

# TOWN WITHOUT PITY

## ***Town Without Pity***

**Paige Silverman**

**Glasgow Project Room**

**Presented in collaboration with Chaz Scott**

**18.05–24.05.25**

**1 *condensation***

Aluminum, primer, oil paint,  
L-hooks

**2 *condensation (in my other***

Aluminum, primer, oil paint,  
L-hooks

**3 *it always starts inside. in a cave. in a car***

Ali's suitcase, monitor,  
hardware and cables, Danny  
and Conor sing Elvis Presley's  
1977 "Unchained Melody" in  
2002 Honda Accord on the  
101 freeway into Echo Park

**4 *to follow the slit so I'm split***

Gregor's suitcase, concrete,  
steel, paper-maché, two  
metallic mylar heart balloons

**5 *present of things present***

Reed's suitcase

**6 *the winds the shield***

Aaron's suitcase, concrete,  
steel, paper-maché

**7 *today i feel free***

Aluminum, primer, oil paint,  
L-hooks

**8 *aware kind dominant  
satiated satisfied the next on  
my hands and knees sobbing***

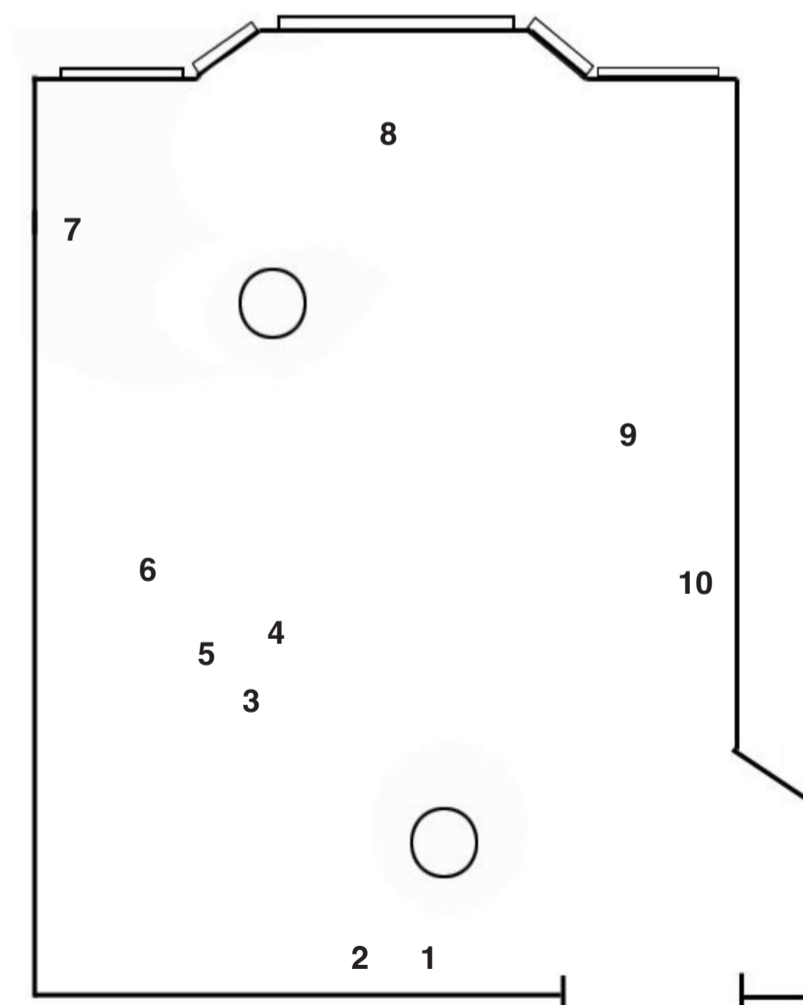
Concrete, steel, paper-maché,  
ribbon, two metallic mylar  
heart balloons, primer, oil  
paint

**9 *make lots and lots of  
candelabras. so many i can't  
think***

Aaron's suitcase, monitor,  
hardware and cables, Danny  
plays Elvis Presley's 1968 "If  
I Can Dream" at The Rhodes  
School on Larchmont Blvd

**10 *full of sex and love and  
light. here!!!!?!!***

Molly's suitcase, glass, paper,  
graphite, L-hooks



**Thanks to** Angella D'Avignon, Colin McDougal, Conor May, Daniel Wood, Edward Gwyn Jones, Fionn Duffy, Giulia Gentili, Isabel Connolly, Josh Hill, Lydia Davies, Rosie Dowd-Smyth, Rose Highham-Staiton, Sara O'Brien, and Glasgow Project Room committee

# You Creep

A suitcase splits like hair, like the body  
the body splits like a case  
a case splits like a body, like hair  
hair splits like a case

You’re already in the process of packing, because you’re returning and leaving again, when it happens. *I wanted to make something... to mark my presence in an unmistakable fashion, something that would defend this individual presence of mine from the indiscriminate instability of all the rest.*<sup>1</sup>

You could, people have, compare this process of packing, or assemblage, to the conception of a shell in which you accrue things or the things you shed take on their own form while staying close to yours: they become your other body, your negative. *From the margin of that fleshy cloak on my body, using certain glands, I began to give off secretions which took on a curving shape all around, until I was covered with a hard and variegated shield, rough on the outside and smooth and shiny inside.*<sup>2</sup>

But unlike the mollusc with its capacious shell, and silica-rich curvatures, yours is flat; or rather, you are folded away flat. The case becomes your personal shape, your silent companion, your own flat echo. *It’s worse than your ego, it’s your creep—always just there.*<sup>3</sup> Split like hair, like the body, your case becomes you, or rather, your creep. You and it are tethered. So you haul it around with you or it hauls you around, split like hair, like the body. *A good shape does and undoes the other shapes and we keep going within them and between them because it does feel very good to be undone while somehow remaining (done)...*<sup>4</sup>

With some things in the case, and others still strewn out across the floor, the operation becomes more serious, and more urgent. *Then the sun began to go down. It was a livid red with a sickly fog all around it.*<sup>5</sup>

Near a construction site, or in a video game, or a high school drama, a girl shouts YOU’RE SUCH A CREEP! because to be a creep is predatory and potentially violent; you might be inherently something, or act so. Fire creeps indiscriminate of how hot or young you are, the way the sun shines salaciously over the hills at daybreak, regardless of how hot and blazing things feel. As it creeps, it casts shadows: reproduces people, dogs, things.

You take flight, not knowing that you carry that damage, that done, with you.

The nose is split — like hairs, like a case — into two vessels. Split like hair, the fire creeps in, or the chemicals produced by the fire creeps in; it burns into the concave spaces of your airways, like a shadow dripping

creeping  
dripping and creeping and dripping  
creep creep.  
You carry it round with you for a long time.

<sup>1</sup> Italo Calvino, ‘The Spiral’, *Cosmicomics*, 1965  
<sup>2</sup> Italo Calvino, ‘The Spiral’, *Cosmicomics*, 1965  
<sup>3</sup> Amy Sillman, ‘SHAPES’, *The OG v14*, spring ‘20  
<sup>4</sup> Rindon Johnson, “Artist’s Choice: Amy Sillman—The Shape of Shape” MOMA/New York, *Flash-Art*, 2020  
<sup>5</sup> Colm Toibin, ‘In LA’, *London Review of Books*, 25 January 2025

Rose Higham-Stainton

# The Big One

The sun is a star. It shines over Los Angeles, a city of layers.

The way filmmaker Robert Altman improvises his dialogue and sound design—especially in *Short Cuts* (1993) mirrors these layers. Criterion writer Michael Wilmington called it a “jazz rhapsody” of a film, a “city symphony”—a sequence of events and conversations, drives across town, to the park, to the bar, a series of accidents, run-ins, coincidences and sunsets. With sprawl so wide, time shrinks and elongates like taffy on a spool; condensed into vignettes of happenstance and misunderstanding.

LA does have a compositional quality to it, the way the sound travels is eerie. When I first moved here, I lived in four different houses month to month and each one had a different sound pattern. I heard music from across the ravine in one, and at another which sat at the bottom of a massive hill, I could hear people above me eating dinner and drinking wine, cutlery tinkling, hoarse laughter. These canyon acoustics and the way sound floats over the bottle brush trees, the bougainvilleas were the equivalent to big city crowds or being alone in an urban public; I could hear people and the lives they lived without seeing them.

In January, I was wondering what to pack to evacuate a wildfire. Nothing felt important so I filled my suitcase with journals and photographs, postcards I’d received, trinkets and of course, the cats.

By April, hot orange Fire Poppy flowers began to emerge from ashen soil in Altadena where the Eaton and Canyon fires ripped across the hillside neighborhoods. These wildfire blooms are endemic to California and only appear after fires since its seeds need smoke to germinate.

In a special Earthquake episode of *Visiting with Huell Howser*, the TV host walks around Los Angeles after the 1994 Northridge earthquake, which was a 6.7 magnitude quake that struck the area

causing widespread destruction, killing 57 people, injuring thousands, and resulting in over \$20 billion in damage. Mic in hand Howser approaches a businessman, sitting shirtless on a beach chair with an oversized mobile phone, in front of his destroyed office building, appointed with yellow caution tape. “Why do you stay here?” asks Howser, “Why do you stay in LA?” The businessman first offers the 1980s greed is good dream—he wants the big house, the pool, the legacy—then admits he already had that and it was all destroyed in the earthquake. In the end all he cared about was his kids, he said. He’d earn another pool. He’d rebuild again, and so would the rest of LA.

*Short Cuts* came out a year before a big one (but not the Big One), in 1993. The film’s ending (an enormous 7 magnitude earthquake) was not so much prescient as it was mythological in its paranoia: Californians spend their lives waiting for the Big One; surviving one as a transplant is a rite of passage. I’ve lived through five myself and none of them my last.

Nothing that fit in a suitcase was as precious as life itself. We carry our cities—our places—with us in our bodies.

For Paige, May 2025

Angella d’Avignon