



- 1 Martine Syms, *Notes on Gesture*, 2015, four-channel HD Video. Courtesy of the artist.
- 2 Louise Menzies, *Time to think like a mountain*, 2014, inkjet print embedded in handmade paper.
- 3 Sorawit Songsataya, *Coyotes Running Opposite Ways*, 2016 (new commission), animated HD video (4min58secs), glazed ceramics, twigs, felted wool fibre, machine-knitted mohair textile, inkjet prints on linen, jute wall, coloured fluorescent lighting.
- 4 Dan Nash, *Plant them in, kill off thinking*, 2016 digitally rendered prints on aluminium, steel framing, resin (new commission).
- 5 Newell Harry, *Untitled (Black Sabbath and Other Anecdotes)*, 2015, black & white photograph with hand-typed text
Courtesy of the artist and RoslynOxley9.
- 6 Fatima al Qadiri and Khalid Al Gharaballi, *Mendeel Um A7mad (NxIxSxM)*, 2012, HD video, 15:28mins.
Courtesy of the artists.
- 7 Mika Rottenberg, *Time and a Half*, 2003, video installation
Courtesy of Lynette Antoni.

Potentially Yours, The Coming Community

November 10 – December 22, 2016

Newell Harry, Louise Menzies, Dan Nash, Fatima Al Qadiri & Khalid Al Gharaballi, Mika Rottenberg, Sorawit Songsataya, Martine Syms
Curated by Tendai John Mutambu

Public programme

Saturday November 12, 2pm

Exhibition Tour

Join the exhibition curator and contributing artists

Louise Menzies, Dan Nash and Sorawit Songsataya in a floor talk on the exhibition.

Tuesday November 22, 6pm

At the Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki Auditorium

Easy Listening presents Martine Syms *Misdirected Kiss*, performative lecture.

Footnotes

- 1 "Liberation through Laziness. Some Chronopolitical Remarks." MOUSSE Issue no. 42.
- 2 José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).
- 3 Sven Lütticken, "Liberation through Laziness. Some Chronopolitical Remarks." MOUSSE Issue no. 42, 2014.
- 4 According to Navajo mythology she is responsible for the stars in the sky. She took a web she had spun, laced it with dew, threw it into the sky and the dew become the stars.
- 5 Tom Sparrow, "Bodies in Transit: The Plastic Subject of Alphonso Lingis," *Janus Head* 10, no. 1 (2007): 113.
- 6 Alphonso Lingis, *Sensation: Intelligibility in Sensibility* (New York: Humanities Press, 1996), 80.
- 7 Arlene Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 7).

Thanks to:

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Eddie Clemens	Bridget Riggir
DDMMYY	Andrea Rosen
Bridget Donahue	RoslynOxley9
First Scene Costume and Party Hire	Daphne Simons
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Oliver Gilbert	Tim Wagg
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Martine Syms, *Notes on Gesture*, 2015, synchronised four-channel HD Video. Courtesy of the artist.

The expanded four-channel version of Martine Syms' *Notes on Gesture* (2015) features the artist Diamond Stingily enacting a series of gestures against a purple backdrop. Taking its title from a Giorgio Agamben essay from 1992, the work presents the Black female body in motion, drawing upon popular culture’s archive of phrases, both verbal and somatic. The Internet is replete with visual fragments of televisual and cinematic media, which create a digital parlance, performing a function on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter feeds that words alone cannot. It is within these combinations of word and image (and in the space between) that contemporary Black subjectivity seizes the potential to re-imagine itself anew by reproducing, ripping and remixing pieces of the everyday. *Notes on Gesture* (2015) zeroes in on the language of the hand, drawing on English physician John Bulwer’s 1644 text *Chirologia: Or the Natural Language of the Hand*, in which he argued for the universality of hand gestures. The work challenges ‘the [so-called] natural language of the hand’ by presenting a complex and specific vocabulary of gestures that are as racially-infected and coded as they are susceptible to appropriation.

MARTINE SYMS (LA, United States) uses video and performance to examine representations of Blackness and its relationship to American situation comedy, Black vernacular, feminist movements and radical traditions. Her artwork has been exhibited and screened extensively, including presentations at the New Museum, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, MCA Chicago, Green Gallery, Gene Siskel Film Centre, and White Flag Projects. She has lectured at Yale University, SXSW, California Institute of the Arts, University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins University, and MoMA PS1, among other venues. Syms’ recently presented exhibitions include *Borrowed Lady*, SFU Galleries, Vancouver; *Fact and Trouble*, ICA London; *Vertical Elevated Oblique*, Bridget Donahue Gallery, New York. From 2007-2011 she was the co-director of the Chicago artist-run project space Golden Age, and she currently runs Dominica Publishing: an imprint dedicated to exploring blackness in visual culture. She is the author of *Implications and Distinctions: Format, Content and Context in Contemporary Race Film* (2011).

Louise Menzies, selected work from the series *Time to think like a mountain* (2014), inkjet prints embedded in handmade paper.

If the archive is at once a collection of historical artifacts and a collection of desires (and fears) projected into the future, how does it anticipate a prospective audience; a community of subjectivities yet unformed? Louise Menzies’ investigations into the Alternative Press Collection at the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, can be approached as an enquiry into the potentialities of the archive. Home to a treasure-trove of printed materials, including documentation of cultural and political activism in the 1960s and 1970s, the collection is a reflection of American history paralleling the University of Connecticut’s own campus history. Looking at the handmade paper, into the fibres of which Menzies

literally embeds the history of alternative media, we can begin to think through the capacity of these accumulated texts and images to form an horizon where each contemporary audience puts the objectivised meaning into its own perspective, giving it its own specific relevance. In one particular framed print, ‘the *locus classicus* of the “never work” ethos,’³ Paul Lafargue’s *The Right to be Lazy* (1883), makes an appearance in the form of a 1969 reprint in pamphlet form whose provenance can be traced back to the Chicago-based socialist collective, Solidarity Publications.

LOUISE MENZIES (Auckland, NZ) typically offers objects, images and situations that explore past and present through attention to the way they are already represented. Her cross-media practice has incorporated film and print into performances and installations. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Spiritual Midwifery*, Gus Fisher Gallery, Auckland (2016), and *Time to think like a mountain*, Contemporary Art Galleries, University of Connecticut (2014). Recent group exhibitions and screenings include: *This is not filmmaking: Artists work for cinema*, City Gallery, Wellington (2016), *Freedom Farmers*, Auckland Art Gallery (2014), and *Everybody knows this is nowhere*, castillo/corrales, Paris (2013). In 2016 Menzies was artist in residence at the McCahon House, Auckland, following residencies in the U.S., Australia and Mexico.

Sorawit Songsataya, *Coyotes Running Opposite Ways*, 2016 (new commission), animated HD video (4:58mins), glazed ceramics, twigs, felted wool fibre, machine-knitted mohair textile, inkjet prints on linen, jute wall, coloured fluorescent lighting.

‘Coyotes running opposite ways’ is the English translation of the Navajo string figure referred to as *Ma’ii Ats’áá’ Yilwoi*. The string figure is an ancient art form, widely practiced around the world and yet its exact origins remain unknown. For the Navajo people, string games are one form of telling stories – stories of constellations and ancestors. The string figure is perceived as a gift from *Tse che nako* (Spider Grandmother), the creator of the world.⁴

In Aotearoa, string games were practiced to encourage a nimbleness of the fingers; a desired trait for women who spent much of their time on weaving and *taniko*. The string figure is known as *whai* in Te Reo Māori, short for *Te Whai Wawewawe a Maui* meaning ‘Maui’s clever string game.’ In the introduction to her recently published book, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Donna Haraway uses the Greek word *Kainos* to describe the ‘thick presence that can be full of inheritances, of remembering, of nurturing what might still be ... [infused] with all sorts of temporalities and materialities,’ allowing the human and the non-human to ‘re-member’ and recuperate within an unfolding present. Drawing from the aforementioned indigenous beliefs and worldviews, the rendition of strings, webs, and knitted yarn—made by both machine and hand—reconsiders and reclaims the potency of a kinship between past and present, through the process of making and unmaking.

SORAWIT SONGSATAYA lives and works in Tāmaki Makaurau. He graduated with an MFA from Elam School of Fine Arts

in 2014. Recent exhibitions include: *A bone, a flesh, a daddy’s nest* with Bronte Perry, RM Gallery; *The non-living agent*, Te Tuhi; *Midnight*, Window gallery; *Cobalt Sun*, Te Uru window space; *Piti Montessori*, Blue Oyster Art Project Space; *Let The Cobbler Stick To His Last*, Brooklyn, New York; *Unstuck in Time*, Te Tuhi Centre for the Arts; *Campaign Furniture*, Dunedin Public Art Gallery.

Dan Nash, *Plant them In, kill off thinking*, 2016 (new commission), digitally rendered prints on aluminium, steel framing, resin.

In Dan Nash’s *Plant them In, kill off thinking* well-worn dualities face a radical dissolution. Inspired by the writing of philosopher Alphonso Lingis, Nash also ‘wields a realism that treats objects... and...their sensible emissions...as the individual substances that they are,’⁵ at a remove from the centrality of a hollowed-out ego. For Lingis – and, by consequence, for Nash – the challenge lies in contesting the primacy of rationality and human dominance over the world. If identity is rooted in routine practices that are induced by means of repetition and reiteration through an entire social circuitry (popular culture, tradition, ‘a gamut of rites, rituals, ceremonies’), Nash’s work complicates the structures regulating our sensitivity. *Plant them In, kill off thinking* is set between alterity and the lived body, where a material imagining (and imaging) binds the two. Interspersed within Nash’s theoretical enquiries are fictional narratives, set on islands or of subjects in isolation, often exposed to the elements. In its convoluted terrain of texts and textures, affective immersions present themselves as we catch glimpses of the embodied subject’s relationship to the sensible world. In this ‘plenum of free-floating qualities without substrates and enclosures,’⁶ the sensuous material of Nash’s work, in all its luminosity, vibrancy and tactility immerses us in the very stuff of our existence. In our encounter with the present work, we are implored to consider the potentialities of *being* a sensitive body, constituted of organic matter, whose materiality submits to outside forces.

DAN NASH is an Auckland based artist who graduated with an an MFA from Auckland University in 2014. His work explores desires for personal and collective escape and bodily and cultural distortion. The grotesque materiality of his sculpture has a strong affinity with the writing of American philosopher Alphonso Lingis and his interest in sensuality and the phenomenology of the fluid. Recent exhibitions include *New Graduate Works*, The Gus Fisher Gallery, Auckland; *touch light silk screen* with Juliet Carpenter, Gloria Knight; *trustno123456*, Projectspace B431.

Newell Harry, *Untitled (Black Sabbath and Other Anecdotes)* 2015, black & white photograph with hand-typed text Courtesy of the artist and RoslynOxley9.

The potent potential to not-be exceeds the limits of merely ‘doing nothing’. It generates its own power to resist with respect to the requirements (and impositions) of a society fixated on activity and productivity. The exhibited image by Newell Harry from the series *Untitled (Black Sabbath and Other Anecdotes)*, posits the racialised temporality of the saying ‘Island Time’ as an opportunity to

Contemporary capitalism [coerces] us all to ‘live up to our potential’ by getting with the program, by playing the game, by giving it everything.

– Sven Lütticken, 2014 ¹

Presented in the form of a sign-off to an open letter; a missive whose subject remains undefined, the title of this exhibition imagines the promise of alternative approaches to potential. In his book *The Coming Community*, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben presents an assemblage of essays on a variety of themes, including potentiality. And much like Agamben’s eponymous text, this exhibition brings together a range of ideas that collectively become at once a critical (re-)reading, a thought-experiment and a material provocation, which find expression through a variety of aesthetic modes.

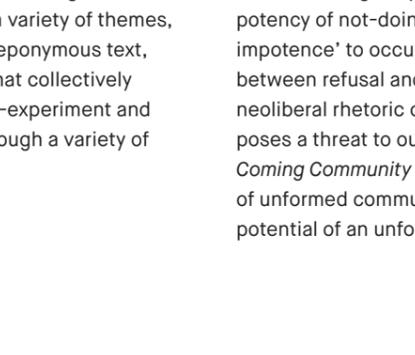
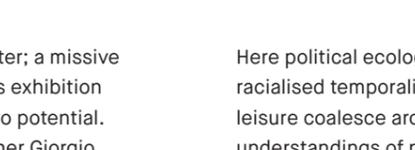
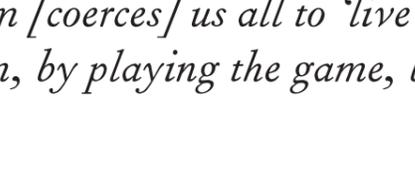


resist one’s interpellation into the oppressive and regimented time of particular institutions, in this case those surrounding tourism. Even our experience of leisure is readily co-opted into a mode of production: creating and altering subjectivities and affects for both producer and consumer. In the accompanying anecdote, Jack – who professes to operating on ‘aelen taem’ (Island time) – opts for a moment of respite from his duties thereby bringing to the fore a subtle but potent tension between the imperatives of capitalist-driven leisure, and the alternative temporalities that refuse to align with it. Central to this work by Newell Harry is a radicalising of the chronopolitics of free time, through a refusal to work which then becomes, in its own right, a gesture of immense political import.

NEWELL HARRY is a Sydney-based artist of Cape Coloured (South African) and French Mauritian heritage who works in a range of media, including sculpture, installation, photography, and drawing. His work and interests touch on diverse fields, from language, anthropology, religion and cargo cults, to the ongoing social impacts of economic imperialism and globalisation. Key to his work are concerns rooted contextually within an Asia-Pacific discourse. Notions of value, currency, and modes of exchange are important themes in Harry’s work, stemming from the artist’s keen interest in tribal economies of Oceania and the wider South Pacific. Harry’s exhibitions of note include All the World’s Futures Venice Biennale 2015, 12th international Istanbul Biennial and 17th Biennale of Sydney. His work has been widely exhibited including in Australia, Amsterdam, USA, South Africa, New Zealand France and Korea.

Fatima al Qadiri and Khalid Al Gharaballi, *Mendeel Um A7mad (NxIxSxM)*, 2012, HD video, (15:28mins). Courtesy of the artists.

Al Qadiri and Al Gharaballi’s video work is where Kuwaiti post-oil boom ostentation meets The Real Housewives-style gendered performativity. In this project the artists investigate the notion of “gendered space,” by uncovering the context,

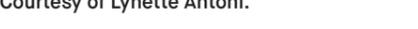


design and discourse present in *Chai Dhaha*, the ritual of pre-noon tea amongst middle-aged Kuwaiti women—an informal female forum that exists parallel to the *Diwaniya* (the male forum). Shot in a hotel ballroom, the spatial conditions and architectural dysmorphia of Kuwaiti interior aesthetics are exposed in all their absurdity. The work features four middle-aged female characters played by a cast of younger men as an homage to Abdul-Aziz Al Nimish, the legendary actor who for decades performed the roles of mature women. Within this narrative, the tissue box is a curious totem that, in its ubiquity within Kuwaiti homes, becomes an unlikely national icon. The naming of generic medicine in lieu of ritual greetings, like the tissue box, refers to the post-oil boom obsession with hygienic products—wet wipes, disinfectants and hand sanitisers. The space for leisure here becomes encumbered by ostentation, consumerism and attempts to control the organic chaos of the natural environment.

KHALID AL GHARABALLI is a New York-based Kuwaiti stylist and artist. His work has been published in Vogue Homme Japan, V, Tokion, GQ and A magazine. Khalid is also a contributor to Bidoun and DIS Magazine. He has performed at Bidoun’s Art Park at Art Dubai. **FATIMA AL QADIRI** is a New York-based Kuwaiti artist, performer, and musician. Through her work in video, photography, and performance, she explores gender stereotypes and the impact of consumerism on contemporary Kuwaiti society. Selected group exhibitions include *Starship Counterforce*, Aqua Art Miami, Art Basel, Miami, 2008; *Goth Gulf Visual Vortex* GGVV, Sultan Gallery, Kuwait, 2009; *Mahma Kan Althaman* (“*Whatever The Price*”), Sultan Gallery, Kuwait, 2010; *MOVE!*, MoMA PS1, New York, 2010; Gwangju Design Biennale, South Korea, 2011; *Global Art Forum*, Art Dubai, Mathaf: Arab Museum of Modern Art, Doha, 2012; *Mendeel Um A7mad (NxIxSxM)*, CAP, Kuwait, 2012; and *Surrender*, Fourth Edition, Marrakech Biennale, 2012.

Here political ecologies, inhuman subjectivities, the archive, racialised temporalities and the chronopolitics of labour and leisure coalesce around the central premise of asserting new understandings of potential. While certain works focus on the potency of not-doing, others deploy the strategy of ‘potent impotence’ to occupy zones of indeterminacy; spaces located between refusal and acquiescence. In its defiant resistance to the neoliberal rhetoric of potential-as-self-optimisation – one which poses a threat to our critical imagination – *Potentially Yours, The Coming Community* proposes a kinship between the ‘not-yet-here’² of unformed communities and collective material histories as the potential of an unfolding present.

Mika Rottenberg, *Time and a Half*, 2003 video installation, (3:47mins) Courtesy of Lynette Antoni.



In the dead time between serving customers, the central character in Mika Rottenberg’s *Time and a Half* (2003) inhabits a state of mental absence in which otherworldly moments are conjured. As the power of an unknown force descends upon the scene, sensory perception becomes augmented – at once stretched out and slowed down. The highly contrived and artificial faux ‘exotica’ of the restaurant, the painted nails of the waitress and the artificial breeze of the fan transform into something almost supernatural; elements once remote and lifeless become animated as they are brought closer to a state of liveliness. While the harsh realities of immaterial labour await her at the end of this reverie—a state which could be disrupted at any moment—fleeting moments of imaginative possibility reveal themselves. And here lies the potential to reclaim a subjectivity co-opted by the demands of affective labour: a form of work whose gendered performativity ‘requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others’.¹ Yet in *Time and a Half* (2003) the phrase ‘I’d prefer not to’ by Herman Melville’s fictional character Bartleby, The Scrivener seems an apposite verbal analogue to the central character’s state of being, located in the indeterminate space between refusal and acquiescence.

MIKA ROTTENBERG uses video installation to probe contemporary formations of labour, the feminisation of globalization, and the production of value. Forthcoming exhibitions include Mika Rottenberg, Bass Museum of Art, Miami. Recent exhibitions include Mika Rottenberg, Galerie Laurent Godin, Paris, France, 2016; Mika Rottenberg, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France, 2016; NoNoseKnows, Shishang Art Musuem, Beijing, China, 2015; Mika Rottenberg, Jupiter Artland Foundation, Edinburgh, UK, 2015.