

movements materialising momentarily Bianca Hester

ST PAUL St Galleries One, Two and FrontBox
31 July – 11 September 2015

Curated by Abby Cunnane

Material things are never still. Take a piece of the basaltic rock common in Auckland / Tāmaki Makaurau, formed through the cooling and hardening of molten lava from volcanoes in the local field. Over time this basalt is likely to have been quarried and used in the construction of buildings and freestanding or retaining walls, or crushed and dispersed as aggregate on roads and railways. Later it may be broken down again to make space for new roads, transported as backfill to other sites, or used as gravel or sand for landscaping. The quarry it came from might fill with water, then be drained and re-filled with tailings from local motorway works, strained through silica, compacted and developed as commercial or residential property.

Rather than being a discrete object or occupying a state of permanence, such material is always undergoing transformation, adaptation, alteration, and embodies the energy of the various processes it moves through.¹ In Bianca Hester's work the essentially *un-still* nature of materials – geological, human-made – is brought into focus through a series of sculptural elements in the exhibition space. While, as static pieces, these arrest movement in some way, they are proposed as temporary materialisations of things in flux, or, in Henri Bergson's words, as 'modifications, perturbations, changes of tension or of energy and nothing else.'² These sculptural works also point to actions and sites outside of the gallery space, gestures of material continuity.

Over three research visits to Auckland / Tāmaki Makaurau, Hester identified a series of axes as a way of mapping the city, lines initiated by the movement of materials. The first spans the remnant urban landscape around the Waterview Tunnel motorway development and associated tailings dump at Wiri; the second connects two fossilised forest sites: at Takapuna on the Waitematā Harbour, and Ihumatao Beach / Renton Road near Stonefields on the Manukau Harbour. The project's third axis, a line from Te Kopuke / Mt St John to Te Tokaroa Reef on the Waitematā Harbour, is the course of a lava flow from an eruption some 28,500 years ago.

This third axis, a social locus of the show, informed the path of a walk undertaken by the artist and participants in early July. The large-scale video projection in Gallery One draws on this walk, a collage of frames animated by the horizontal line of 5.6-metre long bronze rods that participants carried through the city. The bronze rods, made by Hester in arm's length sections and welded together, operate as materialisations of the line walked. They are also idiosyncratic measurement devices: collectively carried, walked with, they compelled a heightened awareness of the particular contours of a city built on volcanic terrain. Like other elements in the gallery space – steel hoops, suspended bronze branch – the propped, bowed or leaned bronze rods contain the potential for movement, a sense of movement which defies empirical measurement.³ They also point to multiple ways of reading time: the walk took place on a specific day in July, continues in the suspended time of the video, and may in the future be re-traced via the takeaway map poster in the exhibition.

¹The thing is the transmutation, the conversion of two into one: the conversion of the previous thing, plus the energy invested in the previous process of production as a different thing...' Elizabeth Grosz, *Architecture from the Outside: Essays on Virtual and Real Space* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 170.

²Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. N.M Paul and W.S Palmer (NY: Zone Books, 1988), 201.

³Werner Heisenberg's Theory of Uncertainty offers a way to think about this. The uncertainty principle says that we cannot measure the position (x) and the momentum (p) of a particle with absolute precision. The more accurately we know one of these values, the less accurately we know the other. Similarly, we might think of the objects as being materials in perpetual movement, movement which is fundamentally unmeasurable.

List of works

Gallery One:

1. Two-channel video projection

HD video, 9:52 minutes, looped

Footage by Joe Jowitt, Mischa Chaleyer-Kynaston, Bianca Hester

Participants on the walk on 11 July who appear in this film include: Fiona Amundsen, Sosefina Andy, Alison Annals, Xin Cheng, Paul Cullen, Abby Cunnane, Eve Cunnane, Pat Dunal, Jeremy Eade, Shane Fairhall, Bianca Hester, Rebecca Ann Hobbs, Tracy Howe, Charlotte Huddleston, Suzie Hunt, Dienneke Jansen, Joe Jowitt, Matt Kambic, Mischa Chaleyer-Kynaston, Jeremy Leatinu'u, Ziggy Lever, Lucy Meyle, Li-Ming Hu, Jennie Palmer, Reba Pinto, Monique Redmond, David Rhode, Carmel Rowden, Deborah Rundle, Maneesha Sakamuri, Mark Schroder, Sarah Smuts-Kennedy, Harriet Stockman, Akira Tamura, Aydriannah Tuialii, Pita Turei, Layla Tweedie-Cullen, Layne Waerea, Sarah Wall, Lynn Wilson.

This event began with a Matariki ceremony on Te Kopuke / Mt St John and a karakia on Maungawhau / Mt Eden, led by historian and storyteller Pita Turei. Geologists Jeremy Eade and Tracy-Marie Howe also spoke at points during the walk.

2a,2b,2c. Three bronze rods

bronze, each 5.6 metres

Carried during an event on 11 July, from Te Kopuke / Mt St John, to Te Tokaroa / Meola Reef.

3. Ply wall and branch

found ply, painted

cast bronze with black patina

A giant cutting involving the displacement of some 180,000 cubic metres of material, Waterview Tunnel interrupts the social function and existence of many neighbourhoods. The cast bronze Titoki tree branch taken from the last tree before the cutting on Herdman Street, Waterview, and the ply wall operate as remnants of a site in transition.

4. Concrete rubble wall

recycled concrete, mortar, oxide

Constructed by Paea Veamoi, Stoneage Fencing (www.stoneagefence.co.nz).

Borrowing the form of many scoria walls around Auckland, this is composed of concrete rubble sourced from recent demolitions across the city.

5. Castings

plaster, oxide

The floor-based cast objects are 'readings' taken from two fossil sites at Ihumatao and Takapuna. At Takapuna, the casts are taken from basaltic surfaces that result from lava flows from Pupuke volcano that flowed into a forest that once stood at the site, engulfing tree stumps and forming cylindrical 'moulds'.

At Ihumatao, the casts are taken from surfaces composed of layers of volcanic ash that erupted from Maungataketake / Ellets Mountain around 50,000 years ago, which trapped pumice and other debris as it solidified.

6. Steel rings

mild steel, rolled and welded, powdercoated surface

These are a part of Hester's project *Sonic alterations of constructed space, with metal objects* (2011–ongoing), a series of informal performances to make sonic interventions across a range of public spaces.

When the rings are spun, the metal meets the particular materiality of the ground, generating a sonic signature of dissonant cross-rhythms.

These rings, and the bronze instruments listed below, were employed in a performance at 1pm at the trig point on Maungawhau / Mt Eden on 30 July, as well as at 5.30pm during the exhibition opening on the same day.

7. Other bronze instruments

bronze

Spread throughout the space and used as levers, wedges or simply to catch the light, the small bronzes have played a role as sonic devices throughout the project.

List of works continued

8. Video on monitor

HD video, 3:46 minutes, looped

Time is marked through shifts in light across a sequence of human-made devices – radio tower, pedestrian crossing signs, buildings. The birds that intersect many of the frames are an active diagram, a non-human time reference.

9. A0 photographic image

An image of a water course through silt, taken on site at Wiri.

Gallery Two:

10. Sonic objects / Solar objects: Variously, 2014

HD video, 12 minutes

Cinematography: James Wright and Polly Stanton

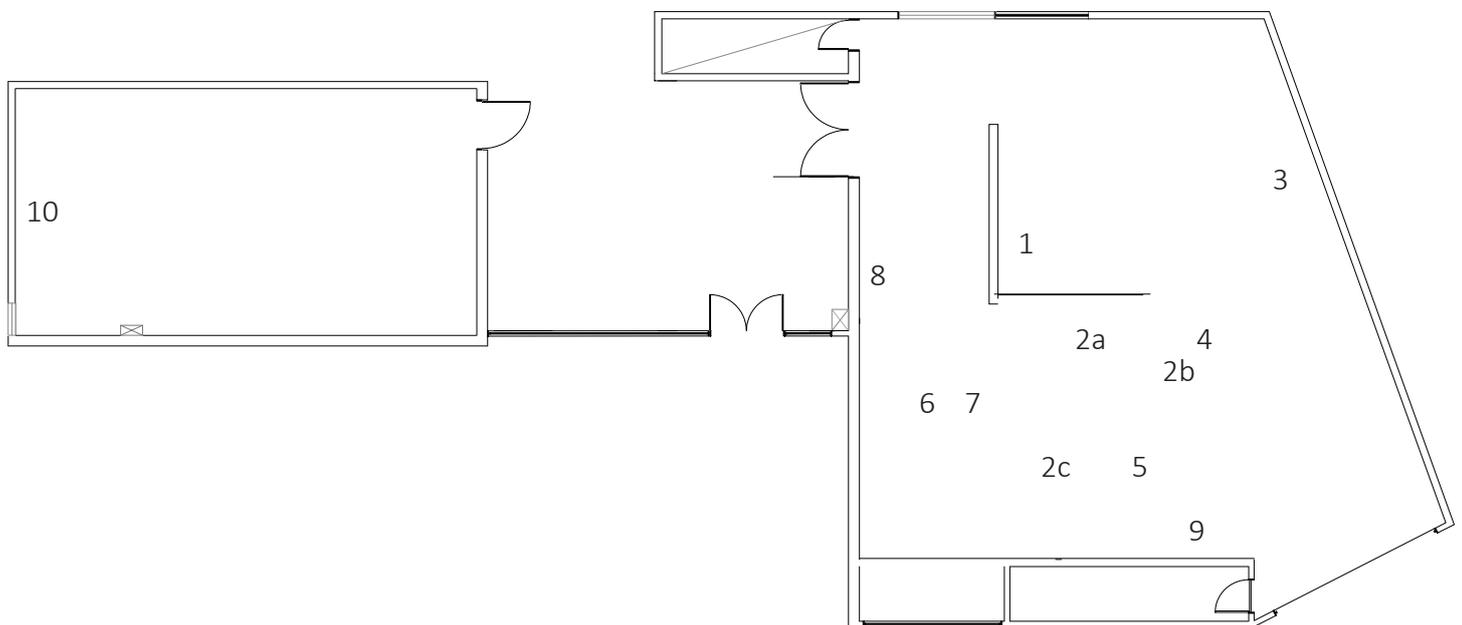
Sound: Polly Stanton

Courtesy of the artist and Sarah Scout Gallery, Melbourne

Commissioned by Bridget Crone for The Cinemas Project, sponsored by NETS Victoria.

Using a range of fabricated and cast metallic objects as props, Hester worked with participants in Warrnambool to test the sonic and optical possibilities across sites including those of disappeared cinemas such as the Liberty Cinema (now a Coles supermarket) and the Shandon Drive-In (now an abandoned block).

Floorplan



Artist bio

Bianca Hester is a post-doctoral research fellow at Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney. She was a founding member of CLUBSproject inc (2002–2007), and of the Open Spatial Workshop collective since 2003. Recent work includes *Fashioning Discontinuities* (2014): 19th Biennale of Sydney; *Sonic Objects / Solar Objects: Variously* (2014) curated by Bridget Crone for The Cinema's Project; *Hoops: sound tests, performances, documents* (2011–2013), Melbourne Now, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2013); *only from the perspective of a viewer situated upon the surface of the earth does day and night occur*, Glasgow International Festival for Visual Arts (2012); *a world fully accessible by no living being* (2011) at Federation Square; *please leave these windows open overnight to enable the fans to draw in cool air during the early hours of the morning* (2010) at The Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne. The book *accommodating spaces, materials, projects, people, videos, actions, objects, thoughts: relatively* was published in 2009. She is represented by Sarah Scout Gallery, Melbourne.

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