

bottom methodology
and
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cor

below,
behind,
across:

Richard Orjis

bottom methodology and queer representation in contemporary art

This exegesis is submitted to
Auckland University of Technology in
partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(Ph.D).

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School of Art and Design, Faculty of
Design and Creative Technologies,
Auckland University of Technology.

Kia ora tatou
Ko Rangitoto te maunga
Ko Whanganui te awa
Ko Ngā Wai o Horotiu te marae
Ko Ngāti Pākehā te iwi
Ko Richard Orjis tōku ingoa
Nō Whanganui ahau
Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou,
tēnā tatou, katoa.

Greetings to you all
Rangitoto is the mountain
Whanganui is the river
Ngā Wai o Horotiu, AUT is my marae
I am Ngāti Pākehā
I am Richard Orjis
I am from Whanganui
Greetings to you, greetings to you,
greetings to us all

Abstract

This practice-led PhD investigates how socio-ecological art practices can facilitate queer representation in Aotearoa. Through the development of the research project, a bttm methodology emerged as an activating agent across a series of art installations, participatory workshops, queer history walks and discussion groups. Drawing on queer theory and socio-ecological art practices, bttm methodology is a guide to my art-making that valorises 'lowly' or marginalised positions. bttm (bottom) was developed with val smith and encompasses a range of queer socio-political relations, past and present, including: a receptive position in intimate relations, ethical alliances between the human and nonhuman, and a grounding in the whenua of the Aotearoa. *below, behind, across* considers the potential to produce queer knowledge and empowerment by adopting creative counter-positions, recalling queer histories and resisting oppressive uses of power. Drawing on the work of Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Jack Halberstam, this research generates artistic platforms for queer representation that challenge dominant colonial, capitalist, and heteropatriarchal narratives.

As the site of the first Gay Liberation Front (GLF) protest in Aotearoa in 1972, Rangipuke (Albert Park) in the centre of Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland), is the physical and conceptual starting point of *below, behind, across*. As such, Rangipuke constitutes fertile terrain for exploring critical intersections of queer, environmental and colonial-capitalist discourse. *Walking in Trees* (2019) and *Queer Pavilion* (2020), two significant research projects, involved hosting a diverse range of artist performances and installations in temporary structures in this location. The GLF was an activist group formed by university students who sought liberation from discrimination and the confines of heteronormativity. My artistic research exhumes local history to reclaim critical moments of radicalism in queer politics. Like the GLF, my art practice and bttm methodology emerge from a university campus adjacent to Rangipuke; in the spirit of this movement I also seek to question hegemonic power, claim queer representation, and actively engage in creating co-operative and socially just formations.

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Ethics approval

This research was subject to AUT ethics approval, which was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) on July 3, 2019, number 19/206.

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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 mentioned), 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.

April, 2021

Introduction

0.1 Positioning the researcher

I trace my lineage to ancestors who arrived in Aotearoa (New Zealand) by ship in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. My colonial forebears started their journeys from homelands in England, Ireland Scotland and Germany. My settler ancestors worked at building and sustaining families, as cabinet makers, as farmers and seafarers. In addition to my biological roots, my worldview is also profoundly shaped by being a queer art practitioner, by growing up in late-twentieth century Aotearoa and by contemporary ecological thinking.

I was born in Whanganui Hospital in 1979 and spent my early years along the city's riverbank (Figure. 01). At the centre of Whanganui is the Sarjeant Art Gallery, where I returned for a six-month artist residency in 2014. The gallery opened in 1891 as a result of a bequest by farmer Henry Sarjeant and the enthusiasm of

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Figure 0.1. Pages from author's family scrapbook, "It's Richards 4TH Happy Birthday," September 12, 1983, Kowhai Park, Whanganui.

the Mayor, Charles Mackay. MacKay's speech at the laying of the gallery's foundation stone took place during WWI and on the site of a former land wars regiment camp. He described the gallery as a "temple built for all time and dedicated forever to the arts of peace."¹

Mackay also figures in the queer genealogy of my home town: a year after the gallery was unveiled MacKay was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for shooting poet Walter D'Arcy Cresswell in 1920 when Cresswell was attempting to blackmail him on account of MacKay's homosexuality.

Nearly 60 years later, my parents arrived in Whanganui in the late 1970s so my father could take up his first job as an architect. The Whanganui River gained global attention in 2017 with the signing of Te Awa Tupua (The Whanganui River Claim Settlement) that acknowledged that the river is a living ancestor, and granted it human legal status. Lead iwi negotiator Gerrard Albert stated at the time "...rather than us being masters of the natural world, we are part of it. We want to live like that as our starting point".² His words reiterate the traditional saying of Ngāti Hau, "Ko au te awa, ko te awa ko au"—"I am the river, the river is me". While my worldview has been shaped by a Pākehā (non-Māori New Zealander) settler-colonial legacy I am compelled by the intersection of ecology and Māori epistemologies that, as Tuhiwai Smith acknowledges, demonstrates a complex interconnection with wai (water), whenua (land) and tangata (people).³

My family returned to Tāmaki Makaurau when I was six years old, and I spent most of my youth in suburbs of the North Shore attending Roman Catholic schools. These early experiences in Catholicism meant that I

was required to negotiate conflicting cultural, religious and scientific paradigms. As I became increasingly aware of my same-sex attraction, my relationship with the establishment became even more complicated as I realised the systems of knowledge and privilege had not been constructed with any consideration for people who deviated from the hetero-patriarchy.

I completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts in 2001. During my final year of study, I gained an international perspective through an exchange semester at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, where I became an archival intern at The Andy Warhol Museum. After graduating, I lived in New York, working for photographer and filmmaker David La Chapelle and collaborating with my partner, Cuban American artist Anthony Goicolea. My time in New York was decisive for my photographic practice, and the vibrant LGBTTQIA+ art scene and history offered a positive countering experience to the social conservatism of the visual arts I had experienced at home.

After returning to Aotearoa in 2005, I completed a Masters in Fine Arts. Since I graduated my artwork has been exhibited in public and private galleries in Aotearoa and abroad and is held in collections which include Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision: The New Zealand Archive of Film, Television and Sound, the Jenny Gibbs

¹ Paul Diamond, "Beyond the Barricade," Ann Shelton, 2013, www.annshelton.com/texts-and-media/the-city-of-gold-and-lead/beyond-the-barricades.

² Eleanor Ainge Roy, "New Zealand River Granted Same Legal Rights As Human Being," *The Guardian*, 16 March 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/16/new-zealand-river-granted-same-legal-rights-as-human-being>.

³ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Second edition (London: Zed Books, 2012), 63.

Collection, The Spanish Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, The Sarjeant Gallery and The University of Auckland Art Collection. The works in these collections are predominantly photographic; this thesis extends my approach to explore socio-ecological art practices.

While I was working on my Master's degree, I began teaching art professionally, and I have continued to do so. My most extended placement was at the Faculty of Creative Arts at the Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT). This experience allowed me to spend time in South Auckland, where both my parents' families are from, and where I gained a deeper understanding of Indigenous creative practices and philosophies. This knowledge was nurtured through working alongside Māori and Pasifika staff and students, studying The Treaty of Waitangi as part of my professional development and forming friendships with members of the Pasifika queer arts collective, FAFSWAG, and artists and curators Ema Tavola and Leilani Kake (Tainui, Ngāpuhi).

During my experience as an educator, pedagogical modes slowly started to infiltrate my artistic practice, as well as social justice concerns. This focus came to the fore on an Asian New Zealand Foundation artists' residency to Malaysia in 2017, where I saw first-hand how artists could be critical agents in solidifying and empowering queer communities against trans-homophobic cultural-political regimes.⁴

Before progressing into the exegesis, I wish to acknowledge how my subjectivity and its inherent bias has shaped my research. As a queer cisgender Pākehā male artist, from a middle-class Christian background, I am aware of how my privilege has benefited me in countless ways. I am committed to the ongoing process of uncovering and understanding it.⁵

Being queer has afforded me particular insights into structural oppression and I am attuned to dynamics of power and the existence of prevailing disparities. In addition, I identify with Geoffrey Galt Harpham's insight that working in the field of the Humanities awakens an understanding of oneself and others, including: "the capacity to sympathise, empathise, or otherwise inhabit the experience of others."⁶

Furthermore, dismantling oppressive systems should not be solely left to those most disempowered by structures that already overburden them. With these thoughts in mind, the intersectional approach developed in *below, behind, across* strives to uphold multiple Indigenous, environmental, queer, trans, feminist voices in resistance to colonial-capitalist and hetero-patriarchal legacies.

4 Eve Ng, "LGBT Advocacy and Transnational Funding in Singapore and Malaysia," *Development & Change* 49, no. 4 (July 2018): 1093–1114, doi:10.1111/dech.12406.

5 Linda Black and David Stone define privilege as the entitlements, advantages and dominance granted at birth and not through personal merit, intelligence or ability. By its very nature, social privilege benefits some at the expense of others and is based upon factors such as citizenship, class, age, level of ability, ethnicity or race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and religion.

Linda Black and David Stone, "Expanding the Definition of Privilege: The Concept of Social Privilege," *Journal of Multicultural Counselling and Development* 33, no. 4 (October 2005): 24310.1002/j.2161-1912.2005.tb00020.x.

6 Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Humanities and the Dream of America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 152.

0.2 Structure of the thesis

This research adopted a practice-led approach, where the contribution to new knowledge emerged from within artistic practice and was used to advance the practice itself.⁷ The guiding question of the research was: 'How can socio-ecological art practices facilitate queer representation in Aotearoa?'

The hyphenated term socio-ecological encompasses social or relational practices, archival practices, site-orientated practices and environmental or ecological art. This hybridised model highlights the exchange between humans, nonhumans, environments, and past and present as a means to effect change. For this research, Sasha Kagan's description of ecological art is apt:

connectivity, reconstruction, ecological ethical responsibility, stewardship of interrelationships and of commons, non-linear (re)generativity, navigation and dynamic balancing across multiple scales, and varying degrees of exploration of the fabric of life's complexity.⁸

In response, the exegesis considers six main art events that took place over the course of the research. These were: *Salt Felix*, an exhibition at the Melanie Roger Gallery (September 12 – October 7, 2017); *Under Your Skin You Look Divine* an exhibition at The Basement Adult Shop and Cruise Club (February 13, 2018); *bttm_methodology*, a curated event at Artspace Aotearoa (February 12-14, 2019); *Walking in Trees*, an event held in Rangipuke (August 31 – September 15, 2019); *Queer Pavilion*, a curated event staged in Rangipuke (February 1-5 & 7, 2020); *And so the days float through my eyes: a queer archive (1972 – 2021)* in Rangipuke's

⁷ Linda Candy, *Practice Based Research: A Guide* (Sydney: University of Technology, 2006), V1.0, accessed April 10, 2021, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Linda_Candy/publication/257944497_Practice_Based_Research_A_Guide/links/004635266b7c4d1591000000/Practice-Based-Research-A-Guide.pdf

⁸ Sasha Kagan, "The Practice of Ecological Art," *Plastic 4*, accessed April 10, 2021. <http://plastic.univ-paris1.fr/document.php?id=866>.

Caretaker's Cottage (May 14, 2021).

The exegesis title -- *below, behind, across* references queer counter-movements and my development of bttm methodology. 'Below' refers to an affirmative decent into the marginalised, Southern and queer positions, and the study's exhumation of underground queer narratives to illuminate the present. 'Behind' alludes to an irreverent queer approach 'from behind' to seek unconventional, innovative and inclusive ways of conducting research. In a desire to disrupt competitive or heteronormative notions of success, the study critically and contentedly sits 'in behind'. Queer theory requires an investigation of intimacies and 'across' signals a socio-ecological movement towards others in the research to relate, collaborate and support. 'Across' also adopts Sedgwick's notion that 'queer' is a word and concept on the move, derived from Indo-European origins of 'twerkw' meaning across.⁹

The exegesis is divided into five parts that address the research questions and creative practice used to explore them. Chapter 1: Reviewing Queer Ecologies of Knowledge, presents a survey of relevant literature focuses on how queer theory has materialised through history, art, activism and ecology. Following a discussion of the genesis and critical review of queer theory the chapter proceeds to illustrate queer theory's expansive scope, as well its limitations. The chapter also introduces the key critical thinkers that support the thesis' development, such as Foucault, Te Awakotuku, Tuhiwai Smith, Sedgwick and Halberstam. The chapter also contextualises Aotearoa as a site of Indigenous imaginings of sex, gender and sexual diversity.

Chapter 2: A bttm methodology emerges, provides an articulation and rationale of the

new methodology and research methods used in the thesis. The chapter discusses bttm methodology's co-creation with artist val smith, and our aim for it to guide socio-ecological art-practice and create queer representation. The term bttm is an abbreviation for 'bottom'. It has been adopted from queer geosocial networking apps where it serves as an idiom referring to a person who assumes a receptive position in sexual relations. The term claims an uncompromising queer space in the academy where bttm, lowly or marginalised positions are reframed as empowering sites of ethical relationality, pleasure, resistance, creativity and knowledge production. The chapter builds on scholarship that has sought to queer research methods and methodology through the recent work of Kath Brown, Catherine Nash and Elizabeth Manning. I also discuss bttm methodology's theoretical foundation, that has been influenced by earlier feminist methodologies including the work of Shulamit Reinharz and Adrienne Rich, and Indigenous and locally contextualised thinking evidenced in Linda Tuhiwai-Smith's *Decolonising Methodology*.¹⁰

Chapter 3: Building Artworks on Queer Foundations provides insight into the foundational series of socio-ecological art events that informed the emergence of bttm methodology. Four key exhibitions that exemplify the study's broader approach have been chosen from the broader study: *Salt Felix* at the Melanie Roger Gallery (September 12 – October 7, 2017), *Under Your Skin You Look Divine* at The Basement Adult Shop and Cruise Club (February 13, 2018), *bttm_methodology* at Artspace Aotearoa,

⁹ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 8.

¹⁰ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

(February 12-14, 2019) and Walking in Trees in Rangipuke (August 31 – September 15, 2019). These events cumulatively built upon each other and brought a matrix of historical reference points and understanding to multiple sites, queer politics and human and nonhuman participants.¹¹

Chapter 4: *Queer Pavilion* discusses the major event of the thesis, *Queer Pavilion* (February 1-5 & 7, 2020). I facilitated the event that hosted seventeen predominantly queer and gender-diverse creative visual, sound and performance artists to activate a nomadic architectural assemblage in Rangipuke. The event worked with bttm methodology and supported queer, decolonial and ecological discourse, and directed towards connectivity and pleasure-leisure seeking. The Prologue: Rangipuke and the Gay Liberation Front contextualises Rangipuke's conceptual and theoretical significance as the site of the first Gay Liberation Front (GLF) protest to take place in Aotearoa in 1972. The main body of the chapter discusses five key works after highlighting my contribution as 'catalytic initiator' and care in "queerating", with Binghao Wong.

The light, agile and temporary pavilion design of Micheal McCabe is also elucidated. I present the contributing artworks as intersubjective, interconnected and counter-colonial in intent from a *Sapphic Pilgrimage* by Mega Pash Action and myself (5 pm – 6 pm, February 5, 2020); to a covert performance *With love and fond memories* by Daniel John Corbet Sanders (11 am – 5 pm, February 5, 2020); a competitive and absurdist *Scat hunt* by val smith that engages with nonhuman matter (11 am -12 midday; February 5, 2020); a shady ecology in *Ghosting the Queer* by forest vicky kapo (11:30 am – 5 pm, February 2, 2020); and the collaborative ethos of *Wā Pakiwaitara Storytime and Collaborative Cloak-making* by Mahonri +

Hobbs (1 pm – 3 pm, February 2, 3 & 4, 2020). The chapter concludes with an epilogue that introduces the study's final exhibition: *And so the days float through my eyes: a queer archive 1972 – 2021* (6 pm – 8pm, Rangipuke's Caretaker's Cottage, May 14, 2021). This lively archive of creative ephemera will include documentation and queer traces from the *Queer Pavilion* itself.

The concluding Chapter 5: Findings offers a reflective analysis of below, behind, across that considers the potential of bttm methodology. I reflect on how socio-ecological art practices can support queer representation and valorise marginalised bttm positions in combined political and contemporary art platforms. The discussion provides a critical perspective on the study's findings, their significance to artistic research, and also addresses outstanding questions and potential future investigations.

¹¹ Nonhuman refers to animals, affectivity, organic and geophysical systems, materiality or technologies. The term actively engages in decentering the human and draws from current critical, theoretical and philosophical approaches in the social sciences and humanities, that include system theory, actor-network theory, affect theory, animal studies, new materialism and speculative realism. See Richard Grusin, *Nonhuman Turn* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), viii.

0.3

Before moving below, behind and across

12 A historical survey of local LGBTTTQIA+ representation in the visual arts falls outside the remit of this study. However, this information can be found in Peter Derksen's recently published thesis: "Where Is The Queer? A Case Study Of LGBTQ Representation In Aotearoa New Zealand Exhibitions" (Master's thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2018), <http://hdl.handle.net/10063/7786>.

In addition to Derksen's research, Brent Coutts has written of the erasure of queer art-history in Aotearoa, "A label of 'the other' raised questions of credibility and value. The result for an LGBTQ artist was exclusion. Institutions, like individuals, suffered from homophobia. Curators carried their prejudices that reflected society's norms. Even for those LGBTQ curators working within the museum and art history spheres, there was pressure not to promote inclusion...The legalisation of homosexuality in 1986 did not affect the homophobia within institutional, cultural spaces, and queer representations have remained scarce within exhibitions".

Steve Lovett and Pepper Burns, eds., *Re-reading the Rainbow* (Auckland, New Zealand: INKubator, 2017), 102

In this thesis, creative platforms for queer representation are positioned as empowering forms of activism. Queer representation in art events acknowledges that queer people's lives exist and are important, worthy of being recorded, investigated, and may constitute sites of creative potential. This research does not seek to establish a monolithic voice regarding queer creative practice in Aotearoa but to add more voices, and to uphold and celebrate multiplicity.

In recent decades LGBTTTQIA+ communities have gained increasing visibility and acceptance in Aotearoa after campaigning for marriage equality and the legal right to be protected against discrimination. This study adds to a growing momentum that seeks to correct the continual exclusion of queer voices from the country's cultural landscape. These omissions are evident in the under-representation of queer themes in collections, exhibition programming and archives.¹²

Although LGBTTTQIA+ and queer are used interchangeably in colloquial speech, they occupy a subtle yet significant distinction within the thesis. The acronym LGBTTTQIA+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, takatāpui, transgender, queer and/or questioning, intersex, asexual and/or ally. However, the + may be interpreted as embracing fa'afafine, fakaleiti, akava'ine, māhū, vaka sa lewa lewa, rae rae, fiafifine, fakafifine, palopa, kathoey, hijra, baklâ, genderfluid, genderqueer, and pansexual identities.

In this thesis I use LGBTTTQIA+ when I attempt to accommodate the broad range of non-heterosexual and non-cisgender individuals, communities and the vast diversity of identities, belief systems and politics that they embrace. Alternatively, the word 'queer' is normally connected to a queer theoretical framing.

First, it describes a non-essentialist identity for diverse sex, gender and sexualities that resists traditional categories and remains unfixed and subject to change across an individual's lifetime. Second, when used as a noun, such as in 'queer ecology' or 'queer space', it describes entities that are reimagined through queer theory. Thirdly, the verbs 'queer' or 'queering' describe acts that challenge, resist or disrupt dominant societal norms and expectations.¹³

I use 'queer' and 'queering' with the acknowledgment that this term remains offensive to some who still associate it with its origins as a derogatory term and that the acronym LGBTTQIA+ cannot adequately describe all people of diverse sex, genders and sexualities. These terms are products of current ideologies and will, no doubt, continue to evolve. As this exegesis takes flight I empathetically concur with artist A.L Steiner's observations of queer artistic praxis when she stated,

Maybe it's too late to respond to 'queer' — or maybe it's just in time. Queer is empowering, offensive, visible, academic, passé, over, urgent, overused, everything, irrelevant, empty, hurtful, hateful, possible, broad, narrow, nothing, futurity, hope, not enough, too much, just right. Queer are the things that bad things are not.¹⁴

¹³ Hannah McCann, *Queering Femininity: Sexuality, Feminism and the Politics of Presentation* (New York: Routledge 2018).

¹⁴ Paul Clinton, "Queer Time and Place." *Frieze*, April 23, 2014, <https://frieze.com/article/queer-time-and-place?language=de>.

Chapter 1:

Reviewing Queer Ecologies of Knowledge

1.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a literature review of the fields of queer theory and queer ecology, with a focus on its implications for the materialisation of queer artistic praxis within *below, behind, across*. The review follows the genesis of queer theory and its interest in critiquing fixed notions. The chapter draws on the field's key thinkers, including Michel Foucault, Karan Barad, Judith Butler, Jack Halberstam, Heather Love, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and the evolution into queer ecology via Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Timothy Morton. The works of Nayland Blake, David Getsy, Beth Stephens, Annie Sprinkle, Charlotte Prodger and the Institute of Queer Ecology (IQECO) are also considered as exemplars of knowledge generated through modes of queer artistic research.

The text approaches Aotearoa as a queer counter-site to the perceived nucleus of Northern hemisphere power and knowledge. In this regard, the Indigenous scholarship of Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, and Elizabeth Kerekere, among others, offers local, contextual grounding for a thesis that respects alternative Indigenous knowledge systems and expands upon dominant socio-historical and academic narratives.

The chapter also builds the conceptual foundation for my development of bttm methodology as detailed in Chapter 2.



Figure 1.1. Richard Orjis, *Wearing Banana Leaf*, 2017, Photograph, from the *Salt Felix* Exhibition, Melanie Roger Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau.

1.2

Foucault and conceptual foundations

Annamarie Jagose traces the foundation of queer theory to Foucault's position that bodies and pleasure have been understood differently across socio-cultural, historic and economic divides.¹⁵ In *The History of Sexuality (Vol. I)* Foucault claims that homosexuality is a modern invention.¹⁶ Through a persuasive historical account he shows that while same-sex connections have been recorded throughout European history, the terms 'homosexuality' and 'heterosexuality' are relatively recent, being nineteenth-century inventions that emerged from the scientific study of sex. Foucault states,

We must not forget that the psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality was constituted from the moment it was characterised — Westphal's famous article of 1870 on "contrary sexual sensations" can stand as its date of birth — less by a type of sexual relations than a certain quality of sexual sensibility.¹⁷

Under British law, non-reproductive sexual acts had long been punishable. Same-sex behaviour increasingly became seen, not as discrete acts, but as an expression of a fixed, essential identity. As Foucault proposes: "The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species."¹⁸

Foucault argues that scientific discourse regarding sexuality fundamentally changed the way the Western world thought about desire, pleasure and subjectivity. He suggests that the construction of sexuality and identities are ways of enacting medical, legal and social power,

¹⁵ Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 10.

Jagose also identifies the lineage of queer theory to the nineteenth and twentieth century homophile movement (1869) and gay liberation and the women's liberation movement of the late 1960's.

Jagose, 22-29.

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction (vol. 1)* trans. Robert Hurley (Hopkinton: Vintage Books, 1990) (original work published 1976), 43.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

policing the line between normal and abnormal, natural and unnatural.¹⁹

Furthermore, Foucault theorises that the science of sex in the nineteenth-century and its taxonomies of normative and deviant behaviours were motivated by economic concerns that emphasised the reinforcement of heterosexually reproductive bodies that would be “economically useful and politically conservative.”²⁰ I argue that Foucault’s insights have direct implications in the colonial construction of Aotearoa and regimes of trans-homophobia, where compliant, reproductive (heterosexual) and productive bodies were desired in the colonial creation of the nation-state.

Foucault also theorises that the nineteenth-century saw a continuing power shift from sovereign/judicial power to disciplinary biopower.²¹ That is, rather than being a top-down relationship between ruler and subject, power is now disseminated ‘from below’: via individuals self-monitoring their own and others’ behaviours against a set of established norms. From this period onwards, the labelling of normative behaviour has been used to discriminate against people of diverse sex, gender and sexualities.

Foucault illustrates a history of homosexuality that moved from it being defined as a criminal activity to an identity that would result in liberation. Foucault refers to this modality as a “reverse-discourse” and demonstrates how established power dynamics can shift over time.²² The construction of LGBTTTQIA+ identities in the twentieth-century has aided community formation and given rise to positive socio-political change. This is evidenced in the recent acquisition of legal rights and protection for LGBTTTQIA+ people in Aotearoa, such as

the Homosexual Law Reform Act (1986), the outlawing of discrimination based on sexual orientation (1993), civil unions (2004) and same-sex marriage legislation (2013).

In a similar way, the word ‘queer’ has undergone a “reverse-discourse”, evolving from its repressive origins to become an empowering term of resistance. Traditionally, the word ‘queer’ meant something strange or odd, with negative connotations of ill, spoilt or ruined; and is still used as an offensive slur directed at homosexual people.²³ However, from the late twentieth century onwards, while its derogatory usage continued, the word queer was reappropriated as a positive or neutral term by academics, activists and artists.

¹⁹ Ibid, 60.

²⁰ Ibid, 37.

²¹ Ibid, 140.

²² Discourse, as defined by Foucault, refers to social systems that construct knowledge and meaning through an interaction of social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations that form collective understandings of truth.

Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972),135.

²³ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “Queer,” accessed April 10, 2021, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/queer>.

1.3

Queer theory

Queer theoretical literature has been vital to this thesis to inform, disrupt, decipher, unsettle and enrich my art practice, while the creative practices in turn have shaped queer theory from the outset.

Queer theory was initially a strategy for the critical analysis of literature and film through the specific lens of gender and sexuality, but soon diversified and was progressively adopted across the humanities and sciences.²⁴ The term 'queer theory' was coined by film theorist Teresa de Lauretis for a conference on lesbian and gay sexualities held at the University of California in 1990.²⁵ de Lauretis' academic adoption of the word queer was meant to be provocative and aligned to its affirmative use by marginalised LBGQTQIA+ communities, activists and artists from the 1980s onwards. Her conception of queer theory was intended to refuse heterosexuality as the benchmark of sexuality; to destabilise the perceived homogeneity of lesbian and gay studies; and to explore how race shapes sexual bias. de Lauretis abandoned the use of the phrase 'queer theory' three years later due to its rapid acceptance into the academy, an institution that her conceptualisation of a queer theory was meant to resist.²⁶

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Nevertheless, queer theory has continued to proliferate since its inception to trouble dominant cultural beliefs and essentialist views. That is, queer theory critically examines the way power works to legitimise or stigmatise forms and expressions of sex, gender and sexuality, and seeks to expose heterosexism, trans-homophobia and misogyny.

According to Jagose, queer theory's non-essentialism owes its origins to earlier feminist scholarship: a denial of any innate existence or universal understanding pertaining to sex, gender and sexuality.²⁷ Sedgwick highlights

²⁴ Hannah McCann and Whitney Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now: From Foundation to Futures* (London, Red Globe Press, 2020), 4.

²⁵ Teresa de Lauretis, "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3 (1991): iii-xviii.

²⁶ Teresa de Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 297.

²⁷ Jagose, 8-10.

queer theory's non-essentialist origins, a refusal to settle down and its continual demand for critical reflections as ultimately productive.²⁸ While both Jagose and Sedgwick resist creating a definitive definition of queer theory, Sedgwick recognises consistent key motivations. As she states,

One of the things that 'queer' can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality, aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically.²⁹

For Sedgwick, these ideas align with the root of the word queer which is derived from the Indo-European 'twerkw', or across, which also yields the German 'quer' which means transverse, the Latin 'torquere', to twist, and the English 'athwart'.³⁰ Correspondingly, Judith Butler builds on Foucauldian philosophy, situating the power of queer theory within shifting boundaries that are in a constant process of being redefined and rearticulated.³¹

Butler argues that conventional constructions of male and female dualities are acted out repeatedly, and often unconsciously, making them, and heterosexuality, appear as logical or natural. This is Butler's concept of gender performativity.³² In the last decade, Karen Barad has expanded upon the potentiality of queer theory via ideas of non-essentialism, drawing in Butler's understanding of performativity that she developed in the 1990s. Barad argues that queer is:

[a] radical questioning of identity and binaries, including nature/culture binary [...] queer is not a fixed determinate term; it does not have a stable referential context, which is not to say that it means anything anyone wants it to be. Queer is itself a lively mutating organism, a desiring radical openness, an edgy protean differentiating multiplicity, an agential dis/continuity, an enfolded reiteratively materialising promiscuously inventive spatiotemporality.³³

Barad's conceptualisation of queer is entangled with her new materialist approach, that sees a theoretical turning away from persistent modern dualism towards the disintegration of subject/object categories, expanding relationality and world building to include all bodies, human, nonhuman matter, time and space.³⁴

28 Michael Warner with Lauren Berlant, "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X?," *PMLA* 3 (May 1995): 343-49.

29 Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 8.

30 *Ibid.*

31 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge 1993), 228.

32 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

33 Karen Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity," *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning* 1-2 (2012): 29.

34 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007).

Barad's provocation complements my desire in this thesis to support queer artistic practice that supports a radical openness, intersubjective relationality, and disrupts binary notions while remaining at ease with emergent, non-teleological outcomes.

1.4 Queerly failing

According to Hannah McCann and Whitney Monaghan, queer theory's controversial history and seemingly vague definition has sometimes resulted in confusion and contestation.³⁵ Although queer is not meant to be a fixed identity, when used as an umbrella term to describe people of nonnormative sex, gender and sexuality it risks flattening a wide range of diverse and marginalised experiences, in a similar manner to de Lauretis' critique of early "Gay and Lesbian Studies". Although this study embraces the queer nomenclature, I have already mentioned that the word has historically been used as an aggressively pejorative term, and while reclaimed by certain sections of the

³⁵ McCann and Monaghan, 1-21.

³⁶ Jagose, 103.

³⁷ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 229.

³⁸ Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (New York London: Routledge, 2006), 334.

³⁹ McCann and Monaghan, 101-105.

⁴⁰ Robert J. Hill, "Learning to Transgress: A Sociohistorical Conspectus of the American Gay Lifeworld as a Site of Struggle and Resistance," *Studies in the Education of Adults* 28, no.2 (1996): 256.

LGBTQTQIA+ community, for some it can be alienating, especially for an older generation.³⁶

As Butler observes, another critique of queer theory is that it is "a predominantly white movement that has not fully addressed the way in which 'queer' plays — or fails to play — within non-white communities."³⁷ Queer theory remains within an epistemological context of the North and the elitist Eurocentric Anglo-American academic institutions from which it arose, often failing to recognise alternative epistemologies beyond its contexts and construction. In an attempt to mitigate this I have reorientated the queer praxis in *below, behind, across* towards knowledge that emerges from multiple local queer practitioners and Indigenous scholarship.

In a variety of art, academic and activist contexts, there is power in the confrontational nature of the term 'queer' and this is a stance that I have adopted throughout this research. Aligned to this position, Lois Tyson suggests that "the use of the term queer can be seen as an attempt to re-appropriate the word from what has been its homophobic usage in order to demonstrate that heterosexists shouldn't be allowed to define LGBT+ experience."³⁸

It is precisely it's the aggressiveness of the term that led the activist group Queer Nation to adopt 'queer' for its most public deployment in the 1990s. Queer Nation was founded in New York by AIDS activists from the group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power), and subsequently attracted large numbers of people from the arts community.³⁹ The group erupted as an urgent response to the AIDS epidemic and rallied against the government and medical establishment's discrimination, alongside the escalating homophobic violence directed at the LGBTQTQIA+ community because of AIDS hysteria, and widespread prejudice in

the arts and media.⁴⁰ The use of 'queer' was born out of anger, with Queer Nation stating that it was "meant to be confrontational — opposed to gay assimilationists and straight oppressors while inclusive of people who have been marginalised by anyone in power."⁴¹ The Queer Nation manifesto was initially handed out during the 1990 New York City Pride Parade, and proclaimed,

homophobia, racism, misogyny, the bigotry of religious hypocrites and our own self-hatred It's not about the mainstream, profit-margins, patriotism, patriarchy or being assimilated Being queer is "grassroots" because we know that every one of us, everybody, every cunt, every heart and ass and dick is a world of pleasure waiting to be explored. Every one of us is a world of infinite possibility.⁴²

41 Jeffrey Escoffier and Allan Bérubé, "Queer/Nation," *OUT/LOOK: National Lesbian and Gay Quarterly* 11 (1991): 14-16.

42 Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 154.

43 Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3 (1 May 1997): 437-465.

44 Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism," In *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalised Cultural Politics*, eds. Russ Castronovo and Dana Nelson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002) 175-194.

45 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 229.

46 Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 89.

Queer Nation's manifesto also critiqued the assimilative tendencies of factions of the gay movement that retreated towards respectability, a critique that early Gay Liberationists in the early 1970s had also publicly criticised.⁴³ These assimilative tendencies would later be defined by Lisa Duggan as 'homonormativity' and refer to implicitly and explicitly seeking approval from the dominant culture rather than challenging its failings.⁴⁴

Butler posits that queer theory allows for criticism of its failings to shape it, rather than being an indication of the expiration of its utility. Butler writes: "The term will be revised, dispelled, rendered obsolete to the extent that it yields to the demands which resist the term precisely because of the exclusions by which it is mobilized."⁴⁵ This responsiveness to developing discourse will hopefully secure queer theory's ongoing relevance, and is a stance that I have adopted for bttm methodology that can adapt to multiple users (to be discussed in the next chapter).

Jack Halberstam's publication *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) presents conventional representations of success as inherently heteronormative, capitalist and unimaginative, as constructions linked to reproduction, the nuclear family, material wealth and existing knowledge.⁴⁶ Halberstam's thesis liberates queer theory to intentionally adopt positions of failure, while reconceptualising failure itself as generative, a way to open up dialogue, creative possibilities, non-linear narratives and surprising ways of being in the world. Halberstam's work suggests that queer theory can indulge in artistic and academic eccentricities as a strategy to question dominant evaluative systems.

Along with queer failure, Heather Love illustrates the expansive and dynamic potentiality of

queer theory, explaining that queer theory now encompasses not only the intersection of race, class, ethnicity, sex, gender and nationhood but also affect, kinship, self-shattering, melancholia, shame, disability and neoliberalism, diaspora and globalisation.⁴⁷

Love grapples with the exhilarating expansiveness of queer theory, while being careful not to diminish its political importance as a site of resistance for queer identities. Love says, "It's just that it's hard for me to imagine a form of queerness that does not maintain its ties to specific forms of sexual identity. Behind my work on affect, historiography, and the social, there is a lesbian in bed crying."⁴⁸ I agree with Love's position: that the representations of sex, gender and sexual diversity remain queer theory's foundational concerns.

below, behind, across adopts queer theory for its ability to embody the lived experience of queer lives and perspectives that defy normative, dualistic conventions. Queer theory also provides seemingly limitless potential to inform, disrupt, decipher and enrich creative practice.

47 Heather Love, "Queers ____ This," in *After Sex? On Writing since Queer Theory*, eds. Janet Halley and Andrew Parkers (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 182.

48 Ibid, 180.

49 David J. Getsy, *Queer: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London: Whitechapel Gallery and Cambridge: MIT Press, 2016), 15.

50 Ibid.

1.5 Queering artistic practice

As the research developed it became important to comprehend a definition of queer art. David Getsy posits that queer art, akin to queer theory, is not about asserting identity but has become a strategy for dispensing with essentialising categories and taxonomies.⁴⁹ Getsy continues that, "Artists who identify their practices as queer today call forth utopian and dystopian alternatives to the ordinary, adopt outlaw stances, embrace criminality and opacity, and forge unprecedented kinships and relationships."⁵⁰

I concur with Getsy, acknowledging that in accordance with queer theory, a definition of queer art should centre around the strategies of the artwork's production rather than the identity of the person who created in. However, I also hold onto Love's hope that queerness will retain links with LGBTTQIA+ lives. Accordingly, queer art is recognised in this study as artworks or exhibitions that: depict or make present the work of queer artists, artworks with queer themes or that have been created utilising queering strategies.

Queer art centralises queer voices, politics or theory and actively addresses the needs of queer people. The landmark exhibition, *In a Different Light* (1995), co-curated by Nayland Blake and Lawrence Rinder, is positioned as a vital forerunner in the conceptual development

of contemporary queer art.⁵¹ Blake and Rinder reframed the presentation of queer artists, not to ghettoise the participating artists but to acknowledge the cultural resonances of the queer experience that are expressed through art. Operating as an artist-as-curator, Blake stated that they were responding to the vitality of the queer San Francisco art community with a desire to intuitively map out the vast terrain as an incomplete and subjective wandering. Blake writes,

In this project we have endeavoured to move away from the identification of queer as a noun or adjective and towards using it as a verb. Previous attempts to discuss the relationship between sexual preference and art-making have asked the question, "What does gay art look like?" We decided to ask the question, "What do queer artists do?"⁵²

At the same time, Blake recorded an irresolvable tension of conceiving an exhibition around individual and collective identity while questioning the very notion of universalising queer sensibility or identity that queer theory resists. Blake remains ambivalent about identity-based exhibitions but observes shared connective threads between queer artists that show a willingness to examine, disrupt and search out new ways of representation.⁵³

1.6 Queer ecology

Central to the notion of ecology is the complex interconnectedness of all things within environmental systems. This study provides an essential critique to persistent articulations of nature which seek to segregate human existence, at multiple levels, from the elemental connection with the environment.

The signing of The Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 resulted in the implementation of 146 years of criminalisation of male homosexual acts in Aotearoa that stigmatised non-heterosexual relations as an "unnatural offence" as defined in the imported British Criminal Code.⁵⁴ As environmental discussion is becoming increasingly pressing with the advent of climate change, widespread pollution and extinction events, *below, behind, across* additionally seeks to redress articulations of nature that have caused direct damage towards queer lives.

51 Nayland Blake, Lawrence Rinder and Amy Scholder, *In a Different Light : Visual Culture, Sexual Identity, Queer Practice* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1995).

52 Nayland Blake, "Curating in a different light," *In a Different Light : Visual Culture, Sexual Identity, Queer Practice* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1995), 3.

53 Ibid.

54 As an example buggery was listed as an 'Unnatural Offence' in The 'Crimes against Morality' section of the 1893 Criminal Code and included punishments of flogging, whipping and hard labour. Ministry for Culture and Heritage, "Criminal Code against homosexuals, 1893," *New Zealand History*, July 1, 2014, <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/criminal-code-1893>.

Mortimer-Sandilands defines queer ecology as a loose, interdisciplinary assembly of practices that apply queer theory to disrupt dominant heterosexist and institutional articulations of nature, through reimagining evolutionary processes, ecological interactions, and environmental politics.⁵⁵

Euro-American histories and scientific understandings of nature and sexuality have traditionally been told through a hetero-patriarchal system of binaries, seeking stable taxonomies and clear accounts of difference. Queer ecological scholars such as Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, Timothy Morton and Joan Roughgarden represent nature as more riotous, messy, mysteriously diverse and queerer than prevailing accounts have allowed for.⁵⁶ Consequently, for Morton, there is no contradiction between ecology and queer theory, as it is inherent in the term ecology itself to demand an examination of our intimacies with other beings —something queer theory also demands.⁵⁷

The term ecology was originally proposed in 1866 by German zoologist Ernst Haeckel, who combined the Greek words *oikos* (meaning the family household) and *logos* (meaning the study of). He defined ecology as,

the investigation of the total relationship of the animal both to its inorganics and to its organics; including above all, its friendly and inimical relations with those animals and plants with which it comes directly or indirectly into contact — in a word, ecology is the study of all those complex interrelationships.⁵⁸

Building on this, Morton argues that the chief stumbling block to environmental thinking is the dualistic construction of nature, and makes a case for amending the traditional Western concept of nature via a revised ecological model that sees interrelations “blur[ring] and confound[ing] boundaries at practically any level: between species, between the living and the non-living, organism and environment.”⁵⁹ To have a properly ecological view, the idea of nature must be relinquished, and the bifurcation of nature and civilisation replaced with what Morton conceptualises as a broader whole, an overlapping and interweaving, interdependent mesh.

55 Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands, “Queer Ecology,” *Keywords for Environmental Studies* (New York: NYU Press, 2016), <http://keywords.nyu.edu/org/environmental-studies/essay/queer-ecology>.

56 Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson, *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

Timothy Morton, “Guest Column: Queer Ecology,” *PMLA* 125 (March 2010): 275-276.

Joan Roughgarden, *Evolution’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

57 Morton, 273.

58 Thomas M. Smith and Roberto Leo Smith, *Elements of Ecology* (London: Pearson, 2015), 2.

Ecology was adopted into philosophy through the works of Arne Næss and Félix Guattari. Guattari argued that social liberation in the twentieth century needed to be embedded within an ecological paradigm. Guattari’s concept of three interacting ecologies of mind, society and the environment evolved from Gregory Bateson’s *Steps to An Ecology of Mind* (1972), however, Guattari sought to elaborate and refine the concept while positioning it in a poststructuralist Marxist framework.

Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. by Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (London and New Brunswick: The Athlone Press, 1989).

59 Morton, 275-276.

Morton's ecological view, like the Indo-European and the philosophy of other Euro-American post-humanists, resonates with Māori epistemologies that position the environment as an interconnected whole, rather than placing humans as the preeminent species.

In contrast, Christian doctrine states that a God (the Sky Father) created the earth with a biblical injunction that men and women should fill and subdue it, and in doing so ordaining an anthropocentric heterocentric hierarchy, placing humanity above plants, animals and the environment and resulting in long-lasting implications for queer lives and ecological sustainability.

Tuhiwai-Smith describes a Māori episteme that regards animate and inanimate entities as inextricable from each other, linked as kin, meaning that the environment, its wellbeing, and its people are intertwined, forming the very basis of identity and culture.⁶⁰ Flora and fauna themselves were created before humans, and are respected as older relatives.⁶¹ Evolutionary biology has similarly traced the origins of life to LUCA (last universal common ancestor), a single-cell bacterium-like organism from which all plants and animals evolved.⁶²

The views of queer ecologists are not universally shared, as queer lives globally are routinely exposed to socio-political violence because of ideologies that continue to position their behaviours as unnatural. Mortimer-Sandilands questions the apparent contradiction from a queer perspective, asking, "What does it mean that ideas, spaces, and practices designated as 'nature' are often so vigorously defended against queers in a society in which that very nature is increasingly degraded and exploited?"⁶³

Furthermore, Greta Gaard questions industrialised Western nations that purport to be secular but are haunted by Christian ideologies, a rhetoric that has, she argues, "been used for nearly two thousand years to portray heterosexuality, sexism, racism, classism, and the oppression of the natural world as divinely ordained."⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Smith, 143.

A recently published edition of *New Zealand Journal of Ecology* drew attention to the importance of Mātauranga Māori for science and conservation. Wehi, Beggs and McAllister discuss the inextricable relationship between people and nature that forms the foundation to traditional Indigenous knowledge. And see matauranga as crucial to mitigate anthropogenic impact, halt further biodiversity loss and improve outcomes for the environment.

Priscilla M Wehi, Jacqueline R Beggs, and Tara G McAllister. "Ka Mua, Ka Muri: The Inclusion of Mātauranga Māori in New Zealand Ecology." *New Zealand Journal of Ecology* 43, no. 3 (2019): 1-8. doi:10.2307/26841822.

⁶¹ Anne Salmond, *Tears of Rangi: Experiments Across World* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2017), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/aut/detail.action?docID=4877988>.

⁶² Madeline C. Weiss, Martina Preiner, Joana C Xavier, Verena Zimorski, and William F Martin. "The Last Universal Common Ancestor between Ancient Earth Chemistry and the Onset of Genetics," *PLoS Genetics*. 14 (2018), e1007518. doi:10.1371/journal.pgen.1007518.

⁶³ Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson, 20.

⁶⁴ Greta Gaard, "Toward a Queer Ecofeminism," *Hypatia* 12, (1997): 122.



Figure 1.2. Elizabeth Stephens and Annie Sprinkles, *Wedding to The Soil*, June 25, 2014, performance, Donau Festival, Krems, Austria, courtesy of the artists.

Artists Beth Stephens and Annie Sprinkle have extended queer ecological relationality into their art practice and staged *Wedding to Soil* (2014) (Figure 1.2). The performance involved the artistic duo and 250 other participants marrying the soil in Krems, Austria. The group's vows stated, "We vow to love, honour and cherish you, soil, until death brings us closer together forever", with Stephens adding, "I look forward to becoming soil myself one day."⁶⁵ Stephens and Sprinkles have also developed the concept of Ecosexuality, where the planet is reimagined, from earth-as-mother origins to earth-as-lover, where intimate non-exploitative relations with the planet are enacted through art, humour, queer sex-positivity and environmental activism.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Alexandra Toland, Jay S. Noller, and Gerd Wessolek, *Field to Palette : Dialogues on Soil and Art in the Anthropocene* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2019), <http://search.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat05020a&AN=aut.b26004203&site=eds-live>.

⁶⁶ Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens, "Sexecology: Where Art Meets Theory Meets Practice Meets Activism," accessed April 10, 2021 <http://sexecology.org>.

Queer ecological art practice is also evident in the artwork of Charlotte Prodger. *BRIDGIT* (2016) (Figure 1.3), Prodger's Turner Prize-winning film takes its name from a Neolithic shape-shifting Deity from the artist's Scottish homeland. Prodger's work assembles iPhone footage from her home, a ship's observation deck and the window of a moving train. *BRIDGIT*'s voice-over weaves parallels between the lives of the artist, her friends and the centuries-old Deity, as they assume multiple identities over time.

Prodger reflects, " I understand landscape and queerness as inherently linked. And, as someone who identifies as queer, I'm excited by the fluid borders of identity — especially the perceived edges of gender and geography."⁶⁷ Prodger's work exemplified queering strategies that are analogous with this research. Both Prodger and the research's bttm approaches (see Chapter 3) seek to collapse nature/culture, subject/object, past/present binaries and expose the construction and instability of seemingly stable referential contexts of self, identity, and systems of belief, time and place.

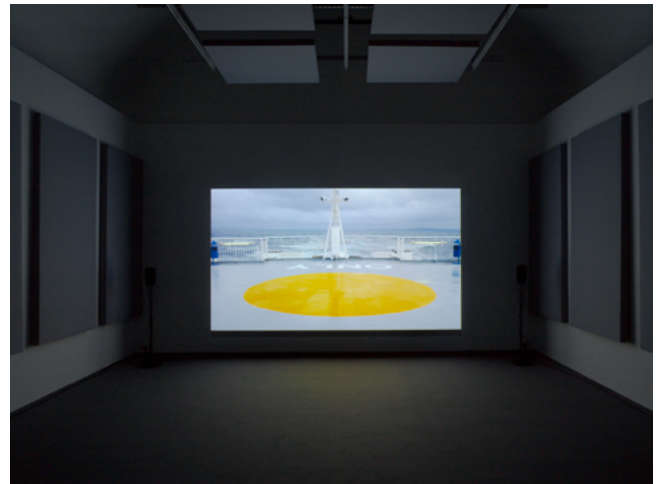


Figure 1.3. Charlotte Prodger, *BRIDGIT*, 2016, Single channel HD video, 32'00", Holly Gardens, London, Photograph by Andy Keate, courtesy of the artist, Hollybush Gardens, London and Koppe Astner, Glasgow.

⁶⁷ "The 58TH International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia confirm Charlotte Prodger's Scotland + Venice presentation as official Collateral Event," Scotland and Venice, March 7, 2019, <https://scotlandandvenice.com/the-58th-international-art-exhibition-la-biennale-di-venezia-confirms-charlotte-prodgers-scotland-venice-presentation-as-official-collateral-event>.

1.7

Floating islands

In the context of Aotearoa, there is limited written documentation about Māori attitudes towards sexuality before European contact. However, Māori scholars such as Clive Aspin and Jessica Hutchings, Elizabeth Kerekere and Ngahua Te Awekotuku argue that pre-colonial Māori were openly accepting of gender fluidity and same-sex relationships.⁶⁸ This was corroborated by Alison Laurie, who cites Māori elders telling the 1988 Royal Commission on Social Policy that same-sex relationships were common in pre-European times.⁶⁹

Te Awekotuku, a prominent figure in this country's Gay Liberation Movement, describes the gratifying re-discovery of several pre-colonial Māori carvings now in museums in both New Zealand and abroad which depict same-sex male and female figures engaging in sexual activity (Figure 1.4).⁷⁰ Kerekere and Te Awekotuku's scholarship has brought to light artworks, legends, waiata (songs) and mōteatea (chants) that contain descriptions of sexual joy and same-sex relations.⁷¹ One prominent example from Māori legend tells the story of the intimate relationship between Tūtānekai and his male companion, Tiki, as well as with his wife Hinemoa.⁷²

68 Clive Aspin and Jessica Hutchings, "Reclaiming the Past to Inform the Future: Contemporary Views of Māori sexuality," *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 9, no. 4 (2007): 422.

69 Alison J. Laurie, "The Aotearoa/New Zealand Homosexual Law Reform Campaign, 1985-1986," in *Twenty Years On: Histories of homosexual law reform in New Zealand* (Wellington: The Lesbian and Gay archive of New Zealand Te Pūrangā Takatāpui o Aotearoa (LAGANZ), 2009), 15.

70 Chris Brickell, *Mates & Lovers: A History of Gay New Zealand* (Auckland: Godwitt, 2008), 27.

71 *Māori Dictionary*, s.v. "Waiata," accessed April 10, 2021, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=waiata>.

Māori Dictionary, s.v. "Mōteatea," accessed April 10, 2021 <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=mōteatea>.

72 Ngahua Te Awekotuku, *Mana Wāhine Māori: Selected Writings in Māori Women's Art, Culture and Politics* (Auckland: New Women's Press, 1991), 37..



Figure 1.4. Artist unknown, Papahou (Feather box or treasure box), 18th century, wood, Paua shell, 430mm length, Bay of Islands, courtesy of The British Museum, London.

Te Awēkotuku and activist Lee Smith simultaneously rediscovered and redefined the term 'takatāpui' in the late 1970s. It is an ancient term which had fallen into disuse, and means an intimate companion of the same sex.⁷³

Kerekere identifies takatāpui in terms of radical inclusivity and the rejection of Western taxonomies and individualism, and states that,

Takatāpui has been reclaimed to embrace all Māori with diverse gender identities, sexualities and sex characteristics including whakawāhine, tangata ira tāne, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer. Takatāpui identity is related to whakapapa, mana and inclusion. It emphasises Māori cultural and spiritual identity as equal to — or more important than — gender identity, sexuality or having diverse sex characteristics.⁷⁴

What these scholars offer to this research is a way to reimagine realities that existed historically and continue to exist in Aotearoa. The open view of sex, gender and sexual diversity as embodied within Kerekere's understanding of takatāpui offers all queer people in Aotearoa a powerful alternative to the more familiar colonising narratives of persecution. People of diverse sex, gender and sexuality have been here as long as people have walked along these shores; these histories offer hope, inclusion, connection and, importantly, are rooted in the place where we stand.

The colonial project enacted a fast-paced and violent reformation and renaming of Aotearoa. The decades following the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 marked a regime that resulted in the New Zealand Wars (in the 1860s) and the spiritual, socio-economic and cultural oppression of Māori.

The imported British penal code was laid out with a moral and religious mission to morally protect colonising Christians and to Christianise Indigenous customs.⁷⁵ The law criminalised male to male sexual contact, and marked a period of incarceration, hospitalisation or ostracization for people of diverse sex, gender and sexuality in Aotearoa.⁷⁶

Art historian Francis Pound argues that the invention of New Zealand in the twentieth-century was predominantly built on universalising, heterosexual, Pākehā male perspectives exercised through art, literature and criticism. Pound observed that dominant mid-twentieth century nationalist artists, writers and critics exposed, in his words,

⁷³ *Māori Dictionary*, s.v. "Takatapui." accessed April 10, 2021, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/7246>.

⁷⁴ Elizabeth Kerekere, *Takatāpui: Part of the Whānau* (Auckland: Tīwhanawhana Trust and Mental Health foundation, 2015), 1.

⁷⁵ Ritchie Maitland, "Sugar, Slaves and Sodomites: Homophobia and Imperialism," in *The Empire Remains Shop*, eds. Alon Schwabe, Daniel Fernández Pasco and Jesse Connuck (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 63-73.

⁷⁶ The history of Aotearoa exposes the criminalisation of homosexuality and its links to the British colonial legacy. Of the nine countries in Te Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa where homosexuality remains illegal, eight are former British colonies. Debate about the decriminalisation of homosexuality is presently playing out in Kūki 'Āirani, the Cook Islands. Although self-governed, Cook Islanders are citizens of Aotearoa. In contrast, laws against same-sex sexual activity have never existed in French Polynesia. Maitland, 66.

a rhetoric of roots, blood and soil; their proclamations of virility and race; their distaste for extremities of modernism in art; their often expressed dislike of women, homosexuals, aestheticism and cosmopolitan culture; their scorn for internationalism, and their association of modernism with Jewishness, have much in common with Nazi rhetoric.⁷⁷

At that time, a number of prominent artists in Aotearoa, including Theo Schoon, Toss Woollaston, Brian Brake and Frances Hodgkins, were engaged in same-sex relations, yet this was not publicly acknowledged and rarely featured in discussions of exhibited work.⁷⁸

Pound argues that by the 1970s the search for aesthetic and creative frameworks through which to imagine nationalism had largely been abandoned. Older nationalist sentiments do not simply disappear; they become overlaid and entwined with newer concerns about place, identity and the meaning of Aotearoa.

The artistic counterculture of the 1970s, Pound contends, was receptive to a plurality of voices, and, as in the wider society, acceptance of alternate female, Māori and queer perspectives grew. (I return to the early 1970s in Chapter 4: *Queer Pavilion* as I explore the radical gay activist group the GLF as they emerged out of the coalitional politics and creativity of the era).

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has offered a consideration of queer theory; including its origins, definitions, opportunities and obstacles. This provides a foundation for responding to the question, 'How can socio-ecological art practices facilitate queer representation in Aotearoa?' which will be explored in the following chapters.

Significantly for *below, behind, across*, queer theory disrupts convention, fixity, dualism and trans-homophobic censorship by placing queer representation at the centre of and across multiple discourses. As a case in point, this chapter has explored how queer theory manifests across artistic practice, ecology and conceptualisations of Aotearoa and its history. Having established the theoretical footing of the research, in subsequent chapters I will be discussing contemporary queer art practices which have emanated from it.

Chapter 2: A bttm methodology emerges, will now construct a queer theoretical framework for 'queer' research methods and methodology. It will also present a grouping of socio-ecological art practices that seek to valorise queer marginalised positions through the development of a bttm methodology.

⁷⁷ Francis Pound, *The Invention of New Zealand: Art and National Identity 1930-1970* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2009), 84.

⁷⁸ Brent Coutts, "Inclusion / Exclusion' in Steve Lovett and Pepper Burns, eds., *Re-reading the Rainbow* (Auckland, New Zealand: INKubator, 2017), 102

Chapter 2:

A bttm
methodology
emerges

2.1

Introduction

This study sought to develop and articulate a queer research approach called bttm methodology. bttm methodology was used as guide for art-making that aims to valorise 'lowly' or marginalised positions in the pursuit of creating a queer representation and ethical relationality between humans, nonhumans and place.

Additionally, the methodology seeks to challenge and queer dominant colonial, capitalist, and hetero-patriarchal tensions within art-making practices. Relating to other queer, feminist and decolonising methodologies, bttm methodology acknowledges the intersubjectivity of researchers and my centrality, entanglement and bias within the research.

bttm methodology was crystallised in the research through a series of socio-ecological art practices that involved site-orientated, relational and archival modes.



Figure 2.1. Richard Orjis, *Christina Houghton bttming Plane Tree*, 2019, Constitution Hill, Tāmaki Makaurau.

The slang term 'bttm' emerged from the abbreviation for 'bottom' that is often found on queer geosocial networking and online dating apps such as Grindr, Hornet, Scruff. bttm refers to the person who assumes the receptive position in sexual relations.⁷⁹

fellow artist and doctoral researcher val smith and I came up with the term 'bttm methodology' as an off-the-cuff ironic jibe at academia but it took on escalating significance as the thesis developed. bttm methodology was co-developed out of discussions between smith and myself as we questioned how it might support queer creative practices and disrupt power imbalances.⁸⁰ The bttm, lowly, subjugated or marginalised position is reconceptualised as a site of empowerment, creativity, collaboration and pleasure. From its inception, bttm methodology was considered akin to an open-source software that could adapt to every user; as such, the following descriptive and interpretative analysis is my version of bttm methodology.⁸¹

⁷⁹ In the context of MSM (men who have sex with men) 'bottom' designates the person who receives anal penetration during sex. In the context of BDSM (Bondage, discipline, sadism and masochism) it identifies a person of any gender, who prefers to engage in a submissive role during sexual encounters.

⁸⁰ smith and I held an event of the same name at Artspace Aoteroaa. See Chapter 3 for a discussion on the *bttm_ methodology event*.

⁸¹ While smith and I shared similar praxis with regard to queer theory, queer ecology and site-orientated artistic practice, our concerns and interpretations are unique, with smith coming from a choreographic background and I from a visual arts background. The theorisation and application of bttm methodology in the written forms diverges in our respective theses. I highly recommend reading val smith's forthcoming thesis, 2021 for an alternative perspective of events and discussions.

⁸² Hoang Tan Nguyen, *A View from the Bottom: Asian American Masculinity and Sexual Representation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 2.

⁸³ *Oxford Dictionary*, s.v. "Bottom," accessed April 10, 2021, <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/bottom>.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

2.2 bttming

The adoption of the term 'bttm' was motivated by a desire to claim an uncompromising queer space in the academy, seeking to disrupt oversimplified binary notions and power dynamics and support non-normative, interdependent behaviours and agency. bttm methodology's academic irreverence risks not being taken seriously as it navigates the unexpected, subversive and eccentric, seeking alternative, queer ways of knowing. This study found shared queer alliance with Hoang Tan Nguyen's capacious conceptualisation of 'bottomhood', which I encountered after bttm methodology's inception. Nguyen defines bottomhood as,

a sexual position, a social alliance, an affective bond, and an aesthetic form. Posed as a sexual practice and a worldview, this flexible formulation of bottomhood articulates a novel model for coalition politics by affirming an ethical mode of relationality...an inescapable exposure, vulnerability, and receptiveness in our reaching out to other people.⁸²

'Bottom' in the English language has Germanic origins as a word for ground or earth. The present-day vernacular meaning of the word is the lowest point under a body of water or the last ranking in a competition.⁸³ Compellingly, in the Australasian mining lexicon 'bottom' refers to the discovery of precious minerals.⁸⁴

Furthermore, 'to get to the bottom of something' means to find the real nature of an issue.⁸⁵ This phrase resonates with the study's desire to discover queer knowledge and exhume queer histories that weave through the thesis.

As an anatomical site, the human bottom colloquially proliferates into arse, rear, cheeks, seat, backside, tush, derrière, bum, butt, behind, booty; it can generate polarising reactions from lust to loathing and carries with it a host of cultural taboos. Jonathan Allan critiques Western societies' phallocentrism, and posited that the bottom holds the "utopian potential for a theory of sexuality, gender, sex, desire and pleasure that is inherently inclusive."⁸⁶

A significant number of queer theorists, including Lauren Berlant, Leo Bersani, Lee Edelman, Guy Hocquenghem and Eve Sedgwick, have challenged anal-eroticism's socio-cultural debasement, and illuminated its critical and creative potential.⁸⁷

In the context of sex, the bottom position receives a lower social ranking, aligned with a host of other negative cultural associations: homosexual, femme, passive, weak, humiliated, and is imbued with notions of waste.⁸⁸ I sought to counter this characterisation with a radically emancipatory alternative. For instance, in a queer colloquial context, 'power bttm' carries connotations of being empowered and assertive. bttm methodology also holds the potential for queer art practices to gain freedom from prevailing discourses of (re)productive function, isolationism, abjection, social stigma and shame.

bttm's linguistic origins in the body and the earth link to the study's socio-ecological art practices that see an interconnectedness between the environment and all organisms.⁸⁹ These socio-ecological art practices encompassed relational

practices, site-orientated practices, and archival practices, and will be expanded upon later in the chapter.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Jonathan A. Allan, *Reading from behind : A Cultural Analysis of the Anus* (Regina, University of Regina Press, 2016), 24.

Although I find the radical inclusiveness of the anus and its ability to sidestep gendered body parts full of potential, I acknowledge that not all beings have a bottom or functioning anus.

⁸⁷ Lauren Berlant and Lee Edelman, *Sex, or The Unbearable* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

⁸⁸ Historian David Halperin traces early records of same-sex male anal intercourse to Greece's Bronze Age. Sexual hierarchies of top-bottom, at least in a Western context, were historically evident, where Halperin identifies that the socially superior partner, judged on criteria of class, age, or gender presentation would penetrate the socially subordinate partner.

David Halperin, "How to Do the History of Male Homosexuality," *GLQ 6* (2000): 96.

⁸⁹ Thomas M. Smith and Roberto Leo Smith, *Elements of Ecology* (London: Pearson, 2015), 2.

2.3

Queering methodologies

⁹⁰ Welby Ings and Marcos Steagall, "Practice-Led Doctoral Research and the Nature of Immersive Methods," *DAT Journal Design Art and Technology*, no.2 (Nov 2018): 393.

⁹¹ Efva Lilja, *Art, Research, Empowerment : The Artist as Researcher* (Sweden: Ministry of Research and Education, 2015), <http://www.government.se/contentassets/7c02c282af4a43fc9c3623b7d9a9089e/art-research-empowerment---the-artist-as-researcher>.

⁹² Kath Browne and Catherine J. Nash, eds., *Queer Methods and Methodologies: Intersecting Queer Theories and Social Science Research* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 10.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (London: Duke University Press, 1998).

Heather Love, "Queers ____This." In *After Sex? On Writing since Queer Theory* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011).

Amin Ghaziani, and Matt Brim, *Imagining Queer Methods* (New York : New York University Press, 2019).

Ruth Holliday, "We've Been Framed: Visualising Methodology." *The Sociological Review* 4 (November 2000), 503–2.

⁹⁵ Browne and Nash, 10.

below, behind, across adopted practice-led artistic research and queer methodologies. The development in the course of this study of an emergent methodology that encompassed both queer theory and practice-led research was a daunting task that offered challenges and productive synergies.

Welby Ings and Marcos Steagall have traced to the mid-1990s the relatively recent development of creative practice-led doctorates, which in turn has enabled artists and designers to develop new methodological approaches that navigate knowing through action.⁹⁰ Efva Lilja argued that practice-led research in the arts holds the capacity of creating forward movement to challenge cultural and political conventions while establishing new knowledge, critical action and thinking in art and art education.⁹¹

Another challenge to the academy that marked a pivotal shift in queer theoretical discourse was Kath Browne and Catherine Nash's publication of *Queer Methods and Methodologies* in 2010.⁹² Queer methodologies aim to challenge, or queer, the sets of rules and procedures that direct research and its methods.⁹³ Queer theory began with the textual analysis of gender and sexuality in identity politics from its origins in humanities, it has since proliferated into a range of disciplines from business to the social, natural and applied sciences.

Alongside Browne and Nash, a growing number of researchers, theorists and academics have taken up the challenge to develop queer methodologies, including Halberstam, Holliday, Love, Brim and Ghaziani.⁹⁴ bttm methodology sought to contribute to this scholarly community in the progression of queer theory's initial focus, and utilise it within art practice. I aimed to consider: "How do we 'do' queer theory?"⁹⁵

To clarify how bttm methodology might be 'done' in artistic practice, I have identified (and will extrapolate on later in this text), six core tenets:

1. bttm methodology is guided by queer theory.
2. bttm methodology acknowledges the intersubjectivity of the researcher.
3. bttm research strives to celebrate lowly or otherwise marginalised queer positions to overcome bias.
4. bttm research adopts an ethical mode of relationality between researcher and participants.
5. bttm research involves an ongoing critique of power and knowledge utilising artistic means.
6. bttm research aims to create queer representation through socio-ecological art practice.

⁹⁶ Elizabeth Manning, "Queerly Disrupting Methodology," (paper presented at Feminist Research Methods Conference, Stockholm, Sweden, February 4-6, 2009), <https://journals.sfu.ca/thirdspace/index.php/journal/rt/printerFriendly/manning/244/>.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

2.4 bttm methodologies is guided by queer theory

bttm methodology resonates with queer theory's radical foundation that queer lives and queer ways of knowing exist, are important, and worth examining. Queer epistemologies are built on a foundation that sex, gender and sexuality are a fluid and mysterious phenomena. Manning argues that "queer methodologies provide space for the multiplicity of strangeness to exist as their disruption of normalcy and Otherness is explicitly political. Queer methodologies deconstruct truth claims, question dualistic ontology and queer straight lines".⁹⁶

Furthermore, Manning brought an urgency to the development of queer methodologies that is deeply embedded in queer theory's commitment to multiplicity, intersubjectivity and a resistant against traditional scientific research paradigms when she stated, "My unapologetic and purposeful mission is to poke holes in, deconstruct and destabilise the hegemonic understandings that have classified, ignored, persecuted and killed us."⁹⁷

Tuhiwai-Smith states that the European Modernist ontologies that took hold during the Enlightenment, and just before the colonisation of Aotearoa, were deeply embedded in systems of classification and representation which lent themselves to "binary opposition, dualism and

hierarchical ordering of the world."⁹⁸ These maintained racial, sexuality, sex, gender and species dominance that required the Other, the lesser, to make sense of what was 'normal'. This has direct consequences for queer communities, which were deemed to exist outside the norm and were relegated to the subordinate Other. I argue that queer methodologies provide contingency for queer artistic research to reside with complexity, uncertainty, fluid boundaries and, at times, unknowability.

2.5 bttm methodologies acknowledges the intersubjective position of the researcher

⁹⁸ Smith, 113.

⁹⁹ 'The personal is political' was coined in Carol Hanisch's 1969 essay of the same name and written for *Notes from the Second Year: Women's Liberation in 1970*.

Carol Hanisch, "The Personal Is Political: The Women's Liberation Movement Classic with a New Explanatory Introduction," 2009, [carolhanisch.org](http://www.carolhanisch.org), <http://www.carolhanisch.org/CHwritings/PIP.html>.

¹⁰⁰ Smith, 231

¹⁰¹ Shulamit Reinharz, *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 263.

There is a paradox in queer communities that are formed of people who are alike in some ways and dissimilar in others. Thus, queer relational practices demand an acceptance of multiple perspectives and tensions that should be viewed as potentially productive.

below, behind, across emerged out of my own lived experience, guided by a desire to understand my own position and also connect with other queer lives, histories and places. The research was carried out within and influenced by the queer, artistic, educational and geographic communities which I inhabit. As radical feminist Carol Hanisch proclaimed in 1969, "the personal is political".⁹⁹

Tuhiwai-Smith traced the lineage of insider methodologies, or working within one's own community or narrative to early feminist research.¹⁰⁰ Shulamit Reinharz work on feminist methodology was an invaluable resource in the development of bttm methodology, as she stated,

I have feminist distrust for research reports that include no statement about the researcher's experience. Reading such reports, I feel that the researcher is hiding from me or does not know how important personal experience is. Such reports seem woefully incomplete and even dishonest.¹⁰¹

bttm methodology followed this genealogy and considered personal experience as integral to queer research. In practice, this materialised in the thesis through my 'position of researcher' statement in the introduction of the exegesis, as well as in the first-person voice used to describe

and interpret the series of art events.

Kate Anderson argues that intersubjectivity in research implies that knowing is not an individual endeavour but rather is socially situated: knowledge does not exist in a vacuum.¹⁰² She suggests that intersubjective approaches have influenced a broad range of social sciences and how the formation of language, meaning and identity is understood. In terms of this study, in acknowledging my position within the research I centralised a specifically queer perspective, a point of view that has historically been under- or misrepresented. Nevertheless, I do not claim to be a spokesperson for queer communities that do not seek a homogenising voice.¹⁰³

By its very nature, the subjective is inherently a biased lens. The debate around subjective and objective research is problematised by Tuhiwai-Smith, who refutes claims that objectivity and neutrality can be sustained, even within positivist scientific research.¹⁰⁴ Singular, universal truth and pseudo-objectivity were destabilised with postmodern philosophy, and, as Rich posited, "objectivity is a term given to men's subjectivity,"¹⁰⁵ and exposes a matrix of knowledge and power that acts to normalise patriarchal dominance within the academy. Moreover, Manning suggests there is a contradiction in replicating binary constructions in queer research, stating,

I do not want to position subjectivity as the opposing binary mate to objectivity (as this would be contradictory to my claims of rejecting binaries), I propose to problematise subjectivity by exposing the complexity and contradictions within one's subjectivity.¹⁰⁶

Following Manning, I was cautious about reproducing a clear division between objective/subjective, top/bottom, and insider/outsider positions, and I have therefore adopted a non-essentialist view of the self as a complex, dynamically unstable, intersubjective construction.

As Sedgwick stated, one's subjectivity is located within an intersubjective network of contingent and reciprocal affective relations.¹⁰⁷ An illustration of this can be found in the ways in which my subjectivity is entangled with other beings at every level of existence: my body was created by the bodies of my parents, and is sustained through plant and animal bodies, that in turn rely on other microbial life forms to aid digestion. My body operates as a physiological process in constant cellular decay and renewal. Furthermore, my cognitive development occurs through an unfolding exchange of knowledge, where learning and creativity are inherently collaborative, shaped by a lifetime of personal

¹⁰² Lisa M. Given, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications Inc., 2008), doi: 10.4135/9781412963909.

¹⁰³ Ings and Tuhiwai-Smith both observed that minority insider researchers faced the added responsibility of representing communities they rely on and live alongside.

Welby Ings, "Queer as a Two-Bob Watch," in Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul and Michael Peters, eds., *Of Other Thoughts: Non-Traditional Ways to the Doctorate* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2013), 138.

Smith, 231.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Adrienne Rich, as cited in Corie Hammers and Alan D. Brown, "Towards a feminist-queer alliance: A paradigmatic shift in the research process," *Social Epistemology* 18 (February, 2004): 85.

¹⁰⁶ Manning.

¹⁰⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *A Dialogue on Love* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999), 171.

interactions with the artists and thinkers that came before me.

Tuhiwai-Smith states that insider-research requires a process of constant reflexivity on the part of the researcher. In direct response to this, I sought to cultivate more critical self-awareness. I developed a process of reflective analysis that oscillated between more introspective written analysis, drawing or ponderings, and collaborative dialogue between my peers, event participants and supervisors. The research practice embodied a desire to be with others, followed by a retreat inward, in order to process, decipher and critically reflect on what had taken place and how it might be understood. The creative practices and post-event analysis embodied modes of heuristic inquiry that Ings and Steagall defined as:

a form of self-discovery through a trial and error process, where the result of experiments raises new problems and shifting understandings. This form of inquiry positions the inquirer at the centre of the study and the initial question functions only as a guideline, enabling the researcher to navigate an inquiry for which no known formula exists.¹⁰⁸

Appropriately to bttm methodology, heuristic inquiry and practice-led research relate to a posteriori knowledge formation, that emerges 'from behind,' where the experience and subsequent reflections are the emergent sites of knowledge creation.

bttm methodology's intersubjective approach sought to address asymmetrical power dynamics by working alongside participants on a horizontal footing. This was a political stance, that sought to address historical imbalance within research: i.e. the empowered 'outsider researcher' working from above with a disenfranchised community below. A guiding principle of bttm methodology is to work 'with' participants as opposed to working 'on' them.¹⁰⁹

It was essential that, as a queer, Pākehā cis-gendered male with an attachment to the university, I comprehended my insider-status as contextually variable. I embodied varying degrees of privilege and prejudice across shifting matrices of power and oppression which meant that my status would have been perceived differently by different participants. As discussions about the study's art events are elaborated in the following chapters, bttm methodology's approaches endeavoured to reorganise relational practices that fostered supportive, equitable, non-hierarchical and collaborative exchanges within my community, even if sometimes this was not always possible due to the nature of systemic power structures.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Ings and Steagall, 400.

¹⁰⁹ This idea of working 'with' was influenced by the research of Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins, where the non-Māori are encouraged to 'with' Māori, not 'on' Māori.

Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins, *He Kōrero – Words between Us: First Māori– Pākehā Conversations on Paper* (Wellington: Huia, 2011).

¹¹⁰ I am referring to systemic power structures of social privilege that place people in asymmetrical arrangements regardless of their actions or intent. These social privilege exist across a matrices of intersecting factors such as age, ethnicity, race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, socio-economic status, education, disability.

2.6 bttm research strives to celebrate lowly and otherwise marginalised queer positions to overcome bias

111 Gregory M. Here, Douglas C. Kimmel, Hortensia Amaro, and Gary B. Melton, "Avoiding Heterosexist Bias in Psychological Research," *American Psychologist* 46, no. 9 (September 1991): 957.

112 Samuel Te Kani's recent article highlighted calls in Aotearoa for major institutions such as the Auckland Art Gallery to do better in identifying and supporting LGBTQI+ artists and art practice.

Samuel Te Kani, "To Queer or Not to Queer: What Can Galleries do to Address Homophobia," *The Spinoff*, April 5, 2020, <https://thespinoff.co.nz/art/05-04-2020/to-queer-or-not-to-queer-what-can-galleries-do-to-address-homophobia/>.

113 Smith, 325.

This study adopted a model of celebrating marginality as a counter-move against dominant power structures within the art establishment.

Dismantling heterosexist bias was crucial to the study. Heterosexism implies that heterosexuality is natural and superior, and consequently disregards, invalidates, or denigrates queer experience.¹¹¹ Within the arts, heterosexism is often implicit, and evidenced through marginalising strategies of neglect and oversight of queer artistic practice revealed in the lack of representation in galleries and arts education, as well as through institutional censorship, exclusion and historical erasure.¹¹² bttm methodology promoted emancipatory relations that took the form of consciousness-raising events in the form of exhibitions, workshops, discussions and support groups.

The bttm research sought to make the invisible visible, to acknowledge the margins as flourishing worlds in their own right and to provide platforms for queer representation. Citing the work of bell hooks and Stuart Hall, with specific reference to queer, deaf, ethnic minorities and Indigenous communities, Tuhiwai-Smith states that margins proliferate with meaningful, rich, diverse and interesting lives.¹¹³

bttm methodology also celebrated queer antipodean positions as another site of marginal resistance. Topographically, the Cardinal North is most often oriented upwards, acting as a reminder that perceived sites of political, cultural and intellectual knowledge and power reside on top. 'Down-under' or inhabiting the "arse-end of the world" unmistakably articulates the power imbalance at play, a system that privileges Eurocentric positions, and speaks to the colonial history of undervaluing populations of Indigenous people and the colonials themselves, who were often underprivileged

working-class Europeans.¹¹⁴

Tuhiwai-Smith destabilised European centrality when she stated that Aotearoa is placed firmly at the centre of Māori world-making. She sees decolonisation, in part, as an intellectual, theoretical and imaginative project, positing that, “[...] reimagining the world is a way into theorizing the reasons why the world we experience is unjust, and posing alternatives to such a world from within our own world views.”¹¹⁵

Tuhiwai-Smith’s primary intention for *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* was to develop Indigenous people as researchers.¹¹⁶ Her extensive critique of the history of Western research illustrated its inherent bias of legitimating Northern hemisphere knowledge while claiming to be objective and working with universal truths, while marginalising other knowledge systems.¹¹⁷

Tuhiwai-Smith’s scholarship became increasingly valuable in the development of bttm methodology. *Decolonising Methodologies* offered me as a queer Pākehā researcher an insight into how another marginalised group in Aotearoa has utilised research as an emancipatory tool; and how Māori scholars have demanded alternate ways of knowing be respected in the academy. The book provided guidance in how to work alongside Māori collaborators in more respectful and ethical ways and to acknowledge that colonisation is woven in almost every fibre of Aotearoa. I was conscious of not wanting to perpetuate colonial logics of taking something not intended for me; however, Tuhiwai-Smith has acknowledged *Decolonising Methodologies’* importance to a substantial group of non-Indigenous researchers, stating,

The book has somehow reached and touched a hugely diverse range of scholars, from different disciplines and linguistic contexts. It has been a catalyst for re-examining curricula, revising some professional and ethical standards, and for capacity building and community empowerment projects.¹¹⁸

I also felt it advantageous to local queer readers to draw parallels between Māori and queer emancipatory projects, both groups having similarly been silenced, rendered invisible and othered within the dominant socio-cultural and academic environment in Aotearoa.

114 Erik Olssen, “Social Class in Nineteenth Century New Zealand,” in *Social Class in New Zealand*, ed. David Pitt (Auckland: Longman Paul, 1977), 27.

Former All Black Zinzan Brooke spoke of the country’s obsession with rugby and is quoted as saying “At the end of the day, New Zealand is just a tiny country at the arse-end of the world that nobody’s interested in. But rugby gives us a chance to flex our muscles. That’s why it’s so important to us.”

Phil Wilkins, “Defeat Darkens a Nation Brooke.” *Sun-Herald*, Sydney, November 2, 2003.

Although unclear which member made the statement, the English rock band The Rolling Stones described Invercargill, Aotearoa as “the arsehole of the world” during their visit to the city in 1965.

Sam McKnight, “Mick Jagger May Have Left His Mark on City,” *Southland Times*, October, 1, 2009.

115 Ibid, 324.

116 For Tuhiwai-Smith “Decolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices.” Ibid, 58.

117 Ibid, 125.

118 Ibid, 24.

2.7 bttm research adopts an ethical mode of relationality between researcher and participants

119 Auckland University of Technology. "The Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research." accessed April 10, 2021. https://www.aut.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/274371/AUT-CODE-OF-CONDUCT-FOR-RESEARCH-2019.pdf.

The Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research (The Code) is designed to uphold ethical behaviour that mitigates harm and endeavours to gain public trust through accountability and remaining open and honest about the research being carried out. Furthermore, The Code recognised human and civil rights, the principle of free enquiry and an obligation to the Treaty of Waitangi within scholarly practices. The value and principles are:

Tika - Acting with integrity and respecting the interests of relevant communities.

Mana - Balancing one's own authority and the rights held by others.

Whakapapa - Acknowledges the importance of relationships with relevant communities.

bttm methodology emerged from AUT University and its ethical framework was based on the values, principles, responsibilities and standards laid out in the institution's *Code of Conduct for Research (The Code)*.¹¹⁹ Although bttm approaches remain sceptical of institutional power arrangements, at the heart of the ethically-based Code is an intention that research should positively impact the lives of individuals, communities, and society, an intention that bttm methodology shares.

The study's use of The Code grew out of the process of gaining ethics approval from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEK). Three critical values of The Code are tika (integrity), aroha (compassion) and pono (respect). In the context of this study, 'tika' stood for integrity and respecting the interests of queer communities and being honest and accountable with everyone engaged within the research. 'Aroha' was about compassion which encompasses being helpful, welcoming and kind. 'Pono', or respect, encouraged collaboration and inclusivity. At the heart of the study's ethical framework was an adherence to

Manaakitanga - Acting with care and respecting diverse values and communities.

Pūkenga - Acting with rigour.

Kaitiakitanga - Acting with responsibility and ensuring resources are managed appropriately.

Beneficence - Acting to benefit other people, contributing to broad concepts of well-being, and balancing benefits against risks and costs.

Non-maleficence - Not causing harm intentionally and ensuring that the risks of harm are outweighed by the expected benefits.

Justice - People are treated fairly and equitably, including fairly distributing the benefits and burdens of research to individuals and communities.

Respect - Respecting an individual's right to make choices and hold views, and to take actions based on their own values and beliefs.

Integrity - Refers to the trustworthiness of research due to the soundness of its methods and the honesty and accuracy of its presentation.

Duty of care - Obligations that a reasonable person owes to others who may be affected by their acts or omissions.

maintaining respect between the researcher, participants and communities.¹²⁰ (See Chapter 4: *Queer Pavilion*)

Tuhiwai-Smith identified queer communities, women, ethnic minorities and young people as “marginalised and vulnerable peoples” within research ethics literature.¹²¹ This is due to participants’ lack of access to power within dominant systems or their perceived lack of agency to provide informed consent.

Out of respect for participants’ ability to hold agency within the research, I conducted a series of open forums for questions in the major projects *Walking in Trees* and *Queer Pavilion*. This took the form of group meetings, one-to-one meetings (both in person and online), email communication, and the provision of printed information. A consent form clarified the aims of the research and obligations of both myself and the participants and their ongoing right of withdrawal (see Appendix).¹²²

The consent form paid special attention to the photographic documentation of participants and their artworks. I retained copyright of the documentation as the person who commissioned it, however, all images, video content and research were made freely available to participants in perpetuity. The form also stated that artists would be given financial compensation (an artist’s fee) for their production and travel costs. If participants had any concerns regarding the conduct of my research, the consent form contained contact information for the AUTECH Executive Secretary.

Tuhiwai-Smith has considered the tensions and concessions required when undertaking research. She states that research is vital because it creates and extends knowledge, and that:

Research for social justice expands and improves the conditions for justice; it is an intellectual, cognitive and moral project, often fraught, never complete, but worthwhile.¹²³

I initially found acceding to the University’s power, the process of gaining ethics approval and requiring formalised contracts, at odds with building genuine relationships. However, the unease I felt was tempered, as for Tuhiwai-Smith, by conceding that while the research would never be perfectly realised it was nevertheless important; queer voices needed to be represented and the contracts provided transparency and safeguarded both parties.

¹²⁰ Of significance to this study was the Code’s incorporation of the Treaty of Waitangi. This highlights a twofold commitment to partnership, protection and participation within the context of Aotearoa as well as a specific commitment to Māori. With regards to this research, before I embarked on the site-orientated art activations, I engaged in a series of informal yet foundational conversation about Māori protocol and best-practice; this took place between myself and artist Layne Waerea; the Auckland University of Technology’s Māori Student Support Manager, Hariata Mareroa; and Auckland Council’s Māori Design Consultant Olivia Haddon.

bottom methodology adopted Tuhiwai-Smith’s understanding of respect as: “[...] a reciprocal, shared, constantly interchanging principle which is expressed through all aspects of social conduct,” and takes into consideration the feelings, wishes and rights of others. Smith, 209.

¹²¹ Ibid, 329.

¹²² It was clearly stated that participation in the research was voluntary and that participants had the right of refusal and withdrawal at any time. It was also made clear that withdrawal would not result in any disadvantage to them. If participants did choose to withdraw, which did not occur in this study, they would be offered the choice of having any identifiable data removed. However, it additionally communicated that once the research is published the removal of data may not be possible.

¹²³ Ibid, 341.

2.8 bttm methodology involves an ongoing critique of power and knowledge utilising artistic means

A potential misinterpretation of bttm methodology is that it perpetuates dualistic thinking by merely flipping the subordinate to the privileged position. bttm methodology however sought to problematise existing power dynamics by disrupting hierarchical stratification through moments of horizontality, multiplicity, subversion and refusal, and exploding bifurcating thinking into a spectrum of creative possibility. The aim was to acknowledge discordant power relations and investigate how queer subjugated positions can work within structures to get what they want and need in the here and now, while not relinquishing the ultimate aim of a more equitable future.

124 Michel Foucault and Colin Gordon, *Power/Knowledge : Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 39.

125 Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power: Interview with Alessandro Fontano and Pasquale Pasquino" in *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*, trans. Paul Patton and Meaghan Morris, (Sydney: Feral Publications), 36.

Foucault maintained that we cannot avoid power relations, and that marginalised positions remain precarious in relation to the dominant power.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, he insists that it is possible for those in marginalised positions to destabilise this dynamic through the act of resistance. bttm methodology adhered to Foucault's hopeful observation that where there is power there is resistance and where discourse is produced, there will be a reverse discourse. One relevant example of this was the socio-cultural 'invention' of homosexuality (as discussed earlier), that was initially employed as a tool to enforce strict social controls yet subsequently mobilised a collective resistance that ignited the gay rights movement.

Foucault's conceptualisation of power suggests that it is not a top-down system of control but argues that much of the time power 'makes us up' as a productive network that creates success, fulfilment, pleasure and love and is not always harmful.¹²⁵ In line with Foucault, bttm methodology is a resistant site of counter-discourse, which analogously holds onto the optimistic hope that queer knowledge and emancipatory experiences always remain possible amidst oppressive power structures.

Within the study, the series of queer-centred events engaged in a range of asymmetrical power relationships with the University, local government, galleries and other funders who provided financial support. I adopted an ambivalent position that acknowledged that these institutions continue to hold dominance and are often sites that reinforce conservative and oppressive paradigms, yet their support allowed for queer knowledge and representation that could potentially create positive change for queer people and the institutions themselves.

2.9 research aims to create queer representation through socio- ecological art practices

¹²⁶ Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells : Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2012).

To expand on Bishop's list, traditional Māori and Pasifika art-making could be seen as regional forms that relate to socio-ecological art practice.

¹²⁷ Suzi Gablik, *The Reenchantment of Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 23.

¹²⁸ *Collins Dictionary*, S.V. "deconstructivism: In philosophy and literary criticism, to deconstruct an idea or text means to show the contradictions in its meaning, and to show how it does not fully explain what it claims to explain." <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/deconstruct>.

¹²⁹ Sasha Kagan, "The Practice of Ecological Art," *Plastic 4*, accessed April 10, 2021, <http://plastic.univ-paris1.fr/document.php?id=866>.

The EcoArt Network is an international group founded in 1998 that subscribes to the overlap of art and science to address ecological concerns.

"About the Community," *Ecoartnetwork*, December 8, 2019, <https://www.ecoartnetwork.org/about>.

¹³⁰ "The Institute of Queer Ecology," *IQECO*, June 5, 2017, <http://www.queerecology.org>.

Social and ecological art practices rose to prominence in the 1990s, emerging from precedents set by Futurism, Dada, the Situationist International, 1960s 'happenings', land art, and the 1970s community art movement.¹²⁶ The research utilised a hybridised model of social-ecological art practice to highlight the relational exchange between humans, nonhumans and the environment. Suzi Gablik asserts that social and ecological art practices use cultural means to effect change and mark an interrelationship between political engagement and cultural criticism.¹²⁷ Gablik further posits that such practices are innately 'reconstructive', acting counter to a postmodernist discourse of deconstructivism, and wanting to create positive change as opposed to solely offering critique.¹²⁸ Extending on her assertion, I viewed modes of social art practice as appropriate vehicles to mobilise queer representation and create positive change. The EcoArt Network defines ecological art practices as,

**the web of interrelationships in our environment — to the physical, biological, cultural, political, and historical aspects of ecological systems [and re-
envision] ecological relationships, creatively proposing new possibilities for co-existence, sustainability and healing.**¹²⁹

In addition to the EcoArt network, this study also found a conceptual kinship with the work of the Institute of Queer Ecology (IQECO), an art-collective that aims to flip destructive anthropocentric hierarchies and realise equitable (bio)diverse futures through artistic action.¹³⁰ IQECO expanded understandings of queer politics and community to include feminist,

Indigenous and inter-species coalitions. Similarly, by placing queer art within the matrix of social-ecological practice, bttm methodology has sought to disrupt rigid dualistic modes that separate nature /culture, human/nonhuman, and structures that have traditionally segregated queer lives from constructs of the natural world.

An additional view in this study, related to that of Gablik, is that ecological art practice is primarily connective and positions the artist as a catalyst. As opposed to affirming an artist's originality, individuality or opposition to society, the artist seeks to cultivate a sense of responsibility for the well-being of fellow humans and the nonhuman.¹³¹ Here, the artist is de-centred; their role becomes collaborative, focused on project inception and development and fostering dialogue between people and place.¹³² Thus in this research, I saw my role as an artist-instigator, facilitator and collaborative partner. bttm methodology's coalitional approaches supported a framework that saw artists work together in a nonexploitative manner that benefited them personally and professionally, and that could be undermining capitalist competitive models. From a queer perspective, working in groups provided support and enhanced the reach of our minority voice.

Nicolas Bourriaud (1998) adopted the term 'relational aesthetics' to describe contemporary art practices aligned with strategies of direct social engagement which privilege communication, collaborative exchange and emancipatory dialogue.¹³³ Although aligned in principle, I have opted not to use Bourriaud's term, favouring instead 'relational practices' to emphasise the importance of process and avoid the cultural baggage of aesthetics. In this I concur with artist and educator Pablo Helguera, who has also voiced an aversion to the word 'aesthetics' because of its association

with traditional values of art and beauty and the modernist evocation of the artist as an enlightened visionary. Helguera sees relational practices as having the effect of democratising the artist as someone who works with others.¹³⁴ The collectivism of relational art practices also signals a movement away from the excesses of the commercial art world and present-day neoliberalism. It is salient to note that relational practices were central to queer art collectives that emerged in the 1980s. Groups such as ACT UP, General Idea, Group Material and Gran Fury saw the aggregation of artists and designers' fight against social issues of homophobia and institutional HIV/AIDS discrimination. Relational art practices also operate in contrast to the anti-discursive orientation of avant-garde modernist art. Modernists often sought opaque communication to separate themselves from advertising and propaganda.¹³⁵ As Grant Kester observed, relational and, more specifically, conversational practices represent a desire to connect with people in the present through dialogue. Relating to social-ecological practice's catalytic effect, the projects in the study positioned the socio-ecological initiatives as cogs in an ecosphere of queer social activism.

My ambition was to ignite a series of small chain reactions with the hope that they might contribute to an amelioration of societal deficiencies in the context of art.

¹³¹ Gablik, 7.

¹³² Pablo Helguera, *Education for Socially Engaged Art: A Materials and Techniques Handbook* (New York: Jorge Pinto, 2011), 22.

¹³³ Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002).

¹³⁴ Helguera, 3.

¹³⁵ Grant Kester, "Conversation Pieces: The Role of Dialogue in Socially Engaged Art," in Zoya Kocur and Simon Leung, eds., *Theory in Contemporary Art Since 1985* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 76.

The success of a socio-ecological art project may be evaluated on how effectively it serves an abstract notion of public or art viewership. This study took an alternative route and primarily focused on the well-being of the queer art practitioners; this was actioned through the creation of communities where art practitioners were supported to make and create artwork or be heard.

The following sections briefly describe a series of practice-led events that played out in the course of the study and utilised bttm methodology. Each project is described in further detail in later chapters. For the sake of clarity, I have defined relational practices, archival practices and site-orientated practices separately. In reality their boundaries were porous and the projects, often bled into one another across multiple points of convergence.

2.9.1 Relational practice

Relational practices in *below, behind, across* included art events that involved communities in participation, ephemeral gatherings, discussions, reading groups, meditations and creative workshops. The thesis' major projects *bttm_ methodology* (2019), *Walking in Trees* (2019) and *Queer Pavilion* (2020) utilised relational practices where social environments were created for people to come together to participate in shared activities. Three other works fundamental to the thesis that exemplified relational practices were: *The Glasshouse* (2018), *&&& / Queer think* (2018-2019); and *Read Zine Workshop* (2018).



Figure 2.2. Richard Orjis, *The Glass House # 1 Making kin(d)*, March 22, 2018, poster, Tāmaki Makaurau.



Figure 2.3. Richard Orjis, *The Glass House # 2 Making Love*, June 17, 2018, poster, Tāmaki Makaurau.

The Glasshouse events (2018, AUT University, North Shore Campus, Tamaki Makaurau) were instigated by education lecturer Janita Crow and myself and occupied a 1960s brick ground-keeper's shed on AUT University's North Shore campus (Figures 2.2 – 2.5).

These open events invited people to share a night of "eating, listening, thinking, talking and stone throwing" at prevailing narratives. The evenings were small informal gatherings where attendees were asked to bring-a-plate and an object, text or experience inspired by the provided provocations.

#1 *Making kin(d)* (March 22, 2018) was a direct reference to Haraway's ecological call to queerly make human and nonhuman kinships.¹³⁶ #2 *Making Love* (June 17, 2018) asked participants to consider a politics and pedagogy of love that related to Timothy Laurie and Hannah Stark's article "Love's lessons: Intimacy, Pedagogy and Political Community".¹³⁷

For Crow and I, our role as catalytic initiators was to provide a place and a discussion topic. We stepped away from any rigid structure, permitting the nights to flow naturally and let participants navigate their own interactions.



Figure 2.4. Garden shed, *The Glass House # 2 Making Love*, June 17, 2018, photography by Richard Orjis, AUT University, North Shore Campus, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Figure 2.5. People gathered outside, *The Glass House # 2 Making Love*, June 17, 2018, photography by Richard Orjis, AUT University, North Shore Campus, Tāmaki Makaurau.

¹³⁶ Donna Haraway, "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin," *Environmental Humanities* 6, no.1 (2015): 159-165.

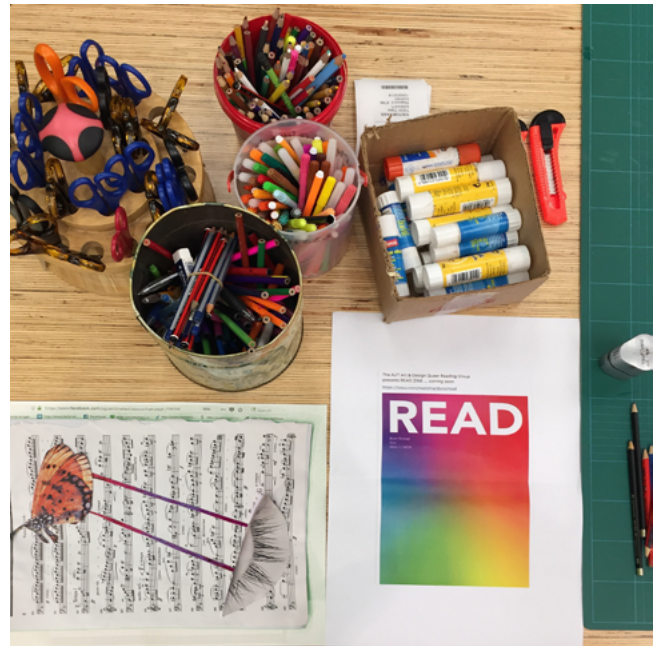
¹³⁷ Timothy Laurie and Hannah Stark, "Love's lessons: Intimacy, Pedagogy and Political Community," *Angelaki* 22, no.4 (2017): 69-79.

Another conversational group, *&&& / Queer think: An Artist-led Conversation* (2018-2019) was organised by artist Jaimee Stockman-Young and myself and hosted at Artspace Aotearoa. This group was a proactive response to the perceived deficit in queer content in galleries, museums and educational programmes. *&&& / Queer think* invited artists, curators and students to meet at Artspace Aotearoa with the aim of exploring the state of queer artistic practice in Aotearoa. Over four meetings (March 29, May 11, August 3, November 2, 2018) the round-table discussions covered issues relating to representation, decolonial strategies, equitable funding opportunities, mental health and improved support for queer artists, students and curators.

A positive outcome of the sessions was the Elam queer group *Bent*, that gained the University's support after Senior Lecturer Lisa Crowley attended the session on the tertiary arts sector that posed the question "How can art schools become places where queer students thrive?" (November 2, 2018).



138 Blake, "Curating in a Different Light," 11.



I also co-organised a collaborative zine-making workshop with artists Steve Lovett and val smith that was delivered as part of the *Same Same But Different: LGBTQIA+ Writers Festival* (Figures 2.6 – 2.8). The Read Zine workshop took place in the Auckland Central Library's ground floor Makerspace.

The zine format is associated with the anti-establishment ideology of the punk movement and its DIY (do-it-yourself) aesthetic of expedient, fragmented and unpolished design. Blake traced the origins of the word 'punk' to prison slang for "faggot" and posits that queer theory shares an alliance with punk culture through a shared history of angrily questioning authority and the status quo.¹³⁸

Figure 2.6. Collection of materials at the *Read zine-making workshop*, February 9, 2018, *Same Same but Different: LGBTQIA+ Writers Festival*, photography by Richard Orjis, Auckland Central Library, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Read Zine can be view on the link below:
<https://issuu.com/readzine/docs/read>

Figure 2.7. Steve Lovett assisting participants, *Read zine-making workshop*, February 9, 2018, *Same Same but Different: LGBTQIA+ Writers Festival*, photography by Richard Orjis, Auckland Central Library, Tāmaki Makaurau.

As with *The Glass House* event, participants were given a loose provocation of 'queering ecology' as a conceptual departure point. Along with art-making materials, if they required any inspiration, they were provided with techniques that related to manipulating text and images. Twenty people created the content for the zine across a two-hour period.

Everything that was submitted was collated and published in an online zine. This inclusive model was an empowering queer strategy to critique normative evaluative systems and destabilise binaries of success/failure, expert/novice or good taste/bad taste.



¹³⁹ Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (San Francisco: The Lapis Press, 1986), 76.

¹⁴⁰ Melanie Roger Gallery has been supportive of my work and my developing critical social practice. Dealer galleries have an underlying commercial imperative for their economic survival; this meant that larger scale socio-ecological and queer specific events within the research became increasingly at odds with these contexts.

2.9.2 Site-orientated practices

A further deviation from traditional artistic modes was reorientating the research away from the gallery and into the outdoors. Queer people navigate multiple worlds between straight and bent, mainstream and underground, and biological and chosen families, and must find meaning in systems seldom designed with them in mind. Similarly, the study queered sites, analogous to the way queer lives are lived and worked at the borders and in the margins in such places as parks, car parks, up and behind trees and on the city's streets. The desire to exit the modernist white cube was illuminated by Brian O'Doherty who wrote,

For many of us, the gallery space still gives off negative vibrations when we wander in. Aesthetics are turned into a kind of social elitism; the gallery space is exclusive.... Never was a space designed to accommodate the prejudices and enhance the self-image of the upper middle-classes so efficiently codified.¹³⁹

Exiting the interior confines of the white cube was a conscious rejection of its ideological allegiance to twentieth-century, colonial-capitalist hetero-patriarchal structures.¹⁴⁰

Figure 2.8. Read zine-making workshop, February 9, 2018, *Same Same but Different: LGBTQIA+ Writers Festival*, photography by Richard Orjis, Auckland Central Library, Tamaki Makaurau.

Although it would be naïve to suggest that the research ever disengaged from institutional networks, it did however seek sites for queer representation that were deemed more empowering and less oppressive.

Curator Valerie Smith posits that site-orientated art practices seek to create meaning from and for the place in which the art exists.¹⁴¹ The events in the study were predominantly situated in Rangipuke. The urban park was a point of departure, a collaborator and a ground on which to explore and find meaning and connection with local socio-political, geological and queer ecologies.

Synchronously, the study's concept of site is similar to the construction of identity within queer theory; as Miwon Kwon's analysis suggests, site is also a multiply-located body in flux that has been socially, cognitively and physically constructed — "a discursive vector-ungrounded, fluid, virtual."¹⁴²

Site-orientated practices in Aotearoa must navigate multiple narratives and confront the ongoing effects of colonisation. Rebecca Ann Hobbs' site-orientated artistic practice has been situated on the contested ground of Ihumātao and offered guidance for how I, as a Pākehā art researcher, might work in solidarity with Māori as an accomplice to their struggle for Tino Rangatiratanga (sovereignty).¹⁴³

Hobbs has written of the importance of Eve Tuck's Indigenous scholarship that emphasised that site-situated approaches illuminate the connection between specific histories and place, and are strategies of resistance against universalising notions supported by European modernism.¹⁴⁴ As an example of this, when I organised the events on Rangipuke and Karangahape Road, I made sure to acknowledge

their Indigenous names and histories, to work with Māori creative practitioners, and to seek consent from Mana Whenua (custodians) before site-orientated art projects took place on their tribal land.

Three site-orientated activations within the thesis were: *bttm_methodology* (2019), *Walking in Trees* (2019), and *Queer Pavilion* (2020). The event *bttm_methodology* investigated Karangahape Road's queer significance by setting up a campsite in the carpark behind Artspace Aotearoa and activating it through queer creative practice, conversation, historical research and walking the surrounding streets, alleyways and bridges.

Walking in Trees (Figure 2.9 - 2.10) and *Queer Pavilion* took place in Rangipuke and created a connection to the place by physically spending time there and activating it through art projects. I also created posters and gave talks on the Indigenous, queer and feminist histories to claim ground for minor narratives that are not represented in the current Victorian façade. I also provided information on the Rangipuke ridgeline's geological structure that was built on layers of ancient volcanic ash and the park's ecological network of plant life.

141 Valerie Smith, "Sonsbeek 93," in Jan Brand and Catelijne de Muynck, eds., *Sonsbeek 93* (Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1993).

142 Miwon Kwon, "One Place after Another: Notes on Site Specificity," *October 80* (Spring, 1997): 95.

143 Rebecca Ann Hobbs, "Ngā puia o Ihumātao (The volcanoes of Ihumātao)," (Doctorate of Fine Art thesis, University of Auckland, 2017), 10.

144 Tuck, Eve. *Place in Research: Theory, Methodology, and Methods* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 2-11.



Figure 2.9. Richard Orjis, Wilde Projects, *Walking in Trees*, 2019, installation, photography by Richard Orjis, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

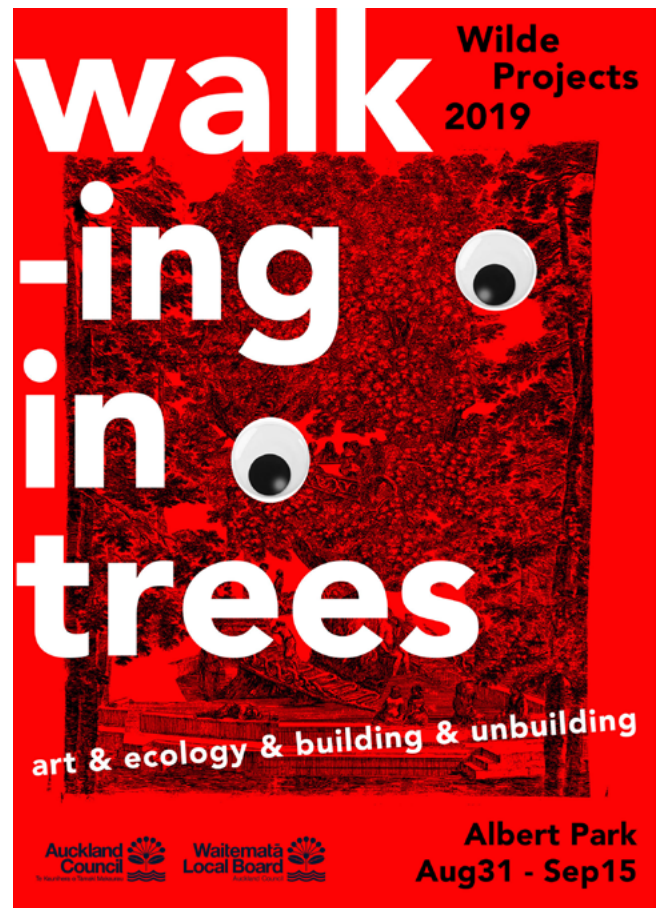


Figure 2.10. Richard Orjis, Wilde Projects, *Walking in Trees*, 2019, poster, Tāmaki Makaurau.

2.9.3

Archival practice

I have conceptualised bttm methodology's archival practices as methods that required unearthing and rediscovery. The main objective of this research approach was to find and present neglected or under-represented queer histories. Charles E. Morris wrote, "queer lives, past and present, are constituted by voices that swell with the complex measures of our joys and our struggles against annihilating silence." Moreover, as Morris asserts, queer histories also proliferate with narratives of liberation, love and resilience.¹⁴⁵

The importance of queer histories is recognised by Blake, who observed that queer people are the only minority whose culture is not passed down to them within the family (because queer people rarely come from queer families). Blake observed that the process of 'coming out' is often counter to familial identity and suggests that queer people must literally construct their own families, identities and culture.¹⁴⁶

The significance of queer archival practices can also be traced to the origins of queer theory itself. Jagose credits Foucault's archaeological method that demonstrated how differently sexuality was perceived across time as fundamental to queer theory's argument that sexuality and gender are unstable entities.¹⁴⁷

The archival practices in the research aligned with Hal Foster's observation that multiple twenty-first century artists envision the archive as a raw material for the creation of work, transforming the excavation site into a construction site.¹⁴⁸

The study's historical research led to the construction of timelines, posters and installations that displayed visual ephemera, manifestos and activist memorabilia. I utilised several archives and made a concerted effort

¹⁴⁵ Charles E. Morris, "Archival Queer," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 9, no.1 (Spring 2006): 146.

¹⁴⁶ Getsy, 120-121.

¹⁴⁷ Jagose, 10-11, 79-80.

Foucault exposed the interplay of knowledge production across science, philosophy, political discourse and behaviour, stating that the archaeological method "tries to revive the most elaborate forms of discourse in the concrete landscape, in the midst of the growth and development that witnessed their birth. It becomes therefore the discipline of interferences, the description of the concentric circles that surround works, underline them [and] relate them to one another"

Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. AM Sheridan Smith (New York, Pantheon Books, 1972), 154.

¹⁴⁸ Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse", *October* 110 (Autumn 2004): 22.

to privilege collections that centralised queer voices. Material was found in Te Pūranga Takatāpui o Aotearoa The Lesbian and Gay Archive of New Zealand (LAGANZ). I also gathered information from The Charlotte Museum, Tāmaki Makaurau, that stores material pertaining to local lesbian histories.

Another essential and immense archive was the internet that allowed me access to the audio archive of PrideNZ.com. This site provided a wealth of locally recorded oral histories and transcripts. I also made extensive use of the online digitised texts collection *The Bookshelf* (www.thebookshelf.auckland.ac.nz) that holds scanned copies of the Auckland University Students' Association magazine *Craccum* (Figure 2.11) as well as feminist magazine *Broadsheet*.

Digitised photographs and other ephemera such as badges, placards, quilts and t-shirts were accessed through the online collections of the Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland War Memorial Museum, Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Art Gallery and Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand.

Specific works contributing to this thesis' archival practices were: *Salt Felix* (2017), and *Under Your Skin, You Look Divine* (2018). From the research's onset, I utilised the archive to map a queer ecology of the city. For example, in *Under Your Skin, You Look Divine*, I produced a series of posters that plotted connective links between the queer histories of Tāmaki Makaurau and San Francisco, Foucault, sex-on-site venues and the patron saint of ecology, Saint Francis of Assisi. In the exhibition *Salt Felix* I created a memorial artwork to the 49 people murdered at the Pulse gay nightclub. I initiated an intergenerational dialogue between queer ancestors by making an artistic response to Félix González-Torres and Gilbert Baker's historical works.



Figure 2.11. Ngahuia Volkerling with Germain Greer and Sue Kedgley (p.11) and discussing the events that led to the formation of the GLF with accompanying self-portrait (p.8-9), *Craccum* 46, no. 2, Thursday March 9, 1972, Tāmaki Makaurau.

2.10

Conclusion

In this chapter I sought to define and elucidate the development of the new bttm methodology as it materialised over *below, behind, across*. To clarify how bttm methodology might be 'done' in artistic practice, I identified an arrangement of six core tenets. They specify that bttm methodology is guided by queer theory; acknowledges the intersubjectivity of the researcher; and strives to celebrate lowly or otherwise marginalised queer positions to overcome bias. In addition, bttm research adopts an ethical mode of relationality; and involves an ongoing critique of power and knowledge. Queer representation within the study is explored through three main methods of artistic inquiry: site-orientated, relational and archival art practices. These are umbrellaed under the term socio-ecological art practice.

Social-ecological art practice highlights the relational entanglement between people, nonhumans and environment or place. These included site-orientated, relational and archival art practices. Site-orientated practices marked a progression away from traditional institutional or dealer-gallery spaces towards streets, carparks, and parks. These modes of site specificity create meaning and connection within the local context. Relational art practices in the study have focused on supporting connectivity over artefact creation. Artistic relational modes have been activated through participation, ephemeral gatherings, discussions, reading groups and creative workshops. Archival art practices provided narratives of mourning, celebration and connection by unearthing queer histories and contextualising them with the present.

Chapter 3:

Building Artworks on Queer Foundations

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses four significant socio-ecological art events that were key to the development of *below, behind, across*. These events incorporated site-orientated, relational and archival art practices that were informed by bttm methodology.

The initiatives are discussed in chronological order and are: *Salt Felix* (2017); *Under Your Skin You look Divine* (2018); *bttm_methodology* (2019); and *Walking in Trees* (2019).



Figure 3.1. *val smith in Rangipuke for bttm_methodology* at Artspace Aotearoa, photography by Richard Orjis, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

3.2 *Salt Felix*, September 12 – October 7, 2017, Melanie Roger Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau

Early in 2017 a quote from the recently deceased poet and scholar Teresia Teaiwa kept appearing on my Facebook feed and resonated with my developing ecological attunement. It read: “We sweat and cry saltwater, so we know that the ocean is really in our blood.”¹⁴⁹ Teaiwa’s words were firmly situated in Te Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa and illustrated a primary ecological exchange between embodiment and environment.

The title of the exhibition *Salt Felix* drew from Teaiwa’s provocative statement and the artist Félix González-Torres. The exhibition sought to connect with queer ancestry and problematise binary constructions that segregated past/present, life/death, human/nonhuman, subjectivity/intersubjectivity.



Figure 3.2. Richard Orjis, *Salt Felix*, 2017, installation, photograph by Richard Orjis, Melanie Roger Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau.

¹⁴⁹ “Teresia Teaiwa: We sweat and cry saltwater, so we know that the ocean is really in our blood,” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19, no. 2 (2017) 133.

There were eleven artworks in the exhibition, and I have chosen to discuss three in detail while also reflecting on their intersecting themes (Figures 3.2 - 3.3).

Talking with Félix González-Torres about connectivity (Figure 3.4) was an homage to González-Torres (1957-1996) who was one of my first queer role-models as a young art student and whose sexuality and lived experience with AIDS shaped much of his artistic oeuvre. For my work, I created a replica of González-Torres' sculpture, *"Untitled"*, 1995, that consisted of two 16 1/2 inch brass rings installed on the wall that gently touch at a single point. My artwork



Figure 3.3. Richard Orjis, *Salt Felix*, 2017, installation, photograph by Richard Orjis, Melanie Roger Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Figure 3.4. Richard Orjis, *Talking with Felix Gonzales-Torres About Connectivity*, 2017, brass, 419x838mm, photograph by Richard Orjis, Melanie Roger Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau.

reflected a desire to form a dialogue with González-Torres, despite his absence. The work was also reminiscent of González-Torres' own intergenerational quest for queer kinships, evidenced in his photographic artwork of Alice B. Toklas and Gertrude Stein's gravesite at the Père Lachaise cemetery. (Figure 3.5)

My work deviated from González-Torres' original in that I welded the two circular elements inextricably together to form a chain-link. González-Torres' caressing circles are read as a metaphor for the union of two individuals in a romantic relationship.

Full of curiosity, I was attempting to raise González-Torres' ghosts from the grave, in the hope of gaining his insight on connectivity in the emerging post-AIDS era and amidst the hyper-connectivity of the internet and impending environmental crisis.

My work was also a critique of societal obsession with romantic pairings at the risk of denying more expansive and potentially more fulfilling ecological connections to a broader community and the environment. In a similar way, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer surmised that the culture industry created distraction from genuine relational fulfilment by reducing "love to romance."¹⁵⁰

I conceptually framed the sculpture's circular forms as a metaphor for revolution, where the wheels of knowledge and socio-political advancement were seen as a series of incremental and collaborative rotations forward built upon what has come before.

My experience in working on Salt Felix made me increasingly aware that I wanted to work with queer ecological subject matter, resist individualism and collaborate with other artists.¹⁵¹



Figure 3.5. Félix González-Torres, "Untitled" (Alice B. Toklas' and Gertrude Stein's Grave, Paris), 1992, framed C-print, 743 × 921 mm, Edition 4, 1 AP, © Félix González-Torres, courtesy of the Félix González-Torres Foundation.

¹⁵⁰ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (United Kingdom: Stanford University Press, 2002), 111.

¹⁵¹ An issue of plagiarism arose concerning the work *Talking with Félix González-Torres about connectivity*. An artist and now-former staff member of AUT University brought an official accusation of plagiarism against me regarding a work he had made using intersecting brass rings. Although I was acquitted, I found the experience distressing. I was angered that someone would claim such a universal form as their intellectual property. I was perplexed as they hadn't researched the work's origins as already being a direct facsimile of González-Torres' artwork.

Ironically, my copy of González-Torres' work was already a resisting the artist's trope of individual genius and maker of original forms

3.2.1 for *Gilbert Baker*

The work *for Gilbert Baker* (Digital print on silk, 2017, 2000 x 1000mm) (Figure 3.6) took inspiration from Baker's iconic 1978 rainbow flag design. Through a process of digital manipulation, my silk-print blurred the boundaries of Baker's original segregating bands of colour.

Baker's design had emerged from his admiration of the rainbow as a kind of natural banner appearing after stormy weather, much like gay liberation's appearance after centuries of oppression. He was also aware of the inherent diversity of the LGBTTQIA+ community, which the multiple colours of the rainbow could symbolise. His original colours of pink, red, orange, yellow, green, turquoise, indigo and violet translated to sexuality, life, healing, sunlight, nature, magic and art, serenity and harmony, and spirit respectively.



Figure 3.6. Richard Orjis, *for Gilbert Baker*, 2017, unique digital print on silk, 2000 x 1000mm, photograph by Richard Orjis, Melanie Roger Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau.

My response to Baker's flag saw his colours explode into a dynamic spectrum of amorphous colour fields, aligning to bttm methodology's desire to be applicable to the seemingly endless and fluid variations of gender and sexualities.

for Gilbert Baker also became a way to engage with the complexity of LGBTIQ+ community construction and bttm methodology's ongoing critique of power. On the one hand, the widespread adoption of the rainbow flag acts as a positive signifier for LGBTIQ+ Pride and the significant shift in societal acceptance of these communities in the Western world.

On the other hand, a critique of the rainbow flag is that it provides an easy marketing tool for organisations to communicate tolerant, modern and progressive ideologies without having to commit to meaningful structural change for LGBTIQ+ people, a strategy referred to as pink-washing.¹⁵² Corporations often focus on consumers from the Rainbow communities' most affluent members, predominantly white, middle-class males, while neglecting those people left vulnerable within the colonial capitalist heteropatriarchal structure.¹⁵³

Lisa Duggan coined the de-radicalisation of the LGBTIQ+ movement as homonormativity. She defines homonormative politics as one which "does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them."¹⁵⁴ Duggan's observations relates to recent LGBTIQ+ political mobilisation in the fight to be included in heteronormative institutions such as marriage and the armed forces that support neoliberal agendas of privatisation, nationalism and consumption. Homonormativity stands in conflict with a bttm methodological approach that seeks to uphold those most disempowered within current structural regimes.

152 Jessica Lai, "Woke-Washing : Misleading and Deceptive Conduct," *New Zealand Law Journal* (October 2019):338-342.

153 Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism," In *Materializing Democracy: Toward a Revitalised Cultural Politics*, eds. Russ Castronovo and Dana Nelson (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002): 175–194.

154 Duggan, 179.

3.2.2 *Pulse*

In the work *Pulse* (2017) (Figure 3.7), I painted a found Orlando Magic basketball cap with a mixture of lime-whitewash and cow's blood, resulting in a matt frosting in pastel pink.

The artwork's main objective was to memorialise the 49 people killed inside the Pulse gay nightclub in Orlando, Florida, in 2016. Questions remain about the killer, including Omar Mareen's sexual orientation and links to Islamic terrorist groups, yet regardless of his motivations he made victims of an already victimised minority.¹⁵⁵ bttm methodology's commitment to celebrating lowly positions emerged from the stark reality that queer lives remain vulnerable to trans-homophobic violence.

Tessa Laird points to the anxious gender-policing of blue for boys and pink for girls and its inherent contradiction. This was a post-World War II phenomenon with an earlier text in 1918 recommending pink for boys as an infant version of warlike, masculine red.¹⁵⁶

The pink colour of the work also refers to an experience I had viewing La Casa Rosada, Argentina's iconic Government House that lies at the heart of Buenos Aires. The building's original pink veneer was the result of a mixture of lime whitewash and cows' blood, a traditional application to weatherproof buildings. The ornately decorated nineteenth-century facade's soft pink colour was in stark contrast with Argentina's brutal political history, thus creating a visual tension between pleasure and suffering.



Figure 3.7. Richard Orjis, *Pulse*, 2017, lime whitewash, blood and acrylic on wool, 260 x 190 x 125mm, photograph by Richard Orjis, Melanie Roger Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau.

¹⁵⁵ Martin Patriquin, Charlie Gillis, Aaron Hutchins, and Meagan Campbell. 2016. "'I'm Going to Die'." *Maclean's* 129, no. 25 (2016), 18–25. <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login.aspx?direct=true&db=anh&AN=116162582&site=eds-live>.

¹⁵⁶ Tessa Laird, *A Rainbow Reader* (Auckland: Clouds, 2013), 134.

Pulse offered an insight into how art may be a reparative agent that can simultaneously illuminate traumatic queer histories and offer moments of solidarity and reprieve for queer communities. In this context the reparative is influenced by Sedgwick's theorisation of reparative reading (2002) and Susan Best's later book, *Reparative Aesthetics* (2016). The reparative is interpreted as a process for an empowering, productive act to take place, promoting innovation, healing, surprise and social change.¹⁵⁷ Best's reparative aesthetics utilised Sedgwick's approach to position contemporary art as a site of political engagement and a tool to memorialise and heal collective and individual shame.

Sedgwick originally sought to complement and challenge the paranoid 'hermeneutics of suspicion' that dominates literary criticism, thus destabilising academic distance, defensiveness and pandering to hierarchical structures.¹⁵⁸ The reparative approach is profoundly ambivalent and empathetic, complicating binary value judgements that direct attention to how a text may illuminate, surprise or produce a positive effect.

Sedgwick acknowledged that the reparative approach has traditionally been perceived as "sappy, aestheticising, defensive, anti-intellectual, or reactionary" and that she understood why critics would avoid incorporating such strategies.¹⁵⁹ Although, Sedgwick argues that the reparative has its own limits and biases, just like the unquestioned dominant alternative, she also highlights the generative risks of this position: "No less acute than a paranoid position, no less realistic, no less attached to a project of survival, and neither less nor more delusional or fantasmatic, the reparative reading position undertakes a different range of affects, ambitions, and

risks."¹⁶⁰

Jason Edwards suggests that Sedgwick's reparative practices will serve queer people the most as their needs are "most stigmatised, least articulated, recognised, validated and culturally provided for."¹⁶¹ Relatedly, my practice also adopts an affirmative position of repair and care for queer communities that increasingly became important as the research progressed; best exemplified in the collaboratively generated *Queer Pavilion* (Chapter 4).

¹⁵⁷ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 123-152.

Susan Best, *Reparative Aesthetics: Witnessing in Contemporary Art Photography* (London; New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016).

¹⁵⁸ A term originally coined by Paul Ricoeur as the 'School of Suspicion' that pervades the writing of Marx, Freud and Nietzsche. Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1970).

¹⁵⁹ Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 150.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Jason Edwards, *Routledge Critical Thinkers: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 113.

3.3

Under Your Skin You Look Divine, February 12, 2018, The Basement Adult Shop and Cruise Club, Tāmaki Makaurau

¹⁶² The Basement Adult Shop and Cruise Club are situated at 12 Canada Street in Central Tāmaki Makaurau. The store specialises in selling sex products and fetish goods for Men. The exhibition was primarily installed in the rear maze that usually functions as a sex-on-site venue.. <https://basementnz.com/about-basement>.

¹⁶³ *Under Your Skin You Look Divine*, Basement Adult Shop and Cruise Club, Canada Street, Newton, Auckland, February 13, 2018. <https://aucklandpride.org.nz/events/under-your-skin-you-look-divine>.

¹⁶⁴ James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York City: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

The curator of *Under Your Skin You Look Divine*, Daniel John Corbett Sander, assembled 19 queer artists for a group exhibition at The Basement Adult Shop and Cruise Club.¹⁶²

The curatorial premise was to examine the translation of contemporary queer representation, politics, performativity and intimacies from the online to physical space.¹⁶³

For this exhibition I produced a series of five poster works: collages of poetry, drawings, diagrams and key quotes gleaned from the internet. The arrangement of graphic and textual information from my research suggested an ironic connection to academic posters.

Pacific Rim City (2018) (Figure 3.8) queered socio-ecological links between San Francisco and Tāmaki Makaurau, both port cities with rich queer histories and situated on the rim of Te Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa. In reference to San Francisco's namesake, I brought forth Saint Francis of Assisi, the Catholic patron saint of ecology and took the liberty of ordaining him the patron saint of queer theory. I also probed Foucault's relationship with Sadomasochism and his recorded fondness for San Francisco bathhouses that related back to the context of the exhibition in the cruise club.¹⁶⁴

In *Paradise Parking* (2018) (Figure 3.9), I mapped out the plants I discovered in The Basement's outside carpark. The recorded flora consisted predominantly of weeds that had found homes in cracks or unkempt planting beds. The work made me consider an alliance between weeds and queer communities that flourish in the margins and resist conventional evaluative systems. I classified each plant with its common, Latin and Te Reo Māori names alongside its country of origin.



If you're going to San Francisco
 Be sure to wear some flowers in your hair
 If you're going to San Francisco
 You're gonna meet some gentle people there

For those who come to San Francisco
 Summertime will be a love-in there
 In the streets of San Francisco
 Gentle people with flowers in their hair

All across the nation
 Such a strange vibration
 People in motion

There's a whole generation
 With a new explanation
 People in motion
 People in motion

For those who come to San Francisco
 Be sure to wear some flowers in your hair
 If you come to San Francisco
 Summertime will be a love-in there

If you come to San Francisco
 Summertime will be a love-in there

Scott McKenzie, 1967

pope-francis-con-christ.blogspot.co.nz/2014/07/pope-francis-patron-saint

St. Francis of Assisi was GAY. He had a male companion whom he met often in a cave

St. Francis of Assisi was a sissy! According to this website with images: When Francis (1181-1226) was a young man, he had an unnamed male companion whom he dearly loved – and who was written out of history after the first biography. Other Franciscan friars referred to Francis as “Mother” during his lifetime. He also liked to be greeted as “Lady Poverty.” He encouraged his friars to live as mothers with children when in hermitage together, and used other gender-bending metaphors to describe the spiritual life.

The hypocrisy of the Vatican Catholic Church in its condemnation against gay people is remarkable as most of priests and brothers themselves are gays. Benedict XVI-RATZINGER denounced gays as people with intrinsic moral evil disorders and yet he condoned the GAY LOBBY in the Vatican chambers who had active orgies with male prostitutes from Rome. He eventually resigned because of them because the debts from his papal motto were too heavy to carry, read here – Vatican Last Year Benedict XVI resigns as Vatican Pontiff of Vatican Catholic Church. It's deceitful to say “Roman Pontiff” of “Roman Catholic Church”
http://popocrimetimes.blogspot.co.nz/2013/02/vatican-last-year-benedict-xvi-resigns_13.html

Pope Francis is the greatest pretender and Imposter of Jesus and don't be deceived by his new original pipel name which he bases his cheap talk on “A church of the poor” because he is the wealthiest man on earth and the Vatican is the wealthiest institution on the planet, read here Hidden Heist in the Holy See. The SECRET biggest heist in the history of mankind: Pope Francis is the Greatest THEIF in earth. <http://pope-francis-con-christ.blogspot.co.nz/2014/02/hidden-heist-in-holy-see-biggest-heist.html>

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OF OTHER SPACES

We are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed.

I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space.

Brothels and colonies are two extreme types of heterotopia, and if we think, after all, that the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens, you will understand why the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development, but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination.

"The Space Axiom," and published in its original form by the French journal Architecture / Movement / Contours in October, 1954, was the basis of a lecture given by Michel Foucault in March 1967.
 Translated from the French by Jay McInerney.

[Foucault's] legacy at Berkeley, where he was known among students of the day as "that mad French leather queen who whips anyone who'll let him at San Francisco gay bath houses."

Rodgers and Thompson write, "In the final year of his life, in discussing the risk of AIDS, he said, 'Besides, to die for the love of boys: what could be more beautiful!'"

http://philosophy.lander.edu/philosophy/behaving_body_by_nigel_rodgers_and_mel_thompson/



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be for drugs or against drugs, is minimal. Drugs have now become a part of our culture. Just as there is bad music and good music, there are bad drugs and good drugs. So we can't say we are "against" drugs any more than we can say we're "against" music.

Q. The point is to experiment with pleasure and its possibilities.

M.F. Yes. Pleasure also must be a part of our culture. It is very interesting to note, for instance, that for countries people generally, as well as doctors, psychiatrists, and even liberation movements, have always spoken about desire, and never about pleasure. "We have to liberate our desire," they say. No! We have to create new pleasure. And then maybe desire will follow.

Q. Is it significant that there are, to a large degree, identities forming around new sexual practices, like BDSM? These identities help in exploring such practices and defending the right to engage in them. But are they also limiting in regards to the possibilities of individuals?

M.F. Well, if identity is only a game, if it is only a procedure to have relations, social and sexual—pleasure relationships that create new friendships, it is useful. But if identity becomes the problem of sexual existence, and if people think that they have to "uncover" their "own identity," and that their own identity has to become the law, the principle, the code of their existence; if the perennial question they ask is "Does this thing conform to my identity?" then, I think, they will turn back to a kind of ethics very close to the old heterosexual morality. If we are asked to relate to the question of identity, it must be an identity to our unique selves. But the relationships we have to have with ourselves are not ones of identity, rather, they must be relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation. To be the same is really boring. We must not exclude identity if people find their pleasure through this identity, but we must not think of this identity as an ethical universal rule.

Q. But up to this point, sexual identity has been politically very useful.

M.F. Yes, it has been very useful, but it limits us, and I think we have—and can have—a right to be free.

Q. We want some of our sexual practices to be ones of resistance in a political and social sense. Yet how is this possible, given that control can be exercised by the stimulation of pleasure? Can we be sure that these new pleasures won't be exploited in the way advertising uses the stimulation of pleasure as a means of social control?

M.F. We can never be sure. In fact, we can always be sure it will happen, and that everything that has been created or acquired, any ground

Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity 167

that has been gained will, at a certain moment be used in such a way. That's the way we live, that's the way we struggle, that's the way of human history. And I don't think that is an objection to all those movements or all those situations. But you are quite right in underlining that we always have to be quite careful and to be aware of the fact that we must move on to something else, that we have other needs as well. The S&M ghetto in San Francisco is a good example of a community that has experimented with, and formed an identity around, pleasure. This ghettoization, this identification, this procedure of exclusion and so on—all of these have, as well, produced their countereffects. I dare not use the word *dialectics*—but this comes rather close to it.

Q. You write that power is not just a negative force but a productive one; that power is always there, that where there is power, there is resistance; and that resistance is never in a position of externality vis-à-vis power. If this is so, then how do we come to any other conclusion than that we are always trapped inside that relationship—that we can't somehow break out of it?

M.F. Well, I don't think the word *trapped* is a correct one. It is a struggle, but what I mean by *power relations* is the fact that we are in a strategic situation toward each other. For instance, being homosexuals, we are in a struggle with the government, and the government is in a struggle with us. When we deal with the government, the struggle, of course, is not symmetrical, the power situation is not the same; but we are in this struggle, and the continuation of this situation can influence the behavior or nonbehavior of the other. So we are not trapped. We are always in this kind of situation. It means that we always have possibilities, there are always possibilities of changing the situation. We cannot jump outside the situation, and there is no point where you are free from all power relations. But you can always change it. So what I've said does not mean that we are always trapped, but that we are always free—well, anyway, that there is always the possibility of changing.

Q. So resistance comes from within that dynamic?

M.F. Yes. You see, if there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience. You have to use power relations to refer to the situation where you're not doing what you want. So resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So I think that *resistance* is the main word, the *key word*, in this dynamic.



san francisco
 to
 auckland
 pacific rim city

Blossoming Biseawal: World's 1st Flower Had Male and Female Parts. <https://www.bvscience.com/60000-first-flower-on-earth.html>

Figure 3.8. Richard Orjis, *Pacific Rim City*, 2018, ink on paper, 594 x 841mm.

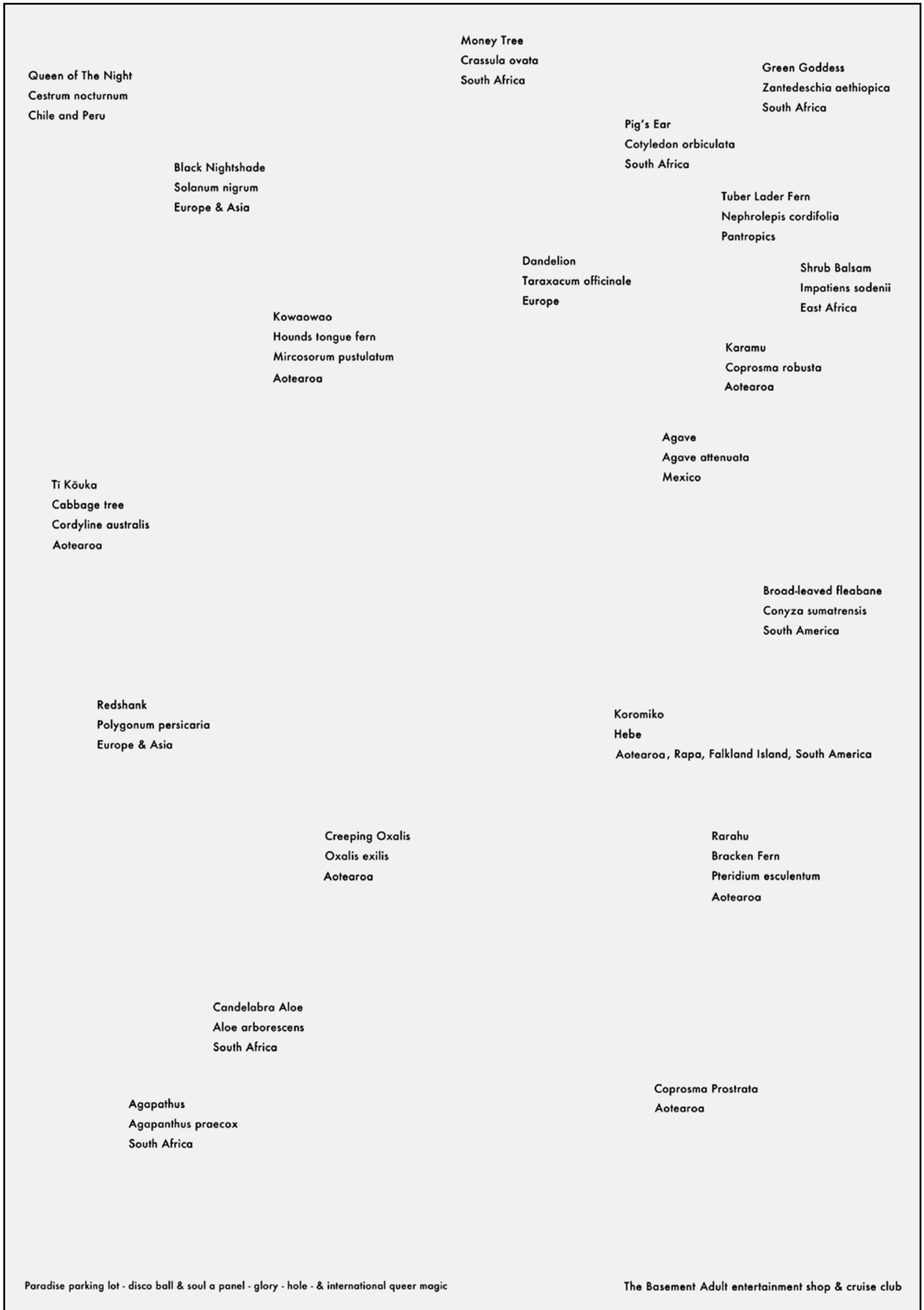


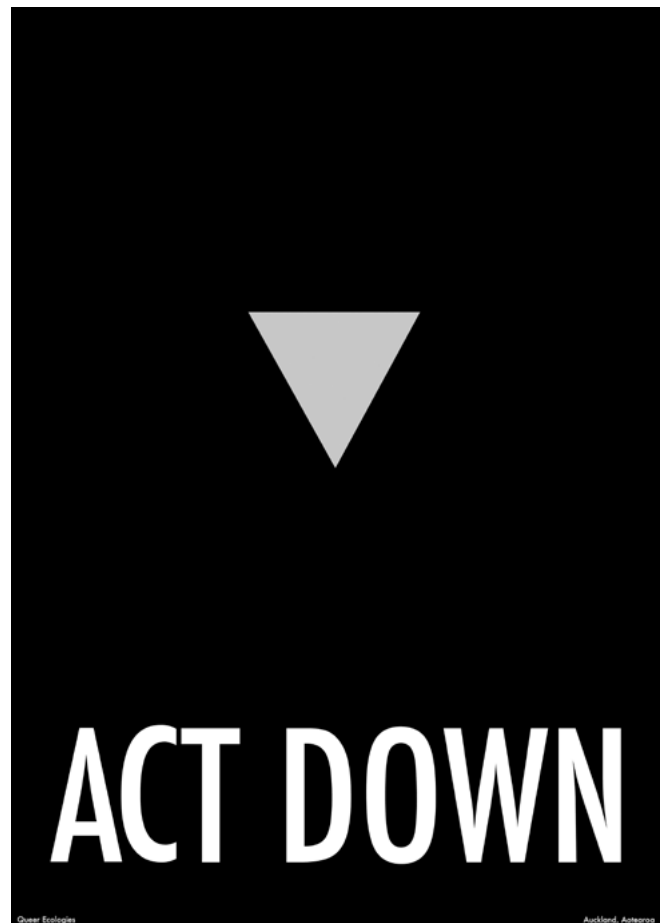
Figure 3.9. Richard Orjis, *Paradise Parking*, 2018, ink on paper, 594 x 841mm.

The posters were installed above a well-used couch in the reception area to the club's maze of video booths, leather slings and playrooms.

I sought to transform the carpark into a garden that formed a relationship with the venue, queer theory and Foucault's heterotopias. For Foucault, heterotopias were spaces that operate as worlds within worlds and mirror, contradict or disturb the world outside of them. He posited that gardens were the oldest example of the heterotopia, as they reassemble plants from around the world in compact and strange microcosms of the globe itself. He stated, "The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world. The garden has been a sort of happy, universalising heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity."¹⁶⁵

My other work, *Act Down* (2018) (Figure 3.10), took a queer ecological lens to reimagine that the radical AIDS activist group Act Up diversified into combatting environmental issues as they relate to queer politics at the start of the twenty-first century.

Simultaneously, *I'm at the Beginning* (2018) (Figure 3.11) conveyed my enthusiasm as well as my despair as I started to discover local queer histories and contemplate the state of queer visibility past and present



¹⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," *Architecture, mouvement, continuité 5* (Paris: Routledge, 1984): 66..

Figure 3.10. Richard Orjis, *Act Down*, 2018, ink on paper, 594 x 841mm.

I'm at the beginning,
of mapping a queer ecology of this port city,
this isthmus of 1000 lovers,
on the ridge of the clubfoot underdog,
under the mountain,
by The Basement Adult Entertainment Store,
S&M gardening with Michel Foucault,

our history is a secret geography, a subterranean mythology,
our monuments are not fashioned from marble,
and our faces don't grace plastic banknotes,
Ngahua Te Awekotuku is not frozen in bronze, poised at the entrance to Aotea Square,
no parks are named in honour of the liberation,
our revolution was fuelled by twentieth-century wars, a Stonewall brawl and the plague,
our struggle, intrinsically linked to the others,
people of indigeneity and colour, women and the earth,

I traced our history via dried-up watering holes and hook-up sites,
cottaging, gardening, a milk-run from Albert Park to the Durham lane,
we have an AIDS tree on Constitution Hill,
but I couldn't find it,
we have ever-changing NZAF billboards in honour of our dead,
reminders of a pathologised identity,
bedfellows with disease,
soil and sodomy,
our ancestors reside in court records and innuendoes,
murder trials and police entrapment,
magical gold-painted sirens and shape-shifting, name changing artists,
slippery as the sea,

we have virtual monuments,
online,
archives, hidden papers,
the search engine of the Auckland Art Gallery came up blank,
someone at lunch said three lesbians designed the Tino Rangatiratanga flag,
Google won't say, we made second Edens,
Heroic gardens,
our protest down Ponsonby Road become a parade for giants (corporate),
normcore flags, normcore fags,

our histories are like crabs on Cheltenham beach that scamper out from upturned rocks,
our young emerge like popping bubbles across a muddy sand beach,
we are not Edmund Hillary on this Island, we don't see our history in children's books, this city, read in a
million and a half ways,

I'm at the beginning,
of mapping a queer ecology,
of this port city, this isthmus of 1000 lovers,
on the ridge of the clubfoot underdog.

Figure 3.11. Richard Orjis, I'm at the Beginning, 2018, ink on paper, 594 x 841mm.

3.4 *bttm_* *methodology,* February 12 – 14, 2019, Artspace Aotearoa, Tāmaki Makaurau

After a series of Auckland Pride Festival community hui, the Pride Board voted to ban police uniforms from the annual Pride Parade in November 2018. This action resulted in the withdrawal of police and a significant amount of corporate sponsorship.¹⁶⁶

The Pride Board acknowledged that the police had been working to improve relationships with LGBTTQIA+ communities; however, Māori, Pasifika and transgender people continued to be overrepresented in prison and police violence statistics and uniforms, by association, made members of the community feel unsafe.¹⁶⁷ Because of the funding deficit, there was uncertainty whether the Pride Festival could be held, and this resulted in my initially planned project *Queer Pavilion* being postponed until February, 2020.¹⁶⁸

In response to these circumstances, val smith and I reconceptualised the intended *Queer Pavilion* as the event *bttm_methodology* in February 2019. (Because the event took the same name as the methodology, to mitigate confusion I have added an underscore to the event's title). After gaining support from Artspace Aotearoa's Director, Remco de Blaaij,

¹⁶⁶ On November 7, 2018, The Pride Board chair, Cissy Rock emailed the NZ Police senior diversity liaison officer Tracy Phillips, stating: "Our intention is to honour our Rainbow people that are part of the NZ Police and who are proud of their involvement in progressing policy within the police. However, we do see the police as an institution, and it is the institution that we feel doesn't meet the degree of safety and awareness of intersectionality that is needed to satisfy the current community feedback."

Anthony Byrt, "What really happened to the Pride Parade? : The inclusion of police in uniform brought out bitter divides in Auckland's LGTBQ+ community," *Metro*, May 30, 2019, <https://www.metromag.co.nz/society/society-politics/auckland-pride-parade-police-our-march-metro>.

The banning of police uniform exposed a rift within the local LGBTTQIA+ communities. It highlighted the complexity of requiring consensus from a group of people from diverse backgrounds, political views, and lived experiences. A Pride Special General Meeting (SGM) was held on December 6,

2018, that called for a new board to be appointed to ensure that all community voices be heard. However, SGM vote results showed a majority of support for the existing board to be retained.

¹⁶⁷ Emile Rákete, "Police uniforms were a deal-breaker at Pride. So why weren't they at Waitangi?," *The Spinoff*, February 9, 2019, <https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/09-02-2019/police-uniforms-were-a-deal-breaker-at-pride-so-why-werent-they-at-waitangi>.

¹⁶⁸ The majority of the Funding for the *Queer Pavilion* came from the Auckland Council. When it was announced that the Pride Festival would go ahead in mid-December, it was too late for the Auckland Council funding to be processed in time for our intended February start date. The eventual funding for *Queer Pavilion* came from Auckland Council's - Auckland Design Office (ADO) (\$23,000), AUT University (\$5,000), Artspace Aotearoa (\$1,000) and Mojo provided coffee sponsorship.

we occupied the gallery's rear carpark. Over the three days we centred ourselves around a make-shift structure and called in the public to engage with a series of queer activations. The opportunity to materialise bttm methodological praxis was communicated via the exhibition statement:

bttm methodology emerged out of a drifting conversation about glow worms, mushrooms and queer networks, tree-hugging/humping, resting, composting and excretion, toilets and cruising. At the soft centre of bttm methodology is a love of the temporary, the tidal, and the transitory. An approach to art-making, pedagogy and friendship, it is counter, subterranean and passively active, prioritising openness, slowness, listening and the pursuit of pleasure/leisure/desire. bttm methodology presents itself as an uncertain manifesto, a list of fluid provocations, questions, and ethical explorations, soft testing of collaborative queer practice.¹⁶⁹

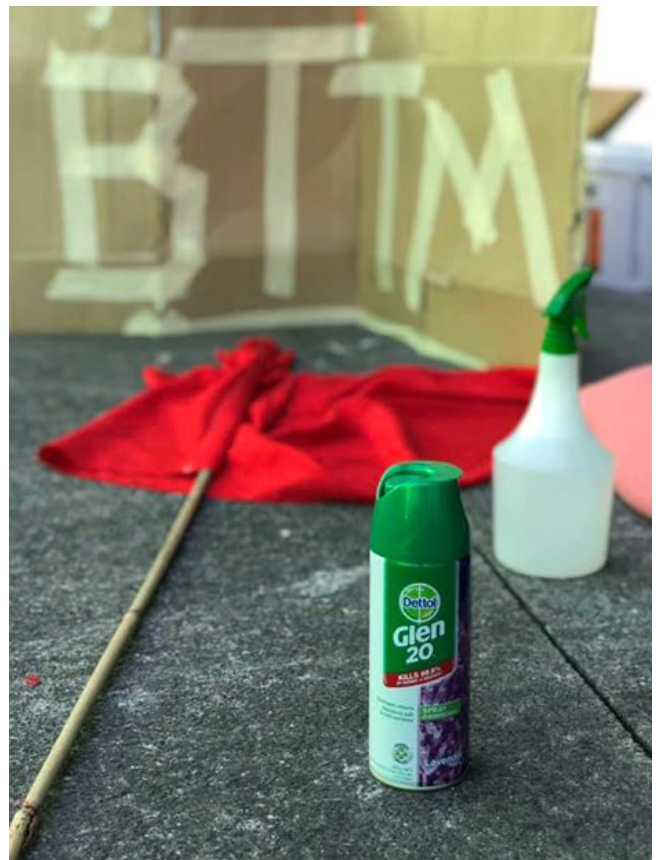


Figure 3.12. *val smith, Richard Orjis and Julia Chote, bttm_methodology*, February 14, 2019, photograph by Geneva Alexander-Marsters, Artspace Aotearoa, Tāmaki Makaurau

Figure 3.13. *bttm_methodology sign, flag and cleansing tools*, February 14, 2019, photograph by val smith, Artspace Aotearoa, Tāmaki Makaurau.

¹⁶⁹ Richard Orjis and val smith, "bttm methodology," Exhibition statement, Artspace Aotearoa, February 12 – 14, 2019.



The open and divergent nature of the statement materialised across *bttm_methodology*, which explored queer approaches that actively sought to defy conventions and celebrate strange, absurd and unproductive practices. We opted out of a conventional exhibition opening, a month-long show, or placing objects on pristine white walls. Instead, we moved towards an exploration of relational practices and anti-material production. We used free and available resources to create a home base, host workshops and performances, and tried to create as little waste and as much positive affect as possible. Participants were invited to be present, opt-in or out, create art, perform, eat or fall asleep.



Figure 3.14. *bttm_methodology*, February 14, 2019, photograph by Geneva Alexander-Marsters, Artspace Aotearoa, Tamaki Makaurau.

Figure 3.15. *val smith and Julia Chote, bttm_methodology*, February 14, 2019, photograph by Geneva Alexander-Marsters, Artspace Aotearoa, Tamaki Makaurau.

Figure 3.16. *Queer napping, bttm_methodology*, February 14, 2019, photograph by Richard Orjis, Artspace Aotearoa, Tamaki Makaurau.

3.4.1

Queer footing

The *bttm_methodology* workshop *queer footing, queer grounding, making queer footwear* (February 14, 2019) was co-hosted by Julian Chote and myself and adopted the seemingly ludicrous provocation to explore an often undervalued part of human anatomy (February 14, 2019) (Figure 3.14 - 3.15).

The feet occupy a bottom position in the hierarchy of the body, where Western bias can be seen to favour the head's cognition and the hand's productivity. The importance of feet is often overlooked, even though they ground us to the earth and enable mobility, connection and discovery. Feet often remain hidden under protective footwear, and are sensitive to the touch. They may garner opposing responses, from lust or ambivalence, to repulsion.

I invited Julian to co-host the workshop after I had met them through the FAFSWAG vogue ball scene, where they competed wearing an eccentric fascinator made from a discarded shoe.¹⁷⁰ This unorthodox use of footwear laid a psychic trail in my mind, connecting Chote as the ideal candidate to facilitate a *bttm_methodology* workshop to queer our footing. This was another example of bringing in other creative practitioners to joyfully occupy and queer space, and resist the sole-authorship model of exhibiting.

At the start of the workshop I explained that the concept had emerged from reading Tim Ingold's scholarship on urban walking. Ingold placed walking as a phenomenological foot-centred movement that reminds people of their embodiment and that we feel our way through the world, always creating and being changed by it as we amble through.¹⁷¹ In this way, walking may be considered as in some ways analogous to queer theory — inventive, bottom focused, performative, pedagogical, relational, unstable

170 The artist collective FAFSWAG emerged from South Auckland in 2013. The group's name combines swag, meaning confidence and the Samoan third gender, fa'afafine. The LGBTQI+ Pasifika group of artists and activists generate exhibitions, parties, events and video works. FAFSWAG seeks to expand the understandings of queerness through a Pasifika lens and claim gender and sexually diverse brown representation in the arts. The FAFSWAG collective includes Jermaine Dean, Akashi Fisi'inaua, Falencie Filiopo, Tanu Gago, Nahora Ioane, Moe Laga-Fa'aofo, Ilalio Loau, Sione Monu, Timothy Swann, Pati Solomona Tyrell, Manu Vae'atangitau and Elyssia Wilson Heti.

"FAFSWAG," The Arts Foundation, 2020, <https://www.thearts.co.nz/artists/fafswag>.

171 Tim Ingold, "Culture on the Ground: The World Perceived Through the Feet," *Journal of Material Culture* 9, no. 3 (November 2004): 315–40.

and blurring the subjective with the environment around it. Andrew Goodman argues that ambulatory art is a further departure from object-based art production. He says,

Walking is intrinsically inventive and relational: to space, to the body itself, and to the potential that it both creates and differentiates. Walking moves us beyond a stable configuration of relations between a subject and objects, and towards a more complex experience that begins to escape such boundaries.¹⁷²



Figure 3.17. *queer footing, queer grounding, making queer footwear, bttm_methodology*, February 14, 2019, photograph by Richard Orjis, Artspace Aotearoa, Tāmaki Makaurau.

172 Andrew Goodman, *Gathering Ecologies: Thinking Beyond Interactivity* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2018), 110.

Walking as an art practice traces a provenance back to twentieth-century artistic movements such as the Dadaists, Surrealists and The Situationist International.

Walter Benjamin was drawn to the figure of the strolling nineteenth-century flâneur in *his The Arcades Project, 1927-1940*.¹⁷³ Benjamin's analysis of the flâneur depicts an archetypical city-dweller who rejects modern society's demands and idly searches for aesthetic pleasures and also the alienation produced by the urban environment and consumer capitalism. *bttm_methodology* veered away from a direct affiliation with the flâneur, as he stands for a privileged, upper-middle-class, European male individual that ran counter to the collective, Southern orientation and overtly queer modalities we were exploring in our occupation of the Artspace Aotearoa carpark.

I did however think of the flâneur's dandified attire in relation to Chote's past drag performances that illustrated the pleasure and subversion that clothing holds to disrupt the gender binary. Chote conducted their section of the workshop by guiding participants through a technique they had recently developed for creating faux paper eyelashes. These delicate curls were attached to participants' feet using glue and sellotape, and mingled with colourful fabric swatches, fringing, feathers, plastic beads, paint, pipe cleaners and tinsel (Figure 3.17).

The workshop culminated in an impromptu catwalk performance down the plastic woven mats, set to the sound of a percussive electronic beat emanating from smith's cell phone. Tightly cropped feet were livestreamed on Facebook as the participants strutted towards the camera, transmitting queerly bedazzled feet from Karangahape Road across the World Wide Web.

173 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 448.

3.4.2 Queer walking

bttm_methodology also facilitated walks: I guided participants out from the Artspace Aotearoa carpark via a serpentine path through Karangahape Road and its back alleys to illuminate the queer, Māori and Pasikifa narratives in *Queer History Walk* (February 13, 2019).

Walking practices have associations with ancient religious pilgrimages, celebratory parades and in New Zealand the protest hikoi (march).¹⁷⁴ I invited Rebecca Ann Hobbs to open the queer history walk by talking to the street's namesake, the ancient club-footed Chief and priest Hape and his Karanga (welcome call).¹⁷⁵ Before the story was shared, Hobbs gained permission from her fellow SOUL activist and descendant of Hape, Pania Newton, to relate the narrative.¹⁷⁶

174 *Māori Dictionary*, s.v. "hikoi," <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoan-Words=&keywords=hikoi>.

175 *Māori Dictionary*, s.v. "karanga," <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?keywords=karanga>.

176 The activist group SOUL (Save Our Unique Landscape) was formed in 2016 to stop a high-cost housing development being built on Ihumātao.

I returned Hobbs' generosity by running a daytime workshop for Tamariki (children) at her event - *Ihumātao Reclamation Festival* (March 2, 2019). I organised a paper nose making workshop to honour of the area's name sake - Ihumātao or Te Ihu a Mataoho (The Nose of the Diety Mataoho). This is an example of the reciprocal relationship that exist amongst fellow queer artists, a kind of informal *bttm* alliance.



Figure 3.18. Jonny 4Higher, *Hina*, 2013, mural, photograph by Richard Orjis, West Terrace, Tāmaki Makaurau.

My introduction called attention to the significance of the Karangahape ridgeline as a connecting pathway for half a millennium between the two harbours of the Tāmaki isthmus.¹⁷⁷

One of the most significant stops was at the mural of *Hina* (2013) (Figure 3.18) by Jonny4Higher, found in a side-alley by the motorway. Hina is painted as a two-storey radiant goddess of Te Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa. According to Julian Cook she was known by other trans sex-workers as an exceptional storyteller and as “Queen of the Road”.¹⁷⁸ Cook recalled Hina telling him in the 1990s that a series of mythological waves had washed transsexual culture onto the shore of Tāmaki Makaurau, first to the Auckland Ferry Building where the rent boys would congregate, then they had swept up the Queen Street canal to the old Town Hall, and finally on the back of a powerful surge up onto the Karangahape Road ridge.

As Cook highlighted in the intergenerational exchange between himself and Hina, such locating of queer people in specific places, each with its own history, can create a sense of belonging and connection. I was made acutely aware of the precarious nature of these narratives and how easily they can be lost if not recorded or retold.

177 Julie Hill, “Dark Side of the Rori,” *North & South*, November 2015, <https://www.noted.co.nz/life/life-life-in-nz/dark-side-of-the-rori>.

178 Ibid.

3.4.3 Queer napping

Between 3 pm and 4 pm daily participants were invited to relax, lie down, listen to the sounds around them and take a nap (Figure 3.16).

Napping in *bttm_methodology* was a strategy of passive resistance against capitalist imperatives. Slowing down and stopping was a way to subvert modes of overproduction that adversely affect the health of the environment and its inhabitants. Prior to this event, smith and I had been exploring napping around AUT and in the city's parks and streets. smith aims to will also be unpacking napping from another perspective in their forthcoming thesis (2021).

Lee Edelman positions Herman Melville's character Bartleby the Scrivener as a queer hero who opted out of capitalist ideologies through his refusal to accept the world as it is — whatever the cost. Bartleby's radical challenge to the establishment started with a polite refusal to carry out a task for his employer with the simple "I would prefer not to."¹⁷⁹ Bartleby's initial negation escalated as he removed himself from all responsibilities, ceasing to work, communicate, and eat, which ultimately led to his death. His passivity short-circuited the legal, social and economic system that could not fathom his inactions.

Edelman also observed that Bartleby emerged as the patron saint of the 2011 Occupy Movement.¹⁸⁰ Aligned with *bttm* approaches, the Occupy Movement opposed global socio-economic inequality and corrupt democracies through non-violent protest and make-shift occupations.¹⁸¹ In honour of Bartleby, at the start of each *bttm_methodology* workshop, smith and I told the participations that they should not feel obliged to do anything they did not want to. When participants did choose to opt out of activities, smith and I would gently applaud them in their act of queer resistance.

¹⁷⁹ Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor and Other Stories*, ed. Harold Beaver (London: Penguin Classics, 1967), 89.

¹⁸⁰ Lee Edelman, "Occupy Wall Street: "Bartleby" Against the Humanities." *History of the Present* 3, no.1 (2013): 99-118.

¹⁸¹ The Occupy Movement in Aotearoa began with a meeting the band rotunda in Rangipike in October 2011 and spread to occupations in Christchurch, Dunedin, Invercargill, Lower Hutt New Plymouth and Wellington. Up to three thousand people attended the Auckland protests and spread over three sites, Ranipuke, Aotea Square and Victoria Park.

Angela Beswick, "Occupy Protestors Claim Police Wore Same Badge Number," *3 News*, 23 January, 2011, <http://www.3news.co.nz>.

3.4.4

Queer cleanse

The final event for *bttm_methodology* was a *Queer cleanse* of Artspace Aotearoa that took place on February 14, 2019 (Figure 3.19). The cleanse aimed to symbolically transform the gallery into a space safe for future queer bodies.

Before entering the gallery, smith, Chote and I huddled together outside on Karangahape Road and acknowledged elemental forces — earth, wind and fire, queer kin, and the witches, bitches and faggots that had come before us. smith held a portable speaker that played a compilation of queer club classics such as Culture Club’s “It’s a miracle” and “Do you really want to hurt me.” Chote moved slinkily into the building, interjecting spirit fingers and provocatively twisting and jutting their body in a collection of poses as they progressed up the stairwell.

Chote was dressed in a red Lycra bodysuit with pink tassels emerging from their clenched mouth like a sea-anemone. smith appeared as a part-road worker, part-nun, wearing a HI VIS yellow vest, with their face poking out of a crudely-cut hole in the bright pink fabric.

I wore blue overalls with a soft pink sequined veil (Figure 3.12). The veil drew links to the sacred, femininity, marriage and imposed modesty. The concealing article of clothing may also be seen as a tool of patriarchal control; however, in this context, I saw it as a protective device that helped me resist conventional performative modes of confident and extroversion. Shyness is an oft-derided sign of social inadequacy or immaturity; however, Sedgwick locates it as something particularly queer and alluring and points to the reserved personae of Andy Warhol.¹⁸² Sedgwick also drew correlations to the shame experienced in a queer person’s childhood that may manifest as introversion or blushing shyness in adulthood.

¹⁸² Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, “Queer Performativity: Warhol’s Shyness/Warhol’s Whiteness,” in *Pop Out: Queer Warhol* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1996), 134-143.



Figure 3.19. *Queer cleanse, bttm_methodology*, February 14, 2019, video stills by Remco de Blaaij, Artspace Aotearoa, Tāmaki Makaurau.

On entering the gallery's main space I proceeded to roll my body into a pink fleece blanket. I moved across the gallery in a caterpillar-like fashion, subsequently making my body into a mop, collecting dust as I negotiated around Fiona Jack's installation of hundreds of wood-fired ceramic pebbles.¹⁸³

After I emerged from my pink chrysalis, I positioned myself on my knees with my face close to the ground and read from a list of queer artistic ancestors, thanking each one, in a soft mumbled sequence.

Chote vocalised a call to any queer spirits present: "I take the rage of your erasure, we want you to be seen, let it go, may your legacy live on." Simultaneously, smith walked through the gallery, misting the air with a spray bottle alluding to holy water, baptismal rites, or the emotional and physical renewal associated with a hair-salon or domestic cleaning. In an act imbued with comic futility, smith took to scrubbing the floor using hydrogen peroxide and a toothbrush.

We finished the queer cleanse with a work choreographed by artist Corbett Sanders entitled *Hesperides' Gift* (2019). An aerosol-can of hospital-grade lavender-scented Dettol disinfectant was sprayed downwards, tracing the corners of the gallery and releasing an overwhelming synthetic perfume into the atmosphere (Figure 3.13). Corbett Sanders' work refers to their part-time job at the Basement Adult Shop and Cruise Club, with the artwork attempting to articulate a queer sensibility that danced between shame, sexuality and dirtiness.

After the *Queer cleanse* we reflected that future cleanses might counter hygienic impulses and instead would feed, preserve and foster microbial outliers and detritus as queer kin.

183 The stones on the floor had been formed during workshops delivered by Fiona Jack and Sue Bradford. The pair's mutual interest in activism and radical pedagogies led to a series of events where participants shaped rocks from clay while engaged in dialogue concerning education, feminism and Indigenous social justice. The exhibition text states that: "Riverbed is an imaginative provocation that connects artistic, pedagogical and political concerns, asking how we might use our hands to organise and to enable our kōrero to shape our world, together."

"Fiona Jack: Riverbed", Artspace Aotearoa, July 18, 2019, <http://artspace-aotearoa.nz/exhibitions/fiona-jack-riverbed>.

3.4.5

Sissies revolt

As part of the *bttm_methodology* occupation, I installed a red hand-painted fabric banner at the entrance to the carpark reading “sissies revolt” (Acrylic paint on cotton, 2019, 2400 x 1350mm) (Figure 3.20). The work was a battle cry to celebrate queer femme liberation, while also alluding to Auckland Pride Board’s Chair Cissy Rock’s recent stance against police uniforms. Banners sit at the nexus between art and politics and are synonymous with protest.

As well as the *bttm_methodology* event, smith and I also hosted a banner-making workshop for community groups at Studio One Toi Tū on Ponsonby Rd in support of the Pride March (February 3, 2019).

As a last-minute request, I was asked to make the leader banner for the March. Pride Board member Teokotai Paitai, who was present at the workshop, encouraged me to go with the loudest colours available. The Board requested the slogan “# our march” that signalled their

Figure 3.20. Richard Orjis, *sissies revolt*, *bttm_methodology*, paint on cotton, 2019, photography by val smith, Artspace Aotearoa, Tāmaki Makaurau.





new direction towards community-led initiatives and away from corporate involvement. The Pride Board members carried the pink and yellow banner as they led the March (Figure 3.21).

Figure 3.21. *#ourmarch* banner by Richard Orjis (carried by Cissy Rock, Zakk d'Larté, Roby Vella, Teokota'i Pai'tai, Michael Lett (left to right)) Auckland Pride March, February 16, 2019, photography by Sam Clarke, Queen Street, Tamaki Makaurau, courtesy of Auckland Pride Festival.

Two days after the March I received a Facebook message from Cissy Rock reading, "I haven't had the chance to let you know how much your support has meant. With so much Pride we carried our March banner, but it's been in the lonely moments I recall the sissies revolution banner and smile. X"¹⁸⁴

Looking back at the banner and its expedient construction, I was reminded of its handmade idiosyncrasies, the fabric letters puckered and leaning slightly askew, glitter pools in uneven distribution and the hemstitching tracing a wobbly path. Regardless, it felt profoundly satisfying to make something for a community that I feel so embedded in and where my set of skills was able to serve an immediate, defined and vital need.

184 Cissy Rock, Facebook message to author, November 2, 2019.

3.5. *Walking in Trees,* August 31 – September 12, 2019, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau

Walking in Trees was a temporary large-scale, site-orientated installation and series of workshops that sought to form a connection between Rangipuke's histories, human to human, and human to nonhuman inhabitants (Figure 3.22). The project took the form of a series of activations centred around a century-old Himalayan cedar tree and a three-storey scaffolding structure.¹⁸⁵ The arrangement of scaffolding staircases, bridges, and platforms created opportunities to explore the urban environment from various physical and intellectual perspectives. I flew a white pillowcase flag at the apex of the structure, a symbolic surrender, with the hopes of building a queerer, more pacifistic and equitable future. A large red and pink fabric banner was unfurled to hang off the side of the structure with the spray-painted stencilled text "BELOW, BEHIND, ACROSS" (Figure 3.23) alluding to the project's bttm methodological foundation.

¹⁸⁵ I presented the *Walking in Trees* under the moniker Wilde Projects that was conceived in a conversation with Renée Tanner and Jeremy Hansen. The name draws associations with art, collective ecologies, environmental awareness, civic activation and queer writer Oscar Wilde.



Figure 3.22. Richard Orjis, Wilde Projects, *Walking in Trees*, 2019, installation, photograph by Richard Orjis, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.



Figure 3.23. Below, behind, across banner, Richard Orjis, Wilde Projects, *Walking in Trees*, 2019, installation, photography by Richard Orjis, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

3.5.1

Scaffolding

Walking in Trees drew inspiration from Halberstam's idea of 'unbuilding', a form of creative destruction full of generative promise.¹⁹² Halberstam's unbuilding is a queer, anti-modernist project that rejects the tabula rasa and works within existing frameworks to cut away that which is no longer required.

For Halberstam, this form of unbuilding, which he calls "anarchitecture", related to the sculptural works of Gordon Matta-Clark and the construction of the trans* body.¹⁹³ *Walking in Trees'* sculptural form created links to Halberstam's counter-construction, and scaffolding became a helpful metaphor suggesting how art practice might be a structure of support for creative, social and ecological relations.

Scaffolding is embedded within the language of construction and, similar to bttm methodology, is infinitely reconfigurable, mobile and responsive to varying contexts and the needs of its users. Scaffolding creates safe, transparent access so core structures can be developed, cleansed, decorated or repaired. One example of how this metaphor of scaffolding materialised in the research was the way I accessed funding for local artists to carry out a series of free public workshops associated with *Walking in Trees*, using a strategy that I had developed in *Queer Pavilion*, 2020.

These workshops activated outdoor group drawing, a fungi-feeding session (Figure 3.25), seed-ball making in the tree tops, and a tea ceremony with ingredients foraged from the roadside.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Jack Halberstam, "Unbuilding Gender: Trans* Anarchitectures In and Beyond the Work of Gordon Matta-Clark," *Places Journal* (October 2018), <https://doi.org/10.22269/181003>.

¹⁹³ Halberstam adopted the asterisk in trans* to signal a transitioning process rather than a final form of something with a definite meaning. Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ The series of free workshops for *Walking in Trees* were delivered by local artists and funded through the Waitamata Local Board and Auckland Council Regional Grants. They were:

Workshop 1 : Richard Orjis, Drawing together: Free lunchtime drawing session, 12 pm-1:30 pm, September 4, 2019

Workshop 2: Levi Brinsdon-Hall, Making Clay Seed Balls, 3:30 pm – 5 pm, September 10, 2019

Workshop 3: Chris Berthelsen, Tea Party, 11 pm – 12 pm, September 11, 2019

Workshop 4: Richard Orjis, Drawing together: Free lunchtime drawing session, 12 pm-1:30 pm, September 11, 2019

Workshop 5: Sarah Smutts-Kennedy, Fungi For The Future, 12pm - 1pm, September 13, 2019

Workshop 6: Christina Houghton, Wild-walk, 10 am-12 pm, September 14, 2019

Workshop 7: Richard Orjis, Cruising in the Park: A queer drawing walk-shop, 12 pm – 3 pm September 15, 2019



Figure 3.25. *Fungi for the Future*, Sarah Smuts-Kennedy, *Walking in Trees*, September 13, 2019, installation, photograph by Richard Orjis, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau

3.5.2

Underground histories

Rangipuke is located in the heart of the central city, a junction between two university campuses, the central business district and the Auckland Art Gallery. The park is predominantly used by students, rough sleepers, city dwellers and office workers who pass through on their lunch breaks. Tourists take photographs, and birds, insects and rodents can be seen in their quest for food and shelter.

The Victorian park is an imperial marker that excludes any commemoration of the Indigenous, feminist, anti-war and queer histories that have taken place there, and which *Walking in Trees* sought to rectify.

Running under Rangipuke is 3.4-kilometres of closed-off WWII air-raid tunnels that became a pertinent metaphor for wanting to unearth and form connective links to the park's concealed past.¹⁸⁶

I created five sandwich-boards to display historical narratives with text, photographs and drawings (Figure 3.24). On these I relayed stories of the Rangipuke ridgeline that had been built up by thick layers of volcanic ash that fell from an eruption around sixty-thousand years ago. The cone, no longer visible, lies at the base of the park, buried beneath a carparking building and the Metropolis Hotel.

The sharing of the area's Indigenous histories was approved by Matt Maihi, the Chairperson of the Ngati Whatua-o-Ōrākei Marae after a kanohi kitea (face-to-face) meeting that took place at the Marae's office at Takaparawhau (Bastion Point).¹⁸⁷

Rangipuke means Sky Hill and from the sixteenth century it was a flourishing papakainga (village) that included vegetable gardens and a defensive Pā named Te Horotiu.

¹⁸⁶ In response to Japan entered WWII in 1940, the Auckland City Council constructed 3.4-kilometres of air-raid tunnels under Rangipuke (opened in October, 1942).

Scott Pilkington, "Heritage values of the Albert Park air raid shelters", *Archaeology in New Zealand* 51, no. 2 (2008) 106-117.

¹⁸⁷ Takaparawhau (Bastion Point) was the site of Aotearoa's most prominent Māori land protests in the late 1970s.

¹⁸⁸ The land on which Rangipuke sits was sold to the British Crown by Ngati Whatua chiefs in 1840 in the hopes of bringing peace and trade to Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland.

"The Founding of Auckland," *Waitangi Tribunal Te Rōpū Whakamana I te Tiriti o Waitangi*, September 19, 2016, <https://waitangitribunal.govt.nz/publications-and-resources/school-resources/orakei/the-founding-of-auckland>.

Six years after the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi and the site's sale to the British Crown in 1840, fears of an attack from the northern tribes grew and the hill was transformed into the Albert Barracks for the British Imperial Army.¹⁸⁸ The Barracks were enclosed by a 3.6-metre-high bluestone wall constructed primarily by local Māori stonemasons. Fighting never reached the Barracks, and the wall was eventually demolished.

The park, designed by James Slater, was built in 1879 and planted with exotic trees, including the Himalayan cedar donated by Sir George Grey. Urban parks were a relatively new Victorian phenomenon at the time and prompted partly by the industrial and social revolutions of the nineteenth-century. Matthew Gandy notes that parks were an important aspect of the Victorian project, as an attempt to reshape society through exposure to design, nature and bourgeois ideology.¹⁸⁹

Mortimer-Sandilands called attention to nineteenth-century anxiety about environmental contamination borne of industrialisation and perceived to be responsible for the social, moral and physical decline, amongst which homosexuality was included. As she notes,

The figure of the homosexual came to haunt the margins of emerging discourses in urban development. Environmental health, and even wilderness preservation: the effeminate homosexual and the lesbian gender invert were not only seen increasingly as against nature but also sometimes considered symptoms of the toxic underside of industrial, urban, and increasingly cosmopolitan modernity.¹⁹⁰

Ironically, the urban park's purpose of fostering Victorian morality was quickly subverted with urban wildlife, graffiti, public drinking, rough sleeping and outdoor sexual assignations.¹⁹¹ Thus the urban park became fertile terrain for this research's queerings and socio-ecological investigations.

¹⁸⁹ Matthew Gandy "Queer Ecology: Nature, Sexuality, and Heterotopic Alliances." *Environment and Planning D-Society & Space* 30, no.7 (2012): 727, DOI:10.1068/d10511.

¹⁹⁰ Catriona Sandilands, "Queer Ecology", *Keywords for Environmental Studies* (New York: NYU Press, 2016) <http://keywords.nyupress.org/environmental-studies/essay/queer-ecology>.

¹⁹¹ Gandys, 729.

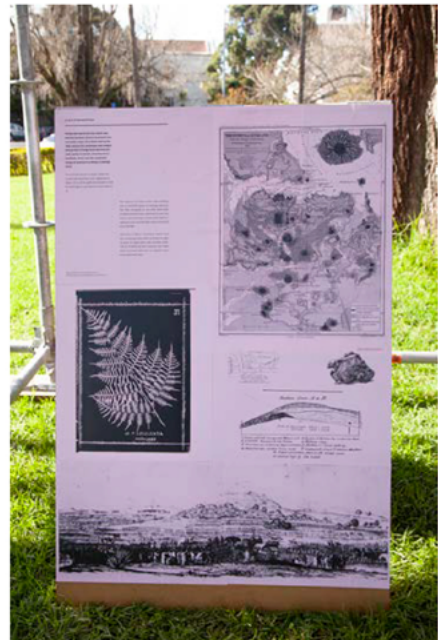


Figure 3.24. Sandwich boards with historic, geographic and botanical information pertaining to Rangipuke, Richard Orjis, Wilde Projects, *Walking in Trees*, 2019, installation, photograph by Richard Orjis, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

3.5.3

Wild-walk and *bttming_trees*

One of the workshops in *Walking in Trees* was *Wild-walk*, hosted by performing artist Christina Houghton (10 am – 12 midday, September 14, 2019, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau). Houghton's led the tour along a unmarked trail where participants were asked to consider the ecological entanglement they shared with the park's flora. The participants drifted through Rangipuke, looking at its plant life, camouflaging themselves with leaves and hugging trees.

In unison with Houghton, I also shared a desire to explore arboreal intimacies in my work. On July 8, 2019, I had presented *bttming_trees* (*tree meditation*) at the *Hacking the Anthropocene IV DIT: Do-It-Together Symposium*, hosted by Melbourne University at Abbotsford Convent. The work consisted of a 15:39 minute audio file that guided people through a relaxation exercise as they lay straddled around the base of a tree they had chosen.

Participants were invited to become aware of the exchange of breath and the ecological interconnectedness of humans and plants. The meditation attempted to subvert Anthropocentric hierarchies by creating more equitable, horizontal relations and related to Morton's assertion that tree-hugging is a radical act of queer eroticism that casts aside speciesism in favour of non-heteronormative, non-genital symbiosis.¹⁹⁵

I was also made aware of how these queer ecological ideas push up against conservative beliefs when my workshop gained a degree of notoriety in the Australian press. Tony Thomas' article "Sex Academia Style: Let's All Have a Tree-some," wrote about the *Hacking the Anthropocene Symposium* and my work as a way to ridicule queer, feminist scholarship and bring university funding into question.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Morton, 280.

¹⁹⁶ Tony Thomas' Quadrant article, "Sex Academia Style: Let's All Have a Tree-some," was republished in Andrew Bolt's *Australian Daily Telegraph* blog (April, 23 2020). The University of Melbourne's cybersecurity team has put both Bolt and Thompson on their watch list.

Tony Thomas, "Sex Academia Style: Let's All Have a Tree-some," *Quadrant*, April 22, 2020, <https://quadrant.org.au/opinion/qed/2020/04/sex-academia-style-lets-all-have-a-tree-some>.

3.5.4 Drawing queerly

Figure 3.26. Henry Winkelmann, Showing a view of the grounds of Albert Park with the statue of Queen Victoria and people relaxing on benches, June 16, 1911, photograph, courtesy of the Auckland Libraries Heritage Collection, Tāmaki Makaurau. 1-W971

During the *Walking in Trees* event, I hosted *Cruising in the Park: A Queer Drawing Walk-shop* (12 midday – 3 pm, September 15, 2019, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau) with the aim of utilising cruising as a metaphor to explore art-making and queer ecological thought.

The walk-shop began with participants sitting together in the interior ring of a group of giant *Strelitzia Grandus* plants. Soft light found its way through the gaps of this arboreal architectural structure as I talked about the history of the site and encouraged participants to imagine the queer lives that had existed in the former papakāinga, military barracks, tunnels and public toilets.

I drew attention to Henry Winkelmann's 1911 photograph of three men huddled beside each



other on one of Rangipuke's park-benches. Chris Brickell has written about Winkelmann's same-sex relationships and the park's reputation for being one of the city's most popular cruising sites for over a hundred years (Figure 3.26).¹⁹⁷

Consistent with this depiction, Michael Stevens recalled a game played with university friends in the 1980s called the milk run: "You had to have sex in each public toilet; from Albert Park, down to Customs St, up to Durham Lane, and whoever got back to Albert Park first was denoted the winner."¹⁹⁸

Ings acknowledged that the secret and often dangerous tradition of male same-sexual encounters in public parks spawned a whole culture and language. He observed that such assignations often occupied an unpopular position for both LGBTTOQIA+ spheres and the general public because they challenged constructions of male sexuality, decency and the divide between public and private space.¹⁹⁹



Figure 3.28. *Queen of the People* by Sharon Fitness, *Cruising in the Park: A queer drawing walk-shop*, Richard Orjis, Wilde Projects, *Walking in Trees*, September 15, 2019, installation, photography by Richard Orjis, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Figure 3.29. *Cruising in the Park: A queer drawing walk-shop*, Richard Orjis, Wilde Projects, *Walking in Trees*, September 15, 2019, installation, photography by Richard Orjis, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.



¹⁹⁷ Brickell, 79.

¹⁹⁸ Noelle McCarthy, "Smart Talk at the Auckland Museum: City of Shadows" *Radio New Zealand*, November 1, 2015, <https://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/smarttalk/audio/201776525/smart-talk-at-the-auckland-museum-city-of-shadows>.

¹⁹⁹ Welby Ings traced the origins of the term "milk route" in Aotearoa to the 1940s, where it was used by US servicemen stationed here to describe the journey taken to public toilets looking for sexual encounters.

Welby Ings, "Into the underground: the language, history and culture of male prostitution in New Zealand," (paper presented at *AustraLex 2008: WELLEX '08 Faces, Forms and Functions of Lexicography Conference*, Wellington, 2008) <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/2987>.

Cruising has been fundamentally transformed in the internet era and with the development of geolocation applications like Grindr, Scruff and Tinder. Clandestine outdoor liaisons have been superseded by digital and interior spaces.²⁰⁰ Countering this contemporary departure, my walk-shop reclaimed the park and adopted cruising as an evocative metaphor for art-making. The word 'cruising' takes on manifold meanings, including the acts of wandering in search of casual sexual encounters and of sailing for pleasure without a specific destination in mind.²⁰¹

The participants in *Cruising in the Park* were provided with charcoal and paper and introduced to Max Ernst's drawing technique of frottage, which consists of placing paper over an uneven surface and rubbing over vigorously with a medium.²⁰² Frottage comes from the French word 'to rub', and elicits a queer resonance to cruising, as frottage also describes the act of rubbing against clothed bodies for sexual gratification, and often in public. I encouraged participants to wander around the park and be led by their own curiosity and desire to take rubbings from any surfaces that intrigued them.

An impromptu exhibition was created by pinning the drawings to the sandwich-boards (Figures 3.27, 3.29). The prolific array spanned from abstract textures to text-based works created off plaques, that read "QUEEN OF THE PEOPLE" (Figure 3.28), "ERECTED", "LOVER", "HORI KEREI" (George Grey) and "HAERE" (to go, journey, walk. Interestingly the word also means 'rainbow', when used as a person's name).²⁰³

Frottage held appeal because of its ease and immediacy and because it requires minimal skill and materials, thus disrupting notions of artistic expertise and the risk of performance anxiety.

I observed that the workshops supported a genial group dynamic, evidenced in laughter, relaxed discussion and quiet contemplation, with participants noticeably enjoying the process, drawing alone or in collaboration (Figure 3.30).

200 Initiated by Pierre-Alexandre Mateos, Ramus Myrup, Octave Perault and Charles Teyssou, The 2018 *Cruising Pavilion* was and installed as part of the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale. The curators explore cruising cultures and the nascent use of online dating apps that create a "psychosexual geography spreading across a vast architectonic of digitally interconnected bedrooms."

"*Cruising Pavilion*," 16th Venice Architecture Biennale, May 24, 2018, <http://www.cruisingpavilion.com>.

201 *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. "Cruise," <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cruise>.

202 *The Tate*, s.v. "Frottage," <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/f/frottage>.

203 *Māori Dictionary*, s.v. "Haere," <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanwords=&keywords=HAERE>.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has mapped out a series of foundational art events that ultimately informed and shaped btm methodology. The study's emergent art practices incorporated site-orientated, relational and archival methods that sought to amalgamate queer theory, politics and artistic practices.

True to btm methodology's grounding in queer theory, *Salt Felix*, *Under Your Skin You look Divine*, *btm_methodology* and *Walking in Trees* examined socio-ecological intimacies while engaging in a broader critique of the construction of power and knowledge. Each project formed a dialogue between queer, Indigenous, historical and environmental concerns.

Figure 3.30. Gathering in the treetop, *Cruising in the Park: A Queer Drawing Walk-shop*, Richard Orjis, Wilde Projects, *Walking in Trees*, September 15, 2019, installation, photograph by Richard Orjis, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.



Walking in Trees conjoined these explicitly through the archival posters on the sandwich boards, and through meeting Ngāti Whātua Orākei representatives, as well as environmental activists, queer performers and artists. The ability to hold multiple intersecting conversations is indicative of ecological thought, and the coalitional alliances that bttm research strived for.

The early exhibitions *Salt Felix* and *Under Your Skin You Look Divine* were staged both within and outside 'queer' designated spaces (a gallery and an adult shop). In order for urban art spaces to be more inclusive of diversity, I concluded that marginalised queer communities needed alternative spaces to feel safe, have in-depth dialogue, share histories and culture without the need to consider their translation for the often dominant, hetero-centric audiences.

The exploration of archival practices in these projects illuminated queer histories that helped me to form a more comprehensive and meaningful relationship between practice, self and place, and queer collectivism and politics.

Walking in Trees temporarily occupied Rangipuke to create a place for ecological connectivity between the artists, audience, seeds, trees and fungi participants. The project's scaffolding formed links with Halberstam's notion of unbuilding. Scaffolding also became an important metaphor for thinking about how my art practice might build supportive structures for other creative practitioners who engage with queer ecological practice.

Supportive and collaborative modes were developed in the later works discussed in this chapter, from co-creation models in the development of *bttm_methodology* with smith, to working in parallel or separately under an

umbrella structure, as seen with the artist-led workshops and performances of *Walking in Trees*.

These interdisciplinary exchanges across performance, visual arts and ecology were valued components of the research and resulted in my challenging, modifying and experimenting with a previously established practice.

Compared with the more solitary modes of producing artwork in *Salt Felix* and *Under Your Skin You Look Divine*, the later more collaborative projects were more satisfying because of their sociability, cultures of sharing expertise and distribution of responsibility. Working with others is unpredictable and requires compromise, yet it offers the joy of surprise and unfamiliar creative outcomes that would not otherwise materialise.

Upon reflection, *bttm_methodology* at Artspace Aotearoa stood out as the most generative project in the development of the research. *bttm_methodology* did not follow any predetermined teleology, instead, the loose framework allowed for emergent responses to available resources, the participants' needs, the place, weather, new knowledge and changing moods.

In contrast, the *Walking in Trees* installation was built on a larger scale and thus required a higher level of public funding. The nature of the structure and its park location required extensive planning, an engineering report, a health and safety permit and the provision of security outside of opening hours.

The additional stakeholders and the obligation to funding bodies added pressures to engage more with media promotion as well as to operate over a more extended time-frame in order

to attract high visitor numbers. Although the project effectively communicated Rangipuke's queer, Indigenous and ecological formations, the restrictions and the marked shift towards valuing broader audience experience took away from a more queer-centred, creatively productive process.

Interpersonal conflicts did not arise during the collaborative relationships detailed in this chapter. Nevertheless, I frame conflict positively because it can be an inevitable part of negotiating difference and problem-solving. It is possible that the projects ran smoothly because the participating artists came together through friendship networks and with shared goals to critique colonial, capitalist, and hetero-patriarchal dominance. Another possibility is that many of the contributing artists work as educators, which is a common practice with artists in Aotearoa. Thus, they were familiar with working in groups, utilising effective communication strategies and balancing compromise, creativity, pedagogy and theoretical concerns. The participating artists also shared objectives to explore and extend queerer or more ecological ways of making art, which lend themselves to more collective, collaborative ways of conceptualising and inhabiting the world.

Chapter 4:

Queer Pavilion

4.1 Introduction: *Queer Pavilion*, February 1-5 & 7, 2020, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau

The *Queer Pavilion* was the major event of the thesis. This pavilion became a platform created to coincide with the Auckland Pride festival and hosted the work of seventeen predominantly queer visual, sound and performance artists.

Queer Pavilion began as a discussion between val smith and myself about how queer artistic practice could be explored in light of bttm methodology and its aim to privilege marginalised voices. Our over-arching commitment was to support queer, decolonial and ecological conversations while also creating an activation directed towards creativity, connection and pleasure-leisure seeking.



Figure 4.1 *Richard Orjis*, *Queer Pavilion*, February 5, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

As the project developed I took prime responsibility for facilitating and hosting the event's production.²⁰⁴

Participating artists came from our creative milieu, networks that blurred the boundaries between professional and friendship circles and extended across Australia and Aotearoa. These creative practitioners included an architectural designer, a communications designer, a photographer, visual artists, musicians and dancers who created artworks, constructed installations, and ran workshops, group discussions and performances.

This chapter begins with a Prologue, Rangipuke and the Gay Liberation Front, in order to discuss the historical significance of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and their first public protest held in Rangipuke in 1972.

The chapter goes on to discuss my specific contribution to the development and implementation of the project and Micheal McCabe's peripatetic pavilion structures.

I then discuss five key works from *Queer Pavilion* that illustrate significant themes of queer representation, and investigate queer history, intersubjectivity, queer ecology and decolonial practices. These works are *Sapphic pilgrimage* by Mega Pash Action and myself (5 pm – 6 pm, Wednesday, February 5, 2020); *With love and fond memories* by Daniel Corbet Sanders (11am – 5pm, February 5, 2020); *Scat hunt* by val smith (11am -12 midday, February 5, 2020); *Ghosting the Queer* by forest vicky kapo (11:30am – 5pm, February 2, 2020); and *Wā Pakiwaitara Storytime and collaborative cloak-making* by Mahonri + Hobbs (1pm – 3pm, February 2, 3 & 4, 2020).

The conclusion of the chapter reflects on the event's findings, with the addition of an epilogue that introduces the final exhibition of the thesis: *And so the days float through my eyes: a queer archive 1972 – 2021*, that will take place on May 14, 2021 on the margins of Rangipuke in a nineteenth-century caretaker's cottage.

²⁰⁴ The initial plan was for smith and me to collaborate on the *Queer Pavilion's* production. However, after the 2019 postponement of the Auckland Pride Festival and smith's growing obligations to their PhD, smith decided to focus on their creative contribution rather than co-facilitating *Queer Pavilion*, 2020. Although it deviated from the original plan, I was happy to take on the added responsibility.



Figure 4.2. Rebecca Steedman, *Queer Pavilion*, 2020, poster, Tāmaki Makaurau.

4.2 Prologue: Rangipuke and the Gay Liberation Front

205 George Block, "Auckland Pride: Huge turnout, jubilation as march comes full circle," *Stuff*, February 8, 2002 <https://i.stuff.co.nz/national/119370579/auckland-pride-huge-turnout-jubilation-as-march-comes-full-circle>.

206 The GLF initially formed in America following the Stonewall Riots of 1969. The name was intended to provoke associations with both the Vietnamese and Algerian National Liberation Fronts and position the movement as a rebellious socio-political force seeking freedom from a dominant oppressor.

Henry Abelow, "How Stonewall Obscures the Real History of Gay Liberation," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (June 26, 2015).

Today the word *gay* is most often associated with male homosexuality, yet when the GLF took shape in Aotearoa, the term *gay* was a nascent North American import meaning happy or sexually free. Baumber commented that in 1972 "camp" was more commonly used in the local vernacular but observed that *gay* was beginning to be adopted in place of *camp*, *lesbian* or *homosexual*.

Nigel Baumber, "Gay Liberation: A Movement For Social Change – Auckland 1972 – 1975" (Master's thesis, University of Auckland, 1979), 20-21.

"We were brave, we were mad, we were bold, and we were fabulous."²⁰⁵ declared Emeritus Professor, writer, activist and curator, Ngahua Te Awekotuku in her commencement speech at the 2020 Auckland Pride March (Figure 4.3). Te Awekotuku was standing in the same location she had been 48 years earlier at the country's first public Gay Liberation Front (GLF) protest in Rangipuke.

In Aotearoa, the GLF was a radical activist group formed by university students seeking liberation from discrimination, compulsory heterosexuality, gender roles, and the confines of marriage and the nuclear family.²⁰⁶

For me, the GLF embodies a dynamic intersection of art, activism and scholarship. Student members from the 1972 GLF would later become prominent artists, writers, educators, art historians, filmmakers and curators. The group utilised creative expression as a vital part of their political action and produced placards, banners, pamphlets, posters, t-shirts, film, installations, zaps and live theatre; their performative politics was played out on the city's campuses, streets and parks (Figure 4.5).

Queer Pavilion took inspiration from the GLF's ideologic grounding in queer collectivism, social justice and refusal to seek approval from what they saw as a corrupt mainstream society.



Figure 4.3 Ngahuia Te Awekotuku opening The Auckland Pride March, February 27, 2020, photograph by Richard Orjis, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

4.2.1

The Gay Liberation powder-trail

The international Gay Liberation movement was formed directly after the six-day Stonewall riots in New York City, June 28 1969 (Figure 4.4.). The riot was a result of patrons fighting back against a police raid at the Greenwich Village Stonewall Inn gay-bar. Te Awekotuku reimagined the infamous riots in a speech, stating enough was enough:

No more harassment, no more lurking about in the so-called twilight, no more embarrassment and no more shame. With chair legs and broken bottles, with high-heeled shoes and hair-spray-cans, jagged mirrors and stiletto cigarette holders, with their razor-manicured nails and proud fists and sharp bony knees, with raw hands and teeth and sensible loafer shoes, courage and craziness and drag queens and the queers, the bulldykes and the fems confronted and crushed (for a while) the homophobic hatred and patriarchal power of the New York police. Thus, gay liberation, as a contemporary political movement, began.²⁰⁷

The GLF in Tāmaki Makaurau was ignited when the 23 year-old student Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, known then as Ngahuia Volkerling, was denied an American travel visa. The New Zealand University Students Association (NZUSA) had nominated Volkerling for a US Government-funded scholarship to tour American universities to research the emerging Gay Liberation and

²⁰⁷ Ngahuia, Te Awekotuku, *Mana Wahine Maori: Selected writings on Maori Women's Art, Culture and Politics* (Auckland : New Women's Press, 1991), 38.

'Red Power' (First Nations) movements. As the departure date approached, she went to the US Consulate on March 15, 1972 to inquire why she had not received her visa, only to discover it had been declined because she was a known 'sexual deviant'. Volkerling proceeded to the University of Auckland Student Quad and gave an impassioned speech calling for a sexual revolution. Volkerling relayed the day's events in a letter to fellow GLF founding member, Nigel Baumber:

So inflamed with rage, passion and revenge, off I went up to the University Forum and grabbed the mike and challenged everyone, to be honest, and open about their homosexuality, to stand up and be counted. About 50 people listened for about 2 ½ hours; a dozen or so registered support, and good vibes.... three of us began scheming a campus, radical activist group.²⁰⁸

This action led to the formation of the GLF, first in Tāmaki Makaurau, and then in quick succession in Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington), Otautahi (Christchurch), Ōtepoti (Dunedin) and Te Papa-i-Oea (Palmerston North).²⁰⁹ The early 1970s in Aotearoa was also a time of economic prosperity and widespread socio-political transformation.

The period witnessed the genesis of Māori activist group Ngā Tamatoa (The Young Warriors), The Polynesian Panthers, The Socialist Action League (SAL), Anti-Vietnam War and environmental protests; with GLF members belonging to multiple groups.²¹⁰

The GLF's coalitional links were strongest with the University's Women's Liberation group, which they drew on for early members, organisational structure and moral support.²¹¹

In 1971 Dennis Altman hoped that the success of the global gay liberation movement would lead to a broader socio-cultural acceptance of human diversity and also envisioned that the movement would exhibit all the excesses and failings of prior liberations.²¹² Some of these failings were evident when the Gay Feminist Collective (1974-1976) was formed in reaction against sexist and homophobic elements in the GLF and other women's organisations.²¹³

Like other activist movements of the time, the GLF often turned protests into raucous creative public displays designed to draw attention to their revolutionary cause, as seen on the inaugural Gay Day.

²⁰⁸ Baumber, 10.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ngā Tamatoa emerged from the Young Māori Leaders conference and stayed active throughout the 1970s. Their main ambition was to fight against the injustices of loss of land, sovereignty and the Māori language. Subsequently the group held the first modern-day Waitangi Day protest at The Treaty grounds in 1971. Smith, 49.

²¹¹ Baumber emphasised the importance of the Women's Liberation group to the GLF. The GLF adopted members and its organisational strategies from the Women's group. It was at the 1972 National Women's Liberation Conference that Volkerling delivered her address on the realities of female, homosexual, and Māori oppression, and that resulted in the Women's assembly formally supporting the future rights of lesbians. Baumber, 15.

²¹² Altman, 227.

²¹³ Anne Else, ed., *Women Together: A History of Women's Organisations in New Zealand / Ngā Rōpū Wāhine o te Motu* (Wellington: Dahne Brasell Associated Press, 1993), 553.

4.2.2 Gay Day



Figure 4.4. Gay Liberation Front symbol from Nigel Baumber's 1979 University of Auckland Master's thesis: "Gay Liberation: A Movement for Social Change – Auckland 1972 – 1975" (p.71).

A month after the GLF's inception in Aotearoa, the group held its first public gay protest, *Gay Day*, on April 11, 1972 (Figures 4.6 - 4.7). Approximately 30 students from the GLF congregated around the Queen Victoria statue in Rangipuke with protest signs, calling for equality, with a rallying cry to end Victorian morality.

Gay Day happened in conjunction with a series of media interviews alongside an open letter to the Mayor. The letter thanked the city for the foresight which allowed it to be known as the Queen City and demanded an end to homosexual oppression and the declaration of Queen St as a morals-free zone.²¹⁴

A GLF skit illustrated the degree of animosity felt towards police and told the story of a young gay man beaten up by a couple of "poofteer-bashers" in a public toilet only to be assaulted again by two police officers.²¹⁵

Chris Carter, a member of the GLF and subsequently the country's first openly gay MP, recalled the *Gay Day* events: "There we were, this little group of intrepid gays, standing around the statue of Queen Victoria, holding up signs that said 'Gay Pride' and 'Gay Rights'... People gawked at us, and it was all a bit exciting and a bit scary."²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Mayor Sir Dove-Myer Robinson never responded to the letter and stated it fell outside the province of his mayoralty. Baumber, 30.

²¹⁵ Ibid, 31.

²¹⁶ James Allan, *Growing Up Gay: Men Tell Their Stories* (Auckland: Godwit, 1996),109.

For many GLF members this was the first time they had made a public declaration of their sexuality. Visibility at this time put them at risk of losing employment, accommodation, and relationships. On finding out about his involvement with the GLF, Baumber's family stopped talking to him for several years.²¹⁷

Claire Gummer commented that early GLF members combined political activism with exuberant festivity, prone to anti-establishment merrymaking; she noted they were, "a movement rather than an incorporated society, a bunch of ideals rather than a set of instructions, a riot of colour rather than an assembly of suits."²¹⁸



²¹⁷ Baumber, 33.

²¹⁸ Claire Gummer, "30 Years of Gay Liberation: Part One" *GayNZ.com*, November 1, 2002, <http://www.pridenz.com/gaynz/54.html>.

Figure 4.5. *Gay is Now: Auckland Street Theatre*, 1972, photograph courtesy of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Sharleen Forbes Collection, LAGANZ-MS-PAPERS-105-C.

Te Awekotuku would later contextualise the activism of the GLF within the grassroots spirit of 1970s — consciousness-raising, protest and the psychedelic free-love, recalling the GLF as, “silly, or committed, or tragic or drug-addled, or courageous enough to stand up and say: “This is my life and I will claim space for myself.”²¹⁹

Although the GLF's goal of radically transforming society was not realised in totality, their revolutionary vigour played a part in fuelling subsequent queer activism, with many former members directly contributing to future cultural and political reform.

219 George Block, “Auckland Pride: Huge Turnout, Jubilation as March Comes Full Circle,” *Stuff*, February 8, 2020, <https://i.stuff.co.nz/national/119370579/auckland-pride-huge-turnout-jubilation-as-march-comes-full-circle>.

4.2.3

Bursts of energy

In June of 1972, after four prolific months Volkerling stepped away from direct involvement with the GLF, stating that she felt her time would be better utilised focussing solely on Māori issues.²²⁰

Her sudden departure and GLF's relatively short five-year life-span demonstrates the power of fleeting bursts of energy. This observation may be extended to the queer art practices within this thesis that often explored fleeting, yet meaningful, interactions with people and artworks in temporary premises.

The GLF demonstrated that moments of collective activism can be efficacious as well as transient as we evolve with the wants and needs of communities and changing socio-political environments.²²¹ Halberstam posits that queer time and place counter a straight bourgeois alternative that requires longevity for child-rearing and the accumulation of capital for inheritance.²²²

Although Volkerling is central to the emergence of the GLF, the group's success was due to the dedication of multiple activists. She would later say: "I have to emphasise the 'we' because although the media isolated me for my long black hair and long black robes and articulateness, the group in itself was a strong collective of a lot of loving people."²²³

Subsequently, Te Awekotuku has written extensively about growing up in a community of takatāpui and Māori feminists from which she drew strength.²²⁴ Similarly, I drew meaning and empowerment from the GLF and Te Awekotuku as queer ancestors. Te Awekotuku's narrative remains vital for understanding the emergent period of the GLF and her significant role in its inception must be acknowledged.

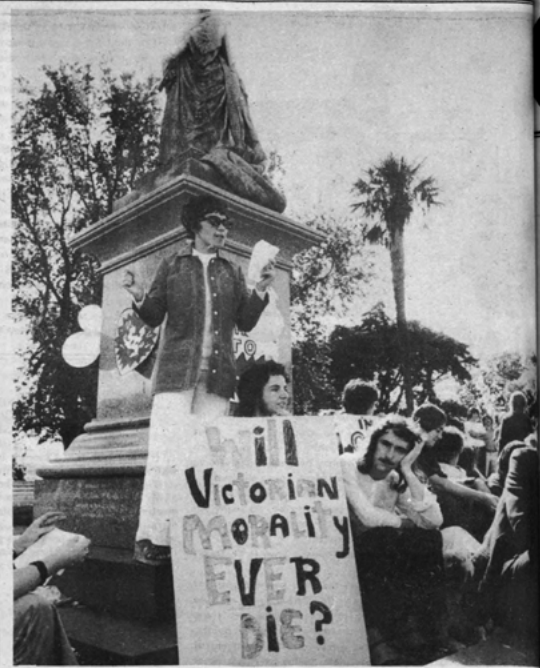
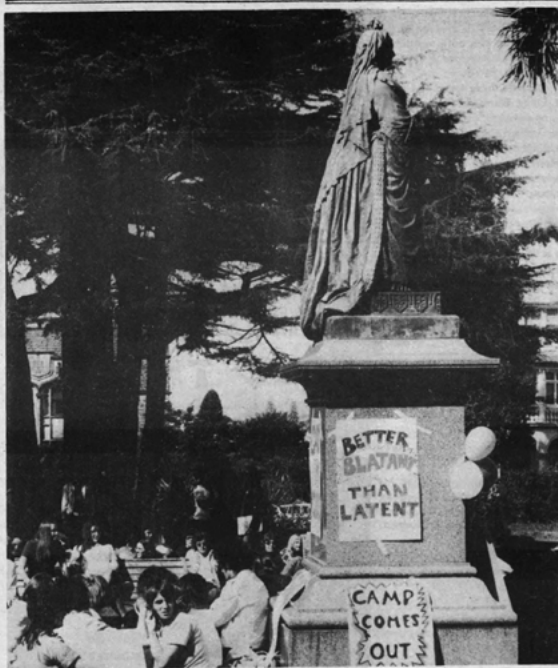
²²⁰ Baumber, 37.

²²¹ After 1972, the GLF evolved into the Gay Liberation Auckland Inc. (1973-1977) and the University Gay Liberation (1973-1977); primarily for pragmatic reason to secure a building lease while still allowing the campus group to gain AUSA funding. The GLF was not immune to in-fighting; as the Gay Feminist Collective (1974-1976) formed to support lesbian members away from sexist elements in the GLF. Baumber posited that the demoralising defeat of Venn Young's Crimes Amendment Bill to decriminalise homosexuality in 1974-75 added to the loss of momentum and subsequent demise of the GLF by the decade's end. Ibid, 56.

²²² Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 6.

²²³ Te Awekotuku, 38.

²²⁴ Te Awekotuku wrote, "The power, the rightness, the sheer joy of being a Māori woman. Of knowing that stretching out on either side of your like a vast glittering fan of light are women of courage, initiative, healing, imagination, terror, and deep, deep knowledge...whose very being, in these islands, left breath that fill us all." Ibid, 9.



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Figure 4.6. Gay Day, April 11, 1972, photography by John Miller, Craccum 46, no.8, April 20, 1972, (p.12).



FROM THE GAY MANIFESTO

Gays are oppressed because by their very existences as gay people they challenge the stereotyped or gender roles. It can easily be seen that gay people don't fit into the stereotypes of masculine and feminine, and this is one of the main reasons why they become the object of suspicion, since everyone is taught that these and only these two roles are appropriate.

Our entire society is built around the patriarchal family and its enshrinement of these masculine and feminine roles. Religion, popular morality, art, literature and sport all reinforce the stereotypes. In other words, this society is a sexist society, in which one's biological sex determines almost all of what one does and how one does it; a situation in which men are privileged, and women are mere adjuncts of men and objects for their use, both sexually and otherwise. Gay men and gay women do deny these 'values' of our civilisation!

The present gender-role system of 'masculine' and 'feminine' is based on the way that reproduction was originally organised. Men's freedom from the prolonged physical burden of bearing children gave them a privileged position which was then reinforced by an ideology of male superiority. But technology has now advanced to a stage at which the gender-role system is no longer necessary.

AND NOW, LIBERATION . . .

Gay Liberation does not just mean reforms. It is because of the patriarchal family that reforms are not enough. Freedom for gay people will never be permanently won until everyone is freed from sexist role-playing and its straight-jacket of sexist rules about our sexuality. And we will not be freed from those so long as each succeeding generation is brought up in the same old sexist way in the patriarchal family. Sexism is not just an accident - it is an essential part of our present society, and cannot be changed without the whole society changing with it.

AIMS

The long term goal of the Auckland Gay Liberation Front, which inevitably brings us into fundamental conflict with the institutionalised sexism of this society, is to rid society of the gender-role system which is at the root of our oppression. Before we can create the new society of the future, we have to defend our interests as gay people here and now against all forms of oppression and victimisation. We have therefore drawn up the following list of immediate demands.

- 1) That all discrimination by society against gay people should end and that all means should be utilised to remove the present attitudes existing so that gay people can live in freedom - now.
- 2) That all discrimination at law against gay people should end.
- 3) That all people have the right to sexual self-determination. We believe that all people should have the unhindered right to be homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual, according to their own free will, and appreciate the validity of their own sexual preference.
- 4) That we shall oppose all oppression against gay people and fight to overcome individual cases of discrimination, so that all gays shall have full civil rights . . . ("the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.")
- 5) That we shall provide counselling services, legal (including bail) services, and medical services for gay people; and help them to define their own identity and remove self-doubts, guilt and confusion engendered by society as it now exists.

HETEROSEXUAL HYPOCRISY

The Auckland Gay Liberation Front was recently attacked by a mob of heterosexual hypocrites. The assault took place at Unity Hall where the Society For The Promotion of Community Standards was being addressed by its national secretary, Miss Patricia Bartlett.

G.L.F. made the mistake of arriving just as a Resistance guerrilla theatre group was being removed. Three or four very angry promoters of community standards were blocking the doorway to the hall and refusing both entry and exit to one and all. The bloody guerrillas, armed with wooden guns, were being shunted out amidst a volley of abuse from enraged moralists.

We attempted peaceful entry. "Look, we're just here to hear what Bartlett's got to say," but it didn't work and the next thing you know there's this senile geriatric with an arm lock on your neck.

A virtuous lady on stage was seen to approach the microphone and say, "Go home and play with yourselves." Such was the catholic, Christian atmosphere before G.L.F. had even fully entered the room.

Meantime, back in the ring a little old man was in the process of bashing Mrs. Ngahua Volkerling's body inside out. He didn't get very far however and 5 seconds later the G.L.F. banner was being proudly displayed in front of the stage. Sister Patricia - oops, sorry - Miss Bartlett made a swipe at it.

Then for some unknown reason the women went wild. Ngahua was dragged down an aisle and thumped by females with hand bags and broties. About this time the names 'Black slut' and 'Maori bitch' were dropped. We were told to behave ourselves and go home like good kids because we really weren't old enough for this sort of thing and we didn't know what we were doing.

Of course we didn't know what we were doing! We didn't turn up to be assaulted and abused. We were bloody dumbfounded.

The work of SOCIETY FOR PROMOTION OF COMMUNITY STANDARDS takes the form of a moral crusade - a battle for the soul of New Zealand. That's what they preach, and by Christ do they mean every word of it. G.L.F. was bruised in the name of Jehovah, thumped in the name of Jesus, and spat on in the name of decency.

Things quieted down a bit and then the police arrived. There were no arrests. This must have come as a shattering blow to one guy I had my eye on because he spent the rest of the evening tripping people up in the aisle in protest. Another guy got into the rather delightful habit of turning around to us, waving his finger while muttering some incoherent mumbo jumbo.

After Bartlett had spoken on the need for another Indecency Tribunal (any volunteers?) to help stamp out the rotten filth in our literature and plays, she then spouted on the necessity for clinics to treat homosexuals.

Now far be it from the writers to suggest that Miss Bartlett didn't know what she was talking about. From a heterosexual's (?) point of view she had it all figured. Homosexuals are sick and a nice dose of medicine will fix it all up. According to Sister Patricia, Gays are a field day for a Freudian, and nice clean clinics with nice clean padded cells and nice clean virgin nurses are the answer.

Pat prattled on for a while and then took a pew. It had been fully forty five minutes since the battle at the door, and the bruises were beginning to hurt. They hurt all right, and when the custodians of the public's morals agreed to apologise in return for our repentance and abject apologies for disturbing their meeting, the pain got worse. The meeting was such a great big mess that the writers don't even know if there was an apology.

Why should we apologise anyway? We were ridiculed, insulted and slandered then asked to forgive and forget. Question time came at did the abuse:

G.L.F. member: "I am a homosexual. Do you think that I deserve to be bashed up and called a 'Queer' because I love men?" Miss Patricia Bartlett: "Well, legally you are not allowed to be hurt." Interjection: "-We're not interested in pervers."

Forgive remarks like that? Like bloody hell! G.L.F.'s strength lies in its brotherly and sisterly love - rather Christian in a way-out way. G.L.F. will not forget that it was the Society for the Promotion of Community Standards that brutally attacked it in the name of morality and decency. G.L.F. will not forget that Unity Hall was covered in blood that night-ours.

Damn your Community Standards. Damn your heterosexual hypocrisy. Damn your Christian ethics. Damn you



G.L.F. COUNSELLING

G.L.F. has formed a counselling group which is now undergoing training, with the aim of dealing with the problems of homosexuals, and helping them to adjust to a hostile society. It was felt that the counselling services which existed in Auckland or which were being established did not cater for the needs of Auckland's gay people adequately.

Youthline, which has been operating for some time, caters not specifically for gay people, but for any person who needs to talk

over his or her problem, and both its name and its image tend to frighten off the older person. Youthline, which has been operating even longer, seems to be even more out of contact with the special problems arising from being gay in a gay-hating world. It is because this large gap existed in Auckland's counselling services that a new counselling group, Homosexual Aid, has been formed, to deal specifically with the problems of female and male homosexuals; but even this is inadequate since it firstly aims more at immediate treatment of immediate problems, with the emphasis on telephone counselling rather than face-to-face discussion of the problem, and secondly because only a small percentage of the counselling is themselves homosexual. The only people who can really understand the problems of gay people, are gay people themselves.

The G.L.F. counselling group aims at helping people adjust to the attitudes of society over a period of time, and through a succession of counselling sessions, and we intend dealing at least as much with the older, as with the younger, person. One of the great advantages of the G.L.F. counselling service is that our clients are brought into contact with gay people who have accepted their position and have adjusted to the hatred of their fellow man.

But this hostility is not the only problem the homosexual faces. Along with all other members of our society, he has been prevented from birth with an ideal of femininity or masculinity, and the obvious difference from this can lead to feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. He has also been taught that homosexuals are undesirable people, and the realisation that he is himself one of these people he has been warned against, is often accompanied by the severest problems. This realisation may come very late in life - a man may reach the age of thirty-five or forty, and be married with several children, before he comes to acknowledge his true sexuality. The position is similar for women.

Loneliness can be another of the homosexual's worst problems. Surrounded by people from whom he must hide his true personality, constantly living and acting a lie to retain his usual friendships, and cut off from contact with others of his kind by the myths, taboos, and prejudices of his upbringing, the gay person especially one past the prime of his youth, has a prospect only of a terribly empty, persecuted, future. It is for people such as this that the G.L.F. counselling service has been introduced.

It is our aim to help all gay people accept themselves and adjust to the hostility of others around them, and learn to look out for mankind as composed not of homo- or heterosexual beings, but of people.

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Figure 4.7. From the Gay Manifesto, photography by John Miller, Craccum 46, no.11, June 1, 1972, (p.6).

Te Awekotuku's story also queerly destabilises dominant Western historiographies that focus on the achievements of predominantly heterosexual, white and empowered men.

Te Awekotuku embodies a catalytic entanglement for *Queer Pavilion* with art, academia, Indigenous, queer and feminist politics. In a recent interview she was asked what message she would give to future LGBTIQ+.

She acknowledged the importance of looking at visual artefacts and ancestral connection, saying "Never give up. Never, never give up. And know that... ahakoa he te ao wairua — even though you cannot see us, we are there for you; we are there for you. Just look at our photographs, just look at our carvings, just look at our imagery, and we will be there for you."<sup>225</sup>

I held onto these foundational queer histories as I assembled *Queer Pavilion*. I thought of the courageous activists who had protested on the grounds of Rangipuke and made themselves visible in an inhospitable era in Aotearoa's near-distant past.

## 4.2.4 Walking forward into the past

My research into the GLF also influenced queer community politics in a discussion around the meeting point of the Pride Parade in 2019. On December 18, 2018, The Auckland Pride Board held a community hui at the Freemans Bay Hall. Members had gathered to discuss alternatives to the cancelled Pride Parade following the withdrawal of key corporate sponsors due to the banning of police uniforms. At this meeting I suggested that an event could take place in Rangipuke and informed those gathered of its significance to local queer history. Subsequent to the hui, a decision was made to begin the 2019 Auckland Pride March from Rangipuke to honour the memory of the 1972 GLF protest. This ecology of art, queer histories and politics was further extended in the works of *Queer Pavilion*.

<sup>225</sup> "Interview with Ngahuia Te Awekotuku," *National Library of New Zealand*, July 4, 2018, <https://natlib.govt.nz/he-tohu/korero/interview-with-ngahuia-te-awekotuku>.

# 4.3

## Queer Pavilion takes flight

The key aim of *Queer Pavilion* was to create queer representation in light of bttm methodology and its aim to support queer, decolonial and ecological conversations.

226 Trudie McNaughton, ed., *Countless Signs: The New Zealand Landscape in Literature – An Anthology* (Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986), 5.

227 The title *Queer Pavilion* ran dynamically off across Rebecca Steedman's posters designs. The series incorporated interconnected systems of letters that formed chain links and reflected the multiplicity of intersecting voices and experiences that the event aimed to support. Steedman's designs were presented on a variety of platforms, both on and off-line - from risograph prints to animated digital GIFs. I drew a historical connection between Steedman's designs and Massimo Vignelli's iconic 1972 design for the New York City Subway system. Both designers adopted minimalistic elements, bold colour and paired backed typefaces, Vignelli with Max Miedinger's *Helvetica*(1957) and Steedman with local typographer Kris Sowersby's *Untitled Sans* (2017) to aid in the navigatation complex 'underground' systems. (Figures 4.2, 4.8, 4.11)

228 Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 22.

229 "Trans\* Week 2020," The Stonewall Alliance Centre, accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.stonewallchico.com/transweek>.

230 Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 233.

Within the local context, the changing of place names as European settlers began to claim land in this country amounted to a linguistic coup.<sup>226</sup> Aotearoa became New Zealand, Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland and Rangipuke, Albert Park. Naming is a powerful act, embedded in modernity's construction of power and knowledge, and as such I carefully considered the naming of *Queer Pavilion*.<sup>227</sup>

My use of the word 'queer' in the title of the pavilion draws directly on queer theory and a desire for the event to be easily identifiable as queer in the public domain. At the heart of queer theory lies Sedgwick's powerfully simply axiom "People are different from each other" and as such I felt the word 'queer' communicated my aim that the pavilion was a venue to support difference and relationality.<sup>228</sup>

The word 'pavilion' comes from the Latin word for butterfly, papilio, via the French papillon. Queer theory's accommodation of fluidity and transience is appropriately commensurate with the life-cycle and movement of butterflies. The butterfly has also been adopted as a symbol by the trans community because of its association with transformation and freedom.<sup>229</sup>

Pavilions are often associated with prestigious large-scale international art events, such as the Serpentine Pavilion series in London or the national pavilions at the Venice Biennale. Thus the naming of my local, small-scale *Queer Pavilion* had a drag-esque irony, akin to Halberstam's observation of drag kings, that he posits as a parody that exposes the social construction of power and knowledge by offering part tribute, part earnest mimicry and part cynical critique.<sup>230</sup> Thus, the use of 'pavilion' acted as a subtle critique of art-world hierarchies, delivered with a with a mischievous side-wink.

Queer Pavilion  
 Albert Park  
 Tāmaki Makaurau

Hours 11—6pm  
 1—5 & 7 February 2020  
 Auckland Pride Festival

Artists include:  
 Ary Jansen  
 Hobbs & Mahonri  
 Michael McCabe  
 Sione Mōnu  
 Forest Vicky Kapo  
 Richard Orjis  
 Whaea & the Rumble  
 val smith  
 Daniel John Corbett Sanders  
 Rebecca Steedman  
 Jaimee Stockman-Young  
 Layne Waerea



Figure 4.8. Rebecca Steedman, *Queer Pavilion*, 2020, timeline posters, Tāmaki Makaurau.



Figure 4.9. Map of events, *Queer Pavilion*, 2020, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Figure 4.10. *Queer Pavilion*, February 1, 2020, photograph by Richard Orjis, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.



Figure 4.11. *Rebecca Steedman's poster designs, Queer Pavilion, February 1, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.*

# 4.3.1 Light-footed and off balance: The *Queer Pavilion* structure<sup>240</sup>

Micheal McCabe is an architectural designer based in Tāmaki Makaurau whose practice specialises in the intersection of queer theory and the construction of place.<sup>231</sup>

The preliminary discussions between McCabe, Smith and myself about the *Queer Pavilion* moved between what a queer structure might be in light of queer theory and more pragmatic concerns of creating something weatherproof and easily transportable.

We shared a common ambition that the structure should be a materialisation of queerness as described by Barad, as something always in motion, “an enfolded, reiteratively materialising promiscuously inventive spatio-temporality”.<sup>232</sup> We also enjoyed Sedgwick’s observation that queerness should resist the concrete and monolithic. With these notions in mind, McCabe created a peripatetic assemblage of multiple elements that twisted, twerked and transformed as it moved across Rangipuke.<sup>233</sup>

McCabe’s structures for *Queer Pavilion* consisted of five movable sandwich-board stands, ranging in size from 1 to 1.8 metres in height (Figures 4.12 – 4.13). The collection of unfixed components linked together with movable

231 I had been introduced to Micheal McCabe and his queering of architectural practice through Dr Karamia Muller, when she invited us both to critique students work at the School of Architecture and Planning (University of Auckland) in 2018.

232 Karen Barad, “Nature’s Queer Performativity” *Woman, Gender and Research* 1, no.2 (2012): 25-52.

233 The project aligns itself to Sedgwick’s definition of queer theory, as she posits, “That’s one of the things that “queer” can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone’s gender, of anyone’s sexuality, aren’t made (or can’t be made) to signify monolithically.” Sedgwick. *Tendencies*, 8.



Figure 4.12. Micheal McCabe, Marquette for the *Queer Pavilion*, 2019, Tāmaki Makaurau.



sandwich-boards, but as protest garments and pedagogical tools.

For example, on Wednesday, May 24, 1972, a group of six GLF student protestors gathered outside the 246 Queen St Shopping Centre wearing sandwich-boards proclaiming: “I am gay — ask me about it” and “I support GLF — ask me why”.<sup>234</sup>

In contrast to the GLF’s hand-drawn cardboard signs, McCabe’s sandwich-boards were constructed from lightweight poplar-ply and perforated using a CNC router. The surface pattern of polka-dot cut-outs was broken up by larger islands of amorphous dripping voids.

The boards became important sites for displaying posters, timetables, archival material and workshop ephemera.<sup>235</sup> The pavilion structure was utilised in a myriad of ways by participants, and across the six-day event it

Figure 4.13. *Queer Pavilion*, February 3, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau. (From left to right: Caryline Boreham, Sharon Fitnss, Micheal McCabe and Carmel Rowden).

<sup>234</sup> Baumber, 52.

The sandwich board comprises of two boards hinged at the top and gaining stability from its triangular form. It is usually utilised to display images and text to sell a product, service or idea. The sandwich board grew in popularity during the nineteenth century with the rise of urban centres and is now surpassed by online advertising and billboards more suited to drive-by viewing. I associate them with community centres or easels used in early childhood educational settings. When sandwich boards are worn on the body, they engendered feelings of unease of using the human as a prop for marketing, which is not the case when worn for protest.

<sup>235</sup> These archival materials were sourced from the Lesbian and Gay Archive of New Zealand (LAGANZ) and articles from the 1972 GLF protests found in *Craccum* magazine and *Broadsheet* magazine’s 1973 publication of “The Gay Liberation Manifesto” alongside articles on *Nghauia Te Awekotuku* and Sharon Alston.

morphed into a shop front, library, archive, café, camp-site, embroidery frame, protective fort, studio, a sacred site, therapeutic space and gallery.

The location of the pavilion also changed daily, responding to a need for specific topography, shelter or electricity (which was accessed free from a socket in the band rotunda) (Figure 4.9). On other days the location was symbolic, for example when people wanted to move closer to the inaugural *Gay Day* site besides the Queen Victoria statue (February 4 and 5, 2020). To keep the pavilion safe from vandalism, it was moved to a locked area behind the park's Caretaker's Cottage at the end of each day.

## 4.3.2

# Queerating: My role

Planning for the *Queer Pavilion* began fifteen months before the event's official opening on a sunny Saturday morning at the start of February, 2020. My role as a socio-ecological artist continued to draw on scaffolding as a helpful metaphor, as I built structures of emotional, physical and financial support around the participating artists. Aligned with Gablik and Helguera's observation of socially and ecologically engaged art practitioners, my role was primarily connective, acting as a "catalytic initiator."<sup>236</sup> I moved between being a co-conceptualiser, fundraiser, activist, producer, educator, host, caterer, curator, media-liaison, writer, participant, health and safety officer, activist and queer kin. I took on these multiple identities willingly as I sought to build a platform for queer representation and cultivate collaborative dialogue between people, place and the past.

As I stated earlier, the *Queer Pavilion* artists, designers and performers came from smith and my queer and creative friendship networks. They were creative practitioners that we knew and respected and whose work we felt could enrich the project through their diverse perspectives.<sup>237</sup> Although I did not know many of the performers smith had suggested before the project began, working within our established social groupings meant that there was an easy culture of care and equitable exchange present throughout the project. In this model, friendship can be understood as a social bond built on shared affection, esteem, and support, with a commitment to resolve any emerging conflict (although this did not arise).<sup>238</sup>

Within queer contemporary artistic communities, Binghao Wong proposed the concept of "queerating" that is also built on an ethos of collective care. Wong speaks to the heart of the word 'curate' itself, that derives from the Latin

<sup>236</sup> Gablik, 7.  
Helguera, 22.

<sup>237</sup> Foucault suggests that homosexual friendship, not homosexual sex, holds the biggest threat to social hegemonic power. In Foucault's formulation, homosexual friendship not only challenges prejudicial views that homosexual life is based purely on sex but it also demonstrates that alternative cultures, ethics and possibilities can flourish in defiance to norms.

Michel Foucault, *The Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Volume One - Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: The New Press, 1997), 135-140.

<sup>238</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "friend."

curare, 'to take care of,' and asked the curatorial provocation:

**how do I care for, work with, and remain accountable to queer artists, given that our bodies are all irrevocably outlawed? While disenfranchisement often acts as our morbidly unique binding agent, I began to think about the ways that queer bodies can also contribute to convalescing circuits. Rather than coming together only in times of grief, it should remain our existential imperative to laugh and heal in deviant solidarity.**<sup>239</sup>

Wong's proposition of "queerating" aligned to my ambitions for the *Queer Pavilion* as an agent to create community and support for queer artists themselves rather than merely exhibit works under a common theme.

As I worked across the professional divides of artist/curator I considered Laura Belém's words when she argued that "by extending the artistic practice to include curating, writing, and other forms of exchange and collaboration, we subvert relations of power and move toward a more truly democratic, pluralistic art sphere".<sup>240</sup>

Such democratic and collaborative modes are also synonymous with the 'bottom-up' politics utilised by activists, students and frontline workers that fight against inequality through collectivisation and acts of resistance.

During *Queer Pavilion* I favoured emergent curatorial strategies that empowered the

participating artists' agency to respond to the project in any way that was relevant to them. In the developmental stages of *Queer Pavilion*, my commitment to care crystallised through hosting a series of group discussions. These occasions offered an opportunity for the contributors to meet one another, clarify the project and share ideas and concerns. This ran concurrently with online dialogue via emails and zoom meetings, and a vital line of communication to those living outside Tāmaki Makaurau.

I spent time guiding participants through the artists' contracts and the AUT University ethics form. These documents outlined the rights and obligations of each participant, outlining the artist's fee, and stating that participants would have free use of any of my video and photographic documentation. An artist's fee of \$1000 was decided on between val and myself before we applied for Auckland Council funding. A number of artists requested to work collaboratively, in which case a fee of \$500 per person was established (see Appendix i-ii).

The importance of hospitality was a defining feature of *Queer Pavilion*. It had grown progressively in my practice through the insights gained from past events, especially the *bttm\_methodology* at Artspace Aotearoa where refreshments and free lunches were provided. I found that simple hospitable gestures made people feel welcome, and it was an easy way to show respect and generosity. During *Queer Pavilion*, I provided tea, coffee and daily lunches.

<sup>239</sup> Binghao Wong, "Queerating," *Autio Italia*, September 23, 2015, <http://autoitaliasoutheast.org/news/queerating>.

<sup>240</sup> Jens Hoffmann, "The Next Documenta Should Be Curated By An Artist," *E-flux*, February 12, 2004, <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/42825/the-next-documenta-should-be-curated-by-an-artist>.

Alys Longley records her experience of *Queer Pavilion* in her Art New Zealand article *Folds of Time, Blooms of Vibrancy*:

**Richard offers me coffee, and three types of milk to choose from. This begins a pattern that will carry on through the week, as the Pavilion is more a tender, embracing nomadic spatiality than any actual artistic object, performance, moment or visual motif. The Pavilion exists through practices of hosting and manaakitanga, so that queer space and time are made manifest, made ordinary, made as vibrant as the super-bright, super watered gardens in a drought-drenched summer.**<sup>241</sup>

These acts of hospitality and queering have a resonance with Maria Puig de la Bellacasa's conceptualisation of care, where she states that care is everything undertaken to maintain, continue and repair the world.<sup>242</sup>

Care also destabilises individualism; as Puig de la Bellacasa suggests, 'to care' and 'to be cared for' is an admission that we are ecologically connected and need others to survive. She also observes that care-work is a feminist issue that traditionally falls to the role of women, charged with the essential task of looking after society's most vulnerable while at the same time being socially and financially undercompensated.<sup>243</sup>

Acts of caring can be highly rewarding and, when paired with art and activism, are

reminiscent of Adrienne Maree Brown's concept of 'Pleasure activism'.<sup>244</sup> Brown reimagines the quest for social justice as holding the potential of being the most pleasurable and healing of human experiences. She notes that reclaiming pleasure is a liberatory act that is often denied minority groups under the weight of oppression. In line with Brown, I wanted *Queer Pavilion* to be a site for queer representation that was creatively and socially rewarding for participants.

241 Alys Longley, "Folds of Time, Blooms of Vibrancy: Queer Pavilion in the Park," *Art New Zealand*, no. 174, Winter, 2020, 61.

242 María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care : Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 161.

243 Puig de la Bellacasa, 14.

244 Adrienne Brown, *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* (Chico: AK Press, 2019).

The origins of Brown's *Pleasure Activism* comes from Audre Lorde's 1978 essay, *Uses of the Erotic: Erotic as Power*. Lorde's use of erotic is more expansive than it is contemporary usage as purely sexual; it references Greek eros and all the variances and empowering possibilities of love - from emotional, physical, psychic and intellectual forms.

Audre Lorde, *Sister Outside: Essay and Speeches* (Berkeley: Crossing Press, 1984).

## 4.4 The artworks at play

### 4.4.1 The artist's contributions

The full list of contributors to *Queer Pavilion* included Ralph Brown, Daniel John Corbett Sanders, Ary Jansen, forest vicky kapo, Micheal McCabe, Sione Monu, Mahonri + Hobbs (Mahonri Rakete and Rebecca Ann Hobbs), Mega Pash Action (Alana Yee, Marika Pratley and Virginia Kennard), Rebecca Steedman, Jaimee Stockman-Young, Layne Waerea, and Whaea & The Rumble (Piripi Huirua-Mackie and Taranaki



Figure 4.14..Layne Waerea, *Māori Love Hotel*, *Queer Pavilion*, February 4, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Queen Street, Tāmaki Makaurau. (From left to right: Tessa Laird, Tuafale Tanoa'i aka Linda.T, Xin Cheng and Layne Waerea)

Ah Young-Grace née Siobhan Leilani) (Figure 4.8), along with smith and myself.

I will give a brief thematic overview of the artworks hosted by the *Queer Pavilion* to give a sense of the events breadth and illuminate several modalities that emerged; including a counter-colonial stance, resistance to heteronormative regimes and the impulse towards queer connectivity.<sup>245</sup>

After this overview, I focus in greater depth on five events or artworks that our encapsulate core intentions for the event: *Sapphic pilgrimage*, an impromptu walk that I convened with Mega Pash Action; the covert urination performance *With love and fond memories* by Corbett Sanders; *Scat hunt*, a competition run by val Smith; *Ghosting the Queer* by forest vicky kapo and Wā Pakiwaitara Storytime and Collaborative Cloak-making Workshop with Mahonri + Hobbs.

A number of the *Queer Pavilion* artists engaged with counter-colonial strategies that Te Awēkotuku contextualised within a lineage of Māori art and activism. She asserts:

**Political comment and protest through art have been an integral part of the Māori world. The powerful, riveting song-poems of the prophet-warrior Te Kooti; the intense, vibrant wall panels of such great carved houses as Te Whai a Te Motu and Ngararanui, illustrate this tradition. Creativity was a potent weapon in political battle – and it has remained so.**<sup>246</sup>



Figure 4.15. Layne Waerea, *Māori Love Hotel*, *Queer Pavilion*, February 4, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Queen Street, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Figure 4.16. Whaea & The Rumble's Piripi Mackie and Taranaki Ah Young-Grace née Siobhan Leilani, *Queer Pavilion*, February 4, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Queen Street, Tāmaki Makaurau.

<sup>245</sup> I valued all the work that the artists created for *Queer Pavilion*. Each project was given equal footing in the event itself, however equal weighting in the written form is beyond the scope of this document. To keep within the required word-limit I have focussed on five artworks that encapsulated the core aspirations of *Queer Pavilion*.

<sup>246</sup> Te Awēkotuku, 164.



Figure 4.17. A *Sione Monu's* mask installed on a tree, *Queer Pavilion*, February 4, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Queen Street, Tāmaki Makaurau

Figure 4.18. A *Sione Monu's* mask installed on a tree, *Queer Pavilion*, February 4, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Queen Street, Tāmaki Makaurau

Waerea's work *Māori Love Hotel* (11 am – 5 pm, February 1, 2020) sat at the nexus of colonial conflict and a desire for equitable relational exchange. The artist created an intersecting dialogue between the Pavilion's February date and the month's key cultural events: the Auckland Pride Festival, Valentine's Day and Waitangi Day. Waerea's installation turned the Pavilion into an operating shopfront for Māori love merchandise and a garden of protest signs (Figures 4.14– 4.15).

The lyrics of Whaea & The Rumble's musical performance of *Tūrangawaewae* (11 am -12 midday, February 1, 2020, and 5 pm – 6 pm February 7, 2020) included sections from Ranginui Walker's *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End* (1990) (Figure 4.16).<sup>247</sup> Ranginui Walker's scholarship fundamentally challenged the dominant historical narrative of the time by centralising the Māori experience in the history of Aotearoa. Whaea & The Rumble's rallying cries called for the preservation of Takatāpui, Indigenous land and Te reo Māori.

Monu's work's *I'm here. Where are you?* (February 4, 2020) offered the participatory wearing of floral-masks, re-imagining Kahoa Kakala - the Tongan fine art of flower garlands. (Figure 4.17- 4.18).<sup>248</sup>



<sup>247</sup> Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Mātou: Struggle Without End* (Auckland: Penguin,1990).

<sup>248</sup> Links to Monu's works on Instagram:

Sione Monu, *I'm here. Where are you?, 1/3, Queer Pavilion*, February 4, 2020, video, 00'30".  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/B8H-XZkJULe/>

Sione Monu, *I'm here. Where are you?, 2/3, Queer Pavilion*, February 4, 2020, video, 00'21".  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/B8ljHpCpmRf/>

Sione Monu, *I'm here. Where are you?, 3/3, Queer Pavilion*, February 4, 2020, video, 00'38".  
<https://www.instagram.com/p/B8lLUjUpaYe/>



Figure 4.19. Ary Jansen, *Open-entry noise jam, Queer Pavilion, February 7, 2020, performance*, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.



Figure 4.20. Ary Jansen *playing at Open-entry noise jam, Queer Pavilion, February 7, 2020, performance*, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Monu's masks elucidated a dichotomy that queer people conceal their sexuality and gender in unsafe social environments and that costume and drag also allow identity to be celebrated, critiqued and subverted. They also exhibited three short films made on their smartphone and directly uploaded onto the *Queer Pavilion* Instagram page.

Monu's films playfully highlighted the complexity inherent in human interactions and how the internet has enabled Pasifika people to form globalised online communities after suffering the effects of a diaspora disempowered through colonialism.<sup>249</sup>

Other artists created initiatives to foster queer connectivity. Jansen hosted an *Open-entry noise jam* in an unwillingness to accept competitive modes or conventional expertise (4 pm- 5 pm, February 1, 2020). He set up speakers, microphones and instruments, and a hand-painted sign invited people to "Pick up an instrument and join in! All Welcome (No musical experience necessary)" (Figures 4.19 - 4.21 ). Jansen's work found rewards in community and moments of creative abandon freed from the pressures of conformity and rules and the emotional toll of 'queer failure' to live up to societal expectations of success or normativity.

In response to the Auckland Pride Festival fall-out over police uniforms a year earlier, Stockman-Young created *Communication Workshop* ( 11 am – 12 midday, February 7, 2020) by sharing techniques built on deep listening, mirroring, validation and the clear articulation of one's needs. Stockman-Young's workshop demonstrated a conscious reorientation away from contemporary art that is content with presenting the issues towards offering practical tools that might improve a situation or make participants feel better.



Figure 4.21. Ary Jansen, *Open-entry noise jam*, *Queer Pavilion*, February 7, 2020, performance, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau. (From left to right: Winifred Edgar-Booty, Micheal McCabe, Eloise Amelia Veber and Virginia Kennard)

<sup>249</sup> Lana Lopesi identifies a double-edge sword, that online platforms support broader access and discourse of Pasifika art and culture while ultimately still being controlled and profited from by established Western neo-liberal power networks, specifically those in Silicon Valley.

Lana Lopesi, *False Divides* (Auckland: Bridget Williams Books, 2018), 92-97.

## 4.4.2 Sapphic pilgrimage

While my role was primarily event facilitator, I also contributed to an unscheduled spontaneous pilgrimage with performance collective Mega Pash Action.

In response to a discussion that the performance collective Mega Pash Action's held on the first day of *Queer Pavilion* I organised for us to take a Sapphic pilgrimage in honour of the Greek poet Sappho (5 pm – 6 pm, February 5, 2020). Mega Pash Action had begun their event by inviting people to share their ancestral heritage (*CommuniTea & Chat*, 4 pm-5 pm, February 1, 2020) (Figure 4.22).<sup>250</sup>

Mega Pash Action founder Yee told the group how her Wellington grandparents had assisted Māori activist and drag performer Carmen Rupe set up her International Coffee House in the 1960s (Figure 4.23). Pratley, another Mega Pash Action member, talked about her Greek ancestors coming from the Island of Lesbos in the North-Eastern Aegean Sea.

I told her that I had recently discovered a 1973 bronze sculpture of Sappho by Greek-American artist Aleko Kyriakos mysteriously installed outside Nando's chicken restaurant on Queen Street.

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<sup>250</sup> Alana Yee assembled Mega Pash Action after graduating from Dance Studies (UNITEC) in 2006. Yee operates under the aspirational ethos that contemporary dance should embody the co-creative excitement, spirit and verve experience at live music events and on nightclubs dance floors.



Figure 4.22. Mega Pash Action, *CommuniTea & Chat*, *Queer Pavilion*, February 1, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.



The seventh-century poet Sappho's reputation for loving women made her island home of Lesbos synonymous with same-sex desire, from which the designation Lesbian derives.<sup>251</sup>

In one further queer connection, Volkerling referred to herself as a "sapphic woman" when she came out on national television in 1971, stating that lesbians had always been at the forefront of women's movements.<sup>252</sup>

For the *Sapphic pilgrimage* I adorned myself with a silver-sequined cloak, a stainless-steel and leather mask designed by Clara Chon, a white towel from the Centurian Sauna topped with a baby-blue baseball embellished by Cat Ruka (Figure 4.1).<sup>253</sup> Pratley performed music on her mobile sound-system as the group ambled down from Rangipuke to Queen Street. When we arrived at the site, I spread my cloak out in front of Sappho and proceeded to decorate her body with dried flowers, placing bunches in the

Figure 4.23. Alana Yee of Mega Pash Action, *Queer Pavilion*, February 5, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

<sup>251</sup> *Online Etymology Dictionary*, s.v. "Lesbian," accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/lesbian>.

<sup>252</sup> Hugh Young, "Part 1 – Before Stonewall and NZ Gay liberation," *GayNZ.com*, July 11, 2002, <http://gaynz.net.nz/history/Part1.html>

<sup>253</sup> Centurian Sauna is a gay men's sauna located Beresford Square in the central city.

hollows of her dark patinated body. Kyriakos had depicted Sappho reclining and ominously faceless, possibly because no known depictions of her exist.<sup>254</sup> Kennard slowly danced and read Sapphic verse while wearing a pink baseball cap reading "Make Cunts Great Again".<sup>255</sup>

The others present gathered around Sappho in silence, observing or documenting the event on their smartphones. This improvised and unscheduled ritual took place as the late afternoon light turned golden: a slow-motioned reverence to queer divinity, juxtaposed with the urban frenzy and that swirled around it (Figure 4.24). The activation was a reminder of how queer histories have often existed hidden in plain view, only becoming apparent through information shared via queer relational networks or archival research.

254 Gisela Richter, *The Portraits of the Greeks* (London: Phidon, 1965), 172.

An excerpt from AGMANZ News in 1973 reads, "The Auckland City Art Gallery's recently purchased bronze sculpture "Sappho" by Aleko Kyriakos, is intended for the Sculpture Garden but is at present resting in the Art Gallery Foyer. The 6ft 4ins reclining figure was made by the lost wax process and had an outer dark patina."

Beverly Macpherson, *AGMANZ News : The Art Galleries & Museums association of New Zealand* 4, no. 3, August 1973, 48.

255 A parody of the Donald Trump supporter's red MAGA (Make America Great Again) baseball caps.



Figure 4.24. *Worshipping Sappho, Queer Pavilion*, February 5, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Queen Street, Tāmaki Makaurau.

# 4.4.3

## *With love and fond memories* (11 am – 5 pm, February 5, 2020)

In a ritual of another kind, Corbett Sanders' clandestine daylight performance *With love and fond memories* saw the artist enact a subtle gesture of covertly urinating on the park's arboreal inhabitants. The work ran antithetically to the 1972 "CAMPS COME OUT" rallying cry of GLF protestors. While public declaration of one's sexuality has been a core socio-political strategy of gay liberation for the last half-century.<sup>256</sup> Corbett Sanders' regression into the shadows can be seen as a defiant counter-act of marking one's territory against the assimilative politics of present-day LGBTTQIA+ politics.

The performance skirted carefully around the law, as urinating in public only becomes criminal if seen and the viewer takes offence,<sup>257</sup> yet Corbett Sanders was still likely to have been captured by one of the park's numerous CCTV cameras.<sup>259</sup> The prevalence of digital surveillance has turned Rangipuke into a version of Bentham's all-seeing panopticon prison and is a reason for the downturn in outdoor cruising.<sup>259</sup>

Foucault observed that the awareness of being under constant surveillance induces people to implement ever-increasing degrees of self-control in relation to societal expectations and norms; a truth that was flouted in this performance.<sup>260</sup>

256 McCann and Monaghan, 49.

257 *Summary Offences Act 1981*, Offences resembling nuisance, 32. Excreting in public place, <http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1981/0113/latest/DLM53598.html>.

258 James Pasley, "Albert Park Gets Bright Lights and \$80,000 Worth of Surveillance for User Safety," *Stuff*, May 8, 2017, <https://i.stuff.co.nz/auckland/92327332/albert-park-gets-bright-lights-and-80000-worth-of-surveillance-for-user-safety>.

259 "Cruising Pavilion," 16th Venice Architecture Biennale, May 24, 2018, <http://www.cruisingpavilion.com>.

260 Foucault states that the panopticon, "Make[s] it possible to see constantly and to recognise immediately. In short, it reverses the principle of the dungeon...— to enclose, to deprive of light and to hide—it preserves the first and eliminates the other two. Full lighting and the eye of a supervisor capture better than darkness, which ultimately protected. Visibility is a trap."

Michel Foucault ; translated from the French by Alan Sheridan. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 215.

While gay liberation has forged many advances in contemporary social life for all genders, Corbett Sanders questioned the aspects of queer culture that have been lost in 'Rainbow community' type formulas of queerness. Nonnormative construction of queer selves and more expansive forms of socio-sexual, political community formation can be traced in minor transgressions of State protocols.

Duggan's *The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism* observed that the 1990s marked a departure from the radical sexual outlaws of a generation earlier.<sup>261</sup> Homonormativity runs counter to twentieth-century figures like Jean Genet, Carmen Rupe or Freda Stark who celebrated queer exceptionalism and melded same-sex attraction with creative self-expression, criminality and hedonistic allure. Corbett Sanders' title, *With love and fond memories*, reads as a bereavement note to the past, a lament for the loss of outdoor cruising cultures due to online apps and urban gentrification, and of the generation of irreverent, risk-taking, boundary-pushing queers that included artists, academics and activists that were killed by AIDS.

In a contemporary art context, Corbett Sanders' acts of urination drew a direct line to the provocative moment when Duchamp boldly exhibited the ready-made porcelain urinal, *Fountain* (1917).<sup>262</sup> Blake suggests that Duchamp was queer art's progenitor, not because of any known same-sex relations but because he formulated acts of resistance against monolithic cultural conventions: "His works played with gender, twisted language into arch double-entendres."<sup>263</sup> Furthermore, Paul B. Franklin deemed that the object-choice of the urinal forever imbued *Fountain* with a queer subtext of cruising.<sup>264</sup>

The origins of the public toilet in the early nineteenth-century stemmed from a desire to discourage men from urinating in streets and on monuments but immediately triggered a concern about the toilet's use for same-sex liaisons.<sup>265</sup>

As alluring as it might be to romanticise the past, the social stigma around homosexuality often drove men to seek sex with other men in parks and toilets and laws and they were left them with few alternatives.

One further reference point for the acts of urination is the current debate about Trans people's right to use the bathroom of their choice. Corbett Sanders' queering act recalls how the policing of queer bodies in public toilets has been integral to queer politics for nearly 200 years.

<sup>261</sup> Duggan, 179.

<sup>262</sup> It is important to note that Amelia Jones has suggested Duchamp role in *Fountain* was more curatorial, as she posits the actual creator was German poet and artist, Baroness Elsa von Freytag-Loringhoven. However murky its origination, the advent of the ready-made shifted the production of art away from the retinal towards the conceptual and forever reorientated to the role of the artist; a foundation that *Queer Pavilion* drew upon in its grounding in conceptual and collaborative modes

Amelia Jones, *Irrational Modernism: A Neurasthenic History of New York Dada* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004).

Franklin posits that Duchamp initially chose the urinal as he thought it would have the least likely chance of carrying favour, contrasting with its present-day value and importance within Contemporary art. Consequently, pissing has gained an almost sanctified position in art, with examples such as Andy Warhol's *Oxidation Series* (1977), Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ* (1987), Helen Chadwick's *Piss Flowers* (1991-1992) or Wolfgang Tillman's *Man Pissing on Chair* (1997).

Paul B. Franklin. "Object Choice: Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain* and the Art of Queer Art History," *Oxford Art Journal* 23, no. 1(2000), 31.

<sup>263</sup> Blake, "Curating in a Different Light", 6.

<sup>264</sup> Franklin, 23.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid.

# 4.4.4 *Scat hunt* (11 am - 12 midday, February 5, 2020)

Just as Corbett-Sanders thwarted the boundaries of normativity, smith's *Scat hunt* reconceptualised hunting for animal faeces as a team sport and an exercise in queer ecological thinking (Figure 4.26). *Scat hunt* drew on the queer and absurd, from the scientific investigation of faecal matter in scatology, to sexual arousal gained in scatophilia, and the childish enjoyment of obscenity in scatological humour.<sup>266</sup>

A two-metre-long trestle table was covered with various plastic containers, hand-sanitiser, paper-towels, rubber-gloves, a small silver desk-bell and hand-drawn maps. At the centre of the table smith had placed a Celestron digital microscope that gave the staging a legitimate scientific association, which was gently contradicted by a



266 Collins Dictionary, s.v. "Scat," accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/scat>.

Collins Dictionary, s.v. "Scatology," accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/scatology>.

Raymond Corsini, "Scatophilia," *The Dictionary of Psychology* (Philadelphia: Brunner-Routledge, 2002), 224.

Figure 4.25. val smith , *Scat hunt poster*, *Queer Pavilion*, February 5, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

blue sequin capelet teetering off the end.<sup>267</sup>

During the *Scat hunt* induction, smith assembled participants into teams and explained with an air of complete seriousness how to record the taxonomy of their scatological findings and their locations on a provided map. Bird shit was worth 2 points, rat shit 5 points, cat shit and other small mammal faeces 15 points and dog shit 10 points. Human shit delivered the most, at 20 points (Figure 4.25).

At the beginning of *Scat hunt*, I was apprehensive about both contagion and how my invited teammate might respond to the abject nature of this task. These concerns quickly dissipated as I observed her nonchalantly scraping a sample off a discarded pair of brightly patterned underwear found by the public toilets. She said she had been desensitised to faecal matter after raising two children and a dog. The incident intrigued me — how love and care could mitigate disgust. In the world of bondage, discipline (or domination), sadism and masochism (BDSM) urine and faeces also sit within an ambivalent terrain of degradation, intimacy and eroticism.

I connected this activity to the tension between abjection, human sexuality and liberation in a campaign by gay activists soon after the Stonewall Riots. A flyer circulated around Greenwich Village, NY in 1969 advertising the world's first GLF meeting, stated "DO YOU THINK HOMOSEXUALS ARE REVOLTING? YOU BET YOUR SWEET ASS WE ARE".<sup>268</sup> In a similar vein, smith's *Scat hunt* challenged centuries-old moralising that imbues alternative sexualities, sex and genders with dirtiness and shame. smith's humorous embrace of scat provided catharsis, transforming the unpalatable, universally shared, uncontrollable and shame-inducing act of shitting into a moment of

connective relief.<sup>269</sup> Akin to queer theorists such as Halberstam, smith embraces both philosophical rigour and absurdist humour or goofiness in resistance to the seriousness of the academy.

*Scat hunt's* competitive elements embodied what Halberstam identified as consumer society's obsession with meaningless competition, along with its relegation of queerness as a failure because of its rejection of reproduction and normative behaviour.<sup>270</sup> Reality television exemplifies Halberstam's observations about the banal gamification of everything from dating, marriage and cooking to renovations and weight-loss. Physical activity has long been associated with competitive sport, yet contemporary art has also been competitivised with events such as The Walters Prize.<sup>271</sup>

<sup>267</sup> Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 187.

<sup>268</sup> Donn Teal, *The Gay Militants* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), 19.

<sup>269</sup> Cindy LaCom also notes that both Lacan and Freud connected the development of shame to early childhood experiences of shitting and the failure to remain clean and contained.

Cindy LaCom, "Filthy Bodies, Porous Boundaries: The Politics of Shit in Disability Studies," *Disability Studies Quarterly* 27, no.1/2 (2007):14, <https://search-ebsco-host-com.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e-do&AN=25005542&site=eds-live>

<sup>270</sup> Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*, 5.

<sup>271</sup> The Walters Prize is a biannual competition held at the Auckland Art Gallery. An international judge is invited to award one of four local artists a \$50,000 prize.



In biology, Joan Roughgarden has questioned Darwin’s observations of evolution, stating that her research had revealed “sophisticated relationships among animals, relationships that involve honesty and cooperation as much as or more than deceit and competition.”<sup>272</sup>

The legacy of Darwin’s theories have legitimised fierce individualism, competition and social inequality as natural, under the slogan “survival of the fittest,” while bttm methodology ascribes value and meaning to all humans and with all more than human and non-life.<sup>273</sup>

Gardeners are familiar with the relationship between manure and its power to generate food for harvest, and beauty in plant-forms. Haraway reconceptualised the human body as a mobile compost pile — a hot, scrappy, nutrient-dense mess and a vehicle that supports multiple life-forms and a flourishing queer ecology of thought.<sup>274</sup> She disrupts the

Figure 4.26. val smith , *Scat hunt, Queer Pavilion*, February 5, 2020, performance, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

<sup>272</sup> Joan Roughgarden, *Evolution’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013),101.

<sup>273</sup> Robert Bannister, *Social Darwinism: Science and Myth in Anglo-American Social Thought*. American Civilization (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979).

<sup>274</sup> Donna Haraway, “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin,” *Environmental Humanities* 6, (2015):161.

conceptual containment of the human body and subjectivity to be seen instead as fluid, deeply relational and multi-species.<sup>275</sup> At every stage of eating, breathing, digesting and defecating we are melting, decomposing back into other beings and the earth. Human subjectivity can be destabilised or 'queered' by considering the trillions of microbial life-forms, from bacteria, bacteriophage, fungi, protozoa to viruses, that co-exist in and on the human body.<sup>276</sup>

bttm methodology aligned with Haraway's composting ruminations by acknowledging the intersubjective position of the researcher, and as Sedgwick enthusiastically asserts: "Promiscuous we! Me, plus anybody else. Permeable we!" suggesting that by accepting our messy permeability with others we can rupture subjectivity into a generative, inter-relational and reparative networks.<sup>277</sup> In an offering to this microbiome and gut-health, smith awarded fibre supplement as *Scat hunt* prizes.

Once *Scat hunt* had finished, smith unwrapped and processed each team's findings, scraping tiny amounts of samples onto paper-thin glass squares and photographing them under the microscopic lens. The abject matter was transformed, any clear distinction between animal faeces blurred to the untrained eye, as worlds of complex frothy cellular architecture were exposed, complete with intricate patination and bubbling facades that resembled stained-glass windows. smith's cellular magnification illustrated the power that art and science hold to change perceptions through subtle shifts in perspective (Figure 4.27).



Figure 4.27. Enlarged faecal sample, val smith , *Scat hunt*, *Queer Pavilion*, February 5, 2020, microscopic photograph by val smith, Rangipuke, Tamaki Makaurau.

<sup>275</sup> Sedgwick. *A Dialogue on Love*, 106.

<sup>276</sup> Erin Ferranti et al., "20 Things You Didn't Know About the Human Gut Microbiome," *The Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing* 29, no.6 (2014): 479–481. <sup>277</sup> Sedgwick. *A Dialogue on Love*, 106.

In *A Dialogue on Love*, Sedgwick also reflects that her most revealing insights were found in the overlooked and uncomfortable, a process she referred to as spinning "silk and shit" together. Similarly, anal sex requires negotiation of taboo in the pursuit of pleasure.

## 4.4.5 *Ghosting the Queer*

While smith wove connective threads between abjection and ecology, kapo's *Ghosting the Queer* confronted the intersection of environmental concern, colonisation and trans-homophobia (11:30 am – 3 pm, February 2, 2020). The installation consisted of a smoke-machine, a single-channel video work and eight ready-made pink and navy blue umbrella clusters laid out over the park's dry summer grass (Figures 4.28 – 4.29).

kapo's video work depicted an undulating carpet of soft green coral swaying on the ocean floor.<sup>278</sup> As carbon emissions warm the atmosphere and ocean temperature increase, one of the first casualties has been the sensitive biodiversity of coral reefs. As the algae which give coral their



278 forest vicky kapo, *Ghosting the Queer*, 2020, mixed media, Rangipuke, Auckland. (Music by artist, WBC and Video Footage courtesy of Ethan Daniels on Shutterstock. <https://www.shutterstock.com/video/clip-5438963-soft-coral-sinularia-sp-waves-slow-currents>).

Figure 4.28. forest vicky kapo , *Ghosting the Queer*, *Queer Pavilion*, February 1, 2020, installation, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.



known as coral bleaching.<sup>279</sup> kapo's pink and navy blue umbrellas shift the visual representation of whiteness that is often associated with freshness, hygiene and purity to a critique of the legacy of the colonial-capitalist and heteronormative nexus.

Ghosting, in the language of social media is the act of cutting somebody off without an explanation or reason for their actions. In our current ecological moment, kapo's title suggests that we are cutting off both the queer and the environment simultaneously.

The word 'ghost' drifted into English through Proto-Germanic roots, meaning breath or the spirit of angels, demons or human beings.<sup>280</sup> Ghosts, like clouds, are nebulous, hovering and temporal, apparitions that momentarily appear and remain intangibly out of reach.<sup>281</sup> Untouchable shapes trailing out from kapo's small portable smoke-machine connected

Figure 4.29. forest vicky kapo , *Ghosting the Queer, Queer Pavilion*, February 1, 2020, installation, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

<sup>279</sup> Nancy Knowlton, "Corals and Coral Reefs" *Smithsonian*, April 2018, <https://ocean.si.edu/ocean-life/invertebrates/corals-and-coral-reefs>.

<sup>280</sup> *Etymonline*, s.v. "Ghost," accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/ghost>.

<sup>281</sup> The work's meagre puffs of smoke play antithetically to the grandeur of the English translation of 'Aotearoa' -- The Land of the Long White Cloud. The country's European name New Zealand is similarly fluid, an aqueous alias translated from Dutch origins meaning sea-land.

to histories of diverse groupings of queer people that met in bars and nightclubs, veiled in hazy darkness. The haze also recalls the smoke of the devastating wild fires that were concurrently taking place in kapo's chosen home of Australia. Like the bleaching of the coral, the unprecedented fury and heat of the fires are a result of the legacy of coal and other fossil fuel extraction in an interconnected eco-system.

I imagined a rolling phantom enveloping the Australian landscape with plumes of screaming ghosts (human and nonhuman) rising into blackened skies.<sup>282</sup> A few weeks earlier, the bush fires across the Tasman had turned the skies of Tāmaki Makaurau a surreal photoshop-filter tangerine (January 5, 2020).

Janine Randerson suggests that catastrophes such as these produce a nascent ecological relationality where disparate groups are brought together to face the same ensuing environmental crisis.<sup>283</sup> Randerson argues that the current climate-change discourse must move beyond traditional and counterproductive divides and hierarchies that have privileged scientists, politicians and industry, and now place artists, Indigenous and activist-community voices at the table.

The installation's umbrella sculptures were tethered to yet another ghostly imagining. The Latin word 'umbra' means shade, shadow, darkness and also spirit.<sup>284</sup> The queer phrase 'throwing shade' emerged from the lexicon of New York Black and Latino Drag Ball culture, and means giving a humorous yet cutting critique of someone else's flaws.<sup>285</sup>

'Throwing shade' was evident in kapo's socio-environmental critique that aligned colonial and ecological trauma. When the concept of ghosting is extended in kapo's work from the

environmental to Indigenous and queer spaces, further references come to light. Because sexual orientation is arguably less discernible than other social markers such as race or sex and gender, queer people must make choices about secrecy or representation in all social interactions, like ghosts, continually coming in and out of view.<sup>286</sup> Such violent disorientation finds another metaphor in the unsettling ghosting that appears on malfunctioning television monitors where double images float, distorted and ungrounded.

*Ghosting the Queer* embodies both an Indigenous and a queer modes of being. Queer legacies are also embedded in histories of the

282 The Australian bush fires of 2019-2020 were globally unprecedented and saw more than twenty per cent of country's bush burnt.

"In the Line of Fire " *Nature Climate Change* 10, no.169 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-020-0720-5>.

283 Janine Randerson, *Weather As Medium : Toward a Meteorological Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018 ), xxxviii.

284 *Etymonline*, s.v. "umbra" accessed April 10, 2021, <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=umbrad>.

285 This use of the word shade was first recorded in Jennie Livingston's 1990 American documentary *Paris is Burning* and was popularised further by its use in the reality television series *RuPaul's Drag Race* (2009 -). "What Does 'Throw Shade' Mean?" *Merriam-Webster*, February 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/shade>.

I perceive something wonderfully camp about the umbrella, possibly because they occupy an ambiguous territory between fashion and utilitarian necessity, and that they seem comically inadequate against the power of the elements. In a similar vein, the 2019 Met Gala took inspiration from Susan Sontag 1964 essay, *Notes on Camp* and saw Lady Gaga revel in camp's comical exaggeration, artifice, as her tuxedoed entourage coquettishly carry black umbrellas down the blush-pink 'red carpet' of the Museum's entrance.

Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp," *Partisan Review* 31, no. 4 (Fall 1964):515-530.

286 Maggie Magee and Diana C. Miller, "Psychoanalysis and Women's Experiences of "Coming-Out": The Necessity of Becoming a "Bee Charmer," *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis* 22, no.3 (1994): 481-504.

decolonial struggle in Aotearoa. By the early 1970s Rangipuke was bearing witness to the decolonial Māori activism of Ngā Tamatoa. As students, Tuhiwai-Smith and Te Awekotuku were both early members of Ngā Tamatoa, an outcome of The Young Māori Leaders Conference organised by Ranginui Walker in 1970. The group mobilised around a decolonising drive to ratify The Treaty of Waitangi and amend a colonial history that had deprived Māori of their land, cultural practices and identity.

As already noted, Māori gay-rights activist Lee Smith along with Te Awekotuku rediscovered the term Takatāpui for Māori of diverse sex, genders and sexuality, thus providing an additional platform to be represented with the language and culture. Lee Smith was also instrumental in leading the Te Reo Māori Society, alongside Ngā Tamatoa and Te Huinga Rangatahi (the New Zealand Māori Students' Association) in collecting 30,000 signatures in 1972 that demanded the Government teach Te Reo Māori in schools. Lee Smith's activism in the twin struggles for gay rights and Māori sovereignty ultimately paved the way for the establishment of Māori language immersion schools and the recognition of Te Reo Māori as an official language in 1987.<sup>287</sup>

In the anglicised setting of Rangipuke's park, kapo's sheltering umbrellas resist colonial and heteronormative processes of assimilation, where Mana Whenua will no longer be ghosts in their ancestral homelands and queer people can find temporary sanctuary.

287 Ranginui Walker, "The Genesis Of Maori Activism," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 277, 2020, <https://search-ebscohostcom.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsdnz&AN=edsdnz.30020084&site=eds-live>.

Māmari Stephens, "Taonga, Rights and Interests: Some Observations on WAI 262 and the Framework of Protections for the Māori Language," *Victoria University of Wellington Law Review* 42, no. 2 (2011): 241–258.

## 4.4.6 *Wā Pakiwaitara Storytime and Collaborative Cloak-making*

The collectively-made feather cloak of Mahonri + Hobbs *Wā Pakiwaitara – Storytime and Collaborative Cloak-making* blended traditional Māori motifs with cosmopolitan queer vernacular and offered an example of bicultural collaborative practice ( 1 pm – 3pm, February 2,3 & 4, 2020) (Figure 4.30 - 4.31). The artists' intention was to create a garment that would inspire LGBTQIA+ communities. Mahonri Rakete's creative practice encompasses storytelling that focuses on sharing historical accounts and personal experiences. Rebecca Ann Hobbs' art practice is socially situated and has centred around her relationship with Ihumātao and a commitment to working as a non-Indigenous partner to Māori in their pursuit for Tino Rangatiratanga.<sup>289</sup>



Figure 4.30. Mahonri Rakete, *Wā Pakiwaitara Storytime and Collaborative Cloak-making, Queer Pavilion*, February 2, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

<sup>289</sup> Hobbs, "Ngā puia o Ihumātao".



Mahonri + Hobbs are key members of the activist group SOUL (Save Our Unique Landscape), that was founded in 2016 to halt the development of high-cost housing at Ihumātao. The ancestral land of Ihumātao has been part of longstanding grievance claims since its confiscation by the Crown in 1863. SOUL and many of the iwi who whakapapa to the whenua feared that the proposed development would destroy the ancient urupā (burial ground), fresh-water spring and ancestral mountain.<sup>290</sup> Mahonri + Hobbs are also connected through Mahonri's grandmother, Kuia Betty King, for whom they are both care-givers.

Before *Wā Pakiwaitara – Storytime*, a conversation with Betty King took place to gain her support for the project because of the intended links to Ihumātao. King's support continued throughout the project: she attended the first day of *Queer Pavilion* and blessed the completed feather cloak.

Figure 4.31. Mahonri + Hobbs, *Wā Pakiwaitara Storytime and Collaborative Cloak-making, Queer Pavilion*, February 2, 2020, photograph by Ralph Brown, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

<sup>290</sup> As European settler numbers grew after the signing of The Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, the Tainui tribes of the Waikato decided to resist selling any more land and established The Kīngitanga (The Māori King movement) in 1858. Sir George Grey viewed the Kīngitanga as a threat to British sovereignty and six years later, issued a proclamation requiring all Māori living in the Manukau and Waikato districts to take an oath of allegiance to Queen Victoria. In response to Māori not conceding, Imperial troops invaded the Waikato forcing most iwi on the Manukau Harbour to abandon their settlements and helplessly watch the massive confiscations, of which the land at Ihumātao was included.

Vincent O'Malley, "Choosing Peace or War," *New Zealand Journal of History* 47, no.1 (April 1, 2013): 39-58.

In addition, Mahonri + Hobbs requested that I organise a kanohi kitea meeting with a Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei representative, so as to gain consent and pay respect to the Mana Whenua of Rangipuke. Ultimately, I secured a meeting for Mahonri + Hobbs with Cinnamon Lindsay, the Rainbow Youth's Tangata Whenua Representative.<sup>291</sup> Lindsay took an interest in *Wā Pakiwaitara – Storytime* and the *Queer Pavilion* and offered her encouragement and support. Te Awekotuku and Tuhiwai-Smith identify the importance of kanohi kitea consultation in their ethical guidelines for working with Māori participants, to assure that they are protected and shown respect.<sup>292</sup>

Mahonri + Hobbs' project embodied the findings of Kuni Kaa Jenkins (Ngāti Porou) and Alison Jones, that bicultural research should avoid replicating the colonial power dynamics; instead Pākehā researchers should learn from Māori, not 'about' Māori.<sup>293</sup> *Wā Pakiwaitara – Storytime* centralised Māori art, narratives and practice within a collaborative bicultural framework.<sup>294</sup> Jenkins and Jones described the creative potential of this kind of arrangement that sits between Māori – Pākehā relations as "working the hyphen", and understand it as a generative site.<sup>295</sup> Furthermore, Jones encourages Māori – Pākehā collaborators to engage with the ongoing productive tension that supports difference, rather than erases it.<sup>296</sup>

As queer theory also suggests, assimilative policies and the expectation of group cohesion often ignore the structural power dynamics that deny the value of diverse perspectives. In the context of Māori – Pākehā colonial struggle, Joan Metge's words are foregrounded in Jenkins and Jones's argument as follows: "We complement each other. We also stimulate, challenge, and strike sparks off each other. We will understand more, explore more deeply

by working together than we could ever do separately."<sup>297</sup>

Mahonri + Hobbs facilitated three open, collaborative sewing sessions over the *Queer Pavilion* week. During the cloak's construction it was either draped over one of the smaller sandwich-boards or laid down on a plastic mat, with care being taken for it not to touch the ground as sanctioned by traditional protocol.

Wā in 'Wā Pakiwaitara' means time, while 'pakiwaitara' translates to story, myth or legend, and also gossip and scandal.<sup>298</sup> As people gathered around the cloak to sew, the artists spoke about the garment's meaning and the unfurling negotiations between the Government and iwi that were concurrently taking place at Ihumātao. The stories shared between the artists

291 We met with Cinnamon Lindsay and Rainbow Youth board member Logan Hamley at Bestie Café on Karangahape Rd on 27 January 2020. Mahonri + Hobbs discussed the cloak and the aims of the project as well as *Queer Pavilion*.

292 Smith, 209-210.

293 Jones and Jenkins, *He Kōrero – Words between Us*.

294 Ibid.

295 Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins, *He Kōrero – Words between Us: First Māori– Pākehā Conversations on Paper* (Wellington: Huia, 2011).

296 Jones acknowledges the homogenising nature of the binary term Māori– Pākehā and that the term 'Māori' (or 'indigenous') in the context of the text denies tribal, regional and political differences. Likewise, the term Pākehā combines an enormous range of political and cultural variations of European settlers, although cultural and intellectual similarities are arguable significant.

Alison Jones, "Dangerous Liaisons: Pākehā, Kaupapa Māori, and Educational Research," in *Critical Conversations in Kaupapa Māori* (Wellington: Huia, 2017), 151.

297 Ibid, 11.

298 Māori Dictionary, s.v. "Pakiwaitara," <https://maoridictionary.co.nz>

and participants meandered from the historical and political to the salacious and humorous.

The workshops reminded me of the importance that quilt-making has held in recent queer histories. Simon Gennard comments that the AIDS Memorial Quilt project brought communities together and transformed the quilt “which has long been associated with femininity, domesticity and amateurism into the turbulent realm of political activism and public mourning.”<sup>299</sup>

Mahonri + Hobbs’ cloak created a connective thread between the lands of Rangipuke and Ihumātao and reflected the significance of place within a Māori epistemology. The cloak’s design centred on a stepped triangular form symbolising Rangipuke which dominated the composition. Each step claimed a coloured band of dyed feathers emulating Gilbert Baker’s Rainbow Pride flag design.<sup>300</sup> Across the black faux-fur background a galaxy of metallic beaded stars and discs signified the historical importance of the ridgeline for stargazing. A blue satin ribbon border represented the two local waterways, Te Wai Ariki (The chiefly waters) and Ngā Wai o Horotiu (The waters of Horotiu). Ngāti Whātua Ōrākei are acknowledged as the tribal custodians with a green ribbon, and four hibiscus appliqués adorning the corners marked the ancestral connection with Te Moana-Nui-a-Kiwa.

While participants sewed feathers, ribbon and beads across the cloak’s surface, the legacy of colonial violence loomed in the background. Standing high on the North-Western corner of Rangipuke is a marble statue of Sir George Grey (1812-1898). Grey orchestrated the original confiscation of Ihumātao, with Ranginui Walker referring to him as “the hit-man of colonisation.”<sup>301</sup> When the statue of Grey was

beheaded by the Māori activist group Upokohua (The Head-boilers) on Waitangi Day 1987, Ranginui Walker responded, “He deserved to get his head knocked off. Whatever they do to put him down and demythologise him is a good thing.”<sup>302</sup>

As part of *Queer Pavilion* I reproduced Upokohua’s 1989 ransom note for the statue’s head and attached it to one of the sandwich-boards. The note read, “Grey Confesses”, advocated a boycott of the 150th anniversary of The Treaty of Waitangi and charged Grey with murder, land theft and white supremacy.<sup>303</sup> (Figure 4.32) Ngā Tamatoa also organised the first Waitangi Day protest at The Treaty grounds in 1971, and as a sign of respect we chose not to open *Queer Pavilion* on Waitangi Day (Thursday, February 6, 2020).

<sup>299</sup> Simon Genard, *Sleeping Arrangements* (Lower Hutt: The Dowse Art Museum, 2018), 3.

<sup>300</sup> The oldest and most significant taonga (treasure) of Mahonri Rakete’s iwi, Tainui, is the 2.7 metre carved wooden repository of the rainbow god – Uenuku. Dating from around 1400, Uenuku’s spiralled head is adorned with a crown of four waved fingers that reach skyward and resemble a carving style linked to traditional Hawaiian art forms.

<sup>301</sup> Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou*, 103-110.

<sup>302</sup> Mark Stocker, “Te kai-hautu o te waka / Director of the Canoe: The Statue of Sir George Grey in Auckland,” in *Transculturation in British Art, 1770-1930*, Julie Codell ed. (Farnham: Ashgate 2012), 57.

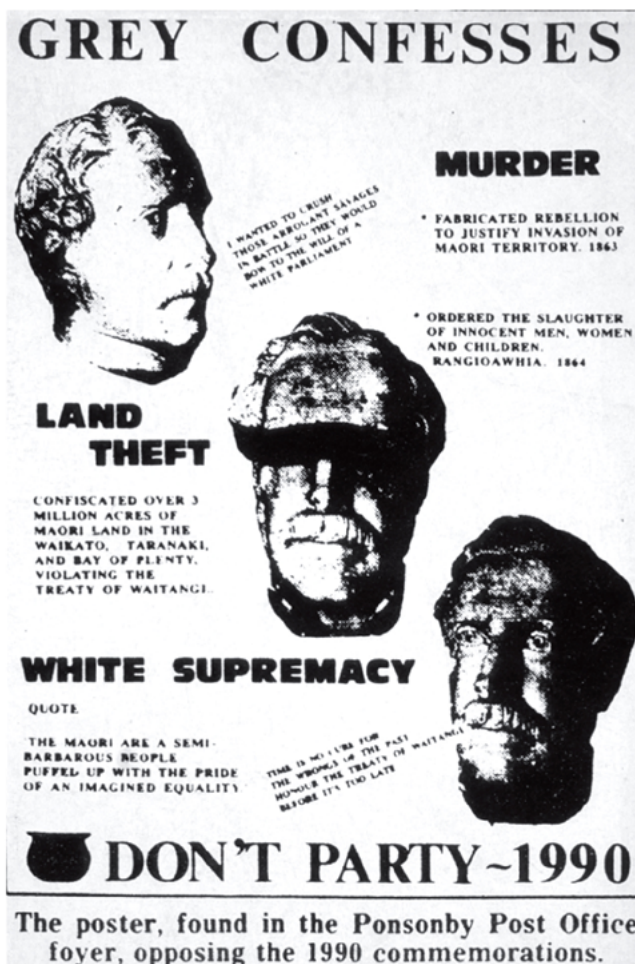
<sup>303</sup> *Ibid*, 58.

# 4.4.7 The Auckland Pride March, February 8, 2020, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau

Soon after the *Queer Pavilion* events drew to a close, 7000 people gathered in Rangipuke to take part in the year's Auckland Pride March, Auckland Pride Festival Chair, Cissy Rock stood at the base of the Queen Victoria statue. She proceeded to welcome the attendees and held up a sign she had borrowed from one of the attendees that read "None of us are FREE until all of us are FREE", a pointed comment about how the festival had nearly fallen apart the year before over the banning of police uniforms.

After her address, Rock passed the microphone to Mahonri + Hobbs, who explained the significance of the feather cloak and its links to Ihumātao, and announced that it was a gift to the Auckland Pride Festival in perpetuity (Figure 4.33). Mahonri + Hobbs unfurled the cloak to a groundswell of applause, then draped the garment over Rock's shoulders. Mahonri + Hobbs ended their presentation by singing a rendition of Wiremu Te Tau Huata's 'Tūtira Mai Ngā Iwi' (Come Together as One) which grew louder as the crowd joined in.

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The poster, found in the Ponsonby Post Office foyer, opposing the 1990 commemorations.

Figure 4.32. *Grey Confesses: Don't Party 1990*, Auckland Star, December 26, 1989.



Figure 4.33. Mahonri + Hobbs gift the cloak to Cissy Rock and The Auckland Pride Festival, February 16, 2020, photograph by Richard Orjis, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

# 4.5 Conclusion

The artists in the *Queer Pavilion* occupied Rangipuke over six days during the Auckland Pride Festival, providing a site of queer representation and festival support for a wide range of queer folk. The event found historical inspiration in the activism of the GLF and Volkerling, guided by bttm methodology's desire to celebrate marginalised positions through queering strategies that honour difference and complexity. The Pavilion also established queering practices as strategies to resist and disrupt hegemonic power through counter-normative uses of public park space. The socio-ecological art practices of *Queer Pavilion* wove queer lives and perspectives into the physical and conceptual geography of Rangipuke. The site-orientated approach attended to the whenua (land) and a history reverberating with legacies of aroha (love) and prortēhi (protest), as well as colonisation and environmental abuse. The queer ecological framework of bttm methodology provided an inclusive ethos that ran counter to the history of exclusion of diverse sexualities and genders as inferior, abject and outside the natural realm.

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This chapter has drawn on Puig de la Bellacasa and Wong's ideas about care and how it might manifest creatively and across relational practice. Care materialised in *Queer Pavilion* through my acts of hospitality and queering. My acts of care held a dimension of pleasure that was reciprocated to me through words of gratitude and positive social interactions during and after the event.

Although I had co-created the event, I did not feel any weight of this duty and instead experienced a sense of collective empowerment and an eagerness to care for and support the people, queer politics and art practices of the *Queer Pavilion*.

Through my experiences of *bttm\_methodology* at Artspace, and in the writings of Foucault, Duggan, and Jenkin and Jones I became sensitive to the power dynamics involved in the support of queer creative works and cultural identities, fuelling my resolve to not concede to the dominant culture's values.

The curatorial strategy of *Queer Pavilion* supported a diverse array of responses from the contributors through many discussions with the artists and designers before and during the event. As a result, complex and rich dialogues emerged that offer significant insights to where queer praxis sits in Aotearoa at this point in time.

The artists of *Queer Pavilion* connected with the temporary and spontaneous queer practices of architecture in the work of McCabe. We explored kinship, care, and with Mega Pash Action through the forging of links with queer ancestry through our ritual in honour of Sappho. Corbett-Sanders and Smith focused on queer intersubjectivity, shame and modes that resisted homonormativity. Halberstam's notions of unbuilding and queer failure came to the fore, as did Haraway, Randerson, and Sedgwick's support of intersubjective thought and ecological relationality.

The *Queer Pavilion* showed how expansive queer praxis has become, moving beyond queer theory's original focus on sexuality and gender to multiple intersecting inquiries. For instance, kapo's encampment of umbrellas provide shelter against the combined turbulence of colonial ecocide and queer marginalisation. Although kapo's umbrellas, and McCabe's pavilion structures might be temporary and collapsible they ignited sparks for ongoing dialogue around the whenua beneath and the whakapapa of the current guise of Rangipuke as 'park'.

The art and performance works generated by kapo, Waerea, Mahonri + Hobbs and the writing and actions of Te Awekotuku and Tuhiwai-Smith provided ethical guidelines for working on Māori whenua as queer creatives or in a settler-Indigenous collaborations.

Mahonri + Hobbs' collaboration explored the hyphenated Māori – Pākehā convergence of the land grievances of Ihumātao and a gesture of gifting a feather cloak as reparative koha (gift) in the local Auckland Pride March. These works served to highlight that virtually every aspect of contemporary Aotearoa must incorporate a critical analysis of the ways colonisation has influenced the cultural landscape and continues to affect the distribution of power and knowledge.

Through Tuhiwai-Smith's scholarship and conversations with Mahonri + Hobbs around *Queer Pavilion*, I realised that I could not enact decolonising strategies myself as I embody colonisation through my settler ancestry. But through the collective ethos of *bttm* methodology, Pākehā researchers can support and advocate for queer Indigenous artists' in their struggle for self-determination.

Working alongside others in the research afforded me far greater insights into queer praxis than I could have gained through a solitary studio-based practice. This sentiment is supported by Belém, who posits that culture stands to benefit from artists moving away from individualistic tendencies and agendas, towards: "a real interest in sharing and confrontations based on the interrelationship between artistic manifestations from different voices regarding themes, concepts, and procedures."<sup>304</sup>

304 Laura Belém, "The Next Documenta Should Be Curated By An Artists," *E-flux*, 2004, [http://projects.e-flux.com/next\\_doc/laura\\_belem.html](http://projects.e-flux.com/next_doc/laura_belem.html).

*Queer Pavilion's* socio-ecological art practices encouraged a flourishing of queer solidarity, shared knowledge and creativity, and an acknowledgment of similarities and difference across the queer experience. In alliance we tested emergent modes of queer representation in a mutual 'unbuilding' of colonial-capitalist, and heteropatriarchal structures.

The following section discusses the final exhibition *And so the days float through my eyes: a queer archive 1972 – 2021*.



Figure 4.34. The Caretaker's Cottage, *And so the days float through my eyes: A queer archive 1972 – 2021*, May 14, 2021, photograph by Wat Tan, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Figure 4.35. Richard Orjis, Rebecca Steedman, val smith, *bttm manifesto sandwich boards*, 2020, ink, paper, wood, originally exhibited at *Civic Pride*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery, 2020, *And so the days float through my eyes: A queer archive 1972 – 2021*, May 14, 2021, photograph by Wat Tan, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

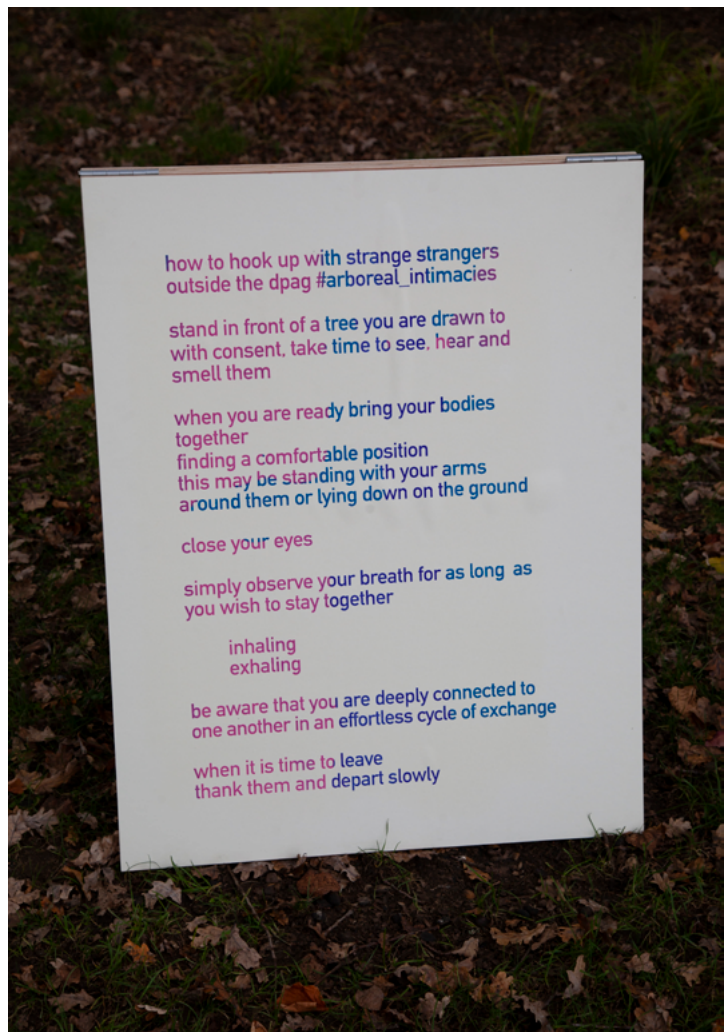




Figure 4.36. Installation view, *And so the days float through my eyes: A queer archive 1972 – 2021*, May 14, 2021, photograph by Wat Tan, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

Figure 4.37. Installation view, *Queer Pavilion*, 2020, single channel HD video, 4'19', *And so the days float through my eyes: A queer archive 1972 – 2021*, May 14, 2021, photograph by Wat Tan, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.

figure 4.48. Installation view, Richard Orjis, *for val smith, we are all compost*, 2021, tinsel curtain, toilet paper pyramid, hand sanitiser, *And so the days float through my eyes: A queer archive 1972 – 2021*, May 14, 2021, photograph by Wat Tan, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau.



# 4.6 Epilogue: *And so the days float through my eyes: A queer archive 1972 – 2021*, May 14, 2021, The Caretaker's Cottage, Rangipuke, Tāmaki Makaurau

<sup>305</sup> Richard Orjis and val smith, *bttm manifesto*, 2018, <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1hJdBkalKUTqEpuf9rDgO1wXhGjM87zJwcsqSx4oas54/edit?fbclid=IwAR3qt0ekTeGueMVaqfOLbzqt9cJj-8Z-q8Fg2SnJfkJA902tLOfuQrIAKz8#heading=h.ggn9mb34pr5t>.

*bttm manifesto* is best read aloud in a group while on your backs on the ground. The manifesto exists online as an open Google Docs and invites others to 'mess' with it, and signals that it will never be fixed or complete. smith and I buried a copy of the manifesto under an oak tree in Rangipuke over three nights, hoping that we might find microbial fungi and worm collaborators.

1. floating islands \_\_\_\_\_
2. sticks. faggots. witches
3. magic magnet, clone zone, growing in fresh soil from your own cut limbs
4. it's not about off the grid, it's about in the grid
5. rotting the system through fungal power
6. queer bombing
7. The private rambling of fuck huts<sup>305</sup>

(bttm manifesto excerpt, Richard Orjis & val smith, 2018)

The final exhibition of *below, behind, across* was titled: *And so the days float through my eyes: A queer archive 1972 – 2021*. Just as the GLF had published a Gay Liberation Manifesto in 1972, smith and I collated a manifesto for bttm methodology that was made available for *And so the days float through my eyes*. The manifesto is set against a background of queer ecological thought that welcomes the abject, the overlooked, the rejected, the polluted and the subterranean.

The manifesto emerged from a co-creative session of writing down our ideas on what bttm methodology might be, then cutting them up and collaging them together as a bullet-point mélange. The bttm manifesto is a list of fluid provocations, loose associations, queer thoughts and poetic musing. Still holding lightly to the GLF forebears and their revolutionary spirit, the bttm manifesto is also a deviation from the GLF manifesto, which set out clear key demands and principles for changing society.

yes to ideas that float and disperse  
yes to incomplete methodologies  
yes to bad memory  
yes to learning to love shame and  
plastic and viruses  
yes to bad planning  
yes to confusion  
yes to arse-end connections  
yes to theatre under the bridge,  
behind the shops, in the gutter  
yes<sup>306</sup>

*And so the days float through my eyes: a queer archive 1972 – 2021* considered the words of José Esteban Muñoz and his observations on the ephemeral nature of queer histories. Muñoz contemplates the precarious journey that queer narratives must navigate via legacies of suppression and the unlikelihood that queer histories will be passed down genealogical lines.<sup>307</sup>

In a spirit of resisting heteronormative impulses of queer eradication, the exhibition reflected on Aotearoa's queer past. It constituted a temporary archive of gathered ephemera from the research in this thesis: pages from 1972 issues of *Craccum* magazine that trace the early days of GLF liberation; protest memorabilia; and collaborative art objects, performance props and exhibition furniture from the *below, behind, across* back-catalogue.

The installation featured Ralph Brown's video footage from the *Queer Pavilion, The Gay Liberation Trail* (2020), and a self-guided walk, among other queer things.

This exhibition conceptualised queer ways of being, art-making and relating that have existed in moments of both queer delight and trouble in the past that can be reimagined into the present. The exhibition title *And so the days float through my eyes* is a line from David Bowie's art-pop anthem *Changes*. For early GLF member Peter Wells the song epitomised the social reform in Tāmaki Makaurau in the early 1970s.<sup>308</sup> In the exhibition context, Bowie's lyrics became an allusion to the passing of time and the importance of queer representation — to be seen, heard and recorded in an unfolding queer archive.

Acts of conserving and discovery associated with the archive have been a significant resource for contemporary queer art, as I discussed in Chapter 2. As Foster contends, the archive is a unique construction site for artists who draw inspiration from past utopian visions and respond to "unfulfilled beginnings and incomplete projects."<sup>309</sup> *And so the days float through my eyes* forged links to queer forebears that occupied the university, played on the city streets, lazed away afternoons in Rangipuke, partied, protested, loved, lost, and dreamed of a more equitable world.

306 Orjis and smith, *bttm manifesto*, 2018.

307 José Esteban Muñoz, "Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts," *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory* 8, no. 2 (1996): 30.

308 Gareth Watkins, "Peter Wells Profile," *PrideNZ.com: Voices of Aotearoa New Zealand's Rainbow Communities*, October 5, 2013, [http://www.pridenz.com/ait\\_peter\\_wells\\_profile.html](http://www.pridenz.com/ait_peter_wells_profile.html).

309 Hall Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *OCTOBER* 110, Fall (2004): 22.

310 Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 8.

The exhibition drew on Sedgwick's description of queerness as a guideline to the construction of an archive, where it becomes an "[an] open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning".<sup>310</sup> The exhibition installation resisted 'straight' archival logic and defied chronological order, linearity and segregating taxonomies. *below, behind, across* came full circle, from research gleaning the archive to becoming an archive itself.

A key artwork in the exhibition was *The Gay Liberation Trail* (2020), a self-guided walk that allowed users to retrace the steps of Te Awēkotuku and the GLF through central Tāmaki Makaurau using an online app. Participants were able to queerly choose to opt in or out, forge their way, create links or disrupt its directives. The freely available app provided an alternative interactive way that made queer history accessible while resisting building fixed, monolithic monuments.<sup>311</sup>

The exhibition occupied Rangipuke's historic 1882 Caretaker's Cottage. From 1930 to 1951 the dwelling was home to the Fillmore family, who were responsible for the wellbeing and upkeep of the park. The Cottage also housed the Bruce Wilkinson Collection of clocks from 1996 to 2014.<sup>312</sup>

An ethos of collective care materialised in *Queer Pavilion, Walking in Trees and bttm\_ methodology*, that ran counter to established conventions of the art market, that invests in the unique individuality of the artist. Accordingly, the Caretaker's Cottage became a place of 'care taking' that supported queer representation, and offered hospitality in the form of food, conviviality and conversation.

The Caretaker's Cottage is located at the park's margins and next to amenities of civic care – a row of garden sheds and a public toilet. In the gay vernacular of the middle twentieth-century, a public toilet was known as a "cottage". As Ings notes, the term 'cottaging' "meant to cruise the bogs" and was used by a community of men who searched for same-sex encounters in public toilets and the surrounding environments.<sup>313</sup>

I thought about Bowie's lyrics of "days float[ing]" and formed a connection with cruising as a form of floating, which means to drift, sail, and look for pleasure without a destination in mind.<sup>314</sup> In his *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Muñoz searches for traces and residue of the queer past in order to reimage a utopian future. For Muñoz, queerness was an ideality that exists only in future imaginings, or, as he writes, "the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality".<sup>315</sup>

311 *The Gay Liberation Trail* was made freely available on AKL City Tours is a mobile application. The application is dedicated to providing tours across Auckland's central city and supported in partnership with Auckland Council and Auckland Transport.

[https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.mytoursapp.android.app1327&hl=en\\_NZ&gl=US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.mytoursapp.android.app1327&hl=en_NZ&gl=US)

312 "Albert Park, Caretakers Cottage," Auckland Museum, July 28, 2014, [https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/collection/object/am\\_library-photography-51360](https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/collection/object/am_library-photography-51360).

313 Welby Ings, (2005). *Talking Pictures: A creative Utilisation of Structural and Aesthetic Profiles from Narrative Music Videos and Television Commercials in a Non-spoken Film ext.* Unpublished Ph. D., Auckland University of Technology, Auckland. 317-318.

314 *Cambridge Dictionary*, s.v. "Cruise," <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/cruise>

315 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1.

In this exhibition I too reached into the past, yet the pleasure of the here and now of active representation of queer histories and creative practice was present in the assembled works.

When people learn to walk, the early stage that requires the learner to hold onto structures like furniture for support is called cruising. This final work recalls *Walking in Trees*, with its scaffolding construction wrapped around the large Himalayan Cedar at the other end of the park from the Caretaker's Cottage. Care and scaffolding are both structures of support, and the archive can be thought of as a such a structure designed to care for local queer histories against the legacies of suppression.<sup>316</sup>

flicker of chemical burn

Igniting protest and movement

light strikes, etched, carved into  
the trunks of trees and walls of  
prison

#pleasure\_seeking #pleasure\_  
activism

32. don't worry, the art will arrive  
Tree humping, resting, resisting

26. bttm methodology is pliable.  
It can be moulded with every user

it is open-source software that  
can be adapted to different users  
and time and place and levels of  
shyness

38. producing anything,  
producing almost nothing<sup>317</sup>

<sup>316</sup> The term 'Support structures' can also be found in the collaborative works of Céline Condorelli and Gavin Wade. Their projects and publication of the same name, explored the notion of 'support structures' as they manifest across art and architecture to bear weight, sustain, prop and hold up.

Céline Condorelli, Gavin Wade and James Langdon, *Support Structures* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2009).

<sup>317</sup> Orjis and smith, *bttm manifesto*, 2018.

# Chapter 5:

# Findings

# 5.1 Reflections on *below, behind, across: bttm methodology and queer representation in contemporary art*

This thesis set in motion the question, “How can socio-ecological art practices facilitate queer representation in Aotearoa?” Through practice-led research, I found that socio-ecological art practice can actively foster queer representation in Aotearoa through a series of art events designed for and with queer communities. *below, behind, across* has foregrounded queer representation in diverse situations and facilitated forms of queer empowerment and care through counter-acts of art-making and event ‘queerration’. The thesis has recalled salient queer histories, such as the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and their defiance of homosexual oppression and excavated historical queer-activist ephemera from archives. The study hosted multiple queer artists as a part of the art practice across various sites in urban Tāmaki Makarau. In these temporary events, bttm methodology’s queering strategies have disrupted dominant colonial, capitalist, and heteropatriarchal positions and unsettled claims of normativity, fixity and objectivity in civic institutions and in public space.<sup>318</sup>

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The diverse collection of socio-ecological events documented in the thesis ranged from site-specific installations, workshops, and exhibition-making, to reading and discussion groups and collective walking, napping and meditations. *Salt Felix* (2017) occupied a dealer gallery, while *Under Your Skin You Look Divine* (2018) joined other queer artists in an adult shop and cruise club. *bttm\_methodology* (2019) operated out of Artspace Aotearoa’s rear carpark and around the streets of Karangahape Road and later this title became the cornerstone of my practice-orientated methodology. *Walking in Trees* (2019), *Queer Pavilion* (2020) *And so the days float through my eyes: a queer archive* (1972 – 2021) found a footing for queer-centred creative practice on the ancient volcanic-ash mound of Rangipuke.

318 Manning, *Queerly Disrupting Methodology*.

The GLF's held their first public demonstration in Rangipuke and this urban park became the study's conceptual and physical foundation to explore critical intersections between queer theory, queer ecology and colonial-capitalist discourse.

Queer representation elevates marginalised queer voices, politics and theory, asserting that queer people should be seen and heard and actively addresses the need for social equality. In below, behind, across queer representation is defined as artworks or exhibitions that depict or make present the work of queer artists, and queer-themed art and performance-based works or other creative works that utilise queering strategies. Queer representation, in this case, through art practice, is also a political position that combats limiting stereotypes and shapes the way queer people see themselves and how the dominant culture understands queer people.

Derksen has evidenced a historical lack of queer literature and exhibition-making within Aotearoa's art sector, as queer representation in the arts contends with a legacy of pathologising, criminalising and censoring queer lives.<sup>319</sup> *Queer Pavilion* offers an example of how the research created opportunities for queer artists to represent their own, often marginalised perspectives on such issues as colonisation, the environmental crisis and queer politics within the public domain.

I have responded to Sedgwick's exhortation to tell the rich queer histories of rejection, violence, resistance and excitement; she argues that Western culture would not only be incomplete but damaged if it did not incorporate queer narratives into its retelling.<sup>320</sup> She defines queer as an open mesh of possibilities for sexualities and genders, where queer is a concept in motion, a protean identity in a state of continual

becoming. Myself and many artists in this thesis have worked relationally, across and also askew, thwarting heteronormative regimes, just as Sedgwick found in the etymology of 'queer', the words 'twerkw' (across), the German - quer (transverse), the Latin - torquere (twist) and the English - athwart.<sup>321</sup>

<sup>319</sup> Derksen, 63-64.

<sup>320</sup> Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1. Sedgwick, *Tendencies*, 9.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

## 5.2 Methodological reflections

The study's development of bttm methodology created guiding principles for practice-led research and could offer modalities of creative practice for future researchers. bttm methodology's ethical foundation sought to ascribe value and validity to marginalised queer positions within the visual arts. The core tenets of bttm research employed in this project required a commitment to overcoming queer marginalising biases, adopting modes of ethical relationality between researcher and participant, and committing to an ongoing critique of the construction of power and knowledge while still being grounded in the whenua of Aotearoa.

In conjunction with its critique of power, bttm methodology also acknowledged the researcher's intersubjectivity. This made me scrutinise the contexts in which I worked to discern where and how I held privilege and where I did not. Miki Kashtan suggests that an ethical response to confronting privilege, motivated by a duty of care, is to accept when one holds privilege and to endeavour to steward it to others.<sup>322</sup>

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In response to this and the research aims, colonial and hetero-patriarchal narratives were resisted by ensuring queer, Indigenous and feminist art-practices were supported across the series of events.

bttm methodology's ethical framework assured that queer participants were protected and shown respect and was developed from AUT University's Code of Conduct for Research and Te Awēkotuku and Tuhiwai-Smith's ethical guidelines for Māori research.<sup>323</sup> I also accessed and facilitated funding, resources and exhibition platforms for other queer practitioners for *Walking in Trees and Queer Pavilion*.<sup>324</sup>

322 Miki Kashtan "Why and How Facing Your Privilege Can Be Liberating: An Article on the Structural Dimension of Privilege," *WPC Journal: Understanding & Dismantling Privilege* 9, no.1 (May 2019): 27.

323 Smith, 209-210.

324 An artist fee of \$1000 (\$500 each for collective members) was provided at *Queer Pavilion* for koha, production and transportation costs. Artists who ran workshops for *Walking in Trees* were provided with a \$400 fee or gift vouchers.

These socio-ecological art encounters strove to undermine capitalist modes of competition and profit-making by creating free public events built on collaborative and anti-exploitative principles aimed to benefit the artists involved both personally and professionally.

An ethos of collectivity ran through *below*, *behind*, *across* as a counter-movement to artistic conventions that encourage artists to assume an individuated brand or produce original objects for the art market. This aligned to social and ecological art practices, as defined by Gablick and Helguera, that tend toward collaborative projects in order to foster dialogue and change for an environment and its inhabitants.<sup>325</sup>

Strategies of inviting a diverse range of creative practitioners into the events ensured that my Pākehā cisgender male voice was not the loudest in the room and that queer representation remained manifold and committed to ameliorating social inequality in the arts. As Derksen observed, the limited queer representation in Aotearoa has mainly been occupied by gay cisgender Pākehā male voices.<sup>326</sup>

I am cognizant of the apparent contradiction in this written exegesis, where I have centralised my personal reflections to bring a focus to the research. A potential limitation of *bttm* methodology in the thesis is that I did not collect feedback in the form of interviews from the contributing artists and audience members; this would have assessed the broader value and effect of queer representation in their own voices and holds an opportunity for potential future research to address. Although my in-situ interactions with the contributing artists in *bttm\_methodology* and *Queer Pavilion* are contained in my reflections in Chapters 3 and 4.

During the research, I approached several organisations for financial support to assist with the exhibitions' costs, installation structures, transport, printing, catering and artists' fees.<sup>327</sup> The primary funding bodies were Auckland Council's Auckland Design Office, AUT and Artspace Aotearoa.

I was encouraged by my experience with these institutions because I was met with enthusiastic support for the projects. This may signal a move towards a more positive cultural shift with regards to queer representation in Aotearoa.<sup>328</sup> I was also aware of Auckland Council, AUT and Artspace Aotearoa's public positions supporting and improving queer representation within their communities. It is salient to mention the precarious nature of corporate and institutional sponsorship for LGBTTOQIA+ events as evidenced by the rapid withdrawal of funding from the Auckland Pride Festival when the organisers banned police uniforms in 2019.

I did consider what compromises might be required when entering into these relationships.

<sup>325</sup> Gablick, 23, Helguera, 22.

<sup>326</sup> Derksen, 63.

<sup>327</sup> I wished to engage in a reciprocal relationship with the funding bodies and thus showed my gratitude by thanking them publicly and privately, attaching their logos and hashtags on promotional material and social media posts. I dutifully filled out post-event reports and gave a talk to Auckland Council staff about queer representation and public art activations.

<sup>328</sup> I was conscious media could pick up the *Queer Pavilion* as a way to scrutinise Council arts spending, as I had experienced when Australian journalist Tony Thomas questioned University funding in association with my *bttm\_trees* presentation at the *Hacking the Anthropocene conference* (2019).

Tony Thomas, "Sex Academia Style: Let's All Have a Tree-some," *Quadrant*, April 22, 2020, <https://quadrant.org.au/opinion/qed/2020/04/sex-academia-style-lets-all-have-a-tree-some>.

For instance, there was an understanding that the events would be evaluated with conventional markers of success like visitor numbers and favourable publicity. Thus, I acknowledge a tension in seeking funding for queer events that often appeal to a minority audience and critique the colonial-capitalist and hetero-patriarchal foundation of the very institutions that can make funding available.<sup>329</sup>

However, as Foucault maintains, while marginalised people will remain vulnerable to the dominant power structures, they hold their power to resist.<sup>330</sup> Foucault also posits that relationships with power are not always oppressive, as they allow for the creation of new knowledge, fulfilment and pleasure.<sup>331</sup>

At the start of the research, I considered how queer artists might best be served when working within asymmetrical power dynamics. Dynamics exist between artists and galleries, funders and the academy, where queer people negotiate spaces designed with the dominant culture in mind. I questioned whether it was better to seek queer representation within these institutions and demand that they change to accommodate more democratic and diverse voices. Alternatively, I asked if creating new queer centred spaces away from any institutional support was a more empowering direction for my research. I came to see that working at the margins of institutions could be generative rather than eschewing institutional support altogether.

Occupying the outside edges of institutions allows access to the practical support, promotion, prestige and funding to foreground queer knowledge and representation; exemplified in the hosting of the *bttm\_ methodology* event in the Artspace Aotearoa carpark and my final exhibition in the Caretaker's Cottage -- *And so the days float through my*

*eyes: A queer archive 1972 – 2021.*

The events that created queer-centred experiences, such as *bttm\_ methodology* and *Queer Pavilion*, highlighted the importance of queer representation for queer audiences. These events bypassed the burden of educating the general public and were about queer voices engaging in affirming, complex, nuanced forms of queer dialogue. By comparison, projects that invited in broader audiences such as *Salt Felix* or *Walking in Trees* risked the queer content being lost, over-simplified or mis-interpreted.

The larger council-funded production of *Queer Pavilion* sparked a reconsideration of the positive experiences of *bttm\_ methodology* at Artspace Aotearoa. The three-day event in the gallery's carpark supported an emergent, relaxed and relational response to others and the site and its histories. *bttm\_ methodology* utilised minimal resources to claim queer space by assembling found-materials, enjoying shared food, and having loosely defined collaborative workshops, walks and performances. The emergent nature of this event remained adaptable to the changing needs and desires of participants and holds a blueprint for future directions in my practice. The relaxed, spontaneous happenings in this event created a queer-affirmative affective atmosphere, bypassing the rigidity and evaluative systems of more conventional exhibition modes.

<sup>329</sup> Foucault, *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*, 36.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson, 20.

## 5.3 Significance of the study

The primary significance of the research is the development, articulation, implementation and critique of bttm methodology. The study contributes to visual arts literature and practice-oriented research by providing a series of creative orientation points for current and future queer artistic practice.

In summary, bttm methodology, guided by queer theory, aims to create queer representation through creative means; by acknowledging the intersubjectivity of the researcher; celebrating marginalised queer positions to overcome bias through creative means; adopting an ethical mode of relationality, and involving critique of power and knowledge.

The trans-disciplinary nature of bttm methodology may also benefit researchers working in queer humanities, creative and social practice, ecology, activism and history by providing an alternative ethos or guide.

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The research contributes to the limited discourse on queer research methodologies; and my art thesis joins the small number of researchers, theorists and academics who have queered research methods and methodology, beginning in the late 1990s (see p.31). The research progressed from queer theory's initial textual analysis to focus on bttm methodology as an active form of practice-led queering (as a verb) that may, in turn, influence future directions in queer praxis.

The study explored queer representation through three main socio-ecological art practices: site-orientated, relational and archival. bttm methodology emerged from queer art-making and activism in Tāmaki Makaurau, past and present, and is well placed to enrich and activate current queer discourse across Aotearoa and beyond.

bttm discourse has already extended outwards by engaging with queer artists from across Aotearoa and Australia in *Queer Pavilion*, towards Ōtepoti (Dunedin) for the exhibition *Civic Pride* (November 9, 2019 – March 15, 2020) curated by Milly Mitchell-Anyon at Dunedin Public Art Gallery and with the collective reading of bttm manifesto at *Hacking the Anthropocene IV DIT: Do-It-Together Symposium* (July 8, 2019) in Melbourne, Australia.

bttm methodology activates the fertile terrain of queer ecology at the critical intersection of queerness with environmental and colonial discourse. Queer ecology acknowledges the complex interconnectedness of all things within environmental systems. This thesis has recognised Mortimer-Sandilands' argument that queer people are continually exposed to ideologies that position their behaviours as unnatural. She asks; "What does it mean that ideas, spaces, and practices designated as 'nature' are often so vigorously defended against queers in a society in which that very nature is increasingly degraded and exploited?"<sup>332</sup> The study has endeavoured to disrupt the persistent articulations of nature that would segregate human existence, and queer lives in particular, from elemental connection with others and the environment; explored most directly in the projects *Walking in Trees* and *bttming trees*.

As bttm methodology centres on marginalised positions, it creates an ethical guide to relationality between people, human and nonhuman, and place, where the facilitating artist is just one element in a greater scheme. This ethos is exemplified in the practice of hosting and care in *bttm\_methodology* and *Queer Pavilion*. The methodology offers insight into working across difference, questioning hegemonic power, acknowledging privilege and oppression, claiming queer visibility, and

actively creating co-operative and socially just formations in contemporary art practice. I also offer strategies and create dialogue for queer communities outside academia; exemplified with my involvement in creating artworks, workshops and events for the Auckland Pride Festival.

Queering conventional methodologies combats prevailing allegiances to modernist ideologies that embed research with a series of dichotomies that can over-simplify, 'other' or erase the experiences of queer lives that exist beyond the binary.<sup>333</sup> For example, bttm methodology problematises dualisms that would uphold hierarchies between Indigenous and Anglo-American knowledge systems; or clear taxonomies between homosexual/heterosexual, animal/human, nature/culture, outsider/insider, female/male, failure/success, artist/ curator, bottom/top.

This study has found that public queer exhibition-making, open discussion groups, and creative workshops can contribute to shifting the relative absence of queer discourse in contemporary art in Aotearoa. In recent decades LGBTTQIA+ communities have gained increasing visibility and acceptance in this country with

<sup>332</sup> Manning, *Queerly Disrupting Methodology*, 8.

<sup>333</sup> Brent Coutts, in *Re-reading the Rainbow* (2015) wrote of the apparent erasure of queer art-history in Aotearoa: "A label of 'the other' raised questions of credibility and value. The result for an LGBTQ artist was exclusion. Institutions, like individuals, suffered from homophobia. Curators carried their prejudices that reflected society's norms. Even for those LGBTQ curators working within the museum and art history spheres, there was pressure not to promote inclusion...The legalisation of homosexuality in 1986 did not affect the homophobia within institutional, cultural spaces, and queer representations have remained scarce within exhibitions".

Steve Lovett and Pepper Burns, eds., *Re-reading the Rainbow* (Auckland, New Zealand: INKubator, 2017), 102.

<sup>334</sup> Derksen, 12.

marriage equality and the legal right to be protected against discrimination. Nevertheless, queer forms of representation remain vulnerable to oversight, censorship or erasure.<sup>334</sup>

In gathering creative practitioners together the thesis has challenged the continual exclusion of queer voices in the country's cultural domain. Queer representation through art, and in social politics, humanises the lives of people who reside outside the dominant culture, potentially highlighting other identity and environmental rights struggles by exposing the workings of power and knowledge.

While bttm methodology demonstrates that queer art-making can be affiliated with and supported by civic and arts institutions, we chose to inhabit the peripheral edges of institutional and public spaces. On the margins, our art-making retained a resistant activism, differentiating potential, creativity, pleasure and site for queer community creation. As Tuhiwai-Smith states, the margins, "are not empty spaces occupied by people whose lives don't matter or people who spend their lives on the margins trying to escape. Many groups who end up there 'choose' the margins, in the sense of creating cultures and identities there."<sup>335</sup>

Halberstam has also offered core insights to this study on the value of queer marginal space, unbuilding systems and queer failure, as generative means to counter dominant narratives, open up dialogue, creative possibilities and find queerer ways of renegotiating the world.<sup>336</sup>

335 Smith, 325.

336 Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*.  
Halberstam, *Unbuilding Gender*.

## 5.4 Future directions

As I mentioned earlier in the research, I consider bttm methodology to be akin to open-source software, and I hope it will inspire and disrupt the work of other creative practitioners. There is no reason that bttm methodology could not converge with art, activism and scholarship and even move into multiple disciplinary fields. If bttm methodology is to remain relevant, it will need to be tested within various contexts. Hopefully, future users will represent a more diverse cross-section from the queer spectrum and less privileged domains than the art gallery and academy.

As bttm methodology is queer theory's progeny, I expect it to adopt Barad's lively notion of queerness that allows for mutation and endless promiscuous reinvention.<sup>337</sup> bttm methodology's origins in upholding the bottom position mean it can remain reflexive to ongoing artistic and socio-political change. The evolution of bttm methodology will occur through the continual critique and challenge to its construction and allegiances. smith and I have discussed how we might disseminate bttm methodology to a broader queer community.

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Alongside making this study freely available online, our early discussion has focused on developing an online resource or print publication that presents the core tenets of bttm methodology with a collection of projects and textual responses.

I plan to extend the research by facilitating a group exhibition that explores the breadth of current queer creative practice in Aotearoa. I am also fascinated with charting the similarities and difference between local and international queer art practice to explore further how Southern orientations can enrich queer praxis.

<sup>337</sup> Karen Barad, "Nature's Queer Performativity," *Woman, Gender and Research* 1, no.2 (2012): 25-52.

I will also continue my research endeavour to explore how queer histories might be materialised in the public realm. The task will be finding queerer alternatives to the public sculptural monuments of the past that often upheld singular ideological perspectives and a belief that the significant events and personalities of the day would remain relevant. My current thinking about how I might create art that expresses queer positionality revolves around using the intangible qualities of light, sound or video projection or the fluidity of water.

On a more personal note, the research highlighted the ongoing need for more equitable queer representation across the arts sector; and I plan to continue working on that through my role as an artist, educator and founding member of the advocacy group AMA (Arts Makers Aotearoa).

As the study draws to a close, I think how far LGBTTQIA+ politics have come in the 49 years since twenty people gathered in the University of Auckland's Student Union Building for the first GLF meeting.<sup>338</sup> As Te Awekotuku subsequently recalled, that amongst the social stigma and illegality, the gathering had; " A heavy feeling of solidarity and understanding – an appreciation of one another' needs, hang-ups, joy and gut-living...A group of waiting people had met at last – we united and felt togetherness and power, and energy and force".<sup>339</sup> The art events of *below, behind, across* also sought an atmosphere of togetherness where queer collective action could be fostered, while striving for ongoing, affirmative social and environmental change.

338 This first GLF meeting took place on March 21, 1972.

339 Negative views of homosexuality prevailed in 1972, from both the law and public attitudes. In the same *Craccum* article Volkerling saw one role of the GLF as political and educational, intending to inform people "to see us not as child-molesters, compulsive neurotics and potential rapist, but rather as people with unconventional but not unnatural sexual preferences", Baumber, 12.

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# Appendices

Appendix 1: Ethics Approval

Appendix 2: Artists Participation Form

## Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology  
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ  
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316  
E: [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)  
[www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics](http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics)

3 July 2019

Janine Randerson  
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Janine

Re Ethics Application: **19/206 Below, behind, across: Queering contemporary art practice**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 3 July 2022.

### Standard Conditions of Approval

1. The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
3. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
4. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
5. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation, then you are responsible for obtaining it. If the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all locality legal and ethical obligations and requirements. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

For any enquiries, please contact [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)

Yours sincerely,



Kate O'Connor  
Executive Manager  
**Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee**

Cc: [richard.orjis@aut.ac.nz](mailto:richard.orjis@aut.ac.nz); Welby Ings; Amabel Hunting

Artist Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

June 2019

**Project Title**

Below, behind, across: Queering contemporary art practice.

**An Invitation**

Kia ora koutou, ko Richard Orjis aho. I am a practicing artist from Tāmaki Makaurau, Auckland and a current Postgraduate researcher from the AUT school of Art and Design school.

Would you be interested in creating and presenting an artwork, which would also be documented during the event, the Queer Pavilion?

The Pavilion will be a week-long event taking place as part of the Auckland Pride Festival 2020, Saturday Feb 1 – Friday Feb 7 in Rangipuke Albert Park.

**What is the purpose of this research?**

The purpose of the research is to investigate new ways of perceiving and creating queer art in Aotearoa. Queering refers to how the world may be viewed differently from an LGBTI+ or non-normative perspective by questioning or troubling popularly held or oppressive beliefs. The recording of the events through still photography and moving image will be used to document the event and may appear in my PhD exegesis, websites or in other media.

**How do I agree to participate in this research?**

After fully understanding what the Queer Pavilion is seeking to achieve and what is being requested of you, you can agree to participate by signing the consent form below. Your participation in this research is voluntary and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw at any time. If you choose to withdraw, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

**What will happen in this research?**

You are being invited to create a artwork/performance, and/or partake in an art making workshop or discussion in one of the series of events. This will be an open public event in Rangipuke Albert Park, any engagement with the public must be consensual. The role of the public in this research is as an audience to the various artworks on display. We will make sure they understand that they may be documented doing so.

**What are the discomforts and risks?**

The risks and discomforts are that you will say or do something that you do not wish to be recorded.

You may also feel uncomfortable if you decide not to consent to have your participation filmed.

**How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?**

If you don't wish to be recorded I will respect your right to make this decision and I will make it clear that this decision will not compromise the outcome or will cause any personal consequences.

You will be given the opportunity to edit any photographic or video footage of yourself and artwork before publication.

**What are the benefits?**

The benefits are that research project hosts free and engaging events to consider new ways of thinking about art practice in Aotearoa. The project will also give voice to LGBTI+ and non-normative experiences that are often erased or minimised in discussions concerning art in this country. The benefits to yourself will be the opportunity to create and exhibit an artwork

with the financial support of a \$1000 artist fee. This is a flat fee and is meant to cover the cost of your time and production costs. The artist fee will be paid on competition of your performance or exhibition at the Queer Pavilion in February 2020.

**How will my privacy be protected?**

Your name can be kept confidential and not used if you wish. You will be protected by only agreeing to statements or photographic / video recordings that you wish to be published.

If you wish to take part as an audience member not in the 'out-of-shot' zone you may be film or photographed. There may be identifiable images created of you and thus wavering your confidentiality.

**What are the costs of participating in this research?**

There will be no cost to you as a participant. You as a participating artists will receive a fixed artist fee of \$1000 to cover their time and production costs on competition of your artistic contribution.

**Who has funded this research?**

The Queer Pavilion has been made possible through \$2500 worth of funding from Auckland Council and AUT.

**What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

You can decide to participate in the event and documentation from this conversation onwards, over the next month.

**Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

The research outcome will be publicly available online as a pdf on [www.richardorjis.com](http://www.richardorjis.com) and I will email you when this is published.

**What do I do if I have concerns about this research?**

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Researcher, Richard Orjis (see details below).

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK,

Kate O'Connor, [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz) , 921 9999 ext 6038.

Or Dr Janine Randerson, School of Art and Design, AUT

[jranders@aut.ac.nz](mailto:jranders@aut.ac.nz), 921 9999 x 6261.

**Whom do I contact for further information about this research?**

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

**Researcher Contact Details:**

Dr Janine Randerson  
School of Art and Design, AUT  
Ph 921 9999 x 6261  
[jranders@aut.ac.nz](mailto:jranders@aut.ac.nz)

Richard Orjis  
School of Art and Design, AUT  
Ph 021 417 409  
[richard.orjis@aut.ac.nz](mailto:richard.orjis@aut.ac.nz)

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEK Reference number type the AUTEK reference number

Participating Artist Consent Form ()

Project title: Below, behind, across: Queering contemporary art practice.

Lead Researcher: Richard Orjis

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand that photographs and video will be taken during Queer Pavilion.
- I understand that my artwork, image and voice may be identifiable in the documentation.
- I understand that once I have agreed to the video and photography documentation of myself and artwork, then Richard Orjis will hold the copyright of this documentation, that I do not own copyright.
- I understand that I own any artwork and any intellectual property associated with the artwork created for Queer Pavilion.
- I understand that by agreeing to take part my artwork will be included in the research component / discussion of Richard Orjis' PhD exegesis.
- I understand that taking part in this project is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the project at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that I will receive an artist fee of \$1000 on completion of my performance or the exhibition of my artwork at Queer Pavilion.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the project then, while it may not be possible to destroy all records, I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the documentations have been released online and attached to the PhD exegesis, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes  No
- I wish to be identified by name in any documentation featuring my artwork, image or voice: Yes  No

Participants signature : .....

Participants Name : .....

Participants Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

Date:

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

