

artesmundi¹⁰

#3

Catrin Menai

ALAW TU HWNT I NI²

I entered without mistrust. It was a real garden. From the very garden gate, you could see the earth was there.



The first garden of my life was a badger garden, in front of the wooden frame house on the prairie there was no lawn, only a flat expanse of scrub land where badgers used to play and at the end of the field, a railway track, where there passed one train a day. The house was called Sharples, but I nicknamed it Shark's Stables. It seemed to me that if there were badgers there might as well be sharks. Across the gravel road that lead to the town were the wheatfields: a dense cool green world which I entered in spring holding my father's hand and which grew throughout the summer until I was surrounded by pungent golden stalks imprisoned in a maze of gold with only my father's hand connecting me to certainty. Down the other side, beyond the kitchen door, was a path which led to a stream lined with willow trees. The path led along the stream to the prairie beyond, the vast empty sky table, where once, after a rainstorm, my dad and I found the skeleton of a dinosaur intact in the hillside. I remember the the broad bands of rib, and the wobbly vertebrae. And we telephoned the university of Edmonton and a man came down to Carbon to verify our find and when we went out we could never find it again. And so the dinosaur became the story of a dinosaur and my dad and I kept on walking the prairie looking for bones



as if the garden could only refer

to something inside

I can't see

pillar of smoke at the conclusion active in the gestures of holding

ludic outside

“for the record”

all the bones in the right places

(what is this collision ?)

of instants bits & pieces mid-sentence

seismic methods of comparing

exhausted terrain

because *something else is happening!*

invisible swell

because when friction is regular like a heartbeat materials and freedom combine⁵

dividing space through snow

mineral trackway *dense cool green world*

(hollow) and hoodoos

and within the half hollows⁶ shadows, *sediment of*





dust in wind

*[every detail exists]*⁸

every verterbrea

protruding through dust

every atom of rain

every limit

every love!

From: catrin menai <catrinmenai@hotmail.co.uk>
Sent: Friday, December 1, 2020 10:46 AM
To: Andrew Dipper <adipper@givensviolins.com>
Subject: Bows through arctic snow

Dear Catrin,

I found a picture that I took of your Grandfather. We had gone out together to collect firewood. The temperature was 28 degrees below zero F and eventually the film in my camera froze to the camera body. I had made a little sheepskin cover for it to keep it warm. The camera was a manual exposure Kodak retinette . It took great pictures but you had to guess the light levels and exposure. I have the negatives but I scanned this picture from a contact sheet. The letter is one of several that I had not scanned until now. I was doing a whole bunch of scanning of archive material of projects that I worked on with John Latham. These are for an upcoming show of John's work at the Lisson Gallery. Let me know if you want to go to the opening and I will see if I can arrange it.

All the best

Drew

Ellie can't discern anything from the rough patterned stone from around her feet. But she knows history can be embedded in stone. In theory, things endure.



VAR

Dear Drew,

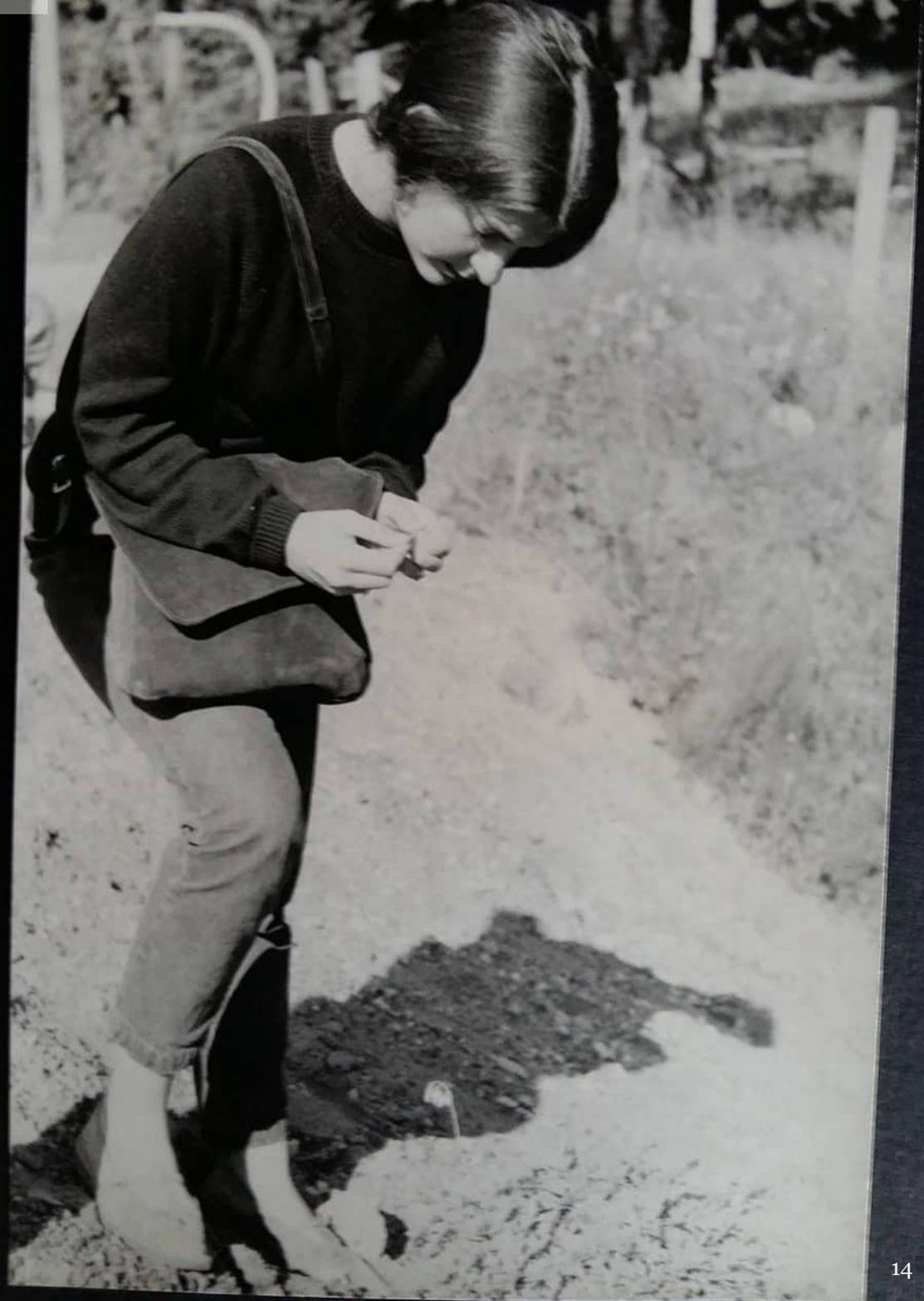
THANK-YOU for the pipes which arrived yesterday along with your letter. I was walking through the souk with a friend and I unwrapped the parcel ^{at a lemonade stall} because I couldn't contain my curiosity any longer and lo! before the second layer even came off we had about 20 people gathered round waiting to see what was inside and when they did they were very impressed. There's a great trade in tin whistles around these parts - the old men on the boats play them and at night sometimes a strange eastern melody comes floating into my window.

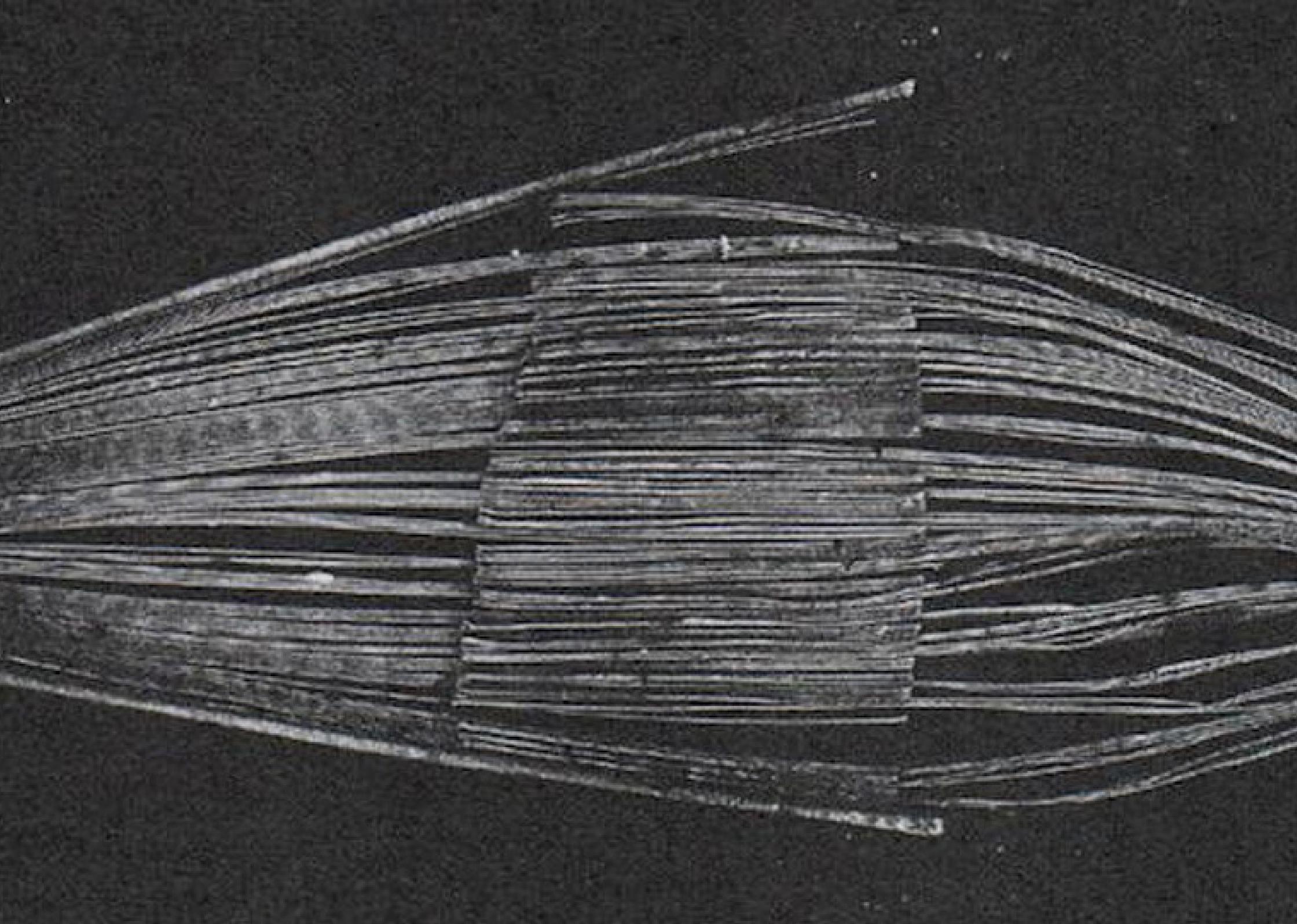
It's a beautiful pipe. Sounds a bit windy now but I think it's getting

coffee from.
Row Conditory Cafe

Evidence.
See inventory;
see love;
see contact;
see syntax

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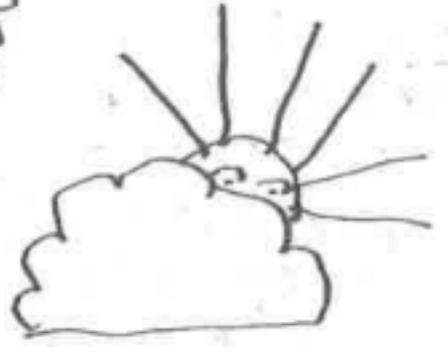


Yma, lle

*mae esgyrn yn
y pridd, mae'n
hawdd mynd o un
cae i'r cae nesaf*



I send LOVE
and a



mail.



Dew Dupper
6 Cambridge Terrace
Regent's Park
London NW1
ENGLAND



אשראי שולחן - SENDER - אשולחן

Re Ann, Israel
to American Express
Co. Hughes

פסג רמטון

אשראי שולחן
containing an objet quelconque sera envoye au tarif de la lettre-avion.
enclosure will be sent at airmail letter rate.

From: Andrew Dipper <adipper@givensviolins.com>
Sent: 09 April 2019 10:47
To: 'catrinmenai@hotmail.co.uk' <catrinmenai@hotmail.co.uk>
Subject: more of the story

Dear Catrin,

Yes I do remember that there was some native American in your mother's blood line. She told me a fascinating story that occurred when she was in Montreal at McGill university. She was invited to a rain making ceremony out on the prairie, so it must have been in western Canada. I remember that it was a peace-pipe ceremony and a ceremony to ask for rain. In the ceremony there were two parts to the pipe that were held by different clans. At the moment that the pieces were put together she told me how the weather completely changed and huge storm clouds rolled in with blustery gusts of rain. This story, which she told in detail had a great effect on me and the event must be remembered somewhere in the Native American oral tradition.

Some years after I had a vivid dream at being at such a ceremony and being given a bunch of sticks. It was explained to me that with these I too could talk to the sky people. I recall in the dream that I cast one of the sticks on the ground and a storm of snow clouds came flapping in from the west and in an hour the whole scene had been transformed from the colors of the harvest time to black and white. Now living in Minnesota I know the thrill of that day when the season changes and how magic it can be. I do remember your grandmother and how she was as willow like as the trees on the prairie.

Gail told me about her time at university and her apartment in the city and her writing and then the leap across the Atlantic to London and an unsure future with only the residue of literary strings as a support. We introduced each other to books. She opened up the world of Gorges Luis Borges to me and I introduced her to the One Thousand and One Nights. There is a certain kind of resonance in people's lives and how they are drawn together each carrying in their precise shadow, their individual ghosts.

Best Wishes

Drew

towards

the end of the hoped-for circle

I am tracing the noise of your bones

TAWDD FEL NAWR

molten

like

now

is where

I dance

in the friction

between you and the ground

which is not so dissimilar to the friction between ice

and a gliding skate

the lines run faintly

through the

place

where the diamond is

heavy

with ciphers like snow

falling

on

sea

and you are forever

For a long time afterwards, Ellie dreamed of the dinosaur. She dreamed that it rained and all over the prairie fresh green grass and star flowers sprouted up. They were walking along the road when suddenly they came upon the dinosaur, no longer collapsed upon the hillside but erect and clothed in scaly armour. It towered above them, so high that Ellie felt dizzy as she stretched her arms in greeting. In the dream the dinosaur inclined its huge head and, ever so gently, touched Ellie's outstretched hand.

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mercury and storm

as if bare heeled

or, naming the world again.

20

- 1 *A True Garden*, FISHER, CLAUDINE G, and H el ene Cixous (2000)
- 2 Recollecting her childhood garden, from G's diary (2000)
- 3 Photograph of G and my grandmother with 'Dinny the Dinosaur', Calgary Zoo (1948)
- 4 *Danse dans la neige* (Dance in the Snow), Fran oise Sullivan (1948)
- 5 'Materials and freedom combine', a line taken from the poem '*Permanent Home*', by W
Mei Mei Berssenbrugge
- 6 A hoodoo is a tall, thin spire of rock formed by erosion
- 7 My grandfather collecting firewood in the snow, Alberta, Canada (date unknown)
- 8 Words echo '*Alphabet*', a poem by Inger Christensen
- 9 *Bows in Arctic snow*, an e-mail from Drew to myself (2020)
- 10 *The Dinosaur*, excerpt from a short story written by G (2000)
- 11 *Where the rivers flow*, Taloi Havini (2023). I took photographs of Havini's work at the Mostyn
gallery using my Mother's old camera. I had to guess the light because the light metre was broken.
- 12 Archived letter with annotated coffee stain, written to D from G, Afghanistan (1974).
- 13 Lines from *The Hundreds*, Lauren Berlant & Kathleen Stewart (2019)
- 14 G picking up stones, Alberta, Canada (undated)
- 15 *Photocopy of two books*, John Latham (undated)

16 *'Rhwng Dau Gae yn Enlli'*, (Between Two Fields in Bardsey), poem by Sian Northey

17 Archived letter, written to D from G, Tel Aviv, Israel (undated)

18 *Habitat*, Taloi Havini (2017), me reading the light again

19 *The Dinosaur*, final paragraph

20 *The Geography of Holes*, published by Poetry Wales (2017), a poem I wrote about my grandmother (who I never met)

G *Flamingos*, Gail Hughes (Parthian Books, 2000), is a sequence of stories following the progress of a young girl through childhood into adolescence on the fringes of the Badlands in Alberta, Canada. Within the stories (which includes *The Dinosaur*), my mother gives herself the new name, 'Ellie'. The book was published shortly before her death in 2001.

D Drew Dipper is a violin restorer in Minnesota. We have never met, but we have been corresponding since 2010.

Catrin Menai is an artist based between Bethesda (north Wales) and Glasgow. She creates narrative-driven works using the communicative potential of everyday objects, gestures, and place. Through film, writing and found objects, and grounded as much in chance encounter as in close study, she explores ways of thinking with our world, considering care and love as a material space for knowledge-making. Her work has been exhibited at Mostyn and The Turner House, and published with Poetry Wales. She completed an MFA at the Glasgow School of Art in 2021. catrinmenai.co.uk

Catrin Menai's 'ALAW TU HWNT I NI²' is the third in [a series of 8 newly commissioned texts](#) developed alongside [Artes Mundi 10](#), which is showing in Cardiff, Swansea, Newtown and Llandudno between October 2023 and February 2024.

Artist yw **Catrin Menai** sy'n byw rhwng Bethesda a Glasgow. Mae ei gwaith yn edrych at botensial gwrthrychau bob-dydd, ystumiau a llefydd i gyfathrebu naratif. Gan ddefnyddio ffilm, sgwennu a phrosesau o ganfod, a'i gwreiddio mewn cyfarfyddiadau damweiniol gymaint ag astudiaeth fanwl, mae'n archwilio ffyrdd o feddwl gyda'n amgylchfydoedd, ac o ystyried gofal a chariad fel gofod materol i greu *gwybod/aeth*. Mae ei gwaith wedi ei arddangos yn ddiweddar yn Mostyn a Thy Turner, ac fe cwblhaodd MFA yn y Glasgow School of Art yn 2021. catrinmenai.co.uk

'ALAW TU HWNT I NI²' gan **Catrin Menai** yw'r trydydd yn [ein cyfres o wyth comisiwn sgwennu](#) wedi'u datblygu yn rhan o [Artes Mundi 10](#), sydd ar ddangos yn Abertawe, Caerdydd, Drenewydd a Llandudno rhwng Hydref 2023 a Chwefror 2024.