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# Pacific Arts

## Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

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**Cover Image**: Natalie Robertson, *A Red-Tipped Dawn—Pōhautea at Waiapu Ngutu Awa (7th August 2020),* 2020. C-Type gloss photographic print, 79 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist

# Pacific Arts

## Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

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FANNY WONU VEYS

# Special Section on the 2022 Meeting of Pacific Arts Association–Europe: "Gendered Objects in Oceania," Part 1

**Abstract**
*Fanny Wonu Veys, president of the Pacific Arts Association–Europe, describes the 2022 organisation's annual meeting held at the Musée du quai Branly—Jacques Chirac in Paris. She introduces three essays based on papers presented at the meeting, focused on the theme "Gendered Objects in Oceania."*

**Keywords:** *Pacific Arts Association, Pacific Arts Association–Europe, gender, Oceania, art, Wilhelm Joest*, *Nendö, Santa Cruz Islands, feather money, Yuki Kihara,* faʻafafine*,* Paradise Camp*, Maisin, Papua New Guinea, barkcloth, tapa*

In September 2022, the Musée du quai Branly—Jacques Chirac (MQB) hosted the annual meeting of the Pacific Arts Association–Europe (PAA-E) in Paris. It was organised to coincide with the MQB exhibition *Power & Prestige: The Art of Clubs in Oceania* (June 7–September 25, 2022), curated by Steven Hooper with the assistance of Stéphanie Leclerc-Caffarel. As the exhibition demonstrated, clubs are, at once, sculptures, exchange valuables, markers of authority and status, embodiments of divinity, and accessories of performance. However, clubs are first and foremost weapons that may be seen as expressions of masculinity through their association with warfare.

The gender identity linked to clubs formed the inspiration of the meeting. Stéphanie Leclerc-Caffarel, curator of Oceania at the MQB, and I, president of the PAA-E and curator of Oceania at the Wereldmuseum in the Netherlands, hoped to explore whether and how objects are being gendered in Oceania. If one accepts that objects are an intrinsic part of being human and of shaping the world, they also take essential roles as things that gender bodies, social relations, and ways of being. It can, therefore, be argued that objects are important vehicles for the realisation of individual and group identities. With this idea in mind, we launched a call for papers focusing on material culture as expressions of gender identities, gendered collecting, gendered objects and art practices, and access to collections

along gender lines. This PAA-E meeting encouraged the cross-fertilisation between the ever-evolving fields of material culture and gender studies—disciplines that have not seemed to be natural allies to this point.

The meeting in Paris was well attended and offered twenty-six papers covering topics ranging from contemporary expressions of gender in the Pacific to gendered collecting and objects to gender in museums and exhibitions. There was also the preview of the Paris version of the London Pacific Fashion week, with designers from Aotearoa New Zealand (Kahuwai Clothing by Amber Bridgman, Kharl WiRepa Fashion by Kharl WiRepa and Jeanine Clarkin by Jeanine Clarkin); New Caledonia (Hadda Creations by Annie Diemene); Australia (IKUNTJI ARTISTS); American Sāmoa (Lenita's Collection By J-Len T's by Lenita Young); Papua New Guinea (Kenny Collection by Kenny Ng); Cook Islands (Lau Secmana by Toka Toka); and Fiji (Vulagi Design by Ana Lavekau).

This special section in *Pacific Arts* features three essays based on the papers that were presented at the 2022 PAA-E meeting in Paris. In the paper "Complexly Gendered Objects: An Analysis of a Piece of Tevau Collected by Wilhelm Joest on Nendö", Carl Deussen unpacks the ambivalent, voyeuristic stance of the German anthropologist who provided the founding collections for the present-day Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum in Cologne. Deussen explores Joest's interactions with women as he collected feather money—objects that have complex, gendered layers of meaning—from Nendö in Santa Cruz. Bernida Webb-Binder reviews the multimedia exhibition "Paradise Camp," which Yuki Kihara presented at the Venice Biennale in 2022. In her paper, she shows how Kihara decolonizes gender and "paradise" using a camp aesthetic and a *fa'afafine* lens. In "'Maisin is Tapa': Engendering Barkcloth Among the Maisin of Papua New Guinea," Anna-Karina Hermkens describes and analyses the crucial role of Maisin women in economic, political, social, and spiritual life through their creation of tapa.

Five additional articles based on presentations given at the 2022 PAA-E meeting will be featured in the next issue of *Pacific Arts* (vol. 23, no. 2). Together, the eight papers capture some of the diversity of perspectives and approaches offered at the annual meeting and provide a glimpse of the current thinking around objects and gender in the Pacific.

*Fanny Wonu Veys is curator of Oceania at the Wereldmuseum (previously the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam, the Museum Volkenkunde in Leiden, the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam and the Afrika Museum in Berg en Dal) in the Netherlands. She previously worked at the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in*

*Cambridge, UK, and has held postdoctoral fellowships at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the Musée du Quai Branly, Paris. Veys curated the exhibitions* What a Genderful World*, first presented at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam in 2019 and then at the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam in 2020;* A Sea of Islands: Masterpieces from Oceania *at the Volkenkunde in Leiden in 2021; and* Mana Māori *(2010–2011) at the Volkenkunde in Leiden, for which she published a book with the same title. She co-curated* Australian Art *with Dr. Georges Petitjean and a barkcloth exhibition,* Tapa, étoffes cosmiques d'Océanie*, in Cahors in 2009 with Laurent Guillaut. Veys's research interests are Pacific art and material culture, museums and cultures of collecting, Pacific musical instruments, Pacific textiles, and the significance of historical objects in a contemporary setting.*

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**ANNA-KARINA HERMKENS**

# "Maisin is Tapa": Engendering Barkcloth Among the Maisin of Papua New Guinea

**Abstract**

*This paper explores the interplay between gender and barkcloth, or tapa, among the Maisin people living along the shores of Collingwood Bay in Papua New Guinea. Tapa features in Maisin economic, political, social, and spiritual life as an object of wealth that is both alienable and inalienable. It constitutes beliefs and values about gender relations and identity, mediating relations between the individual and the social. At the same time, tapa connects the living with the ancestors, God, and the church. In short, tapa is intertwined with all aspects of Maisin life. While in earlier publications I have detailed the gendered manufacturing and use of tapa in various settings, in this paper I bring this work together, highlighting how barkcloth is not just a gendered object, but crucial in creating gendered embodiments and performances, and, as such, experiences of gender identity.*

**Keywords:** *tapa, barkcloth, Maisin, Papua New Guinea, textiles, gender*

## Introduction

While doing fieldwork on the significance of barkcloth among the Maisin people in Collingwood Bay, Oro Province, in Papua New Guinea from the beginning of 2001 until mid-2002, and again in 2004, both men and women would frequently state: "Maisin is tapa!" This statement not only indicates the importance of tapa for Maisin people, it also points to how the Maisin identify themselves with this cloth. As an object of wealth that is both alienable and inalienable as discussed by Annette Weiner, tapa features in Maisin economic, political, social, and spiritual life.[1] Sold at national and international markets as an object of Indigenous art, it contributes significantly to Maisin livelihood. This commercial tapa is alienable, just like the tapa that is used in barter and most ceremonial exchanges. However, tapa decorated with particular clan designs is inalienable clan property—it may not be given away outside the clan or sold. Inalienable tapa is often used as festive and ceremonial dress, playing an important role in church festivals and life-cycle rituals including marriages and mourning. Moreover, tapa constitutes beliefs and

values about gender relations and identity, mediating relations between the individual and the social. At the same time, tapa connects the living with the ancestors, God, and the church. In short, tapa is intertwined with all aspects of Maisin life.

The intimate relationship between tapa and Maisin sociality comes as no surprise. According to anthropologist Jane Schneider, the spiritual properties of cloth and clothing "render these materials ideal media for connecting humans with the world of spirits and divinities, and with one another."[2] Among Maisin and elsewhere, both cloth and clothing are very much intertwined with gender, social, and ethnic identity, thereby giving material form to social categories and hierarchies.[3] In particular, clothing is one of the most visual and dominant materialised gender codes in our world.[4]

While on the one hand clothing is so malleable that it can be shaped to construct appearance and transform identity, one's lived experience with cloth and clothing is also dependent upon how others evaluate the performance of the clothed body.[5] In fact, clothing infuses the human body with meaning and determines its behavior, often beyond personal preference. It may be controlled by others, or, as anthropologist Lissant Bolton argues regarding clothing in Vanuatu, by "systems of rights and privileges and by ritual proscriptions of various kinds."[6] Moreover, as I will show in this article, clothing may not only change our skin and transform our physiology, it may actually define it by restricting our body movements. In these cases, the body is shaped by cultural order, interweaving cloth, cosmology, and physiology in what religious scholar David Morgan calls "an embodied experience of belief."[7]

Among the Maisin, tapa is related to norms and values about female sexuality, about how women should behave, and how they should physically move. It is linked with the life stage and identity of the girl or woman who is wearing a particular tapa loincloth.[8] Similarly, ornamentation such as earrings, necklaces, bracelets, and facial tattoos reflect a woman's clan identity and life stage. This shows how closely material forms and cultural norms affect the person and personal identity.[9]

Practices of decorating and performing the body are also related to social relationships. In fact, decorating the body, especially within the context of life-cycle rituals, is intertwined with practices of giving. The use of tapa as both ceremonial dress and as a gift exemplifies this. According to anthropologist Marilyn Strathern, in Papua New Guinea objects actually circulate within relationships in order to make relations in which objects can circulate.[10] This implies that both people and things simultaneously create and are created through the

relationships within which they are situated. This view of Papua New Guinean relations and identity is often associated with gift exchange, whereas commodity exchange is identified with Western forms of exchange and sociability. However, this theoretical division also essentializes forms of exchange that occur simultaneously in one ethnographic setting.[11] Maisin people, like many other people in Oceania, have multiple understandings of exchange, using tapa both as a gift and a commodity in various types of transactions. This implies that agency is distributed through a series of objects and acts which are separated in time and space.[12] As a consequence, people's identities are not only relational, but also "distributed" in both their social and material surroundings. The constitutive outside of one's identity encompasses other people, ancestors, concepts, and materialities such as tapa.[13] As discussed in the next sections, among Maisin people tapa effectively constructs gendered forms and experiences of self, as well as of others. This efficacy of tapa is grounded in its gendered production as well as its use in various ritual and ceremonial performances.

Figure 1. Alienable tapa with a general, or random, four-panel design, made by Helen (a non-Maisin woman married into Maisin), 2001. Barkcloth made from paper mulberry, 133 x 70 cm. Photograph courtesy of A. Hermkens

## Making the Barkcloth

Among the Maisin, all women—even those from other areas who have married into the Maisin community—are expected to learn how to beat, design, and paint barkcloth. They are responsible for making barkcloth into "women's wealth"—in particular, into *embobi* (loincloths for women) and *koefi* (loincloths for men).[14] The female garment is rectangular in shape and wrapped around the hips with a girdle, covering the thighs and the knees. The male garment is a long, narrow piece of barkcloth worn between the legs and wrapped around the hips, with one end covering the genitals and the other hanging over the buttocks. Among the Maisin, these loincloths are decorated with black-outlined designs, which are subsequently filled in with red pigment. The result is a vivid display of meandering red and black designs on the off-white barkcloth (Fig. 1).

Today, Maisin tapa is made from the inner bark of the domesticated paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), locally called *wuwusi*. In the past, Maisin women also made tapa from wild ficus tree species. Depending on the type of barkcloth that is needed, the *wuwusi* tree is cut when its diameter measures some five or more centimetres. Taller *wuwusi* are used for manufacturing the long, narrow *koefi* for men, while shorter and thicker *wuwusi* are used for making quadrangular *embobi.*

In general, Maisin women begin the arduous work of beating the bark as soon as it has been removed from the tree trunk.[15] Considerable strength and endurance is needed to beat the bark into a smooth, flat piece of cloth. Sitting with their legs folded underneath them, or stretched out together sideways, they single-handedly beat the scraped bark with a narrow wooden or metal mallet on a heavy wooden log. As soon as the fibres are starting to spread, they take a broader wooden mallet to pound the bark over the wooden log. This seated position, which they maintain for several hours, causes strain on the women's bodies, especially their backs, shoulders, and arms.

It can take several days or even weeks before a woman finds the time or an occasion to start applying designs to her beaten barkcloth. In the meantime, she keeps the barkcloth folded in a pandanus sleeping mat. Sleeping on the mat removes the barkcloth's wrinkles, making it smooth. Thus, women's bodies are not only connected with barkcloth through their beating and pounding it; they further process the barkcloth (straightening and softening) by sleeping on it. As one woman expressed, by sleeping on it, women imbue the barkcloth with "a little part of ourselves."[16]

In a similar manner, each drawing that is applied on the barkcloth "contains" a part of the woman who designed it. The designing of barkcloth requires skills different from those used in the preparation of the barkcloth; one needs creativity, technical skill, and *que* (a steady hand). The Maisin refer to these skills as *mon-seraman*, a term that addresses both the mental (*mon*) and physical or technical (*seraman*) capacities of making good barkcloth. The Maisin recognize each other's work and have preferences, and although they silently acknowledge that not everyone is equally skilled in making and designing barkcloth, they claim that all women are equally capable of making and designing barkcloth and no hierarchies exist between experienced and "young" barkcloth designers. Despite this, women who are uncertain of their skills often will turn their work upside down as a gesture of respect when more experienced barkcloth designers come to have a chat and a look.

Figure 2. Drawing a panel design with *mi*, Airara village, 2001. Photograph courtesy of A. Hermkens

Figure 3. Molly painting her clan design, Airara village, 2001. Photograph courtesy of A. Hermkens

When designing barkcloth, most Maisin women create a mental picture of their design and subsequently draw it on the barkcloth surface, although some women draw designs in the sand first, to test them without spoiling valuable cloth. When drawing, they use four fingers; these stand for the four black lines that meander and curve parallel to each other and create three "veins" of which the central is left unpainted and the outer two are filled up with red pigment (Figs. 2–3). The black designs are drawn with *mi*, a pigment made from river clay (*yabu mi*) and the leaves from a vine called *wayango*. Sometimes burned coconut husk or the ink of an octopus is added. These ingredients are mixed with fresh water and can be kept for quite a long while, their odour of decaying organic material

becoming stronger each day. The *mi* is applied with a little stick called *nasa* that is broken off from the dry filament of the white palm and sharpened to obtain a more precise drawing point. In general, each woman has her own bowl of *mi* and *nasa* sticks that vary in thickness, to be able to make both thin and broader lines. Women draw the black lines by either supporting their drawing hand with one finger or keeping the hand from resting on the cloth and letting only the *nasa* touch it.

## Tapa Designs

Maisin women make three types of tapa designs: clan, general, and those related to Christianity. Each patrilineal clan has its own tapa designs. The Maisin believe that when emerging from a hole in the ground, each clan ancestor brought his own clan emblems (*kawo*). Clan emblems vary—from those evoking types of magic or social conduct to fire, drums, dancing gear, and tapa designs. The tapa clan designs, referred to as *evovi*, have individual names and are often figurative designs that represent mountains, animals, or specific artifacts that relate to the clan ancestor's travels and his claims to land, animals, and artifacts. As such, clan tapa conveys information about ancestral journeys, land claims, and relationships between specific clans.

While Maisin men control the journey narratives associated with particular landmarks as well as designs, knowledge concerning the manufacturing of clan designs is in the hands of women, who transfer this knowledge and craft to their daughters and daughters-in-law. Women are crucial in designing a clan's identity; they control the knowledge of the designs and their manufacture through which the clan itself is reproduced. Gendered forms of knowledge, power, affiliation, differentiation, and identity are not only intertwined and expressed through particular types of tapa, they are also "manipulated" through tapa. The prohibition on wearing another person's clan design exemplifies this, since doing so would denote a claim on land.

Although many generations of Maisin women have applied the *evovi*, the designs are fairly rigid, having hardly changed since the last century. In some cases, however, new ones may be created. Women who have a strong vision or a recurring dream about a particular design may submit their design to the clan elders. If the clan elders approve of her design and its meaning, it may be accepted as *evovi*. In this way, women can be more than just the transmitters of clan knowledge and identity as embedded within *evovi*—they can create it as well.

In addition to the relatively static clan designs, Maisin women deploy two styles of general or random designs, which are referred to as *a moi kayan* ("just a design"). These are the so-called "panel" designs and the twisted or meandering *gangi-gangi* ("continues") designs. The former consist of one design that is repeated four times on *embobi* and, in general, six times on *koefi.* The cloth is folded into four or six parts respectively and the same design is drawn on each of the panels separately, often without looking at the previously drawn panel (see Figs. 1–2). This technique is always applied with clan designs and seems to have been the dominant technique and style of barkcloth designs in the past.[17] In contrast, *gangi-gangi* designs, which are a more recent development, flow freely over the cloth and are not bounded by borders or panels. Importantly, g*angi-gangi* enable artists to decorate pieces of barkcloth that are too small to accommodate the traditional panel design. This development is linked with the commercialisation of barkcloth, which makes it economically worthwhile to decorate even the smallest pieces of tapa.

The third type of design applied on barkcloth is Christian-influenced designs. Since the arrival of British and Australian Anglican missionaries in Collingwood Bay in 1890, Anglican worship and its emblems have been appropriated and incorporated into Maisin ways of life.[18] Barkcloth played a crucial role in these appropriations, as almost all of the five British and Australian Anglican missionaries stationed in Collingwood Bay between 1898 and 1920 collected it. Missionaries Wilfred Henry Abbot and John Percy Money, who were stationed in Collingwood Bay between 1898 and 1910, collected many pieces of decorated barkcloth and Money even decorated his house walls and table with pieces of decorated barkcloth. Their successors facilitated the collecting of barkcloth by confederates and scientific collectors such as Charles Gabriel Seligman, Rudolf Pöch, and Albert Buell Lewis.[19]

## Making the Cloth Alive

The two stages of drawing the design and subsequently painting (colouring-in) the black designs are separated in time. When the initial black design is complete, the barkcloth is hung in the sun to dry. Subsequently, it is put between the layers of a folded sleeping mat along with other partly finished pieces. Here, it can stay for months, until finished pieces of barkcloth are needed. This could be an order for several pieces of barkcloth from a shop, or a relative in town, or a ceremonial event, which requires freshly painted tapa. As soon as this is the case, the final

stage of designing barkcloth takes place: the applying of the red pigment, called *dun*.

*Dun* is made out of three components: the bark of a tree of the *Parasponia* genus, locally called *saman* (bark); the leaves of a *Ficus subcuneata*, called *dun fara* (*fara* translates as "leaves"); and fresh water. In contrast to the black paint, the ingredients of the red paint must be boiled so they mix properly. When painting the barkcloth with *dun*, the pot it is being heated in is kept on the fire to ensure the pigment is warm when applied to the cloth. Application is done using the dried fruit of the pandanus (*imongiti*). In contrast to the black dye, the red paint cannot be stored long-term. Thus, women often share their *dun* with female relatives or friends, and it is a common sight to see several women gathered around a heated pot of *dun*.

In most Oceanic cultures the manufacturing of pigment is "a magico-symbolic process," meaning it is bounded by rules and taboos.[20] This is true for the Maisin regarding the manufacture of and painting with *dun*. While some of these taboos have faded, both men and women are still very much aware of them. Until the Second World War, the red dye was prepared in a secluded area within the household, and mixed and boiled in a separate clay pot—one which was not to be used for cooking food. Small children and men were not allowed to look at the *dun* or come near it at any stage of its production and use, nor where they allowed to make any noise while women were preparing and applying the *dun*. The view was that men's bodily substances were "matters out of place" that would contaminate or "spoil" the paint by making it "less red" or causing it to "dry up."[21] While working with the dye and secluded from the rest of society, women were not allowed to eat and drink, or to have sexual intercourse.[22] They also had to speak quietly when working with the *dun* and, out of respect and fear of "spoiling the paint," they would refer to the dye as *tambuta* or *taabuta*, meaning "red blood."[23] As the red *dun* must be applied when it is still warm, the association with living blood is apparent.

Various symbolic connections between the red dye and women suggest that the pigment is regarded as female blood. The association between *dun* or *taabuta* and female blood becomes clear when we consider the use of a particular type of cloth in female initiation rituals, which were last performed in the 1990s. In these rituals, young girls received a facial tattoo after which they were clothed in a loincloth soaked in red dye, leaving only a white fringe on the bottom, and shown to the public. Both facial tattoos and red loincloth marked the girls' transition from young and nonsexually active adolescents (*momorobi* or *ififi*) to sexually active and marriageable girls (*momorobi susuki*). According to John Barker and

Anne Marie Tietjen, the red cloths referred to "the blood let during the initiation," and to the advent of the girl's (menstrual) blood, and, as such, to the girl's fertility and maturity.[24] The connection between red dye and female blood—specifically, with women's reproduction capacities—also exists in the belief that a foetus is created out of a mixture of semen (*voto*) and female blood (*taa*). Both are seen as essential for the conception of a child. For this reason, the ancestral clan designs depicted on tapa cloth can be seen as representing the male part in the conception of clan tapa, while the red dye refers to the female blood that is necessary to complete it, to make the design (and cloth) alive. Thus, through the designing and painting process, a woman "gives birth to" an entity of cloth, thereby reproducing the patrilineal clan and its ancestral origins. This symbolized production of new life connects the ability to design and paint tapa with the character of womanhood. Only strong women—referring to initiated, and thus mature and sexually active, women—were believed to be able to handle the paint. Although men are engaged with the production of barkcloth today, they still avoid processes involving *dun*. Moreover, only women have the prerogative to draw and paint clan designs. As such, the symbolic significance of women reproducing the clan by drawing and painting clan designs on barkcloth continues.

To summarize, the making of tapa defines Maisin women's identity by the fact that tapa results from women's activity that is grounded in a particular gendered tradition. The utilisation and transfer of tapa techniques is achieved through the total immersion of the artist in Maisin reality, and this includes pervasive notions of gender. The specifically gendered space involved in making tapa, the arduous beating and pounding of tapa, and women's posture while making and designing tapa—sitting for hours unsupported with the legs stretched out—are all strongly connected with notions about how women should physically behave and their responsibilities. Making tapa thus defines the female body. As such, the production of tapa can be viewed as a performative act in which identity—and, in particular, gender identity—is constructed. The production of tapa, therefore, not only produces an object that is connected with women's bodies and their minds (*mon*), the act also produces Maisin women who produce and reenact Maisin culture.

As women's reproductive capacities are so intertwined with the making of tapa—especially considering the connection between women and the red pigment they use to paint tapa designs—making tapa actually seems to recapitulate people's ontogenesis, the way they are conceived. As with the creation of children, female-produced substances (the black paint and, especially, the red paint) are essential in the constitution of tapa, whereas male substances are often

regarded as dangerous in their capacity to either weaken the new-born child (by having sexual intercourse with the nursing mother), or spoil the paint used to make the designs. In particular, the creation of clan designs—and, as such, patrilineal clan identity—depends upon women. This is striking, as both scholars and local people generally believe that Melanesian women do not produce the important symbols of their community, as this is seen as the prerogative of men.[25] The manufacturing of tapa also engenders people, both in terms of creation and identity. However, the simultaneous engendering of tapa and people does not imply that the gender identity of both object and subject is fixed. When used and worn by specific people in specific contexts, tapa is imbued with other identities that gain new and other significances through performance.

## Cloth as a Gendered Embodied Performance

Clothing transforms the body through mediating relations: between divinities and humans, and between social actors and groups. These changes in sight, physiology, and status are activated and expanded by performance, resulting in new or enhanced forms of presence and identity. Gender plays a special role in these performances of cloth and the clothed body.

Although to a lesser extent than in the past, Maisin women's lower bodies are still covered up and their movements restricted. Whereas men are allowed to wear shorts or swim nude, women must always hold their skirts close to their bodies, even if they are among other women. Whether they are bathing, canoeing, working in the garden, or sitting, their skirts must always cover their private parts and legs. When getting up, they must make sure their legs, and especially their thighs, are not visible. When leaving a group of people, they have to bend down as women cannot tower over men or walk over their legs. This is considered disrespectful, and also dangerous, since touching a man with one's *embobi* might make him weak or even sick. In the past, it was believed that a man would not be able to outrun enemy spears after having been in contact with women's skirts. As with male substances (semen) thought to spoil the red dye used in painting tapa, female substances (vaginal fluids) are regarded as what Mary Douglas called "matters out of place."[26] Dangerous when not controlled, these substances need to be contained by tapa, while at the same time, these same substances saturate the cloth, so to speak, with female sexuality.

The intimate physical and symbolic relationship between tapa, red dye, gender, and sexuality elucidates how clothing can be regarded as an embodied

performance of belief. For the Maisin, these beliefs concern the cosmological order between the ancestors and the living, between men and women, and between the individual and the social. As such, clothing embodies a whole set of beliefs that are part of what constitutes and forms Maisin social and cosmological lives. These beliefs are not only expressed and regenerated in daily practices, but also in ceremonial performances.

Figure 4. Maisin dancers performing at a church festival in Tufi, 2001. Photograph courtesy of A. Hermkens

The performance of cloth and the clothed body brings about an experiential dimension to both wearer and viewer.[27] For example, during the Gisaro ceremony among the Kaluli in Papua New Guinea, dancers adorned with paint, feathers, ornaments, cloth, and leaves evoke emotional outbursts from their hosts. The dancers transcend time and place as they address, through dances and songs, their hosts' deceased relatives and land. By means of their clothing, the dancers themselves have transformed from ordinary men into figures of splendour, beauty, and pathos.[28] Among the Maisin, the experiential dimension of cloth for both viewer and wearer comes to the fore in church festivals and life-cycle rituals. At church festivals, religiosity, ancestral descent, gender, and sexuality are

expressed through people's clothing. Male and female dancers dress up in their traditional clan regalia to communicate their affiliation with and dedication to the Anglican Church. At the same time, dancers not only enact their clan ancestors at the time of creation, they become the ancestors through the particular clothing they wear. Moreover, the ways male and female bodies move and interact reveal that notions of gender behaviour, aesthetics, and sexuality are equally expressed and embodied (Fig. 4).[29]

This performance of gender and other forms of identity has led some scholars to conclude that gender in Melanesian societies is just a performance.[30] Because in various places across Melanesia, identities are applied to and stripped from the body during ceremonies and other performances, gender is, in their opinion, something that can be changed, and as such, gender is not appropriated and reenacted upon, but rather a staged role that may change according to the context of performance. I would argue that, although among the Maisin, identities such as clan are effectively changed and performed during the course of a person's lifetime, gender identity is rather fixed. The scripting of the body and the self through discursive and nondiscursive practices is not only sex-specific, it is forceful. Gender is not just a role that can be discarded; it is appropriated, embodied, and reenacted through things such as tapa, which is grounded in a specific gendered setting.

Elsewhere, I have shown how tapa is connected with each phase of life, accompanying people from birth till death.[31] Among the Maisin, the ritual undressing, neglect, mutilation, isolation, and physical labour of the body strips it from its previous identity, while the subsequent clothing of the body gives it a new social identity. At the same time, the individual's transition is part of the life cycle of society itself, in which social relations and relations between the living and the dead need to be established due to birth and marriage and closed due to death. In a Maisin person's life cycle, it is in particular the exchange and wearing of tapa cloth that intensifies sociality, and, in the end, terminates it. Thus, the skin-like properties of cloth have a dual quality in their ability to enhance, deepen, and transform both individual and collective identities, as well as relationships between living people and between the living and the dead.[32]

Maisin practices of decorating the body both define and express notions of personhood and self. In fact, the body is used as a surface upon which clan identity is inscribed—alongside gender identity and selfhood—through tattoos, ornaments, and specific types of tapa. Life-cycle rituals entail the decoration of the body by others, who thereby materially construct a new social identity. In contrast, in church festivities, the body is decorated by oneself, revealing dominant

ideas about beauty and attractiveness. Additionally, women's choices for particular tapa reveals their relationships and how they use their bodies to identify themselves with either their husbands' and/or their fathers' clans, thereby empowering one of these patrilineal clans. In all of these contexts, the adornment of clan tapa on the body surface plays a crucial role. It signals the ceremonial transition of individual identity when applied by others, while in contexts of self-decoration the inner self is "displayed" on the outside, revealing gender, clan, and even tribal identity. In both practices, the person and their transitions are constituted by the matching paraphernalia.

The previous shows that tapa interacts with the body in such a way that gender, and other differences, are created. Even though the things involved, like tapa, appear to be static, this is a dynamic process and identity itself is fluid and changeable. Moreover, as Marilyn Strathern argues, people are constructed from the vantage points of the relationships that constitute them.[33] This implies that personhood is distributed. It depends upon relationships, but also on objects located in and on the body, as well as elsewhere in the material world. The clan identity of a Maisin man is not exclusively constructed by the fact that he actually wears the clan tapa. The relationships that he and his clan members are engaged in, as well as the ancestral claims on land, imbue his tapa—and his wearing of it—with significance and power.

Thus, things like tapa that surround people and are applied to their bodies are not external; they are interwoven with their identities.[34] Within the dynamics of subject formation, identities are mediated and defined through these material structures. As such, the body is not only moulded and created in conceptual and discursive practices, but also, and perhaps most strongly, in and through physical materialities and non-discursive practices.

## Gendered Objects

The distinction between people and things is often based on the Western notion that things exist outside the realm of human life, which is, according to French philosopher Bruno Latour, false.[35] Likewise, Strathern claims that in Papua New Guinea things do not exist outside peoples' lives. Distinctions exist between persons, but not so much between persons and things.[36] Her line of argument is that objects such as tapa "do not reify society or culture, they reify capacities contained in person/relations."[37] These social relations are made manifest through action.[38] Among the Maisin, relationships are created through the production of things like

tapa, as well as through its use as clothing and decoration, as a gift, and as a commodity.

Since distinctions between individuals are established through relations and, in particular, the positions they occupy in relation to one another (e.g., male and female), and objects play a paramount role in these relationships, things can be considered as personified objects.[39] These objects define personhood because they are separated from the self,[40] or because they are inseparable and intertwined with particular human bodies. Among the Maisin, the removal of regalia such as clan tapa in the context of Christianisation, marriage, and mourning denotes the removal of a particular identity, while the application of new regalia visualizes the "transformation" into another identity. The tattoos that are traditionally applied on girls' faces exemplify how things can be inseparable from the human (female) body and its constitution.

Objects including tapa are interwoven with peoples' lives and thereby "marked for gender and age and as such instrumental in achieving and sustaining relationships as well as personal identities."[41] Since these values or identities are not stable, the significance of objects may also change. Things are dynamic entities: their meanings change for the participants in different contexts, depending on the specific values that come into play. This implies that "the meaning of things" not only resides in the object. Objects can therefore *not* be read like texts. They must be contextualized and reconfigured within performances and networks of people and things.

The contextualisation and reconfiguration of the various political, ritual, and other instances in which tapa is used shows us how various identities are expressed and defined through tapa. However, in all contexts, it seems that tapa embodies various dialogues, but in particular those that take place between men and women. It therefore seems that both gender values as well as the social gender order is contained in the manufacture and use of tapa. On this basis, one can argue that things like tapa are "vehicles through which social value is expressed."[42]

Tapa affects the properties of people and, as a consequence, their actions. The production of tapa simultaneously produces women's bodies, re-enacting notions of gender behaviour and gender definitions, while the wearing of clan tapa does not just represent the clan ancestors; it embodies them. In addition, the giving of clan tapa and its application to peoples' bodies in puberty rites, marriage, and mourning ceremonies signals the transformation of an individual's social identity. But, in the context of commercialisation, tapa marks tribal—Maisin—identity. As such, tapa contains as well as constitutes many other sorts of identities, which are only revealed in specific contexts of production and use.

In daily performances, the making and wearing of tapa is related to "a complex of practices and rituals involving food taboos, birthing and infant care practices and gender etiquette."[43] Maisin values regarding gender identity and gender relations as embodied in cloth and clothing signify how the Maisin conceptualise the order and hierarchical nature of the relationships between men and women. Each time women make and wear loincloths these beliefs and values are regenerated, as well as internalized and embodied. At the same time, these performances allow for interaction and re-interpretation. This dynamic may be seen in the fact that nowadays children are allowed to sit with their mothers while they are making red dye and applying the paint, and men are able to witness the entire process. In the past, this was believed to have grave spiritual consequences, causing misfortune or sickness to those who transgressed the sacred rules and boundaries.

The embodied (material) performance of gender is especially salient in life-cycle rituals. Birth, puberty, marriage, mourning, and death are considered as crises and major transformations in a person's life cycle. Life-cycle rituals guide people through these often-difficult transitions and inform them about the cause and direction of their lives. By being performed, life-cycle rituals transform self and experience in a regenerative manner and reproduce, as well as reinterpret, the existing social and cosmological order.

Returning to the statement "Maisin is tapa," this performative speech act depends on a densely woven web of social relations and things that themselves render it intelligible and believable. The phrase "Maisin is tapa" gains significance through the social contexts of the object's production and use. In a similar manner, just as the wearing of wedding rings materializes and expresses a performative speech-act that has taken place, tapa *is* a series of materialized performative acts. It dynamically defines gender, personhood, and clan and tribal identity in a range of contexts. In other words, indeed, Maisin *is* tapa.

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## Notes

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[21] On “matters out of place,” see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge, 2002), 50.
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# Complexly Gendered Objects: An Analysis of a Piece of *Tevau* Collected by Wilhelm Joest on Nendö

**Abstract**

*In 1897, German anthropologist and collector Wilhelm Joest spent the last three months of his life on Nendö, Santa Cruz Islands, assembling an extensive ethnographic collection. It includes a piece of* tevau*, or "feather money," originally used by the islands' inhabitants to pay bride price or purchase female concubines, among other things. This paper explores this artefact's various gendered layers of meaning. Used to transform women into the collective property of Nendö men's associations,* tevau *was already gendered and charged with sexualised meaning before being collected. This made it attractive to Joest, who had always recorded non-European sexualities with an ethnopornographic voyeurism. The object, I argue, reveals a complexly gendered collecting situation and Joest's tentative affinity with the men of Nendö based on an (assumed) shared patriarchal outlook. As such, the history of Joest's collecting is relevant both to the presentation of* tevau *in Western museums and cultural revitalisation attempts on Nendö itself.*

**Keywords:** *Gender, ethnographic collecting, masculinity, prostitution, Santa Cruz Islands, Nendö, tevau, Wilhelm Joest, Solomon Islands*

In the vaults of the Ethnologisches Museum Berlin lies an object reminiscent of a giant belt covered in feathers. It is a piece of *tevau*,[1] or "feather money," and originates from Nendö in the Santa Cruz Islands (Solomon Islands; Fig. 1). Over the last century, the feathers' bright red colour has faded—the natural process of value depletion of this former currency. Yet this *tevau* has lost nothing of its complex gendered meaning. It comes from a place and time when it could be used not only to pay bride price but also to purchase women as concubines. When it was still in use, the *tevau* was a primary building block of Nendö's patriarchal power dynamics. Its journey into the museum is no less gendered: it was collected in 1897 by German anthropologist Wilhelm Joest, who had his own idealised conception of masculinity. He saw himself as a *Forschungreisender*, a valiant explorer and collector, willing to sacrifice his wealth and health for what he saw as scholarly progress.

Joest did in fact pay a high price for his Nendö collection, falling ill on the island and dying on a steamer on the way back to Sydney. But during his lifetime, Joest was no stranger to patriarchal relationships of sexual exploitation. As his diaries show, he used his wealth and imperial power not only to acquire objects but also women, visiting prostitutes wherever he went. On Nendö, his conception of local women was characterised by both repressed desire and aversion, and his position as an outsider prevented him from gaining sexual access. However, that did not diminish his interest in the inhabitants' sexuality. He was fixated on the topic of concubinage, and on the currency used to uphold it.

In this paper, I want to explore these different contexts as layers surrounding the *tevau* in Joest's collection. I focus on the patriarchal power dynamics on Nendö, on Joest's gendered imperial perspective, and on the collecting process that brought the *tevau* to Berlin. The following three sections are dedicated to these three contexts respectively. In a final section, I will think about the consequences of gendered understandings for *tevau* both on Nendö and in ethnographic museums today. I argue that the *tevau* represents a complexly gendered object, with different gendered meanings amplifying or clashing with each other.[2] The artefact reveals how the interplay between different kinds of patriarchal systems allowed the transfer of objects and knowledges in a necessarily gendered collecting encounter. Robert Welsch has shown how "most collections reflect simultaneously the subtle interplay between the indigenous and collector agendas."[3] In this sense, I argue that the *tevau* in the Ethnologisches Museum is revealing in three regards: the context in which it was created and used, the ideas and desires of Joest as its collector, and the ways in which these spheres interacted.

## The Use of *Tevau* on the Santa Cruz Islands in the Late Nineteenth Century

My paper is based on archival research on Wilhelm Joest and his collection. I have never been to Nendö and hence the first part comprises a summary of the valuable work of other scholars, most notably Salome Samou, Elizabeth Bonshek, and William Davenport. Some nineteenth century accounts indicate that the use of *tevau* is a relatively novel practice, originating in the mid-nineteenth century during the gradual incorporation of the Santa Cruz Islands into the European sphere of influence.[4] At this time, the islands had not yet been officially claimed by a European empire—they became part of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate in 1898. However, they had been integrated into trading and missionary networks, as well as into the circuits of Pacific slavery, or blackbirding, since the middle of

the century.[5] It is unclear whether the rise of European influence affected the establishment of *tevau* as currency.

Figure 1. *Tevau* from the Joest collection (VI 16005). Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ethnologisches Museum. Photograph by Peter Jacob. Courtesy of the Museum

Samou relates a mythical origin of *tevau* in which forest-dwelling beings called *lemwurbz* are the originators of the techniques necessary for its creation. In one version of the story, they give their knowledge to a man in need. In another, the man clandestinely watches them to learn the secret of their wealth.[6] In both cases, the knowledge of how to make *tevau* was kept within certain families so that only a limited number of people were able to create the currency. This mythical origin indicates that while *tevau* was primarily used as a medium of exchange, it also held spiritual meaning.[7]

The creation of *tevau* was labour intensive and required three specialists. The first would trap cardinal honey-eaters (*Myzomela cardinalis*) to acquire their feathers.[8] The man wanting a new piece of *tevau* would then buy these feathers and bring them to a platelet maker, who first glued together feathers of grey Pacific pigeons (*Ducula pacifica*) into platelets, then added red honey-eater feathers on one side.[9] These platelets would then be brought to the third specialist, the binder, who used bark strings to bind the platelets into long coils of about nine meters in length.[10] Finally, the coil would be finished by adding amulets made from different materials such as wood and bone, ensuring the continued wealth of the coil's new owner.[11] The creation of one piece of *tevau* required between 500 and 600 hours of work and the feathers of up to 300 birds.[12] Importantly, all the specialists involved were men, and *tevau* were considered men's objects. Even in the twenty-first century, Samou reports having felt uncomfortable touching them when visiting a museum storage area.[13]

The value of a new piece of *tevau* would be rated according to a system of between ten and fifteen value categories depending on the amount of red feathers used. A *tevau* of a higher category could be worth twice as much as a piece in the category below it.[14] Over time, the red feathers would lose their shine, despite the meticulous care that is typically taken in storing and handling them. Accordingly, pieces of *tevau* would decrease in value, sinking through the value categories until they had no value. For the value system to work, new pieces of *tevau* needed to be made constantly. *Tevau* were used for all kinds of exchange transactions, and generally moved from the villages where they were made to other parts of Nendö and to the Reef Islands and, from there, to the Duff Islands.[15] One of the most important status symbols that could be bought with *tevau* were *tepuke*, sea-going outrigger canoes. Of such an exchange, Arthur Pycroft writes:

> An ocean-going canoe or tepuki, five to six fathoms in length and capable of carrying three tons, would cost at the present time about four coils of good quality red money, whereas the one coil of the money known as *nopamur* [the highest quality grade] would easily have bought the same tepuki.[16]

While the use of *tevau* in such transactions resembles the use of money, there is some debate whether *tevau* should in fact be considered "currency." On the one hand, it held value independent of its owner or creator and could circulate freely, purchasing a variety of ordinary and prestige goods. On the other hand, *tevau* had spiritual and ritual significance—which, of course, could also be said about

Western currencies. What sets *tevau* apart from other currencies is its limited group of users: it is unclear whether outsiders such as Joest would have been able to pay in *tevau*, and it is certain that women were not even allowed to touch it. If *tevau* was a currency, it was one thoroughly based on gender. Whether this would exclude it from the category of currency or should, rather, be an impetus to broaden the definition of currency—with a critical eye on gendered meanings—cannot be explored here. I leave these two positions in tension for now and follow Samou's local perspective in her continued use of the word "currency."[17]

*Tevau* could also be used to acquire the rights to a woman, either as bride or concubine.[18] Bride price consisted of one *tevau* of each value grade and was often paid by the extended family of the groom, or by wealthy sponsors, to the family of the bride.[19] The children that came from the union would then be named after the sponsors: the first-born after the man who had given the highest-grade *tevau*, the second-born after the second highest, and so on. Daughters would be named after the sponsors' wives. Throughout their life, these children would be closely connected to their sponsor and, if wealthy enough, they would eventually pass on their name to the next generation.[20] Bride prices were paid in *tevau* until the 1970s, when the feather currency was replaced by dollars, which are still used today.[21]

Women could also be exchanged for *tevau* in a system that could be termed concubinage, prostitution, courtesanship, or sexual slavery. All these terms introduce moral connotations not necessarily present on Nendö and hence cannot fully describe the practice. However, to underscore my point that there were indeed commonalities between Nendö's and Europe's forms of patriarchal exploitation, I have decided against using one of the local terms for the practice—*tiela* or *selz*—and instead opted for "concubinage." This term places emphasis on the structural oppression of women sold into the system, as well as their social differentiation from women who are properly married.[22]

The concubinage system was clearly differentiated from that of bride price payments. While brides on Nendö could come from either Nendö or the Reef Islands, concubines were always Reef Island women. Concubines were sold for ten times the number of *tevau* provided for bride price, a substantial amount of wealth. Samou suggests that women were selected to become concubines because they had disgraced their family, a highly gendered concept in itself.[23] Sometimes, men's associations would pool their resources to purchase a concubine, and sometimes a single individual would become rich enough to buy a concubine on his own. William Davenport, whose main informant had owned a concubine in

his youth, writes that "owning a *tiela* was the highest personal achievement a rich man could obtain."[24]

After being purchased, concubines would lose all their social ties and name. They would be called after the *noali*, the pole used to hang *tevau* during transactions that was dedicated to an ancestral spirit, or *dukna*.[25] A newly acquired concubine would spend her first night sleeping alone under the *noali*, thus giving first sexual access to the *dukna* that had enabled the purchase.[26] Concubines had to be sexually available to their owners at all times and could also be lent out to other men for profit. Samou describes the process like this:

> She lived in the clubhouse and was hired out to junior association members and visitors for a price in feather-money. The owners' objective was to achieve wealth in feather-money by making a profit from her sexual services. When the chief of the association felt that he had made good his investment, he then passed the courtesan to the second most senior member who slept with her and hired her out in order to achieve the same. This continued until all the members had all their investment returned, after which time she was sold to another association.[27]

All children born to a concubine were taken from her and adopted by her owner. In extreme cases, a concubine could be killed without fear of retribution from her former family. More commonly, concubines were kept healthy to make sure the investment would eventually pay off. They did not participate in the women's work on the fields and instead spent most of their time in the men's clubhouse that was forbidden to any other women.[28] The practice ended in the 1930s when it was suppressed by Christian missionaries and the British colonial administration.[29]

## Wilhelm Joest and his Ideal of Imperial Masculinity

From the situation on Nendö in the late nineteenth century, I will now turn to Wilhelm Joest and describe his background. When he reached Nendö in August 1897 as part of a Pacific expedition, he was forty-five years of age and an established anthropologist and collector in Germany. His most successful publication, *Tätowiren, Narbenzeichnen und Körperbemalen*, was a comparative study on tattooing and he planned to collect material for a second edition.[30] In addition, the

Pacific had always fascinated Joest; he had failed to reach it in 1884 due to illness, and he now wanted to make his life-long dream come true.

His fascination with the *Südsee* was not only based on ethnographic curiosity about the region. Throughout his life, Joest had used his travels to collect objects and to have sex with women of colour. For both, Joest could rely on the power structures of empire to give him access. Pete Sigal, Zeb Tortorici, and Neil L. Whitehead have called this entanglement of an ethnographic and sexualising gaze "ethnopornography," highlighting the underlying similarity in the desire to access the ethnographised Other, on the one hand, and the sexualized female body on the other.[31] Joest's earlier diaries are filled with remarks on his visits to prostitutes of colour, some of them violent. At some point, Joest stopped recording explicit sexual encounters and unsuccessfully tried to cross out all references to them in his earlier diaries. He nevertheless continued to write about women of colour in sexualised language, often describing their (supposed) sexual behaviours in detail and attempted to see them naked.

In this context, Joest's desire to travel to Oceania is not surprising. The region had been at the centre of European imaginaries of uninhibited sexuality since the eighteenth century. The complex sexualities of Pacific societies were reduced to a paradisical ideal of sexual access for White men and descriptions and images of Pacific women were heavily sexualised.[32] Accordingly, Joest constantly tried to get visual access to women of colour during his journey, using the same materials in trade as for purchasing artefacts. The following excerpt from San Jorge, Solomon Islands, is a good example: "Inside were some women + children. After some persuasion + tobacco, they emerged; the young girls completely naked, the mothers with palm skirts."[33] This sexualised writing was not limited to Joest's diaries but reappeared, in slightly more euphemistic form, in his published accounts, as this excerpt from an article on Ambonese music and dances shows:

> I hear and see them before me, the girls of Ambon, of Haruku and Saparua, how they smile promisingly, how they dance and sing; I feel them devoutly embracing the dancer, not refusing him any favour; and to this image that arises in my mind's eye, first softly, then more and more clearly, sounds and melodies that I thought I had long forgotten, songs whose meaning I hardly understand any more.[34]

In Joest's ethnopornographic vision, ethnographic observation, the acquisition of objects, and access to women merged into a coherent whole, defined by his power as a White man.

While Joest might have been unusually open about his ethnopornographic desires, he was in no way an exception. He often visited prostitutes together with other agents of empire, and in fact he learned this behaviour from his older male peers. These actions represent an ideal of imperial masculinity defined by racism and based on dominance ranging from paternalistic goodwill to brutal violence.[35] Nowhere did Joest's behaviour cause a sensation and the structures to provide him with prostitutes were already in place wherever he went, just like the manifold stores selling "curios." Joest's practices of acquisition, vis-à-vis objects and women, are firmly rooted in the structures of empire.[36] And hence all of Joest's anthropological work, his collecting and writing, need to be understood as both clearly gendered and defined by exploitative power dynamics. Joest looked at the world ethnopornographically, and his stay on Nendö is no exception.

## Gendered Collecting

Joest's stay on Nendö was rather unusual. Normally, following the directive of his mentor Adolf Bastian to collect what could be collected and then move on, he never stayed long in the places he visited. On Nendö, however, Joest followed a new plan: here, he wanted to stay and observe. While he was not quite "pitching his tent in the native's village,"[37] but rather living with the trader Actaeon Forrest, he was engaging in close observation and exchange with the men of Nendö about twenty years before Malinowski's mythologised visit to the Trobriand Islands.[38] This stationary research—not quite participant observation, but also no longer solely based on collecting—resulted in a flurry of notes in his diary that were posthumously published by his friend and colleague Arthur Baessler (Fig. 2).[39] However, in their raw form, they did not receive much attention and were quickly forgotten. Returning to Joest's fieldnotes today, many of them turn out to be surprisingly precise, resembling the observations made by anthropologist William Davenport in the 1950s. Given the era, Joest seems to have been a good observer, and yet his perspective is still clearly that of a White man. Nowhere does this become clearer as in Joest's treatment of *tevau* and the concubinage system.

Aufnahme von W. Joest.

WILHELM JOEST
AUF
SANTA CRUZ.

Figure 2. Wilhelm Joest and an anonymous man on Nendö. Published in Arthur Baessler's *Neue Südsee-Bilder*, 1900

When Joest first mentions the women on Nendö, he immediately muses about their sexuality and sexual availability. European observers often described women from the Solomon Islands as lacking beauty and allure when compared with Polynesian women, and Joest followed this convention, describing them as unattractive and "beastly."[40] At the same time, he notes the impossibility of engaging in sexual activities: "For any suspicion of intercourse with us 3 Europeans, [the women] would be shot immediately (+ we would have to pay a hell of a lot)."[41] These initial remarks paint an ambiguous image. Joest's denial of desire is followed by his awareness of the consequences of such desire, calling the initial rejection into question. He knew that his position as a White man did not grant him special power on Nendö because the island still was outside the imperial sphere of influence. Hence, his relationship with Nendö's women is defined by the patriarchal control of the local men. Under these circumstances—being denied something he supposedly did not want—Joest became fixated on these women, and framed them, above all, in terms of sexuality. He ends this first observation by referring for the first time to the system he calls "prostitution": "On the other hand, there are official prostitutes who also sleep in the clubhouses."[42]

Joest first encounters *tevau* on Nendö, noting that "they brought me a piece of the magnificent feather money (belt made from the red feathers of the honeysucker) of which I had no inkling."[43] He then writes one of the longest entries in the diary, beginning with the ambiguous sentence, "There is no slavery on Santa Cruz, unless it is understood to mean the buying of women [Weiberkauf]."[44] By the European standards of the late nineteenth century, the concubinage system would certainly fall under the definition of slavery, but Joest hesitates to assume this position. Instead of resolving the tension in this initial sentence, he moves to the use of *tevau* and describes the purchase of concubines as a kind of financial investment, stating that among the buyers "the earnings are distributed as a dividend according to the contribution to the share capital."[45] Joest's language creates the image of rational actors behaving according to a European financial logic, something that he denied most other non-European peoples. In this framing, the use of concubines is only logical because it is profitable. The following sentence introduces another explanation: "This custom can only be explained by the fact that adultery + fucking young girls means certain death."[46] Here, Joest uses an idea of masculine desire he shared as well—that men will always need more than one sexual partner and that a monogamous society hence requires other outlets for this desire. Instead of rejecting it on moral terms as slavery, Joest depicts concubinage as both economically logical and naturally necessary.

Joest pursues this narrative further by describing the life of the concubines as mostly pleasant. He writes that "the social position of such whores is completely equal to that of decent women, to a certain extent even better, as they are allowed to enter the clubhouses, which means certain death for a non-whore."[47] Tellingly, he diverges from later accounts concerning the legal protection of concubines, stating that they cannot be killed and that the whole community would avenge their death. He then describes the festive character of the sale of women and ends with a note on their children, stating that while girls are sold into concubinage again, boys are "occasionally killed on the spot."[48] To attenuate the potential moral significance of this practice, Joest adds that children outside the concubinage system may also be killed after birth, for example one sibling in a pair of twins. Again, Joest emphasises the ordinariness of the concubines' lives.

Hereafter, Joest mentions the concubinage system only one more time, writing that "today, down at the casino, there was again a lot happening with 28-30 guys, because Reef Islanders had brought a whore for auction. She was bought by the *jeunesse dorée* of our village."[49] Two days after this entry, Joest's diary stops because he became too sick to continue writing.

Taken together, Joest's descriptions show a rather positive image of the Santa Cruz concubinage system, especially given the moralist framing often applied by nineteenth-century Europeans to sexual practices diverging from their own.[50] However, this may be precisely the point: what Joest is describing is very similar to his own sexual ideals, his own concept of masculinity and desire. Joest identified with the men of Nendö, appreciating their desire for wealth and constant sexual access to women. Joest did not want to find out what the concubines themselves thought about their position and rather imagined them to be content, just as he felt about the many women he had had sex with. Conversely, the wealth of information Joest provides shows that the men of Nendö were apparently happy to share their own perspective with the foreigner.

This shared sense of patriarchal masculinity connected ethnographer and informant and provided the epistemic common ground for exchange. The *tevau* is the material embodiment of this exchange, and of Joest's fixation on Nendö sexuality. Joest bought at least four pieces of *tevau*, and even though he did not record the price he paid, it must have been substantial. As both Pycroft and Davenport highlight, even lower quality *tevau* were very expensive to buy with Western money.[51] As there was no Western currency in use in the late nineteenth century, Joest had to purchase them with objects from his limited reservoir of trade items, making them even more costly. Both Joest's detailed writing and efforts to acquire *tevau* show the great import he accorded the artefact and the

social structure it stood for. This sense of value would have been shared by Berlin's academic circles, for one because of the *tevau's* spectacular aesthetic and relative rarity.[52] But Joest would have also shared his ethnopornographic perspective with his fellow anthropologists, as he had in various other instances, marking *tevau* as valuable in terms of its sexualised character.[53] To Joest, *tevau* represented the resonance between his own sexual ideals and those on Nendö, making them complexly gendered objects.

## ***Tevau* in the Present**

*Tevau's* implication in gendered power structures reaches all the way into the present. Samou writes that she and her brother are trying to reinstate *tevau* as the medium for bride price, which at present is only paid in dollars.[54] Due to the shortage of such currency on Nendö, families trying to marry their sons are placed in precarious circumstances and often have to take some of their children out of school to save the fees. This practice equally follows gendered lines as it mostly affects girls.[55] Samou advocates for the reintroduction of *tevau* to create a currency system for bride price independent of school fees and completely in the control of the inhabitants of the Santa Cruz Islands. However, this attempt also evokes the gendered history of *tevau*, forcing Samou to make a sharp distinction in her argument between the use of *tevau* for bride price and for buying concubines.[56] Additionally, Samou's own work on *tevau* shows that there is still an element of transgression in her, as a woman, touching *tevau*. This raises questions about *tevau's* future gendered meanings and the possible transformations necessary for its revival.[57] *Tevau's* gendered history clearly influences its future, inviting both continuities and reinterpretations.

Outside of Nendö, *tevau* are held at many ethnographic museums, including the Ethnologisches Museum in Berlin. Out of the four *tevau* Joest collected, the only one surviving is held there, as is the extensive collection of anthropologist Gerd Koch from the 1960s. The *tevau* collected by Joest, decaying and grey as it is, does not seem to have caught the eye of the curators when they assembled the new permanent exhibition in the Humboldt Forum. Instead, an impressive piece from Koch's collection is shown prominently in the Oceania Hall (Fig. 3). A short text describes the feather coil: "*Tevau* are objects of value and prestige that were exchanged in the northern Santa Cruz Islands as late as the 1980s. They often served as bridewealth." This is followed by three more sentences on production methods and the connection between feather intensity and value. The reference

to bridewealth is the only hint that *tevau* have gendered meanings, but even this function remains vague. The concubinage system is not mentioned at all. From a curatorial standpoint, this omission might be understandable—there is a real danger of eliciting a strong emotional and moral reaction from a European audience if the subject was broached superficially. Such a perfunctory treatment might perpetuate stereotypes of "savage" Melanesia, sexualise Nendö women, or hide their past and present agency.[58] But not mentioning the gendered history of *tevau* at all and instead focusing on a purely material standpoint also robs the object of its meaning and complexity.

Figure 3. *Tevau* at the Humboldt Forum, Berlin, April 24, 2023. Photograph courtesy of Carl Deussen

In my short analysis, I have offered an alternative approach to *tevau*: to show *tevau* as complexly gendered within their original context, while also including the European perspective and fixation onto such objects, and the ways in which different patriarchal systems could interact. The artefacts held at today's museums did not appear out of nowhere; they have specific histories that were often shaped by the gendered ideals of collector and creator communities alike, as well as by the imperial power-dynamic connecting them. Colonial ideals of the Pacific, as a space of sexual excess and a supposedly natural gender order, continue to function in the present, influencing how visitors approach such objects in museums. Additionally, visitors bring their own gender identity into the equation, making the encounters even more complex. These relations of power and identity shape the museum space implicitly. The role of the curator should be to address them and to offer room for (self-)reflection. It might be worthwhile taking the *tevau* from Joest's collection out of storage to learn about his complexly gendered encounter on Nendö and to question one's own ideas about gender and sexuality, both in Europe and the Pacific.

## Conclusion

The context of Joest's purchase of *tevau* on Nendö shows the importance of gender in how ethnographic collections were assembled. Whether objects were deemed valuable by collectors and whether they were available to them were both influenced by gendered social structures. This case study shows that collecting was not always a straight-forward relationship but was often defined by various factors stemming both from the collector's conception of gender and that of the original community. In this case, Joest saw his own ideal of masculinity reflected in the behaviour of the men on Nendö and hence became interested in *tevau*. The Nendö men that interacted with Joest equally saw him as a legitimately masculine trading partner—according to Joest, they called him "Me-lö-mgu", or "our father"—and hence they decided to let him purchase several pieces of *tevau*.[59]

Understanding a collecting encounter as gendered does not mean that there is no "real" exchange of information happening. After all, many of Joest's observations about the concubinage system turn out to be surprisingly accurate. But it does mean that what Joest wrote in his diary and what he collected for a European museum cannot be interpreted without taking gender into account. The gendered structure of the encounter on Nendö was the epistemic foundation that

made this particular exchange possible. Consequently, special attention should be paid to all the perspectives that have not been recorded. Social etiquette probably would have made it hard for Joest to ask the concubines about their view on things, but what matters even more is that he did not feel the need to ask them in the first place. He was content to write down as fact what the men of Nendö told him, or what he wanted to see, or both: the image of a pleasant life for the concubines beyond the routines of daily labour. In fact, all observations about *tevau* that were collected while they were still in use came from men. Hence it is advisable to be cautious when using the knowledge in this article. As Tarcisius Kabutaulaka has pointed out, "after decades of anthropological field research in Melanesia we have come up only with pictures of people who fight, compete, trade, pay bride-prices, engage in rituals, invent cargo cults, copulate, and sorcerise each other."[60]

I have tried not to hide the patriarchal history of Nendö, and also to make clear how the fixation of European collectors like Joest prevented the emergence of written accounts of "such sentiments as love, kindness, consideration, altruism."[61] In future research, more importance should be given to searching for and amplifying the voices absent from Joest's account—that of the women within the concubinage system, as well as those who supported or opposed it. Within the process of revival of *tevau*, now in progress on Nendö, the artefact and its social meaning might be reimagined. And in Euro-American museums, the history of complexly gendered objects like *tevau* can be retold differently as well, calling attention to the imperial circumstances of the collecting encounter and deconstructing the ways we relate to these imperial imaginaries today.

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## Notes

[1] Feather money has different designations in the various languages of the Santa Cruz Islands. In this article, I use the most common indigenous name, *tevau*.

[2] For similar case studies on such complexly gendered objects, see, for example, Karen Jacobs, *This Is Not a Grass Skirt: On Fibre Skirts (Liku) and Female Tattooing*

*(Veiqia) in Nineteenth Century Fiji* (Leiden: Sidestone Press, 2019); Bansoa Sigam, "African Cultural 'Sheritage': The Case of Akure Metal Necklaces. Missionary Ethnographic Collecting on Women in Colonial Gabon," in *The Gender of Ethnographic Collecting*, ed. Carl Deussen and Mary Mbewe (Cologne: boasblogs, 2022), 21–26, https://kups.ub.uni-koeln.de/55696.

[3] Michael O'Hanlon and Robert L. Welsch, eds., *Hunting the Gatherers: Ethnographic Collectors, Agents, and Agency in Melanesia, 1870s–1930s* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 154; see also Chris Gosden and Chantal Knowles, *Collecting Colonialism: Material Culture and Colonial Change* (Oxford: Berg Publishers Inc., 2001), xix.

[4] Elizabeth Bonshek, "A Personal Narrative of Particular Things: *Tevau* (Feather Money) from Santa Cruz, Solomon Islands," *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 20, no. 1 (2009): 78, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1757-6547.2009.00004.x.

[5] Oliver Lueb, "Die Macht der Artefakte. Tanzkleidung und -Schmuck auf Santa Cruz, Salomonen" (PhD diss., Georg-August-Universität Göttingen, 2018), 37–38.

[6] Salome Samou, "Santa Cruz Feather-Money," in *The Things We Value: Culture and History in Solomon Islands*, ed. Lissant Bolton and Ben Burt (Herefordshire: Sean Kingston Publishing, 2014), 15.

[7] For example, *tevau* was often displayed during ritual dances. See Bonshek, "A Personal Narrative of Particular Things," 80–83. For the use of *tevau* during dances in the present, see Lueb, "Die Macht der Artefakte," 206–7.

[8] William Davenport, "Red-Feather Money," *Scientific American* 206, no. 3 (1962): 97; A. T. Pycroft, "Santa Cruz Red Feather-Money - Its Manufacture and Use," *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 44, no. 175 (1935): 176.

[9] Davenport, "Red-Feather Money," 97; Pycroft, "Santa Cruz Red Feather-Money," 178.

[10] Davenport, "Red-Feather Money," 97–101; Bonshek, "A Personal Narrative of Particular Things," 74.

[11] Gerd Koch, *Materielle Kultur der Santa Cruz-Inseln, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Riff-Inseln* (Berlin: Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, 1971), 162–63.

[12] Davenport, "Red-Feather Money," 101.

[13] Bonshek, "A Personal Narrative of Particular Things," 85.

[14] Davenport, "Red-Feather Money," 101–2; Koch, *Materielle Kultur der Santa Cruz-Inseln*, 162.

[15] William Davenport, "Social Structure of Santa Cruz," in *Explorations in Cultural Anthropology. Essays in Honor of George Peter Murdock*, ed. Ward Hunt Goodenough (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), 63.

[16] Pycroft, "Santa Cruz Red Feather-Money," 179.

[17] For a discussion on the applicability of "currency", see Bonshek, "A Personal Narrative of Particular Things," 78. For a broader discussion, see the classic study Nicolas Thomas, *Entangled Objects—Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1991).

[18] Samou, "Santa Cruz Feather-Money," 16; Davenport, "Social Structure of Santa Cruz," 63.
[19] Koch, *Materielle Kultur der Santa Cruz-Inseln*, 164–65. Koch also describes the payment of a second set of *tevau* for the couple's engagement, showing that while *tevau* was used throughout Nendö and the Reef Islands, the precise usage varied.
[20] Bonshek, "A Personal Narrative of Particular Things," 83.
[21] Samou, "Santa Cruz Feather-Money," 20–21.
[22] Samou, "Santa Cruz Feather-Money," 16; Bonshek, "A Personal Narrative of Particular Things," 82–83.
[23] Samou, "Santa Cruz Feather-Money," 16.
[24] William Davenport, *Santa Cruz Island Figure Sculpture and Its Social and Ritual Contexts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2005), 101–2.
[25] Bonshek, "A Personal Narrative of Particular Things," 83; Davenport, "Social Structure of Santa Cruz," 67.
[26] Bonshek, "A Personal Narrative of Particular Things," 83.
[27] Samou, "Santa Cruz Feather-Money," 16.
[28] Samou, "Santa Cruz Feather-Money," 16–17.
[29] Samou, "Santa Cruz Feather-Money," 20; Davenport, "Red-Feather Money," 103.
[30] Wilhelm Joest, *Tätowiren, Narbenzeichnen und Körperbemalen: Ein Beitrag zur vergleichenden Ethnologie* (Berlin: A. Asher, 1887).
[31] Pete Sigal, Zeb Tortorici, and Neil L. Whitehead, eds., *Ethnopornography: Sexuality, Colonialism, and Archival Knowledge* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2020).
[32] See, for example, Margaret Jolly, Serge Tcherkezoff, and Darell Tryon, *Oceanic Encounters: Exchange, Desire, Violence* (Canberra: ANU Press, 2009); A. Marata Tamaira, "From Full Dusk to Full Tusk: Reimagining the 'Dusky Maiden' through the Visual Arts," *Contemporary Pacific* 22, no. 1 (2010): 1–35, https://doi.org/10.1353/cp.0.0087; Michelle Erai, *Girl of New Zealand: Colonial Optics in Aotearoa* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2020).
[33] Wilhelm Joest, Diary 24, 16. The diaries are unpublished and are held at the Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museum, Cologne. All translations of Joest's writing are mine.
[34] Wilhelm Joest, "Malayische Lieder und Tänze aus Ambon und den Uliase (Molukken)," *Internationales Archiv Für Ethnographie* 5 (1892): 1.
[35] For a more detailed analysis of Joest's ideal of masculinity, see Carl Deussen, "Collecting Masculinities: Wilhelm Joest and the Masculinity of the Other," in *The Gender of Ethnographic Collecting*, ed. Carl Deussen and Mary Mbewe (Cologne: boasblogs, 2021), https://kups.ub.uni-koeln.de/55696/.
[36] See, for example, Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Routledge, 1978); Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London/New York: Routledge, 1995); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and*

*Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

[37] Victoria J. Baker, "Pitching a Tent in the Native Village: Malinowski and Participant Observation," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 143, no. 1 (1987): 14–24.

[38] For other proto-fieldworkers in the Pacific and beyond, see Rainer F. Buschmann, *Anthropology's Global Histories. The Ethnographic Frontier in German New Guinea, 1870–1935*, *University of Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009); Frederico Delgado Rosa and Han F. Vermeulen, eds., *Ethnographers Before Malinowski: Pioneers of Anthropological Fieldwork, 1870–1922* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2022), https://doi.org/10.3167/9781800735316.

[39] Wilhelm Joest, "Wilhelm Joest's Letzte Weltfahrt," in *Neue Südsee-Bilder*, ed. Arthur Baessler (Berlin: A. Asher, 1900), 276–403.

[40] Joest, Diary 24, 60. See Tarcisius Kabutaulaka, "Re-Presenting Melanesia: Ignoble Savages and Melanesian Alter-Natives," *Contemporary Pacific* 27, no. 1 (2015): 115, https://doi.org/10.1353/cp.2015.0027.

[41] Joest, Diary 24, 60.

[42] Joest, Diary 24, 60.

[43] Joest, Diary 24, 65.

[44] Joest, Diary 24, 74.

[45] Joest, Diary 24, 74–75.

[46] Joest, Diary 24, 75.

[47] Joest, Diary 24, 75.

[48] Joest, Diary 24, 76.

[49] Joest, Diary 24, 101.

[50] For example, Fritz Graebner only mentions concubinage briefly in his discussion of Joest's collection. Fritz Graebner, "Völkerkunde der Santa-Cruz Inseln," *Ethnologica* 1, no. 2 (1909): 71–184. See also Lee Wallace, *Sexual Encounters: Pacific Texts Modern Sexualities*, *Sexual Encounters* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Indrani Chatterjee, "When 'Sexuality' Floated Free of Histories in South Asia," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 71, no. 4 (2012): 945–62, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911812001246.

[51] Pycroft, "Santa Cruz Red Feather-Money," 173; Davenport, "Red-Feather Money," 104.

[52] For a discussion of the different valuations of ethnographic objects, see Glenn Penny, *Objects of Culture: Ethnology and Ethnographic Museums in Imperial Germany* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 57–80.

[53] For example, in the case of Japanese vaginal balls, or *rin-no-tama*, in Wilhelm Joest, "Allerlei Spielzeug," *Internationales Archiv Für Ethnographie* 6 (1893): 163–73.

[54] Samou, "Santa Cruz Feather-Money"; Bonshek, "A Personal Narrative of Particular Things," 87. Such revivals are common throughout the Pacific. See, for example, Tamaira, "From Full Dusk to Full Tusk"; Jacobs, *This Is Not a Grass Skirt.*
[55] Samou, "Santa Cruz Feather-Money," 22.
[56] Samou, "Santa Cruz Feather-Money," 23.
[57] Bonshek, "A Personal Narrative of Particular Things," 86.
[58] Kabutaulaka, "Re-Presenting Melanesia."
[59] Joest, Diary 24, 70.
[60] Kabutaulaka, "Re-Presenting Melanesia," 116.
[61] Kabutaulaka, "Re-Presenting Melanesia," 116.

PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

BERNIDA WEBB-BINDER

# Exhibition Review: *Paradise Camp* at the Aotearoa/New Zealand Pavilion of the 59th Venice Biennale

*Paradise Camp*. Exhibition, curated by Natalie King with Ioana Gordon-Smith, assistant Pasifika curator. 59th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, April 23–November 27, 2022. Exhibition catalogue: Yuki Kihara, *Paradise Camp*, ed. Natalie King. Melbourne: Thames & Hudson, 2022. ISBN: 978-1760761424. 176 pp., 124 color illus. Hardcover $50.00 (USD)

**Abstract**
Paradise Camp*, an immersive exhibition of Yuki Kihara's artworks first presented at the 59th Venice Biennale, was curated by Natalie King with Ioana Gordon-Smith, assistant Pasifika curator. Kihara is the first Pasifika, Asian, and* fa'afafine *("in a manner of a woman," third gender) artist to represent Aotearoa/New Zealand at the international art show. Inspired by an essay by Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, the exhibition features twelve new photographic works alongside a "Vārchive" of the artist's research materials and a remix of a five-part "talk show" created in 2018. Through a camp aesthetic, Kihara presents a* fa'afafine *perspective that decolonizes paradise and gender, argues for community solidarity, and fosters intentional stewardship of the environment in response to climate change, among other topics. The Venice Biennale installation invokes the Sāmoan theory of* vā *and is accompanied by solidarity programming, an immersive website, and an extensive exhibition catalogue that signifies the* tā-vā *theory of reality, an Indigenous Moana framing.*

**Keywords:** *Venice Biennale,* fa'afafine*, third gender,* fa'atama*, fourth gender, Aotearoa/New Zealand Pavilion,* vā, tā-vā, *camp aesthetic, climate change*

*Paradise Camp*, an immersive exhibition of work by interdisciplinary artist Yuki Kihara, garnered much-deserved praise from the art world when it debuted at the 59th Venice Biennale in 2022 (Fig. 1).[1] The *Burlington Magazine* acknowledged it as a "landmark presentation;" the *Art Newspaper* named it a "must-see pavilion," along with five other country platforms at the Arsenale di Venezia venue; and *Art Monthly Australasia* referred to the exhibition as "FAA FA FABULOUS" in recogni-

Figure 1. Artist Yuki Kihara in the exhibition *Paradise Camp*, curated by Natalie King, Aotearoa New Zealand Pavilion, 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, April 23–November 27, 2022. Exhibition commissioned by the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa. Photograph by Luke Walker. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

tion of Kihara's trailblazing status as the first Pasifika, Asian, and *fa'afafine* ("in a manner of a woman," third gender) artist to represent Aotearoa at the international showcase frequently described as "the Olympics of the art world."[2] These accolades and others attest to the exhibition's success while recognizing the artist's activism, talent, and vision. The 59th Venice Biennale closed on Sunday, November 27, 2022, but the impact of Yuki Kihara's *Paradise Camp* will reverberate through time and space.

Curated by Natalie King, with Ioana Gordon-Smith as assistant Pasifika curator, the exhibition is comprised of four distinct-yet-intertwined components: 1) a "Vārchive" of historical and contemporary records collected by the artist during her creative process; [3] 2) eleven new collaborative photographic portraits featuring *fa'afafine* and *fa'atama* ("in a manner of a man," fourth gender) communities in Sāmoa; 3) a new performative self-portrait of Yuki Kihara in drag as Paul Gauguin, the nineteenth-century Postimpressionist painter who traveled from France to Tahiti and the Marquesas in search of "paradise;" and 4) *First Impressions: Paul Gauguin*, a televisual interlude giving novel meaning to Gauguin's Tahitian paintings. These paintings—now acknowledged as sexually predatory—of nude and semi-nude young women were incorrectly revered at the time (and long after) as avant-garde documentation of the sexual freedoms available outside of the French metropole. Effectively, Gauguin silenced his subjects, rendering them anonymous, their lived experiences lost through the process of eroticization and exoticization.

The New Zealand pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale was one of more than twenty-five at the central Arsenale di Venezia location, a 110-acre complex built in the twelfth century as a shipyard and armory.[4] The site's 25,000-square-foot exhibition space was a series of connected warehouses which opened into each other; most of the spaces did not have separate entrances, so visitors traversed through one country's offerings straight into the next. *Paradise Camp* was housed between the pavilions of Latvia and the Philippines in the historical Artigliere, and could also be entered directly from the courtyard. No matter which approach you chose, you immediately stepped into a space (*vā*) where you experienced time (*tā*) differently (Fig. 2). The exhibition's immersive approach to its content—the decolonization of paradise and gender, increasing community action and agency, and employing humor as antidote to trauma—transcended the physical place.

Figure 2. Installation view of *Paradise Camp*, Aotearoa New Zealand Pavilion, 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, April 23–November 27, 2022. Commissioned by the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa. Photograph by Luke Walker. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

Figure 3. Detail of Yuki Kihara's "Vārchive," *Paradise Camp*, Aotearoa New Zealand Pavilion, 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, April 23–November 27, 2022. Commissioned by the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa. Photograph by Luke Walker. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

While there was no set path through the exhibition, the best sequential route to take was a clockwise exploration beginning with the "Vārchive" on your right as you entered from the courtyard (Fig. 3).[5] Gordon-Smith describes the Vārchive as

> a salon-hang of items that include newspaper clippings, personal photographs, archival images, a model of a Sāmoan volcano, a photographic "faʻafafine aquarium" of hermaphrodite fish, and a Sāmoan Faʻafafine Association Trophy, all set against a vast siapo-patterned wallpaper. "Vārchive" is a portmanteau of the Western "archive" and the Sāmoan "vā."[6]

The pieces in the Vārchive were hung on the wall in small groupings, each set bordered by boldly colored frames. Archival objects in art exhibitions are often displayed in Plexiglas cases on pedestals, and the viewer must lean in to get a not-very-close view of the letter, photograph, or ephemera that is sealed away. In this case, each item could be viewed without the mediation of Plexiglas and this curatorial choice set the Vārchive apart from other exhibitions at the Biennale, as did its framing of the *vā*.

According to Albert Wendt,

> Vā is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships/the contexts change.[7]

In this context, the Vārchive in *Paradise Camp* marks a multitude of spaces and times. The exhibition, including its catalogue, website, and community programming, is a "tā-Vārchive," following the paradigm of the *tā-vā* theory of reality. Historical anthropologist ʻOkusitino Mahina and cultural anthropologists Tevita O. Kaʻili and Ping-Ann Addo write:

> The Tā-Vā Theory of Reality argues that tā (time) and vā (space) are inseparable in reality and both dimensions must be examined together, and in relation to one another, in order to gain a deeper

> understanding of natural, mental, and socio-cultural concepts and practices.[8]

In *Paradise Camp*, each photograph, clipping, or remembrance marks a different time in Kihara's life, *fa'afafine* and *fa'atama* history, Pacific history, or the history of us all. Kihara has gathered these sources over her lengthy career and, looking at them individually, one can glimpse moments of space and time. For example, the moment in which *Paradise Camp* was conceived is represented in three photographs on the right edge of the vārchive. In the largest one, Kihara stands in front of two iconic Gauguin paintings at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Fig. 4). In the photograph, Kihara's gaze is direct; the photo was taken over a decade ago, yet the viewer standing before it feels seen by the artist. In the exhibition catalogue, curator Natalie King relates that Kihara "returned repeatedly to view Gauguin's paintings" while her own exhibition, *Living Photographs*, was on view at The Met in 2008.[9] If a center to this exhibition were to be pinpointed, this grouping of photographs would be a moment of genesis.

Figure 4. Artist Yuki Kihara at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2008. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) was a French Postimpressionist painter who first travelled to Tahiti in 1891, returned to France for several years, and spent the remaining eight years of his life in Tahiti and the Marquesas. In response to the Impressionist painters who portrayed daily life in Paris and the suburbs by relying on visible brushstrokes to capture the changing quality of light, Gauguin sought inspiration far from the Parisian metropole in what he considered a paradise unspoiled by artifice and convention. Using bright colors, he placed classicized figures set against lush vegetation, resulting in iconic images of nude or nearly nude young girls, a subject that sold well back home. The girls were objectified and sexualized by Gauguin's gaze (and subsequently by viewers). While we know the name of one model—Teha'amana, the first of several teens who would become his "wife"—her identity and agency and that of other models is erased by Gauguin's gaze. These erotic and exotic images set the stage for Western notions of paradise in racialized, gendered, and sexualized frameworks that were instrumental in colonial expansion and subjugation. His work became popular posthumously and as the images circulated, they became synonymous with "paradise."

Ironically, Gauguin sought an escape from the artifice of cosmopolitan and capitalist Paris yet ended up perpetrating a myth. His life is exaggerated in his published journal, *Noa Noa: Voyage de Tahiti*, in which the specifics of consent between the artist and the model (his teenage wife) are brushed aside.[10] In her research, Kihara realized that Gauguin's Tahitian paintings were a match for Thomas Andrew's photographs of Sāmoan men and women taken when Andrew lived in Sāmoa. Kihara's pivotal collage *Three Tahiti(Sāmo)ans (After Gauguin)* (Fig. 5) addresses this connection and is centrally placed in the Vārchive. Its title indicates the amalgamation of Indigenous Pacific identities. Kihara explains:

> The collage features a seamless pairing between Gauguin's *Three Tahitians* [1899] and Thomas Andrew's *Back View of a Sāmoan with a Pe'a* (tattoo) [ca. 1890s]. This is one of many examples I found in my research where Gauguin used photographs of Sāmoa taken by Thomas Andrew as a foundational reference in developing some of his major paintings. I suspect Gauguin may have collected the photographs when he visited Auckland in August 1895, [when] he spent ten days en route to Tahiti for the second and final time.[11]

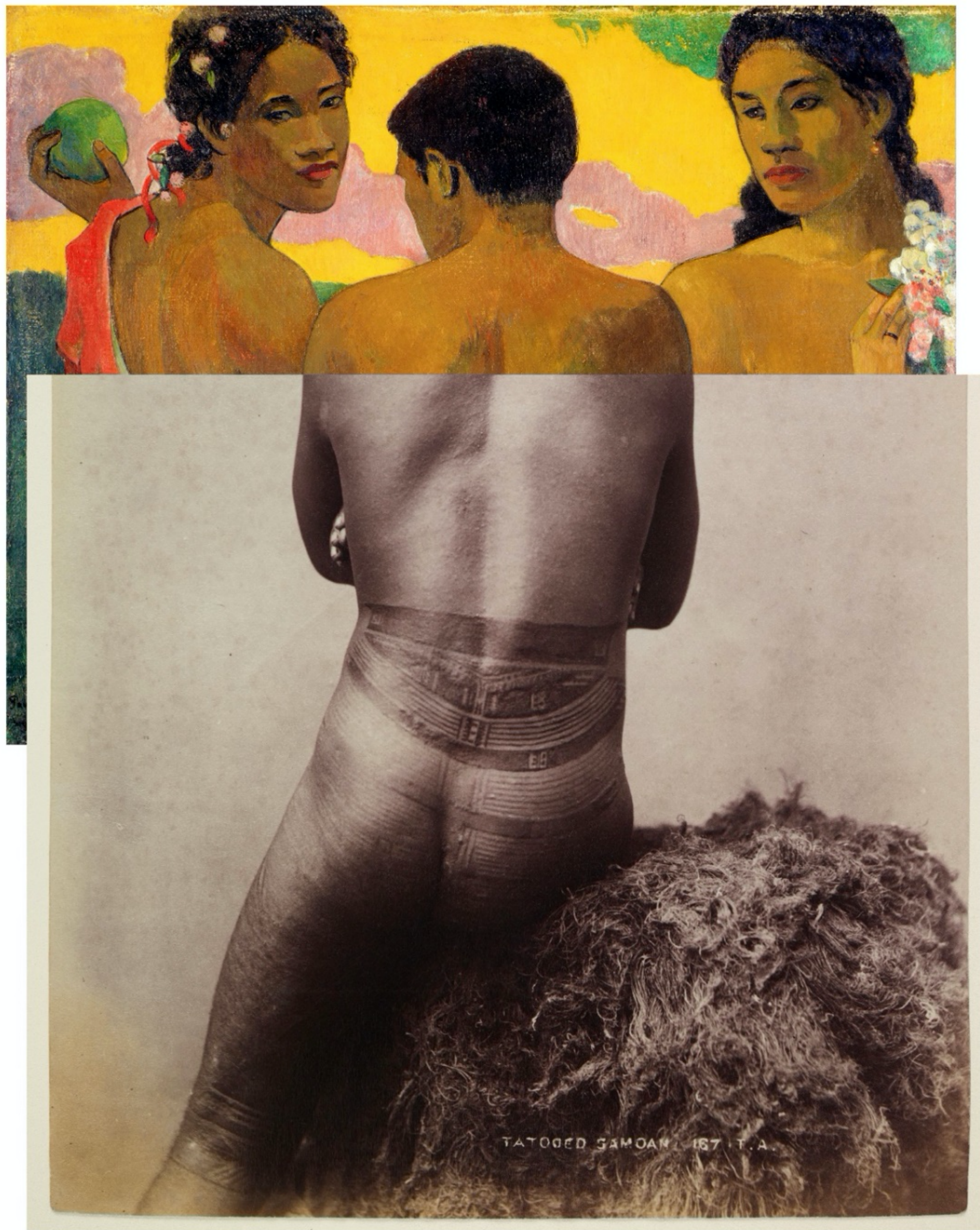


Figure 5. Yuki Kihara, *Three Tahiti(Sāmo)ans (After Gauguin)*, from the series *Coconuts That Grew From Concrete*, 2017, digital collage postcard, 150 x 105 mm. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

Figure 6. Installation view of Yuki Kihara, *Faʻafafine Ancestors*, in the exhibition *Paradise Camp*, Aotearoa New Zealand Pavilion, 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, April 23–November 27, 2022. Commissioned by the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa. Photograph by Luke Walker. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

On the wall behind the Vārchive was a wallpaper covered with patterns that are applied to *siapo* (Sāmoan barkcloth). *Siapo* is highly treasured, lending gravitas to its exchange and marking reciprocal relationships as special. The *siapo*-patterned wallpaper extended beyond the main groupings of the Vārchive to a quartet of portraits adorned with shell necklaces (Fig. 6). The four portraits honor late *faʻafafine* individuals and their contributions to Sāmoan society.[12] *Paradise Camp* has been heralded for its cheeky insouciance, but moments of sorrow are acknowledged as well. Susan Sontag writes, "Camp is playful, anti-serious," yet at the same time, "camp taste is a kind of love, love for human nature. It relishes rather than judges."[13] While the exhibition's title deconstructs Western notions of the exotic, at the heart of *Paradise Camp* is love and respect for *faʻafafine* and *faʻatama* ancestors, as well as an imperative to cherish communities, land, and the environment.

Figure 7. Installation view of *Paradise Camp*, Aotearoa New Zealand Pavilion, 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, April 23–November 27, 2022. Commissioned by the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa. Photograph by Luke Walker. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

Eleven upcycled photographs feature in the second section with a set piece measuring over four and a half by eleven feet dominating the space. In filmmaking, a "set piece" is the scene (or sequence of scenes) that provides the big pay-off for the audience in terms of character or plot development. Set pieces are meticulously planned and lavishly produced visual moments that are so integral that without them the film is incomplete. In this respect, *Fonofono o le nuanua: Patches of the Rainbow (After Gauguin)* can be considered the first set piece within the exhibition, followed by the artist's portrait of Kihara in drag as Paul Gauguin. The viewer was transported to the village of Saleapaga on Upolu Island, Sāmoa, via a floor-to-ceiling photograph of a beach that was devastated by earthquakes and a tsunami in 2009, and which is still struggling to recover (Fig. 7). From left to right, the oceanscape wallpaper depicted a sweep of beach leading into the surf. The expanse of ocean breaks when Nuʻutele islet came into view in the middle, and then continued onto the adjacent wall at a right angle (Fig. 2). Ten individual

and group portraits on Hahnemühle fine-art paper mounted on aluminum were arranged in a rectangle in the first section. One image in this vista may seem familiar. In a notable photograph in the Vārchive (Fig. 4), one of the two paintings Kihara stands in front of is Gauguin's iconic *Two Tahitian Women* (1899). Within the oceanscape section, Kihara prominently placed *Two Faʻafafine (After Gauguin)*, which was also featured on the cover of the exhibition catalogue.

Yet, to focus solely on Gauguin as catalyst in *Paradise Camp* is to give him too much credit by overlooking the Pacific Indigenous perspective on gender. In 1992, Ngahuia Te Awekotuku delivered a paper at Auckland Art Gallery's Gauguin Symposium in which she considers the layered identities of the models from a Māori perspective.[14] In "He tangi mo Haʻapuani (A lament for Haʻapuani): Gauguin's models—a Māori perspective," she writes,

> *He whakaaro taka tapuhi*; for years I have looked at those faces, and I have wondered about them. Who were they? And sometimes, I ask myself, what were they? *He wahine, he tane ranei*? *He mahu, pea?* Either gender? Or the one in between?[15]

She describes her familiarity with his paintings across the years and her scrutiny of the models and their expressions, "recognizing their serene, beautiful, arrogant, and unforgettable faces."[16] Te Awekotuku poses a pivotal question to the models and to herself: "*Ko wai koutou, ake?* Who are you, really?"[17]

Kihara, inspired by this essay to upcycle Gauguin's imagery,[18] creates portraits that depict one or more *faʻafafine* or *faʻatama* with their family or friends in poses that do more than recreate or reenact the original depictions by Gauguin; the upcycled portraits take back the colonial gaze and recuperate the relationships between individuals, communities, and the environment as illustrated by their curatorial choice. Rather than hanging the photographs on a white wall or one painted with a complementary color, King and Kihara conceptually and visually situate the photographs within the landscape that was devastated in 2009. Many faʻafafine were first to respond to the natural disaster, yet the lack of gender-neutral bathrooms mirrors the power disparity to which they are subjected daily. Here, the individuals in these portraits are not just part of the imagery like Gauguin's models; they are integral in the living energy of the "unity-that-is-all"—the land and the climate are just one component—in the *vā*.

Figure 8. Yuki Kihara, *Genesis 9:16 (After Gauguin)*, from the series *Paradise Camp*, 2020. Hahnemühle fine art paper mounted on aluminum, 73.2 x 91.5 cm. Commissioned by the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa for the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, 2022. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

Figure 9: Paul Gauguin, *Ta matete (We shall not be going to market today)*, 1892. Oil on canvas, 73.2 x 91.5 cm. Kunstmuseum Basel. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons[19]

To the right of *Two Faʻafafine (After Gauguin)* was Kihara's *Genesis 9:16 (After Gauguin)* (Fig. 8), which foregrounds representation of *faʻatama*.[20] Wearing a spectrum of primary and secondary colors from head-to-toe with the hues of their shirts and *lavalava* matching their flip-flops, six *faʻafatama* pose on a bench. In *Ta Matete: We shall not be going to market today* (1892; Fig. 9), Gauguin presents Tahitian women in static poses, and while the hand gestures of the Sāmoan *faʻatama* in *Genesis 9:16* are similar, the effect is different. The vibrant color of the clothing in the verdant setting highlights the distinct expressions on each face, giving a glimpse of individual identities rather than the homogenized flat silhouettes of line and color depicted by Gauguin. The intent is unequivocal, according to Kihara:

> *Paradise Camp* is a Faʻafafine project by and for Faʻafafine, compared to Faʻafafine identity that is often instrumentalized as a "cause" to expand cisgender dominance. *Paradise Camp* was created with the Faʻafafine and Faʻatama audience in mind and will tour Sāmoa after Biennale Arte 2022. The exhibition will be a space for continuous mediation where the Faʻafafine community can reflect on their past while offering a Faʻafafine world view for those outside our community.[21]

The rainbow effect of Figure 8 is reflected in the title reference to a Bible verse in which God cements his bond with the earth and its inhabitants after the Biblical flood. In the photograph, the rainbow colors reference the verse, acknowledge Western rainbow pride, and mark the bridge between the mortal and divine worlds. The placement of this radiant work is a visual foreshadowing of the oceanscape's centerpiece, *Fonofono o le nuanua: Patches of the Rainbow (After Gauguin)* (Fig. 10) in which Kihara and her collaborators provide some answers to Te Awekotuku's question, "Who are you, really?"

*Fonofono o le nuanua* is an embodied portrait of the intersectionality described by Kihara in her interview with King:

> *Paradise Camp* is also a provocation against the stereotypical ways that we understand place, gender and sexuality and their intersectionality; it materializes queerness at odds with hetero-normative representation of Pacific people as a consequence of

> colonialism while simultaneously raising questions about how we can decolonize ways of being in the world.[22]

In *Fonofono o le nuanua*, artist and subject agency is reinforced through a collaborative effort mobilized in support of activism. Kihara's nuanced illustrations of lived experience are paramount, unlike the imbalanced power relationship between Gauguin and his models. Kihara's digital collage that superimposes Gauguin's painting with Andrew's photograph emphasizes the suggestive sexuality that Gauguin portrays and the fabulist nature of his life and artistic sources.

Figure 10. Yuki Kihara, *Fonofono o le nuanua: Patches of the Rainbow (After Gauguin)*. From the *Paradise Camp* series, 2020, Hahnemühle fine art paper mounted on aluminum, 139 x 375 cm. Commissioned by the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa for the 59th International Art Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia, 2022. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

In Venice, the third component of the exhibition, *First Impressions: Paul Gauguin*, a single-channel video work, featured on what would be the fourth wall at a right angle to *Fonofono o le nuanua*. The exhibition shares space with the Albania Pavilion and, rather than build a wall, the artist and curator projected the work on a screen hanging above eye-level; the only focus of this "invisible wall" was the "floating" screen. The visitor could stand or sit on the bench in the center of the exhibition, and while you could "see" through the wall to the next exhibition and passersby, this reinforced the sense of multiple times and places converging in *Paradise Camp*.

Figure 11. Still from *First Impressions: Paul Gauguin*, dir. Yuki Kihara, 2018. Single-channel video, 13:00. Commissioned by the de Young Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco and the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, Copenhagen. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

Here, *First Impressions* adds a layer of sound to the symphony of imagery—vārchival moments layered onto *siapo* and portraits placed on top of ocean and land—to create a multi-dimensional feel to the space. *First Impressions: Paul Gauguin* presents five thirteen-minute episodes of a TV talk show, each discussing a different Gauguin painting. Guided by host Anastasia Vancouver Stanley (aka Queen Hera), members of a five-person panel—Charlize Leo, Vanila Heather, Keli Tuatagaloa Laban, Dallas Siatina, and Saunoa Poia (aka Sandora)—voice their thoughts on Gauguin's paintings upon seeing them for the first time (Fig. 11).

While *First Impressions* was commissioned in 2018, in this iteration it is presented as "Paradise Camp TV," with the talk show episodes interspersed with other segments in a fifty-eight-minute loop that includes new footage of Kihara talking back to Gauguin—played by Kihara in makeup and prosthetics—as well as the trailer for Sāmoa's 2019 Faʻafafine Beauty Pageant by the Sāmoa Faʻafafine Association. Rather than the soundtrack featured on the website, the exhibition space is filled with the laughter of the panelists and the hostess, the opening and closing notes of each episode, and the triumphant Game-of-Thrones-like music of the trailer. Also in the rotation is *Faʻafafine, Faʻatama and Climate Change*, a short

documentary film written and directed by Kihara, and New Zealand news footage from 2016 of the Sāmoan *Observer*'s decision to run an explicit photo of the dead body of Jeanine Tuivaiki, a transgender student, accompanying an article misidentifying her gender.

Paradise Camp TV gives a sneak peek (Fig. 12) of the culminating work in the exhibition, Kihara's self-portrait *Paul Gauguin with a hat (After Gauguin)* (Fig. 13), which upcycles Gauguin's *Self-Portrait with a Hat* (1893).[23] This marks the trajectory of ideas embedded in the Vārchive photograph of Kihara in front of *Two Tahitian Women* (Fig. 4). In the self-portrait, the siapo pattern from the walls is echoed as the background that frames the head and shoulders of the artist. The hat sits at a diagonal, throwing shadows on the left side of the face. In a sidelong glance, the artist's eyes stare at the viewer outside the frame. The title, *Paul Gauguin with a hat (After Gauguin)*, doesn't immediately register as a self-portrait by Kihara in which she has recreated Gauguin in her own image. Once this becomes clear, one impact of *Paradise Camp* becomes evident. Gauguin has not only been upcycled by the first Pasifika, Asian, and fa'afafine to represent Aotearoa/New Zealand at the Venice Biennale, he and his colonial legacy have been supplanted through Kihara's fa'afafine perspective and intersectional methodology. Kihara's transformation into Gauguin, as King suggests, "seems like the penultimate decolonial gesture of masking, disguise and parallel acts of creation."[24] Kihara responds with honesty to this statement: "Making this work, I felt nervous, excited about mortality and the legacy one leaves behind."[25] As viewers, we, too, begin to wonder about our own legacies.

There is a sense of activation in *Paradise Camp*. The viewer is implicated in the message of this *tā-vā* and must consider how they will engage with gender inclusiveness, the effects of climate change, and ongoing decolonial strategies after leaving the exhibition. One of the key arguments made by Pamela Rosi about Kihara's body of work is that, by foregrounding her *fa'afafine* identity, Kihara

> maintain[s] positive relationships to her Sāmoan community and her international circle of colleagues through the Moana-Sāmoan practice of *teu le vā*—meaning caring for or beautifying social spaces now threatened by global forces commoditizing the arts and cultures of Oceania.[26]

In this instance, caring for the *vā* goes beyond the exhibition. In conjunction with *Paradise Camp*, Kihara hosted in-person and virtual discussion forums ("Talanoa: Swimming Against the Tide") and established the Firsts Solidarity Network, an advocacy initiative for artists, who, like Kihara, are members of marginalized or underrepresented groups in their countries or are representing countries who are participating for the first time. The Firsts Solidary Network connected artists and facilitated support across national boundaries and provided a map of the five pavilions (Fig. 14).

Figure 12. Production still for *Paul Gauguin with a Hat (After Gauguin)* by Yuki Kihara, from the *Paradise Camp* series, 2020. Commissioned by the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa for the 59th International Art Exhibition of *La Biennale di Venezia*, 2022. Photograph by Evotia Tamua. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

Figure 13. Yuki Kihara, *Paul Gauguin with a hat (after Gauguin)*, from the *Paradise Camp* series, 2020. Hahnemühle fine art paper mounted on aluminum, 45 x 38 cm. Commissioned by the Arts Council of New Zealand Toi Aotearoa for the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, 2022. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

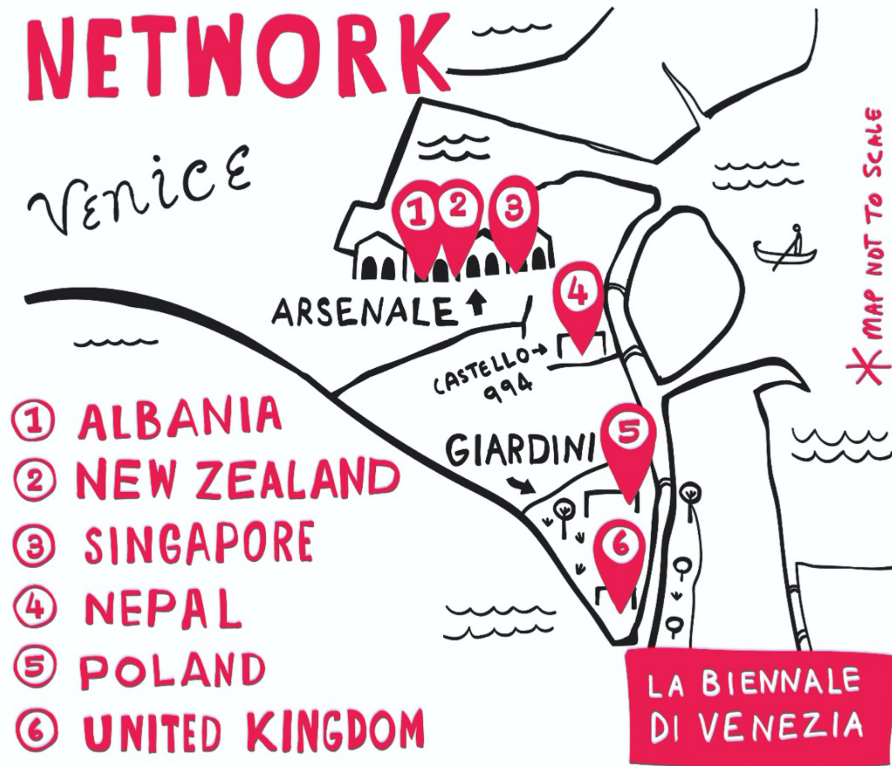


Figure 14. Map of Firsts Solidarity Network pavilions, spearheaded by artist Yuki Kihara during the 59th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, 2022. Courtesy of Yuki Kihara and Milford Galleries, Aotearoa New Zealand

*Paradise Camp*'s themes are echoed in the exhibition's full-color catalogue, which opens with the poem "Fonofono o le nuanua (Patches of the Rainbow)," by Sāmoan poet Ruperake Petaia, reprinted in Sāmoan and English. The catalogue is a rich resource that outlines and explains the creative process of the exhibition, provides a scholarly documentation of Kihara's life and practice, and draws a nuanced view of Pacific history, art, and culture that privileges a *fa'afafine* perspective. In addition to Petaia's poem and Te Awekotuku's essay (with a new epilogue written for the catalogue), it includes poems by Dan

Taulapapa McMullin, who also provides an essay titled "Faʻafafine Theirstory," and a wide-ranging interview between King and Kihara. Jacqueline Lo's essay, "Interweaving Anew: The Japanese-Sāmoan Vā," is one of the first to contextualize Kihara's work within the framework of the Japanese concept of *ma* (間), "the fundamental time and space in which life needs to grow."[27] Gordon-Smith contributes an extensive illustrated chronology of Kihara's life that includes personal and historical landmarks. Other catalogue contributors are Coco Fusco, Elizabeth Childs, Chantal Spitz, Patrick Flores, Daniel Satele, and Fanny Wonu Veys.

The exhibition *Paradise Camp* illustrates Kihara's artistic process. The inclusion of QR codes throughout the space, linked to a virtual exhibition, reenacts the Sāmoan *vā* by offering multiple times (during the exhibition and after) and spaces (in-person or online) to experience *Paradise Camp*. Additionally, it can be understood as a manifestation of the fourth dimension of the *tā-vā* theory of reality. I argue that to the exhibition's immersive elements—the forums, the solidary network, the catalog and website with a virtual exhibition, and the invitation to the reader/viewer to commit to action—Kihara adds a fifth dimension, one in which *tā-vā* is global, embedded in the art world, the art market, and art history and criticism, which must be reckoned with going forward in discussions of Pacific art.

Paradise Camp *is on view at the Powerhouse Museum—Ultimo in Sydney, Australia, through December 31, 2023.*

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## Notes

[1] Viewers can explore the *Paradise Camp* exhibition as presented at the Venice Beinnale at "Paradise Camp by Yuiki Kihara," https://www.nzatvenice.com/.

[2] Freddie Nelson, "Yuki Kihara: Paradise Camp," *Burlington Contemporary,* May 25, 2022, https://contemporary.burlington.org.uk/reviews/reviews/yuki-kihara-paradise-camp; Jose da Silva, Gareth Harris, Hannah McGivern, and Tom Seymour, "Venice Biennale 2022: the must-see pavilions in the Arsenale," *Art Newspaper*, April 20, 2022, https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/04/20/venice-biennale-2022-the-must-see-pavilions-in-the-arsenale?fbclid=IwAR0fvgnAl4-lgLdATPE3yBFaC4guQ5w5aoLzpxRw8p7y5zdWkxX5Jye0bEo; Léuli Eshrāghi, "FAʻAFAFABULOUS," *Art Monthly Australasia*, no. 332 (Winter 2022): 74–79. https://search-ebscohost-com.getty.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=156964509&site=ehost-live; Tagata Pasifika, "Yuki Kihara: First Pacific Islander to represent NZ at the 'Olympics of the art world,'" You Tube Video, 3:29, March 15, 2021, https://youtu.be/oaZmcDvxG6M.

[3] "Vārchive" is a term used by Kihara to contextualize her archival research within the Sāmoan concept of *vā*.

[4] This is the second site after the Giardini di Castello which has been in use since 1895. Twenty-nine countries maintain permanent pavilions at the Giardini. Many of these pavilions are designed by world-renowned architects and the buildings are styled to represent the country that maintains it.

[5] Didactic labels—except for the introductory wall text to the left of the vārchive—were not included in the exhibition space. Instead, a Quick Response (QR) code at the entrance directed viewers to the official website at www.nzatvenice.com. The code provides a "shortcut" allowing you to point your phone's camera at any of the artworks (including vārchive materials) to get a closer look, view descriptive videos starring Kihara, and, in the case of the twelve photographs, a digital slider that toggles between Gauguin's painting and Kihara's upcycled version. The website's virtual explorer also includes a looping 4:37 minute soundtrack. This was best experienced with headphones, as the laughter and musical riffs of *First Impressions: Paul Gauguin* were a central focus of the space.

[6] Ioana Gordon-Smith, "Yuki Kihara: Faʻafafine Nation," *Art News New Zealand*, Winter 2022, accessed April 20, 2023, https://www.artnews.co.nz/feature-winter-2022/.

[7] Albert Wendt, "Tatauing the Postcolonial Body," *SPAN* 42–43 (April–October 1996), reprinted by New Zealand Electronic Poetry Centre/NZEPC, accessed April 24, 2023, https://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/authors/wendt/tatauing.asp.

[8] Tēvita O. Kaiʻili, ʻŌkusitino Māhina, and Ping-Ann Addo, "Introduction: Tā-Vā (Time-Space): The Birth of an Indigenous Moana Theory," *Pacific Studies* 40, no. 1/2 (2017): 5.
[9] Natalie King, "Camping Paradise: I am What I Am," in *Paradise Camp*, ed. Natalie King (Melbourne: Thames & Hudson, 2022), 25.
[10] Paul Gauguin, *Noa Noa: Voyage de Tahiti*, ed. Julius Meier-Graefe (Berlin: R. Piper, 1926).
[11] Yuki Kihara, email to author, April 25, 2023.
[12] Pictured are (top row, left to right) Memea Eleitino Maʻaelopa and Tootooaliʻi Roger Stanley and (bottom row, left to right) Shevon Matai and Tuilagi Seiuli Ailani Allan Alo Vaʻai.
[13] Susan Sontag, "NOTES ON 'CAMP,'" in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject: A Reader*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Edinburgh: Edinburg University Press, 1999), 62, 65, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctvxcrp56.8.
[14] Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, "He tangi mo Haʻapuani (A lament for Haʻapuani): Gauguin's models—a Māori perspective," (with epilogue) in *Paradise Camp*, ed. Natalie King (Melbourne: Thames & Hudson, 2022), 43–50.
[15] Te Awekotuku, "He tangi mo Haʻapuani," 45.
[16] Te Awekotuku, "He tangi mo Haʻapuani,"45.
[17] Te Awekotuku, "He tangi mo Haʻapuani,"45.
[18] Natalie King, "Yuki Kihara in Conversation with Natalie King," in *Paradise Camp*, ed. Natalie King (Melbourne: Thames & Hudson, 2022), 64.
[19] Paul Gauguin, Ta matete (Le Marché), https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Paul_Gauguin,_1892,_Ta_matete_(Le_Marché),_oil_on_canvas,_73.2_x_91.5_cm,_Kunstmuseum_Basel.jpg, accessed August 10, 2023.
[20] This verse in the Bible (King James Version) reads: "And the bow shall be in the clouds; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that *is* upon the earth.
[21] King," Yuki Kihara in Conversation," 63.
[22] Ibid.
[23] To view the transformation from Gauguin's original to Kihara's upcycled version, visit https://www.nzatvenice.com/virtual-explore/artwork/paul-gauguin-with-a-hat and scroll to the bottom of the webpage to the slider that toggles between the two versions.
[24] King, "Yuki Kihara in Conversation," 67.
[25] King, "Yuki Kihara in Conversation," 67.
[26] Pamela Rosi, "Concepts of Tā-Vā (Time-Space) in the Art Practice of Sāmoan Aotearoa Artist Shigeyuki Kihara," *Pacific Studies* 40, no. 1/2 (2017): 289.

[27] Jacqueline Lo, "Interweaving Anew: The Japanese-Sāmoan Vā," in *Paradise Camp*, ed. Natalie King (Melbourne: Thames & Hudson, 2022), 141-147; Kiyoshi Matsumoto, "MA—The Japanese Concept of Space and Time," accessed April 22, 2023, https://medium.com/@kiyoshimatsumoto/ma-the-japanese-concept-of-space-and-time-3330c83ded4c.

PACIFIC ARTS
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**A. MĀRATA TAMAIRA**

# Albert Wendt: Writing in Color

**Abstract**
*Between 2004 and 2008, celebrated Sāmoan writer Albert Wendt held the Citizens' Chair in the Department of English at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa. By 2007, Wendt had completed twenty-seven paintings, each one a visual ode to the land and people of Hawaiʻi. These paintings were featured in his first art exhibition, held at the Louis Pohl Gallery in Honolulu in 2007. This piece is a review of that exhibition,* Le Amataga: The Beginning*, along with an interview with Wendt that took place soon after the exhibition opened.*

**Keywords:** *Albert Wendt, Sāmoan art, painting, Hawaiʻi, contemporary art*

*Writing is the painting of the voice.*
—Voltaire, 1764

Between 2004 and 2008, celebrated Sāmoan writer Albert Wendt held the Citizens' Chair in the Department of English at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa. Inspired by the light and landscape of his surroundings, Wendt used his time in the Islands as an opportunity to return to painting, a creative passion of his that had lay dormant under a distinguished, decades-long writing career. By 2007, Wendt had completed twenty-seven paintings, each one a visual ode to the land and people of Hawaiʻi. In that same year, Wendt and Kanaka Maoli artist Carl F. K. Pao began talking about the possibility of a future exhibition of the writer's paintings with Pao as curator. Pao took the idea to the Louis Pohl Gallery and the rest, as Wendt would perhaps say, was le amataga—the beginning.

What follows is an unpublished 2007 review I wrote of Wendt's first art exhibition, *Le Amataga: The Beginning*, as well as an interview I undertook with him not long after the exhibition opened.[1]

Figure 1. Albert Wendt and his partner Reina Whaitiri, Honolulu, 2007. Visible in the upper left is *Black Star 1: The Black Star Arrives*, date unknown. Acrylic and metallic pens on canvas, approx. 30 x 36 in. Photograph courtesy of Carl F.K. Pao

## *Le Amataga: The Beginning*—An Exhibition by Albert Wendt

A broad shaft of yellow, early-dawn light spreads across a canvas illuminating the soft contours of the Koʻolau Range, while from above, a star—the Black Star—leaves an incandescent trail of red and yellow across an aubergine sky as it makes its final descent to earth. Words extending across the bottom of the frame seem to cradle the image: "The Black Star arrives over the Koʻolau at dawn, traveling all the way from Aotearoa / It wants to meet all its Maoli (indigenous) cousins and learn the ways of the Aina (land)."

This painting, *Black Star 1: The Black Star Arrives* (Fig. 1), is one of twenty-seven works featured in an exhibition by highly acclaimed Sāmoan writer Albert Wendt. The exhibition, *Le Amataga: The Beginning*, was held at the Louis Pohl Gallery in downtown Honolulu between August 28 and September 21, 2007, and marked Wendt's first public showing of his artwork. The opening night—which began with a group of singers and an oli (chant) given by Lilikalā Kameʻeleihiwa—drew students, art lovers, and a large contingent of the artist's friends and family. Throngs of people milled around the paintings—some engaged in enthusiastic discussion regarding the artist's use of light and color, while others simply stood quietly absorbing Wendt's masterful blend of images and words.

The paintings are a testament to Wendt's prolific creativity—all the works were produced during his tenure as Citizens' Chair in the English Department at the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa, which began in 2004. As Wendt notes, the visual arts have always been close to his heart. During his time at teachers' training college in New Zealand in the late 1950s, he immersed himself in art alongside Māori artists such as Selwyn Muru and Sandy Adsett. Indeed, it wasn't until he began to concentrate more on his writing that his engagement with the visual arts began to wane, albeit temporarily. In 2000, Wendt returned to painting and sketching as if drawn to do so by unseen forces. He explains his journey back to the visual arts: "I couldn't stop it . . . the urge to do it just came upon me; it was like a flood, and I couldn't deny it anymore."[2]

Wendt's work, while thematically eclectic, retains a powerful sense of cohesion in that it is borne out of the connections he has made to the land and the people during his time in Hawaiʻi. Key series of works are the *Pele* series (Fig. 2), inspired by Haunani-Kay Trask's poem "Night is a Sharkskin Drum," and the *Black Star* series (Fig. 3), which began as a collection of poems and ink drawings in Wendt's *The Book of the Black Star* (2002). Through the artist's palette, the

Figure 2. Albert Wendt, *E, Pele e 2*, 2005. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 24 in., Pao-Tamaira Collection. Photograph by Carl F. K. Pao. Courtesy of the author

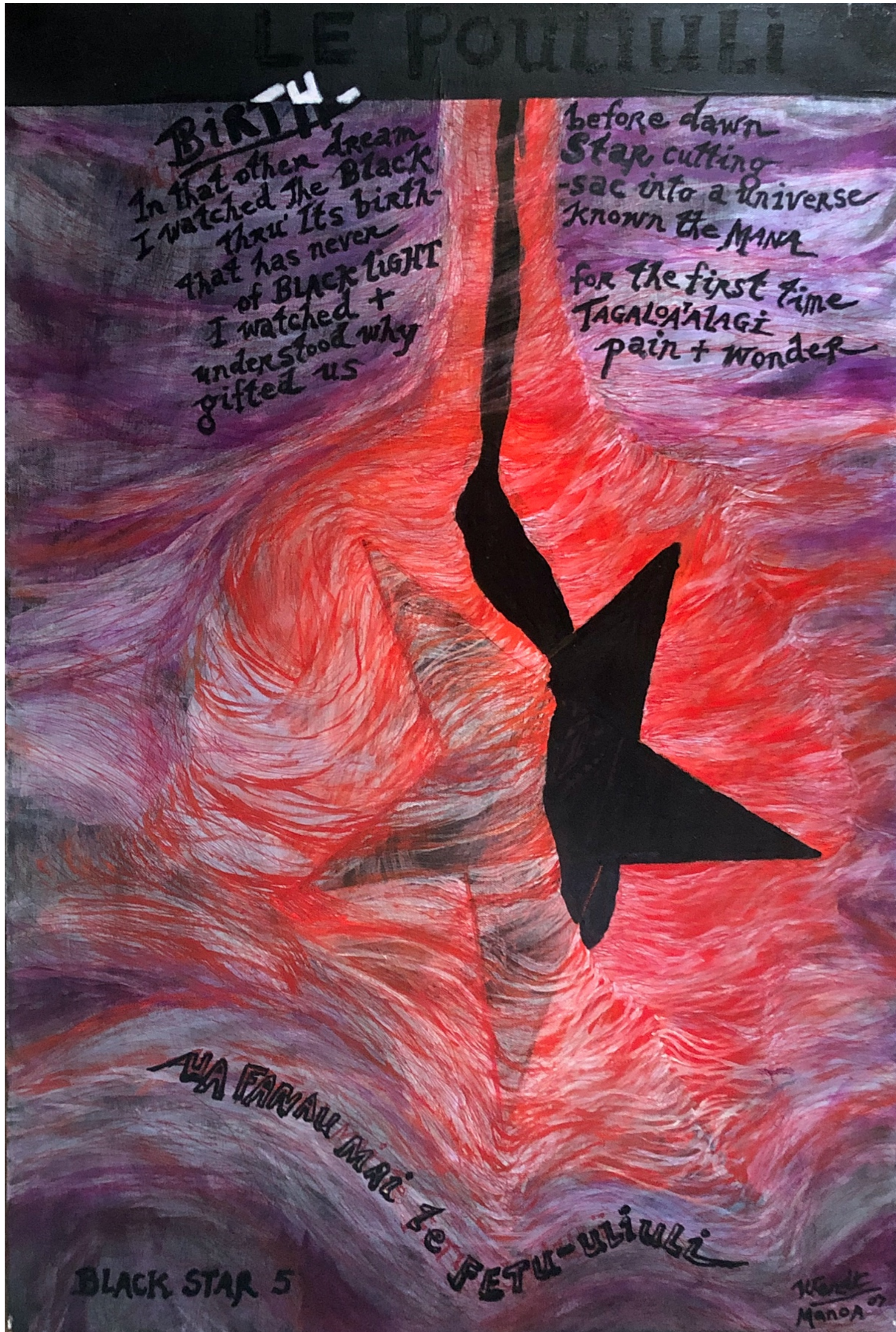


Figure 3. Albert Wendt, *Black Star 5*, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 36 x 24 in., Pao-Tamaira Collection. Photograph by Carl F. K. Pao. Courtesy of the author

Black Star resonates with a new kind of vibrancy. The Hawaiian landscape, which Wendt says is "absolutely marvelous and unusual," is also a conspicuous motif throughout his work, particularly the Koʻolau Range (Fig. 4).[3]

The way in which Wendt utilizes both words and color in his paintings demonstrates a powerful fact: the visual arts and writing are connected; they are overlapping and complementary elements in the creative process. In explaining his dual engagement with both art forms, Wendt states simply, "I'm now a poet who uses color."[4] Over the last three decades, Wendt's writing has provided critical insight into the Pacific Islander experience. Now, through "writing" in color, he offers us a new perspective—and it's just the beginning.

### An Interview with Albert Wendt

On a balmy August evening, a large crowd of people jostled for space in downtown Honolulu's Louis Pohl Gallery to attend the opening exhibition of highly acclaimed Sāmoan novelist Albert Wendt. Titled *Le Amataga: The Beginning*, the exhibition comprised twenty-seven paintings and marked Wendt's first public showing of his artwork. I met with Professor Wendt in 2007 to discuss the exhibition and his passion for the visual arts. The following excerpts are taken from a longer interview.

**Mārata Tamaira (MT):** Many people are familiar with you in terms of your novels and poetry, but what many don't realize is that for many years now, you have been expressing yourself through the visual arts. How long have you been involved in the visual arts, and what inspired you to pursue this artistic medium?

**Albert Wendt (AW):** I've always loved art anyway, visual art, and when I was a boy, I did a lot of it. But, when I went to New Zealand, to the high school there, they wouldn't let me do art. If you were sort of a bright student . . . you had to learn Latin (laughs). So, for five years I did Latin at this high school, while some of my friends did art—and I envied them a lot. And then I went to teachers' training college, and I spent three years doing art there, which I loved very much, with Selwyn Muru and Sandy Adsett, and other Māori painters and artists. And after I left training college, I decided to concentrate on my writing. So, throughout university I didn't do much art, I just did my writing. However, my love of art continued because I followed the development of art in New Zealand and the Pacific very

closely . . . It wasn't until the year 2000 that I began to do art again—I couldn't stop it (laughs). The urge to do it just came upon me; it was like a flood, and I couldn't deny it anymore. So, I went up the road to the French Art shop on Ponsonby Road [in Auckland, New Zealand], and I bought pencils, crayons . . . and I went home, and I spent nearly three months teaching myself how to draw again . . . I'm still teaching myself how to draw now.

**MT:** You've resided in Hawaiʻi for the last three and a half years. How has Hawaiʻi inspired your artwork?

**AW:** The shift to Hawaiʻi has been really tremendous. When I shift to another country . . . I write myself into the country. I use my writing to try and describe how I feel about the country. So, when I came to Hawaiʻi, I now had two ways of doing it: I can write . . . but I also decided I would start painting . . . When we got here, I had brought with me two small, ready-made canvases . . . so those were the two first canvases I painted here. Those were my first two paintings, since the 1960s. And when you saw the exhibition, that's the first one and I wrote it in Sāmoan and it's a tribute to the Koʻolau mountains, five minutes from my house. And while I was drawing the Koʻolau and doing these first paintings, I was also writing a very long poem called "The Koʻolau," which I read out at the end of the night at the exhibition. So, I was doing three things: teaching myself how to draw, painting, and then writing my poems. And those two small paintings then turned into, over the last three years, to twenty-seven paintings, ranging from small to quite large. And those were the paintings that I exhibited in this exhibition. They've all been done in Hawaiʻi. Hawaiʻi I find ideal to make art in. It's because even though I'm very committed to the Hawaiian political struggle, I'm also distant from it, because it's not my country. So, I can participate in that, but I can also distance myself from it and look at the country and paint. I find the landscape of Hawaiʻi absolutely marvelous and unusual. I also find the climate here ideal for painting. I can spend day and night painting just with my lavalava on and look at the Koʻolau, and the light is ideal. At this stage in my life, I only want to paint and draw. People say to me, "Don't you do other art things?" I say, "No, I don't have the time." I mean if I was young, I would try to do ceramics [and] sculpture, to find out what I'm good at doing. But I've always loved painting and drawing, so that is what I'm going to do, I just don't have the time to explore the other genre[s] of art.

Figure 4. Albert Wendt, *Koʻolau 4*, 2005. Acrylic and metallic pens on canvas, 36 x 24 in., Pao-Tamaira Collection. The text reads: "In the language of black moonlight / these mountains dream of / the first Kanaka Maoli / who loved + named them / the Koʻolau forever." Photograph by Carl F. K. Pao. Courtesy of the author

**MT:** What were your feelings about the exhibition?

**AW:** It was quite a privilege to have my first public exhibition . . . It's my first exhibition, so it's like publishing my first book. But in this case, it's more public. You know, you publish a book and people take it home and read it privately, right? So you don't see their reaction. The only reaction you see is when people critique it or write reviews on it or write essays on it. But you don't see the average reader's reaction to your book. However, once you put your twenty-seven paintings up in a gallery, it becomes very public. And, if you're there you can watch the reactions by people to the paintings and the impact on you is immediate. I was quite fearful about the exhibition and the reaction of the people . . . But the opening was a lovely family get-together.

**MT:** How does writing inform your painting and vice versa?

**AW:** I've used the stuff I've learned from writing poetry and novels [and] combined that with using color and shapes, so really what I've done is I'm now a poet that uses color and I combine that with language. And that's really the challenge for me now: How do you get a balance between written language and color and shape. And I know what's going to happen—the art itself, by me exploring it, will take me to wherever it's going to go. And at the moment, I feel very good about where it's going.

**MT:** Your poetry is a prominent feature of your artwork. Do the words come to you as you paint, or are they conceived of ahead of time?

**AW:** I thought I could just simply take some of my poems, which have already been published, and put them on the canvas—very difficult, I found. You're predetermining what is going to be on the canvas before you actually work it—you're actually predetermining the language—and then you are trying to force it onto the canvas and combine it with color. I found it's very difficult. Sometimes it's worked. Some of the paintings in the exhibition are from previous poems, but most of them are poems, which I make up as I do the paintings . . . I like it this way as I'm painting because you see it visually. When you alter it, you visually see the whole thing alter . . . I've always believed that when you alter something in the reality, you alter the whole reality but now I can actually see it on the canvas. I mean, by

putting another color there the whole unity of the canvas changes. And if you alter something here, you've got to balance it with something there. It's similar to what you do when you are writing. But I love it this way—this is visual.

**MT:** In what ways does your artwork offer you a freedom of expression that your writing does not?

**AW:** It gives you another dimension to work with, especially when I use words as well . . . but you see, you run into that problem again of making sure that the color goes with the wording. Sometimes they don't go, but you keep working at it. It's exactly as I do in my writing. I love revising my work, which is exactly what I do in my painting. I mean I can paint quickly, and then I sit there, and I alter it a bit . . . and then change the whole thing, which is what I do in my writing anyway.

Figure 5. Albert Wendt, *Untitled*, 2006. Acrylic and metallic pens on canvas, 30 x 36 in., Pao-Tamaira Collection. Photograph by Carl F. K. Pao. Courtesy of the author

**MT:** How has Kanaka Maoli art inspired your own work?

**AW:** I've been lucky in Hawaiʻi, because Kanaka Maoli art here is enjoying a renaissance, and the contemporary art of Hawaiʻi is very powerful stuff, and I've learned a lot from it. Similarly, I think the same of contemporary Māori art in New Zealand and contemporary Pacific art . . . Without the art of the Kānaka Maoli, I don't know what kind of art they'd produce here—it would be just like mainland American art. Kanaka Maoli art is bringing something unique, which is theirs and which belongs to this place.

**MT:** So, do you think art is a medium through which Indigenous voices can be heard?

**AW:** Art is only a part of the whole drive by our peoples to decolonize themselves and to get our own ways of expression out there, instead of being dominated by foreign ways of looking at the world. But we've also learned from them . . . We've taken acrylics, which were invented in the West, and used them in our own way.

**MT:** In many ways, the title of your show, *Le Amataga: The Beginning*, has an air of auspiciousness. Where to from here?

**AW:** Reina and I are retiring from academic life. That doesn't mean we're retiring from life. All it means is we'll be staying in Ponsonby in Auckland and continuing on with our work. For instance, I'll continue my painting, and we will watch our grandchildren growing up. And it'll give us a lot more time to do our own work. *Le Amataga*—I called the exhibition that because it was my first public exhibition. But how I got there, it's not really a beginning, because I've always loved art, and I still love art in a very passionate way. In fact, when I paint now, I feel more absorbed in it than when I write and some of my publishers are worried that I might stop writing and do art (laughs). I have a novel, which I have to finish before we go back to Aotearoa. But it will be just another phase at reinventing myself, like most artists, well, most people, not just artists. Somewhere along the line, we find something new that we love and that's the direction we take. The word "reinventing" is a sort of a big word, but most of us do it. We do it to survive. We do it to survive according to the things we love. And, making art for me, I really love it.

*A. Mārata Tamaira is an independent Māori researcher and writer who hails from Aotearoa New Zealand. She has ancestral ties with the central North Island tribe of Ngāti Tūwharetoa and the subtribes of Ngāti Turumakina and Ngāti Tūrangitukua. She holds a PhD in gender, media, and cultural studies from the Australian National University and has written widely on contemporary Hawaiian and Pacific art. In 2023, she completed her first children's picture book manuscript, which is currently under peer-review, and she is working on her first novel. Tamaira's creative work focuses on her Māori heritage and traces the links between ancestral connections, the power of place and memory, and the transformative quest for identity and belonging.*

**Notes**

[1] This interview was first published in the July–September 2007 issue of the Center for Pacific Islands Studies newsletter, *Pacific News from Mānoa*. https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/581e3276-ad32-49a0-a81b-3b58aefca822/content.
[2] Albert Wendt, personal communication, 2007.
[3] Wendt, personal communication.
[4] Wendt, personal communication.

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NATALIE ROBERTSON

# Tātara e maru ana: Renewing Ancestral Connections with the Sacred Rain Cape of Waiapu Kōkā Hūhua

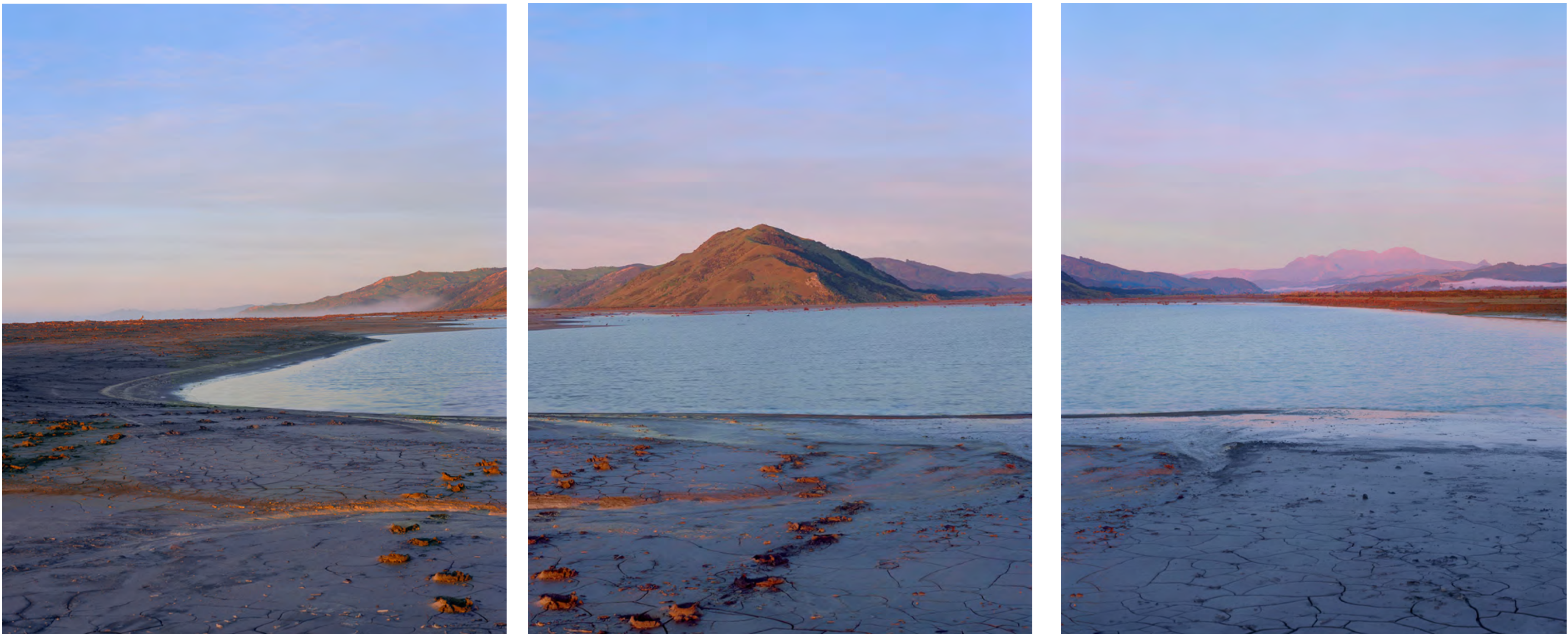

Figure 1. Natalie Robertson, *Tera te haeata e takiri ana mai! Behold the first light of dawn! (Waiapu Ngutu Awa, 7th August 2020)*, triptych, 2020. C-Type photographic prints, each 100 x 79 cm. Courtesy of the artist

**Abstract**

*This photo essay is based on the artist's doctoral research and exhibition* Tātara e Maru Ana—The Sacred Rain Cape of Waiapu*. The PhD thesis interrogated the history of photography in Ngāti Porou to show how lens-based image-making can enact Mātauranga Waiapu: cultural knowledge systems specific to this place and oriented to the restoration of the Waiapu River and the wider taiao or environment. The creative works in the project critically adopt the strategies of landscape photography to activate transformative relationships among iwi and hapū in recognition of the degradation of Te Riu o Waiapu by settler colonial practices of deforestation.*

**Keywords:** *photography, Māori, Mātauranga Waiapu, landscape photography, deforestation, settler colonialism, New Zealand*

| | |
|---|---|
| Ko Hikurangi te maunga | Hikurangi is the mountain |
| Ko Waiapu te awa | Waiapu is the river |
| Ko Ngāti Porou te iwi | Ngāti Porou is the tribe |
| Ko Pōhautea te maunga | Pōhautea is the sentinel hill |
| Ko Takā te awa | Takā is the stream |
| Ko Te Whānau a Pōkai te hapū | Te Whānau a Pōkai is the subtribe |

Figure 2. Natalie Robertson, *Te Riu o Waiapu, Whites Aviation, 1958 / 2020*. Inkjet print on silver gloss paper, 52.5 x 61 cm. Courtesy of the artist

I neherā, i mea atu a Tāmokai o te hapū o Te Aowera ki tōna whanaunga a Kōkere "Hoake tāua ki te Waiapu tātara e maru ana". Ko te whakatauaki nei e whakahuahua ana i te tātara, he momo kākahu i hangaia mā te harakeke, he whakatauaki e pā ana ki te huhua o te wao i te Riu o Waiapu, he wāhi i roto i te Tairāwhiti. Kei roto i ngā kupu o te pātere a Arapeta Awatere e whakaū ana I te kōrero mo te huhua o te takiwā nei te Riu o Waiapu: Kei Waiapu te tainga o te riu o Horouta. Ko te iwi tēnā ko Ngāti Porou, Tātara e maru ana. Ko ngā kupu nei, he kōrero mo te taunga o te waka tapu a Horouta ki Waiapu, i reira i whakangitia hoki te waka. Mai konei, ka timata ko te orokohanga o te iwi nui tonu a Ngāti Porou. E rongonui ana hoki te waka tapu a Horouta mo te haringa mai o te kūmara ki roto i te takiwā o Waiapu. E ai ki a Tā Apirana Ngata:

"...ahakoa te poupou, te pākarukaru, me te hūkerikeri o te rere o te awa o Waiapu ka hua tonu he whenua pai mo te whakatipu kai i ngā tahataha o te awa, ā, ka hua tonu he parehua, he whenua pai mo te whakatū pā. Nā wai rā ka pupū ake te tini me te mano tāngata i reira, nā koia te taketakenga mai o ngā kupu a Tāmokai o te hapū noho waenga parae a Te Aowera, Hoake taua ki Waiapu ki tatara e maru ana."

Nā te whakahuahua o wēnei kupu ka puta te whakairo i a Tāmokai mo te whenua haumaru mo ngā uri whakaheke. Ko te Riu o Waiapu hoki taua whenua haumaru, nā āna kai maha, nā āna puna wai, nā āna whai rawa katoa, me āna tikanga, kawa huhua katoa. Ko te īngoa taketake o Waiapu ko Waiapu Kōkā Huhua, he kōkā nō te tini me te mano, he wahi i noho ai ngā ariki mareikura maha hoki. Heoi, i wēnei rā, nā te whakatopetope ngahere i ngā rau tau kua pahure e raru ai te taiao o te awa. Nō reira, i whakaritea te Runanga Nui o Ngāti Porou me ngā hapū o te Riu o Waiapu I tētahi rautaki mo te whakaoratanga o te awa e kīa nei ko Waiapu Kōkā Huhua. He mahinga tahi hoki i waenganui te Kaunihera o Turanganui a Kiwa me te Manatū Ahuwhenua i runga i te whakairo kotahi mo te orangatonutanga o te whenua, o te awa, me ngā uri. I tōku rongotanga atu mo tēnei rautaki a Waiapu Kōkā Hūhua, i puta mai te whakaaro i au me pēhea te tangata e mōhio i ngā rerekētanga mai ngā rautau ki mua tae rāno ki wēnei rā ina kāore i a rātau he rikoatatanga whakaata? I roto i te 2012 Waiapu River Catchment Study Final Report, i meatia atu ngā hapū i ngā tūmanakotanga mo te taiao, ko te whakamahinga me te kaitiakitanga o ngā puna wai rarowhenua. I meatia hoki ngā pakeke o te takiwā nei e pā ana ki ngā wā o te tuna, arā i te wā i reira ngā tuna i roto i ia puna wai, ko te mahi a te tuna ko te whakapai i te puna wai. Ko aku mahi i te taha o toku hapū o Te Whānau a Pōkai i Tikapa Marae ko te tohu i ngā puna wai Māori, me ngā wāhi whai take, me te rikoatangia a ataata nei i te āhua o wēnei wāhi mā te whakamahi i ngā kōrero tukuiho me ngā tuhinga a te kōti whenua. Ko wēnei whakaahuatanga me ngā whakaaturanga katoa he whakautu mo te rautaki Waiapu Kōkā Hūhua.

E pēhea ai tātau rapa i te tūmanakotanga me māriutanga roto i ngā parekuratanga nui? Nā te rahi o te horowhenua i Waiapu Awa, e kore e tutuki ai te mahi whakaora i te awa i roto i te tipuranga kotahi, engari i roto i ngā tipuranga maha pea e taea te tutuki. Heoi, e taea pea te whakaora i ngā puna wai Māori me ngā kōawaawa i roto i te hā-awa i te wā iti noa. Ka tipu mai te hihiritanga me te manawanui i roto i au i roto i ngā kōrero a ōku pakeke e pā ana ki ngā tikanga o te whakamahi i ngā puna wai Māori. He mea nui te tirotiro haere i ngā wāhi whai take e whai pānga ana ki te wai no te mea ka whakaatutia te mātauranga-ā-iwi a ngā tīpuna mo te taiao, mo ngā tikanga o ngā wāhi-ā-iwi. Ko te tieki me te manaaki i te wai te hua mo te huri atu ki tēnei momo āhua whakaaro.

Nā te tūmanako nui, i kitea e au i tētahi reo whai āramatanga taketake ake ki te Tairāwhiti, he reo e whai panga ana te haeata o te rā. Ko te īngoa o Porourangi Arikinui tētahi o

ngā tauira o tēnei reo taketake, i whānau mai a ia i roto i te ata wherowhero, ā, ka tapaina ko tōna īngoa tūturu ko Porou-ariki Mata-tara-a-whare, te tuhimareikura o Rauru. Ko wēnei korero mo te rā me mārama he kōrero tuku iho no mātau. Koia nei aku whakaaro mo te tango whakaahua. Koia nei tētahi o ngā whiti ō roto i tētahi o ngā haka taparahi i roto i te Tairāwhiti a Kura Tiwaka Taua, ko wētahi o ngā kupu i tangohia mai tētahi oriori mo te waka tapu o Tākitimu e whitu rau te tawhito. I roto i ngā kupu a Ngāti Porou, nā te kupu 'te haeata' ka whakamōhiotia te tino whai pānga o te ata hāpara me ana hīhī e pā atu ana ki te Maunga Tapu a Hikurangi. Koia nei te kitenga i arahi atu i ngā whakaahua o te ata. Ka whiti te rā i waenga nui te ngutu awa o Waiapu kia taea atu ōna hihī ki te taumata o Hikurangi, e rua noa iho ngā wā ka kitea whānuitia ngā hihi o te rā i runga i te mata o te maunga, i te Mei me te takiwā o te Hūrae-Akuhata. I hopungia ngā whakaahua tokotoru me te whakaahua ata wherowhero i te ata o te 6 o Akuhata 2020. I roto i ngā whakaahua tokotoru, he nekenga wā iti kei waenga i ia whakaahua, ā, ko te rā me ōna hihī e pā mai ana i te mata o Hikurangi i te whakaahua taha matau, ko te whakaahua o Pohautea Maunga kei waenganui, ka waiho atu ko te ākau ki te taha mauī. Whakamahia e au te kāmera rīpene Linhof Technika e 5"x4" te matanga mai te tau 1953, he kāmera whai pērō me te uhi i runga i te mataaho. He tukunga pōturi tēnei, ā, ko te nuinga o ngā whakaahua pango me te mā kua whakaahuatia pēnei, i te mea me noho ora tonu te tōrarotanga i roto i ngā rautau kei tua i a tātau.

I roto i tēnei whakaaturanga, ka whakamahi au i ngā whakaahua tawhito o te Riu o Waiapu nā ngā kaiwhakaahua o mua i hopu ki te whakaahua atu i ngā rerekētanga o te taiao me te āhua o te whenua i roto i ngā tau kua hipa. E whakaahuatia ana awau I wēnei rā mo ngā tipuranga o mua, ngā tipuranga o naianei, me ngā uri whakaheke. He hiahia oku te whakamahi i ngā pukenga kei au hei whakatinana atu i te aroha mo te whenua, te awa, te moa, mo te hau kāenga me ngā tāngata e rite nei ki au, te hunga e whakaoratia anō ngā hononga whakapapa. He uri au nā Porourangi rāua ko Hamo te Rangi, ko te whakaihihihi ōku ake hononga ki te whenua me te awa te whainga matua, mā te ako, mā te tipu mai te rekereke ki runga me te taka me te rere ki rō wai.

E whakairingia ko te kōruru mai te whare tīpuna o te marae a Tikapa-a-Hinekōpeka, a Pōkai, i runga ake i te whakaahua o Pohautea Maunga i te taha o te ngutu awa o Waiapu. I te ata o te 6 o Noema 2020, nā te pāpā te Ati Rīkona a Morehu Te Maro (e mōhiotia whānuitia ko Papa Boycie) i whakatapungia, i whakatūwherangia hoki te whakaaturanga

nei. A muri iho, i pōwhiritia mai ngā kaimahi o te Whare Pupuri Tāonga o te Tairāwhiti ki te kite atu i te kōruru katahi anō ka riro i a rātau ki te manaaki me te tieki. Koia nei te kōruru i whakairingia ki runga te whare tipuna o Pokai, he momo whakairo nā te tipuna a Iwirākau, tae rānō ki te tau 2018, i te wā i whakairingia ngā whakairo hou i runga i te whare, nā Lionel Matenga i tā. Kua whakaaengia a Papa Boycie kia whakairingia tēnei kōruru, kia whai wāhi ai ki tēnei whakaaturanga. Tiro whakawaho ana ki te taiao e kitea nei e ia i runga i a Pōkai.

—Natalie Robertson, November 2020

Translation into te reo by Hunaara Waerehu

Figure 3. Natalie Robertson, *Waiapu Ngutu Awa, Whites Aviation, 1951 / 2020*. Inkjet print on silver gloss paper, 60 x 61 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 4. Natalie Robertson, *A Red-Tipped Dawn—Pōhautea at Waiapu Ngutu Awa (7th August 2020),* 2020. C-Type gloss photographic print, 79 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Centuries ago, Tāmokai of the inland Te Aowera people spoke to his kinsman Kōkere and said: “Hoake tāua ki te Waiapu tātara e maru ana—Let us go to Waiapu, where the rain cape is thick.” This proverbial reference to a woven rain cape, usually made of harakeke (*Phormium tenax*), speaks of the shelter provided by the richly forested Waiapu valley, here on the East Coast of Aotearoa. The image of prosperity is reinforced at the end of the first verse of the Horouta Waka pātere composed by Arapeta Awatere: “Kei Waiapu te tainga o te riu o Horouta, Ko te iwi tēnā Ngāti Porou, Tātara e maru ana,” which refers to the Waiapu where the emptying of the Horouta canoe took place, and to the beginnings of Ngāti Porou around the river, where they lived in great numbers. The Horouta waka is renowned for bringing kūmara to Waiapu, where this prized crop was extensively cultivated. According to Tā Āpirana Ngata,

> the Waiapu River in its lower reaches made up for its steep, broken and sometimes violent course by the great extent of cultivable land on both banks backed by terraces suitable for pa sites. Hence the great development of the population there, which drew from Tāmokai of the inland Aowera tribe the cry, Hoake taua ki Waiapu ki tatara e maru ana.

When Tāmokai spoke about returning to his homelands of Waiapu, he imagined a sanctuary, a safe haven for rising generations. With abundant food cultivation, freshwater springs, ample material wealth, and a flourishing culture, Te Riu o Waiapu was indeed a haven. Today, the Waiapu River is in the midst of a century-long catastrophic environmental disaster due to deforestation. Waiapu Kōkā Hūhua is an ancestral mother of many; a river of many female leaders. In response to mass erosion, Te Runanganui o Ngāti Porou iwi and hapū have set forth a one-hundred-year plan for the revitalisation of the river called Waiapu Kōkā Hūhua, in partnership with the Gisborne District Council and Ministry of Primary Industries. They agreed on a shared vision for the restoration of healthy land, rivers, and people.

When I first heard of the Waiapu Kōkā Hūhua plan, I immediately wondered how would people one hundred years from now know what changes had occurred unless there was a visual record? In the 2012 Waiapu River Catchment Study Final Report, hapū identified “desired state” environmental indicators including that “Underground springs are used and protected.” Elders speak about times when there was “a tuna in every puna,” an eel in every spring to keep the water clean. Assisted by oral histories and land court records, I work with my

Te Whanau-a-Pokai hapū around Tīkapa Marae to locate freshwater springs and other sites of significance and markers in the land, to visually record their current state. This series of photographs and video is a direct response to the Waiapu Kōkā Hūhua plan. How do we find hope and optimism in the face of unimaginably large disasters?

The scale of the Waiapu River erosion disaster requires many generations of restorative work. Yet healing the tributaries and freshwater springs of the catchment is conceivable in shorter timeframes. Our elders, who once used freshwater springs maintaining strict tikanga (protocols), retell stories that inspire me. It is imperative to find collective ways to activate change to uplift the mauri (lifeforce) of the water in their lifetimes. Investigating ancestral places associated with water is important because they reveal the cultural and ecological mātauranga-a-iwi (tribal knowledge) of our tīpuna (ancestors), within tribal organizational boundaries marked by genealogies. A measure of a return to this way of thinking is that water is looked after. Seeking hope, I identified a distinctive eastern Tairāwhiti language of light, where the rising sun is of particular importance. For example, Porourangi was born in the crimson red-tipped dawn. His full name is Porou-ariki Mata-tara-a-whare, te tuhimāreikura o Rauru. This observance of the quality of light is a part of our history. I apply this thinking photographically.

> *Tera te haeata e takiri ana mai i runga o Hikurangi!*
> *Behold the first light of dawn is reflected from the crest of Hikurangi!*

The above line from an East Coast men's ceremonial haka taparahi (haka performed without weapons) called Kura Tiwaka Taua is adapted from a portion of the ancient Tākitimu canoe chant that is over seven hundred years old. In this Ngāti Porou version, the word "te haeata" communicates the significance of first light as it strikes the ancestral mountain Hikurangi. This observance has guided the dawn photographs. The sun rises directly through the Waiapu River mouth to touch the summit of Hikurangi unimpeded by hills only twice a year: in May and again in late July to early August. The triptych (Fig. 1) and the red-tipped dawn photograph (Fig. 4) were taken at dawn on August 6, 2020. In the triptych, there is a small lapse of time between each image, as the sun first strikes Hikurangi in the righthand photograph, then Pōhautea in the centre, and the coastline on the left. For these, I used a 5 x 4" 1953 Linhof Technika sheet film camera—the type with bellows and a hood

over the viewfinder. This is a slow and deliberate method. The majority of the black and white photographs in the series are made in the same manner, as I want the negatives to still be here in one hundred years.

In this exhibition, I also draw on historical photographs of the Waiapu valley, taken by earlier photographers, to illuminate past lives and landscapes in the spiral of time. Today, I photograph for past-present-future generations, beyond my own lifespan. My desire comes from a wellspring of aroha for whenua, awa, and moana, for the people who are the hau kāenga living "at home" and for those like me, who renew ancestral connections. As a Ngāti Porou person, I had to begin with myself, re-invigorating my relationship with land and river, by learning from the ground up and being in the flow of the water. The weather-worn kōruru carving from the Tīkapa-a-Hinekōpeka Marae whare tūpuna Pokai is mounted above the sentinel mountain Pōhautea at the Waiapu River mouth. On the morning of November 6, 2020, this exhibition opened with a blessing by Archdeacon Morehu Te Maro—widely known as Papa Boycie. Afterwards, Tairāwhiti Museum staff invited us to view the kōruru recently placed in their care. For over one hundred years, this Iwirākau-style whakairo adorned the apex of Pokai, until Tīkapa Marae was restored with new whakairo by Lionel Matenga in 2018. Papa Boycie has permitted this kōruru to take up a new role here in this exhibition, looking out across the many of the same landscapes he could see from atop Pokai.

—Natalie Robertson, November 2020

Figure 5. Natalie Robertson, *Puna wai, Kuri a Pāoa*, 2020. Inkjet print on gloss paper, 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist

**Te Waipuna—Kawenga Wahi a Te Aowhiua**

It is late summer, so the stock have all been sold. The paddock has just a few cows browsing in it. I can't see the large creamy bull that kept me from coming here in spring. Ngaire said he was nothing to worry about. I said, "Well, he is your bull." A woman named for the water—Te Wai—asserted her boundary on the place where the water runs down the hills from this freshwater spring named Te Waipuna. I am her direct descendant.

"Te Hikapohe sent his sisters to make Waipuna the boundary of their land on the north. Hunaara used the proverbs:
'Kātahi ngārara kopai ara i ngā wāhine nei.'
'He atua whakahaehae ngā wāhine nei.'"[1]

He then threw a stick on the karaka trees and said, "I will give up the land but will hold the trees." This was Hunaara's last attempt on the land.

I squint my eyes to make out the steps into the hillside and the depressions in the earth that are clues to its former use as a pā. Hineauta once lived here. Tamaureriri, the beneficiary of her land, carved a large house called Te Kura Makahuri, after his ancestor, which stood in the vicinity. The Pōhautea case left a trail of names, but with no map we are left to walk the land and guess. Is this her pā Katapeka? Is this near the spring Ngākōhuruamomona, from which the water was drawn in her day?

As the daughter of Takimoana, Hineauta was highly tapu, an illustrious wahine who exercised mana over land and sea in the Tīkapa area. Apirana Mahuika said that the rocks just offshore in the shore break are named Ngā Toka a Hineauta for her. It is a place where a mussel species called "hanea" grows. I have eaten these sweet mussels. Today, they struggle to filter out sediment carried into the ocean from the river. The wīwī grasses are growing here in abundance, reminding me of the tribal saying "He wīwī, he nāti, he whanokē." But even the blades in a single clump of this wetland grass far outnumber the people living around here today. Thriving on water, they are my best indicator of a freshwater spring.

Figure 6. Natalie Robertson, *Puna wai on Taumata o Tūwhata, Kawenga Wahi a Te Aowhiua*, 2020. Inkjet print on gloss paper, 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 7. Natalie Robertson, *Te Waipuna—Kawenga Wahi a Te Aowhiua,* 2020.
Inkjet print on gloss paper, 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 8. Natalie Robertson, *Puna wai (possibly Ngākōhuru-amomona) in the vicinity of the former site of the marae of Hineauta, Kawenga Wahi a Te Aowhiua*, 2020. Inkjet print on gloss paper, 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 9. Natalie Robertson, *Puna wai and pear tree (possibly Puna-a-Hinemahi), Kawenga Wahi a Te Aowhiua*, 2020. Inkjet print on gloss paper, 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 10. Natalie Robertson, *Puna wai, from above Takā stream*, diptych, 2018. Inkjet prints on gloss paper, each 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist

The puna gravity-feeds two nearby homes with beautiful fresh, cool water. There are other puna nearby, but none like this, with its ferny fringe. One seeps out of dark moist recesses in a rock wall on the face of a hill, oozing down into a wetland. Another is subterranean, emerging at ground level into a swamp where kahikatea stand. This puna pours into a stream called Takā.

In our pepeha, we say, "Pōhautea te maunga, Takā te awa, Tīkapa te marae."

Across Takā is a larger spring on a place called Koira, across the hillside from our marae. Koira is where my ancestor Te Wai lived. Wai puna, puna wai. Tīpuna. Mokopuna.

My grandfather was a water diviner, perhaps a gift inherited from Te Wai. The waters from Koira flow into Te Rapa stream, then into Takā. Ngāiwi, the stream at the back of Tīkapa Marae meets Takā, each acting as natural boundaries for our tīpuna and their cultivations. These springs were the source of life for the people living here. Not far downstream all become part of Waiapu, the river below.

From our marae, I can see the moana. The ocean waves break at the river mouth just past Pōhautea, merging wai māori and wai tai. Two waters, ngā wai e rua, sustaining our spiritual and bodily wairua. This place is a portal, Te Tomokanga o te Ngutu Awa o Waiapu.

> Ka noho Wai-nui, ka noho i a Rangi,
> Puta mai ki waho rā Moana-nui a Kiwa;
> Ka maringi kai raro ko Para-whenua-mea,
> Nā Moana- nui, ē, nā Moana-roa, ē!
>
> —Waiata 234: "He Oriori Mo Te Whakataha-Ki-Te-Rangi," na Tupai (Te Whanau a Kai, Turanga). Na H. Te Kani Te Ua nga kupu, nga whakamarama, na Henare Ruru etahi o nga whakamarama.[2]

Figure 11. Natalie Robertson, *Puna wai, Whakaumu*, 2020. Inkjet print on gloss paper, 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 12. Natalie Robertson, *Te Puna o Te Ao Te Huinga and kahikatea trees, Tīkapa-a-Hinekōpeka I*, 2019. C-Type photographic print on gloss paper, 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist

**Te Puna a Te Huinga—Tīkapa a Hinekōpeka**

It is autumn. I am looking for the freshwater spring in the paddock across the road below the marae at Tikapa. It is marshy, my gumboots are sinking ankle deep into the ground.

I can see where the old concrete well is, but can't see the water for all the weeds.

What does this spring look like? There is no deep pool of blue-green water, clear as quartz crystal. It doesn't announce itself as a spring.

Outside of the well, I step into the swampy weeds. I find the water. I slip and am up to my knees in it, all muddy and wet, but I manage to save my camera.

There are cows in the paddock. This is no longer used for drinking water. Rain tanks now provide water for the marae.

Figure 13. Natalie Robertson, *Te Puna o Te Ao Te Huinga and kahikatea trees, Tīkapa-a-Hinekōpeka II*, 2019. Inkjet print on gloss paper, 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 14. Natalie Robertson, *Te Puna o Te Ao Te Huinga and kahikatea trees, Tīkapa-a-Hinekōpeka III*, 2019. Inkjet print on gloss paper, 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist

**My Eyes Are Paua Shells**

It feels like eons since my eyes were in the ocean—they are yearning for the sting of saltwater.

My eyes are paua shells that once husked the black muscular foot inside, a delicacy so desired by my numerous offspring. This black foot surrounded jaws—a radula with thousands of tiny, hard teeth—that once gnawed seaweed from rocks. That tasty meaty muscle has long since been eaten by one of my grandchildren—only the glistening shell remains. Born of the moana, my green-blue-mauve eyes can hear the moods of the ocean better than my wooden ears. I stare at the horizon, as if looking with longing might pull me closer to where the river meets the sea—Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa.

Deeply set into my head, my eyes can see under water, even though I stand here forever on land. The swirling, light-reflective colours of paua, with its substrate of pearly shell, are like my psychedelic visions of the aqueous realm. My eyes have no lids, so at dawn they reflect the first sun rays from the east, and in the last light of dusk they gaze unfocussed at the distant sea. In the hours of darkness, they become mata-a-ruru, the watchful eyes of the morepork. When the moon travels underground on the darkest nights, my eyes still glint like whetu, the stars of the ancestors in the heavens.

Somewhere far beneath my timber feet is another ocean, a subterranean aquifer filled with water that can remember the ancient times when only birds, bats, reptiles, and insects lived on this land. The artesian groundwater remembers the vibration from the felling of forest trees a hundred years or more ago. I too, am made from a tree, a totara that comes from another mountain far from here, a place where tall trees still stand. My name is Rākairoa.

I am the long-awaited adornment for my parents Pōkai and Pōhatu. My sister Te Aokairau and I stand here with our backs to this house looking in the same direction every day, ready to welcome our many descendants home. Some of our children stand behind us: Putaanga, Huanga, Rakaimataura, Hinepare, Tangihaere o Taina, Hiakaitaria, Tukiumu, Rakaitemania.

The faces of their siblings are carved into the window frames of this house, named for their great-grandfather, Pokai. Down the road and across the Waiapu River, they are also the ancestral bodies of other houses.

The land here looks so different from when we were alive. As we look across at the scalped hills, we all yearn for the trees that once formed the rough coarse cloak covering the land. The birdsong was deafening in those times. Korimako, tui, kereru, hihi, and kokako were all lead singers in the dawn chorus that now is just a faint echo of the past.

Someone once cried, “Hoake taua ki Waiapu, ki tātara e maru ana.” “Let us go to Waiapu where the rain cape is thick.”

I look across the dusty quiet road to the upright kahikatea trees standing like sentries among the wetland swamp of wīwī grasses. From where I stand, I can hear the wind in their leaves, dulled a little by my wooden ears. These trees are at least a couple of centuries old. Perhaps they were saplings when I was a girl. Or perhaps their seeds were in the ground, dropped by the parent trees. I like to think that they remember me when I was human flesh.

In those days, my sister and I lived among the podocarp forest, ferns and shrubs of this land—karaka, tāwhara, rimu, pukatea, mānuka, kānuka, kahikatea, and so many more—feeding on their berries, flower bracts, fruits, and fern roots. Sometimes we named our streams for the staple food gifts they gave such as Waiaruhe—the fern root waters—or for the trees that held medicinal healing such as Mangapukatea—the stream where the Pukatea grows.

He mokopuna, he tipuna—a grandchild is a fountain
for ancestral knowledge, a living spring.

My beloved mokopuna Te Ao o Te Huinga, the eldest son from my daughter Rakaitemania and her tāne Iwirakau the carver, settled here when he was young. The waterways across the road from here came to carry his name—Te Waiwhakateretere Ara o Te Aotehuinga for the stream, Te Puna o Te Huinga for the freshwater spring, and also the storage pit for the kumara, Te Rua o Te Huinga.

When Te Aotehuinga was an old man, he returned, died, and was buried here by the stream, and Te Waipai a Te Aotehuinga is his tohu, his marker there. He has another one on Pōhautea, the low-lying mountain that guards the river mouth. None of these names or markers can be easily found today.

The land has changed so much since those times, but the sound of his name is in the wood sap, the bloodwaters of the trees. But human blood has memory too. We ancestors can speak through our mokopuna as our blood continues to flow through them. This is what I am doing now, awakening those names.

The dispossessions and disruptions of the colonial times caused the names of these waterways to be lost to the winds, but since I began standing here at the front of this house, watching over the trees and waters, my descendants are coming out of their clouded amnesia. They weren't forgetful but the colonial trauma of their grandparents' grandparents overshadowed everything and the stories of the land went underground, buried under a world of pain.

What remained here among the trees, in the bush, in the streams, in the springs, in the hills, and in the lengthening shadows at the end of the day, were kēhua—ghosts. Ready to frighten the children and strike fear into strong men in the dead of night, the kēhua became more alive than the people who lived in fear. There is even a place here called Whare a Kēhua—House of Ghosts.

When my mokopuna had to run through the bush in the early dawn to turn on the water pump at the freshwater spring across the hill behind where I now stand, he was reminded to run fast lest the kēhua get him. He sprinted like the wind, his short legs leaping across the paddocks and through the bush.

When my mokopuna felt her head pushed down into the freshwater spring by invisible hands for using the wrong utensil to collect the water, she screamed for her life.

When my mokopuna rode his horse to the river mouth and heard the raspy whispering of the karaka trees, his mother told him it was the ancestors' spirits rustling the leaves on their way to their leaping off place.

Is it any wonder that they cut down the bush and set it ablaze, burning the hiding places of kēhua, smoking them into oblivion? The only large trees left standing were those who had housed the bodies and bones of the dead, those trees for whom the ghosts would demand payment should they be touched. A few sacred trees had personal names—many survived the clearances but later they became casualties of careless helicopter spraying.

The land became barren. Even tī kōuka trees high on hilltops that indicated where fishing grounds were when at sea were not spared. The amnesia of the people is slowly lifting and their collective memory is returning, as they find ways to listen to us old people who are no longer walking among them.

Today, most of those trees are gone and the birds with them, but the cicadas remain. Their summer song is so loud with their wings rubbing together. This surviving family of kahikatea trees talks among themselves and they too lament the passing of their elders. There aren't as many of the family as there once was. The young ones aren't surviving and the oldest tallest ones have long since gone.

So it's just them, keeping their feet wet in the swamp the way they like to. Did you know that they are the oldest member of the ancient podocarp family and were around when dinosaurs roamed during the Jurassic times? They are one of the big five podocarps along with tōtara, rimu, matai, and miro. I wonder if their roots tap into the underground sea of freshwater? I imagine that their long fingers are touching, sending subterranean messages to each other about the water. Is there enough for a long summer? Is there too much in a rainy winter?

The relationship between the underground oceans and the highest rain clouds is intimate, one dependant on the other. As I stand here, I remember the times of my human flesh which depended on the freshwater. I also depended on the lungs of the earth—trees and wetlands—for the very air that I breathed. Now that I am made of the trunk of a tree, I have come to think like a totara tree.

My eyes may remember the ocean but my red totara heart remembers the forest. Connecting the underground artesian aquifers with the uppermost clouds above, are these rākau morehu—survivor trees—standing between the earth and the heavens leaping across the paddocks and through the bush.

**Te Puna o Rangitāuaki—Te Rimu**

The artesian spring water at Te Rimu bubbles up from the earth into a shallow gravelly pool surrounded by native trees. Climbing over the stile, I push back branches to get through onto a track that accesses it. By the puna wai, the air is sweet and earthy. It is the only one around here still surrounded by trees, protected from cows. This is a puna manawa whenua, an unfailing spring. In turn, we must not fail it. It is our oasis.

Puna—wellspring; manawa—heart; whenua—land.

The wellspring heart of the land. The name of this puna was lost to our tongues, even as we drank its precious cool water. I felt parched for our mother tongue. Have you ever had that feeling that your tongue was thick and dry, when you couldn't reply to an elder in our language? I have. I found the name of the puna wai on an old map. I say it over and over so I don't forget—Te Puna ā Te Rangitauāki. Speaking the name of the wellspring heart helps quench a deeper thirst.

Figure 15. Natalie Robertson *Te Puna o Rangitauāki, Te Rimu*, 2018. C-Type photographic print, 79 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 16 (left). Natalie Robertson, *Waiapu Bridge pier, ki uta*, 2020. C-Type photographic print, 66.7 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist
Figure 17 (right). Natalie Robertson, *Waiapu Bridge pier, ki tai,* 2020. C-Type photographic print, each 66.7 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 18. Natalie Robertson, *Buried house—Barton's Gully (Mangarārā stream flowing into Waiorongomai river)*, 2018.
C-Type photographic print, 66.7 x 100 cm. Courtesy of the artist

Figure 19. Natalie Robertson, *Waiapu River at the base of Kai Inanga Hill, with dolosse,* diptych, 2020.
Inkjet prints on gloss paper, each 50 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist

*Natalie Robertson (Ngāti Porou, Clann Dhònnchaidh) is a photographer, moving image artist, writer, and associate professor at Auckland University of Technology, Aotearoa. With a focus on cultural and environmental relationships, Natalie creates photographs and moving images that explore Mātauranga Māori through a whakapapa lens. In 2022, Natalie graduated with a PhD for her doctoral thesis* Tātara e maru ana: Renewing ancestral connections with the sacred rain cape of Waiapu Kōkā Hūhua *through the University of Auckland. She contributed extensively to the multi-authored book* Hei Taonga Mā Ngā Uri Whakatipu—Treasures for the rising generation: The Dominion Museum Ethnological Expeditions 1919–1923 *published in 2021 by Te Papa Press. Recent exhibitions include* Tātara e maru ana—The sacred rain cape of Waiapu *at Adam Art Gallery, Wellington, April–June 2022 and St Paul St Gallery, Auckland University of Technology, 2021;* Toi Tū, Toi Ora: Contemporary Māori Art *at Auckland Art Gallery 2020–21*; *15th annual Nuit Blanche Toronto, 2020; and* To Make/Wrong/Right/Now, *Honolulu Biennial, 2019.*

## Notes

[1] Te Harawira Whanautau, cross-examined by Mohi Turei, April 4, 1878. Waiapu Land Court Minute Book 3: Omaewa, 1878, The University of Auckland, New Zealand, microfilm reel 1317, 399.
[2] Song 234: "A Lullaby For Te Whakataha-Ki-Te-Rangi," by Tupai (Te Whanau a Kai, Turanga). Text and explanations by H. Te Kani Te Ua. Some explanations by Henare Ruru. In Apirana Ngata, "Nga moteatea: he maramara rere no nga waka maha—The songs: scattered pieces from many canoe areas," in *Nga Mōteatea—The Songs Part 3* (Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University Press 2006), 221.

PACIFIC ARTS
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MAX QUANCHI

# “Who Are We Without Land?”: Climate Change, Place, and Identity in the Work of Joycelin Kauc Leahy

**Abstract**
*This research note describes the work of Joycelin Kauc Leahy, an artist, writer, curator, and climate activist. The author focuses on the ways Leahy addresses the relationship between climate change, land, and identity—especially in Papua New Guinea—through her research, curatorial projects, and illustrated children’s literature.*

**Keywords:** *Joycelin Kauc Leahy, contemporary art, Papua New Guinea, climate change, children’s literature, curation, Morobe Province, Tami Islands*

Climate, land, and identity have always been at the heart of Indigenous village life in the Pacific. Recently, these three related topics have been valorized globally as subjects of debate and advocacy at international forums, conferences, and in a body of scholarly literature. In addition, artists have responded to the challenge of climate change using a variety of formats. These works highlight the resilience of local communities, their custodianship of the land, and the numerous ways in which village identity may be maintained in the face of outside forces—sometimes familiar, sometimes inexplicable and unexpected, both environmental and human. The complex, overlapping relationship between climate, land, and identity can be followed through the artistic output of Joycelin Kauc Leahy, an artist, writer, exhibition curator, and climate activist.

Leahy was raised in Wagang village, east of Lae, in Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea (PNG), and earned an undergraduate degree in journalism at the University of Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby. She later obtained a master’s degree in museum studies at the University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia. Leahy’s research, curatorial projects, and creative work respond to climate change in Pacific communities. Using her talents as a visual artist, writer, and climate warrior, from 2009 to 2011, Leahy curated the touring exhibitions *Pacific Storms* and *Lusim Land*, which engaged more than thirty Pacific artists collectively. She then

decided that her message also needed to be told through art and storytelling. Merging her personal, scholarly, and artistic interests with the culture of village life in PNG, in 2015 she wrote "The Song of the Turtle," which won the PNG Literature Award for best children's story. Her continuous involvement in promoting an activist relationship between culture, art, and environment inspired Leahy to write, illustrate, and publish a children's book, *The Lazy Little Frog* (2022, Fig. 1). It includes thirty-three original watercolours illustrating a tale of village life in Papua New Guinea, including daily problems, friendship, and adaptation to climate change.[1] As an artist and writer, Leahy draws on her own upbringing, experience with other Indigenous communities, and scholarship to bring the clamorous and volatile global discourse on climate change in a meaningful and accessible way to her home community.

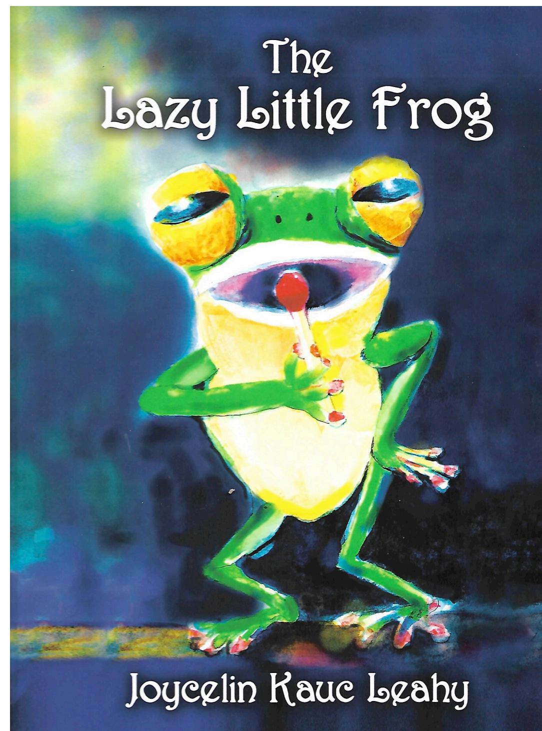


Figure 1. Joycelin Kauc Leahy, *The Lazy Little Frog*, 2022, front cover. Courtesy of the artist

## Fieldwork

Leahy acknowledges that her earliest grasp of heritage, cultural identity, and environment developed as she watched and listened to her grandmother, kin, and clan while growing up in Wagang village. She also acknowledges the importance

of the eighteen months of fieldwork (2009–10) she conducted in the Tami Islands for her master's degree.[2] Leahy worked in the two ancestral Tami villages of Wanam and Kalal. In the 1930s, a third Tami community was established on the mainland. The Tami people are globally renowned for their art and sculpture—including carved wooden bowls and masks, now found in museums around the world—and their magnificent voyaging canoes used in an extended network of trade and social relationships.

Leahy's fieldwork shaped her thinking on how Indigenous peoples, such as the few hundred in the Tami community, respond to rapidly evolving changes noticeable in their islands' biodiversity, their culture, and their heritage. While conducting research, she made the disturbing discovery that despite the Tami villagers' awareness of unusually frequent and large storms and tidal surges, increasing salination in northern New Guinea, erosion, unpredictable seasonal weather patterns, and other negative impacts on the environment, they did not have the term "climate change" in their vocabulary. This was remarkable, as the terms "climate change" and "rising sea level" have been increasingly known around the world since 1993, when the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) began issuing its annual *WMO Statement on the Status of the Global Climate*, an authoritative and often-cited source.[3] She realised that because most of the international debates about climate change occur far from small Indigenous communities across the Pacific, they are unknown to them. Leahy's Tami Islands fieldwork highlighted for her the difficulty of bringing the Tami Islands experience to the world's attention, and of identifying a single voice for the wider Pacific when isolated village communities still characterize much of the population. Beyond PNG's island communities, the term "sea level rise" is also mostly unknown among the millions of highlanders that live in towns and remote villages in the rugged mountainous interior of Papua New Guinea.

Leahy realized that in stark contrast to small, remote island communities like the Tami—who face challenges to their environment, heritage, and culture on a daily, local basis—inland Pacific communities and concentrated urban populations are not so directly affected by or aware of these dangers. While remote coastal communities stoically get on with the business of survival, in cities people chant climate-change-awareness slogans, wear t-shirts, put up posters and banners, march in the streets, and attend fundraising concerts and art shows. For example, in Fiji, where nearly half the population lives in the urban sprawl of Lami–Suva–Nausori, a huge billboard at the entrance to the University of the South Pacific in Suva asks passers-by to help save Tuvalu from sinking. But how many Fijians actually know where Tuvalu is, or that it is a nation consisting of nine atolls

endangered by sea levels rising? Despite these causes, public appeals, and the dramatic vision offered by the billboard being worthwhile, their impact on urban Fijian attitudes, knowledge, and opinions about the effects of climate change is difficult to measure.

Leahy tackles the three themes of climate change, land loss, and maintaining cultural identity by documenting how the Tami community utilized customs, beliefs, and practices to manage climate change, loss of lands, and environmental dangers, including the traumatic experience of being uprooted and disconnected from their ancestral land or homeland.[4] She details the strong intangible and tangible bonds between environment, spirituality, cultural practices, language, song, custom, and ritual.

## Curatorial Projects

Concurrent with her studies at the University of Queensland, Leahy curated two large touring exhibitions by Pacific artists responding to climate change. These exhibitions were shown in the Australian cities of Bundaberg, Logan, and Brisbane. The thirty-three visual, digital, and performance artists in these exhibitions came from twenty-two Pacific Island nations and territories with the aim of giving voice to the real and urgent concerns of Pacific Islanders about *lusim land* (lost lands) and the devastation caused by rising sea levels.

In the catalogue essay for *Pacific Storms* (2009), Leahy comments that world leaders were, at the time, meeting at a UN climate change conference, known as the Copenhagen Summit, to draft an agreement on climate change action. In a curatorial statement two years later for the 2011 version of the catalogue (also titled *Pacific Storms*), Leahy declared, “Pacific Islanders are not separated from their land or their environment; land and sea are part of their life.”[5] She pointed out that if there was an unrealistic response to climate change by developed nations, it would have “tragic consequences for the islanders” in terms of land loss, the salination of gardens and wells, and changes in tidal patterns.[6]

The artworks in the exhibitions made Leahy’s point glaringly obvious. Works by two Fijian artists were included in the traveling *Pacific Storms* exhibition: *Looking for Dry Land* (Abraham Lagi, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 100 cm)[7] and *I Crave for Water to Quench my Thirst* (Irami Buli, acrylic on canvas, 185 x 85 cm).[8] In his artist statement, Lagi noted that “looking for dry land is going to be a dilemma for many indigenous Pacific Islanders . . . (They) will need a miracle to save their land, the basic element of their existence.”[9] An eye catching and message-laden

triptych, Lagi's painting depict Pacific Islanders struggling to climb to safe, secure, dry land. Lagi's artworks emphasize Leahy's warning that interconnections to land and sea are fundamental to village lifestyles, and that, increasingly, low-lying island and coastal Pacific Islands societies are seriously endangered by climate change.

Other artists in the *Pacific Storms* exhibition focused on the three linked themes of climate change, land loss, and identity, including Winnie Weoa of PNG (*Climate Change: Relocation*, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 150 cm), Jean-Claude Toure Garae of Vanuatu (*Uncertain Future*, acrylic on canvas, 93 x 182 cm), and Anare Somumu of Fiji (*Sunken Dreams*, acrylic on canvas, 110 x 88 cm).[10] In his artist's statement, Somumu commented, "Losing land to foreigners, climate change and sea level rise means we will lose it forever. Who are we without our land?"[11]

As an activist, Leahy had pursued these same expressions of concern, despair, and hope through her children's stories and in exhibitions, basing her advocacy on her life experiences as a villager, an artist, and an Islander. Peter Brunt and Nicholas Thomas note, in the foreword to the catalogue for the huge Royal Academy of Arts exhibition *Oceania* in 2018, that "the poetics of water have informed the ways Islanders have imagined and formed their places of dwelling and belonging."[12] Leahy agrees, stating that "tangible and intangible heritage provides Pacific peoples with an endless source for artistic expression."[13]

## Children's Literature and Illustrations

In addition to her curatorial work, Leahy continues the synergy between art and environment by merging art with storytelling in her illustrated children's literature projects. Her reflection on her village background crystallized in her prize-winning short story "The Song of the Turtle" (2015) and book *The Lazy Little Frog* (2022). Leahy decided during her postgraduate studies that her priorities would become raising awareness of the threats to the tangible and intangible heritage of a coastal village way of life and of the loss of Indigenous languages due to diasporic movements. *The Lazy Little Frog* was the result. She decided that to plant ideas in young people's minds she would rely on storytelling, an integral aspect of New Guinea and Pacific upbringing.

In *The Lazy Little Frog*, a rooster named Kande Kaks and a lazy frog named Loki discuss their survival options. Loki declares, "Times are changing. Life is hard but it is what you make of it, especially if you work together." The rooster replies, "That's right, if we are kind, loving and respectful to each other we will always live

well." This home-spun wisdom is at the heart of a story about discovering village life, rivers, and forests, and the problems of finding food, boredom, and petty controversies. Watercolours vividly illustrate Leahy's depictions of the animal characters (Fig. 2). Early in the story, young readers are told why Loki the frog has abandoned his swamp home and relocated to a kitchen in the village: "Loki's entire family and their forest homes had been destroyed by bushfire and logging. The sea level rise had made swamp water too salty." No other explanation is required, as powerful evidence of sea level rise, salination, and logging have become more prevalent in young readers' lives across the region.

Figure 2. Joycelin Kauc Leahy, "Mama Maria the pig," watercolour illustration in *The Lazy Little Frog*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist

The author notes that *The Lazy Little Frog* is a work of fiction, but the setting is clearly her village, Wagang—recognizable by the mention of local

landmarks, for example a Japanese wartime shipwreck and two local rivers. The opening spread includes a vibrant view of the village on the left and a house on pilings surrounded by hibiscus flowers on the right (Fig. 3). Other illustrated pages include a panorama of the ocean, homes, and canoes, and a scene of Mama Maria the pig and Loki the frog exchanging threats and laughs.[14] The story closes with Loki and Kande Kaks the rooster becoming "best friends" following a series of arguments, name-calling, and adventures.

Figure 3. Joyceline Kauc Leahy, "While fishing canoes lay idle in the shade," watercolour illustration in *The Lazy Little Frog*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist

*The Lazy Little Frog* is a wonderful story, with an underlying global message of survival in a world affected by climate change that adult readers will immediately notice. It is written for readers in grades three and four, but the story suits children ages two to twelve years old. It is a pleasure to see youngsters interacting with the pictures, calling out the names of the animal characters, and nodding in agreement to the verbal exchanges between the rooster, the frog, and the pig. When I read this story aloud to a four-year-old and two-year-old, ad-libbing parts

when the text was complex, they smiled and nodded, and clearly identified with the rhythm of village life represented by the animal and insect characters.

*The Lazy Little Frog* joins a pleasing array of other children's books that are taking efforts a step farther by familiarizing young readers with this global campaign. These include Oliver Jeffers's *The Fate of Fausto: A Painted Fable* (2019), Neal Layton's *A Planet Full of Plastic* (2019), Lucy Bell's *You Can Change the World* (2020), and Aunty Joy Murphy's *Wilam: A Birrarung Story* (2020).

When schools purchase *The Lazy Little Frog*, they receive a Teacher's Note with guidelines for class discussion. A portion of the proceeds from the book's sales goes to an education campaign started by Leahy to promote and preserve languages in PNG. The back cover of *The Lazy Little Frog* includes several endorsements; Russell Soaba, a PNG author, notes that the book is "beautifully told in a lively and colourful Papua New Guinea way of storytelling."[15] This quote highlights the growing popularity—and power—of Pacific voices speaking out about climate change, and its threats to the land, water, and Indigenous people in the place they call home.

## Conclusion

Thirteen years after the 2009 Copenhagen Summit, regarded by most observers, critics, and commentators as a failure due to its disarray and weak climate-action outcomes, youth around the world are protesting in the streets; activists are gluing themselves to gallery walls; and dancers, poets, artists, and performers are making angry and insistent calls for change. Today, all levels of print and electronic media are featuring climate-change stories. For example, in 2018, the *New York Times Style Magazine* asked twelve contemporary artists to contribute works and statements to their print and online feature *12 Artists On: Climate Change,*[16] and in 2020, Artsy.net ran the story "These Ten Artists are Making Urgent Work about the Environment."[17] In 2020, the core team at Artists & Climate Initiative, an organization that "uses storytelling and live performance to foster dialogue about our global climate crisis," announced they would use the term "'planetary emergency' in order to clearly communicate the urgency of our situation."[18] In February 2023, Leahy joined researchers, scholars, writers, artists, filmmakers, curators, and cultural actors from Australasia and French-speaking Oceania at a symposium on "Art and Environmental Concerns in Oceania: Cultural Expressions of Climate Change across the French-Speaking Islands in the South Pacific," held at Sydney University.[19]

The impact of Leahy’s fieldwork in the Tami Islands, her activism, and her advocacy are an exemplar for future researchers, artists, and activists. Her actions have led directly to four impactful outcomes: the *Pacific Storms* and *Lusim Land* exhibitions, which included engaging local Pacific islander communities; her appointment as a consultant to the South Pacific Community Team of the Festival of Pacific Arts, tasked with ensuring that the festival addressed tangible and intangible heritage; her involvement in PNG’s Western Province by leading workshops aimed at poverty reduction through small business projects in artifact production and distribution; and her children’s storybook, translated into vernacular languages to engage young minds.

PNG artist Daniel Waswas, speaking about his paired artworks in the *Pacific Storms* exhibition—*Distortion or Fragmentation 1 and 2* and *In the name of Capitalism 1 and 2*—highlights the way that Pacific art calls for recognition of the role that the ancestors have played in “keeping our environment, people and culture thriving together harmoniously.”[20] *The Lazy Little Frog* ends on the same note, with young readers learning that the frog and the rooster “worked together and shared their food as they learnt from each other.”[21] This universal sentiment of sharing, learning, and friendship is a powerful message, one that can be traced from Leahy’s work on art exhibitions to *The Lazy Little Frog*, and in many other art forms now emerging across Oceania and around the world.

*Max Quanchi has taught Pacific history at Queensland University of Technology, University of Papua New Guinea, and University of the South Pacific. His research is on the history of photography in the Pacific. He has guest-edited special issues on photography for* Pacific Studies*, the* Journal of Pacific History*, and the* Journal of New Zealand and Pacific Studies*. Since 1996, Dr. Quanchi has convened panels on photography at the semiannual Pacific History Association conferences. He has published several books, including the monograph* Photographing Papua: Representation, Colonial Encounters and Imagining in the Public Domain *(2007), which focuses on the colonial frontier in Papua New Guinea. His most recent publication is* An Ideal Colony and Epitome of Progress: Colonial Fiji in Picture Postcards *(2019), coauthored with Max Shekleton.*

## Notes

[1] Joycelin Kauc Leahy, *The Lazy Little Frog* (Port Moresby: PNG Publishing, 2022). The book is available in English, Papua New Guinea Tok Pisin, and Motu editions. See https://lazylittlefrog.com/.

[2] The Tami Islands are located just off the Huon Peninsula, south of Finchhafen. See https://www.google.com/maps/place/Tami+Islands/.

[3] *WMO Statement on the Status of the Global Climate* (Geneva: World Meteorological Organization, 2010). For the most recent of many reports globally, see *Climate Change in the Pacific 2022 Historical and Recent Variability, Extremes and Change* (Canberra: The Climate and Oceans Support Program in the Pacific [COSPPac]/Bureau of Meteorology, 2023).

[4] Joycelin Kauc Leahy, "Pacific Calls for Climate Change Justice to Safeguard Heritage," Master's thesis, University of Queensland, 2009.

[5] Joycelin Kauc Leahy, *Pacific Storms 2011* (Brisbane: Beyond Pacific Art, 2011), 6.

[6] Leahy, *Pacific Storms 2011*, 9.

[7] Irami Buli's painting was included in Leahy, *Pacific Storms 2011*, 27.

[8] Joycelin Leahy, *Pacific Storms 2009* (Chapel Hill, QLD, Australia: Beyond Pacific Art, 2009), 20-21.

[9] A. Lagi in Leahy, *Pacific Storms 2009*, 26. Lagi's painting is part of a series titled *Our Lives: Look for Dry Land* (2010, acrylic and oil on canvas, 93 x 33 cm, 95 x 40 cm, and 91 x 58 cm). Author disclosure: my lounge room wall at home is dominated by this series of three large paintings by Lagi.

[10] These works were published in the *Pacific Storms* exhibition catalogues: Winne Weoa, *Pacific Storms 2009,* 68; Jean-Claude Toure Garae, *Pacific Storms 2011*, 22; and Anare Somumu, *Pacific Storms 2011*, 56.

[11] Leahy, *Pacific Storms 2011*, 56.

[12] Peter Brunt and Nicholas Thomas, eds., *Oceania* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 2018), 27.

[13] Leahy, *Pacific Storms Brisbane 2009*, 8.

[14] The book's designer was Roland K. Daure.

[15] Leahy, *The Lazy Little Frog*, back cover.

[16] Zoë Lescaze, "12 Artists On: Climate Change. A Dozen Artistic Responses to one of the Greatest Threats of Our Time," *New York Times Style Magazine*, August 22, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/22/t-magazine/climate-change-art.html.

[17]Shannon Lee, "These 10 Artists Are Making Urgent Work about the Environment," Artsy.net, April 20, 2020, https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-10-artists-making-urgent-work-environment.

[18] The Artists & Climate Change Core Team, "A Note on Terminology," *Artists & Climate Change, Building Earth Connections*, January 2020, https://artistsandclimatechange.com/about/a-note-on-terminology/.

[19] *Art and Environmental Concerns in Oceania: Cultural Expressions of Climate Change across the French-Speaking Islands in the South Pacific*, February 15–17, 2023, The University of Sydney, accessed June 9, 2023, https://slc-events.sydney.edu.au/calendar/french-francophone-symposium-art-environmental-concerns-oceania/.
[20] Daniel Waswas, artist statement, in Leahy, *Pacific Storms 2011*, 76.
[21] Leahy, *The Lazy Little Frog*, 42.

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WAGNER DE SOUZA TAVARES
AND RANI ULI SILITONGA

# ComCard Pacific Phonecards and Presentation Folders from the Republic of Nauru

**Abstract**
*This research note describes ComCard Pacific phonecards from the Republic of Nauru as well as phonecard presentation folders. Eighteen phonecards are identified and classified into five thematic groups based on the images they feature. Their varying visual themes suggested that issues such as wildlife conservation, religious values, and immigrant communities were central in Nauru from the mid 1990s through the 2000s. The article also describes two phonecard presentation folders that promoted tourism and wetland conservation in the Republic of Nauru in 1995.*

**Keywords:** *phonecard art, calling cards, Oceania, Pay-Tel Australia Pty Ltd, ComCard Pacific, phonecard collecting, Nauru, popular culture*

## Introduction and Overview

This research note discusses phonecards from the Republic of Nauru, which are quite rare due to their limited production and circulation in the 1990s and 2000s, and aims to introduce this little-known form of visual culture in Oceania.[1]

A phonecard is a credit-card-size plastic or paper card with pre-paid credit that can be used to pay for telephone calls at a public payphone that has a card reader.[2] Phonecards were invented in 1975 as a more modern, efficient, and reliable alternative to telephone tokens, one that also had lower operational costs for telecommunication companies.[3] They were first put on the market in 1976 in Italy and were eventually used worldwide, mostly from the 1990s to the 2000s.[4]

Many people around the world collect phonecards. Of greatest interest to collectors are phonecards with a specific visual theme.[5] Phonecards printed with series of images—of cultural attractions, entertainment figures, flora, fauna, technology, and transportation, as well as advertisements—first appeared in 1990s and circulated around the world.[6]

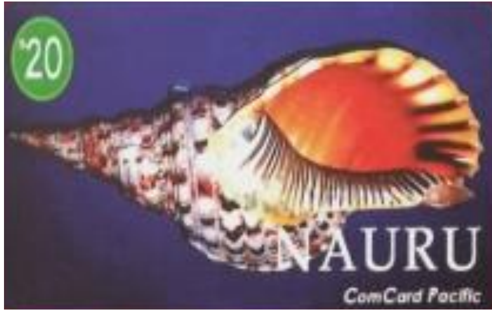
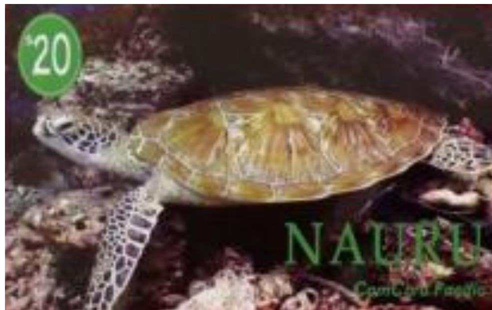


Figure 1 (left). ComCard Pacific phonecard with an image of a giant triton sea snail (*Charonia tritonis*), Republic of Nauru, 1995. Courtesy of Colnect catalog 2022

Figure 2 (right). ComCard Pacific phonecard with an image of a green sea turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Republic of Nauru, 1995. Courtesy of Colnect catalog 2022



Figures 3 (left) and 4 (right). ComCard Pacific phonecards with images of sea turtles, Republic of Nauru, 1995. Courtesy of Colnect catalog 2022

Figure 5 (left). ComCard Pacific phonecard with an image of a sea turtle, Republic of Nauru, 1995. Courtesy of Colnect catalog 2022

Figure 6 (right). ComCard Pacific phonecard with an image of the Micronesian pigeon (*Ducula oceanica*), Republic of Nauru, c. 1995. Courtesy of the authors

Phonecard catalogs used by collectors include photographs of phonecards, descriptions of them, values, print-run information, standard catalog reference numbers, and additional notes.[7] Information about phonecards from certain Oceanic territories—such as Christmas Island, the Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Norfolk, the Pitcairn Islands, the Republic of Nauru, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna—is lacking, as low numbers of phonecards were produced for public usage in these areas; some cards were produced only for trial purposes and some had restricted circulation because their production was controlled by other countries such as Australia and New Zealand. Phonecards from these areas are therefore difficult to obtain and have become valuable collectible items.[8]

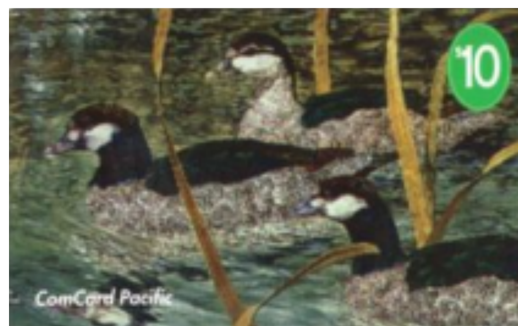



Figure 7 (left). ComCard Pacific phonecard, "White Tern," Republic of Nauru, c. 1995. Courtesy of the authors
Figure 8 (right). ComCard Pacific phonecard "The Green Pigmy Goose," Republic of Nauru, 1995. Artist: Robin Hill. Courtesy of Colnect catalog 2022

## Phonecard Images in Nauru

The Republic of Nauru is a microstate island nation in the central Pacific Ocean with a population of approximately 11,000.[9] In 1994, about 2,000 landlines and 450 cell phones were in use in the Republic of Nauru, with local and international radiotelephone communications provided through Australian companies and an Intelsat S.A. satellite earth station.[10] In 1994, the Republic of Nauru hired ComCard Pacific to organize a public telephone system for the island on an experimental basis.[11] ComCard Pacific, in turn, selected the Australian public telephone system Pay-Tel Australia Pty Ltd for the trial.[12]

As discussed, the study of Nauruan phonecards is unique challenging because the cards—especially ones in new condition—are difficult to obtain. This

research note focuses on eighteen Nauruan phonecards from several sources: the authors' private collection, housed in Sumatra, Indonesia; ones published in a printed phonecard catalog by collectors Daniele Pitarresi and Alam M. Kilpatrick; and examples in two online catalogs, one maintained by Jan Van Rossum and another, Colnect Collectors Club Community (Colnect), founded by Amir Wald.[13] Information provided by these collectors' publications includes face value (e.g., 15, 30, 60, 90, or 100 units), issue date (month and year), price at mint- and used-condition, phonecard type (e.g., advertising, complimentary), technology type (chip, inductive, magnetic, or optic), and chip type (e.g., Exiton, Gemplus, Incard, etc.)—on phonecards they obtained from collectors and production companies. Photographs of the phonecards and presentation folders photographs in this study were obtained with permission from online catalogs or were taken by the authors of cards in their collection.

Figures 9 (left) and 10 (right). ComCard Pacific phonecards commemorating the Year of the Rat from the Chinese zodiac, Republic of Nauru, 1995. Artist: Sophie Zhang. Courtesy of the authors

We classified the image themes featured on the phonecards and identified the phonecards' names, values, and production dates from information printed on the front and back sides of the cards. We also examined phonecard presentation folders as relevant objects of study because they are printed with images and often contain information about the images pictured on the phonecards.[14]

| Phonecard image theme | Phonecard name | Date | Face value | Source | Fig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Birds | White tern (with magnetic strip) | 1995 | $10 | Author's collection | 7 |
| | White tern (without magnetic strip) | | $10 | Colnect (2022) | 7 |
| | Micronesian pigeon | | $20 | Author's collection | 6 |
| | Green pygmy goose (with magnetic strip) | | $10 | Colnect (2022) | 8 |
| | Green pygmy goose (without magnetic strip) | | $10 | Rossum (2011), Colnect (2022) | 8 |
| Animals | Koala | 1995 | $10 | Rossum (2011), Colnect (2022) | 19 |
| | Sea snail | | $20 | Colnect (2022) | 1 |
| Chinese zodiac | The Year of the Rat | 1995 | $10 | Author's collection | 9 |
| | The Year of the Rat | | $10 | | 10 |
| Sea turtles | Green turtle | 1995 | $20 | Colnect (2022) | 2 |
| | Sea turtle | | $20 | | 5 |
| | Sea turtle | | $20 | | 3 |
| | Sea turtle | | $30 | | 4 |
| The Pope | Pope John Paul II | 2005 | $20 | Rossum (2011), Colnect (2022) | 11 |
| | Pope John Paul II | | $20 | | 12 |
| | Pope John Paul II | | $20 | | 13 |
| | Pope John Paul II | | $20 | | 14 |
| | Pope John Paul II | | $20 | | 15 |

$= Australian dollar. Print run of cards from figures 6 and 7 is 1,200 units, while of those 8 and 19 it is 1,500 units. Source: Colnect (2022).

Table 1. Selected Nauruan phonecards grouped by image themes

We grouped the eighteen phonecards into five themes based on the images printed on them (Table 1): birds, animals, the Chinese zodiac, sea turtles, and the Pope. In our sample, images of Pacific fauna are printed on the most phonecards (Figs 1–8 and 19). Animals such as the sea snail (Fig. 1) and birds, including the Micronesia pigeon (Fig. 6) and white tern (Fig. 7), were likely printed on Nauruan phonecards because the island is known for its biodiversity.[15] The green pygmy goose (Fig. 8), which is also found in Australia, Indonesia, and New Guinea, may have been selected because of its beauty and its high population numbers on

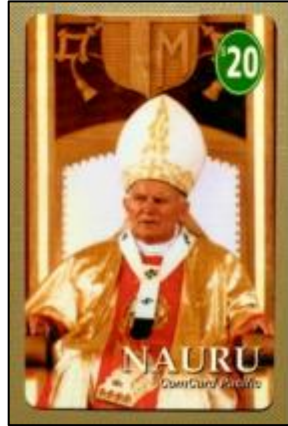
Nauru.[16] A koala may have been chosen on a Nauruan phonecard (Fig. 19) because everyone loves koalas and as a reminder of the need to protect their natural habitat.[17] In addition, bird-themed phonecards play important role as collectible items because the number of collectors of phonecards with animal images is high.[18]

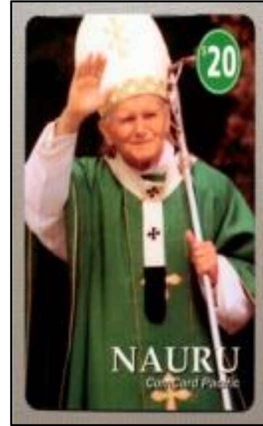
We also classified the phonecards into three series/set categories (Table 2): those that are part of a larger series or set, those phonecards in a set that form a large picture when fitted together (i.e., like a puzzle) (Figs. 9–10), and individual phonecards. Telecommunication companies produced phonecards as sets or pieces of a picture puzzle to encourage phonecard purchases and collecting, with the idea that users and collectors would seek to complete the sets and picture puzzles.

| Classification | Phonecard image theme |
|---|---|
| A phonecard set forming a series | White tern and Micronesian pigeon; koala and green pygmy goose; green turtle and sea turtles; Pope John Paul II |
| A phonecard set forming a picture puzzle | The Year of the Rat |
| Individual phonecard | Sea snail |

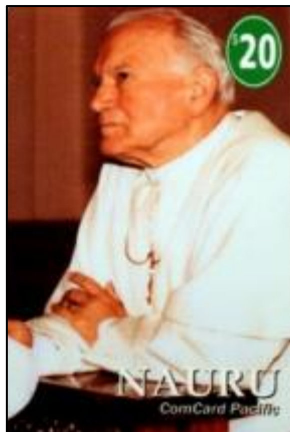
Table 2. Set/series classifications of the example ComCard Pacific phonecards from the Republic of Nauru

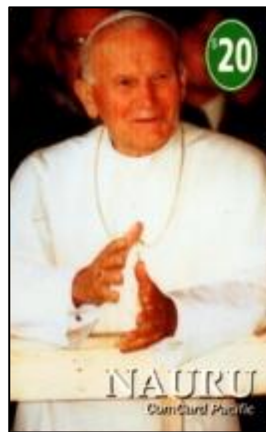
Within this study, Pope John Paul II appears on five Nauruan phonecards issued in 2005 (Figs. 11–15), the year of his death, and can be linked to the spread of Christianity across the Pacific over the last several centuries.[19] Christianity is the main religion practiced on Nauru; additionally, 32.9% of Christians on Nauru are Roman Catholic.[20] Two 1995 phonecards with images representing the Year of the Rat (Figs. 9–10) suggest a tribute to Nauru's Chinese immigrants and their culture.[21] Approximately 15% of the people living in the Republic of Nauru in 1995 were of Chinese descent.[22]

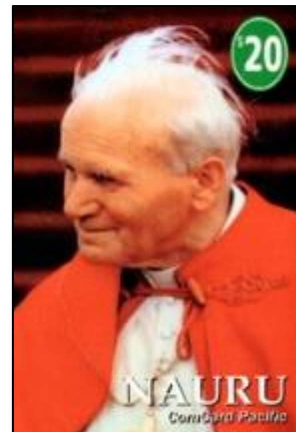



Figures 11 (left) and 12 (right). ComCard Pacific phonecards with images of Pope John Paul II, Republic of Nauru, 2005. Courtesy of Rossum catalog 2011




Figures 13 (left), 14 (center), and 15 (right). ComCard Pacific phonecards featuring images of Pope John Paul II, Republic of Nauru, 2005. Courtesy of Rossum catalog 2011

## Phonecard Presentation Folders in Nauru

Much like postage stamps and commemorative coins, some individual phonecards and series were produced with presentation albums, boxes, folders, and packs so that collectors could display and protect their phonecards.[23] For example, in the 1990s phonecards from Australia had presentation folders printed with images of endangered animals and environments threatened by anthropogenic activities. The presentation folder "Endangered Species Marsupials" was produced by Telecom Australia to accomodate three phonecards, each printed with an image of an endangered marsupial species (the northern hairy-nosed wombat, the numbat, and the birdled nailtail wallaby) (Fig. 16).

Figure 16. Australian phonecard presentation folder, “Endangered Species Marsupials,” with three cards, external covers (top), internal spread (bottom), 1993. Courtesy of the authors

The earliest presentation folder in this study is one in a half-fold format that was issued in July 1995 by ComCard Pacific to promote tourism in the Republic of Nauru (Fig. 17a). The folder included two phonecards that were prepared for trial use (Fig. 17b), one with an image of a Micronesia pigeon (see Fig. 6) and the other with an image of a white tern (see Fig. 7).

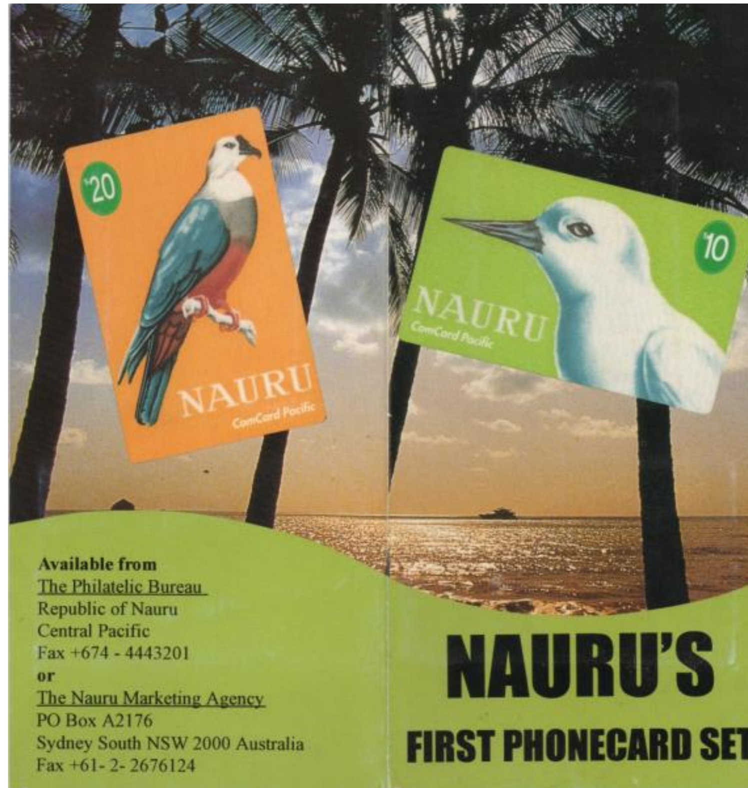



Figure 17a. Phonecard presentation folder "Nauru's First Phonecard Set," external covers, 1995. Courtesy of the authors.

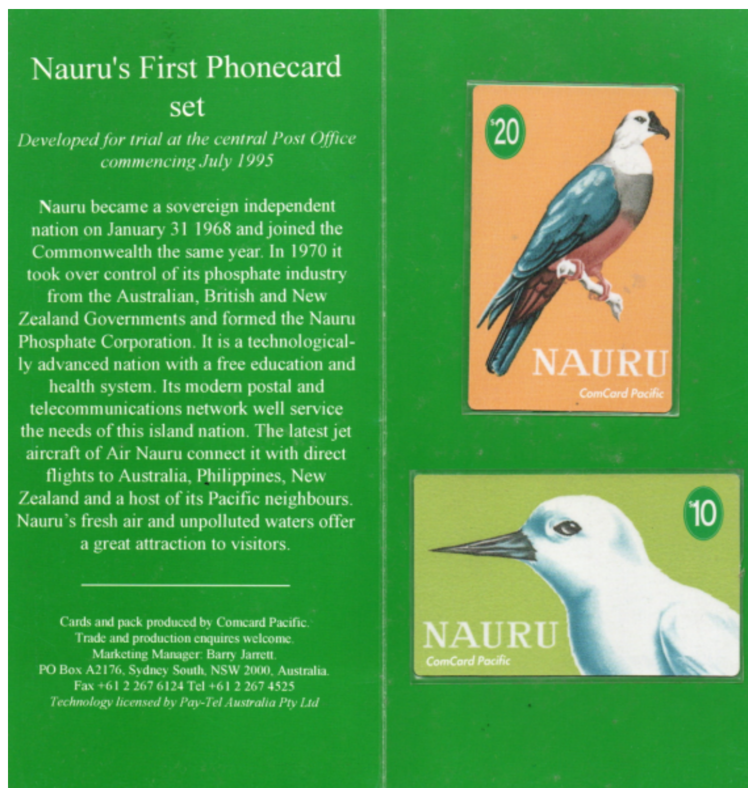



Figure 17b. Phonecard presentation folder, "Nauru's First Phonecard Set," internal spread, 1995. Courtesy of the authors.

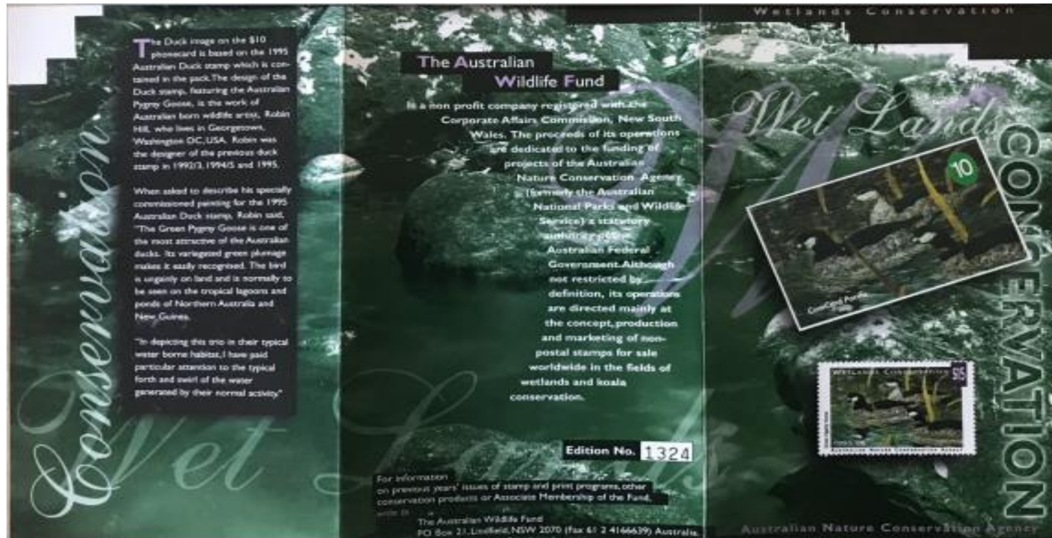


Figure 18. Phonecard and stamp presentation folder promoting wetlands conservation by the Australian Wildlife Fund, external covers (top) and internal spread (bottom), Republic of Nauru, 1995. Courtesy of Delcampe website (2022)

The second phonecard presentation folder that we have identified is one in a tri-fold format produced by the Australian Wildlife Fund, in collaboration with ComCard Pacific, possibly in the second half of 1995 (Fig. 18). This folder has one phonecard (AUD10 face value) and one stamp (AUD15 face value), both items with the same image of a green pygmy goose, designed by Australian artist and writer Robin Hill (see Fig. 8). This presentation folder was created for phonecard

collectors to accommodate the card and stamp and to publicize the work of the Australian Wildlife Fund on the conservation of fauna and flora in the wetlands.

Figure 19. ComCard Pacific phonecard, "The Australian Koala," Republic of Nauru, 1995. Artist: Rosemary Woodford Ganf. Courtesy of Colnect catalog 2022

## Summary

This research note has provided an introduction to phonecards from the Republic of Nauru and described all known ComCard Pacific phonecards and presentation folders. Despite their scarcity, further research of these cards and other smaller Pacific Island nations is merited.

## Acknowledgements

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## Notes

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[4] Wagner de Souza Tavares and Rani Uli Silitonga, "The Coca-Cola Company advertising history illustrated through phonecards," *International Journal of Arts and Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2023): 137, https://doi.org/10.25082/IJAH.2023.01.002.

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[7] Dr. Steve Hiscocks produced the first printed phonecard catalog for collectors in England in 1988. "World Phonecard Catalogue United Kingdom 1," TelephoneCardCollector.com, March 13, 2023, http://www.telephonecardcollector.com/world-phonecard-catalogue-uk1.htm.

[8] Pitarresi and Kilpatrick, *World Phonecard Catalogue*, 98-99.

[9] The Republic of Nauru has an area of approximately twenty-one square kilometers and a population density of 480 people per square kilometer. Graham H. Lawton, "Recent cultural changes on the Island of Nauru," *Journal of Geography* 50, no. 1 (1951): 12–13, https://doi.org/10.1080/00221345108982628.

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[11] The number of public telephones that were installed in the Republic of Nauru at the time is unknown. Pitarresi and Kilpatrick, *World Phonecard Catalogue*.
[12] Pitarresi and Kilpatrick, *World Phonecard Catalogue*, 98-99.
[13] Pitarresi and Kilpatrick, *World Phonecard Catalogue*; Jan Van Rossum, "Nauru Republic," https://pacifficcard.tripod.com/nauru.htm, accessed January 1, 2011; "Nauru," Colnect Collectors Club Community, https://colnect.com/en/search/list/collectibles/phonecards/q/nauru, accessed May 5, 2022. Colnect is a website that allows collectors to manage their personal collections.
[14] Pitarresi and Kilpatrick, *World Phonecard Catalogue*; Jan Van Rossum, "Nauru Republic; "Nauru," Colnect Collectors Club Community.
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[23] Wagner de Souza Tavares, "Description of the folder and its phonecard produced to promote the Museum of Natural Sciences PUC Minas," *Conecte-se! Revista Interdisciplinar de Extensão*, 6, no. 12 (2022): 271–272.

PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

CHERYL NOHEALANI OLIVIERI

# *-/+peace = @.edu*

**Abstract**
*In* -/+peace = @.edu*, an ongoing work of images and poems that will include multiple series, artist Cheryl Nohealani Olivieri explores home in Hawaiʻi as a place of fragmentation—where natives, islanders, residents, and visitors become entangled and call into question the production of identities amidst postwar shifts in geo-political relations.*

**Keywords:** *postwar Pacific, Hawaiʻi, contemporary art, poetry*

*-/+peace = @.edu*, an ongoing work of images and poems that will include multiple series, focuses on how juxtapositions of native, islander, resident, visitor overlap, conflict, merge, and call into question the production of identity. I explore home as a place of fragmentation: a state of temporal malleability conveyed by how references to self, family, land, government, and society fail to interconnect and provide correspondence. Grappling with the concepts of spectacle and disjuncture, as they pertain to when a reference seeks for and fails to find its referent, I use language as my primary medium to thread together formally typed, spaced, and punctuated words and phrases. Beginning with a visual series made from paper, coffee, pencil, and ink entitled *placemats 1-2-3*, I explore the American construction of Pacific ("peaceful") existence as requiring the consumption of other people and places, e.g., Hawaiʻi's emblematic "symbol of aloha," the plumeria lei, are threaded with a nonnative flower.

*placemat 1: Ready to Order?* sets the table for my first three poetic entries—"prurient," "sclerotic," and "jeremiad"—which refer to ways sustainable, collaborative, and supportive relationships (positive peace) remain unattainable even in the absence of war (negative peace), given how the postwar Pacific fosters dependency on the mediated other—in part by upholding proficiency in English as the epitome of intelligence, civility, and progress. The second course, set by *placemat 2: For the Want of Asking*, seeks out this state of living in mediation, a living-in-place-of immediacy and presence. "new, new world" introduces the experience of living within Pax Americana and "once removed, twice over" exposes myself as Keiki O Ka ʻĀina (Child of the Land) growing up Hawaiian in the fiftieth state, a Hawaiʻi created as a place of respite from "this, the old hatreds." The final

course, set by the densely concatenated *placemat 3: Taking Up Space*, offers "David's birthday poem" and "boardwalk in summer" as my initial foray towards coherence, integrity, and intersubjectivity.

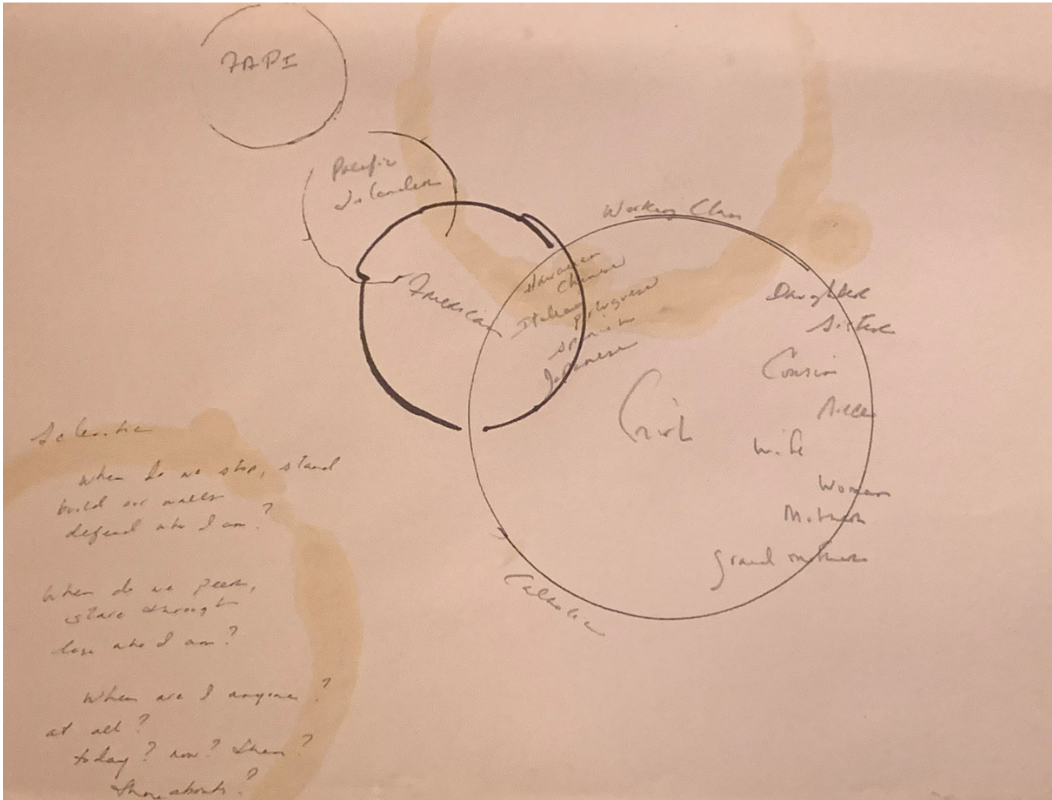

Figure 1. Cheryl Nohealani Olivieri, *placemat 1: Ready to Order?*, 2020. Paper, pencil, ink, and coffee, 9 x 12 inches. Transcription of text on circles (clockwise from the top of the largest circle): Working Class - Daughter - Sister - Cousin - Niece - Wife - Women - Mother - Grandmother – Catholic - Girl - Hawaiian - Chinese - Italian - Portuguese - Spanish - Japanese - American - Pacific Islander – AAPI. Narrative Overlay: "sclerotic." Courtesy of the artist

*placemat 1* evokes an abridged depiction of the Hawaiian Islands chain and the generative momentum emerging from the "spokes on a wheel" architecture put into place by U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (1953–59), who reconfigured the Pacific as units of social analysis created to connect, stabilize, and control alliances between the United States, East Asia, and the Pacific. What types of roles are required to avoid enmeshing the U.S. into nuclear war with China or Russia? What impact does serving as a "host community" to America's foreign policy reach have on Hawaiʻi's local and native populations?[1]

**prurient**
we, are, the built in sacrifice,
the price, paid, for a beating heart
the, twitch, of conscience,
the sigh, of content.

we are
the exchange, for
rejection, a, climb, to, the, top,
the skinned, knee, the, hunger,
the, segues, blind, resplendence,
full, catastrophe.

we
are the price, paid.
the soul, sold.
the deliverance, bought.
the trigger, pulled.
the body, felled.
our
outlined chalk.

**sclerotic**
when do we stop, stand,
build our walls,
defend who I am?

when do we peer,
stare through,
lose who I am?

when are I anyone?
at all? today? now?
then? thereabouts?

**jeremiad**
does the Sun consent
to rise or the Moon
to glow?

does a Mountain
consent to be climbed?

Rain to fall?
Lightning to strike?
Thunder to sound?

when the Clouds clear
who, then, stands atop
the Summit?
who is found wandering
astray?

who simply remains as
a makeshift keeper,
marking our
beginnings,
middles and ends?

and, Consent, do we
know what became
of her?

among the peaks,
vales, pebble
strewn paths, a solitary
Hawk cries aloft, looking
for a place to land.
a Deer scampers by
so quickly, its
motion almost a blur
(you can just make it
out from the corner of
your mind's eye.)

the Butterflies dance
amidst the parched
sunlight
while the Bees and Flies
and Crickets and Ants
buzz, chirp, hum and build
along.

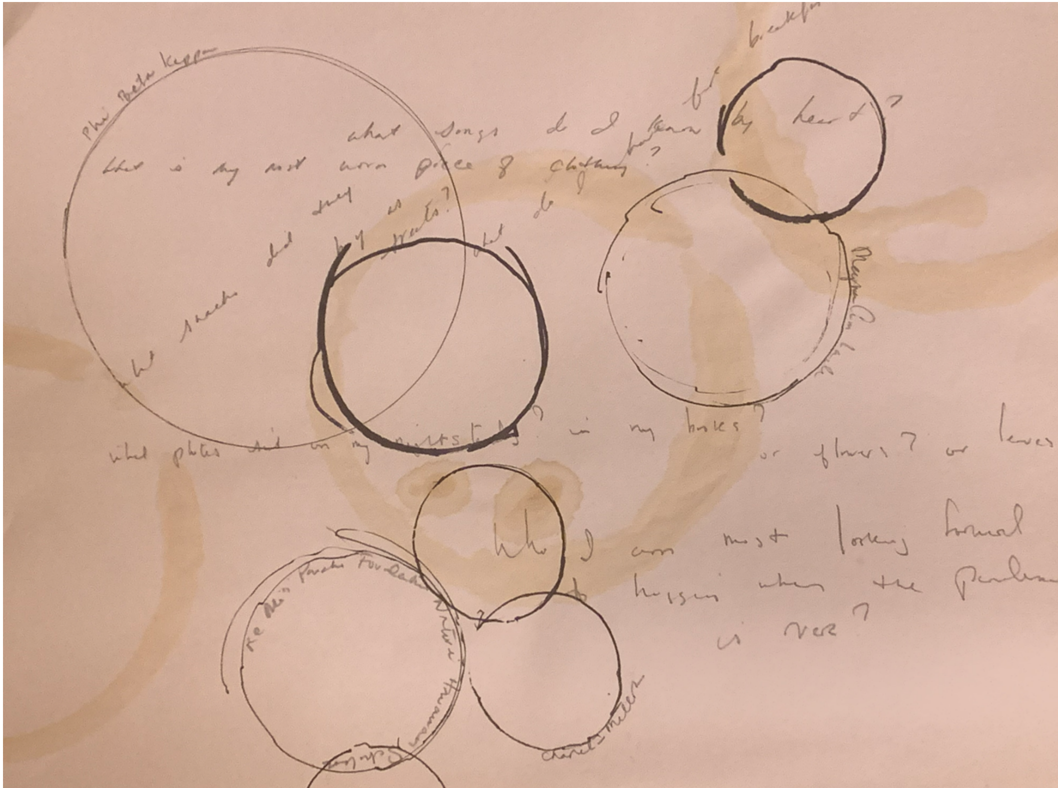

Figure 2. Cheryl Nohealani Olivieri, *placemat 2: For the Want of Asking*, 2020. Paper, pencil, ink, and coffee, 9 x 12 inches. Texts on circles (left to right and clockwise): Phi Beta Kappa - Magna Cum Laude - Ke Ali'i Pauahi Foundation Native Hawaiian Scholar - Chanel Miller. Narrative Overlays: What songs do I know by heart? What is my most worn piece of clothing? What snacks did they buy as treats? What do I have for breakfast? What photos sit on my nightstand? In my books? Or flowers? Or leaves? Who I am [*sic*] most looking forward to hugging when the pandemic is over? Courtesy of the artist

President Eisenhower's endorsement of the Mutual Security Act of 1960 gave rise to the federal creation of the East-West Center in 1961, built atop land managed by what had become the state of Hawaiʻi in 1959. Positing Hawaiʻi as a nexus of self-people-state-nation effectively maintained postwar stability in the Asia-Pacific region for more than sixty years. By juxtaposing Hawaiʻi's interracial demographic against the American South's racial segregation and violence, the United States was able to market, demonstrate, and enact the American democratic system to students at the University of Hawaiʻi arriving from underdeveloped regions in African and Asian countries. How does the impulse to exist through an Other become normalized? How does one begin to distinguish the framework of a state apparatus from the motivations, desires, interests, and choices of individual people? When does one inhabit predefined social roles and when does one supersede it?[2]

**new, new world**
Navigating through
where I won't be consumed as
a product, a purpose, intent,
like a commodity
designed to create a market
through help or need or
dissonance,

Like a Bukowski, I matter most
If I walk through associations,
remain numbed by referencing,
And stay oh so thoughtfully
disengaged–on neutral, as
it were, to let the "good life"
Go along, well, "like that,"

As

A Promise and a Curse,
A Possibility and A Sin,
To Pray, how, maybe,
I shouldn't require Resurrection
to Exist,

As

A Sign, An Omen or Signal
To a Something Else,

Beyond,

/Sing it!/

Better,

/Preach!/

Best,

hallelujah~

God Almighty

**“once removed, twice over,”**

that’s what they said when
____ arrived.
“Uncle’s wife’s sister’s cousin,”
I think it was.

“Once over” is what I began
to call my younger sibling,
one remove from me, of course.

Tutu & Papa were “fifth over,”
living six houses away, and
“once removed” or across the
street, to keep them at
“arm’s length” as it
were,

mostly from, to be honest,
Papa’s drinking which
could yield to knife-wielding,
if we were talking “whiskey,”
or wife-beating, that is, if we were
(in whispers) alluding to cousin’s
decorated police officer husband
(now on his third wife).

if we spoke about “hānai,”
it was “matter of fact,” much
like we would about “the weather,”
which was “quite frankly” either
“rainy” or “sunny.”

when we began saying “‘ānai,”
it was as though the /hā/ carried too
much effort, too much reach,
from the diaphragm to carry
our words, too much
/breath/ or /life/.

if we were farmers in some
midwest somewhere, I imagine
we would have gnawed a stalk
of wheat between our teeth

as we parsed what seeds to
plant, and in what lots.

we would debate the
quality of soil, rub it between our fingers,
for good measure,
spit for affect, and tilt
that cowboy hat.

as if we could wish
this “big sky” away, enclose
our sense of control, wait
for what we patiently
prepared, much like our
well-placed sounds, phrase or
birth.

**this, the old hatreds**
summon the courts,
ring the bell, lay the path,
and hold it to your hearts, this,
your past pains.

lay it upon the foreheads
of the future, so they
too will know the bitterness,
the exile, the wanton and the
shame.

Carve monuments to
bravery, to forgiveness,
to sacrifice, to remembrance, honor,
justice, truth,

so we will once again
understand our divisions,
mistrust, testaments,
our calling, these Destinies,
without uttering one
word, telling one lie,
generating one thought,
living this, our, one life.

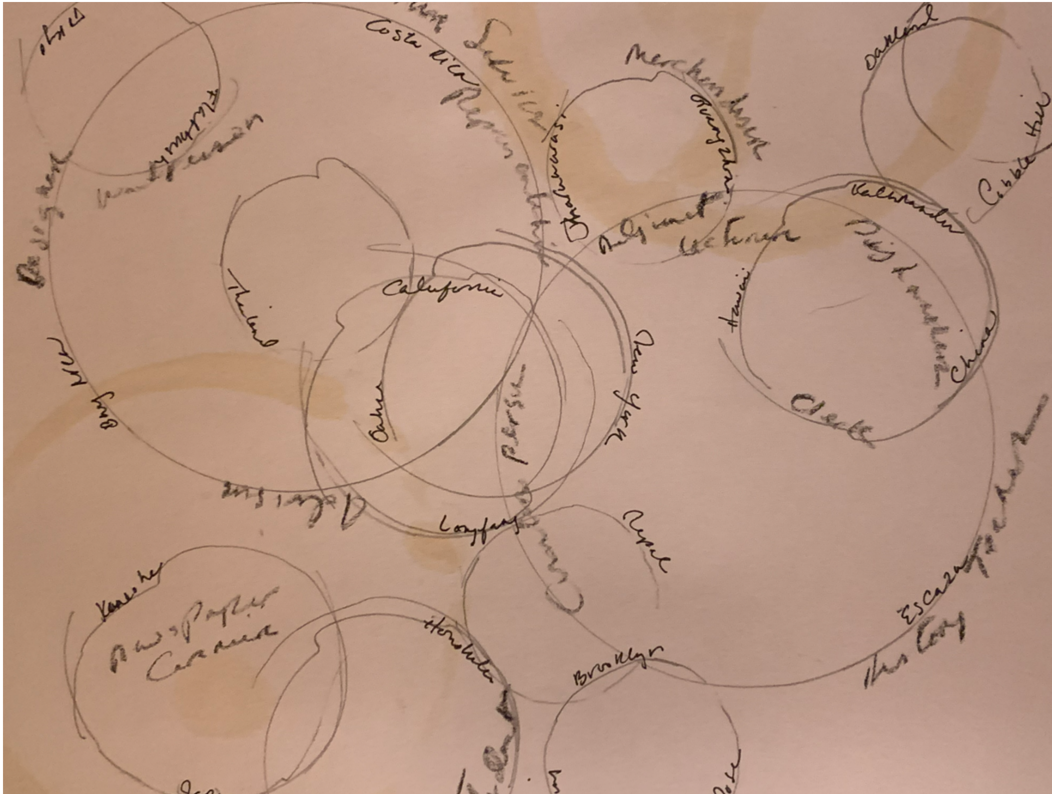


Figure 3. *placemat 3: Taking Up Space*, 2020. Paper, pencil, ink, and coffee, 9 x 12 inches. Transcriptions of ink (left to right and clockwise): Tokyo - Flatbush - Bay Area - Costa Rica - Thailand - California - Oahu - Jharuwarashi - Guangzhou - New York - Langfang - Oakland - Cobble Hill - Bangkok - Kathmandu - Hawaii - China - Escazu - Nepal - Honolulu - Brooklyn - San Jose - Pharping - Gramercy - Japan – Kaneohe. Transcriptions of pencil (left to right and clockwise): Designer - Waitperson - Visitor Services Representative - Advisor - Counter Person - Merchandiser - Adjunct Lecturer - Dishwasher - Student - Newspaper Carrier - History Teacher - Clerk. Courtesy of the artist

The impact of a world systems order and the integration of Pacific Islanders with international markets redefined the concept of “home” through MIRAB (migration [MI], remittance [R], foreign aid [A], and public bureaucracy [B]) economic model, SITE (Small Island Tourist Economy), and profit economies. Enabled by its SITE, which effectively rents out a landscape and climate to visitors, and nontradable economic activities such as government, education, and scientific research, Hawaiʻi maintains its marketability as a destination of escape from both place and self. How are Islanders beginning to reconfigure our relationship to the past and to each other? What becomes the role of government in these enterprises?[3]

**David’s birthday poem**
go to the beach,
sing out loud to the waves

who cares if people will think you're
crazy? call the police on you? film
you with their phones to then post
on social media, shaming you to
silence?

who cares if only the Pigeons and
Mynah birds keep you company
while the tour buses arrive and the
scent of coconut oil fills
the air?

when a Sea Turtle brushes by,
you can look back and think:
why did I let you fill me with despair?
as you give that one last kick
and turn towards the becoming sun.

**the boardwalk in summer**
the heart needs
to beat poetry too
apart from the symbol, the icon,
the scape,
the day, a reason or way

the heart breathes & pulsates &
skips
quick & slow
awake & asleep
alone & joined
hiding & free
from & to
joyful & bleak

insouciance,
catharsis

the heart beats
with, in

*Cheryl Nohealani Olivieri has worked in higher education since 1999, most recently as a graduate advisor at Parsons School of Design, The New School (New York). Cheryl received her BA in history from Brooklyn College, City University of New York, and her MA in Pacific Islands histories from the University of Hawaiʻi at Mānoa. She received a Ke Aliʻi Pauahi Foundation Native Hawaiian Fellowship through The East-West Center (Honolulu).*

## Notes

[1] Victor D. Cha, "Powerplay: Origins of the U.S. Alliance System in Asia," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (Winter 2009/2010): 158–96, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40389236; Mark L. Gillem, *America Town: Building the Outposts of Empire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), 17, 21–23; Daniel Immerwahr, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States*, (New York: Picador, 2019), 4–22, 317–35.

[2] "About EWC: Origins," East-West Center, accessed June 24, 2023; https://www.eastwestcenter.org/about-ewc/origins; see also Cha, "Powerplay," 160–61; Giles Scott-Smith, "From Symbol of Division to Cold War Asset: Lyndon Johnson and the Achievement of Hawaiian Statehood in 1959," *History* 89, no. 2 (April 2004): 256–73, https://jstor.org/stable/24427281; Paula Henderson, Talking Story on the Quad Stonewall of UHM, 1999–2023; John Lachs, "Mediation," *The Cost of Comfort* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 17–21; Chanel Miller (@chanel_miller), "My heart feels sick, like a dark, bloated & bleeding fish," Instagram, May 2, 2021, https://www.instagram.com/p/CMlUbRngsfu/.

[3] Geoff Bertram, "Pacific Island Economies," in *The Pacific Islands: Environment & Society*, ed. Moshe Rapaport (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2013), 325–40, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wqh08.31; Clem Tisdell, "The MIRAB Model of Small Island Economies in the Pacific and their Security Issues: A Draft," *Social Economics, Policy and Development* 57 (January 2021), 1–20, https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/163698/?ln=en; John Connell, "Migration, Dependency and Inequality in the Pacific: Old Wine in Bigger Bottles? (Part 2)," in *Globalization and Government in the Pacific Islands: State, Society and Governance in Melanesia,* ed. Steward Firth (Canberra: ANU Press, 2006), 81–106, https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt2jbj6w.9; Tiara R. Na'Puti and Judy Rohrer, "The Pacific Moves Beyond Colonialism: A Conversation from Hawai'i and Guåhan, *Feminist Studies* 43, no. 3 (2017), 537–47, https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.15767/feministstudies.43.3.0537.

PACIFIC ARTS
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KAREN STEVENSON

# Media Review: *Kanohi ki te Kanohi: The Living Portrait* (2021)

*Kaohi ki te Kanohi: The Living Portrait*. Video, 21 minutes, color, 2021. Directed by Regan Balzer; edited by Grant Triplow. Available for viewing on YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dfyb5StT2ko.

**Abstract**
Kanohi ki te Kanohi: The Living Portrait *(2021, 21 minutes) is a video collaboration between Māori and other Pacific artists who were producing portraits in their studios in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Produced and directed by Regan Balzer and edited by Grant Triplow, it features work by Shane Tuaeu Andrew (Cook Islands), Regan Balzer (Aotearoa), Kauanoe Chang (Hawai'i), Turumakina Duley (Aotearoa, living in Australia), Michelle Estall (Aotearoa), Tanya Leef (Aotearoa), Rangimoana B. Morgan (Aotearoa), James Ormsby (Aotearoa), Taniela Petelo (Tonga), Vaihere Vaivai (Tahiti), and John Walsh (Aotearoa).*

**Keywords:** *Oceanic art, video art, Regan Balzer, COVID-19 pandemic, portraiture*

*Kanohi ki te Kanohi: The Living Portrait* is an extremely fascinating look into the creation of not one, but eleven portraits. Exploring different ways of connecting via the internet during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, artist Regan Balzer assembled eleven Māori and Pacific artists, including herself, to participate in a portraiture project.[1] Typically, when a portrait is made a sitter poses in front of an artist who attempts to create the sitter's likeness. During this time, the artist and sitter may develop a relationship that might provide deeper insights into their personalities. In the case of each artist involved in *Kanohi ki te Kanohi*, contrary to conventional portraiture modes, the artist and the sitter were not in the same space.

Balzer's project, which documents eleven artists each creating a portrait of another artist involved in this undertaking, is unique in that the artist and the sitter in each pair never meet. The participating artists were each sent a photograph of their sitter and instructions on how to video themselves while creating the portrait. "Because I was wanting a particular shot captured by the

artists," Balzer explains, "I sent video recordings of myself providing set-up and filming instructions to each artist, then checked in with them to see how they were doing and if they needed any assistance . . . All videos were recorded by the artists themselves."[2] Beyond these instructions, the artists were given free rein to bring about their works (Fig. 1).

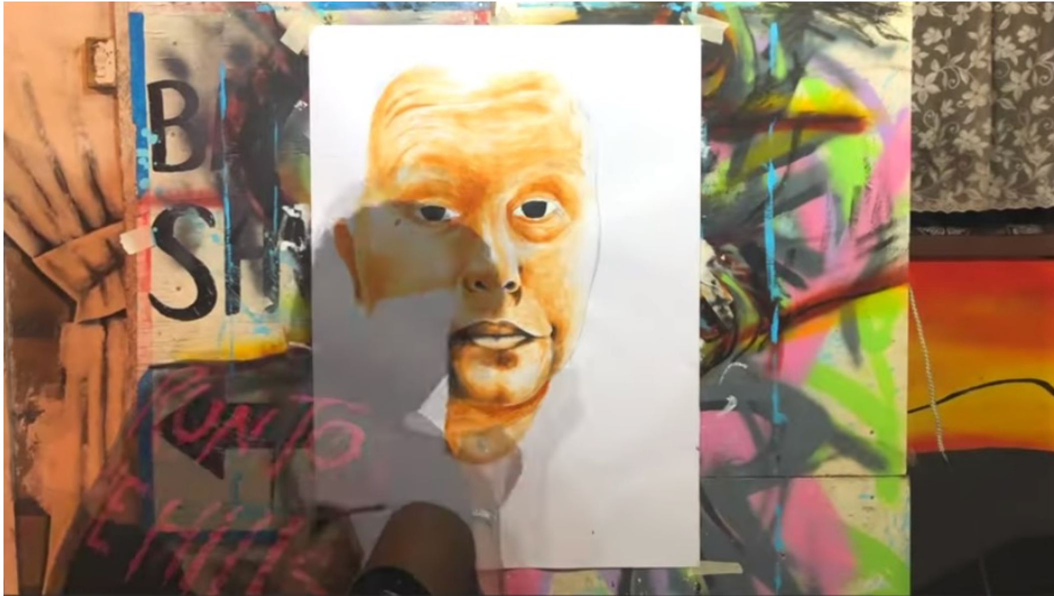

Figure 1. Taniela Petelo painting a portrait of Regan Balzer, 2020. Still from *Kanohi ki te Kanohi: The Living Portrait*, directed by Regan Balzer, 2021. Courtesy of Taniela Petelo and Regan Balzer

When their portrait and video documentation were completed, each artist sent them to Balzer, who began the editing process, which was completed by Grant Triplow. As a result, the project is multifaceted; there is the creation of eleven portraits and the production of a video, the latter of which not only documents each individual artist's process, but also shapes a community of artists. Perhaps most important is Balzer's objective: to investigate the practice of portraiture. *Kanohi ki te Kanohi* teases out the idea of an Indigenous perspective of portraiture while also providing a sense of community—a foundational element of Indigenous art practice.

Balzer's vision for this project was very clear to her. The portrait, in the Euro-American world, has been used through the centuries as not only a record and representation of a particular individual, but also as a demonstration of the sitter's beauty, wealth, and power. Pacific peoples have also frequently been the subject of portraits. In New Zealand, Charles Frederick Goldie and Gottfried

Lindauer became quite famous for their portraits of Māori individuals; Thomas Andrew, Alfred Tattersall, John Davies, and Charles Kerry were prominent photographers in Sāmoa; and Paul Gauguin became renowned for his depictions of Tahitian women. But in contrast to Euro-American artists' portraits of people like themselves, depicting their beauty, wealth, and power, these portraits were images of the Other, of the exotic. Balzer wanted to enable artists from Pacific islands—Aotearoa (New Zealand), the Cook Islands, Hawai'i, Tahiti, and Tonga—to take back the power of portraiture and showcase their artistic practice from their uniquely Indigenous lenses. In my interview with Balzer, she stated: "This project began with my interest in portraiture and how many non-Indigenous [artists] have found fame through their portrayal of Native/Indigenous people. For me, it was important to find a way that expressed an Indigenous approach to making art in relation to portraiture" (see Figs. 2–3).[3]

Figure 2 (left). Taniela Petelo, portrait of Regan Balzer, 2020. Still from *Kanohi ki te Kanohi: The Living Portrait*, directed by Regan Balzer, 2021. Courtesy of Taniela Petelo and Regan Balzer
Figure 3 (right). Photograph of Regan Balzer, 2020. Still from *Kanohi ki te Kanohi: The Living Portrait*, directed by Regan Balzer, 2021. Courtesy of Regan Balzer

In our conversation, Balzer suggested that many Indigenous peoples view portraiture differently. She emphasised that a portrait is not just a representation of a particular individual: "Our faces are not just our own, but are reflections of

our ancestors."[4] She explained that there are key aspects to an Oceanic approach to portraiture that she wanted to explore. She was interested in capturing a moment in time of an artist in their studio. As an artist is rarely the subject of another artist, she was curious to see if this process would create a sense of community, especially considering that an Indigenous Pacific worldview is often about the collective rather than the individual. She also hoped to connect each artist with their portrait, and investigate the notion of a "living taonga"[5] or the exchange of mauri ("life principle" or "essence" in the Māori language).[6]

Portraiture enables the recording and celebrating of people and their connections with one another. The work's title, *Kanohi ki te Kanohi*, is a Māori phrase that translates into English as "face to face," indicating that this project is about *the relationship* between artist and sitter. Balzer, reflecting on this undertaking, commented: "Many of the artists seemed to feel a connection [with each other and across large distances] in some way, which was an interesting dynamic. I guess this reflected the connection between sitter and the artist, and [proved] that this can still exist even though they weren't physically present in each other's space."[7]

Because each artist and sitter never met, it seems to me that this project is about connection and community at a time when the world was in isolation; the Covid-19 pandemic cut us off from friends and family. It created an environment in which using technology enabled us to experience the closest thing to interacting in person. Commenting on this development in modes of communication, Balzer stated: "I wanted to see how I could use technology to work through the perceived barrier of distance, to explore how, through technology, we can continue to connect across the Pacific and support a collective arts practice."[8]

The notion of cultivating a collective arts practice with artists working at great distances from one another, and without communicating with one another, seems an impossible task. Yet, the artists involved in this project, in their individual spaces, creating portraits of people they had never met or communicated with, did just that. *Kanohi ki te Kanohi* is thought-provoking in that it was able to relieve the artists of their isolation while also providing a virtual window through which we, the audience, can engage with both the artists and the sitters. Spending time, both looking at and creating an image, built a real connection between the viewer, the artist, and the person whose portrait was being captured. There is a true sense of intimacy in this process and in viewing this video. We watch as each work morphs into an image of the next artist and their work; we discern a meaningful exchange. We become participants in this expanding, yet intimate relationship between artists and their creations.

When talking to artists and inviting them to be involved in the project, some who Balzer spoke with declined the opportunity. Some felt that the process might be too revealing, that they did not want their practice "exposed," while others were not comfortable with having their portrait created. Even though the ten who agreed to participate, in addition to Balzer, "weren't quite sure about how things would all fit together, they were open to taking the journey to see what would happen."[9]

The work in its entirety presents a rare opportunity for the viewer. It is quite a privilege to be able to watch these artists create. They utilise different media and work in their individual styles as they slowly build up an image. Some start with the background, some with the curve of a cheek, others with the roundness of an eye or the sweep of a brow. What is equally engrossing are the transitions from portrait to artist. One looks to see how the sitter was captured; but once the sitter turns to the process of creating the portrait of another participant, the viewer becomes absorbed in their process. And then it begins again.

Originally, Balzer wanted to create an exhibition as the final presentation of this work; the physical portraits would be hung in a gallery space accompanied by the video documenting their production. Thus, what we are offered in *Kanohi ki te Kanohi* is only part of the original concept. Nonetheless, I found this video captivating—in particular, witnessing how each portrait transformed into the artist portrayed. One truly gets a sense of a "living taonga" as the artists share a bit of their life force, or essence, with each other and also with the viewer. In this, Balzer was looking to offer an Indigenous interpretation of portraiture. While the portraits, in and of themselves, would not have accomplished this goal, the video does because it reveals the process of collaboration and sharing. *Kanohi ki te Kanohi* provides an exceptional fashioning of Balzer's vision.

**Artists** (in order of appearance)

Taniela Petelo (Tonga)

Regan Balzer (Aotearoa; Te Arawa, Ngati Ranginui)

Rangimoana B. Morgan (Aotearoa; Ngati Haua, Ngati Maniapoto,
Te Whakatohea)

Kauanoe Chang (Hawaiʻi)

John Walsh (Aotearoa; Te Aitanga a Haviti)

Michelle Estall (Aotearoa; Te Rarawa, Te Aupouri)

Vaihere Vaivai (Tahiti)

Tanya Leef (Aotearoa; Ngati Marutuahu, Ngapuhi)

Shane Tuaeu Andrew (Cook Islands)

James Ormsby (Aotearoa; Ngati Maniapoto, Waikato, Te Arawa)

Turumakina Duley (Aotearoa; Tuhoe, Ngati Awa, Ngatiterangi—living in Australia)

*Karen Stevenson, of Tahitian heritage, moved to Christchurch in 1995 to take a position at the University of Canterbury. Her writings include* The Frangipani is Dead: Contemporary Pacific Art in New Zealand, 1985–2000 *(Wellington, NZ: Huia, 2008);* Johnny Penisula, Reinterpreting Tradition *(Suva, Fiji: USP Press, 2016); and* Filipe Tohi: Journey to the Present: Makahoko mei Lotokafa *(Suva, Fiji: University of the South Pacific Press, 2015).*

## Notes

[1] Regan Balzer, "Lockdown Only Makes Us Stronger," *The Big Idea/Te Ariā Nui* (Auckland, New Zealand), August 19, 2021, https://thebigidea.nz/community-announcements/lockdown-only-makes-us-stronger.
[2] Regan Balzer, personal communication, May 2023.
[3] Balzer, personal communication.
[4] Balzer, personal communication.
[5] Taonga is "treasure, anything prized—applied to anything considered to be of value including socially or culturally valuable objects, resources, phenomenon, ideas and techniques." *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, https://maoridictionary.co.nz/, accessed June 20, 2023.
[6] Balzer, personal communication.
[7] Balzer, personal communication.
[8] Balzer, personal communication.
[9] Balzer, personal communication.

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HEALOHA JOHNSTON

# Exhibition Review: Hawaiʻi Triennial 2022: *Pacific Century—E Hoʻomau no Moananuiākea*

**Abstract**
*An exhibition review of the Hawaiʻi Triennial 2022:* Pacific Century—E Hoʻomau no Moananuiākea *that was presented February 18 through May 8, 2022, in Honolulu, Oʻahu, Hawaiʻi. Organized by Hawaiʻi Contemporary, the triennial was on view at the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, Foster Botanical Garden, Hawaii Theatre Center, Hawaiʻi State Art Museum, Iolani Palace, Honolulu Museum of Art, and Royal Hawaiian Center. It was curated by Dr. Melissa Chiu in collaboration with associate curators Dr. Miwako Tezuka and Drew Kahuʻāina Broderick.*

**Keywords:** *Hawaiʻi Triennial 2022, Hawaiʻi Contemporary, exhibitions, contemporary art, Oceania, Asia*

The Hawaiʻi Triennial 2022 (HT22), formerly called the Honolulu Biennial, mounted its multivenue exhibition from February 18 through May 8, with this iteration centered thematically on the term "Pacific Century." The triennial—curated by Dr. Melissa Chiu in collaboration with associate curators Dr. Miwako Tezuka and Drew Kahuʻāina Broderick—was planned during an unprecedented time: a COVID pandemic coinciding with and framed by social justice movements. Chu's opening essay in the exhibition's accompanying catalogue begins with the heading "Curating and Crisis"—an indication of the moment's urgency and the potential for exhibitions to exist as responsive spaces.

In many ways, HT22 asked visitors to think on notions of time and place, not least through the bilingual title. The title's English and Hawaiian language segments are not translations of each other; they suggest contrasting perspectives. "Pacific Century" harkens a start and end point to a geography's dominant presence in the global sphere, but the ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian language) portion of the title asserts the continuing and everlasting endurance of the Pacific. Artists and artist collectives working across various media and time periods were included under the premise of this dichotomy, presented at seven sites with dynamic, albeit uneven, curatorial approaches discernable at each location.

Stand-out yet unassuming artworks that were presented at multiple locations included Lawrence Seward's newspaper *Seaward Sun*, printed in an edition of 5,000 copies and installed at the Honolulu Museum of Art, Bishop Museum, Hawaiʻi State Art Museum, and Royal Hawaiian Center.[1] *Seaward Sun* is dated 2034 and offers present-day readers a glimpse into the future. It juxtaposes apocalyptic forecasting related to climate-change impacts and catastrophic effects of unchecked capitalism with a parody-articles describing Hawaiʻi as an ideal paradise of luxury living. In a spirit of collaboration consistent with HT22's focus on artist collectives, Seward invited writers—Lesa Griffith among them—to author articles for the newspaper. It presents, in exaggerated contrast, current scenarios that were described on a daily basis through media outlets in Hawaiʻi during 2021 when the piece was actually made. Also presented at multiple venues—ʻIolani Palace and the Hawaiʻi State Art Museum (HiSAM)—was *When I think of Ea*, a poem and audio recording by Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio.[2] Osorio's recitation of their poem echoed in the atrium of HiSAM's second floor. The poem considers ea and connects breath with music, sacrifice, skin, trust, love, and the lāhui as Osorio (re)members characteristics of their mother and father, the ocean and rocks, extended genealogies, and collective experiences tied to sovereignty.

Large-scale installations at Bishop Museum, such as the formidable portrait series *Te Pu o Te Wheke* by Pacific Sisters and the incredible *Enola's Head* by Gaku Tsutaja, and *With the toughest care, The most economical tenderness* by Justine Youssef at the Royal Hawaiian Center commanded attention in physical spaces while activating digital technology in an effective interplay for visitors (including myself) who were exhausted by virtual life and virtual exhibitions during COVID.[3]

HiSAM was, without question, the venue that featured the most carefully considered grouping of artists; its works were curated with attention to interconnectedness, interpretation, and narrative that the other sites simply did not have. HiSAM's installation read like an art-historical exhibition addressing the intersections between art, design, time-based media, literature, land struggle, and resistance in Hawaiʻi. It was the most distinct site in its departure from typical contemporary art-triennial methodologies. Opting instead for a historicized approach, the exhibition featured nearly survey-scale representations of artworks by Mark Hamasaki—a cofounder of the collective ʻElepaio Press and one of two artists in the collective Piliāmoʻo—spanning several decades of his creative output as an individual artist (Fig. 1).[4] Hamasaki is an underrecognized yet profoundly influential artist in Hawaiʻi. His work warrants the attention it received at HiSAM, and it was impactful to see the expanse of his work across multiple galleries. HiSAM's

focus on artist collectives enabled the inclusion of work by Kapulani Landgraf, one of Hawaiʻi's most internationally acclaimed artists whose photographic career centers on land issues.[4] Landgraf, a featured artist in the 2019 Honolulu Biennial and Hamasaki's partner in Piliāmoʻo, was included in HT22 by way of ʻAi Pōhaku Press, an artist collective whose publications document decades of activism.[5] Any art exhibition addressing twentieth- and twenty-first-century land struggles and resistance in Hawaiʻi would be incomplete without her.

Figure 1. Gallery view of the exhibition *Pacific Century—E Hoʻomau No Moananuiākea* showing issues of *Mana: A South Pacific Journal of Language and Literature* from the collection of Richard Hamasaki. Hawaiʻi State Art Museum, Honolulu, February 18–May 8, 2022. Photograph courtesy of Healoha Johnston

Figure 2. Gallery view of the exhibition *Pacific Century—E Hoʻomau No Moananuiākea* showing "Pupule," a concrete poem by Wayne Kaumualiʻi Westlake. Hawaiʻi State Art Museum, Honolulu, February 18–May 8, 2022. Photograph courtesy of Healoha Johnston

Several artists who were not listed as officially invited HT22 artists were represented in the HiSAM exhibition through ʻElepaio Press, which has collaborated with innumerable local and Indigenous creatives across the visual and

literary arts over the course of its nearly fifty years in operation.[6] Among these artists was Kanaka ʻŌiwi poet and philosopher Wayne Kaumualii Westlake (1947–1984). His writings exemplified the political consciousness of 1970s Hawaiʻi through his assertion of Hawaiian worldviews, consideration of identity, and, among other aspects of his writing, his embrace of pidgin and Hawaiian words. A prolific period in Westlake's writing career coalesced with the Hawaiian Renaissance from the mid-1970s through the 1980s. His publications were displayed in the gallery, and his concrete poems, including "Pupule," were reproduced in large-scale vinyl graphics on walls and gallery floors (Fig. 2),[7] offering a visually brilliant and deeply sensitive interpretation of the poet's contribution to a pivotal political and cultural revolution in Hawaiʻi.

HiSAM's installation of HT22 succeeded in presenting a critical chapter of Hawaiʻi's art history—clearly an exhibition concept that at least one of the curators had given much thought to. Although it was inconsistent with the rest of HT22, and triennial formats in general, it was stellar, and was the standout installation of the triennial event. Overall, it was a testament to the need for such exhibitions, especially during a time when museums and cultural organizations are grappling with the structures and formats of their own existence and are reckoning with their relationships to land and people.

*Healoha Johnston is an art historian living in Kaiwiki, Hawaiʻi. She is the director of cultural resources and curator for Hawaiʻi and Pacific Arts and culture at Bishop Museum. Johnston's exhibitions and research projects explore connections between historic visual culture and contemporary art, with a particular focus on the sociopolitical underpinnings that inform those relationships. She served as chief curator and curator of the arts of Hawaiʻi, Oceania, Africa, and the Americas at the Honolulu Museum of Art, and worked in contemporary art galleries, NOAA's Pacific National Monument program, and the Smithsonian Institution as part of the American Women's History Initiative and Asian Pacific American Center before joining Bishop Museum.*

## Notes

[1] "Lawrence Seward," *Hawaiʻi Triennial 2022*, Hawaiʻi Contemporary, https://hawaiicontemporary.org/artist-lawrence-seward, accessed April 26, 2023.
[2] "Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio," *Hawaiʻi Triennial 2022*, Hawaiʻi Contemporary, https://hawaiicontemporary.org/artist-jamaica-heolimeleikalani, accessed May 2, 2023.

[3] "Pacific Sisters," *Hawaiʻi Triennial 2022*, Hawaiʻi Contemporary, https://hawaiicontemporary.org/artist-pacific-sisters, accessed May 2, 2023; "Gaku Tsutaja," *Hawaiʻi Triennial 2022*, Hawaiʻi Contemporary, https://hawaiicontemporary.org/artist-gaku-tsutaja, accessed May 2, 2023; "Justine Youssef," *Hawaiʻi Triennial 2022*, Hawaiʻi Contemporary, https://hawaiicontemporary.org/artist-justine-youssef, accessed May 2, 2023.
[4] "Piliāmoʻo," *Hawaiʻi Triennial 2022*, Hawaiʻi Contemporary, https://hawaiicontemporary.org/artist-piliamoo, accessed May 2, 2023.
[5] "ʻAi Pōhaku Press," *Hawaiʻi Triennial 2022*, Hawaiʻi Contemporary, https://hawaiicontemporary.org/artist-ai-pohaku-press, accessed May 2, 2023.
[6] "ʻElepaio Press," *Hawaiʻi Triennial 2022*, Hawaiʻi Contemporary, https://hawaiicontemporary.org/artist-elepaio-press, accessed May 2, 2023.
[7] The concrete poem "Pupule" can be found in the book *Westlake: Poems of Wayne Kaumualii Westlake*, ed. Mei-Li M. Siy and Richard Hamasaki (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2009), 67.

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**HALENA KAPUNI-REYNOLDS**

# Event Review: E Hō Mai Ka ʻIke: Celebrating the Launch of the Edith Kanakaʻole Quarter, Hilo, Hawaiʻi, May 5–6, 2023

**Abstract**
*In 2022, Edith Kekuhikuhipuʻuoneonāaliʻiōkohala Kenao Kanakaʻole (1913–1979) was selected to be featured on a U.S. quarter as part of the American Women Quarters program, a collaboration between the United States Mint, the Smithsonian's American Women's History Museum (AWHM), the National Women's History Museum, and the Congressional Bipartisan Women's Caucus that celebrates the accomplishments and contributions of American Women to a variety of fields. In 2023, the United States Mint and the AWHM partnered with Hawaiʻi Community College, the University of Hawaiʻi at Hilo, and the Edith Kanakaʻole Foundation to organize a celebration of the quarter's release. Collectively titled E Hō Mai Ka ʻIke: Celebrating the Launch of the Edith Kanakaʻole Quarter, the two-day event (May 5–6, 2023) showcased the vitality and innovative forms of contemporary Native Hawaiian visual and performing arts—a testament to Aunty Edith's enduring legacy as it continues on through her descendants and students today.*

**Keywords:** *Edith Kanakaʻole, Hawaiian arts, Indigenous arts, Hawaiʻi, hula, American Women Quarters, United States Mint, Smithsonian Institution, American Women's History Museum, National Women's History Museum, Congressional Bipartisan Women's Caucus, currency, popular culture*

In 2022, Edith Kekuhikuhipuʻuoneonāaliʻiōkohala Kenao Kanakaʻole (1913–1979), a beloved Hawaiʻi Island community member whose career as an educator, performer, and recording artist was deeply rooted in hula and other Hawaiian cultural beliefs, practices, and values that were central to her upbringing, was selected to be featured on a United States quarter as part of the American Women Quarters program (Fig. 1). A collaboration between the United States Mint, the Smithsonian's American Women's History Museum (AWHM), the National Women's History Museum, and the Congressional Bipartisan Women's Caucus, the four-year program "celebrates the accomplishments and contributions made

by women of the United States."[1] Kanakaʻole's quarter was the seventh in the series to be released; the six previously minted quarters honor Maya Angelou, Dr. Sally Ride, Wilma Mankiller, Nina Otero-Warren, Anna May Wong, and Bessie Coleman. In 2023, the United States Mint and the AWHM partnered with Hawaiʻi Community College, the University of Hawaiʻi at Hilo, and the Edith Kanakaʻole Foundation (EKF), to organize a two-day celebration in Hilo in honor of the quarter's release.[2] Collectively titled E Hō Mai Ka ʻIke: Celebrating the Launch of the Edith Kanakaʻole Quarter, the events showcased the vitality and innovative forms of contemporary Native Hawaiian performing and visual arts—a testament to the enduring legacy of Kanakaʻole, fondly referred to as "Aunty Edith," as it continues through her descendants and students today.

Figure 1. Reverse image of the Edith Kanakaʻole quarter, 2022. Designed by Emily Damstra. Courtesy of the United States Mint

The first day of events (May 5, 2023) was a full-day workshop attended by approximately 120 students from Keaukaha Elementary School (KES), Ka ʻUmeke Kāʻeo Public Charter School (KUK), and Ke Ana Laʻahana Public Charter School (KAL). The three public schools are located in the Hawaiian Home Land community of Keaukaha where, in 1924, Aunty Edith's mother was one of the first homesteaders. It was at KES that Aunty Edith developed Hālau O Ka ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi, a Hawaiian language and cultural enrichment program for Hawaiian youth that served as one of the models for the Hawaiʻi Department of Education's Hawaiian Studies Kupuna Program. Thus, a student-centered day in Keaukaha, honoring Aunty Edith's love for children and commitment to passing down her knowledge to future generations, was an appropriate way to honor and witness her legacy.

Figure 2. Students from three public schools in Keaukaha perform oli (chants) and hula (dances) in honor of Aunty Edith. Keaukaha, Hilo, Hawaiʻi, May 5, 2023. Photograph by Jill Westeyn. Courtesy of the United States Mint

The student event was held on the EKF-KUK campus and took place in various outdoor classrooms and the rehearsal studio of Hālau o Kekuhi, the hula school founded by Aunty Edith. The day began with a kīpaipai wehena (opening ceremony) in which students performed a series of oli (chants) and hula, including many of Aunty Edith's original compositions and choreography such as "E Hō Mai," "Kokolo Au I Hilo Hanakahi," "Noho Ana I Hilo," and "Ka Uluwehi O Ke Kai" (Fig. 2).

Some of the hula also featured students using implements such as the peʻahi (fan), pūʻili (bamboo rattles), and pūniu (small knee drum), while the hoʻopaʻa (chanters) utilized the ipu (gourd drum) and pahu (wooden drum) consistently throughout each number. Following the performances, students were treated to a series of rotating workshops where they learned information about Keaukaha's wahi pana (famed places), the choreography for one of Aunty Edith's original compositions, and the arts of hei (Hawaiian string figures), lauhala weaving, and palaʻie (loop and ball game made with coconut leaves and balls of cloth). The United States Mint and AWHM facilitated coloring activities for the youngest students. Kawehipua Mahi-Roberts, a visual artist from Keaukaha, produced a coloring book commissioned by EKF. The book, inspired by Aunty Edith's composition "Nā Pana Kaulana o Keaukaha" (The Famed Places of Keaukaha) illustrates each of the wahi pana mentioned in the song with digitally drawn black-and-white illustrations, offering an excellent example of place-based Hawaiian arts curriculum (Figs. 3–4). The day ended with a hōʻike (exhibition), where the students performed some of the hula, songs, chants, and games that they had learned.

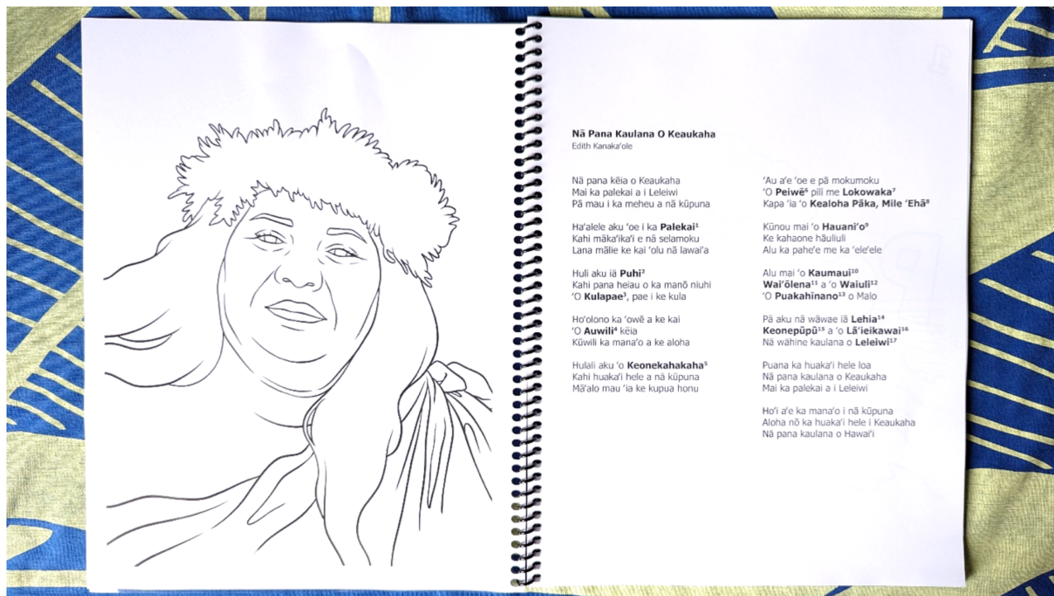


Figure 3. Pages from *Nā Pana Kaulana O Keaukaha*, a coloring book illustrated by Keaukaha visual artist Kawehipua Mahi-Roberts. Photograph by the author. Courtesy of the Edith Kanakaʻole Foundation

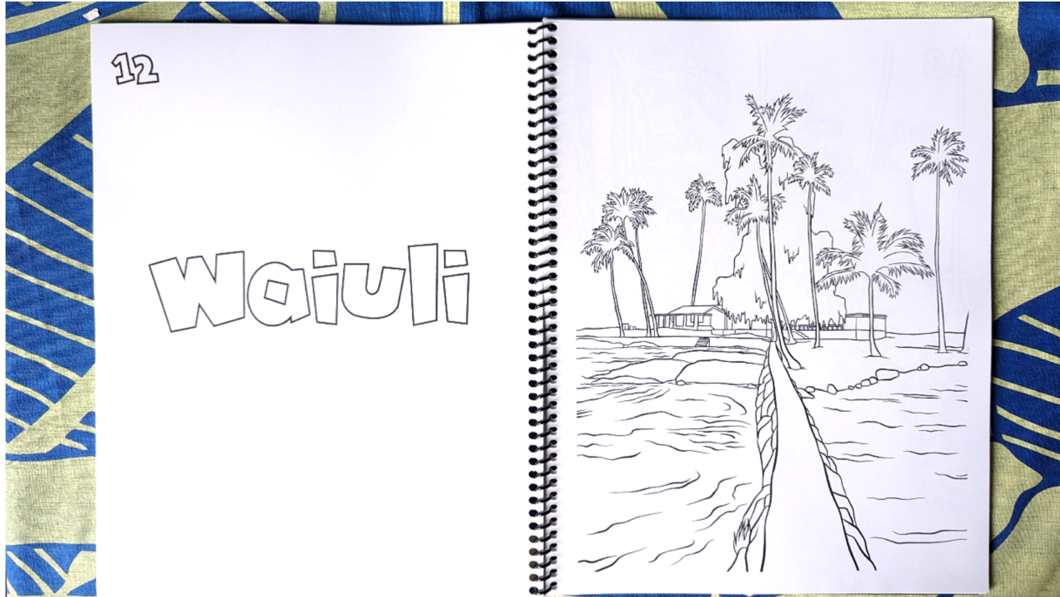


Figure 4. Example of a wahi pana (famed places) illustration in the *Nā Pana Kaulana O Keaukaha* coloring book. Photograph by the author. Courtesy of the Edith Kanakaʻole Foundation

The second day of the celebration, held on May 6 at the University of Hawaiʻi at Hilo, served as the official public launch of the quarter. It began with a formal program held in the UH Hilo Performing Arts Center. As event attendees entered the center, they were greeted by a painting of Aunty Edith from Dr. Kanahele Kanakaʻole's personal collection draped in a large lei made of fragrant lauaʻe leaves atop a moena lauhala (mat made of lauhala leaves). Surrounding the painting were the various declarations read during the formal program, as well as an array of plant arrangements made from kukui, ti-leaf, plumeria, and lauaʻe (Fig. 5). The display was an excellent use of locally gathered greenery to decorate an event space while alluding to Aunty Edith's deep love of the natural world. Once the audience was seated, the program began with an introductory speech that Aunty Edith had recorded for her award-winning album, *Haʻakuʻi Pele I Hawaiʻi!* (1978). A kīpaipai wehena was then led by Aunty Edith's granddaughter, Kekuhi Kealiʻikanakaʻole, and her husband, Dr. Taupōuri Tangarō, followed by recognition of family members and other dignitaries and numerous speeches. The speeches included the official declaration of May 6, 2023, as Edith Kanakaʻole Day in Hawaiʻi, as well as the posthumous awarding of an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree to Aunty Edith by the University of Hawaiʻi Board of Regents.

Figure 5. Edith Kanakaʻole's portrait surrounded by greenery and written accolades that were read during the May 6, 2023 opening ceremony of E Hō Mai Ka ʻIke, UH Hilo Performing Arts Center. Photograph courtesy of the author

Once the formal program was completed, attendees made their way from the Performing Arts Center to Edith Kanakaʻole Hall where they each received an Edith Kanakaʻole quarter from the United States Mint. Additionally, an array of community-produced pop-up exhibitions were set up in various classrooms, providing event attendees with an opportunity to learn about Aunty Edith's life. As participants approached the hall, they were greeted by a collaborative mural by the artists Kamea Hadar and Kūhaʻo Zane, Aunty Edith's grandson (Fig. 6). Much like Hadar's other works that adorn building facades throughout Hawaiʻi, the mural depicts Aunty Edith vibrantly and larger than life. As she does on the quarter, she wears a lei poʻo (lei worn on the head) made of feathery palapalai fern leaves and a yellow kīhei, a rectangular garment made from cloth that is thrown over one shoulder and tied in a knot. The mural includes the phrase "ʻo nā mea huna noʻeau o nā mele ē" ("every little bit of wisdom contained in song") from one of Aunty Edith's most well-known compositions "E Hō Mai," accented by geometric, nature-inspired patterns that are emblematic of designs by Zane and his father through their Hilo-based Hawaiian apparel and design company, Sig Zane Designs.

Figure 6. Mural honoring Edith Kanakaʻole by Kamea Hadar and Kūhaʻo Zane. Edith Kanakaʻole Hall, University of Hawaiʻi at Hilo. Photograph courtesy of the author

From the mural, event participants were directed toward performances of a number of Aunty Edith's original compositions and other hula at the other end of the building. The performers were dancers from Unulau, a hula school under the direction of Pele Kaio that continues the ʻai haʻa hula tradition that Aunty Edith and her family perpetuated for generations. Kaio and his dancers utilized the ipu, pūʻili, and ʻulīʻulī (gourd rattle) in some of their performances. During a break in their set, a group of older women stood near the microphones and began to sing "Nā ʻOno O Ka ʻĀina" as a hoʻokupu (offering) to Aunty Edith and her family. The song, which Aunty Edith performed for her second album, *Hiʻipoi i ka ʻ Āina Aloha* (1979), was composed by Kalani Meinecke and George Kahumoku Jr. in honor of Kanakaʻole and her favorite varieties of taro. A curated space was set up near Unulau's performance area for attendees to leave offerings they had brought that day (Fig. 7). Much like the display in the Performing Arts Center, the hoʻokupu area was decked with greenery and included another image of Aunty Edith—a photograph by Franco Salmoiraghi of her in a lei poʻo and kīhei.

Figure 7. Place for hoʻokupu (offerings), featuring a photograph of Aunty Edith by Franco Salmoiraghi, Edith Kanakaʻole Hall, University of Hawaiʻi at Hilo, May 6, 2023. Photograph courtesy of the author

Overall, the two days of events were successful and well attended. Although many of Aunty Edith's original compositions and choreography were performed repeatedly over the two days—by students, her family members, and dancers connected to her through their hula lineage—there was never a point where the dances became mundane. Rather, each performance differed in terms of the garb and accoutrements that were used, as well as the performers themselves. These performances visually and aurally conveyed to the audience the living legacy of Aunty Edith's hula, traditions that she worked to preserve in her lifetime. Complementing them were the numerous images of Aunty Edith that appeared throughout the venues: the new quarter, painted portraits, photographs, and newly commissioned works like those of Mahi-Roberts, Hadar, and Zane. In considering these hula and art works alongside other artistic elements of the program—namely, the use of particular plant species to decorate event spaces—I would argue that the events provided an excellent example of Native Hawaiian art and aesthetics in praxis. More specifically, Aunty Edith's love and reverence for the natural world, as well as her dedication to the art forms she perpetuated, were evident throughout the festivities and artworks.

To conclude this review, I want to briefly discuss and acknowledge the political tensions surrounding the launch of this quarter. Given Hawaiʻi's political history and other contemporary issues such as militarization and settler colonialism, there are legitimate questions and critiques arising from our communities on the choice to commemorate a Hawaiian woman on a piece of US currency. Rather than shy away from these concerns, I think of them as opportunities for dialogue, chances to reckon with the contradictory and complex sociopolitical realities of many Native Hawaiians today. In the case of the quarter, we can name and discuss the moral and political implications of this coin alongside other facts, including that the Edith Kanakaʻole coin is the highest-selling quarter in the American Womens Quarter Program to date.[3] Although Aunty Edith was already a well-known and beloved community member on Hawaiʻi Island prior to the release of the quarter, the national circulation of the coin means that millions more people will now know who she is. Perhaps through Aunty Edith's quarter and life story, we can develop further avenues for educating the broader American public regarding our islands' unique history and culture while celebrating a Hawaiian leader. A young girl who attended the public event at UH Hilo summarized the significance of the quarter aptly: "I think it's good that they finally put a Native Hawaiian person on a US currency—that they recognize our culture."[4]

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## Notes

[1] "American Women Quarters™ Program," United States Mint, accessed May 17, 2023, https://www.usmint.gov/learn/coin-and-medal-programs/american-women-quarters.
[2] The Edith Kanakaʻole Foundation was founded in 1990 by Aunty Edith's daughter, Dr. Pualani Kanahele Kanakaʻole. It is currently directed by her daughter, Dr. Huihui Kanahele-Mossman.
[3] Mike Unser, "US Mint Sales: Edith Kanakaʻole Quarters Pop," CoinNews.net, accessed May 17, 2023, https://www.coinnews.net/2023/05/17/us-mint-sales-edith-kanaka%ca%bbole-quarters-pop/.
[4] Opua Kern, appearing in "Hundreds Celebrate Edith Kanakaʻole at UH Hilo," University of Hawaiʻi News, May 9, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qG789H2Bg3Y.

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MARY GAGLER

# Exhibition Review: Ancestry and Kinship in Yolŋu Curation

**Abstract**

*The author reviews the exhibition* Maḏayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala*, held at the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire, September 4–December 4, 2022; and the Katzen Arts Center, American University, Washington, DC, February 4–May 14, 2023. The exhibition's tour continues at The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, February 3–July 14, 2024; and Asia Society, New York, September 24, 2024–January 5, 2025.*

**Keywords:** *Yolŋu, bark painting, Aboriginal Australia, Indigenous art, transcultural, Indigenous curation*

In *Maḏayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala*, the first museum exhibition of its kind outside of Australia, Indigenous curators focus on the Yolŋu art of bark painting. "*Madayin*" translates as "sacred," "hidden," and "beautiful," and the show exemplifies its title; its curators have guarded the most sacred aspects of Yolŋu culture while revealing layers of information about the ancestry and networks of kinship present in bark painting. The exhibition welcomes visitors into a visual language of clan patterns and creation stories, which have been reproduced by the Yolŋu in ephemeral forms such as sand sculptures and ceremonial body painting since before recorded time. The exhibition is monumental, with over ninety paintings on tree bark and a selection of full-wall video installations. Its four-stop tour of the United States began at the Hood Museum of Art, with opening events at each venue bringing Yolŋu people and global audiences together.

*Maḏayin* is the result of a seven-year collaboration between Buku-Larrŋggay Mulka Centre, an Indigenous-run art center in the small town of Yirrkala, in the East Arnhem region of Australia's Northern Territory, and the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection in Charlottesville, Virginia. Curators Henry Skerritt and Kade McDonald worked with first-time Yolŋu curators Djambawa Marawili, Yinimala

Gumana, Wäka Munuŋgurr, and W. Waṉambi (1962–2022). In the exhibition catalogue, Skerritt discusses their curatorial process, saying that "the Yolŋu curatorial team were concerned to show the works according to Yolŋu principles—principles of kinship and the connectivity between people and places."[1] In this context, connectivity meant seeking Yolŋu community approval for each painting included in the show, commissioning works to fill gaps, and exhibiting works by a representative group of artists, from emerging to old masters.

Yolŋu contact with cultural outsiders expanded in the first half of the twentieth century, leading to relationships with anthropologists and missionaries and, later, gallerists and art collectors who commissioned bark paintings as portable, nonceremonial expressions of Yolŋu visual culture. These early commissions served a diplomatic role, which is echoed in the curation of *Maḏayin,* for which Yolŋu cultural leaders designed a strategy to share sacred meaning of Yolŋu culture. The earliest works in the show convey the formal and philosophical origins of the bark painting tradition, while more contemporary works represent newer art trends and the strength arising from Indigenous kinship systems.

The first thing visitors to *Maḏayin* learn is that the bark paintings, which pull viewers in with their visual density and dazzling patterns, are based on creation myths. Djambawa Marawili AM, the leader of the Madarrpa clan, explains that Yolŋu bark paintings are "more than fairy tales and pretty pictures. These stories and paintings were given to us by our elders, passed through the generations."[2] Elders are a key aspect of the Yolŋu concept of kinship, which describes a connection based on the shared origins of people and the land, including its plants, animals, and ancestral spiritual beings. Each painting details part of a story, passed down through generations, that expresses belonging within the kinship system.

Performances, catalog essays, wall texts, and the exhibition website enliven hidden connections in the work. Visitors can see how painted clan patterns and epic poems called "songlines" connect through their shared ancestral identity as parts of a visual and auditory map. During the opening events at each exhibition venue, Yolŋu sing these ancestral songlines to bring the spirits back to the paintings, reuniting them with barks that have traveled far away. Describing the curating process, curator W. Wanambi sheds light on the animated charge of bark paintings and how they fit into Yolŋu principles of kinship:

> I always say, you shouldn't show one person's painting on its own. Paintings need family, to show they're connected through authority and responsibility . . . For me, when I look at *ṉuwayak* (bark

> painting), I don't see something flat. It's like the surface of the water. When you look at it, to us Yolŋu we just dive into family, kinship, land, colors, the strength and the power—it just draws us in.[3]

Seeing these bark paintings in person brings visitors into contact with the Yolŋu lived experience. For Yolŋu, everything in the world is designated as one of two complementary moieties: Dhuwa or Yirritja. These groups interconnect through marriage and ceremony, and they also determine intricate ways of relating to other people and the natural world. The exhibition layout reflects this important aspect of Yolŋu kinship: works by Dhuwa and Yirritja artists are in separate galleries that connect through narrative links.

One point of entry for these works is the purely aesthetic, but the Yolŋu curators have objectives beyond this framing: "Americans will come to the paintings through the art world, but . . . we want you to come to the grassroots level, to sit in the sand and let us show you a different way of coming to the paintings."[4] By showcasing select works accompanied by stories, the curators invite viewers to immerse themselves in the Yolŋu worldview, sharing the embedded knowledge or *dhuḏi-dhawu* (the deep story) that connects all living things. Yolŋu paintings are not mere depictions of a deep, ancestral story, but manifestations of ancestral energy itself. Once the viewer knows this, each sea turtle or emu figure, for example, is charged with meaning. This aesthetic-cum-metaphysical concept is foreign to most outside audiences, but the Yolŋu curators embrace a calling toward cultural diplomacy, sharing layers of their philosophy in order to integrate their global audience as kin.

The show opens with a full-wall video installation (Fig. 1) of an eleven-minute looped video, *Gapu Muŋurru ga Baḻamumu Mirikindi | Deep Waters of the Dhuwa and Yirritja Moieties*, by Ishmael Marika of the Mulka Project.[5] In it, two clan elders are seen singing a welcoming and strengthening song while clapping rhythmic clap sticks overlaid with footage of ocean waves.[6] The video casts undulating light onto the exhibition's earliest work, a 1935 painting on flattened eucalyptus tree bark by clan leader Woŋgu Munuŋgurr. This bark piece is encased in Plexiglass on an elevated plinth, its presentation a marker of its historical significance as a work that communicated trust between Indigenous Australians and European visitors during a time when tensions with foreigners were mounting.[7] In this first gallery, one work presents an early instance of the historical technique of fine lines of ochre pigment on bark, and the other showcases Yolŋu filmmaking in one of several video installations that at once punctuate and ground the exhibition, giving a sense of geographic place through scenes of ceremonial dancing in Arnhem Land.

Throughout the show, the formal differences between the bark paintings and video installations make an intriguing contrast that communicates the heart of the exhibition: ancestral energy is present in Yolŋu art across time, distance, and mediums.

Figure 1. Installation view of *Maḏayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala* showing Ishmael Marika, *Gapu Muŋurru ga Baḻamumu Mirikindi | Deep Waters of the Dhuwa and Yirritja Moieties*, 2022, and Woŋgu Munuŋgurr, *Sacred Clan Designs*, 1935. The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, September 4–December 4, 2022. Photograph by Rob Strong. Courtesy Hood Museum of Art

Figure 2. Installation view of *Madayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala*. The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, September 4–December 4, 2022. Photograph by Rob Strong. Courtesy of Hood Museum of Art

Upstairs at the Hood Museum, bark paintings—nearly all in the traditional color palette of iron-rich red, clay white, yellow ochre, and carbon black, and some reaching over three meters tall—towered in the galleries (Fig. 2). Geometric clan patterns unify the compositions, providing a visual rhythm that ricochets around the gallery and formalizes the dynamic connections among all things.

In an adjoining gallery, a commissioned large-scale work by Marrnyula Manuŋgurr, *Djapu'Miny'tji / Djapu' Clan Design* (Fig. 3), demonstrates the flexibility of ancient forms. The artist has painted variations of the Djapu' clan design on 299 bark pieces, which together make up a three-and-a-half-meter-tall "puzzle-work" installation.[8] Marrnyula isolates the grid-like components of the Djapu' clan pattern, making the subject of the work the clan design itself. [9]

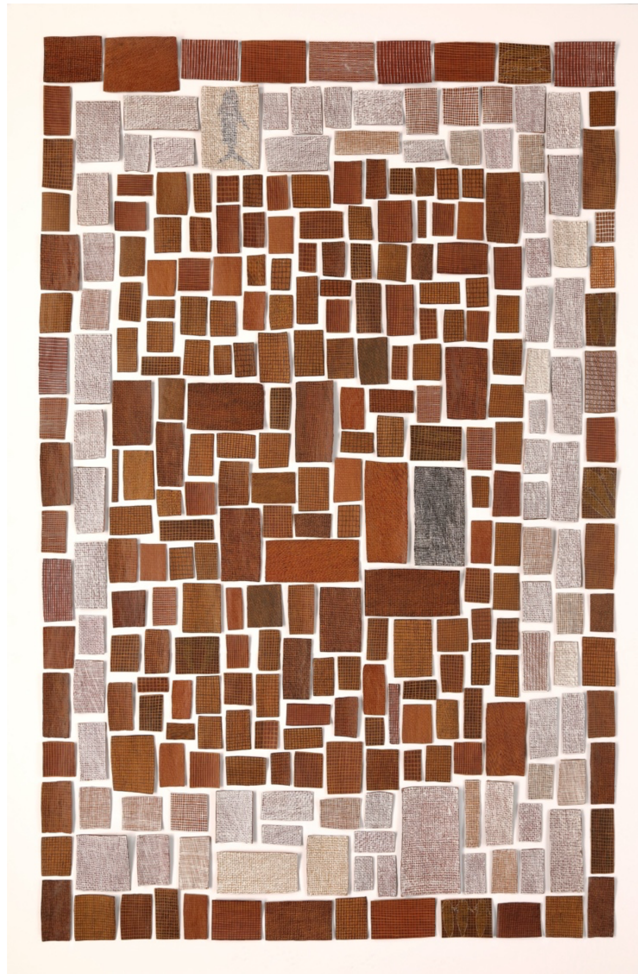

Figure 3. Marrnyula Manuŋgurr, *Djapu'Miny'tji |Djapu' Clan Design*, 2019. Natural pigments on 299 eucalyptus bark pieces, 137 13/16 x 75 3/8 in. (350 x 187 cm), Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia. The 2017–19 Kluge-Ruhe Madayin Commission, purchased with funds provided by William Alexander and Terrence Sykes, 2021, 2020.0002.001-299. Courtesy of Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection

While the patterns in Yolŋu painting can first appear abstract, sitting with this work reveals how the narrative content is present in the smallest of details. Changes in line and color evoke different qualities of ancestral stories and contemporary traditions. The wall text for *Djapu'Miny'tji* describes its story: Mäṉa, the ancestral shark, became caught in a woven fish net. He summoned his strength and swung his head to break free of the net, creating a bend in the river.

On one bark piece in the work, steep diagonal lines cut through a grid of white squares, the white ochre representing clear river water. In the upper left, the shadow of a shark figure appears under the water's surface. On another bark piece, thin black lines meet at right angles to depict a fishing net, while also depicting darker water muddied by Mäṉa thrashing to escape.[10] Multivalent patterns activate each surface, referencing multiple ancestral, cultural, and natural events that bridge time. Shifting grids and sharp angles evoke the flash of anger in a captured animal's eyes, the shimmering surface of disturbed water, the actions of women moving like the shark in a contemporary ceremony, and the net-like designs that are painted on boys' chests for their initiation ceremony.[11]

Fine lines—painted with a steady hand onto bark using only a few long bristles of human hair—create an optical vibration in each gallery. This effect, called *bir'yun,* is essential to Yolŋu art as it is the presence of ancestral energy, manifested as various specific qualities in each story.[12] Clan patterns on different works create a shifting and dynamic surface that alters the viewing experience, as if the bark itself is moving on the wall. The selection of paintings underscores changes in the role of clan patterns across a timespan of eight decades, from figurative compositions to predominantly geometric works.

Bark painting motifs from the 1930s to the 1980s often depict multiple scenes from a myth narrative in a single work, and can require some amount of cultural information to discern the intended emotional tone and political theme.[13] More recent works show less sacred information and instead isolate a scene from a myth system, giving more space for the optical effects of clan patterns and in turn heightening the experiential quality of standing in front of the work.

In *Djambarrpuyŋu Mäna | Shark of the Djambarrpuyŋu Clan* (Fig. 4), Wilson Manydjarri Ganambarr paints the body of the ancestral shark Mäṉa in yellow ochre. In this episode of the shark's journey, a spear pierces Mäṉa's side and he burrows into the land, creating the clan patterns that emanate from his wounded body. The wall text explains the traditional myth: the larger hidden shark in the top half of the painting is a timeless version of the ancestral shark who continues to travel the earth in spirit form. While art-world discourse might read this as a sequential picture of a single shark before and after death, the curators offer a

chance to see the work in a new way: experiencing the imagery as a manifestation of the ancestral shark forever in mid-journey.

Through artistic expressions of a deep relationship to the natural world and ancient stories, *Maḏayin* presents a culture that has changed over time and celebrates individuality that is strengthened by a bedrock of connection. *Gurrutu,* the system of kinship, is made up of the paintings as well as the people who made them, the trees that the bark came from, the land, the sea, and all creatures. *Gurrutu* is both a way of relating and a source of strength, generated by identifying and connecting with one's original place within a vast cosmological web. Seeing all these works together connects us to our deepest identities, showing that we are connected to nature—and through it, to each other.

Figure 4. Wilson Manydjarri Ganambarr, *Djambarrpuyŋu Mäna | Shark of the Djambarrpuyŋu Clan*, 1996. Natural pigments on eucalyptus bark, 75 7/8 x 22 3/4 in. (192.72 x 57.79 cm), Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia. Gift of John W. Kluge, 1997, 1996.0035.017. Courtesy of Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection

In the most recent works in the exhibition, individual styles and more non-ceremonial subjects emerge, especially among the works by women artists. In Dhambit Munuŋgurr's *Bänhdharra | Ocean* (Fig. 5), the artist uses blue acrylic paint to depict a boisterous contemporary maritime scene in which Dhuwa and Yirritja clans make contact with sailors from Sulawesi.[14] Three giant octopuses indicate that the scene takes place in the waters of the Warramiri clan, at a specific ocean locale near the sacred rock Dhambit, for whom the artist is named.[15] Ancestral and contemporary timelines overlap in the jovial energy and place-making details of the composite scene.

Figure 5. Dhambit Munuŋgurr, *Bänhdharra | Ocean*, 2019. Natural pigments and acrylic on eucalyptus bark. 78 11/32 x 42 17/32 in. (199 x 108 cm), Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia. The 2017–19 Kluge-Ruhe Madayin Commission. Museum purchase, 2020, 2020.0007.001. Courtesy of Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection

Contemporary paintings in the exhibition show the flexibility of tradition as they move away from depictions of mythic beings and toward secular stories, observable landscapes, and the night sky (Fig. 8). The formal techniques used also shift, as artists break from traditional compositions, yet the ancestral significance of these works persists regardless of content or form. Women artists play a unique role in the expanding of conceptual vocabulary, as their rights to depict certain subjects are restricted by ancestral custom. They experiment accordingly, with nonsacred subject matter that expresses their connection to the ancestral past and present.[16]

A notable example is Mulkun Wirrpanda's *Retja II | Rainforest II* (Fig. 6), which documents the artist's encyclopedic knowledge of edible plants that have kept Yolŋu communities healthy for millennia. She painted this work in order to transmit knowledge of the land and to protect future generations from the negative health impact of processed foods. Mulkun faced challenges when representing this subject; in order to accurately depict the ancestral energy suffusing the land, she had to listen to the plants: "I had to let the plants tell me what their secular identity or character was, by the way they grow or the way they look or express themselves. This gave me their rhythm, or their pattern."[17]

Artist Gunybi Ganambarr has applied his signature inventiveness to *Garrapara* (Fig. 7), carving the bark to resemble its painting's subject matter. The work's jagged top edge references a skinny fish and the thunderclouds, called Waŋupini, found in Garrapara, a coastal area of Blue Mud Bay.[18] The composition's wavy lines represent the churning deep ocean currents of saltwater that meet the shore. Here, water becomes vapor and rises above mortuary sand sculptures to form clouds of life-giving rain. The composition blends forms from nature with traditional saltwater clan patterns, connecting the physical and metaphysical. The work is structured by the cycles of life and death and the enduring presence of ancestral time within them.[19]

*Madayin* succeeds in presenting some of the hidden, beautiful, sacred aspects of Yolŋu experience to non-Yolŋu people. Ample wall text and visual aids are spaced throughout the exhibition to help visitors unpack meanings and recognize complex patterns, clan identifications, and songlines. Additional online materials—including maps annotated by community elders, oral histories, and documentation of painting processes—deepen the viewing experience and form a global resource for Yolŋu culture.[20] A 3D rendering of the exhibition is available online, expanding access especially to Yolŋu who are unable to travel around the world to see their culture represented.[21]

Figure 6. Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Retja II | Rainforest II*, 2017. Natural pigments on eucalyptus bark, 52 3/4 x 31 3/32 in. (134 x 79 cm), Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia. The 2017–19 Kluge-Ruhe Madayin Commission. Purchased with funds provided by Martha Burton and Margaret Vaden, 2020, 2020.0003.001. Courtesy of Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection

Figure 7. Gunybi Ganambarr, *Garrapara*, 2018. Natural pigments on eucalyptus bark, 64 11/16 x 21 1/4 in. (163 x 54 cm), Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia. The 2017–19 Madayin Commission, 2020.EL.0004.017. Courtesy of Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection

The bilingual catalogue (written first in Yolŋu Matha and translated into English) is a rich compendium of Indigenous Australian writing and perspectives on Yolŋu art and philosophical beliefs. Essays such as "Djulpan | The Seven Sisters or Pleiades Star Cluster" by Djerrkŋu Yunupiŋu and "Milŋurr | Our Knowledge Comes Out from the Waterhole" by Wanyubi Marika connect viewers to cultural stories and messages of belonging to the natural world. Frances Morphy's essay "When Two Worlds Meet: 'Translation' and Its Dilemmas" is an enlightening read on Yolŋu linguistics and metaphysics.

The works in the show present a conceptual message about universal kinship, and the public launch of the exhibition at each venue goes even further. Opening events bring Yolŋu people in contact with their global audience, creating occasions for interpersonal exchanges. The opening at the Katzen Art Center in Washington, DC, included short films and a four-panel symposium organized under the headings "Stewarding the Land," "Harvesting the Land," "Indigenous Voices in Museums," and "Yolŋu Art Tomorrow." These panels featured a delegation of Yolŋu artists and knowledge-holders who traveled to the opening, making the long journey from Arnhem Land.

At both the Katzen Art Center and the Hood Museum, members from local Indigenous groups joined the opening ceremonies to exchange gifts and perform welcoming protocols for Indigenous people who were visiting from afar. Yolŋu processional dances accompanied by song, percussion, and the bone-vibrating sound of the *yidaki* prepared the spaces for cultural transitions: Yolŋu paintings were physically entering North American exhibition spaces, and North American exhibition spaces were absorbed into a Yolŋu cultural expanse. These exchanges are acts of cultural diplomacy, building a structure for international kinship.

In her lecture at The Phillips Collection, which opened the Washington, DC, symposium, Dr. Jilda Andrews identified Indigenous cultural diplomacy as a cornerstone of Yolŋu art.[22] Andrews, a Yuwaalaraay cultural practitioner and museum ethnographer, was the inaugural keynote speaker for the W. Wanambi Distinguished Lecture, developed to honor the life of visionary Yolŋu leader W. Wanambi. She highlighted bark paintings' intercultural orientation, stating that "these are translational objects . . . moveable forms of cultural knowledge . . . (that) find their platform in the outside world."[23]

Andrews pointed to the Western museums' presentations of the works as a powerful translational mechanism rather than something that makes it difficult to approach the works at a grassroots level.[24] Indeed, an art world framing invites viewers, conditioned for aesthetic transcendence in art museum contexts, to begin an interpretation that is closer to a personal spiritual experience. Andrews

suggested that the art museum context primes viewers for Yolŋu curation and a different way of coming to the paintings, to receive messages that are "of scales of time beyond your comprehension; webs of connection so multidimensional they collapse life forms into spirits and then back again."[25]

Andrews offered that, over time, the full impact of these messages can be felt: that "these expressions are potent, patient, and cumulative." The hopefulness in this claim is "not to deny the scale of destruction forged by colonization but to actively restore and repair."[26] Perhaps Indigenous cultural diplomacy provides the model for mutual growth through intercultural encounters. Through careful listening to the truth in messages of kinship and connection offered by Yolŋu curation, vast networks of relationship can begin to be formed.

Figure 8. Installation view of *Maḏayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala*. The Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth, September 4–December 4, 2022. Photograph by Rob Strong. Courtesy of Hood Museum of Art

*Maḏayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting From Yirrkala* is organized by the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection at the University of Virginia and Buku-Larrŋggay Mulka Centre. The exhibition was on view at the Hood Museum of Art at Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire (September 4–December 4, 2022) and the Katzen Arts Center, American University, Washington, DC, (February 4–May 14, 2023). It will continue its tour at The Fralin Museum of Art at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville (February 3–July 21, 2024), and Asia Society, New York, New York (September 24, 2024–January 5, 2025).

*Mary Gagler is an independent art writer specializing in contemporary Australian Aboriginal art. She received her MA in art history and museum studies from The City College of New York, where she wrote about Gunybi Ganambarr's use of found objects in his sculptural work in a qualifying paper titled "Time and the Art of Gunybi Ganambarr: Asserting Primacy of Yolngu Culture through Found Objects." She presented this research at the College Art Association Annual Conference and The Courtauld Institute of Art's "Art History in Climate Change" online conference in 2020.*

## Notes

[1] Wukuṉ Waṉambi, Henry Skerritt, and Kade McDonald, "Maḏayin: The Sacred and the Beautiful," in *Maḏayin: Waltjaṉ ga Waltjaṉbuy Yolŋuwu Miny'tji Yirrkalawuy | Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala*, ed. Wukuṉ Waṉambi, Kade McDonald, and Henry Skerritt (New York: DelMonico Books D.A.P., 2022), 25.
[2] Djambawa Marawili, "Maḏayin'tja Dhuwalaya Ŋayi Marrparaŋ Our Sacred Knowledge Makes Us Strong," in *Maḏayin: Waltjaṉ ga Waltjaṉbuy Yolŋuwu Miny'tji Yirrkalawuy | Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala*, ed. W. Waṉambi, Kade McDonald, and Henry Skerritt (New York: DelMonico Books D.A.P., 2022), 47.
[3] Waṉambi, "Maḏayin," 26–28.
[4] Waṉambi, "Maḏayin," 26.
[5] "About The Mulka Project," Buku-Larrŋggay Mulka Centre, accessed April 8, 2023, https://yirrkala.com/about-the-mulka-project/. The Mulka Project is a cultural archive and training center in digital media, producing and repatriating film and digital media for future generations of Yolŋu.
[6] Ishmael Marika in conversation with Henry Skerritt and Kade McDonald, "Ishmael Marika reflects upon the opening of MAḎAYIN at the Hood Museum of Art," *Maḏayin* (website), accessed April 8, 2023, https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/ishmael-marika-reflects-upon-the-opening-of-maḏayin-at-the-hood-museum-of-art.
[7] For a detailed description of the conflict and this piece's role in peace and trust negotiations, see Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, "*Sacred Clan Designs*, 1935," *Maḏayin* (website), accessed April 9, 2023, https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/experience/pieces/ma%E1%B8%8Fayin-minytji-sacred-clan-designs/.
[8] Marrnyula Munuŋgurr, "*Djapu' Clan Design*, 2019," *Maḏayin* (website), accessed April 9, 2023, https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/experience/pieces/djapu-minytji-djapu-clan-design/.

[9] Yolŋu naming conventions dictate that artists are respectfully referred to by first name rather than by their second or family name.
[10] Marrnyula Munuŋgurr, "Nyumukuṉiny Ṉuwayak | Little Barks," in *Maḏayin: Waltjaṉ ga Waltjaṉbuy Yolŋuwu Miny'tji Yirrkalawuy | Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala*, ed. W. Waṉambi, Kade McDonald, and Henry Skerritt (New York: DelMonico Books D.A.P., 2022), 306.
[11] Munuŋgurr, "*Djapu' Clan Design*, 2019."
[12] Howard Morphy with Naminapu Maymuru-White and Frances Morphy, "Milŋiyawuy | The Milky Way" in *Maḏayin: Waltjaṉ ga Waltjaṉbuy Yolŋuwu Miny'tji Yirrkalawuy | Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala*, ed. W. Waṉambi, Kade McDonald, and Henry Skerritt (New York: DelMonico Books D.A.P., 2022), 169. The Yolŋu technique of *bir'yun* is connected to ancestral beings, stories, histories, songs, and environment.
[13] Marawili, "Maḏayin'tja," 42. The political import of a bark painting might include, for instance, emphasizing information about an individual's land of origin when their family was forcibly removed from that land by colonists or missionaries. See Djambawa Marawili's comments on the Yirrkala bark petition in 1963 and the 2008 Blue Mud Bay sea rights case, 42.
[14] Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre, "*Ocean*, 2019," *Maḏayin* (website), accessed April 15, 2023, https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/experience/pieces/banhdharra-ocean.
[15] Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Centre, "*Ocean*, 2019."
[16] For more information on how experimentation reveals new aspects of tradition, particularly in art by women artists, see Jennifer Loureide Biddle, *Remote Avant-Garde: Aboriginal Art under Occupation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 8-10, 132-138, 141-147.
[17] Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, "*Rainforest I*, 2017," *Maḏayin* (website), accessed April 8, 2023, https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/experience/pieces/retja-i-rainforest-i/.
[18] Gunybi Ganambarr, interview by author, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2023.
[19] Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, "*Garrapara, 2018*," *Maḏayin* (website), accessed April 16, 2023, https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/experience/pieces/garrapara-garrapara.
[20] Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, "Explore Maḏayin," *Maḏayin* (website), accessed April 8, 2023, https://madayin.kluge-ruhe.org/experience.
[21] "*Maḏayin: Eight Decades of Aboriginal Australian Bark Painting from Yirrkala* - Virtual 3D Tour," Hood Museum of Art, https://hoodmuseum.dartmouth.edu/explore/exhibitions/madayin.
[22] Jilda Andrews, "Flipping the Narrative: Historical Collections as Sites of Cultural Diplomacy" (W. Wanambi Distinguished Lecture, The Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C., March 31, 2023), accessed April 8, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/live/Pe4DPMqPPS0.
[23] Andrews, "Flipping the Narrative."

[24] "We are invited into what seems like realms of whimsy or otherworldliness; the fantastical creatures, expressive processes of country, the transfixing patterning, the codes, and then there is the story. Not always but we are sometimes helped towards those messages by story." Andrews, "Flipping the Narrative."
[25] Andrews, "Flipping the Narrative."
[26] Andrews, "Flipping the Narrative."

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KAREN STEVENSON

# Johnny Penisula (1941–2023), A Few Memories . . .

**Abstract**
*Karen Stevenson's memories of the Aotearoa New Zealand-based Sāmoan artist Johnny Penisula (1941–2023).*

**Keywords:** *Johnny Penisula, Sāmoan art, sculpture, Aotearoa New Zealand, contemporary art*

Figure 1. Nigel Brown, *Johnny Penisula*, 1996. Acrylic on canvas board, 340 x 270 cm. Courtesy of the Penisula Family

It was a great privilege to have had the opportunity to know Johnny. He was one of the sweetest, kindest, and most giving persons whom I have ever met.

My association with Johnny began through his art. The exhibition *Bottled Ocean* opened in 1995 at the McDougall Contemporary Art Annex, Christchurch, shortly after my arrival in New Zealand. It was the first travelling exhibition of contemporary Pacific art in New Zealand, and it astonished the general public. Johnny's contribution was *Matai,* a striking artwork made of wood and greenstone that offered a critical commentary on the matai system of Sāmoa.

Johnny's work, always exquisitely crafted, reflected his memories of Sāmoa and the cultural knowledge that he held so dear. In particular, he enjoyed creating work relating to the sea and to the stories around the foundations of his village.

I had the pleasure of getting to know Johnny over the years—at sculpture symposia, conferences, and during his residency in Christchurch as the Macmillan Brown Artist in Residence in 2007. When he was not attending these activities, he was working in Invercargill. To many, Johnny seemed a "fish out of water" living at the bottom of New Zealand in a coldish environment. But his family and his memories of Sāmoa kept him warm.

Perhaps the most magical time I spent with Johnny was when he and his wife Mavis welcomed me into their home and we talked and talked and talked, Johnny sharing his life, his art, and his dreams.

I will miss you, but will never forget you, my friend.

*Karen Stevenson, of Tahitian heritage, moved to Christchurch in 1995 to take up a position at the University of Canterbury. Her writings include* Johnny Penisula, Re-inventing Tradition *(Suva, Fiji: USP Press, 2016).*

Figure 2. Johnny Penisula, *Fa'i*, 1989. Beef bone, 300 cm. Courtesy of the Penisula family

Figure 3. Johnny Penisula, *Family 3*, 2007. Stainless steel, approximately 5 ft H. Commissioned by the city council of Kumagaya, Japan. Photograph courtesy of the Penisula family

Figure 4. Johnny Penisula, *Octupus 1*, 1989. Black argilite, approximately 12 inches H. Courtesy of the Penisula family.

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A'ANOALI'I ROWENA FULUIFAGA

# In Memoriam: Lily Laita (1969–2023)

**Abstract**
*Tautai Pacific Arts Trust in Tāmaka Makaurau, Aotearoa New Zealand, remembers and honors the artist Lily Laita.*

**Keywords:** *Lily Laita, contemporary art, Oceania, painting, arts education*

Figure 1. Lily Laita. Photograph courtesy of Dana Meleisea

Lily Aitui Laita (Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga, Tanugamanono, Sāmoa) was an artist, an art educator, and mother of two who inspired a generation of Pacific people to pursue visual arts as a career and a teaching vocation.

She was part of the first generation of Pacific artists to study Fine Arts in Aotearoa in the 1980s and emerged onto the art scene as part of the early contemporaries who led a vast generation in expressive painting and making. She was a graduate of the Elam School of Fine Arts at the University of Auckland (1990) where she later returned to complete her Masters in Painting (2002). She also completed her Diploma in Teaching (1991) and became one of our most highly respected arts educators in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Since the late 1980s Lily exhibited widely including *Te Moemoea no Iotefa*, Sarjeant Gallery, Whangahui, and tour (1990–91); *Bottled Ocean*, City Gallery, Wellington, and tour (1993–94), *Tu Fa'atasi International Festival of the Arts* (1994); *The Seventh South Pacific Festival of the Arts*, Western Sāmoa (1996); *ReDress* at Auckland Museum (1997); *Tu'u i ai ni vai* at Whitespace Gallery, Melbourne (2000); *VAhine* (2003) at the Lane Gallery; and *Samoa Contemporary*, Pātaka Museum of Arts and Cultures, Porirua (2007), and a major group exhibition at the Sarjeant Gallery Te Whare o Rehua Whanganui, Whanganui (2008). She was also a part of the VAhine collective alongside New Zealand-born Samoan artists Lonnie Hutchinson and Niki Hastings McFall, who were awarded the Creative New Zealand and National University of Samoa Artist in Residence in 2012.

Lily's practice spanned over thirty years of art-making and teaching in New Zealand and the Pacific. Karen Stevenson defined Laita's work and inquiry as:

> . . . a visual language that reflects the complexity of the oral traditions of the past. As one would slowly build images in the mind's eye, Laita creates images that reveal, but only after the viewer has truly looked. Language, people and images of cultural knowledge emerge from what appears to be an abstract canvas.[1]

She went on to say that Laita was part of a groundbreaking generation of women artists who continued to transmit cultural traditions and ideas to new generations living in changing contemproary realities: "Laita utilises her art practice to comment on both the histories and modern realities of Pacific women. She feels that both knowing and understandaing the past is important as a means of transferring knowledge. She is renegotiating tradition."[2]

Laita was a painting lecturer at Wanganui Polytechnic in Whanganui and dedicated the majority of her teaching career at Western Springs College in Auckland, where she served as Head of the Art Department. Apart from her art practice, Laita also contributed to various creative trusts and boards, including

Creative New Zealand, Tautai Pacific Arts Trust, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, and many others.

Faʻafetai tele lava Lily mo lou tautua - moe mai ra, vahine toa.

On behalf of our Patron Fatu Feuʻu and Tautai trust, manuia lou malaga.

*A'anoali'i Rowena Fuluifaga is the director of the Tautai Pacific Arts Trust. Located in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa New Zealand, Tautai Pacific Arts is a charitable trust dedicated to championing Pacific arts and artists. Over almost forty years, Tautai has grown to become Aotearoa's premiere Pacific arts organisation with a multidisciplinary focus. The trust brings artists and the wider Tautai aiga together through a range of events and activities locally and globally. Its purpose is to grow a rich ecology of Pacific creative arts practice and provide leadership, support and unique opportunities for the Tagata Moana arts community.*

## Notes

[1] Karen Stevenson, *The Frangipani is Dead: Contemporary Pacific Art in New Zealand, 1985–2000* (Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2008), 106.
[2] Stevenon, *The Frangipani is Dead*, 110.

PACIFIC ARTS
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## *Pacific Arts* -- Call for Submissions

*Pacific Arts*, the journal of the Pacific Arts Association, has an **ONGOING OPEN CALL** for submissions on the arts of Oceania and its diasporas focusing on visual arts, material cultures, and heritage arts. The scope is temporally broad, highlighting both historical and current topics while engaging with a wide range of creative mediums, forms, and subject matter. Pacific Arts encourages interdisciplinary approaches to examining the political, social, economic, cultural, aesthetic, and environmental stakes in the production and study of Indigenous visual and material cultures in Oceania, past and present.

Please send full-length submissions and an abstract to pacificarts@ucsc.edu. Submissions should follow the *Pacific Arts* style guide. *Pacific Arts* is a peer reviewed open access online journal published by the University of California/eScholarship and encourages broad participation and circulation.

*Pacific Arts* is also accepting reviews of books, media, and exhibitions that relate to visual and material cultures of Oceania. Authors, artists, museums, and publishers interested in having their work reviewed and anyone interested in writing a review should contact the editors at pacificarts@ucsc.edu.

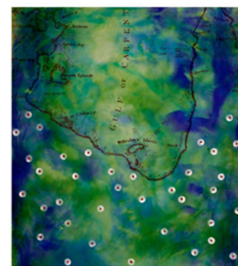
Pacific Arts
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

N.S. Vol. 21 No. 1
2021

Pacific Arts
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association

N.S. Vol. 22 No. 1
2022

Pacific Arts
Journal of the Pacific Arts Association



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2022

The Pacific Arts Association is an international organization devoted to the study of the arts of Oceania. The Pacific Arts Association (PAA), founded in 1974 and established as an association in 1978, is an international organization devoted to the study of all the arts of Oceania. PAA provides a forum for dialogue and awareness about Pacific art and culture. By connecting individuals and institutions around the world, PAA encourages greater cooperation among those who are involved with the creation, study, and exhibition of Pacific art.

The peer-reviewed **Pacific Arts journal** features current research and reviews. The **PAA Newsletter** provides timely information about important events to members. PAA's triennial **International Symposium** takes place in alternating venues across the globe and includes special tours, performances, exhibitions, and presentations of academic and artistic research on the arts of Oceania. Members have the opportunity to meet and participate in a PAA-sponsored session at the **College Art Association** annual meeting. PAA-Europe holds a meeting in Europe annually.

PAA's **goals** are:

- To make members more aware of the state of all the arts in all parts of Oceania.
- To encourage international understanding among the nations involved in the arts of Oceania.
- To promote high standards of research, interpretation, and reporting on the arts of Oceania.
- To stimulate more interest in the teaching of courses on Oceanic art especially but not only at the tertiary educational level.
- To encourage greater cooperation among the institutions and individuals who are associated with the arts of Oceania.
- To encourage high standards of conservation and preservation of the material culture in and of Oceanic arts.

**Membership:** US$50 for professional individuals and institutions, US$35 for visual and performing artists, students, and retired persons. Individuals and institutions wishing to become members of PAA can visit the membership page of the PAA website www.pacificarts.org/membership.

**CONFERENCE**

# National versus Local Museums

December 11-12, 2023
Musée des Beaux-Arts de Chartres, France

The annual **PACIFIC ARTS ASSOCIATION–EUROPE (PAA-E)** meeting entitled National versus local museums will be held at the Musée des Beaux-Arts (MBA) of Chartres, France from 11 until 12 December 2023. The museum holds paintings, sculptures, art objects and ethnographic collections from the 13th to the 20th century, including an important Pacific collection of objects, drawings and photographs. Attendants to the meeting will have the opportunity to see these collections, but also to hear about some of the renovation plans for displaying the collections.

As the Musée des Beaux-Arts of Chartres has diverse collections that are not only focused on the Pacific, the meeting will be an opportunity to rethink the role of smaller museums in relation to the larger national museums in finding creative ways to work with their Pacific collections. How do local museums inform and feed the national debates around representation, collaboration and repatriation?

**Registration, tentative programme and accommodation**
Details for the meeting and information about accommodation will be announced in due course. This will be a small one and a half day meeting offering opportunity to meet and discuss Pacific museum and material culture topics.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

# PACIFIC ISLANDER STUDIES AT UCLA

With the support of the Native American and Pacific Islander Bruins Rising Initiative, the American Indian Studies Center, the Asian American Studies Center, and the Institute of American Cultures, UCLA is now accepting applications for three (3) tenure-track faculty positions in Pacific Islander Studies. The departments include Engineering, Public Health, and Theater, all of which are working closely with the Asian American Studies Center.

**Department of Theater** - Assistant Professor, Pasifika Theater and Performance Studies – **https://recruit.apo.ucla.edu/JPF08972**

- The application deadline or full consideration date is: December 15, 2023.

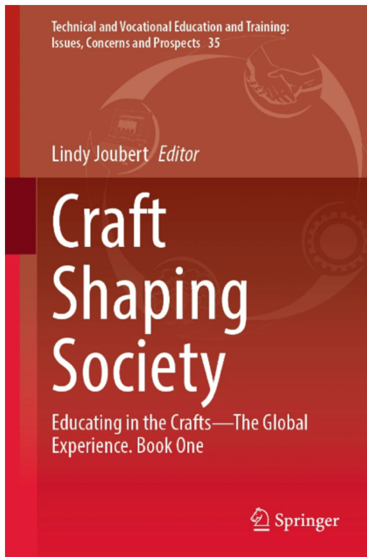
**Department of Engineering** - Assistant Professor, Pacific Islander Experiences in Engineering – **https://recruit.apo.ucla.edu/JPF08858**

- The application deadline or full consideration date is: November 30, 2023.

**Department of Public Health** - Assistant Professor, Specializing in Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Health – **https://recruit.apo.ucla.edu/JPF08959**

- The application deadline or full consideration date is: December 1, 2023.

## NEW PUBLICATION




***Craft Shaping Society: Educating in the Crafts—The Global Experience*, ed. Lindy Joubert (2022)**

This book focusses on the role of craft as a continuing cultural practice and the revival of disappearing skills in contemporary society. It includes twenty-five essays by highly regarded artisans, academics, technologists, entrepreneurs, business-people, curators, and researchers from many countries representing a wide range of global craft traditions and innovations.

The authors explain their professional practices and creative pathways with knowledge, experience, and passion. They offer insightful analyses of their traditions within their culture and in the marketplace, alongside the evolution of technology as it adapts to support experimentation and business strategies. They write about teaching and research informing their practice; and they explain the importance of their tools and materials in function and form of the objects they make. The essays reveal a poignant expression of their successes, disappointments, and opportunities.

This book offers case studies of how artisans have harnessed the traditions of the past alongside the latest design technologies. The authors reveal how global craft is not only a vehicle for self-expression and creativity, but also for being deeply relevant to the world of work, community and environmental sustainability. The book makes the vital link between skills, knowledge, education, and employment, and fills a much-needed niche in Technical, Vocational Education and Training TVET.

The book is the first of six volumes and the editor, Lindy Joubert, invites PAA members interested in submitting an essay on the Pacific region to email her at: lindyaj@unimelb.edu.au

Additional information:
https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-16-9472-1

# CALL FOR PAPERS

**Call for papers:**

## Eco-Artivism in Oceania

***Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies*, 12.2**

**Guest editors: Paola Della Valle, Marine Berthiot, Cornelia Kaufmann**

Climate change is the most urgent issue of the present. Numerous studies have shown the impact of global warming on the environment and biodiversity and, especially in Oceania, on people's political status, their health, cultures and languages. The climate emergency in this region has also prompted the rise of militant artistic and literary forms, often mixing different literary genres and/or arts, drawing on modern technology and Indigenous wisdom. A special issue of the *Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies* will be dedicated to Eco-Artivism, a portmanteau word combining art and activism, in this case applied to environmental issues, in order to observe the connections between climate change, Oceanic arts and literatures, multilingualism, multiethnicity and multiculturalism, biodiversity and politics. For the purpose of this issue, the term 'Oceania' refers here to Pacific Islands and countries of the Pacific and Pacific Rim (including Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand).

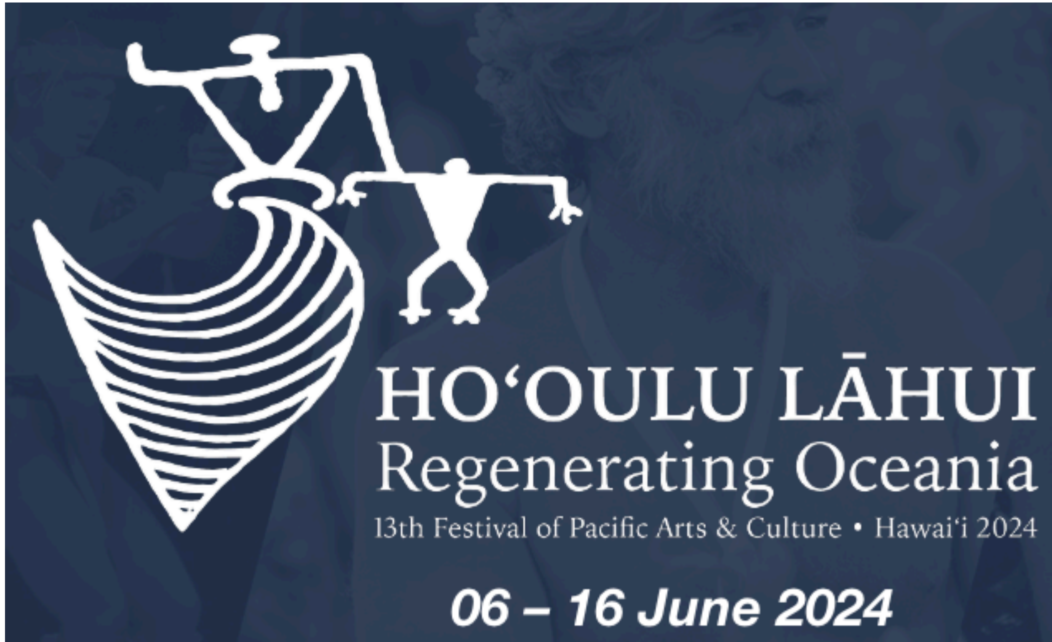
We welcome proposals for articles, interviews and reports to be published in this special issue of the *Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies* and pertaining, but not limited, to the following areas of study:

- Environmental activism in poetry, fiction and drama
- Environmental activism in visual arts and films
- Environmental spoken word poetry and performativity
- Digital/electronic/cyber activism and the environment
- Scholarly environmental activism on paper
- Decolonising environmental literature
- Indigenous studies and the environment
- Artivism, performance and resistance
- Environmental postcolonial and decolonial narratives
- Artivism and political institutions
- Online activist and/or author communities
- Ghost nets and/or digitalized islands
- Refugee literature

**Proposal submission:**

Please send an abstract of 250 words to Paola Della Valle <paola.dellavalle@unito.it> by 31 January 2024. Acceptance of proposals will be notified by mid-February 2024. Abstracts must include a short bio, institutional affiliation and contact information. Contributions will then need to be submitted by 31 May 2024, whereupon they will be refereed. Accepted articles will appear in issue 12.2 (December 2024) of the *Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies*.

## FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS 2024




## ARTS, CULTURE, AND HEALING

The Festival of Pacific Arts & Culture (FestPAC) is the world's largest celebration of Indigenous Pacific Islanders. The South Pacific Commission (now The Pacific Community) launched this dynamic showcase of arts and culture in 1972 to halt the erosion of traditional practices through ongoing cultural exchange. It is a vibrant and culturally enriching event celebrating the unique traditions, artistry, and diverse cultures of the Pacific region. FestPAC serves as a platform for Pacific Island nations to showcase their rich heritage and artistic talents.

The 13th Festival of Pacific Arts & Culture, will convene in Hawai‘i, June 6-16, 2024. **"Ho‘oulu Lāhui: Regenerating Oceania"** will serve as the theme of FestPAC Hawai‘i 2024, honoring the traditions that FestPAC exists to perpetuate with an eye toward the future.

**https://www.festpachawaii.org/**

## NEW EXHIBITION

The ***Project Banaba*** exhibition by Katerina Teaiwa commemorates the history of Banaba Island in the Pacific Ocean, which was destroyed by environmentally devastating phosphate mining during the 20th century. This led to the total relocation of its people in 1945, with the 78th anniversary of their displacement to be observed on Dec. 15, 2023, during the run of the exhibition.

**NOVEMBER 4, 2023 – FEBRUARY 18, 2024**

ADMISSION INFORMATION

**NEW EXHIBITION**

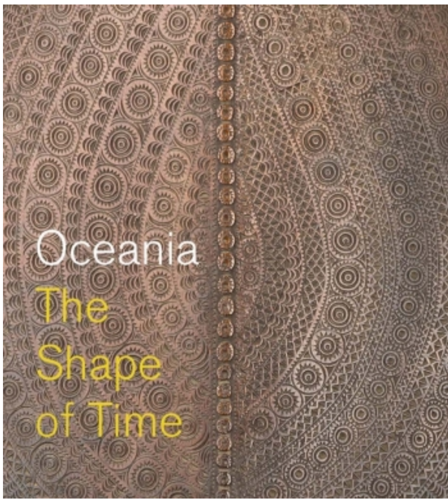
# THE SHAPE OF TIME: ART AND ANCESTORS OF OCEANIA FROM THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

The National Museum of Qatar
24 October 2023–15 January 2024

The National Museum of Qatar will host nearly 130 cherished works from The Metropolitan Museum of Art's unparalleled Oceanic collection, which are travelling outside of The Met's walls for the first time in nearly a century, as the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing is being renovated.

The exhibition is organised by themes—Voyaging, Ancestors and Time—which demonstrate the interconnectedness of Pacific Islanders and their rich cultural heritage, and the dynamic artistic expressions on display that date back four centuries.

Exhibition catalogue: *Oceania: The Shape of Time*
By Maia Nuku




The visual arts of Oceania tell a wealth of dynamic stories about origins, ancestral power, performance, and initiation. This publication explores the deeply rooted connections between Austronesian-speaking peoples, whose ancestral homelands span Island Southeast Asia, Australia, Papua New Guinea, and the island archipelagoes of the northern and eastern Pacific. Unlike previous books, it foregrounds Indigenous perspectives, alongside multidisciplinary research in art history, ethnography, and archaeology, to provide an intimate look at Oceania, its art, and its culture. Stunning new photography highlights more than 130 magnificent objects, ranging from elaborately carved ancestral figures in ceremonial houses, towering slit drums, and dazzling turtle-shell masks to polished whale ivory breastplates. Underscoring the powerful interplay between the ocean and its islands, and the ongoing connection with spiritual and ancestral realms, Oceania: The Shape of Time presents an art-focused approach to life and culture while guiding readers through the artistic achievements of Islanders across millennia.

ADMISSION INFORMATION

**UPCOMING PANEL**

# at College Art Association 112th Annual Conference

## February 14–17, 2024
## Chicago, Illinois

### Pacific Arts Association Panel:
### Curating Pacific Art in the United States: A Roundtable Discussion

Friday, February 16, 2024
4:30 PM - 6:00 PM
Hilton Chicago, Joliet Room

This roundtable discussion brings together curators and researchers who work with and care for museum collections of Oceanic visual and material culture in the United States. The panelists will share updates on current projects, including the redevelopment of Pacific galleries, acquisition strategies, and new research on collections. This will be an opportunity to discuss critical issues in Oceanic art curation, including: community engagement and critical methodologies grounded in Pacific epistemologies; the ethical and sociopolitical issues around museum collection and display; how to engage with different audiences, especially in the settler colonial context of North America; and how to collaborate across institutions.

Co-chairs:
**Maggie Wander and Sylvia Cockburn**, Metropolitan Museum of Art

Panelists:
**Halena Kapuni-Reynolds**, Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian
**Sarah Kuaiwa**, Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum
**Ingrid Ahlgren**, Harvard Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology

Information: https://www.collegeart.org/programs/conference/conference2024

## CONFERENCE

# Empires and Cultures of the Pacific Revisited

**The 28th annual conference of the**
New Zealand Studies Association (NZSA),
together with University College Prague

## Prague, Czech Republic
## 9 – 12 July 2024

A special 4-day international conference, with excursion and conference dinner
**Includes a free symposium for graduates & ECRs on 8 July**

Keynotes:
Professor Michael Belgrave
Professor Brigitte Bonisch-Brednich
Professor Angela McCarthy
Professor Jane Samson
Nalini Singh
Professor Tatiana Tökölyová
John Wilson

The New Zealand Studies Association has a long and strong history in promoting New Zealand and Pacific Studies, which for 11 years has been expanded through its twice-yearly *Journal of New Zealand and Pacific Studies*. The 2024 gathering builds on the successes of the conferences in Stockholm/Turku (2023), Marseille (2022), Athens (2019), Aveiro (2018), Strasbourg (2017), Lugano (2016), Vienna (2015), Oslo (2014), Nijmegen (2013), Gdansk (2012), Frankfurt (2009), Florence (2008), London (2007), and Paris (2006).

Proposals for 20 minute papers to be sent by 31 January 2024 to Ian Conrich (ian@ianconrich.co.uk). Abstracts need to be between 200 and 250 words with a bio added of 100-150 words. Interpretations of the theme are broad and papers can address a range of topics related to the Pacific and New Zealand. Proposals for papers will be accepted within three main strands: 1) Oceania, 2) New Zealand and 3) Oceania/NZ in relation to any aspect of the Pacific Rim. We are particularly keen to receive papers on the third strand as we are hoping to extend the Association's interests into areas we have not widely explored before. The conference fee includes annual membership to the NZSA, which for 2024 includes a twice-yearly journal. A selection of papers from the conference will be published in the Scopus-indexed *Journal of New Zealand & Pacific Studies*, published by Intellect.

**The conference will accept proposals on a range of subjects including the following:**
history, literature, film, music, art, cultural studies, media and communication, sociology, geography, tourism, war studies, politics, international relations, identity and multiculturalism, anthropology, Māori Studies, Pacific Studies, archaeology, heritage and museum studies.

## ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Housed in the History of Art and Visual Culture Department at the **University of California—Santa Cruz**, our interdisciplinary Ph.D. program in Visual Studies is designed for students with diverse academic backgrounds in the arts and humanities who wish to pursue a graduate degree focused on visual and cultural studies with historical and global expansiveness.

The flexibility and small scale of our program allows students to work closely with faculty to craft a personalized course of study that advances their intellectual and professional goals, leading them to excel in academic, curatorial, and other positions. We are proud that our alumni are gainfully employed at universities and museums.

Our program provides students with unparalleled opportunities to consider the role of social, political, and cultural forces in both shaping and being shaped by assorted modes of visual experience and their relations as well to complex workings of multisensory perception. Areas of particular concern, both historical and current, include art-historical and visual theories and approaches to environmental, social, and racial justice, colonial and decolonial visual culture, and Anthropocene and Indigenous studies, all in relation to such regions as North and Latin America, the Indigenous Americas (including pre-colonial California), Asia, Europe, the Mediterranean, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and the Pacific Islands.

Our faculty is internationally known for their scholarship and many have received awards and accolades for their publications as well as their pedagogy. We pride ourselves in being dedicated to our students' academic and professional success. We provide consistent and generous mentorship, feedback and support.

Our students often comment on the positive experiences they share with their peers inside and outside the classroom, thriving in an environment of collegiality and mutual respect. They have an impressive record in the dissemination of their work through national and international conferences, publications, and exhibitions and in earning prestigious grants. You can read highlights of their achievements and activities in our Newsletters, or browse through their accomplishments in our Graduate Student News.

We are located on a 2,000-acre campus nestled in the rolling hills off the Monterey Bay. Santa Cruz offers majestic redwood forests and beautiful beaches and the rich cultural resources of the San Francisco Bay Area are just a short drive away.

Please visit the HAVC website and contact faculty in the department with any questions. The application deadline is December 12, 2023.