

MEDIA KIT

She could lie on her back and sink

3 June – 26 August



Tai Shani, *The Neon Hieroglyph*, 2021, 4K Digital Video. Image courtesy of the artist.

For further information please contact:

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Tai Shani (UK) **Ann Shelton** (Pākehā, Italian, Aotearoa New Zealand), **Jayne Parker** (UK) and **Louie Zalk-Neale** (Ngāi Te Rangī, Pākehā Ōtaki) with **Adam Ben-Dror** (Aotearoa New Zealand), **Neke Moa** (Ngāti Kahungunu ki Ahuriri, Kai Tahu, Ngāti Porou, Ngāti Tūwharetoa) and **Tāwhanga Nopera** (Te Arawa, Tūwharetoa, Tainui, Ngāpuhi)

*'She was underwater now... Just like her grandmother, just like her grandmother's grandmother. She could lie on her back and sink.'*¹

She could lie on her back and sink explores artistic responses to the figure of the witch in the context of both indigenous Aotearoa and European lineages. Through film, photography, installation and performance, the exhibition is framed through an intersectional feminist lens where wise women* and customary knowledge holders are revered because of the way they engage with nature. Water is the unifying force between the artists, from the submergence of women's knowledge in European pre-Christian practices to a vessel of swirling seawater, a hallucinogenic island and an underwater dancer.

The exhibition's title is a quote from a short story by novelist Pip Adam, commissioned by Ann Shelton for her new body of work, *i am an old phenomenon* (2022-ongoing), and refers to the historical practice of "swimming a witch" where hundreds of thousands of women were forcibly tried for witchcraft through drowning. This history informs Shelton's new series and its visual realisation in the exhibition. Shelton's works awaken past and present knowledge systems pertaining to the medicinal, spiritual, and magical applications of plants, animals and fungi.

Turner-prize winning artist Tai Shani presents a feminist mythology of psychedelics in *The Neon Hieroglyph* (2021), which is inspired by her research into the history of ergot – a fungus from which the drug LSD is derived. In a newly commissioned installation and performance by Louie Zalk-Neale and their collaborators Tāwhanga Nopera, Neke Moa and Adam Ben-Dror, taura (ropes) are arranged to circulate flows of mauri through a self-contained seascape of rock, fibre, plastic and water. The exhibition concludes with Jayne Parker's portrayal of a ballerina moving gracefully underwater in the short, choreographed dance spectacle *The Whirlpool* (1997).

She could lie on her back and sink imagines a watery haven where our witchy selves can exist in harmony and new tendrils of knowledge are born. The exhibition

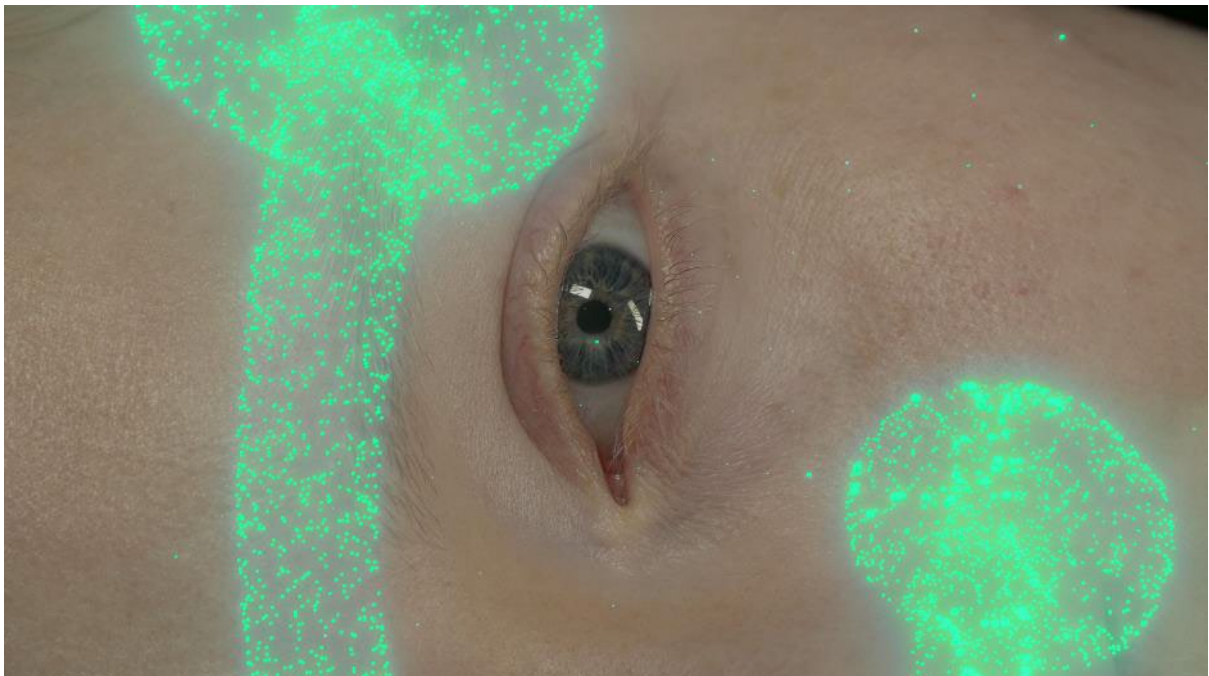
¹ Adam P. *The Three Fates. i am an old phenomenon* at Denny Gallery New York; 2022.

premiere's the work of Turner-prize winning artist Tai Shani for the first time in Aotearoa following its display at the Venice Biennale.

*"woman" and "women" throughout this text is intended to be inclusive of trans and gender diverse people.

The exhibition is supported by John and Jo Gow from the Connells Bay Sculpture Trust.

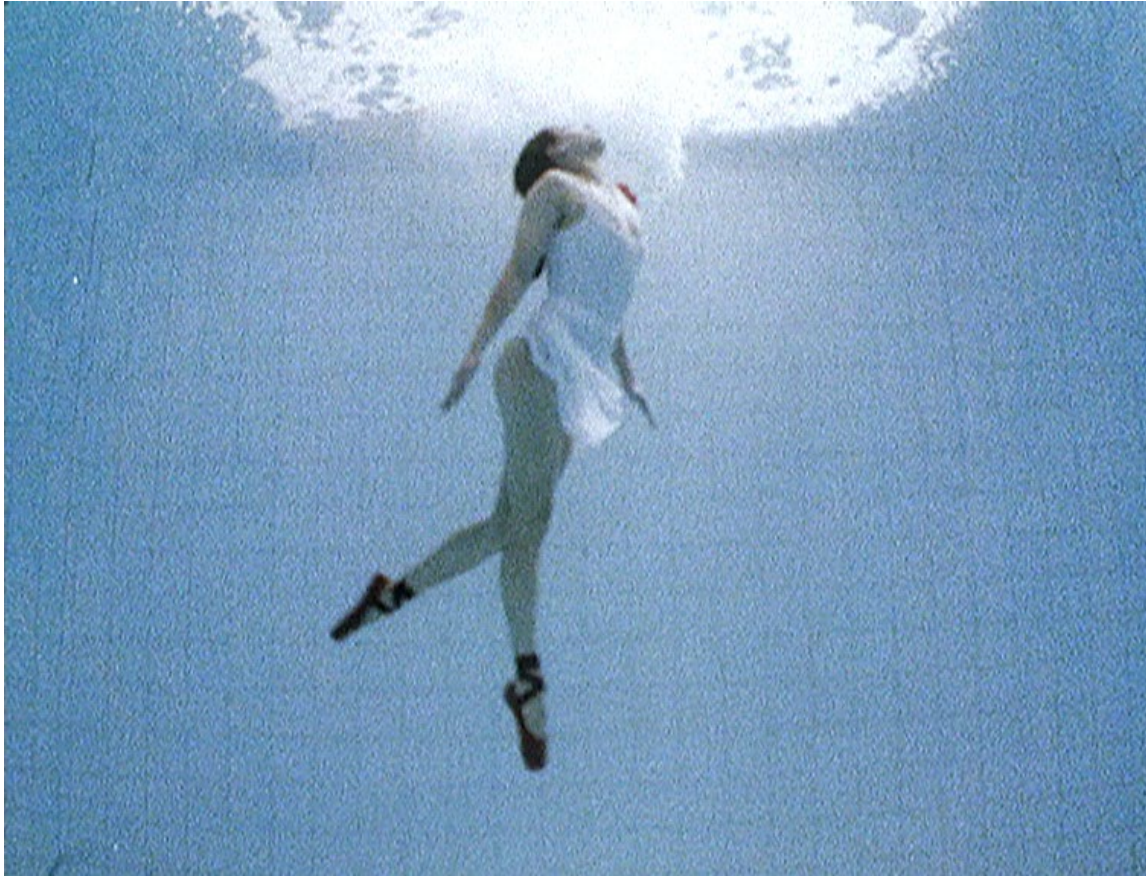
High resolution images available on request



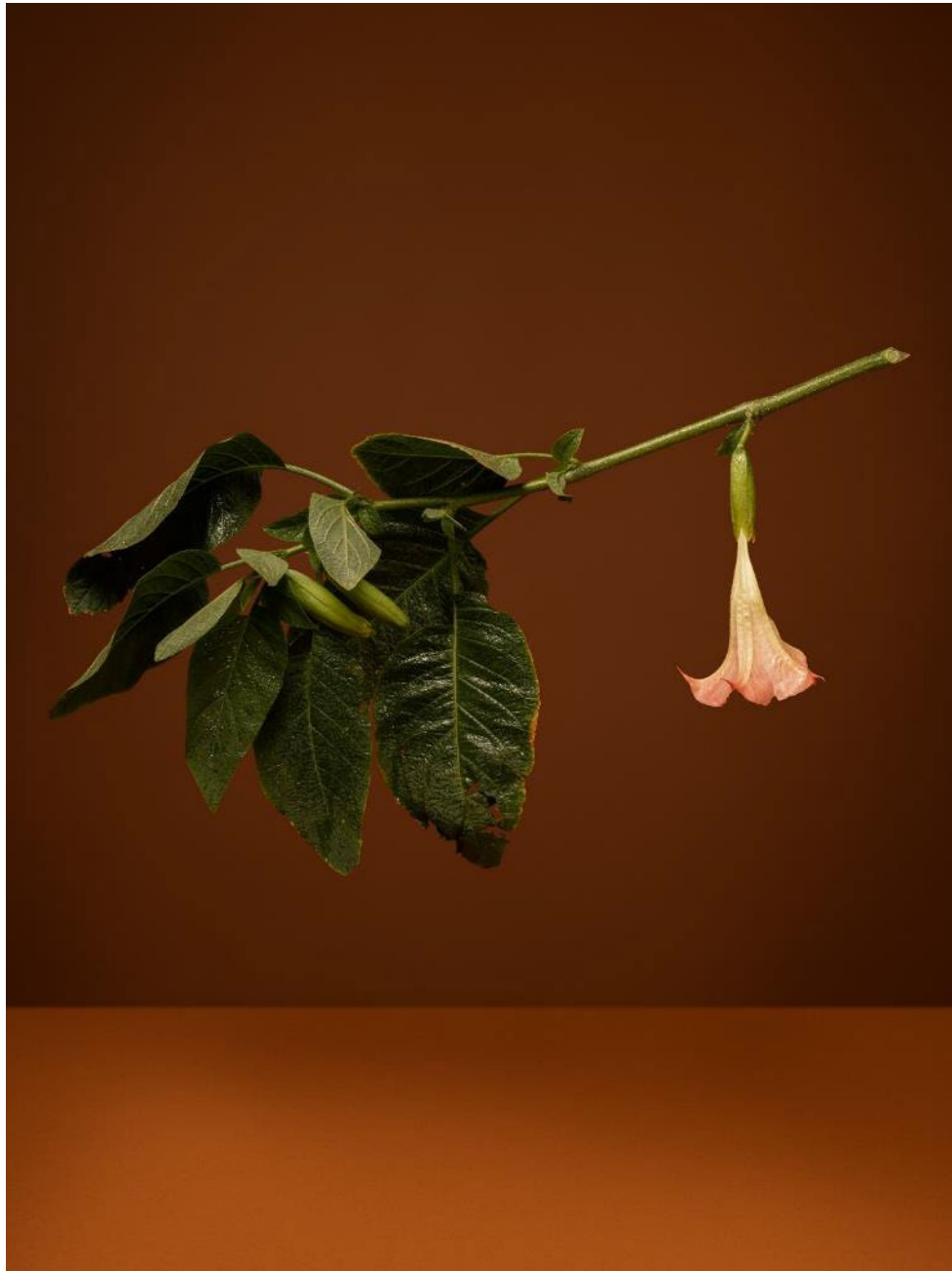
Tai Shani, *The Neon Hieroglyph*, 2021, 4K Digital Video. Image courtesy of the artist.



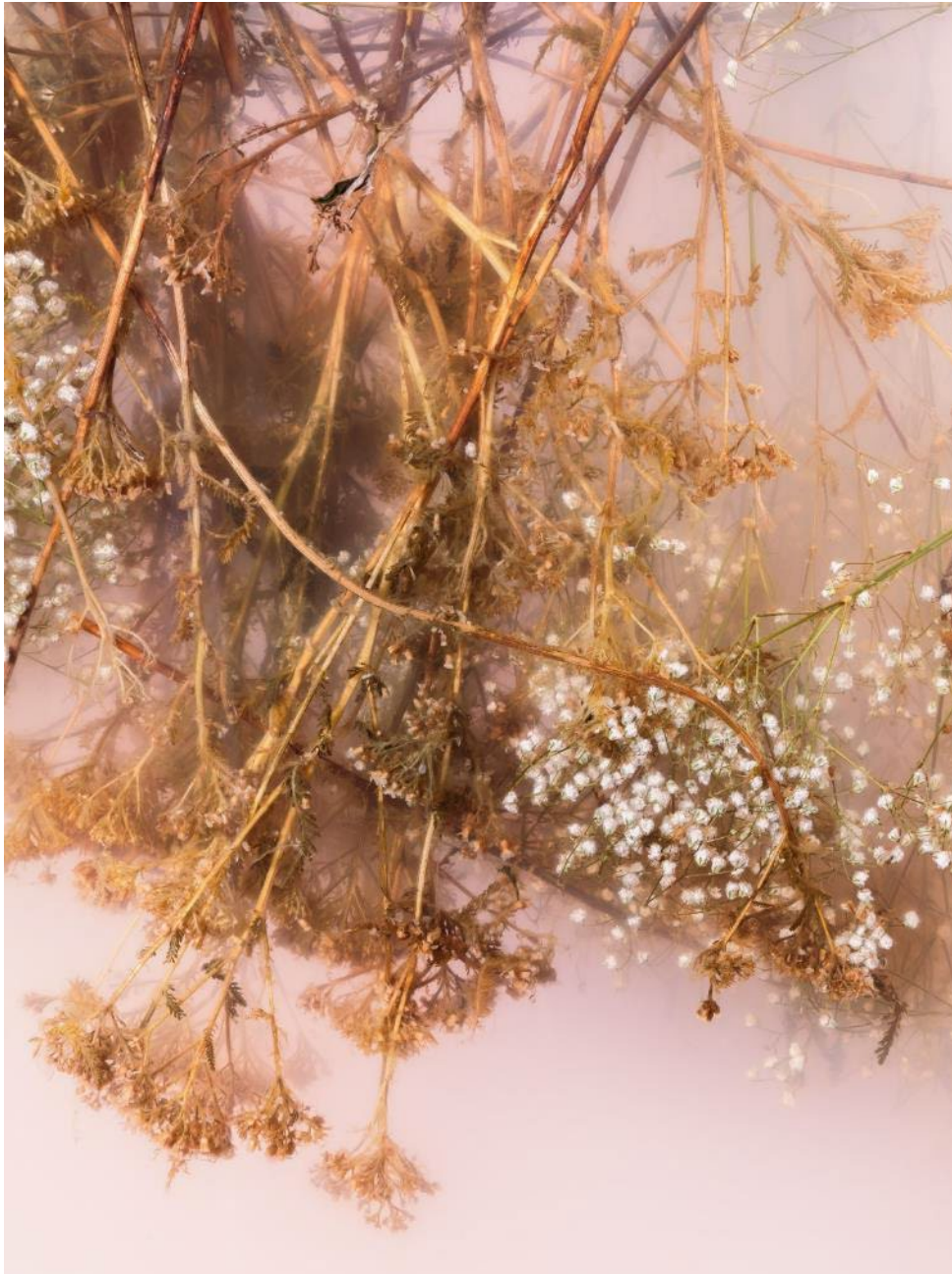
Jayne Parker, *The Whirlpool*, 1997, video. Courtesy of Jayne Parker and LUX, London.



Jayne Parker, *The Whirlpool*, 1997, video. Courtesy of Jayne Parker and LUX, London.



Ann Shelton, *On certain days or nights she anoints a staff and rides (Brugmansia, Angels Trumpet, snowy angel's trumpet, angel's tears, Datura [misleading])*, 2022-ongoing, pigment print.



Ann Shelton, And as she said thanks and spoke spells (Archillia, Yarrow, Old Man's Pepper, Devil's Nettle, Sanguinary, Milfoil, Soldier's Woundwort, Thousand Seal, Bad Man's Plaything, Carpenter's Weed, Gearwe, Hundred Leaved Grass, Knight's Milfoil, Millefolium, Nosebleed, Herbe Militaris, Stauchweed), 2022-ongoing, pigment print.



Image courtesy of Louie Zalk-Neale.

Tai Shani

Born 1976, London, UK. Tai Shani's artistic practice, comprising performance, film, photography, and installation, uses experimental writing as a guiding method. Oscillating between theoretical concepts and visceral details, Shani's texts attempt to create poetic coordinates in order to cultivate, fragmentary cosmologies of marginalised non-sovereignty. Taking cues from both mournful and undead histories of reproductive labour, illness and solidarity, her work is invested in recovering feminised aesthetic modes – such as the floral, the trippy or the gothic – in a register of utopian militancy. In this vein, the epic, in both its literary long-form and excessive affect, often shapes Shani's approach: Her long-term projects work through historical and mythical narratives, such as Christine de Pizan's allegorical city of women or the social history of psychedelic ergot poisoning. Extending into divergent formats and collaborations. Shani's projects examine desire in its (infra-)structural dimension, exploring a realism that materially fantasises against the patriarchal racial capitalist present. Tai Shani is the joint 2019 Turner Prize winner together with Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Helen Cammock and Oscar Murillo. Her work has been shown extensively in Britain and internationally.

Ann Shelton

Born 1967, Timaru, Aotearoa New Zealand. Ann Shelton is recognized as one of New Zealand's leading photographic artists. Her most recent work engages with plant narratives and histories, in particular the intersection of these histories with human knowledge systems. Shelton is interested in how the perceived power play between plants and humans can be questioned, redefined and modified through questions that urgently come into play as we move deeper into the era of the anthropocene.

Ann Shelton received her MFA from the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada. She lives in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, New Zealand. Her most recent museum survey, *Dark Matter*, curated by Zara Stanhope (Director, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery, Ngāmotu New Plymouth, Aotearoa New Zealand), was hosted by Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki in 2016 and toured to Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū in 2017. Shelton's work has been featured in numerous international exhibitions, in addition to being included in *Images Recalled*, Germany's largest photographic biennale.

Shelton's work has been extensively written about and reviewed in publications including Artforum, Hyperallergic, Journal of New Zealand, Pacific Studies, Artnet News, The Art Newspaper, the Evergreen Review. Her works are included in public and private collections throughout Aotearoa New Zealand and in the United States. She is an Honorary Research Fellow in Photography at Whiti o Rehua, School of Art Massey University. Her latest book *mother lode* was published in 2020 by Bad News Books, Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington. Shelton will have her first institutional solo exhibition in the USA at The Alice Austen House Museum, New York in 2024.

Louie Zalk-Neale

Louie Zalk-Neale (Ngāi Te Rangi, Pākehā) is an artist who engages with the transformative power of body adornment. Entangled in an ecological web, their performances and rituals envisage a full embrace of takatāpuitanga and gender fluidity. Their work is a revival of discarded plastics and precious detritus from forests, beaches and gutters, which they use to add meticulously crafted extensions to their body. Louie's wider practice connects performance art, body adornment, sculpture, video, photography, drawing, painting, and holding wānanga and workshops. In recent explorations, their practice of twisting taura tī kōuka (cabbage tree fibre rope) attempts to bind the sacred transgender experience with the transformative powers of taniwha and tipua - spiritual beings from pūrakau Māori that can change gender and form. Louie's mahi toi reinforces that queerness is an intrinsic quality of any natural and cultural system.

Louie has been selected to travel to Taiwan for a month-long artist lab at the Taiwan Performing Arts Center on the topic of queer ecology in performance with eleven other artists from around the world. Louie's work has been presented across Aotearoa and internationally since 2015, including at Govett-Brewster Art Gallery (Ngāmotu New Plymouth), Oberhausen Short Film Festival (Germany), Toi Matarau (Ōtaki), Enjoy (Pōneke Wellington), Blue Oyster (Ōtepoti Dunedin), CIRCUIT (Pōneke, Ōtatutahi, Germany), Artspace Aotearoa (Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland), Shared Lines (Kaikōura, Japan, Pōneke), Critical Costume Conference (Norway), Performance Art Week Aotearoa (Pōneke), Greenhouse Berlin (Germany) along with many independent projects. Louie works primarily as an artist and is based in Ōtaki, north of Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington.

Jayne Parker

Born in 1957, Nottingham, United Kingdom. Jayne Parker studied at Mansfield College of Art, Canterbury College of Art and the Slade. She was a visiting lecturer at Goldsmiths' College from 1984-1998 and has taught at the Slade School of Fine Art since 1989. Her work has been shown at art venues, on television and in film festivals internationally.

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Exhibition open Tuesday - Friday 10am-5pm, Saturday 10am-4pm

Gus Fisher Gallery
74 Shortland Street
Auckland Central

Free entry



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