What do you mean, we?
Elizabeth Axtman
Newell Harry
Amanda Heng
Rangituhia Hollis
Tom Johnson
Simone Aaberg Kærn
Ayanah Moor
Colin Nairn
Kalisolaite ‘Uhila
boat-people.org

Curated by Bruce E. Phillips
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Foreword

'This exhibition really touched me ... It provides great insight into local and national politics ... A timely and important topic to address'

– Visitor comment

What do you mean, we? was a compelling example of artists exploring national and international concerns of prejudice. For Te Tuhi, the exhibition was also a strategic contribution in response to changes within the local suburban community and the diverse functions that the centre has taken on since it was first established. Formerly the Pakuranga Arts Society, Te Tuhi was formed in 1975 to meet the needs of the then brand-new and burgeoning suburb. Colloquially known as ‘Vim Valley’, after an advertisement for a cleaning product, Pakuranga was the new up-and-coming suburb for the white middle class. Since then, Pakuranga has grown to become a much more ethnically diverse area and Te Tuhi is now a crucial hub for these various communities. It fast became apparent that the topic of What do you mean, we? struck a chord with locals. As comments in the gallery’s visitor book attest, issues of colonisation, assimilation, anti-immigration, and institutional prejudice touched greatly upon individuals in the community as it engaged with issues pertinent to their own experience of living in New Zealand. This was a sentiment echoed by Joris de Bres, Race Relations Commissioner from the Human Rights Commission of New Zealand, who formally acknowledged Te Tuhi’s contribution to harmonious race relations in the form of this exhibition.

For the most part, this publication situates What do you mean, we? within the context of recent national and international politics through the writings of four authors: Danny Butt, Fear Brampton, Melissa Laing and Te Tuhi’s curator Bruce E. Phillips. Before the realisation of the exhibition, these writers were brought together for discussion so that they might have time to absorb the curatorial research and practices of the artists involved. They were asked to contribute not only a critical response to the exhibition and artworks but also a personal response. It is through their individual perspectives that complex socio-political relations emerged within the writing, reflecting the manifold premise of the show, that indeed we are all implicated by our own latent subconscious biases. These written responses also acted to replace a singular institutional voice, as visitors to the exhibition were presented with four independent perspectives. On behalf of Te Tuhi, I would like to thank the writers for these considered and honest contributions. This writing mattered greatly to the
exhibition experience and will now do so for the undoubtedly countless online visitors who will access this publication in years to come.

Overall this publication is dedicated to the selected artists whose new innovative strategies in the field of contemporary art are both contributing to the development of art and culture as much as they are directly influencing the issues they are addressing. In particular, I would like to thank artists Rangituhia Hollis and Kalisolaite ‘Uhila, who worked closely with Te Tuhi staff to produce new projects for the exhibition. Both of these works provided an important link and direct engagement with the social politics of Auckland.

There are many other people to thank in the development of the exhibition and in the preparation of this publication, who have been listed in the acknowledgments. Special mention does need to go to Chuck Thurow, former Executive Director of the Hyde Park Art Center in Chicago, who has been a great mentor to Bruce E. Phillips in formulating this exhibition concept. With great respect, I would also like to acknowledge Ngāi Tai, the tangata whenua of the Howick/Pakuranga region, whose resilience in recent years has been of great inspiration for this exhibition. We hope in some small way that the concepts and issues raised in What do you mean, we? might contribute to the understanding of an indigenous perspective as well as an ongoing awareness of the growing cultural diversity in this area.

James McCarthy
Executive Director
THE NATIVES ARE RESTLESS
What we suppress eventually defines who we are. No one acknowledges this more than artists, for the ability to delve deep into the collective psyche to confront us with what we have willingly suppressed is one of the most effective roles that artists contribute to society. Although, as history teaches us, artworks that reveal unwanted truths are never popular at the time of their currency. So to focus an exhibition on the psychology of prejudice is without a doubt not going to draw in the multitude but is nevertheless sincerely created with the populace at heart. It is also a topic not taken lightly, since the fundamental challenge is to reveal the existence of bias within us all – including the curator.

As a heterosexual white male I know very little about being the victim of prejudice but everything about being the demographic of the perpetrator. I mention this not to gratify an agenda of political correctness or to absolve my own Pākehā guilt. Rather this short essay is simply an exercise in self-reflexivity to lay bare my own possible influence on the exhibition-making process for others to consider as they wish. More importantly, I write to give context to the exhibition’s relevance in Aotearoa New Zealand, and to glean what might be learned from current artistic practice.

Academic and political activist Rob Steven once wrote, in addressing the fiction that Pākehā are a non-racist people, that a consciously shared identity can blind and mislead people from an actual reality. The obvious blinded reality being that a leading cause of prejudice in New Zealand, concerning racial discrimination, is the Pākehā psyche. From my perspective, the inherent racism of the New Zealand European perspective is informed through a lens forged by conservative ideals, born from the comfort of majority rule but burdened by the conscience of colonisation and challenged with the fear of immigration. For Pākehā, it seems that the default is a defensive position to excuse their right to power by hiding behind the guise that democracy should serve the interest of the majority or, in the extreme case, justify their position by affirming past wrongs as the basis of an identity to be proud of.

This perspective is clearly apparent but greatly suppressed by most Pākehā. The commonly leaked phrase ‘I am not racist but ...’ or the qualifying remark ‘Don’t get me wrong some of my best friends are ...’ should be moments to recognise hidden bias but instead act to protect a veneer of justification. Leading stories in national
media, from the last two years, highlight the predominance of these attitudes, such as Paul Henry’s comment that the then governor-general Sir Anand Satyanand doesn’t look or sound like a New Zealander; Prime Minister John Key’s Tuhoe cannibalism joke; Māori performers being physically assaulted by drunk fans during the opening ceremony of the Rugby World Cup; and the 2011 election also played on the interests of Pākehā from the likes of Act Party leader Don Brash who answered ‘no’ when asked if Māori have a special place in New Zealand.

Yet awareness that a particular prejudice exists does not necessarily explain how or why it forms. Cognitive psychologists tell us that prejudice stems from an innate human need to categorise the world and mentally define difference. While prejudice can be consciously addressed it is not something that can be easily changed by modifying one’s behaviour or attitude. Most prejudice is deeply hidden in the subconscious and surreptitiously leaks out, insidiously affecting our relationships with others.

It is for this reason that no one is exempt from creating prejudice; however, ideologically, prejudice cannot be excused in our multicultural and globalised age. It is more important than ever that greater understanding and new strategies are formed to mediate the negative effects of prejudice. The exhibition What do you mean, we? attempts to address these concerns by considering how artists are increasingly adopting innovative strategies to draw out suppressed bias.

Performance in its various forms features prominently in this exhibition as a means to disclose personal neurosis, attain lived understanding, or to intervene in public space to confront the social conscience. In Tom Johnson’s work, What a black man feels like, the video camera becomes the confidant as the artist delves into his own psyche. As a form of self-psychoanalysis, Johnson’s repetitive monologue painfully teases out the latent meaning of a single phrase to probe for hidden racial fears.

Equally psychological is Amanda Heng’s performance series Let’s Walk. Originally performing the work in Singapore, at a time when performance art was illegal, Heng took to the streets unannounced, biting a high-heel shoe and walking backwards down busy streets with the aid of a handheld vanity mirror. This surreal Fluxus-like public happening was created in direct response to the then growing gender inequality in workforce during the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s.

Also adopting surrealist and activist sensibilities in the public realm is Muffled Protest by artist collective boat-people.org. In cities across Australia, participants wrapped their heads in the Australian flag and stood silently en masse and individually. As a protest against Australia’s imprisonment of asylum seekers, the intervention made an unforgettable public statement of national shame.
In a public intervention of a longer duration, Kalisolaite ‘Uhila’s work Mo’ui Tukuhausia provided the exhibition’s only live performance. Over a two-week period during the first month of the show, ‘Uhila lived homeless around the grounds of Te Tuhi. This performance followed months of participatory research into opposing aspects of homelessness when ‘Uhila spent time living with local homeless and then working as a security guard to move the homeless off private property. In temporarily shedding his regular life, ‘Uhila occupied the grounds of Te Tuhi in attempt to gain greater understanding of what it might mean to be homeless.

Attempt to attain lived understanding also features in Simone Aaberg Kærn’s ambitious social engagement project Open Sky. In 2002, Kærn flew her small 1960s Piper Colt airplane from Copenhagen to Kabul to answer the dreams of Farial, a young Afghani woman who aspired to be a fighter pilot. The 6000 kilometre flight required Kærn to risk her own life in crossing enormous mountain ranges and violating military airspace to enter war-torn Afghanistan. Yet it was the challenge to cross cultural boundaries and to decode the artist’s own subconscious motivation that proved the greater hurdle. A realisation that it is often social pressure and fear that forms the basis of the most challenging types of prejudice.

In other works, language is deconstructed and appropriated to reveal telling semiotic slippages or blatant injustice. Newell Harry’s neon work compresses and fractures the sentence ‘THE NATIVES ARE RESTLESS’ until it is almost illegible. The message is also momentarily disrupted when the text times out to reveal the word ‘AR ... S ... ES’. By injecting mischievous wit into a phrase laden with latent colonial disdain and fear, Harry questions the hidden meaning within language and subverts the semiotic codes at play.

Text of a more legible nature features in Colin Nairn’s video work God is dead which features the legislation of the 79 countries where it is currently illegal to be openly homosexual. With conceptualist calm, Nairn presents the legislation animated to scroll down the wall. The legal justification of discrimination reads like a list of sanitised insults. Terminology such as ‘unnatural carnal offences’, ‘obscene acts’, ‘illicit’, ‘gross indecency’, ‘fraudulent representations as to the order of nature’ features consistently throughout. This blatant institutionalised prejudice also takes on a sadistic tone as penalties such as life imprisonment and 100 lashes scroll by. Reality hits home given that it has only been 25 years since homosexuality has been legal in New Zealand, and that some of the countries where homosexuality is illegal are neighbouring Pacific island nations.

Lists of readymade information also form the basis of Ayanah Moor’s audio work All my girlfriends; a five-hour recording that references 25 years of Jet magazine’s feature ‘Beauty of the week’. Since 1952 the African American men’s weekly has published

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OCT 11, 1973

Sailing, swimming, dancing and fencing are among the hobbies of this attractive mistress of the seas, Linda Sue Ragsdale, from Dallas, Tex. Measuring 34-22-34, the leopard-skin clad miss is also a modeling instructor.

OCT 18, 1973

Braving the rocks and waves of a Los Angeles beach, Anita L. Simmons takes a pause from her work as a clerk. Her principle hobby is that of smooth, interpretive jazz dancing.

OCT 25, 1973

The toasty brown figure of Ebony Fashion Fair model Suzi- ilene McDonald can be seen dancing for the MGM Hotel in Las Vegas, Nev., her home. She also enjoys swimming.

NOV 1, 1973

Mona O. Freeman, who lists her address as the Watergate Penthouse in Washington DC, is uncovered here as the beauty she is. A student at Howard University, she curves at 37-24-36.

NOV 8, 1973

Toya A Qualls is a busy Los Angeles lady who attends Dorsey High School where she sings, dances and when she can find the time, models. A small bundle at 5 feet, 3 inches, she measures 34-26-36
centrefold images and profiles of swimsuit models. In a performed reading, Moor recites 1296 model profiles from 1973 to 1998, a timespan representing the artist's first 25 years. Here, demeaning and chauvinistic language is humorously subverted as it receives a dose of satire by Moor's calm telephone-operator-like tone.

Parody of existing text is also apparent in Elizabeth Axtman’s video work The Love Renegade # 1 (Sincerely, All White Women). Here, Axtman narrates one of the more than 200 letters written by Ohio man David Tuason to African American men. For 20 years, Tuason wrote hate mail to these men as acts of vengeance for being left for a black man by his white girlfriend. In narrating Tuason’s letter, Axtman accentuates the juvenile and ridiculous nature of the convict’s violent threats and racist statements. In response, the artist writes to Tuason pleading him to confront his hate by finding love, compassion and forgiveness for his victims and for himself.

In a completely different approach to those already mentioned, Rangituhia Hollis’ work Kia mate mangō-pare broaches the psychology of prejudice by creating a haunting virtual reality. From the summit of Māngere Mountain, Hollis animates spectre-like mangō-pare (hammerhead sharks) to swim through the sky as if encircling prey. To Hollis’ iwi, Ngāti Porou, the mangō-pare are symbols of strength and resilience – even in death, the shark is known to thrash and fight. In bringing together the tangible and intangible, Hollis also creates a liminal space where linear notions of time are collapsed so that the history and ongoing impact of colonisation are brought together in a context where decolonisation might occur. A space that recognises that the past is the formidable road to the future.

Humour, absurdity and cold hard facts feature throughout the exhibition and are used to petition rational awareness of latent assumptions that lead to hegemony. Duration, place and the body are also crucial considerations in all works, not as fixed knowable entities but as uncertain, in between and contested. Needless to say, there is no optimistic forecasting from these artists, no oracle-like guidance, no ‘prophet in the wilderness’ syndrome. Rather, the only glimpse of a future resides in an acknowledgement of the past within us. For those who continue to suppress what might be lurking in the past, the future may be one to fear; Tom Johnson elicits this from his stream of consciousness: ‘I am scared … because there will be a reckoning and what will happen to me after the reckoning? It is easier if I am just polite.’

Note: The title of this essay A white man listens to himself is taken from a performance by Tom Johnson presented as part of the exhibition Black Is, Black Ain’t at the Renaissance Society, Chicago, in 2008.
What do you mean, we? A response

FEAR BRAMPTON

As a teenager I had a jaundiced and cynical view of Pākehā and Europeans as a group and part of the cultural hegemony of the West. The West’s disregard of non-Western, indigenous, non-normative and subaltern peoples, and women (as those less central to the god-like torch of the civilisation-bearing ‘I’ of Western white heterosexual maledom) seemed to me evidence of a ‘stone age’ mentality. Despite the ‘progress’ the West had made and the ‘civilisation’ it had achieved, it seemed that much more fundamental progress had yet to be made as I saw it. Primarily, work was needed in relation to a ‘self’ blindness which made its own usurping, self-reifying operations and actions invisible to itself. Only much later was I able to put a term to it: ‘white privilege’. Though much was privileged beyond a mere fact of whiteness. This white privileging has its basis in a malingering hierarchical and hegemonic social ordering. An ordering which sees Western civilisation as the pinnacle of creation, the top rung of the Great Chain of Being.

This, often unconscious, privileging meant that only equal status obtained inclusion in the pronoun ‘we’: otherwise to take Alfred Lord Tennyson out of context it was a case of ‘as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine’ at best. Only when a Westerner recognised, acknowledged or asserted something was its existence validated, might have a place with ‘us’ conferred; everything otherwise was consigned to the outer sphere of ‘them’ or further still ‘other’. Most who have a foot in the camps of us and them have realised that being included as a we has as its price either co-option and assimilation; absorptive neutralisation through self-alienation and renunciation or extinction; or relegation to a trophy of liberalism, beneficence or helping-up paternalism.

We. Still, when I hear it in a public setting, I brace myself. All too commonly, we sets what is normative, we supposes them, and we is often someone else’s Other. We tends to be manipulative, political, excluding. It is the call to ally, to differentiate; a territorial grab that usurps the best unto itself. Whether you heed the call or turn from it, a price is exacted, quid pro quo.

The siren lure of we is that it provides refuge in something greater, it enfolds the social isolate’s vulnerable visibility within a protective group invisibility. There is might and right in numbers but it is dubious, recalling bullies in the playground. Groups have
a tendency to become self-affirming communities, their views and values become part of a shared truth. However, membership is always contingent; it may demand in time a blind loyalty, a reification of its axioms, faith in its rightness as its system of beliefs ramifies, ossifies, naturalises and essentialises.

A group, like any organism, will attempt to perpetuate itself. In the context of the prevailing environment, a process of natural selection predominates; some groups disappear others flourish. For a social species, the social environment is part of the evolutionary environment. The selective forces that operate therein are social ones that test an individual’s social fitness through status ranking and a group’s ‘fitness’ in relation to others. Aggression, marginalisation, mate preference, mate access, (both internally between group members and between groups), mores, justificatory social narratives, History/histories, institutions, or lore and laws are among the socially selective forces at interactive play.

Group – and individual – success or survival is enhanced by social cohesion and/or adaptation of core tenets and values as the environment fluxes.

Only rarely is we a call to inclusiveness, an affirmation of a common ground, a common humanity and a meeting of all equally as us without a them.

Resisting prejudice would seem so easy – just resist the seductions of the group mentality – but prejudice is also inherent in the very fundamentals of who we are and how we perceive and frame the world. Perception facilitated by language provides survival tools that allow us to distinguish, name and know. In this process differentiation and categorisation are based upon unique and shared characteristics. Characterisation is, however, prone to a certain arbitrariness since it is founded upon the subjectivity of perceptions, shaped as they are by circumstance, experience, socially transmitted learning and a unique cultural history.

Resistance to the blandishments of a group mentality are openness, a lack of insecurities and an eternal vigilance. We are rarely so virtuous and aware.

Prejudice, and the discrimination that follows from it, is a by-product of our ability to differentiate and our group-forming tribal tendencies. Indeed, most of us have to battle with prejudices that we are surprised and baffled to find we hold and then find difficult to wink out and extinguish. This is the flipside to the benefits of categorical ordering and sociality.

My difficulties in the past, with thinking through the confusingly layered subject area, allowed me to identify strongly with both Newell Harry’s neon work The natives are restless and Tom Johnson’s video work What a black man feels like. This latter, in particular with its stream of consciousness internal monologue as Johnson psychoanalyses himself while handling the body of a black man, was only too familiar to me and was in consequence exorcisingally funny.

The psychologist Daniel Kahneman is of some help in illuminating the cognitive mechanisms that would seem to problematically produce and maintain our perceptions of others. As a result of his revolutionary approach involving looking at how people actually think rather than how they are thought to think, he came, in the process, to distinguish two basic thinking modes: ‘fast’ and ‘slow’. The fast thinking system of the intuitive mind is effortless and automatic; its judgements form, unbidden, feelings and convictions. By contrast slow thinking involves conscious reasoning and deliberation, demands intensive attention and labour, and is rule and evidence applying. Fast thinking is our everyday uncritical thinking mode and slow thinking an uncommon mode of critical deliberation.

In terms of this framework, prejudice and difficulties in eradicating it seem to be the result of heuristic or rule-of-thumb biases governing fast human thinking. Kahneman distinguished a number of these biases producing cognitive illusions which include the WYSIATI; the halo effect; the availability heuristic; narrative fallacy; representativeness bias; the affect heuristic; the illusion of validity; and substitution. These are for the most part viewing-frame and pattern deriving faults.

Generally, these biases serve us well in our daily lives but they are cognitive illusions and as such can lead us astray when we encounter what is for us the non-normative. Only knowledge attained through sustained proximity and the use of the slow thinking mode allow us to overcome the prejudices we have bought into, often without our knowing. When this involves a reconsideration of one’s entire ramifying belief system, the solution to the problem becomes more difficult. The bigger our ‘buy in’ to the prevailing status quo, the greater the difficulty in finding and implementing solutions because of the greater incurable losses to one’s position with its benefits.

As a Māori who, while possessing a Māori name, is not particularly Māori looking, I have been at times the target of racism, and reverse racism too. Usually this racism has been relatively covert and therefore invisible and, as such, my perception of it was often easily discredited as too subtly and fancifully nuanced.

My own experience and observation regarding racism is that it is foremost a cultural issue in that race, as skin colour, tends to be ‘overlooked’ if there is a common cultural base, particularly in the presence of a more foreign Other. Whether this is because the thinking, values, emotional responses and social conduct is understood; or, whether this cultural commonality is somehow seen as supporting the cultural axioms and premises because this seeming co-option is ‘chosen’ and ‘optional’ is...
harder to determine and may vary. Certainly cultural commonality is more likely to favour identification with a racial Other as either a part of us or as a differentiating us–them rather than as a member of them.

As a gay teen and then adult, my experience of public recognition and naming, before self-acceptance and identification, was that the individual always stands in relationship to groups. Such group membership is protective and some groups are formed through a process of others being squeezed out and lumped together rather than by a coming together of its categorical members. It is for this reason some remain in the closet rather than coming out.

Such groups can be a miscellaneous collection with spurious connection as individuals and as a collective. Thus: gays, paedophiles, prostitutes, communists and drug takers, etcetera have at times been put together and though these groups show overlaps (as they do with the normative ‘majority’) they are not actually reducible to synonymity.

Social iteration and reiteration create cultural ‘truths’ that often refuse to die despite factual refutation and exonerating; a seed is more easily planted than it is stopped from germinating. Continual circulation and exposure through social media, as Andy Warhol and feminists among others have observed, embeds and naturalises a perceptual spin in the public consciousness. Since images and language are never value free, when prejudicial and stereotypical, they end up dehumanising, objectifying, desensitising, and in the process criticality is reduced.

Prejudiced convictions can then be justified through their legalisation and the criminalisation of difference. Lore is then made law and a particular moral code condoned. Acting according to other codes of moral conduct then become punishable and, indeed, ones duty to punish. What is writ in black and white still holds an aura, falsely, of objective truth; like the tablets of Moses.

Law in such instances does not represent some higher moral order or impartial authority but a partisan one which punishes difference. It cloaks its prejudices in righteousness. ‘Ground-zero’ thinking may then eventuate, facilitated first by ‘us’ privileging, then more overt intolerance. Iconoclasm, book-or library burning, pogroms, ethnic cleansing and genocide represent endpoints for such thinking.

These are the thoughts that run through my head while looking at Colin Nairn’s work God is dead.

Messiness characterises biology; hybridity and diversity characterise species genetics and evolution; balances and workability characterise ecological communities. It is then not surprising that findings in a variety of fields indicate that the boundaries of species, race and culture are highly porous. Indeed, it supports a view that race is a spurious human difference and also a fiction. For a species with our numbers, we are comparatively genetically impoverished; that is to say we are very genetically similar. This despite relatively recent inheritance from at least three human species or subspecies (Homo sapiens, Neanderthals and Denisovans). These ancestors contributed adaptations to the ‘local’ conditions in which they lived and evolved, which have furthered descendant survival in new commingled evolutionary environments.

Despite the fact that we are configured by biological hardware limitations – the hard-wired constraints of instincts, physiological and neural processes, programmable and imprintable behavioural and cognitive elements, and a broadly directive, selective and imprinting environmental matrix – we also have a large degree of free will and can make choices that at first seem to run counter-intuitively to our own best interests.

Architect Adolf Loos noted that the ‘speed of cultural evolution is reduced by the stragglers. I am perhaps living in 1908, but my neighbour is living in 1900 and the man across the way in 1880. It is unfortunate for a state when the culture of its inhabitants is spread over a great period of time.’ His observation denotes that pluralism exists within the members of any group; some are forward thinking and ahead of their time and others are throwbacks, ‘neanderthals’ or ‘dinosaurs’. Fast thinking tends to prevail in society over slow, so therefore conservatism is a feature of societal moral codes and institutional thinking, which tend to lag behind ongoing social change. Traditionally, transition from one social ‘paradigm’ to another is not well managed.

In the pluralistic world we live in, inclusiveness is essential to the greater social common good. Without it the divides between people are opportunities for exploitation by the ever present few, who are only too keen to profit personally at the expense of others. This wastes time, money, potential and lives. Inclusiveness is not the easier and necessarily natural social premise for individuals to live by or society’s component groups and institutions to operate by. However, the alternatives are in the end dangerous.

The six-degrees-of-separation styled connectivity and complexity typifying today’s societies and the global community mean we all thrive or suffer together. Because we are woven together technologically and economically, what impacts one tends to affect all. As the media theorist Marshall McLuhan pointed out, technology shrinks our world and makes us rub up together². We must therefore increasingly work together, despite our individual and group differences, to prevent mutual harm. This requires that we become socially smart and that conflict resolution may need to become an educational fundamental like the three Rs.
To prevent competitive escalation and ultimately wars, common ground must be found; common needs require identification, collective goals determining. All must be both winners and losers to satisfy our innate sense of fairness. Differences need acknowledgement but compromise is increasingly the winner's solution and not indicative of defeat.

Future survival prospects in a variety of circumstances, and for some form of global civilisation, are improved by recognising that we all have something to contribute to a survival tool kit by way of skills, precepts and knowledge that provide useful ways of perceiving ourselves and the world. Only together, through a pooling of diversity’s lessons, can we better know both ourselves and wider reality. From this comes a greater understanding of our interactions with, and impacts on, both others and our world.

Exclusiveness and purity, by contrast, reduce our collective options as well as the richness, complexity, diversity and quality of human life as a whole. A good deal of this cultural knowledge is embodied as lived knowledge, understood from within as it partakes of a view, a line of reasoning, a discourse, a history and alternate paradigm predicated on different axioms and birthed in a different environmental matrix.

Perhaps a comprehension of how realities are nested within each other and our place within this diverse universe would help provide a way forward for mutual understanding.

To this end, to encourage discourse that both builds understanding and breaks down barriers. I present as my endpoint an attempt to visually model the situation, as I see it currently, building upon Māori Marsden’s thoughts on the matter.

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1. White privilege is the less recognised obverse side of racism. It posits whiteness and white culture as a neutral non-racial human norm, which positions everyone else as ‘other’. This view sees white social, cultural, and economic values, views and institutions as normative ideals; thus white privilege would seem to represent the survival, covertly, of a Modernist universal and progressive agenda. Others’ culture, art, intellectual and technological achievements therefore occupy a qualified category of accomplishment. A white privileged viewpoint ignores disadvantage and that whites’ advantaged position is maintained at the expense of others, and, attributes disadvantage to the failure of non-whites to achieve normal social status rather than to racial issues. See Nia Addy. ‘White privilege and cultural racism: Effects on the counselling process’. NZAC no.1, vol.28, 2008, pp 10-23

2. From the poem Locksley Hall, 1835.

3. WYSIATI (what-you-see-is-all-there-is); drawing strong conclusions from incomplete information; the halo affect: putting too much weight on first impressions; the availability heuristic: basing our judgements on readily available information; narrative fallacy: creating coherent causal stories to make sense of haphazard events; representativeness bias: leaning heavily upon stereotypes to compensate for partial information; the affect heuristic: putting too much weight on judgements that are emotionally laden; the illusion of validity: holding
on to our beliefs in the face of contradictory evidence; substitution: tackling a difficult question by answering a much simpler related question.


Cook Islands

Section 155. Sodomy –

“(1) Every one who commits sodomy is liable:
(a) Where the act of sodomy is committed on a female, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years;
(b) Where the act of sodomy is committed on a male, and at the time of the act that male is under the age of fifteen years and the offender is of over the age of twenty-one years, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years;
(c) In any other case, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years.

Sudan

(2) (a) Whoever commits Sodomy shall be punished with flogging one hundred lashes and he shall also be liable to five years imprisonment.
(b) If the offender is convicted for the second time he shall be punished with flogging one hundred lashes and imprisonment for a term which may not exceed five years.
(c) If the offender is convicted for the third time he shall be punished with death or life imprisonment.”
In the introduction to his book Violence, Slavoj Žižek writes that ‘the obvious signals of violence are acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict. But we should learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this visible “subjective” violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent.’¹ He goes on to suggest that subjective violence is only one of a triumvirate that includes symbolic violence and systemic violence, the violence of representation, and the violent consequences of the ‘smooth functioning of our economic and political systems’.² Žižek’s proposition recognises that the everyday ideological acts that construct community and identity are coupled with oppositional and exclusionary tactics which can result in symbolic and/or systemic violence against those excluded.

The works in this exhibition What do you mean, we? address instances of symbolic and systemic violence in contemporary society. Violence that through its victims’ lack of visible, physical wounds is all too easily dismissed. Violence that is often justified by arguments for the protection of a way of life, concepts of ‘fairness’ and ‘equality of opportunity’, and as a defence against those who take advantage of society’s generosity. These kinds of arguments have been particularly visible in Australia as they are used to justify the treatment of asylum seekers arriving by boat in Australia’s western territorial waters.

The political and popular response to the waves of these boat arrivals, which have occurred since 1976, demonstrates a hostility fuelled by a deep ‘fear that any trickle of boat people meant a flood was on the way’.³ This anxiety about an invasion from the Asian countries on its western shore, is enshrined in the very idea of Australian federation. In 1890, New South Wales Premier Henry Parkes put forward the argument that federation would protect the colonies against ‘the countless millions of inferior members of the human family who are within easy sail of these shores’.⁴ In a later speech he referred to the danger of invasion by ‘stealthy lodgement in some thinly-peopled portion of the country’.⁵

New Zealand cannot congratulate itself for having avoided similar prejudice against migrants from Asia. Our own history includes the Poll Tax levied against Chinese migrants between 1881 and 1948, and the exclusion of Chinese migrants from citizenship between 1908 and 1951. Neither are we free of asylum seeker scare
These words echo those of successive Australian prime ministers over the last 40 years including Australian Labour Party leaders Gough Whitlam, Bob Hawke, and Julia Gillard as well as Liberal Party leader John Howard. Such sentiments deliberately ignore the fact that for many of these asylum seekers there is no queue to join.

These issues are directly addressed in this exhibition by boat-people.org, a collective of Australian artists established in 2001. *Muffled Protest* by boat-people.org was organised as a protest action and artwork in the days before the 2010 Australian federal election. It invited people to assemble at a given point and instructed them to ‘[s]tand silently and at 4.30pm slowly wrap your head in the flag’. Seventy people took part in the *Muffled Protest* on Saturday 2 August 2010 on the Opera House stairs in Sydney. Organised events also occurred in Federation Square, Melbourne (31 July 2010) and Forest Place, Perth (20 August 2010), as well as independent actions around the country. The advance press release described the artwork as: ‘Fuelled by the disgust towards the use of border policy as electioneering rhetoric and fear mongering.’

*Muffled Protest* was responding to the positioning of the asylum seeker as an enemy who presents a mortal danger to the integrity of the Australian nation-state. By emphasising the risk of unchecked waves of asylum seekers pouring over the border, people who would hold values incompatible to the core values of the nation, politicians promote a perception of danger. This practice has been described as political dog whistling. While avoiding actively racist terms, politicians create firm divisions between them, the ‘illegal’ and unethical migrants, and ‘us’, in this case the ‘humane’ Australians. This kind of speaking at two pitches, one which only some can hear, is exemplified by the then prime minister John Howard’s publically broadcast statements during the 2001 election such as: ‘We are a humane people. Others know that and they sometimes try to intimidate us with our own decency.’ Vietnamese-born academic Kim Huynh, who arrived as an asylum seeker in 1979 during first wave of boat arrivals, said of the 2010 election: ‘There is some progress here as far as I am concerned ... The Labor Government right now panders to people’s prejudices ... as opposed to fear mongering, stirring up prejudice as in the past.’

*Muffled Protest* replied to the speaking of, and therefore creation of, a particular negative visibility for asylum seekers, which also posited a homogenised unified Australia, by activating silenced bodies in space. As an action, independent of its art context, boat-people.org intended it to be a way for those disappointed by the hostility of the election to present ‘an expression of dismay ... A statement of ambiguous, personal and silent declarations that quietly linked borders and interventions, the edge and the interior, under the flag’.

What is made visible through people willingly covering their heads with the Australian flag and standing in silence is the creation of a consenting public to a particular political construction of Australian identity. Created by symbolic and systemic violence against the other, this identity isolates individuals within a political community scared of the outside. The absence of words or placards allowed the action to accrue other meanings, referencing broader uneasy attitudes to migration and events such as the 11 December 2005 Cronulla race riots. During the riots ‘about 5,000 young Australians converged on Sydney’s Cronulla beach, many draped in Australian flags ... chanting “Kill the Lebs”’. The physical violence enacted by Australians of both Anglo-Saxon and Middle Eastern origin against each other in December 2005 reveals how ideas of national belonging are linked to race, language and arbitrary constructions of values, symbolised by the flag.

For me, *Muffled Protest*, with its dual role as both an act of political protest and an aesthetic document of a performance, raises the question of the efficacy of art as protest or, even more poignantly, the ability of protest action to impact on the passing public. In the *Muffled Protest* video the people walking by are predominantly oblivious or disinterested in the action. The passing football fans seem more interested in mugging for the camera than engaging with the intention of the protest. This gap between intention and reception, occurring in the moment of its performance, creates a parallel to the gaps that exist in dialogues around social, political and ethical issues, such as the treatment of asylum seekers, beneficiaries and the homeless, as well as questions of equality and tino rangatiratanga.

Perhaps in *Muffled Protest* the impact of the action lies within those who perform it, not within the disinterested witness. Their choice to stand in a public place and realise this gesture allows them to refute the blind essentialism of narrow national identity within themselves. While the title and intention of this exhibition What do you mean, we? directly challenges the comfort zone of prejudice underpinned by symbolic and systemic violence, it is up to each of us individually to recognise our own prejudices that isolate us within an insecure and fearful mode of being. The choice to be open to difference and conscious of our own potential for intolerance is one that each of us must make, and struggle to sustain. It is from our individual capacity to stand up and assert ‘something is not right’ that communities of resistance and change are built.
Afterword

In late 2011 the entire legislative edifice of mandatory detention and offshore processing for boat arrivals, that Muffled Protest was challenging, collapsed. Disappointingly, this was not due to a shift in popular opinion achieved by the advocacy and protest action of individuals and groups within Australia. Rather, it was an outcome of political infighting between the two major parties, resulting in the failure of legislation to allow offshore processing in Malaysia to muster sufficient parliamentary support. The legislative change was not about whether to have offshore processing, it was about where to send the unwanted. The debate is ongoing.

2 Ibid.
7 Sarah Rowbottan. ‘pvi collective facilitate Muffled Protest the day before the election in Forest Place, Perth’. In Performing Lines WA media release. Wednesday 18 August 2010.
8 Ibid.
10 Kim Huynh in Genevieve Jacobs et al. ‘Asylum seekers, immigration and citizenship’. In Beyond the Spin 2010 election series forum. Presented by Australian National University and 666 ABC Canberra, 16 August 2010. (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5shQ0UKZs&feature=plcp) At 30:00 minutes.
‘We’, as anyone who has been in a relationship knows, is both the most natural impulse in the world and the most impossible. The need to belong to both forcefully leads us to create our-self yet also throws it into disarray — the ecstatic sociality of the wedding seems like another world from the bitter recriminations of the divorce. Whatever the we is, it seems to have a reversibility, signalled by the ‘turn’ in Tonto and the Lone Ranger’s relationship. When Tonto utters the words that make up the title of this exhibition, What do you mean, we?, a long-feared ‘treachery’ is revealed. However, the ‘turn’ merely reflects a gap that was in the relationship already, from the very beginning – ‘tonto’ in Spanish can be translated as ‘fool’ or ‘stupid’. While we may inhabit the same we, even the smallest we of two people, each of we has a very different experience of it. The we is always a utopian principle, never actualised in an ever shifting reality, riven with politics pre-existing and exceeding the we.

Once the we in question is scaled from the personal to the collective body of the nation-state, its uneven character becomes ever more fraught. Michel Foucault sketches this relentlessly in his histories of the state institutions charged with building the collective we: church, state, army, school, clinic. These institutions do not simply organise individuals, but fanatically create our individuality through the repetition of dead logics that existed before we were born and will continue to do so after we die. Theirs is an epistemological project, but one enacted through the regulation of the body. In English it takes more work to remember Foucault’s couplet of ‘power/knowledge’ as a doubled process, where the active bodily energies of pouvoir/savoir seek freedom from the disciplining historical institutions of puissance/connaisance. This reproduction of patriarchal power through the institutionalisation of linguistic concepts – the good, the right, the rational, the healthy, the natural – is routine and widespread enough to be unremarkable, even universal. However, the essence of prejudice emerges when the collective we is created not only through enforcing patriotic obedience, but through the invocation of the frighteningly different ‘other’. The institutions of power use this fear to justify suppression of internal critique, to make the individual believe that they ‘naturally’ inhabit an undivided we of the majority. This grid of emotional belonging is mapped to a predetermined taxonomy in a range of shared national fantasies: the loose woman, the unfriendly native, the uppity negro, the avaricious migrant. Historical accidents — Christian colonisation
Elizabeth Axtman’s engagement with David Tuason in _The Love Renegade # 1 (Sincerely, All White Women)_ directly addresses the intensity of this repetition and how it must not be interrupted. Tuason, whose partner left him for a black man 20 years before he went to prison for writing more than 200 threatening letters to African American men in romantic partnerships with white women, wrote these letters as ‘a white woman’ on behalf of: ‘All white women’. The scariest part of his letter, warning black men away from ‘white men’s clothes, cars, and houses’, comes as Axtman recites Tuason’s graphic list of places where whites will perpetrate lynchings of black men: ‘Malls; restaurants; salons; shops; arenas; gas stations; and golf courses’. The hysteria rises with each newly imagined location. Tuason’s adoption of his lost white female as the voice clearly demonstrates both the need for racist speech to hide the subjective situation of the speaker, while the repetition highlights the intensity of interior personal feeling that must be mobilised to foster large-scale objective hate. Axtman bravely ruptures this gap between Tuason’s racial and personal worlds by writing to him as an imagined peer, attempting to break the self-perpetuating cycle of anger with a personal expression of compassion. Yet even Axtman seems to realise that her single intervention carries little weight against two decades of self-reinforcement, and that her modus operandi perhaps even carries an unsustainable utopianism, the piece ends with: ‘To be continued … hopefully …’

While the works in the show could be associated with forms of activism, many works in _What do you mean, we?_ seem to share Axtman’s fraught need to reckon with a historical/personal archive, quite different from the brash optimism that characterises the activist who fights against the prejudice of the institution. Art is a form of monument and memorialisation, a way of dealing with the material legacies of time and history, the unruly personal affects underlying the most obvious and widespread attitudes. In a world where justice is often denied to those wronged by the supposed need to ‘move forward’, these works serve as a reminder that it is only by facing up to prejudice in history that we can perhaps summon the utopian we of the future.

Tom Johnson in _What a black man feels like_, perhaps the anchor piece of the exhibition, stages this process most directly. He describes the attachment to these Christian boundaries of the self as a fear of reckoning in the judgement of the other, in this case the black man he is massaging: ‘What is going to be left of me after the reckoning?’ This imagined post-reckoning world perhaps looks the same as the pre-reckoning world on the surface, like the calm beach in a psychoanalytic version of the horror film _Jaws_, suddenly overrun by the spectral presence of Rangituhia Hollis’ hammerhead sharks. Johnson notes that it is easier to ‘be polite’, even while racked with pain and desire, than to tolerate the cracks which allow an uncontrollable reality to seep through.

Prejudice is the result of this training of the emotional world to make some people ‘other’ through national and religious fantasies — including those of Protestant-secular or ‘atheist’. The holding of the other at a distance is important because this creates the space for the repetition of this emotional training, reinforcing the internal adoption of the taxonomy. The prejudice of the world becomes ours without our consent or knowledge, practised in our conversations with ourselves. This ‘majority’ we must be protected against the many incursions into its imagined stability (boat people, indigenous rights, queer sexuality, migrant land ownership, labour mobility, interracial reproduction, etc), Ironically, as Colin Nairn’s horrific visual catalogue of anti-homosexuality legislation demonstrates, the fears that bind each individual nation are remarkably similar. The we of the nation is constituted through a shared logic, but its colonial history is masked as specific to each nation. These forms of prejudice must be protected from the experience of the international and interpersonal, so that they can be held at an appropriate distance to function as the false markers of national integrity.

The Canadian political theorist CB Macpherson described Protestant capitalism and its dominant modes of inhabitation as based on ‘possessive individualism’, the accumulation of things outside oneself to define oneself. It is a logic that negates dispossession, the losing control of oneself through negotiating one’s values with another, which must be the essence of any ethical we. The link between liberalism and racism can be seen in the way one’s imagined relationship to the other is reserved for calculation by oneself. Individualist morality insists that we must produce and be accountable for our individual guilt or benevolence. But when boundaries fray, this cultivated individualisation of morality becomes tested by the potential decomposition of the self in the face of another who has previously been held outside a we.

As manifest destiny, the idea of the nation-state as culturally homogeneous — are adopted as if they are as natural as the growth of a tree.

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Discussing *Mo‘ui Tukuhausia*

Over a two-week period, from 19 March to 1 April 2012, artist Kalisolaite ‘Uhila lived homeless around Te Tūhī’s building and surrounding parkland. ‘Uhila experienced and received numerous responses, from overwhelming generosity, in the form of food donations and friendship, to venomous discrimination such as verbal abuse and being spat on. The following conversation between curator Bruce E. Phillips and ‘Uhila took place on the day after the performance ended.

**B:** Tell us about the beginning of the work.

**K:** The 19th of March, 6 a.m. is when time stopped.

I left my watch, I left my family, I left them in the early hours as they slept. I packed up my gear then, looking at the time for the very last minute, I closed the door and walked out onto the road.

It was a nice rainy morning. It was good that it was raining. I caught the Cockle Bay bus No. 50, which passes through Pakuranga on its way to the eastern suburbs. When I jumped on the bus there was an instant silence and I noticed people looking at me and the way I was dressed. I felt that I was not accepted.

**B:** Because it is a bus to a particular neighbourhood.

**K:** [laughs] Yes, it is a particular bus, out to Pakuranga, out to Howick, out eastern ways.

So once I stepped on the bus I felt like I had passed my first test.

I also ended up falling asleep and almost slept through the whole bus drive. The only reason I knew I was in Pakuranga was that I caught a glimpse of a restaurant sign. That was a big lesson for me, in a very simple way. A key aspect to survival is to be aware of your surroundings. If I had missed that sign I would have missed Pakuranga. I would have ended up somewhere that I didn’t know, with no money.

Once I got off the bus I made my way to Te Tūhī. It was still raining hard, but I just appreciated the rain that day. The rain made me aware that I needed to look for shelter.
B: As well as finding shelter, I noticed that you also spent a long time just sitting.

K: Yes, I was doing a lot of sitting, a lot of observing, just listening and being aware of what was happening around the area. That was when I realised that I didn’t really need to know the time, because this was my time. By paying attention to what was going on around the area I would notice life happening like clockwork.

B: So other people’s daily routines gave you a sense of what the time was?

K: Yes, but it is more like a shadow of time. People had the time but I was moving in their shadow. They would be moving but I was moving at my own different pace.

It also made me appreciate the community at Te Tuhi. I initially thought that this community is dead. That was my first honest judgement when I first started. I realised that I had been prejudiced myself. I quickly realised that this place is the complete opposite. Te Tuhi is alive from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. at night. From the first workers coming in to the last person that closes the building.

B: I remember you saying you also met a local homeless man on your first night.

K: Yes, he was living nearby in the park. We were talking, and I explained that I was doing an experiment at living homeless as an artwork. The first thing he said to me was, ‘Bro, I am glad you are doing that, man, it is good that someone is doing this to understand us better’. I felt privileged that he had said this. It reinforced to me that homelessness is a life of being unheard.

B: The Te Tuhi staff noticed and received a wide range of responses due to your presence. From overwhelming generosity to verbal abuse. Aside from the verbal abuse you received directly, were you aware of the intense reactions your presence was having on people?

K: I sensed that a long way off. Before anyone had said anything I could see the judgement in their eyes. I found that the eyes were more killing than the verbal or the physical reactions that I received. The first and hardest punch I received from people was from their eyes.

Being spat on gave me strength; it was the validation or the strength that I needed for the day. Someone actually came up and decided to spit at me. I was not human to him, just a ‘thing’ sitting on the ground.
K: That mask was my fence. Not only my fence, but also I wore it out of respect for others. I was brought up to have my head down for others. I had these gloves as well, so it was like an extra skin to hide my skin inside. I wanted to make people question: Is he European? Is he Chinese? Is he Tongan or Samoan? To question any perceived racism people might have.

Although, if you did have a proper look at what I was wearing you would realise that I was an islander because of my black tupenu and my sandals. But it seemed that most people misread, or didn't read, the whole outfit. They just saw no face. I became that shadow. I became that ‘thing’, that ‘monster’.

The black clothing was also in respect for my monarchy. During that time I couldn’t be back home [Tonga] to pay my respects, but in my own way I was there in this action. What I was wearing and with my head down, that was in respect for my King who had just passed away.

B: We had some interesting responses about your outfit. It seemed, all of a sudden, that people were experts on what a homeless person looks like. Someone commented with full certainty that ‘Homeless people don’t wear balaclavas’!

K: Yeah, I also read in the comments book: ‘He should smell like urine and faeces. This guy smells too clean, I am not yet convinced’. [laughs]

B: Yeah, with this crazy idea that you are trying to act out an authentic homeless person experience.

K: Some people were totally missing the real issue. They still wanted to put me in a box, so they could understand me on their terms.

B: Can you explain the use of the handmade cardboard signs and the chalk drawings?

K: The signs were partly a strategy to keep me moving and for something to do when I was in a spot. But most importantly it was a way to share my experiences and to reach out to people around me in a non-verbal way.

B: I would like to talk about your influences. In your previous work Pigs in the yard (2011) at the Mangere Arts Centre there was a reference to Joseph Beuys’ work I Like America and America Likes Me (1974) when he lived with a wild coyote over three days. In your Te Tuhi work, I can see some similarities with Tehching Hsieh’s work One year performance 1981-1982
when he lived homeless for one whole year throughout New York City. More generally, I can also see similarities in your work with New Zealand artists such as David Cross, Mark Harvey and Jeremy Leatinu'u who all intervene into social space and interact by very humble means with people. It was also interesting to learn from you what influence your Tongan culture has played in your art and in your life.

K: There are a lot of influences. But for me my biggest influence is myself. Of course, I am greatly influenced by my friends, family and other artists but at the end of the day I never forget who I am. I have always been in search of a father’s voice. My father passed when I was three and I have always been looking for an influence and I have always wanted my father to be that influence. I realised, though, that I am that father, I am that son, I am that brother, and I realised I need to just search inside myself for that voice.

What I really want to continue doing from here is to have a voice for those who are voiceless, because that is who I am – a person with no voice.

It is also important for me to embrace challenge and to go out of my own comfort zone. Like going outside your own kind. I when I was at high school I spent time outside of my own kind, away from my Tongan boys, to spend time with goths and skateboarders. I spent time with all different types of people: black, white, orange, purple, and that has been a big influence.

There are other artists who have influenced me but sometimes I can’t spend a lot of time sitting down to read books and researching in a library. I would rather move around and experience people’s work and get to know who they are. Because, for me, my library is my heart and my mind.

B: You also mentioned to me that the kava ceremony has been an inspiration for you.

K: Yes. For me, I was one of the youngest sitting there in a kava circle, seeing the kava bowl and seeing different people coming in. There was the minister, the fisherman, the plantation guy, the guitar player, all different people bringing in their knowledge to the circle. For instance, the minister might want to learn how to fish and that is where the fisherman talks. Then he might ask the minister how to work with people. At the end, they all go away with a plate of food, except it is not food but a plate of knowledge.
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Contributor's Biographies

Elizabeth Axtman
Elizabeth Axtman lives between New York and California and has exhibited extensively throughout the United States. She has participated in exhibitions and festivals at the Renaissance Society of the University of Chicago, the Studio Museum of Harlem in New York, the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston, Arthouse in Austin Texas, ThisisNotaGallery in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and The Kitchen in New York.
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Danny Butt teaches at the Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland. He is part of the Local Time collective and is currently working on a book on the art school in the research university.
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Fear Brampton
I am a gay man whose primary iwi affiliations are Te Rarawa, Te Aupouri, Waitaha and Nga ¯i Tahu. I am also of English and Scottish descent. My professional background is in art and science. As an arts practitioner I have been a lecturer at Manukau Institute of Technology on Auckland University’s Bachelor of Visual Arts programme.

Newell Harry

Amanda Heng
Amanda Heng is based in Singapore and has an extensive international exhibition record. Exhibitions include the Cleveland Performance Art Festival (1997), the 3rd Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Brisbane (1999), the 1st Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale in Japan (1999), the 7th Havana Biennial in Cuba (2000), real[a]work Werkleitz Biennale in Germany (2000), Performance Art Festival in Spain (2001) and Channel F: channel to the multi-layered world at Kyu Art Center (2001). In 2011, Heng exhibited a major retrospective at the Singapore Art Museum. Heng was also the 2010 recipient of the Cultural Medallion award in Singapore.

Rangitūhua Hollis
Rangitūhua Hollis is based in Auckland and has exhibited throughout New Zealand. Exhibitions include Architecture for the Nation at Artspace, Auckland (2008), Kapua 2.0 at Enjoy Gallery, Wellington (2010). In April 2008, Hollis also took part in an international art project Cityscapers: By the throat at the University of Edinburgh.

Tom Johnson
Tom Johnson’s work focuses on questions of honesty and intimacy in communication. In his most recent exhibition at Guido Costa Projects in Turin, Italy, he explored the possibility of realism and theatricality as a possibility more honest alternative to modernist myths of authentic expression. He has exhibited at leading contemporary art museums including PS 1/Museum of Modern Art, New York, the St Louis Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Castello di Rivoli Museum of Contemporary Art, Turin Italy. Johnson lives in Turin, Italy and is represented there by Guido Costa Projects and in New York by CANADA.

Simone Aaberg Kørrn
Simone Aaberg Kørrn is based in Copenhagen and has an extensive international exhibition record. Exhibitions include the 48th International Venice Biennale (1999), SITE Santa Fe’s 3rd International Biennal (1999), Europæk’exist at the Macedoniran Museum of Contemporary Art curated by Rosa Martinez and Harold Szemann (2003), and the 2nd International Art Biennial Göteborg, Sweden (2003). Kørrn is represented by Galerie Asbæk in Copenhagen.

Melissa Laing
Melissa Laing is a curator, artist and theorist. Her work explores (in)security discourses, nation-state territory and migration through the intersection of art and theory. In 2011 she presented three conference papers on the systemic violence of politics, Australian asylum-seeker policy and performance including at the 6th European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) General Conference, University of Iceland.

James McCarthy
James McCarthy has been the Executive Director at Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts since 2009. Previously he worked as the school manger for the Elam School of Fine Arts of the University of Auckland. As a sound artist, he has exhibited and performed extensively both nationally and internationally.

Ayanah Moor
Ayanah Moor has exhibited regularly throughout the United States and internationally. Exhibitions include the 2011 Pittsburgh Biennial at the Andy Warhol Museum, Shift: Cambio at Proyecto ‘Ice in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Oil & Water at Snowhite Gallery, Unitec Institute of Technology, Auckland (2011), and First Person Video at the Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio (2008).
www.ayanah.com

Bruce E. Phillips
Bruce E. Phillips has been the curator at Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts since 2011. He curated, together with Chuck Thruxon, Close Encounters – an evolving curatorial project initiated with the Hyde Park Art Center in Chicago (2008–). Phillips has also curated over 20 exhibitions featuring artists such as Tania Bruguera, Mary-Louise Brown, Derrick Cherrie, Tahi Moore, Anu Pennanen and Santiago Sierra.

boat-people.org
boat-people.org is a gang of artists, activists and media makers that has been producing public work about race, nation, borders and history since 2001. Inverting narratives of heroic pioneering and benevolent nationalism, boat-people.org works from the premise that everyone in Australia who is not Aboriginal is a boat person. The work of boat-people.org is produced through the ongoing interventions, interferences and participation of friends and invited strangers.
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Elizabeth Axtman:
To all those who try, fail and succeed at love and forgiveness.

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Ayanah Moor:
To all my girlfriends.

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