

Between you and me

Louisa Afoa, Natasha Matila-Smith and Molly Rangiwai-McHale

ST PAUL St Gallery Two

19 April – 1 June 2018

The Miseducation of Faith Wilson

I write this as someone who, like the artists whose work is in this exhibition, uses their artwork as a means to define and redefine their agency. Their works are in no way limited to that purpose, but as a fellow brown girl who grew up in Aotearoa, who could never identify with the dominant narratives that were and still are circulating about my body and my body's experience, it's the act of creating new narratives that, to me, is revolutionary.

I'm listening to Rihanna's cover of Tame Impala's Same Ol' Mistakes and the only difference between hers and the original track is that she's the one singing it, and it's like a thousand times better.

Sometimes I wonder what it would be like if I had grown up feeling proud to be Samoan. If I had been the little girl who aspired to be Coco Solid or Beyonce and not, simply, white. If, despite the odds, I had not only questioned colonial narratives from an early age, but had had the desire to overthrow them, instead of assimilate.

Youtube autoplays Beyonce's Lemonade. "So we're gonna heal. We're gonna start again." Because as much as I wish I had grown up thinking differently, my thoughts were a product of a girl lost between worlds, walking her own path. And instead of wishing things were different, I use my experience to heal, to start again, to make lemonade.

I'm still getting to the point where I don't feel that I have to perform my culture. I grew up disconnected from it, so distant from it that I thought it could disappear, thought that I created a gap, that I might never be able to find the way back. And when I wanted to, I thought that the gap seemed too long to navigate. How would I get to the point where I feel close to my Samoanness?

Sza's Broken Clocks. "Better day than yesterday, I just take it day by day, never hearing what they say, I just do it my way."

I am realising that there is no bridge, no long journey to find a place where I feel comfortable. My experience of my culture, of dislocation, shame, fear and then gradual acceptance, love and pride: that is my Samoanness. And it's my Palagi-ness. It has always been with me, and it will always be with me.

"Girl, if they don't know your worth. Tell 'em you're my girl, and anything you want is yours." The Internet, Girl.

It's hard, in spaces where everyone seems to police your experience of your culture, to keep defining your experience, in your terms. When I get scared of saying something, I think about little me, and if little me had read this then, or seen *Between you and me* then, and maybe if she had, she might have had one less worry, one less moment of anxiety or shame about her experience.

Like the artists Louisa Afoa, Natasha Matila-Smith and Molly Rangiwai-McHale, it's with the hope that others affected by colonising viewpoints, with similar ambitions and anxieties, might read this and feel some sort of kinship, in the way that I do with these artists.

"And deep in my heart, the answer it was in me, and I made up my mind to define my own destiny", The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill, Lauryn Hill.

Faith Wilson is a Samoan and Pākehā artist and writer from Aotearoa, currently living in Fernie, Canada, on the land of the Ktunaxa people. She has published in local and international journals including *Poetry Magazine*, *Runway*, *Sport* and *Ika*, and completed a residency in Winnipeg, Canada with Chris Kraus in 2017. She has exhibited throughout New Zealand in group and solo shows, most recently in *Cold Islanders* at Waikato Museum Te Whare Taonga o Waikato, 2017.

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Te Taiwhanga Tuarua o ST PAUL St Gallery

19 o Paengawhāwhā - 1 o Pipiri 2018

The Miseducation of Faith Wilson

Ko au tētahi tangata ka whakamahi i aku mahi toi ki te kimi i te huarahi e whanake ai, e rerekē ai hoki aku mahi, pēnei i ngā ringatoi nā rātou nei ngā mahi e iri nei i tēnei wā nei. Ehara i te mea ka noho pūmau ā rātou mahi ki tērā whakaaro, engari mō tētahi wahine kiri parauri nei i tipu ake i Aotearoa, me uaua ka whai pānga atu ki ngā kōrero e ponitaka nei i a au, i taku katoa, ā, noho kē mai ana ko ngā kōrero hou e puputa nei hei whakamaunga atu mā ōku kanohi, koia hoki aku tino.

E whakarongo ana ahau ki tētahi tāruatanga o te waiata a Tame Impala, o 'Same Ol' Mistakes', nā Rihanna, ā, ko te rerekētanga kotahi, koia anake e waiata ana, ka mutu, kei kō noa atu tāna i te waiatatanga tūturu.

I ōna wā ka whakaarotia tētahi ao e noho whakahīhi ai au i taku Hāmoatanga. Me i pērā au i te kōtiro whai i a Coco Solid, i a Beyonce rānei, tēnā i te hiahia kia mā noa iho te kiri. Mehemea au i tū, ahakoa ngā taunahua maha nōku e moroiti ana, kua ki te tohe noa atu, engari ki te aukati katoa i a rātou, tēnā i te tuohu noa iho ki raro.

Ka timata noa tā Beyonce waiata, a 'Lemonade', i runga o Youtube. "So we're gonna heal. We're gonna start again". Nā, ahakoa taku whakamā ki a au anō i taku ohinga, kei te kitea ināeanei, koirā te hua i puta, he kōpō kau noa nōku. Engari, ināeanei, ka titiro whakamuri, e anga whakamua ai, e ora anō ai, e riringi ai hoki he wai rēmana.

Kāore anō te ngākau kia tau mō te āhua ki taku ahurea, anō he kaiwhakangahau tonu, ahakoa huri ki hea. I taku pakeketanga mai, kāore i paku aro i a au. He pērā rawa te tawhiti ōna, ka tau te whakaaro, ākene ka ngaro mō ake tonu atu, ka matara rawa atu, ā, i te mutunga iho, tē kitea he ara whakamua. Tipu rawa mai te hiahia kātahi ka kite inā noa atu te whānui o te whārua hei whakakī māku. Me pēhea hoki e mauri tau anō ai te ngākau ki taku Hāmoatanga?

Tā Sza waiata a Broken Clocks. "Better day than yesterday, I just take it day by day, never hearing what they say, I just do it my way."

Kei te kite au i te hīnātoretanga, kāore pea he piriti e whiti ai au i tēnei taunahua, he wāhi rānei e hāneanea ai taku noho. Ko tāku i ako ai mō taku ahurea, mai i te herekore, te mokepūihi me te matakū i pā mai, ki te mauri tau, te aroha me te ngākaunui - koia, koia taku Hāmoatanga, tahi me taku taha Pākehā. Ehara i te mea nō nanahi noa nei ēnei tūāhua, engari nō mai anō, ā, ka mau tonu i ahau ā haere nei te wā.

"Girl, if they don't know your worth. Tell 'em you're my girl and anything you want is yours." 'Girl', te waiata a 'The Internet'.

Papatoiake ana te whakapuaki i ō ake whakaaro mō tō ahurea i tētahi wāhi kaha ki te whakawāwā i ō wheako, i ō mōhiotanga mō taua ahurea tonu. Nōku ka wehi ki te kōrero, ka tuku i aku whakaaro kia hoki ki te wā i a au e tamariki ana, me i pānui ai au i tēnei i taua wā rā, me i kite rānei i te kiriata *Between you and me*, kua kore pea i pēnei te kaha o te āwangawanga, o te anipā, o te whakamā hoki ki ngā akoranga kua puta i roto i te wā.

Ko te manako nui ka pānuitia tēnei e te hunga kei te mārāma ki tā Louisa Afoa, tā Natasha Matila-Smith, ki tā Molly Rangiwai-McHale hoki e whakaatuhia nei, ka whakatōkia ai he kākano ki roto i ō rātou ngākau, pēnei i te kākano kua tō ki roto i ngā ngākau o ngā ringa toi, te kākano kua tō hoki ki roto i a au.

"And deep in my heart, the answer it was in me, and I made up my mind to define my own destiny", The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill, nā Lauryn Hill.

Faith Wilson

Te Reo translation by Parekura Pewhairangi

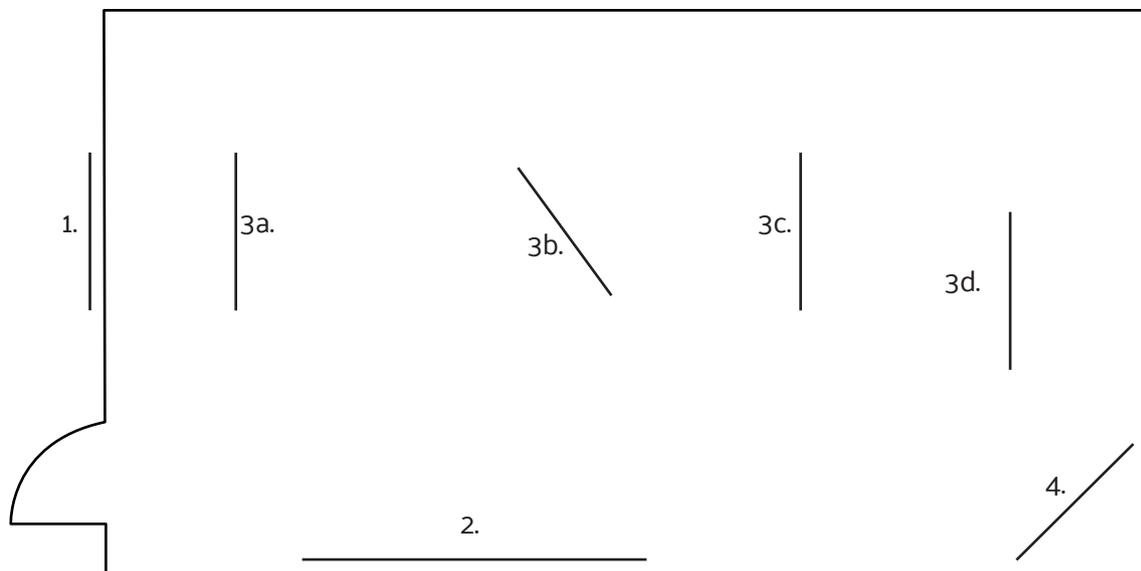
Artists' biographies

Louisa Afoa is a Tāmaki Makaurau based artist. Her practice deals with social encounters relating to experiences of prejudice, misconceptions, and racism towards brown bodies. Recent exhibitions include *Heavenly Creatures*, Verge Gallery (Sydney), 2018; *Cold Islanders*, Waikato Museum Te Whare Taonga o Waikato (Kirikiriroa Hamilton), and *I'll see you at Orion*, Corban Estate Arts Centre (Tāmaki Makaurau), all 2017.

Natasha Matila-Smith (Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Hine) is an artist and writer based in Tāmaki Makaurau. Her practice often deals with social exchanges and anxieties, across installation and digital contexts. Recent exhibitions include *Heavenly Creatures*, Verge Gallery (Sydney), 2018; *You're my number 1*, Firstdraft Gallery (Sydney); *In The Flesh*, Blue Oyster Art Project Space (Ōtepoti Dunedin) and *Cold Islanders*, Waikato Museum Te Whare Taonga o Waikato (Kirikiriroa Hamilton), all 2017.

Molly Rangiwai-McHale (Ngāti Porou, Te Aupōuri, Chinese, Scottish, Irish) is an interdisciplinary artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau. She and her partner, Luisa Tora, construct adornments made with objects sourced from their Ōtāhuhu neighbourhood. They have recently been commissioned by the Pacific Collections Access Project at Auckland Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira to create a new series for the collection. They also collaborated on a portrait series of Tāmaki Makaurau and Suva-based queer-identifying women in their lives. Recent exhibitions include *Heavenly Creatures*, Verge Gallery (Sydney) and *The Language of Things: Meaning and Value in Contemporary Jewellery*, The Dowse Art Museum (Pōneke Wellington), both 2018.

Floorplan



List of works

1. Louisa Afoa, *Untitled*, video, 8:46 minutes, looped, 2018.
2. Louisa Afoa, *Blue Clam*, digital print and wallpaper installation, 2018.
3. (a) Natasha Matila-Smith, *My sweetheart the drunk*, poly-velvet blend banner, spray paint, 2018
(b) Natasha Matila-Smith, *The scent of you stays with me*, poly-velvet blend banner, spray paint, 2018
(c) Natasha Matila-Smith, *His lips pink and swollen*, poly-velvet blend banner, spray paint, 2018
(d) Natasha Matila-Smith, *Spaghetti, alone*, poly-velvet blend banner, spray paint, 2018
4. Molly Rangiwai-McHale, *Love and Affection (Part 2)*, 3 x embroidered sweatshirts, 2018.