

**wan
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wara**



wansolwara

one ocean, one people, one place

Curated by:
Steve Lovett
Cerisse Palalangi
Struan Hamilton

Catalogue essay by
Dr. Carole Shepheard
Contributing Artists
From Left to right in the gallery

- 1: Mita Gilbert
- 2: Sheree Stone
- 3: Rosemary Mortimer
- 4: Neil Emmerson
- 5: Christine Wylie
- 6: Antonia O'Mahony (plinth)
- 7: Irena Keckes
- 8: Damon Kawolsky
- 9: Jacqueline Aust (sculpture)
- 10: Posi Prasad
- 11: Emma McLellan
- 12: Hyun Ju Kim
- 13: Suho Yoo
- 14: John McKaig
- 15: Deborah Crowe
- 16: Nofo Me Fale
- 17: Faith McManus
- 18: Christopher White
- 19: Lee Brogan
- 20: Gabrielle Belz
- 21: Sheyne Tuffery
- 22: Luisa Tora
- 23: Ruby Oakley
- 24: Tom Ludvigson
- 25: Elle Anderson (plinth)
- 26: Chad Andrews
- 27: ValCuthbert
- 28: Mark Graver
- 29: Esther Hansen
- 30: Marion Wassenaar
- 31: Winston Shacklock (landing)

Special Consultant to the project Ralph Ako



The Warmth of Other's Suns

All of us here in Aotearoa New Zealand carry the legacy of recent or long distant migrations, migration to this land to be here in the now. We are connected and separated by the ocean. One sea that we live close to, that nourishes us, that connects us to home and to discovery.¹

The question of 'what is place?' is for many answered by an unswaying belief in home, family, location, or situation. Regardless of geographic location. Something comfortable, dependable, known and safe. The origins of this have existed for centuries when areas within contested boundaries were deemed 'civilised' and anything beyond wild, unfriendly and dangerous. This certainly describes the state of mind common in colonial situations and underpins, albeit it quietly, the background to the exhibition *Wansolwara*.²

The days when Aotearoa New Zealand was largely regarded as *terra incognita* has passed, but the question of *place*, along with its synonyms of space, setting, whereabouts, territory or site, is still being interrogated by many in times of social and economic uncertainty. Migration from one part of the globe to another has had a huge impact on human settlement and over the past century, the art world has benefited enormously from the phenomenon. Far from any desire to reach a complete understanding of a new geographic landscape, or tackling contentious issues of national identity, artists have recognised that

'place' has no fixed identity, no fixed setting and that they themselves, and the work they make becomes a re-energized and new arena for creativity.

Today movement from one country to another is not necessarily about exile, displacement or forcibly imposed relocation but one of perceived opportunity. The 'land of plenty' most would argue, is a myth. The journey however, whatever the personal circumstances, has resulted in an attitude towards art making that brings an unencumbered freshness and a desire to break with tradition. New goals are set, conventions are tested and a new cultural matrix established. Many artists, like those before them, have chosen the '*warmth of another sun*' in which to make art and in so doing bring with them diverse cultural origins that enrich, enlighten and contribute to new hybrid communities.

Reflecting on the writings of print theorists such as Luis Camnitzer, Ruth Weisberg and Hugh Merrill, we can think of print as both a colony and a community. The importance of resisting nostalgia for what 'was', to dismantle linear definitions and to accommodate diversity is the future of print. In Aotearoa New Zealand, new voices have begun to quash what for many decades has been the restrictive boundaries imposed by a ubiquitous European art canon and move ahead unburdened. In this exhibition, and with this legacy, many artists

have investigated concepts that include reviewing aspects of colonisation; perceptions of utopia and dystopia; the loss of language and ritual; metaphors for departure and arrival and the psychology of history, memory and loss. All echo Michael King's belief that '*we are all boat people*' and speak of movement, exchange, transference and journeying.

The exhibition title, *Wansolwara* comes from the Solomon Islands pijin dialect meaning '*one salt water*' and with it notions of *one ocean, one people, one place*. Having spent some time in the Solomon Islands working with print and papermaking projects, the imagery used by local artists almost always depicts the way of life is so dependent on water - as a food source, as a means of transportation and as part of a rich cultural mythology. Ralph Ako in conversation with Steve Lovett offers greater insight into the meanings of the word in a story told to him by his grandfather, Maepio Lulubangara. "Our ancestors were loyal, disciplined, and had strong bond to their traditional beliefs. It was thought that each island was the center of a separate world, and that crossing the ocean, sometimes to fight, was a duty and a way to please the Gods. To be a warrior was central to a sense of self in the Solomon Islands. Contact with missionaries and Christian faith brought in to focus the earliest expression of the idea of '*Wansolwara, one ocean, one people, one place*'. This notion gathered significance toward the end of the civil war and became of uniting people across the ocean"³

When considering migration and print, there are many useful analogies to be made, some

less obvious than others. All media have their own specific and private language but none more so than print. In part because of a history steeped in rewarding skill and manual dexterity, but also because for many technique is paramount. “It is in our DNA”, one printmaker says. We know that the formal components – ink, paper, matrix and press/printer – influence not only the physical outcome, but also importantly the meaning and intent behind the image. This is, however, the printmaker’s Achilles heel.

Susan Tallman commented that “*most prints are produced through a distinct set of procedures that result in distinctive appearances*”⁴ and Luis Camnitzer⁵ speaks of print fundamentalism and the negative impact this has had on the field and the professional lives of many. Hopefully somewhere between the two are calm water and a clear sky.

Rather than focusing exclusively on the migratory artist and her or his personal journey, *Wansolwara* opens up the question of how concept, process and performance might themselves be considered a migratory act – an action of intent if you will from one point (or situation) to another. In this way the artist may mitigate the emphasis placed on technique and bring together work that is informed by ideas and values.

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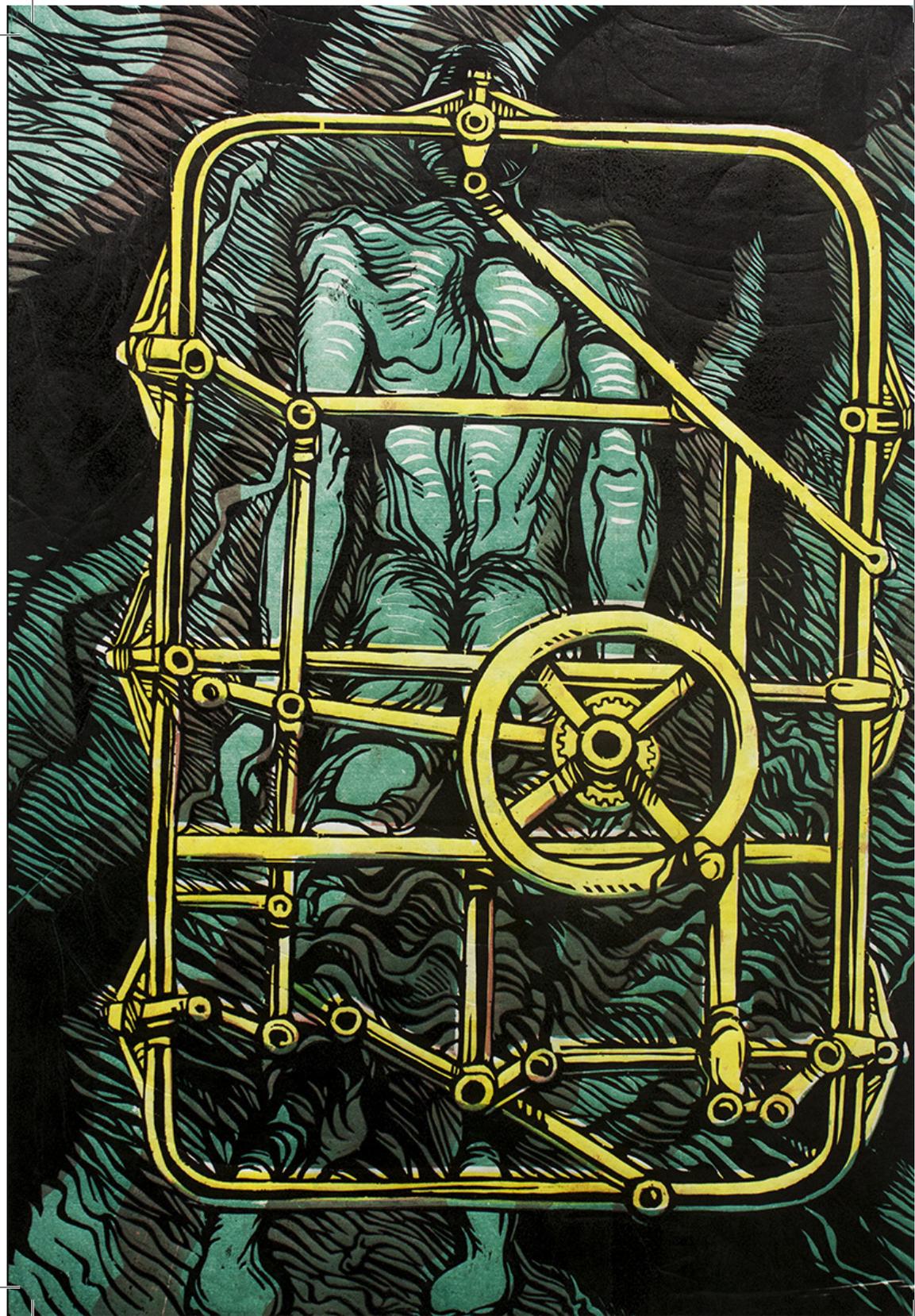
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Every inked image participates in a migration like shift from its start point, be that a plate, block, screen or file, to place(s) where it will be seen. The printed image sits on a new ground, always in the here and now, separated from yet connected to its origins.⁶

The information presented to artists for inclusion in *Wansolwara* was left open and fluid. The resulting works range across most print disciplines (including typography) and extend into collage, photography and the digital. All works however are bound by context and concept so there is much more to this exhibition than the oscillation between concept and process, process and concept. Parallel issues such as print aesthetics, image dissemination, the evolving digital presence and the ethos of the edition are inherent in both the work and the written material. Unlike many other juried exhibitions, curator Steve Lovett has raised the stakes and demanded that printmakers discuss their work primarily in analytical, referential, and abstract terms.

Ruth Weisberg in *Critical Theory and the Print* talks of a frame of reference for relating print to critical theory and suggests three starting points: visual image as **image**, visual image as **sign** and visual image as **perception**. By acknowledging there is now an expanded definition of printmaking, it can be further argued that we might also need to expand the criteria used for curating, selecting and critiquing, along with the removal of didactic exhibition material. If painters do not state the process used, why do we?

With Weisberg's suggestions underpinning the selection of works, and re-considering studio practice in light of this seminal writing, individuals are challenged in this exhibition to find their own '*sense of place*'.

Artists from Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, India, Korea, Samoa and the Solomon Islands are represented in this exhibition and offer new interpretations of the theme and solid reasoning behind their thinking. They have interrogated the notion of movement and place, about displacement and otherness, encompassed the 'personal as political' and explored the place of narrative, so valued by artists in the 21st C. All artists in the show have used the analogy of migratory movement – from there to here, from here to there - as a way to extend their own practice and what it means to enter the contested territory of contemporary print.

Collectively *Wansolwara* is diverse, wide ranging, capricious and challenging. Print exhibitions, carried out in a global atmosphere, introduce people to one another. This has the potential to open up a rich dialogue of inclusiveness for all and gives audiences opportunities to reflect on what it means to receive, in essence, the warmth of other suns.

*Mi hapi tumas fo raetum disfala leter
long iu*

Dr Carole Shepheard 2014



Endnotes

- 1: Steve Lovett. Curatorial statement for Wansolwara. 2014
- 2: Wansolwara. Impressive V. The Nathan Homestead, Manurewa, Auckland. 28 Oct – 30 November, 2014
- 3: Ralph Ako. In conversation with Steve Lovett in August and September 2014, Auckland New Zealand.
- 4: Susan Tallman. *The Contemporary Print: From Pre-Pop to Post-Modern*, London: Thames and Hudson, 1996, p8.
- 5: Luis Camnitzer. *Printmaking: A Colony of the Arts. The Graphic Unconscious*, Philografika, 2010.
- 6: Steve Lovett. Curatorial statement for wansolwara. 2014



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Text © Dr Carole Shephard

Images © (p4) Lee Brogan Paradise Found Low.

(P9) Nofo Mefale, Don't Touch. (p10) John McKaig, Passage. (p13) Mimita Kiripati, Self Portrait. (p14) Faith McManus, Navigator. Winston Shacklock, untitled (cover)

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Nathan Homestead
70 Hill Road
Manurewa 2102
Manurewa Auckland New Zealand



Southside Arts Festival 2014
URBANE SIA





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