

Tarik Ahlip,  
Allora & Calzadilla,  
Saskia Doherty.  
Curated by Brendan  
McCleary

*It's hard to hear the  
distance between the wind  
and waves breaking*

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How do you measure, or even hear such a distance? Is it through the audible, fluttering vibrations of the ear bone system? Is the distance a tonal shift, a triad or octave, a diminished third? Is it through the assistance of visual cognitions, or, through an assumption of distance based on a geographic gap between the two?

One could consider the horizon line as a visual measurement of this distance, the moment in which land and sky begin to merge, creating a visual differentiation between the two. There is, however, a flaw within this measurement - the horizon is not a fixed, concrete form. It is, quite simply, the point at which a person's vision begins to fail. Beyond the blurred division of land and sky there stretches further lands, further swathes of open sky.

As Hito Steyerl aptly critiques, the hori-

zon line is a rather Western consideration, a notion that relies on a singular, stable individual for its central base. Breaking with the thought of the horizon as a fixed definite, Steyerl considers the contemporary age as one within a state of free fall, a state in which there is no stable base from which to consider the horizon.

Instead, what the contemporary age presents is a site of multiple perspectives and planar fields. From the normalised birds-eye google map, to the ruptured fragmentation of the video screen, ours is an age in which the fixed focal point can hardly be considered the norm.

This is a poetic way of thinking, the poetic here considered as a deliberately abstracted language system in which multiple meanings are given the opportunity to co-exist, in which multiple viewpoints can be viewed and acknowledged. The poetic does not force a singular, concrete definition, allowing for a fluidity of thought. It is a mode of thinking that deliberately disrupts the notion of the singular as central, allowing for a sense of free fall to emerge.

Tapping into this poetic mode of thinking, *It's hard to hear the distance between the wind and waves breaking* floats amongst the designed, constructed, natural and material worlds. Investigating the relationship between the natural and the designed, the exhibition questions the division of distance between the two. Looking into this relationship from a timeless perspective through non-linear narrative and myth constructions, the works presented navigate a series of poetic moments, questioning the interplay of humanity and our surrounding materials and environment.

As example, Saskia Doherty, *Contents for a Time Capsule III*, takes digging as its central motif. A fabricated archive of

sourced imagery, objects and drawn elements, laid out in a clear vitrine, preserved together in a moment of display. *Contents for a Time Capsule* is an on-going work without a fixed time or place, produced in multiple iterations in various moments and locations, joined through the digging motif.

The capsules multiply as diffuse objects, highlighting the digging motif, which at once encompass some of the most important functions of humanity (food, death, refuge), but remain widespread enough to mean very little in a pointed, personal sense. The work maintains the poetic sense of free fall, the fragmented archive allowing for multiple meanings and thoughts to be enacted simultaneously.

In one sense, digging can be considered a twofold concept, simultaneously an act of covering and uncovering. As a hole is dug, the former contents pile alongside, each layer covered by the next layer of soil, that which once rested below. In a base physical sense, through digging, the geological chronology of soil layers is disrupted and reassembled, a disruption of chronological modes of thinking.

Extending the digging motif, consider Allora & Calzadilla, *Raptor's Rapture*. A 35,000 year old vulture bone flute, uncovered during archaeological excavations in the Hohle Fels cave in Southern Germany in 2008, is ignited once more with the breath of music, serenading a living griffon vulture, its contemporary descendant. The work considers, and is in direct response to, the archaeological as a digging, sifting, through the layers of history, utilised here finding moments of fascination buried within the layers of passing time.

Beyond the archaeological, the work is a reflection on animality, and its unstable relationship to the realm of the

human. The ruffle of feathers, scratch of the beak, mix with the rasps, trills and pulsing rhythms of the flautist and flute. The close cropped angles, cutting between bone flute and vulture, create a desire to anthropomorphise and characterise the vulture: are its movements forms of discomfort, inherent emotive responses to the bones of its ancestors? This is deliberately a question left open, maintaining a poetic sense of thought.

Continuing this open mode of thinking, Tarik Ahlip reveals layers of narrative within his moulded forms, the three works here setting a tale in motion. *Black England*, in its sequential grid form, refuses the consideration of a linear viewing, calling to mind an aerial view of an agricultural field, or designed city centre, overlain with rhythmic line patterning.

*Woomera*, through name and form calls towards its namesake, the Indigenous spear-throwing tool. More bleakly, the work also calls to mind the RAAF Woomera Test Range, a site of mining excavation, military testing and immigration detention. Most notably, Woomera Test Range is the site of the 1955 - 1963 Atomic testing that left the lands severely scarred, and Indigenous Maralinga-Tjarutja people at great risk of radiation poisoning.

Referencing towards the Woomera Testing Range, through its excavation of natural minerals, to its role within weaponry testing, border patrol and the lasting negative affects of colonisation, *Woomera* reflects upon the violent physical burden inflicted upon the world in the name of social progress. It allows a moment to pause, to float within the free fall, and consider the human relationship with our surrounding environment, how we can acknowledge our relationship with the land and world around us.

*Neurological Pathways to Love*, a curved, minimalist sandstone carving gives an answer of sorts. As it considers within its title, the questions and thoughts brought forward here can be considered within a neurological sense, the tacit feeling and reactive bodily sensation, as instinctive as the act of breathing.

The human breath is a marker of life, but also a moment in which linguistic communication is disrupted. It is the pause between words, the break, the sound of movement between the lips; it is a neurological communication beyond words. Metaphorically, *It's hard to hear the distance between the wind and waves breaking* considers the wind and waves as synonymous with the earth's breath. As elemental sighing, the moving wind and water are both considered as the communication beyond words, markers of movement measured and made distinguishable here through artistic means.

Viewing the breath as a natural communication form, it becomes a marker of our connecting relationship. The exhibition explores the division of distance, but also this distance broken. A deliberate play on the plural meanings of the sentence, as the distance itself breaks, the line between the two (the wind and wave, the natural and the human) is made indistinguishable.

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1. Steyerl, Hito. "In Free Fall: A Thought Experiment on Vertical Perspective." *The Wretched of the Screen* (2011): 12-29.



Tarik Ahlip, *Black England*, 2016.  
Plaster and copper on structural plywood with steel frame.



Tarik Ahlip, *Woomera*, 2016.  
Plaster and copper on structural plywood with steel frame.





Saskia Doherty, *Contents for a Time Capsule III*, 2016, detail.

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