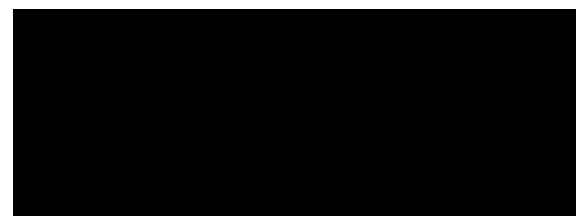
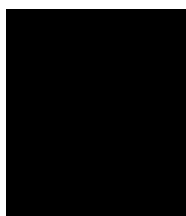
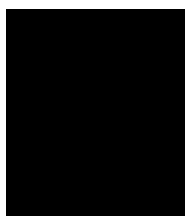




Is it morning yet?

By Katie Lawson

YYZ Artists' Outlet



Heidi Holmes and I have been emailing one another through the darkest months of the year. I am thinking about writing this text as we cross the threshold of the shortest day, the Winter Solstice. My own experience of time this month has been slippery, the days blur together as insomnia creeps back into my life and chronic illness flares. I'm reviewing our correspondence on my phone in bed, in the small hours of the morning, and with my face bathed in blue light I keep reading over Heidi's list of "things that keep me up at night". It is a list that, among other things, includes the manifestation of hormonal fluctuation of menopausal bodies: burning feet, sweating, hot flushes, restless legs, crawling skin, circling thoughts, depression and anxiety. This season of my own reproductive life has not yet arrived, yet these symptoms are all too familiar as recurring bedfellows.

While the witching hour has become a colloquial term in its contemporary use, referring to anything from the sleep of an unsettled infant to the final hours of stock market trading, traditionally it evoked a potent nightly window of opportunity for supernatural phenomena in texts of literature, folklore, and spirituality. It is the latter that feels deeply connected to Heidi's broader practice, as she draws on symptoms conjured within her own body before being transmuted into material form—each object brought into the space of the gallery embodies the transformative power and molecular magic of hormones that shape individual and collective experience.

Heidi frames her installations themselves as atmospheres, individual components come together to envelop the viewer, to form an experience that is itself in flux through the play of light and dark as materials, changing states of matter, and time-based elements. Much like the leaky vessel of the body, fluids move through and transform permeable tissues. Containers are filled with water equivalent to the measurement of water in the body of the artist, the amount of blood from her last menstrual cycle and the average amount of daily discharge from the vagina. A body of water, a Water Body. As an installation, *Witching Hour* includes a series of new sweat-stain drawings, blotchy patches that appear damp on paper pulped from used pillowcases. They call to mind the sweat prints left behind on bed linens by a restless sleeper, a nightly drawing that disappears as it dries.

In the past, when I've intentionally tuned into changes in the lived experience of my body—usually in pursuit of medical care—I've relied on tracking or logging symptoms over a period of time. In turn, myself and others would perform an interpretation of these signs, a form of reading the self that is not dissimilar from practices of divination. What knowledge is carried in the imprint of damp flesh on fabric? In hydromancy, water aids in seeking insights into the future, but other practices of divination have been used to diagnose illness, support spiritual crises, and ease fear. Looking at the sweat-stain drawings I can't help but call to mind the amorphous forms that reveal themselves in molybdomancy or carromancy, the act of pouring molten tin, lead or wax into water before interpreting the resulting shapes. Much like the reading of tea leaves, this practice has variations

across various geographies and time periods. Insights about the past, present and future are woven together by the reader's power of intuitive perception.

In previous installations, time-based elements have included a domestic clothes dryer that performs five times per day in forty-five-minute cycles, filling the space of the gallery with the clatter of buttons and snaps in the dryer barrel, gently vibrating on a wheeled trolley. But it is also materials themselves that take part in the circularity and flow that runs through the artist's work. Heidi carries a commitment to working with previously owned or found objects—a discarded home appliance is re-signified for the span of an exhibition before continuing to circulate in recycling programs or second-hand economy. In *Witching Hour*, I wonder about both the previous and future lives of the freezer, now host to an affirmation drawing—stuck to the interior wall with ice—and a series of ice block plinths holding various items: an estrogen bottle, onyx earrings gifted to the artist by a friend and a white washcloth with innumerable pins inserted into it. When the exhibition comes to an end and the freezer thaws, the work is lost—ephemeral and transitory by its very nature.

Likewise, materials from previous installations and exhibitions have been reworked into new forms. Dried hydrangea petals from the 2016 work *Control yourself (even if you feel dead inside, hurt and barren)* have been repurposed as ornamentation on a delicately striped bedsheet. The artist has carried these flowers with her since leaving Australia in 2017 without a clear intention for their future use. This previous exhibition, a hemisphere away, was made during a five-year period where Heidi was working through the experience of attempted rounds of in vitro fertilization, a process which ultimately failed. Now, in her Post-Menopausal body and practice, the paper-thin petals are re-introduced, a hormone-induced haunting. Grief is not a linear process, and loss has a way of continuing to surface over time. Beneath the sheet a hidden entity vibrates, restless movements. In the stillness of night, something is stirring.

Much in the way Heidi adapts objects and materials to each installation, each exhibition is site-specific, the artist subtly transforming or drawing attention to the architectural features of the gallery. At YYZ, a band of crimson traces the perimeter of the room, skirting the base of the wall; the threshold of the space bears signs of domesticity. These details are a part of the spatial impression of a body, formed by *Witching Hour*. The floorboards creak underfoot like a worn box spring mattress. In the back corner of the gallery, a crack has been cut into the wall, light pours through; a dim orange orb moves across the ceiling. In a windowless space, amidst all this light and dark, I lose track of time. Is it morning yet?

---

**Katie Lawson** (she/her) is a curator and writer based in Toronto. She is currently working towards a PhD in Art and Visual Culture at Western University, with an interest in contemporary art and climate change.

**Heidi Holmes** holds a BFA (Honours) from The VCA at The University of Melbourne (AU) and an MFA from Emily Carr University of Art + Design (Vancouver, CA). Holmes has exhibited her work in numerous solo exhibitions and group exhibitions including Yard Space Gallery (CA), Libby Leshhold Gallery (CA), Spring 1883 (AU), Root Division (US), Margaret Lawrence Gallery (AU), TCB Art Inc (AU), West Space (AU), Bus Projects (AU) and worked with curator Raimundas Malasakis on his project, *On Campus* (AU). Recent accomplishments include securing a scholarship to join The Power Plant's Emerging Artist Collective (CA) and a full scholarship to attend the European Cultural Academy's Contemporary Art Course (Venice, IT). Interviews and writing about Holmes' practice have been published in Un Magazine (AU), The Wheeler Centre (AU), and in 2021, Holmes' work, *I Am Woman, Hear Me Roar as I Push out this Science Baby* (2016) was the impetus for Angela Balzano's book, *To Do Away with Family, From Abortion to post-human Relationships*, published by Meltemi Press, (IT).