

THE PHYSICS ROOM

CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE

SAVAGE IN THE GARDEN

Tanu Gago

4 April – 12 May 2019

Thursday 4 April, 12pm: Exhibition talk with Tanu Gago, Tapuaki Helu, and Jamie Hanton

The power of the colonial gaze continues to deprive everyday Indigenous people of sovereign representations of their own bodies and life experiences. Complex portrayals of Pacific men as emotionally sophisticated are, in 2019, still positioned as cultural anomalies. What Pacific men want to see of themselves is also deeply entrenched in the same colonial codes of traditional Western masculinity.

Toxic masculinity is currently under a global audit from all corners of society amidst intensified discourse around systemic gender inequality. The question of what it means to be a man in this contemporary context is complex and intersects with an endless shopping list of cultural and social variants—some of which are too vast to attempt to address in a singular creative journey. So, consider this exhibition an entry point.

SAVAGE IN THE GARDEN presents a series of images and audio recordings responding to provocations about what it means to be a Queer Pacific Island man and centres queerness as a site for exploration and a pressure point for open social discussion. The intention of the recordings is to provide intimate and personable insights from Pacific men discussing their experiences with masculinity. The recordings are sourced from the public domain and have been mixed with interviews conducted last year, as well as a selection of essays collected from artists from the FAFSWAG arts collective.

Developed during Gago's time as the Pacific Artist in residence at the Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies at the University of Canterbury in 2018, this exhibition is a collaboration with a small community of Pacific Island men from around Aotearoa. The exhibition features Tongan model Tapuaki Helu and members of the FAFSWAG Arts Collective and extended creative whanau.

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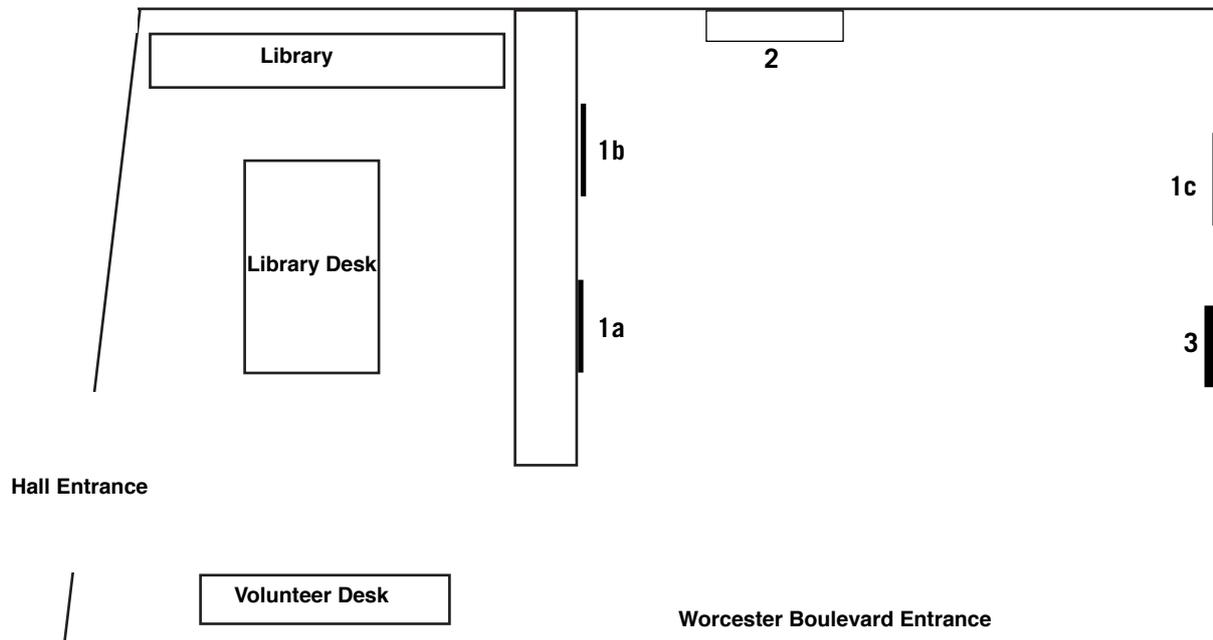
Tanu Gago is an interdisciplinary artist and award-winning photographer of Samoan heritage. Born in Samoa and raised in Mangere. Gago works predominantly in new media with a portfolio of work that includes staged portraiture, moving image, and film. His practice is collaborative and examines cultural framing, decolonization, social politics, queer activism, and gender and sexually diverse narratives.

Gago is the cofounder and creative director of Pacific LGBT Arts Collective entitled FAFSWAG. Under Gago's direction FAFSWAG have carved out credible cultural space within the contemporary arts scene within Auckland. The work achieved by this collective of artists spans over five years. Check out their recent collaborative interactive documentary with Taika Waititi's film production company PIKI FILMS and award-winning digital design agency RESN: fafswagvogue.com

Thank you to Aidan, Tim, and Ilam School of Fine Arts for your support with printing

SAVAGE IN THE GARDEN

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1 a, b & c. *SAVAGE IN THE GARDEN*, 2019, with lighting assistance from Pati Solomona Tyrell, makeup & styling by Elyssia Wilson Heti, and model Tapuaki Helu.

2. *Savage in the Garden*, 2019, series of interviews, pod casts, and group discussions about queer practice and Pacific masculinity. Mp3, 60.00 min.

3. *APPARATUS*, 2019, digital video, 19.21 min.

APPARATUS Film Production Credits:

Artist: Tanu Gago

Camera: Ralph Brown

Styling: Jasper Powell

Sound & Editing: Tanu Gago

Choreography: Jacob Tamata, Cypris Afakasi

Adornments: Rosanna Raymond, Pati Solomona Tyrell

Featuring: Reuben Tomasi, Tavake Akau, Zion McCormick, Morris Gago, Solomon Gago, Simone Akau, Mia Gago, Fili Tapa, Tapuaki Helu, Jacob Tamata, Cypris Afakasi, Gabriel Halatoa, Ponifasio Junior Ah Tani, Benji Timu, Sione Monu, Jermaine Dean, Hela Ikimotu, Esera Ieti, So'omalo Iteni, Mika Tomasi, Ioane Ioane.

Special thanks to FRANCMARIE, COVEN, Dru Douglas, Pati solomona Tyrell, Rosana Raymond, James Waititi, Manu Ha'apai Vaea Tangitau, Guilherme Taccetti, FAFSWAG.

'Power of 3' BIONICA 2018 appears courtesy of Jacob Tamata and the COVEN Collective.