



Sangeeta Sandrasegar: *It's Like That* at Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne

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Sangeeta Sandrasegar, *It's Like That*, 2018. ARA Summer 2018 Review

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Fifty-three sheets of white paper, slightly larger than A4 and arrayed in landscape format, form a continuous horizontal line around three walls of the gallery. Each page is fixed to the wall by pins through transparent plastic tabs attached to its top corners. Arranged to meet the eye, they flutter under brash strip lighting and sway away from the wall as one passes. The blank pages seem, at first glance, waiting to be filled.

On closer inspection, one notices delicate needlepoint piercings through the leaves of paper that reveal themselves to be spindly words and sentences. They are diary entries, with each page corresponding to a calendar week. Copied by hand from Sangeeta Sandrasegar's 2017 diary, they mix daily minutiae with quotes and comments: 'Drank and smoke [*sic*] too much', reads Saturday 2 December; on the following Monday, a quote from French poet Paul Valéry, 'Form is costly'.

Read clockwise around the room, the diary pages narrate the artist's responsibilities, anxieties and routines through the course of the year. Each spread follows the same logic: the lefthand side of the page, divided into the days of the week, contains the artist's engagements, while the righthand side is occupied with to-do lists, quotes from the artist's reading and stream-of-consciousness: 'rather than a gmail – email invite?', 'Fix something the fuck up!!'

The pages document the stages of Sandrasegar's artistic process, revealing how she allocates her time as well as her emotional and intellectual preoccupations. Autobiography mixes with the artist's practice: some sections suggest an artist struggling to stave off depressive tendencies by adhering to a routine, while others describe the creation of an artwork and include snippets of self-critique: 'more layers memory depth melancholy'.

As with her figurative paper cutouts (such as *Untitled from Theatre of the Oppressed*, 2007–08), Sandrasegar uses holes to suggest transience and impermanence. Her experiences are reduced to a pattern of small voids that serve as negative copies of the original entries, replacing ink with absence. The laborious process of writing in this manner – itself a performative gesture – highlights the tension between the passing of time and the attempt to fix a life in words.

The lightness of the work's form is balanced by the gravitas of the quotes and commentaries. Taken from Roland Barthes's *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces* (2013), a quote about Greek etymologies resonates most with Sandrasegar's play on original and copy: 'The [source] Greek word pinpoints a concept that serves simultaneously as an origin, an image and defamiliarises'. In attempting to chart the life of an artist, *It's Like That* combines performance, text and installation. *Cleo Roberts*

Sangeeta Sandrasegar: *It's Like That* at Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, 23 March – 28 April

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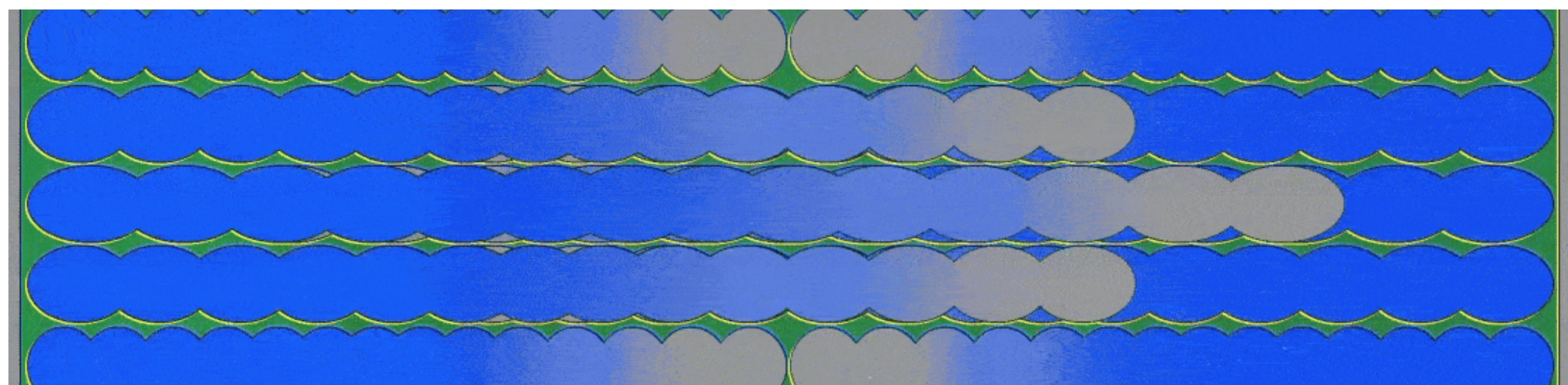
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