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Annie Mackenzie, Ashleigh Taupaki, Georgette Brown,  
Imogen Taylor and Sue Hillery, Li-Ming Hu, Salote Tawale

curated by Sophie Davis

# *Fire-lit kettle*

Enjoy

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ANNIE MACKENZIE,  
ASHLEIGH TAUPAKI,  
GEORGETTE BROWN,  
IMOGEN TAYLOR  
AND SUE HILLERY,  
LI-MING HU,  
SALOTE TAWALE

Creative energy is frequently spoken about in relation to a particular kind of passion or ignition, from the feeling of an initial spark to a sense of burnout. The metaphor of “tending a fire” speaks to resources, knowledge and relationships that require ongoing care and attention. *Fire-lit kettle* is an exhibition that takes this language as a starting point to engage a group of women artists, motivated by the desire to explore its affective and critical potential.

CURATED BY  
SOPHIE DAVIS

*Saved Message* (2020) by Annie Mackenzie comprises a fruitloaf baked by the artist and a voice message reflecting on a somewhat tense conversation around how to make a living and life from craft or art. Over the past decade, Mackenzie has been exploring weaving and textile traditions, developing a practice in dialogue with a community of established weavers working across Aotearoa. Her contribution to *Fire-lit kettle* departs from a message left on her mother’s answerphone by a family friend named Rosie, a potter and painter. Available to listen to on request at the gallery office, it is a brief and heartfelt follow up to an exchange that unfolded during a stay with the Mackenzie family. This conversation took place on what Mackenzie describes as “treacherous ground” between art and craft traditions, an often difficult space that she has been making and thinking within. This territory is shaped by differences in perspective between those who have used their craftforms to make a living (particularly during the 1970s and 1980s when such a living was possible in Aotearoa), and expectations of a particular kind of artistic freedom and experimentation within contemporary art. *Saved Message* highlights the relationships and unexpected roadbumps that can inform a practice. It also affirms the extension of hospitality as crucial to the work of sustaining friendships and one’s own creativity.

***FIRE-LIT KETTLE***  
**19.06–25.07.20**

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Ashleigh Taupaki’s sculptures grapple with memory and materiality in relation to personal histories and Māori ways of living. For *Fire-lit kettle*, Taupaki has developed a series of small sculptures experimenting with traditional forms, casting processes and the poetics of hard materials. *Toro, piko* (2020) encompasses a sheet of paper made from harakeke and natural dyes; plaster “tiles” with found objects; a handwoven wire kete; a hanging woven basket based on a waka huia; and a small vessel made from coiled aluminium. These works explore how intuitive making and collecting might carry—or trace, or reconstruct—knowledge, histories and relationships. Taupaki’s sculptures hold things that she describes are “kept in mind:” pink spiral shells picked off the beach in Whiritoa; pupu shells from Waitangi; a piece of māta (obsidian); and plaster-set impressions of other found materials that connect to place, such as rocks gathered from the driveways of her current and family homes. Her sculptures present a series of moments within a

process, one that is fuelled by conversations with elders and peers, as well as the potential of objects to tell stories and be transformed.

*And Holds Us At the Center While the Spiral Unwinds* (2020) is a suspended painting by Georgette Brown. Working across various media, Brown's work deploys an organic, almost psychedelic language that contemplates ecologies, bodies and internal worlds. Often incorporated into her recent paintings is a figure with a paintbrush and palette, as if the work itself is still in process. *And Holds Us At the Center...* refers back to a process of becoming in a different way, depicting four figures—Brown, and three of her friends and loved ones—sitting around a table on a surreal beach landscape. Curling raised vines frame the edges of the painting, which features a hopeful orange sky and a table laid out as if for a ritual. Held in place by steel wire stretching floor to ceiling, the painting gently turns on its axis. *And Holds Us At the Center...* was painted during lockdown when large, freak waves along the South Coast of Te Whanganui-a-tara caused a mass of seaweed and debris to be ejected out of the ocean. This happened near the artist's home, during what was an intense period of time spent in conversation and company within her domestic space. Meditating on this incident and the world around it, *And Holds Us At the Center...* considers tension, relationships to people and bigger ecosystems, and dealing with things that “come up.”

Imogen Taylor and partner Sue Hillery have developed *Sluice* (2020), a new iteration of a wall painting that appears to twist and turn along the gallery wall. This intervention foregrounds queer relationships and desires as a driving force. Declaring an encounter between bodies, *Sluice* also presents an encounter between Taylor's painting practice and Hillery's investigation of “built potentials.” Taylor's work playfully interrogates gender and sexuality within art and its histories, reimagining modernist, regionalist and cubist painting, while Hillery has an established architecture and spatial design practice. *Sluice* is a continuation of a previous wall painting called *Double Portrait: Screw Thread* (2020), stemming from an investigation into the relationships between architecture, bodies and painting. Taylor and Hillery's series makes reference to a series of double portraits by the New Zealand modernist painter Frances Hodgkins, who experimented with painting two people in relation to one another.

Favouring a bold colour palette and geometry, the interlocking outlines that make up the work are painted by hand from laser-cut stencils, scaled roughly in proportion to Taylor's body. *Sluice* has a resulting physicality and a sketch or plan-like quality, suggesting something under construction rather than fully fleshed out. Taylor and Hillery's collaboration pursues a queer aesthetic and representation of sex and love between women within the gallery space. It highlights the ways in which relationships—to friends, lovers or those we otherwise admire—might enable us to begin to see ourselves.

Two videos by Li-Ming Hu consider what “performing” looks like in artistic and everyday contexts. Both draw from the artist's background as a stage and screen actor, including her role in the 2009 TV series *Power Rangers RPM*. *Three interviews* (2019) collates filmed interviews of Hu: a promotional video for an art school postgraduate programme; a fan web series posted on YouTube; and a (fictional) art magazine feature. *For Acting/Not Acting* (2019), Hu paid a videographer to follow her attending Rangerstop, a Power Rangers fan convention in Orlando, Florida. The resulting footage is interspersed with documentation of recent art projects, and the artist performing the kinds of tasks usually done alone, without an audience.

To the melodramatic soundtrack of *McArthur Park* (performed by Donna Summer), Hu drills, hammers and irons. She looks wearily into her laptop camera and eats a lunch of cold canned soup, staring dead-eyed into the distance. *Three interviews* and *Acting/Not Acting* share an intentionally blurry—and perhaps irreverent—relationship to authenticity or the notion of presenting things as they happened. They unfold within the often unseen dimensions of creative work, exploring notions of success, failure and the performance of subjectivities in maintaining a practice or playing a role.

Salote Tawale's video *Creep* (2014) also explores performances of the self, opening up a humorous and uncomfortable space to question how we relate to self-doubt and belonging. Often using pop culture references, Tawale considers dynamics of representation and power through her perspective as a queer woman of Fijian and European heritage living on unceded territory in Australia. Before entering the back gallery space, we hear the artist singing the chorus of Radiohead's well-known 1992 song on repeat. Shot by Tawale, *Creep* depicts a tightly cropped closeup of the artist's face, gently lit in complete darkness. Her features move

slightly in and out of focus as she sings and stares directly into the camera, its reflection visible in her pupils. *Creep* is part of a body of video work by Tawale that tests a kind of expanded self-portraiture, an approach influenced by her background in landscape photography and North American feminist video art of the 1970s. The homemade quality of the footage creates an unsettling intimacy. Although *Creep* seems to invite us to read into the artist's own identity and position, her gaze also confronts us with our own relationships to the place we are, whether this is the gallery itself, or the land we're standing on.

The works included in *Fire-lit kettle* invite further contemplation of creative energy, considering "producing" or "productivity" as question of relations. Together, they pose a range of possibilities that intersect with discussions around labour, livelihoods and the legacies of other women.

— SOPHIE DAVIS

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Currently based between Whanganui and Purau, ANNIE MACKENZIE graduated with a BFA in Sculpture from Ilam School of Fine Arts, Christchurch in 2009. Previous exhibitions include *SOLO*, The Dowse Art Museum, 2018, *International Foodcourt/Global Classic*, The Physics Room, 2016 and *Walking Forwards Backwards* at Enjoy in 2016. Annie Mackenzie is the 2020 recipient of the Olivia Spencer Bower fellowship, was awarded the Tylee Cottage Artist Residency in 2018, and was the 2016 recipient of the Creative Fibre New Weavers Award.

ASHLEIGH TAUPAKI is a Tāmaki Mākaurau Auckland-based artist and curator. Her work is influenced by Māori concepts of place, place-making, and spiritual interconnectedness through the casting and experimentation of hard materials such as wood, concrete, and metals. Her work is also heavily informed by Indigenous politics and writings, as well as mythological stories and histories connected to place. These places include the Waitakere area where the artist currently resides, and the Hauraki region where her iwi, Ngāti Hako, originate from. She is currently studying towards an MFA at Elam School of Fine Arts, where she is also a curator at Window gallery.

GEORGETTE BROWN is a Pōneke Wellington-based artist and musician. She attributes much of her art practice to her formative years, spent living deep within a eucalyptus forest in Australia. Over the past few years, Georgette has exhibited at a range of artist-run and project spaces around the country, including Neo Gracie, Satchi Saatchi & Saatchi, Window, *MEANWHILE*, Play\_station, and Blue Oyster Art Project Space.

Georgette has a BFA from Massey University Wellington and plays drums in WOMB, a band composed of her and her two siblings.

IMOGEN TAYLOR was born Whangarei, New Zealand in 1985 and is currently based in Dunedin. She graduated in 2010 from University of Auckland's Elam School of Fine Arts with a Post-Graduate Diploma of Fine Arts. Taylor was artist in residence at Parehuia, McCahon House in 2017. In 2018 she was the Paramount Award winner of The Wallace Trust Art Awards and the recipient of the 2019 Frances Hodgkins Fellowship. Recent exhibitions include *Sapphic Fragments*, The Hocken - Uare Taoka o Hākena, Ōtepoti Dunedin; *Betwixt and Between*, Michael Lett, Auckland; *Social Studies*, Dowse Art Museum, Te Awakairangi Lower Hutt (2018); *Pocket Histories*, Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland (2018).

LI-MING HU is an interdisciplinary artist from Aotearoa New Zealand, currently based in Chicago. Drawing on her past experience as a stage/screen actress, Li-Ming is interested in the intersections between art, popular culture and entertainment and the relationships between the performance of subjectivities and cultural production. Li-Ming has a MFA in Performance from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and has undertaken projects with Aotearoa arts initiatives such as The Physics Room, ST PAUL ST Gallery and CIRCUIT, amongst others. She is also part of the artist duo Riff Raff with Daphne Simons, who were Enjoy's 2017 summer residents.

From the perspective of her Indigenous Fijian and Anglo-Australian heritage, SALOTE TAWALE is a Sydney-based artist who explores the identity of the individual within collective systems. Examining through self-performance, Tawale draws on personal experiences of race, class, ethnicity and gender formed by growing up in suburban Australia. Tawale completed an undergraduate degree in Media Arts and Masters of Art at RMIT University, Melbourne and a Masters of Fine art and Sydney College of the

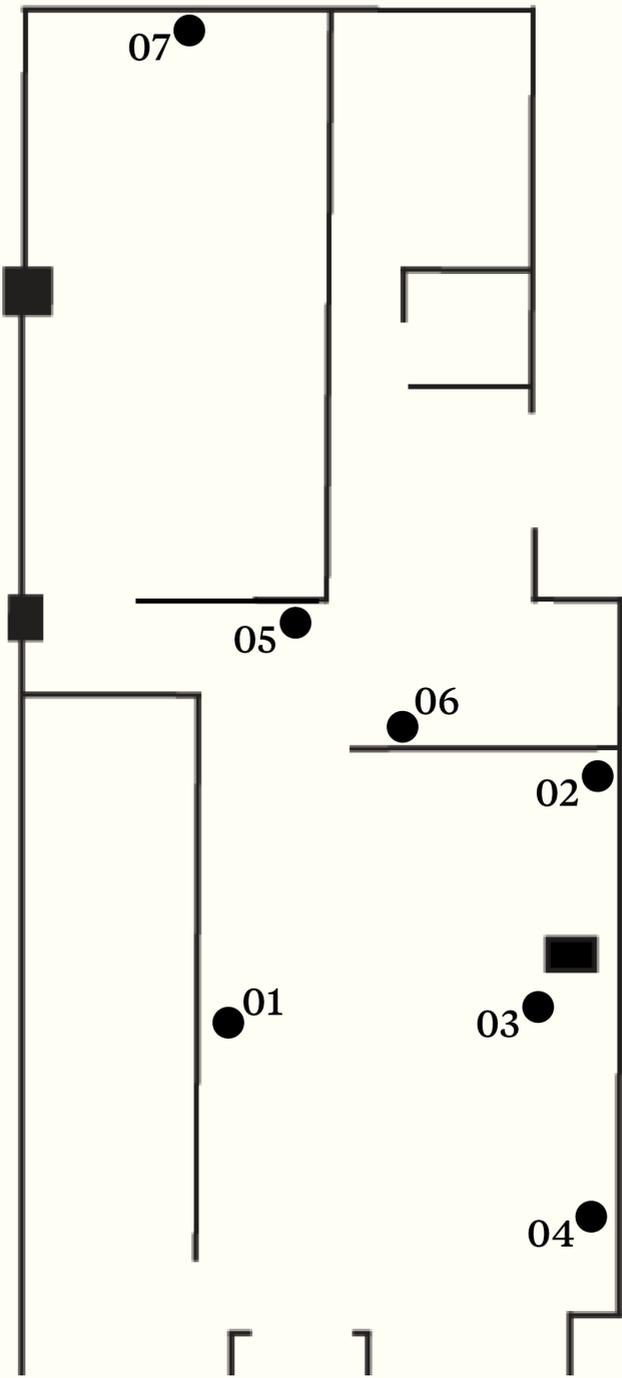
Arts, University of Sydney. Having exhibited nationally and internationally most notably at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art; Spring Workshop in Hong Kong for Para Site; the FCACHeartsJogjatour of Jogakata Indonesia. Tawale undertook an Indigenous Visual and Digital residency at the Banff Centre in Alberta Canada and received the Inaugural 2017 Create NSW Visual Arts Midcareer/Established Fellowship. Tawale recently undertook the Australia Council for the Arts six-month residency at Acme, London, focussing on colonial archives; Fijian Objects, imagery and written records.

SUE HILLERY's practice investigates architecture, sculpture and "built-potentials". She is currently based in Ōtepoti and is the director of Hillery Taylor Architecture.

Hillery graduated from Ilam in 1991 with a Bachelor of fine Arts in Sculpture and from the University of Auckland in 2001 with a Bachelor of Architecture (1st Class Honours). Having established her own architecture practice post University, Hillery then partnered with renowned architect Richard Priest, to form Hillery Priest Architecture from 2006-2012. Hillery sat on the board of artist-run gallery Testrip (1992-7), and continues to overlap architecture with contemporary art. Most recently Hillery has been collaborating with Imogen Taylor, providing spatial design and architectural interventions for *Sapphic Fragments*, The Hocken - Uare Taoka o Hākena, Ōtepoti; *Betwixt and Between* (2019) at Michael Lett Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau; *Pocket Histories* at Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery, Tāmaki Makaurau (2018) and The Dowse Art Museum, Te Awakairangi (2018).

## LIST OF WORKS

1. Imogen Taylor and Sue Hillery, *Sluice*, 2020, acrylic paint.
2. Ashleigh Taupaki, *Toro, piko*, 2020, copper wire, harakeke, natural dye, māta, plaster, found rocks, pink spiral shells, pupu shells, melted glass, aluminium.
3. Georgette Brown, *And Holds Us At the Center While the Spiral Unwinds*, 2020, acrylic paint, mediums and rope on canvas.
4. Annie Mackenzie, *Saved Message*, 2020, fruit loaf and voicemail recording.
5. Li-Ming Hu, *Three interviews*, 2019, digital video, 10:20.
6. Li-Ming Hu, *Acting/Not Acting*, 2019, digital video, 04:32.
7. Salote Tawale, *Creep*, 2014, digital video, 03:11.



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