

Permissions

Yana Dombrowsky-M'Baye,
Dayle Palfreyman, August Ward
19 October – 21 December 2024

Artspace Aotearoa began this year with an exhibition looking at why and how an artist would leave the art world with Charlotte Posenenske's work in *Priorities*. We close the year thinking through entry points into this world with *Permissions*, the 2024 iteration of the Chartwell Trust New Commissions programme. From Posenenske's staunch commitment to social good resulting in a change of career, we now look at the "emerging artist" as a territory in and of itself. The artists in *Permissions* are at the stages of locating their practices in relation to their worldviews while orienting themselves as "emerging" through various art world territories. This fringe position affords an agility that allows them to occupy and trespass artist-run, public, and commercial galleries, sometimes all at once. From the perspective of the artist, we consider what are the conditions required to foster a practice and what are the permissions needed to express it.

In Yana Dombrowsky-M'Baye's work *saint louis saint louis* (2024), the artist maps her matrilineal ancestry to Sénégal through France. The film follows a return journey between two archipelagos with the same name, one the former French colonial capital of Sénégal and the other in Paris. Narrated from the artist's perspective, *saint louis saint louis* charts the emergence, reign, and disappearance of the signare—a term for women perceived to gain property, status and power through marriage to European men during French colonial West Africa from the late 1600s to the early 1900s. The work presented here builds on a project originally commissioned by RM Gallery in 2023, which was filmed across Tournon-sur-Rhône, Aix-en-Provence, and Dakar, and included Super 8 footage from family archives. This iteration tunnels into the project's filmic enquiry, touching on African Francophone cinema and its contribution to the French New Wave.

Artspace Aotearoa is a public contemporary art gallery founded in 1987 by artists and arts workers, it continues to be artist-led. We work within a specific city context, and spiral out into national and international conversations that promote practices that present emancipatory world views.

Dayle Palfreyman presents two sets of sculptural works at either side of the gallery. *Limbo* consists of a lectern holding a pair of cast spinal discs. One is the atlas, the first cervical vertebrae in the neck; the other is the sacrum at the base of the spine. These palm-sized bronze sculptures are available for visitors to touch, welcoming the marks that hands leave on their form over time. Dayle's practice choreographs bodily motion through institutional space with various wayfinders, often breaching standard gallery boundaries and redirecting the behaviour of the audience. At the other end of the gallery is *Running Around the Sun*, a brass sinkhole in a concrete slab. The artwork titles reference limbo and purgatory as mutable places and states of moral change. As an installation the works act as surrogate for the body itself, running the length of the gallery from neck to gut.

In a series of large-scale paintings, August Ward turns the emblems of fashion, beauty, and design into motifs for pictorial and compositional arrangement. August's practice continues an interest in the visual markers of aspirational consumerism, and in *Permissions* this is extended to depictions of domestic spaces and their furnishings. Her paintings depict affluent suburban interiors and the vases and flowers that might occupy their open homes, teetering on becoming furnishings themselves with gravity and frivolity placed on equal footing. August's paintings become objects about and products of consumption, complicating the desire for class ascension.

Anomalous to the inanimate and decorative in August's work is the appearance of a house cat. Consider the territory of the domestic cat that lives over and in between the manicured demarcations of suburban planning. Living on top of the fences, topiary, and berms the cat navigates its own district like a city on top of a city. The feline's boundaries are sometimes determined by values other than our own, like the scent of hierarchy or an individual on heat. The emerging artist like the cat, has a wilful disregard for certain lays of the land. Ultimately, both trespass as a mode of relation perhaps aiming to simply expand existing domains.

After Posenenske left the art world, she dedicated herself to studying the workplace conditions of Sweden's Volvo car plant. Volvo rejected the factory line model employed by Ford in favour of a "team assembly" way of working, one that considered the wellbeing of its employees. This field of research for Posenenske reiterated the values she explored in her artistic practice, which rejected market models of art production for reproducibility, access, and collaboration. We can only speculate on the full conditions for discontinuing her participation in the arts, but we should continue to investigate reasons for others to stay. If the field of the emerging artist is a territory, then so are the areas of "mid-career" and "established". If this is the fixed career pathway, then what happens to the emerging artist's ability to occupy and trespass modes of creative production and whose responsibility is it to push these territory boundaries?

1-7

August Ward
Surrender, 2024
Tar, 2024
Menthol, 2024
Midnight Magnolias, 2024
Yellow, 2024
Grey, 2024
Consider the Cat, 2024

Oil, graphite, gesso, spray paint on canvas fixed to wood panel, 185 x 160 cm; 61 x 61 cm
In this suite of paintings, the artist uses a thick application of paint which is often etched back into using graphite to create a surface with contrast. The artist takes a permissive approach to divisions of exterior and interior, abstract and illustrative, and exposes the tensions between these classical separations.
Courtesy the artist.

10,11

Yana Dombrowsky-M'Baye
saint louis saint louis, 2024
Ephemera, 2024

HD video, colour, audio on speakers.
32'38'' minutes, looped; Reproductions of documents, artist's writing, objects.
Filmed on location between the archipelagos of Saint Louis in Paris and Saint Louis in Sénégal, the artist explores the figure of the signare (black and mulatto Sénégalaise women who had an influence via their marriages with European men) and the figure of the métis (the signares' mixed race descendants) in relation to French colonial West Africa. The reading room contains research material related to the work, an early version of the script penned for the film, slip-cast copies of plates and thiouraye gowé incense purchased in Dakar.
Courtesy the artist.

8,9

Dayle Palfreyman
Limbo, 2024
Running Around the Sun, 2024

Manganese bronze, mild steel, beeswax, 116 x 29 x 21 cm; concrete, brass, mild steel, beeswax, 283 x 110 x 110 cm.
The artist has used both hand moulded wax and 3D printing methods to cast brass and bronze pieces, also working with familiar materials metal and beeswax. The titles of both these works refer to ideas of the afterlife drawn from Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, *Purgatorio*. In the work *Limbo*, audience members have permission to touch the wax and bronze elements, while in *Running Around the Sun*, audiences must keep their distance through the physical boundaries set by the suspended wax bars.
Courtesy the artist.



Yana Nafysa Dombrowsky-M'Baye is an artist and educator from Tāmaki Makaurau. Yana's matrilineal ancestry harkens to Sénégal and France, and her patrilineal lineage is of Polish and Czech descent. Across film, site-responsive installation, and sculpture, Yana's practice is a poetic inquiry into material and immaterial temporalities across human and more-than-human scales. Yana completed a Master of Spatial Design at AUT in 2022 and has had exhibitions at Blue Oyster Art Project Space and RM Gallery both in 2023.

Dayle Palfreyman recently moved to Tāmaki Makaurau from Te Whanganui-a-Tara, and works across sculpture, installation and video. Dayle's sculptural practice has primarily used metal, concrete, wood, and beeswax to create environments that explore the edges of bodily autonomy through the tensions between the industrial and natural materials employed. Dayle graduated from Massey University in 2020 with a BFA (Hons) and has had exhibitions at play_station in 2020, City Gallery Wellington in 2022, at Enjoy Contemporary Art Space in 2022, and 2023, and the Physics Room in 2024.

August Ward grew up in Tāmaki Makaurau and completed her MFA from the Elam School of Fine Arts in 2023. August's painting practice is concerned with the visual markers of affluence and aspirational consumerism, in particular the emblems of fashion, beauty, interior design, and reality TV. Working in oil and graphite, these symbols become pictorial playthings for colour, composition, and surface. August has exhibited in artist-run spaces and galleries, including Melanie Roger Gallery, Paper Anniversary, Envy, Paludal and Ivan Anthony (upcoming).

Events

Saturday 19 October, 2pm
Screening and artist talk with Yana Dombrowsky-M'Baye

Saturday 26 October, 2–3pm
Permissions artist and curator floor talk

Wednesday 30 October, 6pm
Question time: A lecture by Stefan Benchoam and Salma Tuqan

Friday 1 November, 10am–2pm
In focus with Stefan Benchoam and Salma Tuqan: Curatorial emergence

Wednesday 6 November, 6pm
play_station Film Festival

Wednesday 13 November, 6pm
Question time: A lecture by Hyphenated Projects

Monday 4 November – Sunday 1 December
Online Screening Room
Yumoi Zheng, Tea, 2024

Wednesday 4 December, 6pm
Deep dive: Kaiāwhina Whakaaturaga Assistant Curator's Lecture

Thursday 7 November (Art Late), 5 December, 19 December
First Thursdays Open Late

Reading Room
the time [is] ripe, Ardit Hoxha

To learn more about these events, visit artspace-aotearoa.nz

To read the text by Ardit Hoxha, visit artspace-aotearoa.nz/reading-room

To request a tour for your group contact info@artspace.org.nz

Acknowledgements

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To support our work and enjoy additional events consider joining a Supporters Circle.
To learn more about this programme, visit artspace-aotearoa.nz/tautoko

The annual question

Each year Artspace Aotearoa sets one question which our exhibitions and events orbit in the company of artists and audiences. Across the year, we explore what this question offers us and what artworks and their authors can weave together. In 2024, we ask, “do I need territory?”

These annual questions are multifaceted invitations to consider the world in which we live. They are poetic, philosophical, and open yet, never untethered from material reality and its urgencies. Since drafting this question in early 2023 it has developed sharpened bearing as instances of material urgency have forced it into focus at an intensifying rate. These urgencies have included, but are not limited to: the irreparable harm to human dignity unfolding in occupied Gaza and the threats made to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in Aotearoa. Like all necessary questions, “do I need territory?” encompasses the full breadth of human experience: conflict to optimism, fragility to strength. Like all necessary questions, it also insists that we account for the limits many experience in daily life as much as it opens up possibilities to reconsider the codes through which we organise our lives.

History shows us that commitment to critique prevalent modes of relating is unflinching. It also shows us a dogged insistence on wielding power at the cost of the other can push resources to their absolute limit. Late capitalism suggests much of human value is experienced

at the edge of things in the edges: the point where one body ends and another begins, where community space finishes and private domain starts, where monetised time clocks off and our ‘free time’ takes hold.

The impulse to compartmentalise these not necessarily distinct zones has been an efficient tool for the entrenchment of hierarchy through nation states, public service entities, and even families. This delineation process may be presented as serving a particular cause, where an annotated boundary is required for protection’s sake, however there are equally instances where this act results in experiences of radical dehumanisation. Boundaries, borders, and cuts are concepts enacted to extract a quantifiable value by separating said value from the other. However, scholar and activist Ruth Wilson Gilmore encourages us to consider that these same sites are also where relationships begin, where transformation becomes possible.

What shape would the world take if we would go towards difference? Perhaps the sister to what we ask this year is the question, “where do we find solidarity?” Honing in on this secondary question becomes necessary when solidarity is understood to be a form of enabling abundance that ensures dignity and security for all. What would it take to feel not only part of a community but also full as an individual, a boundless participant? Would it take access to a critical and lively art world? Would it take access to one’s whakapapa,

language, and stories? Would it take the ability to describe your terms of engagement? If freedom emerges by our commitment to it again and again it must take many forms.

In 2024's programme each participating artist and their work contribute to considering the annual question in a dynamic way. Rather than producing a clear answer we seek to describe a whole. This whole insists that yes, opening the door to fundamental questions is to be in conversation with the poetic, the philosophical, and material realities.

Ruth Buchanan, Kaitohu Director
January 2024

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Each year we orbit one question in the company of artists through exhibitions and other events. Across the year we explore what this question offers us and what artworks and their authors can weave together. In 2024 we ask “do I need territory?” You can think of this as one exhibition in four parts, as a score played across a calendar, or maybe even as a forest. Join us.

2024

Do I need territory?