amelia pascoe

on the hanging on and the letting go

In his paper *The Reservoir*, Terrence Rosenberg explores different features of scientific (Apollonian) and poetic (Dionysian) research methods and the critical role that together they can play in creative practice. The Apollonian method is characterised by linear, logical progression of ideas aimed at testing a predefined proposition grounded in existing knowledge. The Dionysian method favours divergence, the subjective, and the inferred. Rosenberg uses analogies of working on solid substrate and centripetal forces (movement towards the centre) to explain Apollonian processes. Analogies of open water (being immersed in and at the mercy of the environment) and centrifugal forces (the pulling away and release into the unknown) are used for the Dionysian. He also makes much of the role of the intuitive hunch – a slim, singular, instantaneous spark that ignites whole new worlds of possiblity – for both.

Without having had a name for them, I have been acutely aware of these left brain-right brain tensions in my own practice, and over the years have been actively seeking ways to balance my naturally Apollonian tendencies.

These works are the results of some of my explorations[1].

1 For more information on individual collections, refer www.ameliapascoe.co.nz

Learning to let go (and how science can help)

On a studio visit with Amelia Pascoe last year, she showed me a handful of flasks she had created under the guidance of a glassblower, who was contracted by the chemistry department at Victoria University to produce lab ware for students.

Slightly lopsided, Pascoe's forms radiated charisma in their imperfection, showing a human touch and personality lacking in her teacher's volumetric flasks. Yet the glassblower's technique for making such apparatus meant Pascoe's work was more precise than her mind's eye intended. Curious about other methods, she decided to contact a glass artist, who she hoped could help her explore her unconventional objectives with less rigidity.

At a glassblowing studio in Whanganui, her new instructor showed her the execution needed to make a vessel. Again, it resulted in a series of objects too well formed—until Pascoe dropped a glowing globule of molten glass on the studio floor, causing an organic dollop to coalesce and set. Eureka! She knew then she needed to let gravity do its thing. "I get it," said her teacher. And with that, the series *Opticks* was conceived.

Gravity is a scientific force, one that unfailingly conforms to the principles of physics. It can be calculated, but when combined with the stuff of circumstance, it affects us and the objects around us in unpredictable ways. As you age, your body sags differently to others. When knocked off the mantlepiece, a vase breaks into 27 shards, just so, like no other vase has ever shattered before.

Isaac Newton (1643- 1727) who became one of humankind's most influential scientists—having developed the law of gravitation and written the book *Opticks*—was also an alchemist. Pascoe says:

> *Despite his impact on scientific thought, Newton believed in theories like 'the philosopher's stone', which was said to turn base metals into gold. This idea of transformation has resonated with me, particularly over recent years. During the Age of Enlightenment science really started coming to the fore, whereas previously, religion offered people answers to how the world worked. While Newton and his contemporaries made significant discoveries—as did the many amateur scientists of this time—other beliefs prevailed that seem ridiculous now: like the agent phlogiston causing combustion.*

After hundreds of years of scientific advancements, the tropes of alchemy have become as enchanting and charming as Pascoe's extemporaneous glass forms. While somewhat removed from chemistry taught at Victoria University in the 21st century, alchemy is just as much a testament to our enduring will to experiment and figure things out.

This tension between planning and unpredictability sits at the heart of Pascoe's practice. In her series *Tread Softly* (2014), she purposefully shed her methodical approach, gingerly reconstructing shoes on a path to somewhere new. Two years later, she began heading home to her pseudo-science roots on a new track, through the series *On the origin of species* (2016). Here her well known miniature scaffolding structures sprouted from balls and silhouetted aluminium forms, which together, imitated mechanical extensions of wearers' mouths and feet. With *Opticks* then, Pascoe arrived full circle, having learnt how to embrace logic and intuition in equal parts.

Threading a thick, brightly coloured cord through a hole she has drilled through a fist-sized rock, Pascoe twirls it around her head and—in her most audacious act yet—the artist lets go. Its target, a framed piece of glass, erupts into an entangled network of cracks.

Another transformation has occurred.

- Sian van Dyk

tread softly (2014)
don’t make beautiful things, he says. be less rational, he says. embrace chaos, he says.

works made from deconstructed used shoes.

on the origin of species (2016)
a project adapting elements of evolutionary theory to the development of a new body of work. featuring mutation, natural selection and adaptation.

opticks (2017)
the inter-relationships – connections and tensions - between science and art have been an ongoing source of inspiration. not just the disciplines, their immediate concerns and broader contexts, but also how together they affect the way I think about and operate in the world. my studies in contemporary jewellery have provided an additional lens through which to explore and frame these interests. a lens which promotes reflection, refraction, inflection and results in outputs that can stray towards the edges.

opticks[1] is a reflection on my practice and process, sparked by a volumetric flask loosely bearing my name.

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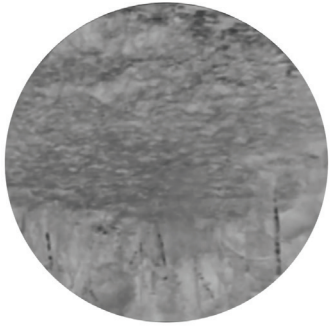
1 This work takes its name from Isaac Newtons publication *Opticks; or, A Treatise of the Reflexions, Refractions, Inflexions and Colours of Light* (1704)

the alchemist (2018)
alchemy is the seemingly magical process of transformation, creation or combination. it was also the pre-cursor to chemistry. scales - one of the earliest forms of scientific equipment - were found in laboratories of both.

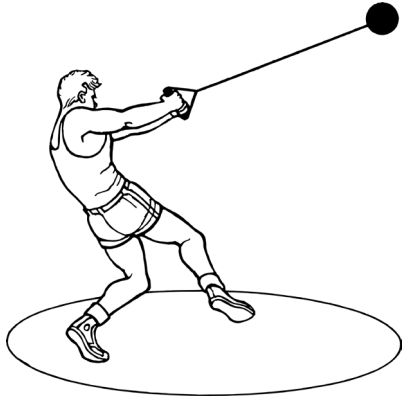
this set is constructed from melted down silver scrap gathered over seven years of jewellery making.

the hunch (2018)
the sub-conscious works in mysterious ways. the idea for this piece was sparked in a dream.



the hanging on (2018)
in the early 1900s moose were released into fiordland. exact numbers were not documented, but in his book *the call of the moose,* ray tinsley suggests 14 - eight females and six males. the last moose was officially sighted in 1952, however, some believe a remnant population may yet exist.

these newest works originate from some of my oldest. evidence of the constant underlying change, or perhaps just a tight grip.



the letting go (2018)
put a string on it and call it a necklace.

a rock on a string can also be used to demonstrate centripetal (apollonian) and centrifugal (dionysian) forces - and the unexpected results of letting go.

References

Rosenberg, T. (n.d.). *The reservoir: towards a poetic model of research in design*. Goldsmiths College.

Tinsley, R. (1983). *Call of the moose, and other fiordland hunting adventures*. Reed: Wellington, NZ.

Image and works information

Cover image. Cracked glass courtesy rock on rope

The reservoir. (1) Foresman, P. (2008). *Apollo*. Retrieved from https://commons.wikimedia.org (2) alekseimakarov. *Dionysus*. Retrieved from https://depositphotos.com

Tread softly. (1) Used Royal New Zealand Ballet shoe, (2) Brooch. Shoe inner fabrics, sterling silver. H:70, W:190 , L:150mm

On the origin of species. (1) Object. Concrete, paint. H:210, W:150, D:160mm (2) Face piece. Aluminium, sterling silver, polymer clay, paint. H:60, W:120 , L:225mm

Opticks. (1) Volumetric flask (2) Object. Hand-blown glass. H:75 , W:125 , L:190mm

The alchemist. (1) Silver scrap (2) Object. Sterling silver, wood, brass, paint. H:180, W180: , D:250mm

The hunch. (2) Object. Vice, stainless steel draw plate, 0.16” (No.8 Wire) hole. H:180, W:180, D:250mm

The hanging on. (1) Video still – edited footage from motion sensor cameras placed in remote Fiordland bush to ascertain the presence of moose. First presented at Photospace Gallery in 2010 as part of the exhibition *Capture*. Original footage courtesy of Ken Tustin. (2) Rings. Sterling silver, 18ct gold. Limited edition of 14 - one ring for each moose released.

The letting go. (1) Object/neckpiece. Rock, rope. Size - various

Amelia Pascoe

Trained in the sciences, and with a long work history in science-based organisations, Amelia formally embarked on her artistic career in 2010. She graduated from Whitireia New Zealand in 2012 with a Bachelor of Visual Arts and Design majoring in contemporary jewellery. Since graduating, Amelia has had a number of solo shows and has participated in groupshows in New Zealand and overseas. Her work is held in public and private collections. In 2013, Amelia undertook a six-week residency in Italy, with internationally renowned contemporary jeweller, Fabrizio Tridenti. Ruudt Peters, a pioneering Dutch jeweller, was her conspirator through *Handshake*— a professional development and exhibition programme for selected emerging New Zealand jewellers. In 2018, Amelia will embark on a Fine Arts (Honours) year at Canterbury University.

Education and Professional Development

2016 *Handshake3*, two-year professional development and exhibition programme

Workshops - Vito Bila (Australia), Masterclass - Hilde de Decker (Belgium)

2015 Workshops - David Clarke (UK), Peter Bauhuis Germany), Masterclass - Ben Lignel (France)

2014 *Handshake2*, two-year professional development and exhibition programme

Workshop (Netherlands) - Ruudt Peters

2013 Fabrizio Tridenti residency, Italy

2012 Bachelor of Visual Arts and Design, Whitireia NZ

1995 Master of Science, Otago University

1991 Bachelor of Science, Canterbury University

Solo Exhibitions

2015 *Principia III*, Bowen Galleries, Wellington

2014 *Principia II*, The National, Christchurch

Principia, Bowen Galleries, Wellington

2013 *A Journey in D,* Masterworks Gallery, Auckland

2012 A *Lure of the Elusive*, Thistle Hall, Wellington

2011 *Capture* and *Shadowlands,* Photospace, Wellington

Selected Group Exhibitions

2018 *On the language of things,* The Dowse Art Museum, Wellington

2017 *Handshake3*, The Dowse Art Museum, Wellington

2016 *Wiggle Room*, Bowen Galleries, Wellington

Ahi Ka Whitireia Alumni Exhibition, Pataka Art + Museum, Porirua, Wellington

Handshake3, Platina Gallery, Sweden

Handshake3, Objectspace, Auckland

Specials: Handshake alumni show, Einsaulensaal, Munich, Germany

2015 *Handshake2*, Pah Homestead, Auckland

Carousel and *Occupy Crossley Street* Radiant Pavilion, Melbourne, Australia

Handshake2, Stanley Street Gallery, Sydney, Australia

Occupy Anna, Anna Miles Gallery, Auckland

Wunderruma, Auckland Art Gallery, Auckland

The bold and the beautiful, The Dowse Art Museum, Wellington

F.O.U.N.D, Objectspace, Auckland

2014 *Wunderruma*, The Dowse Art Museum, Wellington

Awards

2016 Pataka + The Dowse Art Museum Jurors Award, Ahi Ka Exhibition, Pataka Art + Museum

2013 Creative NZ Quick Response Grant (Fabrizio Tridenti residency)

2012 Masterworks Gallery Supreme Graduate Award

2011 Jewellery Manufacturers Federation Award of Excellence

2010 Julie Obren Scholarship, Porirua Community Arts Council

Collections

The Dowse Art Museum
Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa
Wrightmann Collection

Galleries

The National, Christchurch
Bowen Galleries, Wellington
Anna Miles Gallery, Auckland