

## BLANK BANQUET

01 February - 16 March 2025

*Blank Banquet* is a new exhibition developed by Joel Cocks and Tarren Johnson, concerned with communication and thresholds of language.

At the heart of the exhibition is the deconstruction of *Cornelia's Room*, Johnson and Cocks' experimental operetta. The script addresses feminine desire and explores the potential of a message to gain its own force independent of the speaker or recipient.

The titular Cornelia is pursued by Ivor, who hopes they might meet on the occasion of the eclipse. Alas, his messenger, the Black Dragon, absconds with the messages, forcing Ivor to confront her directly. Framed as a Romantic Drama, it is Cornelia who constructs an independent meaning of the relationship from her own desire and emotion. Through this misdirected romance, *Cornelia's Room* highlights the parallels between diplomatic and romantic correspondence.

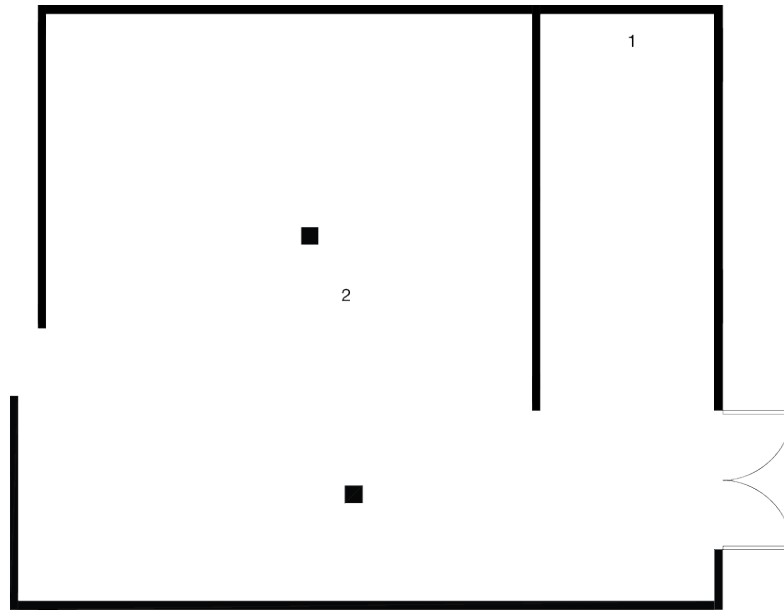
Large-scale mosaics composed of photographs drawn from the artists' archives reshape the gallery's architecture and act as scenic backdrops for two durational performances.

Writer Olamiju Fajemisin's reading of the script is played from speakers embedded within the mosaics and forms the soundtrack for the accompanying video work, *Dripfeed Episode 6: Succubus*. This episode continues Johnson's and Cocks' ongoing series that captures the boundary between creation and collapse, exploring how narratives fracture, evolve, and resist coherence. An actor's headshot, plastered around the streets of Paris appears as a cosmic answer, amongst vignettes of pedestrians, lovers and shoppers. Edited to retain Fajemisin's occasional line errors, *Succubus* refuses to easily parse meaning, embellished with visual and linguistic obstructions.

*Blank Banquet* reflects on the containment and release of information, as well as the processes of alignment and separation underpinning every encounter.

**Tarren Johnson**, an American artist and choreographer from Southern California, and **Joel Cocks**, an artist from Ōtautahi, have collaborated since 2016. Together, they have developed an evolving archive that includes performances in different states of completion, as well as photographs and videos from various productions and their personal lives. Johnson and Cocks recontextualise this material to create new works that explore fragmentation, cultural reproduction, and the peripheries of spectacle.

Their collective work has been presented at Systema, Marseille; Bologna.cc, Amsterdam; and Paris Internationale's public programme; as well as Volksbühne, Berlin; HAU Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin; Tanzhaus Zürich; Les Urbaines, Lausanne; Sophiensæle, Berlin; and Festspielhaus Hellerau. Tarren has performed at venues and festivals such as Festival d'Avignon; Festival d'Automne à Paris; Faurschou New York; Romaeuropa; Manifesta 11; and Art Basel. Together, they were laureates of La Becque's 2021 program and the Cité Internationale des Arts residency in Paris in 2024. In March 2025, they will debut their play *We Don't Live Here Anymore* at New Theater Hollywood in Los Angeles.



## WORKS

1. Tarren Johnson and Joel Cocks, *Dripfeed Episode 6: Succubus*, 2025, digital video, 15:17mins.

Voiceover: Olamiju Fajemisin  
Featuring: Medhi Hamadouchi and Salber Lee Williams  
Costume: Marcus Karkhof

2. Joel Cocks and Tarren Johnson, *Blank Banquet*, 2025, installation of photos, speakers, half newel post.

## EVENTS

***Blank Banquet: Opening Performance***  
Friday 31 January, 5.30pm

***Blank Banquet: Performance***  
Wednesday 5 February, 5.30pm  
Please join us for the second durational performance of *Blank Banquet*.

**Workshop with Tarren Johnson and Joel Cocks**  
Saturday 8 February, 11am-3pm  
Toi Auaha  
Register by emailing [physicsroom@physicsroom.org.nz](mailto:physicsroom@physicsroom.org.nz)

In conjunction with the exhibition, Tarren and Joel will lead a workshop for practitioners interested in exploring compositional strategies that merge creative writing with movement for performance. The day begins with a guided warm-up to prepare the body and mind for creative exploration. Through a series of exercises that combine physical movement with writing techniques, participants will develop their own short performance sketches.

***Dripfeed.tv Screening Night***  
Wednesday 19 February, 6pm, 128 minutes run time  
Lumière Cinemas  
No booking required

A one-night only omnibus of five *Dripfeed.tv* episodes, Tarren Johnson and Joel Cocks' ongoing video series.

*Thank you to Christchurch City Council, Toi Ōtautahi and Toi Auaha for generously supporting this exhibition and related events.*