

Speaking Surfaces

Jen Bowmast, Ruth Castle, Nikau Hindin and
Ben Thomason, Mabel Juli, Karrabing Film Collective,
Emily Parr and Arielle Walker

ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT
from 28 February 2020

Speaking Surfaces is shaped by the questions: How do surfaces speak? How are stories and experiences inscribed in the surfaces that surround us? How might surfaces speak with, to and through people? A collaboration between St Paul St Gallery and AUT Spatial Design students and staff, *Speaking Surfaces* is a project developed to reimagine the gallery's capacities as a platform for encounters and experiences. The project has multiple and layered phases, and it runs throughout 2020 with artworks and exhibitions, performances, screenings, gatherings, conversations, and teaching. These activities are not only experiences of physical space, but of time, and of the many different energies that inform all our states of being, doing and thinking.

In the Pacific, interiors are portals that augment and entangle people and objects within time/tā and space/vā as a form of 'dwelling-in-time' in what Albert Wendt has called an 'ever-moving-present'. On vā, Wendt writes that it is "...not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships/the contexts change."¹ The notion of vā is relational in that the I (individual) is we (family/community/collective), and it is this thinking and doing beyond the self that binds and activates relational space. Galleries are relational spaces, and through the collective process of the design, *Speaking Surfaces* responds to the interior as portal and the embedded relationality of vā, which opens outwards through the publicness of the gallery space.

Speaking Surfaces e hangaia ana e ngā patai: Ka pēhea ngā mata i korokī atu? Ka pēhea ngā pūrākau me ngā wheako i whaowhia ki roto i ngā mata e horopaki ana i a tatou? Me pēhea ngā mata i kōrero atu ki ngā tāngata? Ko *Speaking Surfaces* he hinonga mahi tahi ki waenganui i a St Paul St Gallery me ngā tauira, ngā kaiako hoki o AUT Spatial Design kia pohewa anō te whare toi hei kaupapa mō ngā tūtakitaki me ngā wheako. He maha ngā apaapa o te hinonga nei, ka haere nei mō te roanga o te tau 2020, me ngā mahi toi, ngā whakaaturanga mataora, ngā whakaaturanga kiriata, ngā huihuinga, ngā kōrerorero, te whakaako hoki. Ehara ēnei mahi he wheako o te wāhi anake, engari kē nō te wā hoki, me ngā ngoi rerekē i kōrero mai ki te katoa o ā tātou mahi, whaiwhakaaro hoki.

I roto o te Moana nui a Kiwa, ki rōto i te whare te tomokanga kia whakakaurahi ai, kia pōrowhiwhiwhi i ngā tāngata me ngā mea i waenga i te tā me te vā hei tētahi āhua 'wā noho', hei tā Albert Wendt 'he wātū nukunukua'. Mō te vā ka tuhi a Wendt, "...ehara i te hemanga, ehara i te waengarahi engari ko te pae kauka, ka pūpuritia ngā hinonga me ngā mea kia ruruku i te kotahitanga o te katoa ko te takiwā te horopaki, ka whakamārama ai i ngā mea. Ka huri ngā māramatanga nā te whakarerekē o ngā whanaungatanga / ngā horopaki." Ko te whakaaro o te vā ka pānga nā te mea ko te awau (tangata kotahi), ko te iwi (whanau / hāpori / roopu tahi) me tēnei whakaaro me te mahi hoki ki tua o te awau anō, ka here ā ka whakahohe i te takiwā whanaungatanga. He wāhi whanaungatanga te whare toi, mā te hoahoa mahitahi, ka whakahoki a *Speaking Surfaces* ki ro whare hei tomokanga me te

The space of *Speaking Surfaces* looks specifically at two expressions of tā/time that affect human daily rhythms of life – that of the moon observed here via the Maramataka (Māori lunar calendar), and the Gregorian calendar (Western solar calendar). Within the Maramataka, there is specific recognition of rhythms that locate humans within the cosmos as relationally entangled with the energies of natural forces. These rhythms, which are both within and beyond human-scaled time, manifest in emotional/mental/physical/cellular/ancestral scales of time. The two notions and measurements of time form a propositional field, giving focus to the activities for the 2020 programme and for the encounters dwelling in space and time. In observing this, St Paul St is looking closely at how we can ‘be’ both in practices and in physical and conceptual spatial orientation. *Speaking Surfaces* emerges through tā/time and vā/space allowing different spatial, temporal, and cultural relations to emerge, in order to hold space *with* and *for* each other.

Observing the phases of the moon and the Maramataka as part of *Speaking Surfaces*, from within the Auckland CBD, is in one sense a way to broaden our attention to our location on planet Earth within the solar system. Regarding both time and space, the intention is to notice rhythms of life other than the Gregorian calendar’s dictation of a working day, week, month, year. The Maramataka, Ayla Hoeta writes, has been used by “Māori and Pacific ancestors for thousands of years”, the days and months are defined by “tohu [signs] in our natural environment. The three key areas are tohu o te rangi (sky), tohu o te moana (water) and tohu o te whenua (land). The tohu are all connected and change as the year progresses.”² *Speaking Surfaces* looks to this system and to the energy levels associated with the tohu as a way to observe and align activities of the project alongside the Gregorian calendar.

To tune into the Maramataka, the passing of days and months will be marked by the work *VĀWĀ* by Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina’i, shown in the street-front window. The wā

whanaungatanga o te Vā, e tuwhera noa atu mā te horaina o te whare toi.

Ko te whaitua o *Speaking Surfaces* ka aronui ki ngā whakaaro e rua mō te wā e pā ana ki te mataora o te tāngata – koia tērā te tirohanga marama mā te Maramataka, me te Wātaka Gregorian hoki. I roto i te Maramataka, ko te tino mohio mō te rere o te ngoi ka noho te tangata ki roto i te ao tukupū, me ngā korou powhiwhi o te rawa taiao. Ko ēnei ia ngoi e noho ana ki roto, ki waho o te wā o te tangata, ka whakatīnanatia e ngā kare ā-roto /te hinengaro/te tinana/ ngā pūtau/te wā inamata. Ko ngā whakaaro e rua me ngā inenga o te wā ka hanga he whaitua korou, hei aronga mō ngā rāwekeweke o te hotaka tau 2020 me ngā tūtaki ki roto i te takiwā me te wā. I te tirohanga nei ko St Paul St e āta titiro ana kia pēhea e tātou te tū ki roto i te mahi me te noho i te wā me te whaitua. Ka puakina a *Speaking Surfaces* mā te wā me te takiwā, e āhei ana ngā whanaungatanga ā-takiwā, ā-wā, ā-ahurea., kia puaki mai ano, kia whakawātea me tētahi, mā tētahi atu hoki.

Ka tirohia ngā mata o te marama me te Maramataka, mai i te pū ō Tāmaki Makaurau ko tētahi mahi kia whakanui tō tātou tirohanga ki tō tātou tūnga ki runga i a Paptuānuku, ā i waenga i te whānau a Tamanuiterā. Mā te wā me te takiwā anō, ko te aronga ko te ia o te mataora haunga hoki te rā mahi, te wīki, te marama, me te tau o te wātaka Gregorian. Ko tā Ayla Hoeta i tuhi, ko te maramataka i whakamahia “e ngā tupuna Maori, e ngā tupuna Moana Nui hoki mō ngā tau takimano”. Ko ngā wāhanga pū e toru ko ngā tohu o te rangi, ko ngā tohu o te moana me ngā tohu o te whenua. Ka hono ngā tohu katoa, ka huri hoki i te rērenga o te tau.” *Speaking Surfaces* e tiro atu ana ki tēnei pūnaha, ki ngā pākahukahu mō taua tohu hoki, koina hei huarahi hei tirohanga, hei whai tikanga mō te hinonga, i te taha o te wātaka Gregorian.

Kia arongia ki te Maramataka, ko te taha o ngā rā me ngā marama ka tūtuhungia e te mahi toi *VĀWĀ* nā Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina’i, whakaatuhia ki roto i te matapihi o mua. Ko te ‘wā’ i roto i te taitara he kupu Māori mō te taima me te takiwā. E marohi

² Ayla Hoeta, Learning to Live by the Maramataka. Aponga (7 August 2018). <https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/07-08-2018/learning-to-live-by-the-maramataka-aponga/> Accessed 8 February 2020.

in the title is a Māori term and concept for both space and time, which Carl Te Hira Mika suggests have the “ability to present themselves as both substance and relation.”³ Mossiah interprets the relationship between *vā* and *wā* as being interdependent, and in response, explores through *VĀWĀ* how they might co-exist within the gallery space. The surfaces of the work’s upper and lower planes are shaped by contour lines of the St Paul Street area. The top plane is moved daily in response to the phases of the moon. Over a month, it is raised and lowered – at its highest point when the moon is full Te Rākaunui, and low at new moon Whiro – the space of *vā* and *wā* expanding and contracting accordingly. The street facing location, the movement and the corresponding moon phase diagram operate publicly as a measure of time different to that of the two nearby clock towers on the Town Hall and the Auckland Art Gallery. *VĀWĀ* is a work in two places; inside Gallery One, the two-plane platform built around the central support column is also a space that directs our attention to the *vā* and *wā*. These two elements are developments of Mossiah’s design concept created in 2019 as part of the *Speaking Surfaces* studio brief for Spatial Design students.

As a gallery space within a university, St Paul St holds multiple forms of engagement and relation. *Speaking Surfaces* in some form reprises the 2012 project *Assembly* in which the gallery space had spatial design developed to support speaking on a variety of topics, asking, after Foucault, “who has the right, the duty, and the courage to speak the truth?”⁴ Since then, attending to one of the primary instructions for universities in the New Zealand Education Act (1986) that they “accept a role as critic and conscience of society”, the focus of the gallery has been firmly fixed on how, in practice, we might think of and make the gallery space relational in the context of Aotearoa. *Speaking Surfaces* began with thinking through the history of galleries and museums that is part of a lineage of colonial structures where social and cultural politics are operating even when not explicit. Responding to this, the 2019 Spatial Design studio brief for *Speaking Surfaces* asked students to consider: How

ana a Carl Te Hira Mika ka taea te kupu nei te whakatānana hei kiko hei huānga hoki. Hei tā Mossiah, ko te hūanga ki waenga te *vā* me te *wā* he hūanga motuhake, nō reira, mā te *VĀWĀ* ka tūhura me pēhea aua mea e rua kia nohotahi ki roto i te whare toi. Ko ngā papa ō runga ō raro hoki o te mahi toi āhuatia e ngā rārangi hua o te wāhi o St Paul St. Ia rā ka nukunukuhia te pae hei kātōitoi ki ngā mata o te marama. Mō te roanga o te marama ka hiki ki runga, ka heke ki raro – ka tae ki te tihi i Te Rākaunui, ka pāpaku i te Whiro – ka whakarahi, ka whakapoto rānei. Ko te tūwāhi aro atu ki te huarahi, te nukunukutanga, me te hoahoa mata marama ka mahi māraakerake hei ine taima rerekē ki ērā o ngā taurewa matawā e rua tātata i te Hōro o te Tāone me te Toi o Tāmaki. Ko *VĀWĀ* he mahi e tū ana ki aua wāhi e rua: kei roto i te whare toi Tuatahi ko te kaupapa pae-e-rua i hangaia takarore i te poutoko manawa he wāhi aroā tō tātou whakaaro ki te *vā* me te *wā*. Ko ēnei āhuatanga hoahoa e rua he whakawhanake o te aroaro hoahoa i hangaia i te tau 2019 hei wāhanga o te hinonga taupuni, ko *Speaking Surfaces* mō ngā tauira Hoahoa Whaitua.

Hei whare toi e waenga ana i te whare wānanga, ka pūmau a St Paul St ki ngā tūtakinga me ngā hūanga maha. Ko *Speaking Surfaces* he ngakinga o te hinonga *Assembly* no te tau 2012 i whakawhanake ai te hoahoa whaitua e te whare toi nei kia tautokohia te korokī mō ngā take maha, e pātai ana pērā i a Foucault, “nā wai te mana, te takohanga, me te māia kia kōrero pono?” Mai rānō nā ko tētahi o ngā tohutohu matua mō ngā whare wānanga i roto i te New Zealand Education Act (1986) ka “whakaae kia tū hei waha hei matatika mō te pāpori” ārā anō ko te aronga o te whare toi kua pūmau kia aroā pēhea te whare toi nei hei whaitua hūanga i tēnei horopaki o Aotearoa. I tīmata a *Speaking Surfaces* i te whakaaro e pā ana ki te hītori o ngā whare whakaaturanga me ngā whare taonga hei wāhanga kauhou o te hanganga koroniara, ka haere tonu ngā tōrangapū pāpori, ahurea hoki, ahakoa e huna ana. ka whakahokia ki tēnei whakairo, ko te hinonga taupuni o te Hoahoa Whaitua mo *Speaking Surfaces* i pārai atu ki ngā tauira ki te āta whakaaro: Me pēhea te whawhai i nga

³ See: Carl Te Hira Mika, *The Thing’s Revelation: Some Thoughts on Māori Philosophical Research*, Waikato University Research Commons, 2015: <https://hdl.handle.net/10289/12340>
⁴ See <https://srpaulst.auc.ac.nz/all-exhibitions/assembly>

do we counter repeating established and institutionalized power relationships? Who, and what, is missing? How do we deploy existing institutions and their spaces, or create new ones in better, more effective ways – ways that do not rehash and reinforce dominant power structures and narratives? What do non-colonial and non-patriarchal spaces feel like?

Within the physical and conceptual space anchored by VĀWĀ programmed and responsive activities will come and go over time and space. While the project operates within the calendar and academic year by default, the Maramataka brings to the fore another mode of relating to time. Through this and experimenting with forms of materiality, activity and context the field of planned and spontaneous engagements and encounters, *Speaking Surfaces* aims to be responsive to the ongoing relational exchanges that emerge.

The project opens in Gallery One with exhibited works by Jen Bowmast, Ruth Castle, Nikau Hindin and Ben Thomason, Mabel Juli, Karrabing Film Collective, Emily Parr and Arielle Walker. In March, during the Auckland Arts Festival over the weekend of the 21st and 22nd Atamira Dance Company artistic director Jack Gray and special guests, including Rachel Shearer, will activate the space with a Creative Wānanga. The Wānanga invites the public to discuss, share and participate in a tactile, multi-sensory series of events situated both in the gallery and outside. Also in March, as part of AUT's 20th anniversary as a university, *Speaking Surfaces* will host 'storying of place' discussions and workshops towards the development of an outdoor sculpture commissioned by AUT to mark the anniversary. The project is a collaboration between Taarati Taiaroa and Dion Hitchens and involves students from within the Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies and members of the wider AUT community. Gallery Two becomes part of *Speaking Surfaces* from April.

Later, *Speaking Surfaces* will include Julia Mapusua, Sharon Semi Tugia, Denise Jillian Saso, Monique Jansen, Laura Marsh, Sione

hūanga tūaukiuki, ngā hūanga manatū hoki?
Ko wai i mahuetia, he aha anō kua mahue?
Me pēhea tātou te whakarite i ngā manatū
me ō rātou whaitua, te hanga rānei i ngā
whaitua hou kia pai ake, kia whakamana kia
kua tātou e whakakaha i ngā manatū me ngā
kīnga o naianeī? Ka rongo pēhea ngā whaitua
taketake, ngā whaitua tē mana-tane hoki?

I roto i te takiwā me te whaitua aroā i
pungatia e te VĀWĀ, nga mahi kua hotaka
me nga mahi whakautu ka tu mo te wa
paku mo te roanga o te whakaaturanga
nei. Ahakaoa e noho ana te hinonga i roto
i te wātaka Pākeha, wātaka whare wananga
hoki, ka whakaatu mai te Maramataka i
tētahi atu hōnonga ki te wā. Mā tēnei, mā
te whakamātauria i ngā āhua o te rawatanga,
mā te mahi me te horopaki, mā te whaitua
ō ngā whakapāpā me ngā tūtakinga hoki ā,
ko *Speaking Surfaces* ka whakautu ki ngā
whakawhanaungatanga ka whakapūrerotia ai.

Ka whakatūwhera te hinonga i Gallery One
me te whakaaturanga o ngā mahi toi nā Jen
Bowmast rātou ko Ruth Castle, ko Nikau
Hindin, ko Mabel Juli, ko Karrabing Film
Collective, ko Emily Parr ko Arielle Walker.
Ā te marama o Maramatoru / Ngāhuru i te
Auckland Arts Festival mō ngā rā whakatā
a te 21 me 22 ka whakahohe te whaitua
me tētahi wānanga auahatanga i mahia e te
kaihautu o te Roopu Kanikani o Atamira
a Jack Gray me ōna manuhiri, ko Rachel
Shearer tētahi. Ko te wānanga ka pōhiritia
ki te marea kia kōrero, ki a whai wāhi i
ētahi whakaari tairongo ka tū ki roto, ki
waho hoki i te whare toi. Anō hoki a te
Maramatoru, hei wāhanga o te huritau
20 o AUT kia tū hei whare wānanga, ka
whakauhi a *Speaking Surfaces* i ētahi kōrero,
ētahi awheawhe hoki mō te whakawhanake
o tētahi tāraitanga ā-waho i hokona nā
AUT he tūtohungia mo te huritau. Ko te
hinonga he mahitahi ki waenga a Taarati
Taiaroa rāua ko Dion Hitchens, nā ētahi o
ngā tauira mai i te Faculty of Design and
Creative Technologies hoki me ētahi atu nā
te hāpori nui o AUT. Ka honoa a Gallery
Two ki te kaupapa o *Speaking Surfaces* mai i
te Maramawhā / Paengawhāwhā.

Nō muri mai, ka whakauruhia ki *Speaking
Surfaces* a Julia Mapusua rātou ko Sharon

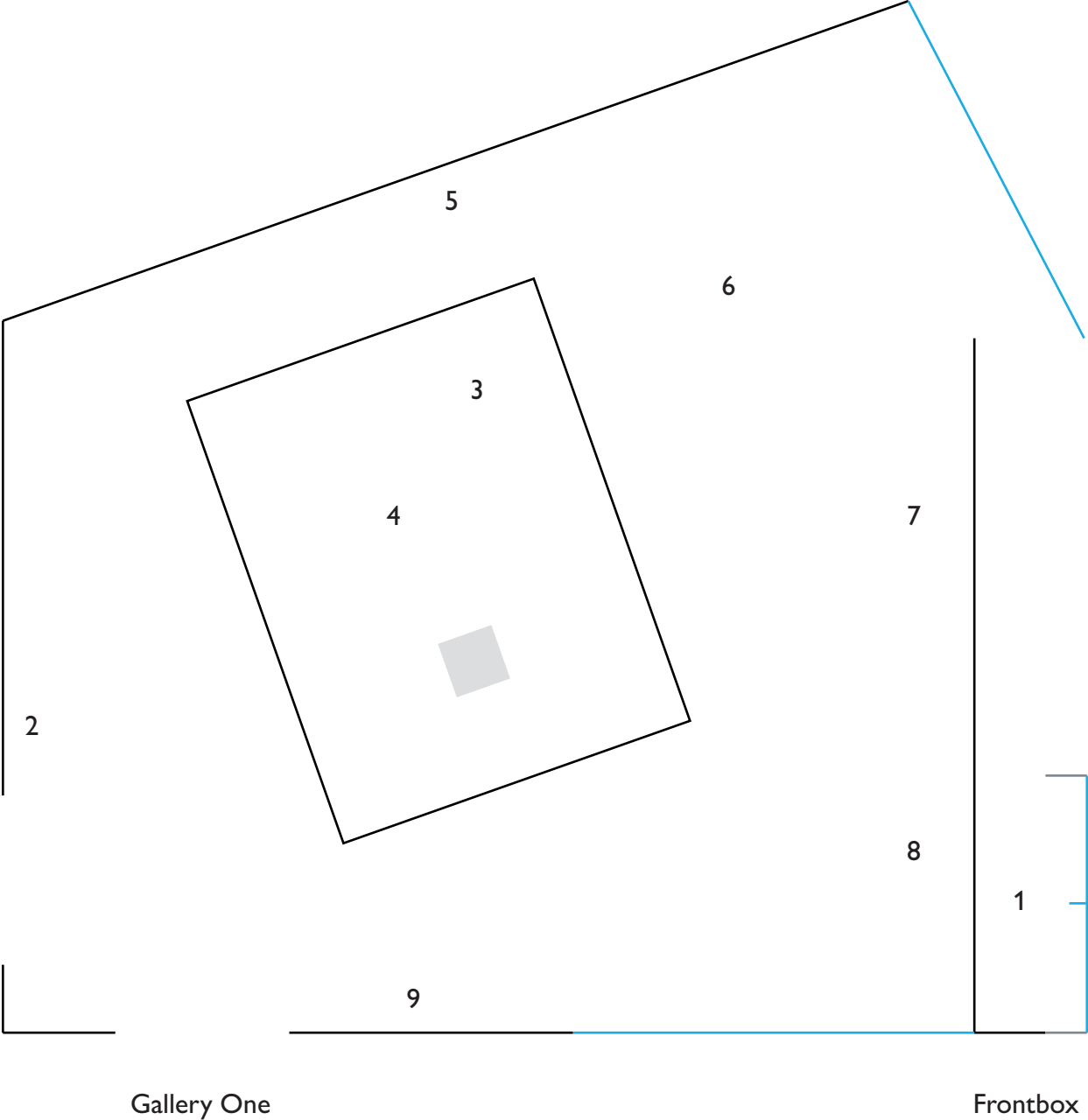
Monu, Lucreccia Quintanilla, Rachel Shearer. Throughout the year other activities will be conceived and activated within *Speaking Surfaces*. Updates on activities will be posted on our social media.

Speaking Surfaces cannot be defined as an exhibition. It is a project generated through a collaborative and experimental design process, involving Gallery staff and the cohort of 60+ students and staff who participated in the Spatial Design Year 3 Studio, whose collective input fed into imagining varying propositions of *Speaking Surfaces*. We acknowledge the particular influence of design propositions from: Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina'i, Silvia Kostandini, Yana Nafysa Dombrowsky-M'Baye, Ellie Blower, Caitlin Hogan, Sharon Semi Tugia, Julia Mapasua, Denise Jillian Saso, and Juvanka Rebello. Subsequently, the core *Speaking Surfaces* project team has grown into: Emily O'Hara, Charlotte Huddleston, Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina'i, Silvia Kostandini, Nooroa Tapuni, Kahurangiariki Smith, Balamohan Shingade, Eddie Clemens, Monique Redmond, Harriet Stockman, Harold Barton, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Davis, Angus Roberts.

Semi Tugia, ko Denise Jillian Saso, ko Monique Jansen, ko Laura Marsh, ko Sione Monu, ko Lucreccia Quintanilla, ko Rachel Shearer. Mō te roanga o te tau ka puta mai ka whakahangaia hoki ētahi atu o ngā mahi mō *Speaking Surfaces*. Ka puta ngā whakahāngai mā te pae pāpāho pāpori o te whare toi nei.

Kāore a *Speaking Surfaces* e tautuhi ana hei whakaaturanga tūturu. He hinonga i waihangatia nā te hoahoa mahitahi, te hoahoa whakamātau hoki, nga kaimahi o te Whare Toi me tētahi roopu neke atu i te ono tekau o ngā taurira, me ngā kaiwhakaako hoki i whakauru mai i te taupuni Spatial Design Tautoru – nā ō rātou utauta i ngā wāhanga o *Ngā Mata Korokī*. Ka mihi atu mātou ki ngā marohi hoahoa nā: Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina'i rātou ko Silvia Kostandini, ko Yana Nafysa Dombrowsky-M'Baye, ko Ellie Blower, ko Caitlin Hogan, ko Sharon Semi Tugia, ko Julia Mapasua, ko Denise Jillian Saso, ko Juvanka Rebello. Muringa iho, ko te roopu whakahaere o *Nga Mata Korokī* kua whakapuāwaitia ki a Emily O'Hara rātou ko Charlotte Huddleston, ko Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina'i, ko Silvia Kostandini, ko Nooroa Tapuni, ko Kahurangiariki Smith, ko Balamohan Shingade, ko Eddie Clemens, ko Monique Redmond, ko Harriet Stockman, ko Harold Barton, ko Glenn Maxwell, ko Matthew Davis, ko Angus Roberts.

Floorplan



List of Works

- 1** Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina'i with *Speaking Surfaces* project team
VĀWĀ, 2020, laminated *Macrocarpa*, Cotton string, plywood, steel
- 2** Mabel Juli (Nyawurru)
Garnkiny Ngarranggarni (Moon Dreaming) 2018, nature ochre and pigment on canvas
Presented with thanks to Tim Melville Gallery
- 3** Jen Bowmast
Calls herself into being, 2020, bronze, clay, copper, glass, obsidian, silver, wax, wood, wool
- 4** Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina'i with *Speaking Surfaces* project team
VĀWĀ, 2020, plywood, unistrut, framing timber
- 5** Nikau Hindin (Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi) and Ben Thomason (Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga)
- 6** Jen Bowmast
Psychopomp, 2018, foam, lacquer, resin, steel
- 7** Karrabing Film Collective
Wutharr, Saltwater Dreams, 2016, HD video, 28:53 mins, screens on the hour
The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland, 2018, HD video, 26:29 mins, screens on the half-hour
- 8** Ruth Castle
from left: *Check Pattern* dish, *Sunflower Pattern* dish, *Spiral* dish, *Bangalow Palm* dish, *Fish Basket* dish, all 2019, dyed Rattancore, Bangalow palm
Presented with thanks to Masterworks Gallery
- 9** Emily Parr (Ngāi Te Rangi, Pasifika, Pākehā) and Arielle Walker (Taranaki, Ngāruahine, Ngāpuhi, Pākehā), *Whatuora*, 2020, HD video, 12 mins

◀ ST PAUL ST



TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Speaking Surfaces

Exhibition Guide
version 1, from 28 February 2020

ST PAUL St Gallery
Auckland University of Technology

Visit

Level 1, WM Building
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Saturday, 12noon – 4pm

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Jen Bowmast

Speaking Surfaces

ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT

from 28 February 2020

Calls herself into being, 2020

bronze, clay, copper, glass,
obsidian, silver, wax, wood, wool

Psychopomp, 2018

foam, lacquer, resin, steel

Jen Bowmast's practice of making is grounded in metaphysical and spiritual enquiry. Metaphysics is derived from Greek, 'after the things of nature', and is the philosophical study of the nature of the world and what it means to inhabit it as human.

Jen's practice and enquiry developed counter to the emphasis placed on predominantly European philosophy that she experienced during Masters study in art. This she "found frustrating" because her "more intuitive and emotional motivations in making work... had to be rationalised within an academic context."¹ As a response to the academic focus on knowledge acquisition, Jen tuned into the 'unknown' and began to use psychic mediums alongside philosophy and art theory. While she acknowledges that it was at first simply a strategic response, it has opened up a whole new way of thinking, doing and being that has developed into a core aspect of her practice. As the research progressed, Jen learnt of 'transpersonal methodology,' which originates in psychology and uses an approach of non-judgmental openness to experience. Jen took up this approach, which lends itself to developing intuition, empathy and self-awareness, and folded it in to her material practice. In this way, the spiritual becomes a more personal, experiential understanding that is formed through living and being in the world.

Working towards an installation, Jen begins by observing site to "better understand the formal qualities, temperament and...atmosphere."² Her processes and methods include a studio-based 'tuning in' in advance of the installation, which involves reconnecting with existing objects from previous installations and making new objects; consultations with divinatory readers, scrying (looking for signs in a reflective surface), Molybdomancy (divination with molten metal) "as a way to expand 'ways of knowing' and understanding of the site." When on-site, Jen spends time over a period of days developing rituals and rhythms responsive to the space, this includes collecting objects and materials from around the site. Working with these practices and with context in a highly responsive way, the "ephemeral and 'felt' take precedence over the intellectual and rational."³

Jen works with materials that themselves go through transformational processes as they are formed – glazed and fired clay, cast Bronze, wax dipped plant materials, carved wood, casting molten metal in water – all reshaping their surfaces and appearance. As installations, the carefully chosen materials speak, the arrangements are intuitively placed in conversations between materials – the highly reflective and matte surfaces complementing and contrasting with each other. As artefacts that carry energies of the making processes, they can be seen as transitional objects located physically here, now and connected to other places and times.

¹ Warren Feeny, Kiwi artist Jen Bowmast inspired by the paranormal, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/entertainment/arts/103271700/kiwi-artist-jen-bowmast-inspired-by-the-paranormal>

² Email correspondence with Jen Bowmast.

³ Wendy Richdale, *Future Makers*, RAMP Gallery, Wintec School of Media Arts, 2019 <https://www.rampgallery.co.nz/assets/Uploads/WNTC075-RAMP-Gallery-Sacred-Sites-Catalogue-DIGITAL.pdf>

Ruth Castle

Speaking Surfaces

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Check Pattern dish, Sunflower Pattern dish, Spiral dish, Bangalow Palm dish, Fish Basket dish, all 2019, dyed Rattancore, Bangalow palm.
Presented with thanks to Masterworks Gallery

There is a 'kindness' or 'friendliness' in fibres when you work with them, exploring their possibilities, gently bending and persuading them...and creating natural forms under tension.¹ — Ruth Castle

Ruth Castle's baskets are "a deeply felt outcome of a relationship with the natural world."² Castle first encountered basket making while studying occupational therapy in Auckland between 1952 and 1954. Her most recognizable works, using patterns developed in the late 1960s, are of black dyed fine rattancore used "to make decorative patterns into dishes."³ From the 1970s, she began to work with and incorporate other materials, some foraged, some bought. Visiting Castle's studio in 2015, curator Damian Skinner observed, "heaps of unwoven stuff: springy meulenbeckia flecked with tiny leaves; curled fronds of seaweed, and sprigs and filaments of lichen...looped skeins of rice straw rope and jute; neatly tied lassoes of rattancore, Palembang and akebi vine; vertical tendrils of date palm ... and the thin twigs of eleagnus that begin ramrod straight and become increasingly unruly."⁴

Castle's baskets and sculptural objects come about through a process of communion with materials. She "takes a while to find out how each material behaves", letting it take her "where it will." She is "a great believer in the happy accident and will let my plan change...if a new idea or direction takes shape as I work."⁵ In this way, Castle is one of the makers that anthropologist Tim Ingold calls wanderers and wayfarers, whose skill is in finding "the grain of the world's becoming ... follow[ing] its course while bending it to their evolving purpose."⁶

¹ Doreen Blumhardt and Brian Brake, *Craft New Zealand : the art of the craftsman* Wellington : Reed, 1981, 282.
² Damian Skinner 'Ruth Castle, Basket Maker' in Garland, 2015, 12. <https://garlandmag.com/article/ruth-castle-basket-maker/>
³ Skinner, 11.
⁴ Skinner, 14, 15.
⁵ Skinner, 15.
⁶ Tim Ingold, 'The textility of making', *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34, 2010, 92.

Nikau Hindin (Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi) and Ben Thomason (Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga)

Speaking Surfaces

ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT

from 28 February 2020

The long journey of the paper mulberry to Aotearoa by sea voyages undertaken using star compass navigation practices, and the tradition and practice of cultivating and making aute cloth, come together in Nikau Hindin's work.

Aute was brought from Hawaiki to Aotearoa by ancestress Whakaotirangi. Prior to that the paper mulberry had travelled from its origin in Southeast Asia, "across the Pacific as a canoe plant, carefully stored, cultivated and beaten into cloth."¹ Nikau first learned the practice of beating paper mulberry into cloth during an exchange at the University of Hawai'i. While there, she learned of the Māori tradition of cloth making – aute – that was lost in Aotearoa due to the paper mulberry almost dying out in the 1840s. Relearning and practicing these forms as an artist is a commitment to revitalise aute alongside the practice of navigation by the stars creating a "new wave of ancient knowledge...reflected in the aute she makes, which depend on the same precision required for navigation."²

The work shown in *Speaking Surfaces* is a star map key that Nikau developed to accompany aute works shown in Hong Kong. It is based on the eastern horizon of Tūranganui-a-Kiwa (Gisborne) where Nikau is living. This star map is a two dimensional visualisation of the Star Compass which is the conceptual framework for 'way-finding' using currents, winds, waves and stars. The Star Compass is a multi-dimensional tool, placing the waka at the centre. From the waka, the 360 degree horizon is the circumference and everything that goes through or over the compass is calculated by the navigator determining where they are and where to point the waka. The horizon here is represented by the red line across the bottom section of the work above the niho taniwha (teeth). The star compass is divided into 32 Whare Whetu, star houses, each of the niho symbolise a house (Whitinga, Rā, Kaingā, Ngoi, Manu...). Each line is a whetu showing where it rises on the horizon (declination). This vinyl is a key to learning the names of our different whetu and where they rise and set on the horizon.

In an interview made to accompany the exhibition Tākiri at the New Zealand Maritime Museum in Tāmaki Makaurau, Nikau talks about her real interest being "the conceptual understanding of the star compass. The way that the stars move, the patterns and the cycles...it's about taking the celestial bodies and translating them into the physical world."³ Underpinning Nikau's practices with aute and star navigation, is a recognition of the importance of connecting, or re-connecting with the environment.

¹ Nikau Hindin in *Crafting Aotearoa: A Cultural History of Making in New Zealand and the Wider Moana Oceania*, Eds: Karl Chitham, Kolokesa U Māhina-Tuai and Damian Skinner, Te Papa Press, 64.
² see <https://artfair.co.nz/projects/p6-nikau-hindin/>
³ NZ Maritime Museum: Tākiri Exhibition Meet the Maker Video <https://www.instagram.com/tv/B5R5qRmj9O7/>

Mabel Juli (Nyawurru)

Speaking Surfaces

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from 28 February 2020

Garnkiny Ngarranggarni (Moon Dreaming), 2018
nature ochre and pigment on canvas. Presented
with thanks to Tim Melville Gallery

I don't paint another country, I paint my own. — Mabel Juli.

Juli is a Gija woman from Warmun, a community of about 400 people located 200 kilometres south of Kununurra in the Kimberley region of far north Western Australia. In Warmun paintings, the material is the work; they are earth and mineral as well as images. Ochre, charcoal and natural earth pigments typify contemporary Aboriginal painting in the Kimberley region. Mawandu or white ochre, extensively used in Mabel Juli's work, is distinctive to the Kimberley area. This is naturally occurring white clay that forms deep in the ground along certain riverbeds. Mixing natural pigments with mawandu provides a range of colours, including lime greens, greys, and a rare pink, all of which are produced at Warmun and traded with art centres across the region.

In *Garnkiny Ngarranggarni (Moon Dreaming)*, Garnkiny, the Ngarranggarni (Dreaming Rock) 'big story' of the Moon, is a story frequently painted by Mabel Juli, and at times alongside his promised wife, the star. This and other stories are "intricate networks or constellations of related knowledge – of country, of human behaviour, of the natural and social world."¹ They hold important understanding about ways of being in the world, about social and ecological relationships, about forecasting weather and adaptation to climate shifts. In March 2011, when a major flood devastated Warmun, the event was widely attributed to the will of interfering humans who had destabilised the ecological balance.²

For Juli, these 'constellations of related knowledge', and their complex connections with the social and material world are deeply embedded in the making of the work. Asked how she learned the story of the Moon Man – an important dreaming for her country – Mabel Juli says: 'My mother and father. And he's a, his Ngarranggarni is right there in Springvale, in Yari. My mother and my dad used to take me everywhere, walkabout. Show me all the Ngarranggarni everywhere.'³

¹ Anna Crane, introduction to *Garnkiny: Constellations of Meaning* (Warmun Art Centre, 2014), 3.
² Alana Hunt, *Jodagen – Warnkan – Barnderi: Changing Climate in Gija Country* (Warmun Art Centre, 2015), 13.
³ Mabel Juli, 'Nginjiny Berdji Laarne, The one who stands on top', *Garnkiny: Constellations of Meaning* (Warmun Art Centre, 2014), 47.

Karrabing Film Collective

Speaking Surfaces

ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT

from 28 February 2020

Wutharr, Saltwater Dreams, 2016

HD video, 28:53 mins, screens on the hour

Across a series of increasingly surreal flashbacks, an extended indigenous family argues about what caused their boat's motor to break down and leave them stranded out bush. As they consider the roles played in the incident by the ancestral present, the regulatory state and the Christian faith, *Wutharr: Saltwater Dreams* explores the multiple demands and inescapable vortexes of contemporary indigenous life.

The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland, 2018

HD video, 26:29 mins, screens on the half-hour

In the not so distant future, Europeans can no longer survive for long periods outdoors in a land and seascape poisoned by capitalism, but Indigenous people seem able to. A young Indigenous man, Aiden, taken away when he was just a baby to be a part of a medical experiment to save the white race, is released into the world of his family. As he travels with his father and brother across the landscape he confronts two possible futures and pasts.

Karrabing, which in the Emmiyengal language refers to low-tide, is a collective of 30 plus members, all but one from the Belyuen community on the Cox Peninsula, in Australian Northern Territory. Founding member Elizabeth Povinelli says, "Karrabing was explicitly intended and meant to refer to the connectivity across the divisions that the state puts in place between indigenous people based on clan and territory, by foregrounding a common condition...the tide presents what is a common condition to everybody that is in the group"¹

Karrabing was formed in 2007, in the wake of the Australian parliament passing of the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act. Widely referred to as the Intervention, the Act gave the government ultimate control over indigenous lives, and resumed government control of land that had only been returned to indigenous owners through land rights legislation of the 1970s and 1990s.² Alongside the negative portrayal of indigenous communities in the media and in political rhetoric, the passing of the Act was presented "as a solution to the 'backward' ways of Indigenous cultures" which blamed "'traditional' lifeways, including specific social formations and kinship, hunting, and religious practices...for increasing levels of poverty and violence."³ The 'solution' for improvement was to move away from customary cultural practices and ways of being in the works, and 'modernize' by participating nation-state's capitalist economy, which means being part of the toxic local mining industry.⁴

The construction of Aboriginal identity as seen through the lens of the paternalistic nation-state creates a daily dissonance for Indigenous people.⁵ Karrabing films are not meant to explain themselves in relation to these imposed notions of identity; rather, the intention through the method and process referred to by Povinelli as 'improvisational realism' is a refusal to be subjugated by them. The stories are generated through ideas of the Collective and shaped into a general form. The dialogue and action are improvised during shooting, and at times, the plot changes in this process. Through this knowing improvisation, Karrabing films "are understood as an intervention in life, in the actual formation through energy, through force of what makes internal differences by discovering things that [they] never knew or knew but never quite saw until [they] improvised them."⁶ Film-making becomes for Karrabing Film Collective "a form of activity that [builds] the self as structure."⁷ The improvised stories are shared not simply as recollections of what existed but also in the context of a struggle for existence to ask how to make these stories matter in the world?

¹ Elizabeth Povinelli, *Karrabing: An Indigenous Otherwise in the Late Liberal Australian Geontology*, lecture held at Pérez Art Museum Miami, 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YS9NimmNZM>

² See Maggie Vander, "'It's Ok, We're Safe Here': The Karrabing Film Collective and Colonial Histories in Australia", *Commonwealth Essays and Studies* [Online], 41.1 | 2018. Online since 05 November 2019, connection on 19 February 2020. DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/ces.389>, 54

³ Vander, 54

⁴ Vander, 55

⁵ Povinelli

⁶ Povinelli

⁷ Povinelli

Emily Parr (Ngāi Te Rangi, Pasifika, Pākehā) and Arielle Walker (Taranaki, Ngāruahine, Ngāpuhi, Pākehā)

Speaking Surfaces
ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT
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Whatuora, 2020
HD video, 12 mins

Hinekura Smith frames *Whatuora* as a methodology which “helps us to see ourselves, our past experiences and possible future through decolonising eyes. A *Whatuora* approach... insists that we actively reclaim and restore, unpick and re-weave, a culturally well and clear vision of our present realities and, importantly, create a vision for the future.”¹ There is both tension and wonder in learning about oneself through museums and archives, which hold our ancestors’ taonga but rarely their voices. We must come to know our tūpuna wāhine in other ways.

As we both begin the long, slow process of learning to weave, we are in conversation not only with each other, but also with our tūpuna wāhine in te whare pora. In *Whatuora*, we hīkoi to a place our ancestors were simultaneously, Kororāreka. Through kōrerorero, we tease out the threads that brought us together, our connection to whenua as descendents of settler-indigenous relationships, and our belonging to place as women whose ancestors moved across oceans and brought – or left behind – their stories and traditions.

We have shared a studio and worked alongside each other for the past year. Our practices have been influenced by this relationship—sometimes converging, always buoying. *Whatuora* is the first of three parts, a beginning point from which reciprocal practices and shared haerenga will unfold over several months. Together, we reflect on the passing down of knowledge, the repairing of ruptures, and the bridging of time.

¹ Hinekura Smith, “*Whatuora*: Theorizing “New” Indigenous Methodology from “Old” Indigenous Weaving Practice,” *Art/Research International: A Transdisciplinary Journal* 4, no. 1 (2019): 21, <http://dx.doi.org/10.18432/art.29393>.

Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina'i with *Speaking Surfaces* project team

Speaking Surfaces

ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT

from 28 February 2020

VĀWĀ (Frontbox), 2020

laminated Macrocarpa, cotton
string, plywood, steel

VĀWĀ (Gallery One), 2020

plywood, unistrut, framing timber

In *Speaking Surfaces*, VĀWĀ has two-parts, and is a work in two places: Gallery One and Frontbox. Both were developed from Mossiah's concept for a large platform in Gallery One. It was presented as part of the Spatial Design studio paper in 2019. The project began with the question: "How can I create a space within the gallery to evoke one's emotions, spirituality, thoughts and perspectives interpreting Vā?"

VĀWĀ references two types of Vā as theorised in work by scholar l'uogafa Tuagalu and political figure Tui Atua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi. They are: Vā Fealoaloa'i (the relational Vā) and Vā Tapuia (the Vā in sacred spaces). Vā Fealoaloa'i describes the connection or relation-building between people and things, and is expanded by Efi as "the relational bonds between peoples, between peoples and their Gods/God, people and the seas, skies and stars."¹

Vā Tapuia is expressed through the work in protocols and in the practices accompanying it. At the beginning of each day, a lotu/karakia will be recited to open the space. The lotu prepares the space for people to share in it, lifting the sã/tapu, as Mossiah writes, to "provide a safe veil over the space for the structures and everyone who is present." In the Frontbox, the work's upper and lower planes are shaped based on contour lines of the St Paul Street area. The top plane is moved daily in response to the phases of the moon. Over a month, it will be raised to its highest point when the moon is full, and lowered to its lowest point at new moon—the space of vā/wā expanding and contracting accordingly.

Vā in the title is a Māori term and concept for both space and time, which Carl Te Hira Mika suggests have the "ability to present themselves as both substance and relation."² Mossiah interprets the relationship between vā and wā as being interdependent, and in response, explores through VĀWĀ how they might co-exist within the gallery space.

Inside Gallery One, the two-plane platform built around the central support column, is also a space that directs our attention to the vā/wā. The VĀWĀ platform structure in the Gallery has the same upper and lower plane form as the work in the window, but it operates as a structure anchoring and supporting the activities of *Speaking Surfaces*. With VĀWĀ, Mossiah's intention is that the main structure in the Gallery is "a means of helping to create Vā, instead of being a tool that Vā is exerted from" and that it preserves "a strong sense of respect and mana within [the] space creating and encouraging Vā Fealoaloa'i, to actively nurture and create Vā Tapuia."

¹ Tui Atua Tamasese Ta'isi Efi, *Samoan Jurisprudence and the Samoan Lands and Titles Court: The perspective of a litigant*, 2007. Retrieved from [http://www.head-of-state-samoa.ws/pages/speech_jurisprudence.html](http://www/head-of-state-samoa.ws/pages/speech_jurisprudence.html)

² See: Carl Te Hira Mika, *The Thing's Revelation: Some Thoughts on Māori Philosophical Research*, Waikato University Research Commons: <https://hdl.handle.net/10289/72340>