



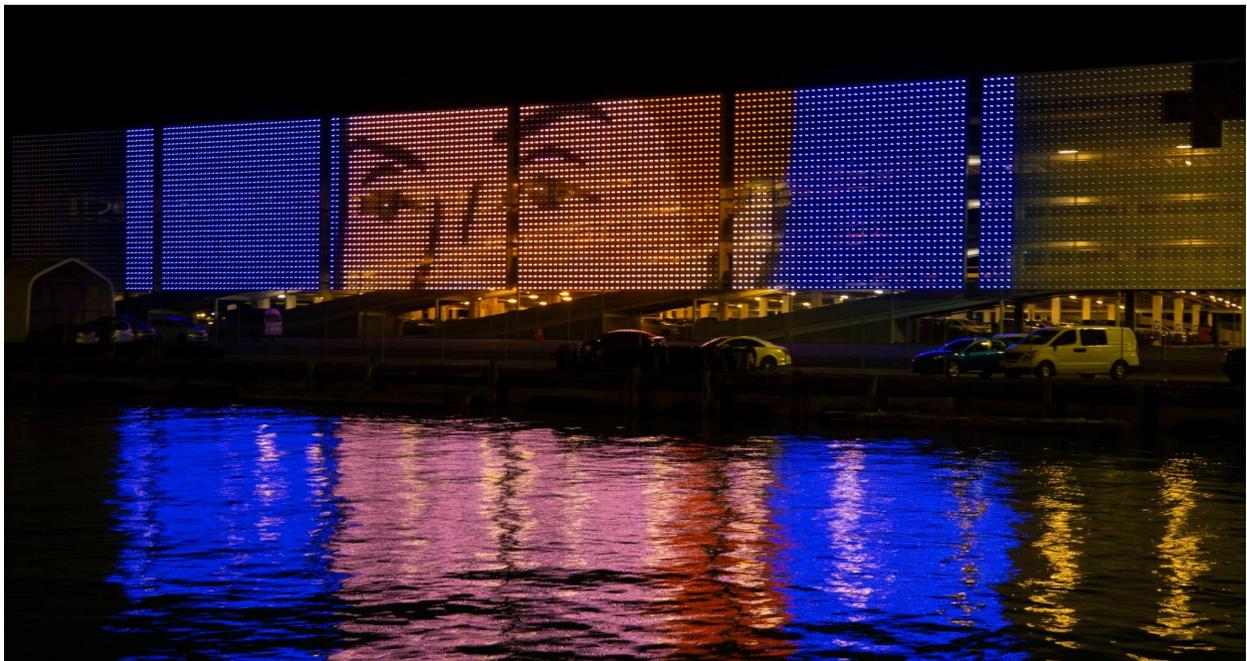
THE LIGHTSHIP

SIONE TUÍVAILALA MONŪ LAUNCHES
NEW WORK AT 'THE LIGHTSHIP'

15 April 2021

PRESS RELEASE

- Tongan artist presents *Broken Embraces* – an ode to the practice of cinema making, with animated and re-presented scenes that are both emblematic of global cinema and formative to their early identity and experiences.
- Sione Tuívailala Monū commissioned to produce the site-specific artwork which will be displayed from 15 April – 27 May 2021.
- The Lightship is a 110-metre-long, 13-metre-high light wall that Ports of Auckland built into the western façade of their new car handling building. It can be viewed from Quay Street, city wharves, local buildings and the water.



[High Res Photos](#)

Unlike the soccer players or the theatre kids, the extra mural activity of adolescent cinephiles is often lonely. A self-determined reading list of cinematic literature is best done in solitude, or shared only in silence. The invitation of a screening movie is to enter a new world and suspend this one – including whoever is sitting beside you – for 90 minutes. The young cinephile enters these worlds seeking characters, events, and lessons unavailable but needed in the real.

In *Broken Embraces* we see Sione Tuívailala Monū animate and re-present scenes that are both emblematic of global cinema and formative to their early identity and experiences. The melodramatically paced montage is an ode to the practice of cinema making and watching; the artist as young cinephile, and their active artistic oeuvre.

Layering animated translations or outlines of films' compositions, tones, and moods with semblances specific to the artist, *Broken Embraces* locates the dreamspace of global cinema in our local through the lens of Monū's developing figure as auteur. Presenting scenes of Monū's lived experience but also scenes that have informed and framed this experience; *Broken Embraces* is a blurring of real and composed (worlds) – a genealogical collage – both mythic and biographical.

Cut away to Sione and bestie Manu hovering on broomsticks high above a harbor on a dark night. This is the Waitematā. It is also a scene from Hayao Miyazaki's 1989 film *Kiki's Delivery Service*, a coming of age film about a girl who upon moving to a new town harnesses her magic powers to earn a living. It was this film that inspired Monū to leave their family home in Australia, to move across the water, and make a new life Aotearoa. These are sequences of mutual exchange between cinema and identity making.

In their practice, Monū has made good use of the suite of editing softwares and capacities offered by social media platforms; using these to turn the everyday, mundane, even lonesome, into well paced, framed, scored, and audienceed approximations of the cinematic. In *Broken Embraces*, self-shot footage of the artist is augmented with popular 'filters', turning their eyes a sparkly blue, and filling their lips. These productions can easily be read as commentary on the pervasiveness of 'main character syndrome', and the artist's own suffering from it. But there is also a sense that Monū's 'slice-of-life' segments proffer the companionship of cinematic languages and imagined audiences. Perhaps the continued framing of oneself with these languages overtly positions being within an animated global flow of culture and audience.

Cinema was Monū's teacher. They are "made up of movies". Narratives and images from elsewhere spoke to feelings and experiences not reflected in Monū's immediate environment. Spanish melodrama and Japanese animation gave permission to the queer part of the artist's identity. Now, as the artist actively reimagines characters from global cinema as Tongan, they seek a Pacific cinematic language; to view and make movies that reflect the wide, vastly different, personal and intricate diasporic experiences of Pacific peoples in a global society.

On *The Lightship*, Monū's cinema flickers between images of celebrity, global narrative, the daydreamed, and the artist's identity and experience. A weave that begs us to question how the media permeates our spheres, and how often we see ourselves reflected in the media.

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 8 October until 3 December 2020. This was followed by *Come Up For Air* by Sorawit Songsataya, which was live from 10 December 2020 to 4 February 2021, and *Skylined* by Tyson Campbell from 11 February to 8 April 2021.

The site is programmed by curators Sarah Hopkinson and Bridget Riggir-Cuddy, and 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 Tyson Campbell

Sione Tuívailala Monū is an artist of the Tongan diaspora. They live between Canberra Australia and Auckland, and works across the mediums of photography, moving-image, fashion and adornment, performance and drawing exploring identity, family and pasifika queer experience in the diaspora. Recent exhibitions include: *Spheres: An Online Video Project*, 2020; Christchurch Art Gallery, *Kahoa Kakala*, Fresh Gallery Otara and Objectspace, 2017; *Statuesque Anarchy*, Enjoy Public Art Gallery, Wellington, 2017; *Pouliuli*, Westspace, Melbourne, 2017; *Making Space*, Centre of Contemporary Art Toi Moroki, Christchurch, 2017; *GG Talk That Talk*, Fresh Gallery Ōtara, 2016.

[@sione_has_doubts](#)

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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