By-and-by

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

Master of Fine Arts

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Wellington New Zealand

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Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this thesis and sources have been acknowledged.

Abstract

This exegesis elaborates upon the growth and exploration of my artistic practice within this thesis project. I have endeavoured to explore the idea of 'by-and-by' (before long; eventually) in action within my making. Through the action of embodied walking, a constant cycle of choices and actions have resulted in iterations forming bursts of learned growth – including pauses, trips and stumbles, through which I, 'get up' from, interrogate and learn through.

In this exegesis I explain and question my trajectory of discovery, critically reflecting upon what has evolved and changed over these past two years, and what I have learned. I outline the key stages/works made through the iterations of my creative practice. I review the work of those I have read and looked at within this course of study (including but not limited to the work of Bas Jan Ader, Guy Debord and the Situationist International, Robert Filliou, Hamish Fulton, Janet Cardiff, James Tapsell-Kururangi, Rebecca Mayo, Kate Newby, Xin Cheng) analysing aspects of their work, ideas, and concepts that have resonated with me while considering their influence and impact within my making and learnings.

The conceptual framework for this thesis includes engagement with discourses around performativity, settler-colonial legacies of colonisation, failure as a generative process, gender politics in relation to body stereotypes, and ways to re-think processes of learning. The praxis undertaken through this MFA has enabled me to arrive at a presentation of companion forms (including text, photographic images, traces of process, handmade and found objects/entities) that collectively offer a non-linear articulation of subjective understandings of place.

Acknowledgments

To my supervisors Martin Patrick and Heather Galbraith – thank you so very much for your time and impartations of wisdom.

To Julieanna Preston and Shannon Te Ao – thank you for the encouragement to ‘step out of the box’ during lockdown.

To my parents and my siblings – thank you for listening to me ramble about things I was in the process of understanding myself.

To my classmates – thank you for a constant and always ready stream of creative inspiration.

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Introduction

When I moved back to New Zealand from the United States in 2016, I kept thinking 'It's so green!' Everywhere I went, I was struck by the water in the atmosphere that enhanced the blue and greens. This is compared to the yellow and red dusty cliffs and plains I had lived amongst for three years in Utah. At that point of re-entry, my primary interest in art was painting. I wanted to paint like those from the Western art canon of landscape artists that art classes in high school had taught me. I didn't know any differently. When I lived in Utah, I had never once heard of Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels* or Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*. I make this observation because these are leading works in the Land Art movement, and they were relatively close to where I was living. Foundational works for artists interacting with environment – these were in my 'backyard' and I never knew. I know I would have endeavoured to visit these works (despite their notoriously hard accessibility) because all cases I have heard of artists engaging with them seem to have prompted shifts in their perspectives, whether underwhelmed or overwhelmed. Perhaps this is because those seeking these works do so as a sort of pilgrimage whereby the person/artist might already be ready for change. In any case, I would place myself in this category.

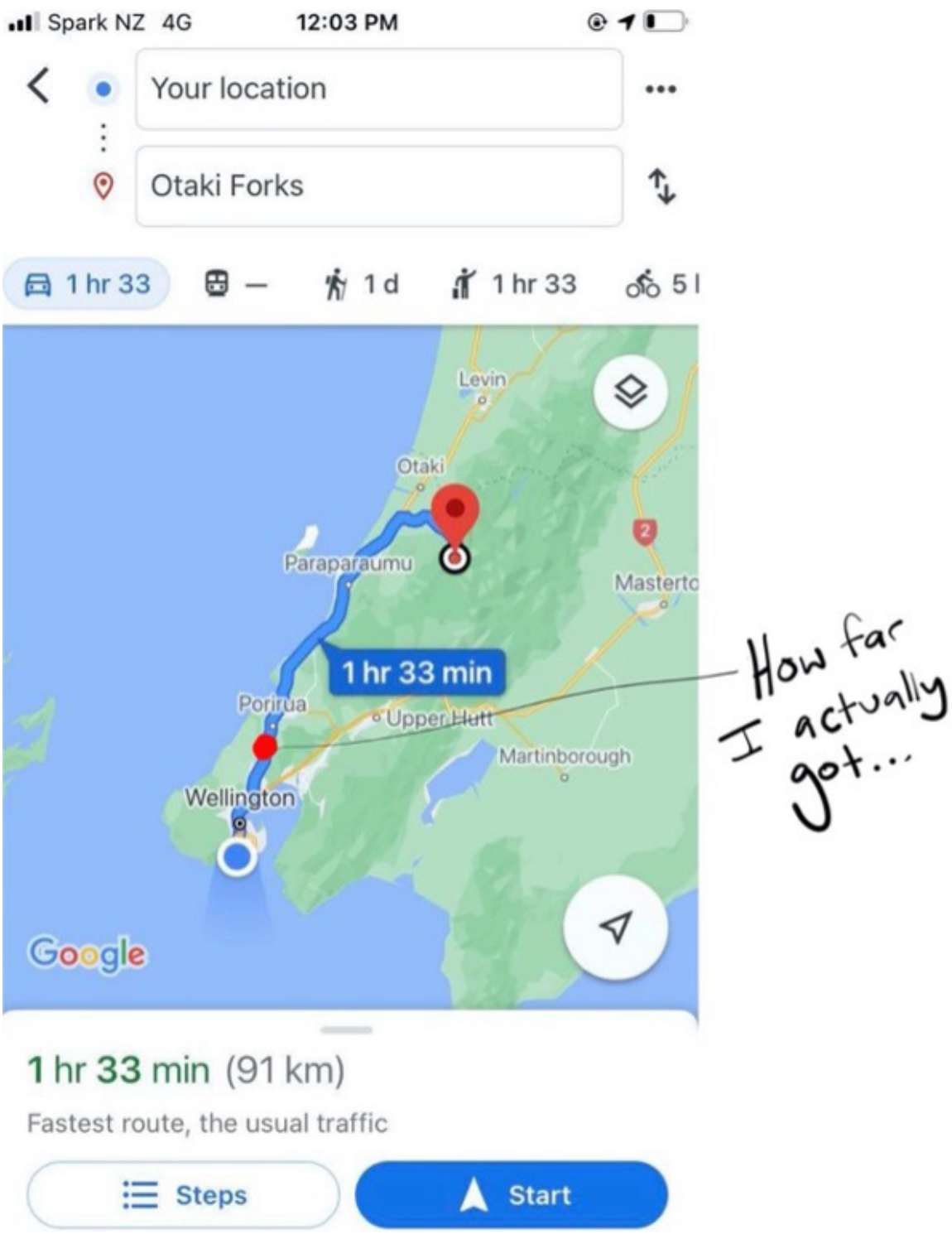
Over these past two years, I have felt that I had so much to learn and I have gained a growing understanding that this will always be the case. I have come to a realisation that I will always be researching in this state of "not knowing". It is appropriate to make the observation that just as with many young artists – I painted what was familiar, and this linked into an existing art historical thread of landscape representations, rather than investigating what I actually saw, felt, and experienced. I was taught representational drawing and painting in secondary school, where faithful or naturalistic depiction was valued, rather than subjective, embodied, or conceptual approaches. Art school has helped my understanding that our holistic lived experience and an awareness of our own subjectivities and biases, impacts *how* we see.

For my thesis project my initial ambition was to walk from Island Bay on the Southcoast of Wellington City to Otaki Forks on the Kapiti Coast (fig.1), both are part of the Wellington section of the Te Araroa Walkway. I set this plan in accordance with the notion of 're-learning' my home. This did not go according to plan. Injuries and geographical curtailment relating to COVID-19 interrupted the trajectory, and forced me to reconsider the purpose of the project. It has been challenging to realise that it is the very slips, trips, pauses, mistakes, and re-routing that have come to mark key moments within the project, rather than any crescendos or 'achievements' marked by total distance travelled, or heights traversed. This realisation has also become a kind of blessing as it has offered a new shape to the understanding I gained through the 'by-and-by' process. It reflects that this process has centred an expression of embodiment and an acknowledgement of the embodied self.

I have titled this project 'By-and-by' with the understanding that the term's definition means "before long; eventually". "This adverbial phrase came to be used as a noun, denoting either procrastination or the future" ([Dictionary.com]). Undertaking and trusting a process of embodied, organic reflection, and responsive iterations, has

confronted multiple assumptions I previously held within my art practice, and has necessitated processes of un-learning and learning. Where previously I would have opted for a more predetermined aesthetic structure following edited documentary lines, with this project I embarked on a process where the form only became known as the project evolved, it has been literally the idea of ‘by-and-by’ in action.

The action of walking is part of a longer process of thinking about walking and thinking about my relationship to the land I walk on, and the legacies of walking in art practices that I relate to and build upon. The work draws from reflections on lived encounters and embodied experiences expressed through forms of text most closely defined as poetry/autobiographical prose. Alongside this is the ‘empirical’ trace of photography and mapping in relation to a performative walking practice. The role of the trace or documentary fragment is significant in this project. While each image, text, found or crafted component has strong associations for me, I am with the final presentation, attempting to offer a platform whereby audience members are invited to edit, sequence, and assemble their own narrative readings of the table-top offerings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Porirua
Upper Hutt
Martinborough
Wellington
Google
How far I actually got...
1 hr 33 min (91 km)
Fastest route, the usual traffic
Steps
Start

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Work and Processes - Impacted and Influenced

1. Collecting Fennel Seeds

I began to walk during Covid-19 lockdown in 2020. I stuck closer to home, exploring the areas around Tawa, the suburb where I live. In doing so, I set myself specific tasks. One of these was collecting fennel seeds. I noticed that they were pervasive, they self-seeded with voracity, and seemed to be everywhere. I was looking closely at a plant that previously I had overlooked. I was interested in my ability to recognise the fennel plant despite only ever picking it up in the grocery store. I recognised the smell and the bulb protruding from the ground. But when I looked at the plants next to the fennel, my mind went blank. I became more frustrated by my inability to know what each plant on my route was and its uses. I was annoyed – where had this knowledge gone? What has been lost over generations?

My questions about how plants came to be here, and what they represent or embody, started earlier than lockdown and relates to when I collected blackberries with my grandparents (fig.4) in the summer each year since I moved back from America in 2016. We would make jam and pies. This felt like somewhere I could start. As I was walking and picking blackberries in 2020 and 2021, I was in parallel learning about colonization. Fear and guilt gripped me. I needed to acknowledge these feelings and keep moving, or else I was in danger of remaining stuck in this place of fear. As a Pākehā, I needed to ask the question: how could I move through/beyond this sense of a lack of authority and agency, while also recognising the white privilege I held?

In this realization while collecting fennel, I realised here was an example of colonisation in action; I did not know this environment around me as well as I thought I did. I recognised the blackberry, the fennel, and the gorse. These three pervasive weeds held a name and space in my consciousness, and yet all these other plants did not. And I wanted to rectify this. But this delving into ecologies has resulted in interactions and interventions that have opened the door to a much longer and larger process that simply naming plants. I have found more questions than answers regarding my colonised mindset and ways of searching for knowledge and knowing. From my *By-and-by artist book,* I state:

> And I don't know the names of all the plants and birds around me as I walk – I recognize some of the weeds – the blackberry vine strangling the native that I can name – the flax – harakeke...
> Like my colonized mindset – the introduced blackberry curls and claws with its thorns. (Hollow)

Figure 4

2. Finding Freedoms in Geographical Restriction

Covid-19 lockdown brought everything closer. There was a sense of discomfort that emerged through the shrinking of my geographical area of living. Removing so much access to normal trajectories of everyday life, reduced down to the 'permitted movements' of within a few kilometres of ones' place of living. This reduction in my everyday locations and spaces inadvertently led to a re-examination of my ways of living. Like any sort of 'cutting back' in a lifestyle – it wasn't enjoyable to begin with. As soon as I lost this freedom, I wanted it back - I wanted to get into my car and drive. I was forced to face (in a comparatively modest way) what The Situationist International (or the SI, a collective of various European artists' groups that existed from 1957 to 1972) had termed 'behavioural poverty' and 'geographical imprisonment'. Considering the SI and Guy Debord's much larger paradigm regarding a social and political revolution of sorts, my fretful concerns seem insignificant. Additionally the constraint of Alert Levels 3 and 4 in Aotearoa were not equally experienced by everyone. Inequalities in terms of housing and fiscal precarity became more apparent. Regardless, I looked to the SI to offer an articulation (of their time) in order to help me think about what people were grappling with in this current situation. But as I looked for their solution to the problem, I found I didn't agree with their prescribed action. That is, a disruption or reimagination for the systems that govern the everyday (Waxman 91).

Rather, I place myself more within the orbit of the project by the artists Gail Burton, Clare Qualmann, and Serena Korda entitled *walk walk walk: an archaeology of the familiar and forgotten* (Burton et al.). They organise public walks in places that are familiar and regarded as marginal/overlooked. In this, there is a provision for the imagination to grow as there is space for receptiveness for possibilities. "[*W*]*alk walk walk's* work performs a sharp retort to Guy Debord's dismissal of a student whose routines made a rigid triangle in Paris. Debord was incredulous that the student did not move outside of those three points. Staging a sort of 'anti-dérive', *walk walk walk* plotted their daily routes to define their own triangle and 'rather than diverging', decided to 'explore the relationships within it', later inviting others to join them." (Heddon and Turner) Rather than a rapid passage through space, this 'anti-dérive' requires looking harder and learning more about what has been overlooked. This is the same as the opposing action prescribed by the SI of living in the everyday. Rather than reimagining, it is considering ways of living better within the 'behavioural poverty' and 'geographical imprisonment'. For me, this was facing my disembodied living relating to my own body and my surrounding environments.

I discovered that this discomfort was a widely felt reaction to lockdown when attending the Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi's *Crossings (a group show about intimacies and distances)* which gathered works that according to the curatorial statement "[…] embody and contend with the polarities that were awakened [during the pandemic], but which have always existed: inside and outside, closeness and distance, health and illness, personal circumstances and larger conditions, life and death." (Barton et al.) I have learned that there is impact in exposing and questioning this

‘everydayness’. I encountered factors that I had previously never had to contend with, internal environments of pain which could be avoided in the vastness of dis-embodied living. My dislike for my body got closer. And so with ‘nothing else to do’, my aspiration grew toward getting fit from walking.

I began to walk and I realized I felt like a floating mind, one that didn’t know where its legs were. I realised that I was not as embodied as I wanted to be in spite of beginning to undertake an embodied walking practice. Getting fit wasn’t going to fix this problem; I needed to connect with my body, and understand more about my body’s relationship to land and place.

There are many photos I took on the street of plants and shadows that I encountered during this time of lockdown on these early walks in 2020. I have images of thoughts I wrote down in my ‘notes’ app on phone and in my notebook. There are also more screenshots of recorded walking lines/shapes on satellite maps on my phone (fig. 5). I was searching and looking outside of myself to find the solutions to encroaching problems: my dislike of my fatness and confusion of how to approach the topic of colonization. And during early critiques, the observation was made that I was not inviting the audience into this searching and questioning process.

I became inspired by artist James Tapsell-Kururangi’s work titled *Gains? Grandmother. Grey Street* in which he questions both the way documentation occurs in the form of an artwork, and also questions what an artwork is. “I do want to ask; can a year living at my grandmother’s house be an artwork?” (Tapsell-Kururangi). The fragment of a text contains blanked out spaces that really caught my attention (fig.7). There is a relational sort of reading that occurs, the audience is able to place their own words within the spaces while also knowing that James had his own intentions. This is all happening while consecutively questioning both the way documentation occurs in the form of an artwork, and also what an artwork can be. The work acts on many levels, and it has helped me to understand that art can sit between the flux of life and art making. The deeply personal action of living in his grandmother’s house after her passing could be described as a ‘durational performance’ but is more than this. It is an action, described by the artist, undertaken in an “effort to understand where he came from, [to] learn about himself, and [to] look after her place for his whanau.” (Tapsell-Kururangi) Acknowledging that there is much more to this work than I can understand or state here, encountering Tapsell-Kururangi’s work has helped me to begin questioning this art/life divide. That is, exploring these relationships with environments that offer this form of intimacy in learning more about one’s self and the places where one lives.

I wanted to try ‘blanking-out’ the walking. I decided to show aspects of the process leading up to the walks, and the events/actions after the walk, and to not record the walk itself. Showing the ‘before’ and ‘after’ of all my gear, I laid out everything I was going to take with me on a walk and took a photo, and then I did this again when I returned home (fig. 8). I also took a photo in the car driving to the walking location, a poem/autobiographical prose I wrote sitting in the car after the walk, and a photo of an ice cream I ate on a detour on the drive home. I have noted since this, that several

artist/walkers used the approach of recording only aspects ‘around’ their walks rather than the walk in progress, such as Richard Long’s noting of traces in photographs, descriptive texts, drawn maps, or stones/sculptures placed in galleries.

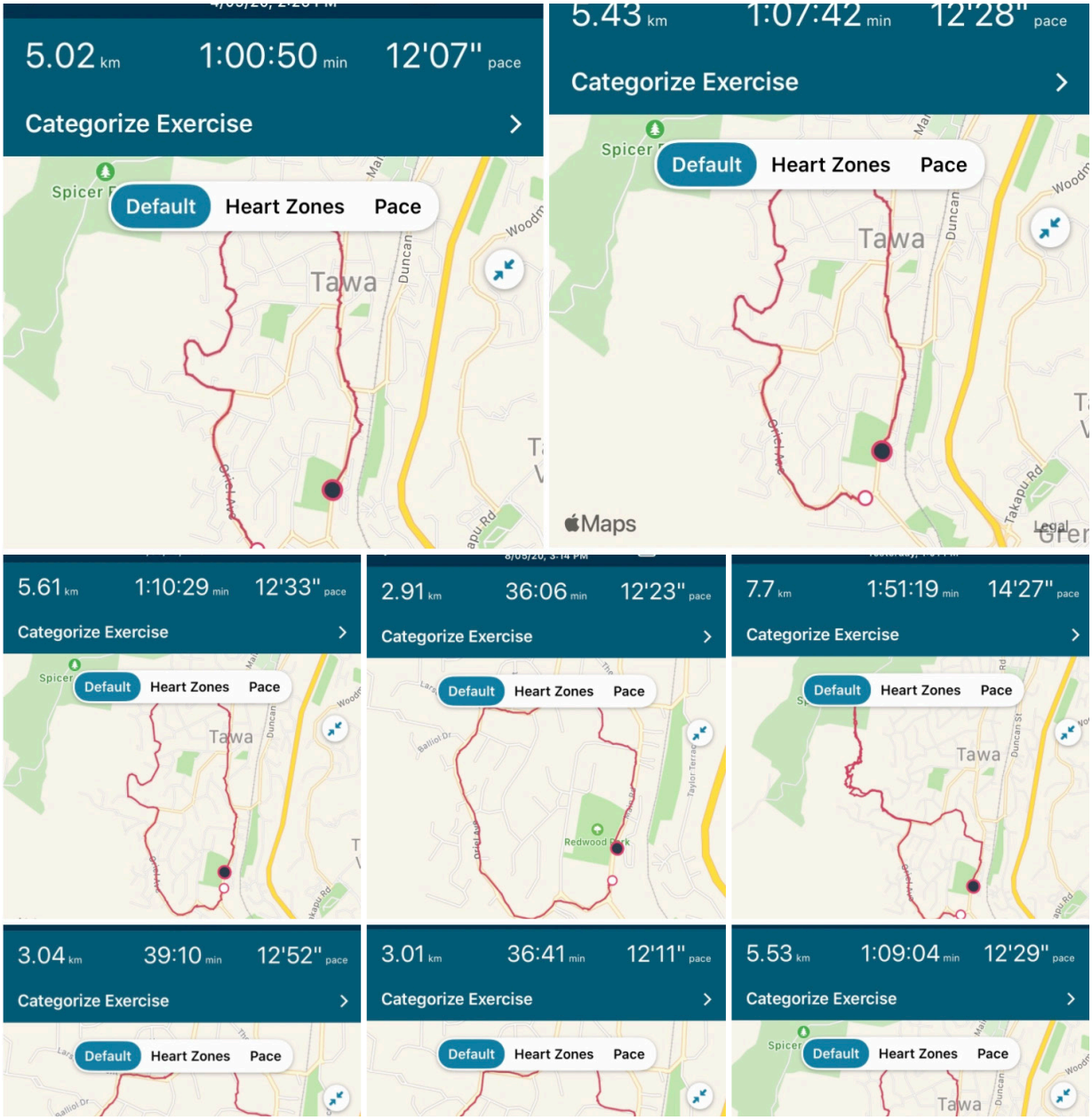
British artists Hamish Fulton and Richard Long who might now be considered ‘grandfathers’ of the contemporary canon of ‘walking artists’ are well known for their contributions to the field. I have found particular insight within Fulton’s works, *Outline of the Cooking Pot, Sardinia 2014*. Within an outline of a coffee stain made from a coffee pot on paper, the title is written, days walked, a basic outline of where he walked to and from, place names and dates. But the coffee stain is what intrigues me and holds the majority of the story. I begin to ask questions: how many coffees did he have on this walk? Why a pot and not a cup -- was it easier to carry while walking? Where was this stain made during or after the walk? I then think of all the coffee a person drinks while heading to work in the morning, and here is Fulton drinking coffee during his day-job as an artist, walking in Sardinia for 14 days. There is some personal narrative in this form of recording, but the walk itself it is out of reach for the everyday walker; both the location financially as well as the fact that walking for 14 days is not an easy task and requires a certain level of fitness. The curator and critic Michael Auping notes the difference between Fulton and Richard Long: “While Long chooses to rearrange the landscape, Fulton prefers that the landscape impose itself on him” (qtd. in [“Arkle Sutherland”]). In this I feel I relate more to Fulton, but there is a certain level of aesthetic monumentality in both of their works, requiring the large tasks of multi-day treks and movement of large stones as is common within Long’s installations. I related to this at the beginning of this project in trying to walk the entire Wellington section of the Te Araroa Trail, but I have now realised that this not only removes the audience from the personal, but myself from the significant task of noticing the marginal and overlooked.

I had cracked open a space for the audience to enter, but not in just leaving the walk blank. I also exposing more of myself and my story than I had realised in the information that framed the walk. I felt comfortable to leave the walking blank because it felt private; a space to meditate and to not have to think about what to record. But in that comfort, I inadvertently showed some of the uncomfortable and private instances that I had not previously exposed. The ice cream… something that a bigger body is not comfortable admitting having consumed. And all the gear I take with me on a walk – the Panadol for my sore back - or the Coco Pops in my second trial of this recording ‘before’ and ‘after’ for a weekend away walking at Mount Ruapehu (fig. 4).

In laying out everything that comes with me that impacts, nourishes, aids, and protects the body - showing these items that are not associated with the traditional hiking image, I began to question the context of my walking; to question the intimacies, distances, and languages of a subjective everyday walker, the systems and codes that specify forms for approaching leisure/exercise.

By responding to asking the question ‘How can walking be art?’, I was led to question my approach to an embodied walking practice that has become a substantive part of my life, and how my life was already present in the framing/outer parameters of

the walk. Considering the recording and reflecting on this activity as an art practice, how can the object, the document, and the reflective first-person text relate to a performative walking action?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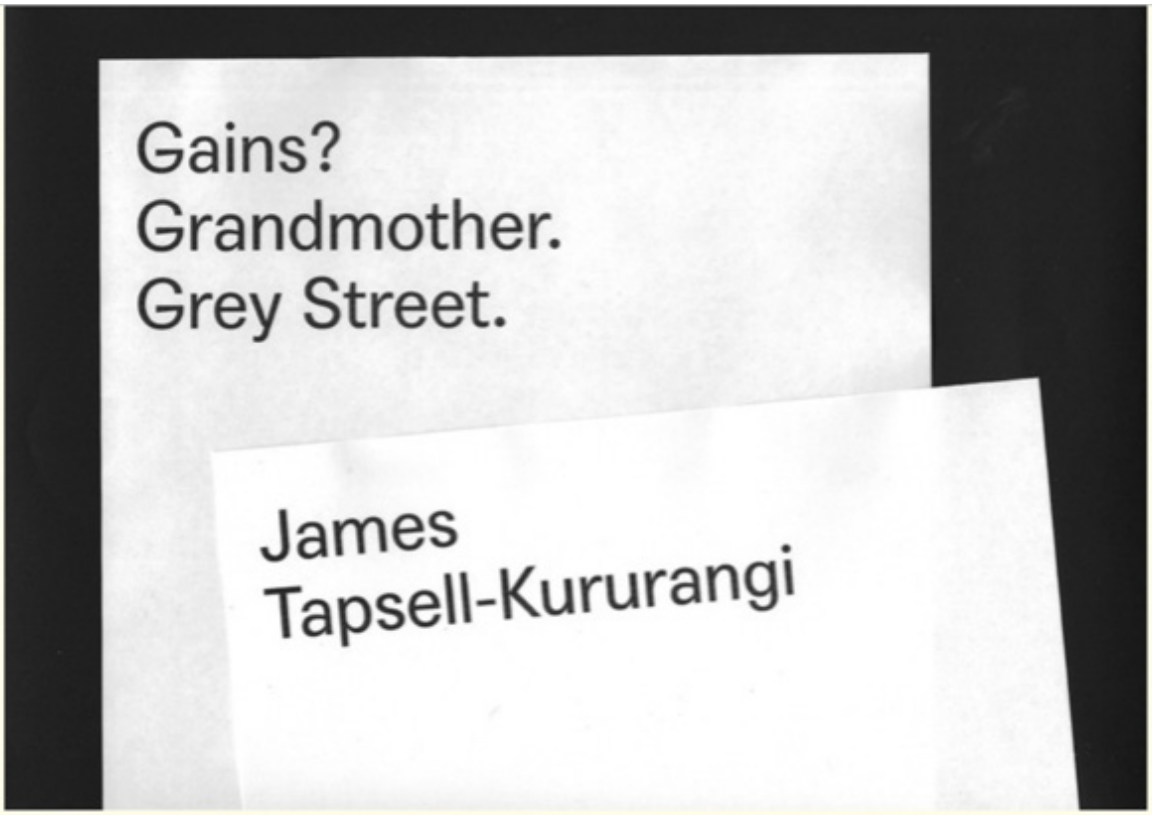
Categorize Exercise
Default Heart Zones Pace
Tawa
5.43 km 1:07:42 min 12'28" pace
Categorize Exercise
Default Heart Zones Pace
Tawa
Maps
5.61 km 1:10:29 min 12'33" pace
Categorize Exercise
Default Heart Zones Pace
Tawa
2.91 km 36:06 min 12'23" pace
Categorize Exercise
Default Heart Zones Pace
Redwood Park
7.7 km 1:51:19 min 14'27" pace
Categorize Exercise
Default Heart Zones Pace
Tawa
3.04 km 39:10 min 12'52" pace
Categorize Exercise
Default Heart Zones Pace
3.01 km 36:41 min 12'11" pace
Categorize Exercise
Default Heart Zones Pace
5.53 km 1:09:04 min 12'29" pace
Categorize Exercise
Default Heart Zones Pace
Tawa

Figure 5

Figure 6



I was wondering what would be useful for an [redacted] to read.
I know I have a responsibility to look after my Nan's house. And my whānau.
I don't really know if these fragments of text are anything close to a year spent living at Nan's house.
You're not supposed to make art about [redacted].
... It was a year spent living.
I wonder what I would show at a [redacted]?
I would like to be generous to an [redacted].
I don't think, or I don't want the year spent living at Nan's house to be a [redacted].
I do not want to [redacted] her or my life and family as art.
I do want to ask; can a year living at my grandmother's house be an artwork?

Figure 7

Figure 8

3. Mapping and Reorienting My Learning

As I walk I see the fields of grass and cows, and I see the city streets with people moving on with their days, and I see the walkers and hikers on the D.O.C. and Wellington City Council designated paths and tracks exercising and enjoying the outdoors. But the tracks my mind travels are changing. I am beginning to see how these landscapes were formed. Of the initial futility of settler-colonial Wellington being planned on a map in a rectilinear manner in order to easily subdivided the land in the early town planning, which did not take into account topography of the land and has in places resulted in steep streets and abrupt street endings that I have experienced while walking this trail ([City Planning Te Ara]).

The Australian backyard-adventurer/YouTuber Beau Miles committed himself to a four day paddle to work, instead of his normal commute in the truck and made this comment after:

> If you look at a map from above, you know that's what our lives become - this squiggle of lines or straight lines. The trail is behind us as we travel through life. The more we use mechanised transport the more they are straight [lines], and the more you do this sort of thing, the more they are squiggly lines, or in circles like just now. I suppose the thing with a commute is that we often lock ourselves in to non-observing because it is so normal and habitualised; it's not exotic. I've never taken three or four days to get to work before and see the view has changed (Miles).

Our commute isn't only mechanical anymore either, Zoom and multifarious strands of emails and social media impact out everyday trajectories. One of the few benefits of lockdown has been attending global seminars on walking and counter mapping practices via Zoom that normally one would have to travel overseas to encounter.

In these initial walks, I had made a rule for myself as a sort of crude exercise in 'seeing differently.' That every time I would take a photo of the 'view', I would have to take a photo of something I normally wouldn't. Through this, I encountered New Zealand's geodetic system, spotting the various markers along the Te Araroa Trail. I noticed the weathered poles and metal markers (usually at the top of the hills), but I did not know what they were. When I got home and 'googled', I learned that they are the infrastructure that act as reference points used to define the features and locations of New Zealand's lands and seas ([Geodetic System: Toitū Te Whenua]). I thought of the colonial-eye and the ordering and sectioning of the land, including its attribution to private or Crown ownership.

I drew on my screenshots of the map like a dot-to-dot the 'weeds' (fig. 9) I had photographed in my walking: The Red Valerian (*Cantranthus Ruber)*, and the Cape Honeysuckle (*Tecomaria capensis*). Identified using my phone and iNaturalist app; a social network based on the concept of mapping and sharing observation of biodiversity. These are forms of mapping that paradoxically allow me to become aware of the ongoing effects and politics of colonisation in ecology and place. These

activities of mapping and undertaking this walk has become a way or reorienting and un-learning assumptions about my relationship to the land through the walking.

It was in attending the online Zoom seminar *Questioning the Colonial – Three Counter Mapping Practices* ([Questioning the Colonial: Livingmaps Network]) that I encountered the transdisciplinary research studio Mapping Edges by the Australian artists Alenandra Crosby and Ilaria Vanni in conjunction with the University of Technology Sydney. They have asked the question, "[h]ow does our understanding of cultural, environmental, and social histories and futures of place change if we let ourselves be guided by plants?" (Crosby and Vanni). They discussed the two different forms of ecologies that inform their work. Recombinant ecologies are those that exist only because of human intervention (inadvertently or deliberate) while civic ecologies are the result of deliberate actions that are used to make connections (e.g. community gardens, road and housing verges tended by communities, and seed exchanges). Regarding recombinant ecologies, I was intrigued as they discusses the 'thrown togetherness' of native plants and those plants that came with migrants. That these environments are the result of interactions and interventions, purposed and unintentional. Crosby and Vanni have lead socially engaged walks, mapping the locations and identifying plants, with the idea that the way the environment is perceived effects the way it is treated. Learning of this work prompted an enthusiasm for my own research and looking. Seeking the identities of the plants around me as I walked and taking photos in order to identify them. More than this, it has made me consider the ways in which these environments I have walked through, how they have been constructed, inadvertently or deliberately and how they are mapped. That cartography is not exempt from colonization, in fact it is one of its very effective tools. I gained an awareness, that the maps I used while walking; that the Te Araroa Trail App and Google Maps are part of the ecology and the experience/identity of place influenced by this.

With the understanding of the emergence of counter-mapping practices, I have started to question the impact of digital mapping technologies in seeking to challenge the power of maps, in particular as a colonial tool. There are further complications that I need to be aware of regarding data harnessing and tracking relating to the use of mobile phone apps and technology more widely. Within the three counter-mapping practices presented during the Zoom seminar by *Livingmaps Network*, all had a similar approach to challenging this power. They did this by honouring the local, recognizing place as a space alive with story and history, and giving definition and voice to the vernacular. I have drawn on two juxtaposing practices that I see doing this in very different ways.

Janet Cardiff is one of the most renowned walkers working with technology alongside memory and narrative and using sound and video as media to connect with her audience. Often her works rely heavily on sensorial/embodied encounters and the specifics of place as is the case with the video walk by Cardiff and George Bures Miller's *Night Walk for Edinburgh 2019*. Guided by Cardiff's voice, she tells a tale layering history, invention, and memories (Night Walk for Edinburgh 1). The participant follows her footsteps in the 50 minute video using headphones and a tablet/

smartphone through the backstreets of Edinburgh's Old Town. This kind of preparation resonates with our current Covid-19 restrictions as experiencing the work can remain in line with social distancing regulations, but the level of planning and construction for the audience encountering this work recalls a film or a theatre production. Although the embodied encounter of being in the place and space as the story unfolds tends to overshadow this, what I find difficult is that the walking becomes part of a constructed narrative and the impact of the environment is regulated within this re-telling. I feel this doesn't encourage actual intimacy within the personal experience of a place.

Rebecca Mayo's *Walking the Merri* is a 7-day artistic re-enactment in the form of a multi-day walk inspired by the book *Journey to the Source of the Merri* by Freya Mathews. Mayo walked with Lesley Harding, the artistic director and curator at Heide Museum of Modern Art in Melbourne. Each day they were joined by a third walker as they journeyed the length of the Merri Creek: a waterway in confluence with the Yarra River in Victoria, Australia. Recounting and considering colonial and precolonial histories, mapping and recording personal diaristic accounts of the trip, and the action of wearing various styles of gaiters each day was designed and created to record the action of the walk by collecting natural debris (seeds, dirt, bark…). The proposed intention of this work was not about treading new ground, but rather it was Mayo's expressed desire to experience walking the entire creek (instead of from a car or train window). This, and her presentation of the work, I have taken into consideration in relation to my own creative work. Her installation at RMIT Project Space (fig. 10) enlisting the use of trestle tables has assisted me in my envisioning of a way to present my own grouping of creative pieces in a cohesive manner.

Figure 9

Figure 10

4. Photos and Failure and Colonisation

It was walking up Colonial Knob in 2020 that I decided on my ambitious plan to complete the Wellington section of the Te Araroa walkway for my thesis project. There is much irony in this as this is where I got stuck and could not move past when I injured my ankle in 2021. An image of which I have included in the collection of *photo cards* presented within the table installation.

The 80 x 115mm *photo cards* I have created act as a way of responding to and contextualising my walking practice and the performative walking actions taking place in this project. The size and existence of which are resulting from a range of factors. I wanted to present a volume of images at one time, without fixing them in an order, or offering only one taxonomy or ordering system. There were technical restrictions, resulting from the lower quality image from my iPhone 7, which I used as my photographic recording device because of its accessibility and portability. I became annoyed at the awkwardness of using larger cameras. When I trialled my Canon EOS T5, it was bulky, heavy and inconvenient to access as I was walking. While 'walking' in the everyday sense, such as when I was collecting the fennel seeds, it was an impromptu act and required using the recording device I had with me… my phone. The phone is also a key device for aiding navigation, identifying parking spots or public transport routes, and for researching things en route (as long as signal was live). It is also the device that is regularly paired with exercise apps, that relay data about distance travelled, inclines traversed, time taken and calories burned.

The artist Xin Cheng created a set of five illustrated booklets: *A Seedbag for Resourcefulness* (fig. 11) drawing from inherited and improvised discoveries made between 2006-2019 while travelling through Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. These also contained recorded conversations, – including one with Christopher Dell, a jazz musician and theorist, on improvisation. He mentions the cards that Cheng has presented to him. These are not imaged but their presence is articulated in the conversation. Dell questions her:

> What do I see in them? For me these are small scale, concentration of things. The spatiality that things provoke.
> Spatiality?
> The spatial arrangements: as soon as you have an assembly of things, they start to create a spatial arrangement. That's what these things are about for me. (Cheng & Dell 1)

I spent a while on this passage of the book trying to imagine what these cards looked like – what they had on them and the information they contained. This informed my decision to use photos in the form of smaller prints/cards. I wanted this ability to take the photos I had captured during the walking and making, and to present them in a way that stayed true to the assemblage of experiences within this project. The freedom to arrange the materials presented on the table top in this form allows for a narrative to be assembled in many different ways much like this walk has created many different lines of discovery; it can become an interpretation of this.

I also see these *photo cards* as a sort of 'proof' of my attempt to do this walk, and the eventual derailment and detours because of the failures that occurred. Emma Cocker makes the comment in a book of short essays entitled *Failure*, about the artists John Baldessari, Marcel Broodthaers, and Bas Jan Ader. That failure of an action can create "[…]a desirable deficit which inversely produces unexpected surplus, the residue or demonstration of wasted energy. In examples of the artists' work, 'performances' appear to oscillate or remain poised between a genuine attempt at a given task and a demonstration of its failure" (Cocker 156). This 'unexpected surplus' can create unique conversations that are mutually supportive and regenerative. In acknowledging my failure, the agency of the walking changes from explanatory (I did this) to reflective and questioning (why did I do this?).

I have encountered two other examples of failure-producing-detours, reacting to failure as a regenerative action, that have encouraged my own acceptance of the process. In a book of essays by Richard Holmes he retraces the *Footsteps* of Robert Louis Stevenson's famous journey through the Cévennes in the hope of writing Stevenson's biography. Holmes writes of his pursuit of the historical figure and 'not managing things very well' because of his bruised shoulder, exhaustion, and low morale: "*Désolé, madame*,": I murmured; and that's exactly how I felt: desolate. I was soon to grow familiar with this feeling. It is how every traveller feels at the approach of night, and the lighting up of windows in houses where he does not belong, and cannot enter in." As he describes sleeping under an outcrop of pines later that night he states "[o]nly once, waking, I drank two ice-cold mouthfuls of water from my can and, leaning back, saw the Milky Way astonishingly bright through the pine tops, and felt something indescribable – like falling upwards into someone's arms." (Holmes 22) He wakes up to realize that he would never be able to catch Stevenson, that the historical distance had to be maintained. He could only follow and hope to bring aspects of that fleeting figure alive in the present.

Another work that resonates with me is Geoff Dyer's book *Out of Sheer Rage* in which he desperately wants to write a sober academic study of D.H. Lawrence, and in failing to do so, instead crafts a humorous account of how life got in the way. Everything that prevented him from writing the book instead leads to a new awareness and knowledge that is opened-up and generated in the failure to achieve a desired outcome.

I hobbled out of the doors of the Kenepuru hospital waiting room with a painful swollen ankle. Situated right below Colonial Knob I experienced a space between humour and despair at my realisation of my failure to complete my intended trajectory of walking from Island Bay to Otaki Forks. What has followed has involved the reorientation of my thinking around the action of walking and the even longer process of thinking about walking.

I remind myself that this is a willing, intentioned set of actions. Even though there is pain – in the walking, in the wounds I have that need healing (internally and externally), and through deepening awareness of the ongoing wounds of Aotearoa, relating to its stolen land, its settler-colonial history, and its bicultural tensions. The conflicted nature of failure allows for a choice to be made to see the problems in this

world and not ignore them and pass them by, but to instead contend with them.

When I stood at the end of Oharui Valley Road, I looked up into the pines leading up towards Colonial Knob. I knew what was at the top as I had walked this section before the year previously as I have mentioned. I was looking forward to the views, but I couldn't stop thinking about the smell that permeated the pines half-way up that hill because of Spicer landfill. This section had to be experienced. It was a 'reality-check' as I realised this was a part of the 'view' I often overlooked or avoided. It took some time before I didn't want to run from/evade the spectre of colonisation. Now I am faced with a walk up its namesake, 'Colonial' Knob. I've been running for so long, like so many, and now I am walking and it is inescapable. I need to be present, to look and listen. This isn't the idealised landscape of the Western art canon, but it is the result of modes of thinking that privilege humans use, exploitation and dominance, over land and the ecosystems that live dependent on the land. I've been looking closer, more intimately at my relationship to the land and my place within it over the period of this MFA, and that has been enlightening and challenging. It is important that Pākehā living in Aotearoa consider how the actions of our ancestors have impacted on this place and its peoples, and how our current actions reinforce or challenge these legacies. This is something we all have to face. It can't be outrun, and it can't be denied or covered up – even though we have tried. I have tried.

I can't deny the past and how it affects what I create now – and the conversation that it imparts by even entertaining the word 'landscape' without noting the intricacies of settler-colonialism. I wanted to further explore and interrogate a situated, embodied walking practice and being with and in the land offered up a range of modes through which experience could be garnered. This practice is contextualised within aspects of settler-colonialism and is also impacted by aspects of gender and class.

The camera was a tool of colonisation. The prize-winning novelist from Zimbabwe Yvonne Vera makes the comment "[t]he camera has often been a dire instrument. In Africa, as in most parts of the dispossessed world, the camera arrives as part of colonial paraphernalia, together with the gun and the bible […]" (Ranger 209). While photography was reserved for the privileged inventors and experimenters of the colonial era, the rise of popular mass technology in the 21st Century has allowed for more accessibility for a larger percentage of the population in artistic expression and other fields of exploration. But there is still a history associated with the tool relating to colonisation. These *photo cards* I have created do not evade the colonial gaze as these photographs have occupied a framing of my own colonial mindset that was prevalent at the beginning of this project in my partial awareness, and still remains. At times, this leaves me feeling unsteady and unsure of how to proceed respectfully; when I create, I do not want to repeat what my ancestors have done.

I am now trying to inform myself and to be more aware of my Pākehā lens by which I view the world. To see with an informed perspective. When I create: when I walk, when I take photographs, when I write my story, it is because I want to and because I need to, despite the uncertainty. Then I can find an element of peace for myself from the fear of not knowing my place in this world. In this, I have discovered different ways

of living in the everyday, rife with contradiction and complexity. It requires being more accepting of the 'not knowing', and not being afraid of it. In reading *This Pākehā Life: An Unsettled Memoir* by Alison Jones, she speaks of the multifarious connotations around the term Pākehā and many European New Zealanders' reluctance to take up this identity. "But as Ani Mikaere famously put it: '[T]here is nowhere else in the world that one can be Pākehā. Whether the term remains forever linked to the shameful role of the oppressor or whether it can become a positive source of identity and pride is up to the Pākehā themselves. All that is required is a leap of faith." (qtd. in Jones 4) And it's about the quality of life, and this is tied 'indefinitely' and completely to my ability to experience the pain of living in the everyday; in the searching and in the not-knowing.

Figure 11

5. Spirituality and ‘Weeds’

There are aspects of walking that I find hard to describe that I have used a form of poetry/autobiographical prose to express within my *artist book*. I have attributed these impalpable experiences to spirituality. As a Christian, theology is prevalent in my thought processes, although I find it hard to discuss in an academic setting. But it was in listening to Dr Huhana Smith present on Māori Spirituality relating to the healing and regeneration of the land in her work at Kuku beach and the Ohau River north of Wellington[1], that I was given courage to explore spirituality in my own work.

She spoke on the work of Māori Marsden, an ordained Anglican minister whose writings explore pre-Christian theology.[2] Through him, I discovered the work of Fr Philip Cody. In his *Seeds of the Word: ngā kākano o te kupu* he discusses the meeting of Māori spirituality and Christianity. In this, he exclaims the importance of first asking the question ‘What is māramatanga Māori?’: “[A]n indigenous way of understanding the reality of our world, which provides us with an explanation of who we are, an explanation of the world around us, and how we are to find our way in the world” (Cody 15).

Within the writing presented within my artist book, there are times when I was seeking to understand aspect of māramatanga Māori because I greatly desire deeper awareness about who I am in relation to the world around me, and support in terms of how to find my way in this world. Intermingling learning has occurred relating to knowledge as personal experience of knowing, knowledge passed on through learning or teaching, and knowledge as understanding or illumination. These are the definitions given by Cody to Te Mōhiotanga, Te Mātauranga, and Te Māramatanga; or the breakdown of the nature of knowledge.

When I wrote the lines in the poem *My first understanding of Te Mōhiotanga, Te Mātauranga, and Te Māramatanga*, I was thinking of a particular moment when I was walking up Ahumairangi – Wellington Town belt (Tinakori Hill):

> Or a tree with its strong roots…
> And yet the gentle winds sway their trunks and limbs like a dance…

When I was walking up that hill I was so tired, and I wanted so badly to turn around and walk back down. I put my hands on my hips and tilted my head up to ease my breathing and I opened my eyes to see the pines gently swaying in the wind. The wind cooled my exterior and allowed for my interior to calm as well, meaning I could continue to focus on going up the hill and along the trail.

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[1]For more information on this project see Bryant, Martin, et al. “Climate Change Adaptations for Coastal Farms: Bridging Science and Mātauranga Māori with Art and Design.” *The Plan Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2017. *DOI.org (Crossref)*, https://doi.org/10.15274/tpj.2017.02.02.25.

[2]In her project, Dr Huhana Smith mentioned Marsden, Māori, and Te Ahukaramū Charles Royal. *The Woven Universe: Selected Writings of Rev. Māori Marsden*. Estate of Rev. Māori Marsden, 2003.

My response has prioritised heightened awareness of what was around me, and strategies to find closer connection with these entities and this environment, in order to open myself up to receiving and retaining the knowledge that is being offered. The closer I have been living: to focusing on my steps, on my breath, on the mosses and lichens, the weeds and seedlings sprouting from cracked pavements, the more I come to realise that the joys of life are not distant things – that healing is not an unobtainable state. I realized it was healing that I needed from my fractured understanding of how to live in the everyday.

My initial reluctance, fear, and confusion in expressing any sort of alignment between walking and spirituality within my practice has arisen from observing the stark rejection of any sort of religious iconography within many other artists' practices. I initially tried to overcome this fear when I encountered a 'prayer labyrinth' during a weekend retreat at Ngatiawa River Monastery in Waikanae at the end of last year. I approached this with interest in relating it to my developing walking practice as well as my spiritual life. "The labyrinth is an ancient symbol that relates to wholeness. It combines the imagery of the circle and the spiral into a meandering but purposeful path. The labyrinth represents a journey to our own centre and back out again into the world" (qtd. in Zielinski). The circuitous path was open and easy to follow but as I walked I found it hard to focus on prayer as I was distracted by all the other elements around me: the wind, how foolish I looked, and the sounds of the kids who lived at the monastery playing further up the hill. The task seemed to ask me to empty all these things out and I was frustrated as I seemed to be doing the opposite. I have realised since that this was because of my own misunderstandings of what prayer could potentially be.

In my search for knowledge relevant to his thesis, I have repeatedly been drawn back toward Cody's statement that māramatanga links a person to those that have come before through the passing on of knowledge, but also extends beyond to linking oneself to the wider world and universe. "A traditional explanation of māramatanga Māori is 'te kaimānga a ngā tūpuna' – food well chewed over by the ancestors. Kaimānga is food a mother softens by chewing it herself, before passing it on to her child, who is now able to digest it. […] Māramatanga needs to be part of myself before I give it to others. I need to taste and ponder it first, so I can own it and know it myself" (Cody 18). Similarly, when I walk there is an essence of this chewing that I liken to the translation of Psalm 1 in which the Hebrew word used for 'meditate' *hâghâh* means 'to mutter' (Clowney). Muttering and chewing are not actions I initially aspired to, but as I have walked, I have found myself doing both of these things often. It is one of the reasons I have preferred to walk alone as I often ended up talking to myself .

The poetry/autobiographical prose, that I have presented in *By-and-by artist book* could be considered as a collection of mutterings or prayers. My exposure to this mode of writing has been limited thus far, and is still in ongoing development. Wellington author Ashleigh Young's ability to describe idiosyncratic experiences closely represents this form of writing, but at a level I can only aspire to. She is able to describe both the inconsequential and epiphanies in a personal, reflective, poignant, and often exposing manner. Having first read her poem *Magic Eye* that was written for the Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi's exhibition *Crossings* (a group show about

intimacies and distances) 2021, I enjoyed the detail that often escapes poetry in its fuller sentences and narrative structure. I later discovered her books of poetry *Magnificent Moon* and *How I Get Ready* as well as her collection of short essays *Can You Tolerate This?*, but my initial point of encounter in the poem *Magic Eye* still draws me in as I value this poem/autobiographical prose's ability to use seemingly discordant experiences to express an intimate realisation.

Similarly relating to this searching exploration into the unknown, the artist Kate Newby has been a source of inspiration and courage to me regarding her fearless approach to a creative practice whose processes of making are often based within the unknown. In this, Newby approaches making while embracing 'not-knowing' as she considers what will be made in response to a project/exhibition/installation; allowing for spaces to open-up and for the 'knowing' to happen. Documenting her work toward the exhibition *Yes Tomorrow* at the Adam Art Gallery, Newby took photographs with a series of disposable cameras (fig.13 & 14). She used them as 'field notes' […] that fed her thinking for the installation she was planning, to document her work as it got underway in earnest, and to capture the familiar and fleeting landscapes she moved between once she was out of quarantine." (Barton 135). These images capture this confidence of 'not knowing' in the making process; embracing the unique experiences that artmaking places an artist within.

Before encountering Newby's *On the benefits of building* (fig.13 & 14), I was already taking documentary photographs recording the process of making the *seedpaper statements*, in preparations of walks at home packing my bag, and in researching various aspects of this thesis project, but I never intended to present these images to an audience. Seeing Newby's series of photos displaying these 'in-creation' moments has given me more confidence to integrate these types of images into my own project, in the series of *photo cards* presented on the trestle table. This is also because I have experienced the stunting effects of anxiety relating to feelings of not knowing what to do or where to go. The benefit of this realisation is something I hope to pass on as Newby has done for me, as it has led to spaces opening up where 'knowing' begins to occur.

Figure 12

Figure 13

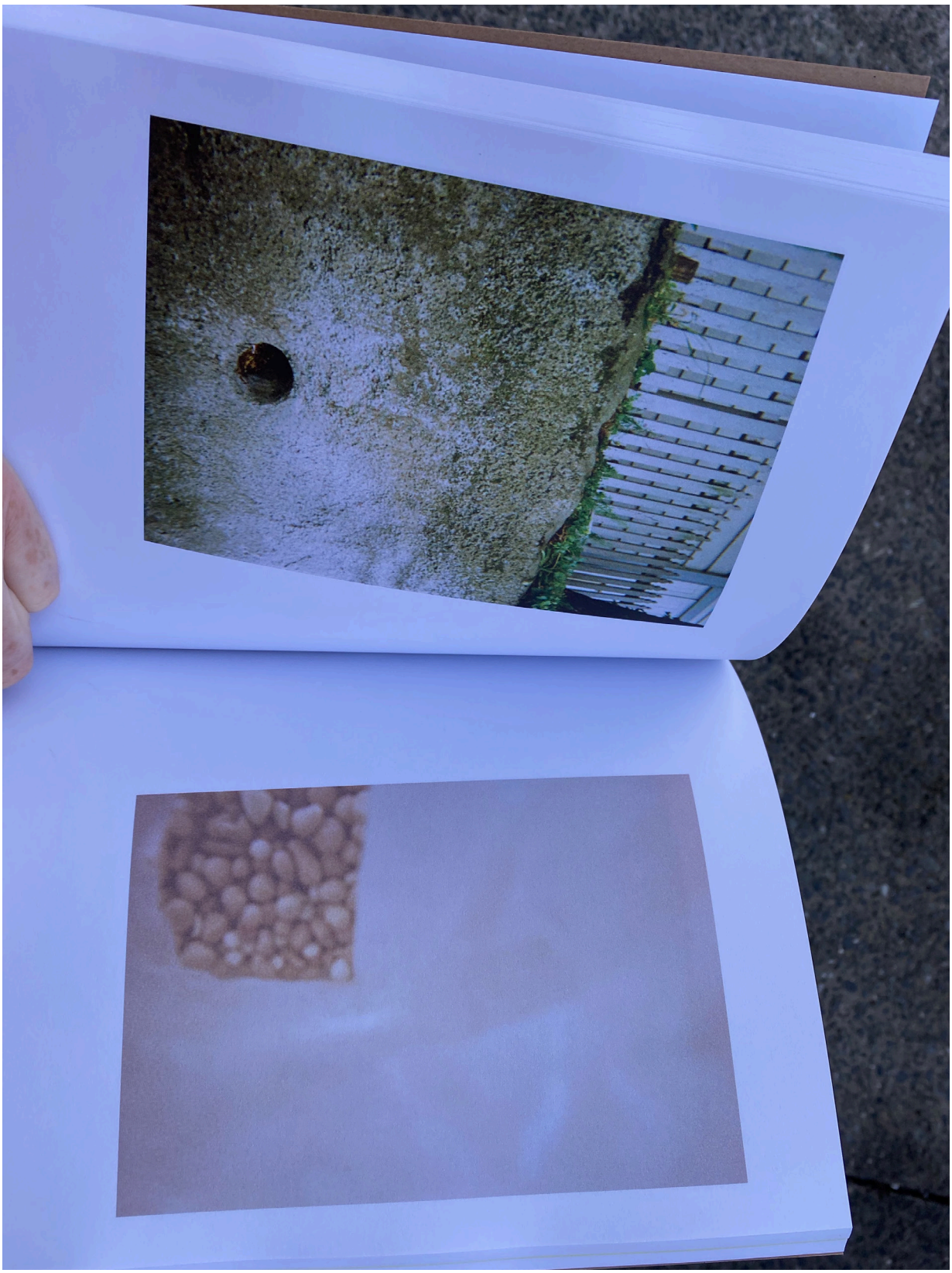

Figure 14

6. Offerings on a Trestle Table

The three elements I have presented on the trestle table I have titled the *By-and-by artist book*, *photo cards, and seedpaper statements*. While the *artist book*s incorporate a sequencing of all the elements on the table offering one way of navigating the material, it is not intended as the dominant narrative.

The *seedpaper statements* were made seeking healing and regeneration. But the revelations within the stamped words reveal some of the narrative relationship I have encountered and experienced with my body through this study. These statements expose pain, the fear and shame of being a bigger body, the sweating and the breaking (of body and spirit).

Alongside this, there is the materiality of the seed paper, and what it contains. I have collected two seeds: fennel seeds and tī kōuka (cabbage tree) seeds. Mixing these seeds together aims to speak of an awareness of changes in the environment in consideration of migration and colonization. The thrown-togetherness of native plants and those that were introduced by settlers and migrants.

The tī kōuka, cabbage tree (Cordyline australis) has a distinctive shape almost "[…]akin to those seen in a Dr Seuss storybook, marching across the deserts and cluster[ing] around rocks and rivers. With outstretched arms and tousled heads of leaves, the look like people" (Simpson 18). The largest in the lily family, they prefer the fertile lowland wetlands but with their fleshy wood and tough leaves, they can grow almost anywhere. For Māori, the strong fibres were used to make shoes, capes, bags, cloaks, and ropes. The young tips (cabbages) were harvested as a vegetable and the fleshy stems were utilized for their sugar. "They planted them as reliable markers of important places like river crossings and fishing beds. They selected and bred them as a domesticated food crop. They buried their placentas and their dead in the branches. They named every part and every variety and had hundreds of spirits explaining the growth and ecology" (Simpson 19). Its aesthetically pleasing appearance and easy manner has led to its spread, becoming a norm along the verges of motorways and in any conservationist restoration project. The New Zealand photographer Wayne Barrar has created a particularly striking and disorientating series of images regarding this tree. In a series titled *Torbay tī kōuka*, he has taken note of how the tī kōuka has become well-established in the UK within the 'English Riviera' or the South West of England as the cabbage tree has "[…]defied the normal direction of ecological colonialism and headed north to the old centre of empire which provided New Zealand with so many of its exotic species" (Barrar).

Fennel (foeniculum vulgare) is a hardy perennial herb that is native to the Old World and most likely comes from the Mediterranean region. Used for its culinary and medicinal properties, it is among some of the 'productive' plants that were bought with the European settlers to Aotearoa in the early to mid-19th century. Like the plants such as gorse and blackberry that were desirable on arrival with settlers, they have propagated with such intensity that they are now considered invasive 'weeds' ([Weeds Envirohistory]).

The term ‘weed’ has a level of disdain and contempt surrounding it. Although in some contexts these plants do harm to the ecosystems they are in, the general crusade behind ‘weeds’ is partly the outcome of a cultural contrast deeply rooted in expectations of uniformity and the ideal suburban home ([Weeds UNSW]). Managing weeds from an agricultural context becomes a bit more complex, but in residential areas the use of toxic herbicides has led to rising public health issues. Many gardening magazines and television shows now encourage gardeners to leave lawns and verges to grow freely to encourage pollinators. It has even been suggested that they can help re-establish habitats for indigenous fauna as in case of the invasive gorse. The plant acts as a nursery (in some cases) for native plants until they are established, and will then shroud the gorse out as has been the case in the Hinewai Reserve on the Banks Peninsula in the South Island ([Happen Films]).

In *seedpaper statements*, The ‘non-native’ and the ‘native’ seeds are mingling together in hand-made paper creating a cracker-like’ surface – to be ‘consumed’ or handled as the viewer desires. An offering, returning the work back, but also one aware of the complexity of such a union of plant genetic material, which might flourish; which might dominate when planted and watered.

In moving from poetry/autobiographical prose to these ‘confessions’ on homemade seed paper, I am beginning to reveal my most personal and precarious experiences and realisations. In laying out images of all my gear (fig. 8) ‘before’ and ‘after’ the walk as I trialled in an earlier critique, this has begun to open up more space for the audience. The text in the *artist book* involves a degree of abstraction, but the process of writing and editing has helped me to open myself up to exposing some of the personal. Through offering more direct access to admissions of mistakes and pain-filled confessions, and through leaving space in the book, and inviting the audience to engage in the table’s contents in an editorial way, I aim to open up to the audience that much more.

My greatest aspiration for this work encompasses the desire to tell a story that might help others encountering and questioning their own relationship with the land, their body and identity, and in their search for healing. I hope that another can use that space that has been slowly torn open, to add their voice to mine. Or rather, my voice to theirs. I am doing something that helps me to learn more about myself and the place where I live, and in sharing this work, it may enable others to consider their relationship to place, and to embodied experiences in situated contexts.

I asked the question at the beginning of this year: As a Pākehā, how does this affect the ways I should be approaching this process of moving forward and acknowledging these histories? In a korero with Angela Kilford (Te Whanau A Kai, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Kahungunu), the Wellington based artist who draws on Māori concepts and knowledge ([“About” Angela Kilford 1]), she advised me of an approach that is both respectful and freeing, through discovering ways of connecting to other histories by retelling one’s own history, instead of feeling as if one needs to know and talk from a perspective that is not one’s own (e.g. tangata whenua). Alongside the work of

Wellington-based Pākehā artist Caroline McQuarrie (such as the exhibition *The New Sun* at Jhana Millers Gallery shown in 2021), these are compelling discussions and practices that have helped inform my thinking and making when approaching the 'empirical' and personal traces of colonisation within an artistic practice.

I consider what I have been reading and writing and try to figure out how the pieces fit together, but they often seem all over the place, only making sense when I place them in a line created by my own learning and stumbling. If it was a nice straight line I had walked, it would be much easier for me to articulate, because there wouldn't be much to say, but this 'wiggly' and intriguing line of discovery with all its detours and discoveries reveals movement – which I deem to be good. Rather than pinpointing a place on the map – this effort involves drawing the curtain back and attempting to observe the ways I look at myself interacting with my surroundings.

7. Performing… Without an Audience… Until the End

One of my earliest concerns about embarking on this project and labelling it as 'performative', arose from my own misunderstanding of what performance can be. I admire the work of those artists that perform in front of a live audience as one does on a stage or in a public space. What I came to understand is that within contemporary art 'performing' can take place without an audience present, and be presented in the form of traces, or documentation.

In my search to better understand 'performativity' in relation to this practice, I encountered the work of the philosopher J.L. Austin, who introduced the term, along with the conceptual framework of the Speech Act Theory. In *How to Do Things with Words* by Austin, I was able to consider the premise that is the intention behind the words we say, matters as much as the words themselves, and additionally important is how the words are activated through the action of being read and/or heard (Austin). It matters how these words are received by the audience and how these words are enacted by those saying the words. I didn't find this the easiest concept to grasp. Breaking this down; there are ways of using words to describe the world. There are also ways of using words that interact with the world. 'Performatives' are common, like making promises or asking questions. It is making something happen by virtue of what is being said – for example 'I now pronounce you man and wife.' This is not describing anything but rather is an act of betrothal. This became important to this research because when I am 'performing' it is a living interaction that is occurring, of me being in/with the site, but it is also important that this interaction is not witnessed by a live audience. Rather through traces, and documentation I supply a potential for a narrative that is further enlivened by the audience.

This living, embodied, situated interaction is between myself and the environment I am part of, and within me (in terms of my subjectivities, memories, emotions, and my breath, my sweat, my body in motion). The philosopher Paul Crowther states that the practice of making and experiencing art is what makes it significant as it brings sensuous and rational material into a relationship that is both inseparable and mutually enhancing. This harmonious relationship is established in the art making (or performing in this case through the act of embodied walking), which reconciles the subject and the object of experience through affirming the basic human need of affirming bodily presence and bodily knowledge. "Crowther addresses the important role that art plays in the growth of self-consciousness as the embodied self-interacts with the world aesthetically" (Siedell).

Establishing my role in the 'performative action', the decision to only present the traces of the action can bring about questions regarding the role and agency of the audience. Every work of art is the trace of an action, a record of the maker's hand. For some artists, performing that action is as much a part of the art work as the finished object. But traces suggest absence, for they point to something that has once been – an action or a body – but is no longer present. We can find ourselves asking, 'Where is the artwork? Where is the artist?'" (Hoffman and Jonas 121). This question also hints; how does the audience enter the work? There is the one performing and then there

are those that are receiving the information that is being given. But an audience can be left feeling lost in the in-between of life and art. There is an open space, but not a lot to grasp onto given that I have elected to walk (largely) solo and to document the journey from my subjective position. In the introduction to Martin Patrick's book *Across the Art/Life Divide*, he cites the artist David Hammons who remarks on the amount of art seen by an audience in the journey to a gallery before they have even arrived at their intended location. He "[…]asserts the significance of the experiential factor in approaching the artwork. How might art compete with being taken unawares, shocked or disrupted by something seen on the street […] occur[ing] through the concerted efforts of artists to transport aspects of daily life into the gallery[?]" (Patrick 3).

When locating the role of the audience in my practice this statement by the French Fluxus artist Robert Filliou feels appropriate: "Whatever I say is irrelevant if it does not incite you to add your voice to mine." (qtd. in Patrick 50) And this occurs not just in the performing; that is, the living interaction that is happening in the embodied walking between myself and the world, but rather in the presentation of the traces in the exhibition moment. Filliou created and published a book in the form of 93 boxed cards titled *Ample Food for Stupid Thought* (1965) (fig.15) in which various questions were presented to the reader such as 'what makes this the land of the free and the home of the brave?' and 'when will all that nonsense end?'. Although my *seedpaper statements* and *photo cards* do not strategically fit within the dialogue-based or instructional ethos of his work, I have taken great inspiration from the ability to envelop statements that are jarring, while remaining related to the human condition presented within the framework of art. To be used as "[…]tools for navigating this uncertain landscape [that] emanate from a bemused, conscious awareness of human connectivity and the problems that befall us" (Patrick 59).

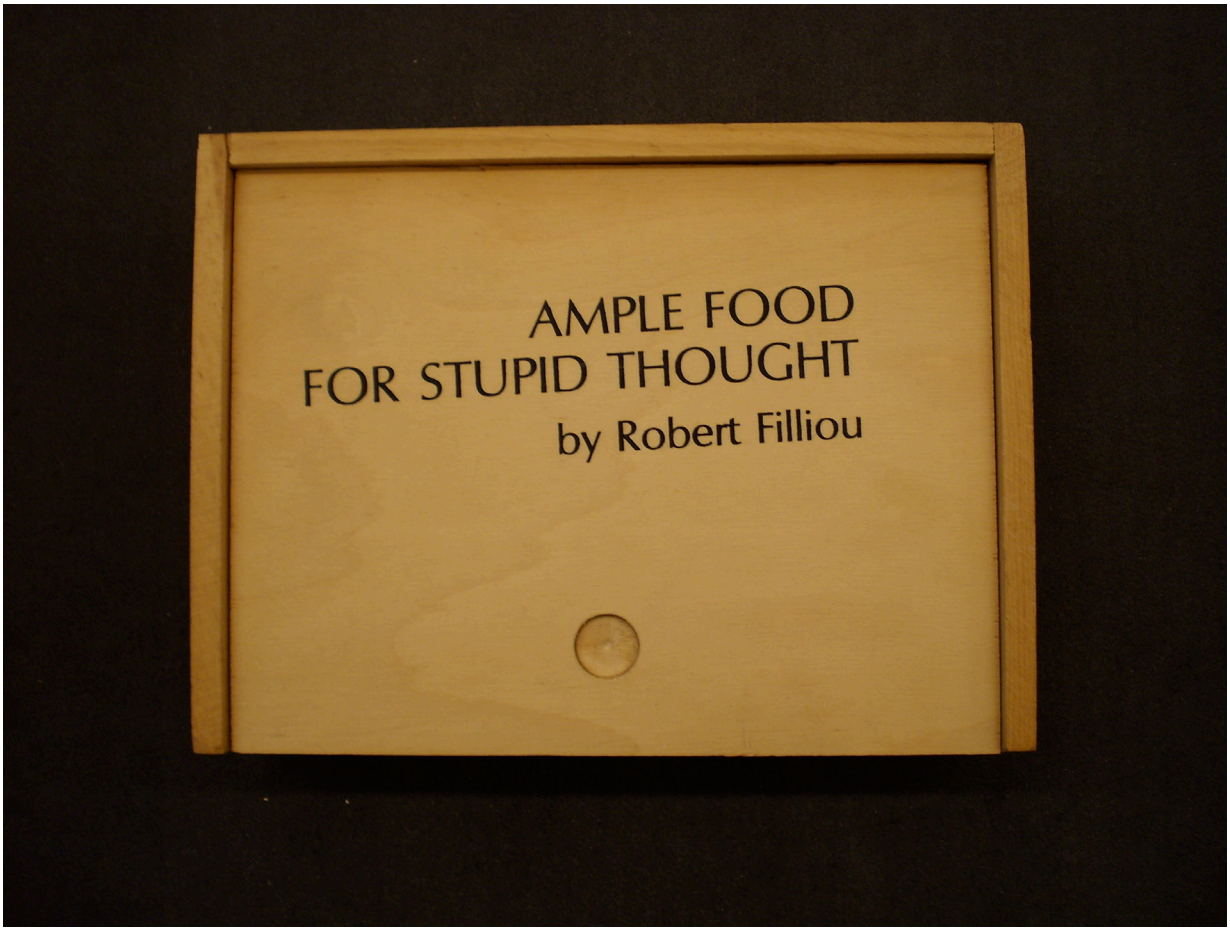

Figure 15

8. Impressionability of a Walker

Despite having a good sense of the benefits of walking, I still struggle to actually get up and do it. Even in just a short walk there are benefits. And yet this struggle to do the walking is just as much a part of this as the walking itself. I can bring my weight and body size into this and I will in part, but it is also this interaction with the world around me that brings about different consequences that inform what I would like to discuss. Reading Kaja Silverman's theory on the ego within *The Threshold of the Visible World* has made me aware of our bodies' impressionability from external and internal environments (Silverman). But I have yet to discuss how these impressions have reacted within myself and are birthed into the external; into the art I have presented in this thesis project.

It was in listening to the poet Andrea Moore speaking the words of her *Big Woman Poem* and *Mercy Poem* on YouTube that I experienced these felt-impressions of words on my physical and inner being. While I was comforted by her declaration and acceptance of being a 'big woman', her graphic statements and questioning regarding the embodied response of being 'fat' felt like a physical shock throughout my own body.

> I have always been this way. I dream of being a head on a stick. A brain with feet. A thing that thinks but needn't feel.
>
> I try to hide my size, more so even than my mind, more so even than the grinding of the gears. The way I operate in fear, the self I'm certain will repel you, more than that, I hate the fat. I want to crush it underfoot. I want to carve it from my corpse. I want to shut your eyes. I want to vaporize. (Moore)

I knew the experience of these thoughts so well myself, but hearing the words spoken by another, established a connection between my body, my perception, and ability to describe its existence that I had not encountered or considered before. I realised that there was a lot of internal pain held within me relating to my experience of being fat. That I had ignored the physicality of my bodily existence in order to avoid confronting my realities of sweating, or struggling to find clothes that fit comfortable so that I could walk without chafing or causing 'muffin tops' or exposing 'love handles'. There was also my internal degradation as I have mentioned, concerned and embarrassed every time I ate something not considered 'healthy'. But breaking through this denial of the pain didn't make the journey any more comfortable, instead it has made me realise how much a body desires to be accepted, and how much a fat body often isn't.

I would describe the effect of Moore's poem to be jarring with the outcome being an impressionability upon my being. To the same effect, reading Henry David Thoreau 'Walden' has done the same, but in a lulling and questioning manner. "A field of water betrays the spirit that is in the air. It is continually receiving new life and motion from above. It is intermediate between land and sky." (Thoreau) This has given me great insight into the perplexing relationship between spirit, soul, and the world we live within. "Allegorically, the pond is the human soul at the juncture between earth and

heaven, living in an earthly realm but reflecting a peaceful world above just as the pond reflects the sky." ([Sparknotes]). But he misses describing the effects of the earth below. Could I describe the effects on Thoreau's pond caused by the gas being released and bubbling up from the earth below, or the weeds shrouding the water and its murky muddy depths. Can I begin to create a visual and text-based reading of what is actually happening in and to my body when I walk; to create an image of the interaction of these external and internal environments? Because it is in this journey/ exploration into my own, and others' ethnographic and embodied walking practices in which a synergism has occurred between "[…]knowing the world through the body and the body through the world." (Scarry 29)

I attempted to incorporate clay into this project at the end of last year, and I joined the Wellington Potters Association and attended a workshop to learn how to 'prepare the clay' for throwing on a potter's wheel (fig.16). During this, I came to understand that clay has a memory and that slamming it down on the slab means the clay is able to be manipulated as it yields to the new form more easily. I was conflicted after this and I never went back to the pottery studio; conflicted because I considered the clay in this project as a symbol for the land. I wanted to encounter the stories of this land I walked upon, not try and erase them. The physical clay that I tried to incorporate turned into a metaphorical clay as I describe my own journey of being moulded by walking. Because the environment has a way of working on the sharp edges of an inner person. Time and distance seem to be the necessary allowances alongside the contributing factors of the encountered elements slowly re-forming an individual. While I began to explore this route of enquiry – it did not become fully incorporated into the project. In this though, I identify a space for future experimentation.

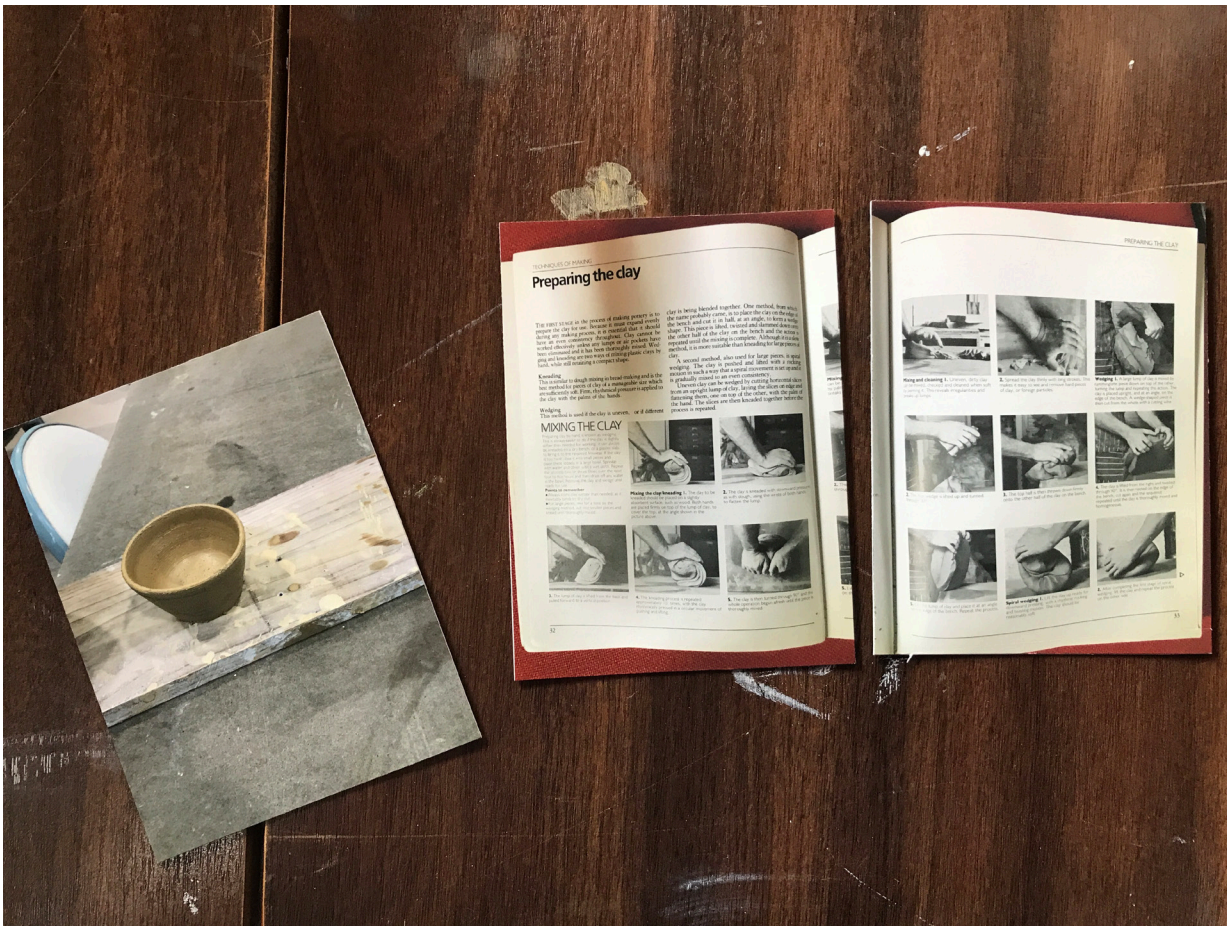

Figure 16

Conclusion

I have been changed by walking; my artistic practice has been changed by this action. I have situated my practice within a synergy of various artist practices, writers, and theorists within this thesis project, drawing from their wisdom and knowledge in order to begin to question and immerse myself within intimacies, distances, and languages that were once unknown to me. My practice has evolved - acknowledging and accepting failure's ability to move agency from explanatory to questioning. In doing this, I have stopped trying to pinpoint myself on a map as I walk – and to instead observe and question the ways in which I interact with my environment and the ways the environment interacts with me.

I can see two lines of trajectory moving forward; twin paths with a verge in-between:

Drawing from existing knowledge systems, I have only begun to approach the available trove of understanding relating to aspects of my faith and personal/ ancestorial histories. My research is opening up to consider the experience of a Pākehā woman walking - making art in 21st Century Aotearoa and the significance of Christianity and spirituality within these processes of living.

I still have to walk up Colonial Knob. This time, I want to do this with an awareness of counter-mapping – exploring tools I have begun to use such as honouring the local, recognizing place as a space alive with story and history, and giving definition and voice to the vernacular.

My ankle still must heal though – but I intend to follow this course… by-and-by.

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