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MARINO TE HAU
CALM THE WIND

Noa Noa von Bassewitz

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An exegesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
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Abstract

This exegesis examines an interdisciplinary art practice grounded in *auto-archaeology*—a methodology of embodied excavation that merges personal narrative, myth, and material process. Through large scale air-inflated sculptural forms made from parachutes and other repurposed materials, the project is an adaptation of printmaking beyond the frame and into atmospheric space, where air and breath become medium and metaphor. Engaging mythic figures such as Papatūānuku, Hine-nui-te-pō, and Persephone as internal archetypes, the work explores transformation, ageing, and the maternal body as sources of creative and political power. The project is a performative act, a show without actors retelling a heroine's journey through a birth/death/rebirth cycle that is charted by the southern hemisphere seasons. It proposes an ethic of gigantic softness—making as resistance, care as method—and situates the Crone as both feminist symbol and regenerative force.

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**E Kore au e ngaro,
he kākano i ruia
mai i Rangiātea**

I will never be lost, for I am a seed grown
in Rangiātea

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Inner Storm

The female form is represented by earth and clay in myth.

Papatūānuku the earth mother. Gaia the earth spirit.

Bones and soil turn into fertile ground.

I was welcomed into the world of women with songs

*and a glowing realisation that the blood and pain of puberty was also a koha—
a fresh womb*

*and me a womb/an who could one day create new life
out of my own flesh and blood.*

And I did.

Life bloomed to rhythms of seasons and flowed with the moon.

Now my body is disassembling the mechanisms it created in its youth.

This is not a linear or well-planned deconstruction.

*An absent-minded foreman has given the job to unqualified tradies who have been let loose in my body,
swinging at random parts of my inner structures.*

I am now a vessel, sagging and billowing without certainty of rhythm and cycle.

*A cataclysmic weather pattern has descended on the shores of my being, flooding me and leaving me dry in
unseasonal ways.*

*Mother and Earth, Mama and Whenua are unknown to themselves in the face of these storms. Once upon a time
I was a person I once knew.*

Eyes open to new terrain each day, both wondrous and foreign.

I feel I am forgetting myself.

To be recreated amid a life you thought you knew, is to be stripped of a skin of identity that felt like 'you'.

The animal inside is more powerful than the human guise I have painted on through life's imaginings.

I have pulled the worm from the apple, drunk the elixir and now get to transform again.

By the light of the moon I can bay my empty farewells.

Tears.

Thunder. Hooves. Needles. Flaming hands.

Tenderness and pain.

Swelling and raging.

Like sand hurled into the eyes—

stinging and blinding and unpredictable.

Yes. And more to come.

Under a full moon there is a shimmer of a path forward.

These breadcrumbs won't ever lead me home, just out of the woods.

This one was made to soothe the storm.

Introduction

I returned to study in 2024 because I had reached a plateau in my printmaking practice of many decades. Printmaking had become a restrictive visual language for the stories I wanted to tell through my art making. I arrived at art school with a mission – to make giant unframed prints. The air-filled sculptural works created during this MFA are in service to that initial impetus – a solution to the printmaking framing problem, using air as support.

Using the self-made thinking tool of auto-archaeology, I excavated the archive of my authentic female self. Through an art-making practice involving body, mind, and ritual, the performances and the cast of sculptures deliver an archetypal story arc – the mythic heroine’s journey. Much like shifting layers of sediment to reveal a lost ruin, the retreat of the hormonal veil in early cronehood lifts the gauze that wraps reality in an oestrogen-filled state of female non-seeing. Like a limpet with proto-ocular sight, I have turned my eyes inwards and downwards and in so doing, I have hauled up a mountain of womanhood.

The work speaks to my own womanhood, to my personal story of transformation into Crone. “The wild woman archetype sheathes the alpha matrilineal being.”¹ writes Clarissa Pinkola Estés. I am a mid-life woman in the midst of an all-encompassing physical renovation. The hormones that circulated my fertility are evaporating. This project charts

an undoing and remaking of self outside dominant cultural directives.

Inspired by Estés’s interpretation of the life/death/rebirth cycles of womanhood, by Michael Ende’s novels *The Neverending Story* and *Momo*, and informed by Jungian analysis, world mythology, and philosophical critique, my research moves in rhizomatic directions that echo Deleuze and Guattari’s *Mille Plateaux*. The exegesis unfolds through seasons, cycles, and mythological heroines. As Jane Yolen explains in *Touch Magic*, “Using archetypes and symbolic language, fairy tales externalize conflicts and situations that cannot be spoken of or explained or as yet analyzed.”²

The project tells a story of becoming crone through a multi-disciplinary performance piece. The works speak to the emotional labour of womanhood and to the physical and cultural terrain of perimenopause today, in 2025. This is a personal journey retold through sculptural body doubles. In *The Sensing Body in the Visual Arts: Making and Experiencing Sculpture*, Rosalyn Driscoll explains, “What we label ‘fear’ or ‘anger’ or ‘longing’ is physical sensations happening in specific places within the body. The body is responding to something, whether real, imagined, remembered, or unconsciously remembered.”³ The sculptures aim to become visual embodiments of these emotional states. The project addresses the female experience of ageing, emotional labour, transformative energy, and visually gives voice to the need for female self-determination.

Where Len Lye's sculptures seek to explore "kinaesthetic" motion through composed movement,⁴ my work seeks to capture the essence of life experienced through breath and air. Each sculpture embodies an emotional state, an organ, a memory – a ritual remnant of my artistic engagement, a "step on the journey."

I am a stowaway in the art community, the daughter of journalists, poets, artists, and editors. My inspiration for making art doesn't come primarily from a visual world, but an aural, storytelling one – the world of children's literature and comics read aloud a thousand times. This forms the bedrock of my creative practice. As Jane Yolen reminds us, "To do without tales and stories and books is to lose humanity's past, to have no star map for our future."⁵

From an anthropological perspective, the final performance is a Trojan horse for an anti-culture stance – a colossal "No Thank you" to patriarchal norms and accepted ways of seeing womanhood, motherhood, and cronehood. Ideologically, the work stands in opposition to patriarchy and capitalism. As Barbara Kruger demonstrates, refusing to "play nature to your culture" exposes the acculturation of women's bodies within the phallic ideology of capitalism. "We are unsuitable for framing."⁶

My research critiques conditions that strangle women with narratives and doctrines that do not serve them. Instead, the C-word – **CRONE** – is reclaimed as the great mother. Through auto-archaeology, I dig down into the subconscious and into the fundamentals of cellular knowledge. The works resemble blooms, shells, and fossils – proto-human ancestral beings. Personal myths and shadows have been examined and their veracity tested. Together, the works tell an archetypal heroine's tale of trials and quests. They have escaped their maker's hand, carrying their origin story in their folds. In collective performance, they live as glowing air-filled orbs, taking up space softly, breathing themselves alive.

I heard playwright Victor Rodger, ONZM speak at the Arts Foundation breakfast at Parliament in March 2025. I wholeheartedly agree with his sentiment "We must make work that not only reflects the world we live in, but the world we would like to see."⁷ We must chart the path forward with our imagination.



Figure 2. *Cempasúchil – Time Flower* with herself projected onto herself, Retired parachute nylon, Dye, Bicycle tyre rim, blower , projector, dark test space, block. Photo by author.

Mind Midden

In the midden of my mind, I will unearth myself to myself.

I will lay my post holes and my shells bare.

I will find evidence of old loves, and locks of children's hair, the love spells and embarrassing photos

I will find who I once was and trace the threads to my current self.

I am an auto-art-archaeologist.

Welcome to my new mind tool.

It has sharp edges like a pickaxe for cleaving away calcified resistance toughened to avoid exposure.

it has soft brushes for removing the dust that obfuscate symbols in the soil.

It has moist sponges for soaking the quiet sobs of recognition.

It has small trays to contain the found treasures...

so you can try to categorise and make meaning out of your discoveries.

You won't be able to.

But it is better than leaving them buried and forgotten.

There will be pleasure and pain on this journey.

There will be dissolution and there may be tomo—

try not to fall in.

You won't find rock bottom unless you really try hard.

I will walk blind through the labyrinths of my internal corridors.

If I don't come back, don't look for me,

I might have found another exit.

Auto-archaeology

Auto-archaeology is a mind-tool for excavating myself. Some people have excellent memories; I hold mine in my body, in deep places that take a long time to find. In another life I was an anthropologist and a teacher. I have assessed auto-ethnography. It is a fine tool, but I need something specific for my sieve-like recollections. I know there are many tools for understanding experience, but I was inspired by Barry Barclay's invention of Fourth Cinema, created to contain Indigenous filmmaking within its own rightful vessel.⁸ In the same spirit, I wanted a tool that fitted my own purposes, so in the spirit of #8 wire kiwi ingenuity this theory is a mind-tool made from what I found useful in the garden shed of my brain.

Auto-archaeology is a personal methodology I have created to draw up, face, and revisit the depths: the layers that do not give up their treasures willingly. Like artefacts found in a deep cave or burial mound, original meaning is often lost, and new meaning must be invented, supposed, or conjured to make sense of the remnants we find. The archive of my notebooks reveals a palimpsest of identities; a woman both known and unrecognisable, each iteration a necessary passage toward the self I now inhabit. The earth of my being is liquefying; I am becoming a creative aquifer.

Rebecca Solnit reflects my own proclivities of thought when she said, “Your whole life is a research expedition, collecting specimens and building your pattern-recognition skills as you accumulate experiences and ideas about them ... hunter-gatherers in their own memories, experiences, and interpretations, curators in the natural-science museum of their heads.”⁹

My German family crest with its rearing boars drifts up from my subconscious and into my dream lexicon. Most of my genes are German, some Scottish, others Māori with Hawaiian roots still attached. My DNA says so. Yet my Māori lineage was cleaved off by my mother's closed adoption until recent revelations showed roots to Arawa and Ngāpuhi. The question “Where is your maunga?” has been a stumbling block in my pepeha. This year, I have made my own maunga – a mountain of womanhood – gathering her parts, her organs, and emotions, stitching them into an internal self-portrait.

In the past, I was trained to see through many lenses – anthropologist, teacher, mother, sexuality educator. I consider myself a citizen of the world – *tangata taiao*.

I am not alone in this search for roots in the Earth. Lisa Reihana considers her art practice an excavation, and Annette Messager's elaborate installations speak to “those dark truths of human nature, the fragility of life itself. We can glean only the ephemera — it's the manner in which we heighten the

personal, for social objects are mythic markers of our histories.”¹⁰

Unlike Tracey Emin’s *My Bed*, which is tethered to confessional intimacy, Messenger’s mythic approach has guided my own. My aim is not confession or exposure, but to lean into the mythologised and unifying aspects of sharing a lived life – excavating what is buried until it speaks its own universal truth.

Auto-archaeology excavates “feelings” as poetically alluded to by Yoko Ogawa’s reflections, “My memories don’t feel as though they’ve been pulled up by the root. Even if they fade, something remains. Like tiny seeds that might germinate again if the rain falls. And even if a memory disappears completely, the heart retains something — a slight tremor or pain, some bit of joy, a tear.”¹¹



Figure 3. *Time Keeper Seeds*, April 2025. Photo by author.

On Auto-Archeology

My personal reality as a woman is politically charged. No matter how hard I try to pull away from what I am. My art making leads me like a baulking teenager back to my inescapable self, again and again. My art making is a seeking to be whole—it is a psycho-spiritual quest that can only be unearthed through material experimentation.

I am process driven, materials driven.

Curiosity and a deep-seated desire to define myself in opposition to social norms lead me to test the boundaries of material possibilities, to reimagine their purpose, their application, and their visual becoming.

All this leads me back to being a woman, a mother, a daughter, a wife and an artist who concerns herself with female things.

I want to be a male artist more than anything. But I am not, and my art unmasks me every time.

I make vaginas. I sew. I make art that feels like I am making a bed. I dye in an old nappy bucket.

Everything is made from a life with children. A life as “Home Maker”.

For me to be a woman is to fill the gaps and plug the holes, spread myself thin then glue the world together. For me to be a woman it is to balance an urn upon my head, containing the minutiae of my own and many other people’s lives, their needs, their wants, their calendars and lost wallets.

I don’t know what I am when I am not a function for another being. I have mothered my mother, my father, my animals, my sons, my partners and my pot plants. My body knows how to make and feed another life. My life is one of nurturing men.

But where is my own intrinsic value?

I clean to keep the world from confining me in dust. Making art feels like internal housekeeping—a constant act of reorganisation, of seeking an order that makes sense, of emptying cupboards and memories. I don’t know myself except the self-reflected in the art I make, in the stories I remember and the stories that I tell.

Like the Bunyip I ask: “What am I? What am I? What am I?” I am a Bunyip. But what is that?

Bunyip is a collection of execrable, repugnant attributes. But to another Bunyip they are the most beautiful thing in the world.

Why in the world when we face of the current political albatross/nightmare, why when the political spectacle has even outpaced my own favourite forbild/role model of the future stolen from the B grade sci-fi “Idiocracy”, why am I so flooded with optimism NOW?

The Practice – Methods and Materials

The Emotional Historical Memory of Air/Wind – Reimagined Perspectives on Atua Tāwhirimātea

HA! Tihei Mauri Ora. We need air to be alive – a body with no air is a corpse. We need air more than water, more than food, more than shelter. We need air to be alive. Wind is free and wild. It also carries a frisson of irritation, of anger with a tinge of melancholy. In a time of crisis, breathing becomes difficult – short, painful gulps of air sipped like a scared rabbit.

This year the air I breathed became the most important symbol for survival. I made what I needed in the world – “space to breathe.” In my auto-archaeological investigations, I unearthed the memory of standing on the beach in Hahei when my parents separated. My twelve-year-old grief-stricken child self-howled together with Tāwhirimātea.

Tāwhirimātea is a child from a broken home. He has all the characteristics of a disgruntled child wreaking havoc with his mother on earth and running wild at his father in the sky. He likes to slam doors. I relate to the humanity of Tāwhirimātea – his touch on my Wellingtonian skin reminds me I am still alive – a stronger tree from exposure to his forceful nature.¹²





Figure 7. (Top Left) Christine Sun Kim and Thomas Mader, *Attention*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, July, 2025. Photo by author.

I discussed this installation with the attendant who endured the deafening blower that periodically inflated the work's giant hands. Knowing the artist is deaf, I was struck by the sensory irony and relieved to have found quieter ways to animate my own inflatables.

Figure 8. (Bottom Left) Inflation test with floor fan, T Block, August 2025. Photo by author.

I have intentionally left the fans visible in my work to date. They are a low-noise and cost effective solution to the inflation problem. Modified openings and repurposed bicycle-tyre rims provided flexible inserts to hold the parachute apertures open.

Figure 9. (Top) Maruch Méndez, *Hurricane Eta*, Museo Universitario Arte Contemporáneo (MUAC), Mexico City, 2022. Photo by author.

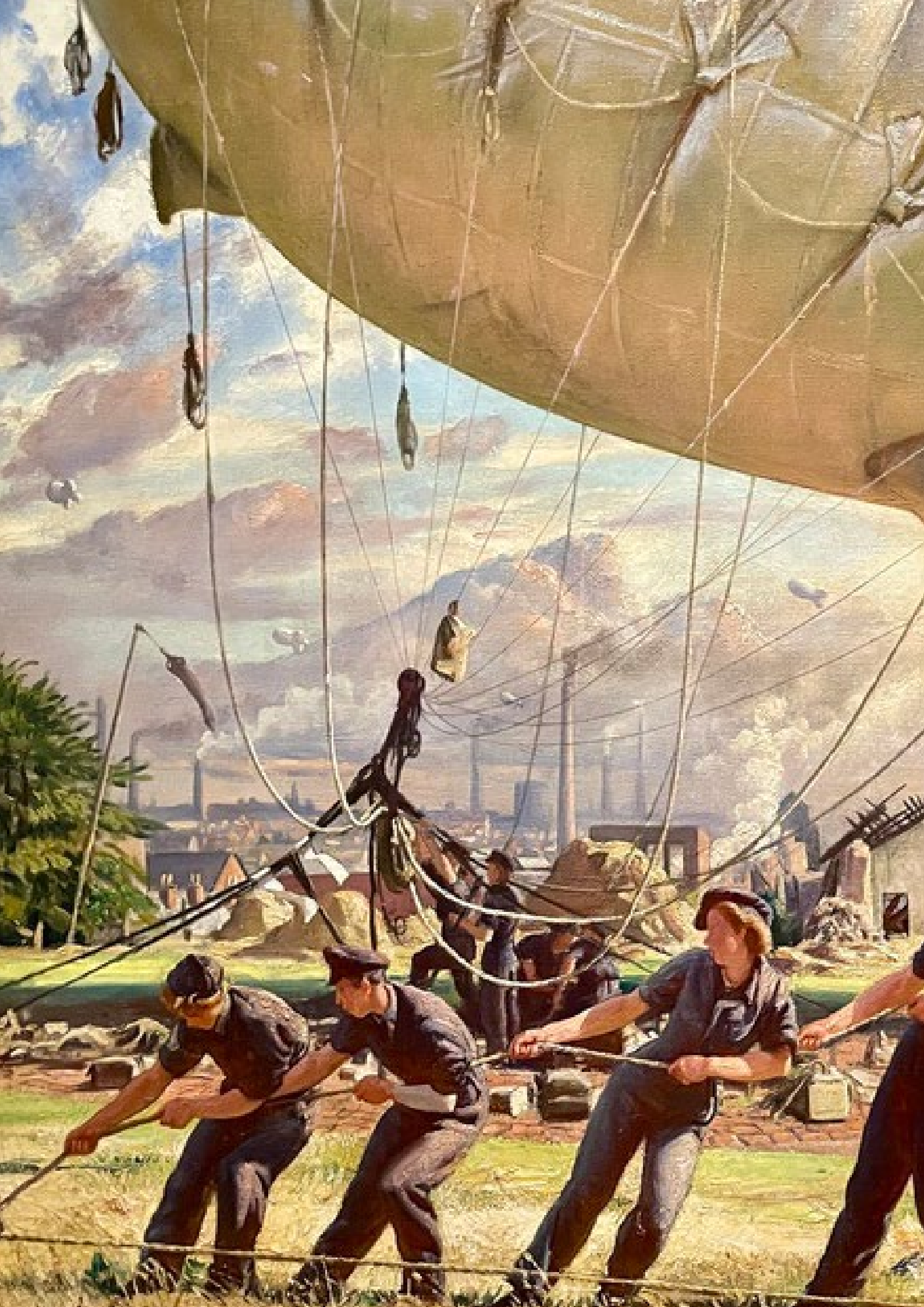
This large-scale installation narrates the destructive power of Hurricane Eta. Immersed in noise and wind, the work offered a sensorial parallel to my own explorations of air and motion – an environment of energy and unease familiar to a Wellingtonian.

Figure 10. (Left) Pack down in T block showing the small bundles the works reduce down to. T Block April, 2025.

Figure 11. (Overleaf) Dame Laura Knight, *A Balloon Site*, Coventry, 1944. *A Room of Her Own – Women Artist Activists in Britain (1875–1945)*, Clark Institute, Williamstown, MA. Photo by author, July 2025.

Dame Laura Knight (1877–1970) was only the second woman ever to be elected to the Royal Academy of the Arts. This historic painting reflects the struggle for female artistic recognition and the temporary liberation of women's labour during wartime. The depiction of the giant blimp resonated with my own air filled making practice. The exhibition *A Room of Her Own* explored the challenges for female artists to find time and space outside the domestic sphere to dedicate to their creativity.







Meaning and Materiality

The history of parachutes resides on the tip of my tongue like a little Wikipedia factoid sheet – partly because I get asked a lot and partly because I needed to know what baggage (excuse the pun) my chosen material brought to my art-making practice. My first forays into the use of parachute material came as a result of looking for cheap material to make big prints. I found a source of “retired” parachutes at an affordable price and the relationship began. The rip-stop nylon fabric used to make parachutes was developed as a joint venture between DuPont and Pioneer Parachute Company. Silk parachutes made in Japan became unavailable during the Second World War for the Allied Forces in response to Japan joining forces with Germany.

The first person to test-jump using a rip-stop nylon parachute was Adeline Gray, the only certified female parachutist at the time, in 1942.¹³

There is visceral pleasure in my ability to pack them down into a suitcase to transport them. I

can carry them in my arms easily like a small child or a pet and yet, when mixed with the sculptural element of air, they grow and engorge themselves, occupying space. As they billow and breathe, expand and deflate, they speak a language that feels decidedly female. The sagging fabric echoes the folds in my belly that stretched to grow my sons and now crumples and folds.

The fabric I use has saved lives. Many thrill-seekers have jumped from planes, been held suspended in the sky, and deposited safely back on terra firma. That’s quite a history for a piece of fabric to carry in its fibres. It has enabled people to take a leap of faith. Now it is my turn to create something new and beautiful and wholly different in their afterlife – to be reborn as something new, an artwork impregnated with the mother-lode of emotion and air. The parachute becomes my metaphorical speech bubble, my body double, my inner organs and private thoughts. We transform together.

Transportability

Aotearoa is a geographically distant country surrounded by water. Portability facilitates a conversation between work and exhibition space. An hour from my parents' home in Massachusetts is one of my favourite contemporary galleries, Mass MoCA, comprising of over 250,000 feet of converted mill buildings. The building affords a generous interplay between space and sculpture. *Inopportune* by Chinese artist Cai Guo Qiang is an awe-inspiring installation I witnessed at Mass MoCA in 2005.¹⁴ The work entailed nine cars suspended from the ceiling in a kind of animated sequence radiating with rods of light evocative of bombing. Twenty years on, we now live in a time of cost cuts to the arts and rising transport costs due to climate change and oil prices. My work is made out of recycled light material manageable for my own corporal limitations and is easily transported in a suitcase or reasonably sized box. The works are almost like oversized Art Letters, easy to send and receive. Similarly transportable to prints

In November 2024, in Mexico City at the Diego Rivera Anahuacalli Museum, I was inspired by the exhibition *Amnesia Atómica* by Mexican artist Pedro Reyes, which focused on nuclear disarmament and featured a gigantic air-filled mushroom cloud work, “Zero Nukes” placed in the museum surrounded by Riviera’s epic murals. The air was ducted in from a blower housed on the roof of the museum. However, placing a blower outside a gallery in windy, wet Wellington didn’t strike me as an entirely feasible solution.¹⁵ Using standard fans has opened up new possibilities.

I tested this by taking *Heart Organ a.k.a Body Double* to the USA in July to inflate and film at my parents’ home. The trip was a form of farewell to a country I have had familial connections with for over three decades. I did visual research in many galleries that have left an indelible mark on my making including Mass MoCA, The Whitney Museum of American Art and the Clark Art Institute.



Figure 12. *Heart Organ (A.K.A. Body Double)*, garden, Montague, MA, July 2025. Photo by author.

Figure 13. *Time Keeper Seeds*, June, 2025. Photo by author.



On Place – Personal and Public Histories

Full moon. Time to talk about birth. The Old Museum, perched overlooking the city of Wellington to be precise. This place is a chosen place. Māori chose it because it was good whenua – a perfect place for a Pa, a perfect place for people, Ngāti Tara named it Pukeahu (Sacred Hill).

The building that stands here now was built to the colonial specifications of its time. One would feel familiar in its foyer if one had visited *Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes* in Mexico or *Die Naturhistorisches Museum Wien* in Vienna. The coat check is to the left, the ticket booth to the right, the central landing sweeps your gaze skyward to twisting staircases that take you to floors that flow unimpeded by doorways like an old-fashioned palace. One spectacle of space connected to the next corridor of curiosities and on and on in a great big rectangular circle.

Te Āti Awa chose this place to build a pā. It was a good place, with water and wide views to the harbour. Colonial powers, as they often do, took possession of the land and built barracks, a prison and eventually the “Dominion” Museum building that now houses our Art/Design school. I need to tell you a story about a little girl...

“A little girl lost her father at the Museum. Her father left her in the “Oceanic” display area, by the giant blue whale. He had to “nip to the post office.” She heard him say “won’t be long, you stay here”. Leaving the four-year-old in the underwater wonderland, he assumed her attention would keep her eyes glued to the sea creatures

suspended above her head. It did for a while, but then the little girl grew tired and curious.

She wandered through the museum for what felt like hours, until eventually she found her way to a long hallway of offices. This was where the museum workers worked. The little girl peeked inside the first office, and the person who sat there was as surprised to see her there as she was to see them. They asked her “What’s your name” and “Where are your parents” and upon learning that she had been left there they took her under their wing and made her a paper airplane. Then the police came and picked her up.

The little girl enjoyed the short ride in the police car playing with her paper airplane. She had learned a new skill that day, how to make the folds that make a flat piece of paper fly.”

That little girl was me. It seems strangely appropriate that the exhibition *Heroines From Ruins to Rebirth* a performance sculptural re-enactment of the cycles of womanhood should be birthed in this very building, with all its colonial and pre-colonial history. But the personal history of the little girl and this building feel like a completed full circle, a finding of a lost child who now gets to breathe deeply as a woman. I searched for the right place to birth this offering of storytelling, and performance, of sculpture and ritual, this tūrangawaewae is the right place to plant this seed, it is the right container for this story.

The Project – Heroines from Ruins to Rebirth

A performance-sculptural reenactment of the new myth – *Mama Maunga and the search for Ngā Kākano o te Ngākau, a Tale of Ritual Female Reclamation*.

These works are a manifestation of rebellion essential for female creation, similar to Luce Irigaray's essay "The Looking Glass, from the Other Side," where she posits that "The fable of Alice [in Wonderland] might be read as a proto-feminist fiction of a dissident daughter who steps outside the codes of patriarchal authority – defying the self-consciousness reflected through the mirror of masculine logic, to discover what she wants."¹⁶

This project contains eleven performance sculptures, each depicting a step on the alchemical journey of Mama Maunga – the artist as performed via the alter ego of her sculptural body doubles. A singular and also global re-imagining of a woman's life cycle. A resounding **NO!** to societal expectations and constrictions, this Crone is reclaiming the *C word* as nomenclature of grandmother wisdom and matriarchal power.

A number of works circle back to *Día de los Muertos* or the Day of the Dead, also known as *Samhain* in Pagan traditions and popularly referred to as Halloween – "The day abounds with witches, of course, but in a type of Crone aspect that our culture, with its ageism and fear of female power, rejects absolutely."¹⁷

I have borrowed inspiration from Mexican, Māori, and classic Greek mythological sources such as Demeter, Persephone, Hine-nui-te-pō, and Hinerauwahāangi.

Madeline McNamara's BATS play *Madame d'Ott and Pandemonic Attractions bring you Demeter's Dark Ride: An Attraction* (21 Oct–5 Nov 2005, BATS Theatre, Wellington)¹⁸ has been a guiding experience from which I have taken much inspiration. I felt lost in a theatre I have known all my life; I felt consumed by the sensorial nature of the experience, leaving as it did an indelible mark.

Heroines is a play acted with sculptures – costumes without actors, a story without words about one woman's quest to find all her parts, name all the feelings residing within her being, and transform them into visual embodiments of her lived experience.

The sculptures present a self-portrait from the inside out. Yes, the works resemble wombs and vulvas, orifices and lips and skin and organs. They resemble aquatic life, rubble, and surrealist blossoms. This is the result of auto-archaeological digging – down through the edifice of ego, identity, childhood trauma, heartbreak, and ingrained patterns of living, down deeper into flesh and bones, DNA lineage and all ancestors who have stood and crawled and swum through time since Thea and Earth

made love and created a liveable blue planet... and before, when we all were still part of the swirling cosmic dust of possibility.

Sisyphus rolling a rock up Mount Olympus is depicted as punishment, but it is also purpose. Each day, to push a heavy load with all your strength and know tomorrow you will need to do the same. Sisyphus is like a mother waking each day to repeat a cycle of care and work and holding entropy at bay through repeated wiping, sweeping, cooking, and cleaning. But when a mother stops this incessant care for others, this martyrdom of self, a creative potential can bloom within her.

This performance installation follows an archtypal hero's journey. As in Michael Ende's *Never Ending Story*, the quest becomes a search for Self. I am reframing and claiming the heroine's journey to centre stage. It contains a search or quest, a set of trials – difficult tasks

to find the esoteric seeds of the heart and, step-by-step, finding red-blooded treasures, mesomorphic traces, love and self until returning changed.

Referencing sensorial sculpture, Rosalyn Driscoll writes, "Emotions are called 'feelings' because we feel them in our bodies. Emotions are muscular, hormonal, visceral responses that have evolutionarily evolved to produce specific automatic reactions to situations."¹⁹

My presentation explores participation in a physical space linking emotions and intellect with movement, space, and time. The works have been made purposefully and ritualistically in conjunction with the seasons – specifically Autumn, Spring Equinox, and Winter Solstice. The filmed projection is the captured memory of these transient outings.

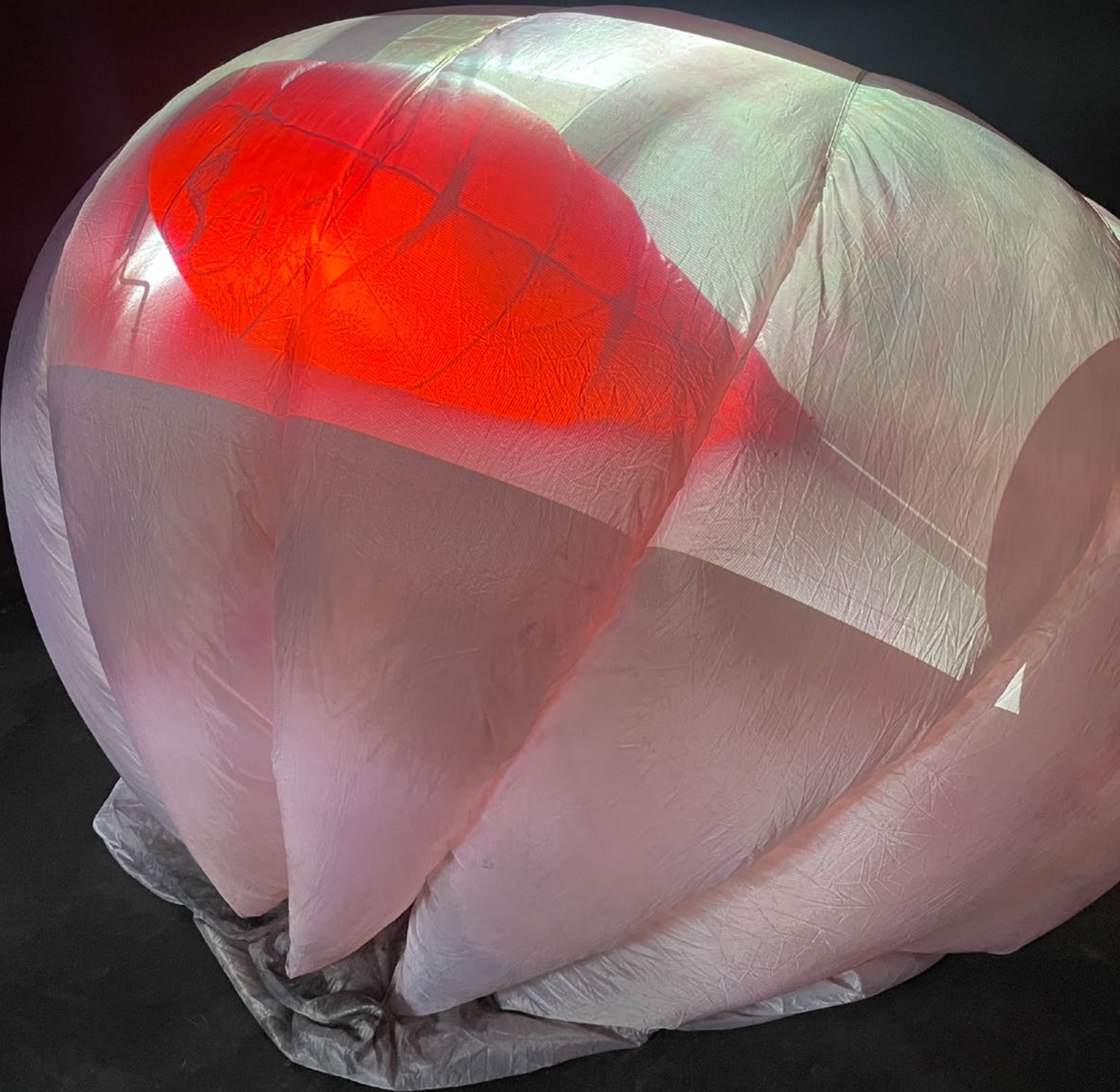


Figure 14. *Moon Child* with projection of *Heart Organ*, April 2025. Photo by author.

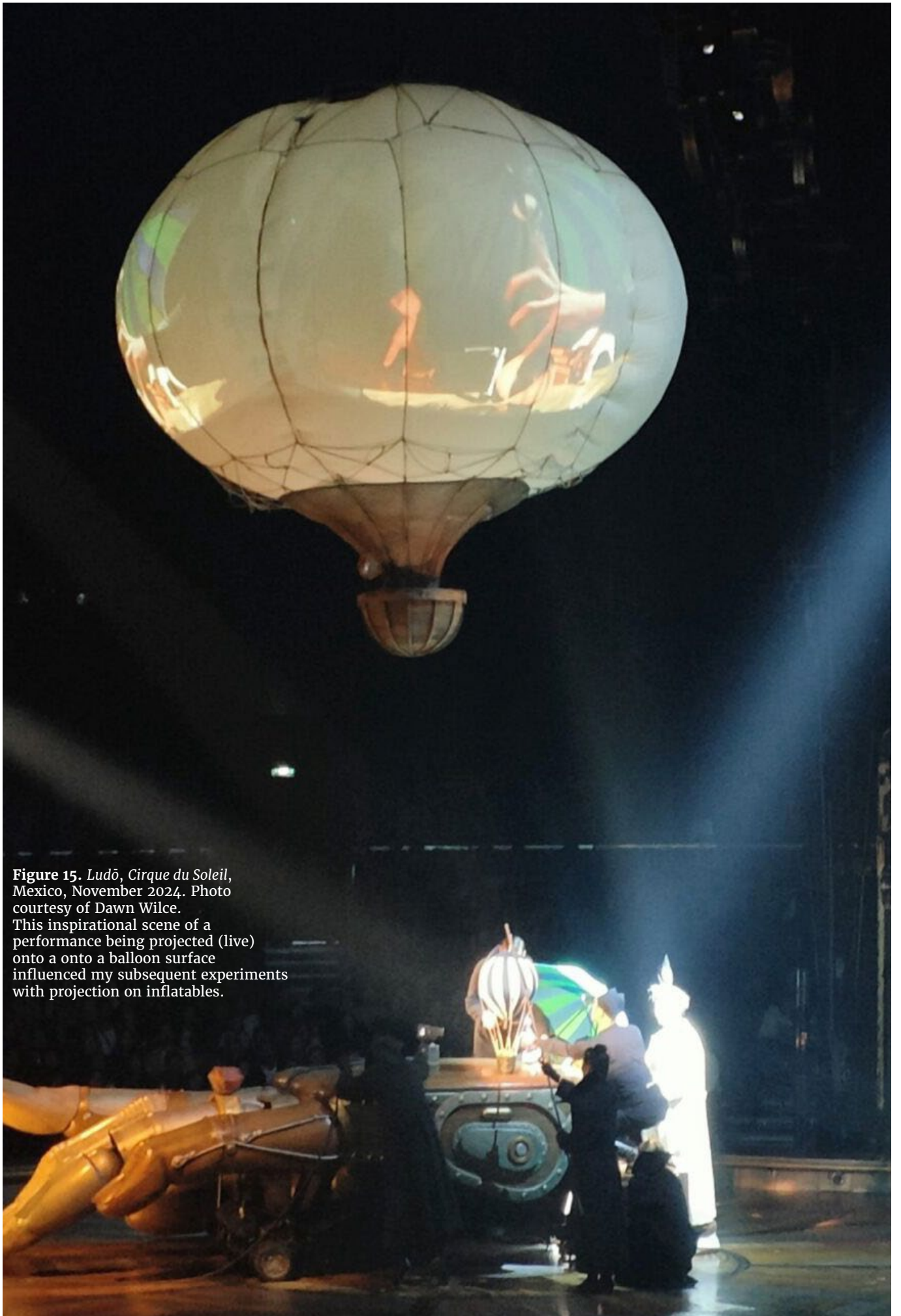


Figure 15. *Ludô*, Cirque du Soleil, Mexico, November 2024. Photo courtesy of Dawn Wilce. This inspirational scene of a performance being projected (live) onto a balloon surface influenced my subsequent experiments with projection on inflatables.

Floración de Corazón: A Karanga to Mexico

The first blooming of this project happened when *Cempasúchil - Time Flower and Storm Womb(an)* were shown in the group show *Floración de Corazón: A Karanga to Mexico* (Engine Room, Massey Campus, 9–19 September 2025). This was an opportunity for me to test the decibels of the works in a gallery setting, to engage with an audience and receive feedback.

Mexico was in many ways the catalyst for the flavour of my MFA works, the colour, the research, and the themes are in response to this experience. From Frida Kahlo, to Nahuatl language, to Dia de los Muertos, the spicy flavours of Mexican art and culture have suffused my making this year. I consider myself an artist who makes in response to events, places, and emotionally charged experiences. The exhibition was a thank you to Mexico and to Raúl Ortega Ayala for organising the PMSLA trip and to the Prime Minister's Scholarship.

See appendix to learn more about this exhibition.



Figure 16. *Storm Womb(an)* and *Cempasúchil*, *Floración de Corazón: A Karanga to Mexico*, Engine Room, September 2025. Photo by author.

Figure 17. *Storm Womb(an)* and *Cempasúchil*, Block 12 lighting space, September 2025. Photo by author.



WORKS

Harakeke seeds, Earth, kōkōwai from Port Charles, Water, Air, Sunshine, Papercrete handmade pots made with dry harakeke and supermarket bags

Time Keeper Seeds

Time has not been witnessed by a mechanical clock (digital or analogue) but by the planting of harakeke seeds – their sprouting and growth physically charting the growth of the project. These seeds come from the garden of María Cristina Sagarzazu, a founding member, together with my mother, of the Whakatāne Women’s Collective, a feminist mothers’ group. The seeds were sown, then transplanted into two self-constructed papercrete and harakeke vessels representing the one and the whole united in nature, growing together and side by side.

In Egyptian and alchemical cosmology, the world is understood as an animate being: “If the world is namely a living being, which always was, is, and will be alive, then nothing in the world can perish.”²⁰ This feeling of being woman singular versus woman collective – nature-born whole – has permeated the push of the project.

I attended a Hakomi somatic experiential psychotherapy workshop in June 2025 and learned of the concept of “Wholism,” an integrated approach to personal and environmental wellbeing. I have ruminated on this passage from *Braiding Sweetgrass* (2013): “Recent research has shown that the smell of humus exerts a physiological effect on humans. Breathing the scent of Mother Earth stimulates the release of the hormone oxytocin, the same chemical that promotes bonding between mother and child, between lovers.”²¹

Time Keeper Seeds is my earth work – the starting place of my artmaking journey. I am contained within it – within earth, plant, growth, and decay. The work evidences mindfulness and a nurturing presence, observing growth over time and through seasons. The seed’s labour offers a physical manifestation of transformation or metamorphosis – not an egg-to-caterpillar-to-butterfly progression, but a blooming of life unafraid of decay and dying.

Cempasúchil / Time Flower

She is the fired-up chilli, the impassioned woman who woke up in Mexico City and realised she was a woman who had neglected to be herself – lost in the identities of daughter, mother, wife. She had abandoned herself as a woman – being before function.

Inspired by symbolism pertaining to love, life, and death – woven from a German children’s book and a traditional Aztec story about a flower – *Cempasúchil / Time Flower* blossomed at an intersection of science and spirituality. I found a copy of my favourite childhood book, *Momo* by Michael Ende, at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México students’ market. The “time-flower” from this tale has deeply informed my concept of the value of life, and finding a copy of this socialist tale in Mexico felt like synchronicity.

The ubiquitous Mexican cempasúchil (marigold in the indigenous Aztec language Nahuatl) represents a sunlike manifestation of Xóchitl, the female character from the pre-Colombian love story between Xóchitl and Huitzilin. Heartbroken Xóchitl is transformed by a ray of the sun into a cempasúchil and her slain lover is reborn as a hummingbird. Mexico and its ancient mythologies reminded me to live with an open heart. Death is always waiting around the corner; there is no sense in fearing the cycle of life.²²

At this time my writing tutor Diane Comer reintroduced me to the works of Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Jungian psychotherapist and *Cantadora* – keeper of the stories, whose *Women Who Run with the Wolves* I had missed when it was released in my youth.²³ I immersed myself in her live podcast *Dangerous Old Women*, her mythic storytelling to soaked into me and has formed a core aspect of the “Heroines” project. She expertly mediates women’s experiences with mythic metaphors.

Figure 18. *Cempasúchil – Time Flower*, First filming experiments, en plein air at my friend Jeremiah Boniface’s Pāuatahanu studio, April 2025. Photo by author.



Heart Organ (a.k.a. Body Double)

The heart remembers – it is where we store our emotions as much as, if not more than, our brain.²⁴ In reconnecting with the body through immense heartbreak, other memories and their bodily sensations can surface. *Body Double* is a stand-in, a mythologised alter ego of “Mama Maunga,” a figure who can enact the personal from a safe distance. She is the primordial aquatic, the pearl diver who sank to the bottom of the ocean floor to find the treasure. She reached rock bottom and gathered her many legs beneath her to propel her back up to the surface. She carries an SOS. She is saving our souls. Saving ourselves. She is reincarnated from earlier works and wears old lives inside herself. She is like a fairy tale that allows me to hide in plain sight.

Lisa Reihana’s *Te Wheke a Muturangi* (2022) has become something of a cultural icon of late popping up on bodies of water all over the motu. My *Heart Organ* is a *wheke* symbolising the many arms needed to manage motherhood a sentiment explored in earlier works, such as *Mother’s Day S.O.S.* That earlier work spoke to the capitalist and consumer takeover of a day originally conceived as an anti-war protest. I took this work to the U.S.A., proving the transportability of the works – she is an international traveller.



Figure 19. *Heart Organ (a.k.a. Body Double)*, Block 12 lighting studio, September 2025. Photo by author. An investigation of light, shadow, and the reflective properties of nylon fabric, refining documentation strategies for future installations.

Figure 20. *Heart Organ (a.k.a. Body Double)*, wheke legs detail, garden, Montague, MA, July 2025. Photo by author.





Figure 21. *I ♥ Wellington (S.O.S.)*, photographic series, Civic Square, Wellington, October 2024. Photo by author.

Figure 22. *Heart Organ (a.k.a Body Double)* test inflation, March 2025. Photo by author.



Mother Courage + Ruins – Culture Climate Collapse

The role of *Mother Courage* and her journey partner *Ruins – Culture Climate Collapse* is to be reimagined rubble. They carry the odious burden of guilt that birthed the need to find a new story to tell. They are warnings and relics, fragments and detritus of the old ways. Her name is borrowed from Brecht’s play “Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder” (1939)²⁵ written in resistance to the rise of fascism. The work carries the words of a satirical poem about war. The work is also a bloom of sorts; however, her colour is muted, dyed with Harakeke seeds and Indian ink she resembles army khakis. Her mouth is open and hungry; war is hungry but also blind. I grew up with Brechtian plays; my parents put on a production of *The Threepenny Opera* at BATS when I was five, and I know all the songs off by heart to this day. This is an archaeological layer dug deep into the foundations of my being. These works rushed out of me, I sewed like a mad woman, a racing car driver pedal to the metal, day and night, sew and unpick, knot and dye, inflate and test.

Brecht’s musical collaborator Kurt Weil used popular music for didactic purposes. These works contain poetry from a hermit crab essay entitled “Solution for the big three, climate change, war and humans”. The un-inflated triptych was shown last year in an exhibition called “Dirty Thoughts, Making light work of heavy issues” at Might Could Gallery in New Plymouth.

At the start of my MFA project I was on the hunt for “the seeds of the heart” which due to life events transformed into a confrontation with life in the face of death – the death of old ways, of fertility, of workable paradigms. Josh Kline’s *Project for a New American Century* at the Whitney Museum (April–August 2023) addressed climate change and displacement, revealing how reluctant humans are to face change.²⁶ It took being pushed to the edge for me to take the leap.

Ruins has settled as an open fragment for this performance. Like a floating stone, a living fossil of a trilobite, she is a cross hatch of imagery both solid and transitory. She was dyed multiple times to create the rock-like appearance she wears along with her poetic lamentations regarding climate change.

Through facing fear, walking through ruins in Mexico, and seeing civilisations layered side by side, I learned that only a way of life dies. In his essay “What to Do When the World Is Ending,” Yotam Maron adds, “I remind myself that the experience of the world ending is not new.”²⁷

In Mexico, the ruins of temples (not pyramids, as we wrongly call them in the West) are repaired with new stones. The mortar of the recreated portions is distinguished with small stones to show the original and rebuilt – old maker, new maker – a re-creation of old with

new. In Mexico City, the Metropolitan Cathedral was built out of the stones of the Aztec Templo Mayor between 1524 and 1813.²⁸ So too, *Ruins* has been remade many times and now slumps like a half erected “pyramid” herself. Cast out from cultural hegemony into the wild unknown. The works are positioned in the underworld of the subconscious, a subterranean performance space that is archaeological Atlantis. Half fiction, half fairy tale, it tells a portion of the story while bearing witness to a lifetime of anxiety.

Figure 23. Ruins and steps of Templo Mayor, Mexico City, November 2024. Photo by author.



Figure 25. Ruins-Climate, culture, collapse Photographed in block 12 lighting space October 2025. Photo by author.





Fig 27. *War, Dirty Thoughts* exhibition, Might Could Gallery, New Plymouth, August 2024. Photo by author.

Storm Womb(an)

Storm Womb(an) was made on Samhain, the Southern Hemisphere seasonal equivalent of the Mexican Dia de los Muertos. On this day it is said that the veil between the living and the spirit world is at its thinnest. The work's creation was an enacted ritual, a physical engagement with the womb of the world, the portal between life and death – reclaiming seasonal ritual in time with the natural rhythm rather than the upside-down colonial imposition.

In *Celebrating the Great Mother*, I learned that “Samhain honours the Crone, the aged, wise aspect of the Triple Earth Goddess whose maiden aspect is celebrated at Ostara... The Crone is the Goddess of winter, death, the dark womb from which new life will spring.”²⁹ This project has been timed by the planting of Harakeke seeds – their sprouting and growth physically charting the growth of the project.

The ink marks are remnants of hieroglyphic symbols washed away by the raging storm on the night of the work's creation. The seen and unseen worlds are both symbolically present. Hine Nui Te Pō and Persephone also belong to this lineage of global mythology connecting women to love, life-giving and death.

Storm Womb(an) is an entity and a visual embodiment of lived emotion. Her body resembles a giant bloom. She speaks to the wear and tear of life and loss. Her breathing bulk stands as a reminder to the viewer to keep breathing, keep smiling. We are not alone, simply a bridge to all who have come before and all who come after. Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes says, “Our difference from the European conception of death as finality is that we see death as origin. We descend from death. We are children of death.”³⁰ Making friends with Death has been my impetus for committed change, as we all return to Earth.



Figure 28. Hieroglyphic prints detail during the making of *Storm Womb(an)*, retention of print strategies in the work, 28 April, 2025. Photo by author

Puāwai o te Ngākau

Over a hundred years ago, Ghandi, who learned of passive resistance from the Parihaka movement, is oft quoted as saying, “Be the change you want to see in the world.”³¹ This year, I grew a deeper understanding of my art-making drive to make “Space to breathe” when I heard fellow MFA student Di Adams echo Ghandi’s sentiment uttering her observation that “I make what I need in the world.”³¹

Puāwai is about taking up space as a woman. Puāwai is soft, huge, and she hums. Her enormity flexes a space-taking presence and generates a powerful radiant transfiguration. A major technical breakthrough occurred with the discovery that a standard fan could inflate *Puāwai*. With her long pink umbilicus and green/yellow blossom she takes up all the space in the room. Neither aggressively nor loudly. Rather, she asserts her corporeal reality in the space like gently vibrating energy merely encased in colourful fabric. She perfectly embodies “Soft Power”.

I saw the exhibition “*The Female Gaze*” at Toi Poneke and attended a panel discussion to mark International Women’s Day May 8th 2025. Gill Greer, ex head of Family Planning Association (my old boss) adjudicated. My years as a sexuality educator zoomed from soft focus – distant memories to full colour in this room as Greer explained the state of women’s rights,

and particularly reproductive rights, were in the worst shape she had seen in her 50 years of active involvement in the field. Prior to the talk, the National Government announced they were repealing equal pay legislation for women to fund tax cuts. Effectively this action wound back the clock on women’s rights to the 1970s. The discussion turned to a question posed by a young woman “what can we do?” I realised in that instant, in that room, the work of my mother and her generation fighting for equal pay, for abortion rights, for equality in general had been eroded through neglect.

Being “woman” is inherently political and we cannot be ‘off-duty’. Of the 83 teacher’s college graduates from my year, 80 were women and three men. The three men all became school principals. The women, like myself, all went on to have children, and their careers stalled. So, what is it about motherhood that makes it more difficult for a woman artist to continue her career? Tamica Wilder, a somatic sexologist and a multi-disciplinary therapist, hit the nail on the head in a recent interview about the “mother martyr” complex, where she pointed out the potential mothers can unlock when they pour some of their caregiving energies into themselves and disconnect from the mother “guilt” trap. In her words, woman can “Phoenix.”³²

In her poem “Children of Our Age”, Wislawa Szymborska wrote:

*“We are children of our age
its’s political age.
All day long, all through the night,
all affairs- yours, ours, theirs-
are political affairs.
Whether you like it or not,
your genes have a political past,
your skin, a political past,
your eyes, a political slant.
Whatever you say reverberates,
whatever you don’t say speaks for itself.
So either way you’re talking politics”³³*

Art historian Linda Nochlin asks in her seminal essay published in *Artnews* 1971 “Why Are There No Great Female Artists?” But a more rudimentary or fundamental question is why have there been so few great artist-mothers? From a cursory scan of *successful* female artists, many have no children—Yayoi Kusama, Frida Kahlo, Rita Angus to name a few. Robin Kahukiwa and Louise Bourgeois are in the minority with three children. Marina Abramović had three abortions because she believed having children would be disastrous for her artistic practice. “One only has limited energy in the body, and I would have had to divide it. In my opinion that’s the reason why women aren’t as successful as men in the art world. There’s plenty of talented women. Why do men take over the important positions? It’s simple. Love, family, children – a woman doesn’t want to sacrifice all of that.”³⁴

With four children, my time to make art is precious and hard won. Not making art now would feel like a betrayal of myself. This is the work I need to do.



Figure 29. *Puāwai o te Ngākau*, Retired parachute nylon, Dye, Bicycle tyre rim, Fan. Second critique, light space, T Block, Semester 1, 2025. Photo by author.



Figure 30. *Puāwai o te Ngākau*, second critique, dark space, T Block, Semester 1, 2025. Photo by author.



Figure 31. “Yo Decido,” woodblock print, Oaxaca, November 2024. Photo by author.

I was struck by the prolific use of public woodblock prints as protest art in Mexico. This particular work spoke to my concerns about the loss of reproductive choice sweeping through Mexico’s northern neighbour (U.S.A) and the importance of protecting such rights through outspoken creative resistance.

Figure 32. Street graffiti, featuring Donald Trump and Elon Musk in bondage gear on a cyber truck, New York City, July 2025. Photo by author.

This graffiti summed up the tone of the political climate in New York during my visit in July 2025. It is hard for me to make my art without acknowledging the political ideologies and realities that are pervasive on the global stage as well as within our own neoliberal (I would say reactionary) political terrain.



Stay-Men

The deep dive sculpting works have produced a bouquet of vulvae flowers, anemone-like sea creatures in oranges and yellows and browns and pinks like so many labia and umbilici and aortas.

Stay-Men, however, is black and shiny and has a singular red effusion like a bud or a monocled foreskin cyclops. He has legs, he has a beak, and he has a phallus. He is the stamen of the bloom, the male essence. He is the testosterone tower, the cocky tui, the hummingbird man – lover of *Cempasúchil*. He is the lover in the story, and he stayed. This is a personal and private part of the journey. He is a wish for men to STAY and be valued and valuable as MEN, to be full and blooming and glorious and beautiful. This work talks to holism and Partnership with a capital P and a wish for the kind of world we send our sons and daughters into.

In *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity and Love*, bell hooks discusses how patriarchy boxes

men into social holes that don't afford them connection, and today that disconnect is so deep in our young men they are lost. For equality to blossom in our time, men and women must address the ways culture peddles conformity at the cost of authenticity and connection with self and the collective.

“Psychological patriarchy is the dynamic between those qualities deemed ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ in which half of our human traits are exalted while the other half is devalued. Both men and women participate in this tortured value system. Psychological patriarchy is a ‘dance of contempt,’ a perverse form of connection that replaces true intimacy with complex, covert layers of dominance and submission, collusion and manipulation. It is the unacknowledged paradigm of relationships that has suffused Western civilisation generation after generation, deforming both sexes and destroying the passionate bond between them.”³⁵

Figure 33. *Stay-Men*, Retired parachute nylon, Dye, Bicycle tyre rim, Metal support, Fan. Block 12 lighting studio, September 2025. Photo by author.



Conch Woman

A Matariki offering – a winter-blue farewell to the old year and a welcoming of the new. Southern Hemisphere adjusted. She blasts her horn like a warning. She is the tip of the iceberg and a chance to change course. Her dimensions are whale-like at approximately 5m(L), 2.5m (W), 1.5m(H). Blue dye begot *Conch Woman* with her big hips and open shell mouth. The role of the ocean grandmother is to be the keeper of knowledge who teaches the young while the parents hunt.

I was imagining the scarf I bought from the women-run Vida Nueva weaving cooperative I had visited in Teotitlán del Valle on the outskirts of Oaxaca. Generally in Māori culture, weaving is women's work, carving is for men. On the other side of the world, the tables are turned—there the men weave, and it is their business. The female-run cooperative is for women who have escaped domestic violence – a safe place to stay and to learn to weave so they can support themselves and their children. *Conch Woman* feels like a liberated woman. She has the feeling of lightness that wearing the Oaxacan scarf gave me. She is ready to chart a new course by the stars across oceans.

Figure 34. *Conch Woman*, Retired parachute nylon, Dye, Bicycle tyre rim, Fan. Outside my studio "the bunker" in Rodrigo Road, Kilbirnie, Wellington, Matariki 20 June, 2025. Photo by author.



Womb(an) of the World + Made(IN) Earth

Life, eh?

I make for the becoming of now — a celebration of life on the knife-edge between past and future — the tiny, imprecise sliver of existence we experience in a breath,

in a moment, in a lived and absorbed taste of being.

Life is a precious yet fleeting paradox.

Within us, we contain all that has been before us.

In our cells we carry our parents and great-grandparents;

we carry the memory of plankton and elements and emotions.

We are a flesh sack of experience and memory.

Alva Noë writes, “But what if every image in your mind is recycled from things that we have seen and thought about together?”³⁶ It’s time we woke up. *Womb(an) of the World* has been created from the recycled remains of two earlier works *Moon Child* and *Humans*. All the works have seen many iterations, lived other lives. She is the largest work I have made this year. Her circumference is aimed at creating a sense of awe, like seeing a space ship. She looks a lot like the aliens from *Nope*, but I only saw the movie after making her.

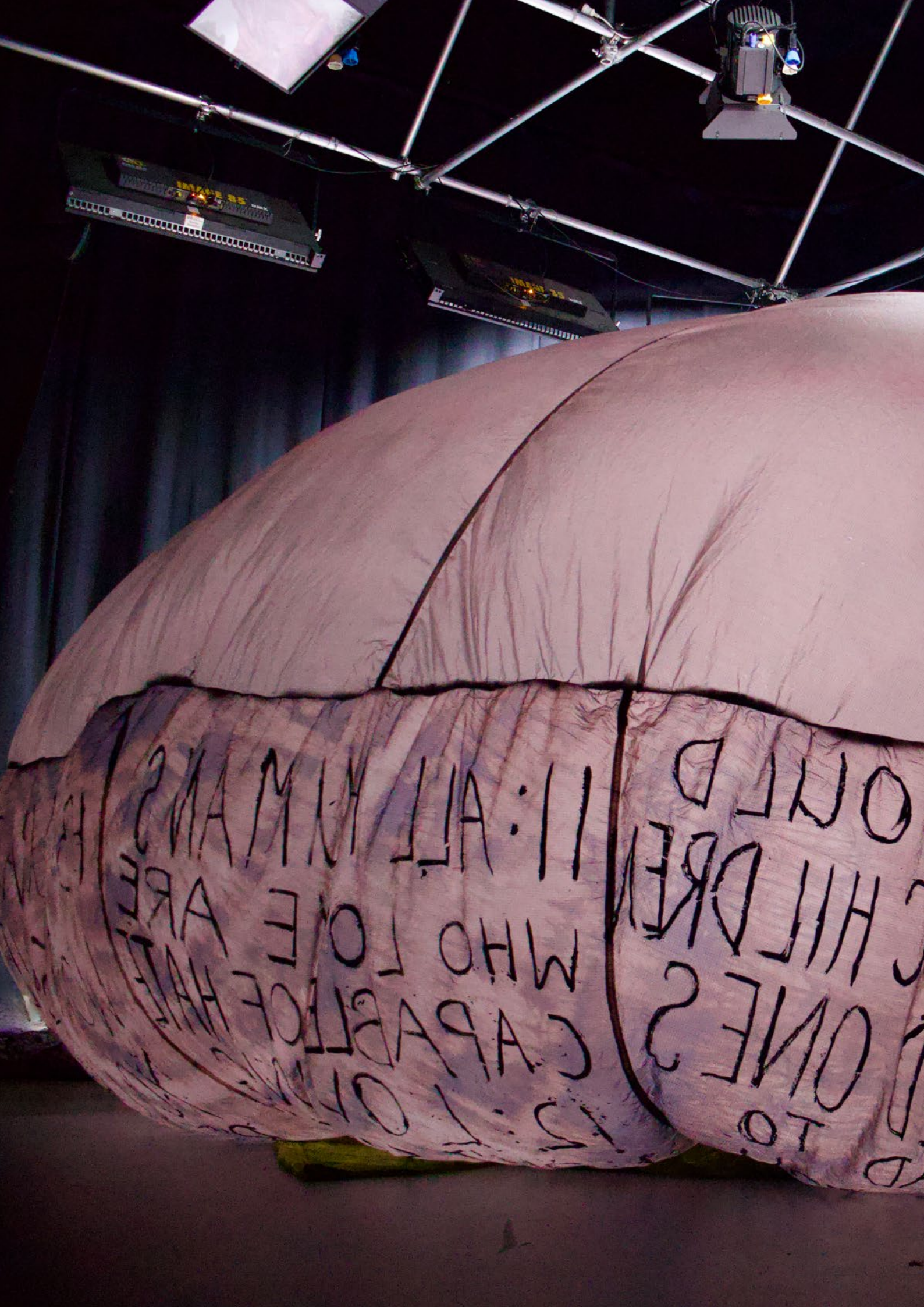
Womb(an) is a container and a whole artwork in her own right. It seems only fitting that she is full, empty, and carries a dual purpose. She bears the freight and fantasy of “the monastic maxim of alchemists: ‘One is all, and by it all, and for it all, and if it does not contain all, all is

nothing.”³⁷ Seen together with the eight minute projection, *Made(IN) Earth*, these works form the clearest depiction of auto-archaeology in action – a mind tool for exploring the strata that have created both the human artist-woman and the time-world that produced her. The projection is a series of filmed outings of the “characters” or “body doubles” in nature, at a friend’s house, Breaker Bay, and on my deck. Each segment is filmed on, or close to, an equinox or solstice, charting the body of work through the seasonal year. Archaeology, using material remains, tells us how people lived, what they valued. Through analysis of artefacts, it traces our religions, our politics, our social structures. Here, I have sought to tell of “past lives” or memories that we as humans carry within us, that create the fundament of our BEING through the use of film/projection and sculpture. The viewer is invited to make leaps of imagination to bridge the gap between the known world we inhabit today and the broken worlds of our memories and recollections. As we outsource our memories and desires into artificial intelligence, I feel we are losing something essentially human. Storytelling and oral traditions will be how we find our way home – to remember who we are, have been, and can become.

Drawing on the neoplatonic notion of the *anima mundi*, or world-soul, Hillman argued that the psyche is not “in” us, but rather that we are in the psyche – immersed in an ensouled cosmos saturated with meaning, beauty, and

intelligence. The task of psychology, then, is not to analyse or integrate the personality but to cultivate a poetic basis of mind – an imaginative engagement with the archetypal images and stories that pattern our perception and experience.³⁸ We all need to un-humanise ourselves and remember we are rocks and plants, oceans and stardust, plankton and protozoa. We are a biome with consciousness. In this cosmology, the world is understood as an animate being.

This work includes a soundscape of wind and walking both in Wellington and Mexico, as well as the sound of cicadas, fire and underground Cenote (natural pools in the Yucatán region of Mexico). This has been expertly fused into a supportive sensorial musical score by Ngahere Wafer to create the soundtrack for the performance.



TO
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WHO LOSE
THE
ART
11: ALT IN MANS
MAMMIA

TO
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CHILDREN
D
ONLY

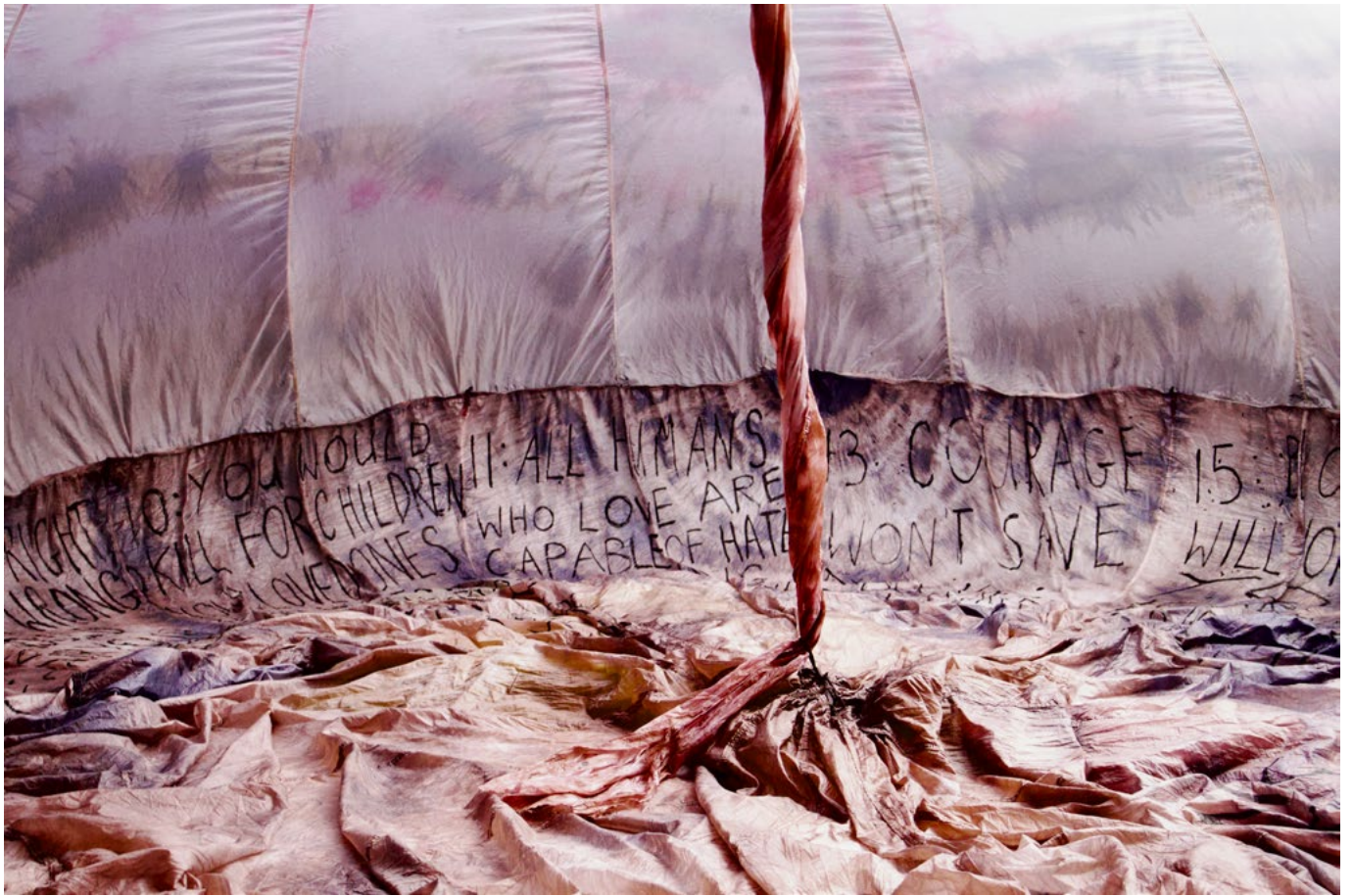


Figure 36. *Womb(an) of the World*, interior detail, Block 12 lighting space, September 2025. Photo by author.

Figure 37. *Womb(an) of the World*, deflation in progress, seen from above, Block 12 lighting space, September 2025. Photo by author.



Afterbirth + Re-Blooming

The culmination of the journey is the rebirthing of the most challenging work to fill with self. *Afterbirth + Re-Blooming* holds both decay and new life in her body. She is the orifice of becoming. She receives pleasure and gives pleasure. She was made for and birthed on Ostara, the Spring Equinox. “Most fairy tales have been scoured clean of sexual, pre-Christian ideas.”³⁹ Here, female sexuality is on display. “Plants and vegetation life cycles exist within the domain of Hinerauwahārangi. This can be broken down into four parts: seed, seedling, flowering and decay and regeneration.”⁴⁰

Afterbirth + Re-Blooming is a homecoming of sorts, a return to the imagery of blooms. This work has seen many iterations. There was a technical execution conundrum making it the hardest work to execute. She is a work made in two parts and requiring two fans. She is the new bloom separated from her Whenua, her placental sustenance. The dye application on her crêpe-like soft fabric came out in a delicate mix of Mexican pink and French fuchsia I wanted to create. *Re-blooming* is made of very worn material, so soft it is difficult for her to fully inflate. She does re-bloom but in a fragile and wrinkled fashion, as is the way of the third age of women.

I am satisfied with her gristly placental purples and her bulging attached life sack. The placenta in Māori translates as *whenua whānau* and brings

us back to earth, to Papatūānuku, where my sons *whenua whānau* are marked by healthy kauri on my parents’ land.

Robin Kahukiwa’s iconic image of Hine-tītama, which graces the cover of *Wāhine Toa: Women of Māori Myth*, has fascinated me my whole life. And now, as I reach the culmination of this project, I realise it is her mountainous outline and the way she carries birth under one arm and death under the other that has aligned with my concept of “Mama Maunga.” This *whenua* remains unburied, taking up space – a living reminder of creation energy.

The time to bloom is now. On this journey I have consistently asked myself:

Who wrote this story?

Whose narrative is this?

Do I agree with it, or is there an alternative interpretation?

In her book *Atua Wāhine*, Hana Tapiata points out, “Narratives perpetuate about Hine-nui-te-pō consistently paint her as the antagonist, rather than celebrate the courage and strength it took to remove herself from an environment and company that did not respect and honour her.”⁴¹ In my artistic efflorescence, I have aimed to centralise women’s experience. In the words of Käthe Kollwitz, “I am in the world to change the world.”⁴²



Figure 38. *Reblooming*, detail with spot light and haze machine in Block 12 lighting space, October, 2025. Photo by author.

Figure 39. *Afterbirth +Reblooming*, test inflation in “the bunker” studio, October 2025. Photo by author.



Ngā Kākano o te Ngākau

Woman on the Edge of Time

I am bloom

I am womb

I am feeling

I am breath

I still bleed...

My heart remembers

Full of seeds

A hope for regeneration

Optimist

Nihilist

A dream beneath the surface

Plunging my hands into the earth

I make men and monsters

Women come from the moon, you better believe it

Run rabbit

Oma rāpeti

Oma, Oma, Oma

Oma means grandmother in German and run in

Māori

My mother's egg was made in her mother

Grandmothers seed the future

I wished for sons

This female line dies with me

Last of my kind

I will return with Rona and her Ngaio tree and gourd

To the moon

The rebirth creates the seeds of new growth. New growth, new ideas and directions are here depicted as a pod of seeds and proto-aquatic fishlings. Kākano wears an adaptation of the poem “Woman on the edge of time” on her skin. She is dyed and covered in shellac, a natural resin secreted from the female lac beetle, part of the Kerriidae family. The lac beetle is related to the Mexican cochineal bug responsible for the dye that makes Mexican Pink. The Prime Ministers Scholarship trip to Mexico in November 2024 has suffused my art making with a new layer of knowledge and interest. A year of making art with air and dye and colour pulled me back to my true love of print and ink and monochrome. I have missed mark making, missed the action of rubbing, of cutting, of cross hatching and of patterning. In the words of T.S. Eliot “In my beginning is my end.”⁴³ A full cycle has been completed. Old and new merge to create a path forward.

The evolution of these works has been a series of re-workings, reimagining, reconsidering, recycling, recreating, reusing, retesting, reblooming, rebirthing, rethinking, restarting, reflecting, retelling, reconstructing, reanimating, redoing, remaking, redirecting and reemerging – a whole built of a kernel of sand, like a pearl.

Figure 40. Ngā kākano o te Ngākau, Photographed in block 12 lighting space with Haze machine. October 2025. Photo by author.



BLOOM
WOMEN
STILL BLEED
REMEMBER
DEAD
LIVES
SURVIVED
THE
SURVIVED
THE



Figure 41. *Road Cones to Show the Way Home*, bicycle tyre, XTC resin, copper ceramic glaze, September 2025.
Photo by author.

Road Cones to Show the Way Home

I laid breadcrumbs to find my way home – à la *Hansel and Gretel*.

The final work, *Road Cones to Show the Way Home*, is made from bicycle tyre rubber left over from cutting reinforced wire out of the tyres I used to hold open the air intake end of the parachute sculptures. The cones are coated in XTC resin – a material I discovered when planning to make a 3D-printed soundproof box for the industrial bouncy castle blower I had used to inflate the works. The resin feels like it belongs at a bondage party in the latex dildo section.

The cones are slick and glistening, gleaming black with iridescent copper glazing. They feel like volcanic vents on the sea floor – somewhat inhospitable, yet still an ecosystem for life at great depths. A warning device where two forces, volcanic and oceanic, meet.

Last year, I made papercrete weights to counterbalance the lightness of the air works. This year, the crinkling and withering skin of the aged parachutes required a shiny, slick smooth texture to counterbalance. Like *Stay-Men*, these small works sit beside the others – small masculine hard-ons to hold onto in the dark.

Figure 42. *Time Keeper Seeds* in papercrete bowls, November 2025. Photo by author.



Triptych: Opening, Os, Opened

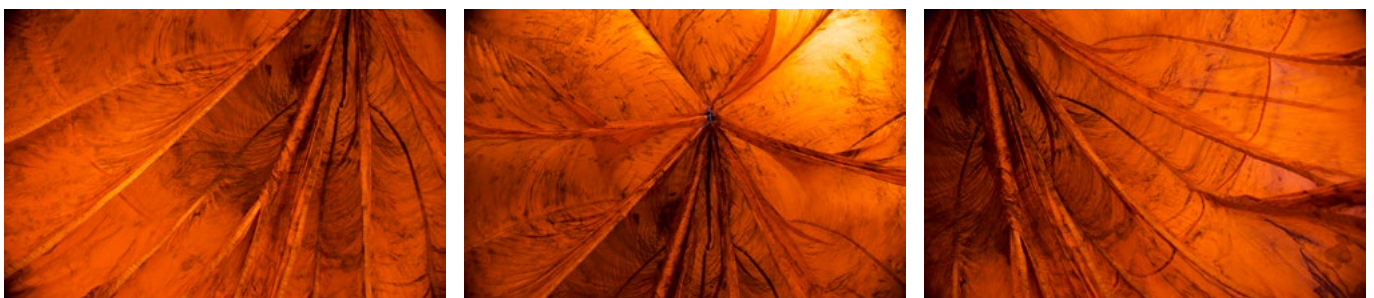
Archival inkjet on Matte paper.
Edition of five 24 X 16 inch prints

Taking photos of such large sculptures has led to a practice of microcosmic documentation. An intentional concentration of attention focused on parts of the whole. A separate, yet complimentary and necessary, aspect of “seeing and experiencing” the sculpted works. My photographic explorations have focused on details of the whole, the microcosmic within the mega structures. This triptych was on show as part of Floración de Corazón. I have built up a significant photographic portfolio this year. And see it as an area for fertile future explorations.

Figure 43. *Opening*, triptych, archival inkjet prints, , 24inch by 16 inch, September 2025. Photo by author.

Figure 44. *Os*, triptych, archival inkjet prints, 24inch by 16 inch, September 2025. Photo by author.

Figure 45. *Opened*, triptych, archival inkjet prints, , 24inch by 16 inch, September 2025. Photo by author. Resembling the wings of the Monarch butterfly, which in Mexican culture represents the souls of the departed here on earth. They are attracted by the scent of the Cemapasúchil. We spent our days in Mexico absorbed in looking at art, tasting, smelling and being immersed in Mexican culture. The photos represent focused attention – up close and personal “looking” at a feeling. A ritual rebirth glimpsed and captured like pinned butterfly wings for posterity.



Samhain Portal – Day of the Thin Veil

This four-minute film work depicts the veil between life and death – Autumn. It is a visual re-enactment of the seasonal shift that occurs when Persephone leaves her mother, Demeter, to winter with her husband, Hades, as Queen of the Underworld. The “actors” are sculptures living and breathing air.

Shot locally at Breaker Bay and in the pine trees near the Truby King House, it charts a day beginning with trees and ending with ocean – through the portal of stone – to visit those in the world of the dead and return. The film was shot entirely on May 1 – Samhain or the Day of the Dead – seasonally adjusted for the Southern Hemisphere according to *The Aotearoa Witches’ Calendar*.⁴⁴

Deepening my fascination with death and rebirth, I participated in the *Día de los Muertos* cultural celebration in Mexico City in 2024. The public and personal ritual honours both a seasonal and spiritual event. Death is seen as part of a natural life cycle, as it is in Māori culture.

This work was exhibited in *Meanwhile Gallery* over Halloween (*All Hallows’ Eve*, 31 October). This European tradition bears no relation to the Southern Hemisphere seasons – Halloween is not a spring event. The work aims to disrupt the colonial construct that does not speak to our southern seasons.



Figure 46. *Moon Child*, Truby King Park, Samhain, May 1 2025 (side lit). This nocturnal iteration emphasised illumination and shadow as a metaphor for emergence. Lighting accentuates the sculptural skin and material sensuality of the piece.



Figure 47. *Samhain Portal (Day of the Thin Veil)*, still from video work, 4minutes long, *Meanwhile Window Gallery*, October 20–November 10 2025. Photo by author

Figure 48. *Time Keeper Seeds* in papercrete bowls, showing growth over the length of the project, November 2025. Photo by author.



Conclusion

Like ouroboros, this journey turns back upon itself, biting its own tail, endlessly beginning again. I end where I began – with air, with story, and with an intractable will to keep creating.

The MFA has been both excavation and gestation. Through auto-archaeology I have unearthed not only works but selves – daughter, mother, lover, crone. Each sculpture is a fossil of feeling; the exhibition embodies a ritual of return and reclamation.

I understand now that printmaking never left me – I simply expanded its field. These air-filled forms are prints of breath, impressions of life pressed into atmosphere rather than paper. The serial logic of print remains: editions, variations, narratives in sequence. Ink and air merge, instead of the press there is an expansive body.

My feminist methodology has crystallised into an ethic of softness: to make gently yet insistently, to occupy space without domination, to turn maintenance into magic. The domestic has proven a site of profound political resistance, the maternal body a source of mythic renewal.

Through making I have rediscovered myth not as distant story but as living organism. Demeter, Hine-nui-te-pō, Persephone, and Xóchitl are not characters but internal organs – archetypes breathing through me. The mythic and the autobiographic are the same pulse.

I made what I needed in the world. A de-acclimated, pro-ageing female ritual. A new narrative for myself and for the world I want to be part of. A wholistic myth that sees us as connected, earth animals with big hearts and big blooming brains.

The work of transformation continues. The Crone, newly born, keeps walking – lighter now, carrying the mountain within, rather than upon her back.

My literary idol, Ursula K. Le Guin, captures the essence of this project perfectly, “The woman who is willing to make that change must become pregnant with herself, at last. She must bear herself, her third self, her old age, with travail and alone.”⁴⁵

Figure 49. *Peace Dove Phoenix*,
Photographic detail from
Cempasúchil- Time Flower, Limited
edition print. Photo by author.

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Appendix



Massive Magazine Art
Issue 28/9/25



All Access interview



Noa Noa von Bassewitz
website and PDF of *Floración
de Corazón* exhibition catalog

HEROINES
Ruins to Rebirth

OPENING
5-7pm,
15 NOVEMBER
OPEN
11am-5pm
16th & 17th

THE GREAT HALL
BLOCK 10,
OLD MUSEUM,
PUKEAHU
15 BUCKLE ST,
MOUNT COOK
WELLINGTON

Noa Noa von Bassewitz
@tamanoanoa

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FLORACIÓN DE CORAZÓN A KARANGA TO MEXICO



OPENING NIGHT
5.30 PM
9TH SEPTEMBER
9-19 SEPTEMBER
12-4 PM MONDAY - SATURDAY

ARTISTS:

OLIVIA ROSE
DAWN WILCE
CARLOS KNIGHT
MANIAH WAIHAPE
IMOJEN HANCOCK
ELVIS BOOTH-CLAVERIA
NOA NOA VON BASSEWITZ
ADAIR VALENTINE-ROBERTSON

THE ENGINE ROOM GALLERY

BLOCK 1, TE WHARE PŪKĀKĀ, MASSEY UNIVERSITY, WALLACE STREET, MOUNT COOK, WELLINGTON



The Engine Room

