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Snail Time

Lucy Meyle and Ziggy Lever

Lucy Meyle and Ziggy Lever
Window Gallery
22.03.21 - 04.05.21

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Snail Time

Lucy Meyle and Ziggy Lever

Snail Time
Lucy Meyle and Ziggy Lever

Originally published in 2021 as part of *Snail Time* at Window Gallery, re-printed in 2022.

ISBN: 978-0-473-61350-1

The typefaces used are Courier New, Univers, Source Sans Pro, and Adobe Caslon Pro. The paper is Munken and Popset Flame Orange.

On the dust jacket of this book are all the entries from the University of Auckland Library catalogue that came up when we searched 'snail time'. The availability and location of items at the time of searching has been preserved.

With thanks to: Ian Meyle, Harriet Stockman, Greg Thomas, Fleur Williams, Simon Palenski, Window Gallery, and RM Gallery.

Introduction 00:06:88

Snail as Handbag 00:22:74

Sandpit: A history of playground design 00:42:87

A Letter from David Macbride, M. D. to John Walsh, Esq; F. R.S. Accompanying Two Letters from Mr. Simon to Dr. Macbride, concerning the Reviviscence of Some Snails Preserved Many Years in Mr. Simon's Cabinet 01:21:71

Glistening 01:45:50

Library Copy 02:03:99

All movement, no travel 02:28:21

Margin/alias *throughout*

Image archive of snail playground equipment *throughout*

Snail Time in the Window / Snail Time at Walker Park *inserts*

Introduction

This book was surreptitiously placed in the Auckland University Library's general collection on the 31st March 2021. You may be reading this whilst standing amongst the shelves in one of three locations in the main library building on the opening night of *Snail Time*, a collaborative project by Lucy Meyle and Ziggy Lever at Window Gallery (in the library foyer). You may be reading this in the relative future, perhaps the three versions of this book have been circulating within the library for some time now. Perhaps you are a librarian reading this text upon discovering that the Dewey number on the spine wasn't put there by the library, and that this record doesn't exist in the index (if so, the authors send their regards). You could be reading this text outside of the library context, perhaps it was pocketed by someone, or sold by the library, and has changed hands as it was passed from person to person. Maybe the library has digitised it. More likely is that you found this in a car-boot sale, or in a long-forgotten archive box and are struggling to remember what it is. On one of our reconnaissance missions to the library, we noticed large parts of the collection were in flux, moving in and out of 'cold' storage or to other parts of the library. Inserting this book into the library's distributions, we hope that it joins this flow.

In this book is a series of loosely connected texts and images that reveal some of the thinking behind the *Snail Time* project, which was installed at Window Gallery between the 22nd March and the 4th May 2021. This project is a collaboration between Lucy Meyle and Ziggy Lever, developing on from ideas that came out of our previous works, especially *Looking Forwards and Backwards*, an installation at Blue Oyster Project Space in 2017. In that show, a large helical plywood ramp was installed in the larger of the two spaces. In a space in the centre of the ramp, two mirrors caught a projection of an archival image of tree Asters that we found in the Hocken Collections / Uare Taoka o Hākena. The projected image rotated slowly, divided into two halves that moved around the room and onto the street, occasionally recombining on the wall as a folding of time and space in the image. Thinking about this work, and its overarching premise of looking simultaneously forwards into the future moment and backwards to the past, is the basis from which *Snail Time* emerged.

Changing tense, in the Window, you will find two sculptures that resemble playground spring riders. Bark lines the floor, and sheets of 'flame orange' A3 paper are stuck in a grid to the back wall. Reflections and light bouncing off the window interrupt the scene, moving across the snail, leaf, and the orange paper grid to form a temporary image space that strikes across the surface of the installation. The cover of this book is taped to the window on the far

hand-right side, and you can imagine the smell of the bark as you approach the text. You might pick up a copy of this cover by the window, and discover a list of books and media that appear when searching "SNAILTIME" in the library catalogue. One of these entries will stand out, a fluro pink record with the title of this publication and an associated Dewey Decimal number.

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You take the hint on the page (or a hint made by the artists), and form small groups to go forth in the library and investigate. Congratulations you found it! With thoughts about snails and libraries and playground equipment, you read this introduction hoping it will elucidate the text in front of you.

The snail is often considered to be 'sub', as in underneath something: under its shell, under a foot, in the undergrowth, being ridden on in the playground. In Western art history it symbolised subconscious desires and bodily processes hidden from the human eye. In their hibernated and desiccated states, or when they retreat into their shells, it can be hard to tell if the snail is still even alive. In writing about the snail, we came to think of the notion of the 'sub' library – how texts can become tied to one another across the categories and indexes of the 'main' collection. These ties create slippages

within the shelves. In the everyday experience of searching for a title and finding it not in the stacks, the authority of the library is called into question. This text wavers like a lost library book, between inner and outer, fact and fiction, the main and the extraneous. It also draws into question what it is exactly that places things together under numbered subject headings, or which pushes them to opposite ends of the Dewey system. The 'sub' library is at play within the collection. This text proposes a meeting of snail, springer, library, and playground in a field of open query, where ideas and thoughts connect indirectly via shimmering trails of meaning that spiral in and out of the pages.



Snail springer from CPCL



Snail springer from Jupiter Play

Wipptier Schnecke from
Spielplatzfragen

Snail springer from Jupiter Play

Snail as Handbag

What is inside the snail? In the movie *Doctor Dolittle* (1967), Rex Harrison (as the titular Dr.) and his friends travel inside a giant pink sea snail, which is completely hollow and shiny inside. Where are the snail's innards, their guts? The shell is where they keep their organs,



their digestive system and something called their 'visceral mass' – it's not a well-lit store room for baskets of fruits and vegetables

or a place to keep Chee-chee the chimpanzee, a 200-year old parrot, or a dopey looking labrador. Obviously the movie is fictional, and the giant pink sea snail is a fun narrative way of travelling over sea. But this prop snail is also indicative of a more general fantasy into and onto which certain things are transposed. The gastropod is a handbag, the shell is a clutch purse.





The face of *Doctor Dolittle's* snail has a fixed smile and its body is a 'void' to be filled by human accoutrement. Snails are like that, though. It's something about their mysterious exoskeleton, the way they shrink backwards into it. Curving over hard and hidden-into, their whorled structure suggests an infinite deepening of time as it

turns inwards again and again in a vertigo spiral. These shells, empty of human comprehension, can be easily filled by speculation or invention.

Snails are everywhere, yet their shell still feels like the beginning of a mystery – and it's one I feel like I want solved immediately. The snail shell is packed with as much human-centric symbology, metaphor, and narrative as we can stuff it with, and then some. Forget the labrador or the chimpanzee: laziness, the resurrection, seasonal harvests, unknown threats, impotence, and sexual desire are all crammed in next to viscera and slime under vaulted nacre.



Suspended in an oil painting from 1491 – next to the little toe of Saint Francis – a small snail is said to represent the virgin birth. The Greek poet Hesiod wrote: "when

the House-carrier crawls on the vines to escape the shower of the Pleiades, sharpen your sickles for the

harvest and keep your servants busy."¹ Knights in the margins of illuminated manuscripts fight, pray, and cower from oversized snails which loom and hover above them. In particular, the snail in *Doctor Dolittle* represented a deep insensitivity to local contexts, as Mark Harris notes in *Pictures at a Revolution*:



Even a scene as innocuous as the movie's planned finale, in which Dolittle and his friends were to sail away in a giant pink sea snail, managed to generate a catastrophe when local St. Lucians, whose children had been plagued by a persistent gastrointestinal illness caused by freshwater snails, took the construction of the giant snail ship off the beach as an insult and threw rocks at it.²

One (small) thing *Doctor Dolittle* did get right: no matter what the species, the interior surface of the snail's shell is very smooth. Commonly called Mother-of-Pearl, the microscopic layers of nacre appear croissant-like in their lamination but given their strength and durability probably have more in common with brick walls. The brick (aragonite platelets)

¹ Hesiod, *Works and Days*, Line 571

² Mark Harris, *Pictures at a revolution: five movies and the birth of the new Hollywood*, 2009, Penguin Press: New York, 243

and mortar (protein–poly-saccharide matrix)³ of snail shell nacre are 'placed' in tall pyramidal structures at distance from one another, before widening out to touch adjacent pyramids and completing a smooth layer.⁴ The process makes the shell very strong and very finely grained, and this layer can be iridescent (nacreous) or not (porcellaneous), depending on the crystalline arrangement of calcium carbonate and available proteins. Sea snails often have nacreous interior shells: this, too, the movie managed to get right. The pink sea snail of the movie looks like an oily eyelid creased in



lustre eyeshadow or the inside of a powder room in an expensive department store; that is, a delusion of surface and glamour, rather than blood and guts.

I wonder about the way we describe the snail as 'carrying its house on its back' – as it is in Hesiod's text. To us the snail drags its shelter from place to place, like a caravan or a big backpack to zip up and hide inside. But this seems like a weird way of describing part of the snail's anatomy, part of its being which grows and hardens from the day the snail is born. Is my body

³ Antonio Checa, Alejandro Rodriguez-Navarro, "Self-organisation of nacre in the shells of Pterioidea (Bivalvia: Mollusca)", *Biomaterials*, 2005 Mar;26(9):1071-9. doi: 10.1016/j.biomaterials.2004.04.007

⁴ Fabian Heinemann, Malte Launspach, Katharina Gries, Monika Fritze, "Gastropod nacre: Structure, properties and growth – Biological, chemical and physical basics", *Biophysical Chemistry*, Volume 153, Issues 2-3, 2011, Pages 126-133, doi: 10.1016/j.bpc.2010.11.003

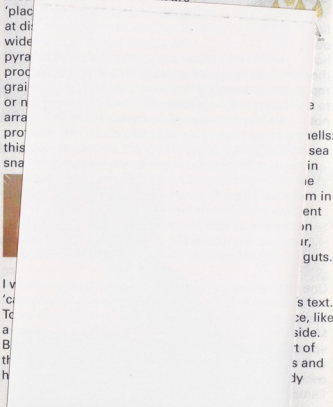
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my house? Is my skin my shelter? My clothes are not synonymous with the snail's shell – they are to be shed at the end of the day, washed if they are dirty. Though I recede into it, my house (rented), can be moved into and out of relatively freely. A snail shell can be mended like a sweater can be, but the mending comes as a scab does – from the interior as a bodily product rather than darned interpolation. Perhaps we see the snail's shell as a separate or removeable accessory because we often come across shells without inhabitants, perfect remnants that bear little likeness to the human analog of skin or skeleton.

Whatever the cause, *Doctor Dolittle* sees the shell's interior as an empty space, and Hesiod likens the snail's shell to a house on its back. This reveals how applications of meaning onto, or use of them as symbolic representation, does not necessarily align with further considerations of the snail's consciousness or intelligence. Rather, this can reinforce the animal as



an 'empty' space to be read and written at will. It also underscores the unworthiness of metaphor and analogy when it comes to other beings. Snail as a handbag, shell as a clutch purse. Because we can sometimes desire an other to be smoothed over and straightened up by our own 'understanding', rather than encountering it with a looser posture. But the life of the snail (shell and all) moves without us, at its own pace – thank goodness.

3 Antonio Checa, Alejandro... of nacre in the shells of Pterioidea (Bivalvia: Mollusca)", *Biomaterials*, 2005 Mar;26(9):1071-9. doi: 10.1016/j.biomaterials.2004.04.007

4 Fabian Heinemann, Malte Launspach, Katharina Gries, Monika Frits, "Gastropod nacre: Structure, properties and growth – Biological, chemical and physical basics", *Biophysical Chemistry*, Volume 153, Issues 2-3, 2011, Pages 126-133, doi: 10.1016/j.bpc.2010.11.003

Images in order of appearance:

The face of the giant pink sea snail, Doctor Dolittle (1967)

"4D VISION SNAIL ANATOMY MODEL", available on Amazon.com

Femme a l'Escargot (1967), Salvador Dalí

The Virgin and Child with Saints Francis and Sebastian (detail) (1491), by Carlo Crivelli, National Gallery London

The Gastropod Conqueror, from the Gorleston Psalter (1310-1324), England (Suffolk), Add MS 49622, f. 162v

Knight defending himself and his wife against a giant snail, from the Pestal Missal (1323), Antwerp

Distribution and structure of interlamellar membranes in gastropods (detail), by Antonio Checa, from the article "Physical and Biological Determinants of the Fabrication of Molluscan Shell Microstructures" (2018), in *Frontiers in Marine Science*, DOI 10.3389/fmars.2018.00393

Inside the giant pink sea snail, Doctor Dolittle (1967)



Fibreglass snail springer from Giochipark Equipment



Lomaca a Molla in Gaglianico, Italy



Muelle Caracol from Urbadep



Snail springer
from Delai Plastics



Snail rocker from Calgary Playground Review

Sand pit

A history of playground design

My memories of the playgrounds I visited as a child are hazy, but certain forms appear again and again. I remember the sensation of running beside a round-a-bout with friends, spinning faster and faster until the last possible second before jumping on. The force of the momentum changing as we pulled ourselves closer to the centre of the contraption, the feeling that this action was speeding it up. I remember the world beyond the round-a-bout as a blurred background, traces of the world forming streaks across my vision, picking out the round-a-bout in space and time.

And upon setting foot on the now spinning ground,

stomach churning, unable to walk straight, madly laughing.

Playground designer
Naomi Heller writes

of the emergence of public playgrounds in Germany and America in "A brief history of playground design" (March 2020).¹ Inspired by Friedrich Froebel, who founded the *kindergarten*, early versions of playgrounds described as "sand-bergs" or sand gardens were installed throughout public parks in Berlin in the 1850s. These were large mounds of sand on which children could freely climb and play, a pre-cursor to the sand-pit that would become a popular fixture of public and private play areas. For Froebel, the education

¹ Naomi Heller, 'A Brief History of Playground Design, Part 1', ASLA Professional Practice Network's Blog, *The Field*, 12 March 2020, <https://thefield.asla.org/2020/03/12/a-brief-history-of-playground-design-part-1/>.

and well-being of children in cities was suffering due to the loss of the natural environment, and the expanding urbanisation of the industrial revolution. He believed contact with "natural" materials such as sand and water, and the creation of a stimulating environment in which children could play would be greatly beneficial to the children of the future. Froebel's ideas were central to the Education of Man.

Outdoor play is especially important for developing children's life and

The idea of the sand-pit was popularised in the US and by 1887 it was common in public parks as free, common play spaces for children in urban neighbourhoods. The sand-pit was an experiment in providing play spaces to impoverished city. As the design changed, it moved away from being a segregated space for the design of the

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⁴ Alexandra ... "History", *Slate Magazine*, 15 June ... human-interest/2018/06/history-of-the-sand-pit-playground-for-kids-and-ideas.html.



and well-being of children in cities was suffering due to the loss of the natural environment, and the expanding urbanisation of the industrial revolution. He believed contact with "natural" materials such as sand and water, and the creation of a stimulating environment in which to explore would be greatly beneficial to the children of the city.² Froebel wrote in his 1886 book "The Education of Man", that:

Outdoor life, life in Nature, is pre-eminently important, especially for the young human being, for its effects are developing, strengthening, elevating, and ennobling. It gives life and higher significance to all.³

The idea of the sand garden was brought over to Boston in 1886, and by 1887 there were 10 sand piles in the city. They started as free, communal spaces, and were mostly located in poorer neighbourhoods where children had little access to natural spaces to play in.⁴ The initial playground began as an open and experimental space for imaginative and free play, a service for the impoverished communities living and working in the heart of the city. As the concept was popularised however, its intended use and design changed. Over the next twenty years, playgrounds shifted away from the free-form sand garden into heavily regulated and segregated spaces, where play lessons were led by instructors and designed to impart certain values on the children. This was the birth of the "model" playground.

² Ibid.

³ Friedrich Froebel, *The Education of Man*, trans. Josephine Jarvis (New York: A. Lovell & Company, 1886), 233.

⁴ Alexandra Lange, 'The Sandbox: An Intellectual History', *Slate Magazine*, 15 June 2018, <https://slate.com/human-interest/2018/06/history-of-the-sandbox-the-origins-of-a-playground-for-kids-and-ideas.html>.

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¹ Naomi Heller, 'A Brief History of Playground Design, Part 1', ASLA Professional Practice Network's Blog, *The Field*, 12 March 2020, <https://thefield.asla.org/2020/03/12/a-brief-history-of-playground-design-part-1/>.

In the new "model" playgrounds of the early 1900s, children undertook a series of guided exercises that were designed to organise play into discrete actions. Large frame-work structures were created in steel using new manufacturing techniques, and these structures defined the spaces of play within the playground. Within this model, boys and girls were separated into distinct sections of the playground. It was in this framework that recognisable equipment such as slides, swings, see-saws, and merry-go-rounds emerged.



Myers Park circa 1917.

At primary school there were two playgrounds, Junior and Senior. As a junior I longed for the day when I would be allowed to play on the Senior playground. Its towering wooden platforms and slides made out of parallel steel bars seemed so dangerous and exciting. As a Senior, I remember looking across to the Junior playground, and feeling nostalgia and sadness. I was dismayed to learn that I had to trade in the imaginative space of the Junior playground, with those wonderful colourful animals and shapes, for the reality of steel and bark and timber.



Children swinging under supervision of an instructor, DeWitt Clinton Park, New York 1909 / Image: Smithsonian Online Virtual Archives.

Many of these early playgrounds were dismantled during WWII, with the steel salvaged for the war effort. Few survive today.⁵ The ideology of the "model" playground, and its mirroring of the segregated and orderly "model" (American) city still underpins many contemporary playground designs. In 2019, The Guardian reported on a Henley Homes development in south London that featured a segregated play area.⁶ The developer was required to provide a number of affordable "social rental units" to receive planning permission for the multi-million-pound build, which all look out onto a central green space with a playground. However, 'the designs were altered' once they received planning permission 'to block the social housing tenants from accessing the communal play areas.' Children living in any of the development's "social rental units" were not allowed to play in the gardens and playground that they could see from their windows.

⁵ Tony Chilton, 'Adventure Playgrounds', *Aspects of Playwork: Play and Culture Studies* 14 (2018): 157.

⁶ Harriet Grant and Chris Michael, 'Too Poor to Play: Children in Social Housing Blocked from Communal Playground', *The Guardian*, 25 March 2019, sec. Cities, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2019/mar/25/too-poor-to-play-children-in-social-housing-blocked-from-communal-playground>.

A shift away from regulated play spaces to more open and unsupervised environmental explorations occurred in the 1940s in Europe. Children were observed playing freely in the bomb sites of post-war Europe, 'lighting fires, building structures, and manipulating the materials left over from demolished buildings'.⁷ This free form experimentation inspired a new type of playground in the UK known as an adventure playground. These sites promoted collaboration between children through open-ended play sessions, and featured uneven ground, 'unconventional structures, discarded household objects, and loose materials' as opposed to the more traditional swings and slides of the model playground.⁸ The adventure playground was seen as a hopeful space, where 'a more just and socially conscious society' could be modelled through children's play.⁹ Here the playground was envisioned as a utopian vision for a post-war society.

When we moved to the UK, I noticed that the school I attended didn't have a playground as such. Instead, there were large fields of concrete, with lines painted on that could be used to play a series of ball games. A short breeze-block wall at one end of the field stood in for a goal, or a fort, or a hiding spot. At random, around mid-way through lunch, a teacher would ring a bell, and we would assemble cross-legged on the concrete in our classes to be counted (many students would jump the fence and leave school at lunch time). In summer, the back fields were open: a large flat field to run around on. During the winter months, the grass fields were closed and we were confined to the concrete.

7 Tony Chilton, 'Adventure Playgrounds', 157.
 8 Naomi Heller, 'A Brief History of Playground Design'.
 9 Ibid.



Image of children playing in Grote Wittenburgerstraat, designed by Aldo van Eyck.

The introduction of abstract static forms and shapes by Aldo van Eyck in Dutch playgrounds presented situations children had to negotiate through playful investigation. Playgrounds designed by van Eyck featuring stationary pillars, bars, shelters, and structures were placed throughout Amsterdam in the late 1940s and 50s. These play spaces were open to the street, intended to complicate the domains of work and commuting with open plan play.¹⁰ The play spaces designed by van Eyck were aimed at blurring the spatial relationships between spaces of play and other spaces (of work, commute, consumption) within the city. Across the Atlantic, a contrasting ideology of playground was being developed. The old "model" playgrounds of America were evolving, and the distinct spaces that marked a separation between play and wider society gave way to the representational super-structures of the "novel" playground.

10 Merijn Oudenampsen, 'Aldo van Eyck and the City as Playground', in *Urbanacción 07/09*, ed. Ana Mendez de Andés (Madrid: La Casa Encendida, 2010), 25-39, <http://issuu.com/malaahierbas/docs/urbanaccion>.



Image of Nieuwmarkt Playground, Amsterdam in Aldo van Eyck: Works, Vincent Ligtelijn.

Alongside characteristic Cold War-inspired climbing frames, novel playgrounds continued developing the traditional forms of slides, swings, spinners, and springs of the model playgrounds of the 1900s. These now classic forms found new life during the late 1950s and 60s, remade first in cast iron and steel, then in moulded plastic as modular forms that represented animals and vehicles. Play was no longer standardised or directed in these playgrounds, taking cues from the adventure playgrounds of Europe. The novel playground like the adventure playground was heralded as more open-ended and imaginative, although the novel playground focused on representational forms.¹¹ Large sculptural structures in the shape of rockets, submarines, UFOs, and Buckminster-Fuller geodesic domes appeared across American playgrounds; Cold War images in which children were encouraged to role-play as astronauts, submarine commanders, or air-force pilots.

An article in *Life* magazine from 1963 reveals some of the themes playground designers wanted children to explore:

The three-stage rocket in a Los Angeles playground can accommodate 35 aspiring astronauts and is more fun to

11 Naomi Heller, 'A Brief History of Playground Design, Part 2', ASLA Professional Practice Network's Blog, *The Field*, 12 March 2020, <https://thefield.asla.org/2020/03/19/a-brief-history-of-playground-design-part-2/>.

climb than a tree. The submarine has hatches, ladders and a conning tower with a pilot wheel that really turns, all any young adventurer needs for a peril-free trip under the polar ice cap.¹²

These playgrounds often featured references to space and military vehicles, symbols of American imperial conquest and power during the Cold War. A kind of media campaign in the form of play spaces, these playgrounds were wholeheartedly supported by the American government, who saw them as an opportunity to instil a hyper-nationalist narrative at a young age. Eastern Bloc playground design similarly adopted space and military themes.¹³ As is perhaps to be expected, the Soviet play structures differed from the bombastic American designs in that they were often mass-produced, creating identical playgrounds across the Soviet states.



Photograph of Children playing on a UFO, *Life* magazine, 1963.

12 Bill Ray, 'Playgrounds Take a Space-Age Spin', *Life*, 15 March 1963, 98.

13 Turkan Firinci and Georgi Stankov, 'My Dream Playground Workshops: Involving Children in Participatory Design', in *ARCHWIZ* 13, 2013, 106-15.



Pioneer Park, Dresden.

Sputnik-themed playground,
'somewhere in the USSR'.

These images and themes played a propaganda role, promoting a fascination with space colonisation and the war-machine in the imaginative play of children (a fascination that continues today). The construction of these "novel" playgrounds in materials surplus to the manufacturing industry (mostly steel bars powder coated in primary colours) gave way in the 70s to injection-moulded plastic and mass-produced modular designs. Relics and re-hashes of this style of novel playground can be seen around the world. A prime example of a novel playground in Aotearoa is "Rocket Park" in Mt Albert (Tamaki Makaurau). I wonder if the sentiment in the *Life* article of the rocket ship being 'more fun to climb than a tree' is indicative of a wider attitude towards ideas of societal, national, and scientific progress at the expense of the Earth's resources and environment? It is in this novel playground context that the spring-rider became a popular feature.

We both feel like we have memories of a snail spring rider. They exist, but in no specific playground, and as we drove around hoping to photograph one earlier this year we realised that playground spring riders have changed since we were kids. Growing up, spring riders were made from moulded plastic or solid wood, renderings of colourful 3D forms supported by large car-springs. Now 2D constructions are seemingly more popular, and many are simply a flat plane "surf-board" attached to the spring, resembling some kind of post-modern gym equipment. The "snail" spring riders we found online do not really resemble snails at all. Perhaps the round shell makes for too difficult a seat. Nevertheless the snail sticks in both our memories as a candidate for spring rider. When we took our snail springer to Walker park for photographing, a few local children were completely convinced!



Cast aluminium "Snail" (probably late 50s), Mexico.



A flat spring rider in Auckland, 2021.

Playgrounds today draw from many of these ideologies, often featuring traditional "model" swing-sets, slides, and merry-go-rounds alongside the static representational structures of the novel playground. Platforms, logs, and tires are common fixtures too, drawing on the free play of the "adventure" playground, as well as landscaped sections and abstract open-frame climbing structures. Combining novel representations and environmental experiences are not uncommon, such as the recently renewed water park in Potter's Park off Dominion Road, or the playspace in Myers Park, both in Tamaki Makaurau.

Sandpits are a somewhat rarer sight, perceived as unclean, visited by real and imagined animals in the night.

One of my first jobs was working at Atomic Café (Now 121 Café), which had an outside area with a small sandpit for children to play in. The café also hosted two stray (and very large) cats who often visited this sandpit afterhours, and whilst the staff were busy cleaning the kitchens and tables they relieved themselves.



Wire frame 'snail' springer. Cox's Bay Reserve, Auckland



Wipptier Schnecke from
DOERING Spielplatzgeräte



"SNAIL SPRING RIDER"
PLAYGROUND TOY MEXICO FORGE"
being sold on Worthpoint



Snail spring rocker from Rainbow Play



Racing snail springer
from Playforce



Jeu à bascule
L'escargot from Kidea



Nippitier "Schnecke" at the Zwergenvilla
Kindergarten, Ruthetal, Germany

[432]

XLII. *A Letter from David Macbride, M. D. to John Walsh, Esq; F. R. S. accompanying two Letters from Mr. Simon to Dr. Macbride, concerning the Reviviscence of some Snails preserved many Years in Mr. Simon's Cabinet.*

TO JOHN WALSH, Esq;

DEAR SIR,

Dublin, 22 Jan. 1774.

Redde, May 5, 1774. I inclose to you two letters, which I received from Mr. STUCKEY SIMON, concerning that extraordinary fact in Natural History, which you seem'd to regret had not been sufficiently authenticated to be communicated to the public, in the Philophical Transactions of last year.—The Royal Society are undoubtedly in the right to be extremely cautious of allowing any thing, so very much out of the hitherto-observed course of nature, as this is, to appear in their publications, without the fullest evidence.

In

N.B

The correspondence on the next few pages use an older version of the 's' glyph, that appears to modern readers like a lower-case 'f'. This elongated S was used for soft sibilant sounds, like the first 's' in 'snails', and 'shells'.

In Mr. SIMON'S letter of the 26th of November, you will please to observe, that he mentions a particular shell, whose snail had come out repeatedly four different times, in the presence of different people; each of whom have assured me that they saw it. That gentleman having done me the favour to dine with me, a day or two after the date of that letter, he brought the identical shell (as he declared), in order that we might try if the snail would again make its appearance.

The company were not disappointed; for, after the shell had lain about ten minutes in a glass of water that had the cold barely taken off, the snail began to appear; and in five minutes more we perceived half the body fairly pushed out from the cavity of the shell. We then removed it into a basin, that the snail might have more scope than it had in the glass; and here, in a very short time, we saw it get above the surface of the water, and crawl up towards the edge of the basin. While it was thus moving about, with its horns erect, a fly chanced to be hovering near, and, perceiving the snail, darted down upon it. The little animal instantly withdrew itself within the shell, but as quickly came forth again, when it found the enemy had gone off. We allowed it to wander about the basin for upwards of an hour; when we returned it into a wide-mouthed phial, wherein Mr. SIMON had lately been used to keep it. He was so obliging, as to present me with this remarkable shell; and I observed, at twelve o'clock, as I was going to bed, that the snail was still in motion: but, next morning, I found it in a torpid state, sticking to the side of the glass.

In a few weeks after the time above-mentioned, I took an opportunity of sending this shell to Sir JOHN PRINGLE, who shewed it at a meeting of the Society; but, as he has been pleased to inform me, some of the members could not bring themselves to believe, but that Mr. SIMON must have suffered himself to be imposed on by his son, who, as they imagined, substituted fresh shells, for those which he had got out of the cabinet.

When Sir JOHN PRINGLE acquainted me with this difficulty, I wrote to Mr. SIMON, and that produced his letter of the 4th of February. I afterwards also examined the boy myself; and could find no reason to believe, that he either did, or could impose on his father.

Mr. SIMON is a merchant of this place, of a very reputable character, and undoubted veracity. He lives in the heart of the city, a circumstance which rendered it almost impossible for the son (if he had been so disposed) to collect fresh shells. The father of Mr. STUCKEY SIMON was Mr. JAMES SIMON, a Fellow of the Royal Society; who, being a lover of Natural History, as well as an Antiquarian, made a little collection of fossils, which is still in the son's possession, and contains some articles that are rather uncommon.

Should Mr. SIMON'S letters be inserted in the Transactions, they will no doubt be the means of exciting Naturalists to enquire into the extent of vitality in the lower orders of animals.

I am, dear Sir, your most obedient,
and very humble servant,

DAVID MACBRIDE.

[435]

Mr. STUCKEY SIMON to Dr. MACBRIDE.

S I R,

Dublin, 26 Nov. 1772.

AN accident having brought to light what some Naturalists have not had an opportunity to examine into, and which has been a subject of some conversation amongst gentlemen to whom I have mentioned it, has made me commit to writing the simple facts, in order to put others on making further experiments on the subject.—About three months since, I was settling some shells in a drawer; amongst which were some snail-shells. I took them out, and gave them to my son (a child about ten years old), who was then in the room with me. The Saturday following, the child diverted himself with the shells, put them into a flower-pot, which he filled with water, and next morning put them into a basin. Having occasion to use it, I observed the snails had come out of the shells. I examined the child. He assured me they were the same I gave him some days before; and said he had a few more, which he brought me. I put one of them in water; and, in half an hour after, I observed him put out his horns and body, which he moved with a slow motion, I suppose from weakness. I then informed Major Vallancy and Dr. Span of this surprising discovery. They did me the favour to come to my house the Saturday following, to examine the snails; and, on putting them in water, found that only one had life,

K k k 2

which

[436]

which was that I put in water, for he came out of his shell, and carried it on his back about the basin. The rest, I suppose, died by being kept too long in water; for, on the first discovery, I let them remain in the water until the Monday following, when I poured off the water, the snails being still out of their shells, and seemingly dead. They lay in that state until Tuesday night, when I found they had all withdrawn into their shells; and, though I several times since put them into water, they shewed no signs of life. Dr. Quin and Dr. Ruty did me the favour, at different times, to examine the snail that is living; and were greatly pleased to see him come out of his solitary habitation in which he has been confined upwards of fifteen years, for so long I can with truth declare he has been in my possession; as my father died in January 1758, in whose collection of fossils those snails were, and for what I know they might have been many years in his possession before they came into my hands. The shells are small, and of one kind; white, striped with brown. — Since this discovery, I have kept this snail in a small phial, with a cover with holes, to let in air; and he seems at present very strong, and in health. I shall be extremely glad, if this plain account I have given you would induce gentlemen to make some further experiments on this subject. I am, Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble servant,

STUCKEY SIMON.

Mr.

[437]

Mr. STUCKEY SIMON to Dr. MACBRIDE.

DEAR SIR,

Strand-Street, 4 Feb. 1773.

I RECEIVED your letter; and see that Sir JOHN PRINGLE received the snail safe. You say, that some gentlemen are inclined to think, my son has imposed on me fresh shells, in the stead of those I gave him. He had no opportunity to get any other shells, being, at the time and for several days after, confined to the house with a cold. I am positive they are the same I gave him, having more of the same sort of shells in my cabinet, and nearly the same size.

The nine shells, which produced the snails, are of the same kind as the one you sent to Sir JOHN PRINGLE; and I now send you one of them, with the snail in it, which I take to be dead. Having put it in water several times, it became soft; and a part of it pushed out of the shell, but shewed no other sign of life. I would have sent you a few more of the shells, but that the Bishop of Derry, and some other friends, have begged of me to give them a share.

I am, dear Sir,

Your most obedient,

humble servant,

STUCKEY SIMON.

XLIII. *Tbs*

"Snail Queen" springer from
Richter Spielgerate GmbH



Muelle Caracas
from Azconasa

"A Letter from David Macbride, M. D. to John Walsh, Esq; F. R. S. Accompanying Two Letters from Mr. Simon to Dr. Macbride, concerning the Revisitation of Some Snails Preserved Many Years in Mr. Simon's Cabinet" is an article from *Philosophical Transactions* (1683-1775), Volume 64. Available at <https://archive.org/details/ystor-106021>

[47]

More playground equipment

Two seesaws and a snail-shaped climber (circa 1970s) photographed by Brenda Biondo in Vandergrift, Pennsylvania, 2007.

The snail-shaped climber is a yellow metal frame with two blue spheres on top. It is designed for children to climb on. The seesaws are also made of yellow metal frames with blue spheres on top. They are designed for children to sit on and swing up and down.



Snail Springer from Kompan



Two seesaws and a snail-shaped climber (circa 1970s) photographed by Brenda Biondo in Vandergrift, Pennsylvania, 2007.



Spring rider
snail from EME



Spring toy "snail"
from Laukumi

Glistening

The partial purpose of the snail's slime is to act like glue, adhering them to whatever surface they walk on. This allows them to climb walls, plant pots, and letterboxes. Slime is also used as a lubricant to ease and speed up movement and to stop them from drying out in the sun. Mucus is excreted from the suprapedal gland on one end of a snail's foot, and this then forms a thin film all over the underside of the snail where it touches the ground. The glistening snail trail that is left behind on surfaces is an inadvertent, wandering drawing. The rippling foot of the snail and stickiness of their mucus makes for a distinctive frilled line, and the clear gluey substance requires angled viewing and the right kind of light to be visible to human eyes. Snails can't see the trails very well either, instead they smell them. With olfaction being their most attuned sense, snails use mucus-lines as scent pathways, helping them follow one another to reach food sources and safe places. Some snails track other snails more purposefully, using trails for mating and for predation, for love-darts or a meal (though hopefully not at the same time).



The slime from the snail's foot has, in recent years, also become a popular ingredient in skincare. Delicately renamed snail 'mucin', it is made up of proteins and polysaccharides, and brands claim that it acts as a moisturiser and antioxidant to plump the flesh and reduce wrinkles. The methods to acquire snail slime were initially completely beyond my imagination. Are they pulped and then strained? Run on a slow little treadmill? The largest snail farm in Italy, Lumaca da Madonita, gets the mucin 'manually' – a video on their website shows someone gently dabbing a cotton-tip at the foot of a snail and then squeezing the contents of the cotton-tip out into a jar. An image on the same page shows the 'massaging' of snails in a bucket.



Clearly, given the large demand for mucin in the beauty and skincare industry, mechanised procedures for collecting the slime have also been developed. One method involves a giant vat with a domed cloche covering the top, in which the snails are given a gentle steaming to help them release their slime. The man responsible for this contraption can't stop calling it a 'spa' for snails in press releases and interviews about it. Both the manual and the mechanical methods don't require the killing of snails, though I would say their enjoyment of the procedure is questionable, no matter what 'spa' man says.

Snail mucin does feel



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1 Bruno Bonneau, "Helix and Drugs: Snails for Western Health Care From Antiquity to the Present", Evidence-based complementary and alternative medicine: eCAM vol. 2,1 (2005): 25-28. doi:10.1093/ecam/neh057

2 "Snail Slime". Colin's Beauty Pages, <http://colinsbeautypages.co.uk/snail-slime/>

The slime from the snail's foot has, in recent years, become a popular ingredient in skincare.

It's a bit of a claim that plump the skin and acquire snail mucus with imagination.



The foot of a snail on the cotton-tip applicator shows the texture of the mucus.

The demand for snail mucus in skincare procedures for hydration and wrinkle-smoothing has also been growing. It involves a process called cloche, which is rich in the snails' mucus, aiming to help with hydration. The man calling it a 'spa' reviews about the methods don't

require the killing of snails, though I would say their enjoyment of the procedure is questionable, no matter what 'spa' man says.



Snail mucin does feel very slippery and sticky, with a texture similar to aloe vera gel. When I put it on my face I lie to myself and say I feel like I'm participating

in a long historical tradition that includes people like Hippocrates and Pliny. Granted, they (and the scientists and doctors who succeeded them) used crushed up whole snails and their mucus externally for healing wounds, and internally for treating anthrax, the "spasms of spitting blood accompanying tuberculosis" and "the urine ardour of nephritis."¹ Currently, I am afflicted with none of those ailments.

These days, in contrast to claims of hydration and wrinkle-smoothing by skincare brands, snail mucin has been described by some cosmetologists as being about as beneficial for the skin as wallpaper glue.² But I do like the feeling of the slime on my skin, and the slippery glistening veneer it leaves temporarily, before it evaporates into the air.



1 Bruno Bonnefante, "Helix and Drugs: Snails for Western Health Care From Antiquity to the Present", Evidence-based complementary and alternative medicine: eCAM vol. 2,1 (2005): 25-28. doi:10.1093/ecam/nab057

2 "Snail Slime", Colin's Beauty Pages, <http://colinsbeautypages.co.uk/snail-slime/>



"RARE PLAYWORLD SYSTEMS CAST ALUMINUM
SNAIL SPRING RIDER PLAYGROUND RIDE ON
TOY" being sold on Northpoint



Spring swing snail toy (3D model)
from Esphera Virtual



Snail Springer
from Caloo



Wooden snail springer at Edel Wies Park near the Bavarian
Forest, Germany

Library copy



Finding the right shelf to put the Snail Time book on.

A library is usually imagined in terms of its space.¹ Referring to the library often brings up an image of library buildings, vast rooms which house the stacks, filing cabinets, reception areas, storerooms and boxes, databases and collections. Libraries contain areas that are designed for different engagements with space, from public to private.

The shelves or stacks, computer desks, study areas, maker-spaces, and couches are the main interface for public access to the library. Behind locked doors, or in back-rooms guarded by receptions, are spaces where returned books and new acquisitions are organised into piles (categorised, labelled, recorded) and carted around the library by librarians and shelvers. Other spaces exist here too, special collections and curated archives, and the kind of hidden sub-library that exists outside of the index, in basements and off-site storage areas. Here lies the outdated text book, the forgotten fictions, the under-valued artist catalogue.

Libraries have existed in some form since written records have been kept. Perhaps the earliest libraries were simple archives, record rooms that housed parchments and tablets. One of the first libraries considered to be systematically collected was the

¹ Sue Breakell, "Perspectives: Negotiating the Archive," *Tate Papers*, no. 9 (1 April 2008): 1, <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/perspectives-negotiating-archive>.

Library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh (near current day Mosul, Iraq).² Established sometime in the 7th century BCE, this library

contained over 30,000 cuneiform clay tablets, the largest collection of written works in the ancient world. It was the first library to be visited by a monarch, and his collection of books was the first to be dedicated to a specific purpose. The library was destroyed in 612 BCE, but the 700,000 tablets were rediscovered in 1845. The library was the biggest library in the world at the time, and the most important library in the world.

2 Ashurbanipal (c. 668–627 BCE) was a British monarch who was assassinated during the return of the golden calf. He played a role in the Protestant Reformation of 16, 2011, and was a campaigner for the abolition of slavery. He was a member of the O'Connell family, and was a specific member of the O'Connell family. He was a member of the O'Connell family, and was a specific member of the O'Connell family. He was a member of the O'Connell family, and was a specific member of the O'Connell family.

² "The Story of the Library of Alexandria is Mostly a Legend, But the Lesson of Its Burning is Still Crucial Today," *Time*, accessed March 21, 2021, <https://time.com/5912489/library-of-alexandria-burning/>.



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 record rooms that housed parchments and tablets. One of the
 first libraries considered to be systematically collected was the

1 Sue Breakell, "Perspectives: Negotiating the Archive," *Tate Papers*, no. 9 (1 April 2008): 1, <http://www.tate.org.uk/research/publications/tate-papers/perspectives-negotiating-archive>.

Library of Ashurbanipal in Nineveh (near current day Mosul, Iraq).² Established sometime in the 7th century BCE, this library contained over 30,000 cuneiform clay tablets, including an early version of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. The inspiration for the Library of Alexandria is said to have come from Alexander the Great's visit to Nineveh in 331 BCE. After Alexander's death in 323 BCE, his companion Ptolemy Soter founded the Ptolemaic Mouseion Academy in Alexandria, which was a massive cultural institution dedicated to serving the muses. The most famous aspect of the Mouseion was perhaps its library, which held between 400,000 and 700,000 texts. This was not the first large scale library, or even the biggest, but the narrative of the Great Library of Alexandria and the myths surrounding its destruction as a triumph of ignorance over "the very essence of civilisation" continue to this day.³

2 When the British Museum showed part of the Library of Ashurbanipal in 2018, they were sponsored by British Petroleum (BP). This led to widespread outrage, as it exemplifies the British Museum's imperialist, racist, and colonial project of amassing a "collection". Many artifacts in the exhibition *King of Assyria, King of the World* had been looted during the Ottoman Empire. Today the British Museum refuses to return ownership of these valuable and important artifacts under the guise of "protecting" them from the wars their sponsor has played a part in manufacturing. See *The Guardian*: "Campaigners Protest against BP Sponsorship of British Museum," February 16, 2019. <http://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/feb/16/campaigners-protest-against-bp-sponsorship-of-british-museum>.

Citing a report by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, Sean O'Toole writes that "The trauma of plunder may be time-specific but its consequences ripple across the ages. "It becomes inscribed throughout the long duration of societies, conditioning the flourishing of certain societies while simultaneously continuing to weaken others." See Frieze: "Will Macron Lead the Restitution of African Cultural Heritage? | Frieze." Accessed March 26, 2021. <https://www.frieze.com/article/will-macron-lead-restitution-african-cultural-heritage-and-felwine-sarr-and-benedicte-savoy-the-restitution-of-african-cultural-heritage-toward-a-new-relational-ethics>.
 and, Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy: "The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage.Toward a New Relational Ethics," Paris, France: UMR 7220 (CNRS - ENS Paris Saclay-Université Paris Nanterre); Ministère de la Culture, November 28, 2018. http://restitutionreport2018.com/sarr_savoy_en.pdf.

3 "The Story of the Library of Alexandria Is Mostly a Legend, But the Lesson of Its Burning Is Still Crucial Today," *Time*, accessed March 21, 2021. <https://time.com/5912489/library-of-alexandria-burning/>.



The shelves onto which the *Snail Time* book has been placed in the Auckland University Library Main Collection.

The library was a part of a wider Mouseion institution, maintained by a succession of directors. The first three directors (Ptolemy I Soter [c. 323–c. 283 BCE]; Ptolemy II Philadelphus [283–246 BCE]; and Ptolemy III Euergetes [280–222 BCE]) collected a vast amount of books, often through ethically dubious means. Their thirst for high quality books is described by Heather Phillips as “*bibliomania*”, and above all else they valued “authentic”, “original” texts.⁴ Methods deployed by the Ptolemies for obtaining books included forgery (wherein a collection of books is borrowed from another city, copied, and then the copies are returned); ransom (‘during a famine in Athens, ambassadors from the Great Library forced the sale of valuable original manuscripts owned by that city in exchange for food’); and simply buying out whole libraries to be absorbed into the collection.⁵ According to legend, the librarians of the Library at Alexandria would search every ship that sailed into the harbour for books, and if a book was found they would take it back to the library and make a copy. They would then decide whether to return the original or the copy to the ship, and books acquired in this manner formed a section in the Library: *From the Ships*.⁶ By and large the Library at Alexandria was organised to Aristotle’s systems of classification, and his structure of classes and sub-classes is echoed in cataloguing systems still in use today.⁷ As the collection grew, specific rooms were set aside for each subject, and ordered alphabetically by the authors first name. Texts that were not in Greek were translated and stored in a separate part of the main library. The Library contained the full collection of the writings of Aristotle and the Peripatetic School in Athens, and

⁴ This value of authenticity and the original would be mirrored by the British Museum in the looting of the Parthenon of its marbles by Lord Elgin between 1802 – 1812. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elgin_Marbles

⁵ Heather Phillips, “The Great Library of Alexandria?,” *Journal of Library Philosophy and Practice*, April 19, 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120418191647/http://unllib.unl.edu/LPP/phillips.htm>.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

the design of the grounds of the Mouseion reflected the ideal of peripatetic scholarship:

The main academy building and the Library building were connected by and surrounded with a network of paths, colonnades, and courtyards. There were botanical gardens and zoological displays for the edification and delight of the scholars. There was even an outdoor amphitheater called the *exedra*. In time, there were two library sites.⁸

The two libraries at Alexandria controlled public access to texts. The main library was housed in the walled Mouseion complex, accessible only to the community of scholars who lived on site and elite guests of the palace. The second library at the Serapeum was installed in a public temple and so open to the public. Richard Ovenden describes them as an inner and outer library.⁹ They were

however branches of the same institution, sharing organisational systems and librarians.

The inner library on the grounds of the palace complex contained original and untranslated texts, and access was restricted for the general public.¹⁰ Scholars were invited to the Mouseion by the Ptolemies and enticed to take up residencies.

They were offered salaries, servants, and lodging in the Mouseion grounds. These scholars would undertake research in various rooms in the main library. In many ways, this inner library at the Mouseion could be compared to a university

library, and the grounds a campus. However, these residencies were intended for life, and scholars who worked at the library were rarely allowed to leave the Mouseion compound. On a number



Movement and maintenance in the UoA Library

8 Ibid.

9 "The Story of the Library of Alexandria Is Mostly a Legend, But the Lesson of Its Burning Is Still Crucial Today."

10 Heather Phillips, "The Great Library of Alexandria?"

of occasions a scholar would attempt to leave for a competing library. Upon finding this out the Ptolemies would sentence them to death.¹¹ This was a symbolic gesture of power over the archive, as much as a protection from neighbouring libraries amassing texts from their own collections. After all, as Jaques Derrida wrote in *Archive Fever*: "There is no political power without power over the archive, if not memory".¹²

The outer library was located outside the palace compound at the Serapeum temple in the poor district of Rhachotis in the south-west of Alexandria.¹³ This library probably housed copies of popular texts located in the main library, and these could be accessed by the greater public. An important feature of the outward facing public library is its index, or record. Here, searchable traces of the collection are stored as metadata, guiding the reader to a position in the archive. The Library at Alexandria had such an index, a list of the most popular texts complete with metadata that was compiled by Callimachus (310/305 – 240BCE) called the *Pinakes*. A method of organising texts first outlined in the *Pinakes* would be used until the 1800s when the Dewey system was invented and popularised.¹⁴ Accessing the library is now done primarily through online virtual archival interfaces — index and codes that trace the archive via scanned images, photographs, written descriptions, and metadata. Here links to digital copies are stored, limiting the need for physical contact with aging *arche-traces*, or the space on the



UoA Library Main Collection

11 Ibid.

12 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, Paperback ed., (Nachdr.), Religion and Postmodernism (Chicago, Ill.: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2008), 4.

13 Heather Phillips, "The Great Library of Alexandria?"

14 Moustafa El-Ahadi, "The *Pinakes*," *The Library of Alexandria -- Ancient and Modern*, June 16, 2011, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110616100618/http://www.greece.org/hac01/www/arts-culture/alexandria/library/library1.htm>.



Wipptier schnecke in the playground between Walter-Rein-Strasse and Hinter der Mühle, Stotterheim, Germany



Jeux sur ressort: L'escargot from Proludic



Snail rider from Austek Play



Playground apparatus, Snail slide, Lloyd Park. Taken by Flickr user Bladpegupez. Original caption: "Non-standard. The Bee roundsabout in a similar style has already vanished so now has the playground"

All movement, no travel



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The springer toys (or 'spring riders') were so necessary in all the playgrounds I remember as a child. These are the pieces of equipment that are basically sculptures mounted on car springs, attached by a metal plate to the ground below. I would stuff my limbs into the small seat, and overbalance a little bit: woah, absolutely wild movements, very unpredictable. As you get older you can really throw your weight around, and they become even more unpredictable. Like a lot of equipment on the playground, the spring riders allow for lots of movement but also for no travel anywhere. Round and around or back and forth, but no travelling from A to B. The movement of the spring rider is bounded by the length of the supporting spring and how flexible it is – a small diameter of reach, whose limit you hoped you didn't find, since it was the ground coming up fast towards your face.



In my childhood memories of playground spring riders, they were always some kind of animal: caterpillar, whale, horse, bumblebee, snail. When Ziggy and I went out to document these pieces of equipment it was hard to find them. This is partly because the playgrounds we used to visit as children have gone through 'revitalisation' projects over the years, and spring riders as a genre have diminished in popularity. Where we could find them though, there was a definite lack of animal-based springers. The car springs that used to be the functionally wobbly part of the spring riders have migrated from below (as a support structure, as the thing which makes it 'spring' around at all) to inform the subject of the whole piece of equipment. We noticed that cars, planes, and trains are all more popular shapes than animals, and most are constructed like punch-out-and-slot-together puzzles – 2D shapes fitting together with notches or wireframe suggestions instead of fully rendered forms.



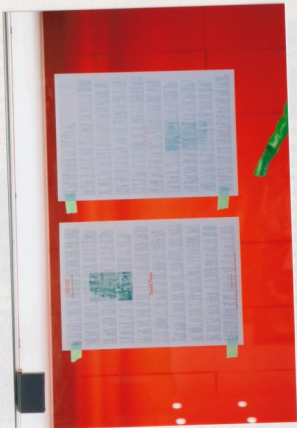
It would seem that we've done away with the image of the springer as quaint domination of ridiculously unsuitable animals (how agrarian!) to a more modern *idée fixe*: progress without end or true purpose. Symbolised by identical images of transport that are efficiently made and then easily slotted together, these go-fast icons go absolutely nowhere. However, despite swapping out



images and forms – from the unmanageable and obdurate animal-other to the static metallic car/surfboard – there is still something amazing that happens on the spring rider. Being on an unstable, wobbly object is unpredictable, it is dangerous, it is fun, and it serves no apparent purpose to aid capitalistic 'progress'. This is probably a 'no, duh' moment, as play and playfulness have these things at their root anyway (though capitalism has instrumentalised 'play' in varying ways). But in the spring riders that still exist, there is a refusal of progress, or rather a position of anti-progress. This is not just a refusal of the progress of the playground (and its 'revitalisation'), or of the progress of form, but of the idea that motion must be followed by travel and forward movement at all. Instead the spring rider is content to remain in place for now; wiggly, wobbly, and unsure of itself. Cars and trains refuse to enter the flow of traffic, and snails and horses periodically shed their riders onto the bark ground.



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Images in order of appearance:

Truck spring bouncer, Auckland, 2021

'Out of Order' Horse seesaw, One Tree Hill playground, 2021

Spring measuring, Sandringham Rd shops playground, 2021

Surfboard/hoverboard springer, Coyle Park playground, 2021

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"Sydney Snail" spring
rocker from Fahr Industries

