

# THE PHYSICS ROOM

CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

## **(Un)conditional III**

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*Text to accompany (Un)conditional III at the Melbourne Art Fair Project Rooms,  
Booth 01, 2-5 August 2018.*

*(Un)conditional III* includes new work by Ayesha Green (Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Kahungunu) and Cushla Donaldson. This exhibition in the Melbourne Art Fair Project Rooms is part of The Physics Room's itinerant operating model for 2018 and draws on the ideas of reciprocity, trade and exchange, hosting and guesting. This iteration of the *(Un)conditional* series, taking place outside of Aotearoa, explores human and cultural movement across oceans.

Green's research-based painting practice attempts to relocate and redefine the power relationships of, and within, Māori representation. *Kurawaka* is a new work comprising of four large-scale paintings completed on full sheets of plywood. Depicting two generations of Green's maternal whānau, as well as the illustrated record of New Zealand flora from Joseph Banks' *Florilegium*, *Kurawaka* traces living connections of lineage and displacement over expansive distances. *Kurawaka* refers to the womb of Papatuanuku, where, in Te Ao Māori, the first woman was created. It is this point of generation, which links the two subjects of Green's paintings.

Green's simplified painting style refers to the essentialising nature of colonial representation of indigenous subjects. Their desire to capture subjects as closely as possible—as scientific or anthropological studies—is challenged by Green's flattening of perspective and reduction of detail. In this methodology of lazy mimicry the idea of the authentic is eroded.

Donaldson's new work *501s* foregrounds the historical instrumentalisation of glamour and soft power. Donaldson has created a gigantic moving image work referencing a legendary event at the Carnival of Venice in the 1600s in which a giant glass slipper was put in a public square and filled with wine. Donaldson has developed a technology that allows current detainees, as well as those already deported from Australia under the Migration Act (1958) to text in and disrupt the seductively spinning crystal shoe to speak back to the present and prevailing power structures.

The texts come through as both a live feed and at random intervals once they have been sent in. These text messages are not vetted or viewed before they are displayed. The shoe literally operates as a vessel, a Trojan horse, for the presentation of stories that would otherwise be invisible and unheard. Stories that have been suppressed until recently: on 21 June 2018, The Australian Federal Court found that the Australian Border Force could not mandatorily confiscate property, including mobile phones, from people in immigration detention.

Throughout the development of the work, Donaldson has been in close contact with the advocates Filipa Payne and Erina Morunga for the *501s* group, 'Iwi n Aus'. Payne has visited every detention centre to date, is the only person keeping full records of those detained and extradited, and is working in collaboration with Donaldson to enable the voices of the detained and deported to be heard in a physical and economic context that has forcibly excluded them.

**Thanks:**

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