

UXBRIDGE
**MALCOLM
SMITH
GALLERY**

HERE AND NOW
TORI FERGUSON, AYESHA GREEN,
ZAINAB HIKMET AND ANH TRAN

*Zainab Hikmet, Half Moon Bay - Auckland glass, 2015,
glass made from raw Half Moon Bay (Auckland) beach sand, 100mm x 100mm x 100mm*

Although they come from, and live now, in various parts of the world, the four artists featured in Here and Now have all – at one point – called this land home. These artists are linked by the way in which the traces of the journeys to where they find themselves now are imbued in the artworks they create. Here and Now shows both the ripples of global influences and the continual threads of reflection they have to Aotearoa.

It is a little known fact that Jean Batten spent part of her childhood in a since-demolished house just a few doors away from where the gallery sits today. Batten's unbridled and relentless spirit of exploration changed the understanding of what was possible for those who dreamed of seeing other parts of the world, far away from the where in Aotearoa they called home. This spirit continues now through these artists travels to the unknown. Living and working in all corners of the world, they show consideration of both Aotearoa and their alternate homes - developing their own unique sensibility and language that is translated into works that demonstrate a new understanding of their past, present and future.

Their personal reflections on the distances they have travelled translate in all elements of the works on display. Symbolic references, materials chosen and ways of working convert their journeys into material form, giving physical manifestations to their movements. Unstable and malleable forms, quick, fluid and deliberate lines, recycled and reconstituted media - the ephemeral and shifting nature of that which is on display reaffirms the nimble and exploratory nature of each artist's unique practice.

Layers of various events and encounters are collected and combined with the echoes and traces of the past. All dissolve together, creating representations that can be seen as reflections of navigation and signifiers of perseverance in the face of challenges that journeys present, both personal and circumstantial, obvious and intuitive.

'It was therefore not surprising that even at the early age of two years I had developed a great desire to roam.' (Jean Batten, *My Life*, 16)

The act of roaming beckons an enticing sense of the unknown. There is a certain appeal with exploring, unbridled, the open and unfamiliar world, seemingly untethered to the people we know, our obligations, to 'real life.' Defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as 'To wander, rove, or ramble; to walk, move about, or travel aimlessly or unsystematically,' the word offers something both alluring and threatening. Someone who roams is entirely at the mercy of the elements, to their own whims, without familiarity and without home. With this in mind, it is easy to see Jean Batten's heroic voyages through the lens of the ceaseless wanderer.

Forged by tenacity and pure grit, Batten remains a national icon. Despite gendered and financial constraints, she consistently broke international records through her seemingly impossible pursuits as an aviator in the 1930s. The first woman to fly herself across the South Atlantic in 1935, she then completed the first ever direct trip from England to New Zealand in the following year. In 1937 and at the height of her fame, she made her last long distance flight, and in turn, retreated from public view. Most biographies quote this vanishing act as a 'fade into obscurity,' tinged with the disappointment of an eager public, like she had failed them somehow. Perhaps it is worth considering that her journey didn't finish there.

Living in Howick in her formative years from 1914-1922 and returning again in 1979, Batten had always called Auckland home. Even when her family separated, both emotionally and geographically, it seemed to be her anchor. Out there, in the unknown world, time itself seemed to often govern her adventures. Her memoirs tirelessly list the task of landing at airfields purely to refuel and sleep and then take off again the following morning. Even as the world unravelled beneath her however, it seemed like the land was not the author's primary interest. In one night flight over an endless desert she described with fondness the 'magic spell and serenity of night' as her aircraft became 'a tiny atom in the vastness of the universe.' Away from all things personal, all things human, she treasured this sacred loneliness as the sky became her home.

Batten's travels took her further afield than was imaginable at that time, and perhaps even now. She saw the world from an aerial view in her Gypsy Moth, battered by winds and storms, without a sign that she ever wanted to turn back. She enjoyed its freeing detachment, hopping from place to place as if they were stepping stones on a trickling stream. With that in mind, it calls to question what Auckland and familiarity truly meant to Batten. Was it a weighing burden or an emotional sanctuary? What we can assume is that home was less a geographical location and more embedded in memory itself. Home was in her mind, in the sky, as fleeting and eternal as her free spirit that never seemed to rest.

TORI FERGUSON

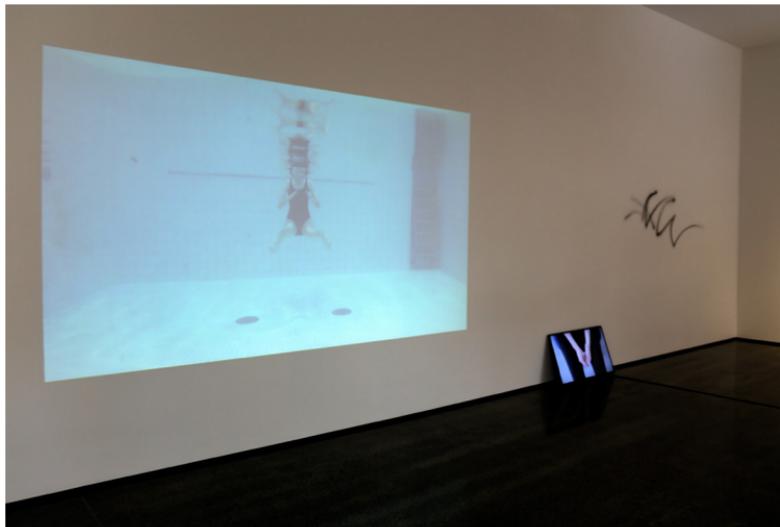
Two works by Tori Ferguson show the artist's continued engagement with the essential – and the fallible – structures of human life: time and memory. Her practice, encompassing video, performance and drawing, has taken her to different destinations around the world; but a concentration on the ideas that transverse place reflect an enduring desire to illustrate universal truths. Ferguson's work contemplates tensions between the permanent and the impermanent, monument and ephemera, while examining the human urge to classify, to document, and to remember.

In *Remembering-how*, treading water – neither sinking nor swimming – is its own state of being. Suspended between activity and passivity, it is marked by a tension between the floating body and the effort required to keep it afloat. Influenced by the idea of habit memory, it brings into focus those actions that are remembered and expressed by the body reflexively.

Hold out depicts an intimate portrait of the artist, focusing on how non-verbal signals transverse language and offer a perception into a personal moment or feeling.

'The repeated action of my hands is a formalised representation of something I do when nervous. I'm interested in gestures that appear insignificant but when viewed in isolation, and with repetition, these non-verbal signals offer insights into private states of being.'

Tori Ferguson has exhibited at galleries in New Zealand and Australia including Seventh Gallery, First Draft, Pataka Museum and Objectspace.





ZAINAB HIKMET

Zainab Hikmet is a locally raised artist, now residing in Melbourne. Her work, Half Moon Bay, intrinsically ties together two personally significant places through an exploration of elemental structures and materials.

She presents two small glass cubes - one made from sand collected in Half Moon Bay, Auckland where she grew up, the other from sand collected in Half Moon Bay, Melbourne where she now lives. Showing the relationship between the locations, Hikmet attempts to use the objects as a signifier to collapse the space that physically separates these two places - symbolically showing the close connection the two bays have to the artist.

The physical attributes of the unique geographies have contributed to the starkly different hues and speckles visible in the cubes. Metal, minerals - chrome, aluminum, quartz - and impurities give distinct and variable tones, reflecting the unpredictable casting process that Hikmet undertook. This process took over a year, including extended experimentation before finding the correct 'recipe' for these sculptures. While they are solid now, the glass will eventually deteriorate and the cubes will collapse. The ephemeral nature of the objects signifies the temporality of time and memory - fleeting, momentary and inherently unstable.

Viewers are invited to hold these objects (with care). The impressions of the objects made as they sit in their hands will one day be all that physically remains of these objects.

Zainab Hikmet completed her Masters of Fine Arts at RMIT in 2015, following Undergraduate and Honours degrees from Auckland University of Technology. She has exhibited in various galleries throughout New Zealand and Australia and in 2015 was selected to complete a residency and exhibition at Singapore's Tropical Lab at LASALLE College of Arts.

AYESHA GREEN

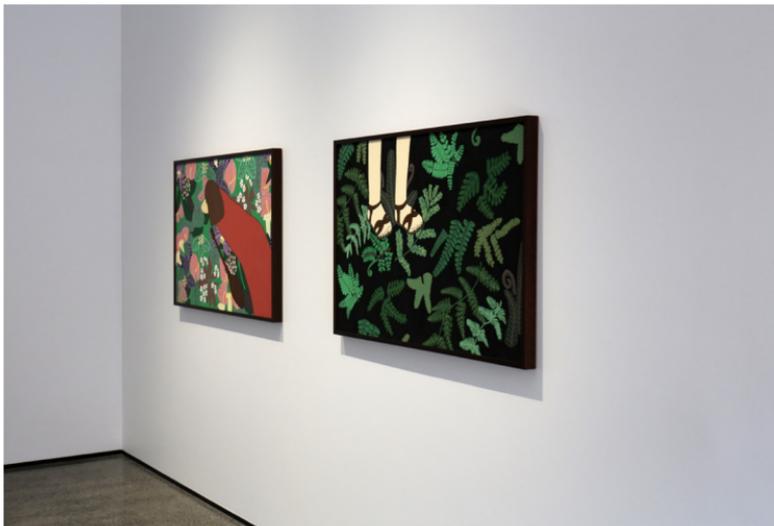
*I saw a tour guide, I told the man that it was my vaka, and he said to me,
this is your place, right here.
He must not have seen that I was white, he didn't choke on his words. He
looked me in the eyes and welcomed me home.
I took a photo for my nana.*

These new works by Ayesha Green are the result of the Te Arerenga Residency, in Rarotonga that the artist completed earlier in 2017. Green combines imagery sourced from fabrics found during her stay with figurative elements that are responses to early historical oral and written stories learnt over her time in the Cook Islands.

Reflecting on confronting tales of transition and journey – the desire for exploring the unknown, the burning provocations arising from new contact, and the grieving wahine left behind – Green considers the threads of these narratives that are familiar in Aotearoa's stories of navigation, illustrating tendencies of human nature that transverse sea and ocean, time and place.

The layered imagery includes elements of the landscape and the tradition of translating and reproducing such elements indoors through drapery, wallpapers, decorative painting. Repetitive patterns and stylized forms communicate an idealized tropical paradise, framing a consumption of the landscape through bright colours and bold shapes. In her deceptively simple way, Green weaves meaningful contemplations on domestic traditions and relationships between home and away.

Ayesha Green (Ngati Kahungunu, Ngai Tahu) is an Auckland based painter. She completed a diploma in Museums and Cultural Heritage in 2016 and gained her MFA at Elam in 2013. Recent exhibitions include Biographies of Transition: Too Busy To Think, Artspace (2017), Suma Pete: Papakura Art Gallery (2017), The Spirit of the Thing Given (Maori), RM (2017), On The Grounds, Starkwhite Gallery (2017), and Seagers Walters at Mirage Gallery (2016).





ANH TRAN

Anh Tran elevates materials as a way to communicate human expression. Texture, colour and paint trace her journey - the stroke of a line, the line of movement.

The materials she selects transcribe her feelings of transition - the paint plays off the canvas, forming an expression of her recent travels and reflections of emotions felt while moving from one place to another - isolation, longing, excitement, apprehension, joy.

The intuitive way she constructs her compositions allows the complex layers to weave around the composition and ultimately reflect a portrait of an individual in an unknown land.

Anh Tran was born in Vietnam in 1989. Tran graduated with a MFA with First Class Honours (2016) from Elam School of Fine Arts. Recent exhibitions include *A trip to the beach*, play_station gallery, Wellington (2017), *Painting: A Transitive Space*, St Paul gallery, Auckland (2016). Anh Tran currently lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand.

Ayesha Green
You go west, I'll go east, 2017
Acrylic on ply, 1200 x 800mm

Ayesha Green
*I'll meet you in the north, and we will
go west*, 2017
Acrylic on ply, 1200 x 800mm

Anh Tran
AKL, 2017
Enamel

Ayesha Green
*Tangaroa have
mercy on us all*,
2017
Acrylic on ply, 1200 x
2400mm

Zainab Hikmet
*Half Moon Bay - Auckland
glass*, 2015
Glass made from raw Half Moon Bay
(Melbourne) beach sand;
100mm x 100mm x 100mm

Tori Ferguson
Hold out, 2015
HD video, 1:02 mins

Tori Ferguson
Remembering-how, 2016
HD video, 1:00 mins, sound: Nathan Gray

Zainab Hikmet
*Half Moon Bay - Melbourne
glass*, 2015
Glass made from raw Half Moon Bay
(Auckland) beach sand;
100mm x 100mm x 100mm

Anh Tran
AKL, 2017
Enamel

Anh Tran
JFK, 2017
Gesso, enamel on canvas

KIX, 2017
ink, enamel on canvas

LAX, 2017
Rashes, enamel on canvas

HND, 2017
ink on canvas



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