

# THE PHYSICS ROOM

A CONTEMPORARY ART PROJECT SPACE

---

## Towards doing more

Sophie Bannan

Not doing more, not yet. Just moving towards more doing, or thinking about more doing or talking about doing more. More than what was done last time? Or more than was originally planned? Or perhaps in the end, after the towards and at a point of completion when the doing has ceased, you will have done more than you ever really wanted to do.

The space is empty. Empty, that is, except for wooden pallets arranged side by side with a joint surface area just big enough to support forty-eight buckets of weeds pulled from your sister's garden. It is called *Fifty buckets of weeds pulled from my sister's garden (missing two)*. Your sister pulled the weeds from her garden and put them in empty plastic paint buckets for you to carry through the corridors and stairwells and gallery spaces of the Auckland Art Gallery. That was last year for a different show in a different city and since then two of the buckets have been lost. You called it *I stretch everything in the end*. As the buckets were being filled you came closer to more, then they were filled and when the doing had ceased the towards is played out backwards and if every time you move the buckets two are lost you'll eventually be back at the beginning. The doing is stretched and then released. And from the windows of this room is an elevated panorama of the city's rubble strewn with pallets, weeds and paint buckets. I think it was generous of you to bring your own, even if you are two short, and not just use ours.

You stand at the other end of the room from us, just you and some sound making and recording equipment are down that end: microphones on stands, speakers, a mixing desk and a loop pedal, all connected by rubbery black cables. There is a desk and a chair too as well as an armful of hard material lengths, wood and marble, that are on the ground, side by side, touching each other. I'm making your end of the room sound chaotic and full but it isn't really. We, you and the rest of us, are separated by forty-eight buckets of weeds pulled from your sister's garden and in the adjoining room you are pushing seawater and coarse sand uphill.

You are standing and using a length of wood to hit the lengths of hard materials on the ground. The sound of their collision is loud and sharp and not at all rhythmic to begin with. Then you pause and hit the loop pedal and overdub the collisions and just as they begin to form an unrehearsed rhythm you stop and so does the noise and now you're sitting down.

You're holding sheets of white paper and speaking into the microphone. I can't hear what you're saying over the audience talking to one another. When finally they hush I hear *and I could never really/get you back on side*. Are you speaking to us now, at the other end of the room? No one is moving towards your side so you are speaking from a distance, not looking at us. *Things haven't worked out/ the way that we had hoped/* and it is hard to say if you're speaking to us or imagining someone else in front of you, a lover perhaps, or your sister who pulled the weeds from her garden for you. *I am out of form*. I can see out the window at the same time as I watch you if I only shift my focus. It is late evening now that the sun is lost sooner than it was in summer just been. The facades that remain of otherwise demolished buildings cast long, sharp shadows over the rubble and weeds, *I can trace one hundred/ Intricate and changing silhouettes. I can press my face/ up against the glass,/ and none of them/ help me*.

Your pace and tone are steady, the room is silent, apart from your voice, and we watch as you speak. The last thing you say before you repeat yourself over and over again is *if I told you repeatedly/ that the house/ including all the plants/ looks happy too*. You tap the small black box with your foot and as you move the white sheet of paper nearest your face to the back of the pile I hear your voice say *she was/ mostly made up of glass* but it isn't coming from your mouth. I'm relieved to be hearing what I thought had been lost, mixed in with the voices of the audience at the beginning. *The kind that after sometime/ of being...* you interrupt your recorded voice, *she was/ mostly made up of glass... rolled by the shoreline/ becomes much more pleasing to handle*. Your real voice falls in behind your recorded voice like a song sung in rounds, the kind sung around a campfire pit on the beach at night. I'm thinking also about the woman you speak of who is mostly made up of glass. As you speak I can feel the matte frosted curved edges of the shoreline rolled glass, picked up because it was mistaken for a treasure, handled momentarily then discarded because it's not. Your two voices match as they say *You can't just raise/your voice/ your arms* before drifting out of sync again, this time your real voice takes the lead and your recorded voice follows. *I looked into my hand. I looked into my hand*.

*She was*, again, or still is, *mostly made up of glass. She was/mostly made up of glass*. There are three of you speaking now, two of you speaking through the speaker and one of you speaking out of your mouth, *my tongue and the muscle between/ my neck and my shoulders*. It's hard to tell which is which now, even hard to make out the words, *eventually I found it hard/ to look you in the eye*. For brief moments your words are isolated and I understand them, or hear them alone at least before they slip back into the waves of what is, now, a murky dialogue. You continue to overdub the same text, each version different in the slightest changes of tone and volume and the length of your pauses. By the fifth time the audience, still at the other end of the room from you, hold empty wine glasses that they stare into whilst they listen, trying to pick out the words you are saying over and over, *mostly made up of glass*.

When you begin to read a seventh time, the last time, the audience resumes their own conversations. *Embarrassed, blushed faces/ lean on the hope/ that memories might blur/ and fold into something else*. I can't follow your words because I can't hear what they're saying, all seven of your voices speaking over and with each other out of time. Your words have folded into something else, something more like the lengths of hard material that you collided at the start to break in the sound. Like the seawater and coarse sand that you push uphill you push your words uphill. The more you do the more they fall apart and wash away.

I can no more hear your words than I can hear those of the others in the room, everyone is speaking. I hear the sounds but not what they mean. It is the same as at the beginning. Your doing was stretched and then released. You did the most that you could do; you kept going, over and over until everything collapsed.