

Designer shell

On a beach in Koh Chang, Thailand, small hermit crabs move across the sand as tourists enjoy succulent meals, watching a glowing pink sunset. A small child watches a crab fumble, roll over a peach-coloured shell, and then shuffle into its new home, leaving its old shell to wash away with the rising tide.

An artist drags a heavy bag off a conveyor belt and pays for long-term parking. As he drives home, memories of the warmth, the smells, and the shells intoxicate his mind. Returning to work at Arts Project Australia, he shares printouts of tropical beaches, hoping the inspiration will pass on.

The holiday feeling begins to fade as winter's gas bill delivers a rude reality check. A year passes, and images start to appear on the artist's easel. The mind travels back and forth between here and there, and a haven is slowly created where these memories are cherished and relived through the brush. The past connects to the present, like receiving a postcard you once sent to yourself while having the time of your life.

It's time to break for lunch. Sitting with baked beans and salad, the dog keeps harassing you to play fetch with one of your favourite socks. A quick check of the phone reveals the world is falling apart. An orange toad is infiltrating everything, making life hell for everyone except billionaire tech bros. The crabs continue their sideways dance across the sand. Coconuts keep falling and drifting out to sea. Buses will replace trains between Bendigo and Southern Cross for two weeks...

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