

Aliyah Winter (Aotearoa NZ)  
Connor Fitzgerald (Aotearoa NZ)  
Daniel John Corbett Sanders (Aotearoa NZ)  
Laura Duffy (Aotearoa NZ)  
Neihana Gordon-Stables (Aotearoa NZ)  
Sorawit Songsataya (Aotearoa NZ)

curated by Christopher Ulutupu  
(Aotearoa NZ)

# Wild Once More

*Wild Once More* is a moving-image exhibition offering a glance into six queer artistic practices working in Aotearoa right now. The term “glance” is used here purposefully to heighten the distance between viewer and viewed. This distancing acts as a provocation, positioning the viewer as a voyeur rather than an active participant. Who is seeing what from where?

These six artists present differing viewpoints on what “the wild” represents to them. Drawing upon the idea of “wildness” by Jack Halberstam, wildness within these artworks reverberates with the idea of the wild as a space of the undercommons.<sup>1</sup> This wildness has been described as a “space of inquiry and study”, which equally could be adapted as a site of potential for generative art-making, that does not buy into a simplistic binary opposition of subject and viewer. Halberstam’s idea of wildness can be also interpreted as being in a state of confusion, unsure of what you’re seeing and where you want to go. Halberstam furthers this idea of “disorientation” as “unfortunate,” but “necessary because you will no longer be in one location moving forward to another,

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1 Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Wivenhoe; New York; Port Watson: Minor Compositions, 2013).

instead you will already be part of the ‘movement of things’”.<sup>2</sup> Halberstam is in dialogue with theorists Fred Moten and Stefano Harvey, thinkers who articulate “the undercommons,” and describe being unsettled as essential for the beginnings of a revolution. This state of being can be understood as similar to a trance-like frenzy. Bearing this in mind then, surely, disruption and destruction is a way to remove power from the oppressive.

Harney and Moten further describe the undercommons through a process of gathering people working against a capitalist order. Perhaps we can interpret the undercommons as a refusal to be settled as well as a place for jubilation. This duality acts as the blueprint for how this exhibition is structured. It is both a call to be in “the wild” through disharmony and confusion, and simultaneously to gather and celebrate in the undercommons with those you love.

The exhibition is split into two parts: firstly, “glancing into the wilderness”, with artworks by Aliyah Winter, Laura Duffy and Sorawit Songsataya. Each artist offers different forms of disruptions within their individual practices. They call upon multiple realms, similar to a witch conjuring a storm to distract and unsettle the purveyor. Through these artworks they are giving permission for the viewer to be lost. The second part of the exhibition can be thought of as “viewing the undercommons”, with videos by Neihana Gordon-Stables, Daniel John Corbett Sanders and Connor Fitzgerald x Angel. These artworks survey various members of queer communities in Aotearoa, and celebrate the people who have taken up the challenge of the undercommons.

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2 Jack Halberstam, “The Wild Beyond: With and for the Undercommons”, in *The Undercommons*, 2–13.

# Glancing into the wilderness

“Before we can commune we must weather the tempest...”

These artworks evoke disruption and rupture the very fabric of reality, each conjuring and prodding the viewer to embrace their own existence. These works refuse to reveal their artistry and offer a mirage, unable to distinguish what is reality and fiction.

Aliyah Winter’s new artwork *restoration fibre song* (2022) is an interactive hypertext fiction made on the open-source computer programming platform Twine. Weaving together abstract and personal narratives into a cyclical structure, we see a table with a reflective surface and mouse that connects with the text displayed. Through the format of a “game”, Winter explores ideas of agency, healing and the metaphysical through the use of prompts and phrases the artist has employed.

Sorawit Songsataya’s artwork *Comfort zone* (2021) examines the distance between ourselves and what we define as nature. Central to this artwork is the imagery of kōtuku, or white heron, and their nesting site on the banks of the Waitangiroto stream in South Westland of New Zealand. While the white heron is common in Southeast Asia and can be found in tropical and temperate regions, the subspecies *egretta alba modesta* found in New Zealand is near the extreme limit of its range, both geographically and climatically. Being so far from its conventional tropical habitat, how the bird first arrived in New Zealand through a distant and difficult migration remains unknown.

Te Whanganui-a-Tara-based artist Laura Duffy’s video *what lives in the lacunae?* (2022) peers into a nocturnal world of shadows and fauna. Duffy explores the feel of what a freaky, queer, fake magic character would do at night: what would they see? How are they connected and how are they disconnected to space and their environment?

Through interrogating her childhood memories, Duffy proposes a new future in queerness and embraces the darkness of her experiences.

## Viewing the undercommons

The camera frame can act as a window into these artists' lives. However, this begs the question around whether or not we should be able to access these stories so readily. As a video artist myself, I often worry about sharing my stories, especially filming my family and friends, because I understand the loadedness of the camera lens as a tool of representation and exposure. I am conscious of how the medium of video can enable voyeurism and exploitation of our marginalised experiences, to quench the consumptive desire of the bourgeois to see and know.

In order to take these issues into account, our queerness has been placed at the centre of this collaboration, with an awareness of what is being framed. We are letting people peer into our personal experiences, hoping you'll understand the gravity of this exchange. Each of these artists have employed different strategies to ensure the people being filmed have autonomy about how they are portrayed. When we interrogate the ethical implications of our video practice, we can begin to have frank conversations about decolonising our screens.

Neihana Gordon-Stables newly commissioned artwork *You are a Star* (2022) is part of a trilogy, *Queer praxis*, by the artist and touches on queer homelessness in Aotearoa. Within his video, we follow a young Tākatapui person named Ari and their friend Senima on their journey to find a sense of community and their chosen whānau. This last edition of *Queer praxis* highlights the growing population of young Māori and Pacific queer people living with housing insecurity. In a turn of tone to this sombre issue, Gordon-Stables also shows the light-hearted humor and resilience of these young people who face systemic injustice.

Connor Fitzgerald's *Love Letter* (2022) focuses on a weekend trip away at an Airbnb with her friends where poetic unscripted performances were filmed. Fitzgerald has always been close to her trans peers and has only recently created relationships outside of those circles. This is due to the recognition that trans spaces offer a sense of belonging and safety. She has created this video work as a love letter and poem to friends who have significantly influenced the artists' life. The video is vivid and at times explosive. The camera refuses to remain still, making sure that the viewer is there for every breath. Fitzgerald's generosity to share this personal work is commended and acknowledged.

Daniel John Corbett Sander's artwork *Queen of the round table* (2022) adopts a documentary style of filming as he records relationships and the intricacies of their personal stories. Corbett is critical of how LGBTQ+ art can contribute to "homonationalism", a term coined by queer theorist Jasbir Puar that describes the intersection between nationalist ideologies and LGBTQ+ people. For this video, Corbett documented a queer activist who they have encountered in Tāmaki Makaurau, following them as they build a coffin, sing a song and discuss what it means to live a life of activism. This piece is poignant and personal, as Sanders invites us along to help celebrate and archive an influential member of the queer community.

Through putting this selection of artworks together, within these two threads, we can start to recognise the miles we have travelled in terms of understanding queerness and storytelling. The irony is that I realise as soon as we arrive at identifying what the Rubik's Cube of queerness is that you find yourself falling through the trap door, back to the beginning of your quest. Destination is death; keep moving and keep asking questions.

*"We must not imagine that the wild is ours to discover or rediscover; we should resist the temptation to believe that it once existed and now has gone; and we must find a way around the treacherous binary logics that set the wild in opposition to the modern, the civilized, the cultivated, and the real."*<sup>3</sup>

Within this quote, Halberstam offers a kind of compass for queer artists, asking us to gather in our communities, return to nature and metaphorically build a new "church". This idea of the return to nature has been distorted by palagi conservative conservationist ideologies, centered around compartmentalising what is wild and what is made by human construction. We can turn to the establishment of the National Parks Act 1980 and our booming tourism industry carried by the slogan "Clean Green New Zealand", which cemented this focus on maintaining a colonial version of the past. How are we able to ensure safety? Particularly when nature has been colonised and repurposed through means that centre a heteronormative lens? This statement from Halberstam acts as a starting point, but is in no way the destination.

The exhibition drew upon ideas from Robbie Handcock's CIRCUIT podcast, where he interviewed artists that employ queerness as identity and used strategies of collaboration and collegiality.

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3 Halberstam in Harney and Moten, *The Undercommons*.

# About the artists

## Aliyah Winter

Aliyah Winter is an artist working across photography, video and performance. Her research-based practice often draws on historical material, with a particular focus on language, voice and the body.

## Connor Fitzgerald/x~Angel~x

Connor Fitzgerald/x~Angel~x is an artist and writer. Her recent artworks focus on poetic storytelling through short and feature-length films. They are interested in the importance of collaboration within the creative process. A constant inquiry within her artistic practice is herself, her transness, and the way they interact with her surroundings. Their work has been exhibited at Artspace Aotearoa, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland; play\_station, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington; Window Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland; Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland; and Blue Oyster Project Space, Ōtepoti Dunedin. Connor is also a facilitator at play\_station space.

## Daniel John Corbett Sanders

Daniel John Corbett Sanders is a Pākehā artist and curator of Dutch and Ashkenazi descent. Through film and photography he examines



the relationship between LGBTQ+ citizens and political economics, and reimagining documentary aesthetics to deconstruct the concept of “queer space”. Sanders currently works as the assistant curator at Artspace Aotearoa, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Acknowledging the lack of representation of LGBTQ+ artists in Aotearoa, in 2020 Sanders founded Parasite, an artist-run gallery prioritising the exhibition of LGBTQ+ artists.

## Laura Duffy

Laura Duffy is an artist working between video, sculpture and installation, exploring queer pleasure or joy derived from failure, error and disgust. Her work has been shown at The Physics Room, Ōtautahi Christchurch; ACMI, Melbourne; Parasite, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland; and The Dowse Art + Museum, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington.

## Neihana Gordon-Stables

Neihana Gordon-Stables (Ngāti Kuri) is a Tākatapui, Tangata ira tane whose artistic practice critically examines dominant cultural narratives and the current lived experience of himself and his communities. His current work explores queer Pasifika coming-of-age stories and the desire, gossip and love that comes with it. His work has been shown at the Oberhausen Short Film Festival, Germany.

## Sorawit Songsataya

Sorawit Songsataya's artistic practice encompasses sculpture, ceramic, textile, moving-image and 3D animation. Drawing from Thai belief systems and ways this might intersect with Te Ao Māori and pop culture, Songsataya explores geological and culturally significant histories which redefine both subjectivity and ecology. Their works have featured in exhibitions throughout Aotearoa New Zealand

and beyond. They are the recipient of multiple awards and residencies, including with Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Ngāmotu New Plymouth; Enjoy Contemporary Art Space, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington; McCahon House, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland; and the International Artists Studio Program, Stockholm. In 2022, Songsataya is the Frances Hodgkins Fellow at the University of Otago, Ōtepoti Dunedin.

# About the curator

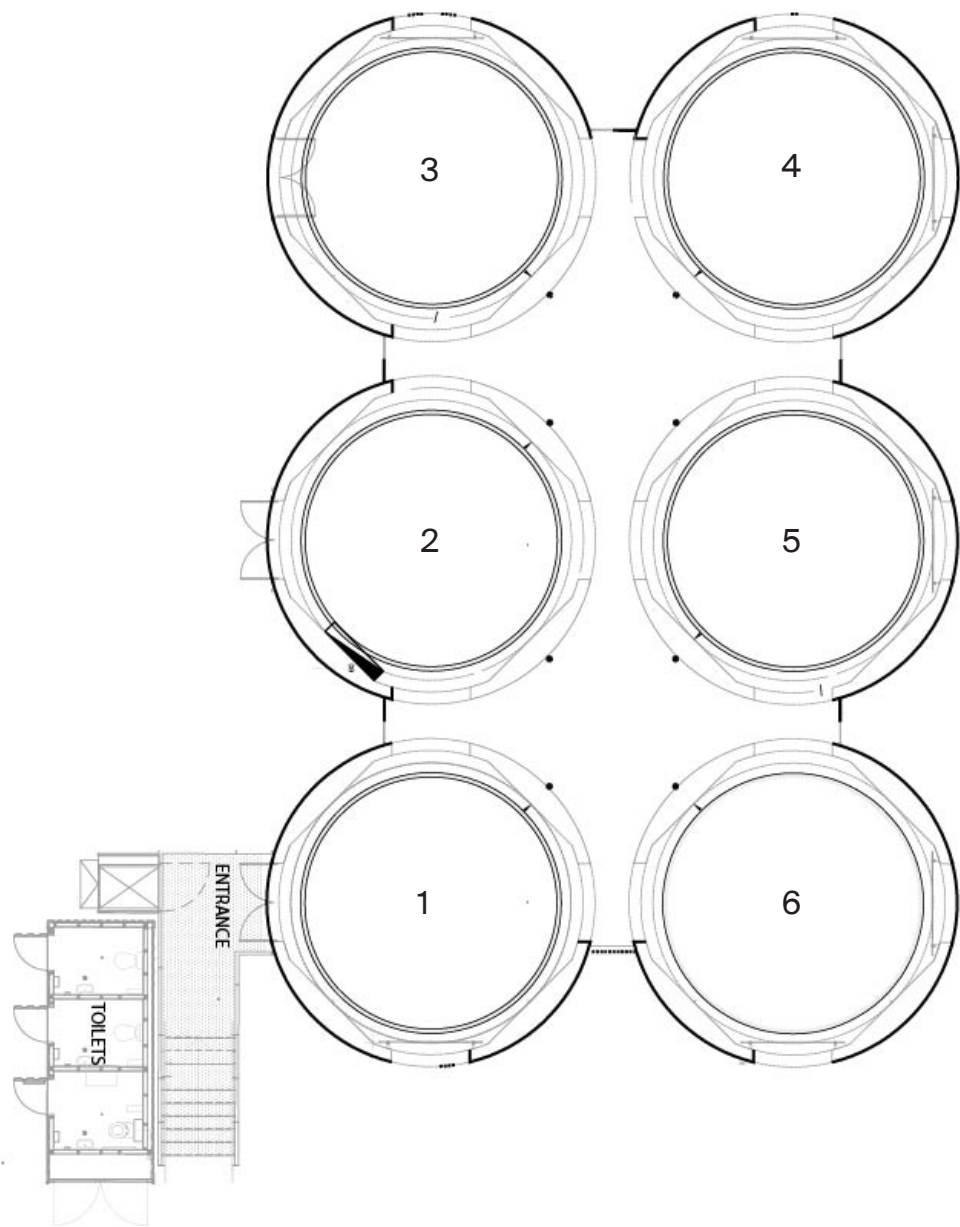
## Christopher Ulutupu

Christopher Ulutupu is an artist of Samoan, Niuean and German descent currently based in Pōneke Wellington. His video practice and performance work explores ideas around landscape, photography and the construction of colonial narratives. Ulutupu has held exhibitions and screenings at Cement Fondu, Sydney; Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū; Dunedin Public Art Gallery; Jhana Millers, Pōneke Wellington; the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany; Enjoy, Pōneke Wellington; and SCAPE Public Art, Ōtautahi Christchurch.



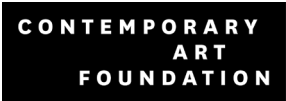
Connor Fitzgerald, *Love Letter*, 2022 (still). Image courtesy of the artist.

# List of works



1. Aliyah Winter  
*restoration fibre song*, 2022  
video, table, chair  
commissioned by Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland
2. Sorawit Songsataya  
*Comfort zone*, 2021  
video  
voice by Awa Puna (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairoa)  
10 mins  
courtesy of the artist
3. Laura Duffy  
*what lives in the lacunae?*, 2022  
video  
15 mins 20 secs  
commissioned by Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland
4. Daniel John Corbett Sanders  
*Queen of the round table*, 2022  
video  
10 mins 6 secs  
commissioned by Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland
5. Connor Fitzgerald  
*Love Letter*, 2022  
video  
53 mins  
commissioned by Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland
6. Neihana Gordon-Stables  
*You are a Star*, 2022  
video  
5 mins 45 secs  
commissioned by Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland

Principal funders



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