

# MANA MOTU

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# Tusi mai le malaga lelei / transcrire le bon voyage

By Léuli Eshraghi

> depuis longtemps  
je me retrouve dans les sons  
diphthongs, voyelles multiples  
de nos langues

français calédonien érigé  
en moi, autour et en toi  
ahou t'es calédonien ?  
tu votes pour Kanaky pour tous  
ou pour la République de trousse

des laissés-pour-compte  
affamés de clarté d'air  
affamés d'ignames d'hier  
en dépit des taros Bourbon

sais-tu ce qui se passe  
autrement dit  
entends-tu la coquille qui sonne  
faux

dans nos contrées  
les plus intimes  
nos vieux, nos petits  
enchantés par  
des vers rationnels  
oublie nos origines  
dénie notre dignité  
proclament le fondement actualisé  
de nos volcans, fleuves et hameaux  
dans l'Évangile et Genèse

Tagaloa-a-lagi s'entend parler  
dans le miroir des cœurs battus  
des derniers maîtres tatoueurs  
des derniers maîtres tresseurs  
des derniers maîtres navigateurs  
de nos îles damnées, vouées à l'oubli

plait-il ? petites îles  
lointaines  
petites  
parsemées sur la mappemonde

travailler plus pour galérer plus  
travailler dur pour voir le jour  
s'éclipser sans te toucher

4 toe-taumafa 2011 23h57

> for some time now  
i find myself in the multiple  
sounds, diphthongs, vowels  
of our languages

new caledonian french raised  
in me, around and in you  
ahou, t'es calédonien ?  
you vote for Kanaky for all  
or the Republic in the bag

the forgotten underclass  
hungry for clear air  
hungry for yesterday's yams  
despite the Bourbon taros

do you know what is happening  
otherwise said  
do you hear the shell that echoes  
false

in our most personal  
lands  
our elders, our young  
spellbound by  
rational verses  
forget our roots  
deny our dignity  
proclaim the updated foundation  
of our volcanoes, rivers and hamlets  
in Genesis and the Gospel

Tagaloa-a-lagi hears himself speak  
in the mirror of downtrodden hearts  
of the last master tattooists  
of the last master weavers  
of the last master navigators  
of our damned islands, called to be  
forgotten

please? small islands  
far  
small  
sprinkled on the world map

work more to struggle more  
work harder to see the day  
vanish without meeting you

4 toe-taumafa 2011 23h57

## **Daughters of the Diaspora.**

Edited by Torika Bolatagici

This conversation originally took place in 2008 and presents the diverse positions of young contemporary artists of the Pacific Island diaspora. Through informal discussions and interviews with diasporic women (including Fijian, Samoan, Cook Islander, Niuean and Maori) this paper draws out the voices of these women and their experience of the contemporary art scene and their feelings about Pacific Islander identity within the context of Australia and New Zealand.

Torika Bolatagici (TB): We are all artists whose practice spans different media, including sculpture, performance, installation, photography, illustration and video. How have your family, friends and community responded to what you do?

Chantal Fraser (CF): I have been fortunate - my family especially my parents and brothers have shown nothing but support and pride for my practice and the development of it. Maybe because it is bringing me closer to my culture and that's something my parents love, even if they don't understand the art. My family will help out with many projects, which almost makes the work collaborative. I remember working on one installation and my younger brother, Mum, Dad and I were all sitting in the living room watching TV and making 7 metre long paper leis!

They didn't need to understand theoretically what I was speaking about in the work - they just help. Those things are what are important to me as an artist. Because my family and the home we live in is a major source of influence, I find their involvement and presence indispensable to my work - the community also.

Salote Tawale (ST): Initially I was not in a supportive environment. It was a religious environment that didn't accept any alternative ways of being. I am supported by my family but I am also supported and accepted by my community.

Janet Lilo (JL): I was lucky I always had the support of my family and friends. They crack me up at art exhibitions, always taking the piss out of things. I like it because it's a real response. Like Chantal, my family are the same. There was this one time I wanted to papier mâché a full size car and I used my Mum's car as a model. I accomplished the task but there was a time in the process where my mother had to drive to the supermarket with the whole left side of the car covered with newspaper! My friends are also supportive – mainly because they are mostly artists too and they understand the importance of having a good community to share work with. If I ever have trouble about communicating my ideas I usually have a critique session with family and friends to see what they think and I find it encourages me to make more.

Ema Tavola (ET): The issue I had at art school was that the work I was making (which was thoroughly informed by institutionalised art and academic thought) did not resonate much beyond the walls of the art school and the gallery. I desperately wanted to make art more accessible, primarily to my friends and family, and this meant making work that also worked in Fiji, and in South Auckland. My work is still kind of informed by those things, but I guess I've just stopped subscribing to the art hype. And now I think more about placement, but because I work so tirelessly investing myself in Fresh Gallery Otara, I feel like exhibiting within formal gallery contexts is kind of balanced.

TB: I went through my undergraduate feeling like I had a responsibility to bring some 'brown-ness' into the classroom. It used to piss me off that the curriculum was so Euro-centric. I used to write my own essay and presentation questions so that the other students would learn about some non-white artists for a change. This is something that is really important to me now as an educator, and I have tried to address this through my teaching. Were there other brown women at art school?

ET: Not a lot at art school - only about four or five. Two Samoans and one Tongan kailoma/afakasi/hafekasi . But four years later there were more Pacific Island women than any other group.

CF: I was the only Pacific Islander. It was interesting, as I would sometimes have questions from audience members/students asking me very cultural questions about Samoan customs - as if I was an expert. Yet the premise of my art was dealing with being a half-caste Samoan, not speaking the language fluently and not being brown enough. Now I have heard from lecturers that there are more and more brown faces in the art schools, which means a lot of progression of the Brisbane art community.

ST: I met a Fijian/Italian woman in photography. But in art school there weren't really any Pacific Islanders.

JL: There were heaps of Pacific Islanders at university but not really in art school, though there has been a significant increase in the last ten years, which is really positive.

TB: Contemporary art by Pacific Islanders is still quite marginal in Australia and certainly doesn't have the profile that it has in New Zealand. Do you feel you have struggled, in relation to your art practice, because of your gender, ethnicity, class or a combination?

CF: Not really, in fact the opposite. I've been very lucky in Australia, maybe because our contemporary Pacific Art scene is still growing. However, sometimes when a gallery has exhibited a 'brown' person that year - they may leave your show till the next calendar (I worked in a gallery so you hear what staff take into consideration). But I'm working to change that! We have a long way to go over here but at least it's moving, and naturally as Islanders we find every other brown face and connect as one large community. As a woman I think there is still a stigma towards making 'beautiful island work' so change is needed there. I think the boys get a bit more of a look-in and there's still a bit of that perception boys make 'edgier' work which is frustrating. But as I said, we're working on it!

TB: I have always been aware of how fortunate I am to be able to set my own agenda. Many of my female cousins in Fiji have done well in school but their potential has been lost to other factors. Unlike them, there are more opportunities for women in Australia than in Fiji.

ET: My practice is not my life, because art making is not sustainable for me. I had never associated being an artist with economic sustainability! Art was the only thing I did really well at school, I struggled with everything else at all levels of school before University. After the 2000 coup, living in Suva, I was unemployed and I started painting at the Oceania Centre at the University of the South Pacific. I spent my days there and treated it like a 9-5 job. I decided then that I wanted to do this, more than anything. I'd never thought University would be fun, just something I had to do and had thought it would be work-providing and had contemplated law, business admin and graphic design. Art was the only thing that got me motivated. And now I curate. I still make art, but as a qualified sculptor, I apply a lot of my technical/academic learning to my curatorial practice, creating spaces. And now it's all about collaboration. Curating and collaborating allows me to network, and meet people and make people believe in ideas and artists, and this I love.

CF: Like Ema, my work is not sustainable due to the fact that lately I have not taken a very commercial route but nonetheless it is a stage I am happy to work within. I have always been guided by the need to be involved in a creative field, whether it be art, design, fashion, architecture or music.

When I left school I did a Diploma in Visual Arts and was completely guided by it. It seems I have a constant urge to make 'work' and that carried me on to University. I didn't particularly like Uni. In fact, I thought a lot of it was based around such 'wank' concepts and people. However I did well there and found my practice and the influences within my practice held me there so I continued.

JL: I have always wanted to make art. Ever since I was introduced to crayon and dye at five I fell in love. No shit. It's not that I thought I was good at it – and even now I feel the same way but it was the only subject that resonated inside of me naturally. I have a motivation for it like nothing else – the only other thing that surpasses that feeling by far is the love and motivation I have for people in my life – who fully support my nutty behaviour.

TB: We have all grown up in relatively supportive communities. It seems that the struggles we have each faced, have been due to external forces in terms of how people want to categorise 'who' we are and 'what we do'. As young women of the Pacific diaspora, how have you each negotiated a sense of identity within your respective environments?

ET: As the Pacific diaspora in New Zealand gets more socio-politically visible, the diversities within the 'Pacific' emerge, beyond social categorisation and national island affiliations. The generational sense of belonging has become more pronounced. Eg. New Zealand-born; Island-born; 'the troublesome half-caste'; mulatto; Island mother/father; new/old; New Zealand/Australian; Other...

JL: This is evident on all the forms we fill out in Auckland (Pacific peoples' capital). Over the years I have noticed more and more nationality boxes appear and an increase in the number of nationalities of 'Other'. We are living in a sea of difference for sure.

TB: Right, like a 'tick all that apply' approach.

JL: One thing that I'm not sure about is, how this can be avoided or how people can feel more confident in themselves with 'labels'? There is no shortage in the art-world of people making work about identity, especially Pacificans. Sometimes I wonder if it's more about validation as minority in context, rather than questioning identity. I know for myself sometimes it is validation.

When I was on Maori TV, I was presented as a 'Maori artist' and when I was on Tagata Pasifika they called me a 'Samoan artist' which I found quite funny. My Niuean Grandfather (bless his soul) would be upset with that. I wonder what I'd be if I was on Crimewatch - who would claim me then?

ST: Janet's point about validation really hit the spot. It is not about questioning for me. There is no question. I feel I sit on the edge of all worlds. My childhood years were spent in

a predominantly white neighbourhood. My Fijian/Australian face and body sit on the edge of these worlds. My language is white and my words are mocha. I feel the same way about gender and its fluidity in my life. It wasn't until meeting other Pacific artists that I realised this place that I sit is insider/outsider. Feeling completely uncomfortable with belonging to Fiji or/and Australia but at the same time feeling comfortable with who I am and knowing no different way to be. Last year I was making work about ideas of 'the exotic' and I think this directly comes from the way I have been received since placing myself in my work. Really for the last few years in Melbourne there haven't been many Pacific artists.

TB: I agree Salote. There certainly is a larger Pacific Islander presence in Sydney and Brisbane. In Melbourne, Pacific Islander artists are more underground and tend not to group based on ethnicity.

CF: I suppose there is a constant re-questioning and 'tug-of-war' between whether it is a pro or a con to be of a certain group – and as an afa tasi/half caste – there is always that invariable process of deconstructing what role you play/want around different audiences and environments. I was born in New Zealand, raised in Australia and have a Samoan background. I have found different audiences pose different levels of comfort when I speak about my work. For instance in school I was the Samoan, in University I was the Samoan, yet in Samoan circles, I was more the Palagi. I think it is very interesting how often you find yourself in a situation where you are the minority, quite often you become that category. And it's not a bad thing – just an absorbing occurrence of being in an existential world. Like many others, my sense of identity changes all the time and I often find myself at different times being a Samoan, or being a New Zealander or being an Aussie or all simultaneously.

TB: Yes, like Chantal, my sense of identity is fluid...there were times when I lived in Melbourne that I felt Fijian, sometimes I felt Tasmanian. Now that I am in Townsville, I feel like a Melburnian. In relation to my artwork, when I have created "self-portrait" identity-based work, I tend to feel more "Fijian/European", and I guess this is because I am generally creating work within Anglo-Australian context, for an Anglo-Australian audience. However, now that I am creating more "outward" looking work about race, masculinity, the body as commodity, militarism and war...I feel like an outsider. I feel like an Australian/Fijian artist making work about a problem that affects my extended family, but I am so conscious of my distance from the issues I am dealing with. And in a way, feeling less personally and emotionally attached has allowed me to look at the issues more objectively. But I can never deny the deeply personal place that the work comes from. How does your sense of identity impact on your practice?

CF: Different audiences almost create levels of comfort when I speak about being a Samoan and how that impacts on my practice. The language I use when speaking with others is determined by them, as an audience. One thing that stays the same is discussion of validation. In the earlier years of my practice I used to consider the referencing of my parent's home

a subconscious means of wanting to use my Samoan-ness in my art but being too afraid to broach it at a wider level. So if I stayed within my 'boundaries' in a sense, I would be more comfortable with the possibilities of scrutiny and questioning.

Through my art practice I have actually learned that my lived experience and the cultural experience I have had, I own – they are mine. It is comforting to have an art practice that helps you understand yourself and become closer to your heritage and family. I actually feel that my practice bridges the gap between my hybrids so I agree with Salote's statement that 'it wasn't until meeting other Pacific artists that I realised this place that I sit is insider/outsider'. I am happy to move between being subjective and objective.

TB: I think your description of your art practice as something 'that helps you understand yourself and become closer to your heritage and family' is beautiful! I have not thought about my work in that way before, and I think that is because of my own lack of self-reflection about why I do what I do. I don't feel like I have ever had to validate what I do either.... but then I haven't exhibited in the context of Fiji yet.

ET: In New Zealand, there's also the provincial/territorial attachments to certain areas where Pacific communities are strong (places like Glen Innes, Otara, Mangere, and Avondale and loads of places in Auckland and the rest of New Zealand), the schools, the suburbs within suburbs and the gangs etc.

JL: There certainly is. This was the design of the New Zealand government State housing which, as a result, formulated identities within a national identity operating at different scales. These Pacific communities are strong because they have to be. This country is young. Developed less than 200 years ago out of struggle for sovereignty and migration (and still under construction). This is evident in the reflection of communities developed currently.

These Pacific/Maori working class suburbs share a similar patriotic attachment because of this and because of where we fall on the map - located at the navel of the Pacific, neighbored by Australia and Pacific Islands - who were/are territories of colonisation.

There is no expectation like the middle to upper-class societies of going to school, university and 'overseas experience' - so the attachment is to location and place to validate identity in the suburbs and streets. It is financial as well as mental. My working-class parents never expected me to accomplish anything but survive and they would be more than happy if I worked in a plastic cup factory. As for gangs, Crips and Bloods are very similar to Labour and National political parties - red versus blue.

TB: So these ethnic and territorial attachments illustrate your insider/outsider status. Can you give me some examples of how this resonates through your work?

ET: Janet's work provides a window into the existence, lives and issues of a growing brown sector of society to dominant culture Pakeha New Zealand. Janet's music video work is excellent because it gives a microphone to a community within a community within a community and is a form of validation and celebration. This is in contrast to a longing and an angst for Pacific Island-ness or an 'authentic native state'. The rhythm and universal nature of music is fluid and accessible. It allows engagement beyond cultural parameters.

JL: It is easier for me to make work around these themes of Hip-Hop, Pacific and popular culture because of that role as 'insider'. However, I sometimes feel self-conscious about the validity of subject matter in an art context, and also coming from an academic (Western) context, blurring the role of 'insider' to 'outsider'. My initial intention was to address issues of identity and to also include different audiences. I didn't always enjoy the classic white middle-class audience. Having said that, it is not meant for any particular audience as it is about people - hopefully anyone can engage.

ET: I find that in Otago the response and engagement with visual art is more physical - more human. Does it move you? Does it make you think? Do you recognise it? How does it make you feel? It is beyond Western art categorisation. Like Janet's use of the music video and the engagement with real people (musicians). The work exists beyond the Gallery. It exists in spaces that are Pacific; on TVs in lounges, on Bebo pages, in Fresh Gallery Otago. The ownership of creative expression and art as an expression of belonging within a New Zealand context is becoming more democratic, less prescribed.

That's the whole thing with Fresh Gallery Otago, the notion that work by contemporary Pacific artists is read and understood in a whole different way than purely within an art/gallery context. But then it's not just about the Pacific, it's about a metropolitan diaspora in an urban Pacific New Zealand context. And there is recognition of this social space in the maturing of the Pacific/New Zealand arts landscape with the inclusion of Janet Lilo and Genevieve Pini in national exhibitions like 'Telecom Prospect' (curated by Emma Bugden) and 'Samoa Contemporary' (curated by Helen Kedgley).

TB: There have been some interesting articles written recently, about curating exhibitions by diasporic artists in the Asia Pacific region. In your experience how have you approached the work of Pacific Islanders in Australia and New Zealand. What have you observed? What have you experienced? Does 'thematic relevance' become a secondary consideration when curators approach 'contemporary Pacific art'?

ST: In the last few years I feel like my in-between-Pacificness is what has given me many interesting opportunities. I was able to show in New Zealand and be in a really cool show in Campbelltown, NSW. Initially I found this confronting because of my issues regarding identity and my relationship to my Pacific heritage; growing up not surrounded by Fijian life. The implication was that I felt disconnected from the very world I was being curated for.

But really, most of the shows have been about diaspora so I have felt really comfortable in that place because it is my life. I was really hesitant to be labeled as any kind of artist, Pacific, gay, Melbourne. But it seems that I have been labeled at different times as different things.

TB: You have also been commissioned for a number of works over the years. How have you found this process, and how you approached this work?

ST: Being commissioned to do stuff has actually made me chill out a bit. I realised that I can only make what I'm going to make. You don't have absolute reign over all of the parameters but I make contextual work anyway. Only half of the shows I've been commissioned for have been Pacific themed.

CF: The curatorial conditioning for exhibitions of diasporic content can be deconstructed in many ways. Is it this conditioning that determines and therefore categorises an artist as being ethnic/multi-ethnic? Is it constructive or is it another form of slotting a multi-racial artist within a box? These are questions that one, as an artist, considers and observes constantly during the course of being a diasporic artist.

For myself, I can honestly state that I have had many opportunities to exhibit by being a Pacific Islander who's work has elements of being a Samoan but is by no means traditional 'Pacific Art'. Curatorial briefs have not prompted applications to be included but rather have seen curators seek me out to fill their brief in exhibiting contemporary art of a Pacific context. In saying that, the majority of group shows I have exhibited in have been with other contemporary artists of a Pacific Island background which has been beneficial as its created a verbal database of Islanders who are artists living in Australia.

There is the discomfort of not knowing whether you are a subject of 'box-ticking', which at times can prompt you to question your own abilities and integrities as a young contemporary artist as opposed to a young contemporary Pacific artist. Am I only in this show because I'm Samoan? How many shows have I been in where I am not identified as a Samoan artist? Is my Samoan-ness spoken about and referenced more so than the art? These are questions I have struggled with in the past.

Sometimes it can feel like that and judging from the many shows I have been invited to join, it seems being a Pacific Islander is 'so hot right now'. I've had instances where a project manager from an arts organisation blatantly said 'it's always nice to tick that box'! Another has attempted to make the work look 'a bit more Islander' asking me to use feathers; straw and other Islander-esque stuff to 'weave' into whatever I was making. This brings me back to the topic of thematic relevance and how at times, an artist's ethnicity can most certainly (and often is) treated as a substitute. There is always the potential for miscommunication and error in curatorial conditioning of diasporic art.

For many diasporic people art and life is an amalgamation of experiencing and linking one's hybrids. Being away from a homeland is another thing in itself and discovering what it is about linking these hybrids is what it is exciting as an artist. Knowing that you are unique because not only do you have this impulse of drawing from your culture but you have the ability to live within a 'sub-culture'. For me that is the Pacific Island community within Brisbane, within Australia. That in itself is another 'culture' on its own – which is very different to that of Apia or Auckland or Melbourne and for myself, I see there is a distance and otherness but at the same time, there are cultural traditions within this contemporary community that have been re-contextualised from the homeland and I think that's unique. So all facets of my cultural environment are important to my practice and I try and reiterate that often – whether it's to limit the possibility of being categorised – I'm not sure.

TB: And in the context of New Zealand?

JL: I have mostly been approached by non-Pacific communities/peoples to show work, within New Zealand, Europe, Asia and Australia and the work I have submitted for those projects have related to 'urbanisation' as well as 'Pacific Identity'- which both go hand in hand really. Sometimes I admit I feel like a 'brown' pick for various events, and yes I do believe in some instances it probably was based on my ethnicity rather than the quality of work.

I find the roles of curator, artist and space an interesting combination because I don't think that it is always a necessary combination for art practice in the first place. There are definitely other contexts besides the gallery space to present work but I see it is predominantly the only place where artists feel their work can exist.

It can be a negative thing but it doesn't have to be, depending on how you position yourself and work in context. Importantly there should also be other contexts and spaces that work can exist in other than the reliance of a gallery space/context. My next exhibition at Fresh Gallery Otara is something that I look forward to because of the prospect of having a browner audience/community is exciting and it feels close.

ET: From a New Zealand perspective, only having been practicing as an artist in Auckland for the past 6 years, there used to be a lot of ethno-shows, and it was enough that the artists were ethnic Pacific Islanders, the ethnic curatorial drive seemed to celebrate all things Pasifika – motifs, traditions, visual and performance culture etc. The work was not openly critiqued as non-Pacific work might be in the art mainstream – because it was deemed a celebratory act, more than a selective, artistic act, to curate Pacific art.

These exhibitions did give platforms for exposing Pacific artists, giving these artists professional development opportunities, exposure, opportunities to network with other Pacific artists across the spectrum. Organisations like Tautai Trust have been at the forefront of this movement in Auckland.

The more popular and regular these ethno-specific Pacific exhibitions became, there is a feeling I think that a Pacific aesthetic emerged, which was both positive and negative. Positive in that it offered a new framework and accessibility for reading and appreciating contemporary Pacific visual languages, or at least those that showed obvious ethnic indicators. But negative in that Pacific artists who did not fit the framework then encountered the situation of being 'un-Pacific'. Artists like part-Cook Island New Zealand artist Ani O'Neill started to show how Pacific-ness (Pacific influence/enquiry) can overlap/exist as an equal within mainstream/high-art contexts. Part-Tongan visual artist Emily Mafile'o represents through documentary photography New Zealand-Pacific lives and spaces, and she was one of two Pacific artists included in the Auckland Triennale in 2004.

More and more there is an international art fetish for 'in-between-ness', conflict, migration and convergence which are realities for people all over the world. In recent years New Zealand has embraced its geo-political location, as a Pacific [Rim] nation with a unique and powerful indigenous history. Internationally, the Pacific-ness and the indigeneity of New Zealand are currencies of difference, interest and authenticity. Contemporary Pacific art has more control/freedom and space to grow and define itself these days.

TB: What about your specific role as a curator within a contemporary Pacific gallery?

ET: In a curatorial capacity, I'm interested in contemporary Pacific art that articulates contemporary Pacific realities/experience. Within the context of Fresh Gallery Otara – it's about art made by Pacific artists and part of a Pacific consciousness in South Auckland. I want to see contemporary Pacific art valued as important, not only in economic terms but in a socio-historical sense, and to dismantle some of the existing stigma that gallery-based art is not in essence 'Pacific'. I like to encourage artists to be accountable to the communities they speak of/to.

JL: Yes Ema, you are indeed right about the context of Pacific art as celebratory as opposed to non-Pacific mainstream art. I think that this is a very interesting point to note in regards to where we currently sit and are about to move. Under that umbrella as being 'un-Pacific' I still see my work as having a strong Pacific-aesthetic through subject matter.

TB: Perhaps in the past, mainstream art audiences have needed the motifs to be able to recognise and interpret the work. Do you perceive any audience shifts? Do you think there is a growing understanding of contemporary Pacific art in Australia and New Zealand?

CF: I think that the understanding and interest is growing in Australia, however, very slowly and I think our role as artists at this time often switches to that of the 'educator'. At a time where most Australians still do not know much about Pacific Islanders as a whole, let alone contemporary Pacific Art, I find that dialogue, conferences, artists talks and the like almost become educational experiences where you often need to give the audience a quick run

down of your particular culture and how it influences you then go into talking about the art. At times it can be frustrating but it's important to play a role in maintaining the development of the Pacific diaspora. But there's also the argument of what is contemporary Pacific Art? Is it art that draws from and has references to Pacific Island culture? Is it art made from artists who have Pacific blood? Is it art that is made in the Pacific islands? I guess it can be all of that and more. The great thing is that all these questions and experiences are creating discussion and that's vital.

ET: It's happening slowly. But even in Fresh, it's a challenge. The art/academic audience is always the first to shift and the mainstream audience comes after. I still have people who want to come in and buy frangipani paintings and when I introduce them to the Pacific art and artists on display they often feel they need to clarify to me what they mean by "Pacific art", and that the new mediums being used by contemporary Pacific artists, like Cook Island video installation artist Leilani Kake, are not 'true Pacific art'.

Nowadays in my work, attempting to shift audience perceptions is an underlying impetus for my art making. I liked using the stag a lot, because I loved that it pissed people off – 'the deer isn't even from the Pacific', that's not Pacific art when we use foreign objects/ideas?! I love painting on newspaper too, thinking about subverting the value associated with fine art and painting.

TB: Do you think that cutting-edge galleries like Fresh Gallery Otago have had any impact on the way more commercial, or mainstream galleries and institutions approach contemporary Pacific art?

ET: Fresh Gallery Otago is riding at the top of this great contemporary Pacific art wave, and in our second year, I'm starting to see the profile the Gallery has nationally and internationally. It just excites me because we've done it on a shoe-string budget, and it has been stressful at times but it's worth it because the artists, and the art, and the ideas are so 'now' and relevant, and global and local.

JL: With the growing number of contemporary Pacific artists/ practitioners, the demand and need is imperative for a wider understanding in interpreting Pacific art. Another interesting thing to highlight is the blurring of disciplines (plus digital technology) in art schools in New Zealand over the last ten years. This has changed what people are producing, including myself. My undergraduate degree was in sculpture and video and my post-graduate was in video and installation.

I think it's a lot more common for people to do more than one thing or dip into other mediums, which means the audience needs to read into a number of separate ideas or aesthetics associated. Another reason could be that the motifs were regularly used by artists that were mostly self-taught in previous generations whereas now, there has been an increase of

'formally trained' Pacific artists emerging – with respect paid to those previous generations.

The difficulty I find with being a consciously educated Pacific/Maori artist is that I am trying to engage with various audiences on different levels without compromising my ideas and to tell the truth I find it really hard. It's not a matter of trying to please audiences but to have a balance. This is where being dynamic is a challenge for me.

The other challenge is related to the context of where work sits in relation to all of these considerations. I'm interested in making work that is based on simple ideas and is open for discussion at any level of sophistication. I welcome criticism from grassroots to academic equally.

CF: I have to agree with this also. My work engages the smallest incidentals of Pacifica experienced through my life, my home, my friends, my community and is open to many forms of critique prompting discussion from all different levels and audiences and that diversity is what makes a practice so much richer.

Torika Bolatagici: [torikabolatagici.com](http://torikabolatagici.com)

Chantal Fraser: [chantalfraser.blogspot.com.au](http://chantalfraser.blogspot.com.au)

Janet Lilo: [janetliloart.com](http://janetliloart.com)

Ema Tavola: [pimpiknows.com](http://pimpiknows.com)

## **Anglophonie.**

By Léuli Eshraghi

complacent anglophonie  
/ values transmitted  
aggressive, economic  
in language self-policy  
patriated  
monolingual outlook  
and expectance  
alas your rejection of  
(my) diversity...  
‘e te fia talanoa i gagana  
sāmoa po’o falani  
pisilama po’o papūa  
sepani po’o peretānia?

## **An uncertain future.**

By Taloi Havini.

The homes of many Pacific islanders are threatened by increased storm surges, rising sea levels and sinking atolls, creating a growing number of environmental refugees. Here, researcher Taloi Havini highlights the plight of one such group, the Carteret Islanders.

Throughout much of the Pacific, the tribal possession of land underpins the traditions and beliefs that define the Custom or Kastom of each culture. But when ownership of land is threatened or people lose their land, what then becomes of these cultures?

Several Pacific communities in tropical and sub-tropical regions are set to lose their low-lying islands. Increased coastal erosion – caused by changes in climate, weather patterns and unpredictable seasons – are greatly affecting the daily lives of these communities who live by their traditional Kastoms. This situation now faces the people of the Tulun or Carteret Islands, located 120 kilometres north-east of Bougainville. The Carteret Islanders urgently need to relocate their population of over two thousand to the Bougainville ‘mainland’ and are reportedly the world’s first environmental refugees. Their circular atoll, with a total land area of 0.6 square kilometres, has a maximum land height of just 1.2 metres above sea level.

Over the last ten years, people have witnessed the loss of sixty per cent of their land, and the islands are expected to disappear completely by 2015. Further to the east, the islands of Kiribati and Tuvalu are similarly endangered. But the land will become uninhabitable long before it finally succumbs to the sea. The people report that the encroaching sea also

threatens the sustainability of their natural resources and agricultural livelihood – saltwater intrusion into water tables is compounding a lack of other freshwater sources, and high king tides and tidal waves have exhausted all physical efforts, such as planting mangroves and building sea walls, to halt coastal erosion.

Having accepted the inevitable, the Carteret people are demonstrating remarkable resilience and resourcefulness. In the 2008 Environmental Advocacy Youth Forum held in Bougainville, Pacific Black Box provided a platform for youth to express their concerns on climate change. They face not just the loss of their land but also the problem of preserving Kastom in resettled areas. Delegate Jerryanne Hugo, 17, offered a frightful insight into the complexities of migration and its wider impact across the Pacific Rim. ‘Where will we go? Will we be able to live together? At the same time, we don’t want to lose our way of life, our families, our clans and our culture. We grieve for our lost past as we prepare to leave our island home’, she said.

Another forum participant and Carteret Islander, Ursula Rakova, appeals to industrialised countries to take more responsibility for tackling climate change. ‘Carteret Islanders are victims of climate change. We do not emit greenhouse [gases], let alone drive cars on the island; [we] do not have an airstrip on the island; yet we have become victims of others’ doing’, she said at the 2007 UN Climate Change Convention in Bali. A strong advocate for her people and the founder of community group Tulele Peisa (which means to ‘ride the waves on their own’), she points to the need for greater awareness of the problems, as well as more urgent action from industrialised nations, to finance relocation and adaptation, deploy ‘climate friendly’ technologies, commit to reduced greenhouse gas emissions, and develop other policies that tackle the effects of climate change on vulnerable communities.

‘Environmental refugees are not well provided for, perhaps due to the fact that there is limited knowledge about climate change [in the Pacific]. At present there is only support for emergency services, but not for environmental refugees’, she said. Yet it is food insecurity and decreasing supplies of fresh water that are likely to be the main health threats from climate change, according to the United Nations. And these will affect developing countries first, compounding existing poverty and hunger unless prompt and urgent measures are taken at the local and grassroots level. For its part, Australia acknowledged the reality of climate change, with then Prime Minister Rudd’s prompt support for the UN’s climate roadmap and Kyoto Protocol to take effect by 2013.

While acknowledging that Australia is now placed to take a leading role in the Pacific, the Carteret Islanders have little time to lose. Committees such as the Carteret Integrated Relocation Program have identified the most pressing local need as greater advocacy on climate change and its impacts. They also want to continue their relationship with their island, their history and their roots.



Image credit: Photo by Carl Bento © Australian Museum 2013.

The islanders are proactive in their own relocation strategies and have begun by sourcing five safe homes for families on nearby north Bougainville. When asked of their fate as environmental refugees, the islanders defiantly place the maintenance of their cultural identity as a top priority. Of their historical experiences, the elders recite their Tulun ancestors related to the Hanahan people of Buka in north Bougainville. For hundreds of years they occupied the atolls and traded over long distances as skilful sea voyagers. One tangible example of their Kastom is beroana (shell money).

Highly prized and once widely traded, this traditional currency is made from the shell of a marine clam, *Tridacna*. It is used in land transactions, weddings, funerals and for other ritual purposes; and once again, beroana will be exchanged, this time for the land provided to the refugees in Bougainville.

It is clear that the challenges of climate change require the combined efforts of governments, multinational companies, aid agencies, local leaders and vulnerable communities. Nowhere is this more pressing than in the Pacific, where thousands of people will need to relocate within the decade. And among the first of these are the Carteret Islanders who, despite their vulnerability, are actively addressing major global issues through their traditional Kastom.

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Further reading:

Teacher's Domain Digital Media for the Classroom and Professional Development Climate Change and the Pacific Islands Special Collection: [teachersdomain.org/special/pacific](http://teachersdomain.org/special/pacific)

Pacific Black Box: [pacificblackbox.com.au](http://pacificblackbox.com.au)

Tulele Peisa: [tuelepeisa.org](http://tuelepeisa.org)

United Nations Development Program, 2008. Human Development Report 2007–08.

***Taloi Havini is a co-founding member of Pacific Black Box and is an Indigenous researcher, artist and curator currently based in Melbourne. She is a descendant of the Nakas clan, north-east of Buka Island, from the Autonomous Region of Bougainville.***

**En moi les morts (à ma péléina Tinā) | In me the dead (for my dear Tinā)**

By Léuli Eshraghi

En moi

Les nésiens du passé.

Voyageurs sages.

Expérimentés.

Serviteurs pieux de Tagaloa, de Papatū  
et de Papa'ele.

Emprunts de fierté et  
d'honneur, ils me chantent  
une prière généreuse.

Une ancêtre chinoise en  
tenue mandarine.

Transposée à une île  
s'appelant à jamais 'Upolu.

Humide et étrangère.

Sienne par le partage du respect du rang.

In me

Nesians of the past.

Wise travellers.

Experienced.

Pious servants of Tagaloa, of Papatū  
and of Papa'ele.

Filled with pride and  
honour, they sing to me  
a generous prayer.

A Chinese ancestor  
in mandarin dress.

Transposed to an island  
forever called 'Upolu.

Damp and foreign.

Hers by sharing the respect of rank.

## **Urban Natives: identity conversations in contemporary Pacific Art.**

By Pauline Vetuna

What does it mean to be a 'native', or an indigenous Pacific person, in contemporary Australia? *So Fukin Native* was an exploration of that question. This visual arts exhibition, curated by Léuli Eshraghi and myself, featured works from eight cutting-edge Aboriginal and Pacific Islander artists, and one accomplished Anglo-Australian performance artist. It also won the Best Visual Arts Show Award for The Melbourne Fringe Festival 2012.

The curatorial concept behind *So Fukin Native* was consciously, ironically, deceptively simple. It centred on one word, six letters that together still connote so many different impressions to different people, layered with meaning through broad historical forces and divergent subjective experiences: NATIVE.

Representations of Aboriginal and Pacific Islander peoples, and 'natives' in general, continue to be highly exoticised, and alternately homogenised, in Western cinema, literature, media, art, and across colloquial sites. 'Native' representations range from fond, romantic idealisations to barely concealed condescension.

As young urban citizens of Australia, with 'native' lineages tracing to Samoa/Iran and Papua New Guinea respectively, Léuli and I bear witness to the array of conflicting responses that are elicited as individuals living life in a Western context, negotiating the complexities of personal identity not merely between and within cultures, but within subcultures, social circles (our modern 'tribes'), families, and our intimate relationships.

That complexity of identity in a cosmopolitan (or, more specifically, Western) setting remains a vital topic for discussion, and muse of abundance, for contemporary Pacific Islander artists living as individuals in the diaspora – particularly for those artists born or raised in the West. In *So Fukin Native*, we sought to explore these tensions, connections, and contradictions.

The esteemed artists we selected for the exhibition were asked to reflect upon sexuality, power, politics, language, and contemporary identity; to further unpack the layers of a loaded term that means different things to different people. Ironically, our deep respect for the complexity and diversity of our human experiences and perspectives as ‘Native’ peoples, necessitated that the brief be spacious and simple.

The result, however, was a sophisticated, profoundly rich, diverse yet cohesive selection of works, across a stunning array of visual mediums. Perhaps one of the strongest themes of this exhibition was the position of native peoples in contemporary society. This theme was evident in a number of the works in the nuanced creations of the contemporary Pacific Islander artists included.

Chantal Fraser and Chuck Feesago’s video projection *other Other* (2012), for example, explores the tensions of being both social insiders and outsiders. It features two separate projections, one of each artist’s face. The projections merge halfway into each face thus creating a central layered image, a new ‘Other’. Both artists live at either side of the Pacific, one in Brisbane, the other in Los Angeles, both belonging to the same diaspora but at the same time, not.

Torika Bolatagici’s projection *NeoGeoNative* (2012) is about what Bolatagici describes as both her attraction and repulsion to the appropriation of Indigenous motifs in contemporary fashion, often marketed as “tribal”. In this work, Bolatagici edited store bought examples of these patterns into a seductive and hypnotic kaleidoscope of colour. Whilst the work still references the Indigenous Pacific designs that they were appropriated from, they are simultaneously completely decontextualised, and aesthetically repackaged.

Photographer Greg Semu’s work distinguishes itself by its examination of Pacific Islander identity both past and present. Colonial photography that idealised the noble savage is channeled and interrogated in his portrait of contemporary Maori artist *Tuane Tangaroa* (2006). Whilst the large photographic work *The Apostles 1, 2 + 3* (2011) is an iconoclastic challenge to the contradictory influence of Christianity in Island cultures.

And Latai Taumoepeau, with Anglo-Australian dancer Kathy Cogill, explores the theme of the meaning of national identity in the irreverent *Sideshow* (2011). This video piece shows both artists, side by side, performing with a selection of cultural icons. Each take familiar

symbols of identity and completely subvert expectations, dressing up and dressing down, contorting their bodies in a confronting display that makes one question – or want to defend – the “sacredness” of these cultural symbols.

Examining Pacific Islander and individual identity, the position of native peoples in contemporary society, and the overwhelming influence of Western culture, all remain vital topics of discussion for artistic and intellectual discourse – as relevant today as they were for the Pacific Islander artists of the diaspora that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s.

But the conversation about identity has and is evolving, with new generations of contemporary artists exploring not merely migration, and the ongoing effects of colonialism, but heralding – by their mere existence and through the individuality manifest in their creative work – new cultural and political conversations, in an increasingly complex, consumerist, and dynamic world.

***Pauline Vetuna is a Melbourne-based freelance writer, currently studying playwriting and screenwriting. Her focus is on creating and promoting consciousness-raising stories, art and media representations that reflect the soul of human experience, and the reality of the diversity of cultural viewpoints within contemporary society. She blogs at [paulinevetuna.wordpress.com](http://paulinevetuna.wordpress.com)***



## **Forum panelists**

### **Mobilizing Pasifika: Intersections of art, activism and community:**

Nic Maclellan, Ronny Kareni, Airileke Ingram, Natalie Pa'apa'a,

Chair: Lia Pa'apa'a

### **Who Will Claim Me: Authenticity and identity in contemporary art of the Pacific diaspora:**

Kirsten Lyttle, Jacob Tolo, Maryann Talia Pau, Léuli Eshraghi

Chair: Torika Bolatagici

### **Addressing the Archive: Pacific collections in Australian museums and galleries:**

Lisa Hilli, Sana Balai, Taloi Havini, Thelma Thomas

Chair: Namila Benson



## **Sana Balai**

Sana (Susan) Balai was born on Buka Island, Autonomous Region of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea. An applied science graduate, Sana spent 13 years working for Bougainville Copper Limited (a subsidiary of CRA/Rio Tinto) in the Analytical, Environmental Research and Development Studies Laboratories (Bougainville, Papua New Guinea), Pilbara Laboratories Niugini Limited (Lae, Papua New Guinea), and Papua New Guinea Analytical Laboratories (Lae, Papua New Guinea). Sana began her museum career in the Indigenous department at Melbourne Museum, 1997-2002, which led to her employment at the National Gallery of Victoria in July 2003. A member of Pacific islands' Advisory committee to the Melbourne Museum, 1994-99, a member of the planning committee of Pacific Islands' festival held at the Immigration Museum (Melbourne) in association with the 2006 Commonwealth Games, and was the appointed Community Liaison (Victoria) for the Board of Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies (AAAPS) from 2010 – 2012. Sana is an active member of the Papua New Guinea and Pacific Islander communities in Melbourne; she's an assistant curator of Indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria with art of the Pacific as her main focus.



## **Namila Benson**

Music, culture and the arts is a way of life for ABC broadcaster, Namila Benson. Over the years, Namila has combined these passions via the worlds of radio, blogging and television. Outside of the ABC, she regularly MCs and moderates at various festivals, conferences and high-profile events; ensuring always to bring a touch of her beloved Oceania. Merging her Pacific and Australian worlds, Namila uses the platforms of media and public speaking to explore issues of race, ethnicity, cultural imagery, traditional vs contemporary and other pertinent elements of identity. Most recently, she was the producer/presenter of the “Forbidden Fruits” conversation series at Sydney’s Museum of Contemporary Art. This series is part of conceptual/visual artist, Brook Andrew’s *TABOO* exhibition and the conversations - which focus on gender, anthropology, ‘Otherness’, morality, race, sexuality and more - will continue in various forms across Australia.



## **Torika Bolatagici**

Torika was born in Tasmania and spent the early years of her life living between Hobart, Sydney and her father's village Suvavou.

Her interdisciplinary practice investigates the relationships between visual culture, human ecology and contemporary Pacific identities. She works across a range of media, including photography, video and mixed-media installation. Her photographic and video work has been exhibited in the United States, Mexico, Aotearoa and Australia. Most recently her series *Export Quality* (2009/13) was selected for the 7th Asia Pacific Triennial, *20-Year Archive* project with Teresia Teaiwa and Mat Hunkin.

Torika has published and presented locally and internationally about contemporary visual culture, gender, identity and the Pacific. She is a member of the advisory committee for *New Scholar* journal; the International Working Group on Militarism and Gender in the Pacific and Big Island Collective.

Torika is a lecturer in the School of Communication and Creative Arts at Deakin University where she teaches contemporary photographic theory and practice, and a doctoral candidate in the Centre for Contemporary Art and Politics at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales.

[torikabolatagici.com](http://torikabolatagici.com)



## **Léuli Eshraghi**

A Sāmoan Persian artist and curator, Léuli is drawn to socially informed cultural representation. His arts practice within painting and printmaking references family histories, spirituality and connection to place through a personal Sāmoan visual language. Most recently in *POTU AIGA* (2012), sentiments of gain and loss were explored through the circular migration saga of ancestral figure 'Apa'ula in her adopted village below Mount Vaea.

His curatorial practice is centred on the critical treatment of Oceanian histories in Australia and abroad. He co-curated *So Fukin Native* (2012), winner of Melbourne Fringe 2012 Best Visual Arts Show, where Aboriginal and Pacific Islander artists challenged pejorative speech, ironic hipster fashion and derivative symbolic treatment with simultaneous reclamations of cultural trajectories. He was also co-curator of the Wilin Centre 10th anniversary exhibition *Wilin 10* (2012), profiling alumni and graduate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists across nations, mediums and experimentations.

Léuli is Arts Programs Coordinator at the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. He has worked in arts development and advocacy at Kultour (2010-2011) and Arts Industry Council Victoria (2010) and arts programming at Island Vibe Festival (2007-2009). Léuli was founding Curator-Coordinator of Heartlands Refugee Fine Art Prize (2010) and French-English interpreter at the 13th Pacific Games (2007), the Australian Festival of Travel Writing (2010) and the AWME (2011).



## **Taloi Havini**

Taloi Havini is a descendant of the Nakas clan, north-east of Buka Island in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville. Currently based in Melbourne, Taloi is an independent curator, researcher and artist who is actively involved in cultural heritage projects and is a co-founding member of Pacific Black Box.

[pacificblackbox.com.au](http://pacificblackbox.com.au)



## **Lisa Hilli**

Melbourne based, Papua New Guinean born visual artist Lisa Hilli draws upon her bi-cultural identity to create works of art that span across mediums such as video art installation, sculpture, live V-Jing, community film-making and most recently; weaving. Lisa utilises her arts practice as a process to learn and gain knowledge about cultural histories, customs and maintain what she inherits by applying these traditions through a contemporary context.

Currently Lisa is working on a cultural revival project with elders from her Tolai community through a self-initiated mentorship with the Australia Museum. Lisa is a co-founder of the Pacific Women's Weaving Circle and co facilitator of Story Weavers: Pacific Youth Filmmaking Project, a satellite event for the Contemporary Pacific Arts Festival 2013.

[lisahilli.com.au](http://lisahilli.com.au)



## **Kirsten Lyttle**

Kirsten Lyttle is a Melbourne based multi-media artist. She is currently a candidate for a Master of Fine Art at RMIT University. In 2008, she completed a Fine Art Degree with Distinction, majoring in photography from RMIT University.

Kirsten has exhibited in Rome, Auckland and Melbourne. In 2012, she won the Patrick Corrigan AM Acquisitive Award as part of the 2012 *Kodak Salon*, Centre for Contemporary Photography. In 2009, she was awarded a mentorship with Naomi Cass as part of the *Outside Eye: Melbourne Fringe Professional Development Program* for her solo Fringe show, *He Was an Alien in the Pacific* (2009); Brunswick Arts Space, Brunswick. Throughout her work she has been exploring issues of post-colonialism, identity, gender, and consumerism, which has been informed by her Maori and Pakeha heritage (Iwi/tribe: Waikato, tribal affiliation: Ngaa-ti Taghina, Tainui A Whiro).

In 2011 she joined the Pacific Women's Weaving Circle. Kirsten currently teaches in the Visual Art program at the School of Art-RMIT TAFE.



## **Nic MacLellan**

Nic Maclellan works as a journalist and researcher in the Pacific islands. He is a correspondent for Islands Business magazine (Fiji) and has contributed as a broadcaster and journalist to Radio Australia, *Tahiti-Pacifique* magazine, *The Contemporary Pacific* and other regional media.

For thirty years, Nic has travelled throughout the Pacific islands and is co-author of a number of books on the region. He has organised community campaigns on development, decolonisation and demilitarisation, and between 1997-2000 worked for the Pacific Concerns Resource Centre (PCRC) in Suva – the secretariat of the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific (NFIP) movement.



## **Lia Pa'apa'a**

Lia Pa'apa'a is a Samoan/Luiseño Native American woman who lives and works in the Western suburbs of Melbourne. Lia is an Event Director, weaver, and community arts worker. Lia has been involved in many Community Arts projects across Indigenous Community Festivals, film, theatre, fashion and visual arts. Lia brings a wealth of knowledge across the Arts sector and a passion for empowering Pacific and Indigenous communities through the arts.



## **Natalie Pa'apa'a**

Hailed by Santana as “The voice of the street and the band of the future!” Blue King Brown, 2011 ARIA nominated artist, is Australia’s premier 8 piece live urban roots crew. Lead by the multi talented, relentless energy of Natalie Pa’apa’a; powerful vocal and lyrical delivery’s meet a dancehall, roots, rock and afro groove mash-up built on an irrepressible percussive foundation.

Their power packed live show is second to none and now world renowned, they’ve played across the planet, through Europe, UK, Canada, USA and Japan rocking crowds from Tokyo to Texas and everywhere in between, Having shared stage and opened for the likes of Santana, Damian Marley, Julien Marley, Spearhead, John Butler, The Cat Empire, Lauryn Hill to name a few.

[bluekingbrown.com](http://bluekingbrown.com)



## **Maryann Talia Pau**

Born in Apia, Samoa, Maryann Talia Pau is an artist and aspiring 'Master Weaver' based in Melbourne. Maryann's woven breastplates (affectionately referred to as 'Pacific Bling') have been seen on singing sisters Vika and Linda Bull, ABC Producer Namila Benson and in a fashion collaboration with The Social Studio for L'Oréal Melbourne Fashion Festival, 2011.

Acquired by the National Gallery of Victoria (2010), Maryann is the first artist of Pacific Island heritage to have work purchased by the Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists for the NGV. A Co-founder of the Pacific Women's Weaving Circle (2010), Maryann was selected for Melbourne's Top 100, 2011 and is currently developing a national weaving project, "Please, Can I Weave with You?" supported by Kultour, the Australia Council and Arts Victoria.

[maryanntaliapau.net](http://maryanntaliapau.net)



## **Thelma Thomas**

Thelma Thomas (aka MC Trey) is a woman of Fijian descent. Thelma was born in Suva, Fiji and spent the first 13 years there. Her family links connect her to Lami, Bau, Ra and Sa-vusavu. Over the years, her cultural knowledge has been acquired through life experiences, personal research, visits to Fiji, New Zealand and attending Pacific events and projects throughout Sydney. Thelma has a strong and established background in Hip Hop, the arts, youth work and community cultural development. Her relationship with the Australian Museum's cultural collections began three years ago through a community group she volunteered for, Fiji Youth Initiatives (FYI). In September 2012, Thelma took on the new role as Youth Worker for the Pacific Youth Reconnection Project. Funded by the Vincent Fairfax Foundation and Australian Museum Foundation, this project is aimed at addressing the over-representation of young people from the Pacific Diaspora in the NSW juvenile justice system, through initiatives which connect Pacific young and their communities to the Cultural Collections. Thelma's current projects include co-facilitating outreach projects with NSW Juvenile Justice offices and detention centres, participating in University of Western Sydney's Pacifica Achievement to Higher Education (PATHE) Family Days and participating at Pacific Days in the community like Waitangi Day and Fiji Day. She is also involved in facilitating tours through the collections and exploring innovative methods of engaging Pacific youth and their families.



## **Jacob Tolo**

Born in Samoa, Jacob was educated and studied Graphic Design in Auckland. With over 20 years of experience in Art Direction and Multi-media Design, Jacob is also a visual artist and Curator. Co-founder and a Director of the Indigenous-run art space Blak Dot Gallery, Jacob maintains personal and professional relationships with the Pacific arts community both in Australia and New Zealand. Jacob's curatorial and arts focus is based in Contemporary Pacific Art and Culturally Specific Design. He currently runs his own design business, Design Tologata, and blogs under the title 'Made In The Pacific - Gazing on Culturally Specific Design'. Jacob is curating *Meleponi Pasifika* at the Roslyn Smorgon Gallery, as part of the Contemporary Pacific Arts Festival. He is also working towards finishing a host of books that have been half-read in the past decade and just hanging out more with his daughter.

[designtologata.com.au](http://designtologata.com.au)  
[blakdot.com.au](http://blakdot.com.au)

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