

scope

Contemporary Research Topics

art & design 7:
Border Crossings: New Dialogues in Pacific Art & Design
November 2012

Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Art & Design) is peer-reviewed and published annually in November by Otago Polytechnic/Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. Within the series, this issue is devoted to Border Crossings: New Dialogues in Pacific Art and Design as a subtitle and focus for the selected material. Dr. Graham Fletcher is the Editor.

The series *Scope (Art & Design)* aims to engage discussion on contemporary research in the visual arts and design. It is concerned with views and critical debates surrounding issues of practice, theory, history and their relationships as manifested through the visual and related arts and activities, such as sound, performance, curation, tactile and immersive environments, digital scapes and methodological considerations. With New Zealand and its Pacific neighbours as a backdrop, but not its only stage, *Scope (Art & Design)* seeks to address the matters which concern contemporary artists and arts enquirers in their environments of practice.

EBSCO Database: *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics (Art & Design)* is catalogued on the EBSCO Database in recognition of academic quality and alignment with international peer review processes.

An online version of the journal is available free at www.thescope.org; ISSN (for hardcopy version): 1177-5653; ISSN (for online version): 1177-5661.

© 2012 the authors; © illustrations, the artists or other copyright owners (all permissions the responsibility of authors).

Submissions for *Scope (Art & Design)* are invited from artists, designers, curators, writers, theorists and historians. Submissions should be sent in hardcopy and electronic format by 30 April for review and potential inclusion in the annual issue to Leoni Schmidt (Chief Editor) at Otago Polytechnic/Te Kura Matatini Ki Otago, Private Bag 1910, Dunedin, New Zealand and leoni@tekotago.ac.nz with a copy to scope.editorial@op.ac.nz. Please consult the information for contributors below and hardcopy or online versions for examples. Peer review forms will be sent to all submitters in due course, with details concerning the possible reworking of documents where relevant. All submitters will be allowed up to two subsequent resubmissions of documents for peer approval. All final decisions concerning publication of submissions will reside with the Editor. Opinions published are those of the authors and not necessarily subscribed to by the Editor or Otago Polytechnic.

Formats include: editorials, articles; perspectives; essays; artist and designer pages, logs and travel reports; reports on and reviews of exhibitions, projects, residencies and publications; and moving, interactive works (to be negotiated with the editors for the online version, with stills to appear in the hardcopy version). Other suggested formats will also be considered; and special topics comprising submissions by various contributors may be tendered to the editors. All material will be published both in hardcopy and online.

Submissions should engage with contemporary arts practices in ways which may contribute to critical debate and new understandings. High standards of writing, proofreading and adherence to consistency through the Chicago referencing style are expected. For more information, please refer to the *Chicago Manual of Style*; and consult prior issues for examples. A short biography of no more than 50 words; as well as title; details concerning institutional position and affiliation (where relevant); and contact information (postal, email and telephone number) should be provided on a cover sheet, with all such information withheld from the body of the submission. Low resolution images with full captions should be inserted into texts to indicate where they would be preferred; while high resolution images should be sent separately. Enquiries about future submission can be directed to scope.editorial@op.ac.nz.

Design, Typesetting and Onlining: Simon Horner, newSplash, Otago Polytechnic/Te Kura Matatini ki Otago.
Printing: Dunedin Print Ltd.

Cover: Lupe Mahe, Ta'ovala (Waist mat), 2001. Detail from "Nimamea'a: The fine arts of Tongan embroidery and crochet" held at Objectspace, Auckland, 16th November 2011.

Editorial Team: Graham Fletcher (Issue Editor), Leoni Schmidt (Series Editor) and Pam McKinlay (Editorial Assistant), Dunedin School of Art, Otago Polytechnic/ Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, Dunedin, Aotearoa/New Zealand.

For peer review and editorial advice and comment, the editors rely on a range of appropriate reviewers, but in the first instance on members of the **Editorial Board:**

- Dr David Bell, Dunedin College of Education, University of Otago
- Paul Cullen, Manukau School of Visual Arts, Manukau Institute of Technology
- Dr Kevin Fisher, Film & Media Studies and Visual Culture, University of Otago
- Mahomed Iqbal Dawood Jhazbhay, Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of South Africa
- Christine McCarthy, School of Design, Architecture and Design, Victoria University of Wellington
- Dr George Petelin, Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia
- Dr Khyla Russell, Kaitohutohu, Otago Polytechnic/Te Kura Matatini ki Otago
- Prof Carole Shephard, Fine Arts, University of Auckland
- Prof Elizabeth Rankin, Art History Department, University of Auckland
- Henry Symonds, Whitecliffe College of Art & Design, Auckland
- Grant Thompson, Manukau School of Visual Arts, Manukau Institute of Technology
- Associate Professor Linda Tyler, Centre for New Zealand Art Research and Discovery, National Institute of Creative Arts and Industries, University of Auckland
- Associate Professor Soumitri Varadarajan, RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

and for this special issue also:

- Ali'itasi Lemalu, Pacific Island Cultural Advisor, Otago Polytechnic, Te Kura Matatini ki Otago
- Pip Laufiso, Executive Officer, Arai Te Uru Kokiri Training Centre, Otepoti / Dunedin
- Hiliako Iaheto, Musician, Otepoti / Dunedin
- Jane Venis, Academic Leader (Creative Studies), Otago Polytechnic, Te Kura Matatini ki Otago
- Clive Humphreys, Principal Lecturer, Dunedin School of Art, Otago Polytechnic, Te Kura Matatini ki Otago
- Tasi Lemalu, Quality Management Office, Pacific Island Liaison Officer, Otago Polytechnic, Te Kura Matatini ki Otago
- Bridget Inder, MFA (distinction) 2010, Dunedin School of Art 2010
- Peter Stupples, Senior Lecturer- Art History & Theory, Dunedin School of Art, Otago Polytechnic, Te Kura Matatini ki Otago
- Dr Graham Fletcher, Studio Coordinator Painting, Dunedin School of Art, Otago Polytechnic, Te Kura Matatini ki Otago
- Prof Leoni Schmidt, Head of School, Dunedin School of Art, Otago Polytechnic, Te Kura Matatini ki Otago

6	Graham Fletcher	Editorial: Border Crossings: New Dialogues in Pacific Art and Design
8	Karen Stevenson	Markets for Contemporary Pacific Art
16	Melanie Rands	Never mind
18	Andrea Low	Fire Caravan
20	Melanie Rands	When the Boat Comes Down
21	Bridget Inder	What's in a name - the label "Pasifika"
23	Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai and Manuēsina 'Ofa-ki-Hautolo Māhina	Nimamea'a
30	Selina Woulfe	Skin Boundaries
34	Bronwyn Lloyd	<i>Readingahouse</i>
40	Lily Laita	Va I ta
41	Katherine Higgins	Creative Starts: Workshop-style programmes in Oceania
50	Lydia Baxendell and Fatu Feu'u	Rebuilding through art
55	Jacque Phipps and Giles Peterson	On curating "Tiāho"
70	Tiffany Singh	<i>Mitakuye Oyasin</i>
77	Leafa Wilson	Apparition I & II

art & design 7:
Border Crossings: New Dialogues in Pacific Art & Design
November 2012

78	Melissa Reimer	Michel Tuffery, <i>Siamani Samoa</i>
81	Daren Kamali and Tanya Muagututi'a	<i>Smile Say Halo</i>
88	Emma Keshu	Artist Profile
90	A'anoalii Rowena Fulufaga	New Spaces and Boundaries (Upolu, Samoa)
93	Max Bellamy and Emily Hlavac-Green	Underexposed
95	Marion Cadora	Cosmopolitanism and a new generation of art in Papua New Guinea
104	Kenneth Merrick	<i>Mining in the Fields of Interest</i>
106	Darcell Apelu	My Detachment
107	Graham Fletcher	<i>"Pasifika Cool" (Revisited)</i>
109	Victoria Bell	<i>"Pasifika Cool"</i>
112	Philippa Keaney	Soulfood (Community Identity)
117	Jared Mackley-Crump	Some thoughts on the significance of Otago's Polyfest
122	Caroline McCaw and Pam McKinlay	A Community Project - The making of "Te Moananui Ā Kiwa"
128	Catherine Cocker	<i>Conversations about archetype and fetish</i>
131	Victoria Bell	<i>Resisting Africa</i>

BORDER CROSSINGS: NEW DIALOGUES IN PACIFIC ART AND DESIGN

Graham Fletcher

Kia Ora; Talofa lava; Fakalofa lahi atu; Kia orana; Halo olaketa; Malo e lelei; Alii; Ni sa bula; Hafa adai; Taloha ni; Aloha mai e; Ia Orana; Kam na mauri; Kaselehliā; Yokwe; and warm Pacific greetings.

I was delighted to be invited by our Head of School at Dunedin School of Art (DSA), Professor Leoni Schmidt to guest-edit this Pacific-themed issue of *Scope*. I haven't edited a publication before, and in the process of putting together the issue over the course of the year, with the support of contributors and DSA staff members, I gained many new insights into Pacific art and design.

The title, *Border Crossings: New Dialogues in Pacific Art and Design* grew out of research conducted during my doctoral studies, sourced primarily from Michael Taussig's proposition that 'second contact' between the Third World and the First breaks down the possibility of any definable border within a postmodern (or postcolonial) landscape. The concept of this borderless landscape grafts itself seamlessly, in my view, to Homi Bhabha's tantalising idea about the emergence of a 'third space'; a space that 'displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority' offering an opportunity for other voices to be heard within the interstices of opposing cultures.

This issue of *Scope* exists somewhere within that borderless landscape where voices from Pacific cultures dominate. I have tried to maintain my objectivity when selecting from the numerous contributions received and have sought to introduce a range of emergent artists and writers into the mix alongside more familiar names.

The feature article by Karen Stevenson questions Western views of contemporary Pacific art in the age of globalisation as well as examining strategies employed by galleries and arts organisations to foster new markets for Pacific art. Drawing the international thread further, Marion Cadora investigates the emergence of a new generation of artist in the changing cosmopolitan face of Papua New Guinea; Giles Peterson discusses with Jacqui Phipps the curation of his travelling exhibition, *Tiāho*; Melissa Reimer reviews Michel Tuffery's new artworks as well as his more recent commercial ventures; and Tiffany Singh reflects on her inclusion in this year's Sydney Biennale titled *All our Relations*.

The politics of identity also feature strongly in this issue in Philippa Keaney's exploration of connectivity and collaboration among Dunedin's diverse ethnic communities as part of the 'Our Voices' project; Bridget Inder contemplates the evolution of Pacific symbols and terms, in particular the label 'Pasifika'; Jared Mackley-Crump shares his thoughts on the 'Otago Early Childhood and Schools Māori and Pacific Islands Festival' held annually in Dunedin since its inception in 1993; Caroline McCaw and Pam McKinlay also focus on the Otago Polyfest in their review of the banner project, *The making of Te Moananui Ā Kiwa*, involving the Art and Design Schools at Otago Polytechnic and the wider Dunedin community.

Pacific arts education is well represented with Katherine Higgins' insightful research into the effectiveness of workshop-style programmes within isolated places throughout Oceania; A'anoalii Rowena Fuluifaga meets with Fatu Feu'u at the newly built Fatu Feu'u Art Centre (FFAC), constructed as part of the Poutasi rebuild following the

2009 tsunami disaster; Lydia Baxendell interviews Fatu Feu'u about new work he produced during his term as 2011 Macmillan Brown Pacific Artist in Residence; and Max Bellamy and Emily Hlavac-Green report on their findings in documenting a sustainable development project undertaken in Tonga 2012.

Within the rich and diverse world of traditional Pacific fine arts, curators Manuēsina 'Ofa-ki-Hautolo Māhina and Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai bring to light the fine arts of nimamea'a tuimatala'i'akau (embroidering) and nimamea'a langaleisi (crocheting); Daren Kamali and Tanya Muagututi'a share their experiences at this year's 11th Festival of Pacific Arts in Honiara, Solomon Islands; and gifted weaver, Emma Kesha, is also profiled as a member of the Aotearoa delegation to the 11th Festival of Pacific Arts.

The border-crossing work of a selection of individual artists is showcased throughout this issue in a variety of articles, artist pages and reviews. Aspects of the exotic and fetishistic are discussed in relation to the works of jeweller Selina Woulfe whose recent work derives its impetus from traditional Pacific tattooing; Catherine Cocker scrutinises the fetishisation of culture prevalent in stereotypical archetypes of the Dusky Maiden and Noble Savage; and Victoria Bell re-interrogates her own exotic experiences after a safari journey through Kenya which culminates in her exhibition *Resisting Africa* (2011).

The effectiveness of the conceptual practice of Luke Willis Thompson is considered by Bronwyn Lloyd in relation to one of the artist's recent pieces of situational aesthetics; the offsite exhibition *inthisholeonthisislandwhereiam*. Here, Lloyd is transported to a 'second location' to unravel a Marie Celeste type mystery within the Epsom home that is the locus for the exhibition.

Interspersed among the articles and reviews are a variety of artist pages including works by Darcell Dorothy Apelu, Lily Laita, Andrea Low, Kenneth Merrick, Melanie Rands, and Leafa Wilson whose contribution to the issue are greatly appreciated.

To coincide with this publication, the DSA staged a Pacific exhibition entitled *Pasifika Cool* (15-26 October) at the DSA Gallery, showcasing works from many Pacific artists who had attended the art school over a number of years including Catherine Cocker, Teina Ellia, Donald Harman, Bridget Inder, Tere Moeroa, Bronwyn Robson, David Te Ata and Michel Tuffery.

All things considered, this themed issue of *Scope* is the culmination of an exciting and busy year for Pacific art at the DSA, and long may it continue.

NEW MARKETS FOR CONTEMPORARY PACIFIC ART: CREATIVE NEW ZEALAND AND THE PUSH 'OFFSHORE'

Karen Stevenson

For many Pacific Island nations/peoples, New Zealand is a land of milk and honey. A metropolitan nation located in the Pacific, it is not only home to the largest Polynesian populations, it has intimate ties to the United Kingdom and the West. A Western island nation – it seems a contradiction. Yet this reality has enabled New Zealand to sustain and support arts programs that other island nations can ill afford. This has resulted in the unique development and buoyancy of a contemporary Pacific art movement.¹ However, New Zealand is small and its art market smaller still. Creative New Zealand (New Zealand's arts funding body), with its focus on arts advocacy, has directed its attentions to moving contemporary Pacific arts 'offshore' – introducing them into a global art market.

International success is a priority for both the artistic and economic sustainability of our artists. International exposure allows them to develop their practice through observing and interacting with international colleagues. New Zealand artists also have unique perspectives and insights to add to the international arts community.

Access to international markets offers the potential to expand and diversify audiences, to extend the life of a work, and to provide additional employment and sources of income to artists. International success can also help develop New Zealand arts domestically, by inspiring other New Zealand artists to raise their sights and by giving a better understanding of international standards. Public appreciation of the arts in New Zealand is likely to increase the more the public is aware of, and has experience of our internationally successful artists.²

Hindering this process, however, are the perceptions and stereotypes that the West continues to hold of what Pacific arts are and what they should be. Typically, Pacific art is 'primitive,' perhaps craft, and made from traditional materials. This perception is reinforced by exhibitions of masterpieces of Pacific arts – those works most frequently collected at the time of contact. Even though such luminaries as Picasso, Matisse and Klee (amongst others) drew inspiration from these objects, they sit uneasily within a Western aesthetic. As Thomas comments: "Indigenous cultures are simultaneously 'traditional' and 'contemporary.' They are 'traditional' in the sense that distinctive views of the world remain alive, but they are also 'contemporary' in the sense that they belong in the present."³

In addition, there is a tradition of innovation and experimentation in Western art – a tradition that is not 'afforded' to non-Western artists. How then, can the expression and artistic creativity of contemporary Pacific artists be understood? Or, perhaps more to the point, why do American and European venues hold exhibitions of contemporary Pacific art when their viewers do not understand or recognise these art forms? Are exhibitions of contemporary Pacific art any more than an assertion of neo-colonialism by the American and European nations that host them? Are contemporary Pacific art exhibitions (outside of the Pacific) any different from the world fairs and international exhibitions of the nineteenth century – venues and events that fuel a stereotypical imaginary? And, if this is the case, what strategies can Creative New Zealand employ to reconcile these attitudes with contemporary Pacific art?

Even though most Pacific nations have acquired independence from their colonial partners,⁴ a relationship continues. Many scholars speak of the post-colonial, but for most in the Pacific the post-colonial has not arrived. The

power relationships still exist, as does the 'politics of primitivism'.⁵ The colonial relationships of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have left a resounding legacy within the contemporary Pacific. Jewel Castro, a Samoan artist living in the United States has noted:

Cultural authenticity in contemporary art and the notion of the artist as a living specimen, are professional challenges that Oceanic artists must deal with as we push for transnational exposure. We must be aware that this exposure effects how our work is interpreted, exhibited, and written about ... as we negotiate our niche within world art history, we still face professional colonization.⁶

The question remains, has globalisation created cultural understanding, or has it just allowed movement across borders that remain intact? Do Americans and Europeans understand the urban nature of Pacific life, or do the stereotypical fantasies of paradise linger unscathed? This essay will attempt to address these issues, but also the strategies employed by arts organisations and galleries in their combined efforts to contextualise and support contemporary Pacific arts.

In 1941 René d'Harnoncourt created and exhibited "Indian Art of the United States" at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. He believed that his brief was "preserving, promoting, and displaying 'primitive' art and contemporary indigenous arts and crafts."⁷ This exhibition has been heralded as one of the most successful non-Western exhibitions in the United States (perhaps followed by "Te Maori" in 1984). D'Harnoncourt commented that the "worst injustice done to Indian peoples [is] their preservation only on the dusty shelves of museums of anthropology and in the books of James Fenimore Cooper."⁸ The fact that this exhibition was held at MoMA demonstrated not only the desire to promote contemporary indigenous arts and crafts, but asserted the artistic value of primitive art: d'Harnoncourt commented, "We have preserved the work of the Indians as ethnology, let us also enjoy it as art."⁹ William Rubin's *'Primitivism' in 20th Century Art* (1985) provided d'Harnoncourt's antithesis, demonstrating the influences that 'primitive art' had on modernist art practice and ideologies. Combined, they have created an American attitude about primitive art, primitivism and modernism in Western art. These attitudes have reinforced a curious relationship between ethnographic and art museums, both trying to find a home for Pacific arts. These attitudes – the 'politics of primitivism' – as Thomas suggests, demand that the arts of non-Western peoples must struggle for equality of both perception and acceptance.

Rosanna Raymond – New Zealand-born of Samoan heritage, now living in London – has been quite vocal about the myriad false perceptions that the art and academic worlds have held about contemporary Pacific art:

The celebration of my cultural heritage is fused into my work as an artist, whether perceived as invented, revivalist, authentic, traditional, contemporary, identity based, gendered, or craft based. Whatever label you want to call it, or has been called, this is not how I and other HYBRID Polynesian artists view our role in producing art that speaks, and relates to living in Polynesia today in a modern urban environment.

I cannot produce artworks, write poems, and create costumes without the knowledge of my cultural heritage, and the experience of living it. Producing art works is my way of putting my culture into the future ... not in past boxes ...¹⁰

Not only does Raymond assert the foundation of her artistic practice, she also addresses the synthesis that others find problematic in contemporary Pacific art. Historically, Pacific and Art have not been linked together: Art historians and anthropologists have fought many battles to elevate and recognise the material culture of Pacific peoples as Art. With the acknowledgement of Pacific art by Western artists and collectors, some sculptural images have come to be acknowledged as masterpieces. However, it is infrequent that these art forms are found in art galleries (or museums) – their home is more frequently within the ethnographic context of an anthropological museum. Contemporary and Pacific have an equally uneasy relationship. For many, the myth of the Pacific remains. Bougainville's island of love began a fantasy that the Pacific has not outgrown, and this image does not coincide with contemporary arts practices. The Pacific label exudes a particular image or attitude which does not equate with

contemporary art practice. Viewers do not want to see the urban in the island. To enhance the problem, there is an arrogance of the West that they and they alone are capable of artistic innovation. Abstraction, for instance, is their purview. As such, Pacific artists must continue their ancestral dictum. As Albert Wendt noted:

My objection to this literature [attitude] is that it gives the impression that our ancestors' art is still the Oceanic Art of today; or, that if it isn't, it ought to be, or that we have not produced any worthwhile art since the papalagi came: or that if we are producing some art it is not 'authentic' Oceanic Art and therefore not worthy of serious discussion.¹¹

When contemporary Pacific artists use Western materials, or draw inspiration from our global village, the label Pacific is quickly taken from them – they are contemporary artists – but their work is not Pacific/primitive enough. Eva Raabe reiterates this when commenting about German audiences: "Very often a contemporary artwork is denied its 'Pacificity' by the European audience because it seems not foreign enough. Pacific arts have changed, but not the habits of the European beholder."¹²

Doug Hall, writing about the Asia Pacific Triennial, suggests that Australian viewers have similar perceptions:

As with many aspects of Asian arts, Australians have viewed the Pacific cultures through Western 'discovery,' as exotic locations romanticised through the depiction of an idealised utopia. Possessing a geographic and climatic splendour; unchanging or, at best, complementing an Arcadian paradise. Perhaps museums have helped reinforce this perception by presenting their material culture as somewhat static and not revealing the effects of change, whether this be self-determined or that affected by external forces. It is a complex arena and one which future Triennials will address.¹³

What is unfortunate about these beliefs is that they are not new. Again, d'Harnoncourt in 1941 was convinced that the public would realise the value of contemporary Indian art when they were shown that it harmonised with the artistic concepts of modernism.¹⁴ If the primitive was actually modern, the ethnocentric schism could be overcome. This, however, has not transpired in relation to Pacific arts. On the whole, the viewing audience has been slow to accept contemporary art from the Pacific, and those practices which address social issues and concerns (though critically acclaimed) have not found patronage. Even though Western artists have drawn from Pacific themes, the modernist/abstract nature of these works remains embedded in the canons of the West. It is interesting to note, however, that contemporary African arts, Inuit art, Aboriginal art and Northwest Coast graphics have successfully found their way into the contemporary market. Frequently their imagery links to an indigenous spirituality and as such the relationship to the primitive (even though the medium is clearly contemporary) remains close at hand.

Similarly, Pacific artists embrace particular aspects of their cultural heritage to exemplify a position within contemporary practice. The concept of tradition is easily intertwined with contemporary art, especially since abstraction and metaphor are traditional Pacific practices. Nonetheless, Pacific art traditions are embedded in the Western mind (as well as the current literature on colonisation, representation, and gender), as Other; as exotic – as primitive or perhaps even a souvenir. These stereotypes create a two-sided sword; Pacific artists who hate the label often exploit it in their own work. They move beyond cliché, beyond fantasy, beyond the label Pacific, and in so doing create a new myth, neither traditional nor Pacific but firmly ensconced in their urban realities. They produce contemporary art negotiated under the guise of tradition in the context of Pacific.

CONTEMPORARY PACIFIC ART

Contemporary Pacific Art is a relatively new phenomenon that has only been recently acknowledged.¹⁵ In contrast to Contemporary Aboriginal Art, which burst on the scene in the mid-1970s and was immediately accepted, much of contemporary Pacific art was categorised as Tourist Art as late as 1990 (and in some instances continues to be so). As a result, the literature on this topic is not extensive, but one where there is a growing interest. This

ambiguous position was the focus of much debate in the 1980s and 1990s. As contemporary Pacific artists were utilising Western materials, many believed that this negated their practice as originating from the Pacific. Because they worked with Western materials and often came through a Western education system, their artwork was not authentically Pacific. These attitudes were based on a specific perception of Pacific art – something which was created pre-contact and has not changed since. Makerita Urale critiqued this notion when she commented, “It doesn’t matter what tools we use, it matters what’s in our minds.”¹⁶ Acknowledging a contemporary Pacific is an important factor in a better understanding of this arts practice. However, this stereotype remains.

Contemporary Pacific artists continue to push beyond the stereotype. They are demanding recognition of their position – one based in New Zealand; not in the myth, not in cliché. It is this position of knowledge offered through notions of identity that propels contemporary Pacific art into its own. This process is both conscious and politicised. Based on social, cultural, and economic realities, it focuses on their identity; an identity that is urban, global, and island-based. The question of what constitutes contemporary Pacific art remains. The answer is simple. It has no boundaries, as clearly any production of art at this time is contemporary. Perhaps the better question is: What makes it Pacific and how can people outside the Pacific translate these ideas and images into their own artistic language? Frequently, the key factor is the artists’ acknowledgement of a Pacific heritage – just living in the Pacific, like Gauguin for example, does not afford the label. More often than not, these artists of Pacific heritage create work that draws upon traditional knowledge, practices, art forms, and motifs. Their contemporary practice is not a reiteration of a past tradition but its use as a metaphor; or as a springboard for ideologies, or as a means of asserting a Pacific identity, political stance or commentary. Even so, acceptance is an issue. Raabe states:

Contemporary paintings without obvious traits of Pacific traditions are not accepted by the public as authentic Pacific art works – but as soon as they incorporate an ethnographic element they are not regarded as being contemporary or modern. In the first case the art work is not seen as genuine and therefore as not good enough to be included in any art show, in the second case the work is classified as ethnographic or folk art and is therefore excluded from modern art exhibitions.¹⁷

Notwithstanding these prejudices, contemporary Pacific artists do what artists across the globe do – they create, drawing on their interests, surroundings and experiences.

A PUSH OFFSHORE

With this in mind, it is essential that Creative New Zealand continue to support contemporary Pacific art offshore. And this they have done.

In 1998, a newly formed Pacific committee within Creative New Zealand allocated \$240,000 to Pacific initiatives. Being able to apply to a Pacific fund gave Pacific arts its own voice. This is not to say that Pacific projects were not funded previously, but with this restructure came the ability to promote and move Pacific, as opposed to New Zealand, into an international forum. Marilyn Kolhasse noted: “increasingly, our artists are featuring alongside mainstream artists both in New Zealand and overseas. It is important this Committee continues to support Pacific Artists to develop their work and build new audiences.”¹⁸ Creative New Zealand’s constant desire to promote “provided an opportunity for these artists to gain international exposure, build networks, explore new markets and profile Pacific arts.”¹⁹

In this process, Pacific artists have formed working relationships to create opportunities at the Festival of Pacific Arts (Samoa, New Caledonia, Palau, American Samoa, and Solomon Islands), with the Tjibaou Centre in New Caledonia, and in association with the Asia Pacific Triennial in Brisbane. Artists have also been supported in their individual efforts in exhibiting in Australia, the United States, England, and Europe. In addition, CNZ has also supported the Tautai Trust, an Auckland-based organisation whose founding principle is seeking wider audiences and international recognition. Tautai has been instrumental in doing the groundwork for contemporary Pacific art in New Zealand. It

has facilitated many symposiums, workshops and lectures throughout New Zealand, and its advocacy of Pacific Arts often overshadows institutionalised arts bodies with larger resources. Since 1996, the trust has organised exhibitions of Pacific artists in Samoa, Fiji, the Cook Islands, New Caledonia, Australia and Germany. In that role, it has been an advocate for Pacific artists, both recognised and 'emerging'.²⁰ Exhibitions as a promotional strategy have also been embraced by CNZ.

EXHIBITIONS

Creative New Zealand has been involved in three key international exhibitions of contemporary Pacific art: "Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific" (New York), "Pasifika Styles" (Cambridge, England), and "Dateline" (Berlin). Each of these provided the opportunity for artists to exhibit their work in important artistic communities. Each exhibition and venue created different opportunities and possibilities. Each curatorial agenda was set forth, and each included Maori artists as well ("Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific" also included artists from the wider Pacific). These exhibitions were also accompanied by a catalogue with essays from the curator as well as 'selected' writers with expertise in contemporary Pacific arts. Melissa Chiu, a curator from the Asia Society states: "Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific takes as its departure point the popular perception of the Pacific as a paradise, a worn cliché refreshed seasonally by tourism operators, drinking water companies, pearl traders, and other enterprises. While acknowledging the perceptions of their region, the fifteen artists included in this exhibition provide an alternative, more complex vision of the Pacific."²¹ She further claims that the exhibition is "reflecting a world of cultural intersections and tensions, one rife with competing social, cultural, and economic claims as well as the legacy of colonialism, this is an image of paradise interrupted."²² This is an image of reality. What this exhibition provided was a Pacific voice that spoke of a complex urban reality, one that is lived by Pacific islanders today. It is not the cliché, it is not how the Pacific is 'seen.' Murray Shaw, chair of the Arts Board, noted that "The potential benefits of this exhibition to New Zealand are huge ... offering a counter narrative to utopian images of the Pacific Islands."²³

In contrast, "Pasifika Styles" at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University positioned contemporary Pacific art as part of a continuum of the Pacific's traditional cultures. The new and the old were exhibited side by side, and as such created "a fusion of contemporary style and technological innovation with ancient traditions. *Pasifika Styles* unites the contemporary new wave of contemporary Pacific art and culture with extraordinary historical collections."²⁴ "Pasifika Styles" was not only accompanied by a catalogue, it also had a website and a program of presentations, symposia, artist talks, markets and festivals that spanned a 22-month period in 2006-08. Over this time, both Cambridge and its environs were exposed to Pacific islanders as individuals and as artists. They not only brought their knowledge and arts practice with them to England, they were able to bring back knowledge learned from interactions with the objects of their cultural heritage. As Rosanna Raymond commented, "I see the future of collections and museums becoming an arena for cultural exchange, going outside the boundary of space into everyday life ... my life ..."²⁵

"Dateline," exhibited in Berlin in 2007, was based on a contrasting curatorial prerogative, one that addressed the stereotype of the 'primitive' – to realign a German perspective about the Pacific. The title itself was "intended to symbolise – as a symptom – the temporal and spatial distance characterising our contemplation of art from far away."²⁶ Even though "Paradise Now?" and "Pasifika Styles" contradicted the stereotype by demonstrating both the urban realities of Pacific peoples as well as their current interaction with their past, "Dateline" chose to address the inequitable perception that German audiences had about Pacific art. Alexander Tolnay, speaking about the exhibition "Dateline," commented: "The very character of the last two locations, "Asia Society" and "Anthropology," highlights a misunderstanding that our exhibition seeks to resolve. These artists do not belong in museums of ethnology, as was often the practice until quite recently, but in reputable art museums, art galleries, and art societies; on an equal footing with their Euro-American contemporaries."²⁷

This notion was reiterated by Jewel Castro, Eva Raabe and Marion Struck-Garbe in their articles in *Pacific Island Artists Navigating the Global Art World*. These scholars have not only detailed the difficulties of finding the proper

venue for contemporary Pacific artwork, but have also demonstrated the need to both educate and create opportunities for Western audiences to gain an appreciation of these arts. As Tolnay describes "Dateline": "Works of the exhibition are an outcome of the innovative developments of the indigenous cultures in the Pacific region and represent independent changes in the current practice of artists with a Pacific heritage ... fundamentally different from [those] ... which serve to satisfy false dreams of the South Pacific."²⁸ These false dreams are indeed the issue. Eva Raabe notes: "At the moment the European art scene has no fundamental knowledge of Pacific art. Art historians and anthropologists must join in an effort to develop a practice of art presentation, which takes into account that tradition and modern artistic expression are linked ... the way we represent Pacific art will shape the development of an European art criticism."²⁹

This issue is key. How does one change this perception? How does a curator interpret an artistic language not universally understood? Does one provide contextual information that will inform and perhaps enhance the viewer's appreciation of the work? If so, do you then suffer the accusation of neo-colonialism? This, of course, leads to another question as to the appropriate venue to display contemporary Pacific art. Art museums have been accused of being monoliths of Western ideologies – yet without access to these localities, non-Western ideologies have no voice. Does one exhibit in a museum and be accused of being inauthentic, or in an art gallery and be seen as old hat? Again, these questions are not new. Difference in location demands a difference of approach by both the curator and the viewing public. In the case of "Indian Art of the United States," d'Harmoncourt purposely decontextualised the ancient arts, contextualised the historic arts, and recontextualised and aestheticised the contemporary art.³⁰ This was deemed necessary due to the "inherent difficulty in evaluating new art forms outside their cultural context."³¹ Raabe feels that providing context is critical today and suggests that "Curators must reconcile the intellectual dissonance between the Pacific artists, who constantly develop new means of aesthetic expression, and the stagnant habits of the European art audience."³²

All of this becomes the foundation to the real question, which is: How do contemporary Pacific artists create a market for their work? The relationship between art and markets, or art as economic policy, was clearly demonstrated by d'Harmoncourt, MoMA, and United States policies in 1941. D'Harmoncourt believed that his exhibition should "stimulate and organize production and assist in merchandising of arts and crafts."³³ To facilitate this, a market was included in the exhibition space and artists were present to demonstrate and explain their arts practice. This strategy was included to create a better understanding of these arts processes, a better cultural understanding between the museum-going public and the American Indians and, as d'Harmoncourt wrote, to "demonstrate that Indian art is not savage."³⁴ This practice is now commonplace. It provides artists with the opportunity to explain their own art and in so doing break down the barriers of misconception. However, this practice has also backfired, reinforcing preconceptions, either of the 'primitive/exotic' or of the 'Western artist.' These realities demonstrate the contradictions found not only in the global art market, but in the many conflicts seen in the institutions, funding bodies and artistic practices themselves. Working through the critique of a 'museum's complicity with colonialism,'³⁵ many institutions have embraced Pacific art production as an entity in its own right; others use the contemporary as evidence of an evolved cultural process, and still others fight valiantly to destroy a stereotype that remains. Yet this process is slow and many Pacific artists have become frustrated. Shigeyuki Kihara comments that "the system in place is not giving equal opportunity for people from the Pacific to speak and contribute to the conversation. So everyone needs to shut up for awhile until we can have our say."³⁶

Jewel Castro "wondered [in] what lofty halls of United States institutional bliss were their cutting edge works hanging, setting, and in collection? Where was the theoretical writing that provided discussion of these twenty-first century expressions of a contemporary world identity?"³⁷ Perhaps the world needs, as Marion Struck-Garbe has suggested, to "put aside its prejudices and embrace new artistic voices."³⁸

In that art continues to be supported by governments, have things changed? Is there a difference between an artist's desire to obtain international recognition and therefore create a larger market for their work, and a government body mandating that art should provide "economic rehabilitation of both the individual artist and the whole tribe"?³⁹

What then is the role of government funding of the arts? Our global village is a long way from cultural and artistic understanding. Knowledge, perception and context are essential to grow an appreciation and recognition that contemporary artists can draw on universals without losing themselves (and their cultural heritage). Funding bodies play an important role in this process – educating and enlightening, offering possibilities and opportunities to exchange and communicate, to share cultural ideologies, to move beyond the stereotype. Creative New Zealand's role is clear: They have supported artists, writers, and institutions not only to 'develop and promote' Pacific art, but to create new markets. This 'push offshore' has provided the art world with a better understanding of the Pacific's cultural and artistic foundations. As we (Pacific artists and the arts community) begin to reap the benefits of these initiatives, we must endeavour to contest the borders that remain.

Karen Stevenson is based at the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji. She specialises in the contemporary arts of the Pacific and is the author of *The Frangipani is Dead: Contemporary Pacific Art in New Zealand, 1985-2000*. She has recently edited *Pacific Island Artists Navigating the Global Art World*.

- 1 Karen Stevenson, *The Frangipani is Dead: Contemporary Pacific Art in New Zealand, 1985-2000* (Wellington: Huia Press, 2008).
- 2 Creative New Zealand, *Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa Strategic Plan and Statement of Content/te mahere rautaki me tauaki whakamaunga atu, 2010-2013* (Wellington, 2010), 18.
- 3 Nicholas Thomas, *Possessions: Indigenous Art/ Colonial Culture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1999), 17.
- 4 Samoa was the first Pacific nation to acquire its independence in 1962. Since then, most island nations have become independent except for the French and American territories: French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, American Samoa and Guam.
- 5 Thomas, *Possessions*, 8.
- 6 Jewel Castro, "Without Boundaries: Contemporary Oceania Artists, A Movement Happening Now," in *New Voyagers: Pacific Island Artists and the Challenges of Negotiating Within the Global Art World*, ed. Karen Stevenson (Oakland: Masalai Press, 2011) 159.
- 7 W Jackson Rushing, "Marketing the Affinity of the Primitive and the Modern; René D'Harnoncourt and 'Indian' Art of the United States," in *The Early Years of Native American Art History*, ed. Janet Catherine Berlo (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 192.
- 8 Ibid., 198.
- 9 Ibid., 224.
- 10 Rosanna Raymond, "Full Tusk Maiden Aotearoa: Ramblings of a New Voyager in Words and Visions," in *New Voyagers*, ed. Stevenson, 149.
- 11 Albert Wendt, "Contemporary Arts in Oceania," in *Art and Artists of Oceania*, eds Sidney Mead and Bernie Kernot (Palmerston North, NZ: Dunmore Press, 1983), 198.
- 12 Eva Raabe, "Individualism and Tradition, Curating Contemporary Art from Papua New Guinea," in *New Voyagers*, ed. Stevenson, 137.
- 13 Doug Hall, *Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 1993), 6.
- 14 Rushing, "Marketing the Affinity of the Primitive and the Modern," 215.
- 15 Stevenson, *The Frangipani is Dead*.
- 16 Ibid., 166.
- 17 Raabe, "Individualism and Tradition," 138.
- 18 Marilyn Kohlhase (2001), <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/mi/news/grants-support-pacific-artists-to-showcase-work>.
- 19 Marilyn Kohlhase (2005), <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/mi/news/grants-reflect-growth-of-pacific-arts>.
- 20 Karen Stevenson, "Refashioning the Label, Reconstructing the Cliché: A Decade of Contemporary Pacific Art 1990-2000," in *Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific* (New York: Asia Society, 2004), 30.
- 21 Mellisa Chiu, catalogue essay, *Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific*, 11.
- 22 Ibid., 19.

- 23 Murray Shaw, (2002), <http://www.creativenz.govt.nz/en/news/major-exhibition-of-new-zealand-and-pacific-art-to-open-in-new-york>.
- 24 Pasifika Styles, <http://www.pasifikastyles.org.uk>, "Pasifika Styles" exhibition and Festival was based in the University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2006-2008.25 Raymond, "Full Tusk Maiden Aotearoa," 158.
- 25 Raymond, "Full Tusk Maiden Aotearoa," 158.
- 26 Alexander Tolnay, *Dateline* (Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, 2007), 12.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Raabe, "Individualism and Tradition," 147-8.
- 30 Rushing, "Marketing the Affinity of the Primitive and the Modern," 195.
- 31 Ibid., 208.
- 32 Raabe, "Individualism and Tradition," 138.
- 33 Rushing, "Marketing the Affinity of the Primitive and the Modern," 197.
- 34 Ibid., 224.
- 35 Bernice Murphy, *Localities of Desire: Contemporary Art in an International World* (Sydney: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1994), 44.
- 36 Castro, "Without Boundaries," 165.
- 37 Ibid., 159.
- 38 Marion Struck-Garbe, "'Ai Bilong Meri': Making and Marketing the Contemporary Vision of Papua New Guinea Women Artists," in *New Voyagers*, ed. Stevenson, 136.
- 39 Rushing, "Marketing the Affinity of the Primitive and the Modern," 198.

NEVER MIND

Melanie Rands

never mind
about getting there
our 'primary purpose'
is to sit
inside this poem
an air-conditioned car
with the cd player on
watching as
the red tail lights
in front
disappear
it's
dew point
in the ozone
as we drive into
a shrouded landscape
of shrubland
and mamaku
if we were birds
we'd be home already
mustard seeds and tarragon
the tide coming in
we would fly over
every
thing
sunlight falling on dairy farms
bush flies on dog bones
undoing boots
at the back door
salt spray white
flowers shining
in the tea tree
as
the dog looks up
from his bones
is this a bird day?

sail rock and the skyliner tearooms
 at the top of the brynderwyns
 bream head and the hen and chicks
 and all that
 environmental
 impact!
 ineradicable
 the last traces of the
 Carter Holt Harvey production forest
 clear-felled, the hills bare
 and we complain
 about

- climate change
- pot-holes

 • relative humidity in the passing lane
 our love affair
 with gravity
 un be lieve able
 the
 line of logging trucks
 is still /
 not moving
 an hour's drive from home
 the gravel spits and cracks
 as salt marshes and mangroves move under
 motorways
 all the way to
 manaia
 but my 'primary purpose' is to
 read you
 this poem
 never mind about getting there
 and
 the low water tide mark
 is
 sand on my feet
 with
 water up to
 every where
 and
 the hum
 of waves on the shore
 is the hum
 of cars
 on the motorway

Melanie Rands is a visual artist, poet and businesswoman of Scottish, Hawaiian and Fijian heritage. She has a fine arts degree from Elam and completed her Masters of Creative Writing at the University of Auckland in 2011. She has spent a lot of time researching and writing for a company called ecostore which she started with her partner in 1993 when they were living in a permaculture eco-village up North. She believes that integrating art and business can be of huge benefit to both fields.





WHEN THE BOAT COMES DOWN

Melanie Rands

when the boat comes down
a dadakulaci lies unconscious on the ground
4 nights of singing the horizon away
the banana boat swinging
16 knots into diesel sunsets

on her twin Armstrong-Sulzer 6 cylinder engines
Bob 'Gin' rocking her golden whiskey cabin
for 3 days straight

the night my father came
with 2000 tonnes of ripening cargo
her quota of islanders bursting
to
over
f
l
o
w

kai vulagi on the bunks & everyone else down below
all their spirits rolled into one
the night my father came
with whales' teeth and a turtle shell
on the Matua
all 355.2 feet of her round
Cape Brett
and up
the Rangitoto channel

when the boat comes down

to Mrs Harvey's boarding house
on
Hepburn Street in Freeman's Bay

a gas stove and a double bed
in her refrigerated hold

Andrea Low is an artist and writer living in Auckland. Andrea's family can be found in all corners of the Pacific and she comes from a long line of artists, performers, musicians and sailors. Alongside her practice as an artist Andrea is a PhD candidate in Ethnomusicology at the University of Auckland researching popular Hawaiian music in the early 20th century.

Figure 1. (pages 18,19). Andrea Low, *Fire Caravan*, 2011, Image courtesy of the artist.

WHAT'S IN A NAME – THE LABEL 'PASIFIKA'

Bridget Inder

It is human nature to want to label and name things. It's a useful survival mechanism as well as an identifying tool. Labels are necessary.

I am of Pakeha and Samoan descent. I was born and raised in Central Otago, which is about as far removed culturally and climate-wise from Samoa as I can imagine. Needless to say, my relationship to the label of 'Pasifika' and, to be specific, 'Polynesian artist' and 'Pacific Islander' is not the normal one. It took me a long time to even feel at home with the cultural identity of 'Pacific Islander' and, once I did, I clung to my newfound sense of identity. I was proud to be considered a Polynesian artist; I wanted to be pigeon-holed. The reason is that I believe I saw the label as a tool, not as a destination. Labels can be helpful, and not always a negative thing, as long as the bearer feels that he or she *carries* the label, thus being free to put it down when it suits – the bearer is not *stamped* with the label.

What is this term 'Pasifika?' and when did the 'c' get turned into an 's' or a 'k'? Does this signify something? Is it to somehow differentiate culture (kulture?) from geographic location? Is it to subvert a Western term and make it into something that is ours? I'm really not sure – maybe all of the above, and I can't quite say where or when I first saw it. I've nothing against the letter 'c,' but I wonder if it is a reflection of the spelling of many Polynesian words? The letter 'k' is prevalent, but not the letter 'c'. As a label it encompasses all of the Pacific Islanders, and is much less of a mouthful than Polynesian, or Pacific Islander. Also it is slightly funkier. It hints at more than just traditional heritage. Mention 'Pasifika,' and the hearer thinks of beats of the South Pacific, a festival perhaps, bright colours, something that is more of a hybrid of modern, contemporary New Zealand-based culture than the more traditional, structured cultures of the islands.

As I mentioned above, it took me a long time to bear the label 'Pacific Islander' and feel comfortable with it. Even now, however, I still see myself as a slight outsider. Speaking personally, I am still much too shy and unsure to use the term 'Pasifika' to describe myself or my work. I still prefer Pacific, or Polynesian. I am, after all, Pākehā as well as Samoan. I feel comfortable being called a Samoan artist because I've got a Samoan side to me, but I'm not comfortable being labelled as just a Samoan artist. I'd rather be known as a New Zealand artist, because I was born here. I've got a kiwi mum. Everything I am influenced by is from within New Zealand, although I do dig my father's heritage. There are things I want to know and learn because that's part of me as well.¹

I am an artist of Samoan and Pākehā heritage, and these two elements make up my work. As my relationship with the two evolves and changes, so does my understanding of the label Polynesian/Pacific Islander/Pasifika artist, and the way I may choose to apply it to myself and my work. I do not make work with the intent that it will fit under that heading, but am comfortable for that label to be applied to what I make. This is an important distinction. The label comes after. It is way of viewing or unpacking the work, to put it in some sort of context to help further understand or gain insights. In this case the label is a tool, just as you could describe an artwork as a painting, or woodcut, an etching. It simply gives the viewer more information when observing the piece.

The term Pasifika, however you choose to spell it, when applied to modern and contemporary visual culture within New Zealand, often conjures up an image of the four-petaled frangipani symbol – perhaps some triangle patterns

based loosely on *siapo* or *tapa* cloth (traditional cloth made from the inner bark of the paper mulberry tree) or seen in the *pe'a* (male tattoo) or *malu* (female tattoo). This formulaic image unfortunately is what happens when the label ceases to be applied to the art or craft, becoming instead a static destination.

Thus the telltale sign of a piece of formulaic work is conventionally the four-petaled flower. In 2011, I was a tutor in the Fresh Horizons workshops organised by the Tautai Contemporary Pacific Arts Trust in Invercargill. One of the other tutors, Johnny Peninsula, spoke of his frustration with the 'Samoan flower;' he stated that he had never seen a flower with four petals, so how has it become such a prevalent symbol in modern Samoan art? He took us back through the evolution of the four petals to its origin, which was, in fact, bird footprints in the sand. Through endless and thoughtless repetition of a symbol that is perceived to be 'Samoan,' it has been taken completely out of context; even though it immediately signifies something as 'Pasifika,' a four-petaled flower does not actually exist. The label has become more important than the work that it is applied to.

So when this label has been so deeply entrenched that the idea of 'this is what Pasifika artwork looks like' is planted firmly in our minds, what of the work that does not depict happy brown people doing happy brown things? That hasn't got a triangle pattern or frangipani anywhere in sight? When the label takes over, such work can be difficult to classify, and it is at this moment that we must discard the label, or allow the people to whom we are trying to apply it to define it and determine it for themselves. We need to be fluid in our application and allow room for growth. Artists and makers themselves also bear a responsibility to not simply churn out and lazily use the same old patterns in the same old way. Instead, they must challenge themselves to think deeply about the symbolism behind the images, to find their own personal narrative, and not to be bound to a label.

Bridget Inder was born in 1982 in the Maniototo, Central Otago. She is the youngest of three girls to a Samoan mother and Pākehā father. She grew up in rural areas in both Central Otago and North Canterbury. She attended the Dunedin School of Art, first as an undergraduate student – completing her Bachelor of Fine Arts (printmaking) in 2003 – and later undertook a Master of Fine Arts, which she gained with distinction in 2010. Bridget's work explores her dual heritage and the conflicting relationships that emerge from the creation of a cultural in-between space. Bridget is currently the manager of an art studio and gallery for people with disabilities. Her other interests include rugby, and she is a member of the Otago Women's Rugby Squad.

I See *Speaking in Colour – Conversations with Artists of Pacific Island Heritage*, eds. Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimalo Pereira (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 1997), 80.

“NIMAMEA’A: THE FINE ARTS OF TONGAN EMBROIDERY AND CROCHET”

Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai and Manuēsina ‘Ofa-ki-Hautolo Māhina

“Nimamea’a: The fine Arts of Tongan Embroidery and Crochet” was the first large-scale Pacific exhibition to be held at Objectspace, although the gallery had previously staged a number of Maori exhibitions.¹ Objectspace is a small independent public gallery located in Auckland, dedicated to provoking “new assessments about the making, functioning and value of works and practices”² within the fields of craft, applied arts and design. The gallery provided an important opportunity for exhibiting and discussing Tongan art. When considering Tongan art, it is important to understand and discuss it from a Tongan world view as opposed to a ‘Western Art’ world view. This approach not only does justice to Tongan art forms, but avoids misunderstanding and misinterpretation when foreign understandings are assumed. Objectspace provided a collaborative opportunity to present Tongan art from a Tongan perspective. The result was “Nimamea’a: The Fine Arts of Tongan Embroidery and Crochet,” an in-depth exhibition articulated from a Tongan perspective and world view.

This is only the second time that Tongan embroidery and crochet have been the sole focus of an exhibition in a New Zealand art gallery. The first was the show “Tongan Style” at Fresh Gallery Otara in May 2010, that in turn generated “Nimamea’a: The Fine Arts of Tongan Embroidery and Crochet.” This second exhibition enabled a more in-depth discussion of Tongan art and Tongan women’s fine arts groups. This exhibition was important in highlighting the extent to which embroidery and crochet have become part of Tonga’s fine arts repertoire. The exhibition also benefited from exposure to a broad urban audience.

TONGAN ARTS

Tongan art is divided into three categories: *tufunga* (material), *faiva* (performance) and *nimamea’a* (fine) arts.³ *Tufunga* literally means ‘beating the surface’ / ‘marking the surface’ or ‘the beating out of form’ / ‘creating form’;⁴ *faiva* literally means to ‘doing time in space’ or the ‘intensification’ of time and ‘reconstitution’ of space;⁵ and *nimamea’a* literally means ‘fine hands’⁶, a reflection of the delicate and meticulous operation of the performer’s hands as a means of production. These categories are further subdivided into various practices. For example, *tufunga* includes, but is not

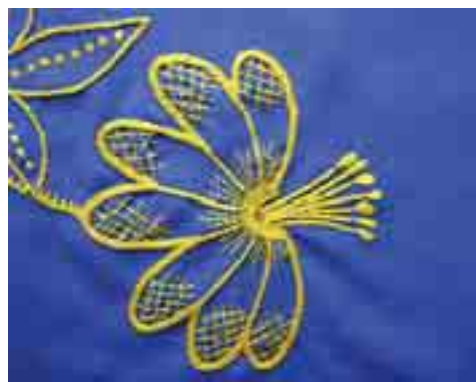


Figure 1. Teunga lotu, Church outfit, 2010. Made in Mt Roskill, Auckland, New Zealand by Noma ‘Ofa-Ki-Nu’usila Talakia’atu.



Figure 2. Kofuloto leisi, Crocheted slip, 2009. Made in Mt Roskill, Auckland, New Zealand by Manuēsina Tonata.



Figure 3. Tupenu matala'i'akau, Embroidered sheet, 1973/74
Made in Tatakamotonga, Tongatapu, Tonga
by Kolokesa Kulikefu.



Figure 4. Tupenu moe tangai pilo matala'i'akau, Embroidered
sheet and pillowcase set, 1993/94. Made in Auckland, New
Zealand, by Tu'utanga Hunuhunu Māhina.

restricted to, *tufunga tāvalivali* (painting), *tufunga lalava* (kafa sennit-lashing), *tufunga langafale* (house-building) and *tufunga tātatau* (tattooing). *Faiva* includes, but is not restricted to, *faiva ta'anga* (poetry), *faiva hiva* (music) and *faiva haka* (dance). *Nimamea'a* includes, but is not restricted to, *nimamea'a lālānga* (mat-weaving), *nimamea'a koka'anga* (barkcloth-making) and *nimamea'a tuikakala* (flower designing). The three categories of art are connected to the 'gender' divisions of functions between men and women in Tonga where *tufunga* and *faiva* are predominantly male-dominated activities and *nimamea'a* are predominantly the domain of women. However, there are areas where these gender divisions can overlap,⁷ such as women artists who are involved in *faiva* performance arts as well as in *nimamea'a* or fine arts.

The three categories of art are also classified in relation to the body.⁸ *Tufunga* and *nimamea'a* arts are 'tefito-he-tu`a-sino' or 'non-body-centred,' meaning that their production is situated outside the body, and the body is simply utilised as an instrument.⁹ *Faiva* on the other hand are 'tefito-he-sino' or 'body-centred' – performance arts are created by the body and centred on the body, and the body is the medium used in the process of production.¹⁰ These three domains of art, with the refined knowledge and skills associated with them, were hereditary professions and practiced as specialised forms of social activity.¹¹ All three categories vary in terms of their *fuo* (form), *uho* (content) and *vaka* or *hala*¹² (medium), and have multiple functions.¹³ In the classical Tongan arts, conceptions of 'quality' and 'utility' are combined to produce both beautiful and useful works, and quality is always given priority over utility.¹⁴ Quality comprises what is internal or intrinsic to art and is connected to the process of production; quality includes *tatau* (symmetry), *potupotutatau* (harmony) and *malie* or *faka'ofa'ofa* (beauty). Utility on the other hand is comprised of what is external or extrinsic to the arts, and is connected to the outcome and, in turn, the use or function of art.

Tongan art is highly sophisticated in terms of its plural, holistic, circular and inclusive nature. Over time and space, the three basic categories have remained the same despite the incorporation of new materials, art practices and advances in technology. This is because the conceptual essence and framework relevant to each of the three categories has remained largely intact. This framework defies terms such as 'customary,' 'heritage,' 'contemporary' and 'modern' used to classify Tongan art today. The use of such terms imposes foreign concepts that are in opposition to the traditional conceptual framework of Tongan art and results in the compartmentalising of art



Figure 5. Kofuloto leisi, Crochet top, 1990's. Made in Mt Roskill, Auckland, New Zealand by Lingsiva 'Aloua.



Figure 6. Ta'ovala, Waist mat, 2001. Made in Auckland, New Zealand by Lupe Mahe. (Ta'ovala made from raffia ribbon using hand knotted technique of no'ono'o or sia, from the island of Nuia).

forms, which can lead in turn to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Such misconstructions sever the natural cyclical flow inherent in the Tongan concept and practice of art, which is plural, holistic, circular and inclusive in approach, as opposed to the individualistic and exclusive Western concept of art.

NIMAMEA'A: TONGAN FINE ARTS

Embroidery and crochet are examples of two introduced art practices that have been incorporated into the Tongan fine arts category of *nimamea'a*; embroidery is known as *nimamea'a langaleisi* and crochet as *nimamea'a tuimatala'i'akau*. Tongan women have adopted and, over time, adapted these two practices in unique ways, so that they now feature prominently in various Tongan cultural contexts.

European missionaries' wives were responsible for introducing embroidery and crochet to local Tongan women. These skills were later incorporated into the educational syllabus of Catholic and Methodist schools for girls, which is where some of the artists in this exhibition were first taught the skills of embroidery and crochet. Once they learned these skills they continued to practice them after leaving school, carrying them into their adult life, and have since passed on their knowledge and skills to others.

Although it is accepted that the art of embroidery and crochet were originally Western forms of practice brought to Tonga by missionaries' wives, it can be argued that they enhanced and expanded existing Tongan art concepts and practices.¹⁵ For example, embroidery or *nimamea'a tuimatala'i'akau*¹⁶ is a new expression of *nimamea'a tuikakala*,¹⁷ or flower designing. *Nimamea'a tuikakala* involves working with natural materials such as sweet-scent flowers, fruits, barks and leaves to create beautiful floral designs for necklaces, waist ornaments or dance costumes. *Nimamea'a tuimatala'i'akau* is a form of *tuikakala* that involves working with new materials such as a needle and different coloured thread on a white canvas. *Nimamea'a langaleisi*¹⁸ or crochet on the other hand is an expansion of *nimamea'a lalanga* or weaving,¹⁹ which involves weaving of natural materials with the hand as opposed to needle and thread.²⁰

Whether the argument is that *langaleisi* and *tuimatala'i'akau* are a development of the already existing art practices of *lalanga* and *tuikakala*, or whether they are regarded as introduced art practices, does not affect the character of Tongan art, as the circular and inclusive nature of Tongan arts accommodates both possibilities. Tongan women fine artists have embraced the two art forms of *nimamea'a langaleisi* and *nimamea'a tuimatala'i'akau* and have made them their own. For example, these artists masterfully adorn plain (and usually white) bed sheets and pillowcases with beautiful and intricate embroidered designs, in some cases featuring fine crochet detailing. These designs are often floral but there are exceptions – as in the birds, faces, proverb texts and stars featured in this exhibition.



Figure 7. Kiekie (Waist ornament), 2010 by Falesiu Siu. Made from wool carpet yarn.

Embroidered and crochet bed sheets and pillowcases are not only fine works of art in themselves, but are also part of Tongan women's material wealth. As items of wealth they play an important cultural and artistic role in ceremonies involving gift-giving and receiving, such as birthdays and weddings. Other than featuring in such contexts, they are normally reserved for special uses such as decorating the interior of a church for a commemorative Sunday, decorating one's home or a specific venue for the funeral of a loved one, or for use within one's own home on very special occasions.

Nimamea'a langaleisi and *nimamea'a tuimatala'i'akau* also feature in Tongan women's clothing and undergarments. A group of women from the village of Tefisi, Vava'u in Tonga have developed, with a sense of creativity and originality, a particular style of garment known as 'Tefisi style'.²¹ This style incorporates either a combination of crochet and embroidery or just crochet, blended with a freestyle construction method using particular types of material; the garment is then further individualised, with each woman adding her unique flair. A typical 'Tefisi style' garment is comprised of a dress and wraparound made of sheer fabric such as lace or chiffon. Worn underneath is a slip or undergarment that can be seen through the sheer fabric. This undergarment would either be crocheted around the edges with embroidery, or feature embroidery on its own; alternatively, the top half can be completely crocheted. The overall look is a layered style. The 'Tefisi style' is well known within the Tongan community in Auckland and is associated with women from this village. However, other Tongan women have also been influenced by this particular style. These outfits are worn to church and on special occasions such as weddings and birthdays.

Nimamea'a langalesisi is also used by women for the creation of *ta'ovala* (waist mats) and *kiekie* (waist ornaments). The formal wearing of *ta'ovala*, by both men and women, and *kiekie*, by women only, are part of Tongan national dress and are usually worn as markers of respect. They are worn to church and on special occasions such as weddings, birthdays and christenings. *Ta'ovala* and *kiekie* were once only made with natural fibres, but now they are made with both natural and synthetic materials. With access to readily available and cheap materials, there are no creative boundaries to the making of *ta'ovala* and *kiekie* today. These artists also love to create beautiful works using recycled materials such as synthetic sacks; they also reuse other people's rubbish, thus validating the popular saying that "One man's trash is another man's treasure." Women garment-makers take an innovative approach, not only with their materials but also with their choice of designs and patterns. The *ta'ovala* and *kiekie* featured in this exhibition are made out of discarded outdoor carpet yarn and recycled synthetic sugar sacks.

TONGAN WOMEN'S FINE ARTS GROUPS

The Tongan proverb "'Oku tōkanga 'a tangata pea 'oku manga ka e falehanga 'a fafine pea 'oku hanga" can be translated as "Men possess the gardens measured by the feet, but women possess the house measured by the hands."²² This proverb alludes to the customary division of labour between men and women. Men's labour is associated with working the land, while women's work around the home includes weaving and other forms of fine arts. *Manga* and *hanga* are Tongan forms of measurement whereby men measure their work with *manga*, using their feet, while women measure their fine arts with *hanga*, using their hands. This proverb alludes to the key role that women play with respect to work around the home, but also with *nimamea'a*, our fine arts.

The role that women play in maintaining and preserving the fine arts is very significant, but not always recognised outside of a Tongan context. Some art practices within the category of *nimamea'a* are more recognisable than others, such as *nimamea'a koka'anga*, the fine art of *ngatu*-making or Tongan barkcloth-making. Tongan women are prolific makers of barkcloth, and Tongan *ngatu* are easily distinguishable from others made throughout the Moana Pacific. However, other art practices such as *nimamea'a langaleisi* and *tuimatala'i'akau* are not as easily recognisable as Tongan, as the arts of embroidery and crochet are widely practiced throughout the Pacific. That is why exhibitions such as "Nimamea'a: the Fine Arts of Tongan Embroidery and Crochet" are important in not only making a statement that embroidery and crochet are part of Tonga's art thinking and practice or collective heritage, and in particular as part of the classification of *nimamea'a* or fine arts, but also to illustrate that they are items of wealth that feature in various Tongan cultural contexts.

The continued practice, maintenance and preservation of Tongan fine arts are in the hands of women artists who work on their own or in groups such as a *kautaha koka'anga* – a collective that comes together to make *ngatu* or barkcloth. In New Zealand there are various women's groups, formed as part of the village, community or church, which includes art in their activities. The women featured in this exhibition are all individual artists in their own right, but they are also members of women's fine arts groups which get together regularly for fellowship as well as to create works of art.

CONCLUSION

This exhibition focuses on the fine arts of *nimamea'a tuimatala'i'akau* or embroidering and *nimamea'a langaleisi* or crocheting. Their specific and general aesthetic, practical qualities and values can be appreciated more critically in the broader context of the framework of Tongan art and its categories of *faiva*, *tufunga*, and *nimamea'a*. It is only through an understanding of this framework for Tongan arts (in particular *nimamea'a*), and how new art practices are incorporated within each category, that one can truly appreciate the fine arts of Tongan embroidery and crochet. "Nimamea'a: the Fine Arts of Tongan Embroidery and Crochet" draws attention to the love, passion, dedication, ingenuity and innovation displayed by Tongan women fine artists. They are the pioneers, custodians and teachers of Tonga's *nimamea'a* or fine arts traditions, and are the living treasures within whom these traditions continue to be practiced, maintained and preserved for posterity.

Curators

Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai is a freelance curator, writer and project manager. She was formerly curator of Pacific cultures at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) where she co-curated its current permanent Pacific exhibition, "Tangata o le Moana: The Story of Pacific People in New Zealand." Kolokesa is also the project manager for Kulā 'Uli Publishing (NZ), where she is co-illustrator of its new children's book series. Her research interests include the tangible and intangible heritage of the Pacific, with a specific focus on Tonga, and the history of Pacific peoples in New Zealand.

Manuēsina 'Ofa-ki-Hautolo Māhina hails from Tefisi, Vava'u and Tatakamotonga, Mu'a, Tonga. She has a background in Pacific fashion, specifically Tongan fashion and style. At a young age Manuēsina was introduced to the 'wonders' of the sewing machine, as well as being exposed to the unique and innovative fashion of Tongan women

in New Zealand which has continued to fuel her interest and passion in the area. Manuēsina has been a member of various Tongan women's arts groups over the years and is currently a member of the Kulupu Falehanga 'i Teleiloa group where she continues to be inspired by their creativity and innovation in keeping the Tongan fine arts alive and thriving in New Zealand.

Makers

Lingisiva 'Aloua: Lingisiva was born in Tefisi, Vava'u, Tonga in 1945. She migrated to New Zealand in 1986 and currently lives in Mt Roskill. Her skills and knowledge of sewing, crochet and embroidery was learnt from her eldest sister Manuēsina Tonata. Lingisiva is still actively practicing sewing, embroidery and crochet and has passed these skills on to her daughter-in-law.

Kolokesa Kulīkefu: Kolokesa was born in Tongatapu, Tonga on December 24th 1948. She migrated to New Zealand in 1977 and now lives in Mangere. She first encountered embroidery, knitting and crocheting as a young student at Queen Salote College in Tonga. She is currently a member of a Mangere based Tongan women's arts group called Kulupu Falehanga 'i Teleiloa.

Lupe Mahe: Lupe was born in Tongatapu on July 5th 1966. She migrated to New Zealand in 1986 and currently lives in Pakuranga. She learnt basic skills of the fine arts of nimamea'a in her second year at high school at Queen Salote College in Tonga. She is a member of the Otara based Tongan women's arts group, 'Toakase Women's Group'.

Tu'utanga Hunuhunu Māhina: Tu'utanga is 58 years old and was born on July 15th 1953 in Tongatapu, Tonga. She migrated to New Zealand in 1978 and now lives in Mount Eden. She learned sewing as a student at Queen Salote College in Tonga. She is currently a member of a Mangere based Tongan women's arts group called Kulupu Falehanga 'i Teleiloa.

Falesiu Siu: Falesiu was born in Tongatapu, Tonga on February 21st 1972. Her skills and knowledge in the fine arts of nimamea'a started off with learning from her mother 'Alisi Taipaleti and her late maternal grandmother Lafimoa Lafitani. She is a member of the Otara based Tongan women's arts group, 'Toakase Women's Group'.

Noma 'Ofa-Ki-Nu'usila Talakia'atu: Noma was born in Tefisi, Vava'u, Tonga on February 21st 1956. She migrated to New Zealand in 1986 and currently lives in Mt Roskill. She learnt basic sewing skills while in high school and her skills and knowledge of crochet and embroidery was passed on from her mother, Manuēsina Tonata.

Manuēsina Tonata: Manuēsina was born in Tefisi, Vava'u, Tonga in 1928. She migrated to New Zealand in 1989 and currently lives in Mt Roskill. She was urged by her mother to attend an all-girl Catholic school and it was there that she learned sewing, embroidery and crochet. Manuēsina has passed on some of this knowledge and practice to her two younger sisters and also her eldest daughter. She still continues to practice embroidery and crochet.

- 1 The exhibition "Nimamea'a: The Fine Arts of Tongan Embroidery and Crochet" was presented at Objectspace from 19 November to 22 December 2011. The exhibition catalogue can be purchased directly from Objectspace or downloaded from <http://www.objectspace.org.nz/publications/viewPublication.php?documentCode=3117>. The authors wish to thank Objectspace for permission to reprint the catalogue essay.
- 2 See <http://www.objectspace.org.nz/about/index.php>.
- 3 See 'O Māhina, "Faiva Fakaali: The Tongan Performance Art of Humor," *Pacific Studies*, 31:1 (2008), 31-54; 'O Māhina, "From Vale (Ignorance) to 'Ilo (Knowledge) to Poto (Skill), the Tongan Theory of Ako (Education): Theorising Old Problems Anew," *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 4:1 (2008), 67-96; 'O Māhina, "Tā, Vā and Moana: Temporality, Spatiality and Indigeneity," *Pacific Studies*, 33:2/3 (2010); 'O Māhina, *I lō lō Tonga he Fepaki / Tonga in Crisis* (Auckland, Aotearoa/ New Zealand: Lo'au Research Society (LRS) Publishing, 2010); 'O Māhina and SF Potauaine, "Tatau: A Ta-Va [Time-Space] Transformation," in 'O Māhina, J Dudding and KU Māhina-Tu'ai, *Tatau: Fenapasi 'o e Fepaki/Tatau: Symmetry, Harmony and Beauty: The Art of Semisi Fetokai Potauaine* (Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand: LRS Publishing [in conjunction with Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge University, UK], 2010).

- 4 Māhina, "Faiva Fakaoli," Māhina, "From Vale (Ignorance) to 'Ilo (Knowledge)" and 'O Māhina, TO Ka'ili and 'A Ka'ili, Ko e Ngaahi 'Ata mei he Hisitolia mo e Kalatua 'o Tonga: Ke Tufunga'i ha lea Tonga Fakaako (Auckland: Centre for Pacific Studies, the University of Auckland, 2006).
- 5 SF Potauaine, "Tectonic of the Fale: Four Dimensional, Three Divisional," Unpub. Master of Architecture thesis (University of Auckland, 2010), 13.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid., 16.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Māhina, Ka'ili and Ka'ili, Ko e Ngaahi 'Ata mei he Hisitolia mo e Kalatua 'o Tonga; M'O Māhina, "Teuteu, The Dress Body: Women's 'Fashion' in Tongan Church in Auckland," Unpub. diss. (University of Auckland, 2006).
- 10 Potauaine, "Tectonic of the Fale," 16.
- 11 Ibid., 17.
- 12 The term *hala* means medium or form, as in "Tāvolo hala he sikotā" (the devil appears in the medium of a sikotā bird). T Ka'ili, personal communication, 13 Jan 2011.
- 13 Māhina, "Faiva Fakaoli," 37.
- 14 Ibid. and Māhina, "From Vale (Ignorance) to 'Ilo (Knowledge)."
- 15 'O Māhina, personal communication with Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai, April 2010.
- 16 The Tongan word for flowers is *matala'i'akau*, which literally means 'eye of the trees,' whereas the generic term *kakala* refers to *matala'i'akau* or flowers interlaced into complex, elaborate, and beautiful *kupesi* or geometric designs.
- 17 The Tongan word *tui* means 'to pierce,' and relates to the fine arts of *tuimatala'i'akau* and *tuikakala*.
- 18 The word 'leisi,' as in the *nimamea'a langalesi*, is a Tonganisation of the English word 'lace.'
- 19 The Tongan word *langa* or *lalanga*, as used in *nimamea'a langalesi* or crocheting and *nimamea'a lalanga* or mat-weaving, means 'to weave.'
- 20 In fine arts such as *tuimatala'i'akau* or embroidering and *tuikakala* or flower-designing, the *mata'ihui* [eye of the needle], or its opposite, *ava'ihui* [hole of the needle] is used as an artistic device for the intersection of cotton threads in the production of flower designs or intersecting flower pedals, fruit-strips, bark-strips, and leaves in the production of *kupesi* or geometric designs. The same applies to the fine art of *langalesi* or crocheting, where the 'eye of the needle' or 'hole of the needle' is used for the intersection of cotton threads.
- 21 See Māhina, "Teuteu, The Dress Body." Garment-makers Manuēsina Tonata, Lingsiva 'Aloua and Noma 'Ofa-ki-Nu'usila Talakia'atu all hail from the village of Tefisi, Vava'u Tonga.
- 22 'O Māhina, personal communication with Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai, September 2011.

NIMAMEA'A The fine arts of Tongan embroidery and crochet 19 NOV — 22 DEC 2011 at Objectspace

Full catalogue is available for purchase from Object Space. *Nimamea'a: The fine arts of Tongan embroidery and crochet*. The exhibition catalogue features writing by curators Kolokesa Uafā Māhina-Tuai and Manuēsina, 'Ofa-ki-Hautolo Māhina. All text has been translated into Tongan by Hufanga Dr. Okusitino Māhina.

<http://www.objectspace.org.nz/publications/viewPublication.php?documentCode=3117>



SKIN BOUNDARIES

Selina Woulfe

Skin is my fascination and energises my jewellery practice. Artistically, I strive to create work that evokes a dialogue between the body and the mind in order to activate a physical and psychological awareness for both the wearer and viewer. For my research, I focus on social, cultural and religious rituals surrounding the body and the objects used to conduct them. In the true sense of fetish, these are inanimate objects revered for their significance or spiritual power. By treating skin as a material to be manipulated with these objects, I am able to explore physical dynamics and push sensual limits. I often use my own skin and body to experience and test my jewellery, in the process pushing my own boundaries and drawing inspiration from my Catholic upbringing and mixed European and Polynesian heritage – English, Irish, Samoan, Tokelauan, Wallis Islander. It is through the body and its adornments that I feel most connected to my ancestry.

Skin is ephemeral, constantly changing, healing, stretching, replenishing and ageing. Its colour is the perfect blend of one's genetic heritage and current environment. Under the sun, my mother's skin becomes a darker shade of brown, while my father's freckles and spots multiply to create a unique lattice across his arms and back. Other natural skin adornments such as warts, moles or beauty spots can increase in size, colour and number over time. Being transfixed by these gems of flesh has led to my current work, *Untitled (flesh)*, consisting of mysterious brown and beige growths on sterling silver or threaded on silk. The pieces are draped or affixed by means of piercing of the body or garment, referencing the sometimes malicious, but usually benign spots of beauty, and the changing gradient of skin tone. The epidermis is visually removed from one body and placed on another, forcing a bond and comparison of shades of skin. As tactile objects, the *Untitled (flesh)* pieces create an experience akin to fingering rosary beads, allowing one to become lost in repetition and pattern.

Personal comfort can be sought in religious and cultural ritual, which allows for self-reflection in a meditative, spiritual state; the process is often methodical, representative of growth, and can offer a link to an historical or cultural narrative. The Samoan *tātau* is a tattooing ceremony that traditionally takes place as part of the initiation of a *matai* (chief). The *tufuga ta tātau* (tattoo master) etches the dark ink into the subject's skin; it is a long and intricate process that usually takes several days to complete. The master also has one or more helpers to stretch the skin, clean the tools and wipe away blood during the *tātau*. The *pe'a* (male tattoo) covers the whole body from the lower torso down to the mid thighs, and consists of an intricate pattern of geometric lines and solid blocks of ink. It is incredibly painful to receive, and requires the subject to prepare himself physically and, most importantly, psychologically. The subject, lying on mats, is held down by the assistants and often supported by family members attending the event. Singing is common practice and acts as a distraction from the pain. Ultimately, the sensations experienced during *tātau* evolve into a constant state of awareness between body and mind. It is necessary for the mind to prevail over the body in order to complete this rite of passage.

The process of *tātau* as well as the end result is important, but it is the memory of the spiritual and physical experience undergone that is most valued. It serves as an unbreakable link between the subjects and their ancestors.

Although incomparable to the severe pain endured by those undergoing the *tātau* process, my jewellery ritual of 'graftification' shares some similar elements; wearers must also prepare themselves psychologically for physical discomfort and place their trust in the hands of a master of sorts, who also uses tools and must wipe away blood.

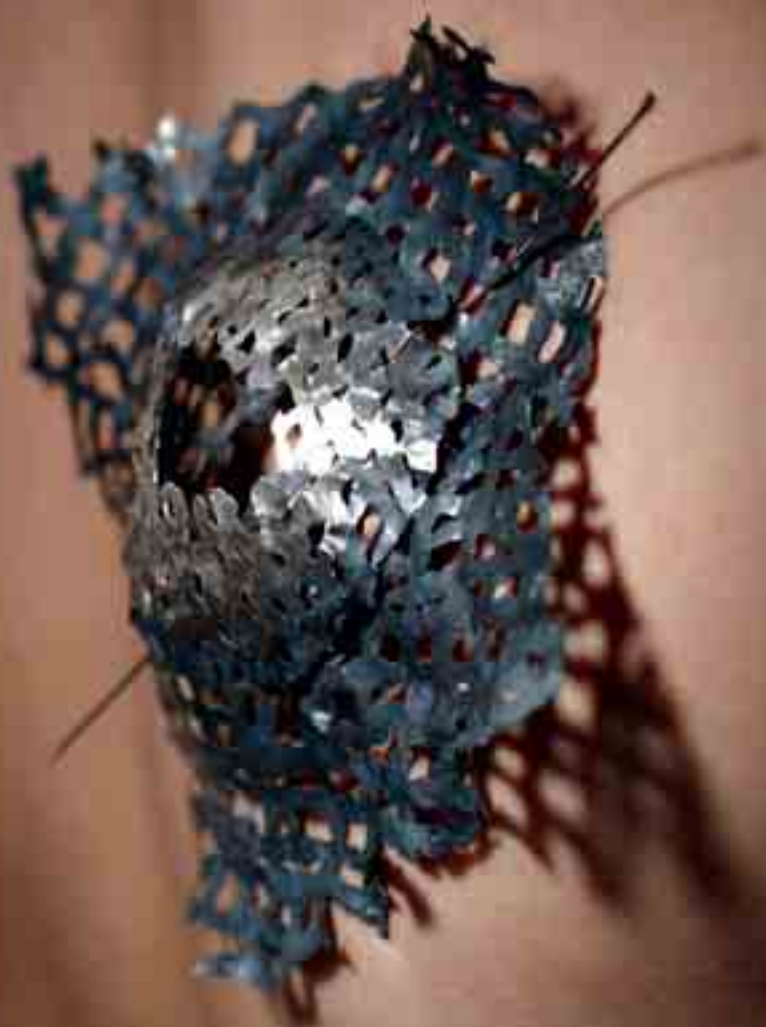


Figure 1. Selina Woulfe, *Silvergraft (male torso ritual II)* (2010), sterling silver; surgical steel pin. Photograph by G Badger.



Figures 2 and 3. Selina Woulfe, *Silvergraft (female ritual I)* (2010), sterling silver; surgical steel pin. Photographs by G Badger.

During my own experience I chose to have supporters with me while I underwent the procedure. The jewellery pieces, called 'silvergrafts,' are a series of protective adornments that actively cause pain when worn, being attached to the body with a surgical steel pin by a piercing artist. These abstract jewellery versions of skin grafts are a fine filigree of raw, undulating silver mesh.



Figure 4. Selina Woulfe, *Untitled (flesh)* (2012), polymer clay, silk thread. Photograph by A McCormack.

An additional layer of history is created and becomes a part of the jewellery object's story each time the ritual is performed, cementing its place in our present whilst bringing it closer to someone else's future. The experience is recorded with film and photography. Part of the work is to display large-scale photographs that depict the intimacy of pieces worn on a male and female body, creating a spectator experience, enabling the viewer to wear the jewellery psychologically. With a tattoo, the marking of the skin is evidence of the experience and transports the viewer or wearer back to it. However, the intention of the graftification process is not to create permanent scars (they can heal within a few weeks). Rather, the photograph is used to transport the subject back to the event; it becomes a second skin, bearing the evidence.

Everyone has skin and can relate to it in some way. The epidermis is the first and possibly most crucial layer of our bodies and, while it is a protective envelope, it is also a penetrable membrane, vulnerable to different levels of manipulation. Physically and conceptually, I use it to challenge my own identity and connect with others – crossing skin boundaries.

Selina Woulfe is a contemporary jeweller. She graduated with a Bachelor of Design from Unitec Mt Albert where she studied 2005-09. After being selected for Objectspace Gallery's Best in Show award in 2009, Selina has gone on to exhibit in New Zealand and Australia, and has work in the Wallace Arts Trust Collection. Most recently, she was included in the book *On Jewellery: A Compendium of International Contemporary Art Jewellery*, by Dutch art historian Liesbeth den Besten (Arnoldsche Art Publishers, Germany, 2011).



Figure 5. Selina Woulfe, *Untitled (flesh)* (2012), sterling silver; polymer clay, surgical steel pin. Photograph by A McCormack.

READINGAHOUSE

Bronwyn Lloyd

I left home that morning with a copy of *Bliss* tucked into the pocket of my pea-green coat. One of Penguin's series of Mini Modern Classics, the A6, grey-covered book contains three of Katherine Mansfield's stories: "Bliss," "The Daughters of the Late Colonel," and "The Doll's House." I always carry a book with me when I travel by bus, anticipating lengthy periods of waiting. Seated on the wooden bench beside Paper Moon, I read eight pages of *Bliss* before the bus arrived, closing the book at this passage:

Really – really – she had everything. She was young. Harry and she were as much in love as ever, and they got on together splendidly and were really good pals. She had an adorable baby. They didn't have to worry about money. They had this absolutely satisfactory house and garden. And friends – modern, thrilling friends, writers and painters and poets or people keen on social questions – just the kind of friends they wanted. And then there were books, and there was music, and she had found a wonderful little dressmaker, and they were going abroad in the summer, and their new cook made the most superb omelettes ...¹

It's rare for any art or cultural activity happening in the city to be tempting enough for me to abandon my precious Saturday of writing or sewing, spruce myself up and catch the bus over the Harbour Bridge into town. But on that day I made an exception. Earlier in the week I had received an email from Hopkinson Cundy advertising an exhibition by Auckland artist Luke Willis Thompson with the run-together title, **inthisholeonthisislandwhereiam**.

What intrigued me about the promotional statement for Thompson's show was the news that the gallery was to be vacant for the duration of the exhibition (15–31 March 2012), and that the work itself was a property in Epsom, which visitors would be transported to by taxi and driven back into the city again afterwards.

The idea of being taken to a second location is a concept that has fascinated me ever since I watched an episode of *Oprah* some years ago that dealt with the subject of abduction. "Never get taken to the second location" was the catchy slogan that the invited guest asked the audience to commit to memory, claiming that once you allowed yourself to be removed from a familiar place and taken to unknown territory, your abductor had unlimited power and you had none. In various ways over the past few years, I've attempted to put this assertion about the second location to the test so, for that reason alone, the invitation to Luke Willis Thompson's exhibition was enough to entice me from my home.

My imagination went to work in the days leading up to the excursion and I began to speculate about what I was likely to experience at Thompson's exhibition. My best guess was that visitors would be taken to a place that would later be revealed as the scene of some terrible crime. People who know me would not be surprised that I would think of something dark and sinister; but it was actually the exhibition blurb itself that got me thinking along these lines:

Thompson's conceptual practice exists in both tangible and intangible forms. In recent work the artist has borrowed ready-made objects – such as a local funeral home's art collection and a black minstrel-style figure from an antique store – to trace the faultlines of race and class in his chosen context. Thompson's objects are often taken from sites of trauma or contain references to the artist's biography, but these are rarely made explicit.

Thompson sets up estranging encounters where the viewer is invited to engage with a marginal object both ontologically and pushed into a fictional space of narrative and mythology.

After reading that, there was no way that I was going to miss out on this opportunity, not only to get taken to a mystery second location, but to a place where we were actively encouraged to construct a story, or multiple stories, based on our experience there. I invited my writer friend Isabel to come along, and at one o'clock on Saturday afternoon, 17 March 2012, we climbed into a taxi parked in the loading bay adjoining Hopkinson Cundy and were taken on a very strange adventure.

Before I describe the experience, let me state for the record that I am, in many ways, an old-fashioned kind of art historian, in the sense that I tend to respond to works in which I can see evidence of the hand and the mind working together to create it. I have a strong aversion to exhibitions in which artists treat their audience as patsies, playing silly tricks on them involving appropriation, irony, and misdirection.

While adopting an open mind towards Thompson's exhibition, on the surface at least, I admit that I harboured deep-seated reservations about the idea of a house in Epsom as the 'artwork,' in light of my antipathy towards an earlier example of a residence used as an artwork in an exhibition by Dane Mitchell.

When Mitchell was awarded an artist residency in 2006 at the Thorndon cottage formerly owned by Rita Angus, the work he undertook during his stay at the cottage was a reading of the paranormal activity of Rita Angus's house, in the expectation that he might learn something about the artist and her life. Mitchell employed the services of a psychic and recorded her findings, which revealed, among other things, that Angus ate a lot of toast, and that she enjoyed the solitude and creative freedom that the house offered her, but was at the same time troubled by her seclusion. The psychic told Mitchell that Angus would help him with his work if he wished her to, and that upon leaving her home he should leave a bunch of daffodils on the table for Angus, which he did.

"Thresholds," the exhibition that resulted from Mitchell's residency, was held at the Jonathan Smart Gallery in Christchurch in April 2007. The show included framed pencil rubbings on paper of the plaque affixed to the gate of Angus's cottage and of the text engraved on Angus's headstone at the Wharerangi cemetery in Napier. There was an audio recording of the psychic's reading, and a monitor placed on the gallery floor playing a looped recording of a squeaky hinge on one of the doors in the cottage that evidently sounded like a woman's voice saying the name 'Dane.'

The sum of Mitchell's investigation of Rita Angus's phantom inhabitation of her Wellington residence was as insubstantial as the spectre he sought to make contact with, but as the taxi drove us through the gentrified streets of some of Auckland's earliest established suburbs, past Cornwall Park and into the heart of Epsom, I actively suppressed any misgivings I had about Luke Willis Thompson's exhibition, unfairly influenced by Dane Mitchell's work, and gave in to a growing sense of nervous anticipation.

We tried to retain our bearings as the taxi veered off Manukau Road and took an unexpected short-cut through a block of units that backed onto the street with the house we were going to view. Presumably, this shortcut was designed to ensure that we didn't see the street sign on the corner, thereby providing the residence, and its owner, with a degree of anonymity.

The cab turned right into a tree-lined street and right again into the driveway of an imposing old villa with a wide verandah running around two sides of the house. A variety of furniture was stacked up around the porch and a young woman, seated on a white sofa by the front door, greeted us as we climbed the steps. We laughed self-consciously and asked if there were any instructions for viewing the house. "None," she said. "Just go in and look around at your leisure." She turned the handle and ushered us in, closing the door behind us.

We found ourselves in a wide hallway. The two bedrooms to the left and right of the front door were wedged closed with a pair of undies. We assumed this meant that access was denied. The hall cut a path through the centre of the house from front to back or, at least, such a path would have been possible if the hallway hadn't been cluttered with piles of stuff. The stale-smelling, dark passage was clearly the main dumping ground for the family's overflow of furniture, papers, clothes, and toys. Rubbish bags filled to capacity sagged on the floor; stuffed toys lay face down on the carpet, like a child had staged a crime scene, and towards the far end of the hall, two cupboards on either side spilled their contents into the space, blocking the way through.



Figure 1. Luke Willis Thompson, *inthisholeonthislandwhereiam* (2012). Image courtesy the artist and Hopkinson Cundy, Auckland.

At this early point we were definitely thinking that someone, perhaps a crazy hoarder, had recently died in the house, but that theory was put to rest when we noticed that the bathroom had been used that morning, indicating that the house was currently lived in. This was confirmed when we turned left off the hallway into the large dining room and encountered life – a handsome grey cat was sleeping soundly on a wooden chair positioned in a sunbeam under the window.

There was a different atmosphere in this room, maybe because of the presence of the contented cat, or maybe because of the contrast between the hallway and the dining room, which was comparatively free of clutter; with a clear wooden table, dusted surfaces, and high ceilings that had been made cobweb-free with the aid of a long-handled brush propped in a corner.

The adjoining lounge was similarly tidy, with neatly ordered bookcases filled with gilt-edged classics, popular fiction and children's books, and framed family photos arranged with care around the walls and on top of the shelves. Isabel observed that the father was not present in any of the photos and we began to evolve a narrative about a solo mother who wanted to be in control of her life, but who was only able to make half-hearted attempts at establishing order.

When we entered the small kitchen at the back of the house, for instance, Isabel saw evidence of domestic order. The green rubber gloves neatly folded over the edge of the sink comforted her strangely. She noticed that the family cat was fed the most expensive brand of dry cat food, and she later remarked that she only bought that brand for her own cat, Nintendo, when it was on special at the supermarket. There were two bags of Optimum on top of the fridge, and Isabel noted that somebody had gone to the trouble of squeezing the air out of the bags before sealing them shut to keep the cat-biscuits fresh.

Admittedly, I didn't take much notice of either the rubber gloves or the cat food in the kitchen because my attention was caught by the magnetic text adorning the fridge door. I was certain that the content of it would yield some clues about this mysterious exhibition by Luke Willis Thompson.

Standing in front of the fridge, I started playing a game of textual forensics. This is an (almost) accurate facsimile of the fridge door:

drink sleep
yourgettheandus visit
experience cheapwarmFiji
amigobigapple paradiseisland
TokyoparkbenchHong Kong
yachtsandHollywood sun
USA j
Canada
s had d
pilot
h milehighpound
i BuckinghamPalace notrandom
t hammeredzoocamera fly
EiffelTowerthong
BigOE dudecupoftearide
kiwicosmo shescoredlovinwith
adventure softcheese
club x
4
d
facetoface aussie i
Europe b
Roundtheworld e
carnival

Examining the magnetic text, I thought about the way the artist had run the title of his show together into one long word: **inthisholeonthisislandwhereiam**. I saw that there was a line of text centred at the very top of the fridge door that formed a poetic couplet of sorts with Thompson's title: **meanwhileyouclimbontheforestedcoolsnowrightabovetheseasunland**. The act of placing the two lines together generates a narrative of escape – a story about climbing out of the hole, crossing the snow and finding oneself above the sea, the sun, the land. Fanciful, I know, but when I find myself without interpretive parameters, as I did in that Epsom house/artwork, I feel compelled to seek out sense, and textual clues are always the first thing I look for to find my bearings. The magnetic text offered me that.

I could see that there were limitations to the variety of magnetic text possibilities on the fridge door because the original set of magnetic poetry, grubby with age and use, was significantly depleted. More recently, it had been supplemented by a set of travel words, but these thematic sets aren't nearly as good, in my opinion, because they limit the options for expressing ideas. Nevertheless, the little groupings of text on the fridge door, combining travel words and regular words, were like small islands of sense (and nonsense) in a wide white sea: **visitcheapwarmFijiparadiseisland**.

When I noticed the stand alone phrase **notrandom** on the fridge door, I declared aloud that this was incontrovertible proof that the artist had staged certain items around the house that we were supposed to notice. The narrative of escape was deliberate, I argued, and Isabel laughed at my obsessive investigative tendencies. From that point on, however, we began to notice things in earnest.

In three separate places around the house we found stacks of sheet music. On top of each pile was a Requiem, and we wondered if this was connected to the memorial pamphlet displayed on the mantelpiece for a pastor who had died in 2008. Death, after all, is the ultimate escape.

We discovered further textual evidence related to the idea of escape in the two open bedrooms of the house. A copy of Truman Capote's novel *Breakfast at Tiffany's*, with its famously unattached and nomadic protagonist, Holly Golightly (played by Audrey Hepburn in the screen adaptation), was positioned face-out on a small bookshelf in the bedroom of a young woman. In an otherwise chaotic room, with an unmade bed and dirty clothes all over the floor, the chic image of Hepburn facing into the room told us a story about a girl's desire for something greater than her present circumstances afforded. The care with which the young woman had arranged her many pairs of cheap but much-loved shoes in a neat grid on the floor of her room was further evidence, Isabel argued, of the girl's aspiration for status and wealth. I didn't tell Isabel that she was standing on the peel-off strip from a sanitary pad while she was talking.

The bedroom next door was slightly more orderly, although the bed was also unmade. Photographs of four smiling young Pacific Island adults were scattered over the bed, along with an unread collection of Katherine Mansfield's short stories. On a shelf above the open wardrobe stood an illustrated copy of Edward Lear's nonsense poem "The Owl and the Pussycat." An escapist tale if ever there was one, the poem recounts the adventure of two creatures that fall in love and set sail together in their pea-green boat for a new life in a new land where they are married under the light of the moon and dance hand in hand along the sandy shore.

It wasn't until we saw the photographs on the bed that we became aware that the family who owned this house were of Pacific Island origin on their father's side, judging by the photographs in the lounge of a Palagi woman we assumed was the children's mother. A birth certificate sitting on top of a pile of papers in the hallway confirmed this hunch. The certificate was for a girl, born in the early '90s, whose father was 51 at the time of her birth. He was Fijian and worked as a primary school principal.

Another detail that we noticed on the birth certificate was that the artist shared the same surname as the father named on the document. Although we had been told by the gallery owner that the home we were viewing

belonged to friends of the artist who had had a similar upbringing, it was apparent that this was not the case and that Luke Willis Thompson had in fact situated his latest work in his own family home.

Standing in the hallway, our conversation turned to the subject of Pacific Island families living in gentrified Auckland suburbs. We talked about the way that such families had been systematically squeezed out of Ponsonby during the property boom in the 1990s and we wondered if this family had experienced similar pressures in Epsom to sell their property and relocate. We imagined that the shabby state of their home drew a fair amount of interest from real estate agents as well as raised eyebrows from those home-owners living in the expensively renovated villas down the street.

Flicking through a pile of blue-covered Auckland Grammar School grade-books in the hall, Isabel commented on the cruelty of publicising the details of the students who had received failing grades for their subjects and how humiliated they must have felt. A discussion about elitism in New Zealand education followed. I told Isabel about an occasion some years ago when I had attended parent-teacher interviews at Auckland Girls' Grammar School on behalf of my Samoan mother-in-law at the time, whose youngest daughter was failing most of her classes. I described the surprised look on the faces of Shiree's teachers when I introduced myself to them, and how mortified I was to hear their condescending assessment of her future prospects. She should get a job at McDonalds, I was told by more than one teacher, and save up to buy a car.

After conversing in the hallway for some time, we suddenly became self-conscious. We wondered if there were cameras hidden around the house and whether our conversation and movements were being recorded. We started to question whether or not we had said anything inappropriate. At that point, we felt it was a good idea to leave.

Returning to Hopkinson Cundy we were struck by the contrast between the cluttered house in Epsom and the empty exhibition space with dark polished floors and bare white walls. It was the visual equivalent of a mind-clearing exercise at the end of a hypnosis session, returning us to the familiar reality of our own lives.

Discussing the experience over a glass of wine at Alleluya, we realised that the long, dank and cluttered hallway in the house had had the greatest impact on us. While we had been able to invent stories about personal improvement, coping devices and escape in the rooms leading off the hall, in that dark space, filled with debris and blocked at one end, it seemed that little hope existed.

Thinking about it later, I realised that the hallway of the Epsom house was the locus of our 'estranging encounter'. The hallway was the uneasy and tremulous faultline of race and class and Luke Willis Thompson had placed us right on it.

Bronwyn Lloyd completed a PhD in English at the University of Auckland in 2010. She currently teaches academic and creative writing at Massey University, School of English and Media Studies (Albany), and works as a freelance writer and curator.

1 Katherine Mansfield, *Bliss*, *Mini Modern Classics* (London: Penguin Books, 2011), 8-9.

VA I TA

Lily Laita

I've been working in and out of a void or 'va'(space or gap) since art school in the late 1980s when I constructed a black polythene box to paint on black paper because I didn't trust the light. In reflecting on my processes, there is always something of the 'other' about my work that I'm never certain is the id or the ego, or who cares? The aura is there –'au'-'ra' – I am there (well, I was there in the making of the work). Hmm, how to site oneself without sounding like a tosser or demographic bargaining chip? Boundaries, I think, are transparent and definitely liminal and in a state of flux, but I am constantly falling off my discourse/horse and landing in the 'va l ta' (space and time before dawn). Which is fine, as I think about painting as a language and a bodily function – a necessity and a means to communicate.

Lily Aitui Laita (Ngai Raukawa ki Tonga/Tanugamanono) has completed a Masters of Fine Arts from Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland University, and a Diploma of Secondary School Teacher Education, ACE, Auckland. Lily Laita is a trustee of the Tautai Contemporary Art Trust and currently associate HOD, Western Springs College, Auckland.



Figure 1. Lily Laita, *Westside*, 2009. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 2. Lily Laita, *Welcome to the Westside*, 2009. Image courtesy of the artist.

CREATIVE STARTS: WORKSHOP-STYLE PROGRAMMES IN OCEANIA¹

Katherine Higgins

Artist workshops have had a significant role in the development of contemporary visual art practice in Oceania. In this article, I present four examples: two artist workshops and two artist residency programmes, which utilised a workshop format, to highlight how workshops have been an effective means for supporting contemporary visual artists. I offer statements from the instigators of the programmes and bolster them with responses from participating artists to highlight initiatives that have supported artists working in the Pacific Islands since the late 1960s. Rather than separate the initiatives by format – workshop/residency – I present them chronologically to emphasise the overlap and continuity of the programmes.

I selected examples away from the urban and arguably resource-rich centres such as Auckland and Honolulu. Artists in places such as Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu were relatively isolated when these workshops took place. Their practice was unprecedented, and, at times, unappreciated because of the individualistic nature of contemporary visual arts, which was at odds with communal social systems common throughout Oceania. Yet, these workshops were successful because the format invites participants to work in a collective space where knowledge and experience can be shared through indigenous pedagogical and epistemological methods rather than taught through the hegemonic methods of Western education systems.² Can 'workshop' imply placing (creative) control into the hands of practitioners rather than assuming curriculum developed elsewhere? The participants are active in determining the learning and sharing processes of a workshop.

This article provides an opportunity to characterise the typical functions of workshops in Oceania and briefly corroborate some differentiation and similarities between workshops and residencies. Although the characteristics typically associated with workshops, such as learning new techniques and communal working space, are apparent in the residencies, it was the duration of programmes that proved a distinguishing factor because workshops typically lasted one to three weeks while residencies lasted months to years. I recognise that long-term residencies such as those at the Creative Arts Centre in Papua New Guinea and Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture in Fiji were a cross between workshops and art school, yet they were called artist residencies and so I analyse them as such. Workshops inspired and have been integral to the development of residency models in Oceania, resulting in artistic support reflective of and responsive to local life. Workshops also continue to be a prominent means for facilitating artistic growth and providing training, independently and as a component of residencies in Oceania. My intention is not to make sweeping generalisations or suggest that workshops and residencies have led to all development of contemporary visual arts in Oceania, but to acknowledge the adoption and adaptation of workshops in places where arts schools were not available or as an alternative for creative individuals who choose not to enrol in academic programmes.

Program type and location	Years	Sponsor or host	Description
Artist residencies, Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea	1969-90	Georgina Beier's home, Centre for New Guinea Cultures, Centre for Creative Arts, National Arts School	Residencies based on a workshop model for Papua New Guinean artists.
Artist workshop, Nuku'alofa, Tonga	1975	Tonga Regional Visual Arts Workshop (sponsored by UNESCO, SPC, and USP)	Fifteen participants from 11 countries met in Tonga for the three-week workshop.
Artist workshops, Esnaar, Vanuatu	1984 and 1985	Michotouchkine-Pilioko Foundation with support from UNESCO, SPC, and USP	Two-week workshops in 1984 and 1985 brought together 34 artists from nine countries.
Artist residencies, Suva, Fiji	1997-present	Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture	Residencies based on a workshop model for local and visiting artists.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In the late 1960s, Europeans Georgina and Ulli Beier imported the terminology 'residency' to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, and employed it to credit emerging artists' skills and contributions. The term was intended as an alternative to the institutional framework of Western education and terminology like diploma or curriculum. Although the term was adopted, the typical European format of a residency was not. Instead, Georgina Beier established a workshop environment in her home for creative individuals to have the space and resources to develop their artistic practice, which assisted artists with launching careers and selling artworks. Conceivably, Beier was transforming a workshop model and bestowing a professional designation on the activities that took place in the informal setting of her home.³ The workshop-style format avoided the constraints of academic training as well as cultural conventions followed in the villages, where individualistic practices like contemporary visual arts careers conflicted with the typical communal lifestyle.

Timothy Akis began his artistic career with the workshop-style residencies with Beier. Akis, acknowledged as Papua New Guinea's first contemporary visual artist,⁴ was the first artist in residence invited to work with Beier in her studio. She described the residency: "He worked with a feverish intensity for those six weeks with more suitable materials than those available in his remote area. He discovered the scale on which he could express himself best. He depicted the world he was intimate with, the animals that inhabit the Simbai Valley, cassowaries, lizards, bandicoots, and snakes. People occur less often in his drawings and tend to be indistinguishable from his representations of spirits."⁵ Beier encouraged Akis to compose drawings according to his vision. This is evident in *Snek slip i stap, orait wanpela rat emi slip antap, orait wanpela pikinini muruk slip daunbelo* (1969) the figures do not represent mythological iconography but familiar animals to which he began adding imaginary elements to create "a poetic vision of his native forest, with its birds and animals and plants and spirits."⁶ From the first residency, Akis' inventive artworks made him immensely popular and, combined with sell-out exhibitions, brought him status associated with modern life. In early 1969, Akis' designs were also printed onto kaftans, dresses, lap-lap (Pidgin for sarong), and shirts that became "the height of fashion among expatriate staff on the university campus."⁷ This is another example of how Beier's guidance and the workshop environment provided Akis with skills and insight to balance creative expression and commercial realities.

Akis held annual residencies with Beier and then the subsequent hosts: the Centre for New Guinea Cultures, Creative Arts Centre, and National Arts School. Akis' annual residencies were imperative for sustaining his career because they provided access to resources via the host, Beier or the Creative Arts Centre, and recognition associated with the designation 'artist in residence.'

Scottish educator Tom Craig was the founding director of the Creative Arts Centre (1972-1976) and then the National Arts School (1976-1990) in Port Moresby. He also employed a format akin to a workshop or shared

studio, again with an absence of a fixed duration. In the film about artist Jakupa Ako, who also held residencies at the Creative Arts Centre and National Arts School, Craig described the Creative Arts Centre: "The big advantage of the centre here is that there are so many diverse things happening. The dancers can be influenced by what is happening with the painters and the painters can be influenced by what is happening with the sculptors and the sculptors can be get excitement from ... the plays that we put on around ... And the whole thing generates this creativity. There is no need to formally teach art or teach dance or teach drama, you create an atmosphere and an environment where the whole thing just takes off."⁸ The informal space filled by a range of creative activities fostered learning and innovation, but not through typical Western pedagogical methods. Rather, the process enabled self-directed and reflexive methods of artistic expression and exchange. Consistency remained in the term – residency – that conveyed professionalism and status through the sponsor's or host's endorsement, which led to opportunities such as local and international exhibitions and commissions.

TONGA REGIONAL VISUAL ARTS WORKSHOP 1976

In 1971, UNESCO initiated the Project for the Study of Oceanic Cultures with invited partner organisations the University of the South Pacific (USP) and the South Pacific Commission (now the Secretariat of the Pacific Community or SPC). The aims and purpose of the project were "to promote the interest of the Oceanic people in their cultural heritage and to inculcate positive awareness of cultural identity."⁹ The arts component of the project employed workshops that brought together creative individuals from countries across the region to learn new skills. From the outset, art workshops were recommended "to provide a vehicle for cross-cultural and cross-island awareness and exchange of ideas. It was also hoped that in a wider, more personal sense, such workshops would provoke new ideas and stimulate new approaches among individual artists and teachers."¹⁰ Upon their return home, workshop participants were expected to act as catalysts to motivate other artists and craftsmen in the fine arts.

The Tonga Regional Visual Arts Workshop, held in Nuku'alofa in 1976, characterises the priorities of the project. The three-week workshop was jointly funded by UNESCO, the Australian Government, and SPC, and coordinated by USP's Extension Services.¹¹ Māori artists and educators, Katarina Mataira¹² and Para Matchitt, facilitated the workshop for 15 participants¹³ from USP's member countries.¹⁴ Unlike workshops or even residencies that primarily function for the host community, the prospect of bringing representatives from many of Oceania's island nations meant that the workshop was a practical means of identifying strengths and weaknesses of expressive arts in the region while simultaneously facilitating wide-reaching networking amongst participants, although restricted by the limited number of participants representing each island group.

The workshop was geared towards experimentation and participants embraced the freedom of expression that it offered. They experimented with new techniques such as using chipboard for printing and applying acrylic paint to decorate tapa (barkcloth). Artists began moving away from reproducing customary imagery towards unique individual ideas¹⁵. These techniques, incorporating customary practice with imported and introduced materials, prompted discussion of issues of the preservation and revival of traditional arts and crafts. Pitasoni Tanaki from Niue reported: "I appreciated very much the idea of learning to be your true self in art and not just reproducing or copying from existing art pieces. This course really offered some very valuable ideas and thoughts which I have to take back with me to my country."¹⁶ It is difficult to evaluate the participants' achievements and career development since there are no records of follow-up with artists or additional visual arts workshops related to the Project for the Study of Oceanic Cultures.

The following year, the Second Session of the Advisory Committee for the Study of Oceanic Cultures took place in Port Moresby. Albert Wendt recommended the continuation and further development of art workshops on both regional and national levels. Wendt's sentiment aligns with his call, through his writing, for the potential of art as a point for connection throughout Oceania in "Towards a New Oceania" (1976): "intense artistic activity is starting to weave firm links between us. This cultural awakening, inspired and fostered and led by our own people, will not stop

at the artificial frontiers drawn by the colonial powers."¹⁷ The role of arts, and the format through which they were fostered and presented, is inextricably linked to self-determination amidst residual colonialism in Oceania because these artists utilised modern materials to create expressions reflective of their modern world which was not bound by traditions. Moreover, this notion coincides with an increase in attention to and advocacy for governmental support of artists in the region, often through workshops.¹⁸ Although there is no evidence that UNESCO initiated additional workshops or exchanges based on these observations, UNESCO, SPC, and USP did provide financial support for workshops at the Michoutouchkine-Pilioko Foundation in Esnaar, Vanuatu.

VISUAL ARTS WORKSHOPS AT MICHOUTOUCHKINE-PILIOKO FOUNDATION 1984 AND 1985

The Michoutouchkine-Pilioko Foundation in Esnaar, Vanuatu, was established by Nicolai Michoutouchkine, born to Russian parents in France, and Aloï Pilioko from Wallis in 1977, to foster an awareness of traditional arts amongst Pacific artists and preserve traditional objects in the Pacific region.¹⁹ By 1984, the foundation had established a reputation for fostering artistic creativity and innovation amongst locals and tourists alike, so it was a fitting site for two artists' workshops in 1984 and 1985.²⁰ The Michoutouchkine-Pilioko Foundation workshops demonstrate a public-private partnership, between the foundation and UNESCO, SPC, and USP, as well as an effort towards follow-up because of the second workshop in 1985. While the workshops did not become an annual event, Michoutouchkine and Pilioko conducted workshops elsewhere, including Fiji in 1994 and the Cook Islands in 1996.²¹

Michoutouchkine and Pilioko had proven that practising contemporary visual arts in Oceania was not an economically futile endeavour: their commercial success and reinvestment into the development of contemporary visual arts, through the Michoutouchkine-Pilioko Foundation, demonstrated to the participants that their creative talents should be celebrated as a gift to share amongst their home community and the network of artists united through the workshops. Thirty-four artists from nine countries²² within Oceania were provided with funding from the South Pacific Creative Arts Society and the Institute of Pacific Studies of USP to attend the workshops. Artists tackled new themes, media, and concepts such as incorporating aspects of ni-Vanuatu life into their practice while also acknowledging and sharing their own cultural heritage.²³

Patricia Hereniko documented the workshops in *Pacific Artists* (1986), and described Michoutouchkine's method of facilitating artistic exchange: "Michoutouchkine attempted to set a particular tone in discussion on the Workshop in general, that of the young artists deciding for themselves what they would attempt and which methods they would use ... Michoutouchkine's own views both of the artist's responsibility to society and of his personal responsibility to renew himself were to strongly influence the individual artists in the days ahead."²⁴ Descriptions suggest that Michoutouchkine was the more outspoken of the two, while Pilioko's bright paintings of figures dancing communicated for the soft-spoken artist.²⁵ During the workshops, Michoutouchkine's role was that of facilitation while Pilioko focused on hands-on interaction with workshop participants during the daily activities, which included printing, painting, clothing design and production, interior design, and jewellery-making as well as local food preparation, kastom²⁶ healing, and Ambrym²⁷ carving. Michoutouchkine and Pilioko did not dictate techniques or styles. Interestingly, this is similar to the methods of Georgina Beier in Papua New Guinea and Epeli Hau'ofa in Fiji (following section).

Accounts from the workshop participants in 1984 and 1985 indicate that they were successful endeavours for training and networking. One example of the motivation that the workshops instilled is evident in Samoan artist Patsy Fata's comments:

Art gives me confidence, though I'm usually scared to show my work. I have been very much encouraged to find that fellow-artists like my work. Until the Workshop of Pacific Artists, I had no idea how to criticise my efforts, how to price my work, I gave it all away as presents. With the advice I've received and the confidence gained now though, I will try to work towards an exhibition. At this stage I most of all want people to see and criticise my work constructively.²⁸

Michoutouchkine encouraged workshop participants to take the responsibility and also to experiment and innovate to further their careers. This was part of an overall declaration that, as artists, the participants were making an important contribution to society. Michoutouchkine's lofty aspirations were based on his personal experience of his partner's successful career that was driven by passion for art as well as Pacific cultures.

THE OCEANIA CENTRE FOR ARTS AND CULTURE²⁹

Residencies at the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture were based on the format developed by Beier and Craig. Hau'ofa was a senior tutor in the University of Papua New Guinea's Anthropology Department from 1968 through 1970, concurrent with Ulli and Georgina Beier's time in Port Moresby. Hau'ofa told anthropologist Nicholas Thomas that Ulli and Georgina Beier "were responsible for the birth of the new contemporary arts in Papua New Guinea."³⁰ Beier's initiatives with artists in Papua New Guinea became a model for residencies at the Oceania Centre more than 20 years later.

Upon founding the Oceania Centre, Hau'ofa established a precedent for creative individuals to join as artists in residence with no predetermined duration, and the use of a shared studio or workshop environment with the expectation that participatory exchange would facilitate skills training. Hau'ofa did not set out to attract established visual artists already set in their ways; instead beginners, specifically young people aged 18 to 24 who were not full-time students or otherwise employed, were targeted to become artists in residence.³¹ This attracted mostly young men; relatively few women have become long-term artists in residence.³² Hau'ofa invited artists such as New Zealand-based Niuean John Pule to conduct workshops for the artists in residence. Pule has returned four times since 1998 to conduct subsequent workshops. During the first workshop, Pule used masi (Fijian painted barkcloth) as a familiar source for inspiration. One of the Oceania Centre's first artists in residence and workshop participant, Josua Toganivalu, identified with Pule and was inspired by him. Toganivalu's painting *Speardance* (1998) (Fig. 1) imitated Pule's style of utilising the architecture of hiapo (Niuean for tapa) (Fig. 2) to express visual narratives referring to both customary and contemporary life.



Figure 1. Josua Toganivalu, *Speardance* (1998), oil on canvas, 1000 x 1000 mm. Image courtesy of the artist.

The workshop format enabled learning at one's own pace, but it can also provide motivation for the most innovative to stay ahead of others. Like Toganivalu, Josaia McNamara was inspired by Pule's artistic style, but McNamara began painting contemporary compositions derived from customary imagery on blank masi before joining the Oceania Centre or meeting Pule. While McNamara's early paintings alluded to the 'architecture' or grid format of Pule's paintings, the workshop led by Pule in 2001 prompted him to move beyond the grid format to more complex arrangements, most likely influenced by Pule's own progression away from grid formats. Although McNamara did not specify as much, I believe that seeing several other artists imitating the grid style also motivated him to reinvent his approach, retaining the narrative elements but expressing them in a more dynamic way. He achieved this by intersecting and overlapping shapes within an organised spatial design, as seen in *The Eyes of the Star Compass* (2001) (Fig. 3). This work shows that although McNamara no longer relied on a grid format, he retained forms and motifs derived from masi as well as the colour scheme.



Figure 2. John Pule, *Nofo tata kehe tau lima haaku* (1996), oil on unstretched canvas, 2200 x 1820 mm.³³
Image courtesy of the artist.

Cultural exchange was fostered through the centre's shared studio space, which required artists to interact and prompted discussion about style and content. The workshop environment was intended as a substitute for institutionalised teaching. However, prior to becoming artists in residence, the participants had little or no experience other than workshops, such as those led by Pule, and so they had little to build upon. The shared studio space prompted imitation as well as competition, in that artists wanted their work to be distinctive. For example, McNamara was motivated to change his style from grid format because Pule's workshop and the shared studio challenged him to create a more distinctive style.

Beier and Hau'ofa encouraged artists in residence to experiment with personal expression, although they did influence artists' techniques and styles. Beier, Mataira and Matchitt, Michotouchkine and Pilioko, and Hau'ofa, each in their own way, were encouraging artists to engage with and invest in their communities by considering their social responsibilities and/or confronting social or political issues. Such commitment helped build a supportive network of visual artists in Oceania.

While several art schools exist today, in the 1970s and 1980s there were few, and many of the Pacific Islands still do not have art schools. Therefore, for artists like the majority of those that participated in the workshops described above, the workshops were an opportunity to receive critical instruction and training to develop their art. The case studies illustrate how



Figure 3. Josaia McNamara, *The Eyes of the Star Compass* (2001), oil on canvas, approximately 1000 x 1000 mm.
Image courtesy of the artist.

residencies have helped to bridge that gap by offering more consistent opportunities, at least in the case of Papua New Guinea and Fiji. The examples from Tonga and Vanuatu demonstrate the ways that workshops have served a wide range of artists, and optimistically their home communities as well, by providing training and networking opportunities that were often not available locally.

Workshops paved the way for many recent residency programmes, such as recent ones sponsored by Creative New Zealand,³⁴ and created expectations of community involvement, collaboration, and cultural engagement. Artist residencies were not introduced to Oceania to imitate European or North American versions of residency programmes, even if the programmes maintained similarities to European models. Rather, the first residencies in Oceania replicated a workshop model of artist training and creative exchange evident in the Papua New Guinea and Fiji examples. The workshop format was retained for long-term residencies to promote artistic growth and innovation through exchange, and instituted as an alternative to academic programmes. They can be viewed as long-term art workshops, but were termed artist residencies by the sponsors. Residencies have not eliminated the need for workshops; art workshops have been and continue to be a popular and effective tool for providing short-term training to creative individuals across Oceania.

I have provided only a brief introduction to workshop-style programmes; this article only begins to highlight the ways that these programmes have encouraged professional development and facilitated artistic exchange. Workshops are not a substitute for educational programmes that provide technical training and historical and theoretical context. Nevertheless, workshops can complement educational routes and have provided professional development opportunities for artists who do not want or are not able to enrol in degree programmes in Oceania.

Katherine Higgins joined the Center for Pacific Islands Studies as Outreach Director in 2012. She graduated with an MA in Pacific Islands studies and a graduate certificate in museum studies from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in 2007 and received a PhD in art history from the University of Auckland (2012). She has worked with artists and arts organizations in Oceania, primarily in Hawai'i, Fiji, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Sāmoa, and the Cook Islands. Katherine's research focuses on contemporary art and artistic and cultural exchange. Her PhD thesis chronicled the development of artist residency programs in Oceania from 1969 to 2010 and analysed the role of residencies as alternatives or complements to institutional programming. She has a particular interest in the ways that residencies engage communities and grow creative industries locally and regionally.

- 1 This essay is related to a larger body of research on artist residencies in Oceania. My interest in this topic was inspired by the methodology employed at the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture in Fiji – the artists' process of learning, sharing, and refining their practice through workshops was responsive to the participants, effective, and adaptable. This examination of the role and contribution of workshops is part of my long-standing interest and investigation into the development of contemporary arts in the Islands. Although this essay draws heavily from secondary sources, my observations are informed by artists and mentors who have generously shared their insights and experiences conducting and participating in workshops in urban and rural areas of the region.
- 2 See David Gegeo and Karen Ann Watson-Gegeo, "How We Know: Kwara'ae Rural Villagers Doing Indigenous Epistemology," *The Contemporary Pacific*, 13:1 (2001).
- 3 Georgina and Ulli Beier also collaborated with artists in Ibadan, Nigeria. Their work with writers and artists in Nigeria shaped initiatives in Papua New Guinea even though the social, cultural, and environmental situation in Nigeria is unlike that in Papua New Guinea. The political situation, however, was similar to some extent because both countries were embarking on postcolonial nation-building. It appears that Georgina and Ulli Beier felt that their experience in Nigeria was applicable in Papua New Guinea and that it influenced their work there. See Georgina Beier and Adele Tröger, *Georgina Beier* (Nürnberg: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2001); Ulli Beier, *Decolonising the Mind: The Impact of the University on Culture and Identity in Papua New Guinea, 1971-74* (Canberra, ACT: Pandanus, 2005).
- 4 Beier, *Decolonising the Mind*; Ulli Beier and Otis Art Institute of Los Angeles, *Contemporary New Guinea Art* (Los Angeles: Otis Art Institute of Los Angeles County, 1971); Melanie Eastburn, *Papua New Guinea Prints*, ed. Roger Butler (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2006). See image Timothy Akis Timothy Akis, *Snek slip i stap, orait wanpela rat emi slip antap, orait wanpela pikinini muruk slip daunbelo* [A snake is sleeping with a rat asleep on top and a cassowary chick below it] (1969), in Susan

- Simons, Hugh Stevenson, and Perc Tucker Regional Art Gallery, *Luk luk gen! = Look again! Contemporary Art from Papua New Guinea* (Townsville, Qld.: Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, 1990), 49.
- 5 Georgina Beier, "Four Artists from New Guinea," *Hemisphere: An Asian-Australian Magazine*, 4:15 (1971), 24.
 - 6 Beier and Tröger, *Georgina Beier*, 111.
 - 7 R Bulmer, quoted in Beier, *Decolonising the Mind*.
 - 8 James Gerrand, dir., *Jakupa* (1978).
 - 9 New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO, *Unesco Project for the Study of Oceanic Cultures Newsletter*, 1 (June 1975), Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand National Commission for Unesco, 1975. The ambitious aims of the project reflected contemporaneous movements towards decolonisation, yet were seemingly at odds with the principle of self-determination because of the external (Paris-based) organisation's role in establishing directives around cultural identity in Oceania.
 - 10 Albert Wendt et al., *Report on the Tonga Regional Visual Arts Workshop 1976* (Nuku'alofa: The University of the South Pacific Extension Services, 1978), 31.
 - 11 Albert Wendt taught in the Literature Department and held an administrative position with extension services at USP in Fiji. He coordinated the workshop and compiled the completion report.
 - 12 Mataira had previously conducted workshops for USP in the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Sāmoa in 1975, so she was familiar with the needs, working situations, and logistical limitations of the participants living in islands without infrastructure or resources for contemporary artists.
 - 13 The participants: Teremoana Pearson, tapa, Cook Islands; Mereisi Tabualevu, teacher, Suva, Fiji; Adama Vakarorogo, adult education, Taveuni, Fiji; Nakibae Merand, woodworking teacher, Kiribati; Albert Leomala, teacher and poet, Vanuatu; Pitasoni Tanaki, woodwork/handicrafts, Niue; Nelson Boso, USP student, Solomon Islands; Fa'one Hefa, art teacher, Tonga; Semisi Siu, retired arts teacher/independent artist, Tonga; Mele Sinisia Taumoepeau, tapa, Tonga; Takitoo Taumoepeau, student, Tonga; Henele Vaka, Tonga Audio Visual Aid Centre, Tonga; Vione Natano, teacher, Tuvalu; Iosua Toafa, art teacher/artist/ writer, Sāmoa; Saivaega Vasa, art teacher, Sāmoa.
 - 14 USP's member countries at the time comprised the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Sāmoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. The Marshall Islands joined later.
 - 15 The workshop publication did not attribute the artists' names or titles of any of the artworks included in the report.
 - 16 Wendt and al., *Report on Tonga RVAW*, 22.
 - 17 Albert Wendt, "Towards a New Oceania," *Mana Review: A South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature*, 1:1 (1976), 58. Prior to publishing this piece, Albert Wendt praised the artistic developments in Port Moresby at the Eighth Waigani Seminar (1975) in a presentation entitled "A Sermon on National Development, Education, and the Rot in the South Pacific" (Whimp 2010, 384) [give full reference]. Wendt observed: "A rich and distinctly Papua New Guinea imagery and symbolism, which transcends the hundreds of individual Papua New Guinea cultures, has emerged." (Wendt and al., *Report on Tonga RVAW*, 112)
 - 18 Ulli Beier attended UNESCO's 1977 meeting of the Advisory Committee for the Study of Oceanic Cultures as an independent observer. He suggested that to "continue promoting the expressive arts and art education apart from workshops, the Advisory Committee should now initiate training fellowships and grants, an artists-in-residence programme, the exchange of artists and performers and arts and crafts exhibitions, within and outside Oceania." UNESCO, *Second Session of the Advisory Committee for the Study of Oceanic Cultures* (Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, 1977). Beier's suggestion was based on the success of artist residencies initiated by his wife Georgina Beier at their home in Port Moresby.
 - 19 Crispin Howarth, "Nicolai Michoutouchkine (1929-2010)," Pacific Arts Association, <http://www.pacificarts.org/node/415>.
 - 20 Patricia Hereniko, *Pacific Artists* (Suva, Fiji: Institute of Pacific Studies in Association with the Fiji Centre of Extension Services of the University of the South Pacific, 1986), 81.
 - 21 Linda Crowl, "Sixth Pacific Artists Workshop," *Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Art and Culture, Language and Literature*, 11:1 (1997); Kathy Papatua, "Huge success – the Pacific Artists Workshop," *Cook Islands News*, 17 October 1996.
 - 22 Artists from Fiji, Tonga, the Cook Islands, Sāmoa, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Wallis Island, Kiribati and Vanuatu participated in the workshops.
 - 23 Hereniko, *Pacific Artists*, 82.
 - 24 Ibid., 82.
 - 25 Nicolai Michoutouchkine and Marjorie Tua'inekore Crocombe, "Aloi Pilioko and Pacific Art," *The Mana Annual of Creative Writing* (1973); Michoutouchkine-Pilioko Foundation, "Nicolai Michoutouchkine & Aloi Pilioko," <http://www.nicolai-aloi.com/>; Aloi Pilioko, *Pilioko: Artist of the Pacific = Artiste du Pacifique* (Suva: South Pacific Social Science Association in Association with the Institute of Pacific Studies, 1980); "The Art of Pilioko," *The Mana Annual of Creative Writing* (1974).

- 26 Kastom is the Bislama word referring to the traditional.
- 27 Ambrym is an island in Vanuatu.
- 28 Hereniko, *Pacific Artists*, 18-19.
- 29 The Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture became the Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies when Pacific studies academic and research programmes merged with the arts centre in 2008.
- 30 Nicholas Thomas, "We were still Papuans: A 2006 Interview with Epeli Hau'ofa," *The Contemporary Pacific*, 24:1 (2012), 123.
- 31 Epeli Hau'ofa, "Our Place Within: Foundations for a Creative Oceania," in *The 2003 Forge Memorial Lecture* (Canberra, ACT: Australian National University, 2003), 18.
- 32 This is similar to residencies in Papua New Guinea, whereas there was more gender balance among participants of the workshops in Tonga and Vanuatu.
- 33 John Puhia tau Pule, Nicholas Thomas, and City Gallery Wellington, *Hauaga: The Art of John Pule* (Dunedin, NZ: Otago University Press in Association with City Gallery Wellington), 2010, 71.
- 34 Creative New Zealand has sponsored residencies for New Zealand-based artists with Pacific Islands heritage in the Cook Islands (2001-06) and Sāmoa (2009-present).

REBUILDING THROUGH ART: AN INTERVIEW WITH FATU FEU'U

Lydia Baxendell and Fatu Feu'u



Figure 1. Fatu Feu'u, *Star Studded Spangled*, 2012, mixed media on unstretched canvas, photograph by Kate Mang.

In 2011, to mark the 15th anniversary of the University of Canterbury's Macmillan Brown Pacific Artist in Residence programme, Fatu Feu'u (the first recipient in 1996) returned to Christchurch to complete a second residency. It allowed him the time to produce paintings for his post-residency exhibition "OLA" (meaning 'to create life') shown in March 2012, as well as research and write a new body of poetry to be published later this year. In April 2012, Lydia Baxendell met with the artist to ask him some questions about his time in Christchurch as well as his art practice and upcoming projects.

LB: You returned to Christchurch in 2011 to complete the Macmillan Brown Pacific Artist in Residence programme. As a result of the February 22nd earthquake and subsequent continuing aftershocks, to the risk-averse, Christchurch could be considered a daunting location to reside. What made you choose to come?

FF: Well a variety of reasons. I think one of them is because I have warm feelings toward Christchurch and the Macmillan Brown Centre. The other reason is I have a lot of close artist friends in Christchurch and understand their situation, their plight of damage, devastation, losing houses and studios and so on.¹ I think it is also important

to give them moral support. They need people to listen to them, talk about their art and loss and trying to find a way forward. For many in Christchurch, a way to rebuild their lives will be through art.

LB: Residencies often enable artists to reflect on where they are in their career; embark upon challenging projects, or just get on with producing art without distraction. In your case, what has this residency enabled?

FF: I used the residency to paint and to research, and it was especially helpful in writing a collection of poems. It's a totally different thing for me to write poems for a publication and therefore I needed the time to collect ideas. It helps me formulate things clearly to create a body of work. That's why to me residencies are so important. If you ask any artist, they will tell you how much they need those opportunities.

LB: Your residency culminated in the exhibition "OLA." Many of the paintings in this show explored an intermingled vernacular of the visual and written. Some of the text stems from your recent poetry and others from traditional Samoan songs. To me, the works seemed to be about love and longing. Can you tell me a little about your choice of words within the compositions?

FF: I feel that now is a time in my life where I have to carefully choose the right words to say. Before I even write them down, paint them on a canvas, or get them published, most of the words are about love and relationships. To me, romantic poems are important; they are like listening to a beautiful song. I was also interested in speaking of rebuilding, whether this is a relationship or to rebuild a damaged place such as Christchurch. Some of the traditional Samoan songs talk about the village, how to build up that place. The songs gave me a direction; gelling in my mind, they became a starting point for my own poems. Not to translate the songs, but to think about ideas or emotions related to them. One of the songs is about rebuilding your village, your love for your village and your love for life. I then went back to looking at not just the village, but how to build or nourish personal relationships.

LB: Your work is rich in a symbolic language built over time. Some motifs such as those from lapita pottery;² the mask, the X from a *tātau* (tattoo), the lizard and frangipani are synonymous with your work. They provide a narrative as well as an exploration of your Samoan heritage. There are also newer motifs emerging such as the 'I' shape. Some people have made the natural assumption that this shape is a response to Colin McCahon's *I AM* series. Can you tell me about how this dominant compositional element developed in your paintings?

FF: McCahon's *I AM* is very different to my motif. It is predominantly large in scale, (*Victory over death 2* (1970), for example, is over two metres high and five metres long).³ My 'I' is a classic symbol. Pronounced 'i' in English and 'ee' in Samoan, 'I' is for 'ifoga',⁴ meaning reconciliation. It was formulated out of a desire to make something different utilising the concept of ifoga in combination with research I had made into tapa cloth patterns. Previously, I had been making a lot of grid paintings based on the siapo (bark cloth) or painted tapa of Samoa. In 1998 I was asked to research the origin of some tapa that was collected during or just after the First World War. This dated back to when New Zealand came to Samoa at a time of German occupancy. 1914 was a turning point – the German flag was cut down, bundled away, and the captured German soldiers were sent to New Zealand's Somes Island⁵ in Wellington. The soldiers had collected a large number of artefacts, especially tapa, which was brought with them to New Zealand. This was in time put into the collection of the Wanganui Art Museum. There were two in the collection that consisted simply of horizontal black lines, and I had never seen any Samoan tapa like this. I then discovered several more similar examples in Te Papa and some German collections. I was inspired to use the horizontal stripes of the tapa in my paintings and began filling an 'I' shape representing the concept of ifoga with these bands. Together the 'I' shape and the bands reveal a sense of harmony and are about the importance of people thinking of their family. In Samoan culture, when you go to do an ifoga, it is a time when your family, your ancestors and your village support you through a reconciliation process. This is a strong example of how using culture to gain acts of forgiveness open new dialogues and unity. My *Ifoga* series were first exhibited in 2000; they changed my art-making and became a turning point in my painting.

LB: You live predominantly in Auckland, though you travel regularly to Samoa. There seems to me to be a crossover or intersection communicated in your work that reflects New Zealand, Samoan and the wider Pacific cultures. How do you see this expressed?

FF: It is true I travel a lot, not just to Samoa but to many Pacific Islands. I have travelled to Rarotonga, Tahiti, New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands and Hawaii, and of course you get influenced or affected by their art forms. While I am informed by the people and their culture, I also have the opportunity to view and discuss similarities or differences in our art forms and why some of our imagery is very pan-pacific. Like the frangipani, it is a recurring motif practised predominantly by Polynesian artists and tapa makers, but there are a lot of other common motifs which you become familiar with from islands such as New Caledonia, the Solomon Islands and Fiji. My work reflects this, expressing an intermingled, expansive and contemporary vision of New Zealand and Pacific cultures.

LB: It is well known that Tony Fomison was both a mentor and friend to you. How did he shape your development as an artist?

FF: He helped me a great deal by getting me to become more focused on making art. Fomison explained to me the importance of being serious about undertaking projects and being on time to appointments. To research and be prepared for lectures so I could talk intelligently. He was very hard on me to deliver on time and was not always an easy person to get on with. On one particular visit to my studio, he noticed I had made copies or reproductions of Van Gogh and Picasso (most artists do this – paint copies of the people they admire); he said to me, “Can you show me your real art?” Of course, I was too shy to show him, but eventually I did. I showed him a grid painting I was doing based on tapa, which you didn’t really see in New Zealand at that time. You didn’t see anything that smelt or looked like a Polynesian painting in a contemporary sense, because there was no other Pacific artist on the horizon. When he saw these multicoloured paintings, he thought they were different and he asked me whether I felt good about them, and I said, “Well, I feel good because it is part of me and part of my culture.” That was the beginning of my career. Through Fomison, I learnt to make art based on the things I enjoy and know.

LB: You are considered as both a leader and mentor within the Pacific arts community in New Zealand and Samoa. Your practice and identity are firmly positioned as Pacific, so it is not surprising that you are so dedicated to the promotion of Pacific art. During your residency you spent time working with tertiary and secondary school students. What kind of knowledge or ideas are you keen to convey to a younger generation of artists and what advice would you give them in achieving a career as an artist?

FF: Firstly I spend time talking to individuals, finding out how their mind ticks and what they like. If they have a Pacific background, I find out if they are keen to explore their Pacific side. If they are, I encourage them to spend time talking to their mum and dad or guardian about it, and then once they build up confidence they can go ahead and start making. The last thing I want to see people doing is working from a textbook or copying from another person. It is disappointing when art is produced with no original idea and no research. It is very important to read and talk to people about their different cultures. Talk to their elders, even go back to the islands and do research. If they are a visual artist, my advice is to go and paint and paint and paint (the same applies for any other discipline). My other advice is not being afraid to make mistakes. Don’t be afraid and keep painting until you yourself know it is finished – when your own soul is happy that it is yours, sign the art work as your own.

LB: Since completing your residency and consequent exhibition, what projects have you been working towards?

FF: My poetry will hopefully be published this year. I am also working on a show in my home village, Poutasi, opening in August. It is the first show to be held in a newly established cultural centre which will be opened by the Honourable John Key. The exhibition will be about different events that have occurred in the last 50 years since Samoa became independent in 1962. I am reading and researching for this at the moment. On August the 1st 1962 a treaty of friendship was signed between Samoa and New Zealand. It is a nice crossover, the freedom to explore both cultures. It is also good for the younger generation who are part Samoan and part New Zealand; they have freedom to travel, to own and experience both cultures. This exhibition will be a highlight of my career.



Figure 2. Fatu Feu'u in the Macmillan Brown Pacific Residency Studio, photograph by Kate Mang



Figure 3. OLA, exhibition preview event, photograph by Duncan Shaw

Lydia Baxendell is art collections curator at the University of Canterbury. She has spent the last decade working in curatorial roles within dealer, public and institutional arts environments. Recently she was awarded an MA with distinction in art history by the University of Otago.

Fatu Feu'u was born in Samoa in 1946, and settled in New Zealand in 1966. A senior contemporary artist, Feu'u is an adept painter; printmaker; sculptor; designer and poet. He is also considered as both a leader and mentor within the Pacific arts community in New Zealand. Feu'u is the only Pacific Island artist to receive an ONZM for his

services to Pacific art in New Zealand. Feu'u has exhibited regularly both nationally and internationally. His work is held in major collections such as the National Gallery, Brisbane; Auckland City Art Gallery; Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington; and Waikato Museum of Art and History, Hamilton.

- 1 Feu'u strongly identified with Christchurch, having undergone a similar experience of devastation after the 2009 earthquake and tsunami that hit Samoa. He lost several relatives and, two and a half years on, his home village, Poutasi, is in the slow process of rebuilding the physical structure and community.
- 2 Discovery of Lapita pottery fragments in numerous Pacific sites, including Samoa, provides significant evidence for the early migration and settlement patterns of the Pacific Islands. Feu'u's friendship with archaeologist Professor Roger Green (1932-2009) led him to explore the decorative motifs of Lapita pottery dating back 3000 years within his art. In particular, Feu'u utilises the 'mask' face from a pot-shard unearthed by Green during an archaeological dig in Santa Cruz.
- 3 Colin McCahon (1919-87), *Victory over death 2 (1970)*, synthetic polymer paint on unstretched canvas, 2075 x 5977 mm. Collection of National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.
- 4 Ifoga is pronounced ee-FONG-ah.
- 5 Also known as Matiu Island.

ON CURATING: “TĪAHO” – A CONVERSATION WITH CURATOR GILES PETERSON

Jacque Phipps and Giles Peterson

My images are a reflection of my current environment and help ‘narrate’ my journey through the two worlds I inhabit, often using music as a foundation.

This paper presents a narrative interview with independent curator Giles Peterson about his 2010 project, “Tīaho,” a group photographic and moving image exhibition from Oceania – the first of its kind to show in Mexico City – with reflection and contextualisation from Jacque Phipps. The show presented 28 artists with New Zealand Maori, Pakeha, Aboriginal and Islander backgrounds from Fiji, Samoa, Niue, Tonga, the Cook Islands, Tahiti, Papua New Guinea and Australia. The “Tīaho” exhibition featured key works by Torika Bolatagici, Edith Amituanai, Ruth Choulai, Reweti Arepere, Becky Nunes, Kay George, Melanie FerDon, Leilani Kake, Terry Klavenes, Kieran Keat, Leilani Kake, Tracey Tawhiao, Vinesh Kumaran, Anita Jacobsen, Rosanna Raymond, Niki Hastings-McFall, Nooroa Tapuni, Greg Semu, Marlon Rivers, Siliga Setoga, Evotia Tamua, Tracey Moffatt, Janet Lilo, Shigeyuki Kihara, Lonnie Hutchinson, Angela Tiatia, Lisa Taouma and Michel Tuffery.¹

It was like a visual configuration of a waka or vaka – a cloud formation – of people, sea, sky – the Pacific Ocean – the largest ocean in the world, an ocean that also connects the peoples of Mexico.

Giles Peterson

JP: How do you describe your curating style or approach?

GP: For the last 20 years I have worked as a lecturer and curator. Nearly all my curatorial work has been aimed at young people, and my projects are known



Figure 1. Marlon Rivers, *Othersreq Bitch!* (2010), digital print. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 2. “Tīaho: Photography and Moving Image from Oceania,” El Centro Cultural Multidisciplinario, “El Casetón,” Iztapalapa, Ciudad de Mexico, April 2010.

for increasing the visibility of young people and young Pacific artists and their work.² The community house model of curating has been pivotal to my work. I began curating at a small community gallery called Uxbridge in Howick in Manukau City East. The communities out there are very diverse, but also divided. Art and exhibitions became a way to bridge that, to raise issues of significance to the local community and beyond, and bring different communities together. All of these exhibitions were accompanied by public education programmes – and schools both local and from out of the area always came. I remember Pat Bonnette, one of the artists exhibiting in “Pacific Dragons – The Art of Protest and Promise” (Uxbridge Gallery 1996), who was a local art teacher doing classes with children, brought her tiny tots to do drawings of their favourite works, and we showed their work as part of the exhibition. It was very kool.

Musicians like Emma Paki and others came and performed in a music festival we organised as part of that show. Lonnie Hutchinson and other artists did art workshops as part of the public programme, and there were artist and curator talks around the politics and themes of the show. I remember Diane Prince, who was one of the exhibitors, giving a talk with me about why the Treaty is important.

JP: How did “Tiāho” going international fit with this community approach?

GP: The exhibition showed in three community spaces and broke fresh ground in bringing Pacific art to new communities. The first was The Instituto Latino de Mexico, a high school in Coyoacan, Mexico City, where I documented and ran workshops with the students on social curating, and had them assist in the installation of “Tiāho.” The second venue, Centro Cultural Multidisciplinario, “El Casetón,” Mexico City, is a community art space where the exhibition showed in conjunction with a photography exhibition by queer Mexican artists and alongside a Latino-Caribbean-wide Indigenous music and reggae festival. The third “Tiāho” venue was the Palacio Municipal of Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl, a town hall in one of the poorest and [most] crime-ridden gang areas in Mexico State. By mounting the exhibition within places located at the far boundary of the Pacific, “Tiāho” brought an entirely new audience and communities to the work.

Along with conceptual, political and geographical boundaries, the boundaries of academic thinking and writing are being pushed here also. This piece of writing is presented as a layered metaphor of exhibition. Commentary, conversation and contextualisation appear alongside, presenting, woven through and framing the works and Peterson’s crafted responses and stories. Curator as artist and writer as curator. Together we offer a variety of discourses both critical and descriptive that relate to some key curatorial ideas such as: postcolonial representation and the notion of ‘represent’ (to make a statement through presence, words and actions); independent curating; collaboration, networking, opportunity and access; community activation; curating the polyphonic or third space³ and the altermodern⁴ – all pertinent to the literal and metaphorical border crossings and relationships discussed.⁵ As contemporary curator and interview enthusiast Hans Ulrich Obrist summarised in his forward to Caroline Thea’s *On Curating* (2009), “the twenty-first century curator is a catalyst – a bridge between the local and the global ... This is a metaphor for how one crosses the border of the self.”⁶



Figure 3. Centro Cultural Multidisciplinario, “El Casetón,” Iztapalapa, District Federal, Mexico City, April 2010.

Much has been made over the last century, through the Western academic and artistic heritage, of the importance of materials, methods and language to message and meaning, and vice versa. The writer and curator believe this direct access to the “little narratives”⁷ offers a subjective phenomenological encounter with the exhibition and the ideas, in keeping with the values and intentions of the exhibition and the works incorporated within it. This qualitative and naturalistic research paradigm is focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspective of the curator; sometimes reflective and always experiential. The narratives, particularly, also value indigenous oral traditions, and arguably the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world.⁸ The narrative (direct and reflective) and commentary provide different bridges and points of access and invite readers to wander and linger.

Building upon the well-established positions of John Dewey⁹ and Michael Polanyi,¹⁰ valuing experience, knowledge development and discourse are all recognised, especially in the field of art, as broader than verbal. Gee describes discourse as a tool of inquiry. “People build identities and activities not just through language but by using other stuff together with other stuff that isn’t language.”¹¹ The conceiving of, organising and putting on, the exhibition and the reflections upon these constitute knowledge-building research. Lingering, whether it be over images, activities or words, has been described as inviting “discoveries, emergent issues, and ideas,” and as mobilising “ways of seeing, and being.”¹² Utilising reflective conversation (the interview) and the narrative also reveals the relational characteristics of these collaborative and community-based events (the exhibitions and this article). Moments of chance, opportunity and the unexpected appear; much like in art-making.

Ideas can sometimes become detached and reconnect in precarious contexts, ‘becoming’ misrepresented and misread. These ‘misses’ are arguably new shapes and new knowledge. Knowledge is becoming¹³ – ‘it’ is in a state of perpetual emergence and rhizome-like in nature – without beginning, end or centre.

In his article on art research methodologies in *Scope* last year (2011), George Petelin argues that “if the product is not entirely pre-planned, it can potentially generate new knowledge that is intrinsically artistic,”¹⁴ and he champions sampling from a variety of methods to offer different points of access and experiences. These ideas sit happily with curating as both art-making and curating wrangle, broker, posit, and mediate.



Figure 4. Edith Amituanai, *The House of Tiatia* (2007), type c print. From the Dejeuner Series. Courtesy of the artist.

I photograph my surroundings and people I know as if they are unfamiliar, although what I want to show is an intimate and particular view.

Art and its presentation are also inherently interdisciplinary and arguably reflect and thus offer unique opportunities for the artist, the curator, the writer and the viewer to challenge definitions and explore and engage with life’s complexities.¹⁵

JP: In your presentation to the AAANZ (Art Association of Australia and New Zealand) Conference: Tradition and Transformation, in December 2010 at the University of Adelaide and the Art Gallery of South Australia, you initially characterised your show as “guerilla curating.” What is guerilla curating?

GP: Curators are on the move – from info-mediator to guerilla curator. Paco Barragan, artist/curator in the Saatchi Gallery’s online magazine, says: “We are experiencing a clear paradigm shift in curatorial practice and its context.”¹⁶ He quotes Mathew Collings, the art critic: “Now there is a definitive new type of curator, attractively hustlerish and modern, akin to DJs and fashion people – someone in a definite scene, one you’d like to be in yourself.”¹⁷ And Ernesto Pujol from *Art Journal*, the magazine of art schools in the United

States: "This is the age of the curator; everybody wants to be a curator."¹⁸

JP: So they're all referring to curators who are up with the latest trends, who are outside the bigger, slower public institutions?

GP: Yes, a guerilla curator is an independent curator who uses guerilla tactics in their practice. A curator who rejects conventional exhibition methods. A curator who sets and conceives exhibitions in unconventional places: offices, shops and shopping windows, factories, townhouses, and abandoned or temporarily unoccupied spaces, flats.

The concept is a relatively new phenomenon. There are some art fair curators and dealer gallerists who use guerilla tactics, but the majority of practitioners are young independent curators or artist-curators. It comes of course from guerrilla street art practices and also, like guerilla art, it references guerrilla warfare and the more recent guerrilla terrorism – with moving targets that appear and then disappear in an instant.

JP: The term 'guerilla' grew out of revolution against real and perceived tyranny. Guerilla curators are political and fighting against the power of the traditional public and commercial gallery systems. But in fact you have concerns about the use of the term 'guerilla' to describe what you do generally and, specifically, what you did with "Tiāho" in Mexico. It seems to me that while your practice may share some guerilla characteristics, it is far from deliberately warlike in its values and intent. It is more about community action, education and empowerment. All of these of course can be challenging, confrontational and subversive, depending upon the communities involved and the socio-political issues facing them. Once again, the boundaries of definitions are being challenged here. How might the curating of "Tiāho" be considered political?

GP: It was quite guerrilla in the sense of being under the wire. The "Tiāho" exhibition was done quite quickly. We are talking a couple of months for the organisation of the exhibition in Mexico City. Of course it's one thing to say you're going to curate an exhibition. It's another thing to make it a reality. And I suggested, when I had this brainwave in the middle of the night, "Oh, we could do it at the school." I would really love to do an exhibition project aimed at teenagers, because most of my curating is targeted towards young people, as is my teaching, and it kind of goes hand in hand.

All the kids in Mexico at the high school got it straight away. It was a multi-layered exhibition talking about multiple perspectives and experiences – the survival and resurgence of Urban Pacific experience in art, music, body art, language, film, photography ... and politics. People are politics. This exhibition of photography was political. Just taking the exhibition to Mexico was political.



Figure 5. Students from the Instituto Latino de Mexico, Coyoacán, District Federal, Mexico City, April 2010.



Figure 6. Evotia Tamua, *St Josephs Catholic Schoolgirls*, Grey Lynn, Auckland, New Zealand (2001), colour print. Image courtesy of the artist.

Grey Lynn – a documentary project of the Grey Lynn shops, focusing on the people that travel through the area during the day and night.

JP: So how did “Tīaho” come about, and why Mexico?

GP: Well, in 2009 I visited Mexico and stayed with a friend of mine, Dr Othon Lugo Cruz, who is a senior teacher at the Instituto Latino de Mexico (a high school) in the colonia: San Pablo Tepetlapa in the suburb of Coyoacán, in the southern part of Mexico City. During this time I was staying in his house in nearby Iztapalapa – in the eastern side of the District Federal of Mexico City. I spent at least eight weeks with Dr Cruz and his family, and also with some friends of ours including Fernando Hernandez, who is a social worker and artist who works on social programmes in health, sport and education for the PRD party, which is the sitting left-wing political party in the borough of Iztapalapa, and also with other friends as well who were artists and educators.

The idea for curating an exhibition came from Othon and Fernando. After I had experienced the hospitality of their families, friends, and neighbours in their houses, Othon said: “Giles, it would be a really good idea when you next come to Mexico if you curate an exhibition” – and that was how it started back then in 2009. In 2010 I had the opportunity to travel to Davis, California, to the University of California. Taking advantage of being in America, I took a two-week break in Mexico City.

“Tīaho” was an exhibition of photography and moving image and I carried it in a two-metre architectural tube, plus some works that were framed photographs and a lei necklace sculpture made of photographs – by the artist Niki Hastings–McFall – and some other photographic works in small tubes in my suitcase.

The thing about the artists I work with is they don't just work in photography, they also might be working in performance, video, sculpture and installation; some do drawing and paintings, as well – so they have multidisciplinary practices, but I also knew they also had work in photography or video that they had never shown. So even in my approach or choice of artists whose work I wanted to show, it was quite unusual in the sense that not everyone was known as a photographer or video artist.

“Tīaho” was the first exhibition of contemporary photography and moving image from Oceania to show in Mexico City. And not only that, it was the first time the exhibiting artists had shown in Mexico, and that was quite a thrill. All of the artists that I approached knew that it was going to be under the wire – that I was going to basically be showing it in a high school, and that I would be taking it rolled up in a tube, that I couldn't afford to insure it, and that was the risk if they wanted to participate. No one said no, and everybody was quite excited. So that was how that happened.

So that's why the title was there. And the title is important.

JP: Tīaho: shine your light – el foco, iluminar. Photography: writing in light; video: to see.

GP: Until I have the title for a project, it doesn't have an entity. It's like a baby – you're creating this living, breathing thing. Artists that were former students; artists who I have long working relationships with – I also approached artists that I had never worked with before. My whole point about that is I'm quite democratic about the selection of artists for an exhibition – I'm not really hung up with celebrity or all of that, nor interested in vanity art projects and exhibitions. It's more that I've got something in mind, I'm looking for a certain feeling – it's a multiple feeling; and in a way I'm crafting a visual experience, or several experiences, through a group exhibition which could have anyone from, say, like Tracey Moffatt to a young student in the final year of a degree. I actually think that's quite exciting, mixing things up. And it's all about the project for me, and what we are trying to achieve.

I say 'we' because all the work I do is collaborative. I could not have done it without the artists, nor without Othon, or Fernando or some of their friends, and I could not have done it without Whitecliffe, or without some faculty including Melanie FerDon, who actually designed the digital catalogue of the exhibition for me. There was no money to print or publish a catalogue in the sense of a book, so what I did was organise a digital catalogue, which had images, a bilingual essay and titles. A digital catalogue could be burnt; it could be given out and distributed for free.



Figure 7. Terry Koloamatangi Klavenes, *Untitled 2, South Auckland* (2009), digital photograph on archival paper.
Image courtesy of the artist.



I'm interested in the relationship the viewer has with the photograph; how their reading of the image and the emotional response the photograph evokes can be based on their own personal story, their life experiences, values and beliefs.

It was easy for the young audiences in Mexico, as well – they are all into digital.

The second thing about the project was that it was only going to be one exhibition showing. Up until about five weeks before I left New Zealand, it was only going to be shown at the school. But in the meantime, my friends were really really excited ...

On the Monday morning we got up at 4am, left at 5am and got to the high school at 7am (two hours through the Mexico City traffic). This school is located in the southern part of Mexico City; there are about 1500 students at the college, two streams a day, so long hours for the teachers. We got there at 7am and unloaded the car. Othon and the school had organised an empty classroom in advance to be made available for the exhibition, and he and his students had also placed temporary walls in the middle of the classroom for the exhibition as well. (I had sent a plan in my proposal for a suggested layout.) Of course, it all changed when I got in the space and unpacked the work. Some of Othon's students in his form class had made a sign in glitter and coloured pencil saying "Tiaho: Photography from Oceania Exhibition." That was on the wall.

There was me, Fernando, Othon and ten of his students from his form class who were there to help install the work. We unrolled the tube and I had a discussion with the students and directed the placing of the work (e.g., told them to place Janet Lilo's 150 photographs from *top 16* all around the bottom of the gallery wall). The whole idea was to have the students learn what it's like to install and organise an exhibition. (This was followed up afterwards with the classes I talked to that day and a workshop I did with them on social curating and using digital photography and social media work as exhibition.) As well as installing the exhibition, they had to document it as well, so several of the students photographed the installation and made videos of the exhibition on their cell phones as part of the project, also photographing each other and their friends in front of their favourite works. The whole installing process was very rapid – one and a half hours basically before the bell rang and the first class started.



Figures 8 and 9. Students from the Instituto Latino de Mexico, Coyoacán, District Federal, Mexico City, pose in front of their favourite pieces (April 2010).

Once the exhibition was up, the principal came around and welcomed me to the school and said how excited the school was to host the exhibition and how much he loved the artwork. He had travelled to Sydney and many parts of the world and thought it was a marvellous thing to bring such an exhibition to his school. (Later at the end of the exhibition he gave me a letter of thanks and said Please come back and do more projects and I was welcome to visit the school anytime I liked.)

JP: Tīaho's doors are open – how did all of these diverse artists and their work speak to you – what were you hoping the Mexican visitors would see?

GP: *Afio Mai* means welcome in Samoan and the symbol of a lei is a sign of welcome – that is why Niki Hasting-McFall's work was the first work you encountered in the space. A lei is given to someone as a sign of respect and welcome. Niki's work consisted of a lei made of photographs from a collection of slides taken by her grandfather. The lei was hung over a framed photo of a beach in West Auckland. The image was taken when Niki was a small girl, and she is in the photo – it was a piece of New Zealand, a highly personal work; an honouring and connection to family, memory, good times and to place.

Marlon River's photos and video works, Terry Klavenes's photos, Vinesh Kumaran, Kay George and Anita Jacobsen's photos, and Janet Lilo's photographic installation were all of young people – young urban Polynesians. Melanie FerDon (who is Mexican–American and lives in New Zealand) presents a candid photograph portrait of her son, Damien. Evotia Tamua, Greg Semu and Siliga Setoga's photographic work and Lonnie Hutchinson's video work explore intergenerational connection – the importance of honouring elders and of young people in Pacific families and communities. Edith Amituanai's photographic series explores the temporary migration of her relatives living and working abroad. Edith produced portraits of young Samoan sportsmen out on the rugby field, and documented their homes back in Auckland. The works are about families, relationships, migration, lived experience and place.

Michel Tuffery's video performance works – *Povi* (Samoan for bull) – are about the building of communities, about issues facing all communities, such as environmental devastation, about the survival and resilience of Pacific communities in a globalised hostile world. For me his ten-year documentation of his performance and sculptural



Figure 10. Ruth Choulai, *Goroka Show, Eastern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea, September 2009* (2009), digital print on archival paper. Image courtesy of the artist.

The Goroka Show has a 30-year history and is an annual event that draws domestic and international visitors to Goroka.

projects is also a visible attestation of the social role of the artist in our communities and of Michel's unique contribution and trailblazing work with Pacific communities and youth around the world. I think this is a very important point to make. Artists are agents of change and 'represent' leadership and vision, and without artists and the work they create communities will die, and what will be left for the next generation – a world that doesn't care about its own? All of the artists in the "Tiāho" project feel passionate about communities, – they are part of their communities, and workers in their communities, using art as a vehicle or platform to make important issues facing their communities manifest.

Shigeyuki Kihara's performance video,¹⁹ Angela Tiatia's video work, Rosanna Raymond and Tracey Tawhiao's performative photographic and video work, Nooroa Tapuni's video, and Reweti Arapere's hip-hop animations of rangatahi (youth) investigate postcolonial histories and representations from personal, community and indigenous urban Pacific viewpoints. Tracey Moffatt's video work challenges racist stereotypes of women of colour in Hollywood films; Torika Bolatagici's photography explores issues around the representation of Fijian masculinity; Lisa Taouma's short film examines the origins, history and practice of Samoan tattooing (specifically focusing on the importance of the Samoan female customary practice of the Malu). The film explores the contemporary significance of the tattoo practice to Samoan communities today, and includes testimonies and interviews with several women about the significance of the Malu in their lives.

Becky Nunes' photographic portraits are from her collaborative book project *Mau Moko*²⁰ and are individual photographs of Ta Moko (Maori tattoo) practitioners and leaders who have been responsible for the continuing revival of this ancient Maori customary art; Kieran Keats' photography explores other cultural expressions of contemporary tattoo. The video work of Leilani Kake posits the family unit, herself as a parent and young people as a treasure and as central to community life. Ruth Choulai's photos in "Tiāho" are also photographs of community – images of her own people – in an urban environment, maintaining the lifeblood of customary values, languages, traditions and practices as they go through great social change. They are not "National Geographic" or colonising in gaze. They are photos of people from PNG – from the country where I was born.

JP: The criticisms most often made of exhibitions that are ethnically based – particularly those of indigenous peoples or of cultures marginalised by the First World, Western mainstream – is that these shows (and the works within them) fall into postcolonial traps.²¹ The shows present or broker identities. Back in the early 1990s in the seminal text *Thinking About Exhibitions* Mari Carmen Ramirez – then curator of Latin American art and a lecturer at the University of Texas – suggested that there was no escaping the [Western, First World] market and institution-dominated lexicon. "Curators are the sanctioned intermediaries of ... institutional and professional networks ... To pretend that any type of alternative field of action exists ... is a fallacy."²² Regionally defined exhibitions often present distinct cultures as an amalgam; stereotype and exoticise or portray individuals and groups as 'others.' The "cultural broker" argued Ramirez, is contradictory: at once tearing down hierarchies and democratising space, but also reinforcing reductive identity constructs.²³ How does "Tiāho" navigate this often-difficult territory?

GP: All my life I have felt like an outsider; never quite belonging, never quite fitting in. It has been explained to me as quite normal for a postcolonial person – in my case born in the Pacific islands – a settler/ hybrid. This contested zone means that creative people often do quite brave, border-crossing work.

When I stood on the shore at Ela beach in Port Moresby in September 2009 on the day before Papua New Guinea's Independence Day – a country I had been away from for 30 years, on a beach I went to as a child and could remember from childhood, in the town I was born – and saw the Lagatoi (large double hulled canoes) coming in across the water from the different Motu Koitabu villages towards the beach, it was like coming home. That is what is represented in that photograph to me taken by Ruth Choulai – my friend who enabled me to go home – the image of a young Papuan woman in her hiri customary grass skirt, her headdress, her Motuan tattoos – on a sunny day on Ela beach photographed before the hiri vessels came in – with her family, mother, father, and brothers dressed in urban clothes. Quite possibly that was what was running through my head when I installed the configuration that day – Ruth's photos are at the heart of that installation for me.

JP: So again we're back to the value of the subjective voice and eye. This hybrid self gives you a useful curatorial position – you have both insight and perspective. You are both insider and outsider – the bridge, the border-crosser.

GP: [An insider?] Yes, most of my curatorial and teaching values come from my own experiences and relationships with people, my own experiences of life. I was wanting to take an exhibition from New Zealand and the Pacific and show something of my life, the artists I work with, the issues their work raises, my community – which is a community of artists, a family and community that keeps extending and growing, but still strong at the core. As I get older and progress further in my life – teaching, creative practice, curating, etc. – I wanted to take and show an exhibition to young people in a different community, to curate an exhibition that said something about life, joy, pain, family, community, struggles, survival, resilience, achievement, beauty, art and life.

I remember the artist Emily Karaka once writing, "Art in a word, you gave me life – ake, ake, ake (forever)."

JP: I believe the other principle or value that prevents your brokering from imperial or colonising tendencies is the respect you hold for the artists and their work and the power of that work. We have spoken a lot recently about the meaning of 'represent' – a term from the local vernacular that refers to a person's right to present themselves and their ideas. As Costa Rican curator Virginia Perez-Ratton says, you both seek to "undo the stereotype ... as one of the exotic," and "to integrate our artists into a larger circuit, taking the artist outside of the comfort zone and to promote exchange with foreign artists."²⁴ Rachel Bailey Jones, in her doctoral dissertation posits a belief in "the use of contemporary art that exists in multiple cultural spaces at once, that crosses boundaries and borders [that] offers the possibility to confront our biased views of those who are foreign to us."²⁵

GP: Yes, exchange is important, exchange of ideas, experiences, perspectives of life – it is through interacting and sharing with others, working together, being open to new experiences, that we learn and grow. It was very exciting to be interacting and sharing with people from different but interconnected communities in this project: getting to



Figure 11. Mexican audiences viewing the Tiaho exhibition, El Centro Multidisciplinario, "El Casetón," Iztapalapa, Mexico City, April 2010.

meet and work with the young students at the high school, the teachers and faculty there who do such an amazing job. Through my friends and the "Tlaho" and the "Foto Arte Urban Cine" exhibition at El Casetón cultural centre, I got a chance to experience life in another Mexican community, meet and make friends with the Mexico City artists from the shared exhibition, hang out with some of the musicians and bands involved in the Olin Kan Indigenous music festival, make friends with the young team who work at the cultural centre – many of whom were artists, living locally and so inspiring in the work they do. It was awesome to see the way the young director interacted with his community, with the young people who come in to use the centre.

I loved the way the El Casetón team ran their community and youth projects and cultural activities – really open. The different outreach programmes they run for their communities – the multidisciplinary focus and community development aspects of their work. Whilst "Tlaho" showed at El Casetón, there were free movie screenings on Friday afternoons, and I know that the Centre do this continually – a free gym, free dance and hip-hop classes, free music festivals and concerts, youth theatre and other activities and after-school programmes. You could see that the centre was a really buzzing place and that it was a hub of the local community. The different age groups of the people using the centre was also interesting: art and culture weren't separated from daily life. This view is common to many Pacific cultures. Another interesting thing was the diversity of cultural backgrounds. Every two days, a group that meets regularly to perform Aztec dancing and ceremonies (not for tourists, but for each other) came into the space. Whilst I was minding the exhibitions, a week-long programme of free consultations with natural healers and health professionals – which anyone in the community could access – was running as part of the Indigenous Music Festival, the "Tlaho" and "Urban Cine" exhibitions – all of this taking place in the open plan exhibition space. These are just some of the things I experienced at El Casetón, as well as having conversations with people that came in to see the exhibitions, use the facilities' free phone, or take an exercise class.



Figure 12. Mexico City audiences viewing the exhibitions at El Centro Multidisciplinario, "El Casetón," Iztapalapa, Mexico City, April 2010.

I was struck by how different, but also similar it all was to what I experienced at the Uxbridge Arts Centre – which is a multi-purpose community art centre – when I started out curating all those years ago. Just really demonstrating how important art, cultural experience and expression is to human beings. At the Palacio Municipal of Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl, I got to meet and have conversations and exchanges with different groups of people – from another community, another city, another state: young people, older people, students, cultural workers, Mexican street artists, families – people from all walks of life. It was a very affirming experience and I am so grateful to everyone involved. Many people in the communities where “Tīaho” showed work six days a week, and often in more than one job to survive, so time is precious. My friends were the teachers, not me. The generosity shown to me in Mexico really broadened my mind; it made me think about what is important – friends, family, community, love, art, passion, integrity, openness, the art of life.

JP: I find it interesting as we sit here that the Auckland City Art Gallery is currently showing “Home AKL” – “Pasifika artists living here.” It seems this show is Auckland’s major public gallery taking up the challenge. As Anthony Byrt wrote in *The Listener* recently, “This show is a chance to redress some of the mainstream art world’s imbalances, but there may also be a bigger prize at stake: the opportunity to understand what it really means to make art in the South Pacific, in an international art world without borders.”²⁶

It didn’t all end for “Tīaho” in Mexico or in 2010, did it? The light ‘shines on’ as ideas, opportunities and relationships continue to be revealed and emerge?

GP: Yes – after I returned home to New Zealand in May 2010, about three weeks later I held an artists’ and friends’ get-together, where I gave a Power Point presentation of the project; we watched Mexican music videos and had some lovely food and just hung out. It was really important for me to do this and thank everyone. I held the evening on a Friday night at Whitecliffe where I teach. It was so good seeing everyone – artists and their families, friends from the Tautai Pacific Trust who I have also curated projects for, and even some of my students came, as well as art writer colleagues, a curator whose work has also inspired me, friends and friends of friends. It was a horrible rainy, windy and cold Auckland evening, so I wasn’t expecting a huge crowd, but we had a good turnout and it was just awesome. I suppose I went on a bit in my talk, but I was just so inspired, excited and passionate. I was really touched that some of my students came and brought their friends and partners. Even artists who weren’t involved in the project as exhibitors came – that touched me also. I’m a very lucky person to be able to do what I do.

Lucy Lippard said: “If we are not moved, if we stand still the status quo is our reward.”²⁷ I went back to Mexico in December 2011 to stay with and see my friends in Mexico. Next year I am hoping to do another project with the high school students in Mexico City – but this time help them to facilitate and curate their own exhibition of photography and video work, about themselves, their interests and passions, the way they view life. This project is only in its initial stages of development. I’m also keen to hook them up with other young people at a school in New Zealand – a joint exhibition that they curate about themselves and what excites them.

Jacquie Phipps is an administrator, lecturer and research supervisor at Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design, with research interests in academic and arts writing, critical thinking and research methods.

Giles Peterson is an lecturer at Whitecliffe College of Arts and Design and an independent curator. Recent curatorial projects include the group exhibitions “Samoan Art: Urban” at the De Young Museum, San Francisco, and “Niu Pasifik Warriors,” as part of the Niu Warrior Festival at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre in Sydney.

- 1 Giles Peterson, *Tiaho: Contemporary Photography and Moving Image from Oceania*, exhibition catalogue (Auckland: Pacific Age Art, 2010). Available from <http://gilespeterson.com/section/201648.html>.
- 2 For further selected reading on some other contemporary Maori and Pacific group art exhibitions, see: Ron Brownson, Kolokesa Māhina-Tuai, Ema Tavola, Nina Tonga, and Albert Refiti, *Home AKL: Artists of Pacific Heritage in Auckland* (Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, 2012); Helen Kedgley and Bob Maysmor, *Samoa Contemporary* (Porirua: Pataka Museum, 2008); *Purangiāho: Seeing Clearly: Casting Light on the Legacy of Tradition in Contemporary Maori Art*, eds Ngahiraka Mason and Mary Kisler (Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tamaki, 2001); *Pasifika Styles: Artists Inside the Museum*, eds Amiria Salmond and Rosanna Raymond (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and Otago University Press, 2008).
- 3 Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
- 4 Nicolas Bourriaud, "Altermodern," in *Altermodern: Tate Triennial*, ed. Nicolas Bourriaud (London: Tate Publishing, 2009), 11-24.
- 5 For further reading on Pacific identities and postcolonialism see, among others: Susan Cochrane, *Art and Life in Melanesia* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007); *Double Vision: Art Histories and the Colonial Histories of the Pacific*, eds Nicholas Thomas and Dianne Losche (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); *Tāngata o le Moana: New Zealand and the Peoples of the Pacific*, eds Sean Mallon, Kolokesa Mahina-Tuai and Damon Salesa (Wellington: Te Papa Press, 2012); *Pacific Island Artists Navigating the Global World*, ed. Karen Stevenson (Los Angeles: Masalai Press, 2011); Teresia Teaiwa, "Native Thoughts: A Pacific Studies Take on Cultural Studies and Diaspora," in *Indigenous Diasporas and Dislocations*, eds Graham Harvey and Charles Thompson (London: Ashgate, 2005); Caroline Vercoe, "Belonging and Homelands: Negotiating Identity in Aotearoa / New Zealand," in *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence: 32nd Congress of the International Committee of the History of Art*, ed. Jayne Anderson (Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009).
- 6 Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Foreword," in Carolee Thea, *On Curating: Interviews with Ten International Curators* (New York: D.A.P./ Distributed Art Publishers, 2009), 4.
- 7 Jean-Francois Lyotard, cited in Stuart Sim, "Postmodernism and Philosophy," in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, ed. Stuart Sim (London: Routledge, 2011), 7-8.
- 8 FM Connelly and DJ Clandinin, "Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry," *Educational Researcher*, 19:5 (1990), 2-14.
- 9 John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Perigee, 1980).
- 10 *Knowing and Being: Essays by Michael Polanyi*, ed. M Greene (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969).
- 11 JP Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
- 12 Loira Bresler, "Toward Connectedness: Aesthetically Based Research," *Studies in Art Education*, 48:1 (2006), 56.
- 13 D Sutton, "Becoming Art," in D Sutton and D Martin-Jones, *Deleuze Reframed* (London: IB Tauris, 2008), 65-81.
- 14 George Petelin, "It's Research, But Not as We Know It!" *Scope: Contemporary Research Topics*, 5&6 (2011), 8-16.
- 15 On the applications of arts-based methodologies see, for instance: Paul Carter, *Material Thinking: The Theory and Practice of Creative Research* (Carlton, Vic: Melbourne University Publishing, 2004); Kip Jones, "A Biographic Researcher in Pursuit of an Aesthetic: The Use of Arts-based (Re)presentations in 'Performative' Dissemination of Life Stories," *Qualitative Sociology Review*, 2:1 (2006), http://www.qualitativesociologyreview.org/ENG/archive_eng.php; C Cazeaux, "Inherently Interdisciplinary: Four Perspectives on Practice-based Research," *Journal of Visual Arts Practice*, 7:2 (2008), 107-32; VB Lusebrink, "Art Therapy and the Brain: An Attempt to Understand the Underlying Processes of Art Expression in Therapy," *Art Therapy: Journal of the American Art Therapy Association*, 21:3 (2004), 125-35.
- 16 Paco Barragan, "On the Age of the Art Fair," Saatchi Online (16 October 2008), <http://magazine.saatchionline.com/culture/reports-from/paris/>.
- 17 Matthew Collings, quoted in Barragan, "On the Age of the Art Fair."
- 18 Ernesto Pujol, quoted in Barragan, "On the Age of the Art Fair."
- 19 For more on Shigeyuki's work in relation to postcolonial theory, see Erica Wolfe, "Shigeyuki Kihara's Fa'a fafine: In a Manner of a Woman: The Photographic Theater of Cross-Cultural Encounter," *Pacific Arts*, 10:2 (2010).
- 20 Ngahua Te Awakotuku and Linda Waimarie Nikora (with photographs by Becky Nunes), *Mau Moko – The World of Maori Tattoo* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008).
- 21 For selected postcolonial responses related to the Pacific region, see: Billie Lythberg, "When the Bellbird Sings," in Salmond and Raymond, *Pasifika Styles*; Kiersten Fishburn, Giles Peterson, Leo Tanoi, Frank Puletua, *Niu Warrior Education Kit*, eds Nisa Mackie and

- Vi Girgis (Sydney: Casula Powerhouse Art Centre, 2011); Rhana Davenport, Ngahiraka Mason, James Pinker. *Face Value: Video Portraiture from the Pacific*, eds Annabel Pegus and Rilka Oakley (Sydney: Ivan Doherty Gallery, 2005); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonising Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People* (London: Zed Books, 1999); Karen Stevenson, *The Frangipani is Dead: Contemporary Pacific Art 1985-2000* (Wellington: Huia Publishing, 2008); Caroline Vercoe, "The Many Faces of Paradise," in *Paradise Now? Contemporary Art from the Pacific*, ed. Melissa Chiu (New York: David Bateman in association with Asia Society Museum, 2004); Kirsten Zemke-White, "Keeping it Real (Indigenous): Hip hop in Aotearoa as Community, Culture and Consciousness," in *Cultural Studies in Aotearoa New Zealand: Identity, Space and Place*, eds C Bell and S Matthewman (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2004).
- 22 Mari Carmen Ramirez, "Brokering Identities: Art Curators and the Politics of Cultural Representation," in *Thinking about Exhibitions*, eds Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W Ferguson and Sandy Nairne (New York: Routledge, 1996), 21-38.
 - 23 Ibid.
 - 24 Virginia Perez-Ratton, "Interview 2002," in Thea, *On Curating*, 106-13.
 - 25 Rachel Bailey Jones, "(Re)Envisioning Self and Other: Subverting Visual Orientalism Through the Creation of Postcolonial Pedagogy," PhD diss. (University of North Carolina, Greenboro, 2007), 6, <http://libres.uncg.edu/ir/uncg/f/umi-uncg-1403.pdf>.
 - 26 Anthony Byrt, "A Fresh Look: Home AKL," *The Listener*, 3763 (28 July 2012), <http://www.listener.co.nz/culture/art/a-fresh-look-home-akl/>.
 - 27 Lucy Lippard, *Mixed Blessings: New Art in a Multicultural America* (New York: The New Press, 1990).

MITAKUYE OYASIN

Tiffany Singh

*When we say Mitakuye Oyasin – “All Our Relations” – the word Mitakuye means relations and Oyasin means more than family, more than a Nation, more than all of humankind. Everything that has a spirit.*¹

Chief Arvol Looking Horse

THE 2012 SYDNEY BIENNALE – THE THEME

The title of the 2012 Sydney Biennale, “All our Relations,” springs from the sense of wholeness and connection implied by the concluding phrase of all North American healing prayers and chants. The phrase “All my Relations” dedicates these invocations to all physical and spiritual relations that are part of the Great Spirit. When viewed in this light, the acknowledgement metaphorically describes our universal connection.

As humans, we engage in three primary modes with which we view and experience knowledge. Firstly, via the *objective*: the physical, outside world, the world of science and measurement, density and force. Secondly, via the *subjective*: the inside world, the space of thought, mind, idea and interiority that helps us understand meaning and our linkages with phenomena. Lastly, via the *spiritual*: the quantum world, shaped by transpatial descriptors and intersections, a spiritual dimension unlinked to religious dogma, described in ethereal, mystic, and yet experiential terms. All my relations; or, in Native Science, the “Implicate Order”.²

With considerable courage and élan, the Biennale curators have set out to build on such an experiential knowledge base, creating a venue that binds the artwork and artists together. Under its chosen title, the Biennale facilitates a resurgence of the sacred or spiritual to champion the intellect and theory, extending to the audience a sharing of consciousness and purpose that intersects with the artists' own. These manifestations, that seemingly travel across time and space, allow a synching between artist and audience that transcends traditional roles – relationships are re-established across the three ancient categories of Body, Mind, and Spirit, which in turn provide a space for us all to hear the distinctive, unique, yet cohesive harmonics which this ancient trinity has the potential to create.

This sacred and holistic framework inverts a modern view of separation that focuses on parts separate from each other and the environment. Native Americans, along with the other wisdom traditions, believe we are all synergistically part of a whole that is greater than the sum of the parts, and healing must be considered within this context.

The role of spirit and connection within a framework of healing allows for an exploration of the relationship between healing and the life force. It is not only the individual's spirit that is important but also the spirit of the healer, and the individual's family, community, environment. The medicine itself and, more importantly, healing must take into account the dynamics at work between these spiritual forces as part of a universal spirit. It is this aspect of healing and energetics that I believe links *Knock On The Sky Listen To The Sound*³ to the curatorial considerations behind this year's Biennale.

KNOCK ON THE SKY LISTEN TO THE SOUND

Knock On The Sky Listen To the Sound was conceived through a desire to extend the notion of artworks that examine the sacred and healing into a space beyond the gallery and into spaces that require balancing from histories or energies. The audience are invited to mediate with instruments denoting spiritual space – instruments believed to have a role in healing, through clearing the space and energy around the chosen structures or sites.

This work adheres to an openness, an inclusive-of-process mode and development that curators Catherine de Zegher and Gerald McMaster have prioritised. The 18th Biennale of Sydney, "All our Relations," intends to focus on inclusionary practices of generative thinking, such as collaboration, conversation and compassion, in the face of coercion and destruction. The creation of conditions for an encounter in consonance with our surroundings brings an emphasis to what is already happening in the world at large. Drawing on the possibility of the present, the Biennale emerges from the engagement of all participants by using a model that begins with two curators in dialogue. This matrix of conversation extends to both artists and audiences in a multi-vocal correspondence. These various exchanges, affinities and empathies created a dynamic structure – the vascular and cellular structure and sinews of a kind of living, breathing organism – from which the Biennale's meanings grew. Artists worked in a context that allowed for mutual recognition, and audiences from differing backgrounds were part of this continual process of development, finding their own direction in these connections. It is in the meeting and making of ideas together that constructive consequences can flow.⁴

This non-linear pathway serves to endorse and illuminate experience and brings forth meta-conscious awareness and purpose to create meaning and interconnection. It is the maturing agency of collective and individual thinking, unpacking ideas around thinking without competitive comparisons – a kind of thinking that inspires what Māori have called *aromatawai* or self-reflection that instructs and transforms, and is vital to an understanding that prioritises the larger



Location 1. Tiffany Singh, *Knock on the Sky Listen to the Sound* (2011), bamboo wind chimes and mixed media, dimensions variable. Installation view of the 18th Biennale of Sydney (2012) at Cockatoo Island. Image courtesy of the artist.

transformations of society; this capacity to reflect, to think, use our minds and, most importantly, to feel out our innate connections with the world around us.

This call for a critical consciousness and a new respect for alternative ways of knowing, seeing and experiencing has been heard for millennia, and is what enduring practices have developed and processed: a knowledge ethic shaped by the needs of place and people. A cultural empiricism,⁵ so to speak, altered by the seasons, the sharing of ideas with others, with its own referential knowing steeped in ancestral memory. It is also real, alive and part of the external and internal worlds. A manifestation of access, as the work generates an energy all its own, outside its creators' expectations.

Knock on the Sky Listen to the Sound is a work that focuses on participation via audience engagement and artistic contribution. It is a work that relates to the role of healing, spirit and an ephemeral experience of itself. The notion of the pilgrimage embedded in a journey from one site to another invites the audience to enter a wide-open field of knowledge production and exchange with priorities in practice, relevance, context, consciousness, and with a shared common sense and experience.

The work intends to promote a knowledge gained through experience, both individual and collective, and a way of being, via a site-specific familiarity through years, generations, and lifetimes. In this way patterns emerge, collapsing time into space and all unknowns into mystery and story. It is knowing shaped by purpose and knowledge prioritised by having a function. Finally, it is an understanding and an ancient mode of spirituality that has endured time for a reason.

Most if not all belief systems contain in some way, shape or form the idea of the pilgrimage. Typically, this takes the form of a journey to a shrine or other location of importance to a person's beliefs and faith – although sometimes it can be a metaphorical journey into someone's own beliefs. Many believers attach spiritual importance to particular places or to the place of their "calling" or spiritual awakening, or of their connection, be it visual or verbal, with the divine. The title *Knock on the Sky Listen to the Sound* draws its origin from a Buddhist proverb which refers to the faculties of hearing, thought, and meditation, which correspond to the body, mind, and soul – reflecting the similar beliefs in tinana, hinengaro, and wairua in Māori tradition. This space of connectivity is what 'native intelligence' has erected as an enduring pattern of thinking and which has been extended with the aid of quantum sciences – the notion that a realm of unseen connecting patterns exist and that we are the causal linkages that modify its capacity.⁶

*The depth of relatedness is so powerful that it guides our lives. It is our Law.*⁷

Karen Martin, Aboriginal

At this Biennale there are many artworks which function in a gentle and inviting way, asking that the audience become co-authors with the artist in ways far beyond being mere witnesses to the work. They call for a comprehensive perspective from which to engage an idea and an object, prioritising alternative ways of thinking as a key challenge to secularism in modern society. By following the inscribed patterns of connected healing we are becoming, rather than witnessing, the patterns that develop and then intersect, like fractals converging with others in an infinite array of evolving life or the work of art.

The Biennale is an invitation to enter a comprehensive kind of thinking, seeing and feeling. It is an attempt to fuse the building blocks of cultural empiricism, with a different sensory immersion, a heightened sense of context, of the whole, with open arms to the experience. What is gained can then prove useful in shaping cultural sensitivities for different understandings.

Wind chimes were used in ancient Rome, as well as in both Eastern and Western Asia, near or on places of religious significance such as temples and shrines, and often in great numbers. They were hung from shrines and pagodas to ward off evil spirits and attract benevolent ones. Today, wind chimes are commonplace in the East and are used to

maximise the flow of chi, or life's energy. The intention is to allow the winds of fortune or chi to flow freely, as wind chimes can influence how chi flows through a space. The five-pronged chimes used for the Biennale are believed to help slow positive energy as it approaches the building, inviting it inside from all four directions. Here my work plays on a connection with the physical and non-physical states altered by our own seeing through the medium of sound and spirit that the chimes are calling on. It is about the energy and life-force found in both ourselves and in a meaning and experience that relates to our universe.

By framing a part of this work as a pilgrimage, the artist seems to endorse the new Jungian archetype of the pilgrimage as a universal human experience.⁸ The application of multiple sites creates a non-static developmental work that externally generates its own tools, channels and co-authorship. The notion of pilgrimage alludes to a discovery of what interdependence really means by listening to others, by watching how those who have more experience do things, and by sharing ideas when asked – and by feeling our way through something that is unfamiliar yet simultaneously resonates within us and through us to help us develop a quality within our relationships that will enable us to evolve, then finally to heal.

Activated through audience participation, the participatory element is opened via a ceremony held by the Gadigal-language people of Australia. The static installation located at Cockatoo Island, where 800 wind chimes are suspended in a geometric colour spectrum pattern, utilises the architecture of the open-air structure. The colour pattern of the chimes is a reference to the chakras, a Vedic concept referring to a number of wheel-like vortices which, according to traditional Indian medicine, exist on the outer surface of the subtle body of living beings. The chakras are said to be 'force centers' or whorls of energy permeating the subject from a point on the physical body. They are considered focal points for the reception and transmission of energies. This primary work's aural sensitivities function as the *karakia* for the chimes installed at Pier 2/3, ensuring their safe journey in their true essence, invoking spiritual guidance and protection.

At Pier 2/3 there are 1,000 wind chimes suspended from the ceiling by ribbons, in the same colours as the Cockatoo Island installation. Following the opening ceremony on the date of Imbolc, 7 August (a date corresponding to the intersection of the seasons, as the Northern Hemisphere is considered to be halfway through its summer and the Southern Hemisphere halfway through winter on this day), these chimes underwent a shift in state – from static to mobile, from private to public.

The work attempts to invoke elements of the sacred at every interval of its conception and realisation. It encourages the audience to imbue the work with their own energy, bringing their own belief systems and historical references to the pilgrimage, functioning in a space of participation while pondering the experience carefully, and then inspiring the world with the quality of their participation while creating joy within the process. These elements of physical, intellectual, and spiritual accompaniment of the work allow the creation of a pathway to healing, to sensory perception and to an experience of the work that bestows a function or purpose on the audience that goes beyond being spectators of a visual work of art.

WJ Norton Jr, who in 1940 wrote *Modern Art and Social Responsibility*, spoke of an artist's obligation to society, and suggested that in recognising the world crisis of the time, artists can no longer make work in a void of moral consciousness – art that carries no responsibility, art without spiritual content, art that places form above content or art that denies the very state of the real world in which we exist. It is with these thoughts in mind that the project is opened up to the audience, inviting them to become the makers, sharing in a conscious co-authorship that has the ability to affect the way we create, appreciate and value our own, intuitive sacred spaces.

My work aligned itself with the curatorial direction of the Biennale by focusing on the connections between site, audience, and spirit. Reiterating the sentiments of the curators, the 18th Biennale of Sydney is rooted in storytelling as it is currently being re-imagined as a coming-into-being. In the reciprocity that is storytelling, both teller and



Location 2. Tiffany Singh, *Knock on the Sky Listen to the Sound* (2011), bamboo wind chimes and mixed media, dimensions variable. Installation view of the 18th Biennale of Sydney (2012) at Pier 2/3. Image courtesy of the artist.

listener inhabit the space of the story. Telling stories connects us and allows us to care, to be; it is an activity that fosters collaboration; it aggregates knowledge and generates new ideas; it ignites change; and, ultimately, it builds community.⁹

This narrative lens promotes an ephemeral and sensory perception of the work that shifts the reading of it from being primarily aesthetic and intellectual to one that engages the senses in a real and profound way, allowing the audience to absorb an energetic reading and feeling of the work before any intellectual analysis begins.

OTHER WORK

This Biennale is a showcase for artists working in a spiritual way. Japanese artist Fujiko Nakaya's most recent works include *Tales of Ugetsu*, which created a magical, enchanted aesthetic through a waterfall-like fog installation in a garden where wind sensors controlled the production of fog and lighting by responding to the presence of viewers; and *Fog over Asuka Breathes with Ancient Life* (2011), where fog completely covered the oldest stone tomb in Japan. She created a magical and suspended reality, where the spaces in between become present and reinvigorated.



Location 2. Tiffany Singh, *Knock on the Sky Listen to the Sound* (2011), bamboo wind chimes and mixed media, dimensions variable.
Installation view of the 18th Biennale of Sydney (2012) at Pier 2/3. Image courtesy of the artist.

Sriwhana Spong is another New Zealand artist who explores the relationship between physical and spiritual worlds and the differing cultural attitudes of East and West.

Also using sound as an other-worldly signifier is Ann Veronica Janssens, best known for her light and mist installations as these immersive and ephemeral sculptures infiltrate the exhibition space in an examination of the body's relation to time and space. She works with materials including lighting, artificial fog, projections and sound to create environments that evoke an experience of sensory deprivation within the viewer. Sensory perception is played with again by Reinier Rietveld and Craigie Horsfield from the Netherlands who produce sensory-engaged work through the use of 22 speakers which are combined with self-designed software by Rietveld to create a unique, site-specific, surround-sound experience at the Turbine Hall on Cockatoo Island. Their installation creates idiosyncratic, yet hauntingly beautiful, site-specific sonic dream work, eliciting an abstract sense of melancholia, a dystopian intertextual weave of sonic noir that affects our emotional responses of the uncanny.

Alongside these sensory-engaged works are artists who speak of spirit through their motifs and engaged ceremony activity. The title of Alick Tipoti's new work, *Girelal*, translates as 'dances.' It shows the cultural connection between the physical and the spiritual worlds, and depicts the stages and sequences of traditional chants and some of the totems and stories that the Maluyigal weave into their dance. Coming from a line of dance masters and choreographers, he continues the tradition. As his is an oral culture, Tipoti illustrates traditional teachings through singing and dancing from the spirits to the elders, to the youth and back to the spirits – a spiritual teaching cycle few can understand. With the blessing of his elders and cultural mentors, Tipoti has composed and choreographed chants, not sacred but spiritual, that are performed in association with the exhibition of *Girelal*.

"Post Commodity," a collective of American Indian descendants, cut away the floor of the Gallery of New South Wales, revealing the earth beneath and thus making it into a spiritual, cultural, and physical portal – a point of transformation between worlds – from which an Indigenous worldview emerges, creating a discourse on regional

and international sustainability. The block of concrete uncovered – the foundation of the 'Western' cultural institution – functions as a trophy celebrating Indigenous intervention in opposition to a Western scientific worldview, honouring the Indigenous knowledge of sustainability within a localised geographic and ecological system.

CONCLUSION

These artworks, having the ability to push and pull at religious conditions in a sensory and emotive way, promote an intuitive reading and understanding of the concepts valued by the other. They provide us with a space of suspension from the intellectual, a guiding of spirit, a fundamental shift to feeling that allows us all to share in the commonality of the human experience. Not governed by the insights of theory or a taught academia, this mode of perceiving – based on what one feels to be true, even without conscious reasoning – becomes instinctive and intuitive.

So the Biennale creates the right time and space continuum to speak of the spiritual dimension of life. This discussion of spirituality is not centred on a religious idea – we just think it is. It is time to shake off the negative religious stigma surrounding spirituality in an attempt to clear our minds, as it has been proven, stitched, sung and experienced that we are more than our bodies, more than our minds.¹⁰ Here is a Biennale that accepts that it is a culture shaped around an environment and the specific needs of people – simply articulated in the ability to feel a connection, regardless of our academic achievements. In essence, it is a space where we relate.

Tiffany Singh lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand. Her philosophies and practice encompass influences as varied as modernism, Eastern and Western spiritual beliefs, Jungian psychology and ancient cultures. Of Māori, Indian and Pacific Island descent, her cultural diversity enables her to draw from many pools of knowledge, philosophies and mythologies. This mix of cultures and aesthetics is evident in her artwork, which consists largely of natural, mixed-media installations combined with ceremonial and ritualistic materials gathered from the everyday. Singh's recent and upcoming projects include a residency at No#1 Shanthi Road, Bangalore, India; the 2013 Auckland Festival of the Arts; a year-long installation at the Auckland Art Gallery Learning Centre; and an invitation to a residency at the Montalvo Arts Centre in California in 2013.

- 1 Chief Arvol Looking Horse, "White Buffalo Teachings", Earth Code: International Network, http://paulapeterson.com/White_Buffalo.html
- 2 Gregory Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence* (New York: Clear Light Publishers, 2000).
- 3 Tiffany Singh, mixed media installation, 2011.
- 4 <http://bos18.com/exhibition-overview>.
- 5 Michael Payne, *Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).
- 6 Ervin Laszlo, *Science and the Akashic Field: An Integral Theory of Everything* (Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2007).
- 7 Karen Lillian Martin, *Please Knock Before You Enter: Aboriginal Regulation of Outsiders and the Implications for Researchers*, Post Pressed, 2008, p.70.
- 8 Jean Dalby Clift and Wallace Clift, *The Archetype of Pilgrimage: Outer Action With Inner Meaning* (New York & Mahwah: The Paulist Press, 1996).
- 9 <http://bos18.com/exhibition-overview>.
- 10 Vine Deloria, *Spirit and Reason* (Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1999).

APPARITION I & II: DIGITAL IMAGES 2010/2012

Leafa Wilson

My mother, Etevisē Krause (née Nikolao), has a library of tales of Samoa inside of her. Each of her eight children was imbued with this sense of awe regarding the metaphysical world. She would tell us stories ... a little black imp danced mockingly over her while she was ill as a child, or the time she told the *aiga* (family) that she was shown in a dream that there was a cursed bottle buried under a plant outside their *fale* (home). Countless other tales fed our minds. Seeing into another dimension isn't even something my mother would consider supernatural.

I never see spirits or apparitions. I make art.

We are not so different, my mother and I.



Figure 1. *Apparition I & II* (2010 and 2012).

Leafa/Janice Wilson is a conceptual artist, whose practice embraces multimedia, installation and curatorial projects. Also known as Olga Hedwig Janice Krause, which is the name on her birth certificate, Olga or Leafa will alternate their voice and positioning within different contexts. Mixing up her Samoan–German heritage, is a large part of Leafa's focus in scrutinising the ideologies that shape our social conduct or cultural expectations and providing (or positioning) a subaltern voice. Leafa is the curator of art at Waikato Museum, Te Whare Taonga o Waikato – but as Olga, she is currently involved in Bushwig (an music/art collaboration) with other artists and writers.

REVIEW: MICHEL TUFFERY, "SIAMANI SAMOA," ANDREW
BAKER ART DEALER, BRISBANE, 13 JUNE–14 JULY 2012, AND
COMMEMORATIVE STAMPS, AUGUST 2012

Melissa Reimer



Figure 1. Michel Tuffery, Commemorative coin in presentation kava bowl, 2012.

Michel Tuffery is motivated by Aotearoa New Zealand's place within the Pacific and its connections to and relationships with Samoa particularly. His rich cultural heritage informs his practice as a multimedia artist, within which he scrutinises issues surrounding colonialism and exploitation. His work is, however, also celebratory of cross-cultural interaction.

Though diversity is a hallmark of Tuffery's artistic career, there is coherence and continuity too, with the artist returning to motifs and themes favoured within his early paintings and prints. For "Siamani Samoa" (2011–12), Tuffery has created a limited edition series of ten *selu tuiga* (hair combs), imitative of traditional Samoan headdress. Working in either rimu or acrylic, using the modern method of laser cutting, Tuffery has incorporated elements drawn from three areas: colonial German–Samoan architecture, with which he became enamoured during his first visit to Samoa as a 10-year-old and has since intently studied; ancient *selu pau* (exquisitely fine wooden Samoan hair combs), encountered at the Canterbury Museum in the late 1990s and seen in historical photographs; and traditional and popular Polynesian botanical and animal iconography, including the *manumea* (pigeon), and *niu* (coconut tree).

Within the combs, Tuffery has recreated the effect of the elegant fretwork which distinguishes some of Samoa's iconic heritage buildings, including the Mulivai Catholic Cathedral (now demolished) and the Courthouse Maota Fa'amasino. These monumental edifices are increasingly rare in Samoa owing to ongoing redevelopment, particularly in Apia. The combs are rich in narrative and recount past and current Samoan history in a pictorial and contemporary



Figure 2. Michel Tuffery, Maota the Courthaus Apia Samoa, 2012.



Figure 3. Michel Tuffery, Malumalu Catholic Cathedral Mulivai Apia Samoa, 2012.

manner, effectively serving as modern artefacts. Tuffery explains that his art has always been a vehicle enabling him to pose questions about family, place, identity, colonialism, ownership, history and legacy. Primarily, his art allows him to make the conceptual tangible. Tuffery's use of traditional Polynesian iconography within a fine art context aligns him with some of the most important names in art history including Gauguin and Picasso.

In fact, while Tuffery's allegiance to his rich ethnicity is a driving force in his art, his artwork is also underpinned by decidedly non-Polynesian sources. His love of unnaturalistic colour owes something to the influence of modern artist Paul Klee, whose practice traversed expressionism, cubism and surrealism. Tuffery's use of popular motifs and everyday materials (the tin bulls of the 1990s, for example) are a nod to Andy Warhol's *Campbell's Soup Cans* (1962).

We may assume Warhol (who appropriated motifs from disparate sources and championed printmaking) would have approved of Tuffery's work celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Friendship between New Zealand and Samoa. For this, Tuffery created five woodcut prints based on the "Siamani Samoa" comb series, with *siapo* (or *tapa*) – one of Samoa's oldest cultural art forms – serving as the base onto which the Polynesian and colonial motifs have been overlaid. These have been reproduced as stamps in five denominations. This series serves as another example of the continuity of Tuffery's practice in that, stylistically, they are reminiscent of the stamp series he produced in 2009.

Tuffery has also produced the design for a limited edition coin. Based on the composition of a rose window – first seen in his woodcut prints of the late 1980's and encircled within a woven framework (of typically Polynesian design) referencing the impenetrability of family – Tuffery has incorporated motifs from Samoan *tātau* (tattoo), nature and architecture.

In his characteristic linking of old and new narratives, and conflation of traditional and contemporary iconography – Polynesian and otherwise – Tuffery's work demonstrates the interconnectedness of diverse aspects of life, including the colonialism of both New Zealand and Samoa, and his own unique cultural heritage. Tuffery's artistic aim is to produce work which invites and fosters dialogue, which continues to ask questions and incite debate, and which pays homage to the history and multiculturalism of the Pacific Islands within a global context.

Melissa Reimer is a gallerist and a freelance art historian and copywriter. She undertook her formal studies at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, majoring in English literature, and art history and theory, attaining her doctorate in 2010, with a thesis examining the influence of modern art on writing at the fin-de-siècle. She has both published and presented her findings in New Zealand and internationally. Melissa is currently living and working in Christchurch, doing her bit for the city's recovery, one painting at a time.

Michel Tuffery MNZM was born in 1966 in Wellington of Samoan, Cook Island and Tahitian descent. His creative output is extensive as he is adept at all arts media, printing, painting and sculpting, and he works collaboratively with technicians and other art practitioners to realise his performance and installation projects, which require moving image, light and sound. His concerns are measured and politicised around the conservation of the environment and shaped by his Pacific Island ancestry. His visibility as an artist has been achieved through awards, commissions, international residencies and exhibitions, and his art is held in numerous public and private collections.



Figure 4. Dancers Installation of exhibition at Pataka Art and Museum, 2012.



Figure 5. Michel Tuffery, Commemorative coin (detail), 2012.

Figure 6. Dancer wearing Pop Pink Tava'e Comb, at Pataka Exhibition Installation, 2012.

SMILE SAY HALO – ME BELONG YOU – YOU BELONG ME

Daren Kamali and Tanya Muagututi'a

Here I am sitting in transit at the LA International Airport, busking on the wanderlust memories of the beautiful Solomon Islands that hosted this year's 11th Festival of Pacific Arts in Honiara.

What a memorable experience. The New Zealand delegation, 140 strong, arrived at Honiara International Airport on Monday 25 June at 2pm. We were warmly welcomed by the Minister of Culture and Tourism, Samuel Manetoali, and the local media. Lei and bead necklaces were placed over our heads, bags of gifts presented to each member of the New Zealand delegation, followed by food and entertainment before we hopped on our bus to the Panatina Campus, where we stayed for the duration of the festival.

Solomon hospitality was *tumas* (too much), as it is said in pidgin. The people are amazing – lots of happy faces, smiles, waves, shouts and a lot of appreciation for their visitors.

We were the second delegation to arrive on the island, after Nauru. I must say we were very well funded and looked after as a delegation at the festival this year. Creative New Zealand contributed \$500,000 in funding and selected a magnificent line-up of artists and operation staff, with much thanks to project manager Jon Tamahere and head of operations Muriwai Ihakara. We were truly blessed as a delegation compared to other islands at the festival – Cook Islands and Tonga had to pull out due to lack of funding.

We had our own cooks, kitchen people, doctors, nurses and even received per diem for the 21 days we were there. Amazing meals were provided daily, with an endless supply of clean water. Sanitisation was a priority. We had a zero tolerance policy for rubbish around the camp and grounds. A container was organised to ensure that all non-recyclable waste was returned to New Zealand, as there is a poor system of recycling in the Solomons.

It was great that we arrived a week before the festival, as it gave us time to acclimatise and get familiar with the sites where we were scheduled to perform and display our art.

We had to pack toiletries such as soap, shampoo, toothpaste, tooth brush, sunscreen, and fly and insect repellent. We could either hand-wash our clothes or



Figure 1. Te Matarae i o Rehu. Image courtesy of Creative NZ Office.



Figure 2. Te Matarae i o Rehu. Image courtesy of Creative NZ Office.

pay for laundry. It was compulsory to take a malarone tablet every morning after breakfast to avoid malaria from mosquito bites – malaria is common in the Solomon Islands.

Three blocks were allocated to the New Zealand delegation at Panatina Campus. Each block contained 12 rooms. There were three artists per room, with a mosquito net bubble, single mattress, a blanket and pillow each.

Block one accommodated our senior artists. Block two was allocated to the Te Matarae Kapahaka group (national kapahaka champions in 2011) and block three, aka 'The naughty block,' was our block. Block three is where everyone gathered almost every night to sing along to the collaboration sounds of Pacific Underground and 'Koile Band. Other artists on the block were the Nga Kaihanga Uku or Clay Artists Collective who worked on their pieces as music played late into the night. They encouraged others to try making their own pieces as well. Naughty Block also had Maori and Pacific Island actors, sculpture artists, weavers and painters. It was the coolest block. Hell, we even had visitors from the Solomons, Fiji and Rapa Nui delegations come to hang out and party with us.



Figure 3. Members of 'Koile and Pacific Underground practice outside their accommodation block. Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.

New Zealand had a whare beside Fiji and Rapa Nui at the Panatina village. The blessing of our whare was held before dawn on the morning of 30 June. Performance artists including Atamira Dance, Daren Kamali, Jamie and Erena, Te Matarae Kapahaka group, James Webster and Jerome Cavenor (Maori puppetry), Pacific Underground and 'Koile were invited to perform on that morning. That night, musicians from the New Zealand delegation were invited to showcase an hour-long show at the King Solomon Hotel (aka King Sol), where most of our crew hung out during their free time, swimming and enjoying cocktails.

Sunday 2 July was New Zealand social night, held at the Iron Bottom Sound Hotel. It was a fun-filled evening hosted by the New Zealand delegation. Our special guests consisted of the Māori royal family led by Darrin Haimona, Mr Peter Sharples, the Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Gordon Darcy Lilo and our local Solomon guests. They were offered a delicious spread of hangi, complementary drinks and entertainment.

The next morning at dawn all the delegations gathered at AE Oval to celebrate the arrival of the eight double-hulled outrigger canoes that had navigated their way through the Pacific to be at the festival. Navigators from Cook Islands, Fiji, Tahiti, Samoa, Hawai'i, Aotearoa and two Pan-Pacific wakas were present. Delegations sang and danced with pride as the wakas entered the harbour. This event marked the start of the 11th Festival of Pacific Arts 2012 in the Solomon Islands.



Figure 4. Arrival of the Waka Ceremony – greeted by local canoes. Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.



Figure 5. Pasifika Stage – local group.
Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.



Figure 6. Solomon Islands Provinces group.
Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.



Figure 7. Solomon Islands Provinces group.
Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.



Figure 8. Solomon Islands Provinces group.
Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.

The festival officially opened on the afternoon of Monday 3 July when all 27 delegations gathered behind the Honiara Council Building to begin the big march to the Lawson Tama Stadium where the Prime Minister, Gordon Darcy Lilo, and the nine provinces of the Solomon Islands – not forgetting the beautiful local children –welcomed us to their island nation. I must say, with a little giggle, that the New Zealand delegation looked very much like tourists marching and waving, without uniforms, holding umbrellas over their heads in the scorching heat.



Figure 9. FOPA Light Sculpture.
Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.



Figure 10. Aotearoa delegation Artists: James Rickard with help from Karaitiana Rurehe and Anikaaro. Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.



Figure 11. Aotearoa delegation Artist - Carla Ruka Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.



Figure 12. Aotearoa Area - Dorothy Waetford from the collective Nga Kaihanga Uku demonstrates her clay process Image courtesy of Creative NZ Office.



Figure 13. Aotearoa area - Tongan visual artist Visiesio Siasau talking with visitors about the meaning of his work at the front of the Aotearoa whare. Image courtesy of Creative NZ Office.



Figure 14. "Hei Reo Aroha" starring Erina Daniels and Jamie McCaskill. Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.



Figure 15. Pacific Underground and 'Koile perform at the Opening of the Art Exhibition. Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.

The local people sang and danced throughout the afternoon into the night. At 8.30pm, a magical display of fireworks lit up the night-time sky to confirm the opening of the 11th Festival of Pacific Arts 2012 in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

Solomon people are the most generous and loving people. The local staff on campus were great – they helped as tour guides and security personnel, and beautiful mama helped in the kitchen. We were grateful to Gloria Phranyta Hong (marketing manageress at the Pacific Casino Hotel) – she showed us nothing but love. Gloria was generous to the New Zealand delegation, going out of her way to be our personal tour guide, picking us up in her Nissan Navara truck, taking us all over Honiara, to hotels, restaurants, clubs and beaches. She even introduced me to the manager at the Heritage Park Hotel (a five-star hotel) that led to a paid gig for our New Zealand bands. It was special when she invited the musicians to her place and hosted a birthday barbeque for our Queen Bee – Tanya Muagututi'a – on 7 July.

Gloria's sister, Queenie Chow, and Robert who owns the Coconut Cafe and Kava Bar, threw a farewell party for the New Zealand delegation on 11 July. They put a pig on the spit and complementary drinks on the bar for us. Other locals like Eric, Jaffa, Betrice, Ngaio, Ofati and Sue who owns the King Solomon Hotel were very friendly and hospitable.

It was all go from 4 July. The New Zealand delegation had an amazing line-up of artists, with high-quality performers, carvers, sculpture and tā moko artists, weavers, painters and clay-makers all displaying an outstanding body of work throughout the 12 days of the festival. They blew their audience away, receiving well-deserved reviews and compliments from national and international media and locals who filled up the arenas at all our shows.

Other delegations also exhibited amazing creative works and talent. They carried the torch for their island nations with pride and passion at venues like the Panatina Village, Doma, and the National Museum, Auditorium and National Art Gallery.

Performances that were scheduled for the Lawson Tama stage were rescheduled for the Pasifika Stage at Panatina as it was unfit to hold events due to poor staging.

Overall, the festival was a truly amazing experience and kept true to its theme of 'Culture in Harmony with Nature.' At the end of the festival, Pacific Underground (aka Pos Mavaega) and Tanya Muagututi'a wrote a song in tribute to the Solomon Islands and its people in collaboration with 'Koile and Daren Kamali, inspiring the title of this story: "Solomons Calling – Smile Say Halo – Me Belong You – You Belong Me."

The closing of the festival was an even bigger spectacle than the opening, again held at Lawson Tama Stadium. All the delegations marched through the streets into the stadium as in the opening, waving, singing, dancing and celebrating into the night. There was another overwhelming display of fireworks, bigger than the opening ceremony. Our last day brought an emotional and sad feeling to all of us at the New Zealand camp. It was hard to say good bye to the Solomons, but by the end of the three weeks most of us were ready to return to our families and to the comforts of our homes, with loving everlasting memories of the Solomon Islands.



Figure 16. Daren Kamali performs in collaboration with other delegates from Aotearoa Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.

Our Time in the Sun

Touch down Solomoni
inhale hot air
Halo
staring gaze
smiley face
palm trees sway
gifts – leis
pan pipes and summer dreams
me fulla
dread lock
represent
naughty block
gnati coconut
weather hot
chew beetle nut
red smile
few Sol Brews
makes me feel so fine
me love Solomon
all of the time
strangers meet
Honiara streets
three weeks
non-stop
one drop
toads hop
ghekos crawl
up the wall
rain falls
29 degrees
cold showers
no time to sleep
happy hours
time flies
memories remain
Solomon Islands
I'll definitely
do this – all over again

Me love you tumas

Daren Kamali is a Pacific performance poet, author and youth worker. A co-founder of the the South Auckland Poets Collective and former member of the POLYNATION Poetry Collective (Queensland Poetry Festival 2008), Daren has performed in New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, Tahiti, Tonga, Rarotonga and Palau since 1999, with a vision to take Pacific poetry international. Of Fijian–Wallis and Futuna decent, he migrated to New Zealand in 1992. He is the current recipient of the 2012 Fulbright–Creative New Zealand Pacific Writers' Residency, at the University of Hawai'i. Last year he launched his first bilingual book/CD (in English and Fijian), entitled *Tales, Poems and Songs from the Underwater World*.

Tanya Muagututi'a has contributed to Christchurch performing arts collective Pacific Underground as a musician–songwriter and occasional actor since 1993. She also heads production duties and events for the group with husband Pos Mavaega, and has written and co-devised a number of plays. A recent stint as Pacific Artist in Residence at the University of Canterbury allowed Tanya to draft a new play and record Pacific Underground's CD *Island Summer*, which was launched in 2010. Songs from the CD featuring Tanya, Pos Mavaega, Andrew Sione, Hemi Lesatele, Chris Searle and Seta Timo were performed at FOPA, in collaboration with members of Dunedin band 'Koile. Also at FOPA, Pacific Underground collaborated with poet – musician Daren Kamali, taonga puoro artist Jerome Kavanagh and Maori songstress Toni Huata. Tanya recently moved with her family to Auckland following the Christchurch earthquakes. She enjoys taking photos and singing with her daughters Talia-Rae, Josephine and Ella.

2012 Festival of Pacific Arts – Artist Profile

Emma Kesha

I stayed alive with my art form of weaving by sharing and teaching others in the community to keep their art alive.

Misa Emma Kesha QSM

Originally from Samoa, Emma Kesha says that weaving is an art, talent and gift that she has been given. Her aim as an artist is to promote and preserve the art of weaving by sharing her knowledge, particularly with the younger generation of her culture, helping to preserve the art of weaving which might otherwise be lost in modern society.

Emma has been weaving since the age of nine, when this skill was an integral part of everyday life in her village. She has since taught weaving to a wide range of people from different cultures, and has exhibited her work throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, Tonga, Samoa, New Caledonia and Australia.



Figure 1. Aotearoa Weavers: (Misa Emma Kesha Centre).
Photo: Tanya Muagututi'a.

Her time working with local iwi has contributed to many intercultural collaborations of Pacific Island and Māori weaving arts. Over the years, she has facilitated workshops and exchange visits with various groups, such as Te Moana Ā Kiwa Multicultural Weavers, events which have been held throughout New Zealand and in the Pacific Islands and Australia, including a trip for Māori and Pacific weavers from New Zealand to Western Samoa which



Figure 2. Basket woven by Emma Kesha.

was hosted by her family, in Samoa. Whilst there, they were able to experience village life and partake in sharing skills and weaving techniques with local people.

Emma's expertise has been recognised with a Creative New Zealand/Macmillan Brown Pacific Artists in Residence award at Canterbury University, during which time she completed pieces for an installation of her weaving works entitled *Siva Siva Maia: Come Dance with Me*. In 2010 she won the supreme award at the 2010 Creative New Zealand Arts Pasifika Awards, and in 2011 Emma Kesha was awarded the Queen's Service Medal from the New Zealand Government for services to the Pacific Island community in Aotearoa.

She is recently returned from the 2012 Pacific Festival of Arts held this year in Honiara, Solomon Islands, where she was invited to be a member of the Creative New Zealand delegation from Aotearoa.

Emma Kesha is a mother of six children and wife of Indian immigrant Hira Kesha. She is currently an active member of P.A.C.I.F.I.C.A. Inc., of which she was a founding member. The organisation aims to empower Pacific and New Zealand women through workshops, conferences and community activities. Emma is a Matai and travels annually to her homeland of Western Samoa where she supports her family, church and community. In 1998 she received the chieftain title 'Misa' in recognition of the ways in which Emma has served her family and community in Samoa. (This was the first time a woman had been made a chief in her family.) Misa has strong ties with the Seventh Day Adventist Church and is involved with many aspects of the church including women's ministries and health and youth initiatives.

NEW SPACES AND BOUNDARIES WITHIN POUTASI VILLAGE, UPOLU, SAMOA: THE FATU FEU'U ART CENTRE¹

A'anoalii Rowena Fuluifaga

In May 2012, I found myself navigating through a torrential downpour, finding speed humps that appeared out of nowhere along the Cross Island road on Upolu, on my way to meet with the artist Fatu Feu'u and visit his village of Poutasi. All the bumping and munching on breadfruit chips eventually led me to his studio in Saleilua (a neighbouring village of Poutasi). I was greeted by Feu'u, a humble tama (father) also fondly known as one of the 'godfathers' of Pacific contemporary art in New Zealand.

HIS VISION

Feu'u began by telling me how he paints his hopes, his future aspirations for the village of Poutasi, and the shared vision led by Tuigalatele Joe Annandale (paramount chief of Poutasi) to rebuild their village, their *va*² with the land, their *va* with the oceans, and *va* as a community. Feu'u seemed somewhat annoyed at the rain gods for spoiling the day of my visit to his village and to the newly built Fatu Feu'u Art Centre (FFAC) – part of the Poutasi rebuild project following the 2009 tsunami which also includes a community centre, funded locally and by the New Zealand Government's Aid Programme. Personally, I was just excited to see him.

CONNECTING THE PEOPLE AND SEA

Tuigalatele Joe spoke of the ongoing efforts to reconnect the people of the village with the sea, involving the restoration of a community centred on the making and maintaining of carving, telling stories in the visual arts and cultural heritage based on the arts. This will hopefully be a model replicated across other districts and coastlines devastated in 2009. He spoke of his fear of losing knowledge around the 'everydayness' of village life and the relocation inland of communities away from the coastal strip. We were both in Samoa a few days after the tsunami that left our villages on the south coast of Upolu devastated. My mother's village of Amaile sits in the upper corner of the coastal strip heading down towards Lalomanu and we were both there to assist in whatever way we could. The relocation of these families is visible along the south coast of Upolu. Funded by aid, basic homes (roofed, concrete-poled homes) were built in



Figure 1. Fatu Feu'u, the author and Tuigalatele Joe Annandale, May 2012.

Poutasi for families who had lost their land and possessions and are now situated one kilometre inland along a dirt road (accessible only by 4WDs). By viewing these new settlement areas, it's clear that the relational spaces and dynamics within this village context have changed dramatically. Eighty percent of the locals in this village don't own cars or have access to vehicles, so lack of mobility has increased with the extra distances to be travelled. There is an increased sense of fear and respect for the sea. In Poutasi alone, brand-new paopao (small fishing boats) have remained untouched by the locals.

During our conversation in his studio, Feu'u spoke with animation when expressing the importance of the acquisition of this project and the geographical layout of the FFAC; He used the term *va fealoaloa'i*³ when discussing the concept of spatial awareness and the location of his family land in relation to the centre.

He reminded me that a family's business or *tautua* (service to the community) can only be built or located on one's own family land, and verbally connected the several pieces of land involved, located in various places in Poutasi. The FFAC is on the site of the old Poutasi School and Poutasi District Hospital. Like a Samoan orator, and as if to minimise the isolation of the FFAC, he eloquently defined these spaces as an advantage to visitors to the place – requiring them to visualise and move on foot around the village, drawing on all aspects of village life. At this point, I was thankful for having some knowledge of Samoan land and titles, especially the importance of the term *va fealoaloa'i*.

The 2009 tsunami has physically altered the boundaries and therefore the *tuaoi*⁴ and structure of the villages. However, the new *tuaoi* suggests a new *va fealoaloa'i* for this village, relational space is key to structure and order in the village (both personally and in terms of spatial awareness). With the relocation of most Poutasi families inland, Feu'u's shared vision highlights a necessity for any village that it be a centre for community. The necessity of locating a central place where villagers can collaborate, create and engage in *talanoa* or 'critical dialogue.' His vision for the centre involved activating this space, nurturing heritage arts and providing a service to his village as well as the external arts community, who have longed for this opportunity.

MAKING OUR WAY TO THE CENTRE

After our *fono* (meeting, hui) in Saleilua, we made our way to Poutasi. Twelve people from Poutasi died in the tsunami, it was one of the worst-affected villages. Memories and images of the damaged bridge and the swamped hospital came flooding back, however, these images quickly evaporated in the heat of the sun, along with a beautiful idyllic moana landscape that presented a very settled and new Poutasi, still in rebuilding mode.

Feu'u's studio is located a short two-minute drive from the FFAC with its adjoining community centre and gallery (still under construction). The project manager mentioned that there were eight weeks to go until the opening of the complex, in August 2012. This date will coincide with Feu'u's first solo show in his birth land of Samoa. Much of the recent work that I saw in his studio will contribute to this historic show, which will feature as the official gallery opening at the centre.

The interior of the FFAC, still fresh with stained and painted surfaces and windows waiting to be installed, had been occupied by carvers the week prior to my visit. Excited by the urgency of this project and the accolades it will surely garner, we moved on to the artist-in-residence house. This complex has excellent accommodation facilities and can house up to four artists at a time; Feu'u proudly declared that this accommodation will be the best Samoa has to offer, providing superior housing for all artists on the residency programme or for those just passing through. Surrounded by *esi* (pawpaw) trees and the smell of *vaisalo* (young coconut and sago pudding), this is going to be an idyllic residence for several artists. Supplementary accommodation for groups of 8-10 students or other visitors is located approximately 100 metres from the centre.

As a Samoan host, you offer your best accommodation to your visitors. I recall how Unitec's visiting US ceramic artist and lecturer Scott Chamberlain and his family were caught in the tsunami, losing all their holiday possessions, and were graciously taken in by a local family who had lost 13 family members in Lalomanu. In a conversation we shared on his return, he praised the hospitality and kindness of the villagers, saying how they had been well looked after and treated like royalty by the family, although they were in the midst of grieving and shock as a result losing their loved ones.

Spending time in Poutasi and getting to know the friendly locals, it is easy to visualise newly painted workshops and an art centre cum village becoming a new mecca for both heritage and contemporary arts in a fast-developing Samoa. And, like any trip across any border, what makes it memorable are the people. He tangata, he tangata ... he tangata.

Aanoalii Rowena Fuluifaga is a lecturer in the Department of Design and Visual Arts at Unitec New Zealand. Her research interests are in Pacific art and artists, oral histories, spatial design and socio-cultural spaces within Pacific cultures. Her interests saw her coordinate Unitec's first Tatau Symposium – the Sacred Marks Symposium (2008) – highlighting her ongoing exploration of traditional or customary arts within an academic/institutional setting. Her current research looks at the Samoan concept of *va* (relational space) within a New Zealand spatial context.

- 1 This article was edited with help from Gina Ferguson and Edith Amituanai.
- 2 *Va* is the Samoan concept of space, relational space, or space that connects.
- 3 *Va fealoaloo'i* refers to the conceptual space between relationships and the social structure within the aiga (family or extended family).
- 4 *Tua'o'i* are land boundaries which help define the social boundaries of *va fealoaloo'i*; attending to one's land and 'invisible fences' in the village setting nurtures good relationships between neighbours.

UNDEREXPOSED

Max Bellamy and Emily Hlavac-Green

During June/July 2012 our Dunedin-based independent film crew travelled to Tonga to document a sustainable development project conceived by a team of New Zealand volunteers and academics. Their aims were to install solar systems into five schools to lessen their burden of large electricity bills (allowing resources to be redirected to other educational areas), make solar technologies visible to communities, and help Tongan partners upskill to allow independent installation of solar systems in future.

For a number of reasons that need to be discussed with sensitivity, the aims of both the development projects and documentary have only been partially met. While inherently disappointing, this doesn't devalue the personal lessons that have been learned through our experience.

There are both obstacles and freedoms in positioning creative skill sets in the often businesslike process of documentary filmmaking. Having political and commercial sensitivities reel in an artistic vision can be frustrating. Even without a client, boundaries seem to be ever-present. The objectivity and quiet manner you must keep to be an effective observational documentary camera operator allows an omni-vision and foresight that is difficult to maintain when concerned with daily logistics, meetings and delegating responsibility. Having this perspective highlighted inefficiencies in the development project for us.

Admirable last-minute student leadership and a unified effort by those on the ground in Tonga were crucial in propping up the project. The tyranny of distance was felt, as remote-control project management from New Zealand missed the mark with inconsistencies in communication and support. Superimposed value systems, even on the most basic level and with the very best intentions, were problematic. At times, cultural differences led to friction between the development team and Tongan partners, reinforcing the importance of understanding in more ways than on paper.

There is a complex disjunct between the haste with which we must build renewability and resilience into the fragile infrastructural fabrics that support our societies, on the one hand, and the importance of working methodically in this international context to understand and respect cultural values that are the beating heart of each community.

The documentary project thus far has been a tentative step towards continuing a conversation about the aforementioned complexities, a departure from our original intentions. Our assumptions and preconceptions have been challenged, our outcome has shifted and our roles have been redefined. We are reminded that problem-solving is what makes being a creative professional so stimulating and rewarding. We have been humbled by the spirit and hospitality of the Tongan people during production, and hope that we can find a way to reciprocate. Watch this space.

Max Bellamy is an interdisciplinary artist and filmmaker based in New Zealand. Though most often framing his practice through the lens of a camera, he is also comfortable with sculpture, installation and works on paper. Bellamy's artworks tap social fantasies around (dis)location, expectation and doom. Our saturated image terrain is distilled and repositioned by Bellamy to provide some distance from our intimate relationship with the screen. Max graduated from the Electronic Arts Department of the Dunedin School of Art in 2008, where he went on to teach until 2011. Max has exhibited art throughout New Zealand and has shown films internationally.

Emily Hlavac-Green is a freelance photographer working across creative and commercial areas. Her personal work often has a distinct cinematic aesthetic, and her current projects explore multi-dimensional technology and image veracity. Emily graduated from the Dunedin School of Art in 2009, and now lectures part time in the School of Design.



Figure 1 and 2. Project team and partners at work and rest in Tonga.

COSMOPOLITANISM AND A NEW GENERATION OF ART IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Marion Cadora

I often say I am a 'PNG contemporary artist' when I write a document. I always have an association with that. But I've already proven to myself and others that I'm very versatile and I can work in many different environments. I am no longer bound by my society, but I can step out of that and think creatively without having to define my identity so much. That's just the way that I'd like to be viewed, first and foremost, as a creative thinker rather than a mind that is constrained by one particular culture.

Jeffrey Feeger

The above quote, from an interview with Jeffrey Feeger in November 2011, is reflective of the limitless opportunities for aspiring contemporary artists in PNG.¹ Feeger sees himself unbound to his own society and is adopting a strategy of communication and creativity in a global sense and on a human level. Feeger's work is not necessarily tied to a particular PNG cultural worldview, but rather a constant re-combination of culturally specific and global modes of practice. Through an introduction of two painters based in Port Moresby – Jeffrey Feeger and Leonard Tebegetu – this article highlights emerging visual themes of a new generation of artists. These artists are responding to globalization in PNG via new access to digital information and the infiltration of web technology.

Historically urban PNG artists created contemporary art as a response to the influences brought about through modernization, evolving cultural traditions, and national independence. In the 1960s and 1970s, artists who pioneered the indigenous contemporary art movement in PNG urban settings, had to establish their identity and their place in a milieu that was dominated by expatriates and a colonial culture. Artists were encouraged to draw visual connections to traditional village life and customs.² Nearing PNG's political Independence in 1975, the PNG government saw the importance of developing a modern communication industry and supported the opening of the Creative Arts Centre in 1972 (later renamed the National Art School).³ Artists during this time were stimulated by sentiments of national consciousness.⁴ However, in 1986, the National Art School (NAS) was forced to deal with increasing budget cuts, including the elimination of art exhibitions and public programs. Eventually these actions eroded the national cultural agenda that was founded during the independence period, and affected the livelihood of NAS artists. In the 1980's and 1990's artists began to feel disillusioned towards new narratives of the nation. As corruption and economic and political instability infiltrated PNG, artists began painting as way to communicate their distrust for politicians and convey the hardships of new urban environments. In the 1990's and early 2000's when artists lost all support of government creative arts funding, artists looked towards international exhibitions and tourist markets for sales, and predominantly painted idealized imagery of PNG culture.

By 2008, economic indicators showed signs of increased investor confidence and expansion of service sectors such as the telecommunication and information communication technology (ICT).⁵ As social media technologies became increasingly accessible, a new generation began seeing themselves within a cosmopolitan framework, and beyond the limits of nationalism.

For artists Feeger and Tebegetu, cosmopolitanism is not only about being a "citizen of the world", but also approaching their subject matter in a way that opens their discussions to new audiences across the globe and

within their home communities. The concept of cosmopolitanism is broadly informed by the ideas of philosopher and cultural-theorist Anthony Kwame Appiah (2005) who suggests the possibility wherein individuals from various localities (including geographic, economic, and cultural) enter relationships of mutual respect despite their differing beliefs. Appiah critically questions separatist philosophies that result in dichotomies such as the “West and the Rest” and “Locals and Moderns”, and thus, attempts to make it harder to think about the world through binary structures.⁶ Likewise, a new generation of artists are attempting to utilize art as a point of engagement for important socio-political issues and blur distinctions of traditional/contemporary and local/global. Tebegetu and Feeger are examples of new artists who are teaching themselves about art via the internet and with this new access they show there are interlinking patterns of local, national, and global modes of practice.

Their paintings depict portrait of grass-root people and show everyday experiences such as market scenes, domestic life, and cultural identity. Primarily self-taught, Feeger and Tebegetu utilize vivid photographic qualities, color pallets emblematic of their urban environments, and graffiti-like elements but also use visual languages rooted in their own cultural traditions. (see fig .1)

The emergence of cosmopolitanism in PNG is dependent on access to information, education, professions, and social associations. Both Feeger and Tebegetu come from middle-class families and have had access to education and communications medium.

Port Moresby, the capital where they both reside, has been exposed to external influences for a century or more, and there has been rapid growth in urbanization and economic organization.⁷ Within the last two years, the increased and wider interconnections afforded through the use of cell phones, Internet, television, advertising, and mass-media have generated effective, real-time communication and a social media-literate niche in the PNG population. These new tools are helping develop a wider sense of identity by making the process of communication fluid and expansive, and the artwork of Feeger and Tebegetu is situated within these complex interactions. The following sections highlight some of their personal stories and societal perspectives, and argues that the roots of cosmopolitanism are written in their visual vocabularies.

JEFFRY FEEGER



Figure 2. Jeffry Feeger; *Jewel in the Rough*, 2007, acrylic on canvas. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 1. (left) Jeffry Feeger; *Transition*, 2008, acrylic on canvas. Image courtesy of the artist.

Jeffrey Feeger's life experiences have given him an unusual confidence and a prominent role in his PNG community as an artist. He states his artistic objective, "[The intention of] my work, [is to] transcend race and class, and first world and third world. I want to bridge the gaps between people who have everything and [those who have nothing]."⁸ Growing up, Feeger lived in numerous regions around PNG, primarily in the island of New Britain and also in Port Moresby, where his father worked as a school teacher. Feeger has had access to education within the International School system and was able to travel across Asia and the Pacific region with his family starting at a young age. He comes from a multi-cultural background: his father is German (but raised in Australia), and his mother comes from a village called Tapala in the Gulf Province. Although early in his professional art career, he has already participated in exhibitions throughout PNG, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as residency programs offered by with the Tautai Contemporary Pacific Arts Trust in Aotearoa New Zealand (2009), the World Expo in Shanghai (2010), and Intersections at University of Hawai'i Mānoa (2011).

Early in his art career the Internet also became a strategic tool for Feeger to develop an expansive repertoire, through which he gained a deeper understanding of contemporary art politics and global conversations. After attending the Visual Arts program at the University of Papua New Guinea for one year in 2002, he was dissatisfied with the program and decided to develop a self-taught practice. He did Internet searches about contemporary art in various places and began to master techniques of photorealism and compositional design. Usually working from his own photographs, he creates paintings by replicating photographic qualities, but he continues to mediate the subject matter by enhancing the colors, contours, and emotional qualities of the image. In the painting *Transition* (2008), fig 2. Feeger harnesses the visual language of multiple times/places via assembling images on top of each other and intensifying the hues. *Transition* paradoxically juxtaposes brightly colored hibiscus petals signifying notions of paradise, with the discerned face of a young girl revealing a sense of concern and confusion. This powerful image enforces a mosaic of possible meanings that could be read as magical, real, spiritual, and contemporary. These ideas are the foundation of Feeger's work that he calls 'magic realism,' a term borrowed from a literature movement (also called 'magic realism'). The importance of this is the way in which his work mediates a multidimensional aspect of society. He states his intentions:

I do realism and portraiture. [This] world that exists is magical. The ordinary world is seen through a magical lens. I view Papua New Guinea, generally floating in that realm...sometimes we don't realize but we overlay these two worlds, in everything we do.⁹



Figure 3. Jeffrey Feeger, *Yu Laikim Buai? [Do you like Betelnut?]* (The New Buka Series), 2008-2009, acrylic on canvas. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 4. (right) Jeffrey Feeger, *Lapun Meri [Old Woman]* (The New Buka Series), 2008-2010, acrylic on canvas. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 5. Jeffrey Feeger, *Meri Simbu* (*The Port Moresby Market Collection*), 2011, acrylic on canvas.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 6. Jeffrey Feeger, *Pikinini Kikori* (*The Port Moresby Market Collection*), 2011, acrylic on canvas.
Image courtesy of the artist.

The concepts of magic realism add to the power of his paintings because he localizes aesthetic elements of realism to become more meaningful and specific to traditions belonging to Papua New Guinea.

In 2008, Feeger started creating a new kind of portraiture that communicates a sense of responsibility for the communities he belongs to in Papua New Guinea. In the series called the *New Buka Series* (2009-2010), he uses magic realism as a way of translating political and social issues in the region of Bougainville. From 2005-2008, years following the end of the Civil War in Bougainville, Feeger moved to the region with his partner and began sketching and painting portraits of people in their daily activities reflecting the realities in a post-war society.

The painting entitled *Yu Laikim Buai?* (*Do You Want betelnut*) is particularly evocative and presents the conditions of contemporary life in Buka (The capital of Bougainville). The painting shows a young woman selling buai (beetle nut or arcega nut) at a local market. Her face asserts strength, as she firmly grasps the umbrella that seems to act as a source stability and grounding in an urban society with lost infrastructure. The use of incandescent hues of blues, reds, and yellows in stark contrast with dark and murky colors of city structures, are emblematic of the Buka scenes. Feeger chooses to drip red paint on the canvas that represents buai spit, and in real life splatters to paint the exterior of buildings and streets throughout Buka. These textured effects reveal an experiential and palpable aspects of everyday Papua New Guinea culture.

Feeger's intention is to present the "rough and raw" portraits in elite and selective venues. It is not surprising then when he exhibits outside of PNG, he creates somewhat paradoxical situations. *The New Buka Series* was exhibited in a solo exhibition at White Space Gallery in Auckland in 2009. His urban portraitures became a way of merging conflicting systems of time and space: the exclusive space of a gallery and the post-colonial discussions

of PNG communities. Similarly, in November 2011, he was invited to exhibit at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa. Feeger's residency coincided with the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) held in Honolulu during the same time. Feeger presented his *The Port Moresby Market Collection* as a way of drawing attention to the 80% of PNG's population who participate in marketplaces and informal economies, but lurk in the shadow of political and economic development.

In PNG and for his Papua New Guinea viewers, his portraits are meant to revitalize a new connection to everyday stories of urban people and centers. "Live paintings" performances have also become a signature genre of Feeger's, where he paints portraits of community members and public figures as a way of highlighting important social issues such as environmental preservation and human rights. Since 2010, Feeger has been developing these live performances, infusing theatricality and spirituality and uses the streets of Port Moresby to attract crowds. He then publicizes the events through Facebook and social networking. The dissemination of Feeger's work in PNG through the Internet has made a significant impact in the way he communicates to other Papua New Guineans. He states, "Now all of a sudden my works are accessible to young people who are part of this social revolution..."¹⁰

Feeger is an example of someone who has access to global tools, grew up in an urban setting, and attended an international school, but importantly is using these new devices and contemporary art to reinvent a Papua New Guinea spiritual and cultural connection.

LEONARD TEBEGETU

Tebegetu was born in the Lelet area on the island of New Ireland in 1980. He grew up in the Highlands township of Goroka where his father worked as an officer for an oil company and his mother worked as a laboratory assistant. He spent most of his youth in Goroka town, the provincial capital of the Eastern Highlands Province. In 2000, he



Figure 7. Leonard Tebegetu, *Identity II*, 2009, acrylic on canvas.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 8. Leonard Tebegetu, *Tatanua I*, 2007, acrylic on canvas.
Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 9. Leonard Tebegetu, *Bishopotonamous*, 2010, acrylic on canvas. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 10. Leonard Tebegetu, *The Botanist*, 2011, acrylic on canvas. Image courtesy of the artist.



moved to Port Moresby to undertake studies at the law school at the University of Papua New Guinea. For several years, from 2000-2006, Tebegetu struggled with the course work, and moved to the streets. Since 2006, he made three attempts to re-enter law school, but failed to complete his course work and returned to the streets numerous times until he moved in with his sister in Port Moresby.

Surviving financially through informal means, Tebegetu began casually experimenting with graffiti until he was asked to design a poster for one of his friends, which opened up a new avenue for art-making. Like Feeger, Tebegetu started searching the Internet and reading books to teach himself basic techniques and art theories. He started researching topics on abstraction and expressionism. He also began learning about new graffiti trends around the world. These early inquiries about modern painterly aesthetics and graffiti styles are evident in his compositions and visual language that he has developed over the years. Tebegetu engages with two primary themes: New Ireland cultural identity and experiences of living in the urban environment of Port Moresby.

During the first few years of his career, Tebegetu abandoned immediate connections with graffiti because he states, “[in PNG] it is not looked at as art.”¹¹ Instead he focused on developing a series of images depicting New Ireland culture which he began selling at the Ela Beach Craft Market in Port Moresby. In Port Moresby, where there is a growing demand in the tourist market for affordable paintings expressing idealized depictions of PNG culture, Tebegetu found that his paintings depicting New Ireland culture sold much easier than the politically oriented images. In his New Ireland painting series he stages an assemblage of material culture, but experiments with new ways of incorporating graffiti elements into the design.

The image entitled *Tatanua I* is an example of his New Ireland imagery. It is directly referencing a type of Malagan mask from the northern region of New Ireland.¹² Most recognizable are the crescent shaped eyes of Tatanua masks

and the heads and beaks of birds, which are often depicted in Northern New Ireland malagan figures. There is a direct relation to graffiti aesthetics where visual elements are unstructured and interlocked, and colors blend and fade. He uses a loose grid-like structure, layering recurring symbols and motifs of tatanua while melding blues, blacks, reds, yellows, and whites, colors often used in malagan figures. Many of these paintings are located at the New Ireland resort, Nusa Island Retreat, where the owner has collected over eighty of Tebegetu's paintings.

In 2009-2010, Tebegetu began creating images with a stronger interest in realistic urban scenery and discussions.¹³ Through Internet research, Tebegetu became interested in a New York-based artist named Justin Bua, who melds "urban rhythms, graffiti, and classical art training" to something he calls "distorted realism."¹⁴ Tebegetu adapted this style to convey his feelings of the raw urban realities in Port Moresby, that he feels are also deranged and often corrupt. He states, "To [alter] these characters, goes to show, that realistically it's our perspective of development; is a bit distorted in a way." Tebegetu is referring to the recent economic boom in PNG fueled by mineral, crude oil, gas discoveries, and the subsequent development of mines.¹⁵ Although the macro economy is strengthening more than ever, the government failed to improve social development at a staggering low rate, including: ensuring law and order; strengthening health and education systems, and ensuring suitable fiscal and regulatory systems.¹⁶ The complexities of these circumstances have been at the forefront of Tebegetu's imagery.

Tebegetu adapts Bua's schemes by inserting his own figures and subject matter into them. He recreates recognizable architectural elements that are true to New York but rarely seen in Port Moresby. For example, Tebegetu's painting called *The Botanist* and Bua's painting *The DJ* present an interesting juxtaposition. Compositionally the images are similar; replicating the brick walls, large bookshelf, and lighting effects. He makes subtle alterations, where a painting of an orchid hangs in Bua's image, Tebegetu replaces it with a traditional Awan mask. He mimics bodily gestures making the woman's head tilt left towards the brick wall. The woman's hand is scaled proportionately larger than the rest of her body, similar to the way Bua elongates the DJ's hand.¹⁷



Figure 11. Leonard Tebegetu, *Susap Solo*, 2011, acrylic on canvas. Image courtesy of the artist.

The appropriation of Bua's work is important to emphasize; he is not only appropriating the imagery, but also the persona and lifestyles of the USA into his paintings. It is as if the disparate histories of each place become an amalgam of contradictory traditions combining urban schemes of U.S.A with elements of PNG culture. Conversing with issues of urbanization Tebegetu conveys Port Moresby as a city of such complex and jarring dichotomies. With the influx of business opportunities coming through the city of Port Moresby, and the rapid emergence of new buildings and businesses, he questions "who and what does 'development' serve?"

Tebegetu uses multiple tools to inform his stories and presents a space where people can engage with his stories from various angles. He merges visual dichotomies of tradition/modernization, high art/low art, and original/reproduction. As a painter in PNG, he also plays different roles as a documenter, political commentator, and discusses issues that are dismissed in the media. In his words:

People on the streets are branded as a nuisance... [But] the media forgets to look beyond the struggles and what causes them to do this and that. So I've realized that I could take on the task. [My paintings are] a way of generating social commentary and reporting on life in Port Moresby from a critical viewpoint.

CONCLUSION

For the new generation of Papua New Guineans exposed to diversifying economies and interactive communication networks, aesthetic and representational agendas have transformed according to these new environments. As cosmopolitan artists, there is no ambivalence towards appropriation and hybridity, and their art has become more urban and varied.

New access to the internet has been transformative, and in many ways it has enabled young artists to voice their concerns and re-think boundaries of representation. Feeger's use of "magic realism" and Tebegetu's adaptation of "distorted realism", are examples of how these artists are using the internet to learn new approaches and global modes of visualization, but then transform it into something that expresses a local Papua New Guinean character. The Internet has also allowed artists to immediately and rapidly engage with other Papua New Guineans, expatriate, and international communities. Both artists actively use the social networking website Facebook to publicize their work and update their current information. In January 2012, Feeger created a Facebook group called *PNG Contemporary Arts* which is meant to act as a platform for discussion and share information about contemporary art ideas in Papua New Guinea.

Ultimately, their ambitions as PNG artists is not superseded by forces of globalism, but rather they use globalized tools to cross boundaries and open their discussions to new audiences. They see themselves as artists within a cosmopolitan structure in which they are able to equally engage local and global communities and ideas, but they are dealing with socio-cultural topics specific to Papua New Guinea.

The emerging roles of cosmopolitans in PNG is reflective of their position as middle-class urban artists. At the moment, 2% of PNG's population has access to the Internet and it is only afforded by people who can pay the high fees of the services.¹⁸ Although the Internet has spurred recognition and connections for the artists outside of PNG, the dissemination and collective appreciation of their work amongst a national and rural audience is still limited. New cosmopolitan dispositions may also become separate from provincial experiences where most people associate themselves within various traditional knowledge/practices, languages, sorcery, social groups, economic and educational units.¹⁹ The increasingly growing tensions between traditional and contemporary systems are at the core of why within PNG there is a consistent struggle to try and create imagery that speaks to the nation as whole.²⁰

As the work of Feeger and Tebegetu enters an increasingly cosmopolitan dialogue, new tendencies also create further divides. There are many more inquiries and complexities to pursue in the study of cosmopolitanism and a new generation of artists in PNG still, and the significance of the Internet and new situations in PNG art cannot be underestimated.

Marion Cadora is a recent MA graduate of the Art and Art History Department at the University of Hawai'i Manoa and a graduate degree Fellow of the East-West Center. Previously, Marion worked as curatorial assistant for the Jolika Collection of New Guinea Art at the de Young Museum in San Francisco, California.

- 1 The interviews in this article were conducted in 2011 during research in Papua New Guinea for a Master's Thesis entitled "Cosmopolitanism: The New Generation of Artists in Papua New Guinea." This particular interview with Jeffery Feeger was conducted at the University of Hawai'i Mānoa during his residency in October- November 2011.
- 2 Prior to Independence in 1975, there were three influential expatriate art educators who worked with PNG artists; Ulli and Georgina Beier (husband and wife) and Tom Craig.
- 3 Pamela C. Rosi, "Bung Wantaim: The Role of the National Arts School in Creating National Culture and Identity in Papua New Guinea. PhD Thesis (Bryn Mawr College, 1994), 356. Pub. Ann Harbor: Bell & Howell, 1994.
- 4 Pamela C. Rosi, "The Disputed Value of Contemporary Papua New Guinea Artists and Their Work," in *Exploring World Art*, ed. Eric Venbrux, Pamela Sheffield Rosi, and Robert L. Welsch (Long Grove: Waveland, 2006), 245-7. Anthropologist Pamela Rosi (1991, 1994, 2006) has primarily contributed to ideas to the topic of contemporary art and nation-making in PNG.
- 5 This is mentioned in the publication by Thomas Webster and Linda Duncan, ed. *The Papua New Guinea Development Performance Report 1975-2008*, Monograph No. 41. (Port Moresby: National Research Institute, 2010), 1.
- 6 Anthony Appiah Kwame, "Cosmopolitan Patriots," *Critical Inquiry* 23:3 (1997), 617-639. The connection between cosmopolitanism and contemporary art is also drawn from the recent publications written by Nikos Papastergiadis (2012) *Cosmopolitanism and Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Polity) and Marsha Meskimmon (2011) *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, (London: Routledge).
- 7 Michael Goddard, *The Unseen City: Anthropological Perspectives on Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea*. (Canberra, ACT: Pandanus, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, Australian National University, 2005).
- 8 Interview July 6, 2011.
- 9 Interview July 6, 2011.
- 10 Interview July 6, 2011. Feeger particularly uses his Facebook page (www.facebook.com/jeffryfeegerart) to promote his new artworks, projects, exhibitions, festivals, and other PNG contemporary artists. In January 2012, Feeger created a new Facebook group called PNG Contemporary Arts (www.facebook.com/groups/238085869601099/). With hundreds of members, this forum continues to grow. This PNG arts forum is becoming a valuable new medium for rapid dispersal of information and is a much needed platform for upcoming artists in PNG.
- 11 Interview September 30, 2011.
- 12 Michael Gunn and Philippe Peltier, *New Ireland: Art of the South Pacific* (Paris: Musée Du Quai Branly, 2006), 260.
- 13 The painting entitled *Bishopotonamous* is an example of how his compositions began to change. He merges bright colors and applies paint with a "spray paint" mannerism.
- 14 Justin Bua, *The Beat of Urban Art: The Art of Justin Bua* (New York: HC, 2007).
- 15 Thomas Webster and Linda Duncan, ed. *The Papua New Guinea Development Performance Report 1975-2008*, Monograph No. 41. (Port Moresby: National Research Institute, 2010), 1.
- 16 Ibid. Paul Barker speaks about these issues in his articles "What are the MP's, Parliament and Government therefor?", *Masalai Blog*, <http://masalai.wordpress.com/2012/06/11/what-are-mps-parliament-and-government-there-for/>
- 17 Justin Bua, *The DJ*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, in Justin Bua, *The Beat of Urban Art: The Art of Justin Bua* (New York: HC, 2007), p123).
- 18 Information found on "Oceania Internet Usage Stats and Population Statistics." *Oceania Internet Usage Stats and Population Statistics*. <<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats6.htm>> [accessed 16 Jul 2012].
- 19 Stephen Winduo, "Preface." Charles Yala, David Kavanamur, and Quinton Clements. *Building a Nation in Papua New Guinea: Views of the Post-Independence Generation*. (Canberra: Pandanus, 2003), xii.
- 20 Pamela Rosi discusses converging notions and authenticities of globalize and traditional artforms in her essay "The Disputed Value of Contemporary PNG Artists" (*Exploring World Art*, 2006). Rosi (263) states that old artists and elite viewers preferred the imagery of village artists because they admired the "traditional designs" and the "strong spirit" of village life. Whereas, younger artists gave higher value to stylistic range and modern techniques. Furthermore, Rosi further comments, "contemporary art is often denied authentic PNG identity because it is seen as a product of imposed Western practices, a kind of soft neocolonialism." (264).

MINING IN THE FIELDS OF INTEREST

Kenneth Merrick

In many ways, my approaches to image-making and research are akin to the archaeological dig. By clawing, gnawing and drawing in the ever-expanding media junkyards, I am able to make sense and nonsense of the world around me, and my place within it.



Figure 1. Kenneth Merrick, *Conjure* (2012), mixed media on paper; 150 x 210 mm. Image courtesy of the artist.

Through the various processes involved with image-making, I am continually trying to challenge, test, and further my understanding of a variety of visual languages that are constantly in flux. By negotiating the variety of push-pull contingencies that are present in drawing and painting, I attempt to loosely describe the nature of the materials used and any relevance these materials might have to an evolving nebulousness of subject matter.

I often work quickly, at various scales and in series. In this way, possible thematic currents that present across numerous bodies of work can be tracked. At times, these currents can be difficult to trace, especially when dealing with individual works that may have been generated in staggered succession over a long period of time.

Actively assessing how individual works relate to each other helps me to build on potential compositional applications. More often than not, these are only starting points, which never offer up formal solutions but rather prompt further questioning. Adopting this



Figure 2. Kenneth Merrick, *Us and Them* (2011), mixed media on vinyl; 2400 x 3200 mm. Image courtesy of the artist.

Figure 3. Kenneth Merrick, *Hail the New Hail* (2012), paper on board; 120 x 160 mm. Image courtesy of the artist.





Figure 4. Kenneth Merrick, *Homo Heroica* (2012), mixed media on board, 1100 x 1600 mm. Image courtesy of the artist.

type of approach enables me to forge connections with internal and external impulses, broadening my understanding of how each is manifest in the connective narrative threads and relationships between each image.

The work I have made over the past five years has largely been underpinned by pre-existing imagery. The majority of this imagery stems from a wide range of digital and physical resources. During the ongoing activity of collection, I try to stay open to the possibilities of the image, as any number of qualities might catch my attention. My recognition of these qualities often occurs a little while after the immediacy of the moment has faded, and my engagement with the processes of drawing and collage begin.

As a lifetime hoarder, I have always looked for narrative connections and associations between the disparate media and objects that I have accumulated. Since returning to study, I have continued to develop interests in narrative forms and visual storytelling. In turn, this has recently led to areas of research that examine how *transmedia storytelling* might be employed in today's vastly expanding multi-platform world.

Kenneth Merrick is in his final year of the Bachelor of Design and Visual Arts programme at Unitec, Auckland, majoring in painting. As a Pacific-heritage student, he was selected for the 2011 Tautai Tertiary Exhibition at St Paul St Gallery, Auckland. In 2009, a change of tack saw him enroll in the Certificate of Design and Visual Arts program at Unitec. Before this, he graduated with a Bachelor of Music (majoring in composition) from the University of Auckland, School of Music, in 2004, and in 2005 he completed a Diploma in Audio Engineering at SAE Institute, Parnell, Auckland. He continues to work in AV and live sound in a variety of settings.



Figure 5. Kenneth Merrick, *Afterglow* (2011), mixed media on card, 900 x 1070 mm. Image courtesy of the artist.

MY DETACHMENT

Darcell Dorothy Apelu

I look for the space of the heart
It doesn't waver me
Leave in place my memory
The means have control now
It commands distance over seas

Anxiety pushes, rips
I grieve for kindred, the belonging
Our connections have come undone
The needs are unbearable
It's hard to stand

Be my maker of hope and wish
Arbitrary numbers have my mind
If only, if only
To be the one to grasp all
Save for what purpose

Adapt for mankind meaningless time
The hurry for capital has a loss
Not one without essence
It is corrupt, callous
Unsettling vertigo the symptom

It will come in spades
And be a true tolerance
To be with the ones of pure love
We will see each other
The space of content

Darcell Dorothy Apelu was born and raised in Mount Maunganui. She graduated from AUT with a Bachelor of Visual Arts in 2011, and is currently studying for her Masters of Art and Design at AUT.

VIEWPOINT:
“PASIFIKA COOL” (REVISITED)

Graham Fletcher



Figure 1. Cath Cocker; *Sweet Dreams in the Missionary Position*, 2012. (detail) Paper & glue, dimensions variable.
Collection of the artist.

In 1999 I took part in a group exhibition at Sarjeant Gallery, Whanganui entitled *Pacific Cool*. This was the first group show I participated in after leaving art school that was dedicated to showcasing the works of contemporary Pacific artists. Since then I have been included in several Pacific focused shows, and more recently, I exhibited work in *Home AKL* (Auckland Art Gallery, 2012) which is the first major group exhibition of contemporary Pacific art at Auckland Art Gallery since Jim Vivieaere's touring exhibition *Bottled Oceans* (1994). Eighteen years is a long time between landmark Pacific shows at the Auckland Art Gallery, not forgetting that Auckland has the largest number of Pacific Islanders living in any one place in the world.

What this situation does bring to light is just how little exposure there is of Pacific visual arts within key public museums and dealer galleries throughout the country. But despite this sense of under-representation, what *Pasifika Cool* signals to me is that Pacific art is strong and healthy and that this exhibition is the start of something new and exciting for the Dunedin School of Art (DSA) and for the city of Dunedin.



Figure 2. Bridget Inder, *Running in the Rain*, 2004. Woodblock over Monoprint, 760 x 565 mm. Collection of the Dunedin School of Art.



Figure 3. David Teata, *Viti*, 2005. Woodblock, 705 x 500 mm. On Loan to the Dunedin School of Art.



Figure 4. Michel Tuffery, *Matai 'Fa Samoa'*, 1987. Woodblock on handmade paper 836 x 615 mm. Collection of the Dunedin School of Art.



Figure 5. Bronwyn Nau Robson, *Multicultural Leis*, 2009. (detail) Wool, tapa cloth (ngata), dimensions variable. Collection of the artist and the Dunedin School of Art.



Figure 6. Teina Ellia, *Death to Disco*, 2012. Oil paint, acrylic paint, graphite pencil on canvas, 755 x 760 mm. Collection of the Artist.



Figure 7. *Paranesia* (installation view of opening night). Photograph by Amy Moffitt.



Figure 8. Tere Moeroa, *Faces*, 2009. Mixed Media Print, 675 x 510 mm. Private collection.



Figure 9. Donald Harman, *Scale design for Tapa Window*, 2009. Digital Print, 1680 x 725 mm. Collection of the Artist.



Figure 10. Tivaevae made by Māra Moeroa, (Tere Moeroa's Mother) and generously lent for the exhibition *Pasifika Cool*.

This exhibition is dominated by works from former Pacific students of the DSA, some of whom have gone on to have successful careers in the art world. Many of these works examine ideas that are familiar to my own practice, such as culture, identity, hybridity and place, and despite the term "Pacific Islander" inferring some kind of collective consciousness and a shared pool of common themes and ideas, it is clear to me that each work has its own distinctive cultural flavour peculiar to that artist's heritage and experiences.

Donald Harman (DipFA, 1985) and Michael Tuffery's (DipFA, 1988) striking graphic works use Pacific symbols and iconography that recalls the traditional art form of tapa making and how this is translated to modern techniques in printmaking. David Te Ata's (BFA, 2006) work is informed through his Manganian heritage in which he draws upon its rich material culture for inspiration. Tere Moeroa's (BFA, 2007) self-portrait combines traditional Cook Island motifs and urban forms that speak of his interests in contemporary music and its connection to his heritage. Teina Ellia's (BFA, 2009) emotionally charged works highlight her harrowing experience of the Christchurch earthquakes in 2011. Bronwyn Robson's (BFA, 2009) lei works challenge traditional readings of this art form while adding to the discussion of hybridisation through the blending of cultures. Bridget Inder's (MFA, 2010) work *Running in the Rain* (2004) explores issues of belonging, otherness and identity as a person of mixed Samoan/Pakeha heritage. Catherine Cocker's (BFA, 2010; PGDip, 2011) work *Sweet Dreams in the Missionary Position* (2010) uses the metaphor of the wasp nest (made from pages of bibles) to comment on the history of New Zealand colonisation and the effects of Western religions on indigenous cultures and practices.

This exhibition, I believe, bodes well for Pacific art in the future. When I look at the works in the show I'm reminded of the question posed by artist (and former DSA student) Colin McCahon at the end of the catalogue essay he wrote for his 1972 Survey exhibition: "Do you believe in the sunrise?"

My response is an emphatic yes!

PASIFIKA COOL (FROM CATALOGUE TEXT BY VICTORIA BELL)

An exhibition of early artworks by Pacific Island graduates of the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic – Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, shown in conjunction with traditional Pacific Island works of art sourced from local communities.



Figure 11. Opening night: Cath Cocker (installation view). Photograph by Madeline Sherwood King.



Figure 12. Opening night: Bronwynn Robson (view through installation). Photograph by Madeline Sherwood King.



Figure 13. Opening night guests look at a work by Teina Ellia. Photograph by Madeline Sherwood King.

"Pasifika Cool" offers a survey of mostly early works, by invited Pacific Island graduates of the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic. The exhibition recognises the rich complexities and empowering strength of heritage and tradition as well as the importance of family and community to the processes of art making. In viewing the artworks in this exhibition it can be seen that during the experience of tertiary education each artist's cultural identity manifested itself in their art work, in some way. Sometimes this became a central premise of their practice, as in the work of Inder and Teata; other times it was a more subtle element, as in the work of Ellia and Harman. The show presents these artists's work supported by and in conversation with, customary works of art and the voices of contemporary Pasifika artists as presented in the film *Paranesia*, acknowledging the cultural, social, familial and historical narratives which move back and forward in time, and are integral to their practices.

In 2006, at the fifth Asia-Pacific Triennial held at Queensland Art Gallery and the Gallery of Modern Art, in Brisbane, Australia, an important collection of woven fabrics and textiles from the Pacific were exhibited for the first time in a major art exhibition. The presentation of these works, humble in nature, but embedded with social and cultural importance, challenged the consistent craft/art, traditional/contemporary, art/artefact categorisations which circulate through Western histories of collection and exhibition. Acknowledged as contemporary artworks, these Pacific textiles presented communal narratives and expressed lived experiences from the past as well as the present.

Nicholas Thomas noted in the accompanying APT5 catalogue, that Pacific textiles "became maps of time and history, which is why Queen Salote, the famous mid-century Tongan ruler, declared that 'Our history is written in our mats'." It is in the spirit of this sentiment that three contemporary Pacific Island textile based artworks are included in "Pasifika Cool".

The ie toga was originally gifted to the College of Education by Pacific staff and students at the opening of the Owheo building, in Union Street. At the farewell gathering held at the Owheo building, when the College of Education became part of the University of Otago, Eti Laufiso attended and shared stories about Owheo and the 'Village' (Polytechnic and College of Education buildings on the site before Owheo was built) which had housed Māori, Pacific and Multicultural Studies, as had the Owheo, and these were the places Pacific students and staff congregated for many years. Thanks to the College of Education for a loan of this ie toga.

Also shown is a contemporary tivaevae made by Māra Moeroa, Tere Moeroa's Mother. This vibrant quilt speaks to the important language of textiles in Pacific Island art which can be seen picked up in the work of Bronwyn Robson. Lastly, we are pleased to exhibit a large Tongan Funeral Tapa/Ngatu on loan from Catherine Cocker. This ngatu was given to Cath on the occasion of her father's funeral.

Graham Fletcher is Studio Coordinator – Painting at the Dunedin School of Art. He holds a Doctorate of Fine Arts from the University of Auckland. His research explored the critical legacy of the widespread European tradition of housing collections of Oceanic and African tribal art in domestic settings. Of particular relevance for him as an artist of mixed Samoan and European heritage is the question of how this legacy might be appropriated and subverted within a contemporary Pacific and New Zealand context.

Victoria Bell is a graduate of the Master of Fine Arts programme at the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic – Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, where she also lectures. Her practice engages with Whiteness Studies and Western constructions of 'Other'. In 2005 she received the Olivia Spencer Bower Award.

- I Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (6th : 2009 : Brisbane, Qld.), The 6th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, p.41. See Nicholas Thomas, 'Our history is written in our mats', in The 5th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art [exhibition catalogue], Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 2006, pp.24–31.

SOULFOOD: THE ROLES OF FOOD, FAITH, FAMILY AND ARTS IN SELF AND COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Philippa Keaney

In late 2012, Toitū Otago Settlers Museum will reopen to the public. A component of the reopening exhibition is a project called "OurVoices," which presents audiovisual 'snapshots' of migrants' experiences of arriving and settling in Otago. This project follows a general international trend which has shown a shift by museums towards increasingly representative and reflective exhibition spaces. Like a recent series of cross-cultural community projects initiated in Cairns,¹ "OurVoices" moves away from a dominant focus on Anglo-Celtic settlers and opens the space for multicultural settlement stories.

For three months, I have been speaking with a diverse range of migrants who, although they hail from very different points of origin, share certain commonalities. They have all left family and friends behind, some of them with the knowledge that they may never see them again. They have all developed new friendships and received support, often from unexpected quarters. They have also experienced differing intensities of loss and alienation. This article explores the ways in which family, faith, food practices and traditional art and craft recur frequently in the conversations shared with migrants to Dunedin, highlighting the importance of these in maintaining self and community identity. These practices and ways of being help mitigate loss and alienation and provide the strength for individuals to sustain themselves while experiencing what it is to be considered an 'outsider' – different because of language, accent, clothing, culture or religion. As the stories recounted below demonstrate, these values also have the potential to break down arbitrary, culturally defined borders and challenge assumptions about difference. They afford a space in which it is possible for both migrants and non-migrants to engage in new ways of nourishing self and the wider community. They suggest that there are more ways than we have yet imagined to work collaboratively, to create and to celebrate our increasing diversity.

As New Zealand television programming reflects, we are increasingly captivated by food preparation as entertainment. Food programmes from the United Kingdom, Australia, USA and New Zealand often constrain the preparation of food to a competitive art form. Rather than a collaborative and generous approach to food, these programmes discourage working together. They pit individuals against each other and culminate in translating the act of eating prepared food into an act of judgment. This focus on individuality and competition is not limited to the search for the 'best' cook or chef, but also permeates shared experiences of food, such as dinner parties at which guests criticise the host's personality, food, décor and hospitality. While these attitudes are not representative of entire populations, they indicate a substantive shift towards the increased commodification of food and its preparation, with the nominated winners spawning ranges of merchandise and re-entering the entertainment cycle as judges of the next series. In contrast, the stories that migrant people share about food celebrate community and collaborative endeavours. For the Lebanese community in Dunedin, food was, and still is, an integral part of family life. The preparation of Lebanese ingredients and food is labour intensive. This allows space for social and familial closeness and support; hours in which stories can be shared, gossip told, jokes enjoyed, support and advice given. The eating of food is a meaningful and social space where families gather together and friends and guests are welcome, further strengthening community. Like Ngāi Tahu's concept of *manaakitanga*, hospitality is inherently extended without question to newcomers and extended family alike.

In contrast, the stories that migrant people share about food celebrate community and collaborative endeavours. For the Lebanese community in Dunedin, food was, and still is, an integral part of family life. The preparation of Lebanese ingredients and food is labour-intensive. This allows space for social and familial closeness and support; hours in which stories can be shared, gossip told, jokes enjoyed, support and advice given. The eating of food is a meaningful and social space where families gather together and friends and guests are welcome, further strengthening community. Like Ngāi Tahu's concept of *manaakitanga*, hospitality is inherently extended without question to newcomers and extended family alike.

While the passage of time and new geographic and cultural locations may change traditions to some extent, it is possible that the real value of food lies within the collaborative approach to its preparation and its shared consumption – the process rather than the outcome. For example, today when there is a Tongan community celebration in Dunedin, it is far more likely that the men will just buy a pig, rather than going out to hunt for one. Similarly, the spit-roast equipment is usually hired, not built. Yet the men will still get up as dawn tinges the sky and gather around the roasting pig for the duration of cooking time because it is the act of *being together* that is significant. Watching the pig cook might have replaced hunting for it, but it still creates an opportunity for men to assemble together to share news, ideas and support. Women and children will be preparing other foods or undertaking other food-related tasks during this time, also enjoying each other's company. The shared meal at the end of preparation cements the social interactions of the day and brings the whole community together.

This adaptability around food procurement and preparation is one of the ways in which borders can be crossed. A Cook Island couple relate how difficult they found being in Dunedin initially, because they were unaccustomed to food preparation and eating being an individual experience.² The husband was working at a local steel foundry at the time and, after some observation, realised that the giant slabs of steel that came out of the foundry would provide a perfect hotplate – once they had cooled from red-hot – to cook crayfish on. To the amazement of his colleagues, he acquired a sack of crayfish and proceeded to cook and share the crayfish during the lunch hour. Although some workers ridiculed him initially, they soon became addicted to what became a regularly shared meal, enjoying a traditional Cook Island food cooked in a novel way for a diverse 'community'.

Local artist Simon Kaan recently mentioned how his "Kai Hau Kai" project afforded an opportunity to reconnect with Ngāi Tahu whānui and had the potential to allow or trigger memories that are currently unknown.³ This is an interesting point because much of the practical wisdom that we no longer have access to is related to food practices. Another Cook Island woman remembers that her grandfather always knew when and where to fish through tuning into signs evident in the physical landscape, his own body and the shifting patterns of life on the island. Similarly, her grandmother could accurately forecast the type of banana yield for the approaching season through 'reading' the rhythms and timing of fecundity or scarcity in other plant-life.⁴ Other migrants share similar stories. A Ukrainian woman shared her knowledge of plant and herbal remedies for common childhood and adult ailments, pain relief and fever control. In a country where drugs are not readily available over the counter, this earlier practical knowledge has maintained a foothold well into the twenty-first century.⁵ There is potential here, not just for information sharing, but for taking journeys together; to reinvigorate our own personal knowledge and to intersect with other cultural knowledge. For some time, we have been aware that in order to care for our increasingly agitated planet, we need to reconnect with some of the practices and knowledge of the past. Cross-border conversations and collaboration allow us the space to do that – to forge new paths into the future while drawing on the wisdom of the past.

Traditional arts and crafts also open up spaces for migrants to gain nourishment from traditional enterprise as well as affording a space of adaptation in which to explore or reflect on their new home. Like food, many traditional forms of art and craft are labour-intensive, collaborative enterprises. The *tivaevae* quilts of the Cook Islands are traditionally worked on by several women at once, each woman being assigned a particular role suited to her strengths, such as designing, cutting, preparing the underside of the cover or sewing.⁶ The finished product is an opportunity for the many contributors to get together and celebrate their work and to start thinking about the next project. These works are not produced for individual benefit, but are gifted to family members on significant

occasions, including marriage. Like food, this art form continues a tradition of giving. One Cook Island woman recounts how she didn't really enjoy learning the skills of tivaevae manu at 14, when her Nana started teaching her. Now, though, she says, "no money can pay for what you make from your own hands," and she is proud that she can perpetuate the knowledge and skills of her forebears by teaching her own children.⁷ In everyday Dunedin life, finding the time for six or more women to get together to work on a tivaevae is almost impossible. One way this woman adapted is by designing a method of tie-dyeing the tivaevae in the manu style. This process means that she can make a finished product in one day. Adaptation is also reflected in her changing designs which weave together traditional Cook Island motifs with local imagery, such as incorporating a koru into the design of a tivaevae manu made for her daughter-in-law, who is tangata whenua.



Figure 1. Detail from traditional stitched tivaevae manu.



Figure 2. Detail from tie-dyed tivaevae manu.

Traditional Lebanese embroidery, with its incredibly fine thread and intricate patterns, has been a shared occupation of Lebanese women for centuries. The finished products are intended as significant gifts: christening garments, tablecloths as wedding presents or items for trousseau, lace for wedding gowns and trains. Although this time-consuming industry has waned over the years, there are always some who are willing to share their knowledge and skills, not only within their own community but beyond. A few years ago, a group of Cook Island women worked with a group of Samoan women, teaching them the art of tivaevae. The finished products were displayed in an exhibition at Burns Hall, First Church. One of the Cook Island instructors noted that the work of the Samoan women was "amazing and beautiful" and brought something different to the form.⁸ A Korean woman teaches traditional paper-cutting and paper-folding craft to children and adults through education programmes and night classes, piquing an interest in a form that lends itself exceptionally well to interpretation and adaptation. At the same time, she uses the opportunity to constantly improve her English skills by immersing herself in an environment in which she is more at her ease, working with something she is skilled with and passionate about.⁹ While these stories have been relayed predominantly by women, one of the ways in which cultural traditions are evolving is that there is increasing interest and participation in art and craft forms by men, even as the division of labour in food practices is becoming more fluid and less strictly gender-discrete.

Faith and family are two other important cohesive factors in self and community identity, and they are closely intertwined. A distinction needs to be made here between faith and religion. One of the observations that frequently recurred during my discussions with migrants was that they were drawn to, and supported by, people of faith even though their religions may have been different. For example, a Lebanese woman fondly recalled her best friend as a teenager, a young Tongan woman.¹⁰ She explained that even though they attended different churches, her friend just 'got it'. She had the same fundamental appreciation of the importance of faith within family and communal life. There was a tacit understanding that faith and family came first. Contrary to the individualism inherent in the modern Western tradition, these young women took their obligations within the family sphere seriously.



Figure 3. Detail from Lebanese hand-stitched linen cloth, late 19th century. Note similarities of form with Cook Island tivaevae manu.



Figure 4. Lebanese embroidered man's velvet pouch, c. 1850.



Figure 5. Detail from Cook Island tivaevae manu.



Figure 6. Intricate hand-stitched Lebanese lace work. Detail from sleeve of laying out garment.

The daughter of a migrant from Lebanon recounts an incident in her father's life.¹¹ In Lebanon, during the First World War, her father who was then just eight years old was escaping from institutionalised life after being orphaned. Sick and exhausted, he took shelter in a cow barn which belonged to a Muslim family. The family nursed the boy to health and cared for him as a son for eight years, all the while encouraging him to continue practising his Christian tradition, appreciating its importance to his identity. Stories of such kindness are too numerous to recount here. However, what is crucial from cross-border conversations, is that a basic tenet of their faith is behaving ethically and accepting responsibility to contribute to the well-being of others. Faith, whether or not we subscribe to a particular religion, is what prompts us to nourish the well-being of others, even though it may require effort and sacrifice for ourselves.

The importance of family recurs repeatedly in conversations with migrants. Many have chosen to relocate here because of the possibility of a better life for their families. Concomitantly, these same individuals may be separated from their wider family network through this choice. It comes as no great surprise that often other family members will follow, if it is at all possible. Conversations about family are often shadowed by sadness. Even those who have brought young families here, settled and made lives that reflect their success, are often tearful when they consider those they have left behind. As one Malaysian Chinese man put it, you are always left with an 'imprint,' a pull towards the familiar that is linked to the preverbal experiences of childhood.¹² Several older migrants from various places commented that this 'pull' becomes stronger as they age. Those migrants who are fortunate enough to have wider family networks here value them enormously. A Chinese woman who comes from a family who settled in Otago generations ago says that family is one of the most important things.¹³ She knows all of her cousins and all of their children and makes a point of keeping the wider family together. Many Egyptian parents and grandparents will accompany their university-aged children to Dunedin to set up homes and make sure they are well cared for so that the young people can concentrate on their study and still experience the close support of their families.

Perhaps one of the challenges that we face as we become increasingly culturally diverse is how we can fill the gaps that are left by an absence of family networks. In part, cultural groups and societies help to alleviate loss of family through organising events and celebrations. Multiple initiatives within Dunedin's Pacific Island communities aim to provide cross-generational support in areas such as health, social activities, dance and music, craft and education. The Otago Southland Chinese Association is similarly active in providing support for the local established community and in seeking ways to engage with the newer wave of Chinese migrants. Organised church and community groups provide a range of supports and services for migrants. Many migrant families settle and bring their children up in Dunedin only to see them leave for greater professional opportunities, adventure or love elsewhere. Parents and grandparents left behind in this way are often disconnected from the community supports that are available, having been focused for a period of years on their own family.

Like practices around food, there is potential for us to engage – not only cross-culturally but cross-generationally – in dialogue about how we can draw together and satisfy the hunger for family connection that is increasingly evident among the entire population of Dunedin. The past decade has seen an increase in the number of artists who have emerged from migrant backgrounds exploring ideas about what it is to be at 'home,' with oneself, one's family and one's community. It is vital that their works, along with collaborative cross-cultural projects, are given public space because it is through such interrogations of ourselves and our place that we can perceive the placement of borders and reach beyond to the shared experience of humanity.

Listening to the stories of people who have invested energy, time, money, body and soul into relocating to another place in the world is a humbling experience. I have seen groups of elderly women transform before my eyes into giggling, sparkling teenagers as they are infused with the joy of shared memories. I have shared tears and laughter. I have experienced genuine hospitality and openness. These are gifts that I will treasure a long time after "Our Voices" finds its way into its designated exhibition spaces. But, what I'm really left with is the question: where to from here? As this reflection has shown, food, faith, family and arts may provide a platform from which we can begin to explore the potential for greater connectivity and collaboration across cultures and communities. New ways of seeing and working together will create new lifescapes and artscares for all of us. These will draw on multiple forms of knowledge and act as a restorative to the soul, a reinvigoration of our potential as human beings to coexist peacefully and creatively with each other and with our environment.

Philippa Keaney is a writer, facilitator, sometime teacher and eternal student. Her studies in political science and gender have augmented her passion for working to promote equitable access to the things that make a fulfilling life possible. She is increasingly drawn to stories from the past as a way of making sense of the present and of reinterpreting our responsibilities as human beings sharing a planet. She is currently completing a short-term contract with Toitū Otago Settlers Museum to produce the audiovisual "OurVoices" project.

- 1 Maria Wronska-Friend, "'Why Haven't We Been Taught All That At School?' Crosscultural Community Projects in North Queensland, Australia," *Curator*, 55:1 (2012), 4-19.
- 2 Anonymous, interview by author; Dunedin, 21 March 2012.
- 3 Simon Kaan, pers. comm., June 2012. Plus full reference to Kai Hau Kai online.
- 4 Anonymous, interview by author; Dunedin, 20 June 2012.
- 5 Anonymous, interview by author; Dunedin, 13 June 2012.
- 6 L Rongokea, *Tivaevae: Portraits of Cook Island Quilting* (Wellington: Daphne Brasell Associates, 1992).
- 7 Anonymous, interview by author; Dunedin, 15 May 2012.
- 8 Anonymous, interview by author; Dunedin, 29 May 2012.
- 9 Anonymous, interview by author; Dunedin, 9 May 2012.
- 10 Anonymous, interview by author; Dunedin, 14 May 2012.
- 11 Anonymous, interview by author; Dunedin, 16 April 2012.
- 12 Anonymous, interview by author; Dunedin, 8 July 2012.
- 13 Anonymous, interview by author; Dunedin, 11 June 2012.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF OTAGO'S POLYFEST

Jared Mackley-Crump

For almost 20 years, on an annual basis, a small part of Dunedin's abundant geographic and cultural space is temporarily transformed into a bounded, identifiable 'Pacific' place. Across numerous days, age groups and ethnic affiliations, thousands of students from around the Otago region (and sometimes beyond) come together to take part in the Otago Early Childhood and Schools Māori and Pacific Islands Festival, or Polyfest: the largest youth event in the southern city.

Second to Invercargill, Dunedin is the New Zealand city furthest away from Auckland – the metropolis known variously over the years as the 'First City of the Pacific' and, more recently and commonly, as the largest Polynesian city in the world. In spite of its less hospitable climate, especially when compared with the lands further north from which Oceanic peoples originally came, Māori oratory tells of various waves of migrations settling in Ōtepoti and the Otago region, culminating in the seventeenth century with Kai Tahu, the iwi we know better as Ngai Tahu. When their historically and culturally related 'cousins' began migrating to Aotearoa in large numbers, from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, the majority entered through and remained in Auckland. Despite this, small communities were established and settled in the South Island cities of Christchurch, Invercargill and Dunedin.

Using 2006 census data and growth averages, the latest Statistics New Zealand projections estimate there are around 9,000 Māori in Dunedin, and around 3,000 other Pacific peoples. With a total population approaching 130,000, as percentages, these numbers are well below the levels recorded on a national basis. These numbers are even more significantly out of kilter when considered alongside the fact that the majority of Māori and Pacific peoples are concentrated in certain areas, like South Auckland and Porirua and throughout the central North Island, where their percentages are far greater than the national average.

This is what makes the Otago Polyfest both more unique and more important as a site of identity creation and assertion, and for the negotiation of place and belonging.

A group of local educators and parents came together in the early 1990s to initiate one of the country's earlier Polyfests, following Auckland's lead of 1976, Wellington in 1979, Christchurch in 1981 and Porirua in the mid-1980s. There are now around 17 such events spread right across the country, including the most recently initiated, 2009's inaugural Polyfest in Invercargill, now a staple event in Southland. When its organisers did so, they carried with them the same intentions, hopes and wishes as those who started the events before them, and those who have done so in the years since: that Māori and Pacific youth are brought together in a forum for learning and sharing, for celebrating and affirming their Māori and Pacific-ness and displaying pride in their cultural heritages. In this sense, it would also help to reaffirm and even establish the identities of distinctly multicultural New Zealanders.

In performing aspects of indigenous Māori and more recently arrived migrant Pacific cultural traditions, participants of those ethnicities and cultural groups perform a sense of connection to place. Polyfest illuminates the routes that connect New Zealand to ancestral Pacific homelands while asserting the new roots within New Zealand as a new Pacific homeland. It helps negotiate the thorny issues of identity and belonging for those whose cultures and world



Behind the scenes: preparations, backstage and primary school performances at Otago Polyfest 2012.
Photograph by Iolana Feleti-Ivala.



High school performances from evening sessions, Otago Polyfest 2012.
Photograph by Iolana Feleti-Ivala.

views are often made invisible by the larger, European-dominated Southern narrative. It is an occasion when often inconspicuous communities move from the margins to the centre and are placed into a highly visible public sphere.

Whilst attending Polyfest in 2009, I spoke with some of the older community members about the event and the vibrant hub of community activities I had come to learn about, events which take place outside the glare of public attention and certainly away from the gaze of local media. We spoke about kapa haka, the friendly rivalry that drives dance competitions between North and South Dunedin Cook Islanders, the central role of South Dunedin's Sāmoan EFKS Christian Congregational church, and others. I will forever remember the words of one elder, who said to me that "We [the Māori and Pacific communities] tend to remain inconspicuous and beneath the radar here in Dunedin, but Polyfest is when we all come out to show ourselves and our cultures."

Polyfest, then, is an important space and display of community, both in a collective and individual sense. It is the occasion when the Māori community, the Sāmoan community, the Cook Island community, and so on, come together to celebrate both their individual cultures, journeys, and selves, but to also do so within an environment that celebrates where those cultures and journeys share common histories and characteristics. Polyfest is an affirmation of both the unity and diversity of the Pacific. It reinforces the ideology of collectivity, the so-called 'Pacific way' first proposed by Fiji's founding father Ratu Kamisese Mara. This notion in particular is a strong narrative within Aotearoa's disparate Pacific communities and is one that has increasingly come to (re)incorporate Māori, while retaining the special acknowledgement of Māori as *tāngata whenua*. And this type of acknowledgement extends to allowing each individual Pacific culture represented to retain its individual role within the overall 'Pacific' collective.

Performances at Polyfest festivalise space. At the same time, performances also Pacific-ise space. They are the sonic markers of festivity, announcing that what is taking place within its bounded space is a festival, a time of festivity and celebration. More than this though, they connote that this area, this festival, is a Pacific space (Pacific in the Māori-inclusive sense of the word). The festival becomes an embodiment of what Māori and other Pacific performance cultures are in their New Zealand and more localised contexts: condoned representations of aspects of material culture.

The French philosophers Deleuze and Guattari proposed that music can be seen as a metaphor for how people establish possession of space.¹ Australian cultural geographer Michelle Duffy extended this idea into the festival context,² and, finally, I have projected it further into the Pacific festival context.³ Extending the idea of marking festivity and marking Pacific-ness, Dunedin's Polyfest, as with other Pacific festivals held across Aotearoa, can be seen as a marker of territorialisation, a beacon of belonging that represents the place of Pacific peoples within and as a significant part of the local cultural and human geography of Dunedin. In a collective sense, in their growth and spread across New Zealand, Pacific festivals extend the interconnectedness of Pacific peoples and cultures in a diasporic sense, drawing New Zealand into the Pacific world. Over time, they have assisted in changing perceptions of place, from New Zealand as an outpost of the British Empire to one firmly centred in the South Pacific (or Asia-Pacific) narrative. Most obviously this has occurred in Auckland, a process that Melani Anae has referred to as a "browning,"⁴ but we should not discount the degree to which this has occurred and continues in other centres, and the impact this will continue to have. Pacific festivals are vibrant symbols of the Pacific-ness – the Pacific origins and interconnected role in the wider contemporary Pacific – of New Zealand.

Given the small numbers of Māori and other Pacific peoples who reside in Dunedin, the majority of young people who take part in Polyfest are, unsurprisingly, not of Pacific descent. This makes Otago's Polyfest even more significant as a space of cultural contact. At Polyfest, different 'contact parties' come together in an environment where the European norms of New Zealand society are temporarily inverted, and all things Māori and Pacific become the central focus. It allows borders to be crossed, not only in the sense of connecting Pacific peoples with ancestral homes and ideas of culture, identity and belonging, but in also allowing those not of Pacific descent to cross borders into cultures, ways of being and understandings that may not otherwise have been made available to them. And in that sense, Polyfest has been and will continue to be significant in allowing the Pacific-ness of Otago its annual moment to offer an alternative view of New Zealand's Deep South.

Jared Mackley-Crump spent six years studying at the University of Otago, from the beginning of 2006 to the end of 2011. After one year of tertiary study in the northern New South Wales region of Australia, he completed a Bachelor of Music with Honours, majoring in composition, in 2008. Switching focus to the anthropology of music, he entered the PhD programme in 2009 and spent three years investigating the festivalisation of Pacific cultures in New Zealand. His PhD was conferred in May 2012. He is currently publishing academic texts and writing for *SPASIFIK* magazine.

- 1 G Deleuze and F Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).
- 2 M Duffy, "Rhythmic Landscapes: Performing A Sense Of Place," *Youth, Sound and Space*, 1999, www.snarl.org/youth/duffy1.pdf; M Duffy, "Lines of Drift: Festival Participation and Performing a Sense of Place," *Popular Music*, 19:1 (2000), 51-64.
- 3 J Mackley-Crump, "The Festivalisation of Pacific Cultures in New Zealand: Diasporic Flow and Identity within 'a Sea of Islands,'" PhD thesis (Department of Music, University of Otago, 2012).
- 4 M Anae, "From Kava to Coffee: The Browning of Auckland," in *Almighty Auckland*, eds I Carter et al. (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2004), 89-110.

A COMMUNITY PROJECT: THE MAKING OF "TE MOANANUI Ā KIWA"

OTAGO POLYFEST 2012, DUNEDIN SCHOOL OF ART, DESIGN SCHOOL, OTAGO POLYTECHNIC

Caroline McCaw and Pam McKinlay

Early in 2012, the Polyfest Committee took a look at the banners that had been used as the stage backdrop for the 19 years since the festival's inception and, with great sadness, realised that they would need to undergo at the very least some major repairs and alterations, and that perhaps it was time to time look at seeking replacements.

THE PROJECT TEAM

They proposed a joint project with the Art and Design Schools at Otago Polytechnic to develop professionally designed and produced banners for display at the annual 'Otago Early Childhood and Schools Māori and Pacific Island Festival' known colloquially as Otago Polyfest. The initial team consisted of Pam McKinlay from the Dunedin School of Art and two artists, Tere Moeroa and Heremāhina Eketone, known through their histories with the Tautai Fresh Horizons programme, who were approached to come up with new concept artwork for the replacement banners.¹



Figure 1. Thomas Te Whaiti-Henry, Madison Henry-Ryan, Heremāhina Eketone, Vincent Egan and Caleb Dudley pose in front of their newly installed banner on day 2 of Polyfest 2012. Photo: Ashleigh Jarvis.

Te Moananui Ā Kiwa speaks of the significance of the spiritual waters that connect Aotearoa to her sisters and brothers of the Pacific ocean. In acknowledgment of the ancestral highways in the tides of *te moananui ā kiwa*, the meeting, trading and journeying places of our tupuna, tangata whenua o Aotearoa and the relationships of the people of the Pacific. Tangaroa, Tagaloa, Hinemoana, Hina, Papatūānuku.

Te Moana Nui Ā Kiwa, also symbolises the embrace that these oceans hold us in, particularly at the exit and entrance ways of the Te Tai Rāwhiti. From Te Rerenga Wairua and the merging of the two oceans at Te Taitokerau to the southern most points of Te Tai Tonga.

Te Moananui Ā Kiwa honours te iwi Māori, as tangata whenua of Aotearoa and pays homage to our close connections to the home lands of each of the Pacific nations. This collaborative piece combines strands, styles, flavours and aspects of culture and art from te ao Māori and from various Pacific nations. As a representation of the many Māori and the Pacific cultures presented and represented on the performance stage of Polyfest.

The centre piece is a representation of each of the cultural influences that reside here in Aotearoa. It highlights the marks, rhythms, melodies and the harmonies of Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, Cook Islands, Rarotonga, Hawaii, Tahiti including the koru being the acknowledgement of te iwi Māori. It acknowledges our tūpuna and those who've paved the way, from the ancient ones who sailed *te moananui ā kiwa* for the first time. The design gives an impression of seeing into the past and bringing forward to the present and future.

Symbolising strength and the journeys of the ancestors, the ngaru or iro gives the footprint image of the waves and hints towards flow and tides but also challenges. Waves are also an interpretation of consistency and repetition but also waves of change, evolution and creativity. The tides are those that cleanse, heal and create - the blending of wairua within the vibrations of *Te Moana Nui Ā Kiwa*. The tiare Māori or Frangipani, displays an essence of the grace and beauty contained in the art forms, the dance and the complete shared cultures. The coconut leaves, spread out as do the arm and legs and facets of dance, but also the whakapapa of generations and extending and growing capacity within a family tree.



Te Moananui Ā Kiwa

The shape itself, being representative of the sounds, vibrations and the echo's heard within the shells and shields of *Te Moananui Ā Kiwa*, also portrays the protective energies of Tangaroa. The outer borders are the posts or pou that represent strength and sustainability. The myriad of designs and colour incorporate features of Māori arts and culture through traditional and modern art styles. They reflect the many cultures, the many performers, the groups, schools and communities who have graced the Polyfest stage over the past 19 years.

Within the specifically Māori designs, inspired by whakairo, raranga and tāniko interpretations, there is a symbolic weaving together of strengths, passion, creativity, people and music, in a unity that blends yet retains individual beauty and style. The pātiki represents

whakapapa, genealogy, history of Polyfest – including students, tutors, schools, past, present and future. The poutama provide a visual framework of striving for enlightenment and knowledge, acknowledging education, performance, families, reaching milestones growth and future development. Roimata or tears of remembrance and release, recognise the travels of our ancestors across the oceans, and the repositioning of cultures. Nihō Taniwha symbolises our leaders, mentors, rangatira, ariki, ancestors and guides.

No Ngāti Maniapoto, Tainui, Waikato, ko HERAMĀHINA EKETONE

No Rarotonga, Mangaia, ko TERE MOEROA



Figure 2. George Street Normal School Pasifika Group performance, day 1, Polyfest 2012. The drummer; back left, is Tere Moeroa.

Joining the project team from the Design School were Caroline McCaw and three Design students in Year 2 of the communication course: Thomas Te Whaiti-Henry, Madison Henry-Ryan and Vincent Egan. Key components of the artworks were provided by the artists as sketches; the designers were required to interpret these key components as vector-based, coloured designs, and then develop print-ready files suitable for printing onto large banners at newSplash² studio. The results were the digital paintings that became *Te Moananui Ā Kiwa*.

Reitu Cassidy, a Polyfest committee representative with a background in fashion design, facilitated the artist/designer negotiation. Reitu's professional eye kept a high level of expectation and a focus on the bigger picture as well as the details. Reitu was a valuable overseer and connection between the client and the creative process. Her fine eye for detail ensured that the quality of the final images was exceptional.

THE PROJECT – THE PROCESS BECAME COLLABORATIVE

The banner artwork had significance, both personal and cultural, for artists Tere Moeroa and Heremāhina Eketone. The artists, whose focus was on the meanings being visually portrayed, would under their normal art practice, control the whole process of making their designs. Both artists would usually develop their ideas from preliminary drawings directly through to their chosen media (print, tātau, graf, whakairo, tāniko). The scale of the new works, however, meant that traditional or handmade media were not the best options for making new banners within the time and budgetary constraints of the project.

Rather, in this project key components in the artworks were provided by the artists, as concept sketches. The designers were required to visualise these key components as vector-based coloured banner designs, and then develop print-ready files. The files were extremely complex at two metres tall (one quarter of the final print size of 8m) and included hundreds of layers of digital lines, shapes and colours. The collaborative development of the designs required many face-to-face meetings, orchestrated between the various workplaces of those involved around Dunedin, and emailed communications. During this period of interchange the artist/designer roles and expectations shifted as the designers were required to take on more of a leading role. The demands of working



Figure 3. Collaboration process. Artists and designers worked together to refine elements of the vector drawing.

in modern graphic technologies and the tight deadline of the project saw the young designers' capabilities extend. Their hands and eyes contributed significantly to the development of the artworks as they were transformed from simple pencil sketches into large-scale and complex banner graphics. The final designs are the result of an iterative process developed within a team of creative professionals.

The breakthrough moment for these various groups – artists, designers and client – came when they managed to come together as a whole group. Sitting together around the computers in the final days, each member of the team was able to communicate their processes, vision and strategies as the banner artwork became a whole. The design evolved quickly at this stage in a collaborative process, and the art team could appreciate first-hand the level of effort required to change even small details, while the vision of the artists became clearer for the designers.

REFLECTING ON THE PROJECT – LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR THE DESIGN STUDENTS

For the design students the project was hard work – at times stressful with a deadline looming– and involved a big learning curve, both in terms of software and in working in new ways collaboratively with the art team. Each design student spent between 60 and 80 hours on the project, sharing times and working on files. The project helped the students to identify their valuable design languages, cultural as well as technical. They gave their design group a name – *Nexus Dimensions* – and included Year 1 student, Caleb Dudley, along the way, ensuring their learning was being passed on. They have since been signed up with newSplash studio for further part-time work.

Reflecting on the project after the opening and dedication of the banners at the festival, the students were tired but really proud of the outcome. They were able to reflect on how much experience that they had gained through the project, along with the chance of possible employment. They had had a taste of 'designer culture' and loved it!

They really enjoyed working as a team, all participating on one set of files and contributing to the design solution. They reflected, too, on the many personal rewards. Their comments reflect this pride:

"It's very motivating to work with cultural projects. There is more of a sense of history and relevance."

"I feel we are honouring our ancestors."

"Projects like this make my work relevant to my family."

They are looking forward to more opportunities like this. And new opportunities are likely to grow out of the success of the Otago Polyfest banners, with enquiries for new work coming before the end of the three days of the festival.

CONCLUSION

The project offered a practice-based learning opportunity for the design students that was community-driven and culturally relevant. This followed on from previous student involvement in professional and culturally relevant Design projects, with filming of the *Haka Peepshow* (2011) and Puaka Mātāriki poster design (2011, 2012).

In terms of designing for culturally based outcomes, Māori communities and Pacific Island communities need designers like these who can span traditional design processes, values and aesthetics and connect these with contemporary digital media processes and output. The project has been an opportunity for staff and students to reflect upon the processes and learn to develop new processes and tikanga that help artists and designers to bridge this gap with valuable input from the commissioning communities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In approaching the Dunedin School of Art and Design School, the Otago Polyfest Committee recognised that Otago Polytechnic offered a specialised knowledge and technical skills base in their staff and students, which made a valuable contribution to achieving the new look and enabling production of the new banners. Special thanks to Lynda Henderson and the staff at newSplash, who oversaw the final printing of the banners which ran over two days. The project was largely able to be realised thanks to Otago Polytechnic, which agreed to sponsor the costs of printing associated with the banners, in recognition of the importance of this key community-driven event that celebrates Māori performing arts and Pacific Culture. Photography by Iolana Feleti-Ivala.

OTAGO POLYFEST OPENING AND BANNER DEDICATION

The resulting banners were dedicated on the opening night at the Otago Early Childhood and Schools Māori and Pacific Island Festival held at the Edgar Centre in August 2012. The opening ceremony included karakia from kaumātua Karaka Roberts, Reverend Tokerau Joseph, Foalima Lemalu and supporting performances from Te Kura Kaupapa Māori o Otepoti, Queens of the Pacific and Kia Orana Performing Arts. The opening ceremony concluded with a blessing of the new taonga by kaumātua Karaka Roberts.

Heramāhina Eketone (Ngāti Maniapoto, Tainui, Waikato) has a long involvement with Polyfest, first as a performer, then as a tutor, and now as part of the Festival Committee. She graduated from the University of Otago, with a BA in Māori and Diploma for Graduates in Social Work in 2007, and also studied for her Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work which was completed in 2009. She is on the committee for the refurbishment of the wharehau at Araiteuru Marae, Dunedin.

Tere Moeroa (Rarotonga, Mangaia) graduated from the Dunedin School of Art with a BFA in printmaking in 2007. He participated in Tautai Contemporary Arts Trust workshops, held in Christchurch, as a student and most recently in Tautai workshops, held in Dunedin, as an artist mentor. His interests include traditional Polynesian art, *tātau*, graffiti and design.

Madison Henry-Ryan (Ngāi Tahu and Cook Island Māori) is a communication design student at Otago Polytechnic. He worked part time as a commis chef at the Crowne Plaza and as a snowboard instructor at Coronet Peak before studying tertiary-level design. He is passionate about film and graphic design, and has also worked on the film set (special effects crew) on Rachael Rakena's *Haka Peepshow* 3D film and artwork in 2011. He is one of the founding members of the *Nexus Dimensions* design crew.

Vincent Egan (Ngāti Ruanui and Nga Ruahine), alias Strate Winnix, is a Communication Design student at Otago Polytechnic. He is a descendant of the proud Ngāti Ruanui and Nga Ruahine people still dwelling beneath the vista of Mount Taranaki. He is interested in drawing and graphic design, but is keen to follow up many creative pursuits along his path. He is one of the four founding members of the *Nexus Dimensions* design crew.

Thomas Te Whaiti Henry (Cook Island and Ngāti Kahungunu) is a Communication Design student at Otago Polytechnic, and is of Cook Island and Ngāti Kahungunu descent. He hails from the creative city of Dunedin, where he has worked as a joiner and a builder in the past, and attended Logan Park High School. He is passionate about projection (digital media) and graphic design, and worked on the film set (special effects crew) on Rachael Rakena's *Haka Peepshow* 3D film and artwork in 2011. He is one of four founding members of the *Nexus Dimensions* design crew.

Pam McKinlay works in the Dunedin School of Art as an editorial assistant on *Junctures: the Journal for Thematic Dialogue* and the journal *SCOPE: Contemporary Research Topics in Art and Design*, maintains the School of Art websites and the DSA Art Collection. She has an applied sciences and arts background and graduated with a Dip H.Sc in Clothing/Design and Textile Science and a BA in Art History from the University of Otago.

Caroline McCaw Academic Leader (Communication), teaches across a range of courses in the Otago Polytechnic Design School, from design culture and context, graphic design and interaction design, through to interdisciplinary and studio projects. She is a member of the Aotearoa Digital Arts network, sits on various community arts committees, and is currently writing her PhD through Queensland College of the Arts, Brisbane.

- 1 Tautai Pacific Contemporary Arts Trust, Fresh Horizons Programme. The Fresh Horizon workshops have been run by Tautai since 2001. Tautai engages established Pacific artists as tutors at the workshops and also engages senior Pacific students from the host tertiary institutions to assist them. Secondary schools in the nominated area identify and nominate students to take part. By putting known artists in as tutors, backed up by senior tertiary students as assistants, Tautai is giving the secondary students visible role models. The aim is to give the students a stimulating art experience under the eye of positive, enthusiastic role models, and reinforce the value of continued education. The Dunedin School of Art hosted a series of Tautai workshops in April of 2010 and will be hosting a new series in 2013. See <http://www.tautai.org/fresh-horizons/>.
- 2 newSplash is a communication design studio based in Dunedin as a project of the Applied Design Research Centre. This studio connects emerging designers with commercial or not-for-profit clients. newSplash matches clients' requirements to the skills of the Art School's design students and graduates, and students gain valuable work experience in a learning environment.

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ARCHETYPE AND FETISH

Catherine Cocker

This article reviews the use of archetype and iconography, within the Western colonisation process, of the Pacific region. The traditions that have fed this topic are world views that used, and continue to use, notions of absolutes such as authenticity and truth. This has created a sense of dualism where the ambiguities within situations become shadow by-products to these concepts, creating division and segregation, both within and without the individual. The colonised person becomes an object as opposed to a subject. This objectification leads to what I call a fetishisation of culture, or, culture fetish. My experiences socially have been informed by my own ancestry, in part Tongan, Scottish and Spanish, and have come from negotiating conflicted cultural spaces. I will be looking at works from Pacific artists that I feel express and convey these conflicts.

Traditionally archetypes and iconography are used as aural and visual mnemonic triggers for learning the myths and stories of cultures. Not only do they illustrate stories from the past, but they help to form a world view. One worldview can seed the creation of stereotypes about cultures and peoples which ultimately help a coloniser objectify them. This objectification becomes a culture fetish and has been used as a powerful tool to subjugate and undermine colonised people. As a response to this, through reframing the stereotypes, some Pacific artists and other 'minority' groups are beginning to reclaim their identities.

Two common archetypes are the Dusky Maiden and the Noble Savage. These particular archetypes have fuelled many contemporary stereotypes and though this thinking may not have been ill-intentioned the outcome was excessively patronising, objectifying and misplaced. The Dusky Maiden and the Noble Savage are Victorian fetishistic stereotypes created in part by colonial desire and its concomitant guilt. Victorian England was controlled through its dualistic sexual repression and misogyny that Victorian Christianity anchored this culture with. This repression created a vacuum of absence which needed to be filled. Guilt became a predominant emotion.

Perceptions of sexuality and gender from a Victorian English Christian morality conflicted with that of a pre-colonial Pacific people's morality. Aided by a sense of inherent superiority, European missionaries, settlers, intellectuals, poets and writers all illustrated and expressed, in various ways, these stereotypes. For example, with the advent of photography the ethnographic depiction of the Dusky Maiden and Noble Savage was distributed world-wide. As a proactive move many Pacific artists have manipulated these images "with the intention of highlighting these absurd notions and of reclaiming control over their own images and identities. These stereotypes highlight issues of cultural transference, from coloniser to colonised, and the objectification and fetishisation of Pacific cultures particularly as it has been reflected through photography. This conversation has been explored by Pacific artists such as Chris Charteris, Sofia Tekela-Smith and Niki Hastings-McFall, epitomised in their exhibition invitation *1 Noble savage 2 Dusky Maiden*, and by Shigeyuki Kihara in works such as *Tauluga: the Last Dance* and *Fa'afafine: In the Manner of a Woman*.

There is a critique of the cliché, of the ways in which the islands and their people are represented. Posing in such a way as to recreate the ethnographic photograph, Chris Charteris, Niki Hastings McFall and Sophia Tekela-Smith became *1 Noble Savage* and *2 Dusky Maidens* the critique of this cliché balanced their respect for a cultural heritage with their reinterpretation of the Western stereotype.¹

The Charteris, Tekela-Smith and Hastings-McFall exhibition invitation recreates ethnographic photographs from the initial colonisation period. The artists have put themselves in the positions of the Dusky Maidens and the Noble

Savage thereby humorously critiquing and reclaiming identity from the colonial Pacific fetish of the European gaze to Pacific people.

In *Fa'afafine In a Manner of a Woman*, Shigeyuki Kihara reframes the Dusky Maiden concept and pushes these boundaries even further. Kihara places his/her self in the place of the Dusky Maiden unravelling a multi-layered conversation about the time and space between cultures by referring to both gender *and* sexuality. Through this culturally conflicted space Kihara begins to reclaim an important part of his/her personal identity as Samoan and by exhibiting this also reclaims an important part of Samoan identity in a public forum. S/he reclaims a perception of gender that has been hidden publically through colonisation. Fa'afafine is a third and valid gender; within a Pacific context, as opposed to a perversion or abnormality as conceptualised in western culture. Through this triptych Kihara explores, the colonial gaze, the Samoan gaze, and the uneasy space between them.

Kihara's photograph is clearly staged in a studio but uses background props to create an illusion of being set in the natural world... In his influential writings on photography the theorist Roland Barthes coined the term 'punctum' to describe an, at first inconsequential detail that pricks at you as it does not seem right.²



Figure 1. 'Fa'afafine; in a manner of a woman' (2005) Triptych 1/3, Shigeyuki Kihara. Image courtesy of artist and Sean Coyle.

Figure 2. 'Fa'afafine; in a manner of a woman' (2005) Triptych 2/3, Shigeyuki Kihara. Image courtesy of artist and Sean Coyle.

Figure 3. 'Fa'afafine; in a manner of a woman' (2005) Triptych 3/3, Shigeyuki Kihara. Image courtesy of artist and Sean Coyle.

Simulation and illusion are two strong ingredients punctuating these images. The dusky maiden is an illusory concept, an erotic object created in the space between colonial culture and the colonised. This is the first punctuation. The second punctuation is that the setting is simulated. The trees and other paraphernalia are bought into a studio setting from outside, creating a theatrical atmosphere. And thirdly, but not least, is Kihara's slow strip from appearing female to being both sexes or Fa'afafine. According to Kihara it was not unusual for sailors and colonials to have had a male mate instead of a female. This was seldom publically acknowledged, possibly due to the fact that homosexuality was illegal.

These images illustrate the disparities between cultures. The images focus on the internalised anxiety that colonial Europeans historically projected onto Pacific people around gender and sexuality. We are talking about a culture that imprisoned people for homosexuality and then in more 'enlightened' times locked people up and gave them electric shocks as a way to cure them of their 'abhorrent' nature. Although these practices are no longer endorsed they still influence western thinking. Some of these differences are inherent in notions such as Drag (Queen or King), as opposed to the notion of Fa'afafine. Within a drag context gender is parodied and traditionally theatrical, seen as a perversion from the normal, whereas Fa'afafine is a third and valid gender.

The crux of this cultural dissonance could, come from an emphasis placed on a concept of space or *Va* (Pacific word for space). *Ta Va* or time and space in Pacific cultures often conflict with Western notions around these concepts.

According to Kihara, Fa'afafine exists in the *Va*, or the space between, genders. Kihara's work explores and challenges the effects of the binary gender code of Western Culture and how it effects and has influenced traditional Samoan culture.

Using art as the *Va* / space to challenge and reclaim identity, Kihara subverts the colonial gaze into a broader Pacific one. She pulls the

iconography from the dualistic and divided colonial space into a more open and considered, ambiguous space of a colonised Pacific, creating new archetypes from the old and limited fetishistic perspective of European colonisers.

Catherine Cocker is a graduate of the Dunedin School of Art, BFA, Post-grad Diploma. She has exhibited in the rear window of the DPAG and has had proposals for work accepted for several shows in 2012/2013.

Shigeyuki Kihara is a performance artist whose recent solo exhibition was held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET), New York. Titled *Shigeyuki Kihara: Living Photographs* (2008/09), this exhibition featured, amongst others, Kihara's self-portrait nudes in provocative poses which critique the portrayed colonial images of Polynesian women as sexual objects. Kihara's work has been shown in major international events, amongst others, Asia Pacific Triennial; Auckland Triennial; Videonale and Sakahàn; 1st International Quinquennial of New Indigenous Art. Kihara's performances have been staged at, amongst others, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand; National Gallery of Victoria International (Melbourne), Haus der Kulturen der Welt (Berlin); Musée du Quai Branly (Paris) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York).

- 1 Stevenson, Karen, *The Frangipani Is Dead; contemporary pacific art in New Zealand 1985-2000*, (Wellington, Huia Publishers, 2008). p.126.
- 2 Wolf, Erika, Shigeyuki Kihara's Fa'afafine; In the Manner of a Woman: the Photographic Theatre of Cross-Cultural Encounter (University of Otago), p.25 http://otago.academia.edu/ErikaWolf/Papers/1076542/Shigeyuki_Kiharas_Faa_fafine_In_a_Manner_of_a_Woman_The_Photographic_Theater_of_Cross-Cultural_Encounter; accessed 25/08/2012

“RESISTING AFRICA:” NOTES ON AN EXHIBITION

Victoria Bell



Figure 1. *Resisting Africa* (2011), exhibition view. Photograph by Craig McNab.

The exhibition “Resisting Africa” was presented at the Temple Gallery, Dunedin, from 12 August to 2 September 2011 and was the conclusion of my Master of Fine Arts degree undertaken at the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic – Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, New Zealand. Founded on a critical reflection of my youthful travels as a tourist in Morocco and Kenya, the show explored my inherent consumption of Western tropes of Africa as an ‘exotic’ or ‘savage’ locale. Through research into the critical frameworks and histories bound within the discourse of postcolonialism, I was able to ‘unpack’ my discrete tourist experiences and reflect on my travel with new insight. The following essay introduces aspects of this research in relation to the final artworks produced for this show.

I have and have not been to Africa.

Africa: not a single imagined country but many nations.

As a tourist I have been to places in Africa, within a bubble of my own – unrecognised fantasies and cultural constructions. I have travelled through landscapes, savannahs, across lakes, rivers and the Indian ocean, entered cities, temples, markets and slums ... always contained within a vehicle, a vessel, a room, a space, by my guide, by my language, by my skin ... kept in close proximity to 'Africa,' but always at a distance.

I have not been to Africa.

The viewer enters a vignette of animal/furniture sculptures made from rich upholstery velvets and antiques. These works re-order the accepted shift from animal to object through 'wrong' configurations of furniture and covering, disrupting a viewer's easy consumption of the 'exotic.' Here the drawing room and safari collide: evoking the implicit histories and constructions, desires for the 'exotic' and 'other' avoid (death, wealth, poverty, fantasy, transference ...).

These strange animal 'trophies' refer to my safari journey in Kenya. The idea of the safari tour – looking at wild animals in a constructed natural setting, from a vehicle which can only stop in 'safe' zones – is shifted by relocating animal motifs to a domestic interior setting. This reshuffle of contemporary African safari and Victorian colonial signs into an 'off' tableau refers to Western tropes of Africa which play out in cinematic and literary tales and which informed my own desire to travel to Africa – in particular, *Out of Africa*, directed by Sydney Pollack, and *The Sheltering Sky*, directed by Bernardo Bertolucci.

Debbie Lisle, in *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, has said that "[t]he idea that 'everybody moves freely' in a globalised world is a fallacy: only those who can afford to move, or those who are willing to take the risks associated with migration, are able to cross established geopolitical borders with ease."¹ Reflecting on my previously naive approach to travel and tourism, this statement resonated with my personal experiences. Not everybody can move freely. Furthermore, in terms of the tourist experience, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, make a case that "contemporary tourism, it can be argued, is in many ways the modern extension of ... possession by exploration. The tourist enters the territory of the 'other' in search of an exotic experience."²

The accretions of 'exotic' Africa include the artefacts and animals which circulate in Western culture's primitive vernacular. During the realm of colonial conquest, collectors in the guise of explorer, colonial agent and ethnographer gathered objects officially and unofficially, which were then relocated to Europe. Most assuredly, the drive for scientific discovery, described as the 'anti-conquest' by Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, provided the momentum for the excessive collection of artefacts, flora and fauna samples and the intensive accumulation of exotic animals: animals which were hunted and killed so as to be depicted as life-like taxidermy objects in great museums. The push and pull of trade in both directions – to Africa, and the consequential relocation of animal 'trophies' and other collectables to Europe – produced surreal fusions of objects in colonial homes, then and still now. The visual language of this 'exotic' collecting remains a trope of 'exotic style' in contemporary interior design.

In particular, British campaign furniture enabled the values and aesthetics of the Victorian epoch to traverse far beyond the geographic borders of Great Britain. This furniture, made portable by the ingenuity of Thomas Sheraton and Thomas Chippendale et al, which could be transported easily without the need for nails or tools, and assembled in "some corner of another foreign field that was forever elegantly furnished England"³, also furnished safari expeditions of the past and lingers in the aesthetics of contemporary lodgings in Africa and the West.

The portability of this furniture, while highly functional, was dependent on indigenous porters to provide the manpower to mobilise these English accommodations. As the Victorian travel writer Francis Galton notes, "The luxuries and elegances practicable in tent-life, are only limited by the means of transport ..."⁴ Campaign furniture may stand then as a sign for the hierarchies of power active in the colonial age.

The circulation of campaign furniture by military expeditions and, later, settlers to the colonies also contributed to the transportation of British hierarchies of class and rank to the 'new world.' Class structures and manners were maintained abroad in 'uncivilised' terrains, despite the practicalities required of a non-European setting, by the use of furniture items to perform cultural etiquette. Campaign furniture informed my research in a series of ways. As props, part of the 'exotic' period elements in films such as *Out of Africa*, this furniture forms part of the visual vocabulary of romanticised 'Africa.' In reality, the major colonising activity of the past occurred under the reign of Queen Victoria and the furniture of this period becomes a sign of those times: a reference to Victorian England.

In considering Victorian England it is important to mention the artist Yinka Shonibare, whose art practice critiques colonialism with humour and beauty. He recognises the continuing presence and impact on contemporary life of Victorian conventions and inventions which were products of the British encounter with Africa, such as the banking system, which originated firstly in relation to the slave trade.⁵ Nigerian-born and raised in a prosperous Yoruba family based in Lagos, Shonibare was surprised when he entered an élite English boarding school, at age 16, to find that "there was this notion that if you were black you were somehow disadvantaged." In an interview with Anthony Downey, published in the monograph *Yinka Shonibare MBE*, he discusses further his interests in Victoriana and the prominence of this reference point in his work:

Let me ... [note] that I am an African speaking English to you. The reason for that is because of the colonial period ... in the 1980's the then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher started to talk about Victorian values ... I thought it would be ironic to play with ... that notion of Victorian 'values.' There was a way of subverting that idea of the historical authority of the Victorian period by appropriating it or being complicit with it ... [In] *The Victorian Philanthropist's Parlour* ... the philanthropist wants to help the less fortunate; however, in this opulent environment of the parlour, where he has decorated his walls with images of black footballers, there will always be a relationship of patronage; or, if you like, a relationship between 'haves,' the colonial philanthropist, and the so-called 'have-nots,' the poor colonials. Philanthropy is more about dominance in the colonial context than it is about altruism; it is more of a condescending idea where the power relationship is never equal.⁶

Thematically, a link between "Resisting Africa" and the established and extensive practice of Shonibare is possible. Critically though, he is African and British, which I am not, and has an inherently different and deeper understanding of this territory. However, there remains a sensibility in his work which I am drawn to and influenced by. His repeated use of textiles as a key medium has made his practice visible in textile forums⁷ as well as visual arts contexts. Shonibare's use of Dutch wax textiles is complex, as these materials are both a product of and sign for the muddy, transcontinental history of colonialism. These highly coloured fabrics, symbolic of African identity, represent the ironies of cultural authenticity, as their origins are far more complex. As Rachel Kent, a contributor to *Yinka Shonibare MBE* and curator of the exhibition of the same name notes, these fabrics are "inspired by Indonesian batiks, manufactured in the Netherlands and Manchester, and marketed in the nineteenth century to West African buyers ... [They have] become a signifier of authentic African identity ... [yet] this might seem ironic, in light of their European colonial origins."⁸ With insouciance and flair Shonibare presents politically charged subject matter beautifully and whimsically, seducing viewers into an engagement with his artworks by his mastery of the visual languages of pattern, colour and form, before they perhaps realise the underlying critiques present in his subject matter.

Coupled with the furniture elements in "Resisting Africa" are the African animals which are entwined within the works. I am concerned with the use of animals as curios and signs of status which allude to and re-inscribe imperial activity. From the nineteenth century onwards the display of African animal trophies has been acceptable in

different quarters, conveying the eminence of an owner's hunting ability, wealth or taste. Western culture has readily consumed African animals as objects within the museum and as elements of interior decorating. It remains for many acceptable that an elephant's foot be made into an umbrella stand or stool,⁹ or a zebra skin be made into a fine rug.

In 1991 Carol J Adams wrote *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, which explored the relationship between patriarchal values and meat-eating. Adams introduced the structure of the 'absent referent,' a linguistic shift which occurs when we talk about meat and animals; for example, we eat pork but this meat comes from an animal we call a pig. By shifting language terms from subject to object, we exclude the death required of the animal in order for us to consume it. In this way we maintain a separation between 'meat' and the idea that it was once a living animal. Adams proposes that the use of the absent referent not only oppresses animals, but also women and other non-dominant humans. She states that women and animals are linked as absent referents in the texts of a patriarchal society: "Terms relating to parts of a woman's body and cuts of meat are often used interchangeably ... The link is also seen in everyday language: If animals are the absent referent in the phrase 'the butchering of women,' then women are the absent referent in the phrase, 'the rape of animals.'"¹⁰

Adams' theory of the absent referent offers a way of understanding why we accept animals as objects. When we re-term a Zebra's skin as a rug, the horror of its death is abstracted, remaining separate from our considerations of 'good' design in decorating our homes.

Each artwork in "Resisting Africa" also expresses particular qualities. *Heart of Darkness* sprawls across the gallery floor like a pool of blood. The deep red and taupe work plays on ideas about death, luxury and colonisation. Zebra skin rugs are a common interior decorating motif, seen in homes displayed in many interior design magazines. I believe there is something particularly horrific about the casual arrangement of chairs over the heads of these 'rugs' or in the invitation to sit on a zebra skin draped over a couch. For the reader to imagine, or home owner to actually do this, means that the abstraction of the animal's death is so convincing that it is no longer perceived as a once living entity. In these Western interiors, the animal's hide is used decoratively, to signify affluence and a taste for the 'exotic.'

In Peter Beard's photo book, *The End of the Game*, the excesses of colonialism are hauntingly documented. Beard's makeshift safari to the edge of Somalia in 1960 greatly impacted his life and photography. He critically perceived the costs of colonialism and began to record the consequences of colonial rule by documenting the diminishing wildlife and traumatised lands of Africa. He stated in 1965: "It is too late to undo what has been done. The laws of inevitability which have ruled Africa for millions of years must now be accepted by Africa's conquerors. To understand this is to begin to realize that we have conquered nothing at all."¹¹

Out of Africa is made from a nineteenth-century chaise longue, approximately dated to 1850, which was stripped to its wooden frame, restored, and then re-upholstered in blue velvet to match the lioness which reclines upon it. The two objects are staged as one piece. By retaining the form of the lioness's body, Adams' notion of the 'absent referent' is referenced. Rather than a 'skin' draped across the chaise, her body remains whole. Therefore, positioned, even camouflaged on the chaise longue, the lioness stands in judgement on the West's ready consumption of African animals as decorative objects.

This piece also refers to Edouard Manet's *Olympia* of 1863, a work which continues to be re-staged and critiqued in contemporary art. Artists responding to this painting have critiqued ideas about male objectification of the female body in terms of desire and possession, and have explored subjectivities of female and non-white bodies. In *Portrait (Futago)* of 1988, Yasunaga Morimura highlights the dimension of race in his reworking of Manet's painting:



Figure 2. *Out of Africa* (2011) (detail), mixed media, 105cm x 180cm x 110cm. Photograph by Craig McNab.



Figure 3. *Heart of Darkness* (2011) (detail), mixed media, 20cm x 140cm x 180cm. Photograph by Craig McNab.



Figure 4. *I Dreamed of Africa* (2011), mixed media, 90cm x 52cm x 66cm (each). Photograph by Craig McNab.

By inserting a non-European body into *both* of *Olympia's* figures, black and white, the gesture outlined another power ratio at work in Manet's *Olympia*, one that had been rather mysteriously elided: male over female, bourgeois over working class, yes – but also white vision and white art over non-white vision and art. That neither the 'class' nor the 'gender' interpretation by new art historians had recognized this triple structure indicated something rather disturbing: that even the most ... enlightened Western viewers still could not see race clearly ... How could they have forgotten that the Paris of 1865 was the capital of a vast – and expanding – colonial empire?¹²

As Morimura suggests, the codes of desire and power within Manet's work are echoed in a colonialist discourse which expresses possession in terms of rape, penetration and impregnation (of both land and people), whilst the subsequent relationship of the coloniser and colonised is often presented in a discourse that is redolent of a sexualised exoticism. *Out of Africa* opens a space between these binaries, a disruption and a re-invention.

Expanding on these ideas of sexualised exoticism are the bulbous pink anuses and penetrating tails of *I Dreamed of Africa*. Ideas about sexuality are more overtly evoked in this piece, but the viewer's horror or repulsion at their gaping orifices is countered by attraction and sensuality through the employment of tactile textile surfaces. The use of plush fabrics seduces the viewer into desiring to touch them, thereby transgressing the expectation that one may not touch an artwork in a gallery. This indulgent *frisson* of the forbidden may also operate as a (safe) metaphor for the perilous danger implied in desiring to touch the 'other' that is active in discourses of colonialism.

Much of the research involved in this project examined patriarchal systems of power and how hierarchies of thought have been constructed by white men to frame colonial thinking. Ideas about sexuality are part of this territory. In the psycho-geography of colonial Europe, the black male body was a place of imaginary phallic surplus. This construction of a highly sexed 'savage' contributes to and continues the notion of peril for white women in Africa. However, female sexuality has also been framed by patriarchal systems which continue to construct binary identities such as the virgin or the whore. Feminist debates about how Western women might express a dialogue about sexuality and pleasure also continue. How does one talk about pleasure or present ideas about sexuality visually without enforcing patriarchal representations of women? In discussing the practice of Ghada Amer, Maria Elena Buszek addresses this question by suggesting that:

It is undeniable that representations of women in both the art world and popular culture have frequently represented womanhood according to patriarchal myths that feminism has sought to deny. Yet women have always found pleasure, and even power in these very representations, which feminism has also provided women with strategies for subverting. Thankfully, many women artists find in the truth of both these positions a challenge that has led to attempts to represent the very contradiction of feminist sexuality in their work.¹³

The idea of a contradictory feminist sexuality was important to this project, as it provided a way to counter desire as constructed within patriarchal tropes regarding Africa. Furthermore, through this studio work I recognised my adherence to these scripts of desire in my African travel experiences. Consequently "Resisting Africa" became an exploration of resistance: an exercise in unpacking the cultural baggage I carried to Africa. It also acknowledged the surfacing dialogues about sexuality in my practice. This becomes more significant when one considers that part of a dialogue about desire involves an enquiry into pleasure. How one does this as a white woman within the contradictory spaces between patriarchal and feminist structures of sexuality is complicated, political and personal. I believe this exhibition evokes critical questions about pleasure in relation to desire by reworking colonial motifs into configurations which denote new and revised power relationships. This critical reworking of power provides agency for the artist and viewer to re-assess their imagined and real encounters with Africa, in a postcolonial context.

Victoria Bell is a graduate of the Master of Fine Arts programme at the Dunedin School of Art at Otago Polytechnic – Te Kura Matatini ki Otago, where she also lectures. Her practice engages with Whiteness Studies and Western constructions of 'Other'. In 2005 she received the Olivia Spencer Bower Award.

- 1 Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 10.
- 2 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2000), 97-8.
- 3 Nicholas A Brawer, *British Campaign Furniture: Elegance Under Canvas, 1740-1914* (New York: Abrams, 2001), 19.
- 4 Ibid, 89.
- 5 Anthony Downey, "Setting the Stage; Yinka Shonibare in Conversation with Anthony Downey," in *Yinka Shonibare MBE* (Munich, London & New York: Prestel, 2008), 39.
- 6 Ibid, 39.
- 7 See *Yinka Shonibare: September 8 – November 6, 2004*, an exhibition at the Fabric Workshop and Museum, Philadelphia, <http://www.fabricworkshopandmuseum.org/exhibitions/shonibare.php>, [accessed 1 Apr 2011], and Nadine Käthe Monem, *Contemporary Textiles: The Fabric of Fine Art* (London: Black Dog, 2008).
- 8 Rachel Kent, in *Yinka Shonibare MBE*, 12.
- 9 See <http://www.trophyroomcollection.com>, which exemplifies the contemporary trade in African animal curios and furnishings.
- 10 *The Animal Ethics Reader*, eds Susan J Armstrong and Richard G Botzler (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), 209-15.
- 11 Peter H Beard, *The End of The Game: The Last Word from Paradise* (Köln: Taschen, 2008), 21.
- 12 Norman Bryson, "Morimura," *Art+Text*, 52 (1995), 75-9.
- 13 Maria Elena Buskek, "Pleasure Principle," www.mariabuskek.com/kcai/Amer_Pleasure.htm [accessed 10 Apr 2011].