Together with Time: A Material Response

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other qualification in any university.

Signature:

Date: 1.10.23

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Abstract

This creative practice-led research project examines our relationship with time in the contemporary world. I describe a time and place that is saturated with information and entrenched within systems and technologies that foster communications, elevate individuals' expectations of self, and manipulate the tempo of our lives. Seeking authenticity of experience, I have located mutual affect and anchored my project motivations in artist Doug Aitken's sentiment: "….do we stand in the calm centre of this hurricane of modern life or do we step into its turbulence? And do we have a choice? I think we're just on the cusp of exploring our options (2006, 6).

"Together with Time: A Material Response" considers how we might navigate Coordinated Universal Time (clock or objective time) to engage with a felt experience of time, one that embraces innate duration and the phenomenon of being lost in the present. Grounded in my belief that time is dynamic, hence the understanding that it actually passes, I explore the concept of moving with temporality (the passage of time) and using materials to do so. The profound and positive affect of watery sites informs the studio enquiry that looks to other artists, expertise across a breadth of fields, and lived time to recontextualise this experience. The pivotal role culture has on perceptions of, and behaviours in, time enriches my appreciation for inherent complexities, as does research concerning conditions conducive to being immersed in its flow.

Phenomenology forms a lens through which knowledge is refined and realised in a series of art installations in this project. This exegesis documents a process whereby understandings of time are unravelled, and strategies for seeking an accord with temporality are defined. The textual and creative research outcomes are designed to contribute to discourse addressing our relationship with time in the contemporary first world. They speak to ideas of authentic experience and explore how we might re-engage with materials to move affably together with time.

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Introduction

The activities and routines of a mother, wife and employee consumed me, and unresolved thoughts lapped my mind like a disoriented cyclist in a velodrome. Whilst conscious to be grateful for my many good fortunes, I was troubled by an elusive and disconcerting sense of absence and dissatisfaction. I observed interpersonal interactions between people progressively shifting into the digital sphere, losing the idiosyncrasies and nuance of human communication. Society's thirst for progress, efficiency and embrace of the new has elevated technology's role in providing information and aspiration. My participation in this technological exchange returned an unbridled stream of content, cascading from multiple sources, time zones and tenses, that built lofty expectations of what one should be and do. These pressures were compounded by a deep-seated hope for unrealised ambitions. The demands on my time felt unrelenting and the length of my days seemed inadequate as I grappled to attain authenticity of experience and self.

The described scenario displays a schism between ideas of authentic experience and my experience of time. Unrealistic expectations of what could be achieved within the space of an hour, day, week, or a lifetime were mirrored in my infinite to-do list and embodied in feelings of urgency and inadequacy as I attempted to achieve more, in less time. Ironically, any efficiencies garnered from the use of technology, were eroded by an increase in its usage and a decrease in productive time. A sense of being overwhelmed by everyday tasks scattered my attention as I responded to environmental demands, reducing my ability to be proactive and present in the moment; I deemed myself incompatible with time.

Doug Aitken, a contemporary artist, eloquently assigns words to an experience of life in the information-saturated first world that resonate with me. He describes a world in which we are swept up by societal currents, losing our sense of self and authentic experience. The protagonist in his 2011 filmic, installation work, *Black Mirror* articulates this sentiment, describing the motivations behind this project: "Somehow

we know exactly where to go and what to do. But in the process something happens, and we lose touch with the earth, the ground...the natural things" (2011, 110). This dialogue meshes with the artwork's non-linear narrative, having the effect of affirming my observations and encapsulating the disorienting, nature of our times.

The need to address my sense of absence and dissatisfaction ultimately led to this creative practice-led investigation. "Together with Time: A Material Response" is a project that explores an alternate relationship with time to that typically experienced in the contemporary first world; it considers how we might orchestrate presence in time and space. Efforts to extend my understanding of time have spurred a multifarious experimental process that has culminated in this exegesis and a series of art installations. Knowledge has been refined and realised in outcomes that embody and speak about the nature of time, explore how our understanding and experience of this ephemeral concept can shape emotions and behaviours, and assuage our relationship with temporality.

Artworks can capitalise on the universality and materiality of water to allude to the temporal passage, and on the semantics of phrases like 'water under the bridge' that mesh materials and understandings of time. These approaches recontextualise the affectual elements of lived time and encourage one to connect with their internal sense of time. Grounded in phenomenology and empirical methods, the study draws on personal experience, expertise across a breadth of fields (especially artists Doug Aitken and Olafur Eliasson) and material interactions with the goal of illuminating how one may move, and reach an accord, with time.

This exegesis contains five chapters that approximate the process undertaken in this research project. The text has evolved over time, absorbing and responding to understandings of time and self in conversation with the materials. Creative research outcomes have evolved within the context of this exchange, realising and extending the enquiry materially whilst providing access to the ideas experientially.

In Chapter One: Out of Sync with Time, I begin by acknowledging the multiplicity of impactful factors that filter and colour one's understanding of time. I justify the decision to draw on empirical evidence and apply a phenomenological approach to research addressing problems of an experiential nature. Our conventional system of timekeeping, Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), is discussed, forming a foundation on which to explore an alternative paradigm; UTC is also referred to as clock or objective time in this exegesis. The work of social historian and activist Edmund Palmer Thompson has given rise to a lineage of experts who have problematised this system for its impacts on society and the individual. Thompson advocates for the preservation of our inward sense of time, our "time-sense" (1967, 58). This proposal for an intuitive, felt sense of time that is favourably out of sync with objective time has led me to examine how artists use materials to evoke time, as well as experiences that encourage immersion in time and place. The affectual power of watery sites becomes apparent and supports the decision to focus on water in my creative practice, based on the potential for liquid to indexically demonstrate time's passing, disrupt rhythms inherent in systems of human construction, and immerse an individual in the present.

A philosophical basis shapes my understanding of the concept of time and its application within this research project. I declare this philosophical lens in Chapter Two: A Dynamic Theory, which rests on the epistemological assumption that time is 'dynamic' in nature and hence flows independently of our minds. I narrow the focus further to encompass an acceptance of lived experience and time's ability to distort as the manifestation of temporal passage, locating this project philosophically within the school of ersatz presentism (Baron and Miller 2019). I identify this theory of time and associated notions within Doug Aitken's artistic practice, a discovery that affirms my feelings about inauthentic experience and shared affect. The artist's work embodies the relationship between language and dynamic time, an affiliation that is strengthened by the universal, material and relational aspects of water. The triad of language, time and water is useful for constructing meaning in artworks and is apparent in Olafur Eliasson's installation *Model for a Timeless Garden* (2011) and

mine, as in *Coalesce* (2021). The latter artwork highlights the primary role empirical evidence (from lived time) has in the research process, establishing the need to understand the cultural influences that have shaped this project.

Chapter Three: Cultural Implications addresses this need. I declare the overarching contextual forces, experiences and inferences that have encouraged my perspective on a dynamic or ersatz presentist perspective of time, informing the way I think and behave. Linguistic anthropologist Richard Lewis describes three broad cultural categories that are useful for classifying people as typically linear-active, multi-active or reactive. The Malagasy and Indigenous Australians enrich this enquiry that explores how people conceptualise the direction and nature of time, plus interpret 'universal' concepts, thereby significantly impacting behaviours. This knowledge enables one to classify one's own community and self – plus, in my instance, locate a source of discord. Problems arising from the meshing of multiple perspectives and systems of time became apparent during the production of my film *Sentinels* (2023). A discussion of Olafur Eliasson's installation *Life* (2021) helps to illuminate how these ideas and challenges can be offered experientially, prompting me to consider what presence means and looks like in the contemporary first world.

Eliasson's *Life* (2021) and my artwork, *Sentinels* (2023), both strive to immerse the viewer in the present. In Chapter Four: Immerse Me, I examine the condition and concept of being present, grounding my ideas in phenomenology and the pursuit of positive affect. Positive psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2014) offers insight into how we might connect with our time-sense (in the present) when having a "flow experience". I extract two malleable attributes intrinsic to Csikszentmihalyi's flow for further enquiry: enjoyment and the internal–external exchange inherent when sensorily engaged. I also refer to David Couzens Hoy to reinforce the importance of enjoyment when seeking peace with the "sting of time" (2012, 183). Cameron Robbins' artworks reveal how to encourage presence experientially using materials. Observations of circumstances conducive to presence enrich this assembled body of knowledge, spurring experimentation that ultimately produced *Affuse* (2023). This delicate and playful assemblage encourages one to be centred and receptive to

textures, sights and sounds. *Affuse* mindfully navigates barriers to participation; however, it remains vulnerable to challenges inherent in encouraging mind and body immersion.

In Chapter Five: Distilling Experience, I look back and move forward in my research trajectory, pulling several loose threads together. I position Edmund Husserl's 'phenomenology' as the philosophy that frames this body of research and explain how this lens has influenced my research methods. The production of *Milieu* (2022) illustrates the natural union of phenomenology with research that attends to materiality and time, drawing connections with time-consciousness and time-sense. I revisit the universality of our primary material, water, its ability to transcend geography and indiscriminately affect individuals. To recontextualise this powerful affect I look to Hiroshi Teshigahara's film *Woman in the Dunes* (1964) for strategies. Considered use of scale proves impactful for this purpose, informing the production of artworks *Pools* (2023), *Sentinels* (2023) and *Coalesce* (2021) and bringing watery movements (contrast and change) to the fore. Sparse and direct, Elina Brotherus's film *Mirvoir* (2001) is used to demonstrate how limited materials (including water) can communicate cleanly and succinctly. I pursue this mastery to effectively transpose key elements of lived experience to experiential creative outcomes. Duchamp's contextual gesture, *1,200 Bags of Coal* (1938), informs the decision to present creative research outcomes in a conventional gallery space, a judgement pertinent when concluding an exegesis concerned with optimising experience.

Chapter One: Out of Sync with Time

The concept of time is complex; its fabric and nature are topics of historical and contemporary debate. During the early stages of this project, I believed I had a firm grasp on what I understood by 'time'. As this body of research grew and I battled with an ever-expanding scope, the boundaries blurred, and certainty waned. I became increasingly aware that from a human perspective, many variables filter and colour an individual's lens on this subject impacting our understanding of, value for, perspective on and degree of conceptual engagement with time. In this research, a phenomenological lens narrows the scope of this behemoth, whereby direct experience (lived time) is utilised as the primary basis for engagement. It is nonetheless apt to commence this exegesis with a brief account of time described in terms of how it is most widely conceived.

Whilst time is ephemeral and occupies no space, it may be signified and is given form through action, change and numbers on the face of a clock. 'Clock time' is signified by Coordinated Universal Time (UTC) and forms the basis of our colloquial understanding and implementation. Author of *Splitting the Second*, Tony Jones describes UTC as the "basis for civil timekeeping" (2000, 71), an agreed-upon 24-hour time zone system based on the average speed of the Earth's rotation, combined with the readings from multiple atomic clocks around the world. This extremely precise construct is a time standard, adapted across geography to transcend boundaries and give shape to the contemporary day, supporting travel and trade across the globe.

As far back as I can remember, I have battled with the repercussions of living according to time by the clock. Conditioning our minds and configuring our days, this soundtrack to our lives provides individuals with a framework for scheduling their personal allocation of time (a lifetime), an armature for an ephemeral concept. UTC is a structure that supports a busy schedule and perpetual list of tasks that typically define an individual's identity. It provides the impetus to curtail, expedite, or extend,

repeat or refrain, commence or conclude; to arrive and depart ‘on time’. It is my preference to embrace innate duration rather than adhere to described constraints. Over half a century ago, British social historian and political activist Edward Palmer Thompson articulated this predilection, coining the term “time-sense” (1967, 58). It describes an individual’s experience when attention is centred and activity is paired with organic duration, independent of and ignorant to strictures of conventional time (UTC). Time-sense is a solitary, inward or felt perception of time, indiscriminate in affect, hence accessible to all and broadly relatable.

Time-sense was borne of Thompson’s critique of time standardisation, a system elicited by industrial capitalism. Its invention in 1967 interestingly coincided with the atomic second superseding the astronomical second as the international unit of time, a ‘refinement’ in time measurement (Jones 2000). Writing in Britain, Thompson reflected on the unnatural shift he perceived from “task-orientation” to “timed” labour (1967, 60-61) in which “[t]ime is now currency: it is not passed but spent”. Vanessa Ogle posits that the social historian essentially argued that standardised time is a lens through which to grasp the “logic of capitalism” (2019, 313). Thompson insightfully questioned impacts on work discipline, structure and conditions. He expressed concern for our “inward notation of time” (1967, 57) suggesting it may synchronise with monetised, regular work hours. Implying time by the clock is incompatible with humankind, Thompson juxtaposed the “immediacy and insistence” of the clock with the “less regular beating of the heart” (1967, 57). Extending on this imposition, he posits the idea that the burgeoning use of clocks may have operated as a control mechanism, a “symptom of a new Puritan discipline and bourgeois exactitude” (1967, 56). For this research it is not important to justify or discredit these ideas. They are of significance insofar as their authors share my discomfort with a rigid system and locate the origins of the concept of time-sense. For the purposes of this exegesis, Thompson’s proposition initiates an historical thread problematising the implications of time by the clock.

A few years later, futurist Alvin Toffler (1971) in his book *Future Shock* predicted a growing aversion to the accelerating pace and increasing scope and scale of change in society. Describing a world on the cusp of the Information Age, he believed that technology enables a “time skip” (16) transporting the past and future into the present, where change is instantaneous and impact is global. Toffler was concerned humans would be unable to adapt, suffering “future shock...a time phenomenon” (11) that “influences our sense of time, revolutionises the tempo of everyday life, and affects the way we ‘feel’ the world around us” (17). Toffler is alluding to impacts on the individual’s innate, felt experience of time, described by Thompson as our “inward notation of time” (1967, 57); our time-sense.

Fast forward fifty-plus years and I would argue that I am suffering *future shock*, Toffler’s concerns have become my reality. From digital infancy to digital dominance, and now artificial intelligence, entering the intimacy of our lives, I’ve experienced rapid changes to the way we function in our now information-saturated first world. As described in the introduction to this exegesis, and in alignment with Toffler’s predictions, technology has impacted the way I feel about the pace of life, my place and identity within the world, and ultimately the way I relate to time. The Internet has asserted its presence with 91% of the population actively using this service in the wealthy nation of Australia (Statista 2023). In 2022, 5.3 billion people, or 66% of the world’s population, had access, in a process that has reinforced gender, age and urban/regional inequality (ITU 2022). The Internet has become the contemporary bible, readily accessible to the ‘fortunate’, and often housed on our person. Available anytime, this worldwide system of computer networks exceeds conventions of UTC, offering those who have access an infinite and instant stream of information and entertainment tailored to the individual. Born into this context, I contemplate how my children’s very apparent expectations for instant gratification and constant stimulation will continue to impact their sense of time and feelings towards the world around them.

In the “post-Internet age”, academics Christina Chau and Laura Glitsos (2019a, 3) also contemporise and respond to Toffler’s concerns. They suggest that transient forms of digital media infiltrate all aspects of lived experience. Individuals are exposed to “a multiplicity of timescapes” that have “colonised subjective experience of time and temporality” (1), thus impacting time sensibilities. Arts and digital industries scholar Helen Powell (2012, 2) describes a Sony Ericsson Xperia 10 mobile phone advertising campaign from 2010 that promotes convenient access to infinite timescapes. Customers are offered the benefit of saving time, plus access to all time with “a quick flick of the finger...you’re scrolling back and forward through time”. E. Ann Kaplan (1987, 144) aptly characterised this phenomenon that she was witnessing as a “flattening of historical frames”. The rigidity of standardised time, rate of change, impacts of digital media, time travel and compression of time represent voices and ideas that speak to our experience of time within the context of an information-saturated first world.

The movement of clock hands, the arrival of the 9.00 a.m. train, a scheduled sporting commitment are regular intervals, repetitions and rhythms of various forms that enjoy a symbiotic relationship with societal conventions of time, governed by, whilst also consolidating of, the time of the day. As chronological markers, they are also the building blocks for a perceived linear timescape. In the words of Phillip Turetzky, “Time is a boundary condition on phenomena” (1998, 1). This is a statement about the application of Coordinated Universal Time and the limitations that this system applies to a concept that is more aptly understood in phenomenological terms. The nature of time relative to human experience is a subject of enquiry across artforms. A selection of artworks inform my studio enquiry; artists Doug Aitken and Olafur Eliasson have provided considerable influence and inspiration throughout the process, whilst the artwork of Mona Hatoum speaks to me about the perpetual impetus, and cadence that drives and shapes activity in time.

Hatoum’s sculpture *+ and -* (2004) (Figure 1.1) realises regular intervals, repetitions and rhythms in material form. It is an exemplary example of a kinetic sculpture that uses these attributes to allude to time, whilst also subjectively disrupting capitalist

ideals of progress and productivity. A sleek metal arm radially cycles across the surface of the circular disk of sand at a constant speed. As one half of the arm rakes fine grooves into the sand, the other half erases the marks in a regular, audible gesture. The repetition of this additive and subtractive action is immersive, even meditative, as time perceptively slows down. The viewer is seduced by the nature of this cyclic movement, each rotation marking time on its own terms, whilst also neutralising its physical impact in a single, perpetual motion of self-sabotage.

Figure 1.1: Mona Hatoum, *+ and -*. 2004, Sand, aluminium and electric motor, 27 x 420 x 420 cm. The Menil Collection. Reproduced from: Whitecube website.

We can see these same attributes of repetition and rhythm masterfully employed by Doug Aitken to critique constructs of time relative to human experience in his formerly mentioned artwork *Black Mirror* (2011). Realised in multiple forms (film, installation, performance, book and website) and set in contemporary times, the protagonist narrates her thoughts as she traverses the globe in a soulless and unrelenting journey. Repeating the mantra “check in and check out, repeat”, she is

despondent, disconnected from place and people in circumstances that render her perceptively timeless. This narrative in conjunction with the action, via the repetition of imagery and sound, orchestrate an exhausting rhythmic rollercoaster; the varied pace and thrust amplified by the juxtaposition of a notably incompatible individual, lost in time and space, and yearning for authenticity of experience.

Drawing on the examples provided by Hatoum and Aitken, I have embedded repetition and a sense of rhythm into creative outcomes to allude to time. I have also drawn on first-hand experience of time-sense to inform artworks designed to disrupt conventions of time. When completely absorbed in an enjoyable activity, or immersed in thought, a moment of tension and/or fear, I have experienced time *stand still* (stop). When rushed and overwhelmed by a sense of urgency, time *flies* (accelerates) and conversely, when feeling bored, time *stretches* (decelerates). These physical descriptors of speed have the effect of giving substance to the intangible, of humanising our experience of time and perhaps even democratising relatability. In all instances mentioned, my innate sense of time within self was out of sync with the clock, and shaped by activity and/or emotion. My mind and body were immersed in the present, mobile moment to the exclusion of other influences. To transpose something of this time-altering, transcendental state to the gallery space, it has been important to recreate and extract elements of the phenomenology underpinning it. This empirical lens has been instrumental in shaping many aspects of this research project and extends to my engagement with watery sites.

When I am seeking a reprieve from the demands of the day, a visit to the ocean or river with my dog is often the remedy. These watery natural environments are dynamic, and the experience is always enjoyable and invigorating; here, my attention to the time dissipates. My compulsion to do and to be is diluted, the pressure becomes a shadow of its former self, relegated to gently simmer away in the depths of my mind. This amnesty from time pressures temporarily satisfies and embodies my desire to reconnect “with the earth, the ground...the natural things” (Aitken 2011, 10), quietening the longing. It also prompts me to consider how water, a formless,

transparent and migratory liquid, has the capacity to beckon visitors and transform their experience of time.

Cultural geographer Liz Roberts and social researcher Katherine Phillips explain that if we are to frame water's potential from a contemporary standpoint, we would typically describe the material in terms of productivity. In their book *Water, Creativity and Meaning* (2018) they describe this narrow-minded attitude towards the concept of water within the global political sphere: "Water is reduced to an abstraction, a resource, a commodity and this view has limited space for the social, cultural or environmental dimension" (Roberts and Phillips 2018, 6). Author Jamie Linton (2010) reinforces this opinion in his book *What is Water?: The History of a Modern Abstraction*. Tracing this reductive history, he describes our diminished appreciation of the relational aspects and materiality of water. Linton also alludes to the rich interplay between water and humans when he states, "Water is what we make of it" (2010, 3)*;* this research explores this relationship in order to understand water's capacity to inform our sense of time.

Water is an elemental juggernaut that covers approximately 71% of our planet's surface, and sustains and extinguishes life by dint of its presence and absence, plus impacts environmental conditions and the physical landscape. Its basal nature has broad sociocultural implications, with simply the provision of safe water and basic sanitation often impacting on healthcare and education services and engagement in economics and politics (Gimelli, Bos and Rogers 2018). On an intimate level, water constitutes 60% of the adult human body. It is intrinsic to many cultural, leisure and work activities that consume our time, connect us with people and places, and shape our sense of identity. Ronan Foley's (2018) chapter "Mapping a Blue Trace: An Intermittent Swimming Life" illustrates the latter statement. The author draws on narratives that document and reflect individuals' regular and intermittent engagement with water in specific outdoor settings; walking, sailing and especially swimming. Embodied memory of these experiences through repeat visitation and practice facilitates a deep sense of connection to place and locus within personal histories. Foley refers to Tim Ingold (as quoted by Foley 2018, 90) to poetically articulate this

visceral relationship – “through walking…landscapes are woven into life, and lives are woven into landscape”. An ethnographic approach enables Foley to ‘map’ water and body interactions across personal histories, collectively highlighting their phenomenological nature and powerful, positive affect.

Environmental psychology theories can provide possible explanations for the positive affect experienced in natural environments. Attention restoration theory describes how enjoyment of nature provides some relief or break from routines and mental load, revitalising our capacity to be attentive (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989, Kaplan 1995, as quoted by Johansson, Hartig and Staats 2011). Psycho-evolutionary theory explores the idea that humans will instinctively have favourable responses to features of the natural environment that enhance our chance of survival (in an evolutionary sense), thereby promoting positivity and stress relief (Ulrich et al. 1991, as quoted by Johansson, Hartig and Staats 2011). I posit that human interactions with natural (watery) sites may illustrate both of these overlapping theories. Perhaps, as Ulrich suggests, the allure towards water is instinctual. Foley certainly supports the idea that there is a form of magnetism or natural inclination towards bodies of water that is grounded in experience and embedded in memory and identity, which positively impacts mental health and encourages visitation throughout many lives. Kaplan and Kaplan’s theory describes how enjoyment derived from differentiation motivates engagement with nature, offering similar mental health benefits. Through the lens of differentiation or primal predisposition, we can be certain from a phenomenological perspective that relations with water offer positive affect that disrupts rhythms and systems of human construction in the information-saturated first world.

The river, ocean, stream and even an established dam possess their own (primarily) natural rhythms that shape the activity and ecosystems within. Ocean currents, for example, are determined by wind driven by solar energy, the Earth’s rotation, geography, temperature, salinity and events like earthquakes and storms (NOAA 2023). These rhythmic movements are essentially outside of human control, hence refreshingly ignorant to the strictures of UTC. The beauty of the vista, howl of the

wind, salty aroma and residue on lips, grit of sand underfoot and icy wash of water across skin; the materiality of watery environments is overt, immediate, visceral and tacit. These qualities engage our senses and, with gentle confidence, gather our attention, offering a joyful and invigorating break from our everyday. This research project engages with the interconnectedness of humans with water on a phenomenological level, experimenting with, recontextualising and realising materiality through creative outcomes that gesture towards our relationship with time. The phenomenology of the site in the form of sensory stimulation, action and form is interpreted in a curated assemblage designed to orchestrate similar affect within the gallery space.

Figure 1.2: Mandy Hawkhead, *Trickle* (detail). 2023*,* Film, porcelain, water, ink, metal rope and fixtures, size variable. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.

Trickle (2023) (Figure 1.2) recontextualises the ocean waves crashing on the limestone rock groin, draping the undulating surface, then promptly trickling back down at gravity's call at irregular intervals and throughout the day and night. Within this reimagining, sleek veils, slipstreams and spherical beads of liquid are received, then released by staggered porcelain plates of various proportions and forms, alluding to the weather- and water-worn surfaces onsite. The action is projected on a grand scale, in slow motion and relative darkness. Visuals fuse with audio to describe the intricate and mesmerising journey of liquid in staggered free-fall. *Trickle* capitalises on the potential of film to push experimentation with sound, movement, scale and time, dramatically injecting pace, and drama, into the gallery space. Visually and audibly, this creative research outcome draws attention to the natural rhythms and phenomenology of the site, plus the materiality and powerful affect of water.

I have described the way society typically understands time in the contemporary first world and how this can impact an individual's behaviour and experience of time. *Trickle* takes this information and explores ways to disrupt these structures, whilst gaining appreciation for the materiality and affect of water, a substance that exceeds its productive value. Society's inclination to quantify and qualify time through regular intervals and rhythms provides us with clues as to how we may conceptualise something that is intangible. It also goes some way towards explaining how we may lose grip on 'time by the clock', and instead embrace innate duration and connect with organic time-sense, when a dynamic material like water is 'out of sync' with and obscuring these regular markers of time. As knowledge grows and processes gain momentum, it is important to consider the philosophical foundation that shapes my understanding of time and informs this body of research.

Chapter Two: A Dynamic Theory

Philosophers Sam Baron and Kristie Miller (2019) in their book *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Time* offer a contemporary overview of two overarching theories of time that deepen and clarify this enquiry. Drawing on personal experience, the framework that I most comfortably align with is dynamic in nature. Dynamic time supports the belief that the flow of time (or temporal passage) is a "mind-independent" (8) component of the universe, a belief that time actually passes. Believers in the alternate theory of static time posit that all events past, present and future already exist out there somewhere and, therefore, it is us who move within the pre-existing passage of time; in this paradigm, belief in the flow or passing of time is dismissed as a construct of our human minds (Baron and Miller 2019).

Narrowing this focus, my creative research outcomes embed ideas compatible with a dynamic theory of time called ersatz presentism. Baron and Miller (2019) explain that proponents of this theoretical framework believe that the future is undetermined and that the present and past exist, with the latter authenticated by historical entities and memories in the present day. Key to my alignment with this theory is the acceptance of lived experience as a basis for temporal passage, hence the abstract nature of time and its ability to perceivably distort (stretch, stand still and fly). This theory also encompasses a belief that the direction of and change in time have the distinct properties of being past, present and future rather than relational (earlier-than, later-than, simultaneous, between). It should be noted, however, that no one theory is seamlessly compatible with our known ontologies of time across disciplines (Baron and Miller 2019).

Lived experience and temporal passage are ideas central to an ersatz presentist perspective and to this research project. I seek to create artworks that engage with this reality and secure the viewer in the present tense. This strategy entails bringing the idea of time to viewers' consciousness and minimising external references to time and place to encourage engagement with the present, moving moment.

As discussed earlier, artist Doug Aitken's rhetoric around our contemporary relationship with time has been foundational in my art practice and this body of research. The protagonist in *Black Mirror* (2011) (Figure 2.1) shared and affirmed my feelings towards life in the information-saturated first world.

Figure 2.1: Doug Aitken, *Black Mirror* (installation view). 2015, Multimedia. Frankfurt: Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt. Reproduced from: Artsy website.

Aitken's (2006) book *Broken Screen: 26 Conversations with Doug Aitken: Expanding the Image, Breaking the Narrative* encouraged contemplation around the impact of technology on contemporary society and time sensibilities, as well as the potential to manipulate duration and disrupt linear narrative in art (especially in film). I came to realise, after the fact, that an ersatz presentist perspective of time is embedded in Aitken's output; a present that is fluid, mobile and changeable. I additionally share his interest in using art to prompt contemplation of our 'options' in respect to time

and life: "….do we stand in the calm centre of this hurricane of modern life or do we step into its turbulence? And do we have a choice? I think we're just on the cusp of exploring our options" (Aitken 2006, 6).

Referencing past and present time, but grounding only the extant moment in concrete reality, the protagonist in *Black Mirror* narrates to the audience: "Reality...Your memory will become your story. All that you've seen and done, and been. But can you erase it? If you do, you will have this moment…right now. That's it" (Aitken 2011, 49). Additionally, perception is acknowledged as impactful on one's experience of duration: "Time? We don't talk about the future much…even a day could lose you; even a day could stretch out beyond your imagination. It's almost too much to hold onto" (91). Aitken's words have been a touchstone throughout this research, a tool to inspire and anchor the project in its motivations.

Baron and Miller (2019) highlight how we may be predisposed or propelled to conform to a belief in dynamic time, pointing out that phrases such as 'time passing', 'ahead of time', and the 'flow of time' have the potential to form a basis for individual reasoning. I would suggest that awareness of this prejudice may be useful if one is determining a time-based theory of personal resonance. The information also begs the rhetorical question of whether the experience of time infiltrates language or, conversely, language informs our understanding of time.

Turns of phrase such as 'quick as a flash', 'the sands of time' and 'water under the bridge' also impart meaning through association. In these examples, light, sand and water connote the passage of time. Philosopher and physicist Karen Barad (as quoted by Lange-Berndt (2015, 13) posits that it is necessary to be critical of the Western tradition of ranking language as epistemologically superior to other methods of constructing and reinforcing meaning. In response to this opinion, I would suggest that in the above-mentioned examples, materiality and language are an organic union. The naturally occurring, plus essential and plentiful, nature of water, sand and light, paired with their capacity for movement (hence ability to mark time), has made

them ripe for association with ‘time’, a concept that exhibits the same qualities. In this research project I have experimented with water and constituents supportive of this formless liquid to create artworks that connote the flow of time.

This approach can be elucidated within the artwork *Coalesce* (2021) (Figure 2.2). The title gestures towards the movement or event when a droplet of water is unified with the greater body of water, pivoting the viewer’s focus towards this minute occurrence within the larger installation. Concurrently, the visual and audible movement of the water in the artwork describe the event materially.

Figure 2.2: Mandy Hawkhead, *Coalesce* (detail). 2021, Water, aluminium, ACM, sealer, paint, irrigation fittings, pump, 240 x 120 x 300 cm. Photo: Bo Wong.
Figure 2.3: Mandy Hawkhead, *Coalesce* (with *Bounce* in background). 2021, Water, aluminium, ACM, sealer, paint, irrigation fittings, pump, 240 x 120 x 300 cm. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.

Coalesce draws on personal experience, recontextualising a light rain shower delicately penetrating and decorating the ocean surface in the harbour. It physically consists of a large, rectangular pool resting on the gallery floor with multiple valves releasing droplets from a visible irrigation grid hovering above. The process is (potentially) eternal as the water cycles from the pond, up the pipes, and back down into the vessel. In terms of its relevance to this research, the work is an analogy for

the enduring passage of time with a sense of flow marked by the repetitious release and collisions of droplets piercing and uniting with the water surface. Movement and associated sound definitively and obscurely mark time in the form of irregular drips that juxtapose with the regularity of the clock and speak to the ideas informing this research.

I share installation artist Olafur Eliasson's interest in time and have worked with several similar materials used by him in his practice to support my enquiry. His monochromatic installation *Model for a Timeless Garden* (2011) provided me with a compelling example of how one could capitalise on materials and language to create meaning. The artwork consists of a panel of flashing strobe lights, hovering above a series of water fountains accompanied by the sound of cascading water. In a stark and dynamic, disco-esque performance, high-key bursts of light momentarily fragment the flow of water into miniscule gem-like particles suspended in space; attention to this instant renders time still, while attention to the rhythmic sequence creates the illusion of slow-motion action. I found this sensory-stimulating experience to be immersive in affect and rich with references to time. When I reflect on the artwork's title and material form, plus Eliasson's reputation as an artist and agent for social change (Dominey-Antonini 2017), they collectively illuminate my concerns about climate change and the temporal nature of our planet. The artwork prompts me to contemplate the circumstances in which humanity may require a model (plan) to recreate Eden, the garden of Earth(ly) delights.

Figure 2.4: Olafur Eliasson, *Model for a Timeless Garden*. 2011, Water, pumps, nozzles, stainless steel, wood, foam, plastic, strobe lights, wall mounts, control unit. Berlin: Studio Olafur Eliasson. Reproduced from: Studio Olafur Eliasson website. Photo: Studio Olafur Eliasson.

My alignment with a dynamic understanding of time is essentially based on lived experience, encompassing time 'distortion', plus the semantics and interplay of this with materiality. *Coalesce* (2021) experiments with the juncture of these ingredients materially, and my interpretation of Eliasson's *Model for a Timeless Garden* is informed by this perspective. In this phenomenological enquiry, lived experience and the perception of ideas, events and material objects are the basis on which empirical evidence is derived. The foundational role the researcher plays in this context highlights the need to declare the cultural influences that have shaped my perspective.

Chapter Three: Cultural Implications

My concept of time is experientially and culturally informed, and intrinsically linked to the temporality of life. An atheistic lens shapes my belief in life's inevitable flow towards the finality of death. This perspective frames and draws on empirical evidence in a reciprocal relationship. I observe changes in state, movement, decay and death and infer that these occurrences mark time consecutively passing from the present moment into the past. The idea that time is 'dynamic', with the past behind, the future ahead, and the present moving along a linear trajectory, is consolidated, at least by language. My experience of being 'lost' in time (meaning irregular duration) authenticates the embodied belief in a subjective, internal sense of time (time-sense); a reality that is reinforced by the knowledge of shared affect. These contextual forces, observations, experiences and inferences shape my conception of time and form a foundation for this body of research.

In his classic book *When Culture Collide: Leading Across Cultures*, Richard Lewis (2006), an expert in applied and anthropological linguistics, provides practical examples of how one's worldview can shape their interpretation of universal concepts and impact behaviours. This text has expanded my comprehension of these ideas and reinforced the importance of this research project. Lewis discusses how people from Eastern and Western cultures generally see time quite differently from one another. He acknowledges a multiplicity of fascinating factors that render differences within these two broad groups, plus the diversity cultivated by personality and context (e.g., language, profession, age) within specific cultural groups. Of great relevance to this research is that there are vastly different understandings of time that are ideologically incompatible and impact the way people feel and behave in time. Lewis describes dominant time ideologies shaping time usage within cultural groupings:

> The several hundred nations and regional cultures of the world can be roughly classified into three groups: task-oriented, highly organised planners (linear-active); people oriented, loquacious interrelators (multi-active); and introverted, respect-oriented listeners (reactive). Italians see Germans as stiff and time-dominated; Germans see Italians gesticulating in chaos; the Japanese observe and quietly learn from both. (Lewis 2006, 27)

We understand that linear time describes the perception that the past is behind us, and time is marching forward along a present trajectory, towards the future. Lewis (2006) explains that in linear-active cultures this conception frames action. Timekeeping is used to ensure punctuality and provide structure for tangible outcomes like decision-making and activities, both ideally addressed in a singular and consecutive fashion. A most useful capitalist driver, linear activity generally underpins cultures that equate time with money, and lament 'wasted' time. Lewis categorises America, Switzerland, Germany, the Anglo-Saxon world generally (including Australia), the Netherlands, Austria and Scandinavia as linear-active cultures.

Within multi-active cultures, people apply themselves to multiple tasks simultaneously and believe this to be the most efficient way to function. Activities of relative enjoyment and importance are prioritised. Unlike linear-active culture, there is little authentic value for punctuality. Deadlines are fluid and the duration of scheduled appointments is flexible as subscribers to this worldview consider human interactions in the present moment to be of paramount importance. Southern European (Latin) and Arab countries subscribe to this usage of time (Lewis 2006).

Lewis (2006) grounds the belief in 'cyclic' time in the observed renewal of and repetition in nature; the rise and fall of tides, the cycling seasons, death followed by life, etc. He explains that these cyclic patterns have endured for thousands of years, leading to the idea that there is a circular trajectory and infinite supply of time in which we can exist, adapt and harmonise. Lewis classifies many Asian cultures as 'reactive', indicative of the inclination to respond to rather than initiate circumstances

that present themselves. Broadly speaking, this mindset removes the impetus to rush; it accommodates time for contemplation, to draw on past knowledge, plan for the long term, and wait for opportunities to circle back round. Lewis describes a selection of diverse time-based behaviours across the continent that have developed against the backdrop of cyclic time: Buddhists anticipate reincarnation; the Japanese segment activity with courteous rituals that gently unfold over time; and curiously, the Chinese have been known to commence meetings earlier than scheduled to complete the proceedings without encroaching on others' valuable time.

Lewis (2006) provides a final, uncategorised example of time relations with behavioural implications that I am including for interest's sake. He explains that the Malagasy imagine that the future flows up from behind them and becomes the past as it stretches out in front. As human eyes are forward-facing, logic suggests that people can see what has occurred, however are blind to what may become. This perception encourages people to draw heavily on the past, plan loosely and allow situations to trigger events; for example, the bus exits the station when the seats are filled. I find it fascinating that this theory initially seemed obscure, however it became rational once the physicality of time's direction relative to one's line of sight was envisaged.

Indigenous Australians understand time differently to the cultures described thus far, conceiving the past, present and future to be "vertical stacked" (Walker 2016). Anthropologist W. E. H. Stanner called this state the "everywhen" (as quoted by Grant 2023), acknowledging its comprehensive interconnectedness. Aboriginal people perceive time to be rich with meaning, alive always with the Dreaming; the cultural beliefs and practices, nature, and ancestry of a culture deeply connected to place. The catastrophic dislocation of people from time is evocatively expressed by Aboriginal painter, philosopher and poet David Mowaljarlai (as quoted by Grant 2023):

Once I was past and future,
Now I am only the present,
Today, the moment,
And that is hard to bear,
With no past, no future.

Distinguished journalist, author and Waradjuri and Kamilaroi man, Stan Grant (2023), describes Mowaljarlai's lament as a "rupture of time". Indigenous Australians' deep relationship with time speaks of family, culture and country, each unequivocally prioritised by people with this worldview.

Reflecting on these broad cultural categories, I surmise that linear-active cultures are future-facing. As 'we' perceive time to be uniform and finite, I observe that behaviours that conform to this system and time dedicated to attaining (often financial) goals are received favourably. The Malagasy perceive time to be linear also, however by travelling from the opposite direction, this results in behaviours diametrically opposed to their Western counterparts. As time is expansive and infinite within reactive cultures, time pressures plus an individual's role within this grander context would perceptively diminish. The abundance of time explains Lewis' (2006) assertion that believers in cyclic time tend to be good listeners who value tradition and strong relationships (entities that develop over time). This group is looking 'back' to the vast past for answers. Indigenous Australians situate themselves in the present, however, with the understanding that it embodies eternity. Author Rebecca Walker (2016) cites M. S. Bain who explains that this perception of time encourages objective time to be observed from a descriptive standpoint only. Walker also explains that the interconnectedness of this worldview accounts for the damaging effect of intergenerational trauma today. Behaviours within multi-oriented cultures display little regard for time by the clock; these people live for the present moment and embrace innate duration. This approach inevitably introduces challenges when paired with an alternative modus operandi. As I am inclined to

operate in this manner, I understand this predicament. I do wonder if this societal norm and relationship with time offers its disciples the authenticity of experience that I seek.

It is important to recall that linear-active, multi-active and reactive cultures have beliefs that shape behaviours within shared geographies. Lewis (2006) locates cultures on continuums relative to these categories to indicate typical 'hybrid' behaviours and also acknowledge that humans can and do change behaviours relative to context, a statement that can be applied to everybody. The need to deeply understand my conception of time is necessary for me to deconstruct my experience with time. Lewis has been helpful in this respect. He has provided theory enabling me to understand cultural norms, identify personality and contextual attributes that differentiate me from the linear-active archetype and allow me to consider real world alternatives in contemporary society today. This theory has also enabled me to unravel a material exploration of time that culminated in the artwork *Sentinels* (2023) (Figure 3.1). My onsite journaling provides the reader with a window into this experience, commencing with the complex interplay of water's cyclic journey with three custodians of its shallows:

Three steel and concrete cylinders, stalwarts standing upright, braving the elements whilst silently observing the comings and goings of the river – within its bed – shrouded by the shadow of Stirling Bridge. I am struck by the beauty and presence of these three pylons, three of the six that are presumably remnants of the former jetty. Historically superseded by the sleek, monolithic structure above, this vestige of historical human intervention stands solid and proud within its territorial waters. The liquid wraps itself around the circular structures, gushing, thrusting and sucking much like a whirlpool, pleating and trickling, then coalescing into the river body – the journey of water and its interplay with the pylons is captivating. Wading into the water and peering into the closest pylon from above, I observe the microcosm that has evolved within, nestled atop of sediment, and secured within the form. Viewed from the correct angle, the ambient light reflects off the circular meniscus creating a mirrored disc that hovers and rests within the concrete sanctuary. Absolute stillness

contrasts with movement around the perimeter; a state preserved until rising waters, assisted by the height of an incoming wave, breach the fortress rim, slipping and lapping within its inner circle, then retreating to allow the stillness to resume. The pylons' height and proximity to the shoreline dictate the proportion of each cylinder that is visible above water, each relative to the others as the tide fluctuates. The convex walls of the pylons ephemerally mark the changing water level, visibly displaying time passing on the river's terms.

Figure 3.1: Mandy Hawkhead, *Sentinels* (still), 2023, Film. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.

I determined to capture the river and its timepieces, commencing a process that has greatly informed my relationship with time. This entailed documenting the tidal cycles relative to the pylons, or 'sentinels', the name I bestowed on these stoic guardians of the site. The goal was clear, however strictures of time were inherent and impacted on my methods and processes, challenging me to navigate a path through multiple, overlapping systems of time. My linear weekly schedule shaped the decision to visit intermittently from 3.30–4.15 p.m. over the course of a week rather than remain onsite for a complete tidal cycle. Peak dog walking times, either at the end of the day or during school holidays, were additionally avoided to minimise interference. The timeslot factored in the cyclic nature of the tides (contingent on solar and lunar

cycles), ensuring significant visibility of the pylons on Day One of the series. Film was the ideal medium for the work as it is inherently time based, with the capacity to explore alternate ideas of time. Bearing in mind equipment limitations and post-production requirements, I collected one minute of 'real' time and one minute 30 seconds of slow-motion footage on each visit.

Difficulties reframing the subject day-over-day at a public site encouraged me to apply a similar process to the sentinels (again) and to experiment with this concept on private property. I tracked objects relative to the tides from maximum to minimum visibility over several hours each visit, capturing footage at irregular intervals. Willyweather.com.au informed these visits, providing tidal forecasts that enabled me to nominate segments of daylit, rain-free, clock time that offered the required action within my available time. Despite best laid plans, the tidal forecast did not offer the desired precision, introducing various challenges that highlighted the limitations of a system that attempted to unify multiple, overlapping systems of time. This messy tapestry meant that many hours were inconveniently spent on the shore contemplating alternatives systems. The process deepened my connection with and appreciation for the riverside site, enriching my understanding of how the landscape can connect people to place and self.

I observe the Sentinels, write, and intermittently rise to capture the fluctuating water levels plus throw the ball to Sunny. I contemplated other ways to mark action and my time spent onsite; perhaps the number of dogs and/or people we meet, birds that fly over, passes of the ferry or large vehicles overhead, even the number of times I shift the picnic blanket to avoid the moving shadows. I enjoy the irregularity and space that these potential systems offer. They speak more of this durational experience than clock time does.

As time by the riverside grows, so does my interaction with the regulars that pass me by. The idea that humans may embody experiences seems more poignant here. There is a temporal culture of sorts that I infer is founded on shared experience and the understanding that we are all drawn to and connected with this watery site.

People are time-full, friendly, and bold enough to hover and enquire as to what I am doing. I am happy to share my story and am often richly rewarded by what is returned. Two young girls and their mother described how the Sentinels are sometimes big imaginary cooking pots in which they stir their (watery) culinary delights; also, excellent targets in which to land rocks. 'Anna' pointed out an area between the nearby moored boat and shoreline where she observes a large pod of dolphins hunting for fish around 8am, high tide. Many individuals have a connection and/or intrigue with this site; some have specific interest in the Sentinels as familiar concrete landmarks, historical ruins and/or (like the girls and their mother) objects for engagement. Integration with water in this context provides the retired jetty foundations with renewed purpose, beauty, and capacity for affect. The Sentinels are an integral part of a watery landscape that enables people to unplug from linear time and reconnect with their time-sense.

My onsite reflections attempt to share the experience of weaving various concepts of time together. This process culminated in the production of *Sentinels* (2023), a film designed to be projected on a grand scale to amplify movement. The ebbs and flows of the liquid as the tide rises and falls, and their interactions with the concrete pylons, provide a visual and audible marker of temporal passage and of a cyclic time. The beautiful irregularities and rhythms of this journey and the dynamic forces at play are subjectively captivating. I have mindfully recontextualised the sights and sounds of an experience that enabled me to connect with the present and with my time-sense, availing the opportunity for shared affect. Ironically, my intent to speak of a cyclic nature of time was ultimately framed by the linear timescape that essentially commands my (life)time and is inherent in the medium of film. All attempts to personally seek refuge and/or materially explore alternatives are shepherded by responsibilities and human interactions that are tied to objective time within our predominantly linear-active culture. Those who deny this timely structure are simultaneously opting out of mainstream society. The creative process described mirrored and amplified the predicament I experience daily. As I write this exegesis about the search for 'authenticity of experience' I am forfeiting the opportunity to see my son play his first soccer match for the season…time feels scarce when

commitments sit within the single time system, a lack of alignment across time systems intensifies the situation. It appears 'refinement' of and interactions with objective time in a post-capitalist society have rendered a disconnect between this system and its cyclic origins (the average speed of the Earth's rotation). In both examples I became aware of my linear-active cultural conditioning; when filming Sentinels and forfeiting the game I embraced juxtaposition and competition in the present, so I might understand / access preferable circumstances in the future. In my experience, the intensity I have described adheres itself to the present and moves forward with this conventional schema of time (UTC). Never-the-less, I routinely enact this farcical solution. Perhaps I must embrace the oxymoron of scheduling in objective time to engage with alternative experiences of time. I look to the work of other artists for answers, seeking exemplars that explore time systems and offer access to these ideas experientially, Olafur Eliasson's *Life* (2021) (Figure 3.2) is both a 'watery site' and a standout example.

In this installation, a still, hard-edged, fluoro-green pool weaves through the gallery space and extends seamlessly into the adjacent parkland. The removal of Fondation Beyeler's façade creates "entanglement" (Eliasson 2021, 02:04) between the interior and exterior world. A robust ecosystem of lush plant life and insects are supported by these waters. The sounds of nearby birdlife and human footsteps bounce around the austere, white-walled spaces. Participants can meander along a series of boardwalks that hover above the watery oasis 24/7 or 'visit' via multiple live streams, enabling access that exceeds conventional gallery hours. At night the installation becomes especially otherworldly; the space is flooded by blue and purple fluorescent lights, and plants assume a blue hue. A green dye has the effect of making the water opaque, ensuring that day or night, the luminous 'plane' is overt and affectual. *Life* merges and dissolves many traditional boundaries; interior and exterior, natural and unnatural, day and night, virtual and physical.

Figure 3.2: Olafur Eliasson, *Life*. 2021, Various. Riehen: Fondation Beyeler. Reproduced from: Studio Olafur Eliasson website. Photo: Mark Niedermann.
Figure 3.3: Olafur Eliasson, *Life* (detail). 2021, Various. Riehen: Fondation Beyeler. Reproduced from: Studio Olafur Eliasson website. Photo: Pati Grabowicz.

In reference to the work, Eliasson explains, “It’s not just about progress, it’s about being present” (2021, 01:16). He uses differentiation and sensory saturation to offer minds and bodies a reprieve from an industrious, progress-oriented lifestyle. From the artist’s perspective, the immersive artwork requires human and non-human participation: *“Life* is never the same, it comes to life through the temporary coexistence of those in it. *Life* is in continuous transformation” (Eliasson 2021, 02:25). He challenges the assumption of human superiority and asks us to reconsider our place and behaviours within this “natural cultural landscape” (Eliasson 2021, 00:23). By extension, *Life* critiques our contemporary first world relationship with time and the resulting behaviours. Critical of individualism inherent in linear time, the artist situates the artwork in an urban environment, amongst a typically linear-active population. He juxtaposes this with natural ecosystems served by cyclic time, 24-hour surveillance and access, a vividly unnatural colour palette and an incomplete building. This environment illuminates difference and contrasts, encourages introspection, and potentially engages our time-sense to reconfigure culturally embedded perceptions that impact life.

Eliasson's artwork offers experiential access to that which Lewis expressly describes with words; universal concepts like time may be interpreted differently and one's understanding (of time) can impact the way we feel and behave. The author's research is informed by an interest and expertise in anthropology and language, and the outcomes are text based, analytic and specific. I have found these cultural groupings useful for articulating experience. *Sentinels* (2023) and *Life* (2021) explore culturally informed concepts and systems of time; however, they differ in that they are material outcomes borne of studio enquiry. Through process and form, the artworks can and have revealed the uncomfortable juxtaposition of multiple time systems. They privilege the viewer in experiences that offer knowledge of an interpretive and empirical nature in an external–internal exchange that is inevitably personal and potentially affectual. The works are activated and can be affective when an individual enters the space and is receptive to the sights, smells, sounds, textures and tastes in this new environment, including but not limited to the juxtaposition of incompatible rhythms, the way this makes them feel, and perhaps the phenomenon of time cycling, or passing, slowing, standing still. One can be immersed in the moment, connecting with their time-sense, in a state that typically contrasts with their regular modus operandi in a linear-active society. The 'alternative' approach that creative research processes utilise is ideal within the context of research that explores how to encourage presence so we might move together with time. *Life* and *Sentinels* serve as examples of how one may become immersed in the present amid multiple, culturally informed ideas of time. This discovery stimulated my curiosity and leads this enquiry towards the idea of immersion and the state of presence.

Chapter Four: Immerse Me

Like Eliasson, I utilise water within installations to encourage a state of immersion in the present. Many terms allude to the condition of being present and the concept of presence; being lost in time, the living present, immersed in the moving moment, la durée, embracing innate or organic duration, Dasein, now, Chronos, time distortion, temporality, lived, primordial or subjective time, authentic experience, felt or perceived time, time-sense, an inward or internal sense of time. Often rich with philosophical interpretations, varied emphases and certainly not reducible to a singular description, they are useful in so far as, together, they assemble a concept with many entry points for understanding. Essentially, all these terms speak of engagement with a temporal dimension that exists, or perhaps only divides the past from the future (assuming belief in temporal passage).

Of questionable quantity and form, this ephemeral sliver of perceived now-ness slides into and becomes the past instantaneously. Drawing on ersatz presentism's understanding of time, the existence of the 'old' present (past) may embed in the 'new' now (former future) in the form of memory, influence, and physical entities; it is, however, forever lost to its original form, assuming a layer of human subjectivity. The idea that humanity's consciousness of now is stratified is a view shared by the father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl. In his 1905 lectures presented in *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* (1964) Husserl discusses how we momentarily retain and modify sensations that present themselves. These "retentions" (50) change their temporal character in a continuum, linking and informing subsequent sensations to illuminate succession and create the impression of continuity. Expectations derived from memory called "protentions" (50) additionally colour our initial sensations. Void of this process, Husserl anticipated that musical notes in a melody would present only as disconnected units of sound. Husserl's internal time-consciousness describes an experience of now that like ersatz presentism, weaves other tenses into an embodied time sensibility.

I cannot ontologically prove cognisance in and of a moment in time before it is durationally exhausted. Acknowledging culturally informed linear leanings, logic suggests that this requires reflection, with awareness being the second, imminent step following exposure to stimuli. Ersatz presentism and Husserl offer philosophies that hypothesize the composition of lived experience in the present. I understand that I can situate my mind and body onsite and with time to the exclusion of otherness, as this is a familiar experience. I can also be certain that this is a conversation with time worth pursuing on account of the positive affect it can have on oneself, making the pursuit of an absolute 'truth' in this context obsolete.

How we might orchestrate immersion in the present is a natural question stemming from these certainties. I understand union with the present may not be initiated on a whim, nor is it likely to occur across all circumstances. So, what conditions cultivate fertile ground for this relationship with time? In the mid-1970s, only a few years after Thompson voiced his concerns regarding the disruption of time-sense, a body of work rearticulated the idea of being present in the present, offering practical insight around its manifestation. Positive psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi had begun researching the motivations driving autotelic behaviours in artists, rock climbers, chess players and athletes (Csikszentmihalyi 1975, Nakamuru and Csikszentmihalyi 2002, as quoted by Csikszentmihalyi 2014). He found that when circumstances were favourable, a subjective, all-consuming, rush swept the engaged individual up in what some participants metaphorically described as a "current" (Csikszentmihalyi 2014, 246). The term "flow experience" came to describe the perception and phenomenology of actions and awareness merging, time distortion, and feelings of absolute control, accompanied by elevated motivation and performance. Flow is an experiential state during which one is immersed in the moving moment or 'flow' of time and is a phenomenon akin to connecting with one's time-sense.

Csikszentmihalyi (2014) suggests that flow may be invoked by certain conditions, including clear goals that establish purpose and guide direction, challenges that are perceived to be surmountable, and immediate feedback to critique progress and fuel subsequent action. One may deduce that these conditions shape one's quality of

experience. The specific nature of these conditions dictates that they are ideally tailored to the individual, discounting a formulaic application of stimulus, with expectations of shared affect. Flow may provide an escape from societal pressures and expectations in our information-saturated society. Conversely, it also describes an ideal state in which capitalist outcomes are enhanced – an assertion Csikszentmihalyi strengthens through the provision of strategies designed to create workplaces that encourage flow experiences. As he explains, “From the viewpoint of the firm such a workplace is ideal because it attracts the most able individuals, it is likely to keep them longer, and obtains spontaneous effort from work” (as quoted by Vogt 2005, 112). The idea that we can be favourably present within a system critiqued by several voices including my own and problematised in Chapter One, presents me with an interesting variant to navigate. What aspects or preconditions of presence can transcend context and be applied to creative outcomes that allude to time and potentially harness presence?

Csikszentmihalyi provides a clue when he highlights that enjoyment is intrinsically linked to flow. Without enjoyment, he explains that extrinsic rewards are necessary to sustain a flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi 2014). The pivotal role of joy in reconciling our experience of life with one’s allocation of time (a lifetime) is expressed within the phrase and also the title of Hoy’s text *The Time of Our Lives* (2012, 183). Hoy explains that the temporal dimension of enjoyment encourages one to make peace with the “sting of time”, a desire that ultimately underpins humans’ interrogation of “time”. Philosopher Levinas (quoted by Hoy 2012) believed that enjoyment is a key ingredient within a life worth living, therefore it is also an essential ingredient within any analysis of life (and time). Our conception of ‘enjoyment’ is subjective, hence our ability to access flow across different (work/play) environments is logically tempered by the many variables that shape our frame of reference, including cultural perceptions, personality and lived experience.

When I reflect upon my interactions at watery sites, enjoyment is an emotion I can certainly attribute to these experiences. Prior to commencing this research, I intuitively ascribed this enjoyment to engagement with nature, plus its differentiation

from the avalanche of information and expectations of everyday life that I felt burdened by. My intuition seamlessly aligned with theories on attention restoration (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989, Kaplan 1995, as quoted by Johansson, Hartig and Staats 2011) and psycho-evolutionary (Ulrich et al. 1991 as quoted by Johansson, Hartig and Staats 2011) explored in Chapter One. In these moments of presence, I can become lost in Thompson's "inward notation of time" (1967, 57). I also feel acutely in sync with and aware of sensory stimuli immediately exterior to my body. This interior–exterior awareness enables me to feel attuned to or 'together' with lived time, and unaware of UTC. Husserl's melodic example illuminates how this intersection with the self, time and watery sites might occur. Substituting music notes with multisensory stimuli, familiar protentions and unfamiliar retentions are corralled into a series. This ordering introduces durational context plus awareness of the new "temporal moment" (Husserl 1966, 31), activating our internal time-consciousness onsite. The following first-person reflection of time spent at the beach seeks to offer the reader a window into my direct experience. It shares how the sights, smells, sounds, tastes and textures (sensations) of a place can engage the mind and body, weaving together site and self to create a shared narrative founded on experience.

Sharing the stillness

With intent in my stride, I walk further up the sand to clean up after my dog. Stationary and unproductively upright, I am staring out to the powerful, rolling swell atop a voluminous, sea. Feeling content, I am aware that a smile has swept across my face.

Between the two man-made groins that bookend South Beach, along the small stretch of coastline that is deemed appropriate for four- and two-legged creatures, I appreciate the might of the untamed ocean waters. Waters cradled, though not wholly contained, within their sandy vessel.

My body understands this place. The whistling winds whip loose hairs across my face. I am pleased by the clarity the diffused light affords my eyes. The fresh, moist

air fills my lungs and alludes to the unreliable grip of the load-burdened clouds. The weighted rush, crash and burble of the wet, raging waters. This is a place that fills the senses and keeps its own time.

I complete the task and Sunny and I continue along the shoreline. Discrete mounds of dense, sleek strips rise above the water surface. Anchored by means of scale and weight and surrounded by their less settled relatives, some 'islands' deceptively float for lack of a fixed reference point. The shiny, wet weed retains multiple tones of green, whilst the beached strips have dried to brown and are crunchy underfoot. The water's tendrils reach for my feet and break my concentration; in avoidance I scramble further atop the drier, more stable mounds deposited by storms overnight.

The sea has discarded a fascinating assortment of debris including fronds of feather-like weed and a collection of sea sponges ranging from rich black to various shades of brown. Numerous sparkling pools of water border the groin and command my attention. The trapped water is afforded a rest within concave limestone vessels, whilst the greater body of liquid rages on the periphery of the boulders. Organic shapes become apparent and mirror light from one angle, the meniscus dissipates from another betraying a transparent volume. I stay with the pools…still, present…until the heavy clouds relinquish their grip and we clammer for shelter.

By sharing direct experience with the reader, I am providing insight into the phenomenological foundation that meshes with expertise from various fields to inform my creative processes and produce material outcomes. My reflection alludes to the interplay between my body and the external environment, with attributes internal and external to self that are conducive to being present in time and space. Our personal conception of enjoyment may be influenced externally, however it is essentially a unique, internal understanding of this feeling that tempers ones access to presence. Sensory stimulation encompasses stimuli that are external to self. The enquiry will now shift towards the latter as it offers opportunity for material manipulation within a fine art context, plus my research suggests that these stimuli (in watery sites) provide a more democratic affect.

Cameron Robbins' arts practice speaks to me of our connection with nature and engagement with the present, meanings I've configured through my senses. The artist harnesses energy sourced primarily from nature, geomagnetic forces, the swell of ocean waves, the influx and recession of the tides, the cascade of waterfalls, the radiation from the sun, the force of the wind, etc. In the lineage of kinetic art, he channels this energy through a machine, powering a mechanism and producing a visual and/or audible response.

Figure 4.1: Cameron Robbins*, Wind Section – Instrumental/Sonic Wind Section* (in situ). 2014, Drawing machine, pen and paper. Hobart: Museum of Old and New Art. Reproduced from: Cameron Robbins website.

Figure 4.2: Cameron Robbins*, 1– 5 January 2014, Two Hot Northerlies*, MONA Wind Section Instrumental Series. 2014, Pigment ink on aquarelle paper, 90 x 266 cm. Melbourne: Mars Gallery. Reproduced from: Mars Gallery website.

In the work *1–5 January 2014, Two Hot Northerlies* (2014) (Figure 4.2), wind was interpreted through a drawing instrument that was driving a pen to produce an intricate tonal drawing over a period of five days. Robbins contextualises the event by referencing the dates over it occurred, indicative of its important relationship to time, especially duration. His utilitarian processes and deceptively rudimentary machines facilitate a linear process that directly connects the viewer to nature. I find this lifeline to a vital force fascinating, and the physical process of the pen actively scribing a circular line on the page, hypnotic. Subjectively, I would suggest that *1–5 January 2014, Two Hot Northerlies* speaks of the active process and energy that it represents, despite its sedentary, resolved form. Robbins has provided an experience that activates the present, and drawings and/or recordings of the process that retrospectively document the past.

Figure 4.3: Cameron Robbins*, Tide Line* (exterior). 2016, Tidal drawing instrument, timber, steel, Colorbond, bearings, stainless steel, aluminium, brass, stone, acrylic, pulleys, Dyneema, polystyrene, PVC float, polyethylene, water, electric motor, PU cord, pen, paper, 10 m circumference approx. Hobart: Museum of Old and New Art. Reproduced from: Cameron Robbins website.
Figure 4.4: Cameron Robbins*, Tide Line* (interior). 2016, Tidal drawing instrument, timber, steel, Colorbond, bearings, stainless steel, aluminium, brass, stone, acrylic, pulleys, Dyneema, polystyrene, PVC float, polyethylene, water, electric motor, PU cord, pen, paper, 10 m circumference approx. Hobart: Museum of Old and New Art. Reproduced from: Cameron Robbins website.

Tide Line (2016) (Figure 4.3), also by Robbins, demonstrates how the movement of materials (water) can illustrate the flow of time. This physical process tangibly interpreted and displayed changing tidal levels over the duration of a lunar month (cyclic time). Immersion in these transitions, in the present, is orchestrated visually and audibly, through the senses; sight and sound connect the viewer with the natural, cyclic rhythms of time and the moving moment, potentially dissolving attention to, and awareness of, time by the clock. I would suggest that the process driven by Robbins' wind instruments is more affectual on the viewer on account of its dynamism, however the same principle can be applied to both examples.

Drawing many threads together, I have acquired the following knowledge: I can use sensory stimulation and enjoyment to encourage total engagement with the present (flow); I know that change, especially in the form of movement, alludes to the flow of time (particularly the present); and I understand water is a material that is physically and symbolically ideal for alluding to time. *Affuse* (2023) (Figure 4.5) is a participatory artwork of mine that is informed by, and experiments with all of this knowledge in a material form. It draws and expands on the physical act of scooping

the cool river water up with my cupped palm. This intimate and playful gesture was a means unto itself, requiring me to be acutely attentive to my precious load, else risk the elusive liquid slipping over or through its human vessel. I had a key role in moving the water, hence also in marking time. The installation began as a series of ceramic vessels formed in response to this process, each possessing the form and folds of the human hand they were made within. These vessels embodied the intimacy and tactility of my experience, prompting me to consider how I might share this phenomenology more broadly.

I explored the idea of reimagining my experiences onsite as a participatory ritual. If participants were to be responsible for the movement of water, they would be physically and mentally engaged in the present. I considered how I might enlarge on this engagement by harnessing the powerful affect that religious rituals can have on devotees. The discrete symbolic acts of sprinkling and pouring water, lighting candles, breaking bread, etc. are imbued with care and beauty, imploring reverence and acute presence from believers. They also demonstrate action and awareness merging, a process gesturing towards Csikszentmihalyi's flow experience. The potential for physicality and aesthetics to inform affect was insightful; however, without faith, the motivation to engage with rituals was absent. Searching for a motivator, I looked to my children who were physically and mentally immersed in multi-sensory play, acutely present in the moment in a flow state, hence oblivious to my requests. Children are naturally curious, wired to explore and learn. This innate ability to be joyfully consumed by an activity in the present (without faith) is a wonderful example of humans connecting strongly to their natural time-sense. Drawing on the aspects of ritual and play that were malleable and useful to me, I created a sensory-rich, however quietly playful, participatory installation that capitalises on the function and form of the ceramic vessels.

Figure 4.5: Mandy Hawkhead, *Affuse* (work in progress). 2023, Water, wood, rubber, sealer, pump fixtures. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.

Affuse (2023) (Figure 4.5) is a black circular pool, comfortably positioned at table height. Four scalloped edges around the pool rim enable individuals to sit 'within' a form structurally reminiscent of a children's sand table. The assortment of manual and automatic mechanisms positioned in the centre scoop, pour and project water in a pool rich with movement and opportunity to touch, see and hear. The inviting seating configuration, the provision of hand towels and ceramic hand-like 'scoops' are all cues to physically engage with the work. A lengthy process incorporating experimentation, reflection and iteration culminated in an artwork that navigates physical accessibility, contextual conventions discouraging participation, and individuals' motivations to interact (including conditions conducive to 'flow'). *Affuse* provides the viewer with opportunity to enjoy a visceral interaction with materials, to be distracted from pressures outside of the gallery walls, and to be present, moving comfortably with time. Automatic mechanisms ensure the movement of water is ever-present, sustaining some degree of *Affuse's* affectual potential, with or without participation.

The goal of immersing oneself in the present is fraught with complexities derived from human individuality and the internal–external nature of attributes conducive to the phenomenon. The aim to orchestrate a 'flow experience' is additionally ambitious as 'flow' refers to continuity or extended duration, hence presence sustained over time. This knowledge encouraged me to explore sensory stimulus and enjoyment (realised through play) with balance and restraint, drawing on their proven and shared affect, plus malleability within a fine art context. Sharing this decision illuminates the role experience has in the production of and response to creative research outcomes. It also illuminates the project's phenomenological foundations; an aspect I will expand on, alongside the distillation of material enquiries to advance the objective of living 'together with time'.

Chapter Five: Distilling Experience

The Greek term ‘phenomenology’ combines the words *phenomenon* and *logos* to describe ‘the study of phenomena’ (Barnacle 2001). “Together with Time: A Material Response” employs a qualitative, phenomenological approach to the task of distilling lived experience and extending conventional understandings of time. To locate the origins of this frame of reference I revisit Husserl, the principal founder of the rich plethora of literature and philosophical movement, Phenomenology. In his text *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* (1965) Husserl critiques rationalism’s failure to acknowledge subjectivity inherent in the (human) source of assumptions and processes that underscore and perform science. He offers phenomenology as a remedy; the idea that drawing on direct, lived experience of a sensory and intuitive nature can ultimately produce wholistic, universal truths. An echo of this sentiment may be found in my introductory critique of life in the contemporary first-world paired with its watery remedy. Husserl’s phenomenological philosophy validates research that seeks to understand and distil a felt experience of time. It accommodates a process that documents and shares retentions gathered onsite. These modified sensations merge with stored protentions and undergo creative processes to ultimately reimagine and resituate the initial affect of watery sites.

In the spirit of my search for personal and sharable truths, I was inspired to adopt American philosopher Herbert Spiegelberg’s learned and favoured description of phenomenology in practice, described by Gloria Latham (2001, 45) as “less of a formal movement and more of a moving, dynamic force. This force resists being caught and asks the researcher to rejoice in being led by the things themselves.” Phenomenology has enabled me to define the subject as the phenomena of lived time (versus objective or clock time) and focus the enquiry on this elusive state, rather than the individual(s) having the experience. The ‘participants’ in this context are the sources of information, namely, the texts, artworks and experiences whose voices are explored and analysed. Creative research outcomes in the form of a series of installations and this exegesis become the new ‘texts’, a legacy that may

contribute to subsequent conversations about the phenomena of lived time. Robyn Barnacle (2001) rearticulates Hans-Georg Gadmer's ideas when she describes this process as "the joining, or fusing, of horizons between the researcher and participant" (viii). Philosopher Jacques Derrida explains that phenomenology challenges the researcher to become attuned to knowledge that is beyond established norms, to that which exceeds personal and contextual influences (Barnacle 2001). In my mind, phenomenology is an overarching approach to research that pairs perfectly with a project that seeks to exploit commonalities conducive to connecting with one's time-sense and embed this knowledge in experiential creative outcomes.

Phenomenology has an overarching influence over all aspects of the creative process. It is a philosophy that is grounded in human perception and experience of the world, which is constructive of one's reality. In my practice, I visualise the intersection of our bodies (physical and mental) with the exterior world and have devised three broad categories to classify research methods according to their function, namely, *experience*, *response* and *reflection.* More specifically, a multisensory *experience* of phenomena encompasses time spent onsite and documentation in the form of words, images and memories. This may elicit a *response* in the form of sourcing information (texts and artworks), developing ideas, and experimentation with materials. A *reflection* on outcomes follows to consider how activity and outcomes fit with research objectives and sit relative to the initial stimulus. *Reflection* may initiate a return to *experience*, or a *response*, in a cyclic process that eventually culminates in a resolved artwork. My journaling during the production of *Milieu* (2022) (Figure 5.7) illustrates the non-linearity of these functions and the interplay between phenomenon, self and materials.

A feeling of intimacy and an allusion to the body is evident as I hold the white greenware, the first batch of ceramic vessels retrieved from the kiln. The concave surface is intricately textured like an elbow. The smooth undulations on the convex side mark the pressure points produced by my fingers. The size and weight of the delicate forms is pleasing, they are comfortable to hold in one or both palms. These

vessels reminded me of fossils, bonelike white fragments that, in appearance and touch, gesture towards age and subsequently time. They speak to me of the resilience and enduring nature of the riverbed, a 'vessel' that despite significant human intervention has survived many years to service the river waters.

The idea of the cradle, of the vessel that manages the liquid, is something often present in my thoughts when alongside natural bodies of water. I am acutely aware that in the absence of the waterbed, I become responsible for water's containment. A material's potential to support the carriage and/or movement of this liquid is a prerequisite condition for its selection. Clay is capable of this and is of a suitably basal nature (additionally often constitutive of the riverbed). These material qualities secured its nomination as a secondary material, with water being the primary.

Attempts to make a preliminary cast of the 'cradle' at low tide with reinforced plaster were unsuccessful due to excess moisture and inadequate structural integrity. The process of pressing thin porcelain planes of optimal moisture and thickness into surfaces along the river shore to form clay vessels was far more effective. Initially draped and pressed with fingertips into a variety of different forms (rocks, fences, vegetation, tree roots, etc.), contemplation around containment combined with textual effects led me to focus on tree branches that bordered and structurally supported the riverbank. Time in-situ was determined by touch and impacted by environmental conditions, after which the form was gently prised off its host. My technique improved as I became more knowledgeable about the site conditions, and materials, which was duly reflected in the quality of the freshly fired porcelain forms.

The reader may identify my *reflection* on material outcomes; how the physical attributes (scale, texture, form, functionality and weight) of the ceramic vessels look and feel plus speak of my *experience* of the landscape. I discuss how my observations at the river (*experience*) informed my choice of materials (*response*) and *reflect* on how experimentation casting with plaster elicited me to *respond* by nominating a new material, clay. I subsequently returned to the site (*experience*) to nominate alternate surfaces, spurring experimentation (*response*) with clay; new

knowledge was gleaned by sight and touch, shaping technique that proved useful for my purposes.

Creative processes culminating in *Milieu* illustrate a natural union between phenomenology, materiality and time. Humans can engage with materials on a sensory and cognitive level. The qualities and the movement of materials, plus changes of state, can allude to temporality and the passage of time. Being attentive to this lived experience and attuned to its affect on self opens the door to phenomenology, specifically the study of the phenomenon of lived time (and ideas of presence). In process, *Milieu* provides a poignant example of one connecting to their time-sense, the state Husserl calls 'time consciousness':

> Every lived experience is "sensed," is immanently "perceived" (internal consciousness)…Every lived experience which our regard can light upon manifests itself as something enduring, flowing, thus and thus changing, And the intending regard does not create this, but merely looks thereon. This present, actual, enduring lived experience is, as we can discover through a change in our regard, after all a "unity of internal consciousness," of time-consciousness… (Husserl 1964, 175-176)

Repeat visitation to specific 'watery' sites has formed a foundation from which I have been able to respond to lived time. In Chapter One, I discussed the shared affect of watery sites, and how multiple interactions have the power to shape our sense of identity, foster connection to place and consume our time. I discuss how the field of environmental psychology offers theories locating our attraction to watery sites in survival instincts, and/or enjoyment of, plus revitalisation from, nature. This research plus personal experience highlights water's capacity for affect at specific 'watery sites', a phenomenon that additionally offers democratic access and can transcend geography. To understand how we may encourage a more cohesive relationship with time in the contemporary first world, I explored how we might extract and recontextualise materiality and affect. The work of film director Hiroshi Teshigahara has informed my approach.

I became aware of the profound, emotive potential of materials when viewing Teshigahara's film *Woman in the Dunes* (1964) (Figures 5.1-5.4). Based on Japanese author Kõbõ Abe's book, published in 1962, it tells the story of entrapment within the dune system, provoking an existential crisis. Teshigahara manages to capture the materiality of the desert sand in two-dimensions, often filling the frame with its dry, gritty, mobile abundance. This treatment amplifies the material's oppressive dominance in the narrative. Frequent close-up shots of sand on sweaty skin enable the viewer to appreciate this uncomfortable felt sensation and problematic union, a reality for the individuals who are forced to mine the resource, else suffer from an early burial. The repetition and scale of cascading materials paired with eerie, high-pitched sounds saturates the viewer's senses visually and audibly, immersing them in the overwhelming psychological and physical burden of the characters' predicament. Like clockwork, cascading sand auspices daily activity and the main character realises his eternal entrapment. As feelings of timelessness are evoked, objective time loses its societal anchor.

(Left to right)

Figure 5.1: Hiroshi Teshigahara*, Woman in the Dunes.* 1964. Film. Janus Films. Reproduced from: Turner Classic Movies website.

Figure 5.2: Hiroshi Teshigahara*, Woman in the Dunes.* 1964. Film. Janus Films. Reproduced from: Turner Classic Movies website.

Figure 5.3: Hiroshi Teshigahara*, Woman in the Dunes.* 1964. Film. Janus Films. Reproduced from: Close-Up Film Centre website.

Figure 5.4: Hiroshi Teshigahara*, Woman in the Dunes.* 1964. Film. Janus Films. Reproduced from: The New York Times website.

Teshigahara skilfully utilises the materiality of sand to sensorily engage the viewer within the parameters of film. In my experience, as time passed, the sand's affect accumulates alongside increasing empathy for the villagers' victims. Drawing on the discussion in Chapter One, the materiality and semantics of 'sand' support its ability to connote time. Mona Hatoum provides an artwork exemplar in *+ and –* (2004) to illustrate this; an artwork that, like *Woman in the Dunes*, integrates repetition (and

rhythm) to mark temporal passage with intervals and change. Teshigahara's use of scale relative to the human figure and within the bounds of the screen is visually and acoustically impactful, adding to a collection of strategies useful in distilling experience. The human body provides a relative measure, and the medium/materials introduce various limitations and opportunities to navigate, when addressing scale.

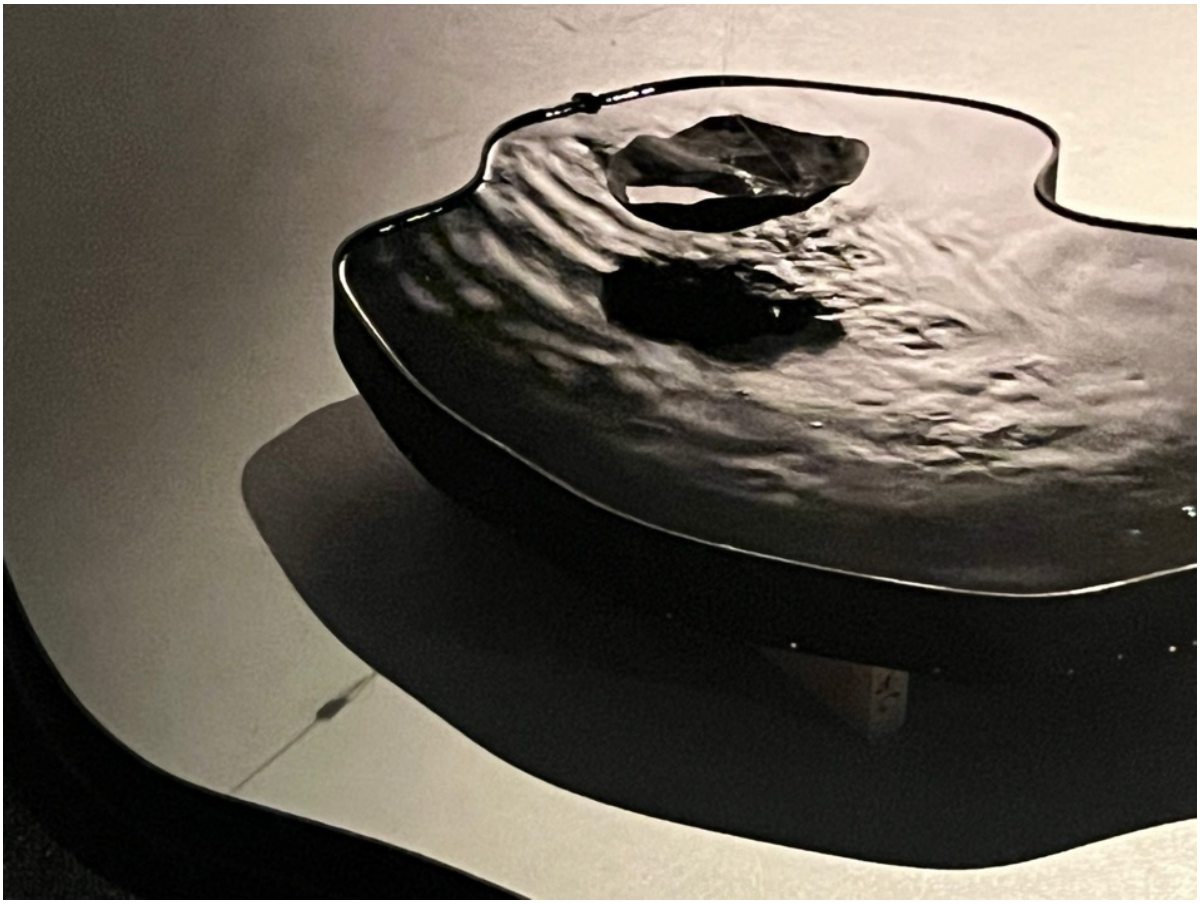

Figure 5.6: Mandy Hawkhead, *Pools* (work in progress). 2023, Water, rubber, wood, sealer, pumps, irrigation fittings, light, batteries, 240 x 120 x 100 cm. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.

When reflecting upon my sensorily rich experiences of being at watery sites, Teshigahara's *Woman in the Dunes* prompted me to consider what aspects of lived time I might bring into the gallery space and at what scale, thus spurring further experimentation. The installation *Pools* (2023) (Figure 5.6) consists of two black shallow and organically shaped pools, containing rippling water, staggered at different heights. Fifteen black porcelain vessels of various sizes and heights imply the form of boulders and hold still water within the pools' vertical bounds. This

assemblage draws on my observation of sparkling rockpools reflecting momentary sunshine and hovering over the tremulous seas on a stormy day. The captivating contrast between the still and the raging waters provided a poetic visual analogy for relations with time; present or scattered, calm or rushed, with or against time. I extracted this movement-based observation, along with the overall shape and actual scale of the rocky forms to enable one to wander, around the pool forms, and become attuned to the watery difference (as I did).

This approach to scale differed to that which was employed in *Sentinels* (2023). The latter video work draws on water's dynamism and intricate journey as it wraps around and then within the concrete pylons, eventually slipping out when the surge retreats. With complex movements and subtle changes in the water level, it was necessary to amplify the scale of the water's journey. This medium enabled me to stretch the audio and visuals captured onsite to create a large-scale projection, illuminating movement and change, and marking the flow of time. *Coalesce* (2021), which was previously discussed in Chapter Two, conversely celebrates a collective of raindrops (movements), blissfully ignorant to objective time as they irregularly fall within the harbour. This process of descending from above and dispersing into the greater whole is certainly intricate and vital to the work, however it was the effect of multiples that was immersive. Secondary materials were used to create a 240 by 120 by 7 cm rectangular pool with physical presence and adequate surface area to receive a light 'shower' of water droplets. Individuals are encouraged to sit on cushions and stools surrounding the water body and engage with the sights and sounds of 'rain' to enjoy a reprieve from time pressures beyond.

The scale of *Pools, Sentinels* and *Coalesce* was determined by my intent to communicate what was intrinsically important about the experience that inspired them. In each instance, the movement of the waters formed the essence of my experience, whilst change and contrast grounded in materiality drew my attention to it. Change and contrast give rise to and embody difference; they are attributes that attract attention thus they can be instrumental in producing meaning in artworks, and life generally. I find the semantics of 'change' and 'contrast' relative to time intriguing.

Change is reciprocally tied to time; it takes time (duration), constantly occurs, and has the effect of making the passage of time tangible. Contrast may develop with time, and change will be responsible for this quality in a cause-and-effect relationship. Contrast may occupy a single moment; it may be a constant or evolving quality over a period time. It is essentially a relationship that is often empirically apparent. I find it interesting to consider the implications of difference going unnoticed. Does the relationship exist regardless or only when it's known? Did the watery contrast evident in the still rock pools and the raging seas preceding the artwork *Pools* exist prior to acknowledgement? These dilemmas connect back to Doug Aitken's exploration of human experience and time, noted in Chapter Two, and expressed by the protagonist in *Black Mirror* (2011): "Reality...Your memory will become your story. All that you've seen and done and been. But can you erase it? If you do, you will have this moment…right now. That's it" (Aitken 2011, 49).

It is not necessary to know the answers, rather it is important to highlight the richness inherent in contrast and change relative to lived experience and time. These concepts have assisted me in identifying and recontextualising key elements of lived time. For example, the contrast of the still rockpools juxtaposed with the raging sea water beneath is the essence of a larger experience that is materialised in *Pools*. I had observed that the meniscus visually described the movement of the ocean waters. Experimentation ensued and revealed that under specific lighting conditions the water surface becomes reflective. The specular reflection diminishes the appearance of the liquid's volume and its container. Mindful that black absorbs all wavelengths of light and rough surfaces create diffuse reflections, I created black vessels with predominantly matte surfaces to contrast with their illuminated liquid load. Conversely, in *Milieu* (2022) the white porcelain vessels speak of the riverbed, of containment, and the intimate tactility of my interactions onsite and with the clay; the reflective white surface and side lighting illuminate the texture and make the forms apparent when installed on a dark ground. In both *Pools* and *Milieu*, key elements of lived experience are apparent to me.

Figure 5.7: Mandy Hawkhead, *Milieu.* 2022*,* Porcelain, light, 300 x 130 x 3 cm. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.

I have come to understand that key elements of lived time must be communicated cleanly, so as not to muddy the transaction between the stimulus and the viewer. By reducing potential distractions, the communicative ability of creative research outcomes can only be enhanced. The combination of direct experience and written reflection has enabled me to nominate aspects of my experiences onsite that alluded to time and/or were conducive to time-sense. To recontextualise these in artworks, I developed a minimalist palette (materially) and produced contrast using the opposing qualities of light and dark, smooth and textural, shiny and matte, still and moving. This method produced an aesthetic that unifies the body of work.

Figure 5.8: Elina Brotherus, *Mirvoir* (still), 2001, Film. Reproduced from Louisiana Channel website.

Finnish artist Elina Brotherus has used a similar approach to create work that gestures towards temporal passage. Her film *Mirvoir* (2001) (Figure 5.8) employs few materials to orchestrate physical change and produce contrast over time. The viewer is situated behind Brotherus, who stands wet and naked in front of a bathroom mirror. We see the figure's damp hair and beads of water adhering to shiny, wet skin; the imagery is textural and feels immediate. We assume she has recently stepped out of the shower, as the reflection in the mirror ahead is obscured by a thick water

vapour in circumstances that are familiar and hence broadly relatable. Over time, the vapour disperses, and her expressionless face, shoulders and upper torso become clearly visible to the viewer. In this minimalist self-portrait, water visually illustrates the passage of time and obscures then reveals the identity of the subject. The artwork title *Mirvoir* is a contraction of mirror and memoir indicative of its self-reflective function. This assumption is strengthened by Brotherus's direct gaze and use of her own body as material. In respect to this familiar inclusion, she explains, "Even if it's me, it can be also you…the body is there as reference" (Brotherus 2012, 8:03), thereby allowing others to project themselves into the circumstance. The artist uses her body, a mirror and water to speak succinctly about the complexities of the human condition and time.

Installing *Coalesce* (2021) in an open-sided courtyard complete with seating, adjacent to an undercover walkway, was an act that enabled me to enhance my appreciation for the power of contrast. In this example, the pace, use and aesthetic of the busy transitory space contrasted with my meditative, water-based installation, amplifying this difference perceptively. As the artwork is designed to engage the viewer in the present and offer a reprieve from the pace and regularity of the contemporary everyday, the pairing was most effective; the context favourably informed the reading of the work. In critic Brian O'Doherty collection of essays *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (1999, 65-86), he describes how artist Marcel Duchamp raised the viewer's awareness of the gallery space itself by unconventionally situating his installation *1,200 Bags of Coal* (1938) on the ceiling. The artist cleverly illuminated the structure and presence of the site/environment and, subsequently, the potential for the context to inform the reading of a work. Whilst O'Doherty and Duchamp reference the gallery space, the principle extends to other contexts generally.

O'Doherty describes the contradictions inherent in the quintessential gallery – a typically white, sealed, artificially lit space that is expressly designed to eliminate the world outside of its walls. It is constructed according to strict conventions in which "[s]ome of the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom, the mystique of

the experimental laboratory joins with chic design to produce a unique chamber of esthetics" (14). He asserts that artworks are afforded the condition of appearing "untouched by time and its vicissitudes" (15), perceptively elevated and understood through a lens that reinforces established values and conventions, welcoming those who understand its language. Assuming a willingness to participate in these theatrics and the attainment of enjoyment from doing so, the described conditions can be conducive to being lost in time and connecting with one's time-sense.

The universal nature of the perceived problem (our relationship to time) underscores the need to ensure creative outcomes are accessible. In this project my creative outcomes are therefore ideally situated within an environment that is indiscriminate so that affect on the viewer can be optimised. The conventional gallery ultimately provided the preferred environment in which to distil experience, enabling me to minimise contextual interruptions and control the stimuli within the space to orchestrate the desired affect.

Conclusion

This body of research is framed by the pursuit of authentic experience of time in the contemporary first world. Subservience to objective time and its repercussions is, in my experience, unsatisfactory, having the effect of diminishing our ability to be present. This soundtrack to our lives is a human construct, an armature for the pressures and pace of life, policing time-relations and shaping one's personal allocation of time, a lifetime. Resentful of these conditions, and aware of my preference to embrace innate duration, I looked to the latter experience for answers.

I have come to understand that when connected to my time-sense, I am enjoyably immersed in the present, and time becomes elastic. Additionally, I can reliably access this phenomenon at watery sites and attach this affect to water more broadly, ushering in an opportunity to share this affect or 'remedy' with others. My engagement with material and relational facets of water is intrinsically linked to the premise that humans can physically and mentally move with the passage of time. This belief in dynamic time and in one's capacity for presence underscores a journey that enlarges understanding of and deconstructs relationships with time. It also illuminates an alternative way of experiencing a phenomenon that shapes one's lifetime.

This exegesis tracks a process that is rich with small discoveries. I've learnt that rhythms and repetition, plus movement and change, are useful for alluding to time in material outcomes. Enjoyment, sensory stimulation, scale and minimalism realised through materials, contrast and context may be conducive to presence. Whilst it is important to document this knowledge, the reader must be aware that articulating attributes explicitly grossly oversimplifies the way elements operate in an artwork and how they are applied within a creative process, structured by the functions of *experience*, *response* and *reflection*, and framed by phenomenology. Before sharing concluding comments, I will attempt to articulate the overarching experience and intended affect of my creative research outcomes when installed in the gallery

space. This task exceeds the potential of language, however it gestures towards my experience for the benefit of those without physical access to the artworks.

A darkened room is peppered by a series of the three-dimensional installations and large projections. Subtly lit, the forms reveal themselves as distance diminishes. Darkness defines the pathway between the artworks; otherness is largely absent. The changing scale of the artworks relative to the body is apparent, a peculiarity that colludes with light to reveal watery movements and surfaces. Repetitious, irregular rhythms mark material change and time passes before my eyes. As I navigate the space, textures, sights, sounds and smells subtly elevate awareness of the self, producing a feeling that is both inside and outside of the body as action and awareness merge. All this is known as I am here, present in time and space. Immersed, I am comfortable and connected with my time-sense, moving together with the flow of time.

My understanding of time, water and self is presently informed by knowledge procured from phenomenology, philosophy, psychology, history, futurism, the geosciences, art, cultural studies, experience and materials. Each has added a genuinely enriching perspective to this body of research. I have enjoyed a process that has enabled me to articulate my sense of absence and dissatisfaction and explore this poignant problem. Its course has meandered with curiosity's flow and enabled me to 'play' with materials whilst connecting with my time-sense, producing a cohesive and pertinent body of work. My immersion in activity aligns seamlessly with flow theory; Csikszentmihalyi had, in fact, initially studied individuals engaged in creative pursuits (including artistic practice) to grasp an understanding of the phenomenon he was witnessing, eventually coining it "flow". Empirical evidence derived from my interactions with watery sites specifically suggests that a flow experience is accessible when one is present in time and onsite. This discovery extends the popular assumption that flow is a state quintessentially accessed when action and awareness merge.

Csikszentmihalyi flow theory, Husserl's phenomenological unity of time-consciousness and Thompson's time-sense crossover conceptually, albeit different emphases. Essentially all encapsulates a triadic relationship between human consciousness, the material world (including the body) and time. Each brings a unique perspective to research interrogating how we might move together with time. They have illuminated the phenomenon of action / interaction and awareness merging, explaining how humans may embody experience of the world and of time in ways that bear no meaningful relationship to the clock's measure.

Whilst opting out of objective time is problematic, the expression that knowledge is power rings true; this exercise has provided me with confidence to navigate Aitken's "hurricane of modern life" (2006, 6). There is freedom in knowing that a multitude of factors influence one's perspective of and behaviour in time, and that the elusive nature of lived time ensures that this phenomenon defies a singular definition and understanding. In response to the circumstances that compelled me to seek out an alternative experience of time, I can now see that the actual and perceived demands of a typical day consumed more of my lifetime than I was happy to supply. Activities and behaviours consonant with clock time were often contradictory to those which provided me with flow (and enjoyment), whilst those incompatible with clock time were infrequent and laced with the guilt of indulgence due to their perceived non-essential, 'unproductive' nature.

"Together with Time: A Material Response" offers practical application for reducing the impacts of pace, pressure and expectation in the information-saturated first world. Visiting a watery site (or site of similar affect) may enable one to proactively disengage, reconnecting with time-sense and nature, plus revitalising themselves. Those strong of mind may draw strength from the words of French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, extracted from his seminal text Phenomenology of Perception: "There is more truth in mythical personifications of time than in the notion of time considered, in the scientific manner, as a variable of nature itself, or, in the Kantian manner, as a form ideally separable from its matter" (2012, 445). His belief in time's permanence and presence's perceived-ness renders quantifying and

qualifying time simply a subjective contextualisation of self and experience that eludes the subject (time) itself. This perspective highlights the nonsensical relationship many have with a concept that eludes singular definition. It tempers feelings of being overwhelmed as mentioned in the introduction to this exegesis; the statement certainly dispels the notion that I am running behind and/or out of time. Additionally, one may alleviate feelings of inauthenticity (of wasted time) by placing value on enjoyment, by engaging mind and body in activities that are challenging, rewarding, stimulating, hence genuinely important for happiness.

Creative research processes attuned to phenomenology and manifested in experience have been formative of these discoveries. It is my hope that access to the outcomes (exegesis and artworks) will contribute to this discourse for the benefit of others. Within a linear-active culture especially, the resource may promote a shift in values. It illuminates what is a worthy use of one's (life)time and the ingredients required to attain 'authentic experience'. The discoveries champion the powerful, affective potential of materials; how immediate, immersive and visceral interactions can have tremendous benefits for oneself. The instrumental role that nature has in anchoring or grounding one in time and space becomes apparent. Additionally, this research supports the necessity of valuing and allocating time towards activities that engage one in the present. By investing mind and body 'with' time, one can discourage regret for lost time and encourage reconciliation with temporality.

Figure 6.1: Walking with Sunny. 2023, Digital image. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.

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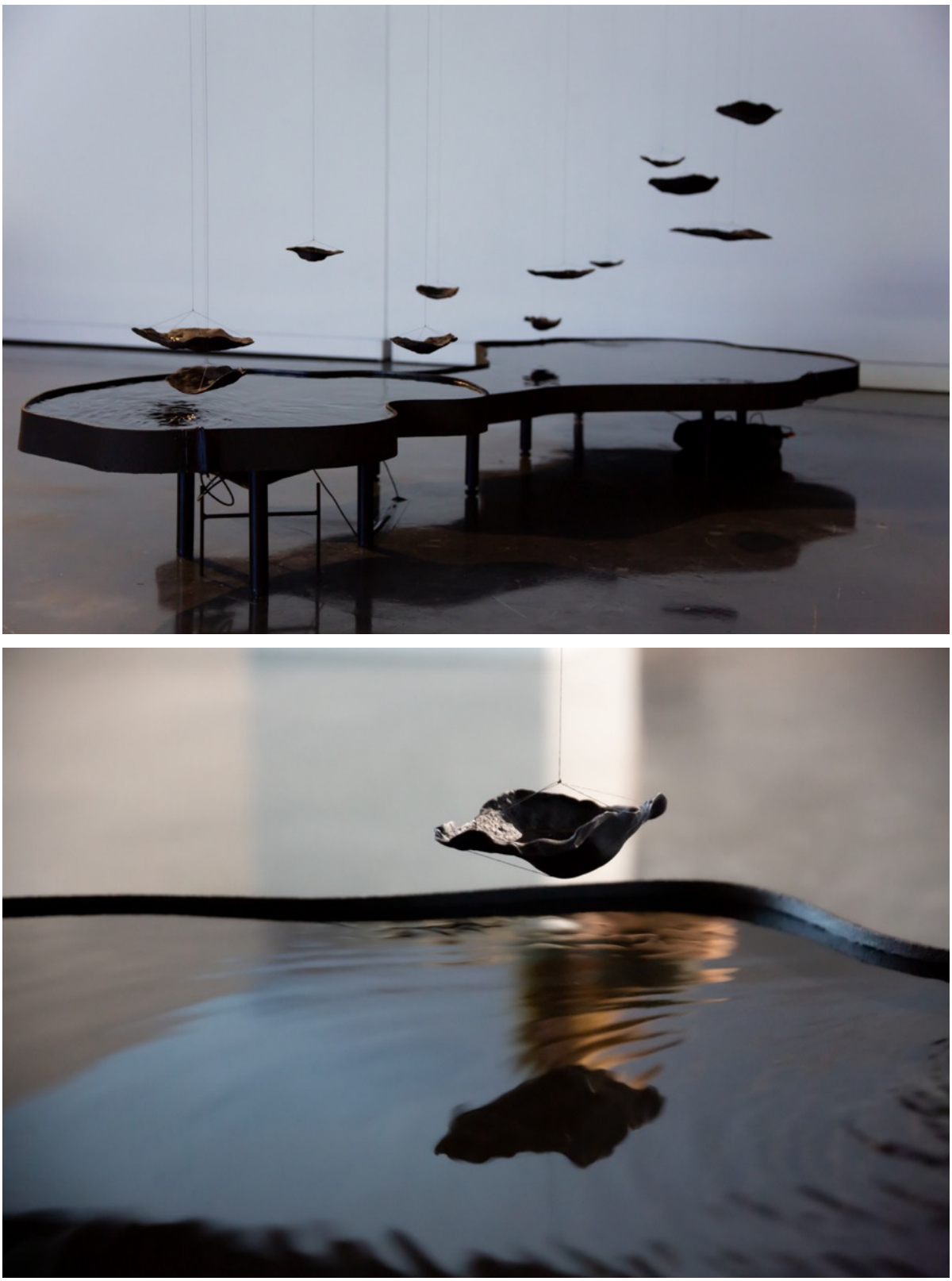
Appendix

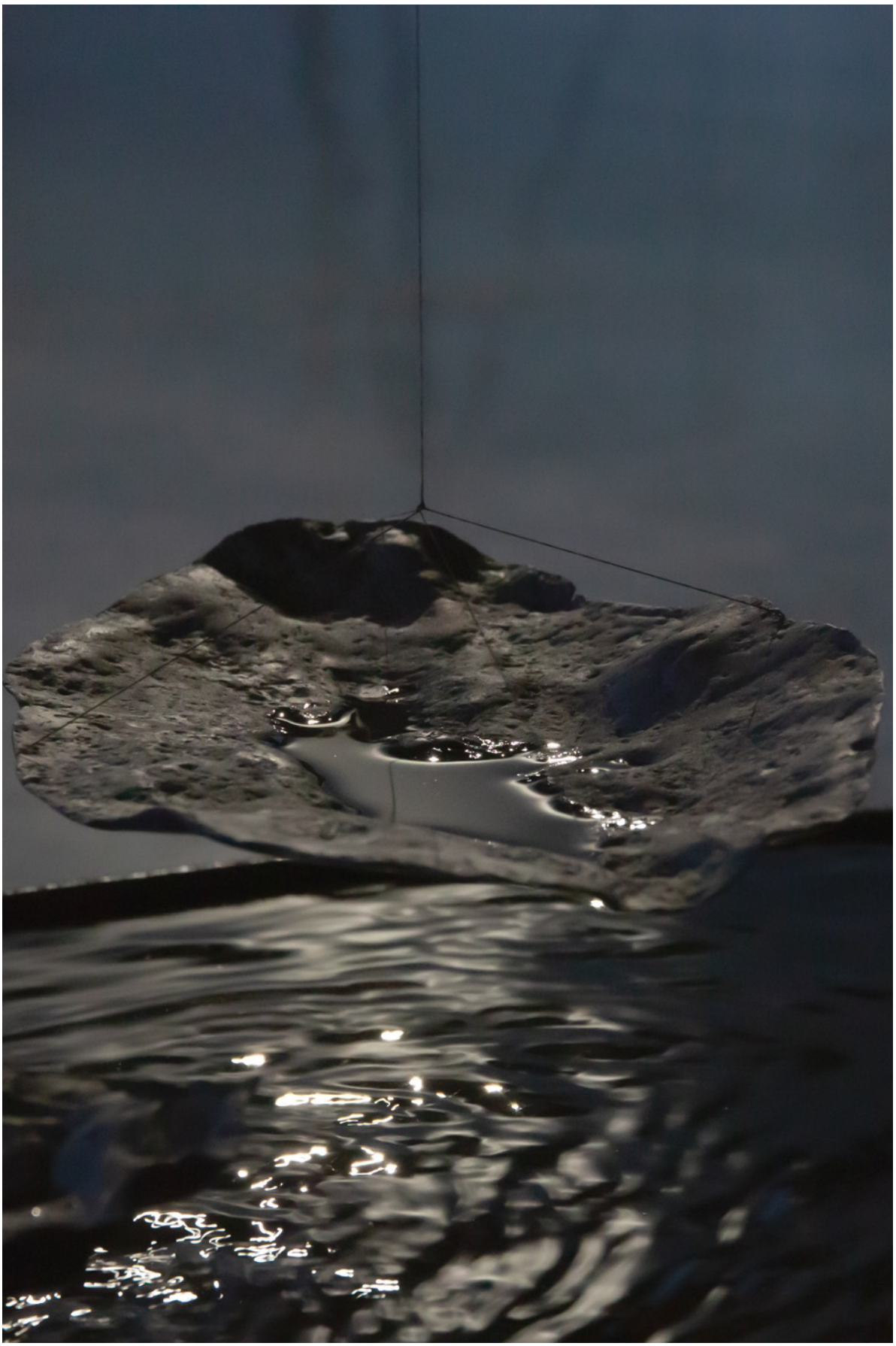
Photographs document artworks installed for exhibition and assessment.

Exhibition view of Pools, Affuse and Milieu at Curtin University. 2023. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.

Reliquary. 2023, water, clay, rubber, light. 80 x 80 x 25cm. Photos: Yvonne Doherty.



Pools. 2023, Water, rubber, wood, sealer, pumps, irrigation fittings, light, batteries, 240 x 120 x 100 cm. Photos: Yvonne Doherty.

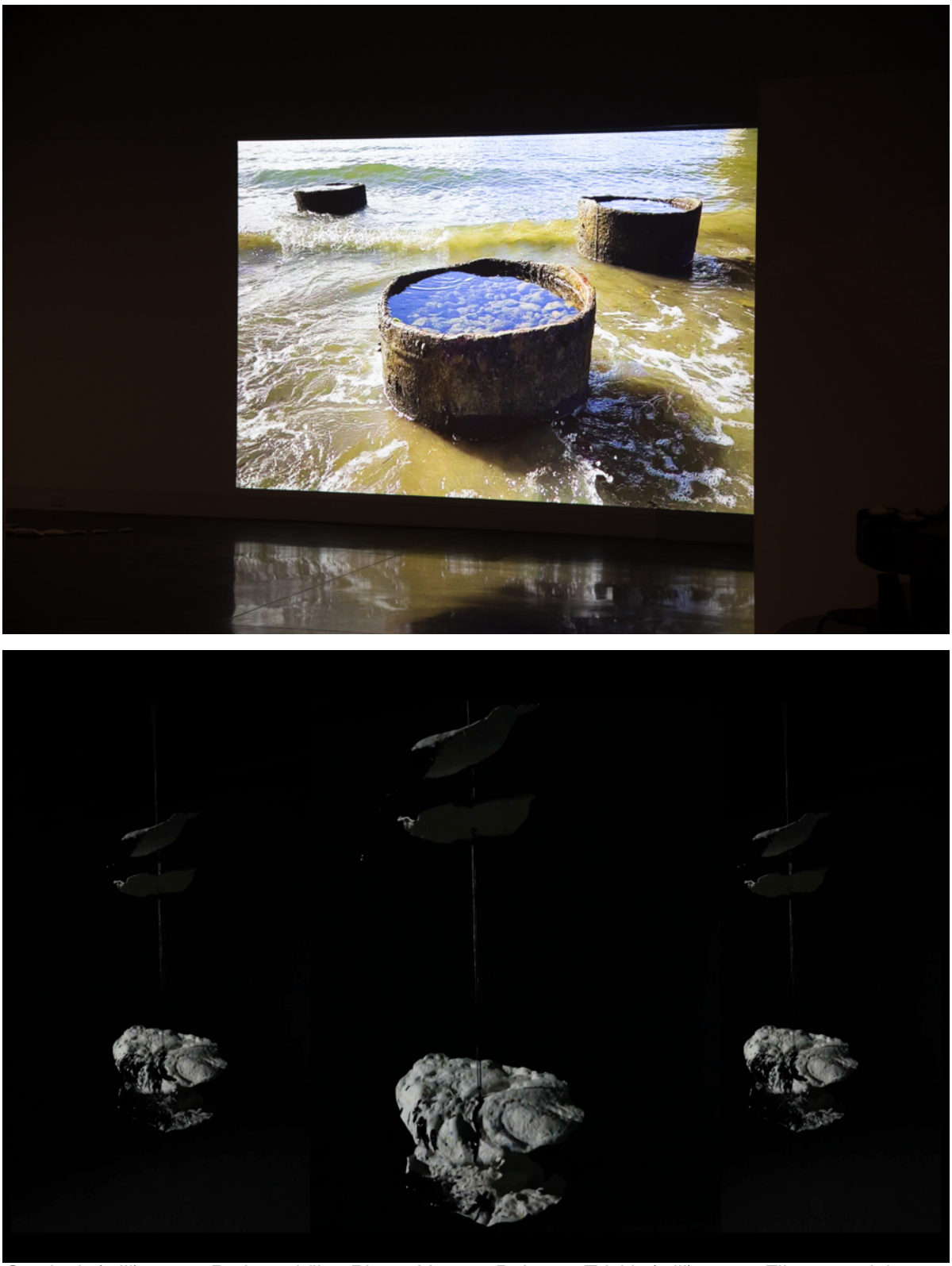


Pools (detail). 2023, Water, rubber, wood, sealer, pumps, irrigation fittings, light, batteries, 240 x 120 x 100 cm. Photos: Yvonne Doherty.

Exhibition view of Pools at Old Customs House. 2024. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.
Milieu (detail)*.* 2022*,* Porcelain, light. 300 x 130 x 3 cm. Photo: Yvonne Doherty.

Exhibition view of Sentinels and Milieu at Curtin University. 2023. Photo: Yvonne Doherty.

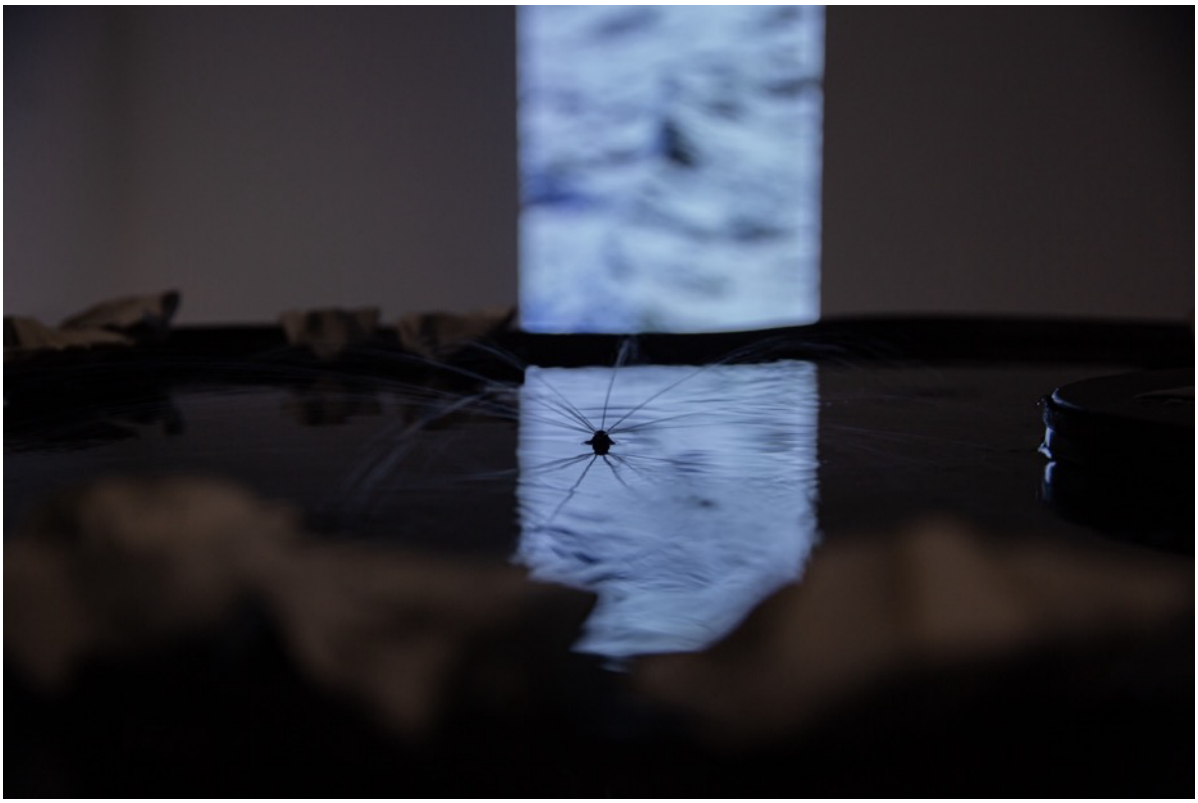
Sentinels (still), 2023, Projected film. Photo: Yvonne Doherty.



Sentinels (still), 2023, Projected film. Photo: Yvonne Doherty. *Trickle* (still). 2023. Film, porcelain, water, ink, metal rope and fixtures. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.

Exhibition view of Trickle at Curtin University. 2023. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.

Exhibition view of Affuse at Curtin University. 2023, Water, wood, rubber, sealer, pump, irrigation parts, towels, fabric, 120 x 120 x 120cm. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.



Affuse (details). 2023, Water, wood, rubber, sealer, pump fixtures. Photos: Yvonne Doherty.

Exhibition view of Affuse at Old Customs House. 2024. Photo: Mandy Hawkhead.