

HUM travels to Berlin

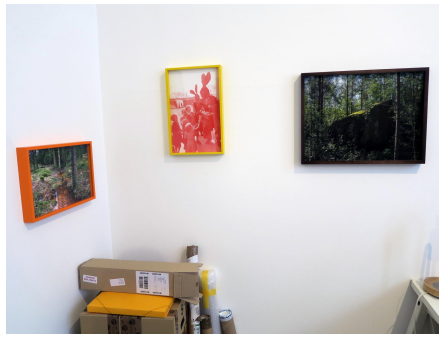
Studio visits

by Contemporary HUM

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Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Matthew Cowan's studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Ben Cauchi's studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Matthew Cowan's studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Sam Rountree William's studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.

On 02 October 2021 Contemporary HUM hosted the panel discussion *On Civicness and participation in public life through art practice* in Berlin which will be published on HUM soon. The conversation explored how the idea of 'civicness' is tied to social responsibility within a global community, from the perspective of three artists from Aotearoa: Glasgow-based Cat Auburn; Berlin-based Ruth Buchanan; and Warsaw-based Daniel Malone.

It was great to see some familiar faces at the discussion and meet new ones from the vibrant Berlin art scene! We thoroughly enjoyed catching up with some of the German-based artists and curators

from Aotearoa who were present, including Henry Davidson; Juliet Carpenter; Michael Stevenson (read our publication on his exhibition at KW in Berlin [here](#)); Bob van der Wal; Henry Babbage (who wrote [this piece for HUM](#) on artist Alex Chalmers); Matthew Cowan; Joshua Rutter; and Stephanie O'Connor (who photographed the event for us) amongst others.

While in Berlin we took the opportunity to catch up with several artists from Aotearoa New Zealand and learn about their latest projects. Scroll down to find out more.

October 3, 2021

Studio visit with Sam Rountree Williams

Originally from Kirikiriroa Hamilton, [Sam Rountree Williams](#) is a painter who has been based in Berlin for the past seven years, after attending the Dusseldorf Art Academy (2009 - 2010) and Turps Art School in London (2012 - 2013).

Sam greeted us at the door of his Kreuzberg studio, a large building containing multiple floors of individual studios, its walls decorated with scrap metal sculptures. After leading us to the top floor, to the studio he shares with one other artist, Sam talked us through his current body of work: large-scale canvasses stretched over wooden frames, most of which are decorated with brightly-painted cockle shells hand collected from the Baltic Sea. Devil figures feature amongst more abstract forms — clouds, horizon lines, landforms, and maps.

During our conversation, Sam noted connections between his work and graffiti art, Philip Guston, 'kitschy shell art', and children's drawings (we also learned he supports his studio practice by teaching in kindergartens across the city).

Earlier this year, Sam made the journey back to Aotearoa New Zealand, travelling with work for the show *Dreamers* (at Robert Heald Gallery in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, 4 - 27 March 2021). Such an exhibition, Sam said, is harder to present in Berlin — a city more known for experimental performances or large-scale, sculpture-focused exhibits than shows dedicated to painting.



Sam Rountree Williams, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Work in progress, Sam Rountree Williams in his studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Work in progress, Sam Rountree Williams' studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Work in progress, Sam Rountree Williams in his studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Inside Sam Rountree Williams' studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Artwork detail at Sam Rountree Williams' studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Sam Rountree Williams and HUM team in the artist's studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Work in progress, Sam Rountree Williams' studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.

October 4, 2021

Meeting with Joshua Rutter

Joshua Rutter's artistic practice flits between dance, choreography, performance art, music, contemporary art, theatre, and installation, a hybrid he says is "absolutely standard" in Berlin, a city he has called home since 2014, and where he studied toward an MA in Solo/Dance/Authorship (SODA) at Hochschulübergreifendes Zentrum Tanz.

We met Joshua for a quick coffee in Neukölln, where he talked to us about some of his current artistic interests — situations, physical systems, and information — and his recent projects including a series of urban walks based on a score of choreography, performed in collaboration with Sabine Zahn among others.

In 2019 was *Fremdgehen*, a mapping exercise performed around Anhalter Bahnhof, which saw four participatory duets (one performer and one member of the public) 'investigate' different surfaces and spaces of the under-utilised and overlooked part of

the city. And in 2021 was *Into Dwelling*, a choreographic study and series of public performances carried out in Alexanderplatz which explored ideas of 'inhabiting' and 'lingering' in public spaces.

Joshua also showed us *This is Dave* (2020), a video he has produced with long-time collaborator, fellow New Zealand artist and Berlin resident Dave Hall, in which they push, punch, hold, twist, balance, and shake various objects to see what happens.

"The shaking montage seems to be a crowd-favourite," he told us.
"I start to wonder if an expanded live version would make for a good performance."

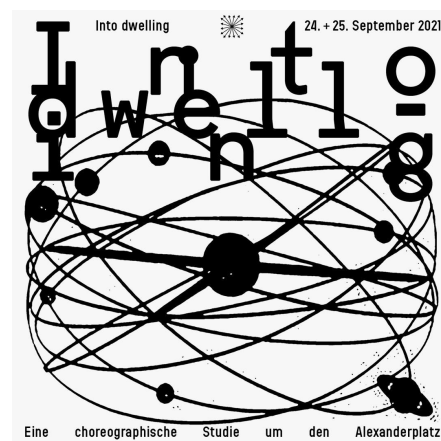
HUM featured Joshua's work in Alexa Wilson's essay *Movements of Outsiders: Nomadic New Zealand Dance Artists during the Pandemic*, published in February 2021.



Joshua Rutter in *Fremdgehen*, 2019. Directed and produced by Sabine Zahn. Performance by Arantxa Martinez, Daniel Belasco Rogers, Joshua Rutter, Sophia New. Photo: Andrea Keiz.



Screenshot of *Fremdgehen* trailer, 2019. Directed and produced by Sabine Zahn. Performance by Arantxa Martinez, Daniel Belasco Rogers, Joshua Rutter, Sophia New. Film by Andrea Keiz.



Poster for *Into Dwelling*, 2021. Image by Roman Karrer.



Screenshot of Joshua Rutter's short film *This is Dave*, 2020.



Screenshot of Joshua Rutter's short film *This is Dave*, 2020.

Studio visit with Matthew Cowan

Later that afternoon, HUM's Editor Pauline Autet visited Matthew Cowan, a multi-disciplinary artist, based in Berlin and Helsinki. He is currently working on his PhD at the Academy of Fine Arts, Uniarts Helsinki, where he also teaches.

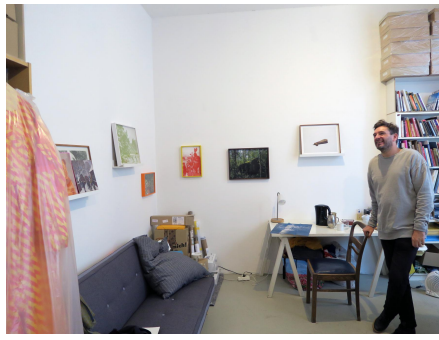
Working between photographs, videos, installations and performances, Matthew's work deals with traditional European folklore and explores the 'inherent strangeness of long-established folk customs in a contemporary world'.

One of Matthew's recent projects includes *Wildness Makes This World* (2019-21), a limited edition LP produced in collaboration with Laitakaupungin orkesteri (LKO) from Seinäjoki in Finland, which combined field recordings made by Matthew in Berlin with experimental soundscapes produced by LKO using various acoustic instruments. The soundscape was also part of the *Wildness Makes This World* exhibition at Kunsthalle Seinäjoki from 10 December 2020 - 06 March 2021.

Matthew just exhibited in the group show *Rituale der Gegenwart* (Rituals of the Present) at Künstlerhaus Sootbörn in Hamburg (27 August - 5 September 2021) and is currently working on an e-book related to his 2019 exhibition *The Scream of the Strawbear* at Kunsthalle Giessen in Germany, which will include HUM's commissioned publication by Tessa Laird.



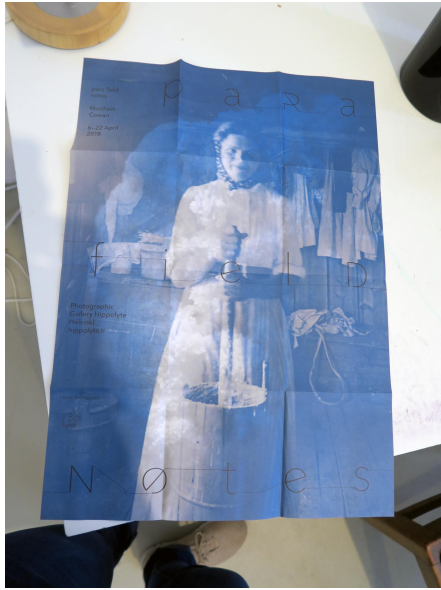
Matthew Cowan's studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Matthew Cowan in his studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Reference books, Matthew Cowan's studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Exhibition catalogue for *Para field notes* at Hippolyte Gallery in Helsinki, Finland, 06 April - 22 April 2018. Photo: HUM.



Exhibition catalogue for *Para field notes* at Hippolyte Gallery in Helsinki, Finland, 06 April - 22 April 2018. Photo: HUM.

Studio visit with Ben Cauchi

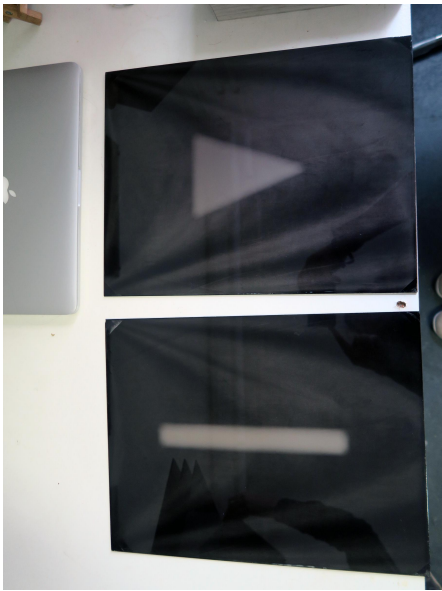
A photographer originally from Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, Ben Cauchi graduated from Massey University in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington in 2000 and has since become recognised for using very early photographic techniques: the wet-collodion photographic process, producing ambrotypes and tintypes; and one-off positives on glass or metal.

In 2012 Ben was awarded the Creative New Zealand Berlin Visual Artists Residency at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin and has since been based in the city, where he continues to develop his unique practice that examines the nature of photography, the passage of time, and the psychological dimensions of viewing.

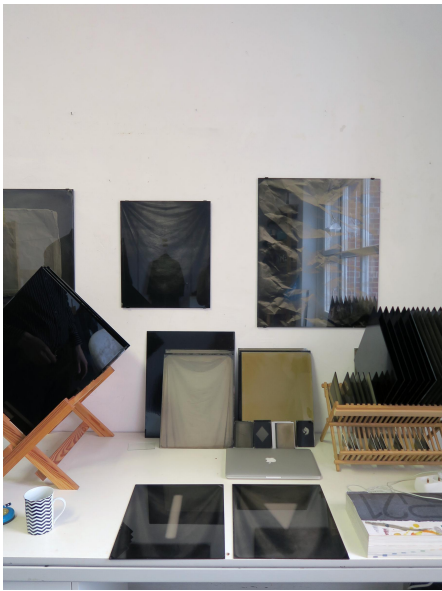
Conveniently for HUM's Editor Pauline Autet, Ben's current studio is located nearby Matthew's making her visit possible that same day. Ben spoke of the challenges involved in finding a studio space within the city, his current setup houses a large-format camera and includes a small darkroom.

It's here that he continues his research into alchemy and is currently experimenting with new forms out of focus in the frame. Ben exhibited recent works in *Metaphysica* at Robert Heald Gallery in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington this year (1 - 24 April 2021), and also curated *Solar Flare*, an exhibition with artists Roger Ackling and Chris McCaw at Robert Heald (1 - 22 May 2021). Like Ben, the artists in *Solar Flare* use sunlight as a drawing tool, producing a physical form from its energy — a process that has captured Ben's interest for more than a decade.

It was a fascinating exploration through Ben's unique setups and a memorable experience viewing his intriguing photographs up close.



Recent works, Ben Cauchi's studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Ben Cauchi's studio, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



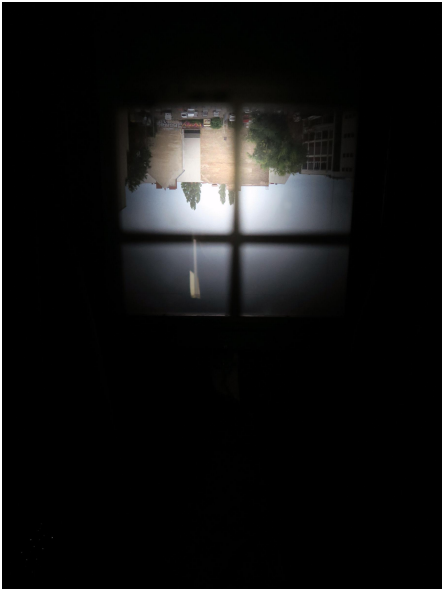
Ben Cauchi inside his darkroom, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



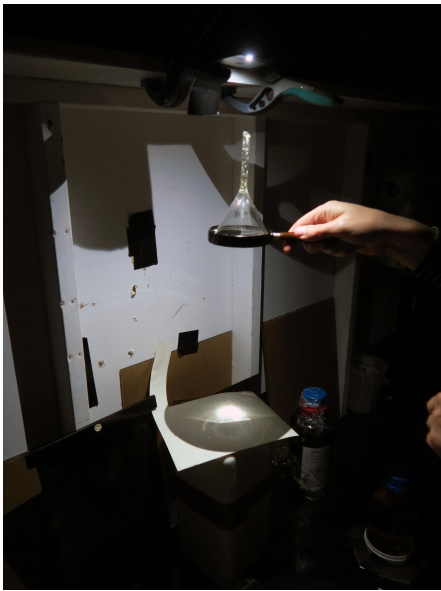
Ben Cauchi's studio with his large-format camera, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Ben Cauchi's studio with his large-format camera, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Looking through Ben's large-format camera, Berlin, October 2021. Photo: HUM.



Ben Cauchi's studio, Berlin, October 2021.
Photo: HUM.

Other exhibitions

We also took the chance to visit a few other exhibitions while in the city including Alexandra Bircken's site-specific installation *Fair Game* at KINDL Zentrum für zeitgenössische Kunst (an imposing former brewery in Neukölln); Alicja Kwade's poetic sculptures and multi-media installations in *In Abwesenheit (In Absence)* at the Berlinische Galerie; and the group exhibition *Illiberal Arts* at Haus der Kulturen der Welt which included work from Karrabing Film Collective, a grassroots Indigenous-based media group from Australia.

We think it is safe to say it was an inspiring few days!



Ben Cauchi (b. 1974, Auckland) developed a keen interest in history at an early age, coming to photography in his mid-20s, inspired by the work of the medium's pioneers. Since completing his studies at Massey University, Wellington in 2000 Ben has become highly recognised both for the 'wet-plate' processes, which he has used almost exclusively since 2002, and the intriguing photographs he creates. In 2007 he was the Francis Hodgkins Fellow at the University of Otago in Dunedin, and the resulting exhibition, *Dead Time*, was mounted at the Hocken Gallery in Dunedin and toured to Christchurch Art Gallery.

In 2011 Ben completed the Rita Angus Cottage residency in Wellington and has commenced the McCahon House residency in Auckland. His work has been collected by every major public collection in New Zealand, as well as the University of Wollongong and the National Gallery of Australia. A significant holding of his work is also housed at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. In 2011, Ben was the recipient of an Arts Foundation New Generation Award, and in 2012, was awarded the Creative New Zealand Berlin Visual Artists Residency at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin.



Joshua Rutter has been based in Berlin since 2014 and is from Aotearoa. Some of his works are: *Dance Like a Butterfly Dream Boy*, Auckland New Performance Festival (2014), Luleå, Stockholm & Malmö (SE), 2014; *Habitual Flux*, Berlin, 2015; *Patterned Interference*, Berlin, 2015; *The body is a system, yes I can*, Bucharest (RO), 2016; *Task / Force*, Berlin, 2017; *Close Up Magick*, Berlin, 2020 (Cancelled due to Covid-19).



Matthew Cowan is a New Zealand artist working in the realm of traditional European traditional customs. His works are photographs, videos, installations and performances, which play with the inherent strangeness of the continued popularity of long-established folk customs in a modern world. These works can be viewed as performative, playing with the elements of folk rituals which give people a link to the past.

Recent exhibitions have included artistic responses to artefacts and folk objects in museum collections, delving into structures that guide perceptions of popular histories and re-examining what is suggested as evidence in the historical presentation of identity. Selected solo exhibitions include: *The Scream of the Strawbear*, Kunsthalle Giessen, Germany (2019); *para field notes*, Galleria Hippolyte, Helsinki, Finland (2018); *Wandle auf Rosen und Vergissmeinnicht*, Braunschweigisches Landesmuseum, Braunschweig, Germany (2016); and *Equinox Men*, Kunstverein Langenhagen, Hannover, Germany (2016).



Sam Rountree Williams (b.1986, Hamilton, New Zealand) lives and works in Berlin. He gained his BFA from Elam School of Fine Arts, and from 2009-10 was a guest student at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf. He participated in the inaugural year of the Turps Studio Programme in London in 2012-13.

Sam has exhibited extensively in New Zealand and Europe, with recent exhibitions including solo presentations at Robert Heald in Wellington (*Dreamers*, 2021, and *Cell*, 2019), at Sumer in Tauranga (2020), and at May&Kuhn in Berlin (2018). His work is held in public collections including the Wallace Arts Trust and The Fletcher Trust Collection.



Contemporary HUM is the first centralised platform dedicated to documenting New Zealand projects abroad. HUM publishes conversations, reviews and essays on the international projects of New Zealand creative practitioners.

