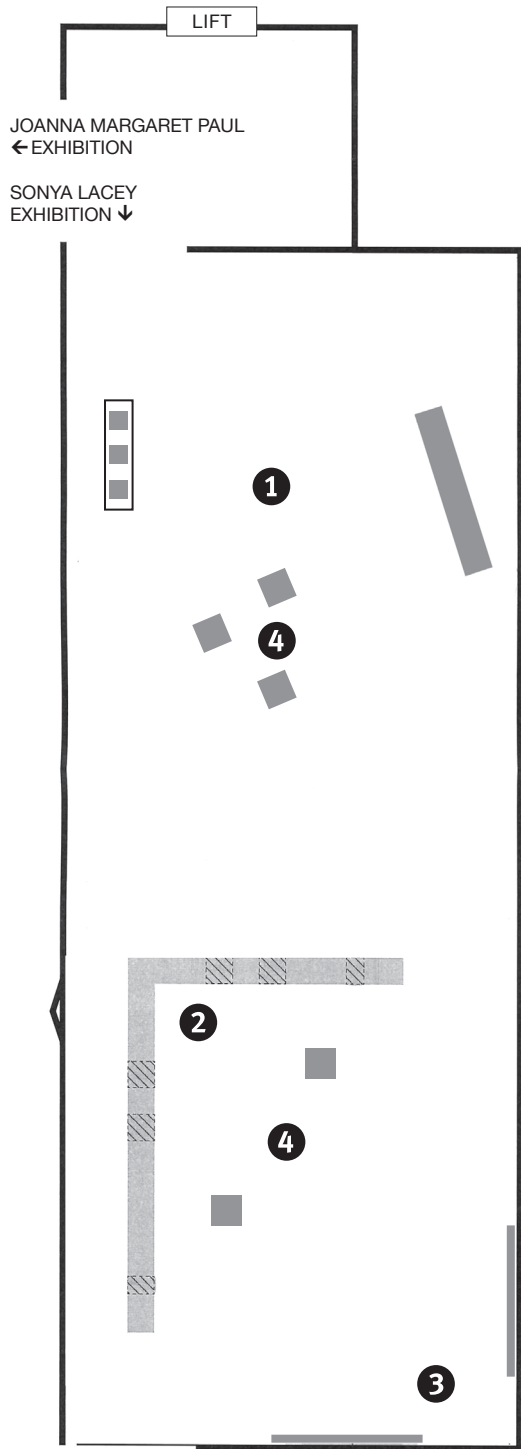


Guide to the works in  
**SONYA LACEY: TOTALLY DARK**

MAP OF FIRST FLOOR GALLERIES:



- 1. Drift, no K, room 4D31** 2021  
Two-channel HD video, no sound, with daily schedule  
15 minutes, plus 5.5mins of 'lights on' and 5.5mins of  
'lights off'
- 2. Wall** 2021  
14.7 linear metres (l) x 3.1m (h) x 600mm (d)  
Construction materials
- 3. 11 extra minutes** 2021  
Dual projection, 16mm film, colour, no sound  
channel one: 5 minutes, channel two: 6 minutes
- 4. Sleep-metal objects: Copper (cushions)**  
2021  
Five copper and steel stools

All works courtesy of the artist and Robert Heald Gallery.

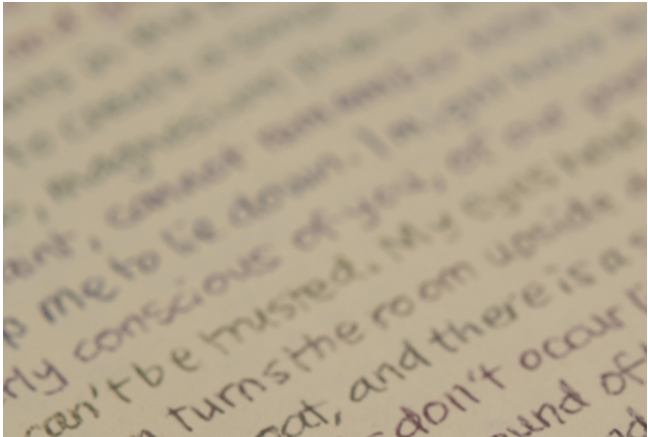
The artist wishes to thank Robert Keyzers at Te Herenga Waka  
Victoria University Wellington, the Sleep/Wake Research Centre  
at Massey University and Otago Museum.

A Dunedin Public Art Gallery Visiting Artist Project supported  
by Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa.



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A Department of the Dunedin City Council



OFF-SITE PROJECT  
**TOTALLY DARK**  
**[CHLOROPHYLL]**  
Friday 6 August - Wednesday 20 October 2021

**Favour Gallery**  
Second floor, 418 Princes Street, Dunedin  
Open 9.30am - 4pm Monday - Friday.  
11am - 1pm Saturdays.

During her residency, Lacey identified Favour Gallery, sitting  
within Miss Reid florist, as the ideal off-site location to  
exhibit her work *Chlorophyll Script*. This text-based work,  
presented at Favour as a handwritten script using ballpoint  
pen ink transformed from newspaper ink, explores ideas  
around minerals, sleep, rest and other biological processes  
in both human and plant cells. They are presented in  
parallel to an additional series of *Sleep-metal objects*,  
connecting the two sites of the exhibition and Lacey's  
shared concerns across these spaces.

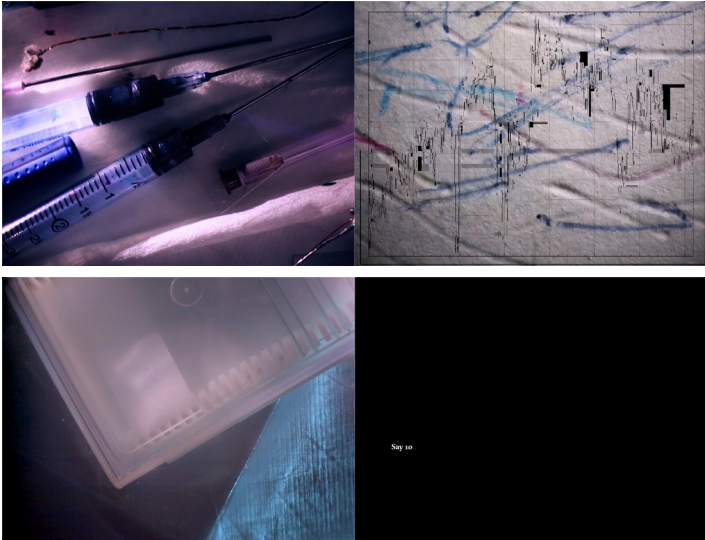
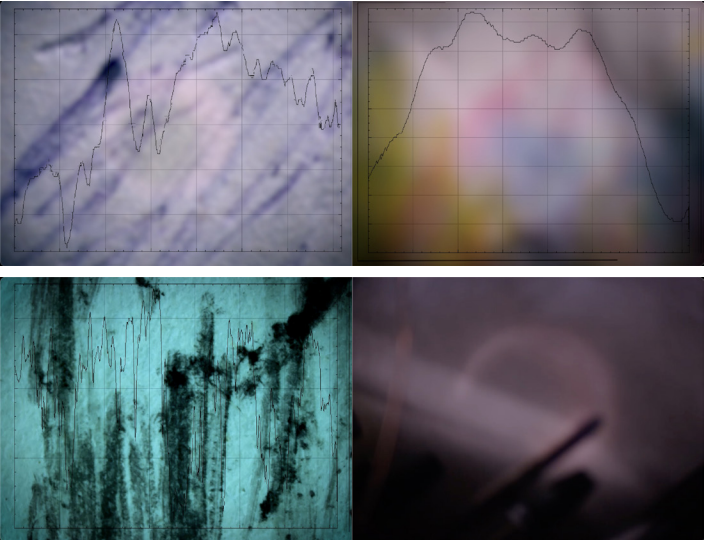
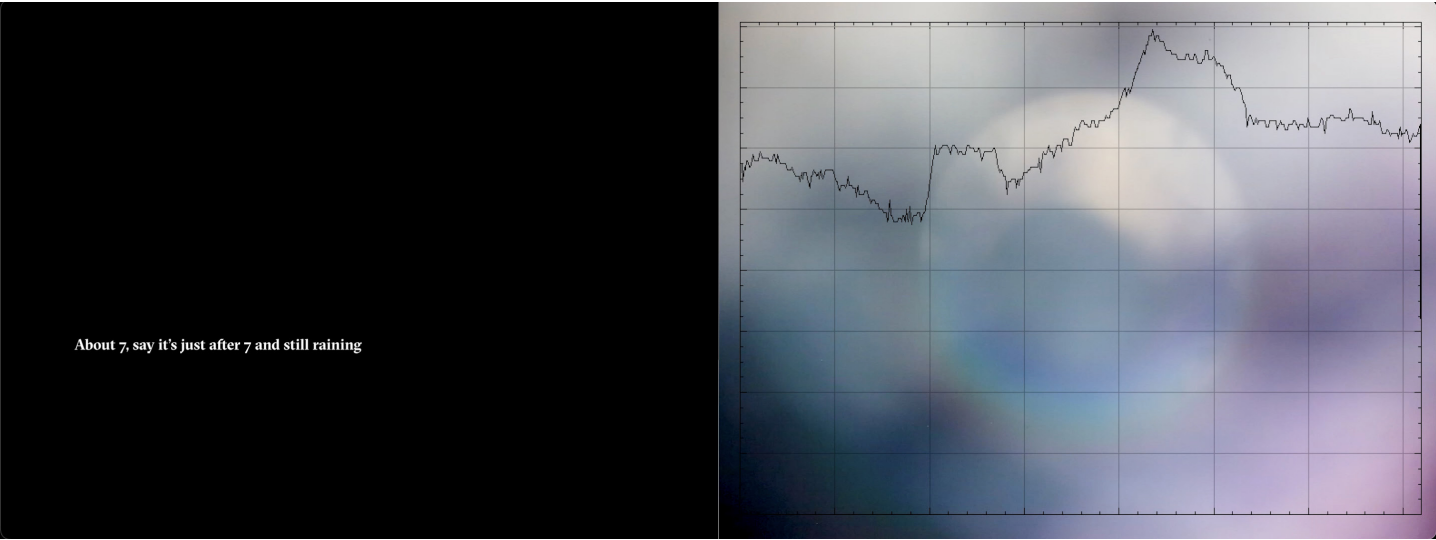
- List of works at Favour:
- Chlorophyll Script** 2020-2021  
Ballpoint pen ink made from newspaper ink from the  
Otago Daily Times, newsprint
- Sleep-metal objects:**
- Copper (cushions)** 2021  
Copper and steel stool
- Sleep metal alloy** 2021  
Zinc, iron, copper, magnesium
- Iron (Before 6pm), (Before 11pm), (Near midnight)**  
2021  
Iron and magnets

Image above: SONYA LACEY *Chlorophyll Script* (2020-21). Ballpoint  
pen ink made from newspaper ink from the Otago Daily Times,  
newsprint. Courtesy of the artist and Robert Heald Gallery

SONYA LACEY  
**TOTALLY  
DARK**







# SONYA LACEY TOTALLY DARK

cover & inside below left: SONYA LACEY  
**Drift, no K, room 4D31** 2021  
Two-channel HD video, no sound  
15 minutes, plus 5.5mins of 'lights on' and 5.5mins  
of 'lights off'  
Courtesy of the artist and Robert Heald Gallery

above: SONYA LACEY  
**11 extra minutes** (details), 2021.  
Dual projection, 16mm film, colour, no sound.  
Courtesy of the artist and Robert Heald Gallery

below right: SONYA LACEY  
**Compilation of 'rich black' monoprints made using  
ink sourced from the Otago Daily Times** 2021.  
Courtesy of the artist and Robert Heald Gallery



Sonya Lacey's research-led practice often looks to historic or real-world reference points – moments anchored to a specific site, time or context. Through her process of translating and transforming materials and ideas, her projects culminate in a conceptual space where fact is inseparable from fiction. Underpinning many of Lacey's projects is an interest in publishing and its material culture. It is a framework that encompasses materials and objects, language, architecture, editorial and technological processes, labour and gender politics.

As the Dunedin Public Art Gallery's 2021 Aotearoa New Zealand Visiting Artist, Lacey spent 12-weeks on residency in Ōtepoti Dunedin developing a new body of work towards the exhibition *Totally Dark*. As a starting point, Lacey was interested in the notion of rest within the context of labour – asking the question 'what would the unit of a day look like if it was disentangled from clock time?' For all living organisms, daily activity is driven by an internal clock, or circadian rhythm, that operates in response to an external clock – the cycle of the Earth's rotation around the sun. To operate within this 24-hour cycle, internal and external clocks must be synchronized to environmental factors such as sunlight, temperature and noise. If there is a lack of synchronicity to these stimuli then the internal clock can drift to a cycle of 24 hours, 11 minutes, depending on the individual (Czeisler et al, Harvard). Through the works in *Totally Dark*, Lacey uses language, editing, and transitions in materiality and scale to create an exhibition experience that explores and redefines these time scales, chronological markers, circadian drift and physiological processes.

*Drift, no K, room 4D31* (2021) was filmed within the now-decommissioned Time Isolation Facility at the Sleep/Wake Research Centre, Massey University. Sound-proofed and light, temperature and humidity controlled, the Isolation Facility removes all external stimuli that influence the internal body clock. With a focus on the physical spaces within this controlled environment, *Drift, no K, room 4D31* highlights the absence of exterior factors that regulate physiology, metabolism and behaviour such as sleep patterns. *Drift, no K, room 4D31* also imposes an

alternative time signature onto the exhibition. The work is scheduled to play according to a day length of 24-hours, 11 minutes (the unsynchronised circadian timescale) rather than to the standard 24-hour day. Within the work, Lacey has used transitional periods of 'lights on' and 'lights off', at 5.5 minutes each, to visually demarcate and push time across the duration of the exhibition. On the first day of this exhibition, 'lights on' takes place at 10am with 'lights off' taking place at 5pm (the opening hours of the Gallery). From then on, the lighting transitions shifts out by 11 minutes every 24-hours, creating an autonomous time cycle unique to the work itself.

In contrast, *11 extra minutes* (2021) uses text to insert a dual narrative around the understanding of and response to time. Positioning herself as both researcher and subject, Lacey used the Experience Sampling Method as a writing tool to generate text. This method of data sampling asks users to provide their immediate and unfiltered responses to predetermined questions, in this case 'what time do you think it is?'. The responses, documented throughout the work, move from confident and assured to open-ended and vague, depending on the time cues available at the point in which an answer was submitted. The *Sleep-metal objects* dispersed throughout the gallery introduce copper, a metal that, when ingested in the correct doses and form, can support and aid the sleep/wake cycle.

The title of this exhibition, *Totally Dark*, uses colloquial and hyperbolic language to set up a conceptual framework in which this project operates, while also making reference to the publishing realm. While the ability to imagine total darkness is a simple proposition in theory, the capacity to truly experience total darkness is impossible, as the eyes require light to see. *Totally Dark* also refers to the material properties present within variations of black found in the CMYK colour printing process<sup>1</sup>, where 'true black' is 100% 'K', while 'theoretical black' is C, M and Y, completely absent of 'K'. Traces of publishing and editorial processes are also present in *11 extra minutes* and in *Wall* (2021). The CMYK inks within *11 extra minutes*, occupying jars, syringes and pens, were newspaper inks sourced

from the Otago Daily Times. Working with a chemist in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, Lacey translated the newspaper ink into ballpoint pen ink – creating a thinner, more malleable and faster drying product. The architectural construct, *Wall*, also pays homage to the Otago Daily Times, with its design referencing the façade of the Allied Press building – bringing a further trace of the newspaper into the exhibition experience.

1. Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Key (Black)

**Sonya Lacey** is the 2021 Dunedin Public Art Gallery Visiting Artist. Her exhibition *Weekend* was nominated for the 2021 Walters Prize. She has exhibited throughout Aotearoa New Zealand at galleries including Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Artspace, Govett Brewster Art Gallery, The Dowse Art Museum and Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts. Her video *By Sea* has been extensively screened internationally including at the London International Film Festival and her work was recently included in the *Singapore Festival of Moving Image: State of Motion 2020*.

