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An Ocean of Tears:
Decentreing institutional marginalisation of
Pacific arts agency

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Abstract

This exegesis explores three key projects that form part of my recent performative practice: *An Anthem of Hope*, *Screenshot* and the upcoming *Magdalena of Mangere* in which group dynamics—which bring people together in spaces of difficulty, resistance, embarrassment, game-playing or distance—are explored. These performance works commonly test institutional boundaries, cultural identities and relationships. The project explores ways in which audiences, including frequently the host gallery and the artist herself - Louise Tu'u - may be drawn in, or induced into social relationships that play out relations of humour and dis-ease. In attending to these relationships, the project aims to develop fluid methods of engagement or intervention in the politics of marginalised communities.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.



Louise Tu'u
24.10.2017

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Introduction: *An Ocean of Tears: Decentreing institutional marginalisation of Pacific arts agency*

Framework of margins

I attempt here to gather, stitch and unravel the creative writing of this project to say the unsayable. I will use four Samoan terms to denote this strategy: *fa'alavelave*, *fa'amatala*, *faitatala* and *fiapoto*.

As a Samoan, I understand these terms in the following: *fa'alavelave* literally means to entangle or as is more usually used to describe a major event such as a wedding, funeral, *sao'fa'i* (conferring of chiefly titles) that requires considerable financial contributions from relatives. For Maiava and King (2008, 91), that contribution is cattle.

Fa'a is a key prefix, meaning 'to make, to do, to appear as', or 'to represent or misrepresent'. Two common examples of its use include *fa'aSamoa*, whose broad definition encompasses the Samoan language and customs, and *fa'afafine*, meaning a person who is born biologically as a man but identifies as a woman.

I decentre this term separating it off from *lavelave*, which means 'to tangle'. I enact this through entangling, weaving and dovetailing accounts, detailed information, thoughts and other collateral in this exegesis.

Fa'amatala and *tatala* both mean 'to open'. In conjunction, I use *faitatala*, which means 'to gossip', as my Mum would say, negatively or positively, as a matter of urgency. For Fa'alogu Lilo (2012, 61), the term is used largely pejoratively by patients. The prefix *fai* also means 'to make or do'. Two common examples include *fai fa'alelei*, meaning 'to do a task properly' and *faifeau*, literally 'to do a chore' but informally used as a noun to denote a pastor or church minister.

Fa'amatala also means 'to explain', which many minority groups do when sharing precious information about their customs, language and so much more, as Ortner (2006, 11) points out in a critique of traditional approaches to anthropology.

Fiapoto is a quotidian term meaning 'smart Alec, big-headed, arrogant'. It also operates in Samoan as a verb, for example: 'Aua e te fiapoto mai!' ('Don't think you're smarter than me!').

The prefix *fia* is crucial and means 'to want to be or be like'. Anthropologist Jessica Hardin (2015, 132) records a patient using the term *fiapoto* when Hardin was trying to change his diet by removing certain fatty foods, to the horror to his family members.

Two common examples include *Fiapalagi*, meaning to want to be a Palagi (European) and *fia lelei* (overly generous, usually with an ulterior motive).

I present this performative exegesis in a way that I would 'wrought' a script for the stage or screen. Therefore, my presentation of this study will be incomplete, with sentences unfinished and words missing, ready to be explored off the page. This methodology also purposely withholds selected parts of my cultural findings and knowledge because I am safeguarding it.

Why? Because I believe this allows the reader to engage with the politics, and with the possibility of reading and misreading my texts, thereby continuing the game-playing as well as preventing a totalising or absolutist rendering of my practice. And in this way, the works and practitioners discussed operate in an ever-folding contingency with the reader and its purpose.

My own practice and Catherine Grant's (2011, 3) statement about artists' writings and the lack of 'stretching, questioning and refusal of academic conventions' provoke me into structuring this exegesis as a performative gesture.

I write this in two distinct voices. The first is that of the expert and MPhil candidate who is in this font. The second is my other voice as performer and playwright, which in this font. This will help differentiate the texts; it is as if they are 'talking' to each other. Occasionally, another voice, the one of reflection and *a'amu* will appear in this font. Another voice will make it's faitatala known in this font.

Collective cultures, such as those of the Pacific, privilege the social network as a primary currency and activator; the work is constituted through the formation of social networks and as such locates itself within a Pacific modality.

Performance is a primary processual tool employed to draw audiences into the dis-ease of the social relationships established by the work: the emphasis on dis-ease aims to develop a system to critique the ethics of communities.

A widely cited source of the need and quest for a communal Pacific identity, which references the common element of all peoples living in islands in the Pacific Ocean being oceans that we share, is the late Tongan scholar Epeli Hau'ofa's text, *The Ocean in Us*. Stating that, "the formation of an oceanic identity is really an aspect of our awaking to things that are already happening around us" (1998, 40), Hau'ofa argues the importance of naming ourselves as Oceanic and exercising personal sovereignty.

Earlier in the article, Hau'ofa decries the need for cultural unity. "Suggesting cultural homogeneity for our region...is neither possible nor desirable. Our diverse loyalties are much too strong to be erased by a regional identity" (1998, 33).

Here, I take up this statement and write to include the collective 'brown' community, existing as an ocean of tears. The reference to Hau'ofa's ocean here has symbolically changed to being composed of tears, supposedly coming from the cumulative disappointment, failure and miscommunication which results from some of the outcomes of my earlier projects in this exegesis.

The three projects I discuss are *An Anthem of Hope* (2013) at the Physics Room, *Screenshot* as part of *Carpet Burn* (2014) at Papakura Art Gallery and the upcoming *Magdalena of Mangere* (2017) at Mangere Arts Centre.

For documentation of the two finished shows, please refer to these websites¹.

Decentreing the margins

In the colonial periphery (as in elsewhere), we are often them as well. Colored skins, white masks, colored masks, white skins. Reversal strategies have reigned for some time. They accept the margins; so do we. For without the margin, there is no center, no heart. Thus, while we turn around and reclaim [the margins] as our exclusive territory, they happily approve, for the divisions between margin and center should be preserved, and as clearly demarcated as possible, if the two positions are to remain intact in their power relations.

Trinh T. Minh- ha

The subtitle of this project introduces a set of spatial relations as I attempt to locate and identify a margin in the realm of Pacific performance and explore tactics as to how to decenter the margin. Is this possible? How can one decenter that which is already on the margins? Why do this? What systems of stability already exist, if any, in the safety of the margins? Is Minh-ha's strategy in the above quote of 'demarcating the divisions' necessary? My work seeks to blur as evidenced in these three projects.

The title of this exegesis is a play on a common understanding that people from the Pacific are unified, because we are all from the same vast ocean that holds our islands together, as emphasised by Pacific writer Epeli Hau'ofa's text, *The Ocean in Us*. This view can be juxtaposed with Miwon Kwon's 'community of mythic unity', which I analyse in greater detail in Chapter 2 where I argue that the over-simplification of a common, unified identity is simultaneously boring, dangerous and lazy. I will put forward an alternative view, that being heterogeneous in work, discussion and curatorial content—and allowing a multiplicity of diverse opinions within the vast oceans of Pacific Island arts

practitioners—ensures we will survive and agree to disagree. How do we make a platform for this to happen?

¹ An Anthem of Hope: <http://www.physicsroom.org.nz/events/louise-tuu-an-anthem-of-hope>
Screenshot: <https://www.facebook.com/events/295020907316662/>. Papakura Art Gallery does not provide archives of previous shows:
<http://www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/en/newsevents/culture/arts/artscentretheatresgalleries/pages/papakuraartgallery.aspx>

Performing the margins

The importance for me in doing this is to address the 'performance of margin'. I use and tease out the definition of 'Poly' from the word Polynesian to mirror the multiplicity of centres and margins.

The Poly can be read with unease throughout the exegesis, within the three projects but also within the performance texts that I have written to inhabit a parallel margin. An ocean of tears will expose these complexities and facile perceptions of homogeneity in my work as a PI (Pacific Islander)

Politics of marginality

"The simple fact that the politics of performance are so often figured through the transgressive and the oppositional is understandable given the historical conservatism of so much theatre. But it is also obvious that a politics that celebrates marginality is a politics of marginality" (Alan Read, 2007, 19).

These politics that Read writes of present themselves in each of my projects. This is done through location and history, 'locals' turned into performers, the role of the spectator, event encounter and my practice as a director.

To imagine giving space to plurality and multiplicity is too amorphous for many organisations and institutions of power, as they would prove impossible to control and maintain control of.

This is the power of the politics inherent in my projects that I am trying to assert. Perhaps the folding in of the dominant and marginal powers is undesirable.

I believe a blurring would mean that these powers become difficult to detect.

The first chapter situates theatre games and the unsuccessful framework of a board meeting as a foundation for the work, *An Anthem of Hope*, performed at the Physics Room (PR) in October 2013. Here, I write about the variety of performative modes used to engage the staff and audience at the "site of struggle" (2002, 2), focusing on the "proper" relationship between art and the artist.

'Perpetually adjust'

Sanford Meisner, famed acting teacher who founded Neighborhood Playhouse in New York City and trained actors, directors and writers such as James Caan, Sydney Pollack and David Mamet, refined his eponymous 'Meisner Technique'.

As a young actor, I trained in this method under the tutelage of Auckland Meisner teacher, Michael Saccente, who himself trained with the late Meisner. Michael placed great importance on responding 'live' to the other actor in classes.

A key learning for me from this technique was the phrase to 'perpetually adjust'; which means to stay present and be open to responding to what is happening in the scene, to the other performer and to the audience.

Therefore, it is this tactic that I use to place myself, Louise Talamoni Tu'u, in the margins as a playwright, director and curator who is Samoan and who has continued to be active for the last sixteen years in the arts industries in Niu Sila/Aotearoa/New Zealand.

I self-identify as someone who is adept in deploying survival tactics such as applying for a variety of funding sources; making sure I am available to the public; contacting various media outlets; successfully navigating the politics in the arts industries as a Pacific practitioner; working on my own projects; and announcing their existence when they are out in the open.

Wroughting and game-playing

My adopted method of wroughting is adapted from a playwright term. A popular and common misunderstanding is that a playwright 'writes' a play. However, the term, as coined by Ben Jonson (2003, 788) pejoratively towards playwrights, is the same 'wright' as used for wheel and cartwright, as well as those who work with or wrought iron or steel.

Chapter 2 engages the local community of Papakura, Auckland as one of Kwon's 'community of mythic unity' (2002, 118). Here, I sought out the attention of this community for my work, *Screenshot* at the Papakura Art Gallery showing from March to May 2014. Part of the group show *Carpet Burn* curated by Rebecca Boswell and Anya Henis, *Screenshot* aspired to work with the local Member of Parliament and then Minister of Police, the Hon. Judith Collins, and fades at the eleventh hour, invoking council arts policy as a bargaining chip for the work to go ahead to play a part in "the presumption of a unity of identity between the artist and the community" (2002, 94).

The final chapter, Magdalena of Mangere, uses my lived knowledge of Pacific hierarchy and gender to explore the final show of this exegesis. I write primarily about my interests of locating a show which will be performed in the suburb named in the title and the wroughting of the female form and faith.

This is like the term fa'a as a form of making doing, to appear as, or to represent or misrepresent.

This will result in auditioning, rehearsing and presenting a live iteration of the work, *Magdalena of Mangere* at the Mangere Arts Centre in late March 2017.

An Anthem of Hope

Location, or the 'where', is traditionally the first consideration of all my projects. It provides the inspiration, as well as highlighting potential logistical challenges, and has the dubious honour of unearthing motives of ambition and rivalry, especially with other Pacific Island performers and curators.

In *One Place after Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*, Kwon (2002) writes that the term 'site-specific art initially took the site as an actual location, a tangible reality' (p. 11). My reaction to Kwon is that her conclusion is obvious. The 'site' may begin in one's imagination but ultimately when other people are involved – curators, technicians, performers and audience members – a live location is where all of these people will converge and materialise the project.

However, in this project, the expectations and quoted 'hope' for the show I played out a struggle for power, by presenting myself as an Auckland-based Pacific Island artist wanting to engage with the power dynamics and structure of this South Island based gallery's board of directors.

My assumption that the final confirmation and endorsement of my show would rest with them was incorrect. This was the beginning of the *fa'alavelave* of myself and the PR, we began entangling ourselves to each other, in a professional working relationship.

The October 2012 invitation from the PR to produce an exhibition or performance for the following year appeared to be auspicious. I had never made a show in the South Island or the 'Mainland' as Cantabrians know it.

My interest in exploring the 'land of the long *white* cloud' (Liu, 2015) and exploiting a component of the racial tensions that Christchurch is infamous for remained key for this then-future project.

Hierarchy and classification

An *Anthem of Hope* (AAOH) was, in 2013, the most recent manifestation of my desire to gain more board experience and to broaden my working and social networks as a professional theatre director. This sole project would test how exactly post-earthquake Christchurch regarded the Pacific Island performance art representation that my work, or more specifically that my body, would bring. In this way, both the PR and I would be exchanging the perception of experience and mutually benefiting from our association: the PR from racial openness and welcoming of performance/theatre, and me with career advancement and institutional credibility.

The PR board at the time was predominantly male, white and middle-class, with one female member. Two members did not reside in Christchurch at the time. The only member who attended the final performance was also and still is the only Māori member, Nathan Pohio. He was also integral to the show's preparation: he drove me around the city for a reconnaissance in April 2013. It would be completely facile to ascribe the board's indifference to attending the show as being racially motivated, rather than ascribing it to their status as a board of voluntary, unpaid trustees who may not have heard of me.

I can only imagine that when my upcoming and vaguely outlined show turned up as an agenda item for one of their meetings, the board had placed it in the murky, awkward terrain of live theatre, embedding itself in the gallery. Perhaps theatre or live performance that involved Pacific performers would inevitably collapse into the treacherous and uninteresting terrain of didactic work that explained elements of Pacific culture to gallery visitors. This would have an effect similar to explaining a joke – get it, Harri Siikala?²

I was trying to avoid this by placing emphasis on the **bodies of agency** already present in the PR: those on the governing board.

Rebecca Schneider recognises the visibility of the theatre director as an example of auteurism (2005, 32-3).³ Working with the mediums of the body, light, space and my text, which is inspired by my observations and interactions with the performers, I began to bend, mould and wrought a performance that is

² 'It is also true that Samoans greatly relish what Tim O'Meara has referred to as recreational lying, including pulling the leg of unsuspecting anthropologists, and ribald banter' (Siikala, 2014, 53).

³ What is 'auteurism' in a collective Pacific culture? This is a question I explore in Chapter 3: *Magdalena of Mangere*.

uniquely mine. It is this way of working that Schneider clearly outlines which is exactly how I work.

What I feel Schneider is highlighting here is the potential for broader definitions of 'auteurism' that extend to other disciplines of live performance such as theatre. It is also a method that I have found produces tacit questions of authorship, credit and legacy. How can this work be attributed only to me though? Is this an unnecessary worry on my part?

Centre of the 'margins'

The 'centre' stands for the mainstream, white and increasingly Pasifika middle-class curators, directors, programmers and art historians who use their social relationships with those on the 'margins' and invest in self-identified indigenous and ethnic minority practitioners.

In AAOH, the social relationship and friendship I had with [redacted] enabled me to be invited to perform at the PR. Here, I was openly complicit in dealing with one of these individuals and a group such as the PR staff. They retain their power and can claim to be inclusive of diversity by calling out or shoulder-tapping particular Pacific Island artists, writers or curators (to also fa'amatala = fiapoto) for inclusion in their galleries, websites or magazines.

A potential problem with this tactic is an uneasy reliance on the self-promotion of a small number of Pacific artists who are recommended by word of mouth by other white and Pasifika (With the latter, a bonus is if they can speak and write artspeak English well and have postgraduate credentials. Maybe they're even tenured for decades!) curators, arts managers, reviewers, former lecturers of these artists' cultural knowledge and the credibility of these people within the communities they claim to represent.

The ability of these artists to present themselves as current, coherent and a little bit controversial (but not too much), and the ease with which they can assimilate into an institution, website, etc., without too much fuss, is evident.

The burden on the Pacific Island artist to represent their work through their ethnicity and, in doing so, to abstractly represent the Pacific is enormous, and largely contingent on this social relationship.

How is this attempt to codify Pacific bodies possible?

In asking these questions, does this make me a botz?

Is this representation specific to being from the Pacific?

My practice as Director

In this project, I was keen to unearth and usurp the multiple definitions of what a director is and/or does. I found two definitions that I was keen to focus on and explore in my project. The first definition states: 'One who or that which directs, rules, or guides; a guide, a conductor; one that has authority over others; a superintendent; one that has the general management of a design or work' ('Director', 2017).

The second definition relates directly to those on the PR board: 'A member of a board appointed to direct or manage the affairs of a commercial corporation or company' ('Director', 2017). The research questions that are of interest from this project are: What do we direct? What makes a director? With what direction, if there is any? Where is the directive? What kind of director is each individual? How is my directing similar to theirs? How is it different?

My aspirations for *AAOH* were to use the gallery's high profile to showcase my work whilst simultaneously addressing the terrain of the general community and to coax the PR staff into engaging with the public. One desired outcome for this work was to embrace professionalism, and articulate that beyond the theatrical stage and gallery. This was assisted by my now lapsed membership as a Toastmaster.⁴ The meeting/performance at the PR allowed me the opportunity to test a level of timekeeping, formality and patience that I had become accustomed to with public speaking.

The framework I had set up of an extraordinary general meeting of the PR Board of Directors was to be the great spectacle of imagined fracas, the fa'alavelave in the sense of a great occasion such as a wedding. Instead, the backstage dramas were vivid and more theatrical than the single show itself.

AAOH became a bricolage of a performance. During the rehearsal week, the PR management had found two of the six people I had requested; rehearsal space was found three days before the show through my own theatre contacts; my cell phone fell out of my bag whilst cycling, only to be picked up by a stranger who answered my call but did not return my phone. Additionally, I travelled to Wellington two days before the show to accept an award and arrived back two hours later than expected in Christchurch.

In retrospect, the show itself proved to be anti-climactic and is best represented and remembered digitally.

⁴ Toastmasters is a highly visible worldwide public speaking organisation, which encourages people from all walks of life to meet together and practise speaking in front of others and giving feedback. My foray into this organisation was to improve my public speaking skills. It also helped me practise timekeeping, use the word of the day as a grammarian, give constructive feedback, and use appropriate Toastmaster salutations, according to roles rostered for the meeting at hand.

"Banality rendered meaningful"

In the PR's 2013 annual journal of exhibitions, *AAOH* and artist Brent Harris's show *Posteering* were positioned together in an essay titled 'Performing Etymologies'. Zoe Crook (2014) commented on my presentation as a 'director', defining the 'typical' director to 'be a tether to reality'. She then goes on to write about my use of 'performing bodies as a site for [my] work, positioning autonomy as the source for [my] "moment of hope".'

I find Crook's use of the word 'reality' intriguing. Perhaps she was referring to my role as the director, keeps things together, allowing the visible performers to perform as much as they are able to. What I find interesting is that a theatre director is not usually visible to the audience and never performs, so when I did visibly and audibly direct performers to repeat actions or speak up, ending in the direction of the entire audience present to dance and play games that I improvised, the ambience became charged like that of a teenage party. Perhaps the 'moment of hope' referred to the ephemeral nature of performance, a levity, and any hope of the performance possessing any gravitas.

Was I performing my 'entertainer' ethnicity for all to see, as in: all fobs are HILARIOUS!

The constraints of time, or rather the early arrival of the end of the performance, prompted me to improvise an antiphony with the audience, concluding with spontaneous applause from the participants as I instructed them how to move around the gallery. I have always wondered why I chose to direct the observers in this way. Perhaps by making people laugh I could coax them into liking me?

Almost four years on, *AAOH* has continued to occupy my memory as a show with many missives; many misfiring long after the applause and artist talk. I realised long after the show that I had misunderstood the term 'board of trustees' in relation to those who operate the PR. I thought it meant a board of directors.

For me, this seemed to lessen the agency of the project, as trustees give the impression of a board whose members have been invited to come to the proverbial table. They are supposedly benevolent figures, who may be avuncular and good-natured, whereas directors are understood to be leaders, who take action and guide through adversity.

Procedures

As posited in Elizabeth Grosz's (2001) essay 'Architecture from the Outside', the text that I propose as potential documentation here for AAOH 'is an intermingling of the old and new . . . scattering thoughts and images into new linkages . . . without necessarily destroying them' (p. 57).

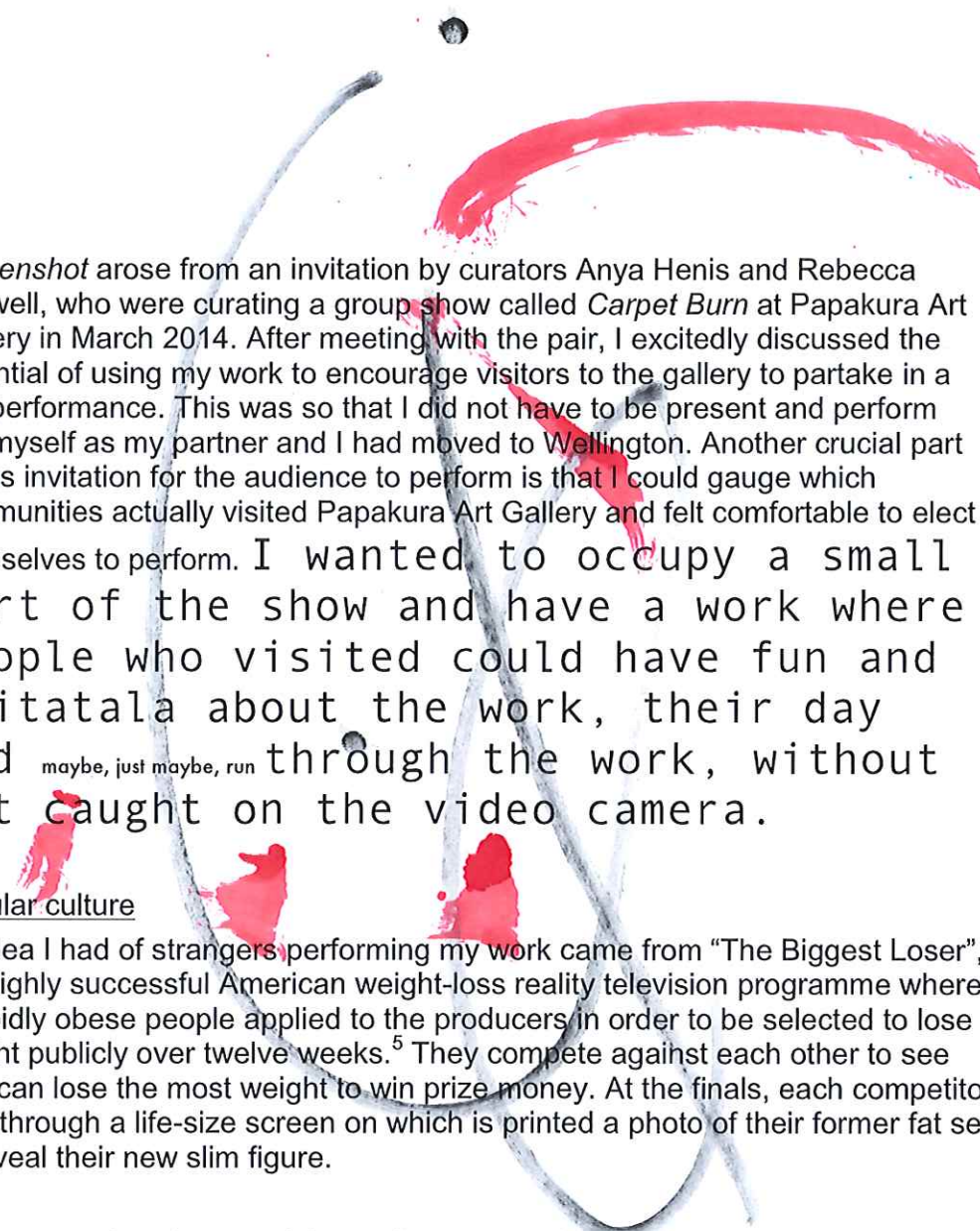
This provides an interesting challenge for both my performative and documentative presentation of the show, continually taking myself beyond the performance itself.

The PR's contributions to the documentation of the show are the photos taken by Daegan Wells; the press releases and webpage still present on the PR's website; and Crook's essay 'Performing Etymologies'.

This chapter weaves together parts of those official 'records' or traces, occasional dabblings of performance art theory from the last twenty or so years, and my varied recollections of the show. Can these texts 'behave' and become responsive to each other? What is the consequence of such a concoction? Performatives occur through procedure and process. In J. L. Austin's (1962, 5) terms, performatives differ from constatives, which report or describe an existing state of affairs.

The procedure of this chapter, as thoughts and images are scattered to make new linkages, is like wroughting as a playwright or performer. Such an interpretation works for me here because it does not offer a clear and concise product or conclusion.

This resonates with what Grosz writes, in that an intermingling and scattering is a process-driven methodology – the doing of an action – which exceeds attempts to con(clusively) state meaning.



Screenshot arose from an invitation by curators Anya Henis and Rebecca Boswell, who were curating a group show called *Carpet Burn* at Papakura Art Gallery in March 2014. After meeting with the pair, I excitedly discussed the potential of using my work to encourage visitors to the gallery to partake in a live performance. This was so that I did not have to be present and perform live myself as my partner and I had moved to Wellington. Another crucial part of this invitation for the audience to perform is that I could gauge which communities actually visited Papakura Art Gallery and felt comfortable to elect themselves to perform. I wanted to occupy a small part of the show and have a work where people who visited could have fun and faitatala about the work, their day and ^{maybe, just maybe, run} through the work, without get caught on the video camera.

Popular culture

An idea I had of strangers performing my work came from "The Biggest Loser", the highly successful American weight-loss reality television programme where morbidly obese people applied to the producers in order to be selected to lose weight publicly over twelve weeks.⁵ They compete against each other to see who can lose the most weight to win prize money. At the finals, each competitor runs through a life-size screen on which is printed a photo of their former fat self to reveal their new slim figure.

Chance was a key element of the work, as potential participants put themselves in a draw to participate in the three breakthroughs. The first breakthrough was pre-determined and actively sought to secure the elected representative of Papakura, local Member of Parliament and Minister of Justice, the Hon. Judith Collins to open the show. Being elected for the subsequent runnings could be understood to be like winning a prize.

⁵ <http://www.biggestloser.com/>

In the Papakura Museum, I discovered a display of a coat of arms from the borough's varied history. I pondered as to how I could use this for my work, referencing the suburb itself.

Fa'amatala alert! I contacted Kara Oosterman, the museum's historian who emailed me a photo of the City of Papakura coat of arms from 1975. I was then able to gain access to three particular coats of arms of the former borough, city, district council and now suburb of Auckland City. Papakura had a fascinating history--early being a strategic port to the Waikato for early settlers and its civic administration as an independent borough in 1938, it became a city in 1975, amalgamating as a District Council in 1989 as part of Manukau City Council. It has subsequently become amalgamated as one of the nine councils to become part of Auckland Council in 2010.

"Too contemporary art"

In his introduction to *Institutional critique: An anthology of artists' writings*, Alexander Alberro suggests:

The underlying belief of these interventions is that the injustices that presently characterize the institution of art can be altered and corrected if the institution's internal contradictions—the discrepancy between its ideal self-understanding and presentation and the current reality—are exposed for all to see. In other words, the work does not maintain that there is anything fundamentally wrong with the institution itself, but rather that the problems are located in the conventions that currently manage and configure it. (2009: 14)

To what extent did *Screenshot* expose "internal contradictions" in Papakura Art Gallery? A month before the show opened, the gallery manager phoned to ask me to clarify *Screenshot*. The manager wanted to know what *Screenshot* was about, why I planned to have people running through a screen, and why I wanted to have multiple runnings. Her main concern was that I would be unable to find anyone willing to perform the work. The manager referred several times to a previous performance project in the gallery by visual art students from Manukau Institute of Technology (MIT) which, in her opinion, had 'failed' because nobody had turned up to the encounter. My understanding of her position was that if nobody (no spectators, viewers, audience) turned up to encounter a work, it would be a 'failure,' and potential 'failures' were her job to discern and prevent.

The contradiction which Alberro refers to as 'ideal self- understanding' exposed itself as a personal over-identification by the gallery manager of 'failure'.

The 'current reality' was that she felt she needed to prevent this from happening again with my project.

I realised then that any art presented in Papakura Art Gallery needed to fit into a certain mould. My feeling was that she was overbearing in unnecessarily micro-managing the project. My training in theatre provides me with an attention to ways people interact with me, and I notice that from my interactions, I imagine people through 'casting' them in roles and 'script' them as performing in characteristic (and thus somewhat predictable) ways suggestive of a 'type'.

I cannot help but wonder if there would have been so much concern and management of my project if I were white. I felt the gallery manager used the organisation's hierarchy to manage my project by bringing in *her* manager.

She could be said to be acting like a *fiapoto*.

She then called me to discuss the need for repetitive runnings and the potential for more workers to be present, thereby increasing the cost to the gallery of my project. More than once, the nearby MIT visual arts students were mentioned and their 'compliance' was inferred.

What is interesting to note is that the majority of MIT students are Māori and Polynesian and tend to come from South Auckland. Samoan academic Jemaima Tiatia, in her 1988 MA thesis, 'Caught between cultures: A New Zealand-born Pacific Island perspective', wrote of the seemingly binary relationship between New Zealand-born Pacific Islanders and their clash of traditions and priorities with their Pacific Island-raised parents and elders. A key concept I respond to in Tiatia's thesis regarding the interaction with the gallery manager, is the notion of 'the silenced Western educated voice', the threat that this colonised and now authoritative voice, at least in the new country, from their own families, now presents to migrant parents and elders.

The exception is that this voice was now being positioned and appropriated by the gallery manager, a non-Samoan, to tacitly agree with her paternalistic concern.

A particularly telling expression the manager used to voice her concerns about my project was that it was 'too contemporary art.' What does that mean? That Papakura Art gallery visitors might not 'get' it? What was there to get? What did the 'too' imply? What was the excess that the manager was referring to?

Using hierarchy and policy of the governing body

The show was a prime opportunity to "celebrate our differences, and to explore new ideas"⁶ with a tactile and live experience to potentially open up new conversations about what is art and why we make it. Using the above statement, directly quoted to Auckland Council from their Auckland Plan, I outlined the intention of my work. My use of this statement was a tactic I employed as the then-manager of the gallery was not convinced about my

⁶ Ibid. Auckland Council email, author's private collection 2014.

desire to have multiple performances and had passed on her concerns to her manager. I then decided to use public art policy to ensure that my work would remain in the show, because of its diverse and innovative nature (Figure 4).



Meanwhile in Wellington, my partner and I attended an opening at City Gallery. It was there that we met a lawyer and his young son. He knew one of the artists and we didn't but both hovered around the food so we got chatting and started to fa'itatala.

Between the crackers and ever-decreasing range of dips, I spoke about my project and it transpired the lawyer actually knew Judith Collins from law school. He fa'amatala to me and remembered her as being ambitious and dangerous. He also agreed to help me write the consent forms and check the legality of what I was proposing (Figure 5) so that it would be accepted by the member and (fingers crossed), enable her to partake in my work.

The premiere

Somewhere near halfway between these two opposing positions is Louise Tu'u's performance where three solo runners from the local community (on different occasions) leap through stencilled paper banners (on a frame) depicting the original crest for the borough of Papakura. These actions seem equivocal, causing contradictory and vacillating interpretations. The symbolic rupturing of a heraldic symbol on a screen could be about the repudiation of confining cultural, historical or geographic stereotypes; or it could be an espousal of a particular identity, reinforcing the community bonding that sees itself as different from outside, a celebratory banner showcased through violent bodily interaction and stepping over a liberating threshold.

John Hurrell's review at the opening of *Screenshot* for EyeContact website was apt, given that the 'repudiation' of a 'confining cultural stereotype' came a few days earlier.

Claire Schoeller <Claire.Schoeller@parliament.govt.nz>
to me

3/18/14

↩

Dear Louise,
Thank you for your email received 17 March 2014. Unfortunately, the Hon Judith Collins is now unable to attend and participate in the 'Screenshot' exhibition opening on 22 March. She was willing to open the show by simply running through the screen as first invited but Judith is unable to take part in a performance. Cabinet rules also provide that Ministers are unable to sign releases for the use of their image and appearance to promote events in any way so she cannot sign the contract either.
We hope that the Exhibition will be a great success with the other performances that are due to occur on Saturday to support it.
Yours sincerely,
Claire Schoeller
Community and Media Officer for
Hon Judith Collins
Member of Parliament for Papakura
Tel 09 299 7426
Roselands Shopping Centre
98 Great South Road
PO Box 72646
Papakura 2244

We Should Practice <lalofa@weshouldpractice.com>
to Claire

3/18/14

↩

Dear Claire

Thank you for your email and the phone conversations this morning. I really appreciate the efforts you have made to get in contact with the powers that be to ask the Minister Collins to be involved.

I have to be honest and am disappointed that she will not be able to run through the screen but understand, given the intense publicity for the Minister in the last fortnight. As the elected representative for Papakura, I feel that she is the best person to run first. If there is any possibility that her office does change her mind, please feel free to let me know!

I then called many of the current Papakura local board councilors to see if they were able to partake. The last-minute refusal to participate from Judith Collins could not be dwelled on. Katrina Winn, board member and Arts portfolio holder agreed to run.

On the day, I made an impromptu direction to ask the first performer to read out the consent form before running through the screen.

With this action/ direction, I was interested in heightening the dramatic tension of people expecting a 'performance'.

When I asked Katrina how it felt to run through the paper, she said it felt weightless. This fascinated me as I reminisced at the way the paper screen billowed out like a sail moments before when it was intact in its entirety.

It possessed a beauty and calm, which was the antithesis of its manufacture. The crispness and sound of the paper moving with a person's presence before and after the piercing makes me shudder.

It felt too easy, fragile, pointless.

much

to the slit
ready

In this final chapter, I use my lived knowledge of Pacific hierarchy and gender to explore the final show of this exegesis. This project marks a clear departure from provoking public institutions and re-asserting my practice as a director.

I will write primarily about my interests in the Pacific female body and the representation of this onstage, as well as referencing the little-known Muslim population in Mangere.

Pasifika female playwrights=one paragraph wonder

As a Pasifika playwright and director, my identity is central to the creation of *Magdalena of Mangere*. Academic scholarship about Pasifika theatre from scholars such as David O'Donnell and Christopher B. Balme, features remarkably little in-depth analysis of female practitioners, especially in comparison to Pasifika male practitioners. Diana Looser's *Remaking Pacific pasts: History, memory, and identity in contemporary theater from Oceania*, focusses mainly on Pacific theatre historiography, as well as Māori and Hawaiian theatre.

In the chapter "The drama and theater of Oceania", Looser writes in detail about Makerita Urale's play, *Frangipani Perfume*, which premiered in Wellington in 1992. Then in one paragraph, six other Pasifika playwrights and performers are mentioned by name, including myself (2014, 62). David O'Donnell does the same thing in his chapter, "Shaping the future: Pacific playwrights in New Zealand," as the Pacific chapter for *Playmarket 40: 40 years of playwriting in New Zealand*, choosing to focus on Justine Sime-Barton. The following paragraph includes five women and one male, including myself, as being 'exciting' (2013, 40).

This grouping or clumping of Pacific female playwrights flattens difference and frustrates any complex discussion. Problematically, only Pacific work published by the Play Press and Playmarket, two of New Zealand's play publishers, are cited here by Looser and O'Donnell. Further there appears to be a geospatial privileging where work performed in Wellington, where these two publishers are based, is advantaged.

The detailed writing about these two practitioners, Makerita Urale and Justine Sime-Barton, who are both from Wellington via Samoa, also highlights practice that was from the 20th century.

Traces of current live Pacific plays that are not documented by scholarship or remain unpublished for a number of faitatala reasons (no funding, no space to think about publishing when making a work, it is not encouraged) are

contingent on reviews that are written quickly, usually in one day.⁷ The ephemerality of live performance, where performance can shift from moment to moment, can make this perilous for robust documentation.

This is one of the reasons I have written about my practice in this exegesis, so that I can be responsible for highlighting it in the spectrum of Pacific performance, whether I like it or not. The lavelave in knowing all of the other practitioners makes it harder to not feel as if we're competing.

My aim with *Magdalena* is to continue folding the process of *making* the work, part of the work, as well as the final performances/season and for this to be seen as credible. The site-specificity of the work wrestles with the location of the show at the Mangere Arts Centre. It's wroughting with a sketched synopsis of the work by myself as playwright and director and the impending audition, recall and rehearsal process of the show, largely populated with local Mangere residents and weaving their bodies, personal stories and experiences into the final show.

Recent Pacific and Māori theatre in Niu Sila

Thematically, Pacific and Māori theatre is usually preoccupied with identity, migration and the past, with occasional glimpses into dystopian futures. Three works that I have seen recently: The Conch's *The White Guitar*, Antonia Stehlin's *Brown: It's Complicated* and Rob Mokaraka's *Shot Bro: Confessions of a Depressed Bullet* have all shared their incredibly painful and lived experiences offstage as theatrical gold onstage.

⁷ This was my experience as a former theatre reviewer for *Theatre Review*, a prominent New Zealand theatre review website, founded by John Smythe at www.theatreview.org.nz. In my short time writing there, I was asked if I could review the "brown" shows that involved Māori and Pacific actors, production teams and content. This was both annoying and useful, as I felt pigeon holed but was also able to see fellow Pacific Island colleagues/rivals work for free. But it wasn't free, in that I had to write 'nicely' about it, even if I hated it.

The White Guitar and *Shot Bro* are male-driven works, which present family and state violence, depression, suicide, sexual abuse, racism, forgiveness and love.

o o o o o
o o o o o
Pain
Pain
mo
papalagie



Underachievement⁸ and domestic abuse⁹ are usual tropes of Pacific female theatrical representation on New Zealand stages. Lucy Lippard's definition of sense of place, being 'the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere, one antidote to a prevailing alienation' (7) is how I am using my upcoming work, *Magdalena of Mangere* to exploit this expectation.

My *fiapoto* is here at work by using my tactic of placing a religious and historically white female body in a low socio-economic¹⁰ suburb of South Auckland, I seek to give an unusual primacy to the largely visible Pacific and to a lesser extent, Muslim female body onstage.

I am also using my own sense of displacement as a Grey Lynn born and bred Samoan and trying to lavelave myself by actively encouraging the communities from Mangere with previous knowledge of figures such as Magdalena for Christians or Maryam for Muslims from a largely religious population¹¹ to participate in a story inspired by them. At the writing of this exegesis, I have started to conduct auditions for the work and have recently started advertising for participants via social media and physical flyers in local cafes, libraries and some houses in Mangere East.

Virtual Body

In the introduction of Marina Warner's historical exploration of the Virgin Mary *All Alone of her Sex*, the conundrum of the Virgin's status in the Catholic Church as being the ultimate woman and mother, whose hymen is miraculously never broken during birth, inspiring a movement called Mariology and is juxtaposed with the 'spiritual impurity and bodily decay' (1976, xxiii) that is neatly avoided by the Virgin, regarding her own body's burial and subsequent decomposition.



⁸ *Fresh off the Boat* by Oscar Kightley and Simon Small
<http://www.playmarket.org.nz/bookshop/products/fresh-boat>

⁹ *Mapaki* by Dianna Fuemana. <http://www.playmarket.org.nz/bookshop/products/mapaki>

¹⁰ Results from 2013 New Zealand census states the following: "For people aged 15 years and over, the median income (half earn more, and half earn less than this amount) in Mangere-Otahuhu Local Board Area is \$19,700. This compares with a median of \$28,500 for all of New Zealand." http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/profile-and-summary-reports/quickstats-about-a-place.aspx?request_value=13625&tabname=Income

¹¹ In 2013, the two most followed religions in Mangere are Christianity and Islam.
<http://www.mashblock.co.nz/area-unit/mangere-south>

The elevation of this woman's body as the mother of Jesus Christ is shared by the Islam faith. In my conversation with two teachers from the biggest Muslim school in New Zealand, Al-Madinah, which is based in Mangere, Maryam as she is known, has her own sura or chapter in the Qur'an. I asked a lot of questions about the burka.

They simultaneously faitatala and fa'amatala to me: No, we don't only wear that. Muslims are like Christians. There's a huge variety of them from Orthodox to those who believe they are but aren't.

We're like Catholics and Protestants, they both said. We're not all Isis, we're not all terrorists.

I also met with the religious elders of Al-Madinah to check if themes such as suicide, interfaith relationships and love stories would be allowed if I referenced their school in my work. The elderly gentleman faced the other way with the deputy principal, another man, politely declining each of my offers. Afterwards, one of the two teachers told me that the meeting was surreal and a performance in itself.

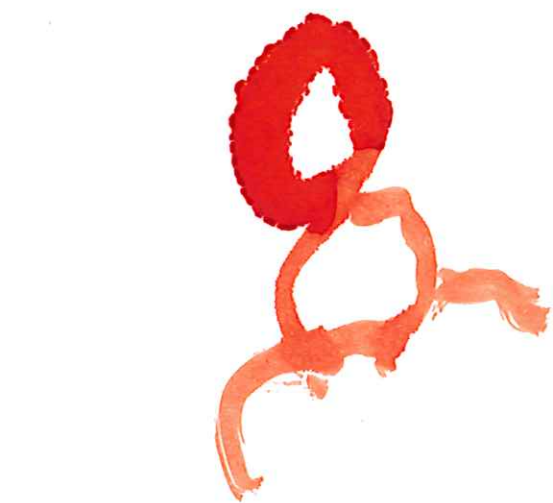
Event encounter

"Our typical ways of being in the world are challenged, our systems of knowledge disrupted. We are forced to thought" (2006, 1). O'Sullivan's event-encounter emphasises a comfortable mode of practising for me: taking a convention in a play such as the wroughting of a script and flipping it on its head, to allow room for improvisation. Hardly revolutionary, the highest compliment for me is that the work I've just made felt 'loose'. Why is this important? Because my practice seeks to locate institutional boundaries, cultural identities and relationships in order to expose, challenge and disrupt their natural tendencies to do what they have always done. I propose that this encounter is a potential one-off, a one-hit wonder, forcing both parties to perpetually adjust.

What I am interested in testing in the March show is that we seed the game-playing into the narrative early in the show. An example of this might be that one of the performers is in the queue waiting for tickets and casually strikes up multiple conversations with different people, disarming them with their charm and familiarity. ~~at some point during the show, this information could be teased out and used in a gentle way to gain support for an action or opinion. For one, the performer is known to be 'the performer' the tension is permanent and they are forever marked in this exchange.~~

Tagata maimoa/spectator

Philip Auslander categorises performance documentation as being in two camps: "documentary" and "theatrical". The documentary, for Auslander, represents a traditional relationship where it provides both a record, so that the performance can be reconstructed, and a proof that it happened. The second category of "theatrical" refers to cases where events have been 'staged' solely to be documented via film or photography. Auslander terms this as being 'performed photography' (2).



The article ends, with detailing Auslander's indifference to the status or relevance of recording the audience and their participation in both states of performance documentation. As Auslander writes: 'Scholars and critics use eyewitness accounts to ascertain the characteristics of the performance, not the audience's contribution to the event' (6).

From the perspective of this project, Auslander's point of view regarding the irrelevance of the audience is problematic. Furthermore, there is no word for 'spectator' in Samoan. If a spectator looks at something, there cannot be a spectator in the sense of a gathering; in the sense of the Vā as social relationality—the relation between you and me. This is relevant because the terms tagata and matamata are person and looking. This could be a bystander or audience spectator. In this respect, there is an entanglement that cannot be separated. In other words, the term 'spectator' suggests that one may be able to get outside a relationship, whereas a Samoan sense suggests that you cannot be seen to be 'just looking', you have to get involved.

Such a lavelave is the lifeblood of my shows, sometimes starring in it as they did for *An Anthem of Hope* and *Screenshot*.

Given that both shows operated without my direct physical presence, the audience includes people who at *An Anthem of Hope* may have walked past the actors, refilled their glasses, visited the toilet, had a ciggie on the rooftop (which was open at the time) or a ciggie outside Alice in Wonderland. Or for *Screenshot*, walked past the hangman frame, lingered with a participation form and decided not to fill it, touched the remaining newsprint with the Papakura borough image or visited both works online to see what (if anything), was worth reading in the media releases. There was ample time for faitatala.

'...it is the initial presence of an audience that makes an event a work of performance art; it is its framing as performance through performative act of documenting it as such' (7) What I take from Auslander's dismissal of this group in the quote above, whose participation is contingent on the notion of success

or the ability to 'get' my work, is a complete ignorance of the spectators. Their views in my theatre works, and patronage through buying tickets, enables me to pay for the venue post-performance, share the profits with actors and crew members and with any leftover income, invest in the next project.

Auteurism

Auteur implies a singular or 'solo' artist, who can be directly credited with the 'vision' of creating and implementing a work to fruition.

I am uncomfortable with this concept of being a solo artist, as I feel the pull of collective baggage that comes with acknowledging Pacific people e.g. my parents, God even though I'm an atheist and craving the visibility and applause of bringing people together to make a new work that did not exist before. I name everyone who is present in my work from audiences to haters as being part of my organisation, We Should Practice, so we are all implicit and responsible for the work.

As I have conducted initial auditions in Mangere, I think about the wroughting and writing of this show.

What persona will I be? How do different people take or listen to direction? How can I faitatata and lavelave our and my processes together to make a show?

Conclusion

The value of *fa'alavelave*, *fa'amatala*, *faitatala* and *fiapoto*, is contingent on the understanding of these terms in this exegesis, underpinned by their quotidian use in *fa'aSamoa*.

What has become apparent is the tension involved in testing those hierarchies in that are both official and invisible. This tension is ongoing and contingent on me as the director, including my choice of performers and the uncontrollable attendance, presence and behaviour of the spectators.

Using the hierarchies or governing bodies of The Physics Room, Papakura Art Gallery and Auckland Council to lavelave my practice with live performances often saw anti-climactic administrative offstage 'dramas of *what* and *who* my project would target. Perhaps my presence would encourage vital ethnic audiences to attend such as other Pasifika groups or fellow theatre practitioners.

I experienced the risk of exposing what and how my body could constitute community engagement in the first two shows, *An Anthem of Hope*, *Screenshot* and the auditions for "*Magdalena of Mangere*".

My profession as a director that is of Pacific heritage sees my work as vulnerable to *faitatala* and chance. As a result, *faitatala* makes me more likely to have to document work was made.

This politics of marginality for as low as possible.

In many ways, I appear with the clear legibility and complete tracing of each concept and theory in this exegesis.

Therefore, I have decided to further enact the notions of lavelave, *fai* *tatala* and *fia poto* in the final presentation of this exegesis, physicalising the permanent instability and volatility of the 'live' and improvised body by showing the continued editing in crossing out unnecessary lines, tearing up and

burning parts and handwriting performance notes.

This reflects the possible 'burning' of relationships, described in this exegesis and the ashes that remain as being symbolic of fragile remains and vulnerability of my actions, reputation and works.



Post conclusion

The final performance work, "Magdalena of Mangere" took place at the Mangere Arts Centre (MAC) in Auckland, New Zealand, playing for four consecutive nights from Wednesday 29th March- Saturday 1st April, 2017.

The season was highly successful for performance in Niu Sila-Aotearoa-New Zealand for a number of reasons. The pace of the work allowed the various scenes to grow on audiences and expand the notion of duration in the show. This was done with one scene which involved live pie-eating and milkshake drinking with minimal dialogue. This scene also explored cross-casting, as I played a young teenage son, who was reluctantly meeting with his reunited mother after time as a ward of the state, played by Andrew Malele.

Marginal women

A tactic to lavelave expectation and result was to reference a largely invisible community such as Muslim women in the poster, whose back is in centre of the frame, holding a silver sousaphone. What started as a potential reality of casting Muslim actors and cast light on this community more instead read to suggest that the titular character might be a woman of colour,¹² as opposed to the assumed European Magdalena. A problem with this was a balance of presence and avoidance of exploring their faith and multiplicity of being, resulting in no possible involvement from the Muslim women I knew.

The presence of Pacific women was an unexpected success. I had long admired violinist Peau Halapua and euphonium player Linna Filimoechala, two professional classical and Tongan musicians and asked them for coffee in January 2017. They did not know each other initially and were intrigued by my idea of women of colour onstage in an unframed performance and agreed to perform. My luck was that their faith in my process such as live rehearsals on Mangere Mountain which stunned many walkers, dog owners and runners enabled me to push them into being present onstage and visible to the audience at all times.

¹² I actually shot promotional videos of the photo shoot, improvising potential scenes on the spot with the actors at a earlier phase before rehearsal at the beginning of February 2017. When it became apparent that I could not source the actors I had in my head or secure a credible and satisfying storyline for Muslim actors, I decided the abandon the idea and focus on the two actors who I had cast: Andrew Malele and Mustaq Missouri.

Audience participation

The finale of slowly dropping a cotton veil onto every member of the audience by the two male actors was an image that had many drafts and refused to let go of. It was a struggle to find the right scene to work with the action and allow ambivalence seep into the audience about this direct violation of their personal space. Choosing Linda to perform a monologue, with a microphone taped to her cheek so that beyond the scripted text of loss and grief, every single awkward noise and utterance that she made could be heard crisply made that moment possible.

Ever vigilant of possible lawsuits should someone collapse or faint from the veil enveloping them, I contacted lawyer Tim Riley who gave pro bono advice to let people know beforehand that was not obvious. Hence the usher, asking if each audience member was claustrophobic and if so, to sit on the end of the aisle.

Community engagement I

An idea of questioning the Electoral Commission live the performance, especially as it was an election year literally became a reality when the Registrar of Electors, Georgia Tatana, for nine South Auckland electorates, including Mangere, agreed to be involved for each of the four shows. Tatana affirmed for me that she was keen to make sure the Commission could be more visible in a variety of platforms, especially new ones such as the theatre and possibly register potential voters.

Professional reviews

Critical reviews from the performance industry were key to marketing, legacy and an outside perspective of Magdalena of Mangere. Paul Sime-Barton, theatre reviewer from the New Zealand Herald wrote this about the work: "The show takes a boldly experimental approach to theatrical forms but maintains the down-to-earth realism of a personal documentary."¹³ Madeleine de Young, theatre reviewer from online arts website, Pantograph Punch wrote that, "Instead of the usual narrative of protest, justification and reform, Tu'u places these organisations (WINZ, CYFs and Housing New Zealand) within mundane day to day situations"¹⁴. To read these were useful, heartening and affirming of both my unorthodox processes and imagery.

¹³http://www.nzherald.co.nz/entertainment/news/article.cfm?c_id=1501119&objectid=11828533

¹⁴ <http://pantograph-punch.com/post/review-magdalena>

Community engagement II

The institutional critique of the venue, Mangere Arts Centre was subtle and referenced a culture of performance works, sited at the venue that made indirect or over claims to being part of the Pasifika performance canon.

A well-known and state-funded¹⁵ theatre organisation in New Zealand, Auckland Theatre Company (Check out who the people are beneath the Donate to ATC" photo! present "new" work, which usually involves "community" and /or preceded by "Māori and Pacific"¹⁶.

In recent years and due to Mangere Arts Centre's existence since 2010, this company has chosen this as a locus for such performances. The risk is relatively low, in that the venue is cheaper than Q and the ASB Waterfront Theatre and the show is taking place in a location where these "Māori and Pacific" communities are more likely to be.

Seasons that the company have performed as their ostensibly Pacific season from the last five years include: "*A Frigate Bird Sings*" by Dave Fane and Oscar Kightley in 2011, "*Sons*" by Victor Rodger in and "*My Own Darling*" by Grace Taylor. The first two of these three works are all remounts of previous 'safe' Pacific works that have either premiered in international arts festivals¹⁷ and/or garnered critically acclaim. Whether these communities are even interested or able to access these works is a different argument.

The tagata maimoa/"spectator" earlier outlined in this exegesis takes on a more involved spin within the Mangere Arts Centre. Here, a pattern of community works has been with the seasons of excellently performed adaptations of European fairytales yet still infantilizing works with largely Pacific bodies. These include two seasons of *Pollyhood in Mumuland* by Lauren Jackson in 2011 and 2014 (Red Riding Hood) and *The Lolly Witch of Mumuland* by Lauren Jackson and Lolo Fonua (Hansel and Gretel) in 2015, all being produced by Auckland Theatre Company.

¹⁵ <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/results-of-our-work/who-got-funded/funding-rounds/toi-totara-haemata-2016-arts-leadership-investment-programme>. Auckland Theatre Company also receives financial support and crucial partnerships such as Auckland University of Technology (AUT (particularly regarding the construction of the ASB Waterfront Theatre), ASB, Auckland Council and a mixture of fifteen other major supporters, media and supporting partners.

¹⁶ <https://www.atc.co.nz/creative-learning/artists/>. Check out "Open House".

¹⁷ "*A Frigate Bird sings*" premiered at the 1996 New Zealand International Arts Festival in Wellington and "*Sons*" won Best New Writer and Most Outstanding Play at the 1998 Chapman Tripp Awards in Wellington.

Subsequent shows include *Pigs on the Run* (Three Little Pigs) in 2016 and *Mirror, Mirror* (Snow White and the Seven Dwarves) the show, immediately after Magdalena of Mangere, continue this uncritical tradition of presenting Pacific performers in “a true South Auckland community collaboration”¹⁸.

My attempts at being an artist in Mangere included the choice of location and possible performers. I chose Mangere Arts Centre as a venue where I as an inner-city resident could access public transport with no single bus travelling from central Auckland. However, the economic status of the suburb and my own lack of car meant that I was struggling while the show is happening.

My car actually got broken into on opening afternoon – how ghetto.
Not even opening night.

Community engagement III

The humour and dis-ease in which I deployed myself as the artist included the launch of the public appeal for non-professional actors.

Here, my fa'amatala included an advertisement, (Figure 10) which was very verbose and specific. It requested that interested parties only contact me during business hours (Monday to Friday 9am-5pm) and be available for certain audition slots. This was a definite strategy and test to see whether keen participants could follow instructions and actually turn up. With three audition slots for the first series of auditions at Mangere East Community Centre, I had two participants turn up on time, with a third turning up 20 minutes late, despite sending me a “Google Invite” request to ensure I would turn up.

With the two remaining sessions at Mangere Arts Centre, I had two participants who were both ideal. Both of the live auditions I had both resided in Mangere. With a recall of three potential actors, I observed for commitment and resistance to my exercises of blowing up balloons and improvisation. The remaining two emailed me to remove themselves via email and Facebook as being available for both the rehearsals and performance season. This left me to cast one of the three.

Hence, the role was played on me.

My attempts to involve the communities present in Mangere failed. It was here I read online of a South Auckland Catholic show the previous Easter that had involved a charismatic lead, Andrew Malele. Following my hunches, I contacted the parish for Andrew's details. Two weeks later, Andrew auditioned and I cast him. The lavelave, fiapoto and social relationships were constantly being in flux and my ‘perpetual adjustment’, being tested with the making of the work up till closing night.

¹⁸ <https://www.eventfinda.co.nz/2017/mirror-mirror/auckland/mangere>. As Mangere Arts Centre still has no website of its own, it uses Eventfinda to publicise all of its events.

Magdalena of Māngere was a hard-won triumph bring people together in spaces of difficulty, resistance, embarrassment, game-playing and contest the decentring of margins within Māngere Arts Centre's previous Pacific performance history and my attempts to include local residents in an authentic yet consistently unstable manner. The methods of engagement and perpetual adjustment on my part and those of my cast and crew aimed to shift hierarchical spaces and enact or activate a more nuanced politics of marginalized communities, using questionable cultural tactics of fa'alavelave, fa'amatala, fiapoto and faitatala.

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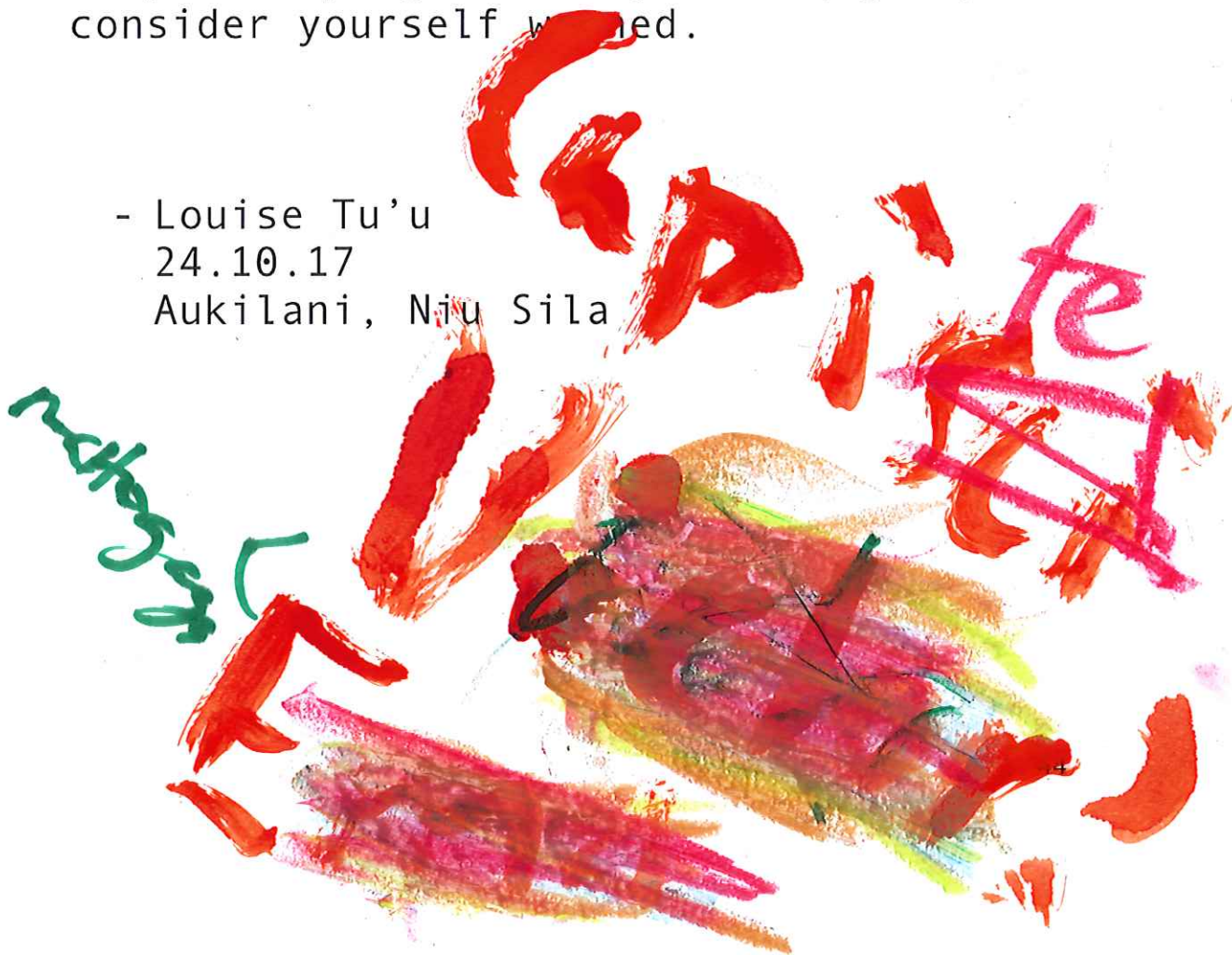
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No part of this exegesis may be reproduced or transmitted in any form, or any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage or retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the author, Louise Tu'u.

Please take the above seriously.

If you do plagiarise my work (again), consider yourself warned.

- Louise Tu'u
24.10.17
Aukilani, Niu Sila



APPENDIX



Figure 1: An Anthem of Hope performance

L-R: Audrey Baldwin (striped pants), Brendon Bennetts, Tom Vavasour and Eve Barlow

Credit: Daegan Wells



Figure 2: An Anthem of Hope performance

Eve Barlow (centre) actor and director Louise Tu'u in mustard top.

Credit: Daegan Wells

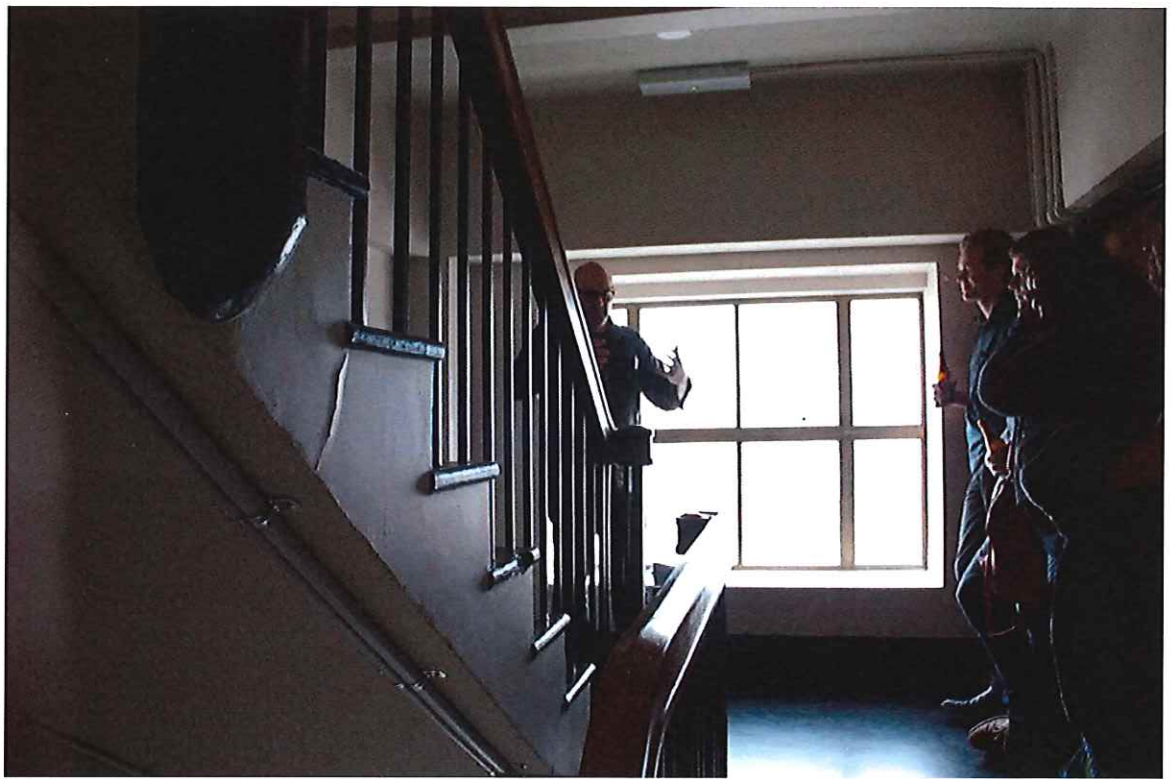


Figure 3: An Anthem of Hope performance

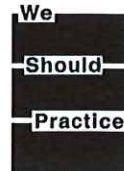
John Christoffels (centre) actor

Credit: Daegan Wells



Figure 4: My hair in a lavelave state (Another important usage in Samoan)
Image for my book, *Performing the Margins: An Anthem of Hope* (2017)
Credit: Louise Tu'u

Screenshot Release Form



Agreement between the
Performer..... (full
name) and the Artist, Louise Tu'u and We Should Practice

Agreement dated of 2014

- I,..... (full name) the Performer agree by taking part that I am a voluntary performer in the interactive work, *Screenshot*, on the understanding that my performance activates this artwork.
- I am ready, willing and able to perform in this work in the intended manner of breaking through the paper screen. As part of *Screenshot*, the artist, Louise Tu'u will retain all of the paper remnants of my performance for future shows.
- Whatever my state of health, I can perform in this work safely and happily.
- I am able to record myself, including signing this contract.
- I, my friends and aiga (family) can freely use the images of my performance in a positive manner that reflects the show, *Carpet Burn*, Papakura Art Gallery, *Screenshot* and the artist, Louise Tu'u and We Should Practice.
- I am aged 16 years or over and am not offended if I am asked for I.D by Papakura Art Gallery staff or the artist and her assistant to verify this.

© Louise Tu'u 2014

www.weshouldpractice.com

Figure 5: *Screenshot* Release form, signed by participants
Written by Louise Tu'u

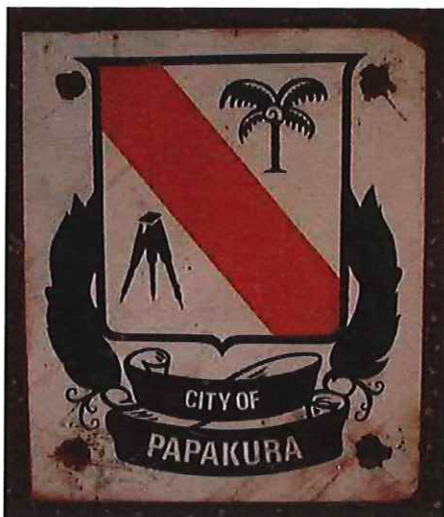


Figure 6: 'City of Papakura' crest,
1989 District Council
Courtesy of Kara Oosterman,
Papakura Museum



Figure 7: Screenshot
performance premiere at
Carpet Burn opening
Artist's mother,
Lafitaga Tu'u is on the
right
Credit: Louise Tu'u



Figure 8: *Screenshot* performance premiere
 Katrina Winn (yellow top) reads out the release form
 Credit: Louise Tu'u



Figure 9: *Screenshot* performance premiere post running
 Artist's mother, Lafitaga Tu'u is on the right
 Credit: Louise Tu'u



WANT TO BE IN A *PLAY* INSPIRED BY *YOU*?

Magdalena of Mangere is a new bold play,
written and directed by Louise Tu'u.
This work was highly commended and placed
2nd equal for the 2016 Auckland Mayoral
Writers Grant.

Opening in late March 2017 at Mangere Arts Centre, *Magdalena of Mangere*
is inspired by the Pacific and Muslim female body in Mangere.
We would LOVE you to be part of it and are holding individual auditions and
recalls in Mangere at the following venues:

**Tuesday 6th and Thursday 8th December 6-8.30pm
at Mangere East Community Centre, 372 Massey Rd, Mangere
East (Behind the library)**

**Tuesday 13th and Wednesday 14th December 10-12pm
at Mangere Arts Centre, Corner Bader Drive and Orly Avenue,
Mangere**

If you are successful, we will recall you for a group audition on **Thursday
15th December 6-8pm at Mangere East Community Centre.**

NOTE: You must make yourself available for this session in case you are
selected.

We are looking for performers who can sing, dance and are committed,
enthusiastic and reliable.

No acting experience necessary.

NB: We are only auditioning people who are aged 18 and over.

Characters are as follows:

6 Women and 4 men aged 18 and over and of any ethnicity

**To book an audition slot and for more info, please contact
Louise at talofa@weshouldpractice.com or call her between
weekdays 9am-5pm on 021 633 814**

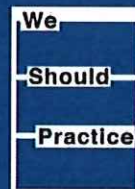


Figure 10: Promotional poster for *Magdalena of Mangere* auditions

Text: Louise Tu'u

Design: Owen McCarthy



Figure 11: Louise Tu'u hands out awards at Al-Madinah Senior Girls prize giving Thursday 8th December, 2016 at Al-Madinah School, Mangere
Credit: Jasmine Faiza

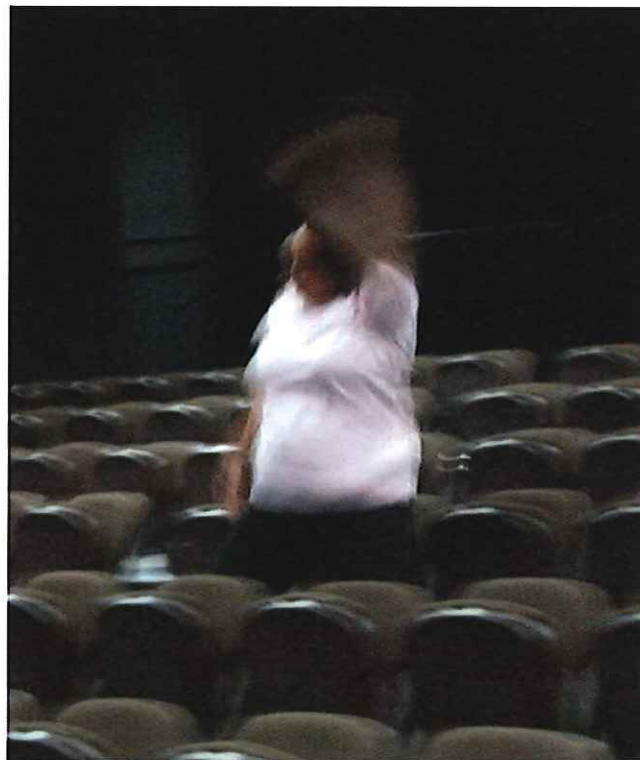


Figure 12: Auditionee for Magdalena of Mangere production Wednesday 14th December, 2016 Mangere Arts Centre
Credit: Louise Tu'u

We Should Practice presents

Magdalena of Māngere

by Louise Tu'u

Wednesday 29 March - Saturday 1 April 2017
8pm
Māngere Arts Centre - Ngā Tohu o Uenuku

Tickets \$15 - \$20
R16
Content may offend

Bookings: www.eventfinda.co.nz

www.weshouldpractice.com



māngere arts centre
ngā tohu o uenuku

Figure 13: Magdalena of Māngere promotional poster

Photo and poster: Louise
Tu'u



Figure 14: Author (Andrew Malele) and Jesus (Mustaq Missouri)
Photo credit: Andy Fang



Figure 15: Cast and crew at the end of dress rehearsal
L to R: Lisa Greenfield (Stage Manager), Peau Halapua, Owen McCarthy, Louise Tu'u,
Mustaq Missouri, Andrew Malele and Linda Filimochala
Photo credit: Andy Fang