

Crossing Currents: Episode 1

An interview with Areez Katki in
Personal Structures

by Contemporary HUM

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Areez Katki. Courtesy of the artist.



Areez Kakti, *Disjecta Membra: Series T* (detail), 2023, Kaolinite clay, raku, Caspian Sea sand (9 parts), 175mm H x 175mm W x 90mm D (each). *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Federico Vespignani. Courtesy of ECC.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawings: Series Z*, 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth (17 parts), dimensions varied, with the roof of Chiesa Parrocchiale di San Vitale in the background. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Federico Vespignani. Courtesy of ECC.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawing 14 (HA 49)*, 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 430mm H x 450mm W. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Contemporary HUM.



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This is the first of eight interviews in Crossing Currents: Aotearoa New Zealand Artists in Venice, a podcast series produced in 2024 by Contemporary HUM. Listen below or wherever you get your podcasts. This is a transcript of the episode that has been edited for clarity and length.

*Speaking to Contemporary HUM in Venice in April 2024, Areez Katki discusses *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House*, his presentation in the 7th edition of *Personal Structures*, a biennial contemporary art exhibition organised by the European Cultural Centre (ECC) that runs parallel to the Venice Biennale. Presenting two series of works, “*Pedagogical Drawings: Series Z*” (2024) and “*Disjecta Membra: Series T*” (2023), Katki describes *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* as a “notional” or “counter-” archaeological enquiry. Employing queer, cross-temporal relationalities, Katki draws from his Zoroastrian upbringing and the systems of care in which he was raised to consider the ways in which modes of learning, understood as pedagogy, can be restored to an instinctual and affective realm of play, thereby disrupting the harsh moralistic dictates placed on pedagogy through religious and patriarchal structures.*

CONTEMPORARY HUM We are standing in your presentation in *Personal Structures*. Congratulations on your participation.

AREEZ KATKI Thank you.

HUM I wonder if we could begin with you describing the work and what's around us.

AK When we started these conversations about me working on a project to present over here, I didn't like the idea of thinking of it as just a static exhibition, where I present work in a kind of white cube-y context. That just doesn't appeal to me, especially right now, or really ever. But what I did want to insist on is being able to produce work that was not necessarily site-specific, but site-sensitive, which is somewhere close to site-specific, but not site-specific in the sense where it's tailor-made. Rather, it's sensitive to the atmosphere, the proximity, the architecture.

I have been to the last two editions of La Biennale and I did visit Palazzo Mora and *Personal Structures* both times. This space that we're standing in, the attic on the third level—we're technically in Sala 3F, I believe—is a really intriguing T plan section with, if you can imagine, a sort of narrow passageway that leads to a window, and the window overlooks a very, very interesting set of architectural features: the roof of a church in Cannaregio. It's a parochial site and it has clear associations with the kinds of spaces that house religious knowledge, and I'm interested in responding to that in the work itself, so that's kind of how it came about. I chose the space and then the work started taking more sort of concrete shape and form.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawings: Series Z*, 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth (17 parts), dimensions varied, with the roof of Chiesa Parrocchiale di San Vitale in the background. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Federico Vespignani. Courtesy of ECC.

Areez Katki, *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Federico Vespignani. Courtesy of ECC.

HUM Shall we then begin with the "Pedagogical Drawings"? Could you describe those and then talk about the process in making this series?

AK I mean, speaking of pedagogy, I guess the most straightforward way to describe these works could be to say that they are a series of sculptures suspended in a site-specific, or rather a site-sensitive, context, as I said. One of the reasons I had painstakingly insisted on presenting this work here is because of that proximity to the church. And I just remembered the name, it's called Chiesa Parrocchiale di San Felice.^[01] And yeah, it felt imperative to speak through that relationality and juxtaposition in the ways in which religious structures dominate pedagogical enquiries, how architecture has the ability to hold the potential to make and unmake critical conjunctures [in which] we find our bodies contained by and containing. And I sought, once the space was reserved for my work, ways to have those conversations with religious and, particularly, patriarchal pedagogies by turning them inside out, looking at their harsh lines and their didactic elements, you know, moralistic scriptures.

So these 17 suspended sculptures made of textiles in the space that lead to that T section window that I mentioned are made of found textiles. They were found over years of urban encounter, primarily in Mumbai, Bombay, near Zoroastrian fire temples and around the

borough of Tardeo, which is where four generations of my family lived until my mother's generation migrated away from India. They're each executed in this way where I sort of extracted—excavated, you could say—cleaned, restored, and then used them for a ground upon which I did those very kind of instinctual embroidered drawings.

HUM Can you talk about the specific religious script that the works are made in reference to?

AK The Gathas of Zarathustra are fascinating texts. As you might imagine, they've been transmitted and interpreted diversely over millennia since they were first conceived around 1300 BC, and one might attribute some degree of ambiguity to their exact origins, given the fact that they were mostly orally disseminated and [given] the expanse of time that it took for these Gathas to make it from ancient Avestan, eventually being scribed over a millennia later in Middle Avestan script.

I mean, what happens when time and tongues and geography, not to mention politics, shift over the centuries? A lot. And so, what we read today is a selection of hymns from an ancient rhapsode. That is the role I ascribe to Zarathustra. You know, he's a peripatetic poet whose image and words were then used as foundational material for the world's first monotheistic faith, Zoroastrianism, which I was raised to follow. Now these hymns, as with any religious text, have been used to perform didactic, moralistic purposes as guides for the ways in which one is meant to practise their faith. I find this notion both fascinating and almost kind of hilarious as a student of literature and poetry, but then [it's also fascinating] to see how, when [these texts are] transmitted into civic and ethno-religious laws, [they have] the power to shape and influence pedagogies. I suppose what my work attempts here is to disrupt that and to trouble that trajectory. I guess it's an attempt to suspend Zarathustra's words back to the place where poetry, in my opinion, comes from, which is linguistic play.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawing 6 (HA 33)*, 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 460mm H x 430mm W. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: *Contemporary HUM*.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawings: Series Z*, 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth (17 parts), dimensions varied. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Federico Vespignani. Courtesy of ECC.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawings: Series Z*, 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth (17 parts), dimensions varied. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: *Contemporary HUM*.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawings: Series Z*, 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth (17 parts), dimensions varied. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Federico Vespignani. Courtesy of ECC.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawing 3 (HA 30)*, 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 390mm H x 430mm W. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: *Contemporary HUM*.



Areez Katki, (L–R) *Pedagogical Drawing 16 (HA 51)*, 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 445mm H x 495mm W and *Pedagogical Drawing 17 (HA 53)*, 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 505mm H x 495mm W. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: *Contemporary HUM*.



Areez Katki, (L–R) *Pedagogical Drawing 8* (HA 43), 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 445mm H x 420mm W and *Pedagogical Drawing 10* (HA 45), 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 420mm H x 430mm W. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: *Contemporary HUM*.

Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawing 4* (HA 31), 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 430mm H x 460mm W. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Federico Vespignani. Courtesy of ECC.

One thing I should mention is that the 17 hymns were written in 17 sections that are called *ha's* and *ha* is short for *h a'iti* which is the Avestan word for fragment or cut. I just wanted to mention and shed light on the fragmentary aesthetic, because it works on various levels here and it always has for me. On one hand, we have these fragments, literally because they were found texts, and what I'm doing is performing a certain symmetry, where I'm using found textiles upon which to scribe what I look at as non-linguistic communication through a kind of relationship I built with material that is found: in this case, cloth. But then in the case of the works that are on our left, not cloth, they are made of earth...

HUM Yes, this series is “Disjecta Membra: Series T”.
Could I ask you to describe these works and what they're made of?

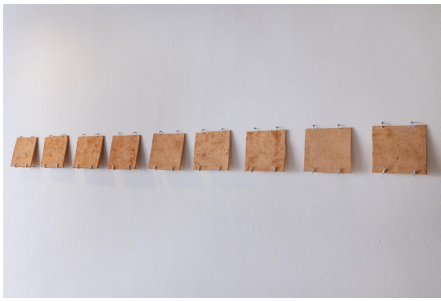
AK I suppose I see them as documents. The way in which I wanted them to be read is as texture and material that is in

its most untampered-with form. It's no accident that the tiles that I've produced here, nine of them, are facing almost directly the window across [from] which you have a pedagogical, parochial structure, which is also covered in terracotta, albeit curved terracotta shingles.

I think that quite often, as artists of a certain generation or, perhaps, owing to more personal processes of thinking, we impose limitations and stick to strict rules, or methodologies, of formulating and producing work. Over the course of grieving my grandmother's death all through until I was starting my artist residency at Tylee Cottage in Whanganui, I realised how something freeing, something devoid of my own hands and [their] control needed to be released. It was a sort of emotional release, but also a way of relinquishing a sense of agency and power and allowing natural circumstances to form the patterns upon which I thought this material deserved to be treated with. And the material itself—sorry, I didn't mention—is kaolinite clay that was found in my parents' backyard [at] our family home in Tāmaki Makaurau, in East Auckland, where my grandmother used to wake up every morning and feed the birds, which is a ritual of hers since she was a girl in India and that she continued even after she migrated to Aotearoa.

In many instances I've thought of the ways in which my grandmother raised me with various modes of care and pedagogical treatments, I suppose. These learnings were quite broad. They went from something that's instinctual and affectual to simple things, like how to cook certain Persian stews that you will never be able to find a recipe for written down, to embroidery or anything that has to do with care and restoration. This ritual of hers to feed birds felt like something particularly meaningful for me. The morning after she passed away, I flew back to Tāmaki Makaurau, and the house was empty, and I immediately just felt like breaking up pieces of bread and gathering some seeds and feeding the birds the way she did. And that's when I actually discovered that—well, I always knew that Tāmaki Makaurau had a lot of clay, particularly kaolinite clay—but I suppose my mother had been doing some gardening and I saw this divot in the grass that had this thick vein of yellow clay running through it. A few minutes later I just grabbed a little spade and I started examining it, and then the next

day I started digging for more clay and I used that clay [in this work]. I took it with me to Whanganui and I blended it with some raku for a little bit of stability and sand from the Caspian Sea. So the material itself has a loaded geographical blend, and I suppose it speaks of migration, it speaks of hybrid identities, but it is essentially a document to me.



Areez Kakti, *Disjecta Membra: Series T*, 2023, Kaolinite clay, raku, Caspian Sea sand (9 parts), 175mm H x 175mm W x 90mm D (each). *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Federico Vespignani. Courtesy of ECC.



Areez Kakti, *Disjecta Membra: Series T* (detail), 2023, Kaolinite clay, raku, Caspian Sea sand (9 parts), 175mm H x 175mm W x 90mm D (each). *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Federico Vespignani. Courtesy of ECC.



Areez Kakti, *Disjecta Membra: Series T* (detail), 2023, Kaolinite clay, raku, Caspian Sea sand (9 parts), 175mm H x 175mm W x 90mm D (each). *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Federico Vespignani. Courtesy of ECC.



Thrity, the artist's grandmother, feeding the birds at the family home in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Courtesy of Areez Kakti.



Areez Kakti, *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Federico Vespignani. Courtesy of ECC.



Areez Kakti, *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Federico Vespignani. Courtesy of ECC.

HUM One thing that strikes me about the series in the context of your broader practice is the markings in “Disjecta Membra: Series T” are also a kind of sign or linguistic inscription. Could you talk more about the markings and how they came about?

AK It was very simple, really. I wanted to look at the most straightforward way to present the material, to produce something that was, as I said earlier, untampered by my hands. But, as we know, these things are hard to realise, and it just involved a level of knowledge about clay and its stable or unstable properties when milled and blended after being sourced. There were kind individuals in Whanganui who helped me with that, because my knowledge of clay was relatively limited, though I did do some research around the properties of kaolinite clay and the firing temperatures. But my neighbour across from Tylee Cottage, Fiona, and also a really wonderful Whanganui potter, Leigh Anderton-Hall, helped me. The rest was about time and chance and seeing how slabs of wet clay could collect marks from seeds and the flocks of birds who I fed over the course of a couple of mornings, much as Granny used to do all her life.

HUM You've spoken about the work as a “notional archaeological practice”. How do ideas of excavation, restoration or preservation feature here, and what kind of knowledges do you think are being produced through this kind of archaeology?

AK In more recent years, I seem to have grown very wary and suspicious of the motivations and effects of practices from Western pedagogies, particularly the ways in which archaeological practices have not always, but often enough, been conducted as a flattening tool that both homogenises and consumes material, particularly material from ancient material cultures deemed by academic practices historically as oriental or adjacent to orientalist psychologies.

This “consumption of the other”, which is a quote from bell hooks, is a form of domination that I'm growing more sensitive to in my discipline, across both my practice as an artist as well as a writer.

[My practice] brings to the fore a queer relationality with material culture, which I suppose might be framed as a notional or counter-archaeology, one that reframes or at least tries to reframe the discipline as a restorative one, a caring one, one that doesn't have acquisitive or colonial ties anymore, and it's something I'm still kind of figuring out.

On another hand, I think that what I'm trying to navigate, however obliquely, is a way to place the notion of excavation in the realm of play, almost this kind of innocent childlike state, or [in] relational proximity to the material world. I suppose the ways in which this might provide new avenues of understanding histories and cultures, all the things that archaeology tries to decode, is by contextualising material excavation through an affective framework, where the emotional and the personal sit at the fore. In a way, it feels like psychoanalytic thinking, which, from the perspectives of theorists like Jacqueline Rose, I am very interested in learning more about.

HUM You mention bell hooks. The title of your presentation, *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House*, is a reference to Audre Lorde. Could you talk a little bit about the title and how you see it fitting in with the two series on view here?

AK The title goes back to a work that was actually first presented in an exhibition, *There is no other home but this*, with Khadim Ali, which was curated by Zara Stanhope at the Govett-Brewster in 2022 in Ngāmotu New Plymouth. It was a singular panel that had the title, *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build The Rhapsode's House*, and at the time I was doing a considerable amount of thinking my way through and hopefully out of the ways in which certain heteronormative, colonial, capitalistic hegemonies had shaped the ways in which thoughts were formed, perceived and communicated. It has been at the systemic, linguistic, social, sexual roots that so many of these encumbrances lie when it comes to finding modes of learning and communicating that don't adhere to a white linguistic or a patriarchal linguistic.

So here I'm citing Audre Lorde's wisdom in her 1979 speech, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House". I started to think about the roles we play historically in shaping the structures that encase our bodies. What are the languages used, and by whom, to inform the building of these structures? Who, if I may posit an alternative Indigenous reading of Lorde's statement, might be a figure that I trust or that I can trust more than the educators who, in my experience, in my socialisation, have mostly been men of Eurocentric origins? How might I look at language again and disseminate it within the way I communicate? And how could a rhapsode, which is a peripatetic poet and educator, possibly be a figure through whom my ideas could be suspended in all of their amorphous and queer and cross-temporal splendour?

To put it simply, the title, *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build The Rhapsode's House* does both: it acknowledges the problems faced by mastery, which thinkers who I adore like Julietta Singh encourage us to unlearn, and [it] also suggests the possibility of a gentle, affectual way of framing our personal structures through learning and questioning authoritarian voices and, most importantly, through the notions of care and play being central to ideas of a fuller, richer experience, through which I would like to imagine pedagogy being framed.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawing Drawing 7* (HA 34), 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 430mm H x 450mm W. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Contemporary HUM.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawing 13* (HA 48), 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 465mm H x 460mm W. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Contemporary HUM.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawing 2* (HA 28), 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 355mm H x 370mm W and *Pedagogical Drawing 12* (HA 47), 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 420mm H x 450mm W. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Contemporary HUM.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawing 14* (HA 49), 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 430mm H x 450mm W and *Pedagogical Drawing 11* (HA 46), 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 445mm H x 420mm W. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Contemporary HUM.



Areez Katki, *Pedagogical Drawing 1* (HA 29), 2024, Cotton embroidery on found cloth, 405mm H x 450mm W. *The Rhapsode's Tools Will Build the Rhapsode's House* installation view, *Personal Structures: Beyond Boundaries*, Palazzo Mora, Venice, Italy, 20 April–24 November 2024. Photo: Contemporary HUM.

HUM Could you talk about how you understand pedagogy and how it features in each of the series?

AK I don't know if I necessarily would claim to understand pedagogy, but, at this point in my practice and in my life, it has been definitely worth reflecting upon how certain relationships and processes of learning and unlearning have come to shape the way I synthesise and formulate my theses, whether they're the art installations or in my writings. So this is, again, where being a migrant and being queer in the positions of precarity all through one's life means new things, right? At least they can; I

can absorb and process linguistic information differently because of how multilingual we had to be, practically raised from birth speaking three languages. So pedagogy becomes a different thing for me. It involved and it still involves the notion of play and of guessing and of both decoding and encoding oneself in the context of a global cultural system that constantly asks the body, a body like a migrant's, to justify itself. It asks, where do you belong? And the answer through pedagogies rooted in care is one that my practice tries to engage with, whether through the joy of encountering materials or responding to them instinctively, or through conversations with beloved whānau, with mentors, with matriarchs and the systems of care provided by their teachings.

HUM Could you talk about how you came to present in *Personal Structures* and what that process was like for you?

AK I was invited to first develop and then present a new body of work in *Personal Structures* for its seventh edition in Venice. It began with a letter of engagement from the Director of Art, Sara Danielli, from the ECC, very early in 2023, while I was just about to start my Tylee Cottage residency in Whanganui. The process involved a few very long conversations with Sara, while I was trying to formulate work for other projects at the time. I began to understand more the context of *Personal Structures* and, in spite of having visited their two previous editions, there was still a lot more to learn about it, its history and also some of the issues that we might have with [it]. I mean, it is the “European Cultural Centre”, so there is a certain level of unease there for me.

Though it was less than ideal, or both logistically and financially [less than ideal], I felt compelled to try at least and run with the freedom, though it can be risky, that a lack of curatorial expertise provides, which is something that I am wary and critical of with the ways in which this particular exhibition is structured. There are threads of enquiry I've long wished to explore in an independent conversation with cultural material and also with my ancestors and antecedents, so I thought that it could be potentially a good opportunity to spend a year or so doing just that and to find my

work situated in Venice, to try and do it as sensitively as I could within this kind of busy global context that the biennale is situated in.

HUM You have an interest in Indigenous art studies, which continues to be a central theme of the Venice Biennale and its parallel events. In the previous edition, Yuki Kihara, who was representing Aotearoa New Zealand that year, was involved in coordinating the Firsts Solidarity Network between artists representing Albania, Britain, Poland, Singapore and Nepal. That year the GAX forum also hosted discussions with trans-Indigenous art practices, with speakers who had worked on the Sámi Pavilion and another collateral event at the Biennale that had an Indigenous focus. I was really interested in asking you where you'll be looking this time.

AK I'm afraid my answer would be quite short, because I have been so caught up in the work at hand to present my work, which is terrible really. I feel a little bit ashamed for not having kept track of who's showing and what I want to see while I'm here in Venice. But that's why I gave myself a whole week, so that I can come here, kind of come in cold [and] attend the openings that I'm obliged to attend, the previews and the events, but then I've put aside a decent chunk of time to explore.

What I will say is the GAX Forum in the last edition was remarkable. The Sàmi Pavilion was an incredible sight. One thing that I loved about their presentation is how, when asked whether they could have the Scandinavian countries' names redacted from the plaque in the pavilion, and they were basically sort of rebuked—they said, “no, sorry, we won't be removing Norway, Sweden, and so on from the architecture”—one of the Sàmi artists put up a piece of bark cloth covering from a distance and obfuscating the names from being visible. I thought that that was a really powerful gesture. So that's the kind of thing that I'm interested in, in seeing how resistance plays out, particularly given the very precarious context we are in today politically.

HUM Absolutely. Well, without a doubt, this edition will be very interesting for that reason.

AK It's almost like every time I've come to La Biennale, there has been some weird sense of... it's not necessarily the most politically charged art event, but it somehow ends up being an event that portends something. It's like a prescient look into, a glimpse into, what our future holds. And I don't know if it's looking very bright right now. But, for example, *May You Live In Interesting Times* (the International Art Exhibition at the 58th Venice Biennale in 2019) was the year before the pandemic. Come on!

(Thunder claps in the background.)

HUM The thunder was really, really well timed.

AK Yeah, it's a stormy day in Venice, by the way!



HUM What's it like being in Venice during this busy week of the Biennale opening and what does it mean for you to be presenting in Venice during the run of the Biennale?

AK It's a really interesting time to be presenting work here. I honestly haven't thought too much about it, because over the past year I've had this wonderful, productive time when I lived basically for all of 2023 in Whanganui. I am just so grateful to the communities there, the city itself, the town itself, the awa (river) and the ways in which it offered more grace and time with which I could produce work. There's something about being within proximity of water, much as we are in Venice, that kind of resonates and it leads me to think about that wonderful fecund year that I had the privilege of being able to spend in Whanganui. It started with the Tylee Cottage Residency, but much like many Tylee Cottage Residents, I too stayed back. I stayed double the amount of time, because it was such a great place to be working.

Sorry, back to your question, I think it's wonderful to go [to Venice] from the small town in the North Island of Aotearoa and to have been quietly chipping away at work. In fact, the tiles from “Disjecta Membra” were packed in pizza boxes that were given to me by a friend who owns a pizzeria in Whanganui, so there's this element of the work being produced in this small space, this sleepy town, and then it being brought to basically the centre of the global art world here. So as contexts change, as our bodies move between these spaces, there's a lot to process, and I don't think I've processed it all just yet. Yeah, it's still early.

HUM That's amazing, the pizza boxes.

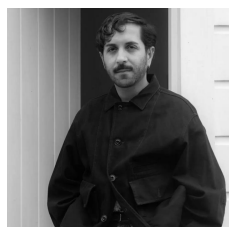
AK I sent pizza boxes to Italy! When they arrived, I sent the guys in Whanganui a photo. Your pizza boxes arrived safely. In Italy.

Crossing Currents: Aotearoa New Zealand Artists in Venice is an original podcast series produced with the support of Creative New Zealand Toi Aotearoa, with editing and mixing by Hamish Petersen. Cultural advisory is provided by Matariki Williams, graphic design by Emma Kaniuk and music by João Veríssimo.

Footnotes

01. Correction: the church named in this episode is Chiesa Parrocchiale di San Vitale, not Chiesa Parrocchiale di San Felice.

Biographies



Areez Katki (b.1989, Mumbai, India) has a practice that dwells between the textual and material-based intersections where the phenomenology of a postcolonial identity is examined through modalities of (de)language and (re)framing cultural affects. He uses traditional processes of mark making—embroidery, weaving, printmaking, staining—to destabilise the expressionistic hierarchies established by a dominant culture.

Katki's work has been exhibited across Oceania, Asia, North America and Europe; recent solo exhibitions include *All My Books Have Faded Spines*, McLeavey Gallery, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, NZ (2022); *There Is No Other Home But This* [with Khadim Ali], Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Ngāmotu New Plymouth, NZ (2022); *Fruit Cubab*, Te Tuhi, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, NZ (2022); and *Bildungsroman [& Other Stories]*, Tarq Gallery, Mumbai, India (2021). Selections of his writing have been published with Matters, Art News (NZ), The Pantograph Punch, Elle Magazine (India), Consider Journal, Waist, Saltwater Love, Turbine Kapohau and Lieu Journal. Katki's work is held internationally in private and public collections.



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