



Freerange Vol. 12:

**Everything
is
temporary**



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This is the last issue of the Freerange Journal and we'd like to thank the many people that have written, drawn, typed, designed, read and supported this journal since its beginning in 2006. We only ever wanted to make a dozen little eggy journals, and we did. Thank you.

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Contents

4	Introduction
10	Collages – Julie Reason
14	A matter of time – Emma Johnson
19	On turning seventy – Julia Tarnawsky
22	Metaphysics and marae maintenance – Ellen Andersen
28	Future nostalgia – James Dann
36	Finding home losing home – John Baker
38	All in my head – Elizabeth Heritage
42	Drowning cities and Burning Man – Tom Rivard
60	The end of the line? – Nicola Gaston
64	Everything is temporary – Emil McAvoy
72	Returning flavour – Kim Anderson
76	What time is the temporary? – Open Spatial Workshop
84	Drawings – Caroline Robertson
88	Music psyche and change – Chris O'Connor
92	Satellite – Charlotte Forrester
97	A brush with death – Maia McDonald
100	Media and maars – Karin Warnaar
104	Freeranger of the issue: Māui
108	Cheap 'n' Choice Award: Student Architecture Congress (1958 – ongoing)
114	The Grief-box – Linda Collins
116	Collages – Julie Reason
120	The dream team

Introduction

Everything ends.

And yet so much of human culture is an exercise in holding off this fact. We scramble to find things that will outlast us. We think our existence can be sustained in memorials, held in writing, continued through bloodlines or captured in data. We all want a legacy of some kind. Even this only delays, for a time, the inevitable. For, as we explore in this final issue of the Freerange Journal, all these things have endings too.

In many ways, this final issue is a personal indulgence. Death scares me. Endings make me sad. I've always found time confusing. But being scared and intrigued by the temporariness of our existence is hardly unique and it can open the door to more cosmic discussions.

In the end, the temporary is just another way of examining how stuff happens in the universe. How do things form, grow and then disappear?

We know that all the people, ideas and objects we care for and protect will not exist one day. Families, cities, nations, cultures, languages, species, planets, stars – even the universe that cradles all of this – are temporary phenomena. The dreams of billionaires don't change the fact that there is no escape vehicle. There is no saved game. We can delay and sustain things for a bit longer, but it doesn't change the long game.

Part of the difficulty in writing about the temporary nature of life is in finding the right balance between the commonness of this fact and the profound implication it has for us each personally. Much of culture and art is really the creative process of making this otherwise everyday reality fresh again. We hide from discussing death and then try and sneak it back into discourse via popular culture. The Sopranos and Bojack Horseman were not series about the mafia and celebrity culture; they were reflections on death and living well.

I have a really clear memory from high school that often springs to mind when I'm thinking about death. One day I was running past the school bully and he pushed me from behind – I fell over and slammed my head into a reinforced glass door. I remember this event some twenty years later because of the strange sense of time that I experienced after my head hit the glass: I recall only the aftermath of the impact, not actually hitting the door. It was as if the before and afters had been swapped and my brain was scrambling to re-order a suddenly disordered world.

This experience has stayed with me because it makes me think about the experience of death – I imagine the small and narrow world of consciousness pulling back from the mundane world. How this might pass back through time, eradicating a person's memories, identity, knowledge, friendships, loves, communities. Then, like the edge of an event horizon, it spreads out removing contexts – the body, surrounding landscape, country, planet and twinkling stars – from the person's experience, signalling their final act: entry into nothingness. A nothingness in which time doesn't mean anything anymore, the one place where the temporary doesn't exist.

This is, of course, a white way of seeing life and death, and by white I mean the particular mix of scientific positivism, existential philosophy and Buddhist reflection that characterises the view of death in many Anglo and European cultures today. Plenty of more enlightened beings carry other understandings of death, endings and temporality. But individual consciousness is, as far as we know, one of the rarest and most beautiful aspects of the universe. It is, as they say, the universe looking back on itself. I've been born into a particular worldview and worldtime and through this, I find it hard not to be saddened, and frequently scared, by the quiet lonely beauty of endings – of me ending.

But perhaps it's not so individual.

We need others around us to give meaning to our lives, to help develop the language we use to form our thoughts, to teach us, feed us and to contemplate our meanderings. The New Zealand musician Dave Dobbyn captures this through his Christian lens when he sings 'There is no such thing as a world without you'. We don't exist without others; there are things outside of ourselves that make our worlds. So perhaps we should see our temporariness as a more collective exercise.

This final Freerange journal is an exercise in sharing thoughts on the temporary, to make it less singular and individual: James Dann reflects on all that was lost in Christchurch during the quakes and the role of key urban venues in sustaining cultural life; Ellen Andersen discusses the role of tīpuna in the maintenance practices of marae; Kim Anderson gets nostalgic about food, family and shifting notions of home; Emma Johnson describes the collective agency of language and mourns the tragic loss of

language diversity that we are presently observing; Nicola Gaston examines the entangled relationship between the half-life of elements and human life on earth.

Other writers have more personal meditations: Elizabeth Heritage generously opens a door into the experience of chronic pain; Chris O'Connor describes the temporariness of music and how it springs anew with each listening; and Charlotte Rose tells a story of lost love, digital memories and flight.

Geological time makes a frequent appearance: Tom Rivard takes us for a trip in space from Burning Man to LA and back again, and in time through shifting deserts, rivers and coasts; Karin Warnaar reflects on practices of archiving and the knowledge stored in Foulden Maar near Dunedin; Scott Mitchell, Terri Bird and Bianca Hester from Open Spatial Workshop dive deep into geophysical time and locate more expansive forms of temporary agency.

I wouldn't want to summarise the poems, photographs and illustrations that grace the following pages so I ask you to make your own encounters with the works by Julia Tarnawsky, Maia McDonald, Linda Collins, Julie Reason, Emil McAvoy, Caroline Robertson and John Baker.

There is a sweet mixture of continuity and closure with this final edition of the Freerange Journal. With the end of this vehicle, a reflection on the temporary, we have started a new series called Radical Futures (FR become RF). This new publication started last year by looking at practices of death and dying in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is a less philosophical and more pragmatic exploration of how we deal with death. It's a beginning about endings.

When I started creating this issue I was in many ways reflecting on the death of the self as the archetype of the temporary. Death, when seen as the end of something, is a very vulgar thing, which is to say its commonplace. But through the process of making the issue, of talks with authors and of exploring their works, I've started to understand a more entangled and nested definition of the temporary. Yes, everything ends, but everything also transforms and returns. Perhaps when Ram Dass says 'We are all just walking each other home' he isn't just talking about human life.

In this more metaphysical view of the temporary we might imagine the universe as a broad tributary in which various material assemblages gather together, or coalesce, for periods of time. These gatherings build their own worlds, languages and internal logics. Things we understand as solar systems, atoms, life forms, societies, language groups, deities, games, trends, themes, tribes, categories and publications are each singularly alive, but also intricately linked to other temporary assemblages. This is the rich tapestry of interwoven objects that make life what it is, in all its mind-blurring richness, occasional comedy and heartbreaking sadness.

These assemblages hold memory in their form. The old stones revealed in the river bank. The dried-up water hole. The pillow that keeps an imprint of our head. The way our grandma used to cook. The vestigial hands of a dolphin. The heartbreak we can't forget. That feeling of picking up a familiar tool.

The cosmos might be indifferent to our dreams of forever, but it does let things linger. Empires form. Islands hold amongst the flow. Sometimes these assemblages resonate

and buzz and magic happens. The mountain stream full of life and colour and buzzing cicadas or that perfect moment in a party or meal when the energy is full and almost sacred, or the moment of reflection and contemplation where the stillness has depth and power, or the strange interspecies connection and love when encountering a pet or strange animal, or the look of surprise from a newborn baby.

None of these ideas are new. You know all this. This final issue Freerange is not meant to be revelatory. The important truths are known.

But in this age of crises, Covid and climate change, it is perhaps a good reminder to let go of the things that no longer matter and to hold on tight to the ones that do.

END

Asteria's
dream (p.11)

Bubble
chamber (p.12)

Julie Reason

Julie Reason is a self-taught collage artist who is drawn to the surreal and dreamlike as an antidote to what passes for reality. She lives in a tiny cabin on Banks Peninsula, and likes looking out to sea.





'Like a sandcastle, all is temporary. Build it, tend it, enjoy it. And when the time comes, let it go.'

— Jack Kornfield

A matter of time

Emma Johnson

In 2014, at the international conference *Constructing Memory*, a group of thinkers gathered in Paris to consider how to communicate messages thousands of years into the future in order to warn subsequent generations about radioactive waste. They were effectively seeking a work-around for language's inevitable entropy, its rate of decay being much quicker than that of nuclear waste. After all, nothing lasts forever and language is no exception – it is not set apart from the flow of time. It accrues and sheds meaning, transforms, comes into being and ultimately passes away, eventually sent on its way by the demands of lived experience.

Some twenty years before the Paris conference, semiotician Thomas Sebeok put forward the concept of an atomic priesthood as a means to making language last longer in his 1984 report *Communication Measures to Bridge Ten Millennia*. Recognising the vitality that the Pandora's box myth still held, he posited that a group be tasked with the responsibility of employing folkloristic devices – 'artificially created and nurtured ritual-and-legend' (24) – complete with retellings and ritual enactments, to

communicate these warnings. Although there are obvious problems in having an elite group in charge of diffusing such knowledge, Sebeok's concept points to the long life of myth, and how when certain things are said in a certain way, they last a bit longer.

This capacity to confound time for a while is something we experience in our daily life, though on much smaller scale. There is the quiet (and now rare) thrill when a letter unexpectedly arrives out of nowhere in your letterbox, bringing a message from the past that has been concealed for a time within the confines of the envelope. Words left over from another time and place have successfully travelled to the future.

Other words work themselves into dominant languages, are absorbed, for example, into English's vast expanses, surviving through change – that hallmark of the living. Echoes and ripples of the past, traces of travels, conquests and empire wash up on the shores of this global language - like khaki, mutton and ransack (India), or canoe and hurricane (Caribbean).

In spite of its transitory nature, language is a means of suspending things in time, of fixing the flux – of communicating. And if you are particularly adept at using it, you might trap something alive to share. There is something in myth's loose configuration that makes it an apt vessel to shuttle meaning over millennia, that leaves it open to common human experience to fill with specifics. Language's systems and universals combined with particular expressions – the local and the unique – give it life. It is expressively limitless. Chomsky calls this 'discrete infinity', when there are innumerable possible combinations of known elements. There is no end to what we can

say and sign. Or, as the Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote in 1918: ‘A word is not a crystal, transparent and unchanged, it is the skin of a living thought that may vary greatly in colour and context, according to the situation in which it is used’.

With all its elasticity, its form that can cling to an instant, how then does language die? It is a pressing question at a time in human history when we are losing a language every two weeks. Of the world’s 6000 different languages, 2400 of them are in danger of extinction. Language’s diverse ecosystem of old growth and new vines is a rich catchment for human experience and expression, but this is now straining under the weight of English, Spanish and Mandarin. Of the living languages, close to 80 per cent of the global population speak just 85 of them (Corbalis). Local languages are being silenced by the spread of dominant languages and as their last speakers die, they become that final category: extinct. They reach this category, very simply, when they are no longer used by their community.

Language does not exist in a vacuum, it too is subject to the forces of politics, capital, migration and society. Some face a gradual wear, fading from relevance, in line with the decline of empire, like Rome. They pass through to dead language status, existing only in the language used to explain them, in words about words – or as Helen Macdonald wrote of endangered animals, ‘Eventually rarity is all that they are made of’ (181). Others go quickly and in violence, like the Mayan, where knowledge accrued over time (medicinal plants, astronomy, irrigation systems, for example) is lost suddenly and all at once. And with this too go ways of being in the world.

In his *National Geographic* article ‘Vanishing Voices’, Russ Rymer writes: ‘What unexpected insights are being lost to the world with the collapse of its linguistic variety? Different languages highlight the varieties of human experience, revealing as mutable aspects of life that we tend to think of as settled and universal, such as our experience of time, number, or color.’ Language informs and expresses the way we see the world.

People inhabit different languages in different times and places. There are the works of art that are great intertemporal triumphs, speaking to us from across the ages. There are lovers’ languages, borrowed languages, private, public and second-hand languages, lost, found, endangered, dead, extinct, recovered and discovered languages – these are small worlds unto themselves and provide intimacy, community, history and a sense of time. All of them share in quest for links, for stability, for meaning. Language makes sense of our world.

Language is a way to ‘tame the wild profusion of existing things’ as Foucault noted, to capture wild human energies, to connect to each other, to make things last. Time is at its very core. And it is at its most powerful when it intersects with an exact present, when for a moment it straddles universal and particular, abstract and empirical, living both through thought and through the body in a direct encounter with the world. With time pulsing through it, language teems with life and is ripe with generative potential. Then it is gone.

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On turning seventy

Julia Tarnawsky

Akaroa. June 2013

Julia Tarnawsky lives and teaches with her husband Orest at Southern Lights Centre, a meditation and retreat centre at Akaroa. Teachings are from the theosophical and trans-Himalayan wisdom tradition. They also enjoy organic gardening and care-taking the property's natural bushland. www.southernlights.org.nz

The mountain's whining wind
Insinuates around the creaking flue.
Possums flaunt themselves on the deck
Eating Begonias.
It's one of those nights.

In my hotbed I radiate the calories
Of too much pizza.
A torrent of thought floods the mind.
I wonder why I am here in rural isolation

And not ensconced in placid suburban plot
Tamed by the nine to five rhythm of the street.

I wander to the idea of gratitude
And find myself bowing to inevitable providence,
That which pumps the heat of heart
The bellows of the lungs
For an allotted life span.
Is it not too glib
To humble myself to Being?

It is the lot of the elderly
To live out their days in dignity or despair.
I am one of these now
A septuagenarian.
A decade ahead of mindless time killing
Or filling the days..... with what?

In my mind I row to the centre of a lake of stillness,
Hoist up a mast of meditation
And tie myself to it,
Heart centre strapped to wood,
Beneath it the thymus
To regulate, protect the sense of Self against not-Self.

I call upon Will and Love
That, overshadowing, hold coherent
Creative flow around the planet.
I give myself to downflow
Heart pressed to this hope
This providence;
That it may be a fountain outlet
Beyond my petty frettings.
Brave, bold, bare
Beyond control
Flowing, free
Conduit for the World Tree.

That I may be a shaman strange
Beyond banality, brutishness
And greyness....
Somehow a light.

Metaphysics and marae maintenance

Ellen Andersen

Ellen Andersen (Ngāti Raukawa ki Te Tonga, Ngāti Kapu-manawawhiti) has a background in architecture and history. After more than a decade working with iwi and hapū on the conservation and restoration of marae, she is now working in the field of Māori housing, and on a Waitangi Tribunal inquiry.

The whakapapa (genealogy) of building in Aotearoa New Zealand traces its lineage all the way back to ngā atua (our pantheon of gods). Buildings are often seen as permanent features in the landscape, yet there are constant environmental forces acting upon them, which cause damage or deterioration. These forces are also the actions of ngā atua. So, how we can make a wooden building that has been around for a hundred years last for another hundred years? Finding responses to this question is the essence of the work I do with marae communities around the country, and it often involves developing conservation and maintenance plans for their heritage buildings.

There is a common analogy that comes up when talking about traditional or sustainable building practices that involves visualising your building as a jolly man in a rain-hat

and gumboots. This hat-and-boots theory suggests that to make your building warm, dry and durable, the primary consideration is protection from rain ingress with the hat/roof, while the rising damp is taken care of by the boots/foundations.

This act of anthropomorphising a building in order to understand the way it functions works very well for us Māori – we have always thought of our buildings in this way. Our whakapapa comes from the same origins as the timber posts that hold up the roof, and the fibre woven into the walls. It wasn't until many years into my work that I properly understood that the old hat-and-boots story was not nearly as useful to me as the stories from our own world. We already had our own explanations of how the world was created by our atua, how all the parts of the house came from our atua, and if we didn't care for these properly, these buildings would collapse and return to our atua. I also found myself feeling uneasy talking about our treasured ancestral houses in a way that made them out as some old man in his wet-weather gear. I was doing our taonga a disservice, even belittling them.

I started instead to base my building maintenance discussions on an artwork created by the person who started this programme of work I'm part of. The image – created by Cliff Whiting in the 1980s – shows a traditional whare personified as the atua Tāne-mahuta, pushing apart his father Ranginui from his mother Papatūānuku below. This is a critical part of our Māori creation story, where after the long period of darkness due to the close embrace of Ranginui and Papatūānuku, light entered the world thanks to the effort of one of their children. Rangi and Papa (for short) are the primary ancestors of our world; they are the sky and earth, and their children are the gods

of the natural world. There are variations to this story in Māori and Polynesian cultures – names vary, particular roles may change – but there is always enough common ground to get a useful dialogue going.

Tāne-mahuta is the atua of the forest and all things that grow there, and almost all of our building materials originally came from the forest. Inside the Māori meeting house the traditional construction method is visible – walls were lined with substantial upright timber posts, and light-weight woven panels frame the spaces between. Rafters were notched into the posts along the side walls and recessed into the central ridgebeam. Purlins were laid across the rafters, followed by a lining with the stems of the toetoe plume, and then we traditionally would have found a roof of layered raupō or nikau fronds.

We can see the house expressing all that Tāne-mahuta was able to achieve thanks to the separation of his parents and the arrival of light into the world. Inside the house we have the vertical posts of tōtara referencing the great separation; in the natural environment we have the great kauri trees of our forests keeping the sky from encroaching into embrace again.

We live with the ever-present tension of Tāne-mahuta providing so that we may build, and Rangi and Papa attempting to collapse all that is built back into the landscape. Rangi and Papa have strategies they can employ to attempt a return to each other. The most significant of these is rain, which is sometimes referred to as the ‘tears of Rangi’ in reference to his anguish at their separation. Rangi can bring heavy rains to penetrate the roof, and Papa can utilise those rains to create rising damp. This is the kind of damage and deterioration that

reminds us that what we create is only temporary, and that the earth and sky remain waiting for the opportunity to embrace again.

Natural hazards are also a useful way to bring about the destruction of buildings. Rangi and Papa have the assistance of two of their children that were least in favour of their separation in the first place. Rūaumoko was the youngest child, who refused to part with his mother. Some say he remained unborn and earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and geothermal activity are all associated with Rūaumoko.

Another atua that was opposed to the separation of Rangi and Papa was Tāwhirimātea – the atua who controls weather. He chose to remain close to his father. Significant weather events are seen as a collaboration between father and son seeking revenge on the other gods, creating floods, tsunami, and storm damage to forests and buildings. Tāne-mahuta is the creator of humans as well as the forest resources that we utilise in construction. He is also the progenitor of rocks and stone, so every aspect of our building tradition is derived from this whakapapa. When we build we consider how we – as descendants of Tāne – are working with his other descendants (our relations) to protect ourselves from threats such as the ferocity of Tāwhirimātea, or the unpredictable devastation of Rūaumoko. We can't control the forces of ngā atua – we can only do our best to cope with them using the resources we have, and ensuring we care for these natural resources that are entwined with our own genealogy.

We build for permanence, but the results are far from permanent. We try to preserve construction for longevity, but the buildings that we create are just a tiny layer in the

whakapapa of our world. When we build with the recognition of the interconnections between ourselves, our natural world and our built environment, it becomes clear that the survival of our buildings in the face of Ranginui and Papatūānuku's efforts require us to consistently care for them, in spite of the knowledge that they will eventually be gone.

'Might as well have fun 'cause your happiness is done when your goose is cooked!'

— Big Boi

Future Nostalgia

James Dann

James Macbeth Dann resides in Christchurch, where he has lived through earthquakes, fires, terror attacks and pandemics – but he doesn't take any of it personally. He writes about passenger rail, yacht rock, music festivals, and his true passion, the New Zealand Warriors.

Nostalgia is a powerful thing, a warm blanket that can envelop you in a hazy glow of half-remembered truths and misremembered rumours. It is often tied to certain people and particular places, to circumstances that were brief and fleeting, but manifests in the mind with an unsteady permanence. High school or university are often very important times, as we break away from our parents and make new bonds of friendship, some of which last a lifetime, while others loosen, those friends eventually becoming unnamed faces in fading photographs. The backdrops for these memories are as important as the people – the film sets that stage the action as we re-watch the pivotal scenes over and over in our minds. They could be classrooms, student flats, a favourite coffee shop, a particular corner where you all met after school. Many of these places won't last much longer than the events they host, especially with the high turnover in music venues, cafes, art galleries, bars and other businesses – built as much on the community as any long-term business plan. You might find yourself

walking down a street five or ten years on, recounting the old names of the spaces to the boredom and rolled-eyes of those around you. Everything must end, but what happens when it all ends at the same time?

The earthquakes that hit Christchurch in 2010 and 2011 were a disaster on a scale that hadn't been seen in New Zealand since the Napier-Hastings earthquakes in 1931. One hundred and eighty-five people died, the majority of them in the collapse of two major buildings: the CTV and PGC buildings. Thousands of houses were demolished, as were hundreds of commercial buildings in the central business district. The central city was cordoned off for years, and when the fences started to come down, many of the places that had hosted once-in-a-lifetime events were gone. One area that had been of particular importance to me – the south-east of the centre city, around High and Poplar streets – was almost entirely wiped out. In the first half of the twentieth century, this area had been a centre of light manufacturing, particularly clothing. As production drifted overseas, the area fell on hard times. Then in the 1990s, and accelerating in the 2000s, the cheap rents and interesting brick buildings became the centre of a minor creative renaissance in the city.

In a textbook example of gentrified urban regeneration, Poplar Lane was buzzing with art galleries, artist studios, band practice spaces, up-and-coming fashion designers, cafes, bars, and probably most importantly, flats. Many of the people who lived here chose to do so because they were part of the community, whether it was working at the pub or studying at the polytech. As the area got more popular, it became a bigger destination. The Twisted Hop – one of the city's first specialist craft beer breweries – opened in a little square on Poplar Lane. Other spaces

came and went. There was a Jewish bakery and a couple of bath houses. A tea house opened and closed, replaced by a bar. A Russian bar opened two doors down from the German bar – though sadly a Polish bar didn't take the lease in between the two. The area was never static, with empty spaces being used for temporary art exhibitions or gigs, markets in the courtyards – a sense of constant flux. And then it was all over.

A number of places in this area didn't survive the September 2010 quake. Almost none survived the February 2011 shake and the subsequent wave of demolition. Many – most – of these buildings had been two or three storey, constructed from brick, unreinforced and underinsured. There was the added misfortune that one property developer owned a large proportion of the buildings, and their insurer, Western Pacific Insurance, didn't have adequate reinsurance to cover the claims made against them. The out-of-pocket developers were in no position to attempt to salvage and repair these buildings, and they were soon not much more than rubble under the caterpillar tracks. Today, the area is a mixture of showy glass facades and empty lots covered by cars and gravel. One of the few buildings to survive the cull is at Smash Palace, a bar on High Street, run by Johnny Moore and family.

Johnny Moore has a long history in the area and we can follow the evolution of the area through the bars that he has run. His first venture was Cartel, a very small bar on the lane in the area that would become SOL Square. As one of the first establishments to open in the lane, it developed as almost an outsider space, both part of the action and too cool for it at the same time. It became the destination of choice for the locals of the area and had a community feel that was rare or absent in other venues

that opened after it. Local musicians were always there, either playing music or talking about playing music, and it was a frequent destination once the free wine had run out at any of the nearby art gallery openings. As the rest of SOL Square opened, the area became increasingly popular. As with gentrification the world over, the artists, musicians, poets and weirdos at Cartel had made it the place to be, but as the number of patrons at the upmarket booze-barns in the rest of the lane increased, the outsiders looked to move on. Johnny Moore had them covered.

Over in Poplar Lane, there was a tea house that had wildly overestimated how popular tea would be. Moore and his family took the lease and started planning for their next venture, Goodbye Blue Monday. This was a much larger venue, with an indoor area that could accommodate a stage for bands. There was a large outdoor area, covered by a canopy, that was perfect for those who liked to smoke whilst huddled around fires in 44-gallon drums. The outdoor area was littered with rumpty couches and chairs from second-hand stores, giving it the feel of a flat that had been partied in a few too many times. As with Cartel, it became the epicentre of an alternative subculture in the city, with artists and musicians sharing \$3 cask wines alongside politicians and priests and whoever else needed a quick taste of realness. Unlike Cartel, Moore didn't get to end Goodbye Blue Monday on his terms. The earthquake did it for him.

The way people remember the two venues provides some insight into how and why nostalgia can be so powerful. Though the quake technically ended both of them, the loss of Goodbye Blue Monday (or GBM as it was affectionately abbreviated by most of the regulars) was more extensively mourned. Cartel had continued on

after Moore and co left; it was the same space physically, but not emotionally. Many of the regulars had followed Moore across to GBM, and thus had parted company with Cartel years before the quake. With Goodbye Blue Monday, and many of the other venues in Poplar Street, as well as across the city, there was no chance to say goodbye. There was no closing down sale or final spectacular. You couldn't go back in two months, when it was now a fried chicken joint, and point out to your bored girlfriend where you once had an argument about the best Strokes LP. The quakes violently ripped so many of these cultural and emotional spaces from us. Without a physical space, it was harder to find a closure.

These are examples that are very specific to my experience, which might only be shared by a few hundred others. But all across Christchurch, there will be similar examples, novellas of friendship and love and rivalry and dance competitions and footsie and bad customer service and flickering fluorescent lights and smells that just won't go away and longing and they all just ended abruptly, the final chapters torn from the book without even a hint of resolution. Those memories are wandering around in limbo, waiting for their story to be told, knowing it will never be resolved.

Of course, places to meet up and get a little tipsy might not seem that important in the bigger scale of a massive natural disaster – and they aren't. They pale in comparison to the day-to-day issues many people faced for years and, in some cases, are still dealing with. But for most people, social activities are one of the main attractions for living in cities. They are the colour, the glue that stick us to a place. Christchurch lost a lot of glue in the quakes, and we're still a long way from having enough to stick things back together.

Rather than give up, Johnny Moore continued to stick at it. In the years following the quakes, there were a number of sites that were activated by temporary projects. Some of these were fleeting, lasting a day or a week or a month. Others moved into an insecure ‘temporary permanence’, and Smash Palace is one of these. This was the next iteration of Moore’s hospitality vision of selling people he liked food and beverages they liked, and it took an unusual form. At the corner of Bealey Ave and Victoria Street, one of the most high-profile locations in the city, he built an enclosure behind the scaffolding that had become so familiar to the rebuild. Inside this yard was a bus, converted into a bar. Patrons could be served from either side of the contraption, and on a leaner with a view out to the road, or in another bus converted for this purpose. It was a very silly, surreal idea that totally summed up the mood of the city in the years after the disaster. But Victoria Street was never the right address for Moore, and so, in 2015, the bus made the trip across the city to their new home in High Street. The second site still has the ramshackle charm of the first, but with a degree more permanence. It is also mere metres away from where Goodbye Blue Monday once stood. It feels much more like home for Moore, his staff, and their patrons alike.

Although nothing is ever permanent – something Moore has learnt while pouring drinks across five sites in not much more than a decade – the current iteration of Smash Palace does feel like an end point. For those of us old enough or lucky enough to have been around in the days of Cartel or GBM, it feels like we’ve been on a journey, and it’s really comforting to be back where it all started. Bars are all about friendship and the space itself can be as important as the people inside it. Of course, Smash Palace won’t be around forever. If the rebuild ever really kicks

on like they've been telling us it would for the last decade, then it will eventually get swallowed up by the empty glass facades of the Innovation Precinct. Until then, it will continue to be the stage for many future nostalgias, a nuclear fission reactor of quirk and grit, lubricated by bodgie beer, the laughter of friendly arguments drowning out the construction sounds of the glacial rebuild. In a city where so many places were taken from us without any warning, it is important to take a moment to respect the ones that we still have.

'We are all just walking each other home'
—Ram Dass

Finding home losing home

John Baker

John Baker is a registered architect and certified passive house designer who has practised in Wellington, Dunedin, Auckland, Hamilton and Zurich (Switzerland) and is currently running his own practice somewhere near misty Mt Misery in the hills above Tauranga. He draws all sorts of things, sometimes well, often unfinished, but always with gusto.



All in my head

Elizabeth Heritage

Nō Ingarangi aku tīpuna
He tangata tiriti ahau
I whānau mai au i Tāmaki Makaurau, i te rohe o Ngāti Whātua
Ko Waitematā te moana
Ko Ōwairaka te maunga
Ināianeī e noho ana au ki Te Whanganui-a-Tara, i te rohe o Te
Āti Awa
Ko Elizabeth Heritage taku ingoa

When you are lying flat on your back crying, your tears slide down into your ears. They are held there by the whorls and pockets of ear flesh and form little pools. On good days, I can distract myself by comparing the ear pools to rock pools, and wondering what tiny tidal creatures might make their homes there. On less good days, I just keep crying.

A couple of years ago, the occasional migraines I used to get morphed into one giant continuous migraine that never goes away. Luckily for me, my symptoms – like the tidal ear-pools – ebb and flow. To track that process, I have invented three migraine levels. Most days I'm Level

One. Level One means the migraine is a dull buzz, and unless I do something outrageous like subject myself to fluorescent lights or long car journeys, I'm mostly fine. Level Two means I'm confined to bed and can't handle electronic screens or artificial light of any sort, although I can sleep a little bit and can get up in short bursts to do some housework. Level Three is the worst: my sickness is so bad that the entire world has shrunk to contain just my body and how terrible it feels. I become obsessed with staying as still as possible, fighting the strange tremors in my leg muscles. My ear-pools overflow. There is no sleep.

When I studied history at uni, I was introduced to the idea that history is created through narrative. Later I encountered theories of how the brain works that say that we are constantly creating and recreating our personalities and memories through narrative as well. So I feel a strong compulsion to force my migraines into the structure of a story. Every time I hear myself tell someone else about my health I wonder which version of the story it will turn out to be.

Here is a story about the physical pain. When Level Three gets really bad, I reach what I call The Twenties. (This number is unrelated to the levels.) The Twenties is when the concept of time becomes unbearable. It's when I'm on hour 16 of what I know from experience will probably be a 30-to-40-hour flare-up. I know I cannot escape. I know I am reduced to simply existing in my body, minute to minute. So I tell myself: I just have to make it through the next twenty seconds. One. Two. Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven. My mind wanders. I feel so sick. Eight. Nine. If only my leg muscles would stop twitching, I know I would feel better if I could just lie still. Ten. Eleven. Twelve. I hear myself making moaning noises. Thirteen.

My feet itch. Fourteen. Fifteen. There is intense pain in my jaw. Sixteen. Seventeen. If only I could sleep. Eighteen. Nineteen. Crying doesn't help but I can't stop. Twenty. I am still alive.

Here is a story about the psychological pain. Having a migraine all the time really sucks and there are a lot of things I hate about it. I hate having been forced into the relentless project management and research work of an ill-defined chronic condition, a job I am unqualified for and bad at doing. I hate that casual enquiries from friends and colleagues about my health involve doing a painful calculation: do I lie and say I'm fine, making myself feel alienated from reality, or do I tell the truth and say my head aches, derailing the conversation and making myself seem frail and needy? I hate the new fear I have now that I will eventually become so sick that those closest to me will stop loving me. I hate my own unreliability and its professional and financial consequences. I hate having to constantly parent myself. I hate that such a large part of me is now a wailing, miserable child. I hate that I have to be so fucking sensible all the fucking time. I hate the invisibility of my illness and the fact that sometimes even I don't believe me. I hate how fearful I have become.

Here are two stories about temporary reprieves. One. There can be moments of utter joy. When your sickness has forced you back and back and back into a tiny corner and your life has become so small and fragile that you can barely leave the house, previously unremarked experiences become precious treats. One day I met friends for lunch at Zealandia and then went for a walk through the bush by myself. It was magical. I shot a series of funny little YouTube videos on my phone about the NZ Bird of the Year competition. I'm not sure why, really – certainly no

one had asked me to. But it was fun, and it was something I wasn't sure I could do until I did it.

Two. One of my migraine symptoms is tinnitus. It's there all the time. I know a lot of people hate having tinnitus but I find mine oddly comforting. I choose to believe that my tinnitus is the sound of my brain working hard and doing its best. During the summer, I discovered to my delight that the cicadas make exactly the same sound. It felt wonderful to sit in the garden and hear the sound of my migraine spill out into the world where other people could hear it. It made me feel more real.

I put those stories last because they feel comfortably like a conclusion, and you and I would both like to believe that they are the final word. I can feel the pull of that narrative; I can feel the power of the lesson learned, of adversity conquered. But just as The Twenties are temporary, so too are the times of acceptance and resilience. I keep telling all these various stories, hoping that if I have enough angles, if I shine enough different lights on my experiences, I will reach some kind of truth. But there is no permanent conclusion. Temporariness is all I have.

Drowning cities and Burning Man

Tom Rivard

Thomas Rivard is an architect, urbanist, storyteller, activist, artist and educator, creating speculative cities, re-imagining relationships between cultural acts and their natural and urban environments. He has made films, installations, events, books and buildings. He leads environmental city-making at REALMstudios, one of Australia's leading urbanism practices, integrating ecologies, infrastructure and communities.

This is a road movie, which travels from the edge of LA to Burning Man and back again via Al Gore, and that pretends to end on a mountainside off the edge of a continent...with a soundtrack of fire and water, and a view.

This is the end...

Eventually, everything ends. Question is, can we wait that long?

The city seems to be humanity's most enduring artefact. The first one, built by Cain following flight and fratricide, somewhere in the desert east of Eden, was a product of

desire and death. The contemporary city, perversely, is founded on a conflict between similar existential forces: economic development and environmental despoliation.

Because of these existential forces, cities rise and fall.

So perhaps it's these forces, rather than any agglomeration of concrete, commerce and conviviality, that might be our most enduring civic legacy.

'This will kill that,' a dead white guy once said about a new faith supplanting an old.

Now, our brave new civilisation burns a far older and more corporeal world and despite all the evidence, all the facts, all the real news, our world refuses to even look at the fire, let alone act on it. In a heartbeat, the building of the Anthropocene, and the engines that drive it, promise to make a desert outside all our cities. It may also drown them.

Time has become strange. As has space. Weather events forecast to occur every thousand years recur every few years. A former universal geomantic constant, sea level, now promises to drown every ocean-side condo between Miami and Mauritius.



Cities are the engines of climate change, *and* the source of the community consensus needed to combat it. With our national governments crippled into inaction, cities, through their density and diversity, remain centres of creativity and compromise, necessarily sharing resources, infrastructure, open space, culture and opinions.

Keep your eyes on the road, your hands up on the wheel...

Through the window of the internet, we see several men in white shorts and white shoes, calmly playing golf while directly behind them a wildfire rages – a wildfire that, at that time, was the worst LA had ever experienced. Until the next one.

In the same week, on the other side of the world, we see two Chinese ladies, wading thigh-deep across the *aqua alta* of Piazza San Marco, clutching bags of Louis Vuitton loot. Although it may well be that they flew all that way only to buy goods likely to have been made a few miles from where they live, the real story is much worse. Luxury-goods manufacturers ship workers in containers to the town of Prato, outside Florence, so that the products they piece together from the scraps of leather they were shipped over with can bear the ‘Made in Italy’ stamp. Not long before these ladies were shot, gleefully deep in the water, half a dozen Chinese workers burned to death in their (cheap, unregistered, unsafe) dormitory in Prato.

He says to you, ‘Do you want to make a deal?’

In 1978, Exxon (pre-Mobil) issued an internal corporate memo authored by a group of esteemed scientists outlining the anticipated global effects of the burning

of fossil fuels: climate change, ecosystem destruction and the corresponding societal cataclysms (Hall). But by then, Exxon was one of the largest corporations on the planet, a permanent fixture in every portfolio and every senate campaign, so they buried the memo, and all of its substantiating reports, and promptly invested in the business of climate denial. This wasn't considered a crime, only good business – part of the argument for inaction was that Exxon was simply providing a product to satisfy a demand, giving the consumers what they wanted

Like a luxury handbag writ large, Los Angeles is a product of consumer desire, orchestrated by mafias of speculation, in which the individual is largely defined by their consumption – of cars, real estate, clothing and media. Since its birth under the whip of Father Junipero Serra – the inquisitionary Franciscan, self-flagellator and promiser of either eternal salvation or damnation – LA has become an exemplar of the prioritisation of market forces and constant expansion, rather than collective communality and ecological responsiveness.

It had not always been so. The Tongva people congregated around the constantly changing Los Angeles River, an alluvial corridor that ran freely across the desert flood plain that is now Los Angeles. The river itself was not permanent. Its path was unstable and unpredictable – even the mouth of the river discharged in different locations. The Tongva moved with the river – they made no permanent settlements.

Today, the proportion of the surface area in Los Angeles dedicated to the automobile (roads, parking, garages, etc.) approaches 70 per cent of the city's land area. But again, we might argue that it has not always been so – after all,

the pre-modern Roger Rabbit LA had a fine street life, and a world-class public transport system, didn't it? Apocryphally purchased and then dismantled by an evil consortium of petroleum, tire and car companies, the Red Car line was, in the 1920s, the largest transportation network in the world. But like most things to do with cars, corporations and speculation, the real story is far worse than our cartoon history.



There must be some kinda way outta here, said the joker to the thief...

Henry Huntington, heir to a railroad fortune, wanted a bigger fortune. With his inheritance, he purchased millions of acres of land in the desert on the peripheries of the Los Angeles basin. He also purchased every independent rail line in the city, using that infrastructure to connect his isolated precincts back to the city itself. Cheap house lots were advertised (and sold) to yearning Midwesterners on the basis that the city was readily accessible. The water required to sustain these communities was delivered by another resource mafia, led by William Mulholland, which diverted the LA River's sources.

The millennia-old river disappeared, its floods didn't. Jack Nicholson lost a nostril investigating.

Once Huntington had sold all of his desert subdivisions, he had little interest in maintaining the Red Car system – it had served its purpose. The network was allowed to decline and decay, until its remaining rusted components were dismantled and sold for scrap. The automotive industry (and its associated supporting conglomerates – fuel, rubber, roads) simply stepped into a free-market opportunity.

You can still see revived red cars, ersatz symbols of urbanity, scattered across shopping mall concourses, on reconstructed rail lines. The best-preserved ones (and the only ones that move) are in Disneyland, on Main Street, USA.

By contrast, along the road to Black Rock City, Nevada, any artefacts of permanent urbanity progressively disappear, along with their residents. The last structures you encounter along County Road 34 are abandoned mobile homes.

When you get to Gerlach, the last town before the Black Rock Desert, the mobile homes reappear – they're not abandoned, though, they're awaiting deployment, temporary homes-for-hire.

The Black Rock Desert is the second-flattest place in North America, the alkali bed of a lake that vanished 15,000 years ago. Black Rock City, the home of Burning Man, forms once a year in the middle of the desert. It is, for one week, the third-largest city in Nevada. 70,000 participants arrive from around the world and create a city that is more idea than reality, based on utopian principles of radical coexistence and deliberate impermanence.

If the story of LA is that of the contemporary individual as the unit measure of humanity's presence in the world, Burning Man seeks to subvert this faith and reveal it as limiting, isolating and fundamentally false.

Instead, the stories Burning Man propagates about how we might be, in the world, together, are about connection to place, adding layers of consideration and narrative, not as an aggregate stratum of physical matter, but as shared experience.

I confess that I – like many who practice in and on the city, and despite personal inhibitions – am actually an optimist, even a romantic, probably also a dreamer.

Across our diverse (and often divergent) disciplines, the shared aptitude of those who seek to re-invent the city is that of making things, endeavours in which those previous sensibilities – optimism and romance are necessarily complicit. Fundamentally, the only skill (if it can be construed to be one) that I bring to the camp is that I'm good at putting things together.

When my dear friend Francesca suggested I join her at Burning Man, most of what I knew was that it was the world's best, biggest and most Insta-ready party, something like Mad Max meets Woodstock meets Kendall Jenner. Of course, I said yes.

When her dear friend Arthur suggested I join his crew to help build the Temple at Burning Man, what I intuited was that some crazy impossible parametric geomancy was going to be built in the middle of absolutely nowhere, out of tens of thousands of parts, by hundreds of volunteers, in service to the aforementioned desert bacchanal. Of course, I said yes.

When I convinced (rather an easy sell, I admit) my dear friend Michael that he and I should pack many bags full of fur and felt and fly across an ocean for all of the above, that's exactly what I thought it would be – all of the above.

To be honest, I had no idea.

I had no idea about the brutal grandeur of the 'Playa', that piece of dusty, dried-up lake bed both inhospitable and majestic, and affording only a temporary (and uneasy) inhabitation.

I had no idea about the casual, but eminently engaging, community of communities that forms, organically and iteratively, around shared endeavours in an equally shared landscape that doesn't give a shit whether 70,000 dust-encrusted ravers are there or not.

I had no idea about the extravagant extent to which people from around the planet would go to – simply to provide joy, comfort or frozen watermelon to thousands of strangers.

I had no idea how important things like the Temple are, freely given over to the city and to the myriad pilgrims who alight there, carting gear, gifts, glory and grief.

I had no idea how genuinely important Black Rock City is to those thousands who come for the world's biggest and best party, and leave with nothing but ideas (and Insta posts).

Most importantly, I had no idea how important Burning Man is as a salient example of how principles focused on people rather than product can create a city.

Now, I have an idea.

Because that's what Burning Man is, what Black Rock City is, even what the Temple is. An idea, or better, a family of ideas.

Because, interestingly, Burning Man doesn't really exist, in the conventional urban sense. Black Rock City doesn't exist. The Temple doesn't exist. They're all made, then erased – temporary places for enduring sentiments. Because they don't exist, except, importantly, in one way only: as ideas.

Ideas about how we might be in the world.



Nearing the end of their residency at Burning Man, lots of folk ruefully talk about the 'default world', some faraway place that is NOT Black Rock City, while insisting that BRC, for all its impermanence, IS the real world. It's a compelling sentiment – imagining the ideas behind Burning Man are more important than the thing itself.

Don't get me wrong: Burning Man IS still a massive wank, a rarefied luxury afforded to those with enough disposable income and free time to spend weeks in the desert posing for photographs and giving things away. It occurred to me, though, that that last act might be the salient difference between Black Rock City and the 'default world': the idea that something as elusive as generosity might inform how we go about transforming the default world, this one, the only one we have.

That default world and the rules we've invented to make it are real. Despite being in the movies, LA is all too real.

But so too are those other intangible realities – of Burning Man, of Black Rock City, of the Temple.

The genetics of LA are crystal clear: speculation, consumption, expansion and permanence.

The DNA of Black Rock City is equally clear though, but with our seemingly permanent neoliberal lens, perhaps more elusive: self-organisation, communality, generosity and impermanence.

I read on the way out, on the back bumper of a dusty Cadillac Hunter S. Thompson would have been proud to steer, what I thought was a highly euphemistic and exhortatory paean: 'Burning Man ruined my life'. If it did so, maybe that life was ready to be ruined; maybe it was ripe for new ideas, ideas with which to infect the default world and everything in it.

Years ago, my dad (not really a man of words) observed: 'People don't change, they just become more so.'

Maybe cities don't either – maybe we just need to find ways to make them more so.

More so (of a different kind) was being promulgated with high enthusiasm at Al Gore's Climate Reality event back in LA, where 2000 well-meaning folk eager to save the planet had gathered at the convention centre to see the world's most famous ex-non-president deliver his affectionately entitled 'slide deck'.

Through a litany of apocalyptic images in which the world is either roasting in a hellish conflagration or drowning in a biblical flood, we were bludgeoned into despair, ready for someone, anyone, to save us, or at least show us a way forward.

We were in the RIGHT movie. The cost, preached Mr Gore, of electric cars and renewable electricity is plummeting – soon the Tesla Model 3 will be cheaper than a Ford and everyone will switch over. He was followed by Eric Garcetti, mayor of LA and future president, Kennedy-esque in his confidence born of intelligence, wealth and the political backing of the fifth largest economy in the world. Garcetti sermonised a future LA, 2030 in fact, in which 'all our vehicles will be electric, all our electricity will be sustainable.' He then went on to expound LA's greatest asset, the mighty LA River, which 'falls further than the Mississippi' in its 50-mile journey to the sea.

NOW I was in the wrong movie. Perhaps the LA River's most memorable role was in *Terminator 2*, when a benevolent Arnold Schwarzenegger on a Harley saved a future messiah from annihilation at the hands of a future AI called Skynet by racing away down the concrete culvert that is the river's reality for its entire length.



You see, ever since the river was not allowed to meander across the valley, its natural capacity to absorb flood events was removed. Enter the fabled US Army Corps of Engineers, who have channellised rivers around the planet and were, up until the building of China's Three Gorges Dam, the biggest users of concrete on the planet. The channelling of the LA River took a vanished river with no set course and made it a permanent, fixed water management infrastructure – albeit one with very little water, since, as Jack discovered, this had been diverted long ago to service remote desert subdivisions.

The river as service, as supply, as conduit, as nothing more than a piece of transactional infrastructure, is LA's most emblematic landscape, both omnipresent and invisible.

The transactional is also at the heart of Climate Reality's pleas to save the planet, in which any choice that is not purely economic, or consumerist, is no choice at all. Replacing LA's 18 million cars with Tesla's, or powering its millions of single-family houses, strip malls and office blocks with renewable energy will still leave the city a 'shithole'. Consuming more, or maintaining the same

patterns of consumption and waste, will not begin to address the larger global issue of consumption itself.

The benchmark precept of sustainability, ‘resilience’, is based on the naïve belief that we can maintain current practices and properties, that our way of life is permanent, and non-negotiable. But while the protection and preservation of some physical aspects of cities may be necessary, it is the cultural making of cities themselves that we most need to transform – economically, socially and culturally.

Our protests, our personal prohibitions, our peripheral shifts in consumption preclude us from understanding the climate crisis as a *systems*’ crisis, and one directly linking climate to other key systems such as austerity, food, water, politics, culture and ideology. But all these systems are maintained and supported by national governments and global institutions, which are the least likely entities to act against their own interests, or to wilfully participate in their own dismantling.

It’s not that we shouldn’t protest or call for institutions to change. But like all empires, these things take a long time to die – they’re not permanent, they just seem so.

If the words are wrong, if we’re not telling the right stories about how we are in the world, then we need new words, and new acts – ones that don’t demand a physical permanence, but acts that re-establish continuities with systems, elements and practices far greater, and far more mature, than our few-hundred-year-old anthropocentric cultural and economic systems.

We need to move beyond resilience as the final objective, to other words, other acts.

Relinquishment. We need to give up unsustainable possessions, processes and practices. We need to lose.

Restoration. Nobody likes to lose, especially when what they're losing is their closely held possessions, processes and practices. Restoration offers the promise of not simply substitutions for those perceived sacrifices, but a re-discovery of relationships – to each other, our communities, and the environments in which we live.

At the enlightened university at which I studied, one of our inspirational presidents left us with this line: 'Make the world's problems your problems.' Now, though, we don't even need to bother – whether economic, climatic, militaristic, technological – the world's problems come to us, inexorably and inevitably. The world's problems are our problems not simply because of geographic propinquity – the systems that engendered them are ours.

Despite Al Gore's messianic belief in transactional solutions to the 'climate crisis,' using a system to correct its own flaws demands a willing suspension of belief even the most fanciful science fiction writers avoid – Skynet never auto-corrected.

We are in need of a new mindset that can create conjoined social, cultural and economic systems focused on a shared and sustainable prosperity for all within that system, not exclusively on a few anthropocentric entities that might 'own' it.

But to move beyond the old systems, we need viable alternatives, or at least examples of how these alternatives might operate.

Two days after sweeping the desert for every last scrap of an incinerated temple, I was on a mountainside outside Half Moon Bay, California, a pristine tranche of coastal wilderness with a proximity to the hallowed halls in Cupertino and Mountain View that might make it worth a lot of money. It is in one sense real estate, pure and simple. It is also a sublime network of ecosystems, wedged between two tranches of national park, and between ridge and coastal plain. It is a territory of creeks and valleys, stands of redwoods and eucalypts, inhabited by mountain lions and wild deer.

It was formerly the land inhabited by the native Ohlone peoples, for whom the coastal ridge that formed their homelands was the ‘mountain that rose from the sea.’ Importantly, to their story (and ours), when the mountain rose from the sea, atop it was Coyote – the Trickster, but also, Prometheus-like, the giver of knowledge. Despite Coyote’s largesse, the Ohlone could not possibly have known of the deep geology that created this ridge some 100 million years earlier, as the Pacific plate subducted under North America, and the coastal range literally rose up from the ocean’s floor. In fact, a few hundred yards away, the San Andreas fault separates two continental plates, one terrestrial and occupied: North America, with its Jeffersonian grid, demarcated in a Cartesian rigour of manifest destiny, private property from sea to shining sea. The other continental plate, though, is subaquatic mostly, and only expressed in its marginal or liminal states, as edges of land (California), or extruded fault lines (New Zealand), or archipelagos of volcanic islands strewn across the ocean (Hawaii).

In North America, across the fault, the Cartesian, neoliberal sensibility asks of a piece of land only how

much is there, and how the value of that quantum can be maximised. Instead, at Half Moon Bay, reacting to the speculative anvil of LA, and inspired by the civic generosity of Burning Man, we ask a question altogether more complex and difficult: what is the carrying capacity of the land? That is, rather than dividing up this place into smaller and smaller increments for sale and/or profit, how can we work with the land in a way that continually improves it, across a broad matrix of criteria?



More importantly, instead of speculation, consumption, expansion and permanence, how might we apply principles of ecological self-organisation, communality, generosity and impermanence?

The project, then, is to leverage the inherent property value of the land to enhance and improve its qualities for all those other constituent ecosystems and adjacent ecologies that might benefit from it. A single real estate transaction (of a long-term lease, rather than a sale) will fund remediation, restoration and re-establishment of the entire site, as a bio-corridor connecting adjacent tranches of dedicated open space, and create opportunities for the

expanded ecological, cultural and social communities that co-exist within this environment. Community gardens, affordable housing, a research centre and a retreat within the re-wilded landscape, all connected to the coastal ridge habitats, which link the coast and the ridge once more. Over time, other leases, episodes of temporal stewardship, will unlock further potential to integrate ecologies.

And, in the principle of Coyote, from his emergent mountaintop, the project will also generate and share knowledge: technologies developed over the ridge in the valley to create an exemplar of the world's most sustainable house will be made available open-source; research findings in making creek-side agricultural operations a benefit to an adjacent waterway will become manuals in the commons; the methodology of structuring radical co-existence within wild landscapes will be widely disseminated for emulation and adaptation.

Neither clients nor designers will live to see the project complete. In fact, even (especially) in the absence of human stewards, the project might never end, but instead evolve to a continuum of ecologies, constantly shifting, interacting and co-existing.

Eventually, everything connects.

And eventually, everything ends.

Except those things that don't.

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'With time involved, everything is temporary.'

—David Benedict Zumbo

The end of the line?

Nicola Gaston

Nicola Gaston is Co-Director of the MacDiarmid Institute and an academic at the University of Auckland, where she wrangles physics and feminism into fantasies of a fairer future.

We have twelve years to limit climate change catastrophe, shouted the headlines announcing the 2018 IPCC report. Or ten now, I guess. All because we've disrupted the natural cycle of a single element: carbon.

It's funny, because the eternal predictability of the element carbon is what has made it so essential to life. Each atom of carbon has a well-defined repertoire of chemistry; it can make a bond *here*, another *there*, so long as each bond is aware of, and can respond to the others, and as long as there are no more than four. The rules are simple, set by the number of electrons that a carbon atom has to share: together they allow nature to reproducibly build the molecules – proteins, sugars and DNA – of which life on earth is made.

molecule to the next, from sugar, to methane, to CO₂, thus lives – or cycles on – forever, as far as living things are concerned: in the atmosphere, inhaled by plants, ingested by animals; as a component of the paper you read this on, or the electronics behind the screen. It's only been the movement of a small bit of it from *here* to *there*, a slight warping of the circle, that has led to scientific realisations of impending planetary doom; less of it sleeping safely under the earth, less of it in the vast forests that used to cover the earth, and more of it floating freely in the atmosphere, the fragile wrapping paper of our planet.

The timescale of life, on which an atom of carbon may live forever, is not the only timescale that matters, of course. One atom of carbon in every trillion, known as carbon-14 on account of a couple of spare neutrons inside its nucleus, will float about, indistinguishable from regular old carbon-12 in pretty much every way, until it spontaneously – though predictably, as we know half of any amount will have decayed after 5730 years – emits a beta-particle from its nucleus, becoming an atom of nitrogen.

Nitrogen has its own cycle, but there's a lot more nitrogen as N₂ in the atmosphere. Only in the timescale of a human lifetime has it become clear that an excess of nitrogen on land, though obtained from such a vast resource as exists in air, has negative consequences for water quality. I clearly remember my dad telling me, when I was seven or eight, that New Zealand was the only country on earth where you could drink the water in any of the rivers. It may be fair to say he wasn't quite correct even then, but the speed of our turnaround on freshwater quality still seems whiplash-worthy. Is it us? Is it small-country syndrome, that has enabled such rapid change? Is sustainability an issue of scale?

But what is truly sustainable, on the scale of a planet? Life? Perhaps I should first define sustainability: to me, it simply means the ability for something to sustain itself, to continue. Forever? Well, forever may be a matter of timescale. Everything living dies. The longest-lived vertebrate is the Greenland shark, it seems. Its eye lenses contain proteins, the carbon-14 content of which suggests a 400-year lifespan: long on human timescales, but short in comparison to others.

Elements on earth occur in amounts fixed by their original abundance in the cosmic dust our planet is formed from, as produced by stars, with more stable elements (often those with even numbers) in greater proportion than others. Minute changes have since occurred due to natural radioactivity, but the basic picture remains the same. The amount of iridium on earth might increase appreciably – since it’s so scarce – on account of the occasional asteroid impact, but that’s about it. It’s the sun that sets the human-scale standard for sustainable energy: the amount of radiation that reaches the surface of the planet in a single hour could provide our global energy needs for an entire year.

Any conversation about sustainability needs to recognise the relevant physical limits. I’ve already told you that carbon-14 decays, but the reality is that we haven’t measured the timescale on which carbon-12 might do the same. The longest half-life measured so far – beyond which we just call atoms ‘stable’ – is tellurium-128. It has a half-life measured in 10^{24} years – over 160 trillion times the age of the universe, currently estimated to be 14 billion (10^9) years.

Our sun is expected to die much sooner, in about five billion years. The energy produced by the sun relies on the availability of fuel to burn; as it runs out, it will balloon out into a red giant, possibly even reaching and engulfing the

earth, then ejecting gas and dust to form a faintly glowing planetary nebula for the briefest moment of its life – a few thousand years – before contracting into a white dwarf, like the pit of a plum when all the flesh has rotted away.

On the other hand, the timescale for our planet to run out of the fuel it has been running on – not literally in the sense of a lack of petroleum, but still quite literally in the sense that we cannot continue to burn it – is twelve years. Does it matter if the world ends with a bang or a whimper, if there's no one around to hear it?

Fire or ice? Both suffice.

In the eighteen months before he died, the cosmologist Stephen Hawking – who was intimately familiar with these timescales – predicted, on various occasions, that humanity had a thousand, then 600, then only 100 years left to get off the planet. It's not the accuracy of these predictions that matters, it's the direction of change that means something.

I had a chat to my bus driver this morning, a lifelong hunter and anti-1080 campaigner:

'I've seen it kill too many birds', he said.

The thing we came around to agreeing on is this: there's a limit to how long you can keep a species viable by worrying about adult deaths. It's the mortality of the chicks that matters, and at some point, you've got to put your resources into giving the next generation its chance to grow. Anything else and the species reaches the end of the line.

As a mathematician might say: the end of the line is where it starts to bend. And that's the start of a circle.

Everything is temporary

Emil McAvoy

iPhone Street Photography
2019

Emil McAvoy is an artist, art writer and educator based in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. His exhibition highlights include projects with City Gallery Wellington, The Dowse Museum, Enjoy Contemporary Art Space, Ilam Gallery and the Auckland Art Fair. His art writing includes essays, interviews, criticism and cultural commentary. emilmcavoy.com

1. *2020*
(p.65)

2. *Still Life with Lime Scooters and Lime Vodka Cruiser*
(p.66–67)

3. *Winging It*
(p.68–69)

4. *Across from the Auckland High Court*
(p.70)



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'Nothing lasts longer than a temporary government program.'

— Ronald Reagan

Returning flavour

Kim Anderson

Kim Anderson is of Ngāti Maniapoto and Singaporean descent. A classic ‘multipotentialite,’ she studied English Lit, Art History, Teaching, UX and Design, before working in marketing and communications. However, she’s always been a writer and illustrator at heart. She currently calls Tāmaki Makaurau home.

I am forever chasing the flavours of my youth, trying to find the dishes I loved best as a child. Eating is an act of time travel, pulling me back to family holidays in Singapore and feasts at my uncle’s house. Returning to this country as an adult, I constantly seek out these familiar foods, to relive those memories again. But eating them doesn’t have the same power it used to. What’s changed? Why am I unsatisfied by flaky roti and garlicky chicken rice?

Singapore holds a special place in my heart, mind and also my stomach. New Zealand felt like a culinary wasteland in comparison to the delicious treats and morsels I could consume at all hours of the day in my mother’s home country. Everything about this small island nation remains evocative. The scent of rain on hot concrete, the boom of thunder during the rainy season, the smell of humidity (yes, it has a smell). But it’s the specific taste of certain dishes that perform some kind of magic on my senses and

make me feel like a child in Singapore again. Fleeting and illusory, but there, if only for a moment.

The French novelist, Marcel Proust, wrote about a similar experience after he sipped a spoonful of tea with crumbs of madeleine pastry through it. Suddenly his aunt's house and garden, a space he hadn't thought of in years, 'rose up like the scenery of a theatre' (Proust, p.84). The taste of something so inconsequential allowed him to relive the flavours, sights and smells of his childhood there. He comments that while nothing subsists from the past, 'the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us . . . in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.' (Proust, p.84). Food nostalgia is swift and sudden, and doesn't always have repeat performances. Like a dream, memories triggered by food fade back into obscurity.

But why does food have this power over us? In 'The Science of Why You Crave Comfort Food', Alexandra Sifferlin writes that 'comfort foods remind us of our social ties, which means they may help us feel less lonesome when we feel isolated'. This line sheds light on a puzzle I had been grappling with for years – after every return trip to Singapore, after every smorgasbord eating marathon, why was I still hungry? Nothing tasted as good as I remembered, and I started to blame fading quality and, eventually, my own early memories.

As a kid, I was privileged in the sense that I never questioned whether I was loved by my relatives. As one of only a handful of children in a large, warm family, I was continuously doted on. Although I didn't love the cheek pinching, I loved the food I was fed. Childhood is so

short, so temporary, and yet these early memories are the ones we keep with us for the longest. It was easy to know my place in Singapore. My family guided me, told me how to behave, led by example. That time has now passed.

As I've grown older, I've become less sure of my footing in Singapore. Both familiar and foreign, Singapore is a slightly estranged relative, one I'm awkward around when we meet face to face. The fact is, I don't know this place as an adult. Over the years, eating has become a respite, a way of not dealing with the angst and uncertainty of my relationship with Singapore and my family there. It's a handy way to retreat to those early days where I felt safe and loved. Eating quickly became a gateway, a shortcut to the past, but one I didn't realise I was forging until recently.

I'm almost thirty now and the glamour of Singapore as the mecca of food, especially food from my childhood, has faded. Early last year, my partner and I made the familiar pilgrimage back to the mother-land. We ate too much and I went through my usual ritual of eating and feeling disappointed. When we returned home, I felt sad, as if I'd misplaced something I couldn't find again. It was only then that I realised what I was doing. Eating was and is a gateway, but it was leading me to a place that isn't reachable anymore. Like a mirror, eating and the nostalgia that goes with it, reflects back something I've already experienced.

I still try to eat every fried carrot cake I can find. But now it's about more than satisfying a food craving. It's also an opportunity to lay a new foundation for an adult identity in Singapore, based on different relationships with people and food. I can form new memories that are no less temporary than the ones from my childhood, but

they can break fresh ground rather than plough the same fields. I'm getting married soon and my partner and I will head back to Singapore for our honeymoon. For me, it'll be a chance to eat again.

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What time is the temporary?

Open Spatial Workshop

Open Spatial Workshop is a collaborative group comprising Terri Bird (Monash University), Bianca Hester (University of NSW) and Scott Mitchell (RMIT University). Over the past thirteen years OSW has produced a broad range of work responding to shared interests in physical forces and how the temporalities of these forces shape our material worlds.

The temporary has no continuance; it is without permanence. Its transient and fleeting character foregrounds precarity: what won't last, what will be lost. However, rather than restricting the temporary to a brief moment, our aim is to unsettle notions of timelessness and bring attention to how the temporary opens in time the potential for innumerable forces and formations. It is in this opening that time gains meaning, presenting an opportune time for new human and nonhuman assemblages to contract in the present.

Even something as temporary as the weather expresses a distinct assemblage of the sea, wind, and tides responding to the movements of the sun and moon. The intersection of

warm and cool air swirling over the surface of the planet can manifest as anything from a passing encounter with a breeze to prevailing winds, gusts, squalls and eddies, or tempests and cyclones. These temporary qualities of air are encapsulated in the generic term ‘the weather’, which is employed to describe all manner of atmospheric conditions specific to a particular time and place. In a number of cultures the terms for weather and time are intertwined, and such is the case for the Ancient Greek word *kairos*. As well as referring to tempests, *kairos* also differentiates the qualitative character of time – that which is right and opportune – from the uniform quantitative time that is the measured, linear chronology of *chronos*.

Lessons in making wine

Kairos, god of the fleeting moment in which things are possible, is sometimes portrayed as the balancing of scales or a razor’s edge. As John E. Smith points out, *kairos* has contributed to a rich history of expressions. It is, for example, the origin of all the English expressions beginning with ‘a time to,’ such as ‘a time to be born’ or ‘a time to harvest’, which emphasise the right or opportune moment to act (Smith 4). *Kairos* emphasises the particularity of circumstances and the singularity of the temporal occasion, ‘time as a dynamic continuum punctuated by turning points and crises’ (Smith 14). A time to respond is also an opportune moment, such as the time to harvest a crop, although Smith notes the temporality of the harvest cannot be separated from the processes that lead to the ripening.

Drawing on Smith, Robert Lestón uses the example of making wine to demonstrate the inventive implications of *kairos* that presuppose *chronos*. Lestón writes, ‘The grower’s involvement amounts to reading the conditions, waiting for the best time to initiate the harvest, and then following through on that decision in the act of making

the wine. The act of invention in the form of the making of the wine is determined by converting the conditions (soil, weather, etc.) influencing the wine-making process – acts held together by chronological time’ (33). Neither too soon, nor too late, the moment of the harvest followed by the maturing of the wine demonstrates the timeliness of *kairos* (35). The present contracts in the temporary a multitude of forces that are expressed through the picking of grapes. This intervention disrupts existing trajectories and becomes the right time to make wine.

Strata

Beneath the growing soil rests another time – rock formations that enact their own temporalities. These sedimentations have, over the past three centuries, been excavated by geologic imaginations intent on mapping time. This mapping, as Marcia Bjørnerud notes, is a very human endeavour, a compilation involving many curious minds, polymaths, and attentive observers (54). In the late seventeenth century Nicolas Steno observed fossils found in rocks were the remains of once-living creatures and devised the principles of strata still used in stratigraphy. In the following century others, such as Italian naturalist Giovanni Arduino devised systems for classifying types of rock into strata ordering them according to a chronology of formation. At roughly the same time James Hutton, a Scottish physician, gentleman farmer and natural philosopher, noticed the discontinuity in the appearance of two layers of sedimentary rock in an outcrop on a blustery cape. Hutton was able to grasp the rocks not just as a navigational aid as others had but, as Bjørnerud suggests, a vivid record of a vanished landscape (24). Hutton’s singular intuition broke with contemporary geological understandings derived from biblically ordained narratives (Bjørnerud 24). What he observed led him to surmise that the discontinuity between the two layers of

rock was the result of an unfathomably long interval of time. Charles Lyell consolidated these geological developments in the three volumes of his *Principles of Geology* in the early nineteenth century, using fossils as the index to classify sedimentary rocks, adding names for the strata and sub-dividing the Tertiary Period into the Eocene, Miocene and Pliocene epochs. Lyell borrows ‘cene’, the Latin form of *kainos* or new, to refer to these qualitatively distinct geological epochs. While stratigraphy is concerned with layers and a linear ordering of time, it is *kairos*, Bjørnerud argues, that imbues geological time with meaning (136). The strata are dense with stories of their own formation – floods, submarine landslides, ash deposits from volcanic eruptions and fossil records – temporal material events written into the stratigraphic record.

Contrary to a linear understanding of time that passes indifferently, the temporary holds the world open, enduring long enough to give meaning to the singularity of timely events, as the young Charles Darwin found when he sailed on the *Beagle*. Accompanying him on his travels was a copy of Lyell’s first volume of the *Principles of Geology*, published the year before he sailed. Darwin picked up the second volume in Montevideo, and probably had the third sent by post following its publication in 1833. Lyell promoted the gradualist view of geological formations, which focused on the accumulation of small changes brought about by familiar everyday forces, like wind and water, as well as seismic and volcanic events. This view conformed with the observations that Darwin made on his voyage. He extended Lyell’s method of understanding geological change – small temporary actions taking place over immense periods of time – to living matter. Darwin writes, ‘there is a force like a hundred thousand wedges trying (to) force every kind of adapted structure into the

gaps in the economy of Nature, or rather forming gaps by thrusting out weaker ones' (Barrett et al. 375).

Incursions

In the writings of both Lyell and Darwin time operates in a nonhuman register: deep time bears little resemblance to our own temporal experiences. Perhaps it is the inconceivable depth of geologic time that gives the world a distorted sense of permanence and renders change as a disruptive incursion. Geological processes, however, do not always unfold at an unfathomably slow rate – sometimes they are dramatically fast. Deep below Earth's surface, for example, earthquakes cause fissures to open in the bedrock. As these voids emerge a dramatic drop in pressure forces mineral-rich water within the rock to instantly vaporise, depositing its minerals onto the surfaces of the newly formed cracks. In a fraction of a second gold-enriched quartz veins are produced. Australian scientists Dion Weatherley and Richard Henley estimate that more than 80 per cent of gold deposits have been formed this way – in the gaps. The nearly instantaneous quality of these geological events brings to fruition conditions that have been developing for billions of years. The presence of gold, actualised in the fleeting moment of an earthquake, can be traced to supernova explosions, stella collisions and the terminal bombardment of Earth that ended approximately 3.9 billion years ago. During this bombardment a billion billion tonnes of asteroid material impacted with Earth's surface, adding not only gold and other precious metals, but also a large proportion of Earth's water and the amino acids that form the building blocks of organic life. These elements await an opportune momentary contraction, still, silent, but always present to the possibilities of a new articulation.

We live on a thin layer of soil, sandwiched between the strata of geology and the atmosphere, weathering the

storms that result from the dynamic interactions of their varying densities and the temporary congealing of their flows. Over the past few centuries geologic elements have been mobilised through the development of technologies of combustion, whereby fire-wielding practices unlock and release the intense energies held within matter ‘turning fossils into fuel’. Exploring these socio-energetic metabolisms Kathryn Yusoff and Nigel Clarke highlight the ‘relentless pulsation of solar energy which has been locked into and then released through the combustion of fossil fuels’ (206). As a geo-logic of human past and present, Earth can be understood, Yusoff argues, ‘as a giant strata machine and the social as a machinic macerator of these strata, combusting and destratifying the life-force of prior epochs’ (122). The materiality of eons past converge in the present moment to produce a collective social becoming. Innumerable assemblages are formed within and with these materials as societies construct, edify and energise their populations, literally and figuratively metabolising not one but many grounds. As Bjørnerud aptly states ‘this world contains so many earlier ones, all still with us in some way – in the rocks beneath our feet, in the air we breathe, in every cell of our body’ (178).

In order to open time to nonhuman invention, Lestón locates *kairos* in the ‘cracks’ or ‘fissures’ between chronological time and the untimely (42). He claims in the exhaustion of human understanding, time opens to the new; ‘...when the sensory-motor schema has broken down, when we cannot continue to narrativize, and when time is unhinged; in short, when we have reached our limit, it is then, in that gap, in that *kairos*, that invention becomes possible, even necessary’ (47). It is in this gap that the timely mobilisation of temporary conditions opens time to both human and nonhuman invention, bringing about new and unexpected

material assemblages. The time to respond is an opportune but fleeting moment; it requires precision to disrupt existing trajectories and redeploy forces and formations in new and inventive ways. This is the capacity of the temporary to be an opening of potential, of difference, before it gives way to cohesion and stability.

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'Being temporary doesn't make something matter any less, because the point isn't for how long, the point is that it happened.'

— Robyn Schneider

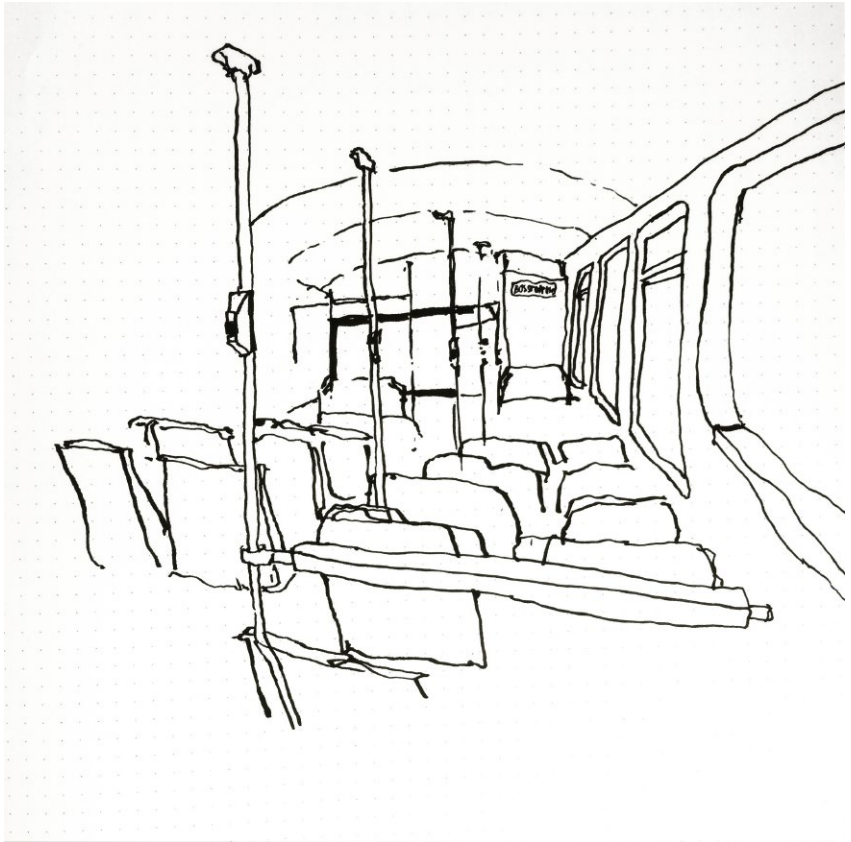
Bus (p.85)

Parliament (p.86)

Rocks (p.87)

Caroline Robertson

Caro is an architect who likes to draw, mostly when her kids are absorbed by their play, and when she has remembered to bring a notebook and pen.







Music, psyche and change

Chris O'Connor

Chris O'Connor is an improvising musician. He is equally comfortable amongst the pop stylings of The Phoenix Foundation, the formal refinement of the Auckland Chamber Orchestra and the freely improvised ecstasies of Jeffery Henderson. He appears on over 50 albums and is currently studying towards a Masters in Music Therapy.

When I experience music in performance, composing, practising, witnessing it live or from a recording, it is at the coalface of the changing moment that my attention is fixed. Well that's the aspiration at least! But 'coalface' is perhaps too static a metaphor. It's a bit of a cliché, – surfing a wave would be closer to the mark. What are the changing currents, depths and velocities at play on these *inserts tongue in mouth* 'winds of change'?

I track the changes in music by noticing the transformation of 'musical elements': rhythm (silence, beat), volume (loud, soft), pitch (low, high), duration (from a short click to a long sustain), harmony (groups of different sounds happening at the same time), density (how much or little space is in the music), speed, metricity (from metrically

timed to free textures and gestures), timbre, orchestration (specific combinations of instruments), and so on.

This by-no-means-definitive list describes some of the parameters I use to navigate and articulate a musical landscape. My attention is focused on the changing details of these musical elements because that is where the music takes place. Because music, in our experiencing of it, does not stick around, I am necessarily drawn towards the present moment – a mysterious, fickle and mind-bendingly complex realm. A realm of our psyches, our mechanical responses, our dream or trance selves, our anxiety, intuition, our elation, our boredom. These are the changing interior elements we carry alongside the changing elements in music.

I've been playing and listening to lots of songs recently. In some ways a song doesn't change. It is composed of specific, predetermined combinations of musical elements and is usually performed the same way every time. Yet my interior state is constantly changing. I find that a song's performance or reception is compromised or draws power from being informed by my interior state. Am I present to the play of musical and interior elements, or lost in a reverie? The same song could be merely dispensed by an execution of the appropriate combo of musical elements, unconsciously informed by our own interior state, or magically transformed by an authentic engagement with the material at hand in both music and psyche.

Listening to music in a more passive way, in an audience or via computer, tape, vinyl, etc., I again make an effort to be present to the changing present. The song has been recorded and there's much less change coming from the sonic dimension. This throws my interior experience

of music into relief. Somebody else is looking after the musical elements, and I am left to receive the music with the contents of my psyche. As a child I discovered the challenge of holding my attention to a piece of music, meeting the provocation of distraction. It's a small step to sitting in meditation, where the constant play of sensation and of psyche both distracts from and points towards a present changing moment.

I also play a lot of freely improvised music. In contrast to songs, freely improvised music utilises a vastly extended, constantly evolving set of musical elements, now in service to an emergent form. The musicians aren't setting off together to explore anything as well established as a song, though song-like music can emerge. Skilled improvisers excel at the change game, extruding new and evolving landscapes in sound and silence, with fine precision and uncanny presence.

Experiences of freely improvised music (or any sound for that matter) can be challenging, and enriched by a generous act of listening. When I invest in being present for this play of changes occurring in both the music and my psyche, new worlds unfold. Listening attentively is transporting, engaging and provocative, offering a delight in play, the challenge of a riddle, the spinning of a yarn, a completely new and even mind-blowing experience.

This generous kind of listening (as performer or bystander) can alert us to this vital and deep motion-tide of change, which more often than not sweeps us along unawares. We are subjected to the vagaries of our human psyche: desire, boredom, awe, confusion, fear, emptiness. I experience all these and more in my musical journey, and am mostly at their mercy. I marvel at the speed, fluidity and power

of change in this interior realm. Music is so effective as a means of release and expression of these interior elements because it deals in the same currency (change) in the same place (the present) with a comparable speed and fluidity.

I see the potential of a revelation in listening. The changing sound is an oracle inviting us to attend to the changing conditions of our interiority.

Charlotte Forrester

Charlotte Forrester is a writer and musician from Wellington. Completing an MA in Creative Writing at the IIML in 2018, her written practice is grounded in experimental essay and poetry. As a musician, Charlotte does composition for theatre and short film, as well as being the songwriter in her band, Womb.

The sky was strange that day, long clouds stretching across it entirely, blocking out the stratosphere. The sun spilled in from behind them, casting the world in a weak yellow light that seemed almost artificial. I pulled my phone from my pocket to take a picture but it slipped from my hand and onto the concrete. When I picked it up the screen was all cracked – like an intricate root system running through the glass. For a few seconds the screen flickered dark purple before fading to black.

I headed home, I pulled open my drawers. After an hour of searching I finally found my old phone. It felt foreign as I picked it up and turned it over in my hand. It was hard to imagine I had once carried this object around every day like an extension of my body. I tried to turn it on but it flashed a dim symbol of an empty battery. I rummaged through my drawers again but couldn't find a charger.

The sun was going down. I put a jacket on and headed outside. As I walked I kept putting my hands into my

pockets, reaching for a phone that wasn't there. Entering the wide parking lot in front of The Warehouse, I noticed a few parked cars – one was slowly reversing, its headlights on low. The fluorescent lights hummed overhead as I walked down the aisles of The Warehouse. I took the old model iPhone charger off the shelf, paid the three dollars at the self-checkout and went out through the exit.

Outside it had gotten dark. I ripped the charger from its plastic wrapping and walked over to a rubbish bin on the side of the road. The bin was full – pale white contents spilling out the top of what I assumed was a plastic bag full of trash. As I got closer, I saw it was a seagull. The bird's chest was totally white and its wings were jet black. It was lying on its back, wings extended slightly, as if preparing for flight. I stared into its face. It was squinting its eyes, like it'd been staring at the sun the second before it fell. It took me a moment to realise it was dead. I stood transfixed for several minutes, wondering how it had gotten here, dead on this trash can. It looked like it had fallen straight out of the sky. I reached in vain for my phone in my pocket to take a picture, forgetting it was still sitting uncharged in my room. I took one last look at the bird and headed home.

In my room, I plugged the phone in and watched the black screen until the glowing white apple bloomed in the centre. It'd been over a year since I'd used this phone and as it turned on, I had the sense that I was bringing something back from the dead. I typed in the four-digit code and immediately started looking through old photos. I scrolled through days and months and years. There were photos I'd taken on the plane, looking down at the huge clouds below the window. There was a series of selfies, back when I'd dyed the ends of my hair blonde.

There were the pictures of my ex and I brushing our teeth together, before he was an ex, posing in front of the bathroom mirror. I opened one up, zoomed in on his face. He looked like a stranger. I clicked out of the photos, tapped into the message inbox. Old conversations with my sister, my mother, some friends, my ex. A new message popped up at the top of the screen. I must have already gotten a new phone by the time the message was sent. It was from my ex, sent a year ago. ‘See you around 7? love you x.’ I put my phone down, my heart beating. Putting my jacket back on, I headed outside again, tucking the resurrected phone in my pocket. It was on 23 per cent and I crossed my fingers hoping it would last.

In *Poetics of Relation* (1997), Édouard Glissant writes that identity of the self is formed relationally. The self doesn’t exist in a vacuum, rather, it is through its encounters with the outside that the self comes into being. Glissant envisions this relational self as a rhizome, ‘an enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently’ (11). My old phone had preserved this old identity like a fossil. I’d marked down time, etched passing moments into permanence. It hadn’t occurred to me that I’d changed, but at that moment, scrolling through those photos, those messages, all that life, I realised I was looking back from a different part of the rhizome. Perhaps, sometimes, it takes distance to see how something’s changed. Stepping back in space, or forward in time. Seven years pass and not a single cell in the body remains the same.

There’s a line in a book I read once, I still think about it all the time. It goes: “Isn’t it amazing that this goes on every second, when we’re not here too? This constant

churning?” my mother had said as we stood above the Huka Falls, watching’ (Sanderson 74). Then again, sometimes, not even the act of stepping away can show that change is fucking constant, the way a river keeps running, or a waterfall just keeps falling. You could be standing with your mother, watching, and maybe the only thing that’s constant is that pull. All that ephemera tugging at something more like permanence.

I was standing in front of the seagull splayed out on the trash can again. This time I pulled my phone from my pocket and took a photo. The flash lit up the bird against the darkness.



I looked up at the sky, a domed ceiling painted black. There was a satellite, arching slowly across that ceiling. I imagined it collecting images of the earth from above. I imagined it collecting an image of me and the bird and the trash can. I imagined that image being contained in that satellite, and I willed this moment to be rendered permanent in its containment. I imagined what the satellite could not detect: how my rhizome had connected

with the bird's rhizome, and how these rhizomes were connected with the satellite's, and I watched the satellite until it was concealed within the sky.

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A
brush
with
death

Maia McDonald

Maia McDonald is a cross disciplinary curator and artist living and working in both Melbourne and Taranaki. She is currently working as a curator for The Koorie Heritage Trust in Federation Square Melbourne. Hapu - Ngāti Mutunga, Urenui Marae. Taranaki, Aotearoa, NZ. Iwi - Te Āti Awa, Parihaka. Taranaki, Aotearoa, NZ.

A wind was swirling out by the front door

Your hand cut through the air

The words left your mouth and were gone into it

The light was turned to off

A naked body on the bed lifeless and undressed inside

Deep inside the words were made out in the darkness of you

All the things were laid out on the table

Packing tape moved across the boxes as new curtains moved across the rails

The wood had new smell and the old smell walked across the drive

All the trees bowed to your memory

Spirits spoke to me and to you as we held hands in the bathroom
The front room was a sink where all was drained
New water came to the house where laughter can be made and found after this
A Fact
A Sneeze
A Life
Coming and going like my daily checklist
Boxes line the wall in the old kitchen
There will be a new one soon
The wedding is here
Love to the bride and groom
Love to you
Always
as the clocks hands
cut through the air as yours
once did

This poem is dedicated to the Kreisler whānau, all encompassing.



Media and maars

Karin Warnaar

After a decade in newspaper libraries, Karin Warnaar moved on to other things, and now mixes those with still consuming too much media – including print – and occasional random writing.

Few people knew about Foulden Maar until May 2019. The fossil pit inland from Dunedin came to public attention when it was revealed that its newish owners planned to mine for diatomite, intending it for use as a pig-food supplement. Layers of this mineral had preserved flora and fauna in an exceptional state over millions of years, creating fossils of incalculable scientific value, each containing information about both its time and its species. The proposed diatomite mining would have destroyed this resource; a local campaign went national, the owners went into receivership, and by the end of the year, Dunedin’s council had announced its intention to acquire the site.

Foulden Maar, with its untold wealth of evidence, is literally a data mine. Its story is also a metaphor about fragments, unfinished stories and other ways of mining data. When the news first broke, a simple search of the Otago Daily Times website for diatomite retrieved a

scattering of articles, mostly business, dry as the dust itself. Over the past twenty years, consumers of news have become so accustomed to such basic online searches that it's easy to forget how it used to be different. For ten years I worked in media libraries, during their twilight in last century's last decade. They were pretty much as they appeared in movies about crusading reporters then: stacks of files and a knowledgeable gorgon at a dusty desk (I can say that, I was an *excellent* gorgon). New Zealand had a couple of dozen such vaults of fossilising information. The major newspapers largely indexed their own papers, while the old Broadcasting Corporation of NZ library, inherited by Radio New Zealand, clipped all the main papers and bundled them into cabinets and shelves.

Old school newspaper archiving is a physical process. Papers are deconstructed by scanning, classifying and clipping, then sorted and filed to reconstruct various options for retrieval. Some systems involved envelopes stuffed with cuttings, others required folders, glue and written index cards of variable legibility. It barely mattered. The index cards, though potentially useful, took time, space and someone who knew how to use them – generally the people doing the slicing and dicing who also absorbed the words, ideas and stories. This knowledge (and the people who had it) was to be considered extravagant once media went digital.

Electronic archiving hit New Zealand in the early 1990s. New Zealand's larger newspapers mostly belonged to the then-Murdoch-owned Independent Newspapers Ltd, which committed to a group-wide library that rolled out mid-decade from Wellington to include content from Hamilton to Invercargill. It was sometimes a challenge to find ways of nose-to-tail cataloguing, but almost every

story was treated as though, maybe one day, it would be retrieved and interpreted to create new stories. The not-insignificant added bonus for the group was that it could sell the content it owned to online databases, where it's still available, but the sense was that keyword searching would automatically replace cataloguing.

Two decades on and the expected next phase, a fully digital news media, has not arrived as quickly as some predicted. For every paper that's successfully introduced paywalls, another stuttered, lost its nerve, looked at alternative models. We still don't know how stable the technology is – some of what was supposedly stored forever is already lost or inaccessible. Nor are we ever entirely sure what we have, partly because search engines turned out to be more fallible than they claimed, with a bad habit of second-guessing users for the benefit of advertisers.

The problems are not all about technology. Deliberately duplicitous content is on the rise in some media outlets: synthetic media artefacts and fake news can be downright pernicious, too easily spread online. Yet news has always required critical reading. Mistakes are unavoidable, as is the essential selectivity. Every story is equally about what to put in and what to leave out. The same story, told by different journalists, is not the same story.

The electronic evolution of media has its cheerleaders who minimize the past and present in favour of the future, but reading news online is not the same experience as reading on paper; nor is digital archiving, for all the almost infinite retrieval possibilities it offers. Clipping and filing stories renders them fragments shored against our ruins, to paraphrase T.S. Eliot. The scraps are consigned to pits from which they may one day be extracted, but what

the maars yield is not precisely what was put in and thus never entirely decipherable. The more different ways we have of preserving these, the more different ways we have of sifting through the data dust, the more we will find. We will always be looking for clues, using them to tell new stories.

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Freeranger of the issue:

Māui

In the third issue of the Freerange Journal, we celebrated the trickster, the mythical archetype that was theorised in the twentieth century by Carl Jung and others, and appears in many cultures and many forms from classical mythology to modern writing. Figures include Coyote, Anansi, Brer Rabbit, Pan, Hanuman, Puck and Loki.

In this final issue, we want to pay respect to the great Polynesian trickster Māui, the demi-god that captured fire from Mahuika, slowed down the path of the sun and fished up the north island of Aotearoa, Te-Ika-a-Māui. Māui is the rule-breaker, the troublemaker, the youngest son who ignored his brother's taunts and went on to change the world.

A common theme across Māui's tales is a battle with time. His quests underscore the human desire to extend our temporary pleasures and to hold off death. We can understand this relationship with time through two stories. In the first, he succeeds and in that latter, his failure to do so illustrates the fate of humanity.

Author Wiremu Grace tells the story of Māui's great victory. One day when the sun was setting and his family was struggling to complete their tasks Māui exclaimed: 'Every day we have to rush to do our chores and gather our food before the sun sets. Why should we be slaves to the sun? I will catch the sun before it rises, and teach it to travel slowly across the sky!' His brothers were sceptical but he convinced them to weave strong ropes which he used to capture the sun, Tama-nui-te-rā, as it rose in the east. Once secured, he beat Tama-nui-te-rā with his magic jawbone. Tama-nui-te-rā cried 'Why are you doing this to me?' and Māui replied, 'From now on you will travel

slowly across the sky, never again will the length of our day be dictated by you.’ The day is still temporary but because of Māui the sun lingers longer, providing us with light and warmth.

However, Māui failed in his ultimate conquest. Rawinia Higgins recounts this tale. Māui wanted to beat Hine-nui-te-pō, the goddess of death. He tried to reverse the cycle of life by entering Hine-nui-te-pō’s vagina and exiting from her mouth and, in doing so, ‘overcome death’. Māui transformed himself into a mokomoko (lizard) and entered Hine-nui-te-pō while she slept. But ‘his struggle provided humour for his friends the tīrairaka (fantails) who were watching on. Their laughter awoke Hine-nui-te-pō. She crushed Māui to death, bringing mortality to humankind.’ Before she killed Māui he asked Hine-nui-te-pō to let people die as the moon wanes in the sky and rises again. She responded, ‘Let him die forever and be buried in the earth, and so be greeted and mourned.’

In a 2010 book *The Trickster*, American literary critic Harold Bloom wrote about the capacity of the trickster to warp space and time. He cites Henri Bergson’s division between clock time (*temps*) and experienced time (*durée*). The former creates divisions and markers that order our world, while the latter is a malleable subjective form of time experienced by humans as they exist in the world. Māui’s great success in extending the day shifted the time created by our greatest clock, the sun. In his battle with Hine-nui-te-pō he tried to transform death into something with a regular and repeatable form; the moon rises and falls much like the sun. *Le temps* cycles and repeats like the hands on a clock, but Māui failed when he tried to halt the extension of *durée*, for our experiences are not cyclical and must end. The trickster is the ‘boundary

crosser', the breaker of rules, but Māui found that there is one great rule that can't be broken: we can't live forever.

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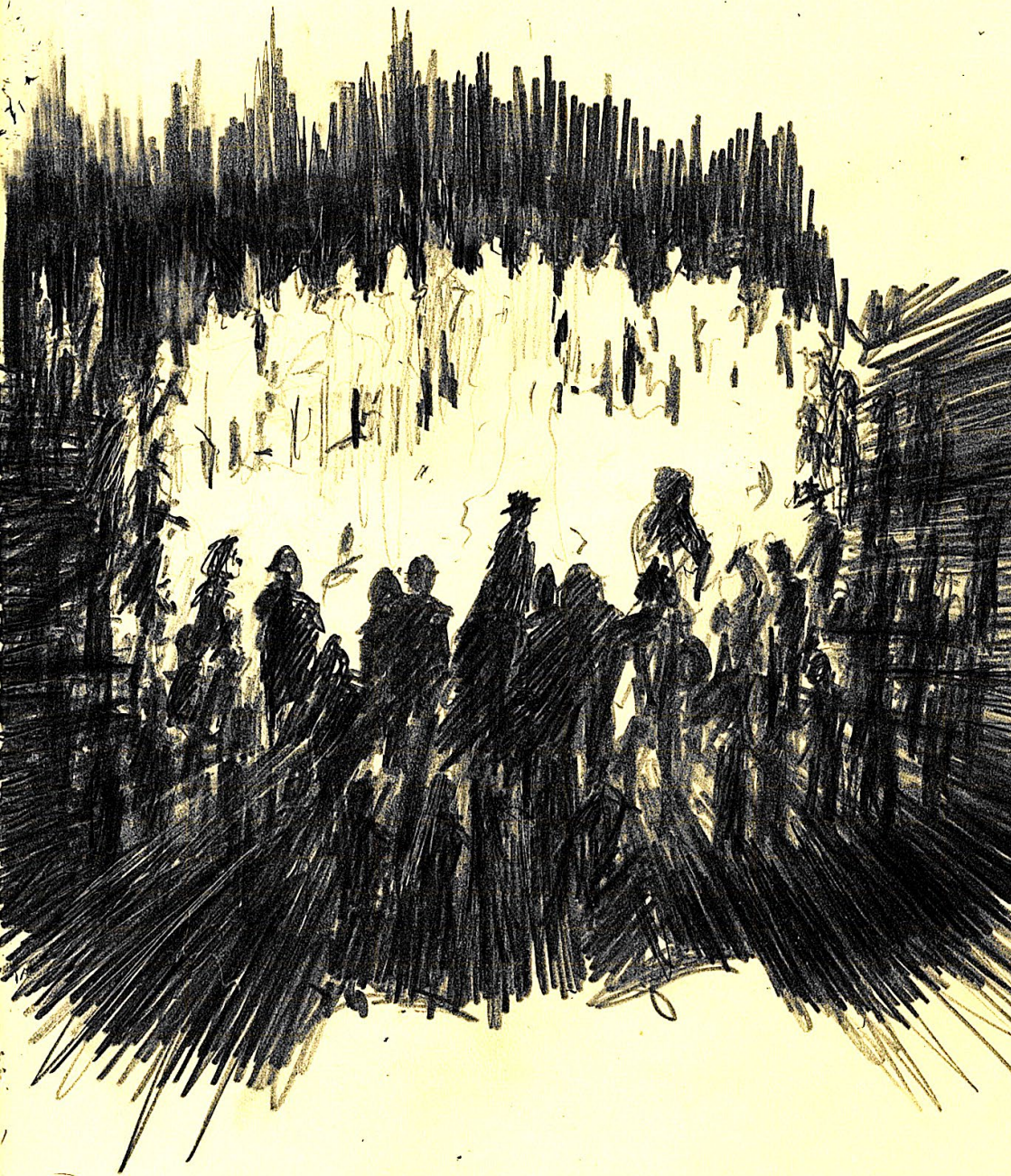
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Cheap 'n' Choice Award: Student Architecture Congress (1958 – ongoing)

There were many great candidates for the final Cheap 'n' Choice award: items, objects, organisations and ideas that celebrate the temporary. But we couldn't go past acknowledging the ongoing iterative and ephemeral experiment that is the Student Architecture Congress. A bunch of Freerange members organised one of the congresses in 2007 in Wellington, so not only is it part of the founding of Freerange Press, it also, amazingly, continues to jump its way into the future today.

At its simplest, the Student Architecture Congress is a conference that has occurred every two years in Australia and New Zealand since the late 1950s. The particularly compelling thing about its regularity is that this is achieved without any continuity of organisation. Each congress finishes with pitches from interested student groups that would like to host the next edition. A vote is held and



then the torch is passed to the new organising committee. There are no rules or groups that oversee this. It's all voluntary. It's incredibly fragile and yet, almost sixty years after the first congress, it is still going strong – an anarchist model of organising for the ages.

The congress has woven its way around Australia and New Zealand starting in Sydney and moving to Auckland, Melbourne, Geelong, Hobart, Perth, Wellington, Brisbane, Canberra, Adelaide and, most recently, Christchurch. It has even taken place on a train to Queenbeyan. Along the way, some of the architecture world's greatest minds have attended including Buckminster Fuller, Aldo Van Eyck, Harry Seidler, Cedric Price, Balkrishna Doshi, Jane Abercrombie, Christopher Alexander, John Scott, Roger Walker, Peter Cook, Paul Oliver, Ath, Ric, Jan Gehl, Paul Pheleros, Sarah Wigglesworth and partner, Rewi Thompson, Mark Dytham, Mark Burry, Doina Petrescu, Peggy Deamer...

This model earns our final Cheap 'n' Choice award because it exemplifies the kind of efficiency, trust, creativity and youthful energy that can be sustained when things are done for the right reason – when temporariness is embraced and not feared.

The congress is cheap and has always thrived on a generosity of spirit, of those wanting to give back (it's always supported by people that were part of the congress when they were younger) and of limitless voluntary/unpaid work by students, expending money only where necessary for the greater good of the experience and receiving condemnation from peers where expenditure was seen as frivolous or gratuitous (the group of students that organised Warkworth Congress weren't impressed with the wasteful Sydneysiders from 1969).

The way the congress has cascaded down the decades strongly echoes one of the anarchist principles that has inspired us at Freerange. In 1966 the British Anarchist Colin Ward wrote a beautiful essay called 'Anarchy as a Theory of Organisation', in which he suggested there were four key aspects for a successful anarchist organisation. Since we first read these at Freerange they have always resonated as being an accurate description of the best projects we've been involved with, particularly the Student Architecture Congress.

Anyone can see that there are at least two kinds of organisation. There is the kind which is forced on you, the kind which is run from above, and there is the kind which is run from below, which can't *force* you to do anything, and which you are free to join or free to leave alone. We could say that the anarchists are people who want to transform all kinds of human organisation into the kind of purely voluntary association where people can pull out and start one of their own if they don't like it. I once, in reviewing that frivolous but useful little book *Parkinson's Law*, attempted to enunciate four principles behind an anarchist theory of organisation: that they should be

- (1) voluntary, (2) functional, (3) temporary, and
- (4) small.

They should be voluntary for obvious reasons. There is no point in our advocating individual freedom and responsibility if we are going to advocate organisations for which membership is mandatory.

They should be functional and temporary precisely because permanence is one of those factors which harden the arteries of an organisation, giving it a vested interest in its own survival, in serving the interests of office-holders rather than its function.

They should be small precisely because in small face-to-face groups, the bureaucratising and hierarchical tendencies inherent in organisations have least opportunity to develop.

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'Everything passes. Joy. Pain. The moment of triumph, the sigh of despair. Nothing lasts forever - not even this.'

— Paul Stewart

The Grief-box

Linda Collins

Linda Collins is the author of suicide memoir *Loss Adjustment* (Ethos Books; Awa Press later in 2020) and lives in Singapore where her poetry collection, *Sign Language for the Death of Reason*, is out soon with Math Paper Press. She ponders existential chaos and order.

I'd rather it were a wooden pyre
for our daughter

leaving hall 3, turn left to the gas cremator

open to the air on a bed of sticks,

a pulley hauls the casket in smoothly

her father giving closed eyes a last kiss,

as a flaming mouth roars impatiently

lights twigs at the base,

two hours at 1,000 degrees Celsius,

arms stiffen, reach to the sun;

tissues, organs vaporise,

later, eagles come and tear at tallow,

calcium phosphates remain,

our mourning keeps crying out

an exhaust system that pumps out

to the mountain gods and

thermal energy sends particles

could cause an avalanche.

through the atmosphere.

Energy cannot be created or destroyed/*White noise as snow dust.*

Tree
of
life (p.117)

Millennium (p.118)

Julie Reason





'...and here's a secret for you - everything beautiful is sad...gilded with impermanence...'

— John Geddes

The dream team



Barnaby Bennett is one of the co-founders of Freerange Press. He is an egg who is both saddened and delighted to have finished this 12th and final issue of the Freerange journal. Just in time. He is forever grateful to the hundreds of people that have contributed to the journal over the past 12 years. Most of you know who you are.



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