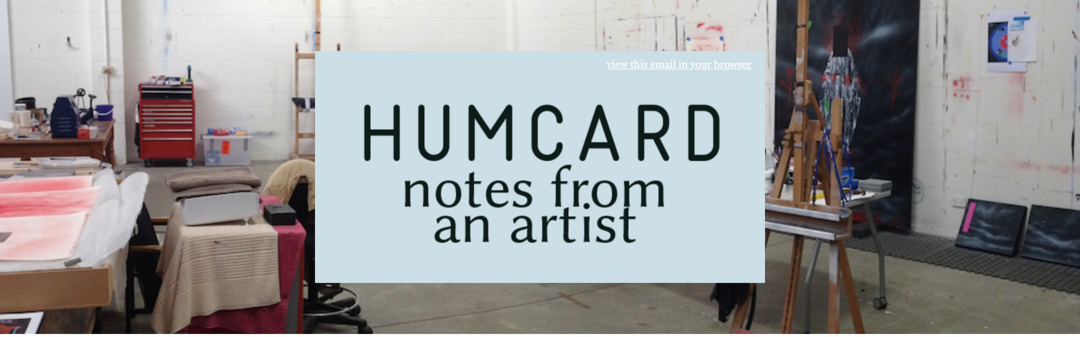

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HUMCARD

notes from an artist

Kia ora tatou and welcome to the second HUMcard for 2021, our special feature for HUM supporters. *As in previous years, every couple of months we will be bringing you an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at an international project featuring an artist or arts practitioner from Aotearoa.*

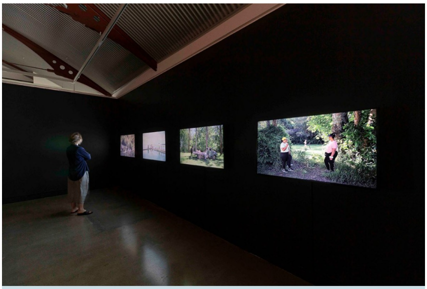
In our first HUMcard of 2021, we featured China-based curator Hutch Wilco and a project he recently co-curated in Shanghai - Southern Transmissions: Contemporary Video Art from Oceania.

For this edition, we've invited Wellington-based video artist ***Christopher Ulutupu*** *to participate. In addition to exhibiting in* Southern Transmissions *in Shanghai, Ulutupu has just presented new work* ***at Cement Fondu in Sydney****.*

On from 16 January - 7 March 2021, the exhibition, ATTENTION TOURIST*, saw Ulutupu paired with the critically acclaimed US artistic duo Lizzie Fitch and Ryan Trecartin, and looked at the performance of identity in relation to place, as well as ideas of 'homelands', colonisation, tourism, and new encounters.*

Here, exclusively for our HUMcard readers, Ulutupu has written some thoughts on the exhibition, his wider practice, and what he has coming up later this year. Scroll down for more.

From Christopher Ulutupu at Cement Fondu in Sydney



ATTENTION TOURIST, exhibition view, Cement Fondu, Sydney, 16 January - 7 March 2021. Photo: Jessica Maurer. Courtesy of the artist.

"My new body of work *New Kid in Town* was presented as part of the *Attention Tourist* exhibition at Cement Fondu, Sydney.

New Kid in Town is a four-channel work showing Samoan people interacting with palagi. Each scene depicts a different tourist location in Nelson New Zealand; a waterfall, a park, an outdoor salt pool, and a horse ranch. The title of the work derives from one of my favourite

Eagles songs, that I usually belt out in the early hours at a dodgy karaoke bar. When I'm singing the song I can't help but connect with some of the observations made in the song; it (weirdly) relates to some of my experiences of being a person of colour in New Zealand. The song is about a cowboy moving between towns and not fixed to one abode, destined to live out their life as a traveler."

All images: digital stills from *New Kid in Town*, 2021. Stills photographer: Kasmira Krefft, Cinematographer: Haz Forrester. Courtesy of the artist.

"My parents arrived in Nelson in the late eighties and always discussed how difficult the move from Porirua was for them as young parents. Describing the need to assimilate to a euro-centric society without any of their support mechanisms. Not saying that there were no Samoans in Nelson (there were like two other families we knew of), it was just very white.

My art practice is autobiographical by nature, referencing personal experiences of what it means to be a Samoan/Niuean/German artist, growing up in Aotearoa. I have been collaborating with family and friends within my practice; their participation is integral to my process, without their presence, my ideas will become hypothetical; resulting in a very different work."

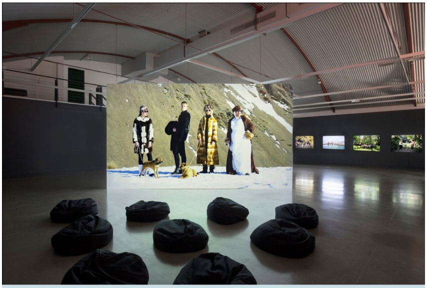
Both images: digital stills from *New Kid in Town*, 2021. Stills photographer: Kasmira Krefft, Cinematographer: Haz Forrester. Courtesy of the artist.

"I do a lot of daydreaming and sitting in locations, with no one around, conjuring performances in my head. My friends joke that it's just me being a Pisces who is dissociating from reality (I like to call it astral projecting).

I don't rely on scripts or storyboarding. My art-making process is similar to a painting practice. I bring all the materials to a set location and then I spend a concentrated amount of time to build the work, placing all the props, technical equipment, performers into the frame and then shoot."

Top image (#1): Family getting ready for filming of *BBQ*, Matai Valley, Nelson, NZ, 2021. ***Middle row L (#2):*** Fame getting lessons with a horse, on set for *New Kid in Town*, Nelson, NZ, 2021. ***Middle row R (#3):*** Ulutupu and production team moving a treadmill for *New Kid in Town*, Nelson, NZ, 2021. ***Bottom image (#4):*** Sister Ashley and singer Sela getting ready for *We used to talk*, Mainfreight Warehouse, Nelson, NZ, 2021. All images courtesy of the artist.

"I'm currently working on new works exploring the supernatural. I have always been fascinated with magic and as a child I would dream of having powers or casting spells to change my circumstances. I even created these short stories about a witch who had cured the world with her blood, but was cursed to crave it. I'm also obsessed with movies and television stories about witches (The Craft was my favourite movie). These works are still at the brainstorming stage, but will (hopefully) be shown in my upcoming show at Gus Fisher Gallery and the Dowse Gallery in 2021."



ATTENTION TOURIST, exhibition view, Cement Fondu, 16 January - 7 March 2021. Photo: Jessica Maurer. Courtesy of the artist.

New Kid in Town was commissioned by Cement Fondu and funded by Creative New Zealand

More on the artist

Christopher Ulutupu (born 1988, Wellington) is an artist of Samoan/Niuean/German descent currently residing in Wellington. He recently completed his MFA at Massey University, Wellington and has a Bachelor of Performance Design (Hons) from Massey University and Toi Whakaari: New Zealand Drama School.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Dreaming of Lulu* at Enjoy Gallery, Wellington (2019); *The Romantic Picturesque* at The Physics Room, Christchurch (2018); *The Romantic Picturesque* at Play_Station, Wellington (2018); and *The Romantic Picturesque* at Hobiennale, Tasmania, Australia (2017).

Other selected exhibitions include *Into The Open* at the New Zealand Festival of the Arts, Wellington (2020); *Into the Arms of my Coloniser,* at Dunedin Public Art Gallery (2020); *The Sound of Seeing,* at The Pyramid Club, Wellington (2020); *Our Sea of Islands* at Nu Space, Chengdu, China (2019); *More than all the oceans between us* at Artspace, Sydney (2019); *CIRCUIT Distributors Screening*, International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Germany (2019); *Lelia and Fitu (Seven)*, SCAPE Public Art Season, Christchurch (2018); *Tulisi*, Australian National University Gallery, Canberra, Australia (2018); and *The Tomorrow People*, Adam Art Gallery, Wellington (2017).

Learn more about the artist here...

MALO
Thank you for trying

Be Happy, 2019, video loop, 13:21 min

3 Songs, 2019, digital video, 16:50 min

What's the worst thing I could do?, 2019, digital video, 19:43 min

Into the Arms of my Colonizer, 2016, digital video, 16:22 min

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Once again, we hope you've enjoyed this edition of HUMcard. *In a couple of months, we will be sending out our next exclusive look at an international project by an artist or curator from Aotearoa.*

Until then, we want to give a big thanks to all of you who continue to support HUM. We think what HUM does, sharing art and creativity within communities, is essential - now more than ever - and 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.