

**On an island in
the middle of
the ocean that is
a river in the
New World /
without legs
(walk), Old
World magic in-
vasion, power
*move and quest***

**TEXT, DESIGN, ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY YONEL WATENE.
EDITED BY CHARLOTTE HUDDLESTON.**

**CREATED FOR “TWO OCEANS AT ONCE”, A GROUP SHOW CURATED
BY CHARLOTTE HUDDLESTON AND CAMERON AH LOO-MATAMUA,
OPENING AT ST PAUL ST GALLERY, FEBRUARY 14 TO MAY 19 2019.**

foreword

This story is so slow. Disgustingly slow. It's disgusting. It's beautiful. It annoys the shit out of me. This text, with a title a little too long, is slow to the point. So slow. I hate to call it the sequel to my last text, which also had a long title. Writing from that one features in this one. Slow. New writing features in this one that didn't feature in that one. More slow. None of this matters. It's the same art. Same writing. New art. New writing. It's all a load of bollocks really. Whats does any of it even mean. I do not care. I

just don't. I am writing a response to my own foreword. Pathetic. So pathetic. Who does that?

Does anyone ever do that? I'm only writing this out of shame. I do care. I really do.

But I don't really care about explaining much before the time is ripe. That's silly.

What I will say is this: the central narrative revolves around something fishy and sinister. Are they the same thing? Maybe.

Maybe metaphorically?

Does proximity equal causality?

Is relevance vital?

Think on that, read this text, and find no answers. I didn't.

Think on that, step away, and evaluate your personal value system.

Think on that, step forward, and contemplate your critical capacity.

Now, think on all of that, read this text, and ask questions.

That's the most I can do for you at this present moment.

Useless and impractical, yes.

But it might assist you in a future knife fight.

Time will tell.

FOREWORD II



Love

The artist is the author. The godless, godforsaken, untrustworthy author. Artist as author. Artist. Author. The artist is not the author. The artist cannot be the author. He cannot write or say. He cannot touch the hearts of men and women. He has no hands. His hands were destroyed. She has hands. To slap. To touch. To write. The hearts of men and women are not hers. They are not the authors. The author was forsaken by her family. A cold, hard family. She walked across a desert. She walked across the beach. She climbed a mountain. She walked backwards down a busy street. The hearts of men and women are not hers. They didn't notice a thing. Still, the artist is the author. The author is the author. Style, rhythm, description, emotion. She has none of these. He has less, which is nothing. Together they make a family of nothingness, which is more. More than me. More than we. More than other authors, who have something. Something to eat. Something to throw. We need none of this. Deserts and beaches. A mountain. Slap. The cycle continues. On and on. It's a horrible story, love. Still, the artist is the author. We must accept this .

Dissecting
a
conversation
with
Charlotte

I think its importance and relevance centres around a few key characteristics of this artwork; my personal journey and personal loss, the islands' journey (its pre-colonial history, colonial history, Fighting Island's decolonisation or 'cleansing', and Zug Island's persistent representation of colonialism and capitalism) and what that represents. My journey is represented by the artworks' evolution from D is 4 Detroit to 8 Mile, and lastly Zug Island and Fighting Island, what I researched and looked at to get there, and my real-life adventures around the world (where I sourced the artworks strange materials). I think my personal journey presents alternative research methodologies and ways of thinking. The laborious 'hunter gatherer' approach to sourcing stage materials presents an alternative way of thinking about materials. And most importantly, I think the artwork's narrative presents a new way of looking at decolonisation without even having to mention it. This is represented by the islands' histories: Zug Island's persistent capitalist functions and Fighting Island's return to 'nature'. For me, what these islands represent are two histories, two outcomes, two sets of beliefs, two stories. You can go one way, or the other. There's two endings to the story and they aren't hypotheticals, they're realities for two real-life islands. This artwork isn't inherent to the Pacific, it's really inherent to the world because it talks about the battle of our time (colonial v decolonial, capitalism v nature and everything, life v death).

- Segment of an email to Charlotte Huddleston (Kaiurungi/Director ST PAUL St Gallery).

The email conversation heralds the evolution of Zug Island and Fighting Island's narrative, and myself as the narrator. It feels awkward, and it should. I would probably say that it's the third evolutionary stage, the first being my narrative on D is 4 Detroit (the Detroit series first installment, which featured in my solo exhibition Mackie Boy, May 2017). The second stage was Zug Island and Fighting Island Essay, which featured in my e-publication Alternative Realities for the Classic Art Fool (released April 2018). And this is the third. Nothing changes, it's always awkward, because that's growth.

I pinpoint this email conversation because of what I introduce into the narrative. It's important because its prior-omission was in itself a subversive gimmick (broken, at last!). Its presence is like a type of awakening, or an unveiling - ta-da ... And most importantly, I think the artworks' narrative presents a new way of looking at decolonisation. As mentioned in the above conversation, Zug Island and Fighting Island present two alternative colonial case studies, with two very different outcomes. I'm really fascinated by the causation of each case study. On one hand you have relentless colonisation, which leads to a ruthless representation of capitalism and industry (with absolutely no remorse). On the other hand you have Pre-Industrial colonisation, that leads to ecological deterioration, and then remorse, which inspires the colonisers to decolonise the area, leading to rehabilitation. When I look at these case studies, remorse is the keystone for me. But I think there's more to it, and more to figure out.

I'm being vague right now, and for good reason. I don't think it's the right time for me to be conclusive. I want this introduction into Zug Island and Fighting Island to be generative. It needs to be that before it can be a new way of looking at decolonisation. This email conversation asks me questions I don't know the answers to. What I do know is that one colonial power took action, and one didn't. The results are evident and applicable because invasion is invasion, in the Pacific, North Pole or Kathmandu. We are on one boat, Gaia. This writing is making me think of a Lisa Reihana quote I often revisit:

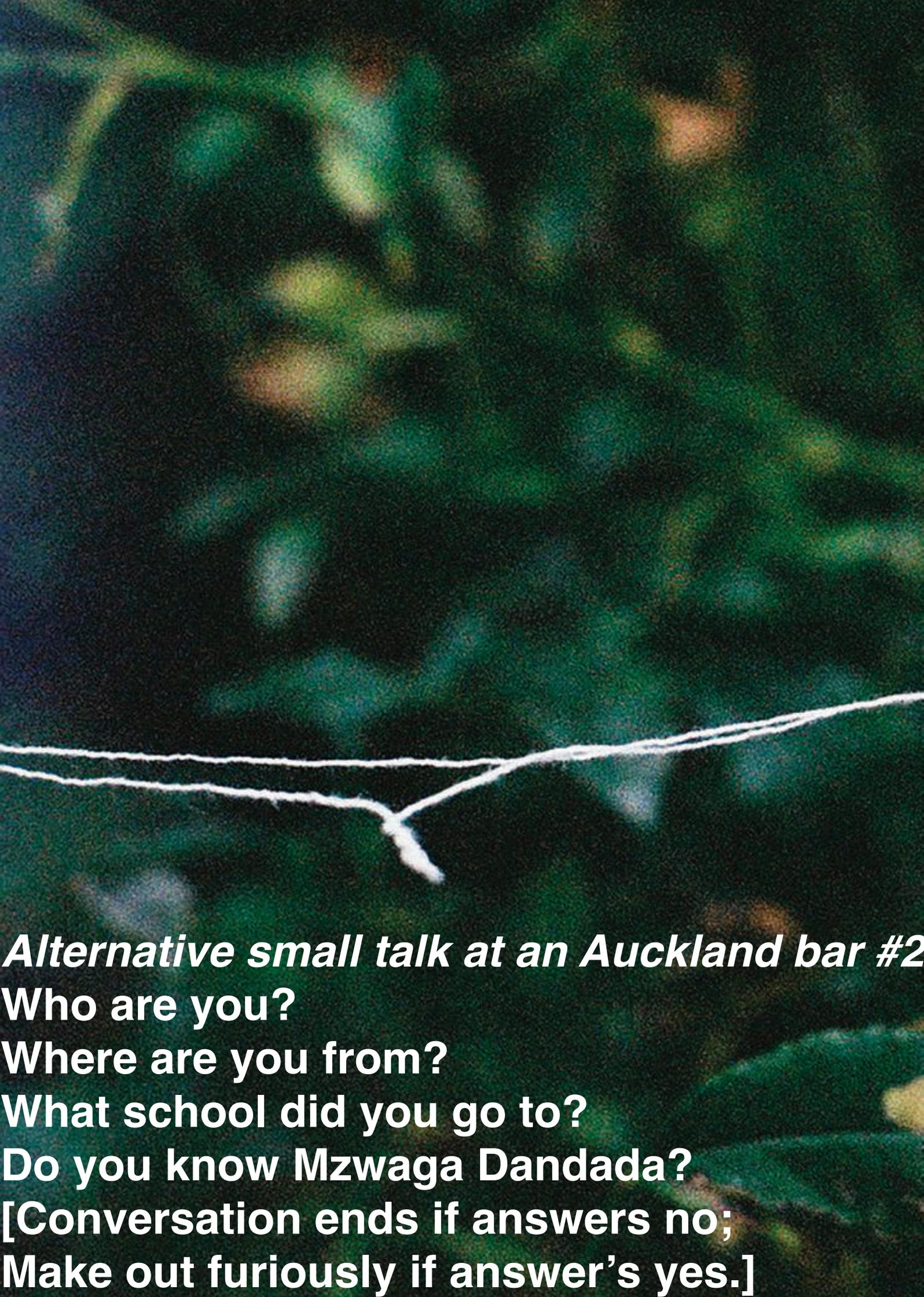
“Look far and wide and tell your own stories”

I need to look far and wide to find answers. Culture and sussing it out is like a drug to me. I'm always looking, always on the hunt for another story. I love stories. Their story is their story, mine is mine etc., but doesn't our common ground make it our story? That makes me ask, will we look at the similarities or the differences? Where does commonality come into this, and where does it end? If it works does it work? What the fuck is going on here?

Lastly, I would like apologise for the vagueness of my introduction. I'm trying to give you, the reader, incentive to think, ask questions, and look far and wide - into this text and further. This evolutionary stage lacks in answers and is abundant in questions, and it's probably the weakest for it. That's good, because the next stage will probably be the best. The real question is, where to from here? I think an effective stage four will need collaborators, and for people to play their role (and to their own strengths). I'm trying to generate critical thinking because, going forward, I'm probably not the best person to drive a new way of looking at decolonisation. I'm not an academic. I don't specialise in the topic. I'm grossly subversive, disruptive and introverted. I'm an artist.

I will probably expand on this thinking by creating art, specifically relating to my Cities series, that present places as case studies for thinking about socio-economic, ecologic, cultural and colonial futures, by looking at a place's history and its current status, so that we can forecast an abstract future. Right now we have Zug Island and Fighting Island, but I envisage a future with multiple artworks, hundreds even, which can be used as case studies, and later tools, that can better prepare us in thinking about the future. Where to from here? That's what I ask myself everyday. Where to from here? Because of that, my artwork inherently asks that too.

I'm proud to be from a nation of hardworking people who fight to preserve the histories, rights and traditions of tangata whenua. I admire those at the forefront of decolonisation action, theory and belief. I salute thee. Me? Let me tell you something Mike Tyson said - he said, “poverty is something that never leaves you.” A lot of the time I still think of myself as a poor Māori kid destined to go nowhere in this world. I failed NCEA. I failed my Certificate in Art and Design Intermediate course at AUT the first time. I went back and passed with a C-. I never got to the bachelors programme after failing to get in twice. Around this time I was about to go to jail. I remember my older brother saying to me “you know it's OK if you go to jail, you can still sort your life out. It's not the end of the world.” I'm writing this to add perspective; sometimes all I can think about is the future. I try to keep it simple. Having a roof over my head, eating some food, being happy as can be, staying out of trouble. After that I make some art. I'm an artist. That's how I process ideas. I make art. It's the greatest thing I have to contribute to this world.



Alternative small talk at an Auckland bar #2

Who are you?

Where are you from?

What school did you go to?

Do you know Mzwaga Dandada?

[Conversation ends if answers no;

Make out furiously if answer's yes.]



On Architecture

I love architecture. I always wanted to be an architect. I dream about architecture. I have so for about 10 years. I see new worlds and comfy homes and hidden doors. They are the best dreams and my greatest creative moments. They inform my 3D work and I'm grateful for that. I fixed my website today and I thought to myself "I can't believe that, after ten years of making art, my paintings are the least interesting thing in my practice." That really shocked me, because before 2016 all I did was paint, and all I wanted to be was a painter. Making sculpture was unnatural. That's how weird this transition felt. It was natural for my sculpture to lean towards architecture. It's got nothing to do with architecture theory or history. It's more to do with architectural modelling. I was always fascinated by architectural models and how they represent structural propositions - they're tiny models that represent the ideas and ambitions of a project that can, quite literally, become a structure with infinite functions. Like Lee Lozano said, "ideas are the most powerful thing in the world." These models represent ideas more than anything else, really. It's an idea, pre-production, nothing's been made yet. It's a proposal for consideration and nothing else, but it's powerful. It's because of people. It's about people. Buildings are nothing without them. Buildings need people to live, eat, shit and die in them. I consider all this when I make sculpture. I think about how the structures relate to each other, and I imagine tiny universities with little people walking about the roads I make, using these buildings for their own purposes. When I make these sculptures I try to think like how an architect would think. I try to consider what I think they would consider; functionality, logic, longevity, aesthetics. Obviously, I don't know what an architect thinks about while developing designs. That's the difference between us. That's where the value is. Despite my obvious gap in training and education, I consider these works to be serious architectural/infrastructural propositions. I can imagine these propositions as fully executed, life sized structures - buildings, parks, cities, towers ... I can see that. I can see people living and working together, having fun, partying, smiling, holding hands. I can't see it happening, that's crazy, but I can imagine it happening. Imagination is so important with these works. It's about imagining alternative realities where existing structures and cities have newer, more exciting functions and design. That's imagination. And I need to think like this to be able to make the art. Why would I reimagine a city if I can't envisage it as reality? What's the point? I like these ideas because they're in response to something I don't always like, which is reality. Rent's ridiculously high, people are homeless, poor people get treated like shit, roads are congested, people are angry and hungry, homes are mouldy, wages are low and prices are high. A block of butter costs \$5.00 now. \$5.00! That used to get you a Big Mac combo, now you can get a block of butter. It's ridiculous. I think about these problems because they are human problems. These propositions are designed to make life better. They might not be good ideas or effective, but they won't hurt you. That's a start considering so many political ideas do.

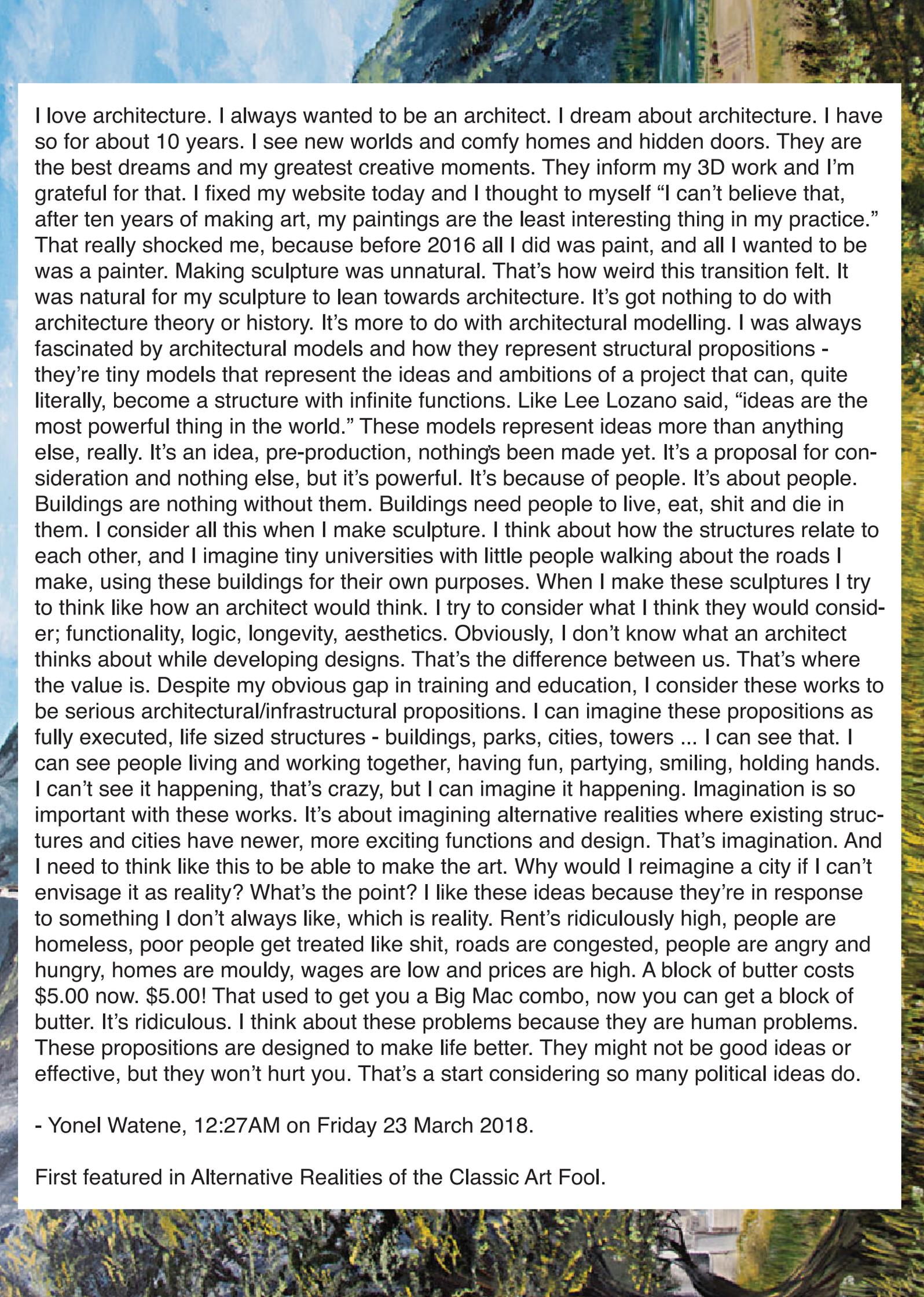
- Yonel Watene, 12:27AM on Friday 23 March 2018.

First featured in *Alternative Realities of the Classic Art Fool*.

ON ARCHITECTURE

EASY READING VERSION





I love architecture. I always wanted to be an architect. I dream about architecture. I have so for about 10 years. I see new worlds and comfy homes and hidden doors. They are the best dreams and my greatest creative moments. They inform my 3D work and I'm grateful for that. I fixed my website today and I thought to myself "I can't believe that, after ten years of making art, my paintings are the least interesting thing in my practice." That really shocked me, because before 2016 all I did was paint, and all I wanted to be was a painter. Making sculpture was unnatural. That's how weird this transition felt. It was natural for my sculpture to lean towards architecture. It's got nothing to do with architecture theory or history. It's more to do with architectural modelling. I was always fascinated by architectural models and how they represent structural propositions - they're tiny models that represent the ideas and ambitions of a project that can, quite literally, become a structure with infinite functions. Like Lee Lozano said, "ideas are the most powerful thing in the world." These models represent ideas more than anything else, really. It's an idea, pre-production, nothing's been made yet. It's a proposal for consideration and nothing else, but it's powerful. It's because of people. It's about people. Buildings are nothing without them. Buildings need people to live, eat, shit and die in them. I consider all this when I make sculpture. I think about how the structures relate to each other, and I imagine tiny universities with little people walking about the roads I make, using these buildings for their own purposes. When I make these sculptures I try to think like how an architect would think. I try to consider what I think they would consider; functionality, logic, longevity, aesthetics. Obviously, I don't know what an architect thinks about while developing designs. That's the difference between us. That's where the value is. Despite my obvious gap in training and education, I consider these works to be serious architectural/infrastructural propositions. I can imagine these propositions as fully executed, life sized structures - buildings, parks, cities, towers ... I can see that. I can see people living and working together, having fun, partying, smiling, holding hands. I can't see it happening, that's crazy, but I can imagine it happening. Imagination is so important with these works. It's about imagining alternative realities where existing structures and cities have newer, more exciting functions and design. That's imagination. And I need to think like this to be able to make the art. Why would I reimagine a city if I can't envisage it as reality? What's the point? I like these ideas because they're in response to something I don't always like, which is reality. Rent's ridiculously high, people are homeless, poor people get treated like shit, roads are congested, people are angry and hungry, homes are mouldy, wages are low and prices are high. A block of butter costs \$5.00 now. \$5.00! That used to get you a Big Mac combo, now you can get a block of butter. It's ridiculous. I think about these problems because they are human problems. These propositions are designed to make life better. They might not be good ideas or effective, but they won't hurt you. That's a start considering so many political ideas do.

- Yonel Watene, 12:27AM on Friday 23 March 2018.

First featured in Alternative Realities of the Classic Art Fool.

The Trump Recession #2

**That's the worst idea
I've ever heard.**

I love it.

**I'll pay you in
a lot of exposure
some crazy hype
and a shout out**

**on Mai,
George,
Base,**

**B,
and The Edge.**

**It'll change your
life!**

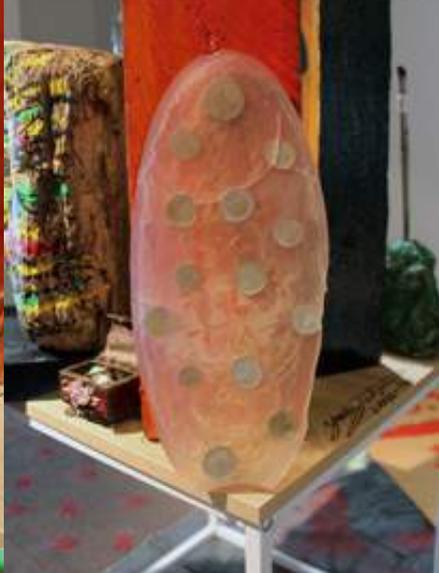
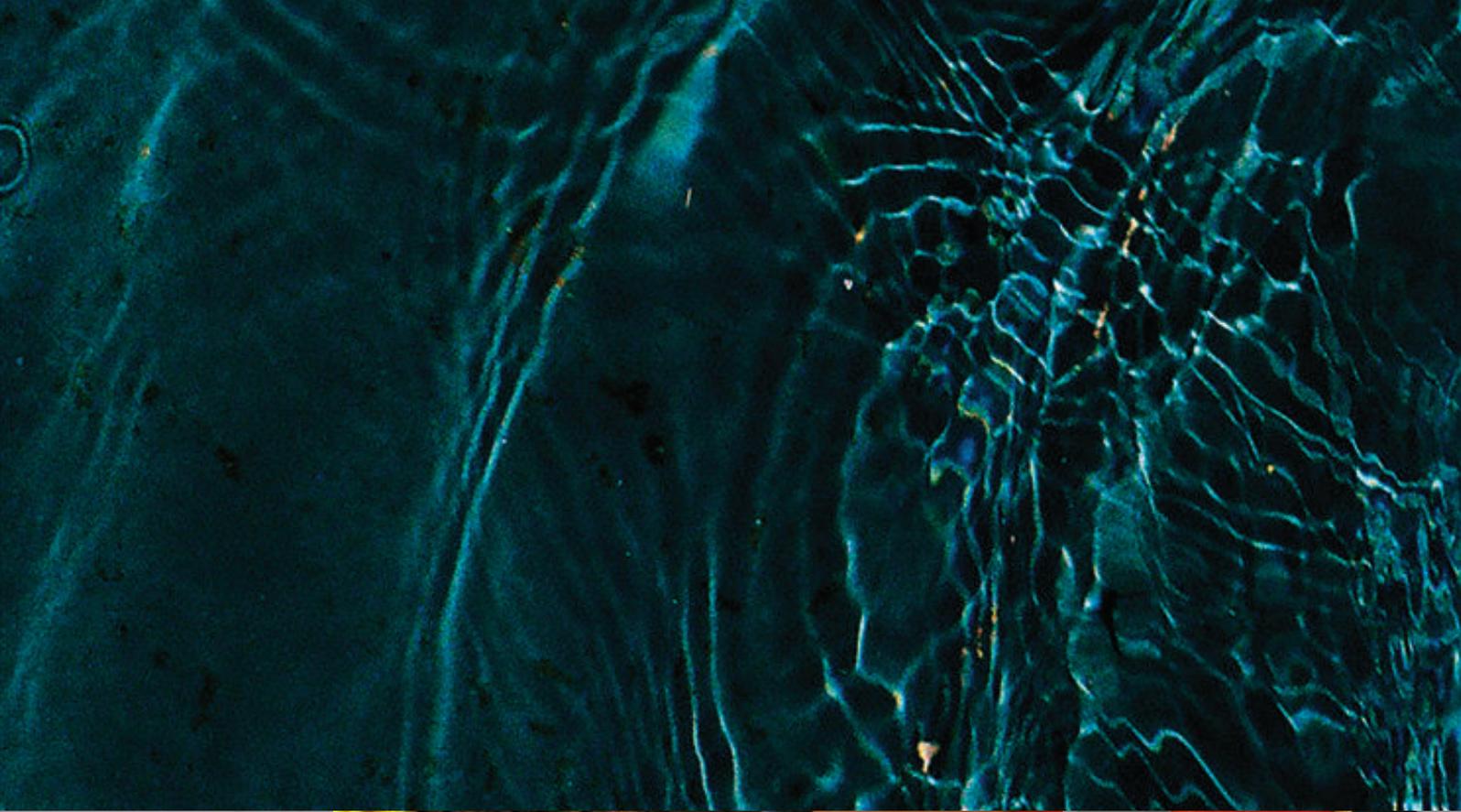
2010
BORDEKS



ZUG ISLAND AND FIGHTING ISLAND

Zug Island and Fighting Island, permanent sculpture, the Detroit series third and final instalment (in order: D is 4 Detroit, 8 Mile and Zug Island and Fighting Island), **Zug Island**: Kmart coffee table, polyurethaned ceramic skull from Oaxaca City, Mexico, unaltered ceramic skull and oil painted ceramic skull from Mexico City, sparkling tape from Los Angeles, USA, painted tin and rusted horse carriage components from Waititi, Otago, bricks from Aramoana and Ravensbourne, Dunedin, light switch from SAVOIE de LACY Gallery, Dunedin, painted tin and palette knife, painted and polyurethaned found wood, cup, altered acrylic paint sculpture and rags; **Fighting Island**: Kmart table, holy land (soil from Jerusalem), Māori carvings by Lee Ralph (enamel and acrylic on found wood), the artists late father's wedding cufflinks (fake gold and acrylic), vintage jewellery box, acrylic trophy from Auckland, painted and polyurethaned lampshade from SAVOIE de LACY Gallery, Dunedin, amputee sock, coins (from Ecuador, Malaysia, Colombia, Mexico and Australia) embedded in epoxy and polyester resin, bricks from Aramoana and Ravensbourne, Dunedin, painted and polyurethaned found wood, rags, brush and paper mache, 2-parts, approximately 50x50x150cm each, 2015-2018.





Zug Island and Fighting Island is a 2-part, 3-dimensional installation by Yonel Watene. It is the third and final instalment of Watene's Detroit installations, the first installment being D is 4 Detroit, and the interim being 8 Mile. The first instalment, D is 4 Detroit, was Watene's first installation artwork (exhibited in Mackie Boy, SAVOIE de LACY, Dunedin, May 2017). D is 4 Detroit was inspired by a National Geographic article where Detroit residents spoke about the city's resurgence. The second installment was titled 8 Mile, named after the same-titled movie featuring Eminem, and was inspired by a scene where Eminem is on a bus, listening to music and writing notes (in the background he passes numerous abandoned shops in Detroit). This scene captivated the artist and has remained engraved in his memory ever since. This scene spoke about the death of industry and an aftermath riddled with crime and poverty. 8 Mile was exhibited in Olga's Lupus Recovery Zone inaugural exhibition, Art Mafutaga, in Hamilton, February 2018 (curated by Leafa Wilson). In-between Detroit and 8 Mile Watene exhibited a similar installation work titled Auckland City, which featured in his solo exhibition rugby ball (Casa Lu, Mexico City, October 2017). Auckland City was an alternative architectural plan for his hometown Auckland, where he recreated iconic buildings to facilitate newer, more humane functions. This artwork addressed Auckland City's common issues around homelessness, the current housing shortage, property inflation, a rising population and road congestion. His Auckland City included a rabbit hotel, a revamped look-out in Stanley Point (a hot-spot for first dates or 'sessions'), The Warehouse "where everyone gets a bargain" (with 'stuff' the artist actually needs), a futuristic gay bar and more. These installations, exhibited in Dunedin, Mexico City, Hamilton and later Morrinsville, between 2017-2018, are the foundation of Watene's architecture-inspired artworks.

Materials used in all his Detroit installations (D is 4 Detroit, 8 Mile and Zug Island and Fighting Island) are sourced from numerous locations that include: Waititi and Ravensbourne, Dunedin, Auckland City and Hamilton, Aotearoa New Zealand; Mexico City and Oaxaca City, Mexico; and Los Angeles, USA. These ready-made materials were sourced during numerous walks throughout Aotearoa or during research trips to the Americas between 2016-2018. For each installment the artist rearranges these materials to create naive urban landscapes. In this instance, two islands are assembled to represent both Zug and Fighting Island. The assemblage process is not dissimilar to a child playing with lego, and the logic is much the same (i.e. you start with one block at the bottom, base or ground-level and build upwards until the 'end', all while considering the structures functionality and its relationship with partnering structures). Despite the artwork's inherent naivety, D is 4 Detroit, 8 Mile and Zug Island and Fighting Island are very serious architectural propositions that envision new worlds and realities. The artworks methodology is highly invested in nonsensical themes pioneered by our Dadaist forebears, mainly one Marcel Duchamp. So in many ways, aesthetically speaking, these works around Detroit are very much in-tune with art historic traditions, but on a conceptual level they speak of sorrow and perseverance.

Detroit was inspired by a National Geographic article the artist read a little over 6-hours after his father's passing (during an emergency trip to the dentist). The article spoke of Detroit's persistent strength and resilience - it spoke about a brighter future for Detroit after socio-economic disaster. It spoke about pain and sorrow, but, most importantly, it spoke about hope. Their passion for whanau and community inspired the artist in his own battles on that fateful day and beyond. Detroit pays homage to these stories, which helped the artist through a difficult moment. Zug and Fighting is an attempt to perfect this gesture, much like a builder or architect may remodel a building to better battle natural disaster. This desire for perfection led to a strange investigation into the Detroit area, where research led to two strange islands with curious histories.

Zug Island (population: 0) and Fighting Island (population: 1) are located on the Detroit River, on either side of the US-Canada border. Zug Island, a highly industrialized and heavily guarded island, is located south of Detroit, Michigan, USA, while Fighting Island is located near the Canadian border in LaSalle, Ontario. Prior to colonisation, Fighting Island was permanently populated by indigenous people, whereas Zug Island was an uninhabited Native American burial ground. In the 19th century both islands were bought by wealthy businessmen who used these islands as industrial dumping grounds, respectively. While Fighting Island remained an industrial dumping ground throughout most of the 20th century, Zug Island was bought by numerous different industrial firms who specialised in steel production (United States Steel has owned Zug Island since 2003). Since Zug Island's industrial transformation the island has been heavily guarded by Homeland Security and is strictly off limits to the public, and is often touted as Detroit's Area 51. Due to Zug Island's strict security and 'no photos' policy, the island has become the centre of many local mysteries,

including rumors that the island is the source of a mysterious 'hum' only heard by Canadian residents in the Windsor area. Apparently this hum can cause stress, depression and insomnia. For some reason some Windsor residents can hear the 'hum', whereas others cannot. Councils in nearby River Rouge and Windsor have spent millions of dollars investigating the source of this mysterious hum. They concluded that the hum was most likely coming from Zug Island, but they can't be certain as investigators weren't allowed on Zug Island due to border disputes between the US and Canada. While Zug Island remained shrouded in secrecy, Fighting Island was purchased by BASF, who rehabilitated the island after decades as a toxic wasteland. In Canada, BASF successfully rebuilt Fighting Island's natural habitation and the island is now used as for education purposes, where high school and tertiary students can learn about ecology and biology.

Zug Island Design: "I purchased a range of ceramic skulls from Oaxaca City and Mexico City during two trips in 2016 and 2017. You find them at local craft markets. I admire their colours. They seem so original and expressive, especially compared to mementoes from other countries - like a dodgers cap or a Venice Beach t-shirt. I've bought both before, and I like my Mexican ceramics more. In Mexico the skull represents Death. Mexican's know Death - they laugh at her, dance with her, drink with her, talk with her. Westerners don't. We associate Death with heavy metal, war, disease and old age - which it is, but it's also associated with more, too - only our culture doesn't have the capacity to comprehend it. Here I associate these skulls with Industrialism, the cornerstone of Capitalism, and the Islands' long history with Industry. The skulls are your classic wolf in sheep's clothing. I see a beautiful, colourful skull, but it's still a skull - and skulls represent death, or a capitalist death in this instance. The trickery makes me want to laugh, or break out in tears. It's ridiculous, just like this island in real life, because at the end of the day the rich get richer and the poor get poorer - that's capitalism. It doesn't care what I think. I planned this island with a capitalist rigidity, kind of like an economic equation: NUMBERS - PROFITS - EXXON - STEEL - STEEL - LEFT - RIGHT - FIRE. All roads are horizontal or vertical, like a grid (similar to Manhattan or Melbourne CBD), meaning you can go one way or the other i.e. you win, or you lose. This is Zug Island where the odds are 50/50, but they're really not."

Fighting Island Design: "I went to Nicaragua's capital, Managua, in 2013. It's a very confusing place. I later learnt that it had survived a massive earthquake in 1972. When they rebuilt the city they did their best. Coming up with a logical plan was beyond that, and I don't blame them. Town planners without the excuse of an earthquake do less e.g. Auckland. Fighting Islands design is similarly confusing and illogical, so as to represent the windy nature of the islands' rehabilitation process (where it went from being a naturally green island (pre-colonization), to a toxic wasteland (around the Industrial Era), and back to a nature reserve once again (and forever more, hopefully)). The complexity of this design references the complexities of nature itself - it's unfathomable to comprehend. The economic structure of Zug Island is more than comprehensible, it's solvable. If it wasn't then billionaires wouldn't be solving it on an almost daily basis. Nature can't be solved, it can only be understood. Fighting Island isn't designed to shock you, it's designed to entice you to learn more. The carvings by Lee Ralph represent that. They represent knowledge and learning. Lee is a one in a million type of guy. Apart from being a legendary skateboarding icon, he's a man who's really in tune with culture and history. He told me before he got kicked out of the States he was living with The Gonz in LA, and he was rich. He had a room decked out with a stereo system and TVs. When he was deported The Gonz left the room like it was for about 2 years, and he used to go into it and ask himself "where is Lee?" I don't know when this happened after his deportation, but sometime after (in the 90s) Lee went and lived in the bush like our ancestors did. I find it hilarious imagining The Gonz asking where Lee is, and then picturing a younger Lee in a bush! The moral of the story is that Lee was out learning something (albeit in a bush). What did he learn in our native bush? That's what the carvings know and we don't. It's that cycle or journey where we live and learn off the land, and repair. I find this narrative fitting because it speaks about Fighting Island's reparational journey, from being a dump to a now fully rehabilitated reserve. It was in a good fight, got rocked, but it wasn't out for the count. That's me, Lee, this island, and the world, really."



8 Mile, temporary sculpture, second instalment from the Detroit series (D is 4 Detroit, 8 Mile and Zug Island and Fighting Island), sparkling tape from Los Angeles, USA, polyurethaned ceramic skull from Oaxaca City, Mexico, oil painted ceramic skull, and oil painted canvas from Mexico City, various bricks from Aramoana and Ravensbourne, Dunedin, painted lamp shade and light switch from SAVOIE de LACY Gallery, Dunedin, rusted horse cart components from Waititi, Otago, acrylic trophy from Auckland, found wooden sign from Hamilton, painted and varnished found wood, amputee sock, paint brush and paper mache, various paint tins, fabric and various cups, 2015-2018.



D is 4 Detroit, the Detroit series first instalment, acrylic, pastel and enamel, found wood and carpet, 2015-2016. Exhibited in Mackie Boy, SAVOIE de LACY, Dunedin, Aotearoa New Zealand, May 2016.

We came from Africa
Go back
to where you
came from,
because
you're from
where I am
from.

And I love
Africa
and I think
you should
visit.

ORIGINS OF CITIES





As a kid I went to Otangarei Primary School in Otangarei, Whangarei, Northland, and Mangakahia Area School just outside Whangarei. I never wanted to admit to my peers, a bunch of snotty nosed brats (like myself), that I aspired to be a City Kid (and whatever comes with being just that). Aspirations weren't the go-to conversation starter for kids back then (or now, you would think). Aspirations of that sort shouldn't be discussed amongst farmers or the hard-nut OT crowd, be they kid, teen or adult, period - it's just weird. But it's true. As a kid I saw an adult me, Yonel Watene, standing alone in some big city, at the centre of some type of Robocop civilization, dodging hovercrafts. Or just eating some weird food, like sushi, on a park bench. I didn't know what these aspirations might bring, or what they were exactly, but it fired me up. It still does. Robocop City. It would fire anyone up. Getting 'there', whatever or wherever 'there' might be, seemed to be the 'key'. I thought it would solve everything, and I needed a solution. My childhood was tough and I knew that, even as a kid. So I dreamt of some type of Robocop City, and the unlikely possibility of visiting one day.

I moved to OT from Sydney as a 6-year old with an Aussie accent and nice clothes. I didn't fit in. If you don't know OT, all I'll say is this; it's one of many poor predominantly Māori neighbourhoods, riddled with crime, poverty and violence. Just one of many. It's hard. They all are. There were no pakeha kids at OT Primary. Just Māori. I didn't meet an asian kid my age until intermediate (I still remember that fateful day, too, when I met Andy Chan). I was different, so I was bullied. I didn't look different, so I thought I might be accepted if I 'did as they do in OT'. So I became hard, like them. I wagged school around age 7. I went into the city and stole some Mighty Ducks socks from Farmers. Afterwards I got caught by my auntie Audrey in Toy World. She told my mom and I was grounded. That's just one story from my time in OT. My mom, who wanted a better future for me and my little brother, GTFO of OT and moved to Kensington, and enrolled me and my little brother into Mangakahia.

We had to get up at 6:30 to bus 45 minutes out to Titoki (it took so long because of all the stops). Coming from the 'city' we were the first and last stop. My older sister went there, and my aunties previously. My nan used to run a halfway house out those ways, in the country, so we had history out there. It wasn't too bad, but it was the country, and I didn't live in the country, I just travelled there everyday and went to school there - it was weird. I remember this kid used to walk around the field/paddock, following the neighbouring tractors. He was obsessed with tractors. I wish I could remember his name. There was no tuck-shop. Instead you had to order your lunch before school, and then a teacher would take your orders across the road to the local dairy. At lunch the dairy lady would bring over your food. You had to go to the front of the school to pick it up. The lunch lady would read out your name and what you ordered, "Yonel, mince pie", and then you'd put your hand up and she would pass it over (what's crazier is that at OT Primary you could order fish and chips for lunch! I can't even believe that now). Mangakahia was primary, intermediate and high school in one, across about 250 pupils. Madness. I look back and cherish those days. I wouldn't say I was fond of them, but I cherish them. They were hard and I knew that, even as a kid. Hard or plain weird. And that's why I wanted out. My aspirations were a form of escapism, evolution and adventure.

Around 99 my parents wanted to move to Auckland. My mom was a major motivating factor in that. She saw how poor our education was, and she wanted a better life for her kids. We moved to the North Shore to be closer to where she was brought up, around Takapuna. I remember skating around Taka before we moved up. I was about 10. I was skating these ledges on Hurstmere Road, trying to nose stall them. I said to her "mom, I like this place, let's move here!" I was buzzing. There was so much to skate! It seemed pretty flash. There was a beach down the road and an internet cafe close by. There was a mall and BK (there wasn't a BK in Whangarei back then). It was paradise. There was so much to see and explore, and that's pretty much what I did throughout my teens.

I started off skating, then I got into bumming around at the bus stop, and then tagging, and then I got into skating again. I become a part of a youth culture who were little loved, or ignored, back home. It was a real community of kids with nothing better to do then skate, tag, bum, play pool - shit like that. That's what we did. And that was what wanted to do with my life. Exactly that and not much else. Obviously it's an over simplified account of what I actually did as a teen, but it's the grunt of it. That's what I wanted to do with my life ... and something to do with art -

in a city
full of people
from different cultures
who have stories
histories
beliefs
and traditions
who go about their business
in their own style
and flair
eating tasty food
and laughing
over coffee
navigating alleys
dodging skyscrapers
and climbing
car park stairs
funny people
coloured people
smelly people
short people
all kinds of people
living in this city
together





ON THE

CITY

OFF

As with any series, I completed a few works before I determined that it would be a thing. I think a series determines its own life. It's beyond me. Its value is determined by; aesthetics, sustainability, the idea/s, weirdness and potential. There's more too, that's just off the top of my head. But that, and how much or how little it has, determines whether it has life. I think with the works in Cities, by the time I got to Zug Island and Fighting Island I was doomed. For better or worse, these works had some mystical energy that just had to be let loose.

Prior to where we're at right now, everything started with D is 4 Detroit in early 2017, Dunedin. Even before I got around to arranging its composition, I was handling its core materials, found wood I stole from behind a bowling alley in Dunedin, and I thought "wow, these would make awesome buildings". When I started playing around with potential compositions, I started to see streets open up, and urban pathways cutting through high rises, and a little Downtown with imaginary people. I really thought of these early compositions as a potential, real-life architectural plan for what a city would or could be. I think if I was tasked with making a city, I would start like this. 100%. With the first instalment of the Detroit series, D is 4 Detroit, the materials were rather minimal. Found wood roughly the same width/depth, but different heights. A bit of paint and polyurethane and that's it. One thing I considered when composing D is 4 Detroit was whether the relativity between buildings was optimal from N, S, E and W, and whether this relationship optimised this cities design or hindered it. So if a decision to move a building east made this relationship better from the north, did it also look better from the south? I was really picky about this part. For me it was a spiritual step that determined the cities spirit, flow, harmony etc. For me that was really important. Secondly, I tried very hard to imagine what Detroit would look like. This work could only ever be a guess, but I wanted it to be a very good guess. Thirdly, I wanted each building to have adamant breathing space. I think for architecture to be admired and understood, it needs to have the space to be fully appreciated.

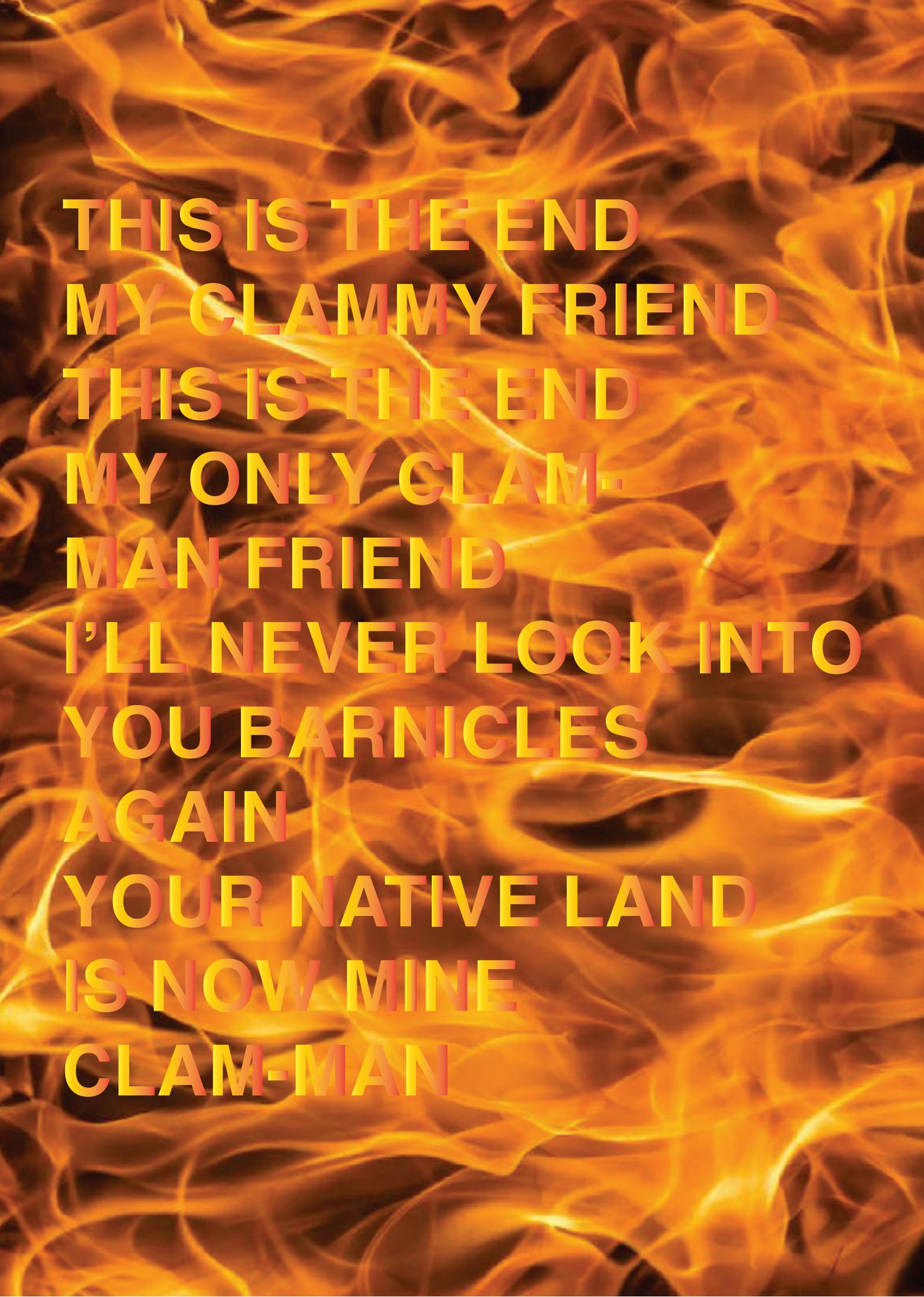
The next work was Auckland City, which I made in Mexico City during my artist residency at Casa Lu (in August 2017 or around then). With this work the methodology was pretty similar. I worked with core materials that appeared to be building-like, which I later painted and varnished. I think the serial evolution occurred with how the new buildings operated. The buildings in Auckland City adopted the biographies of the buildings they were based on. The buildings in D is 4 Detroit were imaginary. I made the Auckland Downtown Warehouse, I think an ANZ bank, Family Bar on K Road, this lookout in Stanley Point, which was a hot spot for steamy dates and a weeknight weed sesh, Auckland Central Library, and places like that. So unlike D is 4 Detroit, which was a guess, Auckland City was an interpretation of the actual city. I really wanted to discuss Auckland's issues around high rent prices, the housing shortage, homelessness, traffic congestion and all the other cliché bullshit we have to deal with (I made this work right around the elections, so I was extra fired up and sensitive). I did this very indirectly by rearranging existing geographical truths that cannot be altered by man, woman or child i.e. I placed a building that was true north in real life, true south in my artwork and so on. Basically I just munted up Auckland's actual geographic layout in an illogical rage, born from a desire for action, results and justice. The buildings and places I made are where they are in real life, forever more, until they cease to exist. I don't adhere to these truths in my version of Auckland. I geographically position them wherever the F I want. By disobeying geographic truths and realities, I wanted to question the potentiality for change. I wanted to take figurative and metaphorical action, because, quite frankly, nobody knows what the F is going on ½ the time, and I often feel like people aint doing shit about it. Seriously.

The third work was 8 Mile, based off of the movie with Eminem, which is the second instalment of the Detroit series (I made this early 2018). This artwork is based on a specific scene in the movie, when Eminem is on a bus, writing notes and brainstorming lyrics for an epic rap battle. In the background he passes boarded-up shops, foreclosed homes, poverty, decay, and the general aftermath of the Post Industrial onslaught. I don't know why I remembered that moment, but for me it just seemed so true. I think 8 Mile was directed to be convincing, and for the most part it is (Eminem being such a good rapper IRL probably helps). For me, that scene was the most convincing part. I thought this scene was a great gateway into revisiting Detroit, but in a way where I can reference someone else's experience. With the actual work, I re-used the buildings from D, and introduced new materials from a range of different sources; tape from LA, ceramic skulls from various Mexican markets, a component from a rusty horse carriage I found while hiking in Waititi, bricks from Aramoana Beach. I hold onto to all this stuff. It really fascinates me. I mean you can literally find bricks on the beach in Dunedin, and swans. It's crazy. I didn't feel insincere about incorporating foreign materials when designing 8 Mile. I think when a colonial city is built, what you have is a collaboration of different people from different cultures, who are not just the traditional colonizers. You get all sorts of people from Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, even Space in popular teen

fiction. They build, and then other people build, and people build on top of that, for decades and decades and decades, until you get a hot-pot rich with culture and history. They bring their beliefs, religion, values, culture, stories, traditions and food, from all corners of the world - in the US. It's almost a joke, but it's true - in the US. I think my introduction of foreign objects represents diversity - in the US. You bring something in from somewhere else and it makes a place more diverse. I think I did this by evolving the material scope of the Detroit series.

Basically I just reused all these materials again with Zug Island and Fighting Island, but I really analysed each component in order to figure out its true nature. My analysis really determined which island it would live on, and the rest is history (or at least decoded in the above text). I think I wanted to talk about these ideas here and now because, like my last e-publication *Alternate Realities for the Classic Art Fool*, I just go straight to Zug Island and Fighting Island and just focus on that. It's kind of painful because I can't talk about Zug Island and Fighting Island without acknowledging what came before, and what it's a part of. I also wanted to take the time to talk about some of the other ideas throughout the series, and my methodologies, which is something I hate doing. I hate talking about how I make art. I don't dislike art writing that describes what an artwork looks like, but I'm not a major fan either. I do dislike art writing that describes an artwork's appearance in a sensual, fancy way (e.g. "the art is exquisite, and mightily majestic!"). An artwork's an artwork, sensualizing it doesn't make it any better. What I really truly think is that anyone can look at an artwork and figure out what it looks like, by themselves. What they see is their truth. You don't need someone to tell you that. What an artwork can't always describe is the author's true purpose. Sometimes writing is needed for that. Even then you don't need me or other writers to tell you that either, because you can look at an artwork and discover your own purpose. But if you do want to know more about the author's story, then look deeper. What I'm trying to say is that you won't see me describing what my artwork looks like, you can figure that out yourself by looking at it (preferably in person). I actually want to encourage you to figure out as much as you can (if you're interested), using the resources available to you, so that you can decide on things yourself. Be you, Reader. Be you.





THIS IS THE END
MY CLAMMY FRIEND
THIS IS THE END
MY ONLY CLAM-
MAN FRIEND
I'LL NEVER LOOK INTO
YOU BARNICLES
AGAIN
YOUR NATIVE LAND
IS NOW MINE
CLAM-MAN

ON ZEBRA MUSSELS



On another lonely night, where I sacrificed my life to the Pathway of Informative Leads, I began my journey by researching a peculiar fishy-creature, *somniosus microcephalus*, also called the Greenland Shark by normal people. I'm writing this on a Saturday morning, and, for the life of me, I can't remember how I got there, but I was transfixed by this funny little shark. Truth is it's huge, around the same size as a Great White. They are the longest living vertebrate species alive today, some believing them to live up to 300-500 years. They are also the slowest fish of its size, having to live in near freezing temperatures and extreme depths. They swim at a speed of 1-2.6 km/h. Because of their extremely slow swimming speeds, scientists find it hard to explain how they catch their prey (lol). As a way to adapt to living at extreme depths, their tissue has developed high levels of TMAO to help with the pressure - it also makes them toxic to eat. If you eat some, this TMAO will affect you in the same way as alcohol. So this fish will get you pissed. Sled dogs have been known to eat *somniosus microcephalus*, which then leads them to take a sickie. Pretty fascinating stuff.

Anyway, I started looking into other big fish and peculiar seas. I was drawn to the Caspian Sea, as it's home to the giant beluga (it's a freshwater fish that's actually/arguably bigger than the Greenland Shark, reaching 7m. It also lives up to 118 years). The beluga is over-fished for its coveted roe, used for caviar. There's also a bunch of other weird animals native to the Caspian Sea, like freshwater porpoise, seals, and ugly little fish that look like something out of *The Simpsons*. Another reason why I was interested in this Sea, was because it's similar to another one I've visited before, called Lake Nicaragua. When explorers first visited Lake Nica, it was so wide, and the swell was so severe, that they actually thought it was the ocean. I visited an island in the centre of this lake, called Ometepe, in 2013. I visited a beach on the eastern side. The waves are so large that they have actually created sandy beaches. You can't see land. You actually feel like you're on a beach, up until a local farmer herds some cows to the beach for a drink of freshwater. It's unreal, just like the Caspian Sea. A peculiar thing to note is the diverse cultures and nations that surround the Caspian Sea, which includes Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Turkmenistan. Northern parts are pretty shallow, and freezes over in the winter. It's the biggest lake in the world, and it comes with the weirdness and magic that usually surrounds such rare titles. After only skimming the top of what is, quite essentially, a very ancient and large narrative, the part that caught my attention happened to be one of its smallest natives. Small, yes, but with a big footprint. I'm talking about the Zebra Mussel, 2 inch bane of the North. It's imprint on its native land was minimal and of little note. On the other hand, its imprint on the lands it conquered, via monotypic colonization, has been absolutely brutal. I found that part rather fascinating. Basically the Zebra Mussel (which I'll call Z) found its way to the Great Lakes in North America. Their mode of transport has been disputed amongst professionals, but the assumption is that they clung to something (which is what they do), and that something made it to the Great Lakes in 1988 (a year before I was born). They're basically unstoppable. If the climate is right they can survive out-of-water for a couple of weeks. Female Z's produce up to 1 million eggs a year. They cling to native mussels and clams, eventually overwhelming and suffocating them, causing death. For this reason, they have caused the near extinction of many species native to the Great Lakes, simply by outcompeting them for food. They've been known to clog-up and damage waterways and pipes. They're bottom feeders, so they filter and ingest manmade pollution and toxins - making them unsuitable to eat. They're believed to be the source of a deadly poison that killed thousands of native birds in the 90's. Basically no predator has been able to effectively eradicate them, so if they do spread it's likely permanent. They're spreading, too, north, south, east and west. They cannot be stopped. I repeat. They. Cannot. Be. Stopped.

It took me a while to realise the Great Lakes are connected by the Detroit River, and that my investigation into the area was affected by this monotypic colonization. I found the parallels between animal and human colonization both grossly comparable, and ridiculous to comprehend. Oh, the Darwinism! Survival of fittest indeed. It doesn't matter if you're a 2 inch mussel or a lightly skinned homosapien, universal rules are rules indeed. Eat first and more, take, take, take, kill you enemies and rule. The correlation between each case is astounding, and

it's interesting that this conquest is occurring both above land and below, on an animal level and a human one. I can't explain it. I'm not a scientist, academic or a specialist in ... any of this, but ... what I can see are similarities in a conscious and subconscious populace, with both rational and irrational drive, in how they conquer and rule. I talk about what happens above in Zug Island and Fighting Island, so it's only appropriate to talk about the war below, too.

My work around Invasion Z is a comprehensive coverage of the unique situational conquest of both man and ana-man, centering in on happenings in the Detroit River. Above we have a human war between races, founded on neo-liberal ideas common with the nations above. Below we have a war between mussels and other mussels, the occasional clam, birds and humans. My conclusion is that the Zebra Mussels are winning. Yes, they are winning, and costing the US government approximately \$500,000,000 a year. The Zebra Mussels pay nothing. Yes, they pay nothing. What they can do is fuck like crazy and have heaps of babies, suffocate your children, parents and grandparents (if you're a mussel), poison your bird friends and clog your pipes so your shit piles up into lovely little bundles underground (if you're a human). Basically it's a complicated war you've found ourselves in, and the Zebra Mussels are winning. Yes, they are. Remember that.



**AN EMAIL
CONVERSATION
WITH LAYNE
WAEFEREA**

**TEXT IS LEFT UNEDITED TO
BETTER REPRESENT AN
ACTUAL EMAIL CONVERSATION**

YONEL WATENE: Kia ora Layne! Thanks for the reply and for agreeing to participate in this email conversation, I'm very excited. I know you've just replied back, so sorry for jumping straight into! Hope I didn't catch you too unaware. So yeah, just a bit about my goal. When I started this text I noticed I was reaching pretty deep into uncharted waters, especially with Zug Island and Fighting Island, their colonial histories, and later with my investigation into the islands underwater inhabitants (the infamous Zebra Mussels), which took me into the animal kingdom. I was just writing away thinking "where is this taking me?" My research findings were very interesting, but at the same time I was like "hold up, I don't know anything about zoology or whatever, colonialism and all this, what's going on?" I'm just an artist and I know about that. So I thought it would be interesting to bring someone else in - someone equally blind, and equally knowledgeable in other areas. To collaborate and to pretty much smash our ideas together. For me I'm really interested in the laws around the parties involved in my research. I don't really think there are any, which seems absurd, but we can get to that later. For now maybe you can tell us a bit about yourself relating to art and law, maybe how you know Charlotte, the understanding you might have about my goals and writing, and any questions you might have for me :)

LAYNE WAEREA: *Kia ora Yonel,*

With my lived experience as a Māori female and former lawyer in Aotearoa – I am conscious of our legal system – everyday. For some areas of law I am aware of the rules of preferred behaviour, and the thresholds and consequences for non-compliance. My art practice is an ongoing conversation that questions some of these rules; interventions or everyday actions in public spaces that test the thresholds (my own included) of what is considered legally appropriate behaviour in public places.

The idea then of an investigation into the legal entity of an invasive animal within a New Zealand context seemed too good to miss – even if, as you hint at, they might have a legal presence similar to an undocumented Honduran migrant. I like playing with the quietly absurd – and this is what appealed about your ideas. Do I know what I have agreed to be part of? Not really. Perhaps a conversation about the legal constraints that affect your practice as an artist? Apart from this, I am hoping to be able to respond to whatever unfolds.

But I do have a question, why the zebra mussel? When I think of mussels I imagine ½ a dozen of them tossed onto the barbecue plate – slowly sizzling then popping opening. Never invasive. Surrendering every time. 'Invasive' as a defining term is arbitrary and partisan don't you think? That with regard the zebra mussel, their territorial and food-hunting aggression – although neo-liberal in appearance – is 'invasive' and therefore unwanted as it jeopardises an altruistic and equitable impression we have of a balanced animal and plant world. What happens when the water becomes toxic and we now need these animal species to clean up the water supplies for public use and consumption. What was once outlawed, or non-lawed, could realise a new legal personality capable of re or new definitions.

YONEL: Thanks for the reply! I got a buzz from you describing your affinity with law and your background. I'm finding it hard to articulate a response but. As an author and artist I'm very lawless. My texts are very grey. I wouldn't say that I'm unclear. Sometimes I'm very clearly grey. I find it hard to paint a black and white picture sometimes, and I'm not afraid to say I'm not sure about it, and that I don't have a stance on the matter. The world isn't very black and white to me. I think when you were describing your whakapapa, I felt a sense of clarity, and that clarity was being introduced into this text. Maybe I missed the mark, I don't know. I'm interested in ideas around what's legally appropriate behaviour or preferred behaviour, because that concept seems so foreign to me. My dad was a crook, and a good one. There was never a day where he behaved preferably. A crime a day, either against our nation's laws or humanity, that was his way of life. I grew up around a lot of drugs and crime. It's crazy because I can't hate these people. I can't hate my dad. Despite all of that, he was a once in a lifetime type of guy - charming, charismatic, artic-

ulate, intelligent. He was truly unique. I can't really describe him, you just had to meet him. Nobody ever met a person like him. He was truly weird and special. I think because of him, when I come across laws, stories or case studies, it isn't black and white for me. For me, I think "it isn't that straight forward, there's more to it." Like him, there was a lot more to him than all the bad he did.

Oh man, I have no idea what I've gotten you into either. I don't think it really matters. I like the idea because it's different to the usual content in art books, and that's important with this text. I think art writings very much about an agenda. There's always an agenda - an argument or point that needs to be made, some type of glorification for an artist, curator or show, or a kind of damnation. It gets very poetic, and that's an agenda in itself - one that centres around the author, and how great they are. I saw all this and I thought to myself, what's my agenda? I saw things I didn't want to do, and things I wanted to do. I wanted to tell honest stories. I wanted my texts to be very real, and human. Not morally sound and perfect, nor good, but human - complex and grey. With a couple of texts under my sleeve, now I'm just another writer with an agenda, and a style. Yonel the Storyteller, pushing his stories with his First-Person Style. I'm being very cynical, but it feels like that sometimes. And I would rather take the piss than take the high road against a class of writers I have nothing against. I'm just over 'Agendas'. I just see this as a conversation. There's things I want to get my head around, and things I want to say, but there's no point to it. If I said there wasn't a point to the rest of the text, I would probably be lying.

Thanks for outlining a few points about Invasion Z. I never thought to think about it (or them) from a non-invasive point of view. To me I saw parallels between them and the colonial invaders who invaded, and conquered, both Zug Island and Fighting Island (above water level). Mainly because they both came from foreign land, and conquered and killed the locals native to the area around the Detroit River. But maybe I'm biased, and maybe I want to see these similarities between the British/US colonisers and the zebra mussels. Maybe that's an agenda? Because right now I see the zebra mussels as symbolic representatives of white colonisers within the animal kingdom, and that there is a parallel war going on between natives and foreigners, above and below. The problem with my logic is that animals aren't human beings, and zebra mussels killing native wildlife isn't a real war. Zebra mussels aren't susceptible to human laws. We can't throw them in jail or fine them. And is the zebra mussel invasion really an invasion, or is it only an invasion because the Americans are calling it that? Maybe it's something very natural. A natural, animal migration that's happened time and time again, for Millenia. Maybe they're just pissy because their pockets are hurting. Who's really paying the most? The native wildlife dying off, or the Americans? Whose winning? I think it's the zebra mussels. And is the fresher water worth it? I just think we're not an eco-friendly race (mostly). It's funny because in all of this, the zebra mussels seem to be very eco-friendly. More so than the Americans? Maybe it's an Eastern Bloc/Middle Eastern thing. And if zebra mussels represent white colonisers in the animal kingdom (from my point of view), what are possums, French? I don't know. Maybe that was mean. Maybe there's no similarities between humans and animals, but I can't quite shake the Darwinism in all of this. That sense of competition. I think we're getting into moral realms and I'm hopeless at that, but I'm finding a lot of these observations to be pretty funny. Not ha ha funny, but just so - interesting.

LAYNE: I've been thinking a lot about your last email – you are very generous with your thoughts – and I think I have replied several times and in different ways in my head, but the written word has been slow to form.

I agree with you that this world is a complex mix of colours – my working knowledge is that the law tries to paint it black and white and it probably is for a particular cultural group i.e white males – but if you don't identify with that particular western demographic (or colour range) then sometimes the world seems out-of-sync, ridiculous even. When I worked as a lawyer, I met a lot of people who were scared of the law – felt intimidated by it and what it actually meant. My

artworks feed off this system of constraint (invasive perhaps?) – referencing rather than endorsing – in order to question any legal ambiguities about why we are expected to do things in certain ways.

lawless: adjective

1. not governed by or obedient to laws; characterized by a lack of civic order.

I am interested to know more about your thinking that as an author and artist you are lawless. What does this actually mean for you? Do you break laws or are you unconcerned about their presence in your world as an artist and writer? I think even the undocumented Honduran migrant on foot and en route to the U.S.-Mexico border – maintains a legal entity or legal personality (can sue, be sued and prosecuted) and is still subject to the laws in whatever environment they move through, domestic or international and whether that environment seeks to exclude (USA – new presidential proclamation denying or limiting asylum) or welcome (Sweden has taken in the most migrants per capita of any European country).

And I have to say I believe all writing has an agenda, a bias or a perspective – even a shopping list. And I think that's ok – it's up to the reader to identify whatever that bias is and to read/learn with this information in mind. But if the writer's intent is to deceive, or to provide false information – how can we know this is happening? I don't have any magical answers – sometimes I learn the long way – perhaps we need to doubt and suspend belief until more information is available?

I like your parallel argument that the zebra mussel is an uninvited colonial invader. While not actually directly killing other species, they are capable of out-eating their competitors and changing the ecosystem to the detriment of the native species. I get it. Is the zebra mussel susceptible to human laws? I believe so. A mollusc may not have a legal entity as such (you're right that an invertebrate can't sue, be sued or be prosecuted by a human or even another invertebrate), but their continued existence relies on and is perhaps determined by certain legislation, e.g.

Conservation Act 1987 To introduce any aquatic life (native or introduced fish, plants or invertebrates) into an area where they don't already occur, you need a permit from the Minister of Conservation, otherwise you could be liable for a fine of \$5,000. The taking and holding of some fish requires a special permit from the Ministry of Primary Industries.

Unwanted Organisms (Biosecurity Act 1993) It is illegal to release, spread, sell or breed unwanted organisms. There is a \$100,000 fine or five years imprisonment for people caught doing so.

So I guess in summary, their physical and legal existence is directly tied to how a human being responds to or recognises the legal rules in place. Rules that prohibit certain behaviours (introducing or releasing aquatic life without permission) and by implication, promote a preferred way of being.

But what if we humans enacted legal rules granting legal rights to aquatic life – pests and all. A treaty of some sort? This has been achieved with the Whanganui River (2017) and Te Urewera (2014) – where legislation has been passed recognising their cultural and spiritual significance. Check this out...

Section 3 of Te Urewera Act 2014:

Te Urewera is ancient and enduring, a fortress of nature, alive with history; its

scenery is abundant with mystery, adventure, and remote beauty.

Te Urewera is a place of spiritual value, with its own mana and maori.

Te Urewera has an identity in and of itself, inspiring people to commit to its care.

And section 11 declares, "Te Urewera is a legal entity, and has all the rights, powers, duties, and liabilities of a legal person."

What do you think?

YONEL: I'm very interested in your ideas around the law being black and white, "and it probably is for a particular cultural group i.e white males - but if you don't identify with that particular western demographic (or colour range) then sometimes the world seems out-of-sync, ridiculous even." On one side I really appreciate and respect our laws, on the other side I can't quite grasp such a simple concept i.e. black and white, right and wrong. There's a lot of laws and benefits to living in Aotearoa, which I'm really proud of - our public schooling system, state housing, our welfare system, our health system, student loans so we can go to university, and basic laws that protect citizens from malicious crimes, and even our road rules. Then again, when I look at them more closely and I see these cracks, some bigger and some smaller, and I see the costs of these cracks in our society (as we all do). The people who really suffer are people I know and love, and it's sad. Once again there's more to it. We have a lot of support and benefits, but on the other hand it feels like it's being ripped apart. When I'm really depressed about this nation's wounds and pains I like to remind myself that we have a foundation with enough momentum for it to be able to repair itself and grow (hopefully), and a lot of that is due to our laws and the structure of our society. I've had a tortured life, so I like to think that things can get better because I've seen it happen before. I don't know if that's the truth, it's just the way that I think. It isn't perfect - our nation, our laws, the way I think. None of it's perfect.

And I don't think I agree with the way "that particular western demographic (or colour range)" may think (if it's in truth very black and white). And it's not a moral conflict that repels me from this type of thinking. I just don't get it. To me it's not that simple. All Maori aren't on the dole. If you're on the dole it doesn't mean that you smoke crack. If there's methamphetamine residue in a house, it doesn't mean that you were the one smoking it, or that it was even used during your tenancy. That's the problem that I have with this type of thinking - it can be very assumptive. It goes the other way, too. Not all white people are middle class and privileged. I know some broken, fucked up white people. But who's making the assumptions? Is it people or our laws? I think it's people. I think laws can be black and white if they can be fair, equal and profitable to a nation. Can people be black and white? I think yes, but is it wise? I don't know. Is being black and white the same as being assumptive? I don't know. But I do think it's a stupid way to see the world. That's just my opinion. Other people might say "why do you see this world as being so fucking complex?" We see what we want to see.

I would say I'm not governed by laws, opposed to saying that I'm not obedient in the face of laws. I wouldn't say that I lack civic order or that I disrespect civic order, because my beef isn't with civic order. I don't have a specific beef per se. What I do have is a specific style, which is subversive. When I say I'm not governed by laws, it's not directed at our nation's laws as such, but at the idea of laws and rules in general. I don't fight for autonomy because I don't appreciate the idea of there being rules, it's just that I don't like the majority I've come across, especially in art. People say you shouldn't do this, or you shouldn't do that, it against the rules. For the most part, it's against what I want to do, so who should I listen to? My gut feeling or them? Another funny thing ... who are these 'people'? Do they even exist? Logic would say that they do, but the truth is I couldn't name even one of them right now. To a certain extent these 'people' are in my

head. It's ridiculous to think that maybe I'm just fighting rules I've come up with in my head. But I fight these rules and trends, or whatever they might be, because by doing so I'm doing what I want to do - and it makes me happy. I like making art because I can do what I want to do, not what someone else wants me to do. That's the basis of my lawlessness. After writing that it doesn't seem so badass now (LOL). For the most part it just sounds weird, but I know we all (artists) deal with this struggle - this struggle with validation, boundaries, trends, rules etc. Its fucked. So I don't worry. I just like making content, physical or written. I'm addicted to that.

I'm glad you wrote this: "And I have to say I believe all writing has an agenda, a bias or a perspective - even a shopping list. And I think that's ok." I respect that and it is OK. I think I'm just pissy about agendas for the moment, and I'll get over it. I think I'm just exhausted. I told Charlotte recently that I can't look at my writing critically at the moment. I can't tell if it's good or bad. And I don't know if I care or not. Maybe I've got to a level where I'm comfortable with my methodologies, and I don't understand that? If I was to say that there was an agenda to this korero, assuming there is an agenda to all writing, I would say that it would be: to create written content without a solid agenda (and with an abstract agenda), despite logic stating it is a flawed methodology. I think that might be close to the mark, because that little voice in my head was telling me "don't pitch this idea, it isn't a good idea," and I knew it was the right idea for this book because of that. I see that little voice as a cue for an opportunity that should be taken. Anyway, I'm glad we're doing this and I'm happy with the korero so thanks! On a final note around this, I do think we will learn the long way once more information is available (in regards to this korero and text), and dwell in disbelief and doubt until then - all because of this 'abstract agenda'. I think anything that is abstract - such as art, writing or ideas - it needs time to become concrete. It doesn't become concrete on its own - it needs contributors, critics and time. There needs to be an opinion. I think when writing, or art, has a solid agenda, it has all that. It has likeminded people who are advocates of that agenda, who also contribute to that agenda. They are of a certain opinion. There usually an opposition who opposes their opinion. There is something to fight for. I think this text doesn't have that (or most of it), and this conversation is helping to figure it out. I think this exercise is helping to make things more concrete, and less abstract. I've come to terms with gap - with these missing pieces. I know that how I feel during this korero represents how I feel now and only now. My feelings will change. They've changed since my first text - when I had lost my dad, and I was very, very sad, and younger and idealistic. I think I'll be more certain, and convinced, when I'm older and the agenda is more concrete, but that will be in hindsight. For now I just need to respect this gap, this abstraction, this uncertainty. Truth is it might never be resolved. I may never be certain of anything discussed here. Who knows? Time. Time will tell.

Thank you for bringing up Unwanted Organisms (Biosecurity Act 1993) and Conservation Act 1987 - because if their "continued existence" relies on or is determined by certain legislation, can't these laws be enforced by white people in order to eradicate wild life who're a threat to native wildlife from their home/colonised land? I'm asking that question from an artist's point of view, because it helps create a potential ending to this artwork. I think for the work I plan on making around zebra mussels, it would be interesting to present the zebra mussel as a coloniser, and westernised laws as a solution to that threat. I see this as an ironic fantasy, because in reality, the zebra mussel would be presenting westernised laws as a tool to justify their actions. It's all very fantastical, but. I think I need to mention that, because I have presented facts and prose, sometimes even biasly for the sake of my own agenda for this artwork, which is to: present new ways of looking at colonisation.

I think the option of a treaty also presents an opportunity to close the curtains on this artwork. Say, for the sake of art, we were to grant the zebra mussels legal rights similar to that of Te Urewera, what then? They have come to foreign lands and killed natives. What do we do? Can we punish in hindsight? What is the goal? You would think: harmonious coexistence, but is that possible with conflicting agendas? Zebra mussels have an obvious agenda? What do the native molluscs want? You would gather that they would want to live life like they always have, for

millions of years. Would that be possible with co-existence?

The final question for this collaboration is: What do we do? Do we do what the Americans are doing and fight them through science? Do we impose/enforce western laws on behalf of the native wildlife, and ultimately seek to eradicate and control them. Or do we enter into a treaty with them, and grant them legal rights? A part of me is interested to see just how far the zebra mussels will go. Imagine revisiting this story in 50 years, just to read about the zebra mussels totally annihilating the Great Lakes.

This seems so ridiculous, but I'm excited about how this artwork could present a range of alternative solutions to their occupation.





HH

**We should move in
together.**

We'll have a lot of fun.

We can start a

business,

and make shit

loads of money.

But I might kill you.

I know Kung Fu.

And I've wanted to

kill someone

for quite some time.







TEXT, DESIGN, ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY YONEL WATENE.

EDITED BY CHARLOTTE HUDDLESTON.

CREATED FOR "TWO OCEANS AT ONCE", A GROUP SHOW CURATED BY CHARLOTTE HUDDLESTON AND CAMERON AH LOO-MATAMUA, OPENING AT WHAT WAS FORMERLY ST PAUL ST GALLERY, AUT, FEBRUARY 14 TO MAY 19 2019.

"I would like to thank Charlotte for inviting me to be in this show, and for supporting my writing practice. Sometimes I feel like abandoning these crazy text projects, but people like Charlotte are very encouraging, so it helps to keep me going. Aucklands my hometown, and I haven't shown here since 2015. So I'm really stoked to be back. I'm also an AUT alumni. I used to walk past SPSG and think, 'showing there would be epic!' I was such a bad student, so being here is massive to me. It shows that in art, without good grades and academic accomplishments, your mahi can still be acknowledged by academia. I don't know if that's the case across the board, but it feels like it is here. There's no good ex-pupil or bad ex-pupil. I'm just an artist who went to AUT. I would also like to say thanks, once again, to Charlotte for editing this text. I just wasn't going to do it. My usual editor, my partner Roberta Francis, is just swamped with work. There's no way I could have done it on my own. And thanks to Rob, too, for editing all my previous texts. She helped create a standard I could never have met on my own."