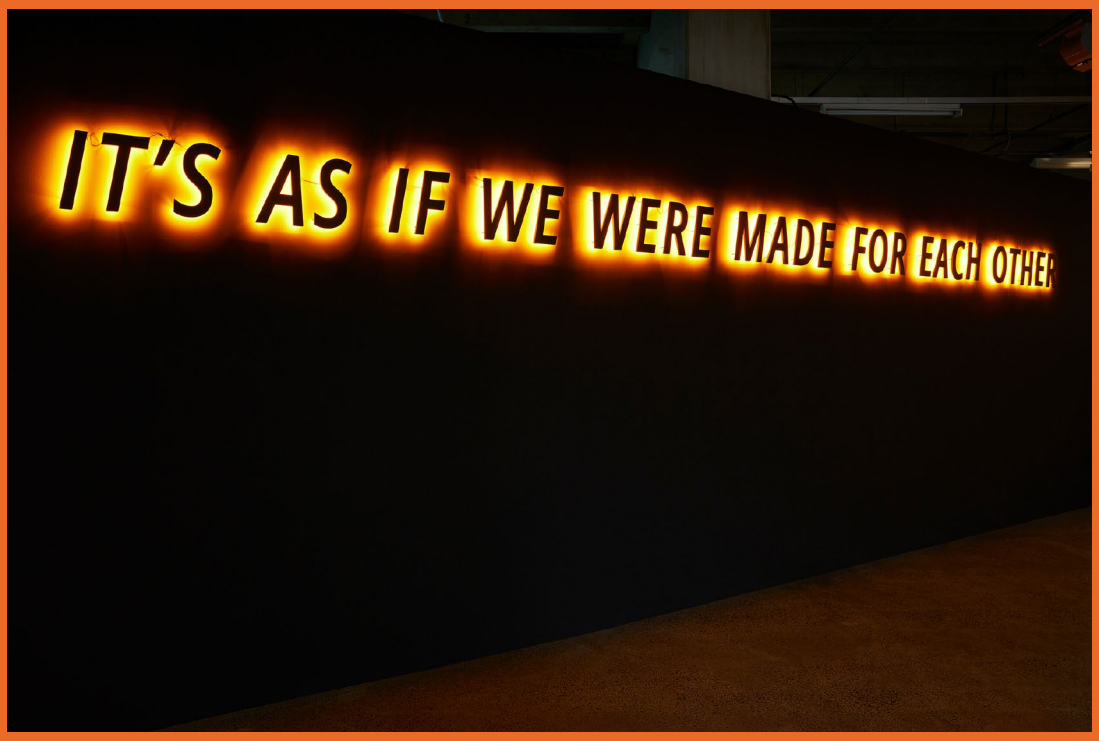
ST PAUL St Curatorial Symposium 2019: *It's as if we were made for each other*

2020



ST PAUL St Curatorial Symposium 2019:
It's as if we were made for each other

ST PAUL St Gallery
Auckland University of Technology
Te Wānanga Aronui o Tāmaki Makau Rau

3 – 5 October 2019

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Cover image: Deborah Rundle, *Made for Each Other*, 2019. Photo: Saam Hartnett.

Balamohan Shingade and Taarati Taiaroa

Foreword

This is the eighth in a series of symposia for ST PAUL St that have been concerned with artistic and curatorial practices as they relate to knowledge production, exhibition-making, and relational commitment. It has been our privilege to be a part of the ST PAUL St Symposium almost every year since its beginning in 2012 as attendees or contributors, and to convene it this year together. The lasting impression of the series, and the experiences with which we have been coming and going and our reasons for returning, is what we hope to bring to the fore this year.

The 2019 Curatorial Symposium extends the core concerns of sociability in the 2019 ST PAUL St exhibition *How to Live Together*, which was guided by the coupled question: What is the intimacy we must develop to create a community? What is the distance we must maintain to retain our solitude?

The title of this year's Symposium, *It's as if we were made for each other*, is borrowed from an artwork by Deborah Rundle. The romantic cliche Deborah employs in her work suggests a preordained relationship between two people, like the fateful mutualism of a flower and a bee, clownfish and sea anemones, you and me. But in the context of the Symposium, who 'we' refers to is unsettled. Here, it seeks an alternative interpretation, where it extends outward from the couple to a larger sense of connectedness. When we experience the various forms of 'coming into relationship with' others, the phrase encourages reflection on community expanding out from our identities – a sense of belonging and commitment working across our differences.

As artists, writers, curators, cultural workers, teachers and students; educators, researchers and subjects; poets, public servants, citizens… as people whose praxis is motivated by working in relation with others, our reason for being together on the occasion of this Symposium is to seek ways of recovering our relationships from alienating, extractive and inequitable methods. As a discursive event that attends to place-based contexts, the Symposium invites practitioners to explore transdisciplinary ways of activating personal, programmatic and systemic transformation.

The Symposium opens with *O Horizon*, an essay film by The Otolith Group centred on the school Santiniketan founded by the poet Rabindranath Tagore in 1901 in rural West Bengal. We have been inspired by a note from Tagore's letter in 1922, which is included as a voice-over in the film. On the founding of Santiniketan, Tagore had written to the educator Patrick Geddes, "I merely started with this one simple idea, that education should never be dissociated from life." The Symposium seeks sympathies with this interconnected and integrated approach to art, education and life.

The Otolith Group was founded by social anthropologist Anjalika Sagar and theorist-author Kodwo Eshun in London in 2002. The collective's creative practice is informed by an interdisciplinary approach, which includes the production of essay films, curatorial projects and publications, public programmes and workshops. We begin with *O Horizon* for three reasons: (1) It is an essay-film that is engrossed in Rabindranath Tagore's ecological pedagogy, in which the social and biological are interconnected and interdependent (2) The Otolith Group's method of co-creating this essay-film over a five year period, which prefers relational commitment (3) *O Horizon* speaks to the potential of the Tagorean imagination in the 21st Century that enacts our desires for a better present.

The programme over the following two days is facilitated by Te Kawehau Hoskins and Alison Jones, Mohan J. Dutta, artists Fiona Amundsen and Pallavi Paul, and regenerative practitioner Lucy-Mary Mulholland. The Symposium continues a method of collective enquiry seeded by the 2018–19 research project at ST PAUL St Gallery titled *Two Oceans at Once*. Inhabiting a flat structure in which contributors and participants are on level ground, the Symposium format comprises

three movements: coming into relationship with, being in relation, and emergence. With this in mind, the Symposium is imagined as a scene to dwell in, an experience to live through or a landscape to sketch out, together.

In their conversation, colleagues Te Kawehau Hoskins and Alison Jones invite engagement with the idea of 'relationality'. We extended our invitation to Te Kawehau and Alison after attending a lecture by Te Kawehau at the University of Auckland. The talk was titled *Doing Philosophy – Indigenous – Māori styles*, which centred risk-taking as a primary principle for a relational commitment. Relationality here is not 'warm fuzzies' or even a unity, but rather a fragmented space wherein our attention is directed to the intersections of plural lines of histories that exist together and operate in the present; a space often of uneven power, as inheritors of other obligations or commitments. What would a relational ontology – or an ontological orientation that is premised upon a worldview that is primarily relational and agentic – then prioritise?

Alison returns to the symposia series for the second time. In the 2016 Symposium *Ako Mai, Ako Atu*, Alison presented *Lessons from the hyphen: Māori–Pakeha work*, something of course we return to in dialogue. Te Kawehau and Alison's own ongoing work as writers, educators and collaborators is what guides their conversation. Together, they revisit their entangled trajectories, bringing a critical view to their relationship as Indigenous and settler subjects here in Aotearoa. In particular, they welcome discussion about ubiquitous critical theory, its impact on concepts of power, and the ways it may be counterproductive as well as helpful to our relational political analyses and our practices.

This year, we have been studying *Voices of Resistance*, a book by Mohan J. Dutta. One of the most compelling ideas to our mind has been 'communicative inequalities', which is theorised as the inequalities in opportunities – infrastructural or otherwise – for community voices to be heard. The emphasis of the book is on the core idea that creating spaces for listening to voices of resistance fosters openings for the politics of social change, for a socialist imaginaries for the future that unsettle neoliberal ways of production, transaction and consumption, through systemic transformation. Already, this has begun to inflect how we are imagining our practices – curatorial or otherwise. We are beginning to ask, how can 'a hearing' be made possible within the form of an exhibition? How might our practices create openings to listen to voices from the global margins? Can curatorial practice be delinked from the exhibition outcome and instead be motivated by an ethic of listening, imagination and relational commitment?

Image: Brook Andrew, *Inconsequential I - VI*, 2018. Photo: Sam Hartnett.

Mohan J. Dutta has developed the Culture-Centred Approach (CCA) based on his work on claims to health and human rights among Indigenous communities, low wage migrant workers, precarious workers, sex workers, farmers, and communities living in extreme poverty at the global margins. Through academic-activist collaborations, the CCA outlines culturally-based participatory strategies of radical democracy for addressing inequality. Mohan asks, what are the communicative inequalities that construct human struggles for voice at the global margins, and how are these inequalities dismantled through movements, creative interventions, and socialist projects on the Left? At the core of his research agenda is the activist emphasis on provincialising Eurocentric knowledge structures, and de-centering hegemonic knowledge constructions through subaltern participation in socialist imaginaries for sustainable futures.

As artists working with documentary methodologies, Fiona Amundsen and Pallavi Paul contend with the complexities of 'being in relation' with subjects. They ask, how can lens-based, documentary practices enable forms of knowing that privilege connecting, imagining, listening and ethics over strategies of making history visible and knowable? How can lens-based, documentary practices consciously reflect on possibilities for voice and to witness in, what Pallavi refers to as, 'the theatre of truth'? Fiona and Pallavi's contributions stretch formats and temporalities. They have shared with us two publications and voice recordings, which opens their dialogue outward from the pair to us as a community on the occasion of this Symposium.

For the Symposium, regenerative practitioner Lucy-Mary Mulholland resources our collective enquiry with regenerative concepts, principles and technologies. Lucy-Mary has a background in psychology and has worked in New Zealand, the US, and the UK for the last 6 years as a clinical arts therapist. The word 'regenerative' is commonly used to define processes that restore, renew or revitalize their own sources of energy and materials. Lucy-Mary draws on regenerative development principles to inspire whole living-systems thinking, which transforms our mind-set, being and function from mechanistic to ecological.

In our discussions, we have considered how the symposia series has allowed for us an occasion to come into relation and examine our practices with one another. Keeping this in mind, we see the occasion of the Symposium as an opportunity to increase our ableness to affect and be affected by the world by being in dialogue. We are guided by methods of collective enquiry, and intend for a discursive event grounded in the principle of reciprocity, which acknowledges that we all bring knowledge and experience with us.

We are particularly interested in what is possible for our practices when it is inhabited from:

- A cultural ethic which privileges risk-taking and face-to-face engagement
- Relationalities which are placed based and context-responsive
- Socialist imaginaries for the future that unsettle neoliberal ways of production, transaction and consumption, through systemic transformation

We would like to acknowledge and thank our speakers and facilitators Te Kawehau Hoskins and Alison Jones, Lucy-Mary Mulholland, Mohan J. Dutta, Fiona Amundsen and Pallavi Paul. Thank you also to Maia Abraham, Ngahuia Harrison, Nisha Madhan, Erena Shingade and Elise Sterback for accompanying us in our thinking. This is not possible without the help of our colleagues at ST PAUL St Gallery, Charlotte Huddleston, Kahurangiariki Smith and Eddie Clemens, thank you. And of course, we would like to acknowledge the time all participants set aside, the travel they have done and the support networks in their families and friends to allow us to dwell together.

Since 2012, the symposia series has engaged with forms of knowledge to assist practitioners to inhabit their arts

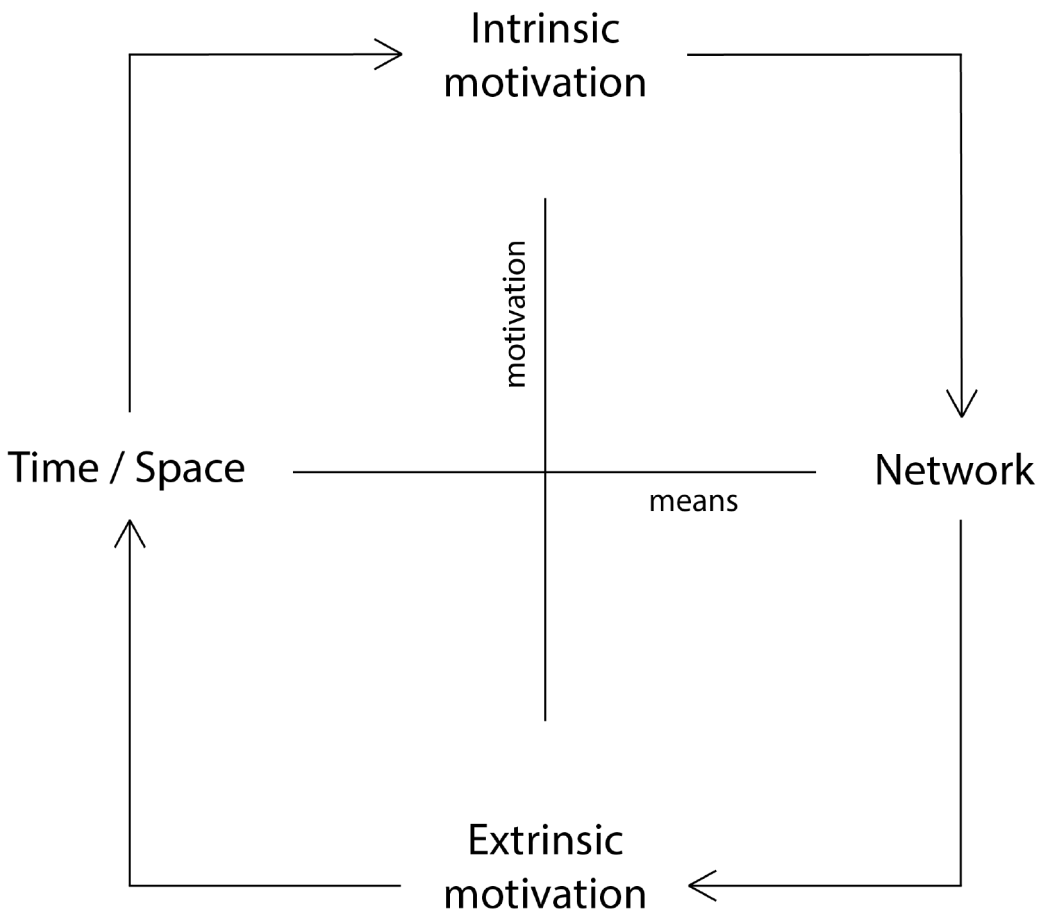
vocation with criticality and care. Through the symposia and other programmes, ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT takes up one of the primary instructions for universities in the New Zealand Education Act (1989), that they "accept a role as critic and conscience of society." Through our programmes, we interrogate the proposition that the arts have a particular capacity to speak critically about society.

Image, from left: Sriwhana Spong, *The Painter-Tailor*, 2019; Deborah Rundle, *Made for Each Other*, 2019; Brook Andrew, *Inconsequential I - VI*, 2018. Photo: Sam Hartnett.

A framework for decision making created by Taarati Taiaroa circa 2015 while contemplating life after art school. In designing this Symposium, the convenors utilised this framework among others.

Taarati Taiaroa

Diagram



The Otolith Group

O Horizon, 2018

Single channel HD video, sound, 1hr 20min 10sec

I merely started with this one simple idea, that education should never be dissociated from life.
— Rabindranath Tagore in a 1922 letter to Patrick Geddes, Scottish town planner and Chair of Sociology at the University of Bombay, India

O Horizon centres on Santiniketan, a school founded by the poet Rabindranath Tagore in 1901 in rural West Bengal. During his lifetime, Tagore opposed the British system of education, which he viewed as a critical part of Britain's imperialist project. Santiniketan is a school founded on the pedagogy of Tagore. It exemplifies interdisciplinarity and engenders a cosmopolitical sociality enlivened by an ecological ethos.

O Horizon is a study of study that is neither propelled by a narrative based on the history of Santiniketan, nor motivated by the biography of Tagore. Instead, Tagore's poetry coincides, communes and competes with newly filmed imagery, voices and music recorded at Santiniketan over a period of five years.

Tagore is reputed to have said, "The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life." The title *O Horizon* refers to the term for the top layer of earth in soil science. Since the founding of Santiniketan, the forest floor has been terraformed in the area

Image: The Otolith Group, *O Horizon* (film still), 2018. Courtesy of the artists.

around the campus as a result of Tagore's introduction of new flora and fauna.

Santiniketan is an ongoing experiment in education. Even as the clamour of industry generates fire and smoke that reconfigures the terms of human communion with nature, the ecological pedagogy at Santiniketan continues. With the help of its teachers and students, *O Horizon* shares Santiniketan's curriculum of the arts, and incorporates the arts of the Santhal peoples, to whom this rural part of West Bengal is home. *O Horizon* proposes a Tagorean imagination in the 21st Century, that enacts our future desires for a better present.

Image: The Otolith Group, *O Horizon* (film still), 2018. Courtesy of the artists.

Te Kawehau Hoskins and Alison Jones

Māori, Pākehā, Critical Theory and Relationality

Te Kawehau Hoskins (Ngāti Hau) is Te Tumu and Head of Te Puna Wānanga – School of Māori and Indigenous Education at the University of Auckland. Alison Jones (Pākehā) is a professor in that School. In this conversation, Te Kawehau and Alison discuss their entangled trajectories as writers and thinkers. Te Kawehau and Alison each bring a critical view to their relationship and its attempts at productive engagements between indigenous and settler subjects here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Te Kawehau Hoskins: We want to share something of our working relationship as we talk a little about the elements and ambivalences that have played a part in our thinking about the indigene-settler relationship – a relationship that is both necessary and interminably problematic here in New Zealand. We do not see our relationship as unique or particularly important in its own right, but as a springboard from which to engage with ideas of relationality which preoccupy all of us who live in settler societies such as New Zealand and Australia.

My journey into settler-indigenous relations started early: with a Pākehā mother and a Māori father. I was raised on my father's side connected to my tribal area in the north of New Zealand. My tupuna/ancestor Patuone was a fearsome fighting chief – but he was also renowned for bridging relationships between settlers and Māori, as is my own father, also named Patuone. So maybe there's something orienting my genes – not only to settler-indigenous relationships, but also to complexity.

As a teenager, I spent a lot of time being politicised by my father's activities in my community and being involved in Māori activism and community and tribal developments. This activism was framed by the relationship – or partnership – between Māori and the Crown, under the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi. This framing is central to New Zealand politics, and it underpins much of our everyday work. That is, thinking, doing and teaching about relationality is an every-day real thing that Māori, and some Pākehā, do.

Alison Jones: I was born in Auckland a year after my English immigrant parents arrived, and I grew up in a series of small towns in New Zealand. Te Kawehau and I met at university when she was a student of mine. I was a lecturer in sociology of education. It was the 1990s and we both had a political interest in our society, and in the relationships that sustained it. Within the bounds of the dominant theory of the time, critical theory, we were focused primarily on the power relations that shaped all social structures and personal engagements.

I was engaged in feminist and Marxist analyses, but my encounters with my students such as Te Kawehau, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Kuni Jenkins oriented me quickly to colonisation, and Māori-Pākehā relationships.

Initially, for Pākehā, critical theory seemed to provide a solid theoretical basis for political collaboration with Māori. We could engage in a shared struggle against oppression in all its forms, including colonisation. Following the publication of Linda Smith's PhD thesis as Decolonising Methodologies in 1999, some western critical theorists included indigenous peoples in their analyses as – as Denzin and Lincoln put it – 'oppressed, colonised persons living in postcolonial situations of injustice'. Critical theory located indigenous people (in this case Māori) as primarily in an oppositional relationship to coloniser peoples: 'they have the power; we lack power'. A simple theory of power in critical theory (and we can include forms of Marxism and radical feminism in this theoretical framing) requires winners and losers, in a binary opposition, with the oppressors taking/having power while the oppressed have had their power taken from them. I am speaking here in simple terms, of course, but I think not unreasonably.

TKH: As with Alison, my analytical entry into making sense of settler-indigenous relations was through critical theory. The language of critical theory allowed us to think about these relationships in terms of dominant and subordinate power relations: the coloniser and the colonised. These terms remain powerful categories, and they have had lasting effects on how people –including Alison and I – relate to each other personally, and politically.

With these categories Māori thinkers mounted fierce critiques of coloniality. We created multiple Māori-centred physical and discursive spaces that had not existed before. There we could withdraw, be together, 'decolonise', 'reclaim' and scheme.

Out of these Māori gatherings, so much was created: a whole parallel education system for Māori, for example, which remains in place today. The beginnings of Māori education as a field of research, in which Alison and I are located, emerged from the discursive and activist politics produced by critical thought.

The 1990s were a heady and exciting time. We were part of the development of what is now widely known as Kaupapa Māori theory and practice. Launched from the platform of critical theory, Kaupapa Māori named the theoretical and practical space within which Māori-centred work could be done. Today, it is fair to say that 'Kaupapa Māori' has become hegemonic in the field of Māori research, and has influenced national discourse and practice in education, health, housing and the arts in New Zealand.

Contrary to the political aims of Kaupapa Māori, it has become popular largely because it has been understood by both Māori and Pākehā, in terms of 'taha Māori' – forwarding the Māori side – with cultural additions to existing practices. So, for instance, in schools, mainstream teachers have been required to learn some reo or karakia to enhance their classroom practice. Researchers thought about how to add Māori in to the existing mix. We are not critical of these things in themselves, but it is not hard to see how this 'culturalist' response to the challenge of Kaupapa Māori is a domesticating move when – for instance – while Māori greetings are going on in the classroom, there remains limited Māori parental engagement in school governance. The response of many Māori scholars to this domestication has been to ramp up the oppositional politics – a politics arising out of critical theory – that remains the basis of Kaupapa Māori power analyses. Superficial changes (such as a smattering of reo in the classroom) are condemned as a sham, dismissed as lip service, and regarded as yet another sign of the interminable power of colonisation, requiring more intense opposition.

I think that here we run into some difficult questions. This clear-cut oppositional response is understandable. But can also be seen as a limited reaction – at least, it has limiting effects. In my view, the longstanding Kaupapa Māori reliance on critical thought has worked to constrain alternative theorisation of settler-indigenous relations.

Photo: Emily Parr

And this is not simply a theoretical problem; Māori-centred work rarely happens in isolation, away from any micro and macro engagement with non-Māori. Kaupapa Māori work almost inevitably exists in some relationship to the existing real complicated practical world of social life.

And we find, in practice, some interesting things going on. Paradoxically, most Kaupapa Māori work overlooks (theoretically at least) the very lively and rich Māori relational social and political practice that operates on the ground in Māori society and in Māori-Pākehā encounters today. Our own cultural practices and concepts are entirely at odds with the binary tendencies of critical theory. Māori ontological practice is fundamentally relational. Engagement is everything, even risky engagement. In general terms, Māori always have, and still do, favour engagement over disengagement, and complex relating over simple positioning.

AJ: Throughout the 1970s, 80s and early 90s, we took up a simple form of critical theory with its binary power analysis and its moral positions of right and wrong, good and bad. These were exhilarating times for us politically-oriented Pākehā, and for Māori. Even if we Pākehā were on the 'wrong' side of the binary, we could stand bravely on the moral high ground of postcolonial theory or decolonising politics, outraged alongside Māori … except … at the same time (as Te Kawehau mentioned) Kaupapa Māori politics had developed, and its strategy drew Māori into Māori contexts rather than into a critical theory-based alliance with radical Pākehā.

Many Pākehā radicals experienced this Māori political move as a form of separatism or at least a rejection of shared politics, and we did not really know how to think about it. I think we tended to take a couple of approaches.

One approach was to try harder to identify possible engagement strategies by working to 'increase equality', and to 'bring us together', which involved learning Māori, inviting Māori to collaborate with course development, asking Māori to be part of research projects. But these strategies to diminish difference and distance were pretty much doomed, and were forced to remain at the level of aspirational rhetoric. We found that a Pākehā research or pedagogical approach based on the ideal of minimal difference, and a set of shared assumptions, [a 'we' and 'us'], was usually destined for practical failure. Māori may be polite to researchers and colleagues they barely know, but the researchers soon find that their plans fall through. Their putative Māori partners do not do what they said they would, they go silent or get standoffish or uncooperative for mysterious or apparently trivial reasons. So the collaborative researchers do not get the information or the relationships they seek. They find Māori 'demanding', 'unreliable', 'a mystery' or 'hard work' and 'hard to work with'. From the Māori side, Pākehā are demanding, ignorant, annoying, weird or just 'don't get it'.

The other main approach towards a desired collaborative engagement has been, rather than trying to reduce difference and distance, to respect and be sensitive to difference, to be 'culturally responsive'. Then we find out that we do not always know how to be responsive or what the difference really refers to. And this then translates as requiring Māori help: 'I do not know, sorry for my ignorance'. Such an approach, too, is often problematic. We might want Māori to tell us what we can do for them and with them, to help improve things for them. ('Share with us your differences, let us know you, so we can be good collaborators in the shared concern about your troubles'.) We expect that if we are sensitive, and open, if we admit to our ignorance, we will be taught. As Sharon Todd reminded us so powerfully in her book *Learning From the Other*, to be taught is to be loved. To demand to be taught is to demand love. Love me, teach me! A demand to know is still a demand, even if it is couched as 'we are sorry for our ignorance about you, and we truly want to know about you'. It is a rewording of the coloniser's demand:

let us onto your territory. Is it possible to learn from others without demanding their attention? Without occupying the centre ground? If we are inevitably locked into an oppositional unequal power binary, how can we escape?

The main problem is that in both these approaches, which have roots in critical theory and its binaries, focus on difference, and positionings of oppressor and oppressed, we remain the centre of attention in our powerful position, but we want to be a nicer, more caring, centre. We want to be collaborative, but our theory sends us into a state of heightened anxiety as we enact respect or responsiveness or, quite often, shame or paralysis.

Maybe it is useful sometimes to think outside the constraints of critical theory and consider another theory of power. And a different theory of difference and of learning about others. Instead of a critical theory of power where top-down binaries shape our interactions, maybe we can consider a more complex theory where power circulates in all directions. We might take seriously the idea that knowledge comes not only and always through a rational analysis of politics and data, but from being present, and being open to what an engaged presence can teach, personally, intellectually and spiritually. How can we learn from otherness, that is, to learn from the difference of others who are not knowable and therefore not comprehensible or containable in our understanding?

Photo: Emily Parr

In some Māori situations, I get the feeling that Jane Bennett reported in her book *Vibrant Matter* about her encounter with the objects on the street: I become open to something new. I learn through the surface of my skin, the roots of my hair, my backbone, the muscles of my stomach, the soles of my feet ... That might seem passive, but it is never a passive process; it requires active openness and attention – and the resulting engagement is always contingent, always situational and contextual, never fixed or predictable, and sometimes quite fleeting…

If all this sounds rather romantic, it is. I might have to add: I learn through the pain in my heart; the prickle behind my eyes, or the ache in my guts. Inevitably, of course, being a Pākehā (in Māori academic settings particularly) in a settler society can be pretty uncomfortable. I have been criticised as a Pākehā for working in what has been claimed as Kaupapa 'by Māori, for Māori' Māori space. I have been present where Pākehā have been roundly condemned. I have sometimes felt a coolness at my presence. I was memorably and firmly advised by a senior Pākehā colleague not to get involved in research work with Māori: too difficult, she said, 'your work will never be your own'.

I have lost count of the people who have called me, as a Pākehā working in Māori contexts, 'brave', or 'courageous'. This description expresses the fear many of us have of being in a Māori space, frightened about trying to pronounce Māori words, being humble to a fault, or

paralysed by anxiety, then feeling shame that we know so little and feel so anxious. Many take it deeply to heart when they hear Māori criticism of Pākehā. They turn away, hurt, or angry and frustrated, finding it all too hard.

So … I encourage strength (a thick skin), perseverance and presence, and some self-awareness as well. It is long-term mahi – we are talking here in terms of years, not days or months, or the odd meeting. It is a matter of remaining in, and maintaining a permanent, alert, positive orientation to Māori. Te Kawehau and I agree that native-settler relationships are endlessly various and complicated, permanently imperfect, inchoate, messy, contingent … and also some of the most invigorating and intellectually productive relationships we can have.

TKH: My everyday experiences of indigenous–settler interaction and my political thinking about Treaty relations has led me to foreground face-to-face, affective relations which are at the heart of Māori identity and 'political' practice. And relationships are never quite comprehensible, they are always complex and, most relevant to this conversation, they are at the heart of all Māori practices.

We can think of the elements of pōwhiri – the ritual encounter between two groups – as illustrative of Māori political practice. Every element is oriented to the productive potential of engagement. There is wero/challenge – why have you come? what are your intentions? Respond to me! The karanga calls in the ancestors of all parties, particularly the arrivals; the call acknowledges the places from which the others have come, and their reasons for coming. The whaikorero/speech weaving establishes the shared ground of engagement drawing out ties and connections. The hongi/pressing of noses intermingles the hau/breath to bind finally the parties together.

In all of these actions, the affective and material force of ancestors, gods, earth and sky, spaces, taonga, human persons, logics and narrative are stirred into engagement, and marshalled together towards productive ends. The manuhiri feel an invitation from Māori to experience all the elements of human engagement – physical, spiritual, emotional. Māori throw everything at their encounters and engagements to capture those in the event together in a kind of felt attunement. Through ordinary Māori ontological practice (such as pōwhiri, mihi, karakia), patterns of power are interrupted, oppositional politics do not hold sway, and the potential for new ways of relating are sparked.

Think of Waitangi Tribunal hearings held on marae in tribal areas around the country. The entrenched power of Crown and Tribunal systems and logics are brought into the heart of the Māori world. These encounters might be the first time iwi and hapū have spoken directly to the Crown about the effects of their early encounters with them – encounters often involving war, death, confiscations and the workings of the Māori land court. Yet through Māori practices of engagement and care the Crown are welcomed, fed, entertained, and shown respect. Māori persist in ongoing relational work because this is who they are and how the possibility for change is held open.

Engagement of course, is not all about warm cosy togetherness. It might bring any number of outcomes into being: it could be a peaceful encounter; it could be a move towards anger. Each of these are engagements. It is worth knowing that the word hoariri illustrates that relationality is highly regarded even if it includes argument and conflict. Your hoariri is your 'enemy' or, literally, your 'angry friend' (in simple terms, hoa = friend; riri = angry). A hoariri is someone with whom I argue or fight, but whose mana in defending their position is respected. There is respect for the difference and the mana of others in all these engagements.

Judge Sir (Eddie) Taihakurei Durie notes that, for Māori, productive political engagement is 'founded on the intricacies of good personal relations'. And at the foundation of good personal relations is

aroha or love. He says, 'inherent in love … is a deep comprehension of another's point of view' – respect for others according to how they see themselves becomes the basis for good relationships.

In the context of settler-indigenous relations, extending aroha to the coloniser is a risky business. Māori political orthodoxies built on critical theory (particularly amongst those of my generation) is often cynical about respecting mana and extending aroha to non-Māori or non-indigenous others. The argument is that such practices have not been reciprocated, so continuing them is misguided and naïve.

Often underpinning this critique is an inversion or reversal of the usual binary positions to 'inherently good Māori' and 'inherently bad coloniser'. Yet, as Durie argues, not having mana Māori respected does not mean the answer is to try to swing the pendulum the other way. A position only of disengagement and opposition is ultimately a position without a future – it is as Gayatri Spivak notes – regressive, destructive, and even addictive.

And, in my view, putting aside Māori social ethicality has the effect of diminishing us. And it maintains us firmly within the logic of the coloniser. Aroha, respect for the mana of others, attention to affective, material forces and intensities, are all Māori ontological practices that have potential for interrupting flows of meaning and normalised patterns of power and interrelations. These forces can rearrange events and be the starting point of the flourishing of commitments to justice.

Photo: Emily Parr

Thursday 3 October

Photos: Emily Parr

Photos: Emily Parr

Lucy-Mary Mulholland

Regenerative Development: Working with Wholes, Reciprocity, Potential

Regenerative Development is a place-based approach that draws on whole living-systems thinking to transform the way we think, work and create together, shifting from mechanistic to dynamic and evolving. Informed by a long lineage of practice, Regenesis Group developed the Regenerative Development methodology in 1995, bringing forth frameworks and practices through which communities and organisations can grow a shared understanding of the unique place in which they live and work in order to develop as a whole, with structures, systems and processes that have regenerative effect, enabling people and place to evolve and thrive.

Since 2016, The Regenesis Institute for Regenerative Practice in partnership with Cabal (NZ) has been running The Regenerative Practitioner seminar series in Aotearoa. The series engages people from diverse professions to explore Regenerative Development and its application in their lives, work and communities of practice. The overall aim of this training programme is system actualisation through increasing the capability amongst practitioners to be able to navigate overlapping systems – economic, social, ecological and political. Colleague and collaborator of Regenesis, Carol Sanford is another key figure within the international regenerative practice community, supporting businesses to develop regenerative capability.

On the occasion of the Symposium, Lucy-Mary Mulholland conducted a three-part workshop introducing the 7 First Principles of Regeneration (Carol Sanford), and exploring the questions: How big is here? Who do you serve? What are you in service to? How does reciprocity exist? How can we find reconciliation beyond the bind of activating and restraining forces?

In the following pages, Lucy-Mary shares her pathway in and current understandings of Regenerative Development, and in collaboration with graphic designer Andrea Lo Vetere, they offer hand gestures that echo those create by symposium participants responding to the 7 First Principles of Regeneration (Carol Sanford).

The Journey In

> *Do not be too moral. You may cheat yourself out of much of life so.*
> *Aim above morality. Be not simply good, be good for something.*
> — Henry David Thoreau

How can we be good for something if we are not truly seeing it, knowing it, relating with it?

Some-thing.
Some living thing.

This living thing. This living being in front of me, changed since yesterday, changing now. Both noun and verb simultaneously. Both stable and dynamic.

How can I be good, for you? How can I respect you?

> *Respect. Re-spect. 'Spect' meaning to see, like the word for spectacles.*
> *'Re' meaning again. Respect = to re-see.*
> — Tarchin Hearn

The first day I stepped into the therapy room with a child, I was terrified. No amount of psychological theories or models could prepare me for the meeting of this livingness. While my intellectual tools were useful in moments, a new source of intelligence began to emerge – in my chest, in my stomach, in the pace of my heart, my prickling skin, sensations of heaviness and lightness, pictures forming in my mind depicting how this child's inner and outer worlds may be playing out, diagrams in my head of connections and relationships, not static but moving and shifting as the days and months rolled on.

Along with my mind, my whole body, my whole being became tools of my knowing.

> ***Two Kinds of Intelligence***
>
> *There are two kinds of intelligence: one acquired,*
> *as a child in school memorizes facts and concepts*
> *from books and from what the teacher says,*
> *collecting information from the traditional sciences*
> *as well as from the new sciences.*
>
> *With such intelligence you rise in the world.*
> *You get ranked ahead or behind others*
> *in regard to your competence in retaining*
> *information. You stroll with this intelligence*
> *in and out of fields of knowledge, getting always more*
> *marks on your preserving tablets.*
>
> *There is another kind of tablet, one*
> *already completed and preserved inside you.*
> *A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness*
> *in the center of the chest. This other intelligence*
> *does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid,*
> *and it doesn't move from outside to inside*
> *through conduits of plumbing-learning.*
> *This second knowing is a fountainhead*
> *from within you, moving out.*
> — Rumi

Over the years, I have come to know children not as clients with behavioural issues or a diagnosis to be treated, but as totally unique and whole humans, on a path of unfolding, sometimes blocked and in need of some support to brighten their torches, in order to see their own pathways forward and upwards. It was all about their journey of development. They were the ones doing the work, I was simply creating the next container for them to stretch into, tending the ground, holding the space and creating the conditions that would support their growth and unfolding. I soon learnt that my advice or good ideas were never as powerful or as profound as the wisdom that emerged from within the children themselves.

And then, I met Caroline Robinson (Cabal), and the world of regenerative practice opened up before me. The scope of my knowing began to expand. Like a fractal pattern, the livingness of a child was now the livingness of a whole community, and then the livingness of a whole place. I started to see, meet and come to know place as a whole, living, being – mauri, people, plants, water, birds, soil, microbes, air, trees, insects, animals. Not a static snapshot or siloed sections of social, economic, cultural, ecological, but an orchestra of dynamic livingness. And not any place, this place. This unique living system, nested within and in service to a larger living system, alive, and evolving. Real, not abstract.

And my question began to change…

How can I be good, for you?

How can I be good, with you?
How can we live together, as co-evolutionary partners? All of life and living.

How can I work and live as a human in a way that does not simply do less harm, not do what I think is good, not live lightly, but live more fully in a way that actually regenerates life?

How do I, how do we, push through that ceiling and continue to lift up our thinking to a paradigm that can source design, decision making and action for regenerative effect?

I sit with this question and it continues to source my work as a regenerative practitioner…

How can we live well together, as co-evolutionary partners? All of life and living.

Life – the integrity of bioregions, bounded in time and space, porous, interconnected in a web of co-creation on the practice grounds of kinship.

Living – the timeless dance of aliveness, whole-some relating, practicing of kinship, ever deepening, ever ascending.

But Rumi says it better…

Where everything is music

Where everything is music
Don't worry about saving these songs!
And if one of our instruments breaks, it doesn't matter.

We have fallen into a place
where everything is music.

The strumming and the flute notes
rise into the atmosphere,
and even if the whole world's harp
should burn up, there will still be

hidden instruments playing.

So the candle flickers and goes out.
We have a piece of flint, and a spark.

The singing art is sea foam.
The graceful movements come from a pearl
somewhere on the ocean floor.

Poems reach up like spindrift and the edge
of driftwood along the beach, wanting!

They derive
from a slow and powerful root
that we can't see.

Stop the words now.
Open the window in the centre of your chest,
and let the spirits fly in and out.
— Rumi

A creative response to Carol Sanford's "7 First Principles of Regeneration" by Lucy-Mary Mulholland & Andrea Lo Vetere

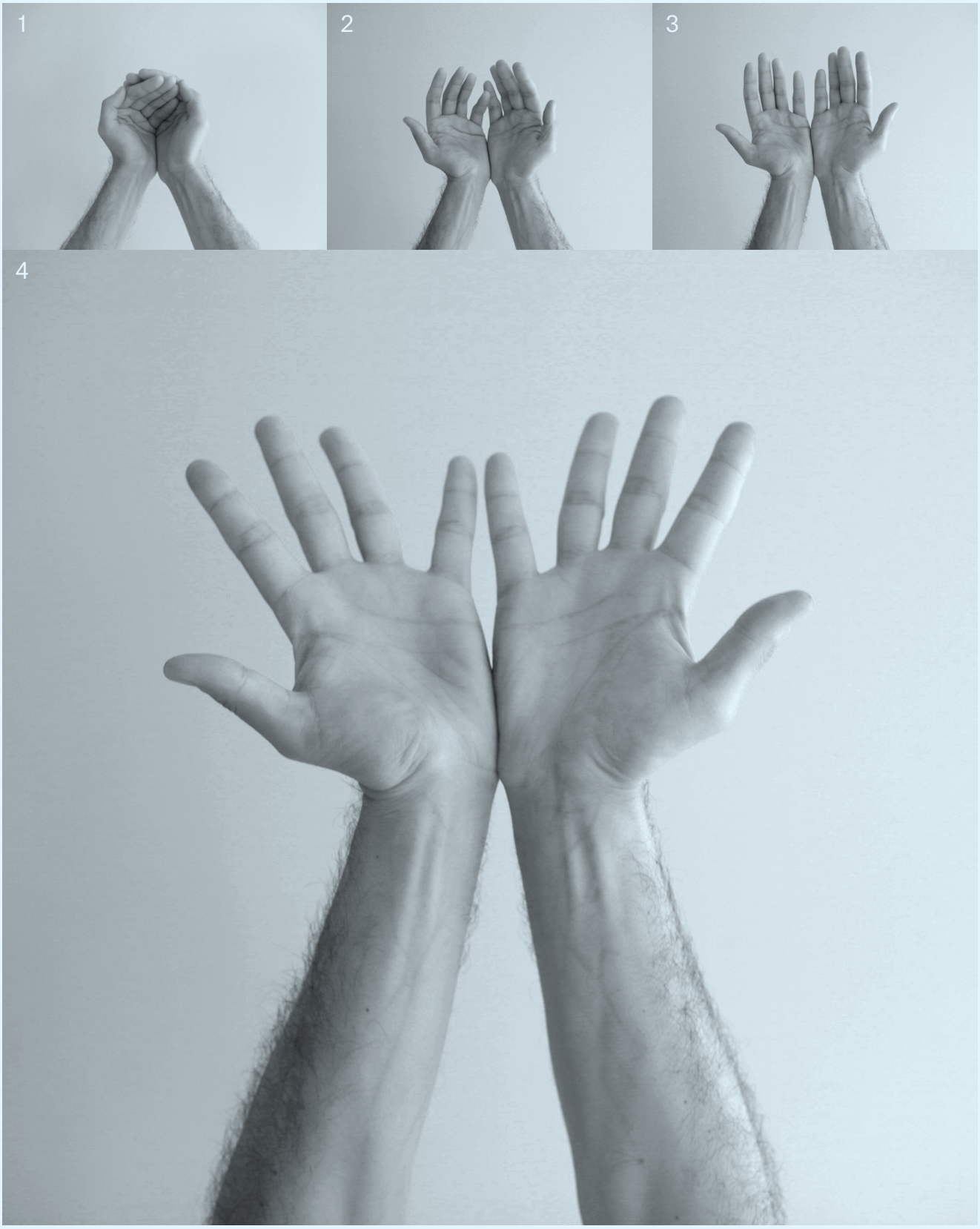
ST PAUL St Curatorial Symposium 2019:
It's as if we were made for each other

1. LIVING WHOLES

Moving away from parts and fragments. Moving towards living wholes, capable of operating in a self-determining way within a system and interactively with other systems. Autonomous in its structures, systems and processes.

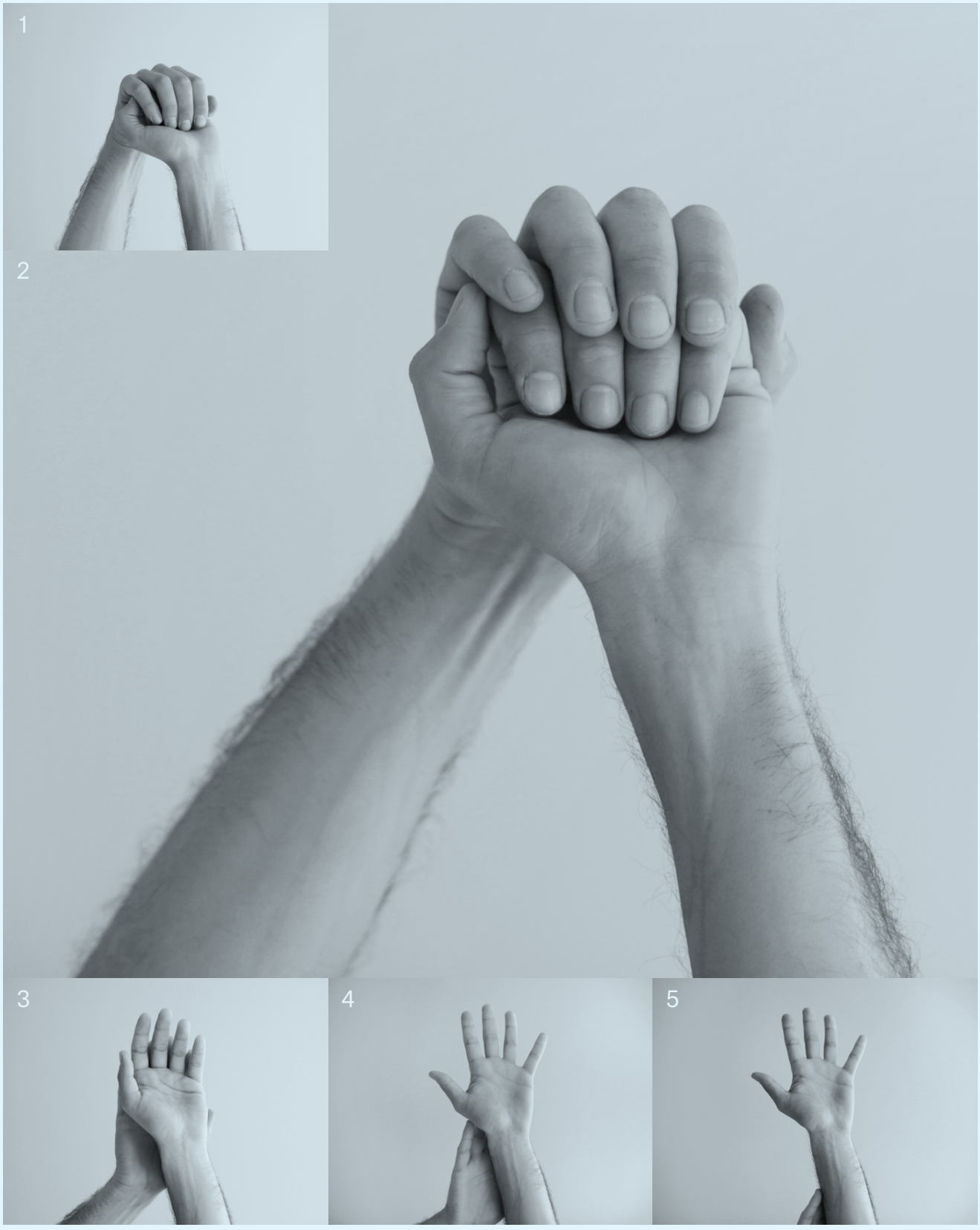
2. ESSENCE

Moving away from commonality and averages.
Increasingly bringing forth essence, fostering
differentiation and uniqueness.



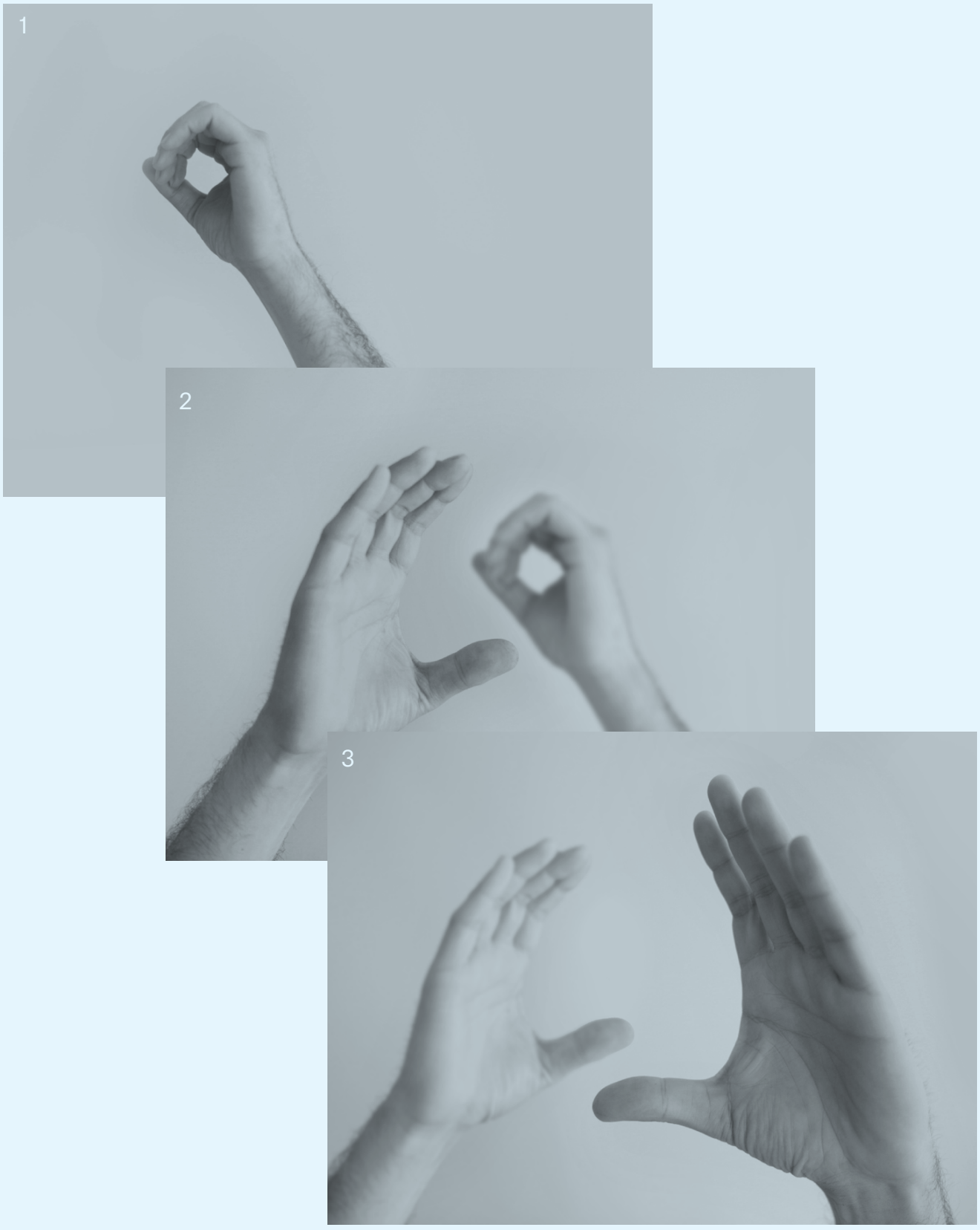
3. POTENTIAL

Moving away from ideals and problems (that further fragment a system), to initiating with inherent and specific potential. Potential is born from essence



4. DEVELOPMENT

Moving away from command and control. Moving towards the development of capacities and capabilities. Seeking to grow and develop potential in each and all entities by focusing on increasing capacity of a whole(s) to be vital, viable and able to evolve.



5. NESTED SYSTEMS

Moving away from isolated and independent entities, to whole living systems embedded within greater and lesser systems, each playing a core role in the success of the whole and other nested wholes.

6. NODES

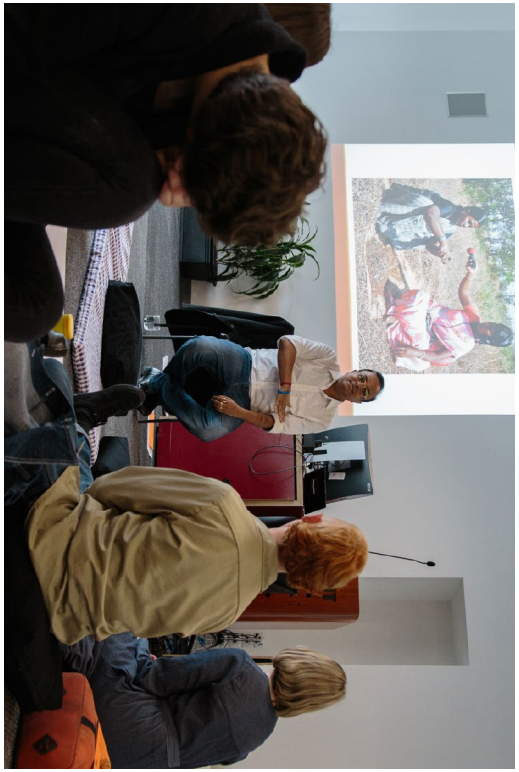
Moving away from shotgun approaches or scaling. Moving towards nodal interventions for systemic effects, like an acupuncture needle hitting a key point, with ripple effects through the whole body.

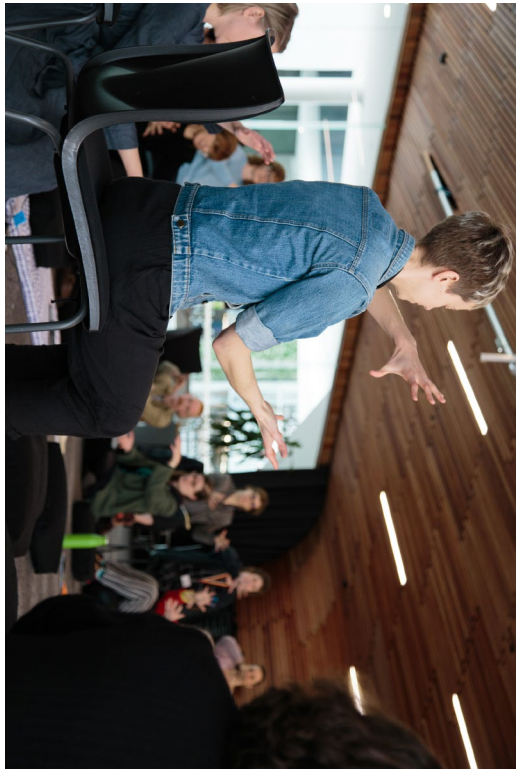
7. FIELDS / SYSTEMIC RECIPROCITY

Moving away from quid pro quo and transactional,
to operating within living dynamic processes.
Systemic reciprocity among all of life.*

* I am still working to embody and see this principle alive, in a way that I can hold. Andrea lent me a Sicilian gesture to express the frustration I felt trying to find a gesture for this principle.

Friday 4 October





Photos: Emily Parr

Photos: Emily Parr

Mohan J. Dutta

A culture-centered approach to radically transforming creative and cultural infrastructures

This essay draws on the plenary address delivered at the Curatorial Symposium, drawing out the hegemonic neoliberal co-option of cultural and creative infrastructures across the globe. I situate this turn within the 'culture as development' framework, colonising the cultural world within the structures of capitalism. Culture and creativity, tied to the marketplace, are reduced to economic terms, catalysing the growth of an entire industry of measurement, auditing, and accounting. This turn to culturalism, devoid of questions of political economy, props up the Whiteness of neoliberal capitalism, ironically often dressing it up in the languages of decolonisation, indigeneity, and postcoloniality. Culture is organised as the site of power and control in the turn to digital futures and sustainable practices, serving the interests of transnational capital. Even as culture is turned into a site of profiteering, the lives of cultural and creative workers are further precarised, expelled from spaces of collective support and collective organising. In this backdrop, I work through the key tenets of the culture-centered approach to foreground the turn to culture as a space for imagining alternatives to neoliberal capitalism, explicitly articulating a socialist agenda, co-creating registers for communicative equality, and organising a politics of collective resistance to neoliberal capitalism.

The accelerated penetration of neoliberal policies into the creative and cultural spaces in the last three decades have normalised and established the hegemony of market-based logics of privatised creativity while simultaneously producing extreme precarities among creative workers. This turn to the neoliberal transformation of cultural infrastructures has been orchestrated by the strategic collaborations between UNESCO, international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), private corporations, private foundations, and an increasingly co-opted state categorically reorganised to serve the interests of global capital. The zeitgeist of neoliberalism, adopted in 'variegated forms' by global elites, has translated into state actions taking the form of 'rolling back' the state from its essential functions of creating fundamental infrastructures of education, income generation, food, housing, and welfare. Simultaneously, the state has been 'rolled out' to serve the interests of global capital, deploying a wide array of technologies of policing, privatising public resources and enclosing the commons, attacking worker organising, targeting spaces of dissent, and disciplining sites of resistance to the expansive land grab organised in the interests of global capital.

Integral to the establishment of neoliberal hegemony is the deployment of 'communicative inversions,' the strategic arrangement of symbolic resources to turn material events, evidence, and processes on their heads. These communicative inversions are carried out by transnational communication capital in the form of transnational public relations agencies, advertising firms, and media corporations that design and disseminate them, in turn generating large profits from their circulation. The incorporation of creative practices into communicative capital is a vital resource in neoliberal expansionism, turning creative practices as vital infrastructures for establishing the ideology of the global free market. The dictum that the market will liberate us all forms the infrastructure of communicative capital in the service of neoliberalism, working systematically to project onto human imagination the free market as the panacea to human suffering catalysed by widespread neoliberalism. Neoliberal hegemony needs its creative writers, copy writers, poets, designers, and artists just as much as it needs its media planners, account executives and business managers to create and circulate the communicative inversions. The communicative inversions are circulated to both deplete democratic sites of resistance to the march of global capital and simultaneously to use the language of democracy to create new markets for transnational capital.

The emergence globally of the rhetorical instrument of 'culture as development' shaped the neoliberal transformation of creative and cultural spaces, tying these spaces to the language of measurement and accounting. The concept of culture as an instrument of economic development reworked cultural production systematically in the ideology of the market, tying culture to economic growth, transnational capital, and circuits of profiteering. This systematic reworking of culture to serve the market expansionary forces is captured in the policy formations around creative cities, creative clusters, creative industries, and urban regeneration in neoliberal economies, placing creativity as the site of growth by catalysing primitive accumulation. In this essay, I argue that this thorough incorporation of creative practices into extreme neoliberalism on one hand has co-opted cultural sites and spaces in the service of the market, and on the other hand, have catalysed the precarisation of creative workers. In this backdrop, drawing on some of the key threads of the culture-centered approach that seeks to co-create communicative infrastructures for the voices at the 'margins of the margins,'[1] I present an outline of a socialist politics of creative organising rooted in communicative equality. The essay is written for artistic, creative and cultural workers across global spaces.

[1] The 'margins of the margins' refer to the ongoing marginalisations that are produced through the co-creation of communicative spaces of participation. The very creation of spaces where voices can be heard constitute forms of marginalisation.

Neoliberal transformation of creative spaces

Creative spaces across the globe have been transformed into the service of transnational capital, scripted into the language of economic growth, measurement, and productivity. Creative practices coded into the ideology of the free market are scripted into public-private partnerships. Coupled with the seductions of the digital and rhetorical promises of sustainability, the articulations of creativity have been thoroughly incorporated into the agendas of private capital, while simultaneously performing the veneer of radicalism. As a communicative inversion, creative radicalism under the umbrella of the free market works precisely to hold up and circulate the mechanisms of profiteering and primitive accumulation. Creative spaces are organised into branding infrastructures for private capital, greenwashing the inequalities, poverty, precarisation of labour and large-scale threats to the environment constituted by the expansive reach of capital.

Ideological tools of neoliberal co-optation

The ideological fuel of creative neoliberalism is offered by the turn to neoliberalism in Cultural Studies, formulated, fashioned, and incorporated in the language of the free market. Paradoxically, the co-optation of the language of Cultural Studies to serve the interests of the free market ideology, as an ideological inversion of the early Cultural Studies scholarship conceptualised in resistance to capital, forms a key ingredient of the neoliberal transformation of culture, cultural spaces, cultural practices, and cultural articulations. Academics working within Cultural Studies structures in neoliberal institutions within extreme neoliberal spaces such as Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia, performing within state diktats of privatising culture, have actively worked to turn culture into a resource, scripted into institutionalised spaces, playing a powerful role in building a register for this active transformation of cultural articulations, practices, and artefacts. The turn toward grant cultures in Universities such as the linkage grants in Australia actively turn Cultural Studies into market research and market intelligence gathering functions for transnational capital, with university-led programs of art, performance, curation serving to bridge the public and the private. Museums as infrastructures for public-private partnerships play key roles in the circulation of the ideology of capital, with performances, installations, art forms, talks established within the market logics while performing radicality. This performance of radicalism to serve the expansionary goals of the free market, through branding, promotion, and advertising is essential to the co-optation of culture. Embedded in neoliberal logic and working within state-led visions of public-private partnerships that incorporate culture in the service of the market, these Cultural Studies academics offer the lexicon, methodology, evaluative tools, and practical interventions for the thorough co-optation of creative practices, museums, and cultural spaces into the agendas of neoliberal expansionism. Paradoxically, programs of cultural measurement, cultural accounting, and cultural data analytics serve the expansionary goals of the global free market. Simultaneously, this ideological turn to neoliberalism has emptied the radical potential of creative practices, formulated into a performance of radicalism in the service of transnational capital.

Smart urbanism, technology, and creativity

Techno-deterministic policies celebrating smart urbanisms form the frontiers of twenty-first century creative imaginaries. Creativity is subsumed into the celebratory rhetoric of technology, seamlessly pushing neoliberal transitions through the realms of the smart, digital, and artificial intelligence. A wide array of communicative inversions work together to project the rhetoric of smart futures as panacea to the pernicious effects of four decades of neoliberal policies, propping up new forms of neoliberal techno-accelerationism. Digital frontiers are pushed forth as visions of the urban utopia, folded into the framing of creative spaces positioned as solutions of the future. The portrayals of utopian futures punctuated in the narratives of efficiency and effectiveness are mediated through technologies. Creative spaces therefore are

spaces built into the logics of technological futures, with creativity positioned as the driver of technological innovations.

The framing of problems and the positioning of technologies as solutions are delivered through the mechanisms of private capital. For instance, smart cities as technological imaginaries of the futures are embedded within logics of profiteering and generation of new opportunities for the market. The seamless propaganda of the digital makes up the backbone of the large scale land grab and privatisation of commons organised under futuristic accounts. Inherent in the architectures of smart planning is the expulsion, dispossession, and displacement of the lives, livelihoods, and bodies of/from the margins. The creative industries participating in the production of the smart urbanism imaginary actively work to circulate communicative inversions through three dimensional images, simulated videos, animation, and smart graphics, while erasing simultaneously the lived experiences and struggles of the underclasses who are displaced from their livelihoods to make space for smart urban development. Creative production of the smart imaginary through stories and images writes over the lands, livelihoods, and dwellings that are the targets of various technologies of violence and disciplining. The cities of the future are the cities of/for the upwardly mobile classes, with the creative classes reworked into productive roles for extending the ever-expanding reach of capital. Democracies that are destroyed through the workings of expert-led top-down authoritarian decision-making are replaced by smart engagement and online deliberation platforms designed through creative inputs. Paradoxically, the artificially intelligent and digital futures, sold in narratives of sharing, gig economy, and intelligent production, create new sites of precarious work for creative workers. The images of freedom, liberty, flexibility, and short hours promoted in the digital interventions.

Sustainable seductions

The seduction of the sustainable incorporates creative practices into the regimes of neoliberal management. Coupled with narrative accounts of futures, promises of sustainability are written into communicative inversions that seek new market opportunities for transnational capital. Culture as sustainability makes up the communicative capital pushing the frontiers of transnational capital. Sustainability is positioned as the niche for cities, capital, and states to be branded with, while simultaneously catalysing the expansion of opportunities for the accumulation of primitive capital. Creative practices, performances and products, pitched as solutions of sustainability, form the infrastructures of neoliberal governmentality. Communicative inversions are built through creative practices that greenwash extractive capital, turning the extractive industries into images of creative sustainability. The very extractive corporations that threaten and destroy the environment are projected as 'green' and sustainable through the creation and arrangement of symbols. Consider for instance the large-scale exhibitions on sustainable futures that are put forth by transnational corporations at the frontiers of extraction. Museums are co-opted into the neoliberal desires of the privatised state, constructed within public-private partnerships to host exhibitions and performances that are funded to offer imaginative registers for sustainability. The turn to sustainability in the creative sectors thus is often critical to the project of extreme neoliberalism that threatens livelihoods, reproduces precarities, entrenches inequalities, and poses significant threats to the environment.

The thorough and large scale co-optation of culture, cultural practices, and creative work within the structures of neoliberalism forms the framework of ongoing precarisation. This critical interrogation of the wholesale destruction and co-optation of creative spaces, practices, and forms in the service of transnational capital serves as a register for imagining creatively the spaces, infrastructures, and practices of creativity. In the next section, I will draw upon the culture-centered approach (CCA) as a framework for imagining radical democracies as the basis of socialist futures rooted in justice.

Mohan J. Dutta

A culture-centered approach to radically transforming creative and cultural infrastructures

Culturally-centering creative practice as resistance

Recognising that communicative inequalities, inequalities in the distribution of symbolic resources, are deeply intertwined with material inequalities, inequalities in the distribution of material resources, the CCA foregrounds the work of co-creating communicative infrastructures in solidarity with the 'margins of the margins.' The frame/work of the culture-centered approach (CCA) seeks to co-create infrastructures for the voices of the margins that challenge the expert-driven top-down structures of neoliberal governmentality designed to serve the global free market by turning toward the everyday work of co-creating communicative infrastructures at the margins. Cultural and creative workers are vital to the organising work for dismantling neoliberalism. Culturally centering creative practice as resistance turns to creativity as the basis for alternative imaginations that interrogate the 'communicative inversions' perpetuated by neoliberalism and simultaneously challenge these inversions. Noting that meaning formations constitute the sites of structural transformation, I propose in this section some questions as registers for imagination and creative organising in creative and art spaces.

Challenging power

The corruption of creative practices and cultural sites is organised through the consolidation of power in the hands of the state and capital. The frontiers of neoliberal expansion are the sites for such concentration of power in the capitalist class. Therefore, the work of challenging neoliberalism begins with questioning the organising of power in the co-optation of creative labour to the service of capital. To challenge power is to deeply interrogate one's position within the hegemonic structures, and to both question the incorporation of the subject position into the neoliberal order as well as re-imagine the subject position as a site of working alongside relationships and communities in organising for social change. For instance, the critical acknowledgment that one's work as an artist incorporated into an exhibit on sustainability sponsored by an extractive corporation is an instrument of greenwashing ought to therefore turn to building relationships and communities of resistance to extractive expansionism. The questions proposed below resist power by re-organising it as a creative source for building socialist futures.

Socialist futures

The precarious labour conditions and structures of exploitation within which creative workers negotiate their everyday livelihoods amidst the turn to extreme neoliberalism across local, regional, national and global contexts points to the urgency of a socialist politics. Amidst the ongoing attacks on unions and spaces of collective organisation across the globe, solidarity serves as a vital register for ensuring universal access to the fundamental rights to livelihood. Against the structures of precarisation, universal basic income, anchored in a socialist imaginary, creates the structural conditions for creative labour that is organised toward building socialist imaginaries. Creative registers for socialist transformations, working alongside communities, activists, social movements, and political parties, offer resistive narratives and symbolic resources that challenge capital and dismantle it.

Communicative equality

Recognising the fundamental human right to communication as the basis for communicative equality, the concept recognises the organising of human rights within the neoliberal order and instead positions a rights-based conversation in the realm of worker organising, indigenous organising, social movements of the Left, and socialist party organising. Communicative equality stems from the universal demand for dignity and the right to having one's voice be heard, right to knowledge being respected, and right to forms of livelihood and wellbeing that are culturally constituted.

In an ongoing movement between the local and the global, the CCA reworks participation, taking it back from its thorough co-optation as an instrument of engagement to serve capitalist structures to participation as radical democracy and as the basis for socialist claims-making. Creative organising rooted in communicative equality is accountable to a politics of solidarity with voices at the 'margins of the margins.' The decolonising turn to organising creative spaces in alternative logics ought to center itself in the politics of co-creating infrastructures for voice and listening, rooted in rationalities of care and justice.

Conclusion

The extreme neoliberalism that constitutes human life and livelihoods of the twenty-first century, made abundantly visible across sites and spaces of organising globally amidst the outbreaks of COVID-19, foregrounds the urgency with which activists, creative workers, academics, and most importantly, communities at the margins ought to imagine and actualise communicative infrastructures rooted in radical democracies for socialist organising. The thorough and large scale co-option of the arts and creative practices to perpetuate capitalist extraction is resisted through registers rooted in communicative equality and socialist politics. Spaces for organising of creative and cultural workers into collectives and unions, working alongside the struggles of the 'margins of the margins,' offer registers for solidarities that are structurally transformative. Art for social change, rooted in communicative equality, offers registers for imagining local, national, and global political economies committed to equality.

What is my/our location within circuits of power?

- What are the spaces I occupy?
- What forms of power do these spaces hold?
- What forms of power do I hold?
- What are the communicative resources I use in my position of power?
- How do I enact this power in relationships?
- How do I enact this power in communities?

How do I/we envision communicative openings for partnering with the margins?

- How do we 'learn to learn from the margins?'
- What are the communicative resources necessary for socialist futures?
- What are the strategies for re-organising neoliberal spaces?
- How do these communicative resources negotiate structures?
- What resources are necessary to build infrastructures of listening?
- What are the communicative strategies for responding to silencing/violence?
- What are the resources for building community-anchored solidarities for voice?

Mohan J. Dutta

A Conversation with Balamohan Shingade & Taarati Taiaroa

https://youtu.be/xNGTiZzwA30

Image: CARE, *A conversation with Balamohan Shingade and Taarati Taiaroa* (video still), 2020.

Pallavi Paul and Fiona Amundsen

Audio Dispatches—Meeting Each Other

Although Pallavi Paul and Fiona Amundsen are not yet physically able to meet (Pallavi is in New Delhi and at the time Fiona was in Berkeley) they have been practicing ways of coming together. *Audio Dispatches—Meeting Each Other* consists of a series of voice recordings and written publications that brings together this experience on the occasion of the Symposium.

Pallavi and Fiona first came into relation with each other through their respective practices, as artists who are working with lens-based documentary. They formed relationships that were not only based in learning of each other through the kinds of images each produced, but also through listening to what those images could say relationally, ethically and politically. Put simply, Pallavi and Fiona's connection developed by listening to and being with each other's images. This process blended into other methods where they explored how to stay in relation with one another's thinking concerning ideas of care, ethics and politics as related to documentary practice.

Here, a hearing is made possible between the two artists. It is a form that allows their voices and words to extend outward from each other to the guests of this Symposium. Their voices practice the intimacy of listening to each other, while their published words practice the collectivity of reading and talking together.

Pallavi Paul and Fiona Amundsen

Audio Dispatches—Meeting Each Other

Photo: Emily Parr

https://youtu.be/_0MR57SwMZ0

11:02 MINUTES

He points to the precipice from where the death of language can be glimpsed.

He stands on the sky that has finally begun to sprout rice.

Q: Where were you born?

Q: How did you come to politics?

Q: Who were you influenced by?

Q: How did you come here?

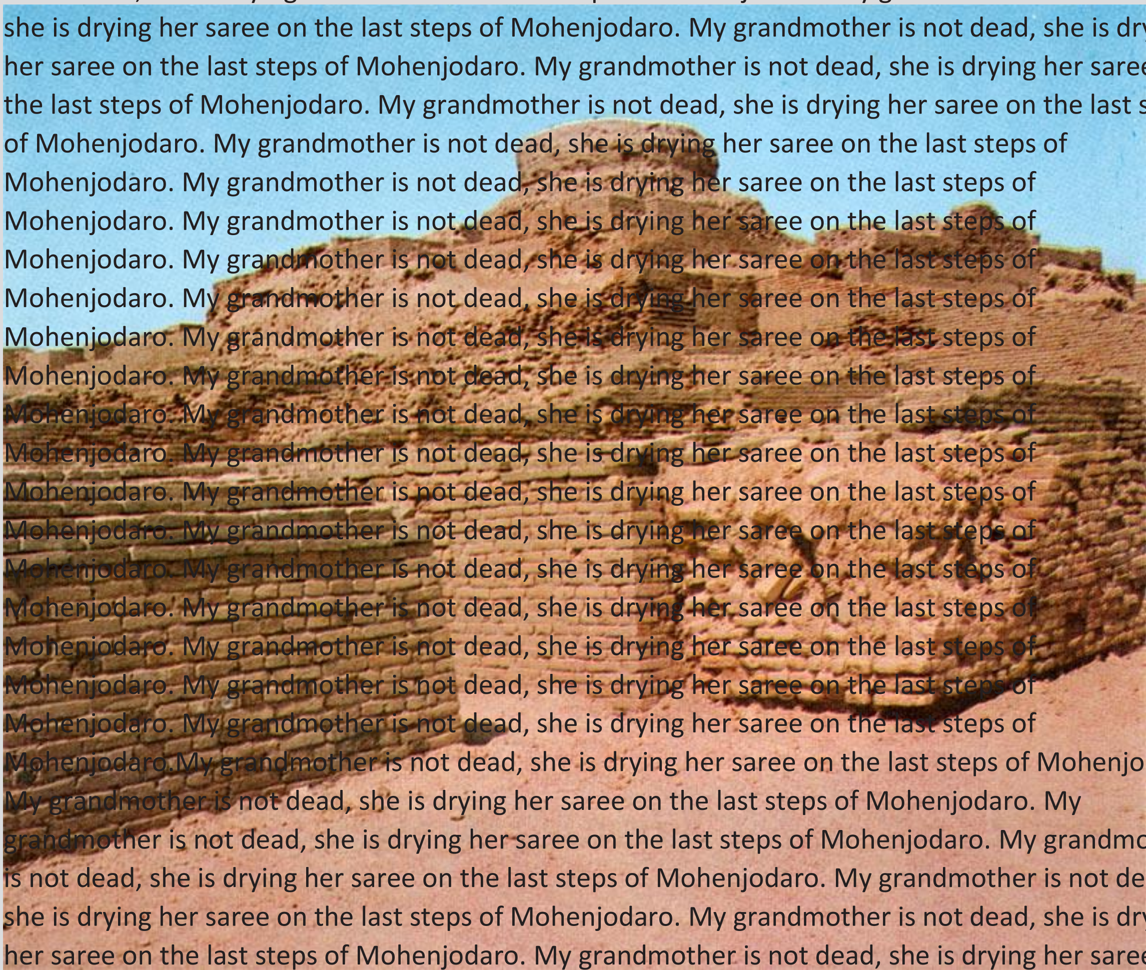
Q: Isn't there a contradiction in what you say?

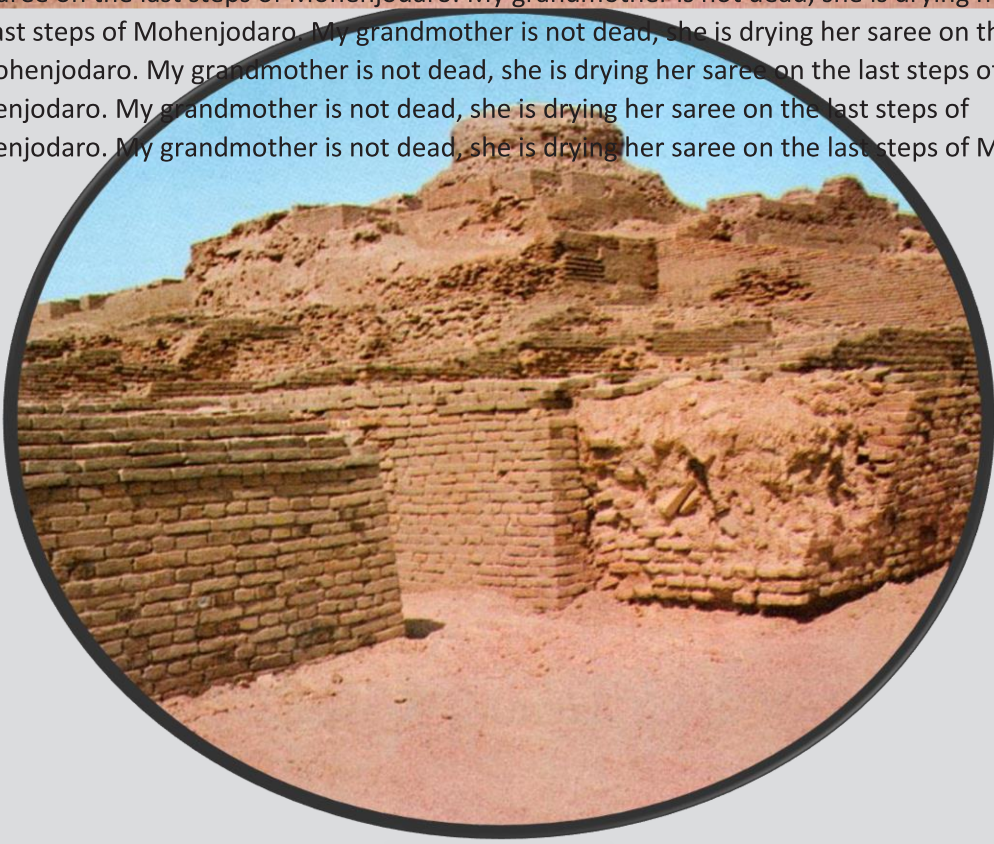
A: Recently scientists discovered the mummified remains on a man sitting in lotus position from 1100 AD in China. He was encased inside an Ancient Buddha statue. It was believed that only some monks did this extreme act of "self-mummification". It is held that some years before entering the statue, the monk would undertake a special diet and regimen to strip his body of fats and fluids. Once this was achieved he would enter the Buddha with an air tube and a bell. The bell rang as long as the monk breathed. On the ceasing of its sound, the statue would be sealed. The aim of the monk was to become a 'living Buddha'.

There seems to be in the rational world a contradiction between life and death. In the world of the monk they coincide. The path to life passes via death. And yet neither life nor death is rendered fully abstract. The sound of the bell and the skeletal remains of the meditator- become the forensic traces of metaphysical. Every contact- even if it is between the human and the divine leaves a trace. The silence of the bell is as telling as its tolling. The monk's skin would have slowly disappeared over thousands of years, leaving in its wake the bones. These bones, disciplined by the lotus position- bearing the memory of muscles that long since etherised- transmute into the soul of the Buddha. You can see that the inside-outside is quite mixed up here. So are the living and the deceased. It is difficult to say who haunts whom.

I don't know if this answers your questions.

My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro. My grandmother is not dead, she is drying her saree on the last steps of Mohenjodaro





It is okay even if you repeat something

We can always get rid of it in the edit.

You’re getting a bit tired

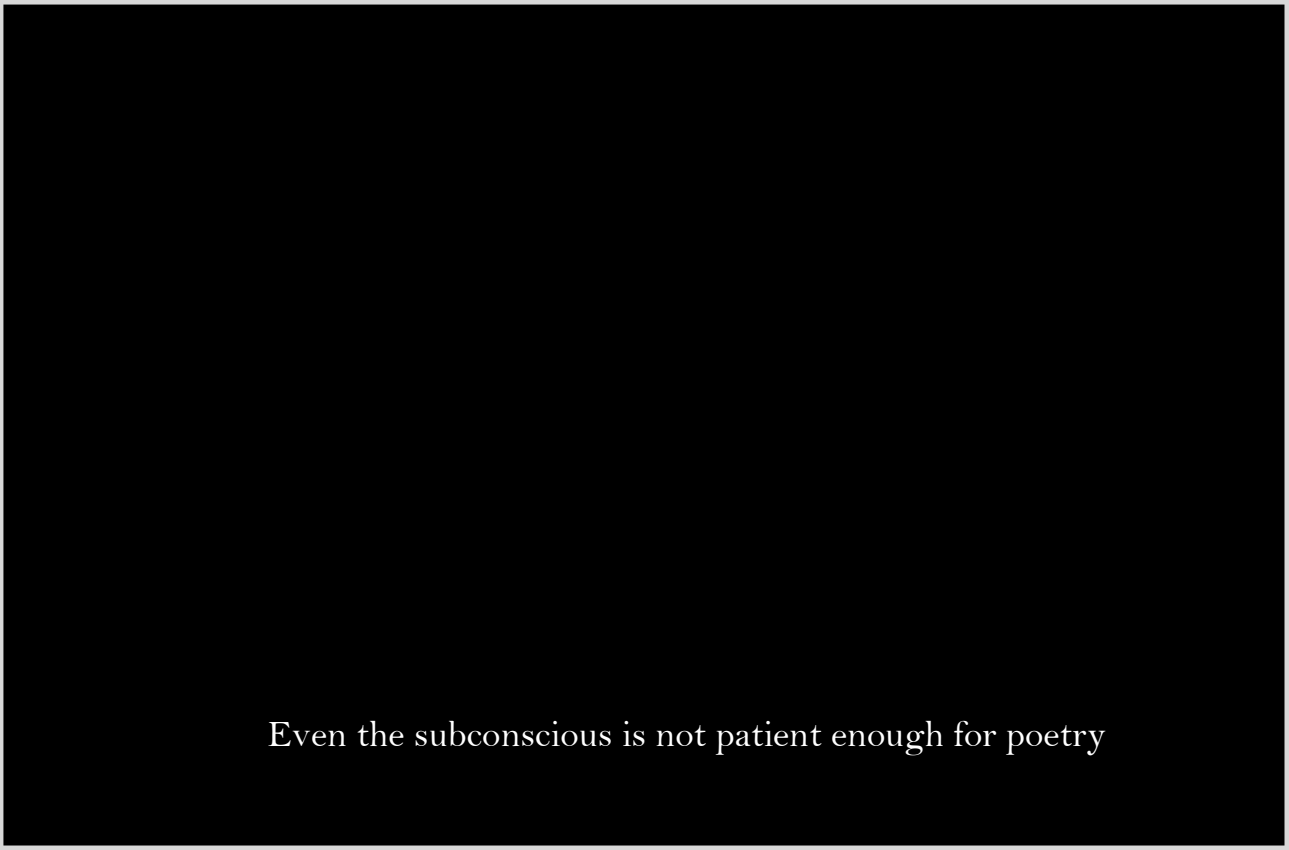
Maybe one last shot and we can wrap up for the day?

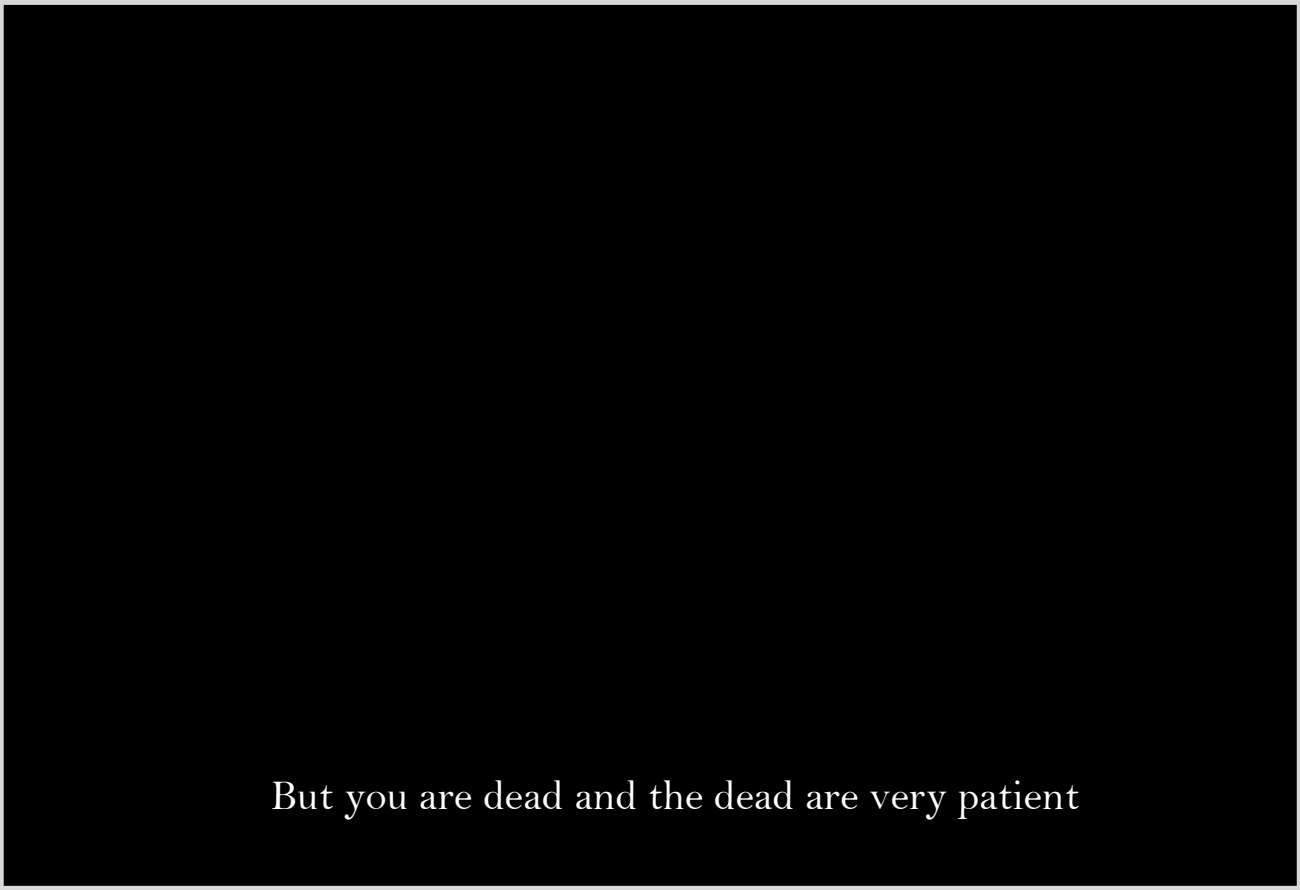
Can you turn your head a bit towards me?

Louder

Sorry we have to take that again

An airplane just crossed.


Even the subconscious is not patient enough for poetry

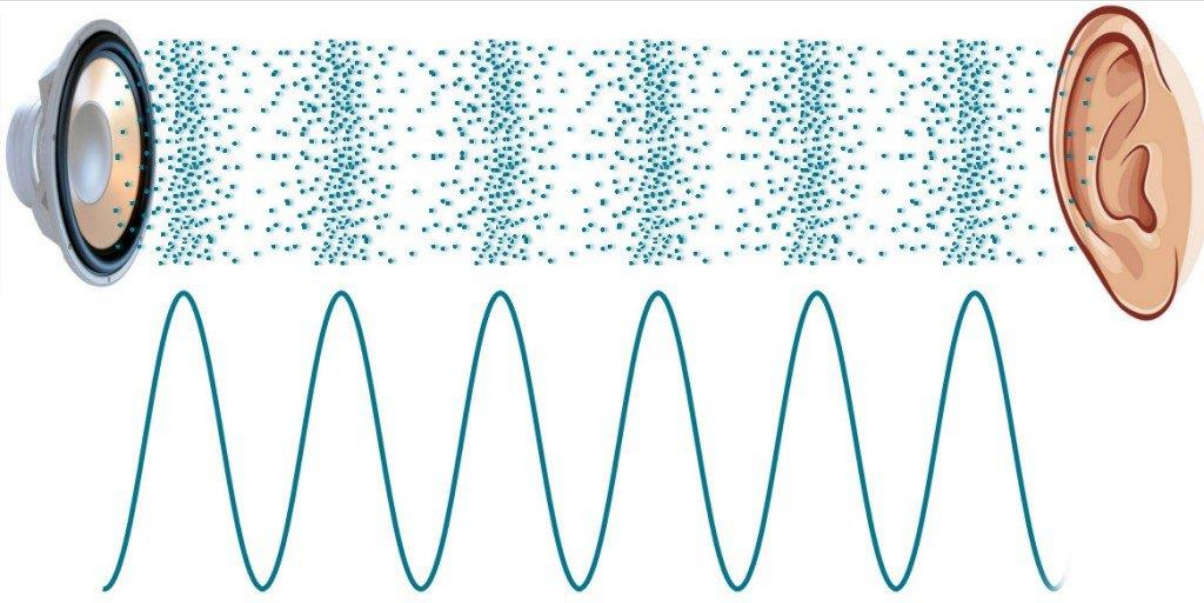

But you are dead and the dead are very patient

Nothing happened today

My camera batteries died sooner than I expected.

Just after the camera died, he started talking about voice. Not his voice but a voice. He said the most terrifying thing about death is the loss of voice. I think what he meant was if one doesn't speak or hear while alive, it is as good as being dead. As he drifted further in his thought about voice he said can you explain to me how voice travels.

He knew I studied science in school



I pulled up this image from the internet on my phone. Look this is sound I said, it is like a wave. Sometimes compressed and at others rarefied. Our ears gather it. I could tell he wasn't being able to understand anything. I continued talking about continuous and discreet signals, as if compensating for his inability.

He spoke over me suddenly- "films thieve sound."

“THROUGH FILM I HAVE BECOME THE GHOST OF JULIUS CEASER”, HE DECLARED.

Vidrohi was never tied to respectability. In fact he was never going to die. In my conversations with him, Vidrohi had often spoken about his death. We had revisited the scenario over and over again. Like a dream or a film – it had a grand setting. He had told us “Now that you are recording me, I know that I will say goodbye in the most glorious way possible. Very few people can say that about their death, while they are still alive.” On another day he had said to us, “As my fame has increased, so have the dangers. Now what I need is guarantee. Your records are guarantee against that largest threat of being killed. I say to my enemies, that if you want to kill me – then shoot me in the eyes. Because I will keep staring back at you till my last breath. Your records will help me stare back at them even after I am gone.” In his imagination Vidrohi was not just going to die, he would have to be killed, so the news of his death seemed a bit strange.

Vidrohi taught me another thing without knowing it of course – to be wary of false humility. To get caught in the web of appearing self effacing while hanging onto the egotistical conception of artist. The biggest danger of this is that the poet has to forfeit the possibility of being a magician. What a drab insufferable thing a humble magician would be.

as time went by the film I was making about him started to morph into films that were going to feature him but weren’t going to be about him. He became a kind of link between other poets from other epochs. In a book titled after Lorca , poet Jack Spicer writes letters to Garcia Lorca, nearly twenty years after Lorca’s passing. The letters written the fashion of urgent impassioned enquires, became a site for me to see whether the images from Vidrohi’s world could help Lorca write back to Jack. When I broke this to Vidrohi – he seemed only momentarily disappointed. But soon took it as challenge to wrestle with two dead poets for film time. He said “*Chalo ismein ek baat to sahi hai ki tum mujhe Lorca ki shreni mein dekh rahi ho, magar dekhna jab film ban jayegi to sab Vidrohi ki kavita ko hi pehchanenge”/* There is one thing that is right here/ that you are treating Garcia Lorca and me as poets of the same calibre/ you will see after this film gets done, everyone will only speak about my poems.

00:00:00

We asked you this question:

50:04:71 *how are acts of care attentive to the functioning of the world?*

You said you had just been talking about this idea with your wife. You differentiated between kindness as a state of being and one off acts of being kind. Then you said:

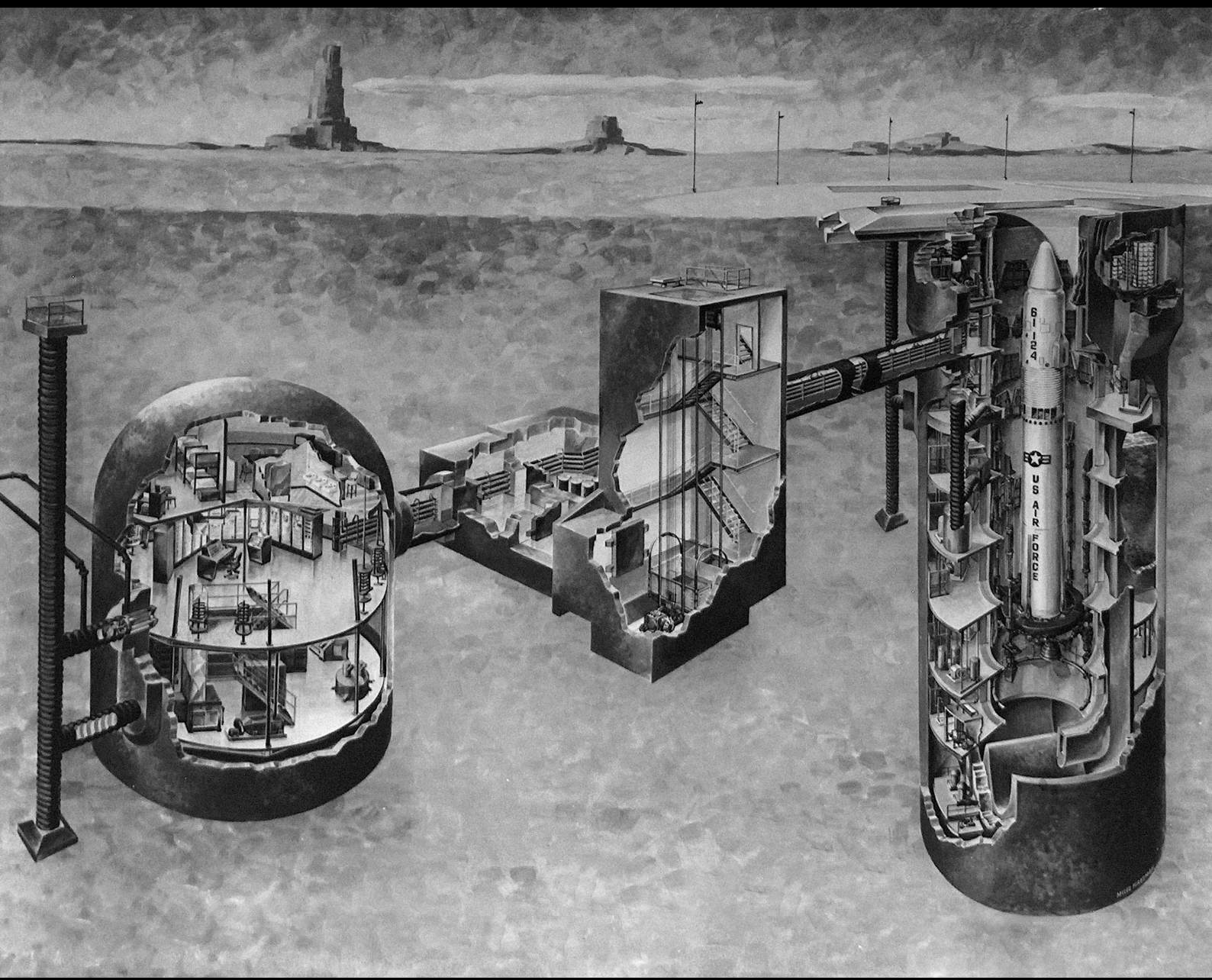
50:55:83 We cannot as a world survive without care for one another , but it's not just care for one another... we have to care for everything that's living.

We talked about the missile; what it could do, and how perfect the acronym M.A.D. was.

54:07:55 Mutal assured destruction: M.A.D! That is like the best acronym ever devised for anything. Okay. We developed nuclear weapons out of human kind's worst impulses.

We did not know how to begin filming.
Your words were very impactful.
We felt responsible for what you had shared with us, for you.

Both camera batteries were fully charged.

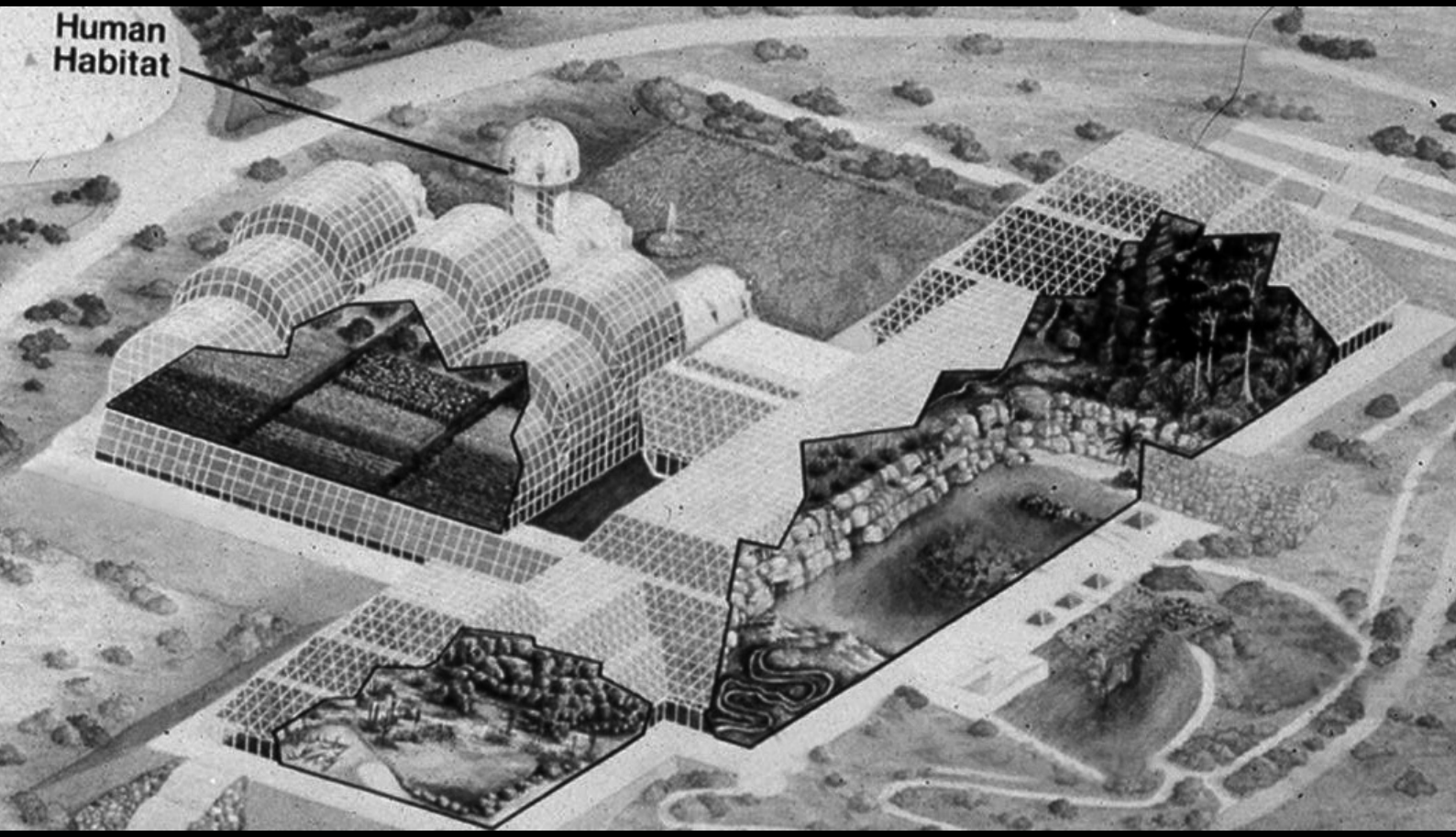

61-124
US AIR FORCE

We found ourselves wondering:

What kind of structure should a film like this have?
(We are thinking about it endlessly...)

We are wondering how the structure of our film can imagine the structures of a caring world.
Such imagining requires seeing beyond steel rivets, concrete walls, glass shapes, and circular shaped structures.

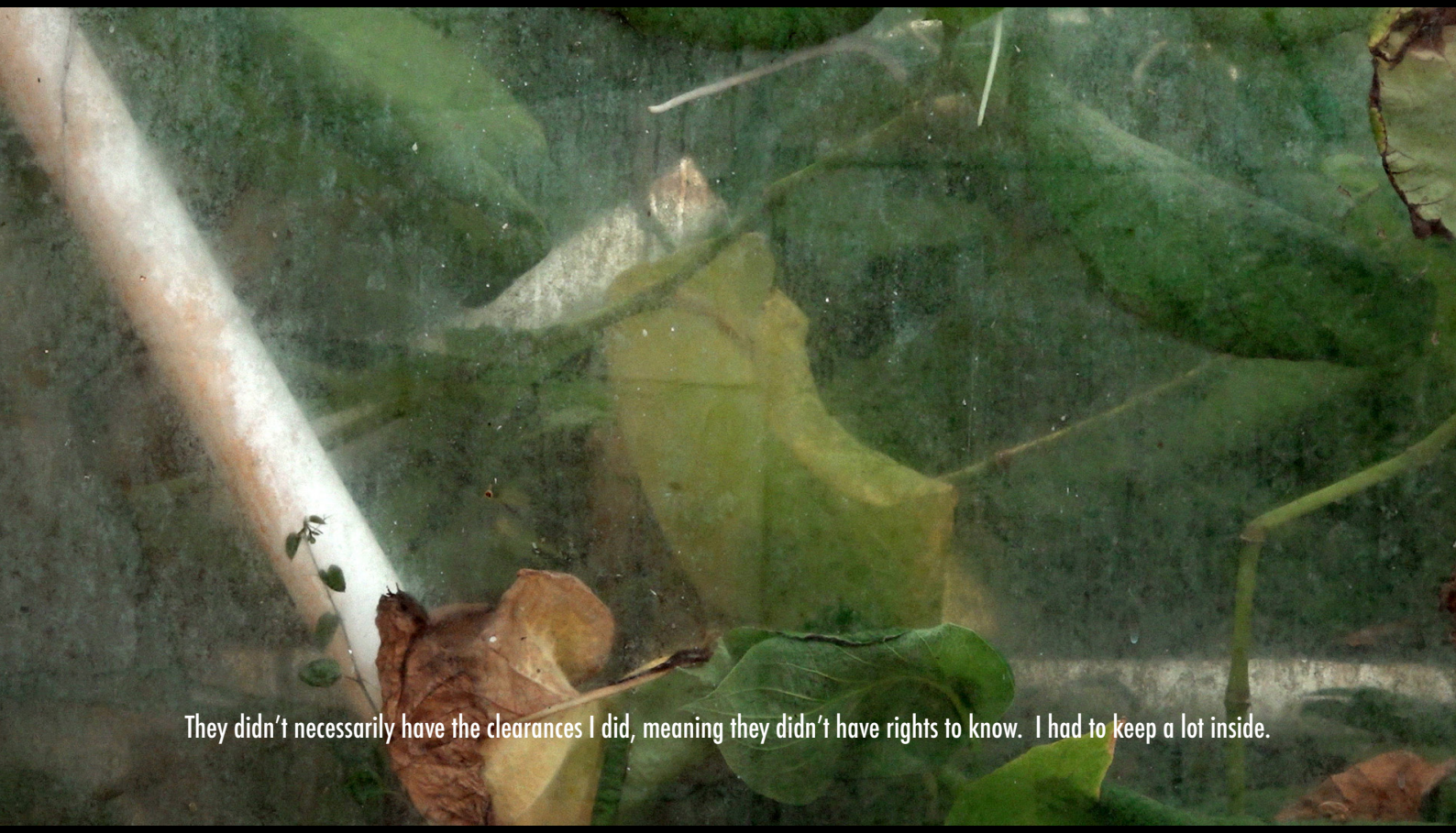
We are wondering how the structure of our film might learn to blend with the invisible structures of worlds existing inside and outside of this 16:9 ratio. What will these structures of films and worlds show us?

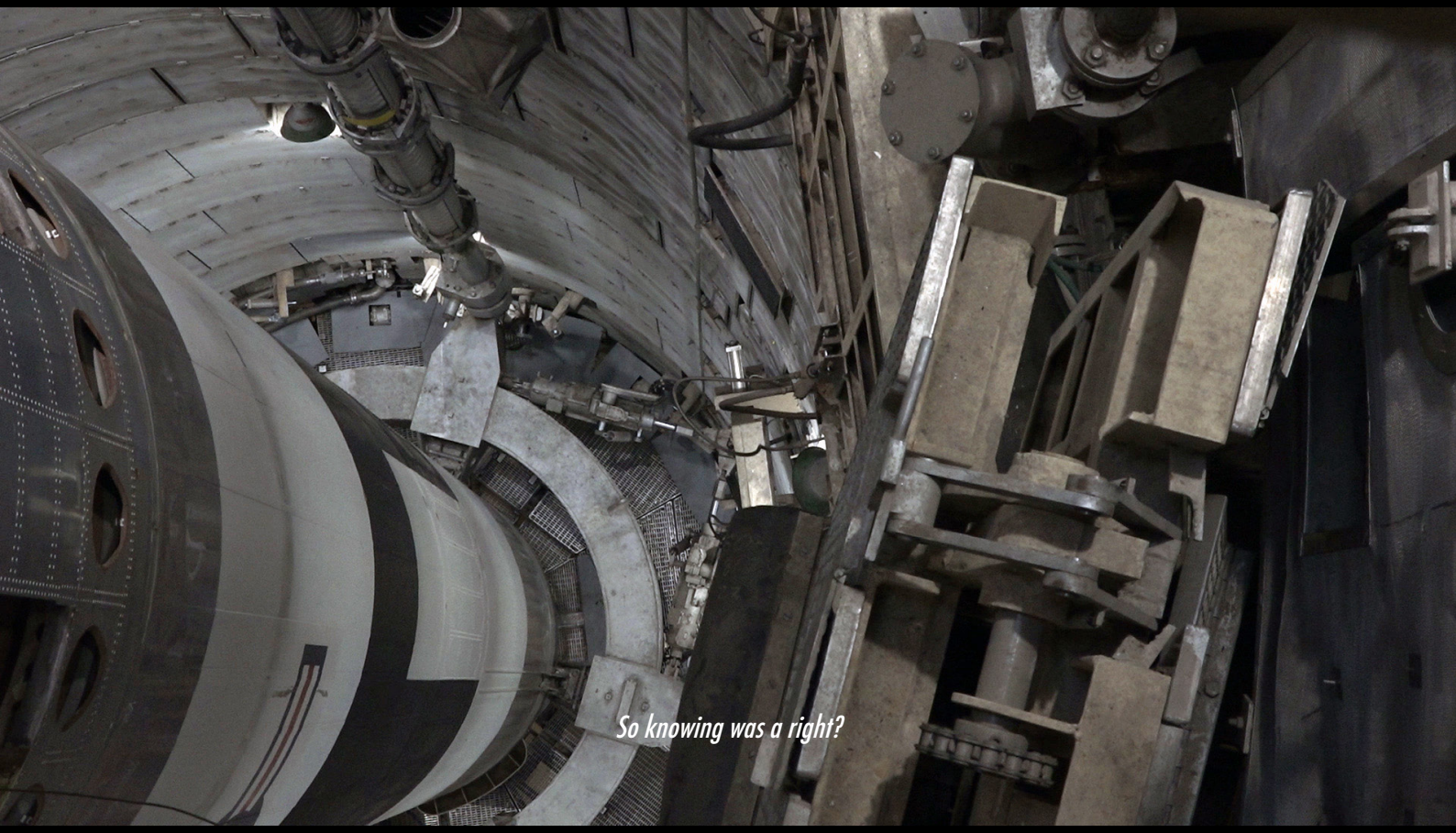


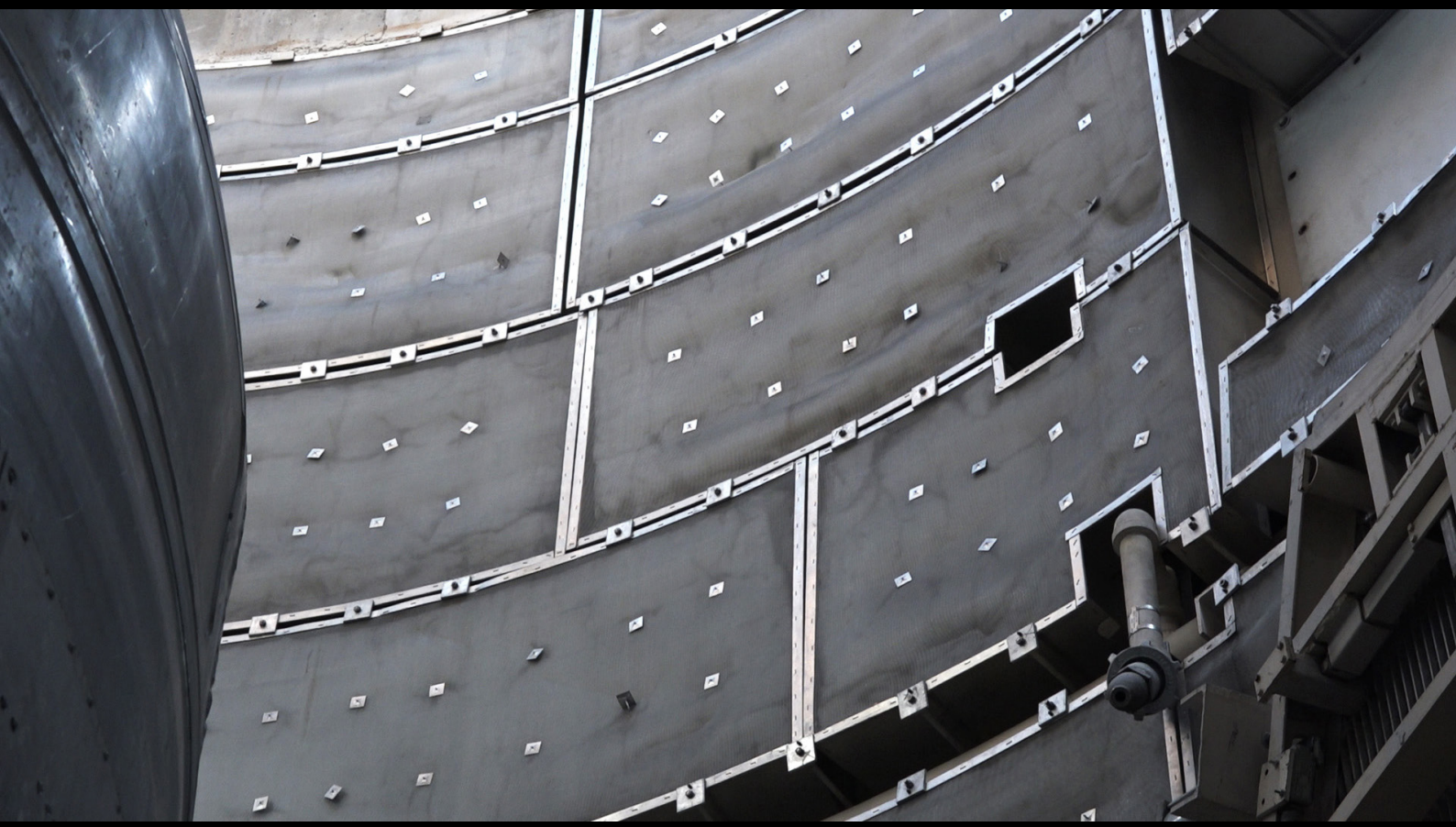
We were blown away by the things you told us. We told you that and then laughed and apologised for our choice of words. We were all lauging and then you asked:

1:05:51 If I could get a copy of this recording; it's some of my best work... everytime I do one of these interviews... there's always one new question that you're thinking about in the moment in the sense of 'I never thought about that before' ... So I always like to revisit what concepts were important to people, and what I said... I never want to give people the impression that I'm cavalier about what I did.

You were not how we imagined you to be.


They didn't necessarily have the clearances I did, meaning they didn't have rights to know. I had to keep a lot inside.


So knowing was a right?



What kind of structure should a film like this have?

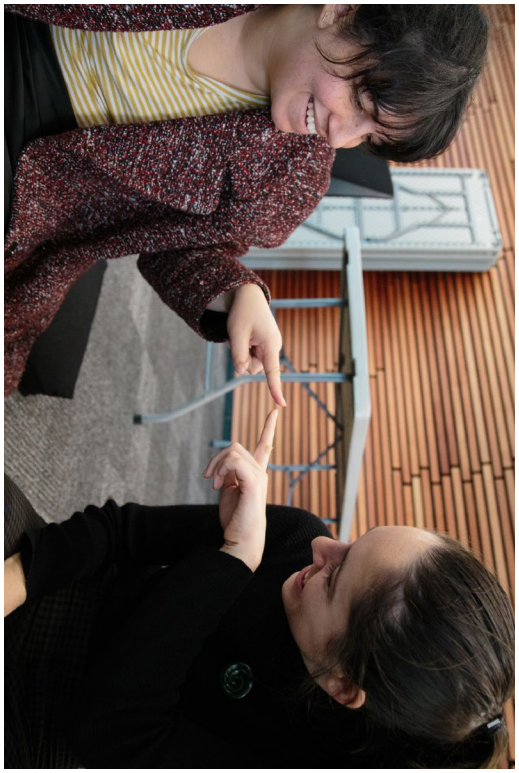
This structure needs to listen, as much as it sees.
It needs to blend with the same kinds of invisibility that these closed material structures embodied.

Q: What happens to images after they are born?

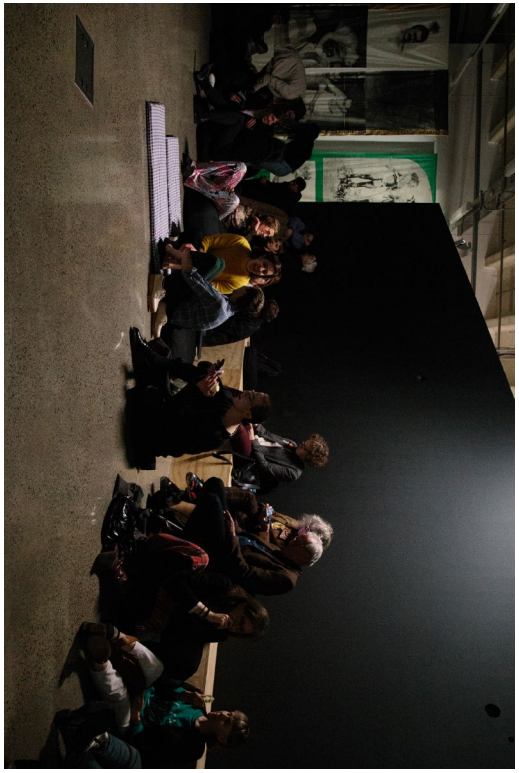
A: They live together with us, helping us listen to *what could have been.*

> *("Because the reader has room to realise that the future may be different from the present, it is also possible for her to entertain such profoundly painful, profoundly relieving, ethically crucial possibilities as that the past, in turn, could have happened differently from the way it actually did" [Sedgwick 2003, 146]).*

Saturday 5 October



Photos: Emily Parr



Photos: Emily Parr

Biographies

Fiona Amundsen's practice explores how documentary photographic and filmic images can enable a connected, active and caring relationship to the ramifications of painful historical experiences that live on in the present. She is interested in establishing relationships between specific historical events, the social responsibility of witnessing, and the ethics of documentary photographic and filmic practices.

Mohan J. Dutta is Dean's Chair Professor of Communication, Massey University. He is the Director of the Center for Culture-Centered Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE), developing culturally-centered, community-based projects of social change, advocacy, and activism that articulate health as a human right. Mohan J. Dutta's research examines the role of advocacy and activism in challenging marginalizing structures, the relationship between poverty and health, political economy of global health policies, the mobilization of cultural tropes for the justification of neo-colonial health development projects, and the ways in which participatory culture-centered processes and strategies of radical democracy serve as axes of global social change.

The Otolith Group was founded by social anthropologist Anjalika Sagar and theorist and author Kodwo Eshun in London in 2002. Further to their production of essay-like films, the group's creative practice is predominantly informed by an interdisciplinary approach. This includes curating exhibitions, releasing publications, developing public programmes and presenting workshops. The Otolith Group's objective is to use their artistic work to create a public platform for discussion on contemporary art and to generate a critical research area between theory, practice and exhibition.

Te Kawehau Hoskins (Ngāti Hau, Ngāpuhi) is Head of Te Puna Wānanga, School of Māori and Indigenous Education and Te Tumu at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, the University of Auckland. Te Kawehau's research centres Māori and Indigenous philosophy and political philosophy, and the politics of the Treaty, and settler-indigenous relations in Aotearoa New Zealand. Linking research and practice, Te Kawehau has led Treaty based co-governance developments in Auckland schools over many years.

Alison Jones is a professor in Te Puna Wānanga, School of Māori and Indigenous Education at the University of Auckland. As a Pākehā researcher, she is interested in Māori-Pākehā relations, both in the pre-Treaty period and in the last few decades of the 20th century. Her most recent books are *Tuai: A Traveller in Two Worlds* (with Kuni Kaa Jenkins) and *Critical Conversations in Kaupapa Māori* (with Te Kawehau Hoskins). She was born in Auckland, and has two adult sons.

Lucy-Mary Mulholland works in the field of regenerative development as a core collaborator with Caroline Robinson in Cabal, in the role of pattern tracker / researcher, designer, and regenerative re-source / developmental facilitator. Also working alongside Pennie Chang, Ursula Griffen, Kathryn Tulloch, Fraser Bruce, Steph Batts, Sadra Saffari, and learning from Bill Reed, Ben Haggard and Pamela Mang. Lucy-Mary was an arts therapist before training as a regenerative practitioner with the Regenesis Institute. Her psychology background and therapy training allows her to research and recognise patterns, to look deeply into the complexity of living processes, and create workshop environments that nurture meaningful discovery and collective understanding.
Born in Auckland, raised in the UK (Stroud) and rural North Canterbury (Cust and Rangiora). Ancestral connections to Newcastle and the West Midlands of the UK, county Cork in Ireland, plus a hint of Swedish.

Pallavi Paul is a film researcher and video artist based in New Delhi. A graduate of AJK MCRC, New Delhi she is currently a PhD student at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU. Her M.Phil. thesis titled *The Trouble of Testimony* looked at the independent political documentary in Post Emergency India with a special emphasis on the use of video technology.

Balamohan Shingade is studying Philosophy at the University of Auckland and working as a Researcher at CARE, Massey University. From 2017–20, Balamohan was the Assistant Director of ST PAUL St Gallery, Auckland University of Technology. During the redevelopment of Uxbridge Arts and Culture, he was the inaugural Manager/Curator of Malcolm Smith Gallery, a new gallery for East Auckland, 2015–16. He is a Masters graduate of Elam School of Fine Arts, the University of Auckland, where he was formerly employed as a Teaching Fellow, 2013–15

Taarati Taiaroa (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Ngāti Apa, Te Āti Awa) is an independent cultural worker with over eight years experience in devising and delivering arts education, exhibitions, public programmes and community workshops. Her past research and projects have explored the structures and values of artist-initiated, community based and collaborative practice. A graduate of the University of Auckland, she holds Masters degrees in both Fine Arts and Museums and Cultural Heritage.

Programme

Waiata and Programme

Purea Nei

Purea nei e te hau
Horoia e te ua
Whitiwhitia e te ra
Mahea ake nga poraruraru
Makere ana nga here.

E rere wairua, e rere
Ki nga ao o te rangi
Whitiwhitia e te ra
Mahea ake nga poraruraru
Makere ana nga here,
Makere ana nga here.

Thursday 3 October 2019
ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT

17:00	Arrival and registration
17:30	Welcome
17:40	Balamohan Shingade and Taarati Taiaroa *Convenors Introduction*
18:00	Dinner at ST PAUL St Gallery
18:45	The Otolith Group, *O Horizon*, 2018
20:30	End

Programme

Friday 4 October 2019
Te Irirangi (WG308), AUT

10:00	*Convenors Introduction*
10:05	Te Kawehau Hoskins and Alison Jones, *Māori and Pākehā in conversation about relationships*
11:15	Coffee Break
11:30	Regenerative Development with Lucy-Mary Mulholland, *Working with Wholes*
13:00	Lunch at ST PAUL St Gallery
14:00	Mohan J. Dutta, *Organizing community and infrastructures for listening: Toward socialist futures*
17:00	End

Saturday 5 October 2019
Te Irirangi (WG308), AUT

10:00	*Convenors Introduction*
10:05	Regenerative Development with Lucy-Mary Mulholland, *Reciprocity*
11:15	Coffee Break
11:30	Pallavi Paul and Fiona Amundsen, *Audio Dispatches—Meeting Each Other*
12:50	Lunch at ST PAUL St Gallery
13:30	Regenerative Development with Lucy-Mary Mulholland, *Emergence*
14:45	*Closing*
15:00	End
15:30	Optional: Conversations continued at Mezze Bar, 9 Durham Street East

ST PAUL ST

AUT
TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Convenors

Balamohan Shingade and Taarati Taiaroa

Contributors

The Otolith Group
Te Kawehau Hoskins and Alison Jones
Lucy-Mary Mulholland
Mohan J. Dutta
Pallavi Paul and Fiona Amundsen

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with Balamohan Shingade

ST PAUL St Gallery are:

Charlotte Huddleston
Kaiurungi / Gallery Director

Cameron Ah-Loo Matamua
Kaituki / Curator

Kahurangiariki Smith
Kaiwhakaniko / Curatorial Assistant

Eddie Clemens
Kaiwhakairo / Gallery Technician

Ngā mihi nui

Jaishree and Balachander Shingade, all the contributors, Maia Abraham, Ngahuia Harrison, Nisha Madhan, Erena Shingade, Elise Sterback, Emily Parr, and our volunteers Arielle Walker, Lindsey de Roos, Rosa Turley, Yana Nafysa, Bareeka Vrede

The Gallery is dedicated to the development of contemporary art and design through a curated programme of exhibitions, events, symposia and publications focused both locally and internationally. ST PAUL St Gallery embraces one of the primary instructions for universities in the New Zealand Education Act (1989), that they "accept a role as critic and conscience of society." Through our programmes we also interrogate the proposition that the arts have a particular capacity to speak critically about society.

Established in 2004, ST PAUL St is the Gallery for Auckland University of Technology and sits within the Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies. There are three gallery spaces on the City Campus: made up of a suite of purpose-built galleries physically located within the School of Art and Design WM building on St Paul Street, and a project space in AUT's oldest WB building, located on Wellesley Street East.