

Speaking Surfaces

Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla with Ted Chiang; Jen Bowmast; Ruth Castle; Chris Braddock with dialogue group; Formafantasma; Nikau Hindin and Ben Thomason; Mabel Juli; Emily Parr and Arielle Walker; Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina'i with *Speaking Surfaces* project team; Xin Cheng and Monique Jansen; Sione Monu; Julia Mapusua, Sharon Semi-Tugia, and Denise Jillian Saso

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

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 pōrowhiwhiwi 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 pūpūritia 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

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.

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.

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 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-takiwa, 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 tūtohungia e

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.

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 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.

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.

Speaking Surfaces cannot be defined as an exhibition. It is a project generated through a collaborative and experimental design process, involving Gallery staff and

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 ana a Carl Te Hira Mika ka taea te kupu nei te whakatīnana 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 kātotoi ki ngā mata o te marama. Mō te roanga o te marama ka hiki ki runga, ka heke ki raro – ka tae ki te tihī 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.

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.

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 tauira, me ngā kaiwhakaako hoki i whakauru mai i te taupuni Spatial Design Tautoru – nā ō rātou

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://srpauistr.auct.ac.nz/all-exhibitions/assembly>

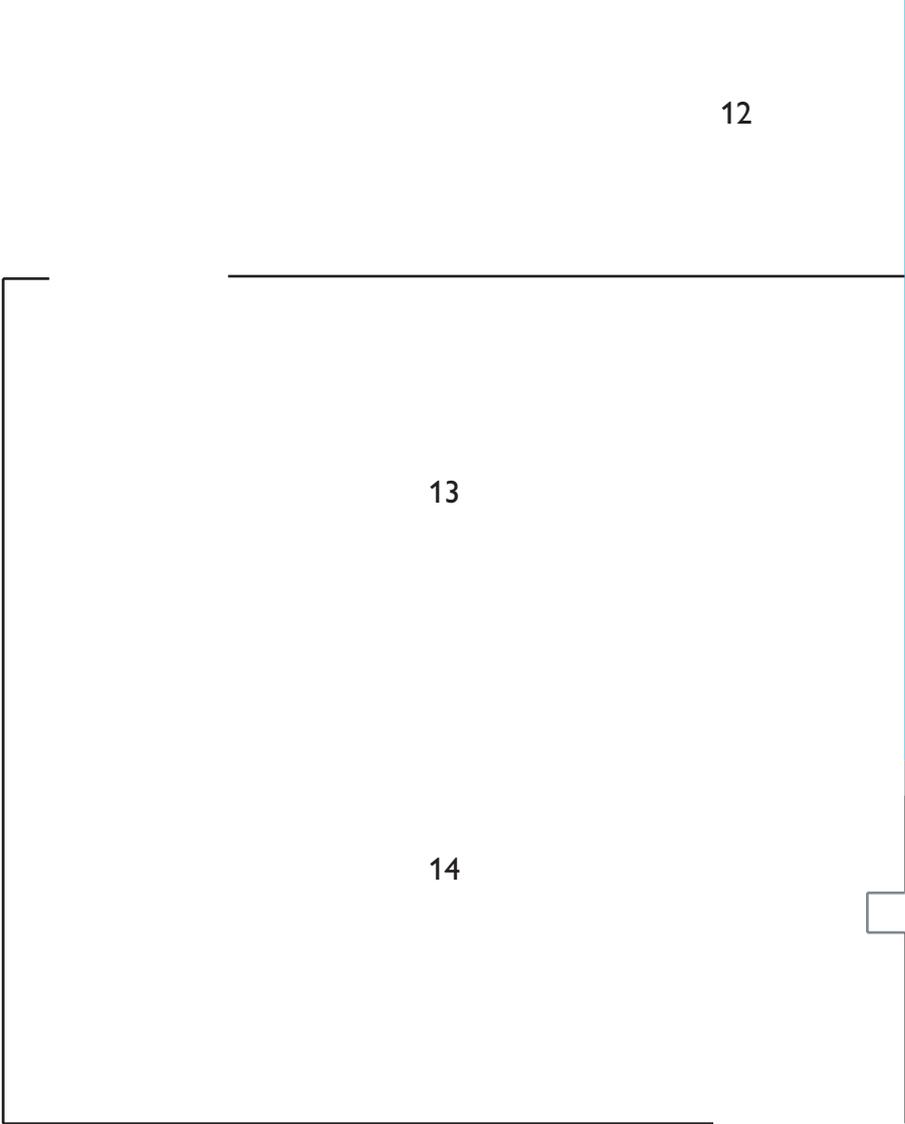
the cohort of 60+ students and staff who participated in the Spatial Design Year 3 Studio, whose collective input fed into imagining varying propositions of *Speaking Surfaces*. We acknowledge the particular influence of design propositions from: Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina'i, Silvia Kostandini, Yana Nafysa 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.

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 *Ngā 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.

— Trans. Poata Alvie McKree

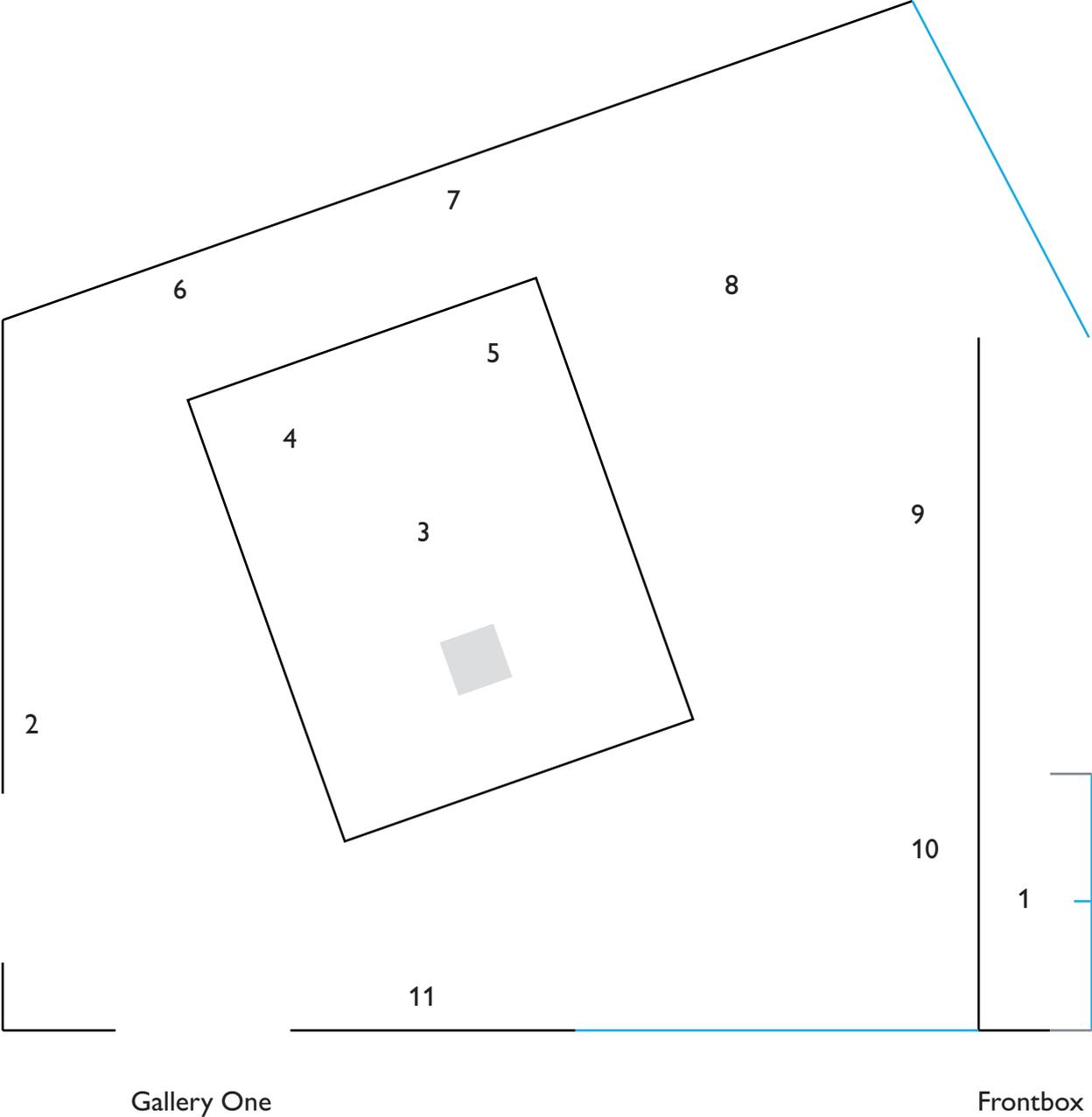
Floorplan

Foyer



Gallery Two

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 (Gija)
Garnkiny Ngarranggarni (Moon Dreaming), 2018, natural ochre and pigment on canvas
Presented with thanks to Tim Melville Gallery and Warmun Art Centre
- 3** Sapati Mossiah Avei Fina'i with *Speaking Surfaces* project team
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- 4** Chris Braddock with dialogue group
Speaking Surfaces Dialogue Project, 2020, every Wednesday 12.10-12.50pm
- 5** Jen Bowmast
Calling the Sentient, 2020, pearls, pins, fire blackened red cedar, rope, wax
- 6** Formatantasma
Quercus, 2020, HD single channel video, 13:06 mins
Courtesy of the artists and Serpentine Galleries, London
This work alternates with Allora and Calzadilla's *The Great Silence*
- 7** Nikau Hindin (Te Rarawa, Ngāpuhi) and Ben Thomason (Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga)
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Psychopomp, 2018, foam, lacquer, resin, steel
- 9** Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla with Ted Chiang
The Great Silence, 2014, HD video, 16:22 mins
Courtesy of the artists and kurimanzutto, Mexico City / New York
This work alternates with Formafantasma's *Quercus*
- 10** Ruth Castle
from left: *Check Pattern* dish, *Naughts & Crosses* dish, *Spiral* dish, *Star Pattern* dish, *Fish Basket* dish, all 2019, dyed Rattancore
Presented with thanks to Masterworks Gallery
- 11** Emily Parr (Ngāi Te Rangi, Pasifika, Pākehā) and Arielle Walker (Taranaki, Ngāruahine, Ngāpuhi, Pākehā), *Whatuora*, 2020, HD video, 12 mins
- 12** Xin Cheng with Monique Jansen
what could this become?, 2020, foraged materials from AUT
- 13** Sione Monu
Matariki fetu'u, 2020
- 14** Julia Mapusua, Sharon Semi-Tugia and Denise Jillian Saso
Banig - Fala, 2020, pine veneer and wool

◀ ST PAUL ST



TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKAU RAU

Speaking Surfaces

Exhibition Guide
version 4, from 8 September 2020

ST PAUL St Gallery
Auckland University of Technology

Visit

Level 1, WM Building
40 St Paul Street, Auckland 1010

Tuesday – Friday, 10am – 5pm
Saturday, 12noon – 4pm

Contact

sgallery@aut.ac.nz
(09) 921 8313

www.stpaulst.aut.ac.nz

Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla with Ted Chiang

Speaking Surfaces

ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT

from 28 February 2020

The Great Silence, 2014

HD video, 16:22 mins

Courtesy of the artists and kurimanzutto, Mexico City / New York

This work alternates with Formafantasma's *Quercus*

The humans use Arecibo to look for extraterrestrial intelligence. Their desire to make a connection is so strong that they've created an ear capable of hearing across the universe.

But I and my fellow parrots are right here. Why aren't they interested in listening to our voices?

We're a non-human species capable of communicating with them. Aren't we exactly what humans are looking for?

'The Great Silence' is another name for the *Fermi Paradox*, the contradiction between scientific estimates of a high probability of extraterrestrial civilizations and the lack of any evidence indicating their existence. In *The Great Silence* Allora and Calzadilla have collaborated with science fiction writer Ted Chiang who writes a "script in the spirit of a fable that ponders the irreducible gaps between living, nonliving, human, animal, technological, and cosmic actors."¹ It is a story that reflects on the human search for communication with non-humans, connecting the transmitting and listening device at the Arecibo Observatory radio telescope in Esperanza, Puerto Rico with the endangered *Amazona vittata* parrot whose only remaining wild population lives in the same area. Narrated by the personified voice of a parrot, *The Great Silence* is a hopeful yet melancholic reflection on the human desire to communicate with extraterrestrials—to seek the unknown—when all the while the parrots who possess their own complex language and proven capability of understanding and expressing concepts remain largely disregarded.

Jen Bowmast

Speaking Surfaces
ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT
from 28 February 2020

Calling the Sentient, 2020
pearls, pins, fire blackened red cedar, rope, wax

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.

During Masters study in art, Jen's practice and enquiry developed counter to the emphasis placed on European philosophy. As a response to the academic focus on knowledge acquisition, she 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 opened up a new way of thinking, doing and being that has developed into a core aspect of her practice.

Working towards an installation her approach is highly responsive to site, prioritising the "ephemeral and 'felt'...over the intellectual and rational."¹ *Calling the Sentient* is Jen's second response to *Speaking Surfaces*—this time developed from afar (she is currently based in Ōtautahi). Materially, *Calling the Sentient* has symbolic references: Red Cedar is associated with protection against disease, healing, purification and for spiritual protection; pearls are often in the realm of the feminine, at times representing wisdom gained through experience. *Calling the Sentient* not only responds to the changes in *Speaking Surfaces* as a project, it is also part of the artist's wider metaphysical enquiry conducted through her making practice. She writes:

"*Calling the Sentient* is the result of my continued exploration into the traditions of divination as I investigate the synergy between artistic and spiritual practice. The work's sculptural language helps me describe the intangible energies I encounter through my research that expand 'ways of knowing' and add to my collection of materials; physical, ethereal, seen, and unseen. *Calling the Sentient* offers an object for divination and contemplation."²

Psychopomp (from the Greek psychopompós meaning 'guide of the souls') remains in *Speaking Surfaces* as a silent, reflective presence that, as Cassandra Barnett has written, is "an anchor, a kuia, a source of endless potency for the forms downwind of it."

¹ Wendy Richdale, Future Makers, RAMM Gallery, Wintec School of Media Arts, 2019 <https://www.rammgallery.co.nz/assets/Uploads/WNTC075-RAMP-Gallery-Sacred-Sites-Catalogue-DIGITAL.pdf>

² Email correspondence with Jen Bowmast.

³ Cassandra Barnett, Taniiwha in the Room: A Response to *Speaking Surfaces*, Part Two, 2020. <https://www.pantograph-punch.com/posts/taniiwha-in-the-room-two>

Ruth Castle

Speaking Surfaces

ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT

from 28 February 2020

Check Pattern dish, *Naughts & Crosses* dish, *Spiral* dish,
Star Pattern dish, *Fish Basket* dish, all 2019, dyed Rattancore.
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.

Formafantasma

Speaking Surfaces

ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT

from 28 February 2020

Quercus, 2020

HD video, 13:06 mins

Courtesy of the artists and Serpentine Galleries, London

This work alternates with Allora and Calzadilla's *The Great Silence*

Wood is not a decorative element of human civilisation — it doesn't matter much about the latitude, the historical era, the degree of complexity. It is the womb of every form of transformation of the world. It is the limit that defines the forms of our being in the world. And vice versa, human existence is always also one of the life forms of wood.

– Emanuel Coccia

Formafantasma's film *Quercus* is both a map and a portrait. Its imagery is taken from a Lidar scan of an oak forest in Virginia, USA, moving between a cartographic view of the area and an anatomical detailing of its biomass. The term Lidar is originally believed to be a portmanteau of the words 'light' and 'radar' and describes the laser technologies used to create 3-D representations of selected targets, and most recently adopted by the timber industry. The film sits in the larger context of the project, *Cambio*, commissioned for the Serpentine Galleries, London, which seeks to investigate the relationship between wood and humanity through its applications within design, architecture, civilisation, and world building.

The film soundtrack is a text from philosopher and botanist, Emanuele Coccia, personifying the voice of an imagined forest in an address to humankind. Coccia's text highlights the intensely alive and intelligent life force of trees and vegetal matter—what might be termed *mauri* in Aotearoa New Zealand—and also our connectedness to it as not only material, but as evolutionary partners. This perspectival shift responds to global histories underpinned by the dangerous mechanisms of settler-colonialism and capitalism, asking as we do, *how might surfaces speak with, to, and through people?* How might we act in fuller communion with our partners on earth?

More information on the film *Quercus* and its larger project *Cambio* can be found on <http://cambio.website>

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-Tuati 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 (Gija)

Speaking Surfaces

ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT

from 28 February 2020

Garnkiny Ngarranggarni (Moon Dreaming), 2018

natural ochre and pigment on canvas. Presented with thanks to Tim Melville Gallery and Warmun Art Centre

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 – Warrkan – Barnderi: Changing Climate in Gija Country* (Warmun Art Centre, 2015), 13.
³ Mabel Juli, 'Nginjiny Berdiji Laarre. The one who stands on top', *Garnkiny: Constellations of Meaning* (Warmun Art Centre, 2014), 47.

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

Speaking Surfaces
ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT
from 28 February 2020

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.129393>.

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

² See: Carl Te Hira Mika, *The Thing's Revelation: Some Thoughts on Māori Philosophical Research*, Waikato University Research Commons: <https://hdl.handle.net/10289/12340>

Sione Monu

Speaking Surfaces

ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT

from 28 February 2020

Matariki Fetu'u, 2020

plastic florals, foam board, glitter paper, beads

Sione Monu's *Matariki Fetu'u* can be thought of as a star map—it is a sculptural representation of the Matariki open star cluster, also known as the Pleiades or Seven Sisters. The cluster appears annually in the early morning of our mid-winter months, and for Māori signals the beginning of a new year within the Maramataka. Observations of the stars and the moon within this framing of time are traditionally used as *tohu*, or signs, to forecast the future inclinations of a harvest period or weather season and how one may respond to these conditions.¹ These practices of linking celestial bodies (often viewed as divine) to the practical communion of humans with non-human life are common throughout the greater Moana-nui-a-Kiwa region.

In the context of Monu's wider artistic practice, *Matariki Fetu'u* follows the artist's experimentation with *nimamea'a tuikakala*, or the Tongan fine art of floral designing.² In the 2017 project *Kahoa Kakala*, with Fresh Gallery Ōtara and Objectspace, Monu fashioned *kahoa* (necklaces) for close family and friends through using materials from each participant's home environment. The floral adornments Monu creates are materialised portraits of the sitter's relationship not just to the artist, but also to their domestic space—they are maps as well as *kahoa*. In this sense the works commissioned for *Speaking Surfaces* are tracings of the stars and of the shifting environments of the diaspora, while also mapping the ecological concerns of our increasingly plastic-filled world.

¹ <https://www.tepapa.govt.nz/discover/collections/read-watch-play/maori/matariki-maori-new-year/what-matariki>

² <https://www.op.ac.nz/assets/Uploads/5e58466022/007-023-Maehina-Tuai-Maehina-11-12.pdf>

Julia Mapusua, Sharon Semi-Tugia and Denise Jilian Saso

Speaking Surfaces
ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT
from 28 February 2020

Banig - Fala, 2020
pine veneer and wool

Our project asks how conversations can activate spaces for a community. As designers, we are accustomed to making spaces for people. But what if the people make the space for themselves instead? The outcome was a gathering space that urges conversations between people and the surrounding works. We created an interactive project to weave a banig/fala (mat) together, offering people an engaging experience in the gallery.

There are various cultural customs of gathering that come with the banig/fala, such as sitting, eating, sleeping, sharing, standing, ceremonial gatherings, and the list goes on. As Benita Kumar writes, “there is no empty, separate or closed space. Rather, a space of woven connections – a duality of substance and respect”.¹ We carry this by creating our own mat that considers these key customs and fundamentals applied in a gallery space.

We ask you to follow the custom of taking off your shoes before approaching the banig/fala as a sign of respect within our Samoan and Filipino cultures. When entering the space you are showing respect to the hosts, artists, creators and designers of the *Speaking Surfaces* exhibition. Through St Paul St Gallery, we present a banig/fala which will allow conversations, as well as inviting new acts of gesture for others to experience, and deeper engagement with the artworks.

The banig/fala is woven with pine veneer strips using plain weave technique. The warp and weft are interlaced in a basic criss-cross pattern, over - under - over - under resulting in a checker board style and bounded at the edges using the Pacific art form of lalava (lashing) used for binding materials together. The banig/fala combines both the Pacific art forms of lalaga (weaving) and lalava. Using yellow and red wool-thread to lash and create lalava patterns “advocate[s] balance in daily living” and expresses “a Polynesian heritage . . . that speak[s] to the entire community.”²

Banig - Fala is part of *Speaking Surfaces* at ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT in 2020. At its core, our project aims to bind people together through the medium of mat weaving.

¹ Benita Sharon Simati Kumar, 'The Potential of Va An investigation of how 'le Toga activate the spatial relationships of the Va, for a Samoan Diaspora community', Masters of Art and Design Thesis AUT, 2011 (np)
² Filipe Tohi, <http://lalava.com/> Accessed 17 August 2020

Xin Cheng and Monique Jansen

Speaking Surfaces

ST PAUL St Gallery, AUT

from 28 February 2020

what could this become?, 2020

Thinking about resourcefulness and recovering, Xin Cheng and Monique Jansen's *what could this become?* takes place in Gallery One and the foyer. Using foraged 'waste' from around AUT to improvise making with paper, vinyl, and fabric offcuts, empty containers, charcoal and other materials, in the process building up an ad-hoc collection of objects within *Speaking Surfaces*.

The collection of materials from around the City Campus not only charts waste types across departments, it also enables informal connections within the campus community.

Dried clay, plaster and wax from Harriet, Wet lab, WM Block Level 3

Timber offcuts from Harold and technician team, scrap bin in 3D Lab, WM Block Level 3

Charcoal made in Monique's biochar kiln, from timber offcuts, 3D Lab, WM Block Level 3

Toner from dismantled laser printer toner cartridges, gathered from printers throughout WM & WE Blocks

Fabric offcuts from student fabric waste bins, Fashion Design, WM Block Level 6 foyer

Carded wool left overs from Peter in the felting workshop, Textile Design Lab, Mount St

Cardboard from university paper recycling collection in carpark between Ngā Wai o Horotiu Marae and WB Block.

Tins and jars from Janine, Refuel café and uni catering

Milk bottles and coffee grounds from Yoyo, Newsfeed café, WG Block

Paper offcuts from Cornelius testing the large format inkjet printer every morning, Photography Lab WE Block Level 7

Cardboard rolls from large format inkjet printer paper, from Cornelius, Photography Lab, WE Block Level 7

Paper offcuts collected by Struan, Greg and Fleur, from Printmaking and Bindery Lab student projects in the Print Lab and Bindery, WE Block Level 7

Vinyl offcuts collected by Struan and Greg, from Printmaking and Bindery Lab student projects in the Print Lab and Bindery, WE Block Level 7

Instant coffee that keeps getting delivered despite no one drinking it, from Visual Arts staff office, WM Block Level 4

*With thanks to Lyndsey Du Prez, Sustainability Manager, AUT