



Hazel Hewison

BEYOND LEWIS ROAD

A Memoir of Grief and Solace

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A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Design.

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School of Art and Design
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DEDICATION

WENDY HEWISON

I wish I had the words to express how much I miss you. My best friend, my confidante, I think about you every day. Knowing I cannot phone home to tell you small things about my partner and new job makes my heart ache. As time passes, I have met strangers to me, who reverently described your kind, gentle and poetic soul, making me smile. Watching you saving creatures in our garden, befriending and assisting our neighbourly old folk, and offering young travellers a home at a moments notice; While I only had you for 16 years, your lessons and experiences have shaped me into the young woman I am today. My being reflects your love and inspiration... through me, your life will never truly be lost. I love you Mumma.

ELLA MORISON

I remember the days we made potions out of mud in the backyard, and playfought on the trampoline while pretending to be characters from our favourite book. The day I called you first with news which changed our lives forever. The night you helped me move into the university dormitories, carrying heavy bags uphill, and now every day in a house we decorated together. El, you have supported me like a sister since we were small, it was a blessing to grow up and spend every year with you. Thank you for your unconditional love and support throughout this degree, consoling me on late nights and prompting hundreds of memories of my mum - I couldn't have made it through without you.

ABSTRACT

How might the complex experience of grief, explored through an autoethnographic lens, be illustrated through the application of non-linear narrative design and interactive pop-up techniques?

This research considers the communicative abilities of pop-up interactivity in a memoir of grief. The memoir employs a non-linear structure and narrative techniques in an attempt to emulate the fragmented nature of memory after trauma. *Beyond Lewis Road* traverses the journey following a loved one's cancer diagnosis, aggressive metastasis and death.

Through an exploration of theory and practice utilising Wortman and Silvers' myths of coping with loss¹ and Maddrell's view on grief and bereavement as being "experienced and marked in space and time"², the practice allows for examination of a significant place, the family home once deemed a joy and comfort, thereupon tainted by loss and sorrow. The work asks how the interactive and tactile qualities of pop-up can pull readers into a significant space, sharing memories and leaving an impression on people who may or may not have experienced grief themselves.

1. Camille B. Wortman and Roxane Silver, "The myths of coping with loss," *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology* 57, no. 3 (1989): 349.

2. Avril Maddrell and James D. Sidaway, *Deathscapes: Spaces for Death, Dying, Mourning and Remembrance* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2010), 1.

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ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor 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.

Hazel Beth Hewison
Date: 3/11/2023

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

I retain copyright of all images and artwork produced and presented as part of this thesis.

Hazel Beth Hewison
Date: 03/11/2023

ETHICS APPROVAL AND CONSENTS

As this is a fictional work that draws on autoethnographic stories and imagery, it did not require University ethics approval.

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INTRODUCTION

POSITIONING STATEMENT

Storytelling is a fundamental aspect of our humanity. From a young age storytelling helps us make sense of the world through many forms.³ The allegorical language of myths and fables contribute to positive moral learning and behaviour, while non-fiction narratives aid in critical thinking and the understanding of true human experience.^{4,5} Stories encourage connection, emotion, principles that shape our experience of the present and dreams of the future.⁶ As sociologist and narrative researcher Arther Frank writes: "...human life depends on the stories we tell: the sense of self that those stories impart, the relationships constructed around shared stories, and the sense of purpose that stories both propose and foreclose."⁷

At the core of this thesis is an understanding that storytelling is an integral foundation of design. The work is concerned with the poetic and fragmented retelling of grief following a loved one's journey of fast-moving cancer. In particular, writer C. S. Lewis' comprised reflections, *A Grief Observed*, provides foundation for grief narrative, visual metaphor, recollection and written self-reflection. "Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape."⁸

Chapter 1 Introduces the thesis, the research and the accompanying practice-led project.

Chapter 2 outlines my position as a researcher in context to the project, returning to my childhood home, family relationships and the haunting experience of loss and solace.

Chapter 3 contains a review of contextual knowledge, encompassing foundational theory and practice supporting the work. This review considers the following areas; The truths, myths and nuances of grief; Memory and the senses; Narratology, interactive storytelling and the pop-up book;

Chapter 4 discusses the research design underpinning the enquiry. This begins by considering the artistic paradigm and phenomenological attitude driving my research. The research methodologies and autoethnographic research approach speaks to the discourse of my project, reflecting upon and critiquing my employed methods of practice; immersive isolation, curiosity collection, illustration and paper-engineering. In this process, narrative fragments, archival photographs, illustrated objects and backgrounds are used to recreate spaces from my memory; my mother; my home. I gather and create a collection of 'curiosities'- objects and memories, each connected to spaces in my childhood home. Methods of pop-up will give placement and dimension to these objects, recreating spaces of the past as I remember them now.

Chapter 5 offers a critical commentary of my research application and design process, evidencing the practice undertaken alongside the theory. Through exploration of narrative and voice, the emulated structure of memory, materiality of paper and pop-up construction techniques, each folding space will portray a different memory or object. The paper spaces will be housed in a self-made curiosity cabinet, or as my mother called it, a memory box.

3. Emma Parfitt, *Young People, Learning and Storytelling* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 1–31.

4. Geoffrey N. Leech and Mick Short, *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, no. 2, English Language Series (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007).

5. Eric Heyne, "Truth or Consequences: Individuality, Reference, and the Fiction/ Nonfiction Distinction", *Journal for English and American Studies* (2008): 117-127, Accessed August 22, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1515/zaa.2008.56.2.117>.

6. Parfitt, *Setting the Stage*. 1–31.

7. Arthur W. Frank, *Letting Stories Breathe: A Socio-Narratology* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), 3.

8. Clive L. Staples, *A Grief Observed* (Zondervan, 2001), 60.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Beyond Lewis Road, a practice-led research project, engages with the narrative and design of a non-linear, interactive text. The research presented in this exegesis communicates the contexts and methods applied in the production of its primary designed artefact – a graphic pop-up memoir, fragmented within the confines of a memory box. Through a series of refined paper-craft pop-up mechanics, the narrative navigates the complex experience of grief from a personal perspective.

The research question that this study asks:

“How might the complex experience of grief, explored through an autoethnographic lens, be illustrated through the application of non-linear narrative design and interactive pop-up techniques?”

RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The research question is rationalised from a deeply subjective position. A position that proposes a shared understanding of personal grief experiences after irrevocable loss, has value for opening dialogue about this complex lived experience.

As research into grief has evolved, new perspectives have surfaced that counter past misunderstandings, those such as loss having clear, predictable and quantifiable steps to recovery,⁹ or that there is to be an expected emotional “recovery or resolution”.¹⁰ From the perspective of the research, loss can be understood as a universal experience and

while every journey has its unique challenges, it doesn’t have to be navigated alone.

The practice is interested in the possibilities of non-linear narrative structures to interpret the unconscious recollection of autobiographical memory. The potency of loss lies in its immediate and long-term effects on a person’s physical and emotional being. The heavy fog of grief is difficult to traverse in the early months, often causing sudden moments of pain when it is least expected. The episodic nature of memories surrounding grief can be difficult to communicate outwardly, as there is no singular pathway for the emotions and thoughts which arise with them. As the true nature of grief can be difficult to understand from the outside, it may be that applying unconventional methods of non-linear storytelling offers an alternate mode of sharing the experience with others.

9. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and David Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss* (Simon and Schuster, 2005).

10. Camille B. Wortman and Roxane C. Silver, “The Myths of Coping with Loss”, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 57 (1989): 349, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.57.3.349>.

KEY TERMS IN THE STUDY

Curiosities

The cabinet of curiosity originally referred to an early version of the present-day museum, rooms dedicated to the collection of notable or unusual objects and memorabilia, however, today describes a small cabinet (furniture) or box to the same purpose. The term is used in this thesis as a fanciful alternative name for our old family memory box, filled with letters, photographs, dried flowers and accessories from our lives and those we wish to remember.

Complicated grief

This grief is persistent and intense, taking a long time to fade or improve. The bereaved often feel isolated and hide their grief from people, suffering longer from possible symptoms of depression, anxiety around mortality and physical pain responses to memories, reflective of emotional or physical trauma.

Normal Grief

Normal feelings people have soon after a loss, usually in the first few weeks. This type of grief is less intense as time passes, steadily becoming manageable as the bereaved learn positive coping mechanisms.

Memoir

This narrative form is a personal account of an experience written from personal knowledge. This thesis employs the memoir as opposed to an autobiography, as it only covers a small section of my life.

Pop-up

In the context of literature and narrative design, pop-up refers to physical components that pop-up from a page. Pop-up is a branch of movable book design but is used now as a common term to encapsulate both branches of construction and interaction. This practice requires large amounts of hand assembly.

POSITIONING OF THE RESEARCHER

BEGINNINGS AT LEWIS ROAD

I remember bees humming in the Sycamore tree with such fervour that my ears felt empty upon entering the house. The leaves often rustled from the south westerly wind and birds flitted around the orchard, pecking at plums. “Cheeky little birds”, my mother would call them.

I like to say I grew up in a fairytale house, or so it felt in my youth. A classic English cottage with a rolling garden, the Lodge was a haven for a young, inquisitive girl (Figure 1). Sunlight dappled across antique wooden floors and touched the paws of our menagerie of rescue cats as they slept away the days. Filled with shelves of old books, bundles of dried flowers and many reading nooks, there my love of storytelling and artistry began.

Living in a home with three generations of Hewison women, the air was full of music and intriguing stories: My mother’s travels across Europe on the back of a motorbike, my grandmother’s time in bunkers as a World War II child (Figure 2). Their experiences instilled in me an excitement for life, and passion for exploration.



Figure 1. The southern meadows behind my home (2018).



Figure 2. Pauline (grandmother), Wendy (mother) and Hazel Hewison (2012).

LOSS AND SOLACE

In early 2018, my beloved mother had a recurrence of malignant Melanoma cancer six weeks prior to her passing. The cancer had metastasized beneath her ribs, making it inoperable and difficult to treat. While we tried to talk lightly of future plans, there was a heavy cloud hovering above us all. The conversations of wills. The physical toll on my mothers' body as seen in every mirror. Knowledge that the treatments weren't working. It was an unsteady time for me and the hardest thing to face was that we knew my mother was dying.

29 March, 10.40am. The weeks after her passing felt like a blur. I sat in the garden alone for weeks, aside from the company of my mother's cat, Mistletoe. The grief was overwhelming as her death repeated in my mind, unable to truly understand what it meant to be without her. As months and years passed, my method of coping pulled me inward, hiding my emotions from those dearest to me.

Beyond Lewis Road as a concept was born out of a three-year burial of memory and emotion, approached with the hope that cautious immersion into a repressed memory would begin a new and healthy grieving period.



ARTISTRY AND ANTICS

I have always loved to create. The ability to imagine, draw and paint has assisted in expressing the wonders and troubles I experience that cannot be conveyed through words alone. Growing up in rural New Zealand, there was little access to people or town activity (Figure 3). I was making potions in the backyard, helping mum in the orchard, investigating and sketching bugs or black birds. I became familiar with studying subjects, sketching to understand and creating worlds of my own from an early age. Working now as a professional graphic designer, my method of communication with the world is constantly supported by this ability to illustrate and tell stories. Accordingly, this exegesis and project are supported and contextualized using artwork, hand-scripted lettering and poetic narrative.

“At the age of 3, Hazel sat in the open garage while her mother was fixing the guinea pig hutch on the front lawn. Upon finding an intriguing bucket of white house paint and brush in the corner, Hazel made the executive decision to improve an artefact, and painted the back of her mother’s car.”

Figure 3. Wendy and Hazel (2005).

CONTEXTUAL REVIEW OF KNOWLEDGE

This thesis is concerned with reflection on the deeper nuances of grief and mourning. The research considers two overarching areas:

The first defines grief, considering personal experience and the existing theories of recovery. The second explores non-linear narratology and how the structure of narrative could interpret the unconscious recollection of autobiographical memory through paper engineering and pop-up mechanics. Finally, the review analyses existing contextual practices which cover themes of grief and mortality.

NUANCES OF GRIEF AND LOSS

Defining Grief

While grief may be broadly defined as “a distinct, personal reaction to the loss of any object to which an individual is attached”¹¹, this thesis is focused on grief experienced as the result of the death of a loved one. According to Hall, grief is a “response to loss in all of its totality”.¹² Survivors of such loss may experience outward emotion, with bouts of crying and physical pain, while others may find that the pain is too profound for expression, and they handle it internally. O’Connor observes that “The death of a loved one has been recognized as the greatest life stressor that we face as humans.”¹³

Complicated and Personal Grief

Neimeyer¹⁴ and Kissane and Bloch’s¹⁵ research finds that the path of grief can be complicated, as an individual or a shared experience. With the loss of kin or a friend, individuals can be impacted in different ways, as losing a mother may spark a different reaction to losing a sister, because the level of reliance and connection varies. Kissane and Bloch conclude that where family or shared support is available to the bereaved, individuals began to heal and adapt faster than those who attempted to hold back their emotions and walk the path alone.

Recovery Theory

Neimeyer suggests that the immensely personal experience of grief and loss is prompted by a process of adapting to a sudden new and uncertain reality.¹⁶ Joan Didion noted in her memoir on loss that “Grief, when it comes, is nothing like we expect it to be.”¹⁷ There have been multiple attempts in the past to quantify and create stages for grief. Kubler-Ross and Kessler created the “five stages of loss”.¹⁸ Sanders analysed this theory and after reflecting on her own grief journey, proposed a sixth phase: fulfilment.^{19,20}

11. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, “The A-Z of Death and Dying: Social, Medical, and Cultural Aspects,” *The A-Z of Death and Dying: Social, Medical, and Cultural Aspects*, (February 1, 2014), 286.

12. Ashley Smith Hall, “Grief and Resilience in Children and Families: Resources for Counseling Professionals, Parents, and Children,” *Educational Specialist* 71 (2011): para. 2.

13. Mary-Frances O’Connor, “Grief: A Brief History of Research on How Body, Mind, and Brain Adapt,” *Psychosomatic Medicine* 81, no. 8 (October 2019): 731–38, <https://doi.org/10.1097/PSY.0000000000000717>.

14. Robert A. Neimeyer, *Techniques of Grief Therapy: Creative Practices for Counseling the Bereaved* (Routledge, 2012).

15. David Kissane and Sidney Bloch, “Family Grief,” *The British Journal of Psychiatry: The Journal of Mental Science* 164 (July 1, 1994): 728–40, <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.164.6.728>.

16. Robert A. Neimeyer, “Searching for the Meaning of Meaning: Grief Therapy and the Process of Reconstruction,” *Death Studies* 24, no. 6 (September 1, 2000): 541–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481180050121480>.

17. Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking* (Vintage, 2007), 26.

18. Kübler-Ross and Kessler, *On Grief and Grieving*.

19. Kenneth J. Doka, “Fulfillment as Sanders’ Sixth Phase of Bereavement: The Unfinished Work of Catherine Sanders,” *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying* 52, no. 2 (March 2006): 143–51, <https://doi.org/10.2190/5BC9-035Q-HG1H-PALG>.

20. Sanders describes her phase of fulfilment as “a recognition that life’s journey, and therefore one’s journey through grief is nearing an end, there is a sense of completion... one has done well not only despite the loss but in a very real way because of the loss...” (Doka, 2006, 149)

Recent theorists such as Stroebe,²¹ Neimeyer,²² and Wortman & Silver²³ argue against measuring grief through such structured approaches, suggesting that there is no average, linear trajectory to grief and that their ordered phases to recovery are very simplistic. Wortman and Silver speculate that labelling generalised stages of grief creates an unhealthy “expectation of recovery”, with no clear guidance on duration or achievement.²⁴ This is witnessed in C. S. Lewis’ memoir *A Grief Observed*, written after the passing of his wife. The story is described as “a stark recounting of one man’s studied attempts to come to grips with and in the end defeat the emotional paralysis of the most shattering grief of his life”.²⁵ The substance of the book is a compilation of personal journal entries and has no clear opening or resolution. It is non-linear, irresolute, an apt reflection of the grieving experience.

NARRATOLOGY

Defining Narrative

Genette describes narrative in a broad sense as a form of artistic and social expression that portrays an imitation of real events.²⁶ On the other hand, Labov defined narrative in literature as a “method of recapitulating past experience by matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred”.²⁷ More simplified definitions have included Rimmon-Kenan’s discussion of narrative fiction as “a succession of events”²⁸ and Shires’ “linear sequencing of events”.²⁹

Narrative can be divided into fiction (dealing with invented subjects), and non-fiction, classed as prose that is informative or factual. Frye suggests that the basis of distinction between the two has been blurred in the past, because the unreality of

fiction may depend on outside perception and belief.³⁰ However, while fictional narratives may be based on real people or places, most other elements have been personally created. Fiction is a genre that often uses the structure of prose to tell an invented story.^{31 32}

Non-linear Narrative

Shires outlines the principal elements that characterize narrative; these include “story, character, temporal order, and focalisation”.³³ In terms of temporal order, in a simple, linear narrative, the story’s stages appear in order. Freytag³⁴ proposes that the conceptual framework of such a story might have five key stages.³⁵ However, in a complex narrative, the order of telling may change to be non-linear or run as a tandem plot. This thesis is concerned with the structure and devices of a non-linear narrative.

Non-linearity can present in many forms. Aarseth describes the most common narrative format, presenting a sequence of non-sequential stories within linear text (read in order).³⁶ *Beyond Lewis Road* employs a different approach, a series of stories read and interacted with in a non-linear order. In his book *Understanding Comics*, McCloud discusses non-linearity in relation to comic narration, where a non-linear story relies on the interaction of its readers. Pearce reinforces this, defining non-linearity as “any body of content that is structured such that its final delivery is variable”,^{37 38} characterised by reader choice and the ability for interaction to change the chronology of the story.

21. Margaret Stroebe, Henk Schut and Kathrin Boerner, “Cautioning Health-Care Professionals: Bereaved Persons Are Misguided through the Stages of Grief,” *OMEGA-Journal of Death and Dying* 74, no. 4 (2017): 455–73.

22. Neimeyer, “Searching for the Meaning of Meaning.”
 23. Wortman and Silver, “The Myths of Coping with Loss.”: 349-357.
 24. *Ibid*, 352.
 25. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*. xv.
 26. Gérard Genette and Ann LeVonas, “Boundaries of Narrative,” *New Literary History* 8, no. 1 (1976): 1–13.
 27. William Labov, *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972).
 28. Slomith Rimmon-Kenan, “Concepts of Narrative,” (2006) 52.
 29. Linda M. Shires, *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction* (Taylor & Francis, 1988).
 30. Northrop Frye, “The Four Forms of Prose Fiction,” *The Hudson Review* 2, no. 4 (1950): 582–95.
 31. Prose is a common form of writing in narrative. It can in a sense be contrasted with poetry, where instead of a structure which often relies on poetic emphasis and sound, prose consists of formal sentences arranged into paragraphs and chapters. *Ibid*, 582-95.
 32. Geoffrey N. Leech and Mick Short, *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, 2nd ed, English Language Series (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007).
 33. Shires, *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction*. 52.
 34. Gustav Freytag, *Freytag’s Technique of the Drama: An Exposition of Dramatic Composition and Art* (Scott, Foresman and Company, 1908).
 35. These, when viewed as a pyramid move from exposition, through rising action, climax, falling action and end with resolution.
 36. Espen J. Aarseth, “Nonlinearity and Literary Theory,” *Hyper/Text/Theory* 52 (1994): 761–80.
 37. Celia Pearce, “The Ins & Outs of Non-Linear Storytelling,” *ACM SIGGRAPH Computer Graphics* 28, no. 2 (May 1994): 101, <https://doi.org/10.1145/178951.178956>.
 38. Non-linear structures can be created using flashbacks, parallel plots and episodic narrative, and have been applied to narrative forms such as the fiction novel, graphic novel, web comic, video game and interactive film.

Movable Books and the Pop-up

A unique instance of interactive storytelling is found in the movable book. Movable books come from the art of paper engineering and feature three dimensional, suspending, folding and revolving mechanisms within their pages.³⁹ Every page turned delivers a new interactive experience in three-dimensional space and hidden narratives combined to intrigue the observer and immerse the reader. Movable book is the overarching term for these artefacts however they are commonly known descriptively as pop-up books, a three-dimensional branch of movable books that use devices such as tabs, flaps, sliders, pop-outs and suspended material to allow user interaction.⁴⁰

Designs have developed in form over time and feature a multitude of themes such as those featured in Katsumi Komagata's *Little Tree* which explores the changing seasons of life and Robert Sabuda's enchanting retelling of *Beauty and the Beast*.

While they fill the market of children's literature now, movable books were not common amongst young audiences until the early 20th century. Designed and intended more toward spaces of philosophy, navigation, science and mathematics, adult examples have been published since the 14th century and resided distinctively within academic audiences.⁴¹ Adult movable books have evolved over time to include mature topics laced with fiction and poetry, for instance Edward Gorey's morbid tale *The Dwindling Party* (Figure 4) or *The Naughty Nineties* by Kaiser and Seymour.



Figure 4. Edward Gorey, *The Dwindling Party* (1982) .

Pop-ups represent memories needing to be accessed, closed off to us until we choose to open and explore them. Complex grief causes trauma that affects recollection and emotional responses to memory. They could be random, fragmented and extremely painful. Pop-ups allow for a controlled environment where every new scene, new place, new memory narrative can be accessed safely, at the readers own pace.

39. Peter Haining, *Movable Books: An Illustrated History* (London: New English Library, 1979).

40. Pop-up and Movable Books, *The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks* (Routledge, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315722986-19>.

41. Bettina Kümmerling-Meibauer, "From Baby Books to Picturebooks for Adults: European Picturebooks in the New Millennium," *Word & Image* 31, no. 3 (July 3, 2015): 249–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02666286.2015.1032519>.

CONTEXTUAL PRACTICES

That Dragon, Cancer, 2016

(Ryan and Amy Green, Numinous Games)

That Dragon, Cancer is a video game released in 2016, telling the story of a family whose very young child has gone through a long, lost battle with cancer. The game traverses the parent's experience both together and individually, offering insight into not only the child's journey from diagnosis to death but the changing mindset and beliefs of Ryan and Amy as they witness the endurance of their son, Joel. Amy's journey is that of spirituality and belief, relying on her strong faith that God will deliver Joel safely through his treatment while voicing a mother's uncertainty of a God who would take her son. Ryan's journey takes a darker turn, expressing both religious and situational doubts, frustration shown through vulnerable discourse:

"I'm pleading to God to spare his life, but I'm tempted to despair because self-inspection concludes that I shouldn't expect much of anything. And yet my wife is expecting a surprise party from the Lord... I envy her."⁴²

While trust in a higher power helps many people traverse the journey of cancer, some people can't turn to religious belief, approaching crisis logically. (This is a struggle I could personally relate to watching my mums experience and envying those who could rely on the strength of God instead of my own resilience, feeling frustration at those telling me "It's God's plan.")

The game uses non-diegetic dialogue and voiceover to convey thought and narrate handwritten letters. This technique provides a genuine sense of grief and distress within the narrative which helps the audience understand the difficulty and vulnerability of their experience. Video-gameplay allows for storytelling to be communicated through 3 of the human senses, pulling people into the author's world for a while. *That Dragon, Cancer* tells an emotionally charged, humanist story which is a comparable reality for many people. Sharing memories in this way makes them stronger, and encourages users to explore themes of faith, love and hope within their own lives as well.⁴³

A Grief Observed, 1961/2001

(Clive S. Lewis)

C. S. Lewis' *A Grief Observed* is a genuine example of the ability for autoethnographic writing to approach devastating and morbid topics openly and without discomfort. This was an appealing discovery, as many books on this subject obscure certain unpleasant or distressing aspects of the cancer journey. The memoir pieces together Lewis' personal experience of overwhelming grief and wavering religious faith after his wife, Joy, passed away from cancer in 1960. As one of our most influential Christian authors and great scholars, Lewis dissects concepts such as loss, mortality, estrangement and religious belief, all through a lens of grief.

"Tonight, all the hells of young grief have opened again; the mad words, the bitter resentment, the fluttering in the stomach, the nightmare unreality, the wallowed-in tears. For in grief nothing 'stays put.' One keeps on emerging from a phase, but it always recurs."⁴⁴

⁴². *That Dragon Cancer*. PC version, Numinous Games, 2016.

⁴³. Cancer is one of the world's big unifying things outside of death itself. More than just the name of the disease, cancer is about the way it changes the lives of everyone involved. It's the one big tragedy that if you look around your circle of friends or family, someone has been through this, and it is an ordeal. Because of this, the creators have treated both the development and publishing of this game with great respect not only for those involved, but for anyone who has been through something similar.

⁴⁴. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 56.

The book is written in the form of a journalistic memoir, full of intimate notes and scattered thoughts, or “jottings”, from the author.⁴⁵ His approach to writing about his own grief is conversational between himself and the paper. The chapters move smoothly from self-inspection, to witnessing his wife’s illness and death, finally coming to honestly question and scrutinize his ideology and faith in a ‘good’ God.

“Because she is in God’s hands.’ But if so, she was in God’s hands all the time, and I have seen what they did to her here.”⁴⁶ Lewis experiences a particular horror upon realizing that he no longer remembers his wife’s physical presence, retaining no good photograph from their short marriage. (I can relate to this musing, where over time the memory of my mother’s voice is fading.) In his grief, Lewis on occasion speaks of Joy as though she is more of an idea than a person. To read this emotionally heavy narrative of sorrow and loss, which eventually closes with an understanding that the cloud of grief can dampen our connection with our own beliefs, is to engage with existential questions, such as “where do you turn when you’re suffering?” and “Where do our loved ones go after they die?” that may apply to many readers, identifying their own story in Lewis’s narrative. The memoir gives voice to one’s own experience, one’s own moments of uncertainty and fear.

Sad Book, 2004
(Michael Rosen)

Filled with many layers of grief, *Sad Book* is an illustrated exploration of Michael Rosen’s experience after losing his son Eddie overnight to Meningitis. The story moves without chronology through Rosen’s day-to-day life, unmasking moments of great pain and a will for recovery (Figure 5).

Narratively, Rosen’s picture book is aimed at older children, featuring a mix of conversational and lyrical language. “Sometimes sad is very big. It’s everywhere. All over me.”⁴⁷ At times he uses wording which seems aimed at an older audience, which prompts that he wants this book, this story to be seen and felt by anyone who needed it. The narrative content is solemn, and illustrator Quentin Blake noted that “You can see that it’s gloomy, in the same way that the typography has to be perfectly straightforward, you know, it’s addressed to you, seriously, and you have to take it in that way.”⁴⁸ Rosen’s melancholic but not despairing treatment of first-person narrative communicates a similar truthful recounting of a sad time in his life.

45. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 59.

46. *Ibid*, 27.

47. Michael Rosen and Quentin Blake. *Michael Rosen’s sad book* (London: Walker Books, 2004), 3.

48. Ghislaine Kenyon, *Writing about the Death of Michael Rosen’s Son*, Quentin Blake, (2006), video, [interviewhttps://youtu.be/t1mOX_Y-Rwk?si=_rJuJFcxFjD6ypAO](https://youtu.be/t1mOX_Y-Rwk?si=_rJuJFcxFjD6ypAO).

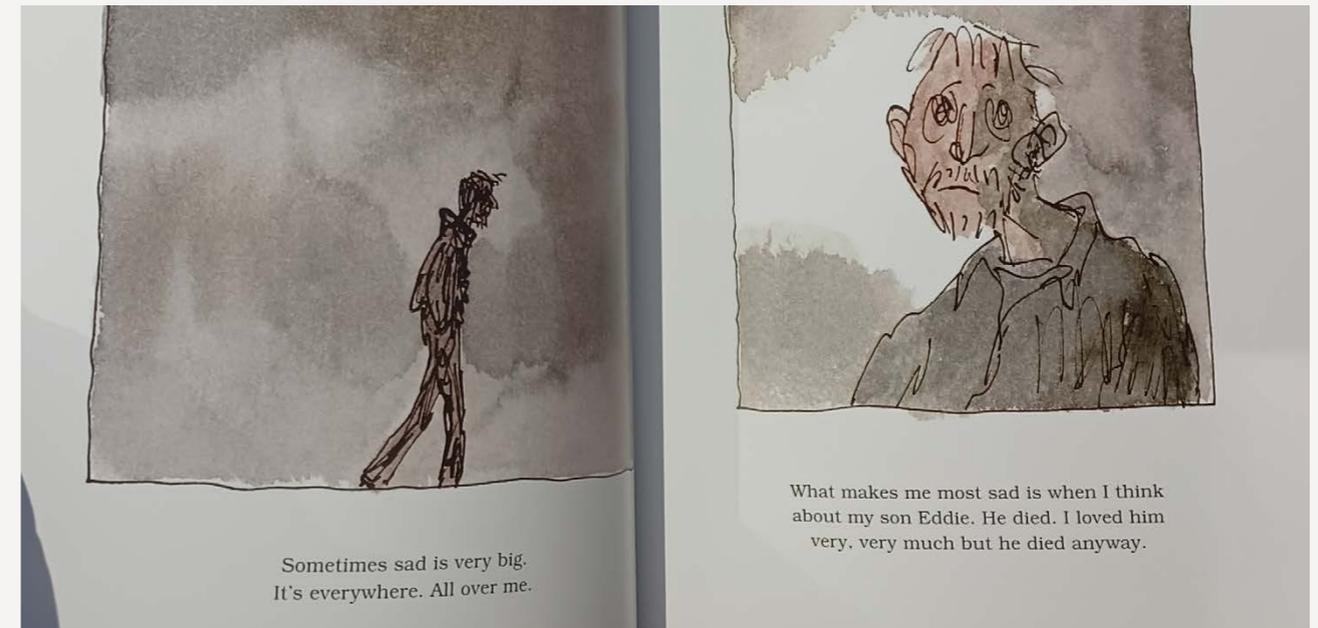


Figure 5. Michael Rosen, *Sad Book*, (2004), picture book..

Little Tree, 2004
(Katsumi Komagata)

In his pop-up picture book *Little Tree*, Katsumi Komagata explores the cycle of life of a tree.⁴⁹ This narrative address's broader themes of change and impermanence, a recognizable ode to the life cycle of all things. On each page of the book, the tree evolves to a new stage of growth, from a tiny white seed to a sapling, finally unfolding into a fully grown tree (Figure 6). The tree moves through the seasons, featuring tiny buds in spring, a canopy of green leaves in summer, shedding red in autumn and darkening to a gloomy grey representative of the tough winter months.

The structural design of this book is subtle and intricate, featuring only a centered v-fold supporting the tree. The paper pop-ups shift between sizes, change point of view and reveal long shadows from the perspective of the tree. Komagata's simple juxtaposition of typed text, silhouette and shadow accentuate the narrative. Leaving space for the reader to contemplate the deeper concept of ephemerality and renewal.



Figure 6. Katsumi Komagata, *Little Tree*, (2004), pop-up book.

RESEARCH DESIGN

OVERVIEW

This chapter discusses the research design underpinning the thesis project. It considers the study's methodological considerations and paradigmatic understanding, supported by a heuristic foundation of research methods which enable the design of the pop-up text, *Beyond Lewis Road*.

RESEARCH PARADIGM

As this practice-led project follows a narrative based on lived experience, the research paradigm driving the practice can be described as post-positivist, oriented towards artistic research.

The post-positivist paradigm is described by Dash to emphasize that "social reality is viewed and interpreted by knowledge that is personally experienced rather than acquired from or imposed from the outside."⁵⁰ As this study engages with an immersion into memory and experience, this paradigm supports the opportunity for personal discovery and self-reflection. Charney observes that post-positivist researchers "do not assume that their methods ensure certainty and universally generalisable results."⁵¹ Their research pays close attention to the individual experience in order to be collectively representative in their practice and findings.⁵²

Artistic research combines creative action with a person's mode of inquiry, developing knowledge through practice.⁵³ Klein notes that "it is not the art, which resolves into research" but the development of "research that becomes artistic."⁵⁴ Artistic

investigation can establish universally applicable knowledge and broad-ranging impact greater than simply their own creative practice.⁵⁵ The subjective nature of post-positivist artistic research supports my autoethnographic inquiry, driving my practice through personal belief and individual experience.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This project uses an autoethnographic approach driven by a phenomenological attitude.

Hamilton, Smith and Worthington describe autoethnography simply as "a look at self within a larger context."⁵⁶ Autoethnography is characterised by its exploration of personal experience and interaction, using self-reflective practices to understand broader societal conditions.⁵⁷ This study's methodologic framework is applicable to my work as it positions my personal experience centrally within the research and practice. Bochner and Ellis refer to the term autoethnography as having been in academic circulation since 1975, first applied to an ethnographic study by the anthropologist, Karl Heider.⁵⁸ According to Ellis, autoethnographic projects have certain distinguishing features, including first-person narration, focus on emotional experience, and having the narrative object be the researcher themselves.⁵⁹ Anderson suggests that an autoethnographic approach can enable researchers to communicate narratives of experience that can evoke an emotional understanding within the reader.⁶⁰

50. Narendra K. Dash, "Research paradigms in education: Towards a resolution." *Journal of Indian Education* 19, no. 2, (1993): 1.

51. Davida Charney, "Paradigm and Punish," *College Composition and Communication* 48, no. 4 (1997): 562–65, <https://doi.org/10.2307/358459>.

52. Marilyn M. Cooper, "Distinguishing Critical and Post-Positivist Research," *College Composition and Communication* 48, no. 4 (1997): 556–61, <https://doi.org/10.2307/358458>.

53. Julian Klein. "What is artistic research," *Journal for Artistic Research* (2010).

54. Klein, "What is artistic research," 4.

55. Henk Borgdorff. *The debate on research in the arts*. Vol. 2. (Bergen: Kunsthøgskolen i Bergen, 2006).

56. Mary Lynn Hamilton, Laura Smith, and Kristen Worthington. "Fitting the methodology with the research: An exploration of narrative, self-study and auto-ethnography." *Studying teacher education* 4, no. 1 (2008): 17.

57. Carol Rambo, and Carolyn Ellis. "Autoethnography." *The Blackwell encyclopaedia of sociology* (2007): 1-3.

58. Karl G. Heider, "What Do People Do? Dani Auto-Ethnography," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 31, no. 1 (April 1975): 3–17, <https://doi.org/10.1086/jar.31.1.3629504>.

59. Carolyn Ellis, *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Autoethnography* (Rowman Altamira, 2004).

60. Leon Anderson, "Analytic Autoethnography," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 35, no. 4 (August 1, 2006).

This is further supported by phenomenological comprehension where truth may only be revealed through experience.⁶¹ This practice-led research project conducts academic research through personal practice and the experience of making. Pitard defines phenomenology essentially as “the study of lived experience or an event as experienced in the living world.”⁶² Supportive of an autoethnographic enquiry, phenomenological-oriented research encourages writing “from the heart”, suggesting a focus on “evocative research” which increases connection between researcher and reader.⁶³ Ellis states in her ethnographic study that “the relationships between writers and readers of the texts is one of involvement and participation”,⁶⁴ aligning with Pitard’s belief that lived experience narratives are not simply stories of the researcher’s past, but their understanding of how experience can be conveyed to and impact a reader.⁶⁵

METHODS

Autoethnographic Journaling

Van Manen observes that “Researchers have found that keeping a journal, diary or log can be very helpful for keeping a record of insights gained, for discerning patterns of the work in progress.”⁶⁶ On account of the transient nature of an autoethnographic study, chronological journaling was a struggle when beginning this research process. Autoethnography relies greatly on the recollection of memory and requires unexpected moments of deep reflection on personal experience. While reminiscing or talking to close friends about my experiences, I began drawing and writing about them. As certain memories began to have clarity and reside in my mind, I would detail these memories and either sketch or paint whatever stood out most prominently. These illustrations and hand-written notes provided a foundation for the written narrative and visual assets of the graphic pop-up text. Over time my documentation of narrative and artistry leaned away from consistent diary entries and took the form of a deconstructed journal in my studio space (Figure 7). My documentation reflects the natural recall of memories and were kept as such, scribbled sporadically on individual pieces of paper or envelopes and pulled from the back of notebooks from work (Figure 8). The method of autoethnographic journaling helped me process and store the fragmented memories, notes and sketches in a collated manner (Figure 9 and 10).

61. Maurice Merleau-Ponty and John F. Bannan, “What Is Phenomenology?” *CrossCurrents* 6, no. 1 (1956): 59–70.

62. Jayne Pitard, “Autoethnography as a Phenomenological Tool: Connecting the Personal to the Cultural,” *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*, ed. Pranee Liamputtong (Springer Singapore, 2019), 1831.

63. Pitard, “Autoethnography as a Phenomenological Tool: Connecting the Personal to the Cultural,” 2019.

64. Ellis, *The Ethnographic I*, 30.

65. Pitard, “Autoethnography as a Phenomenological Tool.” (2019).

66. Max Van Manen. *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. (Routledge, 2016), 73.



Figure 7. My AUT studio space where I worked on *Beyond Lewis Road*. (2023)

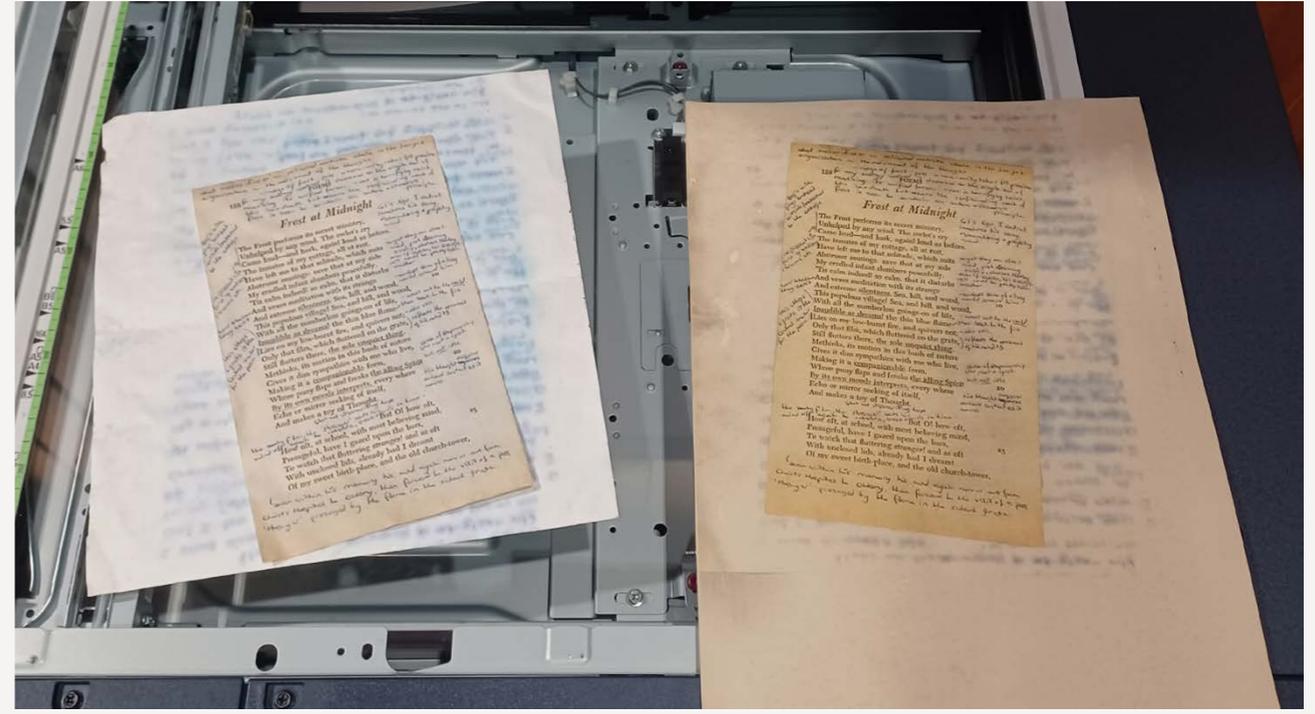


Figure 8. Poetic notation, scanned and printed to use as background textures. (2023)

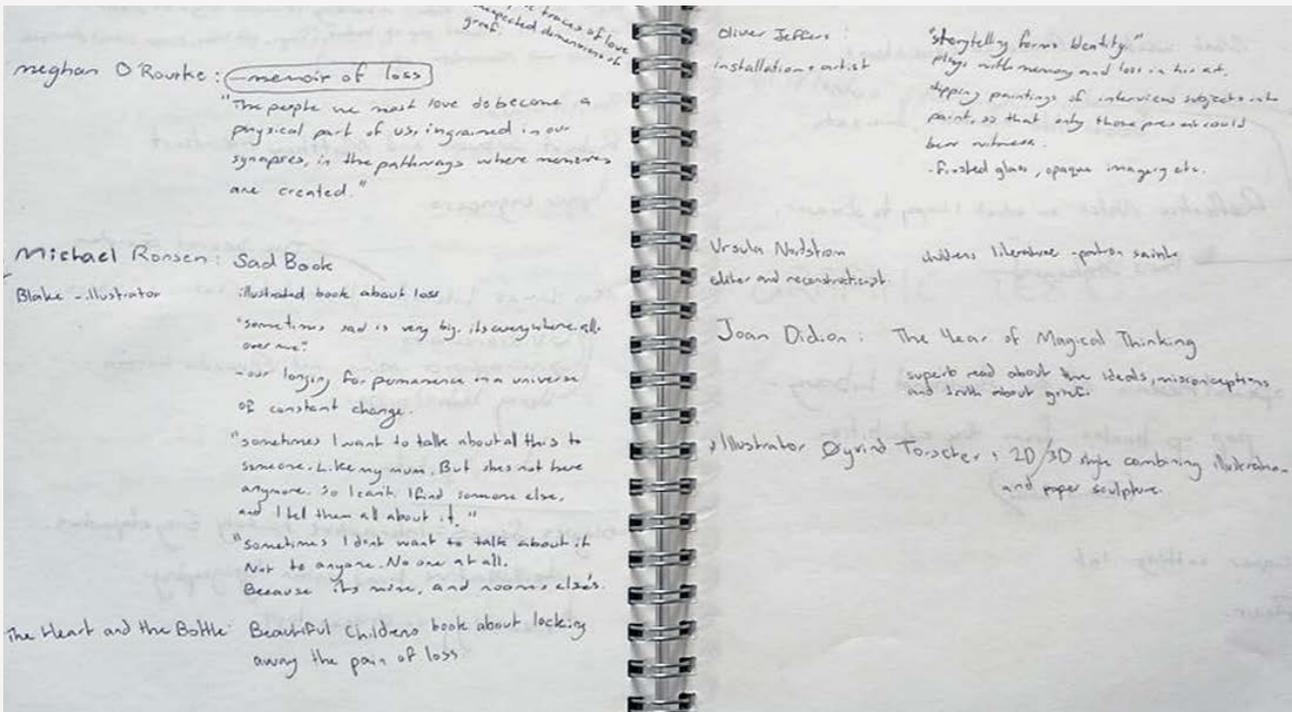


Figure 9 and 10. Pages of colour ideation and research from two of my sketchbook journals. (2022)



Collecting Curiosities

The central artistic focus of this thesis project is visualising memories of grief through portrayal of familiar places, people and objects. For this, I needed to create a collection of mementos which no longer reside at my home, this phase of the research design employed 2 stages: First, gathering media in the form of photographs, letters, dried flora, aged books and items of significance from either my current house or family storage (Figure 11).⁶⁷ Following this process, the second stage required a return to my home, collecting plant specimens and photographs of the house and grounds (Figure 12). I also began a simple herbarium, collecting and labelling an array of flowers and herbs which consistently remind me of my mother and link to my past. The above curiosities helped me later in the process to use as artistic reference, as well as serving as a form of immersion to revive lost memories.

Thumbnails and Illustrated Assets

In developing the layouts and pages for the graphic text, I shifted backward and forwards between sketching thumbnails and drawing assets. Knowing what assets needed to be included enabled me to simultaneously create content for the book while planning out the later stage of construction. As *Beyond Lewis Road* started in a digital space before shifting to analogue pop-up design, it took some time to transform flat designs meant for an interactive web-comic into three-dimensional book spreads, for which thumbnails were integral. During this stage I began by sketching the structure of the memoir, deciding on different layouts that reflected the non-linear nature of my story. After settling on individual and separated book scenes, I began illustrating significant objects and spaces from around my home (Figure 13).



Figure 11. Objects of significance from my bedroom at Lewis Road. (2018)

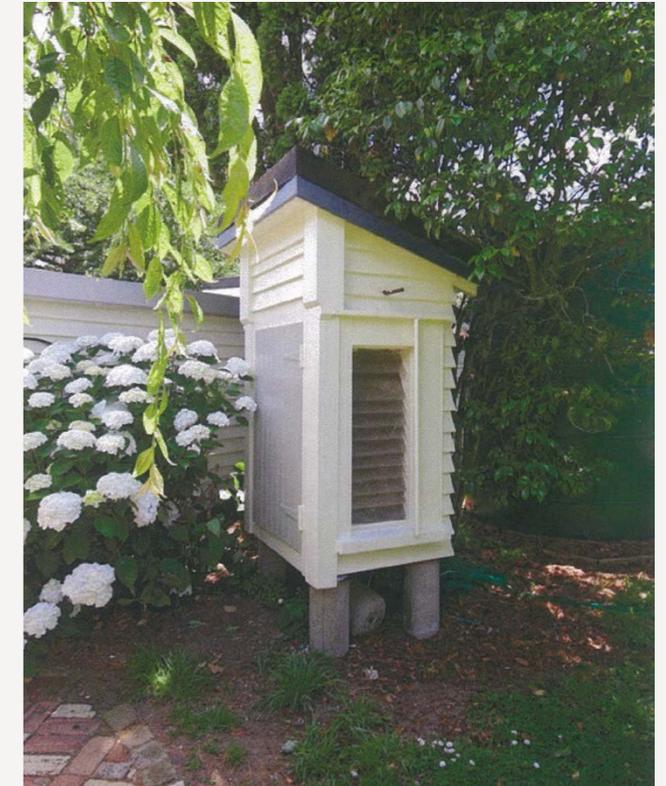


Figure 12. Herb drying locker at Lewis Road. (2022)

⁶⁷. Memories of my mother are instilled in items I interact with every day. Certain furnishings of hers, books with handwritten notes, kitchen utensils, wall hangings, winter coats and jewelry have travelled with me since the age of 17. Upon pulling my muffin tin out of the kitchen cupboard I reminisce over summer days baking in the kitchen, spilling flower all over our clothes. I hold these items, close my eyes and remember her laugh.



Figure 13. Studies of the home in charcoal, my mother's bedroom window and a stained glass lamp (2022).

Intuition and Experiments

Faste defines intuition as “a reflexive and innate kind of knowing”,⁶⁸ not evident knowledge but insight emerging from the subconscious mind. Faste suggests that intuitive behaviour and the perception of a situation is commonly associated with emotion alongside rational understanding. Thus, intuition in design practice acts as a personal device for decision-making and problem-solving in the experimentation stage. Schön identifies experimentation as a “probing, playful activity by which we get a feel for things.”⁶⁹ An important part of the iterative design process, a ubiquitous system of concept/ artefact development and refinement,⁷⁰ experimentation follows a desire to extend our tacit knowledge and search for something new.

Initially, the project started in the digital space, exploring how graphic design and storytelling can be articulated inside digital environments. Visual matter was constrained to scans shown on a screen. During practice however, the evocative nature of illustrating in an analogue environment made the visualisation of a complex emotion almost tangible, to an extent that I found more effectively expressed outside of a digital format. The digital space felt too impersonal during the making process, and I had an affinity towards the analogue, working with tangible mediums like watercolour paints, willow chalk, marker pens and cardstock. In conjunction with practice, my research began to gradually shift from the digital realm to tactile interaction in analogue, which has led me to a space of pop-up mechanics and paper engineering.

68. Haakon Faste, “Intuition in Design: Reflections on the Iterative Aesthetics of Form,” *CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, Colorado, (2017), 145, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3025453.3025534>.
69. Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (London: Routledge, 2017), 145, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315237473>.
70. David Wynn and Claudia Eckert, “Perspectives on Iteration in Design and Development,” *Research in Engineering Design* 28 (April 1, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00163-016-0226-3>.

Paper Engineering as an Artistic Device

Paper engineering is a technical device used to enhance illustrative storytelling through pop-up and mechanical interactivity. In *Beyond Lewis Road*, the original scenes and illustrations are two dimensional, however through layering and connection, they create three-dimensional spaces (Figure 14). Each scene has elements which respond to reader interaction through methods of unfolding, pull-tabs and wheels.

As illustration is translated into an unfolding scene, fragments of spaces, objects and narratives once hidden become visible as a cohesive story. As a result, memories interlace with the present experience as the stimulation of anticipation turns to both physical and mindful engagement. Through this interactivity, each scene becomes a means to examine paper engineering as an artistic method and explore how pop-up design might reframe a non-linear narrative.

Reflection

Contemplative reflection is an important part of any artistic inquiry, and various methods are used throughout this thesis to achieve a contemplative state. To step back from one's research and work allows for self-reflection and is imperative for moving forward in a project. The two most prominent methods of contemplation performed during my enquiry are sitting with a hot pot of tea, and music. The process of filling a kettle, boiling water, choosing tea leaves and steeping the tea is slow and peaceful. It gives the drinker a moment of true methodical control outside of a work environment. Choosing a teacup and pouring the tea is an extremely personal action, concentrating solely on the process.



Figure 14. First iteration of a pop-up tree (2023).

CRITIQUE OF THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design for the thesis was developed through an autoethnographic enquiry into lived experience and memory. The personal nature of the project offered flexibility from the conceptual to the practical stages of making, enabling me to adapt my emerging methods to suit new ideas and opportunities.

An autoethnographic enquiry can reveal distinct advantages and disadvantages in the creative research and output process. First, because autoethnography centres on the self, it heightened the potential for introspection and internal dialogue to aid in the recovery process. This increased the chances of artistic discovery because I was able to navigate a formal research enquiry through a process of personal discovery, experimentation, deep questioning and creative reflection. Simultaneously, the support of a post-positivist research paradigm within this autoethnographic research project allowed for my individual experience to be foundational in representing a collective circumstance, where grief and loss are unanimously felt, but not consistently understood.

However, despite these advantages, an autoethnographic enquiry also poses distinct challenges. First, it can be unpredictable. Having never employed this methodology in such an extensive project before, I was unfamiliar with the discomfort and instability it would cause within my person. Raising such distressing memories prompted long periods of heartache and fatigue in the early months of thesis project. Adding to this personal turbulence, the Auckland floods in 2023 caused severe damage and upheaval within my home, causing me to take leave from study. This time away, while undesired,

proved valuable in stepping back from the project, developing internal methods to manage my involvement moving forward.

Finally, I am aware as a creator, my work is positioned in the public domain, and will become a part of my identity moving forward—both as an academic, and as a person. Autoethnographic research requires a high level of both personal monologue and shared findings, and I have endeavoured to make public only that which wouldn't harm or expose those involved in the narrative.

Summary

This chapter has considered the research design driving the development of *Beyond Lewis Road*. Paradigmatically positioned as post-positivist artistic research, the project has utilised an autoethnographic enquiry, in which I explored grief and lived experience, realized through a range of practice-led and reflective methods.

Having considered the foundational research design of the project, it is now useful to critique how the methods operate within the making process.



Figure 15. Cloud studies and cancerous tree portrayal in Indian Ink, (2023).

CRITICAL COMMENTARY

INTRODUCTION

Grief does not disappear, with time it merely weaves its way through our memories, hiding behind people, in places and things. *Beyond Lewis Road* explores how the lasting effects of grief and loss can manifest in objects and places familiar to the bereaved. This chapter grounds the research project, demonstrating how artistic practices and ‘making’ can return a sense of influence when experiencing or understanding grief.⁷¹ Interactive practices such as pop-up books and explorative video games are examined and deconstructed to help develop a system of three-dimensional narrative and construction. In particular, the memoir’s theme of reminiscence encourages conscious exploration of changing gardens, empty rooms and items long overlooked.

MUSINGS OF THE PAST

In its initial stages, this project sought to merely explore memories surrounding the death of my mother and the immediacy of grief and mourning. It was a devastating experience, one which felt unreal and lingered across the following years of my life. The proposition of immersion into such consuming memories of loss was daunting and for this, I desired a mode of storytelling which offered immersion with a semblance of control, of choice. Interactive storytelling allowed a new level of connection between myself and the topic, not only placing my reflections onto a page but examining the function and shape of my memories, interacting subtly with my past through the objects and spaces I created. In my practice,

I aimed to design a memoir that encapsulated some of those autoethnographic memories and created miniature spaces for contemplation and connection. Early considerations for the memoir included building a collection of memories which would form the foundation of both the visual and written narrative. For me, this collection grew considerably over conversations with my closest friends and family members. Upon sharing parts of my experience or simply remembering my mother as she was every day, my friends challenged my perception around death and grief, and the unspoken prohibition on breaching such subjects. Where I sensed hesitance, I would welcome their curiosity and begin to feel comfortable expressing the emotions which rose with each retelling.

Riches and Dawson note “the importance of talking about lost loved ones as a part of maintaining a continued bond between the living and the dead”.⁷² Conversations with people who knew my mum helped me to remember and appreciate specific positive moments and objects that my senses had forgotten; smelling Jasmine vines through the kitchen window, wearing fingerless gloves in winter, snipping the heads off lavender in spring, dancing to her old records or helping her bake on weekends, the scent remaining in the house for days (Figure 16).

During conversations with my best friend at the beach, she recounted that “On frosty mornings, Wendy would always wear fingerless gloves in the car. I remember the house smelling like banana bread and she would always leave her tea in the microwave until it went cold.”⁷³ While reminiscing on my own, however, I found that those thoughts shifted to that which is absent, sights and smells that I cannot experience similarly

71. Davina Kirkpatrick, *Grief and Loss; Living with the Presence of Absence. A Practice Based Study of Personal Grief Narratives and Participatory Projects* (PhD Thesis, 2017).

72. Gordon Riches and Pamela Dawson. “Lost children, living memories: the role of photographs in processes of grief and adjustment among bereaved parents.” *Death studies* 22, no. 2 (1998): 121.

73. A Conversation with my best friend at the Beach (January, 2023).

again after her passing (Figure 17 and 18). These two different perspectives prompted the exploration of how grief could shift significantly depending on how I approached and narrated the story. The next step was to pinpoint these memories and select objects of significance.



Figure 16. A view from the living room to the Foyer at Lewis Road (2017).



Figure 17. A view from the living room french doors out over the circular lawn (2017).

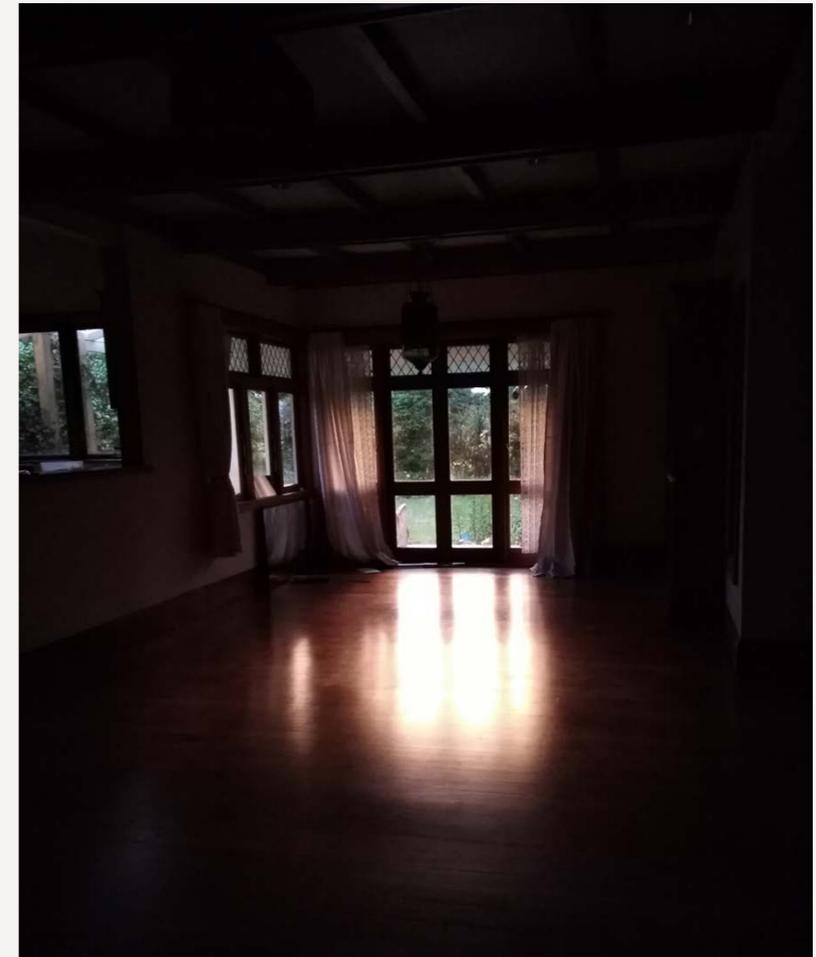


Figure 18. The desolate living room after selling our home (2018).

A SENSE OF OBJECT AND PLACE

Our connection to objects is inseparable, whether collected through materialist appeal, necessity or family heritage. As time flows, physical objects become a place for memories to reside, holding both that which is present and absent.⁷⁴ Through my own experience, objects are integral to creating long-lasting relationships and memories with loved ones, often shaping the human recovery from loss.⁷⁵ Similarly, places such as my current secluded house and garden in Northcote, bursting with flowers and birdsong during the early months of spring, invoke a feeling of tranquility as they closely resemble my home (Figure 19). A key difference was identified between object and place throughout this early process; Objects are specific to my home, pieces I interact with through the senses of sight and touch. Place, however, has a more ambiguous connection to my memory, sparked at any time through the senses of smell and sound. These sensory memories help to create a “comfortable relationship” with lost loved ones.⁷⁶ Illustrations of these objects and places provided a steady ground for visualizing memories of grief.



Figure 19. Images of the back garden at Lewis Road. (2018)

74. Laura E. Tanner, *Lost Bodies: Inhabiting the Borders of Life and Death* (Cornell University Press, 2006): 178.

75. Daniel Miller, *Anthropology and the Individual: A Material Culture Perspective* (A&C Black, 2009).

76. Riches, “Lost children, living memories: the role of photographs in processes of grief and adjustment among bereaved parents,” 121.

AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

Artistic Medium

After collecting my objects and places, the next step was to make quick sketches and paintings in a variety of styles, to try and capture a feeling of grief or melancholy. At this point in the process, I didn't know how I wanted the audience to feel, so these iterative tests filled my journals and digital sketchbook as I shuffled through visual impressions, colours and styles.

Watercolour and coffee staining large sheets of paper gave an organic look to the bases of my artworks (Figure 20). The use of sepia tones is a common artistic tool used to give an impression of nostalgia and memory, portraying old paper and faded photographs.



Figure 20. A watercolour landscape process (2022).



Figure 21. A sewn, dried rosemary and sage bundle. (2022).

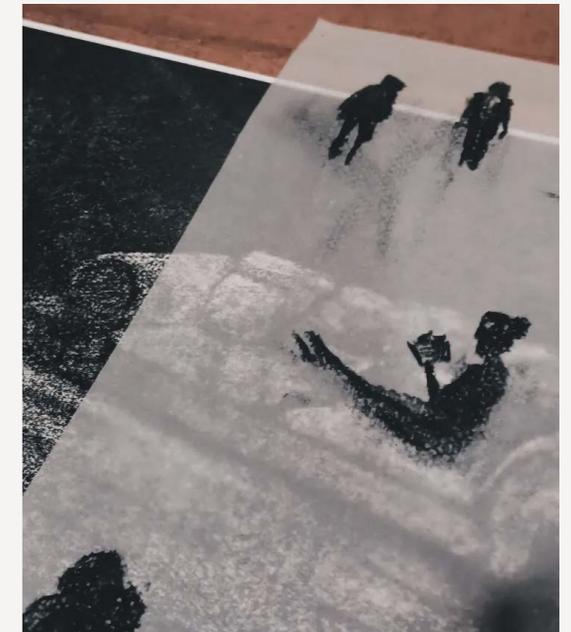


Figure 22. Printing Charcoal artworks onto transparent paper. (2023).

At this point in the process, I had uncertainty as to whether the visual style should soft and nostalgic, or dark and melancholic, so these iterative tests filled my desk and journals as I shuffled through visual mediums. Taking the watercolour bases, I began sewing dried herbs into the paper to incorporate the sense of smell (Figure 21) and smudging crushed charcoal to create dark and moody interiors and figures (Figures 22 and 23). The charcoal works were striking and encapsulated the bleak, stark emotional qualities of grief (Figure 24).

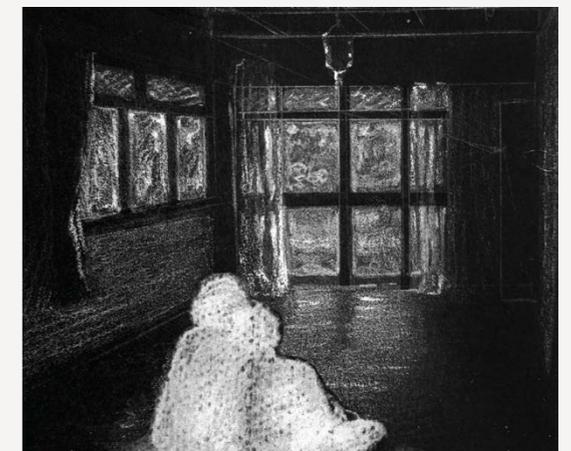


Figure 23. Illustrations of figures and places. (2022).



Colour

Beyond Lewis Road uses a simple monochromatic colour palette. Upon reflecting on how bright and warm my initial illustrative tests were, I went back to the drawing board and applied a darker weight to the charcoal backgrounds leaving only the stark disparity of black and white illustration (Figure 25 and 26).

This first prompted the shift from sepia toned illustrations to a monochromatic palette. These early aesthetic considerations prompted questions of “What does grief look like?” and “What colour is grief to me?” Personally, grief feels bleak. It feels cold. Grief feels like a landscape laden with storm clouds, ready to rain at any given moment (Figure 27). To follow the semi-realistic style I was previously applying to my objects, I continued working in colour between analogue painting and digital editing to create a foundation of assets, before digitally manipulating those assets to become monochrome, using Lightroom to enhance certain levels of light and shadow.



Figure 26. Stormclouds, charcoal. Hewison, (2023).



Figure 27. Lewis Road map, inverted watercolour. Hazel, 2023.



Figure 29. Living Room layout experiment. (2023).

NARRATIVE FEATURES

Non Sequential Narrative

Beyond Lewis Road is a non-sequential narrative that explores the format and relationship between storytelling and memory. While the content is that of an adult-picture book, the text is designed as a deconstructed pop-up book, with separated scenes and individual collation of memories that represent my experience of bereavement in 2018 and expression of grief thereafter. It explores my home on Lewis Road, including parts of the grounds and house that were affected by grief, and objects which I keep with me.

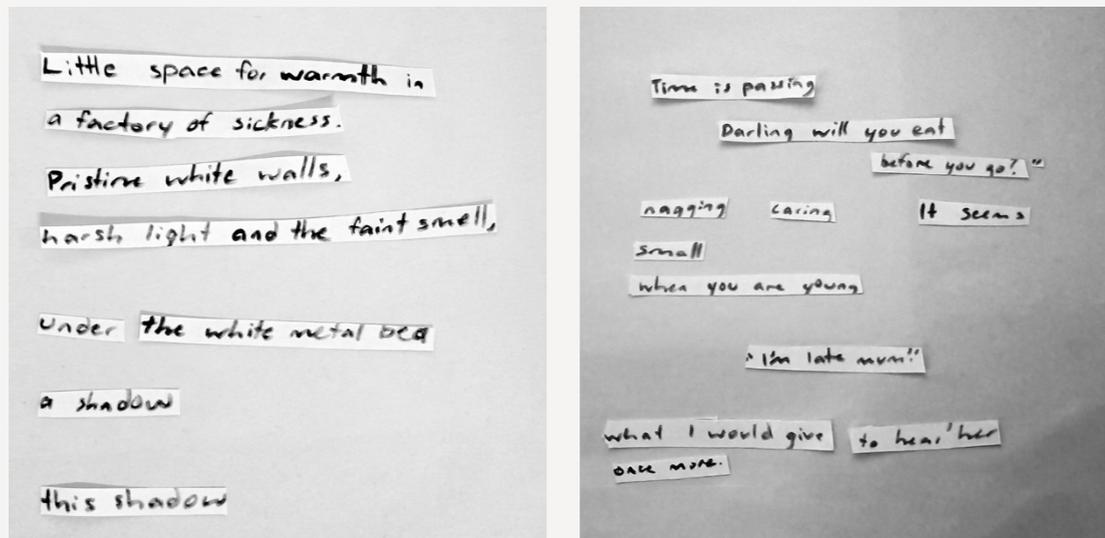


Figure 30. Fragmented narrative cutouts from paper (2023).

After researching prose fiction and poetic narrative as a basis for narrative structure, I came across romantic fragmented poetry. Fragmentation is known literally as something being broken or splitting into pieces.⁷⁷ The inconsistency and collage format of words creates dissonance, distorting the tempo or flow of reading in poetry.⁷⁸ In poetic literature such as the Poems of Sappho, fragmentation adds unease and discomfort that impacts the inference of the text itself.⁷⁹

“Like a sweet-apple
turning red
high
on the tip
of the topmost branch.
Forgotten by pickers.

Not forgotten—
they couldn’t reach it.”⁸⁰

The poetic narrative in *Beyond Lewis Road* needed to reflect both the fragmented discomfort and the tenderness of memory. To achieve this I tested two methods, creating handwritten type in small cutout boxes which gave it a “cut from an old book” feeling, and typing/writing out words, using photoshop to shuffle the sequence (Figure 30). Dispersing these memories created a temporal fluidity to the poems, moving between past and present in their content and perspective. As in the opening of *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*⁸¹ Elliot’s opening line “Twelve o’clock.” is short and direct, placing our attention in a moment. I have tried to emulate this in my narrative pieces: (Figure 31)

77. Anne Janowitz, “The Romantic Fragment,” *A Companion to Romanticism* (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2017), 479–88, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405165396.ch44>.

78. David Perkins, “How the Romantics Recited Poetry,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 31, no. 4 (1991): 655–71.

79. Readers of poetry in the 19th century had become attached to certain compositions of poetry that were unfinished or seemed incomplete. This gradually became a trend and was then purposefully incorporated into the narrative structure of many poems for the foreseeable future, popularizing in modernist poetry, and interrupting the passage of time and audience expectations.

80. Julia Dubnoff, *Fragment #23: Poems of Sappho*, (n.d).

81. Murray McArthur, “Deciphering Eliot:” *Rhapsody on a Windy Night*” and the Dialectic of the Cipher,” *American Literature* 66, no. 3 (1994): 509.



I learned
with time
to close softly the bedroom door,
on memories,

of days spent
perched on your piano stool,
your fingers braiding strands of
hair,
tenderly.

Later,
unraveled,
the wind woven
like thread across my cheeks as
I run, gallivanting through the
daisies.

You watched me then,
now I sit alone.



Figure 31. Wendy in Owhango. Hewison, Sydney, 1992.

Owhango, 1992.

Sitting in a plum orchard,
leaves grazing her hands.

Sunday evening, donning
soft mottled silks, dress
skimming the grass;

a peaceful breeze.

If only the edges
weren't
fading away,
it would ease the ache – tender
and piercing.



Her sweet temperament,
 a lovely laugh heard
 from dawn, wafting through an
 open window at dawn,

Having never met one as gentle
 nor loving as you,

I disdain a God,
 so malicious
 as to hold you before your time.



Wellington

what makes 'Frost' an achieved artistic whole is the design & organisation in the movement of the thought.

128 for any study involves POEMS devoted to the single end of realising its unified form. - not a horrifying calet. its ice-death but where the self-binding work of frost is seen to contain an active & creative principle.

bag's with phys contrast outside/interior to the cottage

no present life force of bird song streams etc.

hard to believe they exist

this cottage I grade it the central anchor for the poem.

the sooty (f) mind off lag

lover within his memory Christ's Hospital to Oltary, then forward to the 'stranger' prosaged by the flame in the school grate.

Frost at Midnight

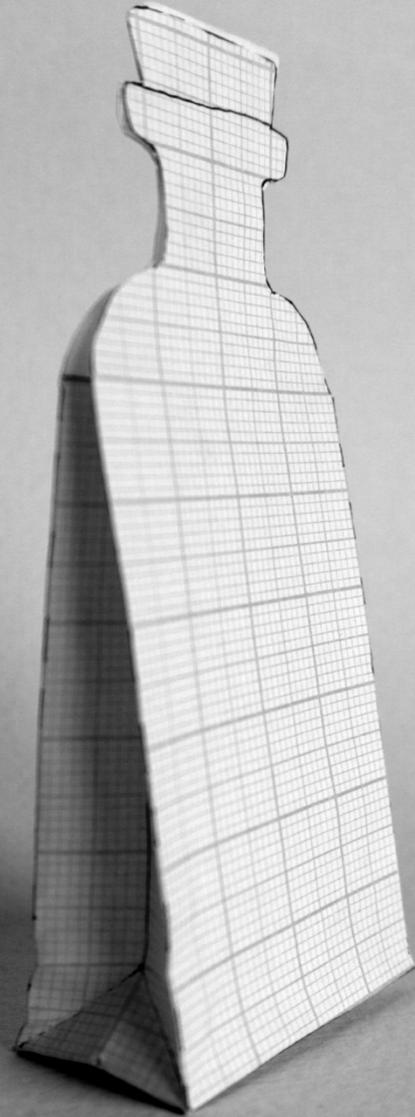
The Frost performs its secret ministry,
 Unhelped by any wind. The owl's cry
 Came loud—and hark, again! loud as before.
 The inmates of my cottage, all at rest,
 Have left me to that solitude, which suits
 Abstruser musings: save that at my side
 My cradle-partner pines and sighs,
 'Tis calm—and easy on the spirit,
 And vexes and annoys me not at all;
 And extenuates the hours of the night;
 This point of view is the central anchor for the poem.
 Inaudible to all else, I lie
 Only the stillness of the night
 Methinks I see, as I lie
 Gives to the landscape all the
 Making of the night
 Whose light is the
 By its
 Echo
 And

Col's Ego, I central involves his seeing, remembering & projecting mind.

myat they are alive in mind, prob obtaining vividly, whereas Mollay even if awake, his consciousness would be partly hidden weather

She occupies
 the deepest residence
 in my mind,
 and in longing
 I call to her in a dream.

Come home to me.



PAPER ENGINEERING

Following a rough draft of narrative spaces and poetry, I began working on the physical layout and mechanics of the story, intersecting imagery with interactive devices and movable parts. During this time, I practised different techniques of layering items through collage, opening pages and parallax movement, reflecting on the narrative connections between image and text. (Figure 32-41)

By applying the method of paper engineering and pop-up explored in Chapter 3, I recreate significant scenes from in and around my childhood home, all associated with memories of my mother: The Bedroom, The Living Room, The Library, The Front Porch, The Copper Beach Tree, and a few small separate objects.

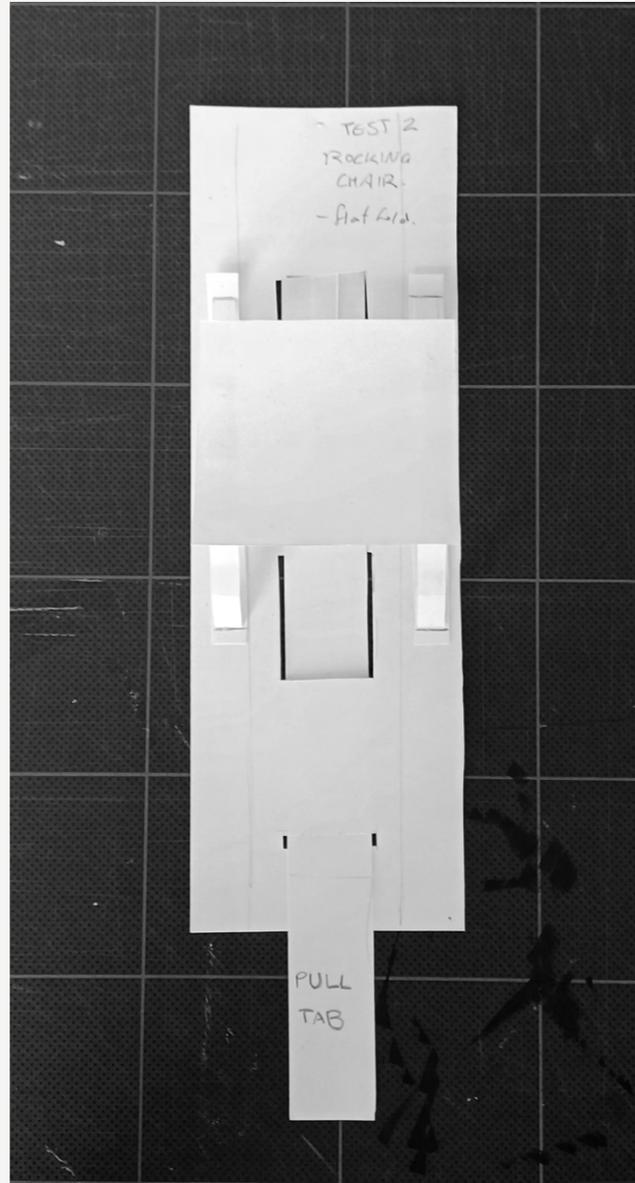


Figure 33. Rocking chair mechanic. (2023).

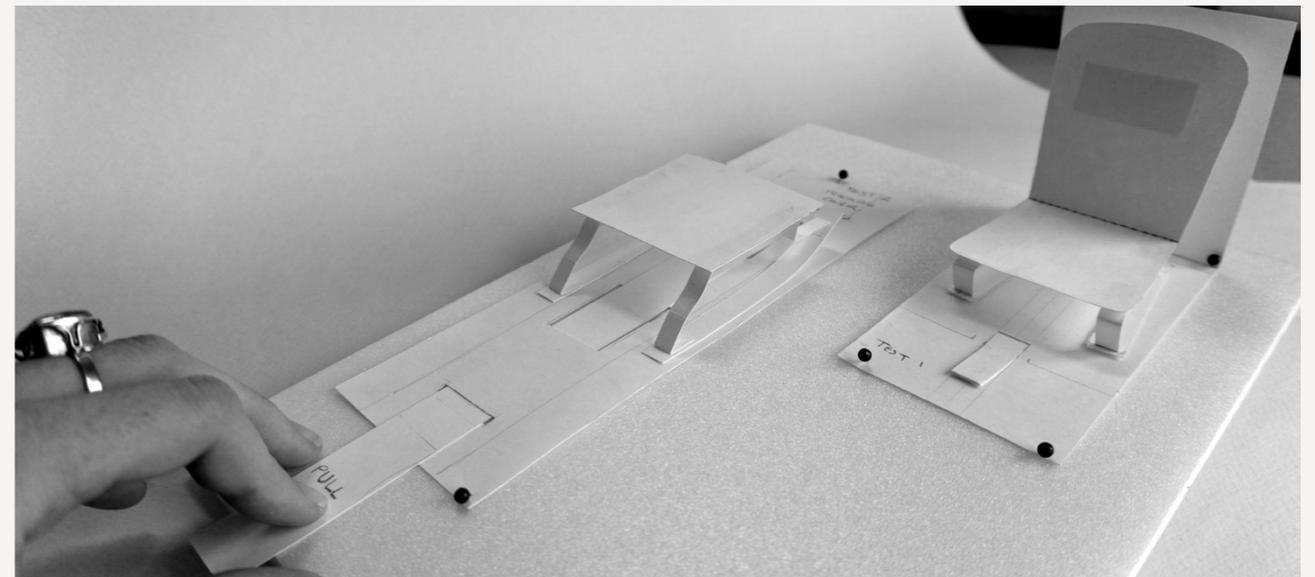
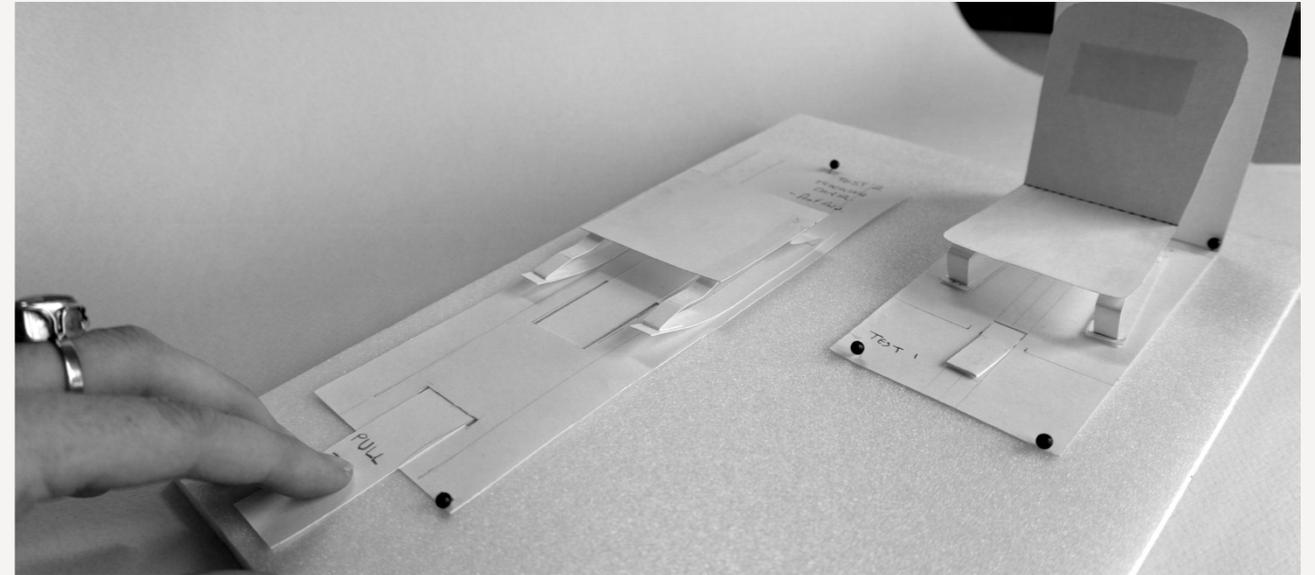




Figure 34. Exploring a pop-up fold. Parallel box-fold. Unfolded. (2023).



Figure 36. Exploring a pop-up scene. Box-folds and rotating parts. (2023).

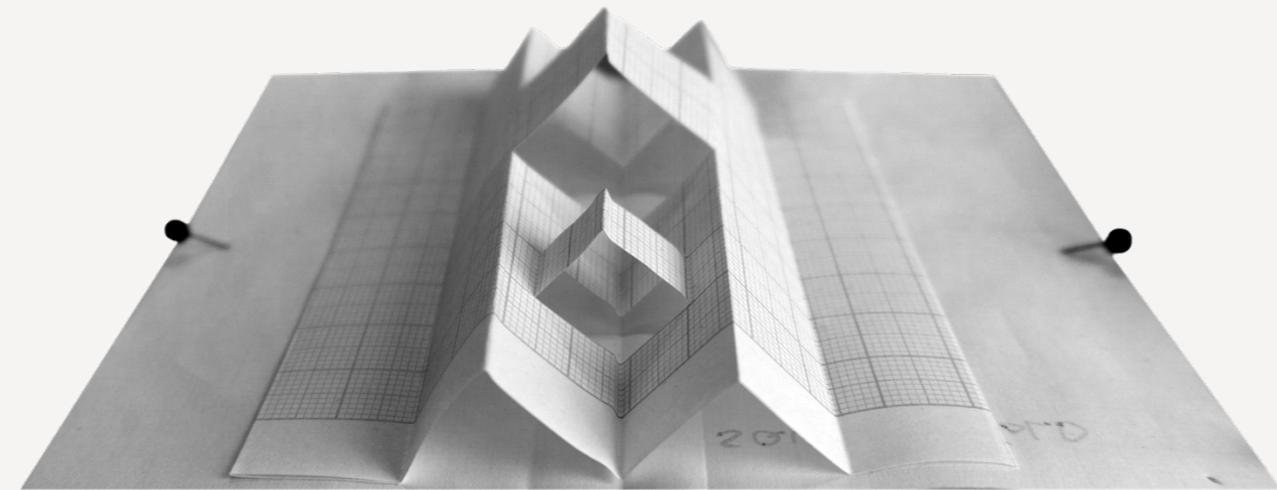


Figure 35. Pull tab mechanic on a bedroom drawer. (2023).

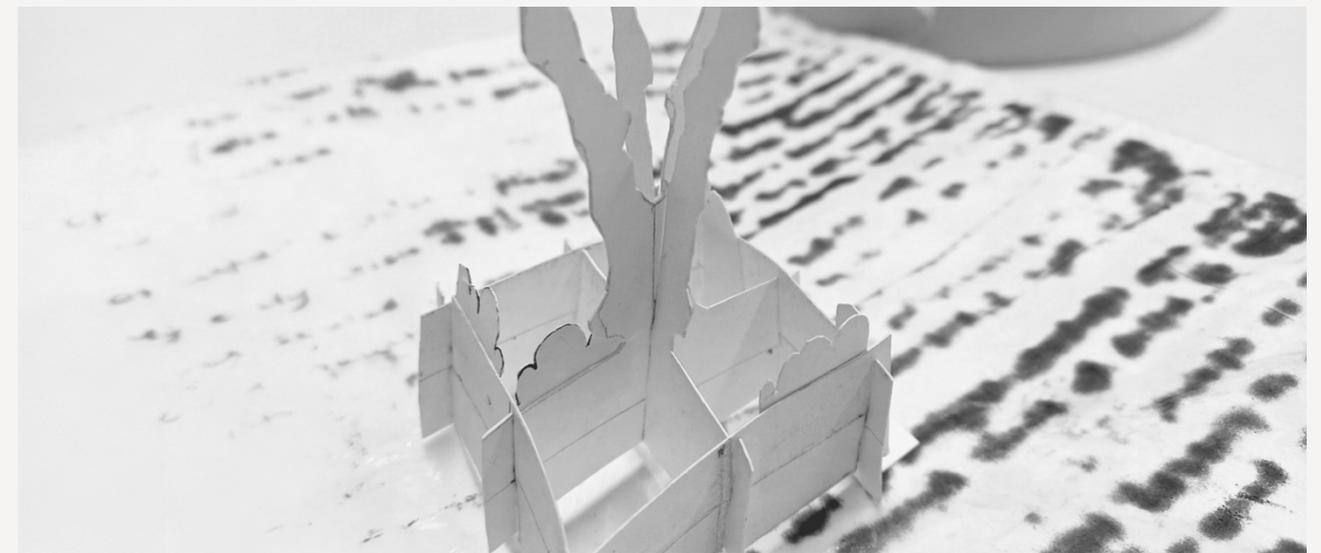


Figure 37. Testing interlocking paper foundations, Copper Beech Tree. (2023).

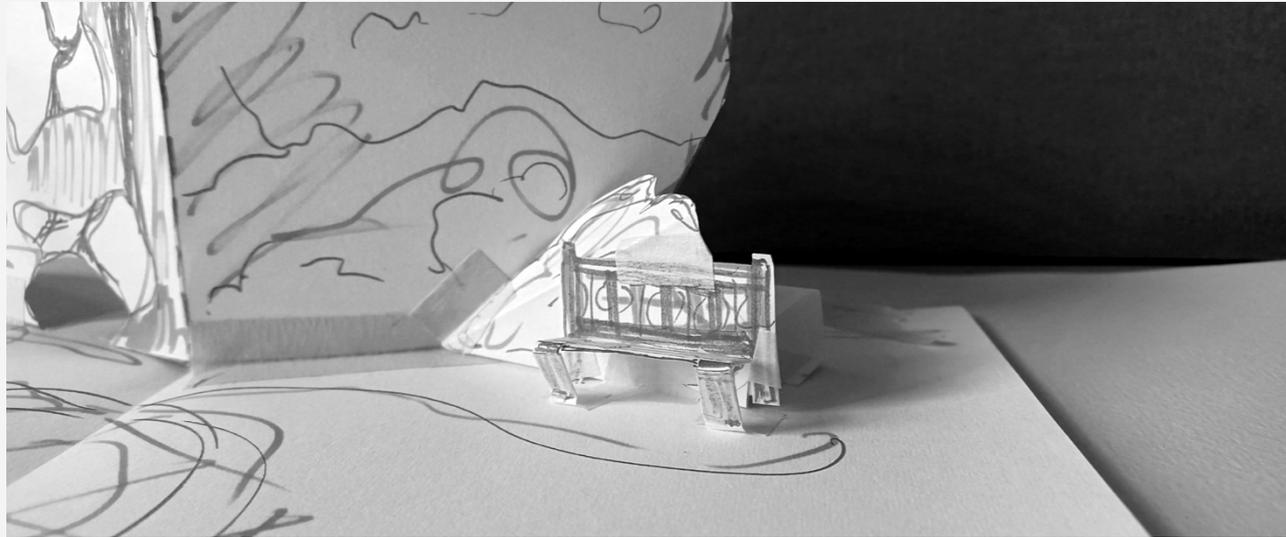


Figure 38. V-fold and parallel fold, garden bench. (2023).

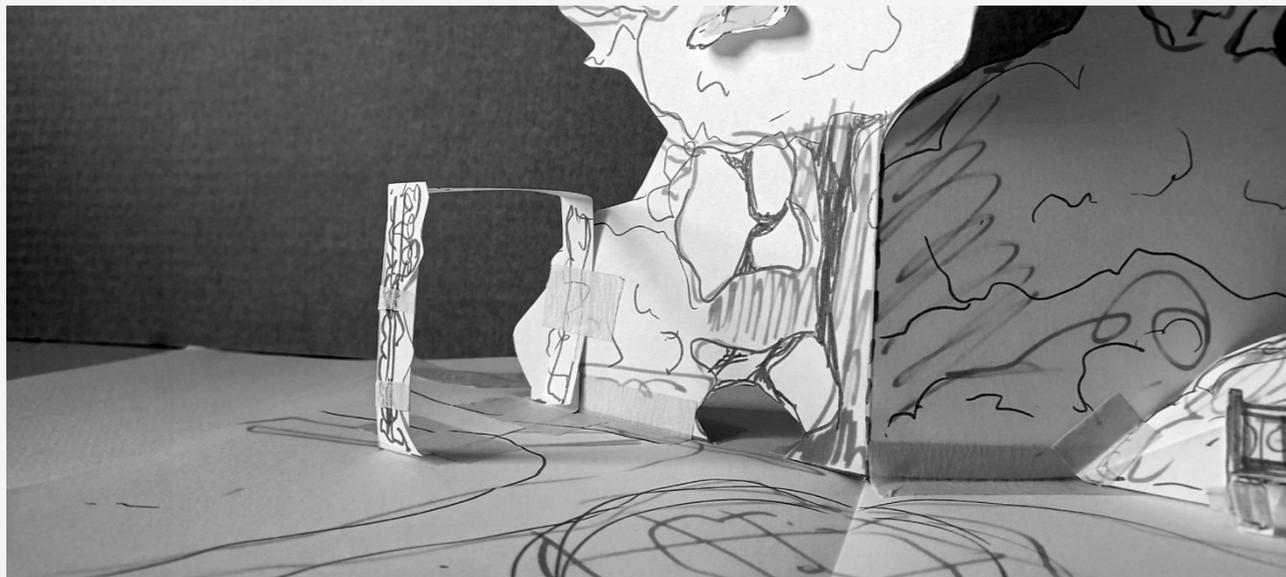


Figure 39. Parallel fold, garden trellis. (2023).

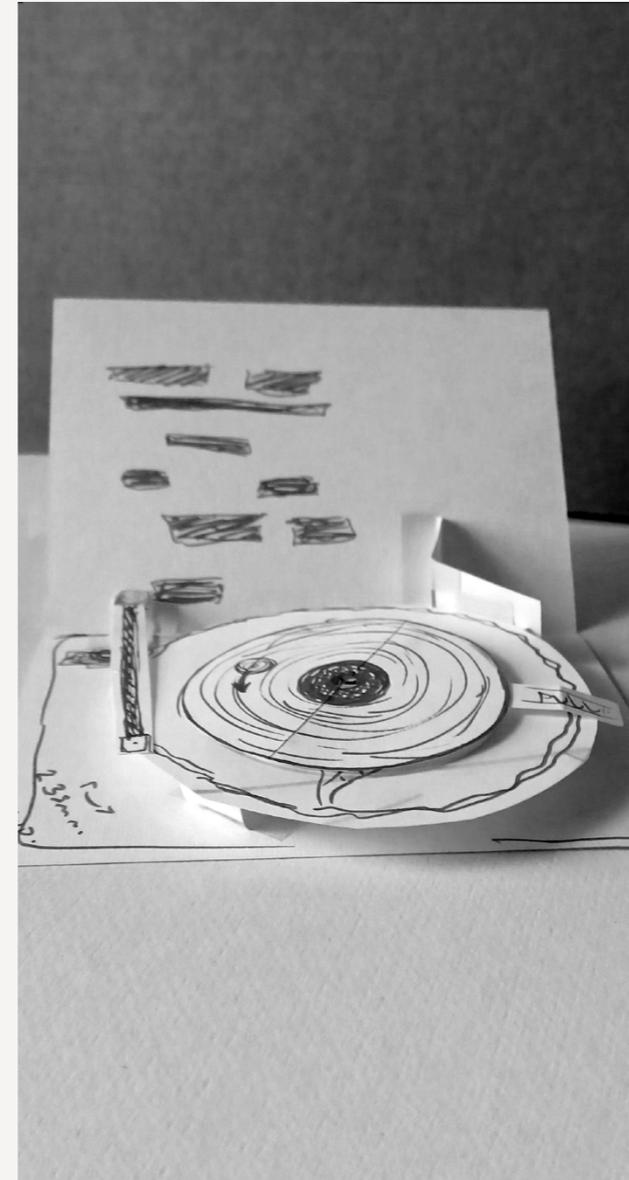


Figure 40. Record player with a rotating mechanism. (2023).

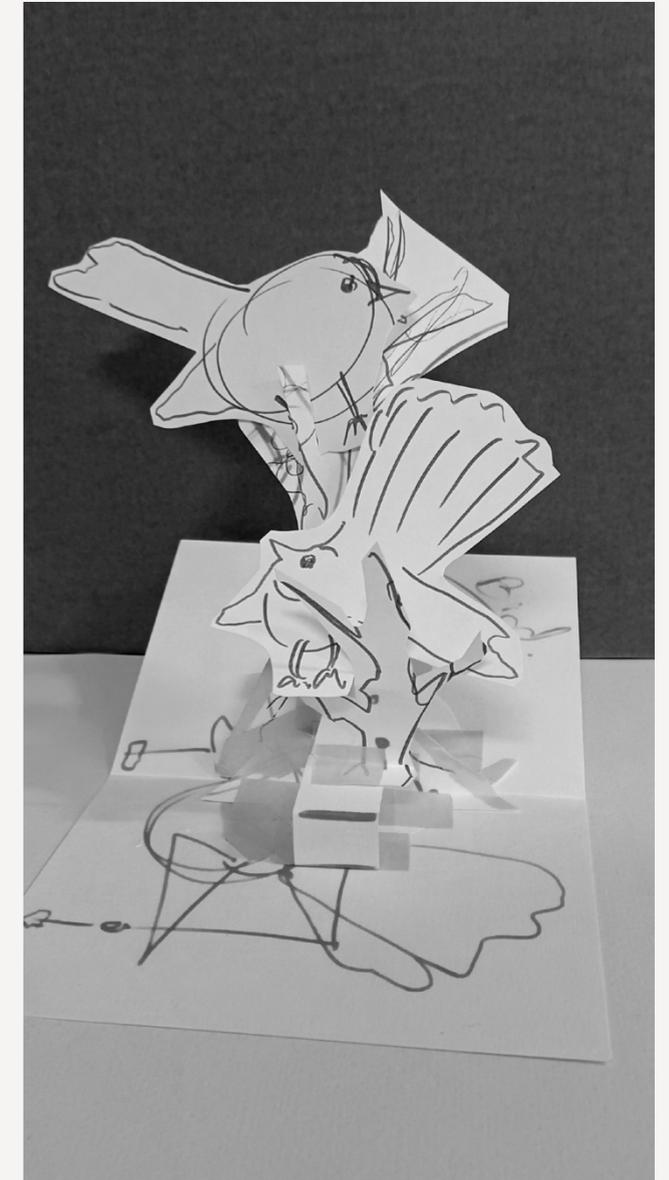


Figure 41. Birds of a feather, V-fold tower. (2023).

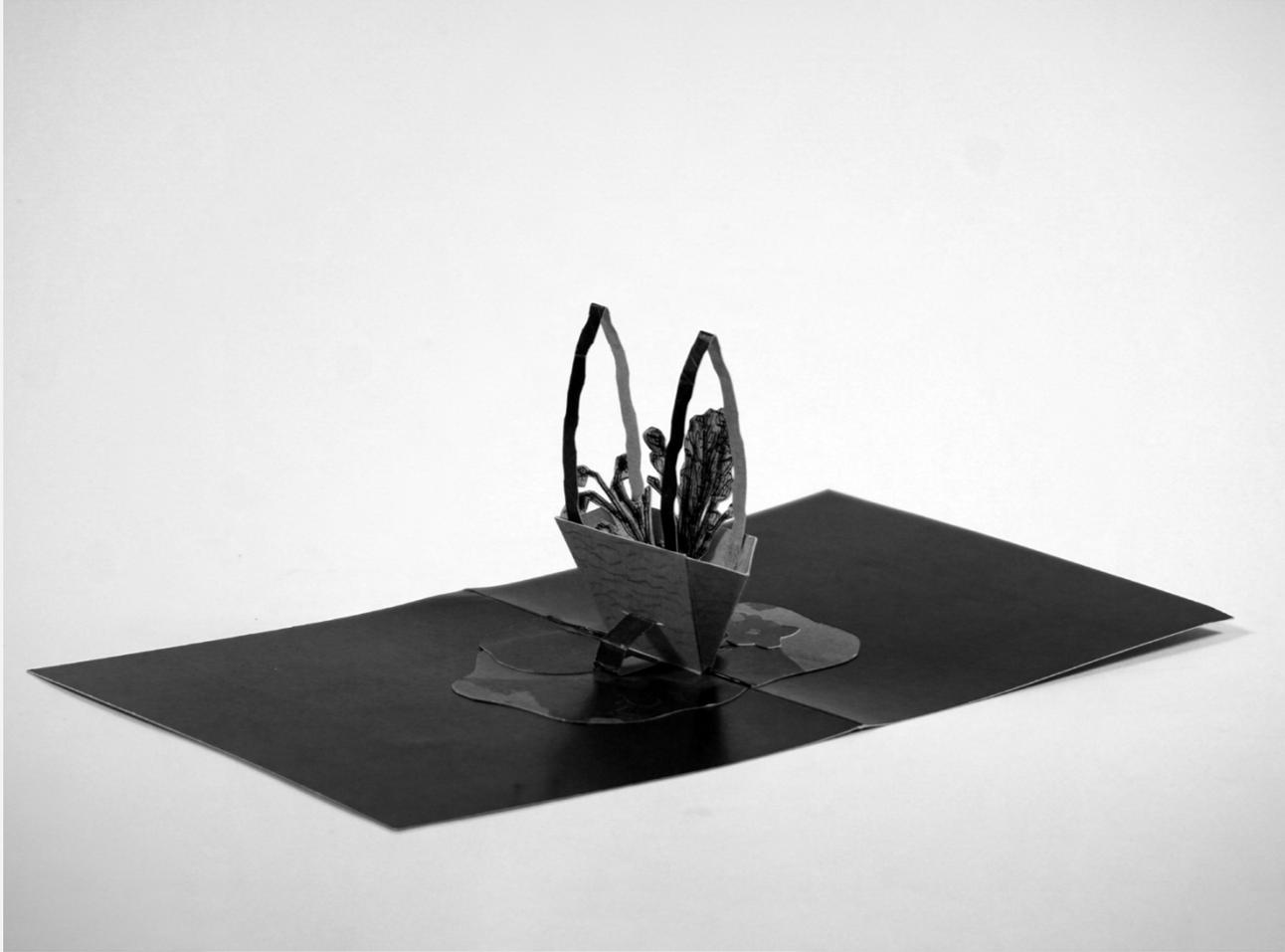


Figure 42. Pop-up flower baskets exploring v folds (2023).





Figure 43. Test front porch and foyer, folded and unfolded (2023).



THE STORIES

THE BEDROOM

My mother's bedroom acted as a great comfort to me throughout my life. Many evenings were spent huddled against my mother's legs as she brushed my hair, reading books together or looking through family photo albums. In this room I remember a large chest of drawers, full of colourful clothing and small boxes of candles. The top drawer had a beautiful ceramic mirror painted with roses lying face down inside. Floral curtains and an intricate stained glass window dappled sunlight across the bedspread, overlooking the Copper Beech tree in the backyard. This window was one of my favourite places in the house, and it remained so after my mum's passing. Our cats also clearly missed my mother's presence, and often sat with me on a piano stool, looking out over the fields.



Figure 44. A series of images showing a draft unfolding bedroom pop-up scene of my mothers bed and opening bedroom window (2023).



Figure 45. Paper tabs under one side of the bed and headrest allow it to fold without catching any edges (2023).





Figure 46. A pull tab attached to the back of the window scene allows the background to change through parallax movement, showing an expanse of the fields behind my house (2023).



THE LIVING ROOM

The living room resided in the centre of our house, a comfortable congregation point at point for any moment of the day. Enclosed by shelves of old English pottery, paintings by local artists, and tall wooden French doors, a variety of individual and family occupation occurred. My grandmother inhabited the corner reclining chair, assisted by our cats in a game of sudoku. My mother joined her in an armchair, after brewing chamomile tea and scouring her bookshelves for a classic favourite. I was sprawled on the paisley rug drawing insects and doing homework to the sound of our old record player.

Within 3 weeks, these memories changed. I remember my mother coughing until she couldn't breathe, catching her during sudden fainting spells and sitting on the couch dropping tiny blue morphine drops under her tongue at 2am to help her sleep. After weeks of physical decline, her left lung collapsed, and she passed away in my arms on the floor. I had to watch the paramedics attempt mandatory resuscitation before asking them to let her rest. This space holds the strongest place in my memory now, remaining a conflicting space in my memory as every positive recollection is tainted by the traumatic experience of loss.



Figure 47. A fully unfolded draft scene of the lounge, constructed using box folds and a mini suspension mechanic, to hold the teapot (2023).



Figure 48. These images show the empty wooden floor unfolding into a living room. The couch was our main congregation spot, used for morning cups of tea and reading books, so I have focused on building a condensed version of this space. This teapot and cup were owned by my grandmother, items I still have today (2023).





Figure 49. This suspension mechanic uses a thin piece of paper, allowing the user to 'pour' a cup of tea, imagining the action in their minds (2023).



Figure 50. A pop-up view of a glass lamp, lighting the couch rim (2023).

THE LIBRARY

My mother's study looked like a library to me as a child, bookshelves stretching to the roof. First edition atlases took me to places across the world. Gardening collectibles taught me what herbs were safe to make childish potions out of. Shelves of Jane Austen novels taught me the mystique of love and friendship. Small tables held rambling plants, vinyl records and many photographs of my family, all of which I have brought with me through life. The objects in this library offer a tangible means for me to carry my mother's memory with me, sharing stories with those I meet and live with.



Figure 51. A draft pop-up view of the library, including my mothers old record player (2023).

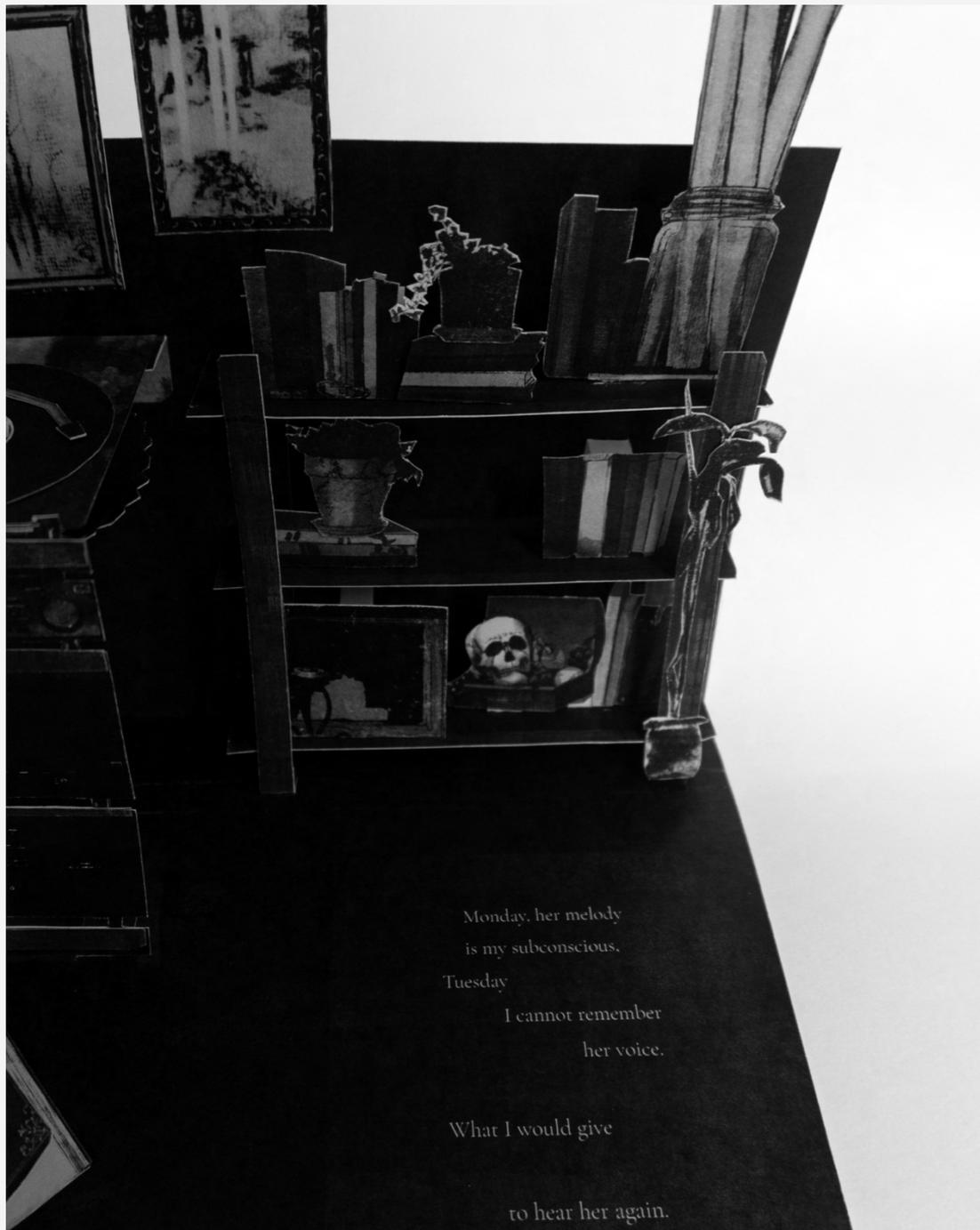


Figure 52. The narrative in this scene flows the eye down from the bookshelf, onto the carpet and text (2023).



Figure 53. A side view of box fold and rotating mechanic within the record player (2023).



Figure 54. Rotating mechanic to turn the vinyl record, using a crimped style edge (2023).

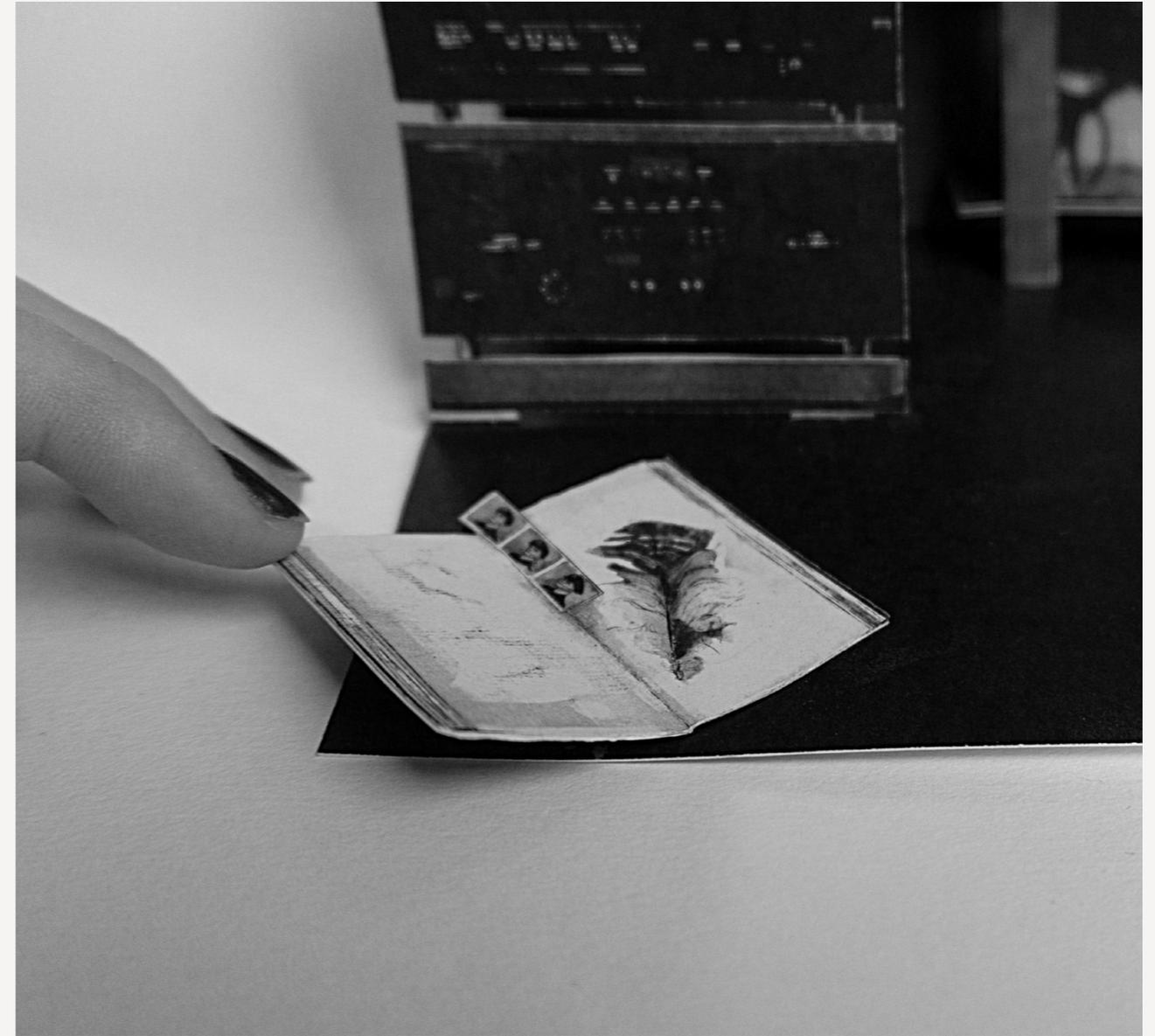


Figure 55. Unfolding mini book, with a photo strip of my grandfather (2023).

THE FRONT PORCH

The front porch was wide and wooden, a tall roof covered in jasmine and grape vines. In this space, my mother taught me to gather, dry and tie up herb bundles which we hung around the house and turned into healing oils. Rosemary grew all over our garden, so that smell permeated the house most times of the year. This was an activity shared only with her, and I am reminded of her every day when I pass the rosemary and lavender bushes outside my front door in Auckland.



Figure 56. Draft pop-up of the front porch, with an opening chest, hanging items and deep standing v fold background (2023).



Figure 57. Closed chest and narrative wall (2023).

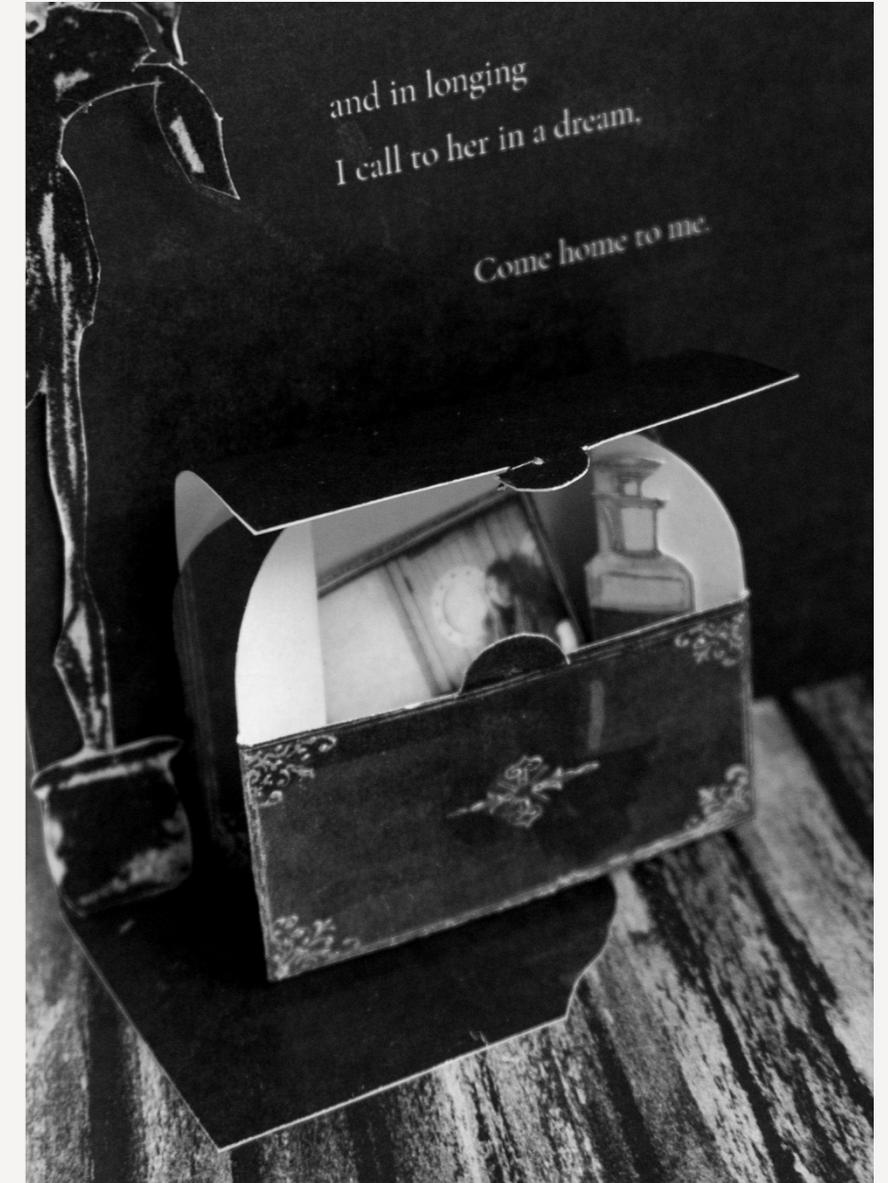


Figure 58. Open chest full of objects (2023).



Figure 59. A plant and candles sitting on a windowsill (2023).



Figure 60. Paper legs holding hanging objects and dried herbs (2023).

THE COPPER BEECH TREE

This tree towered over our property, old and magnificent. Much like featured in *Little Tree*, it represented the passing of time in my home, showing a halo of copper-red leaves in summer, and fading back to prickly, sparse branches during winter. My mother's spiritual practice resided within a neo-pagan belief system; an egalitarian and nature-based system which honours and reveres nature in a unique, sacred way. Her connection to mother-earth was strong, and the Copper Beech rested in the centre of this connection. Following her request, I spread her ashes around the base of this tree to reunite her with the earth, allowing her life to come full circle. With no gravestone to visit, the Copper Beech remained a strong tangible connection to my mother, until leaving home later that year.



Figure 61. Draft pop-up scene of the copper beech tree and garden (2023).



Figure 62. Angled view of the copper beech tree, trellis and garden bench (2023).



Figure 63. A swing glued and suspended from the tree (2023).



Figure 64. Box fold, upright garden bench (2023).



Figure 65. A bird fluttering in the bushes (2023).

FINAL ARTEFACTS : POEMS

I learned

with time

to close softly the bedroom door
on memories,

of days spent

perched on your piano stool,
your fingers braiding strands of my hair
tenderly.

Later,

unraveled,

the hair weaving across my cheeks as I run,
gallivanting through the meadow.

You watched me then.

Her sweet temperament,
a lovely laugh heard
 wafting through an open window
 at dawn.

Having never met one as gentle,
 nor as loving
as you, dearest,

I disdain a God
 so malicious
as to hold you before your time.

Time is passing
 quickly,
it's hard to speak the changes out loud.

 On monday
her melody is my subconscious,
 reciting poetry and limericks.

 Tuesday arrives.
I cannot remember her voice.

FINAL ARTEFACTS : POP-UPS

THE BEDROOM

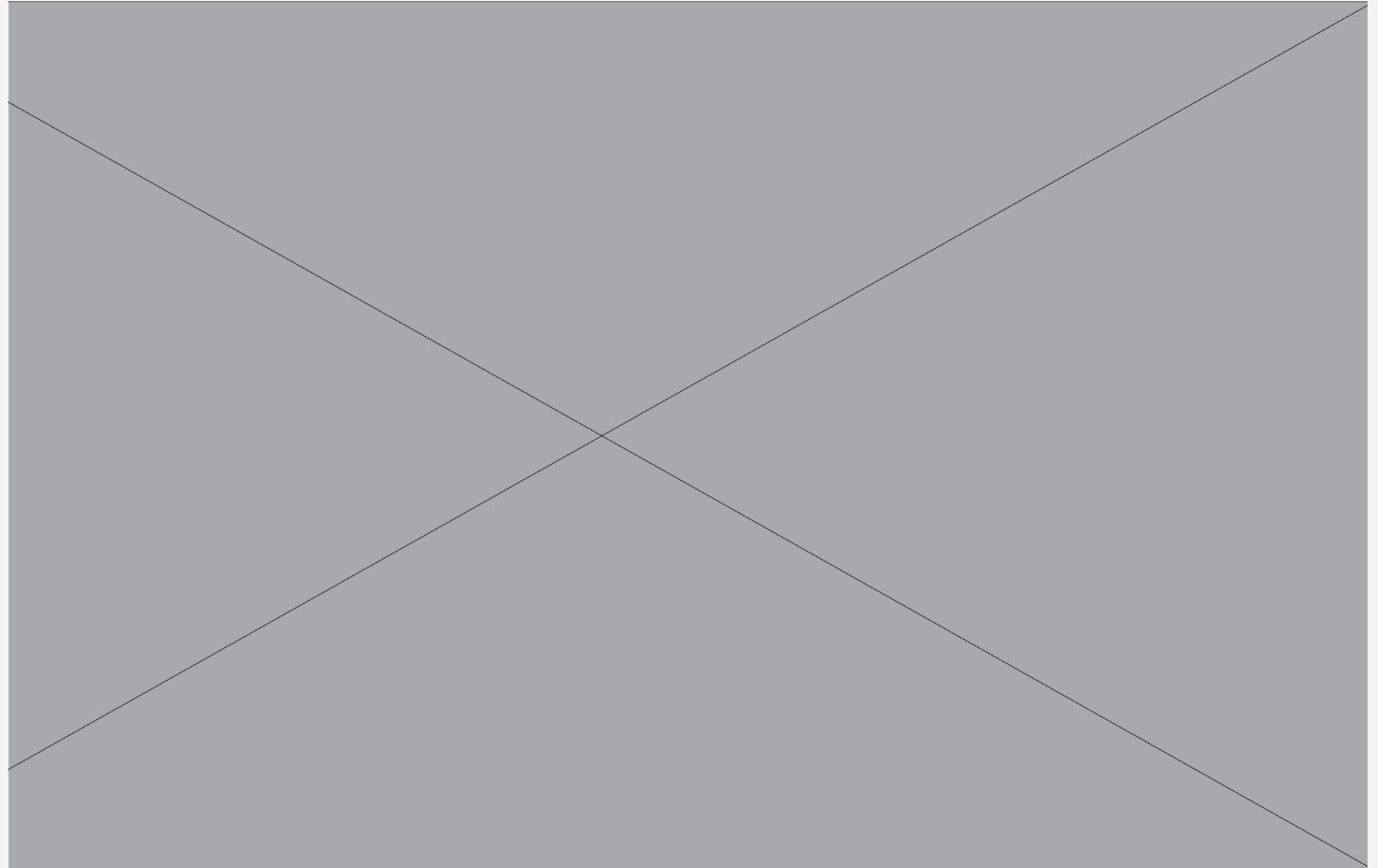


Figure 66. Closeup of an unfolding bedroom drawer (2023).

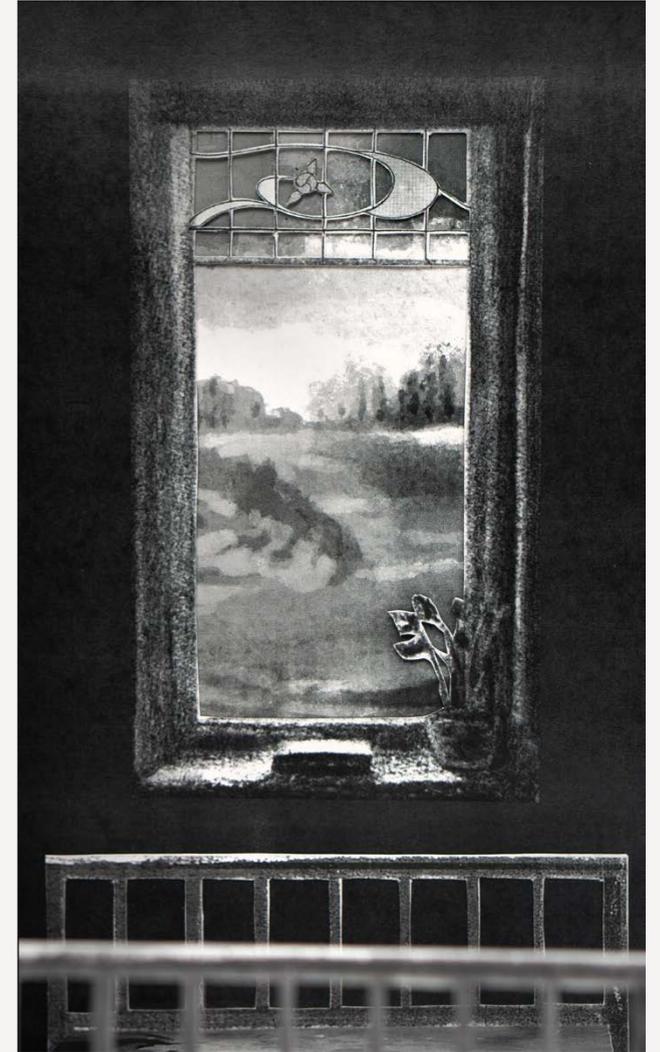


Figure 67 - 71. Unfolding part one of the bedroom scene (2023).



Figure 72 - 74. Unfolding part two of the bedroom scene (2023).

Figure 75 & 76. The bedroom scene connected together, alongside a poem (2023).



Figures 77 - 81. Closeups of the bedroom scene; chest of drawers, paintings, a bed and parallax window (2023).

THE LIVING ROOM



Figure 82. A diecut couch over layered furniture (2023).



Figure 83 - 85. The living room pop-up alongside a poem (2023).

Figure 86 - 89. Closeups of the living room; floating teapot pouring tea, coffee table of items and photo of mum, leaning record vinyl and couch (2023).

THE LIBRARY

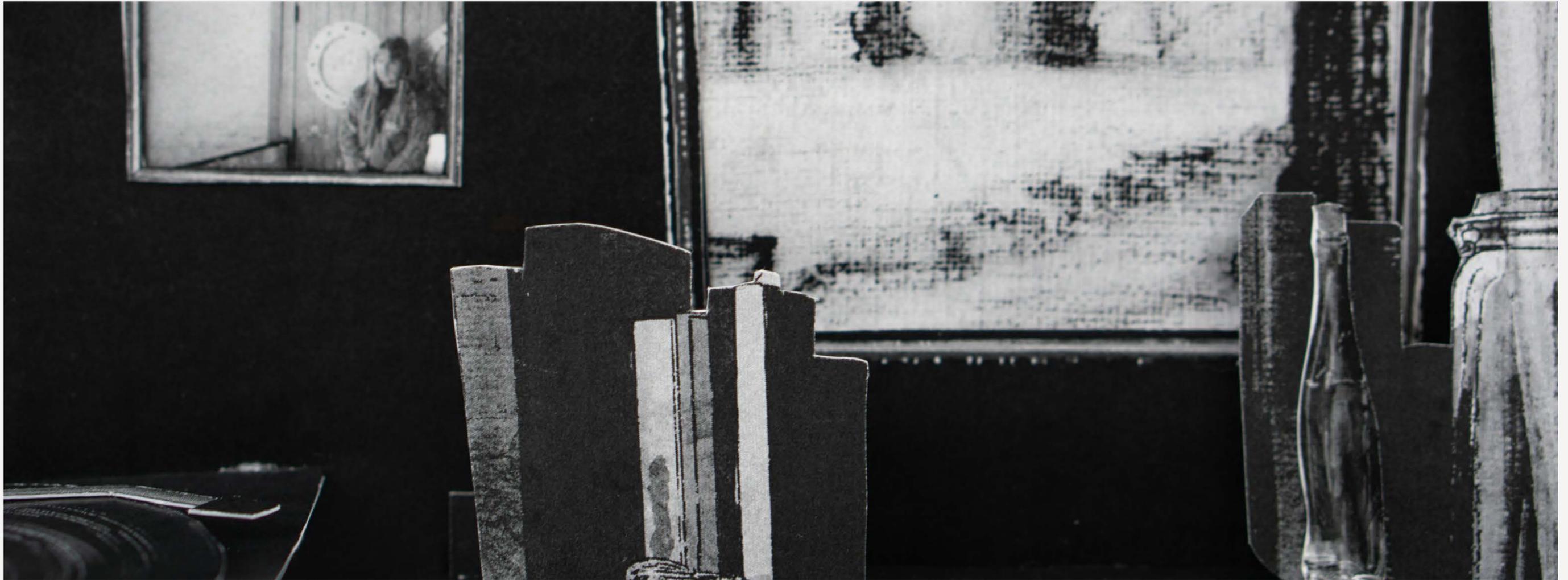


Figure 90. Books and a cluttered library wall (2023).



Figure 91 - 94. Unfolding of the library (2023).

Figure 95. The library pop-up alongside a poem (2023).



Figure 96. Closeups of the library; a spinning record player and vinyl, parallax sliding painting, open book and cluttered bookshelf (2023).

THE FRONT PORCH



Figure 97. Looking out the foyer to the front yard (2023).



Figure 98 - 101. Unfolding of the front porch pop-up (2023).

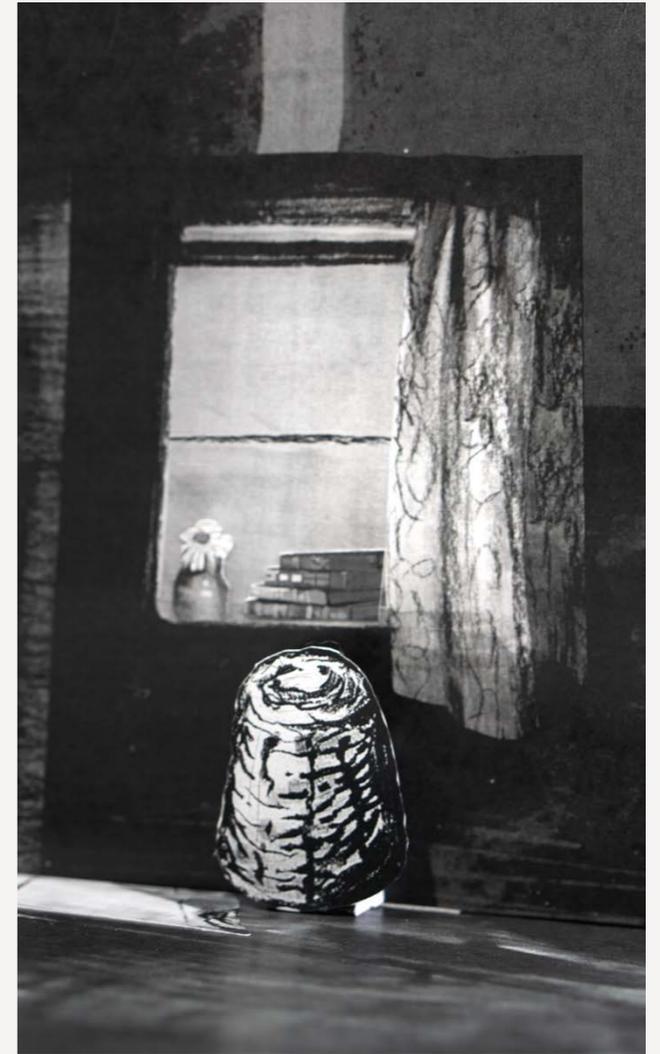


Figure 102 - 105. Closeups of the front porch scene; entrance, hanging rack with lantern and butterflies, wicker basket and poem (2023).

THE COPPER BEECH TREE



Figure 106. Span of the open Copper Beech Tree pop-up and a poem (2023).



Figure 107. Unfolding of the Copper Beech Tree scene (2023).



Figure 108. Closeups of the Copper Beech tree pop-up; various trees, fantail on a branch, garden bench, birdseye view and a trellis arch (2023).

CONCLUSION

OVERVIEW

This thesis asked, “How might the complex experience of grief, explored through an autoethnographic lens, be illustrated through the application of non-linear narrative design and interactive pop-up techniques?”

To address this question, I have created an interactive memoir that explores grief through an illustrative study of object, place and autoethnographic recollection.

The practice led research project *Beyond Lewis Road* explores key themes of grief and loss, the permanence of object and place, and the impermanence of memory. The project exemplifies the idea that an artistic enquiry can be fundamental to making sense of the grief after loss of a loved one, allowing the practitioner to explore response, understanding and recovery.

The project additionally demonstrates a method of storytelling which allowed a poetic yet truthful recollection of the experience of grief and loss, so that people can have more open conversations about the experience. *Beyond Lewis Road's* visual and narrative considerations draw on both traditional motifs of monochromatic landscaping, and non-traditional structure of fragmented storytelling in order to build a visual representation of grief which could be understood by a broad audience. The most significant aspects of this memoir are its interactivity and non-linearity, opening a dialogue around how autoethnographic storytelling can be transformed through giving readers an active role in determining how the story is experienced.

Upon beginning this thesis, I was focused particularly on creating a space for other people to interact with and understand one experience of grief, so that they might invite dialogue around grief and remembrance in their own lives. The act of making and reflecting throughout this project has furthermore created opportunities to deeply explore my relationship with my own past, traversing memories of my mother with respect and admiration. Admiration for my mother's immense strength throughout her illness, and for my younger self's resilience in facing her death and the years beyond.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FIELD

This thesis makes two distinct contributions to the field: Firstly, it contributes to an increasing body of work from autoethnographic creators, exploring new methods of representing grief and loss through illustrative storytelling. It may be situated in the context of work like Edward Gorey's *The Dwindling Party*, Michael Rosen's *Sad Book* and Stein Erik Lunde's *My fathers Arms are a Boat*. As a part of this, the thesis provides young adults with a way to process their grief, not only through witnessing and interacting with the project itself, but also by opening dialogue around personal grief stories.

Secondly, *Beyond Lewis Road*, as an artistic artifact, contributes to the field of interactive storytelling through the creation of a paper engineered, three-dimensional, non-linear narrative. Its pop-up mechanics consolidate the immersive qualities of interactive storytelling, revealing hidden narratives to prompt reader curiosity and interaction.⁸²

⁸² Ann S. Montanaro. *Pop-up and Movable Books. The Routledge Companion to Picturebooks*. Routledge, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315722986-19>.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Beyond Lewis Road sits on the edge of a realm of possibility for interactive storytelling, which I would be interested in taking into a PhD one day. I hold particular interest in the immersive qualities of digital environments. In further research, I plan to investigate different mediums within this storytelling space, which could include stop animation and video games or virtual reality (VR) technology. Having experimented and researched within a digital setting early on, there is a foundation of research supporting transmedia design and the evolving relationship between analogue and VR design, with many books and games sitting between the two.⁸³ Tales of lived experience shape our society, grief and loss being a large part of that. Interactive storytelling formats have offered new perspectives and ways of experiencing others stories for ourselves.

Final Thoughts

To close on this chapter of my life, I finish with a point illustrated by Clandinin and Connelly: “Therefore, difficult as it may be to tell a story, the more difficult but important task is the retelling of stories that allow for growth and change.”⁸⁴

Life moves forward now. The journey of this thesis allowed me to process hidden landscapes of my grief which were not initially visible. Carrying my mother with me every day, I am never alone as I have my memories of her.

⁸³. Tatiana Tavares, “Paradoxical Realities: A Creative Consideration of Realismo Maravilhoso in an Interactive Digital Narrative” (Thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2019), <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/handle/10292/12958>.

⁸⁴. D. Jean Clandinin and F. Michael Connelly, *Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research* (John Wiley & Sons, 2004), 71.

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APPENDIX A : PRIVATE EXHIBITION

A private exhibition was held for *Beyond Lewis Road* on 15 December 2023 at the St Pauls Street Art gallery - Gallery 3. The exhibition was designed to reflect the living room pop-up artefact, using furniture and objects - novels, chests, plants and rugs - from my mother's home. This night-time exhibition had a small audience of family and friends, an evening spent passing around exhibition pop-ups and poetry while sharing memories.



A.1. Setup of exhibition furniture in Gallery 3 (2023).

A.2. A test layout of the exhibition furniture (2023).

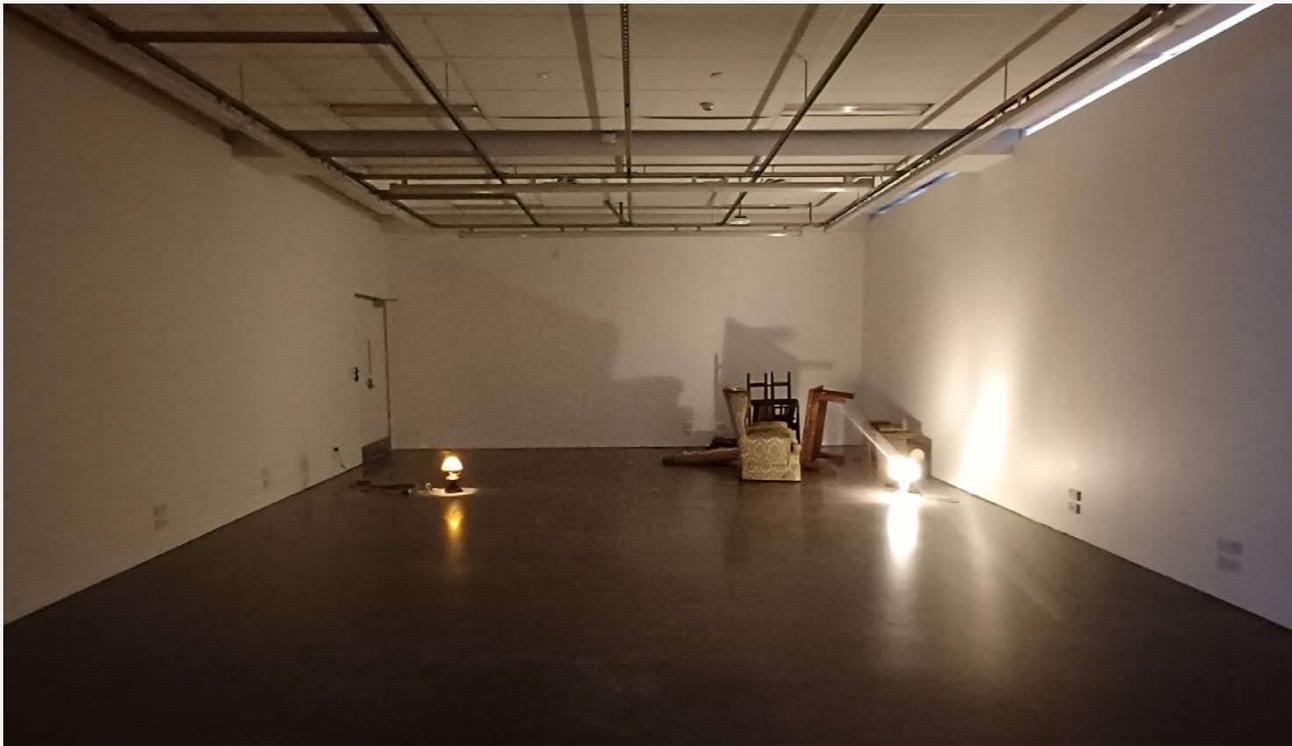




A.3. Gallery 3 looking towards the entrance doors (2023).



A.5. & A.6. Testing light and dark ambience (2023).



A.4. Gallery 3 from the perspective of the entranceway, taken at night (2023).

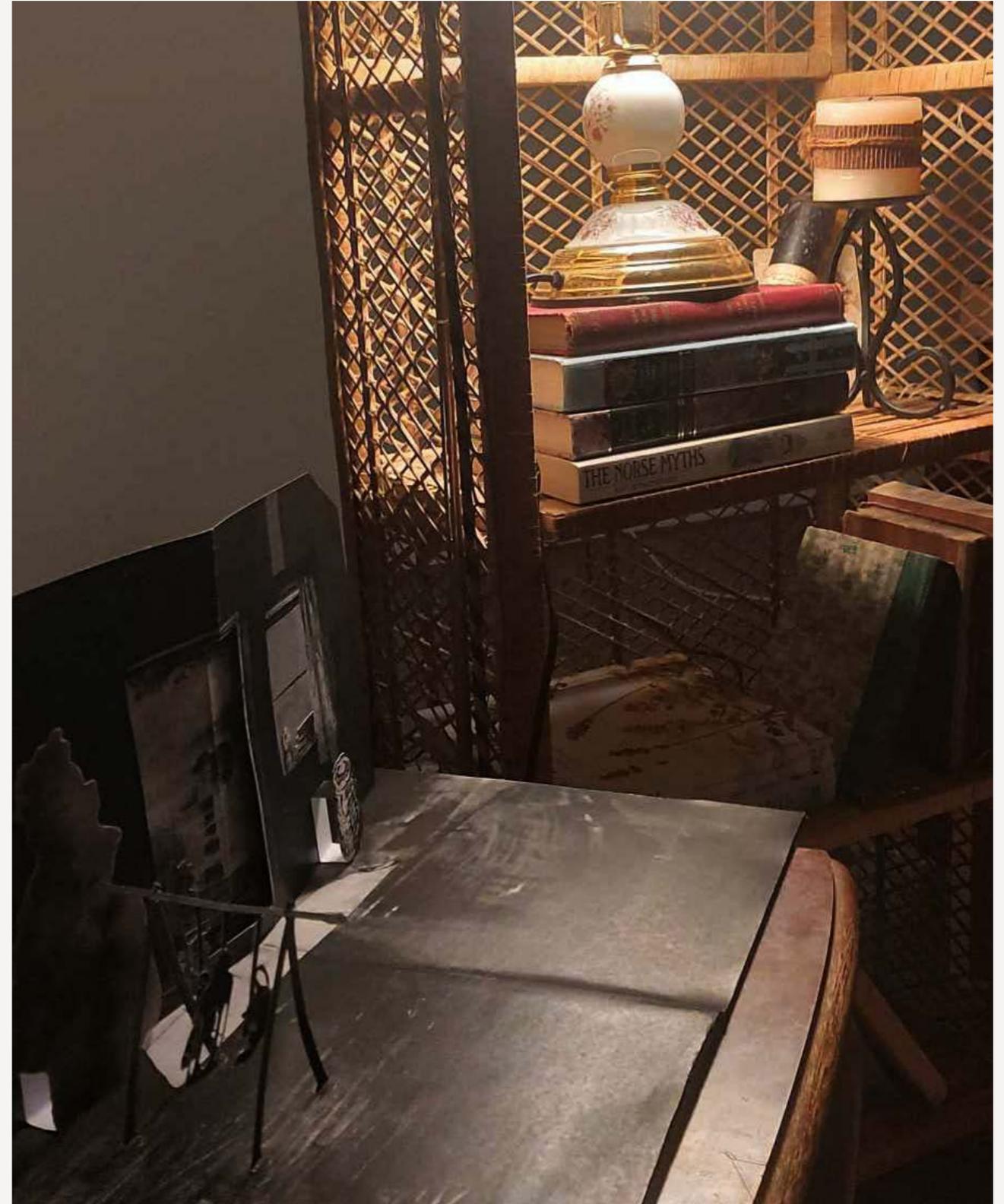




A.7. Friends interacting with The Copper Beech Tree (2023).



A.8. Pop-ups insitu (2023).



A.9. The front porch pop-up on a side table (2023).

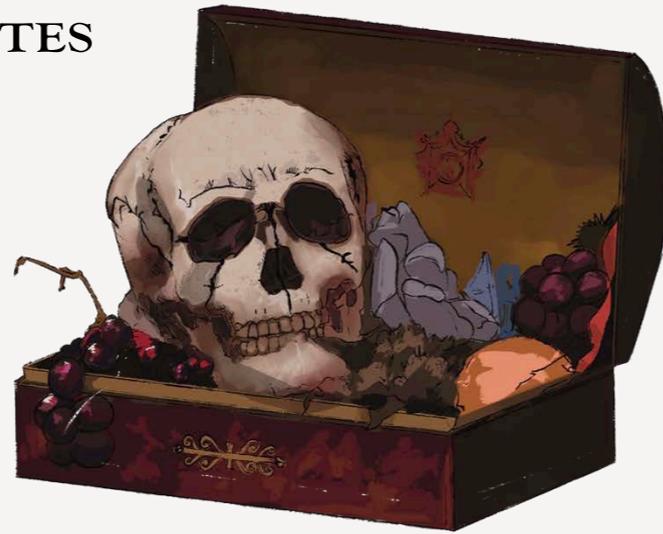


A.10. Rug dimensions showing approximate spacial measurements of the exhibition (2023).

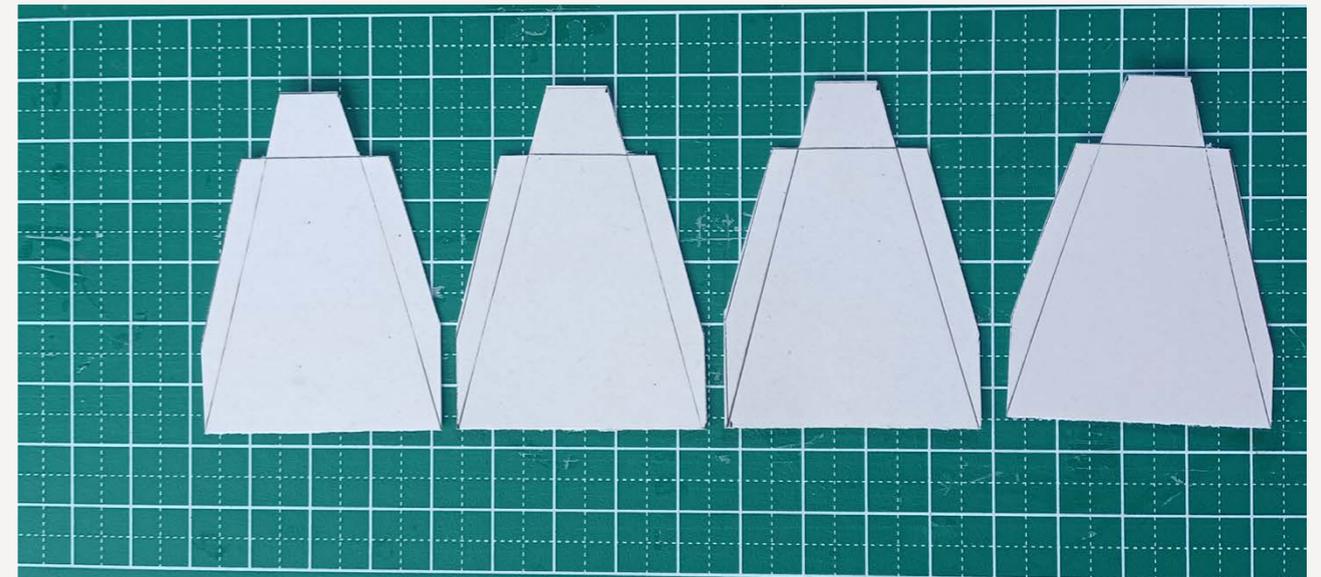
A.11. The bedroom pop-up sitting atop a vintage television set (2023).



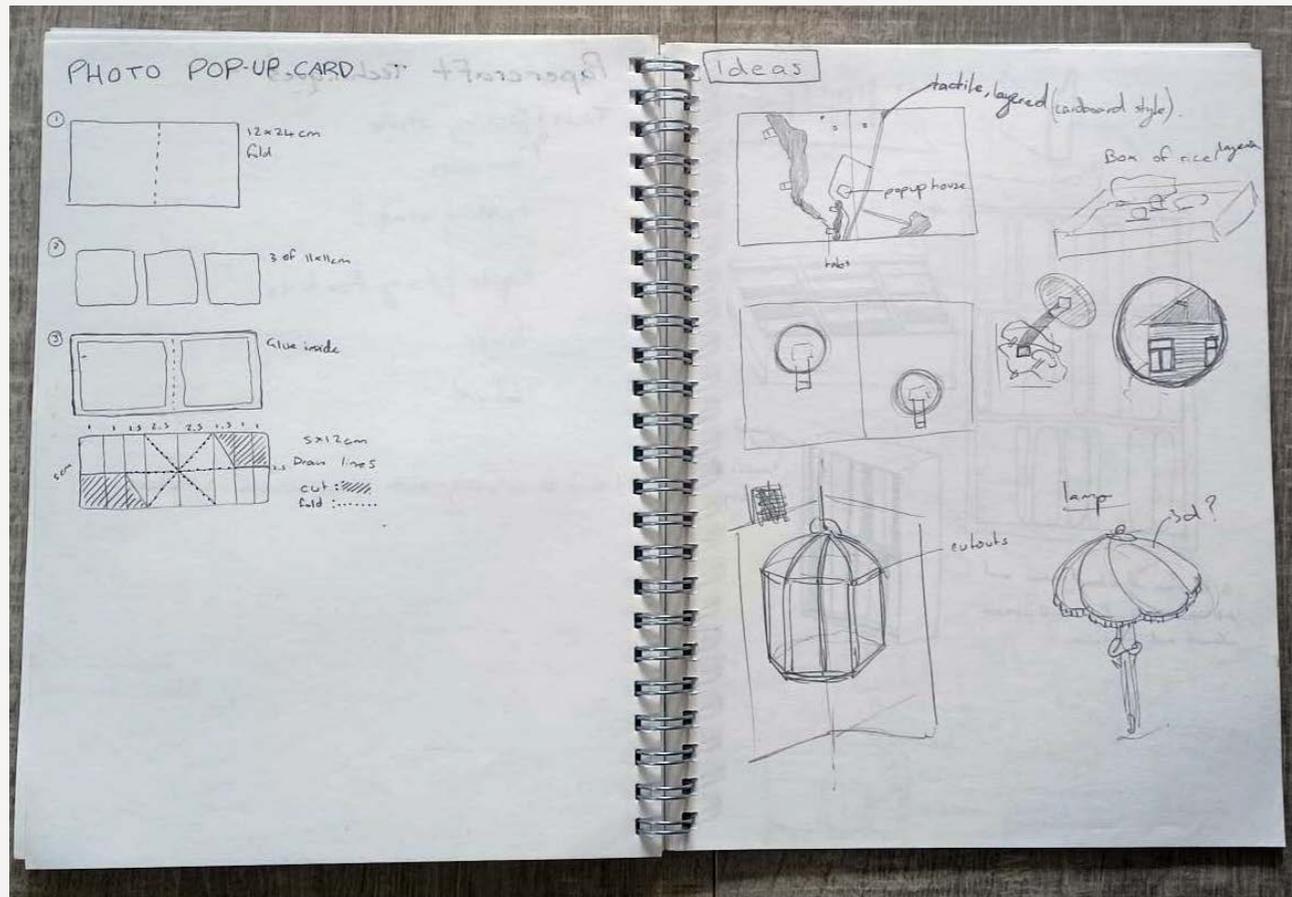
APPENDIX B : NOTES



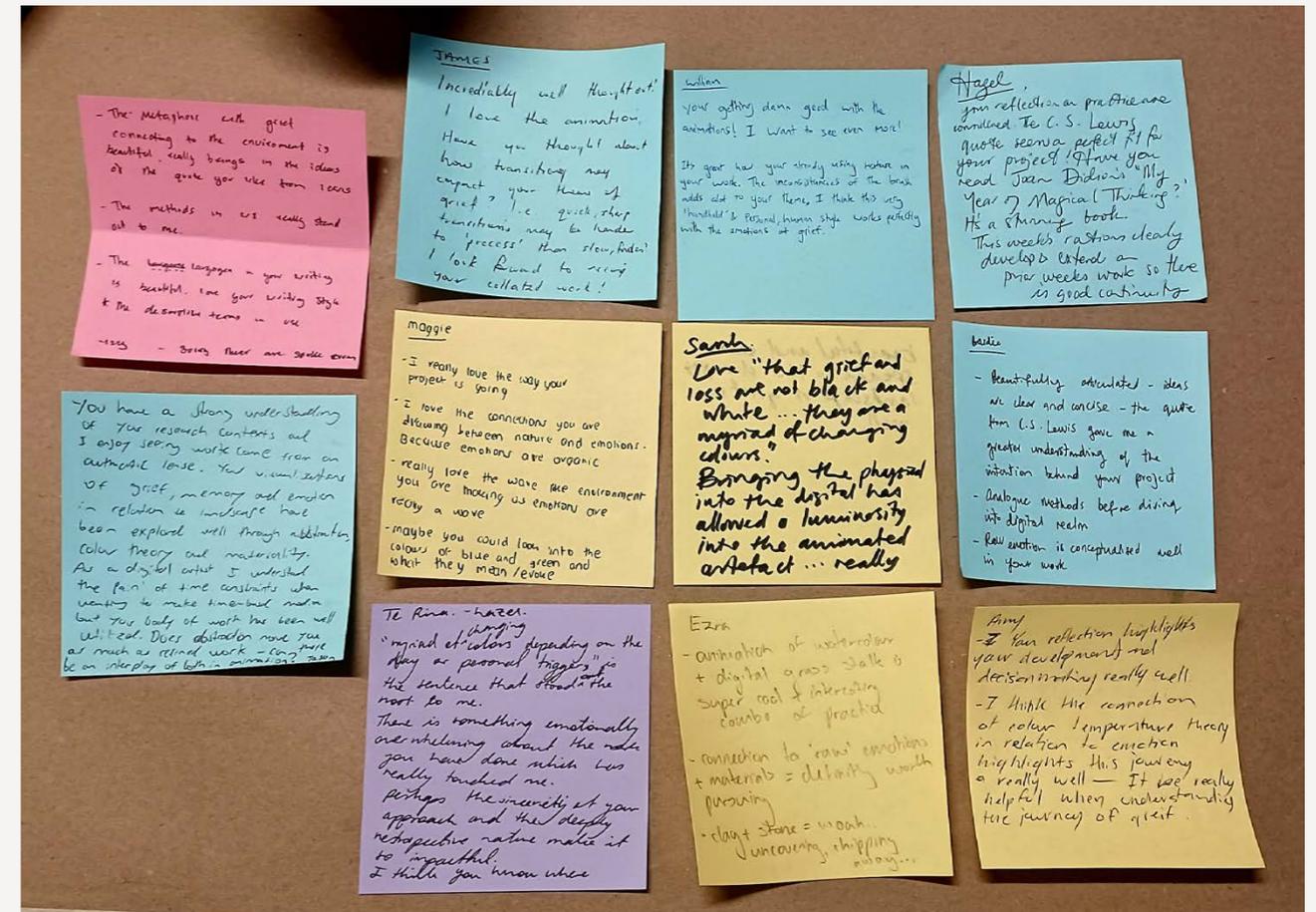
B.1. Three examples of colour assets (2023).



B.2. Early cutouts and rotating arms (2023).



B.3. A page from my ideas sketchbook (2023).



B.4. Group feedback, Design Practice class (2022).