



THE LIGHTSHIP

KALISOLAITE 'UHILA

NEWWORKON 'THE LIGHTSHIP'

28 Apr- 04 Jul, 2026

PRESS RELEASE

- TheLightshipispleasedtopresent *Ko au eni* - a new piece by Kalisolaite 'Uhila.
- The commissioned site-specific artwork will be displayed from 28 April - 04 July 2026.
- Set in the red and white of the Tongan flags, Uhila's new work '*Ko au eni*,' meaning 'I am here,' is an ancestral and diasporic interpretation of a conversation with renowned New Zealand artist, Colin McCahon, that represents a presence and readiness to serve.



Ko au eni

Ko au eni means "here I am." Kalisolaite 'Uhila has set the phrase in the red and white of the Tongan flag across the face of The Lightship. It is the answer one gives in Tongan when called, a signal of presence and readiness to serve, familiar from Tongan hymns and from everyday speech.

A New Zealand viewer may also hear a quiet conversation with Colin McCahon's I AM paintings, which lettered the first person of the Old Testament God across the New Zealand landscape. The "I" in Ko au eni is a different one, ancestral and diasporic, "woven from voices before me."

'Uhila's body has done the speaking until now: homeless for Mo'ui tukuhausia, asleep under ngatu in Mohe, sitting through the equinox at the Ha'amonga 'a Maui. Ko au eni is the first work where the body is absent, and that absence is what the text is about.

About Kalisolaite 'Uhila

Kalisolaite 'Uhila is an award-winning performance artist based in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

Born in Tonga, 'Uhila's art practice centres on live performance, in which the expression of his ideas take place, unrehearsed, in gallery spaces and other locations outside of a traditional theatre environment.

His path to becoming a performance artist began as a print-maker studying at Auckland University of Technology. Studying a visual arts degree, he realised that he did not need paper to make a print but could bring image and sound together. He started to use his body as a tool and his first performance was using an antique saw to make marks on wood. 'Uhila has gone on to develop a range of different

projects, including sleeping rough at Te Tuhi Gallery for a week and Auckland Art Gallery for three months; spending days with a piglet in a pen for Pigs in the Yard at the Mangere Arts Centre and in Aotea Square; conducting the tide at Wellington's Oriental Bay; and in 2012 donning a black balaclava and green fishing net before leaping from a swing bridge into the Wamapu Stream then dragging himself back to shore.

In 'Uhila's experiential performances, he is not always the obvious subject, he may be completely invisible, disguised or inaccessible. 'Uhila's ideas come from exploring life expressing it in ways to be relatable to all people, which, in turn, provokes dialogue.

For his masters he explored the time aspect of 'social structures and relationships'. His thesis was titled Maumau-taimi: Wasting Time; Being Useless. Exploring perspectives of wasting time versus time well wasted in the field of art together with an ongoing study of the construction of performance to understand the patterns and language hidden inside Body, which he recreates in his own contemporary art of performance art from past and future into the present.

His projects have won 'Uhila a number of accolades including the Auckland Fringe Award, Visual arts in 2011, being a finalist in the 2014 Walters Prize and receiving the contemporary Pacific Artist Award at the Creative New Zealand Pasifika Arts Awards in 2017.

About The Lightship

The Lightship, is a space for contemporary art, launched by Port 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 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.

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The Lightship's inaugural commission was a new artwork by Janet Lilo entitled *ISLOVE* which went live from 8 October, 2020.

This was followed by;

1. Come Up For Air: Sorawit Songsataya
2. Skylined: Tyson Campbell
3. Broken Embraces: Sione Tuívailala Monū
4. Pūtahitanga kura: Abigail Aroha Jensen & Georgina Watson
5. Onepanea: Natalie & Sam Tozer
6. Kupesi Sisi Huelo 'oe Taulanga Waitematā moe Funga Tāmaki Makaurau: Sione Faletau
7. Whakakiwi: SINŌ
8. EVERYTHING: Fiona Jack
9. Broken Sovereignty: Parasite
10. Emma's Rain: Andrew Beck

11. Heavy Frame (wairua): Turumeke Harrington
12. The Long White Cloud: Jae Hoon Lee
13. Sky Sculpture: Andre Hemer
14. Frequency Colour: Clinton Watkins
15. Slow Fever: Nicola Farquhar
13. Sky Sculpture: Andre Hemer
14. Frequency Colour: Clinton Watkins
15. Slow Fever: Nicola Farquhar
16. White Collar Eclipse: Oscar Perry
17. Cut Line: Alex Chambers
18. Untitled: Esther Stewart
19. I Have No Body and I Must Move: Jess Johnson and Simon Ward
20. Fathom, Furlong, League: John Ward Knox
21. Colour Function 3:30: Jack B Hadley

The site is programmed by curator Simon Bowerbank, 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.

www.thelightship.co.nz
hello@thelightship.co.nz IG
[@the_light_ship](https://www.instagram.com/the_light_ship)

About the Car Handling Building

The car handling building was developed as part of Port 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. With this purpose maintained, the building is set for a transformation and additional function as Te Waharoa, Auckland's International Cruise Terminal. Construction is already underway and from early 2027, the Quay St elevation and ground floor of the building will become Te Waharoa. The new space is being delivered in collaboration with architects RCG, Ngati Whatua Orakei, Guadians and construction partner, Hawkins.

ENDS

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