

Note: My approach to this text is to mirror how Natalia approaches her exhibition presentations. I will present a series of modular, speculative narratives in response to the works on display. These both connect under the wider themes of the exhibition (or the ones most pertinent to me) that relate to the body, control, ecosystems and environments. Please feel free to use these as a guide to access the works, or to use it as a jumping off point for further narrative exploration. (text by Georgia Stephenson)

#1 Frozen Flowers

Cocoon or chrysalis under a watchful clock. Must time release perfectly with the outside world. Matching conditions make a survival.

One hot weekend in late March brings about blooming that will be thwarted by thunder, hail and freezing temperatures the next.

How can I communicate with them? Don't come out, not yet!
I can't. I see a bee in the cold. I weep.

#2 Beach (macro)

The Beach is an alien landscape. A horizon lacking the shape of a city; of human intervention. The eye follows it, to drift and settle vacantly into middle-distance.

When objects have been "beached" they have often been regurgitated by the behemoth sea. Others have been bleached by the sun, or whipped by a merciless wind.

A body on the Beach is a body exposed, be you flesh, plastic or canvas - these elements don't discriminate. Time to find a hiding spot.

#3 Beach (micro)

Do you remember sand worms? I say remember because I have never once encountered a sand worm in my adult life. Perhaps I'm not paying attention, or it could be my reluctance to return to the beaches of my childhood.

The 'castings' of sand worms are those curly mounds of sand that look just like the worms themselves... but when you push your toe through it, you (thankfully) meet no creature at all.

This is because the sand worm is already on a great escape, burrowing much deeper into the ground. What remains on the surface is merely a trace - a decoy to fool the birds.

I was always impressed by this illusion, and took great pleasure in stomping through as many sand worm 'casts' as I could when I was younger. Once I knew they were shadows and not the creatures themselves.

This commitment to doppelgänger impresses me still. Leaving a false impression to deter, detract or disguise, mimicking alternative versions of oneself – it's an age-old evolutionary survival technique. I do it all the time.

#4 Getting ready

Cold wet hands in a soft warm towel. What did we do before times like these? Before satin polyester blends, velveteen and viscose caress.

The touch of this micro-plastic fabric is the hand of a cherub.

Now – slather me in soap and glory. Scented like hibiscus, pigmented paint for my talons and trotters. Stripe the squid ink along the edge of my eyelid until it spills and leaks to meet my iris. Preserve me in goose fat, illuminated by fluorescence in a mirrored cabinet. The timer rings! Turn, baste and crisp up under foil.

I'm ready to leave but I'm not ready for tonight's performance. I want to stay here instead. Where I'm forever beautiful, eternally full of potential.

#7 Escape

How am I supposed to wake up from someone else's bad dream?

I'm a lazy cat in June, belly to the sky. Just look how comfortable I am! Microchip and all.

I get what I want when I want it and don't have the mental capacity, nor the inclination, to challenge my supply chain.

I've always been told that I am the kind of creature who deserves to be served.

So what if you're monitoring me? I'm not doing anything worth looking at anyway. Because I have the easy life.

I pootle and potter and speculate. Leave the action to the real heroes. I only break a sweat in air-conditioning.

Why would I give it all up? My island sustains my needs.

Occasionally, small voices will attempt to convince me otherwise. When the moon is full and my mind is open a hairline crack.

"There's more than this, more ways of being alive – join us, come and try it – don't you want to see how everything connects? Behind the 'mainframe'? Don't you want to know how the world is made?"

Audible sigh.

Look, I don't need to meet the great creator. To peer behind the curtain. I don't want to see off-shore tax havens, distant detention centres or military sweatshops. It can't be all bad, if I'm living the good life.

And... reconciling with truth is too much like hard work.

Don't you remember?

I'm just a lazy cat in June.

#5 What's keeping me?

The invisible contract I signed when I was born. Vitamin D, H₂O and oxygen (in that order). A skeleton, a copper coil, some vaccines, a questionable genetic code, a sentimental t-shirt. Your smell on my sheets. But I fucked up. The sun came out and I washed the bedding and now the smell is gone. I took stupidly took advantage of the day and didn't think about the nights.

#6 One-way window

Looking out is an infinite array of possibilities. We could do anything, achieve anything, if we reach far enough.

Looking in is being stuck with what's already there. The parts we've buried, that furiously contort and disgust as they desperately attempt to surface.