

Other frequencies: a response to *Stone Moves*

Hope Wilson

*“Through stone and with stone we fashion monuments that endure. Or so we tell ourselves, because our histories are small.”*¹

Growing up, I felt the closeness of a set of hills known to me as the Blue Mountains. Viewed from the kitchen window, they felt physically closer than three kilometres traced along the map. Set between the valleys of the Mata-au (the Clutha River) and Poumāhaka (Pomahaka River), the range of rugged hills are also known by their earlier Māori name of Tapuaenuku, footprints of the rainbow.² The hills lie between the towns of Tapanui, known historically as a forestry town and latterly as a rural centre, and Lawrence, established to support the rush of miners and industries to Gabriel’s Gully and the Tuapeka goldfield in the early 1860s. The European naming of the hills directly connects them to another site of gold exploration and mining, the Blue Mountains in New South Wales which became a pathway to Bathurst and the Australian goldfields.

In listening to Bellamy & Fauteux’s plans for *Stone Moves* I’ve thought most often of the presence of those hills: their influence and proximity, the role they play in shaping the landscape, climate, economy, and movement of people within West Otago. It’s easy to go deep—below into the earth’s crust, back in time through the gradual formation of the landscape, into the words we use to talk about rocks and stones, hills and mountains.

In *Stone Moves*, sampled elements of the Tāhuna Queenstown landscape enter the gallery. Bellamy & Fauteux have relocated five tonnes of guillotined schist, sourced from Frankton Stone, a quarry situated less than 5 kilometres from the gallery near Grant Peak. The raw schist is arranged in the form of a drystone wall, about one metre high, which divides the gallery space. Titled *Sunderers*, the wall is embedded with an audio playback system triggered by the movement of visitors. Walking by a

¹Jeffrey J Cohen. 2015. *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman*. University of Minnesota Press, 253.

²“Atlas — Cultural Mapping Project — Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu.” n.d. Kā Huru Manu. Accessed April 13, 2023. <https://www.kahurumanu.co.nz/atlas>.

sensor activates a short audio missive—sonified biodata collected from plants growing at sites of past and present mining activity including St Bathans, Bannockburn tailings, and other areas in the region. The information collected from the leaves, stems, and roots of plants is data which Bellamy and Fauteux reimagine as a voice. A non-speech contribution from a non-human collaborator. Species who speak from within the wall include thyme, elder, gooseberry, and red currant. All introduced species with their own distinct histories and path to Aotearoa soil.

Bellamy and Fauteux's work with rocks and plants is intimate and tightly attuned to the frequencies of each element within the landscape. They consider the animacy of non-human elements and, accordingly, *Stone Moves* opens a space for listening and heightened awareness. Histories of transformation and exchange are central to this project as each work offers an opportunity to glimpse the interwoven nature of things. Tim Ingold writes beautifully of this potency,

“Yet where the stone ends and its contrary begins cannot be ascertained with any finality. The same goes for the tree and the mountain, even for the human. It is a condition of life that everything leaks, and nothing is locked in. Of course we can tell things apart. Ask me to point to another human being, or to a stone, a tree or a mountain, and I can readily do so. But what I'm pointing to is not an entity that is in any sense self-contained. My attention is rather directed towards a place from which I see something happening, a going-on that spills out into its surroundings, including myself...At once the world we inhabit, and that we share with so many other things, no longer appears ready-cut, into things of this sort or that, along the lines of classification. Instead we find ourselves pitched into a world in which things are ever-differentiating from one along the folds and creases of their formation.”³

Bellamy & Fauteux's work is characterised by a care and interest in the route materials take through the universe—these “folds and creases”.⁴ Their care manifests throughout the gallery installation and operates across both vast and

³Tim Ingold. 2020. *Correspondences*. Wiley: 7.

⁴Ingold, 7.

succinct material and human timescales. It acknowledges the relatively recent arrival of thyme, introduced to Aotearoa in the 1860s by a French goldminer determined to bring a taste of home, while also materially mapping the millennia-long formation of schist and the vertical seams within the rock which deliver gold to the earth's surface.⁵ *Protolith*, a steel pole installed from floor to ceiling and threaded with 85 schist 'beads', acts as a counterpoint to *Sunderers*. The column forms an abstract deep-time calendar which catalogues geomorphic movements and events which reach far beyond a human timescale. *Protolith* offers a consideration of a non-human timeline and echoes the questioning of Adrián Villar Rojas and Noelia Ferretti's fabulative calendar, asking "...while for us—humans—a year may be a huge amount of time, is it the same for mountains? Or octopuses? Or microorganisms? Or for pulsars and black holes?"⁶

Through *Stone Moves*, Bellamy & Fauteux present encounters with the already interwoven histories of schist, the introduction of non-native species, the movement of people and capital, and the transformation and economic exchange inherent to extractive industries. They offer an opportunity to view the environment around us in a different light, by listening to other frequencies. In the words of Alexis Pauline Gumbs considering the thinking of Sylvia Wynter,

"We all have the opportunity now, as species fully in touch with each other, to unlearn and relearn our own patterns of thinking and storytelling in a way that allows us to actually be in communion with our environment, as opposed to a dominating, colonialist separation from the environment."⁷

⁵Derek Grzelewski. 2006. "Thyme." *New Zealand Geographic*. <https://www.nzgeo.com/stories/thyme/>.

⁶Adrián Villar Rojas & Noelia Ferretti in Stasinopoulos, Kostas, and Hans U. Obrist, eds. 2021. *140 Artists' Ideas for Planet Earth*. Penguin Books.

⁷Alexis Pauline Gumbs interviewed by Ashia Ajani. 2020. "The Making of a Love Letter." Sierra Club. <https://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/making-love-letter-alexis-pauline-gumbs>.

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Stone Moves

Miranda Bellamy & Amanda Fauteux

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Te Atamira

Tāhuna Queenstown

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