

Each year we set one question which our exhibitions and events orbit in the company of artists and audiences. Across the year, we explore what this question offers us and what artworks and their authors can weave together. In 2025, we ask “is language large enough?” You can think of this as one exhibition in four parts, as a score played across a calendar, or maybe even as a forest. Join us.

2025

Is language large enough?

Intimation of Endless Space Given in a Small Window of Time (approximately 10 minutes) Ethan Braun, Lina Grumm 3 May – 12 July 2025

Consider the single voice, the single position, a stable, fixed environment, and loop it. Now add additional voices, textures, and rhythms. In this process the single voice, much like a monologue in theatre, is supported *and* destabilised by the many, by the chorus in that same theatre. Similarly, the dynamics between the individual and the group, the active and the still, are important to the way a message is conveyed but also interpreted. This dynamic is exposed in the exhibition, where visual expression and sonic experience become key considerations for enlarging capacity to relate to one another.

Intimation of Endless Space Given in a Small Window of Time (approximately 10 minutes) presents the work of composer Ethan Braun and graphic designer Lina Grumm as co-authors for the first time. In their discrete practices they strive to produce differentiated environments that interrogate conventions in the sonic and graphic fields, working with sound, score, opera, performance, graphics, collage, writing, and publishing. This exhibition expands these individual inquiries into deviation as an enabling counterpoint to the flattening horizons of late capitalism. The title introduces the inquiry into deviation, as it diagrams aspects from each of their fields. Graphic design is often expected to announce, here information is intimated. Music gives body to temporality, here two durations are activated in parallel, the endless, and the small window. The title models an exhibition experience that exaggerates duration and destabilises hierarchies of information. This establishes a field of polyphony, combining a number of voices and parts. Each day of the exhibition's duration is unique as it cycles through a calendarised sonic score. A graphic rendition of the calendar provides a detailed 'aerial view' of the compositions and how they occupy the exhibition's 'window of time'. While the use of visual codes of a standard calendar suggests a linear progression, it is placed within the field

Artspace Aotearoa is a public contemporary art gallery founded in 1987 by artists and arts workers, it continues to be artist-led. We work within a specific city context, and spiral out into national and international conversations that promote practices that present emancipatory world views.

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of polyphonic composition. Lina and Ethan draw from a variety of approaches to notation with multiple interpretations of the sonic-spatial score whether on a visual, acoustic, or emotional level.

The compositions emerge from the legacies of sonic awareness developed by pioneering composers in the second half of the 20th century, including Pauline Oliveros, Maryanne Amacher, Milford Graves, and Arthur Doyle. This approach to sonic content requires a listener to tune into musical as well as bodily and environmental sound. The invitation to tune in emphasises mutuality, the listener is re-coded as an active participant. Mutuality has similarly guided the production of the exhibition, which stages an ongoing dialogue between Ethan’s sonic compositions and Lina’s visual compositions. In this dynamic exchange multiple interpretations is key. A chord or a field recording from the artist’s neighbourhood for example may or may not establish a direct equivalent in the visual scores—a hand, a cloud, a c minor. As part of this exchange, analogue and electronic processes are applied to both the visual and sonic outputs to colour the gallery as a living score.

Living things require care and attention. The interchange between pre-recorded electronic sound and visual composition is augmented throughout the duration of the exhibition as performers ‘read it’. They do this through ‘maintenance.’ Maintenance, much like many rituals of care, involves focused activity, in this instance in the exhibition space. Performers add analogue and bodily sound to the electronic environment by practicing deep listening and working with principles from guided improvisation. This act of care enlivens the exhibition space but also points to the fallible conditions of working with a body or a computer generated algorithm. As this living score is activated in the gallery, mutuality becomes essential, whether in the role of the performer or audience, we become intrinsic to the exhibition.

Intimation of Endless Space Given in a Small Window of Time (approximately 10 minutes) tends to the complexity of navigating the singular voice and its place within a collective. In response to this tension, the artists invite the audience to consider mutuality and the deep listening practices that support it. Deep listening can be practiced in the gallery but equally in wider spheres of life; the domestic, the administrative, the creative, the political. In working with a wide range of notational elements within the scores (the cloud, the hand, the c minor) and producing multiple versions of each sonic work (the pre-recorded, the augmented), the artists create the conditions for limitless interpretation. In opening this window the exhibition becomes a site to tune in with and to the other.

In his article “Rethinking Free Speech” Moana Jackson describes spoken language on the marae where two forces are activated: the force of the atua Rongo (deity associated with peace) and the force of the atua Tūmataua (deity associated with war). Each atua plays a specific role in establishing points of contact between speakers which cover the gamut of expressive capacity, from confrontation to reflection to nourishment. Jackson states: “In that situation, both the right to speak freely and the exercise of the right itself are ideals to be protected because the marae exists to nurture relationships.”³

Drawing from Jackson’s description of marae oration that requires relationships to be at the foreground and the establishing of a specific argument in the background, this year’s programme considers relating in the capacity of being in relation with one another and with the world. “Is language large enough?” therefore also asks how to construct a condition for life flexible enough to contain the span of the technical to the erotic? How can a condition for life be built that deviates from the entrenched “mythical norm” that Lorde so starkly warns us of? What languages are required to conjure deviations from the standards of form, of thought, of body, of desire?

Tenuous political, social, economic, and environmental terrains might adrenalise our current moment but they also expose the hegemonies

allowing these conditions to develop at alarming rate and scale. Artworks and their makers, however, wield scale with other tempos in play: the intimate, the critical, the imaginary. Rather than exploding at exponential pace, these tempos enable the emergence of a beat that is varied and compensatory. Across 2025, the programme at Artspace Aotearoa activates artwork and artistic positions from multiple contexts, diverse mediums, and between generations to consider the potential of forging an otherwise, a deviation—however provisional—through the potency of communicating in the language of contemporary art.

Ruth Buchanan, Kaitohu Director
January 2025

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3 Moana Jackson. “Moana Jackson: Rethinking free speech.” E-tangata, August 19, 2018, <https://e-tangata.co.nz/comment-and-analysis/moana-jackson-rethinking-free-speech/>.

The annual question

Each year Artspace Aotearoa sets one question which our exhibitions and events orbit in the company of artists and audiences. Across the year, we explore what this question offers us and what artworks and their authors can weave together. In 2025, we ask “is language large enough?”

In Lubaina Himid’s 2022 drawing made directly onto the wall of London’s Tate Modern she asks, but also states: “we live in clothes, we live in buildings – do they fit us?” When I encountered this prompt, it turned my attention to the essential infrastructures of daily life: places in which we shelter and what covers our bodies. It struck me how each part of this prompt straddles the technical and the erotic frameworks for forming our world. In asking her question, Himid draws a diagram arcing the zones of the technical and the erotic, subsequently highlighting the friction existing between them. This same friction is activated when language shuttles between the organisation of bodies, space, and culture as a crucial instrument in shaping and scaling our lived experiences. In asking this necessary question “is language large enough?” Artspace Aotearoa invites its audiences to consider contemporary society—from the public to the private, the artistic to the bureaucratic—and language’s charged role in defining these domains.

Language—whether written, aural, somatic, or otherwise—is not a fixed object but is highly unpredictable,

fluid, and consequently evolving. Despite this fluidity it can be wielded to establish and entrench what Audre Lorde has described as the “mythical norm”.¹ In this scenario, a certain type of subjecthood is established as standard and subsequently prioritised, often at the cost of another kind of subjecthood.² If territory is the outline that defines the differentiated but interconnected zones of life (the public, private, artistic, and bureaucratic), then language forms or flattens the contours of these zones as it determines possible ways of relating. In other words, through repetitive use, language constitutes individual subjects by providing frameworks for sets of behaviours that are normalised. This becomes a feedback loop: we relate to one another through and within the languages we have received or accessed. The often invisible impact of contextual access also describes the limit of language.

While this analysis might sound discouraging, encountering the limit of language and its capacity to capture the wholeness of life may propel precedent-setting opportunities. The limit then acts as the enabling context where the capacity for language to become a vital force in any process of transformation is underscored, whether at the scale of the individual, organisation, or community.

1 Audre Lorde. “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference”, *Your Silence Will Not Protect You*. (London: Silver Press, 2017), pg 96.
2 Audre Lorde expands: “In America, this norm is usually defined as white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian and financially secure. It is within this mythical norm that the trappings of power reside within this society.”

Ethan Braun, Lina Grumm

1. Opening & closing
piano bird play (VERY SKETCH), 18:39, 2025

Calendarised stereo-channel sound. Length as above, dimensions variable
At the beginning and end of each day this piece plays across all speakers.

2. Calendar
Framed-digital print, 85 x 70 cm
This calendar is a detailed excerpt of each uniquely scored day of the exhibition.

3. Two sixteenth-notes
Cut plastic, 15 x 10 x 2 cm
Purchased from a store for music teachers, this decorative object poses the question of how, or if, it is possible to visualise sound.

4. *Intimation of Endless Space Given in a Small Window of Time (approximately 10 minutes), score 1–6, 2025*

Vinyl record sleeve, unique print on card, 31 x 31cm
Produced as a one-off, this album shows that while the sonic content is diverse and each score can be read differently, all of the work within the exhibition form one larger composition.

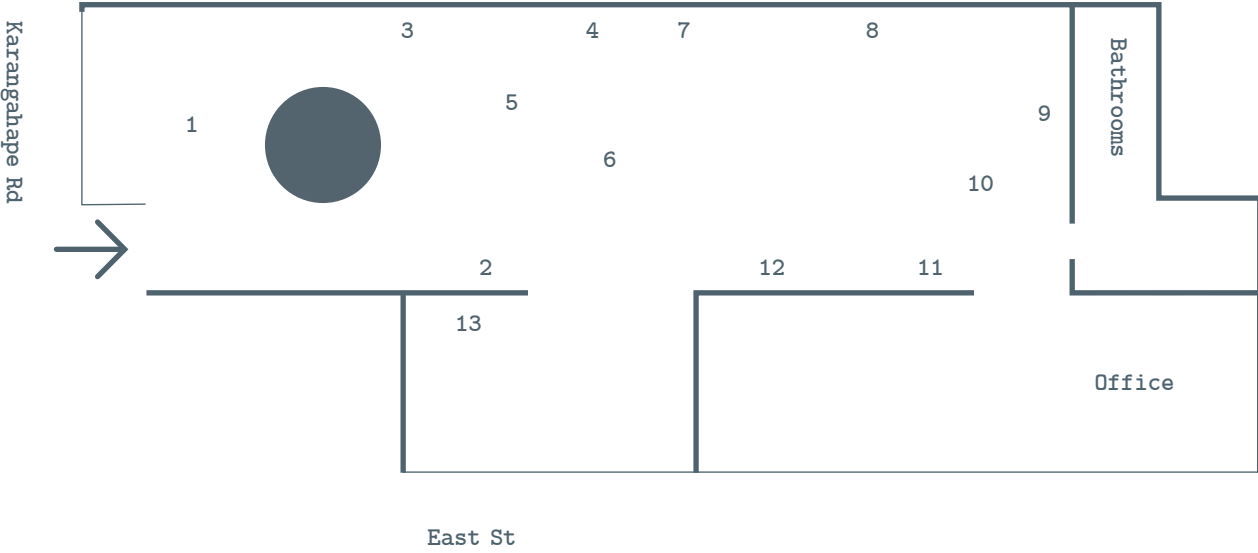
5. Floor
Chord Timbres, 9:28; Floor piece proposition (D7 transposition), 9:02; b buzz, 6:30, 2025

Calendarised stereo-channel sound, printed anti-slip vinyl. Length as above, ø 240 cm
This single score visualises three drone-pieces. Use of static harmonies and timbral layering encourages a grounded approach to listening. Audiences are invited to stand at the centre of the score which can be read clockwise, counter-clock wise, or while rotating.

6. Grand piano
During maintenance, performers use this instrument.

7. Mirror
(Going Up), 1:38; JMC1, 2:05; vr Melody alone, 3:48; leisurely piano exercises; dream time harmoniac, 2:25; JMC4, 2:15; JMC2, 2:10, 2025

Calendarised stereo-channel sound, printed vinyl, mirror, printed paper, hand-drawn notations. Length as above, 194 x 270 x 2 cm
Drawn from introspective voice-memos, these visual and sonic compositions point at the fine balance of concentration and distraction when listening, looking, relating. In this ‘hall of mirrors’ the composer, designer, and audience are all implicated into this scenario through the hand-drawn notation, printed prompts, and the literal reflection.



8. Projection

Pierrot Study #1, 5:22;
Pierrot, Strings, and Birds, 4:22;
Waldenser, 19:22, 2025

Calendarised stereo-channel sound, 19:9 full colour data projection. Length as above, 270 x 590 cm
This composition responds to standard sextet-ensemble instrumentation from Pierrot Lunaire. Here the character of Pierrot, the sad clown from various theatre traditions, is syphoned into the fantasy of the cinematic. The score appears as subtitles, compressing the dynamic interplay of the five instruments, voice, field recording, and samples.

9. Wall

same old fucked 2, 3:14;
same old fucked 1, 3:12, 2025

Calendarised stereo-channel sound, printed vinyl. Length as above, 270 x 483.5 cm
This score, read left to right, introduces the Guidonian hand and Curwen hand symbols, a historic and a modern system for using the hand to describe pitch. The score notates sample and voice with both hand gestures and staff-notation that give way to waves of noise.

10. Clam shell

Hand-painted polystyrene, cast resin, hinges, 100 x 70 x 120 cm

11. Collage

HAND WORK, 6:50; *JMC3*, 1:17, 2025

Calendarised mono-channel sound, two digitally printed bound booklets, music stand. Length as above, each booklet 21 x 29cm
Audiences are invited to flick through these two scores: one, a piece for sampler, and another for cello. The hands comprising them offer texts for music-making through gestural interpretation.

12. Stairs

Audiences are invited to use this as seating.

13. Reading Room

Cloud Study, 7:33, 2025

Calendarised two-channel sound, framed-digital print. Length as above, 118.9 x 84.1 cm
Written for 22 voices, *Cloud Study* is the only score solely in standardised western musical notation. Across the sampled and recorded voices, clouds of beating patterns and difference-tones emerge from shifts in tuning. The visual score produces a sonic image of itself.

All work courtesy of the artists.

Ethan Braun and Lina Grumm have collaborated on a range of works, including opera, records, and printed matter. Their practices seek out tensions between hyper-refinement and glitch, the intentional and the accidental. These dynamics uncover unexpected relationships between sound, text, image, and performance, using disruption to invite new possibilities for interpretation. Ethan Braun is a composer known for experimental approaches to sound and live performance. Ethan's work braids improvisation with algorithmic and computer-assisted compositional models, as well as sampling, in music that harmonises the conceptual, formalistic, and emotional. A frequent collaborator in transdisciplinary contexts, Ethan has worked with choreographers, visual artists, and musicians across various media, with projects presented at venues such as Kampnagel Hamburg, CalArts REDCAT, Rewire Festival, Swiss Institute NYC, and LUMA Arles. Ethan's concert music has been performed at Roulette Intermedium and Carnegie Hall in New York, the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Dutch National Opera. Lina Grumm works in graphic design and is co-founder of HIT, together with Annette Lux. In dialogue with artists, exhibition makers, and authors, she develops visual communication of artistic concepts, transforming abstract ideas into books, exhibitions, posters, and digital formats. She has collaborated with institutions such as ICA and TATE London, Kunsthalle Bern, Midway Contemporary Minneapolis, and Haus am Waldsee Berlin. *Intimation of Endless Space Given in a Small Window of Time (approximately 10 minutes)* is their first collaboration in the form of an exhibition.

Events

Saturday 3 May, 6pm
Maintenance with Ethan Braun, Hermione Johnson, and Darryn Harkness

Tuesday 6 May, 12:09–1:26pm
Maintenance with Ethan Braun

Tuesday 6 May, 2–4pm
Open Rehearsal with emerging musicians and composers

Wednesday 7 May, 5–5:18pm
Maintenance with Ethan Braun

Wednesday 7 May, 6pm
Deep dive: In conversation between Antonia Barnett McIntosh, Ethan Braun, and Samuel Holloway

Thursday 8 May, 4–6pm
Maintenance with Ethan Braun and Carla Grumm

Friday 9 May, 1:18–3:36pm
Maintenance with Ethan Braun and Darryn Harkness

Every Thursday from 15 May – 10 July, 10–10:18am
Maintenance with Ruth Buchanan

Every Thursday from 15 May, 5–6pm
Thursday Date Night Tours

Friday 16 May, 10am–3pm
In focus: Graphic design and world building with Lina Grumm

Saturday 17 May, 2pm
Maintenance with Ethan Braun and Hermione Johnson

Saturday 7 June, 11am
Audio described tour

Saturday 5 July, 2pm
Maintenance with Hermione Johnson

Reading Room
How does a score mean?, BLOT

To learn more about these events, visit artspace-aotearoa.nz

To read the text by BLOT, visit artspace-aotearoa.nz/reading-room

To request a tour for your group contact info@artspace.org.nz

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To support our work and enjoy additional events consider joining a Supporters Circle. To learn more about this programme, visit artspace-aotearoa.nz/tautoko