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# HUMCARD
## notes from an artist

***Welcome to the first edition of HUMcard for 2020.*** *Like we did last year, we will send out these special HUMcards to all our supporters and patrons every couple of months with each one focusing on a different international project by a New Zealand artist.*

*In 2019 we had the pleasure of bringing you a closer look at projects by a diverse group of artists: Hikalu Clarke, Judy Millar, Mata Aho Collective, Dane Mitchell, Simon Denny, Steve Carr and Maddie Leach. To start us off this year, we've invited U.K.-based artist and filmmaker* ***Cat Auburn*** *to reflect on her recent activity. This is the second time HUM has featured Cat's work—you might remember our publication* "Preparing the Ground" *from April 2017 which focused on her moving image work of the same name.*

*Recently, Cat participated in a workshop held at CBRL's British Institute* ***in Amman, Jordan****, followed by a* ***residency at D6: Culture in Transit, in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, U.K.***

*Keep reading for some of Cat's thoughts on these experiences and the role they played in her ongoing research into national identity and post-colonial narratives.*

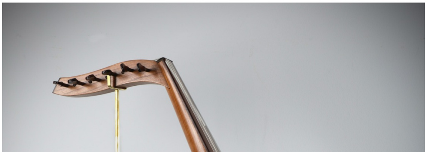
## Cat Auburn in Jordan and in the U.K.

Cat Auburn at Petra, Jordan, 2018. Image: Katherine Baxter.

"I recently had a perspective-tilting experience whilst participating in an exploratory workshop on creative practice and World War One heritage held in Jordan. As a kiwi, I'm used to a warm welcome in international settings (a problematic and privileged default position) and felt awkward when Jordanians explained to me that the history of New Zealand's presence in the region sits heavily in local memory. This is because the Anzac enforcement of the 1916 Balfour Declaration enabled Britain and France to carve up the Middle East, and current conflicts in the region can trace their lineage back to this moment in time."

Creative Practice and Cultural Memory: Exploring First World War Heritage in the Middle East - held at CBRL's British Institute in Amman, September 2018. Image: CBRL.

"Once I was old enough to glean the destructive nature of war, Anzac Day commemorations of Glory and Sacrifice, which are a part of growing up in New Zealand, made me feel uncomfortable. They still do. In 2012, I began developing *The Horses Stayed Behind*, a long-term, socially-engaged sculpture project based on the little-known narrative of New Zealand troops and their horses during the *Sinai and Palestine Campaign* of World War One. This was never a simple project about horses; I had questions about New Zealand’s collective (and selective) memory. Now, at the conclusion of the World War One Centenary Commemorative moment, and being based in the UK for four years, I have more questions than answers about national identity, colonial heritage and the recognition of my own position, both at home and internationally, within the legacy of Imperialism."



***Top:*** Mounted New Zealand World War 1 troops in Palestine, moving towards the Jordan River. Ref: 1/2-066833-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22298410 ***Bottom:*** Cat Auburn and Steve Evans, *The Horses Stayed Behind - oud,* 2015. Image: Sarjeant Gallery.

"Conflicting post-colonial narratives, and the doubt and discomfort that arise from them, have become welcome sign posts now that I have begun a practice-based PhD at Northumbria University on New Zealand's involvement in the Levant (a historical term for the Eastern Mediterranean region of Western Asia). How I position myself and my work ethically in relation to colonial legacy feels critical, particularly in the lead up to further travel in the Middle East. I have been working through complicated feelings related to my position on the side of the coloniser. I am Pākehā. My ancestors left Britain and Ireland for reasons lost to me; their memories and traditions were traded for anonymity, an intentional forgetting and new opportunities at the expense of Māori."

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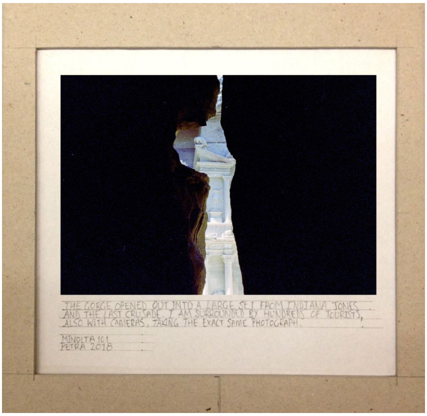
THE GORGE OPENED OUT INTO A LARGE SET FROM INDIANA JONES
AND THE LAST CRUSADE. I AM SURROUNDED BY HUNDREDS OF TOURISTS,
ALSO WITH CAMERAS, TAKING THE EXACT SAME PHOTOGRAPH.
MINOLTA 101
PETRA 2018

***Top:*** Cat Auburn, *Changing Practice* film still, 2019, mural project with D6 - Culture in Transit. ***Bottom:*** Cat Auburn, *The Treachery of Images* (work in progress), 2019. Both images: Cat Auburn.

"Having the support to reckon with my particular heritage whilst on a research residency with *D6 – Culture in Transit* (UK) earlier this year was a crucial next step - the result is a series of edited video diaries called *Changing Practice* hosted by D6 on an experimental online platform. The viewer can scroll between the different videos diaries of myself speaking to camera, diagonally overlaid with different pieces of handwritten text and stills from the spaces in which the residency took place. The video diaries were initially a way to privately review and confront my rapidly fluctuating and often conflicted views on cultural and ethical defaults; *Changing Practice* is an offer of transparency in this process. My current sculptural and filmic explorations of international museum collections and historical sites are at once seeking accountability, bearing witness to, and activism against the perpetuation of colonising practices."

NEW ZEALAND
NATIONAL RESERVE

Cat Auburn, *Interventions in the Collection Store (Glasgow Museum)* (work in progress), 2019. Image: Cat Auburn

## More on the artist

**Cat Auburn** is a New Zealand artist based in the North East of the United Kingdom. Her exhibition, '*The Horses Stayed Behind*' received the 2016 Award for Best Regional Art Exhibition at the New Zealand Museum Awards. This exhibition had a three-year national tour and was created during the 2014/2015 Tylee Cottage Artist Residency with the Sarjeant Gallery in Whanganui, (NZ). In 2015, Cat represented New Zealand at the TRIO Biennial in Brazil and graduated from the Master of Fine Arts programme at Northumbria University with distinction in 2016.

Cat was the 2016 Tyneside Cinema Graduate Artist in Residence (UK) in partnership with Northumbria University and during this time collaborated with heritage sites in Vienna, Glasgow and Northumberland to develop a new moving image work called 'Preparing the Ground'. Cat was the 2010 Olivia Spencer Bower Fellow in Christchurch and has had solo exhibitions at the Tyneside Cinema (UK), the Sarjeant Gallery (NZ), the Dowse Art Museum (NZ), Te Manawa Museum (NZ), Waikato Museum (NZ), Tauranga Art Gallery (NZ). Cat's 2018 short film, '*Shaken*' (commission by Northern Film and Media in collaboration with Channel 4) was broadcast on national UK television in August 2018 and was officially selected for the 2018 Aesthetica Short Film Festival (UK).

Visit the artist's website here...

Film still from *Shaken* (2018), 3:03 min

Film still from *Preparing the Ground* (2016-ongoing)

Film still from *Ask the Fellows Who Cut the Hay* (2016), collaboration with Estella Castle

*Condition Report 1967* (2016), installation shot, Baltic 39, Newcastle, U.K.

*We hope you've enjoyed our first HUMcard of the new year.*

*We look forward to bringing you more of these specials throughout 2020, and we also want to give a big thanks to all of you who have supported HUM over the past three years!*

*HUM is continuing to expand our coverage of international art events with Aotearoa artists, and are currently seeking support to sponsor our future co-editors in Asia and the Americas. Please let us know if you'd like to be involved or want to help make this a reality.*

*We are busier 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.