

1  
Sophia Mairer  
*400 000 000 Years*, 2025  
oil on canvas  
160 x 240 cm

29.01. – 07.02. 2026  
Cache Wien

THIS POEM IS  
TITLED  
*SPINE*

I ACCEPTED SOPHIA'S  
INVITATION TO HAVE IT  
ACCOMPANY HER EXHIBITION  
*40000000 YEARS*

AT CACHE VIENNA  
OPENING ON  
JANUARY 28, 2026.

THERE IS  
SOMETHING FAMILIAR  
LINGERING BETWEEN  
SOPHIA'S PAINTING  
AND THIS TEXT  
THE MACHINIC PART,  
LEFTOVER, LYING  
IN A FIELD OF  
FERN AND GRASS,  
AND MY FABULATION  
ABOUT A  
TORN  
BODY.

PICKING AT THE BODY  
JUST ENOUGH  
NOT TO DESTROY  
THE ENDOCRINE SYSTEM

I UNRAVEL BONE  
AND REVEAL A CORE

I LOOK AT IT  
CAREFULLY,  
AFFECTIONATELY,  
AFTER IT  
FELT  
LIKE IT WAS BREAKING  
BUT NEVER DID

I GRIND MY TEETH  
AND TRY TO  
MOVE  
CONSCIOUSLY  
NERVOUSLY  
TRIGGERING  
SIGNALS

SENT TO  
WEAK MUSCLES  
AS I PLAN AND START  
MOVEMENT

ELECTRICAL  
CHEMICAL  
SENSATIONS  
ARRIVE AT  
A NARROWED  
RANGE OF MOTION

SENSORY FEEDBACK  
SHOOTS UP OUR SPINE  
AND WE FEEL  
SOMETHING  
DEEPLY

I TELL YOU ABOUT  
THE POINT  
WHERE THE BIOPSY NEEDLE  
WENT INTO  
MY FLESH  
TO THE SOUND OF  
CRUSHING BLOOD VESSELS  
AND WHERE IT  
TURNED  
YELLOW,  
AND GREEN,  
PURPLE,  
AND BLACK

I FEEL THE  
ACHE  
AND THE INJURY  
AND HAVE  
MY SKIN  
MARKED  
BY BLUE, RED, AND  
GREEN PENS

I GO IN  
AND OUT  
OF HOSPITAL

TRANSITIONING  
FROM  
WELL  
TO ILL  
TO PATIENT

A LUMP  
FORMED  
IN MY BREAST  
CANCEROUS  
TISSUE

THAT  
NEEDED FIXING

SCALPELS  
CUT INTO FLESH  
JUST ENOUGH  
TO AVOID DAMAGING  
THE SOFT TISSUE  
OF MY REPRODUCTIVE  
ORGANS

I FEEL  
SOMETHING  
DEEP  
AND HARD

STRETCHING AND  
BENDING MY TORSO  
SENDS  
A RADIATING PAIN  
DOWN THE FRONT  
OF MY CHEST

I AM  
TRYING TO MOVE  
MY RIGHT ARM  
I LEARN  
HOW TO LIFT IT  
SLOWLY,  
STEADILY,  
MEASURED IN  
DEGREES,  
BY COMPARISON

WE'RE CONSTANTLY TOLD  
THE MACHINIC BODY  
IS SO MUCH MORE  
USEFUL THAN OURS

I BECOME  
OBSESSED WITH  
SPINES AND  
SKULLS AND  
FISHBONES  
AND WINGS

LEFTOVERS  
SCRAPS

I CHEW THE INSIDE  
OF MY CHEEK  
AND BEGIN TO COLLECT  
THESE REMINDERS  
OF OUR  
STURDINESS  
RELENTLESSLY,

MELANCHOLICALLY

BONES  
SPINES  
VERTEBRAE

JOINTS  
JAWS  
RELICS  
IN CLUMPS OF EARTH

MY HANDS TOUCH DRY  
CORRODED SURFACE  
TISSUE SIMILAR  
TO MINE  
BUT DIFFERENT

A FAINT NOSTALGIA  
GROWS AND STRIKES ME

INFORMATION  
SPEEDS DOWN  
TO MY  
ARMS  
FINGERS  
AND FINGERTIPS

I TOUCH THE  
PART OF MY  
CHEST  
WHERE THE SCALPEL  
MADE THE INCISION  
WHERE  
A SCAR RESTRICTS  
MOVEMENT

AND THAT SMALL PART  
OF THE BACK  
OF THE SHOULDER  
THAT IS  
NUMB AND HURTS AT  
THE SAME TIME

IN MY DREAMS I FILL  
BROKEN SPINES  
WITH SOUND  
AND THEY RESONATE  
FROM WITHIN

HOLDING OUR BREATH  
WE STRAP THEM ONTO  
OUR BODIES  
AND MOVE WITH EASE

FEVERISH DREAMS  
OF BEING  
TORN APART  
VIOLENTLY  
DETERMINEDLY

RIPPED INTO PIECES  
AND STITCHED  
BACK TOGETHER  
WITH A TECHNICAL PRECISION  
THAT MOVES ME

I RECEIVE AN IMAGE  
OF A GHOSTLY  
CARCASS  
FOUND  
IN THE WOODS

I SEE ITS  
LONG, CURVED,  
DANGEROUS  
SPINE  
COVERED IN RESIDUE  
FROM FLESH AND FUR

THEY LIFT IT  
AND I AM TOUCHED  
BY ITS  
FAMILIARITY  
INTENSELY

BELONGING TO A  
FAMILY OF VERTEBRATES,  
I AM SO BAD AT JUST BEING

UNPREPARED  
FOR COMING EMERGENCY  
OFFENDED BY PAIN

I FEEL MY SPINE  
AND  
IT RESONATES

OUR TECHNICAL COUNTERPARTS  
ARE SO MUCH MORE STURDY  
THAN WE ARE,  
I AM BEING TOLD

PASSING  
THROUGH  
ELECTRONIC DOORS  
TO BEDROOM  
TO SICK BED  
TO RECOVERY

I TRY NOT  
TO DESTROY  
MY CERTAINTY OF OUR

RESISTANCE  
TO THE  
CAPITALISATION  
OF THE FRAGILE,  
ISOLATED, AND  
SUFFERING BODY

I COUNT THE  
DOSES OF  
TREATMENTS  
THE BEEPS  
OF MACHINES

TRANSFORMING  
INTO A SOFT,  
GLOWING,  
LOW-RESOLUTION  
TORSO  
ON A SCREEN

I GO IN  
AND OUT  
OF HOSPITAL  
AGAIN  
AND RADIATION  
BURNS AWAY  
MY SKIN  
TWO MINUTES  
EVERY DAY  
FIVE DAYS A WEEK

INVASIVE TREATMENT  
THAT CAUSES  
HARM  
AND A PART  
OF THE BODY  
TO DETERIORATE

DESTROYING TISSUE  
AND SKIN  
KILLING  
CONTROLLING  
THE GROWTH OF THE CELLS  
DAMAGING THEIR DNA

I DREAM OF ANXIETY  
AND BREATHE HEAVILY

I STARE AT THE TINY FISH  
IN THE AQUARIUM  
IN THE WAITING ROOM  
AND IMAGINE THEIR  
FRAGILE INSIDES

IN ONE OF MY DREAMS  
SOMEONE EATS TROUT  
WITH ALL OF ITS SPINE  
AND IT IS GRUESOME  
A MOUTH FULL OF BONES

I COVER MY EARS  
AND STILL HEAR  
THE NOISES  
SOFTLY  
AND INTIMATELY

I IMAGINE THE SOUND  
OF MY BODY  
THE SCOOPING  
AND CRUSHING  
OF LYMPH NODES  
TAKEN OUT OF MY ARMPIT

AND FEEL HAUNTED  
BY GHASTLY  
MACHINERY

ONE WOULD ALWAYS FAVOR  
THE ALGORITHMIC MIND  
OVER OUR OWN,  
WE ARE SO OFTEN TOLD

DOESN'T IT TAKE  
AGES TO FINISH  
A THOUGHT

DON'T WE USE  
THE SAME SENTENCES  
OVER AND OVER

AREN'T WE  
OBSESSIVELY  
DRAWN TO OUR  
INNERMOST  
PARTS  
WHEN  
WE FEEL  
SOMETHING  
DEEPLY

YOU BANG AGAINST  
MY CHEST  
HUGGING ME  
AND EXCRUCIATING PAIN  
EXTENDS OVER IT  
SPREADING  
FAR  
INTO MY TORSO

I BEND  
AND GIVE IN  
RELEASE MY POSTURE  
AND ARRIVE AT THE SPINE

THE BODY  
DROPS  
TO THE GROUND

THE HEAD  
FOLLOWS

HORMONE-SUPPRESSING  
TREATMENT  
STARTS EATING AT  
THE BODILY ARCHITECTURE  
AFFECTING  
EVERY PART FROM THE BRAIN  
TO THE UTERUS

I START TAKING THE PILLS  
TWENTY MILLIGRAMS  
AFTER BREAKFAST  
TO STARVE THE CANCERS

OESTROGEN LEVELS DROP  
AND HAIR FALLS OUT  
I TENSE MY SHOULDERS

AFFECTED BY  
OUR TOXIC  
SURROUNDINGS,  
I WONDER  
ABOUT OUR RESILIENCE

LET ME BE CLEAR  
I MEAN MY BODY  
NOT THE BODY  
BECAUSE  
WE ARE NOT  
BUT WE HAVE BODIES

IN ALL THEIR  
MADE UP CONCRETENESS  
INTOLERANT OF THE  
REAL ABSTRACTION  
THAT MAKES OUR  
CONTEMPORARY  
SOCIAL LIFE

REACHING THE SOFT SPOT  
OF THE SEMISOLID TISSUE  
WITHIN THE CANCELLOUS  
PORTION OF THE BONES

THE MARROW  
WHERE BLOOD CELLS  
ARE CREATED  
A STORAGE OF FAT  
SPONGY  
THICK  
YELLOW  
AND WHITE

WHEN I DUG UP THE GARDEN  
I FOUND PART OF A DOG'S SKULL  
WITH SOME OF ITS  
TEETH STICKING OUT  
I KEPT IT TOO

LOOKING AT IT  
SENDS CHILLS  
DOWN MY SPINE  
TAPPING INTO OUR  
VERY OWN RESOURCES

BODIES  
THAT MUST  
NOT ONLY BE  
STRONG AND SUBTLE,  
BUT ALSO  
CAPABLE OF HANDLING  
SHOCKS, TRAUMAS, AND  
SCANDALS,  
BOUNCING BACK  
FROM THEM  
AS IF THEY  
NEVER HAPPENED

HAUNTED BY  
THE LOGIC OF CAPITAL  
AS THE MEANING OF LIFE

PICKING AT THE BODY  
STEADILY  
ACTIVELY  
CONSCIOUSLY

NASTY HABITS  
BECOME  
RELIEF  
AND RELEASE

TO CALM  
MY BODY  
QUIETLY  
FIDGETY

BITING THE NAILS  
PROBING THE FLESH  
REVEALING THE BONE

I PICK  
AT MY SPINE  
AND LET YOU  
ALL WATCH  
ME PICKING  
AT IT