

*"Under seas, beneath great forests, in deposits deep within the earth, matter sits in droves— laying inert but in a pure, unformed potential. Over aeons, the matter is compressed and shaped. Then mined, manipulated, and enacted. Ores become ingots. Great monuments are erected, vast new forests of mineral and metal lasting for millennia. Slowly, emerging phenomena scuttle, inching and accumulating in complexity, eroding their material and informational constraints.*

*"Formed from polymers of the past—industrial wastes and particulates—the residues of constant re-engineering begin to shape a neo-primordial scum, a sedimentary soup atop high-rise towers and sewage plants. Like lichen on rocks, the boundaries between forms blur—organic and mineral, fluid and fossil. Similar to bioengineered catalysts, akin to industrial yeasts. Polymers bind and break, and a microbial conscience grows, forming new connections until a boundless structure emerges. Atop chemical seas, above galvanised forests, matter squirms in droves."*

*-Panpsychical Geophilosopher and Holistic Narrativiser*

Light filters in from above.

The eye flicks between particulates, residues, stains. A skylight, a protective barrier between the elements and the subject. Shining through an artificial biofilm, diffuse rays poke holes in post-liquid debris of organic and inorganic compounds. A hazy vision gleaned through biochemical alterers, a plaque of antidepressants and painkillers. Time wears heavy on the synthetic - as a material becomes further removed from its origin, the faster it seems to date, to deteriorate. These polished surfaces grow a veneer of scum in a way that sandstone and granite never will. Sophie Mei Birkin pays close attention to this overlooked aesthetic of evolution. But far from Darwin's competition, hers is an evolution bereft of the myth of progress, an evolution that pulsates with random ingenuity, a sifting process, edging out in every direction, coating and coagulating.

For Sophie Mei, growth is not only an organic attribute, something for cell division and gene replication. Growth is a universal constant, a twin and companion of decay. Growth is accumulation, a sediment shift, a crystalline protrusion. Like stalactites in a cave, time is acknowledged through the remnants, pieced together through evidence left in layers. But natural processes are not happening in isolation. Birkin acknowledges the human hand, the vice-like grip it tries to exert on the disorder that surrounds us, and ultimately the tension and release, the lack of distinction between the hand and what it tries to hold.

And from that flash of light.

That once slow creeping, quickens through the gaze of the technosphere, the processes that constitute time gain pace. Pummelled and twisted. Reflected in a thousand suspended moments, in the sparkling glint of shattered glass, a constellation emerges, a crash on the event horizon, a moment just out of reach. Elli Antoniou sits us on the verge, amid debris, storied remnants that illuminate a vision, metallic screens projecting a parallel narrative, in fits and starts. Shadows dance, and a fictioning occurs.

By way of mechanised scarification, Elli collaborates with her tools, delivering dented messages in a balladian act, in a synthesis of body and bonnet. These actions raise the question of where the body ends and object begins, of all technologies and their productions as a form of 'extended phenotype', an entanglement of our very DNA, like a bird and her nest. Antoniou orchestrates a prior event, providing clues to a moment (un)passed. The artist becomes conductor and narrator, the only key to piece together the clues of a prior disaster or accident. Yet, what constitutes that emblematic moment is unknown. The evidence, the records of the event are unreliable, they distort as much as they display. Presented as if waiting for the final repair, her works await a fixing, to be repainted in a refreshing of the eternal present, viewed from squinted eyes at the singularity.

Synthetic and organic, body and tool. By participating in this duo's adjacent realities, we make visible the fallacy of assumed oppositions. We allow ourselves to peek under the hood and squint into the enmeshing of otherwise dislocated categories. 'Manmade' materials, industrial chemicals, and every composite are, of course, created from 'natural' components. Every protozoa, every fungus, plant, and animal evolved from seemingly 'inert' elements. Distinctions and classifications are crucial for forming phyla, creating causal chains, and family trees. Indispensable from our comprehension of reality. Until disintegration, until a crumbling at the boundaries. Divisions become arbitrary as we encroach on the periphery, the dividing lines ultimately missing the broader truths of cross-pollination and interrelation, while discounting non-human and non-sentient actors from their active and participatory makeup of our world(s).