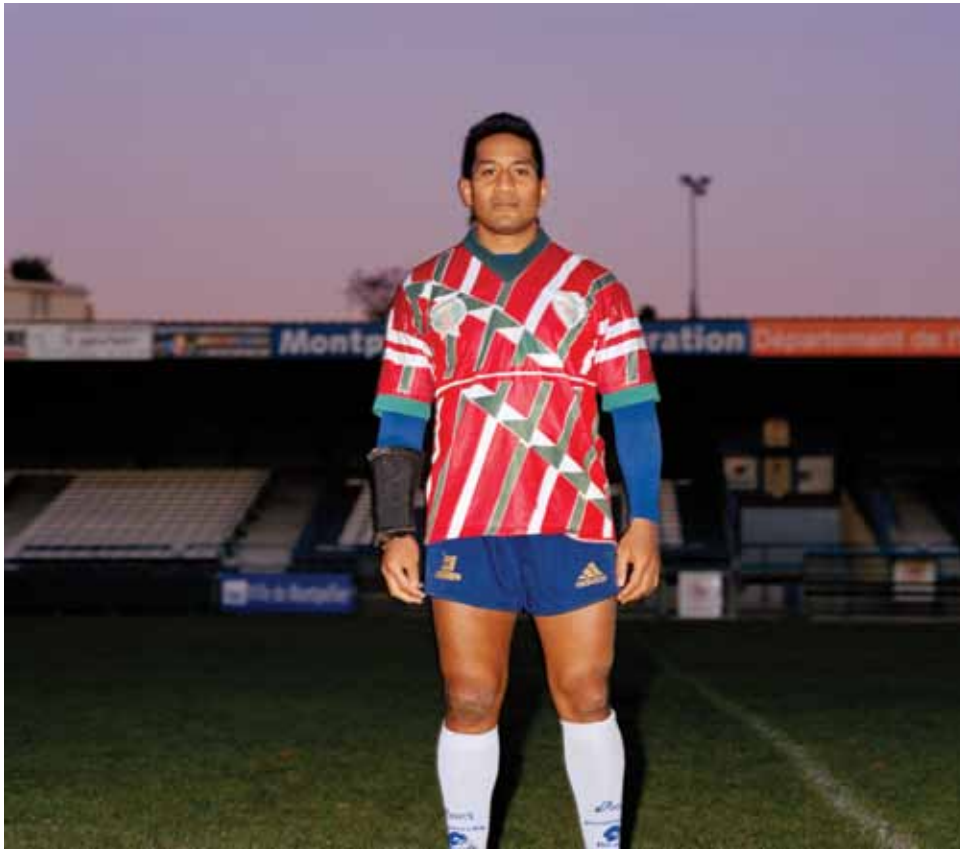


From the collection



During 2006, Edith Amituanai visited France and Italy as part of a Creative New Zealand-funded five-week project to photograph professional rugby players. Each of her subjects had a Pasifika background, and many of them were her relatives or friends. The theme for her work at that time was “third wave” migration, as the children or grandchildren of people who emigrated from the Pacific Islands to New Zealand in the twentieth century, started to move back out into the world to seek new opportunities.

The title for the series, *Dejeuner*, was suggested by one of the subjects, Philemon Toleafoa, mentioning to her how he missed the shared meals and family gatherings back home in New Zealand in particular the Sunday lunch at his grandmother’s house. The use of the title *Dejeuner* also recalls a famous painting by Edouard Manet created in 1862-3 *Dejeuner sur l’herbe* where a large female nude sits with fully dressed men in a sylvan glade, gazing out at the viewer while her male companions remain engrossed in conversation. She is starkly-lit, and

the painting is often used as an example of “photographic” lighting, since there are almost no shadows cast. Daguerrotypes, the forerunners of photographs, were an innovation in Paris at this time, and they had a profound effect on painting. The writer Emile Zola felt this was Manet’s greatest work, since in it he had realised the dream of all painters: to place figures of natural grandeur in landscape.

The subject for Edith Amituanai’s *Dejeuner* is similarly grand. Murphy Pavihi Taele played as a flanker on contract to the Montpellier Herault Rugby Club during 2006. Montpellier is capital of the Languedoc-Roussillon region and Murphy wears the white and blue that signifies this region. During the early 2000s, this team was in the top division of the French league system and played in the European shield. Their success was due to their large number of “imports”: foreign players who were on contract from Argentina, South Africa, Fiji and New Zealand. Murphy is photographed here with a flash at sunset, after evening practice. He is standing casually, and his feet are cropped by the framing, as if snapped in a moment’s relaxation, Edith Amituanai describes her process. “I pose them.

I make sure my subjects understand what I am trying to do. I find they know more about what I am trying to communicate than I do, and they often suggest, “What about this instead?”

Linda Tyler

*Edith Amituanai, Monsieur Murphy Pavihi Taele 2006
from the series Dejeuner, 2007, type C photographic print*