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**TCG**  
TRISH CLARK GALLERY



THE XX FACTOR 3.0

23 November – 23 December 2023

Stella Brennan  
Gil Hanly  
Susan Leonard  
Julia Morison  
Nova Paul  
Tia Ranginui  
Marie Shannon  
Heather Straka  
Christine Webster

Press Release



Two X chromosomes reach through millennia, delivering the realities and rigours roughly half of humankind. A play on the doubled X chromosome and subversive of the glib evaluation of women's 'x factor' we present the 3rd iteration of *The XX Factor* — 2016's *The XX Factor* broadly focussed on the politics of identity and included international luminaries alongside local artists, while 2020's *The XX Factor 2.0* broadly focussed on existential themes in pandemic times. The *XX Factor 3.0*, broadly focussed on portraiture, shines a lens on the practices of nine local artists spanning three generations whose works engage with expanded notions of portraiture.

Staying true to the feminist adage that the personal is political, *The XX Factor 3.0* combines portraiture's biographical elements and historical-political implications so the localised yet expansive conduit of personal experience gives expression to this complex relation. With works bridging personal biography and social, cultural, and technological histories, the artists have utilized diverging technologies and embodied knowledge to both investigate their presents and to imagine possible futures. Realised in photography, moving image, archival documentary, sculpture and painting, this expanded consideration of what a portrait can be features representations of people and suggestive portraits of feelings, places, and states of being.

Installed at the heart of *The XX Factor 3.0* is Stella Brennan's significant new body of work, *Thread Between Darkness and Light*, included in her 2023 survey exhibition *Ancestor Technologies* at City Gallery Wellington Te Whare Toi. Taking as its starting point a family archive of 120-year-old glass-plate photographic negatives, "the installation considers the ways we navigate the span of time and distance. Cracked, tarnished, and peeling in places, the negatives are marked by the traces of time's passage. In scanning and printing these images – and the detritus of their surface damage – onto large-scale silk banners, Brennan shifts the materiality of these archival fragments, translating them into a physically navigable space." [City Gallery Wellington].

Navigating time and distance, of relatively short duration but severe implications, was the subject of Heather Straka's acclaimed *Isolation Hotel* series, installed at the Canterbury Museum in 2022 and three of which are presented here. With her characteristic wit and piercing insight, Straka positions her lone protagonists in carefully constructed film sets, portraying with a remarkable depth of feeling the alienation of isolation.

The interior rooms and domestic surroundings of Marie Shannon set another type of stage. The stories of home, the mundane objects of daily life, interactions with loved ones – senior artist Marie Shannon has mined these over and over across decades and is renowned for her capacity to transfigure the quotidian into moving portraits of love and life.

Similarly in the 2010 work by Nova Paul (Te Uri Ro Roi and Te Parawhau /Ngāpuhi), *This is not Dying*, we experience an intimate portrayal of quintessential life on her marae in Porotū. A pointed declaration of the revitalization of te reo, whanau and tino rangatiratanga, Paul utilises a 1930's three colour separation process that animates space and time to collapse the everyday with the ancestral. Acquired by the Auckland Art Gallery Toi O Tāmaki in 2020, the work was included in *The earth looks upon us / Ko Papatūānuku te matua o te tangata* at Adam Art Gallery Te Pataka Toi in 2018 and *Toi Tū Toi Ora: Contemporary Māori Art* at Auckland Art Gallery Toi O Tāmaki in 2020-2022.



Archival photographs by veteran Gil Hanly and documentary film by Susan Leonard provide windows to the past with soulful portraits of creativity. Hanly's images celebrate an ancient Pacific clay practice and its current revival and are included in the upcoming publication *Ngā Kaihanga Uku: Māori Clay Artists* by Baye Riddell and published by *Te Papa Press*, the first book to examine the origins and loss of this beautiful practice.

Award-winning film-maker Susan Leonard (Te Arawa, Rangitāne) delivers what is essentially a love song to the Māori whanau and remarkable individuals that sat behind the iconic NZ pottery in *Crown Lynn: A Māori Story* commissioned by Te Mangai Paho for Whaakata Māori television in 2022. Underscoring the deep responsibilities at play when telling the stories of others, this is a sensitive portrait that celebrates generations of cultures working together, enriching the backstory of an institution, and offering valuable insight into a slice of iconic local history.

Collapsing time and weaving the contemporary into indigenous mythology and political tropes, Whanganui based photographer Tia Ranginui (Ngāti Hine, Oneone) brings a light touch to weighty narratives inspired by her turangawaewae (home). Ranginui reimagines her intimate local knowledge of the Whanganui awa and the surrounding whenua into a contemporary folklore imaginary, revealing pūrākau (myth/legend) living amongst us now. [Tia Ranginui works presented courtesy of Laree Payne Gallery].

The *XX Factor 3.0* also includes critical works that address the complexities of portraying personhood, by Julia Morison and Christine Webster, both acclaimed senior artists with prestigious international exhibition histories. Morison's characteristically peculiar, unsettling forms call attention to the personal and social afflictions of roles, communications, and capacities. The potent mystery of the personal has been relentlessly explored by Christine Webster in different series spanning decades, the most recent being the Douglas Wright works, exhibited earlier in 2023. On view here is a selection of portraits from different series, reaching back to 1980's works wrestling the body in transformation, and later works equally emotionally charged while employing subtle photographic approaches.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND IMAGES PLEASE CONTACT THE GALLERY  
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