

4/4

Severine Costa Xander Dixon

12 October - 9 November 2019

With special thanks to:

Roma Anderson, Wai Ching Chan, Andreea Cristache, Owen Connors, DDMMYY, Shannon Hoole, Jade Kake, Sanji Karu, Abbra Kotlarczyk, Divyaa Kumar, Tom Mackie, MAKE SHOP, Phantom Billstickers, Oleg Polounne, Indigo Poppelwell, St Paul Street Gallery, Michael Steven, Jane Wallace, Rosa Watson, Tom Young

Artspace Aotearoa presents *4/4*, our annual new artists show. It features new work by visual artists Severine Costa, Xander Dixon, Daniel John Corbett Sanders, and Anh Trần, as well as new writing from Owen Connors, Jade Kake, Abbra Kotlarczyk, and Jane Wallace.

Artspace Aotearoa assistant curator, Lachlan Taylor says:

"With this year's new artists show we wanted to take a step back and think about how these events can really support and celebrate emerging practices. To that end, we decided against shoe-horning the artists into the thematic constraints of a contemporary issue, or presenting a cluster-hang of too many artists that starts to blur into an uncritical mass of 'newness'. What we hope to present with 4/4 is a series of individual platforms for emerging creative practitioners to present critical and innovative projects, read on their own merits."

4/4 offers four distinct artistic projects that range in topic from the realignment of queer cultures in Tāmaki Makaurau and using love as a method of cultural critique, to dissecting the performative narratives of neoliberal self care and exploring the contradictory signs of the conservation estate.

Presented in two parts over ten weeks, two of the four participating artists will exhibit in each four-week period.

The second exhibition (Saturday 12 October - Saturday 9 November) features *And the Sky Slowly Seeping Through*, a multi-media installation by Severine Costa as well as *Sharing Directions*, photography and installation from Xander Dixon.

Severine Costa is a Pākehā artist from Kanaky, New Caledonia. She has been living and studying in Aotearoa since 2011. She graduated with a Bachelor of Visual Arts from the Otago Polytechnic School of Art in Ōtepoti in 2014. After graduating with a major in contemporary jewellery, she met the Fresh'n'Fruity collective and became engaged with them until 2017, when she decided to go back to study. Costa's work has previously been shown in group shows at Objectspace, Waiheke Community Art Gallery, and the Blue Oyster Art Project Space. She is currently enrolled in a Masters of Fine Arts at Massey university CoCA in Te Whanganui-a-Tara.

Xander Dixon is an artist/photographer based in Tāmaki Makaurau, whose practice explores discourse around natural conservation and landscape representation. He graduated from Massey University in Te Whanganui-a-Tara with a BDes (Hons) in Photography and Journalism in 2017.

For details on the public programme for this exhibition please go to artspace-aotearoa.nz

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AND THE SKY SLOWLY SEEPING THROUGH

It is to burn with a passion. It is never to rest, interminably, from searching for the archive right where it slips away. It is to run after the archive, even if there's too much of it, right where something in it anarchives itself. It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for return to the most archaic place of absolute commencement. — Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 1995

In *Archive Fever*, Derrida defined the archive as a place of power, through a definition of the ancient Greek word, *Arkheion*, "Initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded".¹

If the archive is primarily a place of power, or a place and action through which power attempts to assert itself, then what might this place look like? What would it look like if we were to archive our own selves? How might one regain power over themselves, and how might one interact with this archive? Finally, how does one negotiate the self when the act of self-archiving becomes an open book to be read, potentially erased, and even written over by others?

Costa's research is invested in the interrelations between spatial design and psyche, especially in terms of how space might formulate richer and more accurate narratives around depression and anxiety than spoken or written language.

She is interested in convoluted DIY systems built in response to failing and oppressive superstructures. This installation visually manifests the intricate, material and ceaseless labour involved in installing and maintaining self-reliant coping mechanisms.

Concerned with neo-liberal and neo-colonial individualisms and their negative effects on mental health, *And the Sky Slowly Seeping Through* can be read as a visual exploration of the harm caused by propaganda-induced beliefs that metaproblems are resolvable primarily through individual performance.

The enactment of Costa's installation, or even the act of witnessing its futile gestures, summons the tension between the imposition of a normative utopia and the realities of sacrifice and meticulous labour that are its cover charge.

^[1]Derrida, Jacques, and Eric Prenowitz, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

SHARING DIRECTIONS

Text by Xander Dixon

I wish to mihi to mana whenua Ngāti Rārua Ātiawa and Ngāi Tūhoe, whose respective rohe were spaces to think about and generate this work. Kei te mihi.

Tuao Wharepapa sits on the south-eastern boundary of the Kahurangi National Park in Te Waipounamu. An expansive, tussocked alpine plateau, it is a striking area in the mountains. There are traces of gold mining and pastoral use, marks in the whenua slowly healing with time. John Mulgan visited one summer, soon before writing *Man Alone*—the New Testament of Pākehā wilderness. Following its 1996 National Park designation, several recreational tramping tracks have cut through the plateau.

Tuao Wharepapa speaks in and of a wider history. Contradictory values ascribed to land reverberate across the national conservation estate, a space in which economic, scientific and scenic values clash with cultural histories. The most significant paths that contemporary conservation practices navigate are somewhere between these values and their tensions—a complicated and often unprecedented territory.

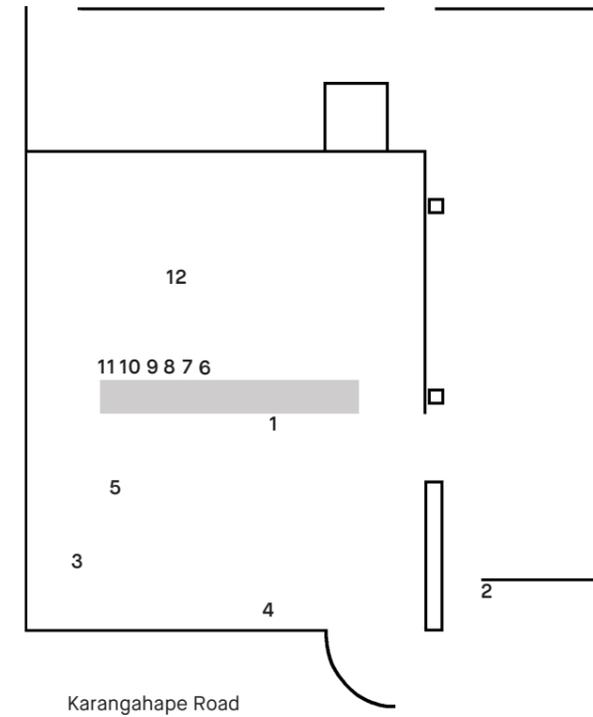
Sharing Directions employs two visual languages to sit uncomfortably with this in-between. A formal photographic language positions the framed works within an earlier Pākehā landscape tradition. This inherited, embodied gaze is inscribed in the technical practice of any Pākehā photographer. The development of landscape photography was inextricably linked with that of the Scenic Reserve movement, championing the wild, sublime, and primeval view above all other values. These desires helped sideline customary rights—contributing to the cultural and physical dispossession of iwi and hapu.¹

Pole markers, ubiquitous signs of navigation in our National Parks, are depicted within the photographs. Seen through the scenic eye, they not only suggest direction but claim the ground—like planted flags in soil that doesn't recognise them. They are loaded objects in the conservation estate.

Markers in the gallery upset what we want to recognise as conservation practice. Who is this we, and in what direction are we wandering? A wayward, pointless navigational exercise. A navigational prompt becomes a theoretical one.

^[1]Tā Mark Solomon, Co-governance and Co-management of Parks and Environments hui, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, June 2014.

Works List



[1] ***Normative Utopia***
Neo-colonial "Edwardian" basin and taps, security mirror, Resene "half-Escape" blue wall
Severine Costa
2019

[2] ***And the Sky Slowly Seeping Through***
Blue cleaning cloths, roll, bottles, monitoring chart
Severine Costa
2019

[3] ***Ab(so)lution***
Second-hand blue sink and taps, fish tank, garden piping, hand pump, tumeric soap, monitoring charts
Severine Costa
2019

[4] ***Labelling Station***
White stickers secured to towel rack, bottles
Severine Costa
2019

[5] ***The Archive***
Concertina folder, paper, pencils, ruler, pencil sharpener, erasers
Severine Costa
2019

[6] ***Pole marker (1)***
Archival pigment print on cotton rag paper
Framed, 175 x 165 mm
Xander Dixon
2019

[7] ***Pole marker (2)***
Archival pigment print on cotton rag paper
Framed, 175 x 165 mm
Xander Dixon
2019

[8] ***Pole marker (3)***
Archival pigment print on cotton rag paper
Framed, 175 x 165 mm
Xander Dixon
2019

[9] ***Pole marker (4)***
Archival pigment print on cotton rag paper
Framed, 175 x 165 mm
Xander Dixon
2019

[10] ***Pole marker (5)***
Archival pigment print on cotton rag paper
Framed, 175 x 165 mm
Xander Dixon
2019

[11] ***Pole marker (6)***
Archival pigment print on cotton rag paper
Framed, 175 x 165 mm
Xander Dixon
2019

[12] ***Untitled (pole markers)***
15 powder-coated aluminium tubes
2000 x 25 mm (appx)
Xander Dixon
2019