

Christopher Ulutupu: *The Romantic Picturesque*  
Princess Park Battery, Hobart.

'For me every diaspora is the passage from unity to multiplicity.' - Edouard Glissant

A minority is any person who is considered 'other' - that sits outside of what is considered neutral in Euro-centric society. This spans over several identity frameworks such as sexuality, gender, physical and neurological ability, ethnicity, profession, etc. Minorities perform for the majority almost constantly, whether it is conscious or not - adapting language, names, accents, clothing and conversations to make the majority feel comfortable and for themselves to feel safety. This is the kind of performance that often goes unrecognised, but Ulutupu creates staged dramatizations of these performances shown in his moving-image works.

It is to watch the unnerving stare of a white man walking towards a young Samoan girl. Donning a marching band costume, she stands in a dark wood performing an interpretation of a sasa, to what appears to be no one. Once the man turns and walks away, the experience is twofold - the first being that of relief, that she is no longer being watched. The second is of disappointment as he has apathetically rejected her, as though he had had his fill of her, despite surveying temporarily.

From enduring colonisation, to slavery, to violence and torment - survival is a necessary act that many people of colour are practiced very at and one of the ways in which they continue to survive is through adaptation. Social and contextual adaptation has become ingrained in people of colour, especially those who have experienced diaspora. The culture of our motherland always forms the base of who we are, but when people of colour have to exist in a white world, means of survival become difficult to recognise and can often compromise the respect we show our heritage. Whiteness does not have to infiltrate a coloured person's connection to their culture, but in colonised countries it does make up a large part of our surroundings, therefore it shifts how we can make those connections. For many who were raised in these contexts they have learned a culture that is hybrid made from multiples, but that does not make our identities a mixture of these many cultures - it is something different altogether. It is a constantly transforming entity that is unique in its portrayal of culture. It can be seen in the gesture of singing songs that are culturally customary with a trio of relatives and soon after singing Western pop songs all on the same mock tropical beach. This is not necessarily the kind of performance that we do to make the white people around us feel like an 'othered' culture is easier to consume, but it is the kind of performance that our forever expanding knowledge base adopts as a practice of interpretation and exploration of our own identities.

Ulutupu tackles this for himself in ways that are often tongue-and-cheek - rejecting the often whitewashed approaches to art. His use of karaoke rebels against a time he was asked if he enjoyed poetry about landscapes, to which he responded 'Karaoke is the strongest form of poetry, especially 80's and 90's power ballads'. He humorously brings to light that what may seem to be a simple distinction between highbrow and lowbrow, but might in reality be a measuring scale of what is considered 'whiter'.

Underneath his comical approach Ulutupu explores how identity affected by diaspora is continuously modified by the influence of various cultural elements. The interpretation of each character's role is directly influenced by their race and gender and how their presence shifts their positions in relation to whom they interact with. Incorporating white and coloured bodies alike in his cinematic works he prompts his viewer to question how performance shifts the interpersonal dynamics between characters in his seemingly relaxed scenes. The combination of works displayed shows hows the infiltration of whiteness into non-white culture is something that can be used as a tool for discussion, but also manipulated so people of colour can create betterment.

-Dilohana Lekamge