

***OTHER WATERS***

**Art on the Manukau**

Exhibition at Te Tuhi: 15 November 2014 - 15 February 2015

Weekend art event on Old Mangere Bridge: 28 - 30 November 2014

SCREENING ROOM - PROGRAMME NOTES

The screening room features works by:

Lucy 'Aukafolau // Ergin Çavuşoğlu //

Sarah J. Christman // Murray Hewitt // Rebecca Ann Hobbs //

Peter Wareing // Shannon Te Ao & Iain Frengley //

Wolfgang Lehmann & Telemach Wiesinger.

Curated by Eu Jin Chua.

This booklet contains the programme notes for the screening room portion of the exhibition. Information about the other works in the show are contained in a separate booklet.

## INTRODUCTION: THE MANUKAU AND BEYOND

**OTHER WATERS** is a collaborative project that takes the Manukau — Auckland’s southern harbour — as its inspiration and its subject. Sometimes overlooked in favour of the city’s more developed northern coastlines, the Manukau and its foreshore play a unique role in the Auckland imaginary. It is a place of wild waters, urban pollution, colonial encounter, shipwreck — its name is thought to be derived from the Maori word “mānukanuka” or “anxious mind”, referring to its dangerous shoals. But this “anxious harbour” is also a place of beauty and recreational pleasure, with rich environmental and cultural resources worth protecting. Consequently a group of us artists and writers decided that we wanted to draw public attention to this economically neglected yet talismanic area of Auckland.

The screening room programme is just one part of the show at Te Tuhi. Its intention is to extend our portrait of the Manukau by means of, paradoxically, showing a number of film and video works that were made elsewhere. The other locations depicted in these works may be thought of as ‘sister’ spaces that are subject to their own specific issues yet also subject to those issues common to all locales where land meets water and nation meets world. (An additional handful of works will be shown in a one-off evening screening event in December 2014.) These ‘sister’ works stand on their own, but perhaps gain an extra richness when put in conversation with the Manukau, with Auckland, or with New Zealand as a whole. Conversely, our wager is also that the Manukau Harbour might be better understood in its national and global context if its specificity is refracted through the lens of other locales. The underlying premise is that the local without a sense of global solidarity is tantamount to parochialism.

The works in the screening room were shot, variously, in Nelson / Whakatu, Hawkes Bay, Tonga, the Bay of Biscay, the

North Atlantic, and Brooklyn, New York. Only one of them — Rebecca Hobbs’s dynamic dance film **MANGERE BRIDGE: 246 METERS** — was shot on the Manukau Harbour, and for this reason, it anchors the screening room programme. The programme thus begins with great kineticism on Old Mangere Bridge — which is the locus of the whole **OTHER WATERS** project — and radiates outwards to other parts of New Zealand and other parts of the world. — **EU JIN CHUA, CURATOR**

Eu Jin Chua is a writer, curator, and educator. He has worked on exhibitions and screening programmes for various galleries in New Zealand and the UK, notably the New Zealand Film Archive and Artsway Hampshire / Tate Modern London. He is an associate founding editor of the **MOVING IMAGE REVIEW & ART JOURNAL**, the first scholarly peer-reviewed journal of artists’ moving image. He has published in various exhibition catalogues and scholarly periodicals, including **POSTMODERN CULTURE** and **SCREENING THE PAST**. One major strand of his current research is on landscape, ecological thought, and film theory. He was born on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, grew up partly on the North Shore of Auckland, and was based in London for several years. He is currently Senior Lecturer in art and design at the Auckland University of Technology. <bbk.academia.edu/eujinchua>

## WORKS LISTED IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

### Rebecca Ann Hobbs

### **MANGERE BRIDGE: 246 METERS (2010)**

NEW ZEALAND  
HD DIGITAL LOOP, COLOUR, SOUND.  
DURATION: 03:00 MIN  
COURTESY THE ARTIST.  
DANCER: AMELIA LYNCH.  
SOUNDTRACK BY: PIETER KEYESZ.

Measuring a 246 meter bridge with whines, pops and rolls.

**MANGERE BRIDGE: 246 METERS** is part of a series of video works shot in South Auckland spaces and influenced

by dance culture. It is intended to show how culture may be reinterpreted through site, and vice versa. The specific cultural form it celebrates is that of dancehall. Dancehall refers to a genre of music that originated in Jamaica, but it is also a term that indicates an entire culture in which music, dance, fashion, and community collide. The more flamboyant and dexterous a dancehall queen's performance, the more she is able to represent her 'hood at a "sound clash" event.

Dancehall culture evolved out of historical changes in the society and politics of Jamaica, including changes in the possibilities of socioeconomic advancement. The aforementioned dancehall queen can maintain her own beauty business during the week and perform at the "sound clash" on the weekend, dressed in full dancehall regalia financed by profits from her small business.

In MANGERE BRIDGE: 246 METERS, we track a dancer as she progresses the length of the Old Mangere Bridge, a structure that joins the North (Onehunga) with the South (Mangere Bridge suburb). The bridge no longer functions as a thoroughfare; instead, different communities come together to fish, play and hang out. — REBECCA ANN HOBBS

For the weekend event on Old Mangere Bridge, Hobbs, in collaboration with choreographer Keshia Paulse and five dancers, will be staging an expanded version of the action shown in this work. Titled DANCE RELAY, this performance will take place live from noon on Saturday 29 November. Free to attend.

Rebecca Ann Hobbs (born in Australia, Wulgurukaba country) is a contemporary fine art practitioner who currently teaches at Manukau Institute of Technology in Otara, Auckland. She works in new media, creating video and still images that mostly celebrate dynamic bodies and their relationships with specific sites. Hobbs has been invited to participate in exhibitions from Aotearoa to Australia, France, Germany, Poland, Sweden and the U.S.A. In 2002 Hobbs received the Australian Samstag International Visual Arts Scholarship, allowing her to undertake a Master of Fine Arts at the California Institute of the Arts, which she completed in 2005. <[www.rebeccaannhobbs.com](http://www.rebeccaannhobbs.com)>

## Shannon Te Ao & Iain Frengley

### UNTITLED (AFTER RAKAIHAUTU) (2012)

NEW ZEALAND  
DIGITAL VIDEO, COLOUR, SOUND.  
DURATION: 03:30 MIN  
COURTESY THE ARTISTS.

"A slightly harrowing experience for the artist, we follow his... footfall[s] over an estuary and witness his slapping, scraping, stabbing with a stick, raising and shaping of gravels, flicking of mud and haehae-like scarifications that he leaves in Waimea estuary, Whakatu (Nelson)....

"Such activities reference the process of art making in response to Te Ao learning more of the cultural significance of the Waimea area. In particular, he emulates the narrative of Māori chief and explorer Rakaihautu [who] first made landfall at the top of the south island at Nelson, and then travelled south 'shaping and creating landscapes as he went'. In this work, Te Ao gets wet, muddy, and in touch with conceptual riches to be found in local knowledge or allegory of place."

— DR HUHANA SMITH, [CIRCUIT.ORG.NZ](http://CIRCUIT.ORG.NZ)

Shannon Te Ao (Ngāti Tūwharetoa) is an artist, writer and curator whose current research interests include performance and video art practices. The majority of Te Ao's recent artistic output has seen him investigating and responding to material drawn from Māori paradigms, testing the implications of alternative creative, social and linguistic models in relation to contemporary video art and other performative practices. He is a lecturer at Whiti o Rehua - The School of Art, Massey University.

<[creative.massey.ac.nz/about/our-people/school-of-art-faculty-and-staff/shannon-te-ao](http://creative.massey.ac.nz/about/our-people/school-of-art-faculty-and-staff/shannon-te-ao)>

Iain Frengley is a freelance cinematographer and filmmaker. He holds a Masters degree in natural history filmmaking (with distinction) from Otago University. He is based in Port Chalmers, Dunedin. He has worked with Greenpeace, The Royal Society of New Zealand, The Vodafone Foundation, the ASB Community Trust, and New Zealand On Air.

<[www.iainfrengley.co.nz](http://www.iainfrengley.co.nz)>

## Peter Wareing

### FROM TIZIANO VECELLIO TO BARNETT NEWMAN AND BACK (2008)

NEW ZEALAND  
8 MM FILM, BLACK/WHITE (MOS), TRANSFERRED TO DIGITAL VIDEO.  
DURATION: 04:00 MIN  
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND CIRCUIT ARTIST FILM AND VIDEO.

FROM TIZIANO VECELLIO TO BARNETT NEWMAN AND BACK references two historical pictorial traditions that are dialectically different and echoes the artist's estranged stance on returning to New Zealand for a visit after many years living in New York. — CIRCUIT.ORG.NZ

As its title suggests, this film refers to two preeminent figures of European painting: Titian, the Italian Renaissance master (born Tiziano Vecellio), and Barnett Newman, one of the deans of twentieth century American abstract expressionism. The allusion to Newman is the more oblique one, and has to do with the fact that the film consists of two vertically oriented frames separated by a line, echoing the vertical stripe that runs down the centre of many Newman paintings (the so-called "zips"). The allusion to Titian is contained in the action of the film: a man walking on the seashore finds, amidst the rocks, a reproduction on a crumpled piece of paper of Titian's sixteenth-century painting VENUS AND ADONIS. He lies down in an odd burrow-like shelter constructed on the rocks out of driftwood and contemplates the image. He then gets back up on his feet, retraces his footsteps, and returns the piece of paper to where he originally found it. In fact, the film is palindromic — it runs the same forwards and backwards, with the forwards action meeting the reverse action in the middle — and so the second half of the film is actually a backwards replay of the first half.

The film allegorizes the experience that many New Zealanders have, of repatriation to Godzone after living overseas for several years— with the occasional disorienting memory

thereafter of what it was like to live in cities where the heavy wealth of the Western tradition hung on museum walls. The man encounters Europe in the form of a famous Italian painting, then puts the encounter away, and returns home (or perhaps returns to Europe to see the real thing). The setting is important — the film was shot on the Nelson Boulder Bank, where, as a child, the artist used to take walks; it thus represents home and homecoming. The driftwood burrow is perhaps a symbol of the unsteady, makeshift tūrangawaewae of a certain generation of Pakeha New Zealanders; it's a house of soft foundations.

Wareing is now based in London. On his many trips of expatriation and repatriation, he must have passed through the Manukau Harbour, which is after all the location of Auckland International Airport, the gateway through which, after a flight connection or three, we encounter the world, and vice versa.

— EU JIN CHUA

PETER WAREING is a London-based New Zealand video artist. He has collaborated with performing artists in numerous interdisciplinary projects in theatre and the performing arts in New York, where he lived for 25 years. His moving image work and performing art collaborations have been presented widely in film festivals, art galleries and performing arts institutions in the US, Europe, and New Zealand.  
<ircuit.org.nz/artist/peter-wareing>

## Lucy 'Aukafolau

### INVISIBLE TERRITORIES (2014)

NEW ZEALAND / TONGA  
MULTI-CHANNEL DIGITAL VIDEO REWORKED INTO SINGLE-SCREEN VERSION, COLOUR, SOUND.  
DURATION: 09:00 MIN  
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND CIRCUIT ARTIST FILM AND VIDEO.

INVISIBLE TERRITORIES is comprised of footage taken during 'Aukafolau's first trip to Tonga with her father and uncle to their homeland in 'O'ua Ha'apai, Tonga. Adopting the role of an observer,

her participation in the journey is guided not by personal way-finding intentions but rather attempts to situate and orient her experience of place within her father and uncle's collective memory of 'O'ua. Throughout the film there are glimpses of boat journeys at different times of the day capturing the activity at sea; the offload of goods and the boarding and disembarking of ferry passengers. The flurry of activity at sea brings to life the importance of the ocean as a means of travel and communication, evoking the prophetic visions of the late 'Eveli Hau'ofa and his notion of a 'sea of islands' where Pacific islands are connected rather than separated by the sea. — CIRCUIT.ORG.NZ

Many contemporary video installations spread themselves out amongst multiple screens. *INVISIBLE TERRITORIES* uses this format to suggest something of what it is like to be spread out across an abundant ocean. It's the formal equivalent of 'Eveli Hau'ofa's famous argument that it's an error of the European imagination to conceive of the Pacific nations as tiny undeveloped landmasses in the midst of empty seas. Rather, we should understand ourselves to be part of huge, rich territories since the ocean is actually a very fulsome space.

*INVISIBLE TERRITORIES* is an intensely spatial work. The eye ranges from one screen to another, as from one island to another. The vastness of the Pacific Ocean always seems to elude the partial views of the camera. Off-screen space is important: the night scenes remind one of Andre Bazin's idea that the framing of a camera is always like a flashlight in darkness — it only shows portions of spaces that we know to be much larger. *INVISIBLE TERRITORIES* is shown here in a two-channel version on a single screen (made especially for this exhibition), but the oceanic horizontality of the work remains. — EU JIN CHUA

References: 'Eveli Hau'ofa, "Our Sea of Islands", *THE CONTEMPORARY PACIFIC* 6.1 (1994): 147-161. // André Bazin, "Theatre and Cinema - Part Two", *WHAT IS CINEMA?*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), p. 107.

LUCY 'AUKAFOLAU is an emerging artist of Tongan and European descent. She recently completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) at Elam School of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland. Now based in Berlin, she has exhibited her work as part of the annual Tautai Tertiary Exhibition at St Paul Street Gallery. Her practice is concerned with the theory of psychogeography and its relationship to the physical actions of navigation, travel and negotiation of space that reveal new territories and experiences.  
<ircuit.org.nz/artist/lucy-aukafolau>

## Ergin Çavuşoğlu

### POISED IN THE INFINITE OCEAN (2004)

BULGARIA / TURKEY / FRANCE / UK  
THREE CHANNEL VIDEO INSTALLATION CONVERTED TO SINGLE SCREEN, TWO CHANNEL SOUND (READING FROM THE BOOK "THE OUTLAW SEA" BY THE AUTHOR, WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE).  
DURATION: 05:20 MIN // DIMENSIONS VARIABLE  
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND RAMPA, ISTANBUL. © ERGIN ÇAVUŞOĞLU

*POISED IN THE INFINITE OCEAN* was filmed on the Bay of Biscay, not far from the spot where, in 2001, a decrepit cargo ship — one that should have been decommissioned long before — broke apart in stormy seas. Eleven crew members drowned (out of thirty-five). The story of the capsizing of the *KRISTAL* was later pieced together from survivors' reports by the American writer and journalist William Langewiesche, and it is the latter's voice that we hear on the soundtrack of Çavuşoğlu's video: Langewiesche reads out excerpts from his account of the *KRISTAL*'s final voyage.

Çavuşoğlu's interest in matters nautical has to do with his career-long interest in (and presumably personal experience of) itinerancy and placelessness. A ship is the ultimate example of an itinerant nowhere space. It's also the paradigm of what Foucault called the 'heterotopia', a space that fulfils a very specific function for society paradoxically by allowing for the suspension of all of society's rules. Thus we may take the key phrase in the video to be the one we hear at the very end, a phrase which seems to refer to the condition of placelessness and lawlessness: "the entire struc-

ture is something of a fantasy floating free of the realities at sea”.

An equally important passage, however, is the bit where a Spanish crewman telephones his mother to convey his worries about the impending bad weather and the poor condition of the ship. Being safe on land, she is unable to grasp the full import of his concern. “Her view was limited, as land views are, by the orderly little neighborhood that surrounded her and the sky immediately overhead”. This is exactly the view that the video gives us: the limited “land view”. Across the three screens, we see the signs of a brewing storm — a house standing fast in darkening skies, flashes of lightning over an “orderly” townscape, the water at sea’s edge beginning to boil — but these are all helpless views from shore. The partiality and helplessness of these viewpoints gives the work an anecdotal, fragmentary quality that exceeds the simple fact that Langewiesche is reading out a fragment from a longer story. *POISED IN THE INFINITE OCEAN* feels like a snippet from some larger field of happenstance. It gives us glimpses of vaster natural forces in play, and of a world so immense that there are always tragedies happening elsewhere of which one has little inkling.

In 1863, the *HMS ORPHEUS* foundered on sandbars at the mouth of the Manukau Harbour. One hundred and eighty-nine drowned; this remains the most deadly maritime disaster to have occurred in New Zealand waters. — EU JIN CHUA

References: Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” *DIACRITICS* 16 (Spring 1986), 22-27. // William Langewiesche, *THE OUTLAW SEA* (New York: North Point Press, 2004).

ERGIN ÇAVUŞOĞLU (born in Bulgaria, 1968) studied at The National School of Fine Arts ‘Iliya Petrov’, Sofia, in the early 1980s. He consequently received a BA from the University of Marmara, Istanbul, MA from Goldsmiths, University of London, and a PhD from University of Portsmouth. Central to Çavuşoğlu’s conceptual art practice are themes that examine notions of place, liminality and the conditions of cultural production, which he has been exploring in a diversity of media, including narrative film, video and sound installations, sculpture and drawing. Çavuşoğlu represented Turkey at the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003. He was shortlisted for the Beck’s Futures Prize in 2004, and in 2010 for *Artes Mundi 4* – the UK’s biggest international contemporary art prize. He has had solo exhibitions in Istanbul, Dubai, London, Aachen, Shanghai, Zurich, and more. He lives and works in London, UK. <[www.ergincavusoglu.com](http://www.ergincavusoglu.com)>

## Wolfgang Lehmann and Telemach Wiesinger *MEER / SEA* (2004)

GERMANY

16 MM FILM TRANSFERRED TO DIGITAL, BLACK & WHITE, SOUND, 1:1.33 ASPECT RATIO.

\*PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS WORK CONTAINS FLASHING AND STROBING EFFECTS.\*

DURATION: 15:00 MIN

COURTESY THE ARTISTS.

DIRECTORS & SCRIPT: WOLFGANG LEHMANN & TELEMACH WIESINGER.

CAMERA & ANIMATION: TELEMACH WIESINGER.

MONTAGE: WOLFGANG LEHMANN.

MUSIC COMPOSED BY MISATO MOCHIZUKI.

Many of the very earliest filmmakers trained their cameras on rippling water, a subject that continues to be one of the most hypnotic things that one can watch on film. (A key work in this vein from the early days of experimental filmmaking is Ralph Steiner’s *H2O* from 1929, a film which consists of nothing but abstract shots of shimmering water.) Why does the medium of film have such an affinity for the image of water? One answer is given by the philosopher Gilles Deleuze, who pointed out that film is an artform that, like water, is constantly on the move, so to speak. For Deleuze, a film of rippling water is a perfect marriage of form and content — to the extent that films of water are said to galvanize us into a perception of the protean flux and changeability of the world.

Filmed in the North Atlantic, Lehmann and Wiesinger’s *MEER* stands out as an accomplished recent example of this longstanding affinity between film and the undulating surface of water — and it can be set alongside a number of other works in this exhibition that also have this interest in glittering water. The difference between *MEER* and the other works is that *MEER*’s watery imagery is played for maximum drama, maximum anxiety. The sea depicted here is a spirit wild and capricious.

Lehmann and Wiesinger use techniques that are appropriately baroque. At some points, the footage is played backwards so that crashing waves seem to pull away from us. At other points, the image is turned upside-down or sideways. At yet

other points, the black-and-white is inverted to produce a negative image. The cumulative effect of all these reversals is to produce a disorienting topsy-turviness that makes us think of impending disaster — tsunamis, shipwreck.

The apparent climax of the film comes when segments of the footage are cut together so rapidly that everything begins to flicker and vibrate. The flickering is reminiscent of similar effects used by structuralist filmmakers of the nineteen-sixties, but here the outcome is less formalist than expressionistic. Integral to the film is an equally expressionist orchestral score, composed by Misato Mochizuki, which, for most of its duration, is dominated by shrieking string instruments. At the conclusion of the film, however, the strings disappear and the music decrescendos into the uneasy but perhaps reassuring sounds of creaking timbers — the creaking of a vessel that has managed to come out on the other side of the sturm und drang? — EU JIN CHUA

Reference: Gilles Deleuze, *CINEMA 1: THE MOVEMENT-IMAGE* (London: Continuum, 2005; originally published 1983).

WOLFGANG LEHMANN (b. Freiburg/Breisgau, Germany, 1967) began his career working for the municipal cinema of Freiburg, a post he held till until 2005. As member of the board and executive chairman of the consortium of the Freiburg municipal cinema, he developed and organised several retrospectives and programmes. His first cinematic efforts were made in 1989. His films have been invited for showings at festivals and museums in Europe, Japan, Korea, India, Bangladesh, Israel, Australia, Canada, USA, Brazil and Latin America. Retrospectives were shown in Berlin, Frankfurt/Main and Cagliari (Sardinia). In his films he makes use mostly of documentary material; these include pictures of landscapes, urban space, and cities. His works can be characterised by an exact and often rhythmic-like montage, as well as extremely short takes that result in overlapping images. Since 2007, he has also been working with static images, and with digital and analogue photography. In 2012 he started to work increasingly with digital projection, the first result being a video stage-setting for an opera production in Stockholm. He lives in Stockholm, Sweden and Gundelfingen, Germany with his wife and his two children. <[www.imagewolfganglehmann.de](http://www.imagewolfganglehmann.de)>

TELEMACH WIESINGER (born 1968, Bielefeld, Germany) has had his experimental films screened at numerous festivals and solo programs, including at the International Film Festival Rotterdam, European Media Art Festival, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, Black Maria Festival, Festival de Cine Experimental Quito, Tampere Film Festival Finland, Filmfestival Seoul Korea, Edinburgh International Film Festival,

and elsewhere. He received the Best Camera Award for Motor at the XXXVI Semana Cortometraje at San Roque, 2014, and, with Andreas Gogol, he received the Team-Work Award for film and music live performance for Landed Take & Sound Times at Filmwinter, the International Festival for Expanded Media, Stuttgart. He received his degrees from the Hochschule Bildender Künste and the University of Kassel. Most of his films are distributed by Light Cone, Paris <[lightcone.org](http://lightcone.org)>. <[www.telemach-wiesinger.de](http://www.telemach-wiesinger.de)>

## Murray Hewitt

### NORTH HARBOUR CLUB, NORTH HARBOUR STADIUM, ALBANY, JANUARY 25, 2013 (2014)

NEW ZEALAND  
DIGITAL VIDEO, COLOUR, SOUND.  
DURATION: 01:30 MIN  
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND CIRCUIT ARTIST FILM AND VIDEO.  
CIRCUIT.ORG.NZ/ARTIST/MURRAY-HEWITT

This is a short work of gentle protest, barely over a minute long, which consists of a single shot of the sparkling water of a bay of the southern Pacific Ocean, as seen from the Petane area of Hawkes Bay, just north of Napier, where it was filmed. The voice that speaks over the image seems to be reading a kind of prose poem of compassion and possibility: “I hope good is done this year...Truth simply done... I believe in clear water...Running free, with kind, full hands.” It turns out the words have been culled from Prime Minister John Key’s 2013 State of the Nation address, each word carefully selected and read in the order in which it appeared in that speech — yet redacted into a new whole of a very different flavour from its origins. The strategy here is less that of appropriation than of reparation. In the artist’s own words: “I wanted to find something wise, profound, beautiful, humble, raw, broken, which is something that would be nice to see and hear from leaders. I was looking for something good in the disappointing” (from a private communication with Hewitt). This year (2014) was of course an election year in New Zealand, but it was also a year

in which there was a chorus of prominent voices on the left, such as those of Naomi Klein, and of Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, stating their view, in no uncertain terms, that neo-liberal free-market fundamentalism has not proved to be a good way to deal with problems of environment and environmental resources (“clear water...running free”). — EU JIN CHUA

References: Naomi Klein, *THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING* (London: Allen Lane, 2014). // Naomi Oreskes and Eric M. Conway, *THE COLLAPSE OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION: A VIEW FROM THE FUTURE* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

MURRAY HEWITT works mostly in video. His works have contemplated consumer behaviour, remembered historic events, or mulled over current political ones through the considered actions of a lone costumed figure, or repetitive stationary camera shots that encourage sustained deliberation from the viewer. Hewitt is a first generation New Zealander whose parents immigrated in the 1960's from England. Born in Hastings, he now lives in Moera in Lower Hutt. He completed a Masters degree in Fine Arts from Massey University in 2007. He also has a NZ Certificate in Civil Engineering and spent many years as a youth worker. He currently works as an art installer for a number of galleries in Wellington, and as a picture framer.

## Sarah J. Christman

### GOWANUS CANAL (2013)

USA

16 MM FILM TRANSFERRED TO DIGITAL, COLOUR, SOUND.

DURATION: 07:00MINS

COURTESY THE ARTIST.

CINEMATOGRAPHY AND EDITING BY SARAH J. CHRISTMAN.

SOUND RECORDING BY KEVIN T. ALLEN.

SOUND DESIGN BY KEVIN T. ALLEN & SARAH J. CHRISTMAN.

“PORTRAIT OF NYC - GOWANUS CANAL” SCULPTURE BY JENIFER WIGHTMAN.

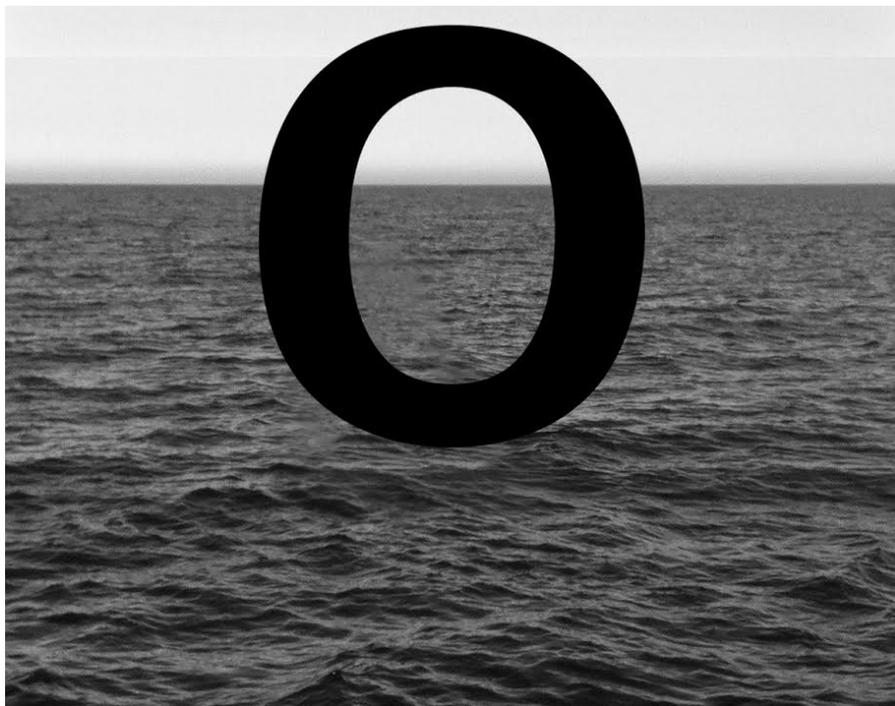
The first thing we see in this film are mud samples taken from the heavily polluted Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn, New York, an urban waterway that runs into the Atlantic Ocean. These samples were collected not by the filmmaker, but by another artist, Jenifer Wightman, who originally exhibited this mud under the title

PORTRAITS OF NEW YORK alongside similar samples from other polluted New York City waterways, and who allowed Christman to photograph them. The images that Christman captures are of the black gloom as it effloresces over time into dank colours of earthy intensity, the result of bacterial fermentation of the organic matter and toxins. These images are quite disgusting (the vileness is accentuated by the skin-crawling sound design), but they also hearken back to the history of abstract film and animation — Stan Brakhage, Tony Conrad's cooked movies, and so forth.

The mud samples comprise just one section of the film. The whole work is beautifully structured, and moves from abstraction to realism and back again. Rhetorically it's like an environmental inspector's report inscribed on film by a careful montagist. Exhibit A: the pollutants in the mud (the fermenting gloom). Exhibit B: the pollutants in the adjacent water (the film segues to oil slicks and debris on the surface of the canal, also of abstract beauty). Exhibit C: the evident sources of the pollution (the film cuts to industrial activity on the banks of the canal: tanks of fuel oil, scrap-metal diggers, also some wisecracking workers). The film ends with a shot of what seems to be relatively clean water — but then a wash of radioactive reds and yellows spills into the frame. This is a kind of metaphorical contamination of the water — and also a reminder that celluloid film is itself the product of noxious industrial substances (the wash of colour was presumably generated by fouling up the processing of the 16mm film). — EU JIN CHUA

SARAH J. CHRISTMAN makes non-fiction films that explore the intersections between people, technology and the natural world. Christman's work has screened widely, including at the MoMA Documentary Fortnight, Rotterdam International Film Festival, Toronto International Film Festival, New York Film Festival, and the Los Angeles Filmforum. She received the New Visions Award from the San Francisco International Film Festival for her film *DEAR BILL GATES*, and Jury Awards from the Ann Arbor Film Festival for *BROAD CHANNEL* and *AS ABOVE, SO BELOW*. She is an Associate Professor in the Film Department at Brooklyn College.

<[www.sarahchristman.com](http://www.sarahchristman.com)>



Design direction by Nick Spratt.  
Design and layout by Eu Jin Chua.

Edited by Eu Jin Chua.

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© Eu Jin Chua, Te Tuhi, 2014

Te Tuhi, 13 Reeves Road, Pakuranga, Auckland 2010, New Zealand.

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