



Family Memories: capturing stories from different time-lines within the Tongan traditional crafts of ngatu (decorated barkcloth) making and kupesi (embroidered stencil) design.

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Tongan Glossary
A, E, F, H, I, K, L, M, N, NG, O, P, S, T, U, V ‘.¹

Anga Fai

Method or way of doing things

Anga’aki

To imitate

‘Eiki

Chief

Fakafonua

About the land or culture, traditional

Fakamālō

To express thanks for or appreciation of

Fakamatala

Information

Fakama’opo’opo

Conclusion

Fakamālō

To give thanks, to be grateful, to feel or express gratitude

Fakatotolo

To research

Famili:famili fai mai

Family continuing: down from the past

Fefolau’aki

Traveling

Fekumi

Research

Feta’aki

Unstained barkcloth

Fine’eiki

Formal language for Grandmother

Founga

Way in which a thing is done, lineage, genealogy

¹ The Glossary is in the Tongan alphabetical order because the glossary is in the Tongan language. Many of the letters in the English alphabet do not exist within the Tongan Alphabet.

Heliaki

Metaphor

Hingoa

Name

Hisitolia

History

Hou'eiki

Chief

Kaha'u

Coming (of time) future

Kāinga

Extended family

Kakai

People, commoners

Kakai

People (referring to commoners)

Lea Mu'a

Old saying

Lea Faka-Tonga

Tongan Language

Leveleva

To be long (in duration), rare except at the end of a speech

Liliu

Translation

Liuaki

To come back, go back and come back

Loa Kāliu

Long past, ancient

Lolotonga ni

At the present

Lolo Tonga

Traditional Tongan Oil

Me'a ngāue' aki

To use as a tool or device

Manatu

Memory

Matāpule

Chief

Ma'u'anga

Resources

Onopooni

Modern times, nowadays

Ono'aho

Ancient times, olden days

Puha

Box

Tala

To tell; oral tradition

Talanoa

Story

Tala-ē-Fonua

Traditional of the land

Tala Fakafonua

Oral tradition

Tala Fakakuongamu'a

Oral tradition about early times

Tala Tupu'a

Myth or legend handed down from the ancient time

Tala Tukungutu

Tradition placed in the mouth; oral tradition

Tala Tukufakaholo

Telling of the tradition

Talatalanoa

An ongoing conversation

Tālanga

Friendly conversation or debate

Tātanaki

To collect

Tohi ngatu

Make marks or design on ngatu

Tokateu

To be prepared

Tokonaki

To be prepared for Sunday

Tu'a

Commoners

Tupu'anga

Ancestors

Vavanga'i

To analyse

Veitatala

Mutual/communal conversation

Kupesi and Ngatu Glossary

Aso

Ha'amoia (Samoan) name

Fā

Pandanus fruit

Fakaafe

Invitation

Fala Koka'anga

Mat weaved from pandanus leaves, which they are the platform for binding the pieces of feta'aki together

Fanongonongo Tokoto

Name of the land where my church was built on

Fata

One of Tonga's fale Tonga from the beginning, the ancient time

Fata' o Tu'i Tonga

The Tu'i Tonga house, in particular, the central beam. The Fata 'o Tu'i Tonga represent of the sennit bindings which holds the support of the central beam, supporting the thatched roof.

Fata Mahanga

Reference the double wedding of Queen Salote Tupou III sons, Prince Tu'i Pelehake and Crown Prince Tupouto'a Tungi.

Fau

Giant hibiscus

Feta'aki

Unstained barkcloth

Fotu 'a e 'Eiki

Name of my church

Fola - Folahi

To spread out

Kafa

Sennit

Kaka

Fibrous integuments that wraps around a young coconut leaf

Kalou

GOD in Fijian

Kupesi

Embroidered stencil

Kavele'ipulu
Coconut husk

Mahanga Mo-e-Langi
The sky twins

Mohokoi
Greenish – yellow flower having six long limp narrow petals

Nimamea'a Koka'anga
Craft of ngatu making

Niu
Coconut

Ngatu
Decorated barkcloth

Paaki
Coded with flower based mixed with hot water and fuel

Pako
Nut-grass

Papa Koka'anga
knee table specifically for ngatu making

Paongo
Pandanus tree

Pepa Koka'anga
Reemay material (contemporary material for making ngatu)

Sila
Envelope

Sinamoni
Cinnamon

Tala fekau
King's or chief messenger, envoy

Tapa
Tongan word for the characteristic white, undyed border along each side of the Ngatu

Tapa
The western term used worldwide for tapa, ngatu

Tangi Fetaua
Crying hater

Tauaki
To dry in the air, dry in the sun

Tautau

To suspended, hang or hung up

Tevunga

Plant similar to canna, but having reddish stalk

Tohi ngatu

Process of hand-draw on the ngatu

Tu'anui

Coconut leaf mid-rib

Tu'i

King's ngatu

Tui

Stitching

Vai Tui Mate

The water of Faith & Death

Vala Fakaafe

Koloa invitation

Vasi Koula

Golden Vase

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (*except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgement*), nor content which to a substantial extent has submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

‘Uhila Nai

29 May 2020

Abstract

Family Memories: capturing stories from different time-lines within the Tongan traditional crafts of ngatu (decorated barkcloth) making and kupesi (embroidered stencil) design.

This project derives from a personal interpretation of *lea mu'a* (old saying)² and *lea Faka-Tonga* (Tongan language)³, which is translated into kupesi symbols to produce a contemporary Tongan ngatu. The research utilises visual language of ancient Tonga and today's *lea Faka-Tonga* to emanate *tala tukufakaholo*⁴ with my family, a collection of knowledge about the history of *hingoa fakafamili*⁵, *tupu'anga*⁶, and *manatu*⁷ about my Nena and myself. This *tala tukufakaholo tātānaki* (to collect)⁸ reflects not only the past *tala tupu'a* (myth or legend handed down from ancient times)⁹ but also the space the ngatu occupies. It is present; for instance, in my art practice, it relates to the notion of learning through listening, observation, and doing with a focus on how this mode of practising can position itself in a contemporary space of artmaking. The physical materials used are natural materials from the *niu*¹⁰, the *paongo*¹¹, *feta'aki*,¹² and *fau*¹³ – along with methods and processes of ngatu and kupesi making; *tui kupesi*¹⁴ and to spread out the kupesi onto the *papa koka'anga*.¹⁵

² C. Maxwell Churchward, *Tongan Dictionary: Tongan – English and English – Tongan*, (The Government of Tonga, 1959), 290.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Telling of the tradition

⁵ Family names

⁶ Ancestors

⁷ Memories

⁸ C. Maxwell Churchward, *Tongan Dictionary: Tongan – English and English – Tongan*, (The Government of Tonga, 1959), 459.

⁹ Ibid, 448.

¹⁰ Coconut tree

¹¹ Pandanus tree

¹² Unstained barkcloth

¹³ Giant hibiscus

¹⁴ Stitching

¹⁵ Knee table specifically for ngatu making

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Fakamālō¹⁶

‘Oku ou tomu’a tuku ha fakafeta’i mo ha fakamālō ki he Tamai Mafimafi ‘i he tauhi hao kuo ne fai ki he fefine tu’a mo ta’e’iloa ko ‘eni, ‘i he tokoni ‘one foaki ivi, kelesi mo ha ‘atamai maama, ko e ‘uhí ko e fekumi ki he poto faka’atamai. Mo’oni ‘a e lau ‘a e folofola, ko e kamata’anga ‘o e poto ko e ‘apasia ki he ‘Otua. Ko e fakakoloa ia ‘o kimautilu ko e fakamālō ki he Tamai Mafimafi ‘i he koloa mahu’inga kuo ne foaki mai kiate au, ‘i he feinga ‘o e ta’u fakaako ko ‘eni. ‘Oku ou fakafeta’i mo fakamālō he koloa mahu’inga kuo ne foaki.

I would like to humbly acknowledge my Grandmother, the late ‘Ana Va’inga Pautā (born Kanongata’a), who has been with me on this journey for many years. Nena has helped me to bring this project to fruition. I am deeply grateful for my Nena, because of every knowledge and life experience and traditional making that she has passed down to me. It was an honour to be Nena’s granddaughter and to grow up with her because I got to be with someone that became my role model and inspired me in so many ways. I admire my Nena’s hard work and everything she has done, which has given me the desire to follow her footsteps. To become someone that could pass on the knowledge and be a role model for our community and our younger generation. ‘Oku ou fakamālō ‘aupito atu Nena, for everything that you have done for me throughout our time – to bring the past me forward to meet the future me. With love and support, even though you are no longer by my side, I know that you will always be with me. The Tongan metaphor, “‘Ofo’ofa ‘a Kui’ literally means ‘the love of a grandmother.’¹⁷ The metaphor expresses the love a grandmother has, which is a love that you cannot question or define. Nevertheless, when she gets angry, nothing can stop her. This metaphor describes the relationship that my Nena and I had grown up together.

‘Oku fakamālō ‘aupito atu¹⁸ to my family in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa and Pelehake, Tonga. I am deeply grateful for every little thing that you have done for the past years of my research. I acknowledge the love and the support from both ends, either when I am back home at Nena’s for my research or here in Auckland. From teaching, sharing knowledge, and helping with every aspect of what my project discovered. From critiquing my work, both positive and negative perspectives explain our history even when time did not match, but in the end, it always works out either way. I am honoured to have a family that supported me with my project and giving me a different perspective every time the work takes place in both contexts, Tonga and Tāmaki Makaurau. Even though you might not understand my point of perspective as an artist from a contemporary viewpoint, you did not hesitate to help me figure out the best solution. Although our concepts or ideas might clash, as it is from a Tongan way of thinking

¹⁶ Acknowledgement

¹⁷ Dr. Nigel Statham, *Ko e Talamalu ‘o e Fonua: Ko e Kava, Koloa mo e Fatunga Lea ‘a e Kakai Tonga*, (Friendly Island Book Shop, South Korea, 2013), #451, 89.

¹⁸ I would like to say, thank you so much to ...

and a contemporary perspective – a small word of encouragement and support provides the solution. Mālō lahi ‘aupito ki he tokoni mo e ‘ofa.¹⁹

Fakamālō lahi ‘aupito atu heni to my community back home, from the small village of Pelehake, on the east side of Tonga. Notably, my Nena’s collaborative koka’anga^{20, 21} group back in their time. It was an honour to be blessed with a group of elders that was able to help me throughout a journey filled with multiple layers of knowledge. I am deeply grateful for their kindness and interest in the project, even though the project sits from a different generation of understanding. Thank you for trying to understand the project from a very personal perspective and helping me understand and unfold what was never understood from a very young age. They have helped me unfold their story and their experience for me to understand their prior knowledge. The different knowledge they uphold reminiscence the different time-framed they experience as an individual. Even though they are from different time-lines, collectively, they pass down knowledge. The knowledge they pass down delivers a purpose through my practice.

Fakamālō lahi ‘aupito heni to the Vā Moana research cluster for allowing me and my project to share with today’s generation and also my community back home. It was an honour to be the recipient for the award because the Vā Moana allowed me to take my research to where it originated and took place, back home to Tonga in a small village of Pelehake on the East-side. In every possible way, that helped me bring this project on board and share it with the community in a Western context. With that said, it helped to create a space for me and my project to be comfortable as it situated itself into a new space. Thank you for everything and thank you for your time, sharing your knowledge and words of encouragement for my project.

Fakamālō’ aupito atu heni to my mentor, my Nena, the late ‘Ana Va’inga and Saia Vakaloa, or known with his chief title, Vakaloa. Vakaloa is a matāpule name. Vakaloa's title was the last chief title to be appointed to all Pelehake’s matāpule, which was a total of six. Saia Vakaloa has always been my mentor when it comes to ancient Tonga. Vakaloa was one of the Royals and King’s matāpule. He is my Nena’s first cousin, as he is my uncle. I humbly acknowledge these people for all the multi-layers of knowledge from different time-line. They have taught me their knowledge whenever we get together. I am honoured to be your students from the start of our journey as time goes by. Thank you so much for all your hard work through a hard time, especially when things don’t always fall on the good hand. Nena and Vakaloa helped me shape this project into a work that could become a piece of knowledge that is able to continue teaching the generations in our family about our ancestors. I sincerely thank you for

¹⁹ Thank you so much for the love and support.

²⁰ Women in the making of barkcloth

²¹ C. Maxwell Churchward, *Tongan Dictionary: Tongan – English and English – Tongan*, (The Government of Tonga, 1959), 269.

wanting to help me by participating in this research and discussing the old Tonga and knowledge that only certain people are allowed to get access to, permitting me to understand them. 'Ikai ke 'i ai ha lea fe'unga, ka ko e tu'u pe ke fai ha fakamālō kiate kimoua, ongo tangata'i fonua mo e fefine' i fonua 'o e ki'i famili masiva mo ta'e' iloa ko 'eni. Ko ia pe ki'i fakamālō. 'Oku 'i ai 'a e 'ofa lahi atu ki he 'api ko Mate Ki Fanga, pea 'ofa lahi atu ki mala'e 'Atuli.²²

I am profoundly grateful for both of my supervisors, Monique Redmond, and Nooroa Tapuni. I wanted to say thank you for everything that you have done to bring this project together. The journey was somewhat lengthy, but I am thankful for all the experience and everything we have learned from one another. You have helped me bring this project into a safer space that would become a space to be called their own home and be comfortable. I am sincerely thankful for your hard work and being a supervisor that I was able to listen and learned a lot from, thank you so much.

I humbly acknowledge all the AUT staff, especially the technicians from the 3D Lab; Harold Barton, Angus Roberts, and Glenn Maxwell. Wet Lab; Harriet Stockman, Laser Lab; Matthew Davis, and also the Printing facilities; Greg Thomas and Struan Hamilton. I am thankful for everything that you have done for me in shaping some of the hard parts in the making of this project. Thank you for your hard work and everything.

Fakamālō lahi' aupito atu heni to all my friends for everything. It was an honour to have a supportive group of friends, which helped me from left to right. What I am more thankful for is my group of friends which became a family, sisters, and brother to me. I am sincerely thankful for all the supportive talk, being there for everything, critiquing from both perspectives, but mainly from our point of understanding. Thank you so much for your hard work, and I hope we can work together again in the future.

I humbly acknowledge everyone who has helped me throughout this journey. It was a fantastic time with you all, and I hope to work with you again in the new future. I sincerely hope that this thesis speaks to every one of you, encourage you to be the only one to know how to value what is yours. Do not let anyone tell you something about your culture from their perspective, because it is only knowledge about what they take from what they hear and observe. Learn to become the first to tell the history of your culture, your people, your family because it is only you who knows the truth.

Leveleva e fakahohoa'a.

Tu'a 'ofa atu

²² There are no words that could describe the amount of thank you, but I can only stand and say thank you so much to both of you. To the elders, who keep this family together, I thank you. I can only say thank you from the bottom of my heart. I want to say, love you to the land of Mate Ki Fnga and also to our ancestors to the Mala'e 'Atuli.

Family Memories: capturing stories from different time-lines within the Tongan traditional crafts of ngatu (decorated barkcloth) making and kupesi (embroidered stencil) design explores the transmission of visual vocabulary into kupesi design as a way to understand our fine arts as living archives^{24,25} of our histories. The histories, stories, and memories; the process of naming and language has become a key concept and an inherent part of the knowledge that formed this research. The concepts of knowing, the idea that there is knowledge in memory have influenced me to choose what has been gifted to me as a responsibility *to do* the project.

My practice has been influenced and inspired by my Nena, ‘Ana, the late ‘Ana Va’inga Pautā (born Kanongata’a) (Fig 1), who was also a mother figure to me. My Nena raised me in the small village of Pelehake on the East-side of Tonga from 1998 until the end of 2011. Back home, every child is known to learn their culture through observation, listening, and doing. It was an obligation. The parents, the family, and the community ensure that all children have the opportunity to express their culture. As time passed by, I started to learn the Tongan traditional crafts my Nena was an expert in, particularly the art of ngatu production. Nena had her ways of transferring and passing knowledge onto me through old processes, methods, and actions of making. As a knowledge-holder herself, she demonstrated and taught me traditional crafts using a variety of approaches – nimamea’a koka’anga²⁶, making of lolo Tonga²⁷, storytelling, and through action. For eleven years of being beside her, I was blessed and lucky to be able to learn and gain new knowledge every day. The amount of experience she shared with me now has a home, which is being transmitted into form through this research project and my art practice in general.

My project is not only influenced by my Grandmother but also family mentors – family and the elders from Pelehake, especially those who were in the same koka’anga group as my Nena. Throughout this research project, I have visited Pelehake several times for extended stays of 6-8 weeks. Even though my grandmother is no longer with me, the knowledge holders from my community have inspired the

²³ Introduction

²⁴ Personal conversation with Dr Albert Refiti, 29 March, 2019.

²⁵ The archive is a board context and a concept that everyone understands as something that is stored in the museum, and many histories written in books and store in a library. The reading I want was not delivered to my audience, and for those, I introduced my practice to. However, in conversation with Albert Refit explains why there is no translation of the word archive in the Pacific, because we do not have it in our cultural. Refiti explains in the context of my practice, like your Nena, ‘Ana and your family, they are the archives themselves. We have the orators, the elders, and the Tongan’s royal *matāpule* (chiefs or orators) in which they are the archive themselves because intergenerational knowledge is embodied in them.

²⁶ Craft of ngatu making

²⁷ Traditional Tongan Oil

project through their ways of saying, “it is good to see you doing what your Nena always make”²⁸ or “it is respectful of you trying to learn the craft of kupesi making”²⁹ or “I am happy to see you making kupesi because us, we are getting older and we can’t make kupesi anymore.”³⁰ As they spoke, it recreated a memory from the past and fakakoloa’aki³¹ as they shared their words with me. In many ways, it felt like they were not only giving me words of encouragement but had “gifted responsibilities to me” rather than saying, “you have to do it.”³²

This project works through a different type of knowledge, which has been gained over a different timeline. They consist of varieties of knowledge passed down from elder generations, my grandmother, women in the community, mentors, and family members. The multiple voices pass down to one voice, which is now manifested in my project through many approaches. Throughout the making and the background research of the project, I found myself going back and forth between the past and present, every time I learned new knowledge. In ways that I speak and tell stories using ancient Tongan words that my ancestors used in their time or sharing a story as if I was there at the exact moment and had witnessed what happened. I am often in a position where I do not realise it myself as I travel back in time, revealing stories and histories that I have been told as a kid through my making. To consider a reason why – it is because I am named after my Nena’s mother, ‘Uhila (Lahi) Tu’ipulotu³³ and family often refer to me as the mother, grandmother or twin, if only because of my name. In ways, not previously understood or realised I now see myself going back and forth, in part because of the name, ‘Uhila, and in honour of becoming a knowledge holder. *The forked centre: duality & privacy in Polynesian space & architecture* (Albert Refiti, 2008, 99), he discusses the notion of ‘knowing who you are in relation to the *fanua* (landscape) and *tupu’aga* (ancestors).’³⁴

²⁸ Conversation with ‘Eleni Manufekai (2019); referring to the idea of me seeking out both old (past) and new (present) knowledge about the craft of kupesi.

²⁹ Ibid, talking about the idea of how we often don’t get to see the youth of today trying to learn the processes and methods of kupesi making. We are starting to lose the practice of kupesi making and not many people are trying to revive or bring the practice of kupesi into the future (referring to the people of Pelehake).

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Enriched

³² It all started after my Nena passed away; I feel like, I need to make use of the knowledge my Nena taught me through making. Ke ngāue ‘aonga ‘aki ‘a e koloa kuo fakakoloa’aki au he’eku kui.

³³ Interestingly enough, because my name is put together between two different gender – male and female – there is always a story behind everything. There is two Uhila, on both sides of the family. Named after my grandmother’s mum Uhila Lahi Tu’ipulotu and also my grandmother’s, father’s twin brother, who is also ‘Uhila Mo-e-Langi. I am named after ‘Uhila Lahi but the name written on my passport is ‘Uhila Mo-e-Langi, which is my great, great-uncle’s name.

³⁴ Albert Refiti, “*Alternative: An International Journal of Indigenous Scholarship*, (2008), 99.

Refiti states,

This knowing/placing who you are involves the understanding that your body, your being is woven flesh, a gene-archaeological matter made of ancestors/land/community/family. Therefore, your body does not necessarily belong to you as an individual. Because you weave from the flesh of the dead, your body belongs to the ancestors, to your *fanua*, the place of birth, and the community that shaped and cared for you. As for the consequence of your 'being there' allows (these bodies of ancestors) to be present there/here too.³⁵

Through my practice, I travel and collect with a methodology of the past, the methods of the present, and the context of the future, knowing that every time I research about my ancestors, my body belongs to my ancestors, depending on the past that I am interested in it. For example, back home in Tonga, I research the craft of ngatu and kupesi. Through time, I can learn the knowledge and processes thanks to the conversation that my body is continually having with the women in my family, my Nena, and my community. What they offer is a space of knowing. Every time I make, they are always in me, because I am living in the presence of my ancestors. The flesh of the dead weave through generations as they (*we*) become the archives for our living history.

This writing will be divided into four chapters. Chapter one identifies the importance of names and their histories to unfold where they belong through the practice of ngatu processes and kupesi, the method of relocating stories from the past and sharing the knowledge given with today's generation. Chapter two identifies the research methodology of memory as making, as it travels through time and ways of re-connecting with their individual spaces as memory from different time-line. Chapter three identifies the moralities, values of three-dimensional Tongan social organization of production, and the hierarchy system of the language used in Tongan traditional arts and crafts as a research method. Chapter four identifies a Tongan key context, which refolds the stories from the past, present with words that will provide the future through the representation of symbols in a contemporary context. (Figs 2 - 4)

³⁵ Albert Refiti, "*Alternative: An International Journal of Indigenous Scholarship*, (2008), 99.



Fig 1. Nena 'Ana Va'inga Pautā. Front of Pelehake church's memorial stone, after her sermon on Friday afternoon, 5pm-6pm service. Photo by 'Mo-e-Langi, 2013.

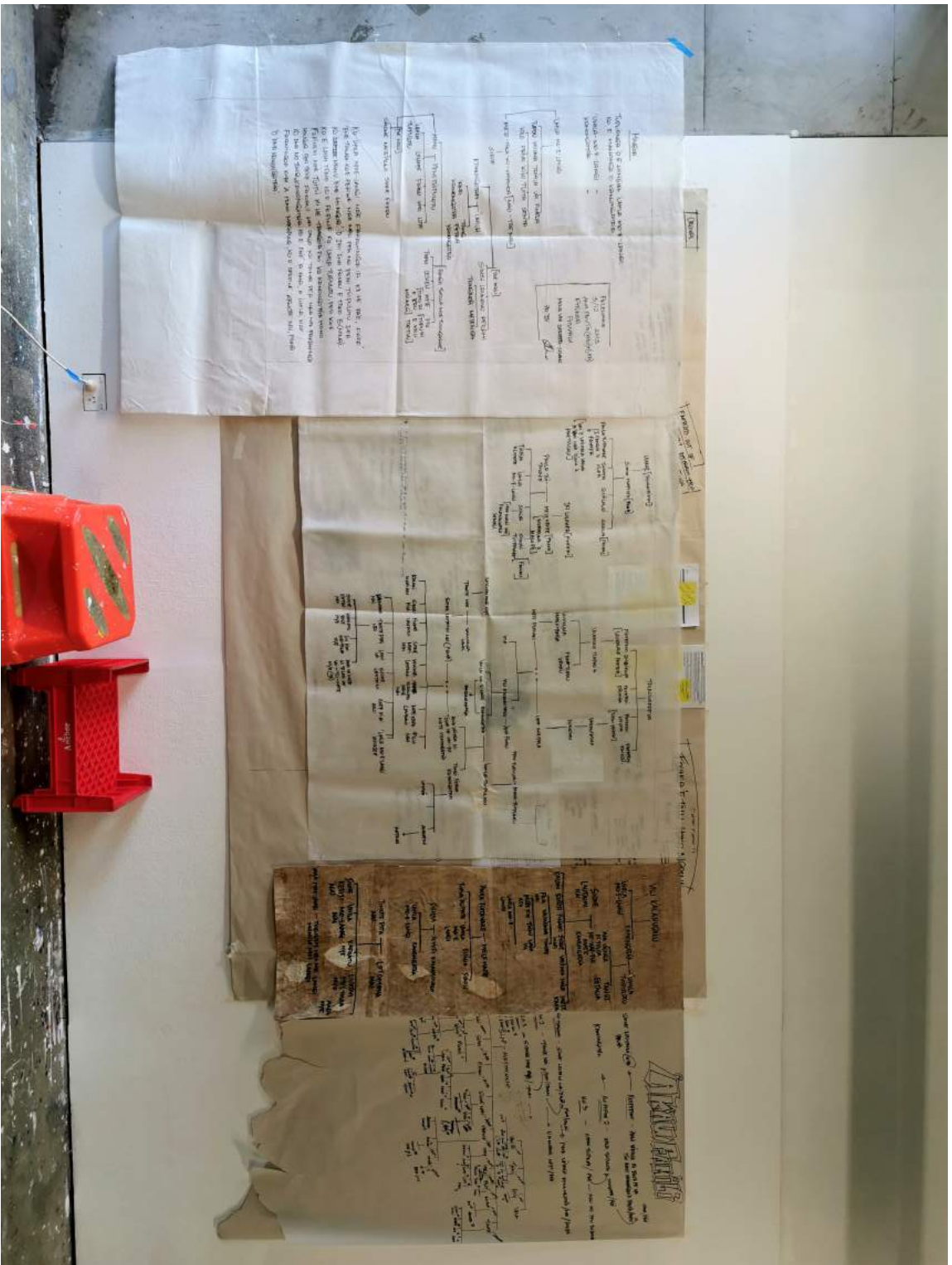


Fig 2. Uthairat. Studio thinking through family tree. 2019.

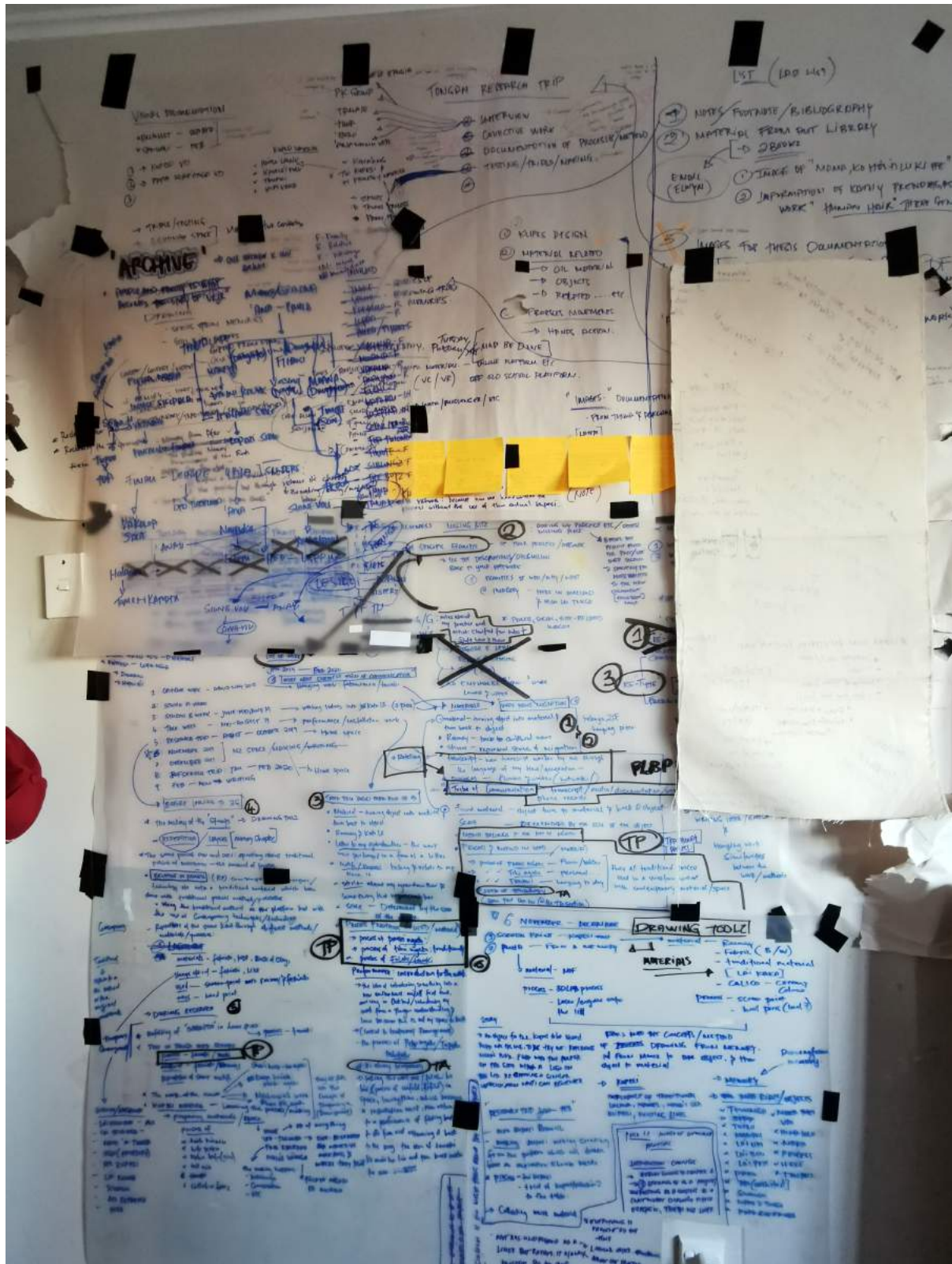


Fig 3. 'Uhila Nai. My practice and writing through mind mapping and notes with the use of Tongan and English. Home studio wall. 2019.

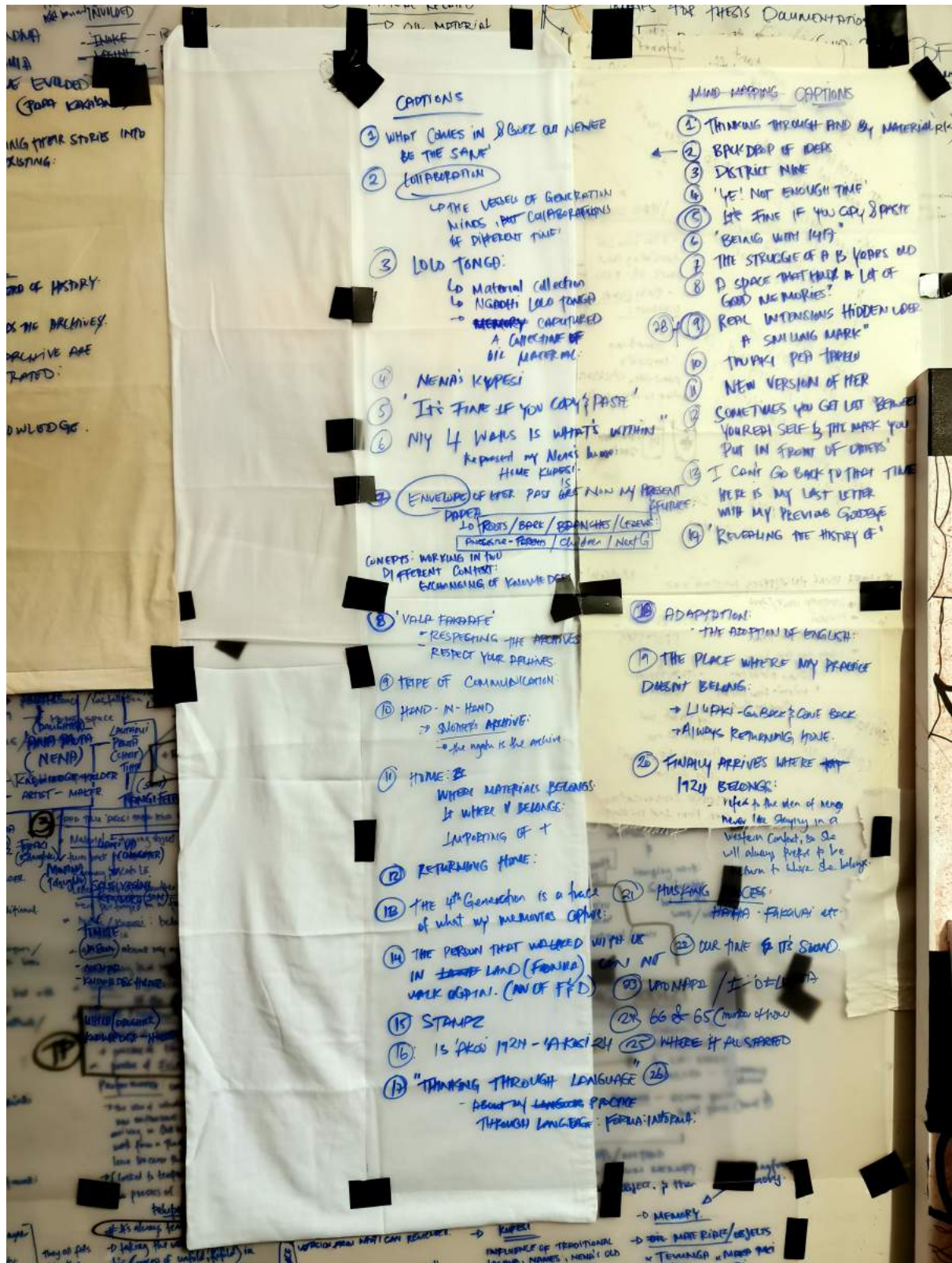


Fig 4. 'Uhila Nai. What comes in and goes out never be the same, 2020, Home studio practice.

CHAPTER I

OUR ANCESTORS ARE OUR ARCHIVES

“But if it starts to get repetitive, the show at some point...it begins to start feeling like work. Then you get these different voices colliding within you.” – Min Yoon-gi³⁶

KUPESI, OUR ANCESTORS:

The live documentation of my ancestors.

Kupesi is a term that has a lot of history, meaning, and translation depending on how you understand it. Throughout my practice, I have been challenging myself to understand the meaning of kupesi and its history. From my understanding of kupesi – kupesi was created to become a vital document in and of itself, to be able to hold the stories, histories of our culture, as people did not write, as we know it. As Tongan people relied on their orators and also their arts and crafts, kupesi became the platform for them to write their histories and pass them down to the next generation.

During my research back home in late 2019 – early 2020, I sat down with Tonga Mohenoa Tamale, known by his main title as Tamale. Tamale is the hou'eiki³⁷ of the village of Niutoua, known as a knowledge-holder and for his creation of tufunga lalava.³⁸ In our conversation, Tamale talked about lalava and kafa,³⁹ and their relation to the art of kupesi. Kupesi is understood to have originated from the craft of lalava. In questioning that perspective, Tamale first discussed the primary definition of the word lalava as something that you do not lash horizontally, but instead, vertically. (Fig 5) Tamale discussed the use of kafa and when it was brought in to use for the craft of lalava. Kafa is the sennit that is weaved from the coconut fibre to make rope. Tamale explained the first-ever kafa made by his father, the late Tamale, was to help him bring down the hohoni⁴⁰ (Fig 6) to dip up water from the river of 'Vai Fakalongo Ki Kafa.⁴¹ (Tamale, 2020)

³⁶ BTS, Bring the Soul: Docu-Series, Ep2: Passion, Documentary, 20:19-20:28, September 3rd, 2019. <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7jzs1p>.

³⁷ Chief

³⁸ Craft of lashing

³⁹ Sennit

⁴⁰ Small bucket or water carrying vessel made of a coconut shell.

⁴¹ Personal conversation with Tonga Mohenoa Tamale, Niutonua, Hahake. 2020.

The relation of lalava and kafa to kupesi can be identified through the first-ever kupesi created by the hou'eiki fafine⁴² from a lashing that was done inside the Tu'i Tonga's fale fataki (Fig 7). As the hou'eiki fafine created their kupesi from the lalava of the fata from the King's house, it became their tools for their making of ngatu. Traditionally, it was only women with a high rank who made the kupesi, which were mainly geometric designs. The reason only women with higher rank could create kupesi is that lalava was done only in the Tu'i Tonga's house. Only those of high rank were allowed access inside the fale⁴³ and able to see the craft of lalava. The hou'eiki fafine then created a kupesi from the two-dimensional lalava they saw (Figs 8 & 9). It was called Fata 'o Tu'i Tonga to represent and reference the sennit binding, which holds the support of the central beam, supporting the thatched roof.



Fig 5. Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, Fotu 'a e 'Eiki, Pelehake. This lalava was made by Tamale and some of his creatives tufunga lalava from the village of Niutoua. Photo by Mo-e-Langi, 2019.



Fig 6. Hohoni is a small bucket or water-carrying vessel made of a coconut shell. This hohoni was created by the late Sione Mafi Nai in 1990 at his residency at Toloa. With the kafa weaved and intertwine around it. Photo by Mo-e-Langi, 2020.

⁴² Chief woman

⁴³ House



Fig 7. This is a Fata which is inside the church of Fotu 'a e Eiki, Pelehake. The lalava is an example of what the hou'eiki fafine took to create their kupesi. The lalava was done around 18th century by Tamale from the village from Niutoua, which located on the East-side of Tonga. Photo by Mo-e-Langi, 2019.

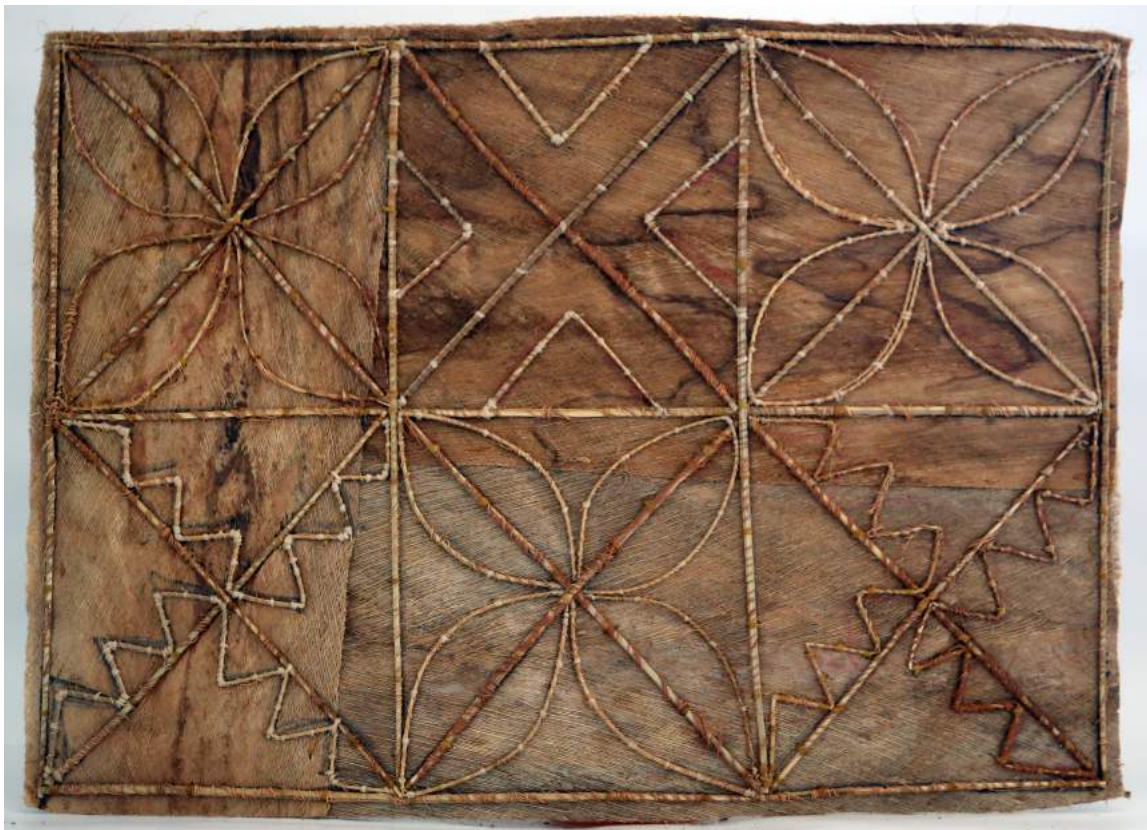


Fig 8. Fata 'o Tu'i Tonga. The Fata as in the form of a kupesi. This kupesi took up a duration of 2-3 weeks, because this kupesi was a collaboration between Toakase Tu'iono and myself. It travelled in time and space as it was made in two different contexts, back home in Tonga and here in New Zealand. 20x19 inch, 2019.

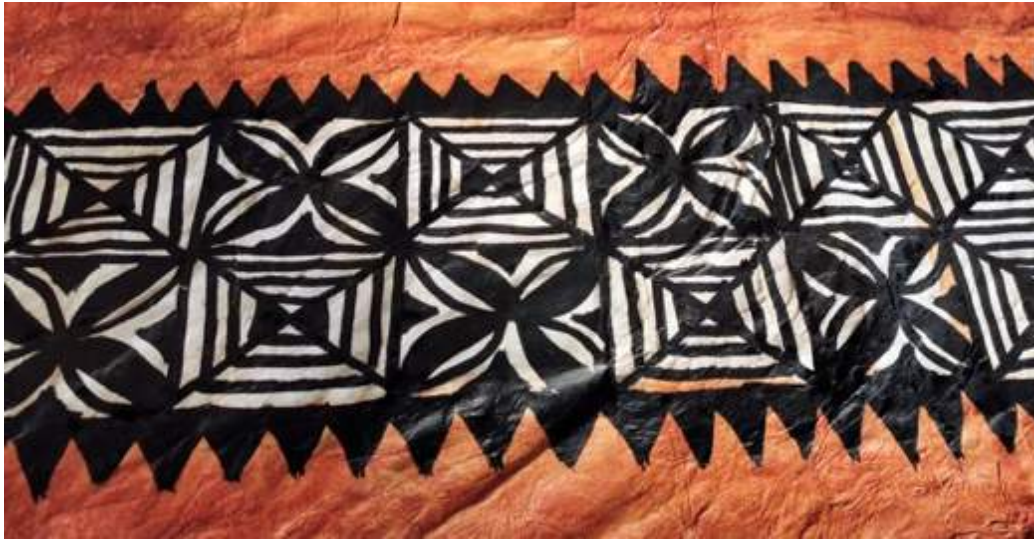


Fig 9. The Fata 'o Tu'i Tonga used in ngatu with the process of tohi ngatu. The Fata 'o Tu'i Tonga was hand-drawn by Kafo'atu Latu, a member of Pelehake's koka'anga group, Fale Kautaha, Photo by Mo-e-Langi, 2019.

The ancient Tongan concept *tala* *tuku fakaholo* is described as *talanoa* 'o ono 'aho 'o a'u mai ki he taimi ni.⁴⁴ It is handed down from one generation to the next through the action of *tala*.⁴⁵ It recounts historical events and explains the artistic tradition of our culture. My journey as a kid growing up was surrounded by people who admire the traditions of their ancestors. The *tala* *tuku fakaholo* has helped me to understand and unpack the ancient stories of my ancestors in a profound way, giving meaning through what they pass down to us. We must know the history of our culture and its origin. Albert Wendt once said, "to know where you come from, to know where you were going," which it is speak to why our history is so important.⁴⁶ (Wendt, 2005)

The method of *veitatala* was used in trying to research the origin of the *kupesi*. *Veitatala* is a method that sits under the concept of *Talanoa*.⁴⁷ *Talanoa* is a universal method which most Pacific cultures are built upon as a means of communication.⁴⁸ (Vea, 2015, 6) Personally, *talanoa* as a method does not appeal to me through that perspective. I understand *talanoa* as a part of life, a process, and as a part of an exchange in everyday life. For example, as a kid growing up on the island, *talanoa* was used as a way of exchange between family members and as a form of communication through face to face. In Talita Kiume Toluta'u's PhD thesis '*Veitatala; Mātanga' o e Talanoa*,' Toluta'u creatively interprets and applies the potentials of *veitatala* through the recollections of *hou'eiki* *fafine* telling their stories.

⁴⁴ The story from the ancient time inherited until today.

⁴⁵ To tell

⁴⁶ Shirley Horrocks, The Coconet.Tv, Albert Wendt, The New Oceania. 2005. <https://www.thecoconet.tv/know-your-roots/pacific-documentaries/the-new-oceania/>

⁴⁷ Conversation

⁴⁸ John Vea, The Emic Avenue; Art through *Talanoa*, (Master's thesis, Auckland University of Technology, 2015) <https://openrepository.aut.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10292/9509/VeaJ.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>.

Toluta'u explains that the PhD title was the creative synthesis of hou'eiki fafine's talanoa into new forms of artistic narrative design to capture the cultural and emotional resonance of their identity. (Toluta'u 2014, VIII)

Back home in Tonga around late 2019 – early 2020, I encountered a few of the knowledge-holders from my Nena's koka'anga group, which are now retired. I grew up watching one of the elders, Mele 'Eleni Manufekai, a 74-years old, one of Pelehake's knowledge-holders, and the daughter of Naipuka and Tenisi Manufekau from Fiji and Tatakamotonga. Throughout my research, I have used the method of veitatala as I am in conversation with this hou'eiki fafine. Manufekai talked to me with an emotional expression as she recounted her past, especially the unforgettable moments. Manufekai encounters kupesi from a different perspective, which makes the conversation interesting. Manufekau discussed kupesi from an understanding that it is something that tells the story of our ancestors. She further explains, "the craft of kupesi is important for a woman to know how to make because it is a part of hou'eiki fafine's tool for their work. Because, when the time comes for making a ngatu, you choose what kupesi you want to use and not having to rely on other women's kupesi."⁴⁹ (personal conversation, Manufekai, 2019)

Following this, a veitatala with the Dowager Lady Fielakepa, the Kingdom of Tonga's foremost knowledge-holder of 'koloa' or customary women's arts in Tonga. Lady Fielakepa stated, "for me, kupesi talks to the notion of story-telling; every single kupesi was created from a story that our ancestors pass down to us."⁵⁰ She further explained that,

"...kupesi does not only hold an important and meaningful story, but it shows the relations to all our Pacific neighbours and what we have in common. No kupesi doesn't have a story or no meaning for its creation. There is always a reason for something to be created and brought into our lives."⁵¹ (interview, Fielakepa, 2020)

For example, the kupesi Kalou belongs to the village of Pelehake, and the name and story are created from two different cultures. The name Kalou is a Fijian name that means God. There is a known legend about the Tu'i of Pelehake's son. Fatafehi Tu'i Pelehake's son was exiled to Fiji on the island of Nadroga. The concepts behind the kupesi Kalou was a design taken from the seed of a tree known as a mapa plant. The mapa plant is very popular or known to grow at the village of Pelehake, with the hingoa

⁴⁹ Personal conversation with 'Eleni Manufekai, Vaomapa, Pelehake, September 20, 2019.

⁵⁰ Interview with Dowager Lady Fielakepa, Kolomotu'a. February 14, 2020,

⁵¹ Ibid.

fakatenetene⁵² of Vaomapa. Before it became Pelehake, the village was known by the name Vaomapa; a bush covered with mapa plants. The maker of the kupesi Kalou created the kupesi from the seed of the mapa plant. To have a kupesi that would tell a story of Fatafehi Tu'i Pelehake's son, to determine the story through kupesi as a way of remembering his son and that he would not be forgotten. The reason might be unknown, but from my perspective, however, it is evident that the mapa was a plant that not only represents 'a e fonua moe kakai'⁵³ but also the royal family as well (Fig 10).



Fig 10. Kupesi Kalou *GOD* by Toakase Tu'iono, 20x19 inch, Photo by Mo-e-Langi, 2020.

The relation of kupesi Kalou to my practice is through the way it uses the plantation as an object for creating a kupesi. With my practice, not only do I create kupesi from stories and names about the ancestors, but I also draw on the memory of collecting plantation leaves as ingredients for making traditional Tongan oil. The materials collected are tēvunga⁵⁴, mohokoi⁵⁵, sinamoni⁵⁶, and pako.⁵⁷ All of these materials have been collected from my Nena's friend/colleague/cousin and son's house. I

⁵² Nickname

⁵³ The land and its people

⁵⁴ Plant similar to teuila (plant similar to canna), but has a reddish stalk.

⁵⁵ Tree with greenish -yellow flower with six long limp narrow petals and bearing fruit.

⁵⁶ Cinnamon (tree or spice)

⁵⁷ Nut-grass that grows near the sea (or land around cemetery)

collected tevunga – from Mele Moli’s, friend/colleague; mohokoi – from ‘Ofa Tukuvaka’s, her niece, sinamoni – from ‘Eleni Manufekai’s, a friend/colleague/sister and lastly pako – from Motekiai Aso’s, her youngest son.

The reason I collect materials in these locations is in a little story that goes like this;

...My grandmother had her garden in our backyard. It was over 20-years-old. In 2008, her children, my aunts, and uncles, cleaned out her yard. It was outside our kitchen and faced towards the church. Grandmother’s garden was full of different plants, from food to herbs and medicine to her little chicken farm. It had everything that Tongan households would have in their backyard. Nena’s garden was created, so she did not have to ask around things. She was a grandmother that did not like to rely on asking from people, but instead, she preferred to have one of her own. After they demolished her garden, everything changed so much that she did not have any of her plantations, which leads me to go to these houses and get material. It went on until a few months before she passed away. (Fig 11)



Fig 11. ‘Uhila Nai. *Material Collection*, 2019. These were made by drawing from the memory of making Traditional Tongan oil with my Nena. The material tests explored the use of contemporary technology with traditional material. The top left was laser cut and engraved onto a block of feta’aki; the top right, was engraved onto a block of plaster. Pieces of soaked feta’aki were applied on top and left to dry, letting it sit; the bottom left, was engraved and laser cut and glued onto a block of wood. And the bottom right is a drawing of pako through AI. These are all trials of creating a new type of ‘my’ kupesi.

THE NAME AND HISTORY OF MY KUPESI

The beginning of a new journey to the east-side of Pelehake.

My practice has always been interested in working between the processes and duration of making ngatu. All the methods of ngatu from the start to end have their own stories and ways of presenting itself. Understanding and rediscovering the old Tongan processes is key to my practice as this connection allows an uncovering of the origins and significance of ngatu to my culture. The motivation comes from the childhood memory that belongs to my grandmother and me. The process of tō ‘o e hiapo,⁵⁸ amusi ‘o e hiapo,⁵⁹ and ngaohi ‘o e la’i tutu mo e feta’aki.⁶⁰

The discovery of my Nena’s kupesi collection (Fig 12), has influenced the idea of re-creating and re-constructing stories, histories, and ancestral knowledge. Through my voice, through my kupesi designs, I bring my ancestors to the fore. It is also important to understand that I make in two different contexts, Tonga and Aotearoa. This is because Tonga is the space where my practice belongs and where the knowledge that forms my practice exists. Here in Aotearoa, is I merge the making and the knowledge.

The kupesi is an archive that tells the story of my ancestors. The kupesi recollected the stories of my ancestors from a different time, becoming the archive itself for the story to be able to be passed on to the next generation. What kupesi does is that it makes me re-connect with my ancestors from a different time. By having a conversation and talking to the community, it helps brings these stories to be shared through its process of tui kupesi.⁶¹ The process of tui kupesi can take up one to two weeks, depending on the time you have on your hands. By talking to the community, I came across, Toakase Tu’iono, a kupesi maker. She showed me the process of making and sharing as a kupesi maker. Tui Kupesi goes through at least a five-stage of process. First, you have the kavele’ipulu, where you twist the kavele’ipulu around the coconut leave mid-rib, to form the shape of the symbols that is going on the kupesi. Second, you form the platform with the la’i kaka to the size of 20x19 inches and also at any sizes you want with two to three layers. Thirdly, you begin to draw in your symbols onto the platform already stitch up until you are happy with the outcome. Lastly, you start to stitch on the mid-rib with the coconut husk around it, follow the symbols that have already been drawn. The following images are the example of the process of tui kupesi; (Figs 13 – 16)

⁵⁸ Planting the mulberry tree

⁵⁹ Harvesting the mulberry tree

⁶⁰ The process of making the unstained barkcloth.

⁶¹ The process of stitching the symbols together with the use of natural material; such as la’i kaka (fibrous integument that wraps around a young coconut leaf), tu’aniu (coconut leaves mid-rib), kavele’ipulu (coconut husk or the nerves of the coconut), fau (hibiscus) and paongo (pandanus leaves).

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Fig 12. Nena's kupesi. These kupesi were made between 1950's – 1970's and they were stored in a plastic bag wrapped with piece of cloth. Photo by Mo-e-Langi, 2019.



Fig 13. Toakase Tu'iono in the process of twirling the kavele'ipulu around the coconut leaves mid-rib. The kavele'ipulu is a decoration adding to the craft of kupesi. Pelehake, Hahake, Tonga, 2019.



Fig 14. Toakase Tu'iono in the process of making the platform for the kupesi, which involves stitching multiple layers of la'i kaka together to be stable. Pelehake, Hahake, Tonga, 2019.



Fig 15. Toakase Tu'iono in the process of drawing the geometric shapes or symbols of the Tokelau Feletoa onto the la'i kaka that is already been formed into a small square of 20x19 inch. Using the material of ruler and pencil. Hahake, Tonga, 2019.



Fig 16. Toakase Tu'iono working on the last process, of stitching up the kupesi and bringing the geometric symbols into a more realistic three-dimensional form. It lifts the drawing off the surface. Stitching is done by using fibre from the hibiscus tree. Hahake, Tonga, 2019.

Cora-Allan Wickliffe, a multidisciplinary artist of Māori and Niuean descent, originally from Waitakere (Ngāpuhi, Tainui, Alofi, and Liku). Wickliffe engages in the process of reviving hiapo through her artwork and is also a founder of BC Collective with Daniel Twiss (Lakota Sioux, Rosebud Reservation). Wickliffe has had an influence on my practice, as we are both hiapo⁶² and ngatu⁶³ practitioners. Our art practice has similarities through the related practices of hiapo and ngatu, traditional processes, and also

⁶² Niuean name for tapa

⁶³ Tongan name for tapa

the method of drawing. A significant parallel connection between Wickliffe and my project is the method or the means of drawing.

In a recent conversation via email with Wickliffe, she outlined her interest in documenting still life, as it captures an object that is perceived to be a lower subject for art making. Wickliffe was interested in drawing from objects that are sometimes given to her by her grandparents. The objects give her a sense of connecting to her culture, even when it may be a simple object like a cup. Wickliffe stated, “when my grandfather passed, I received an amount of random things, even hats, pamphlets from Niue, but the most prized piece are photographs he had taken back in Niue. These are gold to me.”⁶⁴ (Wickliffe, 2020)

Wickliffe has been making a collection of still life’s called the *Still life series*, 2020 (Figs 17 & 18) drawing a gifted basket from her Nana, a fan from her Niue trip, and her Nana keeps giving them to her after her grandfather passed away. We both use drawing in our projects, but I approach the method from the perspective of drawing objects that are passed down from family members, architecture, still images of actions from processes related to ngatu, and materials to do with oil making.

All of these objects are drawn and developed into concepts of different motifs, which are later translated into stamps, digital, and embroidered stencil, using three-dimensional/two-dimensional viewpoints. Wickliffe documents of still life are transferred into the traditional material of hiapo, which is read as a memory that connects to the people and the land. However, my practice is more focused on the material that turns into an object, which later becomes the drawing tool itself which then turns back into an object.

For example, the architectural motif (Figs 19 & 20) – here I used my Nena’s house as an object to draw, which went from being an object to different motifs (Fig 21) that becomes a drawing tool as a kupesi in and of itself. This specific kupesi was designed from the rooftop of two different rooms that were built for my Nena. (Fig 22) Her old Tongan fale was built by Tuafa, her second cousin’s husband, in 1977. The new house was designed with the influence of western architecture, which was constructed by Nena’s brother in 2008-2011. The perspective of these shapes or forms was viewed from inside the church bell as a birds-eye viewpoint.

⁶⁴ Personal Conversation with Cora-Allan Wickliffe, May 3, 2020. 2.40 PM.



Fig 17 & 18. Cora-Allan Wickliffe, *Still Life Series* (2020) #artist book⁶⁵
© Cora-Allan Wickliffe

⁶⁵ See Cora-Allan Wickliffe: <https://www.instagram.com/coraallan.wickliffe/>.

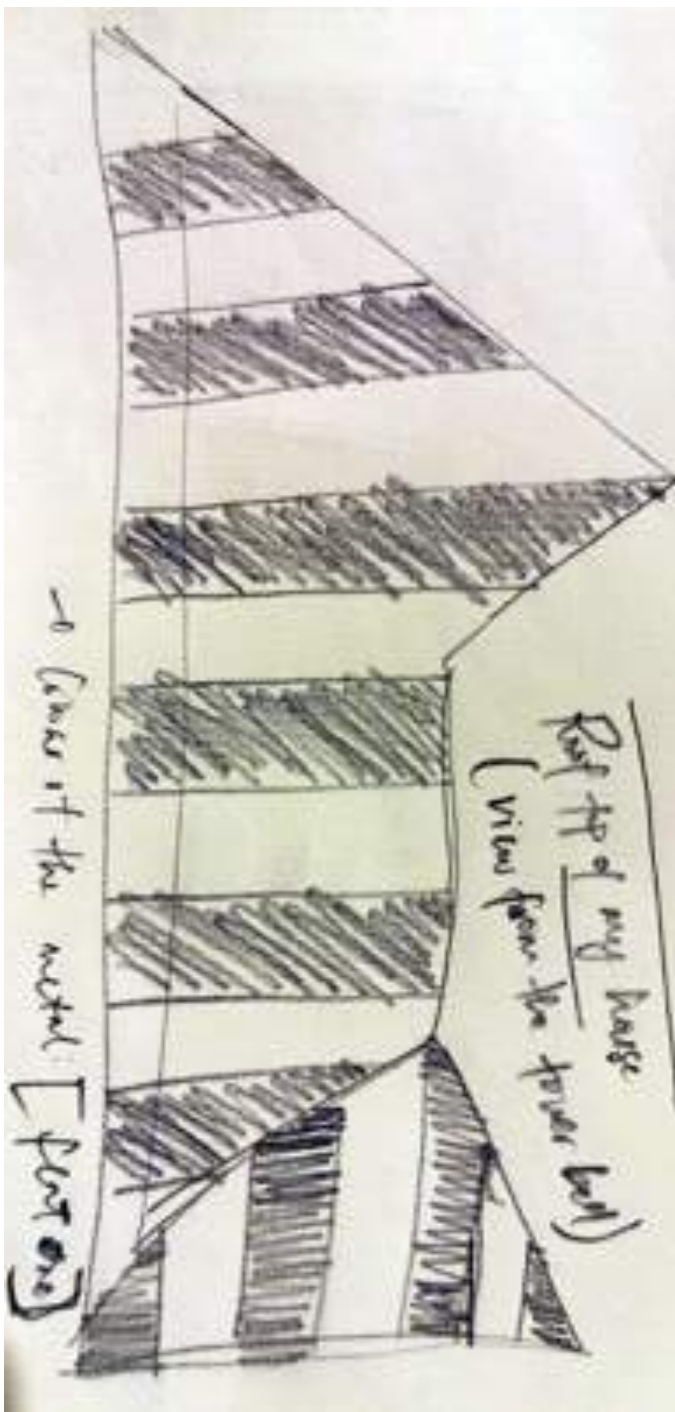


Fig 19 & 20. 'Uhila Nai. *A New Version of her*, 2018 – 2019. Still life drawing of the rooftop of Nena's house. Photo by Mo-e-Langi.

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Fig 21. 'Uhila Nai. *It's fine if you copy & paste*, (2019). A drawing collection of concepts which it was inspired by the form of my Nena's house, from the church bell viewpoint. I refined the drawings through the image trace function in the Adobe Illustrator software. The design was originated from a small house located on the east side of Pelehake. Saturday 27 July at 2.02am.

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Fig 22. 'Uhila Nai. *Tongatapu Hiva: My four walls is what's within*, 2020. This kupesi was designed to hold the memory of my Nena's 'Api (home). The 'Api was built in two different time-lines so it holds the memories of my ancestors and this kupesi is ours. The traditional process of drawing, stitching, and forming shapes with the mid-rib of the coconut leaves with the kavele'i pulu, 60x29cm.

Vala Fakaafe – The craft of Fakaafe

I came across an empty envelope with my Nena's name on it (Fig 23). The first thought that came to mind was, who gave her the envelope, and for what reason? Furthermore, what was inside? I later found out it was gifted to her as a Christmas gift card by her granddaughter, Ane Lupe Le'ota. What came to mind was the memory of Nena always asking for an envelope, every time she has a fakaafe.⁶⁶ What amazed me was how an envelope could draw out part of a memory that I had with my grandmother. The stories of fakaafe have their purpose, but this envelope reminds me of the notion of exchange when it comes to individuals' public presentation of ceremonial gifts. A Tongan phrase often said is 'me'a pe 'oku ma'u 'ave ia, ngata'anga pe ia hoto ivi⁶⁷ or si'i kae ha.'⁶⁸ The more I tātanaki about this memory, I came to create a kupesi using the graphics on the bottom right corner of the envelope and create a kiekie.⁶⁹ The craft of kiekie represents cultural respect. Kupesi has various ways to be told; what makes it interesting is how a small object or found objects hold so many stories that travel through different time-lines, which not until this moment felt right to be revealed.

The kupesi of vala fakafe is a cultural reference through a memory that was created or emerged out of an envelope. Vala Fakafe talks about the notions of values, exchange, and respect. Within my practice, I tried to respect the traditional processes and methods by learning more about its history and its importance to my culture. The exchange appears through gifting when exchanging knowledge, stories, conversation, and also actions of processes and methods. The gifting of exchange holds the memory of a past event, which is now being told through a different platform, material, and form. (Figs 24 & 26)

⁶⁶ Feast which others are invited

⁶⁷ Give what you have, because that is all you can provide.

⁶⁸ Small but significant

⁶⁹ Garment



Fig 23. *An envelope of her memories is now my present and future. This envelope with my Nena's name on it, was gifted to her as a Christmas card from one of her grandchildren, Ane Lupe Leola. This envelope was found around mid-August, 2017 in Nena's bible bag with different documents, mainly our ancestors birth certificates. It unlocked a memory about the exchange of the Tongan obligation of fakafe (invitation).*

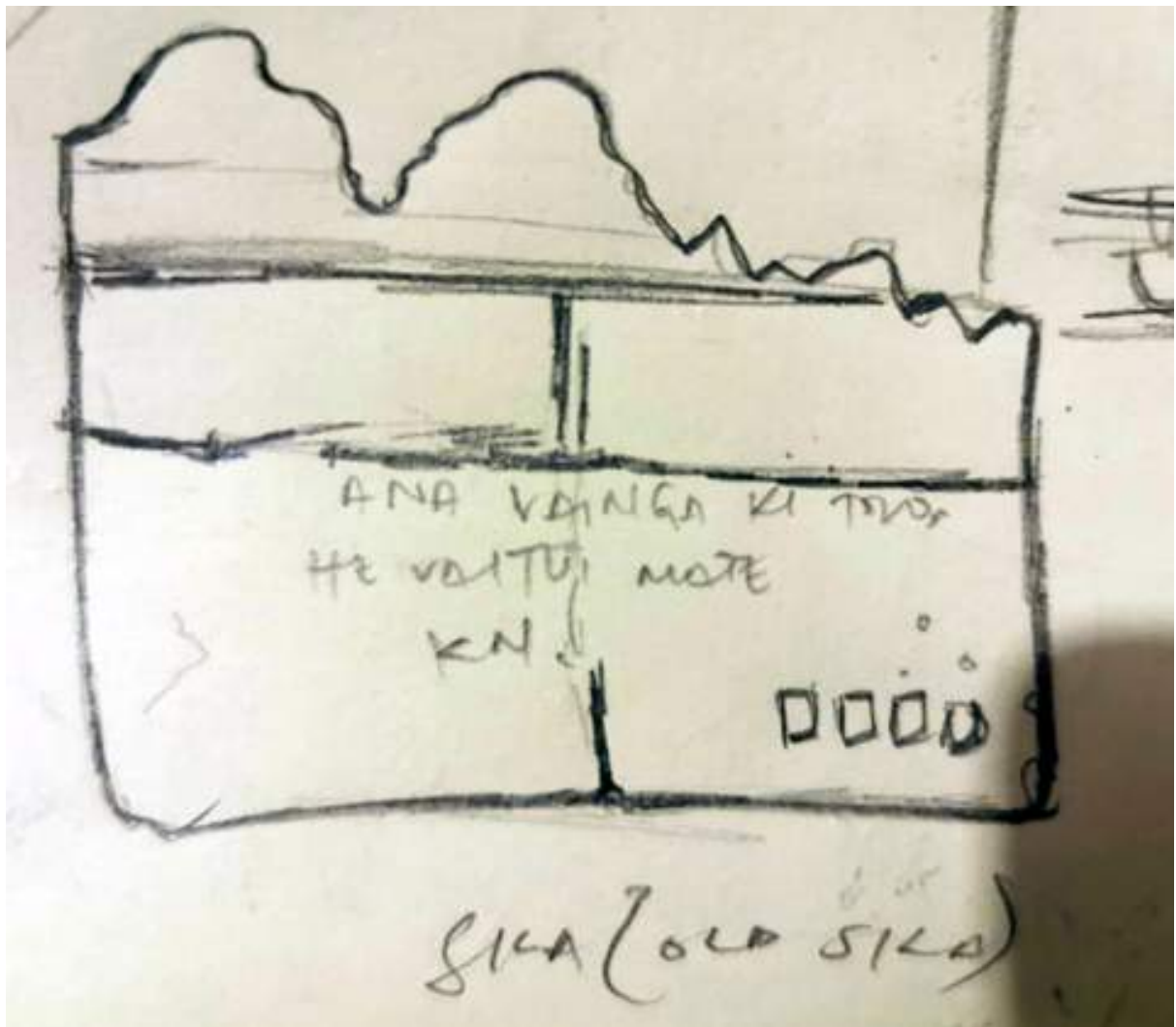


Fig 24. 'Uhila Nai. The exchange of knowledge through different materials; a found material (envelope) and an attempted drawing of my memory capture at first look. With the process of tohi ngatu (hand-drawn), pencil on A5 paper. 2019.

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Fig 25. 'Uhila Nai. The re-constructing of the envelope with the Tongan concepts of; exchange of knowledge, respect, and cultural values that comes with the cultural obligations. The notion of respect is shown by the traditional kiekie, created from the four small boxes printed on the bottom right of the envelope. These concepts were developed and re-constructed using Adobe Illustrator software with the process of image trace. 2019.

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Fig 26. 'Uhila Nai. *Respecting the Archives*, 2020. The traditional process of drawing, stitching, and forming shapes with the mid-rib of the coconut leaves with the kavele'i pulu. 47x30cm.

CHAPTER II

TOHI KUMI KOLOA

“Oceanians retain memories of the past and awareness of its presence.” ‘Epeli Hau’ofa⁷⁰

THE PRIVATE LETTER BECOMES PUBLIC.

The languages of memories that unfold the story to the open space.

My practice has many layers that keep me unfolding knowledge over and over. Manatu⁷¹ is a concept that speaks to the Tongan representation of who I am as a Tongan artist whose practice exists in one place but is, in essence, the makeup of two locations, Pelehake, Tonga and Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa. Manatu refers to the idea of communicating with the past as a way to understand the Tongan ways of thinking and practice. The primary focus of manatu is to unpack or reveal a part from the loa kāliu.⁷² Manatu not only reminds me of the history of my ancestors, but it also gives me the ability to share stories of the past with the younger generation of today (my siblings, cousins and peers) and the future generations. Like many Tongan words, Manatu can have multiple meanings, which can only be understood from Tongan thinking and practice; for example, manatu-melie, which is used for funeral purposes only. However, it can be used in conversation as someone would manatu-melie to their loved ones, family, friends, and school mates who are no longer with them. Also, as a way of remembering all of the good memories of my ancestors (Fig 27).

⁷⁰ ‘Epeli Hau’ofa. Epilogue: Pasts to Remember. Remembrance of Pacific Pasts: An invitation to Remake History. Robert Borofsky. Honolulu, HI, University of Hawai’i Press. 2000.

⁷¹ Memories

⁷² Long Past

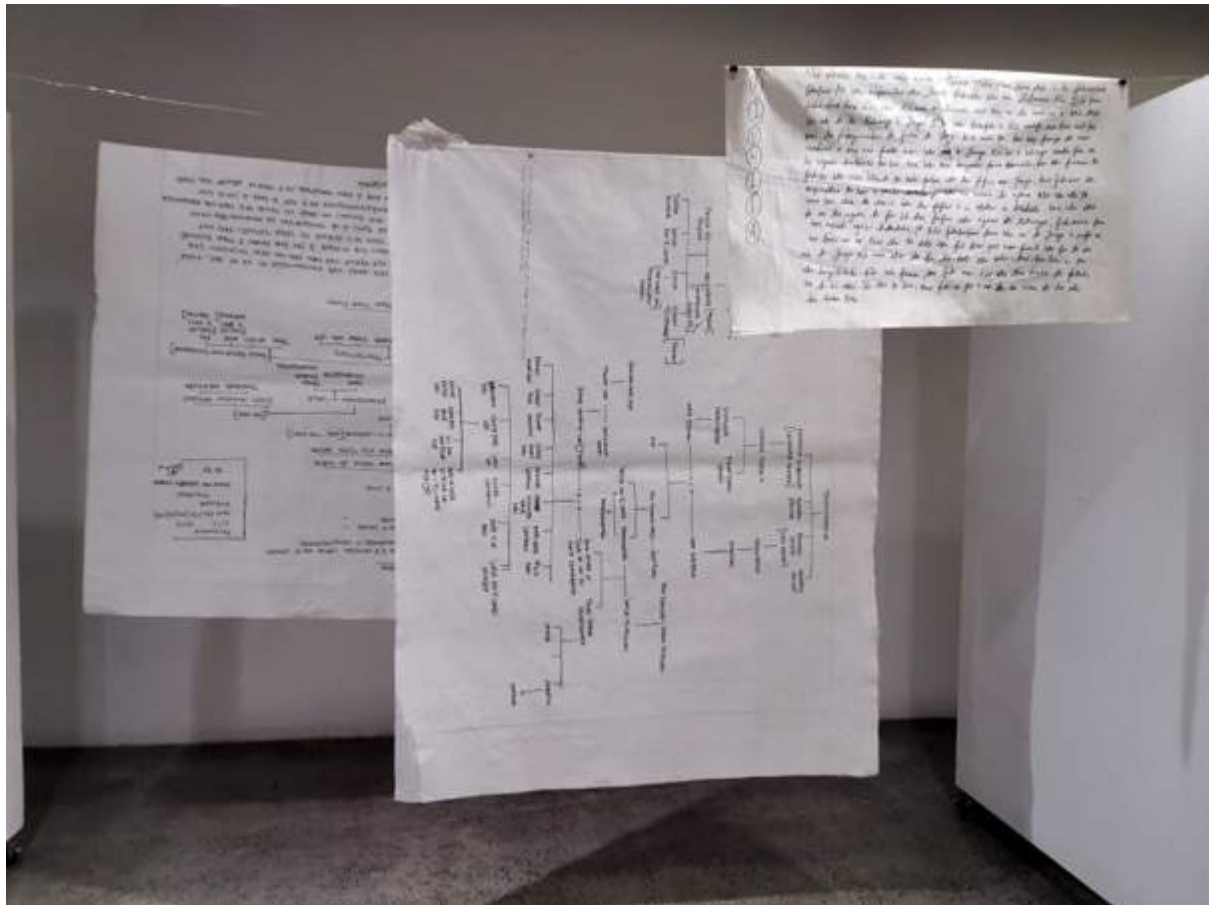


Fig 27 'Uhila Nai. *Tribe of Communication*, 2019. The transferred prints on the suspended sheets of reemay are multiple documents that talk about family lines, passport documents, letters, conversation, and Nena's last notes to her younger self. Mixed processes of tohi ngatu using fo'i fā (pandanus fruit), tauaki (to dry), and tautau (to hang). Critique Session, AUT WM Level 4 foyer, 1:40pm.

Pauline Hoeft-Cocker, a Tongan artist, dedicated an artwork in memory of her Grandmother, titled *Mama Ko Ho'o' Alu Ki Fē* or *Mama, where are you going?*⁷³ (Fig 28). From a Tongan perspective, I understand the importance of the tittle. I understand the title from an understanding of a child. As I grow up, I lost my uncle and best-friend by the age of 4, and with no understanding of the situation, I often asked my Nena at the time, before she passed away. Where did uncle go, and questioning the place he's going to. Hoeft-Cocker sculpted a piece that represents her Grandmother in ways for her to express her inner emotions and feelings because she could not attend her Grandmother's funeral in Tonga. Hoeft-Cocker said, "it was a sad time for me when my Grandmother dies because I could not be in Tonga for her funeral or be with her before she died. I needed to engage in a process as a

⁷³ Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimano Pereira, *Speaking in Colour: Conversation with artists of Pacific Island heritage* (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 1997), 26-35.

memory of my Grandmother and an expression of her grief.”⁷⁴ She expresses her feeling through sculpting a figure of her grandmother, with a traditional costume and kupesi design around her waist with her facing the ground—the representation of respect, memories, and cultural reference.

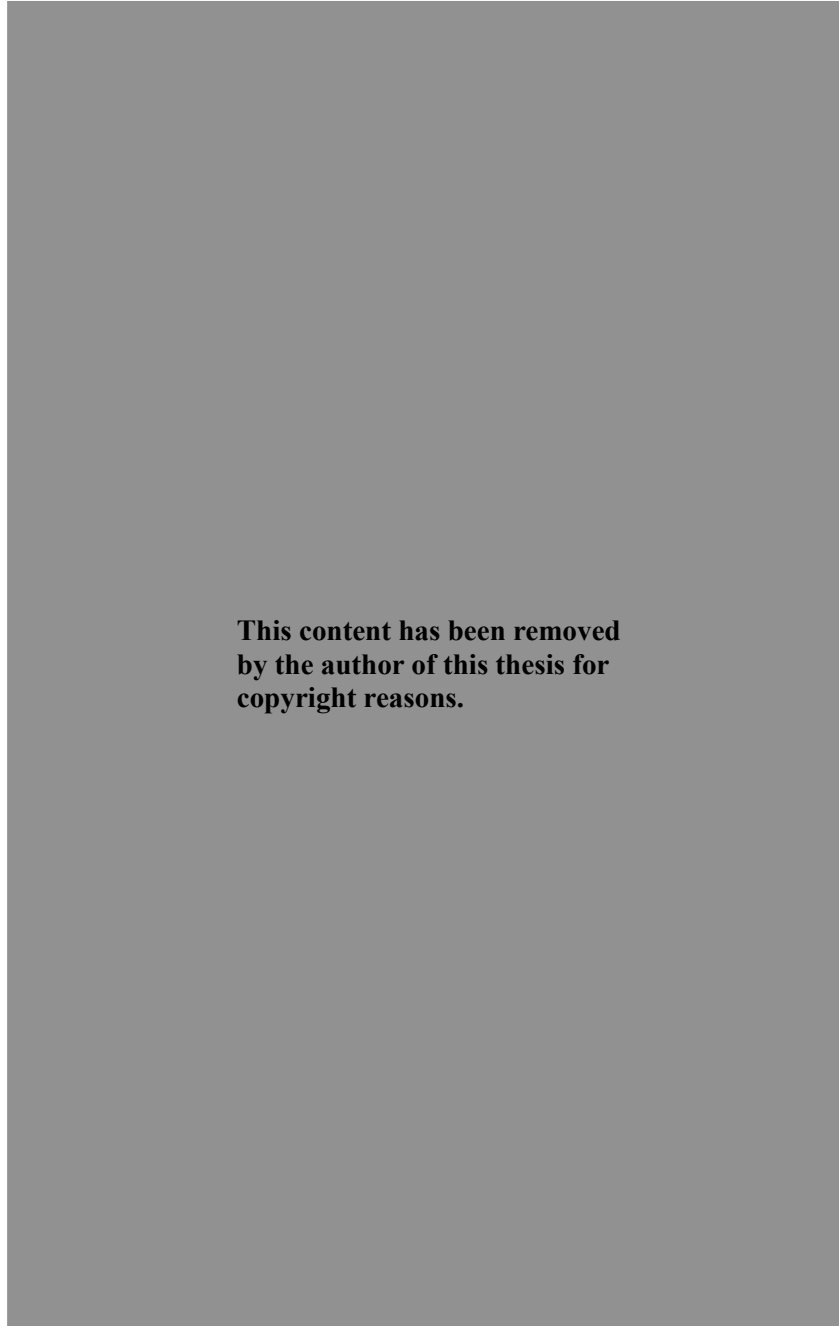


Fig 28. Pauline Hoeft-Cocker, *Mama Ko Ho'o 'Alu Ki Fē?* clay, 1994.

⁷⁴ Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimano Pereira, *Speaking in Colour: Conversation with artists of Pacific Island heritage* (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 1997), 26-35.

The collective meanings of manatu manifest in my practice in different ways; for example, the idea of working with kupesi has brought multiple layers of different memories and emotions from a particular time-line. Mainly my past, growing up watching my Nena engage in varieties of Tongan making (Fig 29). However, the further back the memory, the harder it is for me to recollect. My manatu can only open up to me to interact with when I am back home at my Nena's, where it all started. Manatu acts like the kafa that weaves every piece together with one multiple kafa to become a koloa⁷⁵ that tells the story of my younger self, who was not ready to be separated from my Grandmother.



Fig 29. *Her Mother's ('Uhila lahi) archive*, 2012. Nena was re-creating and fixing up her mother's ngatu during summer 2012, Photo by Moe-Langi Nai.

My practice does not only show through the traditional processes and methods, but also the title that was given to the artwork. It brings out a different side that has never been talked or shared with an external audience. My research has kept the past for so long, as it is about finding the right time, the right space to be shared with today's generation. However, I know my practice will always find its way home to where it belongs, to my Nena, my family, and my ancestors. Fatu Feu'u once said, 'Part of our

⁷⁵ Wealth

survival is doing art, and if we do not, then we are lost. We are lost in another country, without an identity'.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Sean Mallon and Pandora Fulimano Pereira, *Speaking in Colour: Conversation with artists of Pacific Island heritage*. (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 1997).

TOKONAKI MEI MU'A

The collective of living memory.

The Tongan language phrase, tokonaki mei mu'a has a different meaning when it is broken down, but it depends on what is used for. In the Monolingual Dictionary, tokonaki is defined as teuteu ki ha me' a 'oku fiema'u,⁷⁷ and mei pē talu⁷⁸ and mu'a⁷⁹, which is understood as 'uluaki.⁸⁰ These three words create the Tongan phrase tokonaki mei mu'a, which used by the elders to refer to the idea of 'always be prepared or gather something that will be needed or important before it happens.'

Thinking about a collective practice, the word tokonaki brings in the idea of gathering material, information, and stories from the past. Tokonaki is all about preparing and getting what is needed before it happens. For me, Tokonaki means collecting and gathering materials from Tonga for creating my kupesi, before I leave to return to Aotearoa. This planning is necessary because there is no going back once I land in Aotearoa. The collection of the materials was done with the help of my younger and older cousins/brothers (Fig 30). To gather the material takes two-three weeks. It is because the material has to be processed to be transported over to Aotearoa as the material holds processes within the process such as; toli niu⁸¹, (Fig 31) hifi la'i kaka⁸² (Fig 32) and tā louniu⁸³ (Fig 33).



Fig 30. 'Inoke Sisipala Moala, Lopati Siale, Fakalolo Finau and Salesi Kāvaka, 2019.

⁷⁷ To gather or to provide

⁷⁸ From

⁷⁹ Front or forward

⁸⁰ Number One

⁸¹ Picking coconuts from the coconut tree

⁸² To cut off the coconut fiber off from around the coconut leaves.

⁸³ To cut off the coconut leaves off from the coconut tree (collection of coconut leaves mid-rib).



Fig 31. Fakalolo Finau, *Toli niu*. Tokomea, 2019.



Fig 32. Lopati Siale, *Hifi lai kaka*, Tokomea, 2019.



Fig 33. Inoke Sisipala Moala and Fakalolo Finau, *Tā louniu mo paki louniu*, Tokomea, 2019.

How do I create an image? What objects, bits of knowledge, and memories do I choose to work with when I fakatotolo into related concepts. For instance, when I am back home in Tonga, I tried to find something that belonged to my Nena or family members who are long gone. In 2017, I sought materials that were either handed down from my ancestors or have traveled through time. I came across my Nena's boarding pass from 25 January 1996 (Fig 34). In 2018, on another trip back to Tonga for further research about names within our family, I found my Nena's kato tohitapu.⁸⁴ I learned about the memory of a family puha⁸⁵ (Figs 35 & 36), handed down for four generations. However, it leads me to the re-creation of a new box with an understanding of what my memory has captured.

Irish artist, Kathy Prendergast's artwork '*The End and Beginning*' (Fig 37) is an intimate small-scale sculpture. It caught my attention, because she uses human hair – a material that by its very nature travels through time and connects one generation to another. For this work, Prendergast uses human hair from three different generations; her own, her mother's and her son's wound onto a wooden spool. This object represents the materiality of a 'material' that travels through time, a material that sometimes makes you travel back to those times.



Fig 34. *Returning Home*, Nena's boarding pass, 25 January 1996.

⁸⁴ Bible bag

⁸⁵ Box

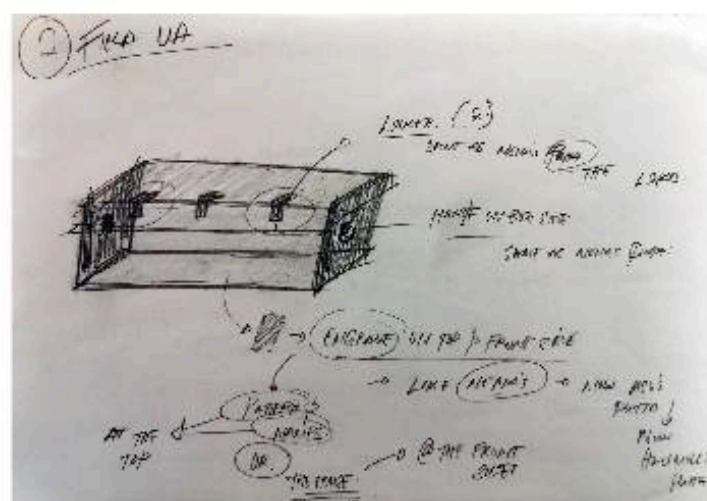
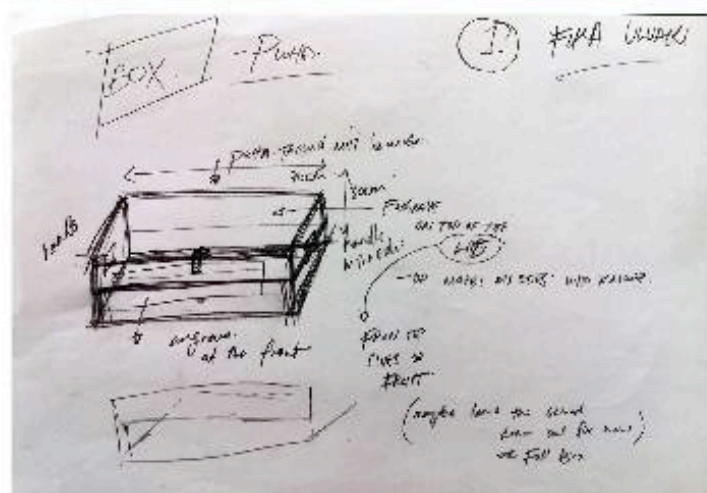
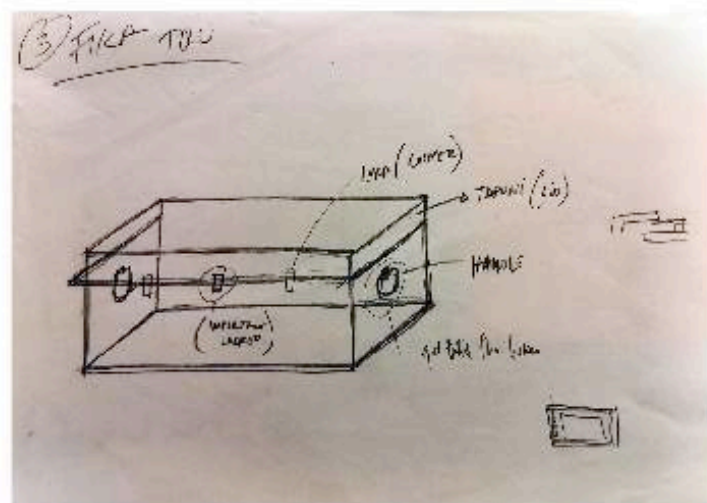


Fig 35. 'Uhila Nai. Collection of drawings from what my memory captures of my great, great grandma's puha (box). 2019.



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Fig 36. 'Uhila Nai. *The third generation is a trace of what my memories capture*, 2019. Re-creating a family box from memory. The original/ actual box has travelled through four generations. I have described this as the third generation because the memory of the puha I have drawn from was when it was in my Nena's possession. She was the third generation of which the puha was passed down too. From my great-great-grandmother – my great grandmother – my grandmother — to me (my memory) – the exact trace of what my memory capture, and to my uncle.

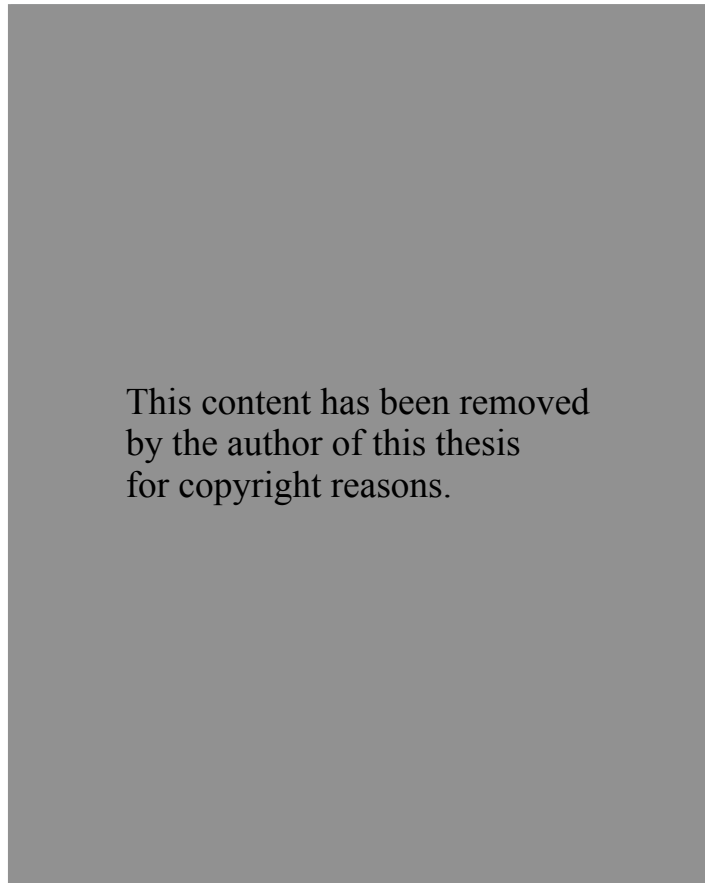


Fig 37. Kathy Prendergast, *The End and the Beginning II*, 1996, three generations of human hair & wooden spool 5.5 x 4 cm / 2.17 x 1.57 in.⁸⁶

What draws my attention is how one object, like the puha can reveal the next story. I can only get access to a small amount of information about an individual story, such as the story about my Nena's name. It only reveals the story of whom she was named after without unfolding the whole story. As the story – tell;

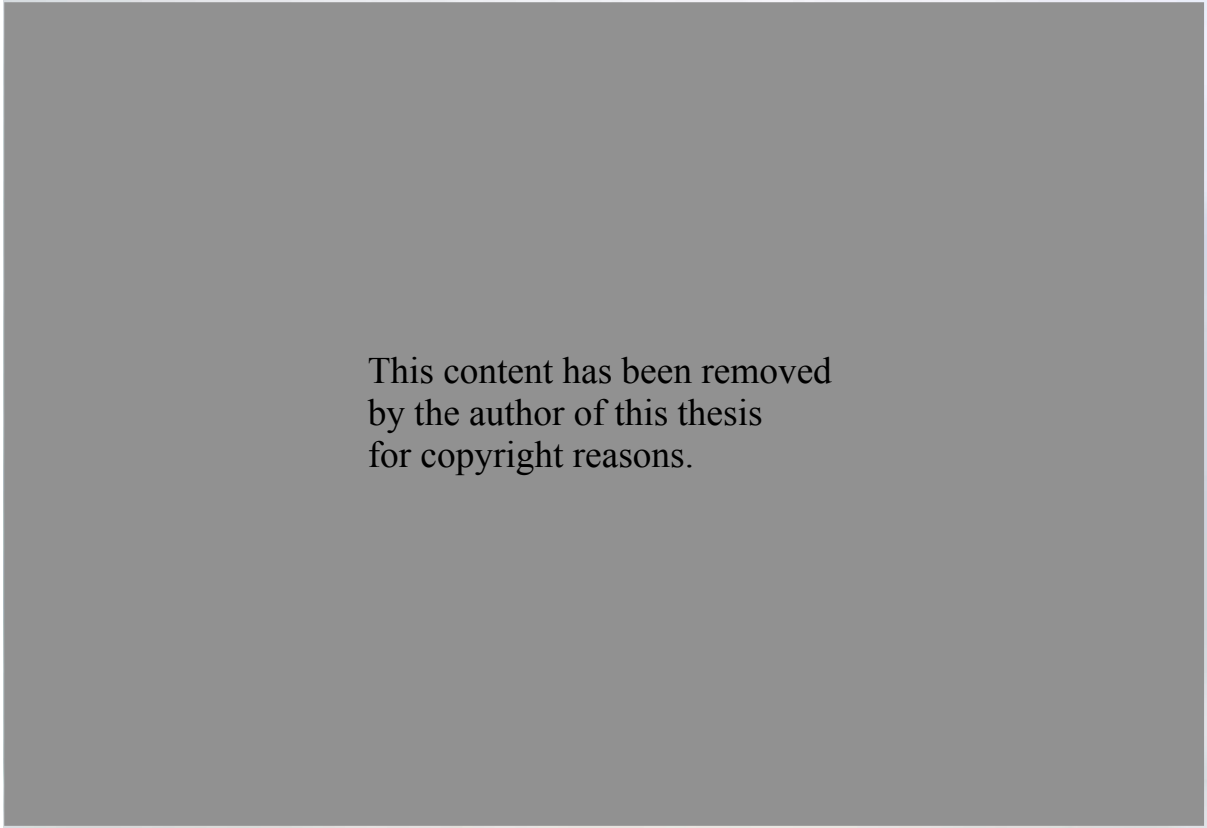
Vai Tui Mate – Water of Death and Faith. (Fig 38)

... My grandmother's name is 'Ana Va'inga Ki Toloa He Vai Tui Mate Nai (born Kanongata'a) Pautā. It is heard that she was named after her grandmother, 'Ana. The history and stories of my grandmother's name have been hard to discover and to be revealed. There are parts where it has been revealed, but most of it has not. Even questioning my family members about my Nena's name, their mum's name, they do not know anything about it. I felt like the more I try to fakatotolo and dig deeper into my Nena's name, the harder it gets. Some things are not supposed to be told, and some are to be spoken about. I appreciated the knowledge given by the children, but I know

⁸⁶ Kerlin Gallery, Kathy Prendergast, http://www.kerlingallery.com/artists/kathy-prendergast/artist_works/1

there is a mystery behind her name, and only she can unfold those stories. There is a saying that goes, ‘there are only a few histories, stories and more that are supposed to be told and the others are not meant to be told.’ From time to time, I feel like my grandmother does not want me to know and does not want to share the meaning and the history to her name. That being, if it fell into the wrong hands and was mistreated and misread in the wrong context.

As I could not unpack the name of my grandmother, what came to mind was creating a kupesi that can represent and hold the meaning behind our relationship as a daughter/mother and grand-daughter/grandmother. To create a kupesi that will remember the story of my grandmother and the hard work of a mother – grandmother.



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Fig 38. ‘Uhila Nai. *Vai Tui Mate – The Water of Death & Faith*, 2019. Referring to my Nena, who always walked in fonua (land) with us, and now can no longer because she is walking in water. The traditional process of drawing, stitching, and forming shapes with the mid-rib of the coconut leaves with the kavele’i pulu. Pelehake, 35x52cm.

The idea of thinking about my Nena and my family as they share their knowledge and memories from the ancient times would come to mind every time I found another object. Every object I encountered throughout my journey to the past, I learned and gained further knowledge about each object as I convert them into symbols for the making of my kupesi. What is important for me and my practice is how the symbols of my kupesi create a space for me to be working with family knowledge, memories, and stories

– they allow its history to be told at the right time for the right reason and the right people. The Tongan phrase ‘oku ‘i ai pe me’a mo hono taimi’ known as everything has its own time.

In the reading of *Materiality and Collective Experience: Sewing as Artist Practice in works*, Bonnie Devine explained her practice as a combination of traditional sewing, learned from her grandmother, and contemporary art practices. In 2003, her installation work titled ‘*Canoe*’ (Fig 39) had a similar parallel to the notion of accessing materials, as she uses pages from her Master’s thesis stitching them together using contemporary sewing. The exciting about Devine’s work is the use of different processes; for example, the method of traditional hand-sewn and the knowledge and skills from her sculpture classes like a sewing machine. Devine chose to use the process of sewing machine for the reason as the viewer must be able to read the text on the paper, and the sewing machine created fewer wrinkles on the paper than if the paper had been sewn by hand. It is interesting to come across Devine’s work because, from a personal perspective, I can see the similarities between the installation work of *Canoe* and my practice, but with a different approach to traditional and contemporary processes and skills. What I connect with Devine is through the concepts of collection, and the use of traditional processes and methods learned in school. For example, the *stamps print*, 2019 (Fig 40) was a work created by using traditional materials, feta’aki and with contemporary printing style of the stamps, with the use of the technology, as it was laser engraved the patterns onto an MDF, then it was used as the stamps.

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Fig 39. Bonnie Devine, *Canoe*, 2013. Graphite and tar on paper, machine-sewed with cotton thread, secured by hand with twine and breads, 16 ft. Long.



Figure 40. 'Uhila Nai. *Stamps Series*, 2019. Laser engraved on MDF board, imprinted onto a feta'aki with fabric ink. The making was done at Nena's house, my first ever studio space in Pelehake.

The group Mata Aho is a collective of four Māori women, Erena Baker, Sarah Hudson, Bridget Reweti, and Terri Te Tau. They collaborate and produce significantly scaled large installation artworks. The size of their work captivated my *attention* as the scale is similar to the scale of making and object that I work with. Their work '*Kiko Moana*, 11x4m, 2017' (Fig 41) caught my attention through the scale and the material that was used, along with the concept of collective making. The installation of the work *Kiko Moana* is particularly inspiring for the large-scale objects in my practice. That said, the Mata Aho collective was also given a collection of stories about the taniwha narratives by friends and family to share through storytelling embedded in the collaborative making of their work.

The similarities between their work and my practice exist in the concept of scale, monuments, textiles, and installation. We both have our perspectives as we draw on different cultures and understandings. My practice is seeking stories about my ancestors, which is where I perceive some synchronicities in the gifted knowledge from my ancestor's travel through the body of the past, present, and future. The idea of the monument appears in both practices; for example, the use of the contemporary material of tarpaulin, whereas for my project, the objects are a monument of my ancestors. It is their stories, histories, and knowledge that are being re-used and re-created within a contemporary context.

I have always been interested in scale as it relates to the art of ngatu. For example, the scale of the ngatu depends on the type. There are Fola'osi : Ngatu Langanga as it is 4-7m, Fatuua : Ngatu Langanga, which they are 8-10m, Lau – Ua : Ngatu Langanga as 20m, Lau Tolu as 30m and Lau – Nima : Ngatu 'e Fatuvalu as they are 50m. Sometimes the ngatu we are producing are up to Lau tefuhi : Langanga e teau, 100m. The scale within the art of ngatu production is really important, as they are shown below—the work of 'Akosi²⁴, 2x8m 2019 (Fig 42) as an example of a Fatuua. Mele Hausia's ngatu is an example of a Lau – Nima (Fig 43), and Fig 44 is an example of Lau tefuhi which is split into two Lau – nima. The scale of ngatu making brings with it a way to be presented in a large open space. For example, most of the processes used in the ngatu production occur in a space like a hall, field, or a backyard between 30-50 sq.metres in area. This scale provides the ngatu the freedom to be moved and also folded, refolded and unfolded, but also paaki⁸⁷ as well. However, most importantly, the process of tauaki,⁸⁸ paaki, and tapelu⁸⁹ out in the sun.

⁸⁷ Coded with flower base mix with hot water, and later mix with fuel.

⁸⁸ To be out in the air and get some sun light

⁸⁹ Fold or refold



Fig 41. *Kiko Moana* (2017).

Polyethene tarpaulin and cotton thread. Installed at the Museum of Hessian History, Kassel, Germany 2017.

Collection: Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington.

© Mata Aho Collective



Fig 42. 'Uhila Nai. 'Akosi24: Nena's house, 2019, mix-media, Indian ink, kato lā, pepa koka'anga (Reemay material (contemporary material for tapa making) with the process of taukai. 2x8m.



Fig 43. Top image. Mele Hausia, and Saia Hausia working on the making of her ngatu. Cleaning and patching up little holes, with the process of tauaki (because it was to be transported over to New Zealand). 2019.

Fig 44. Bottom image. Launima 'e Ua : Lau tefuhi by women from the village of Pelehake. Created for the funeral of Princess Mata-'O-Taone Tuku'aho (the daughter of the late Prince Fatafehi, the brother of George Tupou IV. The current King of Tonga). 2018.

CHAPTER III

REAL INTENTIONS HIDE UNDER A SMILING MARK

*'A person who plays marbles silently, without any showboating, yet is the one who will win.'*⁹⁰

THE HIERARCHY OF LANGUAGES AND ITS USE IN ARTS AND CRAFTS.

The language of Tongan people holds so much more meaning than you could ever imagine. It contains different language levels, moralities, and values. Within the Tongan language, there are at least three categories or what is known as the principles of hierarchisation: 'Eiki – Tu'a'⁹¹ dialectic. I became interested in the language of my culture, as it was explained in the *Tongan ways of Talking* written by Melenaita Taumoeofolau, where she extended the way of talking into six different ranks.⁹²
⁹³(Taumoeofolau, 2012, 327 – 328)

Traditionally speaking, the Tongan language only described the following three: lea 'o e tu'i'⁹⁴, lea 'o e hou'eiki,⁹⁵ and lea 'a e tu'a'.⁹⁶ Taumoeofolau defined the following traditions from 1-5, as those used in a gathering through the expression, such as ceremonial orations in cultural gathering, sermons, songs, poems, and speeches. I work between using the language of kakai, hou'eiki, and tu'i. My project extended into ways of speaking, particularly digging deep into No 3 lea fakamatāpule and No 5 lea tavale. In the *Tongan ways of Talking*, Taumoeofolau explained lea fakamatāpule as speaking in a polite way that is characteristic of the title matāpule⁹⁷ and describes lea tavale as having a conversation with someone familiar, socially equal or tu'a. The way of kakai, hou'eiki, tu'i is used in my practice through cultural obligation, formal gatherings, family gatherings, and also artmaking. What makes the lea mu'a

⁹⁰ John Veā, Reconnecting to Culture through fonua, 2019.

⁹¹ Chief and Commoners

⁹² Melenaita Taumoeofolau, "Tongan Ways Of Talking." *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* 121, no. 4 (2012: 327-72. Accessed May 27, www.jstor.org/stable/43285197. 2012, 327 – 328.

⁹³ lea fakatu'i – way of talking to or about the monarch/king (tu'i), lea fahahou'eiki – way of talking to or about chiefly people (hou'eiki); lea fakamatāpule – polite way of communicating that is characteristic of title orators (matāpule), lea fakatokilalo /faka'aki'akimui – self-derogatory way of talking when addressing those of higher rank, lea tavale – way of talking to a person with whom one is familiar or with whom one is socially equal, or method of talking to or about commoners (tu'a) and lea 'ita – abusive way of talking

⁹⁴ Language of the Kings and Queen's.

⁹⁵ Language for the chiefs

⁹⁶ Language of the commoners

⁹⁷ Orators

The image shows a person's desk with a large, detailed mind map on a piece of paper. The mind map is written in Indonesian and covers topics like "MIND MAP", "RESEARCH", "MEMORY", "LANGUAGE", and "CULTURE". It includes various sub-topics, diagrams, and handwritten notes. A blue folder is visible on the left side of the desk.

The mind map is a complex web of ideas, with "MIND MAP" at the top. It branches out into several main categories: "RESEARCH", "MEMORY", "LANGUAGE", and "CULTURE". Each category has further sub-topics and notes. For example, under "RESEARCH", there are sections for "RESEARCHING", "RESEARCHER", and "RESEARCHING". Under "MEMORY", there are sections for "MEMORY", "MEMORY", and "MEMORY". Under "LANGUAGE", there are sections for "LANGUAGE", "LANGUAGE", and "LANGUAGE". Under "CULTURE", there are sections for "CULTURE", "CULTURE", and "CULTURE".

The mind map is written in Indonesian, and the person has used various colors and symbols to make it more visually appealing. There are also some handwritten notes and diagrams scattered around the mind map, including a small drawing of a house and a small diagram of a person.

The person's desk is cluttered with various items, including a blue folder, a pen, and some papers. The background is a plain wall, and the lighting is bright, making the mind map easy to read.

...In a personal conversation with Vakaloa, he described the processes of ngatu tā'uli by using lea fakamatāpule from ancient Tonga. The materials used for the black ink are tuitui,¹⁰⁰ ongo fine' eiki¹⁰¹ – the chiefly language for the pot, tahi,¹⁰² vavale 'o e fau matu'outu'a¹⁰³ – (vavale is the old Tongan word for to'i, but both meant the name thing) niu taufua,¹⁰⁴ kava 'ilo¹⁰⁵ – paka

¹⁰⁵ The chiefly language for food

mo e kele'a,¹⁰⁶ and 'one'one tahi.¹⁰⁷ The document that was given by Vakaloa is an example that was full of language that was not from my time.¹⁰⁸ (personal conversation, Vakaloa, 2019)

We can take a look at the craft of nimamea'a koka'anga, which is one of several kinds of Tongan valuables, which are known collectively as koloa. In the Journal of the Polynesian Society, *Kie Hingoa: Mats of Power, Ranks, Prestige, and History*, Adrienne L. Kaeppler explains the word koloa as the products made by women, that makes women prestigious. As Kaeppler explains, 'the fabrication of *koloa* is not a craft, but a fine art that creates valuables, and important distinction on the Tongan cultural domains.'¹⁰⁹ For instance, the craft of ngatu and its ranks starts from the position of chiefly women. Speaking of chiefly women, Phyllis S. Herda and Billie Lythberg discuss in the *Culture Change in Tongan Bark-cloth Manufacture* their position within the craft as indeed it was their prerogative, and they may have been the ones to make it in the first place. The ranks of ngatu start from ngatu tā'uli,¹¹⁰ which known as the highest rank of all ngatu. In a conversation with Kulimoe'anga Stone Maka, who works in the field of ngatu tā'uli, says that ngatu tā'uli was created "To mark the power of the Tu'i Tonga. Which it is considered to be a purely abstract art form invented in Tonga, centuries before abstract art was discovered in Europe in 1910."¹¹¹ Ngatu ta'uli were only for funeral purposes of the royal family, and only the hou'eiki fafine were allowed to own and have the authority to create.

For example, in a conversation with my Nena's cousin, 'Anamanu Ve'a, who has been in Pelehake for the past 81-years, the daughter of Sione Nā'uli Vou and Fa'aoso. Ve'a told me about the issue that went wrong when a lady in the village who know so little about the making of the black ink for the ngatu tā'uli. She further explained the pot that is used for the making is called ongo fine'eiki, a respectful way of addressing the pot. This specific process and the pot are known for being addressed formally. Why no ink came from the ongo fine'eiki, the pot because the making was done during daylight when supposedly it should be done at night time. They also address the pot by giving it a new name ongo ta'ahine Pelehake.¹¹² According to Vakaloa, the process itself is fie'ei'eiki,¹¹³ and you have to be careful when addressing it; otherwise, it will not work. They have to follow the protocol of respecting the processes as it is a part of a craft with the highest rank in the ngatu production.

¹⁰⁶ Crabs and conch

¹⁰⁷ Ocean sand

¹⁰⁸ Personal conversation with Saia Vakaloa, 7 August, 2019, Vakaloa's space.

¹⁰⁹ Adrienne L. Kaeppler, he Journal of the Polynesian Society, *Kie Hingoa: Mats of Power, Ranks, Prestige, and History*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20706867>, 1999, 170.

¹¹⁰ Blackened Barkcloth

¹¹¹ Personal conversation with Kulimoe'anga Stone Maka, 11, June, 2017, 4:54 PM, <https://www.messenger.com/t/kulimoeanga.maka>.

¹¹² Two young women of Pelehake.

¹¹³ To imagine oneself to be a chief, and so to desire to be treated; to be arrogant

Artist Kulimoe'anga Stone Maka was born in Patangata, Tonga, and immigrated to New Zealand in 1997 at the age of 26 years old. Maka's practice is deeply rooted in the traditions of Tongan art, in particular the art of ngatu. Maka's practice incorporates traditional techniques and methods of making, along with his knowledge and ways of making. Maka has been using the ancient process of faka'ahu,¹¹⁴ which is a technique of smoking used in the art of weaving, ta'ovala,¹¹⁵ known as ta'ovala faka'ahu. In 2010 at Pataka Art + Museum in Porirua, Nina Kinahoi Tonga curated an exhibition titled *Tonga 'I Onopooni: Tonga Contemporary* with a collective of Tongan New Zealand artists, which included Maka. For this show, he exhibited one of his large-scale *Ngatu Tā'uli*, 2010, a traditional blackened tapa cloth with natural dyes. (Fig 46). From Maka's work ngatu tā'uli, he describes the black field of the ngatu tā'uli as helikai¹¹⁶ alluding to the intangible meanings embedded within the cloth itself.



Fig 46. Kulimoe'anga Stone Maka, *Ngatu Tā'uli*, 2010, a traditional blackened tapa cloth with natural dyes.
© Kulimoe'anga Stone Maka

¹¹⁴ Smoked mats

¹¹⁵ Mat

¹¹⁶ Veiled meaning

My practice is re-creating the art of ngatu tā'uli by adding a personal purpose, new value, and worth with material, and its users. The tradition is still there, but the new creation adds a unique perspective and different understanding. For instance, in August 2019 for the Talk Week event, I created a contemporary version of a ngatu tā'uli, which a work that I can only share within August. This artwork was dedicated as a memory of my grandmother as she was born on 13 August 1924; the piece was shared with the public's eyes one day after her birthday, on 14 August (she would have been 95 years old). Using the contemporary lens as an eye for the making of the ngatu tā'uli, both showed and described the shift of traditional methods and materials across time. The work, *Taha-tolu' o 'Akosi, taha-hiva-ua-fā* (Figs 47 & 48), was the first work that gave me a sense of direction in a way that felt like my Nena was telling me what to do and that she was there throughout the making. The ngatu tā'uli is known for having multiple perspectives and values. I wanted to incorporate the idea of how ngatu is used for funerals as a way for me to create this work to represent my Nena since she passed away back in 2014. Usually, ngatu tā'uli is fully covered in black ink. My work was a re-creation of a different understanding, specifically to be gifted to my Nena and to remember her fifth anniversary.

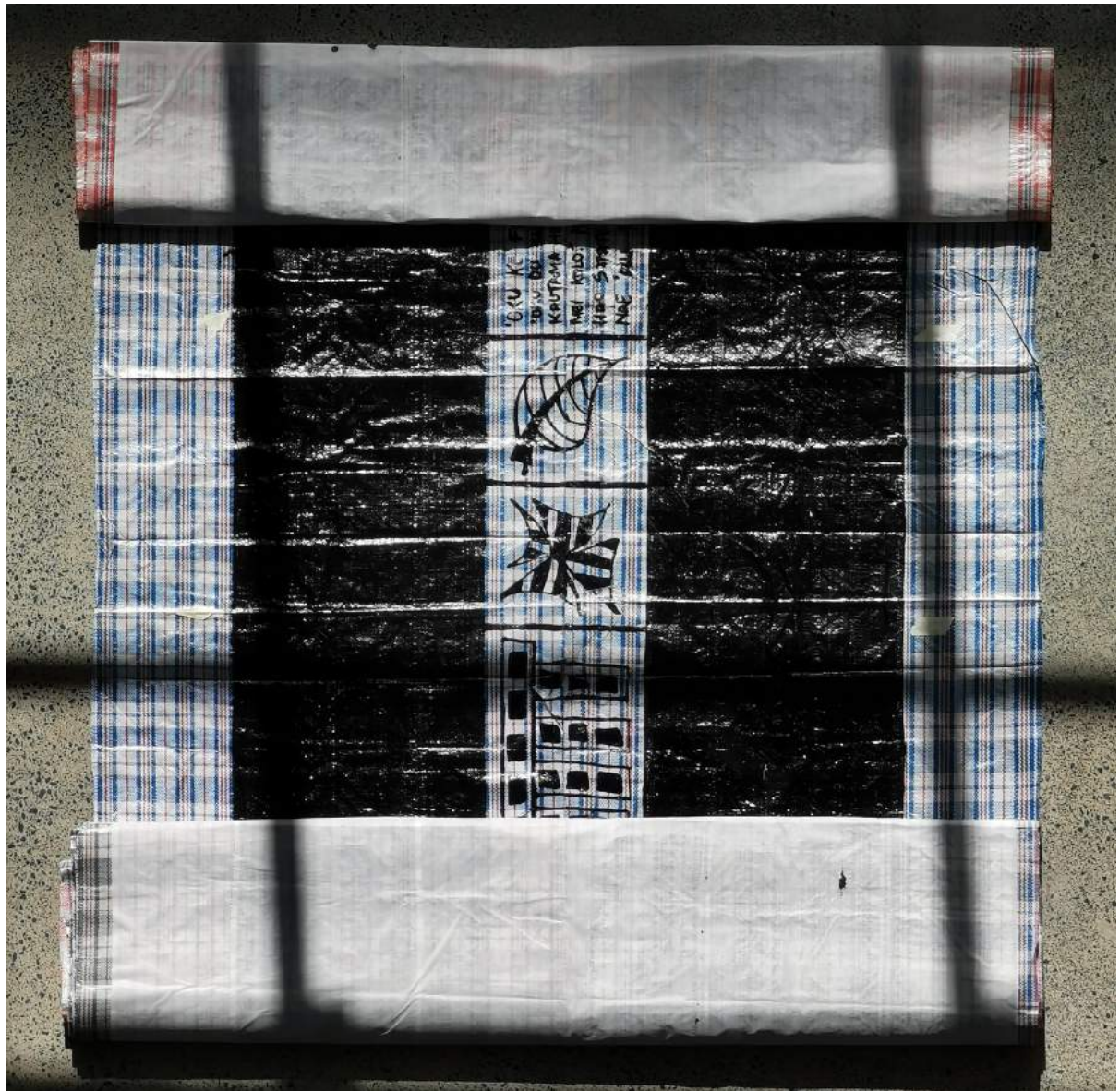




Fig 47 & 48. 'Uhila Nai. *Taha-Tolu 'o 'Akosi, Taha-Hiva-Ua-Fā*. 2019. Talk Week session, indian ink, pepa koka'anga, with the process of tohi ngatu. Photo by Emily Parr, 2x8m.

ALWAYS RETURNING HOME.

The translation of two languages between two worlds.

The poetical term liuaki is defined as; to come back, go back and come back; and liliu is defined as; to turn over or change into something or to translate. The term liuaki is used to refer to the concept of going back in a poetical sense. From where liuaki stands in the project, it is from the perspective of liliu as I go back and forth between Tongan and English but also between Tonga and Aotearoa. My project itself faces various challenges every day as it goes through multiple transformations of translation. The struggle of being bilingual is hard because I am a translation between two languages that do not belong to one another. I am continually re-adapting between Tonga and New Zealand, every time I visit and return. There is an essential gap in the practice where liliu fills in by pulling two different worlds together as they intertwine to creating a better and comfortable space for my artwork and my audience to occupy. Being bilingual is hard, especially when English is my second language. Anahina' Aipolo and Janet Holmes, have said as a response from the Tongan community, “any Tongan should be able to use Tongan, no matter where they are because it marks our identity.”¹¹⁷ (Fig 49)

In a conversation with the leading academic in Tā-Va (time and space) theory Tongan Professor Dr. 'Okusi Māhina, I question myself and ask, how I communicate, and how do I engage with my research? In our conversation, we used Tongan and English. This bilingual approach of communication has become an essential process in my research practice. I use both languages to research, write, and communicate. This research process of bilingualism occurs when a new word comes by while I am reading or having a conversation with my family in Tonga. For example, when I come across an English word I don't know, the method of switching from Tongan to English appears as I look through the Tongan definition on the *Tongan – English, and English – Tongan* dictionary. When speaking to the elders, I switch from English to Tongan. The conversation that I had with Dr. Māhina had revealed to me the struggle of switching between both languages throughout my practice and the difficulty in finding the right word to use.

¹¹⁷ 'Anahina 'aipolo & Janet 'Aipolo, The use of Tongan in New Zealand: Prospects for language maintenance, *Journal of Multilingual & Multicultural Development*, (1990), 516.

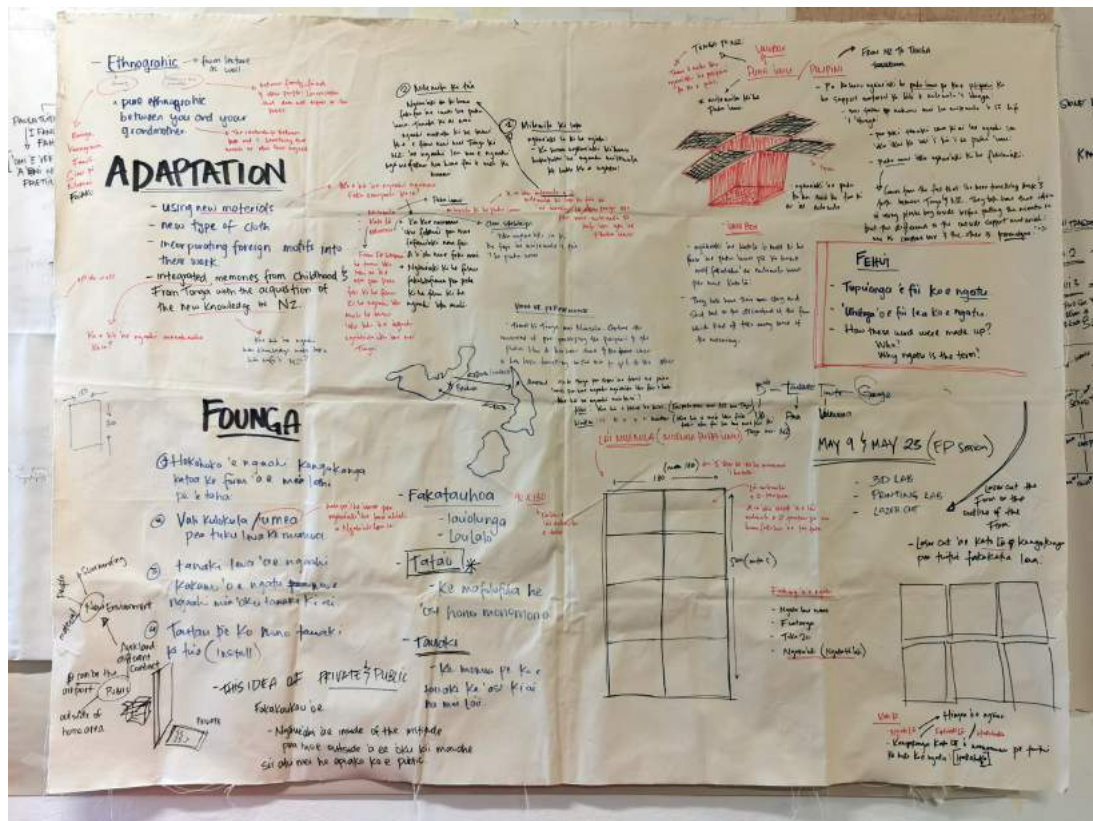


Fig 49. 'Uhila Nai. Studio notes using Tongan and English. Thinking between two languages that intertwine with one another and trying to introduce each other's concepts (to one another) in order to bring it to the fore. 2019.

My project repetitively engages in the process of looking at the meaning and translating one word to another, which leads to more Tongan words with multiple meanings. The concept of repetition becomes the method of myself looking for words. An example, in a conversation with Dr. Māhina, he explained the following term as, nga (when a baby is crying), ngā (when baby birds are crying, which is known as the cry of an animal), and (getting excited and joyful for an event that is about to happen), and ngangatu (sweet-smelling or fragment). Dr. Mahina explained their similarities in pronunciation and how they link together through the concept of 'alahamanongi (fragment) with a different degree and quality of meanings. For example, ngatu is the idea of working together as a community, and ngatū talks about the excitement for an upcoming event that is about to happen. What this conversation brings to my practice is the ability of Tongan language to create new understandings from a contemporary context that positions a different perspective, one that is hard to describe. Ancient Tongan language has a poetic way of communicating its meaning. For example, the word ninamea'a used by my Nena to

describe anything that is arts and craft related; she often said nimamea'a, which is the ancient word of saying nima poto pe ala poto.¹¹⁸

As the practice of making and translating in two different contexts, I continuously have to transmit my work between the two spaces. For example, the work of *Taha-Tolu 'o 'Akosi, Taha-Hiva-Ua-Fā*, 2x8m, 2019, was performed in two different spaces as it brings in the idea of what space the work is more comfortable to be able to have a complete translation of what it is. It does not only apply to space but also my audience. The process used was the same process of tauaki and drying it outside to get fresh air. What defines the translation of both work within the space, different contexts are the use of space. The space in Tonga allows the work to be read as a process used on contemporary materials. The university's studio space allows my practice to challenge the material I grew up watching my Nena used, the reemay material. Also, the kato lā, which used for traveling as it is light and does not add weight to the original 24 KG. With these objects, especially the kato lā, it transformed from being an object into a material, where I use to make most of my contemporary more personal ngatu out of. As the material is used for ngatu, it becomes an object again, because the ngatu is used for multiple purposes. (Figs 50 & 51)

¹¹⁸ Someone who is skillful with one's hand



Fig 50. Uhila Nai. *I3 Akosi, 1924: The place where I unfold myself to my audience*, 2019. Talk Week, Studio Foyer, 14 August, mixed media – Indian ink using fā, kato lā, pepa koka* anga, and marker.

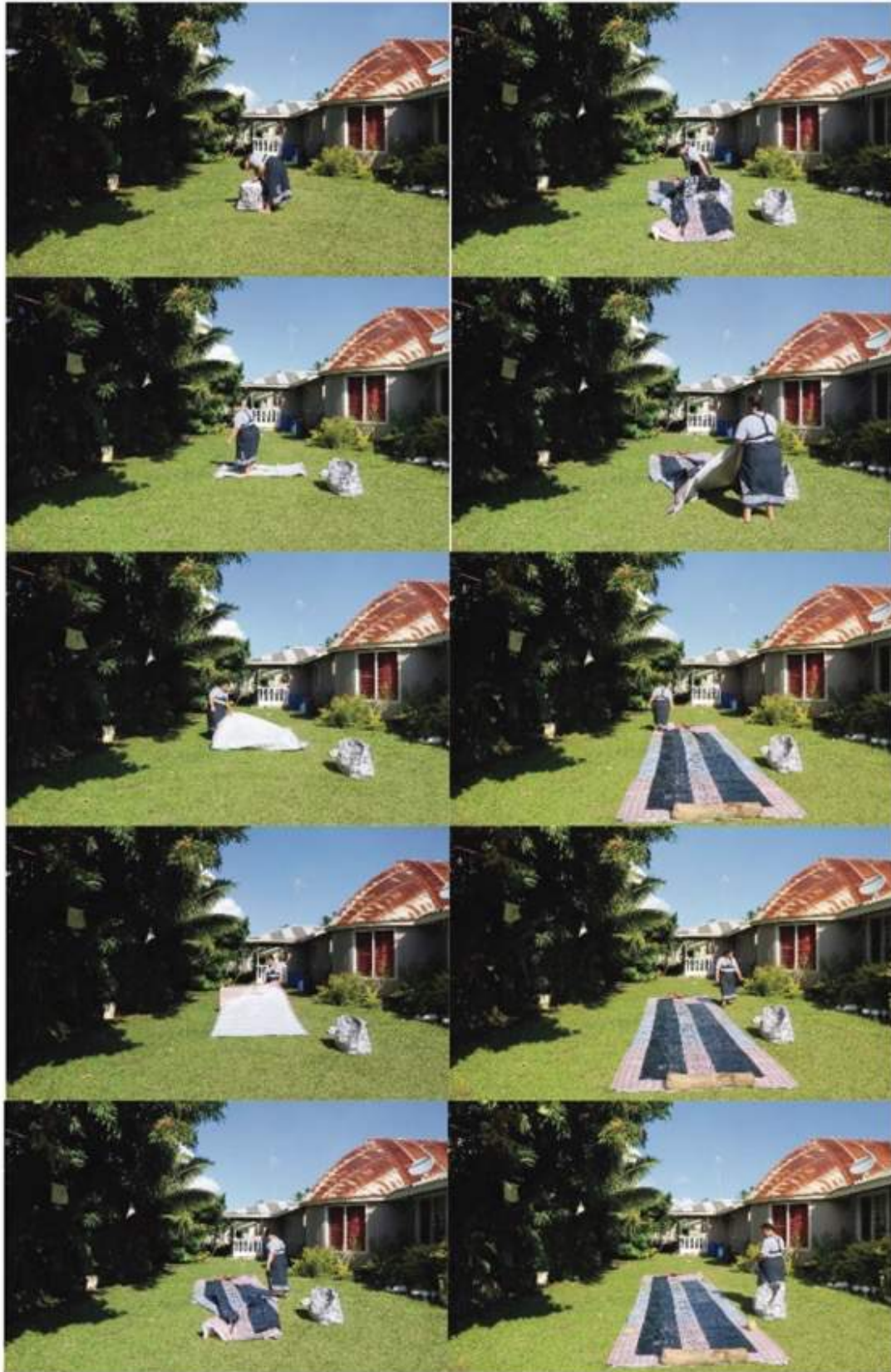


Figure 51. 'Uhila Nai. 13 'Akosi 1924: *Finally arrives where 1924 belongs*, 2019. The artwork refers to the idea that my Nena never liked staying overseas (away from Tonga), because she is a maker and liked to work outdoors at home. That said, she always preferred to return home where she could do anything. Nena's house in Tonga, Outdoor field, 2x8m.

CHAPTER IV

LOA KALIU, LOLOTONGA NI MO E KAHA'U NA¹¹⁹

*'Ko taimi 'oku 'ikai mohe 'oku lakalaka atu'
Time does not sleep it marches on¹²⁰*

TIME, AS DURATION

I understand the past, present, and future as a methodology, method, and context. The past brings the understanding of a methodology that represents the original context of ancient Tonga, which brings with itself the history, story, knowledge, and memories to the fore. By doing that, I am sharing these contexts through a contemporary lens, which is the present. The present is seen as a method, which talks to the western space, Tāmaki Makaurau. The past is brought into the present, through multiple voices which travel through one voice – like me – unfolding multiple views by creating a work that would hold the story of my ancestors. The future is sitting as the outcome of the past and present. What interests me to work with the past: Tonga, the present: New Zealand, and the future: which are both contexts – as the single voice carrying and traveling back and forth, from one location collecting and re-creating – is being able to share with the future generation. It is story-telling from different time-lines, as they try to understand and unpack the knowledge that the age of their time holds, to pass down to the next generation. There is a saying that goes, “Mau sio pē mei mu’a, ‘o fiefia; mau hū falala pe ki he ‘Amui” (We look to the past and rejoice; we go trusting, into the future).¹²¹

In his writing *Tāvani; Intertwining Tā and Vā in Tongan Reality and Philology*, Tevita O. Ka’ili states, “all things, in reality, consist of time and space, and that time and space are re-shaped by people according to their various culture.”¹²² (Ka’ili, 2018,1) The notion of time as duration is known as the principle of consciousness that exists around us. Time is like a rhythm that moves, conducts, and documents our every movement. During this project, I am continually rearranging time within the context of the ‘now’ that I am situated within. Thinking about the concept of duration as it plays a role in the work and represents a moment between this project and the spectator. As a result of an audience viewing the work, the work encourages them to recollect a memory of an experience.

¹¹⁹ The Past, Present and the Future.

¹²⁰ Rev. Siupeli Taliai, Mrs. Helen Taliai, Rev. Dr. Geoffery Gummins, Mrs. Anne Cummins, Rev. ‘Alifeleti ‘Atiola, Mrs. ‘Aioema ‘Atiola, Tupou College: Sesquicentenary History 1866 – 2016, Chapter Ten: Looking Forward, Looking Back, 1910 – 1915. Tupou College, Toloa, Tonga. 2016, 403.

¹²¹ Ibid, 135.

¹²² Maui-Tāvā-He-Ako Tevita O. Kaili, *Tāvani; Intertwining Tā and Vā in Tongan Reality and Philology*, 1.

For instance, Kalisolaite ‘Uhila is an Auckland-based artist who works with performance. The work *Maumau-Taimi: Wasting time: Being useless*, (‘Uhila, 2016) (Fig 52), which took place at the AUT graduation show Friday 11 November 2 pm – 10 pm and Saturday 12 November 9 am – 12 pm. What was interesting about ‘Uhila’s work talks about everyday life and how it is being viewed. The duration of his performance lasted an 8-hour shift. The work talked about the spaces between the artist himself and the spectators. The intention of a private space where it becomes shared with the public space, which becomes a space where it is private, but it read as public space. The quality of time plays a role in everything moving quickly, but in comparison, ‘Uhila reacts by moving slowly, which is something that appears in the Tongan society.



Fig 52. Kalisolaite ‘Uhila, *Maumau-Taimi: Wasting Time: Being Useless*, 2016.¹²³

© Kalisolaite Uhila

¹²³ Anthony Byrt, Kalisolaite ‘Uhila. How artist Kalisolaite ‘Uhila made a statement by vanished into the streets, April 9, 2017. <https://www.metromag.co.nz/arts/arts-art-city/how-artist-kalisolaite-uhila-made-a-statement-by-vanishing-into-the-streets>

In my project, time captures the notion of moving in two different places. My research trip back to Tonga, late 2019 – early October, was 6-8 weeks in duration. Within that time, I collected material to be transported over here for the making of my kupesi and ngatu. However, before getting the material transported, cleaning and preparing took up to four weeks maximum, depending on the material. For instance, the collection of the niu, which took four days, from getting the coconut husk off the coconut and then husked them into small pieces. Then from there into, leave it in a bucket of water for over 24 hours, to help soften the husk. The process of smashing small pieces of the husk until the green layers are off, and therefore leaving it to dry before packaging with the duration of four to a week. The process of hifi la'i kaka, which only takes up to a day or two to scrape off the dust and to cut the edges. If clean-edges are needed but not necessary. The last process is ha'alo tu'aniu, with the duration of a day or two depending on how much coconut leaves mid-rib needed. (Figs 53-60)



Fig 53. Inoke Sisipala, *Hoka-anga niu* – place where the coconut is husked. The coconut is being husked into small pieces. Api, Pelehake, 2019.



Fig 54. The process of leaving pieces of small husks under water overnight to soften the coconut husks, 2019.

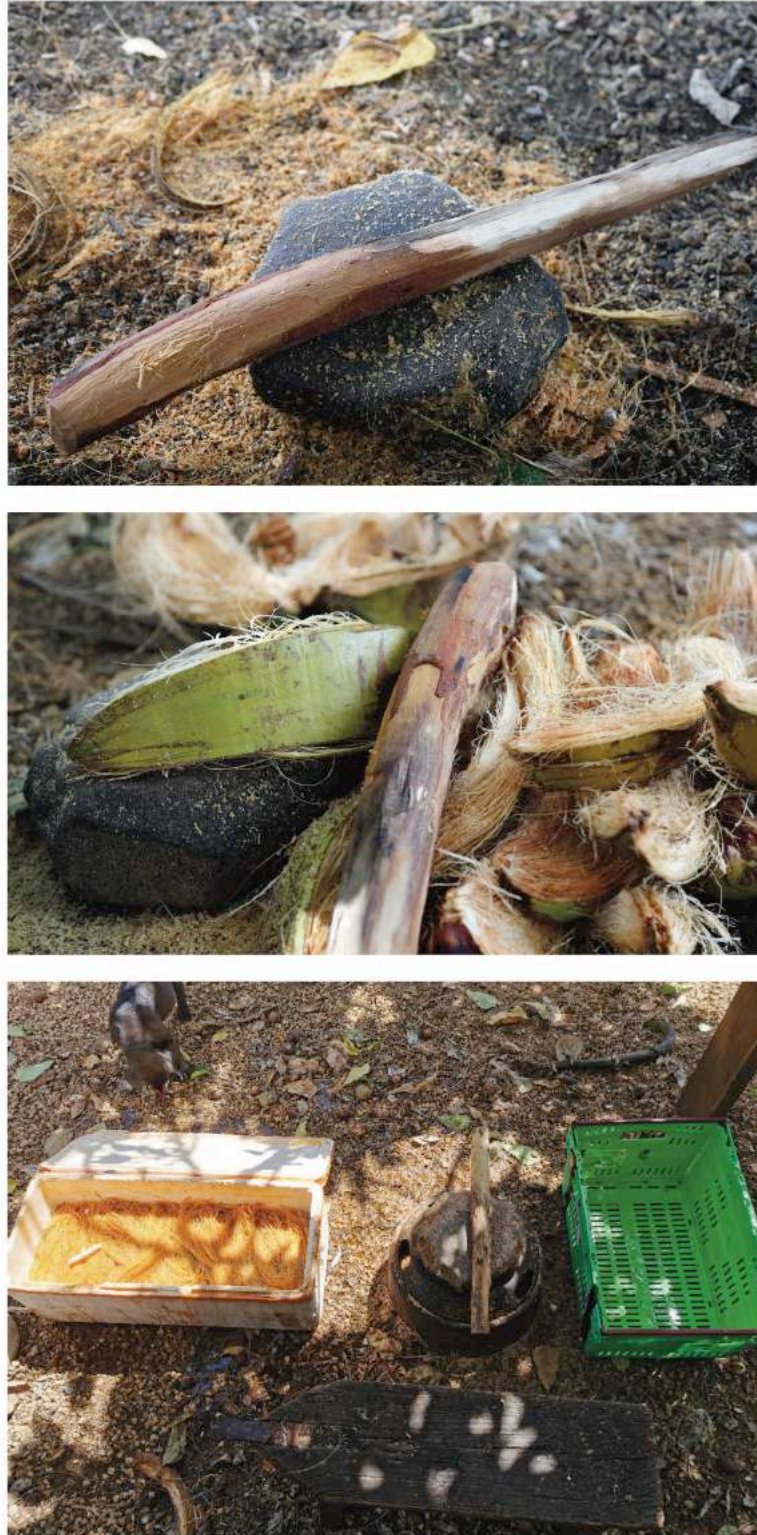


Fig 55. Here is the equipment and materials used for the process of smashing pieces of coconut husk, so it will be easy to peel off the outer layer of the husk, 2020.



Fig 56. 'Inoke Sisipala, in the process of smashing small pieces of coconut husk, using a branch from the hibiscus and also a round rock as a support. 'Api, Pelehake, 2019.



Fig 57. Salesi Vasini Kauvaka, in the process of separating the husk from its skin. As it is the green layer, it will then be soaked in water for couple of hours. 'Api, Pelehake, 2019.

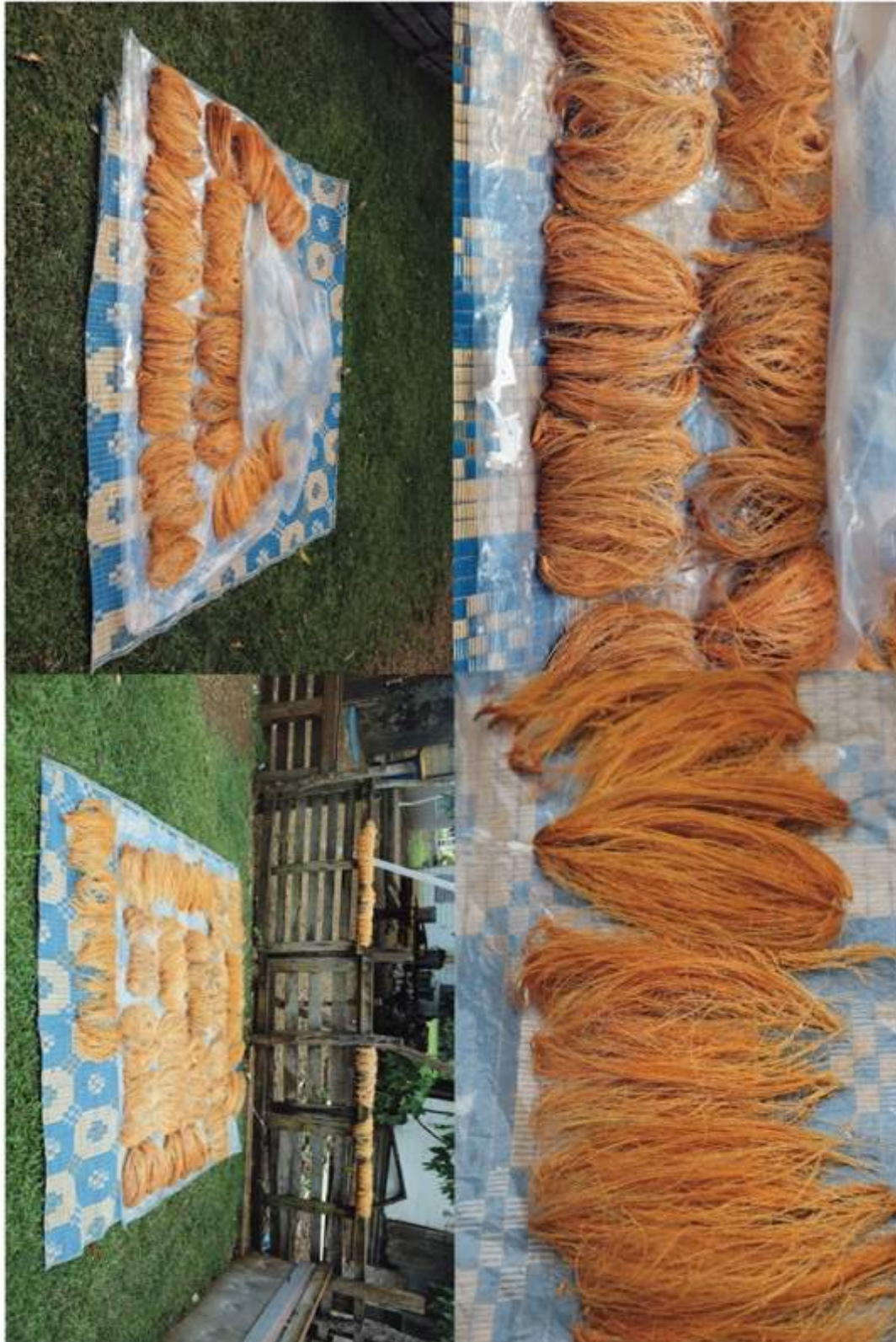


Fig 58. The process of tauki the coconut husk being dried in the sun. 'Api, Pelehake, 2019.



Fig 59. Veisia Vahai'i in the middle of the process of scrapping the coconut leaves off from the coconut mid-rib. #1. Tokomea, 2019.



Fig 60. *Veisimia Vahaii* in the middle of the process of scrapping the coconut leaves off from the coconut mid-rib, #2. Pelehake, Tonga, 2020.

TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENT.

A practice that emerges in actions and process.

A temporary arrangement is understood as being temporary and refers to an idea of things changing and lasting only a short duration from the time they are first presented. Temporary arrangement in this project is based on an understanding of the practice which emerges during action and process; it is an idea which talks about decisions made during the making. In my practice, temporary arrangement arises during the process of creating as I practice in two contexts, here in Tāmaki Makaurau in the institutional space (Fig 61), and back home in Pelehake, Tonga at my Nena's house (Fig 62). Usually, this temporary arrangement does not emerge every time I make. However, it occurred as I dug into finding ways of working with the process and action, which is what the craft of ngatu and kupesi brings with it. Throughout my practice, the temporary arrangement has always been emerged out through a traditional process that belongs to the production of ngatu. For example, the process of tauaki pe folahi,¹²⁴ pelupelu pe tapelu,¹²⁵ tautau ke momoa,¹²⁶ which is applied in using in both contexts, back in Tonga and here in Aotearoa.



Fig 61. 'Uhila Nai, *Four Years of thinking here and there*. My Studio Space, AUT, 2020.

¹²⁴ To be out in the sun or to spread out in an open space

¹²⁵ Folding or to fold

¹²⁶ To be suspended or hung to be dried



Fig 62. Personal space back at Nena's home in Pelehake, Tonga, 2019.

For instance, every process that I have mentioned at the top have their duration. For example, the processes of *tautau ke momoa*, which is a process that is used for hanging the unstained barkcloth to be dry ones it goes through the beating of the mulberry process. This process was used through the work of *Lea hānge ha Pelehake*, 2019. (Fig 63) The work talked about the collection of different documentation/conversations that would able to story – tell about my ancestors from different time-lines. As a Tongan artist practice in a contemporary context, I decided to use the process of *tohi ngatu* as it transferred these documents through the actions of the hands with a traditional brush, called *fo'i fā*¹²⁷ onto a contemporary material. The material that was used was *pepa koka'anga*,¹²⁸ a delicate material that is used worldwide by the Tongan women to make their *ngatu*. The document was hung in different ways, but the idea of temporary was capture through the material that used to hang these documents up to and also with the use of wire, pins, and clips. Even though, traditionally, you do not

¹²⁷ Pandanus fruit

¹²⁸ Reemay material (contemporary barkcloth)

pin the feta'aki to the wire to be stayed on, but rather as the feta'aki became its pin to stayed onto the wire.

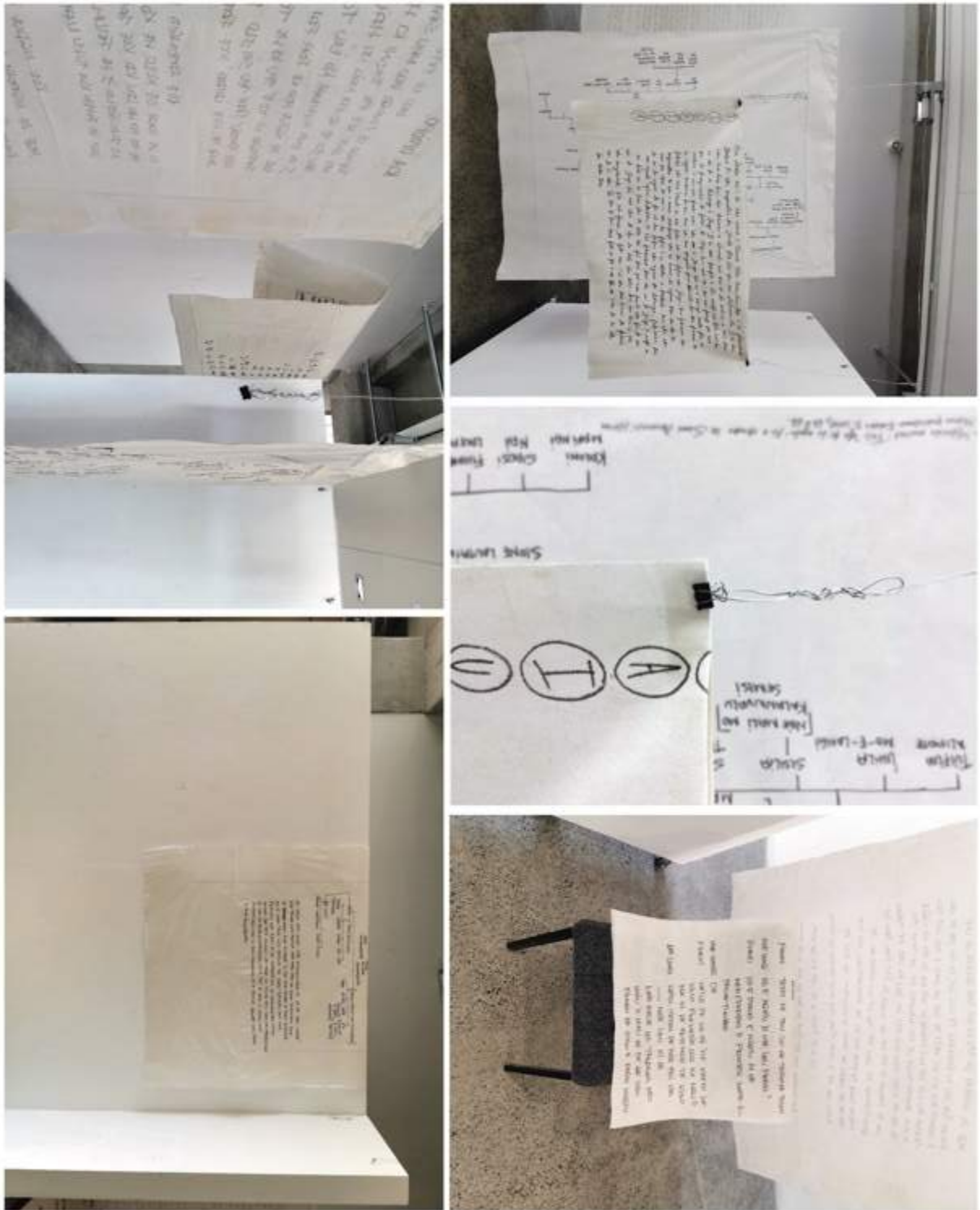


Fig 63. Uhila Nai. *Lea hānge ha Pelohake*, 2019, mixed media of marker, Indian ink with traditional brush, pepa kokanga, wire and clipping pins with a mixture of sizes.

During my research/residency back home at my Nena's house, late August-early October 2019, I experience with stamps making. The stamps were created at first to become my kupesi with the use of contemporary material and technology. I was making my stamps design from a collection of drawings that captured memories of my childhood era. For example, I have drawn the materials used for making traditional Tongan oil, food leaves, and more memory that could remember. As the stamps became a new material and method, I thought of taking them back home to Tonga. I considered what would happen if I used a method or an object created with contemporary technology and printed them onto a traditional material. How would this talk to the notion of where the memory was created? The processes of paaki¹²⁹ were used as a protection layer after my stamps were imprinted onto the feta'aki. The printed feta'aki was then taukai outside the field to be dry and also to get some sunlight. (Fig 64)



Fig 64. *Paaki pea Tauaki ke Momoa*, 2019 the field outside Nena's house, Pelehake.

In Tonga, there are a few temporary arrangements that emerged during the trialing, testing, experience phases, and also during the traditional making. Six months into my research back home, I discovered

¹²⁹ Coded with flower base mix with hot water and fuel.

the practice of a process that emerged during the making of kupesi, which is the traditional process of setting up the papa koka'anga with the kupesi. As earlier discussed by Herda and Lythberg in the chapter, *Technology: The process of Bark-Cloth Manufacture in Tonga*, they talked about the papa koka'anga as the platform for which binding together pieces of feta'aki into the scale of a ngatu.

While researching, I came across the first-ever table used in the koka'anga, which it was the fala koka'anga¹³⁰: the half-cylinder and the papa koka'anga. I grew up seeing one but not familiar with their story. As for the half-cylinder, only a few villages they still used it during koka'anga. However, the papa koka'anga is known to be the table that most villages used during koka'anga, as it is more comfortable for the women to use. The way fala koka'anga was used, it was stuck onto the floor of the house. Then you attach the kupesi onto the fala koka'anga. As for the half-cylinder (Fig 65) and papa koka'anga (Fig 66) is used the same as the fala koka'anga, with the only differences being that it was off the floor and they can sit straight and making their ngatu. (Fig 67 & 68) These tables are about 14-16 feet long, and the embroidered kupesi is attached to the table before the feta'aki is assembled over it.

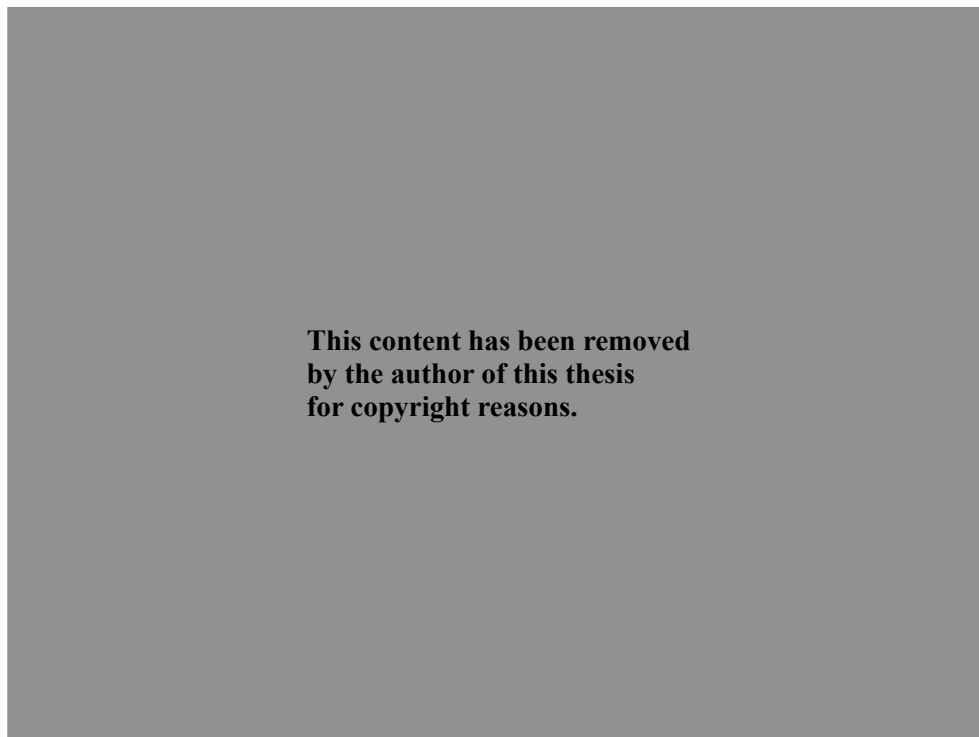


Fig 65.
Demonstration of
Tapa decoration,
half-cylinder,
1930's.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Mat weaved from the pandanus leaves, which they were used as the platform for binding the pieces of feta'aki together into the scale of ngatu.

¹³¹ Roger Neich and Mick Pendergrast, *Pacific Tapa: Chapter 4 – TONGA*, University of Hawai'i Press, (Honolulu, Hawai'i, 1997), 42.



Fig 66. *The changes have evolved: Papa Koka'anga*, currently in use at Pelehake Koka'anga group, currently store at the fale kautaha in Pelehak, Photo by Mo-e-Langi, 2019.

This trial and experience of attaching the kupesi onto the papa koka'anga (Fig 69) acted as a way to figure out how to share my kupesi with my community here in Tāmaki Makaurau, but most importantly in a respectful way. This specific arrangement of the kupesi, only the makers and the insiders, as the Tongan community, can get access or see how it is placed onto the table. In the photographs, during the koka'anga of 'Asinate's Finau ngatu, it shows the labour and hardship of making between the repetitive process, but their way of overcoming and do not think about it with joy, singing and sharing stories. As I research into the fokotu'utu'u kupesi, it brings me to the idea of sharing the backstory with the community outside of Tonga and today's generation. The papa koka'anga becomes the platform that helps the makers transfer their story, their history onto a more delicate and comfortable surface. A suitable surface that lets them create their ngatu to be more beautiful and more presentable and respectful when it is in use. However, it also creates comfort for it to be used as a cloth, blanket, birth and death, gift and exchange, and to become the last longer koloa to pass down to the next generation. (Fig 70)



Fig 67. *The labour intense is real as it is hidden under a smiling mark - #1, Pelehake Koka'anga group. This ngatu belongs to 'Asinate's Finau which it was make in a more comfortable space, 2019.*



Fig 68. *The labour intense is real as it is hidden under a smiling mark - # 2. Pelehake Koka'anga group, 'Asinate Finau's ngatu which it was make in a more comfortable space, 2019.*

Left hand side from front to back: Seini Mo'ale, Losapina Aso, Kafo'atu Latu and Heilala.
Right hand side from front to back: Vasiti Kaufusi, 'Ana Siueti Tove, and 'Asinate Finau.

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Fig 69. *Trial and Error of my ancestor*. Kupesi trial, testing, and experience on the Papa Koka'anga, 2019.



Fig 70. The Papa Koka'anga that holds the archives, as they are generated into Kupesi. The experience to trial, testing, and experience my kupesi on the Papa Koka'anga, 2019.

FAKAMĀ'OPO'OPO¹³²

'This is the story that we wanted to write.'
Kim Seok Jin¹³³

The Tongan proverb hangē ha fakatau kupesi or like buying embroidery stencil describes the difficulty of something being hard to get, because of its value and worth. In my practice, this proverb speaks a lot from various perspectives. My practice inherently talks about the importance and the significance of why knowledge from the loa kāliu is so hard to access and to understand as they change over time. Knowledge is being shared with and by people from both contexts, Tonga and Aotearoa. The knowledge shared throughout my practice was handed down from different generations that, of course, are hard to access. What this project has given me is permission to know the history of my ancestors. They are the archives to my practice, as they are now engraved on my body. They are allowing me to share the knowledge with the community of today's generation, and so on.

What is shared within the Tongan community is the structure of protecting our people, for the people to follow and to keep the relationships in good hands and stay fe'ofa'ofa ni.¹³⁴ It is what defines us for who we are as a Tongan, because it what we value. The fakatotolo that I have been tātanaki has begun to form a fananga that I choose to tell through the art of ngatu and kupesi. These symbols can tell stories without giving a complete answer. After all, kupesi is like a heliaki (metaphor) that appears in symbols and not words. We have to write the story of our ancestors through our own language, because the knowledge and the stories travels and shifts when they are translated through and into different understandings.

As, 'Epeli Hau'ofa talked about, "That the past is ahead, in front of us, is a conception of time that helps us retain our memories and to be aware of its presents. What is behind us [the future] cannot be seen and is liable to be forgotten readily. What is ahead of us [the past] cannot be forgotten so readily or ignored, for it is in front of our minds' eyes, always reminding us of its presence. The past is alive in us, so in more than a metaphorical sense, the dead are alive - we are our history."¹³⁵ Hau'ofa reminded and


¹³² Conclusion

¹³³ BTS, Bring the Soul: Docu-Series, Ep2: Passion, Documentary, 03:30, September 3rd, 2019.
<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7jzs1p>.

¹³⁴ In harmony

¹³⁵ Hau'ofa, 'Epeli. (2000). Epilogue: Pasts to Remember. Remembrance of Pacific Pasts: An invitation to Remake History. Robert Borofsky. Honolulu, HI, University of Hawai'i Press.

taught me that history, stories, memories, and knowledge passed down through generation to generation will always be re-constructed because every generation re-writes its history for their understanding. What that reminded me, even though my project wanted to re-create, re-construct and re-tell stories, history, and knowledge of and about my ancestors from the past into a new space, it will always be re-writes by next generation in how they received it. The importance of knowing that our body belongs to our ancestors which reminding us that we are the living archives of our history.



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Figure 71. Left Kupesi – created by my Nena, Right Kupesi – by ‘Uhila. *The archives of my ancestor are getting re-writes within two different time-line through the same art form, 1950’s – 2020.* Both used the same processes and materials with the differences of stories, history, and knowledge written at different times.

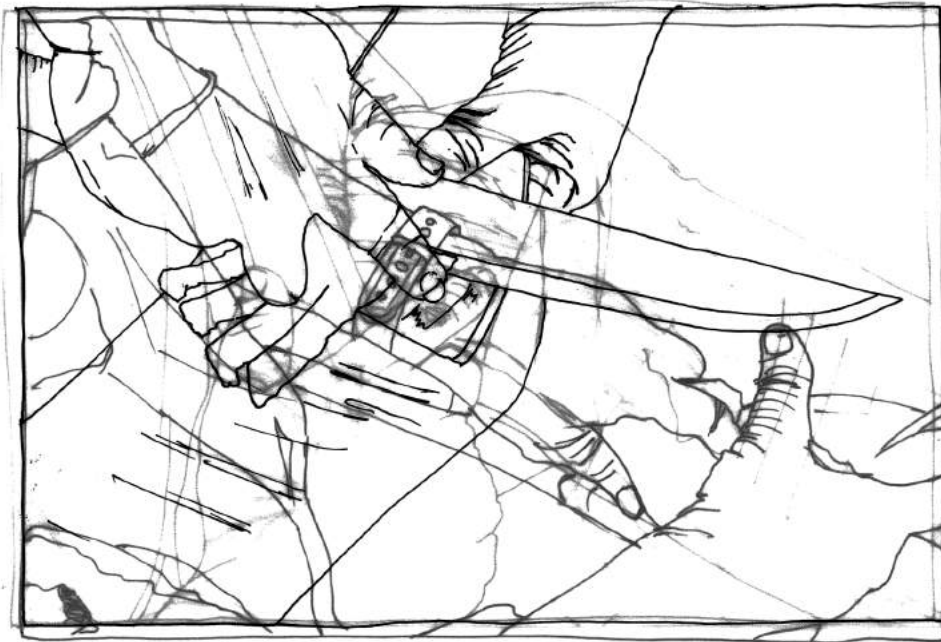


Figure 72. 'Uhila Nai. *The dead are alive – we are our history*, 2020. The flesh of the dead weave through generations as they (we) become the archives for our living history. Every generation listens and observes their ancestors from time to time, becoming aware that they become a living archive of themselves. This is a drawing of processes and methods that I observed from an earlier stage of ngatu making by 'Eleni Manufekai. With the use of Adobe Illustrator to tidy it up.

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Appendix

Family Memories: capturing stories from different time-lines within the Tongan traditional crafts of ngatu (decorated barkcloth) making and kupesi (embroidered stencil) design installation.

Exhibition Strategy;

The exhibition work is deliberately installed in two different spaces to speak to the notion of time and space. During my thesis project, I spent 8-weeks in Tonga for research and making purposes. My project is based in two places, Tonga and Aotearoa. The suspended works in Gallery Two therefore are looking from the viewpoint of Aotearoa, representing my current space. The work in Gallery Three looks from the perspective of being in Tonga, where the presented materials, concepts, research and making was produced. This artwork speaks to the notion of a collapsing of the past, present and future. The use of the two galleries creates a space for the audience to experience the travelling back and forth. As well as highlighting the different protocols and practices in making ngatu and kupesi.

Artist Statement

‘Uhila Moe Langi Kanongata’a Nai is a Tongan New Zealand born artist, who emigrated to Tonga with her Nena (Grandmother), ‘Ana Va’inga Pautā in 1999 until the end of 2012, when Nai immigrated back to New Zealand at the age of 13. Nai grew up watching her Nena making ngatu and kupesi in the small village of Pelehake on the East-Side of Tonga.

This project derives from a personal interpretation of lea mu’a (old saying) and lea Faka-Tonga (Tongan language), which is translated into kupesi symbols to produce a contemporary Tongan ngatu. The research utilises the visual language of ancient Tonga and today’s lea Faka-Tonga to emanate tala tukufakaholo with my family, a collection of knowledge about the history of hingoa fakafamili, tupu’anga, and manatu about my Nena and myself. This talatukufakaholo tātānaki (to collect) reflects not only the past tala tupu’a (myths or legends handed down from ancient times) and the space the ngatu occupies. Therefore, it is present in my art practice. It relates to the notion of learning through listening, observation and doing with a focus on how this mode of practicing can position itself in a contemporary space of art-making.

The artwork uses natural materials from the ‘ulu niu (coconut tree) which are; kavele’ipulu (coconut husk), la’i kaka (coconut fibrous) and tu’aniu (coconut leaf mid-rib), paongo (pandanus leaves) and fau (hibiscus) – along with the methods and processes of ngatu making, specific to the procedure of taukai pe tautau (to hang or to put out to dry), which used after the process of ‘opo’opo. The process of fola (to spread out) kupesi during the koka’anga. Koka’anga is the process of joining the feta’aki (undyed barkcloth) together into the scale of a ngatu. The process of spreading out the kupesi into their individual spaces. This process is only seen by the maker themselves and people in the community.

Visual Documentation

1. Ongoing series: Kupesi, Our Archives, 2019 - 2020.

The Kupesi is created from the tu'aniu (coconut leaves mid-rib), which is twirled around with kavele'ipulu (coconut husk) on a platform of la'i kaka (coconut fibre) lined up with paongo (pandanus) as it is being stitched together using a string either fau (hibiscus) or pulu (coir). Dimensions vary.

Papa Koka'anga, 2020

Two plywood tables with hand-plaited kafa and 16 kupesi.

Each table is 4770(L) x 1000(W) x 450mm(H).

2. The Third Generation is what my memory captures, 2019 - 2020

Wooden box with laser engraving and varnish.

1000(L) x 650(W) x 750mm(H).

3. They were always Returning Home, 2020.

Screen printed pepa koka'anga suspended with hand-plaited kafa.

5000(H) x 1830(W) mm.

Photography by

‘Uhila Nai

Matavai Taulangau

Emily Parr

Raymond Sagapolutele



ST Paul St Gallery, Auckland
Matariki Master of Visual Arts Exhibition
5th August - 8th August 2020

Curated by MVA Students

St Paul St Gallery Three

Ongoing series:

Kupesi, Our Archives, 2019 - 2020.

The Kupesi is created from the tu'aniu (coconut leaves mid-rib), which is twirled around with kavele'ipulu (coconut husk) on a platform of la'i kaka (coconut fibre) lined up with paongo (pandanus) as it is being stitched together using a string either fau (hibiscus) or pulu (coir). Dimensions vary.

Papa Koka'anga, 2020

Two plywood tables with hand-plaited kafa and 16 kupesi.

Each table is 4770(L) x 1000(W) x 450mm(H).

The papa koka'anga are designed explicitly for ngatu making. Koka'anga is the process of binding pieces of feta'aki together to the full length of the ngatu. The kafa, traditionally known as afo (cord), runs across the papa koka'anga, vertically and horizontally, making a grid. The grid is traditionally set at 20 x 19 inches or 40 x 19 inches.

Collaborator in the making of the papa koka'anga;

Viliani Kuli Le'ota helped in the making of the papa koka'anga. From getting materials and putting the table together. The process of putting the two papa koka'anga together, which took about a day. Both of the papa koka'anga were nicely put together thanks to Viliani Le'ota.

Collaborators in fi (plating) of the kafa (sennit);

My parents, Timote Pita Nai, known by the title, Pautā, and Lotomoua Nai, helped in plating the kafa. The process of plating a kafa takes time because of a few processes between preparing the coconut husk to the plating process. It took four months for my parents to get 5 – 6 meters of kafa done. Thanks to my parents for helping with the kafa, which was a massive part of the work.

Both papa koka'anga had 16 kupesi in a total of 8–10 in each papa koka'anga. The dimension of the kupesi on the right table is 20 x 10 inches and vary. They are a re-creation from the original Tongan kupesi that has been used across Tonga. On the right-hand side, the kupesi has dimensions of 40 x 19 inches and under. The form was influenced by the form from the craft of lalava (lashing), modern and traditional architect, ocean waves, inter-generational knowledge, and plantation.

The stories of this kupesi were created from the records of family history, names, childhood, the inspiration of what my family has done, such as; farmer, craft maker, musicians, performer, and more. Each of the kupesi is a metaphor of itself that tells my ancestors' story because they are only supposed to be shared with people they are meant to be shared with.

All the making of the kupesi was done by my Nena, the late 'Ana Va'inga, myself and few collaborations with my in-laws, Toakase Tu'iono and my mother, Lotomoua Nai.

List of collaborators in the making of kupesi:

Papa Koka'anga Fika 'Uluaki (left hand-side) / 40 x 19 inches

1. Sisi Malie 'o 'Uluvalu

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Ana Va'inga Pauta

2. Unknown

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Ana Va'inga Pauta

3. Vai-Tui-Mate

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai

4. Langingata'a

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai

5. Fanongonongo Tokoto

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai

6. Vala Fakaafe

Kupesi Tui / Knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai / Maker : Lotomou'a Nai

7. Makapuna 'Uluaki

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai

8. 'I - 'O - Lupea

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai

9. Pautaimi

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai

10. No. ES. 1920

Kupesi Tui / Maker : Lotomo'ua Nai / Knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai

Papa Koka'anga Fika Ua (right hand-side) / 20 x 19 inches

1. Fata Mahanga

Kupesi Tui / Knowledge-holder : Toakase Tu'iono / Collaboration in the making, took place in Tonga and Auckland : Toakase Tu'iono & 'Uhila Nai

2. Fata 'o Tu'i Tonga

Kupesi Tui / Maker : 'Uhila Nai / Knowledge-holder : Unknown

3. Kalou

Kupesi Tui / Maker : Toakase Tu'iono / Knowledge-holder : Unknown

4. Sisi Malie 'o Fatafehi

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Ana Va'inga Pauta

5. Tokelau Feletoa

Kupesi Tui / Maker / Toakase Tu'iono

6. Tangi Fetaua

Kupesi Tui / Knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai / Collaboration in the making, took place here in Aotearoa : Lotomo'ua Nai & 'Uhila Nai

7. Vala Faka-Tonga

Kupesi Tui / Maker & knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai

8. Vasi Koula

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai

9. Manulua

Kupesi Tui / Maker : 'Ana Va'inga Pauta

10. Unknown Title

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Ana Va'inga Pauta

11. Unknown Title

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai

12. Ha'a Fuli Vai

Kupesi Tui / Maker & Knowledge-holder : 'Uhila Nai

Gallery Open & Closing Time : 10 : 00 AM - 5 : 00 PM

Time : 9 : 45 AM

Re-set everything in the space

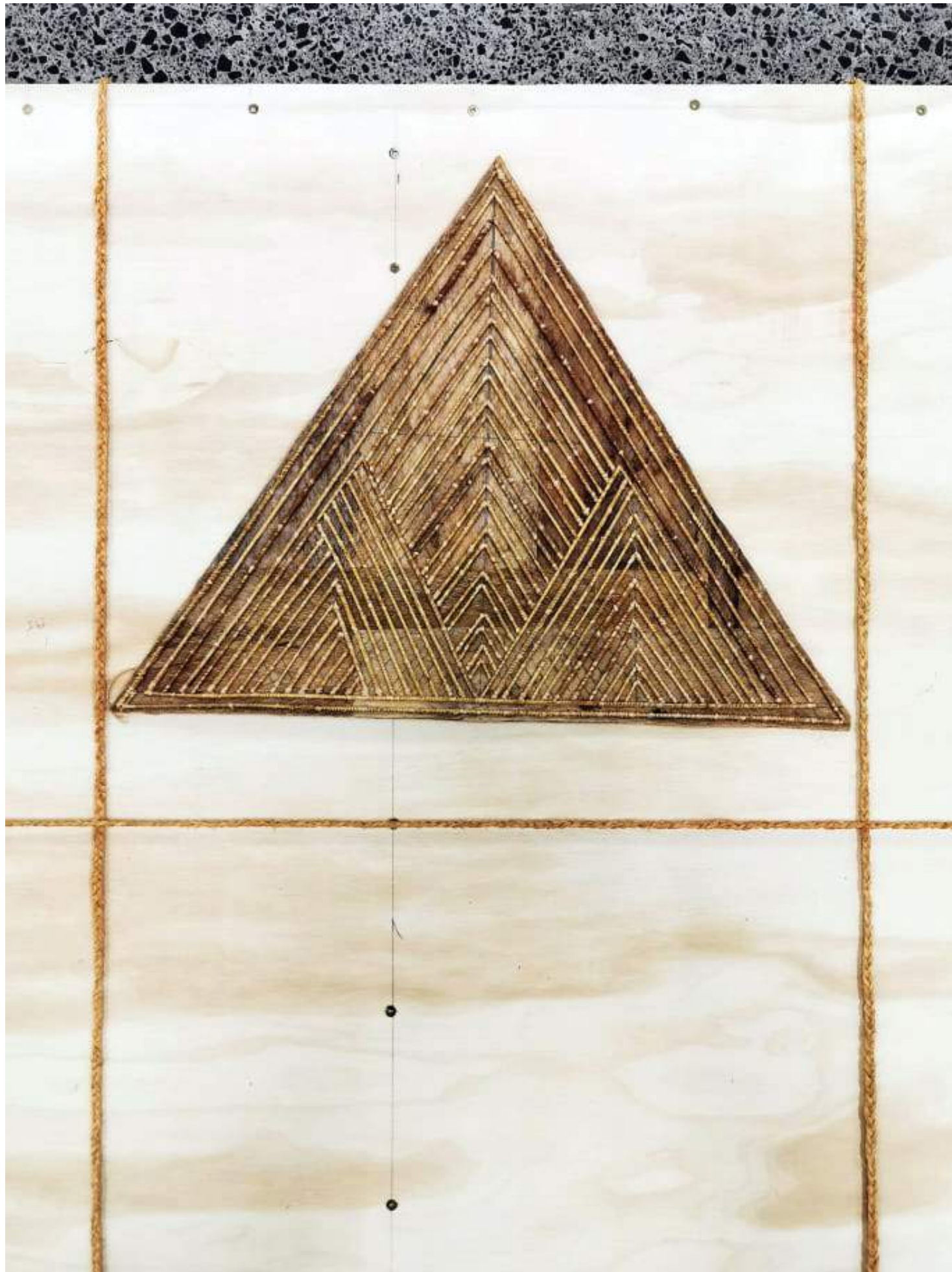
Time : 5 : 10 PM

Pack everything away, from Kupesi to the Papa Koka'anga

Everything gets packed away from the kupesi, the papa koka'anga, the cushions, apart from the two boxes every day, which they stay where they are being placed. Every afternoon after the gallery is closing up. The kupesi are covered and put away to the box they belong to. The older version of the kupesi belongs to my Nena. They are packed with blue cloth and store in the smaller box. The smaller box is designed for the size of my Nena's kupesi. The newest kupesi are packed away with black material and put into the bigger version of the box. The performance is a part of a process before and after the koka'anga. However, as the kupesi are always re-set, re-arrange every morning, the position and the kupesi will always be changing. The kupesi that was set out on the table will swap with the one inside the box.













The Third Generation is what my memory captures, 2019 - 2020.

Wooden box with laser engraving and varnish.

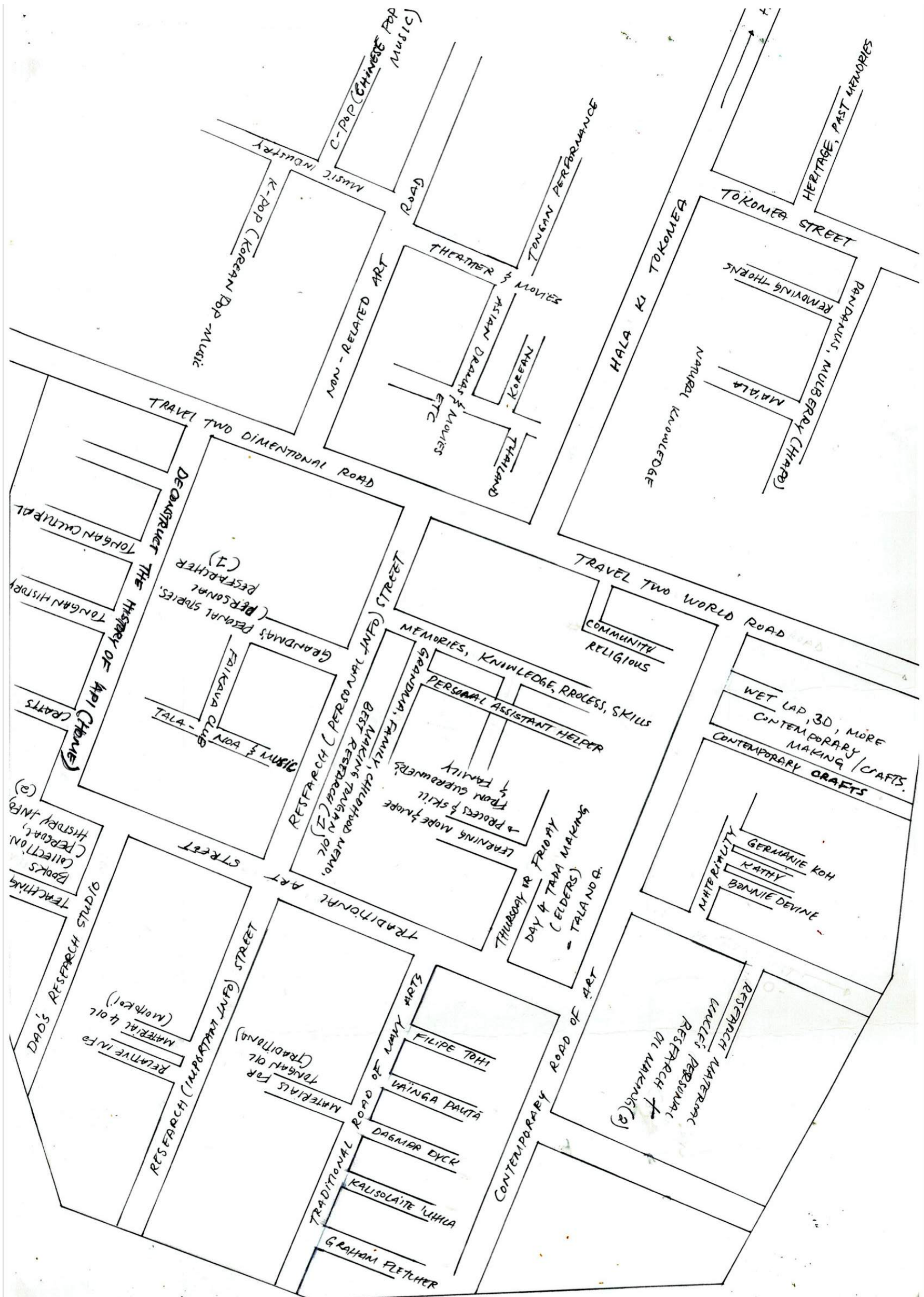
1000(L) x 650(W) x 750mm(H).

The two puha are copies of a family puha that belongs to my great-great-grandmother, Manu Tu'ipulotu. Our family puha has been passed down through 5 generations and is now with my generation. I have spent 13 years with this family puha, as it was handed down from my Nena's mother, 'Uhila Moe Langi Tu'ipulotu.

List of the kupesi, laser engraved on the lid of the puha;

1. Mape' o Tonga (map of Tonga) : This map was drawn from one of my primary memories. We illustrate Tonga's map for a project.
2. Fo'i fa (pandanus fruit) : They are used as a paintbrush, which they are the traditional paintbrush. It is used when the pandanus fruit is brown and dry.
3. La'i Pasiona (grenadilla leaves) : It is used as a medicine, and it is one of the Tongan medicine. The drawing was drawn from a document back in 2017.
4. La'i Fehi (hardwood tree) : The leaves of this tree are used for multiple purposes. It is being used as a medicine for sore tooth, Stomach ache, and cut. The fehi leaves were drawn from memory because, as a kid, I would always make medicine for my Nena.
5. Aso – Day (la'i kumala – kumara leaves) : The kumala leaf was drawn from a memory of my uncle, Motekiai Aso. He had multiple talents, such as a performer, musicians, conductor, farmer, Tongan oil maker, etc. The kumala leaf was a memorial representation of the labor in being a farmer and everything he has done for me.
6. Tokomea x Kolopaea – The name of our land back home in Pelehake. The rooftop was drawn from a still image of my Nena's room rooftop. And the house's bottom structure is the left side of my great-grandma/ancestors/family house.
7. Heke (swing) : This specific heke was drawn from a childhood memory of mine as my Uncle, Aso, installed one outside our mango tree.
8. Hand gestures from the process of fohi tutu and 'opo'opo – the hand gestures are from the hands of my Nena's colleague, friend, and maker, 'Eleni Manufekai.
9. La'i tevunga: One of the ingredients for making Tongan oil. As a kid, I will always walk across the field to my Nena's Colleague's house to get a few tevunga. It only happens ones or twice a month when my Nena makes oil, only if we run out or only have a few left.
10. Tongatapu Hiva (District Nine) : These kupesi are created from my Nena's room's rooftop. The drawing concepts develop from a still image of the new rooftop. The design was originated from a small house located on the east side of Pelehake. Saturday 27 July at 2.02 am.
11. Ike (mullet) : This ike was explicitly drawn from a memory that I have of my Nena's ike. I chose the smallest ike because it is her favorite out of three ike of hers only because it is light and not heavy.
12. Papa mono tutu (patching board) : a copy of my Nena's papa, which I grew up watching her used it. The patching board is now in the right hand because my aunt uses them until now.
13. Tautau ke momoa (let out to dry in the sun) : This is a process of hanging up the undyed barkcloth to dry ones the process of 'opo'opo's are done.
14. La'i lesi (pawpaw leaves) : The pawpaw leaves' symbols came about because it is one of my Nena's favorite fruit to have.

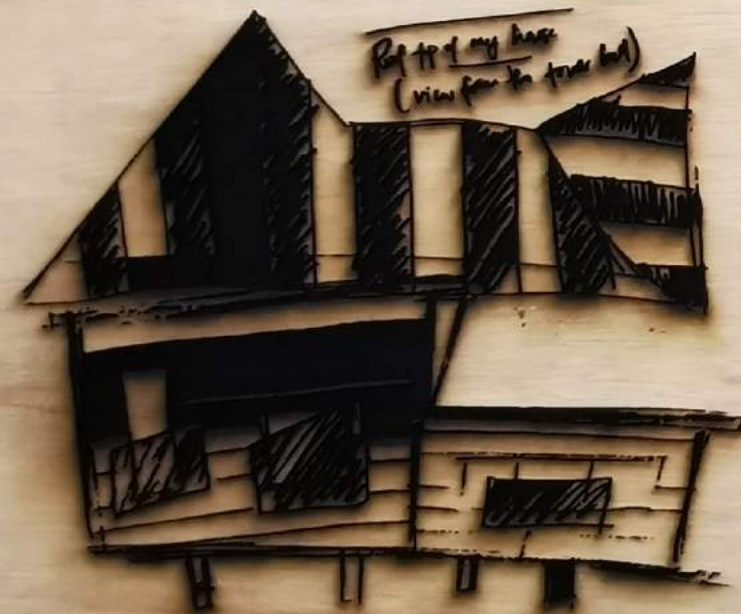
This map is drawn from the map of my village, Pelehake, located on Tonga's Eastside. The map started as a contextual map, but I realized that my village's street map plays a huge role in my practice. It is the core focus of everything that makes up my practice.

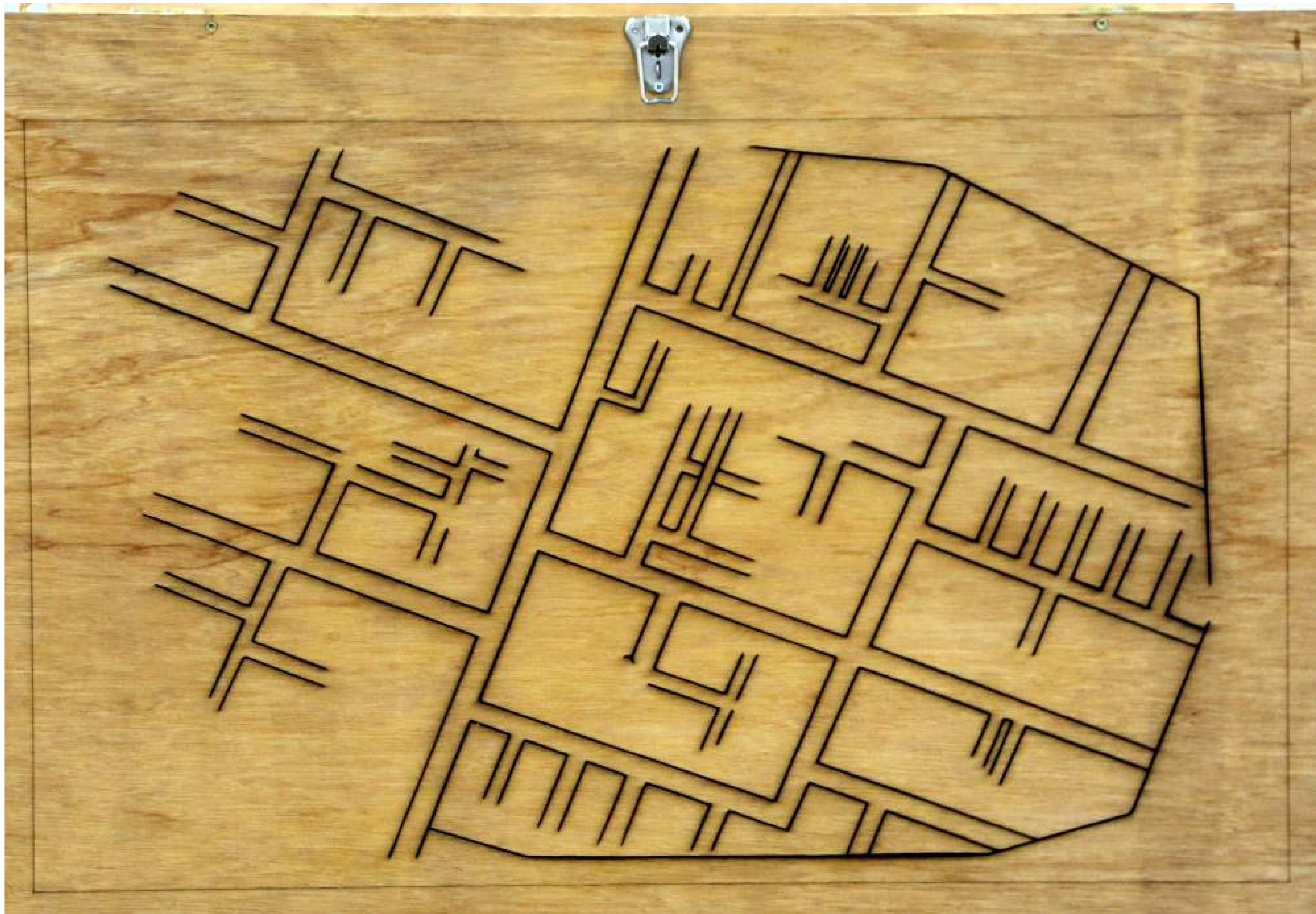


'ANA NAINGA KI TOLOA
HE VAITU MATI
KANONGATAA

















St Paul St Gallery Two

They were always Returning Home, 2020.

Screen printed pepa koka’anga suspended with hand-plaited kafa.

5000(H) x 1830(W) mm.

The suspended work is created from the contemporary material that is known as pepa koka’anga. The pepa koka’anga is used across Tongatapu for making ngatu because it is less expensive than the feta’aki, and it carries the weight of an actual ngatu. The dimension of the hanging pieces is set to the grid of both papa koka’anga combine. The prints on the pepa koka’anga are screen prints of modern influenced kupesi. What interest me the most about the kupesi printed onto the pepa koka’anga are still images from the process of ngatu making; fohi tutu and ‘opo’opo, Tongan oil ingredients, herbs and medicine, materials /tools for making, and maps/streets.

List of kupesi printed onto the pepa koka’anga.

Tongan oil ingredients / tools

- 1. Tevunga
- 2. Sinamoni
- 3. Mohokoi
- 4. Pako
- 5. Maka-tuki-vai
- 6. Nga’asi hina

- 1. ‘Ato - modern influence
- 2. Ancestors / family house

Food / Plantation

- 1. Kumala
- 2. Lesi
- 3. Pele
- 4. Niu

Tongan medicine

- 1. Fehi
- 2. Pasiona

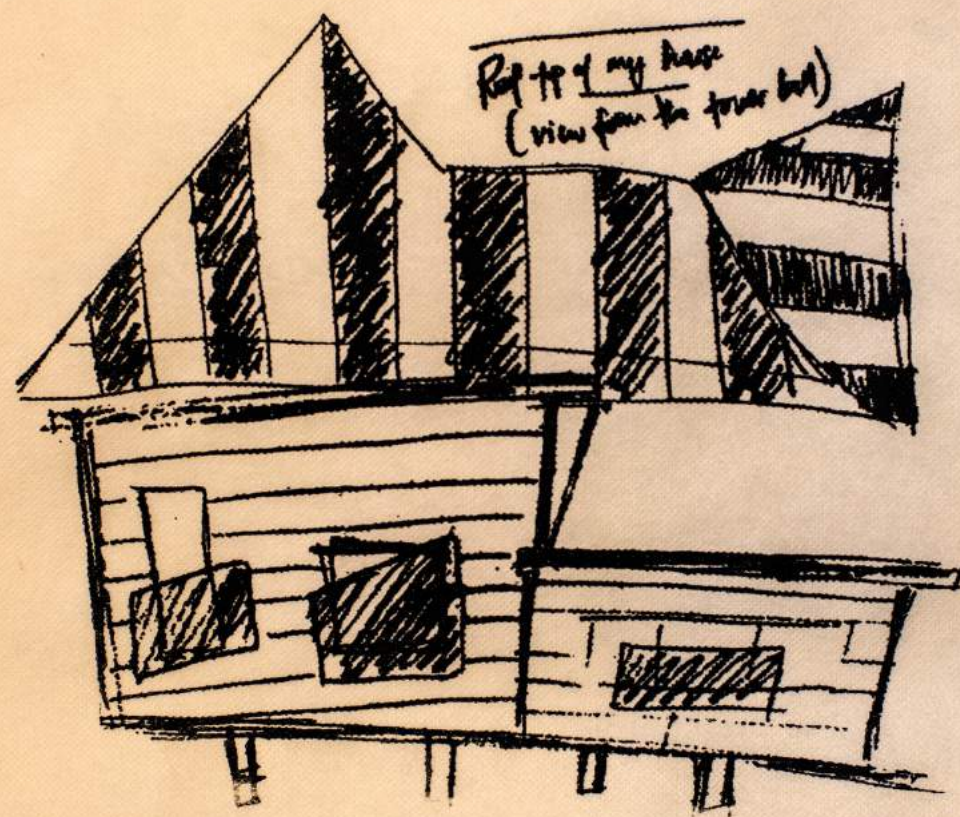
Materials / processes used in the craft of ngatu

- 1. Fo’i fa
- 2. Ike
- 3. Fohi tutu
- 4. ‘Opo’opo
- 5. Fakapa tutu
- 6. Lau’i tutu

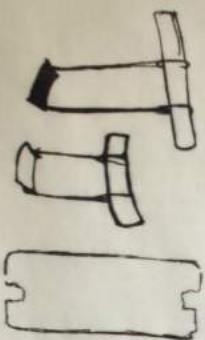
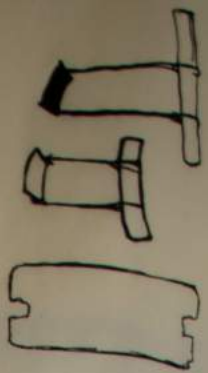
Memory / Childhood

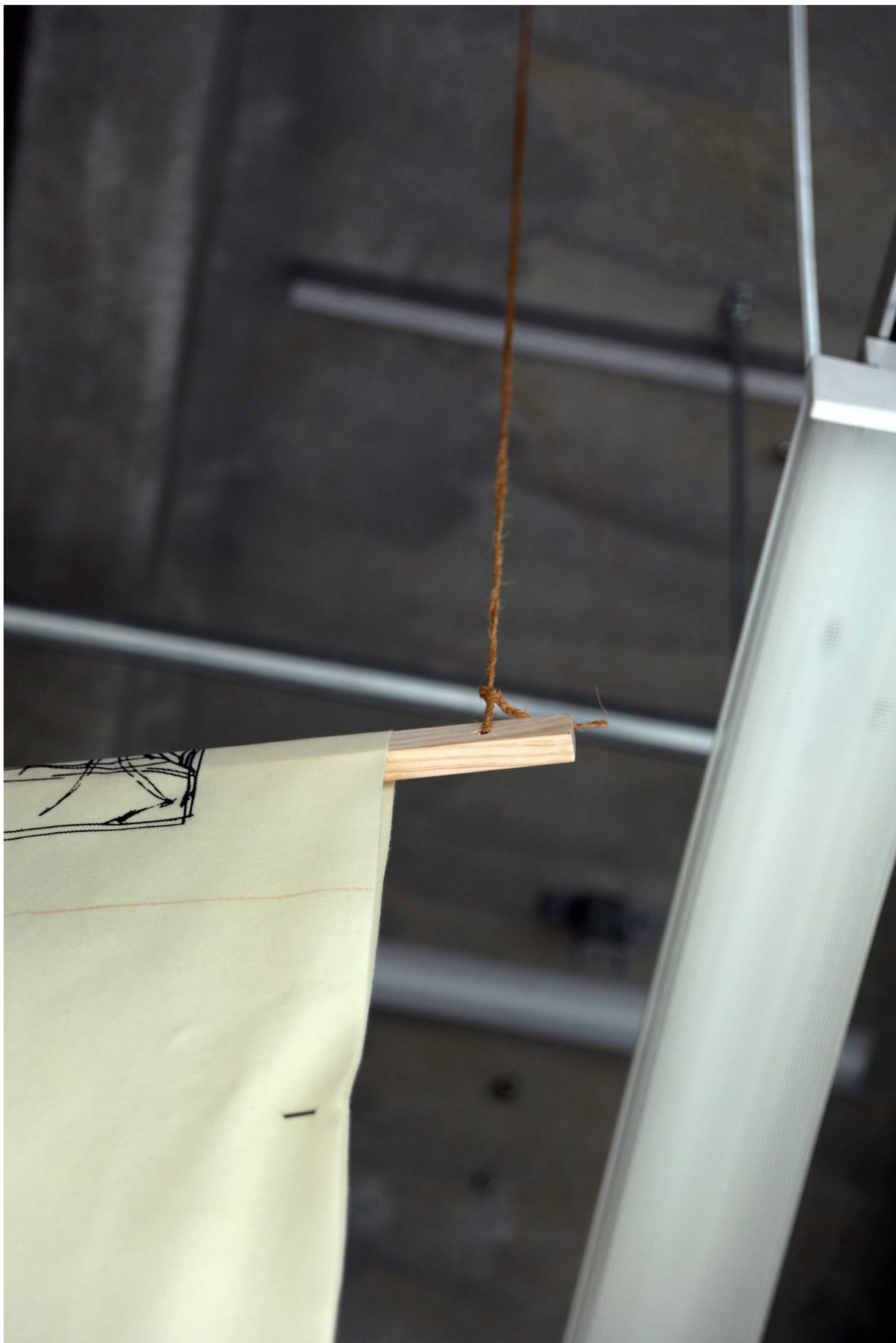
- 1. Heke
- 2. Papa mono tutu
- 3. Mape ‘o Tonga

Architect





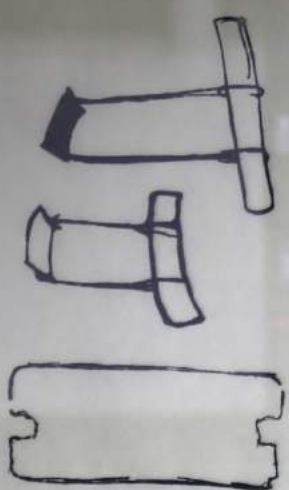














Special Thank you

Thank you to everyone who has contributed their time by being a part of making this work. This project holds and tells our ancestors' history, land, and who we are as a Tongan. Thank you so much for all your hard work. I appreciated everything that you all have contributed to this project. Fakamolemole 'i ange kita na'a kuo to ha taha ka 'oku mou si'i lave 'ilo'i a ho'o mou fatongia moe ngaue na'e fai mai. 'E 'ikai ngalo 'iate au 'a e ngaue mo e 'ofa na'a mou fai. Ma'u ha 'ofa lahi atu ki he taha kotoa pe 'i he fale ni.

Manu Tu'ipulotu (deceased), 'Uhila Moe Langi ('Uhila Lahi) (deceased), 'Ana Va'inga Pautā (the late 'Ana Va'inga), Mele 'Eleni Manufekai, Katalina 'Aho, 'Anamanu Veā, Seini Mo'ale, Mele Hausia, Losapina Aso, Kafo'atu Latu, Heilala, Vasiti Kaufusi, 'Ana Siueti Tovo, 'Asinate Finau, Vaimoana Le'ota, Mele Tofetofe, Veisia Vaha'i, Fihaki Tonga, Lotomoua Nai, 'Analisa Tutu'u, Kaloni Hoko, Amanda Le'ota, Milika Vaha'i, Ane Lupe Le'ota, Kafoatu Nye, Liu Kovi Nye, 'Anau Henry, 'Ana Va'inga Nye (Junior)...

Kanongata'a and 'Uhila Moe Langi (mahanga) (deceased), Vakaloa (Saia Manu 'o 'Uiha) (the late Vakaloa), Pauta (Grandpa - Sione Lautaimi) (deceased), 'Ifalame Siale (the late 'Ifalame), Timote Nai, Mafihiva (Viliami Kuli Le'ota), Motekiai Aso (deceased), Tamale (Tonga Mohenoa), 'Aisea Tonga, Sione Lautaimi Mafi, Matavai Taulangau, Salesi Vasini, 'Inoke Sisipala Moala, Fakalolo Finau, Lotapi Siale, Sione Palu, Pepa Vahai'i, Vetekina, Sione Nai...

Sosefina Andy, Aydriannah Tuiali'i, Vula Ma'u, 'Ilaisaane Siua, Temaleti 'Akauola, Evelyn Tautakitaki, 'Ofa Leha mo MJ Leha, Jimmy Wulfgramm, Vena Latu, Newman Tumata, Chantel Matthews, Lindsey De Roos, Jalesa Nomani, Ester Toilolo, Diva Leiataua, Michalle Greig, Holocene Uata, Jess Metuariki, Raymond Sagapolutele, Quishile Charan, Mavae Manuika...

Dowager Lady Tuna Fielakepa, Tamale (Tonga Mohenoa), Monique Redmond, Nooroa Tapuni, Albert Refiti, Lana Lopesi, Layne Waerea, John Veā, Kalosala'ite 'Uhila, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Davis, Harold Barton, Harriet Stockman, Angus Robets, Struan Hamilton, Greg Thomas, Eddie Clemens, Cameron Ah Loo-Matamua, Kahurangiariiki Smith, Charlotte Huddleston, Luke Boyle...

Exhibition Catalogue; Material version

Malo 'Aupito
Tu'a 'eiki 'ofa atu



Family Memories:

Capturing stories from different time-lines within the Tongan traditional crafts of ngatu (decorated barkcloth) making and kupesi (embroidered stencil) design.

**'Uhila Moe Langi Kanongata'a Nai
04 'Akosi 2020**

St Paul St Gallery Three , AUT

Ongoing series: Kupesi, Our Archives, 2019 - 2020.

Dimensions vary.

These kupesi are created from the tu'aniu (coconut leaves mid-rib), which is twirled around with kavele'ipulu (coconut husk) on a platform of la'i kaka (coconut fibre) lined up with paongo (pandanus) as it is being stitched together using a string made from either fau (hibiscus) or pulu (coir).



Papa Koka'anga, 2020

Two plywood tables with hand-plaited kafa (sennit) and kupesi (with 16 stencils)

Each table is 4770(L) x 1000(W) x 450mm(H).

Papa koka'anga (making tables) are specifically designed for use during ngatu making. Koka'anga is the process of binding pieces of feta'aki (undyed barkcloth) together to the full length of the ngatu. The kafa which is traditionally known as afo (rope) runs across the papa koka'anga, vertically and horizontally making a grid. The grid is traditionally set at 20 x 19 inches, which is called langanga 'e taha or 40 x 19 inches, which is called langanga 'e ua.

Collaborator in making of the papa koka'anga;

Viliani Kuli Le'ota or known by his matapule name as Mafihiva, helped in making of the papa koka'anga. From getting materials into the space to putting the table together. Both papa koka'anga were nicely done thanks to Viliani Le'ota.

Collaborators in fi kafa (plating of the kafa);

Timote Pita Nai or known by his matapule (chief) title as Pauta, and Lotomoua Nai helped to fi the kafa. The total length of the kafa that was fi by them was 5 meters.

Two papa koka'anga with 16 kupesi in total - 8-10 in each papa koka'anga. The papa koka'anga on the right hand-side are kupesi with the dimension of 20 x 19 inches and vary. The papa koka'anga on the left hand-side are kupesi with the dimensions of 40 x 19 inches and under.

The kupesi that are laying out into their individual boxes, were created from family history, names, stores, childhood, inspiration of what my family has done, farmers, craft maker, musicians, performance and more. Each of the kupesi is a metaphor that tells the story of my ancestors, because they are only shared with people that are meant to be shared with. The kupesi that are included on top of the papa koka'anga was created by my Nena, the late 'Ana Va'inga, myself and a few collaborations with my in-laws, Toakase Tu'iono and my mother, Lotomoua Nai.

List of collaborators with the making of kupesi:



The Third Generation is what my memory captures, 2019 - 2020

Wooden box with laser engraving and varnish.

1000(L) x 650(W) x 750mm(H).

The two puha (boxes) are copies of a family box that belongs to my great great-grandmother, Manu Tu'ipulotu. Our family puha has been passed down through 5 generations and is now with my generation. I have spent 13 years with this family puha, as it was handed down from my Nena's mother, 'Uhila Moe Langi Tu'ipulotu.

List of the kupesi on the lid of the puha;

1. Mape 'o Tonga - Map of Tonga drawn from memory.
2. Fo'i fa - Pandanus fruit which they are used as a paint brush. Drawn from an still image.
3. La'i Pasion - Herbs and medicine drawn from a still image
4. La'i Fehi - medicine medicine used for sore tooth, stomach ache, and cut. A drawing from memory, as a kid, I would always makes medicine for my Nena.

5. Aso - Day (La'i Kumala - Kumara leafs) drawn from memory as a representation of my uncle, Motekiai Aso, who was a farmer and many things.

6. Tokomea x Kolopaea - The name of our land back home in Pelehake. The rooftop was drawn from a still image of my Nena's room rooftop. And the bottom structure of the house is the left side of my great great-grandma / ancestors / family house.

7. Heke - Swing was drawn from a childhood memory of mine as my Uncle, Aso, installed one for me.

8. Hand gestures of the process of fohi tutu and 'opo'opo - the hands of my Nena's colleague, friend, and makers, 'Eleni Manufekai.

9. La'i Tevunga - One of the ingredient for making Tongan oil. As, a kid I will always walked across the field to my Nena's colleague/ friend's house to pick up some.

10. District Nine - These kupesi are created from the drawing of the rooftop of my Nena's room.

11. Ike - Mullet, This ike was drawn specifically from my Nena's ike. As the small ike are her favourites out of three ikes of hers.

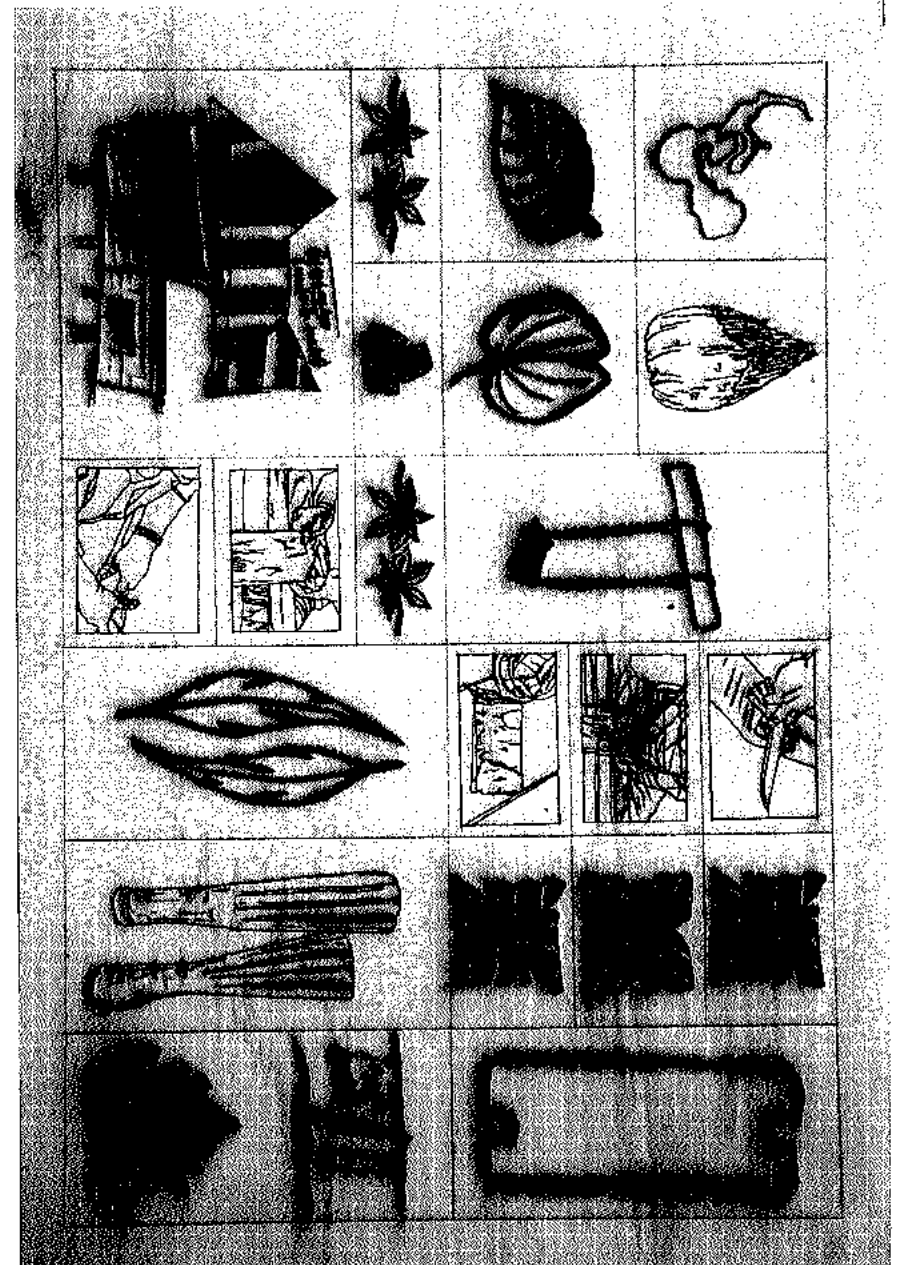
12. Papa mono tutu - Board for patching up holes on the feta'aki (undyed barkcloth). This papa mono tutu is the exact same form as my Nena's papa, which I grew up watching her used it. Up until now my aunty still uses them. So, this became a form as I drew them from a memory of my Nena and myself.

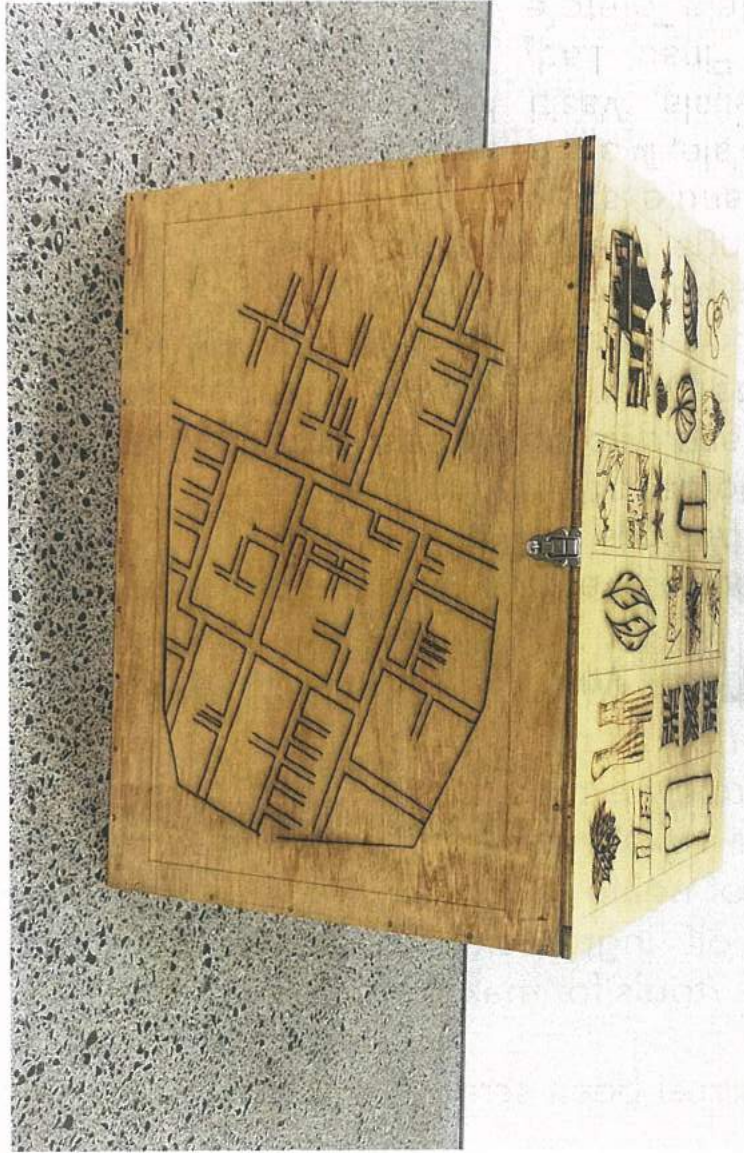
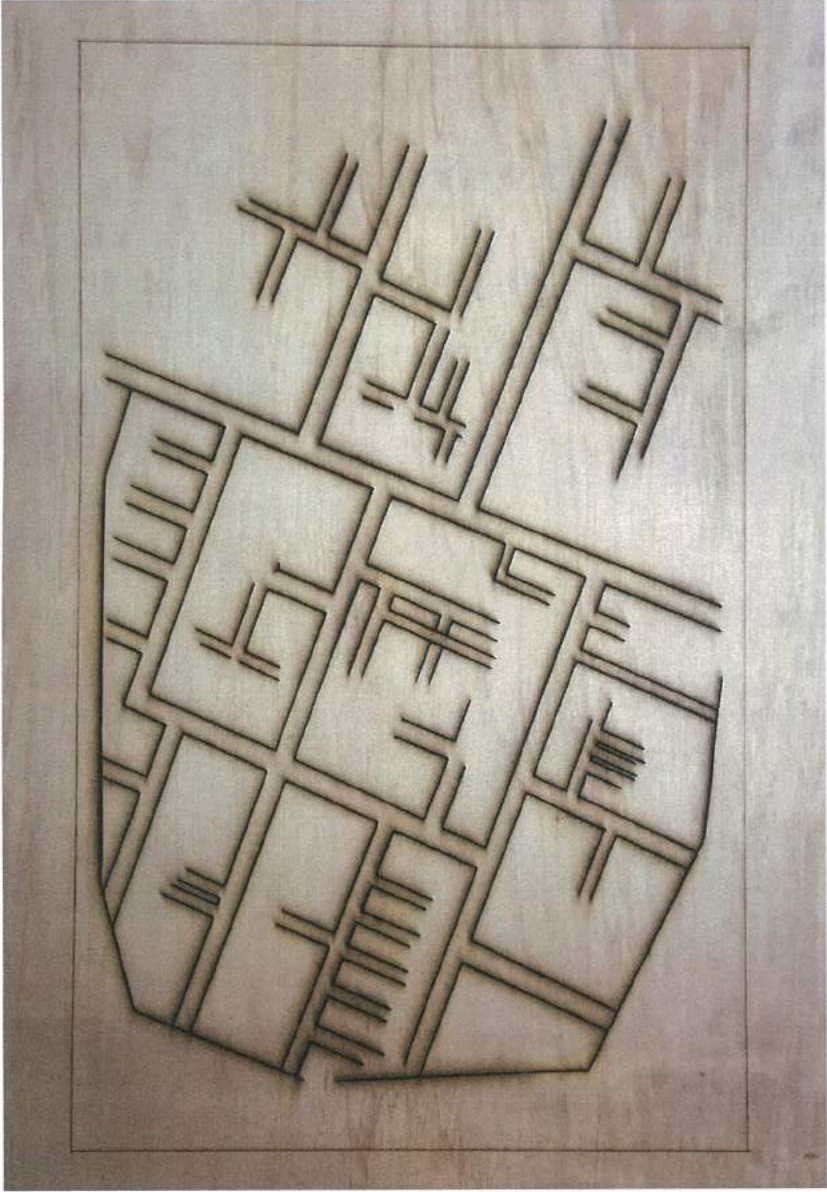
13. Tautau ke momoa - let out to dry in the sun. This is a specific processes of hanging up the undyed barkcloth once the process of 'opo'opo's are done.

14. La'i lesi - Pawpaw leaves, this symbols came about because my Nena loved pawpaw and that is how it became one.

Front of the puha:

The map of the village Pelehake, from the East side of Tonga. The map started as a contextual map but I later realised that the street map of my village plays a huge role in





St Paul St Gallery Two, AUT

They were always Returning Home, 2020.

Screenprinted pepa koka'anga (reemay material) suspended with hand-plaited kafa (sennit).
5000(H) x 1830(W) mm.

The suspended work is created from the contemporary material that is known as pepa koka'anga (reemay material). The pepa koka'anga is used across Tongatapu for making ngatu, because it is less expensive compared to the feta'aki (undyed barkcloth) and it can carry the weight of an actual ngatu. The dimension of the hanging pieces are set to the grid of the pepa koka'anga. The prints on the pepa koka'anga are screen prints of modern influenced kupesi. What interests me the most is the kupesi printed onto the pepa koka'anga are from still images of the process of ngatu making; fohi tutu and 'opo'opo, Tongan oil ingredients, herbs and medicine, materials /tools for making maps and streets.

List of kupesi been screen printed onto the pepa koka'anga.

Tongan oil ingredients / tools

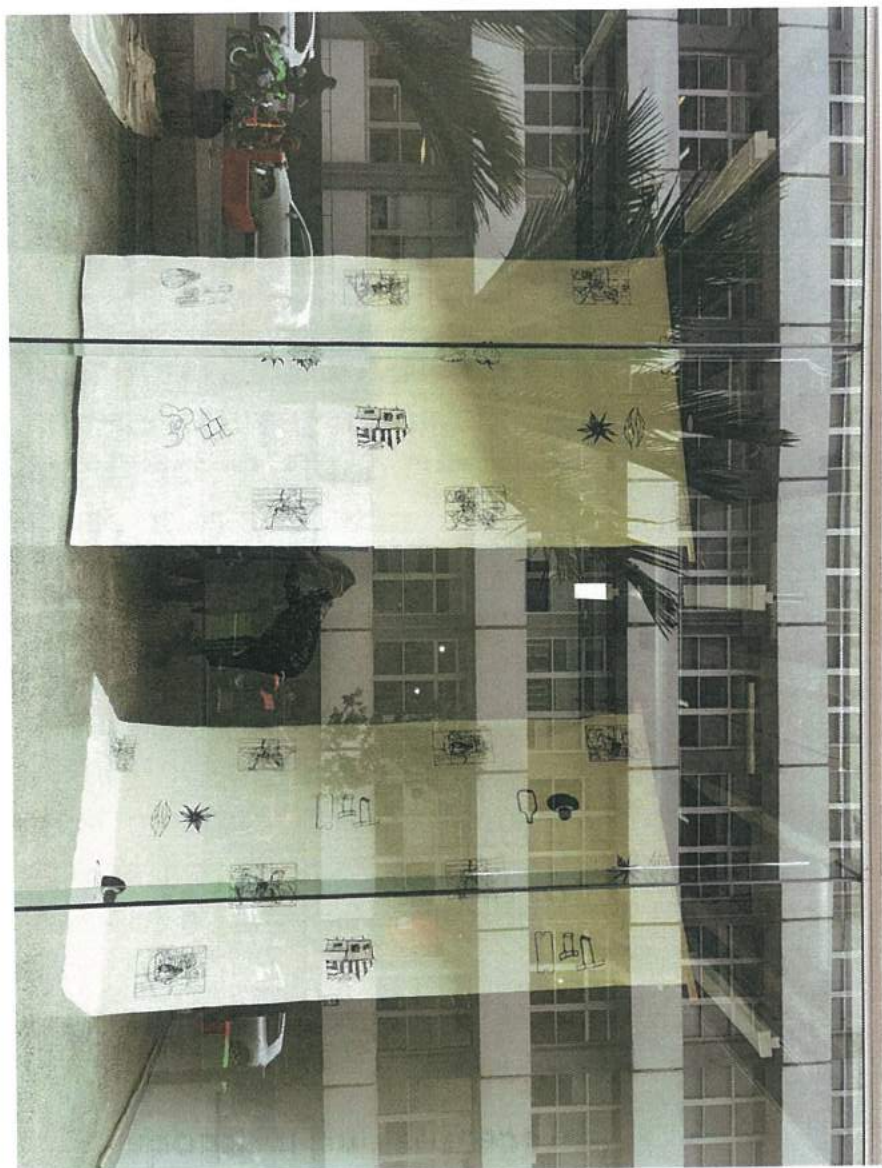
1. Tevunga
2. Mohokoi
3. Sinamoni
4. Pako
5. Maka Tuki Vai
6. Nga'asi Hina

Herbs and Medicine

1. Fehi
2. Pasiona

Ngatu material / processes and methods

1. Fohi fā
2. Ike
3. Fohi tutu
4. Fakapā tutu mo 'opo'opo
5. Lau'i tutu



'Uhila Moe Langi Kanongata'a Nai is a Tongan New Zealand born artist, who emigrated to Tonga with her Nena (Grandmother), 'Ana Va'inga Pautā in 1999 until the end of 2012, when Nai immigrated back to New Zealand at the age of 13. Nai grew up watching her Nena making ngatu and kupesi in the small village of Pelehake on the East-Side of Tonga.

This project derives from a personal interpretation of lea mu'a (old saying) and lea Faka-Tonga (Tongan language), which is translated into kupesi symbols to produce a contemporary Tongan ngatu. The research utilises the visual language of ancient Tonga and today's lea Faka-Tonga to emanate tala tukufakaholo with my family, a collection of knowledge about the history of hingoa fakafamili, tupu'anga, and manatu about my Nena and myself. This talatukufakaholo tātānaki (to collect) reflects not only the past tala tupu'a (myths or legends handed down from ancient times) and the space the ngatu occupies. Therefore, it is present in my art practice. It relates to the notion of learning through listening, observation and doing with a focus on how this mode of practising can position itself in a contemporary space of artmaking.

The artwork uses natural materials from the 'ulu niu (coconut tree) which are; kavele'ipulu (coconut husk), la'i kaka (coconut fibrous) and tu'aniu (coconut leaf mid-rib), paongo (pandanus leaves) and fau (hibiscus) – along with the methods and processes of ngatu making, specific to the procedure of taukai pe tautau (to hang or to put out to dry), which used after the process of 'opo'opo. The process of fola (to spread out) kupesi during the koka'anga. Koka'anga is the process of joining the feta'aki (undyed barkcloth) together into the scale of a ngatu. The process of spreading out the kupesi into their individual spaces. This process is only seen by the maker themselves and people in the community.

The work is deliberately installed in two different spaces, because it speaks to the notion of time and space. During my research trip, I spend 8 weeks in Tonga, for research and making purposes. My project is made up of two places, Tonga and Aotearoa, so the suspending work are looking from the view point of Aotearoa, so it represents my current space.

The work in gallery three, looks from the perspective of being in Tonga. Where all the materials, concepts,

research and making are done most of the time. The work speaks to the notion of a collapsing of the past, present and future.

The use of the two galleries creates a space for the audience to experience the travelling back and forth. As well as highlights the different protocols and practices in making ngatu and kupesi.

Special Thank you

Thank you to everyone who has contributed their time by being a part of making these work. This project holds and tells the history of our ancestors, our land and who we are as a Tongan. Thank you so much for all your hard work.

Manu Tu'ipulotu, 'Uhila Moe Langi ('Uhila Lahi), 'Ana Va'inga Pautā (the late 'Ana Va'inga), Mele 'Eleni Manufekai, Katalina 'Aho, 'Anamanu Ve, Seini Mo'ale, Mele Hausia, Losapina Aso, Kafo'atu Latu, Heilala, Vasiti Kaufusi, 'Ana Siueti Tovo, 'Asinate Finau, Lady Tuna Fielakepa, Vaimoana Le'ota, Mele Tofetofe, Veisia Vaha'i, Fihaki Tonga, Lotomoua Nai, 'Analisa Tutu'u, Kaloni Hoko, Amanda Le'ota, Milika Vaha'i, Ane Lupe Le'ota, Kafoatu Nye, Liu Kovi Nai, 'Anau Henry, 'Ana Nye, Anamda Hoko, 'Ofa 'Aisea, Kanongata'a, 'Uhila Moe Langi, Vakaloa (Saia), 'Ifalame Siale (the late 'Ifalame), Pautā (Timote Nai), Mafihiva (Viliami Kuli Le'ota), Motekiai Aso (the late Aso), Tamale (Tonga Mohenoa), Pauta (Taimi Siale) 'Aisea Tonga, Sione Lautaimi Mafi, Matavai Taulangau, Salesi Vasini, Inoke, Fakalolo Finau, Lotapi Siale, Sione Palu, Pepa Vahai'i, Vetekina.

Sosefina Andy, Aydrianna Tuiali'i, Vula, 'Ilaisaane Siua, Temaleti 'Akauol, Evelyn Tautakitaki, 'Ofa Leha mo MJ Leha, Jimmy Wulfgramm, Vena Latu, Newman Tumata, Chantel Matthews, Lindsey De Roos, Jalesa Nomani, Ester Toilolo, Diva Leiataua, Michalle Greig, Holocene Uata.

Monique Redmon, Nooroa Tapuni, Albert Refiti, Lana Lopesi, Layne Waerea, John Ve, Kalosala'ite 'Uhila, Glenn Maxwell, Matthew Davis, Harold Barton, Harriet Stockman, Angus Robets, Struan Hamilton, Greg Thomas, Eddie Clemens, Cameron Ah Loo-Matamua, Kahurangiariki Smith, Charlotte Huddleston,

Thank you all for everything since day one. I appreciated everything that you all have contributed to this project. Fakamolemole ange kita na'a kuo to ha taha ka 'oku mou si'i lave 'ilo'i a ho'o mou fatongia moe ngaue na'e fai mai. 'E 'ikai ngalo 'iate au 'a e ngaue mo e 'ofa na'a mou fai. Ma'u ha 'ofa lahi atu ki he taha kotoa pe 'i he fale ni.