

YOU ME THEM

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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, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements.

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A special mention of Colin Nairn and Cora-Allan Wickliffe, thank you for the aroha, bad jokes and for teaching me about the Universe.

The biggest thank you to my family, Mum, Dad, Holly and Charles.

Thank you for your unwavering faith and love and being the pillars in my journey. I love you.

ABSTRACT

My project explores perceptions of the Pacific body through identification, specifically that of ‘being other’ within the social climate of New Zealand and the Pacific. I create a series of emblematic artworks that attempt to respond to and critique the relevance of the *Understanding* pamphlets produced by the ‘Polynesian Advisory Committee’ of the *Vocational Training Council (N.Z)*. In relation to an emerging duality of ‘otherness’ within New Zealand’s Pacific community, the concept of failure through misrepresentation is explored from the perspective autobiographical performances. This project—by means of moving image, performance and installation—investigates an ongoing negotiation between cultures in what I have come to understand as the ‘double agent’.

OVERVIEW

Within this exegesis I will explore issues of other 'otherness' and misrepresentation through a series of chapters,—these include; the position of the pamphlets 'Understanding Pakeha, Understanding Polynesians – A guide to good intentions', a performance 'Umu' and concepts of 'double agent', the self-portrait, the nature of private performance in front of the camera lens, and, finally, what might be understood as 'Polynesian Performance'—a primary investigation. The project establishes a forum of investigation through the use of performance-based, moving image and installation artwork.

What do I call myself? When it comes to this question, I just thank God for the little box called 'other' on the census forms. – Mali-Ann Jane Cole, 2003¹

¹See Making Place – Growing up PI in New Zealand, 2003: 189



Look Away
Projection, X6 Chairs, headphones and mp3 players (audio)
Same Story Different Colour
St Paul Street Gallery Three
4th - 7th September
Fig.1

You made me this way

Lesson on how to be an Islander

I guess I never was an Islander when I was young. I was a fake, and to a certain extent I still am.

The closest to being an Islander in my household was watching Brotown in the lounge with my not-so Niuean Father, my loving Pakeha Mother and my sister who was equally as confused as me.

Watching it seemed to be enough to label ourselves at least half Islanders. It seemed okay to define ourselves through a fictional group of characters. And therefore that stereotypical idea that each character represented was true.

We would laugh until we'd cry and at times we were grossed out by what we saw. But everything depicted was foreign; my sister and myself never experienced any of it. Without knowing it, we weren't laughing at ourselves. Though we thought these characters represented us, we were actually laughing at 'them' - yes 'them' — the others that were represented on the screen. Not us. We're not like them.

We were only Islanders when convenient, and at times when inconvenient too.

This has only been something I've realised through my own looking, realising how much I've misunderstood and how much others have potentially misunderstood about me.

As I get older, I notice it more and more.

We're related, can't you tell?

I walked into a store with my Mother and the three children she cares for as an early childhood educator.

We walked around, found what we were looking for and headed towards the checkouts. As the attendant processed the sale, she asked, 'are they all yours?', referring to the three children.

Mum replied, 'no they're not, this one is though' and pointed to me. The look of confusion and the reply of 'Oh' was more than awkward, not just for me, but also for the attendant.

My Mother is white and so are the three children and then there's me. The brown one.

I felt inadequate to say the least.

Excuse me? Do you have the right person?

I was at the supermarket with my Mother and we noticed that my Grandfather's car was parked outside, as he was getting his own groceries. As we walked through the aisles, I saw my Grandfather paying for his items at the checkout, so I walked up, gave him a little cuddle and asked how he was. Within the split second of that happening, I looked around and a few of the girls that work at the checkouts looked completely perplexed and there was a moment of stillness as they stared at us. All I could think was that they must be thinking, 'what the hell are you doing talking to this elderly man', 'how do you know him', since he's white and I'm brown.

For some reason that I can't seem to explain, it makes me feel like I shouldn't be talking to him and that this isn't right; a young brown women shouldn't be speaking to a white elderly man.

We are Blood.

Is it their fault that I feel that way or mine?

This is not the first time.

Brown Benefits

One of the only things to do in the Mount is to go to the beach, soak up the rays. I would head to the beach with a group of friends to chill and waste the day away.

As we would find a spot to settle, the shine of pasty bodies started to emerge. I thought one of the best things about being an Islander was that I didn't have to tan in the sun for hours to be brown. It was all natural, unlike the majority of 'white' girls I grew up with.

Vanity has somehow found a useful reason to be brown.

Must be something to do with being from the tropics.

Oh yeah, she's white

I went to a new hairdresser that my Mother had recommended. It was a small saloon-styled shop and the staff was really friendly. I got talking to the hairdresser who was cutting my hair and she asked if I had been here before. I replied that I hadn't. I then said that my Mother recommended this salon and I said she had been there a few days earlier. When describing my Mother, I said that she was white.

The uproar of laughter that came not only from the hairdresser, but from other staff members too made me feel that I had said the wrong thing; was I wrong to saying that to describe my Mother since I am brown?

What's so funny about that?

Family Times

Sitting in the lounge watching the television with my family was a weekly past time we took part in and on occasion we would watch movies. As we sat there watching the box, anything could trigger it...my dad's 'comments' that were always repeated at my Mothers expense.

In no particular order 'bloody Palagis' and the banjo duel sound from the movie deliverance would be imitated.

As I think about it now, we all laughed and my Mother would laugh, but be a bit pissed off at the same time.

So at times in our household, it was funny to be able to joke about 'white people' and categorise them all this way:

We also equally made fun of 'Polynesian people' and their traits.

Being who I am, it feels like I have permission to do both, because I am both but does that make me racist?



Performance (Sound)
Performance as part of the 'More Than We Know' Performance symposium
Gus Fisher Gallery
6th March - 22nd March 2013
Performance Duration 30min
Fig.2

OTHER/OTHERNESS

The catalyst for this project became clear to me through my own position of being ‘half-caste’. I am both Niuean and Pakeha. Within this project I draw upon my personal experiences as a New Zealand born female. In this current generation, it isn’t uncommon to have ‘a foot in two cultures’(Stevenson, 2008: 18).

“As a stereotype, the Pacific is embedded in the discourse on colonisation, representation and gender. The Pacific and its traditions are seen as ‘other’, as exotic – a tourist experience to be had, a souvenir. The clichés of the happy Islander...” (2008: 18). This quote by Karen Stevenson starts to shape the area that has provided the conceptual platform for my project—that of being ‘other’, my experience of ‘otherness’ and how these experiences can be, and are often understood, within the Polynesian New Zealand Community. To understand the concept of ‘otherness’ is to understand the reality of migration and social factors of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand, the need to assert an identity and the issues associated with it (2008: 22). To have an identity is to be able to identify with an ‘other’.

Homi Bhabha articulates an idea of ‘beyond’ as a state of identity that is in constant motion; that is neither here nor there and which cannot be defined. Identity is a complex and ever evolving transit position of difference that is forged through factors of space and time. Within this restless movement of difference a sense of disorientation and disturbance continuously pushes and pulls, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion, hither and thither, resistance and claim (1994: 1). To have an identity is not a stationary state and it cannot be singularly pinpointed to any specific category within the cause and effect of time and space. Identity is nothing until it starts to move between difference — with reliance on signs and signification, can we start to resist and claim an identity.

Two arguments have continuously informed my research. One is Peggy Phelan's position on identity, and the other, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's locality of the body. Phelan² argues that:

Identity cannot...reside in the name you can say of the body you can see...Identity emerges in the failure of the body to express being fully and the failure of the signifier to convey meaning exactly. Identity is perceptible only through a relation to an other—which is to say, it is a form of both resisting and claiming the other, declaring the boundary where the self diverges from and merges with the other. In that declaration of identity and identification, there is always loss, the loss of not-being the other and yet remaining dependent on that other for self-seeing, self-being.
(1998: 164)

In the same way Bhabha conveys ideas around identity, Phelan also discusses issues around the ultimate failure that occurs through the event of identifying others and self. That failure emerges from the gap in-between 'not being the other' and 'the other'. A reliance on the other to identify self will always fail, as the other is reliant on 'the other' to give themselves over to be identified, but one cannot give themselves over fully to the other and therefore the other is doomed to assume a position and for that position to be of other.

This assumption takes place through what the body gives over to be identified. As Merleau-Ponty³ proposes:

Our body is not in space like things; it inhabits or haunts space. It applies itself to space like a hand to an instrument; and when we wish to move about we do not move the body as we move an object. We transport it without instruments as if by magic, since it is ours and because through it we have direct access to space. For us the body is much more than an instrument or a means; it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions. Even our most secret affective movements, those most deeply tied to the humoral infrastructure, help to shape our perception of things.
(2004: 27)

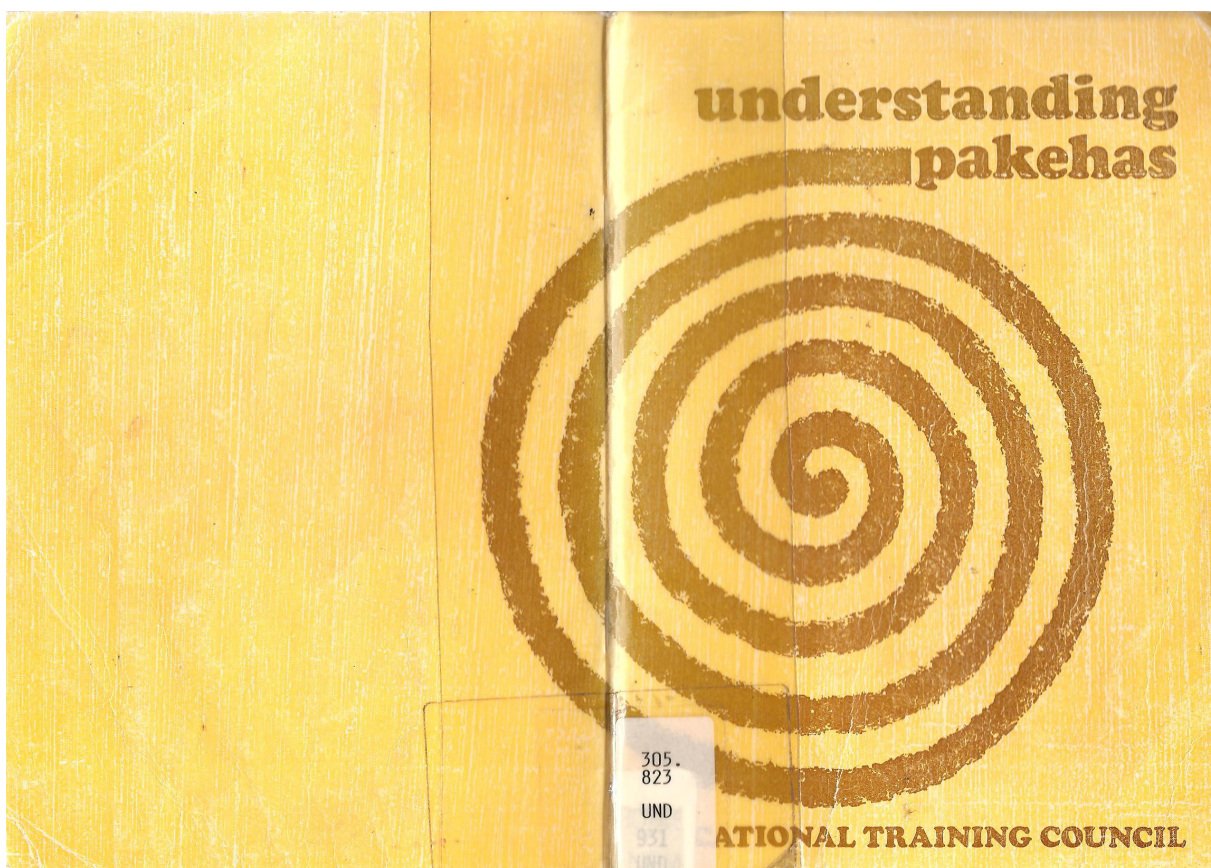
² See Amelia Jones, *Body art performing the subject*, 1998: 164

³ See Jane Blocker, *What the Body Cost: Desire, History and Performance*, 2004: 27

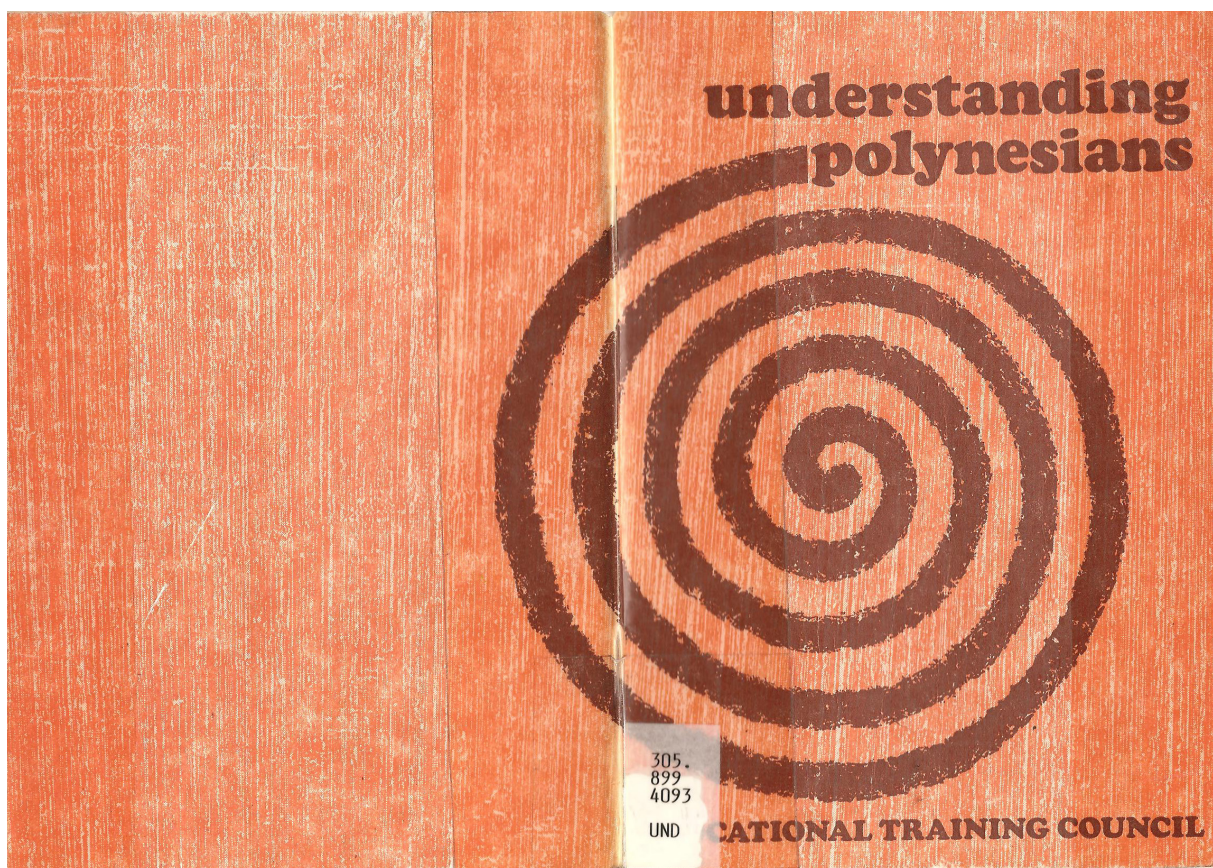
A central notion that Merleau-Ponty highlights is how the body is our expression in the world, “The body is perhaps the foremost of all metaphors for a society’s perception of itself...” (2000: 235). Phelan talks about the position of reliance on other for identification, in terms of the body being our sign and a visual form of our intentions—that is, one has limited information to create ‘the others’ identity because of individual perception and one’s automatic categorisation. This automatic categorisation is an inevitable consequence that comes from an adaptive and functional process that occurs more specifically in people’s primary association to categories such as age, gender and race (Lepore & Brown, 1997: 1). The attempt to move away from ‘class’ and ‘gender’—to conceptualise and identify—has resulted in an awareness of one’s position based on supplementary categories of race, gender, location, which are in a constant movement to identify in the modern world (Bhabha, 1994: 2). What is also needed is to fundamentally think beyond these supplementary categories and focus on moments and/or processes that are articulated through cultural difference where an ‘in between’ space transpires and provides the terrain for elaborating strategies of identity (1994: 2). It is within this ‘in between’ space, ‘gap’, or ‘divergence’ of emerging intersections, where identity overlaps and displaces domains of difference. This overlapping of difference is never complete in relation to the viewing of other; there is the hoped-for-identity through verification, categories and divergences, but the loss that occurs is what slips between the overlapping intersections, resulting in a failure to have a complete understanding of ‘the others’ identity.

This trajectory of the process of identification is the space where the composition of my artwork takes place. My own body slips between the ‘in between’ space and ‘divergence’. I place my body in the domain of the ‘neutral’ space in relation to art contexts of the lens/screen/performance and therefore become emblematic: a stand-in, a double agent, where the body references categories in order to become identifiable.

In what follows, a discussion of this notion of ‘failure’ will unfold in relation to the artwork created within this project and in relation to theorists and artists dealing with a similar arena of identification. An important aspect of this discussion is the failure that occurs through the assumption of stereotyped positions of Polynesians and Pakeha—therefore creating a representation that ensues to cause a misrepresentation. This complex notion of ‘misrepresentation’ is discussed as I critique the ‘Understanding’ pamphlets produced in the 1970s by the ‘Polynesian Advisory Committee’ (PAC) of the *Vocational Training Council*. These pamphlets have been important for the conceptualisation and production of artwork within my project, in that they identify stereotypes that occur through the categorising of traits from the varying cultures represented.



Understanding pakehas : a pamphlet to help Polynesian migrants understand the European New Zealander's way of life and work.
Vocational Training Council (N.Z.) Polynesian Advisory Committee 1975
Fig.3



Understanding Polynesians.
Vocational Training Council (N.Z.) Polynesian Advisory Committee 1974
Fig.4

UNDERSTANDING PAKEHAS, UNDERSTANDING POLYNESIANS

A GUIDE OF GOOD INTENTIONS

UNDERSTANDING PAKEHAS

Polynesians coming to live and work in New Zealand have to overcome many difficulties in adjusting to a new environment and a new way of life. One of the biggest challenges is in getting to know the ways of the Pakeha. Since Polynesian ways are strange to Pakehas too, many problems can arise through lack of understanding. The Polynesian Advisory Committee of the Vocational Training Council is seeking to improve relations between Polynesians and Pakehas, especially at work. It is publishing a series of pamphlets to help Pakehas gain a better understanding of Polynesians. It feels however, that it is just as important for Polynesians to understand Pakehas and to know how things work in a Pakeha society. This pamphlet aims to meet that need. In writing this pamphlet, it has been necessary to talk about Pakehas in general. This does not mean that all Pakehas behave in the same way. The Europeans in New Zealand came from many different countries – England, Ireland, America, Holland, and so on. There are differences between these groups. There are also differences between individuals within any one group, just as there are between individual Samoans, for example. Many Pakehas, like many Polynesians, are recent migrants to New Zealand. They may be different in some ways from those who have been here a long time. Many young Pakehas have opinions, which are different from those of their elders. They dress and behave in different ways too.

It would take a big book to examine all the ways in which Pakehas are different from Polynesians. This pamphlet will look at only a few of the things about Pakehas, which you may find hard to understand. The Polynesian Advisory Committee hopes that it will help you on the road to better relations with Pakehas.⁴ (Fig.3)

⁴ See Understanding Pakehas. Polynesian Advisory Committee of the Vocational Training Council New Zealand, 1975: 5

UNDERSTANDING POLYNESIANS

One of the more evident features of the changing face of New Zealand industry is the increasing numbers of Maori and Pacific Islanders employed in that sector. Race relations, therefore, will play a growing part in industrial relations. Employers are very much aware of this, and it is in response to their need that the Vocational Training Council is publishing this pamphlet the first of a series designed to assist employers who have significant numbers of Polynesians in their work force. Improved race relations require understanding and the acceptance of cultural differences. This Pamphlet seeks to point out and explain differences in attitude and behaviour, which arise from the cultural background of the various Polynesian groups in New Zealand, and between individuals within the groups. Many immigrants are drawn from the more adventurous and enterprising ranks of their societies and can adapt speedily to New Zealand society once the language barrier has been Overcome. The cultural patterns described in this pamphlet should not be taken as applying to all individuals indiscriminately. Awareness of cultural differences should lead to sensitivity and understanding, not to stereotyping based on blanket generalisations.⁵ (Fig.4)

Both of these introductions were printed in ‘Understanding Pakehas’ and ‘Understanding Polynesians’ pamphlets in 1974 and 1975 respectively, with the aim of creating more understanding and acceptance of both cultures. These pamphlets were created within one-sided and biased conditions. All editions of the pamphlets from ‘Understanding Pakehas’ to more specifically ‘Understanding Niueans’ and ‘Understanding Samoans’, etc. were all written by the (PAC) ‘Polynesian Advisory Committee’ of the *Vocational Training Council*, which was a New Zealand governed committee and had no direct Polynesian influence.

⁵ See Understanding Polynesians, Polynesian Advisory Committee of the Vocational Training Council New Zealand, 1974: 3

(PAC) wrote the pamphlets in good faith and with good intentions, as outlined in their statement:

“Awareness of cultural differences should lead to sensitivity and understanding, not to stereotyping based on blanket generalisations”. In producing these pamphlets, stereotypes occur through the categorising of traits from the varying cultures represented. The Committee sought to point out and explain differences in attitude and behaviour in order to generate a better understanding of different cultures. The need for more understanding came from the influx of Polynesian immigrants to combat the labour shortage during the 1960’s. By the mid-1970s there were some sixty thousand Polynesian immigrants living in New Zealand (Hill, 2010: 294). But this aim failed, as the PAC created the very stereotypes they were trying to avoid. It becomes evident that generalisations under Modernity’s terms create conditions of viewing—conditions that are not entirely of one’s own making (Teaiwa, 2005:15). The failure that occurs can be an automatic state—it is inevitable that once something is categorised the consequence creates stereotype; categories such as age, gender and race are initial first steps. While it could be argued that without this necessary categorisation, one cannot start to identify others (Lepore & Brown, 1997: 1), and that stereotyping can narrow one’s position down. As suggested by Phelan, in order to assume an identity we must rely on that other too, for self-seeing. Hence, to take a position one must identify with the ‘other’. Without this classification and categorisation of that ‘other’, we cannot determine who they are past the name we say. Through this classification there is loss, and ultimately failure.

Using the pamphlets as a catalyst, I have begun to pull apart the experience of reading these texts and created artworks in response. From the experience of reading these pamphlets—‘Understanding Polynesians’ and ‘Understanding Pakeha’—I begin to question the relevance of both pamphlets and to ask how they represent myself and the wider community of Polynesians and Pakeha within Aotearoa. Coco Fusco also considers if the identification of ‘other’ is still relevant; “My collaborator, Guillermo Gomez-Pena, and I were intrigued by this legacy of performing the identity of an ‘other’ for a ‘white’ audience,

sensing it's implications for us performance artist's dealing with cultural identity in the present. Had things changed?" (2000: 265). From this perspective, I locate myself as a 'generalised' Polynesian and in this way, throughout the project I respond to the pamphlets by questioning—is this 'other' me? What can be said about these statements? Is there some importance in these pamphlets? How can I project a position with the content of the pamphlets?

REACTION TO INSULTS

A very large percentage of the fights involve island Polynesians arise from aggressive reaction to insults of fancied insults. To a lesser extent this applies to Maori also. Few New Zealanders realise that when people have an imperfect understanding of a language they cannot detect the difference between the tone of voice used in light-hearted teasing and an offensive remark. Recognition of a tone of voice is a refinement of language that is only reached after people acquire a good knowledge of a language. Samoan and Niueans are probably the quickest to resent an insult, very often when no insult is intended. It is a good practice in dealing with Polynesians, particularly Pacific Islanders, not to use sarcasm or remarks which are which are meant to be funny but could be misinterpreted. Sarcasm is not a Polynesian habit and is in fact considered to be extremely rude. Even the term "coconut" or "Islander" to describe a Pacific Islander Polynesian is much more offensive than most people realise. Except when intoxicated, Island people in their dealings with each other are usually a great deal more courteous than New Zealanders. Some Polynesians, and particularly Niueans, are inclined to adopt a fatalistic attitude in the hands of authority and will often make little effort to defend themselves. They feel that there is nothing that they can do about it and will sometimes this is due to a misunderstanding and sometimes to fatalism.⁶ (Fig.5)

⁶ See Understanding Polynesians, Polynesian Advisory Committee of the Vocational Training Council New Zealand, 1974: 11



REACTION TO INSULTS 2013

Response Series #1

Moving Image

Response to Reaction to Insults, Section within Understanding Polynesians

Installation: Media Tablets

Duration 5min 2sec

Fig.5

I respond to these texts with perplexity. Others can place these texts upon me—and these texts give them authority to do so, because they are presented as non-fiction and authentic. My response informs the work by establishing what others have placed onto me/Polynesians/Pakehas in order to identify. Through that identification, blanket generalisations and stereotypes emerge. As I produce my artwork, I aim to establish a voice by placing myself within the work both as Polynesian and Pakeha and by creating work that shows my experience and non-experience of these stereotypes. But as I start to establish a voice, I begin to fail to give myself over completely and slip in and out of being pigeon-holed into being specifically Polynesian or Pakeha. Through this slippage to being specifically ‘named’ assumptions transpire. These assumptions produce misrepresentations that the pamphlets reinforce.

My response to this culminated in the moving image work, *Response Series #1*, where I draw the motif from the pamphlet covers on my face with a red soaked lipstick; a target appears and I become the target onto which these ‘traits’ are drawn upon. As the audience is viewing the work the misrepresentation becomes evident. The target is drawn upon my face; the viewer is challenged by my ‘gaze’ and consequently caught in the act of watching the ‘savage’ face, an exotic and potentially touristic view. In that instance of being challenged, the viewer only sees the savage face with a predetermined knowledge. This knowledge only allows a narrow predestined interpretation of what is exhibited; all that is presented is a savage face, nothing more. The audience is not expected to see anything more than what is shown. The misrepresentation occurs in the space of not being able to give one self over completely to be identified.

Response series #2: As I read through the ‘Understanding’ texts it began to feel familiar, in the sense that what had been written was not about me, but about a loved one. I have experienced ‘musu’ as a viewer and dealt with the consequences of the ‘musu’ state. I could not place the text upon myself, but I could onto a loved one.

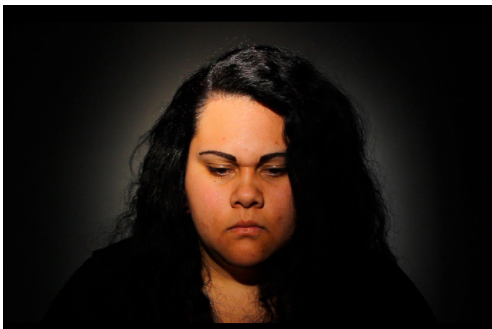
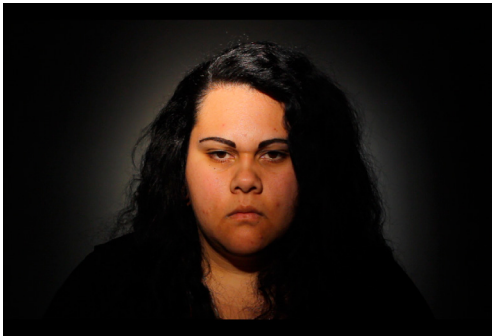
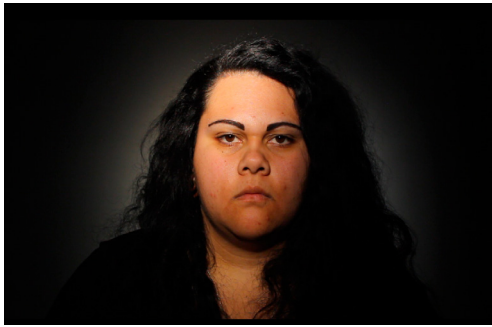
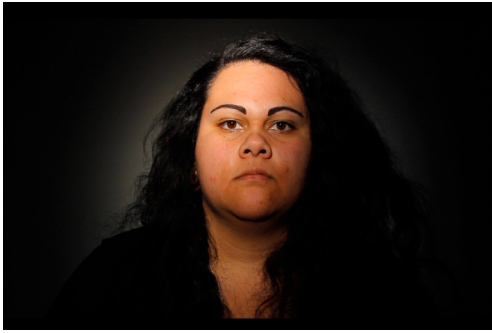
MUSU

There is a widespread phenomenon found amongst Polynesians, which is called “musu” in Samoa. People affected by “musu” become totally withdrawn. They have a “deadpan” look and will say nothing except an occasional monosyllable. It is impossible to get any reaction from a person in this state of mind. It is a baffling experience to deal with and people not used to it eventually tend to become infuriated which only makes things worse. “Musu” is almost always due to one of four causes:

- (a) pure fright in the presence of authorities or strangers;
- (b) a sense of shame;
- (c) sense of guilt;
- (d) a feeling of injustice.

“Musu” is common amongst Samoans and Niueans and relatively common amongst Cook Island Maori and New Zealand Maori. Niueans are particularly prone to it and this probably explains why they have a reputation in some circles for being surly or insolent, whereas in many cases the man is probably suffering from sheer fright or nervousness. When a person gets into this frame of mind, it is best to call in someone whom he trusts and can speak his language, to find out the cause of the problem. If no one suitable is readily at hand, Maori and Island Welfare Officers could be contacted. The worst possible thing to do is to shout or hector the person.⁷(Fig.6)

⁷ See Understanding Polynesians, Polynesian Advisory Committee of the Vocational Training Council New Zealand , 1974: 10



MUSU 2013
Response Series #2
Moving Image
Response to Musu, Section within Understanding Polynesians
Installation: Media Tablets
Duration 5min
Fig.6

This artwork is a moving image of myself with a ‘deadpan’ look, continuously staring ahead into space. As the moving image progresses, so does the weight of the stare—it becomes heavy and vacant.

As I moved onto the pamphlet, ‘Understanding Pakehas’, I became more aware of my position as being both Polynesian and Pakeha. The following text refers to the individualistic culture of Pakeha society—I find that I am more inclined to be ‘individualistic’ compared to Polynesian culture, especially around money. In my experience, Polynesians are more willing to give money to family and extended family members, even when it is not asked for. In contrast, I have found that Pakeha are more frugal and less likely to freely give without question. I personally fit into the description of Pakeha economic traits and it is obvious to me how uncomfortable I feel when I am confronted about it. I now realise I have conformed to this ideal within Pakeha society.

INDIVIDUALISTIC

Everything in western society emphasises the individual.

In religion, each person has to find his own salvation. In politics, each person is expected to make his views known. With Polynesians, it is the family, which gives a status and position. With Pakehas, each has to make his own way in the world and win status by what he succeeds in doing and owning. In many instances, therefore,

Pakehas put the individual before the group.⁸ (Fig.7)

⁸ See Understanding Pakehas, Polynesian Advisory Committee of the Vocational Training Council New Zealand, 1975: 8



INDIVIDUALISTIC 2013
Response Series #3
Moving Image
Response to Individualistic, Section within Understanding Pakeha
Installation: Media Tablets
Duration 5min
Fig.7

Response Series #3: I am applying a light-toned foundation make-up. It is shades lighter than my dark brown skin and as I apply it to my face, I start to blend the foundation and ultimately ‘blend in’ to Pakeha society. I begin to look like ‘them’ and conform to this individualistic attitude.

Response Series #4: With this next article I had conflicting issues; one was a humorous reaction to the content and the other was one of disbelief, in the sense that what is stated is something I myself have not experienced.

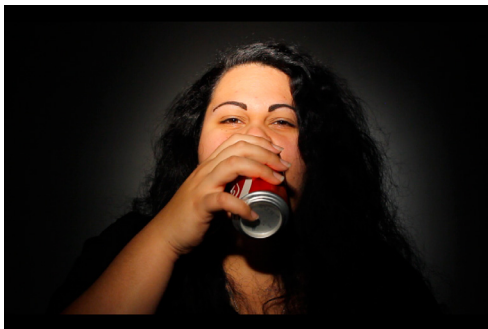
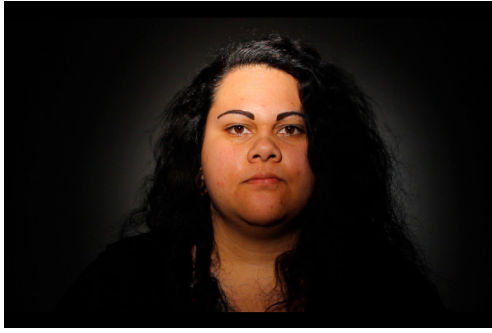
SOCIAL DRINKS

When Pakehas get together with friends for a chat, they like to have a few drinks. This is because many Pakehas find it hard to relax and a little alcohol helps them to loosen up. So they drink in order to be sociable, not to get drunk. On such occasions, to avoid drinking too much, it is a good idea to drink slowly, so that your glass does not get filled too many times too quickly.

Often, however, Pakehas get drunk in pubs and at parties. Although they may not intend to get drunk, this happens because so much drink is available in these places. If you’re not used to alcohol, it is better not to follow their example, as you may do something you would not normally do or approve of.⁹ (Fig.8)

This moving image work plays on this notion of drinking alcohol in a social situation in ways that the article infers, by pulling myself out of a social context and drinking alone.

⁹ See Understanding Pakehas, Polynesian Advisory Committee of the Vocational Training Council New Zealand, 1975: 11



SOCIAL DRINKS 2013

Response Series #4

Moving Image

Response to Social drinks, Section within Understanding Pakeha

Installation: Media Tablets

Duration 5min

Fig.8



COLONIAL POSTCARD

Image Postcard

The Umu performance was in response to this postcard

Exhibition Return to Sender

Papakura Art Gallery

Fig.9

UMU

My work 'Umu' (fig.10) was part of the exhibition Return to Sender curated by Cora-Allan Wickliffe. The main criterion of the exhibition was to respond to a series of touristic postcards of the Pacific that stereotypically represented Polynesian people. As Karen Stevenson argues, the Pacific is embedded with clichés and stereotypes of the exotic and touristic experience. Polynesians are observed through these postcards as 'the Happy Islander' (2008: 18). My performance critiques this notion of the 'happy Islander' in response to a specific postcard. The postcard is of tourists being treated to a feast prepared by Polynesians (fig.9). The artwork operates within the realm of the communal experience of feasting. In my experience, food is a main element in the celebration of birthdays, weddings and so forth within the Polynesian community. I took the 'stereotypic' idea of the individualistic mode of the Pakeha (in which individuals look out for themselves) by stripping away that element of community relevant to the umu. In the performance, I lay an umu for one outside the gallery on the grass verge and then ate my 'single serve' of food from the umu inside the gallery space. This single serve was a deliberate contradiction to the traditions of the Umu, which as a prolific way of cooking food amongst Pacific communities, is always produced on a large scale and always to serve many. Furthermore, as the performer, I moved from outside to inside the gallery where I ate the food in silence thus ignoring the present audience and representing the idea of failure. The umu, as a signifying event, fails because it was not inclusive of others whereas the event of the umu would usually involve many. An underlying aspect of the performance is that, as a Polynesian, I am expected to represent those traditions. As it happens, I (unfortunately) had no prior knowledge on how to prepare and cook an umu and so in collaboration with the Curator I was given instructions by the Curator's Grandmother on how to prepare and cook the umu. As the Curator asked for the written instructions it became clear that this had an impact on the Curator's Grandmother. She began to question and resist the idea of my umu, as she was told by her Granddaughter that it was only for a single serve of food. In her eyes, this defeated the purpose of what an umu represented to her.

I had no connection personally to the activity of an umu, so in that sense, I failed as a Polynesian because I do not fit this representation of the tradition. Just as my responses to the ‘Understanding’ pamphlets create failure, I am supposed to represent and be represented by the PAC Pamphlets. I disagree with the (mis) representations that both the Polynesian and Pakeha versions reveal; by creating a forum and reclaiming what is presented within my artwork there is always the potential that what I present will fail to be seen. Vilsoni Tausie argues that Pacific societies must be confident and have faith in their own cultures in order to progress forward. Only then, through selection and modification can improvements fabricate a new Pacific society—one that is relevant and suitable to present experience (2005: 15). Creating this performance of the umu, a critique of the notion of tradition appears through the modification of the ritual and therefore the experience. The performance puts into question the role that the umu takes by the stripping away of community. The Curators Grandmother was adamant that this is something not to be tampered with—this dilemma could possibly undermine the statement that Tausie argues. This performance is similar to when my family and I watch Brotown, without a full understanding and feeling like a failure at being a true Islander. As Melanie Anae¹⁰ expresses

I am – a Samoan, not a Samoan...

To my ‘agia in Samoa I am a Palagi

I am – a New Zealander... but not a New Zealander

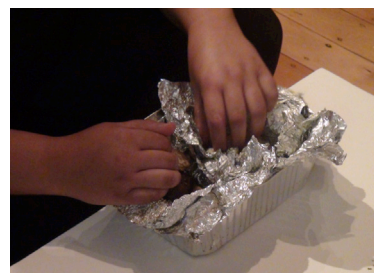
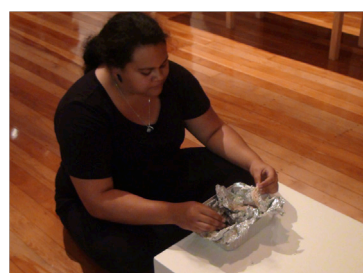
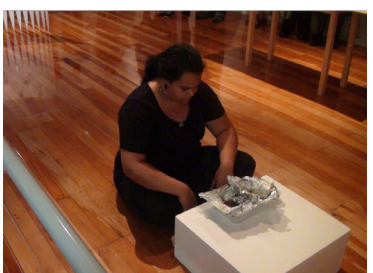
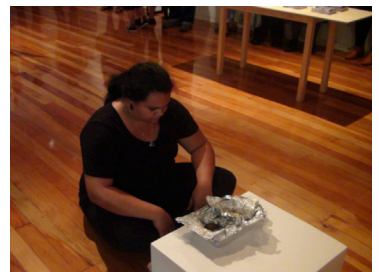
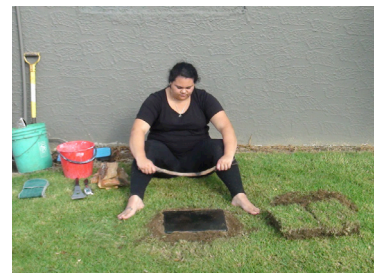
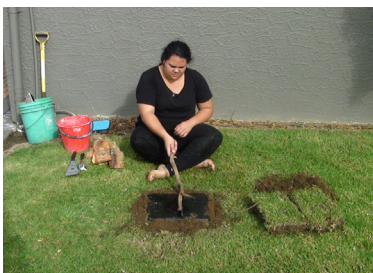
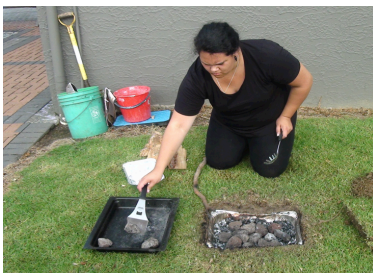
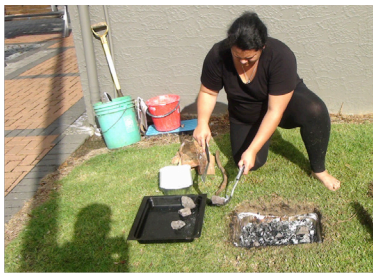
To New Zealanders I am a ‘bloody coconut’ at worst, a ‘Pacific Islander’ at best

I am – to my Samoan parents, their child

¹⁰ See Making Our Place – Growing Up PI in New Zealand, 2003: 89

Anae also expresses a denial of one identity of the other, not by her own account but by others. I respond to the idea of that denial and of what I see on the screen of Brotown by stating ‘we’re not like them’.

Therefore I become a double agent; I am a stand-in Polynesian because of the way I look in the Umu performance. As stated previously, I am not not a Polynesian—I have not grown up with Polynesian traditions and therefore a lie develops from the assumption that I can be seen as Polynesian, but not completely be one. The next section deals with this concept of the ‘double agent’ in order to comprehend how misrepresentation is the product of inevitable classification by ‘other’ to identify.



UMU

Preparing and Cooking a Single Serve Umu

Response to colonial postcard supplied by Curator Cora-Allan Wickliffe

Performance

Papakura Art Gallery

2013

Duration Approx 3hours

Fig.10

DOUBLE AGENT

As my project considers the presence of the Pacific body within the New Zealand landscape, my own body being a part of this discourse is a fundamental influence on the project. My body, as a Pacific body, is often stereotyped as a 'Happy Islander' and therefore as an artist I have used my body as a material. The body has also been a focus for artists Hannah Wilke and Adrian Piper and it underpins issues that relate to this project.

Willoughby Sharp¹¹ advocates that the body used in body art is not as important as the body in general. A critique of Sharp's comment and his disregard of the personal status of the body in relation to a general body is necessary for my project. As previously discussed in relation to the 'Umu' performance, the position of my body within the artwork is significant as I act as a representation of the 'Polynesian' body—I look Polynesian and therefore I become a double agent. As a means to comprehend the initial understandings of the double agent, I consider Nelly Richards statement, "The body is the stage on which this division primarily leaves it's mark. It is the meeting place of the individual (or one biography and unconscious) and the collective (or programming the roles of identity according to the norms of social discipline)" (2000: 244). That is what is needed to convey issues of 'other'. The body is general but is it also white and masculine (2004: 25)¹¹ so anything other than that is considered as 'other'.

Wilke and Piper encounter specifics of the 'gaze', which the female body has had to bargain with. Wilke had been accused of being narcissistic through the use of personal chronicle and her naked body posed in semi-pornographic ways in artworks such as *S.O.S Starification Object series* (fig.11). Wilke could be said to participate as a double agent. Within the work *S.O.S Starification Object series*, Wilke decorated her body with chewed bubble-gum suggestive of African scarification wounds and then posed for 'pornographic' photographs.

¹¹ See Jane Blocker, *What The Body Cost – Desire, History, and Performance* who quotes Willoughby Sharp, 2004: 25

In this way, props such as cowboy hats and guns, maid outfits and hair curlers were used. *S.O.S*

Starification Object series reinforces the stare of the gaze giving a sarcastic version of what is akin to ‘being’ in Wilke’s pose (Jones, 1998: 183). Wilke is an American born Jew and states that, if she was not born in America she would have been branded during the II World War just as other European born Jews endured (Wilke, 1976: 139).¹² Placing ‘wounds’ upon her body externalises internal branding placed onto her by others. It is this external/internal branding is where failure is apparent, her body is seen with primitive prejudice and we name only by the seeing of body. By the position that is presented Wilke participates as a double agent—being seen as beautiful body, but by placing these wounds on her body contradicts the façade that she presents.

Wilke critiques the (mis)representation of herself, however through this process it ultimately sets up her own failure. By using irony within her poses she still reinforces and becomes the body to be looked upon. Lucy Lippard accused Wilke of narcissistic intentions stating, “confusion of her roles as a beautiful woman and artist, as flirt and feminist, has resulted at times in a politically ambiguous manifestations...” (Lippard, 1976: 76).¹³ With the positions Wilke sets up in regards to her work, she is seen as this attractive woman giving herself over to be the object of the gaze, a sex object for men’s use (Jones, 1998: 183).

Within the artworks that I present, I am at risk of reinforcing the ‘traits’ that the PAC ‘understanding’ pamphlets imply. As I produce work that materialises issues within the representation of Polynesian and Pakeha, I am at constant threat of being misunderstood. As I expressed in ‘Lessons on how to be an Islander’, ‘I guess I never was an Islander when I was young. I was a fake, and to a certain extent I still am.’ I physically look like a Polynesian woman, but that physical nature does not reflect (my)self ‘wholly’. To present a platform from which to be viewed has the potentiality to collapse.

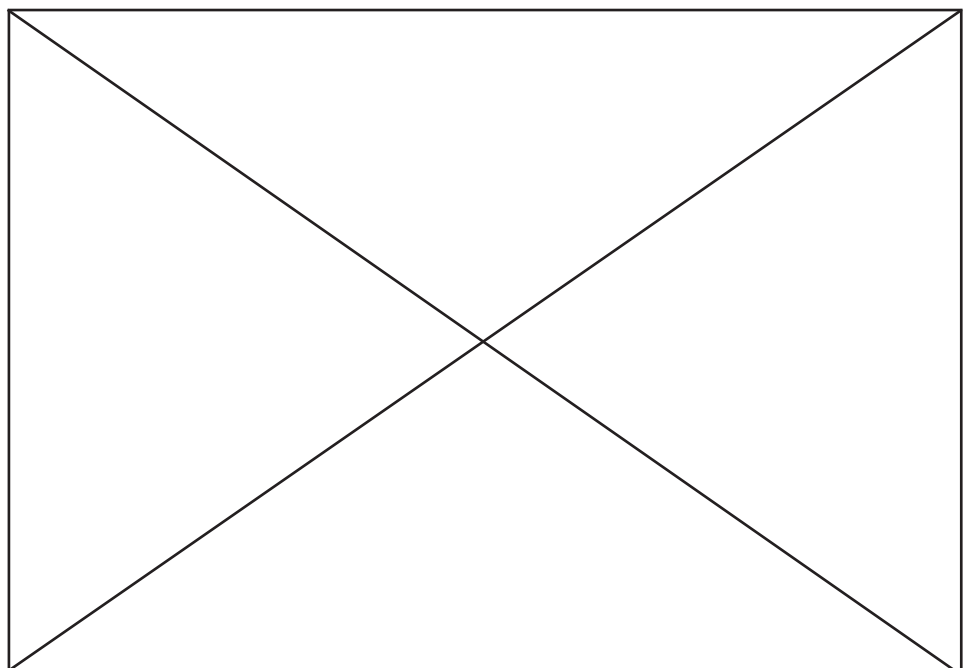
¹² Retrieved from *The Artist Body*, Edited by Tracey Warr & Ameila Jones, 2000: 256

¹³ Retrieved from *The Artist Body*, Edited by Tracey Warr & Ameila Jones, 2000: 253

Perhaps like Wilke, I position myself on that platform where factors of assumed positions eventuate.

While Lippard assumes that Wilke is coming from a narcissistic standpoint, Like Jones, I argue that Wilke is actually implementing a reverse in an ironic way. This is where a collapse occurs. Within this space of collapse and divergence, like Wilke, I become a ‘double agent’.

S.O.S Starification Object series
Hannah Wilke
1974
Fig.11



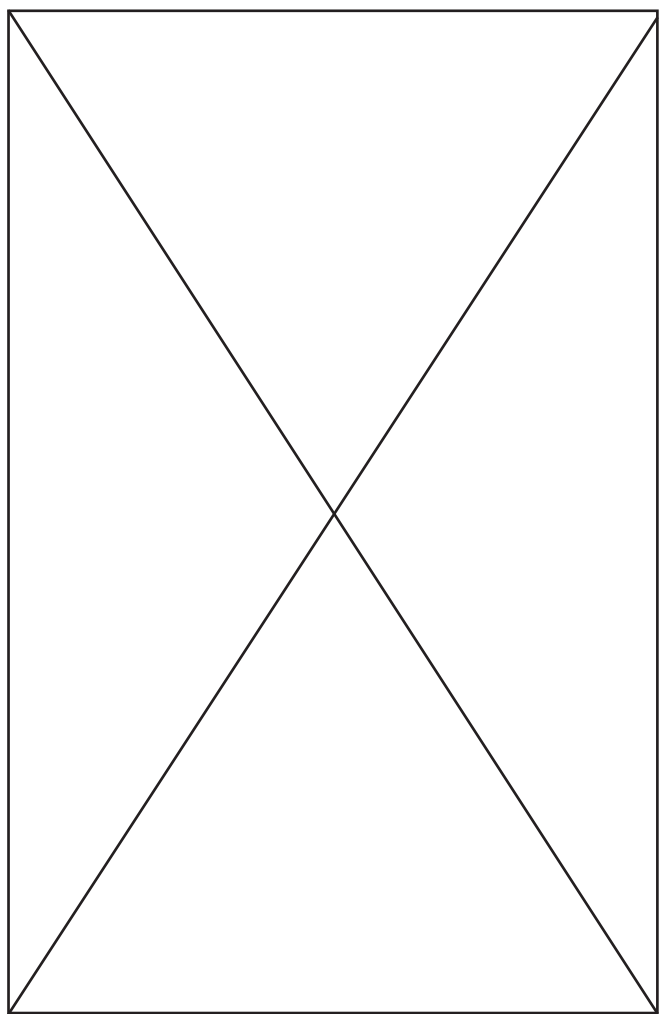
Adrian Piper challenges notions of the 'gaze' as well as issues facing those from a miscegenation (half-caste) background. In particular, I have focussed on her work *Food For The Spirit*, 1971, (fig.12) as a rationale when using my body as an object of the gaze, especially as I am half-caste myself. Piper has authority over the perception of herself in *Food For The Spirit*; "she is both embodied woman-as-object of the camera's 'gaze' and the photographer-subject of the image" (Jones 1998: 162). In doing so, she opens up the possibility of becoming a thinking female artistic subject.

As Amelia Jones articulates, Piper exposes the assumption of underlying whiteness in the 'rhetoric of the pose' through her self-revealing performance in *Food For The Spirit*. As a half-caste woman who could possibly pass as either black or white, Piper is dangerous to the regime of visibility by the constructs of western culture. The position that Piper takes slips between the divergences of identification where her visible form of the black female body is only identifiable through the frame of the male gaze (1998).

Piper's double agency provides an altercation between being the subject of the gaze and being the director of that gaze, being a philosopher that doesn't look like one. Piper also opposes what is unknown by the 'gaze' by placing herself as the subject, anything other than what is considered by the 'gaze' is deemed different.

Through Pipers situation the enforcement of the gaze dislocates, "I am the racist's nightmare, the obscenity of miscegenation (half-caste). I am the reminder that the segregation is impotent; a living embodiment of sexual desire that penetrates racial barriers and reproduces itself... I represent the loathsome possibility that everyone is 'tainted' by black ancestry. If someone can look and sound like me and still be black, who is unimpeachably (unquestioned) white?" (1998). Through my own experience I myself become 'the racist nightmare' and the product of sexual interracial desire. Within the experience of 'Excuse me? Do you have the right person?' I remind people that 'segregation is impotent' by speaking comfortably to my Pakeha Grandfather, breaking the (unspoken) rules of engagement between a young Polynesian woman and an elderly Pakeha man.

As I seek position, I am at odds with (mis)representation. I am a ‘double agent’ within my artwork—such as the umu—and in life. The predicament I face in ‘Oh Yeah, She’s White’ is where failure is the only result. While I spoke to the hairdresser, I wanted to make sure I wasn’t misrepresented. I did so by stating my Mother was ‘white’ therefore validating that I am at least half-Pakeha, which if I hadn’t the hairdresser would not have known that I was half Pakeha, thus the failure. I cannot help but fail, I would have been misrepresenting myself saying I was or was not half-pakeha: the double agent, neither here nor there.



Food For The Spirit
Adrian Piper
1971
Fig.12.

SELF-PORTRAIT

Moving on from the use of the artist's body I cannot disregard the use of the self-portrait in this project.

The self-portrait was an initial core element, but has progressed from the autobiographical situation to a more widely experienced situation. The use of self is an extensive area that has been explored by artists.

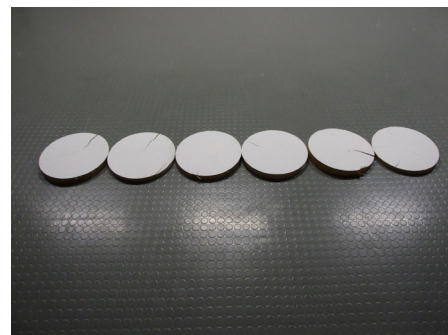
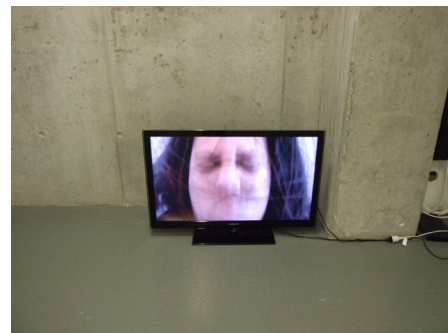
Wilke used an autobiographical entity as a relevant position—as noted earlier she was accused of being narcissistic by using herself as the subject, in a way glorifying her own beauty through these images. As a result, narcissism almost always associates to the self-portrait, even though most body artists use the body as a material. Willoughby Sharp advocates that artists have turned to their most readily resource, themselves, for the use of sculptural material. With unlimited potential the body is capable of doing exactly what the artist wants, without the obduracy of inanimate matter (2000: 231). “Using myself is never narcissistic to begin with because I’m gonna die and then the work will live on. So I just become a figure of a woman” (1998: 185).¹⁴ As Wilke argues, with the connection between narcissism and self-portrait the viewer's perception of self doesn't only concern narcissism, but it positions and locates the viewer. As William A. Ewing frankly asks, “why should these idiosyncratic investigations interest us at all? Because we believe that somehow the artists are acting on our behalf, that we may learn something of ourselves from their struggles, their anguish, their hope” (2009: 303). I do, however, disagree with Sharp's position on the body being material and therefore being a body in general. Jonathan Benthall argues the differences faced for ‘White’ and ‘Black’ stating, “the black has recently asserted his relationship with his body as different form to that of the white” (1976: 8)¹⁵. If, in fact, the body was a general material as Sharp declares, there would be no need to assert a particular identification of the black body from the white body. However the ‘black’ body has had to create difference in order to be considered around issues different to that of the white body.

¹⁴ Retrieved from Body Art, *Performing The Subject*, Amelia Jones, 1998: 185

¹⁵ Retrieved from *The Artist's body*, Edited by Tracey Warr & Amelia Jones, 2000: 8

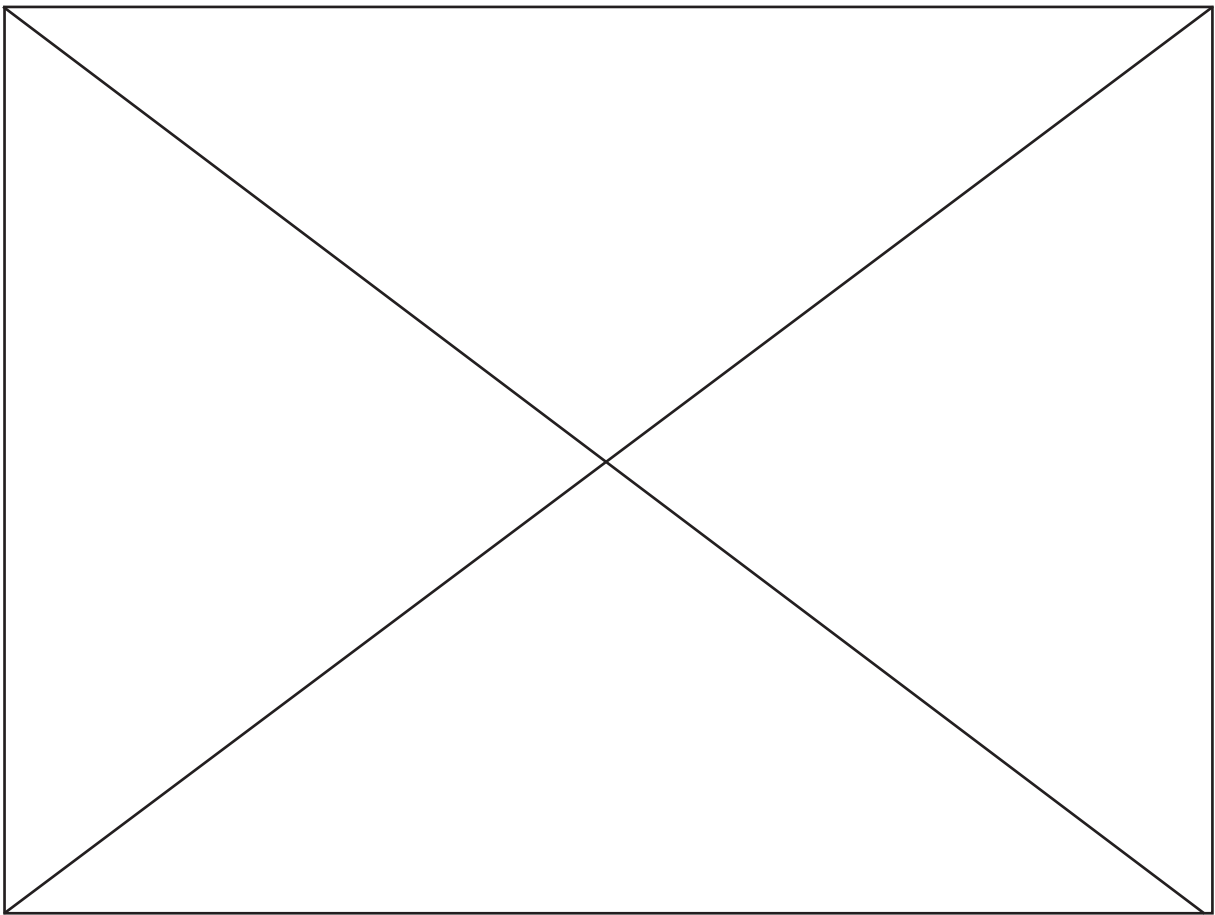
The body is a medium for images and/or representations, it also facilitates the means of social reproduction (Richard, 1986: 65).¹⁶ Images and representations cannot be seen with a 'body in general', that is in the sense of the 'black' body and also my own. My body is embedded around parameters of Polynesian and Pakeha people and in order for those ideas to be considered and seen, I need to present my 'brown' body. Within this project, the body is discussed around factors that convene from outside of the body and speak more specifically to personal occurrences and wider communities.

Self-Portrait 2012
Installation Images (Fig.
Moving image, 42''' flat screen
Photographic collage
x6 pine sawing rings, white acrylic
6'2" Double-Hand M-tooth Crosscut Saw
Single-slide Projector, Nuiean Flag
Fig.13-18



¹⁶ Retrieved from *The Artist's Body*, edited by Tracey Warr & Ameila Jones, 2000: 244

The work *Self-Portrait 2012* (fig.13-18) was an installation consisting of five objects. Each object signified a component of myself; my own self-portrait. One of the objects within the installation spoke more of experience and identification than self-portrait. The projection of the word ‘plastic’ onto a Niuean flag was a part of the installation, exposing the position I am situated in, a position placed onto me by other Polynesians. It stated that I was indeed a ‘plastic’ Niuean. ‘Plastic’ is a derogatory slang used against Polynesians that have no knowledge of their culture or someone of both Polynesian and Pakeha ancestry. Artist Louisa Afoa openly shares her and her siblings’ encounters with being a half-caste Samoan living in New Zealand and what it is like being labelled ‘plastic’ in her work, ‘Louisa’, ‘Samuel’, ‘Josephina’ 2012 (fig.19). The installation consisted of moving images across 3 flat panel televisions with adjoining headphones. I sat and engaged with each story listening intently to what the siblings had to say. It was an intimate encounter, one that I could completely relate to. I knew what they were discussing. I knew what they were questioning. Afoa frankly claims her half Samoan, half Pakeha identity. Though she cannot speak Samoan, she argues that she is not any less of a Samoan. She questions the very notion of a ‘true’ Samoan. The situation of being deemed ‘plastic’ is one that is announced by other Polynesian’s “ideas of dislocation, identity and exclusion as a half-caste through language” (Lopesi: 2012). Like Piper, speaks of the fear of having tainted ancestry, Afoa and I are both tainted in this situation with ‘Pakeha’ blood, we are judged upon by the Polynesian community and seen as ‘other’. The self-portrait is employed to provoke a conversation among viewers, rather than out of a narcissistic desire. My own self-portrait was composed to exhibit an emblematic standpoint where my form was neutral as a ‘Polynesian’ as seen in *Umu* 2013.



'Louisa' 'Samuel' 'Josephina' 2012
Moving Image
X3 Flat-screens, X3 headphones, X3 Seats
Duration Varies
Exhibition This Must Be The Place
Fig.19

PRIVATE PERFORMANCE IN THE LENS

Speaking of self-portrait, I now progress to the view of the self-being private in the way of private performance. “Generally the performance is executed in the privacy of the studio. Individual works are mostly communicated to the public through the strong visual language of photographs, films, videotapes and other media all with a strong immediacy of impact” (Sharp, 1970: 1).¹⁷ The private realm has a connection of being individual and being of self. I situate private performance as a solo domain that leads from the self-portrait, narcissism and also the concept of being the artist, subject and object. Surrounding the project is this concept of the use of the lens (lens of the camera) to facilitate the work.

In my work *Untitled #2* (fig.20), my face was masked in white that was then peeled/flayed to reveal my ‘real skin’, as it was produced within the studio and was performed for the lens. In this context, Ewing talks about the necessity of the performance and the lens. “These ‘bodyworks’ could be highly exhibitionist public events or wholly solitary rites performed in the artist’s studio. What they had in common was that they were all ephemeral. Here the camera proved an indispensable tool; what were transitory, unique, unrepeatable moments were given permanent form in photographs” (2009: 300).

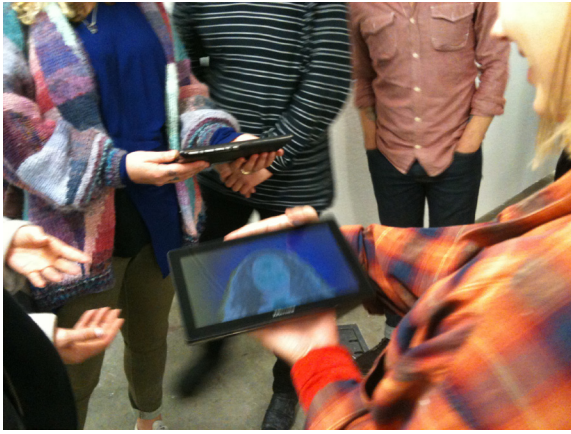
This artwork communicates similar attributes to Wilke’s *S.O.S Starification Object series* and Piper’s *Food for the Spirit*. Placing myself in the artwork refers to the self-portrait and also my personal positioning. I use white paint and glue as a mask and flay this layer off my face revealing my ‘true’ face, externalising internal wounds that Wilke employs, replicating how at times I feel as though I am a ‘white’ person within a brown body. As Piper highlights, miscegenation (half-caste) is evident in the world and that while someone can look and sound Polynesian, they could be questionably white.

¹⁷ Retrieved from *The Artist Body*, edited by Tracey Warr and Ameila Jones, 2000: 231



Untitled #2 2012
 Moving Image
 Projection
 Duration 2min 11sec
 Private performance: White acrylic paint, pva glue
 Fig.20

The installation of the *Response Series #* requires careful consideration, as the use of the screen is a fundamental part of how the work operates. The four moving images were played on four media tablets. Viewers engaged with the work by being passed the tablets showing images of ‘my head’ as they entered the space and stood and gathered in the space. (Fig. 21-24) The audience cannot simply ignore my position through this intimate exchange. What ensued was a communal approach in the viewing of the tablets by viewers. One viewer would hold the tablet while the others would crowd around to view the ‘object’. The viewers were now participants; they created the platform in which the work was seen and where conversations occurred. The Polynesian and Pakeha community that the work responds to is also reflected by the installation and participation with the work itself. Participants gather while they share ‘my head’ around, and a new community develops. The use of the screens enforces a relation between the ‘viewed’ and ‘viewer’, ‘you’, ‘me’ and ‘them’.



*Response Series Installation
Response #1- #4
Reaction To Insults
Musu
Individualistic
Social Drinks
Moving Image X 4 Media Tablets
Duration Approx 5min
Fig. 21-24*

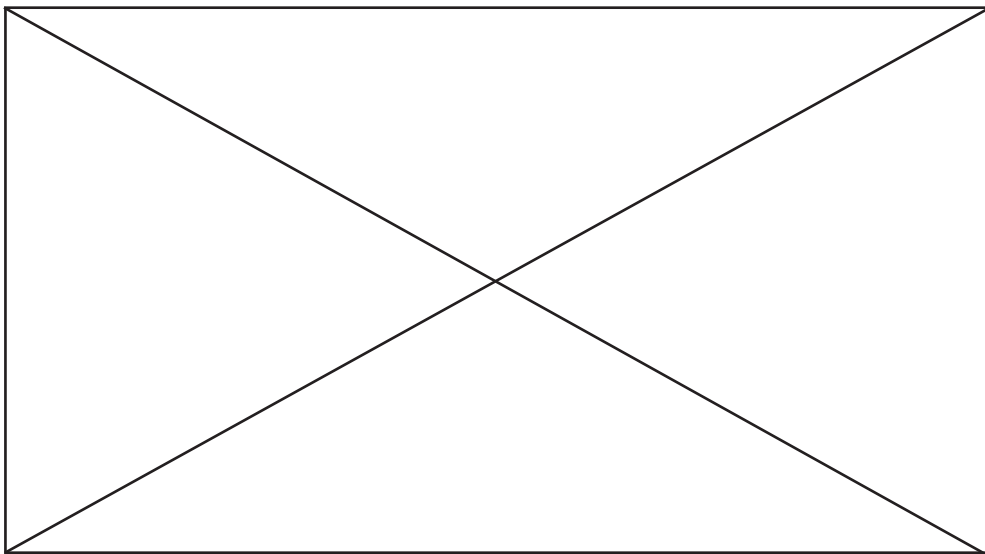
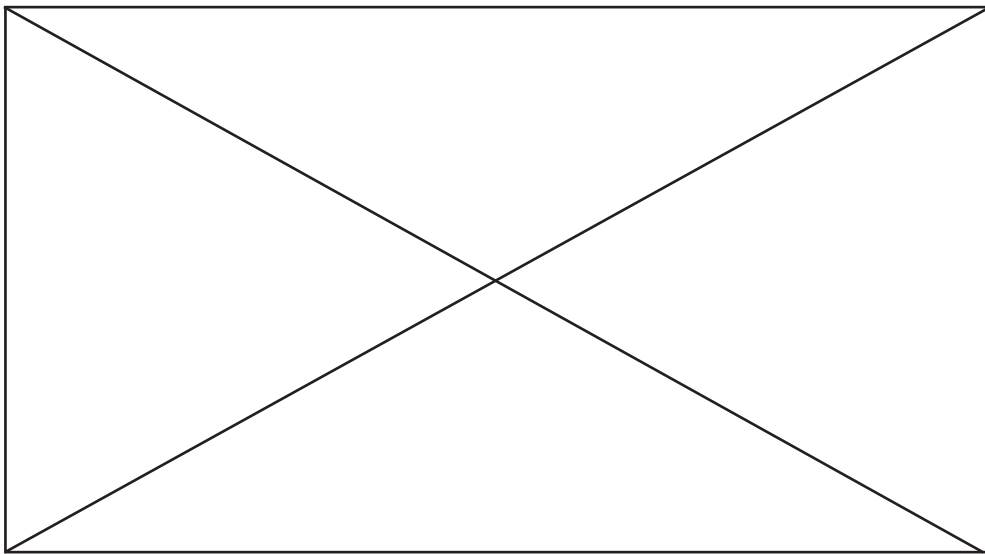
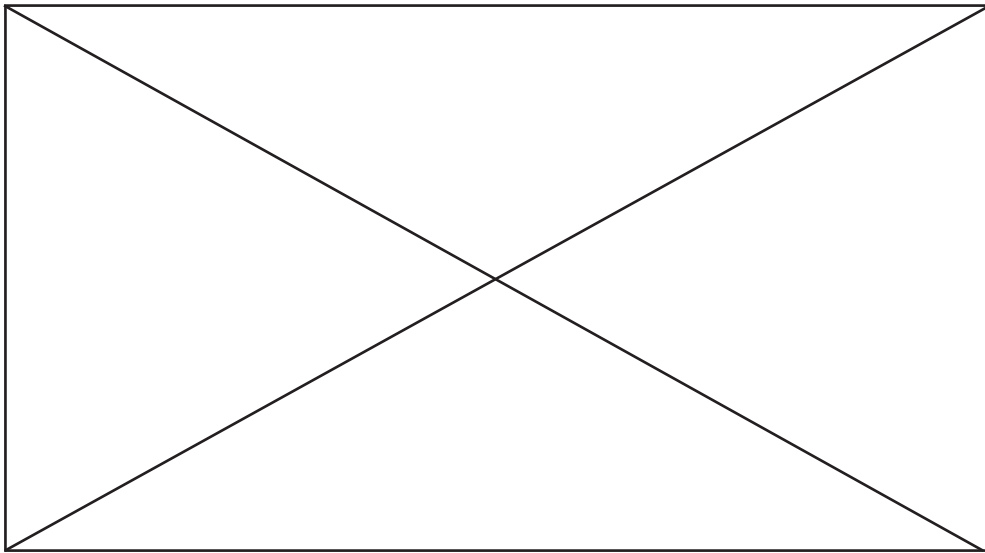
POLYNESIAN PERFORMANCE – PRIMARY INVESTIGATIONS

This component constitutes primary research on emerging Pacific artists and curators.

Artist Angela Tiatia also contributed the exhibition *Return to Sender* curated by Cora-Allan Wickliffe. Her work *Reflexivity 2013* (Fig.25-27) was a moving image work that was installed using a flat screen television placed on the wall. Her body stands still and silent in an open public area. As she stands in the space in a seemingly passive manner, the public becomes aware of her presence in the space. Through this gesture, Tiatia creates a rupture in that space—people either glance at her and carry on as if she does not exist, not wanting to engage with her, or people stand and stare and take photos of her ‘in’ performance. Tiatia’s passive gesture gives us permission to engage through looking. While I sat with the work, my own presence comes to the forefront as she stands there—it’s like she gives me permission to view her and ‘gaze’ upon her body. It is this relation that is evident as I see the public within the work stare at her body.

Tiatia’s gaze was confrontational and it evoked the relationship between her and me. As I spoke to her about the work she stated that she got the exact response she was looking for—to be looked at by the public in a touristic and somewhat uncomfortable manner. Tiatia spoke about the people who stood behind cameras filming her. They seemed comfortable to gaze through their own lens and take photos for their own use. As she stands still and silent, a strong sense of humanity occurs within the work, the camera catches people just staring at her body, she is there to be looked upon and the idea of the gaze starts to take place. She shows her brown body in a very public place where people are going about their day and this junction of a Polynesian woman standing in a passive way disrupts people’s view.

Her brown body also presents her ‘malu’, her female ‘tatau’, which covers the top of the thigh to just below the knee. These significant etchings on her skin further identify her as a Polynesian woman. This work responds exactly to the criteria of the *Return to Sender 2013*; she is this Polynesian woman to be looked upon, just as the postcards suggest the voyeuristic act of looking at the exotic ‘other’.



Reflexivity 2013
Image 1-3
Angela Tiatia
Moving Image
Installation: Flat screen Television
Fig. 25-27

My performance (Fig.28-30) was exhibited in Close to Home 2013, curated by Melanie and Ahilapalapa Rands. In this performance, I lie on the floor on a 'bed' of uncooked vermicelli.

The significance of vermicelli is specific to the concept of the show, Close to Home, as artists we were asked to use the notion 'Close to Home' as signifier for the work, to interpret our own meaning of that idea.

Vermicelli is a food that has become a cross-cultural food item, popularly used for chop suey or sapaui.

Chop suey is an Asian dish that has now solidified itself within Polynesian culture as sapaui.

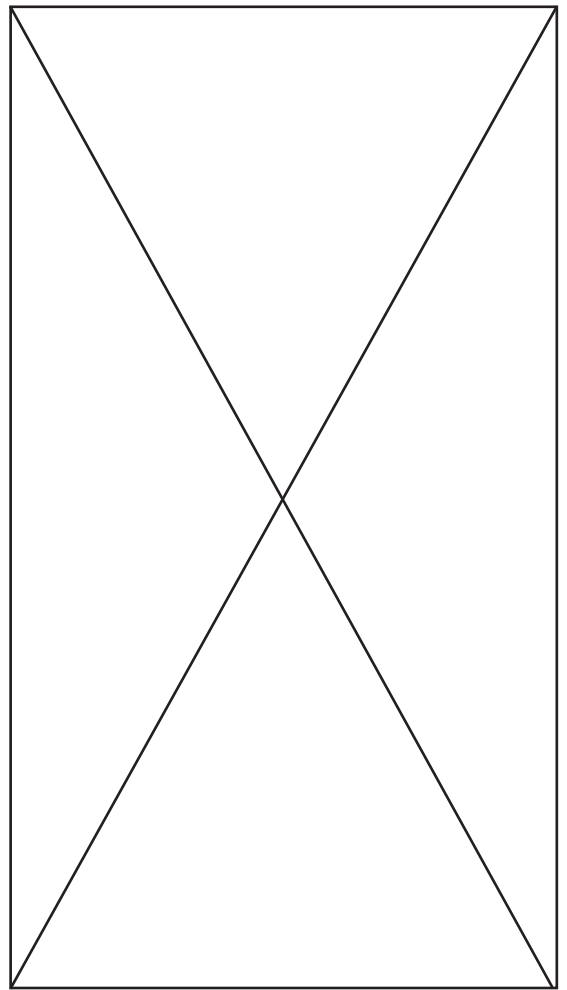
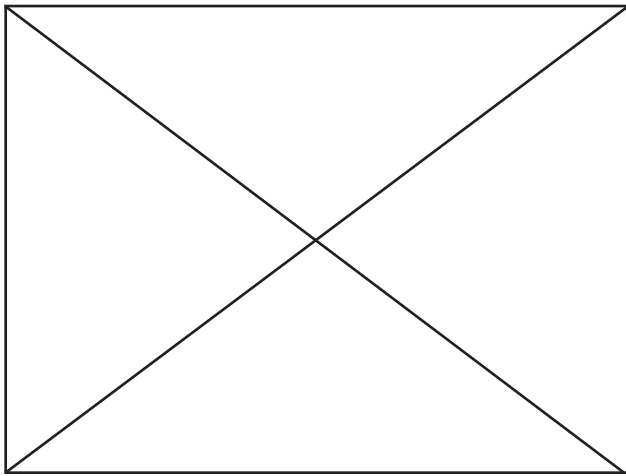
While I lay down I could hear children cursorily gazing at my performance, asking 'what's that she's lying on?'—through discussion the children figured out that it was vermicelli and something that they knew quite well. This material of vermicelli echoed a known experience or understanding for certain viewers, which then registered a place for them of home/family/culture.

As I lay down, I was there for everyone to see. I lay silent with my eyes closed, no movement. As I lay there, I could feel people move past my body, the echoes of conversations filling the room as more people entered the gallery. Because I was lying at ground level, people could look down at my body, creating a visual hierarchy where the viewer has complete permission to 'gaze' as I lay passively. In both the moving image and staging of Tiatia's work, the 'gaze' is constantly reinforced and directed, she gives herself over to be viewed,—and she does so by creating a confrontation in the public space she inhabits. I give over my body to be viewed in a submissive position and the effect is one where the audience has no fear in looking, as I don't challenge them with my own 'gaze'.



No Title
Performance
Artist Body, Uncooked Vermicelli
Duration 2hours
Close to Home Exhibition
6th September - 18th October
Fig. 28-29

Furthermore, Polynesian performances also occurred in an exhibition called *The Anatomy of Paradise* presented at Art Station in February—March 2012, curated by Angela Tiatia. The title of the show came directly from the title of the book by J.C Furnas written in 1947. The book illustrated perceptions of Polynesian people in photography and film. The exhibition explored how the Pacific body is seen now, 65 years after the book was written. Artist Kalisolaite 'Uhila performed a piece called *Fa'e huki* (fig.31-33) where he dressed in a traditional Tongan mat and lay flat on his stomach on the floor. A girl walks over and sits upon his back. She reads to herself peacefully. As the performance continues, the artist changes his positioning moving onto all fours. The girl remains sitting and reading upon his back whilst this shift occurs. Then the position changes once more with the artist sitting upright with legs crossed and the girl moves from his back to his front and continues to sit and read on his lap. As the performance developed, the form in which the artist took progressed from a representation of a mat, to a table, then finally to a chair. The final position the artist takes is one from his own Tongan background. This positioning between two people (as in two generations) is something I have also witnessed in celebrations at a Tongan Twenty-first birthdays. The birthday recipient sat on the lap of his uncle. This is called *fa'e huki*, a traditional part of Tongan celebration where the brother of the recipient's Aunt is the lowest ranked within the family structure, which is reflected in the same sense as the 'chair'. The position in which 'Uhila takes is one of tradition, but it also questions his position by placing himself as a piece of furniture, an item of comfort, an inanimate object.



Fa'e Huki 2012
Kalisolaite 'Uhila
Performance
Artist Body, Artists Niece
Exhibition Anatomy of Paradise
Fig. Fig. 30-31

While I observed the performance another spectator walked over to 'Uhila and asked if he could sit on his lap, 'Uhila replied with 'no, I am only my niece's chair'. At that point Uhila became less of an object and more of a physical being, a Tongan male, an Uncle. It was evident that the performance was exclusive of others. Viewers that did not have knowledge of the tradition of fa'e huki only saw him as a performed object. Now, not being the object, he became a being. As 'Uhila declared that he was his niece's chair, it excluded viewers from participating. The performance was simply to be looked upon, to be a witness to. The exclusivity that was apparent in 'Uhila's performance is also evident in my performance of the umu. The invitation to sit on 'Uhila as a chair turns out to be reserved for his niece. The umu in which I prepare and cook has a participatory tendency, but also excludes viewers, as I cook a single serve and eat singularly.

YOU ME THEM

In summary, this project explores perceptions of the Pacific body becoming ‘other’ through consequences of identification within the social climate of New Zealand and the Pacific, in relation to an expanding duality of ‘otherness’ within these communities. The concept of failure has been explored in terms of how ‘misrepresentations’ of Pacific peoples result in ‘double agent’ identities. I have explored this notion of ‘failure’ as a kind of productive problem in relation to the self-portrait, private performance and the camera, as well as a primary investigation of what is meant by ‘Polynesian Performance’. In doing this, I have created a series of emblematic autobiographical artworks—by means of moving image, performance and installation—that attempt to respond to and critique the relevance of the Understanding pamphlets produced by the ‘Polynesian Advisory Committee’ of the *Vocational Training Council (N.Z.)*.

The work presented for the Master’s exhibition is intended to position the viewer through the ‘position’ of my own body, be that either a performance and/or a moving image installation. As discussed previously, a number of works have implemented situations where the viewer is challenged to consider their own position. The production of the Response Series on media tablets is an important reference here, in that it located a relation between the ‘viewed’ and ‘viewer’: ‘you’, ‘me’ and ‘them—and in the case of the ‘Umu’ performance—the viewer was positioned through a specifically non-participatory engagement with the work. It is these kinds of particulars, the viewer’s locus within potential work and the context of situation, which creates concepts of ‘otherness’ and explores notions of failure.

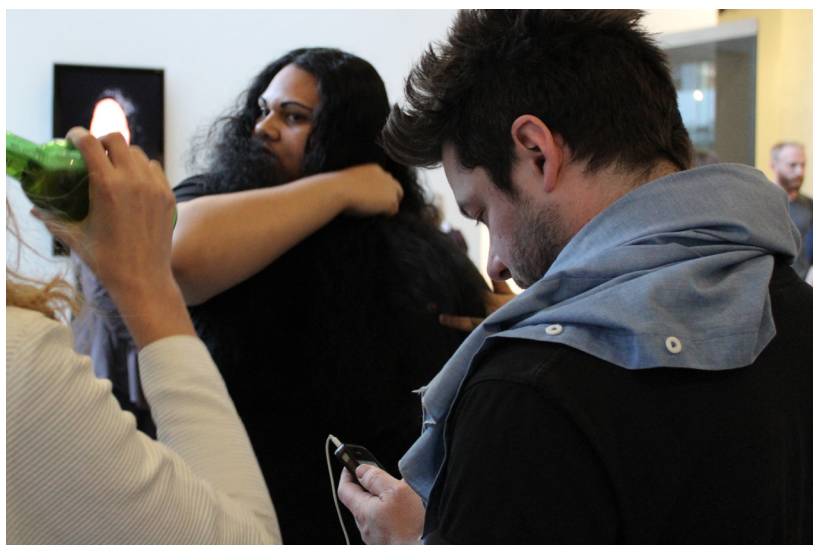
MASTERS EXHIBITION



No title
Moving Image
46" Flat Screen
Duration 2min 11sec
13th - 16th November 2013
Fig.



No title
Perfromance
Hair brushing perfromance
Duration Varies
13th - 16th Novemeber 2013
Fig.



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EXHIBITION BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anatomy of Paradise 2012 Curator Angela Tiatia, Artists: Darcell Apelu, Tanu Gago, Ahilapalapa Rands, Nastashia Simeone-Apelu, Kalisolaite 'Uhila, Vaimaila Urale. Date: 22nd February – 10th March 2012, Art Station 1 Ponsonby Road, Auckland New Zealand

More Than We Know Performance Series 2013, Curator Ioana Gordon-Smith. Artists Darcell Apelu, Sesilia Pusiaki, Terry Faleono, Niu Navigations, Nastahia Simeona-Apelu, Nita Latu, Seidah Tuaoui, Joshua Grace, Kalisolaite 'Uhila and Jeremy Leatinu'u. 6th March – 22 March 2013 Gus Fisher Gallery 74 Shortland Street, Auckland Central.

Return to Sender Curator Cora-Allan Wickliffe, Artists: Louisa Afoa, Darcell Apelu, Lana Lopesi, Aaron Unasa, Ani O'Neill, Lonnie Hutchinson, Theo Ah-Wong, Salome Tanuvasa, Angela Tiatia. Date: 20th April – 1st June 2013. Papakura Art Gallery 10 Averill Street Papakura Auckland New Zealand

Same Story Different Colour 2013 Curator Cora-Allan Wickliffe. Artists Darcell Apelu, Colin Nairn, Louisa Afoa, Tinaz Karbhari, Salome Tanuvasa, Alex Plumb, Evan Woodruffe, Lana Lopesi, Robert Gorge. 4th – 7th September 2013 St Paul Street Gallery Three 39 Symonds Street Auckland New Zealand

IMAGE BIBLIOGRAPHY

Understanding Pakehas Cover

(N.Z.), P. A. C. o. t. V. T. C. (1975). Understanding Pakehas. Wellington, New Zealand: A.R. Shearer, Government Printer.

Understanding Polynesians Cover

(N.Z.), P. A. C. V. T. C. (1974). Understanding Polynesians. Wellington, New Zealand: A.R. Shearer, Government Printer.

Colonial Postcard, Image supplied by Curator Cora-Allan Wickliffe for the purpose of the Exhibition Return to Sender 2013, Papakura Art Gallery

S.O.S Starification Object Series, Hannah Wilke, 1974-82. Performance and installation. Ten black-and-white photos, fifteen gum sculptures (detail). Copyright 2002 Marsie, Emanuelle, Damon, and Andrew Scharlatt. Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York. Photograph by D. James Dee.- Jones, A. (1998). Body Art, Performing The Subject. Minneapolis, United States of America: University of Minnesota Press.

Food For The Spirit, Adrian Piper, 1971: Private Loft Performance. Photography courtesy John Weber Gallery, New York - Jones, A. (1998). Body Art, Performing The Subject. p.163. Minneapolis, United States of America: University of Minnesota Press.

‘Louisa’ ‘Samuel’ ‘Josephina’, Louisa Afoa, 2012. Image Courtesy of the Artist

Reflexivity, Angela Tiatia, 2013 Images courtesy of the Artist

Fa’e Huki, Kalisolaite ‘Uhila, 2012 Images courtesy of the Artist

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LIST OF WORKS



*Untitled
May 2012
Dimensions Vary
Mirror, white acrylic paint, Plinth*



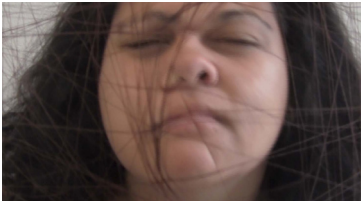
*Untitled
May 2012
Dimensions Vary
Fabric weave over the body*



*Untitled
May 2012
Performance
Duration 6min 34sec*



*Untitled
May 2012
Moving image
Installation with projector
Duration 2min 11sec*



*Untitled
May 2012
Moving Image
Installed on a 42" flat screen TV
Duration 2min 14sec*



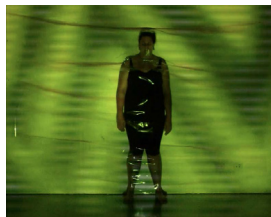
*Untitled
June 2012
Installation
Projector, Niuean Flag, Flat Screen TV,
Crosscut Saw, Pine Sawing rings, White
paint, Photographic collage*



*Untitled
July 2012
Moving Image
Duration 8min 57sec*



*Untitled
July 2012
Moving Image
Duration 1min 27sec*



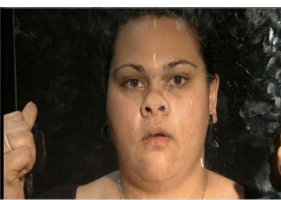
*Untitled
August 2012
Moving Image
Installed as a projection
approx 2.5m x 1.9m
Duration 2min 2sec*



*Untitled
September 2012
Moving Image
Duration 1min 12sec*



*Untitled
September 2012
Moving Image
Duration 48sec*



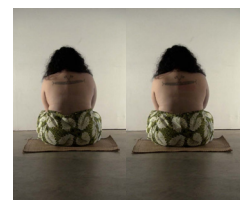
*Untitled
September 2012
Moving Image
Duration 1min 3sec*



*Untitled
September 2012
Moving Image
Duration 37sec*



*Untitled
September 2012
Moving Image
Duration 31sec*



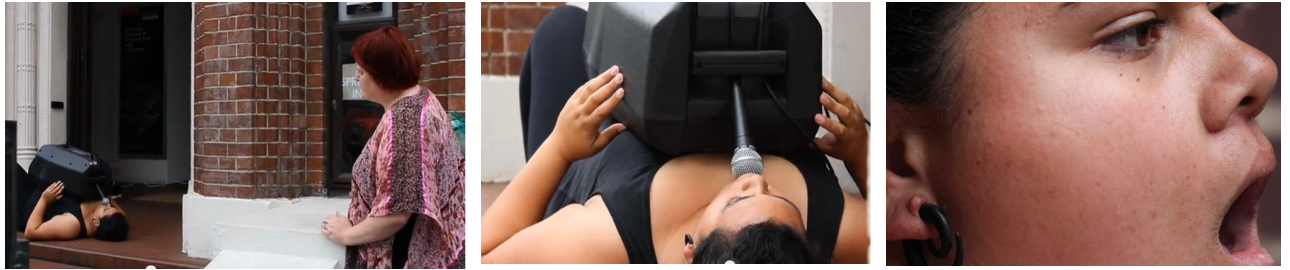
*Untitled
September 2012
Documentation*



*Untitled
September 2012
Moving image
Documentation*



*Untitled
October 2012
Installation; X3 52" flat screen TVs
X3 Moving Images
Duration time vary*



Performance (Sound)

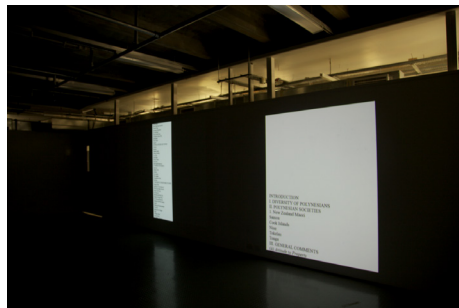
Performance as part of the 'More Than We Know' Performance symposium

Gus Fisher Gallery

6th March - 22nd March 2013

Performance Duration 30min

Fig.2



Untitled (scrolling text) 2013

Text retrieved from the Understanding Pakehas and Understanding Polynesians Pamphlets, contents page

Moving Image

Installed as a projection

Duration continuous loop



Untitled 2013

Response/copy of the poses by Hannah Wilke and Adrian Piper

Documentation



UMU 2013

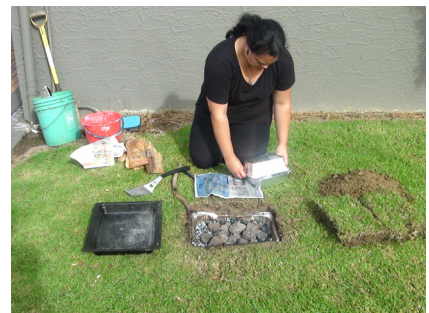
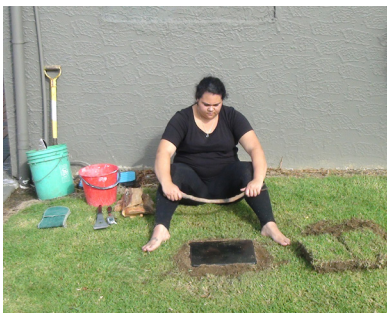
Preparing and Cooking a Single Serve Umu

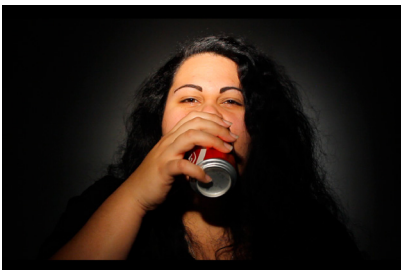
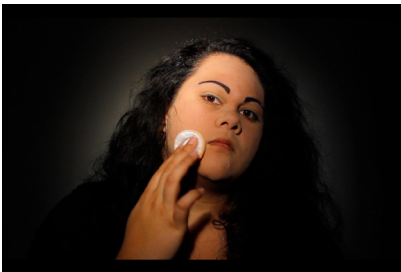
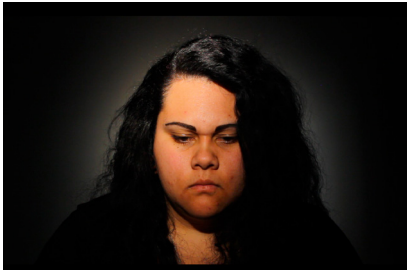
Response to colonial postcard supplied by Curator Cora-Allan Wickliffe

Performance

Papakura Art Gallery

Duration Approx 3hours





Response Series Installation
Response #1- #4
Reaction To Insults
Musu
Individualistic
Social Drinks
Moving Image X 4 Media Tablets
Duration Approx 5min





Look Away
Projection, X6 Chairs, headphones and mp3 players (audio)
Same Story Different Colour
St Paul Street Gallery Three
4th - 7th September



No Title
Performance
Artist Body, Uncooked Vermicelli
Duration 2hours
Close to Home Exhibition
6th September - 18th October
Fig. 28-29



Overall Installation

No title

Moving Image

46" Flat Screen

Duration 2min 11sec

No title

Perfromance

Hair brushing perfromance

Duration Varies

13th - 16th Novemeber 2013



