

IN CERTAIN LIGHTS, AND NOT CLEARLY THEN:

On Maree Horner and J.C. Sturm at Artspace Aotearoa



Installation view, 'Door, window, world: Maree Horner, J.C. Sturm', Artspace Aotearoa, 2023 with Maree Horner, 'Familiar monuments: chair, cupboard', 1994–1996. Image by Andreas Müller, courtesy of Artspace Aotearoa.

Victoria Wynne Jones
April 20 2023

MAREE HORNER (born 1951) has always loomed large in my art-historical imagination. Jim Allen and Wystan Curnow's 1976 publication *new art: Some recent New Zealand sculpture and post-object art* was where I first encountered her work.¹ In their introduction Allen, and Curnow describe their selection as including 'sculptors whose

recent work most interested us. It was work we thought would have a say in the future of New Zealand sculpture.² The two editors, artist and critic, describe the book as an exhibition, 'a report on current work.' Each of the sculptors involved 'was invited to submit a work, or works which best represents his or her current thinking and making.'

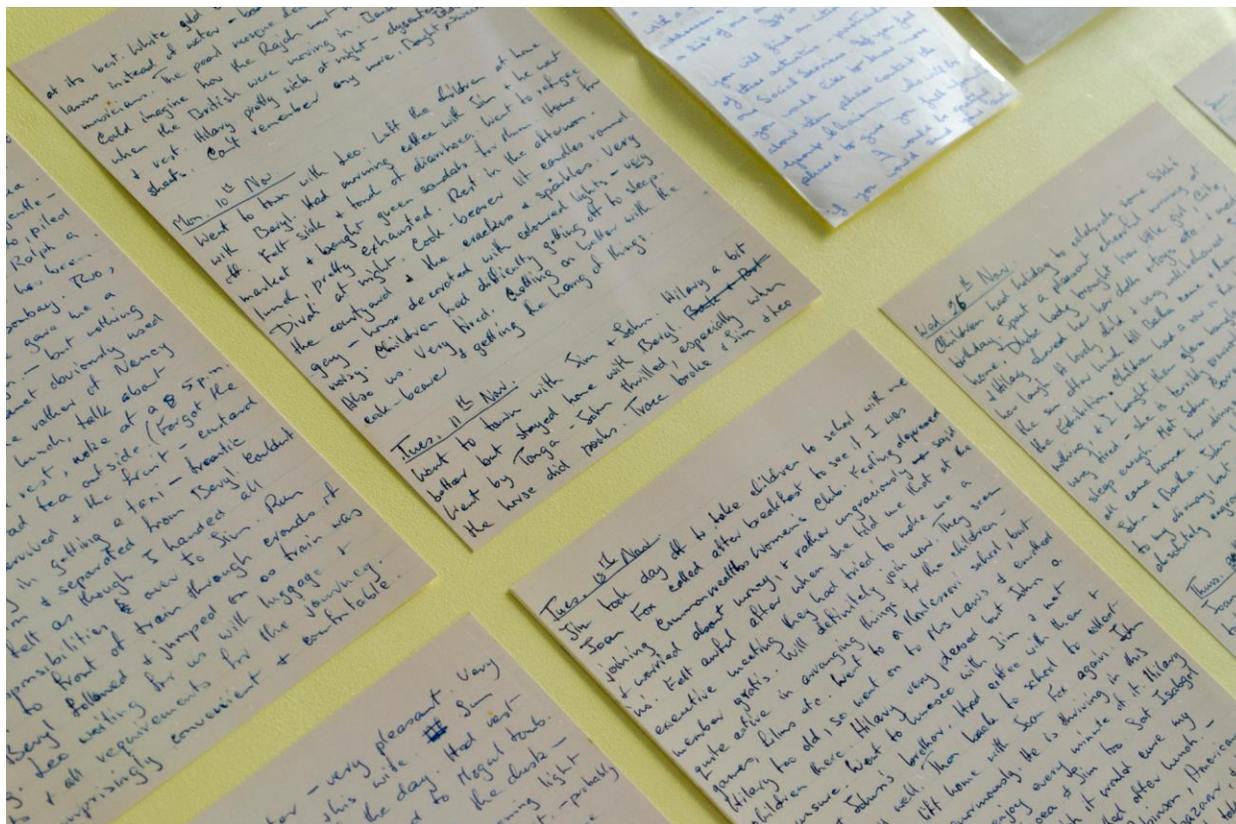
The order of artists and practices presented within this book-exhibition is decidedly non-hierarchical, it is unpaginated, and does not even submit to the tyranny of alphabetical order (perhaps because this would mean editor Allen would come first). Nonetheless, it enjoys a kind of flattening or horizontality of status. Horner, a recent graduate from Elam School of Fine Arts, appears in between Greer Twiss and Phil Dadson. As I was familiar with Twiss' bronze fountain 'Karangahape Rocks' (1967-1969) on the corner of Karangahape Road and Symonds Street, I surmised that Horner must be an equally important figure.

Aside from these issues of inclusion and placement (which are, of course, very important indeed) the fact of the matter is, I found Horner's sculptures the most compelling, perhaps due to their striking combination of everyday objects with surprising materials, configurations and activations. The three works she presents, 'Chair', 'Diving Board' and 'Compass' (1973) are translated beautifully to black and white photographs on glossy paper, with ample negative space and the bold sans-serif typeface. There is room for these works to play out upon the exhibition-page. The graphic grid on the steel-mesh covered easy-chair and foam support demonstrates a mastery of spatiality and three-dimensional form. A wicked sense of humour is demonstrated in the way Horner herself sits upon the electrified chair, calmly reading an issue of TIME magazine with the headline 'WEEK OF SHOCKS'. 'Diving Board' is awarded its own full-colour spread, its repetition of stepped forms, indicating water in transparent glass, or constituting a small staircase in concrete, is totally striking. The contrast of glass, concrete and the prospect of a bouncing board from which an imaginary diver could propel themselves into a hostile and deadly environment is bone-chilling. I recall nodding whilst reading Horner's accompanying notes, "'Diving Board" is primarily a visual statement that the spectator can confront and relate to in a direct physical sense, board to chest, and empty glass tank to groin.'

In 2003, author J.C. Sturm (1927-2009) was awarded an honorary doctorate by Victoria University of Wellington. This honour was bestowed in the same ceremony in which I first graduated. On the day the presentation felt like the culmination of a brisk march down Lambton Quay in which the sky was filled with balloons and the warm greeting of karanga and pūrerehua as we graduands entered the impressive Michael Fowler Centre. I was in awe of the stately figure of Sturm on the stage, wrapped in kākahu, topped with an Oxford bonnet. Thus, from my very first encounter, I was accustomed

to perceiving Sturm as a kind of titan, operating astride Western academia and te ao Māori. Sturm appeared again in Louise Menzies and Allan Smith's 2018 publication, *distracted reader: Time to Think Like a Mountain* as part of Elle Loui August's essay, 'Rose/Miriam/Irihapeti/Elle'.

However, it was in the deep-Covid-time of 2020, when the on-line initiative *Evacuation Tapes* was launched, that I finally had the opportunity to engage more deeply with the words of Sturm.³ Commissioned and edited by artist Ruth Buchanan, the website 'is a collection of writing that posits the very real paradox of the precarious and staunch (female) body as lived and encountered within society, front and centre. It looks at the ways in which certain life structures draw out or exaggerate the relationship between these forces—the weak, the strong. The collection explicitly folds out from a selection of poems by J. C. Sturm, one of Aotearoa New Zealand's most significant Māori women writers of the twentieth century.' With *Evacuation Tapes*, I could read eighteen of Sturm's refined, astute and assertive poems at a time when it had become difficult to access her work due to the fact that her oeuvre was out of print.



Installation view, 'Door, window, world: Maree Horner, J.C. Sturm', Artspace Aotearoa, 2023 with J.C. Sturm, selected journal excerpts and ephemera, 1958. Image by Andreas Müller, courtesy of Artspace Aotearoa.

On reading 'On the building site for a new library' from her 1996 volume, *Dedications*, I was struck by Sturm's account of women railing against the destruction of grasses, rose beds, and blossom trees, and the author's reflections on the transitoriness of all human endeavours, including planted trees, gardens, and buildings, evoking a time when the very land was in fact sea. The frailty of things that are noble and good, and their inevitable destruction, resonated in the ambient uncertainty created by the global pandemic.

So when I heard Buchanan, as Kaitohu Director of Artspace Aotearoa, was organizing the exhibition, *Door, window, world: Maree Horner, J.C. Sturm*, I immediately felt a yearning to make a written response as a way to seize the opportunity to dwell with these two thinkers and creators in a more sustained way. I was fortunate enough to do so when Buchanan commissioned a spoken lecture as part of the public programming for the exhibition (see Commissioner's Note below). For *Door, window, world*, Horner's 'Chair' (1973) was accompanied by five of her large scale, mixed media works from the 1994-1996 series *Familiar Monuments*. Sturm's 1954 short-story 'The Old Coat' was

presented on one wall in vinyl along with selected journal extracts and ephemera belonging to the author, including her passport and writing pen.

As an art historian I wanted to linger on the facture of Horner's prints, their careful assemblage of individual pieces making up a larger whole, the inkiness of the prints and the cunning over-painting. It is evident in each of these works that Horner returned to print-making from sculpture somewhat changed. 'Cupboard', 'chair', 'bed', 'bath' and 'drawers' evoke so much tenebrous depth. Each of these familiar structures exist within a felted darkness that feels like consciousness. The pink acrylic overpainting gives their surfaces a sense that they are somehow en fleshed and the juxtaposition of column and pyramid with pieces of furniture is dream-like and unsettling. Upon reading J. C. Sturm's 1954 short story, 'The Old Coat', I was struck by its depiction of a woman bravely combatting an unknowable repressive force in her home environment. A sense of making and writing against constraints, both internal and external, reminded me of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's 1892 novella *The Yellow Wallpaper*, and moments of Kirsty Gunn's 1997 novel *The Keepsake*. Thus, haunted by multiple voices, I felt drawn to create a text composed of other texts, a kind of quilt or embroidery of quotations, incised, re-arranged, and placed together so that, read aloud, they might provide a particular felt space in which to encounter artworks by Horner and Sturm.

As Buchanan writes in her accompanying introduction, 'home' is a complex space, one that is 'as much political as it is psychological, creative as it is practical, philosophical as it is emotional.'⁴ A sense of captivity, of being over-powered by a force greater than oneself, a physical and psychological mapping of such spaces of containment and the release afforded by imagination are all invoked by the below text, originally designed to be read aloud within the exhibition itself. The process of creating the text involved acts of collation, lead by the almost archetypal forms of Horner's monuments: door, bed, chair and bath. I looked for incidents that occurred in and around these locales and found them with Gunn and Perkins-Gilman: a quietly locked door, a protective chair, a bathtub slick with lime-oil and a bed-head, gnawed. Inspiration was also provided by the old lumber-room described by Sturm, a space where discarded things gathered together, a deposit of familiar detritus. A dark corner filled with objects pertaining to the body which seemed to collect themselves. With text as material, each piece of fabric, those by Gunn, Perkins-Gilman and Sturm were carefully considered in their length and breadth before being incised, dismembered, and artificially brought together in eccentric assembly. In order for the text to have a coherence it was supplemented by snippets of remembered references and poems, as well as a kind of caressing or paying attention to the visual cues provided by the artworks of Horner and Sturm. A textual being-with the artworks and their associations, rather than a straight art-historical account. Commissioned to be read aloud, there is a question about whether this can text

have any kind of afterlife, beyond the specificity of its original recitation? Here it lies, like a patchwork quilt recently dropped in the lumber room, abandoned and still warm with the heat of a body.



Installation view, 'Door, window, world: Maree Horner, J.C. Sturm', Artspace Aotearoa, 2023 with Maree Horner, 'Familiar monuments: drawers', 1994–1996. Image by Andreas Müller, courtesy of Artspace Aotearoa.

in certain lights, and not clearly then

'This winter will have to be my spring.'

Kirsty Gunn, *The Keepsake*. London: Granta Books, 1997, 57.

A column is a body. 'The index of a profound humanism.'

Nigel Spivey, *Greek Art*. London: Phaidon Press, 1997. 193.

'The columns of a house are sons.' Looking around the buildings of a city, especially its central or sacred spaces, there are columns, columns everywhere. Columns in lines two deep, a quasi-phalanx of soldiers. Columns act as statues of the city's men, like a standing, symbolic army.

Euripides quoted in Spivey, *Greek Art*, 193; Spivey, *ibid*.

An idiosyncratic notion forms, that columns derived from life-size, sculpted stone figures, *kouroi*, semi-divine heroes and deities. Youth or striplings, young male figures with long hair, broad shoulders, an athletic waist –a suggested spring in the step.

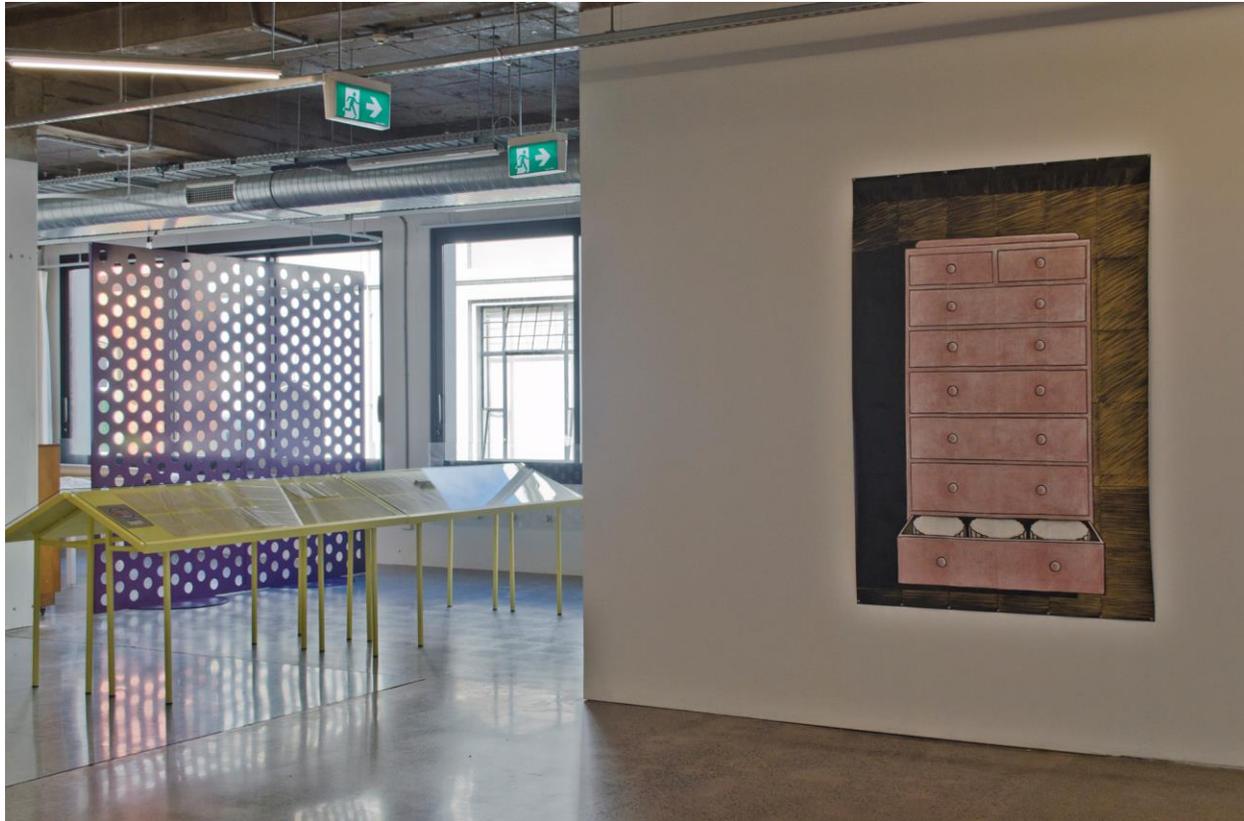
Spivey, *Greek Art*, 116.

I would like to be as open to possibilities as a door left slightly ajar. Its key down by the front steps, beneath a plantain leaf, redundant.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*. London: Virago, 1973, 35.

The swell of a chest as a fine cabinet, breasts pushing silk as one sways through a crowd. An armoire of sweet secrets, filled with wine, perfumes, liqueurs to derange hearts and minds.

Loose translation of 'Le Beau Navire' from Charles Baudelaire, *Les fleurs du mal*. Place of publication not identified: Ligarán, 2015.



Installation view, 'Door, window, world: Maree Horner, J.C. Sturm', Artspace Aotearoa, 2023 with J.C. Sturm, selected journal excerpts and ephemera, 1958; Maree Horner, 'Familiar monuments: drawers', 1994–1996. Image by Andreas Müller, courtesy of Artspace Aotearoa.

'I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy store. I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big, old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend,' a familiar monument. 'I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce, I could always hop into that chair and be safe.'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 16-17; Perkins Gilman, 17.

A familiar monument, a familiar monument, FM FM FM femme *femme*, woman/wife.

'In the kitchen of a house quiet and warm after the heat of the afternoon. We'll be alright if we just stay here.'

J.C. Sturm, 'The Old Coat', *Numbers 1*, July 1954, 22.

Columns in pieces float on the surface of the giant's bath, like pieces of cut celery in minestrone.

Sometimes soup is followed by raspberry instant pudding, wobbly and pink... heaving, rounded, curvy. Or flattened into a pink, flat field. It is there I sit, bunched up like a roast chicken. The grid is a net and I am caught like a fish, bird or butterfly. The steel wire presses into my foam flesh, leaving red marks on my acrylic skin. A current pulses. The floor is for earthing. Tick, tick, tick.

'A knocking noise, persisting and growing louder as though someone were trying to open a drawer that had stuck.'

Sturn, 'The Old Coat', 22.

'When he brought me there, it took only minutes, seconds, to reach the steep front steps that led up to his heavy door. Seconds for the key to twist in the lock, the hinge to swing in. Minutes, seconds, yet already time had changed for me. It was easy, like in a dream, to go inside. Easy to close my eyes there, to sleep, to stay.'

Gunn, *The Keepsake*, 53.

'Some weeks are still and cold and I have to stay in bed most of the time, autumn and winter, then spring comes, and summer. All seasons are the same, in this room so long only the light changes, with the year passing; a finger of sun along the window-sill then an entire wall painted gold.'

Gunn, *The Keepsake*, 60.

'He leaves me in the morning and I hear the front door shut, away down the stairs at the bottom of the house. He pulls the heavy front door closed behind him, then everything is quiet.'

Gunn, *The Keepsake*, 62.



Installation view, 'Door, window, world: Maree Horner, J.C. Sturm', Artspace Aotearoa, 2023 with J.C. Sturm, selected journal excerpts and ephemera, 1958. Image by Andreas Müller, courtesy of Artspace Aotearoa.

'I am absolutely forbidden to "work" until I am well again. Personally, I disagree with their ideas. Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good. But what is one to do? I did write for a while in spite of them; but it *does* exhaust me a good deal – having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition. I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus...'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 10.

'We have been here two weeks, and I haven't felt like writing before, since that first day. I am sitting by the window now, up in this atrocious room and there is nothing to hinder my writing as much as I please, save lack of strength. This wall-paper has a kind of sub-pattern in a different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then.'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 13, 18.

I have been 'cautioned not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try. I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me. But I find I get pretty tired when I try. It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work. I wish I could get well faster.'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 16.

'The floor is scratched and gouged and splintered, the plaster itself is dug out here and there, and this great heavy bed which is all we found in the room, looks as if it had been through the wars.' 'I lie here on this great immovable bed – it is nailed down, I believe.'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 17, 19.

'I will take a nap I guess. I don't know why I should write this. I don't want to. I don't feel able. And I know he would think it absurd. But I *must* say what I feel and think in some way – it is such a relief! But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief. Half the time now I am awfully lazy, and lie down ever so much.' I lie on my side of the bed, and I sense the familiar form placed beside me. Its grainy, stone surface. My fingers trace the edge of its base, follow the gently rising slopes, and at the top a sharp point. I push the pad of my fingers upon it, until my skin is red. When I take my finger away, for a moment there is a white indent from the pressure of the point. I take my finger away and there is the smudge of black printer's ink. I spread the filmy, oily substance between my fingers and thumb, feeling the first prickles of fear moisten the palms of my hands. I move my hands back and forth along the bed covers, as though treading water. 'As my hand touches the rough material I experience a thrill like a bad electric shock. The thing is alive, horribly alive. I stare, fascinated and overwhelmed with despair as the dark folds move and heave and rapidly rise up before me, taking on a fearful shape that menaces me with superhuman power. The very embodiment of anything I had ever known that was mean and cruel and maliciously destructive. Impositions and mockeries and pretences and lies and bad jokes, their accumulated weight suddenly pressed down on me as never before. In a rage of indignation I thought I must choke or give it expression. I shook it and tore it, and flung it against the walls and trampled it till I could do no more.'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 21; Sturm, 'The Old Coat', 23.



Installation view, 'Door, window, world: Maree Horner, J.C. Sturm', Artspace Aotearoa, 2023 with Maree Horner, 'Chair', 1973, 2019 (remade). Image by Andreas Müller, courtesy of Artspace Aotearoa.

'All time is lying here and waiting... For sun to move across the wall and settle on my bed, for the sheets to change to yellow satin, for day to pass so night will come and the man with black hair will come back to my room again.'

Gunn, *The Keepsake*, 62-63.

'Now I lie in my safe bed, I wait. I wait and first there is light, dawn's pale colour. Then heat is in the room, then later dusk, and then at last it is night and then he comes again.'

Now everything is inside, the closed-off air, the bed and all I can smell is him – the sweet lime smell he leaves behind him when he's gone.'

Gunn, *The Keepsake*, 69-70.

'We'll be alright if we just stay here.' 'In the darkness, I hear it. A splinter. A tiny hole of light in the gorgeous velvet dark. A dot of light, I hear it in the rich fabric, then

another, and another. Letting splinters of light in, not in here, not in this room, not inside my own head. Drip, drip. In the dark, pin-pricks of sound but getting bigger. Drip, drip. From somewhere far away, far away from me. Drip, drip. In the bathroom. It's the slow dripping of a tap I can hear.'

Sturm, 'The Old Coat', 22; Gunn, *The Keepsake*, 71.

'I sluice the dark watery remains from the insides of the bathtub and I take a cloth to the sides where he has been lying. His make-up has left a skim, and I have to rub hard to remove it, and the flecks of skin, and hair strands, and the dirt... But as I wipe down the bath completely, removing the final traces of these stains, the smell of him rises up at me as limes, the scent of his oil that he always wears, on his face, in his hands and hair.

I turn on both taps and let the water come fill the huge bath, to be away from the smell, to be clean, to be clean. Only to lie in warm water, to turn on all the taps and let the water run so the sound of clean water fills the top floor of the house like rivers falling...

Yet even as the water runs, scalding and ice cold, even as water pools over the rusty stain at the base of the bath that reminds me of blood, as inch by inch the water rises, dark in the dark air, rising, still the smell of limes is strong. In the water, in the steaming air. Stronger every minute, and sweeter, and the country where he came from seems close, in the dark scented air... The country where old men with painted faces were born, where they were made, with their red lips, with their bright black eyes.'

Gunn, *The Keepsake*, 74-75

'I lower myself into his huge rusted tub, into his water... and his smell is everywhere. In the mirror, as I let myself go gently down, I see my white face, burnt fever eyes, my body bright as a piece of paper underwater. It is me here, in the stink of piss and blood and citrus on the tile, against the porcelain side of the tub, in the mirror, in the water, me.' 'I wouldn't go if I were you, she said quietly.'

Sturm, 'The Old Coat', 22



Installation view, 'Door, window, world: Maree Horner, J.C. Sturm', Artspace Aotearoa, 2023 with Maree Horner, 'Chair', 1973, 2019 (remade); 'Familiar monuments: bath, bed, chair, and cupboard', 1994–1996. Image by Andreas Müller, courtesy of Artspace Aotearoa.

'The moon shines in all around just as the sun does. I hate to see it sometimes, it creeps so slowly, and always comes in by one window or another. He was asleep and I hated to waken him, so I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wall-paper until I felt creepy. The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 23.

'By moonlight – the moon shines in all night when there is a moon – I wouldn't know it was the same paper. At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candle light, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.

I didn't realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind, that dim sub-pattern, but now I am quite sure it is a woman. By daylight she is subdued, quiet. I

fancy it is the pattern that keeps her so still. It is so puzzling. It keeps me quiet by the hour.'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 26.

'I'm feeling ever so much better! I don't sleep much at night, for it is so interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal in the daytime.' 'I really have discovered something at last. Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out. The front pattern *does* move – and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it! The commotion is so great the house feels as though it were being moved from its very foundations. Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over. Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard' like a runaway horse. 'And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern – it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads. They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down, and makes their eyes white! If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be so bad.' 'My anger (an old shield and better than nothing) had all been squandered in shouting at echoes outside empty rooms.'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 28, 30; Sturm, 'The Old Coat', 24.

'I think that woman gets out in the daytime! And I'll tell you why – privately – I've seen her! I can see her out of every one of my windows. It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight. I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows at once. But, turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of one at one time. And though I always see her, she *may* be able to creep faster than I can turn! I have watched her sometimes away off in the open country, creeping as fast as a cloud shadow in a high wind.'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 30-31.

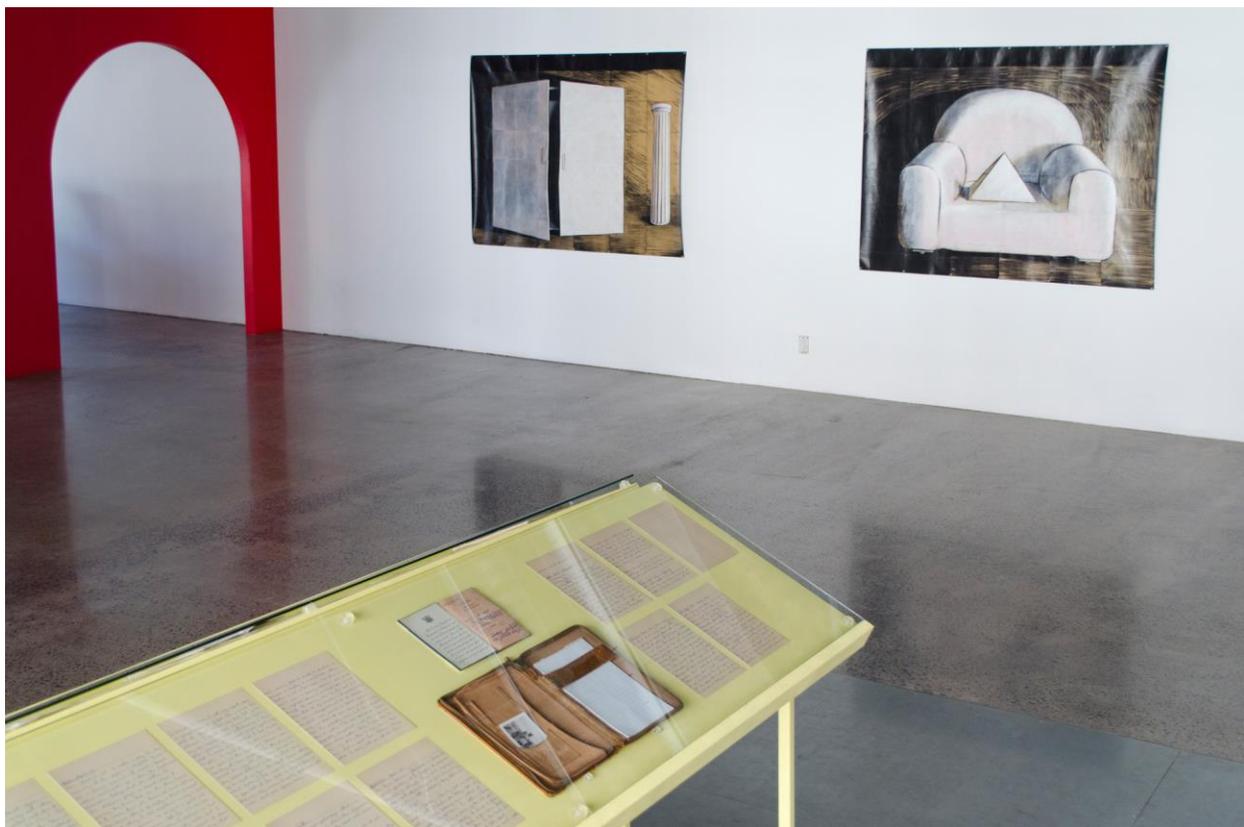
'This bed will *not* move! I tried to lift it and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little piece at one corner – but it hurt my teeth.'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 34.

'He lights a match. For a second, she sees his face illuminated by the flame, for a second there's the face. Then it's gone. It's black again, and the woman is cold again, like before.'

'She is kneeling somewhere on the hard floor. And somewhere else, moving around the room unseen while she remains in place on the floor, weighted there, and her hands are kept together as he has wrapped them, with oiled chains. If it was light, she would see how they have marked her.'

Gunn, *The Keepsake*, 129-130.



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'That is the method used with her by this man: Keep her in, where no one can see. Keep her in a room all day, keep her sleeping, leave her on her own all day in a bed, lying there, not moving much so her bones get softer, like milk. Leave her in a big house all day where no one visits and watch how she comes to love you, just like the others. Waiting for you to come home at night, her skinny arms wrapping around your neck

like string, and like with string you have to cut her down.' 'The thin blade of domesticity will turn or snap against any obstacle it meets.'

Gunn, *The Keepsake*, 129-130; Sturm, 'The Old Coat', 24.

'He knows what the body needs before the body knows. The sponge of water to press against the mouth... He knows when this is to be done, just as he knew when autumn was over and he no longer dressed the body to take her out, when the winter came and he knew to bring the body inside for the last time, lay her in the quiet room at the top of the house. He knew she would lie there in the white room, on the bed, he always planned it that way. That she would be very still. Then she would hear the turn of the key in the front door and a smile would form on the body's face...'

Gunn, *The Keepsake*, 142.

'... so now he brings her up onto the table, and like before, when the air seemed to grow colder with every floor she ascended, and darker, and more close at her face, so now she is cold, no warmth in her.'

Gunn, *The Keepsake*, 158-159.

'And his face is above her where she lies on the table...' 'The door thrown violently back on its hinges. A dark blur... We must keep it shut. Together we managed to hold that door, although there was no catch, let alone a lock, through sheer strength of purpose. The noise had stopped and the unseen force on the other side of the door had given out.'

Gunn, *The Keepsake*, 159; Sturm, 'The Old Coat', 22.

'So now the servants are gone, and the things are gone, and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we found on it. I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again. I am once more an ordinary person in an ordinary house on a quiet summer evening.' 'Just be quiet, and I promise you everything will be all right.'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 33; Sturm, 'The Old Coat', 22.

'We never spoke, but would frequently pass one another in silence, each of us walking either into, or against the strong coastal wind along the esplanade. You moved with a

silent intensity and the mindful effort of age, and your image is still now easy to recall. The manner of your hands as you moved, sweeping past the slight frame of your body, your face stilled by an apparent gravity of thought. I can't imagine what you will have observed at our crossings. Perhaps it was a way of life that was passing.'

Elle Loui August, 'Rose/Miriam/Irihapeti/Elle', in Louise Menzies and Allan Smith (eds.) *Time to Think Like a Mountain*. Auckland: split/fountain, 2018, 74.

'Just be quiet, she whispered, and I promise you everything will be all right.'

Sturm, 'The Old Coat', 22.

Come and get me! 'The key is down by the front steps, under a plantain leaf...'

Perkins Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, 35.



Installation view, 'Door, window, world: Maree Horner, J.C. Sturm', Artspace Aotearoa, 2023 with Maree Horner, 'Familiar monuments: bath, bed, chair, and cupboard', 1994–1996; J.C. Sturm, selected journal excerpts and ephemera, 1958. Image by Andreas Müller, courtesy of Artspace Aotearoa.

Commissioners Note

In her most recent *MIRABILARY* bulletin, '100 Years of Spring and All or William Carlos Williams destroys the world' (March 18, 2023) poet Anne Boyer notes—as she discusses the limits of a 'specimen' style selection process in relation to reading poetry: 'And I don't even believe that *the book* itself is a "natural" or representative habitat of poetry. I would read complete works if I could, of every poet I read, or accruing works, scrolls the size of lifetimes, the scraps hidden away in notebooks and letters, scrawled on postcards, buried in torrents of prose.' Noting that the format and rhythm of reception is as important as the genre that is received makes much sense when considered in this context. Considered in the context that is *Door, window, world: Maree Horner, J.C Sturm*, that bought together the work of Horner and Sturm for the first time through their shared inhabitation of the domestic sphere where sound, of course, plays a significant role. Close your eyes. Consider your home. Is it silent? Probably not. It is full of the tangle of a life, of the bodies that shape that life. With this in mind, it was in fact essential, that the first encounter with Victoria Wynne-Jones' text took place as a reading surrounded by the works of Horner, of Sturm, with the possibility to enlarge the text rather than turning it into a specimen, cleaning it up too much. As interdisciplinary artist Milford Graves has encouraged, when picking fruit from the tree using the mouth is preferable as it disrupts the frequency less and deepens the experience further.

About ArtNow Essays

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¹ Jim Allen and Wystan Curnow, *new art : some recent New Zealand sculpture and post-object art*, Auckland: Heinemann, 1976.

² Allen and Curnow, editors' introduction, (unpaginated).

³ <https://www.evacuationtapes.net/>

⁴ <https://artspace-aotearoa.nz/exhibitions/door-window-world-maree-horner-and-jc-sturm>