

# **Where Do The Fish Go?**

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A thesis exhibition presented to OCAD University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Art in Interdisciplinary Master's in Art, Media and Design (IAMD)

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**Abstract**

Be like a fish, flow with water, rise and sink, and let the body learn the flow before the mind explains it. This thesis explores the spontaneous rhythms of everyday life through the fish as an embodied guide and through material experiments—fish prints, fish origami, and soldered fish drawings made on daily collected receipts. These daily receipts function as an archive of ordinary life, fragile evidence of routine and passing time. The exhibition transforms the gallery into a fish tank–like environment built from these receipt–based works, blurring body, installation, and space. Visitors are invited to wander through the installation as participants, sensing the work through movement, where the meaning of everyday life is not fixed but gradually revealed through experience—through what the flow brings, what it takes, and where it leads.

Keyterms: fish, flow, bodily intuition, embodiment, material exploration, Sisyphus.

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**Table of Content**

Abstract	1
Acknowledgement	2
Table of Content	3
List of Figures	4
What is the fish?	7
The Rock	
Sisyphus	10
We Intersect, Yet, Never Connect	11
Let The Rock Fall	17
The Fish	
Once, I Existed	22
Why Fish Do Not Exist	29
Exploratory Writing	33
Bodily Intuition	37
Material Experiment	41
The Flow	
Fish flow in the Water	52
Where Do The Fish Go?	65
Bibliography	68

## List of Figure

Figure 1. *Contemplation of Loneliness (2019)*, poster design.

Figure 2. *Contemplation of Loneliness (2019)*, poster design.

Figure 3. *We Intersect, Yet, Never Connect (2023)*, mixmedia installation.

Figure 4. Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, *FASE*.

Figure 5. Wassily Kandinsky, *Dance Curves: On the Dances of Palucca (1926)*.

Figure 6. *We Intersect, Yet, Never Connect (2023)*, mixmedia installation.

Figure 7. *We Intersect, Yet, Never Connect (2024)*, mixmedia installation.

Figure 8. *We Intersect, Yet, Never Connect (2024)*, mixmedia installation.

Figure 9. *Untitled* collaboration with Eugene, soft pastel and clay.

Figure 10. *Let the Rock Fall (2025)*, mixmedia.

Figure 11. *Let the Rock Fall (2025)*, mixmedia.

Figure 12. *Chichu Art Museum*, Naoshima, Japan. Photograph from <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/>.

Figure 13. Claude Monet space in *Chichu Art Museum*, Naoshima, Japan. Photograph from <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/>.

Figure 14. James Turrell, *Open Field*, Naoshima, Japan. Photograph from <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/>.

Figure 15. Rei Naito, *Matrix*, Teshima, Japan. Photograph from <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/>.

Figure 16. *Teshima Art Museum*, Teshima, Japan. Photograph from <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/>.

Figure 17. Process of *Once, I Existed (2025)*, cyanotype on washi paper.

Figure 18. Process of *Once, I Existed (2025)*, cyanotype on washi paper.

Figure 19. *Once, I Existed (2025)*, cyanotype on washi paper.

Figure 20. Ruisuke Fukahori, 方丈ノ夢, Osaka, Japan.

Figure 21. Ruisuke Fukahori, 方丈ノ夢, Osaka, Japan.

Figure 22. Exploratory writing during Tashima art museum visit.

Figure 23. Exploratory writing on receipts printing experiments.

Figure 24. Aquarium photo.

Figure 25. Interior view of *Chichu Art Museum*, Naoshima, Japan. Photograph from <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/>.

Figure 26. Cutlassfish on receipt experiment.

Figure 27. Cyanotype fish on receipt experiment.

Figure 28. Exploratory writings fish on receipt experiments.

Figure 29. Exploratory writings fish on receipt experiments.

Figure 30. Fish origamis.

Figure 31. Fish origamis.

Figure 32. Fish print experiment.

Figure 33. Printed fish origami process on receipts.

Figure 34. Cutlassfish strips and recombined cutlassfish strips.

Figure 35. Cutlassfish strips and recombined cutlassfish strips.

Figure 36. Invitation cards and promotion posters for the exhibition.

Figure 37. Invitation cards and promotion posters for the exhibition.

Figure 38. Invitation cards and promotion posters for the exhibition.

Figure 39. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 41. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 42. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 43. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 44. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 45. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 46. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 47. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 48. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 49. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 50. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 51. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 52. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

Figure 53. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition deinstalling photos.

Figure 54. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition deinstalling photos.

Figure 55. *Where Do The Fish Go? (2026)* Exhibition photos.

## **What is the Fish?**

Two years ago, I could not have imagined that my thesis would arrive at fish as its subject matter. At that time, I would have said that I was interested in Sisyphus, and that through the figure of Sisyphus I wanted to explore the self, others, and the world. I have always been someone who values concepts more than outcome. My earlier projects clearly revealed this tendency; they often carried complex and compelling ideas, yet their material forms did not always fully arrive where I wanted them to. For a long time, Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* remained the conceptual core of my practice. I was drawn to Sisyphus's dazzling pain, wandering within the repetitive cycle of nihilism in a kind of solitary ecstasy.

My residency with Ayumi Goto in Takamatsu in the summer of 2025 became the starting point of this thesis. Yet, the shift began even earlier. It began when I realized that for Sisyphus, what mattered was not simply the impossible task he could never complete, but the rock that accompanied him endlessly. Once my attention shifted from the task to the rock, my perspective changed. And with that change in perspective came the encounter with fish. From there, everything unfolded naturally.

In this thesis, I tell the story of how my attention moved from Sisyphus to the rock, from the rock to the fish, and from the fish to flow. The thesis is organized into three chapters: The Rock, The Fish, and The Flow.

Through this thesis, I suggest that art can emerge when the body is allowed to respond to material and environment before the mind seeks to explain. Intuitive making gives rise to forms of understanding that are bodily and relational, rather than fully predetermined. An installation space can invite embodied flow by shaping conditions of movement, attention, and atmosphere without closing meaning.

Rather than offering definitive conclusions, this thesis follows a story. It traces a movement of perception in order to invite others not only to understand flow, but to feel it, and perhaps to move with it. So, what is the fish in this paper?

The fish is Sisyphus, simply pushing the rock and letting it fall. The fish is the rock itself, pushed to the summit only to fall again. The fish is me, fascinated by an idea, becoming stuck, then shifting perspective. The fish is everyone who lives, becomes stuck, and finds a way to move again. The fish is also simply fish, swimming in the flow.

# The Rock

## Sisyphus

Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* guided my life for a long time. In fact, even before reading Camus, I was already drawn to Sisyphus's pain and despair. Sisyphus, a figure from Greek mythology, was punished by the gods to roll a giant rock to the top of a hill in the underworld after he defied the natural order by cheating death. The rock is too heavy; it falls every time—just as it nearly reaches the summit. The road to the top is steep and uneven. The rock is harsh against the skin. In the moment when the rock almost seems able to stand at the top, it slips and rolls back down again, crashing into the darkness. How far is the distance between the foot of the hill and the peak? How sharp are the stones under his feet? How sore are the shoulders that carry the weight? Only Sisyphus knows. He travels between the bottom and the top again and again, pushing the rock, watching it fall, returning to begin once more, an unbreakable cycle. This eternity is his punishment.

Sisyphus is often understood as a symbol of futile labor. But in the 20th century, Camus reinterpreted him as a symbol of human existence itself: the confrontation between meaning-seeking humans and an indifferent universe. Rather than focusing only on the nihilism of endless work, Camus proposes a different conclusion. He writes that we should imagine Sisyphus happy:

The struggle itself is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.<sup>1</sup>

Camus chooses the word imagine—a verb, an action. In a life without inherent meaning, he suggests, we must create meaning for ourselves. Yet for a long time, I remained stuck

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<sup>1</sup> Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York: Vintage International, 1991), 273.

on that word. To *imagine* implies something we do not truly possess; it suggests that happiness is not fully real, only projected. The reason we pity Sisyphus is that we know his labor will never be completed. His task is an eternal cycle.

Humans are often drawn to extreme emotions. I was drawn to his pain, his endless repetition, his despair that has no end. Through him, I began to contemplate my own life. The word “imagine” held me there. I realized that I, too, was stuck in a cycle, milder than Sisyphus’s, but still exhausting in its own way. For a long time, I searched for an answer in a meaningless world. And, of course, I found nothing.

### **We Intersect, Yet, Never Connect**

*We Intersect, Yet, Never Connect* explores relationships between individuals while reflecting on Albert Camus’s portrayal of Sisyphus living alone within an endless absurd cycle. This project exists in multiple versions. It began as my undergraduate capstone project, *Contemplation of Loneliness*, in which I designed a series of posters featuring Sisyphus pushing a rock.



Fig 1. *Contemplation of Loneliness* (2019), poster design.

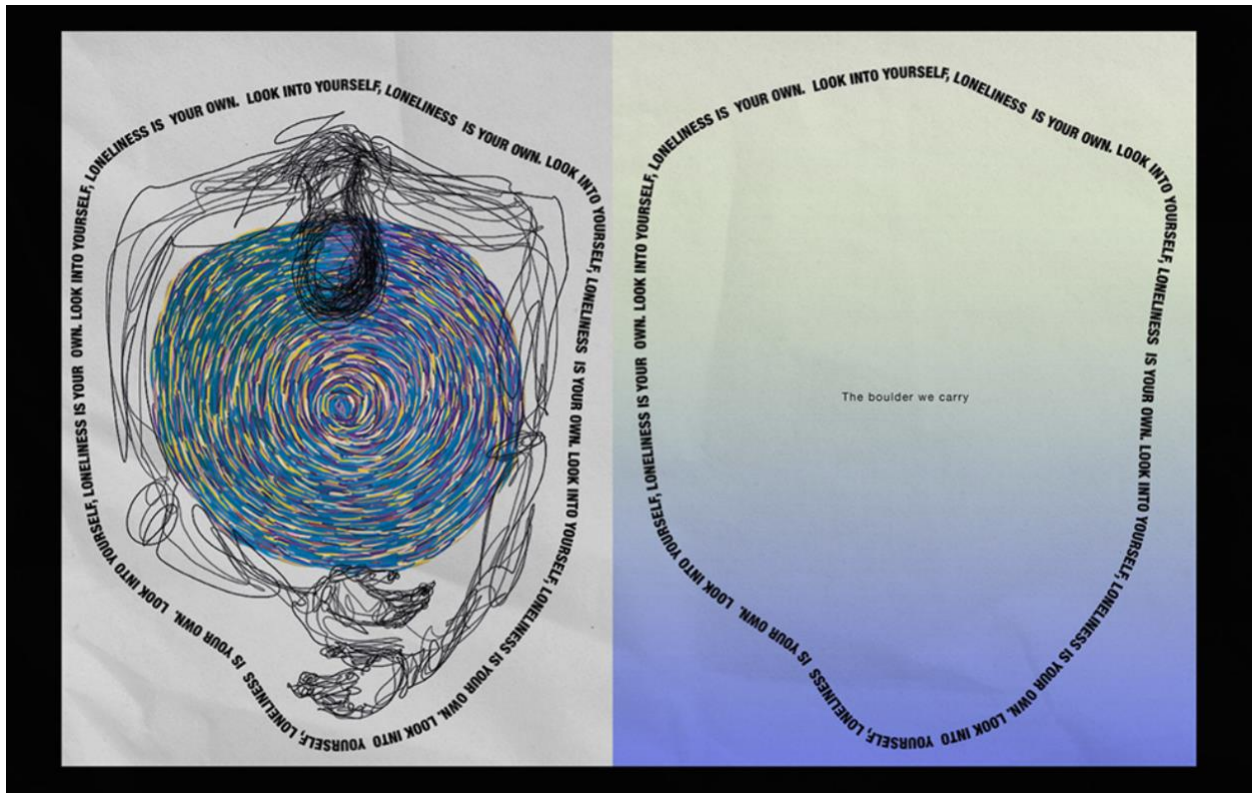


Fig 2. *Contemplation of Loneliness (2019)*, poster design.

That early project invited viewers to contemplate and accept loneliness—not as a personal failure, but as a condition to sit with, learn from, and recognize as shared. In those posters, the rock became a symbol of the loneliness that persists: something heavy, private, and unavoidable. However, as an undergraduate graphic design capstone, the format of poster design was not enough to hold the conceptual weight I wanted the work to carry. I wanted the work to move beyond representation. This desire led to a new version—*We Intersect, Yet, Never Connect*. In Sisyphus’s endless journey, he repeatedly watches what he longs for slip away and fall into darkness. I recognized a similar structure in human relationships. In life, we constantly intersect with the lives of others—approaching, overlapping, and separating again and again. The moment of closeness is often followed by distance. Like Sisyphus facing the falling rock, we repeatedly confront the impossibility of completion.

At the same time, I was drawn to Plato's myth of the androgynes in *Symposium*, which imagines humans as once-whole beings split into halves, condemned to long for reunion.<sup>2</sup> The project is not only about romantic love or loneliness; it is about something more fundamental, a recurring human condition of proximity without completion. As the title suggests, we intersect, yet never fully connect.

For this version, I began by working with my own photographic archive. I extracted figures from photographs I had taken over time—strangers, friends, and family members—and traced their outlines using pencil and tracing paper. By layering and redrawing these contours, I produced dense intersections of lines between bodies. I then transferred these figures onto transparency film, cut them into rectangular fragments, and arranged and adhered them onto boards to form an installation. From the front, the human outlines overlap and intersect, yet remain separated as individual forms.



Fig 3. *We Intersect, Yet, Never Connect* (2023), mixedmedia installation.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Knott, "The Myth of the Androgyne," *Artforum* 14, no. 3 (November 1975): 38–45.

The visual language of the work was influenced by the contemporary dance choreographer Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's *FASE*<sup>3</sup>, as well as Wassily Kandinsky's *Dance Curves: On the Dances of Palucca* (1926)<sup>4</sup>. Overlay, intersection, individuality, bodily contour, and line became the project's key visual elements.



Fig 4. Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, *FASE*.

Fig 5. Wassily Kandinsky, *Dance Curves: On the Dances of Palucca* (1926).

The goal of the project remained the same—to invite contemplation. But a static installation still felt insufficient. I wanted viewers to experience the concept through their own bodies rather than observe it from a distance. This led me to create an interactive version using a camera and TouchDesigner. The camera captured visitors' movement, and their silhouettes were transformed into lines. When two or more people moved in front of the camera, their movements became intersecting lines on screen—approaching and overlapping, but never connecting.

<sup>3</sup> Tate Modern, "Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker: Fase," Tate, accessed Feb 22, 2026.

<sup>4</sup> Bianca Pasquinelli, "Kandinsky and the Dance of the Future," Matteo Mascolo, June 2, 2022, updated July 27, 2023, accessed Feb 22, 2026.

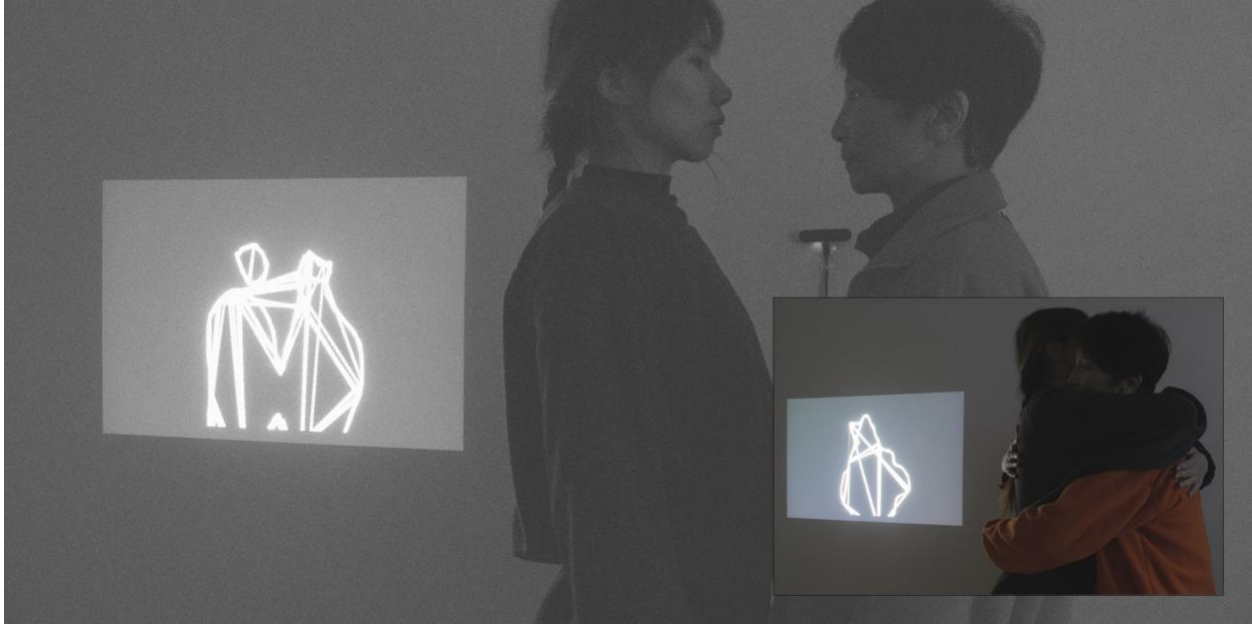


Fig 6. *We Intersect, Yet, Never Connect (2023)*, interactive installation.

After entering the IAMD program, I developed another version for the school exhibition *1000 Years Problem* in collaboration with my classmate Yuting Zhou, who specializes in textile art. Yuting created a breathable textile surface mounted on the wall as a projection screen. I produced a looping video of people walking through public space, overlaid with intersecting lines. The video was projected onto the textile, allowing the imagery to shift with the material's subtle movement. The "breathing" textile surface symbolized our deep longing to become one, while the intersecting lines visualized relationships between individuals: we come together and drift apart, much like Sisyphus repeatedly confronting the falling rock on his endless journey.

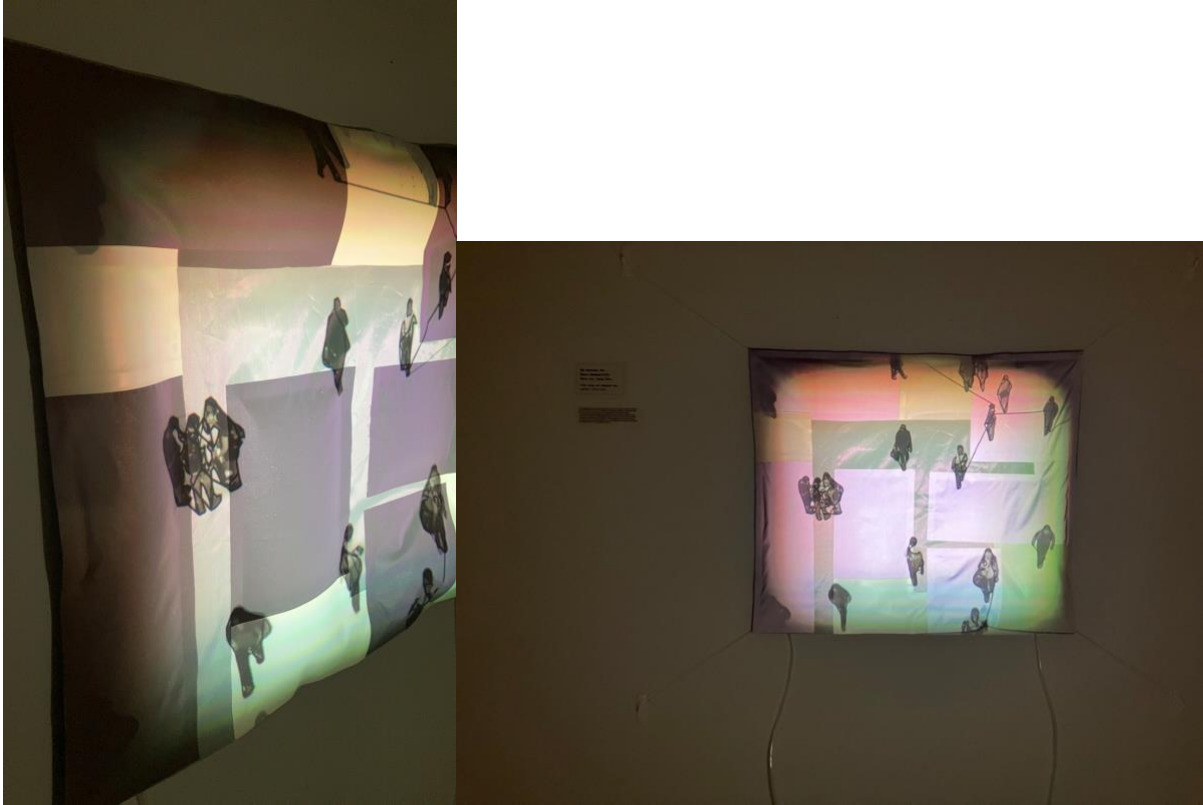


Fig 7, 8. *We Intersect, Yet, Never Connect (2024)*, mixedmedia installation.

In fact, the five projects I submitted for my IAMD application all grew from *We Intersect, Yet, Never Connect*. Each project approached Camus’s statement—“One must imagine Sisyphus happy”<sup>5</sup>—from a different angle, attempting to examine the human condition through different media. In a sense, they were variations of the same core concept, translated across formats. I spent a long period unsure of what my thesis should become. Sisyphus’s pain began to feel like my own. The cycle that I had been representing through my work became a cycle I was living inside: confusion and clarity, questioning and acceptance, again and again. Sometimes I found temporary answers; other times I felt lost. I know I will face more confusion in the future—perhaps an endless cycle of not knowing and knowing.

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<sup>5</sup> Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 273.

## **Let the Rock Fall**

I began working on a project I had postponed for an entire semester: a collaborative painting with one of my classmate. At the beginning of the first semester, Eugene gave me a blank canvas and asked me to draw or paint anything I wanted. He would then respond on the same canvas using clay.

I began by drawing a large circle, big enough to fill the entire canvas, repeatedly and intuitively. My hand held a black soft pastel and moved in circles without hesitation. I did not want to spend time thinking about what to draw. I simply let my hand move. The circle gradually became a black form. I added different colors along the curve of the circle's edge. From a distance, it looked like a colorful black hole, but I knew it was a rock.

Strange, why the rock?

In my previous work, the rock was never my focus. I always began from Sisyphus's perspective. Sisyphus served as a lens through which I explored the world; his viewpoint became my viewpoint. I had originally intended to paint Sisyphus, because I had told my classmate that I planned to. Yet my hand drew only the rock.

The rock—the object that accompanies Sisyphus through eternity, is inseparable from his emotional life. It holds the joy of almost reaching the summit, and it holds the pain of Sisyphus watching it roll back down. That pain is so striking that my gaze had always been pulled toward Sisyphus's suffering, and away from the rock itself. But Sisyphus's countless failures do not bring pain to the rock. The rock does not mourn its repetition. It simply falls. It moves with the current.



Fig 9. *Untitled* collaboration with Eugene, soft pastel and clay

My perspective shifts  
 Sometimes I see a massive rock  
 Unyielding, edgy, and raw  
 Pushed upward with all my strength.

Sometimes my body lines still  
 A rock falling from above,  
 Streaking into nowhere.

Sometimes I stand at the depth of shadow  
 gazing up at the shooting star  
 tearing the darkness apart

Sometimes I am the rock  
 perched atop the mountain,  
 staring into another eyes of myself.

The moment hangs suspended—  
 I wonder about the fall,  
 the collision.  
 Will the rock shatter into pieces,  
 or will it collapse everything?

So I imagine the rock—  
It falls, unexpected and uncertain  
fearless and unrestricted  
It falls into a sea of countless rocks,  
colliding, collapsing.

My perspective shifts again—  
I stand at the top of the mountain,  
gazing into the infinite  
The moment hangs suspended

So I imagine the rock falling  
falling into nowhere.

This poem became the foundation of my project for the Great Hall exhibition, *Let the Rock Fall*. The first sentence “My perspective shifts” appeared in my mind one day. I followed intuition and wrote the poem first, before trying to interpret it. Later, I handwrote the poem onto transparent film sheets and overlaid the sheets into the shape of a shooting star. I also wrote the poem onto a strip of tape and reassembled it into a roll. During the exhibition, audiences could tear off pieces of the tape and place them anywhere they wanted.

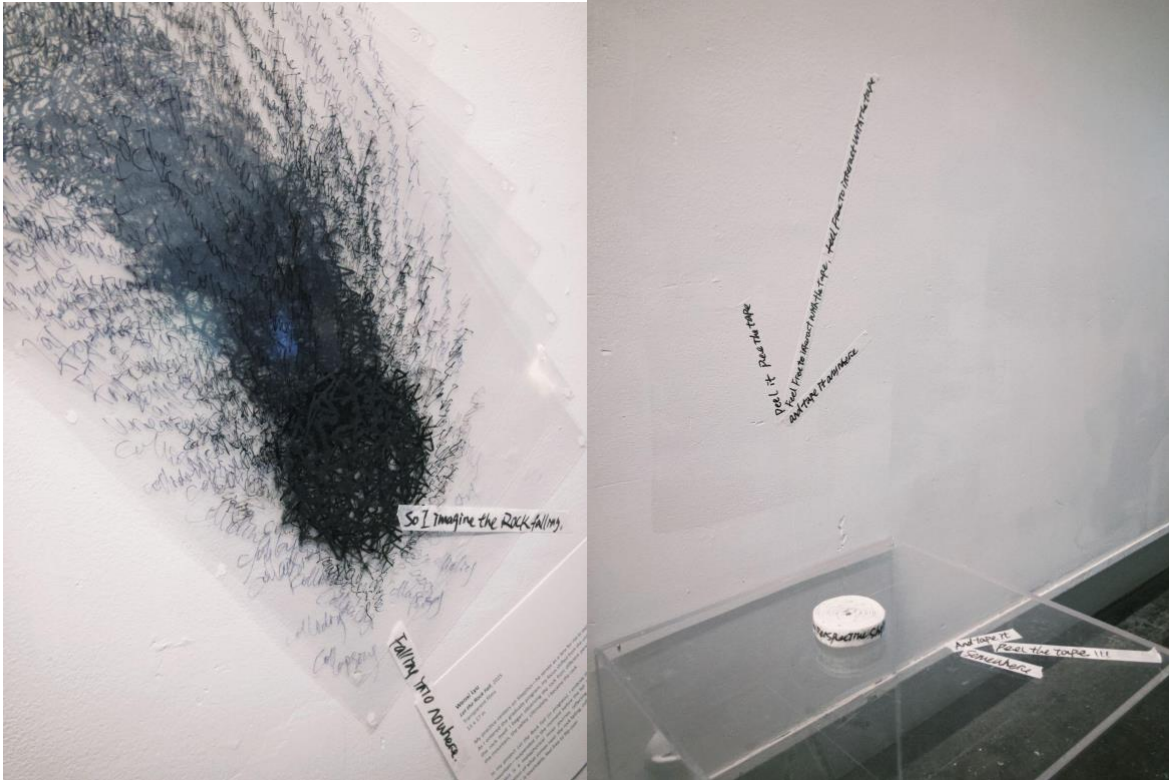


Fig 10, 11. *Let the Rock Fall (2025)*, mixmedia.

In my statement for *Let the Rock Fall*, I wrote that my focus shifted from the unattainable task to the rock itself. I began observing the rock from different perspectives: Sisyphus, the mountain, the valley. Ultimately, I became the rock. In my project *Let The Rock Fall* (in progress), I embody the rock at the top of the mountain—suspended in the moment before the fall. The poem I wrote for this project is a metaphorical inner journey, reflecting my current state and my expectation of what comes next: the rock falling, colliding, and transforming.

My perspective shifted. My focus was no longer Sisyphus and his incomplete task. It moved toward something I had neglected for a long time. Eventually, I began to sense that Sisyphus was about to leave my life. Deep in my gut, I knew this project was a turning point.

# The Fish

## **Once, I Existed**

The art residency in Japan, Takamatsu, was the moment of inspiration that set me on the path to move beyond Sisyphus. Takamatsu is located along the Seto Inland sea, a region that hosts a contemporary art festival every three years across the islands. The Triennale is divided into spring, summer, and fall seasons, allowing visitors to enjoy the landscape in different seasons. I arrived in mid-June, before the summer session began. The temperature was already high.

One day, I was walking alone to my accommodation with heavy groceries. The sun beat down on my skin, and the wind carried heat and dust from passing vehicles. My legs moved mechanically. Sweat gathered and slid down my back. I thought of the fish in the lake under the bridge I walked over a few days ago. Its body was also exposed to the harsh sunlight. The lake was shallow, and the flow stirred up the mud. The fish did not struggle against its condition. It did not resist the mud or the sunlight. It simply moved with the flow.

My bodily sensation extended outward. What I saw was not separate from what I felt. My eyes received the view, my skin met the air, dust clung to sweat, and heat pressed into every pore. The distinction between my body and the environment softened. I felt as if I existed only in that moment. Later, I came to understand this experience through Juhani Pallasmaa's *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*.

In *The Eyes of the Skin*, Pallasmaa critiques the ocularcentric paradigm that has shaped modern relationships to the world. For him, architecture should not address vision alone, but should engage the full body through touch, sound, smell, memory, and movement. He proposes that the body is the true center of how we experience space. He

describes human existence as relational: “our bodies and movements are in constant interaction with the environment; the world and the self-inform and redefine each other constantly.”<sup>6</sup> The self, the body and the world are not separate entities, but are continually constituted through one another. This helped me understand what I had felt in Takamatsu. The experience was not only visual. It was not simply that I saw the fish, the sun, or the passing vehicles. Rather, my body was being addressed by the whole environment. I wrote in exploratory writing, which later became part of the key research method for this thesis:

I walked all the way down the road. The sun burned my skin. Everything was so bright it dazzled my eyes. Sound of heat, sound of wind, sound of footsteps, sound of silence. They all carried me forward, unconsciously. Every moment became the present moment. It felt as if only bodily sensation could pull my floating consciousness back into my body. Come back, Wenxi! Come back! You are melting; your mind, your soul, they are vaporizing in the air.

It was the touch between my body and the environment that defined me as myself during those embodied moments. My mind was wandering, scattered through the air, while my body mechanically walked under the sun. The environment became like a large piece of fabric, wrapping around me, constantly reminding my body that I was here, in this moment.

This embodied experience was deepened through visits to Chichu art museum, and Teshima art museum at the Seto Inland sea. Chichu Art Museum is designed by Tadao Ando on Naoshima Island, the architecture and artworks are conceived as an

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<sup>6</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2024), 33.

inseparable whole. The museum exhibits only a few artists—Claude Monet’s *Water Lilies*, James Turrell’s *Afrum*, *Pale Blue*, *Open Field*, and *Open Sky*, and Walter De Maria’s *Time/Timeless/No Time*, yet the building itself functions as a work of art.<sup>7</sup> Ando treats the exhibition space as a total composition: the boundary between artwork and architecture dissolves. Interior and exterior are not strictly separated; the museum is completed through its relationship with the surrounding landscape and light. Space and artwork appear naturally fused, as a unified presence.



Fig 12. *Chichu Art Museum*, Naoshima, Japan. Photograph from <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/>.



Fig 13. Claude Monet space in *Chichu Art Museum*, Naoshima, Japan. Photograph from <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/>.

<sup>7</sup> *Chichu Art Museum Handbook* (Naoshima: Benesse Art Site Naoshima, 2022), 3–5.

Beyond the integration of architecture and artwork, James Turrell's *Open Field* (1994), part of his *Ganzfelds* series, produced a strong sensory experience.<sup>8</sup> While waiting to enter the space, I found myself unable to determine whether what I was seeing was a painting or another space. The boundary between surface and depth became unclear. Inside, the light did not illuminate the space, it became the space. My perception shifted as my body adjusted. The work did not present itself as an object to be viewed, but as an environment to be entered. In this moment of uncertainty, the distinction between viewer and environment began to dissolve.

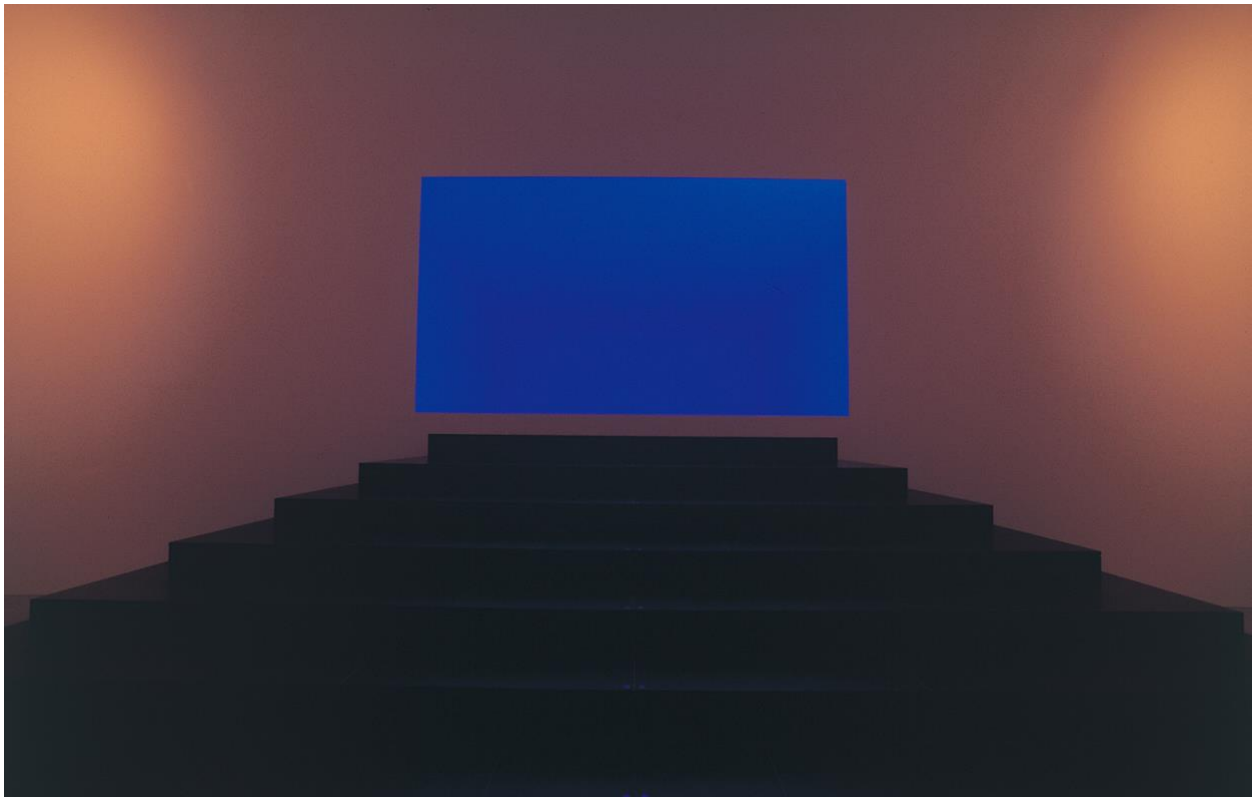


Fig 14. James Turrell, *Open Field*, Naoshima, Japan. Photograph from <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/>.

Teshima Art Museum offered an equally transformative experience. Designed in harmony with Rei Naito's meditative installation *Matrix* and the island's environment, the building resembles a drop of water resting on the earth. Inside the museum, water

<sup>8</sup> "Open Field (1994) by James Turrell," *Artchive*, accessed March 24, 2026.

droplets slowly emerge from the concrete floor and merge with one another, responding subtly to light, wind, and time.<sup>9</sup> Visitors remove their shoes and are invited to walk, sit, lie down, or remain still for as long as they wish, simply experiencing the space. The work does not demand interpretation; it invites presence.



Fig 15. Rei Naito, *Matrix*, Teshima, Japan. Photograph from <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/>.



Fig 16. *Teshima Art Museum*, Teshima, Japan. Photograph from <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/>.

<sup>9</sup> *Teshima Art Museum Handbook*, 34–36.

In both museums, space was not a container for art but an active participant in the artwork. The body was not a distant observer but part of the environment. These encounters brought me back to that fish, the one moving quietly under the harsh sunlight. During my time on Naoshima Island, I thought of it repeatedly. When I walked from the bus stop to Chichu Art Museum, I was that fish. When I moved between exhibition rooms, I was that fish. The strangers visiting alongside me were fish as well. Everything felt as natural as a fish inhabiting water.

For the final exhibition of the residency, I wanted to respond directly to this embodied experience. I drew my sensations in oil pastel on transparent film sheets. Washi paper, a specialty of the Shikoku region, became the base for cyanotype prints of fish I had drawn. I installed the cyanotype fish across the sliding doors of the tatami room where I was staying. The blue forms settled gently into the space, blending with light, and doors. The fish did not dominate the room, they inhabited it.



Fig 17, 18. Process of *Once, I Existed* (2025), cyanotype on washi paper.



Fig 19. *Once, I Existed* (2025), cyanotype on washi paper.

During the residency, I also began keeping the receipts from my daily purchases. I was inspired by a friend who collects tickets and receipts from trips as traces of memory. I found this gesture interesting and started doing the same. The first one I kept was a ferry ticket to Naoshima Island, followed by a museum ticket and, gradually, the everyday receipts I received during my stay in Japan. At first, it was not intentional. I simply did not throw them away. They became small traces of each day, fragments of the life I was living there. I thought I might use them to make work as a response to the residency, much like the installation I created at the time. I did not expect that these receipts would later become central to my thesis. I kept the habit. Even now, I continue to collect them.

## Why Fish Don't Exist

Before going back to Toronto from Japan, I visited the artist Riusuke Fukahori's exhibition *Weaving Boundaries*. I went to the show because he uses goldfish as his subject matter. Fukahori is known for his three-dimensional goldfish made through a technique often described as 2.5D painting, in which acrylic paint is layered onto transparent resin so that the fish appear vivid, suspended, and still in motion. The exhibition included nearly 300 artworks, including resin paintings, large installations, and videos.<sup>10</sup> But whatever the medium was, his goldfish seemed to swim everywhere across canvases, furniture, and fragments of everyday life. Near the entrance, there was a panel with the artist's note, describing why he began painting fish. During a low period in his life, he stayed in his room for an entire month, not going out and barely seeing anyone. When he finally emerged from that state, he found that the small goldfish he had not fed for a month was still alive. He was struck by how such a small life could remain so tenacious, and from that moment, he began to paint goldfish. When I read that note, I felt a deep resonance. The fish was no longer just another figure in an artwork, but seemed to become part of the artist himself. Where the fish goes is where he goes. As a visitor, I was witnessing another fish's life. At the same time, I had just made an artwork myself around fish and embodied experience. This encounter felt strange in a beautiful way. It was as if, at that exact moment, I was meeting fish once again through another person's life and another person's work.

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<sup>10</sup> "Riusuke Fukahori Exhibition: Wavering Boundaries," accessed March 25, 2026.



Fig 20, 21. Ruisuke Fukahori, 方丈ノ夢, Osaka, Japan.

After coming back to Toronto, this feeling did not leave me. My encounter with fish in Japan stayed with me, and it almost felt like destiny. Around that time, one of my classmates recommended Lulu Miller's *Why Fish Do Not Exist* to me. Naturally, or perhaps inevitably, the flow carried both me and the fish into another state. The book unfolds through Miller's exploration of the life of David Starr Jordan, a taxonomist devoted to bringing order to the natural world. Over time, he identified and named nearly a fifth of the fish known in his era, collecting and preserving specimens in glass jars. His work was driven by a belief that life could be organized, that the scattered forms of the natural world could be gathered into a coherent system. Yet again and again, this order was undone. His collections were destroyed in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, which shattered thousands of carefully catalogued specimens in an instant. Faced with this repeated collapse, Jordan did not stop. He began again, recollecting, renaming, and reorganizing what had been lost, as if order could still be restored.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Lulu Miller, *Why Fish Don't Exist: A Story of Loss, Love, and the Hidden Order of Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020).

At first, Miller encounters this story almost like an anecdote, a curiosity. But as the book unfolds, what begins as a story about classification slowly opens into another question: what does it mean to continue, to rebuild, when the systems we rely on repeatedly fall apart? She begins with admiration, even a kind of heroic fascination with Jordan. But that feeling gradually changes. As she learns more about his life, especially his eugenicist beliefs and his obsession with categorizing the world, admiration turns into disillusionment and horror. Eventually, she rejects Jordan as a model and moves instead toward uncertainty, chaos, and contingency, the very things he spent his life trying to resist. In the book, fish first appear as part of a classificatory system, something to be named, ordered, and stabilized. Yet that system itself turns out to be unstable. The category of “fish” was never as fixed as it seemed. What older taxonomy gathered together is unsettled by evolutionary biology, which asks not only what bodies look like, but where lineages lead. Once tetrapods are understood to have emerged from within fish ancestry, “fish” can no longer hold as a closed and stable group. It becomes less a natural truth than a human way of holding disorder still. In the end, Miller’s journey into Jordan’s legacy also becomes a journey inward. By confronting the collapse of the categories she once admired, she undergoes a philosophical reorientation, moving beyond the person who once wanted so badly for meaning to stay still.<sup>12</sup>

Through Miller’s perspective, I witnessed not only David Starr Jordan’s life, but also Miller’s own confrontation with chaos. Reading the book, I thought again of Sisyphus. In Greek mythology, Sisyphus, like David Starr Jordan, seems trapped in a cycle; he pursues an answer that never holds. But Camus’s Sisyphus feels closer to Lulu

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<sup>12</sup> Miller, *Why Fish Don’t Exist*.

Miller, or at least to the movement she makes in the book: rather than finding a final answer, he creates his own way of living within the absurd.

Then, what about me? In the chaotic flow, does a swimming fish know that it is a swimming fish? Can a fish in the lake swim into the sea? And where do fish in the sea go? These questions led me to think of the debate between Zhuangzi and Huizi on “The Joy of Fish”. Zhuangzi sees fish swimming freely in the water and says that they are happy. Huizi replies: you are not a fish, so how do you know the happiness of fish? Zhuangzi answers: you are not me, so how do you know that I do not know the happiness of fish?<sup>13</sup> The exchange does not resolve the question, instead, it shifts it. The issue is no longer whether one can objectively know the fish, but how one relates to it. Of course, I cannot be the fish. But I can resonate with Fukahori’s fish, with Lulu Miller’s fish, and with David Starr Jordan’s fish—through shared conditions and encounters. As Kefu Zhu suggests in his reading of Zhuangzi’s Fish Parable, what matters is not the possession of knowledge about the fish as an object, but the embodied relation between perception, environment, and living being. Zhu writes, “The fish attune to themselves as they are in the water. Self-attunement is the joy of fish.”<sup>14</sup> In this sense, fish is no longer only a figure to be classified or explained, but something encountered through relation and resonance.

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<sup>13</sup> David K. Jordan, “Zhuāngzǐ: The Joy of Fish,” University of California, San Diego, created October 4, 2011, accessed March 26, 2026.

<sup>14</sup> Kefu Zhu, “Toward a Deeper Appreciation of Correlative Thinking: A Comparative Analysis of Zhuangzi’s Fish Parable and Merleau-Ponty’s Philosophy of Body,” *Metaphilosophy* 55, no. 2 (April 1, 2024): 255.

## **Exploratory Writing**

I have never been someone who enjoys documenting my life. I regularly delete photos, and ideas or concepts often remain only in my mind. Between mind and body, concept and making, I have always been more inclined toward the former, I value concepts or meanings more than concrete objects or material outcomes.

I know my mind had been dominating, almost suppressing my body. But I didn't recognize how serious this imbalance could become. This became clear during the Winter 2025 semester, when I experienced nearly two months of insomnia. By the end of the semester, I had an exhibition to prepare, papers to write, and grading responsibilities as a teaching assistant. On the surface, I believed I was managing everything well. I even had time to scroll through my phone and read online novels. Objectively, I did not think I felt overwhelmed by these tasks. Yet every sleepless night was my body's response to the conditions around me. It was saying: something is wrong.

What I found striking was that, during this same period, I wrote in a reflection for my Writing as Praxis class that when an issue is repeatedly brought up by a group of people, it is often because it has not been fully acknowledged by others. It needs to be repeated in order to be recognized. In a similar way, my body was repeatedly communicating through insomnia, insisting that I was under stress, yet I continued to ignore it. I tried many ways to deal with sleeplessness: taking melatonin, following meditation videos to fall asleep, listening to dry philosophical lectures, reading poetry, and writing to release emotion. It was at this point that I began the practice of exploratory writing. I started writing to document not only my thoughts, but also my bodily sensations. I wrote in the form of poetry, recording the fatigue and fear of long, sleepless nights, the body's response to the surrounding environment, and spontaneous

reflections on things I encountered and theories I read. In *The Thinking Hand*, Juhani Pallasmaa refers to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's argument that everyday life is inherently philosophical. As they suggest, "every thought we have, every decision we make, and every act we perform is based upon philosophical assumptions..."<sup>15</sup> Even when we are not aware of it, we are constantly constructing meaning through our lived experience. I finally admitted that I had been listening more to my mind than to the body. At the same time, I did not want to sink entirely into emotion. Instead, I let those emotions remain mostly in writing. I allowed each sleepless night to pass through my body, quietly feeling it, thinking through it, and recording it. Exploratory writing, in this sense, is not separate from thinking, it is thinking in process. Later, during my visit to Teshima Art Museum, I continued this practice, writing down my bodily and mental responses to its architectural environment.

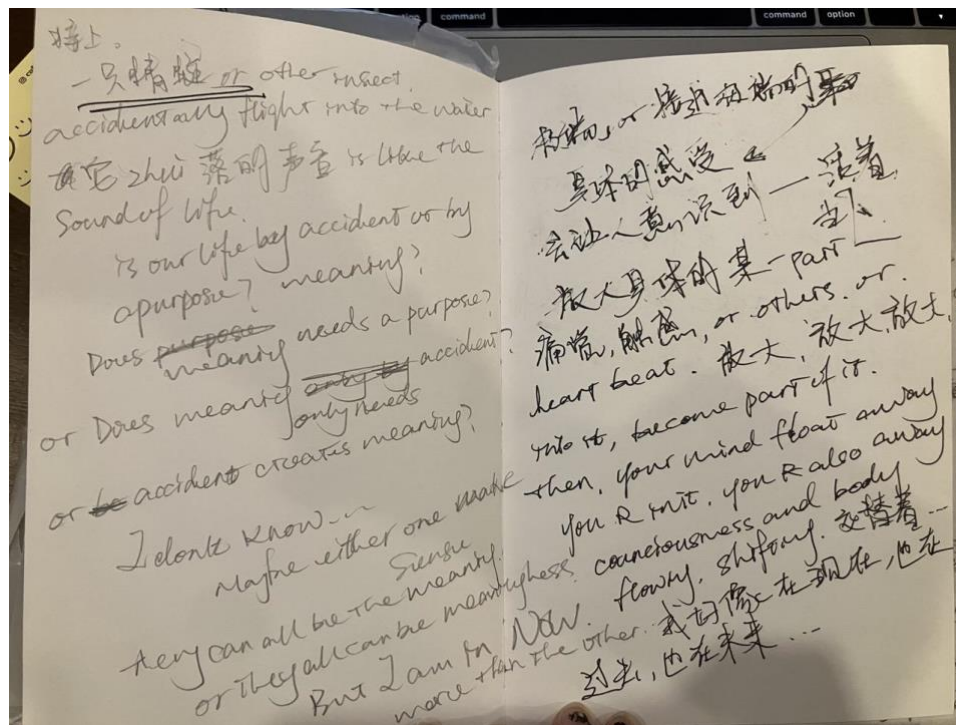


Fig 22. Exploratory writing during Tashima art museum visit

<sup>15</sup> Juhani Pallasmaa, "Embodied and Existential Wisdom in Architecture: The Thinking Hand," *Body & Society* 23, no. 1 (March 2017): 102, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X16681443>.

Part of the purpose of exploratory writing was to gather and hold my scattered thoughts. While external deadlines contributed to pressure, I realized that the deeper source of anxiety came from the uncertainty of my thesis direction. It was less a clearly defined question and more a persistent, unarticulated feeling. In one of the program writing course, my professor introduced the idea of writing as a form of quilting, drawing on the concept:

a quilting practice, as an act of kinship, of exploration, and of imagining...

allowing us to strengthen, protect, and care for one another, while also

acknowledging and thinking with the precarity of our materials and ourselves.”<sup>16</sup>

This idea resonated with me. I began to see exploratory writing not as isolated fragments, but as pieces that could be assembled over time. When I do not know how to write in English, I write in Chinese; when I do not know how to write in Chinese, I write in English. These exploratory writings were later printed onto the receipts I had collected and presented in the exhibition. Overlaid on records of daily purchases, the writings became partially obscured. I did not want viewers to fully grasp what I had written. The point was not to reveal my inner thoughts, but to leave traces of moments I had consciously registered, carried by materials that were themselves records of daily routine. I wanted to see what the intertwining of thought, reflection, and collected material might reveal.

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<sup>16</sup> Petra Vackova, Donata Puntil, Emily Dowdeswell, Carolyn Cooke, and Lucy Caton, “Collaborative Writing as Bio-Digital Quilting: A Relational, Feminist Practice Towards ‘Academia Otherwise,’” *Social Inclusion* 11, no. 3 (2023): 4, <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v11i3.6616>.

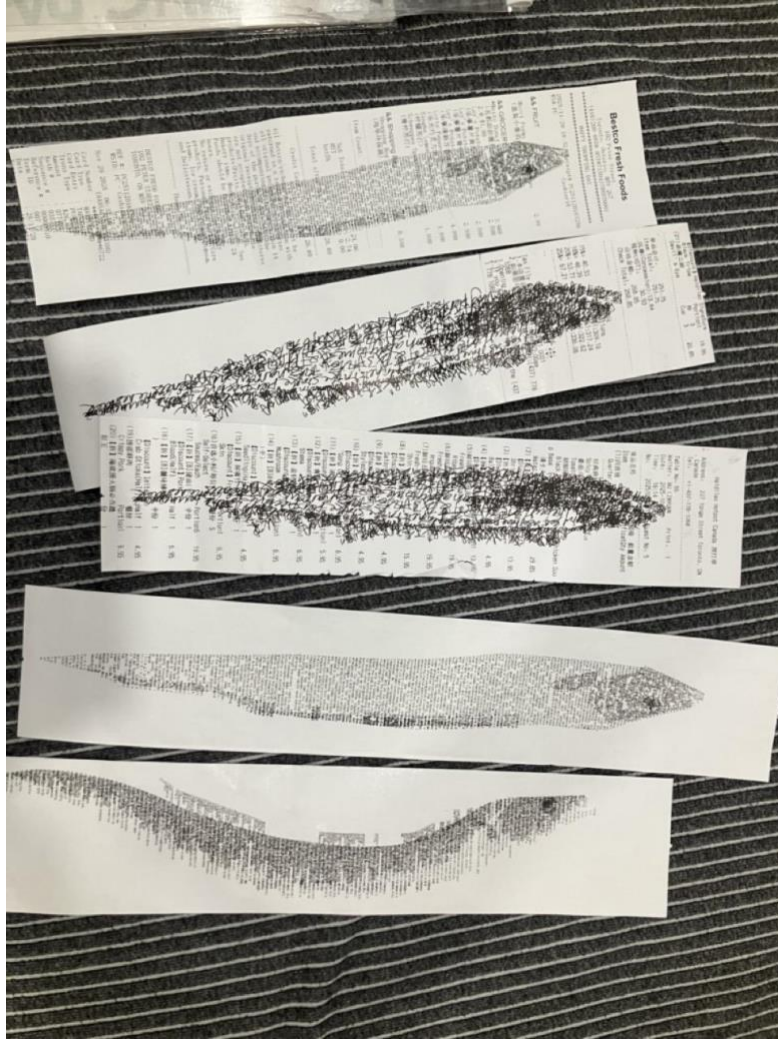


Fig 23. Exploratory writing on receipts printing experiments

I had a vague sense that I was already within a flow—but the landscape around me was obscured. I could not yet see where it was leading. Exploratory writing became an intuitive practice to document each moment along this path, allowing a form of understanding to emerge that was not shaped by rational control alone. From there, my art slowly began to form its outline. As these fragments accumulated, they began to gather into patterns. And these patterns, gradually, revealed the contours of the flow I was moving through.

## **Bodily Intuition**

In the Takamatsu residency exhibition, a visitor asked me: why fish? I cannot clearly remember what I answered, but I do remember what I did not say. I did not mention the embodied experience under the intense sunlight, nor did I talk about my visits to the art museums. At that time, even I did not fully understand it myself. I have chosen the fish as the subject of my thesis, perhaps because of that brief embodied moment during the residency, and because the book *Why Fish Do Not Exist* reinforced my inclination to use fish as a metaphor. Yet when faced with the question why fish, I have never been able to give a consistent or definitive answer. When my professor suggested that I visit an aquarium, I accepted.

I went to the aquarium to see where real fish would take me. I imagined entering a vast, dimly lit ocean world filled with giant tanks—an environment that would almost dissolve my sense of being on land. Yet from the moment I entered, I felt strangely displaced. The entrance resembled a movie theatre, and many design choices throughout the space made it feel more like a children’s playground than a contemplative environment. Passing through the entrance, different types of tanks appeared somewhat randomly scattered throughout the space. The fish seemed indifferent to visitors, their eyes barely shifting as people walked by, as if they had grown accustomed to seeing these strange human “aliens.” Before entering the shark tunnel, I didn’t stop at any of the tanks for long—maybe because of the crowds, maybe because the environment felt not immersive enough. I drifted through the space indifferent, almost like the fish themselves. Inside the shark tunnel, however, the atmosphere changed. With the upper half of my vision enveloped by water and fish, the experience finally felt immersive. Long curved acrylic panels created a sense of an

endless blue expanse. Groups of fish swam together, while solitary larger, stranger-looking fish moved on their own. For a moment, I felt immersed. I stood still, looking closely, as if I might be drawn into that world.



Fig 24. Aquarium photo

But soon I rejected that brief illusion of belonging—of being one of them. John Berger describes the distance between human and animal as a “narrow abyss of non-comprehension”<sup>17</sup> and perhaps that is what I felt in that moment. The fish were there, near me, moving before me, yet I could not enter their world. The fish and people are separated by a sheet of acrylic glass: the fish are immersed in the world of water, while the humans are immersed in the world of air. There are groups of both, as well as individuals. Everyone was immersed, but in parallel worlds. Watching the fish in the tank and the visitors in the space, I noticed a strange similarity. The fish wander within

<sup>17</sup> John Berger, “Why Look at Animals?” in *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 3.

the tank; strangers wander within the aquarium. I, too, was wandering, much like the fish moving in their enclosure.

As I reflect on this visit, I am brought back to my experiences in Chichu Art Museum and Teshima Art Museum. In the aquarium, the feeling of “being one of them” was brief and overwhelming, quickly interrupted as my mind pulled me back. In contrast, the art museum experience did not produce this sense of rupture. Everything seemed to exist where it belonged, naturally, quietly, within the flow. There was no overwhelming sensation, and no sudden awareness that I was separate from it. These differences did not come only from my internal state, but from the way space engages the body. The aquarium is constructed through separation: human and fish, air and water. The body is positioned as a viewer, moving along a path, looking into contained environments. The experience remains primarily visual, and embodiment is fragile and easily interrupted. In contrast, the art museums do not isolate the artwork from the visitor. Although there are guided paths and controlled movement, the space allows the body to enter into a continuous relationship with light, material, air, and movement. The boundaries between body and environment are softened. Yet even this differs from the embodied experience I had during that hot afternoon in Takamatsu. That environment was not designed. The sunlight, sky, road, wind, dust, and passing vehicles were all part of the everyday rhythm of the world. As a human, I was not placed into the environment, I was already part of it. When the boundary between my body and the environment dissolved, embodiment emerged spontaneously. As Juhani Pallasmaa writes in *The Eyes of the Skin*, “The essential mental task of buildings is relational

accommodation and integration.”<sup>18</sup> This is what I felt in the museum spaces, and even more strongly in Takamatsu, not a separation between body and world, but a condition in which the body could be held by surroundings. The spaces were constructed to slow the body down and to elicit a heightened sensory awareness. They did not simply ask me to look; they accommodated within a relation among light, material, art, and designed movement. In Takamatsu, however, a similar experience emerged without design. It was not something I consciously constructed. It happened through being, through movement, through presence. This is where bodily intuition begins.

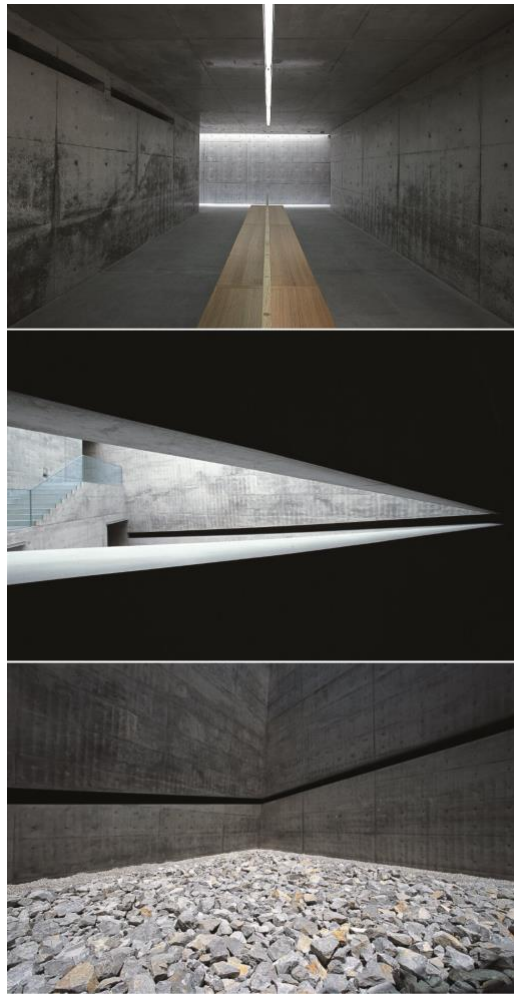


Fig 25. Interior view of *Chichu Art Museum*, Naoshima, Japan. Photograph from <https://benesse-artsite.jp/en/art/>.

<sup>18</sup> Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 4.

Looking back, my embodied experience in Takamatsu did not occur simply because of the fish, nor because of my own internal state. It emerged from a specific condition where body and environment were in alignment. Art, then, does not begin only from concept but from a body attuned to the world around it. The heat, the dust, the light, and the movement of the fish were not separate elements, but part of the same field of experience. When I allowed perception and environment to lead, bodily intuition began to take shape. Only afterward did thought begin to follow what the body had already known.

### **Material Experiment**

The act of collecting receipts began during my summer residency in Japan and has continued until the present. Over time, the receipts gradually shifted from a documentation of experience into a central material in my practice. Receipts are printed on thermal paper, which darkens when exposed to heat. I became interested in working with this inherent material property. Rather than treating the receipt as a neutral surface, I approached it as an active material that responds, transforms, and records. I wanted to preserve fragments of the original printed text, traces of time, place, and transaction, while allowing other areas to react and change. To test this, I experimented with both acidic and alkaline substances. I applied diluted hand sanitizer and baking soda solution to selected areas of the receipts, then used a hair straightener to heat the surface. The results revealed different material behaviors: the sanitizer removed most of the printed text after heating, while the baking soda preserved it. The untreated areas turned black, and the surface developed a crystalline texture, making the receipts grainy and tactile. I taped the receipts together into long strips and used a baking soda solution

to draw cutlassfish forms. After heating, the fish appeared as negative spaces within the darkened surface. These elongated forms reminded me of a dish from my hometown—pan fried salted cutlassfish.



Fig 26. Cutlassfish on receipt experiment.

Following this experiment, I attempted to use cyanotype on receipts. However, I did not feel a strong resonance with this approach. The thermal reaction of the receipt is intrinsic to the material, while the cyanotype blue introduced a dominant visual layer that overshadowed it. Rather than supporting each other, the two processes weakened one another. I began to realize that I wanted the work to remain closely tied to the material itself, allowing its inherent qualities to guide the outcome.



Fig 27. Cyanotype fish on receipt experiment.

Before the start of the 2026 winter semester, I purchased a receipt printer. I gathered 6 months' worth of collected receipts, taped them into a continuous roll, and fed them into the printer. Using Adobe Illustrator, I arranged my exploratory writings into fish-like forms and printed them directly onto the receipts. My fragmented and spontaneous thoughts overlapped with the printed text of everyday transactions, creating layers of information that were both visible and obscured. I wanted the audience to see, but not to see clearly.

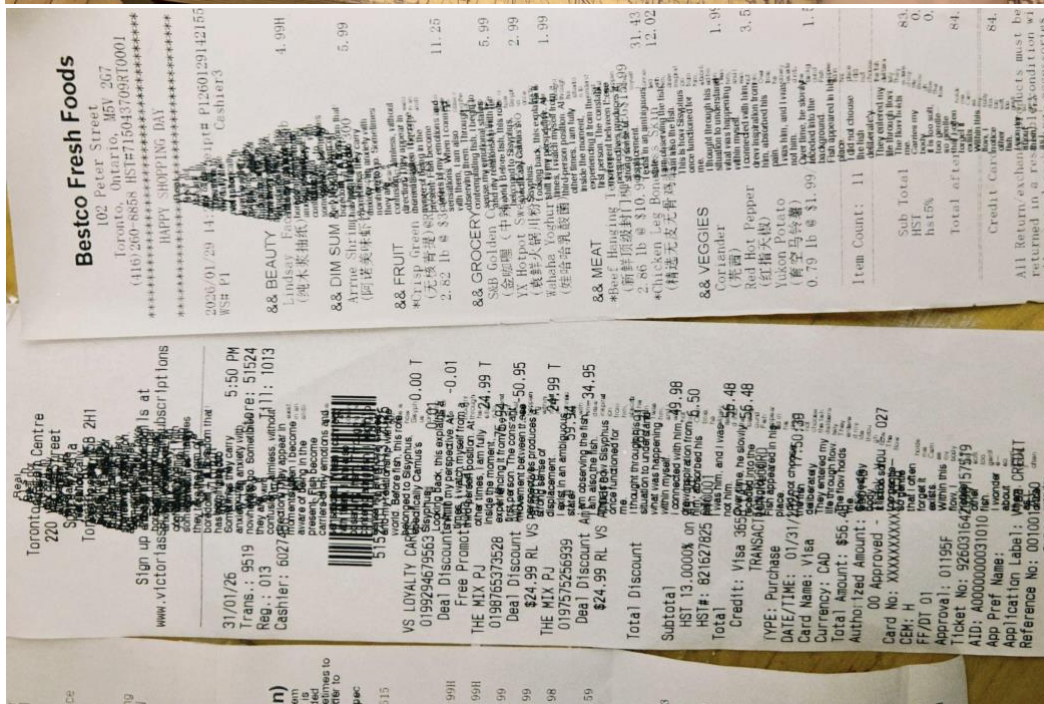


Fig 28, 29. Exploratory writings fish on receipt experiments.

After visiting the aquarium, I began experimenting with fish origami. The idea emerged intuitively: if the receipt is a flat surface, and the fish printed on it remains flat,

what would happen if the material itself became three-dimensional? I tested several origami forms and eventually focused on two types. One was a small fish folded from square-cut receipts, which I imagined hanging from the ceiling. The other was a koi fish folded from rectangular receipts, which I envisioned placing on the ground to create the impression of a small corner pond. These folded fish could also return to flatness. I photographed the origami forms and printed them back onto receipts, creating a cycle of transformation: from flat to three-dimensional, and back to flat again. This oscillation became part of the exploration.



Fig 30, 31. Fish origamis experiment.



Fig 32. Fish print experiment.

Each small fish took approximately ten minutes to fold, while each koi fish required around fifteen minutes. The time and labor involved became significant. During a meeting, one of my advisors, Michelle Astrug, asked whether I had documented this process. She suggested that the duration and repetition of the making process might be as important as the final outcome. This conversation reminded me of the work of experimental artist Adrian Hanft, who uses receipts as a surface for animation.<sup>19</sup> His work often depicts simple and ordinary moments, which are printed onto receipts, scanned, and assembled into looping animations. Inspired by this approach, I began documenting my own process of folding fish. I recorded the process, accelerated the footage, and transformed a 30 minutes video into a 3 minutes stop-motion sequence. I then exported the video into over 3000 individual frames, arranged them in rows, and printed them onto the collected receipts before taping them back together. Initially, I planned to develop this into an analog film projector installation, using the receipts as a moving image strip. Due to time constraints, this idea has been postponed and remains part of my future work.

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Moore, "Adrian Hanft Uses Old Receipts as a Canvas for His Mesmerising Animations," *It's Nice That*, June 4, 2025, accessed March 26, 2026.



Fig 33. Printed fish origami process on receipts.

I continued working with the material by producing additional cutlassfish strips using collected 55mm receipts. I experimented with drawing on receipts using a soldering iron. The fine tip produced lines similar to those made by ink, but I was more interested in the unstable thermal reactions of the material. Using the broader metal shaft of the tool, I created tonal variations that resembled brushwork in ink painting. The uneven heat distribution produced organic textures, introducing a sense of unpredictability. I drew cutlassfish in various styles and forms, then cut and recombined them into new compositions. These fragmented and recomposed forms reflected my own shifting and layered emotional states—complex, mixed, and not entirely legible. I also experimented with drawing fish that moved across the boundaries of individual

receipts: some fully contained within a single receipt, others partially entering or exiting. These fish appeared to move freely between surfaces, unconstrained by fixed edges.

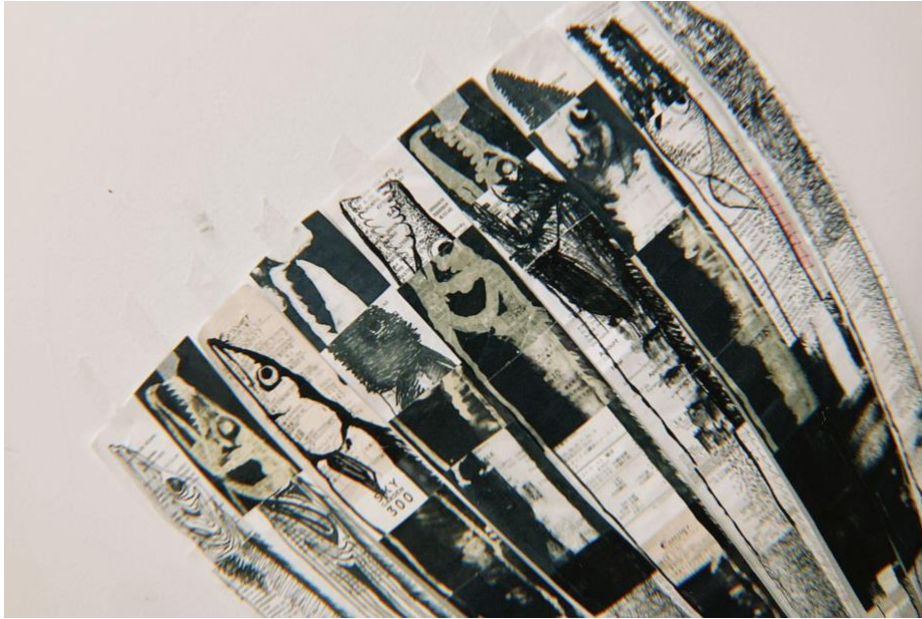


Fig 34. recombined cutlassfish strips.



Fig 35. Cutlassfish strips.

Before installing the exhibition, I also produced a series of invitation cards using new receipt paper. Since receipts had become the primary material of my thesis, I chose to use them consistently, even in the exhibition's promotion. In addition to the basic information of time and location, I drew unique fish on each invitation using the soldering iron. No two were the same. These fish could appear anywhere and move in any direction.



Fig 36. Promotion posters for the exhibition



Fig 37. Invitation cards for the exhibition.



Fig 38. Invitation cards for the exhibition.

The material was not simply a surface to carry images, but an active participant in the work. The receipts recorded time, transactions, and daily routines, while their thermal sensitivity introduced instability and transformation. The material itself suggested a way of working, one that embraced unpredictability, repetition, and gradual accumulation. Rather than imposing a fixed form onto the material, I followed what the material allowed. In this sense, the process of working with receipts became a continuation of bodily intuition, a way of thinking through making, where understanding emerges through interaction rather than prior intention.

# The Flow

## Fish flow in water

“I’m scared. I don’t know what the other three are thinking. I’ll never know. [...]”<sup>20</sup> This is the inner monologue of the protagonist in Makoto Nagahisa’s short film *And So We Put Goldfish Into The Pool*. Although the film centers more on adolescent boredom and restlessness, this line resonates with how I feel when I look at fish. I will never know what is happening within them—in those small bodies, in their passing moments. They swim back and forth, always in the present. Sometimes I imagine what it would be like to be inside such a small body, thinking nothing, simply swimming with the flow. Perhaps there would be less pain then.

My thesis exhibition brought together the material and conceptual explorations developed throughout an embodied and spontaneous process across two semesters. Influenced by my experiences in Chichu and Teshima Art Museums, I approached the exhibition space not as a container for the fish I made, but as an environment for them to inhabit.



Fig 39. *Where Do The Fish Go?* (2026) Exhibition photos.

<sup>20</sup> *And so we put goldfish in the pool.*, directed by Makoto Nagahisa (2016; Vimeo), 00:18:05–00:18:13.



Fig 40. *Where Do The Fish Go?* (2026) Exhibition photos.

Within this environment, the fish do not exist in a single fixed form. Some are embedded into the wall with drydex and white paint, appearing as if they have always been part of the architecture. Others, such as koi fish origami, lightly occupy the surface in small groupings, creating subtle interactions with surrounding elements. The long cutlassfish strips extend between the wall and the air, visually suggesting a transition from two-dimensional surface into three-dimensional space. The distribution of fish gradually guides the viewer's movement through the room, leading toward the windows at the far end, where clusters of small fish accumulate. The white window shades function as a secondary surface, capturing the shadows of suspended origami fish under directed lighting. The overlap between physical fish and projected shadow creates a layered perception, where two-dimensional and three-dimensional forms coexist, evoking a condition similar to looking into an aquarium.



Fig 41, 42. *Where Do The Fish Go?* (2026) Exhibition photos.

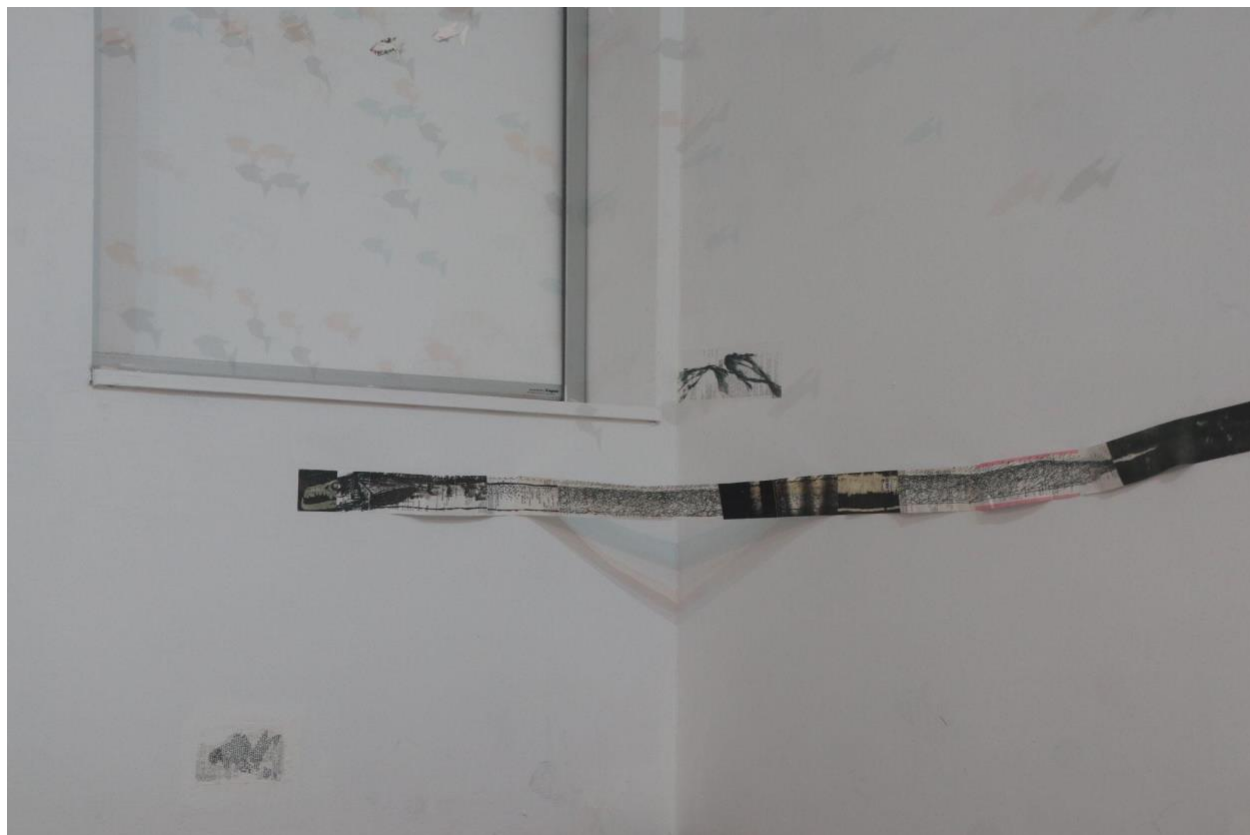


Fig 43, 44. *Where Do The Fish Go?* (2026) Exhibition photos.

These different material states form varying degrees of presence, from embedded, to attached, to suspended, to shadow. Rather than presenting fish as discrete objects, the installation allows them to exist across shifting conditions of visibility and materiality. Together, these elements construct a spatial flow guiding viewers movement. However, movement through the space is not fixed. While the flow suggests a directional path, viewers often navigate it differently. Some follow the implied current, while others move against it. Regardless of direction, the shifting density of fish and the presence of shadow continually reorient the viewer's attention. Each studio light was covered with blue lighting gel. The default studio warm lighting combined with the cool blue filtered through the gel, created a shifting atmosphere within the space—subtle, immersive, and slightly dreamlike. To further activate the space, I used the structural column between the two window shades as part of the installation. I applied the opening line of my statement—“Be like a fish, flow with water, rise and sink, and let the body learn the flow before the mind explains it”—by repeatedly printing each word onto blank receipt paper. These receipts were layered vertically along the column, forming a flowing, waterfall structure that became part of the environment itself.

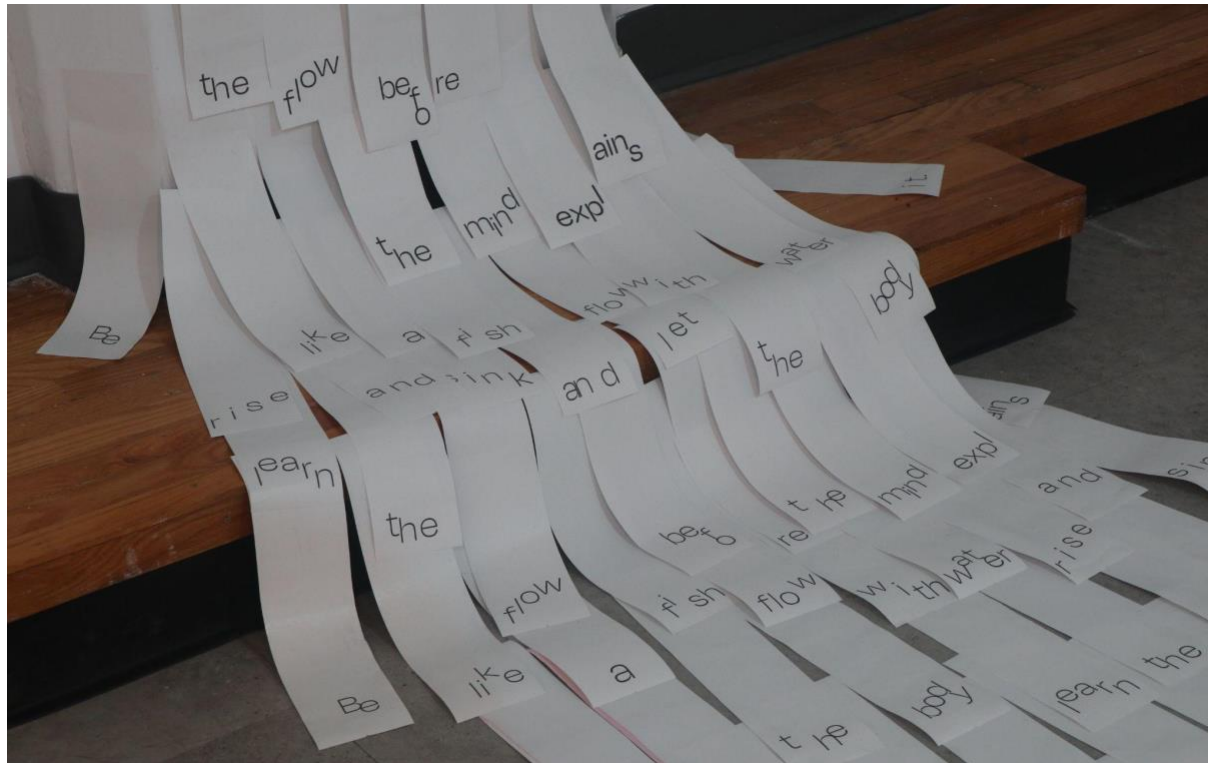


Fig 45, 46. *Where Do The Fish Go?* (2026) Exhibition photos.

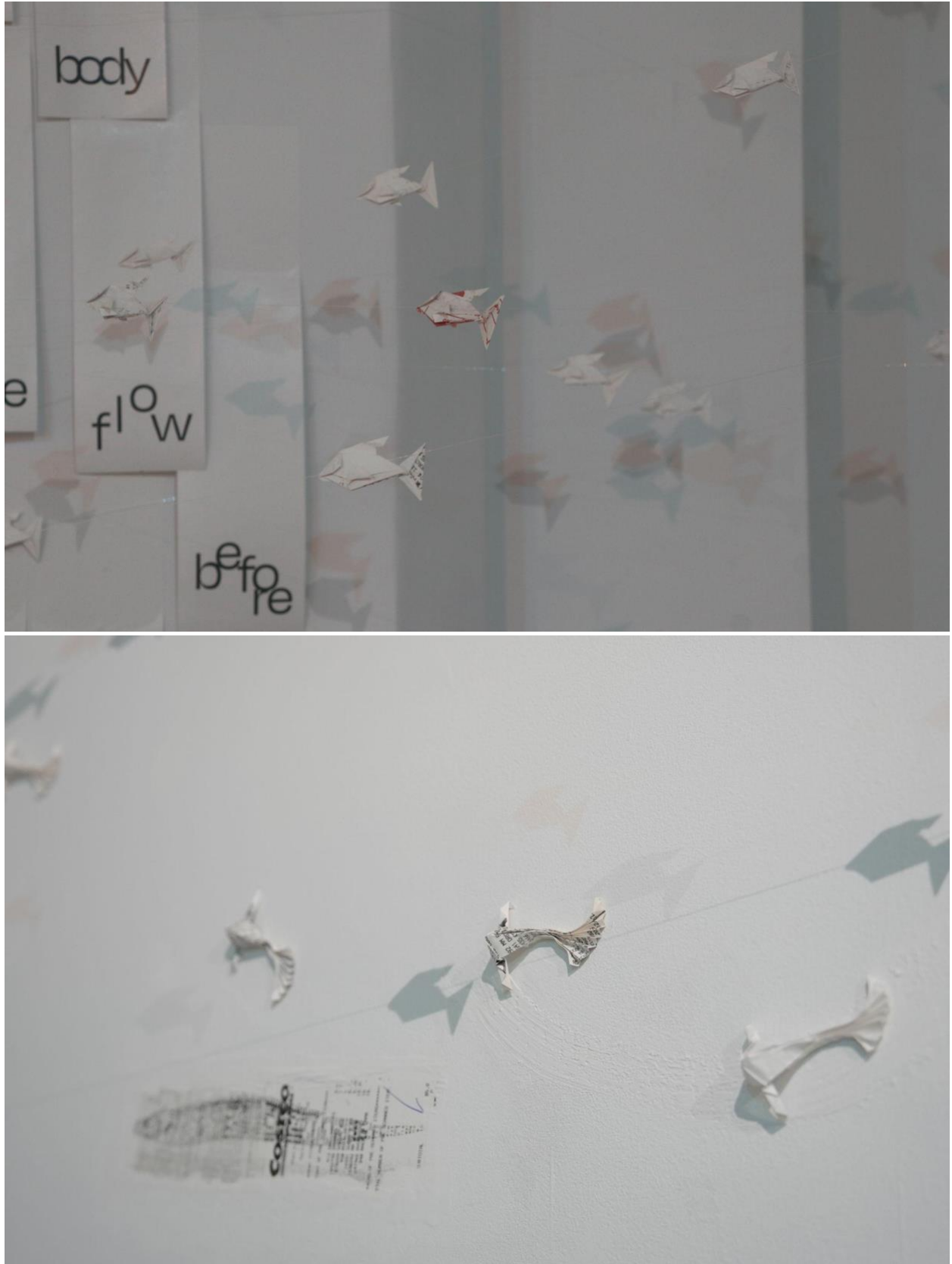


Fig 47, 48. *Where Do The Fish Go?* (2026) Exhibition photos.



Fig 49. *Where Do The Fish Go?* (2026) Exhibition photos.

This notion of flow is not only spatial, but methodological. It reflects the way the work itself came into being—through embodied encounters, exploratory writing, and material experiments that unfolded without a predetermined structure. Rather than moving toward a fixed outcome, the process followed a continuous, and sometimes challenging negotiation between body, material, and environment. During deinstallation, I initially intended to leave all of the embedded fish within the wall permanently. I wanted to cover them with white paint, allowing them to remain integrated to the space, to the environment, to the flow in this moment. Yet, as I applied the paint, the receipts reacted in the same way they had during installation—the receipt paper wrinkled under moisture, resisting the surface I tried to embed it in. In the end, I was only able to leave one fish embedded in the wall. The rest had to be removed. This

moment brought new understanding of the work. What I intended to preserve could not be fully controlled, the material did not allow itself to be fixed in the way I had planned. The fish could inhabit the space, as if inhabiting water, but water flows, and fish move with the flow. They could inhabit this space temporarily but not permanently.



Fig 50, 51. *Where Do The Fish Go?* (2026) Exhibition photos.



Fig 52. *Where Do The Fish Go?* (2026) Exhibition photos.

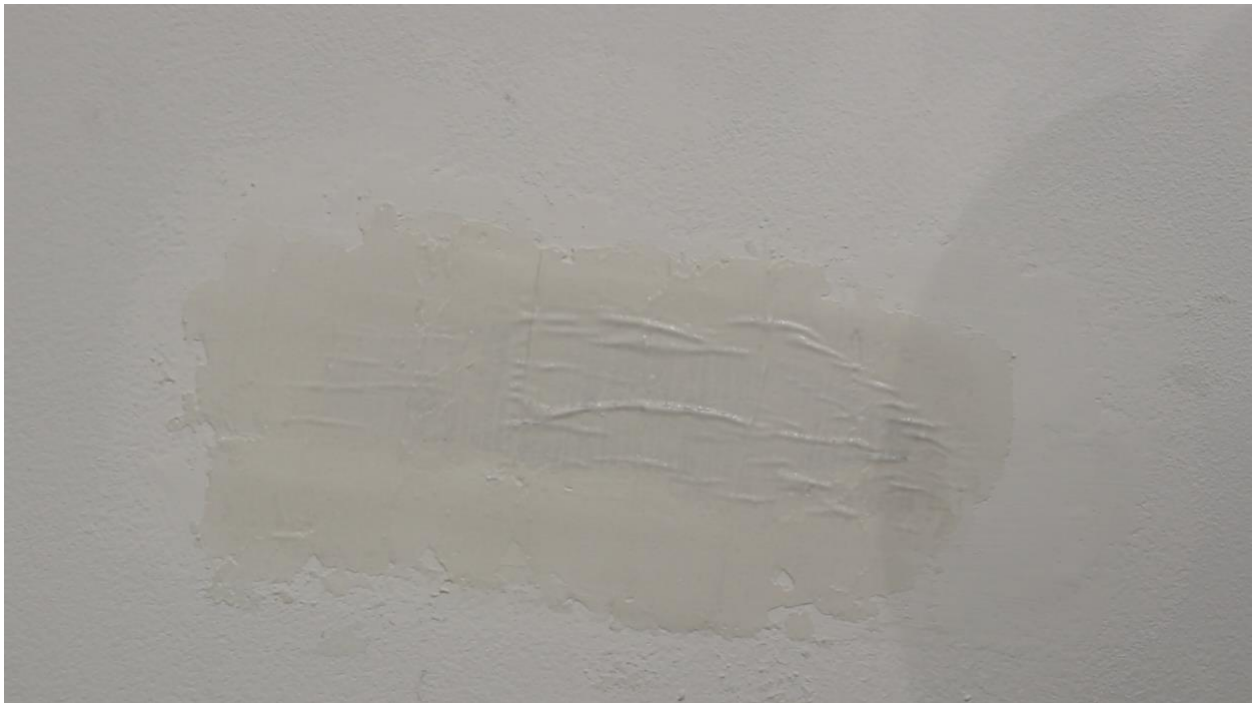


Fig 53. *Where Do The Fish Go?* (2026) Exhibition deinstalling photo.



Fig 54. *Where Do The Fish Go?* (2026) Exhibition deinstalling photo.

I designed the installation by arranging the fish in flowing formations, like waves, because I wanted viewers to enter a state of flow—to rise and sink with the movement of the work. The fish on the walls follow a directional current, while the long cutlassfish strips mimic the shape of waves, suggesting movement through water. The hanging origami fish, their shadows cast onto the window blinds, and the waterfall-like column of receipts were all placed to draw viewers further into the space. I wanted these elements to guide the body gently forward, evoking something between the experience of visiting a waterfall and looking into an aquarium, except here the viewer could step closer, move alongside it, and become part of the environment. On the left wall, two brushstroke plaster forms that I had left from earlier white-paint tests resembled the movement of water, so I placed two koi fish origami there to suggest fish moving with the current. The blue lighting gel over the studio lights further transformed the atmosphere, evoking the sensation of being in the shallow layer of the ocean.

The receipts also carried bodily and emotional memory. A month before the exhibition, I asked my friends to donate receipts to me. When we had meals together, they handed me their receipts. When we went grocery shopping, they saved them. When they bought me a drink, they kept the receipt for me. If we were not together, they would leave receipts on my studio table. My mother also kept a stack of receipts from the previous year on her desk, most of them from grocery stores, Home Depot, Canadian Tire, and gas stations. Through them, I could almost imagine the weekly rhythm of my parents' life. These receipts carried moments I had shared with friends; some came from ordinary days with my parents; others belonged to times when I was not present, yet through them I could still sense the routines around those people. They held pieces of mundane life that might not remain clearly in memory, but could still recall the feeling of an ordinary day. When I folded them into fish and embedded them onto the walls, these pieces of time changed form. They became part of the flow of the exhibition. To me, each fish became an embodied fragment of past time, carrying memories, emotions, and ordinary life outward from my body into the installation space.

Although the installation is highly visual, I arranged it in a way that sought to evoke bodily sensations of moving in water and flowing with the fish, as if the viewer might momentarily become one of them. In *The Eyes of the Skin*, Juhani Pallasmaa writes that “the eye invites and stimulates muscular and tactile sensations. The sense of sight may incorporate, and even reinforce other sense modalities.”<sup>21</sup> These words helped me think about the installation not only as something to be seen, but as something that might be felt through vision. The shadows, the layered textures, the receipts from daily

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<sup>21</sup> Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin*, 20.

life, the cool blue light, and the directional arrangement of the fish were intended to activate a multisensory experience, in which sight could suggest touch, movement, immersion, and memory. The space did not simply present fish as objects, but sought to draw the viewer into a bodily relation with flow.

Perception is never purely visual; it emerges through the collaboration of the senses. Even vision can operate as a form of touch. During the exhibition, I noticed several viewers walking along the flow of fish with their arms reaching outward. Their arms moved with the direction of the fish, as if their bodies were waving up and down with the water. Some viewers stood in front of the window blinds, watching and photographing the origami fish and their shadows, much like visitors looking into an aquarium. Others walked directly toward the waterfall column when they entered the space, their gaze moving from top to bottom, as if watching water fall. Some people touched the koi fish and asked whether they could keep one; others touched the fish embedded in the wall. My friends also visited and found the receipts they had donated, which led us into conversations about the moments we had spent together. Other viewers searched for familiar receipts from Shoppers, Costco, or No Frills, and these grocery shopping receipts seemed to evoke a shared memory of mundane life. At first, I worried that the center of the room was too empty and might not attract people to enter. Later, I came to understand that keeping the center open allowed viewers to wander, to move around the work, and to flow through the space with the fish.

Installation space can invite embodied flow by shaping conditions of movement and attention without fixing meaning in advance. To be in the space is to be within the flow, yet the flow is always moving, never settling into a final form. Nothing remains fixed, and nothing needs to.

## Where Do The Fish Go?



Fig 55. *Where Do The Fish Go?* (2026) Exhibition photo.

Millions of years ago, before land life emerged, everything was born within the ocean. Over time, life moved from water to land, and eventually, human civilization came into being. From this larger scale of history, human existence itself emerges from a kind of flow—like a fish within a vast ocean, moving through cycles of rise and fall, day and night, formation and dissolution. From such a perspective, the question of why begins to lose its meaning. It feels unnecessary. Yet as a small, almost invisible fish within this immense current of time, I still find myself asking. What lies beyond this flow? Where does it lead? Where do the fish go? The fish does not know. It simply moves within the current.

Sisyphus, in the original Greek myth, resembles a fish staring toward a distant shore that never arrives, fixated on an unreachable destination. But Sisyphus in Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* becomes something else: a figure who moves with the tide, rising and falling with the flow, no longer bound to a final answer, but inhabiting the movement itself.

In the debate between Zhuangzi and Huizi on the joy of fish<sup>9</sup>, what is at stake is not simply whether fish are happy. Huizi understands joy as the satisfaction of desire, something that cannot be known without being the fish. But Zhuangzi's notion of joy is different. It is closer to attunement, a harmony akin to music or movement. The joy of fish is not something to be possessed or proven. It is the way the fish exists within water. Self-attunement is the joy of fish. The fish does not separate itself from the flow, to swim is already to be in joy.

In *Why Fish Don't Exist*, Lulu Miller arrives at the realization that the category of "fish" itself does not hold. What we thought to be stable is, in fact, constructed and unstable. If fish do not exist, then what is the fish? What is the fish in my work? I cannot offer a conclusive answer. But through this thesis, I have come to understand that fish is not what it is. Fish is how it is encountered through flow. If the category of fish cannot hold, then what remains is not definition, but relation: a resonance with the present moment.

Relation is also central to how Juhani Pallasmaa understands embodied experience. In *The Eyes of the Skin* he suggests that the self does not exist separately from the world, but is constantly shaped through sensory encounters with its surroundings. Pallasmaa helped me understand my installation as more than a visual arrangement. The shadows, textures, receipts, blue light, and flowing placement of fish

were meant to let vision call forth other sensations: touch, movement, immersion, and memory. Embodiment, then, is not something I simply describe in the work. It is the relation through which the work comes into being and through which viewers encounter it.

I have learned that art does not emerge only from concept, but from moments when body and environment come into alignment. I have learned that intuitive making and embodied experience generate forms of understanding that appear gradually through sensation, repetition, reflection, and material response. I have also learned that an installation space can invite embodied flow not by prescribing a fixed path but by shaping conditions through which viewers move, sense, and form their own relation to the work.

The fish I work with is not something I can fully know or represent. It can be expansive, or as small as a fleeting moment. It emerges through resonance—between body and environment, between experience and perception, between myself and others. I can not be the fish. But I encounter it.

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