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ENDO-EXO

The Oppressive Violence and Perverse
Reclamation within Sadomasochism,
Invertebrates, and Cyborgs.

An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the postgraduate degree of

Master of Fine Arts
at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand.

Gabriella (Gabs) Hughes
2026

Fig. 1. *Void: #1*, white ballpoint and red paint pen on black inked paper, personal photograph by author, 7 April 2025

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A Note on minorities and queer:

In this exegesis, I will to speak towards the historical and ongoing effect of prejudice upon minorities of particular groups, primarily women (or assigned female at birth), queer (queer being the reclaimed word representing all people under the LGBT+ label), neurodivergent/chronically ill individuals, as well as tangata whenua (the indigenous people of Aotearoa, New Zealand). I will acknowledge that more groups of oppressed people may fall within the context of this exegesis, whose struggles may not be mentioned in depth as they should be. My artistic practice focuses on my personal experience in a diaristic manner. I do not intend to discuss realities outside my own experience and wish to leave space for others to speak on their own terms.

Abstract:

My MFA project, entitled *Endo-Exo*, examines how Western institutions have continuously imposed oppressive values onto minorities in various ways, and proposes, within a fine art context, how we can manipulate and reclaim them. By exploring different contexts of bigotry that have long been part of mainstream culture, I connect to my own experiences and position as part of a multifaceted minority, to highlight how personal traumas can arise from the ongoing systemic issues perpetuated by Western media. By using references from popular culture, I aim to expose aspects of the subtextual and illicit propagandising and acts of violent bigotry that continue to plague our everyday lives. By drawing upon imaginative symbolism, punk subculture, and relevant examples drawn from academic theory, I

will analyse how these topics can be deconstructed and recontextualised through a marginalised lens to foster empowerment. Additionally, I will reflect upon artists of similar creative fields, those who identify as women, queer (sexually and gender-diverse), neurodivergent, and/or the chronically ill.

As an interdisciplinary artist, I incorporate sculpture, drawing, photography, and installation within my work. My practice involves ongoing creation, aspiring to reach a place where feelings are processed and internalised hatred is not regarded as personal fault but as a recognised consequence of suppression, even within the context of a relatively isolated country like Aotearoa, New Zealand (as I equally identify as both tangata whenua and tangata tiriti). At the conclusion of this exegesis, I urge you, reader, to acknowledge the space minorities need to thrive within contemporary art practice, as well as to recognise the continued importance of anti-authoritarian positions in the arts—specifically in light of the current rise of fascism and its impact on the Globalised political environment.

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Introduction:

In a system historically constructed for and by cisgender white men, it is not surprising that minorities have always and do continue to live at the institution's will of social hierarchy. These issues are no different when in conversation with visual art, as many historical works have been opportunities for continuing oppression rather than emancipation, advancing problematic ideologies. Though you could argue that fine art produced by minorities is more widely accepted today, there is much more to do to fight for the space to breathe. However, this becomes increasingly difficult when such conservative ideas are used to power prejudice.

Currently, not only is Aotearoa, New Zealand, affected by the conservative joint control of National, Act, and NZ First, but the West, in general, is once again leaning towards far-right politics through its undemocratic approach to governance and its foundational capitalist ideologies—acts that breed fascism. Without a clear understanding of how systems of power like government enforce such ideas of control and abuse, contemporary societies cannot fully move forward or thrive, forever condemned to the continued cycle of violence and oppression. This notion is what I aim to expose and

challenge within the artistic language of my work, and to acknowledge how, like so many others, this suppression affects my own existence.

In my relatively short life, I have experienced how it is to be a marginalised individual (female sex, queer [sexuality and gender], neurodivergent, indigenous, and more recently chronically ill), as well as a victim of grooming and domestic/sexual abuse. It seems as long as I can remember, I have been sexualised for my body and demonised for my identity—wounds which have haunted me for years. I grew up in a conservative town where you cannot go one kilometre without bumping into a church, and the average MP is part of the National political party. It was hard being a young minority experiencing prejudice. Not only was I bullied for my individuality, but that ostracism followed me back into the home through my parents and siblings (which has luckily started to be acknowledged).

Creativity became an escape—a place where I could create new narratives and artworks about oppression and queerness—topics I explored throughout my bachelor's degree, which I completed last year. By the end of my undergraduate studies, I had begun to develop a distinct iconography that closely aligns with themes of identity, trauma, and popular culture.

As I engage with different media throughout my artistic journey, my practice has remained dedicated to representing my internal thoughts, interests, and opinions while exposing the inequality that exists in our everyday lives, and also in the media we consume. By critically investigating readings around alternative subculture, literature, and screen entertainment, I aim to create autobiographical imagery that fosters inner healing while also opening the possibility of validating or comforting others.

Within this exegesis, I discuss texts and artists that inspire my current art practice and previous work. I also describe how reclamation can be an effective tool for personal growth and ultimately push societal progress. These themes are organised into three chapters, each with subtopics, ultimately trying to unpack the use of Sadomasochism, Invertebrates, and Cyborgs within my art.

Firstly, in 'Sadomasochism: Bondage, Counterculture, and Institutionalised Violence', I will discuss how our collective culture pushes sexual violence towards minorities through the lens of sadomasochism. By analysing this culture of violence, I hope to unpack how queer artists use bondage to reclaim their sexual 'deviance.' Secondly,

in 'Bugs: Trauma, Femininity, and Confessional Art', I aim to provide insight into the historic symbolism of invertebrates, dating back to early Christianity—an institution of power that continually reinforces the patriarchy and colonisation. With this knowledge, I hope to show how these systems not only implement sexual violence but also open an opportunity for feminist and indigenous artists to explore how we may use this imagery to confess our pain with the system. Thirdly, in 'Robots & Cyborgs: Zeitgeists, Popular Culture, and the Fourth Reich', I plan to acknowledge my interests in science fiction and horror. Through this, I hope to expose how everyday media infuses subtextual propaganda that preserves stereotypes and teaches us that prejudice is okay. In addition, I hope to demonstrate how cyborgs or robotic enhancement can be used not only as iconography to highlight a neurodivergent experience, but also as an example of how popular culture can be pro-fascist and advance the use of generative A.I.

Sadomasochism - Bondage, Counterculture, and Queer Identity

Although pornographic material originates from ancient Greece, sadomasochistic varieties have only infiltrated the mainstream in the past three hundred years (Pollard 5). Used to describe two corresponding kinks, sadomasochism aims to envelop the deriving pleasures of either imposing (sadism) or receiving (masochism) pain (Smith 6).

While not entirely problematic in consensual practice, there is an air of oppression that lingers in its origins and in the encouragement of such behaviours in Western media, a position we can start to unpack through Tom Pollard's book, *Sadomasochism, Popular Culture, and Revolt*. As Pollard describes, this kind of enjoyment from torment builds a culture which "...nurtures violent pornography, which perpetuates stereotyped gender roles and valorises violence toward women, divisive racial relations, and child exploitation" (Pollard 3).

This use of sadomasochism has continued to appear more often within pornography and heterosexual-oriented media, repeatedly used to normalise gendered power imbalances and sexual violence, even with consent or not. Lusts which

reveal a framework of destructive bigotry that positions the oppressor as someone who enjoys suppressing the marginalised, compelling them to 'surrender to oppression' (Pollard, vii). This sentiment is confirmed by Marquis de Sade's (1740-1814) writings [as the creator of sadomasochistic literature]: "The only way to a woman's heart is along the path of torment... and... a man's ejaculation" (Pollard 6).

There have been many approaches to how these types of sexual activities have been acknowledged and challenged on a public stage. Two of these I wish to focus on are through counterculture (primarily, we will discuss this through the nature of the post-punk movement, specifically the No Wave movement) and the queer photography which followed in the 1970s, which highlight New York's underground BDSM (bondage, discipline, sadism, and masochism) scene.

Growing up with a 2-tone ska punk father, I am no stranger to the anarchic nature of countercultural sound and dress, making it a no-brainer that such symbolism would have a subsequent impact on my practice. The British Punk movement may be well-known by the general public, with the iconic use of the safety pin and the anti-monarchist rhetoric of Vivienne Westwood, Malcolm McLaren,

and the Sex Pistols; its American equivalent, is less acknowledged by historians and academics for its various subcategories—causing multiple bands and musicians to be reduced or entirely forgotten for their unique musical transformation of anti-institutional angst (Clavert, par. 1). While the world considered punk 'dead' at the end of the 1970s, the East Village of New York City was just beginning, ramping up their rage to the point of transgression in the No Wave movement.

Getting its title from a zine called *No, No Wave* aimed to reject its more commercial-friendly counterpart, that is, New Wave, becoming a more radical iteration of Punk (Machañ 33). Situating their beliefs in the city's abrasive liveability, artists across different fields of making immersed themselves in nihilism and transgressive ideology to navigate their day-to-day lives, becoming resilient symbols and uncommon guides in such a turbulent time. "People started to create music because they had no other choice. It was a sickness within themselves that they had to try to purge through music. The idea was not 'I want to do music because I can' but 'I have to do music, or I am going to go insane and hurt myself or somebody else'" (Lunch, 2004, as cited in Machañ 35).

Although it may seem like just another method of revolt (though of a greater extremity), the beauty of No Wave not only lies within its defiance of artistic boundaries but also its notable inclusivity with prominent female and queer voices (Ballet, par. 4). In particular, Lydia Lunch has been a significant contributor to No Wave, with notable works in music, film, photography, and poetry. As well as this, Lunch has been consistent in these transgressive acts of expression throughout her life, as seen within her more recent series *Fatal Beauty* (2000), which involves photographs of a model with significant self-harm wounds and pieces of writing that revolve around trauma and the afflictions of the human condition. In a time that heavily held prejudice towards minorities, female and/or queer artists similar to Lunch thrived in No Wave or adjacent scenes, which sought to escape stigma and contempt by the act of perceived 'extremes' (Callahan 5).



Fig. 2. Lydia Lunch, *When Words Fail*, 2000. © Lydia Lunch. Used by permission.

The body as experimental canvas
as blood bank
as punching bag
as carving board
as sack of pus and cum.

I am an endangered species
suicided by society
justifiably paranoid
rife with contradictions.

An open wound bled sensitive
by the corrosive indifference
of a world battered into numbness.
Ignorant in its inability to recognise
the magnetic force fields of a technology
which poisons the soul
creating a moral pollution,
a psychic vacuum, a spiritual void
overflowing with infectious toxic runoff.

The body as carrier. A cantankerous cavern
filled with fear and loathing. A prison riddled
with the cancer of being. Held captive by invisible forces
who cohabitate in conspiracy to abolish the individual.

While punk fashion adopted BDSM gear and a crass attitude as acts of rebellion against Western systems of power, artists like Robert Mapplethorpe, Tessa Boffin and Jimmy Desana utilised the height of anti-institutional symbolism, documenting and/or engaging with sadomasochism and bondage that encapsulated underground queer spaces of the latter 20th century (mainly in New York). Sadomasochistic imagery had long existed at this point through the use of snuff films and 'kinky' photography generally made by cis-het men and primarily depicting nudes of women. However, artworks that documented transgressive acts of queerness defied sexual and gender taboos—especially since intimate homosexual acts during this time were illegal or only just starting to be decriminalised, but overall frowned upon (which includes within Aotearoa, New Zealand) (Human Dignity Trust par. 58).

Images that I consider influential for my own practice include Mapplethorpe's 1978 photograph *Self-Portrait*, and DeSana's 1984 picture *Stitches*. One depicts the intimate act of Mapplethorpe penetrating himself with a bullwhip, and the other depicts DeSana's surgical wound after his spleen had ruptured (taken early on during his struggle with AIDS). When interacting with these two works back

Fig. 3. Lydia Lunch, *The Body as Experimental Canvas*, 2000. © Lydia Lunch. Used by permission.

in 2023, they opened my eyes (when in conversation with No Wave) to the possibilities of transgressive approaches to making and how sadomasochism can challenge conventional tastes as observed by the Mapplethorpe Obscenity Trial, which acted to punish museums for “...pandering to obscenity...” (Priceless par. 8).



Fig. 4. Robert Mapplethorpe, *Self Portrait*, 1978. © Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation. Used by permission.



Fig. 5.
Jimmy DeSana
Stitches, 1984
cibachrome print
18 3/4 x 12 5/8 ins. (47.6 x 32.1 cm)
Copyright Jimmy DeSana Trust
Courtesy of the Jimmy DeSana Trust and P·P·O·W, New York

Since the beginning of my conceptual work, there has always been an element of the sadomasochistic, as I have consistently drawn inspiration from my own pain and the human condition. In early representations this can be observed through conventions of slicing or tearing self-portraits apart, sewing or adding pieces of fabric to work to create a D.I.Y. (do-it-yourself) aesthetic, as well as covering artwork or models in fake blood or, more recently, working with the materiality of leather to sew together pieces that people can actually wear or can create the illusion of wearability.

These early works remain relevant to my current project in terms of how they consider colour and process. For example, my colour palette focussing on the monochromatic has carried through from my earliest self-portraits from 2022 (with the colour red coming later through my photographic series and videowork *Blood Party*) as well as the ongoing choice of using needlework to exemplify principles of adding and withholding whether that is manifested through trying to sew myself back together or by concealing the identity of figures within my 2023 series of paintings, *Modern Monstrosity*.



Fig. 6. *Untitled*, acrylic on canvas with yarn, personal photograph by author, c. 8 June 2022

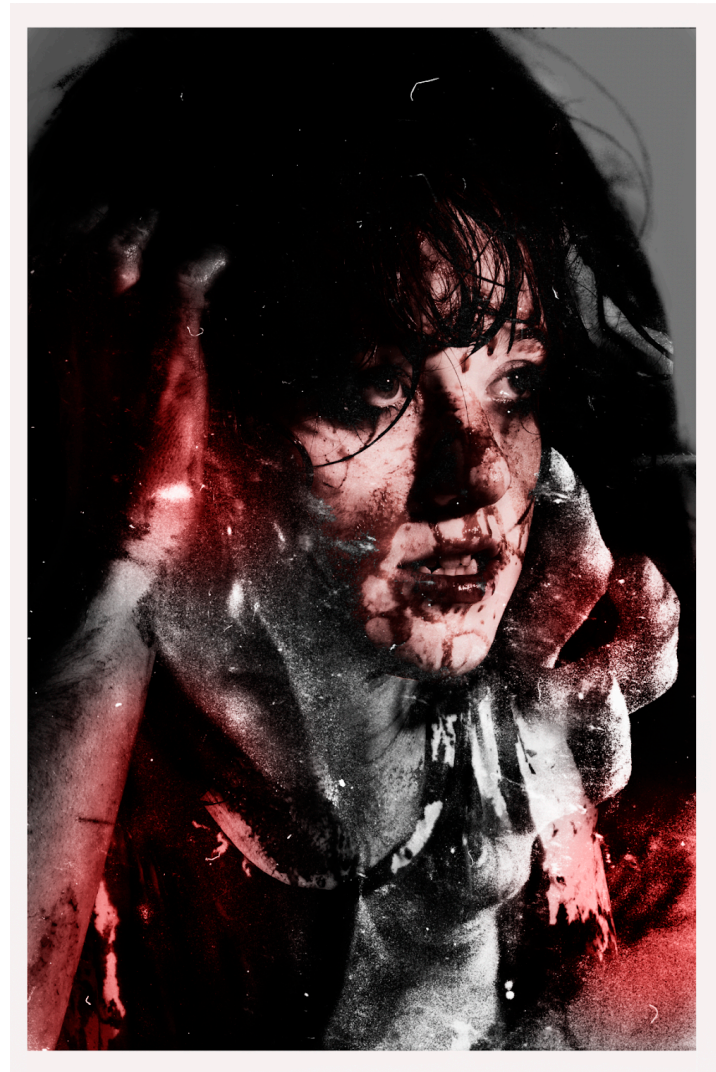


Fig. 7. *Blood Party: #1*, edited digital and film photographs, personal photograph by author, 9 June 2023



Fig. 8. *Blood Party: #2*, edited digital and film photographs, personal photograph by author, 9 June 2023



Fig. 9. *Blood Party: #3*, edited digital and film photographs, personal photograph by author, 9 June 2023



Fig. 10. *Blood Party: #4*, edited digital and film photographs, personal photograph by author, 9 June 2023



Fig. 11. *The Sodomasochist (Walter Freeman II)* (installation view), acrylic on canvas with custom gimp mask (faux leather) hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 20 October 2023



Fig. 12. *The Lobotomised* (installation view), acrylic on 2-layered canvas hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 20 October 2023

When making *Modern Monstrosity*, my approach was to tap into the same political landscape which Mapplethorpe and Desana aimed to expose, but through the lens of historical mental health treatment. By focusing specifically on the horrors of the transorbital lobotomy, my goal was to position its creator, Walter Freeman II, as a sadomasochist, narrowing his lack of expertise in neurosurgery to a sadistic urge to control those who are vulnerable. To rectify the damage he caused, I decided to humiliate his memory, sewing a gimp mask directly onto his portrait [as seen in *The Sadomasochist (Walter Freeman II)*], depicting him in a masochist role as the predator he was. As the picture faces the other two paintings (*The Patient* and *The Lobotomised*), Freeman, as well as the audience, is faced with the brutality and vast pool of victims who were affected by such evil, with the painting lacking a recognisable identity in gender, race, and age. This series not only tried to acknowledge those in America which consisted of patients that were 60% female and 40% homosexual male (Johnson, 50; Kaye, par. 14); but also the women of colour (WOC) that Walter Freeman II believed were the best candidates because of their perceived "... greater family solidarity..." (El-Hai, par. 3).

This skewed thinking means that non-white racial groups including tangata whenua with mental illness, would have more-likely become severely disabled via Freeman's wish. In Aotearoa, New Zealand 65 lobotomies were conducted in Dunedin between 1944 and 1950 (Our Health Journeys par. 3). In addition to this, *Modern Monstrosity* was my first installation which included metal chains as a material, reminiscent of those used for restraint, leashing or suspension; which I have continued to manifest within my art practice as I relate it to the manipulated submission that toxic-masculine sexuality thrives on in terms of the Culture of Violence.

I hope to expose damaging social ideals and to present marginalised identities as not broken by any personal fault, but by societal pressures; an aspect which follows through to my current project. Like many artists before me, I strive to subvert instances of intolerance toward minorities and provoke empowerment by 'dominating' the artistic space not only by exploring sadomasochistic energies but also by situating myself as non-binary, lesbian, and an indigenous queer individual (taktāpui).

I will admit I was not always proud to be queer to the point that I wished to God that I was not, since I was

the first of my year to come out in high school at age 13. Not only did I get bullied relentlessly with slurs and harassment to the point it reached outside of school grounds, but my older brother was egged on continuously to join in by his 18-year-old friends. Even my mother believed popular culture influenced me to the point that it gave me intense anxiety when engaging with queer media until I was in my second year of university.

Today, I still feel the repercussions of the words uttered to me in my adolescence, which include being called 'kinky' towards my 'unusual' behaviours. I wonder now if this is part of the reason that I wish to give myself and others a space to feel represented and empowered in my art as I never felt like I was—as well as feel like my work is me presenting my erotic anarchy for the world to see—generating conversations which basically convey, "I am a deviant, so what?," which I believe is incredibly powerful for responding not just to queer oppression but also for individuals who have been affected by sexual violence and blamed for their pain (as BDSM has been seen as helpful for victims to regain control from trauma)(Callahan 5).

As queer rights and identity remain at the forefront of public debate, there are important aspects of

queerness that, as a queer female, I feel I have a duty to acknowledge and speak to. With masculine-orientated queerness being at the forefront of fine art while feminine-orientated queerness is sexualised continuously within porn, lesbianism is often inexplicably devalued; either considered something you can choose to be to escape the patriarchy or an identity which is reductive simply because it excludes men. This misrepresentation and lack of knowledge around lesbian sexuality is notably used by artist Tessa Boffin as seen in her series *Angelic Rebels: Lesbians and Safer Sex* (1989), which depicts two 'women' (I am assuming, as gender non-conformity is historically substantial within the sapphic community) engaging intimately in leather gear.



Fig. 13.

Untitled no. 5, 1989, Tessa Boffin. Tate, Britain.

Presented by Sunil Gupta 2024 © Courtesy the Estate of Tessa Boffin and the Gupta+Singh Archive. Photo: Tate

As for its impact on my artistic practice, No Wave's ideology is comforting, as it allows art to purge bad feelings from my psyche with its radical aesthetics and other relevant histories that I believe are significant. No Wave actively overturns colonial narratives, conservative Christian ideals and stereotypes (predominantly pertaining to purity and the taboo), which are common symbols used as a means for control, particularly towards those who are women (or non-binary individuals of the female sex).

Bugs: Trauma, Femininity, and Confessional Art

The development of invertebrates, or bugs, as imagery in my work dates back to 2022, my good friends like to refer to these works as 'the infamous genital sculptures.' Presented as a dead spider in the shape of a penis ejaculating silk and a carnivorous vulva that you could touch internally, these works aimed to enact an abject representation of the patriarchal control that female-bodied people (women and gender-nonconforming people, respectively) experience at the hands of male-dominated society. I wanted to kill the evil and enable the vulva to win the fight against the consequences of institutional powers—entitlement and violence. Although these initial engagements with such symbols were more absurdist than intended, these pieces were my first introduction to using bugs to address personal traumas in a critical, conceptual space and to question institutional assumptions about womanhood.



Fig. 14. *Penis Spider (installation view)*, acrylic on air dry clay with bamboo, cotton, and plastic brush bristles, personal photograph by author, c. 21 October 2022



Fig. 15. *Vulva Monster (installation view)*, acrylic on air dry clay with bamboo, cotton, and plastic brush bristles, personal photograph by author, c. 21 October 2022



Fig. 16. *Vulva Monster (installation view)*, acrylic on air dry clay with bamboo, cotton, and plastic brush bristles personal photograph by author, c. 21 October 2022

Bugs (a term I use to encompass all subspecies of insects, arachnids, and myriapods), though lesser known than other animal symbols, have long played a role in Western visual traditions that continue to influence modern European life (Kritsky and Cherry 6). From Christians historically comparing themselves to bees (considered significant by their talent for honey), to 'harmful' creatures being the bringers of consequential plague and death (the ten plagues of Egypt in the Bible), the classification of invertebrates is sorted by 'superior' or 'inferior', connecting them inherently to Christian beliefs of virtue and the taboo (Fjodorovs 11). Ideas which have clung to Western political powers through racial and class supremacy; "...asserting the moral superiority of [the] Anglo-Saxon race and purity of its women" (Johnson 10).

With bugs being inherently connected to Christian teachings like modesty, sexual abstinence and patriarchal gender roles, invertebrates present a stance to which any use of such imagery in Western media can promote a problematic stance. A space in which lust is sinful, whiteness is absolute power, and men should control A.F.A.B. (assigned female at birth) individuals. Propaganda that fundamentally allows abuse to run rampant and manipulates the powerless to tolerate patriarchal violence (Wolfe 90)—acts which promote the unadulterated levels of

trauma which have riddled generation after generation.

In the article “Trauma Sex: A Queercrip Erotic”, J. Logan Smilges establishes an extended reading of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) by opening the door to an individual’s own experiences. By valuing personalised truths, Smilges brings to our attention how each individual’s bodily senses are just as valid or more so than academic analysis—allowing us to consider how trauma may “swim through our bodies” (Smilges par. 6). This advocacy from Smilges for bodily memory to be held alongside ‘traditionally’ valued knowledge systems is important for traumatised voices. As such, this activation gives voice to those who are often ignored, offers a path to breaking destructive cycles of trauma, and introduces opportunities for healing.

Valuing the body as a primary source of information is essential to my artistic making, not only because it provides a means to explain my process of materialising my pain into a consistent creative flow. But it also introduces an anti-institutional viewpoint that allows a critique of received notions and standardised treatment, which may not fit every single traumatic experience, including my own. Trauma has been an ongoing battle which has

affected my psyche throughout my entire life, affecting not only myself but also various social connections.

Whether or not I feel I am a woman or not, oppressive viewpoints will always follow and affect my existence and ultimately cause harm in some way or another, from the pressure to obey beauty standards to be skinny and overtly ‘faultlessly’ feminine, to the ongoing contradictory issues of being vilified for lust while at the same time being fetishised for my body. These patriarchal beliefs are another way mainstream, Western colonialist societies endorse sexual violence and harmful ideologies around gender and sexuality, making it critical for discussion regarding the dismantlement of such issues, and thus the reclamation of power from the oppressor. Corresponding artists, including Louise Bourgeois and Tracey Emin, have inspired many younger female artists to delve into the genre of confessional art.

Caitlin Coor writes in *Personal Sexual Narratives in the Work of Louise Bourgeois and Tracy Emin*, of Bourgeois’s methodology of creation, presenting intimate traumas of familial betrayal, emotional absence, and parental loss into ambiguous symbols, for public inspection (25). Specifically, Bourgeois

references the spider (*Spider* [1994], *Maman* [1999], *Crouching Spider* [2003], etc.) as a symbol of her mother as a nurturing spirit, an industrious weaver, and a ferocious force, all of which are shaped by her own pain.

Fig. 17. Louise Bourgeois, *Spider*, 1994.

<https://thewickculture.com/dream-louise-bourgeois/>

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Fig. 18. Louise Bourgeois, *Maman*, 1999.

<https://www.guggenheim.org/artwork/10856>.

Fig. 19. Louise Bourgeois, *Crouching Spider*, 2003.

<https://publicdelivery.org/louise-bourgeois-spider-maman/>.

Unapologetic in her approach, Bourgeois was one of the first, in a contemporary context, to profess deep trauma in a way that tested artistic boundaries to enter a state of catharsis. Later, a collaborator (with the series *Do Not Abandon Me* [2009-2010]), mentor, and continued inspiration to Tracey Emin, Bourgeois's revitalisations of the confession continue to resonate with younger artists like me, even fifteen years after her death. Her example forms an integral foundation for my practice, as brutal

memories can influence and shape streams of creativity (Coor 25). From being groomed at eleven by an older peer in school, to further emotional and sexual abuse experienced in adulthood, conceptual art is a lifeline where I can converse about my traumatised condition while never having to say a word. While Western Society continues to blame victims of abuse, it refuses to support those suffering with their mental health properly. My art practice is my method of empowering myself and avoiding my previous coping strategies of drug use and self-harm—truths which force me to consider how I may continue to represent my marginalised reality and give my community a voice.

Fig. 20. Louise Bourgeois and Tracey Emin, *Just Hanging*, 2009.

<https://www.hauserwirth.com/hauser-wirth-exhibitions/3666-louise-bourgeois-tracey-emin-do-not-abandon-me/?lightbox=just-hanging#>.

Bio-Warfare (2024), is an illustrative series which helped inspire my sculpture *Endo-Exo*—deriving itself from my ongoing, lifelong battles with trauma, which relate to the differing dynamics within my family. Since the majority of my childhood trauma

stemmed from my mother's aggression and father's sheepishness, it is only fitting (as in the case of Bourgeois's works) to depict the negative attributes of bugs.

Three large inkjet prints hang from the wall, arranged in a configuration of 2mm black chain. Hung in the dark with a spotlight, the organic drawings are presented in a line: a spider, an insect, and a centipede. Hand-drawn and monochromatic, the imagery includes angular panels, vents, and pipes. *Bio-Warfare* raises questions about what bugs may do for me, not only in terms of representing concepts and cultural knowledge, but also in creating perverse iconography that is unique and representative of internal suffering, and how this can be further developed through experimentation with written confessions.



Fig. 21. *Bio-Warfare: Spider*, white ballpoint and graphite on black paper, personal photograph by author, 5 November 2024

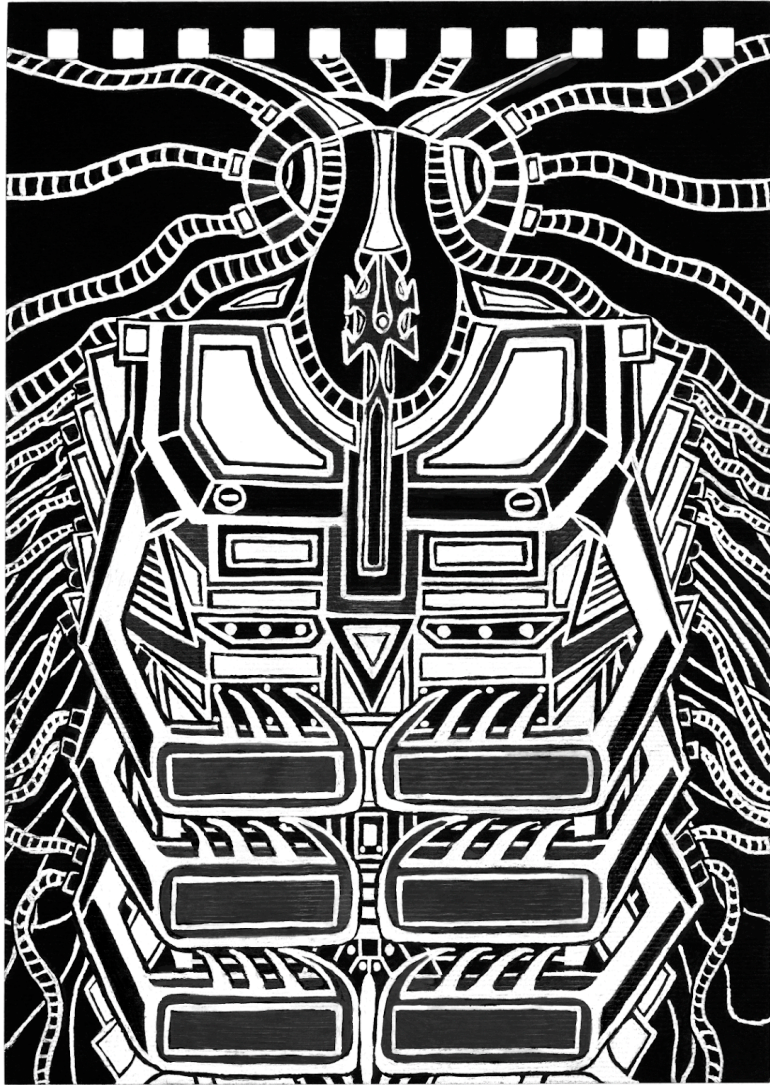


Fig. 22. *Bio-Warfare: Insect*, white ballpoint and graphite on black paper, personal photograph by author, 5 November 2024

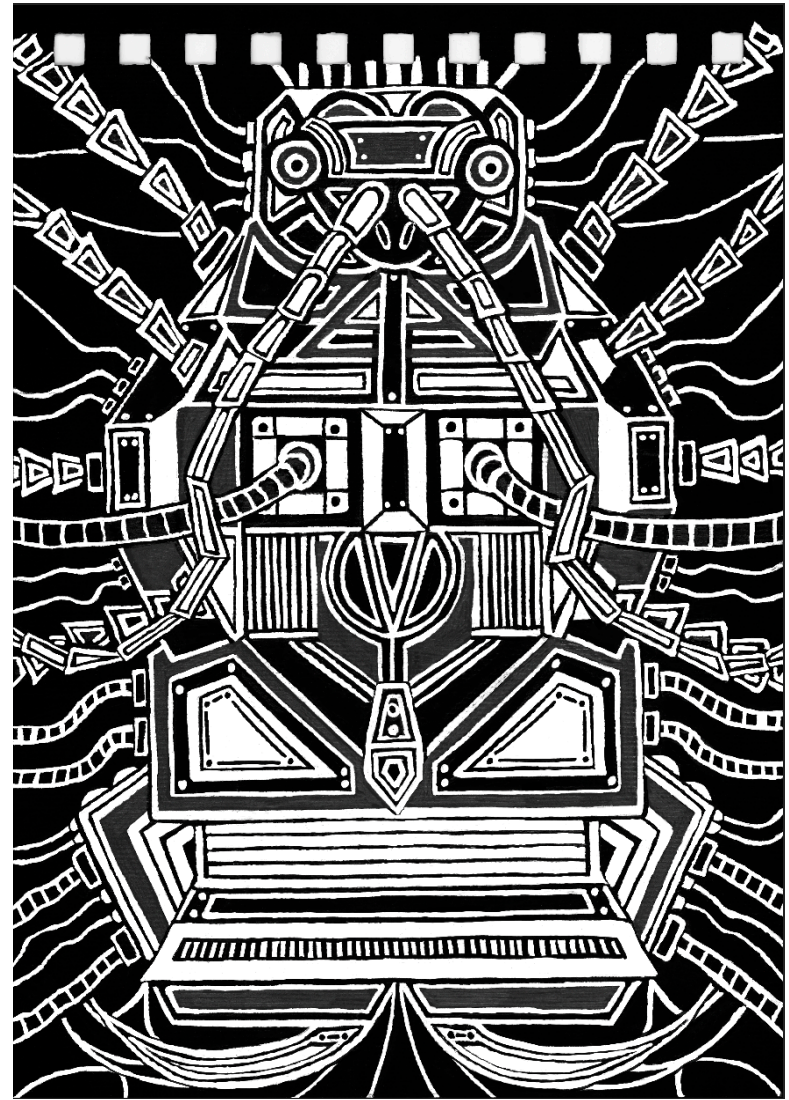


Fig. 23. *Bio-Warfare: Centipede*, white ballpoint and graphite on black paper, personal photograph by author, 5 November 2024



Fig. 24. *Bio-Warfare* (installation view), matte inkjets hung with 2mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 5 November 2024

A poem hangs from the ceiling on a black chain, suspended, drawn, and potentially about to be quartered into pieces due to a collection of photographs that seem like they could rip apart at any second. The words are written messily in a deep red that could be dried blood; the following words appear scratched into the surface of the images:

*FLESH ROTS AS I HANG,
TRAPPED AND TIED, PINCHED AND PULLED,
BINARY TERMINATES MY VOLATILE MIND,
A MONSTER CREATED TO SERVE,
CUTTING LINES TO THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE,
TRANSGRESSING AS I FUCK,
AFTER ALL THIS TIME...
I'M STUCK.*



Fig. 25. *Is This All That Can Befall a Being?* (installation view), darkroom prints glued onto canvas with chalk pastel hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 24 March 2025

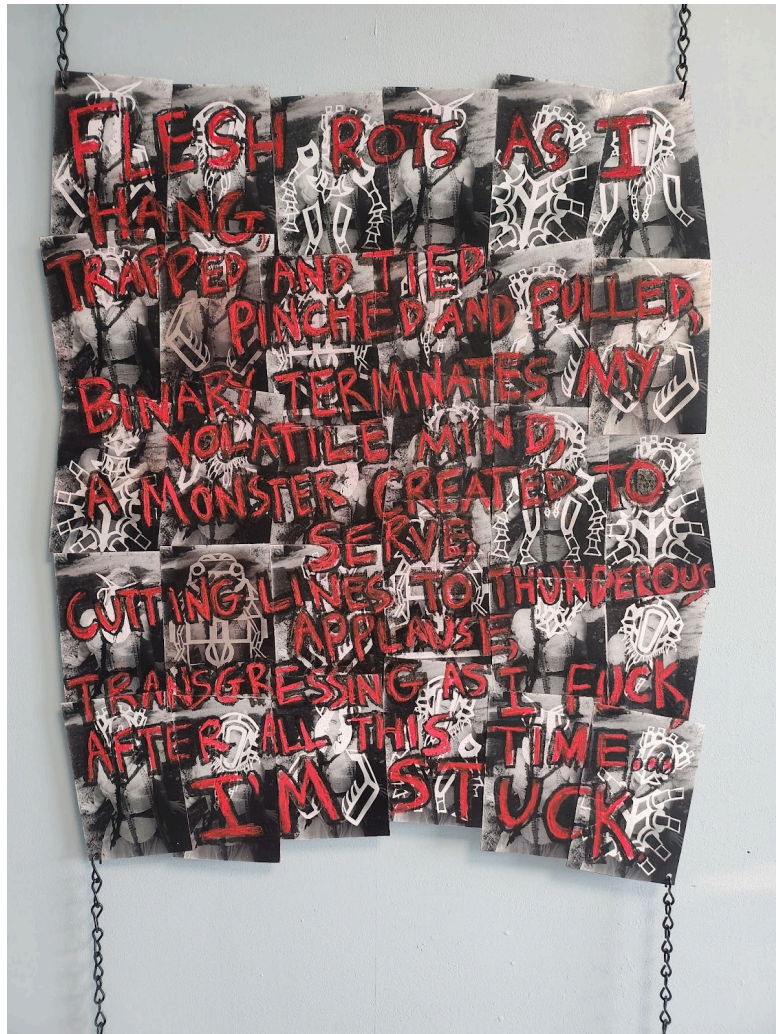


Fig. 26. *Is This All That Can Befall a Being?* (installation view), darkroom prints glued onto canvas with chalk pastel hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 24 March 2025

Reminiscent of Tracy Emin's paintings, such as *Exorcism of the Last Painting I Ever Made* (1996) and *I Followed You to the End* (2024), these intentionally rough and scratchy words act to symbolically demolish the many oppressive powers that aim to dictate how we should change our lives to follow anachronistic Eurocentric ideals. A conformity which, in the end, only favours white cis-het men and punishes anyone else who cannot come close.

Fig. 27. Tracy Emin, *Exorcism of the Last Painting I Ever Made*, 1996.

<https://www.faursschou.com/journal/tracey-emin-exorcism-of-the-last-painting-i-ever-made>.

Fig. 28. Tracy Emin, *I Followed You to the End*, 2024. <https://thewickculture.com/viewing-tracey-emin-i-followed-you-to-the-end/#:~:text=Dame%20Tracy%20Emin%20returns%20to%20White%20Cube,which%20she%20underwent%20major%20surgery%20in%202021>.

In Aotearoa, New Zealand, despite this nation being the first to give women the vote in 1893, wāhine (women who are tangata whenua), were not only ostracised by the patriarchy, but also for their

ethnicity which continues to be shown through the statistical data on of sexual/physical intimate partner violence (49%), sexual violence (43%), and increased attacks of online harm (data from Manatu Wāhine/Ministry for Women). This harm can obviously create substantial trauma for wāhine, whether from the disconnection of culture (which additionally features feminine deities that are incredibly powerful via women's sexualities) or the ongoing violence that colonisation has perpetuated for the last 175 years since the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Kern 1 & 2).

While my work may not use stylistic aspects commonly associated with Toi Māori, the colour palette and inspiration from the environment are my way of connecting to my heritage through Te Ao Māori. As I am not affected explicitly by racial bias in terms of my skin colour, I hold a privileged position to call attention to the unfairness wāhine Māori face without the fear of repercussion, and I believe it is only right as someone with European blood to hold space for those who will observe my work with different experiences. As trauma can affect anyone, in a multitude of ways, I believe it is vital to bring a nuanced approach to making, for these different communities I associate myself with will have

various types of intersectionality and differing opinions, even when it comes to religious faith.

I want to recognise that, while reconciliation with Christ requires forgiveness for sin, contemporary confessional art never asks for such grace. It's brutal, honest, and presents a space where oppressed people are not sinful or unworthy due to a matter of difference (whether that be female, a person of colour, queer, mentally ill or otherwise).

Unfortunately, this perpetuated hate is a form of control that I and many others have had to endure intergenerationally, generating ongoing damage to the point that no person, nor institution like the church and medical industry, can ever really adequately apologise. An oppressive negligence that pushes me further away from their grasp of idealised purity or perceived normalcy, to engage in theories that challenge these historical powers of knowledge—especially since these systems of power influence societal fears (zeitgeists) and align with conservative ideals that often fall into far-right extremism. A type of bigotry which connects with fascist ideation, a political system that wants to maintain social hierarchies, punish marginalised groups, and destroy contemporary art through the development of generative A.I.

Robots & Cyborgs – Zeitgeists, Popular Culture, and the Fourth Reich

"The fear of the unknown, the unstandard, the deviant — that with our deceptive forms and shapeshifting, we become creatures of the night that skulk around, plotting to rob men of their masculinity and patriarchal strengths are applied to us against our will, myth becoming monstrosity." (Queer Kentucky, par. 6).

Forever Tainted, a series of drawings I created in early 2024, was the first of my works to translate complex trauma into cybernetic language—marking the beginning of a heavy monochromatic process that manifests in all my subsequent illustrations. It all starts with a black page, Te Kore, the void or a state of chaos, which envelopes an "unlimited potential for being" (Royal par. 10). Next is the sketch, Te Pō or the long night, the period before the light breaks through on creation: Te Ao Mārama. This final stage involves the use of white ink (paint or ballpoint pen) and, potentially, the colour red (blood or otherwise). This approach aided me to feel more confident in my making and trust myself to experiment with materials and symbolic representation—lending itself to assist in creating not just *Bio-Warfare* but two structural installations called *Stuck* (inspired by

a drawing in the *Forever Tainted* series) and my graduation piece, from which this master's project also obtains its name.

Though you could argue this is not entirely connected to the cyborg, it is the 'chaos' of the human condition in which the robot and subsequent cyborg acts within. Not only reforming the organic 'potential' of self, but also bringing to 'light' our collective and internal conflicts, such as death, personal difference, and change. Fears which present through mass communication in the form of a zeitgeist.



Fig. 29. *Forever Tainted* (installation view), white ballpoint and graphite on black inked paper hung with 2mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 16 May 2024



Fig. 30. *Forever Tainted: #1* (installation view), white ballpoint and graphite on black inked paper hung with 2mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 16 May 2024

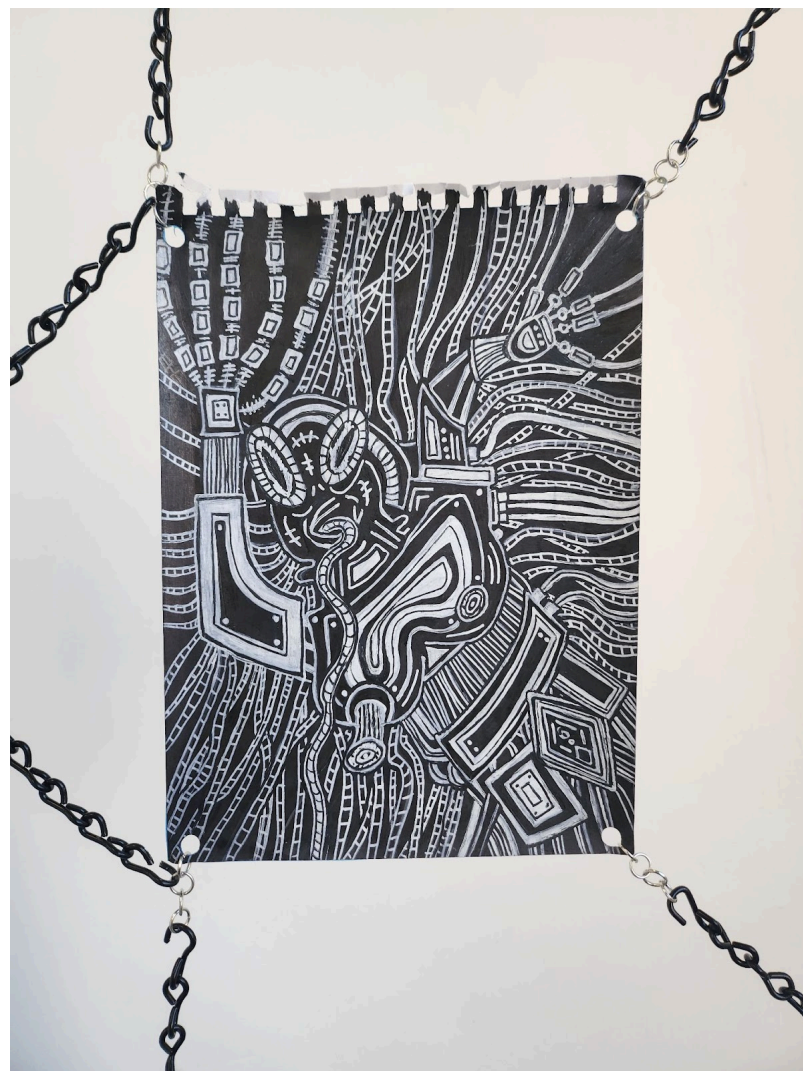


Fig. 31. *Forever Tainted: #3* (installation view), white ballpoint and graphite on black inked paper hung with 2mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 16 May 2024



Fig. 32. *Forever Tainted: #5* (installation view), white ballpoint and graphite on black inked paper hung with 2mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 16 May 2024

Mass communication or "the use of print or electronic media, such as newspapers, magazines, film, radio, [social media,] or television, to communicate to larger numbers of people located in various places" serves a variety of functions (O'Brien 1). Most significantly, it shapes collective belief around ever-evolving opinions or moods (zeitgeists). While not always bad, these era-defining zeitgeists push anxiety and dissociation through agoraphobic fear-mongering. An act of persuasion that assimilates the masses to Christian, colonial, and pro-capitalist positions—propaganda that continues to plague all types of genres, and since its creation has favoured discriminatory agendas.

By manipulating irrational beliefs that minorities are dangerous and threatening to perceived 'normal ways of life,' it is evident that mass media likes to push messages that reinforce the dissemination of stereotypes (Selvi par. 1) Though obviously destructive in nature, and yet another way marginalised groups are hit with oppressive violence, this aspect of media studies has always fascinated me since first learning about it in high school. And has since made me consider what messages are trying to brainwash me through the media I enjoy? Different genres come to mind when

considering this question, but only three bring value to my art practice: Gothic horror, science fiction, and body horror.

Doctor Who—a 60-year-old science-fiction show produced by the BBC that has always stayed close to its Gothic horror roots. First aired in 1963, the story of Doctor Who follows an eccentric humanoid alien called the Doctor, who can traverse space and time in a spaceship called the TARDIS (Time and Relative Dimension in Space) (Mackley 801). Using this time machine, J. S. Mackley notes in *Doctor Who: Identity, Time and Terror*, that the Doctor, through his adventures, meets a matter of companions while beating villains reminiscent of the 'Uncanny' and the Gothic—aspects that produce feelings of terror through horror narratives revolving around the loss of individuality (802).

One of these specific creatures, which has interested me since childhood and which Mackley recognises, is the recurring cyborg, the Cybermen (809).

Originating from a planet similar to Earth, the Cybermen are cybernetic humans who butcher themselves and others to remove presumed 'weaknesses,' such as feelings and emotions (Mackley 810). Commonly compared with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, The Cybermen are jigsawed

with robotic parts, and feared by humanity, a phenomenon psychologist Sigmund Freud described as "the uncanny feeling generated by sentience within automata" (Mackley 810). Despite this angle, these organic machines achieve more than just connecting to the fears of technological advancement. Another reading that emerges beyond standard viewings is the use of body horror to villainise marginalised bodies and the act of masking due to neurodivergence.

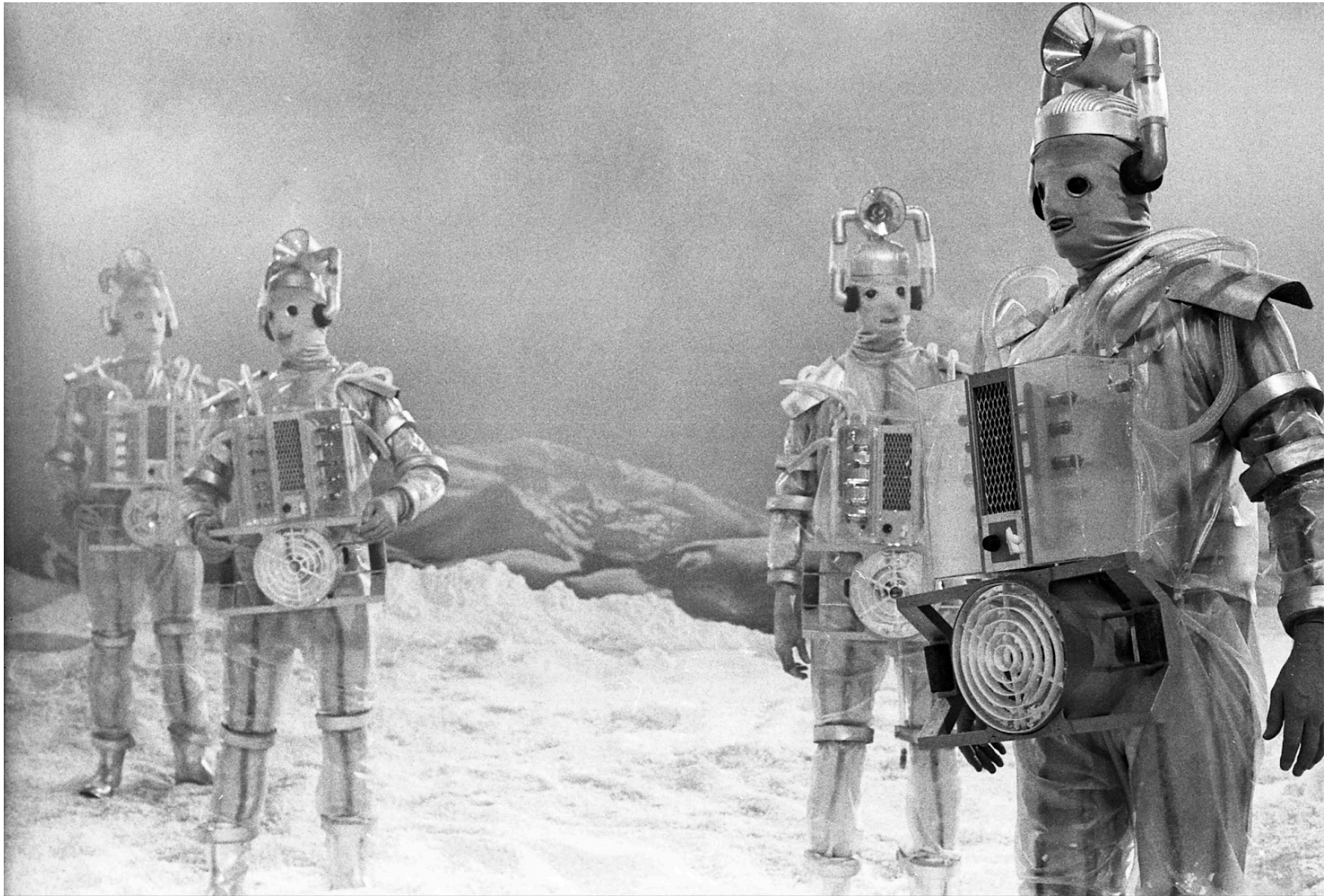


Fig. 33. *Dr Who : The Tenth Planet* (2D). 1966, #134974 © BBC Archive. Used by permission.

Within the narrative of Doctor Who, the Cybermen present a gruesome twist on utopian consciousness: cultural assimilation through the eradication of illness and age (Mackley 810)—perpetrated through horrific bodily acts to maintain a consistent way of being that also connects to historical zeitgeists in Western popular culture. As Xavier Aldana Reyes unpacks in *Gothic: Corporeal Transgression in Contemporary Literature and Horror Film*, Reyes exposes that minorities have inspired depictions of monstrosity since the emergence of Gothic literature, igniting zeitgeists that encourage bigoted ideas by portraying grotesque 'otherness'—punishing those for their deviance from Western 'ideals' of self, and this is no different with the Cybermen. (Reyes 52).

The Cybermen do not rely on binary systems, reproduce in humanistic ways, and more significantly wear masks that not only conceal their face physically but abstractly with the way they numb their emotions and use any means necessary to escape their true selves—an act that I associate with as the desire to conceal neurodivergent traits can be overwhelming in a society that tells you that you are 'built' wrong.

Though not the only representation of robots or cyborgs that align with these readings (as there are

hundreds of different interpretations of robots reflecting fears of technological advancement across various media and genres), the Cybermen are also significant because Doctor Who does act somewhat like a type of familial anchor within my family, and acts as neurodivergent special interest for myself as well as my brother. It is also remarkable because, as the longest-running science-fiction television show to date, it allows us to observe the evolution of societal fears through a consistent forum, to repurpose this imagery to present more inclusive storylines, and to expose the fascist ideologies, implicitly or explicitly, offered within our media.



Fig. 34. Rogers, Adrian. *Dr Who* : S2 : Ep6 *The Age of Steel*. 2005, #134198 © BBC Archive.
Used by permission.

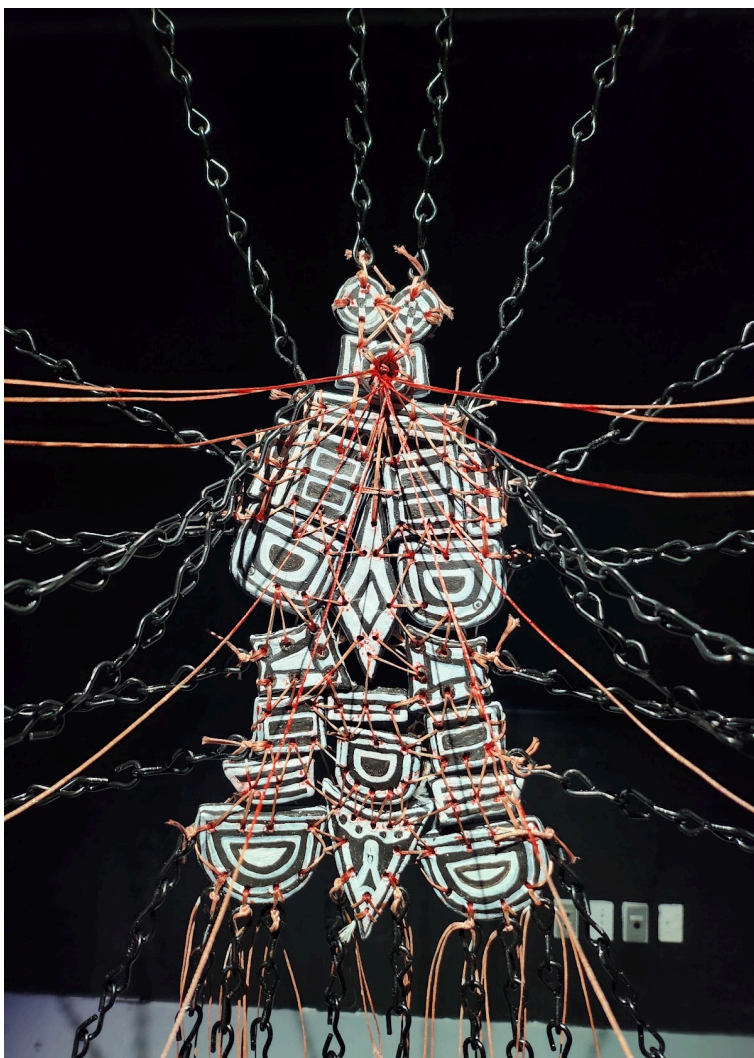


Fig. 35. *Stuck* (installation view), acrylic on air dry clay hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black) with white waxed thread and fake blood, personal photograph by author, 7 June 2024

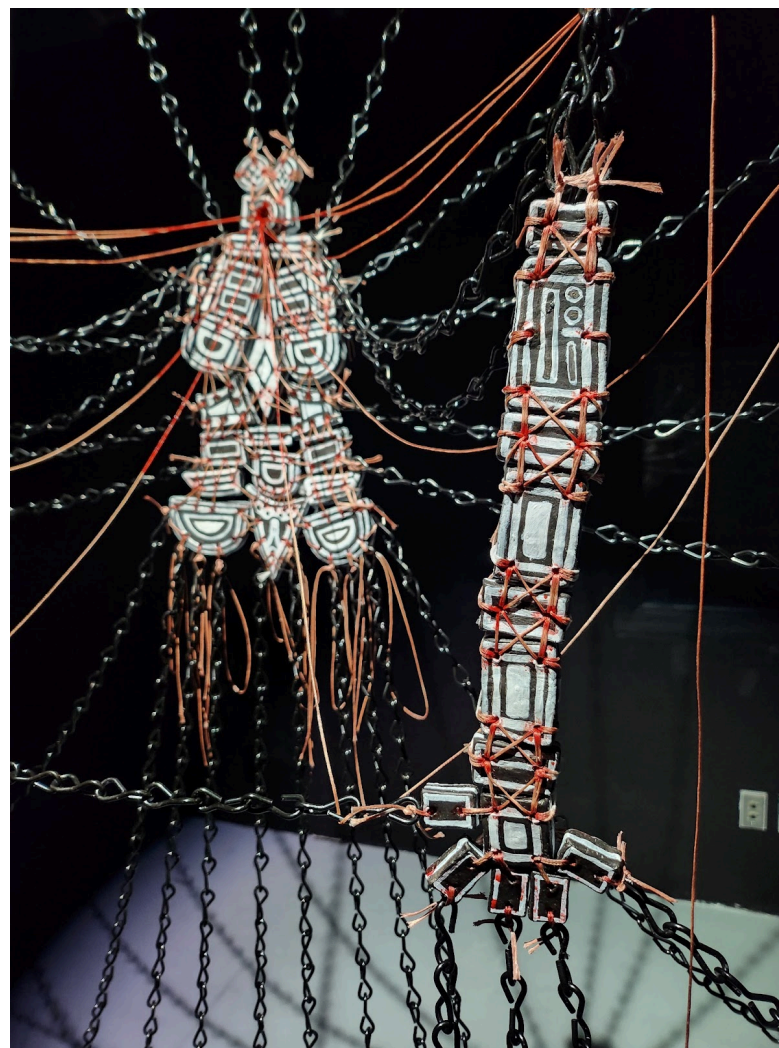


Fig. 36. *Stuck* (installation view), acrylic on air dry clay hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black) with white waxed thread and fake blood, personal photograph by author, 7 June 2024

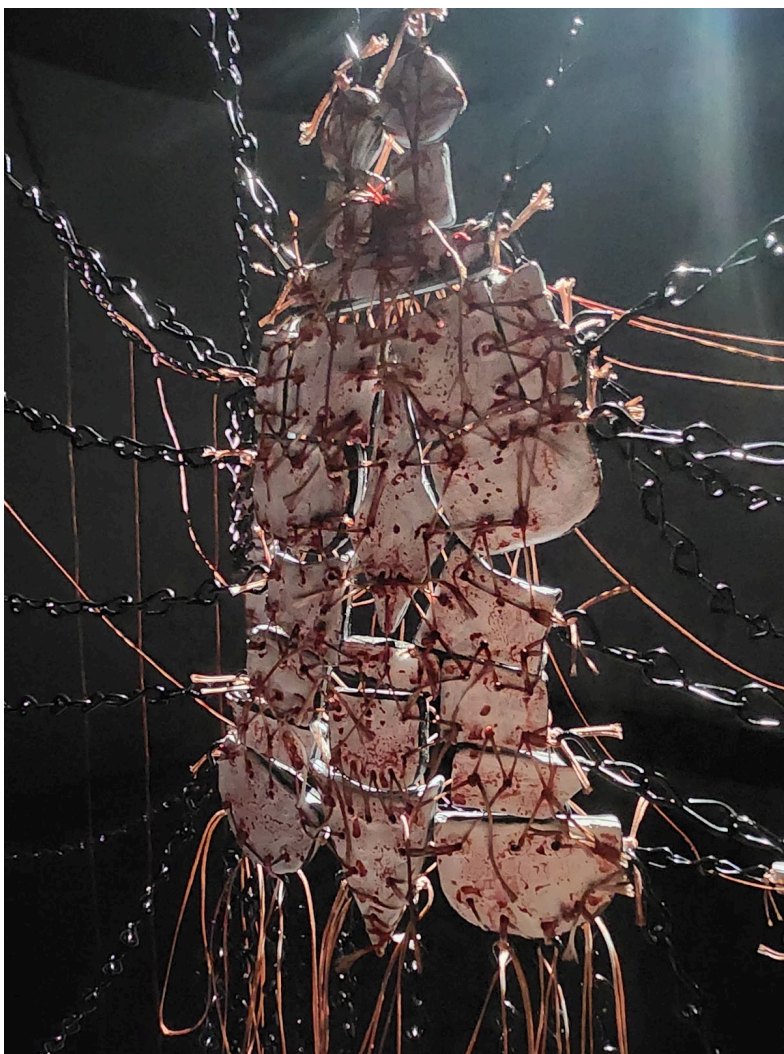


Fig. 37. *Stuck (installation view)*, acrylic on air dry clay hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black) with white waxed thread and fake blood, personal photograph by author, 7 June 2024



Fig. 38. *Stuck (installation view)*, acrylic on air dry clay hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black) with white waxed thread and fake blood, personal photograph by author, 7 June 2024

Suspended in the dark space, a chestplate hangs in oblivion. Threads strain to hold the sculpture together, and smooth clay, covered in monochromatic paint, soaks in the cool spotlight as leather straps and buckles secure the two jigsaws together. Hanging by black industrial chains, the intricate pattern is similar to a spider's web, or even then crafted into a net that can catch us, trapping us within the armour. The piece has 16 input points, eight on the front and eight on the back, coloured in red, almost like severed legs. This piece also features loose, wire-like strings that blend industrial and organic elements. My graduation piece, initially titled *Endo-Exo*, was shown at Massey University's Exposure as my first large-scale sculptural installation. I felt triumphant in translating my traumatic pain into a physical embodiment created through a consistent visual language.

As a development of my previous series of illustrations, *Bio-Warfare*, I aimed to build upon the strengths and physicality of *Stuck*—concretising my understanding of the traumatised experience, prejudice, and social alienation. This artwork presents itself as a physical chest plate—designed to protect but also to represent the weight of mental illness, the neurodivergent mask, and the

normalised Culture of Violence by resembling an invertebrate's exoskeletal shell. Thus, its name comes from its role in protecting the wearer's exoskeleton. This installation was my magnum opus for a time, a piece that seemed to encapsulate my process as it moved from illustration to sculpture, from Te Kore to Te Ao Mārama.

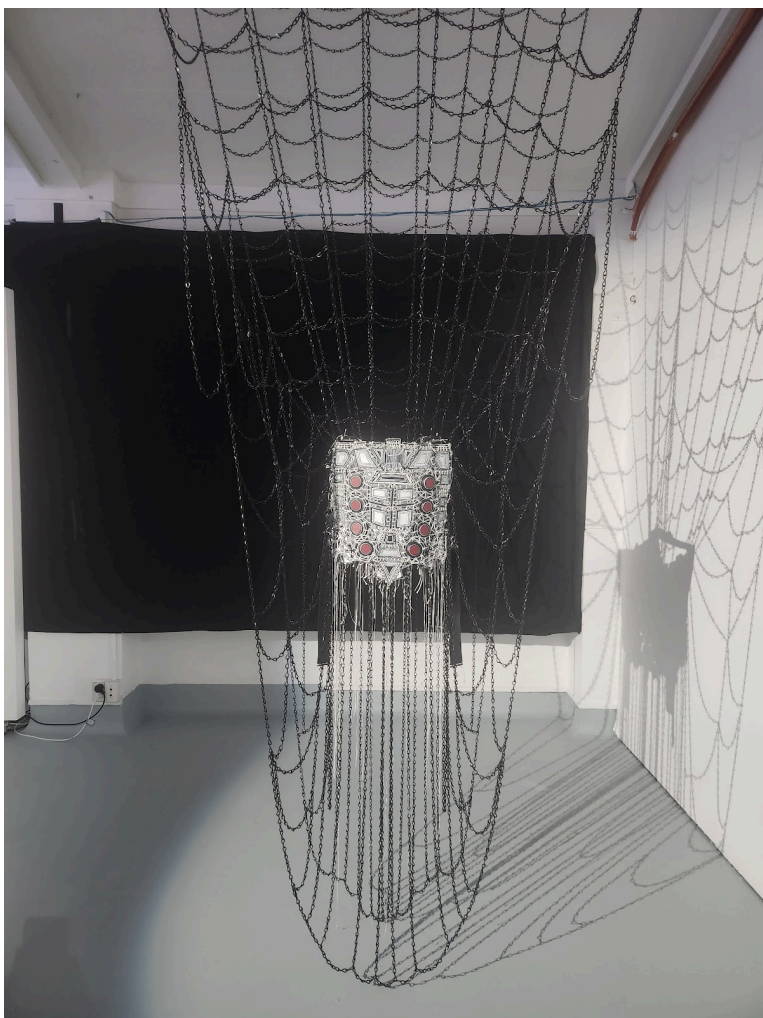


Fig. 39. *Endo-Exo (installation view)*, acrylic on air dry clay hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black) with white waxed thread and paint pens attached together by black leather and silver buckles, personal photograph by author, 5 November 2024

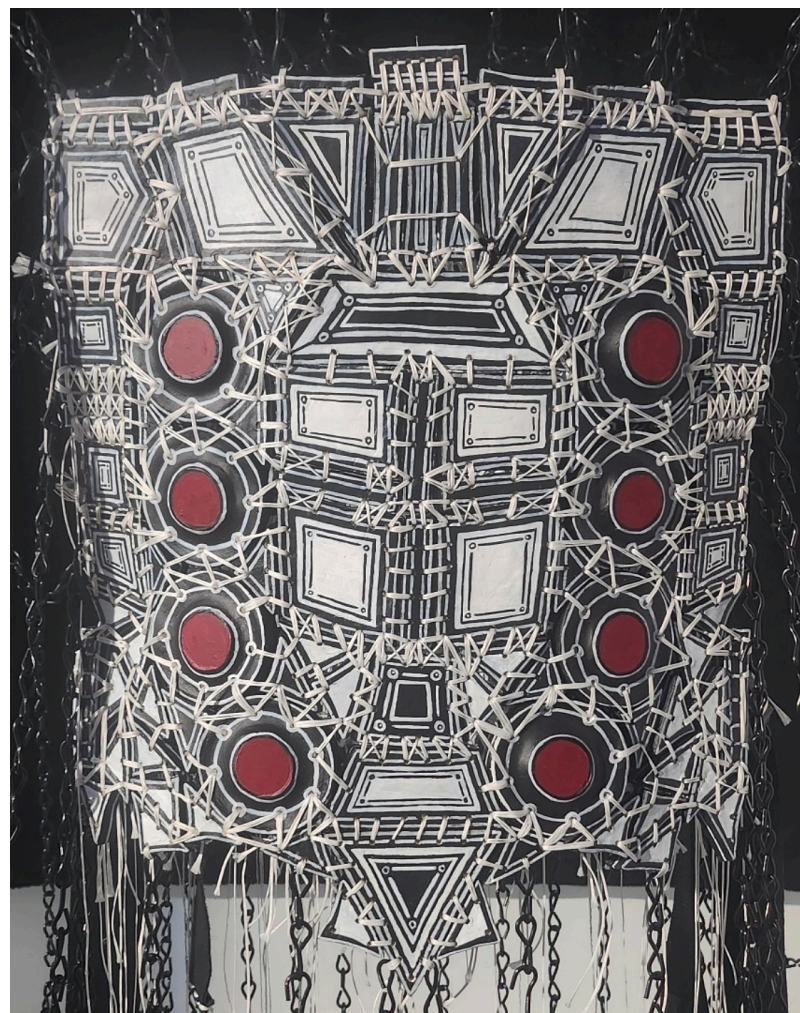


Fig. 40. *Endo-Exo (installation view)*, acrylic on air dry clay hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black) with white waxed thread and paint pens attached together by black leather and silver buckles, personal photograph by author, 5 November 2024

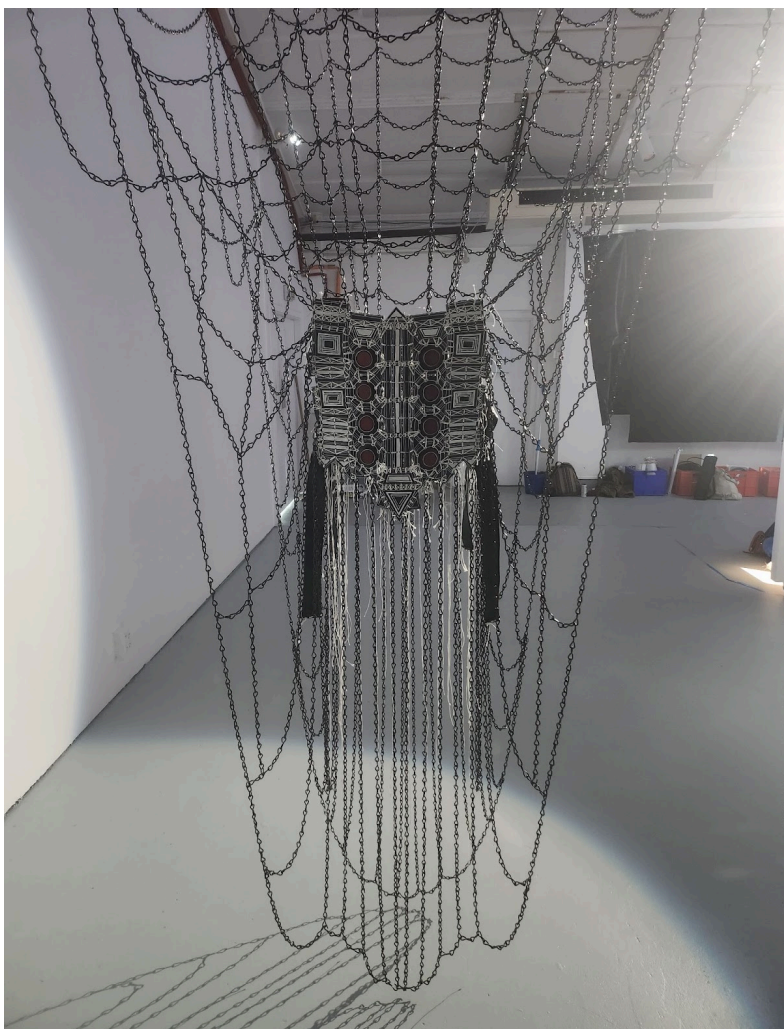


Fig. 41. *Endo-Exo (installation view)*, acrylic on air dry clay hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black) with white waxed thread and paint pens attached together by black leather and silver buckles, personal photograph by author, 5 November 2024

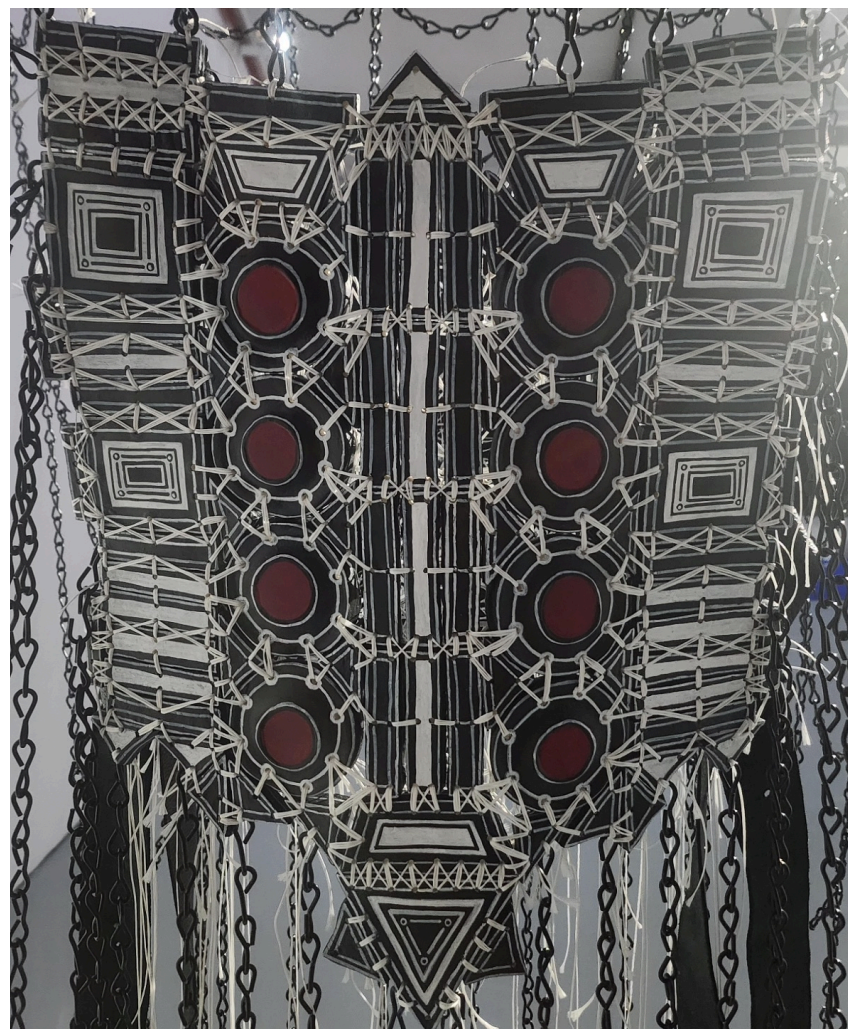


Fig. 42. *Endo-Exo (installation view)*, acrylic on air dry clay hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black) with white waxed thread and paint pens attached together by black leather and silver buckles, personal photograph by author, 5 November 2024

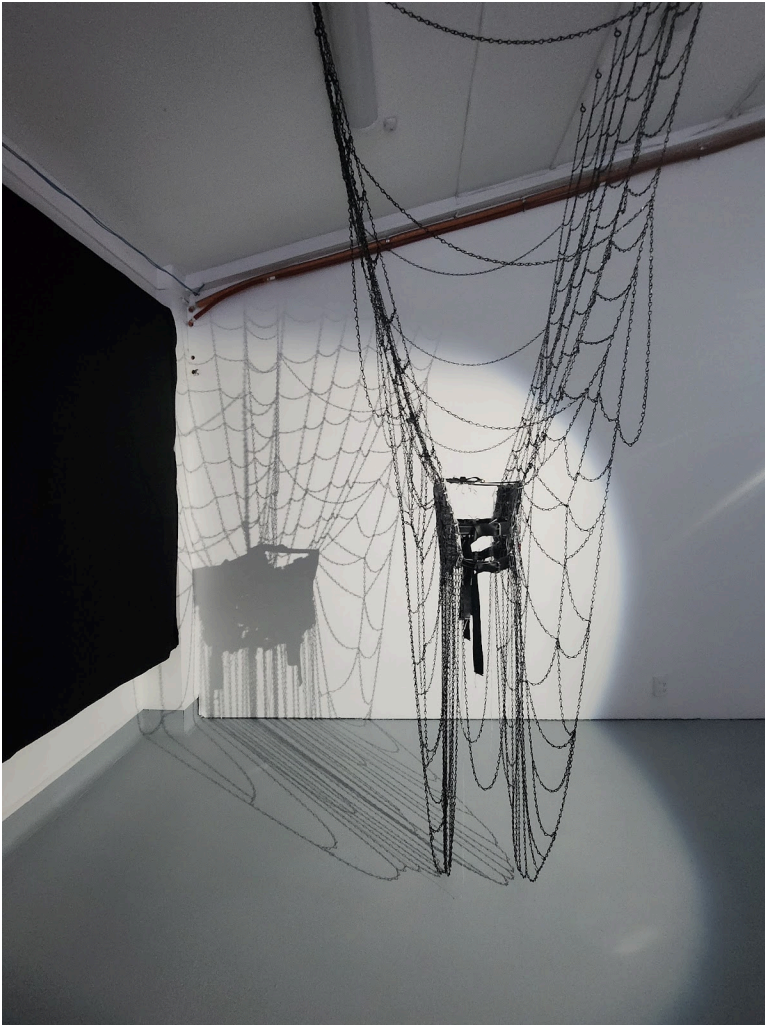


Fig. 43. *Endo-Exo (installation view)*, acrylic on air dry clay hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black) with white waxed thread and paint pens attached together by black leather and silver buckles, personal photograph by author, 5 November 2024



Fig. 44. *Endo-Exo (installation view)*, acrylic on air dry clay hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black) with white waxed thread and paint pens attached together by black leather and silver buckles, personal photograph by author, 5 November 2024

With science fiction inspiring real-life technologies like generative A.I. (and their algorithms being trained on conservative bias), it is no surprise that critiques of such technologies would appear in my work. Especially with the surrounding context of right wing politics that currently holds power to the point of neo-Nazi fascism within Western countries like the United States of America and the United Kingdom. Even Aotearoa, New Zealand, is being affected by its most conservative government in decades, a coalition that continues to underline the effect Western colonisation has had on minority groups, specifically tangata whenua. Their policies enforce ideas of bigotry we as a society cannot seem to fully move forward from—condemning us to the cycle of oppressive violence and war that spreads like a sickness to condemn us until either we die or live long enough to watch the planet burn.

As generative A.I. becomes more normalised, we must be wary of its effects to endorse violence towards marginalised groups, as the lack of moderation upon these robotic algorithms has prompted uneducated ‘enhancements,’ those of which include ableist views. For instance, Elon Musk’s brain-computer chip, Neuralink (connected to the Gen AI system Grok), aims to improve the

quality of life for people with neurological conditions (such as spinal injuries and ALS). While I may agree with helping those with such difficulties, I do have an issue when it comes to statements that come to ‘rectifying’ neurodivergent conditions (I’m also hyper-aware of the current criticism surrounding Grok and the illegal misuse of deepfake tech). “So Neuralink I think at first will solve a lot of brain-related diseases... So [it] could be anything... like autism” (Musk, 2019, as cited in Hamilton par. 3) The idea that autism is somehow a ‘disease’ to be ‘cured’ is not only insulting but it proposes a sort of eugenics that has historically contributed to far-right extremism and eventual genocidal action. These ideologies pose a destructive impact upon mass communications, including marginalising art, as this normalisation vilifies and censors our voices; lest we forget that the Jewish were not the only ones affected by the Holocaust, but in addition queer, disabled and POC.

I do not wish another generation of people, especially members of my own communities, to succumb to the atrocious effects of intolerance, as bias has already forever damaged me. I am a survivor, but I am also a statistic, and many people have suffered due to the evil which persists in

controlling our ideas. I cannot, in good faith, allow such violence to continue—especially since I have a niece and nephew who are both vulnerable to this treatment. As the American film producer Franklin Leonard wrote on Twitter in 2015: "When you are accustomed to privilege, equality feels like oppression..." (@franklinleonard).

Conclusion:

Is This All That Can Befall a Being? Is an artwork featuring a collage of darkroom prints and a chalk pastel poem, hung from the wall with chains. While I couldn't see the true potential of this work until halfway through the year (which led me to rework the original and make another with the same process called *Aftermath*), the positive response of this panic-made piece during a class critique ultimately taught me that trusting the process and letting go of control has its benefits—a lesson which led me to various opportunities for making.



Fig. 45. *Is This All That Can Befall a Being?* (mid-rework), darkroom prints glued on canvas, personal photograph by author, 19 December 2025



Fig. 46. *Aftermath (unfinished)*, darkroom prints glued on canvas, personal photograph by author, 19 December 2025

More new works emerged, engaging with the following media: drawing, photography, and sculptural installation. To begin with, my initial negative reaction towards *Is This All That Can Befall a Being?* steered me away from a creative writing approach to directly focus on the manipulation of darkroom prints, pulling out old 35mm film to create photograms that could be manipulated with red paint pens and white ballpoint; thus, the configuration *True Form* was born, a twenty-image spread which depicted my ex-partner in lace and dark lipstick. Created before we broke up, the piece aimed to describe my ex's gender non-conformity and to use the silhouette of previous illustrations as a representation of the marginalised soul—a technique I had used in my third year of the BFA with feminine hygiene products and water-filled condoms. Though the work was shown in two of the critiques, it was the least appreciated because of the large number of images (most of which were untouched). I believe this impression was driven solely by the other pieces' larger size and strength.



Fig. 47. *Test Install #2 (installation view)*, multimedia works hung by 2mm and 2.5mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 13 May 2025

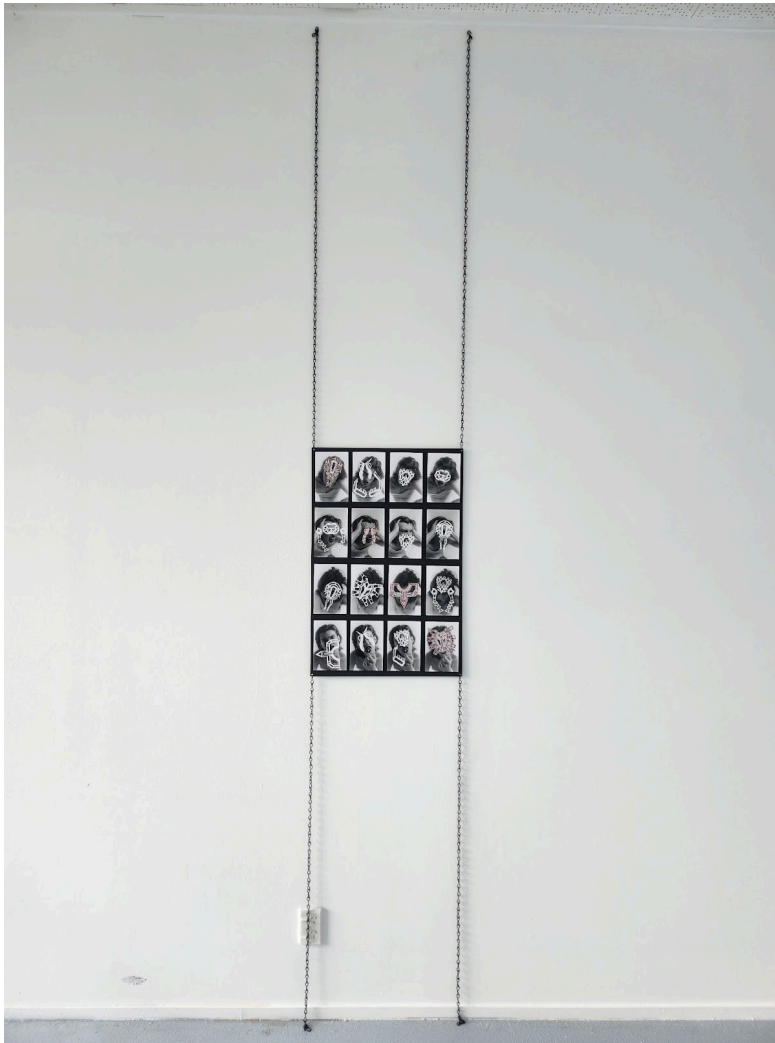


Fig. 48. *True Form* (installation view), darkroom prints on black foamboard with white ballpoint and red paint pen hung with 2mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 13 May 2025

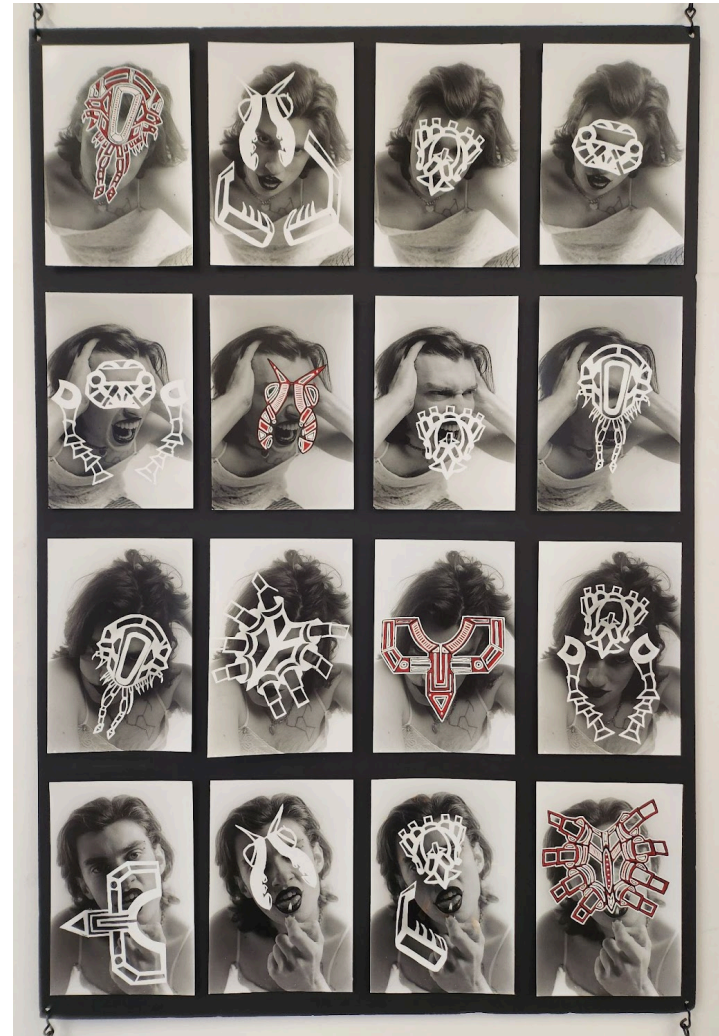


Fig. 49. *True Form* (installation view), darkroom prints on black foamboard with white ballpoint and red paint pen hung with 2mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 13 May 2025



Fig. 50. *True Form*, darkroom prints on black foamboard with white ballpoint and red paint pen, personal photograph by author, 13 May 2025



Fig. 51. *True Form*, darkroom prints on black foamboard with white ballpoint and red paint pen, personal photograph by author, 13 May 2025



Fig. 52. *True Form*, darkroom prints on black foamboard with white ballpoint and red paint pen, personal photograph by author, 13 May 2025



Fig. 53. *True Form*, darkroom prints on black foamboard with white ballpoint and red paint pen, personal photograph by author, 13 May 2025



Situated to the right of *True Form* was the first of many drawings I associate with the title *Void*—a series depicting skeletal cyborgs on organic backgrounds. Initially made on a whim, the point of the drawing was to expand upon the flat nature of my previous illustrations, like *Bio-Warfare*. Despite being a test for what was to come, upon showing the piece to many people, the consensus was that the work was considerably robust. Scanned and printed as a matte inkjet, *Void: #1*, like many of my works, hangs from black chains and resembles a portrait from the waist up. As the figure looks straight at you, it portrays one who holds silent pain, one who wishes to scream but cannot. One who must endure despite its skin looking as if it has ripped right from its body, and its veins grow in cobwebs around it. A body that has been left to rot.

Fig. 54. *Untitled (installation view)*, darkroom prints on white foamboard, personal photograph by author, 30 May 2023



Fig. 55. *Void: #1 (installation view)*, matte inkjet hung with 2mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 13 May 2025



Fig. 56. *Void: #1 (installation view)*, matte inkjet hung with 2mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 13 May 2025

Later additions to the *Void* series, though not as significant to me as this initial piece, were included in an install during the third critique (to varying effect). These works adopt the same approach to skeletal cyborgs (though involving the whole body) as well as some new ones that play with the idea of liminal spaces reminiscent of a space station.



Fig. 57. *Test Install #3: Untitled (installation view)*, reprinted illustrations hung with 2mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 17 August 2025

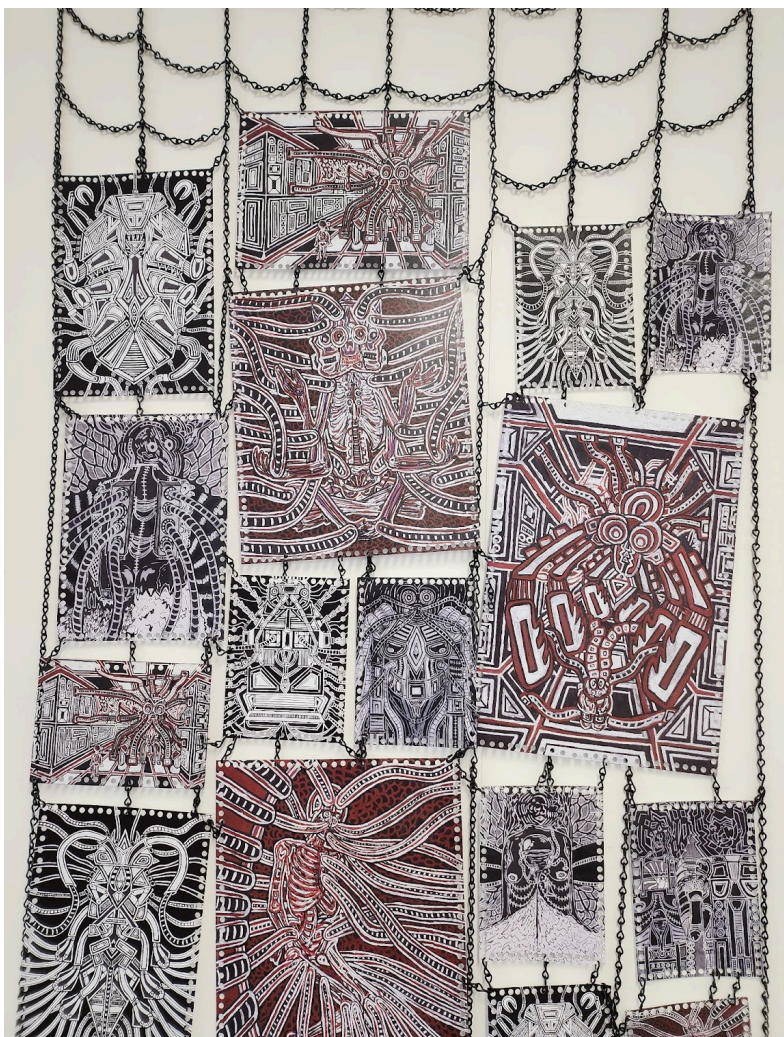


Fig. 58. *Test Install #3: Untitled* (installation view), reprinted illustrations hung with 2mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 17 August 2025

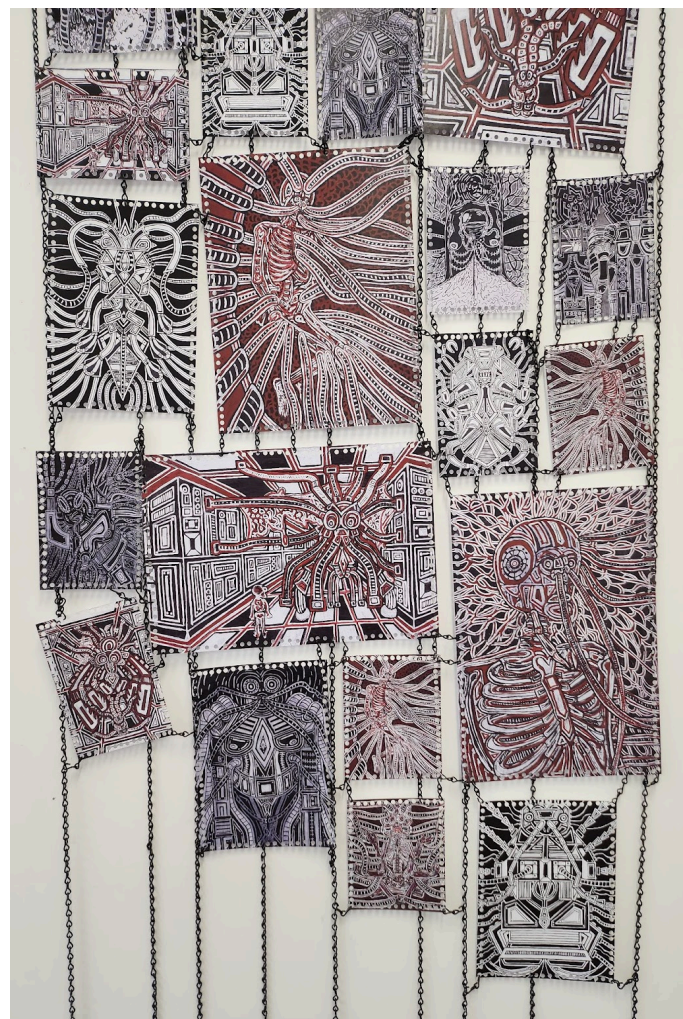


Fig. 59. *Test Install #3: Untitled* (installation view), reprinted illustrations hung with 2mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 17 August 2025



Fig. 60. Void: #2, white ballpoint and red paint pen on black inked paper, personal photograph by author, 12 June 2025

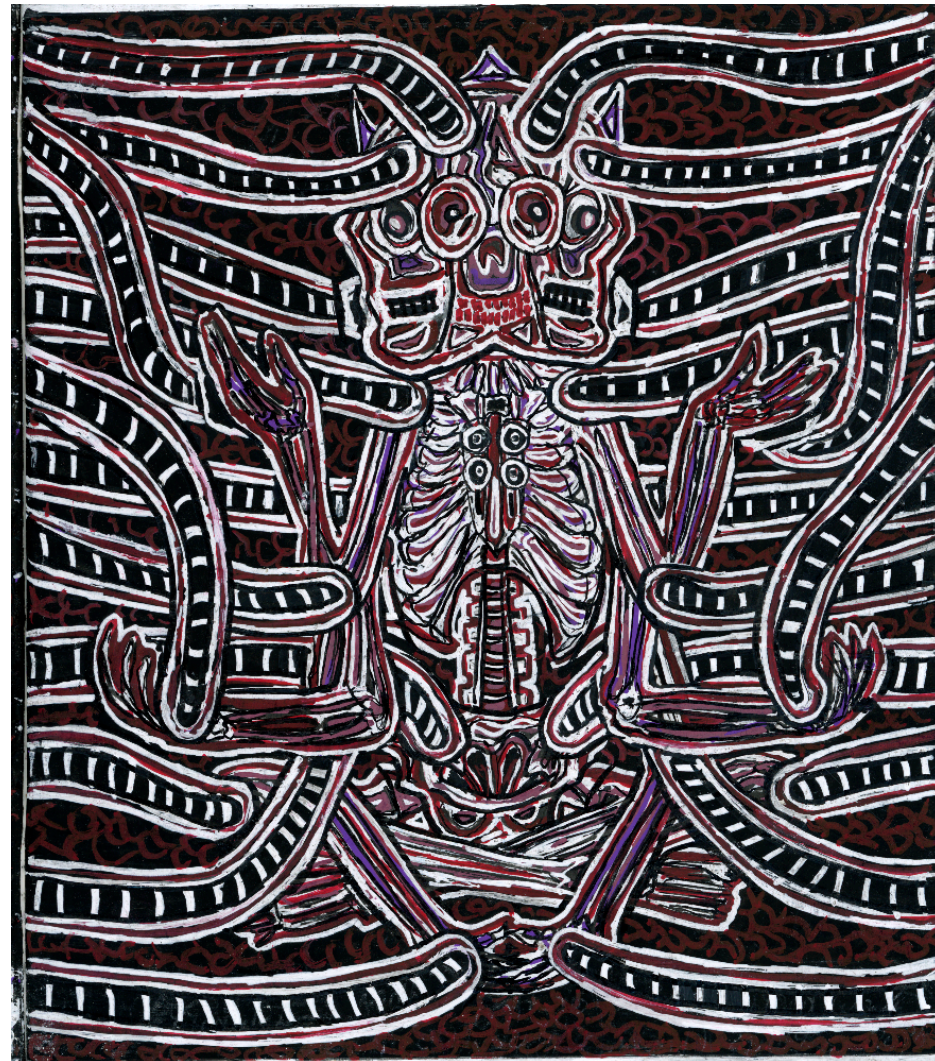


Fig. 61. Void: #3, white ballpoint and red paint pen on black inked paper, personal photograph by author, 12 June 2025

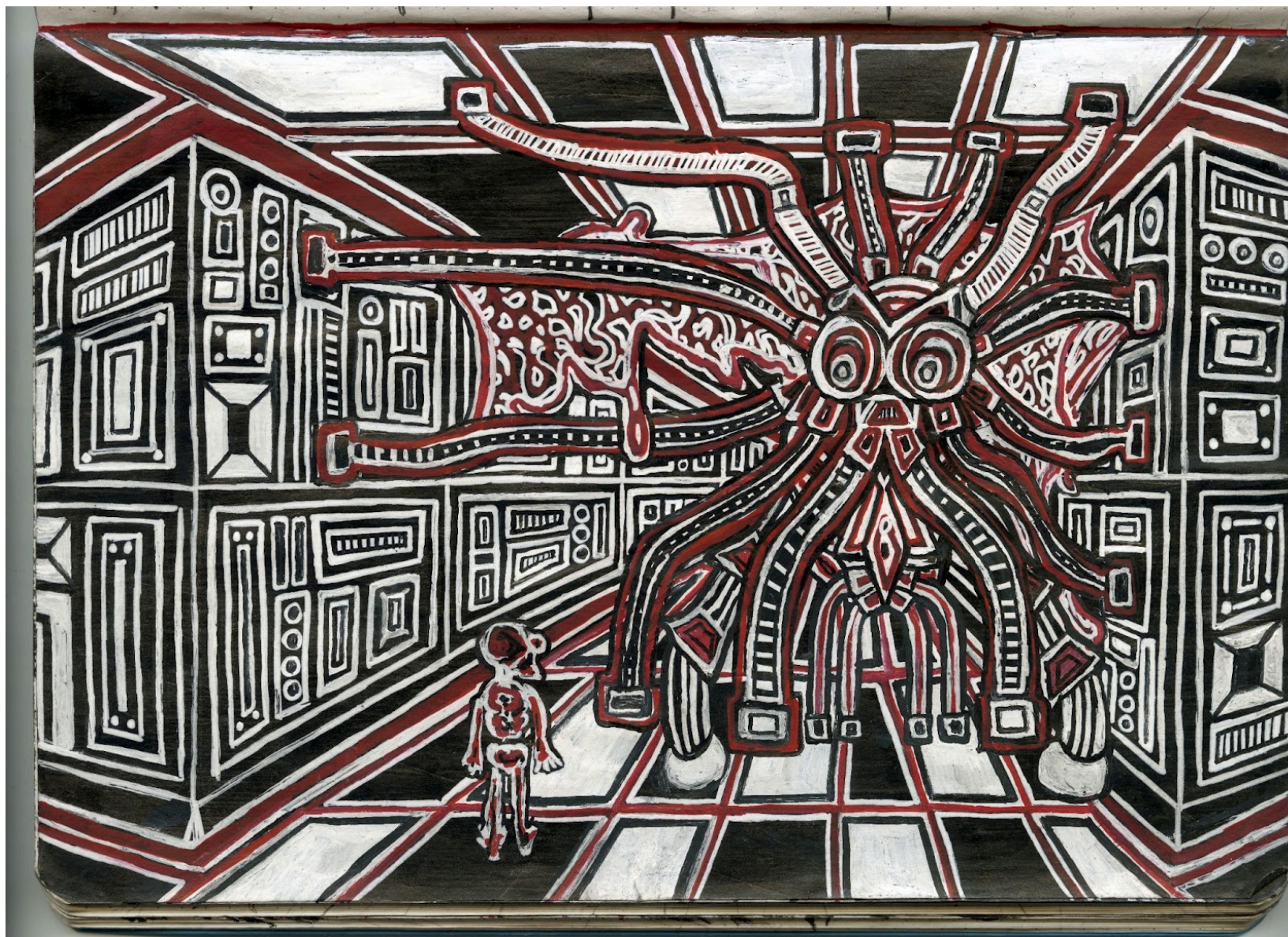


Fig. 62. Void: #4, white ballpoint and red paint pen on black inked paper, personal photograph by author, 2 May 2025



Fig. 63. *Void: #5*, white ballpoint and red paint pen on black inked paper, personal photograph by author, 15 May 2025

The final piece, *Flea* (later named *The Creature That Haunts*), is a sculptural installation that directly references an earlier drawing in the series *Bio-Warfare*. Inspired by an experience of hives from an infestation, the original work sought to commemorate the paranoiac fear of fleas; the later sculpture gave it a different meaning. That of trying to thrive in an environment that expects you to be something you are not (in my case, my childhood home), and in turn, you are seen as vermin to be exterminated. Despite being made of cardboard at the time, *The Creature That Haunts* had an alluring aura, somewhat like an ascending deity. Hung high up in the corner, it held control of the room, silently observing like a spider, daring viewers to come closer. This gave me a strong reading of the material's further potential. I also decided that it didn't need to be in the corner of the room to produce the same effect; it held itself all on its own.



Fig. 64. *Bio-Warfare: Flea*, white ballpoint and graphite on black paper, personal photograph by author, 7 March 2025

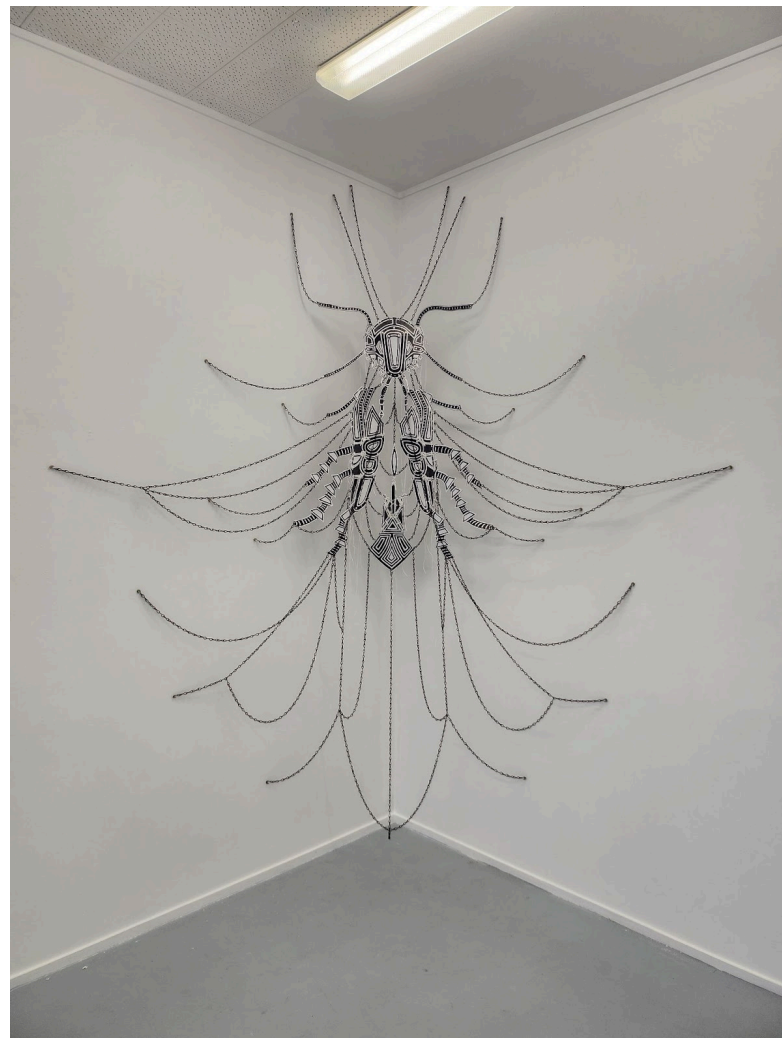


Fig. 65. *The Creature That Haunts* (installation view), illustration glued on cardboard hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 13 May 2025

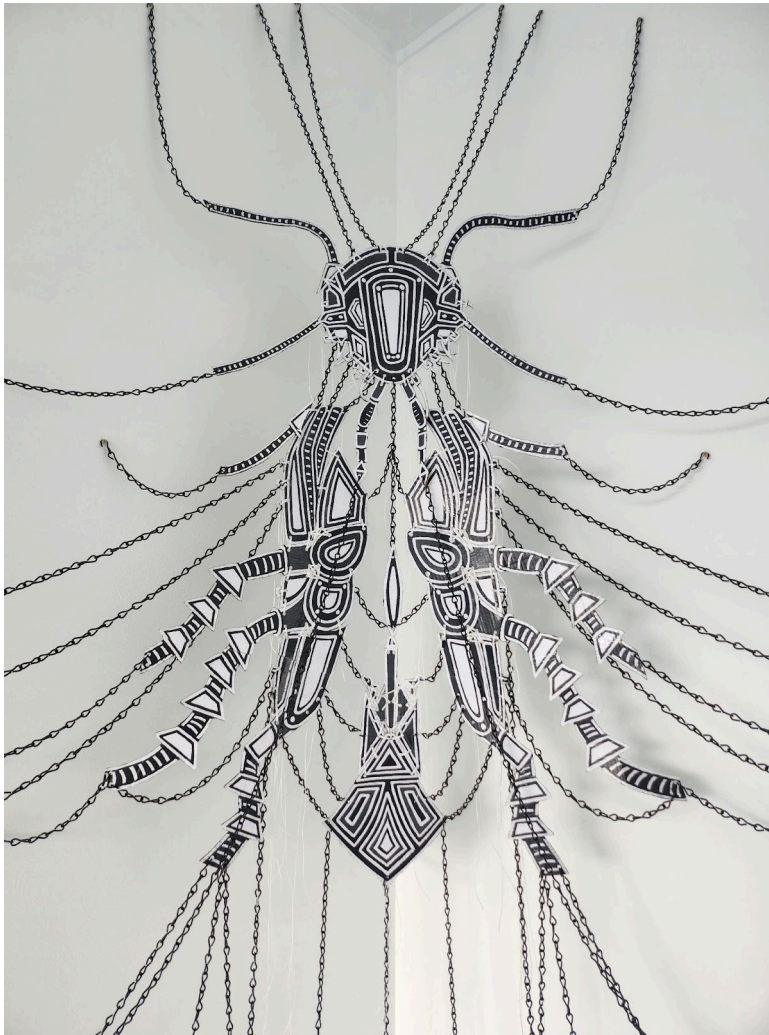


Fig. 66. *The Creature That Haunts* (installation view), illustration glued on cardboard hung with 2.5mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 13 May 2025

In the most recent installation, I was finally able to find my groove, not only presenting *The Creature that Haunts* with a revamped materiality but also two experimental works (both made up from a combination of *Void* and *Is This All That Can Befall a Being?*).

Set within a white cube, *The Creature that Haunts* instead hung directly from the ceiling, gripping its metal talons into the infrastructure. Its skin is black cow leather, sewn together with white and black thread. Its feet and ‘pipes’, in addition, end with belt buckles, and its head and legs are adorned with studs. In the space, it held most of the room, with the two written works occupying an adjacent corner, providing additional context. Both “whipped and pinned, chained to my own design” and “I am a flea, destined to be exterminated but I always survive” tell us all we need to know about the sculpture: a bug that has endured endless torment, even if some of it is by its own doing.



Fig. 67. *The Creature That Haunts* (installation view), white faux leather on black cow leather with white and black waxed thread hung by silver buckles and 2.5mm jack chain (black) , personal photograph by author, 9 October 2025

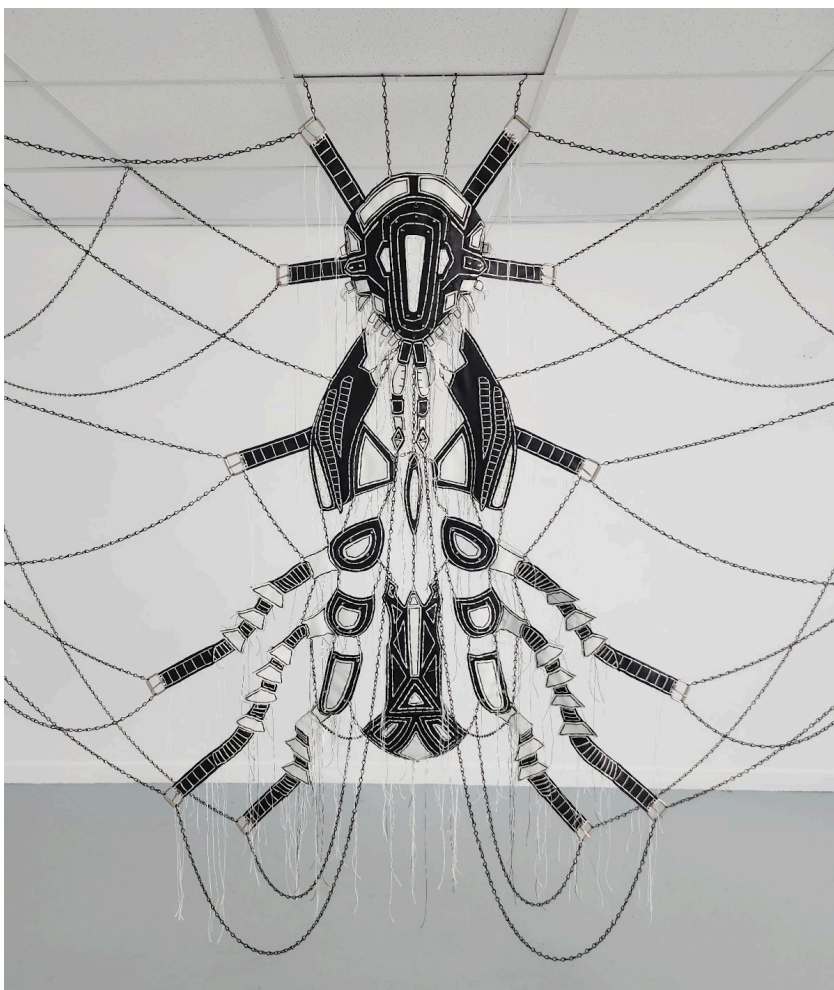


Fig. 68. *The Creature That Haunts* (installation view), white faux leather on black cow leather with white and black waxed thread hung by silver buckles and 2.5mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 9 October 2025



Fig. 69. *The Creature That Haunts* (installation view), white faux leather on black cow leather with white and black waxed thread hung by silver buckles and 2.5mm jack chain (black), personal photograph by author, 9 October 2025



Fig. 70. *Untitled (installation view)*, white ballpoint and paint pens on black paper with chalk pastel, personal photograph by author, 9 October 2025



Fig. 71. *Untitled (installation view)*, white ballpoint and paint pens on black paper with chalk pastel, personal photograph by author, 9 October 2025

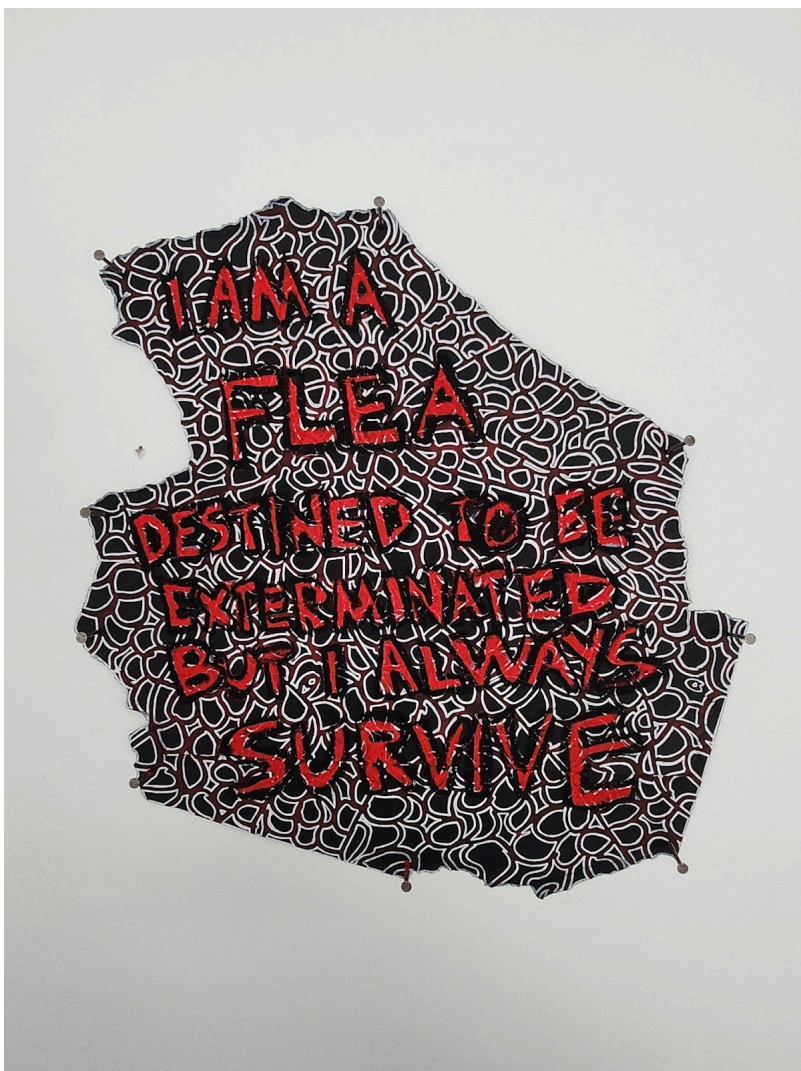


Fig. 72. *Untitled (installation view)*, white ballpoint and paint pens on black paper with chalk pastel, personal photograph by author, 9 October 2025



Fig. 73. *Untitled (installation view)*, white ballpoint and paint pens on black paper with chalk pastel, personal photograph by author, 9 October 2025

In the end, I decided on Block 2 Level D, though sacrificing space to show more work, I decided that if I was going to continue the trend of hanging directly from the ceiling, I needed to have complete control, as I had already negotiated issues when working with Level E's ceilings for the 2024 Exposure exhibition.

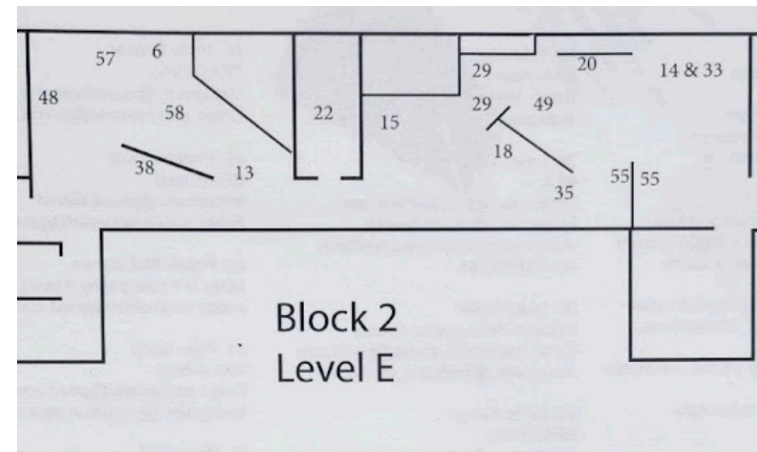


Fig. 74. Photograph of Block 2 Level E: Floor Plans from 2025 Exposure Exhibition, 2026

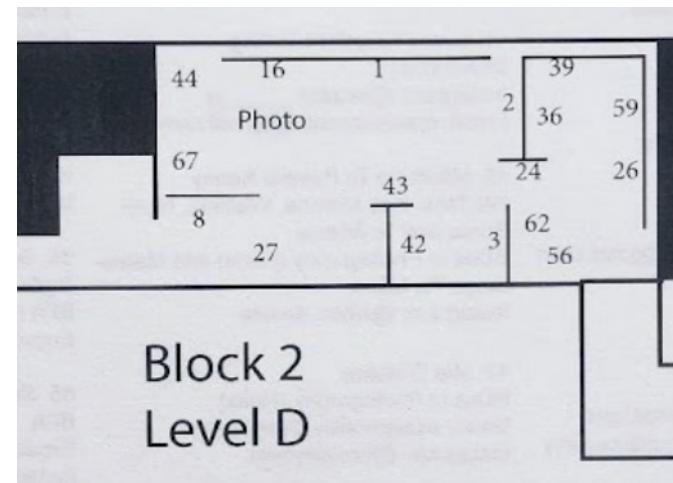


Fig. 75. Photograph of Block 2 Level D: Floor Plans from 2025 Exposure Exhibition, 2026



Fig. 76. *Photograph of Block 2 Level D space, personal photograph by author, 20 January 2026*



Fig. 77. *Photograph of Block 2 Level D: ceiling, personal photograph by author, 20 January 2026*

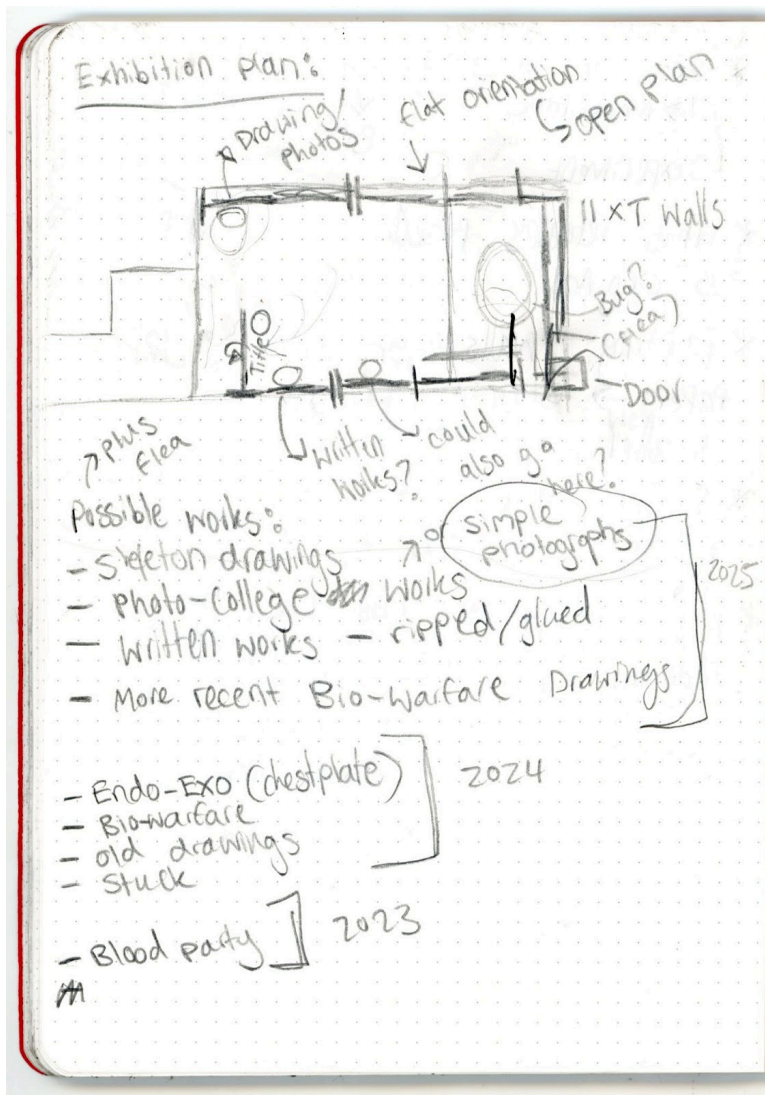


Fig. 78. Photograph of Exhibition Plan Notes #1, personal photograph by author, 22 January 2026

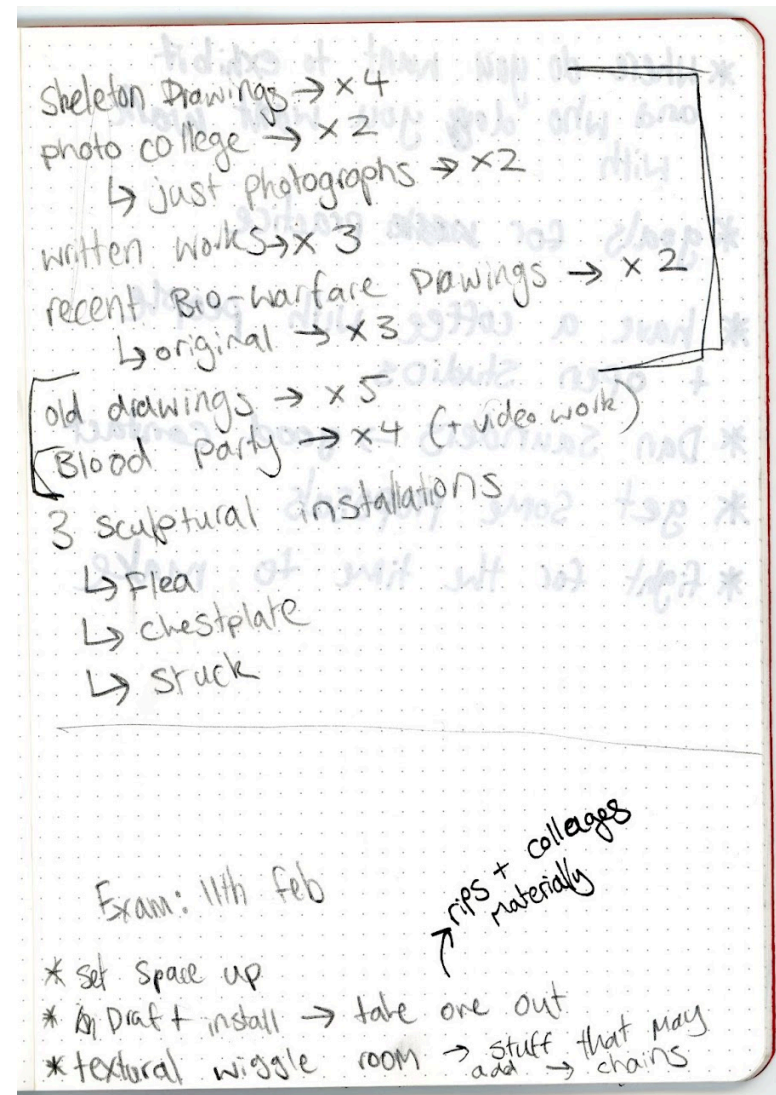


Fig. 79. Photograph of Exhibition Plan Notes #2, personal photograph by author, 22 January 2026

Finally, I considered how aspects of either work could be elongated and expanded, whether that be the straps on the head of my flea or the overall size of the new poetic text artworks. These issues were, luckily, initially easy to fix, as the resewing/reattachment of said straps could be done over a couple of days, and the initial foundation for putting together the poetic works was completed over a few hours. The real quest that put the whole making-up into the air was whether I could finish the organic backgrounds that accompanied the written pieces. However, I was encouraged to find another way, either with stencils, a different type of marker, or even printmaking. I knew I was too stubborn to part with my precious white pigment ballpoint. So, after many sleepless nights in which I sometimes slept from morning to afternoon, I managed to complete three works of the series I now call *A Plague for Being*. A series I ideally want to accompany the two PVA photo-collage poems, as I was reworking them around the same time, and they complement each other well.

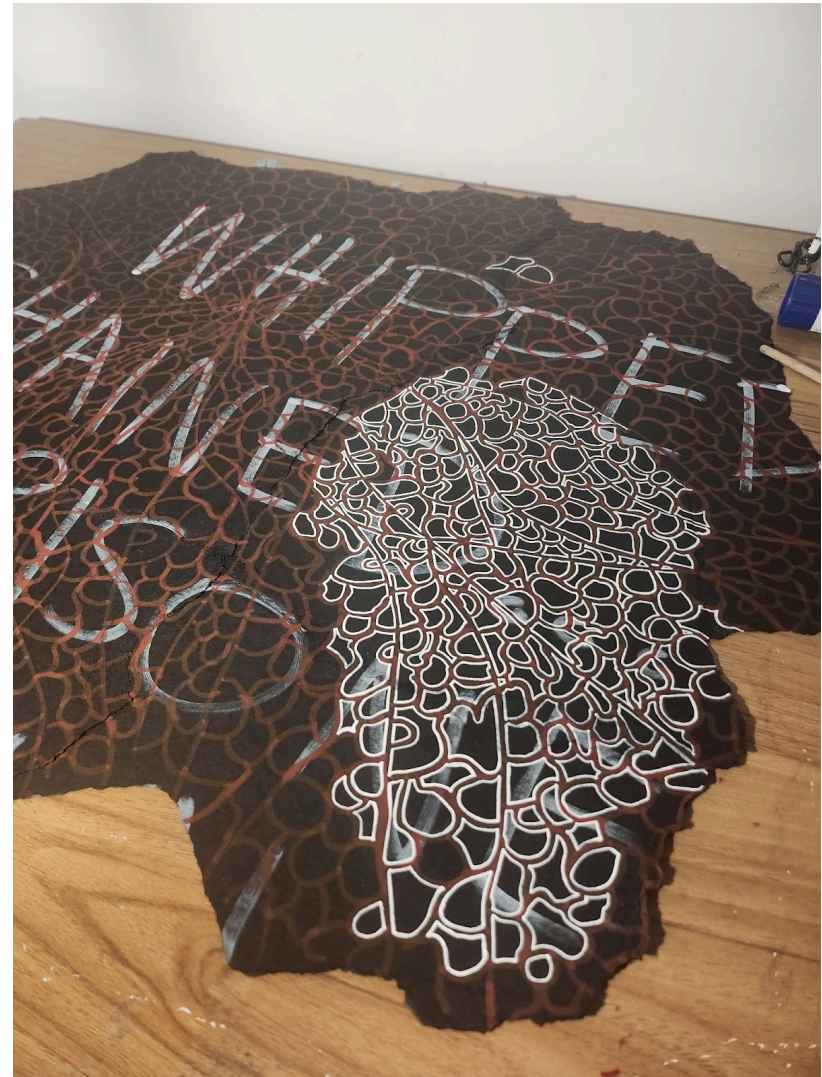


Fig. 80. *A Plague for Being: #1* (unfinished), white ballpoint and paint pens on black paper, personal photograph by author, 3 January 2026



Fig. 81. *A Plague for Being: #1 (unfinished)*, white ballpoint and paint pens on black paper, personal photograph by author, 3 January 2026



Fig. 82. *A Plague for Being (unfinished)*, white ballpoint and paint pens on black paper layered on top of each other, personal photograph by author, 20 January 2026



Fig. 83. *A Plague for Being (unfinished)*, white ballpoint and paint pens on black paper layered on top of each other, personal photograph by author, 20 January 2026

I hope that you can now have a better understanding of what drives my process of making. From its troublesome beginnings of violent oppression, I now aim to break microaggressions hidden within established visual cues, manipulating them to the point of restitution. This act I primarily do for myself, but while society continues to punish marginalised groups unfairly, my practice will relate intersectionally, an aspect that, though melancholy in theory, creates a space where people feel less alone.

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