

Walk with me

The idea for *Clews* began with words.

clue –

from the late Middle English *clew*, meaning ball of thread; hence one used to guide a person out of a labyrinth

For our collaboration *Clews*, we took the summer solstice as our departure date – that still centre of the astronomical calendar when the northern hemisphere is warmed by the sun's longest breath. Bimonthly, we would each make a *Clew* for the other and send it on its ocean-crossing journey – from Yorkshire, England to Honolulu, Hawaii and vice versa – on the 21st of the month. The project's syntax was that each work had to incorporate a yarn-like continuum. The recipient, we agreed, would respond to the other's work by writing, taking the single *Clew* as start and end point. Written responses were shared with each other only once complete, a *Clew* having given its recipient perhaps, and excitingly, different clues from those hinted at materially by its maker. Forms and words elided to become new works with larger meanings.

Six *Clews* were sent from June 2022 to April 2023, thus 12 works and their written responses make up our project. Why collaborate? Why send paper, cotton, threads, dye, fabric, metal, string, paint, black agate and gold leaf across seas in *Clew* form for materials to be deciphered without the help of spoken conversation? My answer: what are friends – those quite dead and those quite alive – for, if not to walk with us in our obscure mazes, if not to lead us out of the labyrinth of ourselves, back to the world rotating?

Kathryn Allan

Yorkshire, England, July 2023