

the spACE betWEen us

NOV 15 - Dec 1 2019



AHSIN AHSIN | CORA-ALLEN WICKLIFFE & KELLY LAFAIKI |
GINA ROPIHA | ISRAEL RANDELL | MEREANI
QALOVAKAWASA | NAAWIE TUTUGORO |
RANGITUHIA HOLLIS | TALIA SMITH

‘the spACE betWEen us’

Australia and Aotearoa NZ houses many nations impacting the original landowners, ‘the spACE betWEen us’ is not an unoccupied space it is the space that adheres us together.

Reflecting on the words of the artists, we found distance and space at the heart of most explorations. Talia Smith’s is ‘physical and emotional’ while Gina Ropiha addresses the ‘presence, transience and place as Pacific people.’ Blood Mothers reclaim sovereignty to keep connected to the land, in this case as guests on someone else’s land. Māori artist Rangituhia reflects “Nō tawhiti māua” (we are both outsiders) an astute observation. As now all the artists are transnational bodies - some living, ‘others’ visiting Australia, with Blak Dot welcoming us all onto the unseeded lands of the Kulin Nation. The show offers unique contemporary Pacific art and includes hiapo (Niuean tapa cloth), billboard sized murals, digital painting, sculpture, photography and videography.

Co-curated by Rosanna Raymond and Kimba Thompson

Tautai Contemporary Pacific Arts Trust

This is the first time Tautai Contemporary Pacific Arts Trust in Auckland has collaborated with a gallery in Australia for a shared exhibition. Blak Dot Gallery and Tautai are working together to achieve their shared aims of illuminating the innovative work of Oceanic artists from Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia in the spirit of supporting Pacific arts practice and to reach new international audiences.

“The Tautai x Blak Dot collaboration marks a historical moment for Oceanic arts, we find ourselves in a moment of true alofa, powered by innovation and generosity. This exhibition offers niu opportunities to see ourselves and our people, to vision the way forward as we honour the past to create a transformative future. The curators and artists have alchemised a very special offering, the space is adorned with perfumed truths, and I am grateful for the passion and hard work of all involved.” - Courtney Sina Meredith, Director of Tautai

“Congratulations to the curators and artists on what I believe to be a beautiful and informative exhibition. This is a fabulous opportunity for the artists, and the wider Polynesian community for talanoa from both sides of the ‘awa’.” - Lonnie Hutchinson, Chair of Tautai

This innovative project welcomes Indigenous creatives, aiga/family and friends to share time, space and knowledge together through creative presentations and performances by contemporary Oceanic artists, writers, thinkers, performers and creative entrepreneurs.

Blak Dot Gallery acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we work, live and create: the Wurundjeri people and Elders past and present of the Kulin nations.



AHSIN AHSIN

Cook Islands

Influenced by 1980s-90s sci-fi films and street art, Cook Island artist Ahsin Ahsin communicates the notions of neo-pop and pop culture in his mural sized designs. His imagination distils into fantastic creatures and sigils, graffiti mark-making and gestures, suspended in hyperspace. He has exhibited extensively throughout New Zealand more recently showcased new work at the Tauranga Art Gallery with his exhibition 'Neon Utopia' as part of the international show 'Mega World'.



COMMUNITY (2019)

These digital works pay homage to my homies that have lifted me, inspired me, pushed me and challenged me. Helping me to become who I am today. This will be an ongoing series based on my friends in my community of creative characters. They are bold, colourful and larger than life, super heroes of the art world.

For this exhibition, I wanted to create new works experimenting with a different medium, I chose digital because it seems today we are all connected through technology in some way. I have been playing a lot more with digital techniques this year, already one of my tools as a painter, it's just an extension of my practice. I feel like if you're not using technology in some way in the arts, you might get left behind. But don't get me wrong I will always choose a paint brush over a computer mouse any day to draw with.



COMMUNITY

CORA-ALLAN WICKLIFFE & KELLY LAFAIKI

Niue, Aotearoa



OUR LAST SUPPER WITH YOU



Cora-Allan Wickliffe is a multidisciplinary artist of Māori and Niue descent. Exhibiting in Australia, New Zealand, England and Niue her Hiapo work is a revival of a sleeping art form that was almost lost. She is the Curator and Exhibitions Manager at the Corban Estate Arts Centre and a founding member of BC COLLECTIVE with partner Daniel Twiss. Wickliffe also shares a history in teaching, her sister Kelly Lafaiki is a student and has helped to collaborate on Wickliffe's Blak Dot exhibition piece.

OUR LAST SUPPER WITH YOU (2019)

Exploring themes of ceremony and memory we are re-tracing using silhouetted objects filled with the language of Hiapo to share stories of Niue that were passed down at the food table from our grandparents.

Stories of Niue, dances, food and songs were shared throughout our childhood in comfortable and often uncomfortable moments of learning dances and how to cook traditional dishes. Our grandparents guided us with stern voices when we were young, however grew softer as we all aged and then meals became the environment of admiration and learning. Over meals and over beers we both learnt more and more that would tie us to becoming Hiapo makers and this current work explores the moments of mourning we have experienced with the passing of our Grandfather Vakaafi Lafaiki in April this year.



GINA ROPIHA

Aotearoa/Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Raukawa

Born in Aotearoa and now residing in Melbourne, Gina Ropiha addresses the harsh realities of living as an Indigenous woman in colonised lands. Her artwork uses found and repurposed objects, through which she urges the importance to maintain a sense of Maoritanga and grace across our colonised lands. Ropiha was an Artist in Residence at the Australian Tapestry Workshop 2017, is an active member of Motu Taim and has been a teacher and tutor in Arts education for 19 years.

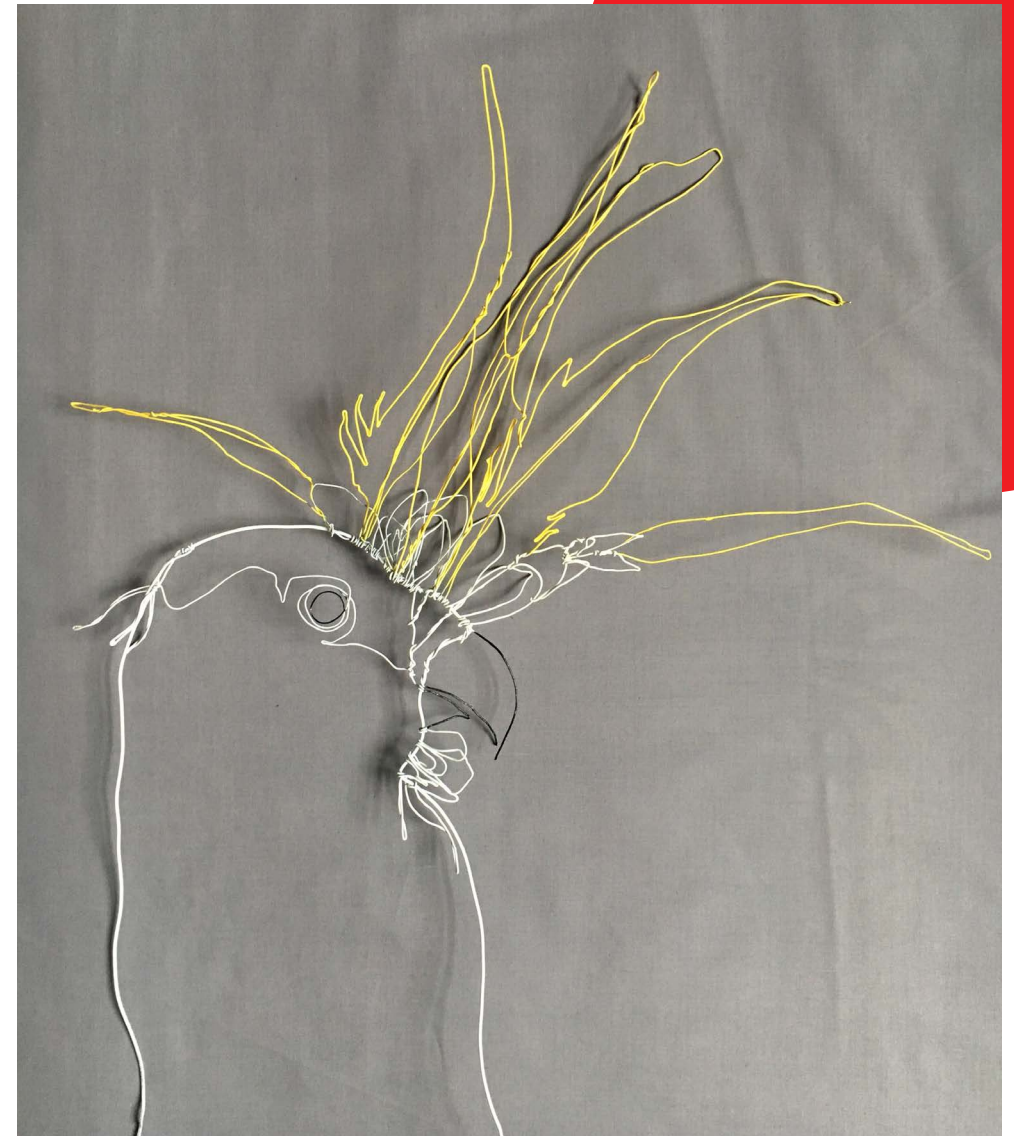
TIPI HAERE (2019)

Wire, paint, castors, found objects.

Tipi haere can mean to roam about or to call in at places. Growing up, the phrase was used to describe a relaxed meandering and the generally laid back attitude that accompanied that journey, as well as a tendency to wander off or disappear — especially to do your own thing.

Tipi haere asks to what degree an individual could be affected or altered by how the place in which they reside perceives and interacts with them. It also considers how shifts in physical location, culture and context might change an individual or group emotionally, intellectually, physically and spiritually.

Trans Tasman and trans Pacific relationships and a 'migratory' or diasporic existence are a challenging, enlightening, disconcerting and open ended reality for many. The opportunity to move physically between locations, realms and systems can offer, be the catalyst for, promote and engender change and a constant reassessing, questioning and fluidity of self. Conversely it could also mean a crystallizing or freezing of personal narrative, identity and possibility. There are as many potentialities as there are individuals living this way of life.



TIPI HAERE

The idea of 'The space between us' is generous and poetic, as the thought of addressing a living presence between Oceanic peoples rather than an absence, lack or distance is fitting.

Seeing space as waiting to be embraced, alive with possibility and the resonances of our ancestors is a welcome relief as it acknowledges the lived experience, connections, thinking, ways of being and conversations that exist across deep time and space of voyagers ancient and contemporary.



ISRAEL RANDELL

Aotearoa, Cook Islands

Israel Randell is a multidisciplinary artist who explores the notions of innovation as tradition through installations, performances and spatial activations that are informed by her dual heritage (Tainui, Ngati Kahungunu, Rarotonga). Her work is underpinned by cosmological theories of space and the parallels found in her Pasifika and Māori culture. Born in the Waikato region, Israel attended Hungry Creek Art School in Auckland, before moving to the Bay of Plenty with her young family where she is currently completing a Bachelor of Creative Industries at Toi Ohomai.



WAHI NGARO

‘... Te Korekore (the void) is the realm between non-being and being: that is, the realm of potential being... here the seed-stuff of the universe and all created things gestate. It is the womb from which all things proceed. ...’

- Maori Marsden



WAHI NGARO (2019)

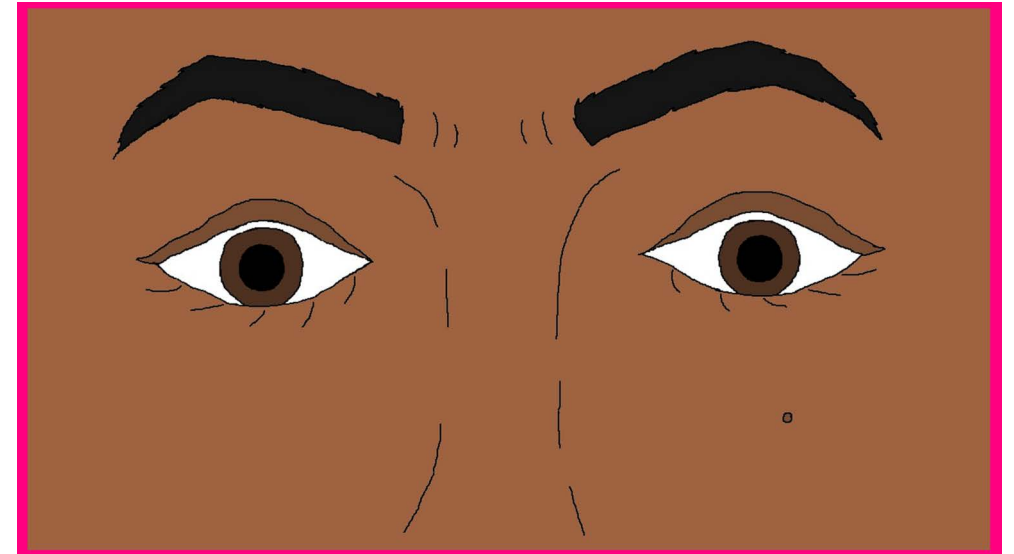
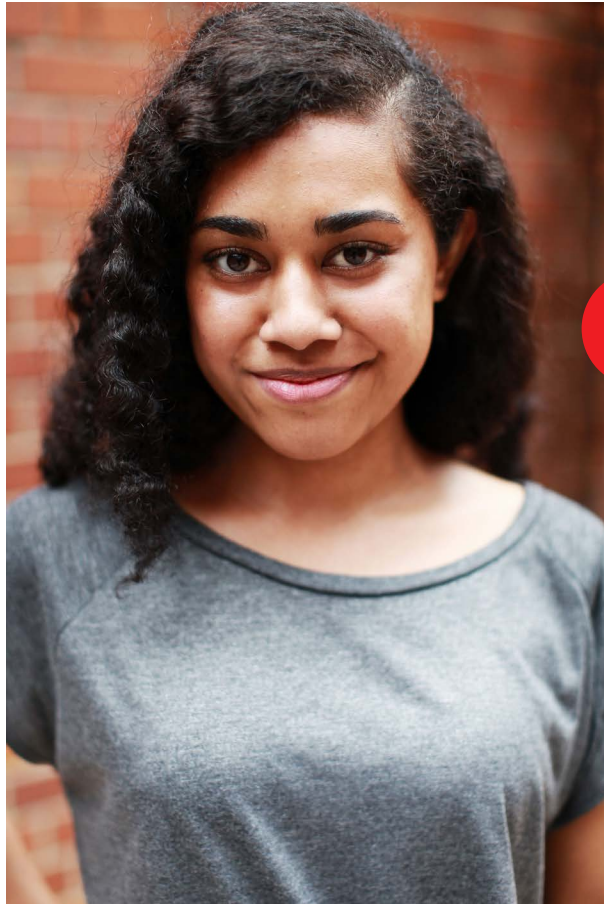
Wahi Ngaro refers to the ‘hidden realm’, home to gods and spirits it exists on a plane unseen. This installation examines the idea of in-between spaces. These metaphorical voids are where the potential for new ideas, new seeds and new life can form.



MEREANI QALOVAKAWASA

Fiji

Brisbane born Fijian artist Mereani Qalovakawasa is a multidisciplinary artist, some of her creative practices include video production, dance, and weaving. Her inspiration is drawn from her experiences of living with the autoimmune disease, lupus. With her videos, she aims to shed light on living with a chronic illness and to reduce the fear and shame of being sick, particularly in Pasifika communities, by sharing everyday moments with lupus. In 2018, Mereani participated in her first exhibition with New Wayfinders called 'Ocean Stories From Home' and shared paintings on the theme of family.



SICK OF IT

SICK OF IT (2019)

Dear Mereani,

Your application for disability support has been rejected.

We are not health professionals but have decided anyway that you do not meet the specific disability requirements.

If you would like to discuss this decision, don't contact us. We actually don't care.





MY GOD HAS AN AFRO

NAAWIE TUTUGORO

Kanaky/Aotearoa



Born to a Kanak father and Anglo-Argentinian/European mother, T maki Makaurau born artist Naawie Tutugoro presents a practice comprising of site-specific sculptural drawings that illuminate moments from her childhood and works with found materials to emphasise contextual negotiations of place and space. The discernment of sub-humanising & de-humanising melanin blessed bodies is alluded to with 'looney tunes' features referencing the white gloves used to humanise the animal characters we know and love. Tutugoro has exhibited in shows such as 'Dirt Future' at Artspace Aotearoa and 'OFFSTAGE 8'.

MY GOD HAS AN AFRO (2019)

I am painting again as a way of asserting identity. Dismantling the Euro-American settings of painting where brown and black and indigenous are marginal and languishing.

Brown people maneuvering postmodernism is radical and necessary. When you see someone that looks like You, it is quite monumental. I know for me it is. To be compelled and validate my visions, experience and existence because I'm tired of worrying if people are comfortable, especially as we look to the past. European comfortability has always been so centered so this work isn't for them – and if it is, I want them to feel uncomfortable.

The discernment of sub-humanising & de-humanising melanin blessed bodies is alluded to with 'looney tunes' features referencing the white gloves used to humanise the animal characters we know and love, moreover the literacy of a painting and the gloves denotes uncomfortable realities of colonisation, fetishisation and so on, which continue to perpetuate racial essentialism. Drawing from certain realities of our ancestral experience, coping mechanisms and bitter sweet instances permeate the benevolent vibrant nostalgia of the works.

Stop making Dark unreal. Dark is real.



RANGITUHIA HOLLIS

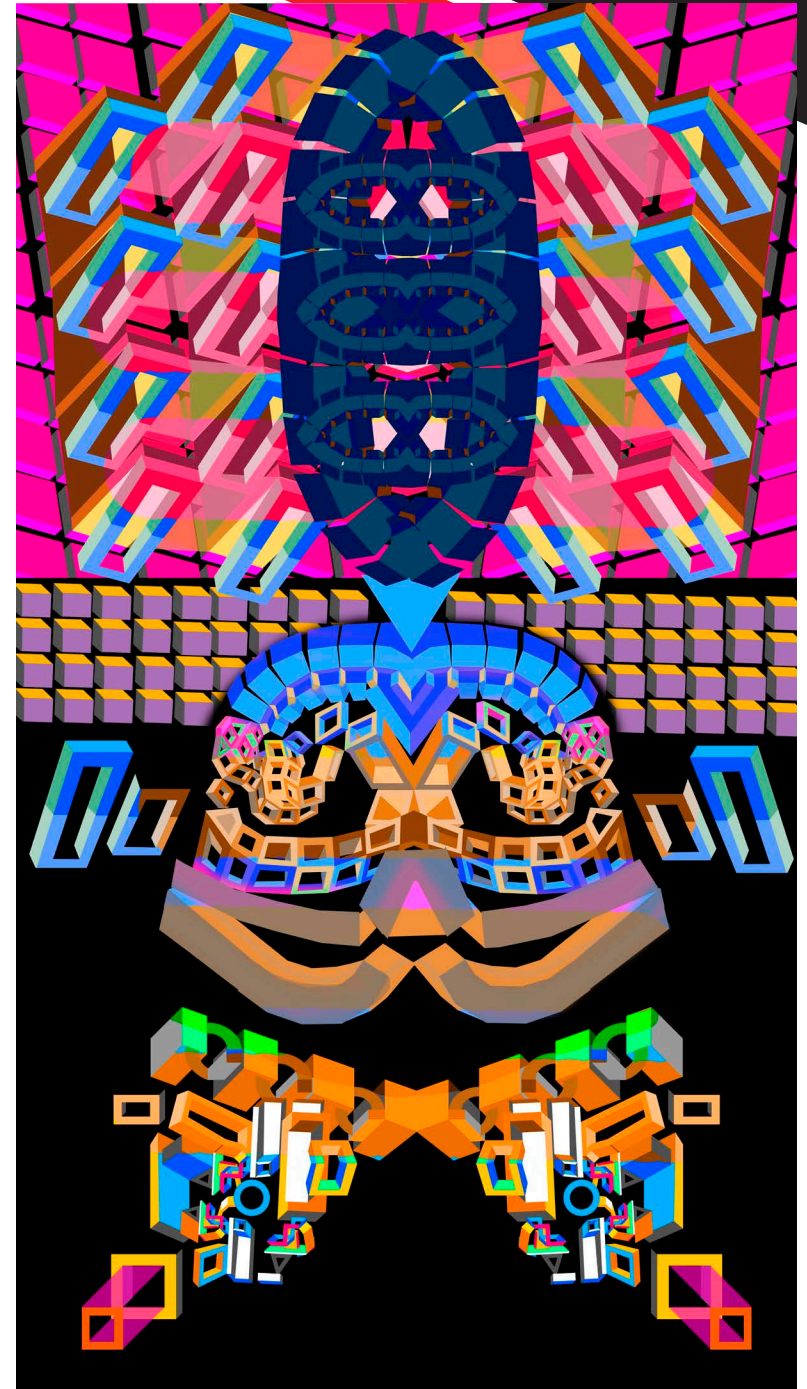
Aotearoa/Ngati Porou

Rangituhia is an artist, writer and educator. His practice employs a range of collaborative strategies, often resulting in large-scale digital animation video works or interactive social engagement projects that explore New Zealand's postcolonial context. He often develops work using emerging or unconventional technologies. He has exhibited throughout New Zealand in leading public museums and galleries.



ACROSS THE FACE OF THE MOON (2019)

I look up to the moon, and I say inside myself "I used to be afraid of you". Now I see your beauty up there. I feel your light carry my eyes across the stars. You're directing me home. And I know that beauty exists, if not here then somewhere. I see a tinge of black across the curve of your brow. You're not full tonight. I see you're in profile, turned, looking like you're talking to a neighbouring star. I hear you whispering. "These words have collapsed the distance between us." I hear you calling. One soft karanga call landing on empty air. "From here, I watch the earth. Do you watch it too? Or do you have better worlds to gaze on with wonder?". Maybe in a few million years I'll be still here to hear that star answer back. Somewhere still standing with you, still there above and roaring, well above, at the apex of all things, seeing our flaming sun dim above a dying world. I hope the answer will be "yes, yes I do".



ACROSS THE FACE OF THE MOON





REACH (GRASPING FOR THE EDGE)

TALIA SMITH

Samoa, Cook Islands

Based in Sydney, artist and curator Talia Smith explores a plethora of themes central to her indigenous background through photographic and moving image mediums. She has exhibited widely in Australia and New Zealand with solo exhibitions at Wellington Street Projects Sydney and Verge Gallery Sydney and has been published in Recent Auckland Photograph. Over the last several years, Smith has been awarded a number of impressive titles; 2018's emerging curator for Artbank Sydney, 2017's emerging curator for Firstdraft gallery and in 2016 was picked for the 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art's Curatorial Intensive.

REACH (GRASPING FOR THE EDGE) 2019

Still, digital print on matte paper

Drawing upon my Masters of Fine Arts research, Reach (grasping for the edge) is a photographic installation that investigates the intangible space that those of the Moana diaspora can inhabit. With more Moana people living in places far from their ancestral homelands this removal and disconnection from traditions, culture and language is explored through my own lived experiences of being Samoan, Cook Island and Pakeha and living in both New Zealand and Australia.

Using the term va as a grounding point for this project, I aim to illustrate what the va could mean to those of the Moana diaspora. I also explore how photography can be used to investigate the sometimes fraught connections to self, culture and how we can enact being part of the Moana when it can feel so far away.



BLOOD MOTHERS

SAMARA ALOFA AND PIPIANA HĒMI

Blood Mothers is the collaborative works of instinctual expressionists, Samara Alofa and Pipiana Hēmi. A work of reclamation, ritual and activation. AVANT-NESIAN relics of gods not lost but long buried deep within. Multi disciplinary activism awakening the womb of Papatūanuku, birthing the entities left dormant in the cracks of industrial dissimulation.



GRACE VANILAU

Naarm based Grace Vanilau is an interdisciplinary artist of Aotearoa Samoa descent. Her creative journey began in her mama's womb and was harnessed at a very young age during mandatory White Sunday boot camps. She hails from a long line of creative natives. She sings because she can, is a sometimes dancer, practicing to be a weaver and had the pleasure of playing alongside 5 amazing women in the original ensemble cast of Tusiata Avia's 'Wild Dogs Under My Skirt' – where her White Sunday training came in full force.

Performance piece

'A Reclamation' – is a performance oratory work. Reflections of a thick-skinned brown woman's western lived reality. A reclamation, an embodiment of everything that I am. Beauty in thoughts we choose to liberate... in this moment.





OPENING NIGHT

Welcome to Country

Aunty Diane Kerr (Wurundjeri Elder)

Djirri Djirri Dancers

Special guest performances by:

Grace Vanilau

Blood Mothers

DJ - Sezzo

To celebrate a above the ground

Umu , prepared by

Miss Samoa Victoria

Talanoa | 16 NOV

Artist Talk | 1.30-2.30PM

Panel Discussion | 3.00-4.00PM

What is the space between us?

PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY:



Australian Government

Indigenous Languages and Arts



TAUTAI
GUIDING PACIFIC ARTS

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ARTS COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND TOI AOTEAROA



DESIGN LAYOUT: KEAGAN MALLIA



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