


**BETWEEN  
US**



**GAIL  
HOCKING**



***We all bruise*** (detail)  
2023, plaster, blended wax, silicon,  
series of 15 individual pieces,  
dimensions up to 160 x 40 cm (each)

### ***Acknowledgement of Country***

As a statewide organisation Country Arts SA recognises and respects that we live and create on Aboriginal lands and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We embrace the principle of 'First Nations First' and recognise that sovereignty was never ceded. Always was, always will be, Aboriginal land.



*Life within life*  
2023, black clay slip fired,  
electroplated roots, series of 60  
individual pieces, dimensions  
up to 14 x 7 cm (each).

## Catalogue essay

By Adele Sliuzas

How can an artwork take you home? Gail Hocking's *Between Us* is an exploration of home – for her, Aotearoa. The exhibition is a mapping of memory, of magic, of time-spent-with and of being-made-up through encounters with a living and breathing landscape. Hocking invites us all to take this journey home alongside her, to witness an internal geographic shift as we encounter her landscape. Through little breaths, quiet moods and lustres we are shrouded in an experience.

Time that extends and contracts.

Remember how slow time was when you were a child? Remember how the summer holidays languished, thick with hot air? Legs scratched by tea tree, sweat mixed with sunscreen rolling into your eye. The summers of my own childhood, spent on a bush block on Peramangk land, evoke different sensibilities to Gail Hocking's childhood, tramping with her dad in the landscapes of the Tararua Ranges, Southern Alpine region and Fiordland of Aotearoa. But it is through conversation with Hocking, and time spent with her work that I am able to re-map myself.

As a curator I often think of the *time spent with*-ness of artworks, where the work is done. In this body of work, the *time spent with* materials is doubled down and folded in on *time spent with* a glacier, *time spent with* the landscape. So much *time spent with* means that the being of the place, its essential *this-ness* has become part of the body. In Hocking's work the *this-ness* of who she is, and the *this-ness* of the place are imparted into the *this-ness* of the artwork, they are inseparable.

Hocking's *At the edge of memory* speaks of her strong connection with the glacier *Ka Roimata o Hine Hukatere* near where she lived (also referred to as the Franz Josef Glacier). As a youth she spent many hours in, and under the edge of the ancient ice. The underside of a glacier is magical and otherworldly, shaped by the interplay between the weight of the ice, gravity, and the topography of the valley it occupies. Channels and caves of smooth, blue, translucent ice contrast with the dark mountain rock. The ice is solid, but also flowing. *Ka Roimata o Hine Hukatere* is a Māori name which translates as 'Tears of the Avalanche Maiden', describing the tragic love story of Hine Hukatere and her lover Tuawe. For thousands of years the glacier has flowed slowly down the mountain, but since 2008 has receded more than 1.5 km in length. Hocking captures the flow



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and architecture of the glacier in these human-scale sculptural works. The texture and drape of the material bring attention to the act of making; the labour, intimacy and gesture of the body as it works the fabric. They are mnemonic – a love song that honours the place; and for the audience they are a glimpse into the magic of an ancient, living landscape.

A sphere within a sphere.

Hocking's *Life within life* could speak to the interconnection between humans, animals, plants, fungi. But to do that I think would miss an opportunity to speak to the concept of dark ecology. Shrouded in black earthenware, these exhaled breaths are materially distant from the 'lightness' often connected to breath. Hocking makes us aware of the corporeality of our breath – the physical act of expelling this air from our bodies, and through capturing it within these strange forms, she makes us realise that the air was never really ours anyway. The breath is abject.

'Nothing remains of you except this floating absence'<sup>1</sup> — *Marguerite Duras*

The heavy quality of these breaths, their weight and volume, and the existential, material *this-ness* of the gauze and clay draw us into a feeling of closeness to the earth, the mud. As Timothy Morton describes in *Ecology without Nature*, 'Environment as theory, as wonder, as doubt, does not achieve escape velocity from the earth but, in fact, sinks down into it further than any wishful thinking, any naive concept of interconnectedness could push us.'<sup>2</sup> Captured in this clay is a moment of being here, part of this earth.

Vulnerability and joy.

A landscape encountered is an experience, not a statement or an answer to a question. This exhibition is an opportunity for re-mapping ourselves with the affect of a landscape: to have a feeling rather than a thought or comment. To lay in the mud and breathe with the mountain.

<sup>1</sup> Marguerite Duras, *Two by Duras*, Translated by Alberto Manguel, (Coach House Press, Toronto, 1993) p. 41

<sup>2</sup> Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007) p. 200



***At the edge of memory***  
2023, muslin, casting plaster,  
blended wax, steel, site-specific  
installation, dimensions variable.



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## *From Country Arts SA*

The Breaking Ground Professional Development Award sets out to elevate and accelerate the careers of South Australian regional artists by providing the support to push the boundaries of their practice into new and uncharted territory.

Since being launched in 2011 the award has supported seven regionally based artists to pursue an ambitious creative vision with the guidance of a mentor as they work towards realising a major solo exhibition at a metropolitan gallery. This year we celebrate an inaugural partnership with Praxis Artspace as the presenting venue and thank them for their commitment to supporting distinctive and daring contemporary practice.

Normanville-based artist Gail Hocking is the winner of the 2023 Breaking Ground Award and for 12 months has worked with her chosen mentor Janet Laurence to incorporate site-specific and immersive elements into her practice.

Additional to this, Hocking has used the Award to undertake a period of expansive and galvanising material exploration. Building upon previous work that considered relational dynamics between human and non-human beings, her Breaking Ground research has focussed on existing scientific knowledge about the impacts of climate change on landscapes and their ecologies, specifically glaciers and mountain ecosystems. Underpinning this is a framework centring Hocking's personal connection, memory and lived experience of time-spent-with-nature in her childhood home of Aotearoa (New Zealand).

The resulting exhibition is a poetic and haunting exploration of global climate concerns through a deeply personal lens.

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the 2023 Breaking Ground exhibition *Between Us* by Gail Hocking.



## Gail Hocking: *Between Us*

27 July – 26 August 2023

Praxis Artspace

Gail Hocking: *Between Us* has been commissioned by Country Arts SA through the Breaking Ground Award presented in partnership with SALA Festival and Praxis Artspace.

The Country Arts SA Breaking Ground Professional Development Award provides a practising contemporary visual artist from regional South Australia the opportunity to develop a body of work for exhibition in a major gallery space in metropolitan Adelaide and receive a mentorship opportunity to further their career.

### From the artist

I would like to thank; my family; my life partner Mark Hocking for his ongoing support; my Breaking Ground mentor Janet Laurence; soundscape artist Thor-Robert Jelstad; writer Adele Sliuzas for her catalogue essay; Sam Mulcahy for making steel supports; Country Arts SA and team, especially Lauren Mustillo; Patty Chehade at Praxis Artspace, and; SALA Festival. Thank you all for your support in making this exhibition and new work possible.

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Cover & left: *At the edge of memory*, 2023, muslin, casting plaster, blended wax, steel, site-specific installation, dimensions variable.  
Above & top left: *We all bruise*, 2023, plaster, blended wax, silicon, series of 15 individual pieces, dimensions up to 160 x 40 cm (each).



SALA



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