



## *In Flux*

4<sup>th</sup> September – 4<sup>th</sup> November 2022  
National Geological History Museum, Meteora  
Organised by Ainalaiyn Space

Reflecting on the nature of being, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus once said: "Everything gives way and nothing stays fixed. Everything flows; nothing remains. All is flux, nothing is stationary. All is flux, nothing stays still." His embrace of such unpredictability frustrated later philosophers, as noted by one of Socrates' interlocutors, Theodorus, who proclaimed "[Heraclitus and his followers] are so very careful not to allow anything to be stable, either in an argument or in their own souls!"<sup>1</sup> Indeed, to some people, an understanding of life that emphasizes and celebrates its uncertainty and volatility is an anxiety-inducing attitude, one that frames humanity as vulnerable and out of control. To others, flux offers the freedom of surrender. Understanding life's constant changes fosters compassion and acceptance; life will move through cycles of sweetness and bitterness, joy and pain, creation and destruction.

Heraclitus' observation draws attention to the volatility of life. Only change itself is truly eternal; perhaps this is life's most important paradox. Everything is a part of this constant flux, even monumentality, as there is no greater force that can stop this constant flow, so far that there is the existence of matter. The mighty rocks of Meteora which attract and fascinate people from all over the world both intimidate us and induce awe, while always attracting our gaze.

Therefore, when thinking of Heraclitus' statement, it is difficult not to question whether he was speaking directly about Meteora. This impressive complex of rocks highlights the site's volatile geological history; a story of rising river beds and constant erosion from water, ice and wind over millions of years. Since the twelfth century AD, Meteora has been a monastic site which has also shaped its landscape. Churches have been built and subsequently abandoned at the top of the rocks; rope winches have become carved stone staircases, and communities have thrived at the base of the mountains also. The plants, rocks and fungi bloom and wilt with the changing seasons, never truly destroyed, but part of a rhythmic cycle of creation and decay. While stone may appear monumental, permanent and unmoving, the site of Meteora showcases its ability to incrementally transform. The passage of time has been etched onto the surfaces of the Meteora rocks, capturing the moment like slow motion. These changes will be observed by multiple generations, endowing the landscape with the power to connect the past, present and future.

*In Flux* is the culmination of a one-month residency in Meteora hosted by Ainalaiyn Space. Artists Kate Daudy, Rowena Hughes, Paloma Proudfoot, Dina Baitassova and Maro Theodorou have each responded to the landscape and community they have become a part of during this time. Each artist has created works that reflect their time in Meteora, engaging with themes of flux, transformation, the cyclical, flow and adaptation. Their time as resident artists have prompted introspection and reflection on the very nature of being, recalling the ponderings of Heraclitus himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Andrew Hui, *A Theory of the Aphorism: From Confucius to Twitter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), p. 43.

Stone and ceramics share an enduring and entangled history with death and funerary practices. Stones have been used to mark burial sites across many geographies and contexts. As explored in *Cultures of Stone*, “[stone’s] enduring character [creates] a link through generations to both people and place”.<sup>2</sup> The endurance of stone allows it to surpass human life, endowing it with a monumentality and the responsibility to archive our past. Pottery, in particular, the urn, also commemorates the dead and stores their remains. Yet, its very materiality and terminology recalls the transformed body it is tasked to hold. The language of pottery endows it with corporality. The urn is held upright by its feet and its lid will be secured by its neck and possibly its lip. Moreover, ceramic forms are composed of pulverised stone and earth which echoes the composition of the body after death, either cremated or buried. Therefore stone, pottery, the body and death are entangled which the works in *In Flux* evidence and celebrate.

The residency itself has become a part of Meteora’s flux; a sudden flow of new energy and perspectives. As the artists and the Ainalaiyn Space team have been so generously helped by the local community, a synergy has occurred. When the artists leave, Meteora will change once more, as will the artists themselves, therefore partaking in the very flux that brought them to this site.

The works in *In Flux* celebrate the unfolding cycles of time, life and form. None of the works are fixed. Everything Flows. Nothing is stationary. Nothing stays still.

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<sup>2</sup> *Cultures of Stone: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Materiality of Stone*, ed. by Gabriel Cooney, Bernard Gilhooly, Niamh Kelly and Sol Mallia-Guest (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2020), pg. 29.



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In *Punctum (Future Nostalgia)* Kate Daudy explores the poetics of objects. Much like the technological motherboard, *Punctum* constructs an assemblage of different components that, when combined, communicate a sense of the artist's life. While exploring Meteora, Daudy has created and gathered objects that symbolise her family, travels, home, work. These objects embody the joys of the artist's life; they are not essential but speak to her spirit and remind the artist of the sweetness of life.

The installation includes organic found objects, for example dried plants and herbs from Daudy's exploration of Meteora. Honey is also displayed on one of the shelves, symbolising not only a food the artist enjoys in her day-to-day life, but a source of research for her work. Daudy has worked extensively with the funerary rituals of ancient Egypt in which honey was discovered in the Pharaohs' tombs. Yet, throughout this residency, Daudy has researched Greek history and byzantine tradition, thinking through the ways in which a person moves through life and the afterlife. *Punctum* features a dress which the artist wore whilst visiting monasteries and collecting plants. When worn, the dress becomes a second skin which protects, covers and absorbs the body that wears it. Yet, when displayed without its wearer, the dress still carries something of its owner, holding traces of its smell and movements.

Displaying these objects on a series of shelves, the artist explains "this is my sarcophagus, this is my tomb [...] I have made objects about all the things I like about being alive [and] when I am dead, I will take these memories with me." Some of the objects reflect this intent to not only record the life of the artist but to equip her with the materials to journey into the afterlife. One shelf even displays the coins in which to pay the man who will charter the boat on the river to the afterlife. To create *Future Nostalgia*, to anticipate a future longing for the past in the present moment, disturbs our construction of linearly progressive time. Here, time feels more cyclical and flowing, or perhaps more elastic, capable of stretching forward, moving backwards, or staying in the present.

The history of Christian art and iconography is a history of a visual language. Particular stories, places and people can be 'read' through the objects, colours, and poses of the figures and scenes. In a similar way, Daudy's installation explores a semiotics of identity, exploring how objects can represent the people that have travelled into the afterlife. The use of ceramics here is not accidental, but continues the entanglement between the body, life, death and the earth. If, as many religions describe, the human body is clay or earth blessed with life and consciousness, then Daudy's use of ceramics works to embody her identity and life. In *Punctum* death is not the afterlife but a part of life itself; merely the transformation of form. In this way, the body is framed as a vessel, one of many forms a person will take as they embark on the cycle of life.



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Paloma Proudfoot's ceramics explore the presence and traces of the body. These new works ask: how can we record the ephemerality of time, the body and life with a material as enduring yet fragile as ceramic?

Proudfoot's ceramic hands are directly inspired by the surfaces of the landscape. The artist creates hands from ripples and folds which echo both the structure of sedimentary rock formations and the water channels that are etched onto their surfaces. Whilst exploring, Proudfoot discovered calcite formations that had accumulated on the rock's surfaces from rain and dripping water. This form of cave growth, colloquially named 'cave popcorn' has a bumpy surface that also recalls the textures of diseased skin. Again, the works included in *In Flux* highlight an affinity between stone and the body, ceramic and skin. Both calcite and water shape the rocks at an incremental speed that is invisible to the naked eye. These processes trace duration and measure time. Like the body which gradually ages, Proudfoot's ceramic hands explore flux and change as a granular process.

In particular, the ceramics' textures prompt both curiosity and caution within its viewer. Attracted to the intricacies of their texture, yet unsure of their bodily colour, Proudfoot's ceramics incite flux within the viewer themselves and their encounter with the objects. Both fascinating and uncanny, the duality experienced when viewing these objects plays into the artist's wider research into the varying attitudes towards death and the body's impermanence.

Proudfoot's engagement with duality continues into her ceramic goblets. Whilst exploring the local community in Meteora, Proudfoot noticed the ways in which death is incorporated into the daily rhythms of life. There are rituals in which to mourn, such as visiting the graves weekly and exhuming bones to be washed, which welcome death as a necessary part of the everyday. These responsibilities are respected and performed without question. This contrasts with the ways in which contemporary technology has influenced approaches to death. Transhumanism is predominantly practiced by the wealthy in the West and uses technology to overcome and defy death. To these people, death is the ultimate intolerability and something to be actively avoided. Proudfoot's ceramic goblets, pins and eyes therefore indulge in the melancholy and explore the liberation experienced when death is faced as opposed to prevented. Like the potter shaping clay, death gives meaning and shape to life.

The ring binders have been made through the process of Raku in which ceramics are removed from the kiln at the height of firing. This sudden cooling and the application of different flammable materials onto its surface leaves impressions and marks behind. Cracked glazes and twisting lines record the objects' journeys through the different temperatures, materials and textures. Like the human body's own skin, the ceramics record the extremes and intensities of our lives. Creating a ring binder directly from the earth, the artist will eventually add pages that detail stories about mortality; Proudfoot will therefore gather narratives and mythology much like the Mountains' gradual accumulations of calcite.



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When Heraclitus remarked, "All is flux, nothing is stationary. All is flux, nothing stays still", one may imagine a scene that is chaotic and dynamic. Yet, the works featured in *In Flux*, and in particular, the works of Rowena Hughes, highlight flux as an oscillation between the calm and the energised. Constructing a delicate balance between the controlled and the free-flowing, holding and releasing, Hughes' works explore the flux of natural forms.

The Meteora rocks are like frozen waterfalls, capturing a moment in time. The grooves carved into the stone have been shaped by the gradual processes of running water, plant growth and freezing and thawing ice. The process of making *Elastic Waves* and *A Ribbon Shaped Beam* echoes this geological process; as Hughes slowly adds each line, the pencil marks and delicately carves the paper and wood. In dialogue with Daudy's considered accumulation of objects and Proudfoot's interest in the gradual accumulation of calcite, Hughes' drawings highlight the granular scale to which change occurs.

*Elastic Waves* and *A Ribbon Shaped Beam* are topographic or seismographic, as though each line intuitively responds to the flow and flux of the moment it was drawn in. Her mark making and use of line evoke waves. Perhaps these are the waves of the ocean, both capable of producing crashing waves and gentle laps onto the shore? Perhaps these are beams of light that refract as they meet different surfaces? These lines even share the flowing quality of fabric in the wind, creating twisting forms that have been suspended in time. These lines are controlled and patiently drawn, suggesting a calm and meditative process. Yet, as the lines end, they again recall the frayed edge of a piece of fabric. Hughes allows the line to freely flow as it dissipates, creating marks that are suspended between the logic of order and the freedom of intuition.

*Dipping Limb of the Fold* is titled after a phrase the artist found in a geological textbook which describes the undulations of tectonic movement. Each cylindrical sculpture is made from a book that has been reshaped into this new form, bound with elastic, and dipped into marbled ink. The pages of the books swirl like the lines in *Elastic Waves* and *A Ribbon Shaped Beam*, which is intensified by the fluid lines of the ink. Now shaped in cylindrical forms, these books have returned to their original tree-trunk shapes, their marbled skins and twisting pages marking the passage of time much like the rings of the tree. *Dipping Limb of the Fold* records the flux of the tree's form, as it transforms from wood, to paper, to book, to sculpture. Hughes' sculptures also document the transformation of the textbook into an artwork. Using dictionaries and reference books that are no longer in date or have been replaced by the efficiency of the internet, their transformation celebrates the adaptability of form. Grouped together, these forms showcase flux as an endless source of creation and metamorphosis, leasing these books with new energy and meaning. These sculptures therefore capture the adaptability of form and, bound by the elastic, temporarily hold these forms in a state of suspension. When the elastic breaks, the books will expand and transform once more, reminding the audience of the inevitability of flux.



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*All Creation Rejoices in Thee* is a twelve-meter-long installation accompanied with an intuitive performance by Dina Baitassova. Whilst in Meteora, the artist has collected objects that epitomise birth and creation such as vegetables, fruits and plants. Yet, inspired by the monastic history of the site, Baitassova has taken the colours of Byzantine icons, to recall the ultimate story of creation in Christian teachings, the birth of Christ. As the artist explains, "I use the deep lapis-lazuli like blue, gold, green and orange colours peculiar to Byzantine icons and mosaics. I believe that these colours have a healing power for humans, giving them a sense of love and wholeness." Objects such as shells, stones and seeds have also been gathered over the course of the residency, recording both the landscape and the artist's memories within it.

Objects such as the nest trace back to the artist's first few days on the residency. As she details: "It was my first day here. I woke up in the morning and went out on the balcony. Two birds were sitting there under the roof. They were so close, kissing and hugging each other. Then the male bird flew away and came back a moment after with a branch. He gave it to her. She caressed him and threw the branch on the floor of my balcony. I thought that they were about to make a nest. But why throw it to me then? For three days they were coming, bringing more and more branches. And then they left and never came back."

The objects featured in *All Creation Rejoices in Thee* epitomise rebirth, renewal and transformation, something the artist hopes to incite in her own life. These objects symbolise the abundance, love, joy and growth that Baitassova has not only found throughout the residency, but will continue to welcome into her life. By collecting these objects, creating written and visual responses to them, and by moving amongst them, Baitassova hopes to spark a moment of flux and renewal.

Walking on this table, the artist will interact with the objects. Picking them up, holding them and carefully inspecting them, Baitassova will form a dialogue between herself and the objects. Yet, a table of this scale invites community and the viewer is welcome to approach the table and the artist. Viewers can participate in the performance by carefully handling the selected objects, sharing their interpretation of their meaning with the artist, and returning them back to the table. As the artist explains, "my golden bundle unfolds gently like a scroll of parchment". Indeed, within this performance, the objects will accrue new stories and meanings and the energies of the people that embrace them will remain, gently forming a new narrative.

This performance will capture a fleeting moment of connection between artist and viewer, artist and object, viewer and object, and viewer and fellow viewer. Like a seismograph, the performance will record a sudden burst of contemplation, collaboration and community, before returning to a state of tranquil equilibrium.



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Maro Theodorou's prints and installation are born directly from the landscapes of Meteora and her own memory. As a child, Theodorou would spend time by the sea and in the mountains with her family, constructing everything the family needed from the materials around them. It is this understanding and respect for the local landscape and materials that continues into Theodorou's practice, as she celebrates the artistry of nature.

The prints were made before the wood was carved. Printed in a striking red and black, they record the organic forms of the tree before it was transformed by the artist. The ink highlights the tree's rings and splinters which in turn record its growth and the passing of time. The gaps between each ring differs according to the conditions of the climate, drawing attention to the ever-fluctuating seasons and landscape. The prints splice the tree and offer the viewer a glimpse into its cross section, producing an effect similar to an Xray or MRI scan, or perhaps the experience of shining a light through an egg. These references demonstrate the connections between the botanical and the body, reminding the viewer of our own growth and transformation throughout the course of our lives. In this way, the artist's organic abstraction illuminates the most profound realities of being.

After printing, the artist began the careful practice of carving the wood for the installation. The sculptures' undulating and circular shape may remind the viewer of the cyclical rhythms of the seasons, time, and birth, decay and rebirth. The tree's hollowed centre has been intentionally carved by Theodorou, but it recreates the tree's natural growth pattern in which its centre empties as its trunk and bark continues to grow. Theodorou's ability to make a feature of this process highlights her intensive knowledge of Meteora's ecology. Perhaps paradoxically, the sculptures' emptiness signifies the wealth of her memories, knowledge and experience working with these trees. Like a gateway or a portal, this almost architectural form connects the artist's present to her past.

These carvings are deeply entangled with the passing of time. They are formed from a Platanus tree, a protected species that cannot be intentionally cut down. Instead, the artist had to carefully wait for a tree to fall, before asking for permission to remove the tree. After many months of searching, Theodorou located a fallen tree and began to carve it in a way that would emphasize and celebrate its natural forms. From its inception to its realisation, Theodorou's practice involved careful consideration and intuition, celebrating flux as something grounding and punctuated by moments of stillness and patience.