



Ua numi le fau



## **Ua numi le fau**

Atong Atem  
Megan Cope and Robbie Thorpe  
Dale Harding  
Yuki Kihara  
Carlos Motta  
Frédéric Nauczyciel  
Mandy Nicholson

Curated by Léuli Eshraghi

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Cover image  
Frédéric Nauczyciel,  
*A Baroque Ball [Shade]* (2014)



# Ua numi le fau

Léuli Mazyar Luna'i Eshraghi

This exhibition takes place in Narrm, the great bay, and the waters flowing through the great yaluk Birrarrung. The settler colonial city of Melbourne is built on the unceded, stolen biik lands and baan waters of the Wurundjeri and their relations, the Boon Wurrung, Taungwurrung, Dja Dja Wurrung and Wadawurrung. Distinct clans, together as the Kulin Nation, have survived and thrived, ensuring that timeless laws, ceremonial-political practices, and knowledges continue into the future. Though British invasion, the frontier wars, dispossession, and genocide have scarred people and place, the sacred waters of Birrarrung yaluk and Merri yaluk have nourished Kulin and Ngamudji lives where you see *Ua numi le fau*, binding time and space for brighter days to come. This exhibition takes a journey through languages, practices, bodies, places, and moments.

Ua numi le fau is an expression in my language meaning that the string tied to the lupe pigeon is entangled, both in hunting the prized bird in Sāmoan vao forests, and in relationships being complicated and difficult. In this exhibition context, the expression locks onto ongoing traumas of capitalism, colonialism, evangelisation and neoliberalism on the integrity of living ecologies and associated spiritual practices. Artworks by Atong Atem, Megan Cope and Robbie Thorpe, Dale Harding, Yuki Kihara, Carlos Motta, Frédéric Nauczyciel, and Mandy Nicholson hold to account grandiose European colonial histories (empires that 'saved' peoples from 'savagery'), binary gender (male/female), binary sexuality (hetero/homo), and structures of patriarchy (privileged men come first always, the end). How might resistance, healing and sovereign futures be sited/sighted? There are many tino bodies, iloa knowledges, aitu spirits, atua gods, tupuga ancestors, fanua lands and vai waters in these vā visual spaces of relationships between all things.

Narrin-ik Mandy Nicholson, Wurundjeri-wilam-ik, Wurundjeri-baluk-ut, Woiwurrung-ik. Ngoon godgin lalal ba gugung-nugel-ik, ngoon godgin buladu-djak-biik-nugel-ik, buladu-djak wurru-wurru, galada ba warinj-bulok-nugel-ik. Ngoon godgin liwik-bulok-nugel-ik ba kirrip-ik. Ngoon godgin-dji-nganjin buladu-djak biik-nganjin, buladu-djak-nganjin wurru-wurru, galadanganjin ba warinj-nganjin.<sup>1</sup> In these words, Mandy Nicholson, knowledge-keeper, and Woi Wurrung speaker and translator, thanks country and ancestors. Her painting on paper, *Barak* (2006), is a personal mapping of biik country, tracing her people's genealogy to significant ngurungaeta clan leader, William Barak (c. 1824-1903). A prominent leader in resistance to colonisation and negotiations with the Victorian settler colonial government, Barak advocated for self-governing First Nations communities, including establishing the agricultural community Coranderk with his cousin Simon Wonga. In a time when the 'Aboriginal Protection Board' banned Indigenous ceremonial-political practices, Barak produced many paintings and drawings to educate and inspire his Wurundjeri people about their ancestral ways of knowing and living.

In Nicholson's painting, there are fine lines that follow the contours of the valleys nurtured by the baan waters of the Birrarrung yaluk and its tributaries. The lines represent the biik country that Barak and so many have fought to protect, to grow futures and to continue communities. There are places of cultural and spiritual significance present in this work, knowledge for initiated eyes and tongues only, a radical sign of active Indigenous presence. The artist is also an incredibly important language speaker and translator, enriching Woi Wurrung with new terms and educating new speakers. A renewed strength in Indigenous

languages through ancestral knowledges comes in the Anishinaabe expression dating to the British and French settler colonists' extensive and long ban on First Nations, Métis and Inuit cultural practices there: Gego ghazaagwenmishken pii wii Anishinaabemowin.<sup>2</sup> Challenging conditions of exclusion, Nicholson's work creates a space for Wurundjeri people and their wider Kulin Nation to be recognised on their own terms.<sup>3</sup> There will be much more change, seeing as Wurundjeri resurgence is gathering the resources necessary for cultural renewal and political agency to be realised.

Concerned similarly with addressing the erasure of his Bidjara, Ghungalu and Garingbal ancestors' histories, Dale Harding is known for corrective installations and works on paper. I say corrective because replica rifles, embellished potato sacks, leather throat cuffs, and life-size holding chambers presented over the last few years claim spaces for those who cannot speak. For those whose ways of knowing and being in their worlds were violently removed or interrupted. The traumatic acts of domestic servitude and frontier wars, repeated many times over, that Harding's work communicates, are responses to his Elders encouraging their expression so that people might know and remember.

Can new presences address ongoing erasures? *And all who enter* (2010), *Blakboy, Blakboy, the colour of your skin is your pride and joy* (2012),<sup>4</sup> and *It puts a rose in every cheek* (2012) stitch new possibilities and cultural strength into being for the artist and for other Indigenous peoples sovereign to European gender and sexual binaries. The artist has been steadily learning site-bound timeless histories as well as sovereign Indigenous-language concepts relating to sexual and gender practices within the reciprocal social structures of his peoples. The fine embroidery situates Harding's being within and through contemporary gendered and sexualised colonisation, in the kitchen, the bedroom, the forest, and in romance. You may recognise the phallic, animal, dark and fair icons of Australiana, a vegemite jar, a kangaroo, a cockatoo, and

grass trees, but they work here on a different level. The artist is claiming space once more for complex sexual, romantic and spiritual relationships between people and between people and country, showing that things are not as simple as they seem in response to previously outlawed behaviours.

In *Nefandus* (2013) by Carlos Motta, the lush green foliage of the forest and clear waters of a river are the setting for a meeting of two worlds – a Kogi-speaking man and a Spanish-speaking man. The Kogi man speaks of the power and effects of the invading Spanish who identified local sexual practices as beyond their evangelical morality system. The invaders tortured and killed those who committed pecados nefandos, 'forbidden sins', 'abominable, unnatural acts', and yet utilised these same practices in militarised campaigns to pacify Indigenous men who resisted Spanish colonisation. A 1500s etching plate by Theodore de Bry is held, wet, by a stone placed in the clear, flowing river. Following the unprecedented plunder of their lands, bodies and knowledges, 'the struggle of Indigenous peoples focuses largely on restoring other forms of knowledge, of understandings of society, of production of food, of economic relations, of spiritual lives.'<sup>5</sup> Paddling along the Don Diego river in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta region of Colombia, the two men speak through and despite the river, keenly aware of the limits of their knowledges and actions.

jika akazhuka ne ki akuagache  
atshakue mulddigabba shi kasax axgatzeguldsila  
ojonguka nokaldsika zunanne  
ubañ agatzega zhe kaggubatshi  
neki saki zaxka kuegané  
shibakdama shi jui nagazhaldsi  
jika akazhuka ne ki akuagache  
muldsigabax guanshijiki meldeubia guakue  
Atshinana mixzaka nusagatse chi kama mijuldune  
Uban yaldisi naxkagui mugajinakualsi  
Neki shubaldama akazuka shibaldama  
axsnshika namax naldagulde zhakua ichualdzi  
guchax  
Melde saxka zukuaxkue zhini naxlde.



Melde nux nalda cechi zha nen ax gukaki.  
Naldegalde henchi<sup>6</sup>

En este territorio la conquista instauró la noción de historia y sus pretensiones de objetividad. Sus relatos y crónicas están basadas categorías importadas; de ellas depende nuestro conocimiento del cuerpo y la estigmatización del sexo. El ano le debe a ese momento su transformación en el órgano de la inmoralidad, en el templo de la vulnerabilidad masculina, en el repositorio del odio a la trasgresión y en el territorio de la sodomía.<sup>7</sup>

shane kalguashzhajanga axbunguane  
kabbiahi shane mixze guakua  
jise nauiji kalguacha  
kax ga shane aganbuguane  
shibaldma ga guiba kue  
nawiji jaba zukax<sup>8</sup>

Following the soft, clear voices switching between Kogi and Spanish, you have time to think about desires seen as abominable, moments in time mirroring the colonisation of lands and waters by fixing official histories and cementing acceptable practices. This has been described as “the systematic destruction of every cultural trace that enabled a recognition of the ancestral memory.”<sup>9</sup> The recovery and integrity of ancestral sexual, spiritual and gender practices in this part of the world begins, perhaps, with this damning analysis of civilisational opposites. Not just between worlds centred on the individual and those centred on the Earth, but also in recognising and disempowering the ongoing violence of Conquest histories in these First Nations territories. Both the Spanish-speaking man and Kogi-speaking man capture the turning point when male Indigenous bodies were pronounced and policed as dark and deviant. Carlos Motta’s *La visión los vencidos (The Defeated)* (2013) depicts a fictional rendition of an oral history that has been selectively passed on from generation to generation, and narrated here by an unidentified voice. An Indigenous slave was guiding Spanish conquistadors up mountain paths into the jungle when they arrived at a temple site.

The moment the invading army commander realised a large homoerotic ceremony was happening is the moment when histories and practices are ruptured in order to be destroyed. The Indigenous men engaged in the ceremony are attacked and burnt alive on the orders of the invading army commander.

majangui nagua  
janchi mixbeiasa

hui, mulkalda kalkalda kukibual ne gata zeshi  
mokue mawi nikalda  
abbi naldsi<sup>10</sup>

More than other parts of the body, the anus became stigmatised and invested with the perceived weakness of all men, the borderland where no saintly or pious man in a European patriarchal colony or homeland would venture. Above all, Motta’s beautiful video works *Nefandus* (2013) and *La visión los vencidos (The Defeated)* (2013) chart the inevitable disappointment in seeking out the “traces of the pre-designated”, the memory of “desire before it was created, manipulated, altered, judged”, in a decolonised history “without violence or oppression”, because it does not exist. Motta identifies the legacy of timeless homoerotic connections from before and since 1492 as being within all the bodies descended from the oppressed and the oppressor – delights and desires are to be sensed and experienced instead of simply knowing their absence.<sup>11</sup>

Where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going? These are recurring existential points of questioning present in Yuki Kihara’s recent photographic series of the same title. Kihara interprets an unidentified *Samoan Half-Caste* portrait from 1886 by English photographer Thomas Andrew in her recent black and white works, *After Cyclone Evan, Lelata* (2013), *Roman Catholic Church, Apia* (2013), *Fale Samoa, Satitooa* (2013), and *Plantation, Lalomanu* (2013). Brought to a liminal presence as the photograph-bound character Salome, she is restricted by Victorian-era values, imposed on the Samoan archipelago, to wearing a black taffeta mourning gown. Critical of

the unmovable colonial-era imagery of exotic, erotic islanders, seen as sexually and spiritually available for missionaries, planters and traders, Kihara's works are nuanced responses. Expertly performing the refusal of the invasive European gaze, and of predetermined roles based on the European gender binary, Salome intently looks into the distance, never at the camera. A 'dark angel of history', she insists that we must keep questioning what losses, violences, identities, and lives have been lost, including the memory of these same losses.<sup>12</sup>

The monuments across the fanua lands and moana oceans that Salome moves within are rich: German colonial-era plantations, European-introduced churches in the place of fa'amalama customary reverence of ancestors and spirits, and ancient Sāmoan fale open-air architecture. Shot whilst under construction, the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Apia is the perfect site from which to highlight the unique coexistence of European-derived Christianity and Fa'aSāmoa Indigenous practices. The images are ghostly empty of the typical "insects, air, the noise and colour of life – all apparently sucked out by a vacuum of pressure after the storm. The mood is almost apocalyptic, the figure something of a spectral visitor sweeping between island locations to silently inhabit these significant landscapes."<sup>13</sup> Through Salome, Kihara asks us to consider what Nafanua, the greatest Sāmoan warrior goddess, might think of her descendants and their actions in the world. In peace time, Nafanua advocated for peaceful discourse in the fa'amatai chiefly system of decentralised customary governance and communal land ownership.<sup>14</sup> Organised religion, nation state (and further east, the United States territory of American Sāmoa), and neoliberal economy all meet in the policed movements of Salome's body through the detritus of climate catastrophe and globalised flows of people and value. It is as if she asks her descendants if they really are her people, considering the shifting practices and attitudes since Salome's time.

Along Atem's *Studio* series consists of the artist's friends captured casually posing in a studio that emulates the fetishes of the colonising Europeans, with beautifully patterned wax print banners, accessories and garments laid over furniture with artificial flower bouquets. The wax cloth prints, introduced to Africa by the Dutch from Southeast Asia, have become ubiquitous with local identities, covering up a complex colonial exchange. This series centres on notions of blackness in the identities of first and second generation Africans living in Narm Melbourne. Drawing on the extensive work of renowned photographers Malick Sidibé, Seydou Keita, and Samuel Fosso amongst others, Atem brings a fresh way of working with, and looking at, black Indigenous African bodies. For Atem, producing images of black Indigenous African people means the first audiences are the ones closest to the people photographed – accessed on Tumblr and Instagram amongst other open channels. Echoing the postcard images kept in many households in the diaspora, the scenes in *Akuot* (2015), *Dit* (2015), *Nyir* (2015), and *Paanda* (2015) portray strength, connection and knowing in bodies that feel and hold cultural memories and futures, despite the distances of time and space.<sup>15</sup>

These studio spaces, captured in images, are reflections of inherited and chosen relationships. Responses to experiences of exclusion and invisibility when the artist was younger have motivated her to channel energy into exploring liminal spaces of identity between multiple intersecting experiences in the world.<sup>16</sup> The portraits poetically render the reverence for ancestors and spirits that has become an acceptable way of knowing and being in the world. Animism and representations of ancestors held in this sense, are a platform for radical being *in* and *with* ecologies and the living beings that they nurture, precisely because it opposes European knowledges of the Other.<sup>17</sup> Atem also works with the collections of the Smithsonian Institution to digitally paint the archival images she accesses, giving the colour back to Indigenous African peoples



in ceremony or events in Madagascar, Burkina Faso, Egypt, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The invisibility that her work redresses is the blanket of whiteness, structural Anglo-Celtic hegemony in the Australian settler colonial context. Here, resistance to the ethnic, gender and sexual norms of acceptable appearance and presence in society is barely tolerated, but image-making can be a further avenue to avoid co-option by wider society, and to maintain spaces determined by Indigenous African peoples.<sup>18</sup>

« Homo, hétéro, tout ça, c'est dépassé, c'est seulement parce que c'est toi »<sup>19</sup> In the French context, queer Indigenous and diasporic non-Indigenous desires, peoples and their presence are permitted, but less visible than mainstream queer French communities. Nightlife has long been the setting for communities to form, organise and lead public actions for their wellbeing, sexual and political rights. In Frédéric Nauczyciel's *House of HMU* series, we see classical European aesthetics and music brought into the voguing urban cultural register. *A Baroque Ball [Shade]* (2014) sees dancers from the conceptual House of HMU, key people in the French vogue ballroom scene, perform not for an audience but for themselves. Throughout the signature movements of this community, the art forms present on screen are the categories in each ball contest. "The goal of the challenges that they set for each other is to learn to be the best. The fact of challenging someone else is a way of surpassing oneself."<sup>20</sup> Voguing as a *form* came out of the African American and Latin American queer-trans communities of urban ghettos and prisons, from Harlem to across the United States. Before and after being in turn appropriated by mainstream music icons and the Anglo-Celtic gaystream in succeeding decades, voguing has been and remains for the 'in' crowd – a dance "that inverts the symbols of white power by appropriating the models' poses on the covers of *Vogue* magazine."<sup>21</sup>

Constantly pushing boundaries, the dancers 'perform the territory' in the Centre

Pompidou exactly as in the palatial settings of monthly balls held around Paris. They refuse the invisibility they experience in wider French and American societies, and affirm their belonging in the urban cultures they have created.<sup>22</sup> In the voguing scene, experiences of trans femininity, trans masculinity, and queer being in all its forms are supported and visible. This contrasts to the hostile attitudes, violences and pressures of urban neighbourhoods and the penitentiary spaces of the heteropatriarchal French state. *A Baroque Ball [Shade]* (2014) features Paris-based Diva Ivy (LaBanji) Balenciaga, Honeysha Khan, Pioneer Lasseindra Ninja, Nayla Monroe, Mona (Khan) Chanel, Kevin Mizrahi, Precious Ebony, Mother Rheeda LaDurée, Clyde SimonSez, Flamy-Joyce, Khalvyn Mizrahi, Tee-Jay LaDurée, Vyna Ebony, Keiona Mitchell Lanvin, and Baltimore-based Dale Blackheart. Nauczyciel isn't reproducing the 'fly in, fly out' anthropological gaze video genre, instead maintaining strong respect-based relationships in both the Baltimore and Paris voguing communities in order to co-create new works together.

In *Red Shoes [Kendall Miyake Mugler]* (2015), young rising star Kendall Miyake Mugler wears a black mesh headpiece, black underwear, and bright red high heels. Within the chapel of the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Saint-Denis, an area known nationally for its 'problem' neighbourhoods, Mugler deftly moves his body through the space. The camera follows him, classical musical voices rising around him, interspersed with a voguer egging him on, bringing you closer to the voguer in the act of being: "A voguer becomes legendary by transgressing the rules in ways nobody expects – in his character, in his alter ego, in his fierceness, because in doing so, he makes the whole community move forward. To be legendary is to exist in the eyes of the community and for himself. [...] One of the attitudes of being legendary is never saying it, never bragging, because he *is* legendary no matter what."<sup>23</sup> Voguing can be understood as enabling flamboyant, sovereign beings to exist and thrive in compromised, deteriorated urban spaces. These works by Nauczyciel and

his voguing friends represent the possibilities of the French banlieue, the urban ghettos whose humanity and strength are hidden in the seams of their recent diasporic histories. Being centres of migration from former French colonies around the world, the presence and agency of voguing enables the artist to “create images that would complicate our European vision of urbanity through a form of twist from the interior.”<sup>24</sup>

Just before *Ua numi le fau*, the exhibition, *If people powered radio: 40 years of 3CR*, curated by Helen Hughes and Spiros Panigirakis, was held at Gertrude Contemporary. It featured the works of local artists and countless community radio presenters and activists. One site-specific installation, *Makin' Waves* (2016), remains on the gallery's front windows for *Ua numi le fau* – a semi-transparent vinyl map design by artist Megan Cope and poetry by veteran activist Uncle Robbie Thorpe. The work radiates out, as per radio waves, calling to the ongoing work towards treaty processes within a new republic, Indigenous sovereignty in action, and the restoration of lands and waters-based ceremonial-political practices. It is a visual reminder to passersby of the foundational unfinished business of settler colonial foray in the unceded, stolen biik lands and baan waters of Australia. Cope is well known for her corrective mapping of country that situates rising sea levels in lands and waters again known by their timeless names in First Nations languages. Near the gallery, *You Are, Here Now* (2015),<sup>25</sup> Cope's large-scale public mural at the Australian Catholic University campus, pays homage to the Kulin Nation clans, their languages and unceded territories. Uncle Robbie Thorpe is famous for his powerful and poetic speeches. Centred on Narrm Melbourne, *Makin' Waves* includes key phrases from his community organising work, including: “Australia”'s a crime scene, needs investigating’ and ‘white “Australia” has a black history.’<sup>26</sup> Their work flips the map and directions of the ocean between Kulin Nation territory where 3CR operates outward to lutruwita Tasmania, to flip assumptions of the colonially imposed borders, and ‘normalised’ European ways of knowing and being here.

*Ua numi le fau* includes a customary exchange between visitors and hosts, part of respect for the Welcome to Country protocol carried out by Wurundjeri people including Aunty Diane Kerr, and artist and Woi Wurrung language expert Mandy Nicholson. Fa'amâlō atu to Taungwurrung artist Mick Harding and Tolai artist Lisa Hilli for your beautiful treasures gifted in this rite of passage for us into being permitted to travel and work on Wurundjeri biik country. The artists in this exhibition are variously invested in the possibilities and challenges of a return to biik country, of love, of healing from ongoing, intergenerational traumas, of poetry, of imagining victory over intersecting oppressions, of new and renewed ways of being and knowing in the world that tread lightly, that create space rather than squash it. Can we collectively develop and individually determine ways forward that don't disclose everything or provide a singular lens of possible futures?

I have lived, worked and played in the neighbourhoods of Fitzroy, Collingwood and Abbotsford that were built over Wurundjeri villages, agricultural lands and trade routes across their biik country. The area has been famous at different times over the last century for petty criminals and trade unionists, young migrant families, and Aboriginal Civil Rights activists – families and tireless community leaders who made spaces safe for gatherings and freedoms during and well after the Missions system ended. There have also been Queer Liberation activists – individuals seeking safety and community organisers during and after law reform into the present. In times of intense gentrification locally, and political, military and cultural conflicts internationally, learning to listen and to bring complicated, nuanced tala o le vavau/histories into our relationships to these places and to each other can teach us to be more. More honest, more curious, more aware, more possible.

Ma le agaga fa'afetai ia 'outou uma.

- 1 My name is Mandy Nicholson, my clan is the Wurundjeri-wilam, within the Wurundjeri-baluk clan, and my language is Woiwurrung. Thanks to my many grandfathers and grandmothers, thanks to my very large Country, my very large sky, my river and ocean. Thanks to my many ancestors and friends. Everyone thank our very large land, our very large sky, our river and our ocean.
- 2 Don't be shy to speak Anishinaabemowin when it's time.
- 3 Ryan Rice, "Defining Moment: What is Contemporary (NATIVE) Art?," in *Changing Hands: Art Without Reservation 3*, (Santa Fe: Museum of Contemporary Native Arts, August 2013), p.50
- 4 K'ua K'ua and Erub/Mer artist Destiny Deacon is credited with coining the term 'blak' by removing the C in the recurring racist attack, 'black c\_\_\_', with a 1991 work *Blak lik me* exhibited at Boomalli in Warrang Sydney.
- 5 Catalina Lozano, "No Man's Land?: Coloniality of Power and Indigenous Struggle in Latin America", in *Sakahân: International Indigenous Art*, eds. Greg Hill, Candice Hopkins, Christine Lalonde, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2013), p.113
- 6 There are things whose name cannot be mentioned, actions which precede language, names, meanings, desires which resist being recorded, instinctive, irrational, human moments. There are things that happen, that exist outside cultural constructions. There are things whose name must not be mentioned, practices enunciated by a language that rejects them, desires inscribed with an abominable meaning, conquered by an orthodox logic, moments colonised like the territory that comprises them, things turned into history and named against certain traditions; farce disguised as truth. There are situations that take place and are eradicated with moral violence, judged with fervent religious devotion. Those things called unnatural are the abominable sins. – Kogi-speaking man
- 7 In this territory the Conquest established the notion of history and its pretensions of objectivity. Its accounts and chronicles are based on imported categories; they are responsible for our knowledge of the body and the stigmatisation of sex. The anus owes to that moment its transformation into the organ of immorality, into the temple of male vulnerability, into the repository of hatred of transgression and into the territory of sodomy. – Spanish-speaking man
- 8 Their vice was our saintliness, their nightmare our dream, their monsters our idols, their perversions our beliefs, their history our calvary, our land their treasure. – Kogi-speaking man
- 9 Pablo Dávolos, "Movimientos indígenas en América Latina: el derecho a la palabra," in *Pueblos indígenas, estado y democracia* (Buenos Aires: Consejo Latinoamericano de Ciencias Sociales, 2005), p.30, translation appearing in Catalina Lozano's "No Man's Land?: Coloniality of Power and Indigenous Struggle in Latin America", in *Sakahân: International Indigenous Art*, eds. Greg Hill, Candice Hopkins, Christine Lalonde, (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2013), p.108
- 10 We are made of desire and unexplained pleasure. Light and air die out in the high parts of the jungle. The skin toughens up. The blood runs. – Kogi-speaking man
- 11 Andrew Berardini, "Carlos Motta: Andrew Berardini looks at political history and sexual repression in the work of the Colombian artist," in *Art Review online*, ([http://artreview.com/features/jan\\_feb\\_2015\\_feature\\_carlos\\_motta/](http://artreview.com/features/jan_feb_2015_feature_carlos_motta/), 2015)
- 12 Daniel Michael Satele, "Shigeyuki Kihara: Dark Angel of History," in *Tautai Newsletter*, (Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland: Tautai Contemporary Pacific Arts Trust, June 2013), p.3
- 13 Maia Nuku, "Standing on the edge of the abyss: Shigeyuki Kihara, catalyst for change," in *Broadsheet* 44:3, (Tarnthanyangga Adelaide: Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, 2015), p.10
- 14 Dan Taulapapa McMullin, "Fa'afafine Notes: On Tagaloa, Jesus, and Nafanua," in *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature*, eds. Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, Scott Lauria Morgensen, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011), p.93
- 15 Wura-Natasha Ogunji, "If I Don't Show It, Nobody Will...", in *Contemporary And: Platform for International Art from African Perspectives*, (Berlin: Contemporary And (C&), Issue 3: Centre What?, May 2015), p.21
- 16 Emma Do, "Photographing the space between cultures", *i-D online*, ([https://i-d.vice.com/en\\_au/article/photographing-the-space-between-cultures](https://i-d.vice.com/en_au/article/photographing-the-space-between-cultures), 2 June 2015)
- 17 Harry Garuba, "On Animism, Modernity/ Colonialism, and the African Order of Knowledge: Provisional Reflections," in *Personne et les Autres: Vincent Meessen*

and guests (*The Belgian Pavilion at the 56<sup>th</sup> International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia*), (Milan: Mousse Publishing and les presses du réel, 2015), p.39

- 18 Emma Do, *ibid.*
- 19 “Gay, straight, we’re beyond all of that, this is only because it’s you.” – In the film *Grande École* (2004) by Robert Salis, the desire that crosses previously acceptable boundaries is spoken by Mécir to Paul.
- 20 Frédéric Nauczyciel and Nacira Guénif-Souillamas, “Hard Skin (Baltimore): Perform the Territory” (DATAR Paris, [http://seeoutomorrow.free.fr/\\_seeoutomorrow/\\_pdf/\\_TEXTES/HARD%20SKIN\\_Nauczyciel\\_Guenif\\_Catalogue-extract-EN.pdf](http://seeoutomorrow.free.fr/_seeoutomorrow/_pdf/_TEXTES/HARD%20SKIN_Nauczyciel_Guenif_Catalogue-extract-EN.pdf), 2013), p.2
- 21 Frédéric Nauczyciel and Nacira Guénif-Souillamas, *ibid.*, p.1
- 22 Frédéric Nauczyciel and Nacira Guénif-Souillamas, *ibid.*, p.1
- 23 Frédéric Nauczyciel and Nacira Guénif-Souillamas, *ibid.*, p.2
- 24 Frédéric Nauczyciel and Nacira Guénif-Souillamas, *ibid.*, p.1
- 25 <http://modscape.com.au/blog/indigenous-art-facade-unveiled-in-fitzroy/>
- 26 Personal communication with co-curator Helen Hughes, 21 April 2016



Atong Atem  
Paanda 2015

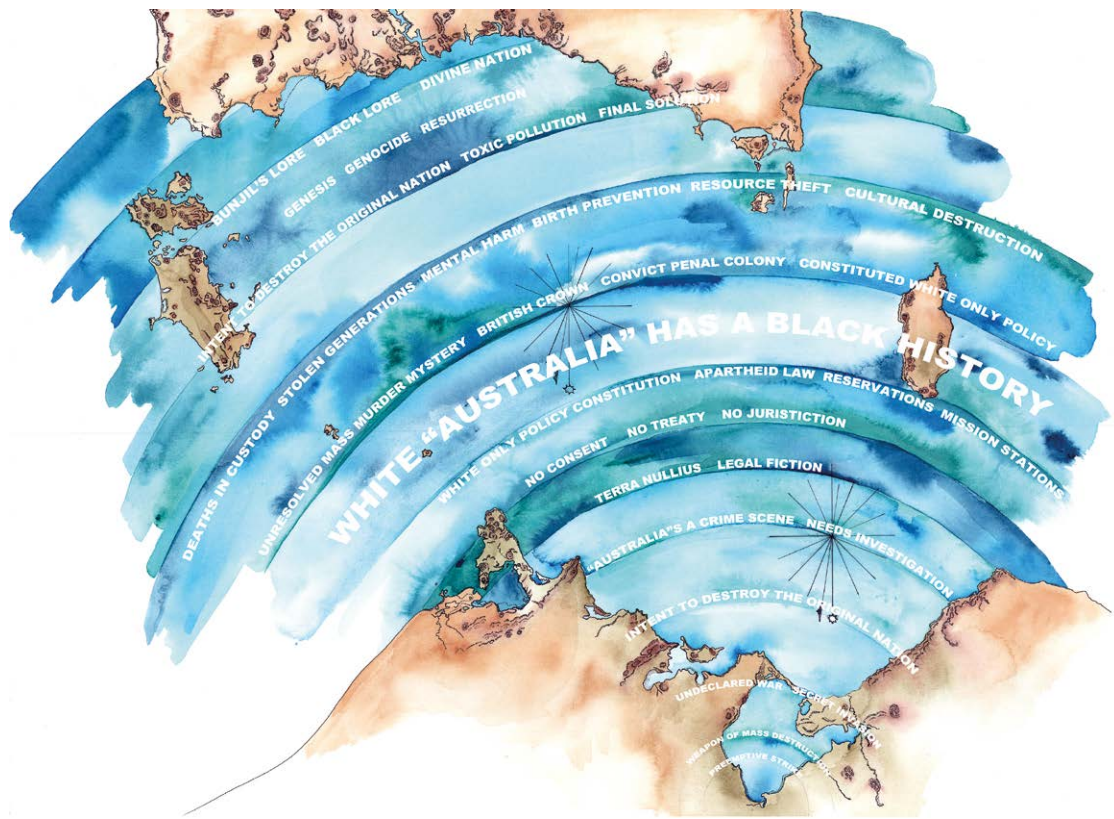


Atong Atem  
*Nyiir 2015*









Megan Cope and Robbie Thorpe  
*Makin' Waves* 2016





Dale Harding  
*It puts a rose in every cheek* 2012



Dale Harding  
*And all who enter 2010*



Dale Harding  
*Blakboy, Blakboy, the colour of your skin is your pride and joy 2012*





Yuki Kihara  
*Fale Samoa, Satitooa* 2013



Yuki Kihara  
*Plantation, Lalomanu 2013*



Yuki Kihara  
*After Cyclone Evan, Lelata 2013*



Yuki Kihara  
*Roman Catholic Church, Apia 2013*





Carlos Motta  
*Nefandus* 2013



Carlos Motta  
*La visión de los vencidos (The Defeated)* 2013





Frédéric Nauczyciel  
*A Baroque Ball [Shade]* 2014



Frédéric Nauczyciel  
*Red Shoes [Kendall Miyake Mugler] 2015*



Mandy Nicholson  
Barak 2006

## MEASINA WORKS

### Atong Atem

*Paanda*, 2015  
From the Studio series *Giclée*  
archival print on Canson Rag  
Photographique  
41 x 62cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
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### Nyiir, 2015

From the Studio series *Giclée*  
archival print on Canson Rag  
Photographique  
41 x 62cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
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### Akuot, 2015

From the Studio series *Giclée*  
archival print on Canson Rag  
Photographique  
41 x 62cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
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### Dit, 2015

From the Studio series *Giclée*  
archival print on Canson Rag  
Photographique  
41 x 62cm  
Courtesy of the artist  
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### Megan Cope and Robbie Thorpe

*Makin' Waves*, 2016  
Vinyl on glass, text  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artists and THIS  
IS NO FANTASY + dianne tanzer  
gallery  
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### Dale Harding

*It puts a rose in every cheek*, 2012  
From the *Colour By Number* series  
Cotton and metallic thread, cloth,  
timber frame  
27 x 35 x 3cm  
Collection of Josh Milani, Mianjin  
Brisbane  
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*And all who enter*, 2010  
From the *Colour By Number* series  
Wool and cotton thread, cloth,  
found timber frame  
32 x 40 x 3cm  
Collection of Liz Nowell,  
Tarnthanyangga Adelaide  
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*Blakboy, Blakboy, the colour of  
your skin is your pride and joy*,  
2012

From the *Colour By Number* series  
Cotton thread, cloth, found  
timber frame  
26 x 34 x 3cm  
Collection of Tony Albert, Warrang  
Sydney  
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### Yuki Kihara

*Fale Samoa, Satitoo (2013)*  
From the *Where do we come from?*  
*What are we? Where are we  
going?* series  
C-Print  
59.5 x 84cm

Courtesy of the artist and Milford  
Galleries, Ōtepoti Dunedin,  
Aotearoa New Zealand  
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*Roman Catholic Church, Apia*  
(2013)

From the *Where do we come from?*  
*What are we? Where are we  
going?* series  
C-Print  
59.5 x 84cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Milford  
Galleries, Ōtepoti Dunedin,  
Aotearoa New Zealand  
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*After Cyclone Evan, Lelata (2013)*  
From the *Where do we come from?*  
*What are we? Where are we  
going?* series  
C-Print  
59.5 x 84cm

Courtesy of the artist and Milford  
Galleries, Ōtepoti Dunedin  
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*Plantation, Lalomanu (2013)*  
From the *Where do we come from?*  
*What are we? Where are we going?*

series  
C-Print  
59.5 x 84cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Milford  
Galleries, Ōtepoti Dunedin  
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### Carlos Motta

*Nefandus*, 2013  
From the *Nefandus Trilogiy*  
13:04 minutes, HD video  
Courtesy of the artist and Galeria  
Filomena Soares, Lisbon, Instituto  
de Visión, Bogotá, and mor  
charpentier, Paris and Bogotá  
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*La visión de los vencidos (The  
Defeated)*, 2013

From the *Nefandus Trilogiy*  
6:46 minutes, HD video  
Courtesy of the artist and Galeria  
Filomena Soares, Lisbon, Instituto  
de Visión, Bogotá, and mor  
charpentier, Paris and Bogotá  
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### Frédéric Nauczyciel

*A Baroque Ball [Shade]*, 2014  
From the *House of HMU* series  
Shot at the Centre Pompidou in  
2013  
5:13 minutes, HD video  
In memoriam Alain B.  
Courtesy of the artist  
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*Red Shoes [Kendall Miyake  
Mugler]*, 2015

From the *House of HMU* series  
Shot at the Chapelle du Musée  
d'Art et d'Histoire de Saint-Denis  
in 2015  
4:17 minutes, HD video  
Courtesy of the artist  
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### Mandy Nicholson

*Barak*, 2006  
Acrylic on watercolour paper  
87 x 107cm  
Manningham Art Collection  
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## TAGATA PEOPLE

**Atong Atem** is a South Sudanese artist from Bor living in Narm Melbourne. Her work explores postcolonial practices in the diaspora, including blackness, desire, race, identity, and the politics of looking. Atem studied painting at Sydney College of the Arts in 2012 before continuing her studies in 2015 at RMIT University where she began exploring photography and new media. Her work has been featured in i-D, Okay Africa, and was recently exhibited at the Brisbane Powerhouse where she won the inaugural MELT Portrait Prize. Atem's work is currently showing in Nataal: *New African Photography* at Red Hook Labs, Brooklyn, in association with Frieze Art Fair and 1:54 Contemporary Art Fair.

**Megan Cope** is a Quandamooka artist working across painting, video, installation and site-specific commissions. Her work explores the intricate relationship between environment, geography and identity. Maps feature prominently in Cope's work; she draws on toponymy to probe myths and methodologies around colonisation. Cope's work has been exhibited in Australia and internationally including at Queensland Art Gallery|Gallery of Modern Art; Gold Coast City Art Gallery; MONA; ARC Biennial, Mianjin Brisbane; Cairns Regional Art Gallery; Koorie Heritage Trust, Narm Melbourne; City Gallery Wellington, Te Whanganui ā Tara Wellington; Para Site, Hong Kong; the Australian Embassy, Washington; Next Wave Festival 2014, Narm Melbourne; and Musée de la Civilisation, Québec City. In 2015, Cope won the Western Australian Indigenous Art Awards at the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Boorloo Perth, for her video work *The Blaktism*. Cope was commissioned to create major site-specific work for the exhibition *My Country, I still call Australia Home* curated by Bruce McLean at Queensland Art Gallery|Gallery of Modern Art in 2013; as well as for the Melbourne Museum and the Australian Catholic University, Melbourne in 2015. Cope is a member of Aboriginal art collective proppaNOW.

**Dale Harding** is a Bidjara, Ghungalu and Garingbal artist from Central Queensland. He has gained recognition for works that explore the untold histories of his communities. Recently Harding has been investigating the social and political realities experienced by members of his family who lived under government control in Queensland. Harding's first solo exhibition, *Colour by Number*, was curated by Tony Albert at Metro Arts. He has participated in a number of group exhibitions, including *string theory: Focus on Contemporary Australian Art*, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, *My Country, I Still Call Australia Home: Contemporary Art From Black Australia*, Queensland Art Gallery|Gallery of Modern Art, and *Outlaws*, Linden Centre for Contemporary Arts. Harding's work has also been seen in *GOMA Q: Contemporary Queensland Art* at the Queensland Art Gallery|Gallery of Modern Art and *White Collared* at the Institute of Modern Art, Mianjin Brisbane.

A native of Sāmoa, **Yuki Kihara** is an interdisciplinary artist whose work engages in a variety of social, political and cultural issues. Often referencing Moananuiākea / Pacific history, her work explores the varying relationships between gender, race, culture and politics. In 2008, the Metropolitan Museum in Mannahatta New York presented a solo exhibition of Kihara's work entitled 'Living Photographs' featuring highlights of her interdisciplinary practice. Kihara's works have been presented at the Asia Pacific Triennial, Auckland Triennial, Sakahān Quinquennial, Daegu Photo Biennial, and the upcoming Honolulu Biennial (2017). In 2015, Kihara co-directed a dance production entitled 'Them and Us' which premiered at Sophiensaele Theater, Berlin touring several venues across Germany & Switzerland. Kihara's works have been exhibited at the Shanghai Zendai Museum of Modern Art; Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan; Singapore Art Museum; Bozar Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels; Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin; Musée du quai Branly, Paris; Trondheim Kunstmuseum, Norway; Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City; de Young Fine Art Museum, San Francisco; Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre, Nouméa; Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, and Art Gallery of New South Wales, Warrang Sydney.

**Carlos Motta** is a multidisciplinary artist whose work draws on political history in an attempt to create counter narratives that recognise suppressed histories, communities, and identities. His work is known for its engagement with histories of queer culture and activism and for its insistence that the politics of sex and gender represent an opportunity to articulate definite positions against social and political injustice. Motta's work has been presented internationally at Tate Modern, London; The New Museum, The Guggenheim Museum and MoMA/PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Mannahatta New York; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia; Museo de Arte del Banco de la República, Bogotá; Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; Rõda Sten Konsthall, Gothenburg; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens; CCS Bard Hessel Museum of Art, Annandale-on-Hudson; San Francisco Art Institute; Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin; Witte de With, Rotterdam; PinchukArtCentre, Kiev; and numerous other spaces. Motta guest edited the e-flux journal April 2013 issue, "(im)practical (im) possibilities" on contemporary queer art and culture. He is on faculty at Parsons: The New School of Design, and The School of Visual Arts, Mannahatta New York.

**Frédéric Nauczycie** is a French artist who works between Paris and Baltimore. His principle mediums are photography, video, and performance. Inspired by dance and cinema, he explores the complexity of social life in rural and urban settings. He creates nuanced portraiture by firmly positioning protagonists in their contexts. His most recent project, *The Fire Flies*, explores the underground vogueing cultures of Baltimore and Paris. He was moved by the poetics of survival that he encountered - Black American and Black French gay, queer and trans artists who invent themselves through performance. Nauczyciel emphasises this expanded meaning of performance with his images vivantes, asserting that the very ability to project yourself into the world is what makes you real. He has exhibited internationally, including at the Centre Pompidou, Musée d'Art Contemporain du Val-de-Marne, Rencontres Internationales de Photographie in Arles, Musée de la Chasse in Paris, Palau de la Virreina in Barcelona, Julie

Meneret Contemporary in Mannahatta New York, Honfleur Gallery in Washington, and in film festivals (Tilde Trans and Gender Diverse Film Festival in Narrm Melbourne, Rencontres Internationales de Paris-Berlin, and Distrital in Mexico City). Recently, Nauczyciel was awarded a tailored 2-year residency to pursue his research in Seine-Saint-Denis, in the outer areas of Paris.

**Mandy Nicholson** is a Wurundjeri-willam artist of the Kulin Nation, whose territory includes Narrm Melbourne and the Birrarung/Yarra Valley. With an established practice in drawing, painting, carving, printmaking, animal hide, ceramics and collaborative artworks, Nicholson has worked in a variety of contexts for the last 20 years. Significant public commissions include *Common Ground* for the Melbourne Commonwealth Games Closing Ceremony; *Kirrip Wurrung Biik* for Wyndham City Council; and *In The Flow* Community Mural for North Yarra Community Health Service. Nicholson's work interprets customary motif repertoires of southeastern Australia, comprising fine symmetrical linework. The depictions revolve around nature, animals, stories of Wurundjeri people, and personal and family experiences. Nicholson studied visual art and Indigenous studies at Swinburne and RMIT Universities in the 1990s, and most recently obtained a BA (Hons) in Indigenous Archaeology and Geology. She is currently Project Officer - Woi Wurrung Language Program at the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages (VACL), Narrm Melbourne.

**Robbie Thorpe** is from the Krautungalung people of the Gunnai Nation, the traditional owners of Lake Tyers. He has been active in initiating Indigenous solutions and, in particular, has been a strong advocate for 'Pay the Rent', an Indigenous initiative which would provide an independent economic resource for Aboriginal peoples. Robbie has initiated a number of legal actions, where he has argued that crimes of genocide have been committed against Aboriginal peoples throughout the history of the colonisation of Australia.



## CURATOR

**Léuli Eshraghi** is a Sāmoan and Persian artist, curator and PhD candidate at Monash University Art Design and Architecture (MADA). His practice is centred on indigeneity, language, body sovereignty, and queer possibility. He has exhibited in Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand and the United States. Highlights include *The Bill: For Collective Unconscious* at Artspace NZ and *Future Archaeology* at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art. Eshraghi has undertaken the 2016 Indigenous Visual + Digital Arts Residency at the Banff Centre, and the 2015 International Artist Residency at the Tautai Trust. His curatorial projects focussing on Indigenous practices across the Moananui a Kiwa, Kiwa's Great Ocean include *Vai Niu Wai Niu Coconut Water* (2015-16) at Kabul-dja Caboolture Regional Art Gallery, *So Fukin Native* (2012) with co-curator Pauline Vetuna at Blak Dot Gallery, Narrm Melbourne, and *Wilin 10* (2012) with co-curator Tiriki Onus at No Vacancy Gallery, Narrm Melbourne.. He holds qualifications in Indigenous Arts Management and Cultural Studies and recently presented at the Indigenous Contemporary Art Summit at the Banff Centre, and the Pacific Arts Association's International Symposium at Tāmaki Paenga Hira Auckland Museum and Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki.

## FA'AMĀLŌ GRATITUDE

Fa'amālō atu to the artists, Atong Atem, Dale Harding, Yuki Kihara, Carlos Motta, Frédéric Nauczyciel, and Mandy Nicholson. Thank you also to Megan Cope and Uncle Robbie Thorpe for the inclusion of their installation, mapping sovereign Indigenous lands, after its premiere in *If People Powered Radio: 40 years of 3CR* at Gertrude Contemporary, curated by Helen Hughes and Spiros Panigirakis. I am indebted for their mentorship and cultural guidance to Aunty Sana Balai of the Hakō and Assistant Curator, Indigenous Art, National Gallery of Victoria, Aunty Diane Kerr, Elder of the Wurundjeri, and Soné Luna'i Eshraghi of the Sā Seumanutafa.

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## Ua numi le fau

Gertrude Contemporary, Narrm Melbourne  
6 May-18 June 2016

Atong Atem  
Megan Cope and Robbie Thorpe  
Dale Harding  
Yuki Kihara  
Carlos Motta  
Frédéric Nauczyciel  
Mandy Nicholson

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## GERTRUDE CONTEMPORARY

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