

Angelica Mesiti's *Mother Tongue* to open at Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki



Angelica Mesiti, *Mother Tongue*, 2017 (stills), gift of the Friends of the Auckland Art Gallery, 2020. Photography: Bonnie Elliot. Courtesy the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery.

Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki presents *Mother Tongue*, a work by internationally acclaimed Australian artist Angelica Mesiti, from Saturday 19 December.

Mother Tongue is an 18-minute, dual-channel video installation that celebrates and examines the ways communities learn to live together. In this work, Mesiti shows how music builds social cohesion and is carried from place to place by people as they integrate into new communities. The work was produced with the participation of school children, employees of Aarhus Kommune, the Ramallah Boy Scouts troop, the Jaffra Dancers, Gellerup Circus School and residents of the Gellerupparken housing development.

Originally commissioned by the European Capital of Culture Aarhus in 2017, the physical presentation of *Mother Tongue* resembles an open book, with two screens showing cinematic musical performances by a range of individuals and groups in urban, civic, learning and residential spaces in Aarhus, Denmark. The music they sing or perform to – which ranges from popular radio hits to traditional folk songs, Somali blues, marching drills and wedding dances – represent the diversity of communities living within this modern Danish city.

Auckland Art Gallery Director Kirsten Lacy says, 'Around the world, song and movement provide vital social connection and ways of expressing identity. This major cinematic work by Angelica Mesiti demonstrates the power of music and dance in affirming cultural identity. Diverse migrant communities the world over will relate to themes of longing, belonging and making home in a new country.'

Co-ordinating curator Ane Tonga says: '*Mother Tongue* looks specifically at the assortment of languages, sounds and rhythms that pulsate through a city. Moving between individual and collective, nostalgic longing and optimism, the work reflects a contemporary society in which individuals make powerful efforts to retain and translate cultural connections in new places.'

Mother Tongue is the second of three new acquisitions by Auckland Art Gallery of work by internationally acclaimed video artists. Its presentation was preceded by the screening of Candice Breitz's *I'm Your Man (A Portrait of Leonard Cohen)*, and will be followed by a presentation of Julian Rosefeldt's, *My home is a dark and cloud-hung land*, 20 February– 11 April 2021.

For images and interviews

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Exhibition details

Angelica Mesiti: *Mother Tongue*

When:
Saturday 19 December 2020–
Sunday 7 February 2021

10am–5pm daily, except Christmas Day

Where:
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki
Cnr Kitchener and Wellesley Streets
Auckland, New Zealand

Admission:
FREE

About Angelica Mesiti

Angelica Mesiti (born 1976, Sydney) currently lives between Sydney and Paris. She is fascinated by performance as a mode of storytelling and a means to express social ideas in physical form. In recent years she has been making videos that reveal how culture is manifested through non-linguistic forms of communication, and especially through vocabularies of sound and gesture.

Mesiti represented Australia at the 58th Venice Biennale (2019). She has held solo shows at Palais De Tokyo (Paris, 2019), Art Sonje Centre (Seoul, 2018), Tbilisi Kunsthale (Tbilisi, 2018) and the National Gallery of Australia (Canberra, 2017) among others. She has taken part in biennales of Adelaide (2018), Sydney (2014), Auckland (2013), Istanbul (2013) and Sharjah (2013). The artist is represented by Galerie Allen (Paris) and by Anna Schwartz Gallery (Melbourne).