

OTHERWISE

WORLDING

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FOREWORD

MARK WILLIAMS

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MARK WILLIAMS
FOREWORD

1 Tendai Mutambu, exhibition text for *Otherwise-image-worlds*, Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery (4 June - 4 September 2022).

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How can animation in contemporary moving image practices be critical of the commercial demand for spectacle and efficiency? How can it serve as a tool for worldbuilding and re-imagining history beyond imperialist, white, cis, male-dominated narratives?

Where the polish and ease of contemporary image economies work to obscure power structures, *Otherwise-image-worlds* experiments with how the making and circulation of animation can be oppositional in playful, oblique, and sometimes-awkward ways.¹

Otherwise-image-worlds was a 2022 exhibition commissioned by CIRCUIT Artist Moving Image in partnership with Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery.

Curated by Tendai Mutambu, the show featured four Aotearoa artists: Juliet Carpenter, Tanu Gago, Ary Jansen and Sorawit Songsataya, alongside UK artist Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley. Each artist was invited to work with animation as a mechanism for worldbuilding; bearing in mind that the form can so often present as a slick, guileless medium that reinforces traditional structures of power.

The project began a year earlier, when I invited Tendai to take up the position of CIRCUIT's 2022 curator-at-large and develop a project exploring animation in contemporary moving image practice. The topic of animation initially came from a question about the state of artist moving image practice in Aotearoa in 2022; with the ongoing issue of financial support, how do artists stretch their conceptual and material aspirations?

Not long after, I saw Ary Jansen's video *Sonja and Corpsie* (2017). The video begins in *Second Life* (2003-), an online multiplayer 3D virtual world where users interact as avatars. In Jansen's video, a human figure with a tail tumbles through an aerial network of coloured threads. They move easily, turning in a void of free space as if suspended in the weightlessness of water. The video cuts to a series of domestic and outdoor scenes, while the voiceover continues:

I know a girl who's a professional DJ. She has a club just for her and her sisters. She lives in a treehouse and she can fly. She has friends all over the world... Authenticity can be made from pixels. Safety can be made in an armour of fur. Sometimes the real world doesn't have a place for us. We make our own reality just as constructed as the one we believe to be true.

Animation has been a tool for the unbounded imagination since its filmic inception in the late 19th century, and in earlier iterations in shadow play and magic lantern shows. Likewise, in *Sonja and Corpsie*, Jansen presents a world where the human form is malleable; where an artist has limitless potential to build an entire city without the aid of physical props, backdrops or production crew; where the scene transitions between night, day and an ethereal sky-world.

In *Otherwise-image-worlds*, Tendai Mutambu's selected five artists each brought a dexterous reimagining of the emancipatory potential for the medium.

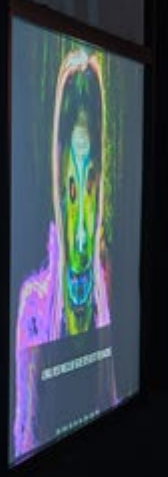
In Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley's game, identity determines power and power shifts as identities change. Tanu Gago's stereoscopic animation draws on Pasifika myths of selfhood and becoming. Ary Jansen interleaves machinima (real-time gaming recordings) with footage captured across Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Juliet Carpenter's vertiginous short film revels in the indeterminate space between the dead and alive, animate and inanimate. Sorawit Songsataya uses data mapping technology to reconstruct spaces in Ōtepoti Dunedin and their mother's home in Chiang Rai, Thailand. The resulting fragmentary compositions encapsulate the disintegration of memory and ongoing environmental ruin.

This *Otherwise worlding* reader includes conversations with artists and guest contributors, an essay, and exhibition documentation. Tanu Gago and Raqi Syed consider the potential for animation, virtual reality and augmented realities to transmute personal and cultural narratives. Juliet Carpenter and Sebastjan Brank discuss feminine hysteria in medical and cinema history. Ruth Watson muses on the intimacy of distance in the cubic world created by Sorawit Songsataya. Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley and Ary Jansen reflect on the role of video games in their lives with Tendai Mutambu, and Brathwaite-Shirley additionally hosts a playthrough of their animated game, *HOW DANGEROUS IS YOUR DATE?*

Thank you to the artists and their interlocutors: Sebastjan Brank, Raqi Syed and Ruth Watson, whose contributions added so much greater latitude to our conversations about animation in the contemporary moment.

Thanks to Andrew Clifford, Connie Brown and the staff at Te Uru who persevered through numerous logistical challenges presented by Covid-19 to deliver *Otherwise-image-worlds* with CIRCUIT.

Special acknowledgements to Tendai Mutambu, whose curatorial vision delivered such a dynamic and vivid installation and public programme series, and whose work gave impetus to this accompanying reader.



/DRIVE-THRU, PLAY-THRU/

**DANIELLE
BRATHWAITE-SHIRLEY
ARY JANSEN
MODERATED BY
TENDAI MUTAMBU**

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TENDAI MUTAMBU
MODERATED BY
ARY JANSEN
BRATHWAITE SHIRLEY
DANIELLE

/DRIVE-THRU, PLAY-THRU/



How are LGBTQ+ artists using animation tools to assert community and imagine new futures? What are the possibilities of the body in digital space?

The following documents /drive-thru, play-thru/ – a public talk and performance presented via Zoom with Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, Ary Jansen and Tendai Mutambu held on 1 September 2022.

The artists offer commentary on their use of animation as a tool for emancipation and play in recent works, beginning with a discussion of Jansen's commission for *Otherwise-image-worlds*, *Breadcrumbs Trail* (2022). The audience was invited to play Brathwaite-Shirley's interactive playthrough, venturing into a story-based game that engages expanded ideas of player agency.

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Still from *Breadcrumbs Trail* (2022), Ary Jansen. Single-channel digital video, colour, sound. 7 min.
Previous page: Still from *Breadcrumbs Trail* (2022).

Tendai Mutambu Ary, could you talk through your thinking around the games you used as source material for *Breadcrumbs Trail*?

Ary Jansen I used games I was playing at the time, whatever I had accessible. Same with the real-life locations – exploring environments around me, whether digital or in person.

TM What are some of the titles you were playing?

AJ *Grand Theft Auto V* (2013), *Red Dead Redemption 2* (2018), *The Last of Us* (2013–)... A friend sent me some fishing footage from *Final Fantasy* (1987–). Another friend sent me footage of her playing *Runescape* (2001–). I haven't actually played *Runescape* in a very long time.

TM What's been your relationship to gaming? How did you get into gaming?

AJ When I was a kid, my dad was the editor of a magazine about Apple computers and he got me to review *Sims* (2000–) games for him. So I played a lot of *The Sims*. I loved it because you create people and a world, and a house to live in.

When I was about 10, I got into playing online chat room games and character creation games like *Habbo Hotel*. I'm trans, and I would always make myself a boy when I was a girl.

TM How did you get into the world of video games, Danielle?

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley: I was always fascinated by digital technology. When I was young, I didn't understand that a representation of someone in a game is not actually them. The first game I played was *Blade* (2000) on PS1. Wesley Snipes was Blade and I thought they had to put Wesley Snipes in the machine to put his 'essence' in the game.

Similar to Ary, games later became a place to try out identity. The first game I did that in was *Dragon's Dogma* (2012–), where you had to create a main character and a shroud character. My main character was what I wanted to look like, and this shroud

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Installation view: *Otherwise-image-worlds* (4 June – 4 September 2022), Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Tamaki Makaurau Auckland. Courtesy of the artists and Te Uru. Photo by Sam Hartnett.

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character that followed me around like a corpse was the body I *was* in.

TM When did gaming become something you pursued with others, as a collective activity?

DBS It's always been a group activity – I've always played with people and it's strange to mention *The Sims*, because that was something I played for hours with my sister. I just watched her play – I don't think I've ever played it, but I know everything about it. I find it very difficult to play games alone now because couch co-op was what I grew up with – we used to have 'game parties'. To me, it's very much a sharing process.

TM Ary, is that similar for you?

AJ Definitely – I went around to my friends' houses and played PlayStation, and we'd each get a turn. Finally I convinced my parents to buy me my own PlayStation; then it became more of a solo thing.

1 *Grand Theft Auto.*

TM What kind of space does gaming afford you, in terms of art making?

AJ There is just so much possibility. I would've preferred to use animation, but didn't have the time or concentration to learn it. So I ended up creating animations with video games instead. I've always been fascinated with the simulacrum – representations of people and the potentials for that.

TM Danielle, the work I first encountered of yours was really crunchy, blocky, polygonal – it was harking back to a very particular time. What was your interest in those forms, as opposed to more contemporary gaming aesthetics?

DBS At the beginning, I had no idea how to 3D model; I had to teach myself everything. It was a necessity, and then it became a fascination with looking at how older, less technical games were made. They became an inspiration because you were able to see how something was made and developed by looking at the background footage, especially the studio green screen for *Mortal Kombat* (1992–).

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I think that looking at these techniques, but having the wider access that we do now, really allows me to reimagine what these engines could have done if they included people like me in the development process at the time – using a body that was never represented in that particular time and space.

TM Ary, do you think there's a thread that draws you to a particular type of game, or a gaming experience?

AJ I would say open world games that are exploration-based. While there may be goals you are supposed to reach, you can spend hours just wandering around discovering things.

TM The one that I'm most familiar with is GTA¹, which is always central in people's moral panics around the violence of gaming and so on. I'm curious about how that figured into your relationship to those games. Did you feel at all locked out of those worlds? Or was it easy enough to access and make your own?

AJ I would've started playing earlier versions of GTA when I was in primary school. I wonder if it was almost an access point to masculinity, because it was what the boys were doing. That was my entrance point into that world – it's a hyper-masculine game, a lot of using violence to lift yourself up above others.

But the new GTA is finally going to have a female main character player, so I'm excited about that. I think moral panic is interesting and I've talked to my friends about it. In the audio of *Breadcrumbs Trail*, they're talking about the idea of there being no repercussions and how freeing that is, but how that can potentially lead to so much violence outside of the game as well. Also the idea that what if we're shooting people in a game and it's actually real? Or, what is reality?

TM I wonder if it's too optimistic, but we have so much capacity to play out our ethical quandaries, and I think I get a hint of this in Danielle – when you're putting work out there, it's like you want to make people confront certain choices, or to think more about their position, their place.

But I think it's good to have scenarios where people are confronting that in a hypothetical way, even though they're real things – in the same way that Greek tragedies, or plays or films are violent. Games can give you an opportunity to play that through.

DBS When I was watching Ary's work, I was thinking about the difference between playing GTA online in role-play mode, where you literally just play a character walking around – you talk to someone and they give you a bike or something. The community has made that a different experience entirely; it's a completely different game.

Then there's *Detroit: Become Human* (2018), which is all about choice, morals, right or wrong, and paralleling Black Lives Matter – but in a way that gamers would understand.

There's a strange dichotomy between gaming wanting to do this, and the community watching with a magnifying glass to see how they do it. In *The Last of Us Part II* (2020), for example – this is a spoiler, by

the way – when they killed off the main character, Joel, everyone went nuts. They hated that there was this masculine female character who killed Joel. In a movie or a series, that could be a huge turning point. But a lot of gamers are white men, and they want white male characters to keep going because they see themselves in it; they've spent so long with that character, they only want to be them. When you erase that character, they get really angry and violent and boycott your game, even though it's a story that you want to tell.

Gaming is such an amazingly wide medium that has been incredibly restricted by the companies that are making the games, and the very loud community of gamers that prevent a lot of these nuanced discussions from happening. I'd love a game that makes you feel like shit, because maybe that's what you need.

There's a lot of potential in seeing games and game engines as a medium, rather than as a service of entertainment for a small subset of a very loud and toxic community.

TM It's the poison and antidote in one, as a lot of things are. I'm so glad for the work that you both do within this space.

Why do you think interactivity is important in your works, in those experiences in the gallery? What do you feel it's brought to your thinking, and to the audience?

DBS There was a time I felt that art was very complacent. A lot of my queer, trans and Black friends were trying to talk about things they really cared about – they weren't trying to make a pretty painting. But there was a point where we realised that people were liking the aesthetics of work and ignoring the content. This happens all the time.

It wasn't until the Tate Modern show, *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power* (2017), that I thought, 'this is ridiculous'. Because all these paintings were made in a very particular time. For people to see it at that time, it must have been so groundbreaking and freeing. But now, you're paying

16 pounds to see a show in which these people who put the show on are getting paid nothing. And you're just consuming it and not caring about any of the issues. There's no contextualisation around the paintings. We're not really working with art – art is doing all the work for us, it's like a service.

I wanted to flip that, so that when you go into an exhibition, you have to do some work to see something. You're responsible for the energy you put in, and that is what you get out of the work.

That's why I like interactivity. Often when I'm working with curators, they're like, 'tell me about the work'. And I'm like, 'no, you have to play it. I don't want to tell you about it'. You can explain what you did, but you can't explain the playthrough of a game to someone because they're going to make a completely different decision.

If you don't play it, you aren't going to have your own idea of how it is. I need you to have that, because that is the work – the work is what you leave with, rather than what I've done. I say that the audience is my medium because when I leave a game, I think about my choices in it. And that's the work I love, the choices made.

SPINNING AROUND

JULIET CARPENTER

SEBASTJAN BRANK

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SEBASTJAN BRANK
JULIET CARPENTER

SPINNING AROUND



Juliet Carpenter's short film *DIZZY* (2022) was one of two new commissions by the artist for *Otherwise-image-worlds*. In the following conversation, Carpenter discusses with writer Sebastjan Brank the co-emergence of photography and hysteria, pop music, and the history of cinematic female ruination in relation to *DIZZY*.

Sebastjan Brank Could you describe *DIZZY* – the narrative, the technical aspects, the general mood of the film?

Juliet Carpenter The film opens with an extreme close up of a woman's face, and slowly zooms out to reveal she is lying completely still on a bed in a messy, dimly lit bedroom. She abruptly begins to repeat a series of precise, mechanical movements. It's not clear what the movements are for. Periodically, she takes trips down a staircase to a bassinet which has a baby inside, but it's not a real baby, it's a hyper-realistic doll. In another short sequence she is kind of dancing, writhing around the room.



Above and previous page: Still from *DIZZY* (2022), Juliet Carpenter. Single-channel HD video, colour, sound. 11 min 53 sec.

These events are seen from several different camera perspectives – a more objective, classic camera; a baby monitor camera; a handy-cam; and the woman's vision, which is very blurred and spherical. The film is about twelve minutes long.

SB Does the character have a name?

JC In the screenplay, I wrote her name as Dizzy. The woman in the film is experiencing vertigo – thus, dizzy/dizziness. The sequence of movements she's doing is called the Epley Manoeuvre, which is a medical manoeuvre that a doctor would prescribe to someone suffering from vertigo.

SB The actress, Shade Th ret, comes from a dance background, right? You can tell by the way she moves – the film is choreographed, in a way. Did you practise this with her?

JC Yes. My preference was always to work with an actor, not a dancer. We asked everyone coming to the casting to prepare a dramatisation of the Epley Manoeuvre. Shade came and her rendition was just so good. I really enjoyed working with her. The 'dance' sequence where you hear *Spinning Around* by Kylie Minogue is all Shade's choreography. We did several rehearsals before the shoot but there was a lot of improvisation that came in once we started filming. Shade was very confident and rigorous. I was worried about it looking too much like a dance film, but in the end, I think it's the right balance.

SB The house she lives in is a little grotesque. The signifier 'home' is usually associated with something cosy, intimate, pleasant. But in films, these spaces are often portrayed as alienating and uncanny – many horror and home invasion films exploit this sensibility. Can you talk about the house and the setting?

JC Henry Davidson, the producer, found this location in Marzahn on the outskirts of Berlin. It's a ferienhaus (holiday home). It did the exact thing that I wanted, which was to give a sense of alienation, somewhat like a hotel room – it's not your home, but it's meant to be for a short period. It was important that the house felt like a vortex – that this character only

exists within this house, and nothing really exists beyond it. No one is coming to visit the house, or her.

SB In the history of cinema there is this endless fascination with white female madness or insanity. One could trace a kind of genealogy of unhinged femmes on screen: *Grey Gardens* (2009), *Repulsion* (1965), *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1962), *A Woman Under the Influence* (1974), *Gaslight* (1944)... You could call this trope misogynistic, but I think we can agree that you can't just reduce it to that. Can you talk about this archetype and why you find it so fascinating?

JC I am a bit obsessed with films where women get completely dismantled or unhinged. I *do* think it is a misogynistic trope; but I think not being able to observe one's own ambivalence towards such spectacle is shortsighted. Everyone, including women, has this desire to see feminine characters ruined. *The Real Housewives* (2006–) reality franchise is a good example of this. It represents the perfect kernel of contemporary contempt and salacious desire for the spectacle of a failed feminine subject.

When I started working on the film, I read *Invention of Hysteria* (1982) by Georges Didi-Huberman.¹ The book charts the co-emergence of photography and particular medical pathologies such as hysteria in a Parisian psychiatric hospital during the 19th century. In this particular hospital, inmates diagnosed as 'hysterics' were methodically photographed in bizarre, quite amazing *mise-en-scènes*. The choreography of the women in these images aimed to describe certain types of hysteria. There were also salons where the physicians would sit in a theatre, and women from the asylum were brought out to perform particular ailments. The patients who delivered the best performances were given special status and became imprisoned celebrities of sorts. Subjectivity was not only documented, but produced with and by the camera. The production of hysteria via moving image is still very present in filmmaking today.

SB It is interesting to reflect on the contemporary reception of Freud, who is often accused of pathologising hysteria, but who was probably the first to start listening to women instead of regarding



Installation view: *Otherwise-image-worlds* (4 June – 4 September 2022), Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Courtesy of the artists and Te Uru. Photo by Sam Hartnett.

them as crazy. According to him, it was hysteria that articulated the truth of the unconscious, and the 'hysterics' – who admittedly were mostly women – let the unconscious speak through their symptoms. Later on, Jacques Lacan praised the hysterics for using language creatively, subverting more ordinary linguistic expressions. For Lacan, hysteria became not so much a behaviour but a psychic structure that leads the subject to question the role ascribed to them by society. In relation to hysteria, there is always this question mark.

JC I'm interested in the ways hysteria behaves in different contexts – historically, medically, but also technologically. If you think about recurrent neural networks (RNNs) – a kind of technology used in recommendation engines which are what all mainstream social media are built upon – they behave in stereotypically hysterical ways: huge networks are designed to make associations between things that seemingly have nothing in common, and therefore can both target and produce subjectivities.

With *DIZZY* it was important for me that the film moved between different technological mechanisms, and ways that the character and the viewer is able to see. I like working with several different kinds of cameras. I've received criticism that it can be distracting. But for me, it's more familiar to be switching between different qualities and types of visual stimuli.

SB I don't want to say 'form follows function', but did using different cameras and angles align with your exploration of what one could maybe call incoherent subjectivity?

JC In order to describe a subject that is splintered, it doesn't really make sense to use one super familiar camera. I think you can create an immersive, cinematic environment between lots of different looks.

SB We are always permeated by external factors that we do not have complete control over, even if we constantly disavow it. The characters in your films embody this lack of mastery over oneself.

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Still from *DIZZY* (2022), Juliet Carpenter. Single-channel HD video, colour, sound. 11 min 53 sec.

JC I do not really believe in the liberal idea of a pure, authentic self. It's not that people are incapable of being authentic, but in screenwriting, characters are often defined and predetermined by their core motivations, a kind of inner problem they have to solve. I am more interested in depicting conditions that are self-contradictory. The baby in the film is supposed to create this continuum of her subjectivity that spills outside of itself.

SB The character is trying to get rid of her persistent vertigo via repetitive movements. When she finally succeeds, there is a brief moment of transcendence, or maybe happiness, but then it gets kind of grotesque and self-destructive again.

It's funny that sometimes the best sedative for daily disorientation is even more disorientation. For example, going to a club and listening to unbearably loud music can lead to a sense of inner calm. This also got me thinking about the death drive and its many interpretations. Think of running a marathon – it is through repetition of physically strenuous movements that you reach a state of transcendence, a state beyond mere repetition. We feel most alive when we negate life itself.

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JC The whole film was based on repetition. You basically only see her do this one thing. The only thing that breaks this are her trips to this unusual doll at the bottom of the stairs. You could describe the musical sequence as the climax of the film, but I wasn't trying to make it joyful or emancipatory. It's meant to still be within the logic of this insane repetition. I think it's as you describe it, in that the pursuit of pleasure always involves some sort of pain.

SB If we go back to this brief moment of pure bliss or ecstasy, we can hear Kylie Minogue's *Spinning Around*. Pop music can be a powerful vehicle for many things. What is your relationship to it?

JC I just genuinely love pop music – the formulaic-ness, the way that it works is extremely manipulative and satisfying. I wanted pop music in the film, but I knew that it needed to have a level of uncertainty around the clarity of her euphoria. I'm not against

using simple manipulative pleasures, because that's how they work in the world – I feel affected by pop music.

SB There's this quote by Annie Ernaux that a mutual friend of ours, Andrew, sent me: 'A book offers more deliverance, more escape, more fulfilment of desire. In songs one remains locked in desire.'² I guess what she's trying to say is that when you hear a pop song, it immediately throws you back into a moment. It's very sticky and resilient.

JC Film is inherently such a bastard medium. I'm not a believer in the idea that you shouldn't use things because they're manipulative. If you think this, working as a filmmaker, you're a bit delusional.

SB Maybe we can talk about the relations that Dizzy has with inanimate objects in the house. Somehow she's libidinally invested in those objects – most notably, the creepy baby, which again reminded me of *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* and Bette Davis' baby form, her miniature replica of herself.

JC The idea for the baby didn't start specifically about it being a baby. I knew that I wanted the main character to be alone, but I needed there to be another presence, something semi-sentient. I was like, is it a dead body? Is it a mannequin? Then I became fascinated with these reborn dolls. That's a whole other thing to perhaps make a film about – the culture of people who collect these hyper-realistic dolls.

Once you put a woman and a baby in a room together, it immediately conveys the idea of motherhood. Although this wasn't in the forefront of my mind, I accept that's the symbolic relationship a lot of viewers interpret. For me, the character of Dizzy and the Doll are one and the same, and they create a closed circuit of subjectivity and madness. Dizzy herself looks a bit like a doll; she seems disaffected and mechanical in her movements. And the doll is immobile but looks very realistic. It's been interesting to learn how heavy the symbols you work with can be. Some people interpreted this film to be about postnatal depression. I think that comes back to what we were saying about this ambiguously misogynistic trope.

SB I'm a big fan of films taking place in enclosed spaces. I love a good chamber piece. It's a powerful format, because I think stripped-down films can force the actors to be more inventive. They also confront us viewers, who are used to being constantly inundated with sensory stimuli, with the brutality of immobility as well as the fact that what we are usually most inconvenienced by is other people, to quote Lauren Berlant.³

JC I also feel very drawn to the chamber piece. Right now I want to be able to make works that are self-evident, immersive worlds of their own, whose rules are justified from within. To me, a way of getting to that is working with a discrete environment. I'm not against films that work in other ways – that's just what I'm learning to do right now.



Still from *Deep Head Hanging Manoeuvre* (2022), Juliet Carpenter. Animated video, sound. 2 min 35 sec.

EMBODIED REALITIES

TANU GAGO
RAQI SYED

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EMBODIED REALITIES
TANU GAGO
RAQI SYED



Artist Tanu Gago and filmmaker Raqi Syed discuss the overlaps and collisions between film, screen arts and contemporary art. With reference to FAFSWAG's VR project *ATUA* (2017), Gago's animated video *Coven Aucoin* (2022), and Syed's film experience *MINIMUM MASS* (2020), the artists consider the potential for animation, virtual reality and augmented realities to transmute personal and cultural narratives.

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Still from *Coven Aucoin* (2022), Tanu Gago. Animated video, sound. 3 min 16 sec.
Previous page: Still from *Coven Aucoin* (2022).

Raqi Syed What brought you to animation?

Tanu Gago My whole life I've been enamoured by animation. Because it stems from the imagination, it became a way to interpolate reality. I've been attracted to it since I was a child, watching cartoons in the nineties. I went to Freelance Animation School but I didn't last long. You have to be super disciplined; I was young and impatient.

I brought commercial film and narrative-based skills into fine art which isn't common practice. Art can be nonlinear – you can really deconstruct the form and the genre. In tertiary fine art education in New Zealand, you're often told to lean into your culture, that this will help you navigate what stories to tell. At the time I didn't know what that meant, I had to get some life experience first.

I came back to linear narrative storytelling in filmmaking and photography. There was a form of cultural framing about how you tell a story in a still image. I'm slowly coming back to my passion for animation. The tools have become incredibly powerful, computers can do a lot for you now.

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RS I started making animation in high school. We replicated simple structures, like a beginning, middle, and an end. We were told an animated film is a good story well told. That put me on a path I've almost never deviated from – which is that animation is fun. It's powerful, it's direct, it's complex.

When I worked at Disney Feature Animation Studios a lot of it was about repetition, this fixation on the pixel – not only do you care about one twenty-fourth of a second, but you have to care about the pixel. If there's one dead pixel, you could spend your whole day fixing that.

TG I think that's what most animators have in common, that obsessive attention to detail. That margin of interpretation as a singular pixel can be redefined. How you interpret a piece of motion, or the way an emotion is translated through a story. That extra five frames makes a difference, in terms of breathing room for the story, or saying something about a character.

Film school filled in so many gaps that I wasn't learning through animation school, because there I was being groomed for the industrial complex of animation. I was more hungry for learning how to tell a story.

RS There's a disconnect – as a student, you have to do a lot of things, it's an enormous learning curve, and as a professional in the industry of big budget or commercial animation, you do only one thing and become really good at it. I specialised in lighting characters – not lighting environments, effects, or water, but specifically characters.

Once you go back to being an independent artist, you have to learn a lot of things again. You have to decide what kind of animator you want to be, how you want to use animation. Animation has this massive context of cinema and storytelling. If you can put it in this interdisciplinary context, it's easier to understand what you're trying to achieve.

TG It has the same fascinating qualities of cinema in that it's a composite art form. You are drawing from other mediums and genres of work, whether it's sound design or a series of reference materials, and where those comes from – whether it sits within the cultural consciousness, or you pull it from the internet. There's a history that comes before the moment you are trying to compose something. You will always have a reference point.

At animation school I was encouraged to tell my story, and I just didn't know who I was – I don't think I was out at the time. If you don't know what your story is, it's hard to find the visual language, the voice to compile everything. To know what I wanted to talk about, that took some time.

RS The film school I went to was started and run by queer feminists. I thought that's how the animation world was run. When I went into the industry, I realised that's not what animation was.

Salman Rushdie's writing was really important to me as a young person. Literary science fiction was where I first learned people who come from the same place my family comes from – India, Pakistan and

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South Asia – can tell speculative stories about their own history. It's really hard to do – Rushdie says if you don't know who you are, you cannot write a story. That's what's tricky about identity politics or the formation of identity. Having some life experience, then coming to the critical aspect of the formation of identity – if you do it in that order, it feels easier to build an art practice around it.

This thing where you go to art school or university and some white person tells you you must access your identity, this place you came from, so you have something unique to say – it's prescribed; that in and of itself becomes a eurocentric violence. I have to justify being in this room by being a person of colour, who's going to talk about being a person of colour. It's like I don't have the privilege of just talking about genre or being a person in the world.

TG It's been absorbed into that framework of academia. It sounds cliché, but those prescribed steps are your method of unlocking your worldview. I've been in so many instances, whether a writing room or a creative brainstorming space, where there's freedom to probe at other cultures purely

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Installation view: *Otherwise-image-worlds* (4 June – 4 September 2022), Te Urū Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Courtesy of the artists and Te Urū. Photo by Sam Hartnett.

as a thought exercise. For non-Indigenous people, that's such a luxury. People of colour are extremely mindful about the parameters of what that looks like, of the way we reference those things. I do find that challenging. It can be a double-edged sword. I think there is a way to move seamlessly through the politics of identity without it becoming a trope, or a barrier or burden.

RS At SIGGRAPH, a computer graphics conference, we talked about diversity and what it means in a technical context for making computer graphics – both from a research perspective and the visualisation of culture. It's uncomfortable for people, but one thing we agreed on was that there's no one solution. We have to do a lot of things, many of them messy, and they will yield different results. Allowing ourselves to be in this messy place is difficult, but it's a better way forward – it invites more people into the discussion. Politics is so polarising because people don't know how to proceed. For me, the story is going in the right direction if I start to feel uncomfortable.

TG If you shift to an abundance mindset, it's adding more dynamic range to your conversation as opposed to asking, if we have this, what are we losing? Why can't we have them all? Even the ones that are wrong? Let's put everything on the table. It should make you uncomfortable, it should be messy.

RS I've been thinking about moving to a labour-oriented framework for talking about my art practice – essentially a Marxist politics, rather than identity politics. Animation is good for that. The history of commercial animation has been tightly bound up in the organisation of labour. Even the biggest animation studios in the world like Disney and DreamWorks – they're union shops.

Disney was one of the first places I worked, and it gave me a mindset about the transparency of pay and the accountability of organisations to the politics of labour. From a global perspective, we're now seeing people engaging in discussions about the value of labour. If we can do that, we invite more people into the discussion. That's what needs to happen, because capitalism keeps chipping away at the value of our labour, particularly art labour.



Still from *ATUA* (2022), written and directed by Tanu Gago, created by FAFSWAG, produced by PIKI Films, digital creative direction by Wrestler. Augmented reality experience. Courtesy of the artist.

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TG That is the line I'm always treading as an animator, to find this middle ground between my hybrid set of skills in animation, photography, and ethnographic and cultural-based storytelling, and what the art world expects of you as an artist, which is to have a response to the state of the world or your environment. I often draw from spaces in my community to figure that out, and utilise animation as a way of amplifying those conversations and putting them in the public domain for people to have their own interactions with it.

RS For *ATUA* VR, what was the process of working in a new medium like? You had to enter into a world of collaboration with tech people and design people – new and different spaces.

TG *ATUA* was a 2017 project by FAFSWAG, a VR experience that took you to Puluotu, our underworld where Pacific gods and deities exist. In 2017, members of our collective were engaged in performance practice, activation, and part of that was drawing on essential knowledge and talking to the *va*, which is the sacred space between all beings and all things, identified as active, not dormant. We were

part of a handful of artists around Tāmaki Makaurau and Aotearoa at the time who were practising this form of performance. We were invited to activate a lot of public art spaces and create rituals.

At a hui where collectives were invited to participate, we did individual performances. We were culturally in a totally different realm – there was a vibration at that time, and one exhibition where artists were drawing on ancestral knowledge. We were part of a frequency that didn't seem like natural reality. I remember coming home and writing a treatment about reproducing that feeling but in a museum context – a VR exhibition where you'd see these activations articulated for a digital experience, a code-based interaction with motion capture and a reinterpretation of those cultural performances.

We rewrote the treatment as a sculptural augmented reality experience where I'd pick a singular deity and tell a story about it, one beat at a time. The first beat was Tangaroa, the god of the ocean. It grew into a project with my producers at Piki Films about the atua, spread across a series of physical pouwhenua. When you engaged with them through handheld devices, they'd generate a digital version of a deity.

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Still from *SAVAGE IN THE GARDEN* (2019), Tanu Gago. HD video. 4 min 51 sec. Courtesy of the artist.

The artist I asked to perform Tangaroa said they were nonbinary and wouldn't feel comfortable being Tangaroa, so I asked them to pick a deity on the spectrum and they chose Te Kore. Te Kore is traditionally perceived in Māori culture as a space as opposed to a physical, celestial being, so it was quite controversial to give them a body. We took about a year to get cultural advice – we spoke to a lot of Māori arts practitioners and elders. We also had conversations about licensing and IP, and whether we all have access to these stories.

RS People should be allowed to explore these stories, but the process is important – how you arrive at the story, who is involved. Who is invited to access the story?

TG The deities were part of our existing practice, things we'd explored and talked about for years. If you look at our practice over the last ten years, there's a clear trajectory to these cultural figures. A lot of our formative work is imbued by the same spirits, mana, of these kinds of cultural conversations. The one thing we didn't want to do was to create a precedent for those characters to be licensed. That took time to figure out – being mindful we weren't doing things in a way that was exclusive.

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RS We could think of it as open source – making the method and process available so that others can use it to arrive at their own results. The method is important too. Metahuman, for example, the character creator platform – it's so powerful and sophisticated. But just because you can push a few buttons and make a good looking character, does that mean you should without a method attached? Why does this character exist? What is the character doing? Who is this character based on? Then you use the tools, and when you put those things together, you can do amazing things. What I find frustrating is that these powerful tools often do not have methodology that sits next to them.

TG The moral, ethical boundaries of what is possible haven't been defined. There are layers upon layers of protocol. We tried to steer away from being definitive about whose culture it was. We were mindful to talk about restoring LGBTQ identity to the realm of

our mythology, because it's been erased through colonisation and the first contact with Christian missionaries in the Pacific. That is still the ultimate goal – to create narratives that feel restorative and insert us back into our mythology. Recognising that as our agenda for the project gave it direction in terms of what we could talk about, and what wasn't for us to talk about.

RS Virtual reality or extended reality is a good medium for that – if you put on the headset and move around, there's an embodied element. That embodiment necessitates questions around who is doing this and why, and opens up that discussion in a way that non-spatialised mediums can only do indirectly.

TG That element almost mirrors the ritual in the real world, because that activation is an embodied practice. Artists occupy space with their physical being, but they're expanding the space based on the ritual they're performing. That's what I appreciated about augmented reality – the device makes you participate, makes you complicit in a series of actions. Or it made you integral to the story in the way you'd feel if you'd experienced it in the museum.

RS That's why I love VR, it's one of the few mediums that you can't second screen. You have to fully engage in it. We used to experience that power with cinema – back when people had to go to the movie theatre, sit down in a darkened space with the curtain in front of the screen. Cinema was supposed to be a religious experience, like you're at the altar. It used to be this transformative experience that people would go to, and emerge from it changed.

TG In Tonga I would wag school and go to the cinema. You could stay the whole day watching films because the tickets were for three movies. I spent most of my time as a child in the cinema by myself, I remember feeling swallowed by the experience. There's an orientation process before diving in, and then coming out suddenly in the real world. That process is important to that experience – everything is a memory, it's part of building your nostalgia or your recollection of things.

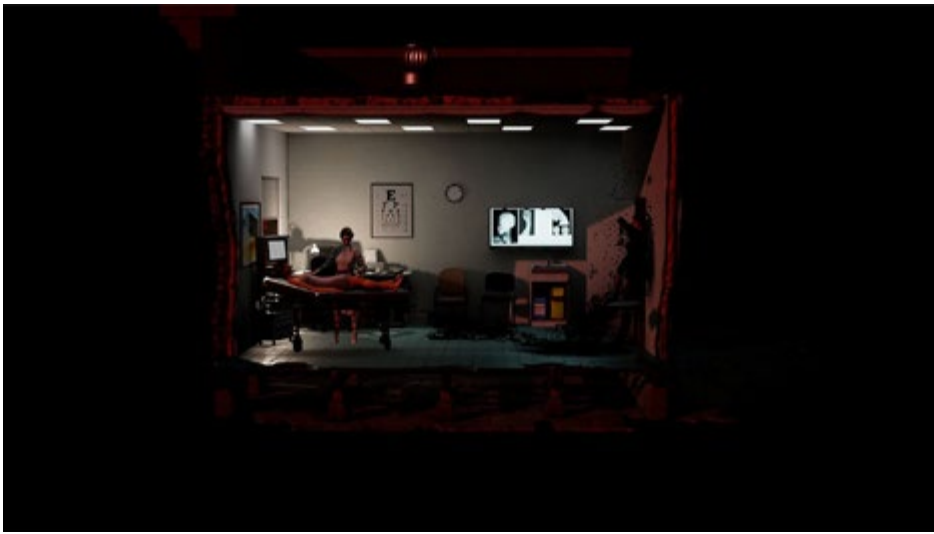
RS Emerging out of virtual reality has that same feeling. The Australian queer feminist artist Kathy Smith teaches a class at the University of Southern California called *Expanded Animation* which was formative for me. She made us read Freud and talk about animation and virtual reality as ways to access dreams.

We can call the virtual reality space the 'volume'. It's blackness, which things emerge out of through an additive process. If you treat the volume as negative space, it's dream space, consciousness. You don't have to justify things or do the prescriptive thing in television or film – the establishing shot of the house, then the door, and then someone walks into it. You don't even need the door – you could just have the sound of the door, and someone walking into the space.

TG There's something beautifully cognitive about VR. It feels like an extension of how you experience the world, as opposed to the illusion of cinema, which I feel is constantly manipulating your perspective whether through cinematography, editing or sound design. There are aspects of VR that I find quite terrifying – the volume, the darkness, the way things emerge and fluctuate, the purpose for things. Sometimes I feel like I've shrunk, and there's a massive tidal wave coming.

RS I think the language of virtual reality is scale. The language of cinema is the cut, the camera, the framing. Since we don't have that in VR we wanted to play with it in *MINIMUM MASS*, which unfolds as a miniature diorama. Then it cuts to these room-scale embodied moments. Scale is the visual language; we played with it to make things miniature or really large. We've only scratched the surface in terms of what you can do with scale in storytelling and how it becomes part of the narrative.

TG That was an aspect of *ATUA* I was attracted to in terms of medium. VR enabled scale. Your atua should be massive; that was something that I appreciated about the way that digital bodies were perceived in science fiction like *Blade Runner*. What could the Pacific version of this manifested digital future look like? Will projects like this add to that canon of storytelling? For us it's rooted in a cultural practice;



Still from *MINIMUM MASS* (2020), Raqi Syed. Interactive narrative virtual reality. 20 min. Courtesy of Like Amber.

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there's a different layer of meaning. But for people who don't have the same cultural framework, it's science fiction, it's the same type of make-believe dreaming space as filmmaking.

RS It's the interplay between the accessibility of mono-myths, these large mythical forms that cut across different cultures, and something specific and gritty related to your lived experience. If it goes too much in either direction, it becomes generic or insular. It's the interplay between the two that is truthful and interesting, and invites people into the storytelling process.

With *MINIMUM MASS*, we wanted to tell this heavy, personal story about miscarriage. The speculative lens became the wrapper around which this story became accessible to more people. It's a way for you to insulate yourself too, because it's a lot of emotional labour to talk about your personal story. It becomes easier if you frame it through the lens of genre.

TG That's what I love about these art forms, they can articulate something that you can't always express in words. I'm into the idea of replicating reality, to look at it as a mirror, through a lens of Indigenous masculinity. There's a cultural stereotype, a binary

that Polynesian men are often situated in: either the virile, exotic other, or dangerous and volatile.

There are so many other aspects of our Indigenous identity. I want to know how these things will exist in this future digital environment, and how we shift the paradigm before that happens in relation to the Indigenous or Polynesian experience. There might still be time for us to figure out what that looks like before we reproduce ourselves in this way.

RS One outcome I want to see consistently is the value of the labour of artwork. Technology enables productivity and access, but there's still the entire conceptual and craft framework around it that is contrary to live-action. You get nothing for free in animation, everything must be deliberately crafted and constructed.

TG Animation is tapping almost directly into the imagination as it's being created and manifested. It's quite incredible – it's not like in film, where a set of practical components have to happen before a shot can be established. I've been in love with animation since I was a kid, and I say I get bored of drawing, but all I ever want to do is draw.

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MAPPING LOVE:
SORAWIT SONGSATAYA'S
MNEMOSYNE
RUTH WATSON

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**MAPPING LOVE:
SORAWIT SONGSATAYA'S
MNEMOSYNE
RUTH WATSON**



You are panning across a digital landscape of tiny coloured cubes suspended in space, as the sound of water gently plink-plonks and ripples. The scene is awash with restful blues, greens and whites, but it's not clear what this place is, if it even is a place – it's abstract, yet the cubes cluster in ways that remind you of something just beyond your grasp. Then you – following the artist's view – are diving below a surface, although there are no surfaces here. Each point in this seemingly artificial world is a colourful 3D polygon floating in the air, attempting to form part of a greater whole.

Next, your view pulls back to an even larger cloud of cubes. A superimposed image of an SLR camera appears on the screen, its display showing an ancient Thai temple. Over the duration of the work, this is one of several cameras that peacefully emerge and recede, gone before you can fixate on it. You are swept along, flying through the landscape of loosely associated cubes which form and reform, softly coming in and out of focus.

Even if that disembodied eye you follow – to use Dziga Vertov's famous characterisation, the 'invisible imaginary ubiquitous winged witness' – can often get up to nefarious mischief, that's not what's happening here. This eye has an aim, and isn't imaginary; Songsataya takes you along with them. It's not a case of passive witnessing; you follow and become complicit in what seems to be a search for something. Perhaps it's a memory, as the title implies: Mnemosyne was the Greek goddess of memory, a daughter of Heaven and Earth, and mother to the Muses.

Most of the visuals we see are derived from point cloud data based on handheld video sent by the artist's mother – some of her private garden, and some from a trip to ancient Thai temples the two took together. The imagery was transformed through several software programmes¹ into a space to be explored. In *Mnemosyne*, we navigate through the field of cubes with the regular refrain of the water's motion. The movement and sounds entice you to relax into this animated world – so it's almost a surprise when you suddenly can distinguish near-clear shapes forming a pointillist domestic space, complete with little potted cacti and pictures hanging on a wall. Some of these were already shown on the floating camera screens, one held by a pair of youthful computer-generated hands; on its screen you could see simple footage of a stone basin, with plants growing in water and stone frogs flanking its bowl. The scene is charming and pleasant.

1 These were COLMAP, CloudCompare and Metashape to process the point cloud data, and Blender to create the polygons. I am grateful to the artist for sharing this information, via email correspondence, 27 October 2022.

2 'Dislocation' and 'relocation' chime with ideas in Connie Brown's article "Otherwise-image-worlds" in *The Art Paper Issue 3: Apparatus*, July 2022, 68, 75.

Yet some images of temples – also rendered into polygons – crumble, and in one case, disintegrate in a slow motion explosion. The digital transformations of the original footage have created a new kind of space, one that Songsataya can interact with – something not possible given the actual distance between the artist and their mother – she resides in Thailand and they in Aotearoa New Zealand. They have lived apart now for many years, but the memory of their 2018 trip visiting temples may have reminded the artist of their shared distance.

In this way, Songsataya transforms spaces of dislocation into possibilities of relocation.² We follow their navigation, while having our own discoveries within this world. Even the crumbling temples have some restfulness to their demise; falling apart into little cubes, they echo the micro and macro aspects of the video. At times the forms seem to show something mountainous, then you decide it's something shown in extreme close-up. This collision of scales, almost switching back and forth between registers, occurs regularly and the sense of being close and far away at the same time becomes increasingly moot. The rhythmic patterns of the gently dripping water, with one particular sonic interval regularly repeated, act like a persistent reminder of something in the background of our minds.



Still from *Mnemosyne* (2022), Sorawit Songsataya. Single-channel HD video, colour, sound. 9 min 48 sec. Previous page: Still from *Mnemosyne* (2022).

3 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2007, 35. Quoted in Petra Lange-Berndt, ed. *Materiality*. London: Whitechapel Gallery/MIT Press, 2015, 17.

Eventually, you realise you are witnessing and engaging with something rather intimate – a form of longing for a person who is far away. This love is simultaneously present and distant, actual and yearned for – it's spooky action at a distance, of wishing to be in two places at once. For physicist-philosopher Karen Barad, "matter is understood as a dynamic and shifting entanglement of relations rather than as a property of things."³ This is reflected in the locations of *Mnemosyne*, where stone is thrown into motion, disintegrating and reforming into known buildings and objects. We, alongside Songsataya, navigate through and with these imaged materialities, with the virtual and the transmissible mapping onto a lived reality of affection and longing.

To map love seems like an impossibility, but cartography has long pinned down the wings of many butterflies. The title of this essay is something of an irritant, too – the ubiquity of mapping as our dominant operational metaphor reflects the way cartography's surveilling eye extends into places it possibly shouldn't go. Yet in *Mnemosyne* it's searching for traces of a relationship across space and time, and making us complicit and sympathetic to its desires. I've often been asked why I don't make maps about urgent social issues. The answer I've long given has been about cartography's dirty hands, that it's not some neutral process to be used – means and ends, et cetera. Songsataya's *Mnemosyne*

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Still from *Mnemosyne* (2022), Sorawit Songsataya. Single-channel HD video, colour, sound. 9 min 48 sec.

has challenged me on this subject for two reasons. One is that they make the artist's subjectivity or position integral to the work – posing questions and offering opportunities for viewers to see what they see, of being invited to search alongside them. Another reason is that the means are thereby altered: the point cloud data, source imagery and the digital transformations are knitted together mindfully, and lovingly. Memories play a part in a continuous process of construction and reconstruction, and love transcends location to become our new coordinates.

Mnemosyne reminds me of another work by Songsataya, *Morning dew* (2019), in which viewers get to peer into small, magical worlds: tiny orbs of resin containing then-living leaves or flowers, frozen as though in a ball of ice that won't melt. What chimes is the invitation to contemplate nature in a fragile state, not as a static fact but through transformation: suspended in time (*Morning dew*) or attenuated across space (*Mnemosyne*).

Some of the imagery for *Mnemosyne* was filmed by Songsataya at Orokonui Ecosanctuary in Waitati, north of Dunedin. This includes some very tiny mushrooms, fallen leaves on the forest floor, and lichen growing on a rotten log or branch. Abstracted through the process of photogrammetry, these become hard to separate from the other imagery, in effect blending disparate spaces together. The overall impression is that of nature in motion: forming and unforming, growing and decaying. It could be a meditation on mortality – perhaps that's what the sonic interval is there to remind us of. Both works encourage us to navigate possible new worlds. *Mnemosyne* shows us how we can do this: remembering, soaring, loving.

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HOW DANGEROUS IS YOUR DATE?

**DANIELLE
BRATHWAITE-SHIRLEY**

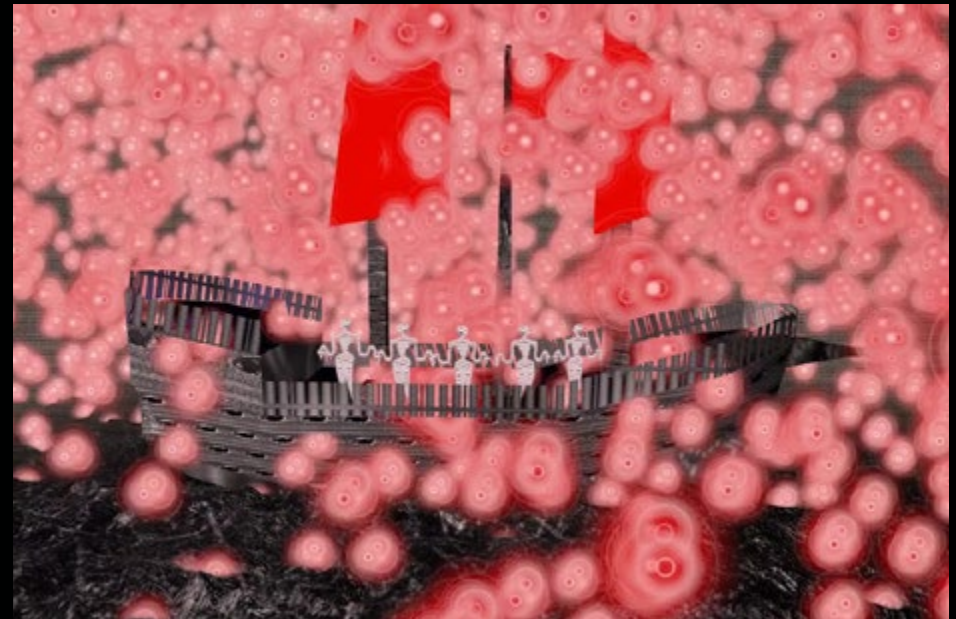
52

HOW DANGEROUS IS
YOUR DATE?
DANIELLE
BRATHWAITE-SHIRLEY

In Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley's game, identity determines power and power shifts as identities change. Players must use their relative strengths and weaknesses to engage other participants in this virtual Black trans-centred universe.

You and the other players will venture into this story-based game space, determining the course of the game, the narrative, and your interaction with the artist through the choices you collectively make.

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Still from *Pirating Blackness* / *BLACKTRANSSEA.COM* (2021), Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley. All images © Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley, courtesy of the artist.

THE DAY YOU LEFT HOME. THE WORLD HAS CHANGED. THE VOICE OF AN OLD GOD ROSE FROM THE BOTTOM OF THE OCEAN AND HAS BEGUN SOMETHING KNOWN AS THE SHIP. THE LAND WE ARE STANDING ON IS SINKING. YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO THINK. AS YOU RUN THROUGH THE CROWDS, PAST THE SCREAMS OF FEAR AND THE LAYERS OF UNCERTAINTY, YOU MAKE IT TO THE BOAT.

IT'S ABANDONED, IT'S OLD, BUT IT'S ALL YOU HAVE. THE WATER IS AROUND YOUR WAIST; YOU AND THE OTHERS MANAGE TO CLIMB ONTO THE BOAT. SOME AREN'T SO LUCKY; THEY ARE SWEEPED AWAY. YOUR HOME IS UNINHABITABLE NOW. YOU AND THE PEOPLE WHO SURVIVE ARE NOW THE CREW OF THIS SHIP – WHICH IS YOU LOT, THE AUDIENCE. THERE IS NO TIME FOR INTRODUCTIONS AS THE BOAT IS CARRIED OUT TO SEA. AS YOU COAST ON THE OCEAN, ONE OF YOU TELLS YOU A STORY OF THE ORIGIN OF THIS.

THEY SAY IN ORDER TO STOP IT, WE NEED TO LOOK FOR SOMETHING CALLED 'THE WOUNDS OF THE OCEAN'. IF WE FIND IT, THERE WILL BE A HOME FOR US. THIS NEWS HAS NOT FILLED YOU WITH JOY, BUT WORRY. HOW CAN YOU SEARCH ALL THAT WATER? HOW WILL YOU FIND THIS PLACE?

SOMEONE MENTIONS THAT THEY FEEL LIKE THEY'RE BEING WATCHED. MAYBE SOMEONE IS FOLLOWING YOU ALL, AND SOME TIME INTO OUR JOURNEY, AFTER LOSING TRACK OF THE PARTS OF THE SEA THAT WE KNEW, THE OCEAN SPLIT. IT WAS AS THOUGH TWO DIFFERENT LIQUIDS WERE MEETING EACH OTHER BUT COULDN'T MIX. ONE IS FULL OF SHADOWS, AND THE OTHER HAS TOWERING WAVES THAT CRASH DOWN UPON EACH OTHER.

YOUR CHOICES ARE:

SAIL TOWARDS THE SHADOWS

SAIL TOWARDS THE STRONG WAVES

NO PARTICIPATION.

Sail towards the shadows.

SHADOWS WINS.

KEEP YOUR EYES TO YOURSELF. THESE SHADOWS ARE THE ANCESTORS OF THE SEA. ONE OF THE SHADOWS BREAKS FROM THE OTHERS AND COMES CLOSE TO THE SHIP. THEY BREAK THROUGH THE WATER'S SURFACE, REVEALING A FACE SIMILAR TO THAT FROM A DREAM OR A NIGHTMARE. YOU'RE NOT SURE IF YOU FIND THEM BEAUTIFUL OR TERRIFYING. YOU GAZE UPON THEIR FACE AS THEY BEGIN TALKING TO YOU.

YOU DON'T KNOW ME, BUT I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU YOUR ENTIRE LIFE. SOME OF YOU HERE HOLD A LOT OF PAIN. SOME OF YOU HAVE PASSED IT ON. IT HURTS ME TO SEE IT. BEFORE I LET YOU PASS, I WANT YOU TO THINK ABOUT WHAT I'M GOING TO SAY. DO WE LEARN TO LOVE HOW CERTAIN PEOPLE LOOK? WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO UNLEARN ABOUT BEAUTY?

OR, ONE OR MORE OF YOU MUST TELL THE CREW A REASON WHY YOU HAVE IMPROVED AS A PERSON.

NOW, DISCUSS AS A GROUP. EITHER:

WHAT ABOUT BEAUTY DO YOU HAVE TO UNLEARN?

OR, ONE OF YOU HAS TO TELL THE CREW HOW YOU'VE IMPROVED.

I'm curious about unlearning about beauty. Particularly for people or objects, it's learned, environmental, contextual. The more you allow yourself to inhabit different worlds and understand them, the more you can understand their ideas of beauty.

Maybe for something to be truly beautiful, there has to be something wrong or ugly about it as well – it has to encapsulate both things. It's a kind of paradox, that's unlearning what beauty is, as an essentialism.

I think beauty is singular, or a singular thing or a singular experience.

It's silent.

**THEY SHOW YOU TWO CARDS. ONE SAYS FOLLOW YOUR BODY,
AND THE OTHER SAYS FOLLOW YOUR HEART.
THERE IS NO EXCELLENT BEAUTY THAT HATH NOT SOME
STRANGENESS.**

**THE SHADOW DRIFTS BACK INTO THE WATER AS WE SAIL OVER
THEM. MOST OF THEM SEEM TO HAVE LITTLE TO NO INTEREST
IN OUR PRESENCE. WE PLUNGE OUR HANDS INTO THE WATER,
REACHING OUR HANDS OUT TOWARDS THEM. BUT THE CLOSER
WE THINK WE ARE GETTING, THE FURTHER AWAY THEY SEEM
TO BE.**

**HOWEVER, SOME OF THESE SHADOWS ARE DRAWN TO US,
SHARING THEIR WISDOM OF THE OCEAN. THEY TELL US TO
EITHER SAIL TOWARDS THE SUN, OR SAIL AT NIGHT. THE
CHOICE IS OURS, THEY SAY.**

SAIL TOWARDS THE SHADOWS,

OR SAIL AT NIGHT?

Night.

**AS YOU SAIL, YOUR MINDS CLEAR AND YOUR CREW BEGINS
TO CATCH THEIR BREATH. YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE SAILING
TOWARDS THE SUN, BUT THE SUN SEEMS TO BE CASTING A
SHADOW. THE CLOSER YOU ARE, THE DARKER IT'S GETTING.
THIS MAKES NO SENSE. WHERE IS THE LIGHT GOING?**

**THE LIGHT SUDDENLY DISAPPEARS, LEAVING YOU IN THE
BLACK OF NIGHT. IT'S HOT, AS THOUGH YOU WERE IN THE
BAKING HEAT. BUT IT'S CLEAR NOW THAT THIS SUN WAS JUST
A FACADE. AS YOUR EYES ADJUST TO THE DARK, YOU NOTICE
TWO LIGHTS IN THE DISTANCE – ONE MUCH MORE PROMINENT
AND ALIEN THAN THE OTHER.**

**NEXT TO THIS ALIEN LIGHT SEEMS TO BE THE LIGHT OF A
SEARCH BOAT. THE BEAM SCOURS THE WATER, AS THE FAINT
NOISE OF A CREW CAN BE HEARD. YOU CAN'T QUITE MAKE OUT
THEIR WORDS. YOU'RE NOT SURE IF THEY'RE SEARCHING FOR
SOMETHING, OR LOOKING FOR YOU.**

**SAILING TO THE BOAT COULD MEAN MORE CREW MEMBERS,
MORE FRIENDS, MORE HELP. OR IT COULD MEAN DANGER. YET
SAILING TO THIS ALIEN LIGHT IS UNCERTAIN. YOU HAVE NO
IDEA WHAT IT IS, BUT IT'S BEAUTIFUL.**

SAIL TO THE ALIEN LIGHT,

SAIL TO THE BOAT,

OR SEND A WARNING TO THE BOAT?

Alien light.

ONE VOTE, ALIEN LIGHT.

COMMUNITY FIND YOUR COMMUNITY

ND YOUR COMMUNITY FIND YOUR CO

TY FIND YOUR COMMUNITY FIND YOUR

COMMUNITY FIND YOUR COMMUNITY

ND YOUR COMMUNITY FIND YOUR CO

TY FIND YOUR COMMUNITY FIND YOUR

COMMUNITY FIND YOUR COMMUNITY



**BLACK
TRANS
POWER**



THE STRUCTURE STRETCHES UP TO THE SKY LIKE THE HAND OF A LONG-FORGOTTEN INTERDIMENSIONAL GOD. ITS IMMENSE SCALE HITS YOU WHEN YOU SAIL UP TO IT. ALTHOUGH NOTHING ON ITS SURFACE CAN BE MADE OUT, IT FEELS AS THOUGH IT'S WATCHING YOU. THE SURFACE IS AS THOUGH A CLOUD HAS BEEN STRETCHED ACROSS THE LIMB OF A COUNTRY-SIZED BEING. TO DESCRIBE IT WOULD MAKE JUST AS MUCH SENSE AS SEEING IT – IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.

AS YOU DRIFT, SLACK-JAW TOWARDS THE THING, ITS SURFACE BEGINS TO BUBBLE AND CONTORT. A SILHOUETTE PUSHES FROM INSIDE, STRETCHING AND EMBOSSEING ITSELF ONTO THE SURFACE AS THOUGH IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN THERE. IT TAKES IN A WHIFF OF YOU:

YOU SMELL NICE. YOU NEED HELP. I CAN HELP, BUT ONLY IF YOU GIVE ME A REASON. YOU ARE NOW IN THE GRAVITY OF MY BODY, YOU CAN'T PULL AWAY. ONCE YOU MAKE CONTACT, YOU'LL BE TRANSPORTED TO A WORLD BETWEEN.

I CAN OFFER YOU TWO WORLDS:

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THE HOME OF GENDER,

OR THE SHADOW OF YOUR ACTIONS.

DISCUSS THIS AMONGST YOURSELVES. WHERE TO GO, AND WHY? YOU MUST HAVE A GOOD REASON.

**THE SHADOW OF YOUR ACTIONS
A MONSTER THAT'S FORMED FROM ALL THE ACTIONS
THAT YOU HAVE MADE IN THE PAST. YOU HAVE TO TAKE
RESPONSIBILITY FOR THOSE ACTIONS.**

**THE HOME OF GENDER
WHERE GENDER WAS BORN – THE CONCEPTION OF GENDER.
THAT DOESN'T NECESSARILY MEAN THAT GENDER HAS TO
EXIST.**

The home of gender feels like an interesting place to visit.

**YOU HAVE TO GIVE A GOOD REASON. WHAT ARE YOUR
PERSONAL REASONS?**

Pasifika artists I've worked with talk about a pre-colonial, pre-Christian time, and how there was a real multiplicity of genders within South Pacific territories. There was a period where gender was thought of in a much more diverse way. I'm curious about this home of gender.

I'LL ACCEPT THAT. HOME OF GENDER HAS ONE VOTE.

I'm more inclined for the shadow of your actions, because I feel like I'm always living in the shadow of my actions. What's the future without the past?

ONE VOTE FOR EACH.

I would also go for the shadow of your actions, mostly because your description made it sound like there was the chance for some kind of resolution or outside viewpoint on the weight of previous actions, which is a comforting possibility.

I was thinking along the same lines for the home of gender, the idea that where we are now, in terms of gender, is the shadow of historical action – we're born into the consequences of other people's choices. If you could go to a source point, you might be able to start to untangle the beginning of that process, that accruing of consequence.

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On the one hand, there's a chance of resolution at an origin point, and on the other, a chance of resolution at a reckoning point.

If that's the case, I would go for the chance of resolution at the origin point – then it can be rewound right from the start. Gender doesn't necessarily exist. That would be kind of cool.

My ingrained pragmatism is being swayed to a more utopian possibility: instead of dealing with the consequences, let's go back to the beginning. Alright, you've got me.

We want to know where the home of gender lies?

**THIS WILL BE YOUR FINAL CHOICE – IT'S A GOOD CHOICE TO
END ON.**

**HELLO. A NEW WORLD IS BEING BUILT.
IT'S A WORLD YOU ARE HELPING TO BUILD.**

**WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO HAVE GENDER
IN THIS WORLD?**

**WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO HAVE GENDER
IN THIS WORLD?**

**WOULD YOU CHOOSE TO HAVE GENDER
IN THIS WORLD?**

LIST OF WORKS

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley

HOW DANGEROUS IS YOUR DATE?, 2022
Interactive animated video game, joystick
Duration variable

Untitled triptych, 2022
Digital animation colour prints on 310gsm
paper

Juliet Carpenter

DIZZY, 2022
Single-channel HD video, colour, sound
11 min 53 sec

Deep Head Hanging Manoeuvre, 2022
Animated video, sound
2 min 35 sec

Tanu Gago

Coven Aucoin, 2022
Animated video, sound
3 min 16 sec

Ary Jansen

Breadcrumb Trail, 2022
Single-channel digital video, colour,
sound
7 min

Sonja and Corpsie, 2017
Single-channel digital video, colour,
sound
1 min 56 sec

Sorawit Songsataya

Building blocks, 2022
Digital animation, 3D holographic fan
2 min 12 sec, looped

Mnemosyne, 2022
Single-channel HD video, colour, sound
9 min 48 sec

CONTRIBUTORS

Sebastjan Brank is a writer and cultural worker based in Berlin.

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley is an artist working predominantly in animation, sound, performance and video games to communicate the experiences of being a Black Trans person. Their practice focuses on recording the lives of Black Trans people and intertwining lived experience with fiction to imaginatively retell Trans stories. Spurred on by a desire to record a 'history of Trans people both living and past', their work can often be seen as a Trans archive where Black Trans people are stored for the future.

Juliet Carpenter is an artist and filmmaker from Aotearoa New Zealand currently living and working in Germany. She holds a BFA from Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland (2014) and graduated as a Meisterschülerin from the Hochschule für Bildende Künste Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main in 2022, where she studied in the class of Gerard Byrne. Carpenter's work often foregrounds psychological and emotional experiences and examines qualities of these narratives that are considered hysterical or disturbed. She is interested in the ways that individuals produce themselves as characters, especially through contemporary image technology.

Tanu Gago is an interdisciplinary artist, Queer activist and filmmaker. Working across film, digital arts, animation and interactive technologies, Gago aims to build restorative narratives of Queer Indigenous Moana experiences. He was a McCahon House artist in residence in 2022, and is currently an artist in development with Piki Films. Gago is co-founder and creative director of Queer Indigenous arts collective FAFSWAG, who represented Aotearoa at documenta fifteen (2022).

Ary Jansen is a visual artist, musician, event organiser and youth worker. His work across these disciplines and fields overlap, each nourishing and supporting the other. Much of his work in art and music is informed by critical, autobiographical reflections on how capitalist logics increasingly dictate social relations, senses of self, and how the world itself appears.

Tendai Mutambu is an Aotearoa New Zealand-based writer, curator and editor who was CIRCUIT's 2022 curator-at-large. His former roles include Arts Editor at *Metro*, Contributing Editor for *The Art Paper*, and Assistant Curator of Commissions and Public Programmes at Spike Island in Bristol. Mutambu has written for *Frieze*, *Art Monthly UK*, *LUX Moving Image*, *Ocula Magazine* and *Runway Journal of Contemporary Art*.

Sorawit Songsataya is a multimedia artist born in Thailand and currently living in Ōtepoti, where they are the 2022 Frances Hodgkins Fellow. Sorawit is interested in redefining the boundaries of subjectivity and ecology and their interdisciplinary work encompasses sculpture, ceramics, textiles, moving image, and 3D animation. Selected exhibitions include *Nature and State*, Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden (2022); *Otherwise-image-worlds*, Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery (2022); *Thinking Hands, Touching Each Other*, Ural Industrial Biennial (2021); and *Rumours (Mermaid)*, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery (2020).

Raqi Syed is a technical artist, filmmaker, writer and researcher with a background in studio animation. Her practice explores the materiality of light, hybrid forms of non-fiction and genre storytelling, and an anti-racist critical aesthetics of visual effects. She is a 2018 Sundance and Turner Fellow, and a 2020 Ucross Fellow. Syed teaches at Te Herenga Waka Victoria University of Wellington.

Ruth Watson has a trans-disciplinary practice spanning video, photography, installation, painting and sculpture. She has worked with cartography since the 1980s as a basis for many artworks, and writes occasionally about art and maps. Selected exhibitions include CIRCUIT Distributors Screening, Oberhausen Short Film Festival (2020); *Other Worlds*, Te Papa Tongarewa forecourt, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington (2018); and *Geophagy*, Gus Fisher Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland/CoCA Toi Moroki, Ōtautahi Christchurch (2017).

Mark Williams is the Director/Curator of CIRCUIT Artist Moving Image. CIRCUIT was launched in 2012 with the support of Creative New Zealand.

Otherwise worlding was published by CIRCUIT Artist Moving Image in association with *Otherwise-image-worlds* (4 June – 4 September 2022), an exhibition developed in partnership with Te Uru Waitākere Contemporary Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland as part of CIRCUIT's annual commissioning series.

Danielle Brathwaite-Shirley's commission was developed in partnership with Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival and Spike Island, Bristol.

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Spike Island



HOW ARE TODAY'S ARTISTS UTILISING
ANIMATION IN THE SERVICE OF NEW PHYSICAL,
SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FUTURES?

HOW ARE ARTISTS COUNTERACTING RACIAL
AND GENDER BIASES ENCODED IN EMERGENT
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES?

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
ANIMATION AND THE PHYSICAL BODY?

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ANIMATED
TECHNOLOGIES IN MAPPING AND MEMORY?



EDITED BY MARK WILLIAMS

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