



Side Gate presents

ITINERARIES OF ESCAPE

25 November 2023

Anita Cummins
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curated by Anna Dunnill

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Ruth Cummins, *Weighted Blanket*, 2020
artist's t-shirts, jeans, recycled cotton, wadding, 17kg of rocks collected within the
artist's 5km radius during Melbourne's stage 4 Covid-19 lockdown; cotton "R"
embroidery on embroidery hoop by the artist's grandmother, Noreen Cummins

ITINERARIES OF ESCAPE

Anna Dunnill

In a child's drawing of a house the door is a mouth. The two windows are eyes, open or veiled. "The house, even more than the landscape, is a 'psychic state,'" writes Gaston Bachelard.¹ The house is an extension of your body.

In November 2020, Ruth posts a photograph on Instagram. She's made a quilt made out of her old shirts and jeans. For ten weeks from early August to mid-October we were tethered to our homes by an invisible string, five kilometres long. Within that circular space Ruth collected rocks on her daily walks, and filled the quilt with them. The quilt is called *Weighted Blanket*. It weighs 17 kilograms.

A weighted blanket works by reinforcing a sense of the body's edges. The body – fragmented, soluble, porous – is given definition through the sensation of pressure, as liquid is defined by the shape of a glass. It is made solid and habitable.

In the photograph Ruth is lying in bed, underneath the quilt, only her face showing.

I imagine her walking the same path every day, as I did in lockdown, feet trudging the pavement in a familiar loop. Filling her bag and pockets with a few stones at a time until she had accumulated a pile big enough to cover her body.

Maggie's needle lace piece *Covid Floor* was also made during 2020. The intricate technique of needle lace was once used to portray scenes of historical and religious significance. Here, the eye turns inwards, immortalising the exhaustion and ennui of lockdown – a feeling that for many has never entirely dissipated. (For those already living with chronic illness, the lockdowns may have simply heightened pre-existing isolation.) The miniature form of the artwork also functions as a kind of container for the unmanageable and the precarious. Bachelard writes: "The cleverer I am at miniaturising the world, the better I possess it."²

A lot of people turned to craft during the lockdown years. Repetitive actions, tactile processes. Quilting, embroidery, ceramics. Activities to keep the hands busy and define the body's edges.

After World War I, returned soldiers were taught embroidery to deal with physical and mental trauma.³

In 1800, an English woman named Anna Larpent wrote in her journal about using needlework to manage her emotions during a period of grief and worry.



Maggie Hensel-Brown, *Covid Floor*, 2020
needle lace made from silk thread; wire frame

“I always find when my spirits are oppressed and I cannot follow what I read that some regular progressive work occupies my mind best”.⁴

The thing about progression is that you feel you are heading somewhere.

I plan an exhibition at my house, to be held in 2021. Artworks that use accumulation, accretion, repeated gesture. Artworks about being sick and exhausted, about fatigue, about anxiety. Being safe inside your house but/and the walls of the house closing in on you. Being in the unstable porous precarious home of your body.

I borrow a book from the library, *The gorgeous nothings*, a facsimile collection of Emily Dickinson’s ‘envelope poems’.⁵ (Dickinson was famously a recluse, so it’s no coincidence that I turned to her work during this time.) The envelope poems were written between 1864-1886, the last years of the poet’s life, during which she rarely left her upstairs bedroom. Dickinson only published a handful of poems in her lifetime. After her death, her sister Lavinia discovered around 1800 of her poems, bound into 40 little booklets and stacked in a drawer.

The image of Dickinson as a solitary hermit, uninfluenced by the wider world, is not a true one. While the poet herself stayed home, her words travelled for her, as she corresponded widely with numerous friends and literary figures. As one writer puts it: “Her famously preserved room was effectively a busy message dispatch centre.”⁶ From the enclosed, intimate space of her bedroom Dickinson sent out letters, telegrams and poems of startling expansiveness. The envelopes received in return were flattened and saved, to become surfaces for pencilled fragments and jottings. On the interior flap of one envelope, sliced open like a carefully-flayed skin, Dickinson writes in pencil so light it is barely legible:

*“Excuse | Emily and | her Atoms | The North | Star is | of small | fabric but
it | implies | much | presides | yet.”*⁷

In my library book about the envelope poems, an essay by Dickinson scholar Marta Werner is titled ‘Itineraries of Escape’.⁸ An itinerary is a planned route or journey, a travel plan. Werner discusses a number of envelope poems in detail, and their allusions to travel and flight, but never directly employs the evocative title phrase in the body of her essay. I imagine Dickinson in her house, accumulating fragments, gathering together her poems; her entire life a collection of plans for escape. Scraps, dust motes, sparkling like a night sky full of stars.

I borrow the essay title for the exhibition.

I decide to write an essay of my own to accompany the show. This essay will artfully weave together all the exhibition artworks with the loose whirling of ideas, quotations and connections jostling in my brain. The essay will provide a clear shape for this exhibition, define its edges.



Anita Cummins, *feelings (Side Gate edition)*, 2023
crushed Cheezels

The journalist Janet Malcolm likens the writing process to entering a hoarder's house, piled with accumulated detritus. She says:

Each person who sits down to write faces not a blank page but his own overfilled mind. The problem is to clear out what is in it, to fill huge plastic garbage bags with the confused jumble of things that have accumulated there over the days, months, years of being alive and taking things in through the head and the heart.⁹

Malcolm goes on to describe the anxieties that accost the person faced with this clutter, “the dangers of throwing the wrong things out and keeping the wrong things in”, or throwing out too much, or throwing out everything, unable to stop. She writes: “It may be better not to start.”¹⁰

In the kitchen is an accumulation of orange-yellow dust (*Excuse Emily and her Atoms*). Cheezels, reduced to their smallest particles, are packed densely into shelves, nooks and crannies.

Anita's installation is called *feelings*. In its original form, it was a yellow wall-to-wall carpet, perfectly smooth and sheared at the edges. Here, feelings are crammed into tiny spaces. Anita once made a version of this work with Cheezel dust filling Perspex boxes. They tell me that some of the boxes have since burst open, pushed apart by the pressure of the feelings they held.

An eight-metre collage of sliced Cheezels boxes – titled *I got out of bed today* – has been reproduced for this exhibition across two pillowcases. Limited edition soft furnishings for the chronically exhausted.

Excuse Emily and her Atoms. My subject matter may be humble, Dickinson seems to be saying, but the North Star – that faithful cosmic guide – is made of the same stuff. All matter is stardust. Cheezel dust.

Gemma says that she is finding ways to make art around “long Covid/life fatigue”, and without a designated studio space. Making things in and around the detritus of daily life. She has moved to a Perth suburb named after a small blue lily that was once plentiful in the area; her pinboards are grey to reflect the concrete that now thrives in its place. “I’ve been drawing brick walls (blockages),” she writes to me, “and am also interested in grass and drains at the moment, things from the neighbourhood. Letters and punctuation are still reoccurring themes. Shiny sequin flowers and pressed weeds.” She writes that arranging these things on the pinboards feels “like making a spell”.¹¹

Fragments pinned together, some kind of wordless poem, space opening up



Gemma Watson, *Oh*, 2023 (detail)
collage on pin up board (3 pieces)

between objects. The flower is an *oh*, the pin is an *oh*, the cut paper is an *oh*. Atoms, scraps, “small fabric”.

During lockdown, Renae lived in a series of homes plagued with black mould. Invisible at first, after heavy rain the mould bloomed and spread across walls and carpets, its spores settling in soft furnishings and clothes and books and craft supplies.

For months Renae was sick with mysterious ailments, constantly fatigued, her breath constricted. Even once she figured out the probable cause, the solution was unclear: the first treatment of an allergy is to remove the allergen, but what do you do when you’re living inside it? When your home is making you sick?

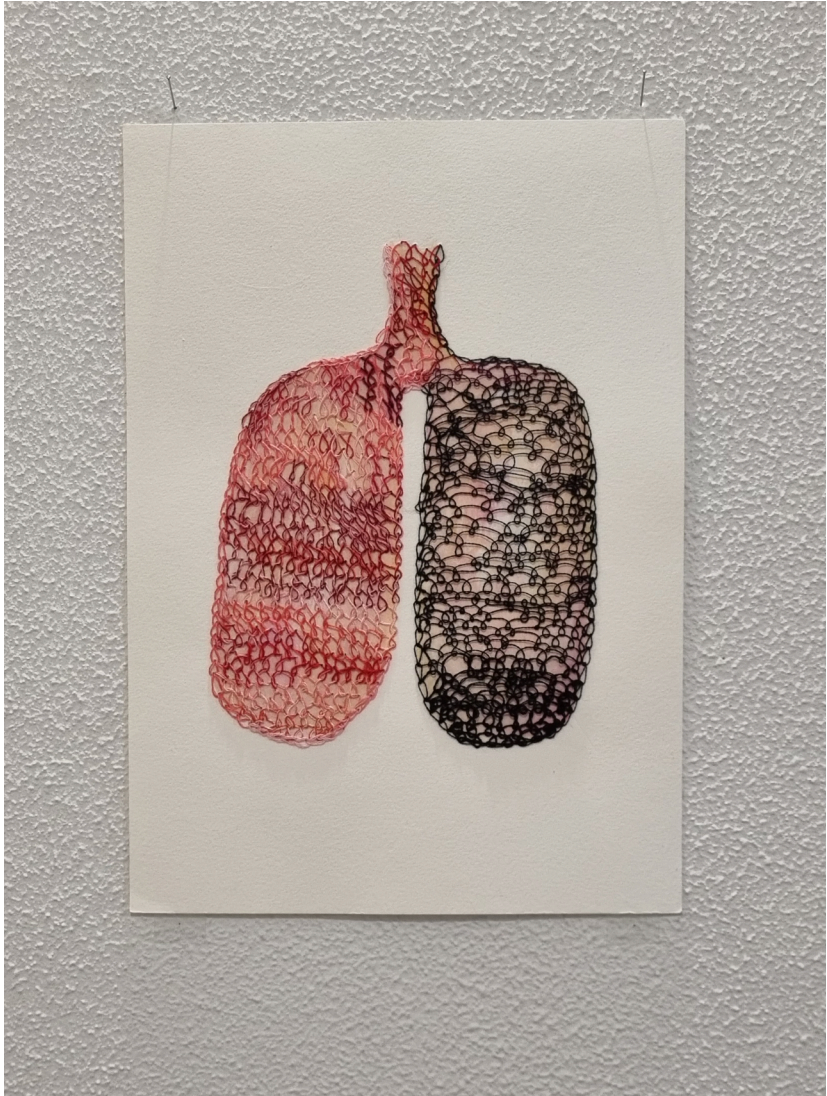
The Old Testament book of Leviticus describes the treatment for a house with what the King James translation calls ‘leprous plague’: mould. This involves removing and replacing the afflicted stones and scraping down the house’s interior walls. Once this is done, and a priest has declared it to be mould-free, the priest enacts the following ritual:

*To purify the house he is to take two birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop. He shall kill one of the birds over fresh water in a clay pot. Then he is to take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the scarlet yarn and the live bird, dip them into the blood of the dead bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times. He shall purify the house with the bird’s blood, the fresh water, the live bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop and the scarlet yarn. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields outside the town. In this way he will make atonement for the house, and it will be clean.*¹²

Using a mending technique called Scotch darning, Renae constructed a pair of lungs: one pink, one blackened. Soft rows of looping threads. Painted in a ceramic vessel: a dead bird, a live bird, and a cup containing red yarn, a cedar stick, and a hyssop bough. In this way the house will be cleansed.

(Our landlord tells us that the dark mould that blooms inside the bathroom cupboard is in fact “condensation”.)

Ellen’s quilt is made from yellow yitaeri towels, used for scrubbing the body. You slip one onto your hand, rub rub rub, slough off the dead skin cells. In a bathhouse you are scrubbed by a Saeshinsa, a professional scrubber. In the text accompanying



Renae Coles, *Breathing troubles / repair*, 2020
cotton (Scotch darning), acrylic on paper

this work, Ellen recounts visiting a Korean bathhouse with her grandmother and being scolded: “Eolmana ttaereul anmileotseomyeon ttaega gooksooga daeno” (You really didn’t scrub your body to a point where we can make noodles with your dead skin). In a video, Ellen scrubs repeatedly at her own birthmark: *The mark, the link that can’t be erased and never fades* 사라지지도 지워지지도 않는 자국, 그 연결 고리. The desire to fully inhabit one’s culture and family of birth, the desire to separate oneself from it. The impossibility of both. The entanglement of identity. Scrub scrub scrub.

Ellen’s text is titled “The heat rises, and there is no silence”. A steamy, sensory overwhelm; an echoing babble engulfing the body.

Sophie’s sculpture *Stick and Poke* conjures the presence of a small child’s body through clothing, encrusted with stickers like garish scabs. “The clothes stand stiff,” writer Tara Heffernan says of this work, “as if encasing a rigid, invisible body—an unyielding little ghost of past trauma.”¹³ This work represents the embodied memories of childhood medical procedures, “life-saving but life-altering”,¹⁴ with stickers to reward bravery for each stick and poke. Plastered with smileys, hearts, flowers and bunnies, it’s an excess of breezy positive vibes and get-well-soons; an empty shell of insistent optimism.

Bachelard again: “...an empty shell, like an empty nest, invites daydreams of refuge.”¹⁵

The exhibition is postponed because Melbourne goes into another lockdown, then another and another. Our living spaces are getting smaller, pressing in on us. We are being compacted into tiny spaces. Something has to give.

The exhibition is postponed indefinitely. I slide down into a dark pit. I can’t work. I can’t read. I make a kind of nest on the pull-out couch, the one that is partly propped up with a brick. Each day I drag myself through the morning routine and then lie on the couch, too exhausted to move. When I have the energy, I sit propped up with pillows and stitch tiny pieces of fabric together: an endless patchwork with no purpose except getting through the days. I am tethered to the couch by an invisible leash.

In her 1797 diary Anna Larpent describes the soothing process of needlepoint:

*the monotony & mechanism like the returning sound of water
or any other sensation that marks time calms the spirit by fixing
the attention then the glowing colours & shading please the
Imagination.*¹⁶



Ellen Yeong Gyeong Son

Eo-seo-oh-sae-yo, Please come in, 2019, sandals covered in bath scrub towels

Onggi Jonggi 옹기종기, 2019, bath scrub towels and thread

The mark, the link that can't be erased and never fades

사라지지도 지워지지도 않는 자국, 그 연결 고리, 2019, looped video

My brain is clogged with sludge. My sewing is regular progressive work, but I don't know where it's progressing.

I write in my journal that the couch is "an island where I can't act on the thoughts that crash on me like waves ... sometimes just lapping gently, but always there if I look."

The returning sound of water.

I write in my journal: *It feels like I'm submerged.*

In the hospital they zap my brain with magnets. It's a treatment called TMS: Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation. I sit in a reclining chair, the kind they use at the dentist. The nurse measures my head and draws a dot on it with a whiteboard marker, on the top left. She lines up a metal plate with the dot. "Why is it on the left hand side?" I ask the doctor. "Because that's where the depression lives," he says. I picture a small dark furry thing, an eyeless creature with stunted limbs, curled up in my skull cavity just below the dot.

The magnet is switched on. It emits a series of pulses like repeated blows – not painful, but insistent. *Taktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktak.*

Pause. *Taktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktak.* Pause.

Taktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktak.

We do this for twenty minutes every day for twenty days. If I accidentally shift my head while the magnet is pulsing, my right hand twitches uncontrollably.

Taktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktak.

The monotony and mechanism of these pulses are supposed to interrupt the sad dull animal settled in my brain. *Taktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktak.* For fourteen days I don't feel any different. *Taktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktak.* On the fifteenth day, something shifts. *Taktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktak.* And continues to shift. *Taktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktaktak.*

I've been writing this for three weeks, I've been writing this for three years. Sorting through my overfilled mind. Writing out the clutter so I can put it in garbage bags and clear it away.

Two days before I am discharged from hospital, we are told that our lease is not being renewed.

We look at sixteen houses that meet our budget. The first fifteen are terrible.

One house is entirely floored with tiny dark-brown square tiles, including the bedrooms. The entire kitchen is slightly bigger than a walk-in pantry.



Sophie Cassar, *Stick and poke*, 2022
clothing, stickers, paper mache, aluminium, plaster

One house advertises a ‘separate bungalow room’ that turns out to be a former outhouse toilet.

One house includes a ‘bedroom’ with swinging saloon doors, the kind that are open top and bottom, and don’t latch.

One house features a separate single-room bungalow which includes a sink with no taps, and no ceiling lights. Two circular orbs, the kind normally mounted underwater in swimming pools, are fixed to the bungalow’s interior wall like two glowing breasts.

One house consists of two small pre-fab homes pushed together. The floors are modelled after rolling dunes and a bedroom window is jammed up against the wall of the second house, like an eye pressed against a telescope with the eyepiece on. It’s a warren of corridors and dead ends, and smells of mildew.

The sixteenth house is this one. We are relieved beyond belief.

Two weeks after we move into our new house, my skin breaks out in hives. Red itchy welts bloom on my legs and arms and stomach and neck. I anoint myself with creams. I swallow antihistamines and steroids. I get blood tests. I see specialists. They rule out allergies, chemicals, mould. Eventually they kind of throw up their hands and tell me it’s probably my body reacting to stress. Have I experienced any stress lately? The stress has inhabited my body, is leaking out of my body at its porous edges.

I take five antihistamines a day and the hives blessedly vanish; my skin is cleansed and purified. After three months I wean myself off the pills and the hives stay gone.

Ruby’s large work, *Longing*, was made during 2019-20. It’s part of a series made using a caulking-gun and acrylic gap-filler – an industrial material designed to seal up wounds in the house’s leaky skin. Squeezing out beads of gap-filler, pressing each one flat with a finger, Ruby builds up a new surface in layers.

This body of work emerged out of necessity, using materials on hand to fill an absence of making. She writes that she loves “the rhythm that comes with quickly touching each plasticky bead before it dries.” A regular progressive task, “quiet and repetitive”.¹⁷

Originally from Aoteroa New Zealand, Ruby writes: “While making this series I’ve been thinking about connection to this land that is not mine. The trees in the Australian bush are mesmerising. There is a language in them that I do not know.”¹⁸

The exhibition is postponed because on the other side of the world a nation of people is under violent siege. Bombs crash down like terrible waves, collapsing



Ruby Brown, *Untitled 2*, 2023
acrylic composite gap filler on aluminium panel

whole neighbourhoods. This carnage is about who can claim this enclosed piece of land as their home. In that place people beam out videos and photographs and messages and tweets. A volley of desperate pleas for escape are transmitted into our homes. We lie in bed moving our thumbs across glass rectangles, watching videos of dead children dragged from under the rubble of their former bedrooms.

The accumulated weight of rocks. The monotony and mechanism of human brutality.

The exhibition was planned for a Sunday, but now every Sunday tens of thousands of people gather in the city, packing Swanston Street from the library to the train station like a throat filled with words.

This land – both the land being bombed and the land we're gathering on – is dense with thousands of years of accretions and accumulations taken in through eyes and ears and hearts. How can you begin to make sense of it? What if you throw away the wrong things and keep the wrong things? Is it better not to start?

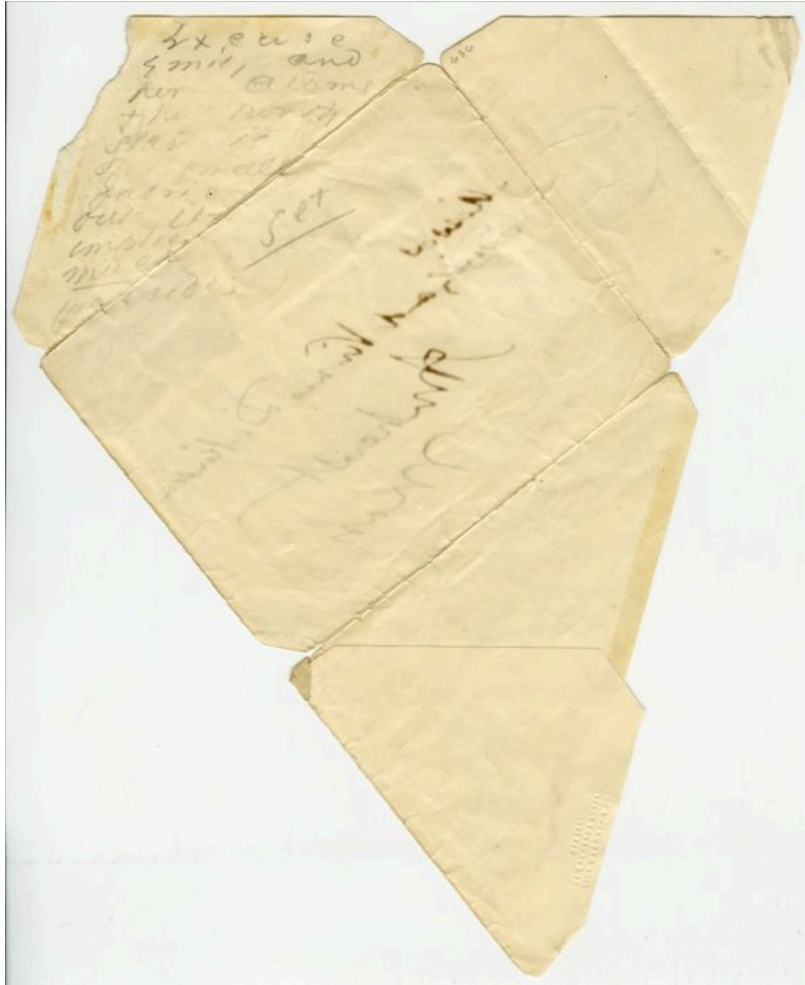
A hundred thousand people protest one Sunday and not a single media outlet mentions it. The words travel along the throat and out of the mouth into empty air.

Oh oh oh. The wordless cry of the blank page, the overfilled mind. *Oh* encompasses the inexpressible, the inarticulate, an atom, a universe.

An *oh* is a rock is a stitch is a filled gap is a curl of skin is a sticker is a mould spore is a piece of orange dust.

The essay is not a container because none of these things can be contained.

I google the exhibition title and find cruises to Norway, on a ship called the *Escape*.



Emily Dickinson, *Excuse Emily and her atoms*, 1836-1886
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Ellen Yeong Gyeong Son, *The mark, the link that can't be erased and never fades* 사라지지도 지워지지도 않는 자국, 그 연결 고리, 2019
looped video

THE HEAT RISES, AND THERE IS NO SILENCE

Ellen Yeong Gyeong Son

“Yilnara gashinaya, jigeum beolsso naeshida!” (*Wake up girl, it’s already 4am!* In Busan dialect.)

Our Halmoney (*Grandmother*) slapped my butt, and I groaned in pain as if lightning struck there. I opened my left eye slightly to see the digital clock on the wall, and I sighed with frustration and muttered,

“...Geojitmal” (*It’s a lie*)

It was only 3.30am. I covered up my face with yibul (*blanket*) to sleep more. Then a bright fluorescent light penetrated through my eyelids.

“Ahk!” (*Argh!*)

I tumbled over on my belly and wrapped my head with my hands. Then, I felt a gentle touch on my back. I angrily threw my blanket open, and my big frown softened a little, after I saw a tall clay mug of apple smoothie held by a big tanned hand in front of my face.

“Ja, moora,” (*Here, eat*)

It was our Halahbeoji (*Grandfather*), who speaks the most minimal and practical way with a stern face but is the most compassionate old man.

I grabbed the mug with my two hands and started drinking it. I was so sleepy I didn’t care whether I was drinking it through my mouth or my nose. I drank half of it and looked up at Halahbeoji, who gave a disapproving look. I took a big breath in and gulped down the rest of the smoothie.

“Wonrae naeshiban ae mokyoktang gagiro hatjanayo,” (*I thought we were meant to go to the bathhouse at 4.30am*), I complained to Halmoney as we walked down the hill to Dongnaetang, our local bathhouse that is a one minute walk from their house. Trotting a few steps ahead of me, Halmoney yelled back, “Mooshinmalyigo! Saeshinsa yaeyakyi daseotshinika miri ga yitseyohanda.” (*What do you mean! We booked saeshinsa - scrubber at 5am, so we need to get there in advance.*)

I clearly remembered that the night before, she told me we *could* go there by 4.30am, and we would have enough time to soak ourselves in water to have the best result of getting our dead skins out through scrubbing. I complained more to her as the one minute walk from their house felt eternal through the winter morning air of Busan, which I felt was way colder than about 15 years ago.

As she pushed the heavy glass door of the bathhouse, Halmoney got tired of it all and yelled again, “Shikeureopda ma!” (*I don’t want to hear any more!*)

“Hyeongnim, achimbuteo wayiri seongnayitnuengyo?” (*Old sis, why are you so angry from this morning?*)

Halmoney and I both turned to the voice coming from a small aluminum frame window, which had a small counter behind it. The window slid open, and a familiar face appeared. It was the Lady of the bathhouse who had been running this bath for more than 20 years. She grinned at Halmoney and nodded for us to enter, as the entrance fees were paid a couple of days earlier. As she handed out the towels and lock keys, the Lady looked at me closely and happily greeted me, “Ayigo! Yigae nugugo! Yeong Geyongyi ayiga!” (*Oh my! Look who’s here! Aren’t you Yeong Gyeong!*)

I shyly smiled at her and bowed, “Annyeonghasaeyo, yimonim.” (*Hello, Auntie.*)

The Lady grabbed my hand with both of her hands and then gently tapped my arm, “Ayigo, mayido keotda! Yijae sooknyeona!” (*My goodness, look at how much you’ve grown! You are a grown lady now!*)

As Halmoney took off her shoes and neatly put them away on the shoe shelf, she made a point to the Lady, “Dakota mothaeseo yijaeneun shijipgal nayida.” (*She is of full age to get married any time soon.*)

“Halmoney! Nae yijae seumul-daseot yiyaeyo!” (*Granny! I am only 25!*) I rolled my eyes at Halmoney as I followed her into the changing room in the bathhouse.

As I shut the wooden entrance door, I heard the Lady giggle in the same way as she did about 15 years ago.

“Oshippal...ah, oshippal!” (*58...ah, 58!*)

I found my locker, which was a while away from Halmoney. I crouched down to the floor and unlocked the wooden locker, which had a big red sticker with the number 58 engraved in shiny silver colour. The locker had a familiar damp smell mixed with an old wooden smell. I didn’t understand why the Lady gave me the locker on the bottom row, when there were two more upper rows of lockers above and covered three walls of the locker room.

“Meothano! Peoteok ot an beotna!” (*What’s taking you so long! Take off your clothes!*) Halmoney impatiently yelled at me, and the old ladies who were eating boiled eggs while sitting on the wooden platform in the middle of the locker room laughed and looked at me. I nervously looked around and slowly stripped off my top, pants, bra, and then undies. I neatly folded my clothes and locked them in the locker. I wore the coiled bracelet with my locker key and scurried across to the entrance door of the main bathing area.

The smell of shampoo, hot air and dampness shot through my nose as soon as I opened the sliding door of the main bathing area. It's amazing that nothing has changed for about 15 years. There were still two hot pools and one cool pool. The walls of the bathing area were covered with a row of individual showers, each equipped with a shower head, plastic chair, and a mirror. In the far right corner, there was a yellow vinyl bed, where Saeshinsa (*scrubber*) used yitaeri towels (*scrubbing towels*) to scrub the clients' bodies.

"Peoteok andeulohohjiano meothano!" (*What are you up to, come on in quick!*) Halmoney's voice echoed, and the old ladies who were in the hottest pool turned their heads onto me. I realised I was letting all the hot air out with the door still open to the locker room.

"Jaesonghapnida!" (*Sorry!*) I bowed my head to the old ladies, and I tried to close the sliding door quickly, but this only made the door jam with a huge screeching noise that echoed through.

After washing my hair with shampoo and rinsing my body thoroughly, I gently slipped into the hottest pool. It was super hot! I tried not to move as much as possible and made sure to cover my boobs and genitals by hugging my legs tightly while sitting down.

"Yahga gaga?" (*Is she that child that I know?*) One of the old ladies in the hot pool pointed at me while looking at Halmoney, who loudly answered back, "Matda!" (*yes!*)

Then all the old ladies turned towards me, sat nearby and commented about how much I'd grown. I didn't quite remember who they were, but it sounded like they lived locally and had seen me in this bathhouse when I was young before I left Korea. One of the old ladies joked about how Halmoney could pass as my Eomma (*mum*) since Halmoney was only in her mid-40s when I was born. Everyone, including Halmoney, laughed out loud, and it seemed like this joke was told numerous times.

After an hour, I lay on the yellow vinyl bed facing down. Saeshinsa (*scrubber*) lady put on yellow yitaeri towel (*scrubbing towel*) with black stripes on the edge. She wet the towel and clapped her hands to shake off any excess water. After clearing her throat a couple of times, Saeshinsa started scrubbing my back first. It hurt a little, but it felt good. I saw grey bits of my ttae (*dead skin*) falling off my back.

"Eolmana ttaereul anmileotseomyeon ttaega gooksooga daeno," (*You really didn't scrub your body to a point where we can make noodles with your dead skin,*) Saeshinsa commented after 10 minutes of scrubbing my back. She was hinting that my ttae is coming out too much, and this will be a very long session. I chuckled a little bit, but I didn't say anything as I didn't know what to say.

“Ayigo, deureupda,” (*Ew, disgusting*) Halmoney loudly commented while eating a leftover cucumber from making a cucumber mask. I thought people weren’t allowed to bring something to eat, but I guess everyone was bringing in either cucumber or yoghurt to put on their face as their beauty routine. Just before I was going to comment about bringing food into the bathhouse, Saeshinsa tapped my back twice to ask me to turn over facing up.

Lying down on the bed facing up was super awkward, and I was forcing myself to close my eyes as I could not bear making eye contact with Saeshinsa who was scrubbing my boobs, belly, and between my thighs.

“Gaseumyi mayi jaratnae,” (*Your boobs grew bigger,*) I opened my eyes wide and then saw the old ladies standing near the bed..! They were all wearing sliced cucumbers on their face and scanned my body with their eyes.

“Jaragineun museun, jeogo aebi halmae dalmaga gaseumyi teokdo eopda,” (*What are you talking about, she’s taken after her Dad’s side, so her boobs are barely there*) Halmoney scoffed while putting more sliced cucumbers on her face. Another big laughter broke out in the bathhouse. I could feel my face growing hot in embarrassment, but I couldn’t suddenly get up and walk away from the vinyl bed as Saeshinsa was super dedicated to scrubbing me for the last 40 minutes. Instead, I closed my eyes and clenched my fists tight as a way to cope with this painful scrubbing session.

LIST OF WORKS

Hallway

Ruby Brown, *Untitled 1*, 2023

acrylic composite gap filler on aluminium panel

Ruby Brown, *Untitled 2*, 2023

acrylic composite gap filler on aluminium panel

Ruby Brown, *Untitled 4*, 2023

acrylic composite gap filler on aluminium panel

Renae Coles, *Breathing troubles / repair*, 2020

cotton (Scotch darning), acrylic on paper

Renae Coles, *Biblical ritual to cleanse the house after mould: two birds (one living, one dead), cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop*, 2022

glazed stoneware

Gemma Watson, *Oh*, 2023

collage on pin up board (3 pieces)

Sophie Cassar, *Stick and poke*, 2022

clothing, stickers, paper mache, aluminium, plaster

Bedroom

Ruth Cummins, *Weighted Blanket*, 2020

artist's t-shirts, jeans, recycled cotton, wadding, 17kg of rocks collected within the artist's 5km radius during Melbourne's stage 4 Covid-19 lockdown; cotton "R" embroidery on embroidery hoop by the artist's grandmother, Noreen Cummins

Maggie Hensel-Brown, *Covid Floor*, 2020

needle lace made from silk thread; wire frame

Living Room

Ruby Brown, *Longing*, 2019
acrylic composite gap filler on canvas

Anita Cummins x Side Gate, *I got out of bed today*, 2018-2023
pillowcase set: edition of 10 + artist proofs
cardboard collage digitally printed on cotton

Kitchen

Anita Cummins, *feelings (Side Gate edition)*, 2023
crushed Cheezels

Anita Cummins, *I got out of bed today*, 2018
cardboard collage

Bathroom

Ellen Yeong Gyeong Son, *Eo-seo-oh-sae-yo, Please come in*, 2019
sandals covered in bath scrub towels

Ellen Yeong Gyeong Son, *Onggi Jonggi* 응기종기, 2019
bath scrub towels and thread

Ellen Yeong Gyeong Son, *The mark, the link that can't be erased and never fades*
사라지지도 지워지지도 않는 자국, 그 연결 고리, 2019
looped video

Cover image:

Ruby Brown, *Longing*, 2019–2020 (detail)

acrylic polymer gap filler on canvas

101 x 77cm (variable)

Courtesy of the artist and Correspondences.

Photograph: Matthew Stanton.

Side Gate pays respects to the Wurundjeri Woi Wurung people, the traditional owners of the land we call home, whose art practices began long before our own and continue despite the displacement and violence of colonialism. We acknowledge their custodianship of the Merri Merri, a site of agriculture, family and culture, which we are lucky to live beside. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.

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Ruby Brown's artwork appears courtesy of Correspondences.

The exhibition title is borrowed from an essay of the same name by Marta L. Werner, "Itineraries of Escape: The envelope poems of Emily Dickinson," 2013.



