

Conser.VĀ.tion | Acti.VĀ.tion

Museums, the body and Indigenous Moana art practice

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Abstract

This study explores the *performative body* based on the Samoan concept of *vā* (reciprocal and sustained relational space) to develop tools for current museum practice related to the Moana Pacific. It focuses particularly on the museum practice of *conservation* and puts Moana Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies at the centre of creative research. The study engages with how a Moana artist can collaborate with museum archives, to create new works from the collections and to keep warm and nurture the connections between communities and museum *measina* (treasure). The questions explored in the research begin with my entanglement as an artist and maker of works acquired by the museum, and the manner in which the museum operates in keeping those works alive and present within a network of *vā* relations.

The resulting uneasy narrative of exchanges and entanglements is the basis of this study. It addresses the following questions: First, how do museum professionals working with Moana artists and their material culture treat Indigenous modes of ‘thinking and being’? Second, how can the *mana* (prestige and authority) of Indigenous Moana arts and culture be recharged and experienced in contemporary museum and exhibition spaces? Third, how can the *mauli* (life force) of *measina* (treasures) be made present and be acknowledged in archives, and how might it be maintained? Finally, how can an embodied contemporary art and performance practice recharge *measina* and ensure that collections are not locked in the past?

By working through these questions, this creative practice-led study foregrounds Indigenous ways of being and knowing through the body to reinvigorate and revive museum-based Pacific collections. It deploys the Samoan concept of *vā* to explore the *Vā Body* as an activator of *mauli* and vessel for past, present, and future; to activate new forms and narratives in the museum; and to develop a methodology to inform and influence a museum *conser.VĀ.tion* ethic.

The study advances the notion that activating the *mauli* of *measina* in museum and archival spaces requires acknowledging the network of relations that artefacts are connected to. The *vā* and relational artefacts’ existence is channelled through *gafa* (genealogy) and many dimensional beings that each *measina* inhabits and carries, articulated as the *Vā Body*.

Attestation of authorship

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 mentioned), 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.

Rosanna Raymond 2021

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Lauga amata¹

I cry the ocean
I bleed the earth
I sleep with mountains
I greet you with my dead

May my waters greet your waters
May my mountains greet your mountains
May my house greet your house
May my people greet your people

Let us take a moment to acknowledge those who have passed, for we are the past, we are the present, we are the future.

Ka haere tātou whakamua
tihewa mauri ora
tuia te muka tangata i takea mai
Hawaiiki nui, Hawaiiki roa, Hawaiiki paomaomao
kukume nga herenga, whakauru nga taura
kukume nga herenga, whakauru nga taura
kotahi te wairua e
haumi e hui e taiki e

Let us progress forward
Let there be life
Bind the fibres of man and women together
These originate from Hawaiiki nui, Hawaiiki roa, Hawaiiki pamaomao
Pull the ropes, join them
Pull the ropes, join them
It is done²

¹ The opening speech in Samoan that lays out the mat and opens a space for the prose of the world.

² *Ka Haere Tātou* was composed and gifted to the Pacific Sisters by Paitangi Ostick at my request in honour of the inauguration of the Nui Sister-Eyekonik, Mangere Arts Centre, 2012.



Fig. 1 *La'a La'a Luga le Fanua o le Mata (A Look through My Eyelands)*. Drawing on photo: Rosanna Raymond 1997. Auckland Art Gallery Collection.

To Chase A Tuna

*To chase a tuna to
Sasina
Savaii
Samoa*

*In a pond more costly to women I walked as Sina, salt not battered awash in deep
water pond, spring into life, refreshed, revitalised, realised, attitudinising*

*I was going with the flow with my bros' in a land, fa-fa away, when a sudden,
reflection, direction, diversion, excursion, emersion, slipped through time and space
offering protection as we just landed lactating lava lavaciously in lalolagi*

*Grounded sitting with mountains, head in the sky, getting the massage with hands on
assimilation, migration, integration, instigation*

Eyes thick with vision, decisions, descriptions,

Choking on lava

Good reef we pierced the sky, departed divine inspired by my Tūrangawaewae

*And in the lay of the land... lies, a plan plain. To my mother land – the far north land, to
my father less land, where burnt and bleeding coconuts, soak the sky, (there we cried,
my sisters and I) to my homeland, Auckland, Tamaki-ma-kau-rau, Te Henga, I resided.*

*Where west coasting with Kupe the connector, the shared ancestor gives direct line, to
my p.i's, reprazent and wreckognise, as I stand in admiration and appreciations for the
inspirational, affirmation, imagination, creations, transformations... sensational*

*Here I stand Full Tusk Maiden Aotearoa... kssss aue aue he
Full moons in my horizons, wandering clouds passing by, east to west with soft caress,
stained rosy, steeling, the sea shines*

*Dusky softly I have spoken, as in two the night my home works, as reflective,
subjective, objective, situations are in operation, too much moon shinning, as the sliver
delivers...*

*Deep come the dark, colding
longing the long the longest
the stars shine*

*Breathed I have bled, when the moon drops past my pants, I look at her in the eye,
golden, slippering, it dropped into my mouth, dripping with fooled mooned horizons*

*Be aware, urban in fusion, do not be confused by this unison, a class 'a' injection,
fraction, reaction, orator, orientator, defining, fortification, exploration, explanation,
feet firm, mat laden. This is where my eyes doth landed, surrounded by eyeland cult'ya*

This opening poem is the genesis of my journey into vā (time-space), the beginning of my urban cosmology, a journey to unfold an inner understanding of vā. *To Chase a Tuna* was written as part of the handover ceremony (or d'acti.VĀ.tion) for *La'a La'a Luga le Fanua o le Mata (A Look through My Eyelands)* 1997 (Figure 1), now housed in the Auckland City Art Gallery.

Manavā loloto³ Introduction

Breathe with me, as I consider how might the vā become an embodied methodology to engender a Vā Body⁴ with which to revive Moana⁵ body adornments in museum collections. The study's initial questions involve my experience as a maker exploring how vā relations are re-enacted within museums and how Indigenous modes of 'thinking and being' are played out in these transactions and relationships. This articulation of vā is central to the Vā Body and its relationship to a *performativity* that I explore in the creative work of the study.

Albert Wendt's essay *Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body* (1999) is a seminal text in Pacific Studies in regard to engendering and developing a theory of vā outside traditional village polity in a cosmopolitan urban context.⁶ Wendt gave voice to the extent and potency of the vā, a context that is ever-present and yet seldom described or discussed within Samoa⁷ but requiring and acquiring a new life and interest in the diaspora.

While this essay helped me situate my research within the context of vā theory by bringing attention to a post-colonial body, Wendt did not connect the post-colonial body and the vā directly. Following Wendt's essay, though, Samoan choreographer Sālā Lemi Ponifasio suggested the concept of a 'Vā-Body' as "a conscious and responsible state of being" in a 2010 interview, but he did not elaborate further on the concept.⁸

Despite two decades of largely diaspora-based writing and thought on the vā⁹, little scholarship has been afforded to the Vā Body that Ponifasio had alluded to. The current study, therefore, could be considered the beginning to formally articulate what might be encapsulated in the following sentence: '*Vā needs a body: a physical presence that activates the vā; a performative body that attracts, sustains and maintains relationships*'.

Vā has been transforming and changing as it spreads throughout our transnational communities in Aotearoa NZ and the wider Pacific. Vā in new geographical settings begets new narratives and experiences, creating new Moana thought and ways of being. This space

³ Manavā loloto can be translated literally from Samoan to mean 'breathe deeply' to signal a long extended ancestral lifeworld.

⁴ First coined by Lemi Ponifasio in 2010 as Vā Body (see footnote 9).

⁵ Ka'ili, Tēvita O. *Marking Indigeneity: The Tongan Art of Sociospatial Relations*. University of Arizona Press, 2017.p 23.

⁶ Lana Lopesi has coined the term Moana Cosmopolitanism which aligns with developments related to urban Moana diaspora, see Tecun, Arcia. Wai? Indigenous Words and Ideas. Podcast audio. Moana Cosmopolitan with Lana Lopesi, 2020.

⁷ Tuagalu, I'uogafa. "Heuristics of the Vā." *AlterNative* Special Edition (2008).

⁸ The Scotsman, 2010. "Interview: Lemi Ponifasio, choreographer" *The Scotsman*. Accessed 18th Aug 2019. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/interview-lemi-ponifasio-choreographer-2468277>

⁹ Tavita Ka'ili, Ōkusitino Māhina, Ping-Ann Addo, ed. *Tā-Vā (Time-Space) Theory of Reality*. Vol. 40(1-2). Lāie: Pacific Studies (Special Issue), 2017.

is not a linear space, or indeed an empty one. The vā is an active space. It binds people and things together. It forms relationships and necessitates reciprocal obligations because it is activated by people and things.

My vā is embodied, multi-stranded, urban and transnational; it is fluid and genderless as a vessel for the ancestor, as it constantly folds time and spaces in artistic, institutional, civil and scholarly projects. I engage the vā to construct a Vā Body so I can challenge and negotiate a space inside the museum.

The study is set out in the following manner: Chapter 1) Tūlaga o Vae, sets the scene by contextualising my own personhood and how the body is an important agent in the present study laying out the constitution of a Vā Body. Chapter 2) Tino ō Faiā, explores Indigenous artists' interventions inside the museum and our entanglement within museum environments. Chapter 3) SaVĀging the Methodology, delineates the methods and methodologies at play in researching, writing and performing within the study. Chapter 4) Teuteu Le Vā, examines the ways in which vā as a concept has been important to my work and the work of others in exploring art and the body in Aotearoa NZ. Chapter 5) One In – One Out, explains the processes and ideas that form the current study and creative work, which will be explored further in the installation *One In – One Out* as the creative work for the thesis. Four Faiga or case studies are woven through the exegesis to personally reflect on past projects that I have carried out in museums and the development of the SaVĀge Methodology.

What is proposed here is an extension of the post-colonial body that Wendt had tautaued or signalled in *Tatauing the Postcolonial body*, a Vā Body that can disrupt colonial tropes by creating a physical presence inside the museum.¹⁰ Museum collections have their own mytho-poetic contexts that I want to elucidate in the study by using my own encounters, experiences and work within its confined spaces. My aim in these encounters has always been to create *niu*¹¹ mythologies that can supersede imperial and colonial narratives.

In undertaking this study, I realised that it is only just a scratch on the surface of what remains to be written about Moana concepts in contemporary art that are generated and cultivated in the diaspora. The study is made from warps and wefts of more than 30 years of experience in the creative arts to create a mat that attempts to cover more ground than may be possible within the format of an academic thesis and associated creative work. This work summarises and is a *stock take* of sorts of my involvement with the GLAM sector in

¹⁰ I include here the GLAM (galleries, libraries and museums) sector.

¹¹ Niu became a popular word play that many Pasifika artists used to express our newness or contemporary selves via a play on a 'nesian term niu, which is a coconut. Examples include exhibitions, publications, radio stations, writing collectives.

preparation for a future practice in which I hope to weave a mat fine enough to be a niu measina (cultural treasure) that can be fluttered like the fa'alelegapepe¹² of old.

¹² Fa'alelegapepe, literally the flight of the butterfly, is a Samoan term for the process of publicly showcasing finished fine mats the village women have made.

CHAPTER 1: TŪLAGA O VAE



Fig 2. *Hand Malu*, Rosanna Raymond, 2009, Photography Kerry Brown

Different Forests

Ua fui'fui fa'atasi, 'ae vao 'ese'ese (flock together from many different forests)

This Samoan *muagaga*¹³ (proverbial expression) was the inspiration for the *malu*¹⁴ tattoo on my right hand. The *malu* is not just an inked pattern, it is also the process that creates a shared space for genealogies, geographies, stories; my body intersecting with the *vā*, the space that connects, not just “the space in-between”.

The *tulafale* (orator) use this *muagaga* as a metaphor to describe an “assembly whose members have come from different villages and who later on will disperse again”.¹⁵ It is used here to position who I am in relationship to my Samoan heritage, to indicate that although I may fly with the flock, I am a slightly different bird and I dwell in several different

¹³ Literally *mua* means: ‘first, excellent’; and *gagana*: language or elevated speech. *Muagaga* or proverb saying were collected by Dr E Shultz Schultz in 1906. “Proverbial expressions of the Samoans.” *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* (1949): 139-184.

¹⁴ *Malu* is the female Samoan *tatatau* or tattoo signified by a diamond shaped pattern called *malu*, sometimes referred to as a *sumu* pattern.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

forests. The muagaga can be extended to also say that although I may be marred by intergenerational trauma – the effects of colonisation and the shame of not speaking the language of my Samoan Grandmother Malia Alai'asa – I have been a vocal and active member of a thriving artistic *urbanesian* village¹⁶ who have nourished one another as we have forged niu ways of being. This position is at once a strength and a weakness, an insider/outsider perspective within and upon the Moana arts and cultural movement, a reality that continually criticises and shapes who I am. This worldview literally gives body to my work and research, an *antibody* of sorts.

Antibody

My body (Samoan, Tuvaluan, Kiribati, French, Irish, Norwegian) has always been a contested space much like that which Albert Wendt referred to as a *blended* body. Wendt writes that a blended identity is a *body becoming*:

(D)efining itself, clearing a space for itself among and alongside other bodies... a body coming out of the Pacific, not a body being imposed on the Pacific. It is a blend, a new development, which I consider to be in heart, spirit and muscle, Pacific: a blend in which influences from outside (even the English Language) have been indigenised, absorbed in the image of the local and national, and in turn have altered the national and local.¹⁷

Therefore, much like a blended personhood and the antithesis of a coherent body, I am an introduced species descended from a multi-stranded genealogical legacy brought about by waves of migration to Aotearoa New Zealand from the Moana and Europe. Even at a young age my otherness became apparent and the term *afakasi*¹⁸ rang in my ears. I did not understand the implications at the time, but this was not going to be the last time my body would be constructed or couched in negativity by other people – young and old, and brown and white. Afakasi was never used by my Samoan or Palagi family; I wasn't half of anything to them.

I was brought up in Auckland in the 1970's, then at the age of 10, I found myself in the far north of England for two years, before moving back to Aotearoa at 12-years-old to spend

¹⁶ Courtney Sina Meredith has been credited as coining this phrase in 2010 and was one of the central themes to her play *Rushing Dolls*. Meredith describes Urbanesia as "a philosophical utopia founded especially by brown women, a ring of unseen leadership that had been looping invisibly for all time... I don't think Urbanesia is a stand-alone, I think you already figured this place out way before me – and you worked it, fashioned it from earth and ideas, with your bare hands. I see Urbanesia now everywhere on the internet lol. It belongs to the community now". Personal communication 10th Dec 2020

¹⁷ Wendt, Albert. "Tatauing the Post-Colonial Body." Afterword in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and Identity in the New Pacific*, edited by Rob Wilson Vilsoni Hereniko, 399–412. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

¹⁸ Afakasi is 'half-caste' in Samoan.

my adolescence in Christchurch. The term afakasi was then replaced by the term half-caste, as I lived in a predominantly European community. That adolescent body had seen and lived in many homes and schools,¹⁹ shapeshifting into a rebellious and defiant teenager. It is out of these fragments that I claim this personhood as being an antibody.

Anybody

A new body was about to (con)form. During the 1980's, my mother sent the defiant body to a modelling course. That body became a commodity to be displayed, used as a coat hanger to sell clothing, cars, and the odd toaster. It also moved again as I found myself in Italy and Germany and Australia. During my years in the fashion industry, my body was measured in ways that I had never experienced before. The body had become individualised and commodified, an object of desire, sexualised, gentrified, still considered an-other but not connected to any of the other others culturally. I missed my homelands and left Europe, moving back to Aotearoa NZ.

Nobody

Walking down the streets of the Auckland CBD at the start of 1990's, I found myself surrounded by 'nesian²⁰ bodies. Since returning home I had reconnected with my Samoan family, but I was very different, maybe a bit too different. Again, my body was scrutinised but for very different reasons than my age or my weight or how good I looked in the latest fashion. This body did not align to the social norms of a now very large Pacific Island community.

Embody

In 2017, Damon Salesa noted that, "Dramatic changes have been happening within the Pacific communities... the most significant is the generational change that has emerged between those born in the other Pacific islands and their children born here." As a community, we are a living reminder of New Zealand's colonial past.²¹ In the 1990s, these embodied histories and futures were just starting to be revealed, especially those stories of we who had been born in Aotearoa NZ. We were becoming more vocal, finding ways to tell our stories using the arts as a platform to *talk back* to over 100 years of colonisation and evangelism under a Western paradigm. We were finding ways to define ourselves outside of the Pacific homeland. Yet we were still outsiders, foreign to our parents' homelands, and foreigners in Aotearoa NZ. This is enshrined in law by the bi-cultural arrangement between

¹⁹ I have 14 school reports, but they are from 8 different schools before the age of 12.

²⁰ I started using this term as a way to disrupt the term Polynesian after attending: *Pacifica 7 poets from Islands the Pacific*, at the Southbank Centre in London in 2012 where I experienced Teresia Teaiwa's poem *I am*. This was a precursor to reimagining the Pacific and the boundaries that had been constructed by Western explorers and map makers.

²¹ Salesa, Damon. *Island Time: New Zealand's Pacific Futures*. BWB Texts. Wellington, New Zealand: Bridget Williams Books Limited, 2017. p14.

Māori and the Crown via the Treaty of Waitangi, which does not acknowledge in law the ancestral links and connections that Moana people already have with tangata whenua (people of the land).

It was against this backdrop that I became a member of the Pacific Sisters, a multi-cultural collective of artists, performers and cultural practitioners. We were re-defining ourselves as a Pacific Island culture developed within New Zealand. The Pacific Sisters were part of the 'niu wave' alongside other artists, writers, musicians, fashion designers, and theatre practitioners, demanding a presence in the urban landscape of Aotearoa. Art historian Karen Stevenson, who was present throughout these developments observed that, "The shift from the island to the urban was complex. As New Zealand born Pacific Islanders embraced the notion of Pasifika (a self-imposed label that fused their island heritage and their urban reality), they became more comfortable in their roles as urban Polynesians".²² Urban Pasifika²³ was coined to describe this movement. We had arrived.

Working with the Pacific Sisters allowed me to develop my embodied practice. I learnt how to use my hands as a maker, fusing traditional techniques, oral histories, and genealogies from the Pacific alongside modern materials; we personified our creations as we told the stories of our pre-contact past. The Pacific Sisters allowed me to manifest a space where my ancient self and my modern self could embrace and engage with each other. We were not interested in replicating the past but in creating a space where we could add to the dynamic legacy of our cultural heritage.

Disembody

At the end of 1999, I relocated again, finding myself in London with a young family in the heart of the Empire that had colonised Aotearoa NZ, affecting much of the Moana. I began establishing dialogues with museums and High Education Institutions, focusing on the issues of Pacific modernity challenging the many tropes of the past that remain deeply embedded in the way that these institutions still see and perceive our entangled histories.²⁴ This was not my natural environment, but it had a profound effect on me professionally and culturally. By the end of 2014, I returned to Aotearoa NZ, with a broader experience and a global art practice.

²² Stevenson, Karen. *The Frangipani Is Dead: Contemporary Pacific Art in New Zealand*. Wellington: Huia Publishers, 2008, p26.

²³ In 1993 Niuean musician and producer Phill Fuemana created the South Auckland based music label Urban Pasifika Records – Pioneers of a Pacifican Frontier. See Zemke-White, Kirsten. "NESIAN STYLES (RE) PRESENT R 'N'B: THE APPROPRIATION, TRANSFORMATION AND REALIZATION OF CONTEMPORARY R'N'B WITH HIP HOP BY URBAN PASIFIKA GROUPS IN AOTEAROA." *Sites: a journal of social anthropology and cultural studies* 2, no. 1, 2005: 94-123. By 1994, the term was being used by many Pasifika artists in the creative industries, especially art and music.

²⁴ Salesa, Damon. *Island Time: New Zealand's Pacific Futures*. Vol. 64. Bridget Williams Books, 2017.

During my time in the UK, I was involved in a range of major museum projects that were Moana focused.²⁵ My roles included curator, researcher, performer, artist, lecturer, workshop leader and member of the large and thriving UK-based Polynesian community groups Ngāti Rānana, Beats of Polynesia and the Gafa Arts Collective. These roles were mainly at the invitation of European museums, but sometimes uninvited interventions were necessary. Some of these interventions were as simple as a touch, a request to view or research a particular collection, rewriting a label, renaming the caption with Indigenous indexes or connecting our community with the museum. Some interventions were bolder, using the presence of my body to reclaim things and people erased (often my own²⁶) to expose the layers of epistemological violence found deeply embedded in the museum power structures.

Coembody²⁷

All these different bodies rendered who and how I am today. On reflection, I can see why I have augmented my body as the primary material of choice for my art practice. My body, its language and the language of the measina²⁸ I adorn it with have proffered a powerful space for my art practice and cultural heritage to come together, the past and the present converging in the *NOW*. My body has become a site of resistance, allowing me to traverse genealogical and geographical space, collapsing time, helping to engender and create time-space where I privilege my Moana body.

Saltwater body

This journey criss-crosses multiple bodies of waters, interfacing many cultures and artistic disciplines. I have achieved international renown for my performances, installations, body adornment, and spoken word. I am a published writer and poet,²⁹ and have held fellowships and developed research projects in major international institutions around the world.³⁰ My art works are held by museums and private collectors throughout the UK, USA, Canada, Germany, Australia and New Zealand.³¹ This art practice spans 30 years; after many years on

²⁵ Pasifika Styles, Cambridge University of Archaeology and Anthropology 2006-2008, Pacific Encounters, Sainsbury Centre for visual Art-University of East Anglia, 2006, Power and Taboo, British Museum, 2006, Mana: Ornament and Adornment from the Pacific, Cumings Museum, 2006.

²⁶ An example can be found here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82Dlcp47zLc>

²⁷ This refers to meaning “to embody jointly” Collins Online Dictionary.

²⁸ Treasured artefacts/objects or knowledge production for customary or ceremonial purposes, definition Aanoalii Rowena Fuluifaga 2017.

²⁹ *Ourselves*, Issue 2, 2021; Ka Haka Journal 2018, 2019; Pacific Presences: Oceanic Art and European Museums Volume Two, 2018; Blackmail press Issue 44 2021 and 34 2012; Maui Ola 2010; Clothing of the Pacific, 2003; Art Nui Sila 1998.

³⁰ Cambridge Museum Researcher and Curator (2004-2008), De Young Museum Residency (2008), MOA Vancouver Residency (2010), Dahlem Ethnological Museum Residency (2014) The MET Chester Dale Fellowship (2017), to name but a few.

³¹ Auckland City Gallery, Auckland New Zealand: Te Papa Tongawera, Museum of New Zealand, Wellington NZ: National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia: Museum of Volkekunde,

the outside, I have been recognised as an innovator of the contemporary Moana art scene,³² rather than an anomaly.

Despite years of experience working with museums and the academy, I still feel like an outsider. Negotiations are complex. The emphasis is on the Western-centric framework and the 'experts' that work in them. There is a need to create space in the centre of these institutions for Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. Taiaiake Alfred encourages those who enter institutionalised spaces to practice "warrior scholarship"³³ as a way to keep their/our Indigeneity at the centre of research and writing inside the academy. The Moana warrior was taught not just to fight but to protect and heal, tending the community gardens and feeding their communities when not on the battlefield. In this sense I am encouraged to be a warrior scholar.

The motivation to commit to a Western-centric framework that I consider to be problematic has been inspired by the enduring mana³⁴ of my Moana cultural heritage and the tenacity of my creative community. We have endured the effects of colonisation that have eroded the mana of the Moana. The focus of this thesis is not to dwell on the negative but to challenge me to expand my thinking and to articulate in words my tacit knowledge and the insights it has afforded me, in the hope that this offering inspires others to action.

Frankfurt, Germany: De Young Museum, San Francisco USA: Cambridge Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology, UK, Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford, UK: Royal Albert Museum, Exeter UK, University of London Anthropological Collections, London, UK: British Museum, London, UK.

³² I was the first artist to be bestowed The Pacific Art Association Frigate Bird Award, 2016 and recipient of the Creative New Zealand Pacific Senior Artist award, 2019.

³³ Alfred, Taiaiake. "Warrior Scholarship: Seeing the University as a Ground of Contention." Chap. 5 In *Indigenizing the Academy : Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*, edited by Angela Cavender Wilson Devon Abbott Mihesuah, 88-99. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.

³⁴ Shore describes that for Polynesia, mana is the potentiality and efficacy inherent in things, see Shore, Bradd. "Mana and Tapu". In *Developments in Polynesian Ethnology*, edited by Allan Howard and Robert Borofky, 137-173. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 1988.

Faiga Muamua (Case Study 1), G'rang G'near



Fig 3. *G'rang G'near*, customised Levis, Rosanna Raymond 1993, Photography Greg Semu 1997.

This is the first 'ofu (garment) I made as a member of the Pacific Sisters. *G'rang G'near* (1993) was a customised denim jeans and jacket, crafted from unwanted scraps of tapa cloth that had been gifted or found on the side of Auckland streets in the days of city-wide

inorganic rubbish collections. The cloths I used were damaged, eaten by insects, mouldy, or tattered from use. I would work with the remaining cloth, bringing together a melange of different Moana nations – masi from Fiji, ngatu from Tonga, siapo from Samoa.

Like a patchwork DNA, different strands come together to create something whole. Inspired from the patchwork leather jeans worn by the infamous Mongrel Mob gang, the title was gleaned from a type of slang used by the queer community and taught to the Pacific Sisters by one of our members. Even though worlds apart, I identified with both communities; they both operated outside of the norms of mainstream society. Like me, they were determined to create communities that reflected the world they lived in.

G'nanG'near had a busy life; used for fashion shoots and catwalk shows they even went out clubbing (and went missing for 3 years) and featured in many exhibitions. It constantly needed repatching as it became worn, and it was the very first artwork I sold (1997) to the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne. Included in my correspondence to them is the gafa (genealogy) and assorted information about how and why they were made. I now see how this provided the foundations for the development of a personal protocol and the expectations that I have with museums when they purchase measina from me. The fax I sent to the museum has long faded, and it seems they never thought to keep the letter as an official document. I have only a handwritten draft, an excerpt which opened a window onto my own process all those years ago:

- *My concern about them in a gallery type atmos(phere) tucked away, is it they will lose their mana, their stories, their life force, as much love is associated with my garments, they come with oral histories some ancient some modern.*
- *I am a tusitala, a teller of tales, I tell them through dance, costume, orally. The costumes reflect and trigger things when I am dancing or talking*
- *I would hope to visit and have input into the environment of the garments. I could perform in the garments one day bringing the life force and stories of the Pacific with them. I'm very into live arts interactive communication³⁵*

In 2015, I managed to visit G'nanG'near whilst visiting Melbourne for the 2nd Contemporary Pacific Arts Festival Symposium. Tagging along were artists Angela Tiatia, Telly Tuita, Jimmy Kouratoras and Léuli Eshraghi. Much to our delight (and surprise) Angela and Léuli were allowed to wear them, we were treated to a siva-dance and had some fun creating an impromptu photographic shoot on our phones. The measina got to hear my

³⁵ Exert from my personal communication with NGV 1997.

voice as I recounted their gafa; they felt my touch again, as I dressed them on living Moana bodies. Sadly, the NGV declined a loan permission for G'nang G'near to be exhibited alongside her other cohorts for the Pacific Sisters major exhibition at Te Papa Tongawera in 2018, despite numerous attempts from the curators.

An image of G'nang G'near featured on the cover of the book from a research project called *Clothing of the Pacific*.³⁶ After connecting with well-known academic Nicholas Thomas, I was invited to the project as an unofficial researcher, as he was familiar with my work as a Pacific Sister and understood the contribution I could offer. To my delight, the first role I had was unboxing and repacking the tapa cloth collections from the Museum of Mankind in London, then being accessioned back into the collection of the British Museum. It was here that I realised I had a very different but vital knowledge base that the museum did not have. Yet I experienced incidents of exclusion and erasure from some researchers concerning my presence and lack of expertise. Thankfully, these perceptions eased as I worked alongside them for 3 years, and eventually, I was able to contribute to a chapter in the book.³⁷ Like the museum, academia is not my natural habitat. But after many years of engaging in and with other practitioners in this environment, I have developed an uneasy feagaiga³⁸ (covenant) with it.

³⁶ *Clothing the Pacific*: a study of the nature of innovation was a joint research project involving the British Museum, University College of London, Goldsmiths College.

³⁷ Raymond, Rosanna. "Getting Specific: Pacific Fashion Activism in Auckland During the 1990's." In *Clothing the Pacific*, edited by Chloë Colchester. New York: Berg Publishers, 2003.

³⁸ The use of feagaiga here (a Samoan category of relations between sisters and brothers), reflects my own position in the power relations between me and academic institutions, that allows me to be in their space safely.

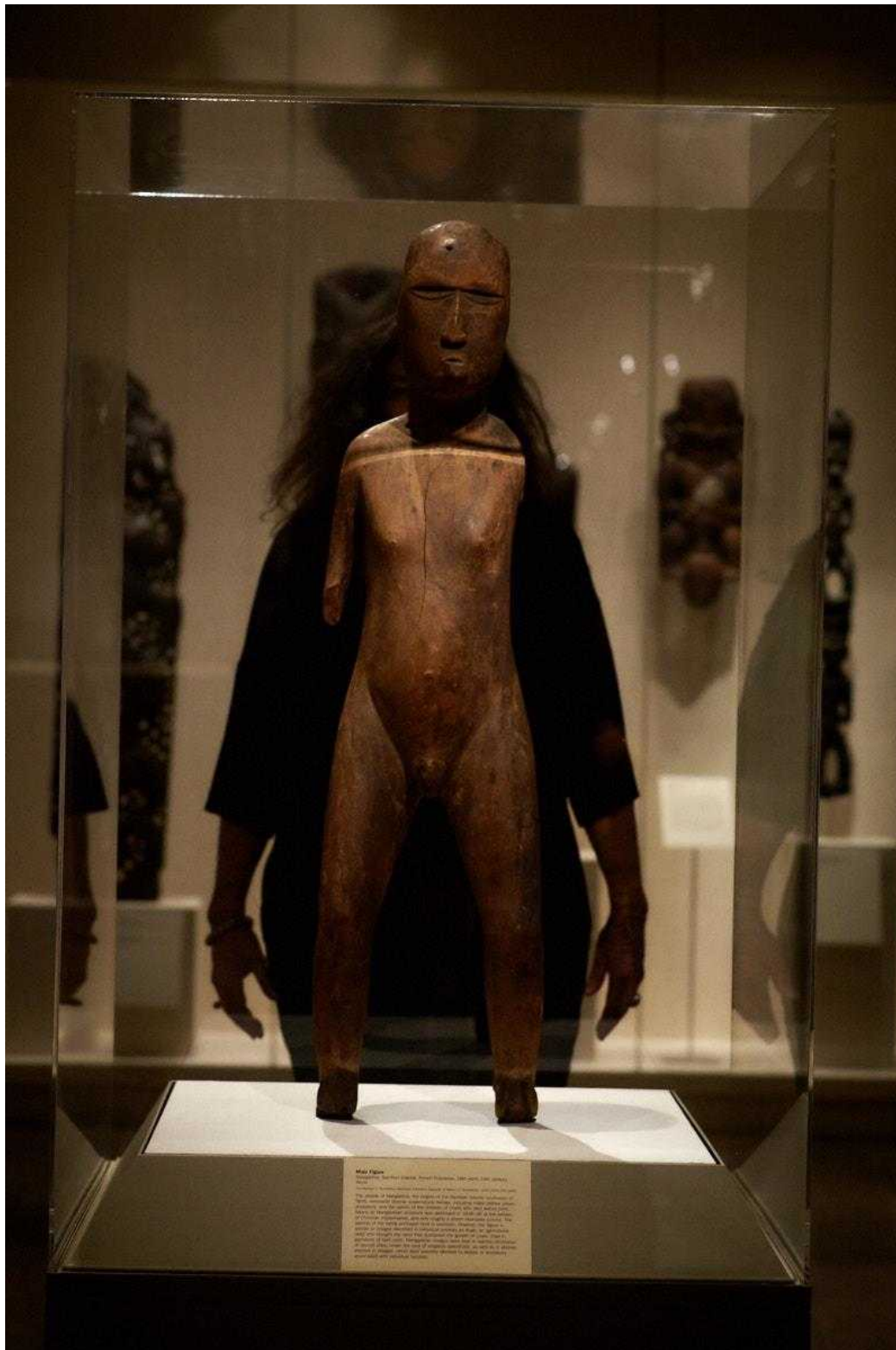


Fig 4. *Acti.VĀ.tion – Portrait Ro and Rogo*. Rosanna Raymond, 2017. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA. Photography, Salvador Brown.

³⁹ Tino ō faiĀ means a body formed from relationships, or a Vā Body.

Museums inside the artist

My creative practice within museums over the last 20 years allowed me to embrace and invent a new concept from *vā*; this is the notion of the *Vā Body* that confront, negotiate and co-create a space for Indigenous Moana voices inside the museum. The main aim during this period has been the revitalisation and reactivation of the *mana* and *maui* (lifeforce) trapped inside body adornments in museum collections.⁴⁰ Some adornments were crafted by my own hands. Many have been created by ‘unnamed’ artists and have become what Nicholas Thomas refers to as *entangled objects*,⁴¹ artefacts that are permanently enmeshed with the colonial legacies that acquired them — a legacy that I share with them.

Indigenous curators have long acknowledged how problematic the museum space is if we cannot maintain control of our own stories. As far back as 1928, Te Rangihīroa (Peter Buck), future director (1936–51) of the Bishop Museum, wrote to his friend Apirana Ngata articulating the need to maintain an active Indigenous archive:

I have travelled a little way on the road to intellectual emancipation and refuse to accept an indoor explanation of myself by outsiders no matter how high their status in the ethnological world. [Such a scholar] is a collector with bottles ready labelled and everything must go in one or other of these bottles, the bottles that have been labelled in the university classroom and not in the field that the labeller never saw. No! Ma taua ano e wehewehe nga taonga, ma taua e whiriwhiri ki tewhea kete ki tewhea kete. Ma taua ano e raranga he kete hou mo nga taonga kaore e tika kia whaona ki nga kete tawhito. Ko wai o te Pakeha e maia ki te ki mai kia taua kei te he ta korua patu i te kai nei. (Wiremu Parker’s translation: “It is you and I who must separate out the items [taonga] and sort them into each basket. It is you and I who must weave a new basket for the items which it would be wrong to place in the [old] basket.”)

—Apirana Ngata, letter to Peter Buck (Te Rangihīroa), Wellington, 1 August 1928⁴²

Whereas Ngata and Buck invoked the weaving of new metaphorical baskets, with reference to the baskets of knowledge received from the heavens in mytho-poetic deep time, I aim to evoke a *Vā Body*, a material flesh, my body.

⁴⁰ An example here is Frank Burnett’s collection of Samoan *measina* in the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver and my response to it in *Border Zones*, Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, Canada 2010.

⁴¹ Thomas, Nicholas. *Entangled objects: exchange, material culture, and colonialism in the Pacific*. Harvard University Press, 2009.

⁴² Sorrenson, M.P.K. (ed.) 1986. *Na To Hoa Aroha: From Your Dear Friend. The Correspondence between Sir Apirana Ngata and Sir Peter Buck 1925–1950*. Vol. 1. Auckland: Auckland University Press, Maori Purposes Fund Board, p122.

Body adornments from the Moana are inherently imbued with potent genealogies, mythologies, rituals and oral histories and thus their retelling via storytelling is how we make sense of our past, in the present. The mytho-poetic narratives they carry, I believe, converge and are channelled through the Vā Body. Not only can they *retell* stories, but they can also recreate new narratives, new lives. The Vā Body contains interpretive and generative potential that can unfold things into existence, as Wendt writes in the often-quoted passage:

Va is the space between, the betweenness, not empty space, not space that separates but space that relates, that holds separate entities and things together in the Unity-that-is-All, the space that is context, giving meaning to things⁴³

Museology and the Mused

Through engaging with European museums since 2000, I have developed a new context for how the vā and the body can be charged and rearticulated so that a living dynamic can perpetuate new narratives and relationships, revitalising the collections. The museum, in all its forms and functions, is a place that simultaneously stimulates and horrifies me. An institution that came into existence through European colonial and imperial expansionism, the museum is a product of the Enlightenment and thus its main archive that propagated its main tenets.⁴⁴ Indigenous communities, artists and scholars have long critiqued this space. Ho-Chunk Nation scholar Amy Lonetree vocalises some of the pain created by colonial imperialism and the excising of objects from their cultural context. She writes that “objects were defined by western scientific categories — anthropological categories of manufacture and use — and not by Indigenous categories of culture, worldview and meaning”.⁴⁵ Native societies were defined by some sort of *functional technology* and were defined only by what they made.

Imperialism pushed Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies to the margins. Privilege is given to the institutions’ modes of displaying and interpreting *their* collections. Imperial and colonial legacies remain deeply embedded in the core of most museum policies and praxis, incarcerating cultural belongings that reside there. While I may not totally untangle these violent colonial inheritances, I have attempted in my *acti.VĀ.tion*⁴⁶ art practice inside museums to develop a new methodology to re-centre Indigenous practices and narratives in

⁴³ Wendt, Albert. "Tatauing the Post- Colonial Body." Chap. Afterword in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and Identity in the New Pacific*, edited by Rob Wilson Vilsoni Hereniko, 399-412. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

⁴⁴ Proctor, Alice. *The Whole Picture: The Colonial Story of the Art in Our Museums & Why We Need to Talk About It*. London: Octopus Publishing, 2020.

⁴⁵ Lonetree, Amy. *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press. 2012, p14.

⁴⁶ *Acti.VĀ.tion* is a concept that I developed to highlight the particle vā within the structure of the word, using the Vā as an embodied practice via the Vā Body. See Raymond (2010).

the hope of creating an ongoing living dynamic engendered by artefacts themselves. This is to ensure that they are alive in a relationship that is not trapped in the past.

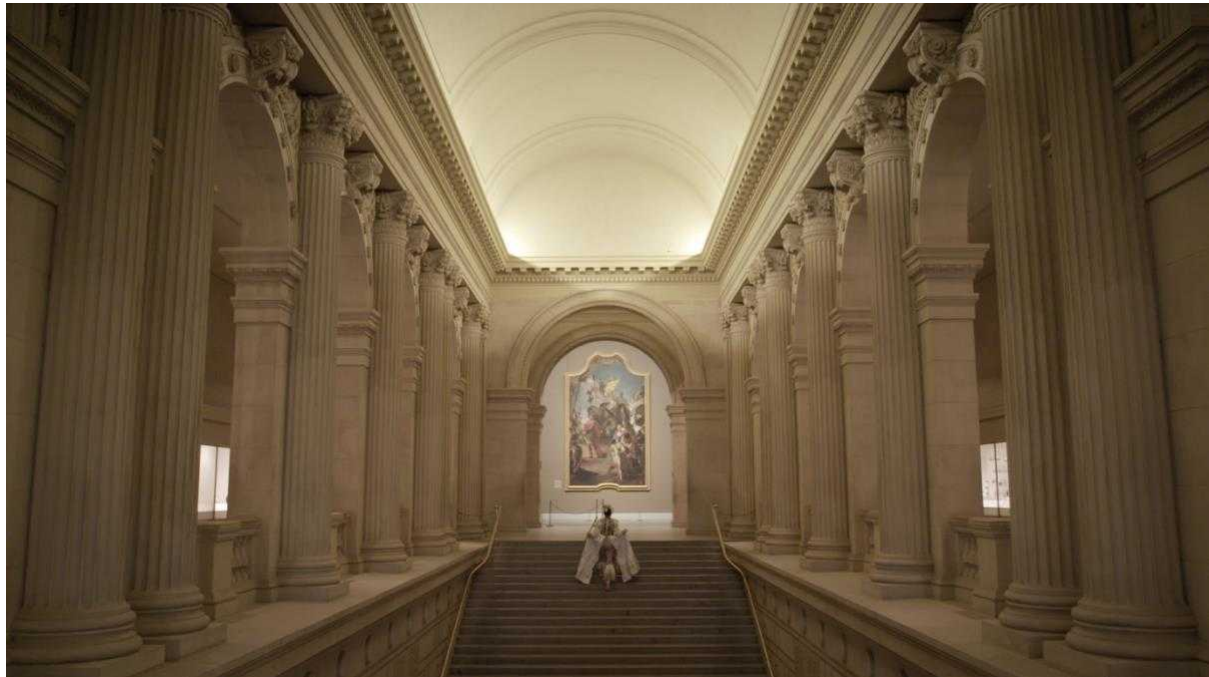


Fig 5. *Acti.VÃ.tion – Backhand Maiden*, Rosanna Raymond, 2017, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, USA.

Artists inside the museum

Claire Robins⁴⁷ argues that artists have a long history of intervening with museums beginning with the Dada movements ironical take on the *art-object* in the 1920's and 30's. The work of James Luna⁴⁸ and Fred Wilson⁴⁹ comes to mind as important non-western interventions inside museum spaces. Another example are the *reverse anthropologists* and artists Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco,⁵⁰ who try to revert the museological gaze in their work with museums using performance and fabricated histories. Gómez-Peña and Fusco's *Couple in a Cage: Two Amerindians Visit the West*⁵¹ a series of performances between 1992-1994 first introduced me to the potential of what a performative dissident body can do. *Couple in a Cage* engaged museum audiences by reversing the objective gaze

⁴⁷ Robins, Claire. *Curious lessons in the museum: the pedagogic potential of artists' interventions*. New York: Routledge, 2016.

⁴⁸ Most notably *Artifact Piece* 1987 and *Take a picture with a Real Indian*, 1991.

⁴⁹ Wilson worked inside the museum as an educator, his intervention at the Maryland Historical Society *Mining the Museum* in 1992 has produced much scholarship.

⁵⁰ Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco collaborated to create a performance work, *The Couple in the Cage Two Undiscovered Americans Visit the West*, 1992-94, touring 5 countries, usually staged in or outside Natural History Museums.

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by placing their bodies dressed up in a variety of cultural identity tropes caged inside museums that directly engage and challenge museum-going audience expectation. Using performance to create presence for Latino and other marginalised bodies, Gómez-Peña went on to develop a radical performance pedagogy in the 1990's "defining new intersections between performance, theory, 'community', new technologies and activist politics"⁵² as he began teaching inside academic institutions.

In her introduction to *Curious lessons in the museum: the pedagogic potential of artists' interventions*, Claire Robins⁵³ reflects on how museums are increasingly using artists' interventions as a strategy to engender change. While there has been an increase of projects that include artists and "source communities,"⁵⁴ there are still grave concerns from Indigenous curators working inside museums who are at the coalface of grappling with the institution's power and the privilege it affords its own stories. This was recently vocalised by Puawai Cairns in an article first published in the Te Papa blog titled "'Museums are dangerous places' – challenging history".⁵⁵ What is telling is that this article went on to be republished in the American Centre for Future Museums in which Cairns highlights Moana Jackson's concern that "Museums are dangerous spaces as *they* tell our stories" (my emphasis).⁵⁶

Closer to home, the connective artistic genealogies formed around pioneering artist, curator, beloved mentor and friend to many Moana artists (including myself), Jim Vivieaere was important for Moana art in the mid 1990's till Jim's passing in 2012.⁵⁷ It is on his shoulders that I stand, following his footsteps inside the museums. There is not much written on his work inside the museum space, but I remember the stories he told of his first foray to the Überseemuseum in Bremen. On this occasion, he had invited himself to research the collections and to install his response, which they accepted. This was the work *Southern Response to Northern Possession* (1993) which was followed by *Two sky Rockets (one for adornment)*, which I got to see at Te Papa in 1994. While Jim's work is defiant in nature and showed me that contemporary art can co-exist inside the museum space, it did not encompass an embodied practice that I was searching. For this I found inspiration in the scholarship of Kanaka Maoli⁵⁸ feminist academic Stephanie Teves, who examines how Indigenous agency can be channelled through defiant bodies. Teves describes that

⁵² Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Roberto Sifuentes. *Exercises for Rebel Artists: Radical Performance Pedagogy*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

⁵³ Ibid.47

⁵⁴ I personally do not like this term as it infers something that can be extracted and not reciprocal.

⁵⁵ Cairns, Puawai. "Museums are dangerous places' – challenging history." Te Papa Tongawera, 2018, accessed 23rd Sept, 2020. <https://blog.tepapa.govt.nz/2018/10/19/museums-are-dangerous-places-challenging-history/>

⁵⁶ Moana Jackson is a highly esteemed Māori lawyer and cultural commentator.

⁵⁷ Jim sadly left us in 2011 after a long battle with cancer... moe moe a rangatira ma.

⁵⁸ Kanaka Maoli is translated as true people and is a term adopted in recent years to denote people who can trace Indigenous Hawaiian ancestry before the arrival of Captain Cook.

“Performance creates knowledge through action; creating subjectivities, it is a simultaneous process of world making”.⁵⁹ Her work helped me to expand Wendt’s notion of a post-colonial body and Gómez- Peña’s radical performance body.⁶⁰ Whilst Gómez-Peña and Fusco’s practice resonates with my own, it is Teves’ writing on Indigenous performativity in *Defiant Indigeneity* (2018)⁶¹ that offers a new theoretical and methodological potentiality to re-energise new Indigenous concepts for my practice. Luna, Gómez-Peña, Fusco and Teves recognise that performance has been a way for Indigenous bodies to be packaged for consumption by Western culture, they deconstruct this by engaging their own bodies as performative artistic tools to talk back to this dominant discourse.

Indigenous scholars have been adding to the toolbox for decolonial methods and methodologies, and for many, Indigenous storytelling emerges as a crucial component for imparting knowledge. Stories can be told, danced, sung, and they circulate through the community. Who gets to tell these stories and how, is an ongoing concern within Indigenous scholarship including those who practice it.

⁵⁹ Teves, Stephanie Nohelani. *Defiant Indigeneity: The Politics of Hawaiian Performance, Critical Indigeneities*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018.

⁶⁰ Teves’ defiant bodies, Wendt’s post-colonial body and Gómez-Peña’s radical body are non-Western bodies.

⁶¹ Ibid., 59.

Faiga Lua (Case study 2) MOA – The Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia



Fig 6. Museum of Anthropology, 2010, Vancouver, Canada. Photography Rosanna Raymond.

The Museum of Anthropology (MOA) is situated at the University of British Columbia on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam people in Vancouver. Its genesis starts at the UBC library in 1927 with its founding collection, a donation of 1500 'objects' acquired by Frank Burnett during his travels in the 'South Seas'. From humble beginnings, MOA is now an award-winning stand-alone museum housing almost 50,000 works from all over the world.⁶²

The underlying premise of MOA differs from many of the museums I have worked for and is most noticeable in their collaborative approach with the First Nations community. This is especially in regard to access, where the emphasis focusses on the value of the reciprocal relationships they build with the communities they work with, through the shared care and maintenance of the cultural belongings they hold. Cultural treasures are able to be used by the customary owners for ceremony outside the museum. The building itself allows for the

⁶² This is not including the 535,000 archaeological objects or the 90,000 photographs it stores on site.

bulk of the collections to be accessed front of house, with large open spaces that allow for large tribal and public gatherings both inside and outside the building.

My introduction to the museum was as a participant of the 2003 ASAO conference. During the conference's guided tour, Curator Pacific Carol Meyer offered us insights into how the museum worked with the local First Nations community who were positioned at the heart of the museum. After the conference, I returned to the museum and was able to view most of the Moana measina in a few hours without the need to contact a curator or collections manager.

Most museums hold the majority of their collections in large storage facilities away from the public view.⁶³ Access can only be arranged by contacting the appropriate staff member, this can be a complex mission if you do not know who to contact or are familiar with museum protocols. Once you have found the right person, you will need to know what to ask for, then they will need to make time and find a space to host you, as there is usually very little if any space to cater for the viewing of the collections. This is time consuming, for all parties.

MOA was the first museum where I noticed that most of the archive and collection are on display. This was a deliberate feature when designing the museum in the 1970's, aiming to create immediate visual access to the collections. But it was acknowledged that there was still a need for physical access, especially as requests by the local Indigenous communities increased. In 2004, a redesign of the museum was commissioned to enlarge the galleries, making room for contemporary art and special rooms for the communities to connect and view their cultural treasures. As the collections were to be stored whilst building, a digital database was created. The Reciprocal Research Network⁶⁴ makes collections digitally available in an effort to increase access for communities.

The emphasis on access has not been easy for all staff to embrace. I recall a conservator's concern that the RNN had increased requests to view the collections. I was one of the concerned parties; she was not impressed I had asked to view the Samoan Siapo collection, as it had been rolled up and was difficult to access. She had hoped the images would have sufficed. The focus of her practice was changing, as were her own experiences. This is reported in an article co-written by the conservation staff, called 'When You Don't Cry Over Spilt Milk: Collections Access at The UBC Museum of Anthropology During the Renewal Project':

Throughout the past few decades, MOA has developed a philosophy of access to the belongings of originating communities that differs somewhat from our standard

⁶³ The average of museum collections on show to the public is said to be 2–4%. "The Good Stuff in the Back Room", New York Times, 2012.

⁶⁴ You can request an account by going to the RNN Community page <https://www.rnncommunity.org/>

protocol for collections care. It differs in the understanding that the preservation of the cultural significance of an object is heavily weighted towards community use of the collections – even at the possible risk to the physical object itself. This practice has developed alongside the shift that conservators have been increasingly experiencing regarding the care of cultural material. Museum practice has moved from that of institutional privilege to a collaborative model. Now methods of care are the result of discussions between conservators and the artist or the originating community.⁶⁵



Fig. 7 *Acti.VĀ.ton – Masi Maidens*, Rosanna Raymond, Katrina Igglesden, 2013, Museum of Anthropology, Vancouver, Canada. Photography Bethany Edmunds.

MOA's philosophy and practice showed me that a museum model that focussed on reciprocity and exchange between the community, conservators and curators could indeed exist. And indeed, it was the relationship I forged with the Carol Meyer that has been the most fruitful, leading to my participation in several major projects over a period of 11 years.⁶⁶ These projects have been essential in the evolution of my creative art practice. MOA was where I developed the SaVĀge K'lub,⁶⁷ now in its 10th year with over 200 people across the globe contributing to SaVĀge K'lub projects. As I navigated my way around different departments, I added to my understandings of the inner mechanics of a museum. Knowledge was shared not just extracted.

Now I had an example in terms of what a dynamic relationship based on exchange and reciprocity might look like inside the museum. The experiences I had working with MOA

⁶⁵ Shabnam Honarbakhsh, Heidi Swierenga, and Mauray Toutloff. "When You Don't Cry over Spilt Milk: Collections Access at the Ubc Museum of Anthropology During the Renewal Project." *Objects Specialty Group Postprints* 18, American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, (2011): p 67-82.

⁶⁶ Researcher for the Reciprocal Research Network, 2004-2010, Artist in Residence 2007, 2010, Exhibiting artist *Border Zones*, 2010 *Paradise Lost?* 2013, Workshop leader for *Fabricating Fashion?* 2013.

⁶⁷ For a comprehensive history of the SaVĀge K'lub visit <https://www.savageklub.com/>.

allowed me scope to expect and engender this sort of relationship with other museums, especially in Europe where the norms of museum practice were still firmly in place.

CHAPTER 3: SaVĀging THE METHODOLOGY

*By refusing to consider as human those who seem to us to be the most “savage” or “barbarous” of their representatives, we merely adopt one of their own characteristic attitudes. The barbarian is, first and foremost, the man who believes in barbarism.*⁶⁸



Fig.8 *Manufacturing Savages*.⁶⁹ Photo collage: Rosanna Raymond, 2008. De Young Museum Collection, San Francisco, USA.

Museums are disputed spaces⁷⁰ and they are imperial mausoleums where cultural belongings are suffocated and permanently entangled⁷¹ with violent colonial histories. I employ the vā as an embodied practice in my work to keep Moana cultural belongings acti.VĀ.ted and connected to their Indigenous histories. An acti.VĀ.ted art practice also has the ability to critically engage with museum collections of Moana body adornments and the *present*, or, as poet Ole Maiava termed it, *whānow* – ‘whānau now’, or to give birth.⁷² The main strategy for operating a method or methodology in this study is playing with the

⁶⁸ Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Savage mind*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1962.

⁶⁹ This image featured on the cover of a publication. Unfortunately, they left my credit out. See Lai, Paul, Smith Lindey Claire, ed. *Alternative Contact: Indigeneity, Globalism, and American Studies*. Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2011.

⁷⁰ While Indigenous peoples have struggled with multiple issues that are associated with museums, the first scholarly book I came across was Ames, Michael M. 1992. *Cannibal Tours and Glass Boxes: The Anthropology of Museums*. Vancouver: UBC Press.

⁷¹ Thomas, Nicholas. *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press. 1991.

⁷² Personal comments related to Pasifika Styles Exhibition, 2004.

notion of *savage thought* or *wild thought*, which anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss had intimated to be the thought of others.⁷³ These are unruly ways of knowing which run counter to Western knowledge.

SaVĀge Disposition

Working inside the museum as an artist, curator, educator, researcher, and community member has permitted me to produce a diverse range of creative and critical outputs, yet my presence inside this space is still highly problematic. The involvement I am afforded can still constrain and confine me to the role of an artist and producer only, meaning access to decision-making, even about my own creations, is limited. Power and authority over decisions concerning access to collections, the sovereignty over the narratives connected to me, and the way they should be displayed, remains firmly with the institution. As an artist and a producer for the collection, I am at a disposition, and an unruly one at that – a SaVĀge. So, when beginning with such a disadvantage, one therefore has to use the thought of others as the unruly mechanism or method to try and disrupt the normative order of museums and their archives.

The following is an amalgamation of different museums' conditions of entry that must be considered when planning your visit:

The museum reserves the right to refuse entry to any visitor;
No flash photography;
No selfie sticks (or similar devices);
You are asked not to use your phone to make calls in special exhibitions, and to turn your phone to silent in the galleries;
No running – walk and move your body carefully;
Only touch things you have been permitted to touch;
You must conduct yourself, and ensure any children in your care similarly conduct themselves, in a manner which, in the reasonable opinion of the museum, does not interfere with, disrupt or offend other persons, nor may you engage in inappropriate behaviour which may result in injury to themselves or others;
You must wear appropriate clothing and footwear at all times.
*(No alterNATIVE histories allowed).*⁷⁴

Since 1990, when I started my creative practice and diversified cultural activity, I have developed and experimented with a number of creative methodologies. Their central emphasis is on intersectional Indigenous practice, through which a number of components are fitted together to re-centre and activate the queer body and the savage body as tools to

⁷³ Strauss, Claude Lévi. *Savage mind*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1962.

⁷⁴ A selected list of the terms of entry from museums around the world; the last, in italics, is my own observation.

decolonise the museum. Performance art, ritual activation, group collaboration and shared ceremonies are important components of the method. They affirm a subjectivity within the vā that is me, which then situates who I am, with or through the creative work. In doing so, the being and making allows me to instigate or invent new vocabulary forms to identify the processes and concepts used. I have not been alone in creating these niu verbal expressions that engage cultural and political landscapes. This practice is a part of an urban street culture which Karen Stevenson recognised:

Pacific artists have created a new language that is both transnational and transcultural. It is a language that positions their work within a Pacific frame – a structure that allows for the assertion of both a Pacific identity and a sovereignty of ideological and artistic practice within both a New Zealand and global context... Words such as polyfied, polyfusion, polynesian, pi's, polys, pasifikan, spacifik, s.pacifik, eyelands, and niu sila create a linguistic fusion with a spacifik flava. They also are understood as a language that asserts a spacifik urban identity for Pacific peoples. Drawn from the energised urban environment, these words created an identity for young pi's not 'caught between cultures' but ones positioning themselves within the context of urban Niu Sila. As such this new language is used to provide a voice in New Zealand's cultural/identity political arena.⁷⁵

I also began to invent new types of logoism⁷⁶ to express Moana concepts within and around contemporary art. The following for examples of these:

Excessification = To be visually hectic, to celebrate abundance
 Eyeland = The cultural and political geography of my surroundings through my eyes
 Culti.VĀ.tor = Relational Researcher
 FAB.ricator = Creator
 Acti.VĀ.tor = Performative agent/Avatar
 SaVĀge = Unthinking/Rethinking the savage
 Conser.VĀ.tion = Conservation that includes the maintaining of past present future relationships, not just the physical mea

Related to the notion of a defiant body (see chapter 1), these terms are constructed partly as word plays, using visual metaphors and puns to disrupt their conventional meaning. In this respect, my exploration of logoism connects to the praxes of *hip hop* and *shout out* culture⁷⁷ by reinventing conventional writing norms to create a new language. Through

⁷⁵ Raymond, Rosanna, and Karen Stevenson. "Specifically Being Herself: Language and Identity in the Art of Rosanna Raymond." *Pacific Arts* 10, no. 2 (2010): 16-22.

⁷⁶ Logoism are words artificially crafted to sound like the image, concept or idea; meant to evoke no precise meaning but allow meaning to be created by things within orbit of each other.

⁷⁷ Raymond, Rosanna, and Karen Stevenson. "Specifically Being Herself: Language and Identity in the Art of Rosanna Raymond." *Pacific Arts* 10, no. 2 (2010): p 16-22.

logoism and its resonances, I am aligning SaVĀge methodology with Critical Hip Hop Pedagogy that Daniel Hernandez describes as operating for Indigenous diasporic peoples in which “Hip Hop provides a way to connect locally and globally... also a way to organize collectively rather than be subjected to the ‘fragmentive effects of Capitalism’.”⁷⁸

Moana Methodologies

In recent years several Moana-based research practices and methodologies have emerged, borrowing heavily from Kaupapa Māori.⁷⁹ I have found several of them to be very close in content and intention, albeit with different names. One of the best known is the Talanoa Research Methodology⁸⁰ or TRM, which first appeared in 2002 as a way to engage communities through the framework of informal talking (tala noa – nothing in particular) to help create a familiar environment for participatory research. It is utilised by Indigenous researchers from the Moana as it centres Moana cultural values with emphasis on the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Here, knowledge is exchanged rather than extracted.

The Samoan Ula⁸¹ and the Tongan Kakala⁸² methodologies incorporate the ideologies of TRM but use the metaphor of building a lei/neck adornment. The gathering of materials, design and construction, and finally the gifting of the lei – these sit well with my practice as a maker.

Su’ifefiloi methodology is used predominantly by Samoan researchers and creatives, including Sia Figiel⁸³ whose interest in Samoan oratory and song led her to play with the style and structure of her writing. This method, like the Kakala model, allows a medley of

⁷⁸ Hernandez, Daniel. "Rootz vaka transits: Traversing seas of urban diasporic indigeneity by collapsing time and space with the songs and stories of the kava canoe." PhD diss., ResearchSpace@Auckland, 2019.

⁷⁹ KMR places Māori thinking, language, customs, world view and knowledge base at the centre of research. Research is for Māori by Māori or if carried out by non-Māori research must be collaborative and partnership-based, shared by the researcher and the researched. The researcher must understand their own experience, knowledge, and whakapapa, and how these will affect the relationships formed and what can be shared.

⁸⁰ Vaioleti, Timote M. "Talanoa research methodology: A developing position on Pacific research." *Waikato journal of education* 12 (2006).

⁸¹ Ula methodology is Samoan specific based on the principles and values of fa’asamoa (literally translated as the ways of Samoa). Emphasis is on the responsibilities of the researcher and the relationship, with the participants ensuring the powerbase is evenly distributed, especially for collaborative, evidence-based research projects, ensuring the research knowledge is meaningful to the Samoan community. See Sauni, Seiuli Luama. "Samoan Research Methodology: The Ula—A New Paradigm." *Pacific-Asian Education Journal* 23, no. 2 (2011).

⁸² Kakala methodology was developed by Professor Konaiholeva Thaman in 1992 and is almost identical to the Ula methodology except based on Tongan cultural principles. They are both concerned with the appropriate sharing of collective wisdom and the maintenance of cultural protocols.

⁸³ Figiel, Sia. *The Girl in the Moon Circle*. Suva, Fiji: Mana Publishing, 1996.

elements to come together, like a song – literally su’i to stitch/sew, fefiloi, a mixture. It has re-emerged in Moana academic research to incorporate fāgogo (performative storytelling), architecture and Moana art.⁸⁴ Like my patchwork jeans, each fragment – although from different origins – can create something fresh and new.

However, while these are very specific to the Samoan and Tongan cultures, this study aims to encompass my mixed heritage and transnational experiences. None of these methodologies quite fits the needs of such a project as they concentrate mainly on gathering ethnographic material, and the relationship and responsibilities of the researcher with the participants and the gathering of qualitative data. In contrast, my research has been and still is focused on the presence of my body to disrupt established power dynamics inside the museum, using artmaking and performative techniques to test my research questions.

SaVĀge Thoughts

In the last 7 years I have developed what I now term the SaVĀge Methodology.⁸⁵ This wordplay has multiple meanings, from its visual appearance to the sound that connects it to other potential meanings – with an overarching allusion to Claude Lévi-Strauss’s use of the word ‘savage’ in the book *Savage Minds*.⁸⁶ Lévi-Strauss might have rewired the notion of the savage mind in his ground-breaking anthropological book, but this is not the only SaVĀgery that I allude to.

The hip hop album *Savage Thoughts*⁸⁷ by Samoan rapper King Kapisi also comes to mind, featuring one of my all-time favourite hip hop songs Reverse Resistance, where savage thinking is said to be habit forming:

*Savage thoughts addictive, to your system,
intervals of time make I selective
penetrate your earlobe and all of your protection
complications now I provide back in your eye*

⁸⁴ Albert Refiti 2014, Amy Tielu 2016, Rowena Fuluifaga 2017

⁸⁵ Acti.VĀ.tion came first as an embodied methodology in 2010, since then I have expanded it for use as a method as well, with three tenets: Culti.VĀ.te (research phase), FAB.ricate (construction/installation) and Acti.VĀ.te (using the Vā Body to animate the mauili imbedded in the works creating a space of connection).

⁸⁶ Strauss, Claude Lévi. *Savage Mind*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1962.

⁸⁷ Kapisi, King. “Reverse Resistance.” In *Savage Thoughts*. Auckland, New Zealand: Festival Mushroom Records, 2000.

The Moana body has lived under the mantle of the savage⁸⁸ since First Contact, and this trope has fascinated me (and my peers) for many years. Like King Kapisi, my saVĀgery is *talking back* to these tropes. The capitalisation of VĀ in the middle of the word indexes the Samoan notion of vā at the centre of the methodology, which I evoke to maintain the mana of Moana-based practices and protocols at the heart of my creative practice. The SaVĀge Methodology has been successfully applied to many projects.⁸⁹ It comprises four central tenets that can house multiple methods, which are adapted for the needs of each individual project: Culti.VĀ.te, FAB.ricate, Acti.VĀ.te and D'acti.VĀ.te.

These tenets align with the metaphor of both Ula and Kakala and incorporate Su'ifefiloi and Kaupapa Māori concepts. But the methods themselves are more diverse, inclusive and better suited to an art practice and have been especially useful when working collaboratively with a medley of artists. Like Lévi-Strauss' analysis of the wildness at the heart of the thoughts of others,⁹⁰ SaVĀge Methodology is also wild at heart.

SaVĀge Faigaluega (Methodology)

The methods pertaining to a SaVĀge Methodology are itemised below to illustrate how the different parts of my practice are formed around these ideas.

Culti.VĀ.te:

Faiaiga/ Whakawhanaungatanga – the research period with emphasis on non-western forms of research, searching and exploring. The time to gather, identify culturally appropriate ways to establish links (genealogical, geographical, historical, social), making connections and relating to the people involved.

Established methods: include wānanga (to meet, discuss, to learn), hui (to gather), talanoa (informal discussions), soālaupule (deliberate consultation). Tofa Sa'ili (proper way for investigating things) or Rangahau (to search, investigate)

FAB.ricate:

Su'ifefiloi/Toi waihanga – the time to gather materials design, construct, compose, write, workshop, rehearse, install.

Established methods: all creative practices available to participants/myself to make the polished measina/tāonga.

⁸⁸Vercoe, Caroline. "History Is a Place: Pacific Artists Reimagining Colonial Legacies." In *Lisa Reihana: In Pursuit of Venus*, 58-63. Auckland: Auckland City Gallery, 2015.

⁸⁹I have now used this method to work with groups on several major projects with the SaVĀge K'lub including APT 8, Brisbane, 2015, Next Wave/AsiaTOPA, Melbourne, 2017, 2nd Hawaiian Biennale, Honolulu 2018/19 and with the Pacific Sisters Fashion Activist exhibition, Wellington/Auckland, 2018/19 and ^V^T^ Auckland 2020.

⁹⁰Strauss, Claude Levi. *Savage Mind*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1962.

Acti.Vā.te:

*Fa'aliga i malae*⁹¹/*whakakitenga* – the time to open the space, by displaying, exhibiting, or revealing the work to the public, friends, family, peers, creating a space of connection and cohesion.

Established methods: Tautuanaga 'o fa'aliga ata⁹² using the Vā Body to animate the maui imbedded in the works through ritual and ceremony, ensuring the tapu is lifted. Manaakitanga ensuring a space of generosity, hospitality and conviviality, is provided, this will involve food and beverages.

D'acti.Vā.te:

Teu le vā/Whakanoa – the time to close the space, to ensure the maui will not be shocked.

Teu le vā is not just about the nurturing of the relationship. One of the meanings of teu is to put away, to put in order... to make sure the vā is tended to and put away properly. If one opens a space, I feel it needs to be formally tended to in order to maintain and sustain the vā relations that have developed over the course of the project.

Established methods: Tautuanaga 'o fa'aliga ata⁹³ by using the Vā Body to animate the maui imbedded in the works through ritual and ceremony and the tapu is put back into place. Manaakitanga – ensuring a space of generosity, hospitality and conviviality is provided, this will involve food and beverages.

⁹¹ Eshrāghi, Léuli. "Punā'oa Resources." *Artlink INDIGENOUS*, no. 40:2 (2020): 28-30.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.



Fig. 9 *D'acti.VĀ.tion – Closing Ceremony SKHBHQ led by the He Hui Kāne collective*, , Rosanna Raymond, 2018, Honolulu, Hawai'i. Photography Pākē Salmon.

Fāgogo as Method

Indigenous First Nation scholar Jo-Ann Archibald formulated the term *Indigenous storywork*⁹⁴ as a method, to *work* with the stories not just *tell* them, thereby “activating decolonising methodologies as a dynamic cultural revitalising strategy”.⁹⁵ The book *Decolonizing Research Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*,⁹⁶ features the work of fourteen indigenous academics who are using the Indigenous storywork as a framework across many disciplines and cultural contexts to reclaim histories, identity and culture inside the academy.

Both Indigenous storywork and Defiant Indigeneity are salient methods to help me consider how new narratives and relationships can be sustained by retelling/recreating the stories embedded in bodies and museum collections.

Samoan paramount leader and knowledge holder Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi⁹⁷ uses fāgogo, the stories from and of the past, to teach us in the present. Storytelling and

⁹⁴ Jo-Ann Archibald, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jason De Santolo, ed. *Decolonising Research Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*. London: Zed, 2019.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Fuamatu, Tamasailau Sua'ali'i-Sauni; I'uogafa Tuagalu; Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai; Naomi, ed. *Su'esu'e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*. Apia: The Centre for Samoan Studies, 2009.

performance are intrinsically linked. The storytelling style of Samoa, fāgogo, is performative; Sean Mallon likens it to a performance art.⁹⁸ My art practice is permeated with fāgogo-stories, they are a vital source of creative and intellectual stimulation. Fāgogo offer a powerful mytho-poetic context for me to work in, allowing me to create my own mythologies in order to retell the stories embedded in museum collections.

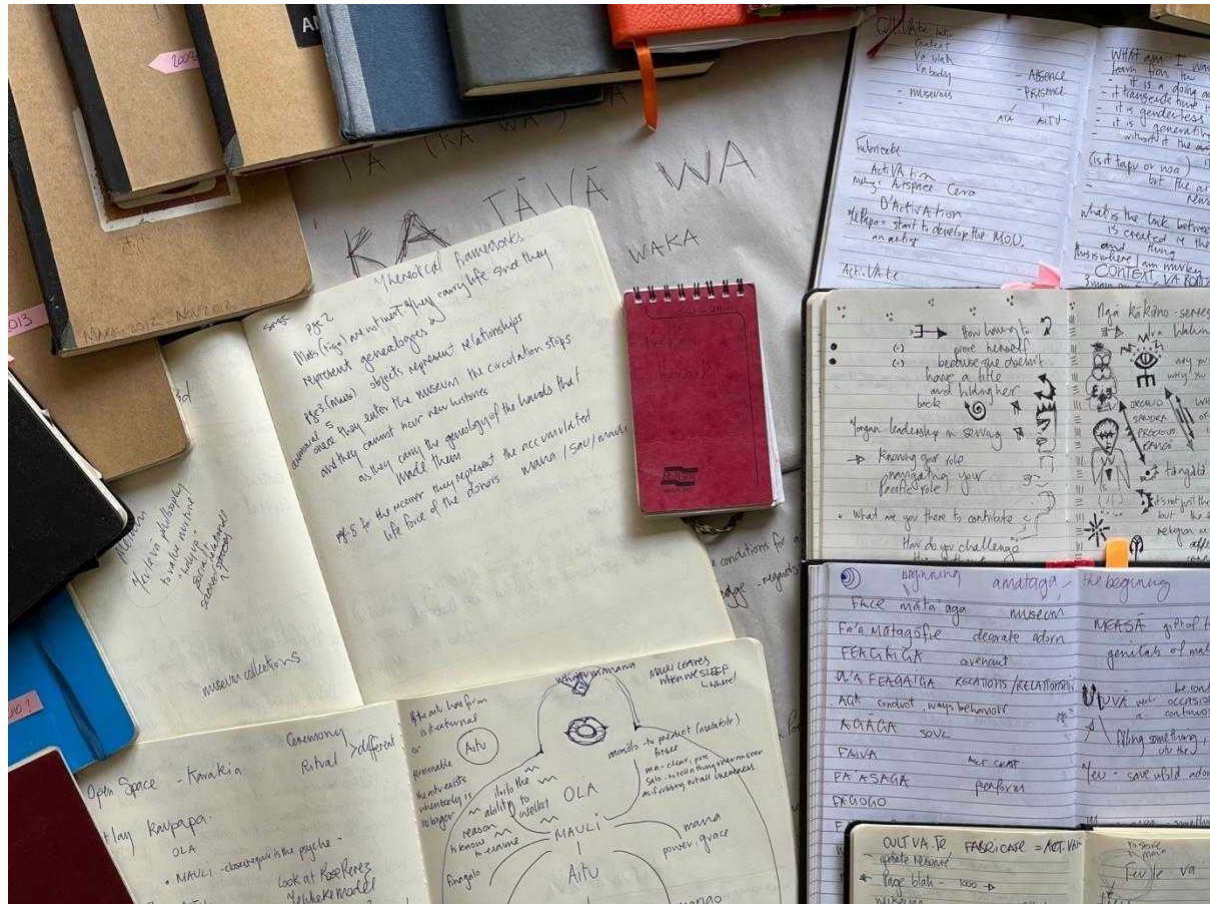


Fig. 10 Selection of my personal journals used for this research project, Rosanna Raymond, 2021.

*Togafiti*⁹⁹ (Strategic Approach)

For the past 20 years, I have employed many methods working inside the museum. Each encounter is different — the social, financial and geographical position of the museum affect the outcomes and outputs. I am consistently engaging with the collections and the staff who work alongside them in order to build relationships. Many factors come into play; the negotiation process has become one of my primary methods to establish a good relationship before I set to work meeting, documenting and analysing any related materials that I gain access to. These include measina I have made that now reside in the museum.

⁹⁸ Mallon, Sean. *Samoa Art & Artists*. Auckland: Craig Potton Publishing, 2002, p163

⁹⁹ Togafiti can either mean a trick, a remedy or cure, see Ma'ia'i, Semisi. "Tusi upu Samoa: The Samoan dictionary of Papaali'i Dr Semisi Ma'ia'i." (2010).

Throughout these encounters, I produce visual diaries.¹⁰⁰ These are rough and anarchic, filled with drawings, musings, poetry drafts and research notes, allowing me to build up designs for my body adornments, play with words and create ideas for texts. On my computer I keep minutes from meetings, emails and so forth. This is part of the flotsam and jetsam of my practice. I use the journals to keep reflecting and re-evaluating as I work.¹⁰¹ The journal is also used to archive the process and techniques; in the past, I have focused on producing artwork or the performance. Ben Spatz now rings in my ears cautioning me about relying on the public spectacle to find meaning and not the techniques used.¹⁰² When the spectacle is gone, the archive will be valuable research material for others.

In the studio I start the FAB.rications, gathering and sorting the materials, experimenting with different craft techniques, making prototypes and playing with sound and movement. Through the action of making, my bodily movements help me think through what I am creating. The body, in this context, contains the archive of my embodied practice; it is its own museum that informs my practice and is embedded into my creations.

¹⁰⁰ I have a collection of 56 journals chronicling 30 years of my research-based practice

¹⁰¹ Gray, Carole, and Malins, Julian. *Visualising Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design*. London, Routledge.2004. Accessed August 29, 2019. ProQuest Ebook Central, p 22.

¹⁰² Spatz, Ben. *What a body can do: technique as knowledge, practice as research*. London: Routledge 2015, p 248.



Fig.11 *FAB.rication* – *Studio mahi*, Rosanna Raymond, 2017, Dahlem Ethnological Museum, Berlin, Germany. Photography Taille Renouf.

By su'isu'i or stitching together several methodologies, I have created my key methodological awning to sit under. The SaVĀge (Practice-Based) Methodology will enable me to use my art practice as a tool of investigation while centring Pacific thought, protocols and narratives within the tenets of the vā.

This methodology is still developing and owes much to some of the giants of postcolonial discourse and action such as the Polynesian Panthers, Tamatoa, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Haunani-Kay Trask, Kamisese Mara and Epeli Hau'ofa. All have paved the way, encouraging the next generations to decolonise ourselves as we rethink and reform Moana ways of thinking and doing. While decolonising methodologies¹⁰³ is an essential underlying concern at the heart of my all my practice, I intend to concentrate on re-centring Indigenous epistemic and ontological practices inside institutions.

¹⁰³ Linda Smith "Decolonisation... does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather it is about centring our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes." (2012), p 39.

Faiga Tolu (Case Study 3) Pasifika Styles



Fig. 12 *FAB.rication – Installation view of Pasifika Styles*, Lower Galleries at MAA, 2006-2008, Cambridge, UK. Photography Kerry Brown.

The Cambridge Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA) may be small, but it makes up for it in the stature of its collections, tucked away inside the Cambridge University. Founded in 1884, the MAA reeks of the past, the oldest relic a stone adze reported to be 1.8 million years old and is the home of some of the earliest collected taonga from the Moana, most notably (to some) those from the first exchanges between Tagata Moana and Captain Cook.

The first time I entered MAA was in 2002 with my *hoa tāpui*-close friend, well-known carver George Nuku.¹⁰⁴ We each had a bag of our own *FAB.rications* and an appointment to see Anita Herle, the Senior curator. It was the first time I had ever entered the stores of a museum; I had no idea what to expect, but I had a fair idea of what they had.

We were unexpectedly joined by the legendary (then retired) anthropologist Peter Gathercole, who expressed genuine delight to meet us both. This in itself was unexpected,

¹⁰⁴ That year I managed to secure appointments with the curators at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford, MAA and The Musée de l'Homme in Paris. We were unable to visit the British Museum stores as they were in the throes of relocating the Museum of Mankind collections where the *measina* we were interested had been housed.

as our usual reception at other institutions had been rather cold and somewhat terse. All of a sudden, we were escorted through the double doors into a different world. My eyes had to adjust as it was darkly lit – ‘conservation’, I was told. Row upon row of shelf units were stacked with boxes, custom built for their contents, labelled and grouped in their geological regions. Larger ‘objects’ were propped against the walls or secured to heavy steel lattice work frames. The air changed, becoming heavier, I could hardly breathe; time seemed to slow down and I could not see for a moment. The tension was palpable, every hair on my body was raised, the noise was deafening. It is that point I stopped and returned to the lobby, looking for some water, leaving George to carry on. The rest of this story is for another time. As our time came to an end, George rendered a karakia-ritual chant to take us back to the world of light, to whakanoa – to lift the tapu. We had not started with one, as we had been rushed into the stores. This was my first lesson in adhering to cultural health and safety rules.

Two years later, I met Amiria Salmond, who had just been appointed assistant curator at MAA. This was the start of a relationship that would go on to produce the first major exhibition of contemporary Moana-based artists in the UK. *Pasifika Styles — Artists Inside the Museum*¹⁰⁵ exhibition ran for two years from 2006, reconnecting thirty-five artists from the Pacific to the MAA’s historical collections.

The MAA was a context *par excellence* for exploration and experimentation. Its extensive ‘ethnographic’ collections include some of the earliest made in the Pacific and have been both a fulcrum for early seminal anthropological works, including James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* (1890), and the impetus for early ethnological expeditions and further collecting.¹⁰⁶

We invited artists to respond to the collections in an attempt to challenge the divide between art and artefact, past and present practices. This was a chance for them to talk to the legacies found inside the museum. Art and artefact were brought together, and it was the presence of the artists themselves that had the greatest impact on the museum staff and protocols, and for the artefacts themselves.

As the project unfolded it, became clear that the artists’ knowledge and skilled practice offered insights into both ‘material’ and ‘cultural’ aspects of the objects that were highly valued within the museum environment. This made me reconsider how ‘mainstream’ (footnote1) museums and academics relate to people who have cultural connections to the collections, as well as how these people might go about asserting a greater degree of control over research into their own culture and material heritage. In the process, my own research methodologies were reconfigured in ways that have

¹⁰⁵ This exhibition also included an extensive two-year public programme with the local Pacific community, a theatre festival and a publication.

¹⁰⁶ Alfred Haddon, a lecturer in anthropology and a contributor to the management of what is now known as MAA, led the 1898 Torres Strait Expedition, and encouraged students to collect for the museum as part of their fieldwork. See <http://maa.cam.ac.uk/history/>

a broader relevance to current debates and methodological initiatives in museum studies and social anthropology.¹⁰⁷

Pasifika Styles welcomed my involvement over a period of 5 years, in all aspects of the decision making from the conception to the closing ceremony. The relationships formed throughout the exhibition spilt out of the museum, with many artists developing projects with other museums. After the artists left, the local Moana community continued to visit and were part of outreach programmes and the closing ceremonies. Unfortunately, it seems the location of the exhibition inside the museum could not break free of its ethnographic shackles, with very little response from the 'mainstream' artworld. On more positive note, Amiria and I were able to develop new protocols inside the museum, brokering new ways of interfacing with the collections between staff and artist and community, that remain in use today. Tāonga/measina were used in ceremony and musical instruments from the collections were played.

MAA is where I experienced mana, maui and the aitu as tangible entities, inspiring me to use my body to push the boundaries and scope of the anthropological museum. It is where I saw the collections reinvigorated by the presence of their gafa. This cemented my feeling that the museum had a vā feagaiga with the living, which needed to be conserved; it was not enough to conserve the past or the physical condition of the measina itself.

¹⁰⁷ Durand, Carine Ayele. "Fieldwork in a Glass Case: Artistic Practice and Museum Ethnology." Chap. 7 In *Pasifika Styles: Artists inside the Museum*, edited by Rosanna Raymond Amiria Salmond, 74-80. Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2008.



Fig.13 *Acti.VĀ.tion* – Jerome Kavanagh (Pūoro Jerome) testing a pūkāea from the MAA stores, 2007, Cambridge, UK. Photography Rosanna Raymond.

CHAPTER 4: TEUTEU THE VĀ

O mea e fai i luma o le nu'u

E le o mea e fai i tua o le nu'u.

(Things done in front of the village, not things done behind the village.)

This chapter explains why it is important that the vā needs a body, and why personal and embodied encounters with traditions and culture are at the heart of my practice. The chapter also chronicles my first encounter with ideas connected to the vā and how I came to meet face-to-face with Moana academics and Samoan and Tongan knowledge holders whose voices and ideas resonate throughout this work.

Lēutuvā (Discontinued Vā)

The arrival of Europeans and the introduction of Western ideas and technology caused a rupture in the vā and the traditional reciprocity in relationships with people and things. With the advent of European collecting practices, artefacts that were once part of a living ecology that facilitated relationships between Indigenous people and their divinities now entered into the heterogeneous and foreign space of the museum. That meant the artefacts that were an important part of the circulation and exchange with ancestors stopped socialising and living amongst the people that mattered. The social life of artefacts is an important aspect of Moana culture. I am certain that just as we conserve physical objects, we must conserve the vā relationships *along with* the cultural practices that belong with the collections – those from the past and the present. Art and performance practices have a role in initiating new ways of conserving cultural belongings so that in the future new relationships can build and grow with measina.

It is, after all, the measina that brings us together. Museums now play an important role in bringing us together, sharing our vā with our ancestors, because the traditional role of the village malae and paepae no longer exists for such cultural becomings in the diaspora.

Defining the vā is not a simple task, I'uogafa Tuagalu for instance writes, “the conceptual terrain of the vā is vast.”¹⁰⁸ Tuagalu discovered at least 37 different vā spatial relationships. Rev George Pratt, who wrote the first Samoan dictionary, found that the usual response to his request for a translation of ‘va’ was “what sort of va are you talking about?” He defines

¹⁰⁸ Tuagalu, I'uogafa. “Heuristics of the Vā.” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 4, no. 1 (2008): p 107-126.

vā as a verb with two meanings 1: to rival; 2: to have a space in-between.¹⁰⁹ This does little to encompass the multiple meanings and applications the vā inhabits.

The First Vā Is The Deepest

Looking into my own past, my journey to the vā is a mix of oral and experiential encounters. The vā was something I felt deep inside my being; the academic context came later. After 20 years in Europe, I returned to Aotearoa, and to formally examine the vā and the Vā Body inside and outside the academy. As I dig deeper, it is my embodied archive that I reference more than text. I recall sitting in a small room in Vancouver in 2003 attending my first ASAO¹¹⁰ symposium, listening to a young Tongan Tēvita Ka'ili talk about the vā, or tauhi vā to be more precise. Ka'ili defined it as “keeping good relations”.¹¹¹

Then based in the UK, I had started to work with museums and universities on various research projects.¹¹² This was not in an academic capacity but as an artist and active community member of two London-based Moana communities: Ngāti Rānana and Beats of Polynesia. Tevita Ka'ili's presentation at ASAO helped me understand some of the issues I was encountering. The expectations and responsibilities of working in and with your own community were at odds with the academy, where the emphasis is on outcomes and the final output rather than the maintenance of the relationships formed. The relational vā Tevita talked about resonated deep within me and became a valuable cultural index to use inside my newfound institutionalised environment. It was in that room that I fully registered Wendt's definition of the vā, especially the concept *teu le vā*.

Teu Le Vā

In the late 1990's, the first wave of Pacific artists¹¹³ were the original group of people to acknowledge the vā (especially *teu le vā*), and it became an important concept for creatives

¹⁰⁹ Pratt, Rev George. A Grammar and Dictionary of the Samoan Language, with English and Samoan Vocabulary. 1984. 1862, London Missionary Society.

¹¹⁰ Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania, is an international scholarly organisation dedicated to the anthropology of the Pacific.

¹¹¹ Ka'ili, Tēvita O. Marking Indigeneity: The Tongan Art of Sociospatial Relations. University of Arizona Press, 2017.

¹¹² Clothing of the Pacific-UCL, Goldsmiths University and the British Museum research project; Commission for the Pitt Rivers Museum, website project, Crowther-Beynon *Grant* Awarded by the University of Cambridge University.

¹¹³ The following artists have all at some stage referenced vā or *teu le vā* in their work: Lily Laita, Lyle Peninsula, Michel Tuffery, Ioane Ioane, Niki Hastings-McFall, Leafa Wilson and John Pule. See, Tamaira, A. Marata. “The space between: negotiating culture, place, and identity in the Pacific.” (2009).

ever since. Almost all acknowledged Albert Wendt as the first to present the idea to them in the now well-cited paper 'Tatauing the Post-colonial Body'¹¹⁴ in which Wendt mused that:

A well-known Samoan expression is 'teu le va'. Cherish/nurse/care for the va 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 va, relationships.

Teu le vā also became a critical cultural index that I utilised when working inside the museum to assert the need to conserve the relationships embedded in the cultural measina in collections. My attempts then were to highlight the need for sustained ongoing relationships with living descendants of measina.

Teu le vā now moves through different contexts and spaces taking on new meanings and applications. Melani Anae and Karlo Mila¹¹⁵ have developed Teu le vā as a methodology and pedagogy to influence government policy for Pasifika health, leadership and education. The Auckland War Memorial Museum Tāmaki Paenga Hira in 2012 brought out a document called *Teu le Vā* to be a key principle in a Pacific framework for engaging with the "stakeholders and source communities".¹¹⁶ In 2017 a specific role was created inside the museum, for a Teu Le Vā manager specifically to ensure this strategy is delivered.

Malaga (Voyage)

As more Moana scholars started to develop the theory of the vā and published articles became more accessible, I benefited immensely from Sa'iliemanu Lilomaiaava-Doktor's¹¹⁷ idea that the vā was mobile because it migrates "as a culturally informed, historically grounded response to modernity and globalisation." Lilomaiaava-Doktor's redefinition of malaga or journeying to incorporate transnational migration tethering to the vā, helped me to settle my feeling dislocated because of being distant from the Pacific. It was at this point I began to attach a self-body identification to the vā as I felt that, like the vessels for a malaga, I am a vessel to enable, enact and tend to relationships. It enabled me to acquire a doubly-diasporic-personhood that reclaims a collective body connected to the Moana on the other side of the world. Lilomaiaava-Doktor highlighted other important traditional

¹¹⁴ Wendt, Albert. "Tatauing the Post- Colonial Body." Afterword in *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and Identity in the New Pacific*, edited by Rob Wilson Vilsoni Hereniko, 399-412. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

¹¹⁵ Anae, Melani, and K. Mila-Schaaf. TEU LE VA – Relationships across research and policy in Pasifika education A collective approach to knowledge generation & policy development for action towards Pasifika education success. Ministry of Education, 2010.

¹¹⁶ "Teu Le Vā: The Pacific Dimension at Auckland Museum." 2016. See <https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/your-museum/about/teu-la-va-the-pacific-dimension-at-auckland-museum>

¹¹⁷ Lilomaiaava Doktor, Sa'iliemanu. "Beyond "Migration": Samoan Population Movement (Malaga) and the Geography of Social Space (Va)." *The Contemporary Pacific* 33(2) (2009): p 1-32.

meanings of *vā* in *vā* fealoa'i (social respect and relationships between people) and *vā* tapuia (sacred spaces and taboo relationships).¹¹⁸

Tā/ Vā and Faiva

I look forward into the past. Yet again, I am in another room, and this time it is in the teaching collections at University College of London listening to the complexities of the Tā-Vā Theory of Reality. Hūfanga 'Okusitino Māhina attached *tā* (time) to *vā* (space), explaining that the two cannot operate without each other. This I feel needs more attention, which I am still thinking through, the question for me being: *do they need each other as separate entities to exist, or are they the same thing?* As a non-native Samoan speaker with a reliance on other people's translations I ponder what was lost why George Pratt and George Milner translated the *vā* as a verb or a noun, as opposed to being a concept in their dictionaries.

The missionaries irrevocably altered notions of the body and time as we were converted to fit Western/Christian categories. We now understand how the Moana social and spatial modes of being were forever changed with European contact. Tides, animals, stars, the movement of the sun and the celestials were markers of how we inhabited and experienced time.¹¹⁹ Pre-contact Moana time was measured in terms of our relationship with nature and the world we inhabited. Here I would like to suggest that time is relational; *tā* is how we mark or fix *vā*; *vā* is not just the relational space, but importantly, it is the connective tissue. It is space and time.

As an artist working inside the museum, I am drawn to Māhina's critique of museums in their propensity to value form over function. Significantly Māhina has also developed a Tā-Vā theory of art, a derivative of the Tā-Vā Theory of Reality, where he defines as both a "disciplinary practice and a form of social activity".¹²⁰ The theory indexes the body through a Tongan Indigenous reference as *faiva* or the creative arts in identifying performance arts as *sino* (body centred) and material and fine arts as *tu'asino* (non-body centred).¹²¹ So while Māhina acknowledges the body as an active participant in making *faiva*, his approach lacks for me a way to engage the body as *vā* in the way that I envision it in my practice.

The Vā Needs A Body

Why would the *vā* need a body? Maybe because I have an embodied practice, I just assumed there was one. Or maybe I needed to see it, like Wendt who "kept visualizing the

¹¹⁸ Lilomaiaava Doktor's definition, *ibid*.

¹¹⁹ Va'a, Unasa Leulu F. "Indigenous Sāmoan Perceptions of Themselves and the Natural Enviroment." *Measina a Samoa* 5 (2011).

¹²⁰ Hūfanga), Ōkusitino Māhina. "Takohi: Drawing in Tongan Thinking and Practice." In *Tā-Vā (Time-Space) Theory of Reality*, edited by Ōkusitino Mahina Tavita Ka'ili, Ping-Ann Addo, 133-53. Lāie, Hawaii: Pacific Studies (Special Issue), 2017.

¹²¹ *Ibid*.

Post-Colonial body as an actual human body”¹²² and was then compelled to tatau it. Melani Anae and Albert Wendt have both stressed the importance of teu le vā as maintaining the space or cherishing the relationship.¹²³ Another meaning of teu that I engage in my practice is the ability of teu to embellish or decorate.¹²⁴ As a FAB.ricator, I need to decorate the vā with a body.

The use of the body as a tool to re-centre Indigenous ways of being and knowing is also found in the work of other First Nation artists and thinkers. Julie Nagam, for instance, cites *Anishinaabe* scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson in the book *Becoming Our Future*¹²⁵ in which she highlights the increasing international relationships that are forged between Indigenous curators and artists. Simpson’s words may be rendered in English, as are my own, but as she describes ideas connected to her tribal land in Turtle Island far beyond the Moana, she conceptually describes ideas that are like the vā – a Vā Body:

Recognition for us is about the presence, about profound listening, and about recognising and affirming the light in each other as a mechanism for nurturing and strengthening internal relationships to our Nishnaabeg worlds. It is a core part of our political systems because they are rooted in our bodies and our bodies are not just informed by but created and maintained by relationships of deep reciprocity. Our bodies exist only in relation to Indigenous complex, non-linear constructions of time, space, and place better continually rebirthed through the practice and often coded recognition of obligations and responsibilities within a nest of diversity, freedom, consent, non-interference, and generated, proportional, emergent reciprocity.¹²⁶

It doesn’t surprise me that it is through the words of another artist that I find someone who naturally brings the body to the vā. Samoan choreographer Lemi Ponifasio brings the two together in his work as noted in an interview for the Te Papa publication *Art Niu Sila*,¹²⁷ claiming “Here in the Pacific, the va is the lived and cognisant body relationship with the world. The va or the body’s intentionality is the foundation of all expression, including dance”. Later, in a 2010 interview, he extrapolates on the concept using the term *vā-body*, as “a conscious and responsible state of being”.¹²⁸ It is this first articulation by Ponifasio of

¹²² Wendt, Albert. “Tatauing the Post Colonial Body.” Afterword In *Inside Out: Literature, Cultural Politics and Identity in the New Pacific*, edited by Rob Wilson Vilsoni Hereniko, 399-412. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999.

¹²³ Anae, Melani. “Teu le va: toward a 'native' anthropology.” *Pacific Studies* 33(2), 2010. p 222-240.

¹²⁴ Milner G.B. *Samoan Dictionary*. Auckland: Pasifika Press. Original edition, 1966. p. 262

¹²⁵ Nagam, J., C. Lane, M. Tamaati-Quennell, and Art Gallery of SA. *Becoming Our Future: Global Indigenous Curatorial Practice*. Art Gallery of South Australia, 2020.

¹²⁶ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As we have always done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

¹²⁷ Mallon Sean, Pereira Fuli, ed. *Pacific Art Niu Sila: The Pacific Dimension of Contemporary New Zealand Arts*. Wellington, New Zealand: Te Papa Press, 2002.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p 8.

vā as having an object or place within the body that I have focussed my research and practice on since.

Gender Fluid Vā

I encountered the idea that “the body is the exemplary agent of vā relationships”¹²⁹ with Albert Refiti in 2008, during a small gathering in the bowels of the Royal Festival Hall in London. This was my first encounter with Refiti’s notion of the gene-archaeological matter or body as it unfolded before me, “Understanding the gene-archaeological matter is to realise that your body and being represent a line of ancestors/land/community/family, which is part of you. Therefore, the body belongs to the ancestor. Your being there allows them (these ancient bodies) to be present there too.” He goes onto say “Our body therefore is already a vā matter, the ultimate vā, a porous/holey boundary between the ancestor and the world.”¹³⁰

Through Refiti’s gene-archaeological body, I started to think beyond personification and began to contemplate my own body as a corporeal vessel that shares time and space with all my genealogical past, both male and female, atua and aitu. I began to imagine the Vā Body as the physical connective tissue enacting all forms of the vā as being spiritual, social, tapu and noa. A non-gendered body or space where all ancestors are housed. The non-gendered space of the ancestors is also reflected in the pronoun of most Moana language groups *ia* (she/he), which addresses both male and female.

Searching for maui

As I journey to the Vā Body through tataued bodies, ceremonial bodies, ancestral bodies, I would like to return to Fanaafi Aiono-Le Tagaloa’s work on Samoan spirituality in *Tapua’i: Samoan Worship*.¹³¹ It is important to remember here the role of the church in literally redressing the *native body*. Tony Ballantyne wrote that when Cook arrived in New Zealand, “tapu and noa were absolutely fundamental in shaping the understandings of the body in all its states and these concepts were at the heart of most social and ritual spaces”.¹³² Much of the Moana also practiced tapu and noa which has remained deeply entrenched in our cultural values today.

Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta’isi Efi, for instance, has written about tapu for Samoa in relationship to vā tapu’ia, he says,

¹²⁹ Refiti, Albert. “*Being Social*” *Critiquing Pasifika Education in the University*. Inaugural Conference, University AUT Ngawai o Horotiu Marae, Auckland, 2007.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Tagaloa, Fanaafi Aiono-Le. *Tapua Samoaan Worship*. Apia, Samoa: Malua Printing Press, 2003.

¹³² Ballantyne, Tony. *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Māori, and the Question of the Body*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2014.

The term literally refers to the sacred (tapu-ia) relationship (va) between man and all things, animate and inanimate. It implies that in our relations with all things, living and dead, there exists a sacred essence, a life force beyond human reckoning. The distinction here between what is living and what is dead is premised not so much on whether a 'life force', i.e. a mauli or fatu manava exists in the thing (that is, whether a 'life-breath' or 'heartbeat' exudes from it), but whether that thing, living or dead, has a genealogy (in an evolutionary rather than human procreation sense) that connects to a life-force. The va tapuia, the sacred relations between all things extends in the Samoan indigenous reference to all things living or dead, where a genealogical relationship can be traced.¹³³

This important Samoan cultural index is also echoed by Aiono-Le Tagaloa who maintains that the first and most important vā is “the relationship between the creator and the created, between the created and other creations”.¹³⁴

These definitions have extended my belief that we also need to be able to maintain our relationships with our measina in the museums. Our cultural belongings are not just mere objects or artefacts. Their gafa or genealogy not only exists through the hands that created them, but also inhabits the very substances they are made from, and thus, they connect us to our cosmological genealogical origins. The vā is not just a *space* for humans to relate with/in, but it is also the potential for *how* we can relate to the world of other animate and inanimate things where mauli or the lifeforce runs through all.

Deboning the fish

Aiono-Le Tagaloa's writing on vā elucidates the essence of pre-Christian Samoan worship in which tapua'i asserts the spiritual connection with Tagaloa (God, progenitor) that still remains within the inner person and must be maintained. Aiono-Le Tagaloa divides the inner person into three parts, Ola, Aitu and Maui, declaring that these essential “senses are the vehicles to the physical world.”¹³⁵

I use here her notions of Maui and Aitu as fundamental ideas for acti.VĀ.ing spaces, people and things. Ola (life) is fundamental to all human and animate life. Maui is a term known to Samoans, but little understood. Where did our mauli go and where might I find it?

Tui Atua locates mauli in the soul or the agaga which is located between the fatu (heart) and māmā (lungs). He says that “the significance of this is that the heart represents God as the

¹³³ Tupua, Tui Atua. “Bio-Ethics and the Samoan Indigenous Reference.” Chap. 15 In *Su'esu'e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta'isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*, edited by Tamasailau Sua'ali'i-Sauni; I'uogafa Tuagalu; Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai; Naomi Fuamatu. Apia: The Centre for Samoan Studies, 2009.pp175

¹³⁴ Ibid,p 129.

¹³⁵ Ibid,p 129, p39.

prime mover, who provides rhythm and life to the mind and body, whilst the lungs are the custodians of the breath of life.”¹³⁶ Maui is evident therefore when we see the body move with the breath, which means that maui is indeed tangible by its presence in us, in the flicker of the leaves, and the lapping of waves. Both early missionaries J. B. Stair¹³⁷ and George Turner¹³⁸ briefly commented on maui in their musings on life in Samoa, equating it to the agaga or soul. Aiono-Le Tagaloa contends that the closest English definition of maui is the psyche. Unlike the Western psyche, which Sigmund Freud divided into three parts (ego, super ego and the id), maui, she maintains, comprises of 7 parts.

Aiono-Le Tagaloa presents maui as I have not seen, heard or read before.¹³⁹ These concepts have been huna¹⁴⁰ or hidden, like the dark side of the moon. Though I have not seen or heard maui in the Samoan vernacular presented like this before, I am not sure how to reconcile or quantify this in the academic sense.

Nevertheless, Aiono-Le Tagaloa’s writings have stimulated my thinking, as I can see how maui can be rethought or reconstrued back into existence to help enrich the inner mechanisms of a Vā Body.

Anchoring the Aitu

Performativity and spirituality had a place in Samoan life through the aitu. This much-maligned entity, like the native body, was targeted by the missionaries as incongruous to Christian doctrines. Aitu are said to be descendants of the original atua-gods, permeating all aspects of life in lalolagi-earth, from birth to death. They had their own priesthood known as taula-aitu, anchors of the spirits. Though described as a tutelary deity,¹⁴¹ aitu are often defined as ghosts, spirits or demons. Aiono-Le Tagaloa disputes this claiming the aitu is not a ghost or the spirit of a dead person, “the aitu is the creative and cheeky part of the inner

¹³⁶ Tupua, Tui Atua. “In Search of Harmony: Peace in the Samoan Indigenous Religion.” Chap. 8 In *Su’esu’e Manogi: In Search of Fragrance. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Ta’isi and the Samoan Indigenous Reference*, edited by Tamasailau Sua’ali’i-Sauni; l’uogafa Tuagalu; Tofilau Nina Kirifi-Alai; Naomi Fuamatu, 104-14. Apia, Samoa: The Centre for Samoan Studies, 2009.

¹³⁷ Stair John B. *Old Samoa, Flotsam and Jetsam from the Pacific Ocean*. New Zealand: R. McMillan, 1983, p220.

¹³⁸ Turner, George. *Samoa, a Hundred Years Ago and Long Before*. Papakura: R. McMillan, 1993. 1884, p16.

¹³⁹ Aiono-Le Tagaloa like Tui Atua have been sharing knowledge that is considered tapu, she has not named her sources as a way of protecting them, a tactic that has not gone unnoticed and highlights the some of the issues indigenous scholars can encounter. Knowledge is power, it is a closely guarded commodity, gifted to the specially chosen members of the family. The academic world challenges this feagaiga-simply defined as a covenant, demanding that knowledge be shared with all (even if most able bodies don’t understand a word they say). Tui Atua has been challenged by his own Samoan community as he has shared tapu and (perceived) problematic measina. This is a huge challenge and consideration to all Samoan researchers.

¹⁴⁰ In Māori maramataka the Huna moon is a time to be cautious, as things maybe concealed.

¹⁴¹ Freeman, Derek. Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth. Suffolk, UK: Pelican Books, 1984.

being of the person”¹⁴² and like mauli, continues to exist when the ola takes leave of our bodies.

¹⁴² Ibid, p 129, p41.

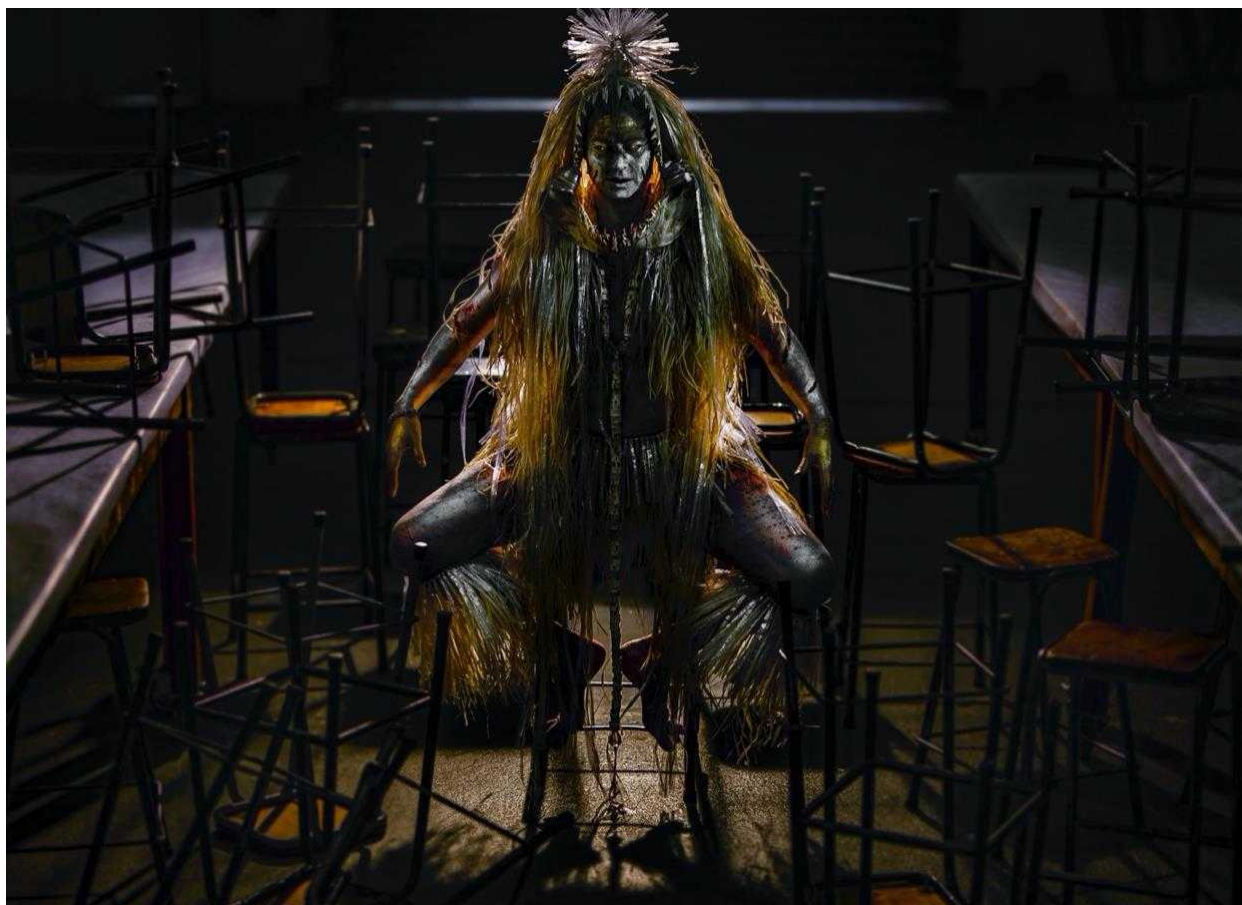


Fig.14 *le Malie / Uta*, Rosanna Raymond, 2017, Photography Jermaine Dean.

Fale Aitu

The aitu has its own spiritual home, the fale aitu, literally the house of spirits. These were not temples as Stair reports that they were called *O le Mālumālu-o-le-aitu*.¹⁴³ The origins of the fale aitu are uncertain, though Victoria Kneubuhl¹⁴⁴ surmises that they were linked to the malaga-travelling parties, where gatherings of entire villages would come together. After the formalities, pōula or night dances were held, filled with song, dance and entertainments. Not much of the content of these nights has been retained due to the distaste the missionaries felt towards pōula because of their licentious elements.¹⁴⁵ Often the highlight of the night was the fa'aluma (one who humiliates), who would become possessed by the aitu using humour and satire to parody leaders and figures of authority.¹⁴⁶ The fale aitu was a form of culturally sanctioned chaos, whereby the fa'aluma would help alleviate the tensions of an otherwise ordered and often repressive existence for people in the village. The traditional fale aitu has been a source of inspiration and widely adapted by Pasifika Theatre practitioners and comedians,¹⁴⁷ becoming a popular source of entertainment for urban Moana communities, in theatres and on screens.

Niu Aitu¹⁴⁸

There is now a next wave of Niu Moana creatives transforming the aitu. For instance, celebrated fa'afafine artist Yuki Kihara has produced a photographic series called *Fale Aitu: The House of Spirits* (2003) restaging aitu from well-known Samoan fāgogo. In 2016, FAFSWAG collective¹⁴⁹ hosted the inaugural *Aitu Ball* which is now the longest running Vogue Ball in Australasia.¹⁵⁰ The spirit of these nights reminds me of the early events of the

¹⁴³ Ibid., 135, p226

¹⁴⁴ Kneubuhl, Victoria N. "Traditional Performance in Samoan Culture: Two Forms." *Asian Theatre Journal*, Vol. 4, no. 2 (1987): pp. 166-76. <https://doi.org/doi:10.2307/1124189>.

¹⁴⁵ Williams, John. *The Samoan Journals of John Williams, 1830 and 1832*. Australian National University Press, 1984.

¹⁴⁶ See more information on the fale aitu in Hereniko, Vilsoni. "Clowning as political commentary: Polynesia, then and now." *The Contemporary Pacific* (1994): 1-28; Shore, Bradd. 1977. "A Samoan Theory of Action: Social control and social order in a Polynesian paradox." PhD thesis, Anthropology, University of Chicago; Kneubuhl, Victoria N. "Traditional Performance in Samoan Culture: Two Forms." *Asian Theatre Journal, Autumn*, Vol. 4, no. 2 (1987). p 166-76.

<https://doi.org/doi:10.2307/1124189>.

¹⁴⁷ O'Donnell, David. "'Spiritual Play': Ritual Performance and Spirituality in Samoan Theatre." *The Ritual and Cultural Performance Hui and Symposium*, Otago University, The Performance of the Real Research Theme, University of Otago, 2016.

¹⁴⁸ This is my own terminology to define urban aitu.

¹⁴⁹ FAFSWAG is an award-winning multi-disciplinary collective using arts and activism as their primary tools to create new narratives for their community. They held their first ball in Otara in 2013.

¹⁵⁰ Vogue Balls started in NYC during the 1980's, as a way to create a space for LGBTQI people of colour who had been excluded by the White Drag Scene. The Vogue Ball community was brought into the mainstream by the documentary *Paris is Burning*.

Pacific Sisters; raw, powerful and like the fale aitu of old, a place for participants to undermine the power bases they are subjected to in their daily lives. The aitu are not just brought to life in performance-based celebrations. Pati Tyrell, one of the founding members of FAFSWAG and father to the House of Aitu,¹⁵¹ has utilised aitu in his interdisciplinary art practice to reimagine pre-colonial spiritual practices as a way to reclaim their ancestral, spiritual and sexual autonomy. These practices are making space in the arts to acknowledge queer brown bodies and sexually diverse identities. Recently the Pacific Sisters, of which I am a member, presented three *Niu Aitu* to the Auckland Museum. Named *Moruroa*, *Supa Suga* and *TOHU TūPUNA* these three embody the underlying values that are important to Pacific Sisters: environmental protection, indigenous sovereignty, freedom of self-expression and encouraging the best from humanity – being your own superhero.¹⁵²

Intersectional Aitu

Aitu exist in multiple spaces which can be theatrical, political and spiritual; intersecting the incongruous realm between the living and the dead; residing in the tagata-lilo or the inner self. One gets to meet aitu in hypernatural spaces in intentional situations that break down the regular norms of everyday. Aitu are for special occasions, both portentous and absurd. They are still called upon to help solve serious issues by chiefs, a practice known as *fono ma aitu*. Tui Atua defines the *fono ma aitu* as a conference of the spirits.¹⁵³ Aiono-Le Tagaloa expands on this describing it as “a meeting between the aitu of those where the ola has ceased and those where the ola is still present.”¹⁵⁴

This brings to mind the Hindu notion of an avatar,¹⁵⁵ brought into my children’s’ (and my) imagination through the popular American TV series in the 90’s called Avatar: The Last Airbender. I was struck by some words of encouragement to the young avatar. “Who better to solve this crisis between the world and the spirit world than the avatar himself, you are the great bridge between man and spirit.”¹⁵⁶

My Vā Body is like a bridge, a pathway for my ancestral past to re-emerge from the inner self. It is not the mundane body; it needs to be acti.VĀ.ted. Acti.VĀ.tion goes beyond performance and mere entertainment; the body is working with spiritual and relational spaces. The Vā Body is mediating different cultural and spiritual settings, allowing maui, in

¹⁵¹ House of Aitu was established in 2019 by Pati Tyrell and Falancie Filipo.

¹⁵² You can find these Niu Aitu on the Auckland Museum website, see <https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/visit/galleries/tamaki-herenga-waka/pacific-sisters>

¹⁵³ Efi, Hon. Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Taisi Tupuola Tufuga. “In Search of Tagaloa: Pulemelei, Samoan Mythology and Science.” *Archaeology in Oceania* 42, Archaeology in Samoa. The Pulemelei Investigations (2007). p 5-10.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 129, p 43.

¹⁵⁵ A manifestation of a deity or released soul in bodily form on earth.

¹⁵⁶ Avatar: The last air bender, Episode 7, 6.02mins originally screened on Nickelodeon 2005-2008, currently available on Netflix.

all its 7 parts, and aitu to be rendered tangible, and enabling a cohabitation with the past, present and future.

Faiga Fa (Case Study 4), Dahlem



Fig.15 Dahlem Ethnological Museum, 2014, Berlin, Germany. Photography, Rosanna Raymond.

Dahlem was one of the last major Artist in Residence programmes I did before I left the UK to come back to live in Aotearoa/NZ. Though based in London I had just come back from spending four months in the Southern Hemisphere summer, bouncing around Australia, Fiji, the Cook Islands and my homeland Aotearoa. The day I arrived, Berlin was cold and grey. I was unprepared as it settled in my bones.

The residency had been organized in partnership with Humboldt Lab Dahlem¹⁵⁷ and the Indigeneity in the *Contemporary World* project.¹⁵⁸ I was also a Visiting Artist at the Interweaving Performance Centre, which provided me with an office and much needed

¹⁵⁷ The Humboldt Lab Dahlem ran from 2011-2015 it was assembled by the German Federal Cultural Foundation and the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz to explore and promote new ideas for a new Ethnological museum-Humboldt Forum.

¹⁵⁸ This project ran from 2009-2014, conceived and driven by Professor Helen Gilbert out of the Royal Holloway University of London, funded by the European Research Council.

support. I was to spend most of my time at the Dahlem Ethnographic Museum researching the Oceanic Collections. Negotiations with the Museum had been fraught, and it had taken project lead Professor Helen Gilbert nearly two years to get me into the space. The museum itself was undergoing big structural changes so it was a challenging and sometimes unwelcoming time to be there. Our first meeting with Markus Schindlbeck, the Head Curator of Pacific collections, was in the corridor. By now I had over 10 years' experience of working inside museums internationally, so I was able to tread softly but firmly, as I continue to be fully aware of the complex power structures that remain firmly intact in many of these institutions. The implications of my behaviour as a guest are vital, in order to ensure good vā relations are formed.

The residency, though fruitful, was a never-ending series of negotiations, even though I had submitted a full proposal outlining all aspects of the project well in advance of my arrival. A major issue was that none of the activities had been planned into staff time, which caused much angst for both sides. Thankfully the residency was for three months, allowing time for me and the staff to get used to each other, building trust and respect for each other's practices. Artist residencies can be very isolating, as you often work and live alone. In articulating a Vā Body I remain connected to my tupuna, which allows me to quell any feelings of working in total isolation. But I was thrilled when a young Hawaiian dancer Jazmyne Koch introduced herself to me and later became part of the acti.VĀ.tion of the galleries.



Fig.16 Acti.VĀ.tion – *Glass Walls Dark Seas*, Jazmyne Koch and Rosanna Raymond, 2014, Dahlem Ethnological Museum, Berlin, Germany. Photography, Taille Renouf.

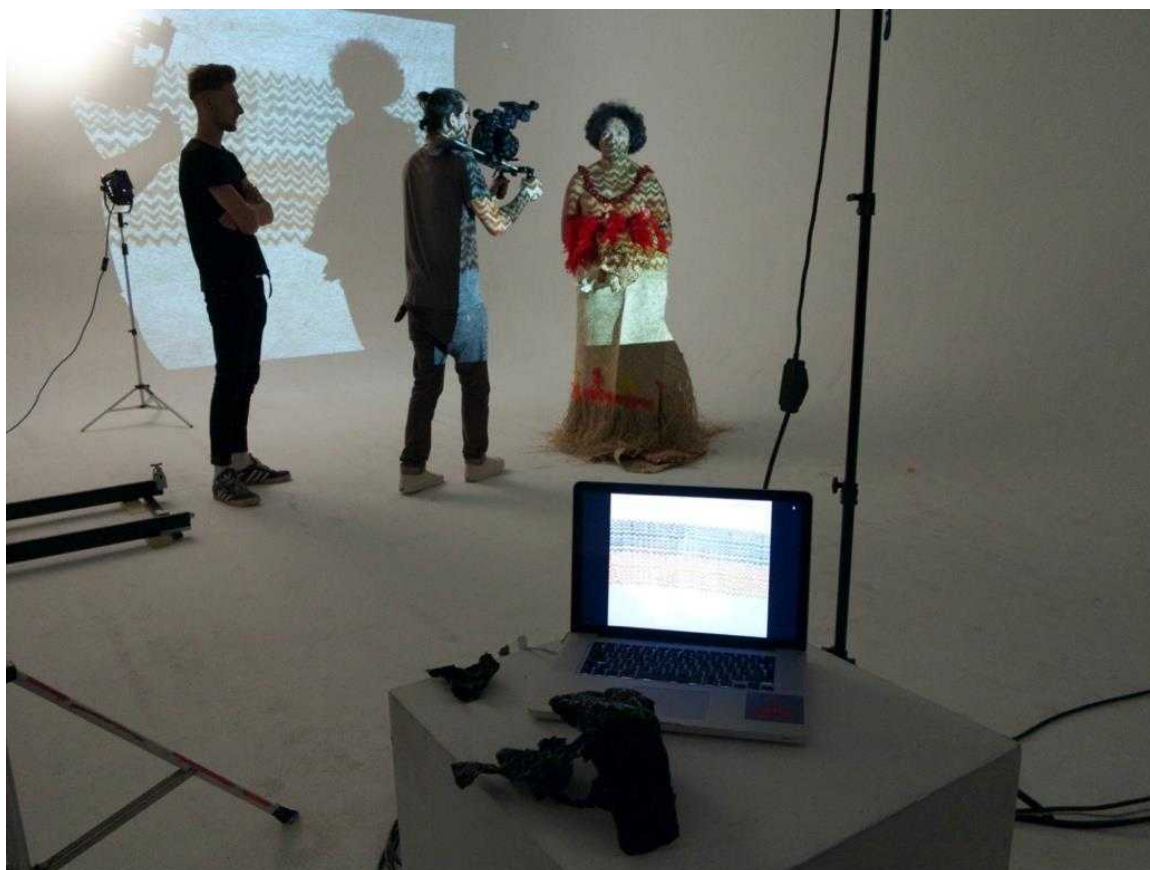


Fig.17 *FAB.rication* – Still from *Bark Waka Bodies* shoot day with Salvador Brown and Sani Muliaumaseali'i, 2014, London, UK. Photography Rosanna Raymond.

Just before I left, Markus Schindlbeck commissioned me to produce a new work based on my response to the bark cloth they were going to exhibit in the new gallery. My immediate response was to show bark cloth on a body, not flat as is the convention in most museum displays. Though the bark cloths were out of bounds, I was allowed access to high quality images that I was able to project onto bodies. *Bark Waka Bodies*¹⁵⁹ was produced in London. I invited two members of Gafa Arts Collective¹⁶⁰ to act. VĀ.te their personal bark cloths and my son Salvador to be co-director with me. Salvador and I have since collaborated on other moving image works involving museums, but this was our first officially sanctioned one.

The Dahlem residency highlighted how detached the institution is from living communities that are genealogical and geographically connected to the measina they possess. The foundation of the ethnographic museum is entwined in networks of relationships and privilege; a space where civilised society consumes the culture of others and their traumatic narratives of conquest. My presence in this space to some extent began to disrupt the status quo that had mostly gone unchecked by the prior lack of Moana visitors and researchers. After my departure, a Humboldt

¹⁵⁹ Sadly, Markus retired and the new curator redesigned the gallery, so the commission was never used. You can watch it here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gBsSzHhNrHY>

¹⁶⁰ London's first ever Samoan arts collective co-founded by Sani Muliaumaseali'i in 2011.

staff member described my time there as ‘enlightening’, while another promised to look after the tāonga (she stopped using the word object) and to keep them company.¹⁶¹

¹⁶¹ Gilbert, Helen; Phillipson, J. *Hands On: Indigenous Artists and European Cultural Institutions: The Story of Two Artist Residencies*. London: Royal Holloway, University of London, 2014. p 107.

CHAPTER 5: ONE IN—ONE OUT



Fig. 18 FAB.rication – Installation photo Aolele-Wandering Cloud, Pacific Sisters He Toā Tāera / Fashion Activists, 2018, Te Papa Tongawera. Photography Rosanna Raymond.

Aolele was incarnate beauty – her eyes darker than lama juice, her lips thick like oars from a war canoe, her breasts firm like the heart of tanoa, her teeth whiter than virgin siapo, her nose noble, experienced, preconditioned for greeting... Her feet were strong too, like the foundations of a fale... her hair... dark, dark hair that fell down her back. Like the fern upon the back of a tamaligi tree

Sia Figiel, *The Girl in the Moon Circle*¹⁶²

^V^T^¹⁶³

Museum collections have their own mytho-poetical contexts that I elucidate in my practice. My encounters with museums inspire me to create niu mythologies and Niu Aitu, both ancient and cosmopolitan. My whāNOW, (a play on whānau to mean giving birth or creations), consists of 21 Niu Aitu¹⁶⁴ new creations. Eleven of these Niu Aitu reside as retirees in museum collections.¹⁶⁵ The remaining ten live in my studio in some shape or form. When a Niu Aitu goes into a museum, or finds a niu home, I feel fa'anoanoa (sad and lonely) because they are an indelible part of me. We live through each other; we have shared history. In their memory, I make their avatar. Same Niu Aitu, but different formation; same maui that I hold in my Vā Body as the FAB.ricator and Acti.Vā.tor. So far, seven Niu Aitu¹⁶⁶ have reincarnations or, as I call them, ^V^T^. Pronounced 'avatar', these are the reincarnations of Niu Aitu no longer with me.

This chapter will look at the generative make up of Aolele and her ^V^T^. She is the subject of this creative work and is engaged here to travel with me side-to-side exploring the ins and outs of and for the duration of this research project. This project uses my embodied practice and the Niu Aitu as a way to test and renew my relationship with and within the museum.

Aolele

During my first ever visit to Samoa, I was *given* a book *Girl in the Moon Circle* by Samoan author Sia Figiel. To this day I do not know who slipped it into my bag. In the book, the Pulu Leaves whispered to Samoana, the main character, of an ancestral story of Malaefouapili. It involves Aolele the wandering cloud of incarnate beauty, gracious, educated and industrious; and Pili a progeny of Tagaloa and known to Winds and Waves, Clouds and Fire, Shark and Bird and Boar. The Pulu Leaves tell her of the seven brothers, Tasi, Lua, Tolu, Fa, Iva, Fitu, Ono and their vā feagaiga (sacred covenant) with her, that they died for her. It is a tale of seduction, transformation, deceit, defeat, shame, forgiveness, humility, mana and remembrance.

¹⁶² Figiel, Sia. *The Girl in the Moon Circle*. Suva, Fiji: Mana Publishing, 1996.

¹⁶³ ^V^T^ is a visual logoism, my own invention to describe an avatar.

¹⁶⁴ See appenedix 1 for a full role call of the Niu Aitu.

¹⁶⁵ Sistar Specific: *G'ňang G'ňear-Tamatoa*, *G'ňang G'ňear-RePATCHtriation*, *G'ňang G'ňear - GENEology*; Pacific Sisters: *21st Sentry Cyber Sister*, *Aolele*, *Supa Suga*, *Moruroa*, *TOHU TūPUNA*.

¹⁶⁶ *G'ňang G'ňear*, *Ina and Tuna*, *Aolele*, *Full Tusk Maiden*, *Backhand Maiden* and *MamaTane*.

The Pulu Leaves then kept whispering to me, even when I returned home to Aotearoa, the land of the long white cloud. The trip to Samoa had acti.VÃ.ated me. Shortly after, the Pacific Sisters were invited to exhibit in a show curated by Toni Symons called *Lapa*, alongside Greg Semu, at Lopdell House.¹⁶⁷ Stimulated from the trip, I started to flesh out Aolele, developing her as a Niu Aitu for the exhibition.

Sia Figiel's words and story set the aganu'u (ethic) for my recreation of Aolele, as I reimagined her, taking her off the page. She became a re-formation using the visual language of ornamentation, sound and movement, to articulate her narrative. My Vã Body became the site to accommodate and render her story, allowing me to share a time-space with Sia Figiel and her fãgogo.

Kaupapa Driven Frock

The language of things is an important aspect to all my work whether Culti.VÃ.ting, FAB.ricating or Acti.VÃ.ting. Materials and techniques have their own fãgogo, their own gafa, their own mana, which surge through my hands in the act of making. The political, social, cultural and material aspects are taken into consideration when designing a Niu Aitu. The Pacific Sisters called this *kaupapa driven frock*.¹⁶⁸

The Pacific Sisters and my own matriarchs (on both sides) taught me the hand-craft skills and heritage techniques I use to create Niu Aitu. Knowing that I use the same techniques and materials as my gafa is one of the ways I reclaim my Moana cultural heritage. Recycling, reducing and reusing are important aganu'u embedded in the Pacific Sisters practice. We are conscious of the amount of mea (things) that the environment is dealing with and treat every natural resource with the greatest respect. It pains us that our precious cultural treasures are disappearing due to commercial practices such as over-fishing and deforestation, which have a direct effect on our design.

The materials I use are gathered from my surroundings, both urban and rural. I forage opportunity shops, beaches, forests and farms. Often materials are gifted to me from friends and family. My mother is one of the best hunters and gathers, collecting from the Far North beaches where she lives, supplying me with sharks' vertebrae, snapper jaws, shells, bird bones, feathers and pig tusks. Precious fibres and seeds are gathered on my trips to the Moana, or brought over by visiting relatives and friends.

As I have adorned the vã with my body, I adorn my body with the materials and fibres that connect me to the land, sea and sky. The conventional idea of a costume does not convey the depth of the spiritual and physical form and function embedded in these creations. This is why I refer to them

¹⁶⁷ For some archival images visit <https://www.teuru.org.nz/index.cfm/whats-on/calendar/lapa/>

¹⁶⁸ Raymond, Rosanna. "Getting Specific: Pacific Fashion Activism in Auckland During the 1990's." In *Clothing the Pacific*, edited by Chloë Colchester. New York: Berg Publishers, 2003.

Niu Aitu, they are fully formed and fleshed-out charismas that embody the maui and the mana of the fāgogo and gafa they relay.



Fig.19 *Acti.VÃ.tion – Aolele*, Rosanna Raymond, 1996, Lopdell House (Te Uru), Auckland, NZ.
Photographer, unknown.

Lapa exhibition

Lapa was the first time the Pacific Sisters exhibited in a mainstream gallery. This created several challenges that we had to negotiate. Niu Aitu are FAB.ricated for living, moving tagata moana bodies not gallery walls or mannequins, both of which render an active Vā Body stationary. It was important for us to present our Niu Aitu¹⁶⁹ in their acti.VĀ.ted state on a body. This was our way of telling the stories imbued in our works by animating the mauili and mana, bringing our community together to celebrate and share the same time space with us. These practices have become the foundation of our collective and individual praxis when working with museums and galleries.

The *titi fatu*,¹⁷⁰ a type of girdle (or as I call them *titi plastiki* as they are made of plastic raffia, but use the same Samoan heritage technique), allude to Aolele hips that according to Figiel were wide as a “pou of a fale” (house post). The flora and fauna based ‘ofu garment represents her mother; the *niu ‘asoa* (coconut necklace) her father. On her back she carries her brothers in the form of seven carved coconut fale that Aolele built to honour her brother’s ultimate sacrifice. From bone I carved a representation of Pili worn in my topknot, the white feather reminding me of the lupe-pigeon he transformed into.

The movements for Aolele were slow and considered becoming more aggressive for Pili. The two hands of Pili were taken out of my hair and used to animate Pili. The sound-bed was an ambient dub track, *The Gatherer* by Pitch Black,¹⁷¹ which starts off very slow and builds to a crescendo evoking the ethereal and the drama that suited the narrative. After the Acti.VĀ.tion, the Niu Aitu Aolele was installed in the gallery, by suspending her, giving her the ata or image that she is floating.

Eyeland Part 1: An Urban Excessification Installation

After the Lapa exhibition, Aolele was again Acti.VĀ.ted at the Auckland City Art Gallery, in front of my *Eyeland: Part 1, an urban excessification installation*.¹⁷² I used the same movements and soundtrack to tell the story, to a new audience in the inner city. Unbeknown to me I was in the presence of Sia Figiel. When I saw her in the audience, her face was filled with emotion, tears of joy rolling down her face, bringing us both to tears¹⁷³ as Aolele’s mauili was made tangible in both of us.

¹⁶⁹ Ani O’Neill-Pacific Wave, Sofia Tekela-Dusky Maiden, Nephi Tupaea- Ngarara and Suzanne Tamaki- Kurangaituku.

¹⁷⁰ Buck, Peter. *Samoa Material Culture*. Honolulu: Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum, 1930. P 253.

¹⁷¹ Black, Pitch. "The Gatherer." In *Future Proof*. Auckland: Kog Transmissions, 1998.

¹⁷² As part of a group show *Open Skies, Divided Horizons*, curated by Ron Brownson, Auckland City Art Gallery 1997.

¹⁷³ Sia Figiel calls me Aolele and has remained an inspiration to me.

Moe Mauiuli- Suspended Animation

Aolele went into storage when I left for London in 1999, she was in a state of moe mauiuli or suspended animation. Thanks to the care of Pacific Sisters Ani O'Neill and Feeonaa Clifton (nee Wall) she survived my sixteen-year absence and in 2017 was resurrected in preparation for major exhibition for the Pacific Sisters. This exhibition reunited us all – friends, sisters, aitu.

*Pacific Sisters: Te Toa Tāera | Fashion Activists*¹⁷⁴

Curated by Nina Tonga,¹⁷⁵ the *Pacific Sisters: Te Toa Tāera | Fashion Activists*, was the Pacific Sisters' first major retrospective exhibition, featuring seventeen Niu Aitu, alongside photographic and moving imagery, spanning nearly thirty years of collective practice and sisterhood.¹⁷⁶ The exhibition was part of the opening celebrations of the new Te Papa museum gallery refurbishments in the presence of the Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern. We certainly had come a long way.

Time may not have affected the alofa I had for Aolele but there was damage and missing elements. The Collections Manager at Te Papa, Grace Hutton, and I collaborated, discussing options for her repair. Instead of trying to mask the signs of damage we decided to make them a feature. Grace embroidered around the holes in colourful threads creating new patterns and I set to work remaking her titi-plastiki and recreating and locating her adornments in preparation for the rigours of display.

Aolele2Gen: Second ^V^T^

Aolele2Gen, the second iteration of Aolele, was (re)formed for the opening ceremony for Te Papa Pacific Sisters Fashion Activists exhibition. I started to develop her before the exhibition. This is my way of bringing her back into the whāNOW as I knew that Aolele was now in a quiescent state inside the museum, inside a box awaiting display on a mannequin, not a body.

Though the aganu'u remains the same, the intent is not to replicate her past form. Each iteration is site specific, Aolele and I are in a different time, a different place. By creating a reincarnation of Aolele I enable her maui to be present, gathering mana as we share time-space through my Vā Body.

¹⁷⁴ In July 2018 *Pacific Sisters: Te Toa Taera | Fashion Activists* our first major retrospective exhibition opened at Te Papa Tongawera, in February 2019 the exhibition opened at the Auckland City Art Gallery.

¹⁷⁵ Nina Tonga is Te Papa's first ever Pacific Curator of Contemporary Art.

¹⁷⁶ For an insight to our process and preparation for the exhibition see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0VQcxxneD4>

Aolele2Gen was Acti.VĀ.ted alongside her Pacific Sisters during the opening ceremonies for the Wellington and Auckland exhibitions.¹⁷⁷



Fig. 20 Acti.VĀ.tion – TOHU TūPUNA and Aolele2Gen leading the dignitaries to the Pacific Sisters exhibition, 2018, Te Papa Tongawera, Wellington, NZ. Photography Kerry Brown.

¹⁷⁷ A more in depth video made by Pākē Salmon on this process can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0VQcxxneD4>



Fig. 21 *Acti.VĀ.tion – TOHU TūPUNA, Mourning Peace Maiden and Aolele-Opening Ceremony*, 2019, Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland, NZ. Photography, Kerry Brown.

In 2018, Te Papa purchased several Niu Aitu including Aolele. After a short respite, the *Pacific Sisters: Fashion Activists* was exhibited again at the Auckland Art Gallery. In July 2019, the Auckland exhibition finished with a closing ceremony, then the Niu Aitu were packed up and respectively sent back to my studio or to their new home at Te Papa. Though we collectively closed the exhibition space with ceremony, Aolele and the other Niu Aitu who went to Te Papa were now moving back into a state of *moe mauiuli* (suspended animation). I had no physical contact with Te Papa during 2020. This relationship became *lēutuvā* or latent and silent. I needed to *reacti.VĀ.te* the *vā* with Te Papa and *d’act.VĀ.te* Aolele according to my protocols, lest she suddenly realise she is not ever going to come home and her *mauli* might leave her.¹⁷⁸

Fa’alavelave

Over the past 30 years I have developed my own protocols for the trade and exchange of my Niu Aitu. I have begun to see the museum like a retirement home, when wear and tear compromise the garment and the *mana* of the Niu Aitu is adequately charged. The more the Niu Aitu has been *acti.VĀ.ted*, the more *mana* it accrues. *Mana* and the *mauli* stem from the person who made the Niu Aitu or *measina* and are passed onto who and what it adorns and the materials it is made from.

¹⁷⁸ *Ua segia o latou maui* is a Samoan expression, their *mauli* was snatched, said to happen if one gets a fright or is startled suddenly.

Working with ancestral knowledge requires diligence and comes with responsibilities. I call this Cultural Health and Safety; it is an important part of my practice and is embedded in the Acti.VĀ.tion process. Experiencing the tangible properties of tapu and noa, I have learnt the importance of following Cultural Health and Safety measures. Karakia (incantation) are needed to open this space. Equally important are the karakia to close the space, so that each realm can stay in its rightful place, and harmony can be maintained. These are important considerations when taking the Vā Body inside the museum space, which is filled with ancestral mana and measina waiting to be reanimated by the living descendants they are connected to.

Museums are a multiverse of red tape. The bigger the museum, the more complicated it can become. Learning how to navigate this space is important. Fortunately, this was my third major project working curator Nina Tonga. Together we have built up our tauhi vā. Nina had to weave together all the wants and needs of my request to create a niu work with my wearing Aolele, as well as find a space where I could D'act.VĀte Aolele. Alongside my own faiga we had to make sure we could satisfy the protocols, both cultural and institutional, of Te Papa. The first challenge was finding dates that suited us all. This took three attempts, then Nina had to secure inter-departmental approvals, including permissions from the conservation and collections manager for me to wear Aolele. Permissions were also needed to record in the gallery spaces and storerooms, and security had to be co-ordinated to open and close doors as we could only work before Te Papa was open to the public. This process took the best part of a year due to COVID-19 restrictions and other timetabling challenges.

All this negotiating is a complex but necessary part of my art practice inside the museum. What could be seen as burden has helped me reacti.VĀ.te old relationships and create new ones with the people that work within the museum. As I lavelave (entangle) myself with the museum, I am reminded of Albert Refiti's rethinking of (fa'a)lavelave, not as trouble or a burden as it has become to be known but as "the entanglement to oneself to the community."¹⁷⁹ Here the community comprises of museum professionals and the measina as I renegotiate terms of access and ownership.

Finally, over a single weekend at Te Papa in March 2021, decades of working with Aolele and with museums coalesced in accord with the SaVĀge Faigaluenga (Methodology) that this exegesis has explicated above. I had Culti.VĀ.te-d relationships with Te Papa staff that permitted Aolele once again to adorn my Vā Body – something integral to my conception of Conser.VĀ.tion¹⁸⁰ but often at odds with museum practice. I had also Culti.VĀ.te-d and FAB.ricate-d new measina: a meaalofo for Aolele, and her ^V^T^ Aolele2Gen. These intensive phases included faiāga (kinship), whakawhanaungatanga (relational care),

¹⁷⁹ Refiti, Albert "Building the House of Noanoa and Lavelave: A Possible Theory of Pacific Art." In *Home Akl: Artists of Pacific Heritage in Auckland*, ed. Brownson Ron., Māhina-Tuai Kolokesa., Refiti Albert., Tavola Ema., Tonga Nina. Auckland: Auckland Art Gallery, 2013.

¹⁸⁰ To preserve the relationship as much as the physical make-up of measina.

Su'ifefiloi and toi wahanga (gathering materials, design, construction, composing, and writing). At Te Papa I was afforded time space to rehearse, and install, completing the preparation work of FAB.rication. Below, I detail the *Fa'āliga i malae/whakakitenga* – the opening of space, often by displaying, exhibiting, or revealing the work to the public, friends, family, peers, creating a space of connection and cohesion, across two performative FAB.rications: first, of Aolele, and then, of her ^V^T^ Aolele2Gen. Both were Acti.VĀ.te-d by my Vā Body. Finally, Aolele was D'acti.VĀ.te-d, gifted a new meaalofo, and her mauli passed to Aolele2Gen through my Vā Body and the future space we will share. The vā fealoaloa'i, respectful, relational space, was conserved, along with Aolele.



Fig 22 Acti.VĀ.tion – image still from *XoV^*, 2021 Te Papa Tongawera, Wellington, NZ. Photography, Salvador Brown.

*Ata tīfaga*¹⁸¹

The written element of this study stems from the Culti.VĀ.tion of relationships and knowledge. This in turn has influenced the FaB.rication of the measina that adorned my body and now the final measina – the 'shiny thing', articulating, in a visual language, the CONsequence of this study.

¹⁸¹ Moving image art works.

One In: One Out comprises of two FAB.rications: *XoV^* (crossover), a 2 channel ata tīfaga; and *H^ndoV^* (handover), a narrative-based moving image work. For the final installation there will be a soundbed and final Acti.VĀ.tion. The work was shot on location at Te Papa by my son Salvador, who had played on the beach next to me as I read Sia Figiel's book twenty-five years ago.

FAB.one: XoV^

One In: One Out is a fabulist view, accompanying Aolele's ultimate malaga, as she wanders through the Te Papa galleries on her way to her final repose in the storerooms. The journey begins outside the building, she can feel the wind in her hair, it's a little brisk but the warmth of my Vā Body invigorates her fibres. We move inside the museum ascending Te Ara a Hine, stopping for the rainbow and a final smell of the sea. As we continue to hikoī, we are surveying the sights and sounds, feasting on centuries of Nation building and Moana creativity. After a few stops to pay respects to some old friends, the mood is pensive but not sad. Aolele has a niu home, back of house, in the K'lub Room. She is in good company.

This journey is mirrored, but in reverse, by her ^V^T^ Aolele2Gen, 'walking forward into the past',¹⁸² a common way of thinking about how we inhabit time space in the Moana. Our past and present intersecting, our future unknown... it's not just a comeback... it's a XoV^.¹⁸³ The ata tīfaga allows us to witness Aolele and her ^V^T^ share the same time space, outside the confines of the museum. I take them into the whāNOW, ensuring Aolele is not locked in the past, back of house, as the ^V^T^ takes them into the future. This is putting the vā into conser.VĀ.tion, maintaining the past present future relationships, not just the preserving physical condition of the measina.

With the filming, the Vā Body now mediated through the lens, this performative document allows her ata, her reflection, to be accessed outside the museum space, reinvigorating and reviving her maui alongside the people and things keeping Aolele alive and present within the network of vā relations we formed.

FAB.two: H^ndoV^

Separate to the XoV^ was the H^ndoV^,¹⁸⁴ where I would say my formal 'fare thee well' and D'acti.VĀ.te Aolele. Nina and I used this opportunity to invite other staff members who had been connected to the Pacific Sisters exhibition. Suzanne Tamaki, a founding member of the Pacific sisters who lives in Wellington, was also able to attend. This was an intimate gathering. Curators, collection managers, conservation specialist, designers, historians, heads of departments, had come because they had a connection to Aolele.

¹⁸² Māhina, Hūfanga'Ōkusitino. "On the Matter of Kava: From the Past to the Present to the Future." In KAVA: A workshop for kava researchers and enthusiasts: Anthropology and Pacific Studies Seminar Series. The University of Waikato, 2017.

¹⁸³ Pronounced 'crossover'.

¹⁸⁴ Pronounced 'handover'.

Salvador and I opened with karakia and a lament, *Ko Muri*,¹⁸⁵ using the sounds of measina logo, traditional Moana musical instruments, to bring forth the mauri of Te Moana Nui a Kiwa. Aolele was presented with a meaalofo, a gift I had made for her, *Ula o le Fe'e*-Garland of the Octopus God, to remind her of her father. It was crafted from the backbone of a shark found on the shores of Te Oneroa-a-Tōhē, pu'a seeds from Samoa, a white pule shell gifted to me long ago and pig's tusks sourced from a trip to Hawai'i.

I regaled them with Aolele's story, her gafa, where I met her, (Sean Mallon, Senior Curator Pacific Histories and Culture, featured in that story), as well as information of how the meaalofo was made, where the measina was made, and where I sourced the materials. Salvador recalled the haunga (putrid smell) of shark in the car on the drive down to Auckland with his Grandmother. The smell had lingered long after my mum picked the dead shark off the beach. These are not the usual pieces of information you read in the accession notes, nor are they usually accommodated in the museum standard 250-word caption for the public. The stories, the karakia, the familiar faces putting Aolele at ease; these were keeping her warm, as was the feeling in the room. Now in a state of moe mauriuli, she lay flat, in fragments, in custom-made acid-free boxes, ready for retirement.

After the formalities, we shared some light refreshments that Nina had organised for us, and reminisced about the Pacific Sisters' project. We exchanged personal thoughts on museum practice, discussed future projects. There was laughter, hugs, even a few tears were shed. As the boxes were closed, we had one last karakia to close the space. Aolele was D'acti.VA.ted, Grace Hutton placed her on a trolley and wheeled her away.

Mā te wā¹⁸⁶, this was not a goodbye; it was a see you later.

¹⁸⁵ Gifted to me to use by the composer elder Rahira Windsor, one of the founding members of Ngāti Ranana.

¹⁸⁶ A Māori expression I use often- time will tell, or see you later.

@MUSE...UM¹⁸⁷ (CONCLUSION)

I have attempted in this thesis and my creative practice to explore a number of questions pertaining to first, how museum professionals can pay respect to Indigenous modes of 'thinking and being'; second, how the mana of Indigenous Moana arts and culture is being recharged and experienced in these spaces; and third, how the mauri of measina is made present, and can be acknowledged and maintained in the archives and transferred to descendants and niu projects.

I have found that each project I have been involved in with museums has been different, such is the diversity of museum practices both locally and globally. It is hard to know what to expect in every situation, even after many years of experience. The overriding factor that binds a positive experience for me is the value held and exchanged through the establishment of meaningful dialogue and knowledge exchange, which builds vā relationships with the staff, the collection, and the source communities. This can only happen with time, with repeated visits and projects, and necessitates on-going maintenance if the vā fealoaloa'i (good relations) is to be conserved.

I have found that Indigenous modes of thinking and being are still being kept in the margins in the workings of the museum and my feeling is that the overarching museum framework is still Anglo-centric. There has been progress, especially in museums that have a large Indigenous population they can work with, but these tend to be employed or consulted mostly as advisors. Museums that hold collections from communities who are not close-by struggle to keep a continuity with them, if at all, outside individual projects, and often fall back to their familiar institutional processes when artists or knowledge holders have gone.

Over the past twenty years, Australia, Aotearoa and Canada have seen an increase in Indigenous curators inside the museum. I return to Puawai Cairns' blog where she questions the notion of decolonisation, "(E)xploring the term 'sovereign space' a few years ago, dissatisfied with biculturalism and the ongoing centring of the dominant European culture in Aotearoa New Zealand. I was frustrated that the bicultural structure that Te Papa was built on – even though it had opened the door for many more Māori stories than had been seen in museums before – was still facilitated by a very Eurocentric system of ideas."¹⁸⁸ Nathan Sentance a Wiradjuri man working in the Australian Museum in Sydney reflects that "the colonial gaze is not just imposed; it is reproduced in museums."¹⁸⁹ As of late, the Auckland City Art Gallery leadership has come under scrutiny with several media articles investigating

¹⁸⁷ A play with words, highlighting the muse in museum.

¹⁸⁸ Cairns, Puawai, "Decolonise or Indigenise: Moving Towards Sovereign Spaces and the Māorification of New Zealand Museology," Te Papa Blog. Te Papa Tongawera, 24th March, 2020.

¹⁸⁹ Anderson, Suse. Museopunks. Podcast audio. Episode 38: Decolonisation And Its Discontents. Accessed 20th Sept 2019, 2018. <https://soundcloud.com/museopunks/episode-38-decolonisation-and-its-discontents>.

the concerns of staff about cultural safety after the resignation of Māori curator Nigel Borrell.¹⁹⁰ These examples reflect how hard it is to restructure the museum-based power paradigms, even with Indigenous curators working inside the museum.

The mana of Indigenous Moana arts and culture is recharged and experienced in contemporary museum and exhibition spaces, through the living descendants and creative practitioners of today. Each new exhibition or project is an opportunity to strengthen relationships and keep cultural and artistic practice active, helping to bridge the gaps that have widened over the past 200 years in the process of housing, collecting and writing about *others*.

I found that there are still impediments for institutions to take on board or take seriously what to some is intangible and bodiless. Yet mauri is everywhere for the Tagata Moana, as Tui Atua explains:

The distinction here between what is living and what is dead is premised not so much on whether a 'life force', i.e. a mauri or fatu manava exists in the thing (that is, whether a 'life-breath' or 'heartbeat' exudes from it), but whether that thing, living or dead, has a genealogy (in an evolutionary rather than human procreation sense) that connects to a life-force.

Museums need to acknowledge ancestral connections with collections as a continuum of the past present and future existing all at once. Museums need to direct as much energy and resources towards cultivating and conserving the relationships that are formed with makers and communities as they focus on the physical conservation of the collections they house. This requires new thinking and structural change, far outside the remit of this study; an area I will keep pursuing.

The layering of the genetic material, the creation of physical adornments, visual artworks, poetry, sound, ceremony and the performative body cumulate to recharge the mauri. Through this embodied art practice, I take them into the whānau, ensuring collections are not locked in the past, as the mauri takes them into the future. The museum is at its most exciting to me when it is a place of confluence: of the past and the present; where the voices of the community and the museum professional, the artist, the intellect, can find a space to create, speculate, articulate, mediate, explore and learn from each other. We need to institute Conservation so that in the future new relationships can build and grow with mauri. After all, it is the mauri that brings us together.

¹⁹⁰ Hayden, Leonie. "'Unsafe Space for Māori': Auckland Art Gallery in Turmoil as Staff Question Leadership." In Spinoff, edited by Duncan Greive. Auckland, 2021. <https://thespinoff.co.nz/atea/27-03-2021/auckland-art-gallery-in-turmoil-as-staff-allege-unsafe-space-for-maori/>.

APPENDIX 1- Faiaiga Aitu

Aitu	LOCATION	DATE
G'nanang G'near-Tamatoa	National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia	1994-97
G'nanang G'near-RePATCHtriation	Te Papa Tongawera, Wellington, Aotearoa	2003-2013
G'nanang G'near -GENEOL	The Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, UK	2007
21st Sentry Cyber Sister	Te Papa Tongawera, Wellington, Aotearoa	1997
Sina +Tuna (PS)	(dispersed between Te Papa and Auckland City Art Gallery)	1994
'Ina +Tuna (PS)	Auckland City Art Gallery, Auckland, Aotearoa	1995
Aolele (PS)	Te Papa Tongawera, Wellington, Aotearoa	1996
Aolele2Gen	Artist Collection	2018-21
Full Tusk Maiden	Waistcoat at Auckland Art Gallery/Artist collection	1999
Full Tusk Maiden	AWOL/Artist Collection	2009
Backhand Maiden	Damaged-the remains artist collection	2009
Backhand Maiden	Artist Collection	2015
Rave on Maiden	Artist Collection	2009
Fully Laden Maiden	Artist Collection	2009
Hand in HandMaidens	In development	2009
Tu Mucho Maiden	In development	2009
Hand to Mouth Maiden	In development	2009
Dark Seas	Auckland Museum (Tohu TuPUNA)/Artist collection	2014
Blood Clot	Artist Collection	2014
Ie Malie	Artist collection	2016
MamaTane (tapa)	Artist Collection	2016
MamaTane (camo)	Artist Collection	2017
Supa Suga (PS)	Auckland Museum	2018
Moruroa (PS)	Auckland Museum	2018
TOHU TūPUNA (PS)	Auckland Museum	2018
H'ere 2 T'here	Artist Collections	2019

APPENDIX 2 - ONE IN - ONE OUT



Acti.VĀ.tion – In.VĀ.TĀ.tion, Rosanna Raymond, 2021, Photography Stefan Marks,

The final presentation *One In - One Out* was fully realised in a public acti.VĀ.tion for friends and family and a private showing for the examiners the next day. The assembly of friends and family is a central element, as they imbue the works with the mana and mauri of all who attended. Binding us all together as we shared time and space. Both gatherings were opened with a karakia and closed with kai, with the final presentation for the examiners made noa with an 'ava ceremony.

The Black Box Theatre, at AUT, was chosen as a location because of its lack of white walls, usually associated with the presentation of *art* and the ability for me to control the lighting. The outside entrance and the greenroom of the theatre were also utilised to host the separate elements of the work.



Guide for the room configuration

Ala sopo o Aitu – The pathway/realm of the aitu

People were moved through the spaces guided by a fa'aluma character, their role was to create a sense of fun and trickery juxtaposing the sanctity of the *Manavā* room where the two moving image works and Aolele2Gen were hanging.

Fa'amalama – The world of light

This room was transformed into colourful and comfortable space where the 1st moving image *H^ndoV^* was screened. The audience was then guided into the Manava.

Manava-the stomach

The acti.VĀ.tion of the audience was through a guided meditation, *In.VĀ.TĀ.tion*, a spoken word piece featuring live taonga pūoro, where I invited the audience to sit with their ancestors. As I finished the meditation the two screens on the opposite side of the room came to life *XoV^*. Shot on location at Te Papa Tongawera, Wellington with Aolele and her avatar Aolele2Gen.



Acti.VĀ.tion – In.VĀ.TĀ.tion, Rosanna Raymond and Salvador Brown, 2021, Photography Stefan Marks

In.V[^].T[^].tion

I cry the ocean

I bleed the earth

I sleep with mountains

I greet you with my dead

May my waters greet your waters

May my mountains greet your mountains

May my house greet your house

May I take this time to acknowledge Ngati Whatua who keep the fires warm tendering the mana of this whenua on which we stand

May I take this time to acknowledge those who have passed, for we are the past, we

are the **present**, we are the **future**

I am the **ancestor**

I am the **house** of the ancestor

I am tino o **faiā**

Inside me...eons of past lives, layers of genealogical matter

Sharing time and **space** as they live through me... and I live through them

Manavā loloto....we are the whā**NOW**

Repeat after me.....I am the house...the house is me...

I am a **body** becoming

I am not **male nor female**, nor am I either or

I am the aitu once **nurtured** in the womb

Born to the lower heavens, a **divine** sequence handed down from the beginning of time
forging the vā **tapuia**, connecting me to the creator and all that is created.

Repeat after me...I am the vā....the vā is me....

I am more than the **vā**

I am the connective **tissue** a resting place for the atua

I am the va'a, a slippery **boundary** between heaven on earth

Manifested in blood, bone, heart and soul...decorated, sustained and maintained

Sau o le ola... sogi mai, when my **breath** takes leave, the aitu and the mauli remain... a
perpetual gift from the depths of the past

Repeat after me...I am the house, I am the aitu, I am the whā**NOW**



Acti.VĀ.tion – In.VĀ.TĀ.tion, Rosanna Raymond and Salvador Brown, 2021 Photography
Stefan Marks

Room Sheet - One In:One Out

Aolele was incarnate beauty – her eyes darker than lama juice, her lips thick like oars from a war canoe, her breasts firm like the heart of tanoa, her teeth whiter than virgin siapo, her nose noble, experienced, preconditioned for greeting... Her feet were strong too, like the foundations of a fale... her hair... dark, dark hair that fell down her back. Like the fern upon the back of a tamaligi tree

Sia Figiel, *The Girl in the Moon Circle*¹⁹¹

Fa'amalama >< Ala sopo o Aitu

The Department of Pre-Acti.VĀ.tions

Acti.VĀ.tion duration — 5mins

Role Call:

Aitu Maui—Sustainer of the Swelling Breath: Daneil Cunningham

Measina: Rosanna Raymond

Fa'amalama

H^ndoV^

Ata tīfaga—moving Image 5.06

Logo—The Gatherer, Pitch Black

Concept: Rosanna Raymond

Videography by Salvador Brown

Shot on location at Te Papa Tongawera, Wellington

Special thanks to Grace Hutton, Ruby Abraham, Vioula Said, Prue Donald , Brook Konia, Sean Mallon, Rachel Yates, Safua Akeli Amaama, Erin McFarlane, Nina Tonga, Charlotte Davy, Catherine Halbleib, Filipe Tohi, John Pule, Janet Lilo, Colin McCahon

Manavā

In.V^..T^..tion

Acti.Vā.tion duration — 10mins

Role Call

Aitu Mapū — Caller to the Layers of the Realms: Salvador Brown

Aitu Maui — Carrier of the 7 Elements of the Inner Self: Rosanna Raymond

¹⁹¹ Figiel, Sia. *The Girl in the Moon Circle*. Suva, Fiji: Mana Publishing, 1996.

Measina: Rosanna Raymond with especial thanks and praise to the Pacific Sisters for the Tiputa, designed and hand printed by Ani O'Neill.

XoV^

Ata tīfaga — 2 channel moving Image 5.43mins

Concept: Rosanna Raymond

Videography: Salvador Brown

Logo: Rosanna Raymond and Salvador Brown

Shot on location at Te Papa Tongawera, Wellington

Special thanks to Nina tonga and Grace Sutton

Aolele2Gen

Ata — installation

Aitu: Aolele2Gen (2017-2021)

Culti.VĀ.tors: Rosanna Raymond, Sia Figiel

FAB.ricators: Ema Lyon, Jaqueline Bennett, Lucia Holloway, Rosanna Raymond, Suzanne Tamaki

Measina: Recycled fau -hibiscus fibre, coconut shell, pūpū tangimoana, makohuarau vertebrae, plastic beads, swan bones, pig tusks, tamure- snapper jaw, pu'a seeds, recycled Tongan ngatu

Techniques: Stitching, lashing, plaiting, knotting

Cultural Health and Safety

Hunaara Waerehu, Pita Turei

'Ava

Numangatini Mackenzie



FAB.rication – *Aolele2Gen*, Rosanna Raymond, 2017-2021



Backstage ^V^T^ - Daneil Cunningham, Rosanna Raymond, Salvador Brown, 2021,
Photography Kerry Brown

Link to watch One in : One Out

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUIUTBkkIMM>

Credits:

Acti.VĀ.tion as part of my MPhil. thesis presentation, shot on location at Auckland University of Technology, Black Box Theatre, WG210

Acti.VĀ.tors: Daneil Cunningham, Rosanna Raymond, Salvador Brown
FAB.rication: Aolele2Gen

Cultural Health and Safety: Leali'ifano Dr Albert Refiti, Hunaara Waerehu, Pita Turei

Faiata: Rosanna Raymond
Ata Tifaga: Kerry Brown and Salvador Brown
Logo: *The Gatherer*, Pitch Black
'Ofu: Ani O'Neill
Measina: Rosanna Raymond

Malo lava-Special thanks:
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Glossary

Acti.VĀ.te- to open a space through a performative agent

Afakasi- mixed heritage

Aitu- the creative or cheeky essence of someone

Ata tīfaga- a moving image, film or video

‘Asoa- necklace

Conser.VĀ.tion- conservation practice that includes the maintaining of past present future relationships, not just the physical mea.

Culti.VĀ.te- to make connections, to gather

Fa’atino- to perform

Fa’afine- third gender

Fa’atinoga- performance

FAB.ricate- to construct

Fāgogo- performative storytelling

Faiagia- to make family

Faiā- connections that make known kinships by blood or by affinity

Faiga- methods, the way of working

Faleaitu- the house of spirits, culturally sanctioned chaos

Falemāta’aga- museum..

Fa’aliga- to reveal the costume and the performer and the performance context.

Fa’āliga ata- exhibition, the display of an image, shadow, photograph likeness

Fa’āliga i malae- the exhibition or revelation of an installation work in a public space

Fa’alelegapepe- flight of the butterflies... showing off the new mat

Fa’aluma- one who humiliates

Fa’atino- to perform

Fa'atinoga- performance

Faigaluega- methodology

Faiva- skill, craft

Feagaiaga- term used to describe a sacred relational covenant between individuals and groups of people, which define protocol and etiquette in va relationships such as va tapuia. The important feagaiaga is that which exists between a brother and a sister

Fe'e- Octopus god/ess

Gafa- genealogical histories linking all life to the gods

Hoa tāpui- close friend

Kānaka Maoli- Indigenous Hawaiian

Karakia- to recite ritual chants, prayer, incantation

Kaupapa- layer, foundation

Ia- the ungendered personal pronoun

Lēutuvā- disrupted vā

Lauga amata-opening speech

Loloto- deep

Malaga- to voyage or travel, aumalaga is a travelling group

Manaakitanga- the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others.

Mānava- to breathe

Meaalofa- thing of love

Measina- treasured artefacts/objects or knowledge production for customary or ceremonial purposes

Measina logo- traditional Moana musical instruments

Malu- female tatau

Moana- Pacific Ocean

Mana- cumulative power, presence, authority

Māuli- life force

Mokemoke- lonely

Muagaga- proverbial expression

Pōula- night dances

Niu- word play for new, coconut

Niu Aitu- urban aitu

Noa- without restraint

Rangahau- to seek, search out, pursue, research, investigate

SaVĀge- active agent of vā

Soālaupule- deliberate consultation

Su’i- to stitch mend to collate

Sui’fepilo- the act of stitching, weaving, synthesising

Tā- to strike, to hold a beat

Tagata Moana- Person of the Pacific

Talanoa- to discuss in a meaningful way, can be formal and informal

Talanoaga- organised meeting to talanoa

Tapu- to be forbidden, to recognise the sacred connection between all things

Tapua’i- to worship

Tangata whenua- local indigenous people

Tautuanaga ‘o fa’aliga ata- the display practices in service of our communities, avoiding the assumed universality of Western curatorial practices and art histories

Tino- body

Tofa saili– the search for reason

Togafiti- trick, strategy

Toi waihanga- construction art, assemblage

Tulāfale- orator

Tūlanga o vae- where I lay my mat

Tupu'aga- origin decent, ancestors

Tupuga- ancestor

Tuna- eel god/ess

Tūrangawaewae- the place where your feet stand firm

Ula- garland

Utuvā- be continuous, continuity

Vā- relational space

Vā fa'asinomaga- identity and belonging or designation

Vā fealoaloa'i- respectful, relational space

Vā tapuia- sacred space

Whakawhanaungatanga- process of establishing relationships, relating well to others

Whakakitenga- exhibition, exhibit, display

Whakanoa- to lift the tapu

Whānau- to be born, give birth

WhāNOW- to be in the present

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