



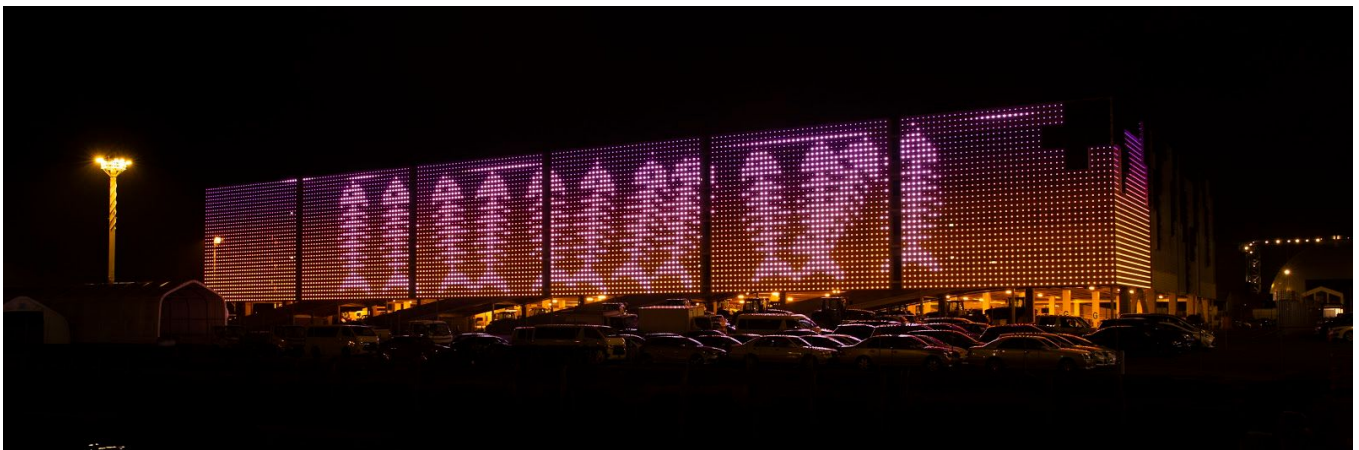
# THE LIGHTSHIP

SORAWIT SONGSATAYA LAUNCHES  
NEW WORK AT 'THE LIGHTSHIP'

*14 Dec 2020*

## PRESS RELEASE

- Wellington-based artist presents *Come up for air* on the Auckland waterfront's new contemporary art platform.
- Sorawit Songsataya commissioned to produce the site-specific artwork which will be displayed from 10 December 2020 – 4 February 2021.
- *Come up for air* maps the natural life of the Waitemata and the industrial processes of the Port.
- The Lightship is a 110-metre-long, 13-metre-high light wall that wraps around the western façade of the Port of Auckland's new car handling building and can be viewed from Quay Street, city wharves, local buildings and the water.



*Come up for air* studies the ecology of the water and its edge. Reducing these large and intricate habitats to patterns and movement, the artist maps processes of coordination in the harbour's natural life and the port's industry. Borrowing synchronicity from these two differing rhythms, *Come up for air* looks at the idea of sustenance through contrasting scales of mass economic systems and day-to-day gathering of food.

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1, 2, 3 breathe

Fish school through the coordinated positioning and synchronized movement of many individuals. Schooling is an instinctive protective behaviour. Individual bodies bloom together to form a flowing sphere; a movement that is shared, sensed, or intuited. In a biological choreography of accumulation as defence, countless bodies appear to form a singular shielding whole.

1, 2, 3 breathe

A plentiful fresh catch, might be dried or smoked and stored, creating a shared pantry and working inventory. Processing fresh foods into something more long-lasting allows for wider distribution. Harvesting more than you may need immediately necessitates the design of storage and administration for the excess.

1, 2, 3 breathe

Shipping containers are standardized in dimension; this allows for their easy stacking, loading and unloading, and to be transported with ease. Filled with goods, shipping containers enter a global flow of exchange. A system of tally, storage and trade; the movement of containers across waters and borders is vital to the intersecting economies of countries.

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The phrase 'come up for air' is both an idiom and directive. Like 'being snowed under', it implies being in an environment or situation in which you are under some type of moderate stress or risk. It is also an encouragement to rest in order to continue, bring your head above water in order to re-submerge, and break from the momentum, to engage the self-sustaining act: breathe.

Oxygen, air, or breath, recurs in Songsataya's work. The persistence of this elemental character in the artist's oeuvre seems to work to remind of the necessity of life-bearing properties and processes. Lungs are containers, and are also spaces of vital exchange, setting a rhythm, synchronicity, and co-dependence between bodies, the environment and the myriad of systems between.

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The Lightship, is a new site for contemporary art, which was launched by the Ports of Auckland in October 2020. The large-scale digital light wall on Quay Street provides Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland with a unique place for public art to be enjoyed.

The Lightship is a 110-metre-long, 13-metre-high light wall that wraps around the western façade of the port's new car handling building. It is made up of seven panels with nearly 8,500 individually programmable LED lights and is visible from busy Quay Street, city wharves, local buildings and the water.

The Lightship's inaugural commission was a new artwork by Janet Lilo entitled *ISLOVE* which was live from Thursday 8 October until Thursday 3 December 2020. The site is programmed by curators Sarah Hopkinson and Bridget Riggir-Cuddy. The Lightship sits near another significant public artwork, 'The Lighthouse' by Michael Parekowhai on Queens Wharf, cementing the area as a destination for contemporary public art.

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### **About Sorawit Songsataya**

Sorawit Songsataya's practice explores the many tangents that connect and redefine our understandings of subjectivity and ecology. Songsataya often employs moving image and sculpture within installation environments, incorporating both digital and tactile media to engage with world-making in imaginative and tangible ways. Winner of the Molly Morpeth Canaday Award 3D (2020) and National Contemporary Art Award (2016), Songsataya has held artist residencies with Enjoy Contemporary Art Space, Wellington; McCahon House, Auckland; and the International Artists Studio Program, Stockholm. Recent exhibitions include *Rumours (Mermaid)*, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery (2020); *The Interior*, Auckland Art Gallery (2019); *Offspring of Rain*, Enjoy Contemporary Art Space (2019); *Jupiter*, Te Uru Waitakere Contemporary Gallery (2019); *Soon Enough: Art in Action*, Tensta Konsthall (2018).

### **About the Car Handling Building**

The car handling building was developed by Plus Architecture as part of Ports of Auckland's 30-year master plan. It is designed to reduce the space taken up by imported vehicles and better integrate Auckland's port into the surrounding community.

The car handling building is no ordinary 'car park'. It is a harbour-saving building, which removes the need to take more of the Waitematā harbour for reclamation by stacking cars vertically. On its southern wall, facing Quay Street it has the world's largest soil-based vertical garden, which was created by local company Hanging Gardens. The western wall, facing Queens Wharf holds The Lightship and a public park is currently being designed for the roof, giving Aucklanders a beautiful new green space with outstanding views of the harbour, the central city and their port at work.

It is a remarkable building, weaving the functional and the aesthetic together to create a building that works both for the port and the city. There is nothing like it anywhere else on earth.

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