

# The Potential of Vā

*An investigation of how 'Ie Tōga activate the spatial relationships of the Vā, for a Samoan Diaspora community*

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**Contents**

1.0	Abstract
2.0	Introduction
3.0	Theoretical Frameworks
	3.1 The Vā – a Samoan concept
	3.2 Fa’aSamoa: Samoan culture
	3.3 Standpoint epistemologies
	3.4 Migration to New Zealand: Diaspora
	3.5 ‘Ie Tōga: Samoan ceremonial exchange
	3.6 Traditional knowledge: Lalava & Lalaga
	3.7 Display: Exhibition and collections
4.0	Methodology
	4.1 Archival research
	4.2 Current museum displays
	4.3 Participation and documentation
	4.4 Experimentation: Lalava & Lalaga
	4.5 Mapping: Manukau south Auckland community
	4.5.1 Le ageagea o Tumua
5.0	Design
	5.1 Site: Otara Markets
	5.2 Intervention: Celebration of ‘Ie toga- “Our Measina”
	5.3 Exhibition of “Our Measina”
6.0	Conclusion
7.0	References
8.0	Bibliography
9.0	Glossary
10.0	CD1: Two-part animation ‘Our <i>Measina</i> ’: ‘Ie Tōga parade
	CD2: Timeline animation of events

I hereby declare that this submission is my own 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 acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

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1.0 Abstract

The *Vā* is our past, present, and future. As much as we might want to define the *Vā* – it certainly defines us. It does not appear as a physical form. It is never vacant. The *Vā* connects us all through our relationships as a space that always already exists, whether we think about it or not, and even when we feel disconnected. It appears most strongly when we meet and practice Samoan ceremonial exchange.

The Samoan dictionary defines *Vā* as “separated, be divided, estranged – on bad terms, space, distance between, and relationship” (Milner, 2003). For my thesis, *Vā* is a relational space whose potential for the creation of spaces of display I will test. My project seeks to discover ways of creating communities, which nurture *fa’asamoa* (Samoan ways) in the diaspora. The *Vā* has the potential to create spaces of display – not necessarily lasting buildings: in Samoan culture, and Oceanic culture more generally, “space is indissolubly linked to time” (Tcherkézoff, 2008, p. 136). It is in these contexts that the project seeks to discover ways of creating communities, nurturing *fa’asamoa*, Samoan ways, in the diaspora.

The project examines the associations and ancestral connections of *‘Ie Tōga* (Samoan fine mats) within their communities. It explores the relationships created through the exchange of historical *‘Ie Tōga*, making visible their place in the *Vā* and how they activate it by presenting to us our past, present, and future. The design proposal is the creation of a space of display arising from the processes of *Lalaga* (weaving) and *Lalava* (according to Albert Reftiti in personal communication (2010), “stirring the *Vā*” is a literal translation of, *Lala-Vā*, lashing). In this case, the combination lead to a stirring and re-connecting of the relationships within diasporic space. The thesis will test the potential of *Vā* through various methods of experimentation, such as archival research, participation, documentation of images and mapping.

## 2.0 Introduction

Like bundles of hay, coils of *‘Ie Tōga* lie piled in our garage. Never used or tampered with, this precious royal fabric lies dormant for the years to come, until the mats will seize the day – to be opened, displayed, then rolled back up and moved to be stored in someone else’s home and treasured.

I reflect on my own experiences of Samoan culture in New Zealand, and I recall memories of standing at the back of the church kitchen hall, next to piles of *‘Ie Tōga*, seeing them passed from one side of the room to the other. Each time, an array of people was revealed in the space as they admired the *‘Ie Toga*, and I recall the pungent smell of dried pandanus leaves which filled the room. It was hard for me to grapple with the significance of this event and absorb what was going on. Only now, in my Master’s year, 15 years later, do I realise the importance of *‘Ie Tōga* for my culture, community and the well being of fa’asamoa. *‘Ie Tōga*, also known as ‘fine mats’, are to this day treasured by Samoans as central to ceremonial exchange. They indicate an individual’s and their family’s status and play a significant part in maintaining culture.

I am trying to come to terms with the concept of ‘*Vā*’ as a New Zealand born half Samoan, half Fijian/Indian and as a spatial designer who is interested in its capabilities for my practice. During my tertiary studies, I never developed any interests towards Pacific theory or design, but in my final year as an undergraduate, I came across this term, “*Vā*”. At the time, *Vā* seemed to be easily understood to me. Albert Wendt explains, “*Vā* is the space between, the between-ness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All” (Wendt, 1996, para.14). For me, Wendt’s beautiful and poetic description captured the essence of

this term in a post-colonial global context, but it also raised questions regarding its meaning for me as a diasporic half Samoan. Did the same connotations come into play? How did the meaning of *Vā* apply to a Samoan community no longer associated to Samoan village structures, and were there different *Vā* relations that could be adapted?

This exegesis is an overview of my investigation of how Samoan *‘Ie Tōga* activate the spatial relationships of the *Vā*. It falls into three sections, Theoretical Frameworks, Methodology, and Design.

The **Theoretical Frameworks** chapter critically analyses the literature on *The Vā: A Samoan concept* - a concept which feeds into the Samoan way of life: *Fa’asamoa: Samoan culture*. *Standpoint epistemologies* then gives an overview of my position and perspective in regards to this research; this concern is further examined in *Migration to New Zealand: Diaspora*. This section observes the Pacific diaspora communities, and how they sustain cultural values, specifically through the Samoan *‘Ie Tōga: Samoan ceremonial exchange*. The materiality of *‘Ie Tōga* brings about the need for my project to understand *Traditional knowledge*, particularly the fine arts *Lalava* and *Lalaga*, to propose methods that may feed directly into the methodology. The last section of this chapter is *Display: Exhibition and collections*, which examines how these fine art forms from the Pacific are displayed, viewed, and archived by traditional Western forms of exhibition.

The **Methodology** chapter describes the design practice in five parts. Firstly, in *Archival research*, it continues to explore past and present forms of display of Samoan/Pacific items in selected instances in early exhibitions of Samoa and the Pacific. I discuss three specific exhibitions concerning three Samoan fale that were

exhibited in the USA: Chicago(1893) , United Kingdom: London (1940), and New Zealand: Wellington (1940). *Current museum displays* provides visual images of present displays by Te Papa Tongarewa/Museum of New Zealand in Wellington and the Auckland War Memorial Museum. *Participation and documentation* gives accounts of my involvement with, and participation in, various Samoan and more generally Pacific Auckland communities and events. *Experimentation: Lalava and Lalaga* is an account of the practical exploration in my thesis of the two traditional methods I explored in Theoretical frameworks. Particularity *Lalava* then feeds into a *Mapping* process of location in the South Auckland community.

The **Design** chapter is my final proposal for a design intervention, locating a specific *Site* in the Otara community, followed by my reasoning for a *Celebration of ‘Ie Tōga*. It will be extended between the submission of the draft exegesis and the examination, as I continue my experiments and add further iterations to the design. Therefore, this chapter only represents part of the process. A full documentation will be submitted at the time of examination. For the same reason, this exegesis does not have a conclusion yet.

This thesis is an equal combination of an exegesis of 50%, and the practice-based work of 50%. The final library copy will include the documentation of the exhibition of practical work.

## 3.0 Theoretical frameworks

### 3.1 The Vā: A Samoan concept

In 1911, *Vā* was defined in Pratt’s Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language as “a space between” (p. 100). It refers to the space between places or people and “connotes mutual respect in socio-political arrangements that nurture the relationships between people, places, and social environments” (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009, p. 12). The seminal definition in the last decades goes back to Albert Wendt’s 1996 ‘Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body’:

Important to the Samoan view of reality is the concept of *Vā* or *Wā* in Māori and Japanese. *Vā* is the space between, the between-ness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things. The meanings change as the relationships/the contexts change. A well-known Samoan expression is ‘Ia teu le *vā*.’ Cher-ish/nurse/care for the *Vā*, the relationships. This is crucial in communal cultures that value group, unity, more than individualism: who perceive the individual person/creature/thing in terms of group, in terms of *Vā*, relationships. (Wendt, 1996, para.14)

This quote refers to the art of *tatau*, or tattoo, from a “global perspective” (Clayton, 2007). Wendt refers to “space” as the “space between” and considers how this “space between” relates to different identities. Spaces of identity merge and, as they draw closer together, form relationships. Differences between cultures, families and traditions are created from the interaction in the relational space, of which we become aware when we draw close.

Wendt suggests that *Vā* is not a vacant space, nor a space that needs to be filled. Wendt further implies that some Westerners tend to think that space is a gap that has to be closed. But there

is no empty, separate or closed space. Rather, space is of woven connections – a “duality of substance and respect” (Wendt, 1996), it provides context and symbolises relationships between people, places and environments. Wendt further discusses the importance of social space, because the Samoan sense of self is ultimately relational or communal, rather than individualistic (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009, p. 12).

Wendt’s (1996) position has been used widely by scholars in the health sector: by Melani Anae in relational education, by Karl Pulotu-Endermann for his fonofale health model and by Karlo Mila-Schaaf within a perspective on Pacific mental health. A study of Samoan perspectives on mental health and culturally appropriate services in New Zealand reports:

Samoa’s traditions and protocols explain the nature of Samoan being as that of a relational being, that is, the Samoan person does not exist as an individual. There is myself and yourself. Through myself, you are given primacy in light of our collective identity and places of belonging (fa’asinomaga), our genealogical lineage (tupu’aga), and our roles and responsibilities and heritage (tofiga). (Tamasese, Peteru, & Waldegrave, 1997, p. 28)

The New Zealand/Samoan health interpretations employ holistic approaches to Pacific concepts and “engage a responsible ethic in health institutions, dealing with Pacific population/stake holders” (Refiti, 2008, p. 1).

These different interpretations of *Vā* made me realise the importance of stating my own standpoint, that is, where I position myself. Wendt (1996), I believe, is correct when he explains that the *Vā* is not empty space, but space that relates. However, there may be problems with his notion of between-ness. While *Vā* is activated within the subject in the presence of “at least two” (Wendt,

1996), it is also a spiritual embodiment in us all: we not only carry this *Vā* within ourselves, but it is embodied in our proper and improper behaviours. Food division and distribution, sleeping and sitting arrangements, and language usage in private and public spaces are all conceived through the *Vā* (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009, p. 14). There are also personal and group responsibilities, which maintain balance and agreement in the *Vā*, thus forming community. All this can be linked to Samoan epistemology. In an interview, Aumua Mata’itusi Simanu, Professor of Samoan Studies at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa, says:

Vā is the most significant concept to understand the complexity of Samoan social interactions between people, church, and the environment. It underpins all epistemologies of participation, obligation, and reciprocation that guide our interactions and continue even as Samoans move abroad. Performances of social responsibilities and obligations prescribed in Vā rest on the knowledge of social and genealogical connections that ‘aiga members possess (Aumua Mata’itusi Simanu, 2006, quoted in Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009, p. 14).

Simanu explains how the relationships between Samoan people have great significance in the forming of social interactions. It is a way in which Samoans view their understandings of one another, and behave in a way expected in accordance with their roles and responsibilities.

Albert Refiti (2008) describes the *Vā* as a co-openness. Refiti contradicts Wendt (1996) to an extent, as he explains by referring to the example of a meeting of Samoan chiefs (*fono*).

When Samoan chiefs encounter each other in the fono council they don’t think strategically about their vā as a be

tween thing – no, they are already in it, they are seized by it and therefore a being-Samoan can be said to be already opened. There is no gap, when a matai sits in the fono council he/she is no longer what he/she is today, he/she becomes the ancestor. This is what I mean by a co-openness (Refiti, 2008).

Refiti goes on to say that the *Vā* changes depending on the context of the relations and has thus a temporal aspect. He supports I’uogafa Tuagalu (2008) who specifically examines *Vā* from a New Zealand perspective, attempting to adapt it in “context to Samoa notions of *Vā Fealoaloa’i* (relational space) and *Vā Tapua’i* (sacred/worship space)” (Refiti, 2008).

Tuagalu (2009), in his article ‘Heuristics of the *Vā*’, suggests that Wendt’s widely used definition has a commonality with a theory of social action that is being developed in New Zealand by Samoan scholars. They all deal with a notion of the *Vā* as a “holistic identity formation predicated on co-belonging and relationship building” (Refiti, 2008); its active character becomes desirable when applied as a strategic concept, “creating space for mutual respect” (M. Anae, 2001).

The *Vā* in a Samoan social structure begins from one’s identity. It is referred to as *fa’asinomaga* (identity), “with the Socratic maxim to ‘know thyself’, the beginning of all knowledge (poio) is knowledge of oneself” (Aiono, 1997). Aiono’s (1997) examination of Samoan *fa’asinomaga* is founded on three main poles (poutu toa): “firstly, *matai*, chiefly titles to which one has genealogical ties; secondly, the land (eie’eie ma fanua), that is attached to those titles; and, lastly, the Samoan language, *gagana Samoa*” (Aiono, 1997). The Samoan language is regarded as the “fundamental way in which Samoans differentiate themselves from other Samoans and non-Samoans” (Tuagalu, 2009, p. 111).

### 3.2 Fa’asamoa: Samoan culture

*Fa’asamoa* (Samoan custom, Samoan way of life, Samoan language) conceives of individuals foremost as integral members of ‘*aiga*’ (family), irrespective of where they currently reside. The development cycle of the ‘*aiga*’ refers to its social, spiritual, physical, and economic improvement in parallel with the life cycles of the individuals within an ‘*aiga*’. Individuals are constantly reminded of their important contributions to the collective welfare. One develops one’s ‘*aiga*’ relationships through responsibilities that are maintained over time.

The concept of *Fa’asamoa* is essential to Samoan identity, and consists of a number of values and traditions:

- ‘*aiga*’ (family)
- *tautala Samoa* (Samoan language)
- *gafa* (genealogies)
- *matai* (chiefly system)
- *lotu* (church)
- *fa’alavelave* (ceremonial and other family obligations).

*Fa’asamoa* practices in Samoa may differ from those in New Zealand: not every Samoan has the same understanding of the concept.

It is my contention that the meanings and nuances of the vā fealoaloa’i, (relational space) though not lost, become muffled in translation. For there are marked differences between the village organisation in Samoa and the Church organisation in Aotearoa: The Church does not have a set fa’alupega, a permanent geographical location, nor an unchanging population as the membership is transient (Tuagalu, 2009, p. 121).

Tuagalu (2009) explains that the relational space taught in a

Samoan village structure differs from that taught in the diasporic church organisations, and further outlines that the church has no “permanent geographical location” (p. 121).

The change of social structure in New Zealand/Samoan church communities has provided a successful framework to sustain *Fa’asamoa* (Samoan custom, Samoan way of life, Samoan language). It is important to recognise these changes, though, and to understand that in certain aspects the term ‘diaspora’ no longer applies to this community. “But it is equally important to realise that change has occurred in the migrant communities” (Yamamoto, 1996), adapting to different rules and set laws. Over the last 30 years, generations have been brought up as Samoan New Zealanders, each having been taught Samoan culture in different situations and contexts, with different understandings and meanings of the culture. As James Clifford (2006) says,

Later generations forced or drawn into towns or cities, have no realistic intention of actually living continuously in traditional places, then the connection to lost homelands comes closer to a diasporic relation, with its characteristic forms of longing and displaced performances of heritage (quoted in De La Cadena & Starn, 2007).

Or, in Melani Anae’s (2003) words,

I am a Samoan – but not a Samoan to my aiga in Samoa,  
I am a palagi [foreigner]  
I am a New Zealander – but not a New Zealander to New Zealanders,  
I am a bloody coconut, at worst,  
A Pacific Islander, at best,  
To my Samoan parents,  
I am their child.

(quoted in Makisi & Fairbairn-Dunlop, 2003)

Anae’s verse summarises the paradox of identity for many New Zealand-born Samoans. In Samoan communities they are not ‘Samoan enough’, in the wider New Zealand community Samoans have been criticised as ‘not New Zealanders’, ‘coconuts’, or ‘FOBs’ (fresh off the boat). These perceptions may leave some with a secure self-identity, but others in a state of confusion. Many young Samoans talk about having time out as a reaction to the dilemma of identity. This usually involves leaving the church and rejecting parental authority. I wanted to work within my own church community a design proposal acknowledging changes and providing a space for *Vā* relations: a space for connection to genealogies and for Samoan parents to teach their young the forms (practices) of *fa’asamoa*.

As my understanding of diaspora in Aotearoa/New Zealand developed, it became important to provide a site, which had a potential to generate genealogical associations (from the current location of the church; and the proposed site; in correlation to Samoa). Such considerations can, of course, not be conducted without involving those who already have genealogical ties with the site: the *tangata whenua* of *Tamaki Makaurau*.

The *Vā* relations, from my own experience, are still very much active within Aotearoa Samoan communities. Therefore what I propose is not just an intervention where it offers a space for these *Vā* relations, but an intervention where it stirs these relations (*Lalava* means literally “stirring the *Vā*”) to form further connections with one another as a community. These connections are locations from our current living sites, to Samoan villages, associated with the display of *‘Ie Tōga*.

### 3.3 Standpoint epistemologies

Epistemologically, *Vā* is encoded with respect, service, and hospitality in maintaining and retaining ‘*aiga*’ status and a socially well-located family (Lilomaiaava-Doktor, 2009, p. 14). In the article “How We Know: Kwara’ae Rural Villagers Doing Indigenous Epistemology”, David Welchman Gegeo and Karen Ann Watson-Gegeo (2001) revise theories of knowledge, including the nature, sources, frameworks, and limits of knowledge. They state that “epistemological agents are communities rather than individuals” (Gegeo & Watson-Gegeo, 2001, p. 58). In other words, knowledge is created by communities, rather than collections of independently knowing individuals, and “such communities are epistemologically prior to individuals who know” (Nelson 1993, p. 124).

For Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo (2001) the concept of indigenous epistemology distinguishes between accounts of other people’s knowledge, on the one hand, and cultural insiders’ ways of theorising knowledge, on the other. In my research, indigenous epistemology means, specifically, the ways of thinking and creating, reformulating, and theorising about knowledge that are activated by Samoan communities away from Samoa – through traditional discourses and media of communication.

As a concept, indigenous epistemology focuses on the process through which knowledge is constructed and validated by a cultural group. In my research, the cultural group is composed of a pool of Pacific artists and theorists who influence thinking and behaviour of Pacific communities in Aotearoa. It was important to understand the diverse in-terpretations, and seek alternative meanings of *Vā* (i.e Absence of Space) to understand the different epistemologies arising from each standpoint. From the *Vā* standpoint, indigenous ways of creating knowledge are part of understanding its full potential and diverse meanings, to justify its use

within the thesis, and its significance to my cultural understanding; drawing on the knowledge residing in this cultural group, and applying it to create space, has been vital to my project.

It is important for me to acknowledge and adhere to the variety of references to such a relational space—for example, the gap between cultures, a space within, a third space, the space to which things are brought back, a different context, the liminal space—in turn gives rise to a variety of parallel characterizations: interface, limen, *Vā* (Whimp, 2009, p. 19).

There has been a variety of references to the “absence of space”, for many Pacific artists in Aotearoa. This absence is confirmed by the artists, all of whom embrace contemporary technologies and diasporic identities. In his essay “Working in the Space Between: Pacific Artists on Aotearoa/ New Zealand” Graeme Whimp (2009) surveys eleven Pacific Island artists, and their perspectives on cultural space. Whimp critiques the significance and variety of concepts spaces such as balance, blending, duality, synthesis, fusion, hybridity, liminality, interface, creolization, and *Vā*, described by the artists, and how they have been deployed within their work. What I found interesting about the survey was the terminology each artist used to describe their individual identity, for example

Fatu Feu’u’s re-creation and shaping, Ani O’Neill’s catapulting, John Ioane’s platform and springboarding, Lily Laita’s alternative encoding, John Pule’s recreation (not rediscovery) of lost knowledge, Michael Tuffery’s creation of a new culture in a new place, Andy Leleisi’uao’s negotiation, Niki Hasting-McFall’s liminal space, and Jim Vivieaere’s creativity over constraint (Whimp, 2009).

All these different interpretations and ideas from the artist mention rejection of simple reproduction and an embracing of contem-



-porary identities (Hall, 1996, p. 448).

A study of the artists show a comon thread that is represented by the the Pacific Ocean, through which they sustain contact with Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Leanne Clayton (2007) writes in her Masters thesis about the diverse settings of *Vā* through visual art. Her work explores different *Vā* relations, about which she says:

There is no one definition for the *Vā* there are many types of *Vā* (Clayton, 2007, p. 47).

Clayton does not refer to a particular type of *Vā*, but she concludes that her work is an interconnection of *Vā* spaces and relations. I argue that it is exactly this *Vā* cultural space that has provided the necessary environment for the detection of shared creative difference and diversity to the contemporary cohort of diaspora artists of Pacific Island origin in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

Through these interpretations, I have come to conclude that this space of *Vā*, for me, is a space of relationships that have been built around me and with each other. Growing up I was raised and brought up in a Samoan church community as a Christian to speak Samoan and learn the Samoan way, *fa’asamoa*. Being half Samoan and also living in a western society *fa’asamoa* was never really clear at times for me, and I felt a sense of loss and non-belonging. Having been educated in a western society, it was hard for me to distinguish the cross-cultural boundaries, and understand what was going on in my own church community in regards to my identity. I want to make clear that in no way was I criticising the church values, but there are marked differences from not only my perspective but other individuals as well. Take for instance my perspective of being:

- I am half Samoan half Fijian/ Indian, two different cultures one identity.

- I was raised as a New Zealand born, therefore educated in the New Zealand system.

- I am a member of the Weymouth congregational church of Samoa; learning Samoan Christian values and *fa’asamoa* the Samoan way.

I was in fact an outsider in my own church. It took me longer than others from church to learn and understand the Samoan way because I struggled with the language.

Reflecting on my own experience, *gagana* Samoa is the essence of *fa’asamoa* in the way both interconnect and feed of one another; they too can be described as *Lalaga* a weaving of balance from two entities. The language was a barrier, and even with translation, Samoan traditional customs was on another level of expertise, and how was I to understand? Surely there must have been others in my position struggling to adapt with customs, traditions and language. I turned to what I knew best and educated myself through means of articles, books, Internet and of course family, to understand my culture and the significance to sustain items such as *‘Ie Tōga* in our culture. This form of learning made me think about other means of instructing, teaching and learning *fa’asamoa*, how else could we as Samoan Diaspora carry through our values and customs to our youth if they too feel disconnected from cultural identity.

### 3.4 Migration to New Zealand: Diaspora

Many cultural communities continually move from one homeland to another site of settlement, either for economic opportunity or political refuge (Clifford, 1997). In doing so, they considerably reconstitute their cultural and communication practices to speak to and reflect upon their migration experiences (Drzeñwiecka & Halualani, 2002). Also, upon moving to new places, cultural groups adapt, incorporate, and modernise (Westernise) to fit into new host countries, sometimes casting aside their traditional cultural practices.

The circumstances of Pacific peoples living in Aotearoa/New Zealand are complex. While they retain ties with their home islands, their place in the “new” land is falsely given Pākehā [European] aspirations for a postcolonial reality, and the continued struggle of Māori against internal colonization. The situation is further complicated by the more recent migration to Aotearoa/New Zealand of people from Southeast Asia and China (Whimp, 2009, p. 18).

Yamamoto (1996) writes, “Diaspora in the past meant leaving the homeland forever. It accompanied the feeling of loss, losing one’s native idioms, family ties, and the attachment to one’s roots” (para.2), but this is not the case for the Samoan New Zealand community. From the 1950s, Samoans migrated to New Zealand in large numbers (Anae, 2000). New Zealand’s industry and the service sector expanded over the next 30 years. Many Samoans moved to New Zealand for greater opportunities and a better education for their children. Within this span of 30 years, diasporic Samoans have adapted to New Zealand living by becoming part of the Samoan church communities. In New Zealand cities, Samoan churches increased in numbers and helped their people to adapt by subsequently taking on the role of villages to provide a platform for strong Samoan *fa’asinomaga* (identity). In the home

land of Samoa it is important for the individual to locate one self. to their village as a form of identity, because there derives genealogy, ancestral and historic connections to the individual and *aiga* family. The role of the church in New Zealand created these relations as it occupied a space of location and formalised an identity for the *aiga*.

In Samoa, a person’s social status has always been based on their village structure, on the land, family connections, genealogies and ancestors. Yet, in a diasporic setting, Samoan communities in Aotearoa organised themselves around church structures. Within the Church organisation, and the family, Samoan parents instructed and taught the forms (practices) of *Fa’asamoa*, or *Vā* relations. Within the church structures, all the major forms of *Fa’asamoa* are practised; e.g. *fa’aipoipoga* (weddings), *maliu* (funerals), *folafolaga* (formal acknowledgement of goods) and *lauga* (traditional speeches) (Anae, 2000). Furthermore, Goldring noted that:

If you belong to the dominant culture of your society, it is relatively easy to build an identity and conform. You understand how things run, what is expected of you, and how to meet those expectations. You have freedom to decide whether or not you will fit in (Goldring, 2006, p. 2).

As a diasporic half Samoan I always find myself in a space of non-belonging, not being a native to New Zealand; although am partially accepted in my Samoan community, as a half Fijian/Indian and New Zealand born.

From my own experience, having seen and been to many Samoan *fa’alavelave* (ceremonial and other family obligations), I found it difficult to understand the significance of the cultural ceremonies that were taking place. For example at my auntie’s funeral, a *si’i* (ceremonial exchange of gifts) was taking place in her home. My

role specifically was to help with the *feau's* (business, errand, task, message), and know my place with the *Vā* relations that were taking place. What did this culturally mean to me? How was I going to carry on these traditions that have been passed to me, without understanding what was going on at my auntie's funeral. I did not want to look stupid and ask my mother what the meaning of this gift exchange was, and little did I know about the value *‘Ie Tōga* had at these ceremonies, so how was I to know? Learning about culture first hand was fulfilling, knowing the amount of effort put on the event, the large quantities of food prepared, and that the importance of the orators reciting each exchange played a significant role. But would I carry on these traditions if I had the choice?

How do we as the next generation view these cultural ceremonies as diaspora, and carry out the traditions? I do not want to propose change, but an alternative means of educating diaspora in the value of these ceremonial traditions. How could my skills as a designer explore new methods of valuing Samoan culture in Aotearoa? I felt the exploration and conceptualising of the term *Vā* had something to offer spatially to my own Samoan diasporas community.

I felt the need to gather communities together, to activate these *Vā* relations in order for them not to be lost, but imbibed through new means. *‘Ie Tōga* seemed to be my starting point to commence the *Vā* relations that could potentially be activated.

**3.5 ‘Ie Tōga: Samoan ceremonial exchange**  
Lemi Ponifasio (2008), director of dance theatre MAU, suggests that rituals activate the opening of the *Vā*. Ponifasio offered the idea, which my design follows, of analysing the customary practice of a Diaspora Samoan death ceremony. From there, the question arises: What specifically in these ceremonies activated the *Vā*?

The gift exchange on so many occasion (births, marriages, funerals, the consecration of a house or a church, the installation of a new family or village leader, etc.) is called a *si'i*, and the gifts exchanged are *toga* and *‘oloa* (Yamamoto, 1996). *‘Ie Tōga* are female valuables composed in the past of mats and bark cloths, but today mainly of fine mats. *‘Oloa* are male valuables composed in the past of pigs and other food items, canoes, tools, etc, but today these gifts may include very specific tinned foods, as well as paper money. A Samoan funeral takes priority over all other ceremonial practices, within the funeral are the *Fa‘alavelaves* (ceremonial and other family obligations) in which the presiding aiga (family) carry out a *si'i* (ceremonial exchange of gifts) of food, money or *‘Ie Tōga*. It is a procession, which requires a lot from the *aiga* of the deceased, in terms of time, money and management.

In the case of a funeral, the presiding aiga of the deceased must give food and fine mats to the orators who attended the ceremony, and the mourning groups of orators visiting the ceremony. Throughout the exchange orators recite genealogies across the space of the room. Food is also prepared for the affinal kin groups which bring valuables to the presiding aiga (Yamamoto, 1996, para.11).

*‘Ie Tōga* play a central role in these processions, not only do they bring value to the ceremony, but within each mat presented *Vā* relations are activated. It is mandatory to give *‘Ie Tōga* for cer-

emonial practices in Samoan culture.

*‘Ie Tōga*, also known as ‘fine mats’, are to this day treasured by Samoans as a central element of ceremonial exchange. As Penelope Schoeffel (1999) notes in her article “Samoan Exchange and ‘Fine Mats’: An Historical Reconsideration”, although, *‘Ie Tōga* has over time lost meaning within its “ancient religious, economic and social system” (p. 143), due to the accelerated migration in the 1960s by the Samoan diaspora. *‘Ie Tōga* in their own right occupy *Vā* relations through the histories and ancestral connections that arise in a ceremonial exchange. In Tamaitai Samoa Their Stories, Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop explains that many individual mats developed great significance as records of alliances and exchanges (citation year). These mats were specifically named and recognized, and are sometimes referred to as the mats of government. It is within this significance of records of alliances and exchanges, I propose an intervention, which brings forth *Vā* relations in the present, that activate *Vā* spaces, from *‘Ie Tōga*.

Peggy Fairbairn-Dunlop writes of the significance *‘Ie Tōga* provide to Samoan women's wealth, Fairbairn-Dunlop explains the qualities of respect, prestige, gratitude, deference, recognition and obligation *‘Ie Tōga* represent, and that *‘Ie Tōga* played a central role in *ifoga* (a ritual involving one party seeking forgiveness from another) (Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1998). These *‘Ie Tōga* are not used traditionally as a protective covering on a floor or other surface, they are entirely meant for ceremonial use. Fairbairn also clarifies that there are different types of *‘Ie*,

‘Ie tōga                      finely woven mat of pandanus fibres bordered with red feathers. Varieties if ‘Ie tōga are named according to their size and quality, or for the purpose for which they are given. Usually called ‘fine mats’ in English.

‘Ie avaga                      marriage  
‘Ie tu                              fine mat worn by a bridegroom at the wedding  
‘Ie sina                              finely woven cloth of hibiscus fibre in which loose ends form a hanging surface on one side; worn by taupou (translation) or sao tamaitai (translation); now very rare.  
  
(Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1998)

In his essay the “‘First Contacts’ in Polynesia: the Samoan Case (1722-1848)” Andrew McClellan (2007), revises the work of Marcel Mauss in his famous essay, The Gift (Essai sur le don), published in 1925:

Mauss showed that a common feature of these practices was the sacred nature of the objects presented. Here the term sacredness should be interpreted in the Maussian-Durkheimian sense as the object that symbolises the larger group, be it society as a whole or one of its sub-groups. Such objects are opposed (in Maussian terms) to ‘individual’ possessions. Only cloth of this kind was, or is, an object of gift exchange in Polynesia. Fine mats or tapa are never owned by an individual (while previously leaf skirts and now printed fabric are); they always represent the identity of a group (McClellan, 2007, p. 163).

McClellan (2007) makes clear that *‘Ie Tōga* are sacred and symbolises the larger group (a family, clan, or similar), and furthermore the identity that is attached to *‘Ie Tōga*. The *‘Ie Tōga* is representative of the family, and holds an everlasting authenticity that is passed down through generations. Mauss noted that the gifts—the mats—were the symbol of a group (a family, clan, or similar) and were inherited. They held the notion of ‘totality’ as he identified it; that is, in which they symbolised a social unit (McClellan, 2007).

The rise of tourism is one of the reasons why the skills of *Lalaga* (weaving) an *‘Ie Tōga* have missed a couple of generations. It led to a demand of cheaper *‘Ie Tōga* of much poorer quality. Samoan women did not want to go back to the finer quality, as it was difficult, and time consuming (TV New Zealand, 2007).

Samoan fine mats are not about individuals but about community and collective An *‘Ie Tōga* is particularly important as a known and renowned object of value. Many *‘Ie Tōga* are held far from their place of origin, but still retain the memory of the family who wove it and passed it on. *‘Ie Tōga* carry the genealogy of that family. In Samoa, no other gift object has such a universal currency.

I agree with Penelope Schoeffel (1999) that fine mats were never “inalienable objects” but were passed around among Samoa’s nobility, affirming the *‘Ie Tōga* exclusive identity and divine ancestry. Schoeffel further concludes that *‘Ie Tōga* had cultural significance as “feminine property”, or “women’s wealth”, or that women, like fine mats, were themselves objects of exchange. She argues this was misrecognition by the foreign missionaries in the early Christian period in Samoa. However, I disagree to an extent: *‘Ie tōga* had cultural significance as “feminine property” (although “property” is not the correct term, rather “feminine wealth”), and they too connected to the exchange between *tamatāne* (descendants of a man) and *tamafafine* (descendants of a women, daughter of a women), and have a divine affinity attached to them, that is associated with “feminine wealth” (Schoeffel, 1999).

In this section of the thesis, on *‘Ie Tōga*, I have come to summarise is not just about reviving a sacred tradition, but establishing the importance and wellbeing of this fine art.

**3.6 Traditional knowledge: Lalava and Lalaga**

*Lalava* and *Lalaga* are male and female art forms respectively. *Lalava* is the lashing done by a skilled male, when binding together a fale, a canoe, tools, etc.; and *Lalaga* is the weaving done by women, in the form of *‘Ie Tōga*. The theoretical framework of both *Lalava* and *Lalaga* is the core strengthening within the objects or structure they compose. They formulate a conception of both male and female, and the importance that each role has in the *aiga*. In this section, I investigate the strengths and weaknesses of both traditional knowledges, and relevancy to the methodology and practice of design.

**Lalava**

In the exploration of these knowledges, *Lalava* is a useful metaphor. *Lalava* is about joining and binding material together. Another intention of this technique, according to Tohi (2006), is to create distinct geometric patterns that once were a well-established part of life within Pacific culture. *Lalava* patterns advocated balance in daily living and were metaphorical and physical ties to cultural knowledge.

In the work of Tongan artist and *Tufunga Lalava* (lashing expert), Filipe Tohi, *Lalava* expresses his desire within his work to construct and deconstruct. He writes: “I see everything around me as pattern, structures capable of being broken down and it makes me think about the illusion of things” (Tohi, 2006, para1). Sue Gardiner (2006) discusses how Tohi’s work of *Lalava* is based on the building up of patterns, lines, and shapes. These layers evoke associations with genealogies and reflect spiritual, historical, social, and psychological links.

Running strongly throughout the practice of lalava, and reflected in Tohi’s work as well, is the theme of intersection between traditional practices and contemporary abstraction.

Moving back and forth and in and out of pattern, he deconstructs the spaces and lines, paring back the components to seek the minimal (Gardiner, 2006, p. 53).

Tongan artist Semisi Potauaine also gave me an opening to advance my reading of *Vā*, and thereby my methodology. Potauaine’s practical work from his thesis Tectonic of the fale: four dimensional, three divisional, is based on highly elaborate and complex geometric kupesi derived from customary Tongan tufunga Lalava (lashing experts) art. Potauaine states *Lalava* is the “manifestation of drawing and making” (personal communication, March 22, 2010). The commonly used colours in his work, red and black, are culturally and philosophically developed in customary Pacific material arts, such as tattooing, bark-cloth-making, mat-weaving and pottery and, of course, *Lalava*. In considering the information provided by Potauaine, I realised that his expertise in *Lalava* had potential regarding the binding of the directional lines in the mapping process. (See section 4.5 in Methodology)

The image in Figure 1, reinterpreted by Filipe Tohi’s sculpture, expresses the physical manifestation of *Lalava*. There are six main areas represented:

- 1 *aiga* (family)
- 2 *tautala* Samoa (Samoan language)
- 3 *gafa* (genealogies)
- 4 *matai* (chiefly system)
- 5 *lotu* (church)
- 6 *fa’alavelave* (ceremonial and other family obligations).

The interconnection of the physical lines in *LalaVA* reinforces aspects of connection and belonging to fa’asamoa. Like Tohi’s work, they make physical links with one another, and are inter-dependent on each other. No representation is above the other, as they are all equal, and each needs its length to sustain a coherent system. They formulate a cross-over bond, overlaying each other. This repetitive action represents “moving back and forth and in and out”(Gardiner, 2006, p. 53), the constant negotiation and re-negotiation of space; the *Vā*. The underlying patterns are the relations that are not seen but are still present; they to sustain the overall structure and form the bases of the psychological links. This framework model I have designed is derived from the concept of *fa’aSamoa*, and is essential to Samoan identity.

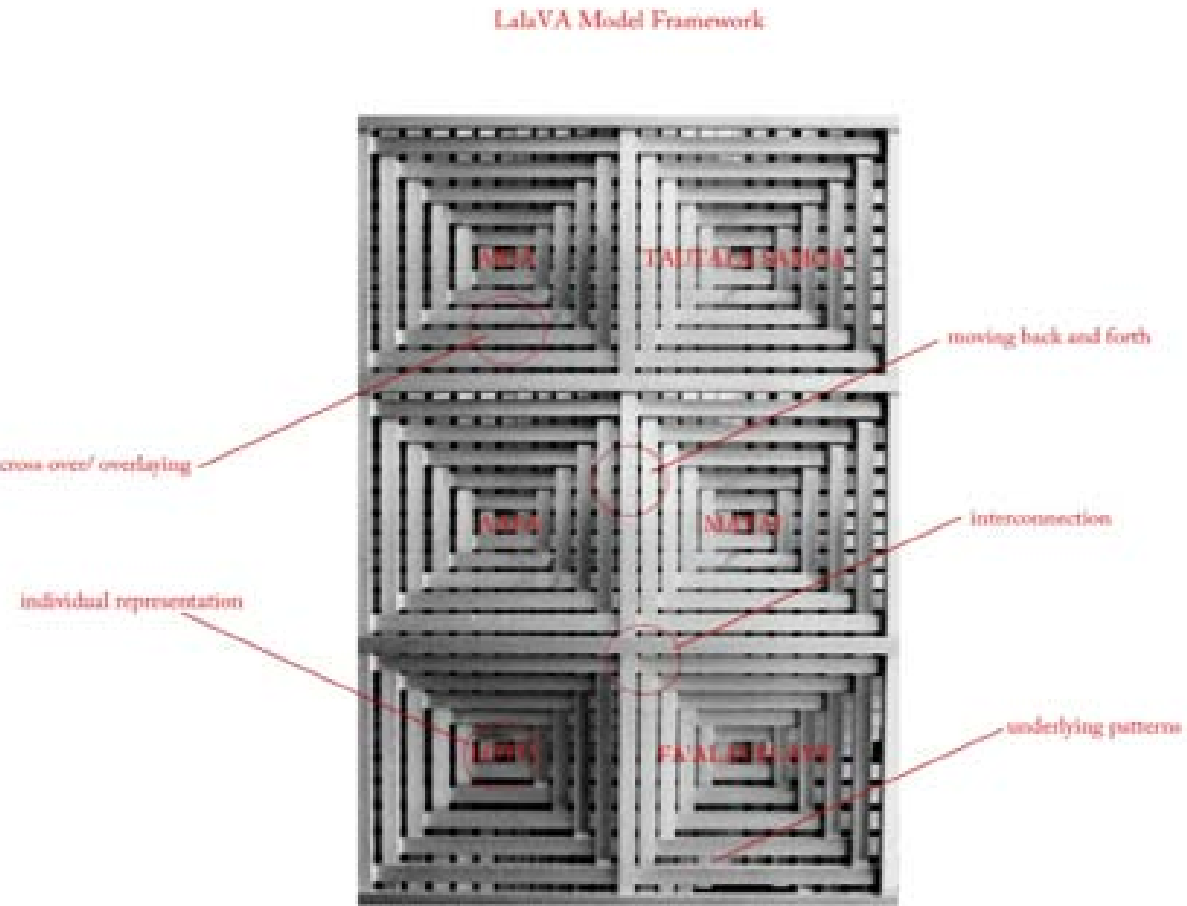


Figure 1: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). *LalaVA Model Framework*.

### Lalaga

*Lalaga* is the second metaphor I use in developing my methodology. *Lalaga* is the Samoan term for the act of weaving or plaiting. *Lalaga* – unlike *Lalava* – is a pattern ‘technique’ used to form goods (e.g. *‘Ie tōga*, mats, baskets, hats, thatching for houses, etc.). *Lalaga*, I found, is the balance to *Lalava*; it is a technique done by women, which is equally skilful in the craft of pattern.

In the past, *‘Ie Tōga* had a texture like silky linen. They were made from a fine grade of pandanus leaves, dried, scraped, split into strips, baked, separated into layers, soaked in the sea, sun-dried, split into fine threads, and finally hand plaited into a cloth of about one by two metres (Schoeffel, 1999). As Schoeffel explains, the technique of *Lalaga* does not only refer to the weave (plaiting), but includes the many processes executed prior.

There are many meanings to the word weave and, for my project, I aspire to *Lalaga*, to interlock the threads of meaning and the threads of *Vā* relations active within a community. Holding on to the significance of *Lalava* and its ties to *Fa‘asamoa*; *Lalaga* is essential to Samoan identity. The methodological processes of both traditional knowledges’ can contribute to an epistemology for my Samoan diasporic community project.

### 3.7 Display: Exhibition and collections

My project began in the summer holiday with work as a research assistant to collect and collate all information available from Archives New Zealand concerning three Samoan fale that were exhibited in the USA (Chicago: World’s Columbian Exposition, 1893), UK (London: British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, 1924) and New Zealand (Wellington: New Zealand Centennial Exhibition, 1940). This was a great starting point, as it got me thinking critically about the concept of exhibition and the many forms of display, specifically concerning Samoa. Never had it occurred to me before how easily mis-representation occurred in the islands and how a cultural form of knowledge could be mis-understood.

Timothy Mitchell writes of the miss-read representation of oriental exhibition in his article “Orientalism and the Exhibitionary order”, he looks at the Arabic accounts of the modern West and their encounters with exhibition and display. Mitchell writes of four members from the Egyptian delegation, and their disturbed feelings with the Egyptian exhibit that had been built by the French in Paris; from the fifty imported donkeys to the colour painted on buildings made to look dirty. Mitchell emphasises the world-as-exhibition a ‘machinery of representation’, that what he found from the Arab accounts were not just exhibitions and representations of the world, but the world itself being ordered up as an endless exhibition. Mitchell not only describes the general outlook of how easily mis-representation occurred within Europe, but gave the perspectives of those Arabs.

It was equally important for me to realise that the display of Pacific items today has an impact amongst the Western communities. The much noted 1994 exhibition “Bottled Ocean”, curated by Jim Vivieaere in the Wellington city gallery, provided opportunities for exhibition to upcoming New Zealand Pacific artists. Curator Vivieaere commented, on this occasion and subsequently, that

while this challenge was attractive, he also felt the galleries only wanted Pacific artists. The work would be shown because Vivieaere felt obliged to show it, not because it would ever be acquired or displayed on other grounds. The flyer with the list of gallery events not only explained that the exhibition explored “‘Pacific Islandness’ in New Zealand” but that the installation design was “‘intended to distance the works from the viewer and in doing so raise questions about the general visibility of Pacific art” (Thomas, 1996, p. 343).

The point of the exhibition at its time was that Polynesian culture in New Zealand was mobile and expanding, and was ready to exhibit itself in complicated, critical, and reflective ways. As much as “Bottled Ocean” had to offer our Pacific art communities, a discussion with Albert Refiti led me to believe we are in a time now where items of Pacific display have earned their rights within the South Auckland diaspora; South Auckland communities are a high percentage of Pacific islanders, claiming their own identities and culture.

Pacific items of display have over time brought cultural significance and understandings to communities and the artist’s *aiga* (family). The display of *‘Ie Tōga* is not something I want to pervert or discompose for the viewer, rather I want to challenge and create responsive behaviour amongst a community, to activate the *Vā* connections.

In his article entitled “Museum Studies Now” Andrew McClellan (year) reports a study of publications about museums from between 2004 and 2006: Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago’s (2004) *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*; Bettina Messias Carbonnell’s (2004) *Museum Studies: An Anthology of Contexts*, and Sharon Macdonald’s (2006) *A Companion to Museum Studies*. These anthologies marked a coming of age of museum studies

and McClellan’s study shows that the 128 articles written within this time frame display the richness of scholarship across various disciplines, art history, history, sociology, and anthropology, and had “‘remarkably little overlap among the volumes” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). McClellan further comments that museum studies have emerged as a model of “‘interdisciplinarity and intellectual vitality” (McClellan, 2007, p. 566). His research led me to raise questions from the books as a whole about the field of museology today. First, there seems to be a lack of research being done in areas such as the Pacific for cultural awareness, and it is noticeable that the contributors are mostly university-based academics in the United Kingdom and North America. Does the majority of English-speaking authors reflect a westernised growth in the museum sector? The literature comes across as a heavily theoretical, and is aimed at an academic market, so it raises the question of how is this fed into the forms of display for Pacific items and where these Pacific items are displayed. I do not intend to market the display of *‘Ie Tōga* in a museum environment; however I do wish to draw from the literature an awareness of my audience and the community relations.

The Theoretical Frameworks section has been a fulfilling journey, investigating the knowledge’s of both western and Pacific theories have influenced my views within my methodological practice, and finding resolutions for design concepts. The relevant theories that I chose to pursue in the methodology are *Lalaga* and *Lalava*. Both *Lalaga* and *Lalava*, have been key themes that have the potential to tie together the philosophy of the *Vā* with the materiality of *‘Ie Tōga*, these of which I would like to explore further in the methodology.

## 4.0 Methodology

From the beginning, the need to understand existing forms of display in New Zealand based communities (specifically Diasporic Samoan and Pacific people living in South Auckland) was an important driver in the development of my methodology. Initially, this was with respect to exhibiting my own creative work. However, the need to understand subsequently related to central aspects of the design and organisation of an event entitled “Our Measina” (Our White Mats), a celebration of our most valued *‘Ie Tōga*. Considering forms of display was crucial, because the relationship between modes of observation and engagement of these communities with my exhibit (or, later, the exhibition of *‘Ie Tōga*) was an important factor that could determine success or failure of my design proposal. In my investigation of the potential of *Vā* relationships for the design of “Our Measina”, I surveyed and documented forms of display, from the past to the present. All forms of exhibition of Pacific items, and all ways in which they could be viewed, were principally included and seen as worthy of analysis. I mediated the shift between past and present through a reflection on the concept of *Lalava*: *Lalava* patterns are metaphorical and physical ties to cultural knowledge advocating balance (Tohi 2006). For my project, the balance of understanding past and present displays, and their sometimes conflicting aims, was important; it would help me select and develop appropriate modes of showing, learning from past Samoan exhibitions as well as present public museum exhibitions and displays by Pacific communities. At the same time, the potential of “stirring the *Vā*” as a driver for change remains an important concept.

#### 4.1 Archival research

Archival research was the starting point of this investigation. Its goal was to collect and collate all information available from New Zealand archives concerning three Samoan *fale* that were exhibited in the USA (Chicago: World’s Columbian Exposition, 1893), UK (London: British Empire Exhibition at Wembley, 1924) and New Zealand (Wellington: New Zealand Centennial Exhibition, 1940). The information was to be compiled in a database of written and visual documentation. From the documentation gathered, I found the visual images most informative, giving good insights into the forms of display. This form of knowledge critically challenged my perspective of how Samoan culture was viewed by others, from the 1890s to the 1920s. It also helped me appreciate the difficulties of space restrictions, the duration of travel, mis-readings and re-interpretations of items, and the role of displays generated from non-Samoan/cultural perspectives, which cater for the interests of visitors to international and national exhibitions.

Of the national and international exhibitions I researched in the Archives New Zealand, Wellington, the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago was by far the most difficult to gather and source information about. Harry. J. Moors, a Michigan born entrepreneur who resided in Samoa, set out from Apia to exhibit in the South Sea Islands part of the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. He wanted to represent a “Samoan Village” but his disloyalty to Malietoa (the then paramount chief of Samoa) led to Malietoa’s forbidding Samoans to associate with Moors. This meant his display would eventually be made up “mostly of half-castes (people of mixed Samoan and Papalagi descent) and other Pacific Islanders, with only a few full Samoans who had been spirited away (Salesa, 2005). Moors managed to take aboard a huge cargo of Samoan objects, including a seventy-foot canoe of modern design (a taumualua), several smaller watercraft, and three large houses (*fale*). It is here, with the three *fale*, that the information becomes blurred; two book sources claim that there were three *fale*, and one claims it was one “knock-down Samoan House” (Furnas, 1945). It is also still unclear whether one of the *fale* belonged to Mata’afa Iosefa, an exiled high chief of the Atua district, whom Moors befriended. Initially, I was so fascinated by Moors’ approach to display and authenticity that I intended to base my master’s thesis on the stories of his adventures.

CD 1: Contains the images taken from Archives New Zealand & Alexander Turnbull library. [photographic images]





Image 1: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). *New Zealand Section British Empire Exhibition Wembly London\_ 1924-1924*, retrieved 26/01/11, from Archives New Zealand. [photographic image]

Image 2: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). *Photographs of New Zealand Pavilion Photographs of Exhibits\_ 1925-1926*, retrieved 26/01/11, from Archives New Zealand. [photographic image]

Image 3: Kumar Simati, B. (2011) *British Exhibition 1924- Samoan exhibits \_1922-1926*, retrieved 26/01/11, from Archives New Zealand. [photographic image]

Mata’afa Iosefa turned out to have also played a role in the preparation for the British Empire Exhibition (B.E.E) at Wembley, 1924. From the communication between officials based in Britain, Samoa and New Zealand, held in the Archives, it appears that Mata’afa offered to build a *fale* for the New Zealand external affairs administrators who organised exhibits for the upcoming Empire Exhibition. He gathered 200 of his people as workers in Samoa and offered to erect it in Wembly. This offer was declined by the New Zealand colonial government, which had explicitly decided not to send any “Native troupes” to Wembley (Johnston, 1999, p. 150). Instead, an Englishman, Mr. H. Charles Reed, a trader married to Samoan chief’s daughter Masooi Reed, then erected the *fale* at Wembley – not unlike Moors at the Chicago Exposition. However, Reed altered the construction to some extent to fit it to a site that was shorter than anticipated. The Ministry of External affairs requested that the Samoan exhibits be returned to New Zealand after the British Empire Exhibition, later to be displayed at the Dunedin Exhibition. Delay in the *fale*’s disassembly by Reed, as well as a misunderstanding regarding a payment of £300 for the exhibits, meant the *fale*, at the time at least, remained the property of the British Administration.

A third exhibition I researched at the Archives NZ was the 1940 New Zealand Centennial Exhibition in Wellington. The documentation indicates that the *fale* exhibited in the Wellington Centennial arrived from Samoa by the ship Tofua. Along with the *fale* other Samoan exhibits arrived aboard ship, which were later to be displayed at several exhibitions to be held in New Zealand, namely in Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin as well as at the Hokitika Exhibition. Reading through the archives, I found it difficult to track the *fale*’s journey since then. However, there is a document to show that towards the end of the Hokitika exhibition, it was advised that the *fale* be exhibited in the Wellington Museum (image 4460). A search through Papers Past led me to a small extract from a newspaper article (15 May 1940) according to which the *fale* had been purchased by an Auckland by the name of Mr. H. J. Kelliher. Kelliher intended to re-erect it on the island of Puketutu, in the Manukau Harbour, then owned by him. To this day, the *fale* stands on the Kelliher Estate.



#### 4.2 Current museum displays

The Auckland War Memorial Museum was the beginning of my investigation for current displays of Samoan and Pacific items. What was most attractive at first sight was the Māori gallery filled with significant artefacts. The display was a coherent journey from the history of Māori culture to a live cultural performance. The Museum stores a generous collection of Samoan and Pacific artefacts. The individual Pacifica displays within the Auckland museum reflect the Pacific Island groups who live in Auckland and highlight different communities; objects such as tools and utensils for communal living, hunting, fishing and recreation to me failed to communicate their use and natural environment. The Pacific gallery, although generous in its volume, I felt lacked in emphasising a materiality the Pacific Islands project. The Auckland Museum states “Artefacts from Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, Kiribati, Niue, Cook Islands, Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea dominate the exhibition” (Auckland Museum, 2011), but in my opinion the displays also create clutter and a busy environment. Reflecting on the journey, I had to understand the many difficulties and restrictions curators must deal with when exhibiting such a large collection of Pacific items. I cannot fault the design concept, lighting, and craftsmanship of display units and as all these elements brought to life a some what imaginary voyage through the Pacific.







5



6











Te Papa is New Zealand's national museum, located in the capital city of Wellington; Te Papa is renowned for being bicultural, scholarly, innovative, and fun. The success of the Museum is built on the relationships and ability to represent the New Zealand community. The Te Papa Museum, I felt reflected a more urban view of Pacific items on display. A honest take of the diaspora Pacific youth, and there influence within the arts community through music, art and cultural festivals. Collage display units describe the colourful nature of Pacific communities in Aotearoa, and how they are very much integrated and interconnected with one another. Te Papa also has in storage some of Samoa's most prestigious *'Ie Toga*. These items, in storage, become lost and forgotten by the public, the relations symbolised in these objects no longer in social use, become dormant and worthless. "Museums are burdened with objects which do not fit and which therefore are rarely or never shown to the public" (Kirshenblatt- Gimblett, 2002, p. 60). Most museums are only able to exhibit a very small share of their holdings and in many cases not more than 10 per cent. To create an opening for these *'Ie Toga* to once again become items of display, is to reunite *Vā* relations within the community, their histories hold a sense of mana to these Samoan communities, they hold genealogies of ancestry which enable the diaspora to imbibe *fa'asamoa*.























16

Image 9-16: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). *Photographs of Te Papa New Zealand's national museum: Maori and Pacific collections(display units)*. [photographic images]

Reflecting on what I gathered as today's forms of Samoan/Pacific displays, it seems that Māori and Pacific curators have in-depth knowledge of the items they display, as they are working within the restrictions of galleries, institutes and museums. The items on display and in storage are well organised, categorised, described, and archived. However, while it is clear that these forms of display are aimed at education and tourism, Samoan and Pacific communities, I feel, are unconnected with these institutions. To them, the thought of museums archiving items such as *'Ie Tōga*, which hold significant relations within the Diaspora community, is unsettling. If *Lalava* is about balance and change, *Lalaga* is about tying these different entities together in various ways. In contrast to the disconnected views of knowledge commonly held within the walls of the Museum, my plan of intervention is a proposal that Pacific communities have access to archived *'Ie Tōga* and *Lalaga*. "Our Measina" aims to interlock the threads of meaning and the threads of *Vā* relations active within the Otara community (or communites). It will emphasise to the community each *'Ie's* importance and past significance to Samoan identity and *fa'asamoa* as people bring forth their own *'Ie Tōga* alongside 'Le Ageagea o Tumua' (see below).



#### 4.3 Participation and documentation

The Pacific arts community is very much alive in the Diaspora, each year celebrating Pacific culture and showcasing a range of crafts on display. From the Otara South Auckland markets to the Waitakere Pacific arts and community trusts, Pacific culture is alive and noticeable. Part of my methodology was to become involved with my surrounding communities and to participate in workshops throughout the year. My participation and documentation adopts the method of *Lalaga* because, “like [in] a fine mat being woven, the strands of Samoan history, *fa’asamoa* and Samoan contemporary livings, and their interaction with ‘others’ interconnect to inform Samoan identity” {Anae, 1998, p. 1}. Thus, with my involvement and accounts (interconnection) of the many events and activities (threads) offered for Pacifica peoples, this thesis acknowledges and connects to the larger body of the Samoan Diaspora (Samoan identity). I hope that the information collected here helps recognise the Samoan/Pacific communities in Aotearoa, and what they offer as Diaspora peoples.

This year, Colab, in conjunction with AUT University, invited Rosanna Raymond as their artist in residence. As part of the programme Raymond held a full day workshop, which I attended, using the AUT Manukau Campus Sculptures to investigate the tension between language, voice(s), the written word, the spoken word, the body and material objects. Rosanna Raymond is a woman of many talents, but advises she is first and foremost an artist. Raymond is a well-known figure in the New Zealand Pasifika movement, being an integral practitioner in performance, poetry and art installation and exhibition. The workshop was to create a series of performative interventions revealing, activating and interplaying with the hidden voices and stories imbued in the AUT Manukau Campus sculptures. Raymond held quick sessions where we were given a few minutes to describe the sculptures as a list of words. In relation to my practice as a designer it forced me to see beyond the physical object and read deeper into the meaning of form. The reading of patterns on the sculptures was a meaningful journey as it provoked feelings of my own identity. Raymond’s workshop covered creative expression using Pacific stories and cultural objects; I found a creativity voice within myself, being expressed through words of identity. This information feed directly into my introduction of this thesis, describing this project from my own perspective and identity as a half Samoan diaspora community member.



17



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Image 17-19: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). *Photographs of AUT University, Manukau campus sculpture*. [photographic images]



My next point of investigation was difficult in that I needed to figure out what was the physical spatial design of my proposal? Having done research on exhibition and displays it was appropriate to meet an architect behind these curated displays. Rick Pearson is an architect who specialises in Exhibition and Museum design; his expertises in this area gave me two important directions on how to begin the process of designing an exhibition. Pearson's first point of direction was beginning with knowing your material of display, knowledge of the material meant an awareness of how to spatially create an environment. Second was to document every item, and familiarise myself with the site of display, space restrictions, lighting, preservation of items and those not necessary to the display. I knew I wanted to display *'Ie Tōga* , but more specifically ones that were going to activate relations of location and identity, but those that were precious to Samoa were either held, or stored, in Te Papa, or by the government in Samoa. Pearson made me critically think about the traditional form of display, I constantly kept coming back to forms of display cabinets, lighting levels, space restrictions; but when I thought about my Samoan diaspora community would these traditional forms of display cater to there needs? What forms of display could actively communicate to this community? I didn't know an answer, however I knew the solution did not lie within the form of a museum or gallery exhibition.



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Image 20-22: Pearson, R. (2011). *Rick Pearson: Vaka Moana* [photographic images]



From the beginning of May to the end of June this year was the 2011 South Auckland Pacific Arts Summit, this forum provided an opportunity for my practice to expand further from the museums and exhibitions and become involved with visual arts, forums, and literature in the community.

Mamas and Museums was a workshop created by Kolokesa Māhina-Tuailooks as part of the 2011 South Auckland Pacific Arts Summit. The aim of the workshop was to create mutual understanding and foster better communication between the museums sector and Pacific women fine artists. Mamas from across New Zealand, representing a variety of island nations, were invited to exhibit their fine art and share a bit about the type and variety of art works they create and the materials and recourses they use. What was most interesting about Māhina-Tuailooks' workshop was the communication between the mamas and representatives from Te Papa museum and Auckland Museum who talked to us about the work they do with their respective Pacific collections. The conservation workshop sessions run by the conservators from both museums provided a safe place and mutual understanding for both parties; sustaining, distributing and contributing Pacific knowledge. What for me was most successful about this event was the safe environment Māhina-Tuailooks provided for the represented mamas. The Manukau Institute of Technology Arts Building in Otara was the site of display. This campus is situated in South Auckland which has a strong community of Pacific Island residents and artists. The site has a rich history and played a role of community based to the success of this workshop, this site is pursued further in my design practice.











29







Image 23-49: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). *Photographs of Mamas and Museums workshop*. [photographic images]



People from many Pacific nations grace Aotearoa/New Zealand with their rich cultures and spiritual traditions expressed in many ways including music, song, dance, prayer, language, visual art, performing arts and traditional arts. Involvement with the Pacific performance sector was the next stage in the methodology.

Pasifika is a Pacific Islands-themed festival held annually in Western Springs, Auckland City. The festival presents a wide variety of cultural experiences, including traditional Pacific cooking and performances from Samoa to the Māori of New Zealand.

A second event, the ASB festival, is South Auckland's most iconic Pacific event. The festival is a celebration of Māori and Pacific Island communities through cultural song, dance, speech and art. The festival every year brings healthy competition between secondary schools celebrating diversity and cultural identity.

Reflecting on my documentation of both festivals, Pasifika and Polyfest, I couldn't help but feel the pride gleam from the sea of brown faces. The festivals, I felt, gave the youth self-importance for who they are, but also acknowledged their peers and the relations they share as Pacific Diaspora. The community participation was incredibly supportive and accommodating of their cultures. The essence of what Pasifika and Polyfest provide is the wellbeing of cultural identity. For this very essence was what the method 'participation and documentation' planed to seek out. My involvement as a South Auckland resident, member of the Weymouth congregational church of Samoa, church youth participant, and recipient of the Manukau AUT scholarship, has privileged me to view our community from these different vantage points, and analyse the successes of each event. For my project I wanted to relate the qualities of a festival to manifest in the display for *'Ie Tōga*, qualities of an event, staged by a local community, which centres on and celebrates a unique aspect, *'Ie Tōga*.

I have always taken along or been a part in the social gatherings held for the Pacific communities in Auckland. To document the occasions this year has justified for the importance of cultural understandings for me, and the need to sustain these knowledges within the Diaspora community. The celebration of the ASB Polyfest, as well as the Pasifika festival, is hugely popular and brings forth Pacific communities. These events have inspired my project to take on the performative and participatory characteristics that both these events succeed through. It prevented me from focussing solely on the display of *'Ie Tōga*, and inspired me to embrace the performativity that activates *Vā* relations.

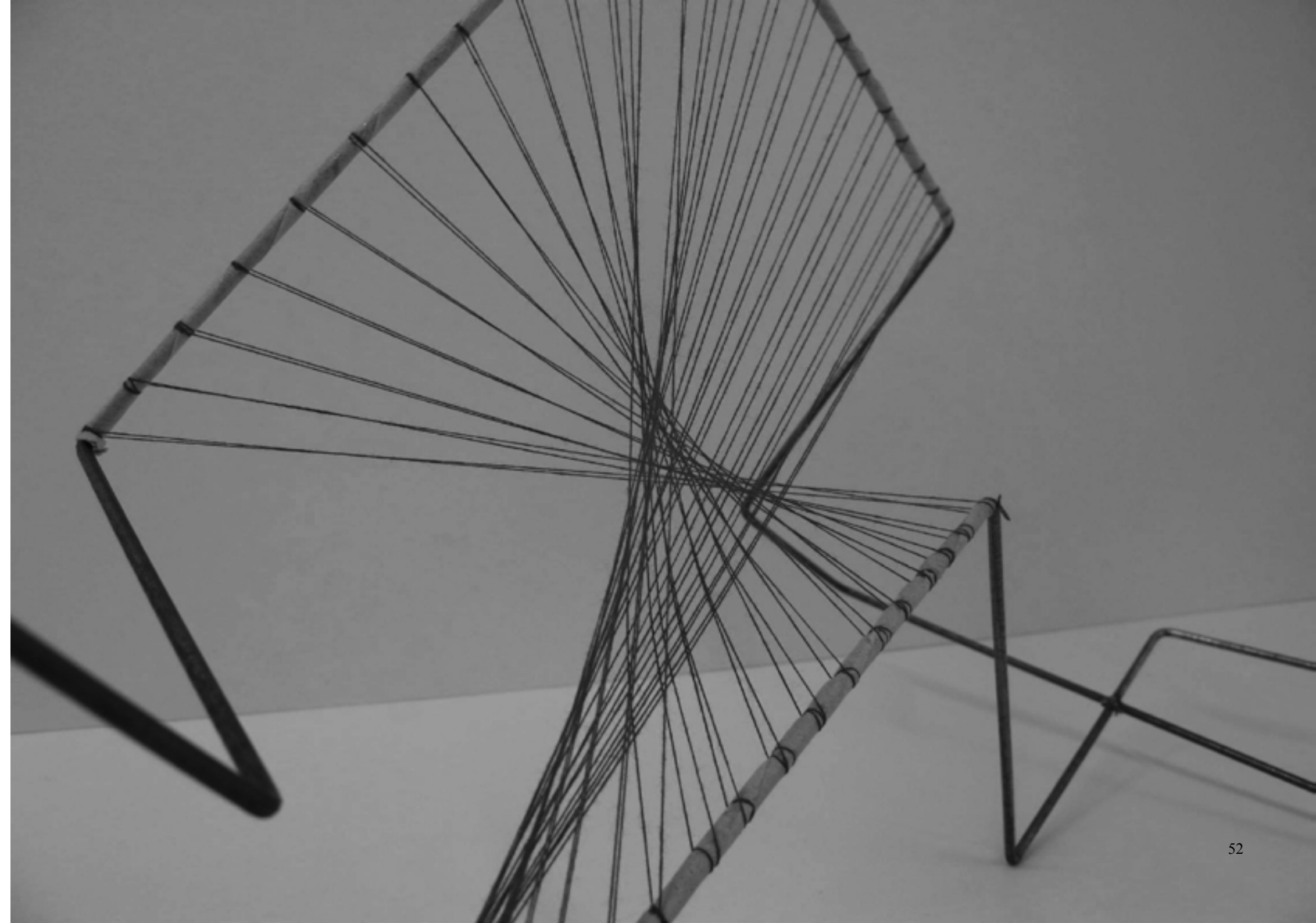
#### 4.4 Experimentation: Lalava & Lalaga

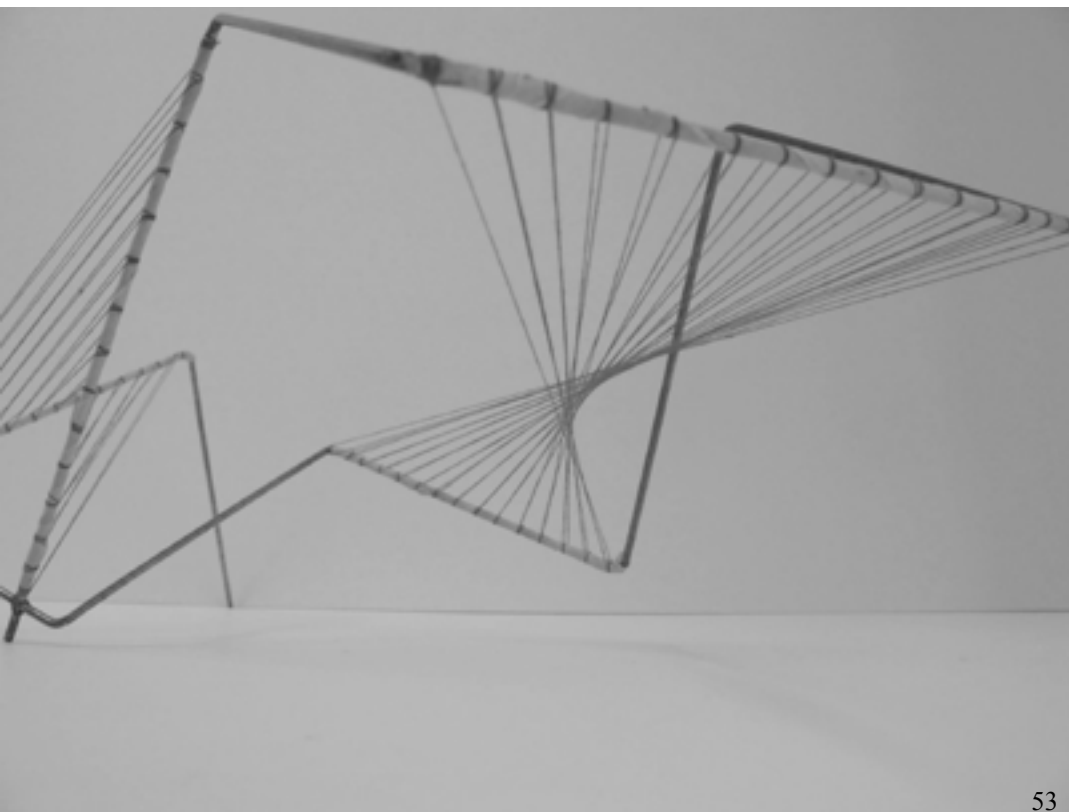
As stated in the Traditional knowledge: *Lalava & Lalaga* section, the information provided by Semisi Potauaine about *Lalava* had potential regarding the binding of directional lines in the mapping process. For this thesis, I initially reviewed the processes of my Honours thesis – specifically the use of materials that have no obvious relation to Pacific construction materials. Testing different variations of spatial relationships, I had begun to form my own language of *Lalava*. This year, I paid close attention to what happens in the process of binding together cotton and steel rods to produce spatial models. For example, I observed the properties of the materials (e.g., stability and fragility), how they react, and what the resulting spaces look and feel like.

I then took photos of the models created and adjusted light setting in Photoshop to explore the spatial properties of different configurations.

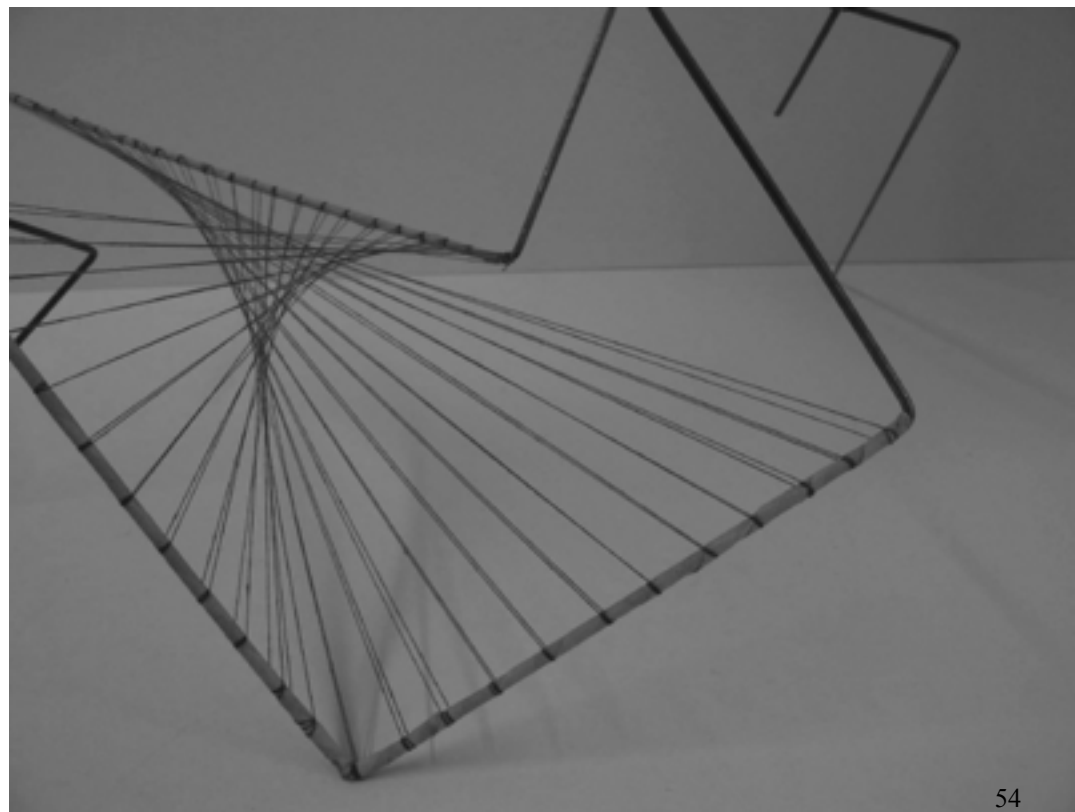
I then moved on to *Lalaga*, this time focusing of the *‘Ie Tōga*, finding spatial relations that pertained to the *‘Ie Tōga* by means of photography, scanning, and lighting.

Reflecting on both these processes, it was interesting to note the fragility and fluidity of the materials. The feedback I received from this made it apparent to me that it was difficult for others to associate relationships, and distinguish spaces with my experimentation of *Lalava & Lalaga*. I had to ask myself, what was the potential of *Vā* within this experimentation? The physical manifestation of both these metaphors was not leading me to a design proposal. I therefore decided to move away from the materials, and to engage with my community to find other means of using *Lalava & Lalaga* as spatial relationships within the *Vā*.

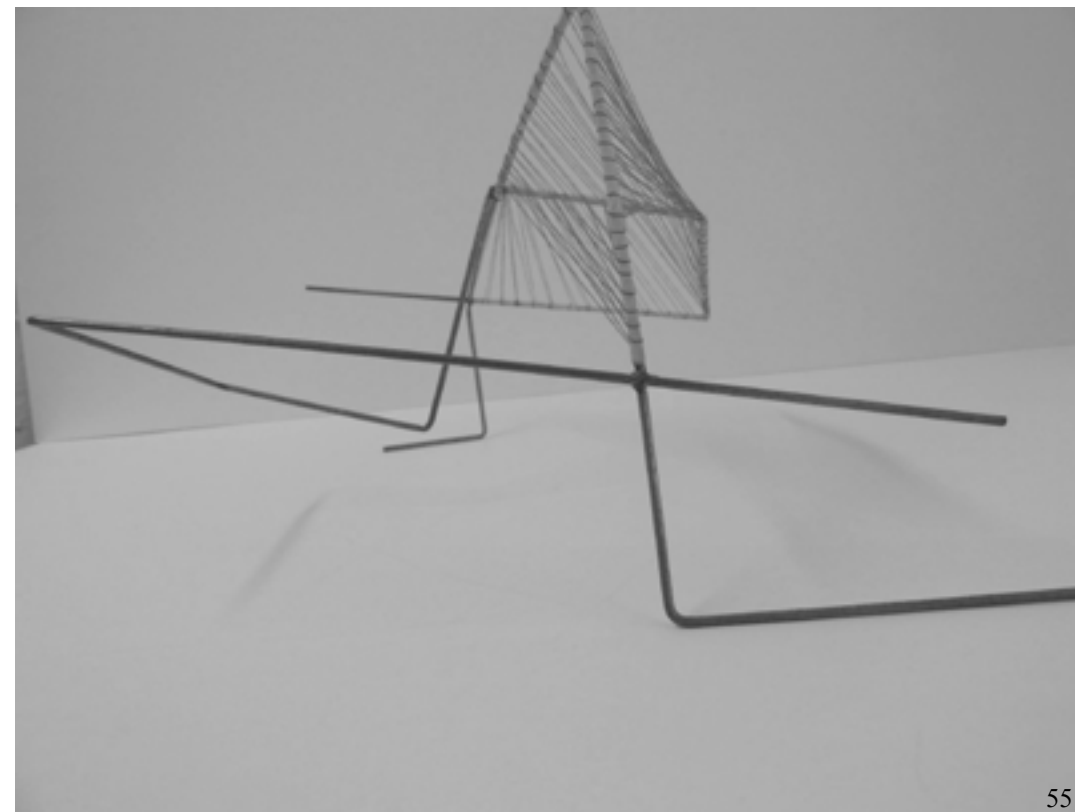




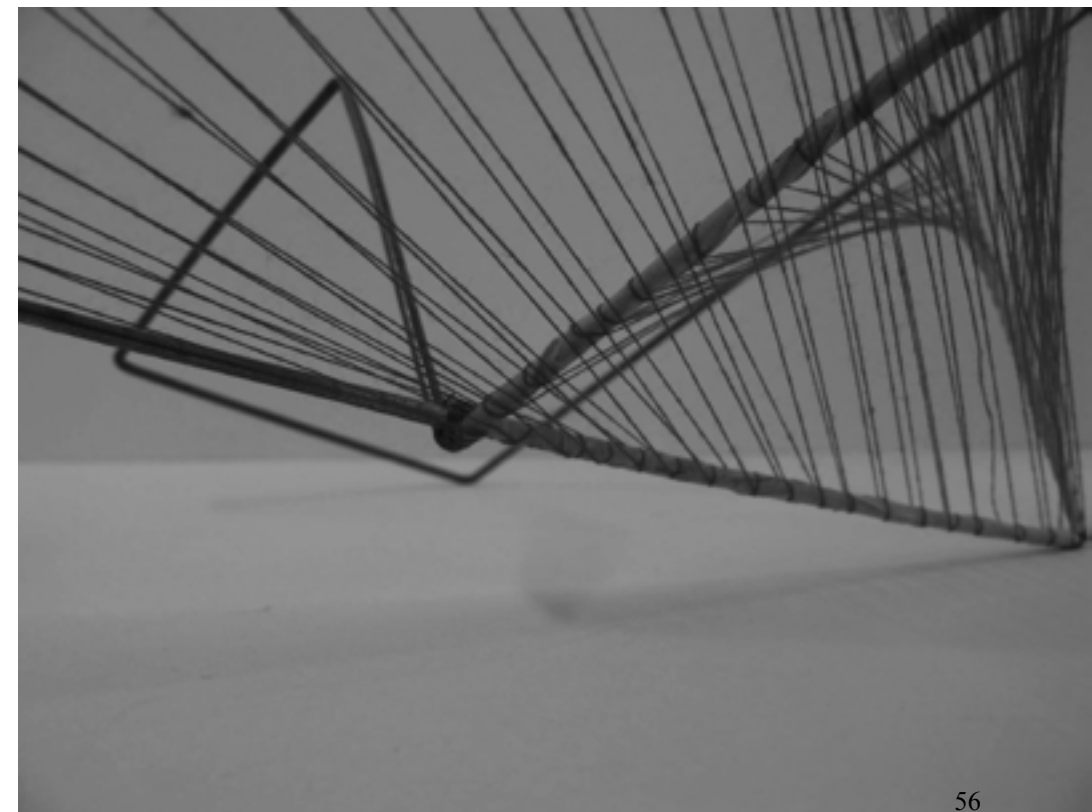
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Image 52-56: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). *Testing the qualities of Lalava*. [model: cotton, masking tape, steel rods- photographic images edited on Photoshop]







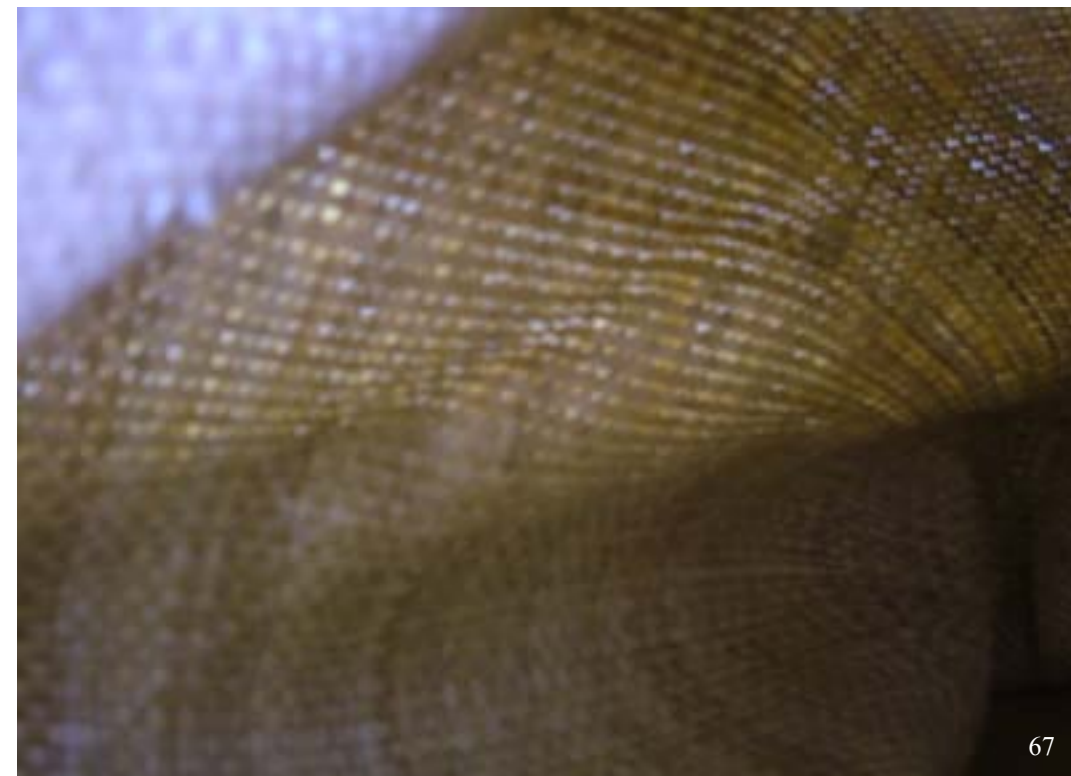
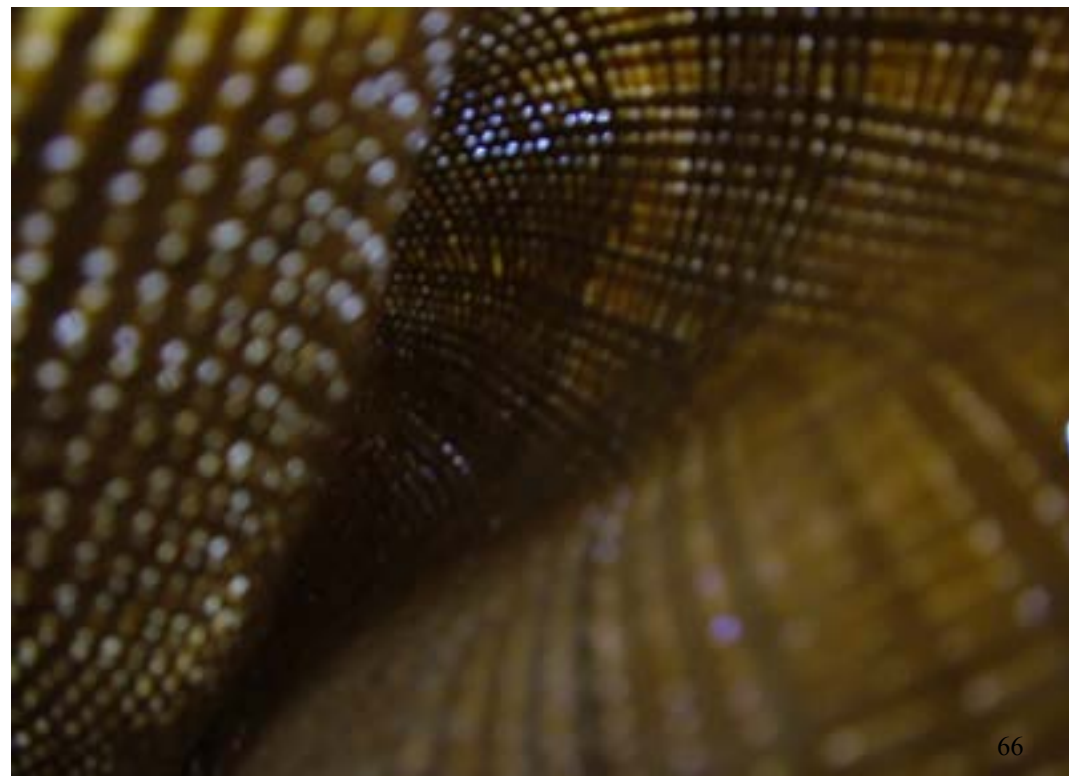


Image 57-68: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). *Testing the qualities of Lalaga*. [photographic images]

#### 4.5 Mapping: Manukau South Auckland community

The significance of location for my Diaspora community is crucial to the display of *'Ie Tōga*. Location of belonging; foreshadows our ancestors, location to Samoa/ villages, in relation to our own locations here in Aotearoa. Within this method of Mapping, *Lalava* is used as the visible lines that are drawn on site, *Lalaga* on the other hand is used as a metaphorical term of weaving and connecting the Samoan community to their *Vā* relations through the visible lines of *Lalava*.

My strategy of mapping, as a design tool, was informed by precedents in the work of Daniel Libeskind, particularly the Jewish Museum in Berlin, which I used as a case study for my Honours project. Libeskind's design involved a process of connecting and mapping historic events and locations of Jewish culture in Berlin. The resulting lines outline and structure the building. Libeskind also used the concepts of absence, emptiness, and the invisible signs of the disappearance of Jewish culture in the city. These notions had an affinity with the concepts of absence, diaspora and lines of location in my own project.



Image 69-71: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). *Mapping the location of the South Auckland community*. [Photoshop edit]

**4.5.1 Le Ageagea o Tumua**

In my own practice, the (*Lalava*) lines of location were used to physically mark the direction of *Vā* relations connected to the *‘Ie Tōga* ‘Le ageagea o Tumua’ 1800s. This *‘Ie Tōga* is the mat that the distinguished Tamasese family presented to New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark at Samoa’s 40th anniversary of independence in 2002.

At this occasion, Clark apologised for injustices during New Zealand’s administration of Samoa (1914–62). In 1918, New Zealand officials failed to quarantine a ship carrying the ‘Spanish flu’, and one fifth of the Samoan population died. In 1929, New Zealand police shot and killed 11 peaceful independence movement members who were marching in the capital city Apia. It shows the mat called Le Ageagea o Tumua (the substance of Tumua). This mat represents the legacies of 32 generations, including those of the Tamasese family. A leader of this family was killed in the 1929 incident. The gift of the mat to the New Zealand Prime Minister sent a message of love, death, and forgiveness between kin (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa, 2002).

I chose this particular mat because of the significant occasion it marked for New Zealand and Samoa. The *‘Ie Tōga* not only served as a gift of forgiveness but sustains a history of Samoans living in New Zealand. The relevance of ‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ within my project activates relations of the *Vā*, the knowledge pertained within the *‘Ie Tōga* belongs to the Samoan community, not to dwell on the past, but to remember the real meaning of *‘Ie Tōga* to pass down for future generations of Samoans and Samoan diaspora.

Further to this significant event is the history of Le Ageagea o Tumua, and the many genealogies and *Vā* relations pertained within it. The three *Vā* relations I chose to include within my project were the locations between Tonga, Samoa and New Zealand/ Wellington.

-King Tuitonga of Tonga gifted ‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ to the Tuiatua Leutele in Samoa

-‘Le Ageagea o Tumua’ previously stored in Mulinu’u ma Sepolata’emo, residence of Tuiatua

-Wellington Te Papa, current location of “Le Ageagea o Tumua’

These three significant events will be marked on the proposed site, according to their geographical location. In the mapping process, the lines start at communal spaces of Samoans in south Auckland. From here, the lines on the location map spread out to Wellington (the current location of Le Ageagea o Tumua), Samoa, and Tonga. The physical mapping of these directional lines onto the site not only connects each individual to the site, but revives the significance of Le Ageagea o Tumua to the community. The mapping shown in images 72-75 begins with a view of the overall context and then zooms in to the Otara site “Our Measina”.





Image 72-75: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). *Zoomed in series: Mapping the historic location of Le Ageagea o Tumua*. [Photoshop edit]



## 5.0 Design

The Vā, as the relational space I wanted to create through the display of Ie Tōga, relies on contextual qualities that are likely to foster communities and nurture fa’asamoa (Samoan ways) in the diaspora. To examine the associations and ancestral connections of ‘Ie Tōga (Samoan fine mats), it is important to explore the relationships created through their exchange. This exchange, and even the display of ‘Ie Tōga, can be problematic in some settings, when, for instance, audience access is restricted to that of the ‘arts community’, as in a white wall gallery or museum-like setting.

### 5.1 Site: Otara Markets

I want the display of ‘Ie Tōga to be aimed at the Samoan community, including all age groups, backgrounds, identities, and religion; I also aim for the project to call upon other Māori and Pacific communities to learn about Samoan culture, to take part in contributing to the knowledge of indigenous fine arts, and to celebrate the Vā relations of community well-being. To make visible the ‘Ie Tōga’s place in the Vā, the place and event has to be different from Western strategies of display, and draw upon our own indigenous community gatherings, in which they present to us our past, present, and future. Creating a space of display arising from the processes of Lalaga (weaving) and Lalava, “stirring the Vā” leads to an excitement and re-connecting of the relationships within diasporic space.

The Otara Market has been the centre of Pacific communities since the early 80s. Synthetically created as a cheap housing area in the 60s, Otara drew attention as Auckland’s most notorious community of Pacific Diaspora, for migrants in the low socio-economic groups (Auckland City Council, 2010). Years that followed led to high housing cost in Auckland’s central regions, pushing many Pacific residents out into South Auckland’s cheaper living areas and leading to ethnic clustering. Today’s township of Otara has a strong sense of South Auckland pride, saturating Otara’s formally fearful façade (which was the consequence of ethnic conflict, at times escalating into violence). In 2011, the South Auckland community gathers every Saturday morning at the Otara Market, filling the carpark with colourful Pacific culture, arts & craft, food & entertainment. This market is considered to be one of Manukau’s leading events, a fact which has made it attractive for my proposal to intervene with the display of ‘Ie Toga. Markets, festivals, and church gatherings are significant occasions and bring forth the display of ‘Ie Tōga, as ways to enrich Vā relations within the community. Conceived as part of the ASB Polyfest and Pasifika festival, my project embraces the performativity of ‘Ie Tōga in a festive display celebrating its significance to the Samoan diaspora community.

To really activate Vā relations, the display of ‘Ie Tōga had to be a part of the community’s social relations. During my observations at the Otara markets, I felt the social relations in the community were very active here: there are informal social gatherings of Chinese, but mostly social gatherings of Māori and Pacific people. The site provides an opening to all age groups, cultures, and communities.



Image 76: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). *Otara site map*, Retrieved 06/10/11, from <http://maps.auckland.govt.nz/Alggi/>













## 5.2 Intervention: Celebration of ‘Ie Toga- “Our Measina”

The proposed intervention stirs Vā relations because the display of ‘Ie Tōga no longer takes place on a separate and formal occasion, but it intervenes into the every-day. “Our Measina” locates ancestral connections and activates them through the display of ‘Ie Tōga – particularly the historically significant Le ageagea o Tumua. The function of the display enhances the Vā relations within the community by engaging people and ‘Ie Tōga; the Vā is acknowledged in the presence and participation of the community. On site, weavers display their fine art and pass on knowledge of ‘Ie Tōga, presenting new ways of understanding cultural identity. ‘Ie Tōga communicate in this event the importance of identity; how we have adapted as Diasporic communities, and how our cultural understandings, beliefs and family ties are still significant to us today. Vā relations are activated when each family presents and displays to the community their individual ‘Ie Tōga, precious to their aiga.

During presentation, ‘Ie Toga will be hand held or propped up by sticks to display the full adornment of the mat; in a parade like ceremony each individual or aiga will walk through the Otara market and display their most precious ‘Ie Toga. Like in a formal si’i, Samoan families will be invited to participate in the gathering of these historical ‘royal robes’. Otara’s Fresh gallery, located next to the market, will be the venue where the ‘Ie Tōga are gathered after the ceremony; each ‘Ie Tōga and owner/s will then be documented by photograph inside the Fresh gallery. The significance of this photo is to archive the history of the aiga and the ‘Ie Tōga (since, over time, these ‘Ie Tōga are passed on in fa‘alavelaves, through generations). The aim of the proposed festival is to gather a collection of photos over time, as a yearly festival of ‘Ie Toga takes place in the South Auckland community. The archived photos will trace the ‘Ie Tōga’s journeys through the community and the Vā relations they gather. Over time, as the collection grows, future generations in the South Auckland community will have these images to refer to. The temporary

form of the Vā as a space-between here is akin to the “dense interspersal of space and the event” typical of Oceanic architectures, as Amanda Yates suggests in *Oceanic Grounds* – a constellation less familiar “to the traditions of Western thought and architecture” (Yates, 2009, p. 12).

The proposed intervention will involve the diasporic Pacific communities by setting up stalls of Pacific foods, crafts, song and dances, languages, arts, and other life traditions. What each stall has in common is a display of ‘Ie Toga (or Pacific ceremonial mats, generally), together with information about their origins and the relationship with the current ‘Ie Toga’s (ceremonial mat’s) location. These inscriptions of location interconnect the links within the communities and stir the relations of belonging.

To activate these Vā connections is to actively sustain a Samoan or Pacific community. By proposing a space where Vā relations can occur, “Our Measina” provides a means of tracing and connecting the genealogies that derive from the many ‘Ie Tōga in South Auckland. By celebrating and sustaining the significance of ‘Ie Tōga, the festival will enrich the Auckland Samoan diasporic communities and create a place of identity away from Samoa, to provide an alternative environment for the unfolding of Fa‘asamoa.

Image 77-79: Kumar Simati, B. (2011). *Otara markets*. [photographic images]



## Mapping of ie togu "Le agegea o Tumua"

In his speech to Helen Clark, Faamatuainu Tala Mailei said in Samoan, and I translate:

Today, Prime Minister Helen Clark, you hear Lufilufi, Faletia and Salani chanting the marriage chants. Why? Because we are not here to mourn, we are here to celebrate the marriage of true minds. For many, many years, Lufilufi waited for this gesture. The words are simple and yet full of meaning: I am sorry. ... When we respond in love and forgiveness, there is a marriage of true minds, which places the message of Tamasese amongst the gods and the angels. Faamatuaimu concluded by saying: I present this fine mat to seal our marriage. The name of the fine mat is "Le agegea o Tumua". It was stored in "Maliniu ma Sepolata'emo", residence of the Tuiaua.

The Tuitoga had two sons. The elder named Tuitoga after his father, the younger, Lautivunia. Lautivunia had an affair with his older brother's wife. When the affair became known, the older brother was very angry. As is custom, the younger brother made a peace offering, which was cooked food, wrapped in tolo and fiso leaves. Tolo is sugar cane, fiso is the wild sugar cane. The leaves of the tolo and the fiso underline the message that is, "Please forgive me for we are brothers". The older brother was not placated and Lautivunia made another peace offering, which included the meat of bananas and the meat of the lei banana. The two varieties of bananas underline the message, "We are flesh and blood, surely you can find it in your heart to forgive me". The older brother was still not placated. Lautivunia decided that if his older brother did not accept the food offering, then he will offer his life. He dug a hole where his catamaran was housed, placed spears at the bottom of the hole face upwards and committed suicide by throwing himself on the spears. The force of this motion pushed the surrounding earth and sand to cover him.

When Lautivunia's disappearance was noticed, the father and the brother sent search parties to look for him. A search party reached Tuiatua Leutele in Samoa. Tuiatua Leutele said, "You need not have come so far. Lautivunia is in Tonga under his catamaran." The search party returned to Tonga and located the body of Lautivunia. The Tuitonga felt obligated and instructed the search party to return to Samoa with the finest of his fine mats, which he named "Le ageagea o Tumua" (the substance of Tumua) to reciprocate Tuiatua Leutele for the favour he had done him. As well, he recognised Tuiatua Leutele's prophetic powers by naming him Leutele Leite, that is, Leutele with the prophetic powers.

What is the relevance of this ritual and the name of the fine mat to Prime Minister Helen Clark's presentation of a wreath at Tamasese's grave? The story and the act were about kinship. It was about love, it was about death, it was about remorse and it was about forgiveness. We are poorer spiritually and intellectually if we are unaware of the meaning, nuance and metaphor in this ritual. (Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Efi, 2003)







- Food stalls
- Food and drinks
- Healthy cooking demonstrations

- Pacific Maatua (Pacific Arts and Craft) making
- Selling Pacific made goods
- Show and display of craft
- Demonstrations and lessons of how to make
- Mangere to Tapsi market

- Home Craft
- Jewellery & Accessories



- Pacific Maatua (Pacific Arts and Craft)



- Small Pacific Business Community
- Associations and organisations
- Banks and Building Societies
- Business Services/ Specialists
- Employment

- Tools, Hardware, Electronics & Home ware
- Clothing
- Health and Beauty



- La agropia e Tamae previously moved to "Maatua ma" Repetitive use, residents of the Tamae

- Damage of Tamae gifted "La agropia e Tamae" in Tamae Estate in Tamae

- Wellington to Papa, current location of La agropia e Tamae



- Pacific Farmers and growers of produce
- Farming and Agriculture
- Selling fresh produce

- Other Farmers and growers of produce
- Farming and Agriculture
- Selling fresh produce



- Indoor grass open space for families to gather and prepare for meals
- Tables and chairs provided
- Small Pacific Business Community
- Local businesses promoting their services and advice
- Associations and organisations
- Banks and Building Societies

- Home Craft

- Pacific Maatua (Pacific Arts and Craft) making
- Selling Pacific made goods
- Show and display of craft
- Demonstrations and lessons of how to make
- Mangere to Tapsi market

- Pacific street Food stalls - Food and drinks
- Healthy cooking demonstrations

- Sporting Community (clubs/teams)

- Fitness and recreation, signing up for community sport teams

- Small Pacific Business Community

- Business Services/ Specialists
- Employment
- Financial Services
- Import and Export
- Property
- Manufacturing
- Local industries



- Live cooking performance of traditional Maori Haka

- Tools, Hardware, Electronics & Home ware

- Fresh gallery Artist in residence Fani Fani's exhibition

- Po Uthi Power

- Large Margins for (Pacific Entertainment) - Local Maatua/ Banks

- providing entertainment, local speakers and Opening Welcome

- Academic Community (schools, universities, institutes)

- Auckland University of Technology & Massey Institute of Technology

- promoting university education amongst the community

- Entertainment parks

- Information on Pacific and community relationships

- Clothing



- Arts Community (Pacific Artists and Entertainment)

- Local art sale

- Local Pacific artists setting up a stall, selling art, and promoting their culture

- Local Maatua/ Banks providing entertainment



- Fresh gallery Artist in Residence: Romaine Raymond

- Clothing

- Pacific Farmers and growers of produce

- Farming and Agriculture

- Selling fresh produce

- Other Farmers and growers of produce

- Farming and Agriculture

- Selling fresh produce







Entrance zone

Food stalls

Public business stalls

Public museum

Main stage performance

Healthy cooking for communities

Fresh produce stalls

Public hand craft

Music & entertainment

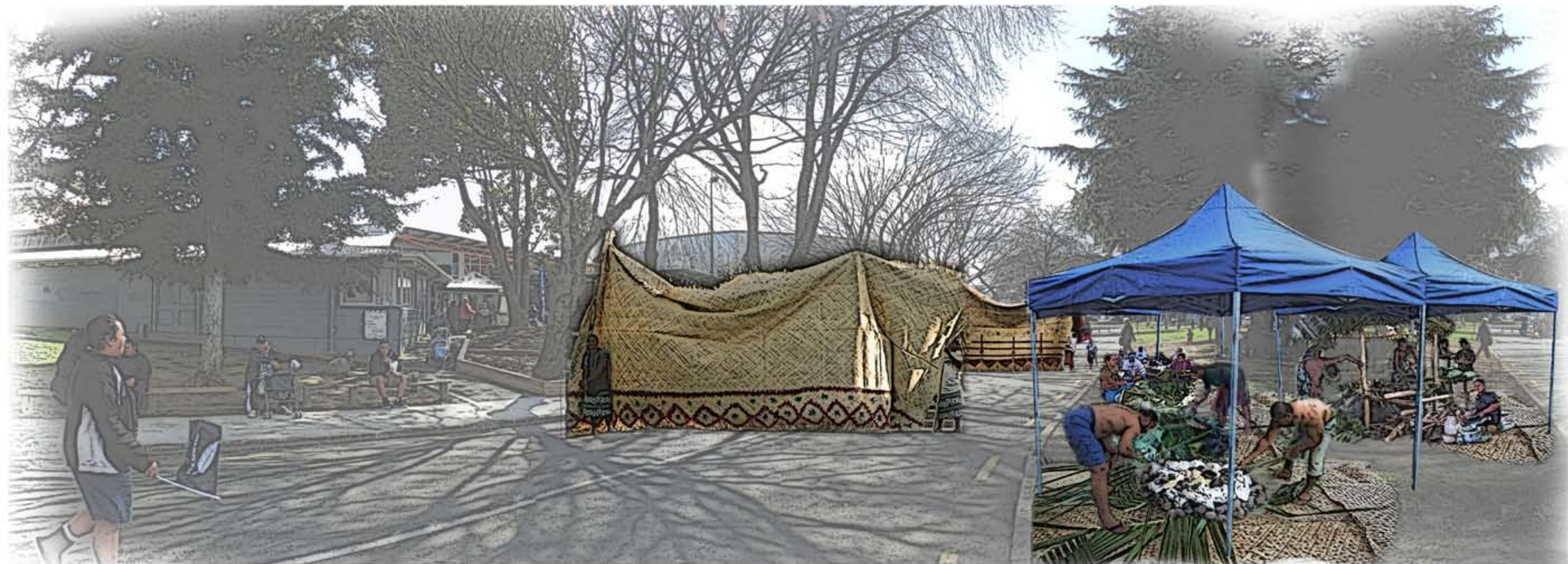
Clothing & accessories

Perspective 1 Otara site: Celebration of Te Tōgā 'Our Maori Story'



Perspective 2 Parade display of Te Tōgā





Perspective 31 Live cooking Performance (Samoa) (low)





Perspective 4 Otara indoor markets





Perspective 6 Otara Fresh gallery interior (photography session)





Perspective 5 Outdoor Pacific performances

5.3 Exhibition of “Our Measina”

For this practice-led Masters thesis, “Our Measina” was proposed in an exhibition comprising eight A1 size drawings and four video projections. Image 80 provides a floor-plan of the exhibition space.

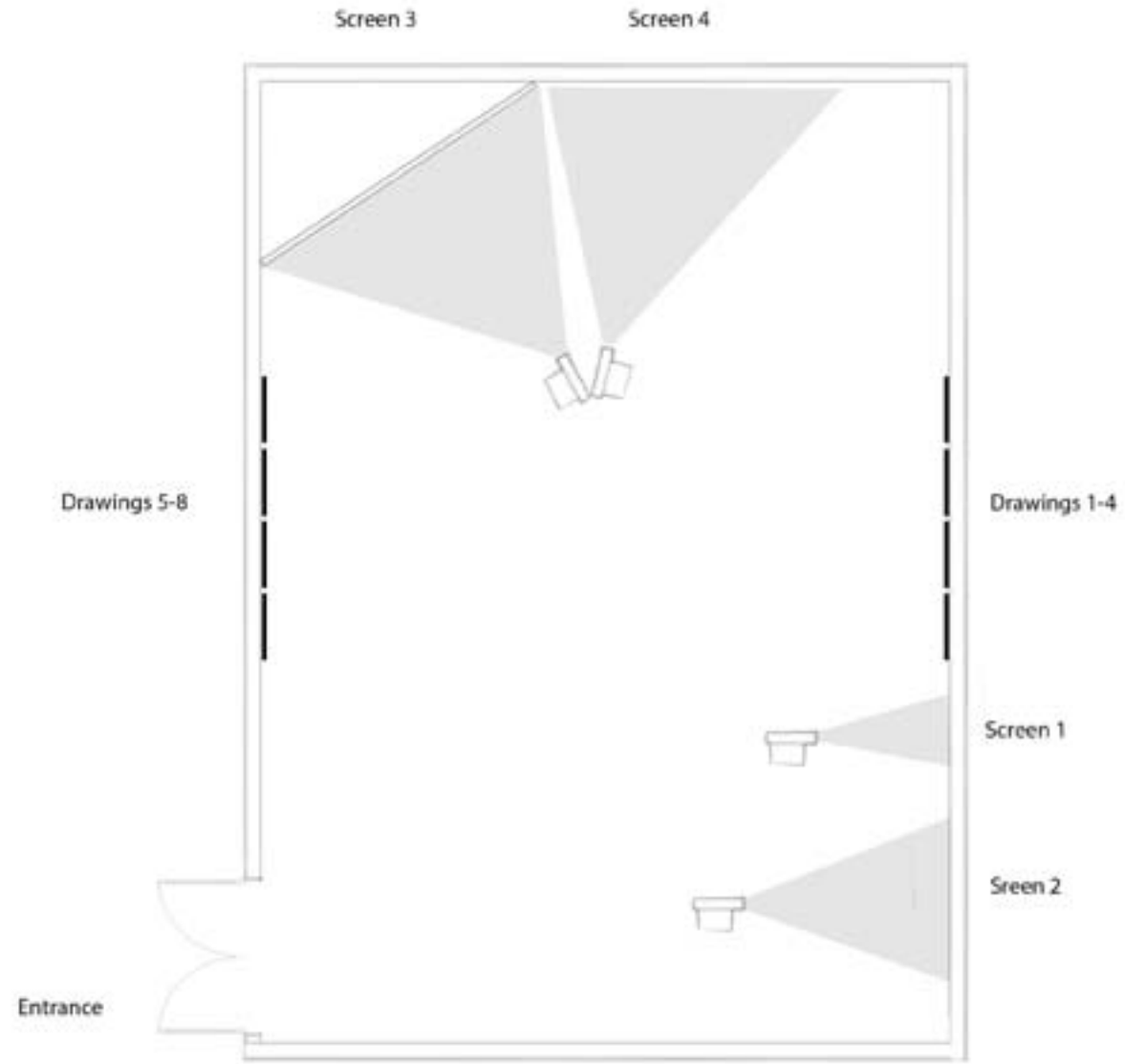
When the viewer entered the room, Screen 1 was the first point of contact with the exhibition. The projection showed an 8 minute video clip, posted on the internet by the Samoan Women in Business Developing Incorporation {Women in Business Developing Incorporated, 2010 #74}, which shows Samoan women weaving and preparing an ‘Ie Tōga. This short but detailed clip introduced the viewers to the work of ‘Ie Toga and its grass roots origins. The act of weaving in this introduction tells the story of ‘Ie Tōga and the many processes involved in preparing a fine mat; it symbolises the unity of people and their significance to Samoan culture.

Screen 2 showed an animated, time-sequenced floor-plan of the site and “Our Measina” event. The first scenes take place at 4am at the Otara car park site, when spaces are allocated, the last at 8pm for the closing of the event. This video animation provides detail and description of the whole event, from beginning to end. Understanding the sequence of events is important for the viewer in order to understand how the markets and celebration of ‘Ie Tōga are designed and curated for the community, and that everyone can take part and enjoy the occasion.

Screens 3 and 4 were deliberately placed in a corner to include the viewer in the projection space. The projection across both screens showed an animation of a busy corner at the Otara markets, a central point in the procession of families displaying their ‘Ie Tōga during the parade; the viewer watched them entering the projection space on the right screen and pass through to leave on the left screen. Standing in front of the projection, viewers would see their own shadow on the screen, as though they, too, were a part of the festival.

The drawings were visual descriptions of the festival to underpin the essence for the viewer. Each drawing exhibited a different scenario within the diverse settings of “Our Measina”, and described how both the markets (selling of goods) and the proposed festival would work hand in hand, overlapping one another and interrelating both themes. The drawings were important as they described what I envisaged for this festival, they detail the interaction of people and relations of the community.

Image 80: Kumar Simati, B. (2011).*Exhibition Floor plan*. [Photoshop edit]



Exhibition Space  
Scale 1:100



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9.0 Glossary

‘Aiga	family, related, home
Aotearoa	New Zealand
Fa’aipoipoga	weddings
Fa’alavelave	ceremonial and other family obligations
Fa’alupega	traditional words pertaining to each village
Fa’amatai	the ``faamatai`` or ``fa’amatai`` is the traditional indigenous form of local governance in the islands of Samoa in the South Pacific
Fa’aSamoa	‘the Samoan way of life’; Samoan Custom, Samoan language
Fa’asinomaga	identity
Folafolaga	formal acknowledgement of goods
Fono	a council meeting
Fonofale	meeting house
Gafa	genealogies
Gagana Samoa	Samoan language
‘Ia teu le vā’	cherish/nurse/care for the opening between or space between
‘Ie avaga	marriage



‘Ie sina	finley woven cloth of hibiscus fibre in which loose ends form a hanging surface on one side; worn by taipou or sao tamaitai; now very rare.(Fairbairn-Dunlop, 1998)	Si’i	ceremonial exchange of gifts
‘Ie tōga	finely woven mat of pandanus fibres bordered with red feathers. Varieties if ‘Ie tōga are named according to their size and quality, or for the purpose for which they are given. Usually called ‘fine mats’ in English, although they are not mats.	Tamafafine	descendants of women, daughter of a woman
‘Ie tu	fine mat worn by a bridegroom at the wedding	Tamatāne	descendants of a man
Ifoga	a ritual involving one party seeking forgiveness from another	Tangata	people, men, persons, human beings
Kupesi	stencils for tapa making	Tangata Whenua	New Zealand Maori
Lalaga	weaving	Tautala Samoa	Samoan language
Lalava	lashing; binding	Toga	female valuables
Lauga	traditional speeches	Tufunga lalava	lashing experts
Lotu	church	Tupu’aga	genealogical lineage
Maliu	funerals	Tatau	tattooing
Mana	power	Tufunga lalava	expert in lashing/ binding
Matai	an individual vested with an ancestral name	Vā	opening between or space between, to denote relationships
Measina	white mats	Vā o tagata	refers to the relationship space between people
Moana	sea, ocean, large lake	Vā feiloa’i	refers to the protocols of meeting
Oloa	male valuables	Vā fealofani	refers to the brotherly and sisterly love that people should show one another
Pākehā	non-indigenous New Zealanders	Vā fealoaloa’i	refers to the respectful space
Palagi	foreigner	Vā Tapua’I	refers to the worshipful space
		Whenua	land, country, ground



