Monday Reader
Stella Maynard
Stella Maynard is an always literate rat and sometimes writer.


Saturday Reader
Hannah Jacks
Hanne Jacks is a polyglot extrovert and scabaddle addict.


“Who reads novels these days?” —Lion’s Honey

Lion’s Honey is a reader and volunteer librarian who works in the Jessie Street National Women’s Library.


the train pulls in to martin place wind and city move around me I lean towards pillared gallery feel for friday at the sandstone entry visitors cloak bags and find a frame to hold them security click and count fluorescent light casts no doubt shadows caught on polished floors no cracks in these walls

four flights of stairs lead me to us our nook thursday's imprint still there on the green chair sheepskin weaves us together our seven shelves slowly swell every page turned books become time holding the line

I approach to see she observes from afar she photographs the moment and ask why I am there

I remember each spine sentences underlined titles hold tight memories told right memories hold light honey you were here before me and you will follow me tomorrow

the sculpture—the seven bookshelves, which had grown horizontally over the course of the week's six months at the gallery—had entirely been constructed through an image of the sphenes stacked side-by-side on the wall. But those on my own shelf, all of the books' front covers were foreign to me.

One book had a plain leather spine, but its front cover was a marble page. Marble pages are one-of-a-kind imprints on paper, where the movement of ink and water is used to emulate the aqueous surface of smooth marble. They have their own literary history: the first marble page appeared in 1759, in Lawrence Sterne's book, *Tristram Shandy*, but I came to know about them through Jordy Rosenberg's *Confessions of the Fox*.

In *Lion's Honey*, the marble page appears unannounced at a moment just before two characters have sex. It appears in lieu of a concrete description of bodies and intimacy. In the abstract space of the marble parent, the reader's possessive gaze is refused. It is a generative elision, where the refraction of written details creates a space for the reader to speculate, to imagine, to sit with abstraction, and with the impossibility of capturing the world with words.

I think *Lion's Honey* is an equivalent marble page among Kaldor Public Art Projects' artist commissions. It is the work that is probably the least-spectacularised, the most-elusive. There are no flames, or coastline conveyed in curvatures, or monumental flourished puppets. Most people in the gallery, after all, walked past us. And, like a marble page, it creates a refraction of the details of a text from the audience. Just the conditions of reading remain in view.

Sometimes people would just sit on the floor; watch us quickly turn pages. The Letter of Agreement Agatha wrote us stipulates this is an impressionistic. Fred Morton once said that impressionism is the thing that we do in the face of history; impressionism corresponds to the necessity of paying attention to our history; to the history that we are and the history that we live. If this was a dance, attention would be the most acute of our gestures. What books we read, the position of our bodies in space; the people we turn our backs on; the people we didn't.

*Lion's Honey* spanned love and floods, through endless news refreshes and map updates and devastation, and I am writing now through another kind of crisis—one that, once again, brings to the fore the precariousness of bodies under capitalism. My attention is scattered, unable to be wrangled in this perpetually artificialised atmosphere.

But sometimes, as Tiana Reid says, the terror would stop, however momentarily, when I devoured the panels of a text. Monday mornings were a time to regard, to regroup, to plan, to rest. There was immense pleasure in sinking my back into that chair. I haven't found the space or attention to read in that concentrated way since the project ended.

But sometimes, as Lisa Robertson says, sometimes my sadness in reading is that I can't stay. I fall away from the ability to receive. The air-conditioned space of the gallery felt so severed from the ever-proliferating news that demanded confronting. Like a stoic heir. Sometimes I didn't show up to work, couldn't sit in that chair at all (although sitting there was all I really desired), and the work accommodated that absence, the need not to sit sometimes. They were months of improvisation; there was also precarity.

Bodies, like books, have spines that crack. My bones would often get so stiff from sitting all day in the fluorescent green chairs: the absorptive intensity of folding into a book, so deeply— the gift of that hard-to-come-by reading—would sometimes come at the expense of remembering to stretch. Eventually, I stood up. I crack the bones in my back and neck to release the tension. I place my right hand on a wall, my left hand on my back, wrinkle my neck to the left, crack, feel the release of my spine, and repeat for the other side.

John sat before me in the space adjacent to the Art Gallery of New South Wales cafe. Emily sat beside me. Small pegs appeared on black plastic trays with thick-rimmed hospitality-style saucers and little jugs of white milk. The escalators whirred beside us, that bodies levitating in and out of our peripheral vision.

John looked up. His age, normally sitting somewhere in the background of his charismatic presence, had seeped forwards. The preparations for Making Art Public Project *Lion's Honey* had been all consuming and seemed to be taking a toll.

I had gone to the meeting on the edge of refusal, I wanted to withdraw myself as an inclusion in the exhibition. It was around June, and the exhibition was to open only a few months later. I had proposed a number of iterations of a concept, but none had landed. One, *Reverse Exhibition*, an augmented sonic experience in which the viewers leave a sonic trace of their names in the gallery, had become too technically and collaboratively complicated. To an extent I agreed, but I carried the rejection like a heavy stone in my pocket.

I inhaled, and as air filled my lungs, I prepared to say—No—thank you John for this opportunity. I am grateful but I must remove myself; I cannot force an idea into being if there is no idea; I am tired; I have to be with my son; nothing is rising to the surface; I don't think this is the right time for me; I have given you my ideas; I have too many other things on; I feel compressed as if I can't breathe; I can't keep up with emails and expectations and my body craves there are piles of clothes on my bed and the floor I can't find the time and energy to put them away; I don't have any resources left; my partner has no space but before that exhalation left my body carrying with it that one syllable negation, John interrupted.

Let me tell you a story. There was once a very strong man. The strong man in the world. On the other side of a great desert, his girlfriend assisted him. She was the most beautiful woman in the world. The desert itself was hot and dry. The man, so determined to reach his girlfriend, and so strong, was not concerned by the desert. Suddenly, a huge Lion tears up before him. This man is so strong the Lion's roar and tearing up means nothing to him, and he tears it apart limb from limb. The Lion is dead, and the man continues to the village. There he meets his girlfriend, but the villagers are unfriendly to him, an outsider. Sometimes, he leaves her girlfriend and her village. As he returns across the huge desert, he comes upon the place he murdered the Lion. The Lion has decomposed so that it is only a carcass now, its flesh rotten and dry. Its spine is exposed, and inside the cavity there are piles of clothes on my bed and the floor I can't find the space and energy to put them away; I don't have any resources left; my partner has no space but before that exhalation left my body carrying with it that one syllable negation, John interrupted.

Take the honey. John said to me, as he reached his hand across the table at the Art Gallery cafe, where we had suddenly remarried. His hand, cupped, gestured towards me. I looked around and saw the familiar tables, chairs, bustle of this room.

A book—I was reading it last night, he said. I will lend you to you to read, but please come back with an idea by Friday.

The next day, equipped with this small paperback book gifted to me by John Kaldor, I arrived at my studio. Here, I have found a sheepskin on the floor and lay down for the first time in many months. I opened the first page of the book, and for the next five hours gave myself permission to read without the nagging thoughts of emails or text messages or bills or cleaning. I sunk into the sheepskin as the book poured into me, activating a virtual world behind the translucent curtain on my back. I had become too technically and collaboratively complicated. To an extent I agreed, but I carried the rejection like a heavy stone in my pocket.

Perfectly inaccessible to anyone else, this world was both fertile and restorative. After five hours I felt satiated, as if a crucial flood of emotions had dispersed. And by Friday I decided the work I would propose to John would involve the distribution of this golden honey to as many people as possible, wanting to use time as one's desires, to dwell and luxuriate in the permission granted to return to the most vital of tasks—reading a story.