backgrounds, Pākehā and Māori.

³² *Ibid.*, 80.

³³ The term, initially used by philosophers Rosi Braidotti and Manuel DeLanda in the late 1990s, accounts for a growing inter-disciplinary focus on matter, materiality and processes of materialisation as fundamental to cultural theory. Politically this 'post-constructivist' approach necessitates a shift from humanist and transcendental thinking towards that in which matter is considered co-productive in discourse and social experience, and significantly, also has agency independent of humans. The 'new' signifies a

work to resist the telos of a self-world binary, and to establish ‘new’ terms of engagement with the material world, Jones and Hoskins note that this is already given in a Māori cultural context. In keeping with this, they assert that forms of material vitality or liveliness are not an expression of an object in isolation, but rather of connection.

I am not setting out to compare ‘worldviews,’ or, to seek alternative epistemologies as a way of supplementing or refreshing the dominant knowledge system. Rather, as a Pākehā I register Jones and Hoskins’ prompt that one may work “within/against” forms of discourse,³⁴ as a place to begin. That is, working within the relative familiarity of the contemporary art context, and the feminist materialist literature I am aware of (mostly from outside of an Aotearoa New Zealand context), I turn against it also, to the objects and to published texts from indigenous writers here, as a way of thinking through how both relationship and differences might co-exist, in a reading of things.

Significant for this study is the work of philosopher Elizabeth Grosz, whose work is founded in a conception of the relation between nature and culture as “a form of emergence or complexity rather than one of opposition,”³⁵ informing her understanding of the thing, as “condition and [. . .] resource for the subject’s being and enduring.”³⁶ I take this as a thesis question, asking: *what are the significances of acknowledging the thing as the condition and resource for the subject’s being and enduring?* This in turn relates to the concept of ‘worlding’, which arises frequently in new materialist literature. In this context the term is generally used in reference to emergence, transformation, materialisation; the experience of being ‘within’ a whole, system, or network.

shift from Marxist materialism, as an essentially anthropocentric theory of value, as well as a different approach to history, where ‘new’ is not required to update or reform the ‘old’, rather offers an alternative reading. I use it with reservations around the potential of such theories to avoid cultural histories and specificities, and the impact of social forces through the focus on matter-as-such. It is however useful here in a categorical way, particularly for its association with contemporary feminist work concerned with materialities (as distinct from materialist feminism of the 1970s, in which the emphasis is on how capitalism and the patriarchy are fundamental to the oppression of women). Barad’s work on intra-activity is particularly interesting in my research, for the way in which it may connect—and productively differ—from some indigenous thinking on an interconnected and agential material world here in Aotearoa. See interviews with Braidotti and DeLanda respectively, Dolphijn and Van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, np.

³⁴ The term is Jones and Hoskins, from their injunction that Western scholars interested in new materialism learn how to work at a cross-grain to Western-dominant ontologies, develop new vocabulary which “troubles both empiricist and interpretivist social science, to open up a space where objects can express their vitality and agency.” I first heard it in their delivery of “A Mark on Paper: The Matter of Settler-Indigenous History,” at Transversal Practices: Matter, Ecology and Relationality, The Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, Australia, September 27-29, 2015. See published version of the talk, Jones and Hoskins, “A Mark on Paper,” 85-86.

³⁵ The full quote reads: “If we understand the relations between nature and culture as a relation of ramification and elaboration, or in the language of science, as a form of emergence or complexity, rather than one of opposition...culture [...] providing the latest torsions, vectors, and forces in the operations of an ever-changing, temporally sensitive nature, cultural studies can no longer afford to ignore the inputs of the natural sciences if [it is] to become self-aware.” Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 47.

³⁶ Grosz, “The Thing,” *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2001), 167. Grosz shares the new materialists’ energy to conceptualise the biological as inseparably engaged within the social.

A prescient articulation of a related idea comes through in Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal's statement, "[m]ā tona Ao te tangata e tohu e oho ai tōna ngākau, tōna wairua e mārama ai ki ētahi mea,"³⁷ which Mika broadly interprets as the following:

The world sets the limits of the self; thus the self is disclosed, in an act of excitement, for the world. In that act of commission by the world, where the self is joyfully disclosed *as* bounded by the world, some things are excitedly brought into relief for the self. These things are agents of the world and they announce themselves, rise up and disclose themselves in commission with the world. Both self and thing are *worlded*.³⁸

But to say I find correspondences in Royal/Mika and Grosz's positions is not necessarily to find a way forward. There are fundamental problems. The first relates to cultural appropriation. As outlined in the prologue, I make the decision to prioritise engagement with texts which are written in or relate to this place, arguing that any consideration of material things in contemporary practices situated in Aotearoa is only able to be undertaken with regard to its history as a colonised country, and my own history in connection with this. I am seeking a viable position for the Pākehā curator to write from; through the process of research I come to see that I am also seeking a 'place' where I can stand in relation to these things—material art objects—that I work closely with. I begin by saying that acknowledging colonisation in this context means actively taking account of that which has historically been subordinated: specifically, indigenous ontological positions. But deciding as a non-indigenous researcher to prioritise the representation of indigenous thought is not in itself an innocent gesture.

Situating the indigenous scholarship relative to a field of recent Western feminist conceptualisations of matter, broadly characterised as 'new materialist' (Karen Barad, Donna Haraway and Elizabeth Grosz are primary, alongside French philosopher Henri Bergson (1859-1941), a key influence on Grosz among other philosophers focused on materiality), the risk of reducing, exploiting and or homogenising these distinct approaches is real, as is the frequently cited inadequacies of white feminisms for non-

³⁷ Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal, *Te Ngākau* (Te Whanganui-a-Tara: Mauriora Ki Te Ao Living Universe Ltd., 2005).

³⁸ This interpretation was offered within the context of Mika's keynote lecture for the St Paul St 2017 Symposium. Mika, "Dealing with the Indivisible."

white cultures.³⁹ I am conscious of Jones and Hoskins' (among others⁴⁰) critique of the academic tendency in which indigenous ontologies are exploited as resource for the theorising of materialism, in their words: "a kind of risky 'dash and grab' from magical non-modern Others that re-enacts the colonising imperative."⁴¹

This relates to the second problem, the fetishisation of the material, of things over relationships. While I set out quite practically to expand the way I write about 'things' in art practice, in that act of academic writing I inevitably dislocate the self and things further, attempting to articulate connections that are often felt, affective, spiritual. As Grosz writes, we turn states of energy—*modifications, perturbations, changes of tension*—into things, "We make objects in order to live in the world."⁴² We solidify what might otherwise be understood as forces, to make them tangible and communicable, and in this process something of the 'real' eludes us, while the form itself (in this case, the writing—arguably this is especially the case in the English language, and through translations) becomes awkwardly visible. The writing congeals energy and perception into a form of material object.

It is in this recognition that I find a provisional reconciliation of the problems identified above—cultural appropriation, and fetishisation of the material—offering a working method for this study. The writing itself is a process of recognising and developing relationships. It is not possible for me to understand many of these texts without conversation and exchange. In order to write, I need to talk and to keep talking with those for whom the knowledge is lived and embodied, not located in written form. Further, I realise that one of these 'things' under observation is the written text itself. It too is something which makes solid form of thoughts, instincts, perception. That is, that the writing produces affects too, that it moves and changes things. One of the 'things' it changes is me. In the course of the research I have come to realise that subject-object fluidity implicates me too: that the writing is not distinct from, rather an extension of my own process of subjectivation.

³⁹ See for instance, Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989): 139-67.

⁴⁰ See for instance, Zoe Todd (Métis/otipemisiw), "An Indigenous Feminist's Take on the Ontological Turn: 'Ontology' Is Just Another Word for Colonialism," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29 (2016): 4-22.

⁴¹ Jones and Hoskins, "A Mark on Paper," 85.

⁴² Grosz, "The Thing", 174.

So rather than writing *about* per se, I am writing within a field that is also occupied by the objects. And like the sculptural objects, the writing is a thing with its own material specificity, its grammar and formal limits as well as its scope for idiosyncrasy and narrative. I set out to emphasise these capacities of writing—for example through following conceptual tangents (such as the pacemaker in chapter two); including rhetorical devices such as repetition (as in chapter six); markers of time passing (as in chapter five, and throughout); adopting a mode of personal address (as outlined in the prologue), and by prioritising deeper engagement with a limited number of sources over a breadth-of-field approach. Throughout the whole I include intermittent interruptions (in italics) with writing from a highly subjective perspective. Mainly relating to the body or senses, these are a way of tracing an embedded or ‘autobiographical’ experience within the material world, in a narrative form I resisted integrating into a more analytical framework.

This is a pragmatic as well as an ethical position; the only way I can see to not treat the things addressed as simply ‘objects’ in a study, is to work toward collapsing the “experience/analysis divide” as proposed by Henare [Salmond] et al. among others.⁴³ That is, to present the writing *as* an experience, an extended correspondence between myself and the reader or readers, and by extension, in correspondence with other things and people in the world.⁴⁴ This approach prompts me not to treat the source texts as passive things either, rather as living voices in relation to my own writing. This awareness was heightened for me in reading Jones,⁴⁵ Henare [Salmond] and others writing on early Māori writing and print as taonga, in the sense that it “enabled a form of distributed personhood, involving the *mana*, *tapu* and *hau* of the person [writer]... as well as their ‘thoughts’,”⁴⁶ and as an “instantiation of personhood.”⁴⁷ This is something that working in the context of Aotearoa, my identity as a Pākehā in relation to the Treaty of Waitangi—widely understood as a living document or taonga—makes me

⁴³ Henare [Salmond] et al. *Thinking Through Things*, 4. On a related note, Mika writes: “The thinker is...not outside matter; he or she is instead *within* it.” Mika, “The Thing’s Revelation,” 65.

⁴⁴ A strength of this approach is that it does not allow the research to sit in a vacuum. While, as I mention in the prologue, there are aspects of relative privacy or containment about a text such as this, I am determined to acknowledge the surrounding context as inseparable from it too. For example, through the course of the research I came to be so interested in the work by Mika in particular that I met with him, shared the texts widely with others in my immediate community, and ultimately invited Mika to speak at a curatorial symposium and wānanga I co-convened with Balamohan Shingade for St Paul St Gallery. This, inevitably, influenced my reading and deployment of the texts. Far from objective, I would consider this approach intimately subjective and as such, open to accountability in a way that ‘objective’, passive voice academic writing may not be.

⁴⁵ See Jones, *Hē korero: Words Between Us—First Māori-Pākehā Conversations on Paper* (Wellington: Huia, 2011).

⁴⁶ Henare [Salmond], ‘Taonga Māori: Encompassing Rights and Property in New Zealand’, in *Thinking Through Things*, 54.

⁴⁷ Specifically, Henare [Salmond] writes of the chiefs signing Te Tiriti with a moko facial tattoo, so that the document becomes an extension of their mana, an “instantiation of their personhood.” Ibid., 52.

aware of; something that being *here* makes me aware of. Without elevating my own text as anything more than a speculative experiment in writing addressing objecthood, I acknowledge the power of writing in general to nourish thinking and relationships; this has been my own experience in much of the reading undertaken for this research, for which in particular I thank Carl Mika, Cassandra Barnett, and the artists.

Prioritising encounter with the object-as-material rather than starting with an interpretative strategy involves taking metaphors seriously as a matter of course. The bronze pole *is* lightning; the hands held in fists *are* my heart; whakapapa *is* the earth. In this I refer to Haraway's writing about performative images or figures that can be *inhabited*: "All language...is figurative, that is, made of tropes, constituted by bumps that make us swerve from literal mindedness."⁴⁸ In line with this, I propose that metaphor is often culturally inscribed as 'likeness', as if this were dislocated from 'realness', and that this reading ill-serves indigenous ontologies in which metaphors may be consequential. Within this text I reclaim metaphors as being things too, with efficacy.⁴⁹ Embodied in language, metaphors are able to be embodied by us too as we speak, read, write. A study of objects is necessarily a study of the languages in which they are addressed.

To this end, each chapter takes as a heading and conceptual starting point a single thesis statement chosen from one of the key texts addressed, and sets out to test this in relationship to the sculptural object in focus in that chapter. For example, the first chapter takes a proposition from Mika's phenomenological approach, about the inseparability of so-called independent material things, and considers this through the discussion of the co-constitutive relationship between a rare earth magnet from one of Leach's works, and the image of a pacemaker—theoretically at risk through the presence of the magnet. The idea is followed through an imaginative construct, or put another way, the theory is asked to play out through narrative.

⁴⁸ Haraway goes on, "... we inhabit and are inhabited by such figures that map universes of knowledge, practice and power. To read such maps with mixed and differential literacies, and without the totality, appropriations, apocalyptic disasters, comedic resolutions, and salvation histories of secularised Christian realism is the task of the mutated modest witness." Haraway, "Syntactics: The Grammar of Feminism and Technoscience," *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan_Meets_Oncomouse, Feminism and Technoscience* (London: Routledge, 1997), 11.

⁴⁹ I refer here to Isabelle Stengers' writing on efficacy, in relation to witchcraft and magic. Stengers writes, "In French this word [*efficace*] avoids the tolerant conditioned reaction, 'if it helps them', because it is no longer used, and remains mainly associated with the theological mystery of the efficacy of sacraments. . . . But this very modern division concerning 'what is responsible for what?', is what we overcome without even thinking when we feel the force of words told to us, which produce an answer that is not 'ours', but that rather testifies for a transformation of who we are, a transformation that will maybe require caution and discrimination. Words and theories have efficacy." Stengers, "Experimenting with Refrains: Subjectivity and the Challenge of Escaping Modern Dualisms," *Subjectivity* 22 (2008): 52.

The texts that follow have been shared with the artists (as well as with those they are addressed to). While deeply interested in and respectful of what the artists have to say, I am aware that my articulation of the objects in their practices is not always as they have previously spoken about the work. While wanting the objects to ‘lead’ this discussion, I deeply care what the artists and others I have spoken with think. These relationships are among those that condition my reading of the materiality of the objects. So perhaps you were right: it is a story about people after all. Or, it’s a story in which people and things continue to define each other, in ways that are unpredictable. Geographically, culturally situated, these things—my writing included—are at the same time predicated on understanding the material world as unfixed and unfinished, as moving. Things will not look this way tomorrow.

For my sister, Eve Cunnane

2. **Magnet: The chorus of the rest influences the seemingly distinct refrain of one thing⁵⁰**



Figure 1 Maddie Leach, *H and B* (installation detail), City Gallery Wellington, 2012. Photo: Shaun Waugh.

Maddie Leach

H and B

**50mm x 40mm Neodymium magnet; 25mm x 360mm x 360mm mild steel plate;
360mm x 360mm x 900mm Birch ply plinth; vinyl cut text; 'Glow n Dark' Tesa
Grip Tape.**

in 'The Obstinate Object: Contemporary New Zealand Sculpture'

24 February — 10 June 2012

City Gallery Wellington

Because of the pacemakers, there is a special afternoon meeting in the gallery boardroom. It starts like this: “A rare earth magnet in the gallery opens us up to undue risk. Precautions will have to be undertaken to ensure the safety of the public. We are not set up for dealing with dangerous objects.” In the statement there are several perspectives represented. *Us* is the public art gallery institution, within which, *we* are the exhibition management and technical teams. *Dangerous object* is a barrel neodymium magnet. I am the co-curator (with Aaron Lister) of the exhibition ‘The Obstinate Object’ at City Gallery Wellington within which Maddie Leach’s magnet work will sit, if we can successfully navigate this meeting.

⁵⁰ Mika, “The Co-existence of Self and Thing Through IRA: A Māori Phenomenology,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Phenomenology* 2, no.1 (2015): 101.

The risk management meeting is the initial contact that the work—as virtual thing: it has no substantial form at this stage—has with the infrastructure of the institution.⁵¹ At this point the magnet is still suspended somewhere in the internet, somewhere in the earth. It is still just any-magnet in the context of the websites through which such magnets are commercially sourced, and may as well be in an entirely materially dispersed form—its constituent metals, neodymium, iron and boron—as in the solid alloy form known as a ‘rare earth magnet’. At the same time, it is progressively gaining definition through a series of URLs shared by Leach and the curators, and exchanges between Leach and magnet vendors. Another way to say this: the magnet is not yet a definite article, rather a series of signs representing the outermost periphery of its materiality. It is $\text{Nd}_2\text{Fe}_{14}\text{B}$ (its atomic structure⁵²); it is \$49-67gram on eBay; it is an anecdote on a blog about magnets being used to draw dents out of brass instruments. Most vividly, the magnet is a list of hazards, other objects vulnerable to its force: electronic devices, analogue watches, compasses, credit cards, heavy jewellery, pacemakers. All these things are implicated in the field of risk or influence the magnet brings with it. But it is the pacemaker that sticks: once it is raised, no one can get the pacemaker out of their minds.

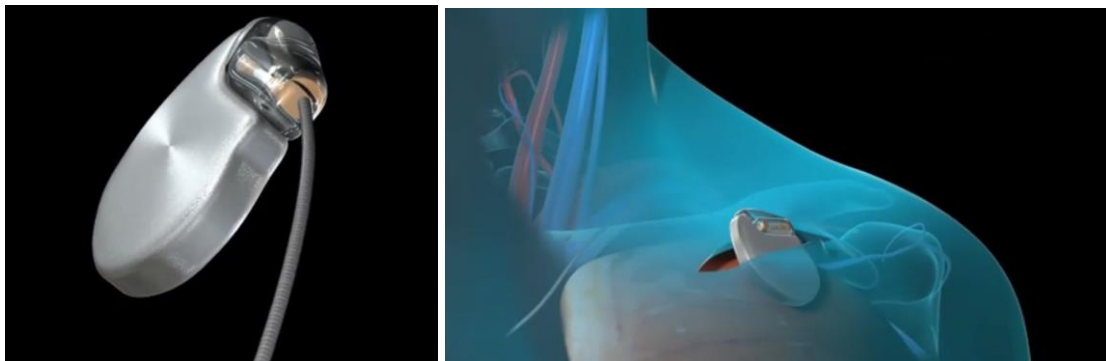


Figure 2 Pacemaker images, from “Nucleus Medical Media” (online) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5HI2-AVQJs>.

Through their co-presence in all the discussions around the installation of the magnet in the gallery, magnet and pacemaker become discursively inseparable from each other, within a relationship of mutual affect. In the context of this work, I argue that the virtual image of the pacemaker and that of the magnet draw each other, and in turn a series of other things, into existence. The ‘distinct refrain’ of the earth magnet becomes a chorus.

⁵¹ While they often exert pressure on institutional protocol, I don't want to position Leach's work as taking on the art historical legacy of institutional critique in more than an incidental way; this is a topic for another paper. Rather, they test the institution's conception of itself.

⁵² The $\text{Nd}_2\text{Fe}_{14}\text{B}$ crystal structure has exceptionally high magnetic field strength. This means as a compound it has high resistance to being demagnetised, and the potential for storing large amounts of magnetic energy.

This text considers Mika's proposition, "[the] chorus of the rest influences the seemingly distinct refrain of one thing", leading (via Barad's interpretation of *phenomena*) into a discussion of what I see as a related proposition from Bergson, that "the division of matter into independent bodies with absolutely determined outlines is an artificial division."⁵³ Reading these ideas together and across one another offers a starting place for the consideration of matter as co-constituted: formed, visible or conceivable only in relation to other forms of matter, from which its independence is a construction of convenience on our part. In light of these ideas I argue that the relationship between magnet and pacemaker is one of a myriad at play in the work, that in the magnet we encounter an intersection of material relations, rather than an autonomous object. Further, this encounter with the object includes us as subjects. In this sense the magnet influences us, asks something of us, *moves us* as we come to understand the material world in a state of movement.

Mika's method is phenomenological. That is, the lived or felt experience of phenomena is primary. As Mika describes it, this is a metaphysical and spiritual encounter, in distinction from a rationalist tradition of thinking. In his words,

Phenomenology . . . requires us to suspend the dominant expectation that the thing in front of us is all there is to it . . . it asks of us to extend our speculations to the possibility that a thing has an actual effect on the world and hence our perception of it.⁵⁴

The phenomenological field discussed by Mika is founded in indigenous Māori metaphysics. This is not set out as a method in relation to the experience of objects generally, let alone those in an institutional art gallery. My connection with it here is as a Pākehā looking for ways of reading across the grain of a colonised perception of objecthood: a way to re-think the seemingly solid presence of that which is immediately before me. So my heart races as I read Mika's writing on phenomenology in the context of Aotearoa—with a feeling of recognition, but also with hesitance: how to relate to the text in a way that does not co-opt it to 'prove' a conjecture I am making? For some days

⁵³ Henri Bergson, "On the Delimiting and Fixing of Images," in *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul, and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, [1908] 2005), 196.

⁵⁴ Mika, "Co-existence of Self and Thing," 100.

this feeling is with me like a force field, within which I cannot clearly distinguish or validate my own response. I return to the magnet.

With your hand just below your collarbone—or, imagine mine there—think of the metal pacemaker, the heavy metal magnet across the room. Can you feel the weight of these things, the lines of energy that run taut as veins between them? Can you feel the dull steady beat of your heart as you think of this? Let that be the pace at which you read this. My heart is beating too.

A pacemaker uses low-energy electrical pulses to cue the heart to beat at a regular rate, preventing arrhythmias. There is evidence that strong electromagnetic fields such as that produced by the rare earth magnet may interfere with a pacemaker's operation. You can't tell by observation if someone has a pacemaker, but as soon as I know there is a magnet coming into the exhibition space, suddenly all the gallery's visitors look different, vulnerable to the potential of the magnet. Suddenly everyone has a pacemaker in their chest, a small disc made of biocompatible titanium alloy, approximately the same size as the magnet. Suddenly everyone is a magnet, and everyone is a force field. In this sense it is not one object that Leach's 'minimalist'⁵⁵ work proposes, but multiple—the magnet enters the space with an entourage of wrist watches, compasses, credit cards, heavy jewellery, pacemakers—a metallic crowd.

Before even appearing in the gallery, the magnet produces a series of conditions, unique to itself and the context of the public gallery space. These are both practical outcomes of the risk management meeting, and, I argue, generated in a direct sense by the force of the magnet itself. The magnet's magnetic properties are both physically and conceptually actualised, repelling some things, drawing other things near. There is to be a sign alerting the public of danger ("Maintain your distance / If you have on your person: a pacemaker, an electronic device, an analogue watch, a compass, MOS, MDs, credit cards or heavy jewellery"); a square perimeter of white tape on the floor around the plinth; the gallery invigilators are instructed to watch the magnet carefully and to warn anyone who approaches too close of the risks they are incurring. It is within these conditions that the magnet emerges and takes form in the work, necessarily bringing other things into visibility as it does. It becomes a 'thing' as a consequence of other

⁵⁵ Minimalism, while of interest with regard to Leach's practice and its art historical genealogy, is not intended as a point of study here. While this research is concerned with de-emphasising the singular object in favour of a dynamic field of relations, minimalism is not necessarily oppositional to this reading, as noted below, footnote 69.

things, such as the imagined pacemaker, at the same time generating further material consequences, such as the signage, floor tape etc. Definite material borders are refuted at every phase.

In a position that intersects with Mika's statement about matter being definitively relational and inter-dependent, Barad also theorises a fundamental shift—from understanding material objects as autonomous, having discrete borders, to understanding matter itself as an occurrence, or phenomenon. For Barad a phenomenon is the meeting point of a number of agencies, the result of which is something coming into being. In her words, "...phenomena are the ontological inseparability / entanglement of intra-acting 'agencies.' [P]henomena are ontologically primitive relations—relations without preexisting relata."⁵⁶ Barad argues that rather than pre-existing, independent entities, material components come to define each other through specific moments of contact, temporary points of resolution within "inherent ontological (and semantic) indeterminacy."⁵⁷ Regarding the magnet's presence, we might view this state of indeterminacy as prior to the exhibition, which becomes a point of contact, and thus, materialisation.

What I encounter in the gallery, in this project, is a multiplicity of forces in apparent stasis—stilled because of the way we as humans perceive them—in Bergson's words, "diagrams which for us have become reality itself, and beyond which only an *intense and unusual effort* can succeed in penetrating [my italics]."⁵⁸ While Bergson is preoccupied with intuitively accessing 'reality itself', for Barad the phenomenon-materialised (temporarily) *is* the real. She writes, "Phenomena are constitutive of reality. Reality is composed not of things-in-themselves or things-behind-phenomena but of things-in-phenomena."⁵⁹ The artwork is one such a phenomenon; its coming into existence is the substantiation of a series of forces.⁶⁰ Co-opting and deliberately misreading Bergson's line above, on the effortful human observer's "penetration" of

⁵⁶ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 139.

⁵⁷ To be clear, Barad does not suggest that objects do not have boundaries and inherent properties, but rather that this happens within a process of intra-action. As she goes on to say, "It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of phenomena *become determinate* and that particular concepts (that is, particular material articulations of the world) *become meaningful*." Ibid., 139-40. See also earlier reference to intra-action as a concept in chapter one; footnotes 20 and 22.

⁵⁸ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 187. For Leach as exhibition-maker, this diagrammatic form is of interest in itself, a way of conceptualising objects as interconnected systems. In earlier works, such as *The Matter of Higher Moments* (2010), the diagram—generated by a mind-mapping programme called XMind—is a component within the work itself.

⁵⁹ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 141.

⁶⁰ These forces do not just act upon what we call objects. As Grosz suggests, "force needs to be understood in its full subhuman and superhuman resonances: as *the inhuman* which both makes the human possible and at the same time positions the human within a world where force works in spite of and around the human, within and as the human." Grosz, *Time Travels*, 187.

reality, I argue that the “intense and unusual” effort rather occurs on a material plane, in the concentrated expenditure of energy that it takes anything to materialise at all.

The object as a coming-together of things could also be understood as the nexus of forces in perpetual motion.⁶¹ The idea is an extension of Bergson’s conjecture that the division of material into independent objects is imprecise. “Matter goes in every direction beyond our representation of it,” he writes (within the argument that knowledge of things is always partial and the true nature of things inaccessible).⁶² I visualise this as a series of flight paths which extend from the material object. For the magnet these flight paths may trace its connection to the geomorphic processes that formed its components, to the industrial processes including the mining of raw materials⁶³ and magnet production, to the economic processes that commodify it and regulate its value, to the social and cultural processes that allow it to be designated as a magnet at all.

Understanding the magnet in this way, we might concede that as a singular object it *does not pre-exist* the work. Its distinct ‘voice’ is not discernible as such prior to the occurrence of the exhibition. Rather, the magnet’s appearance here is a coalescence, involving other forces such as the pacemaker, the internet search, the gallery health and safety policy, staff and audiences, as well as the micro-chemical and industrial processes that bring it into being as a metal alloy. These things come into collision in the emergence of the magnet-as-work; they produce and are produced by it, within-and-as the magnet becoming materially determinate and conceptually meaningful.⁶⁴ This temporary synthesis is a meeting point, a point of contact where the magnet comes into a state of being in which it is recognisable to us.

⁶¹ Following the same logic, a text such as this one might also be understood as a phenomenon, or as ‘methodological field’ in Roland Barthes’ framing. In “From work to text” (1971) he writes: “the Text is experienced only in an activity of production. . . . It follows that the Text cannot stop (for example on a library shelf); its constitutive movement is that of cutting across (it can cut across the work, several works.” Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 157.

⁶² According to Bergson we see only a small part of the “real curve, the curve itself stretching out into the darkness behind.” Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 181. The line of thought becomes too abstract to pursue within the scope of this focused text, but I include it here as acknowledgement of the argument’s trajectory, passing through this text and beyond it.

⁶³ As an exercise, let’s just isolate the mineral components of the magnet: iron, boron, neodymium, and draw the quickest sketch of their properties. Iron (Fe) is by mass the most common element on Earth, in both core and crust. Boron (B), a low-abundance element in the Solar system and in the Earth’s crust, is primarily mined in Turkey. Neodymium (Nd), a soft silver metal that oxidises in the air, is widely distributed in the Earth’s crust. It is mainly mined in China, and also used in the production of lasers. Each of these elements comes with its constellation of other material networks, as well being consequential on a large scale when it comes to the political implications of mining and trade. Their presence in the Rare Earth magnet is the result of a particular ‘sorting’ (to borrow science studies philosopher Ian Hacking’s term) of the material universe, which prioritises use value for humans.

⁶⁴ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 139.

And in this moment of recognition, I find something out about myself. I do not need to have materiality explained in quantitative analytical terms, or to provide a counter-theory for this. But I do desire for there to be a relational narrative within which the magnet is held, and one that holds me too. Resisting empirical language in my encounter with the magnet is difficult: it involves recognising the effects of coloniality⁶⁵ on my own being and way of imaging the world. Even in writing this I resist habits as intuitive as muscle memory, which would return to a rationalising discussion of the magnet's presence, as if that is all there is. The magnet's very being here is in this way a re-acquaintance with the idea of what a force field is: drawing in but also repelling me. Resisting my full comprehension, the magnet allows me to resist the idea that I can fully comprehend even my own being.

When Mika writes of the appearance of the thing, he is speaking of it as *self-manifesting*, not as contingent upon our attention. In this framing it is not up to us to identify the thing, rather it makes itself known to us, in a relationship of "confluence" with the self;⁶⁶ he writes in another place, "one is in the first instance cognisant of the thing through the thing's choice."⁶⁷ This is significantly different from Bergson, who, despite refiguring a rationalist outlook, is ultimately explaining the nature of perception from a human-centric perspective, identifiable in this respect with the binary logic of a colonising view. Bergson suggests it is utilitarian convenience that compels us to reduce material complexity into units of matter: we necessarily perceive that which can be of use to us.⁶⁸ Rather than *use*, however, I argue that mutual agency is at stake here. It is the energetic dialogue between pacemaker and magnet that opens my mind to this possibility; my agency, in this case, is exercised in surrender to the potential of that imagining. This surrender could also be seen as reciprocation of the energy I receive from the magnet, registering the indebtedness of my sense of self to the self-revealing material world. The relationship in this way unhinges me from the fixity of colonising dichotomies: observer and observed, subject and object, and from the expectation that I can exert dominance over that which I perceive.

⁶⁵ 'Coloniality [of power]' is a concept developed in Latin and American subaltern studies, most prominently by Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano. The term describes the legacy of colonialism in contemporary societies, as it is integrated in practices of knowledge and in social orders.

⁶⁶ Mika, "Thereness," 101.

⁶⁷ Mika, "The Thing's Revelation," 67.

⁶⁸ Or, in Grosz's more recent reading of his position, "The thing is the compromise between the world as it is in its teeming and interminable multiplicity...and the world as we need it to be or would like it to be: open, amenable to intention and purpose, flexible, pliable, manipulable, passive." Grosz, "The Thing," 171.

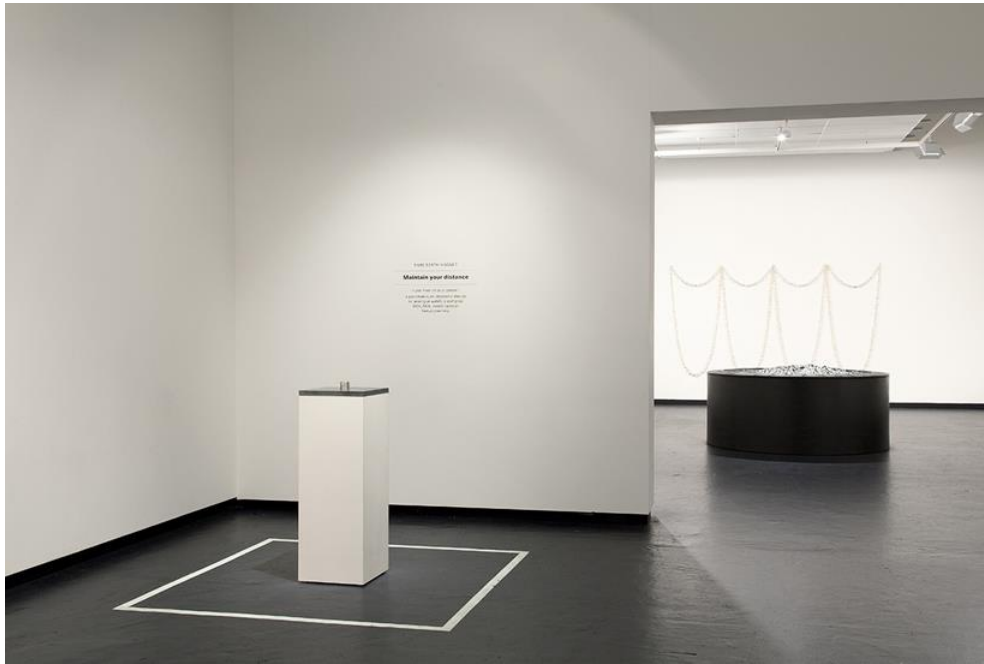


Figure 3 Maddie Leach, *H and B* (installation view), City Gallery Wellington, 2012. Image: Shaun Waugh.

But this has become very abstract. Let's again look closely for a minute. In the gallery, advancing on the work from the main entranceway, the white painted birch plinth is perhaps what you see first. Then the mild steel plate that tops the plinth. Then the vinyl text warning, the white tape.⁶⁹ You have to be right up close, you have to stand still, to get a really good look at the magnet. It's about the size of a large wristwatch, or your palm, and deep as a can of tuna. It would be cold to touch, like it had never been warm, ever. Around its circumference it has the fine regular marks that tell you it was industrially produced. It looks as if it would be heavy, or perhaps you can sense it is connected to the mild steel plate, that the magnetic force between them is a kind of heaviness, like gravity, but that exists only between metals. It's the colour of metal. It is metal: in the end, it's not *like* anything else.

While what we see in the gallery is a specific and limited set of material components, these in turn connect laterally with innumerable others. The title, *H and B*, connects to the physics of the magnetic field, in which H refers to amperes per metre, B, Newtons

⁶⁹ These material elements are of fundamental importance within Leach's framing of the work, exactly recorded in every document of her works. They also materialise a history of Minimalism and 'truth to materials'. Minimalist or post-minimalist conceptual art is often cited in relation to Leach's work. Though I am concerned to differentiate the critical reading at hand as situated within a set of cultural conditions that are distinct from canonised Western conceptual art, in its centralisation of artist-authorship, there is a sympathy here with Minimalism in the idea that material should not be a visual imitation of something else, or symbolic, but expresses its own form of meaning. The Tate glossary of art terms notes; "With minimalism, no attempt is made to represent an outside reality, the artist wants the viewer to respond only to what is in front of them." See "Minimalism," Tate, accessed June 17, 2017, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/m/minimalism>.

per metre per ampere (magnetic field is measured by the force it exerts on a charged moving particle). NASA Jet Propulsion Lab uses neodymium magnets in Mars Exploration Rovers, to collect dust particles which may contain remnant water.⁷⁰ Magnets are widely used in lasers, microphones, loudspeakers, in-ear headphones, and computer hard disks, where low magnet mass (or volume) or strong magnetic fields are required. After the exhibition, still stuck on magnets, I read in the 2013 Unsafe Goods Notice (Fair Trading Act, 1986) for Rare Earth Magnets that their import or sale in New Zealand is now banned.⁷¹

*Never rest your head on the chest of a person with pacemaker while you're wearing headphones.*⁷²

While none of these connections are essential to the magnet's reading as an artwork, they are part of the complex web of relations in which the material object sits poised, and its interconnectivity as a material thing. And as a social thing: it is in the individual encounter that happens in the gallery that these meanings become active. The foregrounding of the thing through terms which emphasise relationality, as Mika asserts, is part of what enables self-recognition, "open[ing] up a path for transformation that both holds the self in abeyance and yet push[es] the self forward to think beneath the given, prescribed definitions of things."⁷³ Further, I argue, it is partly the traction provided by the solid object that offers a form of momentum towards what we don't know, what we can't observe in material actuality. Grosz offers a related position, "The possibility of action requires that objects and their relations be as simplified as possible, as coagulated, unified and massive as they can be so that their contours or outlines, their surfaces, most readily promote indeterminate action."⁷⁴ What happens next is not able to be accommodated in a risk management plan, which can only account for the single solid object as it is 'there', rather than within the chorus of things it relates to. The risk

⁷⁰ See "Magnet Arrays," NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, accessed June 20, 2016, http://mars.nasa.gov/mer/mission/spacecraft_instru_magarray.html.

⁷¹ This is enforced by the New Zealand Customs Service at the border and the Commerce Commission in the marketplace. See "Ban on the Sale of High Powered Magnet Sets," New Zealand Government, 2013, accessed June 20, 2016, <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/ban-sale-high-powered-magnet-sets>.

⁷² Note regarding MP3 player headphones on a website listing devices that may interfere with pacemakers, "Devices That May Interfere with Pacemakers," American Heart Association, accessed April 12, 2016, https://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/Arrhythmia/PreventionTreatmentofArrhythmia/Devices-that-may-Interfere-with-Pacemakers_UCM_302013_Article.jsp?appName=MobileApp#.

⁷³ Mika, "Thereness," 105-6.

⁷⁴ Grosz, "The Thing," 172.

is the unknown: new possible forms of relation.

When our dad died, there was an organ transplant and his heart was given to another man. I think of this often, his 67 year-old heart still stretching and moving and over time becoming part of a whole new biological system. I wonder if the heart is still his, and if it would still know me, beat faster if I were to see the person who received it. I think it would, and yours too. Even if you weren't there and I told you about it after.

This thinking is not distinct from what I learned through the magnet: the thing is connected with us in deeply felt and sometimes shockingly visceral ways. I am drawn to the magnet, I am moved, it moves me. The thing is at once a solid material form and a unique convergence of immaterial forces, for which, finally, there is no equivalent.

For my sister, Elizabeth Barnes

3. Bronze pole: The constant fluorescing of a thing⁷⁵



Figure 4 Bianca Hester, bronze pole and concrete wall, *movements materialising momentarily* (installation view), St Paul St Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, 2015. Photo: Sam Hartnett.

Bianca Hester

one bronze pole

within the installation *movements materialising momentarily* which includes: three bronze poles, HD video, AO photographic image, two large sheets of painted ply, bronze cast Tītoki branch, castings, from two fossil sites: Takapuna (Pupuke maunga) and Renton Road (Maungataketake maunga), concrete wall, map of Te Kōpuke lava flow, six powder-coated blue steel hoops

31 July – 11 September 2015

St Paul St Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

The bronze pole, can we look again at the bronze pole? It is now two years exactly since Hester made it, the damp midwinter of 2015. I anticipate that the pole, like us, will have changed over that time. I think we should look again.

Run your eye along the six metres of the pole. It is faceted slightly, as if whittled from wood; notice the marks that say this has been done by hand, an arduous process in the workshop that leaves the artist's body aching for days after. Think how the polished gold-coloured finish will oxidise over time, will continue to become blacker and duller,

⁷⁵ The full quote reads: "...the constant fluorescing of a thing so that it is maintained as this-or-that, but embedded in the term also is a sense that, from time to time, the entity will diminish or disappear." Mika, "Co-existence of Self and Thing," 102.

and that this is happening even as you look. The pole is thin—thin as my wrist bone, or the handlebar of a bicycle; it would sit easily in the grip of thumb and forefinger. Think about touching it: hard as bone but colder. Think about the warmth from your hand, the warmth from the blood inside your hand, transferred to the pole so that your palm becomes cooler, the bronze warmer. Think about the searing heat of the molten bronze as it was made; google it: 1200 degrees Celsius as it is poured into the mould. Think about its weight—it is propped up at one end by a concrete wall, and sinks slack under its own weight from that point. Worry about the internal joints it contains, whether they can be expected to carry the pole's own weight. All metals have a ductility limit, the extent to which they may be stretched into wire without breaking; there is a practical reason you can't make a single cast this long. Look at the pole, the heft of gravity it bears is clear.



Figure 5 Bianca Hester, bronze pole and wall, *movements materialising momentarily* (installation detail), St Paul St Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, 2015. Photo: Sam Hartnett.

The other end of pole lies propped on the gallery floor, an aggregate polished concrete floor like many other gallery floors, and yet more noticeable right now because looking at the pole—sheer, metallic, linear—has got you noticing the wide planes and rough surfaces in its vicinity. In order to see the pole properly you crouch down low, noticing now not just the floor but a number of other black objects, within a range of 3–4 metres from the pole. Seen from this perspective they look heavy, obdurate, almost as if they are weighing down the flattened constellation of the floor's aggregate, and sooty as if

they are burnt: you will need to stand and go nearer to find out. But you stay crouched, focused on the pole, which seems also like an arrow and an intersection, or a marker from which to view the whole installation.



Figure 6 Bianca Hester, bronze pole and casting, *movements materialising momentarily* (installation detail), St Paul St Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, 2015. Photo: Bianca Hester.

All this has taken three minutes, perhaps less. It's the time it would take to park a car, to give someone directions, to change a lightbulb. This is as long as most viewers spend with the work, their initial encounter likely the only one. In that brief encounter, the material objects are experienced in their immediate physicality. They are subject to the limited life-span of the seven-week long exhibition, existing for the viewer only in the time and space of the gallery.

This present-moment, situation-specific experience of the objects may be read as an assertion of their substantial or material status, and a resistance to being interpreted allegorically. This is furthered by the installation's proximity to the viewer, and open form, both of which compel close observation (alongside other decisions made by the artist such as the careful listing of each component's composite materials in the works' list). These objects are not there to be read as symbols for something else.⁷⁶ Or, as artist Tom Nicholson wrote of an earlier installation work by Hester, "One thing does not

⁷⁶ In art historian Amelia Barikin's words, "Objects *stand*. They do not *stand in for*." "Sound Fossils and Speaking Stones: Towards a Mineral Ontology of Contemporary Art" (paper presentation, Animism and Material Vitality in Art and Performance Conference, Art and Performance Research Group, AUT University, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, June 11–12, 2015).

stand for another, for an idea. It insists upon itself, and upon our relation to it as matter. The strong sense that, for the most part, the material in the installation does not have a history before or outside the work is also important because it privileges the histories the work acquires in the gallery space.”⁷⁷

Nicholson’s statement foregrounds a gallery-based reading, matter in its immediacy; here I am interested in the emphatic assertion of materiality as *inherently* an assertion of history that pre-dates the gallery space, and endures after it.⁷⁸ Highlighting the history accumulated in the exhibition space, however, raises a significant point: this is where the material comes into being within the conventions of viewership prevailing in the contemporary art exhibition. This is where we most actively engage in looking at a sculptural object such as the bronze pole. While the emphasis on the optical as a dominant sense is in many respects a limited and limiting thing,⁷⁹ I propose that it is looking closely at the pole, being in the space with it, that in this instance enables an opening out, a ‘fluorescing’ of its qualities as a material thing, in ways which go beyond what is visible,⁸⁰ and before and beyond the temporality of the exhibition experience. Here I want first to spend time with the potential in the term ‘fluorescing’, then to turn to the consideration of the multiple temporalities the work we see opens out onto.

‘Fluorescing’ used here is a term borrowed from Mika, from his essay “The Co-existence of Self and Thing Through IRA.” Mika’s use of the word is part of an interpretative discussion of ‘ira’: “an interjectory indication of the fact that something has emerged.”⁸¹ Ira is a te reo term he takes up in light of a metaphysics founded in Te Ao Māori, and its implications for the perception and representation of things as self-emergent, essentially fluid entities. In his essay Mika refers to another scholar, Shane Edwards’ work on the word ira in connection to natural phenomena, specifically, through its cognate ‘uira’ (lightning). Lightning is a naturally occurring thing that

⁷⁷ Tom Nicholson and Terri Bird, “This Conversation,” in *please leave these windows open overnight to enable the fans to draw in cool air during the early hours of the morning*, ed. Charlotte Day (Melbourne: Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2010), 81.

⁷⁸ Hester articulates a related position, “I have come to engage the idea of materiality as encompassing a composite of relations in which matter is conditioned by time, change, and process. . . the concept of matter as active, as a condition teeming with forces, and also of being productive, operative, generative and durational, rather than inert.” Hester, “Material Adventures,” 44.

⁷⁹ I refer to the limits of empirical theory that admits as knowledge only that which is able to be definitively observed, made evident, and to feminist critique of visibility’s complicity with patriarchal power dynamics. The latter is discussed in chapter four.

⁸⁰ This relates to Brian Massumi’s discussion of ‘cross-modal fusion’, through which he posits that while we can and do separate the senses out one from another, this is an artificial distinction rather than the way that senses are ‘lived-in.’ Ultimately, Massumi suggests, “potential touches and synesthesias normally (habitually) built into the situation inhabit the event of vision. Feeling between these [sensory] modes we really, immediately see unseen aspects of the object’s presence in that situation.” Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (Cambridge, London and Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2011), 74.

⁸¹ Mika, “Co-existence of Self and Thing,” 94.

happens at a distance, but has a direct effect, in Edward's words, "rekindling" the connection between self and world, or whakapapa.⁸² That is, the appearance of the lightning can represent the re-acquaintance of self and natural world, or act as a re-energising force in an already existing relationship between self and world.

The reference to whakapapa here is fundamental. I return to it primarily to emphasise the relationships the term (as a noun, translated in *Te Aka Māori Dictionary* as "genealogy, genealogical table, lineage, descent"⁸³) implies, and to draw in Mika's gloss note on the same, which includes its definition as a verb: "to become", and as a proper noun: "Earth Mother."⁸⁴ In this note Mika suggests a possible interpretation of whakapapa in which the self is in a state of movement towards becoming a layer of earth, which is itself in a state of movement. 'Whaka' is a prefix particle, meaning to cause something to happen. For me it was also helpful to notice the connection with Māori Marsden's discussion of *kaupapa*: "Kaupapa is derived from two words, *kau* and *papa*. In this context, *kau* means to appear for the first time, to come into view, to disclose. *Papa* means ground or foundations. Hence, *kaupapa* means ground rules, first principles, general principles."⁸⁵ Importantly, *kaupapa* is also discussed by Marsden and others as process, rather than something fixed.

I am not able to address the complexity of either *kaupapa* or whakapapa, beyond quoting a point made recurrently throughout Mika's text, that, "to a large extent the appearance of a thing—related to the self through whakapapa—is . . . uncontrollable. It will show itself as itself whilst retaining to it its autonomy, and some concomitant absence."⁸⁶ This willful manifestation of a material thing, the facility for appearance and withdrawal from our perception, may also be read as a form of opacity or resistance to full disclosure or transparency. This is spoken of by Édouard Glissant:

⁸² Rather than just initiating a connection between self/world, in Mika's essay, and in his discussion of Edwards' work, lightning or uira is an image of the *essential interconnectedness* between the spiritual and living world, that is, the relationship is symbiotic, and always changing. Edwards cites a conversation with Ngāti Rereahu kaumātua Piripi Crown, who explains the role of lightning as follows: "Ka u te ira atua me te ira tangata I te uira, are te timatanga o te whakapapa. *Spiritual and human essences are recalled in lightning, that is the beginning of whakapapa.*" Edwards, cited in Mika, "Co-existence of Self and Thing," 102.

⁸³ See *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, s.v. "whakapapa," <http://maoridictionary.co.nz/>.

⁸⁴ See Mika, "Co-existence of Self and Thing," endnote 55. A linguistic relative, and connection which asks for another text, may be found in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev's observation that in the Latin root 'mater' ("the hard core of wood"), *matter*, *material* and *mother* are related. Christov-Bakargiev, "Why Matter Matters" (Leverhulme Lecture, University of Leeds, Leeds, December, 2013), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tURwan0_00A. This is also discussed by Braidotti, "Identity, Subjectivity, Difference: A Critical Genealogy," in *Thinking Differently: A Reader in European Women's Studies*, eds. Gabriele Griffin and Braidotti (London and New York: Zed Books, 2002), 170.

⁸⁵ See Marsden, *Kaitiakitanga: A Definitive Introduction to the Worldview of the Māori* (Wellington: Ministry for the Environment, 1992), 14.

⁸⁶ Mika, "Co-existence of Self and Thing," 103.

“The opaque is not the obscure . . . It is that which cannot be reduced.”⁸⁷ It is with this opacity in mind that I reflect on the idea of ira, that which cannot be reduced. I do not have the knowledge that sustains the fuller sense of ira as it is held in Mika’s discussion; in its absence (or powerful opacity) instead I work with a related kupu Pākehā from Mika’s text, *fluorescing*.

To fluoresce is, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*: “to shine or glow brightly due to fluorescence.”⁸⁸ Fluorescence is a form of luminescence,⁸⁹ the emission of light occurring when, for example, molecules absorb ultraviolet radiation and become excited. This is energy-as-light.⁹⁰ Fluorescence is infinitely regenerative; within it are the capacities of appearance and disappearance, self-sufficiency, and absence. I consider similar capacities to be true of words. They too are metaphorically animated or illuminated by certain contexts or uses, and in others remain opaque or passive. Words too can be a currency of energy. The verb fluorescing holds the dynamic of presence and withdrawal, of unpredictability and energy, which informs this writing of the bronze pole.

*If you lift a rock, your muscles are supplying energy to raise the rock to a higher-energy position. If you then drop the rock, the energy you supplied is released, some of it in the form of sound, as it drops back to its original low-energy position. It is somewhat the same with luminescence, with electrical attraction replacing gravity, the atomic nucleus replacing the earth, an electron replacing the rock, and light replacing the sound.*⁹¹

To start: the lightning. When, at some point after the exhibition is complete, I read the word ‘lightning’ in Mika’s text (with reference to Edwards’ discussion), I see Hester’s bronze pole. It is immediately and intensely present in my mind as a kind of visual

⁸⁷ Glissant is writing of understanding things through a relational identity, or poetics, rather than understanding being premised on transparency. He goes on, “the verb *to grasp* contains the movement of hands that grab at their surroundings and bring them back to themselves. A gesture of enclosure if not appropriation. Let our understanding prefer the gesture of giving-on-and-with.” Glissant, “For Opacity,” *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1997), 191-92.

⁸⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 3rd edition, 2010.

⁸⁹ Incandescence and luminescence are the two ways light is generated. Incandescence (for example in the sun and stars) requires heat; luminescence is ‘cold light’, in which the energy comes from electromagnetic radiation.

⁹⁰ Marsden writes of *hihiri* as “pure energy, a refined form of Mauri [that] is manifested as a form of radiation or light and aura, that radiates from matter but is especially evident in living things.” Marsden, *Kaitiakitanga, 7. Te Aka Māori Dictionary* offers the following additional translations, as a verb: “to eagerly desire, long for, spring up, rise up (of thoughts).” See *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, s.v. “hihiri,” <http://maoridictionary.co.nz/>

⁹¹ See “Luminescence and Fluorescence,” The Fluorescent Mineral Society (website), accessed June 24, 2017, <http://uvminerals.org/fms/luminescence>.

shorthand, and as a bolt of energy. I am awoken, alert, electrified by this. I can't stop thinking about it—the light searing metal, the metal conducting electrons of energy in a lightning strike, the pole like an abrupt flare of light. The pole is of course already on my mind, in a longstanding way. Since it was first conceived in the development of the exhibition this is an image that has been with me: the gold line of metal has travelled in my mind and my veins since the first conversations Hester and I had about the project.

When I read about the lightning though something dramatically shifts, what I will call a fluorescing of the metaphor. The pole becomes an energetic line of connection, between different concepts of time (geological, the span of the exhibition, as discussed further in the latter part of this chapter), different phases of materiality (molten, moulded, solid, as noted in the earlier part of the chapter); between myself and the text I read. I do not mean to say here that the pole becomes 'just' a metaphor, any more than the lightning is 'just' a metaphor; this would only repeat the way that the metaphorical has often been culturally relegated as an 'other' to rational actuality or consequence. Rather, it is a metaphor with efficacy, to return to Stengers' concept, a *force of words*, which "produce[s] an answer that is not 'ours', but that rather testifies for a transformation of who we are."⁹²

Encountering the lightning in the text affects my experience of the bronze pole in a direct sense, so that it is vividly re-energised as a material form, and I am re-energised in my engagement with its form. As a *light form*, this metaphor goes beyond ideation; it is energetic. In other places, Glissant has referred to the 'poetic force' as "radiant,"⁹³ reaching outward rather than unifying or consolidating. Further, I argue that this 'fluorescence' occurs through the relationship of things: in this case the reading of Mika's text, the temporary presence of the pole in the exhibition space, and its enduring presence in my thoughts. The pole emerges as a visible material thing at the epicenter of these relations, enlivening my encounter with the *u/ira* reference in the text, and materialising or making it *matter*.

⁹² Stengers, "Experimenting with Refrains," 52.

⁹³ The reference extends to the imaginary, as that which "...does not bear with it the coercive requirements of idea. It prefigures reality, without determining it a priori." Glissant, "For Opacity," 192. I read this as invoking the potential of imagination (or intangible experiences) to change things within a tangible reality.

This doesn't mean the experience lasts—I can't hold onto the image of the lightning—and even as I write about it here it falters, passes. I return to the latter part of Mika's proposition on the appearance of a thing, revealing itself, "whilst retaining to it its autonomy, and some concomitant absence."⁹⁴ As the pole is no longer present in the space of the exhibition, now, two years later, neither is the image of lightning vividly present in my imagination. At this point I understand both through their absence, the lightning having withdrawn to an image in the text reference where I first encountered it, the bronze pole returned home to Sydney with the artist, after the exhibition.

However, just as uncontrollably (and less literally), the 'liveness' of this experience, what I call the fluorescence of the metaphor, has changed my relationship to both bronze and lightning. I will not again see the one without the other. I retain something that feels like static in my muscles, the experience of reading about the lightning. Alongside of this I have a heightened energy of enquiry about how my Pākehā whakapapa—in part the colonial inheritance of a worldview which "prefer[s] a perception of the object that [is] discernable, unchanging, solid"⁹⁵—physically as well as psychologically and intellectually, informs the way I experience the presence of material things, and recognise that the desire to interrogate this is part of what has compelled this research. I take it as a prompt to follow what has been briefly illuminated, through living relationships. That is, to speak further about ira and forms of energy in Te Ao Māori, with people I know rather than just reading texts. The possible relationships engendered or enlivened by this experience of the thing are not confined to text citations; they go in all possible directions, and off the page.

To return to the pole in the gallery. Is there another way to think through its materialisation here, both as a tangible and a conceptual thing? For Barad, it is the specific discursive site (in this case, that of the exhibition) in which things *come to matter*.⁹⁶ She theorises this as an infinitely iterative process, rather than one resulting in what she terms 'fixed' or permanent objects. Barad's idea is that all material objects are unique to their situation, embodied as "*specific material configurations of the world* (i.e., discursive practices/(con)figurations rather than "words") *and specific material*

⁹⁴ Mika, "Co-existence of Self and Thing," 103.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 95.

⁹⁶ To clarify—they 'come to matter' *in this form*. I want to reiterate Barad's argument that this 'mattering' is a movement of constant becoming. I do not mean to suggest that they don't exist/'matter' prior or after appearing in any specific form.

phenomena (i.e., relations rather than “things”).⁹⁷ That is, a material object is something that comes into being through overlapping relationships, which are interchangeably human-induced and otherwise. In this framework, while the material forces that inform the work span a vast reach of time, it can be argued that it is only in their specific combination here, in their concentration in the form of the bronze, that the “determination[s] of boundaries, properties and meanings are differentially enacted.”⁹⁸ Barad uses ‘to matter’, and ‘mattering’ as verbs.

Specifically, I want to look at a number of the temporalities that are compressed, or coalesce, to bring this into being in the room. The sculptural object in Hester’s practice helps me understand time differently; the bronze being a paradigmatic example of this. At the most literal level, this is because the seven-week exhibition is just one site within a longer time arc of the research project. The bronze pole which sits in the gallery has already been carried the 11km course of a 30,000 year old lava flow from Mt Te Kōpuke to Tokaroa Reef on the Waitematā Harbour, on July 11, in an earlier phase of the project three weeks before the public exhibition opened.⁹⁹

Remember? The walk: here is the start. 6.30am in winter, dark on the summit of Te Kōpuke maunga, so that you can only recognise people by their voices. We carry the three 6-metre poles up to the edge of the crater, three people to each and awkward in the dark, and the bronze is cold to hold. We wait. There is something shining down there, a pool of water in the bottom of the crater, that the geologists Tracey Howe and Jeremy Eade say is water-tight because it is lined with ash from the eruption 30,000 years ago, and holds plant spore thousands of years old.

Pita Turei is there, and then not there, and then a match-strike flares further up the hill. As the light comes up red over the city he says a karakia for the walk and spins the purerehua. I count 30 people, you, and Eve, and Matt among them. Most people are wrapped in the blankets you brought. And then the light is really up

⁹⁷ Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,” in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no.3 (2003): 814.

⁹⁸ Barad, “Matter Feels, Converses, Suffers, Desires, Yearns and Remembers: Interview with Karen Barad,” in *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies*, np.

⁹⁹ For a copy of the map, and more detail on this walk, in which the pole was carried by a group of friends of the artist between Te Kōpuke (Mt St John) and Te Tokaroa, see “About the Walk,” *movements materialising momentarily*, accessed July 19, 2017, <https://movementsmaterialisingmomentarily.wordpress.com/about-the-walk/>.

and we can see the course of the walk ahead, 11km towards Te Tokaroa Reef, the long rock that stretches like a tongue into the Waitematā Harbour.



Figure 15 Participants on the walk, *movements materialising momentarily*, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Saturday 11 July 2015. Photo: Bianca Hester.

As a second point, the material associations of the bronze pole bring in other time-referents. Bronze is a conspicuously old-fashioned material, anachronistic in the context of contemporary sculpture. Hester has used it (among other metals, most notably blue steel hoops) frequently in recent work.¹⁰⁰ She is drawn to its history of being used in monumental statuary, approaching this in her practice as something to be riffed on in temporary works which are typically mobile, often make sound, and are ultimately transformed altogether, into publication or archived documentation. Hester has spoken also of the hard physical labour of the making process—the final scouring or polishing of the bronze in particular—as being a fully embodied and durational ‘thinking-act’, one which a material with a less resistant physicality would not yield.¹⁰¹ There are hours of time in the making of this single bronze pole. This is all to say, in this pole the historical lineage of bronze sculpture, the relatively brief hours of its production, and time-as-energy or energy-as-productivity, uniquely *come to matter*.

¹⁰⁰ See for example *solar objects / sonic objects, variously*, 2014, HD video; or any of the objects used in performance during *solar objects: various objects held toward evening’s diminishing westerly light, Fashioning Discontinuities*, Biennale of Sydney, 2014.

¹⁰¹ Conversation with the artist, May 2015. This related to the mutual capacity for resistance, within touch. This is not necessarily visible in the final work, in which the artist’s labour could be said to recede, or be encompassed by, the material form.

Further, bronze makes time matter, evident, through the oxidising process.¹⁰² Even over the seven-week exhibition the pole dulled from its original polish, a just-perceptible marker of time passing. This time-inscription also reveals the always-intra-active relationship of time with material things, the way that time is at once embedded in and materialised by objects. Grosz writes: “Time is. . . the form of matter without being material. We can only approach it through its effects on objects, subjects, and matter which tend to obscure or absorb its characteristic and its force as their own.”¹⁰³ Even a material as durable as bronze reveals through the oxidising process the potential for its own undoing or transformation over time.

Put another way, noticing how time is occurring within the pole reveals the metal itself as a form of energy, manifest in time.¹⁰⁴ This was emphasised in the pole’s role within the wider project. Specifically, the lava flow walk which preceded the exhibition, and in which the bronze poles were fundamental, was explicit in its attention to time. As the invitation to the walk notes, “We are interested in thinking about how different orders of time, including the geological, anthropological, historical, and the celestial intersect.”¹⁰⁵ The time it took to walk the 11km route of the walk approximated the time it took the molten lava to run that same course to the Waitematā Harbour,¹⁰⁶ forming what is today Te Tokaroa Reef. On the walk, there were conversations about the connection between molten bronze and moving lava. At the point we reached the reef—where the lava would have met the Waitematā and spat, hissed, cooled, congealed—we stopped walking. We put down the pole, where it glinted on the grass, and we rested, as the walk had been long.

¹⁰² Bronze only oxidises superficially, due to its copper content. A copper oxide (eventually copper carbonate) layer is formed, so the underlying metal is protected from further corrosion.

¹⁰³ Grosz, *Time Travels*, 3. Her point, that material is held within time, while appearing to hold time within it, resonates also in Robert Smithson’s writing: “solids are particles built up around flux, they are objective illusions supporting grit, a collection of surfaces ready to be cracked.” Robert Smithson, *The Collected Writings of Robert Smithson* ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 107.

¹⁰⁴ This idea is elaborated by Massumi: “Energy and matter are mutually convertible modes of the same reality.” Analysing the relationship of the static body to the body-in-movement, Massumi identifies a type of abstraction or indeterminacy which is nonetheless also *immediate* (with regard to movement he calls this ‘transitional immediacy’), and likens this to the relationship between matter and energy. One does not come after the other in time, they are contemporaneous, or: “Fellow-traveling dimension[s] of the same reality.” Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 5.

¹⁰⁵ Invitation sent to participants on the walk; see website for full text, *movements materialising momentarily*, accessed October 1, 2017, <https://movementsmaterialisingmomentarily.wordpress.com/walk/>.

¹⁰⁶ Wai-te-matā means ‘obsidian waters’—the glassy surface resembled volcanic obsidian rock. See *Te Ara Encyclopedia*, s.v. “Auckland Places: Waitematā Harbour,” accessed April 24, 2016, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/>.



Figure 8 movements materialising momentarily walk, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, 11 July 2015. Photo: Joseph Jowitt.

And here, as I put down the pole within this text, I register there is a third way to respond to the question of how something comes to matter. The bronze poles matters, uniquely, when our hands are all on it, carrying it and warming it and talking about the time it would take us to get to the reef, the time of the volcano, the time before Pākehā arrived. The pole matters in directing a course to the harbour, making us choose a line of terrain carefully and follow the passage through the city that thousands of years earlier, the lava chose too.¹⁰⁷ It matters as the light catches on it, rising late and low because it is July. It matters in carrying our warmth as we walk carrying it, and not just the warmth from our hands but that in the voices of Bianca, of Pita, of you, of all of us who spoke as we walked. It matters in the way we breathe as we walk, and in the clenched shape our hands still hold for a minute or two after we put it down, our gestures still holding it. This form of mattering continues, even as the pole rests in the gallery, and as we separate. This is another fluorescing, not the bright flare of lightning, but a long-resonating warmth that exists in the relationships the pole, and those that its appearance has initiated and transformed.

¹⁰⁷ The walking or hīkoi is fundamental to this experience of the object, and of the land. As Desna Whaanga-Schollum (Rongomaiwahine, Kahungunu, Pahauwera), writes, “Hīkoi—the process of walking the land with tangata whenua (people of the land)—can be walks that follow ancestral pathways, or visits to [Sites of Significance] for the purposes of sharing cultural knowledge. More than this, however. . . hīkoi produce. . . something tangible and connective, a personal, intimate view of people being no more or less than elements of the environment.” Whaanga-Schollum, “Sites of Significance,” in *Climate Change and Art: A Lexicon, Distance Plan 4*, eds. Abby Cunneane and Amy Howden-Chapman (Berlin: The Distance Plan Press, 2016), 69.

I asked you to go back, to look again with me. I asked because I wanted to try to figure out the idea of fluorescence: to see if a light image could move through lightning, metal, kupu, metaphor. And that energy carry through different ways of ordering time, our conversation, back into this text, and even, back into the metal itself. I'm not sure; I'd like to know what you felt too. But my nerve endings are tingling still, all the way to the elbows.

For my mother, Alison Annals

4. Meteorite: The thing exceeds our knowledge of it ¹⁰⁸



Figure 9 Replica of Binningup Meteorite. From the collection of Western Australian Museum, Perth.

Maddie Leach

**replica of Binningup Meteorite (Ordinary Chondrite) loaned from the collection of Western Australian Museum on acrylic shelf
within the installation *From where she was standing* which also includes: 3D scan of memorial boulder at Pinjarra Massacre site, WA, Australia; 28th October 2834 (2015), HD video; Rock (Maratoto Andesite); bronze plaque; publication.
19 February — 24 March 2016
St Paul St Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland**

The meteorite arrived from the mailroom. I'd been expecting it. It came in a rectangular cardboard box with a customs script on it, the box about 250mm long and half as wide, wrapped in brown paper, with bubble-wrap and tissue next to the rock's surface. The mailing address was Western Australia Museum, Perth; it had been posted by Dr. Alex Bevan, Head of Earth and Planetary Sciences, Curator of Mineralogy and Meteoritics. He'd packed it himself; the handwriting and the tissue folds were executed in the same precise lines.

¹⁰⁸ This excess of 'being', beyond what is knowable, engenders a speculative approach. Mika goes on, "What is left for us to undertake is a sort of philosophizing—one that must extend beyond the horizon of limited materialism or logic and into the realm of creativity." Mika, "Co-existence of Self and Thing," 99-100.

I'm tempted to let you go thinking it was a real meteorite, a fiction I'd like to hold on to too. But the meteorite was a replica; actually it looked like a charcoal-coloured avocado. When I looked closely I could see the fine seam from the mould. It was unexpectedly light; it weighed about 150 grams, while the original is 488 grams. It was the size of my palm, and throughout the six weeks it was on exhibition I never looked at it without wanting to pick it up and hold it.

This is what I know about the object before it arrives. The meteorite from which it was moulded landed on a beach at Binningup, Western Australia, 10.10am local time on 30 September 1984. Its landing that day was sighted by two women who were sunbathing just 11 metres from where it hit the sand.¹⁰⁹ The original was classified as an Ordinary Chondrite (H5): its particles indistinct due to thermal metamorposis, and primarily stony rather than metallic. It was taken to Western Australia Museum, kept packed in silica gel in a humidity-monitored box to keep the iron present in it from oxidising.

The point though is that it was a replica that arrived in Tāmaki Makaurau for the exhibition. As replica—that which purports to be an exact likeness, but is really completely materially dissimilar—in one sense the so-called meteorite stands in for something that it is not. This is for a practical reason: no museum is likely to loan a real meteorite to a contemporary art gallery. In this reading, however, the fact of it being a replica also offers something generative, through its potential to shift a culturally dominant understanding of how representation works, towards something partial,¹¹⁰ incomplete, and relational. Further, the replica's presence prompts attention to questions of 'where' meaning resides, back onto my own practices of seeing, and finally, toward an idea that practical acts of care may also constitute a form of knowing, a form of relation.

When Leach first told me about the Binningup Meteorite, I wanted to know everything. I began immediately to read about chondrite, the category of stone attributed to this meteorite by the Meteoritical Society. The Binningup is an olivine-bronzite

¹⁰⁹ For this story see Leach's blog, from the 2014 phase of the project, "Maddie Leach: Week 6 and 7," Spaced 2: Future Recall, April 22, 2014, accessed September 11, 2017, <http://www.spaced.org.au/two/maddie-leach-week-6>.

¹¹⁰ Partial in both senses of the word: as a view which is in some way incomplete, limited, and also as biased, interested, partisan. I adopt the term partial as it is used in Haraway's essay, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no.3 (1988): 575-599.

Chondrite.¹¹¹ Ordinary Chondrites are partly made up of ‘chondrules’, millimetre-sized spheres that free float in space in molten or semi-molten form. They also contain isolated particles of silicate minerals, olivine and pyroxene, and sulphides. The rest of the chondrite is made up of fine dust, including ‘pre-solar grains’, which pre-date the formation of our solar system. There is debate around how chondrites were originally formed, but some scientists argue that it was a shock wave initiated by the formation of Jupiter. These facts and hypotheses are among the conditions within which science recognises the meteorite, as distinct from any other rock. At this point I came to an abrupt end of what I could learn as an amateur through science or scientific conjecture. The meteorite was, if anything, further away. Then a resin replica arrived in the post.

As replica, and arriving as it does from another place, the object immediately asserts its ‘otherness’ or difference. Massumi’s writing on simulacra is an obvious initial point of reference in discussion of the replica’s similarity-but-independence. Rather than a copy, predicated on an originary model, Massumi writes of the simulacrum as something which does away with that distinction altogether, and has a life or “inner dynamism” of its own. So rather than being a stand-in for something else, such an object “affirms its own difference,” and processes of differentiation. He writes, “[The simulacrum] is an index not of proximity, but of galactic differences.”¹¹² In a related way this reading recognises the autonomy of the replica¹¹³ form of the meteorite, acknowledging its relationship to the meteorite without making that the *only* relationship within which it has meaning. Put another way, it materialises a relationship of difference, with the emphasis on that difference, rather than on the substitution of one thing for another.

Barad’s critique of representation is also useful here, directly addressing what she calls ‘representationalism’. She outlines this as follows:

[T]here are assumed to be two distinct and independent kinds of entities—
representations and entities to be represented . . . theorized in terms of a tripartite
arrangement. For example, in addition to knowledge (i.e., representations), on the

¹¹¹ For full classification details of this meteorite see “Binningup,” The Meteoritical Society website, accessed February 4, 2017, <https://www.lpi.usra.edu/meteor/metbull.php?code=5051>. This international society records and classifies all known meteorites.

¹¹² Reframing as it does Jean Baudrillard’s ‘simulations’ (the endless circulation of like signs), through Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of simulation, Massumi’s reading offers the simulacrum, which proliferates and operates meaningfully in new circuits of its own. Massumi, “Realer than Real: The Simulacrum According to Deleuze and Guattari,” *Copyright*, no.1 (1987): 91.

¹¹³ I continue to use the term ‘replica’ because I encountered this as a museum object; that is how it was defined as an object for loan. Rather than bring new language into this reading, I use the existing term as part of the object’s materiality.

one hand, and the known (i.e., that which is purportedly represented), on the other, the existence of a knower (i.e., someone who does the representing) . . . representations are presumed to serve a mediating function between independently existing entities.¹¹⁴

If we transfer this paradigm to the sculpture in this instance: there is the replica (knowledge/representation), the meteorite (known/that which is represented) and then the viewers (knowers), who knowingly read that representation. Everything is fixed in place, assuming a ‘real’ that is mediated through the representative form of the replica. Barad identifies a theoretical impasse between this traditional form of realism, and its counter-form, relativist social constructivism[s] in which the real is relative, entirely conditioned by subjective social experience.¹¹⁵

Barad’s alternative, “agential realism”, is a causal or performative explanation of how discursive practices relate to material phenomena, bypassing this binary between relativist social constructivism and representationalist realism altogether. Agential realism allows for the object as a material referent, without implicating this as a static thing, or privileging it as ‘the real.’ She does this by positioning the activities of knowing, thinking, observing and theorising as *material practices in themselves*, that is, part of the equation of intra-actions within which things become material.¹¹⁶ So rather than there being pre-existing things, and us as ‘knowers’, observing from a position separate to them, we are instead participants in the material configuration of such things.

Rather than ‘reflecting’ (as both Haraway and Barad have pointed out, a metaphor perpetuating the dominance of the optical viewpoint) on things from a definitively outside or omniscient position, she proposes the heuristic of ‘diffraction’¹¹⁷ as a way to think about the material world: from within it. While reflection “is based on the belief that practices of representing have no effect on the objects of investigation and that we

¹¹⁴ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 46-47.

¹¹⁵ While her critique addresses both representationalism and social constructivism as a polemic, Barad is also careful from the outset in acknowledging the important history of feminist scholars—relevant to the development of her own position—who have articulated strong *nonrelativist antirealist* positions, including Haraway’s ‘situated knowledges’. See Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 44, for a fuller discussion of this.

¹¹⁶ See Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 88.

¹¹⁷ As Barad outlines, a diffraction pattern is seen in waves (water, light), caused when they bend around an obstacle or opening. The interference effects a redistribution of energy across the wave, modulating the light or causing ripples in the case of water. See Barad, *ibid.*, 72-84 for a discussion of diffraction within physics.

have a kind of access to representations that we don't have to the objects themselves", ¹¹⁸ diffraction admits subject-object relationships as contingent upon one another. ¹¹⁹ This has methodological significance. Rather than referencing a definitive set of ideas, a diffractive analysis involves reading ideas through and across each other; "diffraction attends to the relational nature of difference; it does not figure difference as either a matter of essence or as inconsequential." ¹²⁰ In what follows I read the replica meteorite through and across a series of texts and my own responses, in the process materialising a concept of the thing as meaningful in excess of what is able to be fully seen, known, or controlled.

Adopting and slightly adapting Barad's scheme, consider the replica, not as a representation or mediation of some other independent entity, but as phenomenon in and of itself. The museum conditions prohibiting the loan of the meteorite are one factor among the material conditions that brought the replica here. Other contributing factors include the microphysical reactions that originally brought the meteorite into being, the Meteoritical Society classification system within which it is identified, the anecdote about the Binningup beach with the sunbathing women, and the artist's residency in Western Australia and encounter with the museum and original meteorite. ¹²¹

There is more. It matters that within the project narrative the replica is always referred to as 'the meteorite', and that on hearing the story of the meteorite in the first place, Leach became immediately caught up with the account of its arrival, ultimately leading to the loan request. She shared this narrative with me as one of the curators, knowing I was also interested in meteorites, and interested in how material things may manifest forms of agency. The replica in this way embodied our shared energy for the idea of dynamic matter. Affect theorist Lauren Berlant has written on the types of desire attachments we form with objects: "An object is a placeholder that magnetizes all kinds of fantasies to it . . . the more powerful that object is, the more heterogeneous the

¹¹⁸ Barad, *ibid.*, 87.

¹¹⁹ For a full list of differences between diffraction and reflection, see Barad's table, *ibid.*, 89-90. As Barad acknowledges, this methodology is also indebted to Haraway. See, in particular, *The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others*, *The Haraway Reader* (London: Routledge, 1992), 63-124, and *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience*. (London: Routledge, 1997). Others have suggested Trin Minh-ha also engages with the metaphor in her methodology, though not using the word explicitly. See Evelien Geerts and Iris van der Tuin, "Diffraction and Reading Diffractively," *New Materialism Almanac*, July 27, 2017, <http://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/a/almanac>.

¹²⁰ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 72.

¹²¹ Leach undertook two residency periods in the earlier phase of this project, 2014, as part of Spaced 2, in Mandurah, Western Australia. For more detail see Spaced website, accessed February 13, 2017, <http://www.spaced.org.au/two/projects/maddie-leach/>.

fantasies attached to it . . . so people start to think there's continuity among them . . . that the seat of recognition [is] the scene of an actual likeness.”¹²² I want to go further and say that such ‘fantasies’ may be consequential, in connection with the object itself. That the way I imagine and perceive the object has a bearing on both self and object, bringing us nearer. This is a bodily experience, of the gut or heart rather than cognitive.

A literal example of this could be the exercise in holding your clenched fists together, in front of your chest, as a way to understand how big your heart is. When you do this your heart rate measurably rises as you think about it and through the slight exertion of the exercise, psychological as well as physical. Barad refers to putting “faith in matter.”¹²³ You are, after all, holding your heart.

Returning to the discussion of the meteorite replica, I propose that such objects may be more than equivalents, rather, that objects themselves can *constitute meaning*. Others have argued for this. Social anthropologists Henare [Salmond], Wastell and Holbraad put forward the “radically essentialist” proposal that we take things as they present themselves, rather than assuming they signify, represent, or stand in for something else. They write of this act of conception—the way we conceive of objects in an abstract sense, or as concept—as a generative one: “Conception is a mode of disclosure (of the metaphorical ‘vision’) that creates its own objects, just because it is one and the same with them, so to see these objects is to create them.”¹²⁴ So rather than observation being a form of proof-mechanism, confirming an objective ‘real’, here it too has an expressive capacity. Put another way, we conceptualise things as an active gesture, one which has a direct influence on what we see.

To be very clear: Henare [Salmond], Wastell and Holbraad are talking in their book about objects that hold a powerful role in specific cultural discourses, not about a resin meteorite, as I am here. Specifically, Henare [Salmond] is writing about taonga Māori. I am not, rather acknowledging that taonga are a primary point of reference in indigenous discourse around objecthood, here in Aotearoa. This awareness has ensued through my attention to, in this case, the replica meteorite, but the difference remains vivid, and key.

¹²² Lauren Berlant, “Forms of Attachment: Affect at the Limits of the Political” (lecture, ICI Berlin, Berlin, July 9, 2012) <https://www.ici-berlin.org/videos/docu/forms-of-attachment/>.

¹²³ See Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 380-81.

¹²⁴ Henare [Salmond] et al., *Thinking Through Things*, 15.

As Cassandra Barnett (Ngāti Raukawa) has argued, “though taonga-things may traverse art-things, they will not bear the exact same forms, contours, configurations and ‘objectifications’ as as those art things. For they arise from different conceptual-cosmological universes.”¹²⁵ I am also concerned to be clear that it is not *just* conceptualising or looking at objects that brings them into existence.

When the meteorite appears in Tāmaki Makaurau it comes into a cultural context where the discussion of objecthood is anything but simple, given our colonial history, governance structure, and the coexistence of multiple different cultures in present-day Aotearoa. Aotearoa has a Pākehā settler population; the bi-lateral Treaty of Waitangi (1840) provides a common point of legal and wider social-political reference regarding public access or commercial rights to natural resources such as water and minerals. This often comes down to debate over what constitutes an object or property, and what terms such as kaitiakitanga (often translated as ‘guardianship’¹²⁶), used in the context of the Treaty, imply for practices of environmental management.¹²⁷ As significant cases such as WAI 262,¹²⁸ the legal personhood status recently granted Lake Waikaremoana in Te Urewera¹²⁹ and the Whanganui River¹³⁰ testify, at every level the definition of what is object, resource, relation, is freighted with cultural difference to be negotiated.

¹²⁵ Cassandra Barnett, “Te Tuna-Whiri: The Knot of Eels,” in *Animism in Art and Performance*, ed. Christopher Braddock (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 24.

¹²⁶ As Merata Kawharu writes, “*Kaitiakitanga* is not limited to ‘guardianship.’ Guardianship reflects a literal interpretation but the concept has many dimensions, most importantly, resource management. Ultimately, context determines the various shades of intended meaning. However, it is not only about management of the environment and of people, but also about keeping them in balance, both in time and space.” Kawharu, “*Kaitiakitanga*: A Maori Anthropological Perspective of the Maori Socio-Environmental Ethic of Resource Management,” *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 109, no.4 (2000): 366.

¹²⁷ Kawharu also stresses that kaitiakitanga is not able to be deployed in isolation: “*Kaitiakitanga* can be interpreted as sustainable management, but not without reference to *whakapapa* and the time and space mapping paradigm it represents. *Kaitiakitanga* is, therefore, more than managing relations between environmental resources and humans; it also involves managing relationships between people in the past, present and future.” Ibid., 352.

¹²⁸ Lodged in 1991, WAI 262 is the Waitangi Tribunal claim regarding te tino rangatiratanga over and indigenous flora and fauna. Raising as it does the legal right of sovereignty, ‘intellectual property’ or ‘cultural property’ over indigenous flora and fauna, many have seen this as the most significant claim coming before the Waitangi Tribunal and the courts. As Professor David Williams notes, “This is about a whole wide range of issues to do with . . . colonial and Crown policies that have affected mātauranga Māori knowledge systems with respect to taonga of various sorts, not just flora and fauna.” This is further complicated by the fact that the Waitangi Tribunal is a permanent Commission of Inquiry, not a court, so while it considers the ‘meaning and effect’ of the Treaty across its different texts, its recommendations are not legally binding for the Crown. For full detail on this claim (including the commentary by Williams above) see the 2006 documentary *Wai 262*, directed by Toby Mills and produced by Tawera Productions. Available through NZ on Screen: <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/wai-262>. In a discussion of taonga and objecthood, in the context of the WAI 262 claim, Henare [Salmond] writes, “[WAI 262] . . . insists on the enduring vitality of Māoriness, and may be seen as an attempt to continue weaving into the kaupapa or body of law in New Zealand a distinctively Māori way of looking at persons and things.” Henare [Salmond], “Taonga Māori,” 49. Her point, that the concept of taonga is not translatable into English legal terms does not preclude the necessity of registering the significance of such terms, biculturally.

¹²⁹ A 2127-square-kilometre stretch of land, which includes Lake Waikaremoana, was granted the legal rights of a person under Te Urewera Act 2014. Te Kawa o Te Urewera guides the management of the former National Park, which was returned to Tūhoe iwi as part of their Treaty settlement. For detail see the “Te Urewera Act 2014,” Public Act 2014, no.51, New Zealand Legislation, <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0051/latest/whole.html#DLM6183601>.

¹³⁰ In Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017, it is stated that “Te Awa Tupua is an indivisible and living whole, comprising the Whanganui River from the mountains to the sea, incorporating all its physical and metaphysical elements,” and that, “Te Awa Tupua is a legal person and has all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities of a legal person”. See “Te Awa Tupua (Whanganui River Claims Settlement) Act 2017,” Public Act 2017, no.7, Subpart 2, New Zealand Legislation, <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2017/0007/latest/whole.html>.

This discussion is often situated in legal contexts. As Kaumātua Hori Parata (Ngāti Wai) said, in the context of WAI 262, “I think that the way forward is dialogue, it’s the development and nurturing of relationships with each other. Because the Western paradigm obviously has their view of what the law is requiring them to do. And of course we have our own view of our responsibilities as to how we protect the natural and physical resources in the environment.”¹³¹ Without reducing the scope of the dialogue or relationships that Parata is referring to, I think it is something that should occur at all levels, and has implications for this research too. That is, arriving, the replica meteorite’s trajectory intersects with current political discussions about personhood and objecthood, as well as initiating shifts on a more personal scale.

The replica meteorite arrives. I receive it at St Paul St Gallery, where I work as a curator and where it is subsequently installed. Each morning, as I open the gallery, turn on the lights and clear the specks of dust from its shelf, check its surface is intact, I realise with slow-growing clarity that it is these practical acts of watchfulness or care which initiates a possible relationship between us. Working in Aotearoa as a curator, I frequently encounter the term ‘kaitiakitanga’, not only in the context of the Treaty (as noted above, and in footnote 126 and 127), but also in connection to the duty of care in the work of, for example, museum curators of taonga. I know, in a limited or technical way, what this refers to.¹³² Marsden writes, “The term ‘tiaki’ whilst its basic meaning is ‘to guard’ has other closely related meanings depending upon the context. Tiaki may therefore also mean, to keep, to preserve, to conserve, to foster, to protect, to shelter, to keep watch over.”¹³³ I look up the reference again and read, “The prefix ‘kai’ with a verb denotes the agent of the act.”¹³⁴

Previous to this, I read kaitiakitanga as something that did not relate to me, as non-indigenous. I remain acutely aware of the potential for non-indigenous misappropriation of this complex, and Māori, principle. With this in mind, I turn here to the term with considerable hesitance. What I turn to, however, is a nascent recognition that the

¹³¹ Hori Parata, *Wai 262*, directed by Toby Mills (Wellington: Tawera Productions, 2006), <https://www.nzonscreen.com/title/wai-262>.

¹³² Mine is a limited reading of the term, reflecting the limits of my own experience and knowledge. I want however to strongly acknowledge that the lived and philosophical contexts of kaitiakitanga are where it comes into being or meaning. Kawharu writes of this interconnection, “What *kaitiakitanga* entails in practice is not simply defined, nor does it have a single meaning. Although *kaitiakitanga* is seen within the broader context of cosmic unity between humans and the universe, it must nevertheless be interpreted on two interdependent levels: the philosophical and the pragmatic. Each reflects the other.” Kawharu, 2000, 351.

¹³³ Marsden, *Kaitiakitanga*, 15.

¹³⁴ Ibid. As Marsden notes, the suffix ‘tanga’ takes the noun *kaitiaki* into the active practice of tiaki.

practical care of a thing can also be a process of relationship forming. In the routine act of closely ‘watching over’ the object I come to new awareness of how the capacity of care, and forms of knowing, relate. That is, in the presence of the replica, I also undergo a form of recognition. Rather than knowledge as something that circulates external to the object, it is this experience of self-in-relation that opens up (in this instance) to an apprehension of *kaitiakitanga* as meaningful in a way that implicates, for the first time, me too.

While I come to this on very basic terms, its wider implications are something I continue to think through. When Rōpata Taylor (Ngāti Rārua, Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Tama, Ngāti Koata) writes, “*Kaitiakitanga* is also about the social or human legacy and our obligations to those collectives of which we are members,”¹³⁵ I recognise that Pākehā too can and must develop also practices in relationship to this concept, embedded as it is in the Treaty. The culturally and socially divisive Foreshore and Seabed debate is just one example of the costs of misreading the term (as discussed in chapter four). Merata Kawharu (Ngāti Whātua, Ngāpuhi) expands the point: “[*Kaitiakitanga*] has become a major binding force between Maori and non-Maori. Legal and political requirements to develop *kaitiakitanga* policy have resulted in a new platform from which bicultural relationships between Maori and non-Maori can be fostered.”¹³⁶ The basic act of watching over an object such as the replica meteorite certainly does not initiate understanding that necessarily contributes to a bicultural relationship; my point is otherwise, and a simple one: that in contact with this object, every day, I experience a modest yet significant shift in understanding about my role in this context.

As this form of emergent-knowledge is not separable from the encounter with the object, neither is the perception of such an object total. In Mika’s words: “The thing exceeds our knowledge of it.”¹³⁷ This counters a colonialist assumption, that objects are present, permanent, available. In this sense,

[t]he phenomenological method is . . . one that signals Māori resistance to colonialism, in that it seeks to reduce the assumption that the rationalistic translation of a thing is primary and because it attempts to bring to the fore, yet

¹³⁵ Rōpata Taylor, “*Kaitiakitanga*,” *Stone Soup*, vol.5 (2017): 15.

¹³⁶ Kawharu, “*Kaitiakitanga*: A Maori Anthropological Perspective,” 354.

¹³⁷ Mika, “Co-existence of Self and Thing,” 99-100.

again, the obscure hints of a term that are not immediately accessible through their rational denotative given.¹³⁸

Rather than the thing in front of me being all there, this method opens a view of the thing experienced as *excess*,¹³⁹ that is, exceeding both language and visual perception. As I can not fully see the thing, comprehend it, I also can not assume authority over it.

I would like to dwell on this idea that we don't have control of how things appear. As Mika writes, "the thing's existence is not contingent on one's attention to it as this would be sheer empiricism . . . instead, one is reacting to the fact that the thing abides at all."¹⁴⁰ The idea of *ira* which he puts forward (as discussed in detail in the previous chapter: "an interjectory indication of the fact that something has emerged") includes in it a space of invisibility too. It implies that at some time prior it was invisible or unavailable. A meteorite seems like one (very literal) instance of this. The meteorite is at once an identifiable material thing, an expression of the latent energy within a field of matter outside Earth's atmosphere, and a coalescence with the self in that moment of encounter. The meteorite makes itself known. It is easy to recognise this emergence in the case of the meteorite, blasting through the atmosphere to a beach in Western Australia; that it could also be so with the replica meteorite is more challenging, arriving as it does via Australia Post.

It does not however require you to believe it to be so, to give it meaning. This is the state of suspension in which the meteorite sits; perhaps this is why sometimes I find it hovering when I enter the gallery in the morning. It is, after all, a meteorite.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 101.

¹³⁹ The account of excess also connects with ideas in Jones and Hoskins' paper addressing the *tā moko* of Hongi Hika on parchment: "...the actant-nature of the *tā moko* (or any other object) in its self-expressive setting is necessarily in excess of what can be written. It demands to be encountered experientially, affectively, spiritually, in the complex swirling past and present acts of relationships and engagements. And, as an actant, it will not always express itself in the same way." See Jones and Hoskins, "A Mark on Paper," 89-90. Excess is a term frequently used in new materialist writing. A typical example is found in Diana Coole and Samantha Frost: "[M]ateriality is always something more than 'mere' matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive, unpredictable." Coole and Frost, eds., *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 9. Without wanting to assimilate these references, I am interested in the level of consensus about there being 'more' in matter, both as an acknowledged limit of human authority, and as a point of contact in the dialogue between cultural viewpoints as discussed in this chapter.

¹⁴⁰ Mika, "Co-existence of Self and Thing," 101



Figure 10 Replica of Binningup Meteorite. From the collection of Western Australian Museum, Perth.

Throughout this text I have suggested that we see in a limited way; that conception, imagination and proximity effect how we see; that how we see is conditioned by where we are; that we see what has made itself apparent to us. I have not yet focused on this act of ‘seeing’ itself.

I see the meteorite first as a shape in the tissue, then unwrapped. Then on a clear acrylic shelf in the gallery, the acrylic casting a geometric ghost of light onto the wall so that if you walk into the space at the right time of the day it appears to be floating, or suspended in a clear-light prism. I see it at eye level, and through the window from outside, from which distance it seems coal-black and isolated as only a palm-sized object on a 4-metre high white wall can be. I see other people looking at it in the gallery. Finally, I see images of it in the exhibition documentation. I paste one of these into the white Microsoft Word format of this document, the virtual thing it has become.

As Haraway recognises, visibility has been profoundly critiqued in feminist discourses, where seeing is often equated with patriarchal conquest and surveillance, and associated with militarised, late-industrial, racist ideologies. She writes, “Vision is *always* a question of the power to see—and perhaps of the violence implicit in our visualising

practices.”¹⁴¹ But seeing is not restricted to these mechanisms. Haraway reclaims the idea of constructing a “useable, but not an innocent, form of objectivity.”¹⁴² That is, a feminist objectivity: in and of place, rather than transcendent or all-knowing. Crucially, “[this] allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see,”¹⁴³ with the word ‘learning’ suggesting that this is a self-conscious act, rather than that of a passive spectator. Haraway puts forward a case for vision as embodied, rather than as a detached gaze: “the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position . . . [as a means of] living within limits and contradictions—of views from somewhere.”¹⁴⁴ This asks for a feminist conceptualisation of the body, where what is seen is particular to the individual, while socially enmeshed in political and theoretical knowledges collectively held.

This Haraway text is now 30 years old, but I think has relevance in its call for non-innocent vision, accountability to what we learn how to see. More explicitly, for this research, to be accountable to what I learn to see within the settler colonial contexts of Australia, where the meteorite landed, and Aotearoa, where it sits as sculptural object. So seeing here in Tāmaki Makaurau, *me seeing*, becomes quite specific, although not uniform; as Haraway points out, “Subjectivity is multidimensional; so, therefore, is vision.”¹⁴⁵ I see in many ways, simultaneously, and on multiple scales.¹⁴⁶ I see the replica meteorite in relation to the meteorite itself. I see it as a composite of minerals, and as something that has appeared as consequence of infinite material forces. And at the same time again, as something which has made itself known in relation to place, and to me, but exists in excess of full comprehension.

How am I accountable to these various types of seeing? In refusing to see the meteorite as ‘just’ an object, what do I see instead? I see where it landed—Pinjarra. I see the Pinjarra Massacre that occurred on 28 October 1834, in which British colonial forces led by naval officer Governor James Stirling killed a group of up to 80 Noongar people,

¹⁴¹ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 585.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 582.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 583.

¹⁴⁴ In her discussion of objectivity as crucial to feminist scientific practices, Haraway also refers to this as “positioned rationality.” *Ibid.*, 590.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 586.

¹⁴⁶ For Barad, the binary differentiation of scales is political, gendered, in itself. The belief that the world is separated into macro and micro, with classical physics governing the macro and quantum physics the micro, “suggests that at a particular scale, one conveniently accessible to the human, a rupture exists in the physics and ontology of the world.” In this scheme all ‘normal’ things are macro, while queerness is restricted to the subhuman. See Malou Juelskjær and Nete Schwennesen, “Intra-active Entanglements, an Interview with Karen Barad,” *Kvinder, Kon and Forskning* 1-2 (2012): 17-18.

in an act of systematic genocide.¹⁴⁷ Today Pinjarra is a mining town in Western Australia, which hosts the world's largest bauxite mine and aluminium refinery owned by multinational corporation Alcoa.¹⁴⁸ I see the current debate in Aotearoa around silica mining in Hokonui Hills in Southland,¹⁴⁹ the hydraulic fracking in Taranaki,¹⁵⁰ the industry of iron sand mining along our West Coast beaches.¹⁵¹ In paying attention to the site of the meteorite's landing, I see a history of violent colonisation and settler appropriation of indigenous land and resources, which is ongoing.

As Haraway has written, "What counts as an object turns out to be what the history of the world is about";¹⁵² on a related note Mika states that the 'objectifying' demarcation of the natural world into objects/property is an act of colonisation. Here in Aotearoa this has implications on all levels, from legal and financial to intellectual, psychological and spiritual. Mika provides an example from Treaty of Waitangi claims: "If I am asked to provide evidence about a block of land...I am asked to take on a notion of an object as utterly undistracted or uninformed by other objects."¹⁵³ That is, land as a unit of property, a commodity interchangeable with other such units. This is one way a colonialist framework perpetuates itself as the primary reference, even when compensation of stolen land is at issue as in the Waitangi Tribunal hearings.¹⁵⁴ Even the mode of redress becomes in this instance a substantiation of the dominant perspective, and the power to know, completely.

What happens if I work instead with the awareness of the thing as exceeding knowledge, the thing as that which I will never be able to fully know, let alone to own? To respond to Mika's critique above, what would a 'distracted' object look like, informed by other things? The meteorite replica here offers a model of one such distraction, conceptually connected with the meteorite itself but also, as in this text, flying its own distracted course through texts, places, and ways of seeing the world, and

¹⁴⁷ The numbers are unclear as the colonial reports varied, and considerably underestimated the fatalities. A Noongar account of early contact can be heard on Noongar Culture website, <https://www.noongarculture.org.au/doolann-leisha-eatts-talks-about-her-grandmothers-story-of-contact-with-the-europeans/>.

¹⁴⁸ For details see "Bauxite," Alcoa, <http://www.alcoa.com/global/en/what-we-do/bauxite/default.asp>.

¹⁴⁹ See "Hokonui Hills Silica," *Quarrying & Mining Magazine*, September 1, 2016, <http://www.quarryingandminingmag.co.nz/q-m/mining/hokonui-hills-silica/>.

¹⁵⁰ See "Fracking," ECO, accessed July 20, 2017, <http://www.eco.org.nz/key-issues/mining/fracking.html>.

¹⁵¹ See "The History of Iron Sand," New Zealand Steel, accessed July 11, 2017, <http://www.nzsteel.co.nz/new-zealand-steel/the-story-of-steel/the-history-of-ironsand/>.

¹⁵² Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," 588.

¹⁵³ Mika, "Thereness," 6.

¹⁵⁴ For more detail on the Waitangi Tribunal (a permanent enquiry commission founded in 1975 to investigate breaches of the Treaty), and the hearings process, see the Waitangi Tribunal website: <https://www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz/>.

as such constituted through such relationship of difference, not equivalence. Replica and meteorite are different: galaxies-reach-different, and neither is finally more knowable to me. And the process of differentiation does not finish with these things; it includes me. But difference is not the same as being remote or isolated from each other. As Grosz suggests, in a field of infinite material possibility, humans and other forms of matter are perhaps better understood as “divergent tendencies”¹⁵⁵ in a whole. I recognise now that care too can be a form of relational knowing, or *meaningful proximity*. That in practices of care the thing that ‘exceeds knowledge’ is also able to be closely held.

For Carmel Rowden

¹⁵⁵ Grosz writes, “Life and matter cannot. . . be understood as binary opposites; rather they are divergent tendencies, two different directions or trajectories inherent in a single whole, matter as undivided, matter as it includes its ‘others’—life, ideality, connectivity, temporality.” Grosz, *Becoming Undone: Darwinian Reflections on Life, Politics, and Art* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 32-33.

5. Boatshed and storm: In order to bring the past into the present¹⁵⁶



Figure 11 Boatshed 805, Breaker Bay, Wellington, 2008. Photo: Stephen Rowe.

Maddie Leach

Perigee #11

**Long range forecast by lunar forecaster Ken Ring at www.predictweather.com;
Beaufort wind scale texts printed August 26, 27 and 28 2008 *Dominion Post*
weather page; reconditioned boat shed (cedar planking, custom window, custom
doors); VHF radio receiver/scanner receiving intermittent shipping
communications via Beacon Signal Station; small battery powered lamp.
28 August 2008, midnight to midnight
Boatshed 805, opposite 171 Breaker Bay Road, Breaker Bay, Wellington
Commissioned for *One Day Sculpture* by Litmus Research Initiative**

The boat was what was not there. There was the space for a boat: a dinghy, 10-foot. If there was a boat, it was elsewhere. There was the boatshed. There was a storm coming.

To get to Breaker Bay you need to drive around the Miramar Peninsula on Wellington's south-east coast, slow, as the limit is 60 km/hr and spray flies across the road in a

¹⁵⁶ This is paraphrased. The full quote reads: "For our notion of time is whakapapa based, and like whakapapa it has its own sense of never ending beginnings in which time turns back on itself in order to bring the past into the present and then into the future." Moana Jackson (keynote lecture, He Manawa Whenua Indigenous Research Conference, Te Kotahi Research Institute, University of Waikato, Hamilton, 2013), accessed June 28, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lajTGQN8aAU> (accessed 23 November 2016). Proceedings published online: eds. Leonie Pihema, Herearoha Skipper and Jilian Tipene, *He Manawa Whenua Indigenous Research Conference* (Hamilton: Kotahi Research Institute, 2015), https://issuu.com/tekotahi/docs/proceedings_final_hi_res_version_si, 62.

southerly. Or you could take the number 30 commuter bus, the Breaker Bay Express, which runs from the city in the late afternoon weekdays. Or you could take the number 11 to Seatoun and walk the remaining 25 minutes to the bay. That coast is exposed; Breaker Bay sits right at the mouth of Te Whanganui-a-Tara Harbour. Even on a clear day the sea is dark as denim; take your togs but take a jacket too. When you get there, boatshed 805 is the first you'll see: concrete painted white, rectangular with a rectangular window. When you get out of the bus it will smell like kelp, unless the wind is so strong that all it smells like is wind.

There's a boat in my mind as I arrive. This is partly because there have been many other boats in Leach's work,¹⁵⁷ so that even when there is not, I am still looking around the *idea* of boats in order to see the work—which in this case is not a boat. It is also because of the location. Breaker Bay is widely known in Aotearoa as the site of the Wahine ferry disaster, in which more than fifty people died when the ship struck the Barrett Reef in a storm on 10 April 1968. The wreck is in the consciousness of the bay, and in the way people talk about that part of the coast, especially as the dark comes down early as it does in April, and you remember hearing the archival radio broadcast of the ship sinking within sight of the shore.¹⁵⁸ 2008, the year Leach's work *Perigee #11* was made, was the 40th anniversary of the Wahine disaster.

There's a word in my mind as I arrive too: *perigree*. I realise later this is because of the title of the work—perigee—which I've confused with 'peregrination', meaning a voyage or expedition.¹⁵⁹ So 'perigree', the word in my mind, isn't actually a word at all, rather this is something else that I've carried with me to the work. Nor will I relinquish it easily; when I look it up I find peregrination and perigee share the same prefix from the Greek, 'peri' as in perimeter—so in fact I was not so far from right, though I came to it the long way round. The perigee is the point in the moon's orbit in which it is closest to Earth (the apogee is when it is furthest from the Earth). The moon passes through perigee each lunar cycle, at which point its gravitational pull is strongest.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ See for example *The Ice Rink and the Lilac Ship*, 2002, Waikato Museum Te Whare Taonga o Waikato. In another work, *My Blue Peninsula*, 2006-7, Leach built a boat from start to finish and installed it on the sculpture terrace at The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, looking out onto Wellington Harbour.

¹⁵⁸ Images of the Wahine sinking were broadcast, one of the first national disasters to be shared publicly in this way.

¹⁵⁹ Looking the word up I find a bird too, Peregrine, a falcon found on most of the continents of the world though not Aotearoa.

¹⁶⁰ As the phases of the moon and the orbit are not directly linked, occasionally a full moon will coincide with perigee, resulting in a supermoon.

During these periods there will be a slight increase in tide levels, and storms can be more extreme if they coincide with the moon's perigee.

I arrive ready for a storm. This is not only because I love storms; as part of this work, Leach paid NZ\$43 to weather forecaster Ken Ring to predict the day on which an extreme southerly storm would come in to the coast. It was this forecast which decided the date of the work's 24-hour existence: 28 August 2008.¹⁶¹ But there is no storm. There is instead just a room, boatshed 805, cleanly lined with red cedar boards that give it the smell of newness, and nails that are lined up, precise as minutes on a clock. There is a rectangular window onto the sea. There are the original ceiling and floor, new white metal doors, and a light. There is a VHF radio scanner listening in to Channel 14, the shipping channel between Beacon Hill Signal Station and ships moving across the harbour.¹⁶² A few days before I came I heard the radio interview Leach did with National Radio Arts on Sunday reporter Lynn Freeman,¹⁶³ and I heard her say a storm wave could cover two-thirds of the floor. I arrive on a stark-bright day, I see people with ice creams further down the road. But still, I have this storm in my head. It is a room that looks ready for something to happen.

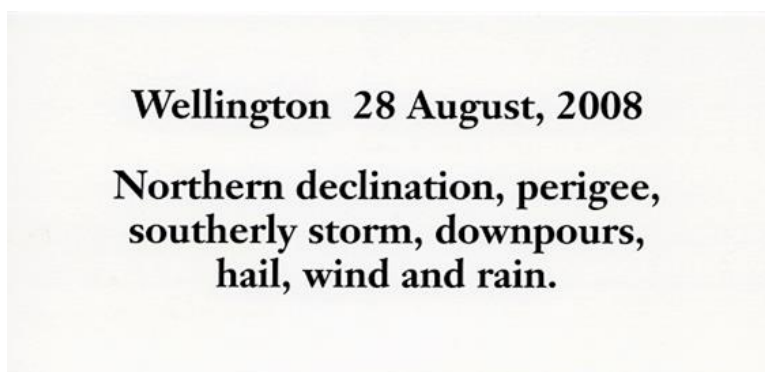


Figure 12 Maddie Leach, *Perigee #11* invitation card, One Day Sculpture, 2008.

None of the anticipations I arrive with materialise. Instead, I'm just standing here in a handsomely finished and empty room. Outside the sea is doing what the South Coast

¹⁶¹ This work was commissioned by One Day Sculpture, a year-long series of temporary public arts works. Each lasted 24 hours. Led by Claire Doherty, UK-based curator and Director of Situations at University of the West of England, Bristol, and David Cross, Litmus Research Initiative Massey University Wellington, One Day Sculpture saw 20 new commissions realised between June 2008 and June 2009. See One Day Sculpture, http://www.onedaysculpture.org.nz/ODS_about_ODS.html.

¹⁶² The Beacon Hill Station is the first point of contact for ships arriving and departing Wellington Harbour. Its main function is communication. See "Beacon Hill Signal Station", Greater Wellington Regional Council, <http://www.gw.govt.nz/Beacon-Hill-Signal-Station>.

¹⁶³ See "Maddie Leach", interview with Lynn Freeman, Arts on Sunday, Radio New Zealand, August 24, 2008: <http://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/artsonunday/audio/1708089/maddie-leach>.

sea always does, moving irregularly and massively, like a giant muscle. The dark waves are threaded through with meaty looking rags of seaweed that appear, then are swallowed back by the waves. I listen to the heave of the sea, and the timing of my own breath, just audible in the room.

The boat is not here. The storm is not here. There is the sea. For the moment it feels like the sea is all there is, the sea is everything there could be. There is the empty space where a boat is not. There is the boatshed.

The figures of the boat which is not a boat, the word which is not a word, the storm which is not a storm, carry with them the possibility of what else is ‘not there’, or cannot be seen. (Certainly, storm, and boat at least *may* be there in the future: my argument draws on my experience of the work, that is, within a 24-hour bracket of time.) The concentrated time in which it was called ‘sculpture’ is the moment of my encounter; I ask, from within the experience of this moment, where might the boat, the storm, the word too, *take me*? Or, put another way, how might they locate me? What is particular about the work because it is here, on the south coast of Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, in Aotearoa?

I argue that the series of absences—inversions, or expectations unmet—set in motion by the boatshed in *Perigee #11* make a space for thinking through the sculptural object as instead a sequence of dynamic elements, hinging on its location. While Leach’s sculpture is often critically situated in terms of the history of the readymade and minimalism,¹⁶⁴ and the work itself always predicated on close attention to details of its physical environment, here I am interested in what is there if we look outside of art history. At how looking at where the object is compels us to think through history in its cultural context; not as something in the past, but as integral to present-day discussions of how things, and places, are defined. Specifically, how they are often defined according to a single cultural conception of temporality.

Regarding the latter, and throughout this reading, I am particularly conscious of Moana Jackson’s writing on colonisation as a state of mind, a form of dominance, of which he

¹⁶⁴ See for example critic Martin Patrick’s response to *Perigee #11* in which the work is initially positioned in an art historical lineage including Michael Craig-Martin’s *An Oak Tree* (1973), Marcel Duchamp, Carl Andre and Bas Jan Ader among others. Patrick also refers to the purchased forecast as ‘readymade.’ While it remains in an art historical context, I enjoy too the way that the sea, and the changing from daytime to darkness, also materialise in the text. Martin Patrick, “On False Leads, Readymades, and Seascapes,” in *One Day Sculpture*, eds. David Cross and Clare Doherty (Berlin: Kerber Verlag, 2009), 63-67.

writes, “the exercise of a different power. . . may be called the power to define. When people assume they have the right and the ability to define what is worthy and ‘real’ and then impose that on someone else, while distorting or dismissing any contesting views, they are colonising at a particularly primal level.”¹⁶⁵ It is this ‘power to define’ that I see the momentum of the elements in this work moving against, asserting instead a cyclic temporality.

The boatshed, and in turn the storm and boat and word, bring me to the coast. This is a moving system, something that as a viewer I am inside of, cannot separate myself from. *Perigee #11* is meaningful at a basic level by offering a place to stand in stillness within a vast and moving environment. As a place to stand and look *from*, rather than being simply something to look *at*, the boatshed becomes a space for noticing change. Leach has spoken of this work as providing an observation deck, or a shelter. Learning where is best to be in a storm, or in any weather on an exposed coast, takes time. Leach rented the house across the road from boatshed 805 (which belonged to her landlord) for three years prior to making the work. She had the time to see how the sea and the coast shift, and this experience is back offered to the visitor of the work in simple concentrated material gestures: the refurbished window offering the view, the dead bolted door which suggests safety in a storm, the radio which hisses static and squawks intermittently with information about a passing ship’s movements.

Leach is of course not the first to propose a watchful position on the coast. Breaker Bay is part of the Oruaiti Reserve (formerly Point Dorset Recreation Reserve). Oruaiti Pā was on the headland at Point Dorset overlooking the harbour, one of a series of pā on Motu Kairangi (Miramar Peninsula). Oruaiti Pā (which Elsdon Best guesses was built in 1625AD) was occupied by Te Ātiawa at the time of colonial arrival in 1839, William Wakefield with the New Zealand Company. Following this a military fort was proposed for the headland, and from 1905 until 1991 it was used by the Defence Force as Fort Dorset. In 1910, guns were installed to protect the entrance to the harbour. I read all this in the Wellington City Council records on the ‘Culture and History’ section on the site.¹⁶⁶ Between Wakefield’s arrival and the establishment of the military

¹⁶⁵ Jackson, “Globalisation and the Colonising State of Mind,” in *Resistance: An Indigenous Response to Neoliberalism*, ed. Maria Bargh (Wellington: Huia, 2007), 178.

¹⁶⁶ See “Oruaiti Reserve Management Plan,” Wellington City Council, October 2011, <http://wellington.govt.nz/~media/your-council/plans-policies-and-bylaws/plans-and-policies/a-to-z/oruaitireserve/files/02culture.pdf?la=en>.

fort there is no record of what happens: rather, the subtle implication that Oruaiti has a long history as a site of defence of the harbour covers an apparently seamless transition from Māori to settler occupation and use. Today Breaker Bay is known as a recreation beach, with views of the harbour entrance; it is also one of New Zealand's 'free beaches' used by naturists. Its relatively shallow gradient makes it good for spear fishing, and diving for paua and crayfish.

The multiple uses of the Bay also take us back to the earlier question about how we understand this work through the specificity of its location, on the coast of Aotearoa. In 2004 the Foreshore and Seabed Act was passed by the Labour Government.¹⁶⁷ This effectively 'nationalised' ownership of the public foreshore and seabed with the Crown as its absolute property, legally embedding rights of public access for recreation and fishing. This contentious¹⁶⁸ Act was seen by many in New Zealand, alongside the Waitangi Tribunal, as an imposition of the Crown into areas that were rightfully governed by Tikanga Māori,¹⁶⁹ and further, offering no guarantee that the land would not later be privatised. In commentary on the Act, Jackson writes of how this contravenes the Treaty of Waitangi:

The Bill formalises the legal division of a small coastal strip and sea from the rest of the whenua, which prior to 1840 was clearly part of the whenua or rohe of Iwi and Hapu. It belonged to those tangata whenua who exercised mana or rangatiratanga in relation to it. As such it was part of the mana whenua of an Iwi or Hapu and was preserved under Article Two of both the Māori and English texts of the Treaty within the rangatiratanga or 'full, exclusive and undisturbed possession' of Māori.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ The seabed is land that is completely submerged under water. The foreshore is land that is regularly submerged by the sea's tidal reach: the wet part of the beach. See "Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004," Public Act 2004, no.93, New Zealand Legislation, <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2004/0093/latest/DLM319839.html>. For a fuller account of the social-political context, see "Foreshore and Seabed information", Peace Movement Aotearoa, accessed May 21, 2017, <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/fsinfo.htm>; and Moana Jackson, "An Analysis of the Foreshore and Seabed Bill," 2004, accessed December 16, 2016, www.converge.org.nz/pma/fsbprimer.doc.

¹⁶⁸ A hiko, estimated to be 15,000 people, arrived to protest the Bill at Parliament in Wellington on 5 May 2004, having left from Northland 13 days earlier. This was also the time of the Māori Party's establishment, following then Labour MP Tariana Turia's decision to vote against the Labour Party's Foreshore and Seabed legislation and resign. For an outline of some of the fundamental issues within the Act, see Jackson, "The Taking of the Foreshore," 2003, accessed December 16, 2016, <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/fs081203.htm#moana> and Jackson, "Another Primer on the Foreshore and Seabed Bill," 2005, accessed December 16, 2016, <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/mj140305.htm>.

¹⁶⁹ Māori practices and way of doing things, according to what is 'tika' or correct. See Hirini Moko Mead, *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori Values* (Wellington: Huia, 2003).

¹⁷⁰ Jackson, "An Analysis of the Foreshore," 2.

The Treaty of Waitangi states, in its 1840 wording: “Ko te Kuini o Ingarani ka wakarite ka wakaae ki nga Rangatira ki nga hapu-ki nga tangata katoa o Nu Tirani te tino rangatiratanga o ratou wenua o ratou kainga me o ratou taonga katoa.”¹⁷¹ / The Queen of England agrees to protect the chiefs, the subtribes and all the people of New Zealand in the unqualified exercise of their chieftainship¹⁷² over their lands, villages and all their treasures.”¹⁷³

Significantly, in the Māori version, the idea of property, individual or collective ownership is not referenced, rather ‘tino rangatiratanga.’¹⁷⁴ Commonly translated as ‘self-determination’ or ‘self-sovereignty’, an influential articulation of the term’s implications comes from political activist Donna Awatere in the 1980s: “Māori sovereignty is the Māori ability to determine our own destiny and to do so from the basis of our lands and fisheries. In essence, Māori sovereignty seeks nothing less than the acknowledgement that New Zealand is Māori land, and further seeks the return of this land.”¹⁷⁵ Maria Bargh (Te Arawa [Ngāti Kea/Ngāti Tuarā], Ngāti Awa) also notes, “. . . tino rangatiratanga has particular connotations attached to it, relating to mana whenua, mana moana, mana tangata and Te Tiriti.”¹⁷⁶ Specifically, mana moana connects tangata whenua with sovereignty of the sea.

In 2011 the Foreshore and Seabed Act was replaced by the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act,¹⁷⁷ which put in place a ‘no ownership regime.’ This acknowledged that Māori may have exclusive customary interests in public areas of the

¹⁷¹ Te reo translation of Article Tuarua, from the first schedule of the Treaty of Waitangi Act 1975. See “The Treaty of Waitangi / Te Tiriti o Waitangi: Te Reo Māori Version,” Waitangi Tribunal, accessed September 24, 2016, <https://www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz/treaty-of-waitangi/te-reo-maori-version/>.

¹⁷² Professor Sir Hugh Kawhuru of the Waitangi Tribunal has observed that the concept of “chieftainship... has to be understood in the context of Māori social and political organisation as at 1840. The accepted approximation today is ‘trusteeship’.” Kawhuru, “Translation of the Te Reo Māori Text,” footnote 1, Waitangi Tribunal, accessed May 7, 2017, <https://www.waitangitribunal.govt.nz/treaty-of-waitangi/translation-of-te-reo-maori-text/>.

¹⁷³ Kawhuru’s reo Pākehā translation of Article Tuarua of the Treaty, published in *Waitangi Revisited: Perspectives on the Treaty of Waitangi*, eds. Michael Belgrave, Merata Kawharu and David Williams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989). Kawhuru’s translation was undertaken with the intention of revealing how Māori read and understood the Treaty they signed. Kawhuru points out that ‘treasures,’ ‘taonga,’ refers to *all dimensions* of an iwi’s estate: material and immaterial. See “Translation of the Te Reo Māori Text,” footnote 8.

¹⁷⁴ This is translated as follows: “self-determination, sovereignty, autonomy, self-government, domination, rule, control, power.” See *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, s.v. “tino rangatiratanga,” <http://maoridictionary.co.nz/>.

¹⁷⁵ Awatere, as cited by Ranginui J. Walker, “The Genesis of Māori Activism,” *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 93, no.3 (1984): 279. See “The Treaty of Waitangi” section of this article for a discussion of misapprehension and mis-translations within.

¹⁷⁶ Bargh, *Resistance: An Indigenous Response*, 142.

¹⁷⁷ For the full Act see “Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011,” Public Act 2011, no.3, New Zealand Legislation, <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2011/0003/latest/DLM3213131.html>. For more detail see “Te Takutai Moana: Customary Rights in the Marine and Coastal Area (Foreshore and Seabed),” *Community Law Manual Online*, accessed December 2, 2016, <http://communitylaw.org.nz/community-law-manual/chapter-25-maori-land/takutai-moana-customary-rights-in-the-marine-and-coastal-area-foreshore-and-seabed-chapter-25/>.

foreshore and seabed, and these could be legally recognised in negotiation with the Crown through court. However, these interests may not prevent existing rights and uses such as public access, navigation, fishing, aquaculture and mining. Therefore the Government retains control of resources in the seabed, such as gold, uranium, silver and petroleum. So a ‘no ownership regime’ in effect leaves the Crown’s position and operation unchanged. Again, Jackson points out two fundamental philosophical problems with this legislation:

1. In tikanga terms whenua has to belong to somebody just as tangata whenua have to belong to the whenua. The notion of not belonging (or not being ‘owned’ in the document’s language) is a diminishment of the relationship Iwi and Hapu have with the whenua and therefore of whakapapa itself.
2. In terms of Pākehā law it appears to revive the discredited colonising legal doctrine of terra nullius or ‘the empty land’ which once allowed colonisers to take indigenous lands simply by saying there were no people there.¹⁷⁸

With the clarity of Jackson’s critique, it is easy to see how the dominant order represented by the Crown maintains its dominance, through reasserting the ‘power to define’ at every juncture. In this case the imposed definitions hinge around the separability of things and people (the former as an object able to be comprehensively owned by the latter in a one-way relationship, or for this relationship to be severed in the interests of commercial gain); and time as linear, with history as something that is able to be left behind (the arrival of colonisers representing a ‘beginning’, the time before which legal process need not take into serious consideration).

The temporality Jackson (and others¹⁷⁹) writes of here is founded in Te Ao Māori, whakapapa-based, “in which time turns back on itself in order to bring the past into the

¹⁷⁸ Jackson, “A Primer on the Government Consultation Document ‘Reviewing the Foreshore and Seabed Act 2004’,” April 7, 2010, <http://www.converge.org.nz/pma/mjfsa0410.pdf>.

¹⁷⁹ Significantly, many references to time immediately implicate space. For example, Marsden writes, “Atea is the word for space. It was usually combined with wa (time) to form waatea (space-time) They [Māori tīpuna] saw space and time as conjoined together and relative to each other. The final series of the Tua-Atea [the world beyond space and time] genealogy is recited as: ‘*Te Hauora begat shape; shape begat form; form begat space; space begat time; and time begat Rangi and Papa (heaven and earth)*’. Thus the space-time continuum became the framework into which heaven and earth were born.” Marsden, *Kaitiakitanga*, 9. Paul Tapsell (Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāti Raukawa) writes of the exchange of taonga as a collapse of distance/‘space-time’, allowing ancestors and descendants to have direct access to each other, to be a single genealogical entity. Tapsell, “The Flight of Pareraututu: An Investigation of Taonga from a Tribal Perspective,” *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, 106, no.4 (1997): 335. While it is outside the scope of this research to follow space-time connectivity further, I recognise also the limits of a discussion of temporalities, in isolation from space.

present and then into the future. Above all it is a notion of time which recognises the interconnectedness of all things.”¹⁸⁰ Running across the grain of linear time, bringing *the past into the present and then into the future*, as Jackson suggests a whakapapa-based time scheme does, therefore destabilises the foundation on which Pākehā legal system maintains forms of dominance. To engage with this conception of time, as more than a subordinated ‘alternative’ then, comes with a political imperative.

To be clear, I am not setting out to position Leach’s work as engaging with the debate ensuing from the Foreshore and Seabed Act in any explicit way, nor in the wider cultural politics it raises. It is easy enough to point out that as privately rather than publicly owned, the discrete portion of land that boatshed 805 occupies technically falls outside of this legislation anyway. Rather, my point is that in the work’s location on the Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington south coast, it cannot but draw the discussion of the contested history of Aotearoa’s coast and coastal access into view. Its presence is in this sense always a culturally located one, and in this reading, an opportunity to reflect on the location as a site of accountability to the past. Further, for me it raises an awareness of my own subjectivity, as contingent on how I understand time. As Barad writes,

A location is an embedded and embodied memory: it is a set of counter-memories, which are activated by the resisting thinker against the grain of the dominant representations of subjectivity. A location is a materialist temporal and spatial site of co-production of the subject, and thus anything but an instance of relativism. Locations provide the ground for accountability.¹⁸¹

I want to address the how too. *How* may reading the work according to a non-linear time-principle enable bringing the past into the present and future? Partly through the experience of cyclic time it initiates, which alters the past/future binary altogether. As sculpture, the boatshed could be visited from midnight to midnight. This duration was specific to the One Day Sculpture brief,¹⁸² but one full day is also the period through which two full tides pass, a moon and a sunrise and set. In this way time, within the work, can be experienced as a cycle, with recurrent phenomena in interdependence. The

¹⁸⁰ See Jackson, *He Manawa Whenua Indigenous Research Conference Proceedings*, 62. Jackson speaks here of a temporality in which multiple presents and tipuna are co-existent.

¹⁸¹ Braidotti, *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), 29.

¹⁸² See One Day Sculpture website, accessed September 26, 2015, <http://www.onedaysculpture.org.nz>.

tides are dependent on the moon; the storm is dependent on shifts of atmospheric pressure, which in turn relate to the sea; the pressure shifts occur in moving bodies of air as they encounter water masses and land masses. Throughout the 24 hours, people came to the boatshed and went, according to what else was going on in their own time that day, not to an imposed schedule. This experience was unique to the visitor; there was not a before and after (within the duration of the work) rather a series of 'nows'.

Continuing with the idea of a cycle, within the work time is not measured in increments as is clock-time, rather it is experienced as constant movement. Bergson's writing on duration usefully extends this idea of time as constant movement or 'flow'. His idea is that duration produces difference, that is, that things are always in a state of becoming, emerging or transforming, a process that necessarily happens over time. This offers a different but possibly related way of thinking through the movement of bringing the past into the present that Jackson talks about. Further, this is a form of temporal continuity which holds within it space for infinite differentiation. Grosz articulates Bergson's 'durational reality' as "composed of millions even billions, of specific durations, each with its own measure . . . Yet each duration can be linked to the others . . . [carrying] in it durational flow, that is, an irresistible orientation forward and an impulse to complexify in this movement."¹⁸³ Surely, I think, they are talking about the sea, standing at the boatshed window in Breaker Bay, seeing the waves, each with their own specific duration, bringing in the future: the storm, the moon cycle, altering even the rocks over a longer duration.¹⁸⁴

Similarly, the potential force of the absent storm is part of what makes this discussion occur, by motivating the work in the first place. The boat, the idea of the boat, this too is active, as that which initially opens my thinking to the 'what else' might be held in its place. So while its elements are largely immaterial, the sculpture offers a specifically located experience and as such, its immateriality is part of what substantiates a political discussion about place. This is neither separate from the work, nor is it the topic of the work.

¹⁸³ Grosz, "Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming," *Parallax* 11, no.2 (2005): 11. Bergson's concept of duration is developed in his 1899 thesis, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness*, trans. F.L. Pogson (New York: Dover Publications, [first published in 1910] 2001).

¹⁸⁴ Rocks are one of the best images for me of Bergson's idea of duration as a *moving continuity*, "in which everything changes and yet remains." Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 197.

Harder perhaps to think of the boatshed itself on these terms, as a kind of continuity that is also generative of future events. But to do so is possible. The boatshed knows there will be future storms, its materials hold in them the resilience to endure the winters coming. Its presence does not make these things occur, but it stands as a material expression of their potential, even on a bright day in mid-summer. The boatshed was a strong part of what made this work happen, in a very concrete way: its location, its presence as a shelter, and subsequently, it is that led to my research about the coast.¹⁸⁵ Likely in the future it will weather the storms that surely arrive with subsequent winters.

‘Storm Batters Wellington.’ The boatshed was broken in that storm, 20 June 2013. I almost miss it, a postscript on the project web page. I only read it this year. But I remember the storm, now: the electricity went off in Island Bay nearby, where we lived on Hudson St on the east side of the gully. We watched the whole gully go dark. Maddie told me a neighbour salvaged much of the cedar lining, but the doors were swept out to sea. There’s a picture online too, where it looks like the shed smashed into the rock from a height, or that the rock rose up to meet it.

I still think of the word that is not a word, ‘perigree’. I have to pause before I say ‘perigree’ aloud, to make sure I say it correctly. In my mind *perigree* sits somewhere between the two meanings—the sea voyage of *peregrination* and the gravity of the orbiting moon in *perigee*. When writing about artworks according to what is not immediately present, or outside of their art historical lineage, it can feel like I am circling, not following a direct line of logic. It can be an experience of loss: the artwork is gone now, and I know I would not see it the same way even if I could revisit that 28 August 2008 day. While I work for new language, while I swim in what it is *not to know*, I will call this perigree: the movement of transformation that does not stop.

For Maddie Leach

¹⁸⁵ As I write this, over eight years into the ‘future’ of that work, a whole new stretch of coast has emerged down on the West Coast of the South Island after an earthquake centred in Kaikoura, and the Aotearoa coast is again in daily public discourse. The Kaikoura Earthquake was a 7.8 magnitude quake that occurred on 14 November 2016. 110 km of the South Island coast rose as a result, in places up to six metres.

6. Concrete wall: To become more where one already was¹⁸⁶



Figure 13 Bianca Hester, concrete wall, *movements materialising momentarily* (installation view), St Paul St Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, 2015. Photo: Sam Hartnett.

Bianca Hester

recycled concrete wall

within the installation *movements materialising momentarily* which also includes: HD video, three bronze poles, AO photographic image, two large sheets of painted ply, bronze cast Titoki branch, map of Te Kōpuke lava flow, six powder-coated blue steel hoops, castings from two fossil sites: Takapuna (Pupuke maunga) and Renton Road (Maungataketake maunga)

31 July – 11 September 2015

St Paul St Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

There's a shell in my mouth. There's calcium phosphate in my left second molar, standing in for part of my tooth after a root canal.¹⁸⁷ There's a shell in my mouth and if you listen, if you put your ear on my ear, you'll hear sounds of the sea near

¹⁸⁶ Butt, "Theses on Art and Knowledge," *Un Magazine* 7, no.1 (2013), <http://unprojects.org.au/magazine/issues/issue-7-1/theses-on-art-and-knowledge/>.

¹⁸⁷ The dentist told me about the shell composite in the root canal operation and I think of it often; I looked up calcium phosphate for the first time just now and see I'm not the only one. Calcium phosphates are like bone in composition and are used in many medical and dental procedures in different forms, as cements, composites, and coatings.

Ruapuke where I was born, two driving hours south of here. There's a shell in my mouth and one day I'll be a rock again. There's a shell in my mouth and the bedrock here where I live now in Tāmaki Makaurau is Greywacke, gritty as sandpaper and hard, with white veins of quartz. There's basalt too, from the volcanoes. There are over 50 volcanoes in this field,¹⁸⁸ and people use the scoria for walls at the edges of their lawns: grey and red and rough as chapped skin.

HALT.

Start by halting, because there is a wall in your way. It is nearly as high as your waist, as wide as an adult body, and about as long as two people lying down head to toe. It is concrete, its texture brings to mind the last time you grazed your knee, the way it would snag your shirt if you brushed by close. It is rough. Listen and you can almost hear the coarse scraping sound of the digger in the quarry, see the diagonal gradient on a pile of loose gravel, taste the leather-dry dust that rises from cement mix when you open the bag. Just standing near by and looking at the wall, you already intuitively know so much about its surface and texture that the awareness of it brings you to a different kind of halt, in your thinking. Perhaps you know everything there is to know about this object already? Perhaps, as sculptural object, it is a solely formal statement? But it is also an actual wall.¹⁸⁹ I could reduce it to a list of recognisable everyday materials, or an aesthetic form within the whole installation; unarguably it is both these things too. But are there other ways to account for its presence in the gallery? Why, and how, is it here?

The wall which stands in the gallery did not begin as a wall. Before it became the wall it was a pile of broken concrete fragments at a commercial yard. Before that it was other concrete buildings' walls, and foundations. The trailer load of concrete fragments came from demolition sites around the city, and were dumped outside the gallery by Paea Veamoi, wall builder and owner of Stoneage Fencing. Veamoi's company makes scoria walls of the kind commonly seen in Tāmaki Makaurau; after meeting with the artist he agreed to use the concrete rubble in place of scoria to make a wall in this style for the

¹⁸⁸ This is monogenetic: a single active field of magma about 100 km beneath the city.

¹⁸⁹ Elements of Hester's sculpture have a relationship to the readymade, a practice of adopting unaltered manufactured objects going back to the work of Marcel Duchamp. While addressing the readymade as such is not the focus of my discussion here, I don't wish to alienate the work from its art historical inheritance. I would point out that in most instances where 'readymades' such as a tennis ball, tape, or a car, have been present in Hester's work, they have been deployed for alternative use—for example for mark-making.

gallery installation. The concrete rubble that would become the wall arrived covered in dust from being broken up, and grime from being stored outside, and needed to be scrubbed by hand before it could go into the gallery.

From the time she arrived in Tāmaki Makaurau,¹⁹⁰ Hester had been interested in the volcanic scoria walls, especially common in suburbs on or adjacent to the volcanic cones themselves, such as Owairaka (Mt Albert) and Maungawhau (Mt Eden). These are typically built in the 19th century ‘freestone’ style, with fine-grained columnar basalt that was used for paddock marking in former lava fields, later for the edges of subdivided blocks of land, and then for individual house sections. In this context they endure as architectural memory of colonial presence in the city, and more recently, as the scoria is replaced with walls made from imported stone, are cited as local heritage that should be preserved. The basaltic rock is solidified magma which was then either quarried from one of the local cones in the Tāmaki field (all of which have been quarried at some point), or in the form of scoria, solidified in the air during eruption.

Most of the volcanoes are flat or hollowed, some are public parks, some hold municipal reservoirs of water; others are housing developments. One day that June when you were filming I saw that the quarry on Big King had hit the water table, the last of the chert scraped out like marrow and made into the last ordered piles to be trucked out. One June later there are raw houses on a packed plane of earth where the crater used to be, and before that, the cone of the maunga.

Hester has spoken of her methodology as working with that which is “within arm’s reach.”¹⁹¹ Rather than arriving to a place to make work with a pre-set concept or set of materials, she typically works with what is already there: locally sourced materials, and following an intuitive process in dialogue with those who become involved in the course of research. For *movements materialising momentarily* (the project within which the concrete wall sits) this meant starting with the volcanic field, as a field of material which is locally specific to Tāmaki Makaurau. The initial idea was to look to the

¹⁹⁰ Hester came to Tāmaki Makaurau initially on a research residency, towards an exhibition project for St Paul St Gallery in 2015. I invited her in 2014, and she had from the beginning been clear about wanting to spend an extended period in the city before making work. Hester spent three months here between May-July 2015, living in an apartment across the road from the gallery.

¹⁹¹ “Working within arm’s reach describes a way of practising with a focus upon the local—that which is within range and close by—spatially, relationally and politically. It affirms being in the midst of many contesting forces and calls for a commitment to negotiating antagonistic energies, in order to hold open space for differences to proliferate.” See Hester, “Within Arm’s Reach,” *Un Anthology 2004-2014: A Decade of Art and Ideas* (Melbourne: Un Projects, 2016), np.

volcanic field to cue the forms the work would take: the craters themselves as well as the lava, scoria, basalt, and quarries, and from those geological cues to consider the movements, processes and interactions of all these elements within the context of specific current urban developments, such as the Waterview Tunnel.¹⁹²

From the outset Hester was concerned that this focus be on a *dynamic and interconnected* material universe, tracing geological histories and material transformations that pre-existed and will outlast the human time-scale. The emphasis was on matter as process, rather than on matter as discrete elements of ‘nature’ and conceived as instrumentally useful to humans. Working from the middle in this way appeared to offer a strategic alternative to re-inscribing a nature/culture binary, by acknowledging the material world as itself always in the process of change, the social and the natural always entangled in a relation of “ramification and elaboration”,¹⁹³ rather than opposition.

What was not apparent at the outset was that working through this ‘arm’s reach’ methodology, and particularly through the dialogue with mana whenua Kaumātua Pita Turei (Ngai Tai ki Tāmaki, Ngāti Paoa, Nga Rauru Kiitahi), and artist Natalie Robertson (Ngāti Porou, Clan Donnachaidh),¹⁹⁴ the volcanic material from the field would enact a series of disruptions in the process, ultimately eluding the exhibition space altogether. So rather than passively signifying a specific locale and its material history in its inclusion, through the process of the project’s development the scoria also revealed forms of agency. I see these as gestures enforcing ‘halts’ within the process, most significantly, the scoria’s refusal to be included in the exhibition space.

HALT. We’re getting ahead, away from the wall.

¹⁹² The Waterview Tunnel is a 2.4 km tunnel between Point Chevalier and Mt Roskill. Under construction at the time of Hester’s residency (opening in May 2017), its significance in the context of the project related to the 800,000 cubic metres of ‘spoil’ or ‘slurry’ extracted for the tunnel to run through, which were then dumped at Wiri, formerly a quarry and before that a volcanic cone. For more detail see “Waterview Tunnel”, New Zealand Transport Authority, <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/the-western-ring-route/waterview-tunnel>.

¹⁹³ Grosz, *Time Travels*, 47.

¹⁹⁴ As part of the project Hester worked with a number of ‘critical companions’ (Natalie Robertson, Jon Bywater, Biddy Livesey), local artists and others with whom she spoke regularly regarding the unfolding of the work, specifically, in identifying and responding to elements of cultural knowledge. These relationships were intended as one way of addressing her position as manuhiri, a visitor or guest. Kaumātua Pita Turei was initially approached in relation to the hīkoi with the pole, as it would traverse the whenua. Over a series of conversations Turei worked with us through the kaupapa, ultimately leading the hīkoi.

What does it mean for a project to try to start with a specific material form, such as volcanic material, but to approach that within the idea that it is interconnected with all other forms of matter? Barad articulates the complexity of material interrelationship this way,

Matter is not little bits of nature, or a blank slate, surface, or site passively awaiting signification.... It does not require the mark of an external force like culture or history to complete it. Matter is always already an ongoing historicity.¹⁹⁵

Working within this understanding means acknowledging that basalt, scoria, does not just exist in fragmentary, easily accessible form as serves human use, and within a human-centred taxonomy and temporality, but is part of the widest conceivable field of material intra-actions. It is at once emerging and complete.

As an initial way of engaging this idea, rather than focusing on the volcanic as an object or series of objects, Hester identified three axes or bi-sections for the project to focus on.¹⁹⁶ These were in one sense arbitrarily drawn lines on a map, human-centric designations connecting different key sites where significant volcanic activity was visibly present. However at the same time they made transparent the acknowledgment that looking at any form of matter in isolation is always a limited exercise, conditioned by the apparatus of observation and by the relative positioning of agencies. This aligns with Barad's concept of the 'agential cut', of which she writes, "The boundaries and properties of component parts of the phenomenon become determinate only in the enactment of an agential cut delineating 'measured object' from the 'measuring agent.'"¹⁹⁷ In this arrangement, object and agent are mutually constituted.

For Barad this allows for a conditional objectivity—a position of externality made

¹⁹⁵ The full passage reads, "Matter is not little bits of nature, or a blank slate, surface, or site passively awaiting signification; nor is it an uncontested ground for scientific, feminist, or Marxist theories. Matter is not a support, location, referent, or source of sustainability for discourse. Matter is not immutable or passive. It does not require the mark of an external force like culture or history to complete it. Matter is always already an ongoing historicity." Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity," 821.

¹⁹⁶ These spanned Te Kōpuke (Mt St John) to Te Tokaroa (Meola Reef); Waterview Tunnel construction site to Wiri where the 'tailings' were dumped; and Renton Road fossilised forest to Takapuna fossilised forest. For detail see the project website, *movements materialising momentarily*, accessed October 1, 2017, <https://movementsmaterialisingmomentarily.wordpress.com/axis-across-auckland/>.

¹⁹⁷ Further, in Barad's posthumanist framing of 'object' and 'agent', "human concepts or experimental practices are not foundational to the nature of phenomena." Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 337-38.

possible through the presence of an apparatus—in this case the observational frame of Hester’s research project. Barad’s idea of the agential cut in this way allows for provisional “resolution of ontological indeterminacy” (the interdependence of things) within a phenomenon such as the volcanic field, the ‘cut’ temporarily separating out different material agencies. In Barad’s words, it is this “agentially enacted material condition of exteriority-within-phenomena”¹⁹⁸ that enables a kind of objectivity, and the (temporary) material resolution of forms.

The first plan was to construct an actual scoria wall, just as it would exist in a local urban neighbourhood where the rock was prevalent, such as Maungawhau (Mt Eden). Walls have played a role in earlier artworks by Hester¹⁹⁹ and the logic was loosely continuous with this: bringing the local material as a material presence into the gallery, altering the course of the gallery visitor’s movement through the space, and drawing attention to the texture and spatial politics of the ‘real’ site in which the research took place, alongside or in contrast with the texture and spatial politics of the gallery space. But this became increasingly complex.

As a non-indigenous artist from Australia, for Hester the project had always involved more than learning about the geology, topography and colonial history specific to Tāmaki Makaurau, which arguably could have been researched at a distance. Being here in Tāmaki Makaurau for a three-month residency, and in discussion with Turei, Robertson, and many others, brought a growing awareness of the ‘subject material’ of the volcanic field within Te Ao Māori. Although the project was from the start founded in broad ideas of material relationships and matter-as-process, this was incrementally altered—and challenged—by locally specific knowledge and principles of mātauranga Māori as they arose in these on-the-ground discussions. I should be clear here that this learning process also involved me as curator, Pākehā and new to Tāmaki Makaurau; I was not separate from the learning in this project and don’t wish to suggest a false objectivity here as it did not exist. The encounter with volcanic material was both the impetus for, and a destabilisation of the project. With it came difficult questions.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, 175.

¹⁹⁹ See for example, *A world fully accessible by no living being*, 2011, in which a breeze block wall (with companion newspaper publication) installed in Federation Square, Melbourne, reconfigured public space. In this instance the wall offered shelter, shade, reading material and interruption, or any other use its multiple publics could put it to. See project website, *A world fully accessible by no living being*, accessed September 29, 2017, <http://aworldfullyaccessiblebynolivingbeing.blogspot.co.nz/>.

For example, the idea of bringing the volcanic material into the gallery as part of the installation. What would this dislocation from context really mean for the material? Who had the mana or cultural authority to bring the scoria into the space in the first place, and what would it mean for the mauri of the material to do so? Marsden has written of mana as having a ‘double aspect’ of “spiritual authority and power”,²⁰⁰ emphasising that such authority is delegated to agents who are channels (rather than the source) of mana. Mauri is often translated as ‘life force’: “the essential quality and vitality of a being or entity, [it is] also used for a physical object, individual, ecosystem or social group in which this essence is located.”²⁰¹ For Marsden, “[Mauri] is that force that interpenetrates all things to bind and knit them together and as the various elements diversify, Mauri acts as the bonding element creating unity in diversity.”²⁰² In other texts Marsden writes of mauri as spiritual, permeating the natural world: “Since the natural order was not a closed system it could be infiltrated and interpenetrated by the higher order of the spirit.”²⁰³ He describes this as an elemental energy, the stuff of which the universe was created.

*You can pick up a word and hold it,
opaque,
untranslated.*²⁰⁴

While I can research these ‘concepts’ in published sources, as I did at the time and continue to, I do not yet understand them in a lived way, except through assimilating them with Western metaphysical precepts, as I inevitably do subconsciously, but work hard not to foreground here. As Pākehā curator and non-indigenous artist working in this space we needed first to develop the living relationships to *begin to* recognise the implications of mauri held in things, the responsibility of hospitality, or ability to safely manaaki²⁰⁵ these things in a gallery. In the process of discussions, we came to

²⁰⁰ Marsden also writes of mana as “that which manifests the power of the gods.” The suggestion is that an understanding of mana is contingent on spiritual understanding, and that the word itself belongs in relational proximity to a whole ontology, rather than having meaning attached to it as a singular thing. Marsden, “God, Man and Universe: A Māori View,” in *Te Ao Hurihuri: Aspects of Māoritanga*, ed. Michael King, (Auckland: Reed Books, 1992), 118-119.

²⁰¹ See *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, s.v. “mauri,” <http://maoridictionary.co.nz/>.

²⁰² Marsden, *Kaitiakitanga*, 7.

²⁰³ Marsden, “God, Man and Universe,” 121.

²⁰⁴ Ursula K. Le Guin, “The Basalt,” in *Buffalo Gals and Other Animal Presences* (Penguin: Canada, 1994), 56.

²⁰⁵ ‘Manaaki’ is the verb form of the noun ‘manaakitanga’, translated as “to support, take care of, give hospitality to, protect, look out for—show respect, generosity and care for others.” *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, s.v. “manaaki,” <http://maoridictionary.co.nz/>. There is also a linguistic and lived relationship with ‘mana’: to manaaki is to nourish and sustain mana.

understand we did not have the capacity to care for the scoria or volcanic material, in a way that would replenish its mauri.

This realisation could be read as an effect of the material's resistant agency, raising further questions. Who would build and later destroy the wall (for it would need to be destroyed to be de-installed from the gallery)? Smashing scoria came to seem like the latent actualisation of a metaphysical violence enacted by dislocating the rock from its environment in the first place. Bringing the volcanic rock inside in this way began to seem not only a gratuitous thing to do, but to counter the kaupapa of the project—committed as this was to working with a model of material as interrelated, different ways of thinking about time, and matter as constantly undergoing transformation.

A relevant articulation of the cultural and representational challenge posed by the hosting of the volcanic material is found in Mika's writing on Heidegger, and the ontological demand for the substantial presence of an object, since Plato and Aristotle.²⁰⁶ Heidegger and Mika share a critique of Western philosophical thought for being tied to the idea of an object as conclusively 'there', as a singular, solid identity and not reliant on relational context. In contrast to this Mika asserts an understanding of absence within Te Ao Māori: "A Māori representation of an entity should ethically depict staying with that entity as active interpretation of whakapapa, thus ensuring that both the self and those things retain their connection with each other and their own inherent integrity."²⁰⁷ Further, Mika's proposition is that a violent and ongoing consequence of colonisation is manifest in this forced dislocation of 'thing' from the integrity of whakapapa. It could be argued that the gesture of embedding scoria into a wall for the purpose of the exhibition enacts a related dislocation of the volcanic material from its whakapapa, in this way perpetuating the colonising framing of 'being' as reliant on physical presence, and reinforcing the tendency of an institutional gallery to function as 'white' or non-indigenous space.

²⁰⁶ Heidegger's critique is of the "metaphysics of presence" (as Mika notes, a phrase first used by Derrida in 1982 but conceptually linked with Heidegger's work), as an ontological assumption in Western thought. In this framework to 'be' is to be tangible, solid, present. Heidegger's lecture, *The Thing* (1950) was originally delivered in an art museum, as part of the Bremen lecture series in Munich to the Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts. While I do not want to dwell on it here, it is interesting to note that Heidegger's 'thing' (a clay jug, in the instance of this lecture) is identified with *nearness* or proximity. For me this suggests the thing's relational capacity, as something that we may touch, hold, or which may act as a 'host'.

²⁰⁷ Mika, "Thereness," 8.

The first halt asserted by the scoria resulted in the decision to use recycled concrete in place of volcanic scoria. Concrete is of course also a material with its own complex history in relation to colonisation, industrial commerce, and the recent accelerated gentrification of residential Tāmaki Makaurau. Using recycled concrete in the gallery space in place of scoria not only registers the inability of the project to fully represent, contain, or constrain the volcanic rock. It also aligns more effectively with the original intention of considering a place through its many and interconnected forms of material expression, and with aspects of matter which may be intangible or invisible. On first glance, the wall looked like a real scoria wall. Although concrete, it brought to mind the *image* of scoria, an image which was however personal to the viewer—perhaps a wall from a familiar neighbourhood, or volcanic rock from a specific cone in the city. In the sense that it is recognisable as a wall, therefore, it was an accessible and shared image, but as *scoria* it was an idea only, something each viewer connected with in a way that was unique to them. Rather than being deployed as symbolic or formal gesture, the volcanic rock was ‘present’ in the gallery only in its specific relationship with the viewer. In its physical absence, the scoria maintained integrity as an unconstricted form, while exerting an influence on the physical shape and idea of the work, from a distance.

Danny Butt, also writing on Heidegger’s critique of presence, comments on the capacity of a contemporary art object to counter rationalist ways of knowing. For Butt, this happens through the real-time encounter with an audience, in which the work escapes the boundaries of terms set by curators, historians, the artist even, and “makes something happen.” This is not a passive encounter between neutral material form and neutral audience, rather, an exchange in which,

The work of art initiate[s] a world by creating a presence working in an oppositional direction to positivist knowledge. The experience of encountering a work [is] not to take us into the future, but to prompt an experience of unconcealment or emplacement—to become more *where* one already was.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ Butt is commenting here on Heidegger’s work on the concept of presence, ‘recovered’ from Greek philosophy. Butt deploys this in the argument against the contemporary capitalisation of knowledge, arguing for a world initiated by and encountered in the artwork, an exchange not fully comprehensible, and therefore unable to be commoditised within a university system. See Butt, “Theses on Art and Knowledge,” np.

More where one already was. (Even, the *where* overcoming or encompassing the ‘who’ or self.) I would say it this way: refusing to be fully present as scoria wall, the work instead located the viewer. This active *emplacement* occurred on several levels: sensorially, temporally, geographically, and culturally.

In a sensorial way (in Butt’s text, he uses the word “ingest” to describe the taking-in of aesthetic experience): encountering the wall brought you into immediate awareness of its physical qualities, and by association, of your own physicality—as discussed at the opening of this text, your height, weight, the vulnerability of your skin, all became factors at front-of-mind in the initial encounter.

Temporally: the wall is both present in an apparently permanent form, concrete, and clearly temporary, as it cannot be expected to last longer than the exhibition period. So the real-time encounter with it is disorientating: will it outlast the exhibition, or is it in a state of accelerated transition from one material form to another? Will it return to fragments as soon as this installation is disassembled? And what of the geological processes that formed the components of the concrete, are they still active?

Geographically: for many the wall’s material form immediately revealed that it was of and from a particular place, Tāmaki Makaurau, the place in which the viewer stands and the project took place. For others the form more directly evoked its colonial originary—the low drystone walls of Highland England and Scotland, built in the medieval period, which in many cases signify the early enclosure of common grazing land since the 16th century, and early colonial defensive fortification.²⁰⁹

Culturally: the recognition of the volcanic rock’s whakapapa in Te Ao Māori is known to some viewers; to others (myself included) it is less visible, remains concealed. This concealment or part-concealment of whakapapa is not a lapse in the meaningfulness of the work. Rather it is a manifestation of material agency, resisting full revelation in the space.

²⁰⁹ Understood in this way, the wall has a historical relationship to empire expansion going back to Roman Emperor Hadrian’s Wall, and the defence of the Roman province of Britannia, begun in AD122.

This takes us back to Mika's address to the thing as present according to, and in connection with, whakapapa, rather than fully tangible or visible. There can be read in this also a gesture of resistance to a colonising expectation of material presence, a refusal to be fully located *there* in the space: "the thing's mercuriality may. . . promise a counter-colonial answer, for it is in the lack of certainty in this kind of thinking that the coloniser might be, if not dealt with, at least put in some place of confusion themselves."²¹⁰ Performing this confusion of presence and absence was fundamental to how the concrete-not-scoria wall came to operate in the gallery space. I argue that generating the effect of confusion or disorientation is one manifestation of the scoria rock's power to resist. In doing so it 'emplaces' the viewer within an exchange with the material form in which the dynamic is power-filled rather than (ostensibly) neutral, or able to be neutralised. Drawing again on Barad's 'conditional objectivity,' it is the project's focus on the concrete wall-as-phenomenon that allows me to form even a theoretical position on how the scoria comes to perform in this way: as an agent. This is however more than a theoretical position. As an entity in Te Ao Māori, in its being invested with mauri, the rock resisted being present in the space. I could say we decided not to include the scoria in the exhibition space. But I would be lying. The rock said no.

HALT.

I sit for an afternoon trying to write about it further, to explain how the scoria resisted being in the space, how my text is not yet ready to hold it either. I write an email to you about it and delete the whole thing, because in the abstract, the words go flat and dull like stones in the sun. I think it would be better to speak about it in person, maybe on Te Tātua-a-Riukiuta²¹¹ where the cicadas changed over to crickets as we climbed up and down, near the scoria itself, not sitting at a computer screen.

HALT.

For two years now I've lived in Freemans Bay. The bay itself was filled in last century, but the water is still there, everywhere, once you begin to notice. Tuna

²¹⁰ Mika, "The Thing's Revelation," 67.

²¹¹ Te Tātua-a-Riukiuta (Three Kings) is one of the cones included in a 2014 Treaty of Waitangi settlement with Ngā Mana Whenua o Tāmaki Makaurau, a collective of 13 Auckland iwi. In this agreement ownership was vested to the collective, and the volcano is now co-governed by the collective and Auckland Council. For detail see "Ngā Mana Whenua Tāmaki Makaurau Collective Redress Act 2014," Public Act 2014, no.52, <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2014/0052/latest/whole.html>.

Mau ('to catch eels') stream used to come down through what is now Western Park by my house, and meet the bay at Franklin Road, near Victoria Park. I learned this first without knowing I was, just noticing the temperature drop cold as stone as I biked down the hill at night, and then by watching water well up and up, irrepressibly, in the low-lying parts of the park all this past winter, resisting the Council's efforts to drain and pave a path through the low-lying part. Later I find a map of the stream and the shoreline on the Internet, and from then on, the damp feels to me like an affirmation.

I recognise the damp in the air as we walk the route that Saturday; as well as a course where lava had flowed it is a watershed course from Te Kōpuke to the harbour. When we get to Western Springs, Pita tells me about the eels that used to be in the open waterways before they were replaced by reinforced concrete pipes, and about the fine filtration of water through the scoria left behind by the volcanoes. The lake at Western Springs is still Te Wai Ōrea (ōrea is the longfin freshwater eel). He tells me that the marshy land on the edge of the mangroves was used as a landfill until the 1960s, and more recently was found to be leaking methane gas and was capped with clay.

Now there are playing fields there, adolescent herons all along the shore. By the time we get there with the bronze poles, Saturday 16 July, the herons are gone and there are teenagers playing hockey. As we cross the road onto the reef, Te Tokaroa, I taste the salt of sweat on my top lip, or maybe it is from the salt in the air round the mangroves, or maybe it is in anticipation of the hot chips that we eat at the edge of the reef, where the lava would have hissed and cracked as it met the obsidian-cold water of the Waitematā.²¹² As we put the poles down and sit to eat the tide is coming in, towards high at 3.15pm.

For Bianca Hester

²¹² One translation of Waitematā is 'obsidian waters'; obsidian is formed by lava hitting water without crystallisation.

7. Plaster castings: Rock foundation beyond expanse²¹³



Figure 14 Bianca Hester, casting, *movements materialising momentarily*, St Paul St Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, 2015. Photo: Sam Hartnett.

Bianca Hester

castings, from two fossil sites: Takapuna (Pupuke maunga) and Renton Road (Maungataketake maunga)

plaster, oxide

within the installation *movements materialising momentarily* which also includes: HD video, three bronze poles, AO photographic image, two large sheets of painted ply, bronze cast Tītoki branch, map of Te Kōpuke lava flow, six powder-coated blue steel hoops

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It may be because the castings are black, but even from across the room you can feel how they hold negative space in them. You can see that they were originally moulded on porous rock, and that they remember this now through a terrain of pock-marks and ridges exposed to the air. There are 11 castings altogether, irregularly spread across the gallery floor. Their blackness makes it hard to see more at a distance.

²¹³ The full quote reads, “since the universe is dynamic and the earth is not simply *Papa* (rock foundation) but *Papa-tua-nuku* (rock foundation beyond expanse, the infinite), the universe itself is a process or event within the cosmic process.” Marsden in *The Woven Universe: Selected Writings of Rev. Māori Marsden*, ed. Royal (Ōtaki: Estate of Reverend Māori Marsden, 2003), 22.

You could go closer, and lie down to see better.²¹⁴ Go on, you know the space, *you could*. But the concrete floor of the gallery is hard and cold, like there is some cold deep within it that emanates, and it is July with a metallic cold in the air already. Thinking of lying on that unsympathetic concrete plane makes you too aware of your own warm flesh, and that the gallery is not an architectural space made for a relaxed body to easily inhabit. You crouch down instead, feeling your kneebones crack not unpleasantly as you do so. At this proximity, it is easier to discern the textural difference between the castings, pitted and made of plaster coloured with black oxide, and the grey aggregate floor with its polished surface.



Figure 15 Bianca Hester, casting, *movements materialising momentarily*, St Paul St Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, 2015. Photo: Bianca Hester.

You need to be this close to see how the one material relates to the other, that the immense heaviness and finality of the concrete floor is occupied in fact quite lightly by the castings, which now appear only as heavy as slabs of dry clay. They will be removed easily at the end of the exhibition; an especially curious or audacious viewer might move them during it, break them even. When you are close and can see what the casts are made of, you can also imagine the sound and the satisfaction of their weight

²¹⁴ The horizontal field is often foregrounded in Hester's work, a gesture related to the critique of binary constructions such as culture (active, productive) and nature (passive, idle). Of an earlier project, *A world fully accessible by no living being* (2011), which involved lying down in Federation Square, Melbourne, she has written: "Lying down in public is a kind of assertion of the body's need, an act that gives the body a moment to rest. I am starting to think of lying down in public as an act of privileging the body and celebrating a mode of passivity or inactivity, in some sense in resistance to the upright and productive one." "Five Points of View: Charlotte Day and Bianca Hester," in *please leave these windows open*, 79.

abruptly shattering against the concrete floor. You do not move. Perhaps the sight of this geological imprint has slowed down time, slowed your breath even.

The cast objects are what the artist has called ‘readings’ from two fossil sites in Tāmaki Makaurau: Renton Road in Māngere and Takapuna on the North Shore. At Takapuna, the basaltic surfaces in which the fossils are embedded are the result of lava flows from the Pupuke eruption that submerged a kauri forest, burning the trunks and leaving cylindrical moulds. At Renton Road, the casts are taken from the surfaces composed of layers of volcanic ash from the Maungataketake volcanic eruption, which fossilised a kauri forest and trapped debris including pumice as it solidified. Both these volcanic events occurred over 50,000 years ago.²¹⁵

Thinking of this time span feels almost impossible while crouching in a temporary exhibition space. At St Paul St, July 2015, you can hear the sounds of construction outside, the parking building being demolished down the street, and you know you’re likely to be interrupted in the exhibition at any minute by someone else coming in. Right here, now, there does not feel enough time to do anything more than look at the surfaces of these forms, identify the material they were made from in the roomsheet text, and try to visualise the local volcanic ‘sites of significance’²¹⁶ they came from.

For a viewer from Takapuna or Renton Road, and interested in geology, there may be satisfaction in connecting familiar rock terrain with this zoomed-in imprint of microscopic surface detail. This however is a relatively closed circuit of observation, not leading to further thought. I ask then, why bother to take the castings from a particular site in the first place, if their reading is ultimately to be entirely self-contained

²¹⁵ This according to Bruce W. Hayward, Graeme Murdoch and Gordon Maitland, *Volcanoes of Auckland: The Essential Guide* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2011).

²¹⁶ The term is used here in the context of the Auckland District Plan section on the Natural Environment, detailing “Significant Landforms and Sites of Geological Significance” on the North Shore (Takapuna’s district area) in accordance with the Resource Management Act (1991). The reasons for doing so are explained: “These natural features are visible evidence of the geological history of the area and as such are scientifically, educationally or aesthetically important as well as being of more general interest. Their significance relies on the clear visibility of the particular feature.” See “Section 8: Natural Environment,” in *Auckland Council District Plan: Operative North Shore Section 2002*, accessed May 20, 2017, <http://www.aucklandcity.govt.nz/council/documents/districtplannorthshore/text/section8-natural-environment.pdf>. Whaanga-Schollum expands on the definition of the term Sites of Significance (SOS), in its role as establishing iwi claimant group rights to natural resources or areas, as follows: “SOS mapping. . . records patterns of long-term occupation and intimate knowledge of place; an understanding which could be called ‘eco-philosophical.’ . . experiencing SOS through hīkoi produces something tangible and connective, a personal, intimate view of people being no more or less than elements of the environment. . . . This relational approach progresses environmental management towards considering ways to improve mutual health, rather than only the mitigation of negative effects—or—the distinct separation of an SOS for the purposes of preservation.” Whaanga-Schollum, “Sites of Significance,” in *Climate Change and Art*, 69. The difference is clear here, not only in the approach to ‘preservation’, but in the idea that human wellbeing and that of the natural ecosystem are inseparable.

and formal? How might we begin to relate to the castings otherwise, in connection with a cultural and temporal context that is broader than the brief time spent in the gallery? How might they be located in relation with this ground we stand on, at once specifically situated in Aotearoa, and within an expanse of geological time?

Geographer Kathryn Yusoff (who has recently written on Hester's work within the collaboration Open Spatial Workshop²¹⁷) offers a way of conceiving geological time through practising a kind of inversion. Rather than try to comprehend the immense span of time relative to the formation of what we designate 'geology', Yusoff puts forward the idea of human existence itself, being, *as* geological. She proposes an alternative temporality for the human subject, recognised through us not only having an effect on geological strata as an externality—as is the premise of the Anthropocene—but also being influenced by geological forces ourselves. Yusoff is less interested in the scientific and socio-cultural validation of the Anthropocene as *the* contemporary geological epoch,²¹⁸ than in its political potential as a site of imagination:

to begin to understand ourselves as geologic subjects, not only capable of geomorphic acts, but as beings who have something *in common* with the geologic forces that are mobilised and incorporated . . . to identify some of the collaborative junctures that govern and provoke these affiliations.²¹⁹

The core argument, which I share here, is that if we are able to relate bodily and psychologically to geological matter, we may better understand our relative agency as humans, and our subjectivity in terms of accountability and care. The logic of our existence becomes more contingent on these relationships. Breaking with a dichotomy of rock/us, we acknowledge an indebtedness to, and common interest with, myriad forms of matter. This opens into the argument that as humans we too share in infinitely distributed temporalities.

²¹⁷ See Yusoff, "Geological Expulsions," *Open Spatial Workshop: Converging in Time* (Melbourne: Monash University Museum of Art, 2016), 121-125.

²¹⁸ Yusoff is among others who identify the Anthropocene as a problematic designation in terms of its humanistic framing, and as a site in which models of cultural dominance are perpetuated. Zoe Todd writes that it needs to be held to critical account as *de facto* 'white space': "The Anthropocene, like any theoretical category at play in Euro-Western contexts, is not innocent of [...] violence." See Todd, 'Indigenizing the Anthropocene', in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, eds. Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), 251.

²¹⁹ Yusoff, "Geologic Life: Prehistory, Climate, Futures in the Anthropocene," *Environment and Planning Journal: Society and Space* 31 (2013): 781.

Yusoff's point in this essay is primarily about fossil fuels. She points out that at this moment in history humans are dependent on fossil fuels to sustain life as we know it, and that this could be theorised as a kind of material 'exchange' which happens in time: the expenditure of minerals (fossil fuels) bringing about climate shifts to the extent that the planet becomes uninhabitable for humans. That is, the extinction of fossil fuels is a prescient act towards our own extinction. In Yusoff's framing, our relationship with geology is implicitly political, and personal. It is a relationship between our bodily consumption and future time, which is in turn materialised, or conceived in terms of layers of sediment. She writes:

The increasingly desperate forms of material exchanges that are involved in 'unconventional' mineral extraction, such as tar sands, 'fracking', and deep seabed drilling, are testament to the wider biological compromises of this new political geology—in unearthing one fossil layer we create another contemporary fossil stratum that has our name on it.²²⁰

This direct connection, through our need for mineral consumption, infinitely concentrates the time/distance relationship we have with the geological. It also complicates the temporal linearity of this relationship. As Yusoff states, the general assumption is that minerals, over time, transform into forms of organic life. But if we see ourselves as returning to the sediment, back into mineral at some future point, we commit to a cyclic view of time which is not interrupted by our death; rather the energy is transferred across different mineral forms. Her term for this is 'geologic materialism': "This is to say that 'our' geologic force is not ours alone and owes a *debt* (of force) to the mobilisation of other geological materials: fossil fuels."²²¹

So how does all this relate to Hester's cast forms? What if we read them with an awareness of being *within* the geological, that is, of ourselves as an extension of the mineral strata that enables our present existence? There is room in imagination for these material likenesses and through them, for relational continuity across different material bodies. While the castings physically sit within the limited architectural space and 'present' of the exhibition period, might they be imagined also to spread out infinitely

²²⁰ Ibid., 784. See also Yusoff, "Anthropogenesis: Origins and Ending in the Anthropocene," *Theory, Culture and Society* 33 (2015): 203-226.

²²¹ Ibid., "Geologic Life," 785.

as a sedimentary layer of the planet we too inhabit? Can we through them be moved to experience our connection with rock as a solid form that is not just situated in the past, thousands of years ago, but also signifies our possible future? This requires a shift of logic, not just looking closely but looking internally.

*Think of this while you are still crouching low down next to the castings, which first asked your attention across the room and then that you move and change position to see them properly on the floor. Remember the ways in which those rock strata are not dissimilar to the material of your bones (part of this is feeling your kneebones, now protesting from the crouch and the cold in the concrete floor). Remember the metals in a body which are also found in the soil, such as iron and zinc, copper, manganese, selenium, essential in the enzymes for metabolic or biochemical processes.*²²²

The castings are not rock themselves, rather they are formed through direct contact with rock. They are the marks a rocky surface makes when it is pressed with a silicon skin, then plaster and oxide poured in to the resulting mould and left to set.²²³ This relation is indexical (rather than iconic or symbolic),²²⁴ meaningful in direct correlation with the rock surface. At this point I see this correlation as *in excess of signification*, or, put another way, taking the form of efficacious metaphor.²²⁵ That is, the rock surface's 'liveness' is sustained in relation to the cast form in the gallery, and as idea, carried into and in turn living on in this text.

This thinking is indebted to Henare's [Salmond's] writing on taonga Māori as rendering irrelevant the distinction between material and immaterial or animate and inanimate, that in taonga there is "a precise identity...between thing and spirit."²²⁶ In Henare [Salmond]'s discussion this vitality is the 'hau', or breath, shared in the relational exchange of taonga.²²⁷ While I am concerned to be very clear that I am not suggesting

²²² These metals are required for blood cell formation, tissues, bones and teeth as well as the regulation of biophysical processes.

²²³ The forms are reconstituted with plaster of paris, itself a calcium sulfate or gypsum: another rock. 'Plaster of Paris' is named for the abundance of gypsum near Paris. Gypsum forms within layers of sedimentary rock, in thick beds or layers. It develops in lagoons where ocean waters high in calcium and sulphate evaporate, and are regularly replenished with new sources of water.

²²⁴ I refer here to the semiotic distinction between types of sign.

²²⁵ Stengers, "Experimenting with Refrains." See footnote 49 for reference, and discussion of the idea of metaphor in chapter 3.

²²⁶ It is essential vitality includes "the ability to generate and encompass new forms." See Henare [Salmond], "Taonga Māori," 49.

²²⁷ Significantly, this 'breath' is not distinct from the taonga, rather "one taonga exchanged for another does not simply carry the hau of the gift, it is its hau." Ibid., 48. In other places Marsden writes of the connection between hau and mauri: "'Hau-ora'—'the breath of life' is the agent or source by and from which mauri (life-principle) is mediated to objects both animate and inanimate." Marsden, *The Woven Universe*, 44.

the castings are taonga, the concept is crucial to this reading in that it brings into discussion the possibility of not just an indexical relation between the rock, mould, and casting, but a living one. Even as the plaster castings appear in the gallery installation as singular objects, they materialise a relationship with the whenua they came from at Renton Road and Takapuna.

The castings are also recently formed, and as such they have potential to transform the recognition of rocks as located in [Pākehā] ‘pre-history’. Rather than being from a time that occurred millennia ago, these castings evoke a temporal continuity that connects this past with our experience of present time. Barad’s theory of non-linear causality, or intra-activity (explored in detail in chapter two), throws further interest on this reading, with its implication that there is no inherently determinate relationship between past, present, and future. Barad writes:

In rethinking causality as intra-activity and not as...cause followed by an effect—... [in] an important sense, the ‘past’ is open to change. It can be redeemed, productively reconfigured in an iterative unfolding of spacetime-matter. But its sedimenting effects, its trace, can not be erased.²²⁸

That is, the marks we make on the geological, and the marks we internalise through the way we interact with the geological, are sedimented in us, lasting. For the most relevant example, while it is possible to reconceptualise a relationship with fossil fuels, change patterns of consumption and concepts of ‘use’, we cannot undo the impacts of burning mineral for fuels. Our existence is changed through the intra-actions, both micro-physical and larger intra-actions, which do not ‘stop’ because we as humans recognise change is required.²²⁹

I begin to imagine these forms as mineral stratum continuous in space—stretching out as a layer. I think again of the word whakapapa, its constituent ‘papa’ meaning ground or base. This is a relational connection across time. Whakapapa is also written about by Anne Salmond among others as, “an element in a network of ties of descent and other

²²⁸ Barad, “Matter Feels,” np.

²²⁹ This also changes how we conceive agency. Barad puts it simply, “Agency is not an attribute whatsoever—it is ‘doing’/‘being’ in its intra-activity.” As Barad has it, agency cannot then be considered an attribute of ‘subjects’ or ‘objects’, as this distinction does not pre-exist phenomena. Barad, “Intra-active Entanglements,” 827.

relationships whose vitality endures in Te Ao Marama, ‘the world of light’ through their identity and form.”²³⁰ That is, the person whose whakapapa is being told is living embodiment of the ancestors named in whakapapa.

To be writing this here in Aotearoa, as Pākehā, is to embody the fundamental challenge at the heart of this study, which attempts to be culturally located. Moving through these layers of interpretation takes me to a place of unknowing. There are layers of Earth to consider, and also layers of language and understanding, as well as historical misappropriation of such concepts. Mikaere articulates this with relation to the example of whakapapa:

The fact that whakapapa, when it is written, is usually recorded in a form that is suggestive of hierarchy (that is, from the top down) is a consequence of the Western practice of reading and writing from the top of the page down. It does not match the meaning of the word ‘whakapapa’ which literally refers to the building of one layer upon another.²³¹

De-emphasising teleological time provokes the consideration of how who, and where, we are influences our understanding of past, present and future. I think of this as I look at the A3 printed copy of the Pākehā family tree I have on my mum’s side, the tree as a metaphor of upward and outward growth. I look again and realise it could also be a root system, spreading laterally and into the ground. In this moment I recognise more clearly how translation can be its own form of colonisation. While a plurality of temporal contexts may be possible to acknowledge in a text such as this, what is the appropriate weighting of things in the discussion? This is asked bearing in mind that the material at issue here are casts from local volcanic material and whenua, sites of violent colonisation both historical and present.²³²

At issue here are points of possible common ground between the non-linear, intra-active paradigm offered by Barad, and a concept of time from Te Ao Māori, in which time is,

²³⁰ See Anne Salmond, “Self and Other in Contemporary Anthropology,” in *Counterworks: Managing the Diversity of Knowledge*, ed. Richard Fardon (London: Routledge, 1995), 26.

²³¹ Mikaere, *Colonising Myths: Māori Realities* (Wellington: Huia, 2011), 373: note 19.

²³² With regard to the latter, see for example the history of Ihumātao, Māngere, illegally confiscated by the Government in 1863, and at the time of writing the proposed ‘Special Housing Area’ site for development of nearly 500 houses, against the will of mana whenua who still occupy the land. For an outline of this history see Leonie Hayden and Qiane Matata-Sipu, “When Worlds Collide,” *New Zealand Geographic*, August, 2017: <https://www.nzgeo.com/stories/when-worlds-collide-2/>.

in the words of Marsden, “a continuous stream.”²³³ In other places Marsden emphasises what he terms ‘cosmic process’:

[S]ince the universe is dynamic and the earth not simply Papa (rock foundation) but Papa-tua-Nuku (rock foundation beyond expanse, the infinite), the universe itself is a process or event.²³⁴

There is a clear difference. Barad is working with a field of intra-actions in which there is no pre-given cosmological order such as Marsden writes of, no locus in foundational forms, or history’s obligation. Jones and Jenkins have framed the cultural difference like this: “While Māori cultural orientation is to the past, Pākehā cultural orientation is to the future. . . In Māori terms the past sits here, in front, with a reality that demands attention.”²³⁵ Others I have worked with more directly, including Ngahuia Harrison²³⁶ (Ngāti Wai, Ngāpuhi), have spoken with me about time in terms of the oral recall of narrative within whakapapa, and as cyclic.

Marsden suggests the focus on time-itself is a reductive construction: “The temporal is subordinated under the cosmic processes and denotes not time but sequences in processes and events which occur in the cosmic process.”²³⁷ Again, I can see immediate resonance with Barad’s statement about the ‘sedimenting’ material effects of the past, or Yusoff’s geological materialism, in which we are indebted to mineral processes. My argument for attempting to read these things in relation is that material such as the castings—forms specifically made for the purposes of art—might operate as a ‘site’ for thinking through cultural differences, and relationships. Through such sculptural objects we might be able to trial points of philosophical connection. And so it is hard not to race down an interpretative path by which one is applied to the other. In a sense this is what art critical discourse does most productively—frames work within a paradigm that substantiates and then extends the existing worldview of the writer, albeit potentially

²³³ Marsden, *The Woven Universe*, 22.

²³⁴ Marsden, “God, Man and Universe,” 135-36.

²³⁵ Jones and Jenkins, “Indigenous Discourse,” 136. I note that Barad would not identify as Pākehā as such; the point however, around Māori cultural orientation being toward the past, remains.

²³⁶ Harrison is an artist and currently a PhD student at AUT, whose research hinges on the conflicting temporalities at stake in Treaty Settlements with the Crown and her own iwi, Ngāti Wai. I worked with her on the exhibition *E takarae ki te muri I raro matā raranga mai kaewa ki te rangi ko au ki raro whakaaro rangi ai*, St Paul St Gallery, April – May 2017.

²³⁷ Marsden points out that there is no place in te reo Māori for the verbal tense (ie. past/present/future), rather terms such as ‘ka’ and ‘kua’ are used alongside actions to denote the start, continuation or ending of that action, and ‘i’ and ‘kei’ etc. are used to denote the static or dynamic state of objects. Marsden, “God, Man and Universe,” 136.

consuming other worldviews in its course. But what if I resist that instinctual *making sense of*, as a type of intellectual colonisation that I have agency in reconfiguring? Where would I start?



Figure 16 Bianca Hester, castings, *movements materialising momentarily*, St Paul St Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, 2015. Photo: Bianca Hester.

I could start where I began, looking at the object as itself: a series of roughly footprint-sized porous black surfaces. Just lumps of plaster and oxide, really, sitting on the ground and later in a gallery storage space, before being shipped back to the artist. Not actually volcanic material, not actually thousands of years old but composites of immediately available material. Through their very prosaic materiality the castings may have the potential for a more consequential cultural relationship to place and time, and to each other. I return to Henare [Salmond's] discussion of *taonga* here, in its attention to the 'objectness' of *taonga*. She writes, "the very partibility and motility of *taonga*...their 'thinginess' within a general state of flux, is precisely what makes them indispensable to the work of relating."²³⁸

With emphasis again that I am not discussing the objects *as taonga*, but rather, attempting to sustain or extend the efficacy of Henare's [Salmond's] discussion into

²³⁸ Henare [Salmond], "Taonga Māori," 62.

this reading, I turn to the ‘objectness’ of the castings. Through their awkward and temporary habitation of the space, we may come to consider different cultural relationships to time *as different*, as connected, but not able or needing to be reconciled. This does not discount the power of relationships themselves; it is after all is through these objects that living ideas are carried through into this text.

For Charlotte Huddleston

8. Chapter review: I build my language with rocks²³⁹

I began with a question. What are the significances of acknowledging the thing as the ‘condition and resource for the subject’s being and enduring’? Could I take Grosz’s line on ‘the thing’, and try to locate this in the context where I work, as a curator within contemporary art practice in Aotearoa? Reading Grosz was a starting point because although I found (and find) much of interest in the way she speaks about ‘things’, it was at the same time frustratingly non-specific, offering no subject position I could identify with, or understand in the context of the place I know, Aotearoa. Nor could I find this sense of located-ness in other feminist new materialist writing that I continued to read because of my interest in the non-binary, co-constitutional and inter-dependent model of subject-object relations these texts offered. My question narrowed in response. What could it mean within curatorial practice here (my own, as a start, that which I can be accountable to), if I held certain of the new materialist propositions to the light provided by local philosophers working within indigenous thought, specifically focusing on material things and subjectivity? And what if I tested this idea of thing as ‘condition and resource for the subject’s being and enduring’ against my own subjective encounter with a series of ‘things’: sculptural objects within two practices I knew well?

So I began with a plan. I set out to focus on the materiality of the sculptural objects in the practices of two artists, Bianca Hester and Maddie Leach, with a politicised intent. That is, in a modest way to work ‘within/against’ the universalising terms and bias of the new materialist discourse, in relation to the context of my own practice as a curator. To stage a rebalancing, so that not only was the material object rather than the artist’s intentions the focus,²⁴⁰ but that this reading would be conscious of its taking place in Aotearoa, and as fundamental to this, of mātauranga Māori as a knowledge system in which the material world is a sovereign entity. Identifying as Pākehā, I wanted to work through a bicultural framework in acknowledgement of my colonial inheritance (that in many ways authored the division of subject/object, culture/nature in the first instance), by prioritising indigenous philosophical texts on the material world, while remaining

²³⁹ Glissant, *L’Intention poétique* (1969), cited by Betsy Wing, ‘Translator’s Introduction’, *Poetics of Relation*, xi.

²⁴⁰ The focus on single objects, extracting these from their installation context, was a strategic way to test the proposition that in a single object meet infinite material relations, that matter is at once whole, and a part of the wider material universe. Further, in most instances I deliberately de-emphasised the artists’ intentionality in the effort to shift the focus to material agencies and trajectories. (Where the artist’s intention is discussed, this is primarily in the context of the material’s capacity for resistance to it, see for example chapter six, on the concrete wall.) This could be said to align with Jane Bennett’s ‘strategic elision’ of the question of subjectivity, or human uniqueness in favour of developing a vocabulary for the active powers of ‘non-subjects.’ For discussion of the latter, see ‘Preface’, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), ix.

open to relation with those of contemporary new materialist feminist philosophers from a Western tradition who are also working to critically revisit the colonial and patriarchal project of binarisms, anthropocentrism or human exceptionalism, and to develop an understanding of matter as manifesting forms of agency.²⁴¹

I was quickly estranged from both intentions (a materialist focus, and indigenous philosophy as foundational to this thinking), both spheres of discourse which I had set out to try and bridge. The feminist new materialism I found increasingly problematic, as it in turn became increasingly referenced within international contemporary art discourse,²⁴² and in this ‘application’ often seemed to me to smother or exoticise significant cultural differences within its all-encompassing approach to matter. Further, it was easily recognisable in critiques, such as those of Jones and Hoskins,²⁴³ and Todd,²⁴⁴ that such uptake risks perpetuating a neo-colonising approach in which indigenous ontological precepts remain marginalised, while non-indigenous new materialists deploy some of the same ideas and are considered leading scholarship. On the other hand, as I worked I experienced an increasing awareness of insurmountable distance—in language, cultural literacy—from the indigenous philosophy I was referencing. The initial intention, to complicate some of the homogenising tendencies and cultural erasures of uncritically deployed new materialisms, seemed preposterous. The experience was one of cultural distance, doubly inflected. I found myself searching for a place to stand, a subjective position from which I could look or speak ‘safely’, and there was not one. This thesis has been a process of recognising what that means.

²⁴¹ A representative expression of this comes from Samantha Frost, “[new materialists] try to specify and trace the distinctive agency of matter and biology, elucidate the reciprocal imbrication of flesh, culture, and cognition, investigate the porosity of the body in relation to the environment in which it exists, and map the conditions and technologies that shape, constrain, and enhance the possibilities for knowledge and action.” Frost, “The Implications of the New Materialisms for Feminist Epistemology,” in *Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science: Power in Knowledge*, ed. Heidi E. Grasswick (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2011), 75.

²⁴² See for example Susanne Pfeffer, ed., *Speculations in Anonymous Materials* (Kassel, Germany, Fridericianum, 2013), published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name, curated by Susanne Pfeffer, at Fridericianum, September 29, 2013 – January 26, 2014, <http://www.fridericianum.org/files/pdfs/733/booklet-speculations-on-anonymous-materials-en.pdf>.

²⁴³ Jones and Hoskins articulate and critique this difficulty as follows, while sustaining the possibility (through collaborative work, such as their own) of relation. “One set of ontological assumptions has been relegated to the ‘outside’ of scholarly thought; the other considers itself . . . ‘cutting edge’ scholarship. This infuses all our engagements as scholars. Nevertheless, our calm, interested, persistent, open and face-to-face encounter is possible. It is fluid, messy, contradictory, impossible, stimulating and never settled.” Jones and Hoskins, “A Mark On Paper,” 86.

²⁴⁴ Todd’s critique is of the silencing of indigenous knowledges routinely practiced in discourse; her call to academics is to be aware of who you are ‘reaffirming as “knowledgable.”’ She writes, “[academic] structures . . . make it easy for those within the Euro-Western academy to advance and consume arguments that parallel discourses in Indigenous contexts without explicitly nodding to them, or by minimally nodding to Indigenous intellectual and political players.” Todd, “An Indigenous Feminist’s Take”, 8.

The introductory chapter was an opportunity to locate myself as subject, and the material objects in the artworks, within a broad understanding that *ecology* that was fundamental to all the literature underpinning this research. That is, within an idea that forces larger than us work in continuity across the designations ‘social’ and ‘natural’. I began with Rāketē’s writing on Te Ao Māori principal of whakapapa, situating humans in relation to Papatūānuku. Rāketē’s assertion is that humans are “functions of an ecology”, that tangata whenua, in the very “act of being” are of the Earth. The concept of absolute self-world division was resisted from the outset; rather a set of inter-dependent relationships came into every consideration of material objects. Within this relational scheme though I still needed to locate ‘the self’, *myself*, as Pākehā working in a bicultural context. How would I navigate this with transparency, aware that it is not a neutral position but one of specificity, including personal bias? I proposed to work through this through writing, as my voice or presence. I would trust the process: read and look closely, write responsively and share this with others, raise my head, and read back through what had occurred.

The second chapter focused on the consideration of all matter as co-constituted: formed, visible or conceivable only in relation to other forms of matter. Mika’s statement, “[the] chorus of the rest influences the seemingly distinct refrain of one thing” opened into a discussion of a proposition from Bergson, that “the division of matter into independent bodies with absolutely determined outlines is an artificial division.”²⁴⁵ Reading these ideas together and across one another was an initial exercise in Barad’s diffractive methodology, and in sustaining differences through the process. Focusing on the single magnet in Leach’s work *H and B*, I argued that the magnet and a virtual image of a pacemaker (potentially affected by the magnet’s force) draw each other into existence, as a coalescence of dynamic forces. I worked through this idea with recourse to Bergson’s conjecture above; Barad’s understanding of matter as an occurrence or phenomenon; and Grosz’s statement about the possibility of action on our part necessitating an approach to objects and their relations as simplified, unified forms.

Reading back now I find things that I did not know I was writing about at the time. While I was barely ‘present’ in the text as a voice, I had addressed the text to my sister

²⁴⁵ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 196.

Elizabeth, who had recently undergone major kidney surgery. Right at the end I wrote briefly of my dad's organ donation, as I thought this would help her understand the visceral pull and energy of the magnet in its relation to the body. Thinking I was writing about a dramatic tension between two objects, the magnet and the pacemaker, I was, perhaps more accurately, writing in a form of relation to my sister and the ways in which her body too had recently been vulnerable to and reliant on medical instruments, and the presence of metals in biology. I see now I started from a position of knowingness, feeling that I could cross-examine these theories about objects by looking at other objects, tracing lines of energy and influence between them through a narrative approach. Now I see that this is not possible to do in abstraction, without the intimate human and nonhuman relations within which some things come to matter more than others. I don't think this is what the text was *about*, finally, but nor do I think it irrelevant—'the self' was myself, inevitably surfacing in relation to things.

The third chapter is about a bronze pole, transformed through the image of lightning into a bodily experience of energy. This 'felt image' began with reading the reo Māori term *ira*, as it is iterated through Mika's use of the Pākehā word *fluorescence*: holding within it new ways to think through the emergence or revelation of material forms. *Ira* is not a word or idea I have the cultural understanding to write about beyond direct reference to Mika's text; while I could and did read and talk to others about it at length, it retained an opacity (Glissant's term) that I registered as a meaningful limit. Fluorescence, however, was a related metaphor within which I felt I could establish a form of relationship. Fluorescence was at once a metaphor and an effect: a manifestation of the bronze object as a form of energy. Fluorescence, radiance, was in this reading a way to think about the power of material forms to illuminate understanding, through eliciting a physical experience of knowing.

Turning to Barad's configuration of 'mattering' as a different way to account for the thing's materialisation, I considered the bronze pole as a site in which many temporalities intersect, suggesting that we might understand matter as the compression of multiple time scales. This took me to the realisation that the pole metal itself might be read as a form of energy, manifest in time. This in turn led back to the walk which had preceded the exhibition, in which the artist and a group of others including myself

had carried the pole the course of a lava flow, an experience of the time as embodied, and social.

If the bronze pole is also an energetic metaphor, or, matter-as-energy, as I argued, this energy has now been transformed back into conversation and written text. When I read back now what I experience most is the absence of the actual object, and with it the clarity of the feeling. I was however changed by the experience of that lightning: it was an electrical charge that registered in my body and led to my reconceptualisation of how metaphor works in relation to the body, as well as vivifying my reading about whakapapa. As a result I addressed this chapter to my mum, Alison, and it became at that point again more than a text, rather a site of dialogue about lines of descent in our family, and the metaphors that shape the way we see the world.

In the fourth chapter, on the replica meteorite, I suggested that the partial or incomplete view of an object can offer its own forms of meaning. I was interested in what this meant for the act of seeing, emphasised as this typically is in a gallery space, and for feminist discourses reconfiguring realism and objectivity. That is, rather than being representations, presumed to serve a mediating function between ‘the real’ and us, all material objects (including replica) may hold meanings in and of themselves. This was a reading I came to in relation to Henare [Salmond’s] discussion of taonga, a fundamental concept in the context of Aotearoa in thinking about objecthood and relationality. Barad’s ‘diffractive reading’ of texts across and through one another was again drawn on methodologically here. As she writes, “diffraction attends to the relational nature of difference.”²⁴⁶ With this in mind, rather than ‘applying’ Henare [Salmond’s] reading of taonga in the discussion of a replica meteorite, while addressing it *in relation* to the reading of the replica, I was concerned to uphold its difference, and specificity, within this chapter.

Writing this chapter was the first time I acknowledged that in as much as I can’t claim to see the wholeness of an object, as an energetic or dynamic form, what I *do* see if I engage with it at a material level is contingent on the history of the place in which it is seen. It is in relation to things beyond the gallery, such as the colonial and present

²⁴⁶ Barad, *Meeting the Universe*, 72.

history of the site on which the original meteorite landed, that the object's meaning is enabled in its cultural significance. Further, the replica's presence prompted attention to my own practical work of care, towards an awareness that such acts also constitute a form of relation between self and thing. This is a form of knowing, and of relational-knowledge, as inseparable. Within this there remains much that is unknowable, as I experienced starkly in relation to kaitiakitanga.

The fifth chapter was about boatshed 805, and the images of a boat, storm and word that this brought into being. The indefinite material state of the work I encountered led me to recognise the whole context of the work as a system of moving elements within a cycle of time. While I set out to recall the physical presence of the boatshed, it was the imagined existence of a boat, and the potential force of the storm, that brought me back to awareness of the coast, and through this, to the discussion the rights of access to the coast in Aotearoa, through the Foreshore and Seabed Act (2004) and Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act (2011).

Finally, in this chapter, I was writing about Aotearoa as a place with a specific cultural and political context. Though I had intended from the start to write from the position of a Pākehā working in a place that defines me as such, it took me five chapters to directly address the place. This happened as an effect of the object present, the boatshed, but also as an effect of things absent, such as the storm. These imagined forms brought me to the recognition that one way colonisation impacts on discourse is through asserting (and perpetuating through legislation) the 'power to define' that which is spoken of. This carries right through from defining what is present and visible, to defining the order of things in time, with the present overriding the past. Through the boatshed discussion, the idea of 'object' asserted its contingency on place, and on culturally distinct concepts of time. In alignment with Braidotti's assertion, the location provides "ground for accountability."²⁴⁷

In the sixth chapter I took this located-ness further, asking how the sculptural object—in this case a recycled concrete wall—allowed one to 'become more where one already was.' I was interested in how the wall engendered a series of disruptions in the process

²⁴⁷ Braidotti, *Transpositions*, 29.

of its own materialisation within the project. This brought me to the concept of *mauri*, or elemental energy, as articulated by Marsden. Conscious of the limits of my knowledge and resistant to ‘interpreting’ through a borrowed lens, I saw this instead as an opportunity to turn directly to the Marsden text, and to think through the requirement of *living relationships* within which an object’s *mauri* may be sustained. While I could not carry ‘interpretation’ further, I came to see this as a productive limit in the project, a point at which I registered vividly that a relational understanding of objecthood necessarily goes beyond reading about concepts, and as a *Pākehā*. The reading though was important; in relation to my experience of the resistance of the object, and a timely reminder that my curatorial practice is essentially discursive and socially located, this writing only one element of it.

One aspect of my frustration with the new materialists’ writing was that the idea of material as having agency frequently went no further than repetitive observation. I was often left asking, if material has agency, how is it actually deployed or registered in a more-than theoretical sense? In chapter six I came to see the agency of the object through the effect of resistance.²⁴⁸ That is, in defying materialisation and containment in the gallery space as scoria, and then through generating confusion around its actual materiality (scoria or concrete), I recognised an expression of the rock’s capacity to act. I wrote, “the rock said no.”²⁴⁹ Through these ‘halts’, the first of which was refusing to be fully present as a scoria wall, I argued that the wall reinforced the viewer’s (and my own) experience of place, their own *emplacement* within this. When I’d asked, “what are the significances of acknowledging the thing as the condition and resource for the subject’s being and enduring?” I had not identified this specifically: significances *for whom*? I was beginning to realise there was no way of following the thesis question through without admitting my own presence in the reading, not as ‘any-subject’, but as *Pākehā* and as myself.

²⁴⁸ While it is beyond the scope of this research, there is room to explore the idea of resistance further with regard to physical touch. In an essay from 2012, drawing on classical physics, Barad considers touch as a form of resistance: as a rejection of entering into relation. At a microscopic level, electrons resist the norms of physical contact as it is impossible to close the distance between two atoms; on a human level even holding a jug, for example, relies on resistance. That is, the sense of touch itself is dependent on electric repulsion between objects. See Barad, “On Touching, the Inhuman That Therefore I am,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 23, no.3 (2012): 206-223.

²⁴⁹ As I wrote this I realised how deeply ingrained the Western critique of anthropocentrism is, and the implications of a cultural bias that anthropocentrism (often associated with indigenous epistemologies) is necessarily irrational or dismissable. I first recognised the weight of this politic in reading Jimmie Durham’s line, “The stones say, ‘Friend, does your chest hurt? Your friends are with you.’” Durham, “They Forgot that Their Prison is Made of Stone, and Stone is Our Ally,” *Columbus Day: Poems, Drawings and Stories About American Indian Life and Death in the Nineteen-Seventies* (Albuquerque: West End Press, 1983), 86.

In chapter seven, while looking at the plaster castings from fossil sites, I worked through the idea of our subjectivity having something in common with geological matter. I was interested in the potential of a connection on both psychological and material terms, that we are affected by geological forces as well as affecting geological processes. This allows for a counter-movement to the unilateral, humancentric premise of the Anthropocene. Yusoff's concept of 'geological materialism'²⁵⁰ is one of reciprocal agency: that through our consumption of fossil fuels we are in the process of accelerating our own extinction. Geological materialism imagines this extinction as the 'return' to a state of minerality. Marsden's writing on Papatūānuku and whakapapa also situates the self-world itself as perpetually in-process, a universe within which rock is foundational. However, reading the text by Marsden and others in relation to Yusoff, I became acutely aware of the ways in which our experience of time is a cultural form too. There is no essential 'likeness' or common ground to be found between the deep and lived understanding of whakapapa and processes of cosmic order as written about by Marsden and others, and a theory of geological materialism as written about by Yusoff. They are predicated on fundamentally different understandings of time.

My understanding of this took place on a physical level. Being on the floor, the plaster forms compelled you to get low, almost uncomfortably. Crouching, aware of my knees, I was also aware of the depth of time that accumulates in the body: material connections between the calcium formation of bones and rocks, and the necessity of other minerals in the biological body. I was also aware of the floor; this had been the case in the readings of other objects, but here the casts held an imprint of the ground at Renton Road, and Takapuna, and with that came a heightened sense of the strata from which they came.

Writing about the experience after, I addressed this chapter to my colleague Charlotte Huddleston, someone I know well in a work capacity, and who had been at St Paul St Gallery at the time of *movements materialising momentarily* (the project in which the castings appeared). Charlotte knows the gallery's aggregate floor as well as I do, and has driven with me to Renton Road. We speak often about the always-complex set of relations material objects in an institutional contemporary art gallery space have to the

²⁵⁰ Yusoff, "Geologic Life," 781.

material world outside. In this text the casts carried the energy of our longstanding dialogue. This was a new layer of the project, through the reading and thinking I had done in the interim about layers of whakapapa and relationality.

Here I realised anew how writing about material things, without reference to places and to people, enacts a disruption or incapacitation of the agency of the material thing. More than that, the attempt to do so may continue a colonising habit of othering or keeping the material world apart. Mika puts it simply: “If we focus [only] on the apparent we are recolonising.”²⁵¹ In the practical work of making sculpture, or standing in the gallery with the work—when we are in the same space as material things—we tend to intuitively speak of and situate them in relation to a specific place, to people; when you are touching something you also form a relation with it.

Writing however, perhaps especially academic writing has the propensity to sever these relations in the effort to theoretically frame the work. I see now that in writing about this work to Charlotte I was looking for a way to mediate the dislocation I was feeling from the material world, from the complexity of my own settler position, to bring the sculptural object back into a form of relational dialogue that included me too. Through this process I finally shed the originary paradigm of the research: I was no longer looking ‘at’ or even ‘for’ the object, but rather experiencing it in lived proximity to cultural and personal relations in which I too was enmeshed. These effect not only where I see from, but also how I see.²⁵²

For Cassandra Barnett

²⁵¹ Mika, “Possible Contributions from Spinoza.”

²⁵² This is articulated in Barnett’s writing as a shift of *vantage point*, a place we might stand to see from, but also an internally located mode of seeing. “To see from new vantage points we give up the old ones. The question becomes not who or what are we looking at, but where we are looking from? Not what does your soul look like, but what does my soul see like?” Barnett, “Strangeface: A Sovereign Countenance,” in *The Imperial Body*, ed. Fiona Amundsen (Auckland: split/fountain, 2015), 21.

9. Concluding: Writing and wellbeing, mauri manaaki

I've been writing for a long time now. There's this bulk of words that have built up, thousands. They are heavy, and I feel their weight like a downward force on my shoulders as I continue to write. Over this period of study the writing has become—alongside the sculptural objects I've focused on—another material form, another phenomenon with its own properties. As I become aware of this I start to try to define what this form is, how the writing here can be said to exist as an object: something which has 'happened', something I encounter or something I have made. The most accurate way I can describe its being, this writing, is as a weight.

If the writing is a weight I experience, *where* is this weight? Is it behind me—in the sense of time past, that I do not have to write these words again? Is it above me—in the Word document, which scrolls up, and up, and up? I do so now and it is a tall column of sentences, like an architectural form I could sit inside. Still writing. Is it beside me—like a rock that I could lean on? Or like a pile of small stones that moves, shifting slightly as I shift position? If the writing is beside me I could pick up a single word, like a stone, use it as a weight to hold open a book at the right page. I could pick it up and turn it over slowly in my hand, when I get tired of looking at the computer screen. Many times, the writing has in this way offered me something to one side, to hold onto when I become weary of the straight-ahead scrutiny that a screen or the close observation of an object demands.²⁵³ Or is the writing in front of me, like something that waits, needs to be re-read, edited, that will never be finished, that will continue to change, as I do?

I think it might be a rock inside my head. Right now, I have this dull headache like there is something made of lead sitting on top of my spinal column, at the base of my skull. Like a sinker at the end of a line, deep down somewhere. I've had it for weeks now. I think it's because I need to finish this writing, and because in a way, the writing has become a form with agency of its own. It is part of me but it is also—finally—something I can let go of. Because if it is a thing, or even the idea of a thing, as such it

²⁵³ Royal has written of the problematic 'narrowing' effect of spending much of our time connecting with screens or texts straight in front of us: "texts—and latterly screens—serve to narrow the aroaro [frontal or sensory area of the mind]. Consider what happens to our bodies when we spend time either reading texts or sitting in front of a screen. This experience, the physical position, narrows and sharpens the aroaro. The more time and the more often we do this, the more the aroaro become fixed in a certain shape and the less 'omni-directional' we become." Royal, "Exploring Indigenous Knowledge" (lecture, Indigenous Knowledges Conference: Reconciling Academic Priorities with Indigenous Realities, Victoria University, Wellington, June 22-25, 2005), 16, accessed October 24, 2017, <http://www.charles-royal.nz/papers-reports>.

has a form of autonomy. I have learnt this much about the way things are at once relational, and yet agentic: we may be free of each other.

Through this research I came to see the writing process in new ways. It is a material thing, a form of movement or transition, and finally, more than that: a space of hospitality or *manaakitanga* for objects and ideas. In what follows I will consider each of these findings through a reflection on the writing process, ultimately returning to the relationship between subjectivity and objecthood. While this is an artificial distinction in many ways, as I have discussed, through it I come to the position that the *apparent solidity* or object-ness of the material things (writing included) is a form of self-sovereignty. It is this capacity of the object that enables relationships, meaningful solidarity, and ultimately, the possibility of rest.

At numerous points throughout the process my initial argument that writing is itself a form of matter, with its own set of quantifiable limits and physical effects, was reiterated.²⁵⁴ This registered first in my own body. Writing on a laptop for hours gives you dry eyeballs and an all-over muscular tension that stays with you after you leave the computer, like thousands of staccato keyboard taps still running brittle through your arms and neck. The shape of the sitting body and that of an open laptop geometrically mirror each other, a co-constitution of form that can be seen as an effect of writing process. This in turn ‘shaped’ the writing. I wrote a lot about the experience of objects in relation to the body: lying down, crouching down, standing on the coast breathing the salinated air—anything but sitting, as I was at the computer. Often it seemed counterintuitive to be writing about material relations at all. I wanted to go outside and stretch.

Writing’s materiality can be measured also in the accumulation and transaction of megabytes. The draft documents saved in a Dropbox folder, syncing as I uploaded a new version; the structure of paragraphs and unfinished notes unfolding as I opened a document. Over time this transforming object, the text I’d written, gave me a sense of companionship. Whenever the object I was writing about began to recede into

²⁵⁴ The writing process in turn relied on, or generated, other material objects. While I was writing about three-dimensional sculptural objects, always the computer screen was a primary point of reference. Though I looked as often as possible at the objects themselves, far more frequent were the subsequent flat and shining images of these that I viewed on screen. While I’d never argued for the primacy of ‘direct’ experience of the objects, it was only in the writing that I recognised how the screen-based image-forms of the works were also experienced materially.

abstraction, I could refer to text that brought it back into proximity. Most frequently, the sentences I returned to to re-locate or energise myself were the words of others, in particular the translated phrase that titles this thesis (“These things are agents of the world and they announce themselves”), or brief paragraphs of direct address that reminded me who I was writing to. These were where the writing felt most alive, and what made it worth doing: the relationships it generated with other material forms and with people.

Writing is also identifiable as material form through the limits of language. Often this became apparent through word choice. Or, more accurately, through the words themselves asserting powerful difference. For example, from the beginning I had decided to use the words *matter* and *material* interchangeably as a way to avoid the dichotomy of being [human] / resource [matter], and the instrumentality associated with ‘material.’ This seemed strategic and viable as a straightforward performative approach. I also made the decision to translate between te reo Māori and Pākehā terms as little as possible,²⁵⁵ to commit to what was held distinct in each original and to acknowledge different readers. When necessary to translate, I decided to do so through direct reference to (a) the specific context of the citation,²⁵⁶ or (b), citing Marsden’s core texts,²⁵⁷ and with occasional secondary recourse to a basic dictionary definition.²⁵⁸

However, translation aside, when it came to kupu such as *mana*, *mauri*, *kaupapa*, or *whakapapa*, which were frequently used in the texts by Mika, Marsden and Jackson, these words already *in themselves* express complex inter-relationships of matter and energy, spiritual elements and the material world, ‘subject’ and ‘object’. So in many cases these words made the critique of distinctions between animacy and inanimacy, materiality and ephemerality—that I was writing about in English—altogether irrelevant when I pursued the idea in indigenous literature. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou) has noted, English can be a very “imprecise language—from our [Māori] perspective. Where it should be precise it is not; where it should be broad it is

²⁵⁵ Further to this, I committed to only using words with which I was already in some way familiar, or had already encountered outside of a formal research context. This was intended as a way of keeping the work and the language close to me.

²⁵⁶ See for example the reference to *whakapapa*, as cited in footnotes 28 and 82.

²⁵⁷ See for example the reference to *kaupapa*, page 41 and footnote 85.

²⁵⁸ This was consistently J.C. Moorfield’s *Te Aka Māori Dictionary* (online version): <https://maoridictionary.co.nz>.

not.”²⁵⁹ I was faced with the redundancy of my entire project: this difference seemed to be so intractably built into the language that not only were there untranslatable terms, but the whole frames of reference were rendered each other irrelevant, the cultural differences sedimented in language.²⁶⁰

Though I had been clear from the beginning about acknowledging the incommensurability of worldviews, and hence, terms, I still had to find a way to articulate, *in writing*, the fundamental in-betweenness of my own position. That is, as Pākehā and writing ‘within/against’ the momentum of new materialist scholarship, and seeking to do so with recourse to indigenous philosophy that I encountered both in a conventional academic framework (reading academics’ published articles, towards a thesis), and in more everyday ways through conversation with those I was fortunate to work with or meet.

The writing offered a site between the texts I was reading, and the experiential encounter with the objects and people; in parallel with this, I realised with growing awareness that I was writing through a form of personal transition. That the writing had the potential to operate as a thing in the *transitional* sense of the thing conceived by Grosz: “It is a compromise between mind and matter, the point of their crossing one into the other.”²⁶¹ Writing was a space for this compromise, and where cognitive-dominant practices of institutionalised learning could cross over into a more relational, affective, or place-oriented encounter with the material world. This ran counter to a cumulative model of academic learning. I had to compromise the performance of a depth of understanding for admission of partial apprehension, let go of things I ‘knew’ about objects and subjectivity, in order to be able to embody a transitional position.

As emphasised at the beginning, listening has been crucial throughout this process. While it is hard to register the significance of this practice in a written text, I note the frequency with which the word recurs in literature on allyship for social justice, and

²⁵⁹ Linda Tuhiwai Smith (keynote lecture as part of Knowledge as Disobedience, The 3rd International Conference on Postdisciplinary Approaches, AUT University, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, February 2, 2018). This sense of ‘imprecision’ was something I felt often in [English] discussions of material properties, in relation to metaphor. The interesting thing about this is it that in a bi-lingual, and bi-cultural context it compels the reconsideration of the way metaphor itself is understood.

²⁶⁰ Throughout the period of this research I was learning te reo through AUT University. I note this as it significantly expanded my understanding of language’s relationship to selfhood and identity, and also the way that colonality conditions language, especially through translation. In particular I thank kaiako Valance Smith for his kōrero on many occasions about this.

²⁶¹ Grosz, “The Thing,” 117.

working in bicultural contexts. Joan MacDonald's advice is on the latter is representative: "the first thing I would say is to listen. Listen to indigenous people and what they are saying. . . . And do what you can where you are."²⁶²

I suggest now that a text also may perform a function of 'listening'. That is, rather than telling readers what to think or what is able to be seen, structuring the text and deploying language in a way that makes it possible to 'hear' differences in relation. Differences may be listened for, 'heard' in the space of writing, without assimilation (this could be as plain as deciding to use Māori placenames in every instance possible, as in this text). In conceptualising listening as a mode of transition I find helpful Anne Salmond's use of the word 'resonance', a sonic metaphor that suggests the reverberating movement between physical entities.²⁶³ Salmond writes:

You'll notice I never talk about commonalities. I talk about resonance. There's a kind of echo, but it's not exactly the same thing. For example, the idea of the Whanganui River being a legal entity in its own right is so interesting because, in one way, it makes sense, but if you really explore what Te Awa Tupua—the Whanganui River Act—is all about, a tupua is not a person. A tupua is a being from te pō, from the ancestral dimension.... So, to give the Whanganui River Te Awa Tupua—the river that is tupua—the rights of a person is, in a way, to diminish it.²⁶⁴

Resonance is not translation, and equally, language cannot be addressed in isolation. Te reo Māori and reo Pākehā each allow for 'what is not there' in ways which are unique to the respective language. I have in this research extensively cited critique of dominant Western philosophy's embedded expectations of 'thereness' in physical objects, alongside of the feminist materialist efforts to counter this, in part through strategies which have linguistic elements—Barad's use of *intra-actions*, *space-time-mattering*, *phenomena* are good examples of the necessity (and sometimes, absurdity) of expanding

²⁶² Joan MacDonald, interviewed in *Working as Allies: Supporters of Indigenous Justice Reflect*, ed. Jen Margaret (Auckland: Auckland Workers Educational Association, 2013), 85.

²⁶³ In physics, resonance is "the reinforcement or prolongation of sound by reflection from a surface or by the synchronous vibration of a neighbouring object." See *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. "resonance," <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/resonance>.

²⁶⁴ Anne Salmond, interviewed by David Hall, "One Strange People, and Another: Dame Anne Salmond on Tears of Rangi," *The Pantograph Punch*, September 22, 2017: <http://pantograph-punch.com/post/one-strange-people-dame-anne-salmond-tears-of-rangi>.

the English vocabulary around materiality. The difference is not however an insurmountable thing, if language too is understood as existing in relationship, rather than isolated as a “container of meaning.”²⁶⁵

In the methodology undertaken by this thesis, the intention was to performatively enact a shift,²⁶⁶ where non-indigenous theoretical texts and philosophical premises are ultimately *encompassed*²⁶⁷ by those of the place in which the reading is situated. In beginning the research I had chosen the objects that moved me, evoked an intensity of emotion I presumed would lead to a deeper understanding about their materiality. The movement worked in a different direction, however. The thesis question itself—“What are the significances of acknowledging the thing as the condition and resource for the subject’s being and enduring?”—I came to realise was charged through and through with Western-dominant expectations of objecthood, positioning the object as a source or instrument for an any-subject. Looking closely at both the sculptural objects and the texts I had identified turned out to have an unexpected consequence: the identified objects dematerialised into places and people, often eluding theoretical frameworks, and my own positioning in relation to the texts, and process of subjectivation, turned into the ‘thing’ able to be studied.

Further, while I initially shied from speaking in direct reference to Māori terminology or concepts as an area in which I had no entitlement to speak, I ultimately came to recognise that to *not* work with explicit reference to these concepts was to practice a kind of invisibilising. I committed instead to acknowledging these concepts, in direct reference to sources who do have the mana and knowledge to speak, and with strong articulation of the limits of my knowledge and ‘access’. Henare [Salmond]’s writing on the bicultural reading of taonga was energising in this respect, as she writes, “If one can no longer assume that the effects of colonisation necessarily adulterate or demolish

²⁶⁵ Salmond uses this term with regard to cultural appropriation, “this assumes the idea of a world or a culture as a container. It’s got boundaries and we need to police them. If you take something from someone else’s container, then you’re nicking something of theirs. In a more relational mode though, it’s all about the quality of the relationship.” Salmond, *ibid*.

²⁶⁶ As Jacob Culbertson has noted, “Some knowledges have more universalising aspirations.” I read this as referring to the neo-colonising potential of re-emphasising Western ways of knowing in this context, and seek to work in a mode counter to this. Culbertson, “Capacitating Comparisons” (paper presented as part of Pacific Spinoza/Pacific Spaces panel, 2017 Interstices Symposium, AUT University, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, May 28, 2017).

²⁶⁷ I refer to this concept with regard to Henare’s [Salmond’s] writing on taonga Māori, where in a discussion of the WAI 262 claim she charts a shift between one register of value—commodity—to another—taonga—where the first is *encompassed* by the second. She writes “This commensurability is consistent with Māori notions of relatedness, in that, according to the workings of *whakapapa*, Māoriness encompasses other identities without obliterating or diluting them—one may be Māori and Irish, but even a majority of Irish ancestry does not make one any less Māori.” Henare [Salmond], “Taonga Māori,” 64.

distinctive concepts, producing ontological hybrids, half-castes and cross-breeds, then it is necessary to acknowledge positions that may be wholly Māori *and also* European.”²⁶⁸

So rather than a place to stand, I found a place of movement. The sculptural objects I wrote about were agents in generating this movement, partly through not offering traction for a culturally specific reading, as synthetic things rather than indigenous to Aotearoa, and fabricated by non-indigenous artists. Nor am I comfortable to read them as hybrid objects, composites of different worldviews. Rather they exist in relation to specific places and people. So the limited ways I as a researcher am able to relate them to this place, Aotearoa, reveals the limits in my relationship to this place, as Pākehā. I have come to see this as a threshold within identity, not a limit in an absolute sense. Through the reading and dialogue this research has involved, I think through matter as a series of relations; it is this sense of a living relation to the material world that both locates, and productively un-settles me.

I return to what I have learned from the objects in the study: that as a subject I too move unceasingly between poles of the known and unknown in my relationship to the metaphysics indigenous to here where I was born, and to the Western philosophical tradition dominant in my formal education. How do I conduct this movement without harm? For Local Time, a collective from Tāmaki Makaurau,²⁶⁹ the relational exchange between different cultural contexts has been a point of critical return, conceived through roles of guest and host, and modes of speaking, listening and hosting as appropriate at particular times. Jon Bywater, one member of Local Time, articulates the shifting roles of the subject, and contingency on context like this, “The difference between thinking of yourself as an in-between guest and host and oscillating between them is this question of taking responsibility for even being a guest, instead of [just] being a passive guest.”²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Natalie Robertson, Danny Butt, Alex Monteith and Jon Bywater have worked together as Local Time since 2007. Over this time the group have worked across projects to “establish settings for exchange and dialogue shaped by tikanga Māori” and responsive to mana whenua. As practitioners (artists, teachers, writers) their collective work hinges on the ways that the “connection between the aesthetic and the political, and the way the cultural is also political.” For more on their work see “About Local Time,” Local Time, accessed October 26, 2017, <http://www.local-time.net/about-local-time/>.

²⁷⁰ Jon Bywater, “Cause to Visit: An Interview with Local Time’s Danny Butt, Alex Monteith and Jon Bywater,” July 14, 2016, in *The Asia Pacific Century*, eds. Emma Ng and Ioana Gordon-Smith (Wellington: Enjoy Gallery, 2016), published in conjunction with the project of the same name at Enjoy Gallery, August 6-26, 2016, <http://enjoy.org.nz/publishing/exhibition-essays/the-asia-pacific-century-part-one/interview-with-local-time>.

How to become more than a passive guest,²⁷¹ a concern which initiated this research in the first instance, has also meant becoming newly acquainted with quite pragmatic practices I know well. For example there are institutional conventions, such as the reliance on academic citations, that at the start I questioned as tropes of dominant discourse. While from the beginning I saw referencing as a political form,²⁷² I see it differently now. That is, as materialising a network of relations which asks for further engagement. Stengers has spoken of philosophy on these terms: “writing footnotes [to inherited philosophy] implies feeling the text as an animating power—inviting participation, beckoning to me and suggesting the writing of another footnote that will make a bridge to the past, that will give ideas from the past the power to affect the present.”²⁷³ This is one way in that the text may be said to *manaaki* ideas, those that have gone before and those that will come.

Taking this further, and looking to the future direction of this research, I turn finally to Marsden’s discussion of *mauri manaaki*: the life force of guests and visitors. Marsden writes, “The word *Manaaki* means to bestow a blessing. The presence of visitors [is] equivalent to the bestowal of a blessing upon the hosts.”²⁷⁴ In the context of this research, the host—the object—might be considered to be nourished, to be sustained in its being, through relationship with the research and writing (conceived this speculative context, as guest). This speaks to the significance not of the research and writing, but the significance of the object’s capacity as host, and *to host*. The hosting is here an agential act, through which *mauri* may be replenished. This is something I come to, with excitement, near the end of the research process; work lies ahead in developing this thinking.

This thing and process of written language is part of the way I relate to Aotearoa, and to the material world I encounter living and working here. This research has in many ways extended this relationship, by compelling me to spend the time reading and looking and speaking with so many people about how they understand and relate to material things.

²⁷¹ I use this term not to euphemise settler-colonial presence, rather in reference to the potential of curator, researcher and related practices of writing to be a good ‘guests’ with relation to different practices and cultural contexts.

²⁷² Sara Ahmed critiques the politics of academic citationality as “a rather successful reproductive technology, a way of reproducing the world around certain bodies.” See “Making Feminist Points,” *Feminist Killjoys* (blog), accessed November 11, 2017, <https://feministkilljoys.com/2013/09/11/making-feminist-points/>. Reading this, I recognised citation as an act of representation.

²⁷³ Stengers, “Reclaiming Animism,” *e-flux* 36 (2012): <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/36/61245/reclaiming-animism/>.

²⁷⁴ Marsden, *Kaitiakitanga*, 20.

Language is culturally specific; there is much I can still not understand. But I also believe that language has the capacity to be more than ‘sense-making’ in intent and operation. For Massumi non-narrative modes of language (such as the phatic and the performative) may “suspend [sense-making] in order to cleave it asunder”²⁷⁵; for Mika language “is aligned to a realm that stands behind utterances, or allows them to begin with.”²⁷⁶ Both these statements recognise a space they do not explain: that which is there when sense is split asunder, that which is ‘behind’ speech. I will not be able to make sense of everything through writing, but a space is opened up in the process. This writing, and the language I do have, work reciprocally to open a reciprocal space for hosting the objects and ideas, for their recognition as self-sovereign entities that make themselves known.

At the end of this, having not made sense of the sculptural objects as *just* material objects, and having worked in many ways to dematerialise them even, I am however ready to recall them as the solid things they also are. The magnet, the bronze pole, the concrete wall, the boatshed and the storm and the plaster castings: it is the apparently hard edges of these apparently discrete objects that makes them crucial to the role of relating, inter-personally and cross-culturally.²⁷⁷ This is for two reasons. Because they are *there*, it becomes more possible to speak about relations to what is *not there*. And because they are solid things, they operate through enabling not the *translation* of concepts, but the *transition* (in the context of this research) of my understanding in response to being Pākehā in a place where the material world exceeds my capacity for language. These solid objects *manaaki*, they are hospitable to, the ideas and words with which I work at developing relationships, and in turn this replenishes the *mauri* of the objects.

And I host these objects in my thoughts and practices, will continue to. So this is not an ending, but, as writing, it is something physically materialised, and thus able to be let go of. The things I have been thinking about, the headache-rock in my head: that metaphor turned out to be solid too. But the weight of this thinking is not just mine. There are

²⁷⁵ Massumi, “The Thinking-Feeling of What Happens.” *Inflexions* 1, no.1 (2008): 25.

²⁷⁶ Mika, “Co-existence of Self and Thing,” 98.

²⁷⁷ This idea goes back to Henare’s [Salmond] reading of *taonga*, discussed at the end of chapter seven. I think also on the relationships I have with the artists, among others, that exist in part at least because of the objects, because they are *there*, and stay there with us. In a related discussion Mika used the phrase “the arrival of what is already there”, the thing that is also ‘becoming’ or being. Conversation with Mika, February 26, 2018.

relationships and language that hold some of its gravity, I do not need to think this out alone. In a related way, the burden of meaning does not sit with single objects. With this realisation, my headache shifts.

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