

# RADICAL SLOWNESS

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We live in a world that prizes speed. It is a fast world, always striving to be faster. It is the world of next-day delivery, one-click purchasing, instant messaging, expedited sending, accelerated downloading, and streamlined workflow. It is a world that is always looking to shave a millisecond off the already fleeting moment.

An advertisement for an app called “Headway” reminded me of this reality. The advertisement showed Yuval Noah Harari’s book *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* next to an icon of a stopwatch and a label that read “15 min”. Below, further text posed a problem, “Not enough time to read this award-winning book?” and offered a solution, “All Insights in Just 15 Minutes”. Or put another way, this program was suggesting that Harari’s book, which distilled 100,000 years of human existence into 512 pages, was not short enough. The brief history needed to be made briefer. The complexities of humankind needed to be squeezed until only a viscous concentrate remained.

In this fast world, RADICAL SLOWNESS offers a point of difference. The title of the exhibition may feel like a contradiction at first glance. After all, what could be less radical, or more dull, than slowness? But a second look offers up a different conclusion. Slowness productively displaces us. It pulls us from the cycle of everyday life and the status quo, and opens up a space for critical reflection. To move slowly is to reclaim the space of thought and conscious decision-making. If our world is one of ever-increasing speed, then no act can be more radical than *doing* slowness.

Of course, we did not always move so fast. We only have to cast our minds back a few centuries to stumble across a different timeline—the timeline of “cathedral-thinking.” The idea of cathedral-thinking refers to the process of building something that will take more than a single lifetime to complete. It suggests that even if you or I begin to build a cathedral, it will be our grandchildren, or even their grandchildren, who finish it (long after we are gone). This was the reality for the Medieval builder and Renaissance architect. Yet, today, when facing climate catastrophe and intergenerational disaster, cathedral-thinking seems to have fallen to the side and become lost. We don’t build cathedrals anymore.

RADICAL SLOWNESS seeks to rescue both the artist and the gallery-goer from this condition. It treats time not as an innocuous or incidental aspect of the exhibition, but as a material in and of itself. Walking through The Lock-Up, you cannot help but confront the idea of time, which is written into the very patina that covers the walls of the 19th century police station. In all of the artworks, the invisible solvent of time is afforded a shape and substance. Each work contains a silent invitation, which asks us to break with the whirring pace of the present and the unabating velocity of our world. The works ask us to pause, to breathe, and to take the radical step towards slowness.

In **Tané Andrews’ *We Carry this Weight Together* (2022)** water cascades across a digital display in a never-ending stream. The flow of liquid appears to lap up against a physical rock that sits astride the digital display, yoking the physical and simulated worlds together. On one level, we know that, despite their proximity, this digital stream will never erode the physical

rock. Yet *We Carry this Weight Together* also produces a little bit of doubt, which teeters on the edges of our knowledge and our certainty. The work aspirates this whisper of doubt—almost making the impossible possible.

**Tané Andrews’ *The Eyes Say More than the Mouth* (2022)** invites us to stand between two nautilus shells. The simple act of standing assumes a nostalgic dimension, recalling the act of picking up a shell at the beach and holding it up to one’s ear. But, rather than echoing the sounds of the sea, the shells literally speak to us. They recite a blend of historical, scientific and poetic texts, all centred around climate change and voiced using ASMR. Here, the lyrical poetry of Matthew Arnold folds into the 19th century theorisations of scientist Svante Arrhenius, which then elides with present-day studies by NASA. In the face of all of these commentaries, we are asked to not only listen but also to hear.

**Aude Parichot’s** drawing-installation ***Chauffe Marcel*** ***Chauffe: Conversation with Rose Sélavy* (2022)** challenges the very idea of time and completeness in the museum or art gallery. Rather than presenting a “finished” work, Parichot produces an installation, whose form is constantly shifting. We see the artist’s process in motion, as her artwork both emerges and recedes over the course of the exhibition. The process of artistic creation is no longer hidden behind closed doors but given a new visibility. As the work’s title suggests, Parichot is producing a dialogue that stretches across time by engaging with the idea of play, and the 20th century Dadaist artist Marcel Duchamp. Through the act of play, Parichot refuses presupposed oppositions, blurring the lines between the personal and the collective; the living and the dead; and the fugitive and the permanent.

**Izabela Pluta’s *Ascending Air, Unfolding Motion* (2022)** pierces through the ceiling of The Lock-Up’s yard. The artist reassembles old art school easels into armature, which extends from the converted police station’s weathered floor out into the open skies beyond. Clinging to these sculptural forms are images made from up-scaled, cyanotype-based source material of clouds mounted on aluminium. The cyanotypes reference a photograph the artist’s father took through the aeroplane window, on the day her family emigrated from Poland to Australia in 1987. Reaching back across time, the artwork uses the *Cloud Study: A Pictorial Guide* (1960) to determine the weather and cloud patterns at this moment of departure. Here, memory feels alive, and assumes an almost active dimension. Clouds float by, in the air above The Lock-Up, yet also remain forever suspended in Pluta’s work below. Pluta’s sculptures connect tendrils of distinct moments in time, collapsing the past and the present into one another.

In **Emma Fielden’s** video performance, ***Andromeda and The Milky Way* (2021)**, two performers hypnotically capture the grand coalescence of two galaxies in charcoal: our Milky Way and the Andromeda galaxy. With each revolution of their arms, the performers mark the white surface, and mark the passing of time. As these charcoal galaxies swell, they move closer and closer to one another. Through this action, Fielden presages the reality that in 4 billion years these galaxies will meet. Yet, when that time comes, there is almost no chance

of any two stars or planets colliding. The poetics of Fielden’s work allegorise our fundamental desire for connection, as we move towards one another, through time and space, without the certainty of either contact or collision.

**Emma Fielden** draws directly onto the gallery’s walls in ***I Orbit a Point in Space Where Nothing Exists... and Time Dissolves* (2022)**. In producing the work, her hand traced an elliptical path that spirals inward and outward, inward and outward, over the course of an entire day. Here, the idea of orbit teases out a form of introspection that is at once conceptual and physical.

**Emma Fielden’s *Of a Second* series (2022)** reframes our very understanding of time across ten drawings. Fielden maps the various actions that can take place within the compressed space of a second: the snap of a finger; the travel of light; and the firing of a neuron in the human brain. Each of these phenomena take less than a second, yet each also throws our sense of time into disarray.

**Dean Cross’ *The First Second* (2019)** depicts an alarm clock flickering on the edge of time, suspended between midnight and 12:01 am. The artwork is caught at the end of one day and the beginning of another. The clock’s blinking red display transforms the brief minute into an extended moment, prompting us to experience time almost as a tangible form, rather than a floating idea. Cross sees the clock’s flickering digits almost as bodies, who are joined together in a temporal dance, marking the passing of time, just as our own bodies do. This vision is accompanied by the mournful sounds of the “Last Post.” Here, however, the sound of the iconic funerary tribute has been stretched and slowed down. With each peel of the bugle, time seems to prolong and the space for introspection appears to grow.

**Akil Ahamat’s *Dawn of a Day Too Dark to Call Tomorrow* (2021)** presents a shifting dialogue between the artist and a snail. In an alternating sequence, the two figures repeat identical phrases, yet, in spite of this similarity, seem to express different things. The work turns upon an attempt at connection in the face of disconnection. Its dialogue seems to capture some critical aspect of our 21st-century alienation, while also meditating upon the power of affect to bypass this condition. A human and a snail attempt to communicate across the divide of species, and, beyond that, across the even more fundamental divide of two separate bodies in a dark world. Almost like a mobius strip, the video installation transports us out of our world, only to seamlessly return us, and bring us closer, to some essential part of it.

artists  
Akil Ahamat, Emma Fielden,  
Dean Cross, Izabela Pluta,  
Aude Parichot & Tané Andrews

The Lock-Up is proudly supported by:



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IMAGE: Emma Fielden *Andromeda and the Milky Way*, 2021, still image from 4K video with sound, 4 hours 33 minutes, performed by Emma Fielden and Lizzie Thomson, filmed by Dara Gill, edition of 3 + 2AP.





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