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Spawning Ecodeviance

An exegesis presented with exhibition as fulfillment of the requirements for thesis: Master of Fine Arts at Massey University, Wellington, New Zealand

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2022

ABSTRACT

In this exegesis, which is presented with an exhibition as a thesis, three broad and intersecting frameworks of queer ecologies, queer technologies, and queer archives are spoken of in relation to my visual arts practise. Queerness in relationship to Nature cannot be untangled from culture, politics and power. “Nature” has often been weaponised to enforce normative codes. My ongoing work envisions a mutation of normative ways of being. My visual practise uses poetics as a mode of rejecting normatively with an eye towards the potential of disgust and desire to open new pleasures. Using video as a site of experimentation, I have been creating videos that seek transmissions through holes and gaps. Including queer theory with respect to reproductions and the futurity, the works seek pleasure for impure and unnatural bodies. This exegesis grapples with two parallel contradictions: that queerness is the most natural thing, and that all bodies are no longer natural. In this is a hopefulness, a composting, an opening up of new or queer ways of seeing and being, with pleasure. The works in this thesis attempt to produce a vision of nature as already corrupted and pushed to the threshold of naturalness.

Key words: Queer theory, visual art, experimental moving-image, deviance, wildness, feral, political poetics.

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The use of *queer* through this exegesis does not simply signify a non-cis-het identity. Rather, as; a politic to be employed, a position, perspective, disruptor, an active undoing, reshaping, melting, reforming.

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

SPAWNING ECODEVIANCE

This thesis, exegesis and exhibition seek to explore the potential for a visual arts practise to employs queer theory against macro concepts of normalisation, ecological collapse, whiteness, capitalism and reproduction. Regarding the microscopic, specifically decomposing bacteria, as a poetic for rebirth.

There is radical potential in understanding all bodies as unnatural and enmeshed; disrupting queerphobic ideas and simultaneously developing more tender ways of being with infected environments. Philosopher Paul Preciado disrupts the idea of a natural body altogether. They argue that all bodies — cis, trans or otherwise — are products of the medical and pharmaceutical industries [1]. There is a mutable potential in this proclamation against the natural.

Queer pleasure, due to an assocation with unreproductive pleasure, has been cast as unproductive and wasteful [2,3]. My work responds to queer reproduction as an expansion on how we might relate to an unnatural world, open to the supernatural. The artwork discussed in this exegesis plays with the aesthetics of deviant sensuality to open a spectrum of potentiality.

Queer ecology is the study of sexual politics and relations as they relate to how perceptions and constructions form Nature [4]. Spawning Ecodeviance, both as a body of text and a body of work, employs queer ecology in both political and visual frameworks to consider the transformative potential of enmeshments, transmutations and interconnectedness [5]. This exegesis grapples with the contradictions that not only is queerness the most natural thing, but that all bodies are no longer natural [1,6,7]. In this is a hopefulness, a composting, an opening up of new or queer ways of seeing and being, with pleasure [8].

Queer ecology poses a joyful, relational framework, interested in pleasure, intimacy and multispecies relationality [9]. It is a practice of disrupting human-centric order, driven by queer and feminist theory and decolonial thinking. This manifests itself in my work as an engrossment in interconnectedness and the effect of possibilities that occur silently beneath the surface and out of sight.

[1]. Preciado P. Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era. 2013.

[2]. Raj S. Disturbing Disgust: Gesturing to the Abject in Queer Cases. 2016.

[3]. Sikora T. Queer/Waste. 2008.

[4]. Mortimer-Sandilands C, Erickson B. Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire. Indiana 2010.

[5]. Giffney N, Hird MJ. Queering the Non/human. 2008.

[6]. Haraway D. Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene. 2016.

[7]. Heinemann C. FUCKING PANSIES: Queer Poetics, Plant Reproduction, Plant Poetics, Queer Reproduction. 2017

[8]. Haraway D, Cajigas-Rotundo JC. The camille stories: Children of compost. 2017.

[9]. Giffney N, Hird M. Noreen Giffney and Myra J. Hird Queering the Non/Human. 2008.

The queer ecological politic the work embodies invests in the body as interconnected to, and made up of, this place, this earth [10]. Late queer theorist Jose Muñoz famously states, "We must dream and

enact new and better pleasures. Queerness is a rejection of the here and now and instance of a better world" [11]. Thinking about Muñoz's futurity within our current ecological climate, I create works that are hopeful yet try to stay with the trouble of ecological realities, rather than striving for utopia [6]. What Lives in the Lacunae, From Emergence of After, and Spawn are works that are not interested in imagining the future as a paradise somewhere else. These works operate as speculative fabulation, a divination of future possibilities of kinship, intimacy and care [6] on this plastic, alien landscape that is Earth [12].

Nature arrives to be understood as pure, as a thing opposite to contaminating, corrupting and polluting. Gender, sex and sexuality are often located against a Nature that is already impregnated with ideas of what is and what is not counted as "natural". Queer birds, lesbian dolphins, trans butterflies, and intersex flowers have been existing joyfully since the beginning [13]. However, pervasive Christian moral ideals have historically determined what is widely accepted as inappropriate and "unnatural" [14], and the folding of these binary, ridgid ideas into the social psyche has prompted damaging implications for real bodies.

The artworks discussed in this exegesis operate as a somatic reclamation of bodies into Nature, pushing against a colonial construct where humans are separate [14]. In my use of the word, somatic refers to an experiential notion of the body; physical reactions produced inside the body which help resolve complex issues that cannot be understood purely cognitively , such as a gut feeling, lust, disgust, or deep connection. The reclamation of the body as both natural and unnatural takes place within a context of a suffering planet, where bodies have been considered as no longer natural [15].

[10]. Anonhi. Future Feminism. 2012.

[11]. Muñoz JE. Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity. 2009.

[12]. Maggic M. Molecular Queering Agency. 2017.

[13]. Roughgarden J. Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People. 2013.

[14]. Gaard G. Toward a Queer Ecofeminism.1997.

[15]. Magicc M. From Molecular Colonization to Molecular

AGAINST NATURE



Pollinator, 2020. Laura Duffy. 4K Digital video with audio, 4 min 46 sec.

POLLINATOR

In phobic proximity to the unnatural lie constructions of the abnormal, freakish, deviant, or mutated, in which marginalised peoples have been positioned as "against nature," or against the natural order [16]. Talking through a queer identity specifically, there is a contradictory naturalisation towards nature in queerness's proximity to floweriness and animality [7]. This push and pull toward orienting specific groups "against nature" and "closer to nature" reflects the ideologies embedded into the construction of nature rather than revealing a truth about "nature" itself . Thinking about the camera lens as a perspective of a body, Pollinator evokes a motion sickness from these pushes and pulls of positionally to a world with conflicting perspectives, embodying a disorientated lens [17].

16. Gosine A. Non-white reproduction and same-sex eroticism: Queer acts against nature. Queer ecologies: Sex, nature, politics, desire. 2010; 149–172.

17. Ahmed S. Queer Phenomenology. 2006. doi:10.1515/9780822388074

Pollinator is a performance-based video in which fluid camera angles watch me whispering “homo” to flowers. At an intimate distance from my face, shooting from my chest to my chin, from myextended arms to the top of my head, the camera does not leave my body, operating as an extension of me. I hold the camera as if it is an eye in my hand [18]. The camera acts as a disorientation, a push and pull towards and against nature, attempting to figure out my phenomenological position to the world before me [19].

“Homo” throws me back. It was a common slur in my family. Growing up, I knew this to simply mean “bad”. Open to multiple readings, the word could also refer to Homosapien. My performance of the phrase has humour or silliness to it, reflected in the strangeness of the position of the camera to my body, and the act of speaking to flowers who (probably) are disinterested in my spoken offering. “Homo” is used both as a question and a statement in the work, switching its aggression in its shifting intonation.

The term “homosexuality” throws me up; it tastes uncomfortable on my tongue, smelling of pathologising, discrimination and personal embarrassment. By shortening the word to a nickname, to break it and open it up for interpretation, is to work with the histories of the word, to examine it playfully. I hope for humour and joy to present in my works, not as flippant but used to facilitate engagement. Feelings considered unserious, such as humour and silliness, can (and, in my opinion, should) be serious and critical tools worth thinking-with [20].

In the article "FUCKING PANSIES", Caspar Heinemann dives into the chaos of queerness as it becomes normalised against an impure nature that is tainted with ideology, and written with bias [7]. Heinemann draws from the fertile composted foundation of queer eco-poetics [21], eco-feminism and queer ecology. They discuss the term “pansy” as both a homophobic slur and a place to consider the social, political and ideological positioning of nature and flowers as unnatural, feminine and weak. The Nature we are conditioned to comply with is none other than the dominant paradigm of cis-heterosexuality disguised, dressed up in costume as “nature” [14].

Pollinator works from Heinemman’s text as a soil to plant seeds in. The embodiment of the performance operates as a way to grow and play with FUCKING PANSIES. Early on, the idea for Pollinator was unintentionally contradictory to my intention. I wanted to depict that homos could be of nature; could be included in the group of natural. To begin with, I was envisioning a medicalised depiction of plants that reproduce within queer relationships to bees, bugs, root systems, the wind, animals and

[18]. Sagadin M. Oko Na Roki or The Eye in my Hand. 2018

[19]. Ahmed S. Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology. 2006.

[20]. Halberstam J. The Queer Art of Failure. 2011.

the fertilisation from people. The original intention, rooted in a problematic idea of biological or botanic proof, became a more nuanced poetic performance of untidiness. Pollinator embodies the impossibilities of language as limited rather than superior.



Pollinator, 2020. Laura Duffy. 4K Digital video with audio, 4 min 46 sec.

Botanical gardens have been featured in my works multiple times. I have been interested in this site as a national, colonial, heteronormative and ecological production of nature [22,23]. The westernised ideology of humans as separate from, and superior to, plants and animals can be seen in the taxonomic systems, categorisation and layout of these traditional gardens [24,25]. Through these perspectives, we see a space designed for people to be in relationship with a sterilised, weeded, neat nature [26]. The Wellington Botanical Gardens holds interweaved social and ecological histories of imperialism, conservation and reproduction. This garden that has operated as a colonial civilising project reflects a history of violence and superiority from settlers, who in fact, unsettled ecosystems, destroying the eighty acres of native bush to plant imported species [27,28]. This behaviour comes from the similar extractive, exoticising, reductive and harmful histories of the cabinet of curiosities, the foundational history of European museums today [29,30].

[21]. Hume A, Osborne G. Ecopoetics: Essays in the Field. 2018.

[22]. Nowak Z, Roynesdal K. Ecological Deviance: The Botanical Politics of Public-Sex Environments in Parks. Environment and Planning. 2022.

[23]. Sutherland M. Seeking a Turangawaewae: constructing a Baptist identity in New Zealand. 2001.

[24]. Kirby V. (Con) founding “the Human”: Incestuous Beginnings. Queering the non/human. 2016.

[25]. Win H. An Indifferent World. 2022

[26]. Schiebinger L. European Naturalists in the West Indies. 2011.

[27]Poole AL. THE WELLINGTON BOTANIC GARDEN, NEW ZEALAND. 1992.[28]. Morris C. Not-Talking/Not-Knowing: Autoethnography and Settler Family Histories in Aotearoa New Zealand. 2022.

[29].Rice R. The botanical landscape in colonial New Zealand. 2020.

[30]. Brockway LH. science and colonial expansion: the role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens.1979.

[31]. Mortimer-Sandilands C. Unnatural passions? Notes toward a queer ecology. 2005.

[32]. Haraway D. Donna Haraway Reads “The National Geographic” On Primates. 2017.

[33]. Harney S, Moten F. The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study. 2013.

In Unnatural Passions: Notes towards Queer Ecology, Caroline Mortimer-Sandilands [31], outlines the ways natural spaces, including parks, are organised by prevalent assumptions of sexuality and race. They discuss the context and history of Central Park, New York City, as designed to restore masculine virtues and bring health and morality to polluting “degenerate” urban homosexuals by putting them close to nature. I wonder what assumptions are designed into Botanical Gardens.

Professor Donna Haraway asks, “How much does it cost to produce Nature for a particular group of people at a particular time?” [32]. This idea of production and cost could be applied from an ecological perspective. What disruption has occurred to flatten and drain the land, to uproot plants and place flowers neatly in rows? What damage to native plants and ecological systems has occurred for the convenience of our viewing pleasure? Haraway's question can also be directed to a social framework when thinking about the production of nature leaking over into the erasure of indigenous ecologies and perspectives.
I am drawn to the theatricrical production of nature in botanical gardens, zoos and other taxonomic systems. Imagining the construction of nature as a theatre production, with bright lights, stage make-up and props. These theatrics of naming and categorising ecologies are replicated in the ridiculousness of naming flowers HOMO in Pollinator.

I am disinterested in oversimplifying the complexities of this space into a binaries of good or bad. For me personally, Wellington Botanical Gardens is also felt as tenderness, holding memory of falling in love for the first time, surrounded by the blooming sensuality of flowers.

It is something to consider the histories of queer, indigenous, and disabled peoples alongside the ecological histories of The Botanical Gardens, in our context of Aotearoa. A native bush, categorised as wild, was put through a process of normalisation, cultivation, categorisation, naming, and cutting into sections, to become Nature [33]. A western idea of Nature constructed within Christian hierarchies of dominance over nature, as superior to, and separate from, feels like it is in relational conflict with the holistic notions of Te Ao Māori, of te taiao, whenua and whakapapa. Māori scholar and solicitor Ani Mikaere talks about interconnected relationships with the environment by suggesting that “everything in the natural world, ourselves included, shares a common ancestry” [34].

They speak to relationships with Papatūānuku, describing how “there is no sensible way of separating out the ways in which humans experience relationships with her”. In conversation with Ani Mikaere’s text, Emilie Rākete [35] in In Human: Parasites, Posthumanism and Papatūānuku states “In actuality, what we perceive as our self is only a part of the ecology.”
My position as Pākehā can be uncomfortable. In embodying this context with criticality, my intention is for this to become layered in the work. A risk I run in filming myself is the naturalisation of the Pākehā body in an environment which is not mine. This naturalisation is attempted to be mitigated through the context and awkward falseness of the Botanical Gardens.

Pollinator is in an attempt not to villainise the site, but rather to disrupt these complex relationships by simply walking around saying one silly word. Embodying the limitations of language, Pollinator wants to widen who we might relate to by speaking to flowers and organisms, in a challenging of human superiority to unsettle a naturalised settler position.

[34]. Mikaere A. Colonising Myths - Maori Realities: He Rukuruku Whakaaro. 2011.

SPAWN



Spawn, 2021. Laura Duffy. Commissioned by Australian Centre of Moving Image & CIRCUIT Artist Moving Image Aotearoa New Zealand.

Removing my body from the frame provides the ability to blur the micro and macro. Spawn sees the earth as an alien landscape, as sensual. Embracing the aesthetic of camp floweriness as a poetic of heteronormative refusal [36]. Enacting imaginative world-building towards futurity [11]. Oily acid-green liquids flow tenderly over spider-like legs and roots. In the centre of the image are the guts of a living organism. Maybe it's a transmuted flower?

“Spawn” refers to reproduction, offspring, eggs, blossoming or birth with a deviant undertone. Theorists have discussed how Nature is consistently associated with “procreativity” [14]. Heinemann refers to a structure that implies sexual practices that are not reproductive as unethical, with priority given to the survival of species over pleasure as “Nature becomes a weaponized synonym for reproduction” . Queer sex has been framed as wasteful due to an association with non-reproductive pleasure. This pleasure has been cast as deviant and perverse [37]. Spawn desires an embrace of deviant pleasure, dressing special to drink from the sewer [38,39].

[35]Rākete E. In Human - Parasites, Posthumanism, Papatūānuku. 2017

[36]. Handcock R. Erotic positions for two consenting males. 2016.

[37]. The Institute of Queer Ecology. Emergence. 2020

[38]. Moir J. Homosexual Law Reform 30 years on 2022.

[39]. Conrad C.A. *PRETERNATURAL CONVERSATIONS*. 2014.

Professor of Indigenous Peoples, Technoscience and Environment, Kim Tallbear positions the right to not reproduce as just as important as reproductive rights, suggesting an environmental urgency to normalise queer, indigenous or alternative modes of kinship that do not revolve around the settler-colonial state-enforced hetero, white, nuclear family as a structure [40]. I am drawn to imagining visually what a queer reproduction could be, or what it could mean.

My little world hums with deviant, sexual and relational interspecies practices. Bees fuck orchids , mushrooms squirt spores into the air, worms poo, bats cover their faces in pollen of the flower of the underworld and bacteria shits [41]. My body itself is porous, I am in a dependent relationship with the trillions of bacteria living and dying in my bones, skin, mouth and stomach.

[40]. TallBear K, Clarke A, Haraway D. Making Kin Not Population. 2018.

[41]. Ballance A. Pua o te Rēinga - return of the Flower of the Underworld. 2020.



A True Story, 2020. Owen Connors.

In FOR FUTURE BREEDERS, Owen Connors thinks of queer reproduction and futurity in their works as not invested in biological lineages but in terms of viruses, mythology and intergenerational transmissions [42]. Connors depicts birth from the non-reproductive site of a leg in A True Story. I think of this work often when attempting to untangle or understand the relationship between Nature and reproduction, and beginning to find ways of imagining queer kinship reproduction expansively.

I think of how mushrooms sprout from the earth's crust in the documentary The Fantastic Fungi (2019). A twirling time-lapse evokes a sensual response to the imagery. Looking at this I wonder, what is the cost of producing nature? The construction of these images can be read against the construction of Nature. The image is perceived to be naturally occurring, a depiction of Natural truth. Yet these natural images are made in an indoor studio. Mushrooms are removed from their environments and placed on a green screen backdrop. The camera on the dolly is probably programmed for concise movements. Water is squirted onto the organism whilst a continuous electrical lighting set-up of grow lights and filming lights glow over many days, powered by batteries that emit toxicity and heat. A low level of destruction occurs to create the image. I follow this interwoven spectrum of truth and fiction depicted in nature documentary images in my work Spawn.

Inspired by the dreamy and electrifying images from the likes of The Fantastic Fungi, Spawn projects a meticulously produced false world, set within a macro–micro parallel universe which is both here and not here. Spawn follows a similar filmic pace and logic to nature documentaries. Dissimilar from nature documentaries, I have omitted any accompanying soundscape in an attempt to create space for new associations. The colour scheme is based on acid green. Shot with a 4K camera, LED lights, flowers and trash in a small studio, the video is like a tiny film set starring transmuted organic-and-synthetic-meshed material as the lead role.

The difference between what the little set looks like physically in the studio and the cropped image in the camera is huge. The magic happens in the camera's closeness to the subject, removing hints of human scale. A perishing stigma of a peony, purchased from a supermarket, sits upon a layer of mucus, the scale of which is confused: it could be as if we are looking through a microscope or from a satellite. Regardless, everything has an ick of unwell. A relentless glaze of sweetness is poured over these objects, dripping thick, honey-like liquid; an articulation of excess, fakeness and abundance.

[42]. Hemus B. Viral tondos: In conversation with Owen Connors. 2021

[43].Conrad CA. ECODEVIANCE: (Soma)tics for the Future Wilderness. 2014.

[44]. The Institute of Queer Ecology. Emergence. 2020.

[45]. Federici S. Caliban and the Witch. 2004

Spawn calls into question the materiality of the planet in late capitalism with imagery of toxic mutations, alien-like landscapes, decomposition and rebirth occurring cyclically. Creating a world of queer reproduction of cross-pollination, self-pollination, sensuality and transmutation act as poetics towards embracing pleasure and ecodeviance [43]. I think of composting as a metaphor for leveraging queerness to mutate capitalism, to dissolve and transform it [8]. Currently, we are reproducing for a world that cannot continue [44]. Rather than reproducing, we might imagine something altogether new.

Transformation and transmutation are shown as sensual, as bubbling, mutating and brewing like a witch's cauldron. This D.I.Y. love-potion-like process refers to a history of alchemy as magical transformation and to a history femme knowledge thought of as witchy, supernatural, dangerous and deviant [45]. As if summoning spirits of intergenerational transmission through potion, materials like baby oil, petals and jelly crystals merge, mutate and interact with each other in ways outside of my control. This blending of unsuspecting textures, colours and materiality contains traces of my childlike desire to mix potions.



Spawn, 2021. Laura Duffy. Commissioned by Australian Centre of Moving Image & CIRCUIT Artist Moving Image Aotearoa New Zealand.

[46]. Ensor S. The Ecopoetics of Contact: Touching, Cruising, Gleaning. 2018.

[47]. Tallbear K, Young A. Dr. KIM TALLBEAR on reviving kinship and sexual abundance. 2022.

[48]. Tyler I. Revolting Subjects: Social Abjection and Resistance in Neoliberal Britain. 2013.

[49]. Kristeva J,Powers of horror: An essay on abjection. 1984.

Painter Robbie Handcock thinks about camp as an aesthetic in his work and writing, pointing to the excessive use of colours as being in close proximity to the decorative and feminine [36]. In Spawn, excessive colours and flowers invoke a decaying decorativeness and mutating femininity. In this world, colour and texture decompose, react, and melt. An element of surprise occurs in the process of making; the reactions of combinations is exciting. In this, a feeling of possibility is carried through the work.

I consider Spawn as sensual, focusing on affect as a mode of connection [46]. Bodies are porous, erotic, fragile, limited, complex, magical and living receptors. I prioritise physical relationships with the work at the same level as the intellectual interaction, and I aim for connection through affective potential. My work recognises the flesh of bodies as erotic, not simply sexual, but visceral and powerful in multiplicities.
Tallbear discusses ecosexuality as a way of responding to nature that emphasises our close interactions with our nonhuman kin, an interesting framework to consider in relation to my interest in the body as erotic [47].

The abject operates as a reinforcement of the boundaries of the social body through the abjection or expulsion of what are collectively agreed to be toxic or polluting practices, people or objects [48,49]. Non-normative sexual practices threaten to destabilise normative imaginings of sensual intimacy. Through time and space, ideas of queers as corrupting, polluting, or filthy cannot be separated from their belief systems. In Spawn, the abject troubles the sentimental and opens up new possibilities of intimacy.

I flip-flop between considering “queer” as a helpful lens to think about the interconnectivity of things, a freeing from the confines of the body as an individual, recognising its collectivity and connectivity, while at the same time acknowledging the overinvestment and overstretching of the idea and identity as a panacea. Like Spawn, these desires are complicated, tense and untidy. This living tension continues to ferment through further discussions on the works’ politics, positioning and descriptions.

The gifting of flowers signals love, joyfulness or grief. Where language fails, flowers speak for us. Whilst making this work, I decided to consider artmaking as a gift. Perhaps an unwanted, ill-fitting gift. The reception of my intention lies outside of my control when the work is presented, a part of the thrill. Maybe artmaking could be like throwing flowers to the internet for the apocalypse?



Fluffy, 2022. Laura Duffy. Commissioned by The Physics Room.

FLUFFY

For the Feral Splendour was conceptualised in conversation between Owen Connors, Abby Cunnane, Aliyah Winter and myself and held at The Physics Room, Ōtautahi in January of 2022. Originally, Owen's prompt was to respond to Pākehā attempts at attaining identity through landscape, which are littered throughout New Zealand art history [50]. We began talking about colonial imaginings, lies, mythologies and fantasies in relation to our pākehātanga, families and wider histories.

I have begun to understand "nature" as a plastic container, a construction that attempts to separate and organise chaos. Historically, nature has existed in the Pākehā imagination as land to dominate [51,52]. Using my research into nature in relation to lies and colonialism, as well as being responsive to The Physics Room's proximity to one of the oldest colonial gardens, I created Fluffy. An awkward acid-green sculptural form constructed from steel, resin and flowers.

[50]. Kake J. Beyond the Mamae. 2022.

[51]. Boyle C. Nature nationalism. 2016. 52.

[52]. Ferguson M. The unavailability of nature. 2022.



Fluffy, 2022. Laura Duffy. Commissioned by The Physics Room.

The show became critical of dominant truths, using humour as a tool of deconstructing narratives and ideas. I wanted to speak to the manufactured-ness

of “nature”. Working with steel, a material which, to me, evokes a reading that the built and the social are both fabricated, Fluffy comprises a melted twisted green leg that holds up a resin plate. Embedded in the plate are flowers, some of which have been chewed up and spat out, some of which have been whispered secrets to.

The flowery plate is simply balancing on the object. Lights cast inside the resin illuminate the flowers from within. An attitude of purposeful carelessness is carried through the work. Things are “badly” made, vulnerable, almost broken, almost unbalanced. The work is not interested in covering up its construction; a battery pack powering the L.E.D lights hangs off the plate. It is almost like a joke version of the fragility of the colonial construction of nature.

[53]. EnviroHistoryNZ. In: envirohistory NZ. 2011.

In 2019, I had an open heart surgery. Reminiscent of this time is the sound of cutting metal with an electric blade; this still feels visceral. While constructing Fluffy, holding the vibrating blade with the waterfall of cascading sparks, screeching through metal, was a little traumatic. Welding steel together felt like a synthetic form of healing, the marks reminiscent of the scars on my chest.

When visiting Ōtautahi whilst developing the show, I was electrified by the merging of synthetic and organic materials. I watched the Avalon River gently flow over road cones, trollies, and e-scooters; thick weeds growing against a mesh fence in vacant lots; seagulls nesting in the raw foundations of damaged buildings. Within this urban devastation exists a contradiction: the possibility for hopefulness; organic life attempting to return to the cityscape.

I was interested in the poetic ecological history of Ōtautahi as wetlands, drained during colonisation to build the city. The wetlands returned in the form of liquefaction in the 2011 earthquakes [53]. Fluffy thus embodies a mutant rebirth. In the exhibition, fragments of abnormal plastic flowers poked out from green wire, as if growing up out of the floor, acting against the idea of self-contained borders. Like devalued weeds, the objects were often accidentally stood on by audience members, horrified by their mistake.

Fluffy was born to operate as a clumsy, silly framing of nature as the divine, as both a fight against and a reclamation of space. Responsive to Christchurch's name, mythologies and our collective personal experiences, we looked to the Church as a site to disrupt. Fluffy references a pulpit found in churches. Maybe the sculpture could be a platform to be used for reflection or spells. I think of this sculpture as a shitty plastic version, attempting to speak truths but so deeply entrenched in capitalism that the message is cheap

and confused. Fluffy warps "truth" with fantasies; little wings can be seen on the object, though they are too small to fly away. In this iteration of a structure of holiness, the object is vulnerable, warped and tired.



Fluffy, 2022. Laura Duffy. Commissioned by The Physics Room.

Both Aliyah and Owen work with or develop alternative archives from which queer and trans histories, stories and mythologies reverberate. For the exhibition, Owen queers familial myths or stories from their childhood into large-scale egg tempera paintings with hand-carved frames. Depicting themselves as all the characters in their familial myths, they use stories, lies or myths from their rural lineages and merge them with techniques and aesthetics from queer material and craft histories in Aotearoa. Die Zerstücklelung thinks of familial mythologies as holding a similar function to historical truths. Both exist to produce a narrative for reasons, acting as justifications.

Aliyah researched biblical representations of angels, meme culture and alchemy to create photographic prints on satin hanging from the ceiling to the floor. In particular, the work examines the biblical representations of angels against queerness and the effects these ideals have now. The magnitude of the objects with Latin text across the image gives the work a sense of authority in the space. Reflective of our collaborative conversational process, I created mechanisms for Invocation to be draped over.



Invocation, 2022. Aliyah Winter. Digital sublimation prints on polyester satin, steel, paint, 1400 x 4400mm. Hanging mechanism by Laura Duffy.



I named my work Fluffy, a generic name for a domestic cat, as well as a primary school nickname of mine. The name is intended as an access point to think of the domination of nature in the environment as well as in domestic settings. It refers to the keeping of animals as pets as an intimate attempt to be close to nature yet also an example of nature being dominated and produced. There is a silliness to giving the work a name rather than a title. Using a layer of humour, I treat the work as subject rather than object, blurring the distinctions between nature and culture.
The title of the work directs the reader's attention to a subset of the work's ideas rather than the central concepts. To me, this name feels like I have already moved on to my next idea. In future works, I crave specificity; to dive deep into a plant and zoom out rather than be embedded in so many ideas and references.

For this exhibition and project, we collectively considered artmaking as alchemical, as embodied, and as a potential type of supernatural. Embedded in our process was a responsiveness to alchemy as a process of transformation, of the search for value. For future works, I aim to continue this thinking to enhance the pleasure and personal meaning of my making.

QUEER TECHNOLOGIES



Maybe Someone is Starting to Bloom, PARASITE, 2021. Laura Duffy.

MAYBE SOMEONE IS STARTING TO BLOOM

Maybe Someone is Starting to Bloom (July 2021) was a solo exhibition held at PARASITE (Tamāki Makaurau), an artist-run space located in a multi-floored staircase responsive to the erasure of LGBTQIA+ artists in public collections. Throughout the various levels of the space, the show featured videoworks, sculptural objects and text. The exhibition was a process of thinking through the queer coding of nature and the potential for queer technologies to enact disruptions, pleasure and fantasy. The idea was to use poetics to challenge,

disrupt and reveal biopolitical mechanisms of social and state power, which name people as citizens, as sexual subjects restricted to either: femme or masc, hetero or homo, natural or perverse, technological or organic.

In the book New Dark Age, James Bridle asks if technology is making the world harder to understand [54]. Bridle speaks to the general lack of understanding of technologies that are linked intimately to our every day. The way these technologies, like algorithms, are constructed is not accessible to users. This exhibition embodies an urge to glitch and deconstruct invisible and visible structures of oppression; to queer as a glitch in the system, a crack revealing false structures.

[54]. Bridle, J. The Dark Age. 2018.



[55]. Gennard S. Negative capability. 2017.

An artificially generated video dances across the walls. The work was created through inputting stills of videos frame-by-frame to an online software trained with video art stills as a dataset. The software learns what the image is and attempts to reproduce it. In the videowork, abstracted bodily forms never come into clear focus, remaining ambiguous. The work could be read as a metaphor of realities as generated. It could also be thinking of queering technologies' use, shifting away from manuplutiation and surveillance, moving towards imagining a more lovely purpose. In this way, the poetics of the threatening technologies' inability to locate, comprehend, and see clearly could be liberating [55].



Are you A Fairy, 2021. Laura Duffy.

Playing on loop is Are you A Fairy, a performance-based video in which I use the ancient technology of ritual to ask various captive zoo animals, fences and rocks if they are in fact fairies.

When I was a kid, I had access to a grand imagination, unrestricted from caring about what was necessarily real. I remember looking at a wound on a tree which was healing a severed branch, imagining the wound as a tiny door opening to another dimension. As a small person, I loved dressing up as a fairy. It was a socially appropriate little girl costume to wear. As I grow older and come into different understandings of my identity, I am drawn to the fairy as a complex cultural product. Originating from European folklore, the function of the fairy was to explain why and how things happen. These stories were then embellished, creating fun. “Fairy” has been used as an insult towards queer men, attacking their sexuality or gender presentation as shattering binary understandings of how a “man” should be or act. The word was reclaimed by radical fairies who were interested in the potential of existing outside of cisheteronormativity and embracing ritual, independence, anti-establishment, community and alternative ways to interact with environments[56]. Whilst reading The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions [57], a fable about radical fairies, I became interested in fairies as a layered cultural product. Similarly, in The Queer Art of Failure, Jack Halberstam speaks to the radical potential of what is typically regarded as low culture, namely children's stories and films.

Fairies are referenced multiple times throughout this exegesis. In embodying this tangled web of costuming, commercialisation of ancient folklore, radical queer histories and gendered childhood memories, I think of fairies as serving a generative, imaginative function.

Blurring between ideas of queer ecologies and queer technlogies, the objects present as a question: What visual signifiers uphold codings of bodies as unnatural?

56. Morgensen SL. Arrival at home: Radical faerie configurations of sexuality and place. 2019.

57. Mitchell L, Asta N. The faggots & their friends between revolutions. 1977.

A mossy plaster cast of my open mouth is displayed inside a vitrine of fruit juice and Gatorade. As the juice decomposes, it blooms beautiful bouquets of rot in my mouth. The sculpture is held up by a vulnerable welded frame whose legs lean against the wall to balance. These object-like works are informed by sculptural assemblage artists such as Ryan Trecarin and Lizzie Fitch, and more specifically, Jesse Darling [59]. Darling's style is one of seduction, drawing attention to objects and intimate relationships with bodies. Their sensibility embodies silliness and sexiness, seeking to expose the materials' rudeness. Objects are stretched, tied, welded and



Maybe Someone is Starting to Bloom, PARASITE, 2021. Laura Duffy.

glued together in a way that personifies objects, emphasising the bodies' awkwardness and vulnerabilities. To me they invoke readings of disabling spaces, bodies as oppressed under man-made capitalist structures, the violence of categorisation, unnatural or disabled bodies as constructed against their built environments. Talking to the vitrine as a signifier of the violence of

museumification, Darling speaks of decaying flowers in their work Life Constantly Escapes with empathy, as the “living forced to perform under scrutiny” [60].

The show was full and complicated, embracing the excessive, the flowery, the femme and the toxic. I do wonder: What is the line between too much, too complicated, and too layered? Which part is indulgence and overcomplication, which is experimentation, and which access points give generosity to audiences? Upon such reflection, the works could have had more breathing room between each other.
As a way to extend the exhibition's life span and continue playing with the queering of technologies, Hamish Besley and I collaborated on a publication of the work, included in my appendix. We experimented with agency and power through using automation, working with AI in the decision making on image, size and placement. The publication includes poems generated from AI’s interpretation of Pollinator and Are you A Fairy.

[60] Darling, J. Instagram Post. 2022.

GARDEN OF PURITY



Garden of Purity, Laura Duffy. The Dowse Art + Museum, 2021.

For [……] you
[…] I myself […….]
You [..][……] Those who have
[….][…..] to it
[…..……..] take me [……]
from within [……..]”

In April 2021, lines from The Thunder, Perfect Mind appeared as titles of works in the installation Garden of Purity, shown as part of the group show Candy-Coated at The Dowse Art + Museum.

Written by an unidentifiable, invisible person, the gnostic, paradoxical text alternates between a first-person monologue and a direct address to the listener. This poetic text had me thinking about ancient queer transmissions, glimpses of the supernatural and possibilities of impure divinity.

I think that the unmediated divine speech was written in a transcendental state, a place where more-than-human energy could work through the writing. Is it too far-fetched to think of this as collaborative?

The text was unearthed in 1945 after 1,600 years underground [61]. The Thunder, Perfect Mind bubbles with energy, not only due to the excitement of something so ancient being uncovered, but also in the mystery it still holds. The text contains voids from paper disintegrating. Researchers have filled and translated these gaps, generating meaning from fragments.

This 7-channel installation spatialized the works on clumsy steel frames, resembling alien creatures, experimenting with the video's relationships to the bodies of the audience members. The works were laid out in reference to a garden in which one could wander about, looking up and down at moments. This experience displays organic forms as rotting and vulnerable. I intended to continue pushing videos off the wall and into space in installation contexts to enhance bodily relations.

[61]. Taussig H, Calaway J, Kotrosits M, Lillie C, Lasser J. The Thunder: Perfect Mind. 2010.

QUEERING ARCHIVES

WHAT LIVES IN THE LACUNAE



What Lives in the Lacunae, 2022. Laura Duffy. Commissioned by Te Tuhi.

What Lives in the Lacunae is an experimental, performance-based videowork embodying the nocturnal character of a deviant fairy creature. Shot entirely in the darkness of night, the audience is given hints and suggestions of a character and an environment. The intention is for the audience to fill in the blanks with their imagination.

We see a shadowy face of an eerie, red-eyed fairy laughs in a forgotten forest. They blissfully cackle and blow bubbles within a darkened world, slipping in and out of the void. Plastic green wings grow out of their back, signalling that perhaps this being could levitate and fly through the skies. Scenes appear disjointed as if the cuts in the video are our eyes blinking, disorientated, trying to orientate ourselves in this world. Fragmented weeds and flowers are born from a black background which they submerge back into. They embody perverse happiness and deviant joy whilst performing fake

laughter. At times, it feels as if the fairy is searching for something, yet no directive narrative is given.

My ancestry is often mediated through the archives of the church, state and military. At times it feels like a void, an impossibility of connecting honestly and intimately to these histories.

The title What Lives in the Lacunae is in reference to In the Dreamhouse by Carmen Machado [62]. Machado speaks to the silences, the erased histories and gaps of queer achives, asking, “What is the topography of these holes? Where do the lacunae live?”. Lacunae are spaces or gaps in a text, piece of art or piece of music. They can also be small cavities, holes or pores in bone and cartilage. What is it to make or write into voids? What possibilities do voids of inaccessible knowledge hold? I think of the pores in my skin, filled with bacteria, co-existing with myself. In If not, Winter, Anne Carson presents the poetic lyrics of Sappho with recognition to all the lost lines, leaving blank space for the reader’s imagination, rather than attempting to fill in the gaps in translation [63]. In my works, I think of voids, gaps, darkness and holes as holding potential rather than nothingness. Imagination is a critical tool in building futures. What imaginings could form within the darkness?

C.A Conrad is a poet, queer elder, mystical being and somatic ritual creator. In their poem POWER SISSY INTERVENTION #1 Queer Bubbles [64], they occupy a street corner in North Carolina to bless children with bubbles that will make them “queer”. I frequently look to C.A in relation to my practise. They embody the form of somatic rituals; they enact their ideas. Thrilled by the bubbles, I wanted to attempt a similar tactic of embodied queer poetics. This desire is experimented with through my practise. In What Lives in the Lacunae, bubbles are blown into the wind, an ode to C.A, and to a childhood magicalness.

In the dark, bubble juice drips down the chin of the fairy, creating tiny rivers of lipstick across their face. They laugh and laugh and want to embody the bubble, to float calmly into the skies and pop. Attempting to create a wild, perverse or manic queer joy through costume, performance, blowing bubbles and eating, this deviant mythological fairy embraces a wild feralness.

[62]. Machado CM. In the dream house: A memoir. Strange Light; 2019.

[63]. Carson A, Sappho. If not, winter: Fragments of Sappho. 2009.

[64]. Conrad CA. While Standing in Line for Death. 2017.



What Lives in the Lacunae, 2022. Laura Duffy. Commissioned by Te Tuhi.

What Lives in the Lacunae was created for the exhibition Wild Once More curated by Christopher Ulutupu, an off-site project by Te Tuhi Gallery held in the dark concrete tubes of Silo Park in Tāmaki Makaurau. The conceptual framework was based on a critical understanding of the “wild” and what it could mean to return to a wild. In Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire, Halberstam thinks of the wild as a social, political and imaginative framing device, a historical production, a mood and an affective force [65]. Discourses of the wild are tangled in imperialism, colonialism, racism and biocontrol.

Previously, my research and visual practice were concerned with the social category of “nature”, of what this broad term encompasses and excludes. Now, I am thinking of wildness and queerness as a deviant slippage between nature and monsters. Wildness has been associated with something uncultivated, not domesticated, primitive, feral or beast-like. In a Pākehā cultural imagination, the wild has existed in “uncivilised” animals and landscapes [51]. I am interested in queerness’s relationship to a deviant, feral and monstrous wildness in response to my own lived experience. As Pākehā, there are blindspots when speaking to

a “wild”, which was constructed as a racist weapon and normative social structure by my ancestors. The idea of taming the wild can come from white supremacy, which underpins the ongoing colonisation and leaks into gender, sex and sexuality. The taming of ecologies, bodies, animals and queerness to be domestic, docile and civilised is uncomfortable and permeant.

Working in moving image means drawing on, or alongside, a long history of experimental queer cinema in screen culture. Mainstream horror is drawn on as a genre that enacts fantasy and reality as coexistent, examples being *Bride of Frankenstein* (1935), *Psycho (*1960) and more recently *Titane* (2021) and *MEN* (2022) With embedded moral codes and lessons, horror has played a large part in constructing disgust in relation to queerness. This video work draws on cinematic tropes in horror to shatter fixed realities and enact new possibilities, instead of reproducing normative, cis-het-coded, Christian moral lessons [66].

Inside this world, my mother, friend and I all act as one character, or multiple versions of one character. Together, they are all extensions of a manic, fairy, younger and older version of myself, and of them. A central aspect of the work is using the making process as a tactic to create fun through hard times, utilising fun and fantasy as coping mechanisms. This fun is translated through the video to audiences. This framing of making as joyful runs through my practise and I intend to keep thinking through this lens and expand into future works.

Autonomy in interrelations are central to my process of making. In an accompanying essay for the exhibition, curator Chris Ulutupu describes the different strategies throughout the works to ensure autonomy. For me, this looked like allowing my collaborators autonomy around how and to what extent they are seen by the camera. Ulutupu states, “I am conscious of how the medium of video can enable voyeurism and exploitation of our marginalised experiences, to quench the consumptive desire of the bourgeois to see and know.”[67]

My direction for the performer, my friend Jelly, was to laugh devilishly, blow bubbles and creep around in the night. Over-the-top fake laughing crosses a line from joy into hysteria. I think of Sam Taylor-Woods’ slow motion portrait of a person laughing hysterically, it crosses a threshold where it is difficult to tell if they are laughing or crying . Like a baby, I find myself mirroring the emotions I can understand in this work: when they laugh I laugh, when they look distressed I feel sad. I love the feralness and the ambiguity of laughter that is verging into hysteria.

[65]. Halberstam J. Wild Things. 2020.

[66]. Somerton J. Monsters in the Closet - A History of LGBT Representation in Horror Cinema. 2018

[67]. Ulutupu C. Wild Once More. 2022.



What Lives in the Lacunae, 2022. Laura Duffy. Commissioned by Te Tuhi.

Wanting to embrace a chaotic, opaque perspective, What Lives in the Lacunae is filmed in what I think of as glimpses, as if a person is spinning in the dark, opening their eyes to catch a quick look before blinking. Things keep moving. The night is the canvas. The fairies obscure my shadows. To dance in darkness feels like embracing the unknown as a force ourselves, to enjoy being a sub to the universe.

Unlike Garden of Purity, What Lives in The Lacunae enacts a feeling of immediacy, a digital media concept of dissolving technology for the viewing experience to be primarily with the film itself. In an attempt to create somatic affect, when displayed as a single-channel projection, the emphasis is on the audience entering into this world, rather than focusing on its installation context. The large scale of the projection, at Silo Park, allowed the audience to enter the work and primed a more visceral bodily experience.

FROM EMERGENCE OF AFTER



From Emergence of After, 2022. Laura Duffy.

Spawn, Fluffy, Pollinator, and From Emergence of After intend to unleash the constraints of Nature to enact new pleasures. The urge to pull apart nature as a construct is fueled by a feeling of collective climate grief, a rage of ripping holes. I think of Mary Magicc's video Molecular Queering Agency[12] and their freak science experiments as pessimistic yet electrifying in their position of embracing the toxic[15]. Magicc discusses embracing the reality of bodies becoming a sort-of-queer through being trans-mutated through endocrine disruptors of hormones, plastics and polluters. Magicc critically embraces waste and transmutation as a space to consider the realities of the unnatural and dangerous, while simultaneously progressing a sort-of-queer politic. Thinking about Magicc and Preciado's thinking around bodies as unnatural, I question: Where do we go from here?

Rather than thinking it is too late, Haraway describes staying with the trouble as learning to be truly present within ecological troubles (For The Wild 2019). Haraway thinks-with relating to oddkin, toxic parts of this earth, as generative rather than negative. My works try to remain present within a turbulent time. From Emergence of After is hopeful, yet I wonder if it smells of defeat.

In the dark, we tune in to our surroundings at a different physical wavelength, becoming more conscious of texture through the sound of the ground beneath our feet; more perceptive to the brush of a branch on skin; our sense of smell enhanced. Where What Lives in the Lacunae embodies this darkness as disorientation, catching glimpses, From Emergence of After feels like slowly navigating the eerie magic of a cold, dark night. Containing suspense, mystique and heightened sensuality, moving through darkness can feel terrifying and disorientating, as if familiar landscapes were transformed into haunting possibilities. Physically, how far I am able to see shrinks to an arm's length, a more intimate perspective [68]. This sense of hypervigilance, unfamiliar terrain, and shortness of perspective are translated into shadowy, low-light moving images in From Emergence of After. From the pitch-black darkness, glimpses of spider webs, strands of hair, or skeletal plants appear, emerging from the submerged. As images fade back into darkness, the shots appear like glimpses, lingering. Darkness serves as a gift of autonomy to the audience to use their imagination to fill the nothingness rather than tell them by depicting it with clarity.

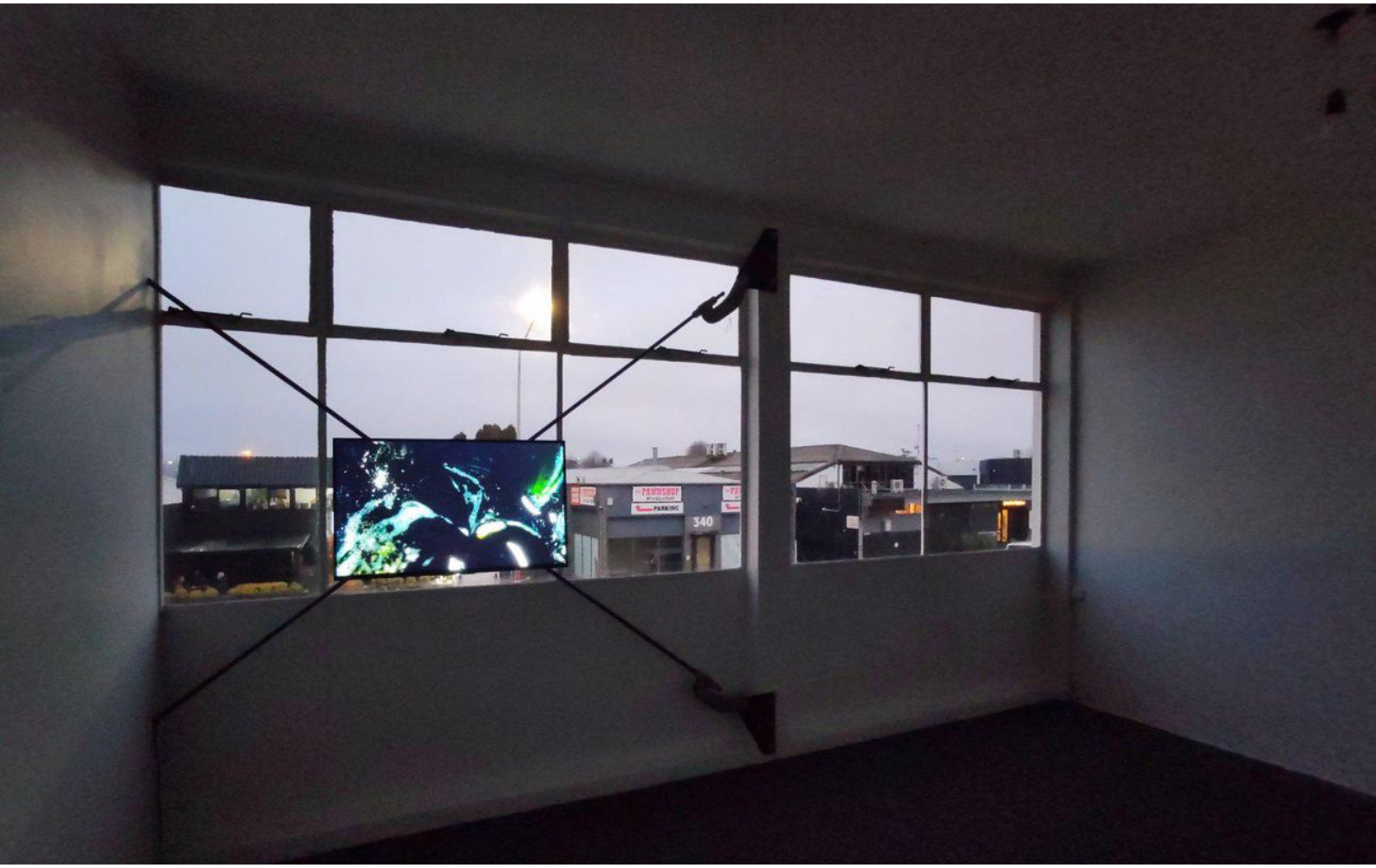
I wish to be held by the more-than-human, supernatural, magic of the earth. Inside of my desire to lovingly connect, I feel a disconnection, a rupture, that presents as a wave of fear, grief and then shame [69]. From Emergence of After is born of this relationship, as a space of perverse darkness, a mutated underground, a deviant unconscious. The idea for the video began as an imagining of the earth after humans have vanished, where new life blossoms in darkness, drinking from toxic waste. The idea grew and morphed to form a perspective (loosely) as if from an underground swamp. This swamp has been defiled with trash and toxins. Instead of abjecting the horror of environmental destruction, we stay with it. From Emergence of After aspires to go beyond the familiar, working with materiality derived from this earth, both organic and synthetic, as enmeshed.

From Emergence of After, like Spawn, draws on scientific visual language in an effort to complicate and disrupt the visual language of what is accepted as "fact." I am invested in what is rejected, such as ideas of the supernatural and alchemical concoctions, more than I am in imagery that preserves the status of "truth" [70]. Embodied in Mary Magicc's art practise of freak science, I think of making videos as a site of experimentation, with the joy of surprise at its core [15].

From Emergence of After is filmed in what I think of as a laboratory, in a lab-studio setting where growth, spreading and fermentation come to live with me. My lab is hectic, probably dangerous, and gross. A rancid fish tank filled with decaying flowers ferments in the centre of the room for months. Lights and cameras are balanced on books and held in place by tape. Materials gathered for the video are primarily rubbish. The work is always juicier when I am able to leave the materials to mix and mingle for lengthy periods of time.

My work draws on fetishistic filmic devices from food, cosmetics, fragrances and technology commercials. Droplets dribble down glossy black plastic. Glistening porous surfaces perspire, the droplets reflecting light back to the observer. Robotically controlled mutant plants swing. Honey squirts on dead flowers. A shadowy plant feels seductive whilst being suffocated by gloop.

Inviting time into my process, over the course of two months, I filmed in multiple nighttime sessions, often for several hours at a time. The audience is invited to see only a portion of the entire footage captured. Although I work with a loose shot list, it is often discarded after a few hours. Instead, I follow the directions from the camera and materials. Unexpected occurrences are always the most enjoyable. I do not draw hard conceptual lines around my ideas before I start making them. I like to work intuitively, follow the materiality, have fun,



From Emergence of After, 2022. Paludal. Laura Duffy.

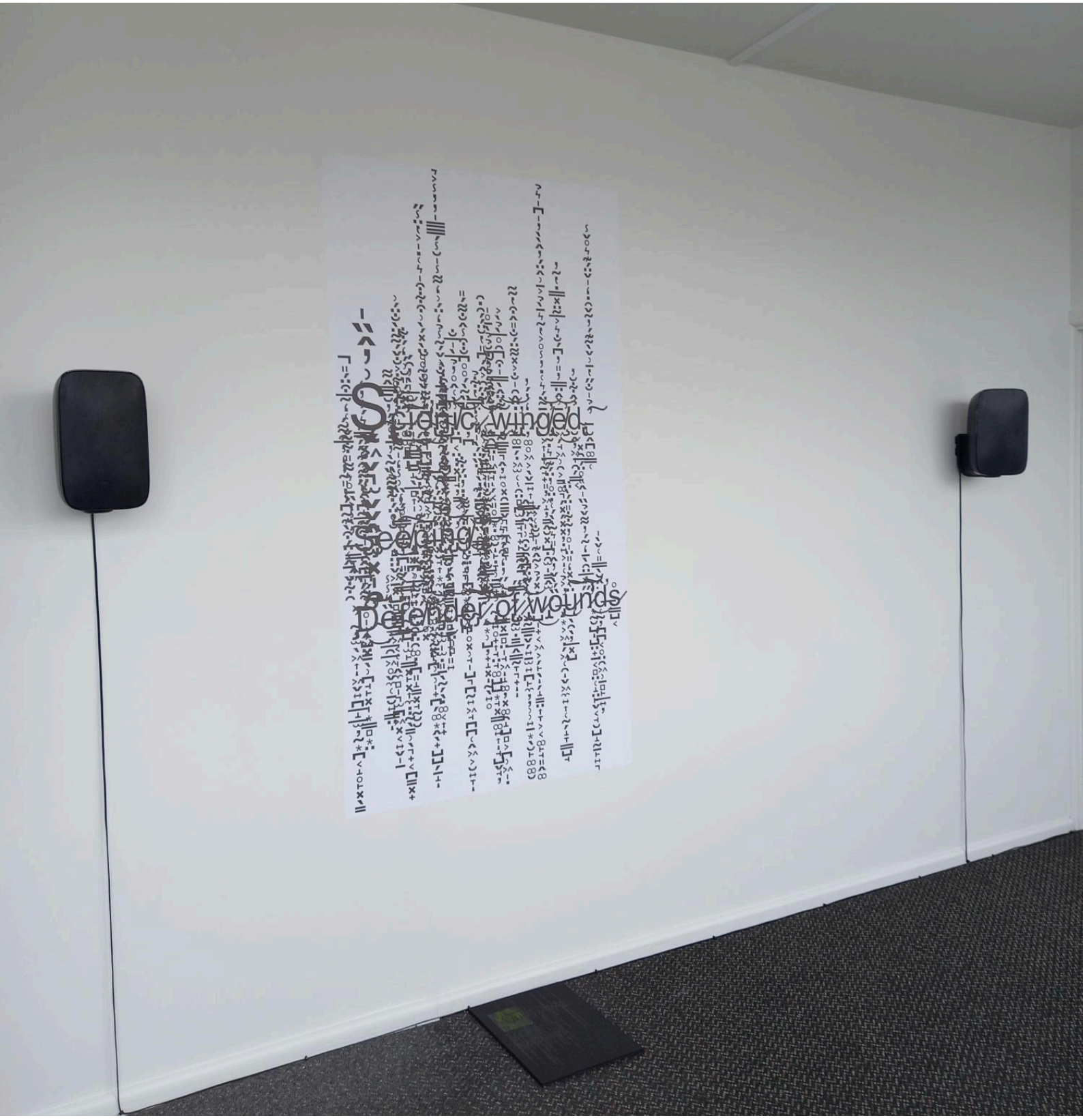
and pay attention to the small details. This approach welcomes the unknown, by creating a filming environment open to chance, unfamiliar materials, and collaboration.

In my head, I follow this funny little relationship framework. When beginning to shoot, it is awkward; things do not look the way I want them to, and they frequently do not come together as in my imagination. This awkwardness eases after growing familiarity together. After hours of working together, the camera, materials, and I relax, and can have fun with each other. Similarly, before I can edit the footage, I enjoy slowly becoming acquainted with it as an entity.

The first showing of the work was at Paludal, an artist-run space in a small gallery above a bar–restaurant–venue in Ōtautahi. Just as I was responsive to the ecological history of Ōtautahi as wetlands, I became obsessed with my immediate and local histories of the dark, old cottage on Holloway Road in Aro Valley, Wellington in which I was living. I became enthralled by ingesting details of the original occupant's life in the early 1900s, especially in regard to her personality, thoughts or interests. Through this investigative process, I was not closer to knowing her at all. From Emergence of After is not necessarily site-specific in its response to place. Rather, it is a broader response to the physical and emotional darkness within the histories that I have been researching and exploring with reference to a lack of documentation, access and erasure of queer histories, I feel like I am looking into the darkness, trying to see, feel and hear. Following on from What Lives in the Lacunae, From Emergence of After asks: What is created within the space of the histories that have been erased, rendered inaccessible, marginalised, burned or left behind? Is it possible to complicate a void of history, fact or evidence by writing into the darkness of the night?

Richard Orjis' Jerusalem begins with a dedication: "For the river, the witches and faggots" [71]. This dedication positions the work as loving and tender, acknowledging queers in the past in whatever form, acknowledging the layers of histories and the whakapapa of the river. The first draft of text written for From Emergence of After was structured like a love letter. Small sentences began with "to" or "from"; as a dedication to the witches, freaks and faggots from the emergence of after, which is to say, from now, from later, from a long time ago. From Emergence of After wants to summon up queer transmissions, to search for an unfindable ancestral body.

Paludal requested a piece of writing to exist in conversation with the exhibition. I spoke with Aliyah Winter, artist, friend, and collaborator, of the desire to acquire a text that is experimental and poetic rather than descriptive, writing to flow with the images, rather than alongside. This time, our collaborative dynamic was within the confines of a request, the commissioning of a response, dissimilar to previous collaborations which were more like fungi supporting the growth of a forest. This conversational dynamic was important as it enacted her autonomy and took away my control. Much like working with materiality, allowing space for unexpectedness is my preference of working with (trusted) artists too. The response was gorgeous; it became much more expansive, poetic and visual than expected. To disrupt the distance between artist and writer in the show, and to reflect the process, I brought the text into the video itself. Aliyah's poetic text emerged from the darkness, between clips, to speak. We printed her text and featured the work as a wall piece.



From Emergence of After, 2022. Paludal. Laura Duffy.

The sound of rumbling bass and bat echolocation could be physically felt at Paludal. Bringing with it a dense atmosphere, it developed into a looming vibration. Bats see with sound, echolocating at a frequency that cannot be heard by human ears in all its fullness without the assistance of an ultrasonic bat monitor [68]. Drawing on bat sounds helps to ecologically locate the work in Aotearoa, an ode to the pekapeka. It is also to think expansively of sound as a way of seeing. This soundscape served as a prototype for future collaborations with friends Emily Berryman and Lucy Reid of the experimental Sci-Fi Goth duo Crone. Crone took the original soundscape and enhanced the audio to reflect the enmeshment of the synthetic and organic materials shown in the imagery. Focusing on the audience's bodies, they spatialized the sound so that it appearred to emanate from the same dimension as the visuals, but also felt corporeal. With the collaboration, Crone contributed their understanding of soundscapes as physical environments.The audio and visuals complement each other rather than compete. The scape has a meditative feel due to the use of coding software to loop the audio.

Within an exhibition context, I had envisioned From Emergence of After as a multi-screen installation with monitors suspended from melted steel frames. Think Garden of Purity with a heat gun on it, melting frames to create organic-like forms. After testing a triptych of 55" monitors on truss stands, I decided against spatializing the work for this iteration as I wanted the audience to be able to immerse themselves in the work without interruption or confusion from the objects.

FUTURE AND AFTER NOTES

Throughout this time, I have pursued a desire to disrupt natural/unnatural binaries, revealing the instability of the concept of nature itself. I feel that whatever actual un-encoded, unbiased, “true” Nature is, it doesn't care about external rules or articulations of normalcy. It simply continues to exist outside of the lens we cast on it. This dismantling of human-centred knowledge provides relief by making possible the unnatural, the supernatural and the unknown.

I've enjoyed experimenting with expansive video techniques, such as self-portraiture, collaboration with performers and studio-lab filmsets. Also, the process of translating or expanding ideas into sculpture has been generative, and I am hopeful that future works will be installation-based.

In December 2022, I will install a reiteration of ! ERROR!, a body of work made in 2020 for exhibition at Enjoy Contemporary Art Space. For this re-edit and re-showing, I will further explore opacity, darkness or invisibility as a space for imagining, as well as continue to queer technologies and archives.

Also, I will be participating in an exhibition at Gus Fischer in February 2022 about queer ecologies. For this, my initial idea is to spatialise Spawn into sculptural frames which create a viewing experience of looking through a garden or a lab, with monitors at different heights and angles to the viewers’ bodies.

To enact a feeling of a clean or tidy end to this text would be insincere. As with living organisms, these experiments and ideas will continue to develop legs and run; expanding and accumulating as they fly.

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IMAGE LIST

1. Laura Duffy, Pollinator, 2020. Digital still. 4K Digital video.

2. Laura Duffy, Pollinator, 2020. Digital still. 4K Digital video.

3. Laura Duffy, Spawn, 2021. Digital still. 4K Digital video.

4. A True Story, 2020. Owen Connors. Egg tempura on board. Photographed at PARASITE.

5. Laura Duffy, Spawn, 2021. Digital still. 4K Digital video.

6. Laura Duffy, Fluffy, 2022.Steel, resin, wire, LED light strip, batteries, spray paint, spit, raspberry, dirt,acrylic, dandelion, gorse flower, thyme, gay flower, weeds, fabric, plaster. Approx dimensions: 1250 x 800mm.

7. Laura Duffy, Fluffy, 2022.Steel, resin, wire, LED light strip, batteries, spray paint, spit, raspberry, dirt, acrylic, dandelion, gorse flower, thyme, gay flower, weeds, fabric, plaster. Approx dimensions: 1250 x 800mm.

8. Laura Duffy, Fluffy, 2022. Steel, resin, wire, LED light strip, batteries, spray paint, spit, raspberry, dirt, acrylic, dandelion, gorse flower, thyme, gay flower, weeds, fabric, plaster. Approx dimensions: 1250 x 800mm.

9. Aliyah Winter, Invocation, 2022. Digital sublimation prints on polyester satin, steel, paint, 1400 x 4400mm. Hanging mechanism by Laura Duffy.

10. Aliyah Winter, Invocation, 2022. Digital sublimation prints on polyester satin, steel, paint, 1400 x 4400mm. Hanging mechanism by Laura Duffy.

11. Maybe Someone is Starting to Bloom, exhibiton photograph, 2021. Laura Duffy.

12. Maybe Someone is Starting to Bloom, exhibiton photograph, PARASITE, 2021. Laura Duffy.

13. Laura Duffy, Are You a Fairy, 2021. 4K Digital video

14. Maybe Someone is Starting to Bloom, exhibiton photograph, PARASITE, 2021. Laura Duffy.

15. Laura Duffy, Garden of Purity. The Dowse Art + Museum, 2021.

16. Laura Duffy, What Lives in the Lacunae, 2022. Digital still. 4K Digital video.

17. Laura Duffy, What Lives in the Lacunae, 2022. Digital still. 4K Digital video.

18. What Lives in the Lacunae as part of Wild Once More, Silo Park. exhibiton photograph, Te Tuhi, 2022

19. Laura Duffy, From Emergence of After, 2022. Digital still. 4K Digital video.

20. From Emergence of After, 2022. Exhibition photograph, Paludal. Laura Duffy and Aliyah Winter.

21. From Emergence of After, 2022. Exhibition photograph, Paludal. Laura Duffy and Aliyah Winter.

APPENDIX

Exhibitions over the period of MFA study

April 2021
Candy Coated
The Dowse Art + Museum, Lower Hutt, Te-Whanganui A Tara

June 2021
Maybe someone is starting to bloom
PARASITE, Tāmaki Makaurau

December 2021
Spawn
Gallery 5 (online), Australian Centre of Contemporary Moving Image , Naarm

January 2022
For The Feral Splendour
The Physics Room, Ōtautahi

March 2022
Wild Once More
Silo Park, Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau

July & December 2022
From Emergence of After
Paludal, Ōtautahi

December 2022
ERROR! - Perilous: Unheard stories from the collection
Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū, Ōtautah

Exhibition: Candy-Coated

Work: Garden of Purity

The Dowse Art + Museum, 45 Laings Road, Hutt Central, Lower Hutt
04 April 2021 - 04 July 2021

Artists: Rachel Maclean (Scotland), Jon Noorlander (Sweden), Alison Nguyen (USA), Patrick Smith (Puerto Rico) and Elisa Barczak (Germany/NZ) Laura Duffy, Sam Duckor-Jones, Emily Crooks, and Wayne Youle (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Whakaeke, Ngati Pākehā).

Curated By Dr Chelsea Nicols, Senior Curator at The Dowse Art + Museum.

Materials: 4K video in 7-channel looping installation, steel frames.



Preview link: https://youtu.be/CO2fiACPtq4

“I AM WITHOUT SHAME, I AM ASHAMED : I AM THE SPEAKING OF MY NAME”,
4K digital video, duration 3 min 0 sec, (2018, re-edited 2021).

“DO NOT STARE AT ME WHEN I AM THROWN, I AM THE LIMBS OF MY MOTHER”
4K digital video, duration 3 min 0 sec, (2018, re-edited 2021).

“YOU WHO DENY ME CONFESS ME : YOU WHO CONFESS ME DENY ME”,
4K digital video, duration 3 min 0 sec, (2018, re-edited 2021).

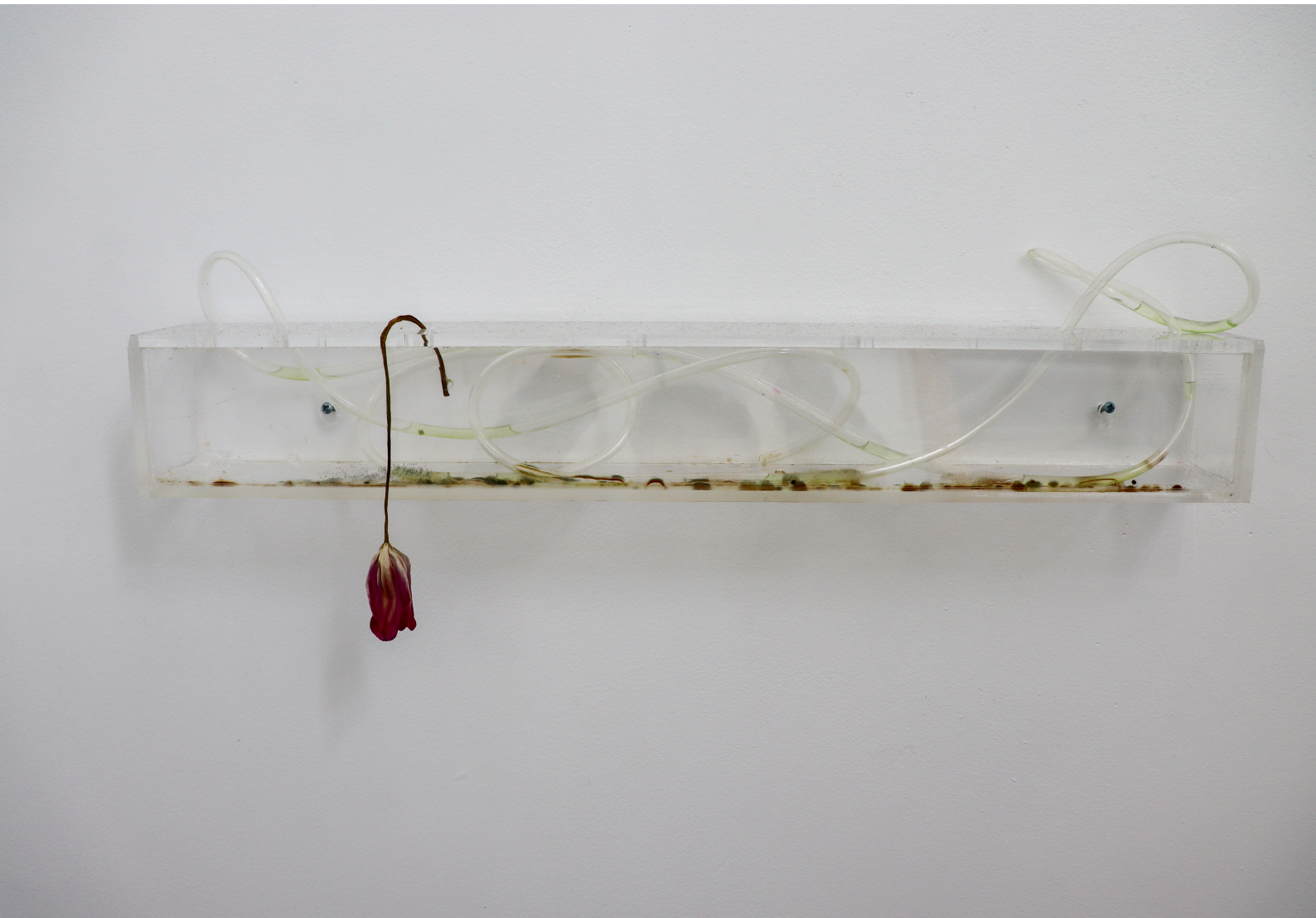
“I AM WITHOUT SIN AND THE ROOT OF SIN IS WITHIN ME”,
4K digital video, duration 3 min 0 sec, (2018, re-edited 2021).
“PAY ATTENTION TO ME AM SHE WHO IS DISGRACED AND SHE WHO IS IMPORTANT”,
4K digital video, duration 3 min 0 sec, (2018, re-edited 2021).

“I AM THE COMING TOGETHER AND THE FALLING APART : I AM THE ENDURING AND THE DISINTEGRATION”,
4K digital video, duration 3 min 0 sec, (2018, re-edited 2021).

“I APPEAR TO BE LUST BUT INSIDE IS SELF CONTROL”,
4K digital video, duration 3 min 0 sec, (2018, re-edited 2021).

Exhibition: MAYBE SOMEONE WAS STARTING TO BLOOM

26 June - 17 July
PARASITE, 448 Karangahape Road, Tāmaki Makaurau
Solo exhibition
Curated by Daniel Sanders











“It’s probably what a bee looks like”
Galvisnised steel tube, steel tube, plastic tubing, plastic orchid
Laura Duffy, 2021.

“Wire drawings”
Materials: Wire flowers, steel pipe
Laura Duffy, 2021.

“Pollinator”
4K video, 3min
Laura Duffy, 2021.

“Maybe someone's mouth is open.”
Steel, Etched Plastic, plaster, fruit juice, moss, stones, dirt.
Laura Duffy, 2021.

“Artificial poem”
Vinyl text
Laura Duffy, 2021.

“The same is true for the interior.”
Steel, resin, LED light strip, leaves, false eyelashes, dirt

“Spit it out”
HD video, 6.26 min, steel
Laura Duffy, 2021.

“Maybe someone started to grow”
Etched Plastic, plastic chain, hook, wire, spray paint,
Laura Duffy, 2021.

“Are you a fairy?”
4K video, 3min
Laura Duffy, 2021.

“wire drawings”
Plastic, wire, hot glue
Laura Duffy, 2021.

“Probably a plant with green leaves”
Material: Tap, fixtures, steel, Spray paint, found material, hot glue
Laura Duffy, 2021.

“Please Be a Pansy”
Materials: Plastic, tubing, fruit juice, sports drink, tulip, screws.
Laura Duffy, 2021.



“Are you a fairy” Preview link: https://youtu.be/Coh-MkM5lsg

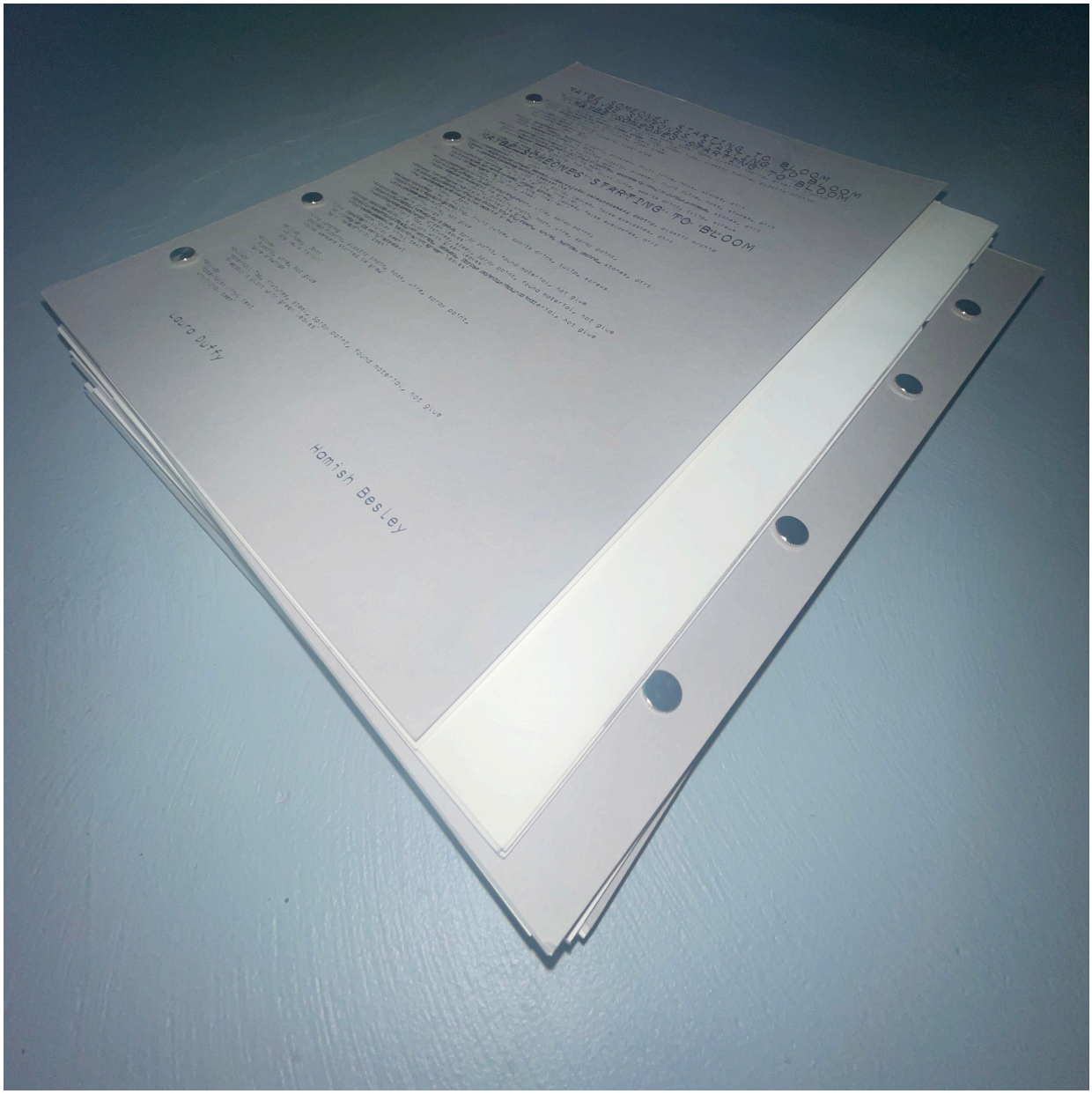


“Pollinator” Preview link: https://youtu.be/pfN74OkJSEA

Publication

Maybe Someones starting to Bloom, Laura Duffy. Designed By Hamish

Published by Admin Press, Pōneke, August 2022.
ISBN: 978-0-473-6342-8



Written response

MAYBE SOMETHING IS STARTING TO BLOOM, C.Forrester

Commissioned by Laura Duffy in response to MAYBE SOMEONE IS STARTING TO BLOOM PARASITE, Tāmaki Makaurau 25th June 2021
Preview link: https://www.instagram.com/p/CRF4O2fMpT_/

Exhibition: Spawn

Gallery 5, Australian Centre of Moving Image
December 2021 - 06 March 2022
Curated by Serena Bentley



“Spawn” Preview link: https://youtu.be/Lcp6wMlMk9Q

Exhibition: From Emergence of After

Paludal, 371 Asaph Street, Ōtautahi
08 -30 July 2022
Curated by Zina Swanston, James Oram, Simon Palenski.

Written response
Lentic, Aliyah Winter

Commissioned by Laura Duffy as part of *from emergence of after,* Paludal, Ōtautahi 8 - 29 July 2022.

Your signifiers have been compromised
Yor signifiers have been compromised
Yo(ur) signifiers have been compromised
Yo(ur) signifi(re)ers have been compromised
Your signifi(r)e(r)s(fires) have been compromised

Yo[u]r]
Signi[[fi[re]er]s
H[as]ve [be]en
Com[promise]d

I whose signifiers have been compromised
You with tearing flesh

You who impose by sheer violence
In the acquisition of meaning
Which cannot be maintained
I who have no name
No eyes to see the light

I who bid corrosion
Wreaking you follow

Vested with names
Folding in all directions
XFc
FEmissary,
Acid myth,
Impaler of names

Overawed
All sun-facing beings
Imminent render,
Dawn
Of zero

Golgotha
Mangled of

Harmonious pledge

Codes of spring,
Hushing moth,
Wrested

Unravelled
Carrion metals
Burdening

A grace set,

Butcher count
Desecration

Aesthete of territory
Of many myths
Burdened metals

Ingot of shade,
Of the dark.
Into the clough

Monstering fall,
Arising,
Sheathe ruin

Hurling
Tether
Severed
Desecration
Strapped
Forged

Hurling sight
Consecration field
Residuate

Waxed market
In accumulation

Mauling watcher
Calcified
fog collapsing

As fog collapses

Darclapse
Forged at star-height
Severing

Calcified
These so-called
Names

Folding in every direction

So-called names
So-cold-in-there
So-called names

Still out of reach

Bloom in still water
Blooming still
Overawed

I who dwell in the rings of matrix
If you follow the channels
It is empty

DOMinion

[Dom]inion
Resolute
Empty navel closing

[0]
[[0]]
[[[[[[0]]]]]]
Nothing can be raised

Blooming sepulchre
Outstreched
In sun face

Hearken to me
Alluviate
Burning shut

roped
And held

Stamen
The trampler
Laking the weary

Pathfinder
Blistered mountain embrace
Dim whole

Scionic, winged,
Seeping,
Defender of wounds

H(o)ld(ing)
As if it
Is Held
In the Body

As if it is held
in the body
H(e)ld
in the body(ies)
H(o)ld
the b(o)d(ies)y
((O))
((((((O))))))

{{0}}

Still water runs
Water still
R(a)N
StILL
Wat(err)
Wat err(th)

Exhibition: Wild Once More

Work: What Lives in the Lacunae

Silo 6, Corner Beaumont & Jellicoe Streets, Wynyard Quarter, Tāmaki Makaurau.
03 March - 27 March 2022.

Artists: Aliyah Winter, Connor Fitzgerald, Daniel John Corbett Sanders, Laura Duffy, Neihana Gordon-Stables, Sorawit Songsataya,

Curated by Christopher Ulutupu, researched by Robbie Handcock.



Preview link: https://youtu.be/IrsEpysI04A