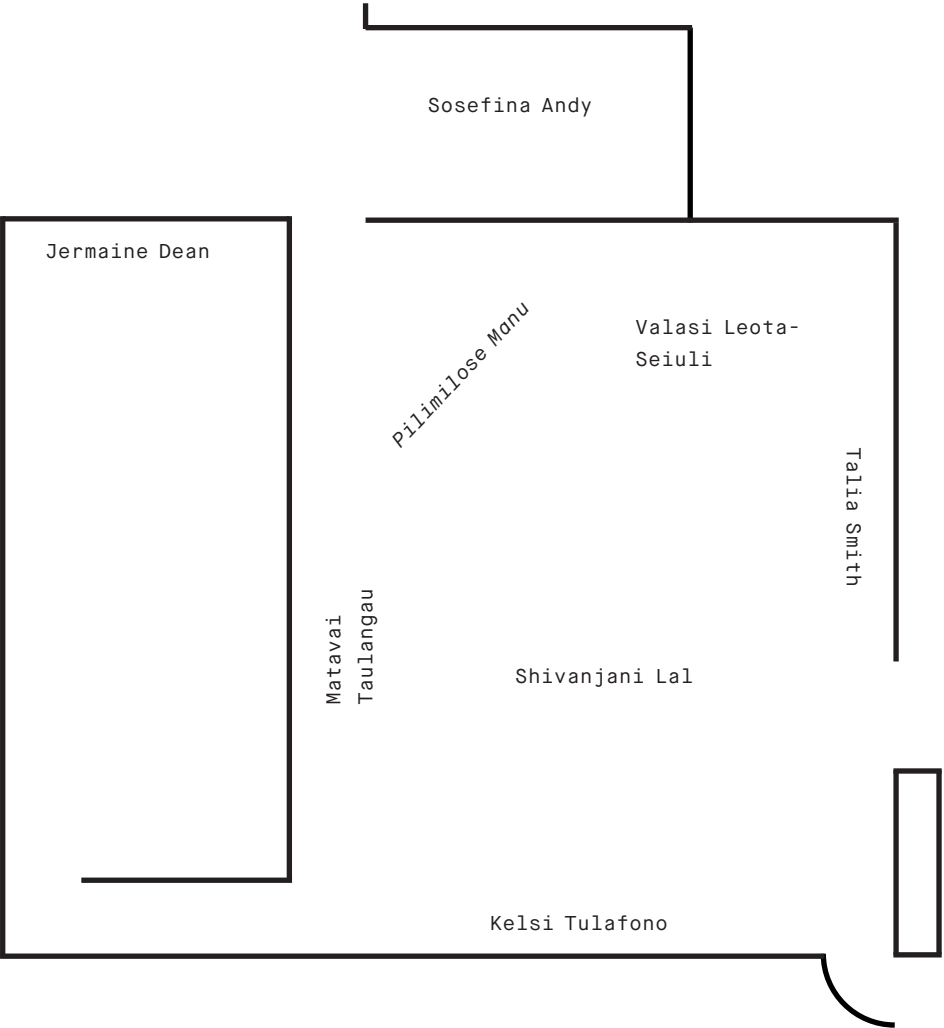


Saturday September 3, 6–8pm
Opening and performances

Friday September 9, 6pm–8pm
Book Launch, Gina Cole’s book of short stories ‘Black Ice Matter’

Wednesday September 14, 6pm–8pm
Artist talks



Opening night performances by
Cora-Allan Wickliffe
Valasi Leota-Seiuli
Shivanjani Lal

OFFSTAGE 7

Sosefina Andy, Jermaine Dean,
Shivanjani Lal, Valasi Leota-Seiuli,
Pilimilose Manu, Talia Smith,
Matavai Taulangau, Kelsi Tulafono,
Cora-Allan Wickliffe

Curated by Louisa Afoa

September 3 - 15, 2016

My Facebook feed was riddled with posts dedicated to Pita Taufatofua shortly after the 2016 Olympic Opening Ceremony. For those that don’t recognise the name, he is a Tongan Taekwondo practitioner from Australia but is now better known as the Tongan team’s flag bearer, who was dressed in ngatu and ta’ovala and more notably in body oil. Pacific people have a long history of being subjected to a euro-centric and patriarchal gaze. Perhaps amplified by the contested views on the representation of Maui in the upcoming Disney film Moana, Pita Taufatofua soon became the real life figure that Pacific people could be proud of.

Knowledge about the origin of coconut oil and its various traditional uses in the Pacific became more visible as a result of the social media frenzy over his rock solid abs. The light-hearted memes floating around about how good looking Pita was were everywhere. It was a feel good moment of solidarity and pride for Pacific people across the globe.

However, things soon became uncomfortable when Taufatofua was featured on the Today Show and — while being interviewed — three white women applied oil to his body, exoticising and exploiting him. The comment section was filled with Pacific audiences expressing their dismay. One comment echoed my own thoughts stating: “I wonder if there would have been so much attention on the “oil” if Pita did not fit into what the Western world deems beautiful...”. This athlete whose journey to the Olympic games was at least four years in the making was overshadowed by fetishisation.

OFFSTAGE — Tautai Contemporary Art Trust’s annual moving image and performance based event — is now in its seventh iteration. As I read through the past promotional material for OFFSTAGE, which includes artists such as Tanu Gago, Darcell Apelu, Yuki Kihara and Lonnie Hutchinson, I am reminded of how important agency and autonomy are in terms of image making, particularly when the above example shows how easy it is in the age of social media to objectify someone outside of their cultural context.

OFFSTAGE has consistently provided a platform for promising contemporary Pacific voices in timebased formats, however this year’s iteration has a focus on personalised narratives. While each artist experiences similar oppressions, they all present a very different experience of ‘being Pacific’, bringing together works with a variety of concerns such as gender, distance, the body, labour, knowledge and embodied trauma. OFFSTAGE 7 provides a unique opportunity to experience a snapshot of Pacific dialogues through time based practices. The emphasis here though is that being of Pacific descent is a personal experience that should not be generalised.

Louisa Afoa

Works

Sosefina Andy

'fa'a-matala; to be-open, to-narrate' (2016) | 4:55
Time based media and installation

Sosefina Andy is an Auckland based artist who is interested in the idea of memory and the transferral of innate experiences into entities that can then be encountered in physical forms. The recollected ideas are refined and highlighted by contemporary techniques and materials of interest.

In the moving image' fa'a-matala; to be-open, to-narrate' two of the artists' relatives are fa'matala (narrating) the knowledge of making traditional fine mats in the confinement of the artists family living room. The couch covers pinned on the wall are traces of the living room measured and created by the artists memory while the table holding a vase of synthetic flowers is the only object that has been extracted and displaced from its original setting allowing the audience to experience the traces of space.

Jermaine Dean

'Jermaine' (2016) | 3:49 | Time based media

Producer: FAFSWAG Arts Collective
Director: Tanu Gago / Jermaine Dean
Camera: Tanu Gago / Pati Solomona Tyrell
Music: SCHLACHTHOFBRONX - LIGHTS OFF feat NICKY DA B

Mahia Jermaine Dean is of Māori heritage and identifies as Takatāpui. Formally trained as a photographer specialising in digital post production and image manipulation, Dean's practice has traditionally explored his culture, sexuality and social environment through the lens of digital story telling.

As a dancer Jermaine wanted to tell a story through movement. The genre of Vogue performance can sometimes be soft and eloquent with flourishes of hard and angular posture. Jermaine juxtaposes these soft motions against a harsh urban environment to profile his unique relationship to the land and to public space.

Shivanjani Lal

'मे यहाँ नहीं हूँ (I am not here) ' (2016) | Performance and installation

Shivanjani Lal is an emerging Pacific artist, who is culturally Indian, was born in Fiji and grew up in Australia. Her practice has always questioned where she fits through her thematic examination of identity and home.

In the performance 'मे यहाँ नहीं हूँ (I am not here)' Shivanjani will attempt to erase all of the locations of where she is from. Starting from her current geographical location/home: Australia, moving backward to where she was born: Fiji and originally to India where she is from culturally. In this erasure Shivanjani is hoping to explore a future possibility of renewal of identity.

Valasi Leota-Seiuli

'Toe Fa'afoi foi a'u' (2016) | Performance, Time based media and installation

Valasi Leota-Seiuli is a Bachelor of Visual Arts student currently pursuing Honours at Auckland University of Technology. Her background as a singer-songwriter and musician has sparked a recent move to incorporate sound and performance into her art practice alongside sculpture and moving image. From a third generation standpoint, her practice explores social issues and embodied trauma within the Pasifika community in New Zealand.

'Toe Fa'afoi foi a'u' is a performance and moving image that also operates as memorial. On the opening night of Offstage Valasi's performance will involve installing sculptural objects with her moving image work while singing and placing fresh lei onto the work.

Throughout his childhood, Valasi's father and her family moved and lived in multiple homes in Otara. Her father experienced this trauma multiple times at a young age and four state houses he lived in were raided at dawn. This work is a memorial of the homes he once live in, paying tribute to the resilience of not only her father, but also of the Polynesian people who wanted nothing more than to make a better life for their families.

Pilimilose Manu

'Untitled' (2016) | 7:42, 9:02 | Time based media CRT installation

Pilimilose Manu is a mixed media artist interested in the exploration of cultural values in relation to traditional and westernised influences. His work often utilises video performance and audio as a medium to negotiate positions from which to engage with the world as he explores gender, difference and the Va. Pilimilose completed his Master of Art and Design from Auckland University of Technology in 2013 and exhibits frequently while teaching at Aorere College.

In the video installation Pilimilose questions the Va within gender roles/norms in Tongan culture. Due to a Patriarchal society men are the decision makers for their families and are expected to financially

provide. On the contrary, within a family, sisters are ranked higher than brothers. In particular, the eldest sister hold a place of honor, known as fahu. (Fahu is the dignified rank and is always the paternal aunty; sometimes the fathers sister). 'Untitled' focuses on the idea of tension that unfolds between Tongan men and women.

Talia Smith

'A long distance relationship (one)' (2016) | 2:06
Time based media

Talia Smith is a practicing artist and curator originally from New Zealand but now based in Sydney, Australia. She has exhibited her photographic and moving image practice in various artist run and public institutions in Australia, Germany and New Zealand with solo shows at Kings Artist Run in Melbourne and the Te Tuhi Billboards in Auckland. She has curated shows in both Australia and New Zealand and has begun an on line platform for curating work called The Surrounds. Her work uses both the still and moving image to examine concepts around time, distance, the ruin and memory.

'A long distance relationship (one)' is a part video and part performance work that examines the physical and emotional distance between one home and another and what this affect may have. This work depicts the body of water that separates Australia and New Zealand - The Tasman Sea.

Talia says "I stood on the rocks at Clovelley Beach and angled myself facing East which is the direction Australia faces New Zealand. I tried for as long as I could to capture the moving ocean before my hands were frozen and began to ache. My long distance relationship lasted only 2 minutes and 6 seconds before I gave in to the warmth that I knew was waiting for me in the confines of the car".

Matavai Taulangau

'Ta Lu' (2016) | 7:23 | Time based media
'Forestry' (2016) | 17:36 | Time based media

Matavai Taulagau is an emerging Auckland based artist who is interested in the idea of labour, production and sustainability. With a documentary approach to the moving image works he makes Matavai hopes to draw out socio political issues that affect his community.

The video 'Ta Lu' follows a Tongan church communally picking lu (taro leaves) in a green house in Pukekohe. In the work 'Forestry' the viewer is taken on a journey following a group of workers on their shift which involves replanting pine. Matavai explores the

values in the activities of production and its history while observing traditions and aspects that are associated with it. The works investigate how these productions benefit and affect the sustainability of the culture.

Kelsi Tulafono

"Is it Saturday tomorrow?"
"Yeah we'll go see Dad" (2016)
7:10 |Time based media

Kelsi Tulafono is an Auckland based artist of Tokelauan and Māori descent. Through lens based mediums she explores the notion of migration and personal narrative. This year has been significant to Kelsi's art making as 2016 marks the 50 year anniversary of when her family migrated from Tokelau to New Zealand.

The work "Is it Saturday tomorrow?" "Yeah we'll go see Dad" explores notions of language, tradition and inter-generational relationships. The work involves the artist and her Nana, aunty Ana and cousin Mele as they talk about the past and present, bringing together their thoughts in the safe, loving place of her grandparents' home. The language barrier between their generations is made apparent through this work, with Kelsi's Nana speaking Tokelauan to her aunty while the grandchildren are having their own conversation.

Cora-Allan Wickliffe

'Corn Beef Girl' (2016) | Performance

As a multi-disciplinary artist Cora-Allan's practice examines constructed identities of indigenous people through explorative bodies of work that analyse colonial and touristic driven perceptions. She explores forms and methods of reshaping identities by engaging with Indigenous academics and narratives from her own Māori and Pacific community.

Departing from controversial representations of Pacific peoples (including Maui in Disney's Moana), Cora-Allan's performance sails through historical and contemporary constructions of Pacific identity, with a focus on preferred representations. Exploring the idea that an individual person can make reference to a larger group, Cora-Allan will engage with the position of a promotional girl for corned beef, fulfilling the role of an individual representing a brand/ community. She analyses what it is as Indigenous people to continuously negotiate the active and transformative creation of a preferred representation.