

## CLUB ATE LIGHT UP THE NATIONAL GALLERY WITH MAJOR NEW COMMISSION



Performance artists and leaders of the Sydney queer art and club scene – Club Ate – will light up the iconic 60 metre façade of the National Gallery of Australia for Canberra’s 2020 Enlighten Festival. This major new commission builds on the success of Tony Albert’s *I AM VISIBLE*, which illuminated the Gallery in 2019 and reaffirms the National Gallery’s commitment to support contemporary artists.

Over 11 nights, water and bodies will flow across the facade of the National Gallery in Club Ate’s monumental video projection *In Muva We Trust* (2020). In response to the illuminations, the collective, led by interdisciplinary artists Bhenji Ra and Justin Shoulder, will also host *Club Muva*, a one-night-only live event inspired by the collective’s decade-long practice of merging club and cultural traditions, as well as drawing from the many subcultural groups they support, including the Australian Ball and Voguing scene.

Club Ate draws on Bhenji Ra and Justin Shoulder’s shared Filipino-Australian heritage – using performance, costume and video to create work about personal discovery and stories of the queer Asia-Pacific diaspora.

“*In Muva We Trust* animates mythic ancestral beings and landscapes to envision new forms of motherhood, community and ecology. It asks the question, ‘in the face of an uncertain future, how do we, as queer communities of colour, cultivate hope and create possibility?’” artist Justin Shoulder said.

Shaune Lakin, the National Gallery’s Senior Curator of Photography says, “As Club Ate’s spectacular digital sky-world in effect ‘queers’ the building’s brutalist concrete structure, the streets will be ignited with dance, music and spectacle with the inclusive *Club Muva* outdoor performance.”

Featuring Asia-Pacific artists from Sydney and Canberra parading in a procession down Parkes Place, *Club Muva* is Canberra’s first chance to experience one of Club Ate’s iconic events. These events have been putting subcultures like voguing at centre stage in Australia and according to Bhenji Ra and Justin Shoulder, opened spaces of ‘infinite possibility for queer and diasporic communities to connect, communicate and transmutate’.

“*Club Muva* is a nurturing space for expression, a celebration of identity and connectedness, where audiences can be immersed in our floorless ocean of potential and join our interwoven families in an action towards radical togetherness” said artist Bhenji Ra.

*Club Ate: In Muva We Trust* and *Club Muva* are [Know My Name](#) projects and are part of [Enlighten 2020](#). For more information visit [nga.gov.au/enlighten](http://nga.gov.au/enlighten).

**Club Ate: In Muva We Trust** | Fri 28 February - Mon 9 March 2020 | 8pm-late | FREE | Façade, National Gallery  
**Club Muva** | Sat 7 March | 8pm-late | FREE | Parkes Place East, National Gallery of Australia  
**Enlighten Media Call** | Wednesday 26 February | 8pm | National Gallery

Interviews available on request. Images available for download via our [media centre](#).

### MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Jessica Barnes | Communications Officer | [jessica.barnes@nga.gov.au](mailto:jessica.barnes@nga.gov.au) | 6240 6431 | 0431 731 140

**Caption:** Club Ate *Ex Nilalang (Balud)* 2015 (production still), single-channel HD digital video, purchased 2017, commissioned by Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art for the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art and co-funded by NAVA’s NSW Artist Grant 2015. Purchased 2017, image courtesy of the artists. Photography: Gregory Lorenzutti

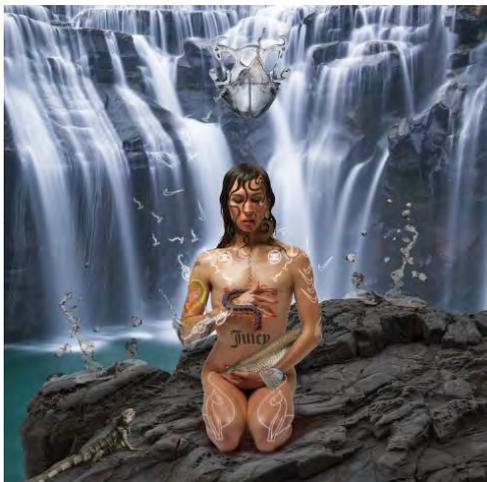
**ARTIST PROFILES**



**CLUB ATE | JUSTIN SHOULDER & BHENJI RA**

Club Ate is a collective formed in 2014 by multi-form artists Justin Shoulder and Bhenji Ra. Their practice transverses video, performance and club events with an emphasis on community activation. Collaborating with members of the queer Asia Pacific diaspora in Australia and the Philippines, the collective is invested in creating their own Future Folklore. Past Club Ate events have taken the form of Pageants, Variety Nights and Balls.

The collective has performed and exhibited internationally, with recent highlights including the 8th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, QAGGOMA, Brisbane, 2015-16; Fault-lines: Disparate and Desperate Intimacies, ICA Singapore, 2016; AsiaTOPA, ACMI, Melbourne, 2017; and Balik Bayan, Blacktown Arts Centre, 2017. They were also a finalist in the Singapore Art Prize at the National Museum of Singapore and have recently completed an Asialink Residency hosted by Green Papaya Arts, Philippines, 2018. They are currently working on the next episode of their video project Ex Nilalang; Queen of Horror to premiere in 2020.



**BHENJI RA**

(Source: <https://artsreview.com.au/common-anomalies/>)

Bhenji Ra is an interdisciplinary artist whose practice combines performance and video. Her work is often concerned with the dissection of cultural theory and identity, centralizing her own personal histories as a tool to reframe performance. With an emphasis on occupation and at times collective action, her work plays with the multiplicities of spectacle while offering moments of becoming and alternative modules of community to be considered. She belongs to the collective Club Ate, alongside artist Justin Shoulder. Together they have shown their work at the 8th Asia Pacific Triennale, ICA London and most recently ACMI, Melbourne.



**JUSTIN SHOULDER**

(Source: <http://phasmahammer.com/>)

Justin Shoulder is an artist working in performance, sculpture, video and nightlife/community events production. His main body of work Phasmahammer is an ecology of alter personas based on queered ancestral myth. These creatures are embodied through hand crafted costumes and prosthesis and animated by their own gestural languages. Shoulder uses his body and craft to forge connections between queer, migrant, spiritual and intercultural experiences. He is a founding member of queer artist collective The Glitter Militia and Club Ate, a gang of Asia-pacific sissies. He has performed and exhibited internationally, recent highlights in 2017 include: the video body of work *Ex Nilalang* for AsiaTOPA by Club Ate, *First Sight* at Museum Macan, Jakarta and the premiere of his feature length theatre work *Carrion* for Liveworks, Performance Space Sydney.

**MATTHEW STEGH | SET & COSTUME DESIGNER**

Matthew Stegh is an interdisciplinary artist who has worked in the entertainment and arts industries for the past 20 years. His extensive experience includes fashion, costume and set design, styling and art direction for film, television, advertising, theatre and stills photography distributed internationally. Stegh is a founding member of the art collective The Glitter Militia, co-creating parties and events for Sydney's vibrant queer community (Monsta Gras, Pink Bubble, Clown Cult). Stegh's fashion label 'Haus of Hellmutti' is generating attention locally and internationally for its focus on queer identities, ethical production and salvaged materials.

**INSITE ARTS**

Insite Arts brings twenty years of experience in the performing arts industry. The company has a high degree of knowledge and awareness of Australia's diverse performing arts market. Insite arts offers services for a wide range of arts and corporate organisations including programming, strategic planning, creative management structures and delivery of projects and programs. Insite Arts works with artists as an independent producer to provide key artistic support and management to their project or practise, and/ or to collaborate with them right from concept stage through to realisation of the project. Insite Arts is Lee Cumberlidge, Jason Cross, Elena Vereker and Victoria Raywood. Their background includes direction/ creation of contemporary performance work and presenting large-scale site-specific installations, company general management, tour producing and production, and festival curation and management. Since their inception, Insite Arts have supported the presentation of more than 30 new Australian works across 25 different countries. Other highlights include the 2006 Commonwealth Games (Melbourne); Advent Calendar at Federation Square; Architects of Air, 'Saltbush' (international touring including Asia pacific region), Unsound (Adelaide) and the Mona Foma Festival (Tasmania). *CLUB MUVA* is produced by Jason Cross and Penelope Leishman from Insite Arts.

**Captions:**

- Club Ate (Justin Shoulder and Bhenji Ra), *Ex Nilalang* Photograph: Jack Mannix, 2015, (editing) Justin Shoulder
- Bhenji Ra for *anito | all idols* 2017, digital photograph by Tristan Jalleh
- Justin Shoulder for *Carrion*, digital photograph by Tristan Jalleh