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HUMCARD
notes from an artist

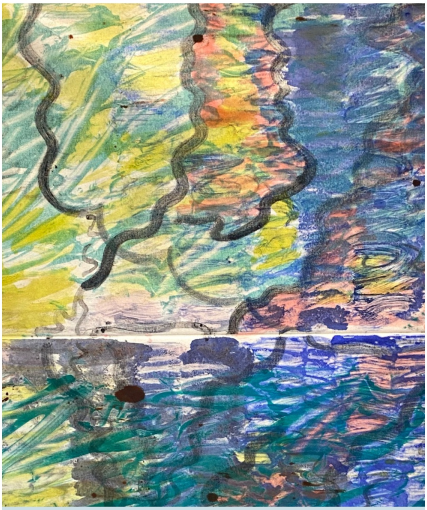
***Welcome to the fifth edition of HUMcard for 2020.** As we near the end of a difficult year, we're happy to give you a closer look at some of the international projects from New Zealand artists via these special mailouts - and we look forward to sending more out over the coming months.*

In our previous HUMcard, we featured Berlin-based artist Richard Frater and his work in the exhibition Im Volksgarten *at Kunsthaus Glarus in Switzerland. For this edition, we have invited Auckland-based painter* **Anoushka Akel** *to reflect on* **her recent exhibition, (RED LEGS) HOT HEAD, *presented at Goya Curtain in Tokyo*** *from September 4th - 27th 2020.*

HUM recently published an interview between our associate editor Catherine Dale and Goya Curtain's co-founder Joel Kirkham, in which Kirkham discusses the conception, rationale and working life of the space, as well as Akel's exhibition.

Here, we offer you another, exclusive look at the exhibition, this time from the artist's personal point of view. Keep scrolling to read more about Anoushka Akel and her latest work.

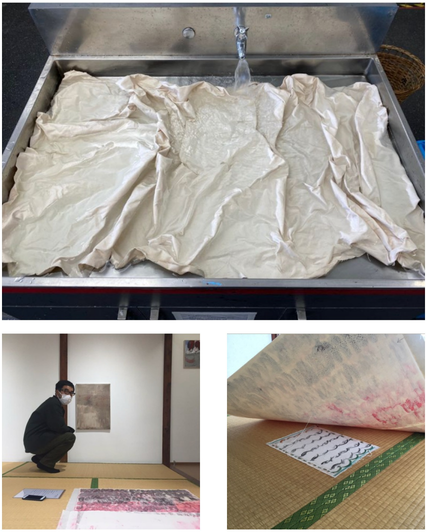
From Anoushka Akel at Goya Curtain, Tokyo



A detail of *Bathing (Lamplight or Urine)*. Image courtesy the artist.

"The project space Goya Curtain in Tokyo, whose co-founder and director is artist, curator and educator Joel Kirkham, came to my attention through my partner and peers, and in 2018 I began a conversation about the possibility of showing work there.

I first visited Tokyo in the summer of 2013. While there, I went to MOT where I saw *Two Stage Transfer Drawing*, 1971, by Dennis Oppenheim. The video shows the artist and his son drawing on and through one another. Oppenheim has long hair, is shirtless, and reminds me of my own 1970's father. This visually simple work focuses your attention to surfaces and reactive bodies, split psyche's and genetic time-travel."



Top (#1): Soaking the canvas in the print studios. Image courtesy the artist. ***Bottom L (#2):*** A visitor to Goya. Image by Joel Kirkham. ***Bottom R (#3):*** Installation view of *Group Portrait*. Image by Joel Kirkham.

"The works in *(Red Legs) Hot Head* are a culmination of attention to direct and indirect experiences, one being my time in Tokyo and seeing Oppenheim's performance. Several works in the exhibition are mono-print based paintings on unstretched canvas. They are made by first soaking the canvas in a large tub of water and then pressing one porous surface against another, to receive and exchange information.

It's hard not to mention Covid-19 when reflecting on this exhibition as many photographic documents evidence the pandemic. For instance, my homeschooled daughter in the background as I sent the works from my Auckland home, and the masked visitors in varied viewing positions at the gallery."

Top (#1): View from the Studio, Karangahape Rd, Auckland. **Bottom *(#2)*:** Packages leaving to Tokyo. Images courtesy the artist.

"I've not been to Goya Curtain, but I understand it to be a small room in a 1960's building, up several flights of stairs. In many ways it reminds me of my studio on Karangahape Rd; a similar era, a similar size, with bare wooden struts arranged in a grid, and large windows which let in natural light and look out over the street below. Goya gets its name from the green curtains of climbing plants used in the local architecture to battle the heat.

Joel installed the show and would send me pictures asking for my feedback. We tried various combinations on the walls, on the Tatami floors, and on the railings and base of the outside balcony. This kind of collaboration at a distance was a first for me, using photography and trust as tools in the installation process, and it was a pleasure to see another interact so intently with my work."

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GOYA
CURTAIN
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Left (#1): A visitor to Goya. Image by Joel Kirkham. ***Right (#2):*** The door at Goya Curtain. Image by Jeffrey Rosen.

"This has been the thing that has struck me most about the show – the difference in how the work has been viewed and interacted with. It's intimate and what I imagine to be slow - something more akin to a sound gig, where people lie on the floor, move around the space and get comfortable. Working together with an idiosyncratic artist-run project like Goya, in a different and larger city, was a much needed (and optimistic) perspective shift at a time when we are preoccupied with borders."

A visitor to Goya. Image by Joel Kirkham.

More on the artist

Anoushka Akel (b. 1977, Auckland, NZ) is an artist who lives and works in Tāmaki Makaurau. She received her MFA from the Elam School of Fine

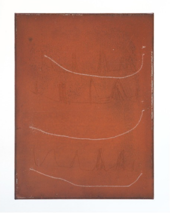
Arts in 2010. Akel works across the mediums of painting and printmaking. Consistent themes/ideas within her practice include embodied knowledge and cognition, philosophies of care, pressure and plasticity, truth and perception in relation to the body, behaviour, and the art object.

Her work has been exhibited in galleries in New Zealand, Australia, Asia and Europe. Selected solo exhibitions include *(Red Legs) Hot Head*, Goya Curtain, Tokyo (2020); *Learners*, Hopkinson Mossman, Wellington (2019); *Back Front Brain*, Hamish McKay, Wellington (2016); and *A Better Surface Held Back*, RM, Auckland (2015).

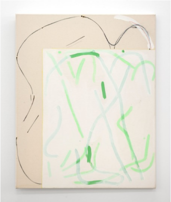
She has also participated in group exhibitions such as *Biographies of Transition: Too Busy to Think*, ARTSPACE, Auckland (2017); *Painting: A Transitive Space*, St. Paul Street Gallery 3, Auckland (2016); *Chain of Mountains*, TCB art inc, Melbourne (2016); and *Necessary Distraction: A Painting Show*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki (2016).

In 2018, Akel won The C Art Trust Award. In 2013, she completed the Künstlerhäuser Worpswede Residency, in Worpswede, Germany, and in 2006, the Peggy Guggenheim Collection Internship, in Venice, Italy. Image courtesy the artist.

Learn more about the artist here...



Teeth over Tongue, 2019,
oil on canvas, 600 x 450mm



Back Front Brain, 2016,
gesso, oil and pastel on canvas,
1000 x 800 mm

Learners, 2019. Installation view:
Hopkinson Mossman, Wellington

Hop Scotch with Kim Pieters, 2012.
Installation view: Artspace, Auckland

Once again, we hope you've enjoyed this edition of HUMcard. *Despite the disruptions felt around the world because of COVID-19, artists from Aotearoa New Zealand continue to present work abroad, and we look forward to highlighting more special projects like this one from Anoushka Akel. To see what's on at the moment take a look at our* Calendar page.

We will be sending our next HUMcard *over the coming weeks, but until then, we want to give a big thanks to all of you who have supported HUM over the past few years, and especially during this difficult year. We wouldn't be able to keep doing what we do without your generosity and encouragement. So,* ***thank you*** *and ka kite anō!*

Contemporary HUM is the first centralised platform dedicated to documenting New Zealand art projects abroad. We publish conversations, reviews and essays on the international projects of New Zealand creative practitioners, in addition to a calendar of events and exhibitions.