

Meaalofa of Presence: *The Gift*

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Attestation of Authorship

I, Jalesa Nomani, 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.

Signed

21st May 2021

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Abstract

This project is based on the teachings of my childhood upbringing. Growing up surrounded by a pasifika community and aiga, I learnt that our alofa was shown most through acts of service, an action that translates into a method of exchange. From a young age, it was instilled in me to serve and relate to others through generosity, kindness, empathy and alofa. These learnings that I carry with me every day have naturally ingrained into a way of making. My research seeks to highlight the importance of learning and acknowledging our pasts and present histories through enlightening another through these actions and teachings. Through lens-based and installational practices, an invitation is extended to create a collective of shared histories, lived experiences and intergenerational knowledge that will ultimately create a platform to open up a talanoa (conversation) for all to reside in one space – to restore ‘left behind’ dreams of the migrant journey.

The First Sail – An Introduction

“You came from a place. You grew from a place and you had a relationship with that place...Land/ocean shapes my thinking my way of being, and my priorities of what is of value.”¹

- Manulani Aluli Meyer

The Land of Milk and Honey. The Land of the Long White Cloud. The Land of Opportunity. The Land we now call home. Aotearoa, New Zealand. Like many other families residing in this country, mine embarked on the journey from their distant homelands across the Pacific and Tasman oceans to settle and dwell in a new destination. In the hopes of providing opportunities from the fruits of their labour to future generations to come. As always, an important decision like this one comes with sacrifice. During the processes of migration, an adaptation of living in the ‘new and contemporary’ western culture is adhered to, whilst the loss of what was known and familiar² slowly becomes foreign.

During this adaptation period of trying to ‘fit in’ to societal routines, culture, and ways of living in Aotearoa, knowledge becomes blurred between the transitions of the old and new. Being second generation born in Aotearoa on both sides of my aiga (family); Scotland and Samoa, I have become a by-product of the migrant dream, an afakasi (half caste/Pākehā) not fully fluent in my mother tongue with only partial knowledge

¹ Meyer, Manulani Aluli. “Chapter 2 - That Which Feeds: Physical Place and Knowing.” Essay. In *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, edited by Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 219. Los Angeles: Sage, 2008.

² Loss of language, cultural traditions, and routines.

of cultural customs and traditions in the Samoan and Scottish culture. I am neither entirely culturally identified in either of these places, Samoa, Scotland, or Aotearoa. However, in more recent years, I have discovered I still long to know more about my culture. But at the same time, I feel displaced within myself and dislocated between the places my aiga is from and even the places where I grew up. So now, I find that my artwork is trying to relocate my own identity.

Through this project, I am trying to find and create a space where all parts of my biographical makeup can coincide in one space. However, this place is not a physical place. As products of migration that live in Aotearoa, communities are prone to creating a shared space that reflects on their own desires for a place of identity. A sense of belonging in an unfamiliar environment. The search for this space within a diaspora becomes a search for a relational space, *the Vā*, that invents a 'pasifika' identity in Aotearoa. Pacific researcher Dr Albert L. Refiti, in his PhD project describes:

Such a project forges a relation between identity (that connects with the homeland) and space (new place). In the diaspora, one's roots are located in the place other than where one lives; therefore, identity as a diasporic project amounts to the reformation and reconstruction process that takes place in a new location. To enable a new identity to be formed in a new location, cultural knowledge is important because it is the thing that travels.³

I aim to create an embodied experience for others with a story similar to mine; an afakasi born in Aotearoa coping with the struggles of locating their own cultural identity between two worlds. That is, the contemporary western culture in Aotearoa and our homelands that link us to our cultural ties. This derives from my own experiences living as a "diasporic pasifika"⁴ residing in Aotearoa. In this project, I focus

³ Albert Refiti, "Mavae and Tofiga: Spatial Exposition of the Samoan Cosmogony and Architecture" (PhD thesis), AUT University, 2015, p15.

⁴ 'Diasporic pasifika' is a term coined by Albert L. Refiti in his Master's thesis "*Mavae and Tofiga: Spatial Exposition of the Samoan Cosmogony and Architecture*." A diasporic pasifika is an individual from a pasifika community in Aotearoa searching for a place to reinvent and reconstruct their own cultural pasifika identity within a foreign

my research on a specific site involving a particular group of people who share common experiences together of living in Aotearoa as products of 'left behind' migrant dreams. They are all members of my aiga who either lived at or are closely connected to the site and our home, 25 Serwayne Place. A four-bedroom suburban home, a basketball hoop above the double-door garage, bamboo trees lined the long rocky and cracked driveway, sectioned off from neighbouring houses by trees and garden beds planted by our aiga. This was a home that housed many members of my family and myself included; it was my first home and the last home that housed our family before the Waitakere City Council removed it in 2004. The locations I work with are connected to this site by significant events or moments in my family and my histories since residing here in Aotearoa.⁵ These locations are based around the three key sites of Serwayne, Newington and Kingsley, which I collaborate with. Serwayne is a reserve, the scale of five empty sections where our family house and four others were removed. Kingsley is the current home of a family member in Mount Maunganui (Mauao). Newington is my current home that I live in. Other locations include beaches in West Auckland. These houses and sites are essential to the research, as this project is a meaalofa back to these places. Key methods that I work with in conjunction with these sites consist of talanoa, exchange of meaalofa and temporal ways of making. These approaches manifest in physical objects like grapefruits, postcards, the written word and video. And through actions like planting and watering, collecting and transferring, and the relational acts of sharing memories, storytelling, having a talanoa, or one's presence in the moment of the temporary event/installation.

The title *Meaalofa of Presence* translates to *The Gift of Presence* which has evolved from the teachings of my upbringing from a child to young adult.⁶ Growing up surrounded

place/new place that is different to their homeland. Trying to relocate this sense of belonging between two locations and adapt in a new environment because of migration. (p15, Chapter 1 - *Lau tofiga lea: Vā and the contemporary understanding of space as identity*).

⁵ My great-grandparents and grandparents on both sides of my family came to live in Aotearoa in the late 1960's to early 1970's.

⁶ At the time of writing this exegesis, I am 22 years of age.

by a diverse pasifika community and aiga, I learnt that our alofa (love) was shown most through acts of service. It was instilled in me from a young age to serve others with generosity, kindness, empathy and alofa. I carry these learnings with me every day, and it has become a natural way of making and being in my art practice. Indigenous scholar Dr Manulani Aluli Meyer's essay on *indigenous epistemologies* speaks to this idea, looking at how "aloha intelligence"⁷ (alofa, love) is involved and intertwined into our creative practices and everyday happenings, experienced knowledge, and research methodologies. This service to others enables oneness between indigenous collectives, seeing 'our differences'⁸ as an opportunity for connection across unfamiliar terrains. However, this oneness is not only exclusive to indigenous collectives, but to a new collective I invite into my research project with the viewers and the collaborators of sites and objects. This collective is welcomed to the aiga.

O le tagata ma lona aiga, o le tagata ma lona fa'asinomaga.

Every person belongs to an aiga and every aiga belongs to a person.

This Samoan proverb is the essence of service to others, meaning that even those who haven't experienced a similar story to mine still have access to the service and generosity displayed by acts of meaalofa in any setting because each belongs to an aiga, and this aiga invites many.

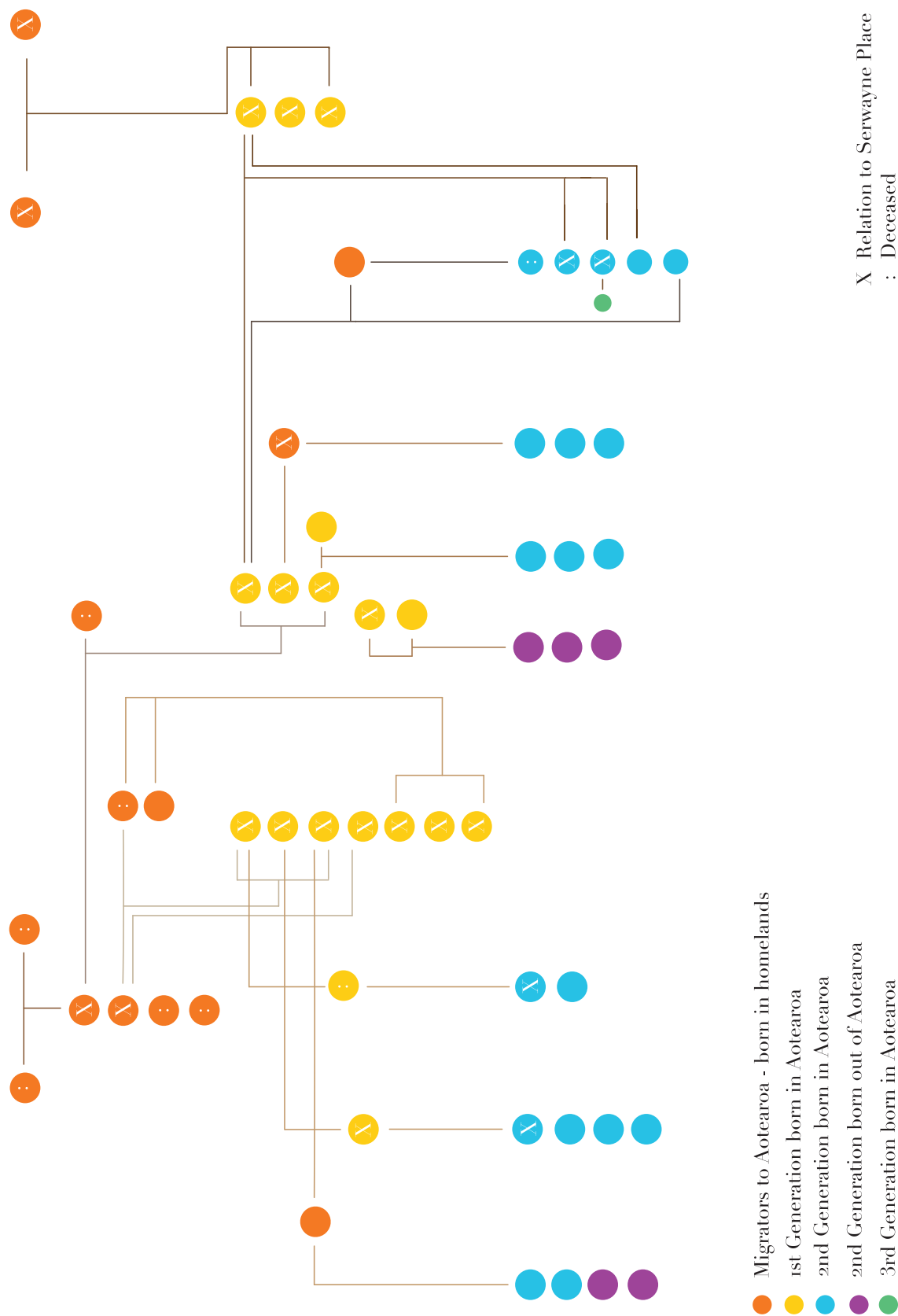
By utilising lens-based and installational practices, an invitation is extended to my aiga to create a collective of shared histories and lived experiences through the sharing of intergenerational knowledge. In combination, these approaches will ultimately create a platform to open up a talanoa (conversation) for everyone to reside in one space – to

⁷ Meyer, Manulani Aluli. "Chapter 4 – Relations and Knowledge: Self Through Other." Essay. In *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies*, edited by Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 221. Los Angeles: Sage, 2008.

⁸ "Our differences within an indigenous collective create multiple opportunities to connect with one another through either the similar journey stories we share, customs and values etc. Even though our genealogy and geographic may be different, our experiences can share commonalities." (Manulani Aluli Meyer, *Chapter 4 - Relationship and Knowledge: Self Through Other*, p221).

restore 'left behind' dreams of the migrant journey. This practice explores how alofa and care influence each component of the project and investigates the meaning of spaces (physical and non-physical) to understand the layering of connections that reside within them (and between us). *'The Gift'* in this project encapsulates this idea of oneness by offering opportunities for acts of alofa to occur between me, the sites and the co-creators – my aiga.

This is a diagram to demonstrate migration within my family tree. It also shows the relationships with family members that are connected to site of the research project, Serwayne Place.



P R E S E N C E

Meaalofa of Presence is derived from a faith-based perspective, to be still, to be present and invite presence back into these diaspora spaces. Being still in the moment and allowing the presence of **being** in these spaces enables an unveiling of underlying past knowledge to come to the surface. Looking at how connections can be made through stimulating a movement of bodies, like the physical, intellectual and spiritual, to create temporal spaces that invite and hold presence within historically meaningful sites that now lie vacant. This project intends to highlight the importance of learning and acknowledging our shared pasts and present histories by enlightening one another through exchanging this knowledge. Another way presence can be experienced is through the space of the Vā. Samoan poet and writer Albert Wendt defines the Vā around views of reality in his essay *Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body*:

Vā is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships/the contexts change.⁹

Creating a space within a space through the artform of acts of meaalofa allows a community and a wider collective to gather together and share with one another their presence in the space, activated by the Vā. What I create are temporary installations that can't be physically taken away. It is the experience, instead of being present in these spaces that remains and is remembered, and the presence that continues to live beyond the event. I do this by reinterpreting the Vā to redefine and shape the spaces that my work resides within. This art practice comprises a series of temporal events

⁹ Albert Wendt, "Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body," in *Tatau: A Cultural History of Samoan Tattooing*, ed. Sean Mallon and Sébastien Galliot (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawai'i Press, 2018), p154.

and happenings¹⁰ staged in significant familial locations with the hopes of creating a new space where I can find that sense of belonging – combining all parts of who I am, a Samoan-Scottish afakasi New Zealander.



25 Serwayne Place. An open reserve in the middle of a suburban neighbourhood. The bamboo trees and the grapefruit tree were on the section of our property. (2021)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

¹⁰ Happenings (coined by American artist Allan Kaprow in 1959 to describe a performance or art event) is the term that I also use to help define the works in progress and the minor actions behind the scenes of the final artwork or event I output. These will be processes, thoughts, drafts, drawings, ideas in the making and will also include those that didn't make into its final stages.

Meaalofa

Meaalofa in Samoan is a combination of two words but read as one.

Mea = like say “here” or “a” ***Alofa*** = can mean love or gift.

Together it is *The Gift*.

Meaalofa in a Samoan context is purposed for the act of gifting something towards someone as a sign of alofa and acknowledgment. This is commonly practiced at special occasions and events when a meaalofa is represented as a high form of respect in the fa’asamoa (The Samoan way). Meaalofa in this project manifests in different ways through fa’asamoa principles – reciprocity, responsibility, hospitality and service. These principles express the meaning of meaalofa and align with my teachings and learnings in my upbringing.

Meaalofa is at the core of this project and acts as an acknowledgement of my cultural ties and how meaalofa is integral in every thought, action, process and understanding within this project. As meaalofa can manifest in multiple ways in this project, I will be working around these three key concepts, *The Gift*, *The Ties* and *The Recipient*, that will provide a working framework and together reiterate the form of *The Gift* and its context.

THE GIFT

The gift of knowledge, the gift of presence within a moment in time, the gift of an experience, the gift of exchange. The gift knows no bounds; it is not limited to one single thing. It can be many; it can contain beings of multiple. By that, I mean the gift can take on various forms, physical and non-physical, that being, a gesture or the form

of an installational artwork. The gift is presented in the work, in the form of tangible and intangible forms of expression. It occurs in the process of making and the events that enable the presence of different bodies to reside in one singular space, time, and moment. Each aspect of the work, from processes and happenings to the final form of an artwork or event, and everything in between or found along the way, are also considered a gift. American author Robin Wall Kimmerer speaks to this idea that when the treatment of things, products or commodities are recognised as gifts, the whole relationship changes.¹¹ When the artwork elements become forms of gifts, each has the capacity to hold and generate generosity, care and creativity. They become collaborations to the work itself and create an ongoing cycle of reciprocity.¹²

THE TIES

The ties, the surroundings, the meanings, the layers, the connections. The ties are embedded in the project and collaborators past, present, and future histories. The ties are also a form of layering. Layering in the sense that there are several levels within this project that crossover, intertwine, tangle, mend, bond, and mould together. They are inevitable because of our existence and what our ancestors have instilled in us. Therefore, it is about who we are, where we are from and what we represent. The ties are everything that wraps around-and-through the gift presented. Activated by these bodies of artwork, the ties also allow an invitation of association to viewers within a space. Memories of viewers are welcomed to associate their story, their own experiences (whatever those may be...), to allow them to be a part of the work, part of my story, and a part of this collective.

¹¹ Kimmerer, Robin Wall. "The Serviceberry: An Economy of Abundance." Essay. *Emergence Magazine*, December 20, 2020.

¹² Ibid.

The cultural ties in this project relate to the migrant dreams left behind but restored through exploring different avenues of my biographical makeup. This is found in the forms of language and the terminologies surrounding them, locating my aiga's journey stories while simultaneously uncovering and intertwining my own journey story, residing here in Aotearoa within the gaps. Throughout this exegesis, I will be including journal entries of my memories and reflections – my ties – that revolve around my processes within my art practice. These will be in an italicised font different from the main body of text in this exegesis to indicate when reading between past and present text.

THE RECIPIENT

While this research project is situated around my aiga, the gift is not just limited to this group. The meaalofo – the gift of knowledge, of experiences, of talanoa and of alofa is also specified to an audience who are willing to accept the invitation and step into the present spaces to retrieve it. Through different methods and strategies surrounding my art practice, such as hosting temporary events and installations, creating opportunities for talanoa to occur, an exchange between myself and my family, I aim to create a common ground. This common ground is to enable and enlighten others to the impact acts of generosity allow to share and to reclaim and restore the narrative that individuals or groups may share the same story of left behind migrant dreams. Lastly, this research project is a gift to my younger self, the person that wasn't able to receive knowledge of my past and where I'm from, hoping it will ignite a new drive for the now and create a new understanding of my present and future indigenous epistemologies.

Talanoa The Village

Talanoa in Samoan translates as ‘to converse together in dialogue’. When in conversation with family members, trying to find the terms of the project and meaning of talanoa, my dad explained it to me like this:

“Talanoa is like a village that brings everyone together.”

- Dad, [1st September 2020]

Talanoa is the gatherer. Talanoa is the point of exchange. Talanoa is a member of the aiga. Talanoa is the Village. Before technology and before the written word, valuable information and histories were passed down through oral tradition. I grew up learning about my family’s origins and upbringing through my grandparents and parents’ stories. My first experience of talanoa derives from being raised in a pasifika home and environment, where talanoa occurred regularly at family gatherings. Talanoa is an existing practice within my household and surrounding communities. My family are always hosting at one another’s homes for a to’onai (Sunday lunch). During these gatherings, talanoa has become a way of coming together to converse, share valuable knowledge and connect. This was the type of talanoa that you heard infectious laughs from aunties throughout the house; the kind that shared stories and memories of the past; it was a space holder and a vessel that brought us all together to connect through our different experiences of life.

In this project, my central approach positions talanoa both as a research methodology and a research method stemming from my first experiences with talanoa. The kind of talanoa seen as a research methodology acts as a gathering conduit, ‘talanoa the village’. Whether tangible or intangible, talanoa the village gathers these things to

coexist in one area and allows it to pass through, much like the concept of the Vā. Dr Benita Kumar Simati explores this concept of the Vā as a relational space, *Vā Fealoaloa'i*, within her research paper, *The Potential of Vā: An investigation of how 'Te Toga activate the spatial relationships of the Vā, for a Samoan Diaspora community*, and explains Albert Wendt's definition of the Vā,

Wendt refers to “space” as the “space between” and considers how this “space between” relates to different identities. Spaces of identity merge and, as they draw closer together, form relationships. Differences between cultures, families and traditions are created from the interaction in the relational space, of which we become aware when we draw close.¹³

The Vā is the space holder for relation to occur whereas talanoa the village is the tool that draws relation into space, it is the invitation. The Vā creates a relational space to meet together, share and discuss. It becomes a space of sharing through relating and acknowledging where differences are. Together Talanoa the Village and the Vā allows unspoken dialogue and knowledge yet to be discovered, that remains in the space between, to move in and out of during talanoa, to build up topics of discussion. It's a never-ending weaving of links being formed whilst a gathering of people, identities, traditions and genealogies come together. The Vā is doing the work to keep a continuum of thought and stories to carry on to its next listeners. For example, take it from a talanoa you might have with a sibling, friend or loved one. You begin to share a story, and whilst you're sharing, certain details spark up new memories or insights you want to share. When you're sharing, you are also thinking simultaneously. It's a parallel that work together to narrate. This is what Talanoa the Village brings into the space of the Vā, a narration invitation. This methodology also entices the cultural principles of the fa'asamoa when hosting a gathering in a family setting. It is a way of encapsulating a sense of belonging within a space by inviting another to be part of the

¹³ Benita Kumar Simati (2011), p. 11.

aiga, the village. Talanoa the village, as a research methodology takes shape when put into practice.

Continuing this practice of talanoa from my upbringing, I have decided to include it as a method to gather members of my aiga together to host talanoa sessions and to create recollections from the memory of locations that we share in common tapu (sacred) relationships. Historically, research has been driven by institution-approved questionnaires, interactions approved by ethics, and distant methods of communication that do not require personal relationships between the researcher and the participant in order to obtain information. However, these methods are all based on different thinking from that of Pacific peoples.¹⁴ Treating talanoa as a research method enables a genuine and authentic gathering of information. Since this project is oriented around aiga, it's important that the principles of meaalofa are also incorporated into my methods of approaching the research. In *Talanoa Research Methodology: A Developing Position on Pacific Research*, Tongan Scholar Timote M. Vaioleti argues that the “communications of talanoa are not devoid of important information and allows more ‘mo’oni’ (pure, real, authentic) information to be available for Pacific research than data derived from other research methods.”¹⁵ While I am interested in gathering a collection of information, I am also interested in how the space of the Vā¹⁶ can act as a social conduit¹⁷ for a platform for talanoa to occur. The space in-between, the space that relates, the space that does not distance further but instead connects closer personal relationships with each collaborator through providing opportunities to expand knowledge.

¹⁴ Timote M. Vaioleti, "Talanoa Research Methodology: A Developing Position on Pacific Research," *Waikato Journal of Education* 12, no. 1 (2006):p22)

¹⁵ Ibid. p23, 24.

¹⁶ Albert Wendt's definition of the Vā that conveys space.

¹⁷ A social conduit acts as a tool or vessel to help carry out and communicate across key aspects, ideas, themes and/or concepts of a particular topic. It enables a platform that encourages actioning our thinking.

Another practitioner that uses talanoa to gather knowledge and information is Tongan artist John Vea. Vea's practice utilises talanoa as a mode of 'storytelling' to share the stories of his own and others with similar experiences around the impacts for migrant workers and cultural minorities labouring within Aotearoa. His definition of talanoa within his art practice includes the whole process of exchanging dialogue, not just in words, but through actions, movements and objects.¹⁸

I ask the storyteller if they would like to take part in the work and the majority of them say no because of potential repercussions, so I end up reenacting their stories using movement and objects. I then take on the role of the storyteller.¹⁹

Vea's approach towards his processes of talanoa aligns with the values that I've tried to incorporate into my own methods of gathering information. With the talanoa sessions I have recorded and completed, I have excluded the names of family members involved because I would like to respect any potential vulnerabilities.²⁰ The majority of the family involved in filming their talanoa did not mind having their names revealed; however, for the few that did, I chose to remove everyone's names to prevent singling them out and revealing their wishes. This brings it back to the fa'asamoa principle of responsibility and my own acknowledgement of respect to them. While they remain anonymous, I become the vessel through which their stories are still heard. I see this research project partially as a recollection and restoration of the 'left behind', valuable knowledge that the younger version of myself couldn't access.

¹⁸ "An Interview with John Vea," interview by Dilohana Lekamge, Enjoy Contemporary Art Space, March 21, 2017, <https://enjoy.org.nz/blog/2017/03/interview-with-john-vea>)

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ethics application: 20/416 Mealofa of Presence – ethics approval was granted for this research project from AUTECH (Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee) on 16 December 2020. This approval included my being able to engage aiga in talanoa for the project and to record and reproduce material within the artwork using photography, video, and sound recordings. The majority of the family involved in filming their talanoa did not mind having their names revealed; however, for the few that did, I made a choice to remove everyone's names to prevent singling them out and revealing their wishes.

POINTS OF EXCHANGE USING TALANOA

Serwayne Place is now an empty grass reserve consisting of five empty sections secluded from its suburban neighbourhood by surrounding trees and foliage. Number 25 Serwayne Place was where our family house used to be and no longer exists. That is, except for the bamboo trees that lined the driveway, a power box, a manhole and a single grapefruit tree. These four elements mark out the property on which our section was situated. The grapefruit tree that still stands tall was planted by my late-grandpa (maternal) Patelesio Tavita David Tiumalu. To this day, my family and I still visit this place (our home) to collect the grapefruit that the tree produces each season in June–July. Each of the talanoa sessions was based around happenings that occurred at this site, prompted by a single object – a grapefruit picked from my grandpa’s tree.

I extended an invitation to those in my family who had lived at or had a close connection to Serwayne to join me in a talanoa session to reminisce and reflect on memories and stories incited by this significant object. This process of talanoa with my aiga enabled them to act as co-creators of the artwork. I understand this aspect of my methodology that includes these ideas of talanoa as a village and a process that gathers collaborators of the land to coincide. Talanoa, in this context, is the gift of exchanging knowledge.



Img 1. Photograph of Grandpa's remaining Grapefruit Tree at Serwayne. (2020) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

The talanoa sessions consisted of inviting the individual family member to a space of their choice, sitting or standing in that space, while I set up the camera, microphone and tripod for recording. I then passed them a grapefruit to hold, which I had picked from my grandpa's tree at Serwayne. I gave them some time before I asked the question that I hoped would prompt their own reflections upon simply holding the fruit. Before the talanoa session, I explained that this was going to be a conversation between themselves and the grapefruit they were holding and that I was the person listening to their conversation. Once I had framed the shot of them holding the grapefruit, I asked them the one question,

"What comes to mind when you think of a grapefruit?"

Many family members could recall memories from Serwayne. I found it interesting to document the conversations they had between themselves and the grapefruit. While they each held grapefruit plucked from the tree at Serwayne, it seemed to trigger different memories associated with the actual fruit and where these fruit originate. Each conversation varied in length of time, depending on the things they wanted to talk about. To some, the grapefruit reminded them of a person, someone that was present in their life. And for others, someone that had passed on. One talanoa session led to the remembrance of other symbolic fruit trees within their backyard that had previously been planted by passed loved ones or by themselves in memory of those deceased. Other topics centred on the physicality of the grapefruit, the way it smelt, the way it felt, tasted – and to one member, they said the grapefruit they were holding was nothing compared to the grand sizes they remembered as a kid. One talanoa session I hosted was with two family members present in the room. Prior to the recording of the session, we sat and talked about so many things; it was like the overheard conversations from the lounge when I was a child, and my mum and aunties would talk about the things happening in their lives, only this time I was a part of the conversation. This stirred something profound in me because it felt like I had lost time growing up, and the experience made me realise and remember the importance of

aiga and the meaalofo of presence. In total, I have had talanoa with twelve members of my aiga out of the original twenty-one that had connections to Serwayne. Each talanoa session has moved me in different ways and definitely provided a new understanding of my aiga's history by exchanging the presence of ourselves within the spaces the talanoa provided. By providing a space for these family members and myself, we were able to reminisce and learn of important values embedded in us and assembled a collection of stories that we get to pass on.

As referred to earlier, this research project revolves around my aiga. It is based on the family values (of the importance) of establishing 'oneness' between all, meaning that all participants are made to feel that they too are co-creators of the project. Without their input and *say* within this project, it would be orchestrated in an alienating manner. My focus is to instil the principles of alofa and care, so it is important to me to ensure that my family feel mutual respect and partnership in the aspects and ideas they collaborate on within the project. All of the project talanoa will become family heirlooms with the intention that their shared knowledge will transfer through meaalofo to the following recipient, the next generation.



Img 2. *Talanoa 09-1/15* (2021) Film still from talanoa session with family member, 09 1/15, about 'What comes to mind when you think of a Grapefruit?', 3'12.
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Img 3. - *Talanoa 09-31* (2020) Film still from talanoa session with family member, about 'What comes to mind when you think of a Grapefruit?', 2'11
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Img 4. Photograph of family member's own Grapefruit tree planted in their backyard remembrance of passed loved one. Shown to myself after talanoa session occurred. (2021)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

The Sites

“No matter how mobile a person may be, some form of attachment to places is always present in our life.”²¹

- Maria Lewicka

Polish academic Maria Lewicka’s research paper, *Place attachment, place identity, and place memory: Restoring the forgotten city past*, investigates the collective memory in inhabitants of two cities, Lviv, Ukraine and Wrocław, Germany. Post-World War II, these cities underwent drastic changes within their own territories and population, most of whom had been removed from their homes. The study focuses on what happens to the residence’s memory of place they call *home* and their relationship with place identity and place attachment. Lewicka defines these terms and says, “*Place attachment* refers to bonds that people *develop* with places and *Place identity* refers to people’s *bonds* with places.”²² Serwayne Place, Newington Road and Kinglsey Place are the three primary places I am working with and are the sites I situate my practice in. Each of these places has played an important role in my upbringing, and their significance has become more prevalent since beginning this research project. These sites have had unique impacts from my childhood to adulthood and witnessed different stages and significant events of my life, and because of this, I have formed an attachment to the three sites. They are acts of meaalofa in how I work alongside them, hoping to collaborate and contribute back to the land.

Māori artist Layne Waerea’s practice seeks to question and challenge social and legal ambiguities through performance art interventions in public spaces. As a former

²¹ Maria Lewicka, “Place Attachment, Place Identity, and Place Memory: Restoring the Forgotten City Past,” *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 28, no. 3 (2008): pp. 209-231, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2008.02.001>, p211.

²² Ibid.

lawyer and lecturer in law, Waerea uses this experience and knowledge to inform her performance interventions, focusing on how Te Tiriti o Waitangi can continue to play a critical role in the developing cultural fabric of Aotearoa. With her public interventions, she installs them within sites that evoke a challenge to the public and are usually located near communities with which she is most familiar. Waerea states,

They include my past and current residential neighbourhoods, those I observe on my drive to and from work, and spaces that relate to the issues I am interested in. Interventions in public and private spaces that question land use and ownership, notions of cultural identity and perhaps provide the impetus for boundary shifts of previously held ideas.²³



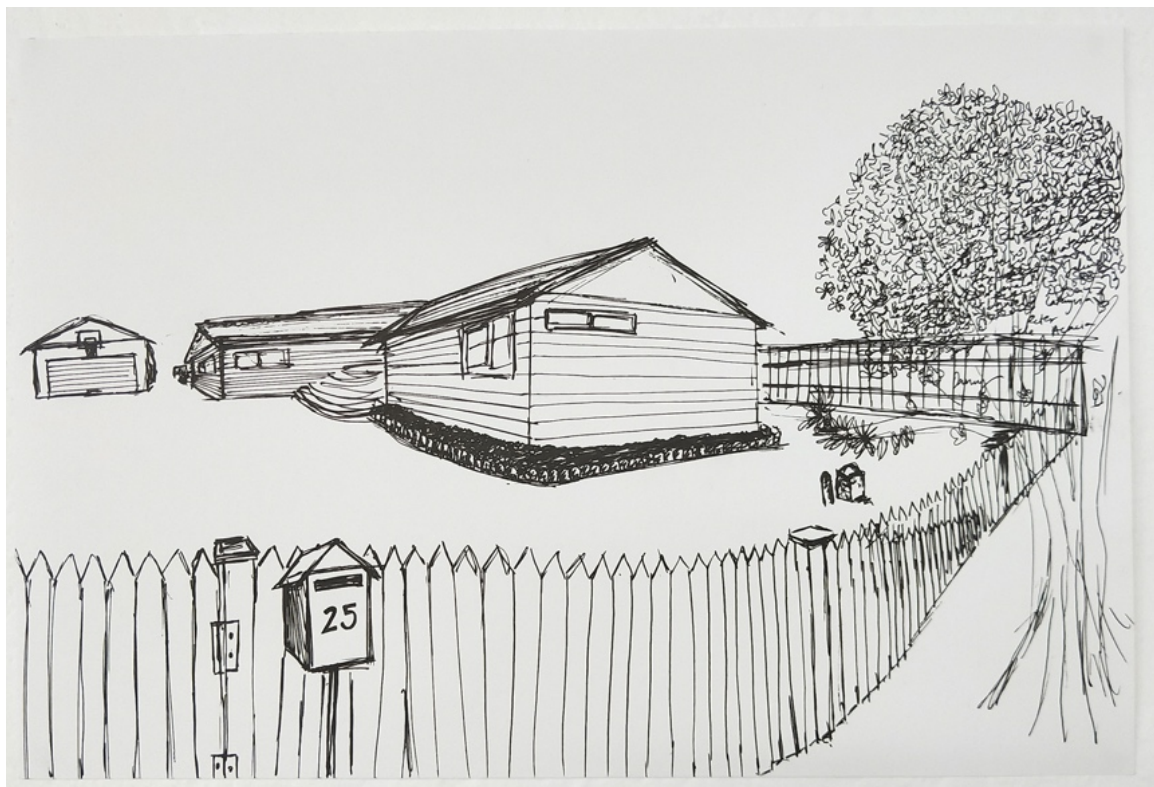
Layne Waerea, *Koha I* (5th Feb, 2012), Assembling a lemondade stand set-up outside in front of a randomn house. Image sourced: <https://laynewaerea.wordpress.com/2012/02/05/koha-i/>

Waerea's strategies of situating her interventions and public installations concerning specific sites surrounding the methodologies of land ownership and cultural identity

²³ Layne Waerea (2012), p14.

are what I am interested in developing in my research. Particularly how I might evoke a deeper relationship to the site by developing methods of collaboration with these sites, urban reminders, and neighbouring locations that are significant to my aiga. Relationships are formed by place attachment and place identity and exchange within the mo'o connections.

SERWAYNE



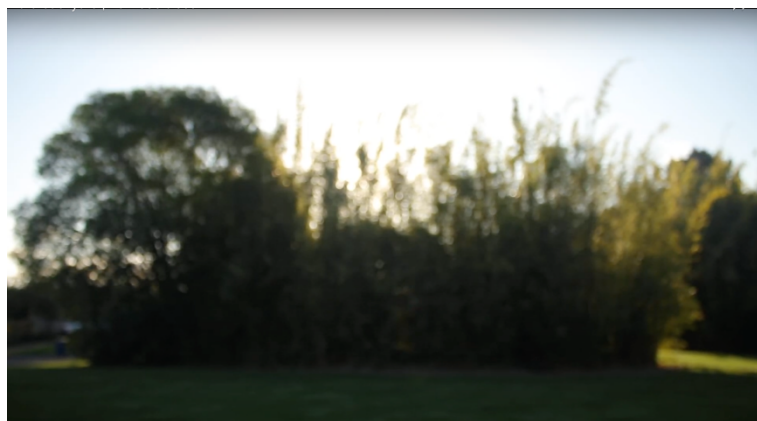
Img 5. 'Serwayne House' Drawing from memory (2021) - 297mm x 420mm, white paper + ink pen

Serwayne was my first home and the last home that housed everyone together from my family before we went our separate ways to live in our own homes in different suburbs and countries. It was also the last home where most of the original migrators of our family were alive together. My grandpa planted the grapefruit tree that still stands tall to this day in the middle of an open grass reserve on the far right corner

where our section met the neighbour's fence line. Family members have continued a relationship with this site since the removal of the house by going to collect grapefruit from our tree each season. It has become an unspoken tradition that I want to bring to the surface and ensure that it continues along with other plans I have in mind to upkeep the land and our family history.

Journal entry #1
"Backyard Series" First encounter with site,
connecting two sites by including places of
belonging | 17.05.2020

At the start of this research project, I had trouble figuring out where to begin the work. During the first lockdown period, I took my camera and went out for a walk, with the idea I would follow the paths where my mind would take me and eventually, something would spark a thought. I ended up at the place where I had previously lived, 25 Serwayne Place, a 20-minute walk down the road from where I currently reside. I proceeded to document a 'new space' for my art practice, but a familiar space from my childhood. In a studio critique, I showed my classmates a still video of my grandpa's grapefruit tree in the backyard of this vacant space that my family once owned. The 1-minute long video captured the essence of the tree standing still, alone, in a vast space, as the wind gently moved the foliage in the background surrounding it. We discussed how this could become a 'backyard series' where I could try and correlate the two locations, one current with one past – and create a narrative between them. A new narrative that tells the story of my past and provides one to tell for the future. This discussion with my classmates helped me focus and initiate thoughts around 'places of belonging' and 'the vacant space, occupied'.



1st Visit - Film stills of 1-minute videos documenting the site of Serwayne
locating the property section of number 25. (May, 2020)

Pacific Māori artist Janet Lilo often makes work in response to her local neighbourhood, looking at the rituals and practices present within them. *Home AKL*, a group exhibition held at the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in 2012, consisted of artists who lived in Auckland Tāmaki Makaurau. The show's theme was around the idea of 'home' and 'belonging', drawing from personal experiences living in Auckland and more specifically looking at the role of Pacific art in New Zealand's identity and landscape. Lilo included *Beneath the Radar*, a three-channel video work on tv screens that explored the concept of neighbourhood as a site of engaging social, historical and cultural relationships that build communities shown in a gallery context.²⁴



Janet Lilo "Beneath the Radar" on 42" flat screens (2012)
Home AKL exhibition at Auckland Art Gallery
Image sourced: <https://janetlilo.com/2012/10/05/cry/>

The video displayed a particular perspective of Auckland City, and it was these landscapes that acted as 'points of familiarity' for Lilo. In the exhibition catalogue *Home AKL* text written by curator and art historian Nina Tonga, about Lilo's views towards her work states,

²⁴ "Home AKL," Auckland Art Gallery, n.d., <https://www.aucklandartgallery.com/whats-on/exhibition/home-akl?q=%2Fwhats-on%2Fexhibition%2Fhome-akl>.

The sentimental value of these places resonate within me a sense of “home” and belonging. The familiar landscape and era of homes in certain suburbs, where clumps of quintessential weatherboard homes lie, are very Auckland to me. I find it beautiful but I also think about the multicultural communities within these spaces and what the spaces represent to them.²⁵

Lilo’s artistic response to her immediate neighbourhood comes from the sense of home and belonging that she has attached to these places of reference, a form of place attachment and place identity within the happenings that occurred in and around the areas that she calls home. Her response parallels my own collaboration with the three sites: Serwayne, Newington and Kingsley. My form of attachment has come from my personal associations with these sites and the things that took place in them.

²⁵ Janet Lilo, Nina Tonga, and Zara Siggelkow, “Beneath The Radar 2012,” Janet Lilo visual artist, March 11, 2015, <https://janetlilo.com/2012/10/05/cry/>.

Journal entry #2
"The five houses" | 22.06.2020

One day, I was researching my old address - 25 Serwayne Place - to see if I could find some resources about the section before we had resided there. Usually, there would be archives of some kind. I was googling my old address and stumbled upon this website called "Property Value"²⁶. I found this photo dated March 20th 2004. It was our house! It was so bizarre to see the house standing there in the photo and then look at the land now, empty. There it was. It is interesting how I can look at this place through an image - and this is what I see, a photograph of our house. The shape, the sound of the bamboo leaves, the broken up concrete of the driveway, it's so surreal. The imagery of my memories feels so vivid. After googling No 25, I searched for the other four houses that were removed also. And there they were too. Cars parked in their driveways and on the street, the dull fences, and the trees that once grew there.

²⁶ Property Value, is a website where you can search properties and view the details and history of the house such as when it was first built, when it was sold, renowned or this case removed from the property. "Property Details for 25 Serwayne Place, Sunnyvale, Auckland, 0612," PropertyValue.co.nz, n.d., <https://www.propertyvalue.co.nz/auckland/waitakere-city/sunnyvale-0612/25-serwayne-place-sunnyvale-auckland-0612-6278329>.



25 Serwayne Place



27 Serwayne Place



23 Serwayne Place



29 Serwayne Place



21 Serwayne Place

These are the photographs of the five houses that were located at the cul-de-sac end of Serwayne Place before they were removed by the Waitakere City Council. These photos were sourced from the Property Value website I stumbled upon.

<https://www.propertyvalue.co.nz/auckland/waitakere-city/sunnyvale-0612/25-serwayne-place-sunnyvale-auckland-0612-6278329>.

The empty site where the five houses, 21, 23, 25, 27 and 29 of Serwayne Place, were removed has now been renamed ‘Serwayne Reserve’. This public area permanently shows the absence of the physical homes that once stood on these grounds and the presence of memories and events that occurred. Memories remain for those people who remember or know of the site’s history. This project focuses primarily on the physical boundaries that demarcate the perimeter of number 25. Serwayne is the site that holds the capacity to seek out a sense of belonging for my family members, even though this place no longer situates a physical home or a family that lives in it. The method of hosting events on-site and utilising urban reminders²⁷ is based on the site itself with family members that one knew it, is the key to unpacking what these spaces and places represent.

²⁷ Urban Reminders (coined by Polish Academic Maria Lewicka in her research paper *Place attachment, place identity, and place memory: Restoring the forgotten City*, 2008, to describe the *leftovers* from previous inhabitants of a place) may be understood in the form of the remaining trees and plants on the site of Serwayne and its local surroundings. Also, in what comes about through talanoa sessions i.e. memories and stories.

NEWINGTON



Img 6. 'Newington House' Drawing from memory (2021) - 297mm x 420mm, white paper + ink pen

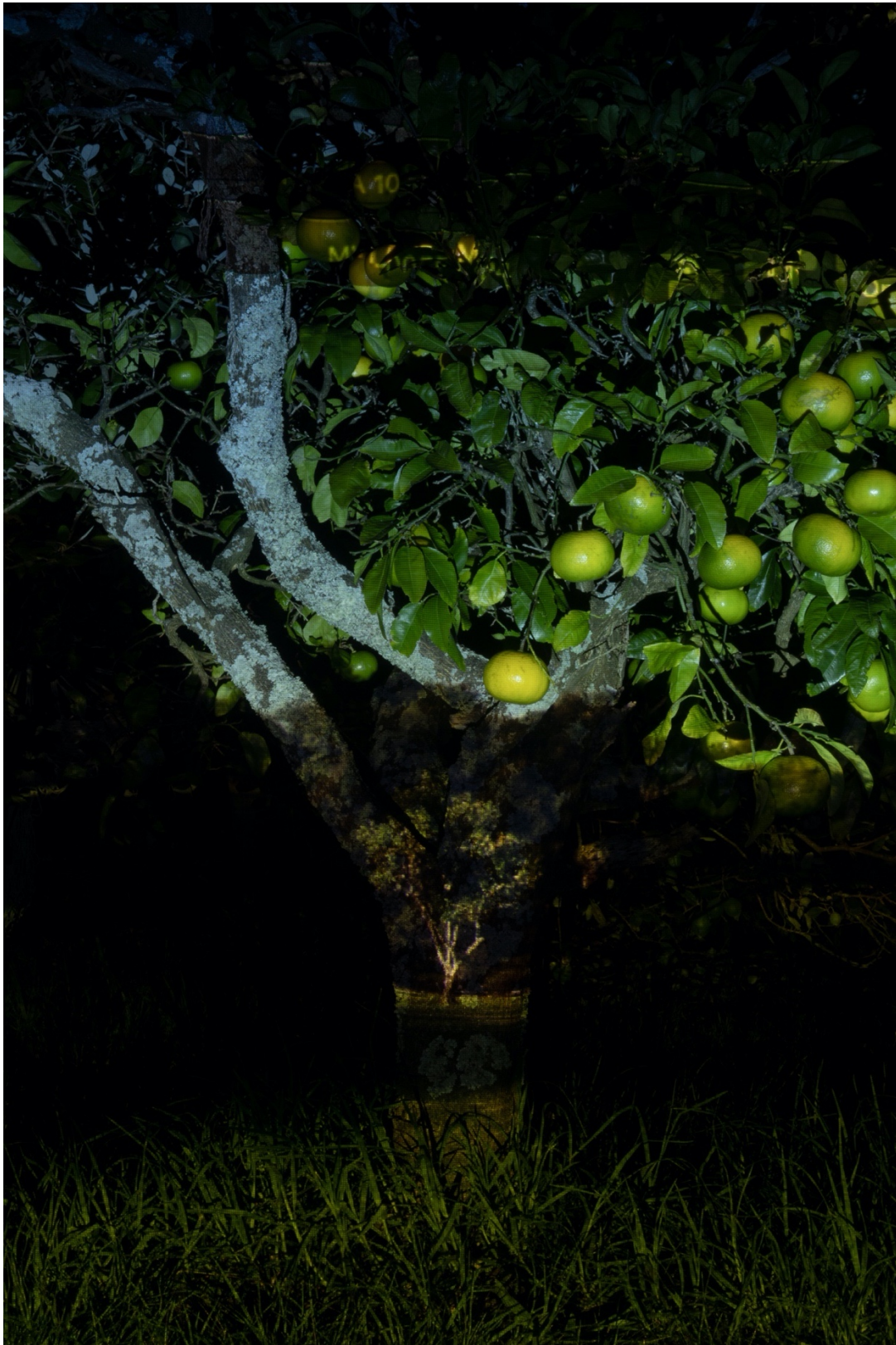
Newington Road is the location of my current home that I live in. This house we moved into in late 2019, after moving from several other homes around West Auckland and since living at Serwayne. After all those house moves, this location has been the closest in proximity to Serwayne, only about a 20-minute walk down the road. Coincidentally, a second grapefruit tree lives here in my backyard at Newington. This one, however, looks to be a few years younger than the one at Serwayne but still older than myself. The significance of having a second grapefruit tree close by helped to keep the project's momentum ongoing. When I was in my backyard, I was reminded that the life of the tree could go beyond the actual site, by correlating similar aspects between the two backyard sites. I began taking my recordings of Newington and highlighting

the differences and similarities between Serwayne and Newington in the hopes of finding something to work with.

The first work I experimented with was a 1-minute 'still' video of my grandpa's grapefruit tree at Serwayne that was then projected onto the tree trunk of the grapefruit tree that resided in my current backyard at Newington. Two grapefruit trees stand alone in the backyards that I once *was with* and am *now with*. I chose the grapefruit trees to connect the two different and separate lands by using a familiar and common 'property'. Using a projector to overlay and merge the two trees together created a becoming moment aligning these two significant places that entice past and present roots. For this installation, I had to wait until nightfall for the projection to be visualised; this also added an ephemeral quality as it only offered a temporary lighting condition that could not be viewed during the day, making the work a fleeting presence.



Img 7. Film still of 1-minute video of remaining grapefruit tree at Serwayne. (2020)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Img 8. "*Apart, but not Alone*" (2020) Photograph of installation at Newington. 1-minute film of Serwayne grapefruit tree projected onto Newington grapefruit tree.
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

Apart, but not Alone took on another layer after installing and seeing these two trees align. The Samoan proverb comes to mind;

O le tele o sulu e maua ai figota, e mama se avega pe a ta amo fa'atasi.

My strength does not come from me alone but from many.

This Samoan proverb considers the relation of cultural ties and acknowledges what lies before and after the happening of removal of a physical body, the house at Serwayne. However, this act of removal did not remove the spiritual and intellectual body of the house or the people that called this place home. The method of physically combining two bodies of the grapefruit trees and the separate spaces through projection, utilises one of the key concepts of meaalofa, the ties. In *Apart, but not Alone*, the ties take the form of connectivity. Even though these two grapefruit trees are set apart, one tree (Serwayne) alone on site while the other tree (Newington) is surrounded by family, they still each share the same ties to belonging because they each within their own time were surrounded by many, by aiga. This indicates that the ties to a place run deep, and the connections simply come from the genealogy you share within your own history. The Samoan proverb, *my strength does not come from me alone, but from many*, reiterates that whatever space you encounter, sit in, stand in, the presence of what was and what is, and occurred within these spaces will always be with you no matter the physical distance you set apart from them.

KINGSLEY



Img 9. 'Kingsley House' Drawing from memory (2021) - 297mm x 420mm, white paper + ink pen

Kingsley is the street in Mount Maunganui where my Nana Irene (maternal grandmother) now lives and is the last place my great-grandparents (on the maternal side of the family) lived before they passed away. My cousins, siblings, parents, aunties and uncles and myself all have memories of spending time in this household and share fond memories of how Poppa Donald and Great-nana Irene (great-grandmother) always took good care of us when we stayed.

Journal entry #3

Mount Maunganui, Remember Me | 03.11.2020

When I was younger, I lived in the Mount (Mount Maunganui) between December 2002 to mid-2003 with my family and great-grandparents. We lived in the Mount to support Great-nana Irene, who was battling the last couple of months of her breast cancer journey. I can remember a lot from those days. The Mount became a second home for me, my Tūrangawaewae.

We're back here, and it feels like a breath of fresh air. Instantly, I feel relieved and relaxed again. It's funny how a place can do that to you. We made it to our Nana Irene's²⁸ house by about 20:00 and surprised her from behind with a cake and song as she was watching Coronation Street on the telly. Her reaction really was priceless. Miss having time with her and having family around. She's such a champ for moving down here on her own.

What was supposed to be a one-night trip for us ended up being a three-day trip. My mum and aunty ended up coming down as well to help take Nana back home with us for the holidays. While we spent a few days there, I asked my nana about the rose bush at the front, and she was able to tell me a bit about it. The rose bush is her mum's (Nana Irene) rose planted by her dad (Poppa Donald). She mentioned that out of the other two rose bushes her mum planted beside this one before, this one was the one that stood against time. Its name is 'Remember Me'.

²⁸ Both my nana and great-nana on my maternal side share the name Irene.

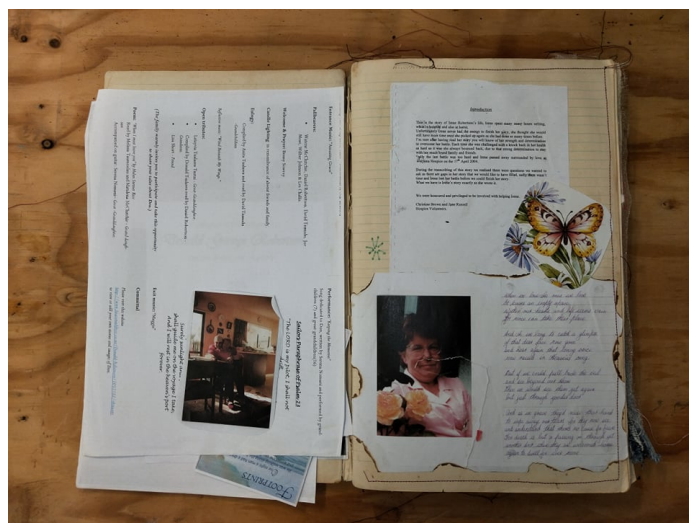


Img 10. Nana's Rose 'Remember Me' at Kinglsey Place, Mount Maunganui
(2020) Photograph of Nana's rose bush planted by Poppa Donald along the
driveway of residential home in Mount Maunganui now owned by Nana Irene.
Image Credit: Jalesa Nomani

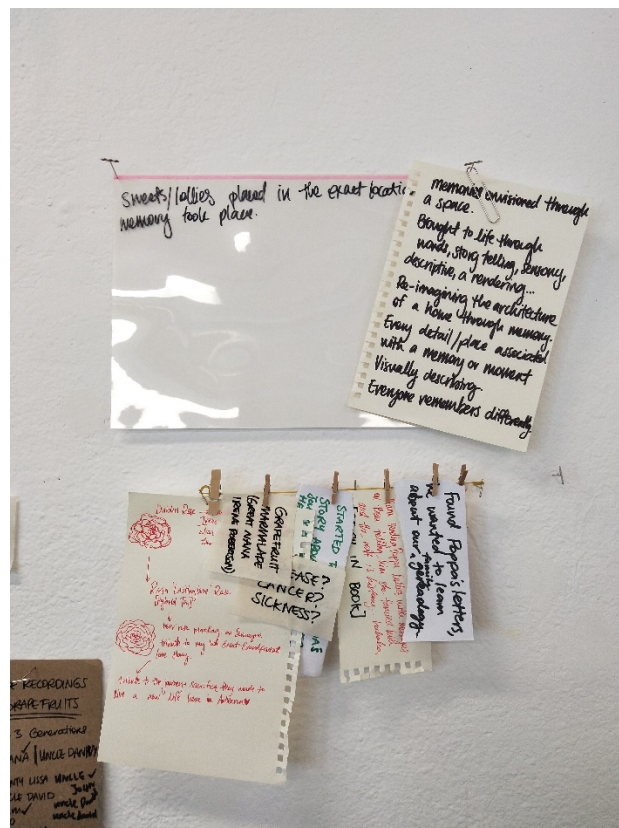
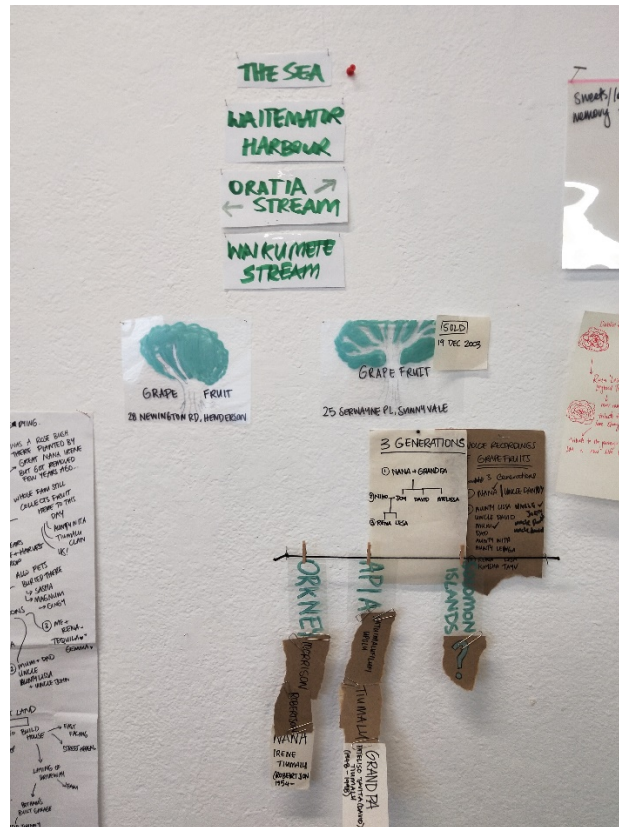
Kinglsey, in this research project is a site of discovering what comes before me. It is where the unveiling of the journey stories of my family members begins and where I start to understand connections. The digging began when I came across family archives of my great-grandparents (maternal), left these behind to my aiga. Through these archives, my connection towards each of them grew deeper, even after they had departed from this world.²⁹ The relationship developed with the collections they left behind, of stories, letters and photographs of their life from when they lived in Scotland to when they migrated to Aotearoa in 1966. One story in particular that I have resonated profoundly with was my great-nana Irene's memoir that she had written, *A Time To Remember*. This story was typed and printed out after she passed in 2004, and only a few women in our aiga have physical copies of it. The copy I found was an iteration created by my mum, who had intended to gift in the future, however it is unfinished. In the book, Mum has inserted photographs and poems, stitched and hand-sewn ephemeral material to the pages, and annotated in the margins her versions of the memories that my great-nana Irene shares. This inspired me to make a third iteration of the story but in digital form. This, too, is unfinished.

The reasoning for the digital version is so that this story can never be lost, and is able to be passed onto the next generation after my own, but also that it can reach other people in the community that may find relation to great-nana Irene's story as she had intended. As I type out the words my great-nana foretold and read my mother's annotations along the way, I begin to feel the presence of the empowerment of the experiences they share. It is a form of meaalofa I simply can't put into words but rather display in the form of my art practice. These are only but a segment that the complexities of the ties and meanings uphold.

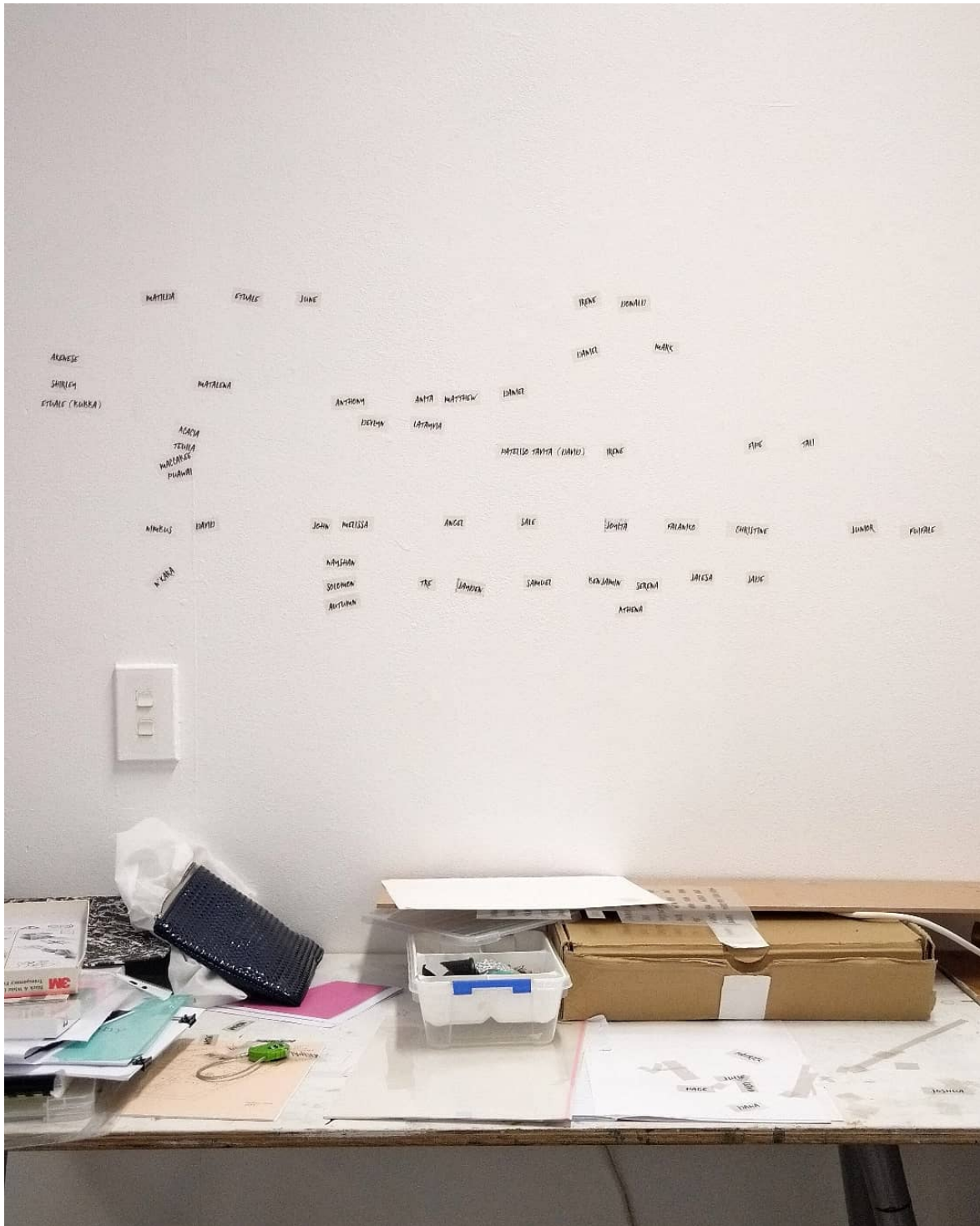
²⁹ My great-nana Irene passed away in 2004 and 11 years later my great-grandfather, Poppa Donald passed in 2015



Mum's iteration of great-nana Irene's story *A Time To Remember*.
Currently has 66 pages of the book completed.



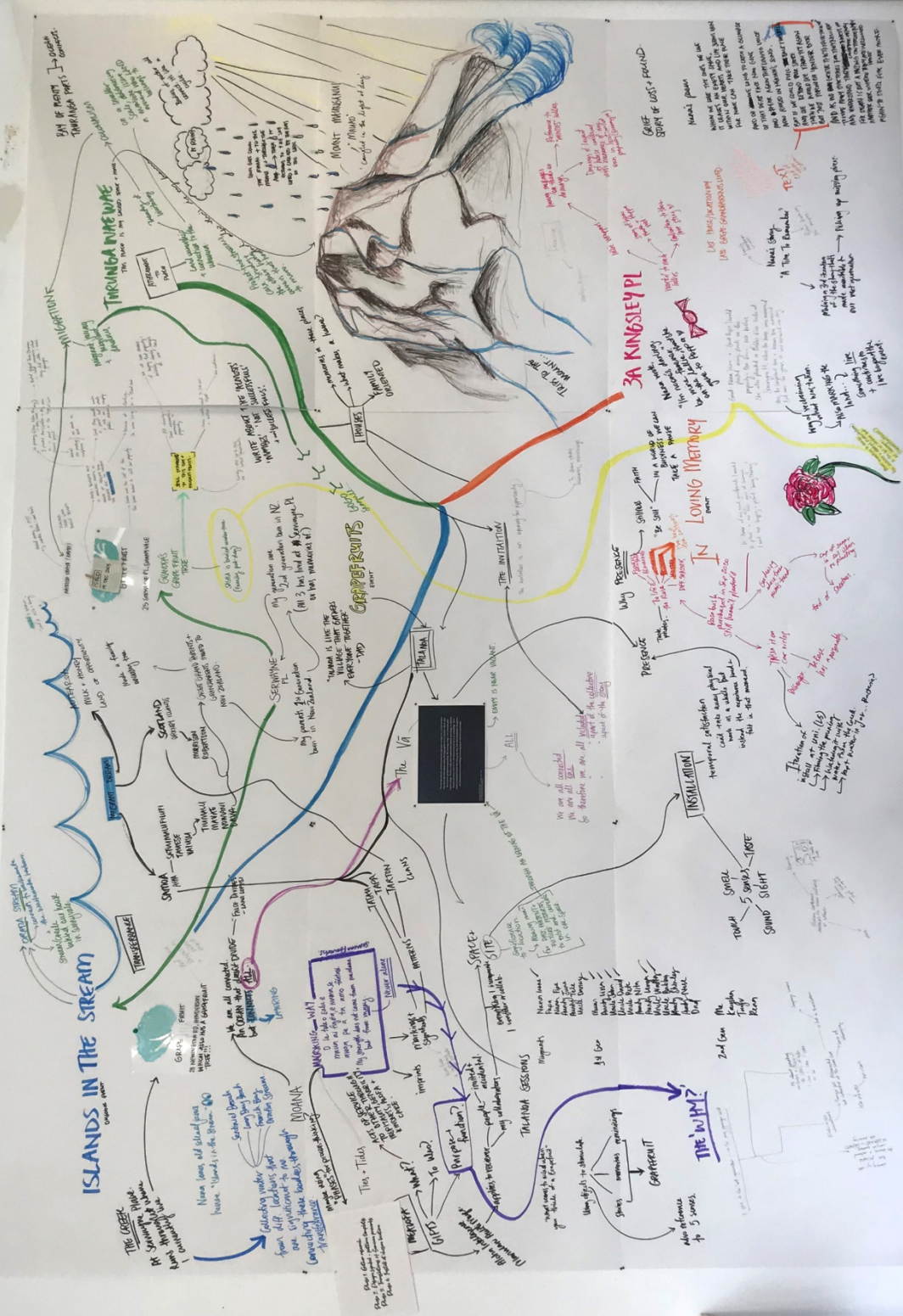
Studio wall close up of family connections and ties to sites. (2020)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Family tree of paternal and maternal side of family including 7 generations.
Studio wall (2020) Image Credit: Jalesa Nomani



Studio space (2021) Image credit: Jalea Nomani



Full informal geography map on studio wall space. 2500mm x 1800mm paper and markers (2021) Image credit: Jaiesha Nominasi

Grapefruits

I decided to host a public event, *Grapefruits*, on the grounds of Serwayne Reserve where I invited guests from my own family and friends and local neighbourhood to come along and exchange grapefruits. The location of the event holds significance as the land was owned by my family, and four other families before the Waitakere City Council removed our houses due to a Water Protection Act in 2004. What remains on this land are plant life and man-made objects that mark the boundaries of the section where our property laid; bamboo trees, a power box, a manhole and a grapefruit tree. This event was situated around my family as a way to reclaim back some of what was taken from us by gathering memories and using the site to recreate a new memory in the form of this gathering.

Samoan artist, Edith Amituanai works to bring about conversations of a collective people that live in amongst her local community. In her 2019 exhibition “Double Take” shown at the Adam Art Gallery Te Pātaka Toi in Wellington, Amituanai included photographs of locals and domestic scenes from West Auckland, Samoa and the USA that represented different ages, stages of life, cultures and ethnicities. Despite these differences, they all shared one thing in common, living within a collective diasporic community as a product of migration. The collective body and the community are recurring themes that takes place in Amituanai’s work. By placing these photographs and artworks in prestigious and ‘high art’ galleries, such as the capital of New Zealand, it begins to deconstruct the stigmas around these people from diasporic communities, specifically those of Pacific Island descent. That is, assumptions towards minorities of Pacific people, particularly how they ‘should behave’ and have been treated due to preconceived notions of crime, violence and rebelliousness. However, this view does not paint them in their true light which is Amituanai’s point.

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Edith Amituanai, "Double Take", 2019, Exhibition install at Adam Art Gallery, Wellington, Portraits of local people and domestic scenes from diasporic communities in West Auckland, Samoa and USA. <https://edithamituanai.com/Double-Take-install>

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Amituanai's photographs in *Double Take* begins by dissociating these preconceived ideas and reconstructs this group of people in a new light that brings power and voices back to the individual and the collective community. "She provides a lens on what she describes as the 'third-wave migration' driven by diverse economic and social forces that propel the movement of Pacific Island communities from their homelands."³⁰ This starts to change the narrative, place 'the people' at the foot of the conversation and put their own narratives into action. *Double Take* allows the public to literally take a 'double take' of the series of photographs and draws attention to the experiences of pasifika people and other diasporic communities within Aotearoa New Zealand, and

³⁰ "Edith Amituanai Doubletake," Ane Tonga, n.d., <https://anetonga.net/edith-amituanai-double-take>.

further afield.³¹ In some of Amituanai's artworks, she uses strategies such as giving rise to the participants in the photograph by handing them the opportunity to take a photograph and capture what they see through the lens. This action then initiates the camera as the guest and the participant that takes a photograph, the host. New relationships and connections are formed as the artist allows the action to take place and hands control over to the community. By giving recognition to diasporic communities in Auckland and from around the world, Amituanai is attempting to change the perspective of preconceived colonial notions around Pacific people by placing them in a new light that gives them the power to choose and decide how they could be depicted. To provide a sense of hope and belonging to those separated and left at the margins of society, Amituanai gathers together those marginalised to find a familiarity with the work. This is how she begins the conversation of reversing back the disempowerment that took place for this group of people and shines a light on ways to reclaim the narrative and share the truth of individuals stories by playing with the themes of guests and hosts through photographic strategies.

Amituanai's reclaims the narrative by acknowledging the communities she works in and the participants through collaboration. This allows the participant to impart the truths of their story, highlighting parts of the narrative that are often overlooked or marginalised. In *Grapefruits*, the narrative is reclaimed using similar storytelling methods in talanoa with aiga and inviting viewers of the event to collaborate in the final installation. This brings a new perspective to the artwork by retelling a collective story of memories and happenings that occurred at Serwayne and the different people that step onto the land and the stories they each carry.

³¹ "Edith Amituanai: Double Take," Te Pātaka Toi - Adam Art Gallery, n.d., <http://www.adamartgallery.org.nz/past-exhibitions/13635/>.

Journal entry #4

My own memories of a grapefruit | 26.06.20

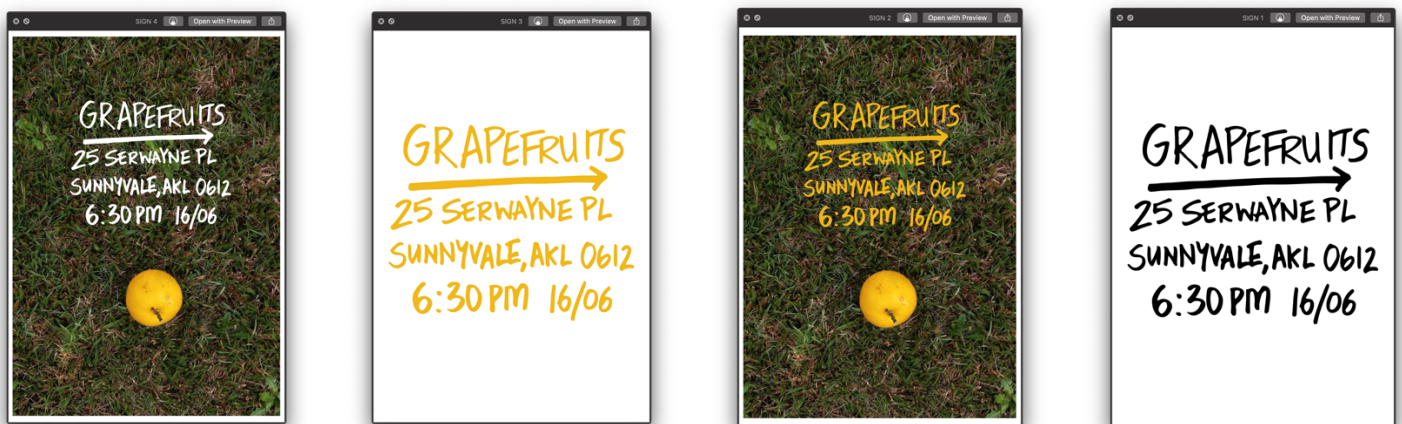
I used to swing off the washing line with my younger sister, and we would swing round and round to grab the grapefruits from the top of the tree to eat. Once we grabbed our bunch, we would take them inside, cut them in half, sprinkle brown sugar on top of them, and eat them. My sister's trick was to do this but go the extra mile and stick them in the fridge, wait a couple of minutes and then come back and eat it. I always used a teaspoon to scoop out the little sections to get all the juice and then squeeze it and drink it like a teacup. It was an acquired taste fruit. When starting this project with grapefruits, I began to notice it more often. It was like when you have the moment when you wear a striped shirt, and then you go out in public and suddenly think that everyone else decided to wear striped shirts. But they didn't. It's just that you began thinking about it because you wore one, and then you started to take more notice of it. That was like the grapefruits. I would walk around my neighbourhood and spot grapefruit trees peeping over the fence of someone's backyard. It even got so bad that while driving, I would yell out, "Hey! They have a grapefruit tree!" Note to self: Don't spot grapefruit trees and drive. One thing that I also found intriguing was that I couldn't find any grapefruits in the supermarket or fruit shop.



Making grapefruit juice with the remaining grapefruits that weren't collected at Grapefruits event (2020) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

THE INVITATIONS

We started by writing the sign out on a bit of paper. We wanted to ensure that whoever saw this sign was invited and felt invited. There were multiple invitations: a personal invitation (envelopes and word-of-mouth), an accidental invitation (signage) and a public invitation (social media). We installed event signage around the local area and used ‘garage sale’ type signage to give the impression that this was a ‘local event’, making it a more authentic approach to the public. This also signified the idea of a ‘public event’, the same way a garage sale is planned – a one-off event where you can only come and get what you want at that specific time and place.



Img 11. *Grapefruits* event posters (2020) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

I made four posters for digital and analogue distribution. I wanted to extend my invitation through different means purposed invited public and an accidentally invited public. These were differentiated by the form of invitation either group received, digital or analogue.

A digital invitation was via social media, message or email. It was the quickest form of distribution sent to family and friends, colleagues, classmates and staff. My immediate

family and friends, colleagues, classmates were classed as a purposed invitation since the event involved a sense of aiga. Those who were invited were considered my aiga. This digital distribution was also published on social platforms, so it offered an opportunity for people that I didn't have a connection to, to come to the event. This group of the public was categorised as accidental.

The analogue invitation was in the form of handcrafted posters, signage, and letters addressed to the immediate neighbourhood of Sunnyvale³². The posters and signage were stapled or taped onto light poles, bike racks and fences in hopes of capturing a passer-by that would feel intrigued to find what this event involved. The letters were mini-versions of the Grapefruit poster and were in the form of distribution crafted by myself and delivered by my mum, who grew up on the street. I addressed 38 orange envelopes to the current residents of Serwayne Place. Numbering from 1 to 40 (minus the five houses), I asked my mum to walk down the street and personally deliver the envelopes, one by one. In honour of this location, I extended the invitation to the local public of where I was installing the work. Mum said she could recall each fanau (family) that had lived there and name which still lived there from back in the days. While she walked up and down the street delivering the addressed envelopes in the mailboxes, I went around the site to the train station and waited by the intersection traffic lights before the entrance of the road and the alleyways, in case people coming to the exhibit didn't know how to navigate themselves.³³

³² 25 Serwayne Place is located in Sunnyvale.

³³ On google maps, when you search 25 Serwayne Place, it still shows the property outline of the house and section, but there is no house there, just an empty section.



Grapefruits event posting up signage of around local neighbourhood, on traffic light poles at the intersection at the entry of Serwayne Place, bike racks outside Sunnyvale train station and fences in alleyways. Mum packing the paper bags with envelopes for our guests when they arrive to the event.
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

THE INSTALL

During the week that led up to the *Grapefruits* event, I could not test my projections due to the wet weather forecast. I had to install everything on the night of the event, and some components to the work I had initially planned to include were cut out. Originally, I would have displayed three projections, one on my great-nana Irene's blanket and two images illuminating the grapefruit tree nearby. When I arrived at the site, the wet weather caused a problem with the installation with the wiring on the grass. So, I adapted to the conditions and installed with one single projection. The projection onto the blanket, would show the three recorded talanoa sessions of my family members holding the grapefruit while they talked. Unfortunately, the file formatting of the video wouldn't transmit through the device, so I decided to put up an image of the house and play the audio on a bluetooth speaker instead. This shifted the event's focus to the presence of the individuals at the site, rather than the projected stories. I always put a lot of trust in the process of installing and deliberately let go of my desire to control by having faith in the accidental happenings.

Journal entry #5

The Set-up, detailing and process | 27.07.2020

Grapefruits was an installation that took a lot of care and consideration into the process of its making. Every decision made was intuitive and in complete trust of the process. Whatever worked was supposed to be included. I understood that whatever did not work or caused strain was not meant to be included in the event. I selected a date in the middle of winter without knowing what the weather forecast would reveal on the day. And still, I went ahead with the plans. Initially, I was trying to create a connection between the two sites of Newington and Serwayne by using the projection of the grapefruit tree at Newington but then realised that that was not supposed to be delivered to the guests.



Img 12. *Grapefruits* event installation on the site of Serwayne (2020) Viewpoint: Makeshift projection screen out of great-nana Irene's blanket. Guests seated on beer crates while the audio of three talanoa sessions played on a bluetooth speaker placed underneath a beer crate. One group of guests bought a picnic blanket and basket. Viewing the work with a hot cup of tea.
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Img 13. *Grapefruits* event installation on site of Serwayne (2020). Viewpoint: Projection of the photograph of our house from the Property Value website onto a makeshift blanketscreen held up by waratahs, with guests seated on beer crate seating around the site.
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

THE EXCHANGE

During this public event, an exchange of grapefruits was encouraged between the host-myself, the land, and the guests. The first exchange was hand-picked grapefruits from the grapefruit tree where I currently reside in Newington. Originally I had planned to collect fruits from the tree on site, but the fruits were not ripe enough when the event was approaching. So I used the grapefruits from the tree at Newington that was fruiting abundantly (Img 14). I had extended an invitation for guest to collect the grapefruit that was the guest to collect the grapefruit on the ground and place it inside the brown paper bags that I had provided. The second exchange was the resemblance of a grapefruit through a prompting thought, place, person, or memory between me, the host and the guests that came along.

Journal entry #6
Collecting the grapefruits | 27.07.2020

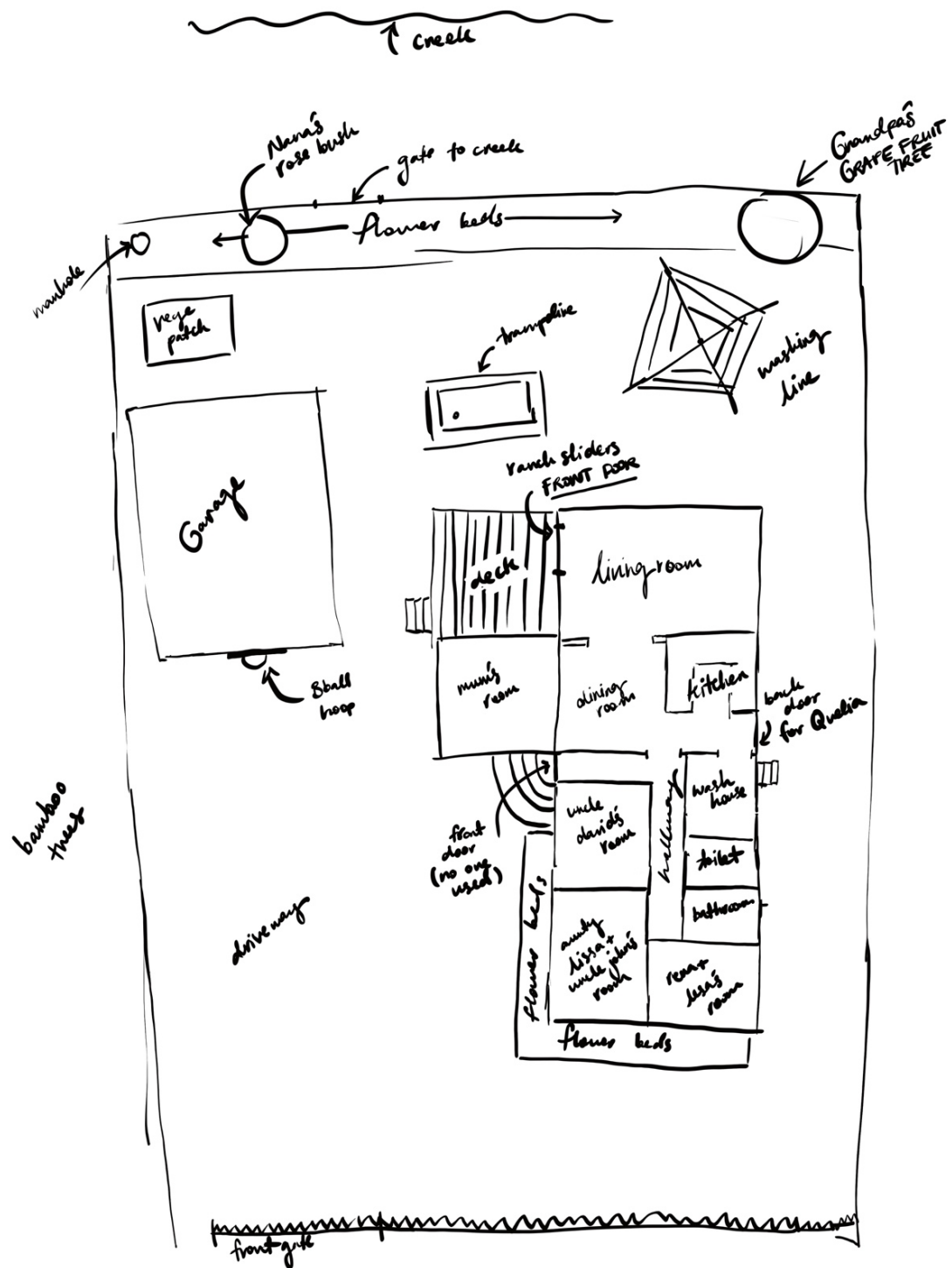
My original plan was to collect and use fruit from Serwayne and Newington. I have a feeling that these trees are close in age. But the one that lives in Serwayne is older. I didn't realise how huge it was until I went there last. I don't see grapefruits sold in supermarkets or fruit and vege shops, yet they're everywhere when I walk around the neighbourhood. I think now, because I'm working with grapefruits, the more I notice its presence in someone else's backyard. For this install, I aimed to create a connection between spaces, 'my back yard' (Newington) and 'my old backyard' (Serwayne). The inability to pick grapefruits from both trees seems to make more sense if I associate them to preserve and produce.

With these grapefruits, I plan to lay them out on-site, to retrace the house's floorplan that once stood. I will then invite my guests to participate in this event by choosing and picking a grapefruit they feel drawn to.



Img 14. Grapefruits harvested from the Grapefruit tree at Newington to be used at the *Grapefruits* installation (2020) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani





Img 15. Drawing from memory layout of the 25 Serwayne Place house and the labelling of the different parts of the home. The shape of the house was the layout the grapefruits were placed on the grass floor at the event of Grapefruits by my mum and younger brother. Digital drawing using Adobe Photoshop (2020) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Img 16. The exchange of grapefruits. Inviting guests to collect the grapefruit from the ground that was laid out referencing the plan of the house that once stood. Placed from memory by my mum and younger brother.

Upon the day of installation, I had made a last-minute addition to the work. Initially, I had this idea that the invited people would come along to the event and collect some grapefruits to take home with them. But then I had this thought, what would I get in return? Here they are, travelling near and far, to attend this event, experience the space and the projection, collect some grapefruits – but I felt something was missing. An exchange!

I decided to invite my guests to collect and choose their grapefruit from the outline of the footprint on the ground and asked them to provide me with a grapefruit of their own, but from memory. I had Mum place an orange envelope in each bag that enclosed a postcard with a writing prompt. It said, *‘What comes to mind when you think of ‘grapefruits’? A memory? A taste? A person? A place?’* This event and writing prompt invited a future purpose that lived beyond the event for both versions of the grapefruits that were either taken away or exchanged. The physical grapefruit that

was laid on the ground could be collected and taken home, to be eaten, made into juice, marmalade, or made into a tart. The new grapefruits, the written words from those that attended the event, were placed back into the standing grapefruit tree. A takeaway that is kept as an urban reminder of the work or used as material for another iteration of the event. The potential for the work to extend beyond the night keeps the grapefruits alive without an end destination or end product. This is an opportunity for more.

The Letter Writing Project by Taiwanese American artist Lee Mingwei is an interactive installation (first staged in 1998) consisting of three transparent wooden booths that resembled a pagoda or lantern and contained a low desk and writing materials for the project visitors. This project was inspired by letters that Lee continued to write to his late maternal grandmother after she had passed away to share his thoughts and feelings. The invitation to the public encouraged visitors to write the letters they had always meant to but had never taken time for. While inside these booths, people could take the time to write the letters they wished and address them to be posted by gallery staff or else leave them unsealed on the booth shelves for other members of the public to read. This project intrigues me because it encourages the collaboration of the visitor and asks for a personal exchange from them.³⁴ Lee, in reflecting on this project and the intended impact of the act of participation that occurred within the writing booths, between the writer and the letters they wrote, says "In the end, it was the spirit of the writer that was comforted, whether the letter was ever read by the intended recipient or other."³⁵ *The Letter Writing Project* focused on the action of intent. What mattered most was the act of writing rather than the delivery of communication. In *Grapefruits*, this same method is carried through by the guest that attended the event. Here, too, the invitation was optional for people to participate or not. Simply the presence of them being in that space and on that site was enough for this event to succeed.

³⁴ Lee Mingwei, "The Letter Writing Project - Lee Mingwei," LEE MINGWEI, n.d., <https://www.leemingwei.com/>.

³⁵ Ibid.



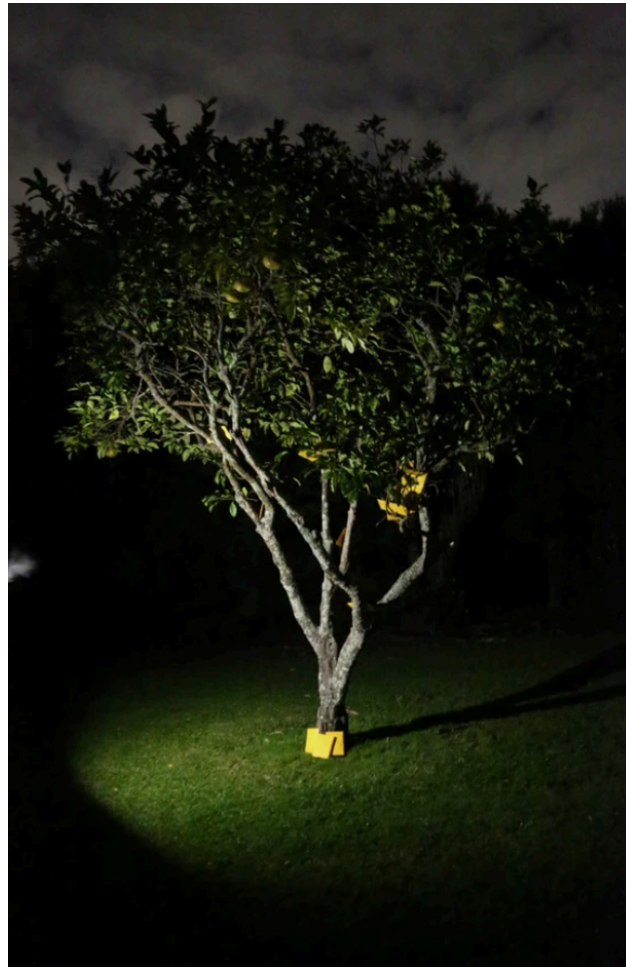
New harvest of grapefruits 5 unsealed letters
from *Grapefruits* eventt (2020)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



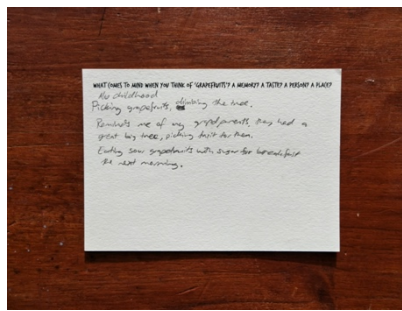
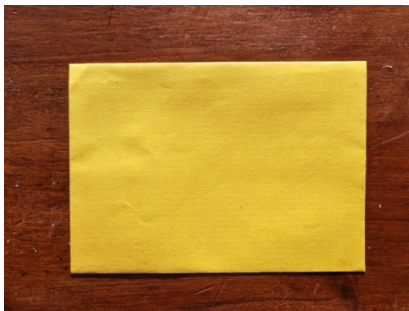
New harvest of Grapefruits 15 sealed
letters from *Grapefruits* eventt (2020)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

TWENTY NEW FRUITS

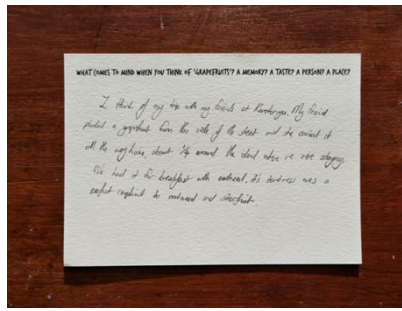
Guests, when they arrived at the event, were offered a bag. In it were a brown paper bag, a pencil and an envelope included a card they were asked to write on. Once they had written on the card, I invited them to place the card and envelope in the grapefruit tree as a meaalofa to the site that they were visiting. After doing so, they were offered to collect some grapefruit from the ground to take home in their bags. The exchange was a success! Twenty new fruits from the participants in the form of yellow envelopes were placed in-between the branches and leaves of my grandpa's grapefruit tree containing their written words of *what a grapefruit means to them*.



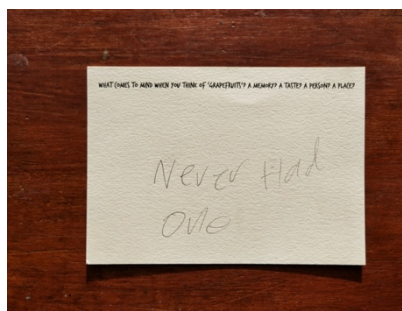
The New Fruits (2020) *Grapefruits* event invited guests to place their yellow envelopes into the grapefruit tree nearby. Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



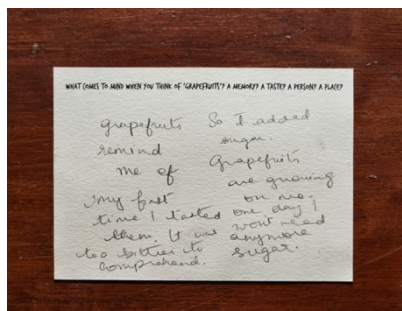
"My childhood. Picking grapefruits. Climbing the tree. Reminds me of my grandparents, they had a great big tree, picking fruit for them. Eating sour grapefruits with sugar for breakfast the next morning."



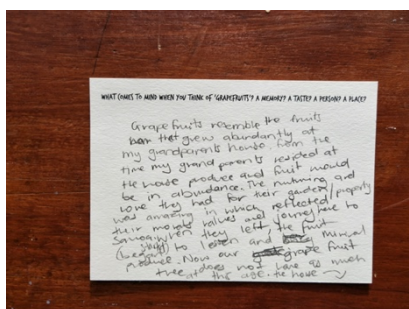
"I think of my trip with my friends at Rarotonga. My friend plucked a grapefruit from the side of the street and she carried it all the way home, about ¼ around the island where we were staying. We had it for breakfast with oatmeal, it's tartness was a beautiful compliment to oatmeal and starfruit."



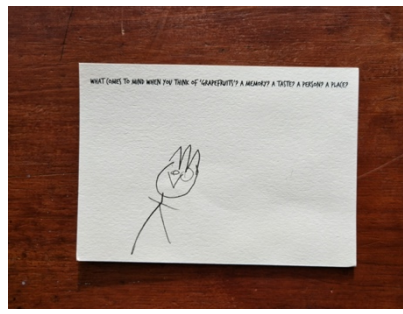
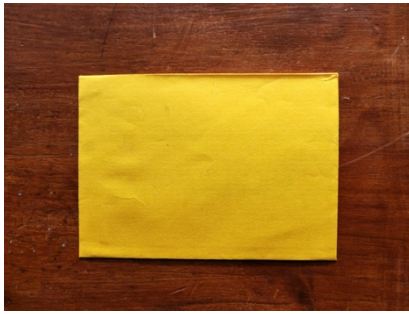
"Never had one."



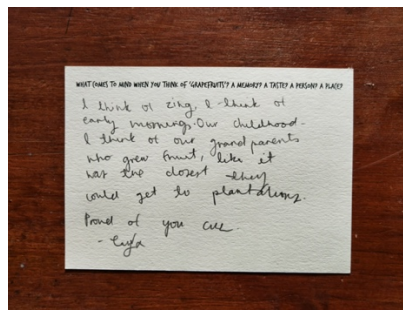
"Grapefruits remind me of my first time I tasted them. It was too bitter to comprehend. So I added sugar. Grapefruits are growing on me. One day I won't need any more sugar."



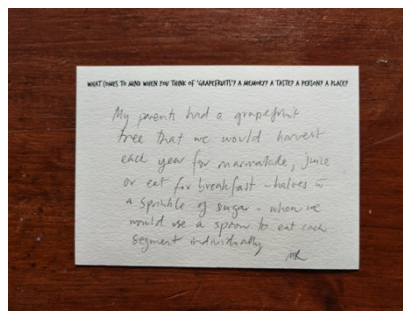
"Grapefruits resemble the fruits that grew abundantly at my grandparents' house. From the time my grandparents resided at the house produce and fruit would be in abundance. The nurturing and love they had for their garden and property was amazing in which reflected their moral values and journey here to Samoa. When they left, the fruit started to lessen and minimal produce. Now our grapefruit tree does not have as much at this age. The house remaining will eventually be sold. On our grapefruit tree ladybugs would attract. When I am looking outside for ladybugs to show the next generation they cannot be found."



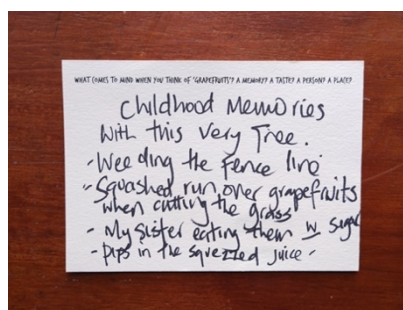
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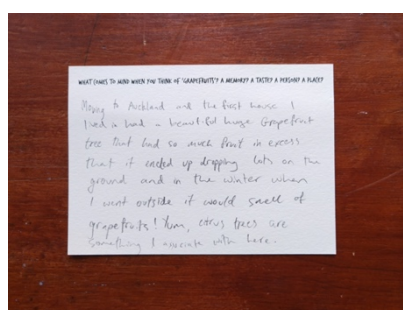
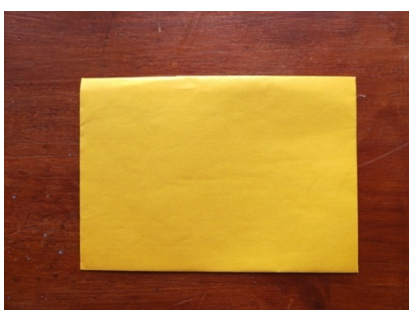
“I think of zing, I think of early morning. Our childhood – I think of our grandparents who grew fruit, like it was the closest they could get to plantations. Proud of you cuz.”



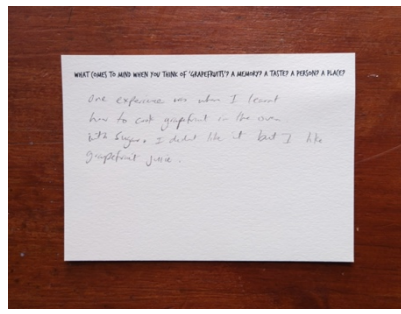
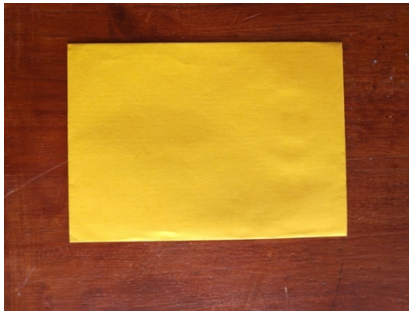
“My parents had a grapefruit tree that we would harvest each year for marmalade, juice or eat for breakfast – halves with a sprinkle of sugar – when we would use a spoon to eat each segment individually.”



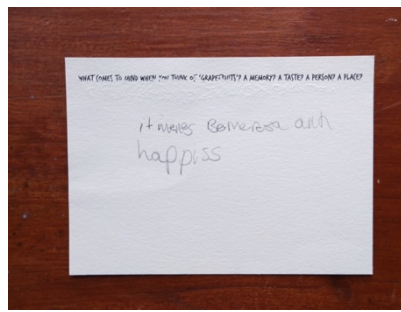
“Childhood memories with this very tree. Weeding the fence line. Squashed run over grapefruits when cutting the grass. My sister eating them with sugar. Pips in the squeezed juice.”



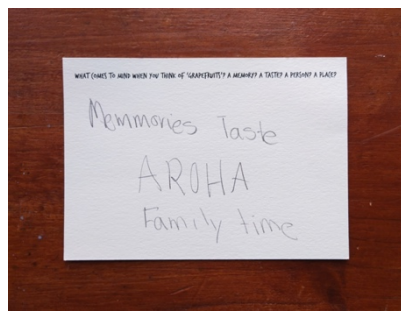
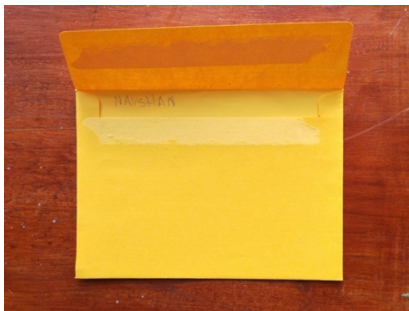
“Moving to Auckland and the first house I lived in had a beautiful huge Grapefruit tree that had so much fruit in excess that it ended up dropping lots on the ground and in the winter when I went outside it would smell of Grapefruits! Yum, citrus trees are something I associate with here.”



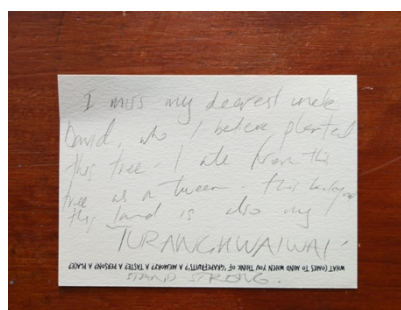
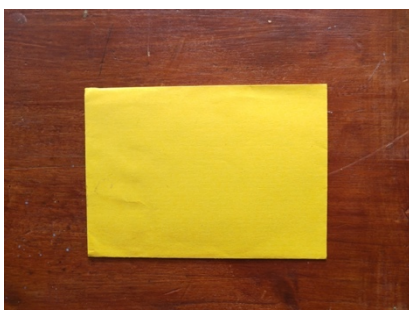
"One experience was when I learnt how to cook grapefruit in the oven with sugar. I didn't like it but I like grapefruit juice"



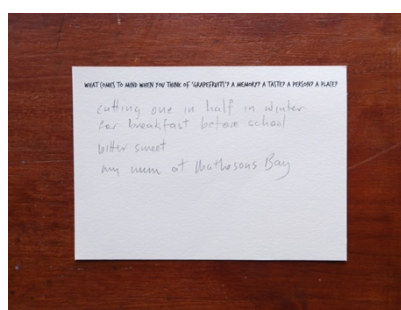
"It means memories and happiness"



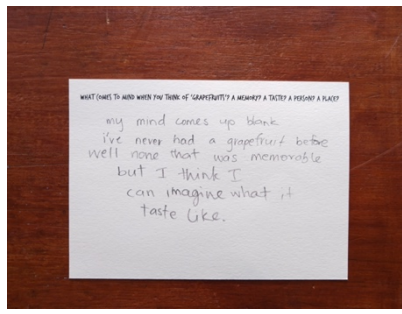
"Memories. Taste. AROHA. Family time."



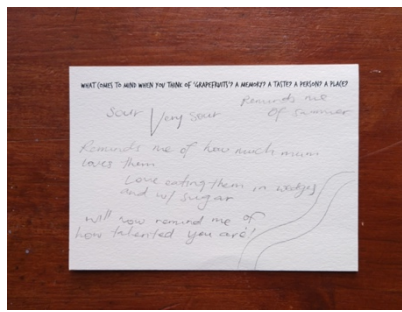
"I miss my dearest uncle David, who I believe planted this tree. I ate from this tree as a tween. This backyard, this land is also my turangawaewae. Stand strong."



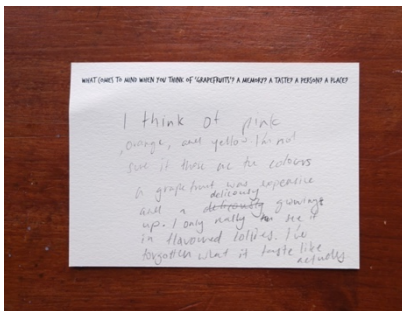
"Cutting one in half in winter for breakfast before school. Bittersweet. My Mum at Matheson's Bay."



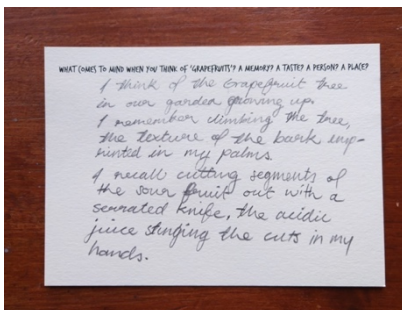
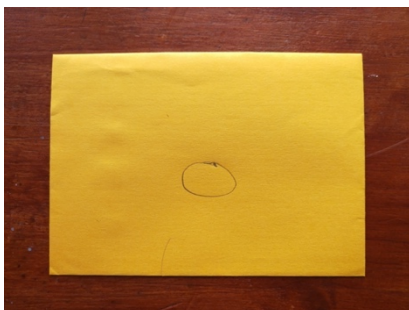
"My mind comes up blank. I've never had a grapefruit before. Well none that was memorable. But I think I can imagine what it tastes like."



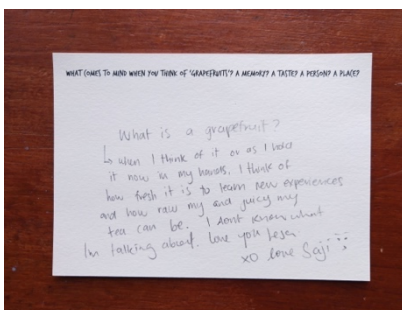
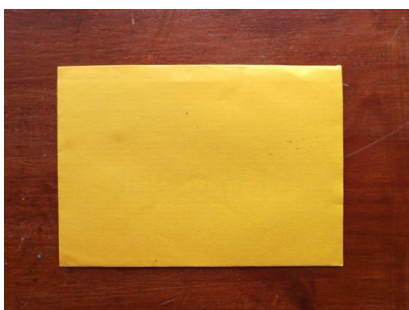
"Sour very sour. Reminds me of summer. Reminds me of how much Mum loves them. Love eating them in wedges with sugar. Will now remind me of how talented you are."



"I think of pink, orange, and yellow. I'm not sure if those are the colours. A grapefruit was expensive and a deliciously growing up. I only really see it in flavoured lollies. I've forgotten what it tastes like actually."



"I think of the Grapefruit tree in our garden growing up. I remember climbing the tree, the texture of the bark imprinted in my palms. I recall cutting segments of the sour fruit out with a serrated knife, the acidic juice stinging the cuts in my hands."



"What is a grapefruit? When I think of it or as I hold it now in my hands, I think of how fresh it is to learn new experiences and how raw and juicy my tea can be. I don't know what I'm talking about. Love you Lesa."

Journal entry #7

Reflection of Grapefruits Event | 16.06.2020

'Grapefruits', a live installation. Many things leading up to the event did make me doubt whether this was the right 'next step' in my practice. For starters, the weather. This was the first month of WINTER. And I chose the date of the event and published the news before I even checked the weather forecast. But like my sister says, "The weatherman is the only job in the world where you can get it wrong every day and still keep your job because of it." So I just hoped and prayed that the weather would do the opposite of whatever rain the weatherman predicted for that day.

The installation was planned to be outside, I wanted to have three projections onto my grandpa's tree, but because of the constant wet weather I could not test anything until the night of the event! With a 90% chance of rainfall, I was holding onto that other 10% to pull through on the day of the event. In the end, I settled for a single projection, audio of the 'grapefruit' interviews of family members that used to live at 25 Serwayne Place. The layout of the grapefruits of the house that used to be on that land and the envelope invitations. It all came together in the end, even though the generator cut out multiple times throughout the night... everything added to the overall experience. The layering, the people and the new harvest of grapefruits given by my guests.

Collecting Properties

Journal entry #8

The last time we saw the house | 13.03.2021

I remember returning to Serwayne (the house) multiple times after we had been relocated. Each time, it was like the life of the house had deteriorated further, the more no-one occupied it. It was a cold and airy feeling. It felt like all the pain and hurt was still left in the house, and I didn't want to be there. Sometimes we would visit and see that the house had been broken into, and there was smashed glass, alcohol bottles, graffiti on the walls. It smelt like ash. The last time we went back, the only remains of the house was the cement that had been dug up and broken apart. The house was no longer there. We were one of the last houses to sell and the last to go. I remember that day so clearly, and Mum had asked if we wanted to take something back home with us to keep as a reminder of this place. And I said yes. I found a bottle cap to a beer bottle. It had been flattened and rust was all over it. But I liked it, the way it looked and how small it had become. I still have it to this day.

Collecting things is common in our aiga. We are the type of people who pick up second-hand furniture from the side curb of a suburban street, take it home, sometimes give it a quick clean, or sand it down, upholster, paint it, or repurpose furniture. We collect shells, leaves or shards of washed-up glass from the ocean as keepsakes when going to a beach. Collectable items in our aiga include photographs, letters, cards and journals. Collecting has become a natural habit, as did the acts of meaalofa growing up. *Collecting Properties* is an outcome of this natural habit that seeks to uncover if the same method of collecting items from a place can be implicated into my art practice around significant sites. This series of collecting properties explored the ways of collecting objects and things that belong to the location and physically transferring them from one site to another, and returning them to similar places to where they were found.

I collected water from beaches in Auckland and Mount Maunganui near the three sites I am working with, Serwayne, Newington and Kinglsey. These locations are places where significant events occurred in my life. The passing of a loved one, a contemplative space for my faith and the last known place where family members visited before passing. I call these my transitioning places where optimal changes happened in my life. I have grown an attachment to these spaces. This reiterates Lewicka's concept of 'place memory'. The location or place of what we remember is often less a product of direct personal experiences and more about embedding social structures (family, nation or ethnic groups). Lewicka describes this occurrence through the term of social memories in her research paper *Place attachment, place identity, and place memory: Restoring the forgotten city past* and says, "Social memories may concern events that happened during our life or took place before we were born, and therefore belong to the history of the family, ethnic group, state or the world."³⁶ *Collecting properties* of the beach is a project I developed in between the two main works of this research project to transition to my next move in the work. It was a method I conducted to explore my thought process around my culture, my story and my grief.

The first collection of properties I chose was water, water from the ocean. The substance of water can both hold and carry, but at the same time, it is intangible. I had been reading *The Past Before Us: Mo'oku'auhau as Methodology*, a text written by Pacific Scholar Nālani Wilson-Hokowhitu. It is about how to translate *being to knowledge* and hope to transfer these past pieces of knowledge onto the present and future generations through using methodologies of Mo'oku'auhau that draws upon the deeper layers of literal, kaona (multiple), and noa huna (secret) meanings in the word Mo'oku'auhau based in Hawaii. In Wilson-Hokowhitu's introduction, *Where the Mo'o Lives* she explains the term of Mo'o³⁷ as "both our *tangible and intangible forms* of

³⁶ Maria Lewicka, "Place Attachment, Place Identity, and Place Memory: Restoring the Forgotten City Past," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 28, no. 3 (2008), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2008.02.001>, p212.

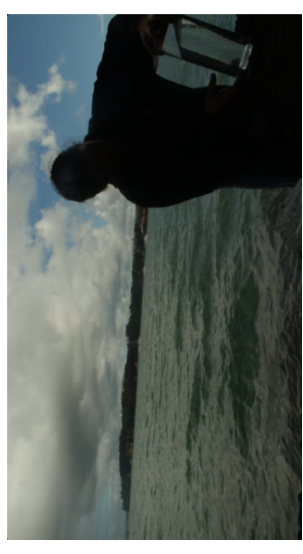
³⁷ Mo'o is a breakdown of the full Hawaiian methodology Mo'oku'auhau.

expression that affirm consciousness, the root idea of mo'okū'auhau. Thus, retooling ancestral knowledge for modern relevance is now the practice of continuity.”³⁸ The materiality of the ocean holds many forms of expression that can evoke meaning and anchor itself to multiple moments of significance, both present in my life and my ancestors. The connection I hold with the ocean creates a vast space of opportunity to deepen and extend my knowledge. Like transferring materials from one site to another to make *mo'o* connections between the property and the location to stimulate the movement of bodies; the physical, the intellectual and the spiritual to create a sense of presence and have stories transcend unfamiliar and familiar terrains.



Img 17. Film still of moana collections video at Papamoa Beach, Mount Maunganui (2021). 6'19. Collecting Moana on a Sunday morning before sunrise. The beach is near the site of Kinglsey.

³⁸ Wilson-Hokowhitu Nālani, *The Past before Us: Mo'okū'auhau as Methodology* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2019).



Img 18. Film stills of moana collections at Sentinel Beach location 1, Auckland (2020).



Img 19. Film stills of moana collections at Sentinel Beach location 2, Auckland (2020).



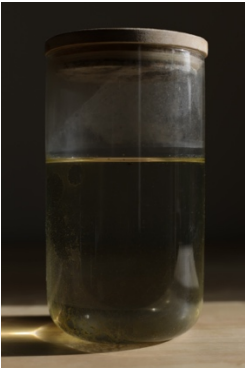
Img 20. Film stills of moana collections at Sentinel Beach location 2, Auckland (2020).

In *Moana Collections*, the method of transferring materials from one space to another also transcends through space/s within the Vā in the hopes of creating connections and a sense of belonging between the two spaces of this project, the tangible and intangible. The act of physically joining separate sites transfers collected moana from site and returns it to another body of moana but in a different location. Through collecting a common material from two different sites, relationships are formed with the transaction of movement. The relationship between space and place concerning material origins and how this is re-translated or reconfigured into new spaces and places is what the collections of moana establish, through the methodology of the Vā, as space for relational space. In the chapter, *Lau tofiga lea: Vā and the contemporary understanding of space as identity* Albert Refiti says that the search for this space within a diaspora becomes a search for the relational space of the Vā that invents a 'pasifika' identity in Aotearoa – and goes on to explain,

Space as a concept has become an important component of the quest for cultural identity in the last 20 years, generally known as the 'Spatial Turn'. This issue of space and place, specifically for a pasifika born in Aotearoa, is where one attempts to identify themselves, anchor themselves to one specific location of belonging. However, this place has become obscured and dislocated. Australian philosopher Jeff Malpas, for example, identifies the question of place as a concern with "a swirl of flows, networks, and trajectories... a chaotic ordering that locates and dislocates," "an effect of social process that is itself spatially dispersed and distributed."³⁹

³⁹Albert Refiti, "Mavae and Tofiga: Spatial Exposition of the Samoan Cosmogony and Architecture: A Thesis Submitted to Auckland University of Technology in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, 2015" (Master's thesis), p13-14.

As a product of migration, western ideologies and ways of thinking, indigenous communities in Samoa and the wider Pacific region that live in Aotearoa are prone to creating a shared space that reflects their desires for a place of identity. A sense of belonging in an unfamiliar environment. This idea of using the Vā as a vessel to translate the meanings of spaces through collecting and transferring materials and properties from different sites that have previous attachments to them is an acknowledgement of locating place identity within a diaspora realm. The true site that this body of *Moana collections* is manifesting is the site of the Vā, the space between, through the transition of properties. Using this framework, I experimented with collecting from within the three main sites and now have a *Final Five* collection of properties from those areas. These are waters from the Creek behind Serwayne, soil from the ground of Serwayne, rose clippings from a rose bush at Newington and Kingsley, and sand and moana from Papamoa beach in Mount Maunganui. These final five collections are also held in remembrance of the five homes that were removed from Serwayne and will be kept for further iterations of artwork or installation.



Creek Water
Collected 11.03.21



Serwayne Soil
Collected 09.05.21



Rose Clippings
Collected 18.12.20
to present day



Papamoa Sand
Collected 16.05.21



Papamoa Ocean
Collected 16.05.21

The Final Five - Collecting properties from different sites, Serwayne, Newington, Kinglsey and Beaches. These are the remaining five collections I've kept during this event. (2020)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

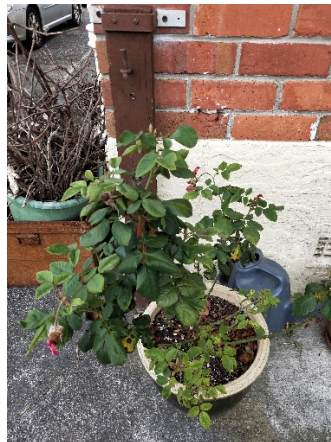
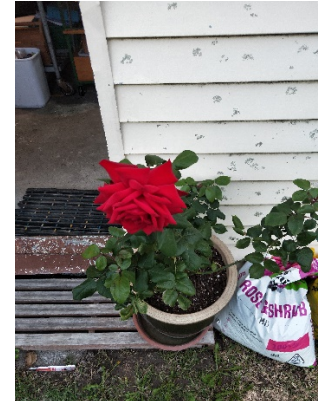
In Loving Memory

At Serwayne Place, after Waitakere City Council removed the house, we regularly visited the site, as there were other plants that remained besides the grapefruit tree. A lemon tree planted by my late grandpa and a Dublin Rose Bush planted by my great-nana Irene. After a few months, the rose bush began to wither and wasn't maintained and was eventually removed as well as the lemon tree. I remember the day we went there to discover they were no longer there and remember how devastated my mum was. It was like seeing her grieve again for the loss of her Nana. At the time, my Poppa was still alive until his passing.

Journal entry #9
Picking the rose | 20.09.2020

In September 2020, I decided to go to MITRE 10 to look for a Dublin rose like my Nana's, but didn't find any. There was only a small number of hybrid tea roses on sale, each with its own name. I was drawn to this one rose, tucked away in the middle of the cluster of leaves. Her name is 'Loving Memory'. I thought this was quite fitting as this would be a nice tribute for my late great-grandparents and their love story of how they met. I planned to plant this rose bush in the same place where the Dublin Rose was originally sited in our backyard. Mum said she could identify exactly where to plant it based upon memory.





The planting of *Loving Memory* was delayed 9 months from the purchase of it in September 2020. Throughout this course of time, the rose was re-potted, watered, pruned, and clipped back. I had documented the different seasonal changes the rose underwent; sometimes it even withered and dieback infected the plant. Each time I cut off these parts that had dried up or petals that had fallen off, I made a collection of them and kept them in a jar. These are the clippings that are included in the *Final Five* work. (2020-2021)

Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

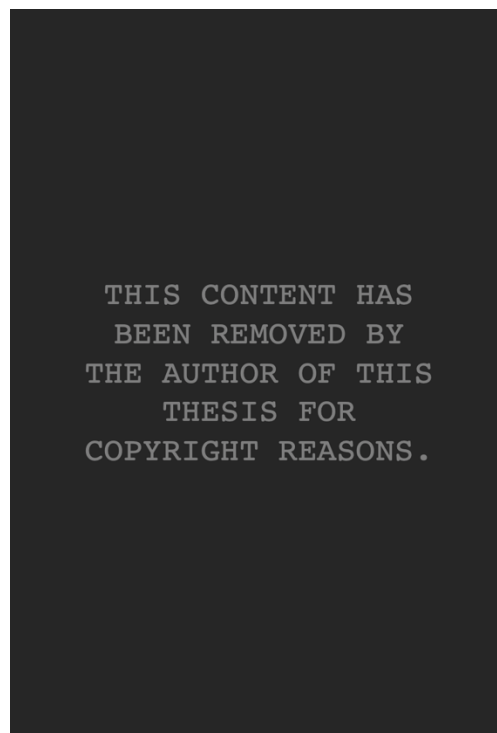
Remembering the removal of the Dublin Rose at Serwayne and the third iteration of great-nana's book *A Time To Remember* led me to the preparation of this next event, *In Loving Memory*. In relation to reclaiming back the land of Serwayne, planting the rose bush of *Loving Memory* seemed to be a fitting way to interlink the previous event of *Grapefruits*. This was a way of replacing the urban reminder that was taken away and introducing a new anchor to the site.

In remembrance of her grandfather, Niuean Māori artist Cora-Allan Wickliffe crafts a Hiapo. At the *Moana Legacy* opening exhibition in 2020 of the new revamped Tautai Gallery in Auckland curated by Wickliffe herself, she opened the exhibition with a performance piece around a Hiapo she had hand-crafted herself during Level 4 lockdown. The title of her work *Grandpa Lafaiki, Remember With Me* holds the presence of what she performs in the opening show and the purpose of the work she had created. After the long and meticulous process of creating this Hiapo, Wickliffe took a brush laden with ink and painted over the cloth, creating a mixture of responses from the audience. She says of the experience,

At that moment, I felt the weight of my grandfather on my shoulder and remembered him passing on to me his love for the knowledge of patterns. I then passed this knowledge of cloth onto the shoulders and hearts of everyone who was standing in the room.⁴⁰

The weight and responsibility of the install and performance with Wickliffe's work, resonated within my planting and burial of *In Loving Memory*. The layering within the work and action of being vulnerable within a performative context creates the presence of bodies within the Vā.

⁴⁰ Cora-Allan Wickliffe, "Grandpa Lafaiki, Remember With Me," Pantograph Punch, August 07, 2020, <https://pantograph-punch.com/posts/remember-with-me>



Cora-Allan Wickliffe *Granpa Lafaiki, Remember With Me* (2020) Performance piece at Tautai Gallery Opening. Image sourced: <http://www.cora-allan.co.nz/exhibitions.html>

Journal entry #10

"The Morning of" | 09.05.2021

It's 6 in the morning, and I decide that today's the day we lay her to rest finally. I first bought her (the rose) in September 2020. We had planned to give her a good caring to and plant her soon, but it had seemed that life became too much again and so she waited patiently. The rose went through her season, and as did I. Blooming and thriving to withered and run down. But after a while, we took notice to our own ruining and clipped her right back to make room for regrowth. And with time, she budded and out she came into the daylight. Mum had always wanted to bury her ovary and her granddaughters' placenta in the earth back on our land. She had suggested to me before that she wanted to with her. And so, on Mother's Day morning, I arranged the laying down of our tapu holdings. A rose bush in honour of Nana and her love story, Mum's ovary that was removed along with a tumor and the placenta of the firstborn of the next generation after mine in our family.

We arrived at Serwayne Place around 7.30 am and prepped the site. Mum marked the spot where she remembered our late Nana's Rosebush lived before it was removed. It had just stopped raining, and it was an overcast morning, the sun hidden behind the clouds. The grass was dewy, and the grounds were still. Mum began the digging. We had to dig deep, so we took turns. Mum put praise and worship music on as we were getting closer to the time. With all the soil we dug up, we had to break through the clay underneath the bed of soil. Mum shared that it might be a tough dig, but to our surprise, it was effortless due to the cold and damp morning and it being near the winter season, so the ground isn't as tough and dry compared to the summertime, which was what Mum remembers having to dig up the ground growing up helping her dad. As we dig deeper, we found rocks that looked like they had been a part of the driveway. And glass that could've been from the garage because this wasn't transported with the house, it got torn down.



In Loving Memory event. Planting the rose on Mothers Day 2021. Mum marking the spot where great-nana's Dublin Rose once was and digging up the soil on Serwayne to prep.
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Mum digging up the hole. We had to dig down 2 metres to ensure it was deep enough to bury the placenta and ovaries and the rose bushes' roots on top. (2021)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Before the burial, Mum went to grandpa's grapefruit tree and picked 23 leaves from it. She said the number represented the anniversaries of the important people we were planting this in memory of. 23 years since my grandpa (maternal) passed in 1998. 17 years since my great-nana Irene passed in 2004. Both of their anniversaries were around the time of this event. Mum placed her ovary in the ground, then the placenta that nurtured her grand-daughter(my sister's daughter) in the womb, then she laid the 23 leaves beside them. We then took turns shifting the soil over and planted the rose, *In Loving Memory*. (2021)

Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



The rose bush *Loving Memory* planted back on Serwayne soil aligned with Grandpa's Grapefruit tree. A new anchor in the space. (2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

The Continuum – A Conclusion

Meaalofa of Presence: The Gift uses the methodology of 'talanoa as the village' as a social conduit for collecting knowledge that can be passed through the bodies of the biographical makeup of an individual. In this research project, exchanges have been made between mo'o expressions of bodies, things that are tangible and intangible, and presence felt and experienced through being. This research has been a search for belonging within a diasporic environment and a journey in discovering the different ways that I can converse, learn and acknowledge stories of members. With my family, I set out to provide the pathways that led to restoring our narrative and reclaiming back the spaces that had become distant. Through talanoa, a platform for exchange was created. It allowed my family to evolve and gain richness through stories gathered and shared in a central place. We are interconnected in who we are, where and what we come from. The attachments we grow towards objects, places, and people, can't simply be severed because those same things have unbreakable bonds formed by the pure presence of placing ourselves in front of them. Reiterating Maria Lewicka's statement, "No matter how mobile a person may be, some form of attachment to places is always present in our life"⁴¹, even when our bodies travel from place to place. The connections never change, they can never be separated, the ties know no bounds.

⁴¹ Maria Lewicka, "Place Attachment, Place Identity, and Place Memory: Restoring the Forgotten City Past," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 28, no. 3 (2008): pp. 209-231, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2008.02.001>, p211.

Glossary of Samoan & Māori terms

Since some of the Samoan and Māori terms share similar meanings, I've included a key guide below. All terms were sourced by official Samoan⁴² and Māori⁴³ Dictionaries.

Samoan term	Māori term	Samoan & Māori term
-	I	+
- Aiga	<i>A family; a relative; a nuclear or extended family or household</i>	
- afakasi	<i>Half-caste</i>	
- Alofa	<i>Love, affection, greetings, to do a favour, friendly</i>	
- Meaalofa	<i>Gift, present</i>	
I Mauao	<i>Mount Maunganui – Tauranga – “Caught In The Light”</i>	
+ Moana	<i>Sea, ocean, large lake</i>	
- Talanoa	<i>To chat; to converse together; dialogue; to make conversation or have a talk</i>	
+ Tapu	<i>Sacred; to make sacred; to place under restriction to be forbidden, holy</i>	
I Tūrangawaewae	<i>Domicile (dwelling place), standing, place where one has the right to stand – place where one has rights of residence and belonging through kinship and whakapapa</i>	
- Vā	<i>The space between; a relational space that both separates and joins; a space that is both sacred and secular</i>	

⁴² (Allardice 1985)

⁴³ (Moorfield 2011)

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Appendix – Exhibition

Journal entry #11

“Final Install” | 22.06.2021

When I think of a Grapefruit, I think of my family. I think of the time my sister and I used to swing around on the washing line to grab the grapefruits from the top of the tree. I think of my sister putting her halved grapefruits in the freezer to make it cold faster before she ate it. I think of my grandpa's tree that still stands tall on the grounds of Serwayne, my home, my aiga, my tūrangawaewae.

This installation is my meaalofa to the current space and to the past events that have occurred. It is an acknowledgement of my aiga's and my past and a new iteration of the stories told to me in the way I see them. I have installed two works that sit as one. *Talanoa the Gatherer* and *In Loving Memory*.



Jalesa Nomani, Master of Visual Arts Graduating Exhibition, St. Paul Street Gallery, Auckland. (2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

Journal entry #11 | 22.06.2021

When I think of a Grapefruit, I think of my family. I think of the time me and my sister used to swing around on the washing line just so we could grab the grapefruits from the top of the tree. I think of my sister putting her halved grapefruits in the freezer to make it cold faster before she ate it. I think of my grandpa's tree that still stands tall on the grounds of Serwayne, my home, my aiga, my tūrangawaewae.

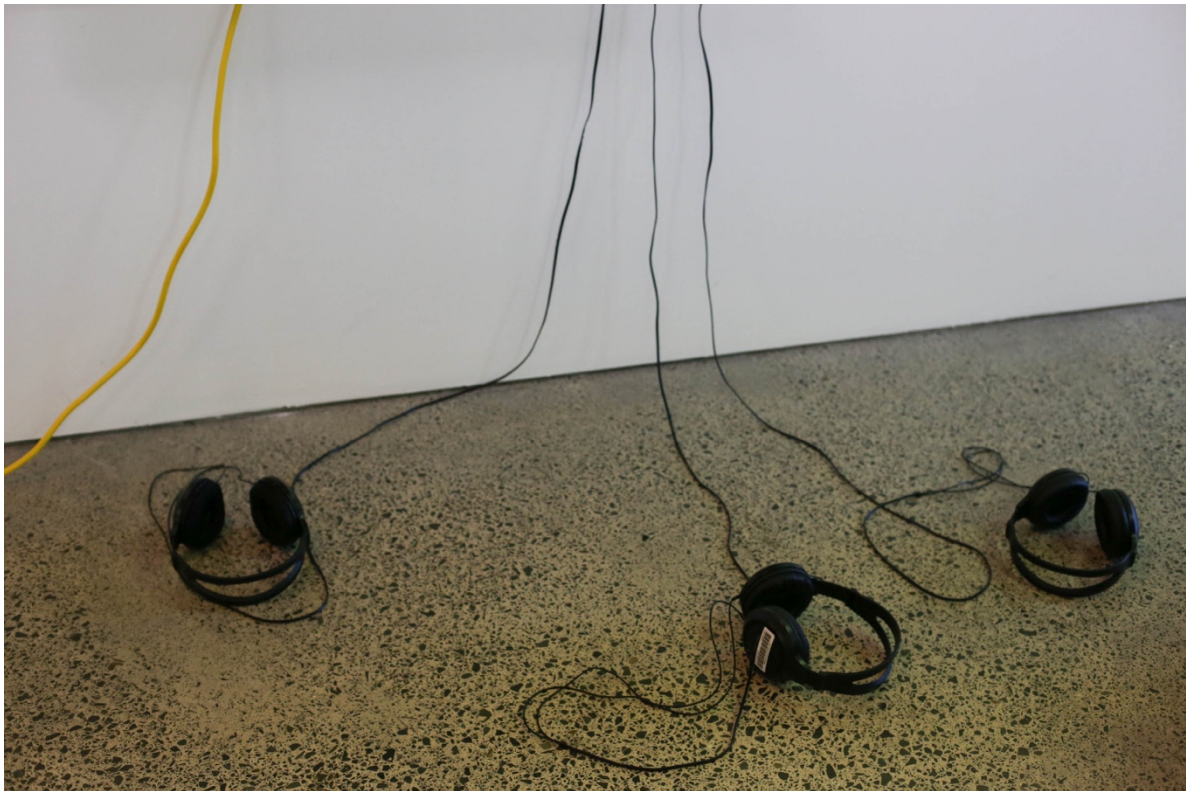
This installation is my meaalofo to the current space and to the past events that have occurred. It is an acknowledgement of my aiga's and my own past and a new iteration of the stories told to me in the way I see them. I have installed two works that sit as one. *Talanoa the Gatherer* and *In Loving Memory*.

Talanoa the Gatherer are two videos compiled of talanoa with family members that had either lived at or visited the site of Serwayne when the house was still there. In each talanoa I gave them a grapefruit that was either from Serwayne's Grapefruit tree or Newington's Grapefruit tree. The grapefruit selected was dependent on the season of either tree. I then asked them one question "What comes to mind when you think of a grapefruit?" and allowed them to talk for however long they wished to. The looped videos have been arranged so that at different times when it loops again, the left person will be facing a different person on the right side. Sometimes they are aligned when one person is talking about them in talanoa of memories they shared or how the grapefruit is a reminder of them. Other times they could be aligned and they have a close connection to one another, siblings, parent and child or cousins. The flow of this video changes each time, so that through the course of this exhibition each person would have had a talanoa with the other. The seating is arranged so that you too can be a part of the talanoa, and listen in on what they are talking about, much like how I had experienced when I was younger sitting at the table and listening to my aunts talk amongst each other. This talanoa however is not the eavesdropping kind, it's a sharing of knowledge and genuine connection.

In Loving Memory starts with my Great-grandparents (maternal) blankets that they'd kept ever since residing in Aotearoa in 1966 which then had been passed down to my family. One blanket out of the four is my grandparents' (maternal) blanket from when they lived at Serwayne Place. The text stitched into the blankets is a verse from my Great-Nana Irene's poem she wrote after the passing of her son. This poem is inside her story 'A Time To Remember' that she wrote. The words were hand stitched by me and my mum, she filled in a couple words and her stitching is very different compared to mine. She said that I have a thing or two to learn from her from seeing my stitching up close... The thread is in reference to my mum's sewing and stitching within her handmade book, this is her iteration of my great-nana's story. Throughout the book she's used a red pen to write in the margins her insights to the stories my great-nana shares. This installation is my interpretation of 'A Time To Remember' and is the third iteration of my great-nana's story. Surrounding the blankets are the different collections from my time throughout this project. Soil and rocks from Serwayne dug up from the burial of my mum's ovary and my sisters' placenta and *In Loving Memory* rose bush that was planted on top of it. Rose clippings and prunings from the 9-month period of purchasing the rose to planting it. Leaves from my grandpa's grapefruit tree at Serwayne. Sand and moana from Papamoa beach in Mount Maunganui near my nana Irene's house. Needles and pins used to stitch and bind the blankets together. All these collections remain open as this installation is not the final event, but the start of a continuum. The start of a tradition. It is a small speck of what is possible to be unveiled within my aiga through more talanoa and more collecting of moments, memories, remnants and so on.

A5 paper ephemera from exhibition left for public to takeaway. Journal entry #11 "Final Install" (2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

Talanoa the Gatherer are two videos compiled of talanoa with family members that had either lived at or visited the site of Serwayne when the house was still there. In each talanoa, I gave them a grapefruit from Serwayne's Grapefruit tree or Newington's Grapefruit tree. The grapefruit selected was dependent on the season of either tree. I then asked them one question, "What comes to mind when you think of a grapefruit?" and allowed them to talk for however long they wished to. The looped videos have been arranged so that at different times when it loops again, the left person will be facing a different person on the right side. Sometimes they are aligned when one person is talking about them in talanoa of memories they shared or how the grapefruit is a reminder of them. Other times they could be aligned and have a close connection to one another, siblings, parent and child or cousins. The flow of this video changes each time so that through the course of this exhibition, each person would have had a talanoa with the other. The seating is arranged so that you too can be a part of the talanoa, and listen in on what they are talking about, much like how I had experienced when I was younger sitting at the table and listening to my aunties talk amongst each other. This talanoa however, is not the eavesdropping kind. It's a sharing of knowledge and genuine connection.



Talanoa the Gatherer (2021) Two videos compiled of talanoa with family members holding a grapefruit and answering the question, "What comes to mind when you think of a grapefruit?". During the exhibition the videos were looped to rotate turns of talking to one another (Left side to right side). Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Wooden crates sourced from *Grapefruits* installation in 2020 were used in exhibition for public seating during the show. Garden cloth fabric used for laying on top of soil for plants, was used as seat coverings and stitched with red wool detailing. (2021)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Grapefruit coloured extension power cord that wrapped around the grapefruits and lead to the talanoa videos. (2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Grapefruits collected from Grandpa's Grapefruit tree at Serwayne placed inside Poppa Donald's paint box. (2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

In Loving Memory starts with my Great-grandparents (maternal) blankets that they'd kept ever since residing in Aotearoa in 1966, which then had been passed down to my family. One blanket out of the four is my grandparents' (maternal) blanket from when they lived at Serwayne Place. The text stitched into the blankets is a verse from my Great-Nana Irene's poem she wrote after her son's passing. This poem is inside her story, 'A Time To Remember', that she wrote. The words were hand-stitched by my mum and myself, she filled in a couple words, and her stitching is very different from mine. She said that I have a thing or two to learn from her from seeing my stitching up close... The thread references my mum's sewing and stitching within her handmade book, which is her iteration of my great nana's story. Throughout the book, she's used a red pen to write her insights into the stories my great-nana shares in the margins. This installation is my interpretation of 'A Time To Remember' and is the third iteration of my great-nana's story.



In Loving Memory - Back of Great-grandparents (maternal) blankets they kept since they migrated to Aotearoa from Scotland in 1966. View from entering St. Paul Street Gallery (2021)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



In Loving Memory - Front of blankets, view of verse from Great-Nana Irene's Poem.
 Lettering hand-stitched by my mum and I in Great-Nana Irene's hand-writing style. (2021)
 Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Back of blankets showing close up of stitching. (2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Close up of hand-stitched word 'door'. (2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Close up of hand-stitched word 'yonder'. (2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Close up of hand-stitched word 'again'. (2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



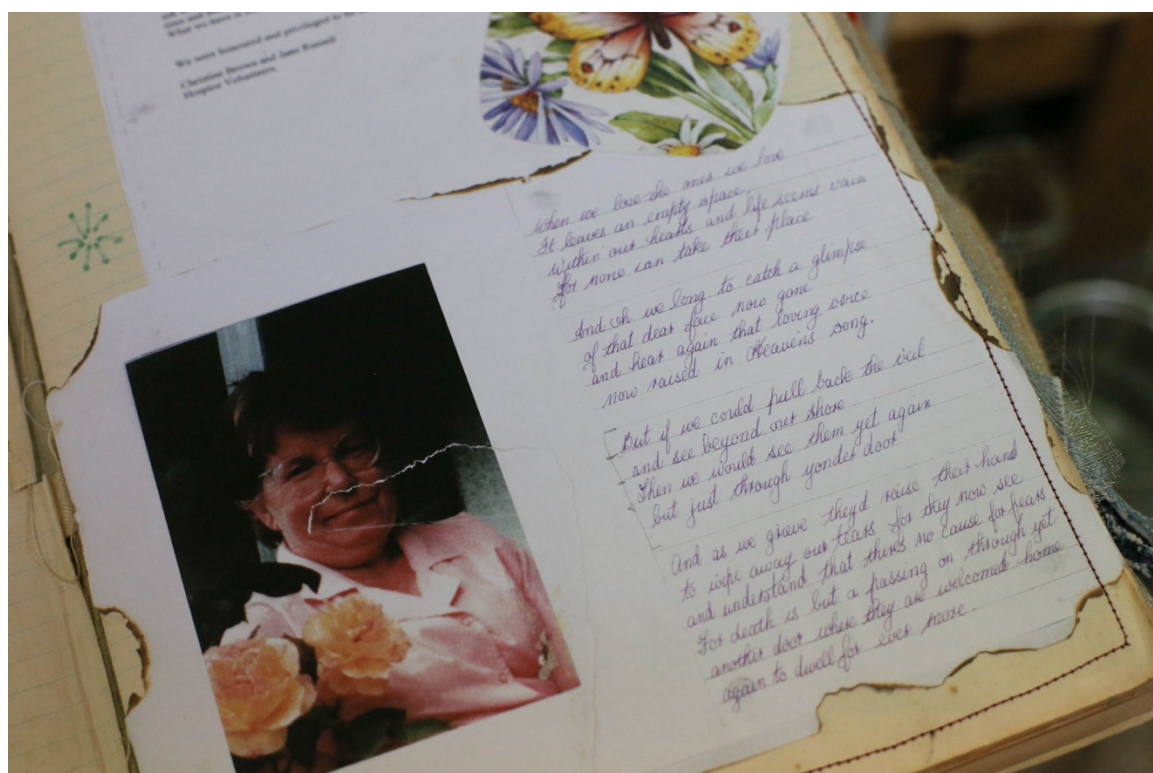
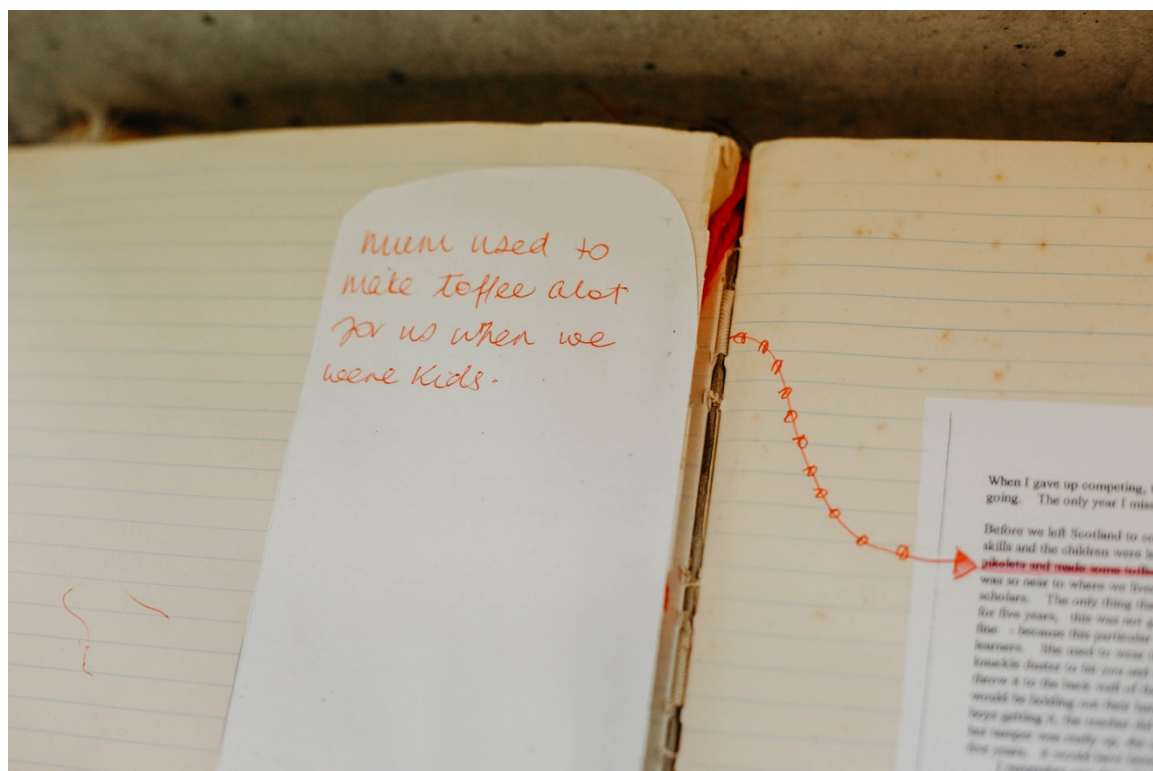
Close up of hand-stitched words 'then & 'we' by Mum. (2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



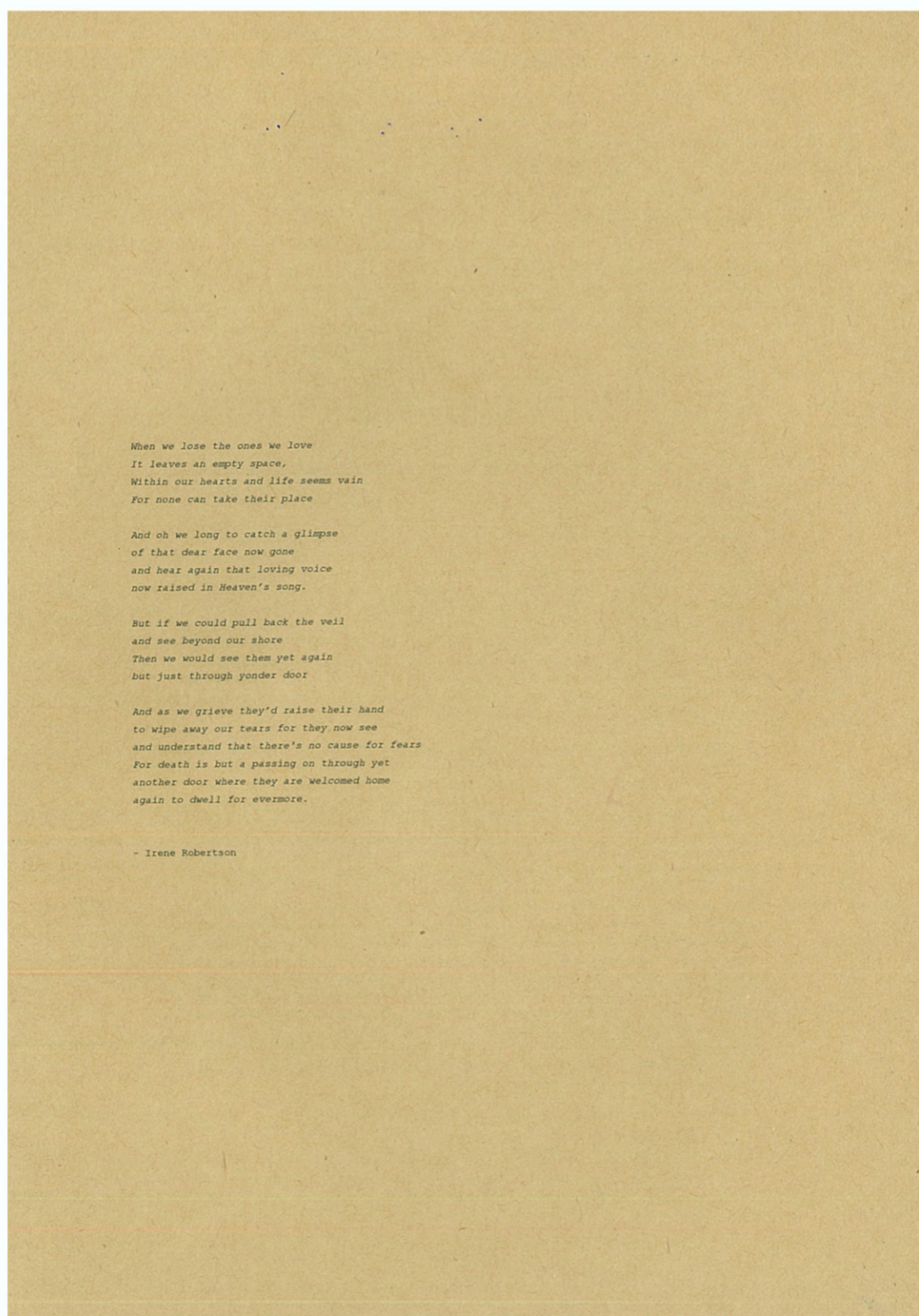
Stitches that joined my Great-grandparents (maternal) blankets together.
(2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Mum's handmade book of her iteration of Great-Nana Irene's story 'A Time To Remember'.
(2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Pages from Mum's book iteration of 'A Time To Remember'. (2021)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



A5 paper ephemera from exhibition left for public to takeaway. Great-Nana Irene's full poem including the verse that was hand-stitched into the blankets. (2021)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Verse from poem hand-stitched into blankets. (2021)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

Surrounding the blankets are the different collections from my time throughout this project. Soil and rocks from Serwayne dug up from the burial of my mum's ovary and my sisters' placenta and *In Loving Memory* rose bush planted on top of it. Rose clippings and pruning's from the nine months of purchasing the rose to planting it. Leaves from my grandpa's grapefruit tree at Serwayne. Sand and moana from Papamoa beach in Mount Maunganui near my nana Irene's house. Needles and pins are used to stitch and bind the blankets together. All these collections remain open as this installation is not the final event but the start of a continuum, the beginning of a tradition. It is a speck of what is possible to be unveiled within my aiga through more talanoa and more collecting of moments, memories, reminisces and so on.



Collections from sites and events throughout the course of research. (2021)
Image credit: Jalesa Nomani



Collections inside various glass vessels were displayed in groupings throughout the exhibition space for this project. (2021) Image credit: Jalesa Nomani

List of items

Talanoa the Gatherer

- Two videos compiled of talanoa with family members holding a grapefruit and answering the question, "What comes to mind when you think of a grapefruit?". Looped videos to rotate turns of talking to one another (Left side to right side).
- Wooden crates used from *Grapefruits* installation in 2020.
- Garden cloth fabric used for laying on top of soil for plants, used as seat coverings. Stitched with red wool.
- Grapefruits collected from Grandpa's Grapefruit tree at Serwayne inside Mam's paint box.

In Loving Memory

- Great-grandparents (maternal) blankets they kept since they migrated to Aotearoa from Scotland in 1966.
- A verse from Mana's poem was stitched by hand into the blankets by myself and Mam.
- Collections from sites and events;

Serwayne - Planting of *In Loving Memory* rose bush

- Soil from digging up the ground
- Water from the creek (Oratia Stream) behind where our house was, used to water the rose
- Washed rocks found in the dug up soil from prepping the burial of the ovary and placenta and the rose
- Rose clippings and prunings of branches, dried rose petals and leaves from the nine month period between purchasing the rose to planting it at Serwayne
- Fallen leaves from Grandpa's Grapefruit tree at Serwayne

Kingsley - Mount Maunganui trips

- Sand and Moana (water from the Ocean) collected from Papamoa Beach near Mana Irene's house. This house was previously owned by my great-grandparents (maternal)

Newington

- Mam's handmade book of her iteration of Great-Mama Irene's story 'A Time To Remember'
- Needles and pins used to stitch and bind the blankets together

The final exhibition was an installation of collected components gathered throughout this time of research. My vision was to leave traces of the sites I had been working with, Serwayne, Newington and Kinglsey. It was a dedication and meaalofoa to the constant learning throughout this project from collaborations between the sites and my aiga. *Talanoa the Gatherer* and *In Loving Memory* acted as gifts to the exhibiting space and the people who took the time to remain with the work. These gifts were about creating a space for stories to be shared as a narration invitation to the wider community that could identify with the migrant journey and those intrigued by it. Choosing to install a collection of works was my own way of highlighting the many different ties involved in the project. The constant links made through talanoa in stories shared by my aiga, the connections between physical objects in the space to spaces that exist beyond the gallery walls, the discoveries I stumbled upon in exploration of my present and past history. This installation took the form of a real-life mind map of all the paths I took during this research, as well as the ones that remain open for future exploration. Although this research project concluded in a final Masters presentation exhibition, this does not mean it is the final collaboration to be made.