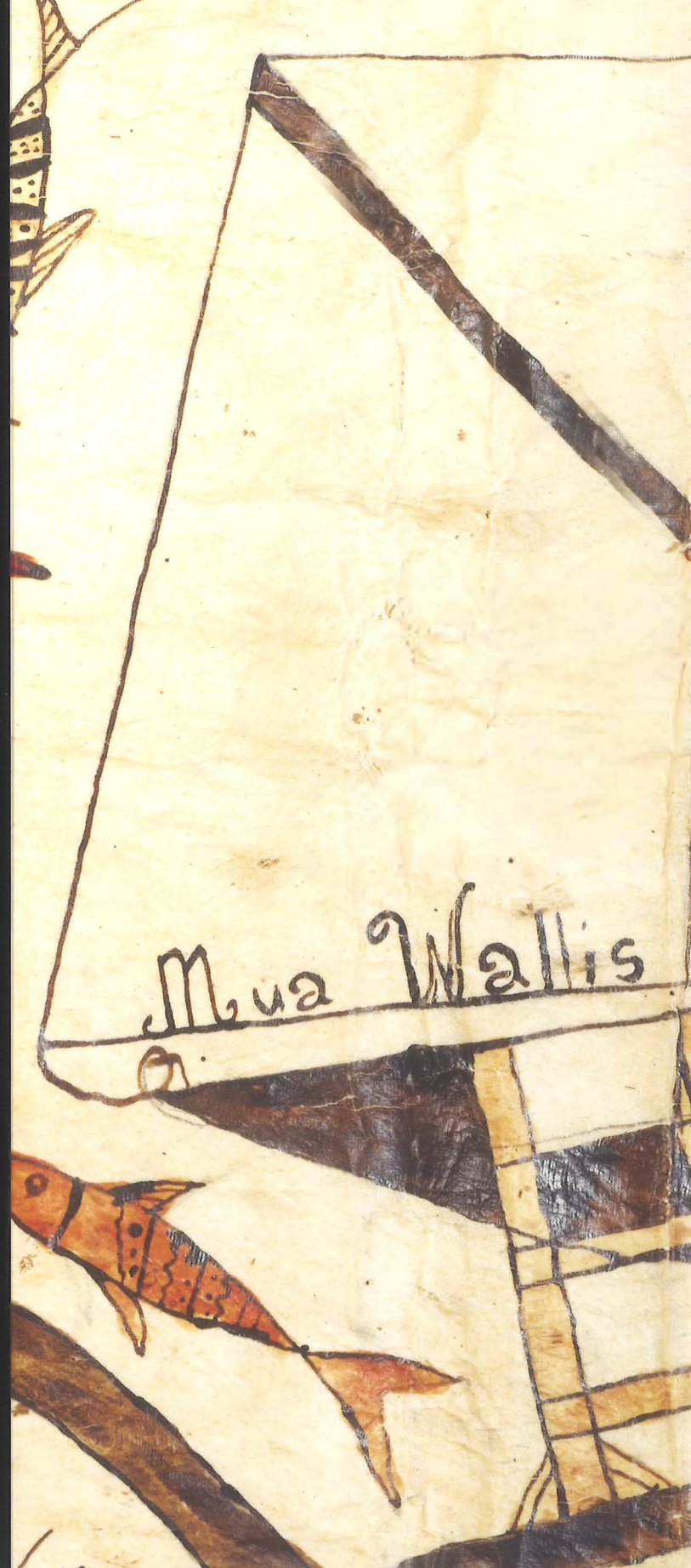






**'The ocean is not merely our omnipresent, empirical reality; equally important, it is our most wonderful metaphor for just about anything we can think of. Contemplation of its vastness and majesty, its allurements and fickleness, its regularities and unpredictability, its shoals and depths, its isolating and linking role in our histories—all this excites the imagination and kindles a sense of wonder, curiosity and hope...'**

**Epeli Hau'ofa**









**Kia hora te marino  
kia whakapapa pounamu te moana  
kia tere te kārohirohi  
i mua i tōu huarahi  
haere, haere, haere rā**

**Haere ki te korowai o Ranginui  
koutou ngā pou o te Whare Toi  
kua whetūrangitia  
tū tonu ra hei ārahi i a mātou**

**Let peace be widespread  
let the sea glisten like greenstone  
may the path be made swift  
before your journey  
embarking outwardly**

**Journey to the heavenly cloak of Ranginui  
you, pillars of the House of Creativity  
who have become stars in the firmament,  
guiding beacons for us the living**







# Oceania

# Imagining

# the Pacific

citygallerywellington  
te whare toi



Generously supported by Roderick and Gillian Deane







## For Roger Neich

'Oceania: Imagining the Pacific' is dedicated to Roger Neich (1944–2010). Dr Roger Neich was an eminent scholar, writer, academic, anthropologist, ethnologist, curator and world authority on Māori and Pacific art. He held senior roles as Distinguished Professor of Anthropology at Auckland University, while also working as Curator of Ethnology at Auckland War Memorial Museum. Roger's unparalleled scholarship, and the list of influential publications that grew from there, made a huge contribution to the knowledge, understanding and appreciation of Māori and Pacific peoples and their art.

I met Roger in Rotorua in the late 1980s while working as a curator at Rotorua Museum of Art and History. Roger spent time in Rotorua on a regular basis, researching Ngāti Tararua carving. I was struck at once by his openness and humility—here was a brilliant scholar who never sought personal ownership of the vast professional knowledge which he had built up over years of research and study. The Te Arawa elders recognised this spirit of integrity and generosity; they trusted and respected Roger and worked with him documenting their whakapapa, history and art. He made a vital contribution to our research into the historic carvings and taonga of Te Arawa iwi for Rotorua Museum's permanent exhibition 'Ngā Taonga o Te Arawa'.

Over the years Roger and I discussed and agreed to develop a collaborative exhibition project involving Auckland Museum and City Gallery Wellington which would bring together contemporary art from the Pacific region alongside historical pieces from the Auckland Museum collection. His untimely death has made that impossible. 'Oceania: Imagining the Pacific', alongside 'Oceania: Early Encounters' at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, has, however, evolved in the spirit of our original idea. I would like to think that this publication and the exhibition which accompanies it are part of an ongoing conversation with Roger and his life's work.

**Paula Savage, Director  
City Gallery Wellington**

Anonymous, hiapo, Niue, c.1900  
natural ochre on barkcloth  
2250 x 1540mm  
Private Collection, Auckland



# Preface

Kua rere noa atu ngā waka i tāraihia e ēnei o ngā uri o Te Moana-nui-ā-Kiwa. I noho ōrite ai ngā pūrākau, ngā kōrero o nehe ki a tātau o Aotearoa. Puta ana te whakaatu i roto i ngā taonga i hangā mai i te rākau, me te hononga atu ki ngā whakapapa.

Me noho whakamiharo rā ki ēnei ōritenga, tae atu anō ki te whakapuakina o te reo. Ka whakaatunga ēnei mātauranga i roto i ngā mahi toi mē ngā whakairo. Nā taka mai ki tēnei wā, ngā kōrero tuku iho, ngā mahinga tārai i te rākau, ngā karakia, ka puta rā ki te marea hei whakamātau i te āhuatanga o tēnei mahi o te mātauranga o ngā tipuna o neherā.

‘Oceania’ is a landmark collaborative project between the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa and City Gallery Wellington. It has been enriching to work in partnership with the Gallery on the two distinct but complementary ‘Oceania’ exhibitions being shown in our respective institutions. They provide a wide-ranging experience of high quality works of art and culture of national and international significance.

Te Papa recognises the importance of excellence in curatorship and the knowledge associated with it, and is committed to making works from the national collections accessible. ‘Oceania’ provides an opportunity for both, and an occasion for these powerful works to be looked at in new ways.

**Michael Houlihan, Chief Executive  
& Michelle Hippolite, Kaihautū, Te Papa Tongarewa**





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Anonymous, tema (breast ornament), date unknown  
 tridacane, 145mm (diameter)  
 Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa  
 Gift of the Wellcome Museum, 1952



# Oceania: Imagining the Pacific



**Marti Friedlander**

Ralph Hotere and *Black Phoenix*  
installation shot, Auckland Art Gallery, 2000  
colour photograph, 290 x 200mm  
Courtesy of the artist

'Oceania: Imagining the Pacific' takes us into a realm of broad horizons, vast expanses and a brightness long associated with this great region of discovery and enlightenment. Yet the works in this survey also register the darkneses of the mythical and historical past and some harsher realities of the present. At the heart of 'Oceania' is Ralph Hotere's *Black Phoenix* (1984–88)—a work which embodies both destruction and rebirth. With its prow of a burnt fishing vessel launching forth from the gallery wall, *Black Phoenix* is a statement of dynamism and progress onwards while also resonating with past struggles. At the same time, the pa-like palisades, extending like wings from either side of the prow, offer a sense of sanctuary and equilibrium, a calmness after the storm. Made at a time of French nuclear testing in the Pacific and the Rainbow Warrior affair, *Black Phoenix* asserts the dignity and timeless authority of indigenous Pacific cultures and their capacity to sweep up, within their catchment, the mythologies and histories of the West.

While Hotere's work encapsulates a specifically Pacific darkness, at the other end of the spectrum we find the works of Richard Killeen, Ani O'Neill and Fatu Feu'u. Their works celebrate the multitudinous life forms and the verdant, lush physicality of the islands that make up the Pacific. Like *Black Phoenix*, the works of these artists also have a notion of voyaging at their core. Aptly, in this regard, the subtitle of this project, 'Imagining the Pacific' is derived from Bernard Smith's important study of Captain Cook's three voyages and their aftermath.



Bringing that narrative of journeying and discovery into the context of the present, 'Oceania: Imagining the Pacific' asserts the significance of the Pacific not only as a place of great navigators and seafarers but also of imaginative artists—voyagers of a rather different kind.

The works in 'Oceania: Imagining the Pacific' have been chosen because of the depth, and often complexity, of their relationship to past traditions, and also because of their capacity to take us inside the Pacific of the imagination of which Bernard Smith wrote. All the Māori, Pacific and Pākehā artists represented here have grappled with fundamental questions of how we live in this part of the world. Their works may evoke narratives of the impact of colonialism, struggles over sovereignty and land, geographical displacement, migration, possession and dispossession and environmental damage. Like the *hiapo* and tapa of earlier eras, the works of John Pule, Robin White and Shane Cotton contain narratives of settlement, habitation and cultivation.

This survey is 'oceanic' in its approach. Rather than adhering to a time-line or master-narrative—an overriding history—here we encounter a diverse range of works, presented in a non-chronological arrangement. Similarly, works from different regions of the Pacific are mixed together so that Māori, Pacific and Pākehā art coexist within the same space. Alongside the natural elements—the pervasive sea, earth and sky—humanity is a central presence. Just as Tony Fomison's *Ponsonby Madonna* (1982–83) marries Western/Christian influences

with Pacific realities, the figure-based works of Robyn Kahukiwa, Shona Rapira Davies, Greg Semu and others suggest new and challenging way of dealing with issues of individual and cultural identity. So too does Sharon Grace's double-exposure portrait of Tony Fomison, with its complex interplay of indigeneity and imagined, or adopted, versions of self. With their layers of political and social commentary, the figurative works of Mathias Kauage, Akis and other Melanesian artists are as remarkable for their topicality as they are for their high-spirited inventiveness. We are grateful to Nicholas Thomas for facilitating the inclusion of these works in both this publication and the 'Oceania' exhibition.

A selection of historic objects, drawn from the collections of the Auckland War Memorial Museum and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, is included in 'Oceania' to offer a pre-history to the modern and contemporary works gathered here. Between old and new, we recognise continuities, as well as noticing ruptures and points of change along the way. Rather than constructing specific histories and narratives, 'Oceania: Imagining the Pacific', just like the eddying waters of the Pacific Ocean, offers us metaphors, nuances, points of dynamic connection and moments of poetic association. 'Oceania: Imagining the Pacific' builds upon a number of past Pacific-related projects, one of the most significant of which was 'Te Moemoe no lotefa; the Dream of Joseph', an exhibition curated by Rangihiroa Panoho in 1990. Originated by the Sarjeant Gallery, Whanganui, the exhibition subsequently toured to a







number of venues around New Zealand, including what was then the Wellington City Art Gallery. Not only did the exhibition make a major impression on artists, curators, academics and the general public, it was a significant influence on the Australian writer Nicholas Thomas, who is currently director of the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge, England—and who has contributed generously to the present exhibition and publication.

Whereas 'Te Moemoe no lotefa; the Dream of Joseph' included work by Pākehā as well as indigenous artists, the next major 'Pacific' exhibition—'Bottled Ocean' (1994), curated by Jim Vivieaere—concentrated on art by people of Pacific Island descent who were living in New Zealand or in the islands. Importantly, this exhibition cemented the reputations of John Pule, Ani O'Neill, Michel Tuffery and Fatu Feu'u as significant artists in their own right and, collectively, a major force in the New Zealand art scene. 'Bottled Ocean' was initiated by City Gallery Wellington and met with a warm reception during its nationwide tour. Among more recent touring exhibitions, the Pacific-inspired 'Paradise Now?' (2004, at the Asia Society and Museum, New York) was another milestone, and the recent Queensland Art Gallery exhibition of New Zealand art, 'Unnerved' (2010), had at its heart a strong selection of work by Pacific and Māori artists including Greg Semu, Shigeyuki Kihara, John Pule, Lisa Reihana and Michael Parekowhai. In 2010, the first ever major monographic exhibition of work by a Pacific Island artist, John Pule's 'Hauaga/Arrivals',

**Brett Graham**

*Ground Zero Bikini*, 1996

carved wood, paint, 1470 x 2260mm

Private collection, Wellington. Photograph: Kate Whitley



**Shirley Grace**

*Double portrait of Tony Fomison*, 1989

black and white photograph, 220 x 265mm

Private collection, Wellington

Courtesy of the Shirley Grace Estate







was held at City Gallery Wellington. As all of these projects witness, the past two decades have been a dynamic period in the creation and exhibition of works by Pacific Island artists, as they have for Māori and Pākehā—and the recent works included in ‘Oceania: Imagining the Pacific’ attest to the ongoing vitality, unpredictability and character of the region’s art.

It was with great sadness that, as the present project was coming to fruition, we heard of the passing of Jim Vivieaere, a pivotal figure in the visual arts community and contemporary Pacific art scene for over 20 years. Of Cook Island Māori heritage, Jim Vivieaere, artist, curator, advisor, and commentator, was also a mentor and role model for innumerable younger Pacific Island artists throughout his career. He participated in exhibitions as artist and curator, and held residencies, both in New Zealand and overseas, where he was instrumental in raising the profile of Pacific Island art in the wider world.

**Paula Savage**

**‘I like the Taoist notion of using your life to support your art rather than using your art to support your life. Being involved in art kind of impacts on almost everything: relationships, where and what you live in, what you want to drive, read, own, wear. You tend to use your eyes and your intuitive voice; it would be odd to make a separation between the life and the art.’**

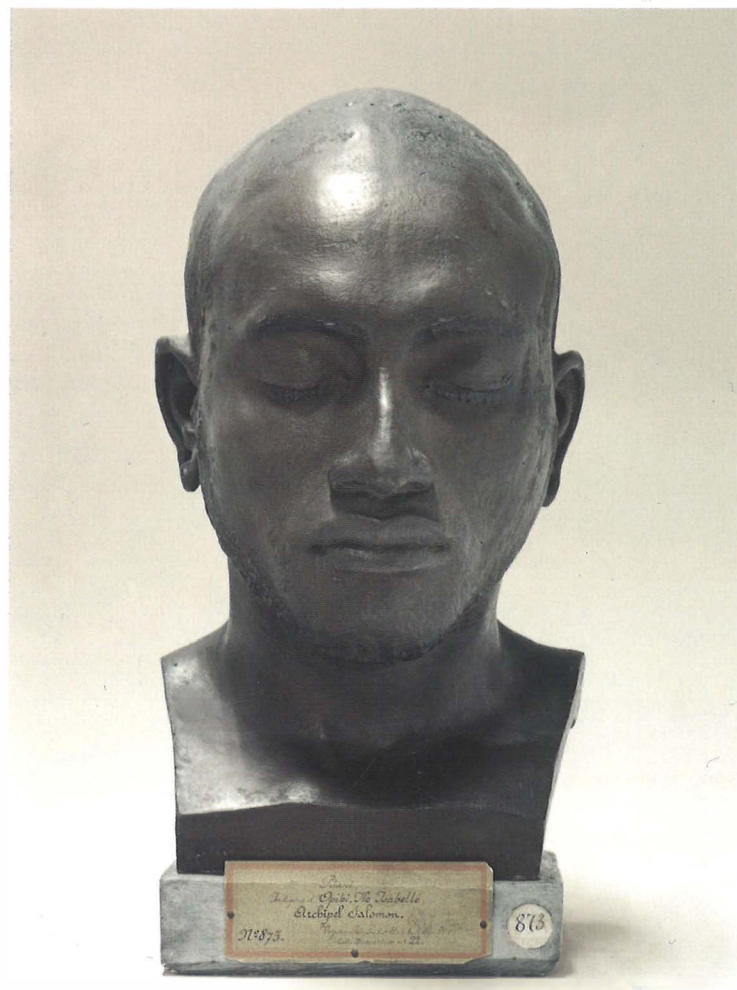
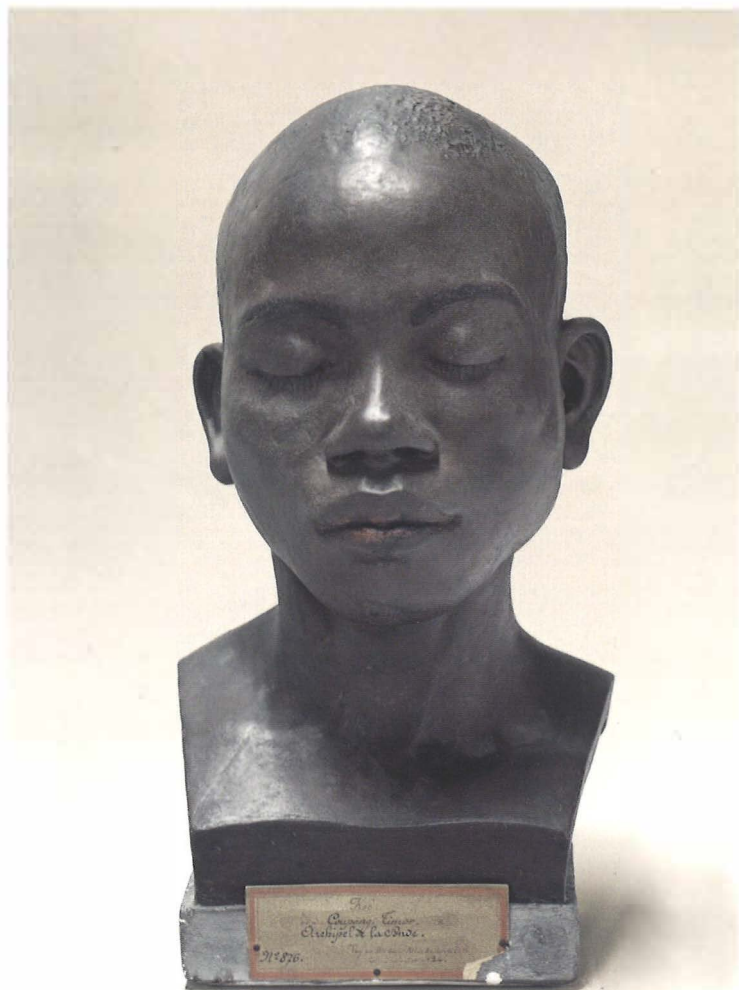
**Jim Vivieaere**

**Shona Rapira Davies**

*Nga Morehu, 1988*

terracotta figures with muka and wood, 2000 x 7855 x 2400mm  
Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa





**Fiona Pardington**

(a) *Portrait of a life-cast of Koe, Timor, 2010*

(b) *Portrait of a life-cast of Pitani, Solomon Islands, 2010*

(c) *Portrait of a life-cast of Tou Taloa, Samoa, 2010*

(d) *Portrait of a life-cast of Matua Tawai, Aotearoa/New Zealand, 2010*

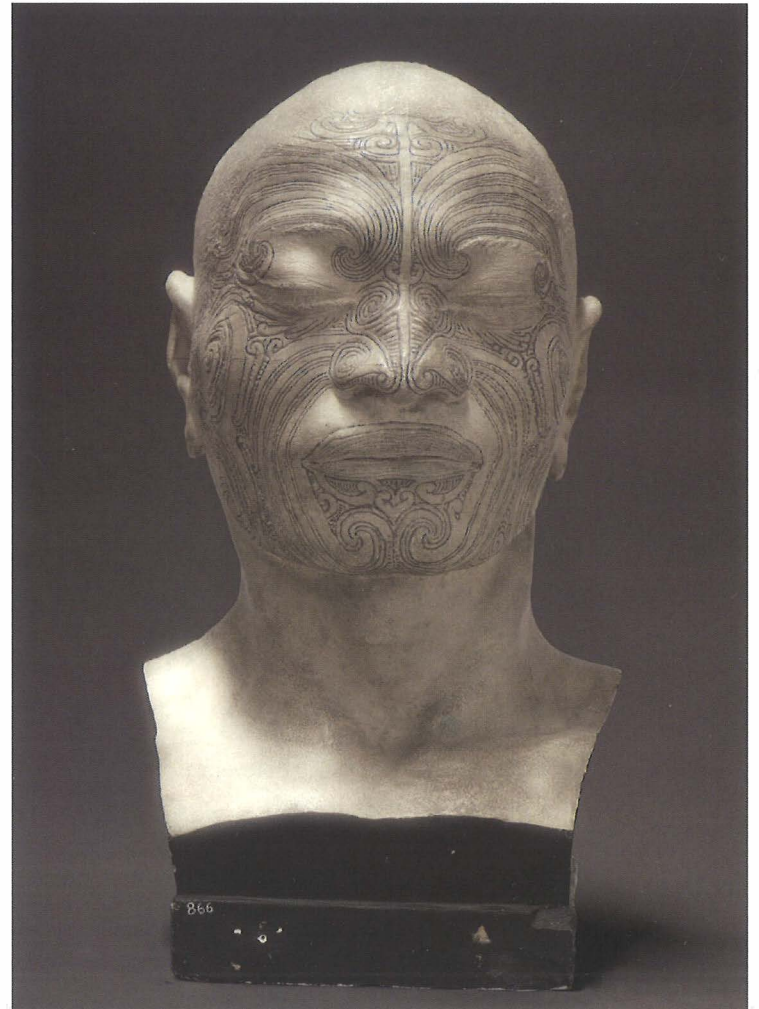
Courtesy of the Musée de l'Homme (Musée d'Histoire Naturelle), Paris, France

Unknown provenance

paris pigment ink on Hahnemuhle photo rag, 1460 x 1100mm

Private Collection, Havelock North, except (d) The University of Auckland Art Collection



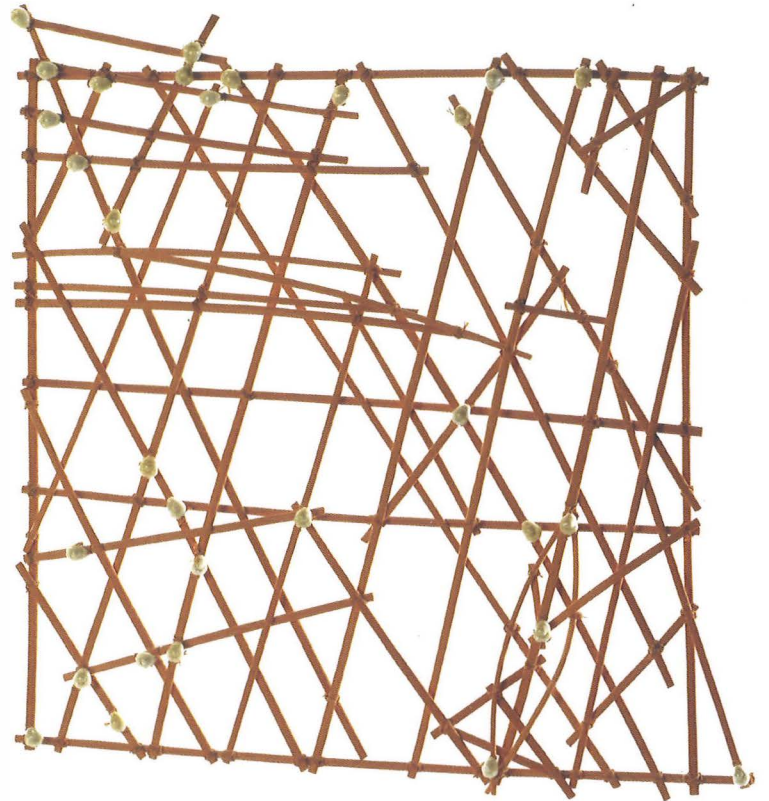




# In Oceania

**‘The ocean is not merely our omnipresent, empirical reality; equally important, it is our most wonderful metaphor for just about anything we can think of. Contemplation of its vastness and majesty, its allurement and fickleness, its regularities and unpredictability, its shoals and depths, its isolating and linking role in our histories –all this excites the imagination and kindles a sense of wonder, curiosity and hope...’**

**Epeli Hau’ofa**



## 'We are the ocean'

Mostly we stare into the far distance, towards an horizon that encircles us. We are one day north of Raoul Island and about a day away from the Tongan port of Nuku'alofa. I am sitting with a group of artists on the aft deck of the offshore patrol vessel HMNZS Otago. Lying open on the deck between the Niuean-born painter John Pule and me is a book, *We Are the Ocean* by Epeli Hau'ofa. The Tongan/Fijian author writes of the Pacific as 'the inescapable fact of our lives... When people talk of the importance of the ocean for the continuity of life on Earth, they are making scientific statements. But for us in Oceania, the sea defines us, what we are and have always been.'<sup>1</sup>

Over the past few days at sea, Hau'ofa's book has been a talisman and navigational device, discussed while seated on the back of the naval vessel, our feet dangling above the underwater volcanoes of the Kermadec Ridge, or looking across a blue-green expanse crisscrossed by flying fishes.<sup>2</sup> We begin with the word 'Oceania'—a less familiar term than 'The Pacific'.

Of these two designations, Hau'ofa notes that, while we tend to think of the Pacific in relation to its islands—'small areas of land surfaces sitting atop submerged reefs or seamounts'—Oceania contains far richer associations, encapsulating, as it does, a realm incomprehensible to 'any anglophone economist, consultancy expert, government planner, or development banker'. Hau'ofa looks back at the deep rootedness of Pacific peoples in this environment:

The world of our ancestors was a large sea full of places to explore, to make their homes in, to breed generations of seafarers like themselves. People raised in this environment were at home with the sea. They played in it as soon as they could walk steadily, they worked in it, they fought on it. They developed great skills for navigating their waters, and the spirit to traverse even the few large gaps that separated their island groups... Nineteenth century imperialism erected boundaries that led to the contraction of Oceania, transforming a once boundless world into the Pacific islands, states and territories that we know today. People were confined to their tiny spaces, isolated from each other. No longer could they travel freely to do what they had done for centuries. They were cut off from their relatives abroad, from their far-flung sources of wealth and cultural enrichment.<sup>3</sup>

If you include its largest landmass, Australia, Oceania covers one third of the world's surface area, and contains some 25,000 islands, 1,500 of which are inhabited. Just as it occupies a singularly large geographical space, Oceania presents a broad and various province of the human consciousness. The region has been mythologised, idealised, Romanticised, poeticised and dreamt about—not to mention fought over, divided up, and some less fortunate parts have been the site of nuclear weapons testing. (At the time of writing, the tsunami-damaged Fukushima nuclear power plant is leaking radioactivity into this same ocean, a few

Anonymous, stick chart, Marshall Islands, date unknown  
wooden slats, string, cowrie shells, 610 x 605mm  
Collection of Auckland War Memorial Museum  
Gift of Mr H. Denton





Anonymous, Nguzunguzu canoe figurehead, late 19th century  
wood, 320 x 210 x 140mm  
Collection of Auckland War Memorial Museum.  
Gift of T. W. Leys Memorial/ Edge-Partington Collection

thousand kilometres north-west of here.) Just as it has its trade winds, and its Force 9 gales, Oceania contains narratives of enlightenment as well as despair, best laid plans and unforeseen setbacks. The islands, and the waters around them, have seen a lot.

I look upon the sea with great love and admiration.  
I admire the beauty of the moon looking at the moon  
in the sea. The way clouds conjure up the day so the  
night can shower the sky with stars.  
It tells me who I am. Where I come from.<sup>4</sup>

So writes John Pule, on the deck beside me, under the hypnotic spell of the sea, reiterating the fact that the Pacific is, to use Hau'ofa's phrase, 'the ocean in us', an integral part of our identity and being. The multi-media artist Phil Dadson reminds me of the elemental, oceanic energy which engulfs all living beings—the pulsing current of the intelligence we're a part of', as he describes it.<sup>5</sup> Out here on the Pacific, he is ever mindful of the fact that the human body, which is made of up of 60 to 70% water, resonates in rhythm with the water that surrounds us. The ocean is *literally* inside us as well.

The Pacific Ocean also comes to us as a dream reality, a Romantic myth—which is how Herman Melville presented it in *Moby Dick*, when he observed that 'this serene Pacific' once beheld by someone 'must ever be the sea of his adoption. It rolls the midmost waters of the world, the Indian and Atlantic being but its arms.' He also paid homage to the 'milky-ways of coral isles,

**John Pule**

*Tino*, 1998

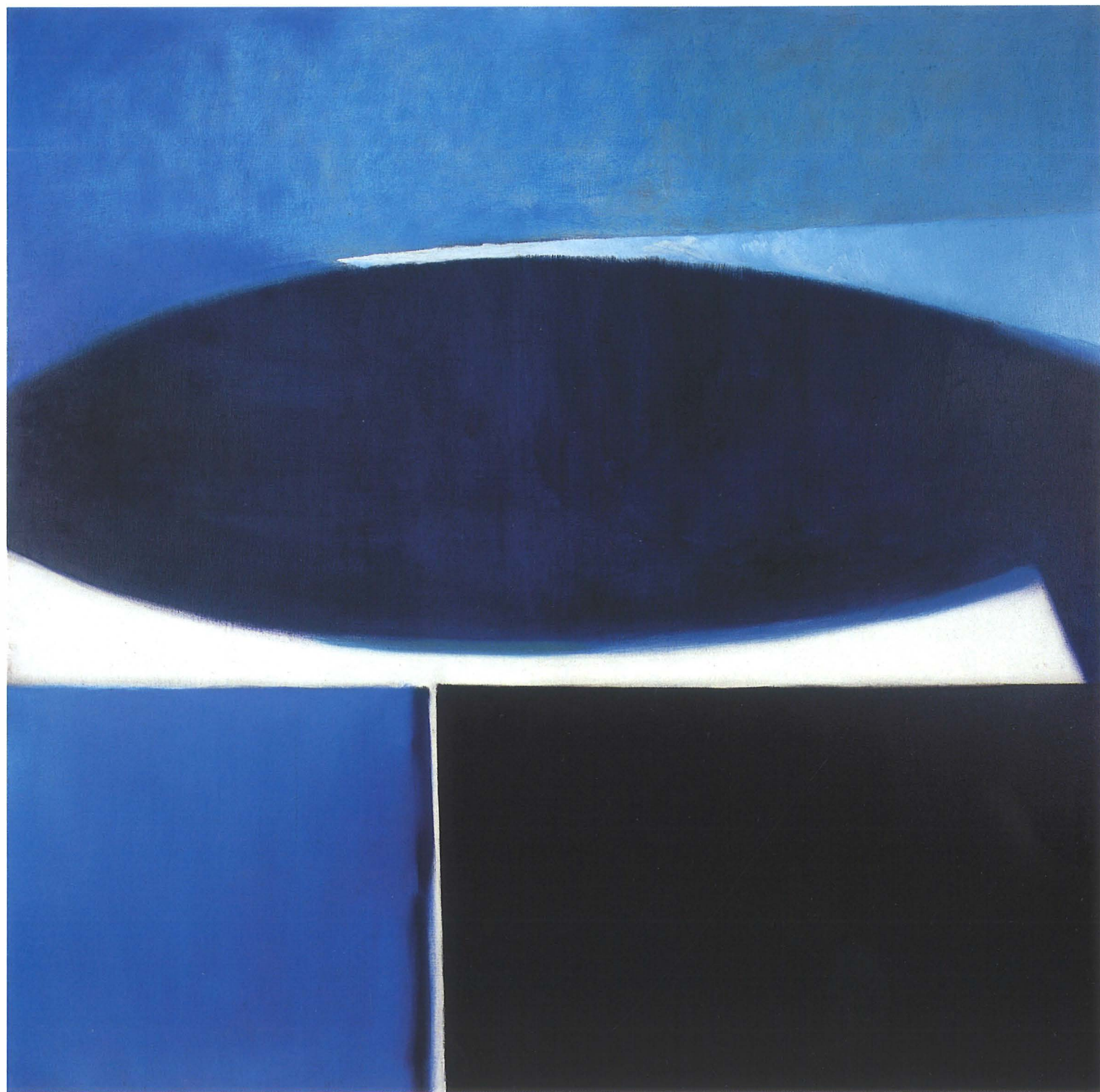
oil on canvas, 2000 x 2000mm

Collection of King's School, Auckland









and low-lying, endless, unknown Archipelagoes, and impenetrable Japans. Thus this mysterious, divine Pacific zones the world's whole bulk about, makes all coasts one bay to it, seems the tide-beating heart of earth."<sup>6</sup>

A year after the French Surrealists famously redrew the map of the world and located the Océan Pacifique at the centre (this was published in the Belgian journal *Variétés* in 1929), Henri Matisse, aged 60 and hoping for some kind of artistic rebirth, sailed for French Polynesia. He spent ten weeks in and around Tahiti, where he had an epiphanous encounter not only with the light of the Southern Hemisphere but also with the subaquatic environment. He was also deeply affected by the tapa and tivaevae he saw, examples of which he took back with him to France.<sup>7</sup> The spatial and colouristic effects Matisse assimilated into his art would, some decades later, in turn inspire a great many Pacific-based artists, among them Pat Hanly, Robin White, Fatu Feu'u and Gretchen Albrecht.

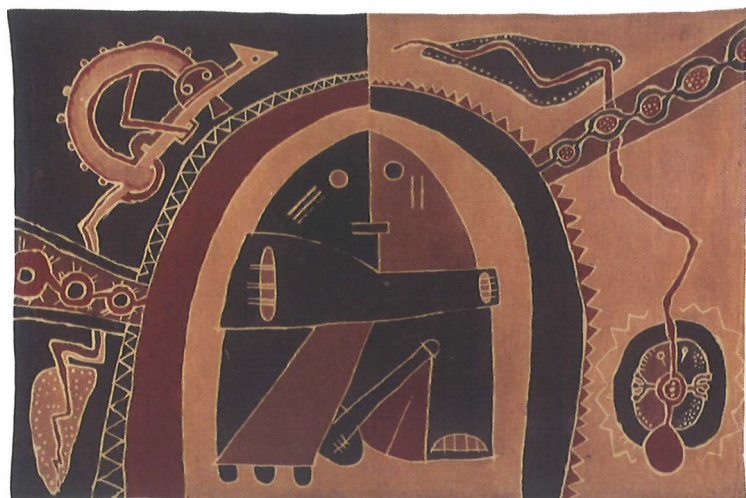
Yet there is more to the Pacific than optical effect and a marvellous array of natural forms. Robin White, who is leaning against the railing of the HMNZS Otago, reminds me that this expanse of water is a place where people actually *live*. Nearness and intimacy are a precondition just as distance is. She recalls her 17 years spent on the remote island of Kiribati, inhabiting 'a tiny space between the road and the lagoon, the high tide lapping the rock foundations of our house and, 200 metres away on the other side of the island, the surf thundering on the

**John Drawbridge**  
*Pacific Lagoon*, 1962  
 oil on canvas, 1650 x 1650mm  
 Private collection, Wellington



**Gretchen Albrecht**  
*Ocean Flower*, 2010  
 acrylic and oil on canvas, 950 x 1600mm  
 Courtesy of the artist and Black Barn Gallery, Hawkes Bay





**Len Lye**

*Polynesian Connection*, 1926-27

batik dye on linen, 1040 x 1515mm

Len Lye Foundation Collection, Govett-Brewster Art Gallery  
New Plymouth

reef. On a heavy swell you could feel the island vibrate from the crash of waves. I awoke every morning to a view of the sea, I lived with it all day, and at night it hushed or hissed, depending on its mood. It was my constant companion and what it gave me was a horizon, an ever present invitation to see beyond what is visible, to take risks, to explore and to learn.’<sup>8</sup>

Maps—even the Surrealist one—can never encompass the reality of the Pacific; the smallest islands are invariably missing and the printed names of islands are far bigger than the islands themselves. Maybe the Marshall Island stick chart (see page 16) is a more viable guide to the Oceania we are presently considering. The stick chart is a coded summary of water currents, tides, swells and wave-patterns—it charts energy and flow. In doing so, it provides an accurate and useable set of bearings for anyone skilled enough to read it. It’s a very human construction: low-tech and provisional in character. It also speaks to us of human thought patterns, of connections between places, and of past voyages.

How else might we go about mapping a region characterised by such vastness, variability and movement in all directions? Art is one answer to that question—and recent generations of Polynesian, Māori and Pākehā artists have set to exploring the inner and outer realities of this great, perplexing zone. We would do well, at this point, to bear in mind Bernard Smith’s important book *Imagining the Pacific*, from which the subtitle of this publication is taken.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to the



art of the period of European discovery and colonialism written about by Smith, present day Oceanic art attests to a plethora of voyages and movement in all directions—a case in point, John Walsh's *First we take San Francisco*, in which Māori are cast as the colonising force. Herein, a hikoī on a New Zealand headland is about to embark on a trans-Pacific voyage. The title strikes a topical note, referring to a successful exhibition of contemporary Māori art that was held in San Francisco in 2005. The art history of Oceania is characterised, not only by purposeful voyaging, but also by trade and exchange.

As Bernard Smith noted, Sydney Parkinson and the other artists on Cook's first voyage were charged primarily with recording botany, animal life and other manifestations of the natural world—this first voyage was, in Smith's words, 'the botanical voyage, *par excellence*'.<sup>10</sup> By the time of the second voyage, with artist William Hodges on board, priorities had changed and the voyagers concerned themselves with cosmology and navigation. And then, finally, Cook's third voyage was ethnographic in nature, its purpose being to study and record the peoples of the Pacific—in this instance John Webber was artist. While the purpose of art-making in this part of the world has changed exponentially since the late 18th century, the emphases of Captain Cook's three voyages do offer useful thematic groupings with which to deal with the recent and contemporary art of Oceania.



**John Walsh**  
*First We Take San Francisco*, 2005  
 oil on board, 890 x 1190mm  
 Courtesy of Page Blackie Gallery, Wellington





## Cook's Three Voyages, Revisited

Responding to and recording the natural world remains a major preoccupation and catalyst in the art produced by recent generations of artists—Māori, Pacific and Pākehā—even if the topographical and botanical preoccupations of Cook's first voyage have been subsumed into a host of more elaborate pictorial strategies, which go well beyond representational art to encompass the conceptual, symbolic and abstract.

With its constituent pieces scattered like a group of islands, Richard Killeen's *Island Mentality #1* (1981) is an improvisatory flourish, Oceania-inflected, and an indirect homage to Matisse's great Pacific-inspired cut-outs, *Oceania Le Ciel* and *Oceania La Mer* (1946). Following also in the footsteps of Cook's botanist Joseph Banks, Killeen lays out visual motifs like specimens or samples—his approach is encyclopaedic, yet reflecting a particular relish in the fluidity, disorder and ambiguity of the world. To put that another way: the taxonomic impulse is here torn apart by poetic association—and Killeen's cut-outs configure more as a paean to the life-force than an index of life itself. His work is an instance of Oceania talking about itself, rather than a case of a Western artist sampling the local wares.

Much contemporary work from the region—by Pule, White and Feu'u, among others—has more in common with historical Pacific paperbark—tapa, *hiapo* and *masi*—than it does with the productions of Cook's artists. The works of these artists revisit the grid-like configurations that dominate Polynesian textiles. Pule

has eloquently described the arrangements in his paintings of the 1990s as a kind of *soil* or *firmament*—a foundation upon which human life is built. His canvases reference both the floorplan of the South Auckland state house in which he grew up and the layout of a Niuean village.<sup>11</sup> While, at the outset of the 21st century, more Polynesians are living in cities than in towns and village, the metaphor of the village, with its allotments and social ordering, remains a pervasive blueprint in the region's visual art, as it is in the writing of the Samoan novelist Albert Wendt:

A town is made  
of iron, stone, and wood.  
A village is made  
of palm frond, people, and great silences.<sup>12</sup>

The village floorplan, in contemporary as in historical art, resonates with customs and belief systems. Anthropologist Adrienne L. Kaeppler has written that, in Polynesian cultures, 'settlement patterns, spatial orientation, shape of ceremonial sites, height, and the alignment of houses and their internal divisions reveal relationships between gods and people, between chiefs and commoners, and between men and women'.<sup>13</sup> Threading human figures, helicopters, aeroplanes, cars, boats, churches and crucifixes in a bead-like manner, Pule's *Tino* (1998) (see page 19), maps the artist's autobiography as well as broader currents in culture and history. His hiapo-inspired works resemble scientific charts, cellular structures, while their network

**Richard Killeen**  
*Island Mentality #1*, 1981  
alkyd on aluminium, 33 pieces, approximately 1800 x 2350mm  
BNZ Art Collection



**Fatu Feu'u**  
*Salamasina*, 1987  
 oil on canvas, 1764 x 2321mm  
 Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

of girders, bands and pillars allude to the 'load-bearing structures' of Colin McCahon's art.

Feu'u's *Salamasina* (1987) is a contemporary tapa, although painted in oil on stretched canvas. It evokes a fundamental relationship with the natural world—the reliance upon the land for food, shelter and clothing; and on the sea for food and transport. Like Pule, Feu'u looks to the foundations of human life in the physical world; his paintings are statements of *mana whenua*, a spiritual connection which extends beyond people and land to the all-encompassing sea. The same could be said of two earlier works, Teune Tibbo's *Samoan Village* (undated) (see page 29) and the mid-twentieth century tapa from Futuna and Wallis Islands (see pages 66–67), both of which, like the shelves of an island store, are packed with items from the natural world.

Taking its cues from Christianity as from Māori tikanga, Shane Cotton's *Whakapiri Atu te Whenua* (1993) features a number of urns containing fence posts and flags, deployed around an overarching Tree of Life.<sup>14</sup> The title inscribed near the top left hand corner, translates as 'Remain close to the land'—a sentiment which echoes the words of the great Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, writing from the far side of Oceania: 'Let us make it our life's work to be close to the earth.'<sup>15</sup>

In the 21st century, the overwhelming elemental presence of the Pacific—the sea, sky and land—represents simultaneously a sense of belonging/origin and—just as



it did in Cook's time—a step into the unknown. Bill Hammond, John Walsh and Peter Robinson offer elemental summations of Oceania, in which the region is configured as a vast canvas traversed by Boeing 747s, frigate birds, flying fishes, lost tribes, manaias and (in the case of Hammond's *Traffic Cop Bay* (2003)) enforcers of the law. Between blaring daylight and verdant darkness, Oceania is, as it ever was, a place dense with meanings and possibilities.



As Smith writes, Captain Cook's second expedition to the Pacific, this time on the HMS Resolution, was primarily focussed on the mapping of constellations—hence the five weeks spent in Dusky Sound in 1773. It was there, at Astronomer Point, Cook set up an observatory to pinpoint, by chronometer, the exact location of New Zealand. Artists have, in their different ways, plied and ploughed the sky, waters and lands of Oceania to work out their bearings, to ascertain how they fit into the cosmological scheme of things and to navigate their way into new, uncharted areas.

Like the Marshallese stick chart mentioned earlier, John Drawbridge's *Pacific Lagoon* (1962) (see page 20) uses both straight and curved lines to evoke the forms and dynamism of the oceanic environment. Drawbridge, like Pat Hanly a few years later, drew formal elements from nature to convey vertiginous, at times dizzying effects. Hanly's 1966 series 'Pacific Icons' (see pages 31 and 33),



**Shane Cotton**

*Whakapiri Atu te Whenua*, 1993

oil on canvas, 1831 x 1657mm

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa







of which only two paintings survive, place flat planes of pure colour behind archetypal forms such as the f rond and the standing stones of pan-Pacific culture (referencing traditional Māori pou, the Easter Island statues and the 'antipodean Stonehenge', Ha'amonga 'a Maui in Tonga). Striving for a similar sense of the primordial or archetypal, Brett Graham's *Ground Zero Bikini* (1996) (see page 10), was made three decades after Drawbridge and Hanly's reductive experiments. Graham's Oceanic orb-shape, with its spiral patterning, alludes to moko and historical wood-carving at the same time as it references scientific modelling and the 'ground zero' target of nuclear testing on Bikini Atoll, which was the site of some 20 nuclear explosions. The spherical format is revisited, to very different effect, in Gretchen Albrecht's sumptuous *Ocean Flower* (2010) (see page 21) and in Ani O'Neill's jubilant wall-installation, *Rainbow Country* (2000–01), which comprises a cluster of planets or islands that hints at celestial and earthly modes of navigation which Polynesian voyagers mastered centuries before their European counterparts.

Linking the natural world with the transcendental, koru and kowhaiwhai patterning runs like a pulse through the paintings of Theo Schoon and Gordon Walters, as it does through Colin McCahon's aptly titled 'Visible Mysteries' series (1968). Forms long familiar in Māori carving and wall panelling are here recast in the laboratory of 20th century modernism—yet with a palpable respect and understanding. A comparable language of abstract forms is melded with a three-dimensional figurative element in

**Ani O'Neill**

*Rainbow Country* (detail), 2000–01  
 wool, stainless steel, 1550 x 2440mm  
 Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa



**Teuane Tibbo**

*Samoan Village*, undated  
 oil on canvas on board, 595 x 900mm  
 The University of Auckland Art Collection



**Peter Robinson**

*Painting, 1993*

tar, wax and oil on canvas, 1825 x 3043mm

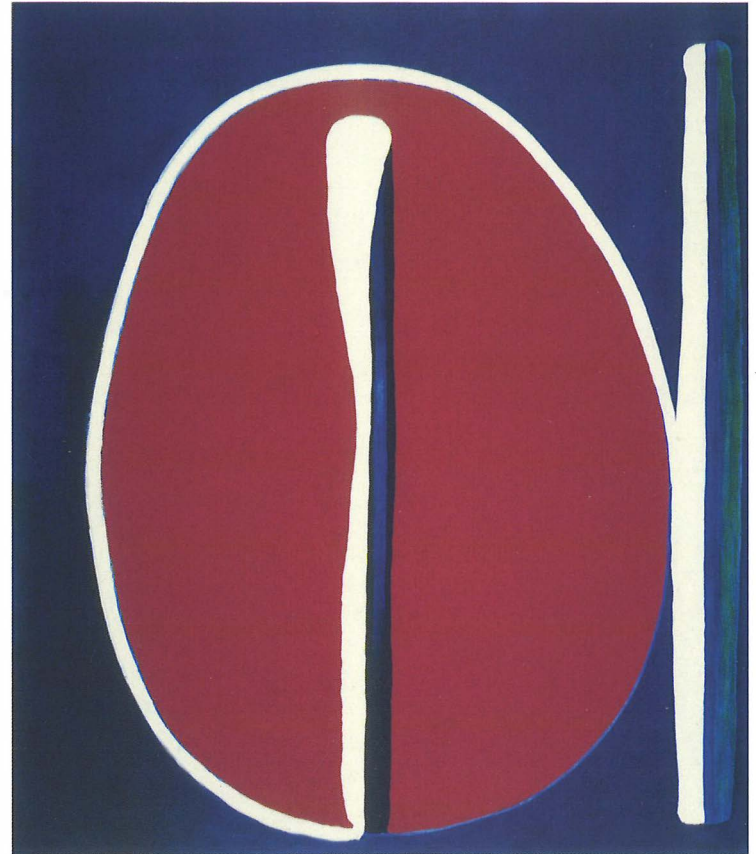
Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa



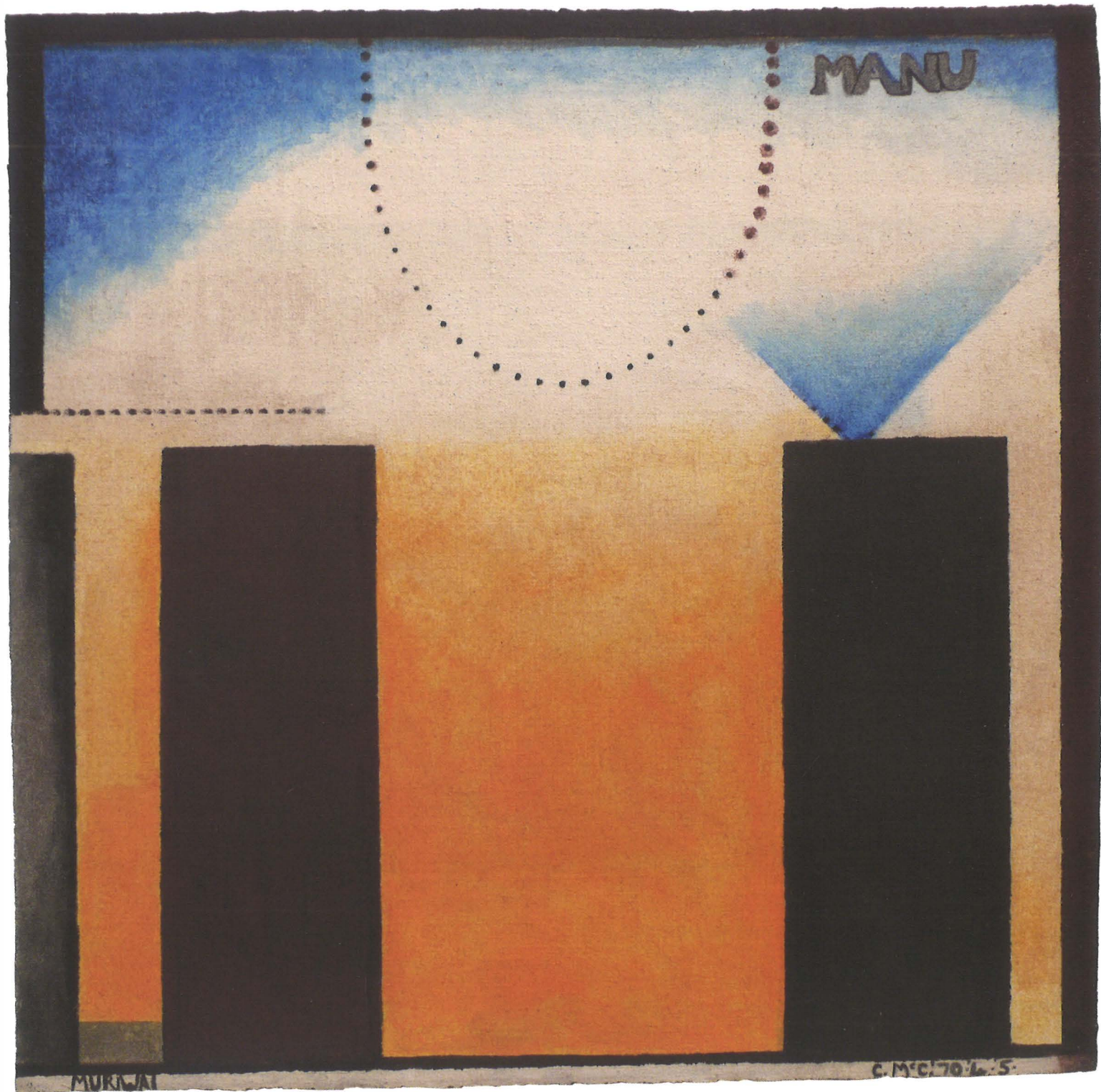
Paratene Matchitt's *Taunga Waka* (1971) (the title of which translates as 'a resting place for a waka', reminding us that Māori genealogy leads inevitably back to the migratory canoes of centuries earlier—an Oceanic point of origin). Kowhaiwhai patterns reappear in the unlikely medium of glitter dust in Reuben Paterson's *Untitled* (2009) (see page 45)—and in the illuminated plastic panels of Michael Parekowhai's *Bosom of Abraham* (1999). All of these works keep one foot resolutely in the past, the other in the present/future. McCahon certainly had a similar strategy in mind when, in his Muriwai Beach works of the 1970s, he arranged blocks of darkness and light—an approach which has as much in common with Fijian *masi* as it does with Mark Rothko.

As early as 1958, when McCahon travelled to the United States, he was fascinated by the geological area known as the Pacific Rim and the art that was produced around the so-called 'Pacific Ring of Fire'. A few years after his North American adventure, McCahon was featured in the Auckland City Art Gallery exhibition, 'Painting from the Pacific' (1961), which included work from the West Coast of the United States, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. In a manner that would be untenable today, the Pacific was, in this instance, configured as an immense void. It served the function of, as P. A. Tomory wrote, 'a huge liquid mirror' which reflected light back on the creative souls gathered at the perimeter, but nowhere therein.<sup>16</sup>

Importantly, however, by the end of the 1960s, McCahon had come to realise the immense cultural depth and



**Pat Hanly**  
*Pacific Icon L20*, 1966  
 oil on canvas, 1570 x 1353mm  
 Private collection, Auckland



MANU

MURKAT

C.M.C. 70 L. 5.



significance of the Pacific. In 1967 he spent a fortnight tutoring in an art programme in Lautoka, Fiji. It would prove an influential trip, despite the fact he produced little work at the time (this was almost certainly due to restrictions on taking art materials and works both in and out of Fiji, according to Gordon Brown).<sup>17</sup> As was the case after Matisse visited Tahiti, McCahon took a few years to realise the imaginative potentials of his time in the tropics. In the early 1970s he began painting a suite of high-keyed colour works—the ‘Rosegarden’ series, of which *Rosegarden V* (1974) (see overleaf) is an uncharacteristically monochromatic example. These paintings, most of which are painted in bright yellows, greens and pinks, feature a string of ‘Polynesian—or rosary-beads’ (McCahon’s description)<sup>18</sup> which descend from the top of each unstretched canvas.

According to John Caselberg, the ‘Rosegarden’ series was a conscious attempt to evoke the ‘suffering, particularly by Polynesian people, in Auckland. On a black canvas hangs a necklet of small roses or jewels: islands of light shining against almost unimaginable loss and pain.’<sup>19</sup> In a related painting, *Manu* (1970–75), the necklace motif also suggests the patterns of shooting stars, comets and gannets above the Muriwai colony. *Manu* means ‘bird’ not only in Māori but also in many other Pacific languages, including Fijian and Hawaiian. In fact, the word is a useful example of the migration of language across Oceania—a process of dispersal and adaptation that mirrors the movement of people, animal and plant species. Aptly, McCahon renders the heavily painted word in mid-air.

**Colin McCahon**

*Manu*, 1970–75

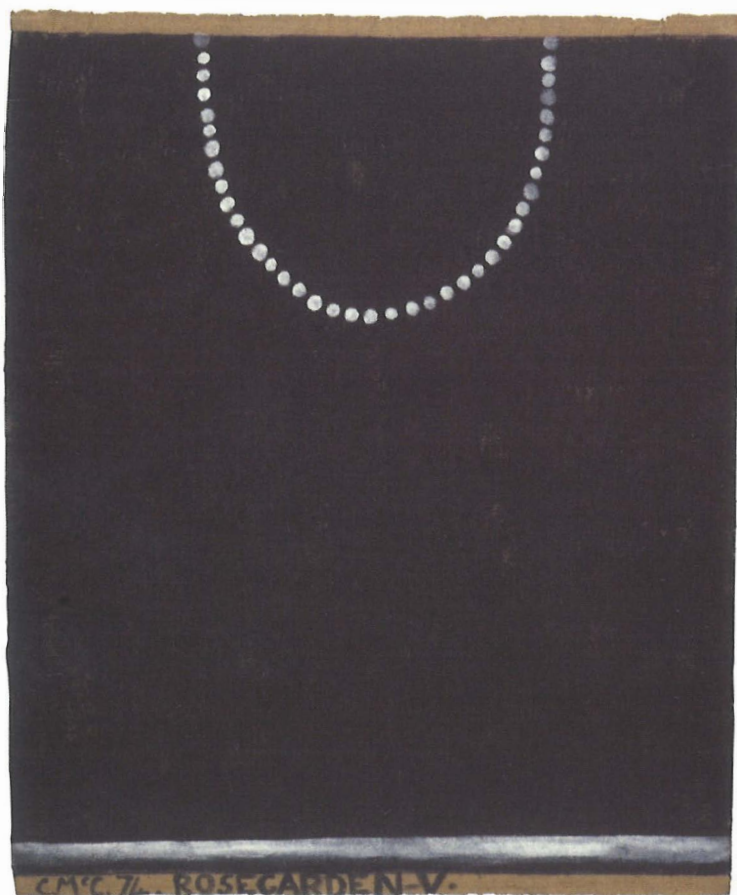
acrylic on unstretched canvas, 928 x 945mm  
Courtesy of John Leech Gallery, Auckland



**Pat Hanly**

*Pacific Icon L24*, 1966

oil on canvas, 1040 x 800 mm  
Private collection



**Colin McCahon**  
*Rosegarden V*, 1974  
 oil on hessian, 918 x 768mm  
 Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

The traditional Polynesian coloured necklaces—known as *lei*—which inspired McCahon's 'Rosegarden' works have been revisited by Niki Hastings-McFall in a series of *lei* which uses nylon, plastic and other materials to achieve both devout and playfully subversive ends—see her *South Seas Rosary* (1999) and *Too much sushi lei* (2000), the latter of which is made of fish sauce capsules. Another unapologetically 'plastic' work of art is Bill Culbert's 2001 work, *Spacific Plastics* (see page 46), which references the continent-sized accumulation of refuse which has been gradually gathering in the Northern Pacific and is now widely known as the 'Great Pacific Garbage Patch'. Yet Culbert's work, like McFall's, has ingenuity and optimism at heart—here the plastic refuse is recast as a constellation of coloured forms, crossed by trajectories of light. Formal beauty eclipses the negative connotations of the materials, and the work is suggestive of journeys, movement, life itself.

Works such as *Ina and the Shark* (c.1990) (see page 2)—a *tivaevae* based on the Cook Island legend of a shark-riding woman—and O'Neill's *Tangaroa Dolls* (1992) (based on fishermen's gods) remind us that Oceania remains a place rich in mythological, cosmological and metaphysical associations. Contemporary art from the region is alive with flight paths, and alludes to all manner of constellations and celestial systems. Perhaps the greatest artistic statement on Oceanic voyaging—through mythical and historical time as well as through space—is Ralph Hotere's *Black Phoenix* (see page 8). From the prow and planks of a burnt fishing vessel, Hotere created



an echo-chamber of pan-Pacific meanings and references, drawing on Māori culture, Western legends and the history of ocean navigation, in which the explorations of Captain Cook and the 20th century voyages of the protest vessel Rainbow Warrior are both an integral and poignant part.



By the time Cook made his third voyage to the Pacific (1776–1780), his brief had been altered once again and ethnography—the mapping of humanity—was now top of the agenda. While the human element is never far from the surface of virtually all the work discussed so far, it attains epic proportions in Tony Fomison's *Ponsonby Madonna* (1982–83). This double portrait is a heartfelt statement of the dignity and strength of Pacific peoples—or Oceanians, to use Hau'ofa's preferred term. Having consciously recast the Virgin Mary and Christ Child as indigenous people, Fomison then looks beyond barriers of race and geography to offer a timeless embodiment of universal values. Like another of Fomison's double portraits, *Te Puhi o te Tai Haruru* (1985) (see page 40), the work asserts the importance of identity, family relations, and of the spiritual power that resides within the human form.

Fomison's Madonna figure is revisited in Star Gossage's *Moana* (2006) (see page 37). Meaning 'ocean' in most Polynesian languages, the name Moana links the waters of the planet with a nurturing mother-figure—



**Niki Hastings-McFall**  
*Too much sushi lei*, 2000  
 plastic, sterling silver, 1190 x 230mm  
 Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa



**Tony Fomison**

*Ponsonby Madonna*, 1982-83

oil and alkylid on hessian, 2375 x 3615mm

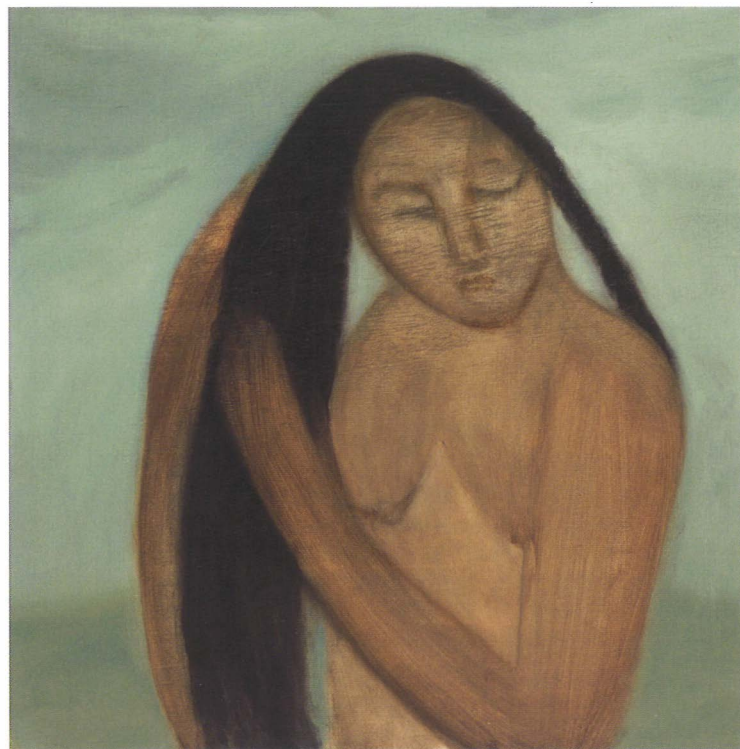
Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, purchased with funds  
from the Lyndsay Garland Trust, 2006



an association which has proved remarkably compatible with Roman Catholic notions of the Virgin Mary as Stella Maris (star of the sea). Christian tradition is assimilated or adjusted in Michael Illingworth's *Adam and Eve* (1965), in which the two biblical characters are transplanted to an island kingdom. Physically, the central figures are an amalgam of Oceanic sources, among them the carved goddesses of Tongan tradition and the dance-paddle heads of Easter Island.

Revisiting past forms in a similar fashion, Robyn Kahukiwa recasts, in oil on canvas, the massed carved figures you might find in a Māori wharenui. The mother and child relationship is the foundational relationship in Kahukiwa's art, as it is in Shona Rapira Davies' *Nga Morehu* (1988) ('the survivors') (see page 12)—a strident assertion of indigenous and women's rights. These works are key manifestations of a tradition of Māori/Pacific expressionism which encompasses other artists such as Emare Karaka, Lily Laita and Andy Leleisi'uao.

In recent years, the photographic medium has offered some of the most varied and imaginatively charged accounts of the lives of Pacific peoples. Building on the achievements of photographers such as Brian Brake, Marti Friedlander, Glenn Jowitt, Peter Black and Mark Adams, Edith Amituanai photographs Pacific peoples in their homes, to create a rich mosaic of cultural evolution and adaptation. Her images of empty living rooms (see pages 76–77) are crowded with implied human presence and history.



**Star Gossage**

*Moana*, 2006

oil on board, 600 x 600mm

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

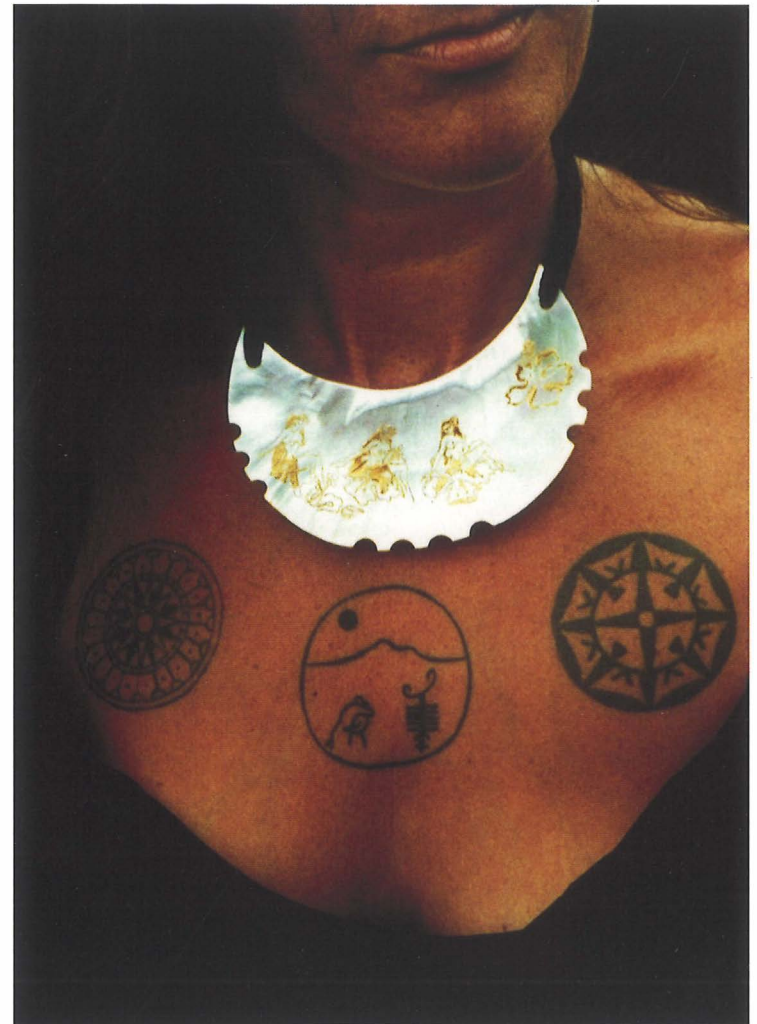




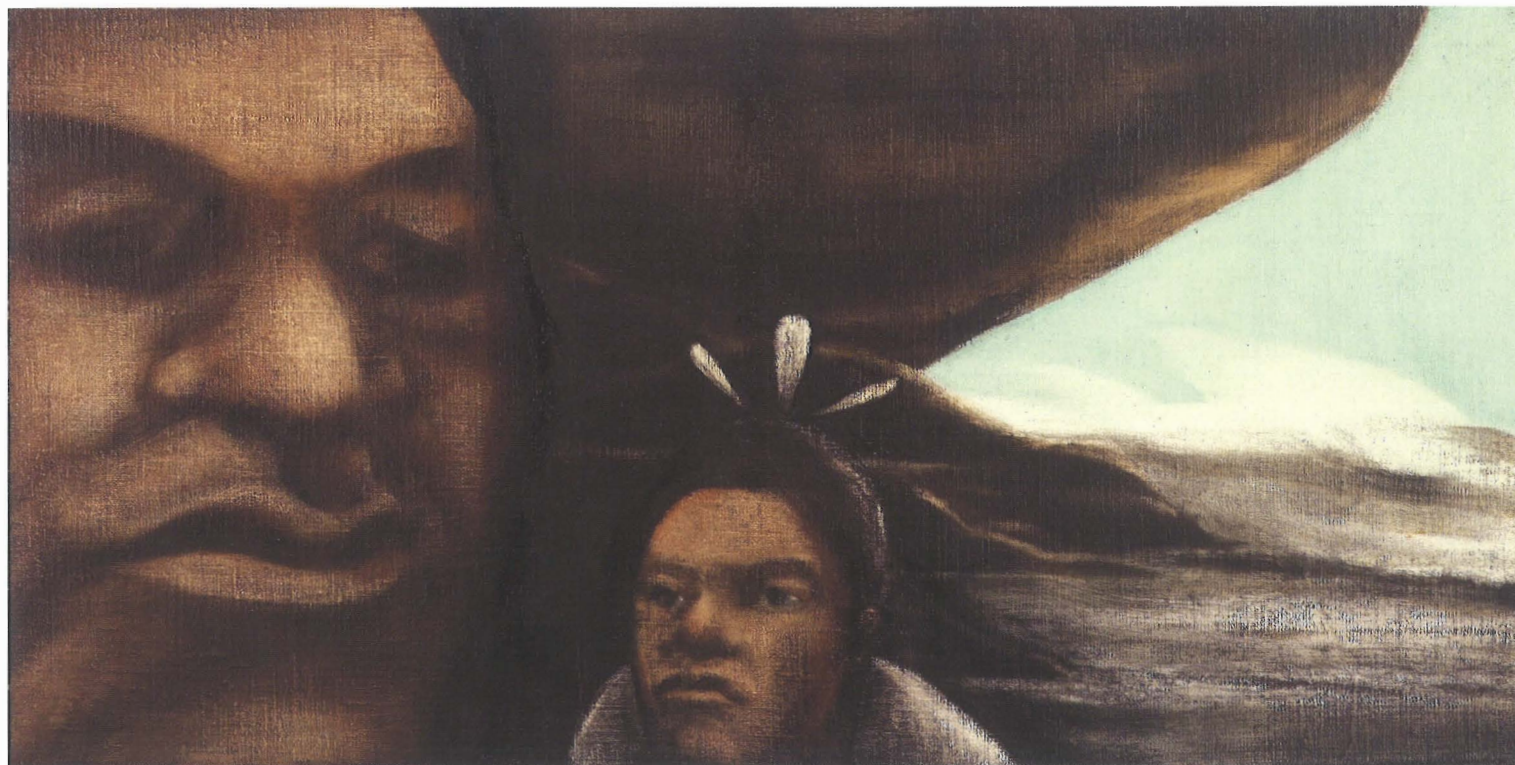
A theatrical reinvention of Oceanic identities is at the heart of the work of Shigeyuki Kihara and Greg Semu. Fiona Pardington's recent photographs (see pages 14–15) are large-scale meditations on ancestry, cultural property and the human condition. While the size and formality of these images place them within a tradition of historical portraiture, the photographs are perhaps most remarkable for the melancholy and introspection of their subjects. It is as if the photo-artist has breathed human life back into these life-casts—anthropological exhibits that have been in the storeroom of a Parisian museum for many decades.

Comparable narratives of cultural and individual identity—with roots in past and present—prevailed the work of contemporary jeweller-artists—witness the creations of Sofia Tekela-Smith, Chris Charteris and Alan Preston. In their work, the body, rather than being a subject, becomes an active component in the presentation of the work. Friedlander's photographic portrait of Sofia Tekela-Smith underlines this fundamental connection between jewellery and wearer—a relationship also to the fore in Tekela-Smith's portrait of John Pule, *Savage Island Man with Pure* (2003) (front cover). In these instances, we witness an artistic language that flows from ornament to body-marking to other modes of expression. Appositely, the Niuean title of Pule's painting, *Tino* (see page 19), translates as 'body'—in that case, the canvas, like tattooed human skin, carries ancestral patterns and traces of histories and mythologies. Just as Pule has based his paintings on

Anonymous, breastplate, c.1870  
shell, turtle shell, glass and plant fibre, 185 x 175mm  
Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa  
Gift of Mr Alexander Horsburgh Turnbull, 1913



**Marti Friedlander**  
portrait of Sofia Tekela-Smith in mother of pearl necklace, with tattoos  
designed by John Pule, 2005  
colour photograph, 230 x 180mm  
Courtesy of the artist



**Tony Fomison**

*Te Puhi o te tai Haruru*, 1985

oil on hessian on plywood, 963 x 1875mm

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa



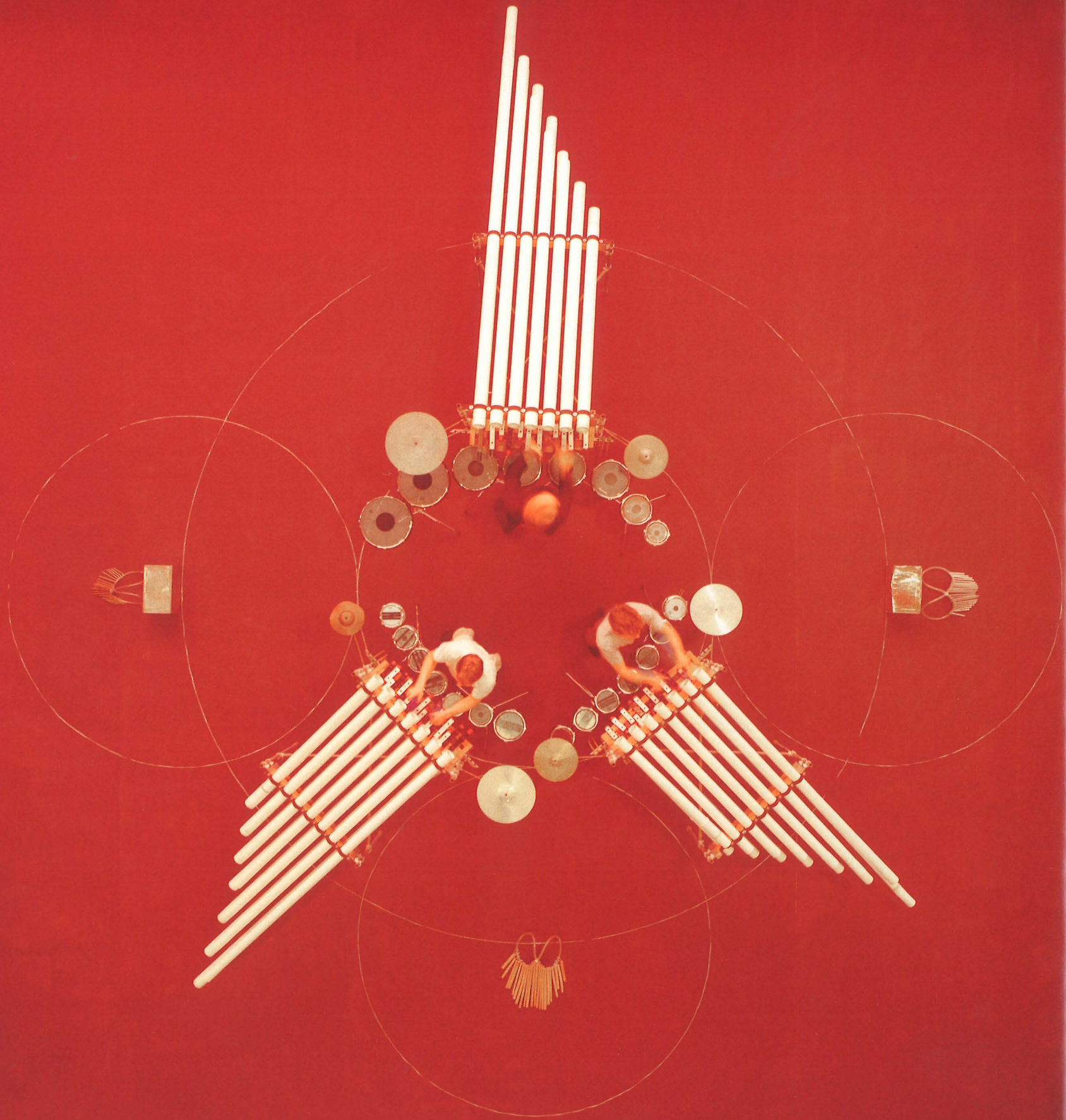
spatial/architectural plans, so it is that in Polynesian and Micronesian tradition, the body is divided, map-like, and presents a complex, coded diagram of the wearer's identity.

An almost mystical melding of human figure and ocean is achieved in Megan Jenkinson's self-portrait as a skindiver, *Oceania* (1996). The photograph is strikingly reminiscent of Solomon Island breastplate designs (see page 6) which frequently incorporate a frigate bird—denoting the spirit of the ancestors—alongside stylised forms of bonito fishes. In Jenkinson's image, the bent arms of the swimmer mirror the crooked wings of the frigate bird diving into the dark, submarine world.

The presence of a net across the entire image suggests both the exploitation of natural resources and a state of personal entrapment. Jenkinson's work teems with moral, political, sensual and mystical significances. The work bears an inscription: 'THE PACIFIC WATERS OF OCEANIA ARE DEPLETED BY THE LAST OF THE GREAT CATCHES', with the motto beneath: 'meditate upon banishments, tortures, wars, diseases, and shipwrecks...that thou mayest not be a novice in any disaster'. Jenkinson's *Oceania* can be seen as the most lyrical of protest works—a plea on behalf of the ocean within, beyond and all around us.



**Megan Jenkinson**  
*Oceania* (lower section of two part work), 1996  
 cibachrome photographic collage  
 570 x 655mm  
 Collection of the artist





## Crosscurrents

According to the executive officer on the HMNZS Otago, even the most refined Global Positioning Systems and radar do not tell us exactly where we are and what lies beneath us. On the ship's bridge, the watchful human eye, along with chart and sextant, is still necessary to safely navigate these waters. As we cross this disorientating expanse of water, we need to be attentive to both old and new systems of thought and ways of seeing. It would be just as true to say that recent generations of artists in the Pacific region have had to be similarly versed in various forms of attentiveness to the world around them.

Approaching the Tongan islands, it is the frigate birds that draw our gaze skywards—the same creatures, with their jagged wings, that John Pule has tattooed upon his arms and that permeate many of his paintings and prints. If there are any markers that tell us where we are out here, they are the constantly moving things: flying fishes, sharks, dolphins, seabirds and, of course, the waves. An apposite work in the present circumstance, Pule's *Shark, Angel, Bird, Ladder* (2008) (see pages 48–49) charts a vertiginous free-fall—a submersion in the consciousness-altering particulars of the Pacific. Like the waters that surround us, the painting embodies a loss of the usual certainties; it is a zone of rhythmical, multi-directional movement, and also a sense of cyclical, rather than linear, time.

Hau'ofa has observed that, for Pacific peoples, 'the past is ahead, in front of us... Since the past is alive in us, the

dead are alive—we are our history.' In Oceania, he continues, time is 'tied to the regularity of seasons marked by natural phenomena such as cyclical appearances of certain flowers, birds and marine creatures... which themselves mark the commencement of and set the course for cycles of human activity such as those related to agriculture, terrestrial and marine foraging, trade and exchange, and voyaging, all with their associated rituals, ceremonies, and festivities.'<sup>20</sup>

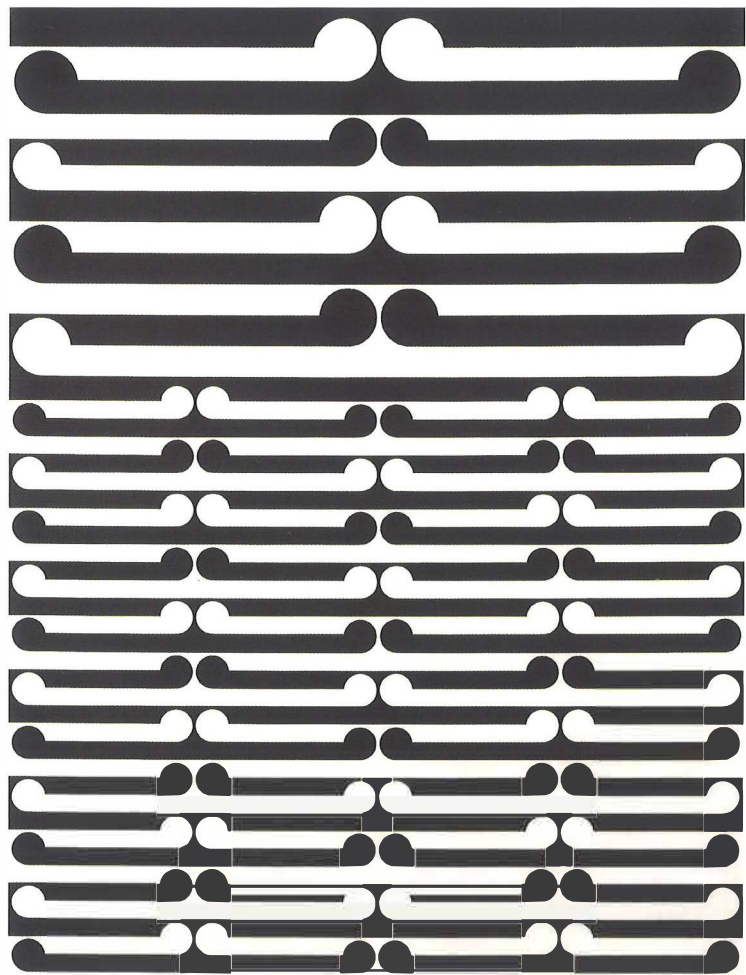
It is these animating rhythms and patterns of life that not only permeate daily life in many Māori and Pacific Island communities, but are also present in the greatest works of Oceanic art—from traditional Fijian *masi* to Len Lye's groundbreaking *Polynesian Connection* (1926–27) (see page 22). Within the constellation of Oceanic art, Lye figures as a vital force. As a boy he was inspired by Pacific carvings in the Dominion Museum; by age 20 he had sailed to Samoa. Throughout his long career, he referred back to the forms and energies that infused his youth.<sup>21</sup>

A similar emphasis on rhythm, movement and energy is manifest in the sound art of Dadson and From Scratch. As well as existing in its performed and recorded iterations, From Scratch's classic performance piece *Pacific 3, 2, 1, Zero* (1985) is manifest as a series of diagrammatic drawings, a suite of colour photographs and as a video/film work. *Pacific 3, 2, 1, Zero* is a trans-genre, trans-cultural, quintessentially Oceanic work of art. While the piece has a formality and ritualistic

### Philip Dadson

*From Scratch: Pacific 3, 2, 1, Zero, part 1*

Aerial groundplan, 1984. Camera operator, Wally Floyd  
Courtesy of Starkwhite Gallery, Auckland



**Gordon Walters**

*Genealogy III*, 1971

PVA and acrylic on canvas, 1829 x 1372mm

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

quality you would associate with ancient or archaic practices, it is also a strident response to contemporary events such as ongoing French testing in the Pacific, the nuclear arms race and environmental degradation. Phil Dadson writes: 'The structure of the work is based on an image of isolated islands connected by common waters; waters whose currents now innocently carry nuclear contamination.'<sup>22</sup>

More recently, artists as various as Culbert, Robinson, O'Neill and Paterson have continued to offer us the maps, floorplans, stick-charts and star-charts with which to navigate a great many paths across this sphere in which we live—and where, as Oceanians (of Māori, Pacific Island or Pākehā heritage), we are simultaneously castaways, drifters, and the most deliberate of voyagers. Just as they engage with the pristine environments and deep indigenous traditions, the works of these artists speak to the complexity, mutability and at times contradictory nature of the region.

We find ourselves returning to the fact that, for all its wide-openness and grandeur, the Pacific is still grappling with its own labyrinthine politics, a plethora of social, economical and environmental concerns, and the ongoing legacy of colonialism. These issues are as alive in New Zealand, as they are in Tonga or Kiribati. Far from being insulated against the world beyond, Oceania is now, more than ever, a melting pot of influences from home and abroad. And the visual arts of the region continue to reflect this fact.

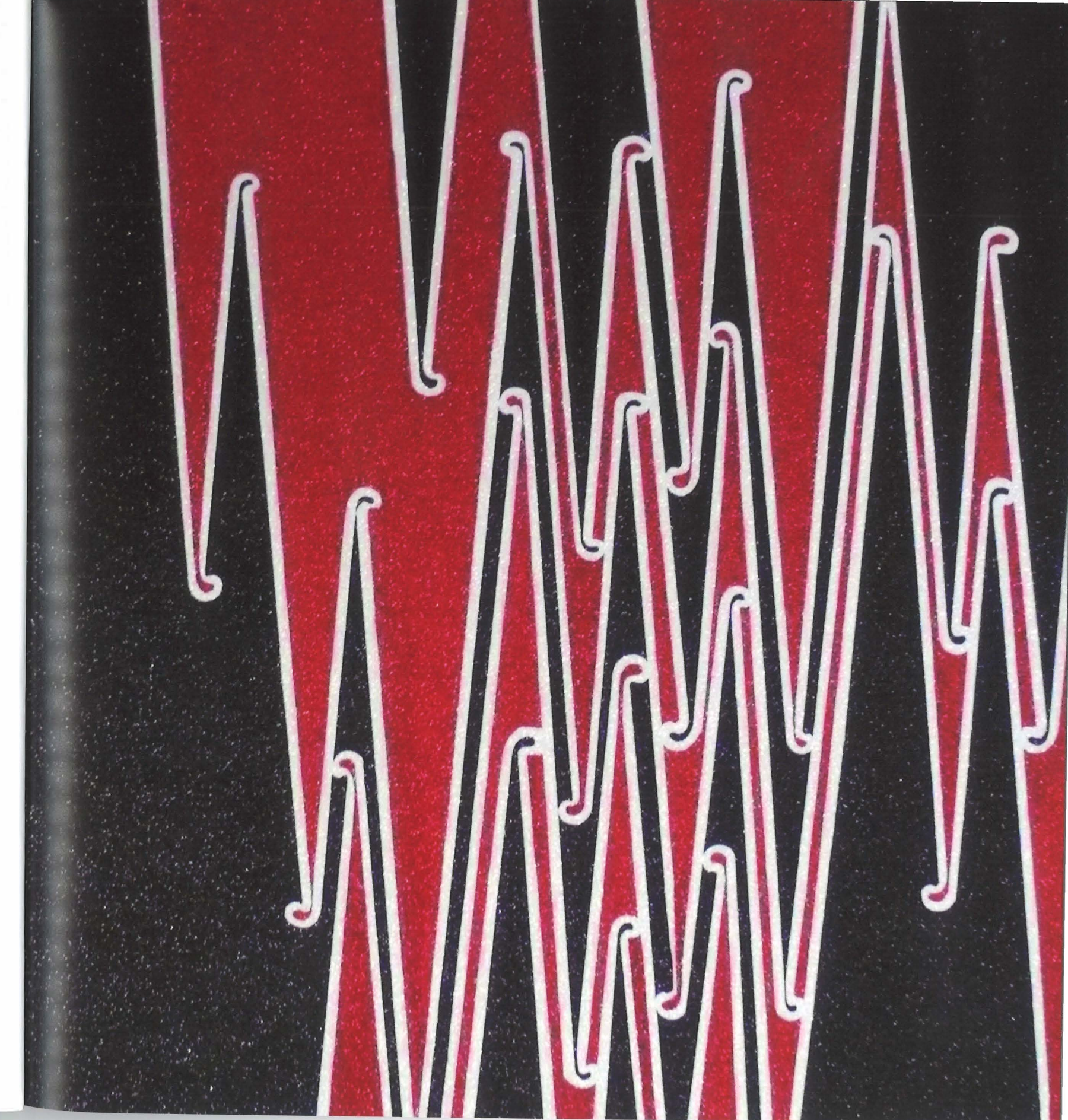
**Reuben Paterson**

*Untitled*, 2009

glitterdust on canvas, 1010 x 1020mm

Courtesy of the artist and Gow Langsford Gallery, Auckland











A week after I have returned from the voyage aboard HMNZS Otago, Dadson writes to tell me that, while he was waiting in the departure lounge at Nuku'alofa Airport, the King of Tonga arrived home on an incoming Air New Zealand flight. With due pomp, a large contingent of the Tongan military, brass band attached, marched out to the aeroplane. And then a London cab with white leather seats—the preferred mode of royal transport—drove across the tarmac, collected his Royal Highness and spirited him away to his newly built palace, just up the road from the hospital the Chinese Government is presently constructing. A short distance away, a sign outside the brand new Mormon college instructed students and visitors: 'SPEAK ENGLISH PLEASE'. And, a little further down the road, a truck was parked, with the legend emblazoned upon it: 'TONGA PURE WATER—for the purity of the kingdom'.

**Gregory O'Brien**

Raoul Island, Nuku'alofa, Wellington  
May–June 2011



Anonymous, goddess carving, Tonga, late 18th, early 19th century  
wood, 375 x 127mm  
Collection of Auckland War Memorial Museum

**Bill Culbert**

*Spacific Plastics*, 2001  
tupperware, fluorescent tubes, brackets, dimensions variable  
Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, 2009

Overleaf: **John Pule,**

*Shark, Angel, Bird, Ladder*, 2008  
oil paint, enamel, ink and polyurethane on canvas, 2000 x 4000mm  
Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa











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 DRAMUA STOP-STOP  
 MIWA GIPIM KU IS T  
 STOP-STOP TILIS PILIG  
 MIR KAUAGE





# Melanesia Modern

Over the last twenty years, Aotearoa New Zealand has been an extraordinarily fertile garden for the art and culture of the new Oceania. More than fifteen years on from the late Jim Vivieaere's inspiring, sophisticated and luminous 'Bottled Ocean', new and impressive things are being done, that in the best cases are honest and not complacent about the social and political issues that are more rather than less difficult, in an epoch of global economic crisis and renewed xenophobia.

The sheer richness of the Aotearoa milieu has come at a cost, however. As Epeli Hau'ofa remarked in an interview conducted a few years before his death, 'We'—he meant those around the Oceania Centre at the University of the South Pacific in Suva—'have an advantage over New Zealand. They call themselves "Pacific this," "Pacific that," but really, it is Polynesia.' He was talking about the way the Centre in Fiji had, in contrast, succeeded in drawing Melanesians and Polynesians together. Even as he declared the necessity of moving beyond tradition to find new styles and forms, he greatly admired the enduring strength of art and ritual in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, among other places. I cite his observation here not in any way to diminish the New Zealand scene, but to remind us that there have been many locations of Pacific creativity. In one sense, of course, as many as there were and are islands, villages and cities. And it is true that beautiful things have long been made, and are still being made, in places and contexts that are beyond the vision and beneath the radar of those whose practices and discourses constitute

the so-called art world. But here I am less concerned to affirm the importance of going the distance to discover and engage with the true heterogeneity of local activities and aesthetics across the Pacific, than point to Port Moresby as a kind of counter-weight to Auckland. For this was another town in which a modern Oceanic art was invented.

The late 1960s and early 70s was a period of excitement and rapid change in the lead-up to decolonisation in Papua New Guinea. While Port Moresby remained, to a shocking extent, a city structured by colonial and racist hierarchies, the University of Papua New Guinea had attracted idealistic academics keen to participate in a new institution, that would nurture the first generation of independent politicians, administrators and teachers. Ulli and Georgina Beier, who had already acted as catalysts for modern writing and art in Nigeria, arrived in 1967. Ulli supported writing, theatre and publishing and Georgina quickly became involved in art initiatives and worked with inmates in the colonial mental hospital, one of whom, Tiabe, made an extraordinary series of screenprints in 1968. More consequentially, she was introduced to a Simbai valley man, Akis, who had worked as an informant and assistant to several anthropologists, and made sketches to illustrate explanations of customary phenomena. With Georgina Beier's encouragement he began to produce highly distinctive drawings for a hastily arranged exhibition at University of Papua New Guinea in early 1969. His was the first solo exhibition of the work of a Melanesian artist in modern media.

**Mathias Kauage**

*Pasindia Trak*, c. 1977

screenprint, 770 x 1040mm

Collection of the University of Cambridge, Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology



**Mathias Kauage**

*Independence Celebration 4, 1975*

screenprint, 522 x 782mm

Collection of the University of Cambridge,  
Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

Mathias Kauage (c.1944–2003) was a Chimbu man from the Papua New Guinea Highlands. In the mid to late 1960s he was one of the small minority of Highlands men who travelled to the colonial capital, Port Moresby, for work. He got a job as a cleaner on the UPNG campus and saw Akis's exhibition. He was impressed and soon sought contact with Georgina himself. She later lamented the woefully derivative character of his initial attempts, but before long he found a distinctive direction and began producing increasingly confident, somewhat fantastic images that have been presumed to depict spirit beings or figures associated with Chimbu mythology, but appear rather to have been creatures of his imagination.

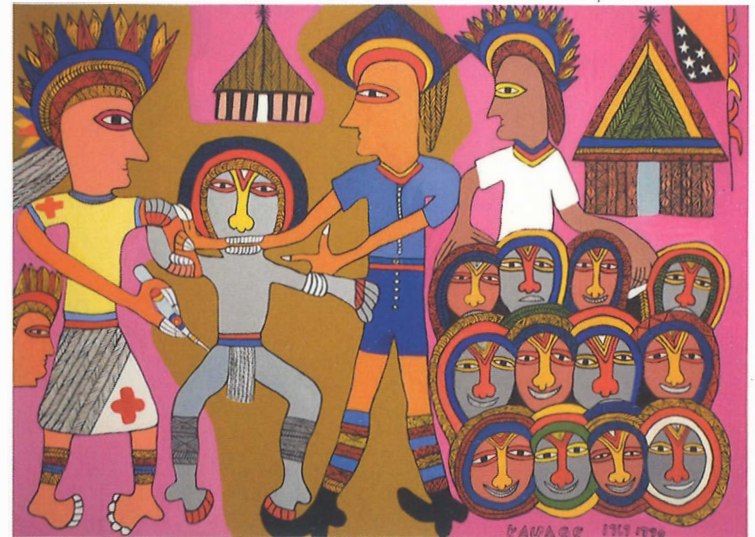
In due course a screenprinting workshop was established which involved a considerable number of artists and flourished right through the 1970s. Kauage was to become the most prolific and accomplished of the group. He soon began to feature modern transport technologies—motorbikes, helicopters, and buses—and figures associated with city life such as street entertainers and the glamorous modern Melanesian women whom he (and the other emerging artists, almost all male, of the period) regarded with ambivalence. In 1975 he made two large paintings, entitled *Independence Celebration* (the present whereabouts of which are unknown) and a set of colour screenprints based upon them. These were the first of his works to depict a public political event, but he went on to do more, featuring the funeral of an important Chimbu politician, Iambakey Okuk. In the 1980s and 1990s he concentrated on large acrylic



paintings, some of which dealt with subjects in Pacific history (such as Captain Cook's arrival, which had loomed large in Australia, which Kauage had visited during the bicentennial year, 1988) and current events in Papua New Guinea, notably the secessionist war in Bougainville.

*Biting the Doctor's Arm* (1990) is one of the most accomplished and engaging of Kauage's large acrylic paintings. It depicts something that children all over the world can relate to—the fear of an injection—but in another sense represents a very specific moment in recent history, the engagement between Australian medical staff and a group of Highland schoolchildren, whose parents had been born prior to the assertion of colonial control, and his own children who would grow up in an independent nation.

Kauage was a painter of multifarious aspects of Melanesian and international modernity. Yet in another sense he represented these aspects via a Chimbu aesthetic. The faces and figures in his paintings are decorated as men and women would be for a ceremonial exchange event in the Highlands, they are 'in bilas' to use the Tok Pisin (pidgin) term. Their lustre is apt to the importance of the historic moments they enact, and to the brilliance of Kauage's imaging of those moments. While the works of Akis, who died in 1984, and Kauage each exemplify different and highly distinctive relationships between local aesthetics and modern practices, the art of Ken Thaiday is different again.



**Mathias Kauage**

*Biting the Doctor's Arm*, 1990

screenprint, 1500 x 1750mm

Collection of the University of Cambridge,  
Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology



**Akis**  
*Untitled [figure with quadraped]*, c. 1975-77  
 ink on paper, 830 x 630mm  
 Collection of the University of Cambridge,  
 Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology



**Akis**  
*Untitled*, c. 1970-73  
 ink on paper, 840 x 690mm  
 Collection of the University of Cambridge,  
 Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology



**Tiabe***Moto bagarap*, 1968 (top)*Accident*, 1968 (bottom)

screenprint, each 530 x 830mm

Collection of the University of Cambridge,  
Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology

The Torres Strait Islands are historically renowned for extraordinary turtle-shell masks and a range of other wooden, fibre and feather ornaments that were central to performance, and that frequently imaged totemic creatures such as crocodiles that were vital to the lives of particular communities. By the beginning of the twentieth century the turtle-shell assemblages were seldom made, seeming to confirm the notorious western assumption that indigenous arts 'died out' with colonisation, but dance and performance in fact continued to thrive and develop right through last century and remain vital today. Thaiday is renowned for 'dance machines' that he began making in the late 1980s for the Darnley Island (Erub) Dance Troupe.

His accomplishment was quickly recognised and his works began to be acquired by institutions such as the National Gallery in Canberra and the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in Cambridge, but they did not thereby become static art objects: he and his sons and kin continue to wear them and dance in them. His art has however taken new forms, it works as installation, it is equally at home in the cool white cubes of contemporary art museums and the heat and dust of a Cairns park, turned for an afternoon into a community dance ground.

**Nicholas Thomas**

To Georgina Beier and in memory of Ulli Beier (1922–2011)

Overleaf: Anonymous

*masi*, date unknown

barkcloth, plant fibre, 4280 x 3000mm

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

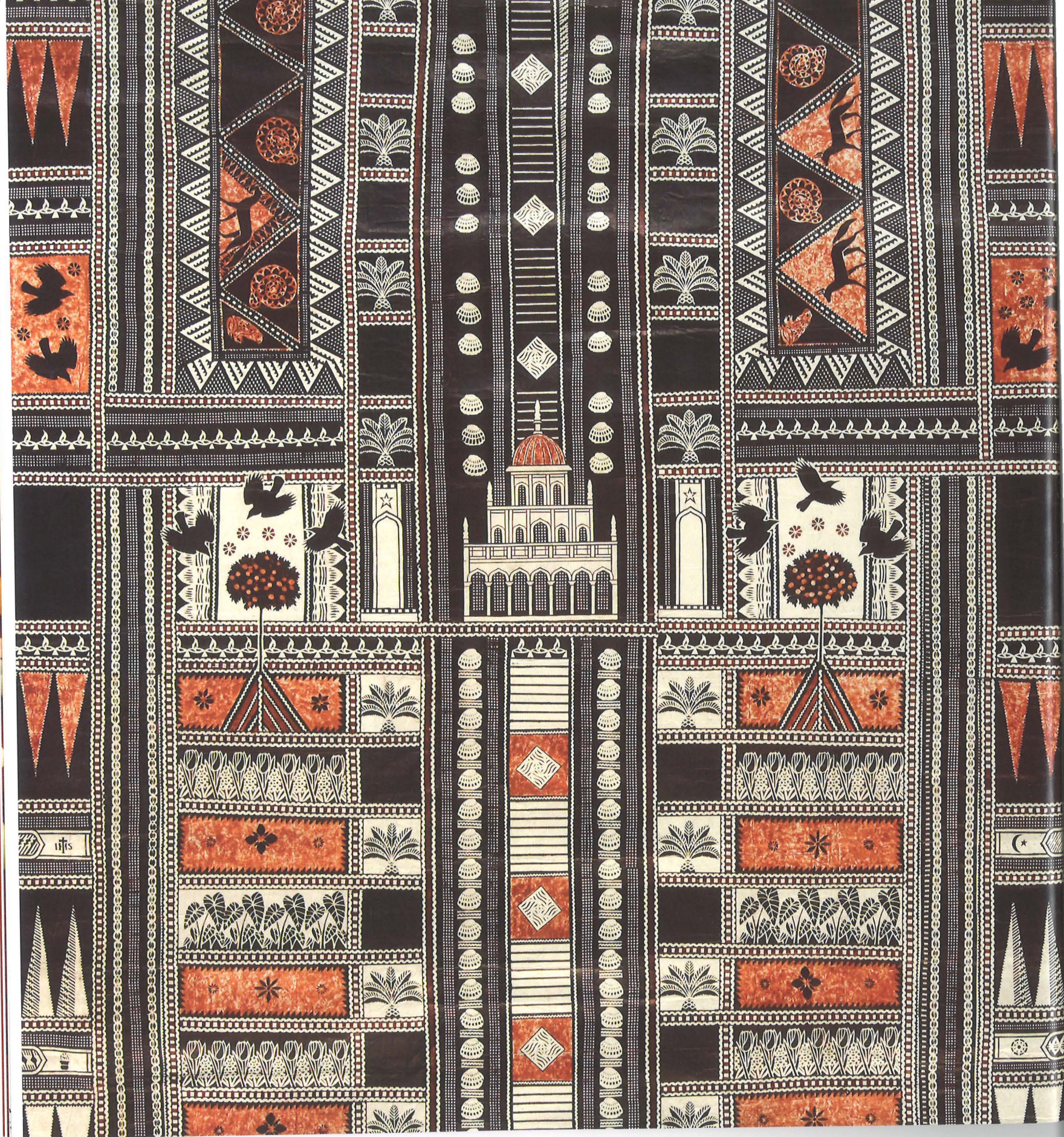














# Beginning, and beginning

Robin White has just embarked on a new collaborative project, a tapa work with Tongan artist Ruha Fifita. In White's Masterton studio, Allen Curnow's 'Landfall in Unknown Seas' is pinned to the wall alongside pictures of Tongan painted tapa, and a growing constellation of other source images, notes and designs. She writes; 'I have formulated a sense of direction, now I am building up a vocabulary of images and patterns, old and new, from which "an island story" can be told.'<sup>1</sup> In Tonga, Fifita is preparing the tapa. In August White plans to travel there. There's a lot to talk of, a lot to learn. New beginnings and learning; these two things have characterised White's practice since 1982 when she first moved to, and spent 17 years living on, Tarawa, Kiribati, a tiny coral atoll in the Pacific.

The work White made there has been shown on a number of occasions, most significantly in 'Island Life: Robin White in New Zealand and Kiribati', curated by Linda Tyler and toured by the Hocken Library, University of Otago, 2002–05. Revisiting some of these works in the context of a large contemporary exhibition which looks to the greater Pacific for orientation, it's easy to trace a line back to Kiribati and her earliest collaborative works. It's also possible to consider White's entire subsequent practice as an extended discussion about processes of learning, central both to how she works, and what her work is about.

Describing herself as being 'from New Zealand... also from the Pacific. I'm an islander too',<sup>2</sup> the artist has

always been essentially concerned with people and locality. 'My work arises out of the situation I'm in,' she has said.<sup>3</sup> Using means which are practical, available and possible, she makes simple images which convey an acute, humane and demanding awareness of ordinary human situations. At a basic level this may be taken to mean that her work responds to the everyday, observes what life looks like in a particular place and time. Her physical surroundings have always provided the raw material for compositions at once realistic and highly abstract in construction, initially paintings and screenprints, later woodblock prints, weaving, textiles and *masi* (tapa cloth). It also means that her work is sensitive to the only real constant in human experience, perpetual change.

A dramatic change in situation occurred in when she moved to Kiribati to assist the Baha'i community there. In an interview with friend and fellow artist Claudia Pond Eyley, White described her sense of the place: 'You look one way and there is the ocean, and the other way and there is more ocean. It's just this sense of vastness and the nothingness of space... living on this island is a bit like living on a ship. You're crowded together on a tiny strip of coral in the middle of this vast ocean.'<sup>4</sup> She set up a studio. Having brought her brushes and oil paints, White immediately realised that all the colours were wrong here. The etching press had not arrived; there was no room for screenprinting equipment; the availability of materials was restricted, an easily transportable medium was required. A new means was necessary.

**Robin White, Leba Toki and Bale Jione**

*Suka Siti* ('Sugar City') (detail), 2009–10

barkcloth, natural dye, vegetable adhesive, 3840 x 2450mm

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa



4/20 The canoe is on the bareaka. Robin White 1983



4/21 Tamdeng is washing in the bathroom Robin White 83



4/22 The house. Robin White 83



4/20 Michael is sleeping on the bed. Robin White 1983



White began her first series of woodcuts, 'Beginner's Guide to Gilbertese' in 1983. Borrowing the picture book format, she began very methodically to *learn* the new place through its language. Five basic images depict the fundamental elements of her new situation: her husband Michael sleeping, Florence Masipei, the young Gilbertese girl who came to help; herself doing the washing; the *maneaba* (meeting house) and the canoe. Around each image are thumbnail drawings, and words which name key parts of the image—body parts relating to dancing in Florence's case, the names of the household intruders in the case of *I am doing the washing in the bathroom*.

The 'Beginner's Guide' images work as a language primer at a very practical level. White was learning the language, becoming conversant with neighbours who spoke little or no English, learning to listen with the thunder of the reef always in the background. They are a reference book for the operation of daily life on new terms. Yet there are more complicated narrative connections to be made. Ian Wedde has pointed out that the marginal drawings relate visually to ethnographic recordings, as well as to natural science images and language texts.<sup>5</sup> Michael lies with his back turned to us; Florence sits under the tree, poised, self-contained, positioned as teacher. The compositions are complete without the viewer, requiring us to come to them humbly, to learn. Wedde writes, 'What is implied is that it is *our* turn to do the learning, and we have to start at the beginning. Not only with simple words for beginners, but with a basic redistribution of images.'<sup>6</sup>

**Robin White**

from 'Beginners Guide to Gilbertese' series, 1983  
woodcuts, individual works 282 x 380mm

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa



**Robin White**

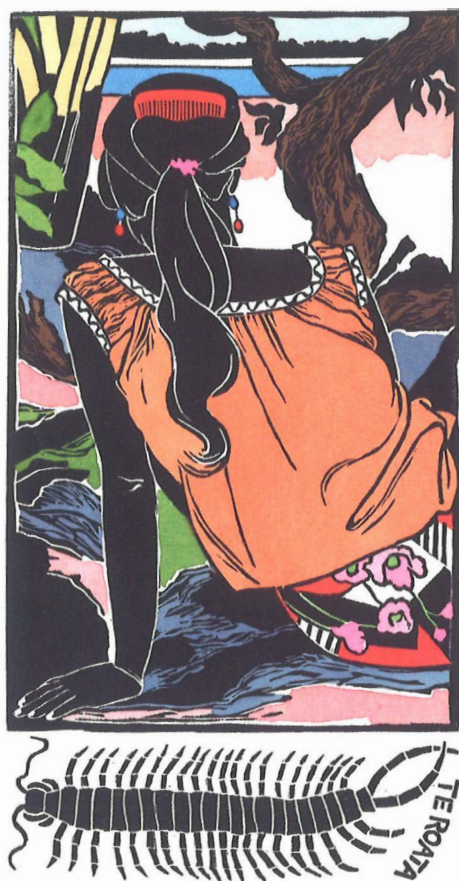
*This is Brigid*

from 'Twenty-eight days in Kiribati' series, 1985

hand coloured woodcuts, individual works 520 x 416mm

Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago





**Robin White**

*Florence sits in the shade beside the lagoon*

from 'Twenty-eight Days in Kiribati' series, 1985

hand coloured woodcuts, individual works 520 x 416mm

Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

In January 1984 White wrote, 'This evening I began to think about a book. A book of images... Handcoloured woodcuts.' This idea would become '28 Days in Kiribati', an account of Pond Eyley's month long visit to Kiribati with her daughter Brigid. Again, White drew on the book form to present text and image relationships, as journal, parable and reference, quoting traditional decorative and narrative elements. The intense colours of the new place saturate the images, flag-bright reds, oranges and blues.

*Florence sits in the shade by the lagoon* typifies the composition of these works. Beneath a framed scene a stylised centipede motif is named, *Te Roata*; under this the text sits as caption, explanation, and as part of the work. The intention of the artist is clear: to tell us about her sitter, to show us a place, to record what she has learnt. Beyond this she is cautious; this is not a guide book concerned to exoticise its subjects. Rather, the figures are active, engaged in the tasks at hand. Two men are flying a kite; Brigid hits a rock while accompanying text tells us 'if the rock loves you it bleeds'.

In the print introducing Brigid, it is the back of her head we encounter; the peopled images from this series are less portraits, more frames into which the subjects move, intersecting with pattern, motif and writing. Clapsed hands (for agreement) and stars (for a sense of direction) from a local man's tattoo sit above her. Brigid's gently closed hand echoes the tattoo design, as does the fern leaf garland around her head. It's like another kind of writing, a text more subtly embedded.

Beyond the direct narrative role of each element is the way it works as formal gesture, and again as something else, unfinished. The artist proposes that we need to read further into cultural, social and economic histories of the place to begin to understand the individual and the situation. These are the reverse of the anthropologist or ethnographer's *knowing* images; the facts and anecdotes they document are witness to how little we are able to know. To look and record is the beginning of learning.

A major fire in 1996, in which the artist lost her house, studio and all her belongings, represented another kind of beginning. This was the beginning of a collaborative working dialogue with local women, and a new medium, which resulted in the 'New Angel' series of tablemats. White developed the concept, which was realised in pandanus fibre traditionally woven by women from the Itoiningaina Catholic Women's Training Centre. Each hosts a brand image from the packaging of products available in the island shops at that time: Bushells tea, New Angel tinned mackerel, Sunshine milk powder. The motif appears in three phases: a natural coloured image represented in two dimensions, three dimensions—casting shadow and with accompanying text title—and fully coloured.

And the image is only the beginning of the series' story, which encompasses how belief and identity are conditioned by change and renewal. There are links to be made with Christian imagery of bread and fish, with communal gathering around the table (an accompanying

table cloth, *Food for Thought* (1998), was also produced by White and Masipei), and with Kiribati's history of contact, food and trade. There is research to be done by the viewer. The artist takes us through a course of learning, presenting the image first as motif, then named solid object, then 'realistic' representation.

Widely known for her painting, print-making, and recent fibre based collaboration, White has also worked consistently in other forms including drawing, watercolour, and photography. 'Young Warriors' (1998) is a photographic series. Eight black and white images depict the command bunker on Tarawa, where Japanese soldiers, during World War II, were trapped and burnt in an American offensive in the critical central Pacific region. Bleak white light filters into the spaces, which are etched with graffiti, and horribly empty. Rendered in stark strokes, this is another Pacific entirely from the warmly-lit '28 Days' images. Yet White's take is characteristically compassionate, and matter of fact: 'I have...sought the sublime in what is terrible—looking beyond the brutal circumstances to reflect on the ability of the human spirit to rise above earthly limitations and relying on images and arrangements of light to convey my thoughts about that which perishes and that which endures.'<sup>7</sup>

More recently, *Suka Siti* ('Sugar City') (2009–10) was made collaboratively with Leba Toki and Bale Jione, two Fijian artists who share White's Baha'i faith. The large *masi* takes the form of a *taunamu*, a screen used during





**Robin White**

from 'New Angel' series, 1998

plant fibre, vegetable dye, synthetic dye, individual works 290 x 412mm

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

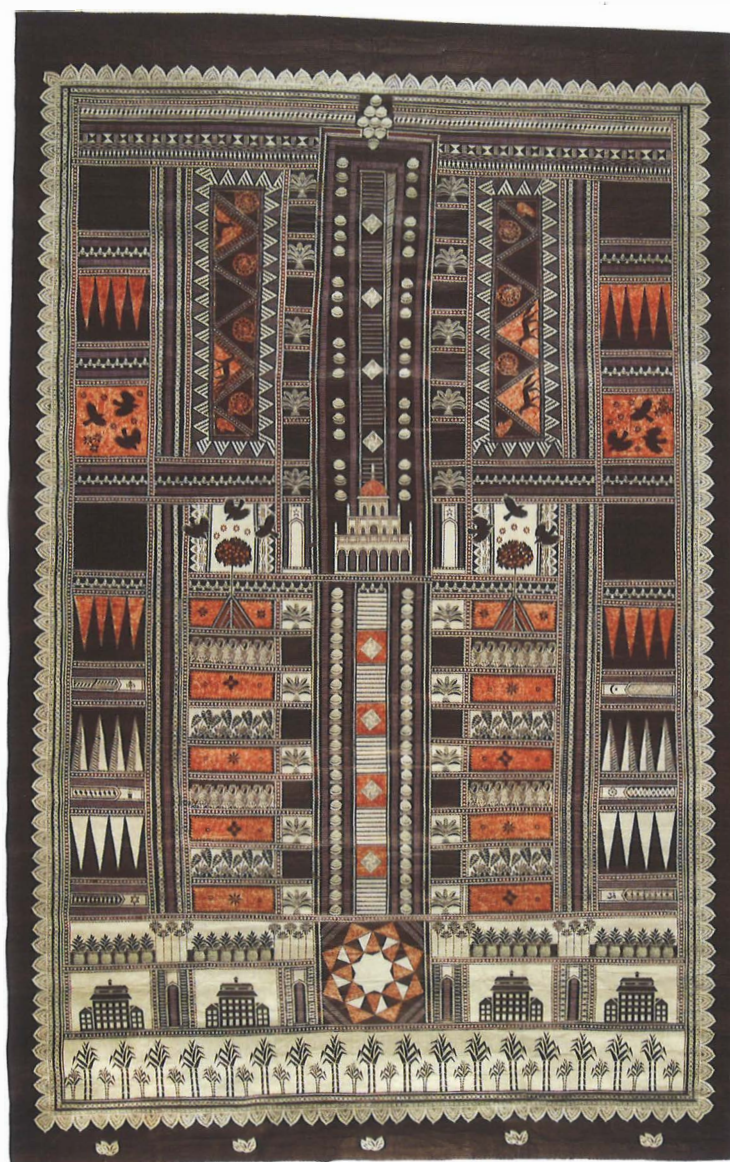


traditional Fijian wedding ceremonies. The Lautoka sugar mill, which dominates the town's physical and economic landscape, appears repeatedly, alongside crops including taro, sugarcane and orange trees, symbols of world religions, jackals and crows. At the foot of the screen, mats are placed where the couple would stand.

Drawing on the customary practice of making *masi*, and the ceremonial act of marriage, the work extends a discussion about the relationship between functional objects and art, image-making and cultural history, and about alternative ways of relating to locale and tradition. White describes it as 'working in the space between...between cultures, between traditions, and learning how to operate in that space.'<sup>8</sup> The medium, place, and process are new for White; once again her work opens to its situation, embodying adaptation and processes of learning.

Working communally plays an increasing part in White's project, which is ever more outward looking. Focused on learning as both subject and methodology, deeply engaged with places and people, her work is an exercise in active observation. 'The land is minimal and the ocean is vast,' reads one of the '28 Days' works. What we can be sure of is that there is much to learn, much more beyond the land we stand on; this is the understanding of the island dweller. These works ask that we begin to learn by looking, and then begin again.

**Abby Cunnane**



**Robin White, Leba Toki and Bale Jione**

*Suka Siti* ('Sugar City') (detail), 2009-10

barkcloth, natural dye, vegetable adhesive, 3840 x 2450mm

Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa



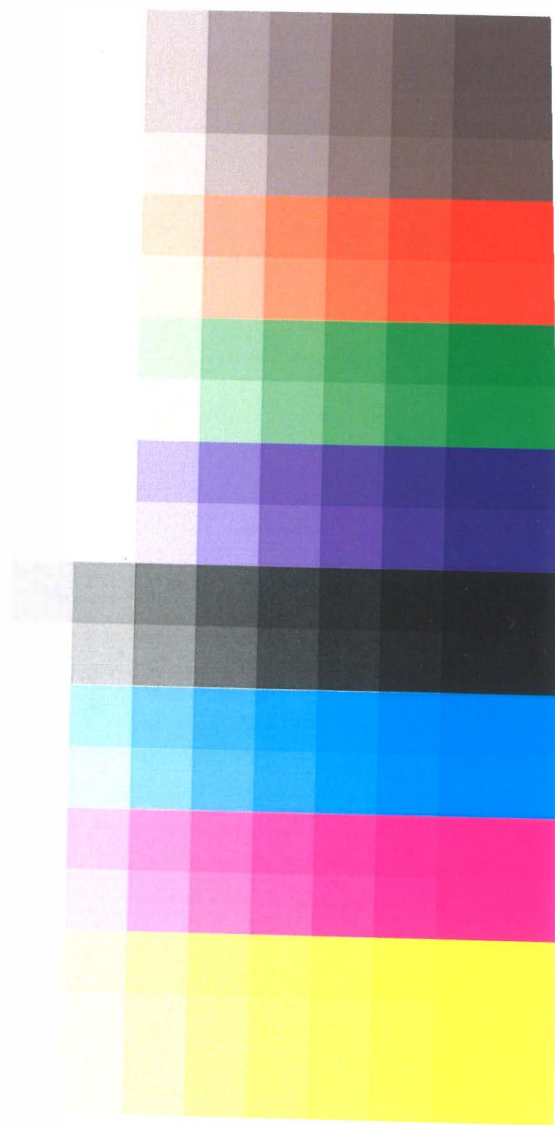
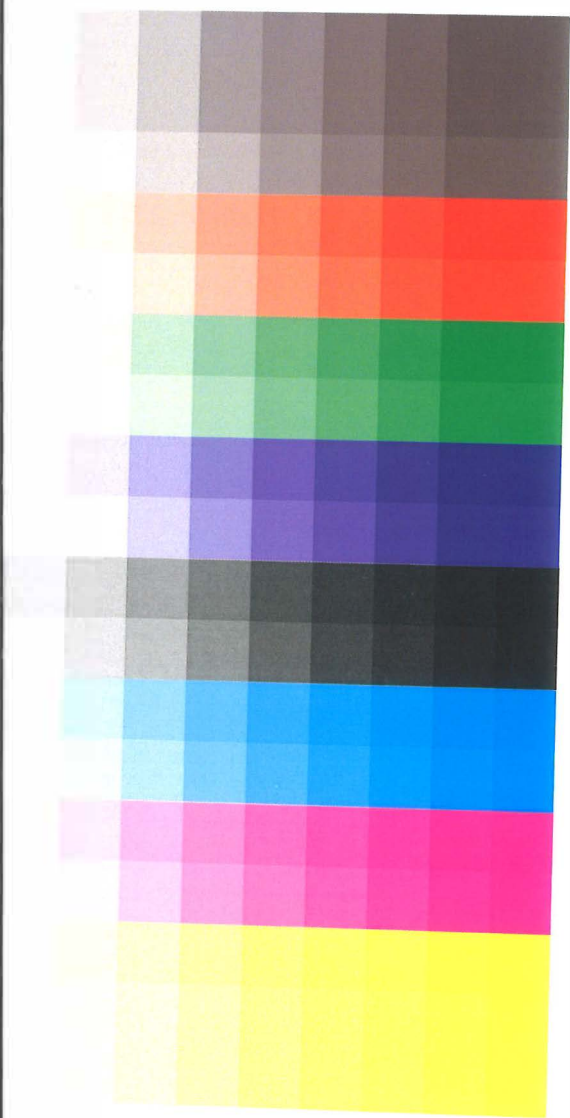


Siapo, Wallis and Futuna Islands, 1960s  
barkcloth, dye, 762 x 1985 mm  
Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa









# Re-imaging Oceania

*I belong to Oceania—or, at least, I am rooted in a fertile part of it and it nourishes my spirit, helps to define me, and feeds my imagination.*

Albert Wendt<sup>1</sup>

In Aotearoa New Zealand we often refer to ‘the Pacific’ when really we mean Polynesia. In doing so, we privilege this most central region of Oceania of which we are the most southern constituents. Considering the Pacific in its entirety, Epeli Hau’ofa wrote of the French preference for the term Oceania. Oceania, as a much more grandiose and encompassing term, encapsulates far better the true vastness of the Pacific Ocean and the reality of its many inhabitants.<sup>2</sup>

Hau’ofa considered early Western imaginings of Oceania as outsider perspectives. Outsiders imagine what inhabitants experience. The earliest residents of the Pacific formed cultures in response to their experience. These experiences moulded them, defined them and, as poet and novelist Albert Wendt articulates, continue to feed their imaginations.<sup>3</sup> This distinction between imagined experience, and imagination fuelled by experience, is what separates customary Pacific representations of Oceanic culture from early Western imaginings of Oceania.

Depicting imagined Oceanic worlds was the domain of the nineteenth century colonial artists and the early twentieth century modernists, many of whom sought to invigorate Western art practices by infusing their art

with indigenous imagery and subject matter.<sup>4</sup> By the latter half of the twentieth century however the descendants of the early colonial settlers, and other foreigners who had made Oceania their home, began to express a uniquely Pacific experience of identity. In Aotearoa New Zealand some of these expressions became a point of contention, marking an era of dynamic inter-cultural artistic exchange, negotiation and inspiration.

Certain Māori art historians and academics, among them Rangihira Panoho and Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, pointedly criticised Pākehā appropriations of customary Māori imagery for their often scant regard of cultural sensibilities around the use of such material. Colin McCahon and Gordon Walters, for instance, were criticised as well as acclaimed for their use of Māori iconography and language, while Theo Schoon was more commonly commended for his more traditional treatment of Māori imagery and acknowledgement of its source material.<sup>5</sup>

Conversely, other Māori academics such as Hirini Moko Mead feared that contemporary Māori artists’ admiration for modernist approaches and conventions threatened to dilute customary Māori art forms to the point that they were no longer identifiably Māori.

These binary negotiations between Māori and Pākehā largely excluded Pacific artists but did however provide a cultural model which Pacific artists could draw upon. McCahon for instance held particular resonance for

**Greg Semu**

*Vic Taurewa Biddle* from ‘The Battle of the Noble Savage’ series, 2007  
photographic print mounted on light box, 1200 x 1200mm  
© musée du quai Branly, Paris, France



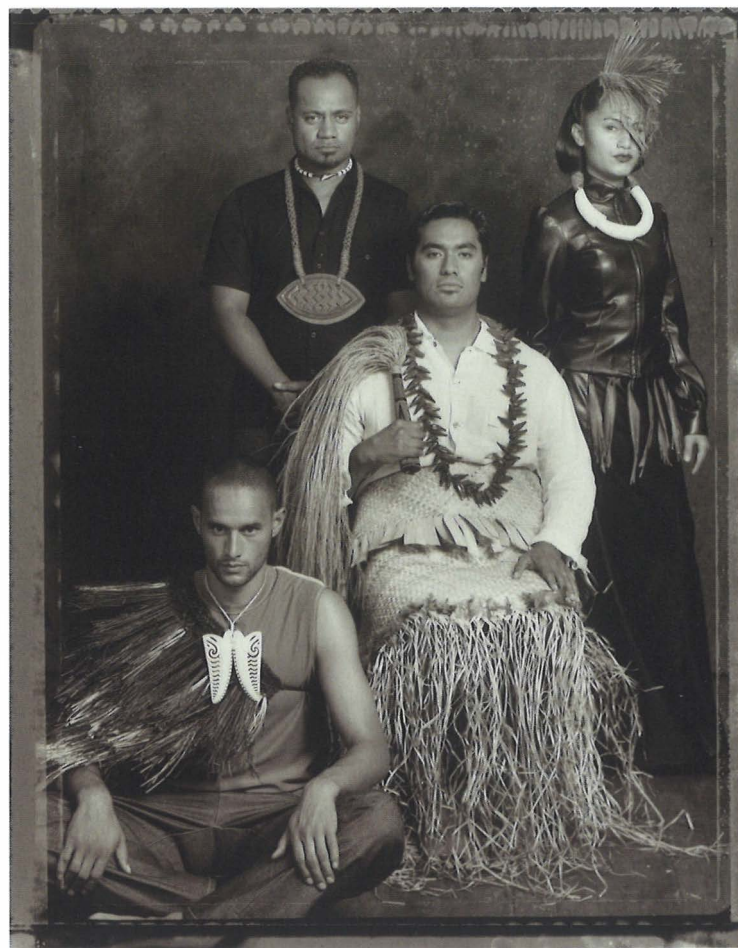




Pacific artists like Fatu Feu'u, who were able to draw upon Pākehā expressions of South Pacific identity as inspiration for their own artistic practice. However, despite what could be described as cultural camaraderie based on ancestral Oceanic connections, contemporary Pacific artists often differed from Māori in their opinions about Western appropriations of customary indigenous imagery. The New Zealand born Rarotongan artist, and curator of the 1994 landmark exhibition 'Bottled Ocean', Jim Vivieaere controversially stated that he felt no greater right than Palagi artists to use customary Cook Island imagery.<sup>6</sup> Just as Paul Gauguin, Henri Matisse and other Western artists had sought inspiration from Oceanic sources, Vivieaere, Feu'u and their contemporaries were actively re-appropriating from Euro-American sources, participating within wider international discussions about Oceanic art.

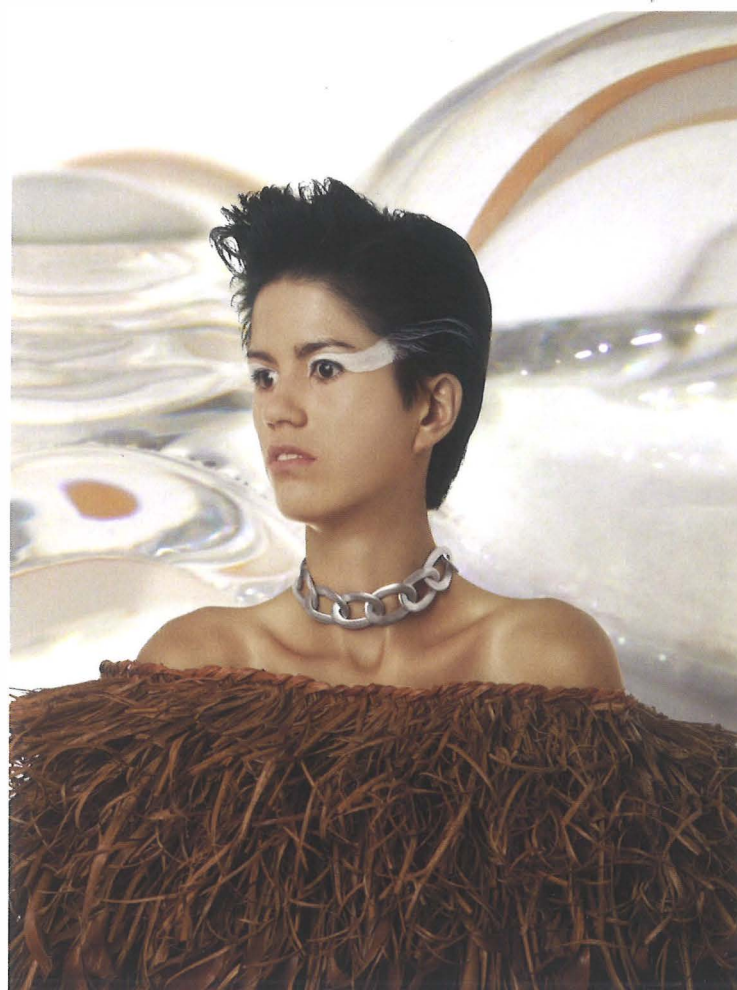
In 'Oceania: Imaging the Pacific', works by these artists sit alongside a younger generation of Aotearoa New Zealand artists, such as Peter Robinson, Ani O'Neill, Michael Parekowhai, Star Gossage, Reuben Paterson, and Sofia Tekela-Smith, illustrating points of intersection, where Western imaginings of the Pacific meet Oceanic realities and realisations—both Palagi and Pacific. Amongst this next generation, Greg Semu, Lisa Reihana, Shigeyuki Kihara and Edith Amituanai use photography to subvert art historical representations of imagined Oceanic realities to challenge and critique the contemporary currency of the Oceanic subject in Western art, media and popular culture.

**Shigeyuki Kihara** (concept developer) and **Duncan Cole** (photographer)  
*Daughter of the high chief* from the 'Savage nobility' series 2001  
 Gelatin silver photograph, 469 x 593mm  
 Courtesy of the artists



**Shigeyuki Kihara** (concept developer) and **Duncan Cole** (photographer)  
*The high chief and his subjects* from the 'Savage nobility' series 2001  
 Gelatin silver photograph, 593 x 469mm  
 Courtesy of the artists





**Lisa Reihana**

*Nga Hau e Wha* series, 2010

photographic prints, 1200 x 1600mm

Talent: Georgia Reihana-Wilson, Ruby Reihana-Wilson, Ariane Langford, Kiri Reihana-David

Crew: Robert Buck, Norman Heke, James Pinker, Trevor Potter

Weavers: Kohai Grace, Kataraina Hetet-Winiata, Sonya Snowden

Commissioned by Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

Image courtesy of the artist







Greg Semu's 'Battle of the Noble Savage', commissioned by the musée du quai Branly, Paris (2007), references Western depictions of Māori subjects to provide a satirical response to the 'noble savage' stereotype. Exploiting the classical romanticism of early colonial portraiture, Semu's fictional scenes of Māori engaged in battle hark back to paintings by Louis J. Steele, Nicholas Chevalier, Walter Wright and Charles F. Goldie. However, and more contentiously, Semu's images have a resonance with more contemporary images of Māori such as the 2007 Aotearoa New Zealand All Blacks 'Bonded by Blood' Rugby poster campaign. Demonstrating a similar romanticism, the poster depicts the All Blacks performing their signature haka amidst a tropical rain forest, replete with ancestral Māori figures silhouetted amongst the foliage. In an act of subversion, Semu's fictitious scenes both celebrate the 'warrior' spirit of Māori while alluding to the objectionable overtones of stereotypes which continue to have international purchase in the media today.

Similarly, issues around typecasting and the commercial utilisation of the indigenous subject have been consistent themes in the art of Reihana. Reihana's *Nga hau e wha* (2010) presents four beautiful Māori maidens re-imagined as the Four Winds. Reihana's subjects exude a glossy magazine aesthetic linking her imagery with the commercial trade in sexualised images of indigenous women. This trade, as seen in tourist advertising worldwide, is in the business of selling stereotypes and ideas of exotic beauty. The sexualised maiden, presented

as a recognizable and non-threatening enticement, is repackaged in 'ethnic' attire, offering a point of difference and subsequently more appealing attraction. This type of imagery in the Pacific can be traced back to the nineteenth century when postcards depicting young Pacific maidens, often topless and/or demonstrating a demure or docile demeanour, first entered the commercial market. These gave birth to local visions of the 'dusky (eyed) maiden' stereotype.<sup>7</sup> Here Reihana, like Semu, uses a subversive methodology to expose narratives around typecasting and the dynamics of indigenous representations in art and the media.

In *The high chief and his subjects* (2001) (see page 71) Shigeyuki Kihara and photographer Duncan Cole utilise fashion photography to offer contemporary critiques of the commodification and representation of Oceanic imagery and subjects. Presenting a fictitious scene in which a Samoan *matai* (chief) and his *aiga* (family) are adorned in urban street attire, Kihara and Cole allude to the balance between contemporary desires for Western clothing and material trappings and the need to retain those aspects of Pacific material culture which engender a degree of cultural autonomy. Originally composed as a Pacific fashion spread for the pop culture magazine *Pulp*, this image of Samoan/Niu Sila (New Zealand) youth culture expresses a uniquely hybrid sense of priorities and style. This generation of diasporic Pacific youth, in lieu of a physical connection to their island homelands, invests power and ideology in material culture as a connection to, or perhaps reminder of, ancestral customs

#### Greg Semu

*Amato Akarana-Rewi* from the 'Battle of the Noble Savage' series 2007  
photographic print mounted on light boxes, 1200 x 1200mm  
© musée du quai Branly, Paris, France







**Edith Amituanai**  
*Millennial* from 'Millennial' series, 2008  
 c-type photograph, 825 x 460mm  
 Courtesy of the artist and Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington

and traditions as a means of maintaining and strengthening cultural identity and connectedness to their *fa'a Samoa*.

Urban Pacific *aiga* or *kainga* (home or family unit) are also depicted in the photography of Edith Amituanai as a space of transition between the customary and the contemporary. Amituanai follows in the illustrious footsteps of senior documentary photographers such as Marti Friedlander and Ans Westra—two significant female photographers who, incidentally, also trace their cultural roots from outside of Aotearoa New Zealand. Typically utilising the conventions of portraiture, Amituanai also photographs lived in spaces which, despite the lack of a physical human subject, form an autobiographical account of *aiga* through the various treasures, mementos, furnishings and cultural paraphernalia on display. Like Kihara, Amituanai's portraits of migrant families depict people in pursuit of the 'New Zealand Dream', adjusting to the cultural coding of the West while seeking to retain a sense of cultural autonomy. However, unlike Kihara, Semu and Reihana, these works by Amituanai depict real people in their real environments, offering an earnest image of Samoan communities as they exist in Aotearoa New Zealand today.

Works by this generation of artists intentionally elicit diverse responses and seek to stir mixed emotions. They do not offer us passive images of unwitting indigenous subjects, nor are their subjects presented

as anthropological studies or 'ethnic' commodities; rather they are consciously composed acts of subversion and self representation, demonstrating the power of the artist as provocateur, challenging and testing the waters of what is real and what is imagined in the minds of audiences, both local and further afield.

### Reuben Friend

In memory of Jim Vivieaere (1947–2011)



Edith Amituanai

*The Manu Lounge* (detail), 2006

pigment inkjet print, 730 x 590mm

Courtesy of the artist and Robert Heald Gallery, Wellington



## Notes

### In Oceania

1. Epeli Hau'ofa, *We Are The Ocean*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press 2008, p54.
2. Involved in an arts project, sponsored by the Pew Environment Group, aimed at raising awareness of the Kermadec region, the group voyaged from Auckland to Nuku'alofa, via Raoul Island, 10–16 May 2011.
3. Epeli Hau'ofa, *ibid.*, pp32–33.
4. Untitled poem by John Pule, emailed to the author, 9 June 2011.
5. Email from Phil Dadson, 6 June 2011.
6. Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, New York: Harper & Brothers 1851, p536.
7. See *Matisse; His Art and His Textiles*, Ann Dumas, London: Royal Academy of Arts 2004.
8. Email from Robin White, 7 June 2011.
9. Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific; In the Wake of the Cook Voyages*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press 1992.
10. Bernard Smith, *ibid.*, p193.
11. This aspect of Pule's work is dealt with in *Hauaga; The Art of John Pule*, ed. Nicholas Thomas, Dunedin: Otago University Press 2010.
12. 'Town and Village', Albert Wendt, *Inside us the Dead*, Auckland: Longman Paul, 1976, p18.
13. Adrienne L. Kaeppler, *The Pacific Arts of Polynesia & Micronesia*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008, p147.
14. See Lara Strongman's essay in *Shane Cotton*, Wellington: City Gallery Wellington, 2003, p20.
15. Pablo Neruda, 'From Residence on Earth', unpublished translation by Gregory O'Brien.
16. Quoted in *Painting from the Pacific*, Auckland City Art Gallery exhibition catalogue, 1961, p41.
17. Gordon Brown in conversation with Gregory O'Brien, March 2011.
18. Inscription by McCahon on drawing entitled *McLeavey Sat Here* (1975), Collection of Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.
19. John Caselberg quoted in *Colin McCahon: Artist (New Edition)*, Gordon H. Brown, Auckland: Reed 1993, p180.
20. Epeli Hau'ofa, *ibid.*, p67.
21. As a film-maker inspired by numerous Oceanian traditions, Lye would repay his indebtedness to the region by influencing young Pacific video artists such as Lisa Reihana, Nova Paul and Veronica Vaevae—see Tessa Laird's 'Len Lye and colour: A Carnival of Soul' in *Len Lye*, ed. Tyler Cann & Wystan Curnow, New Plymouth: Govett Brewster Art Gallery and Len Lye Foundation 2009, pp137–152.
22. Email from Phil Dadson 15 June 2011.

### Beginning, and beginning

1. Email from Robin White, 2 June 2011. The 'island story' is a reference to the last line of Allen Curnow's poem 'Landfall in Unknown Seas' (part 3), in *Early days yet: new and collected poems, 1941–1997*, Auckland: Auckland University Press 1997.
2. *Robin White in Fiji, the Collaboration: A New Garden*, directed and produced by Ken Zemke, DVD, Auckland: ARK Productions 2010.
3. White, Robin, 'Art and Conservation are Synonymous', *Art New Zealand* 7, 1977, pp40–41.
4. 'Robin White in Kiribati', interview with Claudia Pond Eyley, *Art New Zealand* 31, 1984, p33.
5. See Ian Wedde, 'Welcome to the Pacific: Robin White, Richard Killeen and From Scratch', in *How to Be Nowhere: essays and texts, 1971–1994*, Wellington: Victoria University Press 1995, pp79–85.
6. Ian Wedde, *ibid.*
7. Email from Robin White, 6 April 2011.
8. Zemke, 2010, *ibid.*

### Re-imaging Oceania

1. Albert Wendt, 'Towards a New Oceania' in *Mana Review* 1 (1), Suva 1976, p49.
2. Epeli Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', in Eric Waddell, Vijay Naidu and Epeli Hau'ofa (eds.), *A New Oceania: Rediscovering our Sea of Islands*, Suva: University South Pacific, 1993, pp2–16.
3. Albert Wendt, *ibid.*, pp49–60.
4. Nicholas Thomas, *Possessions: Indigenous Art / Colonial Culture*, New York: Thames and Hudson 1999, pp6–49.
5. Jonathan Mane-Wheoki, 'The Resurgence of Māori Art: Conflicts and Continuities in the Eighties', in *The Contemporary Pacific* 7 (1), 1995, pp1–19.
6. Nicholas Thomas, 'From Exhibit to Exhibitionism: Recent Polynesian Presentations of "Otherness"', in *The Contemporary Pacific* 8 (2), 1996, pp319–348.
7. Jacqui Sutton Beets, 'Images of Māori Women in New Zealand Postcards after 1900', in Alison Jones, Phyllis S. Herda and Tamasailau Suaalii (eds.), *Bitter Sweet: Indigenous Women in the Pacific*, Dunedin: Otago University Press 2000, pp17–33.

## Acknowledgements

'Oceania', a collaborative exhibition project between City Gallery Wellington and Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, comprises two independent but complementary exhibitions. This publication, 'Oceania: Imagining the Pacific' documents the exhibition at City Gallery. We would like to express our heartfelt thanks to the following individuals and organisations, without whose help and support this publication would not have been possible.

Firstly, we acknowledge our 'Oceania' project partner, Te Papa Tongarewa, for their support in staff and resources, and the generous access they provided to the national art collection, without which we could never have realised this exhibition and accompanying publication. We have found it a pleasure to work collaboratively with the Te Papa Chief Executive, Kaihautū and dedicated professional staff.

We would like to gratefully acknowledge the many artists and lenders, public and private who have generously contributed to the project. We would also like to thank Limosene and Kay Neich, wife and daughter of the late Dr Roger Neich, to whom the publication and the exhibition at City Gallery are dedicated. Special thanks also to Roderick and Gillian Deane for their generous support of this publication.

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# Oceania: Imagining the Pacific

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**Paula Savage** is Director  
of City Gallery Wellington.  
Recent City Gallery  
publications include *Fiona  
Hall: Force Field* (2008) in  
partnership with Museum  
of Contemporary Art,  
Sydney and *Yayoi Kusama:  
Mirrored Years* (2009)  
in partnership with the  
Boijmans Museum,  
Rotterdam and the  
Museum of Contemporary  
Art, Sydney.

**Gregory O'Brien** is a  
poet, essayist and artist.  
Between 1996 and 2009  
he was a curator at City  
Gallery Wellington.

**Nicholas Thomas** is  
Director of the Museum  
of Archaeology and  
Anthropology at the  
University of Cambridge.  
His books include *Oceanic  
Art* (1995) and *Islanders:  
the Pacific in the Age of  
Empire* (2010), which  
was awarded the Wolfson  
Prize for History.

**Abby Cunnane** is curator  
of the Hirschfeld Gallery  
at City Gallery Wellington.

**Reuben Friend** is an artist  
and curator of the Deane  
Gallery at City Gallery  
Wellington.

Front Cover: **Sofia Tekela-Smith**  
*Savage Island Man with Pure*, 2003  
colour photograph, 1700 x 1300mm  
Courtesy of FHE Galleries, Auckland

Back Cover: Anonymous, tema (breast ornament), date unknown  
tridacane, 145mm (diameter)  
Collection of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa  
Gift of the Wellcome Museum, 1952

Page 2: **Group of Mamas: Maria Teokotai, Iva Cecil, Agnes Winchester,  
Noo Ngatuakana, Ake Mateariki, Mats Andrew, Nga Ponini, Aue Brown,  
Suzanne Moo**  
*Ina and the shark*, c.1990  
cotton, 2470 x 2570mm  
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