



Extispicy in the Everyday: An Exploration of Human-Environment Binaries through the Gut

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Extispicy in the Everyday:

An Exploration of Human-Environment Binaries Through the Gut

Aims and Outline of Workshop Schedule – 5 mins

AIMS:

- To explore the thresholds between our bodies, and in particular our guts, and the external, natural and built environments
- To problematise human-environment binaries and re-conceptualise these seemingly bounded entities
- To explore our immediate locale to notice and gather materials that resemble our guts, intestines and our hidden infrastructure
- To draw parallels between the hidden infrastructure, leftover materials, waste and discarded matter of our immediate locale and our insides
- To conceptually and visually re-connect the idea of the gastrointestinal tract being at the same time inside the body, and part of the external environment, outside the body border

Part 1 – 15 mins

Introduction to *extispicy* & the themes and aims of the workshop through my artwork and research

- I will introduce the ancient practice of *extispicy*, divination using the entrails
- I will present this practice in relation to some of my artwork/projects and research and summarise the ideas and themes of the workshop

Part 2 – 20 mins

Gathering activity

- We will go out and explore our immediate locale to perceive and gather materials that resemble guts, intestines and our bodily hidden infrastructure
- On our return, we will gather our gut-inspired dish or snack that we prepared earlier

Part 3 – 20 mins

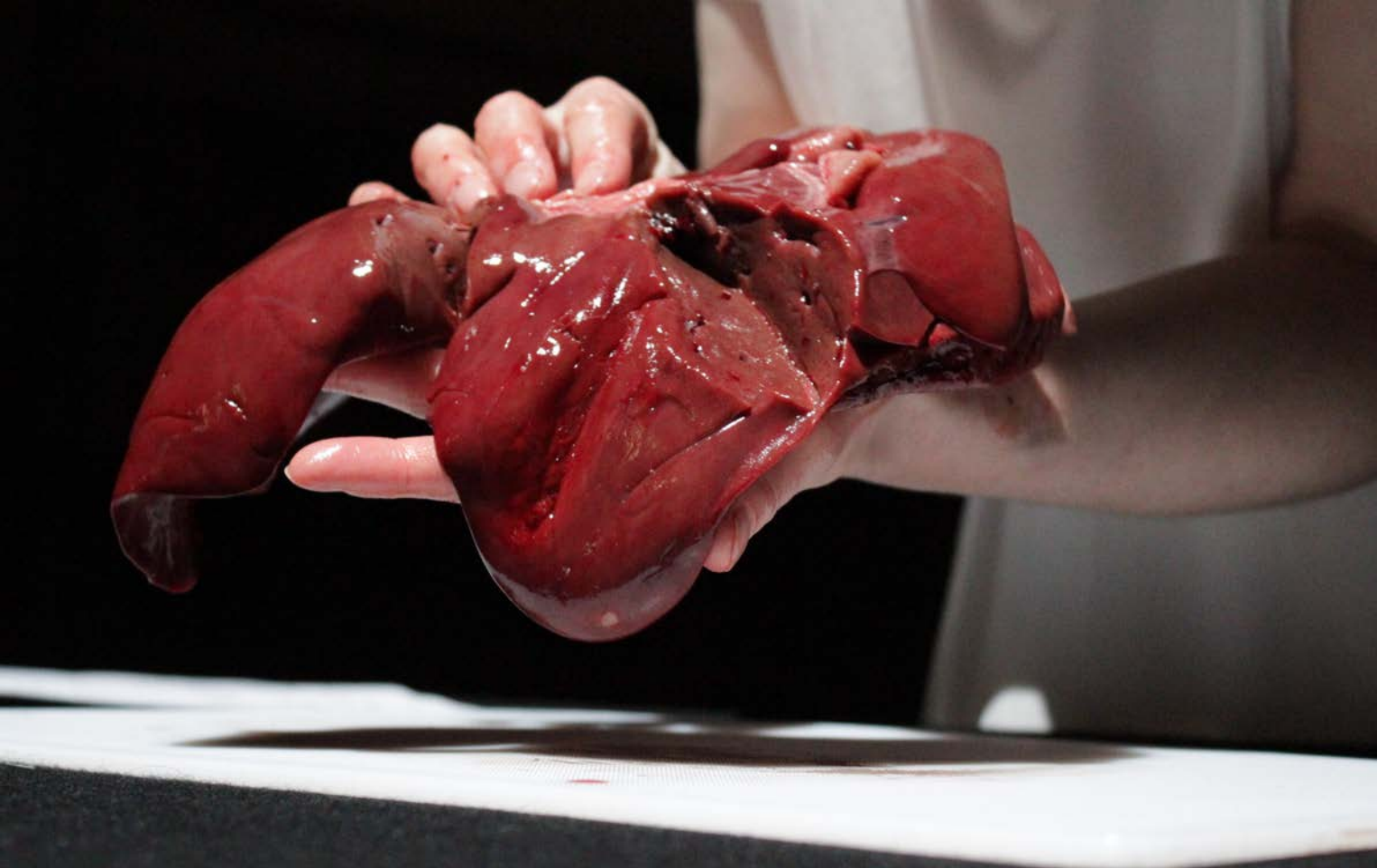
Sharing and digesting collected materials/images & eating food together

- We will discuss you gathered materials and your reflections and motivations for the choices made
- We will eat (and later digest!) together our gut-evocative foods and share our reasoning for our choices of food
- We will conclude with a discussion about our experiences in relation to the aims of the workshop

What is *extispicy*?

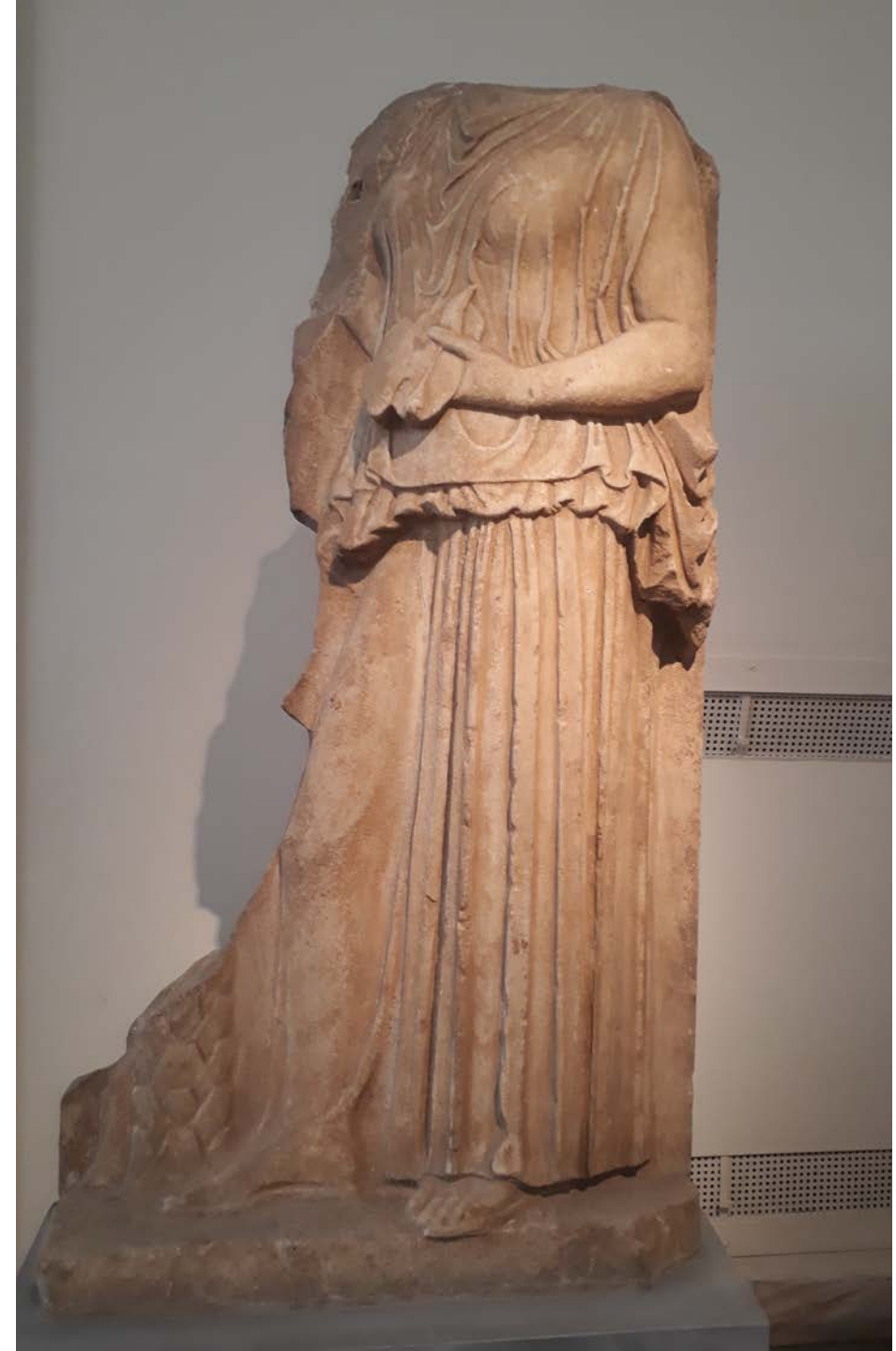
The ancient practice of divination
using the
entrails





Above: Documentation of Amanda Couch, 'A Woman Holding a Liver' 2017, at Acts-Re-Act 4: Wimbledon Space, London. Photograph by Rosie Potter.

Right: Votive relief in Pentelic marble of a woman holding a liver. Found Mantinea, Arcadia. Greece. 420-410 BC, in National Archeological Museum, Athens Greece. Personal photograph.





Liver models from the palace of Mari in Louvre, dated 1800 - 1700 BC.



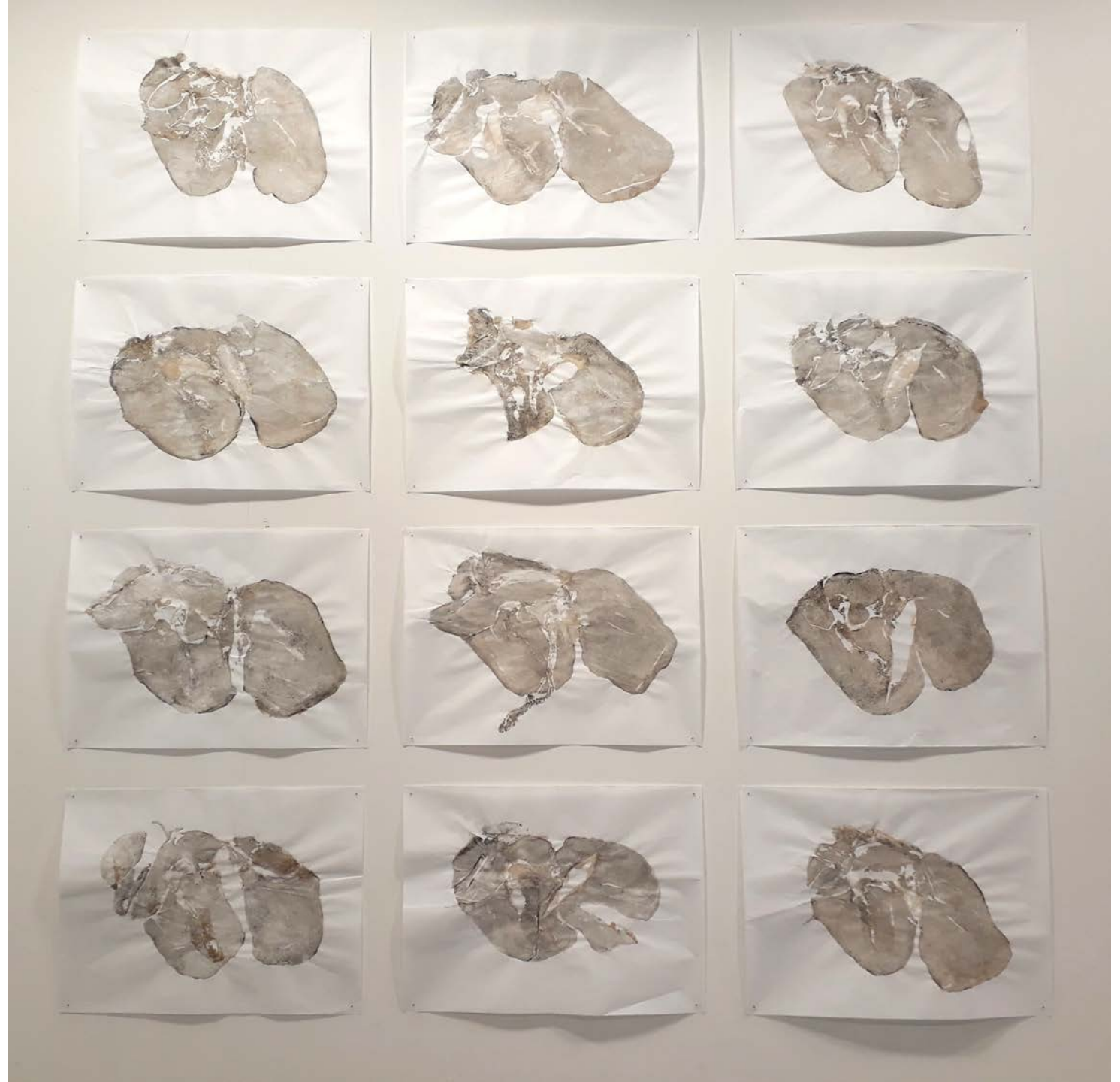
Liver tablet, British Museum from
1900 – 1600 BC, Sippar.

Thought to be a teaching tool.



Bronze diagram of sheep's liver
found at Decima di Gossolengo
with Etruscan inscriptions,
Museo Civico, Piacenza, late 2nd
century BC, below.

The Liver Models 2016.
Monoprint on Chinese
paper.





The Liver Models 2016 . Monoprint on Chinese paper.



Above: 11th century BC Mesopotamian clay tablet representing the bowels of a sheep. Personal photograph.

Clay tablet from Babylon, from the 12th - 11th century BC, with what is thought to be extispicy models, Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (part of the Pergamon). Personal photograph.





Extispicy Biscuits 2016, inscribed, baked gingerbread dough

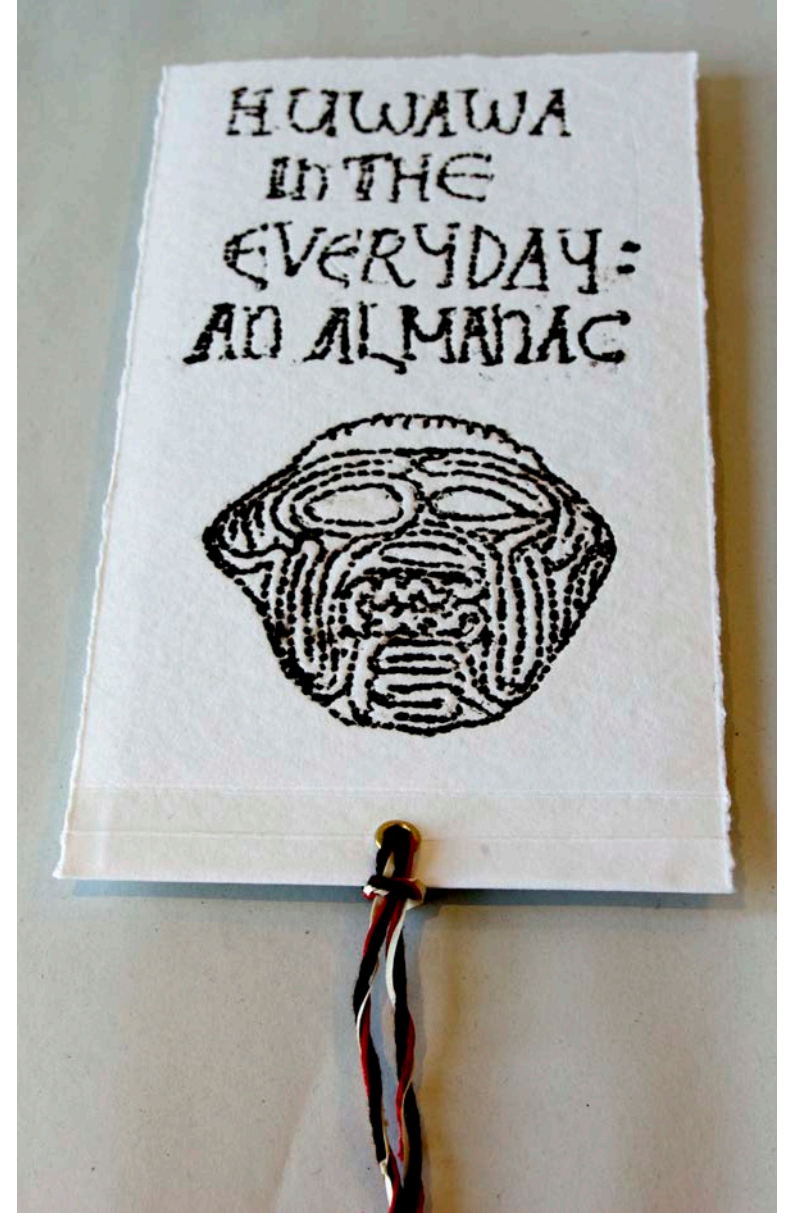


Our Palace of Intestines for Stag(e) Hill 2018, Ivy Arts Centre, University of Surrey, Guildford



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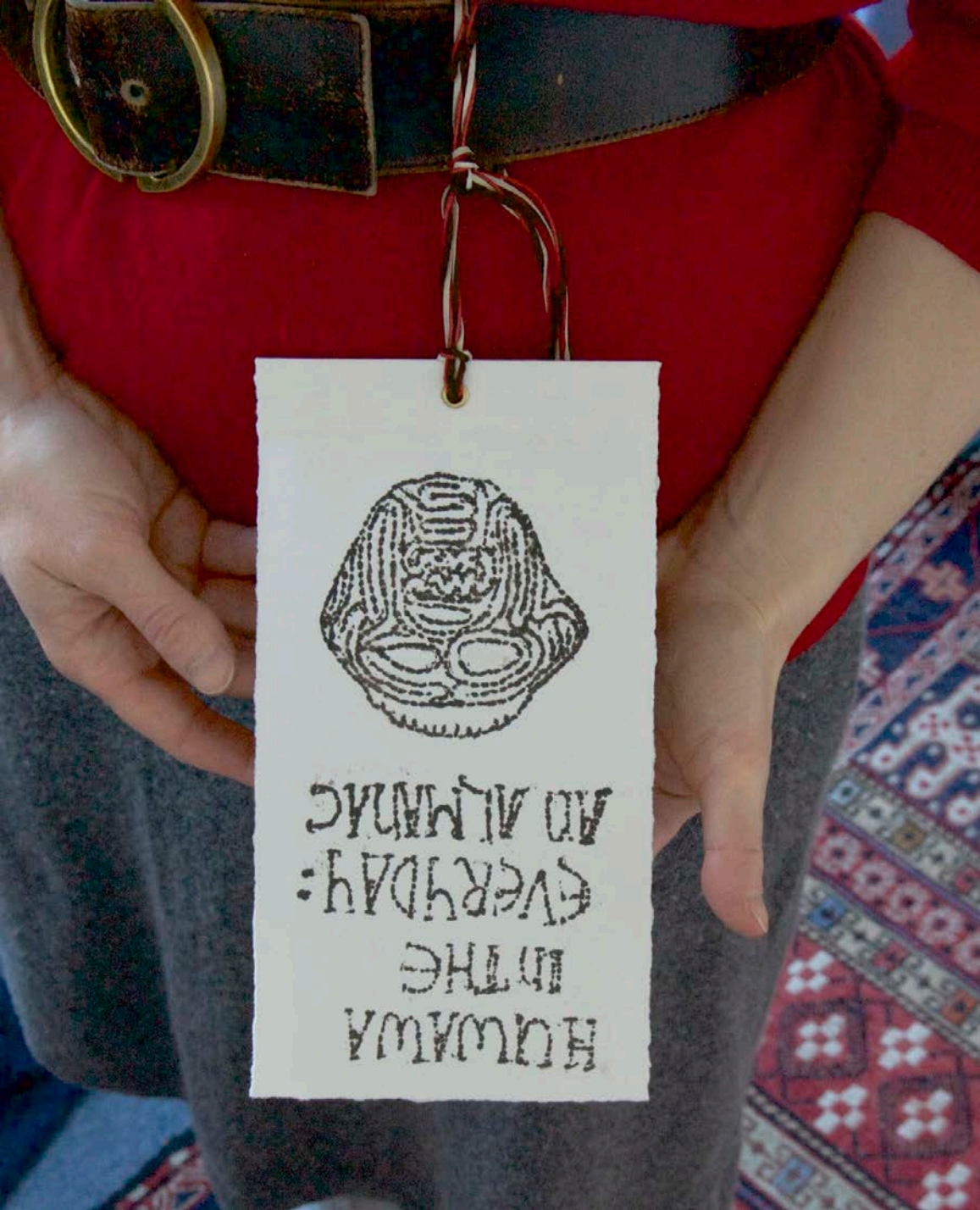




Huwawa in the Everyday: An Almanac 2016



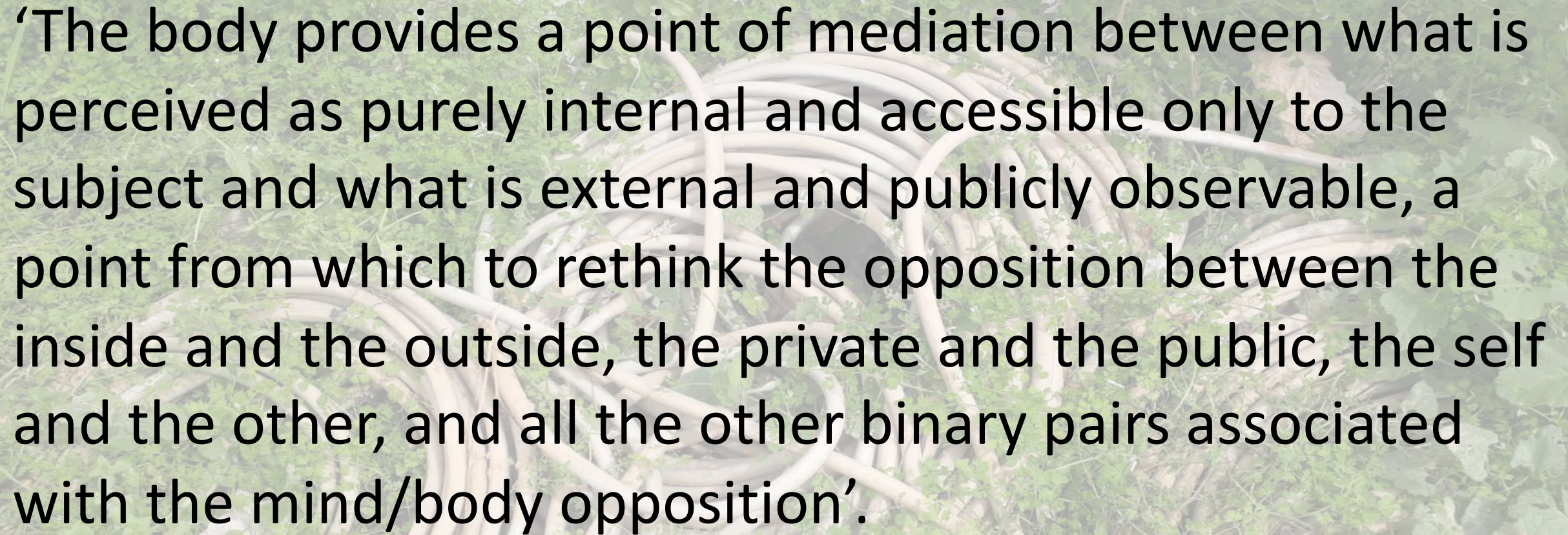
Huwawa clay tablet. About 1800-1600 BC From Sippar in The British Museum, London.



Huwawa in the Everyday: An Almanac 2016

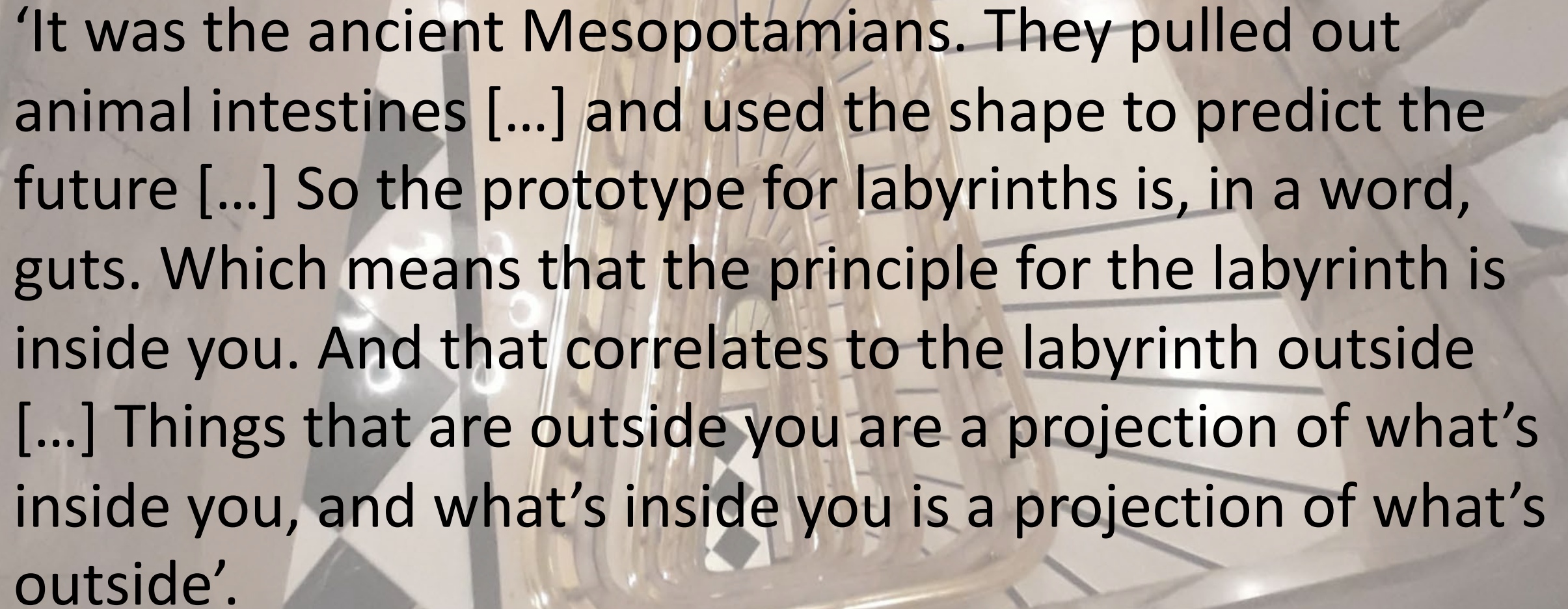
The book can be carried on the person, attached to a belt with threads, and could be used as a prompt during daily activities, 'making the audience member a performer'.

(Johanna Drucker (2004) *The Century of Artists' Books*, p.311)



‘The body provides a point of mediation between what is perceived as purely internal and accessible only to the subject and what is external and publicly observable, a point from which to rethink the opposition between the inside and the outside, the private and the public, the self and the other, and all the other binary pairs associated with the mind/body opposition’.

Elizabeth Grosz (1994) *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*

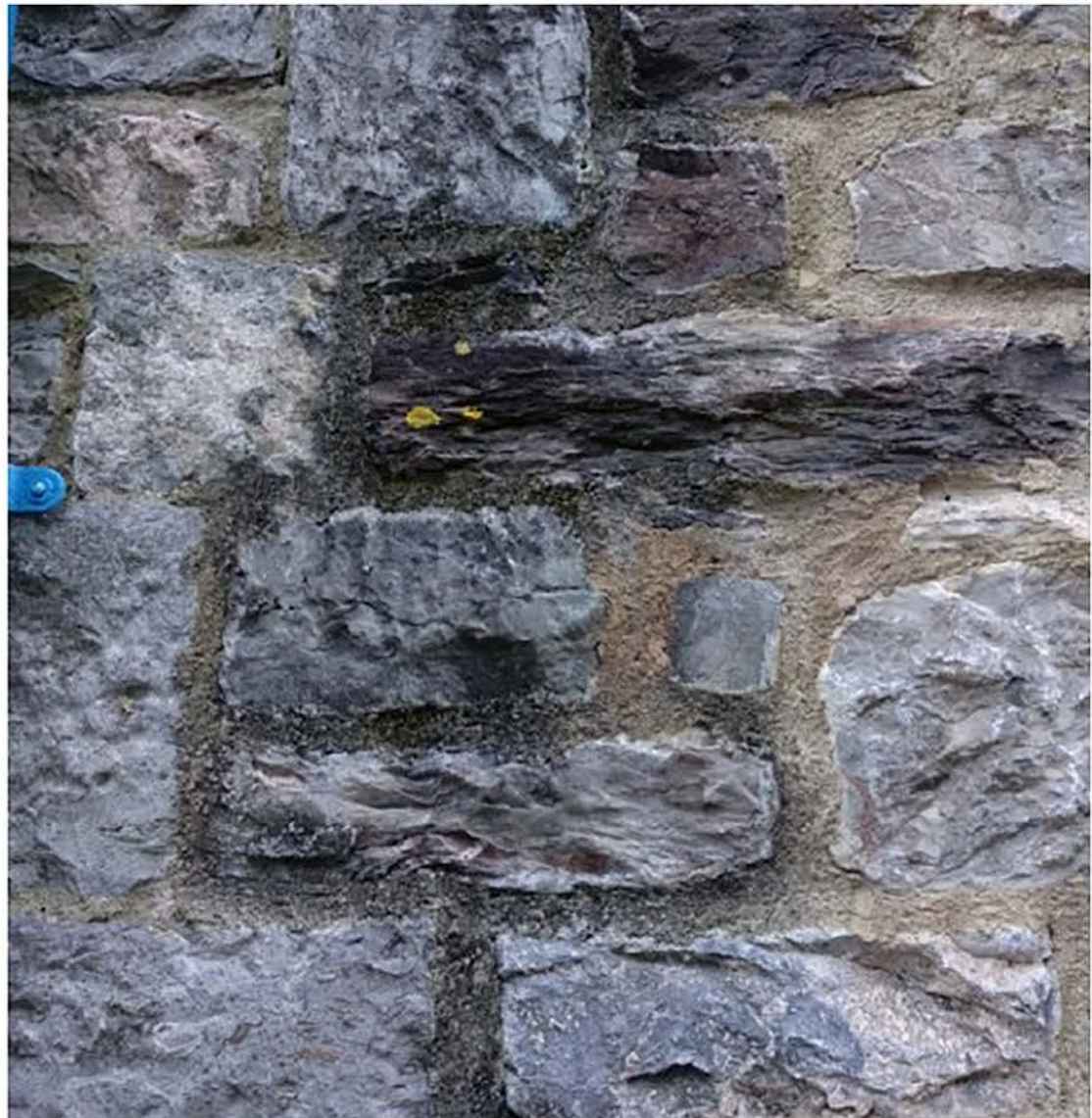


‘It was the ancient Mesopotamians. They pulled out animal intestines [...] and used the shape to predict the future [...] So the prototype for labyrinths is, in a word, guts. Which means that the principle for the labyrinth is inside you. And that correlates to the labyrinth outside [...] Things that are outside you are a projection of what’s inside you, and what’s inside you is a projection of what’s outside’.

Haruki Murakami (2002) *Kafka on the Shore*



One participant gathered images showing tree roots emerging from the earth, which they suggested, ‘put me in mind of the way in which the stomach and intestines often indicate feelings of unease which are otherwise kept “underground”,’ an awareness of which was triggered for them, during the breathing exercises (Anon., 2018).



A second, chose images of the maps of the gardens and photographed rain meandering and zigzagging within the mortar amid brickwork on a wall, drawing parallels between the paths, and passageways of water and the conveyance of matter and fluids through the alimentary canal.



Another participant perceived the whole urban environment as a consuming, processing organism, contemplating the digesting of life, activities, etc all day in the city. They sought out 'scenes of digestion' and drew parallels between the abdominal wall and surfaces within the urban environment.

'The plastic foil covering the scaffolding of a building in construction made me think of an abdominal wall behind which intestines perform their duty of deconstructing compounds and transforming/storing them into more suitable forms of structure/energy' (Anon., 2018).

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