

THE PHYSICS ROOM

CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

Jahra Wasasala

KALOUGATA: under the earth

Exhibition runs: 24 September – 23 October 2022

With Navi Fong (VOU), Henry Lai-Pyne, Harrison Hall, Ooshcon, Steven Junil Park (6x4), and Oliva Luki (a.k.a. Spewer).
Graphic design by Elliot O'Donnell (a.k.a. Askew One)

KALOUGATA: under the earth, by dancer and world-builder Jahra Wasasala, takes The Physics Room as a site for transformation. It includes new and existing collaborative works reimagined during Wasasala's Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies Artist Residency: live embodiments and digital animation, clay sculptures, poetic text and soundscape.

A vast, projected animation wraps around the walls of the gallery, enveloping the viewer within a scorched, otherworldly terrain. Here a monstrous figure dances: this is Dra, the manifestation of our desires and compulsions to consume. Commissioned for Tempo Dance Festival and created in collaboration with digital performance artists Henry Lai-Pyne and Harrison Hall, *KALOUGATA: Dra* is activated using motion capture technology, blending the algorithms of Wasasala and creative partner Ooshcon's dancing bodies to produce a hybrid entity. Images of Wasasala's skin, scar tissue and tattoos have been incorporated into Dra to create an abject form embodying multiple stories and timelines, a being that is built from that which is discarded.

Central to the exhibition is a new dance work, *KALOUGATA: under the earth*. Developed during her three-month residency in Ōtautahi,

this living embodiment will be activated by Wasasala throughout the exhibition. Infusing the physicality, character work and contortionist elements of street dance cultures FlexN and Krump, and drawing on influences from traditional Fijian Meke and Japanese Butoh, the work envisions the collision of histories, presents and futures, foregrounding these against the politics of protest.

Wasasala works intuitively, dancing into a state of formlessness that is both a response to and break from the histories of these cultures. Wasasala's embodiment also responds to the real and virtual bodies in the gallery space. For Wasasala, these are connected ancestrally through their making and kinship with the artist. *KALOUGATA: under the earth* also features adornments and garments made by Steven Junil Park of 6x4 and a soundscape designed by Oliva Luki a.k.a. Spewer.

KALOUGATA: above the earth is a concurrent online platform premiering at Tempo Festival. You can view the work online from 24–25 September at www.tempodancefestival.co.nz/kalougata-above-the-earth

Jahra (Arieta) Wasasala is a Fijian/Pākeha world-builder, movement psychopomp and writer of realms. Within Viti, they are from Macuata and Ba provinces. Jahra's work is based in the relational space between a world ending and another world beginning. Jahra centres dance, while also working with sound, adornment, poetry, sculpture, and digital media.

Jahra has an ongoing creative partnership with Ooshcon (known as CONJAH), by which they facilitate, hold festivals, make work together and empower each other's practices. Jahra gives gratitude to Tāmaki Makaurau (raised) and Te Awa Kairanga ki Uta (current), acknowledging the influence of place on work.

Jahra is an award-winning artist, internationally and nationally touring their own embodiment work as well as being featured in various company works, touring across Aotearoa, Australia, Hawai'i, New York, Canada, Guahān and Berlin. Jahra has experience as a mentor and facilitator within movement and poetry for young people, and has taught across Aotearoa and overseas.

Jahra affectionately sees their work as 'Oceanic Terror-fi', and constantly moves towards being spirit-led and blood-led in their evolving creative offerings.

Jahra's work can be found at jahra.xyz

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This exhibition is a result of the ongoing partnership between The Physics Room and the University of Canterbury Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies to present work and research produced during the residency.

We would also like to thank Creative New Zealand, Professor Steven Ratuva and the entire Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies team, the Sutton Heritage House and Garden Charitable Trust, VOU Fiji, Solomon Enos, and Tarisa Sorovi-Vunidilo for their generous support of this exhibition.

List of works

1. Jahra Wasasala, *KALOUGATA: under the earth*, 2022. Live embodiment, 25'00". Soundscape by Spewer. For details of dates and times visit physicsroom.org.nz
2. Steven Junil Park (6x4), costume for *KALOUGATA: under the earth*, 2022. Recycled bed sheets, elastic, dye.
3. Jahra Wasasala and Henry Lai-Pyne, *KALOUGATA: Dra*, 2022. Digital animation, 4'12". Soundscape by Spewer. Technical support by Harrison Hall.
4. Navi Fong, 2022. Video, 2'27". With thanks to VOU.
5. Jahra Wasasala, 2022. Studio installation with Monster Clay, wire, digital prints and text on paper.
6. Askew One, 2022. Digital graffiti print on vinyl.