

ATONG ATEM: COMEHOME

23 AUGUST - 9 SEPTEMBER 2017

FACIAL GEOMETRY (II) – THREE
SCENES OF PAINTING FACE, INDIRECT
GAZE LEFT OF CAMERA

“WHAT IS THE WORTH OF A
COMMUNITY IF ITS MEMBERS ARE
TOO TRAUMATIZED TO FUNCTION?”

“ARE YOU CELEBRATING THE ART-
IST’S PROXIMITY TO WHITENESS?”

“ARE YOU REFUSING TO ACKNOWLEDGE
ART PRACTICES THAT EXIST
OUTSIDE OF EUROCENTRIC
HISTORIES?”

“ARE YOU CONSTANTLY WAITING
FOR THAT PUBLIC CALL OUT TO BE
PUBLISHED?”

“ARE YOU CELEBRATING YOURSELF
AND YOUR “PROGRESSIVE” SCENES
IN LIEU OF CREATING ACTUAL,
TANGIBLE PROGRESS?”

“ARE YOU PUBLICLY PERFORMING
ALLYSHIP FOR SOCIAL CAPITAL?
ARE YOU THAT AFRAID OF
FUCKING IT UP?”

“HAVE YOU ASKED A THIN, WHITE

C O M E H O M E 2 : 5 0

a-cross y-our yards + fences where we meet

t-owards un-bounded archipelagos + waters where we grow

pawpaw and coconut leaves reaching for vanua + lagi + us

s-waying in the breeze

t-ouch banana leaves, island rhythms moving your lips, hips

saltwater lapping at the shores of our potential, wounds, healing

p-etals caressing dogs barking, through cassava stalks

e-quatorial warmth melting your skin, accustomed to southern climes

toso Viti, always Viti, centre of sacred space, undulating waves

is-lands where Black + Brown peoples thrive

t-owns where younger and older stand against colonial frames

N Y A N C E M Ä R

L-ost g-irl;

f-ound

we can honour those who embody memory, who hark back to a time and space beyond empire that continues into the non-colonial future through us. we can be Indigenous, Black _ Brown, African _ Oceanian _ South Asian, sovereign _ diasporic, displaced _ empowered. we can remember what we remember, and seek out ~~home hearths heats~~ hearts in places near and far to where we have landed, where our genealogies have birthed us into these worlds.

perhaps, despite the violence of wars, extractions of resources initiated in small slivers of soil called Europe, and genocidal regimes across continents interrupted by the small minds of cis wealthy white men in the scrambles for empire-building and existence-destroying, we are the ones to hold tight to ~~herstories histories stories~~ hxstories. we are called to find once more all our relations, all around us, all through us, airs, waters, fires, energies. we can yet learn once more to speak, feel, dance in bird, animal, insect, fish, spirit. and live their songs which we share since before a supposed Enlightenment created whiteness as key to suffering, to gain, to hurt, to dominance, to imbalance, to toxic masculinity, to systemic violence.

A MEMORY, A DREAM (II) 2:16

Dinka gathering

celebration

coming together of houses, families, clans, you _ me _ all
whose family, whose joy, whose traditions ?

Dinka thriving

living best selves

despite oppressive shit

independently forging new paths ?

Dinka from Bor

remaining vulnerable, honest, heart keen to connect _ care _ be

voyeur to cultural practices, displacement to patriarchy ?

disconnection to piety, family to liminality ?

we can think together in the dream space, the liminal space, far from and coursing through this one, that one, yours, mine. we can think beyond ongoing colonialisms, patriarchies, traditions, realities, grounded as they are in multiverses at once. we can see our homes in the voyage, our invitations to multiple, mutable, shifting homes + protections. resistances to extractive Western gazes _ plantations _ wars _ economies _ Western Union. the cycle of exchange and custom comes back around, full rotation.

hearing Indigenous languages spoken, untranslated, unrendered for easy consumption keeps at bay the easy capture. traumas held in displaced Black + Brown bodies, flung far from Ancestral territories, keep at bay the easy participation in expected activities. family as both genealogy and pursuit, kinship as both collective relationships and becoming oneself, navigation as worlds colliding and unsettling emotional labour flows.

FACIAL GEOMETRY (II) 9:07

silence as Indigenous resistance

survival as Indigenous revival

sexuality as Indigenous resurgence

indirect gaze as a register of touch you can't approach

marks made across the face as visibility on own terms

questioning place in art production

in stolen First Nations territories

in diasporic Dinka experience

observances + honesty = real talk, real being, real heart

refuse that extractive social capitalising

unlearn those tangible art histories

from the stateless in-between before South Sudan was restored its agency, to Narrm in unceded Kulin Nation territory, to Wurundjeri Biik and Boon Wurrung Biik, from one heart to another, there are things best said, best expressed by sensual languages beyond the purview of empire-obsessed European languages, so disconnected from their own indigeneities in their own mountains, valleys, river deltas and fields. tau igwo agwo. ek acha lech.

surviving wars waged over cultures, languages, lands, waters, oils, and more, is a defiance of empire. remaining vulnerable, honest to the transformative experiences of travel, art world fakery and time out are one step more. folauga is to voyage in my gagana Samoa. to voyage is an Indigenous experience, especially with all our relations everywhere everywhen everythen evernow ever ever.

what I see and feel right now is that visibility in pressure-cooked white supremacist settler colonies founded on anti-blackness, extraction of bodies, lands, waters, aesthetics and languages, is just about the freshest anti-hell we can conjure and contribute. where nostalgia ? where art world ? where displaced person ? where you _ me _ us in all this mess ?

BIOGRAPHIES

Atong Atem is a Melbourne based artist whose work gravitates around her South Sudanese heritage and its relation to forming identity in Australia. Selected exhibitions include: Us, Customs House, Sydney, 2017; The Process of Feeling, Centre for Contemporary Photography, 2017; Rec Room, Interlude Gallery, Sydney, 2016; Make Nice, Vivid Ideas, 2016; Nataal- New African Photography, Red Hooks Lab, Brooklyn, 2016; Ua numi le fau, Gertrude Contemporary, Next Wave Festival, Melbourne, 2016; Ouroboros, First Draft, Sydney, 2015; and Stayfly Sydney Block Party, Ambush Gallery, Sydney, 2013. Atem was the inaugural winner of MELT Portrait Prize in 2016, presented in conjunction with Brisbane Powerhouse and has recently been awarded the MECCA M-Power 2017 award.

atongatem.com/

Léuli Māzyār Lunā'i Eshrāghi (Samoan, Persian and other ancestries) is an artist, curator, writer and an uninvited guest in unceded Kulin Nation territory. His work centres on indigeneity, language, the body, and queer futures. Across performance and installation, Eshraghi processes intergenerational trauma, honours diasporic indigeneity, and imagines multilingual, sovereign bodies and relationships to our planet

Recent residencies include University of British Columbia, Canada; Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, Canada; Arts House-Next Wave, Australia; and Tautai Pacific Arts Trust, New Zealand. Recent exhibitions include Dead Centre, curated by Anna Louise Richardson and Abdul-Rahman Abdullah at Spectrum Project Space, Edith Cowan University, Perth, 2016; and The Bill: For Collective Unconscious, curated by Misal Adnan Yıldız at Artspace NZ, Auckland.

Recent curatorial projects include: Pouliuli (Faitautusi + Fa'liga) at West Space for Yirramboi First Nations Arts Festival, 2017; Ala Moana Center for 'Ae Kai Culture Lab on Convergence by the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, 2017; Ua numi le fau at Gertrude Contemporary, developed through the Emerging Curators' Program for Next Wave Festival, 2016; and Vai Niu Wai Niu Coconut Water at Kabul-dja Caboolture Regional Art Gallery, 2016. He is member of Canada's Aboriginal Curatorial Collective | Collectif des commissaires autochtones board, Broadsheet's editorial advisory panel, and Melbourne Museum's Pacific Advisory Group.

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Atong Atem: COME HOME
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BLINDSIDE

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BLINDSIDE

PERSON FOR A DURRY OUTSIDE OF
BONEY MORE THAN ONCE?"

"ARE YOU POSITIONING WHITE REC-
OGNITION AS THE PINNACLE OF
VALIDATION?"

"ARE YOU CAPABLE OF PRIORITISING
CARE OVER PRODUCTIVITY?"

"HAVE SOME OF YOUR EXES SOLD
THEIR SUCCULENTS AND RECORDS
TO MAKE ART IN BERLIN?"

"ARE YOU REFUSING SPACE FOR
WAYS OF VIEWING AND NOT
VIEWING ART THAT EXIST OUTSIDE
OF EXHIBITION/ARCHIVING/
PRESERVATION?"

"ARE YOU FETISHISING PEOPLE AND
THEIR HISTORIES INSTEAD OF DOING
YOUR RESEARCH?"

"ARE YOU IN MULTIPLE FACEBOOK
GROUPS THAT YOU WOULDN'T TELL
YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT?"

"ARE YOU USING PATERNALISM TO
EXCUSE THE OPPRESSIVE
STRUCTURES THAT BENEFIT YOU?"

"DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU CARE
ABOUT?"

"ARE YOU TURNING TRAUMA INTO
CURRENCY?"