

Redefining Facades

A Spatial Exploration of Threshold and Interior Spaces within the Pacific

Nehrusha Nand

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Abstract

Redefining Facades explores how tactile installation influenced by Pacific cultures transforms space. It questions traditional facades and highlights threshold spaces that foster meaningful interactions and dialogues. The concept seeks to establish a friendly and welcoming atmosphere by integrating Pacific elements, such as indoor and outdoor living. With the use of cultural practices and theories of architecture, the project reimagines facades as flowing landscapes that promote harmony and communication, integrating the flow of movement and time within permeable thresholds.

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Attestation of Authorship

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

Signed:

Date:

6th May 2024

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Introduction: From Facades to Verandahs

In the European architectural tradition, the external face of a building, known as the architectural facade, serves as the main surface of contact between the building and its surroundings. It is the first space that those encountering the building will see. It possesses great power over how they perceive and understand the build environment.

(t)he fac(ad)e carries the primary responsibility for interacting with the public environment. As the face is to the body, the facade is the most expressive part of the building (Korman, 2022, p. 24).

According to architectural historian Gordana Kostich-Lefebvre, facades have evolved from Greek mythological beginnings to later growth during the Renaissance. Her *Facing it all: Mighty Faces and the Western Facade* (2000) draws attention to a facade derived from mythological figures—for example Medusa and the Gorgons—whose imposing faces were frequently painted on building facades to ward off evil spirits. Facades gained a sense of authority and strength from their relationship with these mythological beings. Renaissance builders and designers used columns, pediments, and friezes on their facades to produce a sense of classical beauty and harmony. These elements were inspired by traditional Greek and Roman architecture. Facades that were visually beautiful and rich in symbolism combined traditional themes with avant-garde design concepts. These facades served as representations of permanent cultural identity and artistic expression.

Entering buildings in the Pacific, however, is very different. With their open-door approach, Fijian houses both welcome people with open arms and open out to the surrounding landscape. As a Fijian Indian, I have constantly seen people walking into my family's home and indulging in everyday activities like drinking tea or kava. Helping around the house and having a space to sit and talk is all people need, no matter where they are in Fiji. These areas encourage individuals from different backgrounds to join, tell stories, and celebrate their cultures because of the open-air designs and floor-based meeting areas. In Fiji and across the Pacific, spaces are more than simply physical buildings; they are permeable centres of community and culture that promote social interaction.

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In Tonga, according to academic and architect Dr Charmaine Ilai u Talei, the Fale Puha, the traditional house (Figure 2), has evolved from traditional thatching materials to timber framing and corrugated iron or weatherboard sidings in the early 20th century. The Fale Puha was first influenced by the Fale Fa'ahiua and Fale Sa, which were straightforward rectangular constructions with partitions. In response to Tonga's tropical environment, the design also incorporated a porch, known as the faletolo, that encircles the home.

In some cases, the faletolo space is encased by walls. In effect, this intermediary space becomes an extension of the interior quarters of the fale puha. Tongan families build the middle section and add the lean-to as additional funds became available (Aho 2007). By enclosing the verandahs, Tongans thus create floor space for growing families or to establish the family store. (Ilai u Talei, 2018, p 703)

On the other hand, westernised social gatherings in the Pacific typically take place in controlled indoor environments that stress privacy and small-group interactions, such as a church. The Western method promotes well-defined boundaries and areas set aside for activities or discussions, resulting in a more exclusive and divided environment. These events frequently emphasise formality, well-planned seating arrangements, and organised practices, reflecting the cultural emphasis on personal boundaries and individual autonomy.

In *Figures, Doors and Passage* Robin Evans examines the importance of these architectural features in Western buildings, focusing on how they influence what people perceive things. Doors are markers of the boundaries between the public and private spheres and influence rituals and social interactions. According to Evans, doors act as transitional markers, defining the limits of various architectural zones and controlling entrance to internal areas. In addition, he emphasises the symbolic meaning of doors, claiming that they frequently represent power dynamics and societal hierarchies. Evans says that doors are dynamic, rather than static, elements that compel investigation and interpretation. This emphasises the transformative power of doors within architectural compositions as they influence how space and movement unfold (Evans, 1997).

In the Pacific Islands, outdoor verandah spaces like the faletolo are culturally and communally significant places of transition, essential gathering places for families, friends, and community activities. These outdoor additions to the house are adaptable areas adopted by Europeans in the Pacific: “Verandahs increasingly had become the preferred living space in tropical bungalows” (Freeland, 1968; Sumner, 1978, p. 34). They “supplemented or even replaced the interior living rooms; they were a place for domestic and family life” (Purser, 2003, p. 309). By dynamically mediating transitions between public space and the private interior, verandah and faletolo offer an alternative to the facade of Western architecture.

Families frequently use verandahs to unwind, eat together, tell stories, or relax after a hard day. By giving elders, the chance to tell stories and carry on traditions and cultural information to younger generations, these areas help promote intergenerational bonding. Verandahs are essential for community togetherness as they act as hubs for neighbours to get together, share news, and commemorate significant anniversaries. These outdoor areas, which host everything from spontaneous musical performances to formal assemblies, capture the spirit of community and hospitality typical of the Pacific Islands, reflecting the interdependence and camaraderie characterising these dynamic towns.

Yet, at the same time, the entrances to most houses continued to open directly into the verandah proper, either in the middle of the long axis or obliquely, at one narrow end. As a result, the verandah took on an increasingly elevated and socially visible relevance as a place whose meanings were open to mediation. In particular, “the definition or separation of the interior/exterior or public/private [meanings of verandah space] was... fluid, and... revised and modified by changing social and cultural needs and desires.” (McPherson, as cited in Purser, 2003, p. 309–310)

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Indians were first introduced to Fiji in the 1800s, and between 1879 and 1916 over 60,000 indentured labourers came from various parts of India to work in the cane plantation. (Minority Rights Group,2017)

I am a first-generation Kiwi deeply connected to my family's cultural heritage. I have inherited the timeless qualities and principles of my Fijian Indian background. Among these characteristics are a strong focus on inclusivity, community, and the value of social gatherings. These get-togethers are essential to my Fijian Indian culture as they represent the core of cultural expression and community. My family has sustained this cultural past through the years by continuing the custom of getting together, viewing these occasions as essential for preserving relationships, passing along our rich history, and cultivating a deep sense of unity that cuts through geographical boundaries. Despite originating from different islands and having distinct upbringings, my parents share a profound connection rooted in the shared values of family and community unity. My father's family is from Ba, while my mother's is from Savusavu. My parents value similar aspects in the dynamics of their respective settings despite the differences in geography and culture between their hometowns. The spirit of family and community permeates everything. This sense of belonging and community enriches their lives and unites their experiences.

In this creative practice research thesis, I aim to capture the spirit of a way of life that has its roots in ties to the community and family and exists in the threshold between interior and exterior. I want to discover how my Fijian experiences and understanding of space reflect the Western architecture predominant in Aotearoa New Zealand. To do this, I draw from a collection of photos taken by my parents, as well as my personal recollections of Fiji. These pictures show the diverse range of experiences that make up Fijian life, revealing how areas are interconnected and what values they represent. By selecting these photos, I aim to establish a fresh story that enables people to fully experience the spirit of this way of life and recognise its importance in defining identities and promoting community cohesion.

My family remain dedicated to upholding and advancing our customs and beliefs. We put a lot of focus on maintaining the cultural fabric that defines gatherings, creating open and welcoming social places, and persistently fostering a culture of unity. As a first-generation Kiwi, I am a conduit between two vibrant cultures and a source of distinctive viewpoints. This project explores an alternative to the way European architectural traditions divide between interior and exterior. It shows how the permeable threshold spaces surrounding houses in Fiji and the Pacific create spaces where private space overlaps with community life and relationships and explores how facades and threshold spaces can be redefined in the context of the Pacific.

Research Contexts

Threshold Spaces

Thresholds interrupt spatial boundaries for a transition from one zone to another. The phenomenon of the threshold thrives on spatial ambivalence. Thresholds open up spaces and organize transitions. At the same time, they are read as part of the boundary and can be perceived as a barrier. A space that is delimited by thresholds and space defining elements can be termed a threshold space. (Boettger, 2014, p. 10)

The idea of a threshold space is of great importance in the context of social gatherings. It is the active centre of the meeting, where people interact with each other \ through conversations or group activities. Space is defined by the activities within it rather than by its borders.

The “collective body” exists in this context when there is an intersubjective “we- experience” of the group or crowd, even if this experience is momentary. People can have this we-experience by sharing the same interest in being in a space, behaving similarly, or doing a similar thing. (Kimmel, 2021, p. 38)

I will heavily incorporate the idea of a threshold into my design, taking cues from the practices of my experiences in Fiji and especially the idea of indoor-outdoor living. This design concept promotes the smooth transition between indoor and outdoor areas, where lines between them blur and movement is unrestricted by physical obstacles. My design will embrace this mobility by emphasising open layouts and unimpeded passageways, encouraging a sense of harmony and connectedness between various parts of the space.

In Leatherbarrow's analysis of the complex interrelationship between architecture and its environment, he highlights how spatial arrangements affect human perception and behaviour (2008). This viewpoint recognises that the interactions and movements that architectural settings enable determine them just as much as the physical forms themselves. This enhances the lived experience of both residents and visitors. Leatherbarrow states, "While we think of architectural settings as essentially spatial configurations, in what follows, I would like to focus instead on their temporal characters" (2008, p. 124). In exploring the temporal element, Leatherbarrow admits that architecture is dynamic and subject to constant change. This temporal viewpoint forces architects to anticipate future needs and changes and consider their designs' durability, flexibility, and resilience. Architects can design spaces that adapt to changing user habits, and environmental changes by integrating temporal considerations. Adaptive features like doors, enable spaces to change through time.

Social Relationships through Movement

One of the most essential components of establishing a lively and exciting environment that promotes social cohesiveness is active fluidity of movement: “permanence of place is not permanence in time, for some things appear at different stages and then linger, others disappear, while still others are ever present” (Leatherbarrow, 2008, p. 126). People frequently form circles or make communal seating arrangements on the floor at open and welcoming events. In addition to encouraging equality and unity, this arrangement provides a higher level of physical intimacy and closeness, facilitating simple storytelling, conversation, and experience sharing. In *Architecture Oriented Otherwise*, Leatherbarrow discusses how the spatial setting forms how people behave in situations such as sitting for a meal. “Before, after, and during the meal, the table gives itself in different ways: as a trace once eating is over, as a type before one sit down, and tacitly while dining occurs.” (2008, p. 123). Deep and enduring social ties can be forged in these settings. The space’s active zone is more than just a physical layout; it is a spatial setting representing a culture’s ideals and influencing social dynamics. In my design, I chose to gather around and drink tea within the space, as this is common in my family gathering the offering of tea. Whether they accept or decline, you still give them a cup of tea, becoming a routine when entering other’s spaces. Allowing this act gives you the sense of you coming into my space.

“Art can and should be a touching experience” (Paterson, 2007, p. 79). Author and professor Paterson uses the concept of “tactile appropriation” in *The Senses of Touch* (2007) from Walter Benjamin, who originated this concept in his book published in 1935, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (2008). According to Benjamin, tactile appropriation occurs when the art experience moves from a direct physical interaction to a controlled encounter. Benjamin illustrates that this shift in tactile feeling for our perception and understanding of art changes when touch is introduced. Social spaces are tactile and “touching”.

In *Thing Theory*, Bill Brown raises questions about how we interact with artefacts, pointing towards our understanding and knowledge of materiality and their tactile qualities (2001). Brown says that by exploring how artefacts interact with our lives, they become a part of our daily lives and experiences, impacting our thoughts, behaviours, and emotions.

Karamia Muller: Relational Drawing

Architect Karamia Muller addresses conventional spatial representational systems from a Samoan cultural viewpoint in her paper *Relational drawing as agency: negotiating the tangible and intangible of Samoan diaspora social space* (2012). According to her, modern Samoan approaches to tangible and intangible culture are based on value systems that go against Western conventions. Muller takes the reader on a tour of the history of early Samoan arrival, the hardships, the antagonism of the New Zealand government, and the settlement process. Threshold spaces are an important part of her account:

Ancillary structures attached to domestic dwellings have proved vital in enabling the Samoan diaspora to recreate their culturally specific social spaces in New Zealand. These structures, although varied, are typically single cell, adjacent to the domestic dwelling, retrofitted with reused cabinetry, decorated with a range of contemporary and traditional objects (such as photographs of ancestors), and furnished with household items. The kitset garage, known in Samoan as the 'fale ta'avale became popular amongst Samoan migrants. (Muller, 2012, 124)

This resonates with what I have seen in my visits to Fiji and experienced in New Zealand. Spaces such as garages are turned from their intended purpose to places for people and objects to be stored, creating a new space to live in. Muller continues:

It is proposed that the prevalent use of the fale ta'avale as a facilitator of relational space is an architectural marker in migration history, a point when Samoan migrant homeowners began to view their property as a fluid landscape in which they could build with construction principles used in Samoa, rather than as a fixed built environment. (Muller, 2012, p. 125)

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Muller challenges fixed ideas of borders and divisions of space with her concept of “fluid landscapes,” which embraces the dynamic and interrelated character of the environment. Muller focuses on how landscapes change and respond to human presence and perception. Drawing as a relational technique allows people to respond to and interact with their environment, blurring the line between observer and observed. This viewpoint emphasises a reciprocal link between humans and their environment, challenging Western ideas of ownership and control over the land. Muller’s fluid landscape echoes in Pacific in-between spaces, defined by their fluidity and openness, and the Western facade, which frequently emphasises rigid divisions and confined areas. I explore this idea by creating permeable threshold spaces that are defined through time and space, not by the idea of fixed walls and facades. Instead, a veil of beads can walk through them, defining the qualities of the space and the surroundings as Muller describes as fluid landscapes.

Do Ho Suh: 348 West 22nd Street

Contemporary artist Do Ho Suh investigates identity, memory, and place. His skilful manipulation of fabric's translucency, which dissolves traditional barriers between private and public spaces and becomes a metaphorical membrane, is at the core of his artistic work. Suh spatialises and physicalises memories through his installations, drawing spectators into a world where the tangible and the ethereal coexist, resulting in settings that deftly intertwine the threads of individual and group histories. (SCI-Arch Channel, 2020)

Do Ho Suh's installation *348 West 22nd Street* (2011–2015) (Figure 6) is an immersive 1:1 scale replicating this ground-floor residence from a New York building (LACMA, n.d). It allows viewers to experience a sense of displacement and nostalgia for Suh's old home. Translucent polyester fabric has been meticulously stitched together to create a shell of the home. On a 1:1 scale, it showcases intricate details such as light switches and doorknobs and blurs the lines between reality and memory.

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I noticed Suh uses several access points in his installations. This design decision encourages viewers to explore the rich settings independently, creating a dynamic and interactive experience. As people engage with Suh's artwork, they become caught in a multimodal discourse incorporating touch, sight, and subtle body interaction, taking the viewing experience beyond the visual domain. Suh's thematic investigation revolves around transitory spaces acting as symbolic corridors (SCI-Arch Channel, 2020). His installations are analogies to how life constantly changes, reflecting his idea of life as a journey. Every work becomes a vessel holding the recollections of private settings where the universal becomes personal, and audiences connect profoundly emotionally (SCI-Arch Channel, 2020). Like Do Ho Suh, I focus on developing immersive spatial experiences grounded in individual stories of home and an intimate and reflective mood.

While Do Ho Suh's artistic process entails carefully creating exact replicas of his memories and faithfully reconstructing architectural spaces from his past, my approach is different. I have taken inspiration from places I've visited and combined memories of my parents and my own experiences, as held in archival photos. By fusing personal memories with family stories, I want to design environments that function as dynamic windows into personal and societal memory. This variation in approach highlights how artists deal with nostalgia and memory in their works, emphasising the interaction between the built environment, familial tradition, and personal history. Furthermore, my works generate a wider sense of connection and resonance, inviting viewers to investigate the connections between personal and shared experiences inside the manufactured environment.

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Sosefina Andy - Modes of Adaptation

Sosefina Andy recalls her grandmother's Samoan home, where she sewed clothes for the whole family. These recollections inspired her installations that show the close relationship between Andy and her grandma—using art to transcend time. To strengthen this bond, Andy's interest in crocheting grew; using crocheting, she reinterpreted furniture in her grandmother's living room. (Andy, 2017)

Andy investigates the use of craft as a tool for adaptation via her work; this technique is based on lessons passed down through the generations from her relatives, especially her grandmother. This technique is something I have also inherited from the craft of making stools and recipes. Making with your hands and being taught how to make by family and generations before you is a way of keeping your culture and history alive and is something I will try to showcase within my design, as does Andy. Her artworks use substitute materials to represent the labour-intensive nature of traditional Samoan techniques like lalaga and ula production (Andy, 2018). She looks at how craft might represent genealogy issues and the experience of migrating to New Zealand from Samoa. She also explores the idea of memory space, serving as a storehouse for family history.

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Figure.9 Sosefina Andy. *It's an extension of Her*; installation photography, 2018.

Figure.10 Sosefina Andy. *It's an extension of Her*; installation photography, 2018.

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Esther Stewart - I was moving too fast to see

Esther Stewart combines visual languages from architecture, design, and geometry to produce visually appealing paintings and installations that explore new possibilities for expression. Her project at Objectspace involves building a detailed suspended 1:2 scale sectional model of the Emely Baker Centre. (Waghorn, 2024)

Stewart provides a platform for critical reevaluation of modern building principles in general and the Emely Baker Centre specifically through her involvement with this location. *I was moving too fast to see* serves as a paradigm of adaptive reuse, questioning existing power structures while providing new and speculative methods to repurpose areas. Her work emphasises the dynamic interplay of these aspects in modern art and design, encouraging viewers to reassess the relationship between architecture, memory, and future use by holding the potential for reassembly in numerous configurations.

Stewart chooses her materials carefully, considering each choice's ethical and political ramifications. Each fabric panel was created and arranged for assembly. Stewart emphasises practical problem-solving, connecting sociocultural and ecological research with hands-on production. It is both a conceptual investigation and an advocacy effort. It challenges the preservation of legacy that upholds colonial power relations and calls for reevaluating the Emely Baker Centre and modern construction techniques. (Waghorn, 2024)

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Research Methods

Overview

As a spatial designer, I focus on the dynamics of human interaction with physical environments and interpreting the emotional responses elicited by spatial experiences. Central to my practice is exploring how our senses shape perception of space and influence emotion. I delve into the nuances of human movement within a space, seeking to understand the flow of individuals and the factors that guide their paths.

Surface, a fundamental element of spatial design, holds particular significance in my work as I investigate how varying tactile qualities can profoundly alter the ambience and character of a space, evoking different emotional responses from occupants. I am deeply intrigued by the interplay of elements that draw people towards certain areas within a space, whether through visual cues, spatial arrangements, or the subtle manipulation of lighting and materials.



Archive Collection of Images

Early in my research, I began to read these qualities of space, material, colour, and movement in a collection of photographs of my family homes. Ethnographer Carolyn Ellis defines autoethnographic research as “research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural, social, and political” (Ellis, 2004). These pictures, taken from my parents’ perspective, capture specific events in time but also offer a window into the beliefs and experiences of the photographers and, thus, an earlier generation. We may decipher tiny hints about everyday life, societal norms, and family traditions by closely scrutinising the details portrayed in each snapshot, from the items held to the clothes worn. This helped me better understand the diverse experiences that have shaped my worldview. These images are powerful memories, evoking emotions and associations beyond the visual. They offer a tangible link to the past, allowing me to reconnect with cherished moments and reflect on the passage of time. Objects and scenes that may seem mundane or commonplace to the uninformed eye can hold profound personal significance, acting as touchstones for shared experiences and familial bonds. Through autoethnographic inquiry, I uncovered hidden narratives and untold stories that contributed to my sense of self and belonging. Selecting and interacting with this archive becomes a way to recover and safeguard family history, ensuring that these recollections go on for subsequent generations.

Figure.13 Nehrusha Nand. Collection of Archival Fiji Images, still image, 2023.

I can better understand my cultural past and identity by analysing my connection to these pictures and their narratives, strengthening ties between generations. In this sense, the archive collection becomes more than just a collection of photos; it symbolises the value of respecting our ancestors' legacies and the enduring power of memory. Anthropologist Tom Martin describes sensory ethnography as an "observation that takes sensory data into account, including (but not limited to) the sensations of touch, hearing, and smell, as well as the roles that these senses play in cultural and social interactions" (Martin, n.d). Adopting this approach will help me focus on the sensory dimensions of human experience and culture as I experience my journey of touch and the materiality of the environment,

aiding in ways sensory perceptions are culturally shaped and interpreted, and uncovering how they can be intertwined with cultural designs and the human experience of surfaces and facades. With the help of these photos, I have better understood spatial dynamics and the role that different items play in forming the surroundings. Of them, tarpaulins, stools, bowls, and door curtains have become especially notable components in space arrangement. Each of these items contributes to the spatial narrative, whether it's through establishing borders, encouraging interactions, or adding colour.



Full-Scale Experimentations

After initial small-scale tests of pattern and surface, I began to work at a 1:1 scale, giving myself a large canvas on which to explore the nuances of the project. This immersive method provides me with an understanding of how the design will manifest in context and puts me in the position of an individual interacting with it. Working at a life scale allows me to carefully evaluate the design's experiential elements, spatial dynamics, and visual impact. This practical approach enables a more thorough assessment of how people use and navigate the area, which improves my capacity to adjust components for maximum usability and visual appeal.

The immersive quality of a life-size installation makes comprehending how different design components work together holistically easier. It provides a dynamic platform for fine-tuning aspects that need to be noticed in smaller-scale models.

Through close observation of how visitors move around, I can identify subtle differences in movement patterns, the dynamics of interactions, and the general traffic flow. This method also helps the observer to pinpoint focus points and what initially grabs people's attention in the room, be it an appealing element, a captivating texture, or a particular spatial arrangement. Issues with scale, proportion, or material compatibility may be highlighted. In one installation test, the density of beaded threads relative to the surrounding surroundings, for example, came into focus (Figure 9). Problems and discoveries frequently occur throughout this process. These findings can provide insightful information about how materials and space interact, stimulating additional research and improving design concepts.

Further, the 1:1 scale technique encourages experimentation with spatial arrangements, materials, and sensory aspects of my body. The tactile experience takes centre stage at 1:1 size, providing an opportunity to investigate object weight, texture, and gravitational interaction beyond the bounds of digital simulations or models. This hands-on interaction with tangible materials provides an unmatched depth of understanding that enables a more comprehensive investigation of design possibilities. In addition, filling the interior area to capacity allows for a distinct viewpoint and encourages a design approach that puts the user experience first, from the inside out. Through thorough immersion in the real world, architects can anticipate the requirements and preferences of users, leading to more adaptable and compassionate architectural solutions.

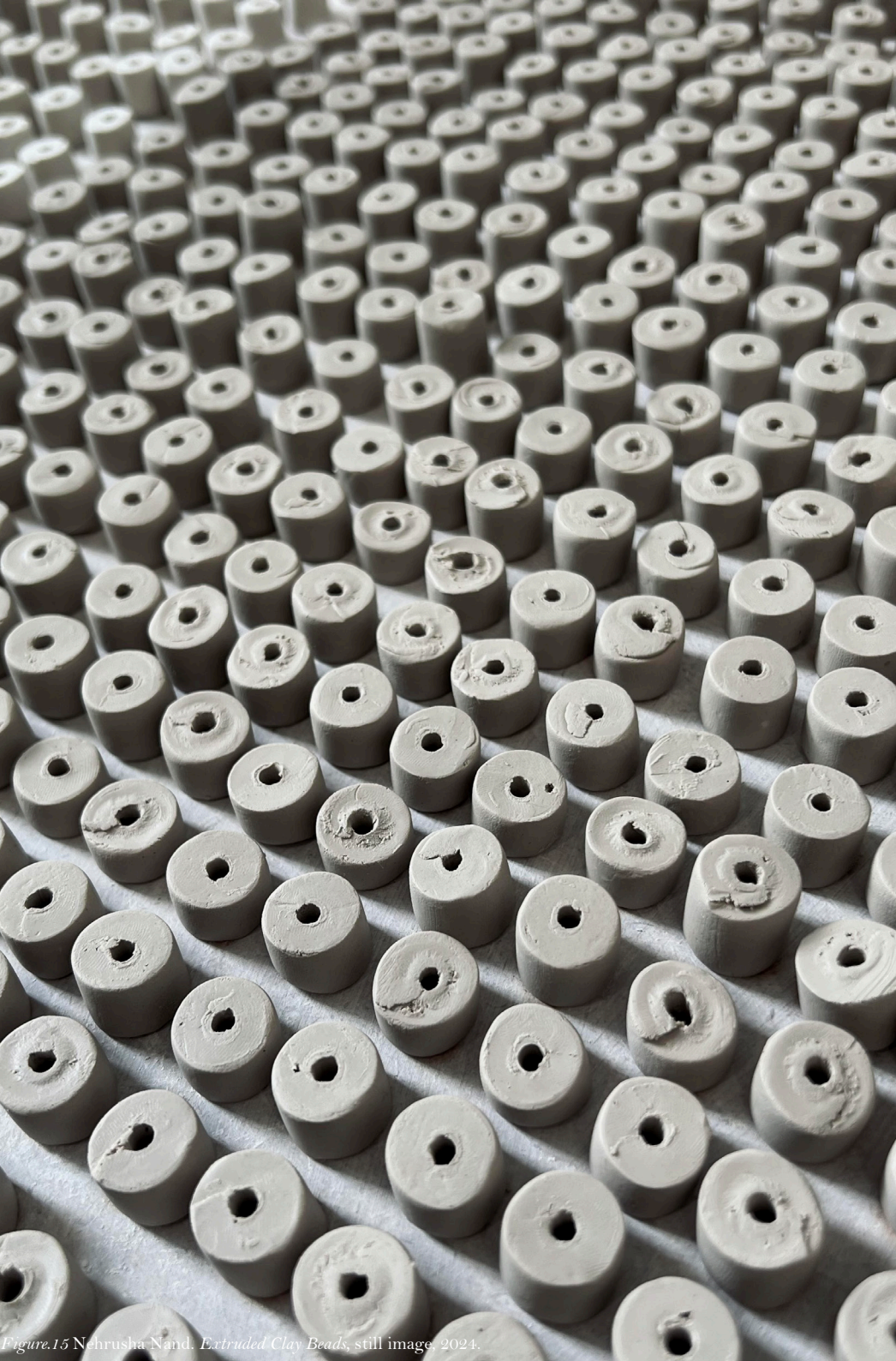


Figure.15 Nehrusha Nand. *Extruded Clay Beads*, still image, 2024.

Working with Repetition

Adopting an iterative methodology, scale models were still indispensable instruments for analysing the shape of every object, scrutinising their relationship with one another, and gauging their sensory impact. This method's intrinsic benefit is its capacity to quickly produce prototypes in various sizes and shapes, from small versions to lifelike operational models. Modelling allows for a forward-looking viewpoint, anticipating the final design. These prototypes were made by hand with my fingertips all over them, giving me a personal touch and a concrete record of my involvement in the design process. Using physical prototypes opens the door to creating multiple forms, patterns, and designs that would be difficult to test at full size. Iterative refinement of individual elements is facilitated by this method, which also offers essential insights into the quality of repetition and its possible influence on my designs. Mark Anderson and Peter Anderson's book *Prefab Prototypes: Site-Specific Design for Offsite Construction* (2007) offers an in-depth analysis of offsite construction techniques emphasising prefabrication. The book emphasises the value of practical small-scale prototyping and explains the concepts underlying the design and construction of prefabricated buildings. Designers can uncover many forms, patterns, and designs through practical experimentation, providing the possibility of creative solutions. I can experiment more effectively with many iterations and variations by making smaller-scale prototypes. This enables me to investigate how repetition might improve my work's conceptual depth and visual coherence. Additionally, smaller-scale prototyping makes it easier to evaluate the viability and scalability of specific design components with greater accuracy. It enables me to foresee any difficulties or constraints when attempting to replicate the design on a bigger scale, which informs tactical modifications to guarantee the integrity and coherence of the finished result throughout numerous iterations. Using this method, I can evaluate every prototype's tactile and visual aspects, ensuring that the repetition adds to the design's overall aesthetic appeal and conceptual resonance and at the same time fulfils a practical need. I may improve my comprehension of how repetition can be used as a purposeful design technique to elicit emotions, transmit theme motifs, or reinforce conceptual frameworks by closely examining the subtleties of each iteration.

Transposing these methods to considering Pacific threshold spaces, tangible prototypes and iterative improvement are consistent with the project's critical focus. A deeper comprehension of the sensory experiences connected to Pacific threshold spaces is made possible by the tactile interaction provided by physical prototyping, which influences design choices that put people's comfort and involvement first. These techniques provide a comprehensive approach to design that connects with the spatial dynamics and cultural resonance of Pacific threshold spaces, ensuring that the result is visually striking and contextually fitting.

In the next section, I give examples and consider how these methods worked together.

Description of Practice Work

Prototypes of Facades

Motivated by my innate Western perspective of viewing the facade as a visage, I began my investigation by exploring the possibilities of applying laser-cut pattern making to surfaces and utilising multiplication to enhance designs.

I considered the idea of a facade as a dynamic representation of identity and purpose rather than merely a facade. By experimenting with patternmaking, I aimed to go beyond simple adornment and give the surfaces additional significance and complexity. I explored Mughal architecture to understand architectural facades better, and I was especially captivated by the intricate layout of deep porches and verandahs. This project sought to go beyond the traditional understanding of the facade as a simple, flat surface by exploring the many cultural and spatial value levels these architectural elements embody. I aimed to understand the intricate relationship between form and function, texture and meaning, and facade. The sweeping porches and verandahs that typified Mughal architecture challenged traditional views of the facade as a static border.

Starting with a small-scale surface facade prototype (Figure 11), built on MDF strips and meticulously laser-cut with a pattern, this aims to investigate the relationship between light and shadow and clarify the subtle nature of the material's delicacy. This initial phase enables the investigation of how patterns appear on the surface and react to different light levels.





Moving on to increasing the dimension (Figure 12) makes it easier to examine the facade's relationship to light and shadow in more detail. It offers insights into how versatile the surface pattern is. An important turning point in the design's development is the switch from laser cutting to laser etching, which allows for a move from mostly 2D representation to the investigation of three-dimensional structures. Considerations of depth, texture, and spatial dynamics become crucial as the facade pattern transforms from a flat plane to a sculptural entity, highlighting the complex interplay between form, light, and perception in architectural design.

After that, I set out to create a three-dimensional arching facade surface. I distinguished between two methods: the first focused on the facade's visual appeal (Figure 13), and the second on creating an immersive spatial experience (Figure 14). Using laser-cutting and etching methods, I repeatedly etched patterns onto the surfaces, using texture and repetition to give the structure a three-dimensional, visually complex appearance. Using an iterative process, several panels were assembled to create an extended arching corridor. To ensure structural coherence, notched cut-outs were positioned strategically. The final result was a design that guaranteed accessibility through the sides and allowed for easy mobility through the arches. In addition, this investigation raised questions about the fundamental qualities of frames and encouraged a more thorough examination of the subtleties involved in producing furniture and building frames.



Figure.18 Nehrusha Nand. Facade Entrance Prototype, still image, 2023.



As I reflected, an abundance of queries about thresholds and facades emerged. Examining the subtleties of these architectural features in greater detail made me think about how they function as cultural and personal narrative conduits in addition to being physical constructions. Sensing room for more investigation, I changed course and closely examined old photos. This shift in approach was brought about by my goal to give my creative process a more genuine and personal touch by incorporating inspiration from my background and family's recollections. Due to this investigation, my design approach underwent an essential shift, and I began incorporating these personal narratives into my compositions.

Figure.19 Nehrusha Nand. *Facade Arch Threshold Prototype*, still image, 2023.

Archive Images

I took a moment to reflect and lost myself in the old photos my family had taken when visiting Fiji; every picture provided a glimpse into their thoughts and experiences. These photos, taken from their perspective, acted as priceless mementoes of the past, preserving significant events and a diversity of cultural perspectives. I was taken to a world far different from my own Western upbringing in Aotearoa New Zealand as I dug deeper into the pictures. These images and my personal experiences helped me identify the unique rhythms of island life, which are characterised by social gatherings and fluid spatial relationships.

I could see faint reminders of my parents' Fijian childhood within the frames, memories of traditions and practices that had permeated our family's everyday lives. I saw how ideas with roots in Fijian culture had been woven into our domestic world, from the layout of places to the gathering and discussion rituals. In contrast to the divided living areas in most Western homes, Fijian architecture adopts a more fluid style in which indoor and outdoor areas are blended together to facilitate a wide range of activities.



After carefully looking at archival photos, I recognised the many uses of the areas essential to my research, and noticed various activities across different settings, from meal preparation (Figure 15) to cleaning up afterwards. (Figure 16). Furthermore, these locations function as places for social gatherings or simply places to unwind (Figure 17). While searching through the images, I became aware of objects such as tarpaulins, mats, curtained doorways, bowls and stools (Figure 18). They brought back memories of my home because they remain as fixtures. This observation highlights the persistent relationship between the past and the present, in which commonplace objects function as moving reminders of continuity and custom in homes. Within these photographs, I could also see what colours stood out to use in my design, ranging from the colours of the greenery landscape surroundings to the more vibrant and prominent colours like the vivid blues and yellows from objects and items of clothing.



Figure 20 Nehrusha Nand. *Archival Fiji Savusavu*, still image, 2023.

Figure 21 Nehrusha Nand. *Archival Fiji Savusavu*, still image, 2023.

I was taken back by how multipurpose these common areas were, with every nook and cranny of the house being used for anything from cooking, to entertaining, to interacting with family and friends, to doing everyday tasks. It became clear that the concept of space in Fijian culture went beyond essential utility and developed into a dynamic setting for cultural expression and communal interaction. Recalling Muller's term, I define the spaces in these images as fluid landscape.

I wanted to know whether I could engage with these traditional ways of using space by working with spatial flexibility and creating settings that encourage interaction, dialogue, and cross-cultural understanding.



Figure.22 Nehrusha Nand. *Archival Fiji Savusavu*, still image, 2023.

Figure.23 Nehrusha Nand. *Archival Fiji Savusavu*, still image, 2023.



My Father's Stool

I discovered an intriguing tapestry of experiences woven around a seemingly simple piece of furniture while immersing myself in old family photos (Figure 19). The more I thought about the memories connected to this improvised wooden stool made by my father, the more I realised how important it was. The stool was used in the threshold spaces around the house: the verandah, garage, and yard. It represented family bonds and cultural continuity ingrained in a Fijian way of life. Its widespread use and importance in Fijian households was evident because similar stools were present in every house I visited on the island. My father made this stool in 1995 out of leftover wood and nails, a perfect example of Fijian ingenuity and simplicity that infused many facets of daily life. It was built with inexpensive materials, reflecting our cultural legacy of ingenuity and adaptability.

In addition, the stool had a particular personality and usefulness due to its unusual design. Because of its height relation to the floor and ability to ground users close to the earth, it promoted a feeling of intimacy and connection with the surroundings. The stool's shin height provided a different postural dynamic than traditional seats at waist height, encouraging users to interact more intimately and fully with their environment. Its lightweight design made it simple to move and rearrange to suit a variety of events and gatherings. The versatility of the space reflected the fluidity of Fijian social practices, where spaces were used for various purposes with ease promoting a sense of communal cohesiveness and conviviality. The stool is a threshold object being moved around, half belonging to the house and half to the outside space.

Reflecting on my childhood, I realise how many uses my father, uncles, and grandfather had for one item. In the kitchen of our house in Auckland, my dad would sit on a stool, lay a newspaper on the floor, and use a chopper to cut up meat, similar to ways I have seen it done in Fiji (Figure 20,21). Observing my father use the stool outside while working on different construction tasks gave me further perspective on its versatile uses. An apparently commonplace object may quickly move across contexts, attesting to its usefulness and adaptability in various situations. Small objects can act as conduits for tradition and memories throughout generations.



Figure.25 Nehrusha Nand. Archival Fiji Savusavu, still image, 2023.

Figure.26 Nehrusha Nand. Archival Fiji Ba, still image, 2023.



Ceramic Hanging

During this research phase, I came up with the idea to create a ceramic curtain, a tangible representation of a transitional place that blurs the lines between the internal and outdoor worlds. I wanted to make a kind of curtain that would change people's perceptions of space while simultaneously appealing to their senses on several levels.

In the first iteration of my hanging ceramic, I used a laser cutter to cut stencils out of MDF, carefully engraving four pattern designs (Figure 22). Then, I played around with a combination of two different kinds of clay, carefully blending and marbling them together. I then used my stencils and applied pressure to the clay to imprint the detailed designs on the surface. The outcome of this procedure was a set of thirty different ceramic panels, each with a distinctive texture and design interaction (Figure 23,24,25). This approach made exploring the series' diversity and originality easier while enabling accurate replicating of the intended patterns.

As a dynamic interface, the ceramic curtain slows down users' movement across a threshold by asking them to manoeuvre around its textured surface. In addition, the interactive aspect of the piece encourages visitors to walk through it, submerging them in a personal sensory encounter. They are engulfed by the soft sound of ceramics hitting one another and the captivating dance of light and shadow across the ceramic surface as they move through the beads.



Figure 28 Nehrusha Nand. Flat Pattern Hanging Ceramic, still image, 2023.



Figure.29 Nehrusha Nand. *Flat Pattern Hanging Ceramic*, still image, 2023.



Figure.30 Nehrusha Nand. *Flat Pattern Hanging Ceramic*, still image, 2023.

I decided to make smaller beads in my second attempt at hanging ceramics. I gradually worked glaze stain into clay to produce three vibrant colour schemes: blue, green, and yellow (Figure 26). I drew this colour scheme from my archival images. I used this collection of beads and hung them in a test space at a 1:1 scale, placing them deliberately lower to the ground to gauge their visual impact in relation to the human body. To shed light on how colour, shape, and spatial context interact within an architectural environment, this experiment investigated these relationships.

Ultimately, the ceramic curtain becomes an intriguing focal point encouraging investigation and engagement. I wanted to create a space that inspires wonder and curiosity in users and motivates them to interact meaningfully and fully with their surroundings by utilising ceramics' tactile and sensory properties. I aimed to create a location that encourages participation and provokes thought and conversation by embracing the natural plasticity of ceramics. This space embodies the transforming potential of design to generate emotion and inspire connection.





Test Space Installations

Expanding on my investigation of my ceramic curtain idea, I took on the challenging assignment of converting it into a larger installation. This 1:1 scale would envelop viewers in a dynamic spatial encounter. I faced many issues and concerns as I got deeper into this project, all of which influenced the course of my design investigation. How can inclusivity and accessibility be ensured while preserving a sense of geographical separation? What effects might the presence of other bodies have on how something looks and feels? How might I direct the flow of movement to promote side trips and surprising discoveries? These enquiries functioned as a framework for my creation of test scenarios and my staging of the area to investigate the interactions between the ceramic veil, lighting, and human interaction.

I built situations in these 1:1 scale test area that would encourage dynamic encounters with the surrounding architecture while also showcasing the aesthetic potential of the ceramic curtain. I wanted to create routes and views that prompted visitors to explore and discover by carefully placing the veil around the area (Figure 27). This would let people wander around the installation and interact with its tactile and sensory elements. I also experimented with various lighting setups to highlight the rich texture of the ceramics and provide eye-catching light-shadow interactions.

At first (Figure 28), I experimented with hanging cotton strings in a test studio to control spatial dynamics (Figure 29,30). I saw how these strings changed the surroundings, dividing spaces and inviting people to interact by walking between the strings. In contrast to rigid walls that may impart a feeling of limitation, the installation of string veils created a welcoming atmosphere that encouraged an impression of transparency and flow. This insight made me think about creating a conversation within the design, which led me to consider how to incorporate colour using ceramic beads.

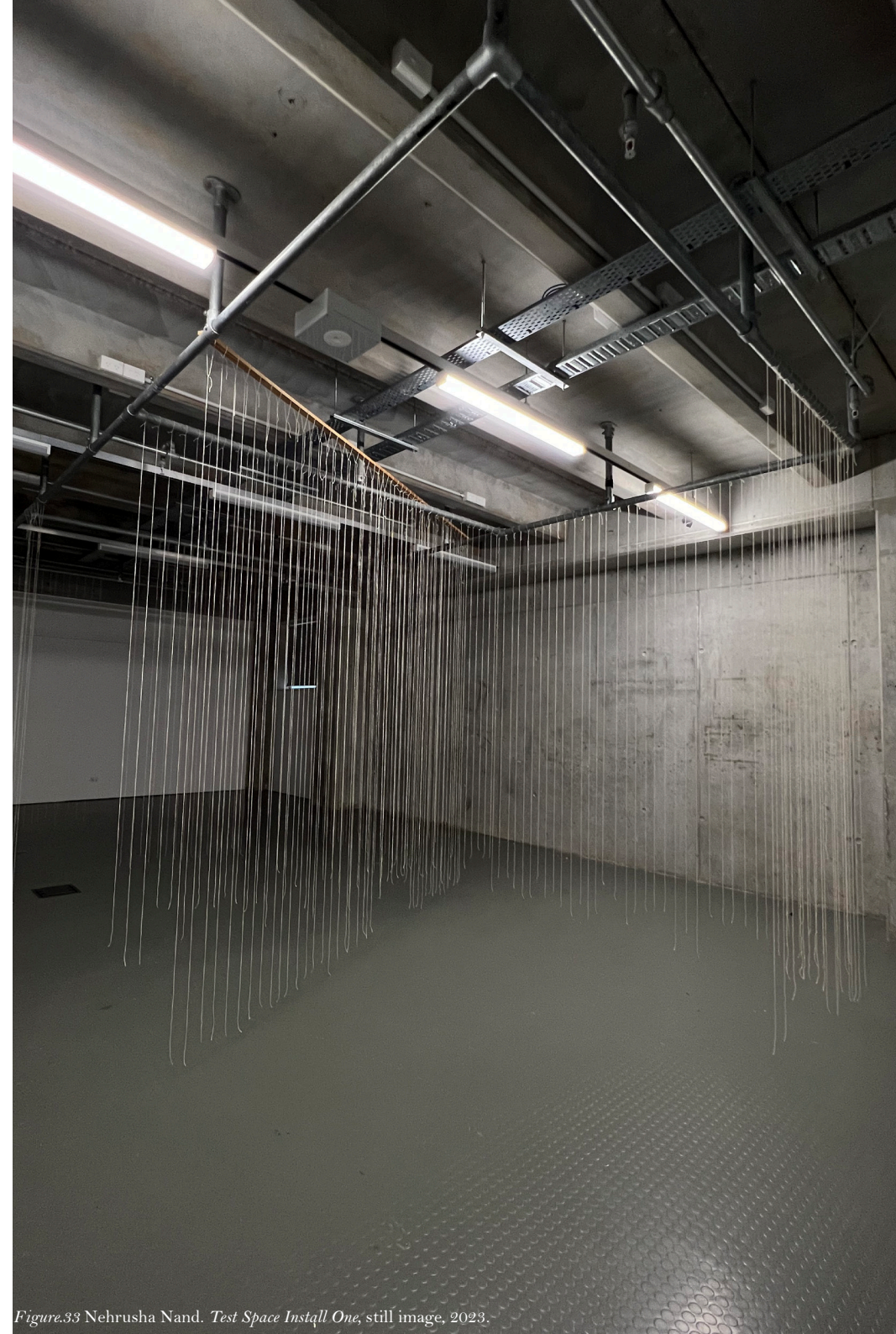




Figure.34 Nehrusha Nand. *Test Space Install One*, still image, 2023.



Figure.35 Nehrusha Nand. *Test Space Install One*, still image, 2023.

In my second exploration of my 1:1 scale design (Figure 31,32,33), I explored the idea of scene-setting to create a more inviting atmosphere and added the dynamic element of beads hanging from the strings. My goal in adding activities to the space was to make it an interactive experience rather than just an appealing visual. This method, which involved watching people move around and interact with the mat and cushions in the area, gave essential insights into how people behaved there. I carefully planned the cushions' and mat's positioning to the floor's layout and the sitting-level beaded veil to establish the anchored area.

In hindsight, although the strings marked out a specific spatial enclosure resembling a box, people tended to interact more inside this confined space than outside of it. I considered varying the string density, imagining zones of higher density to promote particular behaviours or exchanges. The idea of a beaded curtain surfaced as a possible means of dividing areas for different purposes, which led to how to draw lines separating inner, external, and transitional spaces.



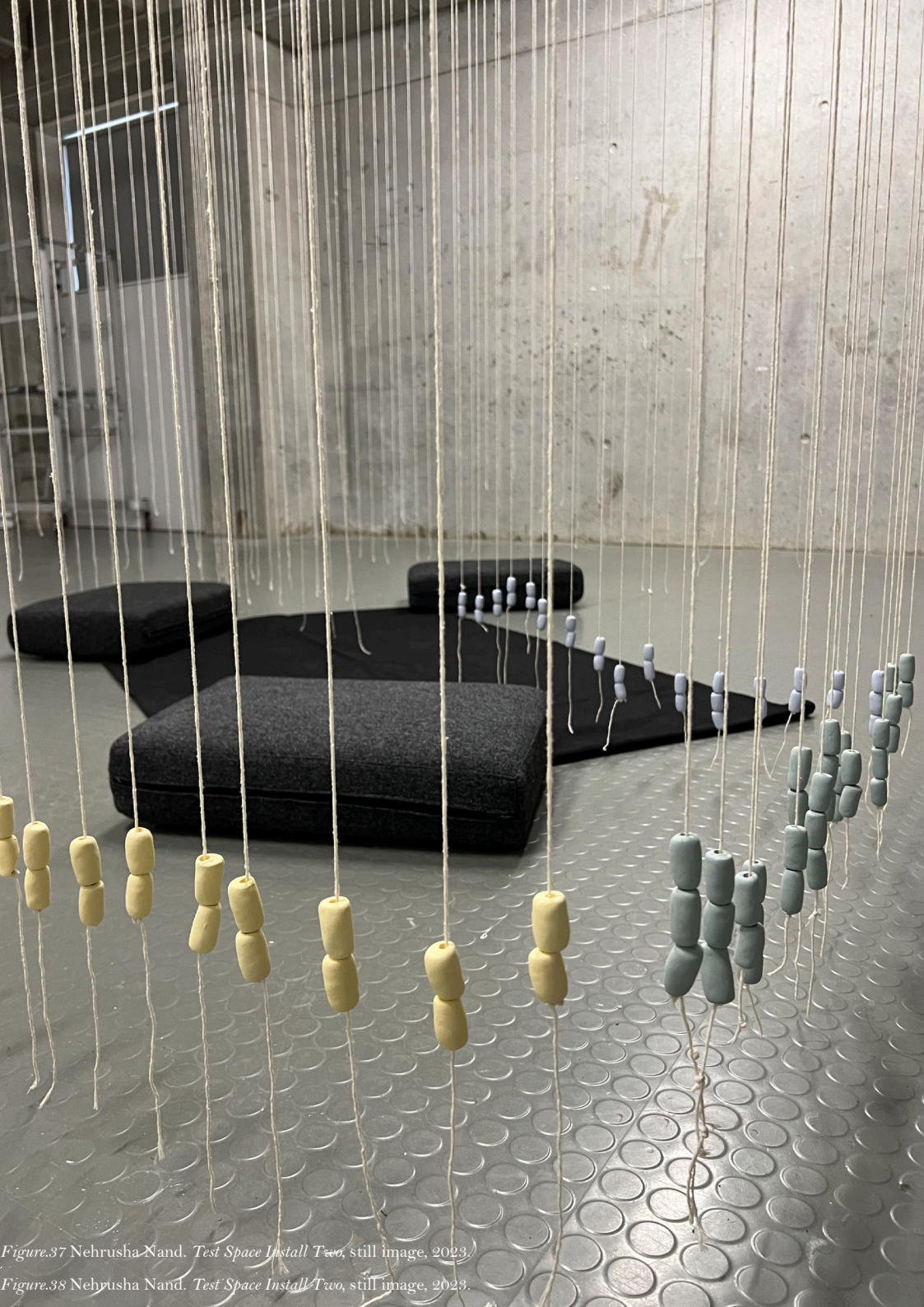


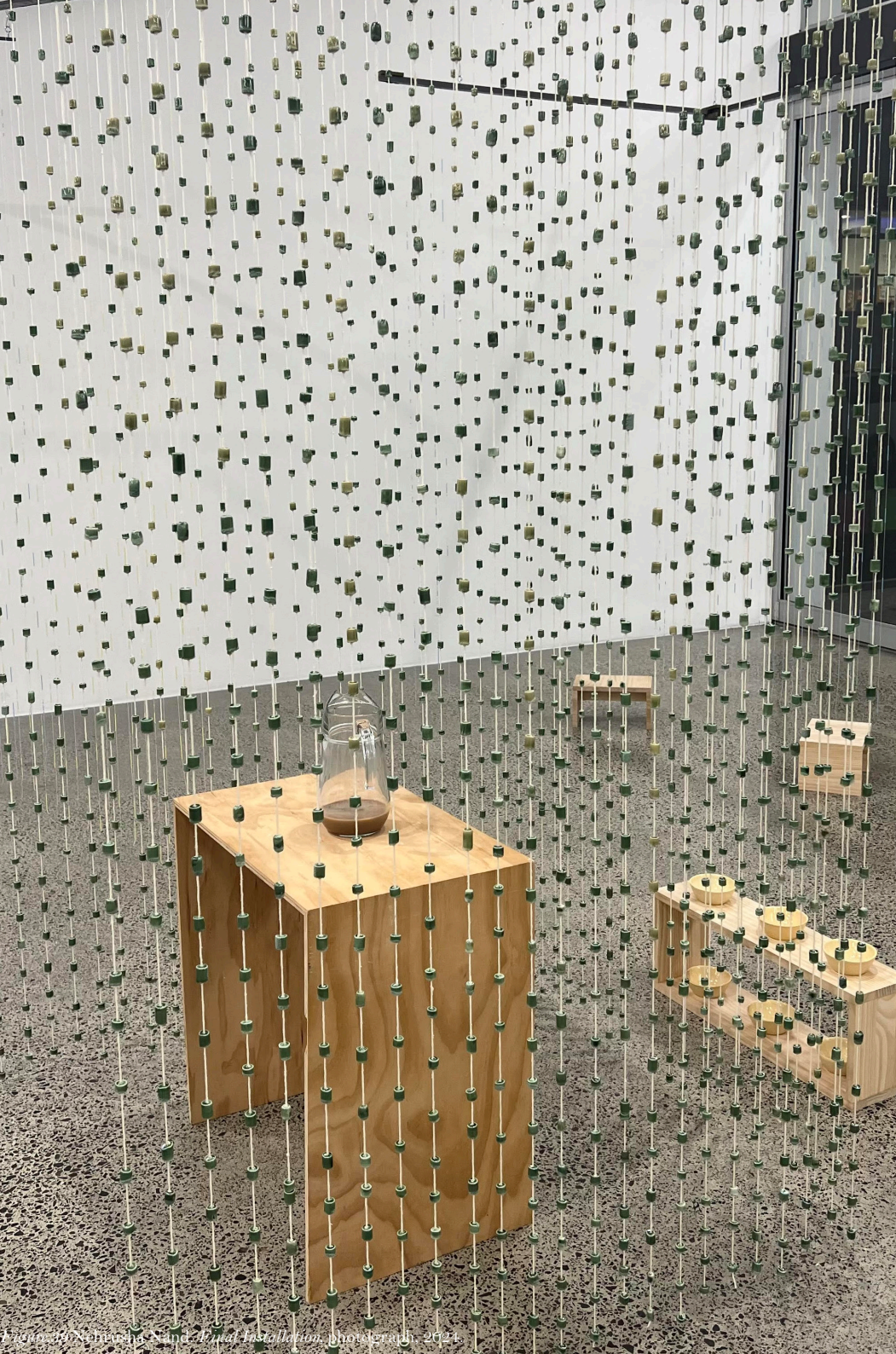
Figure.37 Nehrusha Nand. *Test Space Install Two*, still image, 2023.



Figure.38 Nehrusha Nand. *Test Space Install Two*, still image, 2023.

I considered introducing gaps into the room layout, placing sections out of participants' reach to direct and modify their movements. As I thought about the movement sequence, I imagined a purposeful choreography that dictated how people would move across the area, considering typical spatial dynamics to predict their actions and reactions. This iterative process of exploration and refinement aims to create a space that meaningfully engages and interacts with its occupants while also orchestrating their experience.

In addition, I thought about how human presence affected the spatial experience, imagining how the artwork may come to life and become livelier with other bodies in the room. I learned a lot about how social connections and spatial dynamics combined to create the overall mood and environment by watching people move through and interact with the ceramic veil. Ultimately, these 1:1 scale test environment functioned as dynamic laboratories for experimentation, allowing me to improve and rework my design concept while learning more about how it might affect users' experiences and perceptions.



Beads and Tea

The essence of my family is represented in the village names of my parents: my father's village is named 'Waibuka', and my mother's village is named 'Waikava'. 'Wai' means water in Fijian, and 'buka' means fire. These two words represent the elements that influence my creative work of ceramic making. In the early phases of clay and ceramic making, water is crucial as it provides the moisture needed to mould and shape the clay. Fire appears after the mould is completed, bringing about a new transformation. The clay is firmly formed in shape, which results from the kiln's intense heat. This contrast—where fire solidifies and transforms, while water nourishes and shapes—illustrates a deep relationship between these elements of my background in making outstanding, long-lasting ceramics. Using clay as my focal materiality to capture my family's background through the meaning behind their villages.

In particular, tea represents hospitality and arrival, embodying the warmth of welcome that permeates my cultural upbringing. It is more than just a drink. Serving tea is a social ritual that encourages interaction and dialogue. My initial work focused on practical objects that highlight the beauty of routine activities and improve these group experiences. I use beads to incorporate craftsmanship that honours embellishment as a narrative means. Telling a story that respects my heritage and invites others to partake in the simple pleasure of getting together over a cup of tea and the sensation of connection and tradition.

A room filled with ceramics provides a tactile experience that is deeply immersive, with each piece's surface encouraging exploration and touch and move through. The ceramics create soft noises as fingers move over the delicate forms, a clinking and tapping that goes into each piece. In this instance, a facade serves as a visual frame and border for the area, highlighting the idea that the real purpose of a place is determined by the interactions and activities that take place there.

Unlike solid walls that restrict and constrain a room, the beaded hanging ceramics offer a more open environment for fluid movement and interaction. They give off an air of openness while clearly defining spaces, offering a natural framework that invites participation. Beaded curtains function as a delicate veil, permitting simple passage while inviting views through their strands, unlike typical curtains, which enclose and block off spaces. Instead of encouraging a sense of division, this design creates a sense of continuity between various locations.

Design Outcome

The project *Redefining Facades* draws inspiration from my experiences visiting Fiji and challenges the idea of facades in a way that can potentially transform domestic spaces. I want to question preconceived ideas about space and promote meaningful conversation outside of typical interiors with this interactive artwork reflecting domestic space. The European facade as a mask that separates interior from exterior is replaced by a Pacific layering of thresholds to define a space for congenial welcome.

Through exploring materiality, surface, and lightweight enclosure, I activate my family memories to show others the use of threshold spaces in the Pacific and gain an understanding of how people moving through such spaces can change the activity happening within the space. Fundamentally, my research explores the issue of how we can communicate and connect with each other more deeply by overcoming the constraints of physical space. I want to create an atmosphere where people may appreciate the fluidity of human contact and escape the confines of traditional settings by allowing them to fully immerse themselves in the installation.

In the work to be exhibited, participants will receive an invitation to rest, contemplate, and refuel while sipping cha (tea) as soon as they enter the room. This small gesture encourages one to slow down and become more receptive to the experience. Participants can select a stool and locate an area inside or outside the space's dividing veil of coloured beads as they become comfortable with their surroundings.

The various sections of the installation will be marked off by coloured bead curtains, which are representations of partitions and barriers. However, rather than serving as impenetrable barriers, they allow people to move between areas while maintaining a connection to the larger community. People are encouraged to converse and share ideas with one another, regardless of whether they are seated within or outside the curtain. This helps to break down barriers and promote unity.

Participants are encouraged to examine how time, place, and human contact are interconnected and to question their preconceived conceptions about facades through this interactive experience. Through dismantling obstacles and fostering chances for significant interaction, Redefining Facades aims to stimulate a change in viewpoint and foster a more profound understanding of the intricacies of our mutual experiences.



Figure.40 Piraya Ruengsakoon. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2024.



Figure.41 Piraya Ruengsakoon. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2024.



Figure.42 Piraya Ruengsakoon. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2024.

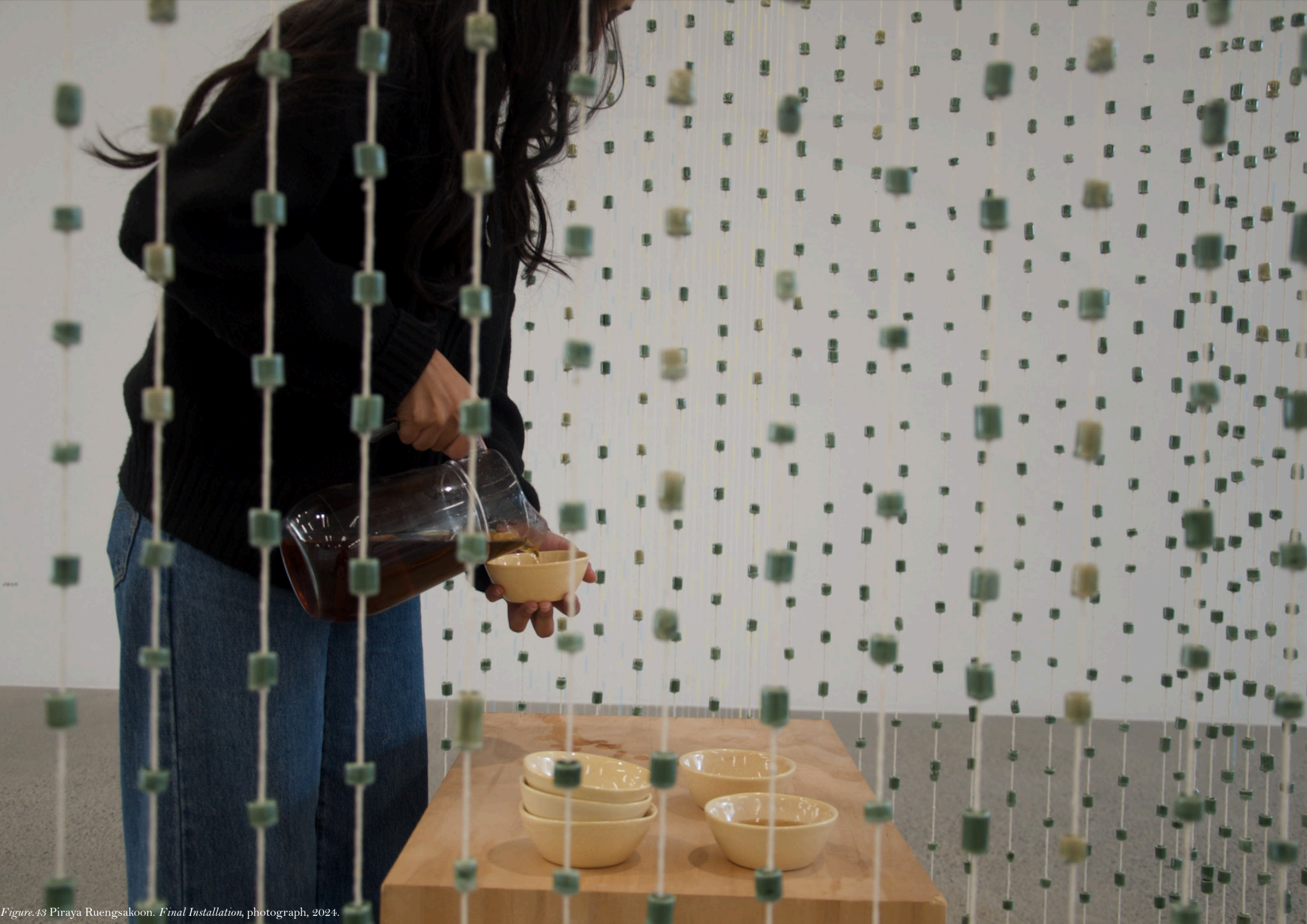


Figure.43 Piraya Ruengsakoon. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2024.



Figure.44 Piraya Ruengsakoon. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2024.



Figure.45 Piraya Ruengsakoon. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2024.



Figure.46 Piraya Ruengsakoon. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2024.



Figure.47 Piraya Ruengsakoon. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2024.



Figure.48 Piraya Ruengsakoon. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2024.

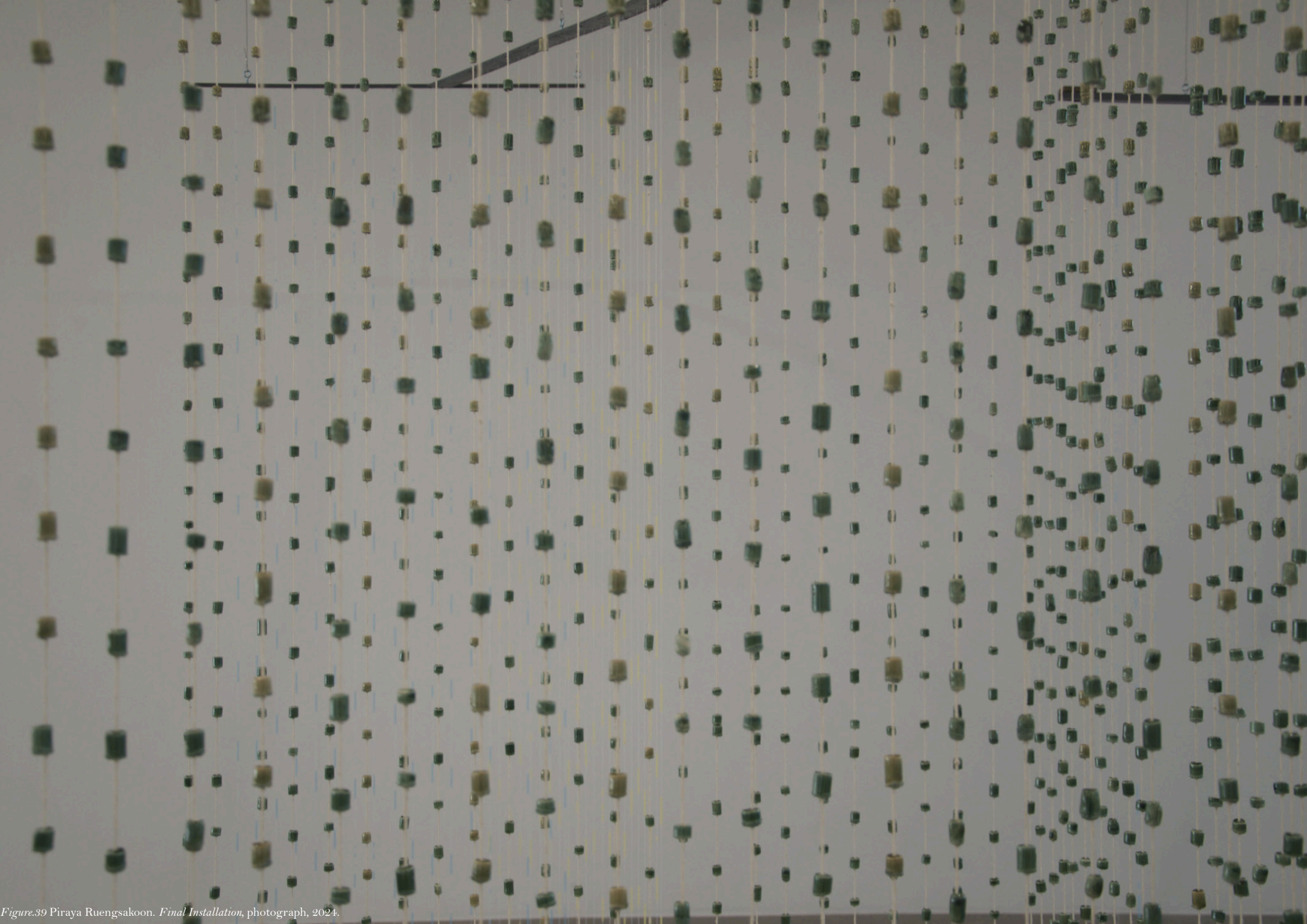


Figure.39 Piraya Ruengsakoon. *Final Installation*, photograph, 2024.

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