

# Wansolwara: One Salt Water



Centre for  
Contemporary  
Asian Art



Terry Faleono  
Rebecca Ann Hobbs  
Paula Schaafhausen  
Vaimaila Urale

The ocean is our greatest connector; a dynamic living force that traverses the globe with no consideration for borders, delineations and divisions. *Wansolwara*, a pidgin word from the Solomon Islands meaning 'one salt water' or 'one ocean, one people', encapsulates the idea that there is a single connected waterscape that holds distinct and diverse cultures and communities. Rather than a means of separation the ocean is respected as our greatest nexus—a large, spirited and powerful body that connects us all. *Wansolwara: One Salt Water* is a multi-site project jointly produced by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art (4A) and UNSW Galleries that explores, through art, performance and conversations, the depth and diversity of contemporary visual and material culture throughout the Great Ocean.

In the Western world understandings of the Great Ocean, Oceania and the Pacific have been anchored by colonial explorers and perpetuated by glossy tourism campaigns that construct, and fetishise, a perceived authenticity of a 'traditional Pacific culture.' Such understandings place contemporary artistic practice in a stranglehold where change and evolution is equated to 'loss' of culture and, as Albert Wendt so critically noted, has led to outsiders trying to not only impose preconceived notions of culture and how it should be 'lived' but also to dispense advice on how it should be 'preserved.'<sup>1</sup> The dynamic and continuing nature of artistic practice and the sheer existence of a culture of contemporaneity in the Great Ocean destabilises and disproves a static understanding of art and cultures that continue to be seen as 'authentic' in the West. *Wansolwara: One Salt Water* seeks to further this destabilisation placing customary practices in step with contemporary articulations in art, writing, performance and the moving image to facilitate a multifaceted and sometimes paradoxical understanding of the depth and breadth of artistic practice across the Great Ocean.

Exhibited at 4A as part of *Wansolwara: One Salt Water* are the work of four artists—Terry Faleono, Rebecca Ann Hobbs, Paula Schaafhausen and Vaimaila Urale—who all have practices that explore how the Great Ocean connects us all. Australian born and Tāmaki Auckland based Hobbs occupies the entirety of the ground floor galleries with her video series *South* (2010–2011). Conceived in collaboration with multiple dancers and shot in various public locations in South Auckland, the series profiles the dance forms of voguing and dancehall that have migrated, across the Pacific Ocean, to Auckland from the Americas. Since the late 1970s South Auckland, and in particular suburbs such as Ōtara and Māngere, have been predominately the home of Pacific Islanders who have created communities at distance from the more affluent northern suburbs. In the videos, local dancers employed these migrated moves linking the socioeconomic realities of South Auckland with the birthplaces of each dance culture: Kingston, Jamaica in the 1970s and Harlem, United States of America in the 1980s. Each pop, whine and roll of dancehall and each syncopated strut of voguing knit these disparate histories into global dialogue against cultural barriers and social oppression.

Like Hobbs, Tāmaki Auckland based Vaimaila Urale investigates the evolution of artforms as they migrate across oceans. In her large-scale commissioned work *Manamea ma Anivanuanua*, Sāmoan born Urale references traditional Sāmoan symbolism through the ubiquitous global contemporary language of keyboard punctuation.

1. Albert Wendt, 'Towards a New Oceania' in *Mana Review*. Vol 1, Issue 1 (1976), pp. 54

Underpinned by *tapa* (barkcloth) and *tatau* (tattoo) artistic practices the sand-based wall mural is distinctly contemporary comprising of the backslash, forward slash and angle bracket keyboard symbols.

Through the redeployment of these symbols Urale illustrates the development of artforms across time and technology where contemporary advancement is, perhaps, not innovation but rather evidence of the evolution of continuing artistic practices. On opening night Sydney based performance artist Terry Faleono, a long-time collaborator of Urale, responds to her work with his performance *Sand* (2020).

Samoan artist Paula Schaafhausen's ongoing work *Ebbing Tagalao* is re-presented for *Wansolwara: One Salt Water*, examining humankind's fundamental dependence on the ocean as a life force. The installation comprises several sculptured figures of *Tagalao*, the Polynesian God of creation and, in turn, creator of the ocean. Formed from coconut oil and found debris from Sydney beaches the sculptures melt, harden and remelt in response to oscillations of temperature throughout the duration of the exhibition. As the *Tagalao* figures lose form they are reduced to fragrant pools of oil littered with both organic and manmade detritus. *Ebbing Tagalao* is a poetically powerful response to the realities of climate change, global warming and rising sea levels that increasingly threaten to disrupt the delicate balance of our oceans.

4A's presentation of *Wansolwara: One Salt Water* is complemented by bodies of work exhibited at UNSW Galleries by Ruha Fifita and Shivanjani Lal as well as *O le ūa na fua mai Manu'a* curated by Léuli Eshrāghi all of which further elucidate the complex and multifaceted contemporary artistic practices and knowledge systems of the Great Ocean.

#### EXHIBITION ARTISTS AT 4A:

Terry Faleono  
Rebecca Ann Hobbs  
Paula Schaafhausen  
Vaimaila Urale

**CURATOR:**  
Mikala Tai

*Wansolwara: One Salt Water* at 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art  
17 January – 29 March 2020  
4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art  
181–187 Hay St  
Haymarket, Sydney

*Wansolwara: One Salt Water* at UNSW Galleries  
17 Jan – 18 April 2020  
UNSW Galleries  
Cnr of Oxford St and Greens Rd  
Paddington, Sydney

*Wansolwara: One Salt Water* is presented in partnership with UNSW Galleries, and supported by Sydney Festival, Art Monthly Australasia, and FBI Radio.

This project and 4A are supported by the Commonwealth Government through the Visual Art & Craft Strategy and The Australia Council for the Arts, its arts funding and advisory body; the NSW Government through Create NSW and The City of Sydney.

Cover image: Paula Schaafhausen, *Ebbing Tagalao* (detail), Installation documentation from Elam School of Fine Art, Auckland. Image courtesy of the artist, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art and UNSW Galleries.

## LIST OF WORKS

### Ground floor:

Rebecca Ann Hobbs, *South*, 2010–2011, three HD video works as below in order of play. All works courtesy the artist.

Rebecca Ann Hobbs in collaboration with the dancer Amelia Lynch and in consultation with South Auckland community members, *Māngere Bridge; 246 Meters*, 2010, 00:02:47 HD video; soundtrack by Pieter Keyesz.

Rebecca Ann Hobbs in collaboration with the dancer Amelia Lynch and in consultation with South Auckland community members, *Ōtara at Night*, 2011, 00:02:09 HD video, soundtrack: *Limb By Limb*, by Cutty Ranks, on the *Reggae Anthology*.

Rebecca Ann Hobbs in collaboration with the VOGUE Dance Crew and in consultation with South Auckland community members, *Māngere Mall*, 2011, 00:04:28 HD video, soundtrack: *Tropicalinare*, by Cat Ruka and Joshua Rutter of Sweat City Heat Wave.

### First Floor:

Terry Faleono, *Sand*, 2020, performance with sand, 16 January 2020, courtesy the artist, commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art.

Paula Schaafhausen, *Ebbing Tagalao*, 2020, coconut oil, found objects from Sydney beaches, dimensions variable, commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art.

Paula Schaafhausen, Video documentation of *Ebbing Tagalao*, 2020, HD timelapse video, commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art and courtesy the artist.

Vaimaila Urale, *Manamea ma Anivanuanua*, 2020, black card and sand, 240 pieces across two walls, commissioned by 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art and courtesy the artist.

## PUBLIC PROGRAMS

### Wansolwara Symposium

Saturday 17 January | 10.30am – 5.30pm  
UNSW Galleries

This one-day symposium draws together diverse perspectives on the Great Ocean as a connector to culture, ancestral traditions and the movement of people. Join artists and guest speakers as they discuss issues connecting communities and cultures, including displacement and labour, cultural activism in the face of colonisation and the creation of new cultural phenomena.

Free, book at [artdesign.unsw.edu.au/unsw-galleries](http://artdesign.unsw.edu.au/unsw-galleries)

### Please Explain: no one's drowning, baby

Sunday 19 January | 2pm – 3.30pm

### 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art

Pacific Island nations are in the midst of a climate change crisis. This edition of Please Explain takes Marshall Islander poet, performance artist, educator Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner's address and poem "Dear Matafele Peinem", presented at the 2014 Opening Ceremony of the UN Secretary-General's Climate Summit as a starting point for discussion on the role artists and activists play in this major challenge facing our Pacific region.

Free, book at [4a.com.au](http://4a.com.au)

### Club 4A: Troppo Galaktika

25 January 2020 | Ticketed

Sydney-based collective Troppo Galaktika presents an evening of food, parade and live performance, that weaves from 4A to a karaoke club in Haymarket.

Tickets available at [sydneyfestival.org.au](http://sydneyfestival.org.au)

To find out more about public programs, artists and more, visit: [4a.com.au/wansolwara-one-salt-water](http://4a.com.au/wansolwara-one-salt-water)

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17 January – 29 March 2020

