Pelenakeke Brown Provocation

A Travelling Practice looks at the Samoan design principles and ancestral knowledge held within the landscape and context of the contemporary keyboard. The keyboard becomes a crossover site that intersects my many identities and art forms, as well as becoming a tool for freedom and creativity of expression.

As a disabled artist working within crip time, the power of movement that I can achieve through my keyboard and the liminal space of the internet is integral to help me connect, create, and facilitate my artistic practice. With this work I wished to expand what is considered movement and explore the specific choreography of the keyboard, both physically and conceptually, and ask how can one move without moving?

I focused on the small movements created in this contemporary landscape and how it invokes Samoan concepts. The keyboard is set up with a pre-existing set of relationships, from the keys that most people know and understand, and each movement, each tap, no matter how small, is a powerful propelling forward through time and space. Using the Samoan framework of the vā* or spatial relationships, I analyzed the relationships of the keys, using the concepts already on the console to think about movement. Looking at the relationality of the keys of the keyboard, I realized many of the characters in the keyboard reflect many of the symbols of the Samoan tatau; specifically, the malu, traditionally worn by women. I was fascinated to see that in this modern technology there is this ancestral knowledge in plain sight. I wanted to connect the two in my use of text and visual images and explore what do some of these movements, look and feel like and how is this reflected in the Samoan tatau.

Tatau has continued to evolve and today it is still a significant and an important marker of identity especially within communities of the Samoan diaspora. Artist, tatau practitioner, and scholar, Tyla Vaeau Ta'ufo'ou defines tatau as a travelling practice and connects tatau to the wider movement of Samoan people both historically and in contemporary forms in her thesis, Fa'avaetuli: Like the Feet of Tuli >>> Samoan Tatau as a Travelling Practice. With her permission and with much alofa ma fa'afetai tele lava, I have used her title as I similarly applied this spirit of exploring tatau as a movement practice in itself, through space and time, and the malaga I have taken both physically and conceptually to create this work.

This work connects to my wider multi-disciplinary practice as it explores the quiet intersections between race, disability, immigration, decolonization, and aesthetic.

*To learn more about the vā, please read Albert Wendt, "Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body," originally published in *Span* 42-43 (April-October 1996): 15-29. Sourced from New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre, http://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/authors/wendt/tatauing.asp



Pelenakeke Brown < < < < < < A Travelling Practice > > > > >

I look down at the landscape before me in each corner I see four deliberate markers of space and time

esc		on
	and everything in between	
fn		>

Today's journey begins with a crick in my neck, an ache in my left arm and a longing for home this longing for home feels like a dreaded dry mouth and a lead weight of nerves in my stomach with a wish to be supported, floating effortlessly in the water with my ears covered by the cool, smooth liquid muting out the outside noises and my own (often more debilitating) inside voices the reverberation of these opinions echoing long after the action that I am agonizing over has ended

I look at the landscape that I am in
the framework of this space
the context that is held within these keys
the relationships between each of these keys
the ascending
descending
symbols and languages
worlds within worlds

My body, although always tired has made its own rhythm and knows, instinctively, how to move I, too, have home keys, familiar steps although sometimes I falter

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My hands are hovered above, midflight
If I make a tap I need it to be perfect
I need to be sure, there is no room for error
but with no guarantee the only way forward
is to tap on

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into the abyss into the vā the space in-between As I type, I watch the symbols and keys build upon each other shift and move along the page as I tap each key

I see how it changes the configuration and movement on the page It is gentle, yet stable work, and while I type it calms me

At other times
I sit there in silence, unable to move afraid, to go forward |stuck|
fearing "what if it's not right?"

I notice on my keyboard
that there is often a corresponding action in the keys
a reflection and reciprocity
this reciprocity mirroring
the vā
relationships that support and protect each other

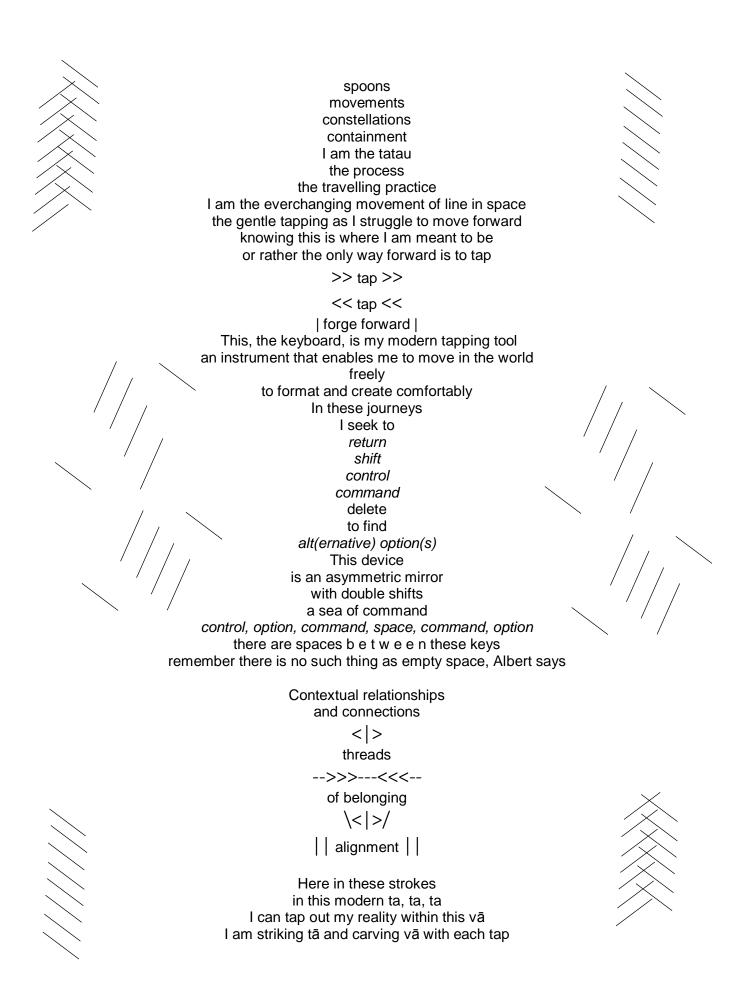
to increase there must be a decrease

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When I type (strike)
/// \\\ /// \\\ /// \\\
I move into a rhythm

like the Tufuga tā tatau and their 'au, with each strike on Samoan ancestral flesh the strike of my keyboard is a way of affirming my existence and connecting to something outside of ourselves

Like my ancestors did with our lineage, travelling, exploring new worlds now, I am journeying from the comfort of my home while still resting these sore bones of mine using these contemporary keys that hold ancestral taps of knowledge which propel me through time and space tap, tap, tap, remember there can be no vā without tā



All the things I cannot say live here

shift
let's me know
that I am human
that I feel
and can move
forward
command

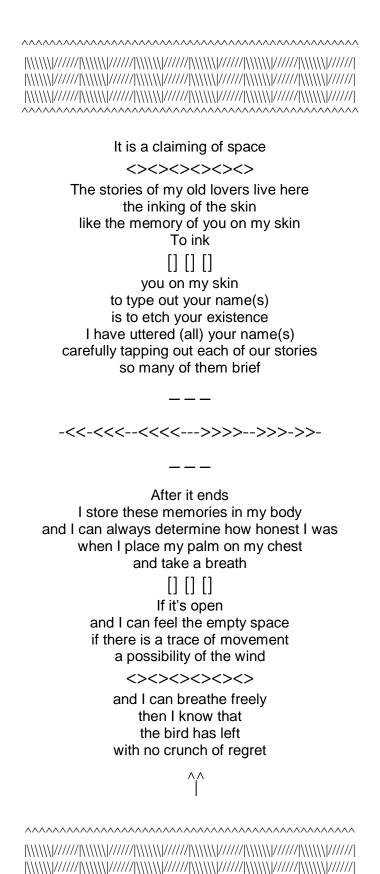
is the ever-powerful tool I am searching for control

is the cool face of detachment but when you peer under the table her hands are gripping (too) tightly

Are there any *alt options* to let go? (and how can I *delete*?)

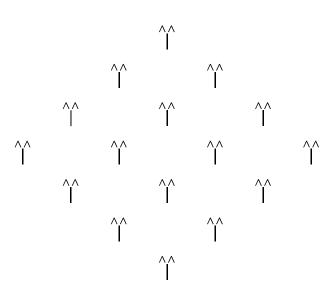
The continual striking of tā in my movements in this liminal vā the continual pressing of *return* (or is it *enter?*)

I am unsure this will lead me anywhere



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I sit here now
legs wide
coming out from the slit of my dress
the birds
of my heart, soaring, trying to find land
to rest, to be cradled upon
within



It is a grounding visual force and connects me to so many out there I do not need to move to feel this connection It tells you where we have been and where we are going

I imagine my tatau will feel the same, she will cover me, connect and protect mark me as Samoan out in this travelling world in a language that only a few will recognize

return and enter are one and the same when I think I am returning I am in fact moving forward

I have always had the movement of my score right here

Manuia lou malaga

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